

'excellent and most loyal fellow soldiers' and to celebrate his achievements in public monuments in Rome, most blatantly the honorific column, dedicated in 113 as part of his new forum, on the frieze of which the emperor's victorious campaigns were depicted in impressive, if stylized, detail. The invasion of Dacia beyond the Danube ended eventually, after two wars, in the creation of a new Roman province in 106. On 22 March of the same year the old kingdom of the Nabataeans was turned into a new province of Arabia, without apparent opposition, although the governor of Syria was given triumphal ornaments for the achievement. The new military road built from the Red Sea to Damascus may well have been connected to plans for further expansion to the east. In 114 Trajan picked a quarrel with the Parthians over control of Armenia and in 115 he attacked Parthia itself through Mesopotamia. Coins proclaimed that 'Armenia and Mesopotamia have been brought into the power of the Roman people'. Cassius Dio, commenting caustically on these campaigns a century later, asserts that Trajan's conquests to the east were prompted by a desire for glory. He was almost certainly right.³³

Throughout these events the Jews, already a conquered people, seem to have been ignored. When their resentment and fury finally broke out with ferocious violence in different parts of the eastern Mediterranean, the uprising caught the Romans by surprise. Cassius Dio describes it thus:

The Jews in the region of Cyrene had put a certain Andreas at their head, and were destroying both the Romans and the Greeks. They would eat the flesh of their victims, make belts for themselves of their entrails, anoint themselves with their blood and wear their skins for clothing; many they sawed in two, from the head downwards; other they gave to wild beasts, and still others they forced to fight as gladiators. In all two hundred and twenty thousand persons perished. In Egypt, too, they perpetrated many similar outrages, and in Cyprus under the leadership of a certain Artemion. There, also, two hundred and forty thousand perished.

A century after Dio, Eusebius of Caesarea provided a Christian interpretation of the same disastrous conflicts, linking the uprisings in the Mediterranean diaspora also to the despair of the Jews of Mesopotamia, who might with some justice view with horror the

extension of Roman power to include the lands where they had lived under tolerant Parthian rule for centuries:

While the teaching of our Saviour and the Church were flourishing daily and moving on to further progress the tragedy of the Jews was reaching the climax of successive woes. In the course of the eighteenth year of the reign of the emperor a movement of Jews again broke out and destroyed a great multitude of them. For both in Alexandria and in the rest of Egypt and especially in Cyrene, as though they had been seized by some terrible spirit of rebellion, they rushed into sedition against their Greek fellow inhabitants, and increasing the scope of the rebellion in the following year started not a small war while Lupus was governor of all Egypt. In the first engagement they happened to overcome the Greeks, who fled to Alexandria and captured and killed the Jews in the city, but though thus losing the help of these Jews, the Jews of Cyrene continued to plunder the country of Egypt and to ravage the districts in it under their leader Lucuas. The emperor sent against them Marcus Turbo with both land and sea forces, and even cavalry. He waged war vigorously against them in many battles for a considerable time and killed many thousands of Jews, not only those of Cyrene but also those of Egypt who had rallied to Lucuas, their king. The emperor suspected that the Jews in Mesopotamia would also attack the inhabitants and ordered Lusius Quietus to clean them out of the province. He organized a force and slaughtered a great multitude of the Jews there, for which success he was appointed by the emperor governor of Judaea.³⁴

By no means everything in these brief but highly coloured narratives is to be trusted. Atrocity stories of cannibalism are a regular feature of the depiction of savage enemies. The appalling casualty figures may well be exaggerated. But comments by contemporaries confirm the extreme violence. In a papyrus letter found in Egypt, an unknown correspondent reports dramatically (in Greek) that 'the one hope and expectation that was left was the push of the massed villagers from our district against the impious Jews; but now the opposite has happened . . . our forces fought and were beaten and many of them were killed'.³⁵ On 28 November in (probably) 117, an official named Apollonius applied to the prefect of Egypt for leave of sixty days, complaining that 'because of the attack of the impious Jews, practically everything I possess in the villages of the Hermopolite nome and

in the metropolis needs my attention'.³⁶ A number of Egyptian papyri deal with the confiscation and reallocation of Jewish property after the revolt had ended, and with issues which arose in dealing with property destroyed in the uprising. The contemporary historian Appian, himself from Alexandria, records a lucky escape which confirmed the Arabian power of divination:

When I was fleeing from the Jews during the war which was being waged in Egypt and I was passing through Arabia Petraea in the direction of the river, where a boat had been waiting in order to carry me over to Pelusium, an Arab served me as guide at night. When I believed us to be near the boat a crow croaked, just about day-break, and the troubled man said: 'We have gone astray.' And when the crow croaked again, he said: 'We have gone much astray.' Then I became disturbed and looked for some wayfarer. I saw none, since it was early morning and the country was in a state of war. When the Arab heard the crow a third time, he said rejoicing: 'We have gone astray to our advantage and we have gained the road.' I only laughed, thinking we would gain the wrong path again, and despaired of myself as we were surrounded everywhere by enemies, and it was not possible for me to turn back because of those behind from whom I was fleeing. However, being at a loss, I followed and gave myself up to the augury. Being in such a state, unexpectedly I perceived another river very near to Pelusium and a trireme sailing to Pelusium. I embarked and was saved, while the boat which awaited me at the other river was captured by the Jews. So much I had good luck and marvelled at the augury.³⁷

Such personal experience lends credence to Appian's chilling note, in passing, that Pompey's tomb near Alexandria had been devastated by the Jews 'while the Roman emperor Trajan was destroying utterly the Jewish race in Egypt'. Another contemporary, the historian Arrian, who wrote an account of Parthian history which concentrated on the campaigns of Trajan in the East, seems to have been referring to the Jews when he recorded that 'Trajan was determined above all, if it were possible, to destroy the nation utterly, but if not, at least to crush it and stop its presumptuous wickedness'. Inscriptions from Cyrenaica (modern Libya), using the Latin term *tumultus* ('disturbance') to refer to the uprising, record that Hadrian 'ordered the Caesareum [the temple of the imperial cult] which had been destroyed in the Jewish

disturbance to be rebuilt for the city of the Cyrenaeans', and the restoration of a basilica, the temple of Zeus, baths and public roads which had been damaged enough to need major repairs. The disturbances were evidently directed not just against the Roman state but also against neighbouring gentiles – including, in Egypt, the native Egyptians as well as the Greeks whose hostility in Alexandria had been so longstanding. A papyrus records the celebration in 199 of an annual festival established by the Greek inhabitants of the Egyptian town of Oxyrhynchus to commemorate the suppression of the revolt some eighty-two years earlier. Cassius Dio explicitly refers to the consequences of the rebellion in his own day, a hundred years after it had ended: because of the huge death toll caused by the Jews in Cyprus, 'no Jew may set foot on this island, but if one of them is driven upon its shores by a storm he is put to death'.³⁸

The exceptional violence of the uprising and the devastating effects of its suppression are not in doubt, but neither Cassius Dio nor Eusebius in their brief narratives gives an explanation of its outbreak, although they agree, despite discrepancies in the detailed chronology and sequence of events, in assigning the rebellion to the last years of Trajan, during his Parthian campaign. It is left to modern historians to explain an uprising unprecedented not just in its savagery but in its geographic spread. Large numbers of Jews lived in Parthian territory, so the coincidence of the outbreak with Trajan's Parthian campaign is unlikely to be accidental, whether the rebellious Jews sought to free those in Mesopotamia from the Roman yoke Trajan was imposing, or to take advantage of the deployment of Roman forces in the frontier campaign to rebel within the empire. Some have suggested that the diaspora uprisings were coordinated with a strategic aim of attacking the Roman state at a moment of weakness, others that vague eschatological leanings were exploited by messianic leaders – in Cyrene, Andreas or Lucuas; in Cyprus, Artemion – hoping by violence to inaugurate a new and better age. A more mundane explanation would be a gradual escalation of violence, with unintended consequences, fuelled by Roman over-reaction to Jewish unrest. As Trajan extended his military capabilities to their limit in the search for conquest, he will have known that the Jews within the empire were potentially friendly to Parthia because they maintained contact with their

co-religionists in Parthian territory – after all, Jews from Adiabene had joined in the defence of Jerusalem in 70, so it was reasonable for Romans to suspect the possibility of reciprocity.

