



# Jerusalem Imperilled

Book 1 of the Yavneh Trilogy

Harry Freedman

Published by Harry Freedman Books November 2011

[www.harryfreedmanbooks.com](http://www.harryfreedmanbooks.com)

[info@harryfreedmanbooks.com](mailto:info@harryfreedmanbooks.com)

Published in London, UK

© 2011 Harry Freedman

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in critical articles or reviews no part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission of the publishers.

Thank you for downloading this free sample. This sample is intended for your personal use and enjoyment only. It may not be re-sold or given away. Thank you for respecting the work and creativity of this author.

The rights of Harry Freedman as author have been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988.

**If you enjoy this sample please purchase a copy from Amazon,**

**<http://www.amazon.com/Jerusalem-Imperilled-Yavneh-Trilogy-ebook/dp/B006791GR4/>**

# Chapter II

---

“I want heads! I want Eleazar and the blacksmith and that worm Yitzhak. I want them now!” The little, fat man, the bane of our lives, was working himself up into a fever, the pitch of his voice rising higher, his barrel stomach reverberating with rage. Attius and Capito, long suffering witnesses to the Procurator’s intemperance stood by passively, waiting for his ire to wane. They had each served their country faithfully in the campaigns in Britannia before being posted to Judea. Each had seen too much suffering and destruction in their military careers to become agitated by their master’s tantrums.

“Who do they think they are to mock *me*? An appointed official of the Emperor of Rome, governor of this dirty little province, dispensing the power of the gods over their miserable little lives. And they are what? Nothing more than street jesters. How dare they take up a collecting bowl pretending I need their charity?”

“And their cry, sir,” interjected Capito, stooping to address the small man, recoiling slightly from the unsavoury odour of his breath. “Charity for the starveling! All because you rightly claimed what was Caesar’s from their Temple treasury.” Attius just managed to suppress a smile at his colleague’s sarcasm; the procurator was so self-satisfied he would never see it as such.

“Don’t come back empty handed” he hurled at the departing backs of his two prefects.

Fuming, Gessius Florus turned towards the chamber that overlooked the Giants’ Valley, its olive terraces shimmering in the noonday glare. This was his favourite spot in the palace, the place he went when wanted to be alone and quieten the pounding that so often afflicted his head. Even his wife refrained from disturbing him here.

He stepped through the open door into the blinding sunlight. The tamarisks were in bloom. Butterflies danced amongst tufts of foliage exuding from the cracked stones in the walls, over which drifted the sound of children laughing in the streets.

How unfair that such a villain can enjoy such tranquillity, that the architect of our misfortune can bask in the delights of a city to which he has no claim. Accursed tyrant, would that his end reflects his deeds, that those he destroyed, destroy him

He had advanced just two steps into his courtyard when Falco, chief of his advisers, froze him in his tracks. “A dispatch from Cestius” he cried. “He will visit in seven days.”

Florus kicked the wall in frustration. No news could have been more unwelcome to him. Nor given a crumb of hope to us. Florus may have had an impressive title as procurator of Judea, but in reality he was little more than a functionary within the hierarchy that governed the Roman empire. His rank gave him grandiose pretensions, the highest authority in the land, but nevertheless he was no more than a spoke in a wheel, a civilian administrator drawn from the second, equestrian rank of Latin nobility, whose name was probably not even known here amongst my master’s masters, in the Senate of Rome. He

reported to the Governor of Syria, the selfsame Cestius, a fairer and more decent man than Gessius Florus would ever aspire to be.

It must be over a hundred years since Rome first invaded our country. They changed our name to Judea and annexed us as a province about sixty years ago. I'm not sure what difference that made, it was long before my time. But one way or another it led to our being ruled by the vile Gessius Florus.

Old people, who remember other governors and procurators say that he is without doubt the worst of the lot. Banditry and corruption are not new in our land; but no ruler has been as bare-faced as Florus in his abuse of power nor as incompetent in his exercise of it. When there were riots in Caesarea, where Gessius Florus's garrison is based, he did nothing to intervene. Worse still, when the Greeks who reside there drove the Jews out, and the leaders of the Jewish community implored, then bribed, Florus to assist them, the rogue had them arrested!

It's not as if he imagined he would get away with it. He had already been summoned some months earlier by Cestius, following a series of complaints sent to the Syrian governor. We all knew what happened, because the slaves who attend Cestius told everyone they could, news of that sort spreads like wildfire.

