

God in Three Persons: A Spiritual Odyssey

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“He reveals deep and mysterious things.”

Daniel 2:22

Apollo read the message again: a dragon’s gate, a trident, four beasts, sacred heart, grace, twin view, and the crossroads. What could these images mean? And where would he find them? His mind raced through the city as he tried to recall places he had visited with Sophia. Sure enough, the first image that flashed into his mind was the year of the dragon celebration that they went to in February.

It was the Chinese Golden Dragon year, the 4697th Chinese year, and they were watching the enormous dragon being carried up the street by dozens of young men.

“Did you know that I was born in the year of the dragon?” he remembered her asking. That was when he mathematically deduced that she was about 24 years old.

“I was born in the year of the monkey,” he told her. That made him about eight years older than her.

Apollo drove his Mercury Mystique through the dragon’s gate at the entrance to Chinatown on Grant Street. He parked his green car on the uphill one-way street facing north. He walked around the majestic structure, which was a gift from China in 1969, and noticed the earthy green roof that had wavy tiling flowing horizontally and round bamboo-like ridges that were placed vertically. The larger roof on top overlapped two smaller roofs on the left and right side of the street, with a guardian lion in front of each twin pillar supporting the entire edifice. Twelve small guardian beasts stood in protective poses on the four corners of each roof. And on the very top of the dragon-crested gate were two brazen dragons contending for a centrally placed fiery pearl. To each side of the central imperial emblem and coat of arms of the emperor was a carp with the long upper green bamboo support in its mouth.

Apollo with his western mentality saw the sign of Pisces in the pair of fish, not the eastern symbol of domestic felicity and fertility. The dragons to him represented evil that must be vanquished, like in the famous story of St. George and the dragon; although at times he thought the dragon was an apt symbol of the mysterious Chinese civilization.

Apollo looked for clues that might connect with the message. He couldn’t decipher the Chinese characters. In a San Francisco guide he had read that the writing proclaimed, “Every-thing in the world is in just proportions.” He searched again near the ominous-looking Fu Dogs, and this time he noticed a red envelope underneath the western-oriented male paw. He opened the envelope, hoping for good fortune, but instead he only found a cryptic capital letter A on one side of a small card. On the reverse side of the card was a clue for his next destination: a picture of a trident inside a square. He knew where it was located.

Union Square was several blocks away, so Apollo headed downtown. The central plaza featured a 91-foot Corinthian granite column with a female figure representing Victory at the top. The green-tinted bronze figure wore a flowing dress down to her ankles, and in her left hand was an uplifted trident; in her right hand was a

laurel wreath. The westward-facing figure was standing with her right foot on a ball that represented the earth.

Apollos and Sophia came here on May Day, the same day that Admiral Dewey gained his victory over the Spanish forces at Manila Bay during the Spanish-American War in 1898.

“Did you know that there once was a sandy hillside next to a stream running down a steep ravine right where we’re standing?” asked Sophia as she held his strong hand.

“No, I didn’t,” answered Apollos. “And today we have cable cars clanging up and down that ravine.”

“And did you know that the Dewey monument survived the 1906 earthquake?” she asked.

“That’s amazing,” answered Apollos. He was going to say something about the magnitude of that earthquake, but Sophia quickly added another bit of trivia.

“And did you know where the square got its name?” she asked. Apollos shook his head. “From the pro-Union demonstrations that erupted on the eve of the Civil War.”

“You’re a storehouse of information,” said Apollos.

“And see that Maiden Lane,” she said, pointing to the east end of the 2.6 acre park with date palms on the fringes. “That used to be the Barbary Coast’s red light district.”

“Now how did you know that?” asked Apollos. “It’s almost as if you’ve been here before, the way you’re describing everything.”

Apollos clearly remembered the wink she gave him when he uttered those words. He glanced once more at what seemed to him was Poseidon’s trident, with which he ruled the seas. Or was it Shiva’s trident of dissolution, which was wielded at the end of an age? It was at the moment when he thought of the three-pronged spear in its negative aspect that he saw a red envelope wedged in the granite base that supported the cylindrical shaft.

He opened the red envelope and saw a capital letter T on one side of the card and the word Washington inside a square on the other side. “Washington Square,” said Apollos in a low voice. “That’s on the other side of Chinatown.”

He drove down Columbus Avenue and parked his car on the south side of the square-block park. Through the poplar and evergreen trees he saw two majestic white towers highlighting the overcast northern sky. On top of the lofty spires of the ornate Romanesque Saints Peter and Paul Church were two crosses; a central gold-plated cross stood atop the church front. He walked across the green park, past the sword-wielding Sunday Tai-Chi practitioners, and crossed the street. He casually glanced at the strange address of the church.

Sophia had coaxed him to come here for the Easter Mass, he remembered. He also remembered her soft melodic voice as she read the mosaic inscription placed just above the three entrances to the church: “LA GLORIA DI COLUI CHE TUTTO MUOVE PER L’UNIVERSO PENETRA E RISPLENDE.” She added, “That’s from Dante’s Paradiso.”

“What does it mean?” asked Apollos.

“It’s from the third part of the Divine Comedy, Paradise, and it’s the first three lines of Canto 1, where it says: ‘The glory of Him who moves everything penetrates

through the universe, and is resplendent in one part more and in another less.’ That’s the complete quote.”

Apollos remembered looking into the sky-blue eyes of Sophia as she seemed to open up new worlds for him. His was a world of philosophic thought and inquiry, and hers was a world that seemed to plumb the depths of universal wisdom. Perhaps she was directing an allegory of the soul in his life.

