God in Three Persons:
A Spiritual Odyssey

By Paul John Wigowsky

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Dedicated to the Memory of

Maestro Salvatore D'Aura

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Epigraph:

Naassene Hymn

"Send me forth, o Father, therefore, and I,
Bearing the seal shall descend and wander
All Aeons through, all mysteries reveal.
I shall manifest the forms of the gods
And teach the secrets of the holy way
Which I call Gnosis."
[Hippolytus: Refutation of All Heresies, Book V, Chapter V,
quoted in The Other Bible, edited by Willis Barnstone, p. 636;
quoted from Gnosis, by Robert Haardt, pp. 99-100]

"All mysteries I'll unravel,
And forms of Gods I'll show,
And secrets of the saintly path,
Called "Gnosis," I'll impart."
[Hippolytus: Refutation of All Heresies, Book V, Chapter V,
quoted in Gnostic Secrets of the Naassenes, by Mark H. Gaffney, p. 236]

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God in Three Persons: A Spiritual Odyssey

111

"Behold, I show you a Mystery"

Apollos peeked his head out of his sleeping bag and saw the dawn light chase the stars away from the night canopy above him. He stared at the changing scene momentarily through the mesh opening at the top of his tent. He rubbed the sleep out of his eyes with his knuckles and scrambled shakily to his feet. The discarded covering lay in a heap towards the back of the small pup tent. He pulled the tent zipper upwards, opening the door to the outside world of nature.

Apollos crawled out of the dark blue tent, straightened up, and stretched himself out to his full 6 foot height. He looked towards the east and felt the morning breeze lightly brush against his bearded face. He had set his mental clock to rise before the sun and watch the day begin from the summit, which was a mere hundred yards from his campground. His long lanky legs carried him swiftly over the glaciated grey-white granite rocks to the top of the dome.

As he caught his breath upon reaching the elevated height of 8,122 feet, he searched the eastern horizon for the first rays of the solar orb. The snowy range in the distance looked like an interlaced chain of jagged crystalline peaks. This was the backbone of the state of California – the Sierra Nevada.

The first ray of light broke through the dark shadows just south of the tall pyramidal shape of Mt. Starr King. From the vantage point of Sentinel Dome, Apollos felt like he was at the center and on top of the world, looking out on the first day of creation as the ball of light ascended above the crystal snow line of mountains, making the entire sky seem a veritable Range of Light. That's what the naturalist John Muir had called the mountainous range when he first set eyes on it, proclaiming the entire Yosemite Valley and its surroundings to be the greatest temple on earth.

Apollos gave homage to the light which flooded the hills and the valley by stretching out his arms to his sides in a horizontal manner, and placing his feet together. With eyes closed he let the light flow into his inner being and warm the cells of his body with an effulgence that made his entire mind and spirit glow with an energizing force. He took a deep long breath from the surrounding air and drank into his lungs the taste of the pine trees. A cool current of electrifying fluid coursed up his spine into the awaiting reservoir in his brain. The top of his head felt like the mountainous range of light, and he saw in his mind's eye a crown on his head sending out rays in all directions.

He opened his eyes and felt like he had just bathed in the streams that cascaded down the walls of the Yosemite Valley. Apollos did not see the long dark cross shape behind him that was formed by his outstretched arms, a cross which seemed to stretch over the green hills clear across the western sky.

Directly behind him stood the lone windswept and gnarled pine tree on the summit, a Jeffrey pine that had lost its green needles and was left to stand bare upon the dome as a reminder to the onlooker that it had passed the test of time. It was a sentinel who stood watching as the elements of air, water, and fire swept over the land. It was a witness to the passage of time, somewhat like its southern neighbor, the towering and

majestic Sequoia gigantea. The tallest conifer in the world was also the oldest, reaching upwards of almost 3,000 years.

Apollos tried to imagine the passage of the centuries that the old sequoia had seen in its lifetime. He saw it emerge from a three-inch cone at the end of the last ice age, while glaciers formed the immense grandeur and beauty of the valley and its surroundings by carving out the granite rock to make its own sculptured designs. He felt the tree soar 300 feet into the sky and look across the earth with its needle receptacles to sense the races of men and their civilizations coming and going upon the face of the earth.

The visionary's head seemed to spin, and he stumbled forward to a large circular rock and grabbed hold of it. He noticed a large circular brass plaque attached to the top of the rock. It was a 360-degree panoramic display of everything that surrounded the centrally located Sentinel Dome. The plaque had the names of all the surrounding landmarks inscribed on it. He tried to look in all four directions and identify the main features of the valley. To the west he saw Cathedral Rocks and El Capitan, to the north he saw Three Brothers and heard the Yosemite Fall, to the east he saw Half Dome, and to the south he saw Wawona Point, home to the giant sequoias.

When he looked back at the circular plaque, something strange seemed to happen to his perception, and his eyes started to water. *The circular shape started to slowly revolve, and he could barely make out what seemed to be four figures staring at him out of a cloudy surface: a bright red lion with a flaming mane; across it was a manly figure with an angelic face; next and to the left was a figure of a bellowing ox; and across from it was a soaring eagle. The figures seemed to correspond respectively to the four directions: east, west, north, and south.*

And in a lightning-moment, directly in the center of the revolving wheel, Apollos saw a figure whom he immediately recognized and which caused him to cry out, "Oh, my God!"

It was his fiancée, Sophia. He saw through his blurry tear-filled eyes what appeared to be an anguished look on her pale face and a glance of fear in her blue eyes. He heard her cry out, "Help!" And then the picture before him went dark, and he stared in disbelief at the scene which had just flashed before his eyes.

There was no time to lose. His solitary retreat would have to be resumed some other time. Apollos quickly packed his belongings, rolled up his tent, and descended from the heights, driving his well-used Mercury vehicle down curvy Glacier Point Road, thinking only of the young woman he had been courting for seven months. He recalled the first time he saw her; she had walked into his philosophy class wearing a rose-colored skirt, and she sat in the front row. It was his first year teaching; he had just finished his master's degree in philosophy and was assigned a temporary associate professor position at the university. It must have been those legs with the firm thighs, which she displayed as she crossed her legs, that first caught his attention. After that, he had a hard time teaching Plato's Symposium. She had noticed him blush whenever she caught him looking at her muscular thighs.

The car turned on El Portal Road and started following the Merced, River of Mercy, whose waters mirrored the flowing of Apollo's blood, hurrying through the body as it made its way back to its source, the heart. Apollo was praying for mercy for his beloved fiancée, the love of his life, to whom he had proposed when she returned a

second year as a devoted student. Sophia had stayed after class many a day, asking questions that stimulated conversations about the philosophical systems of great thinkers.

"Do you think the Socratic method of asking continuous questions is the best way to arrive at ultimate truth?" she asked one day after class.

"What do you think?" was his response.

They both had a hearty laugh whenever they tried that method of inquiry.

"Do you believe Hegel's spiral theory of life leads to a progressive evolution of man?" she asked on another occasion.

"Yes, I do," he replied in the affirmative. "I believe in the innate goodness of mankind."

"Then how about all the evil in the world?" she asked.

Apollo felt a surge of fear in his heart at the thought of the picture of fear he had seen during his morning meditation. 'How could such a fearsome possibility exist amidst the beauty of nature?' he asked himself. He tried to juxtapose the joy of communing with nature and the despair of struggling to survive in the physical world. He tried to think of the treasures of the visual and sensory forms of swaying waterfalls, perpendicular walls, fragrant flowers and trees, singing birds, and numerous lakes to enjoy. In fact, he remembered reading that John Muir had actually counted one hundred and eleven lakes which were created by the receding glaciers within Yosemite National Park.

However, at the present moment nothing could erase the cry for help that echoed in his mind over and over again.

It was almost noon when he finally arrived in San Francisco at his small apartment near Brotherhood Way, a short walk from the university where he taught. He immediately knew something was wrong when he opened the door and saw overturned chairs and papers strewn all over the room.

"Sophia!" he called out. There was no answer.

He walked across the room to the bedroom. Some of Sophia's clothes were lying haphazardly on the bed. She had moved in with him when summer vacation began; he had been planning to marry her on Midsummer Eve in honor of their mutual adoration for the romantic flair of the playwright-philosopher Shakespeare.

"Sophia, where are you?" he said out loud as if expecting her to still be somewhere hidden in the small staff apartment. He looked in the closet and found his answer – her suitcase was gone! And so was a slim selection of clothes hanging next to his. It appeared as if she was forced to pack in haste and was permitted to take only what she needed. But why? And where?

When he finally made his way to his desk, he saw something that he hoped would provide the answer to his "where" question. A single sheet of paper with bold red letters stared back at him with the following message:

When you enter the Dragon Gate
And retrieve the Trident
And face the Four Beasts
And seize the Sacred Heart,
Then Grace will guide your steps
To a Twin view
Of the Cross-roads where
You will find your treasure.

Suddenly, a gut-wrenching feeling forced him to look inside the top drawer of his desk. His unfinished manuscript was missing!

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Joshua emerged from the cave under the mount and looked across the sea. He stood for a moment and let the salty sea breeze blow his shoulder-length hair away from his face. He tried to bring back into his consciousness the lucid dream he had of a vast being standing with one foot on the land and the other foot in the sea. The picture materialized in the eye of his thought and he saw a being who seemed to stretch from the earth to the heavens. Encircling his body around his waist were rings with orbiting bodies attached to them. They appeared to be seven planetary orbs. In his hands the white-bearded being held a circular disk which he slowly spun around his shoulders with his hands. The disk had twelve pictures on it, with four of them having an appearance of real life to them: a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle.

A black raven flew overhead, and Joshua looked up to see in which direction it was flying. The raven landed directly above him on a juniper tree and dropped a morsel of bread at his feet. 'This must be a sign,' he thought. He picked the bread up and ate it. It tasted good and satisfied his hunger. He walked up the path away from the cave.

As he approached the monastic community, he heard the singing of the morning hymn. On this day the words intoned the sweet name of Asherah, the Earth Mother, whose nutritive forces provided food and nourishment for the body and the soul. He hurried up the stone steps to the temple building. He was met at the entrance by his confidante, the temple maiden Binah.

"Where have you been? You're late!" said Binah in a reprimanding voice.

"I was at the cave of Elias, meditating," answered Joshua in a condescending tone.

"Yeshua," she said endearingly, using his Hebrew name, "You're always meditating in that cave. Are you trying to ride the chariot of fire up to the heavens and leave me here on earth by myself?" Binah chuckled and smiled at Joshua in an understanding way.

"I've got to tell you about my dream," he anxiously said, grabbing her hand as she turned to go into the temple.

"Can't it wait? We're going to miss the morning communion with our earth mother."

"This is very important," stressed Joshua. "I need to understand what I saw. You've always helped me understand my dreams. Anyway, I'm more interested in the evening communion with the heavenly father, where we contemplate eternal life."

"You've convinced me," conceded Binah. "Let's go up to the bluff overlooking the sea."

She grabbed his hand and they hurried together up the path past the purification pool to the place where Mount Carmel met the Mediterranean Sea. Their white robes,

which were the required dress code by the Essenian Order to which they belonged, flowed behind them in the wind. Here, on top of the Carmel Range which extended fourteen miles southwest from the sea, was a verdant park filled with pine, eucalyptus, and cypress trees and bounteous lush natural vegetation. Carm-El was well named, for it meant Garden of God. Truly, it was a fertile terra rossa whose rich red soil was said to be used to create the first man.

Binah and Joshua finally made it to their favorite lookout. Two trees stood side by side near the bluff. As young children they used to come to this place to hug the trees. They used to pretend that they could feel the roots of the tree digging deep down to the ancient limestone, and the veins of the tree pumping water up to its limbs and leaves. They pretended that they could feel the same force of life flowing through their body. Now that they were grown-up, a man and a woman, they still loved to embrace their favorite tree and establish a link with the stream of life. They looked like two pillars melded into the tree of life and its eternal source.

"Now, tell me your dream," said Binah, after they finished their little ritual.

Joshua felt someone shaking him. "Wake up! It's time to go," he heard a voice say.

He opened his eyes wide open and stared straight ahead. His senses were trying to relay a message to his mind that he had just awoken from a deep dream. It seemed to him as if two bodies were trying to overlap and join together, as if one part of his body had been somewhere else and was now trying to relate to the present moment.

The first thing that he said when he totally became aware of his surroundings was, "Binah, where are you?" He heard a still, small voice inside his mind answer, 'I am always with you.' The second thing he said when he realized he had been on a tour with a group of people inside the cave of Elias was, "Who is Yeshua?" He distinctly recalled Binah calling him that.

He followed the tour guide out of the cave and barely heard her say to the group that had gathered outside the cave, "And now we are going to go see the ruins of an ancient monastery where the Essenes used to live and worship both the masculine and the feminine aspects of God." He trailed behind in a cloud of reverie. He still felt like he had really been somewhere else. When he saw the ruins he suddenly realized that he had just seen the exact place as it had existed in its actual form centuries ago.

When the tour ended on top of Mount Carmel, the tour guide reminded the tourists that the prophet Elias had a school for the development of prophets on the very site where now stood a Carmelite monastery complex called Stella Maris (Star of the Sea), in honor of the new Earth Mother, the Virgin Mary. Joshua followed the group into the church and looked up at the dome, where he witnessed the colorful depiction of Elias being swept up to heaven in a fiery chariot.

'His face looks like the one I saw in my dream, or vision, or other world experience I had,' thought Joshua to himself. The white-bearded face of Elias and the white-bearded face of the being, who appeared to be of celestial origin, seemed to be transposed in the mind of Joshua. Joshua felt an eerie warm glow surge up his spine as he craned his neck to look straight up at the dome imagery.

Joshua finished his tour with a stop at the gift shop, where his roving eye caught his attention and drew him to a book with an interesting title: <u>The Ascent of Mount Carmel</u> by St. John of the Cross. He bought the book.

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Paul's feet trudged through the desert sands. His tattered sandals were worn down to their soles. His feet ached from the daily pilgrimage to which he had been summoned.

He remembered clearly the voice that had spoken to him out of the dark recesses of his mind, "Go to Arabia."

Paul's mind was tormented daily by his acts of cruelty toward a group of fellow countrymen called the Nazarenes. The desert heat compounded the guilt that he felt in his heart. Deep down in his soul he knew that their beliefs were non-threatening to the authorities of his day.

'So why was he repulsed by their ways?' he asked himself. He knew their teachings conflicted with his orthodox ways. They were strict vegetarians and even refused to offer animal sacrifices, absolutely no killing; he felt the animal offerings were an essential part of the temple worship. They believed in the transmigration of the soul from one body to another; he couldn't believe that the dead came back to life in another body, changing place after place, and house after house. They yoked themselves to a holy vow not to cut their hair or even drink wine, and they fasted in order to be made perfect through suffering.

His journey through the Way of the Wilderness was beginning to resemble the steadfast rituals of the sectarians whom he had denounced and tried to exterminate. He felt the Followers of the Way, as they called themselves, were nothing more than a heretical cult of wandering exorcists, who tried to cure people by casting out imaginary demons. Now he had to battle his own personal demons as he traveled the King's Highway on the edge of the Trans-Jordan plateau.

It was days since he left the environs of Damascus, where he had planned to destroy the Nazarenes and their spiritual center. Instead, he had encountered the ringleader of the Nazarenes, who was called by various names, including the Holy One and the Just. He had never expected this teacher of righteousness to have such an impact on him. When he gazed into the dark brown eyes of the long-haired Nazarene, who confronted him before he could enter their holy order, Paul was completely taken aback by the light which emanated from his face.

"The Light of the divine has appeared to you," spoke the gentle-voiced Nazarene. "If you wish to be initiated into the mysteries of our order, you must first travel the Way of the Wilderness for forty days and experience the dark night of the soul. Afterwards, you will be shown the true Light within your own soul."

Darkness overcame Paul at the sound of those words. He recalled them distinctly as he traveled day and night in a state of semi-darkness, as if his mind was trying to break out of a constricting chrysalis. He had been given a higher directive from a higher mind than his, and he felt the urgent need to obey it in order to escape the stifling darkness which was suffocating his very being. He had to break out of the darkness into the light.

He had been traveling on the desert road for thirty days now. He had passed by the upper Sea of Galilee and its turbulent waters what seemed to be ages ago. He had descended to the area of the Dead Sea, following parallel to the Jordan River. As he approached the fortress city of Petra in the Arabian Desert, he was frightened half to death by a serpent which crossed his path. He recoiled from the sight of the hideous creature which had been cursed even by God.

He thought the serpent in the wilderness portended evil ahead, and he spent the last ten days of his journey feeling totally scared to death. He felt that the specter of death awaited him. 'Had he come thus far only to face imminent death?' he thought to himself. He came face to face with his greatest fear, death itself. He hadn't even winced when he saw others die, or when by the authority of his governing body he had put to death innocent sectarians. The image of one particular young man stood out in his mind as a martyr to a faith that his zealotry was determined to eradicate.

'Would he be willing to die for a cause?' he mused within the confines of his solitary thinking. Would he be willing to give up his dear life and the desire to enjoy all that life had to offer? Was this the supreme test that he had to face in order to escape the labyrinth of darkness and ignorance that had engulfed him like a net? At this point in his journey he felt totally abandoned, and he wanted to cry out for help. But he knew he couldn't give in to despair, so he gathered up enough inner strength and courage to continue.

On the fortieth day of his pilgrimage through the wilderness, Paul completed his trials of mind and body and finally reached his destination: the holy mount. There was no smoke from its peak and no rumbling on the ground. There was a calmness that pervaded the area around the mount where the law was delivered to Moses and where the prophet Elias heard a still, small voice. In the tradition of his forefathers, Paul approached the mount and looked for a path to ascend to the top.

Before him appeared a cave which he had only noticed as he approached closer to the mount. There seemed to be a green glow emanating from the entrance, beckoning him to come inside. He took off his sandals, sensing that he was treading on hallowed ground.

Inside the cavern he saw a great figure of a man, with a great Egyptian headdress with a uraeus upon his forehead, and a great golden throne upon which he sat. In his left hand he held a brazen caduceus, and in his right hand he held an emerald tablet that produced the green light which captivated his attention.

"Mercurius!" exclaimed Paul when he recognized the messenger of the gods who always carried his caduceus with him.

"Balinas, welcome to my abode," said the illustrious being.

"Why do you call me Balinas?" asked Paul. "My name is Paul."

"You will be called by many names, just like I am called by many names," he answered. "You called me by my Latin name, although I am more recognized by my Greek name, Hermes, and my Egyptian name, Thoth."

"Are you the true Light that was promised?" asked Paul, referring to the words of the Nazarene.

"Some think of me as the Soul of the World, and some think of me as the Light which dispels darkness. And others say that I am a personification of Reason and Mind. You take your pick."

"I wish to have my darkness vanquished," stated Paul, who resolved in his mind to be enlightened.

"You have chosen wisely, for that is the first step in the illumination of the soul," said Hermes.

At once the Emerald Tablet was bathed in a green radiant light, and the winged caduceus began to vibrate and pulsate with a humming energy.

"The first principle is written on the tablet for you to perceive," stated Hermes.

Paul peered into the vast depth of the tablet and saw a Roman numeral and three words:

I. Truth is One.

He saw the bulb on top of the central rod of the caduceus light up with a scintillating light.

Paul peered again into the tablet and saw the second principle appear:

II. All is Vibration, moving at different rates of motion according to the law of opposites or polarity.

Paul looked back at the caduceus and saw the white and black snakes encircling the central rod begin to move. In the crystal ball of the central rod he saw a circular shape resembling the oriental yin and yang, the white alongside the black, and the white in the black and the black in the white.

Again he looked at the tablet, and the third principle appeared:

III. Unity emanates forth duality, and duality produces the triune nature of all life.

He glanced back at the bulb, and he saw a point emanating into two lines, then being joined by a third line, producing a triangle.

The fourth principle appeared:

IV. When the circle is squared, the material order of nature is unfolded through the elements of fire, water, air, and earth.

Inside the crystal ball a circle opened up and a square appeared with the cardinal points of the horizon placed around the images of fire to the south, water to the west, air to the east, and earth to the north.

Paul's attention was diverted from the familiar imagery back to the tablet:

V. The creative process descends as a force from above into form, and then ascends through a process of regeneration back to its source.

The crystal ball emitted a fiery ray of light descending from a point, and Paul watched as the light formed a figure of a man standing inside an image of a pentagram.

The tablet again demanded its share of attention:

VI. What is above is like what is below. The microcosm below reflects the macrocosm above.

The bulb showed two equilateral triangles, the one below inverted and reflecting the upright one above. Then they moved together and interlaced themselves into a Star of David.

The tablet again glowed:

VII. The pillars of wisdom are unveiled by ascending the seven steps corresponding to the seven planetary spheres.

The crystal ball showed a seven-stepped stairway, like a pagoda temple, and on the seven steps were placed rotating spheres of Saturn, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, and Jupiter.

The tablet revealed the next principle:

VIII. All life spirals upwards as man travels the eightfold path.

The bulb showed an eight-spoked wheel with inscriptions on right thinking and living.

The tablet displayed the penultimate principle:

IX. Humanity is the work of the Sun and the Moon, and the Great Work of humanity is Perfection.

Paul peered into the crystal ball and saw a transparent man with the image of Hermes' caduceus superimposed upon the spinal column.

Paul read the last and ultimate principle:

X. The ten archetypal forms are the basis of all existence.

Paul turned to look for the corresponding image in the crystal ball, but Hermes lifted the caduceus and said, "For this image, you must look into your own mind and soul. Close your eyes."

Paul closed his eyes, and he felt Hermes tap the skull of his head lightly with the top of the caduceus, and he instantly saw a bright light in his mind's eye; and in the center of that light he saw the tetractys of Pythagoras, formed of the numerical 1+2+3+4. And then the ten spheres seemed to reassemble themselves into another pattern, resembling the tree of life. The ten spheres glowed with the colors of the rainbow spectrum, and Paul felt the spheres pulsating within his own body, filling it with light in its manifold vibrations.

Paul was not aware of the passage of time as he watched the interplay of colors and the tree-like formation with the twenty-two paths that connected the spheres.

When he finally opened his eyes, Hermes was gone. On the back wall of the cave he saw four flaming letters in a vertical column:

Y
H
V
H

He also noticed that when he closed his eyes again, he saw the entire sequence of events that he had witnessed in the cave. He realized that the words and images of the Emerald Tablet were etched in his mind and in his heart.

"He reveals deep and mysterious things."

- - Daniel 2:22

Apollos read the message again: a dragon's gate, a trident, four beasts, sacred heart, grace, twin view, and the cross-roads. 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.

Apollos 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.

Apollos 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.

Apollos 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 Apollos 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 Nuestro Senora 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.

Apollos 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 Apollos 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 Apollos 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 Apollos, 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.

Apollos 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. Apollos 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. Apollos 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 hearkens 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-numerics 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-numerics 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 dead 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, Elijahu 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.

Elijahu 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?"

ακολασια (akolasia), Licentiousness
α 1
κ 20
ο 70
λ 30
α 1
σ ..200
ι 10
α 1
_____
333

ακρασια (akrasia), Incontinence
α 1
κ 20
ρ ...100
α 1
σ ...200
ι ... 10
α 1
_____
333

"The Mystery of the Ineffable maketh three mysteries, although it is only one mystery; but the type of each of them is different."

- - Pistis Sophia, Book 2, 236

Apollos headed south on Highway 101 along the San Francisco Bay towards Palo Alto. He had traveled down this road before, so he put his conscious mind on automatic pilot while he reminisced within his soul-mind about his last visit with Maestro Salvatore D'Aura several years ago.

Apollos had been introduced to the life of Apollonius of Tyana, and he found the events in the life of the great philosopher of the first century coinciding remarkably with the travels of the biblical Apostle Paul. Furthermore, he discovered to his amazement that certain scholars had unearthed documents and archival material that linked Apollonius to the Christian savior.

Could Apollonius be the World Teacher who had appeared on the stage of life in the Roman world two thousand years ago? That was the burning question that was driving Apollos to produce a manuscript that would answer that question. And now that manuscript was missing.

He tried to recall in his mind what he had written in his notebook about his previous visit with Salvatore D'Aura:

"Apollonius is Paul, Paulus, Pol, whatever you want to call him," said Maestro Salvatore D'Aura. "You can even call him Apollo. He went by many names in the Mediterranean world. It all depended on which location he was at and what name corresponded to the name Apollonius in the local vernacular."

"How do you know these things?" I asked. [Apollos had written about his interview in the first person.]

"Apollonius was the ascended master who was present at my initiation into the adept life," said Maestro. "He was one of the three masters who were required to form a triangle of spiritual power. You see, it takes three ascended masters to perform the ceremony, to coordinate the three higher bodies of man."

"Who were the other two masters?" I asked.

"I'm not going to reveal that to you at this time, maybe next time," said Maestro. "But I will reveal to you that Apollonius is right now, at present, living in the Himalayas in his etheric or spiritual body."

"I've heard that there are seven bodies that are part of man's consciousness," I remarked, recalling something I had read.

"Yes, there are many levels of awareness in this world," said Maestro. "See, it's not just the physical world, and then there's heaven. I mean, forget it, it's not that way."

"Like there are many vibratory states of existence," I added my two-cents worth.

"Well, many," said Maestro, picking up on his train-of-thought. "We have the physical body, like we all know. Then next to that is the astral body. That's the body we use when we dream, and everybody dreams and goes out of the body. There's no question about that. Then we have the causal body. You see, the causal body is what caused the ingredients that mixed the body, the material, the cohesion of the materials: bones, the flesh, the blood, and then the glands, and then the part of the body that makes this instrument a total piece."

"Sounds like the DNA code and the genes that are part of our ancestral heredity," I added.

"Yes, that is the cause on the physical level," said Maestro. "On the higher level we call it the causal body, which includes all the things you brought in from previous lives. And we use the causal body only with instruction, with training, in a higher level. No more crazy dreams as are sometimes caused by the stomach or by aberrations or by bad news or situations, vibrations of this world. So then we repeat that stuff, that bad stomach, or bad digestion. The causal is a different kind of dream, a different kind of travel."

Maestro D'Aura paused. He stopped pacing on the living room carpet and sat on the couch. He closed his eyes and tuned in to a higher level of awareness.

"Then, of course, we have the mental body," Maestro continued with eyes closed and in a lowered voice. "And in the mental body there is another degree of more awareness. More refined. And then there are many higher powers, especially in India or South American, and Mexico, like the Mayas. Even many saints of the Catholic Church. Those who have ascended. They live when they go away, when the body is done, they dwell in the mental realm. And they believe that is heaven. So they are very happy about that. And whenever they try to communicate to a human being from that plane, so you see, it is distorted, because it's not what we call heaven."

Maestro D'Aura shifted his weight on the couch, crossed his legs, and leaned back. His eyes were still closed as his inner vision focused on another level of awareness.

"Then, after the mental, then we have the soul realm," Maestro said.

"Isn't there a Buddhic level, and a higher Atmic?" I asked, remembering those metaphysical words from an esoteric scripture.

"Wait," said Maestro, noticing my impatience with the lower levels. He raised his voice to an elevated tone. "The soul realm is the first higher level. All the others are, ah, grammar school. The soul realm, those who are gifted can dwell there. You know when you have reached that level. But you never go there by accident or by chance. You go with a master. Then you go to school over there. You're chosen to become a chela, a neophyte. And then you learn – two, three times a week you learn – and when you come back, you're a different person altogether."

Maestro D'Aura paused again. He toned down his voice as he seemed to go into a deeper level, a level which seemed to echo from the depths of antiquity.

"Then, after the soul realm, that is the first higher one," he continued with his physical eyes closed and inner eyes fully dilated, "then we go into the second one, that is the spiritual, and we enter into the hierarchy of heaven."

He stopped for a moment. I could see Jacob's ladder in my mind's eye, with angelic beings descending and ascending on the golden ladder which connected the heavens with the earth.

"Now the Indoo," said Maestro as he opened his physical eyes and looked again at me, "when I say the Indoo I mean the Hindu from India, they have classified this in their own way. But it's not the complete truth."

Apollos saw the exit sign for the Embarcadero Rd. / Oregon Expressway, and he mentally switched his awareness back to the road before him. He was embarking on a venture that he hoped would provide a way for him to save his fiancée Sophia. He turned off of Highway 101 and merged onto the expressway that headed west to Salvatore D'Aura's house on El Dorado Avenue.

Apollos drove down the tree-lined streets of Palo Alto, which was named after a tall coast redwood tree that stood beside San Francisquito Creek. He parked his Mercury vehicle in front of the modest corner-lot house with a brown rock slab foundation. He approached the door and rang the doorbell. He glanced back at the expansive tree that stood at the edge of the front lawn.

Salvatore D'Aura opened the door and invited Apollos to come in. They shook hands after Apollos crossed the threshold and entered directly into the small living room. The two-bedroom house was built in the early 1950's after World War II, and it had approximately 1632 square feet. For a confirmed celibate who lived by himself, and who had dedicated his life to the higher path, the house provided ample room for himself and for his students.

Maestro D'Aura was known to his opera students as the master of the Bel Canto style of singing, a beautiful voice technique that he had inherited from the renowned Italian composer, Giacomo Puccini.

To his other students, like Apollos, he was known as an adept of the esoteric wisdom of the ascended masters.

"What can I do for you today?" asked Maestro D'Aura. He was dressed in beige corduroy pants and a light-colored striped sweater over a light blue turtle-neck shirt. "Your call sounded urgent."

He motioned for Apollos to sit on the golden-colored floral patterned couch. D'Aura sat on the left side of the couch.

"My fiancée, Sophia, has been kidnapped, and I found a message that indicates she's probably in Athens, Greece," said Apollos.

"Hold on, back up," said Maestro, waving his right hand in the air. "You didn't tell me you had a fiancée."

"She was a student in the philosophy class I was teaching at the university," Apollo divulged. "A very bright student, I might add. Well, to make a long story short, we fell in love. We were going to get married this month during the summer solstice."

"I understand," said Maestro reflectively. "I had a young lady in my youth. I was only eighteen years old and I fell madly in love with her. She was my partner in the opera 'La Boheme.' Are you familiar with it?"

"Sorry. I haven't heard of it," replied Apollos apologetically, as he listened politely, waiting to relate more of his own story.

"I was a tenor at that time and I played and sang the part of Rodolfo, a poet who falls in love with a seamstress named Mimi. I called her my Lucia, or the light of my life. The tragic death of Mimi in the opera was like a foreshadowing in my life, for I lost my Lucia in a tragic auto accident. She was strangled to death by her own scarf."

"That's so sad," said Apollos. "I'm sorry to hear that."

"But my life changed drastically from that moment on," said Maestro. "It was as if the guiding hand of destiny reached down and showed me that I must remain a single man for the rest of my life. That's when I began studying to become a priest in the Catholic Church."

Suddenly Salvatore D'Aura got up from the couch and headed for the kitchen. "Hold on, I'll be right back," he said as he headed for the adjacent room. "I have something in the fire. I was cooking some vegetables in the oven, and I don't want them to burn."

Apollos looked around the room while Maestro was in the kitchen. Behind the couch was a golden-framed mirror that reflected two golden cherubs on a mantle on the other side of the room. The cherubs were each holding up a candelabrum with four candlesticks. Above the white mantle was a large painting of the Madonna with a child in her lap.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," said Maestro when he returned after a couple of minutes. "Now, back to your dilemma. Tell me what else happened."

"Well, remember the manuscript that I was working on about the story of Apollonius and his connection to the Paul and Jesus stories?" asked Apollos.

"Yes, you mentioned it last time you visited," said Maestro.

"Well, it's missing!" stated Apollos, his voice betraying a nervous anxiety about the event that he witnessed at his apartment. "Whoever kidnapped Sophia was probably interested in getting the manuscript."

"Absolutely!" said Maestro. "You hit the nail right on the head. And I can tell you without any doubt that the Catholic authorities somehow caught wind of your manuscript and most probably have it now in their possession."

Apollos felt as if Maestro D'Aura had pierced the darkness of his ignorance and illuminated the mystery with a ray of light and hope.

"Did I ever tell you why I left the Catholic Church?" asked D'Aura.

"I think my friend Peter, your student who introduced me to you, said it was because you got disenchanted with the falsehoods that the Catholic Church was propagating," said Apollos.

"That's part of the story," said Maestro. "I had risen pretty high up in the church hierarchy, and I was even slated to be nominated for training to become the next pope."

"I didn't know that," said Apollos with an astonished look on his face.

"And you can imagine my surprise when I discovered in the Vatican's secret archives, to which I was given access because of my position, that the real teachings and the real history of the church were not what I had learned during my years as a young priest."

"So you left because you found out about the real story of Apollonius and Jesus?" Apollos asked.

"That and much more," replied Maestro. "When they speak of the body of Jesus, there's so many Jesuses. So many. There's the Jesus story taken from Yeshua ben Pandera, which was created by Eusebius, who wanted to be a pope. There's the story of a Joseph who married a Miriam, who had a sister named Mary Magdalene, and this Miriam had a son who was cross-ified or initiated in Egypt. There was a mix-up in the Bar-abba or 'son of the father' story, where the son was delivered to the people instead of the father, and he was rescued by the Essenes. Then there's a Hesus and a Christna story. There's at least four or five, and even probably more, stories, the combination of which were compiled and mixed together to make a story you have in the Christian Bible."

"That is quite a revelation," said Apollos.

"So now, getting back to your situation," said Maestro. "You have a karmic pattern to fulfill. You must respect and follow the entanglement and the commitment you've established. Whether it's right, whether it's wrong, we're not going to judge. Whatever way of life, of living, you've chosen, you must follow."

"So you're saying I should go to Athens and rescue Sophia from the kidnappers?" asked Apollos.

"Certainly," stated Maestro. "Did they leave a clue where they might be keeping her?"

"The last clue they left me showed a picture of the Parthenon," said Apollos, pulling the card out of his shirt pocket and handing it to D'Aura.

"Ah, the Temple of Wisdom," said Maestro, as if he recognized it from another time. "I have an intuitive feeling that you will also need to go to Rome to solve the mystery of her disappearance."

"Why Rome?" asked Apollos.

"You should have asked me first, why Athens," said Maestro. "Remember, that is where the paths of the biblical Paul and Apollonius of Tyana cross. How and why is the first mystery for you to solve."

"But didn't you say Paul and Apollonius are the same person?" asked Apollos.

"Yes, I did," admitted Maestro. "But what I didn't mention to you was that the story of Paul is also made up of many personalities, only one of which was Apollonius."

"And what will I find in Rome?" asked Apollos.

"Whoever kidnapped your fiancée is trying to lure you to Athens for a reason," said Maestro. "Since they are probably working for the Catholic authorities in the Vatican, their ultimate goal is to bring you to Rome, most likely for a public humiliation.

Or, God forbid, to make a martyr out of you, as they've done to other messengers of truth and wisdom."

"Are they that afraid of the story of Apollonius?" asked Apollos.

"They've been trying to stamp out that story since the fourth century, starting at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. They will stop at nothing to make sure their religious power is not tampered with. In fact, they might even think you know something of the whereabouts of Apollonius, who they know mastered the secret wisdom of de-materialization and immortality."

"The main thing I want to know," interjected Apollos, "is whether my fiancée is safe, and will I find her."

"Don't worry about that," reassured him Maestro. "They won't harm her. They need you, and she's the bait."

Apollos pondered the significance of that statement. All at once he felt like a heavy burden had been placed on his shoulders. A hard road lay ahead for him.

"Anyway, let me tell you a story," said Maestro, who saw that Apollos was slipping into a somber state of mind. "I haven't told this story to anybody. There was this chiropractor who invited me to come to his house, and he said, 'You know, there are many things I don't understand.' So I went over there. He lived in a beautiful home, but down below is an abandoned, not a park, but an abandoned field. But nobody can build there because it belongs to the state. There's an old tree in the field and nobody can touch that tree. However, there's a legend – everybody loves a legend.

"So anyway, we had a dinner outside. Well, this outside means a big deck, a huge deck. And the deck looks on this field, or backyard. So, while we were eating, we had fireworks."

"Sounds like the 4th of July," Apollos remarked.

"No, listen," said Maestro. In his excitement to tell the story he stood on his feet and started gesturing with his arms and hands. "They were fireworks you never saw, the most beautiful fireworks I saw in all my life.

"So the wife and doctor asked, 'What is this? This is not July.' This was the month of August. There's no festivities. There's no state activity. So she goes on the telephone and inquires, 'What's going on? What's the occasion?' The operator said, 'What are you talking about?'

"Then I knew. They were friends of mine. You know what I mean, friends. They gave me a welcome. Well, this phenomenon, while we were eating, baffled everybody. They had other guests. We all saw it. We never saw anything so beautiful. But the city didn't know anything about it.

"So, as we continued with our dinner, then we heard – you see, there was this platform – you hear these steps. We heard bom! Bom! Bom!" D'Aura thumped on some wood three times simultaneously as he voiced the sounds.

"And they all turn around, but they could see no one. But I saw. It was a young man, an American Indian, a young boy about fourteen, fifteen. And the father with him was dressed up in the paraphernalia of their own tribe.

"So, anyway, I saw. And they greeted me. So the young man went to the daughter of this chiropractor, a beautiful girl, a very virtuous girl, about fourteen. Something like that. And, of course, he kissed her. She said, 'Oh, someone kissed me.'

"So, this is the phenomenon that I wanted to tell you about. Details are not important. The main reason I'm telling you this story is that you will have invisible friends that will be with you on your journey. You can take my word for that."

"I appreciate that," said Apollos. "I can use all the help I can get. Now that I know what I need to do, I guess I'll be on my way."

"And don't worry," said Maestro. "I'll also be with you in spirit. You will feel my presence whenever you call for my help. I will be there to serve you in whichever way I can."

Apollos got up and stood eye to eye with the six-foot-tall Maestro. He shook his hand and felt the powerful grip in his reassuring hands.

Apollos drove his vehicle to Alma Street, a scenic drive he enjoyed taking whenever he visited Palo Alto. His soul felt at peace driving on the tree-lined street that ran parallel with the railroad tracks. His destination on this soulful street was always the site of the El Palo Alto redwood tree.

At the north end of the city stood the 1059 years old coast redwood tree. The Sequoia sempervirens name was an apt description of the "ever-living" tree. A small creek named San Francisquito Creek flowed beside it, giving water to its thirsty roots. Apollos stood beside the tall tree and looked up at its 110 feet height. He read the inscription on the plaque, which was attached to a rock near the base of the tree:

"Under this giant redwood, the Palo Alto, November 6 to 11, 1729, camped Portola and his band on the expedition that discovered San Francisco Bay."

Apollos sat at the base of the tall tree and thought of its history. Originally, it had twin trunks, but a flood in 1887 tore off one of the two. Somehow, the ever-living tree managed to survive even though it was no longer a double-trunked tree. And on top of it all, the ancient tree made Apollos think of Maestro Salvatore D'Aura and his quest for longevity and immortality.

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Joshua stepped down from the tour bus and followed the tour guide to the only gate on the western side of the Old City. He passed through Jaffa Gate, one of seven gates presently serving as entrances into Jerusalem's Old City, and he looked up at the high stone structures that were part of the city wall.

The tour guide, whose name tag said Anastasia, stopped the small group after they had crossed the entrance. She faced the group and made her introductory speech:

"The Jaffa Gate, through which you just passed, was called David's Gate by the Crusaders. The Arabic name for this entrance is Bab el-Khalil, which means 'Beloved Friend,' and it refers to their nickname for Abraham, known as the father of both the Jewish and Muslim people. For those of you who are not familiar with the story of Abraham, I will just say that he had offspring with his wife Sarah, and also with his Egyptian concubine Hagar. The offspring from his wife's line came to be known as the

Jewish race, and the offspring from his concubine's line came to be known as the Arab race. The long and divisive history of those two genealogical lines is part of the ongoing drama, as you know from current world events.

"Anyway, we will begin our tour in the Christian quarter of the Old City. The entire area of the Old City, by the way, covers roughly 220 acres or one square kilometer," said Anastasia as she started to turn away from the walls and headed eastward up the main street, which was called David Street.

Joshua walked behind the group of modern-day Holy Land pilgrims. Ever since his first day in the country, he felt like he was on a pilgrimage to discover why people like himself were attracted to the land where the stories of three separate religions and cultures vied for attention and for prominence in the world. The Holy Places, which were established over the centuries, continued to demand recognition from the believers and the curiosity seekers.

Joshua watched the heterogeneous groups of foreign and domestic people as he walked along the markets lining the main street. 'What an international flavor this country has,' he thought. It almost seemed as if every race in the world was represented in this location, as if it became the center of the world for those who gravitated towards the saints and sages who walked through this city. And a major part of each person's pilgrimage was to walk in the steps of the renowned saints, prophets, and wise men, and to connect with the spiritual essence of their revered master or teacher.

David Street was the path that led to the magnetic center of the Christian faith. The tour guide Anastasia was leading the pilgrims to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Christendom's holiest shrine, which invited the pilgrim to meditate on the threefold Mystery of the Crucifixion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ.

Just before Anastasia turned left to lead the group up Christians Street, Joshua noticed a Jewish rabbi walking toward the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City. Something inside Joshua's mind told him to talk to the bearded rabbi.

"Good morning," said Joshua, approaching the rabbi, whose head was downcast and deep in thought.

The black-suited rabbi peered at Joshua with his bright blue eyes. An astonished look on his face concealed his disappointment that his morning meditation had been interrupted by a tourist. The rabbi readjusted the black hat on his head, pushing it further back on his gray hair so he could get a better look at the young man dressed in casual clothes.

"I wanted to ask you a question," said Joshua, who suddenly remembered a name that had been on his mind ever since the previous night's dream. In the dream he was told to seek the rabbi Jehoshua ben Perachiah. The dream woke him up in the middle of the night on his first night in Jerusalem. He had written the name down in his notebook, and he had been puzzled by the urgent sound of the voice.

"Make if fast," said the impatient rabbi. "I'm on my way to the Kotel ha-Ma'aravi to say my prayers." The rabbi used the Hebrew name for the Western Wall, which was created to support the Temple's structure.

"Where can I find the Rabbi Jehoshua ben Perachiah?" asked Joshua. He momentarily glanced to his left to see in which direction his tour group was heading.

"Where did you hear that name?" asked the rabbi, whose eyes widened and a look of concern flooded his pale face.

"I was told in a dream to seek the rabbi Jehoshua ben Perachiah," said Joshua in a straight forward manner. He looked anxiously in the direction of his tour group. He didn't want to lose sight of them.

"Are you with that tour group?" asked the rabbi, who noticed the young man's anxious glances up Christians Street.

"Yes, I am," said Joshua. "Would you mind walking with me so I don't lose my group?"

"I usually don't go into the Christian Quarter," admitted the rabbi, "but for your sake I'll make an exception."

"So you know something about that name?" asked Joshua, who tried not to walk too fast in consideration of the old rabbi.

"Yes, I do," replied the rabbi, "although I haven't heard that name since my early years in Talmudic studies. He was a famous rabbi, according to our oral tradition, in the time of King Alexander Jannai, who reigned from 103 before this Common Era to 76 BCE. Maybe I should have said the rabbi had a student who became famous or infamous, depending on who tells the story."

"You mean the rabbi is a historical figure?" asked Joshua with a puzzled look on his face. "I thought he was alive and that I needed to find him."

"The Past is always alive within us," said the rabbi. "Look at you tourists, seeking to recreate the past by visiting all these sacred places."

"So why do you think I was told in my dream to seek the rabbi?" asked Joshua. He noticed that his tour group had veered to the right onto St. Helen Street.

"Like I said, the rabbi had a student, whose name was Yeshua ben Pandera," said the old rabbi, who looked intently into Joshua's eyes. "And this Yeshua was what we call a mamzer, who was an outcast child born of an adulterous relationship."

Joshua suddenly stopped walking. He grabbed his head with both of his hands and stooped low to the ground. He felt like a vice had gripped his head, and his skull was about to explode.

"What's wrong?" asked the rabbi, stooping down and laying his hand on Joshua's shoulder.

"My head feels like it's going to split open," said Joshua, struggling to voice his concern.

The rabbi placed his right hand on the crown of Joshua's head and uttered an incomprehensible phrase softly into Joshua's ear. Joshua steadily sensed the immense pressure in his skull slowly dispersing back into the hidden caverns from which it had risen. His head still felt a dizziness which seemed to revolve like a spiraling vortex inside his cranium. The rabbi put his arm around Joshua's waist as he stood up and straightened himself. They slowly walked together toward the courtyard that led to the entrance of the Holy Sepulchre Church.

"Something about that name Yeshua set my mind off like a volcano about to erupt," said Joshua, when he realized what had caused the unexpected incident.

"That name has been the cause of wars, persecutions, inquisitions, crusades, schisms, and lots of hatred and bigotry," said the rabbi with a stern voice. "That was why I initially hesitated to say his name, but you wanted to know the meaning of your dream."