All such explanations are possible and certainly none can be disproved, but all rest on the primary assumption that Jews in the Roman empire hated Roman rule. For that hate, taken for granted by Dio and Eusebius and by contemporary observers, the history of the past forty-five years was to blame, and especially the frustration of hopes that had been raised, all too briefly, by Nerva. In contrast to the Parthians, who had allowed the Jews in their empire to worship as they liked without interference, the Romans had burned down the Temple and gloried in its demise. Every year, when the tax collectors called, Jews were reminded that this heinous act had present consequences and that Rome continued its war against Judaism by refusing to allow Jews the freedom, permitted to all ordinary subjects of the emperor, to rebuild their destroyed sanctuary. During the disturbances the temples of Apollo, Zeus, Demeter, Artemis and Isis in the city of Cyrene were all destroyed or damaged. The evidence for this destruction, all either archaeological or epigraphic, cannot reveal whether it resulted from deliberate action by the Jewish rebels against pagan cult centres as well as against their gentile neighbours, or simply as an unintended consequence of conflict. But it would be unsurprising if Jewish frustration at Roman attacks on Judaism manifested itself in a war against the religion of the oppressive state.³⁹

Judaea was affected by these upheavals only indirectly. Alongside their co-religionists in Rome, Asia Minor and Greece, the Jews of the homeland seem to have remained quiescent despite the bloodshed, although their non-participation should not be taken to indicate lack of sympathy, but only a reluctance to risk all in what proved to be a hopeless cause. Indeed the reluctance of these other communities to be involved itself argues against the notion that the uprising was coordinated rather than a spontaneous outburst of rage, but the passivity of the Jews in Judaea did not free them from Roman suspicion. Eusebius records that Lusius Quietus, the Moorish chieftain who had cleared out the Jews of Mesopotamia with great savagery, was appointed governor of Judaea by the emperor in 117. Quietus commanded an independent cavalry unit of Moors which had fought with

distinction alongside regular Roman forces both in Trajan's Dacian campaign and in the invasion of Parthia and, as a reward for his services, was enrolled in the Senate, becoming consul probably in the same year that he went to Judaea. An ex-consul with a fine military record could expect to command at least two legions, and a milestone from Galilee confirms that a second permanent legion was stationed in the province at least from early in Hadrian's reign and probably while Trajan was still alive. As far as the Romans were concerned, disaffection among Jews in one part of the empire necessarily threw under suspicion those in another, as they had shown consistently ever since Vespasian adopted his policy of hostility to Judaism in 70.⁴⁰

Precisely when the last traces of the diaspora revolt flickered out is uncertain, and violence may well have continued in some places during the first months of Hadrian's rule. But the circumstances of Hadrian's accession, following the death of Trajan while he was with his troops in Cilicia during the Mesopotamia campaign on 8 August 117, discouraged the new emperor from adopting any clear policy towards the Jews until his own position was secure, which took considerable time. Aelius Hadrianus was a cousin of Trajan and his ward, but his adoption as Trajan's son and heir was announced only the day after the emperor had died. There was a plausible rumour that the succession had been stage-managed by Plotina, Trajan's wife, who championed Hadrian's interests and contrived the support of the army. Hadrian was faced by a distinct lack of enthusiasm among his fellow senators. In order to concentrate on ridding himself of political opposition in Rome and among the elite, he relinquished Trajan's hard-won new provinces of Mesopotamia and Armenia. Among the powerful and influential senators to be dismissed from their posts was Trajan's favourite, Lusius Quietus; in 118 he was executed, along with three other ex-consuls, on a charge of conspiracy. Hadrian evidently set his own political security above the need for a strong military commander in the Jewish homeland. He had no opportunity in such an atmosphere to draw up comprehensive plans to deal with the Jews. In any case some of the Jewish rebels, where not already violently suppressed, may have been pacified by the unexpected withdrawal of Roman forces from Mesopotamia – to the Jews of that region, at least, the Roman retreat may well have looked like vindication of the uprising,

since they can have known little about the nuances of political intrigue at the heart of imperial rule which seem in fact to have been responsible for the reversal of Roman policy.

The solution to the Jewish problem would have to wait. In the year after Trajan's death Hadrian was confronted by provincial disturbances as far apart as Britain and Mauretania, where an uprising was probably inspired by support for Lusius Quietus after his abrupt dismissal from his command in Judaea. By the time Hadrian arrived in Rome on 9 July 118 he was keen to promote an image of settled normality. A posthumous triumph was held to celebrate Trajan's victories over Parthia, despite the abandonment of the territory he had conquered. There were lavish gladiatorial games and generous gifts to the plebs of the city and bankrupt senators. In the face of much hostility from his fellow senators, Hadrian sought to consolidate his power, establishing a distinctive atmosphere in his court through the patronage of Greek culture. He prided himself on his own expertise in Greek rhetoric as well as other arts, including architecture, poetry and music. The new regime was celebrated by the inauguration, probably on 21 April 121, of a huge new temple near the Colosseum dedicated to Venus and the goddess Roma. The largest temple ever built in the city, and designed by Hadrian himself, the building evoked the image of Rome as eternal and divine. This was the first time that the goddess Roma, long worshipped in the Greek world, had received the honour of a cult in the city of Rome itself.⁴¹

Once his position in Rome was consolidated, Hadrian set out, as other emperors had done, for the provinces, but with different aims in mind. Further conquests were to be eschewed. Instead, Hadrian set out to reorganize the government of the empire, adopting the name Hadrianus Augustus as indication of his ambitions to impose his personality on the Roman world as decisively as Augustus had once done. There followed a series of financial, military, administrative and legal changes on a scale that had not been seen for a century and a half. The new policy of security within fixed frontiers was advertised in some places in concrete form. A continuous palisade was erected in Upper Germany and Raetia, forming the first artificial frontier to be erected to limit the exercise of Roman power. From 122 a great wall, running for eighty Roman miles and far more elaborate than

anything elsewhere, was built 'to separate Romans and barbarians' on the northern edge of the province of Britannia. Hadrian himself went in person to each province, strengthening military discipline but also advertising his beneficence by the foundation of new cities and other similarly magnificent gestures. His contributions to Athens, favoured especially as the fount of Greek culture, were so extensive that a great arch was erected on which inscriptions proclaimed on one side 'This is the city of Solon', on the other, 'This is the city of Hadrian'. The arrival of the emperor in each province was commemorated by the issue of a coin series depicting the province in idealized form, with the legend ADVENTUS AVGVSTI, 'the emperor's visit'. The demonstration of such a personal interest in the detailed administration of each part of the empire was entirely novel, as the issue of the distinctive ADVENTUS AVGVSTI coins seems to acknowledge.⁴²

In 128 Hadrian set off on his final tour, going to Africa and Mauretania, then Greece and, the following year, Asia Minor and Syria, where he spent the winter in Antioch. A bilingual honorific inscription from Palmyra in the Syrian desert records the services provided by a local man called Males for looking after Hadrian's troops when he visited that city. A triumphal arch was dedicated in 130 by the city of Gerasa (Jerash) in Transjordan, now in the province of Arabia. Finally, on the way south to Egypt, Hadrian came to Judaea. The (by now) standard coins were issued to celebrate the emperor's presence, recording ADVENTUS AVGVSTI IUDAEA. Fragments of a large Latin inscription from Tel Shalem, close to Scythopolis, suggest that the legion installed at the nearby camp set up an impressive arch to commemorate his visit. A massive cuirassed bronze statue of Hadrian, accidentally unearthed in the same area, was also probably manufactured as part of the celebrations of the emperor's arrival. There was every reason, given his record in other provinces, for the inhabitants of Judaea to expect the visit to have momentous results. So, indeed, it did – but not those that Hadrian intended.⁴³

The main types of ADVENTUS AVGVSTI coins for Judaea show Hadrian facing a female image representing Judaea. She holds a cup or some similar object in her left hand. The coins depict next to her two children, each holding a palm, the standard symbol on Roman coins as an attribute of Judaea. Minted in Rome, these coins, like others in the ADVENTUS AVGVSTI series, were issued to celebrate the emperor's visit to the province.

series, portray the emperor in the act of sacrificing a bull at an altar. Judaea is to become a normal part of the pagan world. The Judaea that Hadrian had in mind was not to be Jewish at all: 'At Jerusalem, he [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.' So, succinctly, Cassius Dio as condensed by Xiphilinus. Hadrian's reformed province was to have at its heart not a rebuilt Jewish Temple but a Roman colony, named 'Aelia' in recognition of his own family and himself and 'Capitolina' in honour of Jupiter Capitolinus, whose cult was to be of central importance in the new city. The creation of a pagan city on the site most sacred to the Jews seems an act so provocative that some scholars have been tempted to explain it not as a cause of the ensuing revolt but as a response to it, following the remarks of Eusebius that work on building the new city was carried out after the revolt had ended; but finds of coins produced by the new colony in hoards alongside coins produced by the rebels strongly suggest that the sequence of events as given by Dio is correct: 'This [the foundation of Aelia Capitolina] brought on a war of no slight importance.'⁴⁴

