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Jesus' life and death is paradigmatic precisely because of its human concreteness. It was during his Passion that he was mocked and humiliated in two brutal and grotesque plays. The first time was on his last night, in the high priest's house, when the men who were guarding him tried to compel him to play the prophet. The second was the next day, when Roman soldiers acclaimed him as king. It became clear that the first incident was an already old and known game. Because of its brutal aspect, this game fits the atmosphere of prisons, but it is also until today a children's game. The discovery of the secular background to this episode is helpful, not only for academic research but, it seems to me, also for the concreteness of the faith. However, the results of our inquiry also have broader implications. We have found further evidence for the great value of the Gospel of Luke, and I also hope to have shown that, in fact, no night session in the high priest's home took place.¹⁸ The correct sequence of events, from Jesus' arrest to the point at which he was turned over to the Romans, was that given by Luke.

18 In his book *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (London, 1985), Martin Hengel argues that "more recent investigations have again disclosed how marvellously Mark has arranged his Gospel" (p. 34). He even goes so far as to claim, "Almost every pericope and every logion has its well considered place and its paradigmatic character" (p. 37). Hengel stressed, "However, this strictness in his overall plan does not simply dispense with historicity: Mark only reports history which has undergone the deliberate reflection of faith" (p. 38). The texts examined in the present study demonstrate quite clearly that it is not so easy to make such exalted praise of Mark fit the content of his Gospel. John (18:22-23) reinterpreted the cruel game, evidently under the impact of Acts 23:2-4. There the high priest is Ananias, while in John the high priest's name is Annas.

... TO BURY CAIAPHAS, NOT TO PRAISE HIM!¹

CHAPTER 15

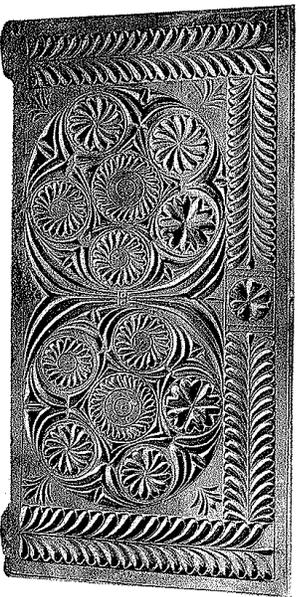
Caiaphas² is the most prominent Jewish personality of the Second Temple period whose ossuary and remains have been discovered. I have used the occasion of this discovery to discuss Caiaphas' personality and place among the high priests, and to explain some of the background to his fateful decision to eliminate Jesus and his disciples.³ A careful reading of the Gospels report shows that the involvement of this high priest in handing Jesus over to the Romans and persecuting his disciples was more decisive than is commonly believed.⁴ Both rabbinic sources and the recently discovered ossuaries

1 This article first appeared in *Jerusalem Perspective* 4, 4-5 (1991), pp. 23-28. See also D. Flusser, "Caiaphas in the New Testament," *Aiqvat* 21 (1992), pp. 81-87.

2 Two spellings of the name exist: "Caiaphas" and "Kaiaphas." We have used the former, which is common in English translations of the New Testament and in scholarly literature.

3 See D. Flusser, "A Literary Approach to the Trial of Jesus," *Judaism*, pp. 588-592. About the trial, see the present volume: "The Crucified One and the Jews" "What was the Original Meaning of *Ecce Homo*?", "Who is it that Struck You?" See also "Uthitus Crucis" E. Bickermann, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, part 3 (Leiden, 1978), pp. 82-138.

4 Concerning Caiaphas and his family see D. Barag & D. Flusser, "The Ossuary of Jehohanan Granddaughter of the High Priest Theophilus," *Israel Exploration Journal* 36 (1986), pp. 39-44; D. R. Schwartz, *Agrippa I: The Last King of Judaea* (Tübingen, 1990), pp. 184-185; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, vol. 2 (Einburgh, 1979), pp. 225-236; J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia, 1989); B. Z. Rosenfeld, "The Settlement of Two Families of High Priests during the Second Temple Period," *Historical Geographical Studies in the Settlement of Eretz-Israel*, vol. 2, Y. Katz, Y. Bar-Arieh & Y. Kaniell, eds. (Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 206-218, especially pp. 209-218 (Hebrew); M. Stern, "Herod's Policies and Jewish Society at the End of the Second Temple Period,"



The Caiaphas Ossuary
Courtesy: Israel Antiquities Authority

show that the name Caiaphas was the designation for this whole family. The Tosefta speaks about the house of Caiapha,⁵ and Josephus refers to Joseph surnamed Caiaphas.⁶

The surname כַּיָּאֵפָאס (Caiapha) appears on two of the ossuaries discovered in the tomb, and one of these is inscribed with the name כַּיָּאֵפָאס בֶּרְכַּיָּאֵפָאס (Joseph bar Caiapha).⁷ The family came from Beth

⁵ *Tarbiz* 35 (1966), pp. 233–253. Reprinted in *Studies in Jewish History: The Second Temple Period*, M. Amit, I. Gafni, M. D. Herr, eds. (Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 190–198 (Hebrew).

