

# The Lost Temple of Hadrian

*& Other Secrets*

By Olaf H. Hage III

The Phiabis, who was not a legitimate High Priestly line, was first appointed by King Herod the Great, an Edomite. The Zealots (who championed their own branch of the House of David) had already revolted when Herod was ruling only Galilee, where the Zealots originated. Herod had hired spies and Sicarii assassins, but after Herod died, the Phiabis acquired their own gang of spies and thugs. Most High Priests thereafter were Phiabi-related. The conflict escalated until the Zealots eventually began assassinating them.

In A.D. 29, Simon the Cananite, a Zealot, married a sister of Jesus at Cana. The 30-year blotting-out of Zealots after the 1 B.C. war had not yet expired, requiring John to omit his name as the bridegroom at Cana. The Phiabis may have mistakenly assumed from Simon the Zealot's marriage that Jesus and his family were linked to Zealot attacks on Phiabi priests. Since the Zealots hid out in mountain caves, the Phiabis chose to retaliate against the House of David by targeting the more accessible family of Jesus.

When Jesus' family scattered far beyond Palestine, the Phiabis had to target those who were less closely related, such as Barnabus. They beat him to death in the spring of A.D. 61, when he and his nephew John Mark tried to smuggle copies of the Gospel of Mark and the first half of Revelation into Jerusalem. Since only the copy of Mark buried with Barnabus survived, we can infer that the books were seized and Barnabus died mere days before the blotting-out of Jesus' name was due to expire at Passover that year.

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To learn more about Olaf Hage's research, read his website or email us at:

<http://olafhage.com> [olafhage@whitestonefoundation.org](mailto:olafhage@whitestonefoundation.org)

A pagan assault on non-Holy Family Christians did not begin until Mark had received the rest of Revelation in the spring of *A.D.* 64 when he and Peter went to Rome to warn the Jews and the Christians to flee. When Rome burned, the Phiabis there were horrified and tried to explain away Mark's prophecy by attributing his powers to demonic spirits, determining that Christianity was a form of witchcraft, and was therefore punishable by death under the Law of Moses. They thought to have pagans like Nero kill Christians was an acceptable way to exterminate what they felt was a deadly demonic contagion.

This decision had severe implications for Jews who converted to Christianity, but still lived among Jewish people. The Phiabis became paranoid that Jews were in grave spiritual danger. They issued strict detailed rules to keep Jews from any "contaminating contact" with Christians. Yet, conversions escalated, especially among Hellenistic Jews.

The Phiabis had barely escaped the Jerusalem siege in *A.D.* 70. They felt God had rescued them and had thereby declared their views correct, and therefore, inspired. So, rabbis like Phiabi priest Ishmael ben Elisha could thereby justify promulgating rules that would later result in massacres of Jewish people who had become Christians or were reckoned heretics. After the Roman war, Jews were blotted out and forbidden to convert others. So, the harsh Phiabi rulings, by which they governed Jewish people in exile, were handed down orally. Some of their rulings were later written down in the *Mishnah Torah* ("Oft-Repeated (=Memorized) Torah" or "Second (oral) Torah"). Its text assumed, but never asserted, the authority of post-*A.D.* 70 rabbis. About a third of this Mishnah Torah comes from Phiabi-connected rabbis prior to *A.D.* 135. Then there are interspersed rulings from newer groups of rabbis who emerge after *A.D.* 135. The whole collection was published in the Mishnah *c.* *A.D.* 192-195, when 60 years of Roman blotting-out of Jewish writings elapsed after the *A.D.* 132-135 war. (Neusner, *Invitation to the Talmud* 1989, pp. 28-34)

During their long absence from Jerusalem, the Phiabis had plenty of time to ponder their return. They also had time to acquire enormous wealth and power by using their own Torah rulings to keep the Jewish people restricted to those *kosher* goods that only the extended Phiabi family imported and that only their own rabbis certified. As a result, the Phiabis had effectively monopolized Jewish commerce by running a "company store" system that kept Jewish people from buying from any other source but 'kosher' ones controlled by the Phiabis themselves. Only by such means could the Phiabi priest "Harsum" have acquired an armada of 1,000 ships and have gained "ownership" of 1,000 indebted towns and a huge, widely-scattered army of slaves.

In the second century, the Phiabis, laying claim to their High Priestly descent, declared a Jubilee return to Palestine, starting in *A.D.* 115. But they rejected letting Hellenist Jews or Jewish Christians return with them. They wanted to quietly evacuate their people, but keep the "heretics" from following. With pagan gangs at hand, the Phiabis left the pagans to pillage the evacuated Jewish neighborhoods, which led to mass killings of the left-behind "heretics." Such lethal strategies had been endorsed in their rabbinical rulings. As Edersheim said: "(Even) if a

heretic returned to the true (Jewish) faith, he should die at once...(and) all means for their escape removed ((e.g. evacuation by the Phiabi armada))." (Martin 2000, p. 71)

Emil Schürer, in his massive five-volume Judaic history, concluded that Hellenistic Judaism totally vanished by *A.D.* 135. (Schürer 1995, I: 2: 319) These Hellenists were no threat to Rome or Christianity. But the strict Phiabi rabbis hated them. Like the Jewish Christians who vanished from Palestine at that time, or the other Jewish "heretics" who vanished from Cyrenaica, Egypt, and Cyprus in 115-117 AD, Greek-speaking Hellenist Jews were effectively doomed by then-secret Phiabi rulings. Not until *c. A.D.* 195, in the *Mishnah*, where these oral rulings published (and even then, only in Hebrew).

By the third century, Phiabi rabbis had become folk heroes to the Jewish people. In the *Mishnah*, their rulings were edited and arranged by topic, preventing casual readers from realizing the secret war the Phiabis had waged against dissident Jews who dared deviate from them. Only when all the Phiabi rulings are followed separately throughout the record does their systematic campaign against dissident Jews become clear. (Sanders 1993, pp. 61-66, especially 65) Compare Jack Sanders' writings with Josephus' accounts of Phiabi abuse of other priests; cf. the Lament (see below) about Phiabi beatings that continued under Elisha's "house" during the exile for two decades after the Jubilee massacres.

The Phiabi leopards had not changed their spots. They persistently persecuted their Jewish adversaries, starting in 1 B.C., when Zacharias was slain between the Altar and the Holy Place, on down through Phiabi raids on the tithes and their persecutions of the House of David and the family of Jesus (*cf.* Matthew 23:35, Luke 11:51). They continued eliminating their Jewish enemies after the War, with the massacres of Jewish dissidents in *A.D.* 115-117, culminating in Bar Kokhba's official executions of Jewish Christians in Palestine from *A.D.* 132-135. Along the way, as Schürer noted, Hellenist Judaism was also eliminated.

