

Chapter XXXI

# Coins and Documents

*Part III of the Sabbath Years  
of 133/134 and 140/141 C.E*

**C**oins and documents from the period of the Second Revolt actually confirm that the revolt only lasted 2½ years from the time that Bar Kochba became leader of all Judaea until the fall of Jerusalem and Beth Thera. The notion that these items of evidence conform to a chronology of 3½ years for this same period has no substantive merit.

### **Coins and the Fall of Jerusalem**

Coins from the Second Revolt, minted from the time that all Judaea nominated Bar Kochba as their leader, prove that the war only lasted 2½ years. Among the first Jewish coins produced in the revolt are those bearing the inscription “**ירושלים**” (Jerusalem),” symbols partly related to the Festival of Tabernacles, and the legend, “Year 1 of the Redemption of Israel.”<sup>1</sup>

This detail shows that the city of Jerusalem, which at the time was no more than a Roman camp and not heavily fortified,<sup>2</sup> had been seized by the rebels in the 1st year of the revolt, sometime prior to the 7th month (Tishri; Sept./Oct.) when the Festival of Tabernacles was held. Under Roman hands, “The city was degraded to a small market-town, that mainly served the soldiers living there.”<sup>3</sup> The Jews, of course, immediately fortified the city. Based upon Eusebius and the best manuscripts of the *Seder Olam*, these coins would belong to 133/134 C.E., Nisan reckoning.

Coins of the 2nd year were dated “Year 2 of the Freedom of Israel” and were struck in honor of the New Year, which began with Nisan (March/April).<sup>4</sup> This 1st of Nisan belongs to the year 134/135, not 133/134 C.E. as the advocates of Systems “B,” “C,” and “D” would have it.

Coins and documents from the 3rd year of the revolt bear the legend “Of the Freedom of Jerusalem” and “Year 3 of the Freedom of Jerusalem.”<sup>5</sup> These coins and documents are important for they represent the last time that the phrase “the Freedom of Jerusalem” is mentioned. It is clear from this evidence that the rebels held Jerusalem only until the 3rd year of the war. Even Kanael admits, “Bar Kokhba seems to have occupied Jerusalem for only about two years”;<sup>6</sup> that is, from about mid-summer of the 1st year of the revolt until mid-summer of the 3rd year of the revolt.

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<sup>1</sup> IEJ, 21.1, p. 41, with its ns. 17 & 18, “It is rather unlikely that Jerusalem was captured by Bar Kokhba prior to the Passover of 132”; JCST, pp. 159–161. Cf. Fig. 4.

<sup>2</sup> HJP, 1, p. 545.

<sup>3</sup> NSR, 2, p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> IEJ, 21.1, pp. 44f. Cf. Fig. 4.

<sup>5</sup> IEJ, 21.1, p. 45. Cf. Fig. 4.

<sup>6</sup> IEJ, 21.1, p. 45.

Fig. 4.

## EXAMPLES OF COINS FROM THE SECOND REVOLT



## YEAR 1

**OBVERSE:** Facade of the Temple at Jerusalem;  
inscr. יְרוּשָׁלָם (Jerusalem).

**REVERSE:** Lulav; inscr. **שָׁנָת אַחַת לְנַאֲלָה יִשְׂרָאֵל** (Year 1 of the redemption of Israel).



YEAR 1

**OBVERSE:** Amphora with two handles; inscr. שָׁנָת אַחֲת לְנַאֲלָת יִשְׂרָאֵל (Year 1 of the redemption of Israel).

**REVERSE:** Wreath; inscr. **לְפָנֶיךָ תְּהִלָּתָךְ יְהוָה** שְׁמֹעֵן נְשִׁיאָה יִשְׂרָאֵל (Before you is the glory of the Lord, Simeon, Prince of Israel).



YEAR 2

**OBVERSE:** Grapes; inscr. שְׁמַעְוֹן (Shemayon); Simeon).

**REVERSE:** Lyre; inscr. שְׁבָלָחֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל (Year 2 of the Freedom of Israel).



YEAR 2

**OBVERSE:** Palm branch and wreath; inscr.

**REVERSE:** Lyre; inscr. **לְתַנְשֵׁלָה** (לְתַנְשֵׁלָה) Year 2 of the Freedom of Israel). Note: On some coins Israel (לְתַנְשֵׁלָה) is abbreviated to Is-el (לְתַנְשֵׁלָה).



