

# MOMENTOUS DECISIONS

The Romans and the Middle East

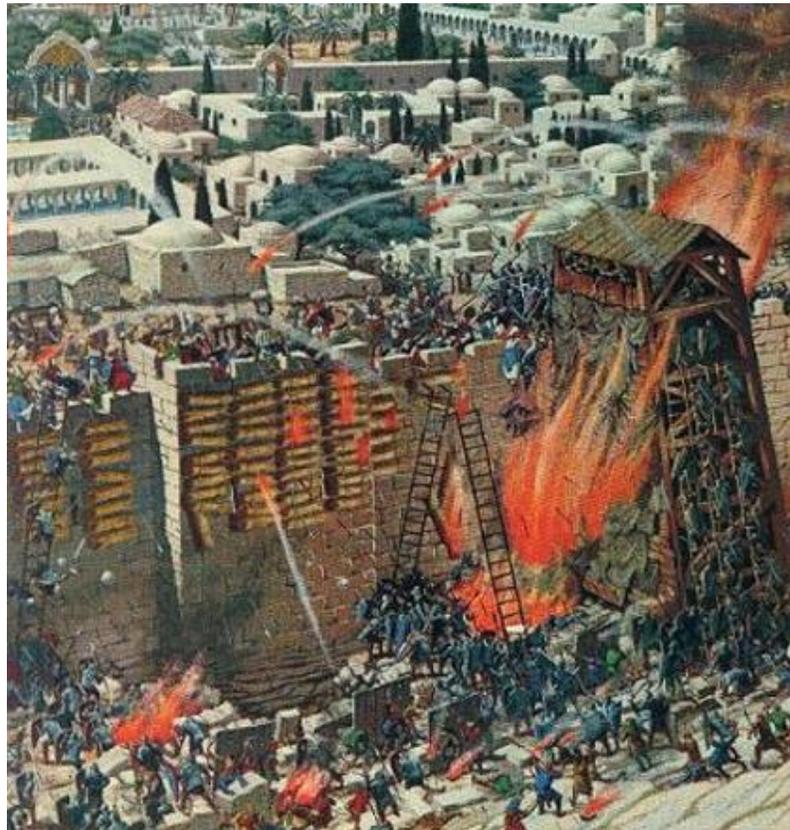
# Simon Bar Kokhba leads the 2<sup>nd</sup> revolt against the Roman Empire in 132CE.

- Modern historians view the Bar Kokhba revolt as being of decisive historic importance.
- An entrance into an (excavated) cave used by Bar Kokhba's rebels.