"You are a fool, Florus" the Governor had rebuked. "It is one thing to impose discipline in your province. It is quite another to drive the population into the hands of fanatics and insurrectionists. You know what an idealistic people these Jews are. As I hear it their messianic doctrine is becoming fashionable again, largely because of your iron rule. The people are looking for a leader who will overcome us on the battlefield and restore their sovereignty. Because of you, every factional leader is competing for the title Messiah."

Florus of course would have none of it. "Thirty years ago," he protested, "we put to death a so-called messianic leader. We will do the same with any leader of the Jews who dares to oppose us. There is nothing to fear."

"Idiot! You understand nothing! You don't even know what they mean by this name Messiah. The very first thing you should have done when appointed Procurator was to familiarise yourself with the history and culture of the people you rule. How else can you manipulate them?"

Gessius Florus sneered. He had nothing but contempt for the Governor, even though he was careful not to show it. What sort of a man, he asked himself, would fail to enrich himself at the expense of his subjects, given the opportunity? What sort of man cares about being liked and respected by those he rules?

"So? What is a Messiah?" Florus tried not to appear to mock, his mouth visibly twitching as he sought to suppress a smile.

"Remember who you are speaking to!" For all his arrogance Florus visibly recoiled as the Governor's words, carried on a shower of spittle mingled with a vapour of garlic blasted

from his mouth. "I am not your school master. I am your commander. You will do well to remember that. Ask the Jew, he will tell you."

Florus turned to see a Jewish attendant, trying not to show too much interest in the argument as he swept the floor. Florus seized him by the throat, pushing him backwards against a column.

"What is this Messiah, Jew?" he bellowed

"The king who will defeat our enemies" retorted the Jew, inconspicuous no longer.

"Promised by our prophets long ago, and making ready to come to our aid now."

"A nice promise" scoffed Florus. "You Jews pay more attention to your dreams than to the real world."

"Your predecessor didn't think so. He feared the Messiah. That's why he slaughtered Bar Abbas shortly after he was brought down from the cross. And murdered Yeshu."

Florus shrugged. He was tired of this conversation. But Cestius had not summoned Florus to educate him.

"Your cynical abuse of power has stirred up the partisans. They are inflamed by this crazy, messianic ideology. The people are not just on the point of insurrection. They have become driven by religious zealotry; they believe their appointed time has come and they are seeking the Messiah who will destroy Rome forever. It is all your work. You have created an unstable and dangerous climate. I rue the day that you were foisted on me. Unless things rapidly change I will be petitioning the Senate for your removal."

Florus, so we hear, received the remainder of his rebuke in silence. He would not voluntarily change his behaviour, but there was no reason for him to confess this to Cestius. Despite the fanaticism of which Cestius spoke, there was no Messiah and Roman troops were free to continue their murderous rampages. Allowing Florus to continue to get rich on the back of the Jews. He would seize his opportunities while he could. Cestius was old and soft headed. The Senate would never oust him on the Governor's word. One day Florus would have his job.

Other than Agrippa, our so-called king who is really just a proxy of Rome, Cestius is the only person to stand between Florus with his overwhelming desire to exploit his power and enrich himself at the expense of the local population. But whatever he may have thought about his superiors, he was still answerable to them. A matter which his victims, we inhabitants of Judea, knew full well. Would that we had been smarter in exploiting it.

But one good thing came out of Florus's rebuke by the Governor. The Jewish attendant spent the next week recounting the episode in the inns of Damascus. It did not take long before the whole of Judea, as well as Syria, knew just how vulnerable Gessius Florus's position was.

\*\*\*

News travels fast in a small province. Particularly when the Procurator's household staff keep a close watch on his business. My enormous friend Meir Ben-Batiach was chasing a chicken around its meagre coop when his sixteen year old cousin, one of several kitchen boys in the Procurator's household burst breathlessly into the yard.

The old stories talk of a beast called a Reym, an animal so large that Noah had to tie it to the side of the ark. If he'd lived at that time, Noah would've tied Meir alongside it. He was a giant. Bigger even than Og, king of Bashan. But although he stood head and shoulders above everyone else, when his mother ordered him to catch a chicken for the oven, that's what he did. Or at least, tried to do.

"Cestius is journeying from Syria," the boy blurted out. "He will meet Gessius Florus in Jerusalem in a week's time, two days before the Passover."