YEAR 3

**OBVERSE:** Facade of the Temple at Jerusalem;  
inscr. שִׁמְעוֹן (Shim'on; Simeon).

**REVERSE:** Lyre; inscr. שְׁלֹמֹחַ חַזְקָה (לְהַרְוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָם); For the Freedom of Jerusalem)

That Jerusalem and Beth Thera both fell to the Romans at about the same time (on the 9th of Ab [July / Aug.]), and therefore in the 3rd year of the revolt, we have the record from the Mishnah:

On the 9th of Ab it was decreed against our fathers that they should not enter into the Land, and the Temple was destroyed the first and second time, and Beth Thor (Beth Thera) was captured and the City (Jerusalem) was plowed up.<sup>7</sup>

Notice especially that the plowing up of Jerusalem is listed chronologically after the capture of Beth Thera. Eusebius provides us the added information that the decree forbidding the Jews from entering the country around Jerusalem was also issued by Hadrian AFTER the fall of Beth Thera.<sup>8</sup> If Hadrian had taken Jerusalem a year or so before Beth Thera fell, since all of the rebels would have supposedly been locked up in Beth Thera and unable to enter Jerusalem, why did Hadrian wait to issue this decree until the time that Beth Thera fell? This detail makes no sense unless Jerusalem came into possession of the Romans only a short time before Beth Thera was conquered.

The plowing up of Jerusalem, meanwhile, refers to Hadrian's orders to tear down what had remained of the city after its destruction under Titus in 70 C.E. so that he could make his own preparations for rebuilding a pagan city and Temple to Zeus (the issue over which the war had originally broken out).<sup>9</sup> If Jerusalem had been taken a year before Beth Thera, as the advocates of Systems "B," "C," and "D" would have it, why did the Romans wait until the day Beth Thera fell before they plowed up the city? Again, the details make no sense unless Jerusalem fell only a little before Beth Thera.

The evidence shows that Hadrian's orders to tear down what had remained of Jerusalem and to ban the Jews from their sacred city happened upon the fall of nearby Beth Thera on the 9th of Ab. It is further substantiated by the fact that the Mishnah couples together the destruction of Beth Thera and the plowing up of Jerusalem in the same sentence, as part of the same thought: "and Beth Thor was captured and the City was plowed up" on the 9th of Ab.

Therefore, that the command to plow up Jerusalem would occur upon the same date as the demise of Beth Thera (the 9th of Ab) points to the fact that Jerusalem fell to the Romans a little prior to the time that Beth Thera collapsed. The nearby fortress at Beth Thera may have offered some limited protection to the area around Jerusalem. The flow of events would even suggest that the Romans were forced to take Beth Thera before they could gain

<sup>7</sup> *Taan.*, 4:6. Ab 9 was actually the date that the First Temple was set on fire. *Jos.*, *Wars*, 6:4:5, and *Jer.*, 52:12f, date the burning of the First Temple to Ab (Macedonian "Lous," i.e., July / Aug.), 10. This was the date that the Second Temple completely burnt down. The text of 2 Kings, 25:8, gives Ab 7 as the date that Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard of Nebuchadnezzar II, entered the city prior to his burning down the First Temple.

<sup>8</sup> Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:6.

<sup>9</sup> HJP, 1, p. 550 and n. 162.

absolute control of this area. Nevertheless, it is hard to reconcile any real or long term dominance over Jerusalem by the Jewish rebels even if nearby Beth Thera was in their hands.

The coins dated to the 3rd year of the revolt, therefore, were minted in the spring and summer of 135 C.E., prior to the fall of Jerusalem and Beth Thera in Ab (July/Aug.) of that year.

The advocates of Systems "B," "C," and "D" totally overlook this evidence and instead theorize a year or more spread between the fall of Jerusalem and the fall of Beth Thera. To demonstrate, Kanael writes:

Thus, the insurgents would have held Jerusalem from the spring (or summer) of 132 till the spring (or summer) of 134. In the spring (or summer) of 134 the Romans retook Jerusalem and Bar Kokhba retreated to Bethther.<sup>10</sup>

Yet there is no evidence whatsoever that the fall of Beth Thera occurred a year or more after the fall of Jerusalem. Rather, as demonstrated, the evidence indicates that one event shortly followed the other, by just weeks if not days.