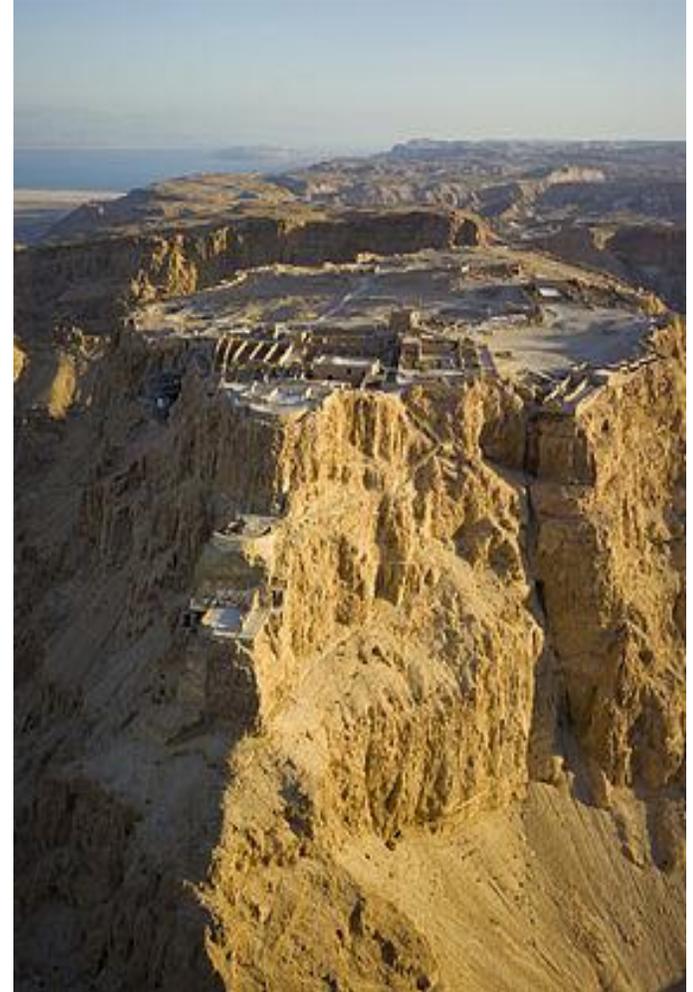
# Earlier

- The first Jewish–Roman War (66–73) CE — also called the First Jewish Revolt or the Great Jewish Revolt, began with the 66CE uprising.



# Why? What nation would not object to domination and desecration?

- In 67CE the Romans conquered the Galilee, destroying Jerusalem and the Second Temple.
- They instituted the Judean Tax (Fiscus Judaicus) in 70CE.
- Then, finally, they took Masada in 73CE.



# A religious insult as well as economic burden!

- The *fiscus Iudaicus* (Latin for 'Jewish tax') or *fiscus Judaicus* revenues were directed to the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus in Rome.



# The last (briefly) independent Israel before 1948

- The Bar Kokhba revolt against the Roman Empire in 132CE, established an independent Jewish state which he ruled for three years as Nasi ('Prince').
- A cluster of papyrus containing Bar Kokhba's orders found in the Judean desert by modern Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin.



# Attempt to replace Aramaic with Hebrew.

- According to Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin, Bar Kokhba tried to revive Hebrew and make Hebrew the official language of the Jews as part of his messianic ideology.



# Retribution by Emperor Hadrian.

- Kokhba's state was conquered by the Romans in 135CE following a two and half-year war.



# A famous wall.

- In Britain: Hadrian's Wall from Housesteads.



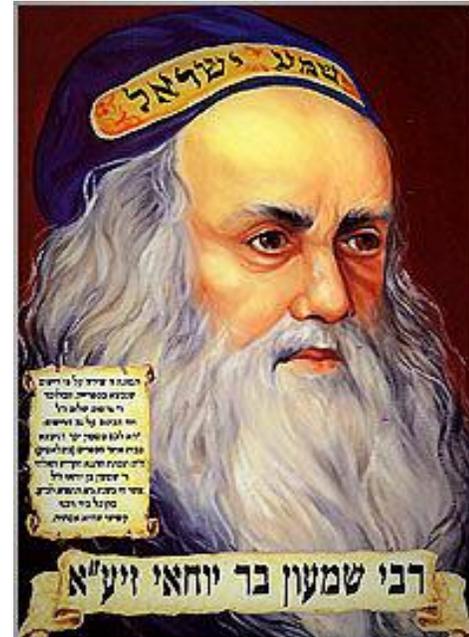
# Beginning of the dispersion of the Jews?

- The massive destruction and loss of life occasioned by the revolt has led some scholars to date the beginning of the Jewish diaspora from this date.
- Remains of Hurvat Itri village, destroyed during the Bar Kokhba revolt.



# He was hailed as the fulfilment of a prophecy.

- Documents discovered in the modern era give us Kokhba's original name, Simon ben Kosiba.
- He was given the surname Bar Kokhba (Aramaic for 'Son of a Star', referring to the Star Prophecy of Numbers 24:17, "there shall step forth a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite through the corners of Moab") by his contemporary, the Jewish sage Rabbi Akiva.



# Disillusionment.

- After the failure of the revolt, the rabbinical writers changed Bar Kokhba's epithet to 'Simon bar Koziba' meaning, 'the son of disappointment'.



