

The Number of the Beast (666)

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Bible Versions

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(Note: All underlining of Scripture quotations for emphasis has been added by the author.)

Introduction

Revelation is a "prophecy" of coming events (1:3).

Because nothing like what John describes has ever literally transpired, John's visions are assumed to relate to events still in our future. But that's not what Revelation itself claims!

The very first verse clearly indicates the time frame for fulfillment (1:1):

This is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants what must soon come to pass.

This time indicator is repeated in 1:3, and again at the end of Revelation:

1:3: *Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and obey what is written in it, because the time is near.*

22:6: *Then the angel said to me, "These words are faithful and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His angel to show His servants what must soon take place."*

22:10: *Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of prophecy in this book, because the time is near."*

The entire prophetic content of Revelation is "bookended" by imminence statements.

Thus, contrary to popular opinion, John's visions relate not to events in our future, but to events long past.

To first-century events!

When John wrote, a certain "king" was reigning: the sixth king in a line of seven.

Five kings had already "fallen" (i.e., died), and a seventh would soon arise to reign for a short while (17:10).

The Beast itself would be a sort of eighth king, meaning that it would take on an identity and possess authority of its own somewhat independently of the other kings (17:11).

These seven kings are almost certainly the Roman rulers (Caesars), beginning with Julius:

Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, NERO, Galba.

Nero's successor, Galba, reigned for just seven months.

This places John's writing during the reign of Nero, who became Roman emperor in October 54 AD.

Nero's persecution of Christians broke out in Rome around November 64 and probably continued until his death in June 68 — a period of about 3½ years or 42 months, as noted in Revelation 13:5.

The dreaded number

Revelation 13:17-18 (BSB):

¹⁷ so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark — the name of the beast or the number of its name.

¹⁸ Here is a call for wisdom: Let the one who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and that number is 666.^d

BSB Footnote:

18 d Some manuscripts 616.

We see here that:

1. John calls for “wisdom”: he invites his readers to calculate and solve the riddle.¹
2. 666 is the number of the name of the Beast (13:17; 15:2).

It’s the number of a certain man (13:18).

Since John gives its value (666), the riddle involves identifying the number’s referent: the man and his name.

3. One must “calculate” his identity. From the verb *psēphizō* (Strong’s G5585), “to count, calculate”.
4. The solution is not straightforward, but requires a degree of “insight” — some ingenuity.

From this we may deduce the following:

1. The riddle is solvable, and could be solved by John’s first readers.
2. The man was someone familiar to them.
3. The solution likely required some mathematical calculations.
4. The riddle is deliberately obscure.

The number’s referent clearly must have been some first-century person. But there was a need to keep its meaning hidden from outsiders — from the Roman authorities, so as not to unduly endanger John’s readers.²

Isopsephy and gematria

In ancient languages, the letters of an alphabet also served as numerals.

Most of us are familiar with the Roman numerals I, V, X, L, C, D and M — all letters from the Latin alphabet.

With the Greek and Hebrew alphabets, every individual letter also represented a number.³

This dual role of letters allowed words and phrases and names to have numerical values as well — equal to the sum of the number values of their constituent letters.

Isopsephy is the technique of (1) calculating the numerical value of Greek words, and (2) correlating multiple words having the same value in order to uncover hidden meanings. (*Gematria* is the Hebrew equivalent.)

Riddles utilizing this technique were commonplace in the first-century Roman world.

So we may assume that when John invited his readers to “calculate” to whom the 666 referred, they would have tried different letter combinations and added up their individual values in an attempt to reach that total.

To complicate matters John was seeking a Hebraic solution, not a Greek or Latin one.

Only those readers familiar with the Hebrew alphabet would have been able to solve the riddle.

¹ John seems to have liked puzzles and symbolism.

² The Roman province of Asia (in today’s western Turkey) was a center of the cult of Caesar-worship. Its cities were loyal to the emperor and his Empire. There was a definite need to keep the riddle’s solution private!