Hadrian was presumably happy with his reform of Judaea, for he did not stay long. By the summer he was in Egypt, where he was distracted by personal tragedy: he had fallen totally in love with a young Bithynian boy named Antinous, and the boy's death by drowning in October 130 was devastating. The foundation of a new city, Antinoopolis, to commemorate his beloved, and declaring him a god, provided small consolation. Hadrian went to Lycia, and by the winter of 131 was again in Athens, where he seems to have been happiest, setting up the Panhellenion, an organization of Greek cities which celebrated the culture of the Greeks and their loyalty to Rome, and especially to the Panhellenion's founder, Hadrian himself. Hadrian's consistent philhellenism, which led him to promote Greek cultural traits even when, as in his extravagant love affair with Antinous, it rather embarrassed fellow Romans, might encourage the view that his mission in Judaea was, like Antiochus Epiphanes' three hundred years before, to bring the Jews to Greek culture. At Athens, Hadrian had revived a project, the completion of the great temple to Olympian Zeus, which Antiochus Epiphanes had intended but not achieved. The

author in the late fourth century CE of the biography of Hadrian preserved in the so-called *Augustan History* asserts that 'the Jews began the war because they were forbidden to mutilate the genitals', and there is considerable evidence that Hadrian did indeed ban circumcision of males throughout the empire as inimical to what he considered civilized behaviour, just as castration had been banned by Domitian in the previous century. However, it is quite clear from the account in Cassius Dio that Aelia Capitolina was not to be a haven for Hellenized Jews who had accepted Greek culture. The war broke out because 'the Jews deemed it intolerable that foreign races should be settled in their city and foreign religious rites planted there'. Aelia Capitolina was not to be refounded as a Greek city in which Jews might settle and be 'civilized', but as a Roman colony, inhabited by gentiles, from which Jews were to be excluded.⁴⁵

The most obvious explanation of Hadrian's decisive action is that it was intended as the definitive solution to the problems which had led to the appalling uprising of diaspora Jews in 115-17. Hadrian seems to have liked to deal with one province at a time and then to sort it out once and for all, most grandiosely in the erection of the frontier wall in Britain. By planting a Roman colony on the site where the Jewish Temple had once stood, he made it crystal clear that the Temple was not to be rebuilt. Leaving the site of Jerusalem empty for sixty years had proven an invitation to the Jews to agitate for a return to their former glories. To expect Rome to disband a Roman colony would be so obviously ridiculous that agitation would evaporate.

It is unlikely that Jews will have understood the reasons for the delay in inflicting this punishment thirteen years after 117. After 70 Roman retaliation had been instant and vicious. Now, by contrast, the years passed by and those Jews who had not suffered directly in the Trajanic revolt were no more ground down by the state than they had been before. The mixed emotions, of fury and despair at the bloody suppression of the rebellion and denial of the right of Jews to worship in their ancestral fashion, and relief and hope at the possibility of imminent felicity under the new emperor, are evident in the coded prophecies preserved in the fifth book of the *Sibylline Oracles*. Certainty about the identity, religious orientation and place of origin of

the authors of these pseudonymous oracles, and the time and unity of their composition, is elusive, but the author's continuing grief at the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple emerges clearly:

The desired house has long ago been extinguished by you, when I saw the second house cast headlong, soaked in fire by an impious hand, the ever-flourishing, watchful shrine of God made by holy people and hoped by their soul and body to be always imperishable . . . But now a certain insignificant and impious king has gone up, cast it down, and left it in ruins with a great horde and illustrious men. He himself perished at immortal hands [?] when he left the land, and no such sign has yet been performed among men that others should think it right to sack a great city.

The assertion that Titus had died 'at immortal hands' parallels the later rabbinic traditions about his awful sufferings as punishment for his sacrilege; that he died through divine intervention may have proved tenable because he did at least die comparatively early, albeit a natural death. The Sibyl denounces Rome with exceptional bitterness: 'You will be among evil mortals, suffering evils, but you will remain utterly desolate for all ages yet . . . With you are found adulteries and illicit intercourse with boys. Effeminate and unjust, evil city, ill-fated above all. Alas, city of the Latin land, unclean in all things, maenad, rejoicing in vipers, as a widow you will sit by the banks, and the river Tiber will weep for you, its consort.' The book opens with a survey of the 'woeful history of the Latins', in which the author condemns, among others, Nero, 'a strange snake', Vespasian, 'a certain great destroyer of pious men', and Trajan, 'a Celtic mountain-walker, who, rushing to an eastern war, will not avoid an unseemly fate, but will die; foreign dust will cover him, a corpse'. All the more striking are the author's favourable judgements on Nerva, and, especially, on Hadrian, 'a silver-headed man, who will have the name of a sea [the Adriatic]. He will also be a most excellent man and he will consider everything.' Such praise so lavishly poured by the author on Hadrian would be impossible for a Jew after 130. This passage provides, indeed, the main clue to the date of the composition of the text.⁴⁶

In 130 this 'most excellent' emperor turned the site of Jerusalem into a miniature Rome, devoted to Roman religious rites and settled by gentiles, probably by Italians. Among the deities later worshipped

in the colony were Bacchus, Sarapis, Astarte and the Dioscuri, all of whom are represented on the city's coinage, but the main cult was that of Jupiter Capitolinus. The symbolic transfer of the Jews' annual tribute from the Temple of the Jewish God to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome had now gone one stage further. Now in Jerusalem, too, Jupiter Capitolinus was to dominate the new, Roman, city, ideologically, if not physically, displacing once and for all the cult of the Jews. Thus was the suppression of the revolt under Trajan linked to the foundation of Aelia Capitolina and, in turn, to the outbreak of a further terrible war in 132. The ancient writers explain none of these disasters, so modern historians must try to do so in the light of normal Roman imperial practice and the known idiosyncrasies of Hadrian. What happened next was described succinctly but coherently by Cassius Dio:

[The foundation of Aelia] brought on a war of no slight importance nor of brief duration . . . 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 that they themselves might thus have the use of them; but when he went farther away, they openly revolted. 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 underground; and they pierced these subterranean passages from above at intervals to let in air and light. At first the Romans took no account of them. Soon, however, all Judaea 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; 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. Severus did not venture to attack his opponents 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.⁴⁷

All the other evidence for the revolt of 132-5 is less coherent than this story told by Cassius Dio, but it tends to confirm the general accuracy of his narrative. The rabbis commented mostly on the character of the Jewish leader of the revolt, Shimon bar Kosiba, on the siege of Bethar (about seven miles south-west of Jerusalem) which brought the uprising to an end, and on the persecution which ensued; their stories accreted more and more legendary elements over time, but, unlike the diaspora rebellion, this war was securely entrenched in the rabbinic historical consciousness, along with the great revolt of 66-70. On the non-Jewish side of the conflict, the contemporary historian Appian notes, in discussing Pompey's destruction of Jerusalem in 63 BCE, that it was afterwards rebuilt, but that 'Vespasian destroyed it again, and Hadrian did the same in our time'. Appian notes also that, as a result of these rebellions, 'the poll tax imposed upon all Jews is heavier than that imposed upon the surrounding peoples'. Thirty years after the war the orator and teacher Fronto tried to console the philosophical emperor Marcus Aurelius for Roman losses in a different campaign, against the Parthians, by reminding him 'what a number of soldiers were killed by the Jews under the rule of your grandfather Hadrian'. Revealing of the ideology of the rebels are the images and slogans on the abundant and varied coinage they produced, and fragments of military documents and letters written by the insurgents which have been found in increasing quantities over the past half-century in Judean desert caves. Revealing of their tactics are the excavations of many underground hiding complexes, with narrow tunnels leading to larger storage chambers and cisterns, which seem to confirm Cassius Dio's reference to their use of 'places of refuge... underground' and 'subterranean passages'.⁴⁸

War broke out eventually in 132 after lengthy and organized preparation. The rebels must have been well aware of how the Romans would react: the bloody conflict under Trajan had ended only fifteen years before. A new Jewish government had to be created in secrecy and the population primed to accept its authority under war con-

ditions. In contrast to the internal political struggles leading up to revolt in 66, the Jews in 132 were operating in almost a political vacuum, although some rabbinic sources presuppose, perhaps rightly, that rabbinic support was offered to the rebel leadership by at least one leading rabbinic sage, Akiva. In any case the minting of an impressive series of coins in the first year of the war suggests a new state firmly governed; coins of course served an important purpose in paying for military necessities for the war, but for an underground state without other means to disseminate its messages, the wide distribution of coinage also provided an excellent medium for that purpose. This impression of organized efficiency is confirmed by the tone of surviving documents issued by the rebel administration, from a series of rent agreements for what had previously been imperial property in En Gedi and was now assumed to be the property of the Jewish state, to peremptory orders to military subordinates: 'Shimon bar Kosiba to Yehonatan and to Masabala... let all men from Tekoa and other places who are with you, be sent to me without delay. And if you shall not send them, let it be known to you, that you will be punished.' In the event these Jewish fighters were to maintain their independence for some three and a half years, inflicting heavy losses on the Roman force sent to suppress them, until in 135 they were finally overwhelmed.⁴⁹