Yet, the Phiabis were not valid priests of Zadok nor even fully Israelite, being of Roman Fabian lineage. In their desperate attempt to create the illusion of a legitimacy they could never actually achieve, the Phiabis pretended to be more righteous and *Kosher* than the genuine Israelites they killed. So, they promulgated extremely strict rulings, while suppressing all dissenting groups (*cf.* Mt 23:1-39).

The Phiabis saw the world structured in layers of initiates. At the top innermost layer were intimate members of the Phiabi family leadership. Then, came priestly and pure Israelite allies who were marriageable insiders. Next, came the allies among the Israelites who were not part of the leadership circle, but were loyal to the Phiabi family. Below this group was the larger populations of Jewish families that adhered to the Phiabis, but whose purity and loyalty might be in some doubt. Among the lowest-ranking of these were members of the Edomite lines who had converted centuries before.

Below these layers the Phiabis ranked those with a severe "blemish." (Jeremias 1975, pp. 275-358) Highest-ranking were exiled Jews of a doubtful bloodline who remained loyal to the rabbis. Next, came freed Jewish slaves who pledged full loyalty to the family. Then, came

converts from the Gentiles. All these were considered Jewish by outsiders, but were not usually reckoned strictly genuine by the Phiabis.

Always keep in mind that the Phiabi family itself had gentile ancestry from the Roman Fabi line. This illegitimacy caused the Phiabis to live in a state of continual paranoia that they might lose everything they had acquired.

The next layer included two groups Phiabis denied were Jewish, but which pagans often grouped with them for various reasons. The first group was the Samaritans, who considered themselves part of Israel. But, they were viewed as deluded non-Jews by the Phiabis. The Phiabis were willing to spare their lives and allow them to live in separate enclaves in Galilee as long as they supported Phiabi causes. The second group was made up of various local pagan gangs paid by the Phiabis. Because they did the Phiabis bidding, the Romans often viewed them as effectively part of the "Jewish" world.

Ordinary pagans who were not manifesting spiritual activity, such as most Greek students of Philosophy, the Stoics, and similar groups, were considered "safer" for Jewish converse. They were deemed not to have been severely contaminated by evil spirits.

But, below them came to those people utterly hated and feared by the Phiabis. Most despised were Jewish converts to Christianity, primarily from among the Hellenistic exiles. Pagans sometimes confused them with being Jews since they often continued to live in Jewish communities, even after the Phiabis had made them unclean for any Jewish contact. For a time, the pagans also assumed Gentile Christians to be "Jewish." But, the Phiabis excommunicated all Christians, declaring them to be possessed by "demons of witchcraft." When ex-Jewish Gnostics manifested certain spiritual phenomena (or at least claimed to channel spirits), they were added to the groups considered dangerous demonic heretics by the Phiabis. These "heretical" former Jews were subject to a death sentence if caught practicing within Phiabi-controlled areas in the years before *A.D.* 135.

The killing of Christians and others hated by the Phiabis came in several stages. The first executions targeted individuals like Jesus, Stephen, and James. Next came the mass arrests of their families, such as those conducted by Saul. Christians of a city could be falsely accused, as happened in Rome in *A.D.* 64. Then, came the strategy of getting Roman decrees issued against targets like the House of David, such as Vespasian issued *c. A.D.* 70. The massacres of *A.D.* 115-117 involved evacuation of loyal Jews while leaving behind those groups the Phiabis did not want to be rescued from the pagan gangs. But in the end, during the Bar Kokhba regime of *A.D.* 132-135, the Phiabis resorted to open persecution, torture, and official execution of Jewish Christians under their jurisdiction.

Yet, during much of this carnage, the Romans were oddly patient, as if they did not wish to interfere. For example, when the massacres began in *A.D.* 115, the Emperor Trajan did nothing. He did not act until early *A.D.* 117. Then, he ordered his top cavalry officer to "sweep" all the Jews in the Fertile Crescent back into the Holy Land, whether they wanted to go or not. We know the Phiabis had already been ferrying Jews to Palestine for nearly two years by the time

Trajan obligingly ordered his general to force the remaining reluctant Babylonian Jews to join the Phiabis in Palestine.

The Phiabis shipping empire had little influence in the valley of Mesopotamia. Many of the Jewish people there were quite comfortable with their lives and showed no desire to move to Palestine. For example, during the centuries after Babylon had carried the Jews captive in the days of the prophet Daniel, and even during the lifetime of Jesus, upwards of a million or more Jews had remained in Babylon and nearby places of exile. Nothing had been able to dislodge them and lure them back to the Holy Land. Even today, most Jews still live outside modern Israel and have no real plan to move there.

The problem the Phiabis faced was that they needed the tithes and labor of large numbers of Jewish people in order to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. But several things had reduced the available pool of Jewish families. First, the Jewish War of *A.D.* 66 had resulted in 1.1-million dead, according to Josephus. Second, hundreds of thousands more were sold into slavery or had apostatized, intermarried, or converted to Christianity. Third, at least half a million died in the massacres of *A.D.* 115-117. And finally, most of the rest were living comfortably in exile and did not want to move back to Palestine.

Decades of peace had given the Jews time to rebuild their numbers from the War, but the new Jewish children had grown up in exile without ever knowing Jerusalem. Getting them to want to leave a familiar exile and go to rubble-strewn Palestine was not easy. In retrospect, we can see that the Phiabis used the specter of pagan massacres to frighten exiles into boarding their ships in the middle of the night with whatever belongings they could carry, paying the Phiabis for their rescue. It was a clever scheme.

When “rescued” Jews learned of the Jewish Christians who were killed by the local pagan gangs, they rejoiced that the Phiabis had saved them just in time. Few may have suspected any Phiabi link to the massacres until after the Phiabis openly sponsored Bar Kokhba torture and execution of Jewish Christians in Palestine. It was about that time that the second, updated version of the anti-Phiabi Lament appeared, which spoke of the evils of Elisha’s High Priestly family. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 195, 195n, 196)

Woe to me because of the House of Boethus.  
Woe to me for their evil speaking (vs. the original “lances,”  
showing a more favorable view of the Boethians by the early  
second century).

“Woe to me because of the House of Alhanin (Rabbi Joshua ben  
Haninniah was a Captain of the Temple under Ishmael ben  
Elisha from c. A.D. 118-130).  
Woe to me because of their slanders.  
Woe to me because of the House of Kantheras.  
Woe to me because of their reed pens (*i.e.* libels).

Woe to me because of the House of Elisha (Ishmael ben Phiabi's son's family). (Implying a new Phiabi Temple under Hadrian, starting *c. A.D.* 118),  
 Woe to me because of their fist (Elisha's sons' brutality).  
 Woe unto me because of the House of Ishmael ben Phiabi.  
 For they are the High Priests, and their sons-in-law are Overseers, and their sons are Treasurers and their servants beat us with clubs (under Elisha's family in Palestine, between *c. A.D.* 118-135)."