³ In Greek: *alpha* = 1; *beta* = 2; ... *iota* = 10; *kappa* = 20; ... *rho* = 100; *sigma* = 200; ... *omega* = 800.

In Hebrew: *aleph* = 1; *beth* = 2; ... *yod* = 10; *kaph* = 20 ... *qoph* = 100; *resh* = 200; *sin/shin* = 300; *taw* = 400.

The Solution

The solution presented here was reached independently by several German scholars in the 1830s.

The riddle clearly points to Nero as the Beast. As emperor he was in a position to persecute, and he did so with great viciousness. He blamed Christians for the fire that decimated Rome in the summer of 64 AD, thereby justifying his brutal torture and murder of untold thousands of believers.

Here is the solution to John's riddle:

John's readers mostly spoke Greek, but some would also have been acquainted with Aramaic and Hebrew.

The Latin form of Nero's name was NERO CAESAR. We find this form, for example, on first-century Roman coins.

The Greek form of his name, as found on Greek coins, was ΝΕΡΩΝ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ (= *Nerōn Kaisar*).

The Hebrew form of his name was a transliteration of the Greek form, but without the vowels *e*, *ai* and *a*.

First-century Jews wrote his name thus: נרון קסר .

(We know this from an Aramaic document that has been found at Murabba'at, near the Dead Sea.)

The numerical values of these seven Aramaic/Hebrew letters total 666.

These seven letters transliterated into our modern alphabet are *Nrwn Qsr*.

Explanation

1. Hebrew reads from right to left.
2. In John's time only Hebrew consonants were employed; the vowel pointings had not yet been invented. Thus, the vowels *e*, *ai*, and *a* (in *Nerōn Kaisar*) are missing in the Hebrew transliteration.
3. Having said that, vowels were sometimes represented by certain consonants (called vowel letters). Here, the *omega* (long *o*) in *Nerōn* is represented by the Hebrew letter *waw* (= *w*).
4. Aramaic/Hebrew letters were assigned numerical values; the values of the seven letters total 666.

Nero's name in Greek	Nero's name in Hebrew	Hebrew letter's numerical value	Hebrew letter's transliteration
N	נ (<i>nun</i>)	50	<i>n</i>
E			
P (<i>rho = r</i>)	ר (<i>resh</i>)	200	<i>r</i>
Ω (<i>omega = ō</i>)	ו (<i>waw</i>)	6	<i>w</i>
N	ן (final <i>nun</i> form) ⁴	50	<i>n</i>
K	ק (<i>qoph</i>)	100	<i>q</i>
A			
I			
Σ (<i>sigma = s</i>)	ס (<i>samek</i>)	60	<i>s</i>
A			
P (<i>rho = r</i>)	ר (<i>resh</i>)	200	<i>r</i>
TOTAL		666	

⁴ The final *nun* of a Hebrew word has a different form to a *nun* placed elsewhere. But its numerical value is the same.

Why does the Hebrew letter *waw* (w) stand in for the Greek letter *omega*?

Hebrew writing has gone through several phases:

The earliest Hebrew alphabet consisted of consonants only; vowels were not used in writing at all.

Then, from the 10th century BC on, innovative scribes started to use some of the consonants to represent the different vowel sounds.

The ה (*he = h*) stood in for the vowels *e* and long *a* (*ā*).

The י (*yod = y*) stood in for the long *i* and long *e* (*ī* and *ē*).

The ו (*waw = w*) stood in for the long *o* and long *u* (*ō* and *ū*).

Because these three letters (ה, י, ו) represented both vowels and consonants, they were called vowel letters.⁵

Finally, the present system of Hebrew vowel signs and accent marks was introduced by the Masorete scholars sometime between 600 and 800 AD. Under this system, the *waw* has been modified by a dot to represent the long *o* and long *u* vowels:

וֹ = *holem waw*, transliterated by *ô*.

וּ = *shureq*, transliterated by *û*.