⁶ *M. Yevamot* 1:10.

⁷ *Josephus, Antiquities* 18:35, 95.

⁸ Concerning the ossuaries see: Z. Greenhut, “The Caiaphas Tomb in North Talpote,” *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, ed. Hillel Geva (Israel Exploration Society, Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 219–222; R. Reich, “Ossuary Inscriptions of the Caiaphas Family from Jerusalem,” *Ancient Jerusalem*, pp. 223–225. There is no doubt that the original form of the name was *Καϊάφας* (*Caiaphas*), although there exists a variant, *Καϊάφας* (*Kaiphaz*, *Caiphaz*), in the New Testament (see F. Blass and A. DeBrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [Chicago, 1961], §37, p. 20). Josephus speaks about him as Joseph surnamed Caiaphas (*Ant.* 18:35, 95). *Tos. Yevamot* 1:10, mentions the “house of Caiapha.” Thus, as the “bar Cathros” inscription (see N. Avigad, “Excavations in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, 1969–1971,” in *Jerusalem Revealed* [Jerusalem, 1976], p. 49) shows, the name Caiapha designated all the

Mekoshesh, a village in the vicinity of Jerusalem. This clan of high priests were descendants of the second wife of a family member from a levirate marriage. One of the family, Elihonaus,⁸ was appointed high priest in approximately 44 A.D. by King Agrippa I.⁹ Thus two high priests are known who belonged to the Caiaphas family, the earlier one being Joseph (18–36 A.D.). It is even probable that the high priest Elihonaus was the son of Joseph Caiaphas.

Was this priestly family important before Joseph’s appointment to the highest task in Israel? Did he become high priest because he was born into one of the distinguished priestly families, or was there another reason for his precipitous promotion? A cause for Joseph Caiaphas’ advancement could have been his marriage to the daughter of Annas, the head of a powerful high priestly clan. This connection is reported only by the Gospel of John (18:13), which is not completely reliable as a historical document. Nevertheless, it tends to accept John’s statement that Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, and to believe that Joseph Caiaphas became high priest because he married Annas’ daughter.¹⁰

members of the family. Therefore Joseph bar Caiapha is the same as Joseph Caiapha (Caiaphas). For examples of similar variants see Stern, *op. cit.* (Hebrew), p. 191 n. 75 and p. 192 n. 83.

⁸ See J. Liver, *Chapters in the History of Priests and Levites* (Jerusalem, 1968), p. 105 (Hebrew).

⁹ *Josephus, Antiquities* 19:342, *M. Parah* 3:5 and 20:16, and see *Josephus*, L. H. Feldman, ed., vol. 9 (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), pp. 398–399. According to *M. Parah* 3:5, this high priest belonged to the family of Caiaphas, while Josephus (*Ant.* 19:342) speaks about “Elihonaus the son of Cantheras.” The Cantheras family evidently is to be identified with the house of Cathros. Thus, there is a clear discrepancy between Josephus and the Mishnah, and scholars who believe both witnesses have no choice but to equate the two high priestly families. However, one should take into account the possibility that Josephus erred by supposing that Elihonaus was the son of Joseph Cantheras. This is the opinion of M. Stern, *op. cit.*, p. 196 (Hebrew); for an example of a similar error, see *ibid.*, p. 194 n. 88. In any case, B.-Z. Rosenfield rightly suggests (p. 218) that the rare name Elihonaus shows that he belonged to the famous priestly family of Pashhur. If Elihonaus was a member of the house of Caiaphas, then the origin of its other members, including Joseph Caiaphas, was Pashhur.

