464 B.C.
The Helot Revolt of Sparta
Greece

Sparta, at first, was only the Messenia and Laconia territories, and later the Spartans (previously known as the Dorians) came and took over those territories. Those places they conquered had other residents who were captured and used them as Spartan “slaves” (also known as Helots) for the growing nation. However, these Helots were not the property of anyone or under the control of a specific person. They worked for Sparta in general, and since the Dorians couldn’t do agriculture, they made the Helots do the work. The Dorians were “Barbarians,” note them taking over territories. Unlike the slaves that we know today, these ones were able to go wherever they want in Spartan territory and they could live normal lives like the Spartans. The Helots lived in houses together for a plot of land that they worked on. They were allowed families, to go away from their house and make cash for themselves. Occasionally, the Helots would be assigned to help out in the military.

However, not all Helots were happy where they were at. Around 660 B.C., the Spartans attacked the Argives, who demolished the Spartans. The report of Sparta’s lost gave encouragement to the Helots who started a revolt against Sparta, which is now known as the Second Messenian War. The Spartans were fighting to gain back control, but they were outnumbered seven Helots to one Spartan. The details about this war were concealed, and very little information is known about what happened in the war. In the end, the Spartans won and banished the remaining rebel Helots to Sicily. After their banishment, Sparta saw the Helots as a great threat and the government of Sparta wanted to train soldiers for this new threat.

After all of that, the Helots were still not happy. Another opportunity arose for the Helots in 464 B.C. when a massive earthquakes hit Sparta, which took the lives of 20,000 Spartans. The Helots decided to take a stronghold on Mount Ithome, that the Helots, before their enslavement, held at one time. The Spartans did not attempt to attack alone with the forces they had, so they asked the Athenians to help them in their predicament. Athens sent some 4,000 hoplites (soldiers) to help Sparta, but things wouldn’t last long. Ancient Greeks thought enslavement was a forbidden act to do, resulting in the Athenian hoplites leaving Sparta’s cause and sailing back to Athens. For Sparta, fighting the Helots took a long 10 years, until one day, finally, the Helots surrendered. With the surrender, the Helots requested that they would be able to leave the Peloponnese (The place that Sparta settled down at.) The Spartans had a request—that they never return.