

My talk today is about the destruction of the 2nd Temple, in the year 70.

mainly based on the memoirs of the Jewish historian Josephus, who witness the whole thing.

The destruction of the 2nd Temple was the culmination of a Jewish rebellion against Roman oppression, that started 4 years earlier (year 66).

At the time, the king of Israel was Agripas, the great-grandson of the evil King Herod

Agripas was initially, like his grandfather Herod, not Jewish,
but he converted to Judaism and was a good king

By the year 66, Rome had controlled Israel for 100 years.

Rome dictated who king of the Jews would be.

Rome dictated who the high priest would be, based on which kohen offered the largest bribe.

Rome oppressed the Jews with high taxes, embezzling from the Temple, and murdering of civilians.

A flash point occurred in the year 66,

Roman soldiers rampaged through Jerusalem (Jm), slaughtering 3600 Jewish men, women and children

Despite the atrocities, Agripas and the rabbis spoke out against retaliation.

But a minority of the Jews did not listen.

Jewish zealots, also called rebels, retaliated against the Romans

by slaughtering all 600 Roman soldiers that were stationed inside Jm.

Another Roman army traveled from Syria to Jm

It attacked Jewish villages along the way

But it itself was attacked by Jewish rebels, and lost 6600 Roman soldiers.

At this point, Emperor Nero had enough and escalated the conflict to a full-scale war.

He sent an army under general Vaspasian (Aspanianus)

Vaspasian re-conquered almost all of Israel, one city at a time, killing and burning.

This led to a flood of Jewish refugees, from all over Israel, fleeing the Romans

and seeking refuge in the last city not in Roman hands -- Jerusalem.

Jm doubled in population and in size.

And King Agripas added a large U-shaped extension to the city walls to encompass the added population

General Vaspasian then arrived in Jerusalem laid siege to the city.

Fortunately, during the siege, Vaspasian received word that Emperor Nero had died

and that he, Vaspasian, was appointed to become the new emperor.

So Vaspasian left Jm, and took his army with him

Vaspasian stopped in Alexandria Egypt, and left half his army in Egypt,

under the command of his son, Titus

and continued on to Rome to become emperor.

During the Roman army's absence, the situation was bad in Jm.

King Agripas left the city, because he wanted nothing to do with the rebellion.

Jm was fell under the control of 3 Jewish rebel militia,

Each rebel militia was under its own warlord, and controlled its own neighborhood,

and oppressing the Jews in its neighborhood.

The rebel militias depleted their resources by fighting each other.

Then, General Titus returned from Egypt to resume the siege of Jm

He found that the population of Jm had grown since he was last there,

both from the influx of refugees fleeing the Romans

and from an influx of Jewish pilgrims who had just arrived in Jm for the annual Passover pilgrimage

2.5 million Jews were squeezed within an area of about 1 square mile

All of these Jews were trapped in the city.

They were afraid to leave the city,

both because they feared the Roman army outside the city

and because the rebels inside the city killed anyone trying to escape the city.
Many Jews did escape the city, and Titus caught them
Titus let some of them go free
But others he crucified in view of the city to frighten the rebels into submission.

Jm ran out of food. People were starving to death
Many corpses were accumulating within the city,
and many corpses were thrown over the city wall to get rid of them

Finally Titus gave up trying to starve the Jews out.
and he initiated an attack.
The city walls were high.
Roman soldiers brought ladders to scale the walls, but the Jewish defenders just pushed them backward.
Romans used battering rams, but the wall was too strong
Romans built large wooden ramps to scale the walls.
But the Jews burned some of the ramps down and collapsed the others by digging tunnels beneath them.
Unfortunately, one tunnel that the Jews dug partially collapsed the city wall.
Roman soldiers rushed through the breached wall,
This occurred on the fast of Tisha Asar B-Tamus (17th of Tamus)

The Romans spent the next 3 weeks, fighting their way through the city, toward the Temple.
killing every man, woman and child in their path,
burning all of the homes
looting a huge amount of gold and valuables.
The Jewish defenders fought so furiously
that it took the Roman soldiers 3 weeks to fight their way 1/2 mile from the breach in the wall to the Temple,
When the Romans reached the Temple, they plundered everything of value,
burned down the Temple, and killed all the priests.
This occurred on Tisha B'Av (9th day of the month of Av)
the same date of the Hebrew calendar that the first Temple was destroyed.

When the city was securely in Roman hands,
the Romans demolished almost the entire city wall, so that the destruction would be complete.

In the end, over a million Jews, mostly civilians, were killed in Jm.
Another 100K Jews were captured. Of those,
The younger captives were sold into slavery.
The elderly were executed on the spot.
2500 captives, who were suspected of being rebels, brought to Caesarea and killed for entertainment
by being burned to death, fed to lions, and being forced to fight each other to the death a gladiators

When Titus arrived in Rome, Rome put on a spectacular celebration, honoring Titus for defeating the Jews.
They publicly displayed a massive amount of spoils they plundered from Israel,
including all the items looted from the Temple

In the meantime, a contingent of the Roman army was left in Israel.
It spent the next 3 years hunting down rebel fugitives.
The last fugitives were the 960 men, woman and children that took refuge in Masada,
and committed mass suicide to avoid capture.

In this conflict, the Romans had a major advantage over the Jews.
Romans had an easy time inflicting losses on their enemy
because they targeted unarmed men, women and children.
In contrast, the Jewish rebels could target only armed Roman soldiers.

The city of Jm remained out of Jewish control for the almost exactly 2000 years,
until it was liberated by the Israeli army in the Six Day War in 1967.