The effort to place a year between the fall of Jerusalem and the fall of Beth Thera is an attempt to force the evidence to fit a 3½ year war from the beginning of the 1st year of redemption until the destruction of Beth Thera.

It is very important to notice that there are no coins dated to "Year 4" of the revolt, this despite the fact that, "The outstanding feature of the Bar-Kokhba coinage is the LARGE QUANTITY of coin-types issued in the relatively short period."<sup>11</sup> If the war effort under Bar Kochba had continued for a year beyond the fall of Jerusalem, as the speculation of those advocating Systems "B," "C," and "D" demand, then there would have been more than ample time for them to strike coins for the 4th year "Of the Redemption of Israel" or "For the Freedom of Israel."

To merely excuse this absence of "Year 4" coins by claiming that the rebels were simply too busy with the war begs the question.<sup>12</sup> For if the rebels found time to strike numerous types of coins during the siege of Jerusalem would they not have certainly found time during a year-long siege of Beth Thera? Indeed, these coins were mainly overstruck older coins.<sup>13</sup> It was not as if they needed to mint new coins. Moreover, there was no reason to stop the production of coinage merely because Jerusalem fell. Since overstriking already-existing coins was a rather easy process, the absence of coins dated to "Year 4" of the revolt is not only glaring but gives us insight into the events of this period.

Under identical circumstances during the First Revolt, as a comparison, the Jews, under heavy siege by the Roman army of Titus and in distress by

<sup>10</sup> IEJ, 21.1, p. 45.

<sup>11</sup> NSR, 2, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> E.g., Kanael in IEJ, 21.1, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> NSR, 2, pp. 64–80.

plague and famine, found time to strike coins in the last desperate months of the 5th year of that war.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, Bar Kochba believed himself to be the messiah. It is only natural that he would have continued to encourage his followers with such demonstrations of independence as the issuance of coins—as he had done for the claimed first 3 years of the war. Therefore, that a movement that had created such a great quantity of coins for 3 years of a revolt would suddenly produce nothing for a 4th year strongly indicates that the war did not continue beyond the 3rd year.

### The Contract Dated “Iyyar 1”

Our next evidence comes from a document which is dated, “On Iyyar 1, in Year 1 of the Redemption of Israel by Simeon bar Kosiba, נֶשְׁיָה (Nashia; Prince) of Israel.”<sup>15</sup> According to Systems “B,” “C,” and “D,” this document should be dated to the year 132 C.E. What all have failed to notice is the fact that the 1st of Iyyar in the year 132 C.E. fell on a Sabbath day. Based upon the business nature of its contents, this circumstance is impossible and proves that the 1st year of the Redemption of Israel WAS NOT THE YEAR 132 C.E.! They may have been permitted to fight during a Sabbath year under their messiah but would never have broken the weekly Sabbath, especially for business concerns.

The Jews of the first few centuries of the common era continued the ancient practice of determining their months by the appearance of the new moon, which for them presented itself with the first glimpse of crescent moonlight in the first phase of the moon.<sup>16</sup> (It did not start with a completely dark moon which is often misconstrued today as a new moon.) The 1st moon of the year was the moon of Abib,<sup>17</sup> meaning “to be tender,” “green, i.e. a young ear of grain,” “green ears of corn.”<sup>18</sup> The moon was called Abib (greening) because it was the 1st moon (month) of spring. Its Babylonian name, which was adopted by the Jews who returned from the Babylonian exile, was Nisānu.<sup>19</sup>

The 1st month of the Jewish year during this period was reckoned as the month that encompassed the 1st full moon AFTER the vernal (spring) equinox (i.e., when the sun passed into Aries), the equinox taking place on or about March 21st. Josephus, for example, states:

In the month of Xanthicus, which is with us (Jews) called Nisan and begins the year, on the 14th day by lunar reckoning, THE SUN BEING IN ARIES, our lawgiver (Moses), seeing that in this month we were delivered from bondage to the Egyptians, ordained that we should year by year offer the same sacrifice

<sup>14</sup> BA, 26.2, p. 59.

<sup>15</sup> IEJ, 12.3/4, p. 249.