“You might as well tell me about the four figures on those pedestals,” Apollo remembered saying as he looked at the sculptured figures above the words of Dante. And then it dawned on him. The message said: “And face the four beasts.” Sophia had told him those were the four beasts or signs of the fixed cross in the heavens, which the Christian religion had converted into the symbols of the four Evangelists: Mark (a lion), Matthew (a winged man), Luke (an ox), and John (an eagle).

Behind one of the three spiraling columns, which formed three column-arches at the central entrance, right underneath the watchful eyes of the Universal Christ with the Greek letters Alpha and Omega, Apollos saw a red envelope partially sticking out. He didn’t bother going inside to see the magnificent 40-foot Italian altar again. He remembered the beautiful marble and onyx carvings. He also remembered the sad expression on Sophia’s face as she pondered the significance of the La Pieta statue near the east side of the altar.

However, at the moment his mind was totally captivated by his quest to find and rescue his beloved fiancée. The red envelope had a card, just like before, with a letter and a clue. The letter was H, and the clue was a miniature Mater Dolorosa with seven swords with cross-shaped hilts piercing her sacred heart. He remembered Sophia telling him about the Lady of Sorrows when they toured the official birthplace of San Francisco.

“Remember the La Pieta statue that we saw at the Italian cathedral?” she asked. He knew she was referring to the church where he saw the strange triple-six address. “Well, that is the sorrowing mother holding the dead body of her son, and those seven swords in her sacred heart represent the seven sorrows that she bore throughout her life at various stages of her son’s life.”

“And what do those seven rays in the dome represent?” Apollos remembered asking as he drove his car to the Mission District, the designated Heart of the City.

“Aha, you’re not only observant, but you’re also learning to ask the right questions,” he remembered her saying in her instructive tone. On these excursions she always turned out to be the teacher, and he the student.

“Do you notice that the Mater Dolorosa is placed on the central ray?” she had asked with a piercing look in her eye. His heart skipped a beat as he drove as quickly as he could to Mission Dolores.

“If she is the heart of those seven rays, what do you think the other rays represent?” she had quizzed him on his ability to think in a more abstract manner.

“Could they represent other body parts, like the brain, for instance?” he had responded.

“There you go,” she had laughed jubilantly. “Now you’re on the right path.” She revealed no more to him on that day.

Apollos thought of those seven rays and the seven swords as he drove down the palm-lined boulevard that once was known as El Camino Real. His heart felt like it was erupting with his own personal sorrow as he thought of the danger his fiancée was in.

Tears rolled down his cheek as he tried to pray the prayer Sophia taught him: “O Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us who have recourse to thee.” He choked up momentarily as he fought back the flood of tears that were blurring his vision. “And please don’t let anything happen to my beloved,” he mouthed softly as he licked the tears away from the side of his mouth.

He drove up to the humble mission, which was overshadowed by the majestic basilica beside it. Here, beside what once was a small stream and lake, which was christened Arroyo de Nuestra Señora de los Dolores (Lake of Our Lady of Sorrows), stood the sixth mission established under the direction of Father Junipero Serra. The date was June 29, 1776, and the first mass in honor of the Feast Day of Saints Peter and Paul officially designated the land beside the lake as the site of the future Mission San Francisco de Asis. By this reckoning, San Francisco was officially born five days before the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The adobe building measured 174 feet long and 22 feet wide when it was completed in 1791.

Apollo headed straight for the image that was troubling his heart, the Mater Dolorosa and her seven sorrows. The interior of the basilica was partially lit, and Apollo strained his eyes to see any sign of a red envelope. He thought it might be under the partially opened red-and-gold umbrella stand on the right side of the altar or the carved coat of arms with the papal insignia stand on the left side facing the altar. Both were the official marks of a Basilica, an honorary church of the Pope. But Apollo did not see a red envelope hidden near or under those stands.

He finally found the red envelope under a large mural of the Lady of Sorrows near the left side of the altar. The mural depicted her wearing an outer blue robe and an inner ankle-length white robe and what appeared to be water flowing from her lowered hands. At her feet was, what seemed to Apollo, an ominous-looking serpent. He did not notice that the lady had her right foot on the head and her left foot on the tail of the snake.

He opened the envelope and found the expected card. On the front was a capital letter E, and on the back was a picture of a labyrinth. He immediately recognized the labyrinth and connected it to the cryptic words, “Then Grace will guide your steps.”

He drove his car across Market Street to Nob Hill, where the third largest Episcopal cathedral in America, with roots to the Church of England, stood tall and concrete strong in its Gothic grandeur on top of the hill with its front facing east. The 329-foot long building covered an entire city block, and its two towers soared 174 feet from street level into the sky. A gilded steel cross atop its centrally placed spire rose 255 feet above the street.

Apollo quickly climbed the forty steps of the wide stairway and approached the world-renowned Ghiberti Doors, which stood closed behind a locked waist-high metal gate. Apollo used the side entrance. He had it in his mind to look for the red envelope near the labyrinth inside the cathedral. He had not noticed the folded up red envelope between the bars of the gates, which guarded the bronze doors that depicted scenes from the Old Testament.

The envelope was nowhere near the archetypal floor tapestry, which was modeled after the medieval pavement eleven-circuit design at Chartres Cathedral in France.

