

# ***The Phiabi Crime Family***

**High Priests, Organized Crime,  
and  
the War on Jesus' Family**

By Olaf H. Hage III

If they had published tabloids in the days of Jesus, the Chief Priests would have been the cover story. They ruled like kings. They ran Judea, Galilee, and wherever Jewish people had power. They oversaw much of the Empire's commerce and beyond. Ruling priestly families lived glamorous lives swathed in satin, gold and jewels.

But by *A.D.* 73, it had all vanished like Camelot and the Irish Mafia!

Gone were the tithes and those who paid them. Gone was the Temple and the need for priests and Levites to service the holy places and altars. Gone were the palaces and the mighty city walls that had not protected them. And, when the bloodletting ceased, gone were a million young Jewish men and women. Gone was Judea as a nation.

Or so it seemed. In reality, some chief priests and their families escaped the city! But their new lifestyle was not the soft, luxuriant one of an urban elite. In contrast with their former regal status, the priests were now a handful of impoverished outcasts. They huddled together in the small town of Gobna (also called Yavneh or Jamnia), a windy outpost on the dusty coastal road thirty miles west of Jerusalem and ten miles south of Joppa, in what had once been the Philistines' territory. (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 1977, VI:2:2)

It was a time of shame and defeat. Josephus blamed the chief priests. It was their greed and abuse of the people, their constant power struggles, their thievery and treachery that had stirred up the Zealots to rebel. And those Zealot revolutionaries had then brought down the thunder of Roman siege engines upon Jerusalem. A grieving eyewitness left a lament against these priests (perhaps spoken at a family funeral) from just before the war:

Woe to me because of the house of Boethus (the Alexandrian priestly line of Joazar and Eleazar, who betrayed their father Simeon Boethus, and whose sister Miramne married Herod). Woe to me because of their lances (Boethian Eleazar killed Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, between the Altar and the Holy Place--where only priests were allowed--with a lance).

Woe to me because of the house of Hanin (or Annas, heir of the first High Priest under King Herod, Ananel of Babylon, father-in-law of the Phiabi line). Woe to me because of their slanders (public vilifications).

Woe to me because of the house of Qathros (also called Caiphas or Kantheras). Woe to me because of their libels (perjured indictments).

Woe to me because of the house of Ishmael ben Phiabi (some say Fabi or house of Elisha). Woe to me because of their fist (beatings and brutality).

For they are High Priests and their sons are Treasurers, and their sons-in-law are Temple Overseers, and their servants strike us with clubs." (Jeremias 1975, pp. 195-6n; cf. 190-198)

One would hope these brutal men would have lamented their own actions. But there is little sign of that. The preservation of this lament by postwar scribes (some of whom had married into these priestly families) is the only hint of remorse. But the lament itself comes from one of the victims, not from any of the chief priests. This particular lament expressed grief over the unjust deaths of several blood relatives.

The lament tells us about the author. The four uses of "me" show at least four relatives were victims of these priests, as also the "us" in the final line. Josephus said that the prime targets were other priests, Levites, and wealthy families not among the power elite. So, the author came from a highborn family. This is confirmed by his mourning over a murder of a priest by a Boethian lance. This infamous murder in the Temple killed Zacharias, the priest whose wife Elizabeth was of the daughters of Aaron, the first High Priest. The author is lamenting Zacharias as a relative of his own family. Thus, the author was a high-ranking Levite living in Apostolic times and was related to Zacharias.

We know of many well-off Levitical relatives of Zacharias, at least via marriage, all linked to Mary, the mother of Jesus. These included an extended family of blood and legal kindred, including, but not limited to, her mother Hanna and father Eli Joachim, Jesus, His half-brothers and half-sisters

and their families. There was Mary's brother Joseph of Arimathea, his Levite-Benjaminite wife Mary Magdalene, his sister-in-law Martha and brother-in-law Lazarus and father-in-law Nicodemus. We also know of a daughter of Magdalene named Hanna, married to the Levite martyr Stephen. We have Mary's sister and Jesus' Aunt Salome, her priest husband Zebedee and sons James and John, their sister and her Levitical-Ephraimite husband Peter and brother-in-law Andrew and father-in-law Jonah. Then we have Peter's son Judas (a Levite since he was able to discard the thirty pieces of silver in the Temple *cf.* Matthew 27:5) and Judas' son John Mark, and Judas' Levitical wife Mary and brothers-in-law Barnabus and Aristobulus, the children of Stephen. Some of these, in particular, the priestly James and John, probably had Levitical wives and children.

Of all these people, only a handful are recorded to have been still alive, able to be in Judea, and not in prison or hiding, when this lament was uttered just before the war with Rome in *A.D.* 66. These include John, Andrew, and Lazarus. Of these, the only one whom the New Testament specifically attests to remaining in Jerusalem after *A.D.* 49 is John (*cf.* Galatians 2:1-9). Note that the modern name "John" is linked to the Hebraic name "Johanán" or "Yohannán" ("one of the Yohann," *i.e.* "one of the family of John").

Could the Apostle John have left this lament, or perhaps a son of his? According to the rabbis, the author of the lament was named, "Abba (Father) Joseph ben (son of) Johanán, citizen (official legal resident) of Jerusalem." (Jeremias 1975, p. 195n) The rabbis did not preserve anything else he said. That makes sense if his father were the Apostle John, even if he had remained a Jew in good standing. He was a priestly elder ("Abba") whose father Johanán ("John") must have been of a priestly line. His lament shows he was related to Zacharias and, therefore, to Jesus. And "citizen" made him an elder from one of the four chief tribes allowed to live at Jerusalem (I Chronicles 9:1-34).

We also know that someone older in his family was named Joseph, since it was the custom to name a child after an elder in the family. Joseph of Arimathea was the Apostle John's blood uncle, and Mary's husband Joseph was John's uncle by marriage.

Moreover, the lament indicates that one of his relatives had died as the result of slanders by the house of Annas. This could refer to Jesus, John's first cousin. He also laments a libel by the house of Kantheras that caused a death in his family. John's brother James was beheaded under the High Priest Simon Kantheras. (Jeremias 1975, p. 378)

Finally, he cites Ishmael ben Phiabi's thugs, singled out with an accusation of a recent ("us") beating that caused the death that apparently occasioned this lament. Since we know Ishmael was last in Jerusalem in early *A.D.* 62, we must ask, Who in John's family was beaten to death just before early *A.D.* 62? We know that the blotting-out of Jesus would have expired Passover *A.D.* 61 (thirty years after Jesus had been crucified), while Ishmael was High Priest. Was a relative of John's visiting Jerusalem at the time?