<sup>16</sup> HBC, pp. 40–42.

<sup>17</sup> Exod., 13:3–4, 23:14–17, 34:18; Deut., 16:1.

<sup>18</sup> SEC, Heb. #24.

<sup>19</sup> HBC, pp. 33–40.

which, as I have already said, we offered then on departure from Egypt—the sacrifice called Pascha (Passover).<sup>20</sup>

In another place, Josephus refers to the 1st day of the 1st month of the year as the moon of “Nisan” and “on the new moon.”<sup>21</sup> Philo supports Josephus, noting, “At the 1st season, which name (i.e., Abib) he (Moses) gives TO THE SPRINGTIME AND ITS EQUINOX, he ordained that what is called the Festival of Unleavened Bread should be kept for 7 days.”<sup>22</sup> He also defines “the New Moon, or beginning of the lunar month, namely the period between one conjunction and the next, the length of which has been accurately calculated in the astronomical schools,” as beginning when the moon “resumes its natural brightness.” For “it is just then,” he continues, “that the sun begins to illumine the moon, with the light which we perceive, and the moon reveals its own beauty to the eye.”<sup>23</sup> In short, as reckoned during the 1st century C.E., the first thin crescent of light shown in the first stage of the moon’s phases is classified as the New Moon.

In another place, Philo (writing about 45 C.E.) describes the 1st month of the year as the time of the Passover festival, which began on the 14th day of Abib. He calls Passover “the spring-time festival”<sup>24</sup> and reasons that it was placed at this time of year because with “the spring equinox we have a kind of likeness and portraiture of that first epoch in which this world was created.” He adds, “So every year the deity (Yahweh) reminds us of the creation of the world by setting before our eyes the spring when everything blooms and flowers. And therefore, there is good reason for describing it (Abib; later called Nisan) as the 1st month because in a sense it is an image of primal origin reproduced from it like the imprint from an archetypal seal.”<sup>25</sup>

By the 3rd century C.E. another school arose that determined the 1st month of the year as being the moon in which the vernal equinox arrived. Under this new system, Passover, which was celebrated on the full moon of the 14th day, could be observed before the equinox. In response, Anatolius of Laodicea (3rd century C.E.) points out that those who followed this method erred because they were placing the Passover in the last of the 12 zodiac signs and not the 1st:

Therefore we say that they who place the 1st month in it (the 12th sign), and determine the 14th day of the Pascha (Passover) accordingly, are guilty of no small or ordinary mistake. And this is not our own statement, but the fact was known to the Jews, those of

<sup>20</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 3:10:5. Also see Jos., *Antiq.*, 1:3:3.

<sup>21</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 3:8:4; cf. Exod., 40:17.

<sup>22</sup> Philo, *Spec.*, 1:35, §181.

<sup>23</sup> Philo, *Spec.*, 2:26.

<sup>24</sup> Philo, *Spec.*, 2:28, §§159f.

<sup>25</sup> Philo, *Spec.*, 2:28, §152.

old time even before the messiah, and it was carefully observed by them.<sup>26</sup>

Proof that the Jews considered the 14th of the moon to be the beginning of the full moon comes from the ancient 1st century B.C.E. Jewish work entitled *1 Enoch*. This text notes:

When the moon (begins its cycle), it appears in the sky one half of a seventh part; it will become fully illumined from the 14th (day); it completes its illumination the 15th, becoming fulfilled according to the sign of the year and becoming 15 parts.<sup>27</sup>

Anatolius of Laodicea lists several important ancient authorities for this position and then adds:

These writers, when they resolve the questions relative to the Exodus, say that all equally ought to sacrifice the Passover AFTER the vernal equinox, at the middle of the 1st month; and that this is found to occur when the sun is passing through the first sign of the solar, or, as some have named it, the zodiacal cycle. And Aristobulus adds that at the Festival of the Passover it is necessary that not only the sun should be passing through an equinoctial sign, but the moon also. For as the equinoctial signs are two, the one vernal, the other autumnal, diametrically opposite each to the other, and as the 14th of the month, at evening, is assigned as the day of the Passover, the moon will have its place in the station that is diametrically opposed to the sun, will be in the sign of the vernal equinox, while the other, the moon, will of necessity be in that of the autumnal. I know many other statements of theirs, some of them probable, others advanced as absolute proofs, by which they attempt to establish that the Festival of the Passover and of Unleavened Bread ought WITHOUT EXCEPTION TO BE HELD AFTER THE EQUINOX.<sup>28</sup>

Even as late as Bede, writing in the early part of the 8th century C.E., this method was acknowledged:

Now the time when the days and nights are equal (i.e., the equinox) after the opinion of those in the orient (Middle East), and especially the Egyptians which

<sup>26</sup> Cited by Eusebius, *H.E.*, 7:32:14–16.