From this second version of the Lament we learn that Elisha served as a High Priest in what must have been a rebuilt Temple. So, did others of his family, including the known High Priest and Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha, who here seems to have served as Elisha's Treasurer and perhaps briefly as Captain of the Temple, the enforcer in charge of his club-wielding servants. Another High Priest was Elisha's kin, Elazar ben Harsum. At some point, Elazar ben Harsum had to be Captain of the Temple under Ishmael ben Elisha, in order to serve as High Priest (around *A.D.* 130).

There is also a possible indirect reference in this revised *Lament* to the priest Joshua ben Hananiah, teacher of the anti-Christian Phiabi rabbi and later High Priest, Ishmael ben Elisha. (Edersheim 1962, p. 169) (Jeremias 1975, pp. 161f., 175n82) Hananiah, who died *c. A.D.* 130, is repeatedly said to have served as a Captain of the Temple. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 6, 104, 161-163, 161n47, 233) Since he was also chief Nasi, or "Prince," of the exiled rabbis at Yavneh after *A.D.* 110, he could not have been much more than 80 years old at his death, making him too young to have been Captain of the Temple that burned in *A.D.* 70. Thus, he could only have served in a later rebuilt Temple, that is, between *c. A.D.* 118-130.

The rest of the updated Lament seems to have watered down criticism of the previous High Priestly houses in order to show how much worse Elisha's family "now" was (his family was in power in the *A.D.* 118-135 period when this revision was made). With this eye-witness record in hand, we can look for additional evidence of the Elisha family serving as priests in a rebuilt Temple. This new Temple would have been built under Emperor Hadrian (he ruled in *A.D.* 117-138), and therefore, must have existed between *A.D.* 117 (earliest date it could be built) and *A.D.* 135 (by which date Hadrian had it destroyed).

We can be precise about the Temple's construction time-frame because of the Lament names Elisha as a High Priest, as do other rabbinical texts. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 196n, 233n) Given that Elisha's father, Ishmael ben Phiabi, was beheaded in *A.D.* 66, and Elisha had received Ishmael's High Priestly robes, Elisha must have been 20+ years old by *A.D.* 66 (old enough to be a priest). (Jeremias 1975, pp. 158n37, 196n159) So, it follows that, by *A.D.* 117, the first year when a new Temple might have been built in which Elisha could have served, Elisha would have then been at least 70 years old. Elisha could not have served but briefly at that age, and it follows that the Temple must have been rebuilt near the beginning of Hadrian's reign, which began in August of *A.D.* 117.

Is there any record of such a rebuilding? Yes indeed, Schürer relates (skeptically) that a "late" rabbinical commentary contains the following tradition (in his words):

...in the days of Joshua ben Hananiah (died *c. A.D.* 130), that is, in the time of Hadrian (after mid-*A.D.* 117), the pagan government (Rome) had granted (to the Jews) authority to proceed (as if already underway) with the building of the Temple. But the Samaritans (protested) against the enterprise. And in consequence... the Emperor had not indeed withdrawn the permission, but issued a (second) decree that the new (Temple) building should not be erected precisely on the site of the old Temple... Then the Jews gathered (in protest). But Rabbi Joshua (ben Hananiah), in order to quiet them, told them... they ought to be glad if they were allowed to live in peace under a heathen government." (Schürer 1995, I:2:289, 289n60, citing *B'Rashith Rabba c. 64*)

The tradition was recorded in Medieval times, but the details match up with the rest of our evidence. (Neusner, *Rabbinic Judaism* 1995, p. 217, citing a fourth-century text) The text makes two key points: That Hadrian ordered the new Temple be built near, but not "precisely" on, the old Temple site, and that construction began when R. Joshua was still vigorous enough to quiet an angry mob, *i.e.* well before *A.D.* 130.

Therefore, even after all those claimed "revolts" against Roman rule, the Jews were not only resettled in their homeland, but they were also allowed to build a Temple in Jerusalem, albeit not "precisely" on the earlier site.

There is considerable controversy about this Temple. Our rabbinical witness says that Hadrian, who became Emperor immediately after the Jews were resettled in Palestine, issued an initial order allowing them to rebuild the Temple in its previous location. (Schürer 1995, I:2:289, citing *Genesis Rabba c. 64*) That original site is generally believed by most scholars to have been where the Dome of the Rock now stands (= "the abomination ("the thing hated" by the Jews to this day) that makes desolate" (keeps the Rock "bare and empty," as indeed it still does); *cf.* Matthew 24:15).

However, when there were protests to Hadrian about this location, Hadrian decided to modify his decree to say, "that the new building should not be erected precisely on the site of the old Temple." (Schürer 1995, I:2:289, citing *Genesis Rabba c. 64*) This led to Jewish protests, but Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah, who later became Captain of that new Temple, convinced them to be satisfied with the situation. (Schürer 1995, I:2:289, citing *Genesis Rabba c. 64*) Several early Christian reports from *A.D.* 100-400 also claim the Jews then built or tried to build a new Temple at about this same time. (Schürer 1995, pp. 289-290, 290n62-63, 302, 302n93)

Scholars do not agree on whether this happened; some think it was indeed built, but skeptics doubt it. (Schürer 1995, esp. p. 302)

But, all this uncertainty is unnecessary. Multiple rabbinical sources insist that Elisha's son Ishmael served as High Priest, even on Yom Kippur, requiring him to enter a Holy of Holies in a new Temple. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 97, 175n82, 233) We have still other references to this same Ishmael, who was executed under Hadrian in *A.D.* 135, having served in a standing Temple. (Martin 2000, pp. 314-315)

Back in *A.D.* 115-117, when Phiabi “rescue” evacuations from coastal cities like Alexandria had been carried out by the Golden Armada, their vast 1,000-ship merchant fleet, the Jewish refugees saw the Phiabis as great heroes. Hence, it would have taken little encouragement only one or two years later to accept Elisha and his son Ishmael as High Priests. However, if they indeed served as High Priests, as all subsequent Talmudic Rabbis insisted, the Temple must have been rebuilt early in Hadrian's reign.

As noted, we are expressly told by the rabbinical source that Hadrian had decreed that this rebuilt Phiabi Temple could not be constructed “precisely” where the previous one had stood. (Schürer 1995, I: 2: 289)

So, where was this rebuilt Temple that both early Jewish and Christian sources declare was built and used? The late Ernest L. Martin, who conducted explorations in the Jerusalem area, wrote his last book (*The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot*) about his theory that the Temples had all stood just south of the Dome of the Rock. This more southerly site was over the Gihon spring (the only significant water source than in the city).