Yes, John's grand-nephew Mark and Mark's uncle Joseph Barnabus were probably there. Barnabus and John Mark went off to Cyprus after a dispute with Paul in *A.D.* 50 (Acts 15:39). But while Paul is in prison in Rome, before the July fire in *A.D.* 64, Paul has Mark come to Rome to help him (II Timothy 4:11). The implication is that Barnabus had died by *A.D.* 64, and early church tradition agrees, for it says Mark had buried Barnabus in Cyprus with a copy of Mark's Gospel. (McBirnie 1973, pp. 260-261)

The reference to Barnabus being buried with a copy of the Gospel of Mark had been accompanied by the statement that 'Jews' (Ibid.; more literally "Judeans") had killed him. Was Barnabus killed on Cyprus, as most interpreters assume, or at Jerusalem itself?

Mark naturally took Barnabus' body back to Cyprus (where his Levite family brought wealth to the island through the copper trade). Barnabus and his Levitical family no doubt gave their fellow Jews preference in jobs related to the family copper business. These Jews would be unlikely to kill the heir to the copper business that provided their jobs. Barnabus had lived among them for at least a decade at that point. So, Cyprus is a very unlikely place for Jews to kill Barnabus. This would support the idea that Barnabus had been killed by "Judeans" elsewhere, most likely in Jerusalem.

We know Jerusalem's Judean leaders were not friendly to his family, having stoned his father Stephen to death in *A.D.* 31. His father's name was blotted out thirty years, until late *A.D.* 61, and Joseph Barnabus was, accordingly, restricted by Psalm 109's blotting-out rules. Thus, he was called "Joseph Bar Nabus, not "Joseph Bar Stephen."

This suggests Barnabus may have run afoul of the blotting-out laws in Jerusalem, been arrested and beaten by Ishmael ben Phiabi's thugs, and died of his injuries. The tradition that "Judeans" caused his death implies that a group of people killed him, and the lament about the "fists" and "clubs" of Ishmael ben Phiabi's "servants" indicates the recent beating to death of a family member by thugs paid by the High Priest Ishmael.

There is another clue supporting the case for a blotting-out violation, if there had been a Gospel buried with Barnabus by Mark. Perhaps Barnabus, a Levitical scribe by his original training, had personally copied that text. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 105, 234) Tradition says it was later found by the early church in Barnabus' casket. (McBirnie 1973, pp. 260-261) Thus, John Mark felt free to dispose of this precious text by burying it, as if there were many other copies of that Gospel in Cyprus in *A.D.* 61.

Did John Mark (also a scribe: Revelation 1:2-4, 11, 19, *etc.*) and Barnabus devote that decade in Cyprus to the task of mass-producing copies of the Gospel, in anticipation of the expiration of the blotting-out of Jesus in the spring of *A.D.* 61? Most scholars once dismissed the notion of such an early Gospel, but some now argue that Mark may indeed have first published his text about that time, if not before. (Robinson 1976, pp. 352-353)

Publishing a Gospel for Gentiles outside Jewish territory may have been permitted under blotting-out rules once a biological "generation" of fifteen years had elapsed since the Crucifixion of *A.D.* 31 (+ 15 = *A.D.* 46). Paul and Barnabus, both Jerusalem-trained Biblical scribes, who should have known all the subtleties of the blotting-out rules, seem to have begun publishing a Gospel while they were staying at Antioch in Pisidia in Asia Minor *circa A.D.* 46-48. (Jeremias 1975, p. 234) They had been ejected from the synagogue there. So, they had officially "turned to the Gentiles," who "rejoiced over and praised the Word of the Lord... And the Word of the Lord was published throughout the whole country. But the Judeans... stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabus and cast (deported) them from their borders" (Acts 13:48-50, *cf.* Greek).

The literal Greek of "published" indicates that "the Word of the Lord" itself was physically "carried through" the whole region while Paul and Barnabus were still in that city. It certainly suggests these two scribes were making copies of a Gospel of some kind, and it was then being hand-carried to gentiles in the surrounding towns. When those who were considered representatives of the Judean authorities in the region learned what was happening, they found a legal loophole (*i.e.* blotting-out) to shut down the operation.

Like Barnabus, Lazarus was also a fully qualified Levite scribe (literally, a man trained to make official copies of Biblical books). The Cyprus church says Lazarus became "bishop" (actually administrator of Barnabus' Levite scribes) on Cyprus in *A.D.* 61, just after Barnabus' death. (McBirnie 1973, p. 273, note that Dr. McBirnie assumes an *A.D.* 33 Crucifixion as his reference point, and so his dates must generally be adjusted) Lazarus, as we have seen in earlier reports, was (among other things) tasked with publishing the New Testament. It would make perfect sense for Lazarus to take over this job on Cyprus if Barnabus had just died after creating a Christian publishing industry there. This timing would also explain why, with Lazarus in charge in Cyprus, Mark was free to join Peter in Asia Minor after *A.D.* 61, and then go with Peter to visit Paul in Rome in *A.D.* 64.

It all fits perfectly. After the Church Council of Jerusalem in *A.D.* 49 (*cf.* Acts 15), which authorized the publication of the Gospel to the Gentiles, Mark and Barnabus had argued with Paul (who preferred to preach, not publish, due to his eyesight). The pair had gone off to their now-Christian Levitical relatives in Cyprus and trained them as official Christian Levite scribes to copy Revelation as Jesus had instructed (Revelation 1:11), and also Mark's Gospel account, which is said to have been dictated to him by Peter. (Robinson 1976, p. 114) When the year *A.D.* 61 came into view, they surely would have taken a boatload of copies of these books to Jerusalem to distribute to Jews at the Passover. We may assume James and the elders, including the Apostle John, were working on a similar project. (Robinson 1976, p. 352) The apostles had waited thirty years for this moment.

But Ishmael ben Phiabi was not about to let the rival House of David triumph under his High Priesthood. The Annas/Phiabi families were determined to crush this publishing venture

the second the family of Jesus committed even the slightest violation of the blotting-out rules. All relatives of Jesus were forbidden to speak publicly to Jews in the name of Jesus or to write about Jesus by name until the full thirty years had elapsed. The Phiabi knew that the thirty years were expiring in *A.D.* 61, and they had their spies scattered around the city of Jerusalem, watching for any misstep by the apostles.

Barnabus must have been a special target because his own family's blotting-out still had several months to run (because his father Stephen was martyred several months after the crucifixion). The Phiabi thugs would have grabbed Barnabus the very second, he spoke his father's forbidden name, or perhaps for some other trifling violation, or perhaps they might have just lied and falsely accused him, as the lament suggests in its references to "slanders" and "libels."