The tour group stopped at the entrance to the church building that appeared to be made up of a conglomeration of mismatched elements. Anastasia was waiting for the

group of tourists to form a semi-circle around her so she could begin her talk to an attentive audience. Joshua stood with the old rabbi behind the other tourists and listened to the young woman's memorized speech:

"Today's Church of the Holy Sepulchre stands at the most likely site where the ancient Golgotha or Place of the Skull was located. There are two other contenders for the location of the crucifixion: one is the Garden Tomb near the northern Damascus Gate, where you will find a hill that resembles a skull; the other more likely site is the 2,900 foot Mount Olives, which has a long history of being a sacred site, and it has a rock cave and a burial place. However, most historians, archaeologists, and theologians favor the hill that stands inside the structure of this church. Some say the hill has the shape of a person's skull; some say that the name Golgotha is derived from the tradition that Adam's skull was buried here; and others say that this was the sacrificial place where Abraham almost sacrificed his own son Isaac."

The old rabbi nudged Joshua with his elbow and said, "That is true. Our Talmudic tradition says that Abraham brought his son Isaac to this place, which was called Mount Moriah, to be offered as a sacrifice."

"Historically," continued Anastasia, "there used to be a Roman temple dedicated to the goddess Aphrodite or Venus on this site, and it was supposedly build by the Emperor Hadrian to cover the sacred place of the Christian savior's crucifixion and burial. When the Roman Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in 325 AD, there was an established effort to locate and create sacred places as focal points of the new religion. Constantine's mother, who later was canonized as St. Helena, came to Jerusalem to find the sacred places. According to a Christian legend, a certain man named Judas led Helena to the site where the true cross was found. Needless to say, Helena had the pagan temple destroyed, and she ordered a basilica to be built on the holy site. According to historical records, the original Church of the Holy Sepulchre was practically completed when the anonymous Pilgrim of Bordeaux visited Palestine in 333 AD. During its long history, the church underwent demolition, ruin, and eventual reconstruction. Starting in the year 1099, when the Crusaders occupied Jerusalem, the church was basically rebuilt from the ground up. And most of it is still standing here today for you to see."

Anastasia concluded her speech and motioned with a wave of her right hand for the group to follow her into the sanctuary's dark and gloomy interior, at the heart of which was the traditional rock of the crucifixion, an isolated hill of antiquity about six meters high.

Joshua turned to the rabbi and asked, "Are you going inside with me?"

"I'd like to see the tomb of my ancestors one more time," answered the rabbi, "so I will go with you."

"Where is the tomb of your ancestors?" asked Joshua.

"I will show you," said the rabbi.

Joshua and the rabbi followed the group as Anastasia led them to the right up eighteen steep steps, made of pink Santa Croce (Cross) marble, to the top where an archway greeted the pilgrims. The keystone of the archway over the entrance to the chapels at the summit of Golgotha was carved with a Jerusalem Cross.

"Do you know what that sign signifies?" asked the rabbi, stopping and pointing to the inscription on the keystone.

"That looks like an equal-armed cross, like the Greeks use," said Joshua, looking up at the keystone in the center of the archway. "And I see a small Greek cross centered in each quadrant."

"You've described it fairly accurately," said the rabbi, "except you forgot to mention the crossbar, a T-shaped form that tops the end of each arm of the central cross. The Tau-shape actually is a very old form of the cross, and the T was the mark that was placed on a person's forehead as a sign of Life. If you notice its shape, it has the male vertical line and the female horizontal line, which in our way of looking at life signifies the union of opposites and the union of heaven and earth. Furthermore, some have interpreted a triple T to signify the Temple of Hierosolyma by combining the T and H; however, I would point out that the quadruple T brings into sight the old or earthly and the new or heavenly Yerushalayim."

"I've always considered the cross to be an ancient symbol of the four cardinal directions," said Joshua.

"On the physical plane, yes," said the rabbi. "Have you ever heard of Ezekiel's wheel?"

"Isn't that where you have the ancient symbols of man, eagle, lion, and bull of the fixed cross?" asked Joshua.

"Rightly so," said the rabbi, obviously impressed by Joshua's knowledge. "And the four small Greek crosses centered in each quadrant of the Jerusalem Cross on Ezekiel's wheel or zodiac circle should actually be a representation of those ancient signs, but they were replaced by crosses so that the mysteries of the universe would remain out of the hands of the common people."

Joshua felt that there was so much more the old rabbi could have told him about the keystone symbol, but he was anxious to rejoin his group. Joshua hurried past the 10th and 11th Stations of the Cross, where the Christian Messiah was stripped of his garments and then nailed to the wooden crosspiece. They caught up with the group at the 12th station, at the place of crucifixion, which revealed the rocky summit of Golgotha enclosed by bullet-proof glass to prevent tourists and souvenir-hunters from chipping away at the rock. Joshua and the rabbi watched as the pilgrims got down on hands and knees to reach through a small opening to touch the sacred rock below.

Joshua's eyes were diverted to the life-size icon behind the altar depicting a crucified Christ with a 12-rayed aureole surrounding his head, with the mother Mary standing to the left and the beloved disciple John standing to the right. Joshua was not aware of the 12-rayed sunburst that he was standing on.

The rabbi felt uncomfortable looking at the suffering portrayed on the cross, and he patted Joshua on the shoulder. "Let me show you the place of my ancestors," he said, hoping to distract Joshua from the torturous scene. The rabbi seemed to feel his own inner agony as he recalled the oft-repeated story of Abraham and the helpless son who was tied up and ready to be offered up as a burnt offering on the rocky summit.

"I really wanted to see the final station, the actual tomb," said Joshua.

"You will," said the rabbi, "but let me first take you back down to the main floor, to the base of this place of the skull. It's located directly below the traditional Golgotha. Legend has it that there once was a stone quarry here and that it developed a crack from top to bottom during an earthquake, which the Christian tradition attributes to the time of

the Crucifixion."

Joshua reluctantly followed the rabbi to the Chapel of Adam.

"This is the Cave of Treasures," said the rabbi after they entered the small Chapel of Adam, "the place where the first man, Adam, was laid to rest when he died at the age of 930 years. Our tradition holds that Adam's body was deposited in the center of the earth. There's also a legend that the cave was a repository for sacred treasures."

The rabbi's voice droned on as Joshua sat on the ground and listened. He noticed a fissure in the rock. There was a hypnotic quality to the rabbi's words, as if they were recalling ancient mysteries. Joshua's mind began to swirl, and he felt as if he were spiraling downward into the womb of Mother Earth.

Joshua felt a sudden jolt in his body, the kind he usually felt when falling asleep and when his astral body was leaving his physical body. He sensed a shift in consciousness, from the physical body to an out-of-body consciousness. He saw the curtain of darkness lifted from the surface of his soul's eye, and he entered a stillness where everything seemed to stop moving, including his heartbeat and his breathing.

A picture unfolded in his soul's eye of a certain time and place: A young Roman soldier, a libertine, approaches a chaste Jewish maiden's bedroom in the middle of the night. The maiden, thinking that he's her betrothed husband, pushes him away, telling him it's not the right time. The lust-crazed warrior can't keep his hands off of the soft electrifying touch of the virgin's skin, and he deflowers her against her will. The young woman is left in tears as she bewails her loss, and the young rake slips off into the dark night. The same night, the betrothed husband appears at the maiden's house and wants to enter:

"Yohanan, you have already done your will with me. Why do you come to me a second time?"

"Miriam, what are you talking about? This is my first time here this night."

"But you were here less than an hour ago, and I tried to push you away," Miriam speaks through her tears.

"Oh, what evil has befallen us? Who could have done such a lascivious deed?" Yohanan mourns with a loud voice.

"It must have been that wanton soldier, Joseph Pandera, who has been making lewd remarks to me lately," Miriam acknowledges.

"Oh, what shame, what disgrace! What will I do now?" Yohanan wails.

"I'm still your betrothed wife, if you still want me," Miriam opens up her heart to her betrothed husband.

Three months pass, and Miriam tells Yohanan that she is with child.

"I will not be able to face the accusations and the knowledge that this is not my child," Yohanan confesses.

Yohanan leaves and never comes back. Some people say he probably went to Babylon.

A baby boy is born and Miriam calls him Yeshua. The child is treated as an outcast by the local villagers. The children are told by their parents to avoid him. The boy has a troublesome childhood. He is disrespectful to his teachers. Finally, he is introduced to a teacher who takes him under his wings. The teacher's name is Rabbi Jehoshua ben Perachiah.

Joshua realized the significance of the panoramic picture that was swiftly unfolding before his soul's eye. He was being given a glimpse into the Hall of Records, which existed in the Universal Mind that he had tapped into. He was seeing another facet of his soul's existence, another past-life, as his benevolent angel Binah had taught him. At the thought of her name, Joshua felt a warm glow envelop his entire body, mind, and soul. 'Now you will see why I told you to seek Jehoshua ben Perachiah in your next life time,' he heard her sweet voice sound in his inner temple, as the seer and the seen became one.

"Yeshua ben Pandera," called the Rabbi Jehoshua ben Perachiah. "The time has come for us to go to Egypt."

"Is it because of the persecution of the Pharisees by the Sadduccee-lover Alexander Jannai?" asked the astute Yeshua, who was busy reading religious scrolls.

"That's part of the reason," said the revered head of the Sanhedrin, Rabbi Jehoshua. "The slaughter of innocent rabbis is now widespread, and many of my fellow-rabbis are fleeing this religious war. However, there is another reason."

"What might that be?" asked Yeshua, putting down the scroll and waiting patiently for his teacher's explanation.

"I have taught you all that I know of Jewish religious law and of the sacred teachings," said the dignified looking rabbi, who had a large intertwined white beard. "The rest you will have to learn in the temples and pyramids of Egypt."

Yeshua followed his revered teacher down into the Land of Mystery, the land where Moses, Plato, and Pythagoras were taught the wisdom of the Egyptians.

Yeshua cautiously approached the antediluvian beast. The half-human, half-animal, Sphinx seemed to rise from the sands of time. Its leonine paws pointed to an age when Leo ruled the heavens. An age, according to Plato, where the Atlanteans spread their civilization around the globe before impending doom sent their world to the depths of the ocean.

Yeshua looked up at the man-beast, which rose about 66 feet high in the desert sky. The Great Sphinx of Giza stood as a silent sentinel as Yeshua walked down to the grand stone stele-door that guarded the entrance to the subterranean halls and temples. Plato had gained entrance through the door when he was 49 years old; Yeshua was hoping to gain admittance to the secret chambers of the Egyptian mysteries at the age of 30.

The stele-door opened slightly, and a bull-like voice bellowed from within: "Who seeks to enter these sacred halls of divine wisdom?"

"It is I, Yeshua ben Pandera, who seek to enter," answered Yeshua in a steady voice. He had been instructed by his teacher, the Rabbi Yehoshua, to be strong and courageous, and to face all the tests and trials of initiation without any sign of fear.

The voice continued. "To enter, you must provide the answer to the riddle of the Sphinx: What animal is it that goes on four feet in the morning, on two feet at noon, and on three feet in the evening?"

Yeshua thought for a while, and then carefully worded his reply: "The answer is Man, who crawls on his hands and knees in childhood, walks upright on two legs in adulthood, and uses a staff as a third leg in old age."

The door swung open, and Yeshua entered. A young bare-chested and bare-headed priest ushered the new candidate through the secret gate into the underworld of the ancient mysteries. The young priest carried an ankh, the symbol of eternal life, in his hand. They silently descended thirteen steps to an entrance hall, which was illumined by torches mounted on the walls. Here Yeshua saw incomprehensible pictures of Egyptian deities and hieroglyphs that told a story of cosmic proportions.

After weeks of preparation, the candidate was led through a narrow tunnel to the Great Pyramid. Yeshua felt his first pangs of apprehension as he descended a long dark passageway into what seemed to be the bowels of the earth.

The ceremony of the first initiation was timed to occur during the winter solstice. The darkness of the season coincided with the darkness that Yeshua felt in the cavern-like subterranean chamber, where he was left alone for three days and three nights. On the first night, he encountered the Lord of the Underworld, Osiris, who revealed to Yeshua the mystery of life and death, the cycle of generation into the world of matter, and the laws of karma and reincarnation. Yeshua saw himself as crucified on a cross in space, descending through seven vibrational levels to earth. On the second night, he encountered his earthly mother, whose image reminded him of the act of generation that produced the physical body for his incarnation. Yeshua saw himself as a willing participant in the drama that provided him a suitable body to inhabit. On the third night, he encountered the evolution of man in the womb, where he witnessed the embryonic development from a fish in the water, to an amphibian shape, to half-animal and half-human, and finally to a physical being that resembled a miniature human. Yeshua saw himself as continuing to evolve; he had a glimpse of himself as being on the verge of becoming a man-god.

"Oh, my god," cried out Yeshua when he saw the fleeting vision of himself as a semi-divine creature. It was as if a star had illuminated the sky of his consciousness and revealed to his conscious mind the present phase of his evolution. All his inner fears and doubts vanished in the light of that realization.

A hidden door opened, and the young priest appeared with a torch in his hand. "I heard you cry out," he said.

"I had a stunning vision of myself as a man-god," said Yeshua.

"You have successfully passed the first initiation," said the young priest with a smile on his face. "Come with me. We have to prepare you with purification rituals for your next initiation."

Three months later, at the vernal equinox, the candidate-initiate Yeshua was brought to a pool of water, where he was bathed and cleansed from inner and outer impurities before proceeding to the next ceremonial chamber.

Yeshua ascended a passageway with the young priest in front of him and a young priestess behind him, both of them lighting the way for him into the heart of the grand inner temple. They reached a level passageway, which they followed for a short distance, and then they stopped at the vestibule in front of the Queen's Chamber.

"This is the Temple of Isis," said the priestess, who had a veil covering her face. "I will introduce you to her mysteries." The young priest left Yeshua alone with the young priestess, whose face was turned away from him.

She read the inscription above the archway: "I, Isis, am all that has been, that is, and that shall be; no mortal has ever unveiled me."

The young priestess led Yeshua into the Queen's Chamber, where Yeshua saw an altar and a throne. The altar was a rectangular-shaped table with three horizontal panels that had pictures of Egyptian deities representing cosmic and natural principles.

"This is the Mensa Isiaca or the Table of Isis," said the priestess. "The inscriptions on this table depict the three-fold nature of the world: the archetypal, the intellectual, and the physical. If you successfully pass the initiation in this chamber, Isis herself will appear to you on her throne and teach you the mysteries of the World Mother."

The young priestess placed her torch in a heart-shaped urn beside the throne of Isis and turned around to face Yeshua. It was at that moment, with the flickering light from the torch dancing across the figure of the priestess, that Yeshua saw the body of the thinly-clad female figure. He felt a burning sensation in his loins as she approached him. His heart was racing, and the blood in his veins surged through his entire body.

"I am a priestess of the Virgin Isis," said the young priestess as she came within an arm's distance of Yeshua. "And as her priestess, I carry within me her generative and creative powers."

Yeshua was burning up with desire. The tempting wiles of the beautiful female figure made it hard for him to think or reason. His emotions had full sway over him.

Yeshua was just about to reach out and touch the body of the young priestess when he happened to look through the veil to see eyes that appeared familiar.

"Let me see your face," said Yeshua, looking intently at the eyes behind the veil.

The priestess slowly lifted the veil.

"Binah!" exclaimed a shocked Yeshua. "Why?"

"You are being tested," explained Binah. "I am every woman, and I play every role that exists through the female principle in the world. I am the Virgin, the Temptress, the Prostitute, the Adulteress, the Mother, the One through whom life comes into the world."

Yeshua stood in awe as Binah transfigured herself into the multi-faced Isis. He saw each feminine aspect as she named them.

"Do not judge by appearance," said Binah. "I am also the feminine principle that exists in you, which is why you were attracted to the female figure I presented to you in an illusionary form. Someday, when you reach the androgynous stage of evolution, you will understand what I mean. In the meantime, you must learn the secrets of your heart and how to control your emotional body."

Binah vanished into thin air, and Yeshua was left standing alone. For the next seven days he wrestled with every conceivable emotion that arose in his heart: love, hate, anger, fear, lust, envy, jealousy, and a host of other emotions. He learned that all the negative emotions stemmed from his lower animal nature, and all the positive emotions, like joy, peace, and contentment, arose from man's higher nature.

At the end of the seventh day, the young priest arrived to take Yeshua back to the entrance hall, where Yeshua remained in a state of abeyance. He didn't know if he had completed his previous initiation successfully or not. He wasn't sure if he would be permitted to continue onto the third and fourth initiations. He was told by the young priest that if he was granted permission by the hierophant of the temple, then he would ascend through the seven stages of the Grand Gallery during the summer solstice; and

hopefully, he would meet Ra, the sun-god, in the King's Chamber in a grand resurrection ceremony during the autumnal equinox.

Yeshua never met the hierophant of the temple nor Ra, the sun-god, during his visit to the Grand Pyramid in Egypt.

"The hierophant says that you still need to overcome the temptations of the flesh that you displayed in the Temple of Isis," said the young priest, who accompanied Yeshua. "He says maybe you'll return in your next life time to complete your initiations."

"How will I know in my next life time that I need to come back here?" asked Yeshua.

"Your higher mind will awaken to your soul's destiny when you hear the sacred name that Isis, according to legend, coaxed out of Ra," answered the young priest.

"And what is that sacred name?" asked Yeshua.

"Nuk Pu Nuk," said the young priest, "which means, I am becoming that which I am to be."

"Thank you," said Yeshua. "By the way, what is your name?"

"I am called El-Aton," said the young priest, "which means, the one who bows down to the One God."

Yeshua returned to Alexandria in Egypt, where his teacher, the Rabbi Yehoshua, was waiting for him.

"You're back earlier than I thought you'd be," said the rabbi. "What happened?"

"I passed the first initiation, but I couldn't complete the second initiation in the Temple of Isis," said Yeshua. "I looked at a young priestess with lust." Yeshua hung his head down in shame.

"What?" said the surprised rabbi. "After all that I taught you! And after all the effort I put into your training to become a rabbi! Get away from me, you ungrateful so-and-so!" The rabbi pushed Yeshua away from him with both of his hands.

"But she was only an illusion!" exclaimed Yeshua. "It was a fleeting temptation."

"That's what they all say," said the rabbi. "You will have to find yourself another teacher. Or get yourself a study companion. I am no longer your teacher."

Yeshua stayed in Alexandria for another two years, learning whatever he could from the magicians in the city. On the third year of his stay in Egypt, the Rabbi Yehoshua told him that the wicked king had died and the wife Salome Alexandra was on the throne. A friend had sent him a letter saying that the queen was a friend of the Pharisees, and it was safe for them to return to Jerusalem.

On his first day back, Yeshua was found on the temple steps bragging about his exploits in the Great Pyramid and about the Egyptian mysteries that he had learned there. "I saw myself as a man-god!" he professed.

Word soon spread that the young Egyptian heretic was deceiving the people. He was even called an apostate for renouncing his religious faith.

"Isn't this the mamser (the outcast), the son of Joseph Pandera?" asked the religious leaders.

When Yeshua used the sacred name to heal a lame man, the people claimed that he was practicing sorcery.

The anger toward Yeshua soon escalated to a fever pitch, and one day, when Yeshua repeated that he was a man-god, the people picked up stones and hurled them at the apostate.

"Do not your scriptures teach that you are gods?" Yeshua spoke out in self-defense.

"We have one God, and it's not you!" yelled back the self-righteous people.

"I only want to teach you what was revealed to me," cried out Yeshua, whose skull was bleeding from wounds inflicted by the stone-throwers.

"Our Law says not to allow a blasphemer to live!" yelled back an old rabbi as he hurled a stone at Yeshua. "You will die like Balaam died, for he too was a corrupter of the people."

"You will one day see that the evolution of man is destined to continue through many life times until he becomes a god," cried out Yeshua with his last breath.

"Blasphemy! False prophet!" yelled the people as an avalanche of stones ended the life of the young thirty-three years old man.

Someone said the last words they heard from the bleeding mouth of the outcast was, "Nuk Pu Nuk."

The Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachiah afterwards reprimanded the accusers by telling them, "When you judge people, give them the benefit of the doubt."

The last image that Joshua saw through the lens of his soul's eye was Yeshua hanging on a carob-tree, which was in bloom with male, female, and hermaphroditic flowers.

"Wake up!" exclaimed the tour guide, Anastasia, as she shook Joshua's rigid body with both of her hands.

Joshua slowly opened his physical eyes. He felt like he had come back from the dead. He looked up at Anastasia's face, and he thought he saw Binah's angelic face.

"Binah," he said softly.

"I'm Anastasia," the tour guide corrected him.

Joshua looked around for the old rabbi. "Where's the old rabbi?" he asked.

"He left just before our group came into the Chapel of Adam," said Anastasia. "He told me to tell you that his name is Isaac."

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Paul/Saul moved back one step and looked into his sister Phoebe's dark brown eyes. Her long dark black hair was tied back into a pony-tail, to keep it from falling into her face as she worked in the vegetable garden. Her face radiated with excitement.

"What are you doing here?" Phoebe asked, echoing Paul's question.

"No, no. I asked first," said Paul, laughing with joy at seeing his twin sister again.

"Mine is a very long story," said Phoebe, smiling back at her brother.

"So is mine," teased Paul in return.

"All right, you win, like you always do," teased back Phoebe. "Let's go under the shade of the palm tree, and I'll tell you all about it."

Phoebe led her brother away from the curiosity-seekers who had assembled to witness the reunion of brother and sister. Elijahu, the elder Essene, looked approvingly at the friendship that the brother and sister displayed to the onlookers. Elijahu, after a few minutes of contemplation, motioned for the members of the desert community to get back to their specified work.

The women went to work on processing dates from the palm trees. The men went to work on collecting and storing the local resources of salt from the nearby Dead Sea, which the Hebrews called Yam HaMelakh (Salt Sea). Both men and women worked on the cultivation of grapes in the small vineyard. And then, of course, there was plenty of work to do in the garden, for the small village of Ein Feshka was a community of vegetarian Essenes.

Phoebe and Paul reached the palm trees, which grew near the springs that flowed through the reeds and tumbled down into small pools. Phoebe sat down at the base of the tree, and Paul sat beside her. He was anxious to hear her story. He was also anxious to ask about the family members, but that would have to wait until he heard how she had ended up with the Essenes.

"Let's see, where should I begin?" said Phoebe, musefully.

"Start at the beginning, from the last time I saw you in Jerusalem, when our family was living there, right about the time the Herodian Temple was rebuilt and Pontius Pilate was just starting his term of office as procurator."

"That's when father and mother decided to leave Jerusalem because of the turmoil and predictions of impending doom," said Phoebe.

"Right," said Paul, "and they thought it would be safer for them to be with the Jewish community in Cyrene."

"And they had to travel with Rufus and Alexander, poor little boys, how they cried," said Phoebe.

"And Lucius, Jason, and Herodian stayed with you in Jerusalem," added Paul.

"Yes, although we pretty much went our separate ways after a while," said Phoebe. "That's when I met a young handsome man who invited me to visit the Essene Quarter. Remember the small section in the southwestern part of Jerusalem, where we wandered into when we were exploring the city when we first moved there?"

"Yes, I do," said Paul. "I felt like I had wandered into a monastery with only men wandering about, as if they were in a trance or something."

"Well, I found out they at times allowed women to visit, but not to stay," said Phoebe. "So this young Essene, who said his name was Alexander, brought me to visit some elders. I guess I kind of liked Alexander because of his name. It had the sound of a Greek god. Remember how we studied Greek history in school and learned about Alexander the Great conquering the world, and then taking Palestine in 333 B.C.?

"Do I remember?" asked Paul. "Of course I do. I even remember daydreaming about conquering the world some day, just like he did."

"When I looked at Alexander, I imagined him as a conqueror of my heart," said Phoebe. "And he seemed to like me, also. However, I soon found out why he had chosen me. He was the son of the high priest, and he had left the Pharisees to join the Essenes. The simplicity of their teachings about piety and righteousness, and love of mankind, including their contempt of money, fame, and pleasures, somehow made him feel that he wanted to follow their Way. He also liked the fact that they had no rich or poor amongst them, for they brought all their possessions into a common treasury, from which each took only what they really needed. At first, he thought it would be hard to adapt to their strict code of vegetarianism, but he soon learned that he could adjust to their common meals, where everyone ate the same healthy food, basically."

"So did he propose to marry you?" asked Paul impatiently.

"Wait, I'm getting to that part," said Phoebe, gently placing her hand on his knee for a moment. "What he was shy about telling me was that the Essenes taught strict continence, and marriage was only for the purpose of producing children. Most of the men that belonged to their order were of the belief that sexual abstinence was a prerequisite for resurrection from the dead. I had never heard that teaching in all my life, not even from any of the Pharisees who taught in the temple."

"That's a very strange belief," said Paul, as he furrowed his brow and tried to ascertain the rationale for such thinking.

"What I learned later from overhearing a conversation Alexander had with one of the Essene elders was that they meant the resurrection of the dead in this lifetime, not in some future state," continued Phoebe. "When I pressed Alexander about what that meant and how it was accomplished, he said he wasn't supposed to reveal secrets of the Essene teachings. But when he saw that I wouldn't stop pestering him about the secret teaching, he broke down and told me. However, he made me promise that I wouldn't say anything about what he revealed to anybody."

"So that means you can't tell me," said Paul.

"Don't be silly," said Phoebe. "When was I ever able to keep a secret from you?"

"Never," replied Paul confidently.

"However," continued Phoebe, "you must promise me that you won't tell anyone about what I'm about to tell you."

"You know I can't keep a secret, either," said Paul. "But I promise to try."

"No, that's not good enough," said Phoebe, becoming impatient with her brother. "You've got to really, and truthfully, promise."

"All right," conceded Paul. "I promise."

"The Essenes teach that there is a sacred seed in the human body," began Phoebe. "And this special seed, which they call a lunar seed because it is produced once a month, is produced in the brain, in the pituitary gland. If this seed is not lost through sexual misuse, then the lunar seed descends to the pelvis and ascends back to the brain. Alexander told me that the initiates are taught how to lift their seed to the head and reach illumination. But it takes a lot of self-discipline and dedication. It takes thirteen saved lunar seeds, plus something he called a solar seed because it makes a cycle of the sun in the body; the solar seed descends from the pineal gland down the spinal cord and ascends back again in one solar year. When the lunar and the solar seeds join in the brain, then the person resurrects from the body and is elevated into the spirit world. Isn't that something?"

"That sure is incredible," said Paul. "I would have never guessed that in a thousand years."

"They teach that the regeneration of the physical body into a spiritual body begins when the marriage of the lunar and solar seeds is consummated," added Phoebe. "And it is a life-long endeavor."

"So that's why they don't get married," said Paul as the realization struck his mind. "So why would this Alexander fellow tell you all this if he planned to marry you?"

"That's the tricky part," said Phoebe. "When he found out I was a virgin – I told him when he asked – he told me that the Essenes prepare themselves for what they call immaculate parenthood, which means that both husband and wife save their seed until the time is ripe to bring an advanced soul into the world of humans. They call such a soul a chosen one, because they chose to conserve the sacred seed in order to bring someone special to earth to help with the work of the Essenian order."

"That just simply overwhelms my mind when I even try to think of it," admitted Paul.

"So Alexander wanted me to join with him in this immaculate parenthood," said Phoebe, whose voice started to quiver when she spoke. "I burned inside for him, and a fire raged in my body. But I was afraid to commit to such a life. That's when he brought me to the Essene Quarter to visit with some elders, who explained the role that I would play in bringing a pure soul into the world. After several months of consultation, and after I had agreed to give up my chaste body for this worthy cause, they took me outside the Gate of the Essenes and led me up thirty-six steps on the side of Mount Zion to a miqveh, the ritual bath. It was situated on a rock shelf and was just outside the city wall. I descended some steps into the pool of water in my white linen robe, and I immersed myself in the cold water, cleansing myself and dedicating my life to purity. Then I ascended some steps on the other side of the pool and was given a blanket to keep from shivering."

"Did you feel like a new person after the ritual bath?" asked Paul naively.

"A little," confessed Phoebe. "Although there was no striking transformation in my body or illumination in my mind, I felt very self-confident in the task and the journey I was about to embark on. After three years of preparation, and of keeping myself chaste, and my inner temple clean from impure thoughts and deeds, I was ready for the final act."

"With Alexander?" asked Paul.

"Yes," answered Phoebe. "He had also prepared himself for this sacred union. We were given a special ceremony and a special place to consummate the marriage. And then I was told I would have to join the community of Essenes at Ein Feshka, where I would await the birth of the chosen one. And here I am."

"You mean you're with child?" asked Paul in disbelief.

"Yes, I am," said Phoebe, standing to her feet and holding her hands to her belly to show his brother the roundness that was forming within her womb. "In three months. At the time of the autumnal equinox." Phoebe was not aware of it, but a Son was being formed inside her.

"That's unbelievable!" exclaimed Paul excitedly. "You are an amazing woman. And where is your husband, Alexander?"

"He's working with the other male members collecting salt from the Salt Sea," answered Phoebe. "We are permitted to live together. Chastely."

Paul's head was swimming with the new information that had inundated his mind. He couldn't fathom how a person could remain chaste his entire life. It didn't seem natural to him. The concept of sexual abstinence as a prerequisite for resurrection from the physical body into a regenerated body was a foreign idea to him. He wasn't sure if he ever could control and conquer the urges within his body that arose from time to time. He wasn't even sure if he was willing to try to test the theory of physical regeneration.

"Come on," said Phoebe. "It's time for me to get back to work." She took his hand and started to lead him in the direction of the encampment.

"Wait," said Paul. "I wanted to ask you about the family and the latest news about everybody."

"I'll tell you all about them some other time," said Phoebe. She let go of his hand and walked on.

Paul took one last glance at the grove of date palms. As he did so, something caught his eye. A woman was standing beside one of the date palms, taking a break from picking dates off of the ground. He stopped and turned around.

"Wait!" he said to Phoebe, who was already several paces ahead of him. "Who is that woman?"

Phoebe turned around and looked in the direction where Paul was pointing with his outstretched arm.

"Oh, that's Alexander's sister, Asherah," said Phoebe.

"The daughter of the high priest?" asked Paul in an astonished voice.

"Yes," answered Phoebe. "She has quite a story to tell."

"What do you mean?" asked Paul. "What happened to her?" Paul kept looking in the direction of the young woman in the grove of date palms.

"She was betrothed to this Pharisee who was madly in love with her," began Phoebe. "One day she happened to hear outside of her window two Essenes discussing continence and how conserving the sacred seed brings about the resurrection or regeneration of the physical body. She was so enthralled with the prospect of remaining chaste in order to pursue the goal of transforming her body into a spiritual body that she told her betrothed that she was not going to get married to him. He was very angry. He wanted the Sanhedrin council to bring judgment upon her. When the Essenes through Alexander heard about the plight of his sister, they rescued her from the wicked intents of the council and brought her here to Ein Feshka. She's been here only a short time, and her heart is still torn with memories of the unchaste advances of some of the men she encountered in her life."

"Do you think I can talk with her?" Paul asked anxiously. His eyes were still riveted to the grove and the young woman who presented an irresistible picture of enchantment to him.

"Sure, you go ahead," said Phoebe. "I'll head back to my work. And remember, you still have to tell me what you're doing here."

Phoebe turned and walked quickly back to her garden work. Paul slowly approached the young woman in the grove.

God in Three Persons: A Spiritual Odyssey

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σπειρημα (speirema), The Serpent-Coil
σ 200
π 80
ε 5
ι 10
ρ 100
η 8
μ 40
α 1
_____
444

"I will open my mouth in a parable:

I will utter dark sayings of old."

- - Psalms 78:2

Apollos boarded the intercontinental Lufthansa airplane at the San Francisco International Airport on the day of the summer solstice. The airplane took off into the air gracefully like a swan, with its outstretched wings soaring high into the heavens. Apollos looked out of his small window at the receding Bay Area, whose seven bridges spanned the mixed oceanic and fresh waters between the densely populated shores. He tried to imagine the vast valley that existed there before the rising waters at the end of the previous ice age advanced into the region to create a panorama of climactic change within the landscape.

When the airplane reached its highest altitude of 33,000 feet, Apollos leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. He reflected on the events of the previous three weeks, from his camping trip in the scenic Yosemite, to his frantic search for his fiancée Sophia, and culminating in a portentous visit with the adept Salvatore D'Aura. His life had taken a drastic turn for the worse, as if fate had stepped in and altered the natural river-like course of his future. All his plans had changed, and now even his career at the university was placed in jeopardy; he had given the philosophy department notice that he had to leave the country on a mission to rescue his kidnapped fiancée. He did not know when he would be back from Athens and wherever else he needed to go to bring Sophia back home.

The one fortunate event that put a smile back on Apollos' face was the discovery of his notes that he had used to write his manuscript on Apollonius of Tyana. He reached with his right hand inside a pocket in his light Windbreaker jacket and reassured himself that he had brought his compact notepad. He pulled it out and thumbed through the pages. He had left photocopies of all the pages locked up safely in his newly-acquired safe deposit box at the bank. As it was, he was glad the thieves didn't look in the bottom right-hand drawer of miscellaneous items, where he kept his notepad.

Now Apollos had to attempt an accurate reconstruction of the manuscript that was stolen. He opened a spiral notebook, which he had brought with him for the task he had

set for himself while flying to his destination, and he began to write what he had written before:

The Life of Apollonius of Tyana, which was published in the year 217 A.D. by a Greek sophist (professor) named Flavius Philostratus, relates the story of an ascetic Greek philosopher, who lived during the first century of the common Christian era. The biography of this renowned teacher and world-traveler was written to prove to the world that Apollonius was not a sorcerer or wizard, but a divinely-inspired sage and reformer.

However, the wisdom-seeking philosopher, who conformed himself to the precepts of the sage Pythagoras by following a vegetarian diet and a chaste life, was later compared by a writer named Hierocles with the Christian savior. That's when the ecclesiastical bishop Eusebius wrote an apologetical treatise in which he refuted the allegation that the Christians modeled their savior on the life of Apollonius, the miracle-worker. Ever since then, the undercurrent of rivalry between the Christian savior and the Pythagorean philosopher has caused reasoning minds to look at both stories more closely, and unreasoning minds to dismiss one or the other as a wizard or magician, or worse yet, as a fake or fabrication.

This dissertation will explore the possibilities that the stories of the Christian savior, known as Jesus the Christ, and the philosopher Apollonius of Tyana are intertwined, and that a third character provides clues and answers on how the entire biblical story of the first century A.D. (Anno Domini, "in the year of the Lord") was constructed and composed as a mystery drama. That third character is the dualistic Saul/Paul of Tarsus, who is credited with being the apostle of Christianity, and yet his life and travels parallel the life and travels of Apollonius almost step by step.

The story of the life of Apollonius begins with his birth in the Greek city of Tyana, Cappadocia near the city of Nigde, which is in the present-day Central Anatolia Region of Turkey. According to legend, an apparition of the ancient sea-god Proteus appeared to his mother just prior to his birth and announced that the child would be an incarnation of the ever-changing, prophetic sea divinity. And at the hour of the auspicious delivery, a flock of swans danced and sang in the meadow around the sleeping mother, and a thunderbolt from Zeus was said to have descended and ascended without falling to earth. The precise date of birth depends on which source one relies on: those who link the birth of Apollonius with Jesus give the date as 4 B.C. (Dr. Raymond Bernard

gives this date); those who link the birth of Apollonius with Saul/Paul of Tarsus give the date as 2 A.D. (or in the year of Rome 756, which is 756 years "ab urbe condita" , i.e. since the founding of Rome.); one source pinpoints the date as February 16, 2 A.D. (Antiquity Unveiled, by J.M. Roberts).

As a young student, Apollonius was brought to Tarsus at the age of 14 to study rhetoric and general literature and philosophy. Afterwards, he transferred to the city of Aegae to study medicine and the art of healing at the Temple of Asclepius. He also learned the philosophy of Plato and Epicurus, but he was inclined to follow the Pythagorean system. So at the age of 16 he adopted the life-style of Pythagoras by following a vegetarian diet in order to purge his interior from illness, and to sharpen his mind; and he renounced the use of wine because he sought to maintain mental balance and to purify the ether in his soul. At this time in his life he also chose to wear only linen clothes, refusing all animal products, and to let his hair and beard grow long. [Note: Tarsus in Cilicia is the alleged birthplace and home of Saul/Paul of Tarsus. Coincidentally, Saul left Tarsus at the age of 14 to pursue Talmudic studies in Jerusalem with Rabbi Gamaliel. This would mean that Saul left Tarsus shortly after, or simultaneously as, Apollonius arrived there.]

The fame of Apollonius grew as his work at the Temple of Asclepius produced cures of the sick. He cured a drunk who suffered from dropsy by teaching him how to dry up his malady; even the god of healing, Asclepius, referred patients to consult the wise Apollonius. He wisely dispensed justice to petitioning patients by refusing the wealthy sacrifices of the wicked and accepting those who came with a clear conscience; to demonstrate the wisdom of the gods, he taught the following prayer: "O ye gods, grant unto me that which I deserve." (Book1, Chapter 11).

At the age of 20, when his father died, he personally buried him beside his mother's grave, and then he divided the property with his older brother. Apollonius bestowed his share of the property on relatives who were in need and left himself only a small amount, which he later used to pay for his travel expenses. This was a turning point in his life, for Apollonius decided to remain unmarried for the rest of his life, even though he was distinguished for his beauty and intelligence. At six feet tall and weighing approximately 180 pounds, his body displayed a firm and

strong masculinity. [Note: The marital status of Saul/Paul is recorded as being unmarried. 1Corinthians 7:8.]

At the age of 21 Apollonius committed himself to the great task (stipulated by the Pythagorean discipline) of observing a five years spell of absolute silence in order to learn how to restrain the tongue, control the emotions, and improve the memory. Observing such a prolonged period of silence was a prerequisite for initiation into the mysteries of mind and soul, which the sage Pythagoras advanced at the school which he established in Crotona in Southern Italy almost five centuries before Apollonius.

Throughout the five years of silence, during which time he lived mostly in the Roman provinces of Pamphylia and Cilicia (Mediterranean region of Turkey), Apollonius communicated mainly through signs of his hands and head or through writing. At the end of his term of silence, he traveled to Antioch (in the province of Syria), where he visited the Temple of Apollo, and he talked with the priests about the traditional forms of the sacred rites and suggested reforms where he thought they were needed. It was here in Antioch that he taught the duty of the philosopher (or seeker of wisdom), which was to rise at sunrise to converse with the gods and then speak with authority of the truths that were communicated to the mind. It was also in Antioch where he made many converts, who would follow him and converse with him as with an oracle who knew of what he spoke. [Note: Antioch becomes the place in the New Testament where the disciples or believers were first called Christians (Acts 11:26), although it's a word which is used only three times in the Bible. Antioch is also the base from which the biblical Paul makes his "missionary" journeys.]

At the age of 27, Apollonius made up his mind to follow in the footsteps of his spiritual mentor, Pythagoras, and he set out for India, where "wisdom and the gods lead me." (Book 1, Chapter 18) On the way through Babylon, in the ancient city of Nineveh, he found a life-long companion named Damis, who became a faithful fellow-traveler and writer of the memoirs of Apollonius. [Note: In the biblical version, Demas, which strongly sounds like Damis by transposing the position of the vowels, is a fellow-laborer who forsakes Paul in the end. 2 Timothy 4:10] As Apollonius is heading toward India in quest of wisdom, Saul/Paul as a religious zealot is heading for Damascus (a code name for exile in Babylon, Amos 5:27) to persecute the church, which historically refers to the Essenes and other pre-Christian sects.

In Babylon, Apollonius met with the Magi and was initiated by them into the Chaldean mysteries, which pertained to the sacred fire of the inner nature of the initiate, by which at-one-moment the soul becomes a receptacle of a fiery body of light. The wisdom of the Magi, with the magic of the stars and the divination of magical properties in plants, minerals, and animals, was imparted to Apollonius in order to add to his storehouse of knowledge of the natural forces at work in the universe. Apollonius was provided camels and a guide by the King of Babylon, who befriended the wise man and even tried to bestow gifts on him. But the king, Vardanes, soon found out the significance of Apollonius' frequent prayer: "O ye gods, grant unto me to have little and to want nothing." (Book 1, Ch. 33) So in the summer of the year 31 A.D., Apollonius and Damis approached the borders of India as they headed over the Hindu Kush Mountains. At the age of 29, he crossed the Indus River and arrived at Taxila (near the modern city of Rawalpindi), the city of King Phraotes.

Apollos heard the announcement of the pilot that the airplane was getting ready to descend to Frankfurt in Germany, where he would transfer to a flight to Athens, Greece. Apollos put his notes and notepad away and watched as the modern-day swan landed on the runway. At the airport he boarded the Olympic Airways 737; he noticed the logo of six interlaced Olympic-type rings on the tail of the aircraft. Although there were actually five interconnected Olympic rings on the Olympic flag, Olympic Airways had six rings of different colors to represent the six continents to which the airlines flew (the five Olympic rings represented five continents, counting the Americas as one continent).

After the airplane ascended into the heavens, Apollos closed his weary eyes and imagined the long-anticipated reunion with Sophia. He visualized her beautiful face, and he stared into the dark eyes, which were full of love and wisdom. He tried to send her a mental message: "We will soon be together, again." And then he drifted off to sleep.

Apollos felt his astral body separate from its earthly mooring and soar into the heavens – into the realm of the gods – where his eagle-eye consciousness was capable of visualizing the worlds below. His mind's eye was following the journey of Apollonius in the land beyond the Indus River, in the royal palace of Taxila (an ancient Buddhist seat of learning), where King Phraotes entertained a fellow-philosopher in a simple moderate manner, sharing the vegetarian meals and discussing the merits of philosophy, "the divinest of human attainments." He watched Apollonius in his sable philosophic cloak rise in the morning and perform his devotional hour to the rising energizing rays of the sun, and he listened as the wise men discoursed on the oracular qualities of the sober mind that drank only pure water in order to maintain a rational vehicle for divination.

Apollos hovered over the developing scenery, as Apollonius left the city of Taxila, which was divided into narrow streets in an irregular manner like in Athens. A new landscape unfolded as Apollonius crossed on camel into the Punjab area, the "land of

five rivers," across the plain where Alexander the Great fought Porus and the elephant-riders. He crossed the Hydraotes River (presently Ravi River), and he came to the altars of Alexander to the twelve Greek gods and goddesses at the river Hyphasis (presently Sutlej River), the limit of Alexander's Empire.

Apollos rose to Olympian heights as he trailed behind the ever-ascending dragon of wisdom, Apollonius, whose goal was to reach the mysterious castle of the sages in the region of Kashmir in the Olympus-like Himalaya Mountains. A hill of about the same height as the Acropolis of Athens was the place where Apollonius was welcomed by the Indian Brahmans, who levitated above earthly concerns and could make themselves visible or invisible at will. The prescience or foreknowledge of the god-like masters spanned the pages of time, for they knew the past-life of Apollonius as well as his present life, from his being a pilot of an Egyptian vessel to his being a philosopher in quest of the uppermost regions of existence. The masters imparted to Apollonius their wisdom on the nature of the Cosmos, including the concept of five elements (earth, water, air, fire, ether) making up the body of a male-female living universe, and the nature of astronomy and divination, whereby the souls of the stars interact with the souls of human beings.

Apollos watched and listened as the variegated flora and fauna appeared in his mind's consciousness. He watched the sages bathe in a natural spring of water, and he listened to the masters talk of magical stones with mysterious powers and relate the legends of mythological animals like the griffin (sacred to the sun) and the phoenix (symbol of longevity). Apollos continued to navigate his conscious astral body-mind as Apollonius left the heights of the gods in the Himalayas and descended in a ship down the Indus River to the ancient Erythraeum ("Red") Sea (presently the Arabian Sea).

The last image Apollos saw, before his astral body was pulled back into his physical body like a kite on a string, was the arrival of Apollonius in Greek Ionia (western coast of Asia Minor on the Aegean Sea), in the city of Ephesus, where he was welcomed by admirers, who heard of his legendary travels through the mouthpieces of the oracles. Apollos knew, as he saw the wisps of his lucid-dream fade away, that Apollonius would be traveling next to Athens, arriving in autumn at the season of the mysteries. Apollos heard the pilot announce the arrival of Olympic Airways at Athens International Airport.

Apollos boarded the E95 Syntagma Square express bus at the airport with his medium-sized suitcase and backpack. He had reserved a room at Hotel Hermes, which was within walking distance from the Syntagma bus stop. He had originally thought of reserving a room at the Adonis Hotel, but he thought it would be a bad omen to be associated with Adonis, the Greek god who was one of the dying and rising saviors of mythology. So he chose the Hermes instead, because it was the Greek name for Mercury, god of wisdom, whom Apollos revered as the guiding intuition that would lead him to Sophia.

He walked to his tourist class hotel in the 80 degree summer heat, with his suitcase in one hand and a map of Athens in the other. Apollonos Street was several irregular-shaped blocks from the downtown bus stop. It was in the historic heart of Athens – in Plaka area – which was the oldest and most picturesque quarter in the city. It was also within walking distance of the Acropolis, where Apollos hoped to be reunited with Sophia.