But much of Dr. Ernest Martin's key evidence was based on the location where rabbis said Ishmael's rebuilt Phiabi Temple had been placed. That site was indeed about where Ernest Martin located the Temples, but the rabbinical evidence expressly states that the rebuilt Phiabi Temple was not in the same location as the previous Temples. (Martin 2000, pp. 314-315) (Schürer 1995, I:2:289)

So, the Phiabi Temple built in Hadrian's day was just south of the Dome, because it was personally forbidden by the Emperor himself, when he was in Jerusalem, to erect it precisely where the Herodian Temple had stood, that is, over the current Dome of the Rock location. Thus, Ernest Martin's final book was in error about the previous Temples. Only the Phiabi Temple built under Hadrian actually stood over the Gihon spring.

From the Talmud, we know the Phiabis were also allowed to conduct the Temple services, including the rituals of Yom Kippur. (Martin 2000, p. 314) Moreover, they were allowed to keep control of the High Priestly robes worn by their forefathers. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 97, 196n, 233n) And as Captain of the Temple, Joshua ben Hananiah would have had his own armed servants to patrol the holy site. The Lament quoted above indicates that these armed men did not hesitate to use violence against the people.



Restoring the Phiabis and their loyal followers to Jerusalem, a rebuilt Temple, the renewing of tithes and their High Priesthood... all these things were rewards to the Phiabis, but for what? What had they done for the Romans that they rewarded them?

The Romans had (as of late *A.D.* 111) been persecuting Christians. (Benko 1984, p. 5) Trajan was then Emperor, until his death in mid-*A.D.* 117. Although Trajan limited the kind of rumor that could be used to accuse Christians, he kept an Empire-wide death penalty for Christians. (Benko 1984, pp. 6-7) He wanted to be seen as generous and kind while executing Christians. But the fact is, Roman officials were worried that, because of Christian preaching, no one was offering sacrifices in the pagan temples anymore, especially the offerings that resulted in revenues flowing back to Rome. (Benko 1984, pp. 6-7)

So, the Romans were eager to crush the Christian influences that were costing them money. If the Phiabis could eliminate the Jewish heart of Christianity and hand over control of the copper mines on Cyprus to the Romans, then all these things were worth a big reward. Being allowed to return to the Holy Land, resettle it, and rebuild a Temple and conduct services were exactly the rewards the Phiabis most hoped for.

Once the Phiabis returned to Palestine and rebuilt the Temple, they launched another purge, hunting down and eliminating all the Christians in Palestine who had escaped the earlier pogroms. When they targeted these victims, they seemed to be confident the Romans would not object as long as the victims were Jewish Christians.

In addition, the Talmud gives no hint the Phiabi family lost a single drachma of its investment in ships or real estate until they lost the Bar Kokhba War in *A.D.* 135. (Jeremias 1975, p. 99) The Talmud refers to the Phiabi family still owning at least a thousand ships almost twenty years after the massacres began in *A.D.* 115. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 97n, 99) They were still in the international shipping trade long after they evacuated Cyrene, Alexandria, and Antioch. Their vast shipping empire continued to function intact. The only difference is that after the massacres they depended even more upon local pagan gangs and other Phiabi agents to run the operation. This reveals that perhaps only a few days after the pagan gangs had butchered and feasted upon all those Jewish Christians, they went back to work loading and unloading the same old Phiabi slave ships and the same old Phiabi non-kosher cargo vessels.

Because these gangs were working with the Phiabi merchant marine before and after the massacres, it is credible that they were also working for them, and thus, in some way compensated for their efforts, during the massacres, when they killed all those Jewish Christians. It is hard to see any way around this observation. The Phiabis hands might be physically clean of all that blood, but their money surely was not.

The Talmud boasts of the family's armada of vessels, an exceedingly dangerous claim in a world eager to tax the Jews and confiscate their wealth for trivial reasons. The only way this boat would have been safe to make would have been if it were common knowledge that the boast was true and that all those ships had already fallen into Roman hands after the War in *A.D.* 135. But if the Romans already possessed all the Phiabi wealth, then the boast of a thousand ships may

have been a modest one. Had it been an exaggeration, the Romans would have come looking for the extra ships which would have been deemed lacking in their inventory of booty from the War. So, we may assume there had actually been over a thousand ships, and that the Romans had seized all of them. The Talmudic claim of a thousand ships must therefore be an understatement.

During the exodus of *A.D.* 115-117, the Phiabis and their wealth and were safe, far away from the rioting seaports, while their hired gangs of local thugs did their dirty work. When the massacres ended, the Phiabis were unscathed, claiming no involvement in the bloodletting. Roman historians were not fooled. They suspected Jewish leaders behind the massacres, but the identities and motives were vague. (Edersheim 1962, pp. 182-187)

Meanwhile, wave after wave of exiles was ferried back to what was then called Syria and Palestine, depending upon where they ended up. And what were the Romans doing while all this was happening?

The Roman Emperor Trajan was deep in the heart of western Asia, seemingly having a good time leading the main Roman army on horseback. He had joined them just outside of Antioch and had led them up onto the Turkish plateau, across the hill country of Asia Minor, then back down the valley of the Euphrates toward the Persian Gulf. He fancied himself a military man, although he was in his 60's, a bit old for such grandiose exploits. His family was patiently waiting for his triumphant return to Antioch, hearing continual reports that he was gaining much new territory and wealth for the Empire.

Trajan rode around like a traveling troubadour, trotting across Asia Minor and Parthia from one all-too-easy conquest to another, until, far from home, his army reached the Persian Gulf. Then, as if on cue, all the "conquered" territories in his wake revolted.

Somehow the Jews, erupting from Ararat in the northeast to Libya in the southwest and everywhere in-between, somehow, they all seemed to know that Trajan was helplessly enmired in the marshes near the mouth of the Euphrates. Their intelligence reports must have surpassed the modern satellite surveillance of the United States trying to avoid roadside bombs in Iraq (the exact same battleground where Trajan was located).

Only the Phiabi family possessed such a spy network. Even with Trajan under watch, the Phiabis still had the ordinary Roman military to overcome. By waiting for Trajan's army to get bogged down by the lower Euphrates River, the Phiabis could set off revolts in places where Roman armies could not react quickly. The idea was to keep the Romans off-guard, to delay their arrival until loyal Phiabi Jews had been evacuated.

Trajan delayed over a year from the time he heard (or should have heard) of the first violence in Cyrene in *A.D.* 115, until he finally took action, in early *A.D.* 117, to move all Jews to Palestine and send troops to halt the violence. Every day of delay in Trajan's response allowed the local pagan thugs to hunt down and kill more people. That is, it would give them enough time to exterminate all of the Jewish Christians in each locale.