¹⁰ Concerning the rules affecting the marriage of the high priest see Jeremias,

Annas (Hanan) the son of Sethi was the founder of an important dynasty of high priests. Josephus writes, "It is said that the elder Annas [Annas] was extremely fortunate. He had five sons, all of whom, after he himself had previously enjoyed the office for a very long period, became high priests of God—a thing that had never happened to any other of our high priests."¹¹ Annas was appointed by the Roman prefect Quirinius and held this office from 6 to 15 A.D. when he was deposed by the prefect Valerius Gratus. Thus, when Joseph Caiaphas was the high priest, Annas no longer served actively but still manipulated the power behind the "throne."¹²

The New Testament accounts of the last week of Jesus' life and the persecution of the Church in Jerusalem confirm the assumption that Caiaphas belonged to a faction of Annas' family. "Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander and all who were of the high priestly family" are explicitly named in Acts 4:6. Annas and Caiaphas are at the head of the list, and they also appear together in John 18:13-24. The clan of Annas without doubt belonged to the Sadducean party,¹³ as is explicitly stated in Acts 5:17 which refers to "the high priest and all who were with him, that is the party of the Sadducees." Also the younger Annas, the son of our Annas, "followed the school of the Sadducees."¹⁴ Thus it is reasonable to assume that other members of the family, if not the whole clan, were Sadducees. Josephus, in speaking of the younger Annas' affiliation to the Sadducees, says that they "are indeed more heartless than any other Jews when they sit in judgment."¹⁵ The Babylonian Talmud and the Tosefta list the woes caused by high priestly families. One of these is, "Woe unto me because of the house of Hanin, woe unto me for

pp. 154-157. In 1984 the Israel Antiquities Authority acquired the ossuary of a member of the Annas family (see Barag & Flussner, above n. 4).

¹¹ Josephus, *Antiquities* 20:198.

¹² For the decisive influence of retired high priests, see Jeremias, p. 157.

¹³ See Jeremias, pp. 229-230. In Acts 4:1-2 we read about the arrest of the Apostles by "the priests . . . and the Sadducees." The latter were evidently identical with the men of the high priestly family enumerated in Acts 4:6.

¹⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities* 20:199.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 20:199; cf. also *ibid.* 13:294.

"Enjoy your life!" A Sadducean inscription found in a tomb in Jerusalem from the beginning of the 1st century B.C.

their calumnies."¹⁶ The house of Hanin is a reference to the mighty family of Annas and one could easily include among these calumnies the persecution of Jesus and his first disciples, in which Caiaphas also played a decisive role. The New Testament indicates that those who were active in delivering Jesus to Pilate were members of the high priestly aristocracy. A further conclusion is almost inevitable, namely, that the leading figures in this fateful action were Annas and his clan, together with Joseph Caiaphas, probably his son-in-law.¹⁷

In the first three Gospels, the "high priests" are presented as the main enemies of Jesus. The plot to kill Jesus is described there as follows: "Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death; for they feared the people. Then . . . Judas called Iscariot . . . went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might hand him over to them. And they were glad and engaged to give him money. So he agreed, and sought an opportunity to hand him over to them in the absence of the multitude" (Luke 22:1-6). And when Jesus was finally arrested, "they seized him away, bringing him into the high priest's house" (Luke 22:54). There, in Caiaphas' house, Jesus passed the night in custody, and the men who were holding Jesus mocked him (Luke 22:63).¹⁸

¹⁶ *B. Pesachim* 57a; *Tos. Menahot* 13:21.

¹⁷ This conclusion is based mainly upon my interpretation of Acts 4:6.

¹⁸ See the preceding study, "Who Is It that Struck You?"

The interrogation took place the next morning, and it was the high priest Joseph Caiaphas who asked Jesus the decisive question, "Are you the Messiah?" (Matt. 26:62-64; Mark 14:60-62). When he was turned over to Pilate, "the chief priests accused him of many things" (Mark 15:3; Matt. 27:12), and when Pilate offered to release Jesus, "the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead" (Mark 15:11; Matt. 27:20).

The first three Gospels do not explicitly indicate the cause of the hatred of those who delivered Jesus to death.¹⁹ One can only guess why the Temple hierarchy feared this prophet from Galilee and why they did everything they could to get rid of him. Jesus' presence in Jerusalem at Passover apparently represented a clear threat to them. The aim of Jesus' pilgrimage to Jerusalem was neither to perform healings nor to agitate against the Roman occupation; he conceived his task as similar to that of Jeremiah at the close of the First Temple period, namely as a prophet of doom to warn the people of the future destruction of the Second Temple (see for instance Luke 21:5-6).²⁰ He described the Temple as "a den of robbers" and began to drive out those who did business there, and the Temple authorities seem to have been powerless to stop him, "for all the people hung upon his words" (Luke 19:45-48).