<sup>27</sup> *1 Enoch*, 78:6f.

<sup>28</sup> Eusebius, *H.E.*, 7:32:16–19.

bear the prize for computation before all other teachers, customably comes on the 12th day before the 1st of April, as also we ourselves prove by inspection of the means of measuring time. Whatsoever moon, therefore, is at full before the day and night be of one length, being to wit 14 or 15 days old, that moon pertains to the last month the year before, and therefore is not meet for keeping Passover. But the moon which is at full after the day and night be of equal length or in the very point of that equality, in that doubtless (because it is the full moon of the 1st month) we must understand both that the ancients were wont to keep the Passover. . . . Therefore as first the sun coming forth from the midst of the east made by that his rising the equality of day and night in the spring; and after, the moon (the sun going down at evening) followed itself also at the full from the midst of the east; so every year the same 1st month of the moon must be observed after the same order, so that she should be at the full not before the day and night be of one length, but either on the very day of that equality, as was done in the beginning, or when it is past. But if the full moon go but one day before the day and night be of one length, the aforesaid reason proves that this moon must be assigned not to the 1st month of the year beginning, but rather to the last month of the year that is past; and for that consideration is not meet for the celebration of the Paschal Festival.<sup>29</sup>

Calculating the lunar months from the spring or vernal equinox of the year 132 C.E., the 1st of Abib (Nisan) fell on the evening of April 4 and the daylight hours of April 5 (Thursday night and Friday day). The 14th day of the previous moon would have fallen prior to the vernal equinox and, therefore, is clearly eliminated as the Passover of the 1st month. The 1st day of the 2nd month, Iyyar, was the evening of May 3 and the day of May 4 (the Israelites counting the beginning of their day from sunset).<sup>30</sup> May 3/4 (the 1st of Iyyar) of the year 132 C.E. was on Friday night and Saturday daylight, i.e., the sacred Sabbath day.

The document dated, "On Iyyar 1, in Year 1 of the Redemption of Israel by Simeon bar Kosiba, Nashia of Israel," is a "simple deed written in Aramaic."<sup>31</sup> In it, two of Bar Kochba's local administrators have leased out a section

<sup>29</sup> Bede, 5:21, *Letter to Naitan*.

<sup>30</sup> DB, p. 140; cf. Lev., 15:5, 22:4–9, 23:32; Mark, 1:40.

<sup>31</sup> IEJ, 12.3/4, p. 249.

of land for 650 zuzim, an amount which not only covers everything on the plot of land but includes irrigation rights.<sup>32</sup>

The contents of this agreement reveal that the participants were Jews conducting personal business, something which is expressly forbidden by the Scriptures on a Sabbath day.<sup>33</sup> The nature of the contract and its participants, being associates of a man whom they believed to be the Jewish messiah, clearly prove that this deed could not have been produced on a Sabbath day. Therefore, we are forced to conclude that the 1st of Iyyar in the year 132 C.E. could not be equivalent to the 1st of Iyyar in the 1st year of the Redemption of Israel by Bar Kochba as mentioned on the deed in question.

In the year 133 C.E., on the other hand, which would be the 1st year of the revolt for all of Judaea based upon the 2½ years of war designated by the Seder Olam and confirmed by Eusebius, the 1st of Iyyar falls on April 23/24, which is Wednesday night and Thursday daylight. This date is not a Sabbath. Since the 1st of Iyyar of 132 C.E. is impossible as the date of the deed, we are left with the clear and undeniable fact that the 1st of Iyyar of 133 C.E. must be correct. The year 133/134 C.E., Nisan (Abib) reckoning, therefore, was the 1st year of the redemption of Israel in the deed and the 1st year of the revolt by Bar Kochba as ruler of all Judaea.<sup>34</sup>

## Other Documents

In order to bolster their claim for a revolt lasting 3½ years for all Judaea, a few documents are held up as proof that the war continued beyond the month of Ab (July/Aug.) of the 3rd year of the era of the war.