Josephus confirms that beatings by the Phiabi gangs were commonplace at this very time, and he specifies that even priests sometimes died at their hands. Moreover, this was nothing new. Josephus records that Ishmael ben Phiabi's immediate predecessor, Ananius ben Nebedeus, who was probably Ishmael's father-in-law, had also hired thugs to beat and club priests of other Levitical families, stealing their tithes. This criminal practice resulted in such severe hunger that some priests simply starved to death:

But as for the High Priest Ananius ben Nebedeus... he also had servants who were very wicked. They allied themselves with the most brazen (street thugs) among the people, and went to the threshing-floors (where the people deposited their tithed food and grain contributions for the priests and Levites), and they violently stole the tithes that belonged to the priests. And they did not hesitate to beat (with fists and clubs) anyone who would not give them their tithes (which may have included money as well as foodstuffs). So, the other high priests (of that time) acted in the same way as did their servants, without anyone being able to stop them. As a result, (some of the ordinary (poorer) Levites and) priests --who were entitled always to be fed by means of these tithes-- (as God had commanded the Israelites because the tribe of Levi had no land of its own on which to grow food or keep cattle and sheep) died of starvation. (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1977, XX:9:2, modernized translation)

No one usually became High Priest unless he had first served as the Captain of the Temple. Being Captain put him in charge of the Temple guard of armed soldiers. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 162-163)

So, Ishmael ben Phiabi had almost certainly been the Captain of the Temple under his immediate predecessor, Ananius ben Nebedeus (High Priest from at least *A.D.* 47 to the mid-*A.D.* 50's) (Jeremias 1975, p. 378)

Generally speaking, the High Priests appointed their sons or sons-in-law to be their deputy, that is, the Captain of the Temple. The Captain's role was like combining our Secretary of Defense, the heads of the FBI and the Secret Service, plus the Vice-President, all wrapped up into one office. With such overwhelming power, it was hard not to make him the next High Priest, if he wanted the job (which some did not).

Ishmael ben Phiabi, since he and his predecessor Ananius ben Nebedeus had different fathers' names, would likely have been Ananius' son-in-law. The name Ananius indicates that he had probably been named after his mother's ancestor the High Priest Ananus ben Seth (*A.D.* 6 to *A.D.* 15), who in turn had probably been a son-in-law of Joshua ben Phiabi, the patriarch of the family (serving from *c.* 30 B.C. to *c.* 22 B.C.).

So, both Ishmael and Ananius b. Nebedeus were part of the extended Phiabi crime family. Together they ruled from *A.D.* 47 to *A.D.* 62. But Ananius' son, Eleazar ben Ananius, was also Captain of the Temple several years after that. Eleazar was Ishmael's brother-in-law. So, Ishmael's personal crime family exercised power for much of two decades.

At the end of *A.D.* 63, King Agrippa II (a descendant of Herod the Great) took a bribe from a wealthy woman named Martha, who was apparently not of the Phiabi clan; she wanted her husband, Jesus ben Gamiliel, made High Priest. Agrippa II complied with her request, bypassing Eleazar ben Ananius, the Phiabi candidate and heir-apparent.

Eleazar's rulership over the armed Temple guard, as Captain of the Temple at the end of the year *A.D.* 63, allowed him to launch a war in the streets of Jerusalem over who should have been made High Priest. Order was never again fully restored. The ultimate winner was Matthias ben Theophilus, a descendant of the Boethians, who became the last man that may have been a member of the extended Phiabi criminal family to serve before the Zealots took control of the Temple in *A.D.* 67. (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1977, XX:9:4-7)

The intermarried families cited in the lament above had ruled as High Priests, with rare exceptions, from 34 years before the birth of Jesus until the last three years before the burning of the Temple, nearly a century of brutal 'religious' exploitation.

Josephus, an eyewitness to the final years, documented the fact that these specific families had degenerated into vicious criminal gangs, beating and robbing the people and their fellow priests in the last decades before the war. But it is clear, that violence had already marred their rule from the previous century.

In 1 B.C., when Eleazar had killed the priest Zacharias between the Altar and the Holy Place (*cf.* Matthew 25:35), these chief priests had shown themselves capable of murder. But Eleazar's act was merely the beginning of a carefully plotted-out full-scale national war against Herod's son Archelaus and the Romans, a war which cost thousands of lives.

The fact that the extended Phiabi family hatched this plan shows their willingness to use war and bloodshed to further their objectives. They always had a lust for power.

Only God knows the full list of their victims, but we can name some of the early Christians that the Phiabi/Ananus family persecuted. Besides Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, there were plots against dozens of Zacharias' extended family. These included Jesus, Lazarus, Stephen, James the Great, Peter, James the Less, Barnabus, John the Apostle, John Mark, Thomas/Joseph of Arimathea, Mary, Martha, and various other members of Jesus' family, as well as Paul, Luke and the elders stoned along with James in *A.D.* 63. Eventually we will discover that there were far more long-forgotten victims.

It is no exaggeration to state that the Phiabi/Ananus priestly family was waging a criminal war to the death against the family of David and the messianic followers of Jesus, using trumped-up charges, beatings, assassinations, libels, mob violence, and state executions. Why did this family have such a hatred of Jesus and the House of David?

Jesus and the family had indisputable Davidic inheritance, even if His mother Mary was accused of fornication (sex with Joseph before marriage). (Jeremias 1975, pp. 290-291) The libel that Jesus was the son of a Roman soldier named "Panthera" is without any foundation. While it was an actual name used by people of the day, the Panthera libel comes from scribal literary devices used to avoid writing forbidden names. In this case, the Greek word for "virgin" had two of its letters transposed to create the pun "Pantheros" ("all beasts" = of an unknown father = illegitimate = "child of fornication"). The rabbis considered it blasphemous to call Jesus the son of a literal "virgin" because Christians cited that as evidence of His divinity. The Greek for "virgin" in the New Testament was "Parthenos." Jewish scribes used many such fake-name devices. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 98, 284-290)

By contrast, it is now recognized that many leading scribal families themselves had intermarried with Gentiles, especially in Babylon. Moreover, the priests were also often of impure ancestry (*cf.* Ezra 9-10). (Jeremias 1975, p. 214) This was certainly true of the Phiabi clan. Josephus is quite adamant that they had less of a claim on the High Priesthood than his own family, which was Hasmonean, who were themselves not of the legitimate high priestly family line of Zadok. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 188-194, 214)

There is no Biblical "Phiabi" family, name or root word (*cf. Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*). The alternate form *Fabi* is not Jewish, but Roman. *Fabi* was a popular Roman family. Its most famous member was Quintus Fabius Maximus, the "Delayer," the general who saved Rome by delaying Hannibal's advance on the capital. (Bowder 1980, pp. 97, 193-

196) Fabius restrained Scipio Africanus, who introduced the cult of personality to the Republic, which led to rule by dictators. (Bowder 1980, pp. 195-196) Scipio subdued Asia Minor, enslaving many dispersed Israelites, including Levitical families. As adversaries of Scipio, the Fabi were viewed favorably by Jews. Marriages may have taken place between Roman Fabi men and some Levitical female lines, such as that line which produced the Phiabi/Fabi priests. To cover up such a link, they may have used the unattested etymology "Phi-Abi," meaning "House of my Father" or "House of Decision." No such place name is known. In any case, the form is Egyptian, but the Phiabi family had been in Babylon, using a Hebraic dialect in which "Phi-Abi" is not a place or name.

