



# **The Image of Bar Kokhba in Traditional Jewish Literature: False Messiah and National Hero (Hermeneutics: Studies in the History of Religions)**

*Richard G. Marks*

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Bar Kokhba led the Jewish rebellion against Rome in 132–135 A.D., which resulted in massive destruction and dislocation of the Jewish populace of Judea. In early rabbinic literature, Bar Kokhba was remembered in two ways: as an imposter claiming to be the Messiah and as a glorious military leader whose successes led Rabbi Akiba, one of the great rabbinic authorities of Jewish tradition, to acclaim him the Messiah. These two earliest images formed the core of most later perceptions of Bar Kokhba, so that he became the prototypical false messiah and the paradigmatic rebel of Jewish history.

*The Image of Bar Kokhba in Traditional Jewish Literature* is a history of the perceptions that later Jewish writers living in the fourth through seventeenth centuries formed of this legendary hero-villain whose actions, in their eyes, had caused enormous suffering and disappointed messianic hopes.

Richard Marks examines each writer's account individually and in the context of its period, exploring particularly political and religious implications. He builds a history of images and looks at larger patterns, such as the desacralizing of traditional imagery. His findings raise timely political questions about Bar Kokhba's image among Jews today.

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