In a last ditch attempt Meir flung himself full length to the ground, throwing up a cloud of dust big enough to cover the sun, and seized the chicken by the neck. He narrowly avoiding decapitating the bird- had he succeeded it would have been ritually ineligible for consumption, voiding his efforts of the past quarter hour. Shaking himself to expel the cinders from his robe, one hand shielding his eyes from the fierce white dazzle of the sun reflected from the stones, the other keeping a firm grip on the fowl's neck, he appeared to be performing an esoteric dance. "Then we will need to be ready for them. Good work, boy." he added as an afterthought.

"They will be harder to snare than a chicken" laughed the kitchen boy.

"The timing cannot be a coincidence. Next week is Passover. Do you think Cestius means to worship with us, to eat the sacrifice? How can the sages permit that? He is no Jew."

"The sages know better than to provoke the Romans. Ask your uncle."

"My uncle? Yohanan Ben-Zakkai? Why he would forsake a commandment a day if the Romans would just leave him in peace with his beloved scholars."

"That is no way to speak of my brother" yelled his mother who had overheard the tail end of the conversation. "Your uncle Yohanan is the most respected scholar in Israel, the leader of the people. You *will* show him respect. And you will *not* cause trouble with the authorities. It's time you grew up and put all this talk of revolution behind you."

But even mothers who can command their sons to catch chickens cannot control their passions. Ben-Batiach hated the Romans to distraction. I often wish now that I had listened more to him, instead of admiring them the way I foolishly did.

He had been fighting the Romans in his dreams and fantasies since the age of eleven. The old women said it was because his father had walked out when he was just a baby, leaving the boy with no proper discipline. But his mother, a strikingly tall, light-skinned woman with a graceful bearing, a womanly version of her brother Yohanan, blamed it on the night just a few weeks after her husband had left when Roman soldiers broke in, slammed the infant in a chest to drown its screams and raped her. She had never

recovered from that fearful night, nor she believed, had he. I only know this because as a child I overheard her speaking of it to my mother. Although the conversation stayed with me, it took me many years to appreciate the extent of the trauma they must both have suffered.

Meir had recently begun to turn his fantasies into actuality. He had led a handful of compatriots in a couple of excursions against Roman patrols on the hills of the winding Hebron road in the past few months. His strength, and his willingness to use it would have been an inspiration to his comrades, it must have been like going into battle behind Goliath. He hadn't killed anyone yet. But he knew he would soon. Despite wondering what it would be like, he did not admit to self doubt. Rather, he dreamed of the day when he would be proclaimed leader of his people.

Much as he sneered at his uncle Yohanan, his conciliatory attitude towards Rome and his obsession with religion and learning, Meir had a sneaking respect for his status and the deferential way that people treated him. He imagined himself at the head of a group of fearless guerrillas, launching terror raids on the Roman forces, galvanising popular support and driving the occupier from the land. Unschooled in world affairs he had no idea of the extent of the Roman empire, the size of their military or their prowess in crushing rebellions. But he was convinced that one day he would be the leader of a free nation, although the precise nature and organisation of that state, and his particular role in creating it, evaded his fancy.

Over the coming days, news of Cestius's impending arrival travelled through the city. We'd all been traumatised in Jerusalem by Gessius Florus's relentless campaign against us. A campaign that seemed designed to do little more than demoralise us and enrich him personally. It was ironic that a senior member of the military occupation, a former consul of Rome, could be viewed as a potential saviour, but such was Florus's tyranny and our desperation that any crumb of hope was worth devouring; even the impending arrival of the Governor of Syria.

Word spread, as words do. And despite the frantic Passover preparations which engaged every household, the citizens realised that this was a rare opportunity for them to turn the tables against their foe. Cestius had established a reputation for himself as a relatively benign ruler, a man who reached out to his subjects and engaged them in dialogue. Many of Jerusalem's most senior dignitaries are on familiar terms with him.

The Sanhedrin had wanted to send a delegation to Cestius privately to discuss Florus's behaviour. But popular anger was so great that they acceded to suggestions of a mass rally at which the elders of the city would implore Cestius to intervene on their behalf against the tyrant. The bulk of the population had no stomach for revolution, they simply wanted to live a peaceful life, to enjoy the benefits that Roman technology brought them and to better themselves, without feeling the iron glove of the Procurator upon their necks.

But Meir Ben-Batiach had no time for mass protests. He was convinced that firm, decisive action was the only way to bring about the change he sought. Young enough to still have the courage of his convictions, not yet old enough to appreciate the value of caution, he had other plans in mind for the Syrian governor, and particularly so for his Judean subordinate.