It seems the Fabi/Phiabi had married into the Zadokite line of Ananel in Babylon, before Herod appointed Ananel to the high Priesthood in 37 B.C. When Ananel died or was too old to continue as High Priest, Joshua ben Phiabi succeeded Ananel. In order to inherit, Joshua ben Phiabi must have married Ananel's daughter when Ananel was still in Babylon, and Ananel had later made Joshua Captain of the Temple, the heir apparent.

When Joshua ben Phiabi was made Captain of the Temple under Ananel, King Herod had not long beforehand executed a large percentage of the Sanhedrin for merely criticizing him. Moreover, Herod had also recently murdered the last Hasmonean High Priest himself, his wife's younger brother. In this terrifying situation, no one dared publicly dispute Joshua ben Phiabi's questionable genealogy.

Josephus regarded Joshua ben Phiabi's family as "low-bred" and "undeserving" of the High Priesthood. (Jeremias 1975, p. 214) If Joshua were descendant of a Roman family, that would explain his being reckoned unfit, even though, as a Zadokite on his mother's side, he ought to have been reckoned of a higher priestly caste than Josephus. It has always been a puzzle that Josephus looked down on a family that otherwise seemed to outrank him. Roman intermarriage would by itself fully explain why Josephus rejected Joshua's line. But Josephus could not spell out this in books that were paid for by the Romans. He would have been saying Romans were a Levitically impure race.

Having pagan Roman ancestry in its family may have been embarrassing for the Phiabi line. Yet during the days of Roman occupation the Phiabi/Fabi family name was a definite advantage when dealing with the empire's representatives. Still, it was not well-regarded by other priests like Josephus, who were jealous of the power the Phiabi's had achieved and who knew the Phiabis would never have been allowed to serve at all in the Temple under normal circumstances.

The Phiabi's were paranoid about the alliance that developed between Simeon Boethus (whose legitimate claim on the High Priesthood threatened the bogus Phiabi claim) and the house of David (whose legitimate claim on the kingship threatened the bogus Herodian claim). This mutual fear of a Boethian-Davidic alliance created a shared agenda between Herod's family and the Phiabi line. Joshua ben Phiabi's family tree eventually intertwined the house of Hanin/Ananus and Caiaphas and nearly every other High Priest after *A.D.* 6. When later

Herodian rulers had to choose sides, it was almost always with the house of Phiabi over the house of David. To further aid their claims, the Phiabi line married some of its many daughters to friendly Boethians, drawing them into unions that were intended to elevate the dubious status of the Phiabi family.

But none of these measures could ever totally erase the presence of Fabian Roman ancestry in their family tree. The resulting fear and insecurity led the Phiabis to resort to escalating violence in order to hold onto power. Fear leads to violence.

Intermittent acts of violence gradually evolved into continuing street combat in which the Phiabi family developed the crime of extortion. They discovered that their victims became so afraid of beatings by their gangs of hired thugs that the wealthier people offered the family money to stop the brutality. But then the Zealots and other gangs began kidnapping and murdering Phiabis. (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1977, XX:9:3-5) (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 1977, II:13:3-6)

The "protection" racket brought in a lot of revenue. What had begun as petty bullies stealing tithes eventually became full-on warfare. What had been a once or twice a year event had become daily bloodshed. (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1977, XX:9:2-7) The Phiabi's gangs of young thugs roamed the streets like a pack of wolves, looking for fresh meat to devour. And the Zealot and Sicarii rebels plundered the Phiabi crime families.

Jerusalem was becoming a city of terror. (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 1977, II:13:5)

The Phiabis were now too addicted to crime to quit, and they dared not break off support of the street gangs, who could quickly turn on them. They also realized that a tactic that brought in so much money in Jerusalem could be exported to other places like Alexandria, Cyrene and Babylon. Wherever there was a large Jewish population, there was a potential for recruiting loyal gang leaders who could extort 'tithes' from the people. It may be no accident that the Mafia, which got its ancestral start from Alexandrian gangs, adopted the same tactics and used them to exploit Italian immigrants in America.

The Phiabi family no doubt had justified their oppressive behavior by claiming (correctly) that most people were failing to pay their tithes. (*cf.* Malachi 3:7-18) So, they asserted a right to "collect" this income with the help of their gangs of enforcers.

Pagan street gangs tied to Roman politicians were already practicing extortion. This had been going on for over a century in Rome and probably other large cities. (Bowder 1980, pp. 130-131) These primitive street gangs helped politicians gain or hold onto power. Hence, they eventually transformed into political parties. In the days of Justinian in the sixth century, political gangs were still doing serious violence to the city of Constantinople. During the Nike Revolt of *A.D.* 532, the gangs destroyed many irreplaceable ancient buildings and nearly toppled the Byzantine Empire itself. (Procopius 1914, pp. 219-230)

The ranks of these violent gangs were mostly young men and teenage boys without a family. They had no father to negotiate a marriage contract, nor a wife to calm them. Most of these thugs were the sons of prostitutes or women who had been raped and abandoned with their child. Thus, one reason for pagan and Jewish societies allowing such sexual exploitation of women was because it enabled them to maintain a steady supply of angry young toughs to employ in the gangs who controlled the cities.

The moral conscience of the priestly caste had declined into depravity long before the burning of the Temple. When Jesus had confronted these men, He called them "white-washed sepulchers, full of dead men's bones" (Matthew 23:27). That is, they had killed and devoured people as if they were cannibals. Jesus called them a "generation of vipers," reptilian-like, cold-blooded killers, predators that swallow their victims whole (Matthew 12:24, 23:33). Jesus was not using hyperbole. These priests stole the Levite's tithes and then stole food from even fellow priests' families, starving them to death. He said they would "devour a widow's house" (Matthew 23:14, Mark 12:40, Luke 20:47). No one was safe, not even the very prophets of God (Matthew 23:29-37, Luke 6:23, 11:50, 13:33-34, Romans 11:3, Revelation 11:1ff, 16:6, 18:24 (in the latter cases, if Babylon is construed as Jerusalem)).

It should be clear from the preceding that Jesus and the Apostles felt there was no limit to the evil these illegitimate priests might commit to preserving their ill-gotten power and wealth. The group they were speaking about was the extended Phiabi crime family.