He stopped for a moment and gazed at the six-leaf design in the center of the circular labyrinth. He recalled when he stood together with Sophia in that center on New Year’s Day, and they resolved to make the journey of life together. Apollo took off his

shoes and stepped once again on the path to that center. He needed to release the anguish of his mind and to clear his thoughts. He tried to re-enact his journey thus far with his beloved, and he intuitively felt her walking in front of him, guiding his steps. When he reached the center, he closed his eyes and felt the kiss of her lips on his lips. He knew in his heart that love would guide his steps back to her. He sensed a calm reassurance in his soul as he stepped out of the meditative circle of the inner world and back into the outer world. He put his shoes back on.

He tried looking for the envelope in the nave and in the transepts. He tried to find it in the area of the high altar. He tried to find it in the adjacent Chapel of Grace.

Instead, he found an icon near the southern side exit that stopped him in his tracks. It was an icon of Martin Luther King of Georgia, with the halo of a saint around his head and a scroll in his hands that said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." He remembered that this modern apostle of civil rights for all people had spoken here at Grace Cathedral. The words of the martyr echoed in the walls: "We are engaged in a struggle to establish a reign of justice and a rule of love all over this nation and in every community." Apollos also seemed to hear the preacher speaking of the esoteric Book of Revelation: "This is a book which is puzzling to decode, shrouded with impenetrable mysteries, and with apocalyptic symbolism, but within it are eternal truths which will ever confront us."

All of a sudden Apollos remembered the doors which Michelangelo had marveled at and called the "Gates of Paradise." He recalled Sophia's words about the seemingly impenetrable mysteries hidden in the stories of the Old Testament.

"Look at these beautiful replicas of the original doors created by the Florentine sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti," he remembered her saying. "It took him 27 years to create these three-dimensional panels, which marked the true spiritual beginning of the Renaissance when they were installed in 1452. Within its ten panels is the story of humanity, past, present, and future."

"How can that be?" inquired Apollos as he tried to decipher the pictures in gilded bronze which looked so life-like.

"Well, look at the picture of Adam and Eve and notice the cosmic egg design of the creation of Eve in the central scene. It's as if man in his original androgynous state became a polarized being with two halves. And the story of the two brothers, Abel and Cain, notice how one becomes a meat-eater, and the other a vegetarian. Sound familiar? And Noah, a story that harkens back to the legend of Atlantis and the sinking of that great civilization, which is represented in the panel by the pyramid-shaped ark. Look here at Abraham, who brings the mysteries of the land between two rivers, including the mystic sacrifice of his son, to a new land. Now Jacob and Esau, that's the all-too-human story of a younger brother who outwits his older brother for his father's inheritance. And Joseph and his brothers, well, that's what I call the most ancient of stories, the one about the sun and moon and all those constellations in the heavens. Moses, well, that's the wisdom that he brought from the Egyptians. And then the Promised Land story. How do you figure a human being can make that journey of the soul and finally achieve a state of bliss? The answer is in David, or soul, defeating the towering physical giant of a man, who needs to die so that the King can reign. And who is the King par excellence? Why, of course, Solomon the solar deity, who performs the rite of the mystic marriage to the lunar deity, the Queen of Sheba."

When Apollos finished looking contemplatively at the ten panels, he noticed a red envelope folded up and stuck between the bars of the iron gates in front of the Doors of Paradise. He opened the envelope and saw the capital letter N, and on the other side a picture of Twin Peaks.

“A-T-H-E-N,” spelled out Apollos. “Could it have something to do with Athena?” he mumbled to himself.

He drove up Market Street to Twin Peaks. He parked his car at the first pullout near the top. He walked up to the summit of the north peak. When he stood on the summit, he recalled a day in March, the day of the vernal equinox, when they wanted to see the city from the heights; he had ascended the north peak and Sophia had ascended the higher south peak. They stood at the second and third highest peaks in the city at 910 feet and 903 feet.

“Hey, can you hear me?” he remembered her yelling across the etheric spaces that separated them.

“Yes, loud and clear!” he had yelled back.

“How does it feel to be on top of the world?” her voice vibrated through the air.

“I feel like a god!” he remembered exclaiming, with his hands and arms spread out like the wings of an eagle.

“And I feel like a goddess!” she yelled back and imitated his eagle pose.

He remembered telling her to wait, that he was coming over to her peak. He was doing the same now, glancing back to see the fog-shrouded Golden Gate Bridge as he descended the short distance and ascended the south peak. He reached the spot where he remembered her standing before, and he spotted a red envelope underneath a round stone.

The card revealed a capital letter S, and the reverse side showed a large Latin cross. “Mt. Davidson,” he said with a sense of realization. He distinctly heard her voice in his head, “I want to take you higher. To the highest point in the city.”

As he drove to Mt. Davidson, which towered 938 feet above sea level, he recalled the serious tone in her voice as they stood at the foot of the 103-foot-high concrete cross.

“We are all crucified on the cross of matter,” she had said solemnly. “This body is the sepulcher of the soul.” She waited for her words to sink in. Then she continued, “We come into this world from other realms, and we experience all the joys and sorrows that this world has to offer. But never forget, you are not this body.”

She made that statement with such certitude, that Apollos wasn’t even able to refute it. It became a mantra in his life, and he often repeated the truism she gave him: “You are not the body.”

The reflection of that day faded from his mind as he parked his car and walked through the eucalyptus and pine forest to the place of the cross. He recalled an interesting fact about the mount, which originally was known as Blue Mountain: the highest point in San Francisco was originally crowned with a forty-foot-high wooden cross for the first Easter Sunrise service on April 1, 1923. Subsequent crosses had suffered the fate of conflagration. The present concrete cross was the fourth to be erected on the highest point, as a sign of man’s quest for spiritual meaning in a world of materialism.

