

Siege of Jerusalem

14 April to 8 September

70 AD

YouTube Video: The Siege of Jerusalem 70 AD – The Great Jewish Revolt

The Jewish Revolt 66-74, Si Sheppard, Osprey Publishing

Josephus The Complete Works, Trans William Whiston,
Thomas Nelson Publishers

Presented 5/5/20

The Siege of Jerusalem

- In 66 AD, the defeated Roman troops retreated to the Citadel in Jerusalem and the great Jewish Revolt began
- The Jewish sect *Sicarii* moved on *Masada* and overran and massacred the 700 strong Roman garrison
- The soldiers in the Citadel sued for terms and when they surrendered, they were massacred
- Tension arose all over Israel when Greek mobs began massacring Jews in cities and towns while the Jews retaliated

The Siege of Jerusalem (Cont)

- The Roman Empire could not allow the loss of a Roman force and such defiance
- The proconsul of Syria (*Cesitus Gallus*) marched South with 30,000 troops to seize Jerusalem and restore order
- The effort failed and the legions were ambushed at the *Beth Horon Pass* as they retreated to the coast, when the Jews attacked them from the hill tops with bows inflicting huge losses including the destruction of a legion and the capture of their siege weapons and the Legion's eagle standard was lost
- *Gallus* punitive campaign was a complete failure and it emboldened the rebels

The Siege of Jerusalem (Cont)

- When *Emperor Nero* heard of this defeat, he selected *Titus Flavius Vespasianus* (known as *Vespasian*), a successful general from the *Britannia Campaign*, to command the Army of Judea
- *Vespasian* moved to *Antioch* (in Syria) where he was joined by two legions and their auxillary units
- His son *Titus Flavius Vespasianus* (known as *Titus*) was sent to *Alexandria, Egypt* as commander of another Legion to march North and join the main army
- This force, along with other reinforcements from the region, made an army totaling 60,000 troops to crush the revolt
- As *Vespasian* moved toward Jerusalem, no prisoners were taken and all opposing villages were set on fire

The Siege of Jerusalem (Cont)

- The 10,000 strong Jewish field army scattered to fortified strong points throughout the region
- In 67 AD, *Vespasian* moved his troops through the regions while destroying every thing in its way, and allowing his troops to loot, burn, murder, and pillage as they pleased
- They destroyed many towns and villages until they reached their winter quarters
- This destruction of Galilee prompted more internal strife among the Jews
- In 68 and 69 AD, *Vespasian* destroyed every settlement on his way to Jerusalem and slaughtered tens of thousands of civilians

The Siege of Jerusalem (Cont)