Historians have debated the size of the force sent by Hadrian to crush the Jews, but it is probable that it was very large. Hadrian took command in person, at least for a time, and his personal involvement drew in the best military minds of the age. The celebrated architect Apollodorus of Damascus sent him designs for new siege engines, although evidently at some distance from the field of battle. Gaius Iulius Severus, 'first' of Hadrian's 'best generals' according to Cassius Dio, was supported in the campaign by the governor of Syria and the governor of Arabia. Hadrian's imperial persona since he came to power had been far less militaristic than that of his predecessor - porforce, perhaps, because he had found it politically necessary to abandon Trajan's conquests in the East - but precisely the lack of military commitments elsewhere would have made it easier for him to concentrate all his efforts on the total crushing of the Jewish rebels. The geographical spread of the uprising faced by Hadrian is not clear.

Judaea was certainly the main arena of the conflict, but Galilee may also have been caught up in the fighting, although the discovery of rebel coinage in Galilean underground complexes may reflect only the plight of refugees from Judaea after the war. The demise in the Judaean desert of one group of fugitives became gruesomely apparent when their skeletons, along with some of the precious documents they had taken with them for safekeeping, were found in the cave where they had died. The documents themselves show that some of these victims originated in the province of Arabia to the east, suggesting that Jews from outside Judaea were drawn into the uprising either as voluntary participants or through suspicion from gentile neighbours such as had caused the pogroms of 66. Cassius Dio states explicitly that not only 'all Judaea had been stirred up', but 'the Jews everywhere were showing signs of disturbance, were gathering together, and giving evidence of great hostility to the Romans', which suggests strongly that diaspora Jews were voluntarily involved, although due allowance must be made for rhetorical exaggeration: '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.'⁵⁰

The shape and weight of the coins issued by the rebel government, and the types and slogans chosen, suggest a direct ideological link to the Jewish state which had collapsed in 70. The new state, like the old, was named 'Israel', once again a significant choice because it was a name never used by the Roman state to refer to the Jews. Many of the same slogans ('freedom', 'redemption', 'Jerusalem') and the same images (palm trees, *lulavim*) were found on the new coins, although the coins started a new era with the new leadership, and there were some other changes which are quite striking in contrast to the earlier types: thus, for instance, the coins make no reference to Zion (only Israel and Jerusalem). Even more than the coins of 66-70, the issues of 132-5 are remarkable for the extraordinary variety of types chosen, which include many images of buildings, some of them probably idealized versions of part of the destroyed Temple in Jerusalem. The slogan 'For the freedom of Jerusalem', found on undated coins probably to be assigned to Year Three of the rebellion, was presumably programmatic, since there is no evidence, apart from Appian's claim that Hadrian destroyed the city, that Jewish forces ever gained control

of Jerusalem, which was, after all, the headquarters of the Tenth Legion. Certainly the rebels of 132-5 lacked the protection of the city walls which had given security for so long to their predecessors in 66-70: the defences of Jerusalem had been razed to the ground by Titus.⁵¹

Both Jewish and Christian sources are eloquent on the qualities of the rebel leader, Shimon bar Kosiba, known in the Christian sources, and occasionally by the rabbis, as Bar Kokhba, 'son of the star', presumably his preferred designation, but usually in the rabbinic sources as Bar Koziba, 'son of the lie', emphasizing his claim to messianic status and the ruthless dedication which, according to one legend, led him to test the courage of his soldiers by requiring each of them to cut off a finger. Some of the coins carry simply his name SHIMON. Others have the legend SHIMON NASI YISRAEL, 'Simon, prince of Israel'. According to the Palestinian Talmud, 'when Rabbi Akiva saw Bar Koziba, he cried out, "This is King Messiah." Thereupon Rabbi Yohanan son of Torta said to him, "Akiva, grass will grow out of your cheek-bones and the Son of David will still not have come."' The vitriolic judgement of other rabbinic sages, that Shimon was 'son of the lie', is amply explained by the abject failure of a messianic leader whose uprising had promised so much.⁵²

The bloodshed in this last war was as awful as anything that had gone before. Cassius Dio notes that

very few of them [the Jews] 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 that perished by famine, disease and fire was past finding out. Thus nearly the whole of Judaea was made desolate. . . . Many Romans, moreover, perished in this war. Therefore Hadrian, in writing to the Senate, did not employ the opening phrase commonly used by the emperors, 'If you and your children are in health, it is well; I and the legions are in health.'

Neither the Roman legions nor the Jews were 'in health'. After seventy years of tension and conflict, Jews could never again realistically hope to live in the Roman empire with the same freedom as other minorities to practise their ancestral customs and worship their God in their own land.⁵³

'Malodorous Jews'

The public presentation of Rome's victory over the Jews in 135 was different from the celebrations in 70. Neither the war itself nor its outcome, with such heavy casualties on the Roman as well as the Jewish side, fitted well with Hadrian's persona as proponent of peace and culture. He liked to be seen as omniscient, civilized, organized, poetic and romantic, and his achievements as the encouragement of architecture and art across the empire. He wished his subjects in Rome to admire his wisdom and foresight, not his conquest of distant lands. He stressed, of course, the military competence which was an essential requisite for the emperor, and he was not averse to being portrayed on many statues, particularly in the Greek East, as a cuirassed warrior, but, as he showed by the dispositions made during his provincial tours, under his rule military might was to be used for peace and security, not to win glorious campaigns. The necessity of fighting a war against the Jews cannot have been welcome. There was not, then, to be a triumphal procession or any glorification of the victory. Hadrian did not present himself as conqueror of Judaea as Vespasian and Titus had done, nor did he trumpet his achievements as Trajan had done after this campaign in Dacia and Parthia. The iconography of the regime made no reference at all to the Jews. No coins celebrated the successful end of the campaign. It was a war that should not have happened.

The intensity of the conflict and the involvement both of the emperor in person and of so many troops made it politic to glory in Roman heroism even if not much could be said about the outcome of the war, much as modern states maintain war memorials to the dead of wars they would prefer to forget. Hadrian himself accepted acclamation as *imperator* by his troops, so that *imperator II* was inserted into his official title. His motivation for accepting the honour was probably the need to encourage military morale after a bruising encounter. The service of numerous ordinary soldiers was appropriately recognized by the presentation of military decorations, and triumphal ornaments were bestowed not just on Iulius Severus, who had taken primary responsibility for the campaign, but also on Haterius

Nepos, governor of Arabia, and Publicius Marcellus, governor of Syria. If Roman soldiers were to continue to risk their lives for the emperor, public acknowledgement of their efforts was prudent, but it did not amount to glorification of the war.

Roman burial of memories of the conflict had an impact on the Jews even more disastrous than the triumphalism of 70. It was to be as if the Jews had never been in Jerusalem. In his apologetic address to Antoninus Pius and his sons, the Christian Justin, 'the son of Priscus and grandson of Bacchius, natives of Flavia Neapolis [Nablus] in Palestine', informed the emperor, a decade or so after the defeat of Bar Kokhba, that the desolation of the land of the Jews had been foretold that 'the house of our sanctuary has become a curse, and the glory which our fathers blessed is burned up with fire, and all its glorious things are laid waste'. Justin added for the emperor's benefit that 'concerning its desolation, and that no one should be permitted to inhabit it, there was the following prophecy by Isaiah [again, paraphrased]: "Their land is desolate, their enemies consume it before them, and none of them shall dwell therein." And that it is guarded by you lest any one dwell in it, and that death is decreed against any Jew apprehended entering it, you know very well.' When addressing, in a different treatise, the Jew Trypho, the same Christian writer blames Jews' observance of the law of circumcision for their exile. 'For the circumcision according to the flesh, which is from Abraham, was given for a sign, that you may be separated from other nations, and from us, and that you alone may suffer that which you now justly suffer; and that your lands may be desolate and your cities burned with fire, and that strangers may eat your fruit in your presence, and that no one of you may go up to Jerusalem.' Writing in the early fourth century CE, Eusebius quotes a certain Ariston of Pella who had recorded that 'Hadrian commanded that by a legal decree and ordinances the whole nation should be absolutely prevented from entering from thenceforth even the district around Jerusalem, so that not even from a distance could it see its ancestral soil'. 'Thus,' notes Eusebius, '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.' The name of Jerusalem had already seemed to

officially in 130. Now the name of the whole province was changed to Syria Palaestina, resurrecting an ancient Greek designation of the region, which referred not to the Jews but to their ancient enemies, the Philistines.⁵⁴

Such a response to rebellion was unique in Roman history, both before and after 135. For a province to change its name for administrative purposes was not unusual, but not, as in Judaea, as punishment of the natives for their uprising. Despite revolts in Pannonia, Germany and Britain, the Romans continued to call each province after the name of its native people. Only the *Iudaei* ceased to have a homeland because of what they had done. Nor was transfer of populations a standard Roman procedure. Under Augustus, some of the inhabitants of the Spanish highlands were compelled to move down into the coastal plains as a precaution against insurrection, and more generally the Celtic peoples of northern Europe who had sought security in hill-top forts were moved after Roman conquest into urban centres on lower ground less easily fortified against Rome by the disaffected; but these precautionary measures were quite different from the mass punishment to which the Jews of Judaea were subjected. In the eyes of Rome and at the behest of Hadrian, the Jews had ceased to exist as a nation in their own land.