Jesus' parable of the vineyard and the tenants (Luke 20:9-18 and parallels) was clearly directed against the priestly establishment. "He [God] will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard [Israel] to others." The "scribes and the chief priests" well understood the threat; they "tried to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people; for they perceived that he had told this parable against them. So they watched him, and sent spies who pretended to be sincere, that they might take hold of what he said, so as to deliver

¹⁹ Mark 15:10 followed by Matt. 27:18) says that "it was out of envy that the chief priest had delivered him up." This is evidently a mere Markan dramatization. Luke says nothing of the kind.

²⁰ If Joseph Caiaphas was indeed a descendant of Pashhur, then there is an amazing parallel between the behavior of Pashhur, who had the prophet Jeremiah arrested and beaten when he stood in the courtyard of the Temple and prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem (Jer. 19:14-20:6), and that of Pashhur's descendant, Joseph Caiaphas, who had Jesus arrested for the same offense.

him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor" (Luke 20:19-20). Although Jesus did not fall into their trap, he was finally handed over by one of his own disciples, arrested, and brought to Caiaphas' house.

The fear felt by Jesus' opponents was not the only cause of the tragedy; it was also conditioned by their group disposition. They were Sadducees, and as we have seen, Josephus depicts them as "more heartless than any other Jews when they sit in judgment." Concerning the high priestly clan of Annas to which Caiaphas also belonged, we noted above that the Talmud mentions the venomous intrigues of that family. History teaches that those who are accused of acting viciously do not commonly respond with repentance. On the contrary, they generally become even more obstinate and react to the accusations by refusing to change their ways. This is what happened with Jesus' adversaries.

At the beginning of the community of Jesus' disciples in Jerusalem, "the priests and the Sadducees came upon them and arrested them" (Acts 4:1-3). We have already mentioned the list of these opponents in Acts 4:6, "who were all of the high priestly family," Caiaphas being among them. Later the Apostles were again arrested by Caiaphas "the high priest and all who were with him, that is the party of the Sadducees" (Acts 5:17-18, 21). "And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest [i.e., Caiaphas] questioned them, saying, 'We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us'" (Acts 5:27-28).²¹

²¹ I even venture that the famous Marthean self-condemnation of the whole Jewish nation for the present and future (Matt. 23:25, "his blood be on us and on our children") is a tendentious distortion of the real danger that the crucifixion of Jesus would bring blood upon the guilty clan of Caiaphas (Acts 5:27-28). About the unfriendly feeling of the last redactor of Matthew toward the Jewish nation see my "Two Anti-Jewish Montages in Matthew" and "Matthew's Versus Israel" in *Judaism*, pp. 552-574. About Matt. 27:24-25 see especially, pp. xxiii-xxiv and 554, 556 n. 12. I deeply understand such Christian theologians and scholars who feel — after the Holocaust — that they are obliged to interpret Matt. 27:24-25 as innocuous.

Thus, according to the Book of Acts, Caiaphas recognized very well the danger menacing him and his friends when Jesus' disciples preached the new faith. In recounting the life and martyrdom of their Lord, the disciples could not avoid mentioning the guilt of the Sadducean high priests who had delivered Jesus to the Romans. In the eyes of Caiaphas, by preaching this message to the people, Jesus' disciples were attempting to make the high priests responsible for Jesus' death. In contrast to what we know about Caiaphas and his faction, especially from John 11:47-53, the Pharisees of his time did not launch persecutions of Jewish prophetic movements. This is attested by Jesus himself (Matt. 23:29-31), according to whom the Pharisees of his day used to say, "If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets." Indeed, when one reads the Gospels critically, one becomes aware that the Pharisees did not play a decisive role in Jesus' arrest, interrogation, and crucifixion.²² The Pharisees are not even mentioned by name in the context of Jesus' trial as recounted in the first three gospels, with the exception of the story about the guard at Jesus' tomb (Matt. 27:62).²³

When the Sanhedrin wanted to put Jesus' disciples to death, their lives were saved by "a Pharisee called Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in high regard by all the people" in other words Rabban Gamaliel the Elder. The Pharisees evidently disagreed with the action taken by the high priests against Jesus because, according to their halakhah, handing over a Jew to a foreign authority was a sin that could not be forgiven.²⁴ One can even assume that, to the Pharisees, the whole affair was further proof of Sadducean cruelty,

22 See Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (Berlin, 1961), pp. 125-126, and A. F. J. Klijn, "Scribes, Pharisees, High-Priests and Elders," *Novum Testamentum* 3 (1959), pp. 259-267.