When Apollos arrived at 19 Apollonos Street, he checked in at the registration desk and then headed to his budget-minded room with two beds on the sixth floor. He carefully hid his notebook and notes in a false bottom in his suitcase, which he had purchased for the purpose of the security that it provided. He stepped out on his private balcony for a limited view of the surrounding neighborhood. Then he ventured up to the rooftop for a more expansive view of the Plaka area, with its taverns, restaurants, museums, shops, cathedrals, and residential homes. Apollos turned to the southwest, and his heart almost stopped as his eyes caught sight of the breathless view of the magnificent Parthenon on top of the flat-topped limestone rock which rose 512 feet above sea level. He watched as the setting sun cast its rays on the east-west axis of the 90 meter high rock, the acropolis or "high city." Tomorrow, on Midsummer Eve, he hoped to meet Sophia on top of that sacred site.

Early in the morning, while the sun was preparing to rise and shine its life-giving solar streams on the city of seven hills, Apollos walked around the 1,000 foot long oval-shaped tawny rock to the western entrance. He quickly traversed the gradual slope up a natural pathway and waited at the gate for the ticket office to open. At eight o'clock, Apollos walked through the Beule Gate, up several flights of rock steps, and up through the Propylaia, the grand entrance of Doric columns, which opened up to the temple complex on top of the sacred rock.

As Apollos stepped through the last doorway of the Propylaia and out into the open, he stood in awe as he was overwhelmed by the majestic temple of white marble columns to his right – the Parthenon, Temple of the Virgin. His heart pounded in his chest as he intuitively sensed the momentous occasion that he had envisioned for some time now – the sight of his beloved fiancée. He approached the western side of the 101 foot wide temple, which had eight Doric columns standing about 34 feet in height; then he walked along the 228 foot long northern side, which had seventeen columns. He mentally computed that there were once 46 columns that supported the temple of Athena. He continued walking around the entire edifice, past the entrance to the temple on the eastern side and around the southern side until he reassured himself that there were 46 total columns upholding the symmetrical building, which was completed in 15 years in 438 B.C.

Apollos kept an eye open for any sign of Sophia. He glanced to his left and to his right as he continued to tour the sights of the Acropolis and what used to be a city and fortress on a hill. He stopped at the ruins of the Erechtheion, which was built to commemorate the legendary battle of Athena and Poseidon for possession of the city. He recalled reading that Poseidon had struck his trident in a rock to make sea water flow to make the city a great maritime city with its nearby seaport of Piraeus, whereas Athena had grown an olive tree on the site to make olives the agricultural staple for the Greeks. Athena was chosen as the winner of the contest and as the patron goddess of the city, which was named Athens in her honor.

The Parthenon beckoned Apollos to enter, and he had a premonition that he might encounter Sophia within the interior of the 100 x 230 foot architectural marvel. Apollos tried not to pay attention to the scaffolding that was set up for the extensive restoration of the temple and its columns, which had been ravaged by time and the elements. He sub-vocalized a prayer as he walked up seven stone steps and entered the home of Athena

through the eastern entrance: "O, Athena, Queen of the Aegis, shield me from harm and guide me to my beloved Sophia."

As Apollos stepped into the cella (central part) of the open-air peripteral temple, he felt an immense pressure building up in his skull, as if a vortex of energy was swirling around in his brain. He looked down on the ground, and he saw himself standing in a shallow rectangular pool of water. An image of a gold and ivory statue loomed in front of him, with a woman's head shimmering in the reflective water at his feet. For a split second he thought he recognized the face of Sophia in the reflective image, but as he lifted his eyes upwards, he realized that he had been looking at the reflection of a 40-foot statue of the virgin goddess Athena.

The chryselephantine (made of gold and ivory) statue seemed to be speaking to him. The ivory face appeared to smile mysteriously at him, as if to say she was happy to impart the wisdom that he sought. The mythological griffin and sphinx shapes on top of her helmet looked down on the seeker of hidden worlds. The aegis (breastplate), with its awe-inspiring snake-encircling Medusa's head, protected the unspeakable mysteries from the profane and imparted the secrets of the goddess only to the pure in heart and mind. A miniature statue of Nike in the outstretched right hand of Athena promised Victory to the conqueror of the Self. In her left hand Athena held a shield, which rested on the floor in an upright manner, and within the inner surface of the shield was a coiled serpent.

The snake in the shield looked at Apollos with its hypnotic eyes. Apollos at first recoiled at the sight of the reptilian form, but then he was charmed by its endless figure-eight movement. And then he heard the mellow voice of Athena in his mind: "Wisdom is to be found in the Serpent."

At that precise moment, Apollos' head seemed to split open, as if an axe was thrust into the top of his skull, and he felt his mind soaring into the Olympian heights of the gods. He sensed himself suspended between heaven and earth, and his eyes looked directly into the bejeweled blue eyes of the goddess, who embraced Apollos with her mental acuity and imparted her wisdom to his intellect. He was enraptured by her eternal fount of wisdom, which seemed to flow from her vast mind to his infinitesimally minute mind, like cascades of waterfalls from the highest mountains to the lowest valley.

When Apollos recovered from his stupendous vision of Athena, he saw Sophia facing him from the exact space where he had an eternal moment ago seen the goddess.

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Joshua stumbled out of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in a semi-dazed state of mind. Images of his soul experience in the Chapel of Adam bombarded his inner being, causing him to become disoriented. All he knew at the moment was that he needed to get away from his tour group and go to a place where he could be alone.

He found himself walking down the Via Dolorosa in an easterly direction, past the traditional Stations of the Cross in reverse order. He walked with head lowered past the column at the entrance to a Coptic Monastery where the Son of Man fell down for the third time. His thoughts were still centered on his own failures in the past as he maneuvered past the oncoming pilgrims, who were moving in a steady procession past the Greek Orthodox Monastery where an equal-sided cross with the inscribed letters ICXCNIKA were carved on the wall, declaring Iesous Christos as the Conqueror. The

question of man's destiny weighed hard on his soul as he passed the second place where the Man of Sorrows fell down under the weight of the cross he had to bear: 'How many times must a man fall down before he is liberated from the wheel of birth and rebirth?' he thought to himself. He glanced up momentarily at the Greek Catholic Church, where the legendary story of Veronica's silk veil preserved the memory and imprint of the savior's face. He continued left as the Way of the Cross turned and twisted towards the Muslim Quarter. He pondered the significance of the inscription of the name Simoni Cyrenaeo, the cross-bearer, on the architrave of a door of a Franciscan Chapel; he wondered if anyone could lighten the burden he felt. At the small oratory where the Son encountered the Mother, he breathed a prayer for divine assistance. He passed the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate Chapel, where the Son of Man fell the first time, and he turned right to the place where the remains of a Roman arch commemorated the humanistic utterance of Pilate, "Behold the Man." When Joshua finally arrived at the Monastery of the Flagellation, where the infamous Fortress Antonio once stood, he couldn't bear the pain anymore. He broke down and cried.

By the time Joshua exited the Old City of Jerusalem through St. Stephen's Gate, his face was drenched. He was totally immersed in the humiliation he had suffered at the hands of his countrymen in his past-life. The stones kept pelting his conscious mind, and for the first time in his present life, Joshua realized that it was not a good thing to remember past-lives.

"Yeshua, why are you crying?" a still small voice spoke in the inner recesses of Joshua's mind.

"Binah, my dear angel," spoke Joshua through his tears and his sobs. "I'm trying to make sense of the pain and suffering that mankind is inflicted with life after life."

"Trials and tribulations are like the storms of life, after which come the rainbow and the promise of a better life in the sunshine," said Binah in her reassuring voice.

"But why must the pain hurt so much, and why must the suffering go on life after life?" asked Joshua. His face was twisted with an anguish that reflected his soul's torment.

"Let me take you on a pilgrimage up the sacred Mount of Olives," said Binah. "You have some lessons to learn, and you need to distinguish between the fleeting sensations of the ephemeral body and the immortal essence of the soul."

Joshua followed Binah's promptings across Jericho Road to the foot of the Mount of Olives. On the other side of the road, Joshua walked to the fork in the road which veered left to the Tomb of the Virgin Mary. As he descended the forty-eight steps to the dark interior of a cave-like church, he felt as if he were descending into the underworld, the dark and mysterious world of Sheol.

"You are now entering into the womb of Mother Nature," softly breathed Binah into Joshua's inner ear. "Mary, like the original Eve, is the conduit through which the physical world comes into being; she is the sacred vessel through whom intelligent life is born."

Joshua thought he was a child being led to its origins. He slowly stepped to the right through the darkened church to a sarcophagus that stood under a dome of rock. He looked inside the sarcophagus and saw that it was open, and there was nothing inside.

"There is no one body which can contain the expansive nature of the Mother," explained Binah. "Even though she gives birth to all physical life, giving of herself, she remains empty. That's why she remains a Virgin."

Joshua wasn't sure that he understood Binah's explanation. The whole issue remained a mystery to him. He walked out of the Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption thinking of the paradox of life and death, and of life after life.

He walked up Jericho Road, in through a gate to a garden of eight ancient olive trees, and towards the Church of the Agony, set in the biblical Garden of Gethsemane.

"Your body is the garden in which a tree of life is located, and the tree produces an oil which moves throughout the nervous system, anointing your entire body with light-substance," said Binah, her impressions filling his mind with images. He imagined olive branches with silvery green leaves making his body a veritable promised land of olive oil and honey.

He approached the three-arched entrance to the church and looked up at the colorful mosaic within the triangular area over the grand portal (tympanum). His eyes were drawn to the image of the Ancient of Days, whose right hand offered peace and left hand held a stone tablet inscribed with the Greek letters AΩ (Alpha and Omega – beginning and end); below the tablet was the Son of God symbolically connecting the Triune Supreme Being and humanity. He tried to read the Latin inscription beneath the mosaic: "PRECES SUPPLICATIONESQUE SUM CLAMORE VALIDO ET LACRIMIS OFFERENS EXAUDITUS EST PRO SUA REVERENTIA." A voice in his inner ear resounded with the memorable words: "Offering up prayers and supplications with a strong cry and tears, he was heard because of his reverence."

"Go ahead inside," said Binah, whose voice he had learned to obey.

Joshua entered the violet-colored semi-dark interior and immediately felt as if the day had turned into night. The sadness that he had experienced earlier in the day on the Via Dolorosa returned to his soul as he looked up at the somber blue star-studded ceiling, which was built in the shape of twelve domes. A cold lonely feeling descended on him, and he no longer sensed the warm presence of his angelic Binah. As he approached the front of the church, he noticed a rocky mass surrounded by an iron wreath, which was shaped like a crown of thorns.

"The Rock of my Salvation," sub-vocalized Joshua, as he recalled the words from the Song of Moses. A faint glow seemed to radiate from the sacred rock, as if hidden solar rays extended through the rock, spiritualizing it, and transforming it from crude matter to the proverbial Rock of Ages, a generative force inherent in nature.

Joshua sensed the significance of the imagery in the mural painted above the altar, which stood behind the sacred rock: the agony of the Son of Man (kneeling at the foot of the rock) as he prayed for the cup of earthly experience and suffering to pass over him represented the same earthly agony that each soul experienced as it encountered the imprisoning body of matter. Joshua recalled the biblical story of the Son of Man praying three times for the cup to pass away from him, and three times he found his three disciples asleep. Joshua felt the tears welling up in his eyes again as his soul commiserated with the suffering lot of mankind.

"Weep not," he heard Binah's sweet angelic voice again. "It's part of the divine plan for man to transcend the flesh and its limitations and ascend to divinity, becoming a

Son of God. That's what the top part of the picture shows, see?" Joshua looked at the top of the semi-circular mural and saw the Son of Man ascending into the heavens.

Joshua felt refreshed in his mind and soul as he walked out of the Church of the Nations (Church of the Agony), and out into the light of day. He turned right and continued his trek up the Mount of Olives.

"You're in for a pleasant surprise," said Binah as they approached the Russian Orthodox Church of St. Mary Magdalene, surmounted by seven gilded onion-shaped cupolas. "This church conceals one of the mysteries of the esoteric teachings about Mary of Magdala."

They entered the incense-filled church reverently, without saying a word. The only visible light came from oil-filled lamps and candles. Several sisters of the women's convent were performing their sacred duties within the ornate interior of the three-storied building.

"Those are the mystical brides of Christ," whispered Binah into Joshua's receptive consciousness. "They have dedicated their lives in servitude to and in imitation of the Holy Bride as exemplified by Mary, the original consort of the Lord."

Joshua let the enchanting words hover above his awe-stricken mind as he stood in front of the beautifully carved pure white marble iconostasis, the eastern orthodox partition that separated the prayer hall from the inner sanctuary. He looked adoringly at the icons, which were like picture-windows into a sacred archetypal world, and he was amazed at the seven-arched design of the iconostasis, which reminded him simultaneously of the menorah design and the seven centers of energy within the human body.

"Look at the large arch-like canvas above the iconostasis," whispered Binah.

Joshua's eyes moved upward to a vast vertically displayed panorama of a woman in a long white robe showing a Roman emperor a red-colored egg.

"That's a beautiful scene, isn't it?" asked a nun, who was dressed completely in a black nun's habit.

"Yes, it is," answered Joshua, surprised to hear such a soft feminine voice.

"I saw you admiring Our Lady, and I thought you'd love to hear the story behind the picture," said the nun with a serene look on her aging face.

"I'd love to hear it," responded Joshua with a smile on his face.

"Our Eastern tradition tells us that after Mary Magdalene witnessed the resurrection of Our Lord, she not only told the disciples about what she had seen, but that she also traveled to Rome to speak to the Emperor Tiberius about the injustice that Our Savior suffered at the hands of Pontius Pilate, the procurator. When she told the emperor that the Master had risen, he told Our Lady that a human being was not capable of rising from the dead. She picked up an egg from a nearby dinner table and used the egg to explain the resurrection of new life from an enclosed tomb-like body. The emperor told her that a human being could no more come back to life than the egg in her hand could turn red. And miraculously, the egg in Our Lady's hand turned red to demonstrate the reality of the resurrection. That's what you see in the picture."

"Thank you for that delightful story," said Joshua. "Now the painting looks more real to me." Joshua was just about to reach out and place his hand on the nun's shoulder as a sign of appreciation for the story, when the nun moved a step back to prevent Joshua from touching her.

"Don't touch me," sternly reprimanded the nun. "Don't you know you can't touch a nun who has vowed not to allow a man to touch her physical body?"

"I'm sorry," apologized Joshua. "I didn't know that. I was only trying to thank you."

The nun turned around and walked away without saying another word.

"They take their vows seriously," whispered Binah. "Remember what I said about their role as the Holy Bride? Well, now you saw for yourself what I meant."

"Yes, I see, but I still don't understand what you meant when you said something about Mary being the consort of the Lord," said Joshua as he walked toward the exit.

"That's the mystery of the perfected man who has restored the male and female attributes of his being into perfect unity and harmony," explained Binah. "Mary as the consort and companion of the Lord personifies the feminine aspect, and Christ personifies the masculine aspect. There's a saying: the two shall become one. That's your androgynous being. The future ideal man."

Joshua contemplated the significance of Binah's words as he walked out of the convent and headed further up the hill. His mind was trying to make sense of the concept of fallen man and woman rising together in unison as an androgynous being. Could that be the coming of a future race of human beings? The question burned inside his mind as he came closer to a small church on his left.

"This is the traditional place where the Son of Man wept over the destructive forces that were about to descend on Jerusalem, the City of God," said Binah, as they stood looking at the teardrop-shaped building called the Dominus Flevit (the Lord Wept). "He was also thinking of the temple of his body which was about to suffer dissolution."

Joshua silently thought about the end times of a city, a country, an empire, a civilization, an age, and a person. There was a sense of impending doom and a sadness that accompanied such thoughts. Joshua didn't like to dwell on such thoughts. He continued walking up the hill.

He came to a gate, which led to the Tombs of the Prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the last three prophets of the Old Testament. He recalled reading of their oracular statements of the coming of a deliverer, a Messiah, who would inaugurate a new age. He walked down to the candle-lit rock cave which had burial niches all around. Somehow, Joshua's soul was still heavy-laden with all the experiences of the day, and he was feeling tired and dispirited. He wanted to find a place to rest his weary head and sleep.

"A little further, and we'll be at the mountain-top," encouraged Binah. Her voice was only a momentary consolation.

They reached the Church of the Pater Noster (Our Father), where the Master taught his disciples how to pray. They entered the convent's iron gate.

"Our Father which art in heaven," prayed Joshua as he looked at a series of ornamental panels containing the entire Lord's Prayer. "Thy kingdom come." He heard the voice of Binah reminding him that the kingdom of heaven was within him.

He walked down the vaulted cloistered walkway and tried to read the inscriptions of the prayer in different languages. He was emotionally moved by the colorful ceramic plaques which lined the white stone walls. The 140 prayers throughout the compound seemed to reverberate from within the panels in the various languages of the world.

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," prayed Joshua as he looked at the Latin panel and his eyes focused on the line, "Fiat voluntas tua sicut in caelo et in terra."

"As Above, so Below." Binah always seemed to add her intuitive perception to what his reasoning mind was trying to understand.

"Yeshua, are you ready to ascend to the mountain-top?" asked Binah as they walked back onto the main road to the summit.

Joshua nodded his consent as he turned right and proceeded to take his final steps to the 2,640 feet summit of the Mount of Olives (also known as Jabal al-Tur, Mount of the Summit). He turned around one last time to look back at the Old City; far below he saw the Lion's Gate (St. Stephen's Gate) through which he had exited, and to the left he saw the beautiful Golden Gate, which was walled up. Behind the closed double arched gate, whose northern portal was known as the Gate of Repentance and southern portal was called the Gate of Mercy, was the magnificent golden Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount. In front of the messianic gate, through which the Messiah was prophesied to return on Judgment Day, were graveyards extending up the slope of Mt. Olivet, with souls awaiting the resurrection of the dead.

"It was also known as the Gate of Eternal Life," said Binah. "It appears as if there are no visible signs of entry through that gate, but to those who seek they will find, and to those who knock it will be opened."

Binah's words struck a chord in Joshua's mind, and he felt his soul's eye open slightly, revealing a light shining from the crown of his head.

The last steps to the top of the two-mile long north-to-south limestone ridge, with its four summits, ended up at the Chapel of the Ascension. For the city of seven hills, the Mount of Olives was the most sacred. Joshua paid the gatekeeper a small sum of money, and he walked through the gate to the walled compound enclosing the stone octagonal chapel. Inside the domed chapel, he looked at the enclosed rock on the floor which was said to be imprinted with the footprint of the risen Master just before he ascended into the heavens.

Joshua felt so tired at the moment that he walked over to the interior wall of the ascension chapel, sat down cross-legged on the stone floor, and leaned his back against the firm rock wall. He closed his eyes and fell asleep, shutting off his sense perceptions to the outer world and turning on the astral sensory mechanism of his inner world. He had learned, as a matter of habit, to turn his inward gaze to the region of his mind's eye, toward the crown of his head, as he laid himself to sleep and prayed for his Lord to keep his soul from all harm.

Within moments after he drifted off to sleep, *an ethereal being of radiant light tapped Joshua lightly on the crown center and said, "Rise, Yeshua." Yeshua rose out of the body of physical flesh and into an otherworldly consciousness. The royal figure raised his right hand with palm extended and said, "Peace be unto you."*

Yeshua felt a shaft of golden light strike the top of his head like a spear and descend through his spinal column to the nine segments of the sacrum and coccyx region. The light appeared to ignite a red flame in the dark lower cavern of the spine, and a serpentine force uncoiled and began to ascend through the seven nerve ganglia (chakras) of his erect rod-like spine. The flame turned yellow and then blue as it dispersed itself rapidly seven-fold throughout the forty-nine sacred nerve centers of his flaming tree of

life. His entire inner body was lit up with a fiery colorless light, as if it was a city all aglow.

"Who are you?" Yeshua managed to voice weakly when he finally managed to stand face to face with the celestial high priest, who had a blossoming rod of initiation in his left hand.

"I am Melchizedek, king of Salem, hierophant of the Greater Mysteries," spoke the royal high-priest. His long blue robe appeared to reflect the stars and the seven sacred planets in the heavens, and a zodiac ring of constellations encircled the bottom of the robe. Yeshua instantaneously saw a picture in his mind's eye of Melchizedek and Abram meeting near the ancient city of Jerusalem. He saw Abram, the Father of many nations, who came from Chaldea (center of ancient mysteries), receiving a higher form of initiation from the king of righteousness.

"Take, eat this bread, the substance of physical life," said Melchizedek, extending a materialized grain of wheat to Yeshua, who chewed the seed and felt its life-force regenerate his body. "Take, drink this wine, the substance of astral life," said the adept initiator, extending a materialized chalice of the fruit of the vine to Yeshua, who drank the nectar of the gods and felt a spiritual force circulate through his entire blood stream; he sensed a spiritual intuitiveness manifesting in his circulatory system, and he saw his blood-line extending into infinity. "Take, absorb this olive oil, the substance of the soul," said one of the Immortals, placing a drop of oil on Yeshua's forehead with his index finger and blessing him with an insight of the immortal soul of man.

Melchizedek placed the rod of initiation at Yeshua's feet and the rod turned into a coiled serpent. As the serpent uncoiled, it shed its old skin, leaving it behind at Yeshua's feet. The vibrant serpent moved in a circle around Yeshua, grabbing its tail with the mouth and forming an eternal circle.

"Be wise as the serpent," said Melchizedek. "It leaves its old body behind and transforms itself into a new creature; in like manner your old coat of skin is discarded, and you resurrect into a spiritual being, like me. When you ascend to the center of your being, you become that which you have always been: an immortal soul, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life."

Yeshua looked down with the single eye of his soul at the discarded physical body, which was leaning against the rock wall of the ascension chapel. Somehow that mortal frame seemed remote and unnecessary, like a chrysalis that has served its purpose and is cast aside when the butterfly emerges.

"I am not that mortal physical body, which dies and passes away," said Yeshua, whose awareness had been raised beyond mere body-consciousness. "I am the immortal soul, which is birthless and deathless."

At that precise moment of self-realization, Yeshua saw his divine Self as a brilliant star bursting forth like a new galaxy and emanating its cosmic light throughout the universe.

"Welcome into the treasure of light," said Melchizedek, the regent of Light, whose task of reuniting the little light of Yeshua's immortal Self with the great light of the infinite fiery wheel of the Most High self-generating Being was complete. Yeshua had entered into the Order of Melchizedek, a brotherhood of priests who were kings of the eternal center of their being.

"The center contains, like the formless seed, all that has been, is, and will be," said Melchizedek. Yeshua saw a small seed, shaped like a miniature white egg, in the high priest's extended right hand. The small seed emitted a pulse of energetic white light, which beamed simultaneously into both faces.

When Yeshua lifted the single eye of his soul and looked at Melchizedek, he saw as if in a mirror a reflection of his own Self. Both of them were wearing a white robe that enfolded their solar body of light.

"You will be a forerunner and revealer of the divine light in mankind," announced Melchizedek.

The words of Melchizedek echoed in the chambers of Joshua's mind as he felt his astral body return to its earthly habitation: "You will be a forerunner and revealer of the divine light in mankind."

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Paul came closer to the woman standing under the date palm tree. He saw that she had a tall, slender body, and her long tresses gracefully hung on her narrow shoulders. At her feet was a detached date stalk with clusters of dates laying on a mat made of palm fiber. Beside the date stalk was a basket woven from palm leaflets.

As Paul came even closer, he could sense that something was wrong. Asherah had her face to the ground, and he could hear her faintly sobbing. He felt awkward at the moment, thinking that he was disturbing her privacy and the right to be left alone. But somehow he wanted to share in her personal sorrow. He intentionally shuffled his sandals on the desert ground to make a loud sound in order to alert her that he was approaching.

Asherah quickly turned her face in the direction of the unwelcome disturbance. Paul saw tears rolling down her distraught face.

"Who are you?" Asherah blurted out angrily. "And what do you want?"

Paul stopped several paces from Asherah. He saw the agitated look in her reddened face.

"I am Saul, Phoebe's brother," said Paul, hoping to gain access to her heart by mentioning his sister's name. "My sister told me about you, and I wanted to meet you and talk with you."

"As you can see for yourself, I'm really in no mood for talking at this moment," said Asherah, trying to wipe the tears from her face with the sleeve of her long light-blue robe.

Asherah bent down and pretended to be busy working on the date cluster, picking the ripe dark dates and placing them gently in the basket. She left the green dates on the stalk to ripen.

"I'm sorry if I disturbed you at the wrong time," said Paul apologetically. "I thought I might lend a sympathetic ear and listen to your problems. That is, if you would confide in me."

"I don't even know who you really are," said Asherah. "To me, you're a total stranger. Why should I confide in you?" She looked into his eyes with a piercing look. He was taken aback by her frankness.

"Phoebe told me you were the high priest's daughter, and I also was once interested in the priesthood," said Paul. He wasn't sure if he was making headway with the weeping woman, who was trying to stifle the sobs that were rising periodically from her chest. "My sister also told me that you were running away from a suitor, and I wanted to know what happened. I was compelled to come here and talk with you."

Asherah did not respond to Paul's advances. She kept picking the ripe dates and placing them gently in the basket. Paul squatted down beside her and started helping her pick the ripe dates and doing exactly as she was doing. They worked together for several minutes, and then Asherah broke the silence. She had stopped sobbing, and she wiped the last tears from her face with her drier sleeve.

"I'm sorry for being so rude," she began, "but I have had problems with men and their attraction to me all my life. I can't help it if I'm beautiful, and they are drawn to that beauty. But deep in my heart I'm just like any other woman."

"Yes, you are very beautiful," admitted Paul, "and I can understand how men are attracted to you." He noticed a change in her fair complexion, as a pink blush flowed across her face.

"You are so kind to say that," said Asherah, "but I hope you're not like other men, who simply say that because they want my body."

Now it was Paul's turn to blush. He couldn't admit to her that he was beginning to feel a flow of energy and a surge of blood to his private member. He was slightly embarrassed to realize that such an emotion could sweep through his body so quickly, without even any conscious effort. The thought of Asherah's femininity made him conscious of how human he was, with the same desires as other men.

"I guess it's in the nature of men to be attracted to the beauty of a woman's body," said Paul, trying to sound philosophical about the issue. "Our creator fashioned us with the desire to procreate, and our natural impulse is to seek a partner who would respond to that natural urge."

"I know," said Asherah, "and women have the same natural urge lying dormant until awakened by the male member. "However, I have decided, just like your sister Phoebe, that living a chaste life helps control those natural urges for a higher purpose."

"Oh, no, not you, too," said Paul in exasperation. "But why would you give up the natural purpose for which the creator fashioned your female body to be a partner in the creative process and bring new life into the world? What unnatural reason would compel you to denounce the reason for your existence?"

"Just because women have the physical mechanism to produce babies does not mean that we were created only for that purpose," retorted Asherah. "Our inner being also strives for a higher and deeper union with a higher spiritual self."

"So you have chosen chastity above motherhood?" asked Paul point-blankly.

"Yes, I have," said Asherah. "After all my negative experiences with men and their seductive wiles, I no longer wish to be manipulated by their lies and forceful overtures to conquer my body."

"What happened in your life to bring you to this point?" asked Paul. He was dismayed by the sudden realization that she had rejected him.

"Hold on a minute, and I'll tell you," said Asherah, as she pointed to a young man who was heading in their direction with another large date cluster for her to work on. He placed the cut stalk on the mat near her basket without saying a word. He glanced

disapprovingly at the male she was consorting with, and then he turned and left to climb up the nearby female date palm tree to cut another date stalk. Paul watched curiously as the young man used a rope made of palm fibers to hoist himself step by step up the female date palm. He had another rope with him, which he used to lower the cut stalk slowly to the ground.

"The story of my life has basically revolved around my father's work at the temple," began Asherah. "He would take me with my brother Alexander to the temple with him from an early age, because mother had died and there was no one to look after me. So I would play with several of the other children there. Eventually, I was allowed to study the sacred scrolls, because I showed an interest in learning about religious matters. However, as I grew older and started to mature, the priests and other men at the temple started to look at me with lust in their eyes. My father tried to warn me about that lustful nature that lurked in the hearts and minds of body-centered men. He told me that when girls reach fertile age, then their bodies change and begin to grow into a luscious fruit that men want to pick and taste for themselves. He told me the story of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden to illustrate his point. However, he always stressed the fact that temptation was something that needed to be resisted and fought against, which he illustrated with the story of Samson and Delilah. He said that Samson got into trouble because he couldn't resist Delilah, and he finally lost his powers and his sight after she seduced him. I got the impression from my father, and from Hebrew scrolls, that they always blamed the woman for being the temptress and seductress, while I always felt that it was the man who was the pursuer and seducer. At least that's how it always turned out all the time for me. I never chased any men. They always chased after me.

"Finally, when one of the older priests at the temple tried to forcefully take me one day, I promised myself that if God would deliver me from his wicked intent, I would follow a chaste life. Mercifully, I came to no harm, and I devoted myself to the chaste life, which my brother Alexander had told me about. He introduced me to the Essenes, and I started to follow their teachings about preserving the sacred seed. However, my father allowed a suitor to court me; my father didn't believe in the Essene teachings. In fact, he insisted that I marry the young priest so that I would put my foolish ideas out of my head and become a fertile woman and produce babies, like a woman was created to do. I was really hurt when he told me that, and he insisted that I become betrothed to the priest, whom I didn't like at all. And so I asked Alexander to help me escape here, especially after I learned that the council might condemn me to a life of servile submission to a man I didn't love, and a life I didn't want."

Asherah paused in her story. The basket was full, and she needed to take the basket to the encampment for processing.

"You can come with me or wait here if you like," said Asherah. "I'll be back in a little while after I empty the basket."

"I'll wait here," said Paul. He wanted to hear the rest of her story, and he didn't want to be seen in public with the high priest's daughter. People might get the wrong idea, he thought.

Paul watched Asherah as she walked gracefully with one hand balancing the basket of ripe dates on her head. She moved with such care and balance that not a single date dropped from the full basket. After he could no longer see her, Paul strolled over to

the springs whose waters fed the deep roots of the date palms. He looked back at the tall palm under which he had his conversation with Asherah. He noticed that it still had some date clusters hanging from the lower leaves; he also noticed that quite a few of the date stalks had been cut off. He realized they had been sitting under a female date palm.

Paul strolled leisurely beside the water. Suddenly, he stopped dead in his tracks. There, directly in front of him, was a coiled serpent. The eyes of the serpent hypnotized him, and he couldn't move. He was too frightened to run away, and he felt as if the serpent held him in her power.

He could hear the hiss of the snake, which was sooty black with a yellow-orange stripe on each side.

Paul's mind started going into a tailspin, and he felt as if he were falling into an abyss. The dark hole seemed to swallow him and suck him into the nether regions. The hissing coiled snake stood upright and looked him straight into his eyes. For a split second he thought he was looking into Asherah's deep eyes, whose penetrating look pierced him to his inner soul.

A flash of an electrical bolt of lightning struck the frontal lobe of his brain, and he thought he was about to succumb to his bodily infirmity and fall to the ground. However, the firm grip of the serpent's mesmerizing power held him upright. He felt a surge of energy flow through his spine, from his pelvic region to his cranium.

The serpent seemed to be transmitting thoughts and images into Paul's brain. The telepathic communication revealed an image of a beautiful woman, whom Paul instantly recognized as Asherah. The flow of energy instantly surged in orgasmic spasms through his generative organs, seeking for release from the intense pressure that had built up in that area. Paul wanted to reach out with his hands and embrace the voluptuous image of Asherah that impinged on his lower brain. He wanted to taste the aroma that exuded from her attractive and sweet-smelling flesh. A sensation of warmth pervaded his entire body as he felt the need for Asherah's body rise in his physical member.

He began to shake uncontrollably, as if a feverish wave was bouncing back and forth in his body. He recoiled at the thought that the reproductive urge had such a fierce hold on his mind. He tried to extricate himself from the seductive image, pushing the red-hot body of Asherah away with his sweaty hands.

The twisting force of the serpentine energy seemed to penetrate through a fine filament in Paul's sacrum region, and he felt the radiating force drawn up like a string through a needle into the central spinal canal at the lumbar region. Paul felt his consciousness spiraling upwards, leaving the world of enthrallment with sensual pleasure in his generative organs, ascending towards regions of the higher mind.

The pulsating flow of spinal fluid seemed to sparkle like a milky white river of snow, radiating in electrical waves through the rivulets of nerves extending from the cerebrospinal system. The wisdom of the circulating serpentine force guided Paul's consciousness through the region of the heart, where a new all-embracing form of love enfolded his soul like the arms of a mother cradling her newborn child. Then he ascended further up the ladder of spinal evolution to the region of the throat, the gateway to the higher centers in the brain.

And then he saw it: a silver-hued pool of liquid with iridescent colors radiating in all directions from a central core. The pool seemed to glow with an ethereal light, and

an oceanic hum emanated from it in steady rhythms. The light became a blinding burst of golden energy, and Paul felt his entire brain and body suffused with the radiant light.

He felt as if a transformation had occurred in his mind. A rapturous sensation rose from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. He sensed the embryo of a new man emerge from the pool within the ventricle cavity in his brain. It appeared as if a super-conscious being had been born, a being surrounded with an electrical force which emitted purple sparks within its aura.

Suddenly, a sharp pain struck his coccyx bone, and a firm grip pressed hard on the back of his neck. Paul yelled out for help as he simultaneously opened his eyes. There, in front of him, stood Asherah with one foot on the tail of the snake, and the other foot on the head of the snake.

"Are you all right?" asked Asherah, with a glint in her eyes. "I saw you standing here petrified with fright from the harmless whipsnake, and I ran over here as quickly as I could." Asherah released the whipsnake, and it scurried into the reeds beside the water.

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Paul. "Now I know that the resurrection of the dead is real. I had a revelation of myself as a regenerated being with a body of light. It was simply amazing!"

Paul was beside himself with rapture. A joyous expression bathed his face. He wanted to embrace Asherah, to spread the happiness to her. In fact, Asherah intuitively sensed Paul's desire, and she threw her arms around him as a welcoming gesture. She was welcoming him into the fold of believers in the Way of the Essenes.

"You are a divinely favored man," said Asherah after she released herself from the prolonged embrace. "You have been shown what others strive for years to accomplish."

"I wish I could have remained in that state of ecstasy forever," said Paul, whose eyes looked heavenward.

"I've heard of an Essene named Bannus, who prepares initiates for the permanent state of ecstatic regeneration," said Asherah.

"Where can I find him?" asked Paul with a sense of anticipation.

"You'll have to ask our elder, Elijahu," said Asherah. "He knows where the hermit Bannus resides."

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επιθυμια (epithumia), Desire
ε …. 5
π …. 80
ι …. 10
θ …. 9
υ …400
μ …. 40
ι …. 10
α …. 1
———
555

"We speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery,
even the hidden Wisdom, which God ordained
before the world unto our glory."

- - I Corinthians 2:7

"Apollos!" exclaimed Sophia. Her flowery golden dress flowed behind her as she rushed into Apollos' arms. Their lips met in a sweet reunion as they embraced each other.

"Sophia, my love," cried Apollos as he looked into her sky-blue eyes and saw a reflection of his bearded face in her eyes. "I thought you were the goddess Athena, and you were a 40-foot statue that became alive and imparted wisdom to me."

"And I thought you were Apollo, the god of light, coming in your solar glory through the eastern door of the temple," said Sophia, whose arms held Apollos tight around his neck as she looked into his teary gray-blue eyes. "I saw you riding in a chariot of light to rescue me from the gloomy darkness of the past three weeks."

"What happened? Who abducted you? Where did they take you? Why did they do this?" The questions poured out of Apollos like a bubbling brook. He lowered his arms from around her slim waist and took both of her soft hands in his firm hands.

"Hold on, not so fast," laughed Sophia. "You're full of questions. I'll try to answer your questions as best as I can." She made a cursory glance behind her in the direction of the columns of the Parthenon.

"Is there someone with you?" asked Apollos, who noticed Sophia's anxious look.

"Never mind that for now," answered Sophia curtly. "Let me tell you what happened first. Remember when you were at Yosemite for your spiritual retreat?" Apollos nodded with a sad reminiscence in his mind. "Well, someone must have confessed to a priest that you were teaching a heretical philosophy at the university. Remember when you were teaching the course on great Greek philosophers, and you included Apollonius of Tyana as part of the course?"

"Yes, I remember," admitted Apollos. "Come to think of it, I believe I even mentioned in class that I was working on a manuscript about Apollonius, comparing the Greek philosopher with the Christian savior and the Apostle Paul."

"Yes, you did," remarked Sophia. "And that's when a sensitive student with strong Christian beliefs felt uneasy and confessed to his priest about the troubling subject matter. And you can imagine what the priest did. He called his superior, and before long it reached the ears of the Vatican. The Catholic authorities sent their lackeys to find and destroy the manuscript before it became public. When they knocked on the apartment door, they looked like two priests in their Sunday clothing. They seemed cordial at first, but when I naively let them into the apartment, I found out that they were on a serious mission. They probably would have forced their way into the apartment either way, so I was basically helpless. Anyway, as you probably found out, the two men found your manuscript, and they forced me to pack a suitcase and leave with them for a designated location."

"How did they come up with the scheme of the clues to notify me of where to find you?" Apollos interrupted. He didn't want to say anything at the moment about the notes which he had recovered.

"That was my idea," answered Sophia. "I knew, and they knew, that you would start searching for me. They didn't want the police involved. So I told them I would write clues on the piece of paper that you found, and also on the cards in those red envelopes."

"That was ingenious," remarked Apollos. "Each of the seven clues was connected with a special place we had visited."

"I thought you would like the romantic element in the quest to discover where they were planning to take me," said Sophia, her eyes beaming with delight.

"But why Athens?" inquired Apollos.

"They wouldn't tell me," said Sophia, glancing back again in the direction of the columns.

"They didn't harm you, did they?" asked Apollos anxiously.

"No, they were actually courteous, as long as I didn't resist them," explained Sophia. "The two men who flew with me to Rome actually were very talkative, and inquisitive."

"Rome?" asked Apollos quizzically. "Why Rome?"

"They wanted to deliver me and the manuscript to a special liaison person who was handling the sensitive, and potentially explosive, case," said Sophia. She glanced a third time over her right shoulder to see if anyone was coming. She knew that she was under surveillance, and she was hoping that she would have some time with Apollos before her private meeting was discontinued.

"Is that person watching you right now?" asked Apollos, who was beginning to suspect that Sophia was still held captive.

"Yes, he is," confessed Sophia. "But he promised me I could have a private moment with you before he appears to explain what they want."

"What do they want?" asked Apollos, who was exasperated with the entire situation.

"He wouldn't tell me," answered Sophia. "But don't think of that now. Soon this bad dream will be over, and we'll awaken and all of this senseless intrigue will seem like an illusion. I'm just glad that we're finally together again, and that the nightmare of being separated from you is over. And of all things, on Midsummer Eve, the day we planned to get married."

"I know," said Apollos. "That's quite ironical. Just to think that we could have been exchanging our marriage vows in a chapel right now instead of standing in Athena's temple just holding hands."

"Our love and dedication to each other go beyond any formalities," consoled Sophia. "As far as I'm concerned, I'm already eternally yours."

"And I am yours, to love and to cherish from this day forward," vowed Apollos as he took Sophia in his arms again and solemnly kissed her.

When Apollos opened his eyes again, he noticed a dark figure dressed in black stepping out of the shadows behind a column. The ominous figure started walking towards them in a slow deliberate pace, as if he were stalking them.

"Is that the guy?" asked Apollos, as he slowly released Sophia from the long embrace.

Sophia turned around. Her face turned pale. "I promised him that you wouldn't try anything drastic. In exchange he would provide us safe passage home after they get what they want. Please hear him out."

"What am I up against, a grand inquisition?" remarked Apollos sarcastically. He watched as the bald-headed man with a goatee and mustache approached him. The burly man appeared to be in his mid-fifties.

"Professor Apollos," said the man, whose medium-height almost matched Apollos' height. "Glad to make your acquaintance. My name is Simon Petroma." He reached out his hand to shake Apollos' hand.

Apollos held onto Sophia's hand without extending a hand in greeting. Something in the dark brown eyes of the black-suited man caused Apollos to mistrust him. A queasy knot formed in his abdominal region.

"What are you after?" asked Apollos bluntly. "You already have my manuscript. What more do you want?"

"I see you like to get right to the point," chuckled Simon. "Well, to tell you the truth, someone in the Vatican is really interested in that little book that you mentioned in your manuscript. They thought it would be part of your manuscript. However, it seems that your unfinished manuscript was supposed to end with that little book, which you enticingly named, 'The Key to the Initiated.' That's what they want to see."

'So that's what they're after,' mused Apollos to himself.

"Weren't you going to consult an oracle, like Apollonius did, to recover that ancient book written by the great philosopher himself?" asked Sophia, turning to Apollos and indicating in a clever way, by squeezing his hand, to go along with her idea.

"Ah, that's right, dear," said Apollos endearingly. "It seems as if the gods have smiled down upon us by bringing us to the land of oracles to retrace the steps which Apollonius took nearly two thousand years ago."

Simon Petroma listened while Sophia and Apollos discussed what seemed like a plausible solution to the problem of the little book, which supposedly held the key to the magical arts; at least that was what Simon thought. The handsome couple didn't know that Simon had been dabbling in the occult sciences, and that his perfidious mind was scheming to get the little magical book for himself.

"So it's settled," finally announced Sophia. "We'll visit the oracle of Delphi, just like Apollonius did."

"But the real oracle left centuries ago after the Byzantine emperor Theodosius the Great closed it down in the year 392," remarked Simon skeptically.

"I will be the Pythian oracle," stated Sophia, astounding both Apollos and Simon with her matter-of-fact proposition. "After all, this land is part of my heritage, and I am familiar with the spirits who still roam over this ancient land of the gods."

"I didn't know you were Greek," said Apollos.

"There's a lot that you don't know about me," said Sophia, "but which you'll learn about as we travel the road of life together." She hugged him in reassurance.

Simon was beginning to believe that Sophia could actually materialize the contents of the little book out of thin air. After all, she had correctly predicted that Apollos would arrive in Athens and meet them on Midsummer Eve.

"Shall we get started today?" asked Simon, who sensed urgency to his mission. "We could spend the night at a hotel in Delphi and then visit the oracle – I mean, have you play the role of the oracle – tomorrow. It will be St. John the Baptist's Day, or as you pagans call it, Midsummer Day."

"Sounds like a good plan," chimed in Apollos and Sophia together as they looked approvingly at each other.

"Where are you staying?" asked Simon, as they started walking out of the Parthenon.

"I'm staying at the Hotel Hermes," answered Apollos, who walked hand in hand with Sophia. "On Apollonus Street."

"And we're staying in separate rooms at the Adonis," informed Sophia. "On Kodrou Street, which is only a couple of blocks from you."

"I was going to stay there, but I thought the name Adonis was a bad omen," said Apollos. "You know how I shy away from those Greek and Roman saviors who are dying and then rising again."

"I know," said Sophia, "but don't forget that Adonis was a lover of Venus, and he spent half of the year with her, making the earth fertile and renewing the vegetation, while the other half he spent with Persephone, the goddess of the underworld."

"Shall we walk back to the hotels down the Panathenaic Way through the Agora, or the shorter way over the Areopagus Hill?" asked Simon as they walked down from the Acropolis.

"I wouldn't mind seeing the place where Apostle Paul supposedly stood on Mars Hill, or Hill of Ares, the god of war, and made his famous speech about the unknown god," said Apollos.

They walked down the rocky hill, adjacent to the Acropolis, heading westward.

"It's quite a coincidence that Apollonius was also here at about the same time, roughly 51 AD," stated Apollos. "Apollonius lectured the Athenians on how the worship of the gods was to be conducted, whereas Paul lectured them on the worship of the one invisible God."

"I think it's curious that Paul's appearance before the Council of the Areopagus was similar to the trial of Socrates, where he tried to convince the people to question their belief in the Greek gods," stated Sophia.

"I find it paradoxical that Paul would quote the pagan philosopher-poets, Epimenides and Aratus, to make his point about the oneness of God," stated Simon,

showing that he also was knowledgeable about the subject under discussion. "In fact, Minos addresses Zeus in that famous biblical quote:

'They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one –
The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies!
But thou art not dead: thou livest and abidest forever,
For in thee we live and move and have our being.'"

"Well quoted," said Apollos with admiration. "I was not aware that Paul was referring to Zeus when he was talking about God. Not that it matters, for both are just different names of the Supreme Deity."

The three hikers descended from Ares' Hill and climbed down the ancient rock stairs to the foot of the hill, where a bronze plaque set in a rock displayed the text of Paul's sermon, from Chapter 17 of the Book of Acts, in Greek.

Εν αυτω γαρ ζωμεν και κινουμεθα και εσμεν, ως και τινες των κα θ υμας ποιητων ειρηκασιν, του γαρ και γενος εσμεν.

Sophia began reading the 28th verse of the Greek text: "**En autô gar zômen kai kinoumetha kai esmen ôs kai tines tôn kath umas poiêtôn eirêkasin tou gar kai genos esmen."**

Simon interpreted: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."

"That was exquisite," applauded Apollos. "So, you know Greek." Apollos looked at Sophia with admiration as they continued walking down the hill.

"It's my mother tongue," admitted Sophia. "I haven't used it in quite some time."