To what extent the hostility of the state was reflected in the attitude of ordinary Romans towards the Jews can be surmised only from occasional hints in the extant literature, and from plausibility. Violent terminology occasionally surfaces. Under Domitian, the great authority on rhetoric Quintilian wrote of Jews as a baleful nation (*perniciosa gens*). For Tacitus in the reign of Trajan, most Jewish customs are base, abominable and depraved, so that 'the Jews regard as profane all that we hold sacred, while they permit all that we abhor'; to Florus, a younger contemporary, Jews were an 'impious nation'. In the distant city of Oenoanda in what is now Turkey, the Epicurean philosopher Diogenes had inscribed, probably during the reign of Hadrian, in large letters for the benefit of his fellow citizens advice to seek contentment by not behaving credulously like the Jews: 'A clear indication of the complete inability of the gods to prevent wrong-doings is provided by the nations of the Jews and Egyptians, who, while being the most superstitious of all peoples, are the vilest of all peoples.' Whether such

hostile attitudes became standard in the city of Rome or elsewhere in the empire after 135 cannot now be determined, but they are unlikely to have evaporated quickly.⁵⁵

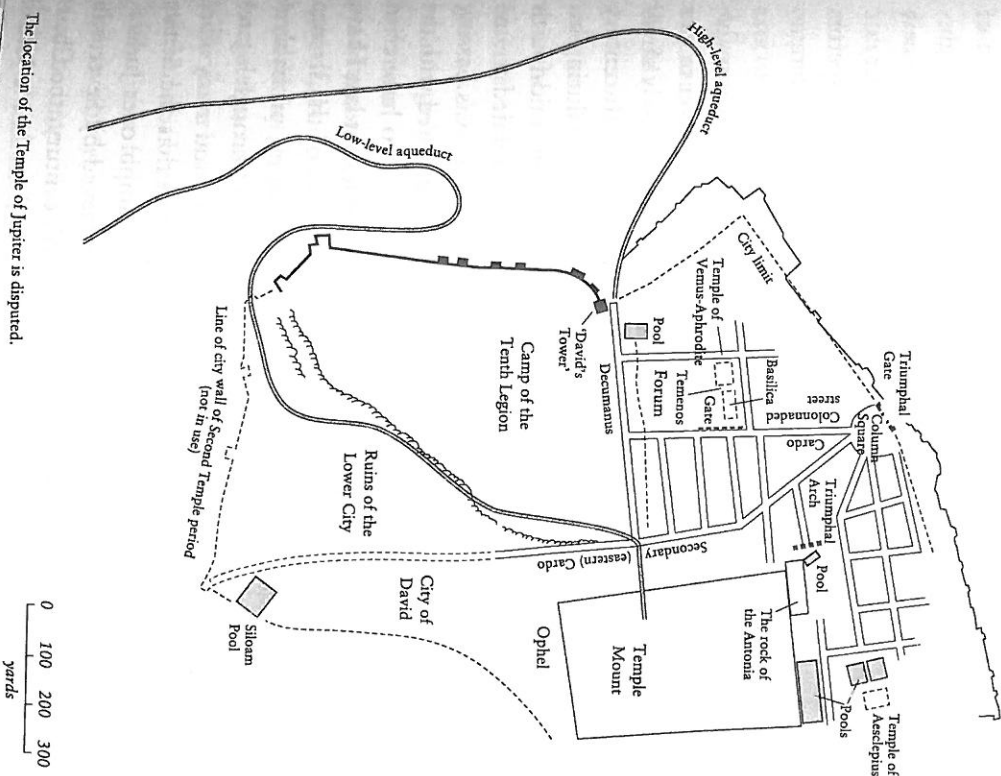
Nothing in the comparatively settled elite politics of Rome over the next hundred years encouraged succeeding emperors to dispense with the policy so clearly established in 135. Just as Hadrian's legitimacy as ruler of the Roman world derived from his alleged adoption by Trajan, so every emperor down to 193 owed his position to adoption by Hadrian or his adopted successors. By the mid-second century CE the prestige of imperial adoption was so fully accepted that an emperor's choice could not safely be set aside even when it might seem to everyone in authority potentially disastrous for the empire. When Hadrian's successor Antoninus Pius died in March 161, the new emperor Marcus Aurelius insisted that the Senate confer the rank of Augustus on his adoptive brother Lucius, implying an equal share of power, despite his lack of political and military experience or competence, and despite Marcus Aurelius' own popularity. The only justification was the fulfilment of Hadrian's wishes as expressed just before his death twenty-three years earlier. Even when the strict line of adoptive succession, continuous since 96, came to an end with the murder of the deranged Commodus in 193, the desire to justify current rule by appeal to the past did not vanish. Commodus was succeeded by a series of generals, each seeking supreme power for himself, much as had occurred in 68 on the death of Nero. Septimius Severus, who emerged as sole victor only in February 197, came from Africa and was of Punic descent. He had no connection to the regime of Commodus, except as a competent senator; he had become emperor because in 193 he was governor of Upper Pannonia and won the support of the legions stationed on the Rhine and Danube, and because in the ensuing wars against rival claimants the crucial battles went his way. But even in the midst of such blatant realpolitik, image mattered, and in 195 Severus proclaimed himself a son of Marcus Aurelius and thus brother of Commodus; for this relationship to bring the prestige desired, Commodus' memory, which had been enthusiastically condemned by the Senate following his assassination, was restored, and he was declared to be a god. Severus' son, the future emperor nicknamed Caracalla, was given the name *Antoninus*.⁵⁶

ROME AND JERUSALEM

Antoninus'. By such means, artificially but effectively, the political heritage of Hadrian was carried through into the Severan dynasty, which was to last, in somewhat indirect form, to the death of Severus Alexander in 235. Thus, for a hundred years after the defeat of Bar Kokhba, there was no incentive for any Roman ruler to challenge the ethos of the empire created by Hadrian. The marginalization of the Jews was to remain in force.

Continuation of the policy of hostility to the Jews is less easy to demonstrate from the surviving evidence than its original imposition. The coins issued by the colony of Aelia Capitolina show that it flourished as a pagan city on the site where Jerusalem had once been. The earliest coin types show the emperors as founders of the colony, ploughing its boundaries, the she-wolf with the twins Romulus and Remus, the legionary standards, the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus and the Capitoline Triad. Three coin types from the time of Marcus Aurelius depict Rome as a goddess, armed and seated, with her left arm resting on a spear and in the palm of her extended right hand the figure of a winged victory. Later coins, in the third century, exhibit less distinctively Roman traits, with images most often of the goddess Astarte and the god Sarpis, but they are still defiantly pagan. The Tenth Legion, whose camp continued to occupy the south-western hill of Jerusalem, near what is now the Jaffa Gate, advertised its presence on ceramic roof tiles, bricks and pipes, each stamped LEG X FRE (sometimes just LXXF) and often bearing the legion's insignia of a galley and a wild boar. The wide distribution of roof tiles produced by the legion shows that they were used extensively for purely civilian purposes, and it is reasonable to assume that the soldiers were well integrated into the life of the colony. The main centre of the civilian colony seems to have been sited to the north of the legionary camp, in what is now the northern quarter of the Old City, where the modern street plan still follows in part its rectangular layout. The arched gate leading onto the main colonnaded north-south street is still visible below the Damascus Gate built by Suleiman the Magnificent in the mid-sixteenth century. This and other arched gates, such as the so-called Ecce Homo arch on the Via Dolorosa, fulfilled a propaganda rather than defensive function. Impressive arches of this sort were a common feature of cities in the Roman Near East in the second and