As soon as his mother had wearied of her reprimand, and his cousin had slouched back to his job in Florus's kitchen, Ben-Batiach made a beeline for the home of his ally and fellow-conspirator Hanan. The pair had met some months earlier, when they had been roughly relegated to the side of the road as a phalanx of Roman troops had marched on some errand into the city. Hanan had been cursing the Romans under his breath, but not quietly enough for his words to evade Ben-Batiach's sharp ears.

I have never met Hanan but I have heard stories about him. Smaller in stature than Ben-Batiach but with a commanding voice and cunning mind, he makes up in brain and personal authority what he lacks in brawn. They make an ideal fighting couplet.

Hanan's father grew up with mine; they had been close friends until their religious differences tore them apart. Religious differences have been tearing apart our people since we stood together at Mount Sinai.

Hanan's father had been little more than a boy when he decided to join the small and impoverished band of Ebionites, Jews who proclaimed Yeshu of Nazareth as Messiah. My father had often told me the story. I think he secretly admired the man's faith, was perhaps a little envious that Hanan's father had managed to be passionate about a belief he had attained through his own enquiries, rather than just subscribing to the norms of Pharisaic doctrine as everyone else seemed to have done.

It had happened about ten years after Yeshu had been crucified. Hanan's father had been idly strolling towards the main thoroughfare in Tyre. Turning a corner, his head full of young man's nonsense, he walked straight into a small knot of people watching a speaker declaiming something from the top of a broken column. It was not an unusual sight, my country is full both of street preachers and broken columns. He saw a couple of his friends amongst the crowd and stopped to listen. The man was recounting how this Yeshu had brought someone called Lazarus back from the dead. Hanan's father shrugged and walked on. Miracle men in our country are as numerous as the stars in the heavens, nobody really believes the stories.

Next day Hanan's father was carrying a hide from his father's tannery when he passed two men intensely conversing. It was the high pitched voice of one which caught his attention. He was saying "Yeshu's followers fought with the High Priest's servant. They cut off his right ear. It was no accident. No other wound would have done." He didn't understand the context, could not hear the reply, but he noted the name Yeshu, it was odd to hear it twice in as many days.

The following day was the Sabbath. He went to the synagogue with his father as they did every week. The congregation was thin, it was the turn that week for the town's priests,



my father's family amongst them, to officiate in the Jerusalem Temple. An old man he had never seen before began to rant at him. "They're gorging themselves silly on the offerings of the poor again. The whole priesthood are nothing but parasites. That Yeshu had the right idea; he wanted to do away with the lot of them and put his friend the Baptist in charge. That's why Herod, may his name be blotted out, had him killed you know."

Hanan's father didn't know and didn't much care. He had frozen when he heard that name again. Three times in three days. It must have been an omen.

He began to ask around. It turned out that Yeshu had a group of followers, religious Jews, who lived in a nearby village. Convinced that he should pay attention to the omen, he went to speak with them. He found them meek, pious and welcoming. They called themselves Ebionites, which means poor in our language. His visit turned into a sojourn. He stayed with them until the day that the elders suggested that he could do more good for their movement if he were to live in Jerusalem. They found him a wife and he went.

In accordance with the Ebionites' asceticism, Hanan's father committed his family to a life of simplicity. In a frugal upbringing on the fringes of the city, Hanan had been ignorant of the luxuries enjoyed by the aristocracy in the heart of Jerusalem.

From his earliest years he had felt alienated, whether as a Jew oppressed by the Romans, or as an Ebionite viewed with suspicion by both Pharisee and Sadducee. His urge to overcome his handicaps was overwhelming. He wanted nothing more than to share in the riches of the world, to transcend both the self imposed frugality of the Ebionites, and the grinding poverty of the crushed citizens of his homeland. He needed to make something of himself. His ambition was his driving force. He rarely thought of anything else.

Like Meir Ben-Batiach, Hanan was a young man in a hurry who saw revolution as the way to a better life. Unlike Meir, Hanan was not prepared to rely on brute force alone, he was too smart for that. A successful revolution needs popular support. Ben-Batiach's physical style was not always to his liking. Hanan preferred to fight with his mouth whenever possible.