# Palestine a place of turmoil throughout history

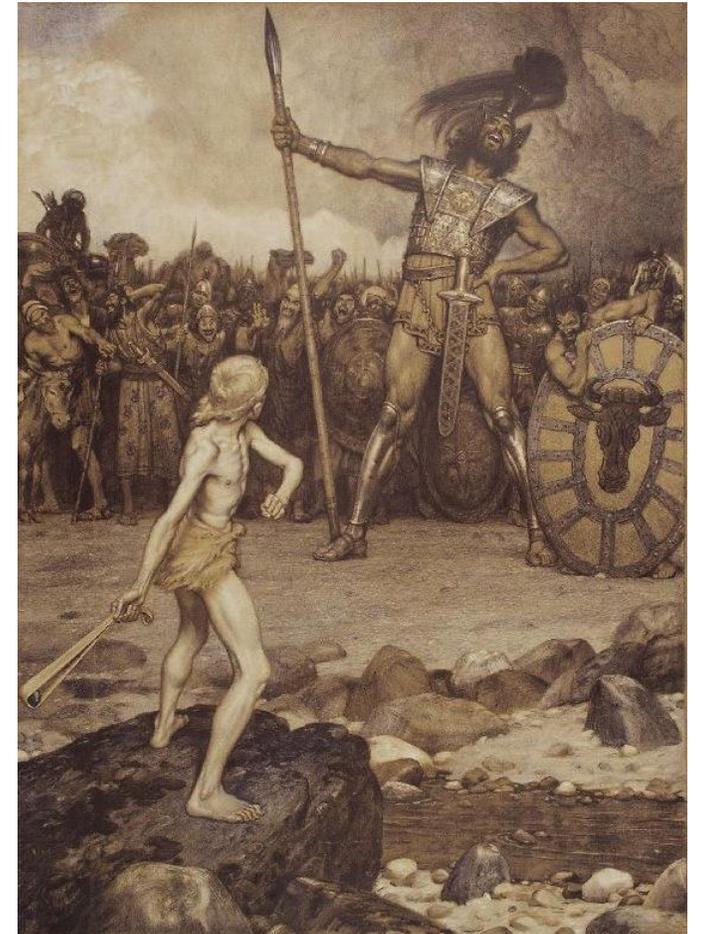
- In the aftermath of the war, Hadrian consolidated the older political units of Judaea, Galilee and Samaria into the new province of Syria Palaestina.



# Manipulating people

- Hadrian probably chose a name that revived the ancient name of Philistia (Palestine), combining it with that of the province of Syria, in an attempt to suppress Jewish connection to the land.
- Boundaries of Palestine have changed throughout history, and were defined in modern times by the Franco-British boundary agreement (1920) and the Transjordan memorandum of 16th September 1922, during the British mandate period.

Goliath of Gath was a Philistine.