Our interest here, with Nero's name in Hebrew, is with the letter ו (*waw = w*), which in John's time could stand in for the long *o* and *u* vowels.

This is the reason for the *omega* in *Nerōn* being transliterated by the Hebrew letter *waw*.

Objections to the Nero theory

Objection 1

Why would John complicate matters by requiring such an unusual spelling of Nero's name?

This theory requires an appended *n* (Hebrew letter *nun*) to reach the 666 total.

Response:

Rather than being an unusual spelling, this was the regular Greek spelling of Nero's name as found, for example, on first-century Greek coins. The standard form of his name was ΝΕΡΩΝ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ (= *Nerōn Kaisar*).⁶

This objection, while quite common, it completely unfounded.

Two further points:

1. Nero's name in the Murabba'at document, with its transliterated Aramaic/Hebrew characters — includes the final nun: נרױן קסר (= *nrwn qsr*). This document dates to the second year of Nero's reign (55-56 AD).
2. Some early Greek manuscripts have 616 as the Beast's number. It seems that some early scribe, mindful that Nero was the intended referent, altered the number so that it reflected the more usual spelling used by his Latin readers: *Nero Caesar*. The Hebrew equivalent (without the final *nun*) totals 616. Irenaeus wrote disparagingly of this variant found in certain manuscripts already in his day (ca. 180 AD). He insists that 666 is the original form.

⁵ The ה (*he = h*) was only used as a vowel letter at the end of a word, to show that the final vowel (*e* or *ā*) should be pronounced. This can be seen, for example, in Hebrew names such as Moshe (מֹשֶׁה) and Leah (לֵאָה), and in other names ending in *ah* like Deborah and Rebekah.

⁶ A Google search will amply demonstrate this fact. Search using as key words: Nero, Greek coins, ΝΕΡΩΝ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ. Coins often had ΝΕΡΩΝ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ on them — the Greek equivalent of Nero Caesar Augustus.

Objection 2

Why would John require a Hebraic solution when most of his readers spoke Greek?

Response:

1. John himself said that some “insight” or ingenuity was needed to solve the riddle.
As noted earlier, there was a need to keep its meaning hidden from outsiders — particularly from the Roman authorities, so as not to unduly endanger John’s readers.
2. John in Revelation shows a keen interest in Hebrew names:
9:11: *They were ruled by a king, the angel of the Abyss. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek it is Apollyon.*
16:16: *And they assembled the kings in the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.*

In the first instance John gives his readers the Greek equivalent to a Hebrew name.

And for both names, he transliterates the Hebrew form into the Greek text of Revelation.⁷

Given John’s evident interest in Hebrew names, and the fact that Revelation’s symbolism derives almost exclusively from the Hebrew Scriptures, it would seem reasonable for him to propose a riddle solvable in Hebrew rather than Greek or Latin.

Objection 3

The number should be understood as three “sixes” rather than the number 666:

William Hendriksen, in his classic work *More than Conquerors*, claims that the 666 refers not to a specific man, but to mankind generally:

... the number of the beast is the number of man. Now, man was created on the sixth day.
Six, moreover, is not seven and never reaches seven. It always fails to attain perfection; that is, it never becomes seven. Six means missing the mark, or failure. Seven means perfection or victory. ... The number of the beast is 666, that is, failure upon failure upon failure!⁸

Response:

If John intended three lots of six, we would expect to see in the early manuscripts one of the following:
Either three *stigmata* in a row, with each denoting a *six* (Ϛ Ϛ Ϛ), or the word “six” written three times thus:

ϚϚ ϚϚ ϚϚ (= *hex hex hex*).

But instead, we find 600 + 60 + 6, for a total value of 666:

- Some early manuscripts have the number written out fully as *six-hundred sixty six*.
- Others have the number’s shorthand form: ΧϚϚ. Χ (*chi*) = 600; Ϛ (*xi*) = 60; Ϛ (*stigma*) = 6.
- Certain scribes deliberately altered the number to 616, intending it to be 50 less in value than 666.