One document, often represented as being produced in the month of Marheshuan (Oct./Nov.) of the 3rd year of the Second Revolt,<sup>35</sup> was found in the caves at Murabba'at. Nevertheless, this manuscript is extremely fragmented. The only thing it actually proves is that it was composed in "Year 3 of the Freedom of Jerusalem."<sup>36</sup> The piece where the month is supposed to have been located is not attached.

*Fragment #3*, upon which the name of the month of "Marheshuan" is found, does not fit with the piece from the document where the year is given. Not only is the piece incompatible but the letter size is larger (see Fig. 5).<sup>37</sup> The month written on this piece has been applied at the beginning of the document only because historians are assuming that it might go there. It just as easily and, based upon the shape of the piece and the letter size, more probably belongs within the context of the document—a reference, for example, to a certain condition of the contract that was to be carried out in that month.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> E.g., Exod., 16:4–5, 20:8–11, 23:12, 31:12–17, 34:21; Isa., 58:13–14; Amos, 8:4–6.

<sup>34</sup> None of the other documents from this period, regardless of which year is used, conflicts with a Sabbath day and are, therefore, of no value in this regard.

<sup>35</sup> E.g., by HJP, 1, p. 546.

<sup>36</sup> DTJD, 2, no. 25, pp. 134–137, and 2, pt. 2, Plate XXXVIII.

<sup>37</sup> See DTJD, 2, pt. 2, Plate XXXVIII.

Fig. 5.

FRAGMENTED DOCUMENT FOR "YEAR 3"



There is no justifiable reason to represent this fragment as the month in which the document was composed (indeed, it may not even belong to this document). To claim that it overthrows the evidence of a 2½ year war is completely inappropriate.

Two other documents, land deeds, are also often held up as proving that the revolt continued past Ab of the 3rd year of the revolt of Judaea. One is dated, "On Marheshuan 28, in Year 3 of Simeon ben Kosiba, Nashia (Prince) of Israel, at En-gedi" and the other reads, "On Khisleu (Nov./Dec.) 2, in Year 3 of Simeon ben Kosiba, Nashia of Israel, at En-gedi."<sup>38</sup>

These deeds are NOT dated by the era used for the 3rd year of the Judaean revolt, i.e., "of the Freedom of Jerusalem." They are only dated by the reign of Ben Kosiba (Bar Kochba) AT EN-GEDI.<sup>39</sup> On coins and other documents Bar Kochba is called "Nashia (Nasia, Nasi) of Israel," indicating his rule over the whole of Judaea. In the deeds in question, on the other hand, only a local neighborhood is mentioned: En-gedi. The distinct mentioning of a local region proves that the date provided on the documents refers only to Bar Kochba's reign in this district and not to the entirety of Judaea.

Simeon bar Kochba certainly did not just appear one day and cause the whole of Judaea to revolt with the support of various rabbis and the masses, suddenly convincing them to break their centuries-old law against aggressive military activity during a Sabbath year. He most certainly held a position as a local ruler who through his exploits won fame and renown, and very probably autonomy from the Romans for the Jews of his own district. Rabbinic tradition has it that Rabbi Akiba saw Simeon performing great exploits against the Romans and because of these feats of bravery and strength declared Simeon bar Kochba to be the messiah.<sup>40</sup>

Dio's report on the war also supports this conclusion. He notes that while Hadrian remained in Egypt, and later Syria, the Jews remained quiet, but "when he went away they openly revolted."<sup>41</sup> Coins, papyri, and inscriptions attest that Hadrian was in Syria in 129/130 C.E., in Egypt by August of 130 C.E., and in Syria again in 131 C.E., after which he left the area.<sup>42</sup> Since the revolt broke into the open upon Hadrian leaving Syria, the evidence points to Bar Kochba's initial uprising in En-gedi and the adjoining territories during the latter part of 131 C.E.

The key to these events lies in the fact that the local revolt broke out BEFORE all Judaea joined in the war. Dio continues, "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

<sup>38</sup> IEJ, 12.3/4, pp. 250, 255. But this claim misrepresents the documents.