Aelia Capitolina



third centuries CE. Aelia Capitolina does not seem to have been walled. The inhabitants could be confident that, despite all that their city represented to the Jews, they would be secure. In c. 201 CE a memorial medallion was struck in Aelia Capitolina bearing the heads of the emperor Septimius Severus and his wife Julia Domna on one side and the figures of their sons, Geta and Caracalla, on the other, apparently to commemorate a visit to the colony by the emperor. This public affirmation of the status of Aelia Capitolina by Septimius Severus was echoed by permission to add the names *Pia* and *Felix* ('Pious' and 'Happy') as soubriquets to the name of the city. There is no sign of any doubt in the Roman state about the wisdom of the policy inaugurated by Hadrian. The gradual move of the Tenth Legion to a new base at Aela on the Red Sea in the second half of the third century CE did not reflect any shift in attitude to Aelia Capitolina by emperors but the strategic unimportance of the site now that the Jews were no longer a threat to the peace of the empire.⁵⁶

Without a Jewish state during the one hundred and seventy-five years between Bar Kokhba's defeat and the accession to power in 312 CE of the first Christian emperor, Constantine, Jews feature only rarely in the historical narratives composed by Romans. The fourth-century pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus notes in passing, during his discussion of a quip attributed to the emperor Julian in the mid-fourth century, that Julian believed his own witticism to be related to one uttered two centuries earlier by Marcus Aurelius: 'as he was passing through Palestine on his way to Egypt, being often disgusted with the malodorous and disorderly Jews, [Marcus] is reported to have cried with sorrow: "O Marcomanni, O Quadi, O Sarmatians, at last I have found a people more unruly than you."' The author of the strange emperor biographies included in the *Augustan History*, probably a pagan writing in the 390s, writes that Antoninus Pius 'through legates and governors, crushed the Germans and the Dacians and many other tribes, and also the Jews, who were rebelling', and that the Senate decreed to Caracalla (at the age of twelve!) a triumph over Judaea, *Judaeus triumphus*, because of the successes achieved by Severus in Syria. Writing at the same time, in the late fourth century, the Christian Jerome noted in his *Chronicle* for the year 197 CE that 'a Jewish and Samaritan war broke out', which could refer either to a revolt by

both peoples against Rome or to a war between the two groups. But there is a striking lack of contemporary literary, archaeological, epigraphic or any other sort of evidence from the second and third centuries to support these stories, composed in the fourth century, about conflict two hundred years earlier. It is just possible that this apparent contemporary silence is the result of chance, and that these conflicts did indeed take place in one way or another, but more probably these stories show only that, even in later generations and even when they were at peace, Jews retained their reputation as rebels and as a disruptive element in the empire.⁵⁷

It would be unsurprising, of course, if Roman hostility to Jews diminished gradually as memories of the violence between 70 and 135 faded; but no emperor did anything at all about the main complaint of the Jews against Rome, that the state prevented them from worshipping God in their Temple. The Jews' desire for the rebuilding of the sanctuary, so evident in Josephus' description of Jewish worship in *Against Apion*, written at the end of the first century, was not in any way diminished by the early third century, for a large proportion of the Mishnah, redacted at just this time, concerned the rituals to be performed in a restored Jerusalem sanctuary: of the six divisions, one, on 'Hallowed Things', was entirely devoted to the topic, and references to the Temple cult permeate the other five divisions also. Severus Alexander could hardly have been unaware of what the Jews wanted. He himself came on the maternal line from a family which had for generations dominated as priests the worship of the sun-god of Emesa, modern Homs, on the Syrian Orontes. His cousin and predecessor as emperor, nicknamed Elagabalus, after the sun-god himself, had not only promoted this cult in his home city but had brought his ancestral forms of worship to Rome. Compared to such innovation, to permit the restoration of the famed Temple of the Jews might have seemed uncontroversial, if prejudice against the Jewish cult had not been so deeply entrenched in Roman minds by this time. That this failure to rebuild the Jewish shrine was the result of Roman policy, and not of any insuperable physical or other problem, became clear in 361, over two centuries after Bar Kokhba had been defeated, when the Roman state inaugurated precisely such a rebuilding. The emperor Julian, an avowed pagan, was the first to

Christianity, ordered the reconstruction of the Jewish Temple not so much to please the Jews as in order to spite his erstwhile Christian co-religionists: he knew that Christians believed that the destruction of the Temple was a sign of the veracity of their version of the religious tradition they shared with Jews, and that if the Temple was restored it would undermine this argument. In any case, Julian believed that encouraging traditional worship through sacrifices was in itself a good thing. Julian's contemporary and admirer, Ammianus Marcellinus, records with approval the commencement of the 'great work' which Julian planned 'to extend the memory of his reign', and the practical difficulties faced in its execution. Julian, writes Ammianus,

planned at vast cost to restore the once splendid temple at Jerusalem, which after many mortal combats during the siege by Vespasian and later by Titus, had only with difficulty been stormed. He had entrusted the speedy performance of this work to Alypius of Antioch, who had once been vice-prefect of Britain. But, though this Alypius pushed the work on with vigour, aided by the governor of the province, terrifying balls of flame kept bursting forth near the foundations of the temple, and made the place inaccessible to the workmen, some of whom were burned to death; and since in this way the element persistently repelled them, the enterprise halted.

What obstructed rapid rebuilding was evidently not the presence on the site of other buildings or any such problem, but natural phenomena, perhaps earthquakes. The contemporary Christian writer, the bishop Gregory of Nazianzus, who had been at school with Julian, claimed that the sacrilegious attempt to foil the divine will had been subverted by a miracle. Such Christian considerations will have carried no weight for the pagan emperors before Constantine. If they did not try to rebuild the Jewish Temple, it was not through fear of divine retribution, or the practical difficulties of the site, but out of a continuing belief that the Jewish cult was dangerous in the Roman world.⁵⁸

Wicked Edom

Many, perhaps most, of those Jews who survived in the new province of Syria Palaestina must have reacted to the defeat of Bar Kokhba by ceasing to think of themselves as Jews. The rabbinic texts of the third century CE and later contain recollections of a period during or immediately after the revolt when displaying any outward sign of Judaism could be fatal and some Jews even underwent an operation to reverse the mark of circumcision; the rabbis laid down a general rule for ordinary Jews that, because of the overwhelming preciousness of life, in such times of persecution any part of the Torah can be contravened to save one's life except the cardinal sins of idolatry, killing another person, and adultery or incest.⁵⁹ The archaeological and epigraphic remains from the land of Israel for the two centuries after 135 contain little that is clearly related to Judaism. Public buildings lacked any of the Jewish iconography which was to become standard on the mosaic floors of Palestinian synagogues in the late fourth to sixth centuries, when a repertoire of Jewish images (the ram's horn, palm branch, and especially the candelabrum from the Temple) was ubiquitous. Since the Roman state had always accepted without quibble the validity of apostasy from Judaism, as Tiberius Julius Alexander had demonstrated by the success of his public career in the first century, it might seem sensible for Jews to respond to Roman hostility to their religion by choosing to abandon it, particularly since their God seemed to have abandoned them. This may indeed be the best way to understand the assertion in Christian writers, such as Justin Martyr in the mid-second century, that Jews were forbidden after Bar Kokhba to live in their homeland. It would not have benefited the settlers in Aelia Capitolina to find the lands they were allotted in the new colony deprived of a local workforce. Doubtless they could employ slave labour to some extent, particularly when slave prices were low in the aftermath of the war, but much farm work must have been done by descendants of the original Jewish inhabitants who had given up Jewish customs and elected to merge into the wider gentile population of the region.⁶⁰

At least some of those Jews who remained faithful to their ancestral

religion developed a deep loathing for the Roman state because the Romans prevented them from worshipping God as laid down in the Torah. How general such loathing was is unknown. Hostility to the state was not of course an attitude that it would be prudent to express in public display of any kind, so the evidence is confined to the surviving Jewish literary texts from this period, of which the vast majority were produced by and for rabbinic sages. Whether the other Jews shared the rabbinic viewpoint can only be guessed, but that some rabbis came to see Rome as wicked and malevolent, and 'good' Romans as the exception, is clear. The rabbis, as recorded both in legal texts like the Mishnah and in more discursive works of Bible interpretation, saw Rome as an instrument of war, and Rome was frequently equated by them with the hereditary enemy of Israel, Edom, which had been identified already in the biblical book of Genesis with the descendants of Esau, brother of Jacob, so that relations between Israelite and Edomite had the bitterness of fraternal hatred.⁶¹ They elaborated traditions about pious martyrs in the revolt of 132-5, and especially about Rabbi Akiva, who, arrested because 'the wicked kingdom made a decree that people should not be occupied with Torah, and anyone who occupies himself with Torah will be stabbed with a sword', was said to have died smiling because martyrdom allowed him to fulfil the injunction in Deuteronomy to 'love the Lord, your God, with all your soul'.⁶² The rabbis' hope for the final defeat of the evil empire of Rome was rooted for the rabbis not just in general speculation about the end times but in the more specific expectation of a cycle of four empires to precede the last days and the belief that the fourth of these empires was Rome. The cycle of empires had been described in the biblical book of Daniel and was applied to the future of Rome already by Josephus in his *Antiquities*, but the rabbis, composing an esoteric literature in Hebrew and Aramaic for Jewish readers, could afford to be less circumspect than Josephus, who felt constrained to be tactful for his Roman audience.⁶³