Apollos saw the last red envelope placed at the 10-foot-square base of the vertical shaft. He already had formulated a hunch in his mind that the elaborate puzzle and quest had something to do with Athens, Greece. ‘But why?’ he thought as he opened the

envelope and saw the capital letter G. His hunch was verified. He turned the card over and stared aghast at a picture of the Parthenon, the temple of Athena Parthenos on the Acropolis at Athens.

It was after Apollos had finished solving the mysterious puzzle set before him, that he turned his attention to the missing manuscript. He remembered when he first started writing about the controversial Greek philosopher of the first century.

Destiny had led him to an adept of ancient wisdom, who had verified his suspicions about the identity of the philosopher who followed the teachings of Pythagoras.

“Yes, that’s a picture of Apollonius,” stated Maestro Salvatore D’ Aura assuredly. The 8x10 colored picture showed a statue of a tall man in a long robe with his right index finger pointing to the sky, and in his left hand was a book and a sword (the tip of which rested beside his left foot).

“Someone at the cemetery told me that was a statue of St. Paul,” remarked Apollos.

“The biblical St. Paul is the same as Apollonius of Tyana,” the Italian adept reassured him. Salvatore D’ Aura was well-versed in biblical matters. He had been born into the Catholic religion in Italy, and he had risen high up the ladder of the church hierarchy. He had learned many secrets of the church, and he was even considered to be a prime candidate some day to be the next pope.

Apollos felt a strong urge to call his spiritual teacher. He knew his guide would steer him in the right direction at this crucial stage of his life.

“Maestro D’Aura,” said Apollos as he heard the husky voice answer the phone. “Can I come over to see you today? I have an urgent matter to discuss with you.”

“I can give you about forty minutes of my time,” said the busy man.

“I’ll be there in about an hour,” said Apollos, grateful for the opportunity to see his spiritual teacher again.

“Come on over. I’ll be waiting for you,” answered the Maestro in a deep baritone accent.

Apollos got in his Mercury vehicle and headed south on highway 101 to Palo Alto.

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Joshua finished reading The Ascent of Mount Carmel by St. John of the Cross on the same day that his tour group arrived on the banks of the Jordan River.

As usual, Joshua verged from the beaten path of the tourist and strayed to a solitary place beside the slow-moving river. He looked north towards the heights of Mt. Hermon, where the river’s source rose 9,100 feet into the sky. Two streams descended from the southern slopes of the snow-capped peaks to unite in one sacred flow through the Holy Land.

Joshua sat in his meditative pose beside the river and listened to the gentle sound of the water. His thoughts were still trying to unravel the prescribed method for divine union that St. John of the Cross wrote about in his theological treatise.

What bothered him the most was the part that spoke not only of the detachment from the temporal things of the world, which was easy for him to accept, but also of the detachment from even the imaginary visions and images that he was accustomed to in meditation. How could he deprive himself of the visions he had of his soul-mate Binah? He had become dependent on her frequent ministrations to the needs of his spirit. How could he possibly go beyond meditation and communion with the motherly love and affection that she bathed him in whenever they met face to face?

The questions loomed large in the darkness of his mind. He felt like he was trying to swim upstream, but the river kept carrying him further downstream.

Suddenly, from the depths of his consciousness, he heard the name again which perplexed and haunted him: "Yeshua." As if a veil had been lifted and a star-like light broke through his inner darkness, he saw Binah approaching him with her long dark hair and white robe flowing in the gentle breeze.

"Binah, I'm glad to see you again," said Joshua. It actually felt as if he were transmitting his thoughts to her without saying anything vocally.

"I'm glad you were thinking of me," Binah transmitted her thoughts in a similar manner. "I felt your heart beating in anticipation of my arrival."

"You called me Yeshua again," said Joshua mentally.

"Yes, I did," smiled Binah as she relayed her response. "You are curious to know about your true nature, aren't you?"

Joshua thought that she was referring to the book that he had been reading and of his desire for divine union.

"About your name, Yeshua, and your past life experience related to that name," she elaborated. "Here, let me show you something." She tapped him lightly with her right index finger on his forehead.

A scene opened up in his mind's eye, and he saw a bearded young man named Hosea, son of Nun, crossing a river with a multitude of people following him on dry ground. Behind Jehoshua (the name given him by Moses) were four priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant. He watched as the bearded young man with shoulder-length hair placed twelve stones on the banks of the river to commemorate the great crossing into the Promised Land, the land of milk and honey.

"Do you understand what you see?" Binah's voice reverberated in his mind.

He was too engrossed in the moving picture in his soul's eye to respond. He continued watching as the young man (with a spear in his hand) and his army of soldiers destroyed the inhabitants of the conquered land.

Joshua recalled the words of St. John of the Cross: "When Josue was commanded to destroy all things at the time that he had to enter into possession of the Promised Land, that was said so that we may understand how, if a man is to enter this Divine union, all that lives in his soul must die, and that the soul must be detached from it."

"Now you understand," Binah joyfully transmitted her thoughts. "And you are that young man who brought the knowledge of the Law and the sacred rod of Moses within the ark of your soul, where that knowledge still resides."

Joshua recalled St. John of the Cross calling the rod of Moses, which was the brazen serpent on a pole, as the Cross which must be borne as the Way of suffering and annihilation of the natural self and all that belongs to the old man, so that a transformation can take place and the soul can become divine.