We are told that, after Ishmael ben Phiabi's thugs had beaten to death Barnabus at Passover of *A.D.* 61, Mark had taken his uncle's bloody body back to Cyprus for burial. Then, Lazarus arrived in Cyprus to take over the publication of the Gospel. That allowed Mark to go with Peter to Asia Minor (Turkey). It was while there, apparently, that Mark received the second part of the Revelation that warned about Babylon the Great.

We can date it by references to volcanic eruptions in the text. The Thera volcano, to the southwest of Patmos, erupted in the spring of 46, the fall of 60, and again in the spring of 64. The volcano lies on a fault line that runs right through the island of Patmos. When Thera erupts, Patmos quakes. The middle eruption, in the fall of 60, coincided with Acts 27 and Paul's shipwreck. The first and third eruptions fit volcanic events in Revelation (*A.D.* 46: Revelation 1:9-17, 20, 2:1, 5, 18, 3:20, 4:1, 8:1-9, 9:1-2, 10:11. *A.D.* 64: Revelation 11:19, 14:2, 15:8, 16:18 (19:11-14 may also have been seen at Jerusalem: p. 17 below)).

So, John Mark seems to have been given information about the destruction of Babylon the Great at the time of the spring *A.D.* 64 Thera eruption. He and Peter could not be sure which city was being described. It could be Rome, but it might also have been the city of Alexandria. There was also the possibility at that time that it might have been Jerusalem itself. They just didn't know for sure. (Robinson 1976, pp. 221-222)

We only know that they left Asia Minor, probably from the port of Ephesus, just northeast of Patmos, and sailed to Rome in the late spring of *A.D.* 64, arriving a bit before the fire that summer. We are told they were trying to warn both the Jews and the Christians to flee Rome (compare Revelation 17:5-6, 18:4-24). This early church tradition says this happened right after "the Revelation (that had been given on Patmos) to Peter and Mark, that they should advance on Rome and Alexandria" (These traditions even call Alexandria "Babylon"). (McBirnie 1973, p. 255)

The idea that Peter was also involved with John Mark's Revelation was widely believed by early Christians. Church records cite a "Revelation of Peter." Peter alluded to Revelation in his epistles (*e.g.* I Peter 1:13, 4:7, 12-13, 17-18, 5:4, 8, 13, II Peter 1:11, 19-21, 2:1-9, 3:2-13). Peter said, "no prophecy is of private interpretation." Christian prophecy required a second witness (1 Corinthians 14:22, 28-29). And, Revelation itself hints (Revelation 1:5-6) of two authors, saying God "has made us kings and priests." Furthermore, we know that Peter could never have produced Revelation alone because Peter was in his 60's, and his failing eyesight would have prevented him from writing without an assistant (I Peter 5:12). But Mark was still an active scribe in his 30's. John Mark is often identified as Peter's scribe and translator. As for Peter's name not being used, Peter had been a fugitive since *A.D.* 42; so only John Mark's name could be used in the book itself when it was written. But John Mark never says, "I alone saw these things."

After Peter died, Mark's sentence was delayed by the discovery of Piso's Conspiracy against Nero (early 65). Later in 65, Nero issued a formal edict of clemency. (Tacitus 1977, 15:71ff, pp. 380-381) Nero also officially silenced any further public comment on these events, even by Senators. (Tacitus 1977, p. 381) Then, sometime before October of *A.D.* 65, after which it was not safe to sail the Mediterranean, Mark was placed on a ship with other exiles. (Ibid. see pp. 379-381, etc.), bound for Cyrenica. (Tacitus 1977, pp. 379-381, *etc.*) (McBirnie 1973, p. 255)

The exiles were not allowed to leave the place of exile, in this case Cyrene, until after Nero's death. (Tacitus 1977, p. 380) But Aziz S. Atiya, relates "very detailed and firm traditions in Egypt among the Coptic churches" that Mark left Cyrene after "many miracles" there. (Atiya 1968, pp. 25-28) Then, he said, Mark traveled via "a circuitous route" through the desert to Alexandria (actually called "Babylon" in this ancient account), where he was martyred not long after arriving. (McBirnie 1973, pp. 254-255, 300)

The date of his martyrdom is given as *A.D.* 68, but this date was calculated based on the assumption of a Crucifixion in *A.D.* 33, then counting how many years elapsed before Mark died. (McBirnie 1973, p. 255, see also other such dates in that same book) Since we have previously shown (in *For Your Eyes-Only* reports) multiple proofs for an *A.D.* 31 Crucifixion, the correct date for Mark's death would be 66, not 68. The difference is that Mark was still condemned to exile in Cyrene in 66, because the exiles were not set free until after Nero's death in June of 68. Mark should not have been released and able to go to Alexandria in the year 66. He should have been still under guard in Cyrene.

Therefore, to be in Alexandria in the year 66, Mark must have been an escaped prisoner, having fled east into the desert, taking "a circuitous route" to avoid capture. He was only about 35 years old, young enough to go running off from his captors, able to survive in the deserts of North Africa until he could reach the Nile Valley.

Meanwhile, Mark had not been alone in Cyrene. Ishmael ben Phiabi, the High Priest, had been a hostage at the estate of Nero's wife, when Nero killed her in late spring of *A.D.* 65. With no one to protect him from Nero's wrath, Ishmael had also been exiled to Cyrene and was later beheaded there. (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 1977, VI: 2:2) This execution most likely was in late *A.D.* 66 or early *A.D.* 67, right after the war broke out in Jerusalem, because Ishmael was being held hostage to keep the Jews from revolting; once the revolt occurred, the Romans had no choice but to carry out their threat and behead Ishmael. The rest of Ishmael's family was in Jerusalem by *A.D.* 70, apparently including Hilkiah, his son, who had been the Treasurer of the Temple and hostage with his father in Rome. (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1977, XX:8:11)

We know that Ishmael and Mark were exiled about the same time. So, it appears Mark was Nero's chosen "hostage" to ensure the Christians ceased preaching, being sent into exile at Cyrene on a prison ship with Ishmael. One can only imagine how Ishmael must have cowered on board the vessel as he wondered if young Mark would take vengeance upon him for the beating of his uncle Barnabus to death, not to mention for the murder of his father Stephen. How much more might Ishmael have trembled had he known that Barnabus had been like a father to the lad and had raised him? The older man must have felt sick on the voyage as the ship heaved into the waves again and again.

But a mysterious tradition says that "The whole body of the church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation given to men of approved piety (Peter and John Mark?), before the war (before the fall of 66), removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella." (Eusebius 1979, Book III:5) After Mark had been executed in Alexandria in early 66, neither Peter's nor Mark's names could be publicly used. So, Revelation had to be blotted out 30 years, until the Apostle John re-published it, by using the unspecified name "John" in *A.D.* 96.