"Here we are at Apostolou Pavlou," announced Simon as they merged with the western pedestrian avenue named after Apostle Paul.

The pedestrian avenue merged with the southern walkway around the Acropolis. "Can you imagine Athenians naming a street after Dionysion Areopagitou, and even making him the patron saint of the city?" stated Simon rhetorically as they walked on the avenue of Dionysius the Areopagite.

"And just to think that he was supposedly a convert of the apostle after that Mars Hill speech," informed Apollos. "And then centuries later we find out he was actually a late 5th century Christian mystic who copied a lot from the Neoplatonist Proclus."

"Sounds like an example of interpolation in the scriptures," noted Sophia. "That was the work of the editors – to cut, insert, delete, alter, reword – a process that goes on to this day with every new edition of the Bible that comes out."

Half-an-hour later they arrived at the Plaka district, and they parted ways to go to their separate hotels.

"I'll have a taxi at your door in about thirty minutes," called Simon as Apollos started walking toward his hotel.

When the taxi pulled up at Hotel Hermes, Apollos was ready to go. He climbed into the back seat and sat with Sophia, who had changed into a plain dark blue dress.

"I liked you better in your flowery golden dress," opined Apollos, noticing a change in Sophia's mood.

"We have a slight change in plans," remarked Sophia seriously. "We need to make a short stop at Eleusis. I need to initiate you into the Eleusinian mysteries before we proceed to Delphi."

"What's going on here?" asked Apollos, looking at Simon as the taxi weaved in and out of traffic to make its way out of the city.

"Don't look at me," said Simon sheepishly. "Sophia's in charge now, and she told me she needs to stop at Eleusis for a purification ritual. Anyway, we're passing through the area of ancient Eleusis on the road to Delphi, so it's really not out of the way."

"Sophia, what's the meaning of this?" begged Apollos as he tried to draw her closer to him.

"In ancient times we traveled this road on foot for fourteen miles in a sacred procession to reenact the story of Demeter in search of her daughter Persephone, who was abducted by the god of the underworld," intoned Sophia as she gazed into the distant past. "This was the Sacred Way."

The taxi picked up speed as it rode on Leoforos (avenue) Athinon out of the congested city and toward the body of water generally known as the Sardonic Gulf. The road to the city of Elefsina, where ancient Eleusis once stood as a beacon of Greek civilization, followed the shoreline of the water.

Apollos' mind was reeling from the sudden pressure that descended on him. Sophia wanted to initiate him into the sacred Eleusinian mysteries. What was she up to?

"On the surface," continued Sophia, after a pregnant period of silence, "it appears that the myth of the mother in quest of a lost daughter is simply about the seasonal changes in the agricultural cycle, where the corn goddess must descend to the underworld or die in the winter time, and then return to life as a new stalk of corn in the spring time. However, as an allegory of the soul, the drama revealed the immortal nature of life, which goes through cycles of death and rebirth, just like the grain of corn that seems to die in the dark soil, but springs up to life in the bright light of day."

Sophia's face was beaming with a radiant light which came from her inner being. Apollos had never seen her like this before. She seemed to be transforming into a goddess right in front of his mortal eyes. He was speechless as he gazed upon her awe-inspiring beauty.

"Elefsina," announced the taxi-driver as they neared the industrial town with its oil refineries, factories, and shipyard.

"We're certainly going to need to use our imaginations to visualize Eleusis as it once was, not as it is now," stated Simon jocularly.

"Just picture in your mind an ancient center of religious devotion nestled on the green slopes of a low hill close to the shore of the bay," instructed Sophia.

When the taxi drove up to the archeological site, it was hard to imagine a glorious past amidst the scant remains of the ancient ruins.

"Follow me," motioned Sophia to Apollos as she stepped out of the taxi and walked briskly towards a vision of the past that was etched in her memory.

"I'll wait with the taxi," called Simon as Sophia and Apollos receded into the background. "Don't be long," he added as he glanced at his wristwatch.

Sophia walked up the Sacred Way through the courtyard and gates and into the sacred complex, which she envisioned still standing in its majestic glory. Apollos only saw a sprawling site with paved pathways, exposed floors, blocks of stone and marble, a former cave to the underworld blocked with stones, and rows of stone seats from an ancient temple. Sophia stepped up into the Telesterion, a large rectangular temple, and

entered the Anaktoron, a small structure housing the holy relics. Apollos only saw an excavated hole, exposing what used to be the south end of the sacred chamber.

"Sit on the ground," commanded Sophia. Apollos sat on the exposed stone floor cross-legged. "Close your eyes. You will pass from life to a state of death, and then back again. Do not be afraid. I will be your guide."

Sophia placed her right index finger on the center of Apollos' forehead and braced his head by placing the palm of her left hand behind his neck. "You are going to see yourself as a filament of light descending through nine levels into an embryo and developing a physical body for yourself. That is the descent of Persephone into the underworld, from spirit to matter." Apollos saw the guided imagery flowing on the screen of his mind's eye. He saw his body grow from a tiny seed like a grain of corn. "That is known as death to the soul because it becomes entombed in the matter of a physical body and becomes unaware of its heavenly home." Apollos felt a cold shiver of alienation and darkness flicker in his consciousness.

"Now, you are going to awaken from your state of ignorance and watch as your soul body rises to an awareness of its true self," said Sophia as her index finger vibrated rapidly, as if drilling a hole into the ventricles of his brain. Suddenly, Apollos felt and saw a flaming burst of light erupt in his inner soul, and he envisioned a golden ear of corn rising from the ground.

"I see a golden ear of corn," exclaimed Apollos ecstatically.

"Good," said Sophia, obviously pleased with the results of the ritual. "That represents a resurrection of your soul from the tomb of your body. The grain of corn had to die in order for it to live. Do you see that?"

"Yes," answered Apollos joyfully, realizing that the entire drama of the Eleusinian mysteries was enacted inside the heart and mind as a personal experience.

"You may open your eyes now," said Sophia as she released her hands from his head. "Remember that time on Mt. Davidson in San Francisco when I told you: You are not the body?"

"Yes, I remember," recalled Apollos. "Now I know for sure. But why did you put me through this interior experience?"

"I needed to get you ready to be my amanuensis when we arrive in Delphi," explained Sophia. "You will write what I dictate. And for that I will need your purified mind and soul."

"I thought it might be because you wanted me to experience what Apollonius experienced when he was initiated here into the Eleusinian Mysteries by the hierophant that he predicted would initiate him," reasoned Apollos.

"That is an added benefit, knowing that we are walking in the steps of Apollonius," smiled Sophia as she took Apollos' hand and led him back to the taxi.

"I wonder if the initiations Apollonius went through in India and in Egypt, and other places, were the same as here, or different," wondered Apollos as he walked hand in hand with Sophia.

"Each unfolded a different dimension of the vast consciousness of the divine inner being," expounded Sophia.

Apollos remained deep in thought as they drove up the national road (E962) northward to Thebes, and then westward up the mountainous secondary road (3) to Delphi. He didn't say anything about his initiation to Simon. He stared out the window

at the chain of summits which formed Mt. Helicon. Sophia was either sleeping or simply daydreaming as her head rested on his broad right shoulder.

"Lebadea (Livadia)," announced the taxi driver when they entered the town in the middle of the agricultural valley of Boeotia, a region of central Greece. The taxi driver needed to take a break, and so did the weary travelers.

"That reminds me," said Apollos as he stepped out of the taxi and stretched his body, "isn't this the place where Apollonius visited the Oracle of Trophonius?"

"It most certainly is," said Sophia, who was back to her cheery old self. "In fact, according to his biographer, Damis, the philosopher emerged from the narrow cave of Trophonius after seven days with the answer to his question: 'What is the most complete and pure philosophy?' In his hands he had a volume containing the tenets of Pythagoras, who taught five centuries before Apollonius."

"Aren't there two streams here, from which those who entered the shrine had to drink?" asked Simon, scratching his bald head to try to remember what he had read about the oracle.

"Quite right," answered Sophia, who was willing to refresh his memory. "First, the inquirer had to drink the water of Lethe (oblivion) to forget all past concerns, and then he had to drink the water of Mnemosyne (memory) to recall what was received from the oracle."

"Maybe I should get some water from the streams and drink it when I ask the oracle of Delphi to reveal the contents of the little book tomorrow," said Apollos, looking at Sophia inquiringly.

"That's a good idea," remarked Sophia, "Except we'll have to boil the water – to get rid of any pollution – before you drink it."

"Go ahead, I'll wait by the taxi," waved Simon reluctantly as the adventurous couple hurried up the small hill behind the town to find the magical water.

Within ten minutes the exuberant couple returned with two marked plastic bottles of water. A couple of young boys had led them to the famous streams for a small fee.

"Now we're ready for the oracle," said Apollos as he crawled into the taxi, holding both of the bottles of water.

"I hope it works for both of your sakes," said Simon in a tone that was not very reassuring.

"The oracle resides not in the water," rebutted Sophia, "but in the purified vessel of the spokesperson. The water is only used as a catalyst to facilitate the communication process."

The taxi headed westward through cotton fields, with eucalyptus trees lining both sides of the two-lane blacktop road.

Within an hour and a half, the taxi had climbed up the southern slope of Mt. Parnassus and negotiated the winding road past some of its giant sandstone cliffs. Finally, after traveling 117 miles from Athens, they had arrived at Delphi.

"Here it is, the center of the world," proclaimed Sophia, who felt like she had returned to a familiar place. "According to a legend, Zeus wished to find the center or navel of the world, so he released two eagles from opposite ends of the world. When their paths crossed the sky directly above Delphi, he established this site as the Omphalos, or navel of the earth."

"According to another legend," propounded Apollos, wishing to share his storehouse of knowledge, "the great serpent Python once lived in the chambers leading to the depths of the earth, and the oracle was controlled by and named after that fearsome creature, the Pytho. However, Apollo fought the dragon and slew him here, on the side of Mount Parnassus, and threw the body in the fissures to decay below the cavern of the oracle."

"There's another legend about this area," interjected Simon, not wanting to be left out of the discussion, "where Zeus destroyed the world with a flood, but Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha survived and landed here on Mt. Parnassus."

"Look, Apollonos Street," interrupted Apollos, who was pleased to see the name of Apollonius honored. "Is our hotel on this street?"

"Actually, our hotel is on 32 Pavlou," remarked Simon, who looked at a piece of paper where he had written the reservations for two rooms at the Parnassos Hotel. "The street is named after Apostle Paul." The taxi turned onto Pavlou-Friderikis Street.

"Remember, Apollonos is a form of the name Apollo, the god of light," reminded Sophia.

"I know," said Apollos. "However, Apollonius is also a form of the name Apollo, who represented the intellect and the rational side of man."

"Parnassos Hotel!" exclaimed the taxi driver in a loud booming voice, as if to sound the grand finale to a long tedious journey.

Before going to sleep that night, Apollos and Sophia drank the purified water from the streams Lethe and Mnemosyne. Both of them decided to put off the reward of marital bliss for the sacred encounter with the spirit of the god who would speak through the oracle.

Early the following morning, before the rays of Aurora beamed on the sacred archaeological site of Delphi, three eager pilgrims embarked on a pilgrimage to visit the oracle. Sophia was in a deep meditative state of mind, and Apollos gripped a notebook and pen as they walked solemnly hand in hand up the Sacred Way to the Temple of Apollo. Simon tagged along close behind them. Nearby, the slopes of Mount Parnassus rose to an elevation of about 8,000 feet.

Sophia led the way past the huge blocks of random-shaped limestone scattered throughout the ancient complex. They walked up the path which once was lined with statues, memorials, and treasuries. At the site where the Sanctuary of Apollo once stood, there only remained several tall Doric columns of thick cylindrical stones; the stones were stacked on top of one another in irregular heights. The peripteral temple once had thirty-eight columns (a six by fifteen design) around its rectangular sides. As they walked through an area where the portico once stood, Sophia said, "This is where the inscription read, 'Gnothi Seauton' – Know Thyself."

Sophia proceeded to walk over to a spot near the center of the temple. "This is where the Delphos, or womb, of the earth mother, Gaia, was located," reminisced Sophia. "She was the first oracle, and everyone who followed afterwards, including Themis, Phoebe, and Phoebus Apollo has taken on the mantle of her primeval spirit. Here I will sit." She sat down cross-legged on the limestone slab with her long white robe covering her legs. Apollos sat down near her on her right hand. Simon sat on a nearby rock and watched.

There was no tripod of gold, ornamented with carvings of Apollo in the form of the Python, for Sophia to sit on. There were no oracular fumes rising through the cleft of the earth underneath the oracle. There was only a modest priestess, who sat with a straight back in a meditative pose and closed her eyes to concentrate on the crystal ball of her mind's eye.

"Ask your question," exhaled Sophia after she had taken a deep breath in preparation for the inspiration to begin. The first ray of Aurora beamed over the top of Mt. Parnassus.

"What are the contents of the book, The Key to the Initiated, which Apollonius of Tyana wrote?" asked Apollos, who had carefully rehearsed the question the previous night. The scribe had the pen in his hand, and the notebook on his lap, ready to write what the mouthpiece of the oracle revealed. Unbeknownst to Apollos and Sophia, Simon had brought a tape recorder to record each word spoken by the oracle.

Sophia drew in another deep breath and exhaled slowly. Then she, or the god of the oracle, spoke in a slow melodic tone:

"This is the story of every soul living
Who ventures to travel beyond Earth's confines,
Seeking celestial and heavenly glories;
How it achieves this is written in stories.
Signs, symbols, metaphors must be deciphered,
Numbers add, names unveil, find meaning in All.
Characters external, part of you they are;
Walk in their steps, look through their eyes, you'll go far.
Starting with the central vision of seven,
Within and without seek the knowledge of Self;
Raise your consciousness from lowest to highest,
Ascend to the crown and in Truth you'll be blest.
Step one the base you must subdue and conquer;
Step two false prophets of lewd pleasure expose;
Step three the Dragon of dense desire devour;
Step four the Beast of low nature lose power;
Step five the cross of your body-self deny;
Step six be pure like the Lamb of clear conscience;
Step seven enter the door of the bliss-mind;
The ladder you've climbed up is the spine divine."

Sophia paused. There was a reverent silence in the mountainous air around them. Even the birds paused in their singing to listen to the new song that was being sung. After another deep breath and slow exhalation, Sophia continued the inspired recitation in an ancient cadence: hexameter verse.

"DRAMA OF LIFE is the keynote that's sounded, vibrations in motion,
Neophyte stands at the gate of redemption and waits for the trumpet.
Act one the chakras or centers are opened, and flower in colors,
Rainbow of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple lights up the aura.
Act two the trumpet sounds, brain cells awaken, illumined with bright light,
Spinal fires surge up the centers to light the encompassing Sol-Flame.

Act three the battle with elements, beasts of man's low inner nature,
False prophet, dragon, and beast are all three tied, defeated, and transformed.
Act four the harvest of earth and its vine in the center of the Heart,
Washing and cleansing, makes ready the purified blood of the New Man.
Act five the scourge of the land – procreate – generation is finished,
Regenerate and make ready for birth of the heavenly Soul-child.
Act six the last battle, descend in bold steps to infernal regions,
Extinguish all fires of burning desire, and gone is the Temptress.
Act seven, Last Judgment, earth lives are unrolled, and reviewed, and summed up;
Conqueror rides on a white horse, a new solar vehicle – a god.
Such is the DRAMA of each living SOUL."

Sophia paused again. Then she concluded her prologue:

"Four seasons hath MAN:
Spring, the awakening, is his resurrection;
Summer, the growth, is his propagation;
Autumn, the harvest, is his fruition;
Winter, the resting, is his preparation
for a new season.
Then the cycle begins again, and again, and again."

Sophia stopped. Her introductory melodic tones were concluded. She swallowed and cleared her throat. Apollos handed her a bottle of water to drink. She slowly gulped the water to lubricate her vocal cords. When she had relaxed again, and regained her solemn composure, she started to speak again, but this time in free verse.

"These are the words that Apollonius of Tyana wrote. May he always be remembered as a man who became a god," intoned Sophia in a conversational tone.

As Simon listened to the oracle speak, he realized that he was hearing the revelation of one of the Vatican's best kept secrets: the esoteric meaning of the Apocalypse. Suddenly, he realized what he needed to do. He would wait for the complete unveiling of the little book by the oracle, just to make sure that he had recorded the complete ancient scripture. Then he would take the tape, along with Apollos and Sophia, to Rome.

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Joshua dreamed that he was being thrown into a pit. Inside the pit were a scorpion and a snake. He cried out, and the snake and scorpion hid behind a rock in a crevice of the dry pit. Then he was pulled out of the gloomy pit by some merchants and taken, kicking and screaming, to a foreign land where he was sold as a slave to a temple priest. The temple priest had a beautiful wife who tried to seduce the handsome young man. He had to flee from her on numerous occasions. And then one day she drew a sword and placed it against his neck, demanding that he perform the illicit act with her or he dies. This time he screamed and ran for his life. His heart was pounding as he ran.

Joshua heard someone banging on the door of his hotel room. He got out of bed in his pajamas and went to open the door. He opened the door slightly and peered

through the narrow opening with half-opened sleepy eyes at a young man standing in the semi-dark hallway.

"Are you all right?" asked the concerned young man. "I heard you through the adjacent wall. You were crying and screaming."

"I must have had a nightmare," answered Joshua in a soporific drone as he tried to remember what he was screaming about.

"O, my gosh, you've got blood on your neck," said the young man, who was also standing in his pajamas.

Joshua ran his fingers across the left side of his neck and then stared in disbelief at the sign of blood on his right hand. He turned around without closing the door and walked quickly to the bathroom to look in the mirror. He couldn't believe his eyes. There was an actual razor-sharp cut on his neck. He put a cloth on the wound to keep it from bleeding. An image of the dark-haired woman in his dream, with a sword in her hand, flashed in his mind.

"Are you all right?" called the young man, who had placed his head inside the room to see what was happening.

Joshua walked back to the front door and saw that the young man was already almost entirely inside the room. He had dark hair and light brown skin.

"It's just a small cut," said Joshua as he approached the young man. "You look familiar," he added as he looked into the dark brown eyes of the concerned young man.

"I was on the tour with you yesterday," said the young man. "My name is Yusuf, but you can call me Joe." He wanted to extend his right hand in greeting, but he saw that Joshua was still holding the small cloth to his neck.

"Now I remember," said Joshua as he recalled seeing Yusuf when they entered the Jaffa gate of the Old City. "Sorry about all the commotion. My name is Joshua, and you can call me Josh."

"What happened to your pajama top?" asked Yusuf, who noticed a tear across the length of the front.

"Oh, my goodness," said Joshua, realizing the extent to which his dream had become a reality. "I can't believe this. What I dreamed has come to pass."

"What did you dream?" asked Yusuf curiously.

"I dreamed that I was thrown into a pit," said Joshua, whose eyes gazed upward into a faraway land. "I think it might have been my brothers who threw me in out of spite or jealousy. Then they sold me to some merchants traveling on camels to what seemed like Egypt. I was sold as a slave to a priest in a temple, where I was trained to be a temple servant. The priest's wife, however, had other plans for me. She wanted me for her own pleasure. She even threatened me with a sword if I didn't lay with her. That's when I tore away from her grasp and ran away."

"So that's probably when you got the cut on the neck and the torn garment," conjectured Yusuf, "and when you screamed out loud in your sleep."

"That is so strange," said Joshua reflectively. "I've never had such a dream before – so real that it manifests in physical reality."

"What's also strange about your dream," added Yusuf, "is that it resembles the story of the biblical Joseph, except for the temple part."

"Oh, my gosh!" exclaimed Joshua, realizing the implication of Yusuf's statement. "Do you think it's a past-life experience?"

"I don't know about that," frowned Yusuf. "I'm not convinced that we live more than one life. However, your dream could be a forewarning to watch out for women trying to seduce you."

"You've got a point there," remarked Joshua, recalling a soul-memory of an initiation in an Egyptian temple. Suddenly, an image of Egypt popped-up in his soul-consciousness. He saw two tall obelisks standing in front of a rectangular-shaped temple; they seemed to reflect the rays of the sun. Yusuf noticed the distant look in Joshua's eyes.

"Wow, you looked like you just spaced-out," remarked Yusuf. "Where'd you go?"

"I just had a vision of a temple on a mound in Egypt with two tall obelisks standing in front of it," beamed Joshua. His face seemed to reflect the light from the distant past. "Something, or someone, is calling me to go to Egypt." Joshua's tone was absolutely resolute, as if the hand of destiny was guiding him through imagery imprinted on his mind.

"My guess is that you saw the ancient city of Heliopolis, which is associated with Joseph," said Yusuf, displaying his knowledge of the biblical story. "Joseph married Asenath, daughter of Potipherah, the priest of Heliopolis, which is also called On."

"I've got to go there," reiterated Joshua, sensing an urgent desire to heed to the soul-call that was the driving force in his life.

"I'll help you get there, if you want," volunteered Yusuf. "I've been there before. All we have to do is catch the night bus to Cairo. We'll be there by Monday morning. It's too late to make it to the early morning bus, which leaves at 7:30am." Yusuf looked at his wristwatch to check the time.

"I'd love to have a traveling companion," said Joshua gleefully.

"Do you have a multiple-entry visa?" asked Yusuf.

"Yes, I made sure before I left the United States to get one in case I ventured into other lands, like Egypt," answered Joshua.

"Good, so we're both set to go and return without any hassle," stated Yusuf. "In fact, I'd like to show you my favorite spot in Jerusalem today."

"Where's that?" asked Joshua.

"Get dressed and meet me in thirty minutes in the hotel lobby," said Yusuf excitedly. "You'll be in for a pleasant view of a special spot on earth."

In thirty minutes the newfound friends were strolling outside the garden-like front of the Seven Arches Hotel on the summit of the Mount of Olives, waiting for the first rays of the sun to strike the gold-capped Dome of the Rock.

"Look, Beth-Shemesh is opening its doors in the east and revealing its glorious light!" exclaimed Yusuf when dawn broke over the Old City.

"What's Beth-Shemesh?" asked Joshua as he watched the golden light chase the darkness away.

"The House of the Sun," answered Yusuf. "That's what my Hebrew mother called it when the sun rose in the eastern sky."

"That's quite a coincidence," remarked Joshua. "My mother is also Jewish. She married a Christian man against the wishes of her family."

"My mother married a Muslim," shared Yusuf. "You can imagine what a cultural divide they had to cross." The young man watched in silence as the golden Dome of the

Rock glistened and bathed in the golden rays of the rising sun. The entire Old City seemed to glow in the magnificence of the central shrine.

"What a glorious sight!" proclaimed Joshua as the gold leaf covering the anodized aluminum dome lit up with resplendent beauty in a brilliant pure gold light.

"That spot is considered to be the center of the world," reported Yusuf.

"I know," acknowledged Joshua. "In fact, my mother, when she used to take me as a child to the synagogue, had me memorize a Midrash by the Rabbi Tanchuma bar Abba that exposited that theory. I still remember it. It goes like this:

'As the navel is set in the center of the human body,
So is the land of Israel the navel of the world . . .
Situated in the center of the world,
and Jerusalem in the center of the land of Israel,
and the sanctuary in the center of Jerusalem,
and the holy place in the center of the sanctuary,
and the ark in the center of the holy place,
and the foundation stone before the holy place,
because from it the world was founded.'"

Yusuf joined in the recitation of the beloved verses, and they both laughed with an inner joy when they finished, realizing that they both had memorized the central teaching of their foremothers.

"Let's go have our free breakfast, and then go for a tour of that magnificent shrine," suggested Yusuf. "Then we can come back here by noon and check-out. And then we'll head out the Jaffa Gate to Ben Sira Street to catch a bus by evening. We can take our time and visit some more sites in the Old City, or just stroll through the market places."

"That sounds like a great plan," agreed Joshua. "Plus, it will help to fill our stomachs first before we feed our minds and souls."

One hour later the young friends were crossing Jericho Road at the bottom of the Mount of Olives and entering the eastern Lion's Gate (St. Stephen's Gate). Yusuf led the way through the Old City to the Western ("Wailing") Wall area, where they followed a pathway on the right to a gate called the Mughrabi Gate. A sunny plaza greeted them. They ascended two flights of stairs, walked through a stone arcade with four arches, and stopped on the raised artificial platform to admire the octagonal building centered in the huge area known as the Haram al-Sharif (the "Noble Sacred Enclosure").

"It looks even more magnificent up close," said Joshua, referring to the entire building.

"Wait until you see the inside," said Yusuf. "My father used to bring me here at least twice a month when I was growing up, before we moved from the West Bank to America about seven years ago. I was seventeen at the time."

"Why did your father want to move to the United States?" asked Joshua.

"He had relatives there who convinced him to leave the turmoil and fighting behind and to start a new life," explained Yusuf as they walked toward the western entrance of the shrine, which had four entrances, one on each side of the cardinal points. "Plus, he had a Hebrew wife, which made life difficult for him. Now they're happy, but I'm torn between my childhood home, where my relatives still welcome me when I visit them, and my adopted land."

"My father met my mother when he was touring the holy land over thirty years ago," said Joshua. "They fell in love and he was able to bring her back to the States, where they got married. And soon afterwards, I was born. They've always called me the holy land child because that's where I was conceived. So here I am, at the dawn of a new millennium, visiting my mother's land."

"We'll have more time later to talk about family histories," interrupted Yusuf, "but we need to take off our shoes before we enter the holy ground." He motioned to some pigeonholes near the entrance, where they placed their shoes before entering the holy shrine.

As Yusuf led Joshua under the portico and through the double doorway, Yusuf voiced a simple prayer which Joshua barely heard:

"Ashhadu alla ilaha illa Allah wa ashhadu anna Muhammad rasulu Allah."

"Was that a prayer you said?" asked Joshua out of curiosity.

"Yes, that is our Muslim credo," gladly explained Yusuf. "It says: There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad (peace be upon him) is his messenger."

Joshua wasn't sure how to respond to Yusuf's statement of belief. He accepted the monotheism, but he had reservations about the rest of the statement. Nevertheless, he felt respectful towards the holy shrine as he anxiously waked across the red rugs and approached the oblong rock, which was surrounded by a wooden lattice.

"This is the spot from which, according to Muslim tradition, the prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) made a night journey through the seven heavens," expounded Yusuf, as he reached through a crescent-shaped hole in the lattice and touched the sacred rock, whose porous surface felt cool to the touch.

Joshua reached in and touched the sacred rock, which according to Jewish tradition was the bedrock of Mount Moriah, the place where Abraham almost sacrificed his son Isaac.

"Some believe that there is a hoof print left on the rock by the steed, Alborak, that carried the prophet from Mecca to Jerusalem," continued Yusuf. "The beginning of the seventeenth Sura or chapter of the Koran says that he was taken on the night journey in order to be shown some signs."

Joshua looked up at the interior of the Dome of the Rock, known in Arabic as Qubbat As-Sakhrah. The dome stretched 20 meters across and rose to an apex about 35 meters above the sacred mount. The dome rested on an inner circle of four granite piers and twelve marble columns.

"I read somewhere that this is the spot where the foundation stone was laid in the building of the world," remarked Joshua as his eyes reverted from the heights back to the oblong rock.

"I also read of an ancient Semitic legend that spoke of a gigantic serpent that held this rock formation in its mouth," said Yusuf. "That reminds me of the cave-like crypt underneath the mount. Come, let me show you."

Yusuf led Joshua down several steps to a dimly-illumined chamber beneath the ancient sacred stone.

"This cave is known as Bir-el-Arwel, the well of souls," spoke Yusuf softly, as if not to disturb the dead. "Some people believe that this place is like the crossroads between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Some have claimed to have

heard the voices of the dead, and others have claimed to have heard the sounds of the rivers of paradise."

Joshua turned to go back to the upper section of the shrine. He wasn't interested in speaking with the dead. In fact, he suddenly felt uneasy about the realm of the dead that haunted his mind from time to time. He started heading for the exit, back into the light of day.

"Wait," softly called Yusuf as he tried to catch up with Joshua. "I wanted to read to you one of my favorite inscriptions on the wall."

Yusuf led Joshua to the south wall and read one of the inscriptions, from the seven hundred and thirty-four feet long chain of inscriptions that lined the walls:

"Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim, la ilaha illa Allah wahdahu la sharika lahu, lahul Mulku, wa lahul Hamdu, wa Huwa 'ala kulli sha'in Qadir.

"Which means, In the name of Allah the Merciful the Compassionate. There is no God but Allah. He is one and He has no partner. Sovereignty and Grace are His and He is the Omnipotent."

When the sun was finally starting to set on the western horizon, the two friends were boarding the bus with their backpacks, heading for Egypt. They were exhausted from walking all over the Old City. When the Aviv Tour bus departed from the Ben Sira Street station, the two travelers sat quietly and watched Jerusalem fade away. Within half-an-hour they were both nodding their heads with eyes closed as the bus rumbled down the highway. Darkness descended on the eventful day.

Once again Joshua dreamed that the priest's wife was trying to persuade him to share an illicit bed with her, and once again he told her that his religion prohibited him from committing immoral acts. This time Zelicah – the priest's wife – invited the women of Egypt to witness the beauty of the servant. The women were so enthralled with the charming young man that they cut their hands with the knives they were using to cut the fruit they were eating. Now they understood why Zelicah was burning up with passion for the young Hebrew.

The repetitive dream tormented Joshua's subconscious mind. Once again he felt the sword against his neck, and once again he struggled to escape from her lascivious grasp. He wanted to scream out, but he felt a suffocating oppression grip his throat, and then suddenly the scene changed, and he was condemned to a term in prison. He was charged with attempted rape, according to the falsehood with which Zelicah had accused the noncompliant servant. Even though the judges and the priest, whose name was Potipherah (a priest in the house of the sun), saw the evidence of the torn garment, which proved that Zelicah was trying to grab the front as the servant was trying to flee, nevertheless the priest and judges felt they needed to protect the honor of Zelicah. And so the Hebrew was charged and sentenced to twelve years in prison.

"I'm innocent," mumbled Joshua in his sleep. "I'm innocent."

"Joshua," said Yusuf. He gently nudged Joshua's shoulder with his hand. "Wake up."

Joshua felt a jolt in his physical body as his astral body realigned itself with his conscious mind. He opened his eyes wide open and stared at Yusuf, feeling as if he was stuck between the world of sleeping and the world of waking.

"You must have had a terrible dream again," softly spoke Yusuf.

"It was the same dream I had before," said Joshua, as his mind readjusted to his environment and he realized what had happened in his dream-mind. "Except this time I was falsely accused by that evil woman, and they put me in prison on the charge of attempted rape. For twelve years!"

"Re-occurring dreams usually have a deep significance," postulated Yusuf. "The number twelve might also be meaningful."

"I wish I knew why this is happening to me," questioned Joshua. A tear welled up in his right eye. He tried to go back to sleep, but the haunting image of the priest's wife kept coming after him, and he couldn't tear loose from the feverish anguish that had gripped his mind.

"Yeshua," whispered a still small voice as Joshua started drifting off into dream-land after his battle with his inner demon had tired him out. "Yeshua, you have won the battle, and you have overcome the passions that plague mankind. You are the virtuous conqueror of the self."

"Binah, my angel," mentally voiced Joshua, realizing that he was entering into the ethereal region of lucid-dreaming. The dreamer was aware of the self as the dreamer. He saw Binah's flowing auburn hair and white linen robe. "Why am I having such terrible dreams?"

"That was your final test with your passional nature. Didn't you recognize the role of the temptress that I played?" chided the angelic Binah, who was fulfilling Joshua's inner wish to understand his subconscious experiences.

"Was that a past-life experience?" inquired Joshua, who was curious to know if his initial hunch was correct.

"Yes, it was," encouragingly informed Binah. "And your brothers were the qualities that you had developed previously. They were bringing you to the full measure of a man, which was signified by the round of twelve years, or twelve life-times, that it takes to accomplish the twelve Herculean tasks. Here, let me show you something."

Binah tapped the crown of Joshua's head lightly with her magic wand, and a vision of an ecliptical circle of twelve signs appeared in the heavens of his soul-mind. As Joshua focused his consciousness on the revolving wheel, it appeared as if the twelve signs were twelve brothers carrying colorful banners with insignias in a grand procession:

Judah's blue banner led the procession from the east with the sign of the Lion;
Levi's black, red and white banner had the bejeweled high-priest's breastplate;
Asher's rose-colored banner had an olive tree in the center;
Dan's sapphire banner had the serpent, symbol of wisdom;
Joseph's dark banner had the fruitful bough by a well;
Naphtali's reddish banner had the hind;
Reuben's red banner had the first-born, the Aquarian son of man, image;
Zebulun's white banner had the ship sailing Piscean seas;
Gad's black and white banner had a camp with two paths leading to it;
Issachar's earth-colored banner had the taurine beast of burden;
Simeon's green banner had a picture of a city in the center;
Benjamin's multi-colored banner had the wolf.

At the end of the procession of former ages and former signs, which passed before his mind's eye like a motion picture show, Joshua saw a central sun emerge from within

the revolving wheel. The dazzling solar blaze raced through the sky like a golden horse-drawn chariot, carrying the revolving wheel of starry signs through the universe in a never-ending circle-dance.

"That's the solar logos, the mind and body of the divinity that ensouls the field of manifestation that you saw," revealed Binah, who was watching the same celestial vision with Joshua. "You are in the process of becoming that solar logos. Your next step will be to meet the sky goddess, the Queen of Heaven."

A face appeared in Joshua's consciousness, a face the likes of which he had never seen before. A heavenly face! And just as suddenly as it appeared, the incredibly magnificent face disappeared. A wisp of a silvery hair-like substance hovered above Joshua's head, and then that thin silvery-thread vanished, too.

Joshua's vision was over.

"Yusuf," nudged Joshua sharply with his elbow against Yusuf's arm.

"What?" said the stunned sleeper. "What is it?"

"I had a vision," divulged Joshua joyfully. "My angel came and helped me understand the meaning of my dreams, and then she showed me a vision of celestial grandeur."

"Did you have a night journey through the seven heavens, like the prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him)?" asked Yusuf in an earnest manner.

"Nothing like that," admitted Joshua. "It was more like being in the middle of Ezekiel's wheel and watching the celestial parade of zodiac signs spinning around me."

"Something like Joseph's dream about the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowing down to him?" questioned Yusuf perceptively.

"That's an interesting way of looking at it," replied Joshua. "Or should I say, a unique way of interpreting the dream-vision?"

When Joshua finally fell asleep again, he dreamed that he was confined in a prison house with two attendants, a butler and a baker, who had offended the king. He attended to the needs of the king's officers for an entire year. At the end of one year, the butler dreamed that he would serve a cup of ripe grapes from the fruit of the vine to the king, whereas the baker dreamed that birds were eating the baked goods from his three baskets. Joshua's intuitive mind saw that the butler would be restored to his former position, whereas something bad would happen to the baker in three days. On that same day, the queen gave birth to a son, and on the third day a feast was given in celebration of the king's first-born. The butler was freed from prison and presented the chalice once again to the king, whereas the baker suffered the fate of death. Joshua's fate was to serve out the remainder of his twelve year sentence.

As the dream of an imprisoned self continued, Joshua realized that life itself, in the material world and the physical body, was like a prison. Only the intuitive mind could release the immortal self from imprisonment and attachment to the confining, mortal body-oriented personality.

And so it happened, as Joshua's inner awakening was about to take place, that his ego, the ruler of his body-consciousness, dreamed of a sevenfold fertility cycle followed by a sevenfold cycle of infertility, portrayed as symbolic bovine and ears of corn. The king's wise men, the concrete thoughts of the objective world, guessed that the king

would display his fertility by having seven daughters, who would afterwards die; they also guessed that the ears of corn on one stalk were seven cities built by the king's mighty hand, and those cities would be destroyed during the king's reign; some interpreted the symbolic bovine as seven kings, who would be destroyed by seven princes; others interpreted that the king would be so fertile that he would take seven wives, who unfortunately would die during the king's lifetime. The ego, the outer personality, refused to accept such nonsensical explanations, so the king-ego decided to slay all the magicians (wise men). The butler, the awakening mind of the dreamer, remembered that the Hebrew servant, the illumined intuitive mind, was the true finder of mysteries and the revealer of secrets. So the informed mind, the king, turned to the illumined mind, the Hebrew, for the interpretation. The awakened mind saw a septenary cycle in the life of the land, or physical being, where seven progressive stages of abundance and fertility of nature are followed by seven successive stages of reaping what had been sown. The image of the doubting mind, the king, wanted to have assurance that the interpretation was true and correct, so the Hebrew gave the king a sign: that same day the queen would give birth to a son, but the first-born son would die.

Joshua awakened from his long dream and stared out the window at the dark landscape of the desert. For the first time in his life he was aware simultaneously of what he was dreaming, and what the dream meant. He also realized that everything he was dreaming was part of him. All the characters – all the images and symbols – were part of his personality: the physical body, the emotional body, the mental body, and the causal body. He, the intuitive immortal self, was the dreamer and the revealer of the mysteries of the dream.

He closed his eyes again, and he knew what he would see next. It was as if he were watching a movie that he had seen before, and the images flickered upon the screen of his conscious mind as beams of light projected from the booth of an immortal, all-seeing Mind. He watched as the king was convinced that the Hebrew servant's words were true. The king was ready to hand over the rule of the land to the wisest of men, but the king's advisers wanted the Hebrew man to prove that he was fit to reign as the grand vizier, second only to the king. He needed to display knowledge of all the languages of men. That same night an angel came and taught him all seventy languages of mankind and called his name Yehosef. When Yehosef appeared before the king and his advisers, he ascended the seventy steps to the throne of the king, and he spoke to the king in all seventy languages. As the king declared Yehosef to be his second-in-command, he placed the royal ring on his hand, a gold chain around his neck, and a golden crown upon his head. Yehosef listened as the king made a proclamation to all the people of Egypt: "This man who this day is crowned to be second to the king, this man to whom mysteries are revealed and he in turn reveals those mysteries to us, this man who is the savior of our land and the prince of the life of this age, this man in whom the god speaks and lives – henceforth his name will be Zaphnath-paaneah."

Joshua opened his eyes and looked at his traveling companion. Yusuf was sound asleep. The sky was beginning to turn light blue, and the lights of a large city emerged from the desert sands in the south.

"Yusuf," said Joshua, gently tapping him on the shoulder. "Wake up. I think I see Cairo up ahead."

Yusuf sat up and rubbed his eyes, trying to clear the sleepiness away. When he eventually managed to look in the direction of the lights, he confirmed Joshua's assumption.

"You're absolutely right," verified Yusuf. "We should be in Cairo within half-an-hour. Then we'll take a taxi from the bus station to a suburb in northeast Cairo. We'll be staying at the Ain Shams Obelisk Hostel, which is five minutes away from the historic obelisk of ancient Heliopolis."

"It looks like we'll be arriving in Cairo at the same time as Ra-Khepri emerges from his night journey and signals the creation of a new day," announced Joshua jubilantly. He was referring to Khepri as the sacred scarab who rolled the sun like a gigantic ball through the sky, and then through the underworld to the eastern horizon.

"I like to call him Re," said Yusuf.

"Like in Ray, a drop of golden sun?" inquired Joshua facetiously, alluding to a line from his favorite musical.

"That's very bright of you," punned Yusuf. The two friends laughed.

When the bus entered Cairo, the sky-goddess, Nut, gave birth to the sun-god, Ra, once again in the eternal cycle of renewal. For Joshua, it was like witnessing the first day of creation.

"The place we're heading to, Ain Shams, means 'eye of the sun' in Arabic," reported Yusuf as they rode in the white-and-black taxi toward their destination (about 10 km). "We could have taken the metro there, but it's a lot easier and faster taking a taxi."

Joshua was happy either way. His attention was absorbed by the sights and sounds of the ancient, and the modern, attractions in the sprawling city. Everything was new to him: the buildings, the cars, the streets, and the people.

"I've got reservations for a room with two beds at the hostel," continued Yusuf, while Joshua's eyes were riveted to the passing panorama. "We can stay there a couple of nights before we head back."

"That's fine with me," replied Joshua without taking his eyes away from the window.

When they arrived at the hostel, the owner told them that they had arrived four days late for the commemoration of the arrival of the Holy Family in Egypt 2,000 years ago. He said there was a large gathering at the Church of Saint Mary in Maadi, 15 km south of old Cairo, to celebrate the event on June 1st. Maadi was considered to be the traditional site where the Holy Family descended to the Nile River to take a boat to Upper Egypt.

Yusuf explained to the owner that they had come to visit the site of ancient Heliopolis in the adjacent district of El-Matariya. The owner told Yusuf in Arabic that they should visit the Tree of the Virgin at Matariya, where the Holy Family visited and rested under the shade of an ancient sycamore tree. The talkative owner also related a legend about Mary washing the clothes of the child near the tree, and it was believed that they quenched their thirst from a well near the tree. By the time the owner was finished recounting the various legends and traditions of the Holy Family in Egypt, a subject about which he was knowledgeable, the young adventurers were convinced that they at least should pay a visit to the sycamore tree.

"He must be a Coptic Christian," said Yusuf when they finally left the owner's office and set out for their room. "They have an ancient tradition, which they've kept

intact over the centuries, that the historical journey of the Holy Family lasted for more than three-and-a-half years and that the holy child blessed the land of Egypt with his holy presence. They even quote from the book of Isaiah, the 19th chapter, that the Lord would come to Egypt and the idols of Egypt would fall down. They say that the idols in the temple of Heliopolis fell down when the holy child arrived, and that nothing remains of that temple except the red obelisk."

When the traveling duo reached the Virgin's Tree later that morning, they saw an old gnarled sycamore, which was not the original tree under which the Holy Family rested. The original tree, according to local legend, fell sometime in the 17th century and was replaced with a new sapling in 1672. When it fell again in 1906, it was replaced with a shoot from the fallen tree. Yusuf and Joshua touched the tree, like the other visitors to the site, and they felt a connection with the religious fervor that attracted pilgrims to the place where they sensed the Holy Family's presence.

"I wonder if the story of the Holy Family in Egypt, especially the various sites that they visited, corresponds to the Egyptian story of Isis, Osiris, and Horus?" asked Joshua when they walked away from the sign which said "Mary's Tree" and started walking toward the obelisk.

"You mean where Isis traveled throughout Egypt gathering the fourteen dismembered pieces of Osiris, and supposedly establishing a temple at each site where a piece of Osiris was found?" inquired Yusuf, who recalled the story he had studied in school.

"Yes, that story," remarked Joshua. "There was a tree in that story, except that it was a tamarisk tree, and there was a child named Horus, who was the rightful heir to the throne. It just seems to me that a lot of Christian churches were built to cover up former pagan sites, and names and stories were changed to support the new religion. That's my personal contention."

"I understand," said Yusuf. "I've wondered the same thing about the two traditions I was raised with, how the stories and traditions vary from one to the other. Take for example the story of Joseph that I mentioned before; the Islamic tradition has Joseph teaching Muslim values and the message of submission to Allah's will, whereas the Hebrew tradition has Joseph giving allegiance to the Lord God of his forefathers. It's curious how they both look at the story of Joseph, some of which comes from the Book of Jasher, through different eyes."

"That's funny how you keep bringing up the story of Joseph," commented Joshua. "I experienced another episode of that story in my dream while we were traveling in the bus."

Joshua recapitulated the dream as they walked in the direction of the obelisk of Heliopolis.

When they approached the tall red granite obelisk, Joshua abruptly stopped talking. His eyes were fixated on the peak of the obelisk, which was 68 feet and 2 inches in height, with about six feet of length embedded in sand. The pivot point on the pyramidion (miniature pyramid) seemed to be a gateway between earth and sky, and Joshua had an instantaneous vision of the sacred capstone illumined with the rays of the sun. He felt as if the solar reflection from the electrum covering (of silver and gold) pierced his heart and soul and invigorated him with a primeval energy, the life-giving power of Ra.

"What are you envisioning now?" asked Yusuf, who had become used to Joshua's extra-sensory perceptions.

"I saw the capstone light up like a sunburst in the sky," described Joshua. "That stone is full of the energy of the sun."

"You can imagine how the first Egyptians must have felt, watching that Benben stone rising from the primordial waters on top of the primordial mound at the dawn of creation," expounded Yusuf. "The Egyptians believed that Nun, the god of the waters of chaos, and Neith, the goddess of the limitless sky (of air and light), in an act of androgynous self-generation brought the world into existence – similar to the Hebrew concept of the spirit moving upon the face of the waters in the beginning."

"So the sky-goddess Neith floats upon the waters of Nun, creating the primordial mound (Benben), from which Ra emerges at the dawn of creation," interpreted Joshua, who continued to look up at the capstone.

"I couldn't have said it better myself," congratulated Yusuf. "Ra, in essence, was the son of Nun."

"Sounds similar to the story of the biblical Joshua, who also was the son of Nun," added Joshua. "And coincidentally, may I add, who made the sun stand still."

"And, as a further coincidence," added Yusuf, "both Joseph and Joshua died at the age of one hundred and ten."

"Which, if I know my Hebrew, is Aleph, the One, and Yod, the ten, which contains all numbers," postulated Joshua. "And by extension, Qoph, the hundred, would be a symbol of the Cosmic One."

"Or you can mathematically state that the One is the infinite and timeless, whereas the ten is the finite, manifested existence," added Yusuf.