“Let me show you something else.” This time Binah placed her warm hand on the crown of his head.

Instantly Joshua’s skull seemed to open up and a seven-stepped ladder ascended into the heavens. He saw himself climbing up the seven steps, up to the heavenly abode which awaited him.

Then Binah placed her left hand over his heart, and the vision in his soul showed the Beast of the Apocalypse with its seven heads.

Joshua recalled the words of St. John of the Cross, encouraging the soul to vanquish the heads of sensual things and visions of sense, and to even decapitate the heads of the interior senses, imagination and fancy, in order to ascend to divine union.

Binah’s voice soothingly sang and echoed in Joshua’s cave of the mind: “Now you have learned to still the five senses and to let the light of your Soul illuminate your inner worlds.” An image of Joshua son of Nun flashed in his mind and he saw the young man conquer five kings and command the sun and moon to stand still. He was the conqueror of his inner self.

All at once Binah grabbed Joshua’s hand and pulled him toward the waters of the Jordan River. She pulled him under the flowing water and he felt her embrace. He forgot all the cares in the world, and he felt an inward peace as he reciprocated with a strong embrace of his own. When they both broke water, she began swimming upstream like a nymph, and he felt the strength in his body to follow her upstream.

In his soul’s eye Joshua saw the two of them swimming side by side like fish to the heart-shaped Sea of Galilee.

Joshua’s heart was pounding with a newfound love when he finally emerged from the waters and from his soul journey with Binah.

He composed himself and opened his physical eyes. He saw the Jordan River now with new eyes, as if it flowed within his own inner being. He contemplated his encounter with Binah, and for the first time in his life he seemed to understand what his inner angel was trying to teach him. She had given him a glimpse of the divine and a glimpse into his own immortal nature.

There was so much more that he felt he needed to learn about himself, especially about his nature as Yeshua.

That night Joshua learned another lesson about giving up the physical nature in quest of the spiritual: the spirit soars to the invisible by giving up the visible. St. John of the Cross even gave the example of the physical body of the Lord having to go away so the Spirit would come.

Joshua’s consciousness seemed to soar through the heavens as he fell into a deep trance-like sleep.

He saw a multitude of people being carried away in captivity to the Land Between Two Rivers. He watched as they wept and cried for a deliverer during their time of captivity in the strange land of Babylonia. He witnessed the rise of a new empire and a king of Persia giving freedom to the people in exile. He stood in their midst as a member of the priesthood.

He was called Yeshua the son of Josedech, and he had sons who were also priests. While in captivity these sons had married non-Jewish wives, some of who lived as priestesses in the temple of Ishtar, the Babylonian goddess of love.

And it came to pass when the Jewish people returned to their own land, that Jeshua the son of Josedech and Zorobabel the son of Salathiel worked hand in hand in the rebuilding of the temple.

(Jeshua, of the priestly line, and Zorobabel, of the royal line, though two, worked with a single purpose.)

Jeshua the priest stood firm in the Law of Moses, which prohibited the taking of foreign wives, and convinced his brethren to cast off their wives and their offspring.

(For thus it had been said, you will be a separate people and stay clean from heathen influence.)

Zorobabel (also called Zerubbabel) convinced Darius the king to keep his former vow to rebuild Jerusalem by winning a contest among three of the bodyguards of the king, and thus was granted his wish to secure the freedom of the Jews and to return to their homeland.

(As for the contest, Zerubbabel proved to the king that even though wine is strongest in influencing the mind and body of man, and even though the king is strongest in commanding and controlling his people and his kingdom, the wisest argument was that women are rulers of wine and kings, and truth prevails over everything.)

Jeshua presented himself to his fellow-men as a priest clothed in filthy garments, and then he showed them his transformation into the high priest with the apparel of a sky-blue robe and a vestment of golden, bejeweled adornment with all the glory of his high office. In purity and chastity, he stood head and shoulders above the rest.

(In such a manner did Jeshua display normal human nature, with its flesh of mortality, in contrast to the luminous immortal soul body, with its inner attributes.)

Zerubbabel, a governor of Judah, carried out the rebuilding of the temple, even though enemies of the Great Work tried to prevent them from finishing their task.

(The foundation, the stone work, the walls of the city, the gates, and the temple itself were all completed by the builders during the reconstruction period.)

Jeshua in his crowning moment as the first high priest of the second temple had a silver crown and a gold crown set upon his turban-like cap when the temple was rededicated in Jerusalem, now called the City of Truth.

(In his dual function of king and high-priest, Jeshua united the role of ruler of the outer physical world and the inner spiritual world in one person.)

Zerubbabel in his glorious moment was given the signet ring in one hand and a plummet in the other hand.

(With his ring he would mark the royal line, and with his plummet he would measure the perpendicular and straight and narrow passageway in the temple.)

Binah's wing-like hands gently lowered Joshua's spirit from his visionary heights back into the confines of his ark-like body.

"You are now an initiate into the mysteries of your soul body," Binah's voice whispered into Joshua's ear.

"I saw myself as a high-priest named Yeshua, son of Josedech," said Joshua to the image of Binah in his mind as he remained in his rapturous state with eyes closed.

“That was the life-time when you became an initiate or priest and ruler of your own inner temple,” the image of Binah beamed a smile as a silvery halo formed around her head. “That was when you arrived at the realization that you were the temple of the Most High. Your life became a sublime allegory of the rebuilding of the inner temple.”

“But how about Zorobabel, who was always with me, who was he?”