The Phiabi goal was to resettle all of the Jewish people in Palestine. And, this implies the Phiabis had planned from the beginning on the Romans rounding up all the other Jews scattered along Trajan's inland route and transporting them to Palestine. But, how could the Phiabis possibly have known in advance that Trajan planned to invade all these areas, much less that he would respond to a widespread Jewish revolt by agreeably allowing them all to move to Palestine?

None of this could have been done without good old-fashioned espionage. We saw how Elisha had needed spies in Alexandria to catch Mark before he could warn Jerusalem in *A.D.* 66. The Phiabis also needed spies on the inside of Trajan's government.

The Phiabis may even have had spies in Trajan's very household. Indeed, there were several Jewish sympathizers at his royal court. (Conzelmann 1992, p. 34) One source claimed Trajan was "surrounded by Jews," although others disagree. (Conzelmann 1992, p. 34) And, it is pointed out that his wife Plotina sometimes intervened on behalf of the Jews in specific cases, such as the Alexandrian dispute of *A.D.* 110. (Conzelmann 1992, p. 34)

However, to pull off this grand exodus of the Jews back to their homeland, the Phiabis needed more than some spies in Trajan's government, or even in his house. They would have to be helping him make his decisions about what to do. Who could be that close to Trajan, at his elbow, even when far from home? We are not without clues...

Here's what happened: Trajan, a vigorous, experienced horseman in his sixties, had a stroke. It was not severe enough to instantly end his life. Instead, it merely incapacitated him. He was too weak to lead his army as before, but not weak enough to be replaced as Emperor. Not only was his stroke of exactly the right kind and extent, but its timing was perfect too: It came just as news of the Jewish revolts (over a year late) reached Trajan, bogged down with the Roman army in Mesopotamian marshland.

And, the coincidences don't stop there. His personal physician mysteriously died right after Trajan himself. In other words, the man most likely to know if Trajan had been poisoned conveniently died a day later. Perhaps, he was a Phiabi assassin committing suicide for the cause, in order to prevent any chance of a leak or that he might confess under torture. Or perhaps a sleeper agent had the job of silencing him.

No matter. For whatever reasons, everything had worked perfectly from start to finish. "Rumors of war" had drawn Trajan and his army deep into Turkey in *A.D.* 115, and then back to Edessa, and then down the length of the Euphrates River through Parthia--all heavily Jewish lands. Then, after exhausting his horsemen, the Jews (actually the pagan Phiabi thugs) "revolted" everywhere, and Trajan had a perfectly-timed and perfectly moderated stroke. Only months later did he die, and the one man who might know the truth died immediately afterward. If it had been a movie, the audience would have demanded their money back because the plot seemed so obviously contrived.

Before he died, Trajan ordered the Roman governor Marcus Turbo to secure Alexandria and Cyrene, and Trajan sent cavalry chief Lusius Quietus, a former consul, to "sweep" the Jews out of the Mesopotamian valley, which he did, driving them into Palestine. (Schürer 1995,

I:2:285) With its huge influx of culturally diverse Jewish exiles, the land of Judea then became understandably restless in *A.D.* 117. (Schürer 1995, I:2:285-286)

Quietus "cleared" the provinces and ruled Judea, where no revolt had occurred up until then. (Schürer 1995, I:2:285-286) We know Christians still lived there. We would expect attacks on them, after resettlement; and such violence did eventually occur. (Schürer 1995, I:2:285-286)

Thus, the Phiabi plot may have been to shift the Roman military to the east first and then launch the exodus to Judea. Lusius Quietus herded the inland Jews back to Palestine. The Phiabis had more power in the eastern seaport region of the Mediterranean than they had over the Jews who dwelt well inland. It required a Roman "sweep" to compel these inland Jews to move to Palestine where the Phiabis hoped to rule over them, collect their tithes, and mold their youth into a workforce to rebuild the Temple.

The Phiabis needed the Romans to do exactly what they did. They needed them to invade lands where the Jews had long been residing, but where Rome had never held power before. They needed the Romans to gather up all these far-flung Jewish populations, however reluctant they might be, and force them back to Judea. And, they needed the Romans to lock these Jews inside the land of Palestine where the Phiabis could indoctrinate them into the Phiabis' grand agenda.

All these things were done. And, then the Romans let the Phiabis rule in Judea. They let them build a new Temple and collect tithes. They let the Phiabis control the priesthood and the new Temple. They gave them full reign to keep their sacred robes and conduct their religious services. They may even have let them coin their own money, for Elazar ben Harsum's name appears on the first Bar Kokhba coins minted in *A.D.* 132. (Jeremias 1975, p. 97n)

How could all these things happen without full Roman cooperation?

How could the Phiabi leadership have left the Roman army out of the plot, as some kind of gigantic, uncontrolled wild card? The Phiabis clearly left nothing to chance.

We saw earlier how the Phiabis could have plotted with the pagan gangs to reward them for killing off Jewish Christians. We also saw how they must have cut a deal to hand over the copper mines on Cyprus to full Roman control. And we saw that the Phiabi spy network apparently had Trajan himself under their influence. So, is it so hard to believe that one of his key generals, Lusius Quietus, might be conspiring with the Phiabis? He did exactly what the Phiabis were hoping the Roman army would do for them: He used Roman might to force reluctant Jews throughout Parthia to join the Phiabi cause by moving them to Phiabi-controlled Palestine.

Curiously, within a year after securing the Jews in Palestine, Quietus was removed by Hadrian, and was executed for having been part of a conspiracy against the Emperor. (Bowder 1980, p. 308) If he had in fact known too much of a Phiabi plot to resettle the Jews, he becomes yet another convenient death silencing all witnesses.

Seeing the hand of the Phiabis manipulating these events is easy. Declaring a Jubilee is done by the High Priest, since he is the duty priest who conducts the services on the Day of

Atonement when the Jubilee is declared. We know that the High Priests of the new Hadrian Temple included at least three direct descendants of Ishmael ben Phiabi (Elisha, Ishmael ben Elisha, and Eleazar), and that no other family of High Priests can be conclusively linked to serving in this Hadrian Temple after *A.D.* 117.

We also know that the immediately preceding events of *A.D.* 115-116 fell on the Jubilee anniversary of Ishmael's death in *A.D.* 66. His family was reckoned the High Priests from 118 onward, and hence, they must have been so reckoned at the time of the violent events of 115-116 AD. There simply was no one else but the Phiabi priests in a position to declare this official Jubilee, nor with so personal a stake in this timing.

Therefore, these high-ranking Phiabi priests seem to have anticipated, if not planned, the widely-coordinated pagan outbreaks tied to the Jubilee armada evacuations, not to mention nearly all of the espionage and undercover activities that accompanied them. Moreover, it all began in Cyrene, the very city where Ishmael had been beheaded, and was timed to coincide with the anniversaries of his exile and beheading. For the Phiabi family, this was a personal vendetta.