The rabbis demonstrated no great knowledge of the intricacies of Roman politics – indeed, it would be impossible to write even the most schematic coherent account of the political and military history of the Roman world if it was necessary to rely on the rabbinic texts alone. They made comparatively frequent reference only to a few

specific emperors: Vespasian, Titus, Trajan, Hadrian, Diocletian. Allusions to other political events, including the intensive campaigns by third-century Roman emperors in the Near East over territory in Syria and Mesopotamia where large numbers of Jews lived, campaigns in which emperors themselves were often personally involved, are sparse and often elliptical, and are comprehensible only in the light of non-rabbinic evidence. 'Antoninus' was used as a generic name for a good emperor prepared to talk to, and take lessons from, rabbinic sages. Other emperors lacked a distinct personality in the rabbinic imagination, apart from Titus, the archetype of evil, about whom a whole folklore grew up, with enthusiastic speculation about the tortures he experienced before he died:

This was the wicked Titus who blasphemed and insulted Heaven. What did he do? He took a harlot by the hand and entered the Holy of Holies and spread out a scroll of the Law and committed a sin on it . . . Titus further took the curtain and shaped it like a basket and brought all the vessels of the Sanctuary and put them in it, and then put them on board ship to go and triumph with them in his city . . . A gale sprang up at sea which threatened to wreck him. He said: 'Apparently the power of the God of these people is only over water. When Pharaoh came He drowned him in water, when Sisera came He drowned him in water. He is also trying to drown me in water. If he is really mighty, let him come up on the dry land and fight with me.' A voice went forth from heaven saying: 'Sinner, son of sinner, descendant of Esau the sinner, I have a tiny creature in my world called a gnat. Go up on the dry land and make war with it.' When he landed the gnat came and entered his nose, and it knocked against his brain for seven years. One day, as he was passing a blacksmith's, it heard the noise of the hammer and stopped. He said: 'I see there is a remedy.' So every day they brought a blacksmith who hammered before him. If he was a non-Jew they gave him four *zuz*, if he was a Jew they said, 'It is enough that you see the suffering of your enemy . . . When he died he said: 'Burn me and scatter my ashes over the seven seas so that the God of the Jews should not find me and bring me to trial.'

It is interesting to see the Roman practice of cremation, still standard in the first century CE, interpreted in a Jewish text as a means to avoid

Hostility to the Roman state did not preclude the rabbis in Palestine between the second and fifth centuries CE adopting many of the cultural traits of the Roman world, but acculturation did not necessarily imply accommodation, either for them or for the non-rabbinic Jews who were their contemporaries, about most of whom knowledge can only be derived from inscriptions and archaeology. No one was likely to express hostility to the state on a recognizable permanent monument, and if some Jews vented their rage in graffiti none has been recognized. But it may be worth noting that, in the privacy of the interior of the Dura-Europus synagogue, built by the Euphrates in the mid-third century CE, the artist felt free to display on the wall frescoes the violent destruction of a pagan shrine, albeit as illustration of the dramatic biblical scene in the book of Samuel, when the Philistines took the ark of the Lord into the house of Dagon 'and set it by Dagon':

And when the people of Ashdod arose early the next day, behold, Dagon was fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon and put him back in his place. But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off upon the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter into Dagon's house do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day. But the hand of the Lord was heavy upon the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumours, both Ashdod and its territory. And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, 'The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us; for his hand is heavy upon us and upon Dagon our god.'

The same artist at Dura framed the main panel of his painting of the west wall of the prayer room around a depiction of the Temple in Jerusalem, which dominated the Torah niche in the centre of the fresco and was surrounded by other reminders of the Jerusalem cult, including a huge depiction of the Temple menorah. The Temple was as important to the Jews of Dura and the rest of the diaspora as it was to the Jews of Palestine. They had not forgotten what the wicked kingdom of Edom had done.⁶⁵

Romans of the Jewish Faith?

In 197 CE a dedicatory inscription in Greek was set up in Kaysoun in Upper Galilee 'for the safety of our lords, emperors, Caesars, Lucius Septimius Severus Eusebes Pertinax Augustus and Marcus Aurelius [Antoninus] . . . [and G]eta, his sons . . . [by] vow [prayer?] of Jews'.

Whether the inscription was set up in a synagogue or on a pagan site is uncertain, as is any connection with any specific event in imperial history, but the stone testifies to enthusiasm in public for the Severan dynasty by at least some Jews in the Galilee region in the late second century. The terminology may reflect no more than cautious obedience, but it may reflect Jewish hopes, as a century earlier in 96, that the new regime, which had come to power after four years of intermittent civil war, would return the Jews to the status they had enjoyed before 70, at least with regard to the practice of their religion. Certainly fourth-century sources record the Severan dynasty, which ruled in the early third century, as more favourably disposed towards the Jews than their Antonine predecessors. Thus Jerome (c. 347-420) reports that some of the 'Hebrews' in his day understood the passage in the biblical book of Daniel, 'When they fall, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery', to refer to the emperors Severus and Antoninus (Caracalla), 'who loved the Jews very much' (although others took the text as a reference to the emperor Julian). The biographer in the *Augustan History* of the emperor Severus Alexander, who ruled from 222 to 235, portrayed this emperor as particularly friendly: he 'kept the privileges for the Jews' and 'used often to exclaim what he had heard from someone, either a Jew or a Christian, and always hung on to, and he also had it announced by a herald whenever he was disciplining anyone: "What you do not wish to be done to you, do not do to another."' How seriously to take such a story in the *Augustan History* is hard to judge. To some extent these frivolous and unreliable biographies seem to have been composed to amuse, and the author evidently found Jews and Jewish customs funny, but, some confirmation of a more friendly attitude to Jews in Severan times may also be read in a law cited in the *Digest*, the great compilation of jurists' opinions compiled in AD

mid-sixth century CE at the behest of the Byzantine emperor Justinian, in which the opinion of the prolific lawyer Ulpian was recorded, that 'the Divine Severus and Antoninus permitted those that follow the Jewish *superstitio* to acquire honours, but also imposed upon them duties such as should not harm their *superstitio*.'⁶⁶

A change in Roman attitudes may also explain rabbinic traditions about the high status in Palestine in the early third century CE of Judah haNasi, 'Judah the Patriarch', the compiler of the Mishnah. According to later rabbinic tradition, Judah haNasi was an immensely wealthy aristocrat who was also a rabbinic sage: 'from the time of Moses until Rabbi [Judah] we have not found Torah and greatness in one place.'⁶⁷ Hence the historical significance of the rash of stories in rabbinic texts about a close relationship between Judah haNasi and a Roman emperor called 'Antoninus', culminating in the implausible tradition that Antoninus converted to Judaism. The stories themselves belong to the same genre of moralizing folk tales as other rabbinic narratives about gentiles (governors, philosophers, 'matrons') being instructed in the truth by rabbinic sages.

Antoninus made a candelabrum for the synagogue. Rabbi [Judah haNasi] heard about it and said, 'Blessed be God, who moved him to make a candelabrum for the synagogue.' Rabbi Samuel son of Rabbi Isaac, 'Why did Rabbi say, "Blessed be God"? Should he not say, "Blessed be our God"? If he said, "Blessed be God", it indicates that Antoninus never in fact converted to Judaism. If he said, "Blessed be our God", it indicates that Antoninus in fact converted to Judaism.' There are some things that indicate that Antoninus was converted, and there are some things that indicate that Antoninus was not converted.