“That was the builder of your physical temple and the part of the nervous system in your spine that directs the work of building your outer and inner temple. As the master builder, he’s the pituitary gland in your skull. And you are the pineal gland.”

Before Joshua could ask for an explanation, Binah placed her right index finger on his forehead and he felt an electrical force strike his pineal gland and cause it to vibrate, at the same time causing a magnetic force to pull the pituitary gland towards it and causing it to secrete a whitish fluid. The combined fluids of the two glands flowed down the central canal of the spinal cord.

“This is your personal land of milk and honey,” said Binah as Joshua watched the inner workings of his own temple. He watched as the golden oil flowed through two olive-type branches and filled seven lamps.

“Do you understand what you see?” asked Binah.

“No,” answered Joshua. “Illuminate me.”

“These two olive branches or tree-like structures on the sides of the central rod (or candlestick, as the ancients called it) are the subtle sympathetic nerves that run alongside your spine, your staff of life. In scriptural allegories, they are represented by many names, but they always refer to the left negative current (symbolized by the moon or cool lunar force) and the right positive current (symbolized by the sun or warm solar force). The seven lamps are your seven wheels or vortices of energy within your spine, which branch out to your entire body of etheric energy.

“Your inner temple is a marvelous and mysterious work of great proportions, and now that you have seen your initiate-self as the high-priest Yeshua son of Josedech, you are ready to enter the holy of holies.”

Joshua watched as his skull was illuminated with the light of a thousand suns: he saw the high-priest sacrifice his physical nature on the altar of burnt offerings at the entrance to the rebuilt temple; he witnessed the cleansing of body and mind in the laver of purification, and he smelled the sweet scent of incense before he entered the sacred sanctum and stood before the ark of the covenant.

Joshua and Jeshua (Yeshua) were now indistinguishable in the consciousness of the bowl of the mind: the seer and the seen, the knower and the known were one.

Jeshua the high-priest opened the ark cover and saw a rod which looked like a wooden staff. He picked up the branch-like rod and seven buds sprouted to life on the seemingly lifeless branch. He felt the branch-staff quiver and pulsate in his hand; simultaneously, Joshua felt a snake-like energy rise in his spine.

“This is the Branch, the staff of life, the regenerated life of the Perfect Man. You are that.” Binah’s voice echoed in the chamber of his mind.

Joshua felt his whole body and soul vibrate with an inexpressible energy. His spine was on fire, and he felt a warm glow around his entire being.

The last words he remembered Binah relay to his soul before he opened his physical eyes were: “Seek the rabbi Jehoshua ben Perachiah in your next life time.”

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Paul was not sure how long he had been in the cave. He thought long and hard about all that he had seen and heard. He wasn't sure if people would believe him. He himself wasn't sure if what he had experienced was a revelation or a hallucination. He had no physical proof to offer. There was no emerald tablet or caduceus that he could show. He could not prove the existence of the imperceptible letters on the wall. As far as he knew, he had a personal experience that applied only to him, and no one else. The principles of Hermes seemed true enough, but most likely they only reflected his own perception of reality.

Paul's mind wanted to believe that he had received a divine revelation for his age. He needed a sign to reassure his mind that he was not delusional.

When he opened his eyes and looked into the semi-darkness of the cave, he noticed the glow of the lunar light at the entrance. He stood to his feet, straightened his long brown robe, and headed to the entrance. He breathed in the cold desert air, and then he looked up at the full moon which traversed the sky. The moon always reminded him of his sister Phoebe, whom he had nicknamed "moon-face" because of her white round face.

His sister Phoebe used to tease him back by calling him "sun-face" just to see him get red in the face. As children, they used to play a game called "the race of the chariots." He would get dressed up in his yellow-colored Roman tunic and pretend to be Apollo, the sun-god, and she would get dressed up in a silver-colored tunic and pretend to be Artemis, the virgin moon-goddess. They would race their chariots across a field behind their house in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia in Asia Minor. Sometimes, she would be in front of him, and sometimes behind him, but to the watchful eyes of their mother it always appeared that they both disappeared down the hill into the waters of the nearby Cydnus River.

Paul began walking in the direction of the Dead Sea. The light of the full moon provided illumination for his feet. Once in a while he would look up into the heavens, as if to look for a celestial sign, but the dazzling effulgence of the moon prevented him from piercing into the depths of space.

He had been trudging along for about seven hours, and the holy mount was a ways behind him, and the moon was starting to incline towards the western horizon, when Paul noticed a raven fly overhead. Normally, he was not prone to regard a bird as an omen, as the Greeks did. However, on this occasion his eyes were mesmerized by the slow flapping of the wings against the backdrop of the northern sky. The motion of the wings appeared as graceful as a swan's flight.

All at once, as the bird seemed to fade into the night sky, he became aware of a group of stars that formed a Greek letter X. He recognized it from his advanced Greek studies in the school of his teacher, Rabbi Gamaliel. It was Plato's cross. According to Plato's Timaeus, the X (chi) was formed by the Creator by dividing the compound of the World Soul into two parts and then joining them at the center like the letter X.

Was this the sign he was looking for?

For the next six days, he rested during the hot day hours in the shade of any tree or rock that he could find in order to conserve his strength. He looked forward to the cool nights, when he could travel by the light of the silvery moon and follow the sign which beckoned from the northern sky. He tried to remember what else he had learned about the mysterious X that placed itself square in his path.