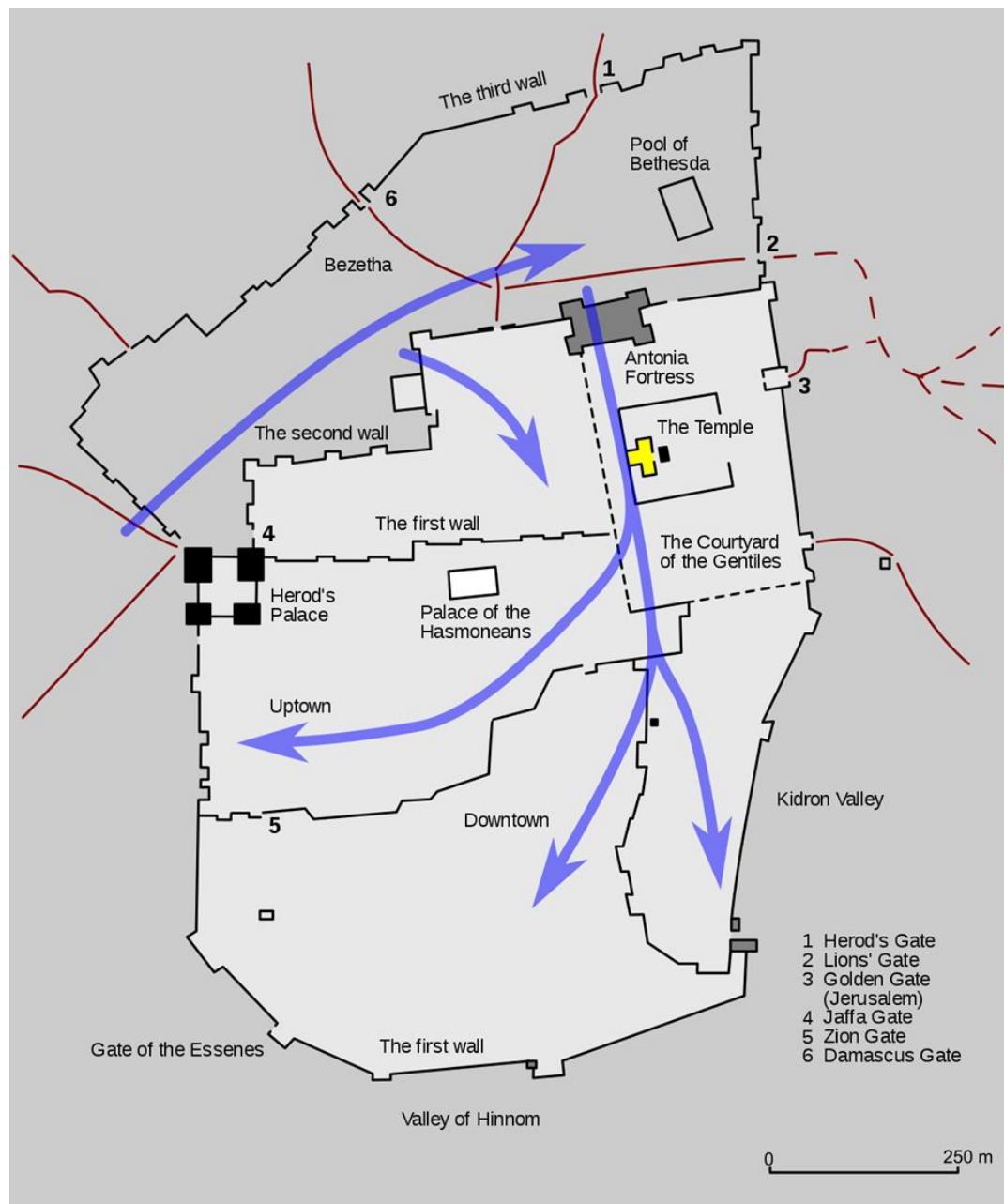
- Meanwhile, political strife arose in Rome, causing Nero to commit suicide
- He was briefly replaced by three others proclaiming to be the emperor, until *Vespasian* was selected emperor
- He then turned over the Judean campaign to his son *Titus* in the spring of 70 AD
- *Titus* began the campaign by moving his force from Egypt up the coast of Israel, with a force of around 70,000
- They began to arrive on the outskirts of Jerusalem on April 23, 70 AD
- *Titus*, with 600 horsemen, reconnoitered the city and was surprised by an attack by a large Jewish force which defeated his cavalry and almost captured *Titus*
- The city had been well fortified and was protected by three separate formidable walls supported by 20,000 well-armed Jewish troops

The Siege of Jerusalem (Cont)

- Despite the city being swollen by those attending the Passover feast (17 -24 April), water was not a problem due to cisterns and pools filled with rain water
- Unfortunately, food storage sites had been burned by the inter-Judaic strife in the city during the months before the siege
- This strife led the defenders to be divided into three sub-factions
- The Romans set up camps to the west and east of the city

The Siege of Jerusalem (Cont)

- The Jews united and attacked one of the legions (the 10th legion) while they were building their camp on the Mount of Olives
- The Romans were not able to drive the Jews from the mount, until they were attacked by a cavalry charge from the flank
- *Titus* then began his attack on the western wall with three legions using battering rams, siege towers, and missile launchers
- On the 15th day of the siege (May 7th), the Romans destroyed a section of the western wall
- The Jews pulled back to the second wall
- The Romans began to ram the second tower gate and were able to bring it down after four days (May 11th)