⁷ Concerning the first Hebrew name that John cites: *Abaddon* (Greek text: Ἀβaddon), means “destruction”.

All five Old Testament instances of this name end with the vowel letter *waw* and a final *nun*.

The second name, *Armageddon* (Greek text: Ἀρμαγεδων = *Har-magedon*), means “hill or mountain of Megiddo”.

There are 12 Old Testament references to Megiddo. The first 11 end with the vowel letter *waw*, representing the long *o*.

The last (and chronologically latest) is Zechariah 12:11, where the name ends differently — with a final *nun* added after the *waw*.

It is intriguing that all the names John cites here, including *Apollyon*, end in *waw* (*ōn*). Is John perhaps hinting at the solution to his riddle? Is he saying to his readers: Don’t seek a Greek solution; look rather for one in Hebrew — with a *waw-nun* ending!

Note that *Har* is the Hebrew word for hill. Megiddo is not on a hill but in the Jezreel Valley. John is alluding to the numerous battles formerly fought in this valley, where God had delivered his people from their oppressors. Armageddon (“Mount Megiddo”) is to be regarded as a symbolic place denoting *final defeat*, much like our term “Waterloo”.

⁸ William Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors, Commentary of Revelation*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1967).

Chapter 11: Revelation 12 – 14; Section 4: The helpers of the dragon (13:1-18).

Then there is John's invitation to solve the riddle through mathematical calculation.

John employs the term *psēphisatō*: a verb, imperative mood, 3rd person singular; literally: "let him count".

From the verb *psēphizō* (Strong's G5585), "to count, calculate".

Used in connection with the counting of pebbles in enumeration, or casting them into an urn when voting.

This requirement for calculation is consistent with the (aforementioned) practice of *gematria* or *isopsephy*.

Indeed, the term *isopsephy* is related to the very verb that John employs: *psēphizō*.

The root word for both is the Greek noun ψηφος (*psēphos*) = a pebble.

Isos means "equal" — hence *isopsephy*, "equal pebbles".

For John's riddle, whose name is equal to 666?

Objection 4

There ought to be additional vowel letters in the Hebrew transliteration of *Nerōn Kaisar*.

Specifically, a *yod* (= *y*) should be included in the title Caesar, to give nrwn qysr.

Which would bring the total number value to 676 rather than the required 666.

Response:

The Aramaic document discovered at Murabba'at, near the Dead Sea, supports the required spelling.

This document was composed "in the second year of Nero Caesar", which equates to 55-56 AD.

Nero's name is spelled thus: נרױן קסר .

Other than the *waw* (ו), no vowel letters are present that would increase the name's numerical value beyond 666. This spelling may or may not have been the dominant spelling, but it was certainly utilized.

(See Appendix: Nero's name in the Murabba'at scroll.)

Conclusion

Many objections to the Nero theory seem to stem from something more fundamental, namely this:

An underlying objection to the 666 referring to some past personality.

After all, if John is referring to Nero, that leaves no room for some latter day Antichrist to appear on the scene to stamp us all with his mark.

And of course, that is correct! That is precisely what preterism affirms.