<sup>39</sup> Yadin's theory (IEJ, 12.3/4, p. 250) that En-gedi should be separated in thought from Simeon ben Kosiba, Prince of Israel, and punctuated accordingly, is pure conjecture.

<sup>40</sup> HUCA, 54, p. 185.

<sup>41</sup> Dio, 59:13.

<sup>42</sup> HJP, 1, pp. 541f.

secret AND PARTLY BY OVERT ACTS.”<sup>43</sup> This detail shows that it was as the result of Bar Kochba’s local victories that the whole of Judaea became encouraged and that many Jews from other districts of Judaea began to recognize Bar Kochba as Nasia (Nashia, Nasi) and as the messiah. As a result, in the spring of 133 C.E., they made him leader of the revolt for all of Judaea.

It is no surprise that all of the identifiable places held as major camps by Bar Kochba laid in Bar Kochba’s home territory in the Judaean desert, southeast of Jerusalem: Herodium, Tekoa, En-gedi, etc.<sup>44</sup> According to Josephus, both En-gedi and Herodium were toparchies of Judaea, and therefore held their own regional authority.<sup>45</sup> It is clear from this data that this region served as the place for Bar Kochba’s rise to power before he became ruler of all Judaea.

The only thing that these two documents in question inform us, since there is no mention of the era of the revolt, is the fact that they were composed in the 3rd year of Bar Kochba’s rule over En-gedi. It is interesting that the title “Nasia” was relinquished by Bar Kochba at the end of the 2nd year of the revolt and is not found on the coins of the 3rd year.<sup>46</sup> Yet contrary to this fact the En-gedi documents in question associate the term “Nasia” with the third year of Bar Kochba’s rule, which indicates that they were written prior to the 3rd year of the era of the revolt for all Judaea. The year 131/132 C.E., as a result, fits extremely well as “Year 1” in context with the documents dated to “Year 3” of his reign at En-gedi. The 3rd year of Bar Kochba’s local reign would be equivalent to the 1st year of his reign over all Judaea, i.e., 133/134 C.E. (see Chart I).

That more than one method was used on documents to date the reign of a Near East monarch is no surprise. As we have already demonstrated by the records of other kings, such as Herod, Arta-xerxes I, etc., a king’s reign can be determined by any number of means, depending upon who is reporting the date and where. Bar Kochba’s reign is no exception.

It is also true that Bar Kochba probably did not receive the title of “Nasia” until he was declared the messiah in the 1st year of the Revolt. Therefore, this evidence indicates that “Year 3” of Bar Kochba’s rule over En-gedi, as reported in the two above documents, must represent either the 1st or 2nd year of the era of the Revolt of all Judaea, when Simeon bar Kochba was still using the title “Nasia.”

## Conclusion

Our close examination of the coins and documents from the period of the Second Revolt—far from demonstrating support for a conflict lasting 3½ years, as the supporters of Systems “B,” “C,” and “D” would lead us to believe—only serves to reinforce the period of the 2½ years of war for all Judaea as reported by Eusebius and the *Seder Olam*.

<sup>43</sup> Dio, 69:13.

<sup>44</sup> HJP, 1, p. 547, and its n. 146.

<sup>45</sup> Jos., *Wars*, 3:3:5.

<sup>46</sup> IEJ, 21.1, pp. 42–44.

The business contract dated to Iyyar 1 of the Redemption of Israel, i.e., the 1st year of the revolt for all Judaea, cannot belong to the year 132 C.E., for in that case it would fall on a Sabbath day. Such is not the case for the year 133 C.E.

The fragment carrying the month name "Marheshuan" and associated with the 3rd year of the revolt for all Judaea, meanwhile, because of the size of its lettering, cannot be the date of the contract, as often construed. At most it is only a reference to some condition of the contract that was to be fulfilled at a later time.

Finally, the documents dated to the 3rd year of Ben Kosiba "at En-gedi" do not follow the formula used for dating the years of the Second Revolt by all Judaea. They are merely dated by the rule of Ben Kosiba at En-gedi. Since it is clear that Ben Kosiba held some kind of local authority before he became the leading figure of the Second Revolt for all Judaea, the "Year 3" documents "at En-gedi" should more properly be associated with the 1st year of the revolt by all of Judaea.

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