So, if Mark were dead in Alexandria, who warned Jerusalem?

When Mark left Rome, he may have thought that the Christians there were safe, but he still felt God had ordered him to warn the Christians of Alexandria to flee. In the Revelation, we read that Babylon the Great was near a great seaport and had a large Jewish and Christian population (*cf.* Revelation 18). Peter and Mark had "advanced on Rome and Alexandria," because they were not certain whether either one was Babylon, or if Babylon might even be Jerusalem. Mark apparently felt he had been "commanded by a divine Revelation" to warn the people of Jerusalem, not just Rome and Alexandria.

These early church accounts strongly imply the book of Revelation was the reason Mark escaped Cyrene in order to warn Christians to flee Alexandria in early 66. The "Revelation to Peter and John Mark" is mentioned by name in the accounts. The early church was aware that their readers would assume that the "Revelation" being referred to was the Book of Revelation. Yet, no attempt was made to clarify this as some other book or some other Revelation. Indeed, so certain was the tradition that such a book existed, some heretics attempted to create a fake Apocalypse of Peter text, but there was never a ruling by the Christian church itself to formally endorse any such alternative text.

It is clear Mark personally warned the church in Alexandria. But he was arrested as an escaped prisoner there and executed before he could go to Jerusalem. He was unable to warn Jerusalem in person. So, someone had to do it for him. That person went from Alexandria to Jerusalem in the spring of *A.D.* 66, apparently taking Mark's personal copy of Revelation, but he was prohibited from identifying Peter or Mark as its authors.

Peter and Mark had been officially executed and blotted out, John Mark thirty years until *A.D.* 96, and Peter (because he had a son and grandson) even longer. Any account written before that time was forbidden to use their names. Instead, it had to refer to Peter and Mark as "men of approved piety... commanded by a divine Revelation." Thereafter, the church handed down these accounts without the names of the men who received that Revelation (note again the plural "we" and "us" that John Mark used in Revelation 1:5-6). Yet, early church eyewitness authority said the Apostle John later published this Revelation.

How could this be? We know John had returned to Jerusalem after his release in Rome in *A.D.* 65. His ship from Rome may have docked in Alexandria, and John may have lingered there preaching. John must have acquired Mark's own copy of the Revelation in *A.D.* 66. So, John himself may have carried the warning to Jerusalem. The Apostle John apparently died before Peter's blotting-out expired. So, Peter's name could not be used.

Ishmael's people in Alexandria had probably visited Ishmael in Cyrene and could have seen Mark's miracles. When Mark showed up in Alexandria in 66, they would have recognized him as the escaped prisoner. It's possible that Ishmael's agents in Alexandria then identified Mark to the authorities, leading to his execution. Ishmael ben Phiabi himself would have been executed back in Cyrene less than a year later.

What did Ishmael do in his final year of life? We have a clue, but it involves another, later, High Priest named Ishmael ben Elisha, who is recorded in rabbinical writings as swearing by the High Priestly robes of his "father," whose robes scholars identify as Ishmael ben Phiabi's, not Elisha's. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 195-196)

Scholars believe High Priest Ishmael ben Phiabi must have had a grandson named after him by a son named Elisha, but that only Ishmael himself was a High Priest. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 196, 233) Ishmael's son Elisha was not named after any well-known member of the family. We

know Ishmael's son Hilkiyah was Treasurer. His eldest son probably would have been named after Ishmael's great-grandfather Joshua ben Phiabi.

So, Elisha was probably the youngest of three sons. Yet he, not his elder brothers, ended up with his father Ishmael's precious High Priestly robes. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 196, 233) Why would Ishmael have given his most precious possession to his youngest son? And how could he do this while he was in exile in Cyrene, hundreds of miles west of the Holy Land?

The High Priestly robes were breathtakingly valuable in the eyes of the Jewish people at the time, and even more important for the power of the Phiabi family. These sacred robes included four pieces of clothing (the white linen robe, the white linen trousers, the turban, and the girdle around the waist) and four items added to the robes (the golden diadem, the bejeweled breastplate, the ephod, and the shawl-like tunic draped over the head). (Jeremias 1975, p. 148n2)

That Ishmael was able to hand these sacred vestments to his descendants poses a mystery: He was followed as High Priest by half a dozen further High Priests before the Temple was destroyed. How could he possibly have kept the robes in his family while all these other families wore them?

To solve this mystery, we need to go back to the events of *A.D.* 6. A tax revolt by the Zealots in Galilee had resulted in a Roman crackdown on the Holy Land. One of the measures taken was the confiscation of the High Priestly robes by the pagan Romans, who stored them in the Antonia, their military fortress just north of the Temple. The robes remained under Roman control from *A.D.* 6 until *A.D.* 37, then again briefly during *A.D.* 44-45, being loaned by the Romans under military guard to the High Priest for his religious services. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 148-149) After *A.D.* 45, the priests had full control again.

One thing is certain: The Jews absolutely hated the very thought that unclean pagan hands might ever touch the High Priestly robes at all, much less that they would be kept in a soldier's fortress most of the time. The whole idea was utterly unthinkable.

Let there be no mistake about this. We have proof that at this very time, when the robes were kept in pagan hands, the Jews had extremely strict views about any hint of contamination that might touch the High Priest's garments. In the year *A.D.* 17 or *A.D.* 18, a casual event took place that was recorded in both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud. (Jeremias 1975, p. 153n24) The High Priest Simon ben Kamithus (probably related to the house of Annas, as a son-in-law) had just become High Priest. And this was his moment of glory, his first (and, as it turned out, only) Yom Kippur dressed in the 8 pieces of the High Priestly robes (Ibid.). Just as the evening was beginning, someone's spittle (it mattered not if it happened accidentally) landed on him, apparently from an Arabian (= a Jewish man from Petra or its Nabatean towns). He was immediately and fully disqualified from serving. (Jeremias 1975, p. 153n24) In fact, it appears he was permanently replaced by the next High Priest, Joseph Caiphas, who condemned Jesus (*cf.* John 18:13-28). (Jeremias 1975, pp. 153, 157, 159, 162)

Now if the High Priest himself could be made so totally unclean by such a minor infraction, how could the priests ever be certain that his robes had not been contaminated by the pig-eating, fornicating, unclean pagan Roman soldiers during the months these robes were out-of-sight in the Fortress Antonia?

Obviously, there was not any way to ensure the sacred purity of the robes while they were under Roman control. All the priests would have agreed with this assessment.

Yet by *A.D.* 18, within twelve years after the Romans took control of the robes, Simon ben Kamithus was completely disqualified by what could have been an accidental touch of spittle. So, how could such a minor contamination remove Simon, while years of his robes being handled by the unclean pagan Romans had been disregarded?