He faintly recalled the rabbi's words: "According to my grandfather Hillel's seven ways of study, which he called the Middoth or ways of measurement, Plato's X, which he makes into the two circles of the celestial equator and the celestial ecliptic along which the sun travels through the signs of the zodiac, seems to be in our scriptures. Does not Job speak of the Mazzaroth? And what were our people accused of burning incense to, according to the righteous King Josiah, if not the sun, moon, planets, and the signs of the zodiac?"

Paul recalled the diagram that the rabbi drew for his top students, of the two circles crossing at the equinoxes and forming an X in the starry heavens. There was also a chart that the rabbi displayed only on special occasions; it was a great wheel with twelve divisions, with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

On the seventh day, as the sun was beginning to rise, and the moon was setting, Paul reached the western shore of the Dead Sea. As he sleepily gazed across the shimmering sea of glass, he felt a weakness in his knees and a trembling in his body, as if his astral body was getting ready to leave the physical body. Paul had just enough time to crumble sideways to the rocky desert ground before his eyes rolled upwards and his brain's electrical energy produced a storm of convulsive movements in his body, mind, and soul.

In the darkness of his mind, Paul tried to cry out for help. He felt as if his body's infirmity was his cross to bear in life. As he felt consciousness slipping away from his mind, Paul simultaneously felt and saw two electrical bolts of light make the letter X near his temporal lobe at the base of his brain. And then in one last flash, he saw the letter X on a great wheel turning in space, with him impaled on the cruciform.

When Paul finally awoke from his long deep sleep, he saw an old bearded man in a white linen robe sitting on a rock next to him.

"Who are you?" asked Paul, squinting through his half-open eyes.

"Never mind who I am," answered the old man brusquely. "First things first. Who are you?"

"I am Paul of Tarsus."

"That's a Greek name. You don't look like you're Greek."

"My Hebrew name is Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin," said Paul apologetically.

"Aha, one of the lost tribes of Israel," said the old man with a smile. "We don't go by those tribal names nowadays. Anyways, you should use your Hebrew name in these parts of the country."

"What are you doing here?" asked Saul.

"I was just going to ask you the same question," said the old man, rising to his feet with the aid of the staff he had beside him. He walked over to his hand-woven basket of willow twigs and brought it back to where Paul was now sitting. "These are medicinal herbs that I gathered. I belong to a community of Essenes, which is several

days journey from here. I walk long distances to find the special plants that our teacher taught us to use. And pray, may I ask, what are you doing here?"

"It's a long story," replied Saul.

"I gathered that much, especially after watching you going through your convulsions," remarked the old man.

"You saw me in my affliction?" said Saul embarrassingly.

"Yes, I saw you from afar. We call it the holy disease."

"The last thing I remember was a great wheel in space with the Greek letter X on it, and I was impaled on it," said Saul as he looked up in the direction of the risen sun.

"Aha, the wheel of Ixion," said the old man with a twinkle in his eye as he recognized the familiar archetype from the teachings of his Greek teacher.

"What's the wheel of Ixion?" asked Saul in a befuddled tone.

"There are several stories about him, but the one I like best is where he is strapped to a fiery wheel that travels across the sky."

"That sounds like another myth about the solar deity," said Saul, remembering the Greek story of Helios in his fiery chariot.

"Exactly," said the old man. "The old familiar story of the birth, death, and resurrection of the sun who gives light and life to the world. Here, let me show you something."

The old man rose to his feet and took the staff in his right hand and drew a large circle and then a large square surrounding the circle. He proceeded to divide the large square into thirty-six squares by drawing five vertical and five horizontal lines.

"This is the magic square of the sun," stated the old man matter-of-factly. "Our Greek teacher, Pythagoras, used to say that number is the origin of all things. So, watch and learn."

The old man wrote the Greek alpha-numeric A, for Alpha (1), in the top left square, then continued diagonally from top left to bottom right to write the alpha-numeric for 8, 15, 22, 29, and 36.

"Now, if you add all six of those numbers together, you get 111, which we call the Intelligence of the Sun."

The old man glanced up from his stooped position on the desert ground and saw that Saul was paying attention and ready for the next step in the equation.

He drew the Greek alpha-numeric for 6 in the top right square, then continued diagonally from top right to bottom left to write the alpha-numeric for 11, 16, 21, 26, and 31.

"You can probably guess what those six numbers add up to," said the old man, looking up into the face of Saul, whose eyes were beaming with excitement at what he was witnessing.

"It would be the same as the other diagonal, 111," said Saul, rising to his feet to get a clearer picture of the vast puzzle that was being unraveled before his eyes.

"You're a bright pupil," said the old man. "So, let us continue to the next level. What happens when you add those 12 numbers together?"

"You get 222," replied Saul.

"That's the number which we call the Soul of the Sun," said the old man.

Saul quickly noticed that each horizontal and each vertical line of numbers would also probably add up to one hundred and eleven.

“You must be thinking what would happen if you added up all the numbers from one to thirty-six,” said the old man, looking into the eyes of concentration that he saw on Saul’s face.

“Actually, I was one step behind that,” admitted Saul. “I was recognizing the similarity of the horizontal and vertical totals.”

“I like an honest person,” said the old man, putting his left hand on Saul’s shoulder. “You see, one of our Essene principles is that you must love truth above all. Anyway, let’s finish with the magic square of the sun. As I was saying, if you add up all the numbers from one to thirty-six, you get the number that we call the Spirit of the Sun.

Saul displayed a puzzled look on his face as he realized the significance of the sum of all the numbers.