23 See *A Comparative Greek Concordance of the Synoptic Gospels*, R. L. Lindsey, ed., vol. 3 (Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 267-269.

24 See *Seder Olan Rabbain*, end chapter 3, and the so-called "Birkat ha-Minim" in the Eighteen Benedictions. In the present volume see chap. 4 n. 36. About the last item see also the study of D. Flusser in *Tarbiz* 60 (1992), pp. 333-374 (Hebrew). In German, "Ein Sendschreiben," pp. 13-16.

and that the Pharisees' criticism only increased the Sadducees' persecution of Jesus' disciples.

A similar clash between the Pharisees and the younger Annas, probably the brother-in-law of Caiaphas, took place in the year 62 A.D. "Annas the Younger convened the Sanhedrin of judges and brought before them a man named James, the brother of Jesus who was called Christ, and certain others [probably Christians]. He accused them of having transgressed the law and delivered them to be stoned."²⁵ The Pharisees, whom Josephus describes as the "inhabitants of the city who were considered the most fair-minded and were strict in the observance of the commandments," managed to have the high priest Annas the Younger deposed from his position as a result of the illegal execution of James.

All four Gospels describe the decisive role of the high priestly group and especially of the high priest Caiaphas in the tragedy of Jesus, and also agree that Jesus' opponents feared him. However, only John clearly states the historical circumstances of Caiaphas' fear: "The chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, 'What are we to do? For this man [Jesus] performs many signs. If we let him go on thus, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.' But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.' He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation" (John 11:47-51).

It is not clear to what degree this report was molded by John or his source. Although Caiaphas' statement that if many believe in Jesus "the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation" may be late, it is well known that in Caiaphas' time prophecies of doom about the future destruction of the Temple already existed,²⁶ one of them was uttered by Jesus himself.

25 Josephus, *Antiquities* 20:200-203.

26 Compare Josephus, *War* 6:288-315, and Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai's prediction of the Temple's destruction in the Babylonian Talmud, *B. Yoma* 39b. According

It is very probable that Caiaphas decided to act because he feared that Jesus' movement and its possible success among the people would trigger violent Roman intervention. His anxiety was exaggerated but not unfounded. Roman military forces not only fought against Jewish rebels, but also crushed any enthusiastic Jewish prophetic movement whose aim was the freedom of Israel. The leader of one such movement, Theudas, is mentioned in Acts 5:36. Josephus described his career: "He persuaded the majority of the masses to take up their possessions and follow him to the Jordan River. He stated that he was a prophet and that at his command the river would be parted and would provide them an easy passage." Fadius "sent against them a squadron of cavalry . . . slew many of them" and Theudas himself was executed by the Romans.²⁷

When Felix was the governor of Judea, "deceivers and impostors, under the pretense of divine inspiration fostering revolutionary changes, persuaded the multitude to act like madmen and led them out into the desert under the belief that God would there give them tokens of deliverance. Against them Felix, regarding this but the preliminary to insurrection, sent a body of cavalry and heavy armed infantry, and put a large number to the sword."²⁸ Felix anticipated the attack of a similar prophet of Egyptian origin, meeting him and his followers with Roman heavy infantry. "The outcome of the ensuing engagement was that the Egyptian escaped with a few of his followers; most of his forces were killed or taken prisoner."²⁹ Paul was later mistakenly held to be this Egyptian by a Roman tribune (Acts 21:38).

It is certainly possible Caiaphas' fear of Jesus' activities leading to similar ends prompted him to arrest Jesus and deliver him to Pilate. However, in order to accomplish this, the high priest needed Jesus' confirmation that he believed himself to be the Messiah (Matt. 26:62-64; Mark 14:61-62). Caiaphas did not receive an

explicit confirmation in full, but Jesus' opponents accused him before Pilate. "We found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ a king" (Luke 23:2). Although Pilate evidently was not sure that Jesus was a rebel against Rome, he ordered an inscription to be put on the cross accusing Jesus of being "the king of the Jews" (Matt. 27:27; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; and John 19:19).

Returning to the account in John 11:47-51, Caiaphas justified his terrible decision by arguing that "it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish" (John 11:50). I personally feel that Caiaphas was capable of so arguing. Many politicians and rulers before and after Caiaphas have believed that real or assumed expediency outweighs any moral scruple. This way of reasoning and acting was and is without doubt contrary to the Jewish faith's humane approach³⁰—but a Sadducean high priest could disagree.