There is a simple solution to these mysteries. There had to be more than one set of High Priestly robes. The Jews would have been horrified by the Romans touching these sacred garments right from the start, in *A.D.* 6. The almost certain immediate reaction would have been to create a second set of robes. Indeed, every time such a crisis occurred, they could have created another copy of the High Priestly vestments.

The Romans believed they had had the Jews under their control because they held these sacred vestments. Even though they secretly had a spare set of robes, the Jews dared not reveal that fact. Once we realize that the Jews, in terror of the Romans, kept their spare set of robes secret, we can appreciate why a frequent show of street protest may have been used to keep the Romans deceived.

What all this means is that Ishmael ben Phiabi could have taken his High Priestly robes with him to Rome in *A.D.* 62, when he traveled there as part of what Josephus called a formal "delegation." Ishmael was not yet a formal prisoner. He fully expected to return home and continue to serve as High Priest. He may have felt that by wearing the sacred vestments he would impress Nero as if he were a head of state. Moreover, by taking the robes with him, he could forestall any attempt to replace him while he was gone. And he could also argue that Nero needed to let him return before the fall feasts.

Unfortunately, Nero viewed this show of sacred glamor as a sign that Ishmael would make an even better hostage than just the robes themselves. Poppaea was also very impressed, it seems, and requested her husband Nero let Ishmael and his son be held at her estate outside Rome. Nero granted this. Then a year and a half later, Peter and John Mark showed up in Rome, warning that a Revelation from God had shown them that the city might be about to burn and that Jews and Christians should flee Rome at once. It seems that the warning came just days before the fire, leaving little time for anyone to escape. The Christians clearly failed to leave in time, including Peter and Mark, for Nero soon rounded them up and began executing them for starting the fire. If Peter had arrived and started preaching about a fire just days before it broke

out, that would certainly explain Nero's willingness to believe they had something to do with what happened.

But after Piso's Conspirators confessed, even boasted, that they had been plotting to set fire to Nero's palace (which did happen) and kill him, Nero realized too late that the Christians were innocent. He must have then learned something, however, that made him think ill of Poppaea and Ishmael, because Nero next turned his wrath on them.

When Ishmael had been told back in Rome that he would not be returning home to Jerusalem for the fall feasts of *A.D.* 62, the new High Priest, Joseph Cabi, was allowed to use a spare set of robes. Some of the garments may even have been made new for him. We know that an undergarment, not one of the eight sacred portions, was apparently created for such occasions. (Jeremias 1975, p. 97) Given the variations in the stature and girth of the priests, we may assume that it was not uncommon for each High Priest to also require his own white linen trousers and turban, for example.

This means that Ishmael may have been wearing his own sacred robes into exile in Cyrene, or at least, he was able to take them with him when he left Rome in *A.D.* 65. They represented the one valuable asset he had left to bargain with, and it seems doubtful that he would simply have handed them over to Hilkiah to take back to Jerusalem. He would have hung onto those robes at all costs, planning to part with them only at death. They were his only insurance policy. Wearing the robes, for example, might help protect him from being scourged by the Romans, which was itself often fatal.

Thinking of the Piso Conspiracy, Ishmael hoped that Nero might be assassinated, for Ishmael knew Nero's death would result in his immediate freedom. The sacred vestments might help keep Ishmael alive long enough to outlast Nero.

Meanwhile, Ishmael could promise that after he died, he would leave the robes to whichever son pleased him the most. He could use the robes to coax his sons to come and see him, bring him gifts in his exile, and perform special missions for him.

We know that Elisha, not Hilkiah or any of his other potential heirs, ultimately had received the sacred vestments from Ishmael. What had Elisha done that outshone all the other heirs? How had he so impressed his father that Ishmael willed them to him?

One thing we have seen is that Ishmael's lifetime vendetta against the family of Jesus had made him paranoid about possible reprisals against him and his sons by the Christians. He and the rest of the Phiabi clan had murdered or tried to kill at least a dozen members of John Mark's extended family: Zacharias, Jesus, Stephen, James the Greater, James the Less, Barnabus, Peter, Lazarus, and John. There were also various women relatives driven to an early grave in Gaul: Mary, Mary Magdalene, Martha, and Salome. Beyond these were surely many more of John Mark's family members whose names are not recorded.

It may be that Ishmael and Mark shared their exile under common house arrest in Cyrene. Every time Ishmael looked at Mark, he would have wondered what the young man was thinking, what he might be plotting against him. It never crossed his mind that Mark might simply be praying for him and trying to forgive him, much less that he was more concerned about getting the Revelation warning out to Alexandria and Jerusalem.

Seeing Nero rebuild Rome so quickly made Mark question if it were Babylon the Great. By the fall of *A.D.* 65, Nero's edict of clemency freed the Christians. But it also imposed a "silence" upon them, for which Mark was exiled to Cyrene as a hostage with Ishmael. Mark realized Christians would not stifle the Gospel to save him, nor would he have wanted them to do so. His grandfather Peter had just given his own life to prove that point, and had always said, "We ought to obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29)

Then one cloudy day, while the Roman guards may have been dozing off a big meal, Mark made a run for it. Before Ishmael realized what was going on, Mark had bolted over the wall, eluded the guards, and had fled east toward the desert. It must have been during the winter of 65-66, between his arrival in Cyrene and his execution in Alexandria the following spring. The desert would have been cooler, easier to cross in January. The sun was lower, less glaring, and it set sooner. He could travel by night, and tradition says he fled "from oasis to oasis." (McBirnle 1973, p. 255)

Was Elisha visiting with his father that winter day? Was it mere luck that gave him his opportunity to impress his father? Something had worked in his favor.

Perhaps he had gone to Ishmael and asked him outright, "If I can catch Mark, father, if I can bring him back, or make sure that he can never trouble you again, will you promise me the sacred vestments?"

"Why, well... uh, yes, maybe," Ishmael may have fumbled. "If you can really do that, and survive, then after I pass away, they could be yours." The scheming old goat probably thought the youth was mad to think he could find Mark in the vast Libyan Desert. "Be careful, my son! He's very clever..."

"But I have an advantage over him."

"What advantage?"

"I know where he is going!"

"How so, my son?"

"I know you warned me not to listen to him, but I heard him speak of needing to warn the Christians of Alexandria to flee just as he did in Rome. Wherever he may be now, he is going to end up in Alexandria, and when he does, I will be waiting for him!"

And with that, Elisha went north to take the coastal road to Alexandria. While Mark was meandering breathlessly through the desert to elude the Roman authorities, Elisha took a leisurely journey along the seacoast, arriving well ahead of him.