After the Bar Kokhba revolt ended in *A.D.* 135, Ishmael ben Phiabi's grandson (the High Priest Ishmael ben Elisha) was executed by the Romans as one of the chief leaders of the revolt. He was later remembered as one of "The Ten Holy Martyrs" in Talmudic passages that insisted Ishmael ben Elisha had served in a new Jerusalem Temple, which the Phiabi priesthood had built with legitimate Levite hands.

Finding enough pure Levitical workmen to carry out this Phiabi Temple project necessitated recruiting from a very large pool of returned Israelites. The Phiabis knew they would have a hard time achieving their goal unless they could compel the bulk of the surviving Jewish population in exile to return to Palestine. Without Roman help, it was simply impossible to plan on gathering sufficient Levitical manpower needed to rebuild the Temple.

Thus, Roman military compulsion was needed to carry out the project by forcibly resettling the Jews who were exiled in lands beyond Roman control. Trajan was carefully maneuvered into the specific areas where most of the exiled Jews were then dwelling, largely outside the borders of the Empire. He "conquered" these lands, which no Roman before or since has ever done. Then he ordered his best commander to herd all the Jews from these lands and deposit them in Palestine and become their governor. Then the Romans promptly withdrew from most of the newly-conquered territory.

All that had changed when the campaign ended, except for Trajan's mysterious death, was the transport of hundreds of thousands of Jewish exiles back to Palestine.

Most historians are too timid to see anything odd in this. No one dares suggest that the only thing that was accomplished, namely resettlement of the Jews exiled beyond Rome's borders, was the only real purpose of all this bizarre activity. It is no coincidence that the Phiabis were the prime movers behind the scenes, that they were of Roman stock, or that Trajan had Jewish influences in his court and family.

The top witnesses who might have revealed what went on behind the scenes were conveniently dead by *A.D.* 118: Trajan, his doctor, Quietus and his co-conspirators in the military. It is also likely that Elisha himself, who was head of the Phiabi family at the time, just as the Lament says, did not outlive Quietus by much. He was now in his 70's or 80's, too weak to head up the new Sanhedrin, as High Priests had traditionally done. (Jeremias 1975, p. 179) This job fell to the Temple's new Captain, Joshua ben Hananiah, who was chief of the Council from 110 until his death in 130.

We can conclude, accordingly, that the elderly Elisha had exhausted his health carrying out the Jubilee evacuations of 115-117, and that, by the time the Temple could be rebuilt, he was failing quickly. He lived long enough to see the structure generally fit for service, and he only served in it as a kind of ceremonial High Priest merely to dedicate the new Temple, perhaps on Yom Kippur of *A.D.* 118. That date was 49 years, or one Jubilee, after the final Yom Kippur service in the old Temple of Herod in the autumn of *A.D.* 69. That old Temple had burned the following summer and was dismantled in *A.D.* 71.

Besides Elisha's advanced age, there are other reasons to believe the new Temple may have been dedicated in the fall of 118. For example, we know that Hadrian raced to Rome in late summer of 117 to be confirmed by the Senate. (Edersheim 1962, p. 189) He promptly returned to the east to survey "all" the areas devastated by the violence of the preceding years. Hadrian is famous for the city rebuilding program he launched during this tour. (Edersheim 1962, p. 191) So, this trip certainly would have included Palestine, for he promptly removed Lusius Quietus as Governor of Palestine, sending him home to his native Mauritania, apparently by early 118, the year Quietus was executed for plotting against Hadrian. (Bowder 1980, p. 308) Unless Hadrian had dismissed Quietus in late 117, it is difficult to find time by late 118 for Quietus to go home and become involved in a plot to kill Hadrian before his execution. We must also account for the time needed to have the plot exposed and Hadrian informed, have a hearing of the evidence against Quietus (for he was considered a war hero and some sort of hearing or trial would have been expected), and so on.

We also are informed by the book of Acts that sailing the Mediterranean was dangerous after September because of violent storms. It follows that Hadrian's trip must have taken him back toward the east and Palestine by late September of 117, and Quietus would have been dismissed not long after this.

One of the cities Hadrian visited while near Palestine would have been Jerusalem. Edersheim rejected any report of this kind because he refused to believe any rebuilding had taken place that early. (Edersheim 1962, p. 191) We saw previously that Hadrian had issued two edicts allowing the Jews to proceed with the rebuilding of their Temple. The first was a blanket permission, while the second required them to move their Temple site a few hundred feet to the south. (Schürer 1995, I:2, p.289) So, this permission was arguably granted in late 117 or early 118, giving the Jews nearly a year to build.

We have further support from the early Christian writers, Chrysostom, Cedrenus, and Nicephorus Callistus. They affirm that the Jews had indeed sought to rebuild the Temple

during Hadrian's reign, although the blotting out of Jewish history used by the Romans to punish them made it difficult to sort out the timing. (Schürer 1995, I:2:289, 302n93)

The Christian chronology known as the *Chronicon Paschale* asserts that, after Hadrian had suppressed the Jewish revolt, he destroyed the rebuilt Temple, presumably in *A.D.* 135. (Schürer 1995, I:2:289-290) Early Christian sources generally emphasized the idea that the rebuilding effort ultimately failed because Hadrian destroyed the new Jewish Temple. The Temple construction may have been adequate for services by the fall of 118, but yet not altogether completely adorned some 15 years later when the Jews retreated from the city under Bar Kochba. This simple explanation shows how a not fully finished structure begun in 118 could later be demolished by Hadrian after the revolt in 135. Remember that Herod's Temple was not finished until *A.D.* 64, some 83 years after it was begun.

Schürer made an important comment about Hadrian's reign as Emperor (from *A.D.* 117-138) that is worth quoting:

The rearing of magnificent buildings and the founding of cities  
was the work to which Hadrian devoted the energies of his life"  
(Schürer 1995, I:2: 293)

It would be strange that Hadrian would wait until he had ruled 13 years or more before rebuilding Jerusalem. This is especially odd, given Schürer's stubborn insistence (which has misled many subsequent scholars) that the Emperor ignored the city until *A.D.* 130 and was almost immediately thereafter embroiled in war there until a scant three years before his death in 138. (Schürer 1995, I:2: 293)

Yet, once again, the sources suggest otherwise. Epiphanius, who lived in Palestine about 250 years afterward, said he had learned that Hadrian had given orders to rebuild Jerusalem, but not the Temple itself, 47 years after the destruction of the city (Ibid. p. 294). The city was demolished stone by stone, in *A.D.* 70-71. But 47 years brings us to the 117-118 period, not *A.D.* 130. Schürer dismisses this on the untenable assumption that Hadrian did not return from Rome at that time, which is demonstrably false. (Edersheim 1962, p. 189, which shows Hadrian promptly returned to the east to survey the damaged cities following the 115-117 revolts)

Giving orders to build a city does not mean that construction began at once without a plan or the gathering of building materials from quarries and forests. So, it should not surprise us that the *Chronicon Paschale* puts the start of actual construction in the following year, that is, *A.D.* 119. (Schürer 1995, I:2 p. 294) This gradual chronology makes sense out of the events. Hadrian could have ordered plans drawn up in late *A.D.* 117, then approved them in 118. Construction would have begun after sufficient materials and workmen were assembled, presumably in 119.