When the Roman phalanx had ordered them to the side of the road, a small group of young priests had been standing across the way. The way they disported themselves screamed wealth and privilege, robes of the finest linen, voices ostentatiously loud, stature upright, heads held high. They seemed oblivious to the marching column of soldiers passing them by. They laughed and joked amongst themselves, as if they had not a care in the world. They looked visibly shocked at Hanan's tirade as he strode past them.

"Sniggering jackals! Look at you. The enemy parades past, pushes you out of the way and still you strut around like young lions in springtime. You priests are far too at ease with the foe. Traitors! Yeshu was right. He'd have cleansed the Temple of your impurity."

Ben-Batiach, enraged as he was at the triumphalism of the Romans, had never heard such an outburst against the holy priests. Rushing to catch the stranger up as he strode away seething with outrage, Meir breathlessly accosted him.

“Comrade, stop. I heard what you just said. Indeed, the Roman pigs have to be made to pay for what they do, but why are you so angry at the priests? Are they more culpable than any other Sadducee in their affection for Rome?”

Hanan wheeled round. Seeing a young plebeian of his own age but twice his size the anger flushing his face subsided somewhat. “The priests? They and their Temple. They represent everything that is corrupt and unsavoury in our nation. Everything Yeshu tried to change. Have you heard how he threw the moneychangers out of the temple? Because of their corruption, encouraged by the priests?” He spoke rapidly, his rage at what he had just witnessed still apparent.

Ben-Batiach shrugged. Had he just accosted a street corner preacher? “I have heard of Yeshu,” he admitted “But I don't know anything about moneychangers.”

“I am no follower of Yeshu,” Hanan fumed. “I am not fighting for him. That was then, this is now. The Romans are the foe, the priests are just an irritation. Not worth bothering about. Apart from one, so I hear.”

“Really? Who is that?” Ben-Batiach was intrigued. But Hanan was not giving any more away.

“Who are you that wants to know? You are very inquisitive. I don't even know your name. Let alone where you stand.”

And gradually a friendship was born.

\*\*\*

“He's not so big.” The oversized Ben-Batiach, who was unable to keep news of his new friend to himself, was talking to his mother. But you wouldn't know it. He *feels* big. I think it might be the way his eyes smile, even when his mouth doesn't. It makes you look at him. And he's got untidy curly hair that you can't help but notice and that's when you see his eyes. So you notice him - it's as if he fills the room. Not like me- people can't help noticing me. I *do* fill the room, he added wistfully.”

His mother smiled. Her son may have been the largest person she had ever seen, he may have scared people just by looking at them and he may have made many enemies, even at his tender age, with his uncompromising politics. But he was her son, the only one she had, and she couldn't help loving him, you only had to hear him talk to know that he was still a kid.

“But the real thing about Hanan is not the way he looks, nor the white robe that he wears because he is an Ebionite, and not even the fact that he can't keep still, he's always

swinging his feet or tapping with his hands. The real thing is that he is so smart, much cleverer than I will ever be. He always knows what to do and he's nearly always right.

"But you aren't stupid, son"

"No. But he's quick. I can work things out and get things to happen. But I have to sit down and make plans. He just sort of knows, straightaway what to do. And he's good at telling others what he means. People listen to him, he's got a strange, sharp voice, like a crow, he startles people when he starts to speak and then they can't help listening. I think that's why he can get people to do what he wants. They see him and they listen to him, even though they don't mean to."

"And do the girls like him?"

Ben-Batiach thought for a moment. He laughed. "Yes, he can get them to do what he wants as well."

Between their first encounter and Cestius's planned visit Hanan and Meir had slowly accumulated a small cache of weapons. They did not yet have a plan, other than to arm themselves and wait for the right moment.

They had bought a couple of curved sicarius daggers from a ruffian in one of the many inns in the city, a transaction that had them both trembling with fear lest they had stepped into a Roman entrapment. They had stolen a slingshot from a young peasant boy and made off with a javelin in their most daring escapade yet, an early morning raid on the Roman regional headquarters at Caesarea, a coastal city some miles to the west.

It was too dangerous to store these weapons at home, Gessius Florus's men had been known to descend on Jewish homes without warning, looting was just one of the many entertainments the Procurator enjoyed. So they concealed their stash beyond the city walls, in a rock crevice close to the Virgin's Spring. Roman troops have no reason to patrol that sloping cliff which overlooks the Valley of Kidron, abutting the conduit that brings water to the city.