Manuscript variations on the number

1. The **Textus Receptus** (Latin: “Received Text”) refers to the succession of printed editions of the Greek New Testament, from Erasmus’ *Novum Instrumentum omne* (1516) to the 1633 Elzevir edition. This served as the textual base for the vernacular translations of the Reformation era, including the KJV. For the book of Revelation, Erasmus utilized a 12th century codex (book) called Minuscule 2814. (*Minuscule* refers to the use of lowercase Greek letters in the text.) The Textus Receptus, following Minuscule 2814, has the number written as three (lowercase) Greek letters, each of which represents a number. It is written thus: **χξζ**. These are, respectively, the letters *chi* ($\chi = ch$), *xi* ($\xi = x$), and the obsolete letter *stigma* (ζ).⁹ The Greek numerical values of these three letters represent the number 666 as follows: χ (*chi*) = 600; ξ (*xi*) = 60; ζ (*stigma*) = 6. For a total of 666.
2. Many other Greek minuscule manuscripts, from the 9th (or 10th) to the 15th centuries, similarly have the number written as the three (lowercase) Greek letters *chi*, *xi*, and *stigma*: **χξζ**. Two 10th century manuscripts have retained the use of Greek capital letters: Uncial manuscripts 046 and 051 have the number as three capitals, thus: **ΧΞΖ**. Here, X is capital *chi*, Ξ is an older form of capital *xi*, and Ζ is capital *stigma*. In Uncial 051 a line has been placed over the letters to indicate that each one represents a number.¹⁰ (*Uncial* refers to the majuscule script written entirely in capital letters that was used from the 4th to about the 8th centuries AD by Latin and Greek scholars.)
3. The earliest Greek manuscripts employed Greek capital letters only and had no breaks between words. For example, **Papyrus 47** was part of an early Greek manuscript of Revelation, produced in the late 200s AD. Its text of Revelation 13:18 contains the 666 written as three capital letters, thus: **ΧΞΖ**. See the following image, about one-third of the way along line four.¹¹ These letters, with a line above them, are the capitals *chi* (Χ); *xi* (Ξ), and *stigma* (Ζ):

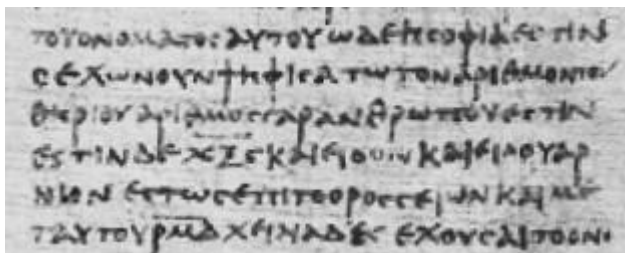


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⁹ The Textus Receptus of Revelation 13 can be found online here: https://www.logosapostolic.org/bibles/textus_receptus/revelation/rev13.htm.

¹⁰ Images of Uncial 051 can be found online here: https://manuscripts.csntm.org/Manuscript/Group/GA_051. Search for Image 0022, the sixth line down on the right page. Note that the final stigma here looks more like an S than a ζ.

¹¹ A better image of this papyrus leaf is available on the Institute for New Testament Textual Research website: <https://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/manuscript-workspace?docID=10047> [Page Id: 130 (7r); Rev 13:16-18; 14:1-4].