To better understand Caiaphas' reaction in John 11:47-52 to Jesus' movement, one needs to be aware that the horror concerning handing over a citizen to a foreign power (which almost certainly meant exposing the victim to execution) was not restricted to Pharisaic rabbinism. According to the Essene Temple Scroll (64:7-8), "If a man slanders My people and delivers My people to a foreign nation and does evil to My people, you shall hang him on a tree, and he shall die . . ." ³¹ We also hear from the Jewish Sages, "If there is a group of people and Gentiles said to them, Deliver one of yourselves to us and we shall slay him; if you do not, we shall slay all of you; (the ruling is) let all be slain and do not deliver to them a single soul in Israel; but if they single him out . . . let them deliver him to them,

³⁰ See *Tox Terumot* 7:20. In such cases the Hasidic halakhtah did not permit any compromise. See W. Bacher, *Die Agada der Palästinensischen Amoraer*, vol. 1 (Strassburg, 1892); reprint published by G. Oims (Hildesheim, 1965), pp. 128, 188-189.

³¹ See D. Flusser, "Ein Sendschreiben," pp. 13-16. The Greek verb used in connection with the act of Judas does not mean "to betray," as was rightly observed by W. Klassen, *Judas* (Minneapolis, 1996), pp. 47-57. Judas "handed Jesus over." See also 1 Cor. 11:23b. However, already in Luke 6:16 (cf. Acts 7:52) Judas is called a "traitor."

to the Talmud, ben Zakkai gave this prophecy forty years before the destruction of the Temple.

²⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities* 20:97-99

²⁸ Josephus, *War* 2:259-260.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:261-263.

that all of them be not slain."³² When in Gethsemane Judas approached to kiss Jesus, Jesus addressed him with tragic horror: "Judas, are you delivering a person (lit. the son of man) with a kiss?"

It is almost impossible to believe that the Sadducees would not have been sensitive to the common, understandable opposition to handing over a fellow Jew to the hostile foreign powers. The danger that such a Jew would be executed by the Romans was not purely hypothetical—as was proven in the case of Jesus. Caiaphas and his clan were surely not unhappy with the consequent violent solution. Even so, it seems that Caiaphas' proposal in John 11:47–52 was in reality a kind of fishy apology, when he said, "It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation should not perish." The case of Jesus does not fit at all the exception that permits delivering a specified Jew to the Romans. Nevertheless, Caiaphas evidently felt obliged to justify his decision. Jesus himself considered his imminent handing over as an abominable crime (Luke 22:22).

CHAPTER 16

WHAT WAS THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF *ECCE HOMO?*¹

The Latin phrase in the title of this article is a translation of the Greek in the Gospel according to St. John 19:5; its English translation would be "Behold the Man!" In the course of time, this phrase has become a familiar one; but what does it actually mean? In the context of John, it is used by the Roman Prefect, Pontius Pilate, when he presents Jesus to the people. We read how, at the time of Jesus' trial, "Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak. 'Behold the Man!' said Pilate. The high priests and their henchmen saw him and shouted, 'Crucify! Crucify him!'"

This passage from the Gospel of John appears in a section paralleled in the Synoptic Gospels. The cry of "Crucify! Crucify him!" with which the Jewish crowd respond to Pilate's appeal, is also found in various renditions in Matthew (27:21–23), Mark (15:12–14), and Luke (23:21–23). Earlier, John relates that Pilate had Jesus flogged, and that the soldiers wove a crown of thorns for his head, clothed him in a purple cloak, and stepped up to him saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!," and struck him on the cheek (John 19:1–3). A similar story appears in Mark 15:16–20, where an entire cohort of Roman soldiers is said to have participated in this mock ceremony.² They clothed Jesus in purple, crowned him with thorns, hailed him as "King of the Jews" and then struck his head with a

³² *Tos, Terumot* 7:20 and *J. Terumot* VIII 46b, quoted by Safrai, "Teaching of the Pietists," p. 26 and n. 52 there. See above n. 30.

¹ This article was originally published in Hebrew in *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Science and Humanities* VI:8 (1982), pp. 143–151, based upon a public lecture delivered on December 9, 1980; translated from the Hebrew by Anna Barber.

² The Greek word for "cohort" is a translation of the Latin *cohortes*.