But the traditions say Mark had deliberately headed into Egypt well south of Alexandria, and so came up to the city via the Nile River Valley. (McBirnie 1973, p. 255) If Elisha were watching the desert, he might have missed Mark's arrival. That provided just enough time for Mark to present his Revelation message to the Christian community.

Mark could not do it publicly in any case. Not only was he now personally a wanted fugitive, but as we saw, Nero had imposed a ban of silence upon Christian preaching and publication at the time of his exile. So, everything Mark now did had to be done inside of homes and other safe places, behind closed doors.

Alexandria was one of the three or four largest cities in the Roman world. Elisha realized he would need to create a network of spies to catch Mark. It was not as easy as he had originally thought. The strategy would require infiltrating Christian gatherings. But once again Elisha had an advantage; he knew what Mark would be preaching.

Even if Mark disguised himself, his message gave him away. Elisha likely told his growing network of spies: "Find the message, and you will find the man!"

And they did. It must have been very near Passover of *A.D.* 66. Possibly Mark may have been trying to sneak out of Alexandria in a crowd of Jews headed to Jerusalem for the feast. It should have worked. But Elisha's spies were too numerous, their infiltration too great, for Mark to pass unnoticed. Mark was arrested.

The Apostle John was apparently there, because he ended up with Mark's original text of Revelation. (Revelation 1:1-3, *cf.* 22:19). So, Mark was able to hand the precious manuscript off to John, who had two challenges. First, he had to conceal it from Elisha's spies, and second, he had to hide it from Alexandrian customs authorities, who seized undeclared books and deposited them in the Great Library. (*The Catholic Encyclopedia* 1913, Vol. 1, p. 303a, "Alexandrian Library,")

We know John was successful because we now have Revelation in our Bibles. Had John failed, we might have lost it forever, captured and burned by Elisha, or confiscated for the Library, which later burned in a Persian attack in the third century.

John made it safely to Jerusalem and warned Christians to flee, which they did by fall, some months after Mark's execution. John may have been heard by the Jews as well, because, unlike Rome or Alexandria, thousands of Jews and all of the Christians ("the whole body of the church") did in fact flee Jerusalem in time. As Josephus stated, thousands of "the wise" felt an "urgency" to leave the city before the war. (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 1977, VI:5:2-3)

And while natural portents occurred before and after the fire of Rome in 64 or the events in Alexandria, Josephus reported dire preternatural warnings given to Jerusalem in the years before the war. (Tacitus 1977, XV:34, 46-47; XVI:13)

For example, a sword-like star stood over the city and a comet was visible from Jerusalem for a year (some think this was Halley's Comet, but the time of visibility seems too long). A brilliant light turned night into day for about 30 minutes around the Temple at Passover of *A.D.* 66 (when Mark died). Also at that Passover, the heavy bronze Temple gate opened at midnight by itself. At Pentecost, just before the war (when the Christians fled), the voices of a multitude were heard by the priests in the inner court, saying, "Let us go forth!" One day, *c. A.D.* 64, bizarre atmospheric images at sunset showed detailed scenes of an apocalyptic celestial battle. Armor and chariots were seen clearly, witnesses said (*cf.* Rev 19:11-14. see John's *A.D.* 64 event, above). (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 1977, VI:5:3)<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the rabbis said the "Shekinah Glory," the Holy Spirit glow in the Holy of Holies was seen to leave the Temple at Passover in *A.D.* 63 (when James was executed). It crossed the Kidron, ascended Olivet and hovered for 3½ years until the war (at the summit where Jesus was crucified). (Martin 1996, pp. 167-168) Revelation prophesies similar great signs for our time.

The Phiabis barely escaped to Yavneh in *A.D.* 70, but Ishmael did not live to see it. His son Elisha did, however. The amazing, infamous, and highly-censored things Elisha and his own son did to the Christians and the Romans in the next century will be unveiled in the next installment of this saga, in *EO-29: Revenge of The Phiabis*.

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<sup>1</sup> Josephus was away from Judea at the time, between mid-62 AD and mid-65 AD, yet it was not long before the *A.D.* 66 war. So, it was at the latter end of his time in Rome: *c. A.D.* 64 = Thera's third eruption.

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# The Etymology of the Phiabi Family Name

## Possible Origin of the Roman Fabi Name

In Report # 28, we showed that the Phiabi name was not based upon any Hebrew usage. There is no related Hebrew root. The Phi prefix is Egyptian, meaning "house" or "place." A very few loan words from Egypt had adopted this form, for example, the Egyptian Bubastis ("House of Bas't") became the Hebrew *Pi-Beseth*.

But the situation in Latin not much better. The Latin word *Fabi* seems to be derived from the Latin *Fabus* for "broad bean." But there is only one other Latin word remotely like it, namely *fabula*, meaning fable. There seems to be no link among these words.

Likewise, those who believe Latin derives from Semitic languages, such as the Phoenician tongue, will be disappointed as well. No source exists for *Fabi* in any Semitic language. We must look elsewhere for the origin of *Phiabi* or *Fabi*.

There is one ancient culture which could explain everything: Egypt.

Egypt is famous for being the first, or among the first, to develop agriculture, as early as 18,000 years ago. Cultivating grain was a great leap forward for civilization. But "man does not live by bread (grain) alone." (Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4, Luke 4:4) It generally lacks the proper balance of amino acids, providing an incomplete protein. To balance it, one needs a legume, such as the *Fabus* bean. We can be confident, therefore, that the Egyptians also cultivated beans. The Nile River supplied water for both grain and beans, completing the protein so essential for building the pyramids.

The Egyptians nicknamed the Nile "Hapy" and could have called the origin of the Nile, upstream in Ethiopia, "Bhi-Hapy" (pun intended), meaning "House of Hapy" or "Home of the Nile." The root "Hap" seems to mean "good luck" (*cf. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*).

Rendered into Etruscan or early Latin, Bhi-Hapy might have become Fi-Hapy or Fiapi, hence, Fabi. The family of Joshua ben Phiabi seems to have been using the standard Hebraic form, Phi-Hapy or Phiabi: "Home of the Nile."

Here's what appears to have taken place:

The Romans at an early date imported the Tuscany red Fava bean from Egypt, which attributed its cultivation to Ethiopia. It soon naturally became the Latin word for this bean, which dominated Italian bean cultivation in northern Italy. The Fabi family may have played a role in Fava bean cultivation in Italy, thereby acquiring the nickname "Fabi." Inter-marriage with

a Levite clan then passed the name onto the Phiabi priestly family in Babylon, one or more of whose sons then married into the house of Phiabi.

As a side-note, the famous Roman orator Cicero was named after the garbanzo bean or chickpea, which is called *cicer* in Latin. Perhaps his family had once been known for farming the ceci (pronounced chi-chi) or "chick" bean.

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