4. Some ancient manuscripts have the number fully written out.
For example, **Codex Alexandrinus** (ca. 440 AD) has something like the following, though without the word breaks: **ϞΞΑΚΟCΙΟΙ ϞΞΗΚΟΝΤΑ ϞΞ**.
Here too, **Ξ** is the capital *xi* (= *x*), and **C** is the (obsolete) capital *stigma*.
The lowercase equivalent for this number is ἑξακοσιοι ἑξηκοντα ἑξ.
Transliterated, it is *hexakosioi hexēkonta hex*.
Literally, it is *six-hundred sixty six*.
The even older **Codex Sinaiticus** (ca. 350 AD) has something similar, with minor differences in spelling.¹² (Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus comprise two of the four so-called *Great Uncials* — codices [books] that originally contained the entire text of the Greek Bible, Old and New Testaments together.)
5. Various early non-Greek versions all have the number 666, not the 616 variant.
These include the Coptic^{sa} (300s AD), Latin Vulgate (ca. 400), Armenian (400s), Ethiopic (500s), and the Syriac^{ph} (508) and Syriac^h (600s) versions.
The Vulgate has the number fully written out: *et numerus eius est sescenti sexaginta sex*.
6. In the **Codex Ephraemi**, produced sometime in the 400s AD, the number of the Beast is 616, not 666. (This codex is also one of the four *Great Uncials*. Its original text has been written over by a later scribe.)
In the underlying text the number 616 is fully written out in Greek capitals.
With its middle word *deka* (10) rather than the usual *hexēkonta* (60), the total comes to 616.
Here is the text's lowercase equivalent: ἑξακοσιαὶ δεκά ἑξ.
Transliterated, this is *hexakosiai deka hex*.
7. The 616 textual variant is of ancient pedigree.
Irenaeus wrote disparagingly of this variant found in certain manuscripts already in his day (ca. 180 AD). He insists that 666 is the original form.
8. One ancient witness to the 616 variant is **Papyrus 115**.
Papyrus 115 consists of 26 mutilated fragments of a codex containing parts of the Book of Revelation. It was written ca. 300 AD.
The number 616 is written as three Greek capital letters: **ΧΙϚ**.
These letters are *chi* (X = *ch*), *iota* (I = *i*), and *stigma* (Ϛ):
X (*chi*) = 600; I (*iota*) = 10; Ϛ (*stigma*) = 6. For a total of 616.
Note that this early manuscript seems to have breaks between words.
Moreover, one can see that the number 616 is preceded by the letter *H* (capital *eta* = *ē*).
If standing alone, this letter is the Greek word “or”.
It seems that this manuscript combined both numbers, so as to read “666 or 616.”
This conjecture is supported by the following:
 - There seem to be no other letters immediately prior to the *H*.
 - No other manuscript has the letter *eta* immediately preceding the number.¹³

¹² Codex Alexandrinus (A 02), and (most of) Codex Sinaiticus (Σ 01), are housed in the British Library in London. Digitized versions of both can be viewed online.

The relevant image in Codex Alexandrinus can be found here:

<https://archive.org/details/codex-alexandrinus/page/n1561/mode/2up> (image 1562; right-hand column; row 12).

The relevant image in Codex Sinaiticus can be found here:

https://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx?__VIEWSTATEGENERATOR=01FB804F&book=59&chapter=13&lid=en&side=r&verse=18&zoomSlider=0 (third column; rows 21-22).

¹³ Other manuscripts have one of the following immediately preceding the number:

αύτου (= *of it*), ἑστιν (= *is*), ἐστιν (Sinaiticus), or ἐστιν δε (Papyrus 47). None have a preceding *eta* (H or η).

Here is an image of the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 115 (4499/p¹¹⁵):

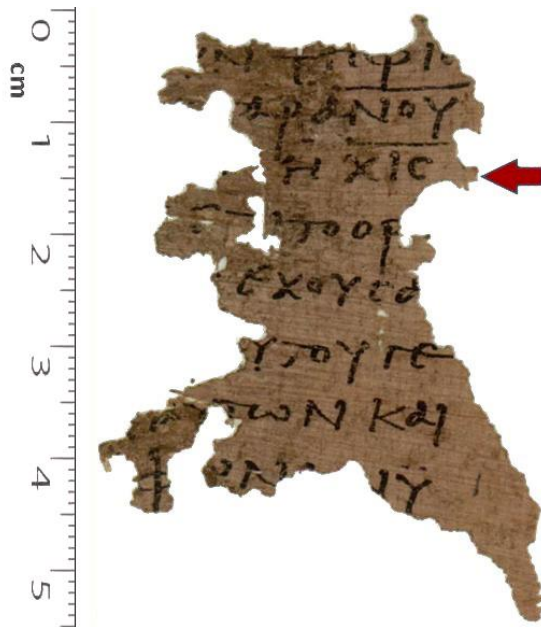


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The Institute for New Testament Textual Research (at the University of Münster, Germany) provides, on its website, what is likely to have been the original text of Papyrus 115.

Here is part of their reconstruction (employing lowercase letters):

γαρ ανου **εστιν και ο αριθμος αυτου χξς** η χις.¹⁴

The words in black can be made out on the papyrus; those in red are a reconstruction of the missing text.