“You will find that it equals to the same number that is written of our solar deity Solomon, who received a yearly supply of solar gold in the amount of six hundred threescore and six talents of gold,” said the old man.

“Six hundred and sixty-six is the number of the sun?” asked Saul with a quizzical look on his face.

“That and much more,” stated the old man. “Of course, there’s more to it than what I’ve told you. But that’s enough for now.”

The old man took his stick and pushed the desert sand around on the diagram of the wheel. Within minutes there was no sign left of the wheel in the grains of sand.

“I might as well tell you my name,” said the old man. “I am called Elijahu.”

“And you’re an elder from the Essene community?” inquired Saul.

“Yes. Would you like to visit our humble community?” asked Elijahu. “It’s half way up this side of the Dead Sea.”

“It would be my distinct pleasure,” said Saul, relishing the thought of actually being inside one of the communities, which he had formerly despised and antagonized. He seemed to have had a change of heart towards them since his wilderness experience.

“So, tell me your long story as we walk,” said Elijahu.

They started walking side by side along the barely perceptible path through the desert along the western side of the Dead Sea.

Saul began telling his story, from the time he met the teacher of righteousness in Damascus to his meeting with Hermes in the cave at Mt. Horeb. However, he did not embellish the Damascus part of the story with too many potentially embarrassing specifics of his role as an agent of the ruling religious party.

Elijahu kept the details of the story to himself, especially the part about the teacher of righteousness. The Essenes never mentioned him by name. He immediately remembered hearing of that incident from one of the community members, who had reported that a certain emissary of the high priest in Jerusalem had come to Damascus to arrest the Followers of the Way in that city.

Elijahu realized that he was dealing with a sensitive issue: whether to allow the agent of the enemy to enter their community or not. He realized, after hearing Saul’s story, that he was dealing with the same man who had been sent by the ruling religious authorities to exterminate their simple way of living. However, Elijahu also reasoned in his mind that this man might be helpful in their cause to resist the religious authorities. Perhaps Elijahu could convert Saul to their Way.

They walked for a while in silence.

Elijahu was musing about the ramifications of his decision to bring Saul into the community as a prospective convert.

Saul was contemplating his experience in the wilderness and the warring elements in his mind: in the cave of the mount he was recognized by the great Hermes as Paul, and even referred to as Balinas; in the desert beside the Dead Sea he was told by Elijahu to stick to his Hebrew name Saul. In one part of his mind he was Paul, living in a Roman world with a Greek name; in another part of his mind he was Saul, with a Hebrew background and a Greek education in the school of Gamaliel. Sometimes he felt like he was two persons living in two different worlds.

“May I ask you a serious question?” asked Elijahu, breaking the profound silence as they continued to walk in the steadily rising heat of the desert.

“I’m listening,” said Saul, anxiously anticipating what appeared to be an important question.

“Are you willing to make a solemn promise that you will follow the rules of discipline that we as members follow?” asked Elijahu. “And that you will not divulge any of our teachings that you might learn during your stay with us?”

“But I only want to visit a day or two,” said Saul, hesitating to make a long term commitment.

“I know, but you might decide to stay longer, and I need to make sure my people won’t deride me for inviting an enemy of our Way into our community,” said Elijahu, who was beginning to question his spontaneous decision to invite Saul.

Saul was stunned by the words that Elijahu hurled point-blank at him. He stopped in his tracks and faced Elijahu.

“So you suspect me of being an enemy of your way of living and believing?” asked Saul with a stern look in his eyes.

“Are you not the Saul of Tarsus who went to Damascus as an agent of the high priest and the Sadducees in order to bring my people to judgment as enemies of the temple in Jerusalem?” asked Elijahu with a fiery look in his eyes.

Saul could not deny the statement that Elijahu made. He hung his head down and didn’t say anything for a while. Elijahu waited patiently for an answer to his question.

“So you do know about me?” Saul finally said after he collected his thoughts and realized he might as well resign himself to his fate.

“Yes, we have followers of the Way scattered throughout the country, and we keep each other informed by various means in order to protect ourselves,” admitted Elijahu. “Now be absolutely honest with me, and admit who you truly are.”

“I am the one you speak of,” confessed Saul. “All the things you said about me are true.”

“Can I trust you now, after what has transpired?” asked Elijahu, raising his eyebrows.

“I will do as you ask and make the solemn promise to observe the prescribed rules that you will place at my feet, and I promise to walk in the path which you set before me,” said Saul, whose heart, mind, and soul were determined to penetrate into their mysteries.

“And do you promise not to communicate our teachings to outsiders unless permitted to do so in the same manner as we teach it?” asked Elijahu.

“I promise,” replied Saul. He had no choice. He was committed to his endeavor to learn as much as he could about the teachings of their Way.

For the remainder of their journey together, they did not speak more than was needed. Each man was absorbed in his own little world.

On the third day, when the sun stood in mid-heaven, Elijah arrived with Saul at an oasis in the desert with groves of palm trees and plenty of water to drink. This was where the community of Essenes lived in temporary shelters with few possessions of their own, for they held what they had in common.

As the two men arrived at the encampment, the people lifted their heads from their work and followed them warily with their eyes. The Essenes always were on guard when a stranger entered their community.

Elijah was just about to reassure the people with an announcement about the stranger, when a woman leaped up from her work in the garden and ran up to Saul.

“My dear brother!” she cried, running into his arms and embracing him with both of her dirt-covered arms around his neck.

“Phoebe, my dear sister!” exclaimed Saul with a great deal of surprise in his voice and in his face. “What are you doing here?”