"I think the energy from this obelisk is having an effect on both of us," laughed Joshua. Yusuf joined him in the merriment as they approached the obelisk, which was erected by Sesostris I (12th Dynasty of the Middle Kingdom) in 1942 B.C.

As Joshua came closer to the immense obelisk, he had a strong magnetic attraction to it, and he reached out and placed the palms of both of his hands on the red granite. Images of a sun temple with a sacred lake emerged in his receptive mind. He closed his eyes and the images became clear and distinct. He saw Yehosef building a large temple and a palatial house for himself, within which he set a throne made in the likeness of the land of Egypt with a river running through it. It took him three years to complete the building. He saw the thirty-year-old viceroy riding in a chariot throughout the land of Egypt, collecting corn for the cities and storing it in the treasuries for future use.

Yehosef rode into Heliopolis on a hot, sunny day. He came to visit Potipherah, whose name meant "belonging to the sun." He was the priest of Heliopolis, "City of the Sun." Potipherah had a beautiful eighteen-year-old virgin daughter named Asenath, whose name meant "she who is of Neith," the Egyptian goddess of the eastern sky. Potipherah wanted his daughter to be a bride for the ruler of the land, Yehosef. Asenath didn't want to marry Yehosef, for she had heard he was a man of another race and was sold as a slave. However, when she saw the young ruler in royal attire arrive in a chariot of gold like the sun coming from heaven, her heart melted and she repented of her former reluctance to be his bride. When Potipherah called Asenath to come down from her ten-

room tower, where she lived with seven virgin maidservants, she hurried down into the presence of Yehosef.

Joshua couldn't believe what he was witnessing: the face of Asenath was the same heavenly face that he had seen when Binah told him that he would meet the sky goddess, the Queen of Heaven. His heart stopped for a moment, and his breath was caught in his chest, as he realized that this was the culmination of a long quest: the sacred marriage of the Sun and the Sky.

Joshua kept his eyes closed and his hands on the obelisk, whose vibrations pulsated through his arms, transmitting images of former times. He continued to watch as Yehosef, himself a virgin, met the virtuous Asenath as if she were his own sister. He was not willing to make any commitments to her until she promised to get rid of her Egyptian idols and worship the Most High God with him. He would return to her in eight days. Asenath spent seven days fasting and cleansing herself for her bridegroom. She threw away the precious stones dedicated to the gods and goddesses: Amun (sun), Shu (air), Tefnut (moisture), Geb (earth), Nut (sky), Osiris, Isis, Set, and Nephthys. On the eighth day, as she stretched her hands out to the east and prayed to the God of the ages to acknowledge her sincerity and her conversion, and to make the person she loved more than her own soul to be her husband, lo and behold a messenger from heaven appeared to her. The messenger resembled Yehosef in every respect, and he brought the message that she would eat the bread of life and drink the cup of immortality with her bridegroom Yehosef that same day. When the man vanished, Asenath prepared herself and put on her wedding robe, which was sky-blue woven with golden sun colors. When the bridegroom arrived for his bride . . .

Joshua released his hold of the obelisk at the precise moment when he saw that he was the bridegroom, and Asenath was his bride.

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Paul went straight to Elijahu when he returned to the encampment at Ein Feshka. He had one thing on his mind: to meet the man who Asherah said knew the mysteries of the resurrection of the body.

Elijahu was repairing one of the temporary shelters when Paul approached him and asked, "Can you take me to Bannus? I need to see him."

Elijahu glanced up from his work and looked with piercing eyes at Paul, who was breathing hard and fast. "Who told you about Bannus?" asked Elijahu sternly.

"Asherah," confessed Paul. "She said he knew how to help a disciple achieve the permanent state of ecstasy."

"Why would she tell you a thing like that?" asked Elijahu suspiciously.

"I had an ecstatic experience near the date grove," explained Paul, "and she saw me and rescued me from the snake, and then I told her about my experience, and . . ."

"Wait a minute!" interjected Elijahu. "What snake?"

Paul told Elijahu about the snake that hypnotized him, how Asherah stepped on the head and tail of the snake, and how his spine reacted in conjunction with the physical manifestation.

Elijahu looked at the ground for a long time in a deep thoughtful silence. He stroked his long gray beard with his fingers. Paul waited impatiently for an affirmative word from the Essene elder. Finally, after several minutes of interior deliberation, Elijahu spoke his mind: "Bannus is a former disciple of mine. Everything he knows, I taught him. The former disciple became a master in his own right. However, I should warn you ahead of time that his methods are harsh and strict. The purification rituals alone can destroy a weak-minded individual. What we teach in the community here is intensified a hundredfold by his accelerated techniques. I don't know if you're ready for him."

"I'm willing to try," acknowledged Paul. "I'm willing to do whatever it takes to achieve the goal my heart desires."

"This is something that will demand your entire heart, mind, and soul to accomplish," stated Elijahu emphatically. "The preparatory cleansing of your entire being will take at least two years. During the third year, your mortal nature will be transformed so dramatically that you will never be the same person again."

"If you're trying to scare me or discourage me, it's not working," confirmed Paul. "I'm determined to go through the valley of the shadow of death in pursuit of the greatest prize a mortal can attain."

"In your case, perhaps it is expedient to send you to a master so you don't have to spend at least seven years working towards a maturation of our Way," conceded Elijahu. "After all, the people in our community are very hesitant to admit you even as a probationary member."

"Then it's settled?" anxiously inquired Paul. "You'll take me to Bannus?"

"I can't just take you to him," cautiously stated Elijahu. "I will need to get his permission to bring you to him. He spends most of his days beyond Jordan in a cave. I will go to him tomorrow."

"When will you be back?" asked Paul anxiously.

"It usually takes me seven days, there and back," answered Elijahu succinctly. He turned away from Paul and returned to his work. There was nothing else that needed to be said at the moment.

Elijahu left Ein Feshka early the following morning. He had his walking stick with him, and he also carried a small satchel of dried food for the journey. He wanted to do most of his walking in the coolness of the morning, when the invigorating desert air coursed through his lungs and flowed through his veins. He always planned on resting in the shade during the heat of the noon sun.

Something about this trip made Elijahu uncomfortable. He wasn't sure if he was doing the right thing this time. Usually, when he determined that a student had passed a certain level of competence and dedication, he was certain Bannus would accept that student as a disciple and proceed to teach him the higher or more advanced aspects of the Essenes' wisdom. However, the case with Saul was totally different: this person was not his student, and he did not know much about him.

Paul spent the following days nervously waiting for the return of Elijahu with word that Bannus had agreed to accept him as a disciple. He performed menial tasks and

adhered to the rules of the Essene community, but his mind was preoccupied with other matters: What would life be like with Bannus as a teacher? Where would he live, and would he be able to adapt to the environment? How would he cope with the strict regimen that Elijahu had warned him about? Would he have the patience to pursue his goal even if the results were not forthcoming?

"Paul, you're worrying too much," said his sister Phoebe on the third day after Elijahu left. He had voiced his concerns to his sister, who was always willing to listen to her brother speak of his turbulent mental anguish. "You're always anxious about the future, when you should concentrate on the present."

"I've always been like that since I was a child," said Paul. "You know that I play out a dozen scenarios in my mind, and life always turns out differently anyway."

"So why do you concern yourself with such imaginary speculations about what might happen?" asked Phoebe.

"I guess I enjoy visualizing the possibilities that my busy mind dreams up," replied Paul. "It's like trying to read the universal mind as it presents its infinite range of ideas to the finite mind."

"I think it's more like you trying to see the future like a seer does," remarked Phoebe. "That's the visionary part of you."

On the fourth day, Phoebe asked Paul the question that he had been avoiding since he ran into her: "Why are you here?"

"I was hoping you weren't going to ask me that," responded Paul. "It's a long story, and I'm afraid you won't like what you hear."

"Don't be foolish," said Phoebe with a soft smile as she placed her hand reassuringly on his arm. "I've always respected you as my big brother. You can tell me anything you like, and it won't change my opinion of you nor the sisterly love and respect that I have for you."

"Well," began Paul. "I might as well come straight out and tell you that I have sided with the pro-Roman faction in our land. In fact, I have been commissioned by the high priest, who is a Roman sympathizer, to infiltrate the Essene sect in order to determine if there are any messianic rebels who want to overthrow the foreign rulers."

"No, that can't be!" exclaimed Phoebe vociferously. "You should know that we are a peace-loving people who want nothing to do with the government, nor with the corrupt priesthood in the temple. We have a spiritual community that is only concerned with building the kingdom of heaven for ourselves and for like-minded people."

"I can see that now," admitted Paul. "But the ruling party thought that there might be Zealots hiding out in these communities, you know, like Judas of Galilee, who tried to lead a group of militant followers in an insurrection against the empire."

"You know that our elder, Elijahu, wouldn't allow that," reprimanded Phoebe. "In fact, I had to convince him, while you were visiting with Asherah that first day, that you were not the vicious persecutor of our movement that you were rumored to be."

"That's another thing I haven't told you," said Paul, hanging his head down in shame. "I used to be that person until I met a saintly man who told me to go to the wilderness in order to change my ways and redeem myself. I hate to admit it now, but I had been an accomplice to a crime against a fellow human being. I stood by and failed to stop the martyrdom of a good person, whom some called Stephen. I hold myself accountable for his death by stoning."

"Paul, how will you ever pay for your sins against humanity?" cried Phoebe. She wanted to throw her arms around her brother as a sign of forgiveness, but she couldn't bring herself to do it. She felt that her brother had committed an unforgivable wrong.

"But you promised not to judge me," pleaded Paul. "That was part of my past that I'm not proud of anymore. I've seen the error of my ways, and I mean to commence a new life. That's why I asked Elijahu to take me to Bannus."

"I'm sorry I judged you so harshly," confessed Phoebe. "I still love you as a brother." She threw her arms around him as they both felt tears flowing down their cheeks.

On the sixth day, toward sunset, Elijahu walked slowly into the small encampment of Ein Feshka. He was tired. His bearded face showed the fatigue of a weary traveler.

The first person to greet Elijahu was Paul, who had kept his anxious eyes peeled for any sign of the expectant arrival of the elder.

"What did Bannus say?" were the first words out of Paul's mouth.

"Bring me some water, first," said Elijahu wearily. His eyes were lowered.

Paul ran to the nearby spring and scooped up a bowl of water for the thirsty old man. Elijahu drank his fill, and then wiped his whiskers and beard with the back of his hand before looking at the apprehensive disciple.

"Bannus said that he'll take you as a disciple on one condition," stated Elijahu, looking seriously into Paul's eyes. Paul's face turned pale, and the words stuck in his throat as he suddenly feared the worst. Elijahu noticed the sudden change in complexion on Paul's face, and he waited a moment for the effect of his words to sink into the disciple's mind. "You must pass the supreme test – purification of body, mind, and soul – by completing a forty day fast."

Paul's mouth opened to speak, but the words wouldn't come out. He stood there, with gaping mouth, looking at Elijahu, who was waiting for a reply. Paul remembered the experience at the date grove, and he realized that he might only have this one chance in his life to find complete fulfillment and satisfaction. He knew in his heart that the treasure he was seeking was worth more than everything in the world.

"I have come thus far," responded Paul, recalling his wilderness experience up to this point. "And I will finish the course that I have started."

"That's what I was hoping to hear," said Elijahu with a smile on his face. "We'll set out for Bethabara, the house of passage, the day after tomorrow. I need to get some rest before I travel again." Elijahu turned and slowly walked with the aid of his walking stick towards his humble abode.

Five days later, Elijahu and Paul reached the ford in the River Jordan, where they crossed over to the other side and walked eastward along a small valley of reeds and flowing water. They approached a place of willows about two kilometers from the Jordan, a place where a small perennial stream flowed over smooth stones. They stopped to drink the cold, tasty water from the natural spring. When their thirst was satiated, they washed their faces and heads with the refreshing and cleansing water. A peaceful feeling flowed through Paul's soul.

Elijahu walked up the west side of a small natural hill which rose out of the reeds at the head of the small riverbed. He entered a natural cave. In the semi-darkness toward the back of the cave sat a long-haired, bearded man in his loincloth with eyes closed.

Elijahu and Paul stooped down as they approached the meditative hermit; they sat cross-legged in front of him, waiting for him to finish his meditation and to recognize their presence. Paul looked at the gentle face of the man who was going to be his master.

Bannus opened his eyes after several minutes of absolute silence. His brown eyes radiated a warm welcome to his guests. He nodded his head reverently towards his former master, Elijahu, and then he slowly turned his long-faced head in the direction of his new disciple.

"So this is Saul, who asked for me to teach him what he already knows," said Bannus in a soothing tone of voice.

"I am honored that you agreed to accept me as your disciple," said Paul as he bowed his head humbly and reached out his hand to touch the bare feet of the master as a sign of submission.

"When the disciple is ready to learn," replied Bannus, "the teacher arrives to open the doors of learning." The aphorism resounded in the small chamber of the cave.

"If you don't mind," interjected Elijahu, "I think I'll leave the two of you alone. I really want to spend some time alone on my favorite hill." Elijahu stood up in a half-stooped manner so he wouldn't hit his head on the ceiling of the cave. He gave an affectionate look to both the master and the disciple as he raised his hand in a blessing before he turned to leave the modest sanctuary. He walked up the small hill overlooking the cave.

"Are you hungry?" asked Bannus with a subtle hint of mischief in his voice. Paul wasn't aware that the teacher was already putting the student to the test.

"Yes," answered Paul, his mouth watering with the idea of food. "We only had dates and other dried fruit, and some dried bread, for our journey here."

"I have some special desert food for you," said Bannus, reaching behind him to produce a small palm-woven bowl full of dried carob pods. The flat, narrow horn-shaped pods looked tantalizing to Paul's gastronomical senses. He was just about to reach for a pod when he recalled the words that Elijahu had relayed from Bannus: "You must pass the supreme test by completing a forty day fast." Paul looked into the perceptive eyes of Bannus and instantly drew back his hand from the bowl.

"So Elijahu told you about the supreme test?" asked Bannus knowingly. Paul nodded his head. "And you are willing to undergo the purification of body, mind, and soul for a period of forty days and forty nights?"

"Yes, I am," said Paul assuredly.

"Good," affirmed Bannus. "That seals the vow you have made this day to follow the Way of Purification." Bannus reached out with his long arm and placed his warm right hand on the crown of Paul's head. Paul felt an electromagnetic current flow from the top of his head, down his spine, and throughout his etheric body.

"Saul," said Bannus as his hand continued to transmit an ethereal flow of energy into the disciple's entire threefold being, "may the Great Life, with its flowing living waters, permeate every fiber of your being as you prepare to undertake the Great Work." Paul saw a river of light streaming through his cerebral cortex, down through the medulla oblongata, to every nerve fiber in the spinal system, forming a veritable body of light.

"Repeat with me the Great Law of our forefathers," commanded Bannus. Paul recited the ancient affirmation together with Bannus:

"Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God
With all thy heart,
And with all thy soul,
And with all thy mind."

When Bannus released his hand from the crown of Paul's head, a flood of tears erupted like a geyser from the depths of his soul. Paul couldn't stop the streams of cleansing waters as they flowed like underground springs to the surface of his eyes. He now saw clearly that the way had been prepared for him to enter the stream that would lead him to the inner kingdom of rapturous ecstasy.

"From this day forward, you will recite the Great Law at dawn and at dusk in your mind only," instructed Bannus. "You will observe one year of absolute silence—not a word must come out of your mouth—as taught by our ancient master, Pythagoras. This vow of silence will cleanse your mind from extraneous thoughts and purify your tongue from the senseless chatter of the monkey mind. Instead of thinking of things to say and thoughts to think, you will start by beheading the mind, which stands in the way of achieving crystal-clear consciousness. You will work on making your mind as pure and clear as a mirror-like lake, where the mountains, trees, and clouds in the sky are reflected with perfect clarity."

Paul felt like a new-born child, who was to be led by the hand through a new world, an inner kingdom of heightened awareness. It was as if he were developing a whole new set of senses to experience an inner world that he was taught to observe with keen interest. What was happening inside of him became more important than what was happening in the external world.

"By closing the door of the lower mind, you open the door of the higher mind," taught Bannus. "By closing the physical eyes to external impressions, you open the single mind's eye to an internal reality. By closing your eyes to the sounds of the natural world, you open an inner listening device that will enable you to hear a still small voice. By closing the doors of the five senses – what the eyes see, the ears hear, the nose smells, the tongue tastes, the skin feels – you avoid the mental desires that arise from those senses. When you cut the strings of attachment to your sensory desires, you purify your mind and you free yourself from the bond of your bodily passions.

"Your body is the House of Passage that you inhabit while you journey through this world. But this house is not the real you. The real self passes in and out of this house."

Bannus stopped talking. He took a deep breath through his mouth, and then he exhaled a long stream of warm air into Paul's face. Paul felt a pleasant glow envelop his head.

"Rise, my little one," said Bannus endearingly. "Henceforth you will be called the Little One, an initiate into the mysteries of the Great Life from which everything is formed and to which everything returns."

Bannus led Paul by the hand to the entrance of the cave. Paul was surprised to see how tall and slim Bannus looked. They walked hand in hand to the natural spring where Elijahu and Paul had satiated their thirst.

"Drink the waters of purification," enjoined Bannus, who cupped his hands and filled them with savory water. Paul squatted beside the stream and imitated his actions. "Let this water be nourishment to your body and soul. You may drink this water

whenever you feel hunger or thirst." Paul drank from his cupped hands until he could drink no more.

"Stand, Little One," said Bannus, rising from the squatting position. Paul stood erect and waited for directions on how to proceed with what he intuited was a ceremonial initiation. "Breathe deep through your mouth and hold your breath to a count of ten." Paul filled his lungs with the warm desert air. "Let this air be nourishment to your heart and soul. Breathe the breath of life to its fullest whenever you feel weak or need the life force." Paul breathed deeply several times until he felt oxygenated and invigorated.

"Come, Little One," said Bannus, taking Paul by the hand and leading him up to the top of the adjacent hill. Paul felt the strength of the master's energetic arm pulling him up to higher ground. Paul was gasping for air after the strenuous climb; Bannus didn't show any sign of strain or exhaustion. "Raise your hands to the sky and feel the energy of the sun pulsating with waves of heat and light within your body." Paul raised his hands in the direction of the setting sun. "Let the solar rays be nourishment to your mind and soul. Meet the rising and the setting sun on a daily basis to reenergize every cell in your being."

Paul stood on the hill overlooking the verdant valley, and he felt like he was standing on top of the world. He looked southwards and he saw the area of the Dead Sea and the Wilderness of Judea; he looked eastwards and he saw beyond the Jordan River into Samaria; he looked northwards and he saw the land of Galilee.

"The land that you see before you," pointed Bannus with a panoramic sweep of his hand from southwest to northwest, "is the Holy Land, according to our teachings. But it pales in comparison to the holy land that is the threefold body of the human being. Look at Judea – that represents the navel, the lower physical aspect of man. There, in Samaria – that represents the heart, the emotional aspect of man. And Galilee – that represents the head, the mental aspect of man. Those three represent the kingdoms of your threefold world. However, there remains one last kingdom for man to inhabit and to rule: Here, at the center, the place we call Beyond Jordan, the place of the spirit of man, the inner kingdom."

Paul thought that Bannus was referring to the literal hill on which they were standing, but when Paul turned his eyes from the sweeping panorama and looked at his master, he saw that his eyes were closed. The master was looking inwards, pointing to the center which was at the heart of all life. Paul closed his eyes and imitated the master. He visualized the center of his being in an invisible world that spread out like the rays of the sun in all directions throughout the universe.

"The wise men say the center is everywhere, and the circumference is nowhere," postulated Bannus. He looked at Paul with beaming eyes of wisdom and smiled. They both watched as the fiery sun sank over the western horizon, knowing that it was rising as a solar blaze elsewhere.

"Come, Little One," said Bannus as he prepared to descend the natural hill. Paul scanned the upper surface of the hill for any sign of Elijahu. He was nowhere to be seen. "Don't worry about Elijahu," remarked Bannus when he noticed Paul was standing stationary. "He comes and goes wherever and whenever he pleases. This is his hill, and according to our legends, he ascended into the heavens from here in a chariot of fire. He probably is back in his humble abode at this very moment."

Paul was amazed to hear that Elijahu was associated with the legendary prophet of his childhood memories. He remembered how as a child he had always dreamed of ascending in the same chariot that he had pictured the prophet Elijah riding into the heavens. As a young student he had read stories of Helios riding in a golden chariot drawn by four horses, and he thought that both stories related to the journey of the solar orb across the sky. Now, with the awe-inspiring reality of actually standing on Elijah's Hill, Paul wasn't sure what was fact and what was fiction.

"Come, Little One," coaxed Bannus, "you will have all night to reflect on what you've seen and heard this day. I will show you the cave you will live in." Paul followed Bannus half-way down the hill to another natural cave, which was smaller than the one Bannus lived in. In the center of the cave he noticed a small fire-pit made of river rocks. Beside the fire-pit, on the ground, was a bed made out of reeds. On the bed of reeds lay a bundle of clothes. "You won't need a fire until winter comes. We just passed the time of the summer solstice. Six months from now you'll need a fire to keep warm." Paul wanted to ask why Bannus didn't have a fire-pit in his cave, but he knew that he had to keep his lips sealed. The oath of silence wasn't easy to observe. Bannus rescued him from his awkward predicament when he said, "You're probably wondering why I don't have a fire-pit in my cave." Paul nodded his head with an affirmative gesture on his face. "When you learn how to heat your body with your inner fire, you won't need a fire-pit, either. Anyway, here's a bundle of clothes you can use to keep warm, if needed. I made them out of the inner bark fibers of the trees in the valley." Bannus wrapped the green-dyed bark-fiber robe around his waist and shoulders to demonstrate how it should be worn. Paul took off his old brown linen robe and tried on his new bark-woven robe. It felt rough, but warm, to the skin. "Now you look like a real disciple of the wilderness," said Bannus in a jovial tone.

Bannus left Paul alone in the cave as the sky darkened and the stars began to display their twinkling light. Paul sat on the cave floor in his new robe and reflected on the events of the day. He couldn't believe that he was finally a disciple of a real master. That night he dreamed that he was riding in a golden chariot, but he couldn't get the chariot into the sky.

The following morning, and every morning thereafter, Paul awoke to the sounds of chirping birds in the nearby valley. They were the precursors of each new day, calling for the disciple to arise and greet the rising sun. Paul diligently followed the daily routine that Bannus prescribed for his rapid purification.

"Today I will show you how to cleanse the body and mind of its passionate nature," said Bannus, who was drinking from the same natural spring as his disciple in the morning. "When you descend into the cold water to bathe, you sublimate the generative desires, thus preserving a chaste nature for the regeneration of your body." Bannus descended into the shallow spring and lay lengthwise, completely submerging his naked body and holding his head under water for almost a minute. Paul watched at first, and then he performed the same procedure.

"When you descend into the waters of life, which is what you do when you leave the world above to come to the world below," expounded Bannus after Paul stepped out of the water onto dry land, "you enter the world of matter and take on a body of flesh. When you leave the world of matter, you take off your robe of flesh. Naked you come

into this world, and naked you leave it. This drama of life you will reenact in the morning and in the evening."

After morning meditations, Paul was instructed in the process of developing the higher mind, which Bannus called intuition or the wisdom of the soul. "This is the method of careful observation of every thread of thought of which the fabric of your mind is constructed. I call this tent-making because each part of the tent must be constructed properly in order for it to be a suitable habitation. Your habitation is the mind. Henceforth, you will be a tent-maker."

Paul learned how to understand the cause and effect of each and every thought that entered his mind. He followed each thread of thought from its inception to its ending. He was taught how to have the right ideas about things by basing his thoughts on careful observation of the external world of nature and the internal world of mind. He learned to differentiate what was reflected from the heights of intuition into his receptive mind. He advanced from level to level, learning that his higher mind was actually a vast realm of consciousness that spanned the ocean of inner space.

"Once you free yourself from the many masters that try to rule your body and mind," instructed Bannus as Paul neared the end of his forty day fast, "you will be the master of your own life. Only the Most High, your higher mind, will be lord of your life."

After the period of fasting ended, Paul was given the carob pods to eat. "Here, Little One, take this nutritious food," said Bannus, offering him the same bowl of carob pods which he had offered Paul on the first day of the fast. "Now you may eat. You have successfully completed the supreme fast." Paul took one long pod from the bowl and slowly chewed the dried pod, savoring each chewy seed and relishing the sweet honey-like syrup within the pulp. "Let this food be bread for your body and give you energy to perform your daily tasks."

During the following hot summer days, Paul followed Bannus down the valley and along the Jordan River to find other sources of food: dates from the date palm tree, olives from the olive tree, almonds, and other tree-food. Edible plants and roots were another source of nourishment. But the staple food was always the carob bean pod from the evergreen Carob tree or Locust tree. Paul learned how to knock the carob pods from the stalks attached to the trunk and limbs of the tall trees by using a long stick, and he learned how to dry the pods in the sun to make them palpable.

In the winter, Paul learned how to gather dried wood for the fire and how to make a fire. Bannus would sometimes come to his cave to sit with Paul around the fire and watch the dancing flames with their blue, red, and orange colors. He also learned about the cosmic fire that flowed through his spinal cord. In the spring, he rejoiced with nature as it appeared as if the world was reborn and redecorated with the many-colored flowers.

A year passed, and then a second year, and Paul began to completely forget his past life before he came to the wilderness. He felt as if his mind, body, and soul had been transformed. He was at peace with himself and with the world. He realized that the solitary path, which Bannus espoused, was conducive to a total purification and renewal of one's threefold nature – body, mind, and soul. The way of the wilderness had taught him to make his mind pure and clean of any new material desire. Toward the end of the third year, he felt like an entirely new man.

And then it happened, but not quite like he expected it to happen. In the middle of the night, at the time of the spring equinox, he was awakened from his sleep by a bright and shining light in his cave. The light had the form of a golden chariot, which was drawn by four living creatures: a lion, an eagle, a man, and an ox. Inside of the chariot was a long-haired bearded man, dressed in a white robe, who beckoned for Paul to take a ride in the chariot. Paul felt as if his soul stepped out of his physical body, like a bird out of a cage, and sat in the chariot beside the man. The chariot seemed to hover above the ground for a moment, and then it ascended into the starry sky. The chariot moved along a river of solar waves, through spheres of light, through inter-cosmic dimensions, into another world.

When Paul stepped out of the chariot into the new world, he saw a tiny baby in a basin of water. Beside the basin was a mother who was washing the naked body of the baby. He heard her singing softly to the baby as she bathed it:

"Hail, the baby's come to us,
Hail, the Son has come to us,
O, what joy he has brought
To our hearts and to our souls."

Then he heard the mother say the name of the baby: "Elisha ben Abuyah, you are a beautiful baby, and you will grow up to be a fine son."

Paul came closer to the mother and child, and he looked into the baby's face. Instantly, the thought entered his mind that he was looking at himself in the form of a newborn child. Paul recalled the words of his master: "When you descend into the waters of life, you enter the world of matter and take on a body of flesh." He had reenacted the drama of life on a daily basis, and now he was confronted with that life face to face. He wanted to take the baby out of the basin of water and bring it home with him.

When Paul suddenly found himself back in his cave again, he wondered if he had really traveled to another world, or whether he had a vision. He needed to find out what had happened. He hurried to Bannus' cave by the light of the full moon.

"Bannus, something happened to me just now," said Paul excitedly. "I wanted to ask you what it means."

Bannus sat up. "Tell me what happened," he said.

Paul explained in minute detail the experience of the chariot ride and the encounter with the newborn child.

"Son," said Bannus, using the endearing name for the first time with Paul, "you have taken a ride in the Merkaba, the Light-ship of the soul, to another dimension. In reality, you must know, the soul does not travel anywhere. Everything and everywhere is already inside of your inner spirit, and your spirit is a reflection of all that is. Your soul basically became aware of a higher consciousness, and it appeared that you traveled to it, when in actuality it opened up as a new reality within the crystal-clear consciousness of your mirror-like mind."

"But how about the newborn child that I saw in the basin of water?" inquired Paul.

"You have become a true seer, like the oracles of former days, and your consciousness has revealed to you your next life," explained Bannus. "You will be Elisha son of Abuyah in your next incarnation."

666

ηε φρην (he phren), The Lower Mind

ηε… 8
φ ….500
ρ ….100
η …. 8
ν …. 50

_____
666

"Here is Wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six."

- - Revelation 13:18

"Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold."

- - I Kings 10:14

Apollos looked out of the small window as the airplane started to descend into the Eternal City, the sacred heart of Christendom. Beside him, Sophia reclined on his broad shoulder, resting and recharging her internal battery after having depleted her psychic energy at Delphi. Apollos reminisced about the long session with the oracle of Delphi, a role that Sophia had played admirably. He had already read the words in his little notebook that he had transcribed from the oracular revelation of the Keys to the Initiated. He reflected on the science of the accelerated evolution of the human soul from the lower mind (and its attachment to the physical body) to the higher mind (and its ascension to higher consciousness). This science was revealed in explicit detail in the unveiled little book, which Apollos kept close to his heart in an inner pocket of his blazer jacket.

Simon Petroma sat behind Apollos and listened once again to the recording of the apocalyptic secrets through a set of earphones. He was experiencing a battle in his mind, and his heart thumped nervously, as he tried to reconcile what he had been taught and what he was now hearing for the first time in his life. What he had been taught from early childhood, when his imagination had been captivated by the terrifying images from the Apocalypse, the last book of the Bible, was that the book was about the past, present, and future of the Christian church. He had tried to decipher the symbolic language when he became a scholar within the Catholic Church. However, his interpretations always portrayed the persecution of the early church by pagan Roman authorities, and he saw the metaphors as literary devices used to represent pagan Rome, the city on seven hills. Within the apocalyptic story he saw the church being triumphant over paganism. Now, in stark contrast to what he had been taught, he was discovering that the church represented the human being.

Sophia drifted back and forth between a state of semi-wakefulness and a state of semi-somnolence. She was aware that she was flying in an airplane through earth's atmosphere, but her mind kept falling into a dreamy feeling of still being in Greece. It seemed as if her subconscious mind was replaying over and over again the oracular

message that she had transmitted from some universal source, a memory of some distant wisdom which had been buried in the fabric of space and time. The ancient wisdom had risen to her consciousness like a pearl brought to the surface from a cavernous depth. Images of a drama played out on the stage of life kept recycling in her mind, and she sensed her heart expanding and contracting rhythmically with each renewal of the play in which she was a prominent heroine. One particular image seemed to perplex her intuitive mind, and she tried to pierce through the mysterious image.

Apollos felt Sophia's body jump out of her seat and her head move from his shoulder.

"Sophia, did you just dream of something?" asked Apollos, who was familiar with the perturbations of the dream-body when it was reentering the physical body.

Sophia stared for a moment absent-mindedly as she sat in an upright position and gathered her senses. "I must have been dreaming," she said slowly, as if trying to recall the mysterious image that haunted her subconscious mind. She turned around to look at Simon and saw that he still had his earphones on. At that instant the mysterious image became a lucid realization. "Now I remember," she said in a whisper. "I remember seeing Simon hide a tape recorder when I came out of the trance in Delphi."

Apollos looked back at Simon and realized that he was probably listening to the recording of the esoteric revelation.

At that moment a voice came on the speakers within the airplane and told the passengers to prepare for landing at the airport. Simon opened his eyes and saw Apollos looking intently at him. The voice reminded the passengers to turn off all electronic devices. A light flashed simultaneously overhead to fasten the seatbelts.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" asked Simon as he turned off the small handheld recorder and put away his earphones.

"You recorded what Sophia said at Delphi, didn't you!?" stated Apollos in an accusatory tone.

"And what if I did!?" answered Simon with a mocking tone.

"You beast!" exclaimed Apollos through gritted teeth. He turned around and brought his seat to an upright position. He looked out of the small oval window and saw the city of Rome fade into the distance as the airplane descended westward toward the airport near the Tyrrhenian Sea. He couldn't make out the seven famous hills that he had read about, but his associative mind parroted a mnemonic device that he had learned in school: "Can Queen Victoria Eat Cold Apple Pie?" The first letters, he recalled, stood for the seven hills: Capitoline, Quirinal, Viminal, Esquiline, Caelian, Aventine, and Palatine. He could, however, see the Tiber River snake its way through the modern city.

Sophia reached out and held Apollos' hand as the plane rapidly lost altitude. They both seemed to hold their breath as the wheels of the plane touched down on the runway of the Leonardo da Vinci International Airport, Rome's main airport. They breathed a sigh of relief as the plane taxied toward the terminal, and Sophia smiled as if to reassure Apollos that everything would turn out all right as long as they were together.

A personal driver was waiting for Simon and his guests, as he called them. Apollos noticed the Alfa Romeo insignia as he walked up to the red car and got into the back seat with Sophia; two Milanese symbols decorated a heraldic inner circle: a red cross on a white field, and a snake-cum-dragon on a blue field. The passengers sat quietly as the driver drove down the Autostrada Roma Aeroporta di Fumicino, the main

highway connecting the airport with Rome. When the driver turned onto the Grande Raccordo Anulare, the ring road motorway that encircled the city, Simon started talking to the driver in Italian. Apollos and Sophia had no clue that Simon and the driver were working together to sabotage the publication of Apollos' manuscript.

The driver took exit number one, Aurelia, and drove down Via Aurelia to Citta Del Vaticano (Vatican City). Within minutes the car stopped at the Starhotel Michelangelo, which was a short walk from St. Peter's Square.

"This is where we're going to stay," said Simon, breaking his self-imposed silence. He was still bitter about the word Apollos used when he found out that Simon had recorded the revelatory message at Delphi.

"Arrivederci," said the driver as he unloaded the suitcases and turned to leave.

"A piu tardi, Romano," responded Simon, calling his friend by his first name for the first time, as he told him he'd see him later.

"So what are you planning to do with the recording?" asked Apollos as soon as Romano drove away.

"Let's not make a public spectacle of this," answered Simon as he picked up his suitcase and headed for the hotel lobby. "Let's talk about it as soon as we get to your room."

As before, Simon made sure his room was adjacent to the room Apollos and Sophia shared. He wanted to keep a close eye on them.

"Look, Apollos!" exclaimed Sophia as she entered the hotel room. "We have a view of St. Peter's Dome!"

"I thought you'd be excited to have a room with a view of the greatest monument of the Catholic Church," remarked Simon as he stood at the threshold of their room. "I'll be back in a minute, as soon as I settle into my room."

"I still would like to know what he's up to," said Apollos as he stood beside Sophia and looked at the egg-shaped dome crowned with what appeared to be a four-directional or a fleur-de-lis cross on top of a gilded bronze ball.

"Don't push him too hard," cautioned Sophia. "Even if he has a recording of the oracle's revelation, he probably has no idea what the esoteric message is all about, or how to apply the knowledge in his life. Remember that the final initiation into the mysteries of the body and soul take place only after years of practice and meditation."

"You're right," admitted Apollos as he put his arm around Sophia's slender shoulder. "To be a true scientist of the soul, you must dedicate a life-time or more of serious endeavor. It's not any easy path to tread."

"So you want to know what I'm going to do with the secret wisdom I now have in my possession?" rhetorically questioned Simon as he burst into the room. "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. Now that I have the magical keys of the kingdom of the soul, I can become a magician, like your Apollonius. I can become the next pontifex maximus, the great bridge between heaven and earth. I can become a god." Simon stepped up to the window and pointed in the direction of St. Peter's basilica. "See the globus cruciger on top of the dome? That cross on an orb represents the dominion of the Roman Catholic Church over the world. Well, with what I now have in my possession, I can make or break that dominion."

"I think you're going a little too far with this," interjected Apollos, stepping toward Simon. "You made me believe that you wanted to suppress the dissertation that I

was working on. Now it appears that you want to use it for nefarious purposes. My purpose in bringing the story of Apollonius to the world was for scholarly reasons, to enlighten the world with the wisdom he tried to spread everywhere that he traveled and every temple and sacred site that he visited. It was not for power or to bring down a religion."

"Gentlemen, please listen to me," said Sophia, stepping between them. She saw that the heated exchange was starting to escalate into a war of words. "I think I distinctly recall a story about Simon the magician, who tried to become a great one, and he also tried to buy the power to perform miracles. If I recall the story correctly, he was denounced by the same Peter who tradition says is buried in the basilica that we see in front of us."

"I am well aware of that story," acknowledged Simon. "As a matter of fact, I carry the same name, and I pride myself on being a follower of his teachings. His concept of mind as the father and thought as the mother uniting to produce the world is the best example of spirit above and matter below working together to bring existence into being. He was a true magician who understood how the Eternal One, through the mind and the Logos or intelligence, brings heaven on earth."

"Then you must also be aware of the apocryphal story that Clement of Alexandria weaves to show that Peter, the champion of the Jews, was more powerful than Simon, the champion of the gentiles," continued Sophia.

"That was just a legend that the Catholic Church created to discredit any heresy," countered Simon. "You don't really expect me to believe that they were flying through the air and all that nonsense."

Apollos listened and watched as he saw the many sides of Simon come to the surface. Apollos suddenly recalled the words of Maestro Salvatore D'Aura about the paths of the biblical Paul and Apollonius of Tyana crossing in Athens, and he thought it referred to the story of Paul on Mars Hill and the story of Apollonius in the temples of Athens. Now it dawned on him that there was another story that entered into the mixture – the story of Simon the Magician. Apollonius was denounced as a magician, and so was the biblical Paul. Simon was a gentile and a heretic, and the early Church Fathers were eager to discredit the wise man Apollonius, so they inserted the story of Simon into the biblical account. They didn't want to use the name of Apollonius, so they just called him Simon the Magician. After all, even the Jews thought that the biblical Paul (or Apollonius) was a heretic. Apollos still felt confused about all the stories that connected the biblical Paul with the philosopher Apollonius. Nevertheless, he persevered in his determination to make all the connections and demonstrate how the story of Apollonius was transformed into the story of the biblical Paul. After all, he was now in Rome, where the strongest evidence for their identical identity existed.

That night Apollos dreamed that he was entangled with Simon in an ongoing battle with many twists and turns: first, he saw a statue standing on an island in the Tiber River in honor of the new god, Simon, and the statue seemed to come to life, performing marvelous wonders such as making a dog talk, a fake fish swim in a pond, and a seven-month child talk like a man; at times Simon seemed to be a real magician performing illusions with the help of a daemon or spirit guide, and at times Simon seemed to be transformed into an universal genius whose stature equated with Ju-Peter. The protean nature of the two beings was such that it was difficult to discern who was who, for in the

presence of a Roman emperor both tried to make a dead man come to life, a contest in which the magician Simon first showed his command of the magic arts by putting the man to death and then the god-like Ju-Peter restoring him to life. Then in another contest of who was more powerful, Simon flew through the air all over Rome, and then the more powerful Ju-Peter caused Simon to fall from the air and break his legs. At that moment Apollos, who felt like he himself was floating in the air and then plummeted to earth, awoke. The last image that he saw as he fell out of the astral sky was Simon dying in a grove of Diana, the moon-goddess, in Aricia, which was outside Rome, and in the grove he saw two large tablets of stone which were joined together in a large Book of Stone called the Petroma. And Simon the Magician was holding that Book of Stone in his hands.

"Sophia," said Apollos as he gently shook her shoulder. "I had the most unusual dream. I've got to tell you about it."

"It's not even daybreak," said Sophia, rubbing her eyes as she looked at the drawn white curtains covering the window.

"It was a most curious dream," began Apollos. "A contest between Simon the Magician and a super-hero named Ju-Peter." Apollos embellished the story of his dream somewhat as he retold it. When he came to the part about the Book of Stone called the Petroma, Sophia sat up in the bed and gasped, "You saw the Book of Stone?"

"Yes," replied Apollos. "What does it mean?"

"It means that you saw the book that was read by the hierophant to the candidate for initiation into the ancient Eleusinian mysteries. The two large tablets that were joined together represented the dual aspect of truth or ultimate reality as One."

"Why was it called Petroma?" asked Apollos, who suddenly realized that the name was the same as the mysterious man who was presently holding them as hostages in a megalomaniac plot.

"Peter, the man who was the interpreter (or inter-peter) of the mysteries, or the hierophant as we called him in Greece, was a title of the chief god or Ju-Peter," explained Sophia, her wide awake eyes shining like a beacon in the night. "He was the one who brought to light the sacred mystery of Zeus, thus Zeus-Peter."

"And we know that, according to Apollonius, there is not a structure nor a statue in all Rome but that had a Greek origin," remarked Apollos, who deductively reasoned that Jupiter, the Pater or father of the gods, was derived from the Greek Zeus.

"Precisely," stated Sophia. "Which brings us to the legend of Peter in Rome."

They were interrupted by a loud knocking on their door. "Are you both awake?" they heard the voice of Simon say.

"Wait a minute!" yelled back Apollos. He got out of bed and walked to the door wearing only his boxer shorts. "What do you want?" asked Apollos as he held the door slightly ajar.

"I heard voices coming from your room, and I figured you both were awake," explained Simon, who was standing in the hallway in his pajamas.

"I was telling Sophia about a dream I had," said Apollos, yawning for the first time since he had awakened.

"You'll have to tell me about it sometime," said Simon with a subdued interest. "Listen, I forgot to tell the two of you that today is the Feast day of Saints Peter and Paul.

"There's a special jubilee celebration at Piazza San Pietro." Simon used the Italian name for St. Peter's Square or plaza.

"Oh, I didn't know that," commented Apollos indifferently.

"How would the two of you like to join me for breakfast in the hotel's fine restaurant, and then I can show you around my beloved city?" suggested Simon, whose friendly tone seemed to betray an ulterior motive.

Apollos looked back at Sophia, who was nodding her head in approval to the suggestion. "OK, un'ora," said Apollos, raising one finger skywards to indicate in one hour. "A piu tardi," he added. He had remembered the Italian phrase Simon had used the previous day. He was starting to catch on to the adage: When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

"What day is today?" was the first question Sophia asked when they met Simon for breakfast.

"Thursday, or as we Italians say it, Giovedi," answered Simon, getting out of his chair slightly out of respect for the lady who was going to sit across from him.

"Jumping Jupiter," said Apollos, winking at Sophia.

"By Jove, you've got it," winked back Sophia in response.

"What's the winking all about?" asked Simon, who noticed the subtle gestures.

"Oh, it's something that we were talking about this morning, how the Greek gods became Roman gods, and how Zeus became Jupiter, and so forth and so on," responded Sophia in a playful tone.

"And how curiously that the name Peter comes from the Roman god Ju-Peter or the Greek combination Zeus-Peter," added Apollos, stressing the parts of the dual name.

"So what was that dream about, that caused you to raise such a ruckus this morning?" asked Simon, changing the subject. He started to eat the food on his plate.

"Oh, it was only a jumbled up replay of the apocryphal stories of Simon and Peter that we were talking about yesterday," remarked Apollos. "The really interesting part was the ending, where I saw a book of stone called the Petroma."

Simon stopped eating as he looked up and saw the look of realization in the eyes of Apollos. "So now you know," said Simon sheepishly.

"Yes, we do," chimed in Sophia. "We now understand why you carry that name, and what drives you to be the grand interpreter of the mysteries."

"Say no more," pleaded Simon. "I have been found out. Let's just finish our breakfast and be on our way. I'd rather help you enjoy the city than spoil your day with an in-depth look into my true nature."

After breakfast, Simon's personal driver, Romano, picked them up and drove them across the Fiume Tevere (Tiber River) to the ruins of the ancient Roman Forum. They walked through the ancient ruins and reflected on the glory that was once Rome. As they walked down the Via Sacra (Sacred Way), Apollos began to expound on Apollonius in Rome:

"Apollonius must have walked through here in a religious procession along the route of the Sacred Way when he first came to Rome. In the biography by Philostratus, he mentions that Apollonius was not afraid to enter Rome, even though many philosophers were persecuted for speaking out about the tyrannical rule of Nero. He says that Apollonius first stopped outside Rome at a grove of Diana in Aricia, which was located beside the circular volcanic crater of Lake Nemi. That's where a fleeing

philosopher warned him not to proceed northward to Rome. However, when he came to Rome, he was careful to only share his wisdom, and not his opinions about the buffoon Nero. He visited all the temples and was given written permission by the high-priest Telesinus to recommend reforms. The major reform Apollonius attempted to inculcate was the abolition of animal sacrifices. So in the Temples of Jupiter, and Saturn, and Castor and Pollux, and in other temples, Apollonius tried to teach that it was better to bring an offering of fruit, or to burn incense as an offering to the gods, instead of trying to guess the will of the gods through bloody sacrifices."

"Would you like to visit the Colosseum, while we're here in this vicinity?" interrupted Simon as they started to head in the direction of Rome's greatest amphitheater.

"I'd rather not," bluntly stated Apollos. "Apollonius declined to go there because of the uncivilized activities that took place there."

"How about the Arch of Titus, which is straight ahead?" inquired Simon, who was trying to be a good host and a tour guide.

"I'd like to see it," stated Sophia, who walked hand in hand with Apollos.

They walked under the enormous memorial commissioned by Emperor Domitian in 81 CE after the death of his brother Titus, the general who conquered Jerusalem in 70 CE.