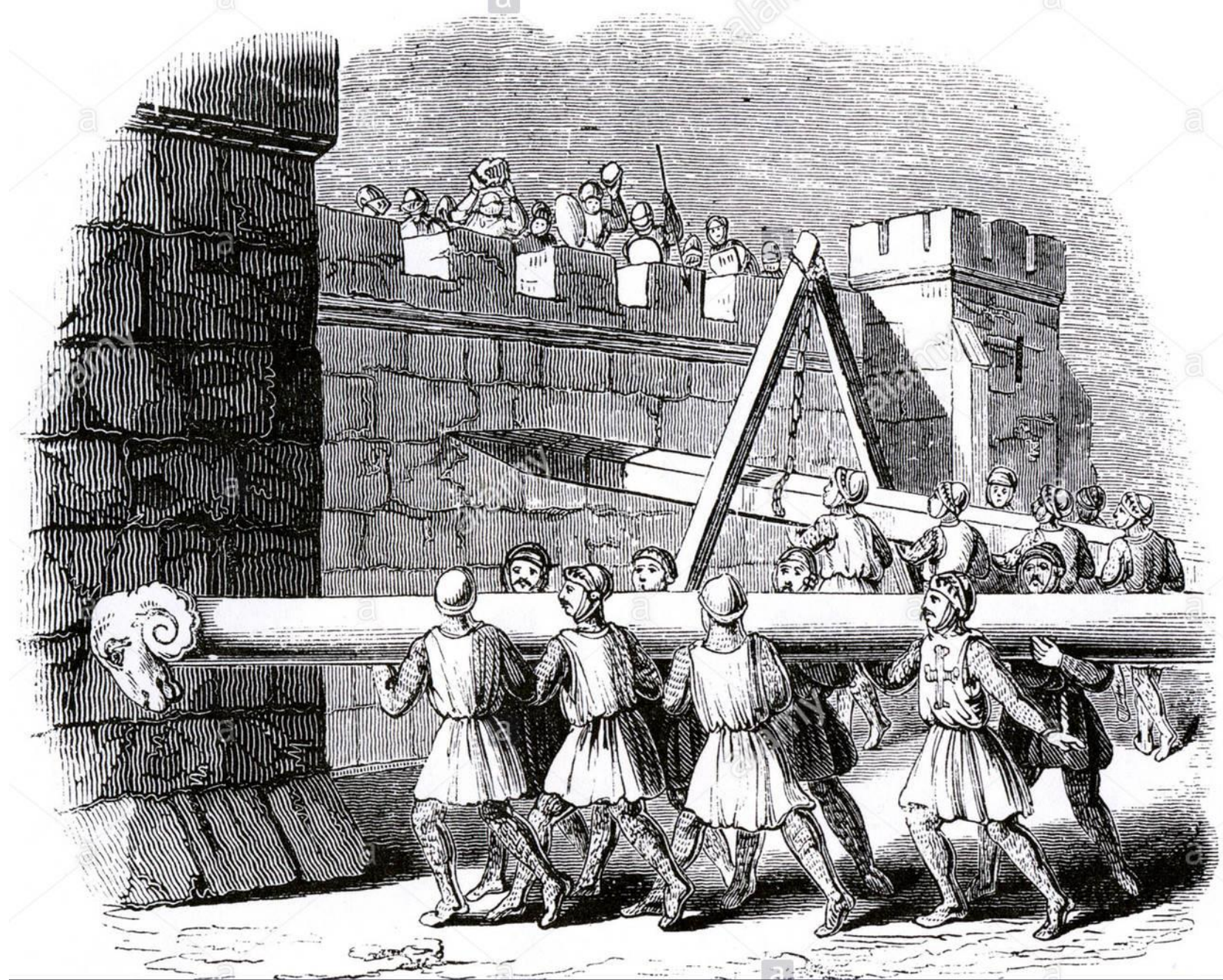


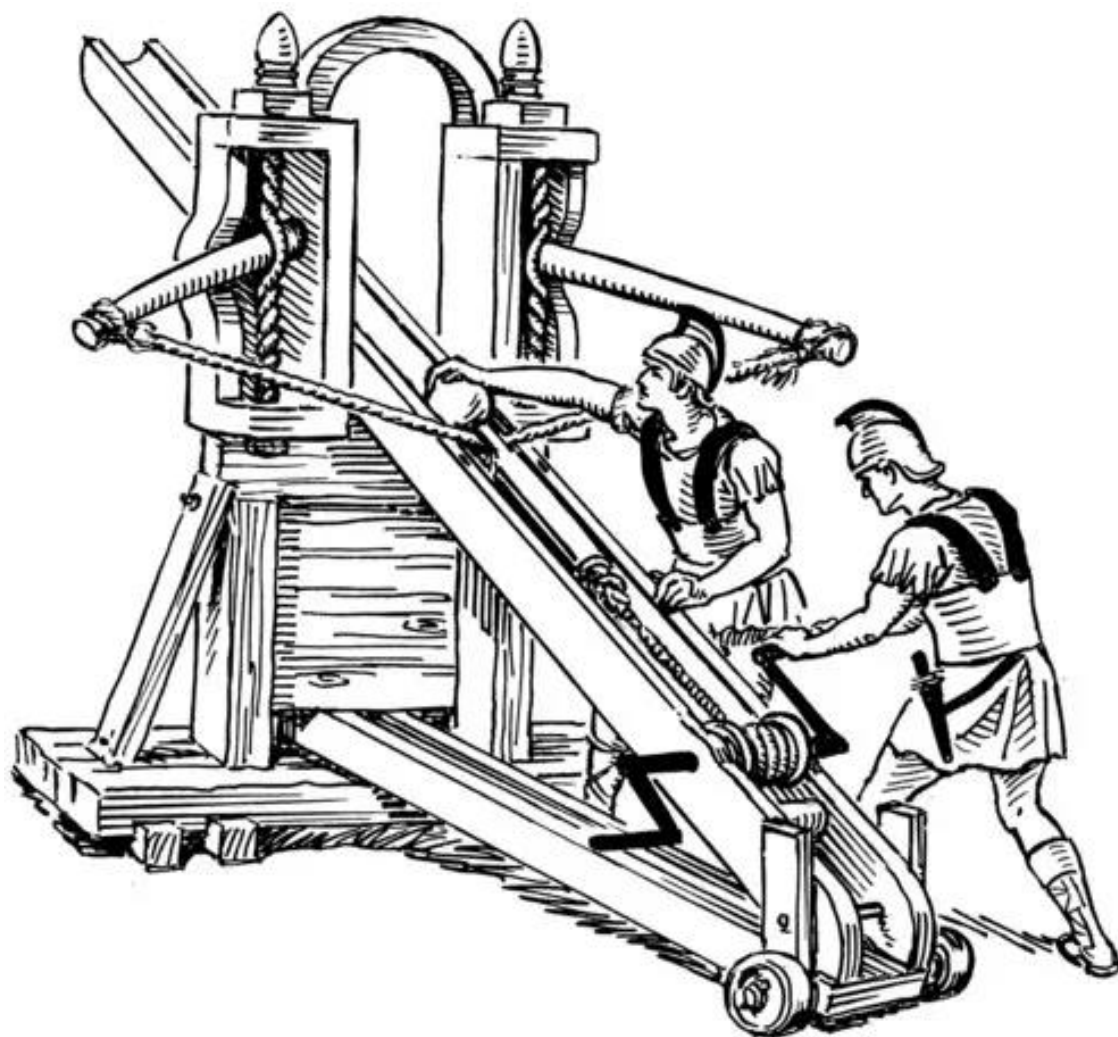


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The Siege of Jerusalem (Cont)

- The Romans attempted to continue into the city, but were repulsed by the Jews hiding in ambush
- After four more days (May 15th), they tore down the entire northern sector of the second wall
- *Titus* then divided his entire army into two groups (each ordered to construct two siege ramps)
- On May 29th, one group of two legions attacked the wall opposite the tomb of John Hyrcanus, and the other two legions attacked the *Antonia Fortress* under a constant bombardment by bolder shooters and stone throwers, which the Jews had captured from *Gallous* in 66 AD
- Jewish sappers also dug under the Roman siege lines and set fire to the Roman ramps causing them to collapse

The Siege of Jerusalem (Cont)

- The destruction of the ramps and siege towers were very demoralizing to the Romans
- Then, *Titus* ordered an 8 kilometer wall to be constructed (which was completed in three days) around the city completely cutting Jerusalem off from the outside world
- This ended the Jews ability to foray out of the city to forage for food and supplies
- This act also caused a famine to descend on the city resulting in starvation and death
- All the Roman forces were now concentrated on capturing the Antonia fortress
- During the night, a heavy rain fell causing part of the wall to collapse

The Siege of Jerusalem (Cont)

- The beginning of the battle for the Temple mount then began after the total destruction of the Antonia fortress
- On July 17th, the Romans attempted to seize the temple court yard, but were repulsed in close quarters fighting
- *Titus* then ordered four siege ramps to be set up against the northwest corner of the wall of the temple mount
- Even though the Jews counter-attacked, the Jews eventually abandoned that section of the wall, while setting fires to trap and kill many Roman soldiers
- By August 9th, the Roman artillery made the defense of the temple mount untenable causing the Jews to pull back to the defenses of the temple itself

The Siege of Jerusalem (Cont)

- On August 10th, a fire began in the apartments next to the temple courtyard which set the temple on fire
- This finally broke the Jewish resistance as they were divided between fighting the fires and fighting the Romans
- The entire temple mount was then seized in an orgy of butchery and looting
- For the next two days, the legions were unleashed on the lower city burning everything in sight
- Two days later, the Romans assaulted Herod's palace which was taken on September 7th



The Siege of Jerusalem (Cont)

- It is estimated that the death toll from this battle was (according to Josephus) 1.1 million civilians, pilgrims, and Jewish soldiers
- Titus returned triumphant to Rome where his father was emperor
- All that was left of the Jewish revolt were the Sicarii at Masada who were defeated in 74 AD