Passover is a time of febrile activity in the city. Cooking utensils need to be cleaned, unleavened bread to be baked, the Passover lamb which we eat at the beginning of the holiday has to be procured. Although they had planned to set off early on the morning of Cestius's arrival in order to collect the weapons they needed, Meir Ben-Batiach's mother had other plans for him. Domestic chores detained him for the whole morning. He tried to convince Hanan that it would have seemed suspicious if he had not carried out his mother's requests. But Hanan was not persuaded.

By the time they were able to set off for the Virgin's Spring, the streets were already full of people heading for the Agora in the north western corner of the city. The large market square stands just beyond the walls of the lavish palace built by the late King Herod, may his soul never know peace, now the official residence of the Procurator, where Cestius and Gessius Florus were already reported to be in conference. Hanan and Meir, heading

in the opposite direction threaded their way through the rapidly swelling mob. I called to Ben-Batiach as he pushed past, but he was too preoccupied to even see me.

Beating a path through the crowds was not easy, it took longer than they anticipated to reach their destination. The afternoon sun was burning fiercely as they scrambled down the cliff face. From the city, scarcely a mile distant they could already hear the swelling din of the crowd as they pressed into the market square, calling on Cestius to come out and hear their grievances. Ben-Batiach was too large to squeeze into the rock crevice where the weapon stash had been secreted, but Hanan had little problem. He emerged a moment later brandishing the daggers and a couple of sling shots. Meir in the meantime had been filling the folds of his robe with stones; David was preparing to take on Goliath.

From Herod's Palace, Cestius could hear the buzz of the crowd as it swelled into the Agora. He stepped into the marble courtyard in time to see the leaders of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish legislative body, robes girded with their distinctive red cords, approach the guards with a request that Cestius confer with them. He did not wait for the guards to convey the message to him, rather he summoned the reluctant Florus and strode towards the Jewish leaders. As he made his way, a press of frightened and discontented citizens surged towards him, halting him in his tracks.

A thousand voices discordantly apprised him of Florus's crimes- his protection rackets, his use of Roman soldiers to rape, plunder and steal, his exiling of villages. Florus, who stood at Cestius's side whilst the protest was being made, laughed off the charges but his boss, at least on the face of it, seemed to take things seriously. A tall, gray haired man with those sharp Roman features, clear voice and friendly demeanour, a fluent orator, he was able to reassure the crowd and guarantee more reasonable conduct on Florus's part in future. He then called forward the leaders of the Sanhedrin to talk privately to him.

The crowd was already dispersing as the two flustered, sweating conspirators finally entered the market square. Their satisfied faces and the snatched phrases that Hanan and Meir caught as they battled their way through told them that the populace had been appeased by their confrontation with Cestius.

Ahead of them they could see a small knot of Roman soldiers. In the middle, a handful of well dressed, important looking Jerusalemites busily engaged in conversation with the Governor. Meir recognised his uncle Yohanan amongst them. The vile Gessius Florus was also prominent, the diminutive tubby creature was clearly standing on a plinth of some sort to give himself more height. "That must be Cestius, next to the pig" whispered Meir to Hanan.

"And the other pigs are the priests who run the Sanhedrin."

"They are not all priests. My uncle is amongst them. He is a Pharisee. And he is not a pig."

Hanan looked quizzically at his friend. Not for the first time he wondered whether Ben-Batiach fondness for his uncle might not harm their cause.

The assassination plan was vague, if plan there was at all. They were not at all sure how to get close enough to Cestius and Florus, nor how they would escape after delivering the fatal blows. They were still young and idealistic, notwithstanding Hanan's cunning mind they had not yet appreciated the full value of detailed planning.

The only realistic thing they could do from a distance was to fire off some slingshots, cause a commotion then sprint across the Agora, daggers in hand. But even slingshots seemed out of the question, it was evident that flying stones risked endangering their own people as much as the oppressors. Still, the two young men had come too far, and were too agitated to back off now. They *would* do something. Pharisee and Ebionite, allied together in a compact against the enemy of their people.

They headed for the south of the square, towards the well that was used for watering cattle. Crouching behind its low surrounding wall the Ebionite Hanan, at this stage in his life still without sin, prepared to cast the first stone. The hand that fell roughly on his shoulder and the boot that broke three of his ribs with just one kick came as a complete surprise. As did the next few months, spent in a cold, dank dungeon.

**If you have enjoyed this sample please purchase a copy from  
Amazon,**

**<http://www.amazon.com/Jerusalem-Imperilled-Yavneh-Trilogy-ebook/dp/B006791GR4/>**