Here, χξς η χις means “666 or 616”.

9. It seems that once the text was changed, the 616 variant was preserved and disseminated by those with pet theories as to whom the number referred.

The 616 variant was popular in North Africa and in Donatist circles.

Tyconius employed this number in his popular commentary on Revelation (ca. 380 AD).

Caesarius of Arles also gave his interpretation of this number (542 AD).

10. Further variants:

One 9th century Latin manuscript, it^{9r}, has 646 as the number of the Beast.

One 11th century manuscript, Minuscule 2344, has 665 as the number.

These numbers are clearly the result of copyist errors.

¹⁴ See: <https://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/manuscript-workspace?docID=10115> [Page Id 160 (8v); Rev 13:18; 14:1-3; 14:5-7].

Appendix: Nero's name in the Murabba'at scroll

This section derives principally from two sources:

Encyclopedia.com; article entitled: *Murabba'at Scrolls*.¹⁵

Craig R. Koester, "The Number of the Beast in Revelation 13 in Light of Papyri, Graffiti, and Inscriptions."¹⁶

From 1952 to 1961, numerous ancient manuscripts were discovered in caves near Wadi Murabba'at. The Murabba'at caves are some 19 km to the south of Qumran, where the more famous biblical Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. The caves are near Wadi Murabba'at (or Nahal Darga) which runs from the Judean Desert near Bethlehem southeastward down to the Dead Sea.

Following initial discoveries by Bedouin, archaeologists visited the site in early 1952. Numerous documents were recovered from four caves. In 1955 shepherds entered another cave and found a scroll of the *Twelve Minor Prophets* which contained substantial portions of the Hebrew text of nine of those 12 books.

Among the manuscripts are fragments of Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah — written on animal skin.

There is a fragment of a liturgical document in Hebrew, and fragments of some literary works in Greek.

The Roman period documents are the most numerous and interesting, but there are also some that come from earlier periods — from the Iron Age (8th and 7th centuries BC) and the Hellenistic period.

The caves were evidently used as outposts for guerrilla fighters during the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132–135 AD).

There are also some letters addressed to Yeshua ben Galgula, probably the leader of the Murabba'at guerrillas.

There are quite a number of contracts and deeds of sale written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, with many of these belonging to the period preceding and during the Bar_Kokhba Revolt.

There are several lists of deliveries of grain and vegetables; most of these are in Greek, but a few are in Aramaic or Hebrew.

What these documents demonstrate is that the inhabitants of Judea were trilingual in the first century AD and on into the second — they were proficient in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

Significantly for our purposes, one of the oldest of the Aramaic documents found at Murabba'at has Nero's name spelled out exactly as our theory requires. The document relates an acknowledgment of indebtedness, together with the debtor's promise to fully repay the loan:

... in the second year of Nero Caesar [נְרוֹן קֶסֶר] ... at Şiwaya, Absalom son of Ḥanin from Şiwaya has declared in my presence, that he borrowed from me, Zechariah son of Yoḥannan son of H... a resident of Keslon, twenty denarii ...

[The debtor then declares his intention to fully repay the loan]:

... and if I do not repay by the end of the appointed time, I will pay you one-fifth interest and will repay you fully, even if it is a sabbatical year. And if I do not do it, restitution will be made to you from my property, and you will have the right of seizure on anything I acquire.

[Signatures follow.]¹⁷

This document was composed "in the second year of Nero Caesar", which equates to 55-56 AD.

Nero's name is spelled thus: נְרוֹן קֶסֶר . Other than the *waw* (ו), no vowel letters are present that would increase the numerical value of the name beyond 666.

¹⁵ See: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/murabbaat-scrolls>.

¹⁶ Craig R. Koester, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN. Article in: *Journal of Early Christian History* 6, no. 3 (2016): 1-21.

Via https://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=faculty_articles.

¹⁷ Quotation adapted from Craig R. Koester, "The Number of the Beast."