Simon translated the inscription in the frieze on top of the arch: "The Roman Senate and People to Deified Titus, Vespasian Augustus, son of Deified Vespasian."

Apollos looked up at the inside of the arch and commented on the panel with a relief of the triumphal procession with the spoils taken from the temple in Jerusalem: "That menorah, or seven-branched candelabrum, is the most precious sacred object that the Romans stole from the Jewish people. How humiliating for the people to watch a foreign conqueror loot their sacred temple."

Sophia was impressed by the symbolic representation on the second panel with a relief of Titus' victory: "There is the deified emperor Titus riding in a chariot drawn by four horses and accompanied by the goddess of Victory and the goddess of deified Rome. How those emperors loved to glorify each others military exploits!"

"I'm not too proud to say that Apollonius was involved in advising Vespasian to seek the crown at the same time that the campaign against Jerusalem was set into motion," remarked Apollos. "I guess Apollonius felt that Vespasian would make a better ruler than the tyrant Nero."

"I suggest we proceed to our next destination," advised Simon as they exited the Roman Forum through the Arch of Titus. "I'd like to show you the official cathedral of Rome, San Giovanni in Laterno, founded by Emperor Constantine in the early 4th century."

The first thing that Apollos noticed as they drove up to the plaza, where the basilica stood, was a red granite obelisk.

"That's the largest standing obelisk in the world," said Simon when he saw Apollos gaze in wonderment at the quadrangular pillar. "It's 105 feet tall, and it was moved from the Karnak temple in Luxor, Egypt under the orders of Emperor Constantine, who hoped to raise it in his new capital at Constantinople. But he died before it left Egypt, and his son, the emperor Constantine II, decided to bring it to Rome instead."

"I wonder if Apollonius saw this obelisk when he traveled up the Nile River on his pilgrimage through Egypt?" said Apollos musingly.

When Simon led his little tour group up to the impressive entrance of St. John Lateran, which was named after both John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, he read the inscription on the façade while Apollos and Sophia looked up admiringly at the seven meter high statues of Christ holding a large Latin cross, the two biblical figures that the church was named after, and twelve saints of the Eastern and Western churches:

"SACROSANCTA LATERANENSIS ECCLESIA OMNIUM URBIS ET ORBIS ECCLESIARUM MATER ET CAPUT, which means The Most Holy Lateran Church, Mother and Mistress of all churches of the city and the world."

"That's quite a distinction, to be named the Mother of all churches," said Sophia.

"I would say that's quite an egocentric claim," remarked Apollos.

"Wait until you go inside and see the special high altar," said Simon, hoping to build up some excitement for his tourists.

When they arrived at the tall, ornate papal altar, they stood looking upward at its heaven-oriented design for several minutes before Simon broke the silence:

"There's a relic chamber at the top of this high altar in which the heads, or part of the heads, according to tradition of course, of the Saints Peter and Paul are preserved."

"The only part of Apollonius' head that I can imagine preserved here would be the hair of his head and the beard from his face that was shorn and shaved when he was in Rome the second time, which was during Emperor Diocletian's reign when he was imprisoned and brought to trial for treasonous implications."

"Well, according to apocryphal stories and church historians, Paul was beheaded during his second imprisonment during the reign of Emperor Nero in the year 67AD," stated Simon.

"I remember reading about Apollonius in prison," interjected Sophia, "and I especially loved the part where he consoled the other prisoners and then preached a sermon to them, telling them that we are all in a prison which is known as life. He explained to them that the soul is bound and fettered in a perishable body and has to suffer many things."

"That is quite a philosophy of life," admitted Simon. "But I don't think we have much time left if we're to make the appearance of Pope John Paul in St. Peter's Square at noon. I think we'd better hurry along."

"Now that's a sweet surprise that I hadn't anticipated," expressed Sophia. "My heart is starting to open up to your ingratiating deeds."

"I'm pleased to hear that," smiled Simon, whose inner nature also seemed to blossom at the thought of the person whom he called Holy Father.

When they arrived at St. Peter's Square, the plaza was already packed with pilgrims from all over the world. They made their way past the centrally located obelisk, and maneuvered past the standing crowd, to get as close as they could to the studio window overlooking the square. They could see a large purple banner unfurled from the open window; the banner was adorned with the pope's personal coat of arms, whose central motif was a white cross of purity on a heavenly blue background with a large virginal white M in the lower right-hand corner; the M stood for his unflinching devotion to the Virgin Mary.

The crowd responded with a thunderous applause when Pope John Paul II made his appearance at the window. He held up his right hand to silence the crowd, and then he led the pilgrims in the prayer known as the Angelus:

"Angelus Domini nuntial vit Mariae (The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary)
Et concepit de Spiritu Sancto (And she conceived of the Holy Ghost)
Ave Maria. (Hail Mary)
Ecce aucilla Domini (Behold the handmaid of the Lord)
Fiat mihi secundum verbum taum (Be it done unto me according to thy word)
Ave Maria. (Hail Mary)
Et Verbum caro factum est (And the Word was made flesh)
Et habitavit in nobis (And dwelt among us)
Ave Maria. (Hail Mary)"

Apollos looked up at the frail, suffering pope as his words droned through the loud speakers. He was amazed to be standing in the presence of a man whose influence in the world was truly great. He remembered watching the man traverse the globe on television, and he watched as the gifted leader of the Catholic world brought communism to its knees. Here was a man who carried the two names that were paramount in Apollos' own life: John, the revelator of the Apocalypse, and Paul, the world traveler who was to Apollos also known as Apollonius. Curiously, the pope signed his name in the Greek style as Ioannes Paulus, as if to connect himself to the mysteries of Greece.

At the end of the Angelus prayer, the pope spoke about the Feast day of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul that the Catholic people were celebrating, calling Peter and Paul "the pillars of the universal Church." Apollos had an image of two obelisks flash in his mind. One obelisk seemed to represent Egypt and the other Greece, two rays of the solar deity that shone like lighthouses of Rome's past. The pope continued to speak of the destiny of the two apostles, how "a mysterious design of Providence brought them both to Rome," and how their fate was sealed in blood: Peter by being crucified upside down at his request, and Paul by being beheaded. "One was buried at the foot of the Vatican Hill, the other on the Via Ostiense."

Apollos caught the words Via Ostiense and held them in his mind. He repeated the words to remember them. He felt a strong need to visit the purported site of St. Paul's burial.

Sophia, meanwhile, was savoring the devotion that the people showed to their beloved leader. She was especially thrilled when she heard him speak of his devotion to the Queen of Heaven: "Lastly, let us turn our hearts to Mary Most Holy, whom we invoke today as the Queen of Apostles and the Salus Populi Romani – the salvation of the Roman people."

In her heart, Sophia couldn't help but think about the life of the pope and his long pilgrimage through the many countries of the world, trying to unite all the religions under the umbrella of the universal (Catholic) church. 'All roads lead to Rome,' thought Sophia, 'but the pope is not able to publicly state that all religions lead to God.'

Simon knew in his heart that he had made the right decision to bring his captive guests to hear the pope speak. And he still had one more surprise for them: the Holy Door. Simon tapped Apollos on the shoulder and motioned for him to follow. Apollos

took Sophia by the hand as they threaded their way out of the crowd. When they had made their way clear of the dense throng, Simon explained what he had in store for them:

"I wanted to show you the Holy Door before all the pilgrims start to make their way to it," explained Simon. "Since this is the year of the Great Jubilee, the Holy Father has opened the Holy Door so pilgrims can go through the door of salvation and receive an indulgence by means of penance, forgiveness, and mercy."

When they approached the bronze doors which had been opened by the pope for the Great Jubilee, Apollos and Sophia stopped and gave each other a look of familiarity.

"They look just like the Gates of Paradise by Ghiberti that we saw at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco," they seemed to tell each other simultaneously.

"Except that the sixteen scenes on these doors depict the story of man's original fall and the subsequent story of redemption as portrayed in the New Testament, whereas the Ghiberti doors depicted ten scenes from the Old Testament in a Renaissance manner," observed Sophia.

"As you enter the Door of Great Pardon," said Simon as he started to lead them through the gates of the sacred entrance under the watchful eyes of St. Peter, who held the keys of the kingdom in his right hand and an open book of life in his left hand, "you must be penitent and approach with a contrite heart, renouncing all attachment to sin. You can also pray a Hail Mary or Our Father as you enter."

Apollos had his eyes riveted on the scenes portraying man's path of redemption through the grace of a merciful Father and the sacred heart of a caring savior and shepherd. The story of the door was the story of Christ, through whom the prodigal son returned to find forgiveness. Apollos felt as if he was part of a huge procession entering into the kingdom of the blessed as he walked through the doors.

Sophia was wondering what Martin Luther would think about indulgences being granted for walking through the Holy Door.

Simon led them through the basilica, pointing out the highlights of the interior. He showed them his favorite statue, the one of St. Peter sitting on what appeared to be a throne.

"The hierophant, holding the keys to the mysteries," whispered Sophia to Apollos as they meditated on the Greek method of sculpting universal truths into human statuesque forms.

"The Rock, from whom flows the wisdom of the ages," added Apollos, using the Christian metaphor for the interpreter of the universal religion, commonly referred to as Roman Catholicism.

"It's amazing how you can see all the ancient gods of Egypt, Greece, and Rome assembled during various periods of time into this monumental edifice constructed to the glory of the Church," reflected Sophia as she looked around at all the various statues.

"And now these ancient gods are called saints by the Church," remarked Simon, who led them to the ornate baroque-style high altar, the traditional site of St. Peter's burial.

"Can we see the rest of this basilica and Vatican City some other day?" asked Apollos as he reluctantly followed Simon around each symbolic representation of the Catholic faith. "I'd really like to see the place where they say St. Paul was buried."

"Sure, we can come back some other day," replied Simon. "After all, we'll probably be spending some time in Rome before we move on to our next destination."

Apollos ignored the sinister-sounding comment; he tried not to think of the fact that, even though they had a relative amount of freedom, they were still prisoners of Simon's grand scheme. For Apollos, the battle with Simon would not be over until he had retrieved his stolen manuscript.

"I'd really love to come back just to spend a whole day at the Sistine Chapel," concurred Sophia. "I've always wanted to see Michelangelo's masterpieces, especially his portrayal of the sibyls or oracles." She had seen pictures of the Delphic oracle and other sibyls that Michelangelo had interspersed among his paintings of the Old Testament prophets, but she wanted to look up at the ceiling and see the actual representations of antiquity.

When they arrived at the San Paolo fuori la Mura (St. Paul's outside the Walls) basilica on Via Ostiense (Way to Ostia), Apollos felt that he was coming to a sacred site. The anticipation in his mind made his heart palpitate with a religious fervor. Here was a place preserved by tradition for posterity, a place where the memory of Paul or Apollonius was preserved throughout the centuries. Simon led the way to the front entrance. He wanted to give his tourists or "pilgrims of Rome," as he had started to call them, a historical perspective of the site which attracted many visitors:

"Catholic and Christian tradition hold that St. Paul suffered martyrdom by beheading in the first century, most probably during his second imprisonment in the final years of the reign of Nero in 67 AD. According to the Church Fathers, his body was buried in a cemetery along the Way to Ostia, right here on these grounds. A shrine was erected over the grave, and later, in the year 324, the Emperor Constantine consecrated a church over the burial site and placed the Apostle's body in a bronze sarcophagus covered with a marble slab." Simon paused in his extemporaneous speech, while he searched his encyclopedic mind for some more interesting facts.

"According to my calculations," interrupted Apollos, who was eager to present another view, "the traditional story of St. Paul has him imprisoned on two separate occasions, once in 62 AD on his first trip to Rome, and then in 67 AD on his second visit. According to certain sources, including a biblical allusion, Paul visited Spain and North Africa in between his two visits. Well, that happens to be exactly, without a shadow of a doubt, what Apollonius did after he left the environs of Rome when Nero was expelling the Stoic and other philosophers from Rome. The biblical record that suggests that Paul was only under house arrest while in Rome is paralleled by Apollonius being under the watchful eyes of the spies of Nero while he lived in the temples of Rome. The second imprisonment of Paul, which is only recorded by dubious second and third century sources, is unsubstantiated by historical records, which suggests that the story was a gloss or cover-up of the real story of the imprisonment of Apollonius of Tyana during the reign of the Emperor Domitian in the year 91 AD. And what better way to end the influence of Apollonius then by a symbolic beheading of the pagan philosopher (as they called him), who was denounced by the later Roman Catholic Church."

"Gentlemen," said Sophia, demanding her share of attention, "you have both given fine discourses on the two traditions that form the basis of our present attention. But I think you're both missing the point here." Sophia had already glimpsed the statue of the Apostle at the end of the courtyard though which they were walking. The statue stood on a pedestal in front of the impressive colorful golden mosaics of the façade of the patriarchal basilica. "By whatever name you call him, or whatever tradition you ascribe

to the man, here was a wise man who walked the earth and conquered the hearts of a multitude of followers from all walks of life."

Apollos glimpsed the same aspect of truth that Sophia had propounded as he approached the dramatic statue of a god-sized figure holding a sword in the right hand with the hilt placed over the heart and the blade elevated over the left shoulder. The hooded giant of a man stood in his long folded robe and sandals in a contemplative pose, with eyes lowered earthward in an aspect of looking at human nature passing by. In his left hand he carried a closed book along the side of his body, with the spine of the book resting in his strong fingers.

"PRAEDICATOR VERITATIS DOCTORI GENTIUM," read Simon in Latin.

"To the preacher of truth, the teacher of nations," translated Sophia, looking at the inscription describing the wise man. "See, that's what I mean by giving credit and honor to Truth in the Greek fashion, by leaving out the name and anthropomorphizing an abstract concept."

"I know what you're trying to say," said Apollos, who looked up at the object of adoration. "But this statue is very similar to the statue that I saw in the United States, and Maestro Salvatore D'Aura said that it was definitely Apollonius. He equated the St. Paul of the Bible with the philosopher and wise man of the first century, Apollonius of Tyana. Except that statue was not hooded and the sword of wisdom was turned downward, instead of upward.

"Let me show you the high altar, which stands over the tomb of St. Paul," announced Simon as he tried to lure Apollos and Sophia away from the statue.

Apollos looked up at the tympanum of the façade of the basilica, with the symbols of the Christian faith portrayed in brilliant mosaics made from gold glass: Christ seated on a central throne and the apostles Peter and Paul on either side.

Sophia looked ahead at the bronze doors depicting scenes from the lives of the two apostles.

Simon was focused on the burial site under the high altar.

"He is not here," stated Apollos as he looked inside the high altar, which had a red light behind a grille burning perpetually to designate the resting place of Paul. Apollos almost wanted to add, 'he is risen,' but he felt it would be inappropriate in a religious setting. "Apollonius was believed to have died at the age of 100 possibly in Ephesus, or possibly in India. But not here."

Sophia closed her eyes and tried to meditate on the spiritual presence of the master who taught wisdom to the Mediterranean world during the first century. She saw an image of Apollonius in her mind – the same image with the unsheathed sword held over the heart, as if to signify that the battle of life streamed through the heart center, where good and evil contended for the mind of man – and the image verified, in a voice sounding through her inner ear, what Apollos had said: "I am not here. I am in India."

"He is in India," said Sophia when she came out of her semi-trance.

"You mean his dead body?" asked Simon, who took a sudden interest in what Sophia had said.

"No, not his dead body," answered Sophia. "The living Apollonius. The master of the wisdom of the gods is in India."

"That's exactly what Maestro D'Aura told me," added Apollos. "He told me he's living in an etheric body in the Himalayas."

Simon's mind was already working on another scheme: how to get to Apollonius. "Oh, by the way," remembered Simon. "There's a chapel of relics where there's a set of chains said to be the prison chains used on St. Paul. Do you want to see them?"

"We might as well," replied Apollos. "Even though it's really immaterial. Apollonius would not be confined to any chains of the body nor of any material substance. He demonstrated that no chains could hold him when he showed his closest disciple and biographer, Damis, the unclasped chains in the prison that the Emperor Domitian placed him. He could take them off or put them on at will."

"These prison chains could have been worn by anybody, or by everybody in that prison," stated Sophia as she looked at the alleged relics in the chapel.

"We have all been bound by the chains of matter at one time or another," philosophized Apollos, who was not too impressed by the darkened iron chains.

"I suggest we unchain ourselves from this place and pursue other interesting places," suggested Simon. In his mind he was thinking of other places besides Rome. He still wasn't sure what to do with Apollos and Sophia; he needed them to get to Apollonius, so he couldn't get rid of them. He had to keep convincing them that he would give the manuscript back and let them go if they provided him with the information that he needed. They had already complied by obtaining the little book at the Delphic oracle. Now he needed the absolute truth – that Apollonius was still living somewhere on the face of the earth. Simon's imagination soared with the possibilities of what he could do with such a person.

"What do you suggest?" asked Apollos, who was anxious to leave the prison chains behind. He started to exit the chapel of relics.

"I know what," said Sophia excitedly. "We can visit the picturesque piazzas of the city. Maybe one with an Egyptian obelisk."

"I know just the one to show you," responded Simon enthusiastically. "The Flaminian Obelisk from Heliopolis, city of the sun. It stands in the Piazza del Popolo."

"The plaza of the people," said Apollos, who recognized the word from the Latin word populous.

The piazza was located in the northern section of the city, and three major avenues converged at the plaza in the shape of a trident.

Apollos' eyes were immediately drawn to the red granite obelisk that emerged from the center of the two hemicycles forming the plaza. The red obelisk rose in the blue sky as if to connect with the solar orb in the heavens.

"There are thirteen obelisks in Rome," stated Simon in his tour-guide voice. "One stands on the west side of the Tiber River, at St. Peter's Square; the other twelve all stand on the east side of the Tiber, in front of various basilicas or in the center of piazzas as focal points in the city."

"The symbolism of that arrangement seems to indicate the twelve signs of the zodiac revolving around a central sun," noted Sophia.

"Or Christ and the twelve apostles," added Simon. "Whichever way you look at it, their present location was determined by Pope Sixtus V in the latter part of the 16th century. He raised a fervent enthusiasm for resurrecting the Egyptian obelisks from their ruinous condition."

Apollos turned his attention from what Simon was saying back to the obelisk which stood on a tall pedestal. He wanted to reach out and touch the obelisk and feel its

power. As he lifted his gaze upwards at the pyramidion crowning the obelisk, he postulated, "Rome has been turned into a grand temple of Ra, the sun god, with thirteen obelisks illuminating the city with the rays of the ancient Egyptian mysteries."

Sophia sensed Apollos' desire for contact with the energy of the obelisk, and she lifted her hands in the Egyptian way of paying homage to Ra, and she intoned, "O Light Bringer, Father of All, may your rays continue to give life to all your children. May our souls unite with your light, and may your light radiate in our hearts and minds, revealing your true Self."

Apollos raised his hands with palms extended toward the power source, imitating Sophia's priestess-of-Isis pose, and he felt an energy flowing from the pyramidal apex of the towering obelisk into the palms of his hands, transmitting vibrations from an ancient land. As he closed his physical eyes, an image of an Egyptian deity formed in the center of his mind's eye. The deity wore a crown around his forehead with an ureaus or serpent of wisdom protruding from a position directly in the center of the forehead. In his hands he held a caduceus formed of a gold serpent and a silver serpent, which shone like the sun and the moon. The two serpents seemed to transform into two keys which the deity held in one hand. In the other hand he held a green tablet which appeared to be similar to the Book of Petroma, the book of stone used in the ceremony of initiation. All at once Apollos recognized the grandiose figure as the grand interpreter of the mysteries – the immortal Hermes, the personification of universal wisdom. The eyes of Hermes looked into the depth of Apollos' soul and transmitted a message: "I will meet you in Alexandria."

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"Joshua, the sun has come up," said Yusuf as he glanced at the streaming light coming through the eastern window of their hostel room.

There was no response from the direction of Joshua's bed. Joshua was not in his bed. When Yusuf looked out the window, he saw his newfound friend standing with arms outstretched towards the rising sun. Yusuf hurriedly put on his pants and went outside to join Joshua in a salutation to the dawning of a new day.

"What are you doing up so early?" asked Yusuf as he stood beside Joshua and watched him face the sun with closed eyes.

Joshua opened his eyes and turned his head to his right to look at his companion. "I had a dream-vision this morning at the break of dawn," explained Joshua. "I was sitting at the entrance to the Sphinx, and my angel Binah was standing in front of me telling me the story of my people. As I listened to her melodic voice, I was able to visualize the pictorial scenes of a land with a river flowing through it. I saw myself living in that land for a long time, and then a deliverer appeared to take my people out of that land of bondage to a better land. Binah helped me understand that I would be a servant of the deliverer and eventually follow in his footsteps. I don't know how she did it, but she was able to guide me through the wilderness of many trials and break down numerous limitations on the journey to the Promised Land. And lo and behold, just as I

was about to step into a flowing river to cross into the new land, I saw the face of the Sphinx transfigured onto Binah's face, and I thought for a split second that I was witnessing the story through the eyes of the immortal Sphinx. That's when I got out of bed and came outside to watch the sun rise, just as the Sphinx does every morning."

"That's incredible," remarked Yusuf. "That sounds like the Exodus story, the deliverance from bondage."

"That's exactly what I thought as I meditated on the significance of the vision as I stood here seeking enlightenment from the source of all light," said Joshua, turning his face back to the rays of the sun.

"Don't tell me you're thinking that you've envisaged another déjà vu or past life experience?" queried Yusuf with a skeptical look on his face.

"Remember when we were discussing the similarities in the stories of the biblical Joseph and Joshua, especially the mystical age at which both were said to have died?" asked Joshua.

"Yes, I remember the one hundred and ten years," answered Yusuf, wondering what his friend was trying to prove.

"The two figures stand as two pillars of the edifice upon which the story of man's journey through life is built," propounded Joshua. "Joseph's journey down into the land of Egypt represents the descent of the soul into the life of the body, the physical and material existence; Joshua's journey out of the land of Egypt and back to the promised land represents the ascent of the soul back to its place of origin. That's what I was meditating about when you joined me out here in the morning sun."

"There might be some substance to your reasoning," remarked Yusuf, applying his knowledge to the thought process. "Joshua was born to the tribe of Ephraim, who was one of the two sons that Joseph had. When Joshua finally conquered the land of Canaan, as the holy land was called in those ancient days, he gathered the twelve tribes at Shechem for his final speech and covenant with the children of Israel. He spoke of the antediluvian fathers who lived on the other side of the flood in old time, and he set up a great stone under a tree as a witness to the covenant that the people had made with their God. Then he died at the age of a hundred and ten years old. And the book of Joshua ends with the bones of Joseph, which were carried out of Egypt, finally being buried in Shechem."

"So they were united in the land from which the journey began," said Joshua. "In short, they came full circle."

"That's an apt metaphor," confirmed Yusuf, who glanced at the round ball of light which steadily ascended into the heavens.

"It also dawned on me that there was a strong magnetic attraction in me toward the great stone that stands beside the Great Pyramid," announced Joshua, who was drawn back to the vision of the Sphinx.

"Are you thinking of going to the pyramids of Giza?" asked Yusuf, who was picking up on his friend's vibrations.

"I'd love to, if it won't inconvenience you," remarked Joshua. "We don't have to go back to Israel today, do we?"

"Not really," replied Yusuf with a new sense of adventure in his mind. "I can arrange to extend our stay at the hostel for another day."

"Can you make it for several days?" asked Joshua. "I have a feeling that I might need to spend several days at the pyramid to accomplish what I think my guiding light is leading me to."

Yusuf looked into Joshua's eyes and noticed a spark of something extraordinary, twinkling like a brilliant star, within the depth of Joshua's soul. "There is a spirit of something good happening within you," noted Yusuf, whose perceptive look smiled into Joshua's eyes, "and I'm willing to stand by your side as you embark on this new pilgrimage of your inner being."

"You are a true-blue friend," said Joshua, who grasped Yusuf's left arm in a grip of friendship.

By mid morning the two sojourners were stepping out of the Egyptian taxi and buying tickets for entry into the Giza Pyramid Complex. Joshua headed straight for the Great Sphinx, whose half-human, half-animal limestone body spoke of ancient ages. He wanted to come close to the leonine form and sit between its paws, just as he visualized in his dawn vision, but a prohibitive enclosure was set up by the authorities to preserve the colossal royal sculpture from the eroding effects of explorers and tourists. So Joshua just stood outside the enclosure and faced the majestic sixty-six foot high being.

"Do you know that the Arabic name for this creature is Abu al-Hol or the Father of Terror?" asked Yusuf, who stood beside Joshua and looked into the stone eyes of the desert Lord of the Horizons.

"Why would they call it that?" asked Joshua inquisitively. "Could it have anything to do with the mysteries that are hidden under it?"

"Maybe it has something to do with the Arab proverb: Man fears time, yet time fears the pyramids," replied Yusuf. "The Great Sphinx and the Great Pyramid have withstood the test of time and are immortal."

"Speaking of time," enjoined Joshua, "ancient wisdom postulates that Plato's Great Year is enshrined in the design and orientation of the Great Sphinx and the Great Pyramid. The Man, or sign of Aquarius, is the head of the Sphinx, and the Lion, or sign of Leo, is the body of the Sphinx. The age of Aquarius is once again dawning on planet Earth, with the sun entering the sign of the Man at the Vernal Equinox."

"That would make the Autumnal Equinox in Leo the Lion," added Yusuf enthusiastically as the Platonic year formed a cross in his mind. "And the Summer Solstice in Taurus the Bull, and the Winter Solstice in Scorpio, the ancient Eagle."

"Precisely!" exclaimed Joshua. "The four seasons of the great year are presently reflecting the archetypal sacred four living creatures of Ezekiel's wheel and the Apocalypse. And so we have the fixed cross in a circle twirling through space and time, with the great year encompassing a cycle of about 25,800 years, or 25,920 years, depending on which authority you rely on.

"Making it about 2,160 years for each age," calculated Yusuf. "But how does the Great Pyramid fit into that equation or scheme?"

"Well, each side is oriented with the cardinal points of the compass, with the entrance on the north side," explained Joshua. "And the descending passage pointed to the most accurately aligned pole star, Alpha Draconis, over four thousand years ago, which some experts say is when the Great Pyramid was built. However, I'm of the opinion that it might have been built as far back as three complete turns of the great wheel around a central spiritual sun."

Joshua gazed up into the face of the Great Sphinx, and his eyes focused on the snake-like uraeus (symbol of royalty) on the forehead of the man-like figure. Joshua simultaneously felt a throbbing in the same area of his forehead, as if to indicate that his third eye or pineal gland was vibrating in harmony with the thoughts transmitted through the uraeus or beaming third eye of the god-like immortal Sphinx. As he stood silently gazing at the silent sentinel of the wisdom of the ages, he thought he heard a voice saying, "Look within your Self to find what is hidden underneath the Sphinx." Joshua closed his eyes and saw with his mind's eye the enigmatic face of Hermes, the Egyptian god of wisdom, superimposed on the face of the Sphinx, and in his hands he held a large book which emitted a subtle green light; when Joshua peered into the book, he saw that it contained the blueprints for the construction of the Great Sphinx and the Great Pyramid.

"Only Hermes, the immortal god of wisdom, could have built this foremost wonder of the ancient world," annunciated Joshua as he opened his eyes and pointed to the Great Sphinx, who was no longer an enigma to him. He also, for the first time, became aware of a subtle hermaphroditic aspect within the face of the immortal being, as if to reveal the androgynous nature of man, the male and the female.

For the rest of the day, Joshua and Yusuf walked throughout the pyramid complex, exploring the ruins of antiquity and reminiscing about the days of old. Joshua, however, couldn't get the image of Hermes out of his mind; it was as if the eyes of the Sphinx had pierced deep into his soul and were now part of his nature. When he closed his eyes, he thought he saw the eye of Horus or Ra, the sun-god, beaming at him from the right eye, and Thoth, the moon-god, reflecting the sun-god through the left eye. He came back several times to the antediluvian monument, walking along the 240 foot length and observing the seven geological layers of limestone bedrock out of which the body of the grand symbol of the great cross in the heavens was built.

At high noon, when the sun disk was at its zenith, Joshua and Yusuf took a well-needed rest from their fast-paced activity at the pyramid complex. They sat at the southern base of the Great Pyramid and replenished their bodily needs, Yusuf eating the sandwich he prepared for himself and Joshua drinking the quart-sized container of water that he carried with him. Joshua had committed himself to a three-day fast in order to raise his awareness of the subtle forces operating at the sacred center of the world's geographical landmass. He also wanted to prepare himself for the experience within the heart of the Great Pyramid. Yusuf told him that he could buy an extra ticket to go inside the pyramid, and Joshua decided that he would go into the king's chamber on the third day.

Joshua closed his eyes as he sat cross-legged on the warm desert sand with his back resting against a granite block at the base of the pyramid. The solar disk of Ra stood directly above the apex of the pyramid, shining its light on the crown of Joshua's exposed head. The face of Hermes was still imprinted on the reflective screen of Joshua's consciousness. Joshua felt a surge of liquid-like energy rise from the base of his spine to the base of his skull, and then he sensed a gentle voice like a slow-flowing stream within the region of his medulla oblongata: "Be not afraid, be strong and have courage." As the words resounded within the chamber of his mind, he perceived a small flickering astral flame ignite a fire in the subterranean chamber at the base of his spine. Within the cave-like chamber, a steady light beamed a stream of pictures on the wall: Joshua saw an older man dressed as a warrior sitting at the base of an acacia tree,

instructing two men to view the land and report back to him. He watched as they crossed a river and entered a city where a harlot gave them refuge. The kind woman told them that the God of heaven and earth had given the land into their hands. The king of the city wanted to see the alleged spies, but the wise woman hid them on the roof of her house that was located on the town wall. The courageous woman, who claimed to be the daughter of an Israelite, tired to dissuade the king from fighting against the warrior Joshua and his God, but the king wouldn't listen to her counsel. Joshua watched as the dark-haired woman helped the two men escape from the window of her house by letting them down a cord. Joshua at that moment noticed something familiar about the dark-eyed woman – she looked just like Binah.

"So you finally recognized me," softly cooed the dove-like voice of the angelic Binah. "I wondered how long it would take you to become aware of the feminine nature of the kundalini fire symbolized by the story of Rahab the harlot and the scarlet thread she hands from the window of her soul. Didn't you think of the two currents of energy, the positive and the negative, rising up along the skeletal walls when you saw the two men ascend to the roof of the house? Didn't you wonder about the personality, the ruler of the city, which is your mental ego that controls the land of your body? Didn't you feel a tingle in your spinal cord when the two men were let down a cord?"

Joshua opened his eyes and realized that the pictures he was viewing in the cave-like chamber were actual processes occurring within his own land, the consciousness of his inner world. He also realized that in order to conquer the vast territory of his interior consciousness, he would need the help and understanding of his personal angel, Binah.

"I thought you were sleeping," said Yusuf, who had returned from an excursion to the nearby solar boat museum.

"I just took a little journey in my soul body," said Joshua with a wide smile on his face.

"Do you want to walk around the Great Pyramid, stretch your legs a bit?" offered Yusuf. "We haven't done that, yet."

"That sounds like a great idea," accepted Joshua enthusiastically. "I can use the exercise. By the way, how far around is it?"

"According to the tour guide I spoke with, the base of each side is 756 feet long, which would make the perimeter 3,024 feet," answered Yusuf. "And the height of the pyramid is 453 feet."

"That's roughly almost a kilometer or a little more than half-a-mile around," estimated Joshua as he took a step in a clockwise direction.

"Give or take a couple hundred feet," added Yusuf, keeping in step with Joshua.

"Yusuf, do you think that Egypt was as much a holy land to the Egyptians as Israel is presently a holy land to the Jewish people?" asked Joshua as they slowly strolled in the direction of the western base of the pyramid.

"Yes, I think Egypt was and still is a holy land, just like the biblical Canaan or Palestine was and still is a holy land," replied Yusuf. "Remember that Moses, the great deliverer, was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he passed that wisdom on to Joshua, who brought it to the Promised Land. Both of the holy lands have a holy river running through it, and both were divided into two major sections, upper and lower Egypt, and the northern and the southern kingdoms."

"How about the stories where Egypt is a metaphor for the land of darkness, and the land of the Israelites a metaphor for the land of light?" inquired Joshua.

"I think that sometimes such a comparison refers to bondage in contrast to freedom, or ignorance in contrast to wisdom," remarked Yusuf. "Perhaps darkness could even represent the mysterious and secret wisdom that is hidden in the monuments."

"Do you think that the builders of the monuments and the writers of the stories could have built and written edifices representing the journey of the human spirit through life?" asked Joshua. "And that the land would symbolize the physical body, and that liberation from the bondage of the body is the ulterior motive of the great works, including this Great Pyramid?"

"I'm not sure what you mean by liberation from the bondage of the body," admitted Yusuf.

"I would think that, first of all, you would realize that the real you is not the body – it's only a garment you wear or a vehicle you drive, or a house you dwell in – and, second of all, the real you is the immortal soul," explained Joshua as best as he could.

"I prefer the metaphor of a partnership that the physical body and the spiritual soul have," expressed Yusuf, "or better yet, the metaphor of the dance, where the body and soul dance together on the journey of life."

"And yet you would have to say that the body is mortal and passes away, whereas the soul is immortal and remains from age to age," reasoned Joshua.

By the time the two sojourners had run that topic into the ground, they had made one complete circuit of the Great Pyramid. They rested at the southern base of the pyramid before they called it a day, and then they headed back to their temporary dwelling place.

The next day Joshua and Yusuf returned to the pyramid complex, and Joshua instantaneously was found contemplating the face of the divine Sphinx, who had witnessed the passing of numerous ages. The age that the Sphinx revealed to Joshua (in the circular pattern of the precession of the equinoxes through the great wheel of the zodiac) was the passing from the age of Taurus, and the overthrow of the golden calf image which Moses accomplished, to the inauguration of the age of Aries, the sacrificial lamb or ram. Through the eyes of the immortal Sphinx, Joshua watched the new age unfold as the new energy and the cosmic forces poured out through the life-force (the blood) that flowed from the Celestial Lamb during the festive time of the Spring Equinox. He saw his namesake, the warrior Joshua, a new deliverer for a new age, wield the sword of self-mastery over all the centers (cities) of the Promised Land of his body, mind, and soul. In the silence of his heart, Joshua again heard the voice of the Sphinx (in the person of Hermes) speak: "Hoshea, son of Nun, god of the primeval waters from which the world emerged, in you is the spirit of wisdom. Henceforth, you will be called Jehoshua, the divinely appointed deliverer of the age, through whom Yahweh saves all his children." Joshua felt invisible hands touch the crown of his hand and the third eye center in his forehead.

Joshua couldn't talk the rest of the day. He simply sat cross-legged at the western base of the pyramid and contemplated the immense task which he felt he needed to accomplish. Joshua felt two streams of tears flowing down the sides of his face as he thought of all the battles he still needed to fight till victory was won.

At noon, when Ra's rays beamed straight down on Joshua, and as Joshua continued to sit cross-legged with his back against a granite block, a stream of light descended through his erect spine and ignited a flame at his sacral region. He felt a flow of spinal fluid, like a river flowing down, descend simultaneously with the stream of light. The light-energy and the flowing-waters seemed to overflow the banks of the spinal canal and spread throughout the entire nervous system of Joshua's body, filling him with a strong current of creative energy. He saw himself standing still in the stream of consciousness that flowed in his spine. He visualized himself as the causal body, the ark within which all the seeds of his past and future lives resided; he saw the causal body as Lord of his physical, emotional, and mental bodies. All the forces within his being seemed to stand still when he entered the stream and became conscious of a living omnipresence spreading outwardly in all directions. Joshua was so enthralled with what he was witnessing that he hadn't even noticed that his breathing and the beating of his heart had also seemed to have been momentarily suspended. When he became conscious of the supreme stillness in his land, the physical body, he took a deep breath again. As he did so, he felt the stream of light-energy ascend from the sacral region up through the five lumbar and the twelve thoracic vertebrae, and past the seven cervical vertebrae, to the place of the skull. He had reversed the flow of the light-energy-creative-waters within his body.

"You did it!" he heard the sweet voice of Binah in his heart. "You made the waters of your spinal river stand still and then flow backwards. You crossed over from the lower body of physical awareness into the Promised Land of the higher mind, the higher Self."

As Binah spoke those words, Joshua's mental faculties seemed to be illuminated with a sweet milky white light-substance. A vast panorama spread out before his inner mind. "Behold your higher Self as the conqueror of the lower animal nature!" annunciated his angel Binah.

Instantaneously, he saw an eighty-two year old warrior rise up early in the morning and move all his forces from Shittim, the place of the tree of life, to the Jordan River. After three days of preparation, the priestly (causal body) aspect of the warrior stepped into the sacred river (spine) with the ark (soul). The Jordan (flowing downward) river rose up in a wave of energy-motion, causing it to flow upwards to the city Adam (place of the skull). All the energized cellular particles of the initiate-warrior passed through the river (spine) on dry ground (through the physical body). When every aspect (every thought, feeling, desire, and unit of creative life) of the soul-warrior had been affected by the passage through the Jordan (spinal column, life-force energy), a memorial of twelve stones was set up in the river and in the lodging place in Gilgal (a circle).

"Do you understand what you are seeing?" asked Binah.

"It's like a pictorial representation of what I experienced in my spine," answered Joshua. "Whoever wrote the allegorical story must have experienced the same thing I did."

"That's absolutely right," confirmed Binah in a reassuring tone.

"But what do the twelve stones in the Jordan and in the lodging place represent?" inquired Joshua.

"The twelve stones or vertebrae are enshrined in the spine as the dorsal or thoracic area, to which are attached twelve pairs of ribs," explained Binah. "The ribs make a

circle around the central part of man, namely the thoracic cavity, within which resides the soul in the dwelling place known as the heart. Now, if you look at the cosmic picture, then the twelve stones represent the twelve signs of the zodiac, at the center of which dwells the spiritual central sun, or soul of our universe."

"The Prime Mover," reflected Joshua.

"There's one more thing I need to show you," stated Binah. She placed her hand on his thigh and instantly an urge rose in his private member. A fire in the sacral region of his spine instantly flared up and agitated his emotional and mental bodies. An image of a yoni and a lingam flashed in his mind, and Joshua made a deliberate choice and pulled himself away from the desire that flowed toward his generative organ. "That's good," said Binah. "You are now capable of sublimating your personal desire and transmuting the creative energy for a higher purpose." The panoramic scene of the initiate-warrior returned into Joshua's field of vision, and he saw the conqueror proclaim a day of circumcision, a day of dedication of the highest power in man – procreation – to a divine purpose: for complete mastery of the land. As soon as the circumcision or sublimation of the physical forces in the body and mind of the initiate-warrior was completed, he was able to partake of the sacred meal of milk and honey flowing in the creative land of his higher mind.

At that moment his angel Binah displayed to Joshua's receptive mind an angelic being with a flaming sword in his hand. Joshua felt as if the shining two-edged sword was a triple force of energy in his spine, with the two edges sending the positive and negative, the warm and cool, currents through the body, and the central part of the blade ascending through the central spinal canal to the brain. The angelic being spoke to Joshua's mind in an inaudible voice: "You have displayed self-mastery. Now you can wield the sword of creative energy which resides in your spine." The angelic being handed the sword to Joshua, who took the sword in his hand. As he did so, he thought that the sword was a caduceus, and the angelic being was Hermes. "And for goodness sakes, take your shoes off, for the ground you're on is holy!" spoke the voice and then vanished.

Joshua immediately stood up and took his shoes off.

"What are you doing?" asked Yusuf, who was sitting a short distance away, reading a book about the pyramids.

"You are right, Yusuf," said Joshua affectionately. "This land is holy. Come, take a walk with me around the pyramid, and I'll tell you all that I've seen and heard."

On the third day, Joshua and Yusuf arrived at the pyramid complex early so that they would be assured of getting tickets to go inside the great pyramid. After getting their tickets, they waited at the north face for the opening of the entrance into the pyramid. The primary or original entrance, which was flanked by angled stones, stood 55 feet above the ground level, while the short cut entrance, a forceful intrusive opening ordered by Caliph El-Mamoun in the 9th century, was located below the original entrance.

When the secondary entrance was opened up for the tourists, Joshua and Yusuf entered through the roughly cut opening and descended with the group of tourists to the subterranean chamber, where Joshua saw and felt the stifling pit of dense matter envelope his soul. His mind was set on the main chamber, where he anticipated a fruitful resolution to his three-day fast. He followed along through the narrow passageways, up the steep, narrow steps of the ascending passageway and through a long tunnel for a short

stop at the Queen's Chamber, where Joshua thought of Isis, the Egyptian Queen of Heaven and the Mother of Nature. As Joshua continued through the Grand Gallery to his destination, he felt as if he had been climbing through a suffocating darkness, and he gasped for air. Finally, as he reached the upper platform of the gallery and passed through a short passageway into the King's Chamber, Joshua was able at last to catch a breath of fresh air coming into the large, high rectangular room from air shafts leading out onto the surface of the pyramid and from a ventilation system.

The first thing that Joshua noticed as he entered the 34 foot long and 17 foot wide and 19 foot high room was a lidless sarcophagus. As he walked to the west end of the chamber toward the rectangular sarcophagus, he noticed that the walls were made of the same red granite as the red obelisk of ancient Heliopolis. When he touched the broken southeastern six-and-a-half inch thick edge of the sarcophagus, he realized that it was also made of the highly energized rose-colored granite. He peered into the depths of the empty tomb-like coffer and saw that he would fit inside without any difficulty.

"Are you thinking of re-enacting the rite of death and rebirth in that stone coffin?" asked Yusuf, whose quiet presence had been forgotten by the contemplative Joshua. Yusuf had read about the initiations that were dramatically preformed inside the King's Chamber in the book that he carried with him. "The book I'm reading says that the initiate would be symbolically buried in this great coffer, which curiously has the dimensions of 90" length by 38.79" width by 41.25" depth, which equals a volume of the biblically cryptic number 144,000. Or to be exact, it says 90 x 38.78509448 x 41.25296125 = 144,000."

"Yes, I am thinking of doing exactly that," confessed Joshua. "It's as if I've foreseen this moment for many lifetimes, and it has finally arrived."

"Wait until the tourists leave, and then I'll stand guard while you perform the ancient rite," cautioned Yusuf, who was beginning to understand the importance of this moment for Joshua.

As soon as the last tourist exited the chamber, Joshua took off his shoes and crawled inside the stone coffin, which was positioned in a north-south orientation. He laid his head on the north end of the hard surface and took a couple of deep breaths and relaxed his body completely. He interlocked his fingers over the solar plexus area of his abdomen. Within minutes he was completely still and adapted to the dark enclosed space.

The first image he visualized was of the warrior-initiate Jehoshua, whose tall seven-foot frame was stretched out to almost completely fill the same sarcophagus in which Joshua was presently partially entombed. The second image was accompanied by a still, soft voice: "Arise, Jehoshua, and behold your seven-fold body." He felt his bird-like soul body step out of his physical body lying in repose, and he saw a candlestick with seven branches spread out throughout the trunk of the spine, with seven golden bowls or vortices twirling like lotus flowers that were ready to open up, like almonds coming out of a shell. The central branch was affixed to the middle of the spine at the heart center. He saw a hand light the base of the spine, and the face of Rahab, the harlot, appeared in the flame-like flower. The hand lit the second bowl of precious oil, and he saw the warrior Jehoshua step into the spinal waters of the Jordan River.

"You are ready for the third center to be opened," said the voice as an etheric hand lit the light within the lumbar region or third branch of the candlestick. Within the

light of the opened ten-petal flower, Joshua watched as the ark of his soul with all seven of his higher faculties moved around the circuit of the inner city, the etheric spinal canal, with the vortices of each center vibrating with the sound of an active beehive. With each circuit of the inner city, from its head to its base and back, the vibrations throughout the body intensified, and the sound vibrated like a flute and then like a harp-string. At the fourth round of the inner city, the sound of a bell rang through the tube-like central channel. As the spiritualized forces (seven priests) in his body completed a fifth circumambulation of the inner city (the symbolic Jericho), Joshua felt a thunderous roar, like the pounding of ocean waves, and he thought that the vibrations would break his eardrums. At the sixth round, as the symphonic sound of the seven-fold vibrations (seven trumpet sounds) raised the molecular structure of the body to a high degree of activity, Joshua saw the dark-haired woman Rahab approach Jehoshua and beg for the warrior to spare her people, and the warrior told her that only those who saved themselves by flight would be spared; and so it happened that Rahab and her household came to live with Jehoshua, and the inhabitants of the city took flight from the city to the mountains. Joshua no longer had any consciousness of his body; the mountain of his mind was the only consciousness that remained as he watched the last seven rounds of his inner forces complete the total of thirteen circuits of the inner city; and then he heard a crescendo of a prolonged OM chant resound throughout the universe of his body and regenerate every cell in his being. The walls of bodily consciousness were totally transformed and consumed by a fire which purified the inner city and left only the pure gold and silver and precious metal, which signified the solar, lunar, and planetary influences.