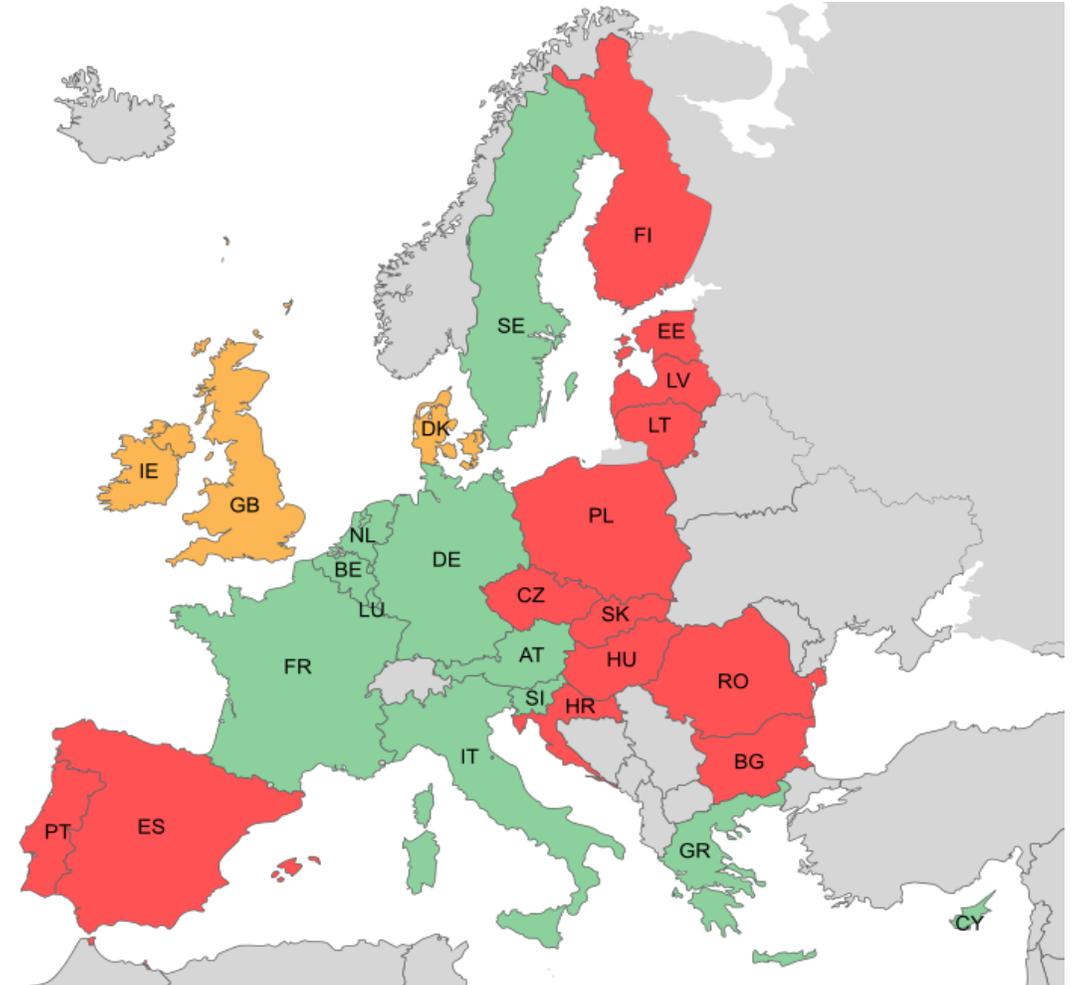
# The modern world: Syrian refugees

National government positions on the 2015 EU mandatory quota plan for asylum seekers in the EU, as of 5<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

Approval: green.

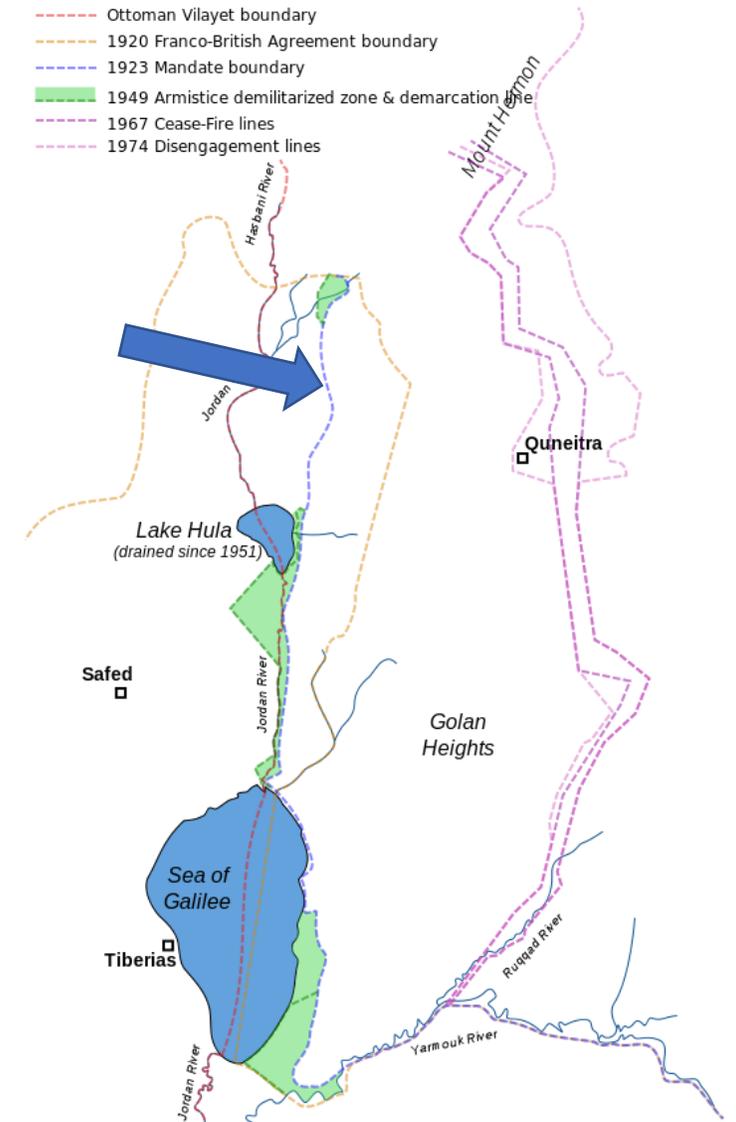
Opt-out (de facto refusal): amber.