Much confusion exists because some mistook references to the revolts of 115-117 as instead being references to the Bar Kokhba rebellion of 132-135. Thus, the *Chronicon Paschale* states that the city was rebuilt after the revolt had been quelled in 119, which Schürer chose to

misread as meaning the Bar Kokhba War was being incorrectly dated to the year 119, giving him an excuse to dismiss the *Chronicon* as of no value. (Schürer 1995, I:2 p. 294) However, the *Chronicon* merely asserts that the actual city construction began in 119, after the revolts of previous years had come to an end.

The conflict vanishes when we realize it means the revolts of 115-117, which we noted had briefly extended into Palestine in 118. None of this is inconsistent with Hadrian issuing his initial order to rebuild the city in late 117 or early 118. Then the actual construction could have begun in 119, obviously extending for many years after.

It was not until *A.D.* 130-131 that Hadrian made another extensive tour of the East to survey the results of all this construction. At this time, commemorative inscriptions and coins were made to honor Hadrian's efforts. (Schürer 1995, I:2:pp. 295-296, esp. notes #76-79)

The coins are especially revealing when one recalls that the far-reaching Phoenician merchant empire had been used to force the Jewish people into a mass-exodus from their places of exile so as to repopulate Palestine in 115-118. Note that the Jews had been widely dispersed by that time. Here are the areas that the coins commemorated Hadrian rebuilding after the Jewish revolts: Asia (=Turkey), Africa (=North African coast), Arabia (=Petra region), Galilee, Greece, Spain, Italy, Nicomedia (=Byzantium vicinity), Judea, Alexandria, Gaza, Libya, and Sicily, among others (Ibid.).

Note especially the unexpected need to rebuild such known Jewish exile regions as Spain, Italy, Sicily, Arabia, Greece, and Byzantium. The implication is that these areas had also experienced severe destruction during the 115-118 period of Jewish revolts. It appears that the skimpy accounts of these revolts fail to list all the places where Jewish people evacuated and pagan riots destroyed their abandoned neighborhoods. This reveals the extent to which pagan anti-Semitism had grown during the century following the exiles of *A.D.* 70-71.

Hadrian had to deal with an Empire-wide mass devastation. The suggestion that the new Emperor sat around doing nothing for the first 13 years of his rule is naive. Hadrian must have been racing around the Empire seeking to calm and reassure people everywhere that help would soon be forthcoming. He must have seen the need for immediate and decisive action in the summer of 117, when he first saw the damages on his way back to Rome. This increases the likelihood that Hadrian promptly sailed back to the east from Rome in September of 117, taking a detailed inventory of the damages.

The notion that all this destruction throughout the whole Roman Empire was kept from Trajan until 117 also seems very improbable, or we must surely see in such silence a conspiracy to keep Trajan in the dark until the last possible moment.

The enormous extent of the Jewish exodus of 115-118 can be verified by another set of data. When the Bar Kokhba War ended less than twenty years later, the Romans tallied the number of Jewish dead soldiers at 580,000. (Schürer 1995, p. 314) Hundreds of thousands more died of wounds, famine and disease later, and "innumerable was the multitude of those sold away as slaves." (Schürer 1995, p. 314) These descriptions imply a population in the millions by



*A.D.* 132, when the war began. Quietus and his Roman cavalry could not have herded that many Jewish refugees into Palestine. Only a fleet of 1,000 Phiabi ships, the Jubilee Armada, making repeated trips from ports all around the Mediterranean, could have brought such huge numbers to Palestine over the course of the revolts and for some time thereafter. Each evacuation by the Phiabi fleet was potentially capable of bringing 100,000 Jewish people to Palestine, if not more.

The ship-borne evacuation of a million newcomers to Judea during the 115-118 exodus cannot be ruled out. Quietus may have brought 100,000 more. The huge throngs pouring into the land would have made it even more credible that Hadrian saw plenty of ready workers when he visited Jerusalem for the first time in 117.

Suddenly we can feel the excitement of the Jewish people surging back to their land after half a century, some of them not having seen it since they were children, but by this time in 118 grown gray-haired. The crowds of children seeing it for the first time would become the soldiers of Bar Kochba, the half-million who would die in his lost cause in their twenties and thirties. The irony is especially sad when one realizes that had they been content to enjoy their homeland, they would have prospered in peace.

But back in 118, the urgency to have the new Temple functioning (although not completely beautified) by the Jubilee anniversary of the end of the old Herodian Temple, was augmented by the failing health of Elisha, whose efforts had made it all possible. The old patriarch had longed to one day don his grandfather's High Priestly robes in a rebuilt Temple. Tempering his grandfather's dying wish for the blood of John Mark was his hope that his son might eventually restore the family to power. Ishmael ben Phiabi had gone to his beheading unaware that both Jerusalem and the Temple were about to be razed to the ground in *A.D.* 71, not one stone left upon another (more or less).

Ironically, the dying Elisha would have dedicated his freshly-built Temple in the fall of 118, equally unaware that both his hard-won new Temple and the new city before which it was to stand would soon be destroyed by the Romans as a result of his family's unbounded hubris. Less than two decades later, Elisha's new Temple would be trampled back into the pile of rubble upon which it had been built.

It was a costly achievement. Not only would upwards of a million people die for the twenty years of Phiabi vanity between *A.D.* 115-135, but the world would be made to forget that such a Temple ever existed or that the Phiabis had been High Priests in it.

Measured in gold and silver, the effort must have cost the family much of what it had acquired. The Phiabis would have had to pay for most of the Temple construction, and no doubt they once again had to maintain their own armed Temple guard to protect the facility (and guarantee their control of the priesthood and the Temple Treasury).

Most of the evacuated Jews had suffered massive losses during the Jubilee exodus, leaving behind possessions and probably paying the Phiabis all they could bear for their rescue. While most of the people had been impoverished by 118, the Phiabis had become richer than ever.

Their shipping empire continued to rake in profits. And now they had a captive nation of customers for their *kosher* imports.