In all these tales the culmination is the demonstration of his superior wisdom by the rabbi, who often brings the discussion to an end by citation of an appropriate biblical proof text. In most cases there is no reason to imagine any real historical dialogue as having given rise to the rabbinic story. But since the traditions about 'Antoninus' and Judah haNasi are not generally paralleled for other sages and emperors, it is likely, at the least, that Judah haNasi did indeed have a closer relationship to the Roman government than his predecessors and successors in the rabbinic community, a relationship characteristi-

cally expressed in terms of patronage and gifts: 'Antoninus gave Rabbi two thousand fine fields [in the area of Yabluna in the northern Golan] as a tenancy.' To which emperor the name 'Antoninus' in the rabbinic texts refers is unknown, but if Judah haNasi flourished in the early third century it is reasonable to link these traditions to an improvement in the attitude of some rabbis towards the Roman state in the Severan period and perhaps to accommodation by at least some Jews to Roman rule.⁶⁸

On the other hand there is no evidence that rabbis ever thought of themselves, at this or any date, as 'Romans of the Jewish faith' even when, in legal terms, they were fully entitled to do so. Rabbinic sources never refer to the single greatest innovation of the Severan dynasty which, in theory, might in one stroke have ended the Jews' perception of themselves as a persecuted minority in a hostile empire, when, in 212, the emperor Caracalla by edict bestowed Roman citizenship on all the inhabitants of the Roman world, including Jews. In a formal sense, the Mishnah, and later rabbinic texts such as the Palestinian Talmud, can be described as products of Roman literature, and Judah haNasi could have used a Roman name, but in fact there is no hint in the Mishnah, or indeed in any of the Palestinian rabbinic texts, that any of these Jews identified themselves as Roman. Rome, for third-century Palestinian Jews, was a foreign power which had subdued Israel. It would not, it seems, have occurred to Judah haNasi to think of himself as Roman in the same way as 'Antoninus' was, even though the Roman identity of Caracalla, whose father was of Punic origin from North Africa and whose mother came from Emesa in Syria, was no less genealogically fictive than was that of Judah haNasi (and, indeed, the Roman identity of almost all Romans in his day).⁶⁹

Far from integrating Palestinian Jews into the Roman world, the effect of a more benign imperial regime in the third century CE seems to have been a licence to some Jews to manage their own affairs in self-imposed isolation from the heavy hand of the state, as the Christian Origen (c. 185-c. 254) describes: 'Now that the Romans rule and the Jews pay the two drachmas to them, we, who have had experience of it, know how much power the *ethnarch* ['ruler of the people'] has among them and that he differs in little from a king of the nation. Trials are held according to the law, and some are condemned and

death. And though there is not full permission for this, still it is not done without the knowledge of the ruler.' Origen, who was living in Caesarea Maritima on the coast, appealed to local knowledge about the condition of Jews in contemporary Palestine: 'We found out about this to our certainty when we spent much time in the country of that people [the Jews].'⁷⁰

The power of the ethnarch to put people to death as described by Origen was informal, derived from his local prestige among Jews rather than from authority delegated to him by Rome. 'Ethnarch' does not seem to have been an official Roman title, but was used by Origen as a Greek equivalent of the Hebrew title *nasi*, 'patriarch', accorded to Judah haNasi and his descendants during the rest of the third century and on to the early fifth. The third-century *nasi* as described in rabbinic texts was a local leader who declared fast days, instituted and annulled bans, sent judges to serve communities, controlled the calendar, and, with his court, issued decrees about religious obligations such as the laws of sabbath, purity, tithing and the sabbatical year, but he was not described as involved in the standard tasks of a local authority that was delegated power by the Roman government, such as the collection of taxes on behalf of Rome. Rabbinic stories about the use of Gothic bodyguards by the patriarch Judah Nesiah, grandson of Judah haNasi, show him as more like a mafia boss or powerful patron than an appointee of the Roman state.⁷¹

In contrast to the self-isolation of the Jews of Palestine, one might imagine that to identify themselves with the Roman state would have come more naturally to Jews in the city of Rome itself. Those Jews in Rome in the third century CE, whose ancestors had first settled in the city and had become Roman citizens as long ago as the first century BCE, might reasonably have felt themselves to be Roman as well as Jewish, regardless of the current attitude of the state to the observance of their religion. It is not easy now to discover how they balanced these two aspects of their identity; arguments about how they described themselves can become dangerously circular. Thus the use of a full Roman name is rare in the (mostly funerary) extant inscriptions from Rome identified by scholars as Jewish, being found in fewer than ten out of six hundred or so, so that it might appear that, when it came to commemoration after death, Roman Jews preferred to stress their

Jewish rather than their Roman status; but since the inscriptions of or about Jews are often identified in the first place by their Jewish name, the epitaph of a Jew who used a purely Roman name (like that of Tiberius Julius Alexander) and did not use Jewish iconography would not be identified now as Jewish even if the individual in question had in fact been a pious Jew.⁷²

In late first-century Rome, at least one Jew who was a Roman citizen, Flavius Josephus, seems never to have portrayed himself in his writings as Roman, despite his ability as a historian to describe the Judaean campaign and Titus' triumph from the Roman side.⁷³ But the same was not obviously true two centuries or so later of a certain Cresces Sinicerius, whose epitaph, inscribed in Latin on a plaque of coarse-grained grey-blue marble in the catacombs below the Villa Torlonia, records that 'Cresces Sinicerius, Jewish proselyte, lived 35 years, took his sleep. His mother [had] made for her dearest son what he should have [had] made for me.' A convert to Judaism, Cresces had begun life as a Roman citizen and had only later become a Jew. He was entitled to think of himself, if anyone was, as a Roman of the Jewish faith rather than a Jewish outsider in Roman society. It is probably significant that this inscription is in Latin, unlike the great majority of Jewish epitaphs from Rome, which, as in the rest of the Mediterranean diaspora, were in Greek. The mother of Cresces Sinicerius expressed her mourning in terminology common on pagan tombstones (including the addition of the date: 'VIII K[a]l[endas] Ian[uaris]', 25 December), but of course she, unlike her son, may not have converted to Judaism.⁷⁴

The number of such proselytes in the city of Rome in the second and third centuries CE is impossible to gauge since the surviving Jewish inscriptions from Rome record only a tiny fraction of the community, and there is no reason to assume that the relatives of all converts chose to include on their epitaphs the information that they had not always been Jewish. The practice is indeed rather odd, and could also be dangerous in the light of the periodic effort by the state to ban such conversions: the jurist Modestinus, discussing the rights of masters over their slaves, notes that 'by a rescript of the divine Pius [Antoninus Pius] Jews are permitted to circumcise only their own sons, and that 'if anyone shall perform this act on one who is not of

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the same religion, he shall suffer the punishment of a castrator'. The unreliable *Augustan History* states baldly that Septimius Severus 'forbade under heavy penalty [anyone] to become Jewish'. A text contained in the codification of Roman attitudes to circumcision included in the *Sententiae*, attributed to the early third-century jurist Paul but composed in the late third century, also lays the blame on the proselyte as well as on the Jews responsible for the conversion: 'Roman citizens, who suffer that they themselves or their slaves be circumcised in accordance with the Jewish rite, are exiled perpetually to an island and their property confiscated; the doctors suffer capital punishment. If Jews shall circumcise purchased slaves of another nation, they shall either be banished or suffer capital punishment.' It is all the more striking that the relatives of Cresces Simicerius and others were prepared to state so openly that they were indeed converts to Judaism.⁷⁵ Whatever the attitude of the state, ordinary Roman attitudes to proselytes fluctuated. In the early second century CE Tacitus asserted that new converts to Judaism were immediately taught 'to disown their fatherland'. By contrast Cassius Dio, writing a century later under the milder regime of the Severans, exhibited no such overt hostility to proselytes: 'I do not know how this title ["Jews"] came to be given to them, but it applies also to all the rest of mankind, although of alien race, who affect their customs. This class exists even among the Romans, and though often repressed has increased to a very great extent and has won its way to the right of freedom in its beliefs.'⁷⁶

By the late third century CE there were still many Jews, both native and proselyte, in the Roman world. Many lived in the diaspora, but a good proportion still inhabited the land of Israel where, excluded from Jerusalem, they congregated primarily in Galilee and in the cities of the Mediterranean coast. To what extent those Jews not part of the rabbinic movement still thought of themselves as Jews since the disaster of 135 cannot be known, but it would be surprising if most of them lost all sense of their Jewish culture since, as Dio noted, the Romans allowed them to believe what they liked about the nature of the world.⁷⁷

Jews could observe their dietary laws as their customs allowed. They could circumcise their sons and congregate to hear the Torah

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read. No one compelled them to break the rules of resting on the Sabbath or to participate against their conscience in the worship of other gods. But they were still deprived of the main focus of their religious piety. As Dio and all Romans knew, the Jews had once worshipped their God with sacrifices in an 'extremely large and beautiful temple', which continued to lie in ruins.⁷⁸