"The tabernacle of your body has been prepared for the lighting of the fourth light on the candlestick of your spine," said the voice of the hierophant-initiator as his unseen hand set a flame ablaze in the twelve-petal rosy flower of the heart center in the dorsal area. "You have sacrificed your lower animal nature on the altar of the generative region, and you have cleansed your inner being in the regenerative waters of your spinal river. Now, as you watch the lighting of the seven centers of your astral body on the etheric seven-branched golden candlestick of your spine and partake of the bread of your twelve positive character traits on the table of earthly experiences, you will sense a fragrant essence rise from the altar of your heart to the highest center of your being, the place where your spirit dwells."

Joshua saw the light within the heart center illuminate a scene where the warrior-initiate lifted the spear of his spinal energy and gained mastery of the entire central nervous system (city of Ai) by purifying it with the fire of his will and conquering it with the sword of his creative life-force. He saw Jehoshua hang the former king and ruler of the generative spinal energy on a tree, signifying that henceforth the warrior would rule the city by raising a great heap of stones on the cornerstone of that generative force, making it a veritable spinal column that would ascend into the mount of the brain, where Jehoshua built an altar (Mt. Ebal) to enshrine the divine self.

Another battle unfolded for the warrior Jehoshua. He would have to conquer and defeat five kings who waged war against the royal city of the heart (Gibeon). Those five kings ruled over the five kingdoms of the land: the auditory, the optical, the olfactory, the gustatory, and the tactual. Jehoshua spoke to the higher forces of his land to help him control those five rulers, whose will and desires worked through the heart center: "Solar and lunar forces, positive and negative elements within my body, be silent and rest from

activity." As he made the affirmation, the five senses in his body were disconnected from the consciousness of the higher mind, just like in sleep, and the two great lights of the inner sun and moon stood in the midst of the heavens in his head – the solar light of the pineal gland and the reflective lunar light of the pituitary gland. As Jehoshua witnessed the inner celestial phenomenon, he saw an animal-bearing circle revolve on the dome of his mind around the central celestial sun and moon. The circle appeared to be an ancient Egyptian sky map, the Zodiac of Denderah, which had thirty-six characters proceed in a counter-clockwise orientation on the outer edge of the circle. 'Isn't it written in the book of Jasher,' mused Joshua to himself as he realized what he was witnessing through the higher mind of Jehoshua: "The Sun stood still in the midst of the heavens and it stood still six and thirty moments." All of a sudden Joshua realized that the cryptic thirty-six moments referred to the thirty-six decans, or divisions of a circle of 360 degrees into thirty-six sections of ten (deca) degrees each. Time seemed to stand still in Joshua's mind as he looked at the Egyptian representation of the Celestial Day of the universe on the ceiling of the Denderah temple.

"You have seen the body which encloses all things," spoke the inner voice, "and now you know that the vision of the calendar of the ages was revealed within this temple, which was called the Mount of God or the Temple of Amon, the secret house of the Hidden One." Joshua realized that the Egyptian moon god, Sin, was the origin of Mount Sin-Ai, the holy Mount of God.

A song erupted in the heart of Jehoshua, the warrior-conqueror, and its melodic lyrics were transmitted to the consciousness of Joshua:

"My goodness and my fortress, my high tower,
I will sing a new song unto thee,
With thanksgiving will I sing to thee,
Thou art the strength of my salvation.
Our tongues shall relate thy might,
We will sing and praise thy wondrous works.
And thy beloved shall be like trees planted by the waters."

The following moment the face of Thoth, who was also represented as the moon-god, appeared to Joshua's inner vision.

"Look at the light of the remaining three centers of your inner being," spoke Thoth, as his hand lit the fifth light at the cervical area, and Joshua saw the battlefield strewn with the bodies of thirty-one kings, which represented the innate tendencies in the body. The sixth light illuminated the cerebrum, and Joshua saw the land divided amongst the twelve tribes or faculties of his inherited past zodiacal lives, the cities inherited totaling 365 or one city for each day of the solar year. The seventh light illuminated the entire golden seven-branched candlestick of the body with the glorious light of a thousand-petal lotus flower, wherein Joshua saw a recapitulation of the entire history of the warrior Joshua, the conqueror of the land. The crown of his head (the biblical Hazor) was conquered and purified with the etheric fire which flowed through his spine. And in the midst of the lotus flower, he became aware of the union of the masculine and feminine, the spiritual and the physical, within the body of the conqueror: Jehoshua and Rahab stood side by side, like two pillars in the house (similar to ISis, the moon-goddess, and RA, the sun, in the house of EL, the celestial IS-RA-EL).

As Joshua's senses became reconnected with his bodily consciousness, and he felt his soul reentering his physical body, he heard the voice of Thoth-Hermes say, "Your final battle will be fought at Megiddo!"

Joshua opened his eyes and looked out of the depths of the sarcophagus into the watchful eyes of his friend, Yusuf.

"You're back!" said Yusuf excitedly.

"How long was I gone?" asked Joshua, rubbing his eyes.

"You were gone three hours," answered Yusuf.

"It felt like I was gone three days," said Joshua, who was trying to reorient himself to his surroundings. He sat up and got out of the rose-colored sarcophagus.

"We have to get out of here," said Yusuf anxiously. "I think I hear the afternoon group of tourists entering the pyramid." They exited the King's Chamber and quickly descended backwards through the narrow passageway.

"So tell me," said Yusuf when they finally emerged from the darkness of the pyramid into the bright light of day, "what happened? What did you see?"

"Let's take a walk around the pyramid, and I'll tell you all about it," said Joshua as he stepped in a counter-clockwise direction around the Great Pyramid.

The following morning the fellow sojourners caught the early morning bus out of Cairo, Egypt, and headed for Tel Aviv. They followed the Great Trunk Road, the ancient highway that connected Ancient Egypt with the civilizations of the Fertile Crescent in Ancient Mesopotamia. On the third day after their arrival in Tel Aviv, they caught a bus and followed the Great Trunk Road (or Way of the Sea, as it was also called), eastward to Megiddo.

The full moon shone brightly over the ruins of Megiddo on the day that Joshua and Yusuf spent time together there. The mound of the archaeological site Tel Megiddo revealed the excavations of more than twenty strata of settlements dating back to at least six thousand years. Joshua had only one purpose in coming here: the voice of Hermes had told him that his final battle would be fought at Megiddo, and he aimed to find out what that meant. He was familiar with the stories about this being the site of the last battle that would be fought at the end of days, the biblical Armageddon. He was also aware that the strategic site could be an allegory for the eternal battle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. However, for Joshua there seemed to be something at the soul level which drew him to this many-layered ancient city.

"Did you know that the name of this place is called Tel-el-Mutesellim in Arabic?" asked Yusuf, who walked through the heap of ruins with Joshua. "It means the Hill of the Ruler."

"I wonder if that refers to King Solomon, who rebuilt the city as a royal city to administer the northern part of his kingdom," stated Joshua. "He collected six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold in one year to build his kingdom, according to the biblical record of the kings of Israel.

"That's also the biblical number that is associated with the number of the beast who would do battle at the place called Har Magedon or the height of Megiddo," remarked Yusuf astutely.

"Which could just be an allegory of the innumerable battles that Man, whose number is nine or the total of 6+6+6 or 1+8, has to fight on the battlefield of life,

especially the battle to overcome the beast or the human animal nature," expounded Joshua.

"By the way, did you ever read the book called The Source, by James Michener?" asked Yusuf, changing the subject abruptly.

"No, I haven't" admitted Joshua.

"He bases his story on a fictional archaeological site, called Tel Makor, which means the source," related Yusuf. "It actually seems to follow the story of the historical Tel Megiddo. Anyway, his story begins sometime in 9,000 B.C.E., and it's centered around a well of water."

"There's a tunnel that goes to a spring here at Tel Megiddo," interjected Joshua. "We should go see it."

The two explorers went to the tunnel which cut through more than 200 feet of rock to a spring. As Joshua walked through the tunnel, he thought he was back at the Great Pyramid, and again the words of Hermes echoed in his mind: "Your final battle will be fought at Megiddo!" At that moment, Joshua realized what Hermes meant: The last battle was judgment day for the soul, when it reviewed all the layers of its lives, and all the deeds of the heart were weighed against the feather of truth in the balance in the Hall of Truth. Here at Megiddo he witnessed the strata of over twenty ancient cities, each of which had a beginning and an end. The ultimate battle was for the immortal soul to transcend the mortal nature of its earthly existence and to reach the heights of its spiritual kingdom. And then a final thought occurred to Joshua: At the end of each life, the soul transcends the body and is liberated from the land of bondage, and is ushered into the Promised Land.

Three months later, the battle for the holy land of Israel was reignited when a second intifada was announced, and the forces of light and darkness once again did battle on the battlefield of life. Joshua's friend Yusuf was a victim, or a sacrifice, of the battle as a bomb blew up the bus he was riding in. Joshua's last words to his friend, at Yusuf's burial site in his former home in Shechem, were: "We'll meet again, my friend."

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"Little One, today the kingdom of heaven is at hand for you," said Bannus. His voice rang out with an apocalyptic fervor in the chamber of the cave. Paul's body shuttered with a nervous anticipation as he sat beside his master. "The world as you know it will come to an end for you, and you will be born into a new world." The words of Bannus vibrated with a profound finality.

"Will I die?" asked Paul, his body still shuttering like a butterfly about to break out of its confining chrysalis.

"No," chucked Bannus at Paul's apprehension. "You will enter a state of trance where you will simulate what we call the little death. During the trance you will enter a timeless dimension where your higher self will reveal to you what you need to know."

"Will I see myself as Elisha ben Abuyah, again?" asked Paul, referring to his recent encounter with, what Bannus explained, was a future life.

"There seems to be a purpose for your glimpse into the future," replied Bannus, "and the only way to find out is to commune with your divine soul, which is a miniature universe within you. It will reflect to your conscious mind an aspect of your eternal self, in which the past, present, and future exist simultaneously."

Paul closed his eyes and tried to comprehend what Bannus was telling him. He felt a tingle in his forehead, in the area of the pineal gland, as he tried to focus his attention on the light streaming in his mind.

"Lie down, here," said Bannus, pointing to his bed of reeds on which he slept. Paul lay down on the dry firm reeds in a supine position and folded his hands across the solar plexus area near his navel. He had learned to trust his master explicitly, and he trusted him now as he prepared to enter the trance state.

"All your bodily functions will be temporarily suspended," instructed Bannus. "I will watch over you as you venture into the unseen world." Paul's mind attached itself to the words "the unseen world," which reminded him of the meaning of his Hebrew name, Saul. He also thought of the other meaning, or variation, of his name: Sheol, the vast underworld where Hades and Paradise coexisted.

Paul felt a light breeze as the hands of Bannus waved in circular motions over his body, sending an electro-magnetic charge through his aural body and a surge of energy through his spine. He felt a fiery pulsation at the base of his spine ignite a rapidly spreading inner fire, which sent a heat wave throughout his spine and nervous system. The inner combustion seemed to immerse his entire body in flames, burning away all the dross of his physical being. And then he felt a release, as if his soul body was lifted out of the physical world and thrust in a spiral motion upwards into ethereal worlds. The last thing Paul saw, before his consciousness left the earth plane, was his physical body lying in repose on a bed of reeds with Bannus' bark-woven robe covering it.

As Paul's inner gaze turned upwards, he saw a light shaped like an equal-armed cross. The cross of light was affixed to a twelve-spoked wheel hurling through space. On the arms of the cross he saw a familiar tetramorph: the four living creatures with the appearance of a lion, an eagle, a man, and an ox. In a flash of illumination, the four living creatures became the wheels of a chariot and also the driving force that carried the soul of Paul into the heart of his own being. On the wheels Paul saw the flaming letters YHVH: the Y letter emanated the wheel of fire, the H emitted the wheel of water, from the V emerged the wheel of air, and the final H originated the wheel of earth. Now Paul understood the meaning of the four flaming letters that he had seen in the cave of Hermes at the base of the holy Mount in the wilderness.

Inside the chariot sat the divine charioteer, who appeared to Paul's inner eye as a handsome long-haired youth this time. He was wrapped in a garment of brilliant rainbow-colored light. Paul realized that his own incorporeal being was also wrapped in a similar garment. The celestial messenger sat in silence as he mentally steered the celestial Light-ship, whose counter-rotating fields of electro-magnetic energy sent it spiraling in wide circles upwards to the throne of the higher Self.

And then for what seemed like a moment of eternal silence, everything stopped moving. The chariot and the charioteer were gone. Paul's consciousness and his awareness of Self was all that remained. He stood face to face with his own inner being.

In that one blissful moment, he understood that his true Self was that all-pervasive, infinite existence.

Within that realm of existence Paul noticed a spark of light blossom forth into a six-pointed star, which was encircled by an ethereal body. When his consciousness turned to look at the embryonic form emerging from within the star, he felt himself descending into that form at the same moment that he heard a baby's cry as it emerged from the womb.

"It's a boy!" exclaimed the midwife.

"Elisha has come!" cried the jubilant father, Abuyah, who hoped for a boy and had even picked out a name for him. The father had even made a vow that if his son lived he would dedicate him to the study of scripture, namely the Torah, in hope that he would be as powerful a man as the Torah-minded rabbis, who could bring the proverbial fire down from heaven. The child lived.

The mother was too exhausted from the delivery to say anything. She was just glad that it was over. She was hoping for a girl. Somehow she sensed that a boy would have a hard life during the troublesome times ahead. The Roman general Titus had just laid siege to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the mother sang songs in Greek and in Hebrew to the child in hope of stifling any fear. Throughout his life, Elisha would sing those songs in honor of his mother, whom he lost six weeks after his birth.

Four months after the child's birth, Titus captured Jerusalem, and shortly thereafter the Romans destroyed the temple. The great revolt of the anti-Roman rebels, the Zealots, to attain political and religious liberty came to an end. Even the notable Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai could not save his people from the ill-fated revolt, which caused the devastation of the land, the city, the temple, and the people. This was the world that Elisha ben Abuyah was born into.

Elisha's father, who was an esteemed and rich citizen of Jerusalem, was forced to relocate north to the province of Galilee. He settled in the small city of Migdal, near Tiberias, along the Sea of Galilee. The father moved in two social circles: the intellectual Greek world and the legalistic Jewish world. The son followed in the footsteps of his father, learning to read Greek and Hebrew. By the time Elisha was ten years old, he was already reading Homer's Iliad in Greek and the Books of Moses in Hebrew.

A turning point came in Elisha's life when his father died. His uncle became his guardian. The uncle tried to completely sever the young boy from all Greek influence, and he burned all the Greek books that the father had accumulated over the years. Henceforth, the intelligent student would be taught only Hebrew law and scripture. At the age of thirteen, Elisha was placed under the tutelage of his godfather, Joshua ben Hananiah, who was present at the celebration of Elisha's circumcision. At the rabbi's little house in a valley of Judea, Elisha learned to appreciate the vast tradition of his Jewish background.

When Elisha turned seventeen, his mentor took him to Jamnia, the great Jewish cultural center, which was located near the Mediterranean Sea, seven miles south of Joppa. Here he witnessed the resiliency of the Jewish people to regroup and reestablish the Sanhedrin after the fall of Jerusalem. The semi-circular assembly of the seventy-two members of the highest judicial and ecclesiastical council of the Jewish nation was an impressive display of scholarly knowledge and legalistic prowess. Elisha's master, Rabbi

Joshua ben Hananiah, indicated to him that someday the young student might grow up to be an elder and sit in the throne-like chair, just like the rabbi.

Sure enough, Elisha applied himself to his studies and quickly mastered the Torah and the entire corpus of Jewish law, and he was accepted as a candidate for ordination. He became proficient in discussing and interpreting the written and the oral law. It was at this time that Elisha compared his education to the writing on a tabula rasa (clean slate): "He who learns as a child, to what is he like? To ink written on new paper. He who learns as an old man, to what is he like? To ink written on blotting paper." Little did he know at the time, but old ideas from Greek books were hidden underneath in his subconscious mind, waiting to emerge from dormancy.

The year 100 C.E. was a momentous year in the life of Elisha ben Abuyah. The Patriarch Gamaliel II laid his hands on Elisha's bowed head and endowed him with the title of Elder and with membership in the Sanhedrin by declaring him a rabbi. This was the culmination of a lifetime of diligent study and perseverance. In his ordination lecture Elisha gave his sage advice on the study of Hebrew law and tradition: "A man who studies the Torah and does good deeds is like a man who laid a good foundation of stones before he began to build. When the floodwaters came, they could not undermine the building. However, the man who does not study the Torah and doesn't do good works is like a man who laid a poor foundation, and a heavy building on it. And when the floodwaters came, they undermined the building easily."

The ordination overshadowed his recent marriage and the birth of a daughter into his household. He soon was a busy man: hearing cases in courts of law, lecturing at the academy that Johanan ben Zakkai had set up in Jamnia, preaching in the synagogues, and attending the council meetings. He made lifelong friends, including the respected Rabbi Akiba, and he found a disciple named Meir, who would be faithful to his master for the rest of his life. Elisha would spend hours discussing scripture with his disciple. They especially loved to investigate the life of Job, whose trials and sufferings seemed to mirror the story of the Jewish people.

"What are you studying today?" asked Elisha, stopping by the schoolhouse at Tiberias where Meir was studying.

"I'm studying the end of Job's life where it says the Lord blessed his later days more than his earlier days," replied Meir, who was glad to see his teacher.

"How do you interpret that part of scripture?" asked Elisha in his customary teacher's role.

"I take it to mean what a previous verse stated, that the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before," answered Meir in hope that he had understood the meaning correctly.

"You've got to dig a little deeper," said Elisha. "Rabbi Akiba would say that Job's later days were blessed on account of his earlier days. And I would add that he earned the blessing through the merit of the good deeds that he had done."

The foundation of Elisha's faith received its first jolt when the plague visited the home of Meir and took his two young boys. Elisha was very fond of them, and his faith was visibly shaken. Meir accepted God's righteous judgment and cried, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away." But Elisha inwardly was in anguish and began to question, "Where is the justice and mercy of that righteous judge in regards to two innocent little boys?"

Other questions and issues began to stand out on the battlefield of Elisha's mind: Was the Jewish way the only truth known to mankind, or was truth multi-faceted, including the Greek approach to truth? Were miracles of scripture to be taken at face value, or were they sleight-of-hand performances of magicians? If the absolute authority of scripture is questionable, does that mean that there is no firm basis for the tradition that springs from it? An agnosticism vexed his spirit, for he was no longer sure of anything that he had formerly believed in without question. He wanted the inner turmoil to go away, but it persisted in shaking the foundation of his being to its very roots.

Elisha appealed to his friend Akiba and two other friends, Simeon ben Azzai and Simeon ben Zoma, to help him resolve the raging battle that was tormenting his mind and soul. He asked them to join him on his great quest to build a solid foundation for their faith by supporting it with arguments from all the resources available to them: nature, philosophy, tradition, scriptures, and logical systems. They would buttress their faith with irrefutable evidence and remove all doubt in the veracity of their Truth and Tradition. Ben Azzai chose to look into mystical methods of approaching their tradition, ben Zoma agreed to investigate controversial and contradictory scriptural passages, Akiba decided to approach Greek philosophy with the purpose of defending their tradition against it, and Elisha took up the task of surveying pagan philosophy in order to remove all doubt and arrive at ultimate truth.

At the same time that the four scholars were working on the monumental task of building a lasting edifice to Truth and Tradition, the Emperor Trajan was sitting on his throne in Rome, listening to Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah's request to allow the temple in Jerusalem to be rebuilt. The request was granted. Soon the temple mount in Jerusalem was swarming with active builders, leveling the ground and preparing to lay the foundation. No sooner was the work started than the capricious emperor changed his mind and issued a decree to stop all work on the rebuilding of the temple.

When the four seekers of truth had their next meeting together at ben Azzai's house, they were surprised to hear of the culmination of his mystical quest. He told them: "I have searched in all the wrong places for the presence of the Almighty and for a glimpse of what's behind the veil that separates us from this world and the world to come. I fasted and denied myself all the pleasures of the flesh in my ascetic attempt to reach the goal towards which I was striving. And then it dawned on me. I needed to get past the illusion of this world that the demiurge created in order to reach the transcendent reality. Now I am on the verge of breaking through the great barrier, the abyss, and I'm ready to enter into the light." Ben Azzai's eyes rolled upwards and only the whites of the eyes were visible as he withdrew from the visible world. The last words that he uttered before his emaciated body slumped to the ground were: "God is Light." The seekers were shocked to see the consequence of ben Azzai's self-mortification. They carried the lifeless body to his bed.

The outer world that Elisha lived in -- and his inner world -- were both in perpetual agitation. There was talk once again of war as Emperor Trajan was close to death. Anti-Roman sentiments were spreading like wildfire once again. A new leader of the insurgent party was organizing an army of men to fight the Romans, this time in hope of driving the oppressors away permanently. There was even a coordinated insurrection planned in other parts of the empire. However, the wise Rabbi Joshua stepped in and convinced the insurgents to avoid bringing an apocalyptic end to the land and to the

people. Palestine was saved for the time being, but other parts of the empire were not spared from destruction.

Elisha decided to jettison his work and begin his quest anew, starting with all the competing sects and divisions running rampant throughout the world he lived in. He went to the Nazarene congregation and listened to moral epigrams and parables attributed to an itinerant teacher named Yehoshua, whom they had accepted as their Messiah. However, he was not convinced that the followers of the Law and the Messiah could prove their case on anything more substantial than blind faith. He went to the Jewish Christians and to the Gentile Christians and only found a bitter dispute about the role of the Law of Moses in their religion. He went to the Gnostics, and he saw the elaborate symbolism of the temple of Mithra, and he heard the teachings about the evil demiurge, the prince of the world, and the road to salvation through a secret wisdom. He looked at a world where there were followers of Christos, of Apollos, of John, of Cephas, and of countless deified saviors and messianic leaders. He viewed the entire menagerie of statuesque figures with equal disdain, all unworthy of standing on the pedestal of ultimate truth.

The end of the quest for ben Zoma came when his friends found him reciting scripture incessantly. They couldn't have a coherent conversation with him. It seemed as if he had reached such a level of mental agility, that he could quote scripture and give various interpretations with the rapid flutter of words like the wings of a hummingbird darting from flower to flower. There was a method to his madness. However, in the end, it was madness, and it appeared that he had literally lost his reasoning mind and had been transformed into an automaton.

The end of Elisha's quest came when he witnessed a boy plummet to his death from a tall tree. He had just listened to his father's instructions to get the eggs from a nest, being careful to shoo the mother bird away safely. According to scripture, such an obedient boy should have his days prolonged on the earth, and yet he was lying dead in his grieving father's arms. Elisha felt like a vindictive judge himself when he blasphemed in the presence of witnesses, "There is no reward for good works, for there is no righteous judge."

Henceforth, Elisha was viewed by the people of the Law as an apostate, a person who had fallen away from the faith and was destined for excommunication and perdition. He had climbed to the heights of being a rabbi and a member of the highest council in the land, and now he had become an outcast. When he entered a schoolhouse, he no longer encouraged the pupils to study the Torah. Instead, he told them, "What are you doing here? You should be a mason. You should be a carpenter. You should be a fisherman." He told them to pursue practical occupations, and so he destroyed their love of learning.

There was nowhere that Elisha could find peace of mind anymore. At the scene of one of the inhumane Roman executions, he saw a dog running around with the bloody tongue of a rabbi in its mouth. Elisha could not refrain from saying, "Here was a rabbi who recited the holy words of the Torah, and look what has happened to him. There is no reward for reciting the Torah in this world, nor in the next."

His friend Akiba tried to reason with him. Akiba had discovered during his quest for truth that peace of mind comes from having an unshakeable faith in a benevolent providence that guides men's lives. Any belief that enlarges man's concept of life and gives him a purpose in life is better than having no belief at all. Even urging people to

believe that there is a divine essence that resides at the heart of man's being is better than living a hopeless existence as a mortal with no conviction of a future life. Such was the theological reasoning that Akiba tried to persuade Elisha to consider. Elisha turned his back on his friend and cut himself off from the God of his faith and his tradition.

The man whose name meant "to whom God is salvation" became the unmentionable one, and his name was not uttered by the people who had once looked up to him as a sage and a respected law-abiding rabbi, a paragon of virtue. One last time, when he entered a schoolhouse with Rabbi Meir, and he asked a child what he was learning, the child read, "There is no peace unto the wicked." Another child, when asked, read, "But to the wicked God says, what business have you reciting the laws?"

Even Rabbi Meir couldn't convince his dear master to repent of his unlawful ways. When Elisha was riding a horse unlawfully on the Sabbath, the disciple Meir asked him to stop and get off. Elisha replied with the self-deprecating words: "I heard the divine voice issue, 'Repent, you backsliding children, except for Elisha, who knew my power and rebelled against me.'"

In self-defeat, "the Other" (Acher), as he was now called, moved as far away from his friends and community as he could. He moved to Antioch in Syria, where he reasoned that since he was now barred from the next world, he might as well enjoy himself in this world. The former world, as he knew it, was collapsing all around him. Nevertheless, a new star rose on the horizon of his once-beloved land. Akiba declared that this new star, Bar Kokhba, was the promised Messiah, the deliverer of the people from the oppression of the Romans. Elisha was recruited by the Romans to be an informer against his own people during the ensuing war. His own people were ordered to violate the laws of the Torah. The Sanhedrin was exterminated. Once again, Elisha witnessed the wanton cruelty of human nature and the realization that there was no reward for virtue.

Amidst the final destruction of his people and his land, Elisha realized that he couldn't inform against his former disciple Meir. Elisha was imprisoned by the Roman authorities, who condemned him to live in shame and infamy for his acts against his own people. It was while Elisha wasted away in the dark dungeon where he had been placed, and where he had reached the lowest point in his life, that he cried out in his soul for help. He felt the searing tears of a lost soul streaming through his being, and the alienation from his roots caused him to cry out for mercy. He felt that he was a traitor to his spiritual mission, and he had wasted the best years of his life on a useless quest. He had tried to bridge the faith of his tradition with the reason of Greek philosophy. All in vain.

There and then – in a split moment – a light broke through the tear-ravished mind of the apostate, and in the darkness of the dungeon he felt his spirit being lifted from his chained body and transported up to the third heaven, a place where he presumed he had entered paradise. He thought he was in an orchard, for he saw a fruit-laden tree of life with a river flowing beside it. On an elevated mound in the orchard was an angelic being sitting on a throne. Elisha hesitated at first to approach the majestic throne, for he expected that in heaven only God is seated, and the other heavenly beings stand. The thought crossed his mind that there might be two deities, which he considered to be a heresy of dualism. However, when he saw the outstretched hands of the angelic being beckoning him to come near, Elisha slowly approached the awe-inspiring presence of

radiant light. As he came closer, the light became brighter and multicolored, and it appeared as if the colors of the rainbow made an arch above the throne. Elisha fell on his face and prostrated himself before the divine presence.

"Rise, Elisha," spoke the being of light. "I am not God. Thou shalt worship the One God only, the invisible Father of us all. I am his messenger, Metatron, the angel of the divine presence. I was the angel sent to preserve you and bring you to this place. This place is the crown of your achievement."

Elisha suddenly felt the crown of his head light up with a thousand lights, and he felt himself transformed into a new creature, a being of light. He noticed that Metatron was holding a large book in his hands, and that he was writing the name Elisha ben Abuyah in it. At the feet of Metatron, within the folds of his vast white robe, sat four living creatures: a lion, an eagle, a man, and an ox. The four living creatures became the wheels of a chariot, and Metatron motioned for Elisha to sit in the chariot. As Elisha sat in the chariot, he felt himself transported to another dimension.

The last thing Elisha saw, as the chariot started moving and vibrating at an accelerated rate, was a fiery bolt of lightning striking the grave of Elisha. His disciple Meir put out the fire with his cloak. The smoke rising from the grave ascended into the heavens, and the voice of Meir trailed the spirit of Elisha rising into the air with the words: "Elisha, the Other One, will be redeemed by virtue of his knowledge of the Torah."

The voice of Bannus rang out in the cave, "Come back, Little One, come back." Paul felt like a lost soul drifting in the outer regions of Sheol for a moment. And then he felt the chariot of the light-body descend back to the entrance at the crown of his head. He saw with his mind's eye the light dissolve back into darkness.

Paul opened his physical eyes and looked at Bannus smiling at him.

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σταυρος (stauros), The Cross
σ τ…. 6
α …. 1
υ …400
ρ …100
ο …. 70
ς …200
_____
777

"That which is known as the Christian religion existed among the ancients, and never did not exist; from the very beginning of the human race until the time when Christ came in the flesh, at which time the true religion which already existed, began to be called Christianity."

- - St. Augustine, Retractions, Book I, xiii, 3

Apollos looked across the observation deck of the small luxury ship, the Silver Wind, at the wide expanse of the dark Tyrrhenian Sea. Behind, in the wake of the cruise ship's waves, receded the night lights of Civitavecchia, the port city of the Eternal City of Rome. Simon, who was initially reluctant to book a cruise for three people to Alexandria, finally conceded when Sophia convinced him that the mystery of Apollonius would be resolved there. Apollos had suggested a cruise instead of a flight because he wanted to experience the ancient method of travel on the waves of the Mediterranean, the sea that was once considered to be located in the middle of the earth. Sophia, on the other hand, was looking forward to visiting the center of learning in the ancient world.

The Silversea cruise line offered Apollos and Sophia an opportune time to relax in the open air after the prolonged stay in the congested atmosphere of a large city. It also offered Apollos an opportunity to visit the island of Malta, which tradition said was the place where St. Paul was shipwrecked. For Simon, it was a chance to pursue his unquenchable desire to discover the whereabouts of the illusive Apollonius of Tyana.

The south wind gently blew across the bow of the liner and softly caressed the face of Apollos as he thought of the words of Hermes that kept reverberating in his mind: "I will meet you in Alexandria." Apollos looked up into the dark autumn sky and saw the new moon and the nearby evening star as a fortuitous sign. The propitious promise of Hermes was like a beacon of light, guiding him to a harbor of solace and tranquility. Deep inside his soul he knew Simon would not release him and Sophia until he had triumphed in his nefarious plot to destroy the name and spirit of the wise and divine man who had become one of the immortals. Apollos was torn between two conflicting ideas: if he followed in the footsteps of the sage, he would hopefully complete his investigation into the life of Apollonius and finish his manuscript; if he continued to support the stealthy tactics of Simon Petroma and utilize his ecclesiastical and financial services, he might inadvertently do more harm than good in proving his thesis that Apollonius was the

biblical Paul and the real teacher of the gentiles. Should he continue his life's work even if it meant helping Simon with his power-hungry schemes?

The dilemma that tossed the mind of Apollos back and forth like the waves of a turbulent sea was etched on the furrows of his brow, and Sophia couldn't help but notice that something was perplexing her companion.

"Do you want to talk about the bothersome thoughts that hang like a dark cloud over your head?" asked Sophia as she snuggled up to Apollos, who was reclining in a chair on the observation deck.

"It's the same problem we've been faced with for more than three months," gloomily responded Apollos, his voice cracking under the mental stress.

"You mean the problem of Simon, who is like the proverbial monkey on our backs?" asked Sophia intuitively.

"Yes," conceded Apollos, "the egoist who is exploiting us for personal fame, power, and glory."

"Just keep believing that the good we do in making the story of Apollonius public will outweigh the evil that he will try to do in discrediting our efforts," reassuringly postulated Sophia.

"You mean I should keep on writing," asked Apollos, "and let the gods decide the providential outcome of our work?"

"Precisely," said Sophia in her cheerful voice, "and may our outcome be as Apollonius prayed: 'O ye gods, bestow on us whatever is due.'"

"This extended period of inactivity has dulled my creative thinking," said Apollos, referring to the days of touring museums, churches, public plazas, and numerous restaurants instead of working on his manuscript. "Maybe this fresh seaborne air will clear the cobwebs from my mind."

"I'm actually glad we had all that time to familiarize ourselves with all that Rome had to offer," said Sophia. "The time I spent communing with the sibyls and oracles in the Sistine Chapel was something I could have continued to do for all eternity. Michelangelo's inspiring art work was like heaven on earth for me. In fact, I believe I'm inspired by all I've seen to finish the great work that we started together at Delphi."

"You mean the Key to the Initiated that the oracle of Delphi delivered into our safekeeping?" asked Apollos knowingly.

"I've read the transcribed notes that you took, and I believe I can correlate them with the scriptural revelation," confidently stated Sophia.

"And I can work on the Egyptian chapter in the life of Apollonius," enthusiastically stated Apollos, breathing in a large volume of fresh air through his wide-open throat into his expanding lungs. "This vivifying air is already stirring up my brain cells."

Apollos and Sophia laughed joyously as they walked hand in hand to their vista suite to get their writing material. Then they went to the quiet library at the back of the ship next to the Panorama lounge on Deck 8. They were too busy to care about Simon and his whereabouts; he was entertaining himself by mingling with the single women, and dancing with them, in The Bar on Deck 5.

Apollos opened his spiral notebook and began writing about Apollonius in Egypt:

The land of Egypt beckoned many a pilgrim of the soul to explore the mysteries of life and death within its temples and pyramids.

Apollonius of Tyana was one in the long line of wise men who sought initiation into the wisdom of the Egyptians. The Greek philosophers Pythagoras and Plato had preceded him, and Apollonius was determined to follow in their footsteps and learn what they had learned from their experience in the Great Pyramid.

*Upon landing in Alexandria, Egypt in the summer of 69 A.D., the people of Egypt enthusiastically greeted the renowned sage with love and devotion as he stepped down from the ship in the Eastern Harbor. Philostratus writes: "They gazed upon him as if he was a god, and made way for him in the alleys, as they would for priests carrying the sacraments." (**Life of Apollonius**, Vol.1, Book 5, Ch.24, p. 517) His first order of business was to visit the great Serapeum, the cult center of the sacred bull Apis, who was considered to be an incarnation of the creator god Ptah, and a manifestation of Osiris, the Lord of Heaven, on earth. Within the temple stood the statue of Serapis, a composite god used for the purpose of uniting the Greeks and the Egyptians, a blazing solar god with a coronet of seven rays, whose aspects of fertility (with a basket of grain on his head), healing, and the underworld (or afterlife) appealed equally to Greek and Egyptian essential religious beliefs.*

Apollonius was impressed with the "orderliness" of the arrangements in the temple, which was "thoroughly religious and wisely framed," but he disapproved of the blood offerings and wisely offered a correction to the Egyptian rites: he showed the officiating priest how the sacrifice of a model bull, made of frankincense gum resin, would emit an ascending smoke of an oracular nature as it melted in the fire. In conclusion, Apollonius revealed his knowledge of Chaldean lore, and his own morning obeisance to the Eternal Fire, with the words: "Many things are revealed in the disc of the sun at the moment of its rising." (Book 5, Ch. 25)

Apollos placed his pen on his notebook and closed his eyes. His eyes were tired and he wanted to go to sleep. He wanted to rise before sunrise so that he could perform his morning salutation to the rising sun.

"Are you ready to call it a night?" asked Sophia, who was still working on her project.

"Yes, my eyes are tired and I want to get up early," answered Apollos with his eyes closed.

"Do you want to hear what I've written so far?" asked Sophia, who was anxious to reveal the mystery of the Apocalypse.

"Sure, you read while I listen with closed eyes," responded Apollos dreamingly.

"OK, but don't go to sleep on me," stated Sophia emphatically. "Here goes: The Apocalypse or Book of Revelation, as it is more popularly called, is a Wisdom Manual

for initiates of all religions. The symbolical teachings flow from the fountainhead of the true religion of the ancient masters of wisdom – the religion and science of the human soul. What in ancient teachings was called the Christ-mind or Christ-consciousness came to be called Christ Jesus in Christianity. The principle of the Higher Self (or divine soul) in Man is the same, no matter by what name it is called. The purpose of the unveiling of this Wisdom Manual in this day and age is to bring the individual soul of each person to an awareness of its innate divine self – its God-given birthright as a part of the All-encompassing Ultimate Reality. The key to the unfolding of the divine nature of the soul is revealed step-by-step within each verse of the twenty-two chapters of the Holy Scripture. The method whereby the regeneration of the body takes place is through self-discipline and inner attunement with the soul through silent prayer or meditation. May the divine spirit within each person reveal itself through the reading of the oracular words of Wisdom.

Here begins the verse by verse biblical and wisdom teaching correlation:

Revelation 1

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

When the Initiate first sets out on the Path to regenerate his body, an inner teacher (the Higher "Christ" Mind) appears and opens up the inner consciousness. The "book" which is unveiled are the states of vibration of inner activities (past, present, future) in the regeneration of the body.

2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

The Initiate receives these vibrations as a revelation of the Higher Mind. These are all the vibrations of all the inner states of experience and existence ("Christ-within").

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

The mind of the Initiate receives the ability to perceive and understand the vibrations from the high spiritual realms. The Eternal Now is the "time" in which any person who qualifies may experience "illumination."

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

The Initiate recounts the peaceful and beatific experience when the vibrations (spirits) in his body opened up the doors of his energy centers (churches) to the enthroned consciousness which abides in the Eternal.

5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

The realm of Christ-consciousness contains the highest Memory of Nature and the Intuitive Mind, which is the first of man's faculties to awaken from dormancy to become the dominant power in the body, and which also directs the purifying fire with its cleansing influence to eliminate evil in the body.

6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

The entire completed process of initiation opens up the way for initiates to function consciously in the Higher Divine Mind, which rules the higher class of people. The chanting of the Aum (Amen) vibration stirs up the electro-magnetic forces in the spinal cord to arouse the regenerative serpentine fire.

7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

The awareness of the spiritual body (aura) allows the spiritual vision to see the enlightened Higher Mind, even the sense perceptions and faculties of the mental and psychic constitution which previously were unable or unwilling to perceive it.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

The awareness of the God within – Pure Spirit – is the beginning and end of our existence, after we have learned all (past, present, future) lessons and discarded the physical world.

Sophia looked at Apollos and saw that his mind was enraptured with an inner world of its own. She touched him gently on his shoulder and said, "Apollos, let's go to our suite. You're falling asleep." Sophia grasped the hand of Apollos and led him to the comfortable bed in their vista suite.

The following morning, Apollos and Sophia stood together on the observation deck and greeted the sun disk as it rose above the Apennine Mountain range, the backbone of Italy. After their energizing morning devotion, and after a hearty breakfast, they returned to their suite and prepared for a day of touring in the vicinity of Naples, where the Silver Wind cruise ship stopped for the day. Simon wanted to take a day tour of Pompeii. Apollos wanted to visit Pozzuoli (the ancient Greek colony of Dicaearchia, renamed Puteoli by the Romans), where two converging stories took place: St. Paul's journey from Puteoli along the Appian way to Rome (Acts 28:13-16); and the journey of Apollonius from Puteoli to Rome (Book 4, Ch. 36), and thirty years later from Rome to Puteoli (Book 8, Ch. 12). So Simon traveled southeast to Pompeii, and Apollos traveled west with Sophia to Pozzuoli (Puteoli).

"So this is where the famous harbor once stood," said Sophia when they arrived at Pozzuoli, just eight miles west of Naples, "the chief commercial seaport of ancient Rome, to which the ships of Alexandria brought their corn and grain cargoes."

"And the site where St. Paul started on his final journey to Rome," remarked Apollos, who looked across the waters of the submerged port facilities," after traveling on a ship of Alexandria from Malta."

"What puzzles me is why, if St. Paul was a prisoner on his way to present his case to the Caesar, Nero," noted Sophia, "he wasn't transported on a smaller ship from Puteoli up the Tiber River to Rome, the way Apollonius traveled when he presented his defense against the charges brought against him in the presence of the Emperor Domitian in 92AD."

"Probably because the story of St. Paul going to Rome had to end with the reign of Nero, who ruled until 68 AD, and not with the reign of Domitian, who was assassinated in 96AD," conjectured Apollos. "Otherwise, if the biblical story of St. Paul

concluded with his court trial before the Emperor Domitian, then there would be conclusive evidence that the entire story of St. Paul was really about the philosopher Apollonius of Tyana."

"That is brilliant reasoning," said Sophia admiringly, "and I would add that the mysterious disappearance of Apollonius from the court of the emperor and his reappearance that same day at Puteoli, where his traveling companion Damis and the philosopher Demetrius were waiting for him, are the real reason the story of St. Paul ends with a complete silence about what happens to him at Rome."

"You're right," conceded Apollos, "the book of Acts only mentions that St. Paul spent two years in Rome. There's no meeting with the emperor, or Caesar, and no beheading, either."

"Apollonius proved to the emperor that he was not a mere mortal," continued Sophia, whose mind seemed to pierce through the vibrations of the distant past, "and that fact would conflict with the Church's portrayal of only one immortal savior."

"How well I remember that incident in Book 8," reflected Apollos, whose eyes were lifted to the heavens as he recalled the words he had memorized, "where Apollonius explains his mysterious appearance at Puteoli to Damis, who traveled three days by land to get to the same place: 'Imagine what you will, flying ram or wings of wax excepted, so long as you ascribe it to the intervention of a divine escort.'"

The remaining part of the day Apollos and Sophia spent visiting the remains of monuments still visible from antiquity, among which the Temple of Neptune and the Temple of Serapis, a market court enclosed by a portico, were preserved for tourists to view. [Note: According to Daniel Tredwell in A Sketch of the Life of Apollonius of Tyana: "On arriving at Puteoli, Apollonius repaired at once to the temple of Neptune, and sacrificed to that god for his safety from perils of the sea; he then visited the temple of Diana . . . and he also visited the temple of Jupiter Serapis, famous throughout the world." p. 147]

That evening, after returning to the cruise ship, and after a sumptuous dinner, Apollos and Sophia returned to their favorite hangout, the library, and continued with their literary enterprise.

Apollos proceeded to write about Apollonius and his encounter with the Roman Emperor Vespasian:

In August, 69 AD the Roman emperor Vespasian was occupied with the siege of Jerusalem when a political turbulence arose in the empire, and Vespasian decided to seek the sage advice of Apollonius about making himself emperor. Vespasian sent for Apollonius, who declined "to enter a country which its inhabitants polluted both by what they did and by what they suffered." (Book 5, Ch.27) So Vespasian came to Alexandria, to the temple where the "noble man of Tyana" spent most of his time. The future emperor, who believed Apollonius had " insight into the will of the gods," asked him to make him king. Apollonius replied: "I have done so already, for I have already offered a prayer for a king who should be just and noble and temperate, and surely in my prayer I was asking from the gods for none other but thyself." (Ch. 28)

After the encounter with the future emperor of the Roman empire, who spent several days conversing with Apollonius and listening to his advice, "above all to the forecasts and revelations imparted to him by the gods concerning the future of the empire," (Ch. 37) Apollonius was ready to leave Alexandria and head to Ethiopia to visit the gymnosophists, a community of scantily-dressed ascetics known as "the naked sages."

At this point in the investigation of the life of Apollonius, and before we leave Alexandria, it would behoove us to pause and consider the enigmatic statement in the Bible about "a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in scriptures." (Acts 18:24) According to the Dictionary of Scripture Proper Names in the Oxford King James Version of the Bible, Apollos is another form of Apollonius. Apollos (Apollonius), furthermore, is a man "instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John." (Acts 18:25) Apollos (Apollonius) is associated in the biblical account with Ephesus (18:24) and with Corinth (19:1); Apollonius spent time teaching in both cities, urging his listeners to devote themselves to philosophy, the love of wisdom.

Certain terms, or expressions, need to be clarified in order to understand the underlying significance of the enigmatic text:

(1)" Jew" refers metaphorically to a person of high spiritual development, like Apollonius; such a person (and title) represents a knower of God, or one who possesses the knowledge and wisdom of God.

(2) "Alexandria" in the ancient world represented the cosmopolitan compilation of the religions and philosophies of the known world, which Apollonius embodied (i.e. as a world traveler, Apollonius amassed the wisdom and knowledge of that day and age).

(3) "Ephesus" is the city where the miraculous appearance (bilocation from Smyrna to Ephesus) of Apollonius took place; here he became a "physician of their infirmity" and purged the people of the plague which raged in their city. (Book 4, Ch. 10)

(4) "Baptism of John," which involved the rite of repentance or purification, refers symbolically to the initiation (baptism) into the purificatory doctrines and teachings of Pythagoras. Apollonius actually was initiated into almost all of the mystery teachings of his time, as evidenced by the phrase "stewards of the mysteries of God," which refers to Paul and to Apollos (Apollonius). (1 Corinthians 4:1, 6)

The crux of the matter lies in a revealing passage where Paul and Apollos are juxtaposed as both being ministers in an allegorical garden: "I (Paul) have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." Then a perplexing riddle ("Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?") is unraveled in a seeming conundrum: "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one." (1 Cor. 3:4-8) In actuality, the paths of Paul and Apollos (Apollonius) never cross because Paul is another form of Apollonius, as is Apollos – i.e. one man, Apollonius of Tyana, appears as both the "wise masterbuilder" of the Christian faith, or more aptly called "Wisdom of God in a mystery" (1 Cor. 2:7), and the man who builds on top of the foundation (Acts 3:10) by visiting the temples of the Roman Empire in the first century AD and reforming their religious rites.