Refusal: red



# Changing borders

- The boundary between the Mandates of Palestine and Mesopotamia, (Great Britain), and the Mandate of Syria and the Lebanon, (France)
- Borders in the region of the Sea of Galilee and Golan Heights, showing the Ottoman boundaries, the 1920 agreement and the 1923 agreement.



# Brutal genocide by Hadrian

- The majority of the Jewish population of Judea was either killed, exiled, or sold into slavery and Jewish religious and political authority, including the Jesus sect, was suppressed far more brutally than previously.
- A typical Roman legionary.



# A continuous presence in Palestine

After the revolt, the Jewish religious centre shifted to the Babylonian Jewish community and its scholars.

Judea would not be a centre of Jewish religious, cultural, or political life again until the modern era, although Jews continued to live in Palestine and important religious developments still occurred there.

For example: in Galilee, the Jerusalem Talmud was compiled in the 2nd–4th centuries.

The Western Wall of the Jerusalem Temple.



# The Mishnah and the Talmud

- These are two important collections of writings that have helped the Jewish people to survive the last two thousand years of the Diaspora.
- The Jewish Diaspora refers to the dispersion of Israelites, Judeans, and later Jews out of what is their ancestral homeland (the Land of Israel), and the communities built by them across the world.
- The Pale of Settlement was a western region of Imperial Russia, in which permanent residency by Jews was allowed and beyond which Jewish permanent residency was generally prohibited.
- There is also a region in Ireland that is called The Pale.

# The Mishnah

- The **Mishnah** or **Mishna** is the first major **redaction (conversion to written form)** of the Jewish oral traditions known as the ‘Oral Torah’.
- It is also the first major work of Rabbinic literature.
- The Mishnah was redacted by Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi before his death around 217 CE, in a time when, according to the Talmud, the persecution of the Jews and the passage of time raised the possibility that the details of the oral traditions of the Pharisees from the Second Temple period (536 BCE – 70 CE) would be forgotten.

# Preserving their religious heritage.

- The Jerusalem Talmud, is a collection of **Rabbinic notes** on the **Mishnah** plus the **written discussions** of generations of rabbis in the Land of Israel (primarily in the academies of Tiberias and Caesarea) which was compiled c. 350-400 CE into a series of books that became the **Gemara**.

Studying the Talmud.



# The mess in the Middle East

- Was the dispersal of the Jews by the Romans just?
- Did it extinguish the Jewish claim to Eretz Yisrael?
- What might have happened if Israel had remained independent?
- Would the Ottomans have tolerated a Jewish State?
- If Israel had remained a country the modern world might have been a very different one.

# Sheol?

There are dragon's teeth sown in the Middle East,  
And peace is a comma twixt terror and war.  
Hate is the coinage and fratricide festers,  
As the seed of Abraham slaughter each other.

The blood of millions has soaked the land,  
With the song of the Uzi a psalm of death.  
Throughout past millennia the conflict has raged,  
In unholy wars for the Holy City.