Then, they decided they had become strong enough to declare independence. It was that final step in the plan that was the Phiabis undoing.

In *A.D.* 132, the Phiabis were rich enough to finance the Bar Kokhba revolt. Given the checkered history of tithing, especially by an impoverished population, we must conclude that the Phiabis had learned how to derive money from other sources. Their involvement in the slave trade, for example, may not have been merely for the purpose of freeing Jewish slaves, but also for the more pragmatic goal of making money off a very lucrative Gentile business. Their ships were also no doubt engaged in moving pagan goods and passengers around the Empire, traveling as far as the British Isles and India. It must have seemed by *A.D.* 132 that Phiabi wealth and power, supported by thousands of spies and criminal gang members, had grown virtually invincible.

The Bar Kokhba War of 132-135 supposedly had a professional "bandit" named Simon leading the fighting. One of the top elderly rabbis at the time, the famous Rabbi Akiba, declared Simon to be "Bar Kokhba" or the Messianic "Son of the Star" (apparently because of a supernova was seen in that time). The modern myth is that Akiba somehow elevated some nobody to superstar status. Akiba was in his crazy 80's at the time. Simon was in his ego-maniacal 30's.

It is unlikely that the Phiabis had been hoping all those years to share power with a petty tyrant. But Simon bar Kokhba was hardly some backwoods bandit. He was actually the Davidic nephew of a wealthy Jewish priest named Elazar, whom some identify with Elazar ben Harsum, the same Elazar on the coins that financed Bar Kokhba. (Schürer 1995, I:2:299) And Elazar ben Harsum was a Phiabi, the grandson of Elisha and great-grandson of Ishmael ben Phiabi II, the High Priest beheaded in Cyrene in late *A.D.* 66, after being responsible for the deaths of several relatives of Jesus. So Even if Simon were the son of his uncle Elazar's sister, Simon bar Kokhba would have been at the very least, Elisha's great-grandson: a full-blooded member of the Phiabi crime family.

There is a good reason why the date of his birth could have been *A.D.* 97. Emperor Domitian, whose brother Titus had overseen the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in *A.D.* 70-71, was a persecutor of both Christians and Jews. He was assassinated on September 18, *A.D.* 96. The Jews would have celebrated his death. Moreover, his successor, the Emperor Nerva, lifted some of the restrictions on the Jewish people and eased their taxes. Jewish people began to hope that things had finally started looking up for them. Simon was probably only one of the many Jewish children conceived in late *A.D.* 96 as Jews around the Empire celebrated the good news.

However, Simon's father may not have been a Phiabi priest. He was a member of the House of David. The most probable line was that connected to Joshua ben Gamaliel, the High Priest from *A.D.* 65-67, who was with the Phiabis when they escaped Jerusalem in *A.D.* 70 and took refuge in Yavneh. In *A.D.* 80, ten years later, Joshua would assume the leadership of the rump exile Sanhedrin they established at Yavneh. He would hold that post until his death in *A.D.* 110.

Jewish tradition maintained that Joshua's family line was in some way descended from the house of David. Henceforth they were to lay claim to a kind of Messianic inheritance. It was from this family that Simon Bar Kokhba may have been descended.

This would mean that Bar Kokhba was a priest on both sides of his family, and that he may have had, not only multiple High Priests, but a chief rabbi of the exile council in his bloodlines. Now we understand why people could be deceived into putting their blind faith in this leader. On paper, he seemed to have impressive credentials.

Of course, the Christians were not fooled by this pretender. The Phiabis must have expected as much. Their rules ordered the killing of any Christian who attempted to reconvert back to Judaism. So even if a Jewish Christian had submitted to bar Kokhba, he or she would have faced the death penalty under rabbinical rulings, as we quoted from Edersheim previously. Jewish Christians in Palestine at the time of Bar Kokhba's regime never had a chance. Nothing they could do would avoid Phiabi revenge.

Even if Christians fled Palestine, the Phiabi spy network could hunt them down from Britain to India. It must have seemed hopeless. According to Eusebius, or rather the Jewish Christian historian Hegesippus, writing just a few decades later, Jesus' half-brother Simeon, who was head of the Christian church in Jerusalem in 117, was tortured and put to death by the Romans. That would mean that Simeon was executed by Quietus. It was an omen of the slaughter of Jewish Christians in Palestine barely a decade and a half later. Only, this time, the killings would be conducted by the Phiabis themselves. There would be no pagan intermediaries to soil their hands with Jewish-Christian blood while the Phiabis pretended to be saintly observers on the sidelines.

In the twenty years between 115 and 135, millions of people may have died as a consequence of various Phiabi actions. One of the bloodiest revolts early on was in the city of Alexandria. The Phiabis had established a considerable presence in that city. Alexandria was the crime capital of the Mediterranean, no doubt because it had a large population of prostitutes producing a restless army of fatherless sons. Recruited for the Phiabi crime family in Alexandria, this army of thugs would later be taken over by the city's corrupt Catholic bishops, some of whom may have been Phiabis themselves, still seeking to cling to power.

By the time of the Moslem invasion of *A.D.* 641, the Phiabi crime bosses of old Alexandria may have long since forgotten their Jewish roots. When Islam arrived, the criminal families of Alexandria are known to have fled to the island of Sicily. Eventually, we can easily assume, their much later descendants became the Mafia. It is, of course, debatable whether any Phiabi blood flows today in Mafia veins.

Extortion rackets, the corrupting of public officials by bribery, the hierarchy of family blood ties, the iron control of docks and shipping, the importation of drugs, the enslavement of prostitutes, and many other features of modern organized crime are remnants of the practices of early crime families like the Phiabis. The earthly Jerusalem was no holy city.

One more point. Revelation says that God pours out a "double" wrath on Babylon the Great. The city of Rome burned twice, in *A.D.* 64 and *A.D.* 80. Christians suffered under Nero in 64-65 and under Vespasian, from 70-79, as he tried to exterminate the house of David and its adherents. The second great fire of Rome was under the Emperor Titus, who had watched the Temple and Jerusalem burn in *A.D.* 70. Revelation's warning about Babylon burning was tied directly to its persecutions of God's people.

Alexandria persecuted Christians in 66 and again in 116-117. It had two major revolts and fires after these persecutions.

Jerusalem's two persecutions ended after destructions in 70 and 135. So, all three cities suffered double and all three had persecuted Jewish Christians. Perhaps Babylon the Great is not just one city, but a symbol of the doom awaiting any city that persecutes the people of God, and especially Jewish Christians and the family of Jesus.

One more curious bit of historical trivia: The mysterious Knights Templar, who claimed David's bloodline, formed in Jerusalem on the 1,000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the return of the Jubilee of *A.D.* 117. How did they remember an event the pagans had blotted out so well?

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