"In the words of Daniel Tredwell, in his book ***A Sketch of the Life of Apollonius of Tyana*** *: "He (Apollonius) passed from province to province and temple to temple without distinction of sect, in an endeavor to purify the pagan worship, as he had done at Antioch, Ephesus, Smyrna, and Athens, establishing new parishes, bishops, presbyters, elders, and priests. In this work he was assisted by the priests of the temples and his disciples. He revised the pagan festivals, amended the rites of sacrifice and penance, during a period in which Paul is said to have instituted Christian churches in the same places." (p. 128)*

Apollos looked up from his work and watched Sophia as she was putting the finishing touches to her own masterpiece.

"I think I need to stop for now and continue tomorrow," said Apollos as he looked admiringly at Sophia and her concentrated effort with her project.

"Just a minute," said Sophia without looking up from her work, "I'm finishing the last verse about the mystery of the human body."

Apollos proofread his writing while he waited for Sophia to finish.

"There," said Sophia, putting her pen down on her notebook, "listen to what I wrote."

Sophia began to read with a commanding voice, and Apollos listened attentively this time:

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The Initiate begins recounting the ordeal of initiation which occurred in the kingdom of the higher intellect when the mind was in a state of inner introspection. The Heart of the initiate is a partner in the ordeal with the Mind, which is related like a brother (i.e. lower mind and higher mind).

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

The Initiate was in contact with the heaven worlds through deep meditation, and the vibrations of the inner voice raise his consciousness to a higher plane.

11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

The vibrations strike the keynote of the Process of Initiation from its beginning to its end, which is the steady unveiling of the Mystery Temple within the Human Body, starting with the lowest spiritual center (church) and progressing to the highest center: (1) Ephesus=sacral region, Muladhara chakra; (2) Smyrna=procreative region, Adhishthana chakra; (3) Pergamos=abdominal region, Manipuraka chakra; (4) Thyatira=cardiac region, Anahata chakra; (5) Sardis=throat region, Vishuddhi chakra; (6) Philadelphia=cavernous region or Pituitary Gland, Ajna chakra; (7) Laodicea=Pineal Gland or 3rd Eye, Sahasrara chakra.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

The Initiate tries to visualize and realize the "voice within." By directing the consciousness in the direction of the posterior side of his body, the initiate becomes aware of the 7 spiritual centers in his spinal cord.

13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

And he becomes aware of the appearance of a High Initiate who functions as a Divine Man in the midst of the 7 spiritual centers, with the body of an all-encompassing aura, and enclosed with wisdom.

14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

The Divine Man has the Mind of innocence and his thoughts are pure; the control of his emotional nature allows his eyes to be opened and illumined with soul energy.

15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

The spiritualization of his feet allows them to run errands of mercy; and the controlled force of his voice allows him to speak with power and authority.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

The Divine Man rules his own stars or planetary influences, and he speaks with the qualities of spiritual justice and impartial judgment; a charismatic force shines through his personality.

[Note: The composite image of the Divine Man or Logos as the incarnating Soul, with its 7 planetary spirits or influences can be seen from a Cosmological Point of View:

(1) Saturn's white hair = Ancient of Days, or Father Time
(2) Jupiter's flaming eyes = All-Seeing Father God
(3) Mars' two-edged sword = Divine Justice
(4) Sun's shining face = Light of the World
(5) Venus' girdle = Divine Love
(6) Mercury's feet = Divine Thought
(7) Moon's voice = Sea of Generation]

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

Upon entering the state of awareness of the divine consciousness, the initiate loses consciousness of the physical world. The hand of power descends on the initiate and he is encouraged to tread the path of regeneration from beginning to end.

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

The Divine Man becomes "dead" during the cycle of physical incarnation, but he is "resurrected" to life when the soul-intuition is awakened by means of the vibration of OM (regenerative energy force), which brings consciousness of immortality and control over the physical and astral worlds.

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

The impressions of the higher consciousness are conveyed to the heart and the mind as an eternal reminder of the soul's destiny.

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

The mystery of the human body is determined by the 7 ruling planets and their influences, and the 7 centers (chakras) in the spinal column. The 7 ruling planets are the ruling intelligences (divinities) of the 7 centers (churches), and the 7 energy chakras are the 7 spiritual centers (churches).

When the Silver Wind landed at the La Cala harbor of Palermo in Sicily the following day, Apollos and Sophia were joined by Simon for a casual tour of the exotic city of ornate palaces and churches of various architectural styles.

"I wish we had landed in Syracuse instead," said Apollos, as they walked down Via Vittorio Emanuele, the main street heading away from the harbor. "Then we could have taken a trip to Mt. Etna, or at least seen it from Catania."

"And Syracuse is where both Apollonius and St. Paul are said to have stayed," added Sophia, knowing the real reason Apollos wanted to go there.

"Although St. Paul stayed there only three days on his way to Rome," added Simon with his bit of knowledge about the subject under discussion.

"Apollonius supposedly stayed at least a year in Sicily, teaching philosophy in the temples after his return from Spain," countered Apollos.

"Where he supposedly plotted with others to overthrow Nero after he banished all the philosophers from Rome in 66 AD," chided Simon, who relished the political intrigue Apollonius was accused of by his opponents.

"Let's turn left here," interjected Sophia, whose eyes caught sight of a Gothic style medieval church off Via Paternostro.

"You must remember that Apollonius fought for truth and liberty, and for his fellow philosophers, both during the reign of the tyrant Nero when he went to Rome the first time, in spite of protests from his disciples, and during the reign of Domitian when he fearlessly faced another tyrant, when he was imprisoned and in danger of losing his life," continued Apollos as he followed Sophia toward the Italian Romanesque church.

"That imprisonment reminds me of a funny incident that occurred between Apollonius and the tribune at the jail," laughed Simon sardonically.

"You mean that coarse tribune who claimed that the cause of the magician's trouble was that the people of Ephesus worshipped him as a god, which resulted in a charge of blasphemy against him?" asked Apollos, who was aware of the incident Simon alluded to.

"That was quite a strategy he thought of," concurred Simon, with a sinister grin on his face, "to actually provide Apollonius with a method of defense against the blasphemy charge. He would cut off the wizard's head with his sword, and the accusation would be groundless; whereas if he wasn't able to cut off his head, then the charges would be valid and the magician would be considered a god."

"So that's where the idea of the beheading of St. Paul came from," suggested Sophia intuitively as they approached the Piazza San Francesco d' Assisi.

"Now there's a fine example of inductive reasoning," stated Apollos, whose grasp of philosophical concepts had been perfected by the class he had taught.

"And I guess we can say that once the tradition was established that St. Paul was beheaded, everybody in Christendom accepted it as a historical fact," concluded Simon.

"Look at that building!" said Sophia, changing the subject. She stopped and looked at the Basilica of San Francesco d' Assisi with the richly decorated triple false arches of the portal. "Let's go inside." She looked up at the exquisite rose window above the portal as she approached the entrance to the building.

The discussion ended, and the sightseeing began. After the basilica, the threesome ventured back on the main street and headed to the Quattro Canti (Four Corners), the crossroad marking the heart of the city's traditional center. Onward in their journey they encountered the Duomo, which housed the tombs of Sicily's kings and other royal personages. The crowning moment of their adventurous walk through the city was at the Palazzo Reale (Royal Palace), the present home to Sicily's regional government and the former splendor of the Kingdom of Sicily.

Back on board the cruise ship, the traveling companions discussed their plans for the arrival at Valleta, Malta the next day. They all agreed that the wisest course of action would be to utilize the services of a licensed guide, who would give them a private tour of the major sites connected with the life of St. Paul. They also agreed to go to bed early and get a good night's rest.

Sophia, who had been keeping a journal of her travels, made the following entry about their sea voyage to Malta:

This is the third night out at sea for us. So far it has been smooth sailing, and the calm waters of the Tyrrhenian Sea have made the trip enjoyable. Now that we're entering the turbulent waters of the Great Sea, my imagination is running wild and I'm imagining the voyage of Odysseus on this wind-tossed sea and the shipwreck of St. Paul on the island we're heading to. What am I thinking? I'm on a safe modern cruise ship. However, those waves are getting bigger as I look outside our vista suite window, and I'm beginning to have a queasy feeling in my stomach as the ship is starting to rock back and forth. It's almost midnight. I'm going to try to get some sleep. I will try to block out the sound of the ocean.

Morning. I couldn't sleep at all last night. I was tossing and turning right along with the erratic movements of the ship. I don't think I'll be able to eat breakfast. It seems like we're getting close to our destination. The movements of the ship have subsided, even though I still feel them in my

mind. Time to wake Apollos up. Lucky guy slept through the wind storm and the wild ride. I can still hear the sound of the ocean in my mind.

What a day! I've never seen so much in one day. We were on a fast-paced itinerary of most of the places associated with the shipwreck of St. Paul on the island and his subsequent stay of three months at various legendary sites. Our private guide drove us from place to place. She was such a devoted follower of the patron saint of the island, and she was extremely informed about all the traditions that arose to keep alive the memory of St. Paul's stay on the small Mediterranean island.

Angelina – that's the name of our private guide – was a godsend. She was able to perform a small miracle for us by hiring a small boat so we could go to St. Paul's Island to see the impressive thirteen foot high statue of the apostle holding a book in his left hand and a snake at his feet. Angelina told us that a serpent cult existed on the island before Christianity arrived, and the story of Paul handling a poisonous snake and not being harmed was similar to the story of St. Patrick driving the snakes out of Ireland. Amazingly, no snakes existed on the island of Malta after Paul threw the snake into the fire. That was when Apollos couldn't help himself and blurted out that the whole story probably referred to the kundalini fire within the spine. Angelina just smiled at him when he said that. Simon mentioned something about the islanders calling Paul a god after that incident, and we got into a discussion about how Apollonius was also called a god or a divine being. What amazed me as I looked at the statue on top of the twenty-six foot high pedestal was that the right hand of Paul was extended in a blessing, and there was no sword at his side.

After we took the small boat back to the marina of St. Paul's Bay, Angelina drove us south to Burmarrad, where a small Chapel of St. Paul, called San Pawl Milqi, stood. Angelina explained that the name meant "St. Paul is welcomed," referring to his stay at the villa of Publius, the island's Roman governor, when he came ashore after the shipwreck. Angelina showed us the excavations around the chapel, pointing out that it was the site of an agricultural estate where olive oil was extracted. When Simon asked her if there was any proof that the estate belonged to Publius, she was not able to offer any proof. She liked to use the phrase "according to popular tradition" to affirm her position on the matter. I would say she was very tactful.

As we drove further south to our next destination, Apollos got into a friendly conversation with Angelina about the possibility that the story of Paul's shipwreck might have been based on the shipwreck that the Jewish historian Josephus experienced on his way to Rome. Angelina politely brushed that conjecture aside by saying that the shipwreck that Josephus described was out on the open sea, whereas Paul's ship ran aground and was broken into pieces by the waves. I liked her ability to contrast the two events. Nevertheless, Apollos pursued his point, and he tried to say that the legend of the shipwreck was most likely taken from epic stories like the Odyssey by Homer. When he told Angelina that the real Paul never was in a shipwreck because he always changed ships if he had a premonition about a shipwreck, she looked at him with a puzzled look on her face. I knew he was talking about Apollonius, and I nudged him with my elbow to keep him from being too forceful in his argument. I knew Apollos was trying to find an explanation for the shipwreck story since we both knew that Apollonius sailed the Great Sea from one end to another and always arrived safely at his destination. And besides, there is no record of him going to Malta. My guess is that Apollonius was so popular all over the Mediterranean world that people were making up legends about his visit to their land, even if there was no record of such a visit.

Anyway, back to our trip. Angelina wanted to make sure we saw the baroque Cathedral of St. Paul in Mdina. We were all in awe of the ancient walled city as we drove through the Mdina Gate on the south side of the medieval city, which was situated on a hill. What a sight to see! No wonder they called it Citta Notabile (Noble City), the ancient capital of Malta. After marveling at the ancient fortifications, we were not as excited to see another church, even though Angelina pointed out all the marvelous memorial tablets on the floor and the ornate stained glass and the ceiling

paintings. I remember the funny face Simon made when Angelina told us that, according to popular tradition, the church was built on the site of the house of the governor Publius. I laughed when Simon asked Angelina how many churches were built on top of Publius's house. Even Angelina laughed. The biggest surprise for me was seeing a street named "TRIQ SANTA SOFIJA" (St. Sophia Street), and then looking at the oldest (supposedly) building in the city called Palazzo Santa Sophia, built in the Gothic-Romanesque style.

When we got to the suburb of Mdina, which was aptly named Rabat (suburb), Angelina took us to the cave where, according to popular tradition, St. Paul lived during his three months stay on the island while he was waiting for winter to end so he could catch a ship to Rome. The grotto was located under a church, dedicated to St. Paul. Angelina told us several legends about the grotto, one of which was that St. Paul was imprisoned there and another legend which attributed healing power to the stones in the grotto, especially for snake bites and fever. Apollos was impressed with the marble statue of St. Paul at the grotto, which showed the apostle holding a book in his right hand and his lowered left hand extended forward. Simon was thrilled to hear that Pope John Paul II came to pray in the grotto in 1990. Angelina showed us the plaque on the exterior wall of the church that commemorated the event with an inscribed prayer: "God Bless Malta and God Bless you all."

With that closing prayer we left Rabat and Mdina and headed back to our ship in the harbor of Valleta, the modern capital of Malta. I'm glad I wasn't driving – it just boggles my mind to see cars driving on the left side of the road like the English do. Angelina informed us that even though Malta gained its independence in 1964, it was still part of the British Commonwealth. So that's why they drive on the left side of the road.

Our last stop was the Church of St. Paul's Shipwreck in Valleta. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw a relic of a piece of St. Paul's arm bone and part of a column on which the apostle was beheaded. My goodness, to what extent was this worship of St. Paul carried! I guess the islanders started a tradition by saying that he was a god, and that tradition is continued to this very day in Malta. Apollos again was drawn to the statue of St. Paul in the church, which (in contrast to the others we have seen) had a sword at the left side of the statue. Simon said he had seen enough baroque churches to last him a lifetime. Angelina pointed out to us the two belfries and the seven bells when we came outside, again.

When Angelina dropped us off at the cruise ship, she reminded us to come back on the tenth of February, when there's a public holiday to celebrate the Feast of St. Paul's Shipwreck. She was a fantastic guide! I wish we had a guide like her everywhere we went. And so ends our Malta trip. Now on to Alexandria!

After seven days at sea, the Silver Wind at last brought the anxious travelers to their destination, the modern Western Harbor of Alexandria, "the Pearl of the Mediterranean." Apollos was anxious to find out about the cryptic message he had received from Hermes: "I will meet you in Alexandria." He had spent the past three days in a state of abstinence, preparing his body, mind, and soul for an encounter with the Egyptian god of Wisdom. Simon was curious to find out how the mystery of Apollonius would be resolved at the city founded by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C. He trusted Sophia's promise at the beginning of the cruise. Sophia was also wondering how it all would turn out. She trusted her intuition, even if she wasn't sure of the particulars of how the mystery of Apollonius would unfold.

Simon had booked two rooms at the Mercure Romance Hotel, which was located on the seafront near the ancient Eastern Harbor. From their hotel they were able to walk along the Corniche, the road along the seashore, to the city center. Sophia was thrilled to

see a new Alexandrian Library being constructed on the western end of the Corniche near the promontory Silsila. The project to rebuild the ancient center of learning, which was burnt by Julius Caesar and finally destroyed by the zealous Christian Emperor Theodosius I in the fourth century, was an international effort to resurrect the ancient library of the ancient world.

"I would love to be here on opening day," mused Sophia, who envisioned all the ancient scrolls being brought out of their hiding places and restored to prominence again.

"Come back in a year or two, when it's projected to be finished," said Simon, who saw a sign at the construction site.

"Some scholars have said that the great School of Alexandria relied on the books in the great library to create the religious thought which eventually produced Christianity," postulated Apollos, whose mind was always trying to visualize the source of physical phenomena.

"I guess you're referring to the great minds, the founding fathers of Christian theology, like Clement of Alexandria and Origen of Alexandria," said Simon, mentioning his two favorite theologians. "Clement, by the way, made the famous statement in his Stromata, which Monists from all walks of life like to use: 'The way of truth is one, but into it, as into a perennial river, streams flow from all sides.'"

"I was primarily thinking of Philo of Alexandria, the Jewish scholar who combined Judaism and Platonism to inaugurate an allegorical interpretation of scripture," remarked Apollos.

"And don't forget Apollos of Alexandria, whose genius provided the impetus to uncover the hidden wisdom of the mysteries of ancient religion and philosophy," added Sophia, who had read what Apollos had written about the biblical teacher. Apollos looked at her and winked.

"You mean the Jew of Alexandria, to whom Aquila and Priscilla had to teach the way of God because he only knew the teachings of John the Baptist?" retorted Simon in a mocking tone.

"Yes, the Apollos who was really Apollonius, who was instructed by Priscilla and Aquila, which signifies the 'ancient eagle' of wisdom," replied Apollos calmly and directly. Apollos expounded on what he had written about the subject in his treatise.

"You didn't have that in the manuscript that I procured," said Simon, who listened with renewed interest to what Apollos was revealing to him for the first time.

"You mean the manuscript that you stole from me," corrected Apollos. "There's a lot that you don't know and that I haven't written, yet."

"Weren't we on our way to the ancient site of the Serapeum, the temple where Apollonius taught at?" asked Sophia, trying to divert the two combatants from getting into another fight. She stepped in between the antagonists and walked between them to keep them from getting at each other's throats.

They walked silently toward the Eastern Harbor, where the ancient site of Pharos Island came into view. What was once the seventh wonder of the ancient world, the Pharos Lighthouse, was now occupied by Fort Qaitbey. Simon thumbed through his guide book, which he had purchased at the hotel, as they walked along the shoreline of the ancient harbor opposite the site of the former lighthouse.

"Here it says that the Pharos Lighthouse was composed of three stages: a square shape (183 ft. high) on the bottom, an octagonal shape (90 ft. high) in the middle, and a

circular shape (24 ft. high) on top, with a total height for the entire building, including the foundation base, of about 384 feet," said Simon as he looked at a sketch and description of the world-famous lighthouse in his book.

"The beacon of the ancient world," stated Apollos, referring not only to the lighthouse, but also to the light of knowledge and wisdom which beamed from Alexandria to the world.

"Pharos, curiously, has the same meaning as Pharaoh," noticed Sophia. "Both refer to the fire and light of the sun."

"And it also states in the guide book that a statue of Poseidon (or Neptune) with his trident adorned the summit of the towering building, whose light was reflected by a mirror at least thirty-five miles offshore," stated Simon, paraphrasing the information in the book. "The mirror reflected the sun rays during the day and fire by night."

"Isn't this where we turn to go south?" asked Sophia as they came to what appeared to be a main street.

"Sharia el-Nebi Daniel," read Simon, looking at the map in his guide book. "Yes, that's the main north-to-south street that runs from the Eastern Harbor. In ancient times it connected the harbor to Lake Mariout." Simon noticed that the entire area between the two harbors and the sections on top, or north, of the harbors formed a T-shape.

"I just thought of something interesting," said Apollos excitedly as he glanced back at the ancient Eastern Harbor. "The ships of Alexandria used to sail from that harbor with their cargo of grain and corn. Paul is said to have sailed on a ship of Alexandria from Malta to Rome."

"He also sailed on a ship of Alexandria from Myra, hometown of St. Nicholas," added Simon. "That's the one that shipwrecked on Malta."

"What hypothetical waters are you sailing on with these ideas?" asked Sophia, who knew that the mind of Apollos was heading into rough seas with his conjectures.

"The ship of Alexandria is a metaphor for the Egyptian mysteries," surmised Apollos, "and the Egyptian religion and its mysteries were brought to Rome aboard the symbolical ship whose figurehead was the sign of the Gemini twins, Castor and Pollux."

"The sign which represents the dual nature of man: the mortal Castor, who was fathered by a human, and the immortal Pollux, whose father was Zeus in the form of a swan appearing to the queen Leda," interpreted Simon.

"According to the precession of the equinoxes, which was pictorially represented on the ceiling of the Egyptian Temple of Denderah, Gemini would be the gate of the sun and Sagittarius the gate of the moon, the equinoxes in the Age of Pisces," commented Sophia, who tried to connect earthly knowledge with heavenly wisdom.

"Here it is," interjected the earthly-minded Simon, cutting off Sophia before she could say that Mercury (Hermes) was the ruling planet (or divinity) of the sign of Gemini, "the cross street, Al Horreya, which traverses from east to west and was called the Canopic Way in ancient times. The Gate of the Sun was on the eastern end of this street, and the Gate of the Moon was at the western end, near the Western Harbor."

"Which means that the design of the city was in the shape of a cross," deduced Apollos.

"According to the cardinal points of the compass," added Sophia. "From the Great Sea in the north to the lake in the south, and from the eastern Gate of the Sun-god, Ra or Osiris, to the western Gate of the Moon, Isis."

"We might as well walk along Al Horreya Avenue to the tram line that goes south to Pompey's Pillar and the site of the Serapeum ruins," advised Simon, who consulted his guide book.

They took the yellow-colored tram south to the highly visible Pompey's Pillar, which was located on Alexandria's ancient acropolis, a small hill adjacent to the city's Arab cemetery. Apollos began to sense a change in his consciousness as he stepped onto the grounds where the ancient temple of the composite god Serapis once stood. He knew that Apollonius taught his wisdom philosophy at the sacred site, but there was no sign of the temple of the Greater Mysteries of Serapis and Osiris that had been razed to the ground by Emperor Theodosius in 319 AD as a culminating victory of Christianity over pagan religions. Apollos gravitated to the twenty-five meter high solid red granite column, which stood on a high pedestal.

"That pillar was actually erected in honor of the Emperor Diocletian in 297 AD," stated Simon, whose eyes darted from his guide book to the round pillar as he tried to gather information about the remaining relic of a distant age.

Sophia raised her hands toward the symbolic ray of the sun, which connected the heavens and the earth, and she closed her eyes and said a silent prayer in her mind. She felt the fructifying ray of the inner sun pierce through her receptive mind and give birth to an image of a sublime sun-god, whose hair and beard beamed with light.

Apollos imitated the pose of Sophia, just as he had done at the red granite obelisk in Rome. He sensed a presence emanating from within the sacred stone. The presence revealed itself in a voice vibrating within his mind: "You have come to Alexandria, as expected. You have prepared yourself, as required. Now, seat yourself in front of the sphinx. Go deep within your inner Self, and I will transport you to the Holy Mount."

Apollos moved automatically to the nearby statue of a Ptolemaic sphinx on a pedestal. He sat down at the base of the pedestal and relaxed his body and mind. He focused his attention on his mind's inner eye. Sophia noticed Apollos sitting at the foot of the sphinx statue, and she came and sat down at his right hand. Simon watched in wonderment at the silent scene unfolding before his eyes, and he expected to witness something unusual at any moment.

Apollos continued to sit with a straight back for several minutes. He watched his breathing, through a slightly opened throat, become almost imperceptible. He felt the cool lunar and the warm solar currents of energy flow up and down his spine. His mind became crystal-clear, like a calm pool of silver-colored water. In the reflective pool of his mind an image of the Great Pyramid appeared. The next thing he knew, he was standing inside a cave-like room inside the pyramid. Inside the room was a majestic throne, and on the throne sat the familiar figure of Hermes.

"Welcome back, Balinas," stated the awe-inspiring voice of the messenger of the gods. Apollos stood silently and ruminated on the significance of the name he was called. He realized the name was connected to Apollonius. "You are the proxy of Apollonius in this day and age. The alter ego, or an etheric aspect, of Apollonius – who goes by the shortened name of Paul – was here some time ago at the etheric Mt. Sinai, the Holy Mount. He received the new revised or simplified version of the Emerald Tablet for the arrival of the Aquarian Age. You will use the cosmic laws of that version in conjunction with the Keys to the Initiated that you recently received."

Apollos watched as the green Emerald Tablet materialized in the right hand of Hermes, and the ten cosmic laws flashed simultaneously on the wall of the room and in Apollos' mind. From the unity of the One to the multiplicity of the Ten, Apollos watched the archetypal principles demonstrated within the crystal ball of the caduceus which materialized in the left hand of Hermes. He witnessed the transformation of the gold serpent and the silver serpent of the caduceus into two keys, a solar gold key and a lunar silver key. The lunar key opened the inner sanctuary of his receptive mind, and the solar key opened a cone-shaped golden box in the tabernacle of his soul, the Pineal gland. He watched as the golden windows of the soul opened in his cone-shaped mind's eye, and a scroll unfolded to reveal the mysterious Book of Thoth, which was subtitled "The Key to Immortality."

"Listen as I relate the story of your divine soul," spoke Hermes, whose voice seemed to travel from the depths of outer and inner space simultaneously. As the story unfolded, Apollos saw a pictorial representation on the screen of his mind. "The life of the universe and of your divine soul is like a great dragon whose body moves in endless rhythm. It is like a vast mind made of creative thought particles which constantly vibrate and give birth to energized units of life-matter. It radiates a light from within itself, which becomes the light of the world in which it lives. This light descends into a world of darkness called matter, and this light becomes imprisoned within a body. The imprisoned light of the soul can never be extinguished, for it always rises like a pillar of fire from the constantly moving creative thought particles. Thought is the voice of the inner light, which generates a reasoning mind. The reasoning mind makes invisible things become visible by virtue of the light and the voice, or creative word, of thought. The visible becomes a physical body composed of the masculine principle of light-energy and the feminine principle of life-matter. Thus, the visible body is said to be in principle a hermaphrodite, or male and female."

Hermes paused in his discourse as he displayed an image of the great dragon transformed into a vast wheel that revolved eternally within the great celestial kingdom, and within the small kingdom of the soul. The twelve divisions of the wheel, which pictorially represented the zodiac, seemed to be governed by seven planetary spirits. Apollos instantly had a vision of a seven-branched candlestick that was illuminated with seven lights within his cerebral-spinal system, and the twelve divisions of the wheel were like a chain of continuous lives on the Great Wheel of Life.

"Now watch as I reveal to you the life of the divine soul as it rises back from the visible to the invisible, or from the mortal to the immortal," said Hermes, whose mind emitted a beam of light that revealed an image of a man crucified on a cross of matter. Instantly the thought of Apollonius arose in Apollos' mind, and he knew that Hermes wanted him to realize that he was witnessing the initiation of Apollonius in the Great Pyramid. Apollos saw that the naked body of Apollonius was unconscious. Tears welled up in his eyes, for he thought that Apollonius was dead. The seemingly-lifeless body was laid in the tomb of the sarcophagus for three days.

And then the scene changed and Apollos watched as Hermes unfurled a vast canvas of the soul rising to immortality: the seven material aspects (or planetary spirits) of the imprisoned soul were cast aside one by one, starting with the generative desire of the Moon, the crafty mental aspect of Mercury, the lusty nature of Venus, the ambitious fire of the Sun, the martial spirit of Mars, the ruling power of greed in Jupiter, and finally

ending with the dark illusion and falsehood of Saturn. As the lower nature of the divine soul was transcended, a higher nature became manifest – an ethereal body of light.

Apollos watched as the body of light rose from the tomb. The consciousness of Apollonius radiated within that body of light, sending an image of his regenerated etheric form to the eye of the beholder. As Apollos watched the vibrations of light-energy assume the bodily form of Apollonius, he realized he was witnessing the materialization of an ascended master. In his mind, Apollos heard the voice of Hermes announce: "He who realizes that the physical body is the tomb of the divine soul, and transcends the cross of flesh and bones, that person will wear the crown of immortality."

The vision of the immortal Apollonius was imprinted on the eye of the soul of the mortal Apollos. Apollos looked into the face of that vision, and the face of Apollonius became vivid and clear. The mind of Apollonius spoke a grand thought and transmitted it to the mind of Apollos: "God has given us Eternal Life." The eternal truth reverberated within the mind of Apollos like the ripples of an ever-widening circle in a pond.

As Apollos continued to gaze at the extraordinary vision, he saw the face of Hermes, the god of wisdom, transfigured on the face of Apollonius. The apotheosis of Apollonius was complete.

As the vision of the immortal Apollonius faded from the elevated consciousness of Apollos' mind, the immortal words of the sage resounded like the cosmic waves of an infinite ocean:

> "There is no death of anyone save in appearance only, even as there is no birth of anyone or becoming, except only in appearance. For when a thing passes from essence into nature we consider that there is birth or becoming, and in the same way that there is death when it passes from nature into essence; though in truth a thing neither comes into being at any time nor is destroyed." [Life of Apollonius, Epistle LVIII]

Apollos felt one with the universe, and he did not want to return to the consciousness of his physical body. His mind seemed to float on billows of peace and bliss. And yet, there was a silver-like string pulling him back to earth, to Alexandria, to his physical body, and to Sophia. He felt the energy of his body again, and he opened his eyes. Sophia was still sitting beside him, and Simon was watching him intently from a short distance nearby.

"What happened?" asked Simon as soon as he saw Apollos open his eyes. Sophia opened her eyes at the sound of Simon's voice and looked at the distant gaze in Apollos' eyes.

"Give him a minute to gather his senses," cautioned Sophia, who stroked the arms and legs of Apollos to bring circulation back into his limbs.

"I saw Apollonius," said Apollos after a minute of readjusting to his environment.

"He's alive?" asked the astonished skeptic, Simon.

"I saw his mortal body become an immortal body," stated Apollos, his gaze fixated on the heavenly vision which was still visible to his mind's eye.

"Where is he?" asked Simon, who was becoming impatient.

"All I know at the present moment is that he did not die at Ephesus," affirmed Apollos. He told Sophia and Simon all about his vision. "Now I understand the biblical passage where Paul or Apollonius was called Mercurius or Hermes. The god of wisdom resides in Apollonius." Apollos suddenly became aware of a solution to a problem which

had perplexed biblical scholars for centuries: Who wrote the book of Hebrews? Martin Luther had suggested in the 16th century that Apollos of Alexandria probably wrote it. Apollos now knew that Apollonius, the divine man who belonged to the Order of the Immortal Ones – the biblical Order of Melchizedek, who was without beginning and end – most likely wrote most of the book of Hebrews.

"If he didn't die at Ephesus," persisted Simon, "where did he die?"

"There is no definite record of his death," reaffirmed Apollos. "Even Philostratus in the biography of Apollonius states that there are many stories about the time and place of his death, adding the disclaimer 'if he did actually die.' And I'm convinced after what I saw that he never died. He became one of the immortals."

"Perhaps if we go to Ephesus, we might find a valuable clue to your perplexing question," suggested Sophia. She turned away from Simon and gave a wink to her loving companion, Apollos.

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Joshua slowly climbed to the top of Mount Gerizim with Yusuf's seventy-year-old grandfather, Ibrahim. The mountain rose 881 meters above the valley in which the city of Shechem was situated. With each laborious step that Joshua took, he thought of the friend he had lost. Memories of the past three-and-a-half months raced through his agitated mind. The two friends enjoyed traveling together so much that they had decided to extend their stay in the Holy Land and visit as many sacred sites as they could. Part of their decision stemmed from their discovery in midsummer that pilgrims from all over the world were making pilgrimages to the Holy Land in the year of the Great Jubilee. Even Pope John Paul II had made his commemorative pilgrimage during the season of the spring equinox.

Yusuf and Joshua became such good friends that Yusuf felt comfortable enough to invite Joshua to meet his relatives in Shechem, which was presently named Nablus. Nablus was an Arabic version of the Greek name Neopolis, meaning "New City." Joshua recalled the day they traveled on Route 60 (the ancient "Way of the Patriarchs") from Jerusalem via Ramallah to Nablus to meet the relatives. They stopped on the way to see the ancient site of Bethel in the picturesque Arab village of Beitin. The ancient Beth-El ("House of El" or God) was at the crossroads of the main north-south road and the east-west road. Yusuf and Joshua reminisced about the legendary "Jacob's Ladder" as they climbed the steps of a crumbling watchtower on the archaeological site. Joshua remembered Yusuf saying that Jacob's vision of a stairway ascending to the heavens reminded him of the visions of Joseph. Joshua was surprised to find out that in Muslim tradition, Bethel was known as the "Assembly of the Prophets," because Mohammed had a vision of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the site.

The relatives that Joshua met in the heartland of the Palestinian West Bank were from Yusuf's father's side. The grandfather, Ibrahim, who was rooted to the land, was not in favor of moving to America or anywhere else. This was his homeland and he wanted to lay his bones in the land that his namesake, Abraham, first entered when he came to the ancient land of Canaan and was promised the land on which he set foot. Ibrahim took an instant liking to Joshua because Joshua loved to listen to the stories that flowed from the reservoir of knowledge in Ibrahim's brain. Of course, Yusuf had to translate the Arabic words into English for Joshua.

When Joshua and Ibrahim reached the Samaritan high place, one of the three summits of Mount Gerizim, they sat down and rested. This was the sacred mount on which Abraham built an altar and later offered up his son Isaac as a sacrifice, according to the Samaritan tradition. Joshua recalled the first time he ascended the mount with Yusuf and Ibrahim, who was an avid mountain climber even in his waning years. Yusuf and Joshua had discussed the significance of the intended human sacrifice and the substitution of a ram in place of the human sacrifice. Joshua had reasoned that each new age was inaugurated with a symbolical sacrifice, and the sacrifice of the ram signified the beginning of the age of Aries the Ram. Yusuf said that in the Muslim tradition the sacrifice signified a personal submission to the will of Allah. Ibrahim had asked Yusuf what they were discussing, and when Yusuf told him, the wise old man told Joshua a story that he had never heard before. As Joshua looked down at the narrow pass between the higher Mount Ebal to the northeast and Mount Gerizim to the south, he reflected on Ibrahim's story:

"Over four thousand years ago, when the prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) first left the idolatry of his father's home in Mesopotamia, he became the first true believer in the One God. He tried to show his idol-making father and the people of Chaldea that statues can't hear or talk, and that it was useless to pray to them. He tried to reason with people who worshipped the celestial planets and stars that they were brought into existence by the word of Allah, who alone should be worshipped. When the people wouldn't listen to the servant of the one true Allah, the prophet went into the temple with an ax and destroyed the stone and wood statues of the false gods. The idolaters tried to burn him by casting him into a deep pit of fire, but he came out of that pit unscathed, as if he had walked out of a cool garden. Still the people did not leave their idols, so the prophet left the land of polytheism and came to bring monotheism to a new land. His wife Sarah came with him, but she was not able to produce a son for him. So she offered him the servant Hagar, from whom the father of our Arab nation was born. In time the servant and her child, Ismail, were taken by the prophet to start a new nation in the valley of Mecca, where they built a House of worship, which is the Kaba of the Holy Mosque, a place of pilgrimage for every Muslim. It was there that the prophet had a vision that he must sacrifice his son Ismail. However, when Allah saw that both of them had submitted their wills to the will of Allah, they were told that they had fulfilled the vision through the act of submission, and a substitute sacrifice was offered."

Joshua remembered telling Yusuf that he thought both stories of the sacrifice of a son represented submission and sacrifice of the individual ego to the will of a higher mind. He recalled quoting the prayer, "Not my will, but thine be done." Now as he reflected on the sacrifice of his friend Yusuf to the reignited uprising in the land, he wondered whether it was Allah's will or the age-old battle for territorial rights that he

was witnessing. The question loomed large in his mind: Why can't the two nations that claim Abraham as their spiritual and ancestral father live in peace?

Joshua stood up and raised his hands to the sky. In his mind's eye he saw the last ritual that Yusuf had performed on the holy mount – it was a blessing that he said used to be shouted from the top of Mount Gerizim by the children of Israel. Joshua thought of Yusuf resting in the bosom of Abraham, the universal spirit of life, as he shouted the blessing in honor of his friend: "Blessed shall you be when you come in and blessed shall you be when you go out." From the opposing northern Mount Ebal he heard a response – it was the curse that would come upon those who did not follow the voice and commandments of the biblical Lord thy God: "Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out."

Ibrahim had tears in his eyes. The loss that he felt was unbearable. He didn't know how many more lives would be sacrificed before the blessing of peace would return to the land. He could only hope and pray that peace would come soon, Allah willing.

The rest of the day Joshua and Ibrahim walked through the 100-acre archaeological park on top of Mount Gerizim, where a Samaritan temple had once stood. Supposedly, it had been modeled after Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. Yusuf had walked through the sacred ruins with them a month ago.

The next day Joshua bade Yusuf's relatives farewell. Before he left, Ibrahim told him that the times were dangerous for travelers in the Holy Land, and he advised Joshua to return to his own land. Ibrahim didn't want Joshua to suffer the same fate as Yusuf. Joshua took his advice to heart, but there was one last place he needed to visit before he said farewell to his motherland: Samaria, the burial place of the prophet Eliseus. That was the last place Yusuf and Joshua had spent a day together before the fatal incident which took Yusuf's life.

Joshua left the crossroads that divided Nablus (Shechem) by way of its ancient north-south and east-west trade routes, and he followed Route 60 (the "Patriarch's Highway") north to Samaria (modern Sebastiya). One of Yusuf's male cousins volunteered to drive Joshua the short distance of seven miles to the remains of the royal city of Samaria, which was known as Shomeron ("Watch Mountain") to the Hebrews. A sign on the highway directed the visitors to Samaria/Sebaste, the old capital of the northern Kingdom of Israel. The present name of Sebaste was given to the city when Herod the Great rebuilt it and named it after the emperor (Augustus' name in Greek was Sebaste).

Joshua thanked Yusuf's cousin for the ride to the ancient acropolis, and then he proceeded to climb the isolated 300-foot oblong hill overlooking the main north-south road. The long flat top on the summit had an extensive amount of ancient ruins, including what was left of a temple of Baal from the first millennium BC, a tower and city wall from the time of Alexander the Great, a Roman basilica used as a hall of justice and a public meeting place, and steps from a temple dedicated to the emperor Augustus (Sebaste). It was a veritable City on a Hill in ruins.

Joshua walked past the ruins to the east end of the hill, where an old Crusader church from the 12th century AD had been converted into a mosque with two tomb chambers – one for the prophet Elisha (Eliseus), the other for John the Baptist. Joshua sat down beside the mosque nearest to the tomb chamber for the prophet Elisha. The midday

sun warmed his face. He closed his eyes and thought of the conversation he had with Yusuf at the tomb chamber:

"Remember when we arrived in Egypt back in June and you called the sun Ra-Khepri as it emerged from the eastern horizon?" asked Yusuf in his soft-spoken voice.

"Yes, and I remember you calling it Re, like in Ray, a drop of golden sun," chuckled Joshua with a beaming smile on his face.

"Well, the story of Elijah ascending into heaven in a chariot of fire reminds me of the Egyptian story of the sun-god Re sailing across the sky in his solar boat," remarked Yusuf as his eyes lifted toward the light in the blue sky.

"I'm more inclined to think of the Greek story of Helios in his radiant chariot driving his blazing white horses through the heavens," gesticulated Joshua, his right hand tracing a semi-circular path through the air.

"So would that mean that the story of Eliseus continues the journey of the story of Elijah, just like the setting sun follows the rising sun?" queried Yusuf, casting a dark glance at Joshua.

"That sounds reasonable, except that the Egyptian sun-god is represented in three aspects: Khepri in the morning, Ra at midday, and Atum in the evening," reasoned Joshua, scratching his head.

"Actually, the story of the sun's journey also includes the night journey through the dark underworld," added Yusuf.

"So then we have a duality of day and night," said Joshua, continuing Yusuf's train of thought.

"I think Eliseus does represent the double power of the sun as it passes its zenith and heats up the earth," said Yusuf, reflecting back on the story of Eliseus.

"So in a sense he embodies the setting sun that dies and then is reborn in the morning as Khepri—the One who always comes into being with each new day," concluded Joshua, as his thought became interiorized and he reflected on the idea of birth and rebirth.

At that moment a voice within Joshua's inner mind interrupted the memorable conversation with Yusuf: "There's much more to the story of Eliseus than just the diurnal journey of the sun through the sky."

Joshua instantly recognized the celestial musical-quality of Binah's voice. His inner ears perked up to listen to her melodic words: "The story of Eliseus, like the story of Everyman, is a multi-layered, multi-dimensional story that needs to be understood not only from a historical or literal perspective, but also from an allegorical or symbolical viewpoint. There's always the outer and the inner worlds, the cosmic and the personal, and the physical and the spiritual realities that must be taken into consideration whenever you read any sacred scripture."

A celestial sphere appeared on the canopy-like screen of Joshua's crown chakra, and he saw with his mind's eye a projection of the circle of the stars of the zodiac on the screen. Simultaneously he saw a picture of a man on the backdrop of stars plowing a field with 12 connected oxen. The man seemed to be performing the Herculean task of moving through the 12 signs of the zodiac, starting with Taurus the Ox (or Bull). The mantle of authority from the sun-god JAH fell on the burdened shoulders of the Plowman as he assumed the responsibilities of his predecessor, the forerunner of the end of the age

of Taurus. The Age of Taurus ended with the sacrifice of the oxen, and the Plowman followed the sun-god JAH to a new task and a new age.

"Such is the cosmic picture of the path of the Cosmic Savior," announced the voice of Binah as Joshua continued watching the celestial Eli-JAH ("My God is JAH") and Eli-SEUS ("My God is Savior") move toward the sign of Pisces the Fish.

Before Joshua could see what transpired in the ensuing ages, the cosmic vault of heaven faded, and an image of a scantily-clad guru and his disciple materialized on the screen of his mind.

"The prophet Elijah and his disciple Elisha," sub-vocalized Joshua as he watched the hairy ascetic dressed in a loincloth emerge with his faithful servant from what appeared to be a zodiacal circle (Gilgal).

"The journey through the twelve signs of the zodiac is the destiny of every soul as it travels in the physical world," explained Binah. "For the average person, fate and necessity push the soul along; for the disciple, self-determination motivates the soul." Joshua visualized an image of the disciple taking the proverbial bull by the horns.

Joshua watched the moving picture and scenery change as the guru and disciple traveled down the dusty road of the patriarchs to Bethel ("House of El"). He knew that the road represented his spine and he felt a warm current (flow) of etheric energy descend to his heart center. As an initiate of the forces and energies in his body, Joshua was aware that the imagery he was seeing stimulated certain nerve impulses in his body. When the guru and disciple traveled further south to Jericho ("a fragrant place"), Joshua sensed the flow of energy descend to his generative center. When the guru and disciple stood on the banks of the Jordan ("flowing down") River, Joshua saw fifty streams of nervous energy, like fifty streams of knowledge within the nervous system, enter the spinal river of life. When the guru took the mantle off of his back and divided the waters of the river and crossed over to the other side, Joshua felt the spinal energy in his back reverse its flow and begin to ascend to the top of the head. Finally, as the guru ascended into heaven in a chariot of fire drawn by blazing horses, Joshua became aware of a spiraling fiery energy moving upwards like a whirlwind through his etheric spinal cord and ascending out of the physical body through the top of the head.

The vision of the inner mechanism of the driving fiery forces in his etheric body brought Joshua to a state of exaltation, and he saw himself as the disciple Eliseus cry out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and its horsemen." A flash of solar light illuminated Joshua's mind as he (as Eliseus) realized that his guru had transcended the three physical bodies of the physical, astral, and etheric realms and had been transformed into the immortal solar body. He had become the master of his own inner starry universe.

"Consumed by the fire," said Binah as Eliseus picked up the physical remains (mantle) of his master and cast them upon the waters of the Jordan. "Now you understand why his name is Eli-JAH, for JAH means 'a consuming fire.' The spirit of his kundalini fire will be doubly powerful in your life now that you have witnessed the manner in which the fiery energy ascends."

Joshua was no longer aware of any physical sensations. His consciousness became totally absorbed in the life of Eliseus, the son of Shaphat ("Judge"), as if he himself was the disciple. "Yes, Yeshua, you are witnessing a previous incarnation," whispered Binah in her soft angelic voice, using Joshua's spiritual name.

Yeshua (Eliseus) entered the stream of his spinal river, and then he began retracing his master's steps, first through the generative system (Jericho), where he used the alchemical salt of the earth with the waters of his circulatory system to begin the regeneration of his body, mind, soul, and spirit. Next he traveled up by the Way of the Patriarchs to the heart center (Bethel), where he witnessed his ascent to the bald crown chakra of his head; he saw the recapitulation of an age as the Big Bear and Little Bear in the heavens devoured (progressed through) forty-two children (generations).

"Now there's an interesting image, two bears killing forty-two children," whispered Binah into Joshua's inner ear. "Actually, the Age of Aries that was inaugurated by Abraham and completed by the coming of the Messiah of the new age progressed through forty-two symbolical generations. Or should I say constellations?"

Yeshua (Eliseus) continued his journey on the path of the disciple, spending some considerable time at the school of the prophets at Mount Carmel ("the Garden of El" or God), where his master Elijah had instituted a center for the study of the holy mysteries of life. "You'll come back here in a future incarnation," whispered the guiding voice. "There will be an Essene community here paving the way for the arrival of the Messiah of peace."

After Yeshua (Eliseus) finished his studies at the school of the prophets, he came to Samaria, the capital city of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Here he became the servant of God and man. His mantra became: "In which way may I serve?" He had also become a seer of the vast underlying reality of consciousness, where he could see and hear intuitively beyond the realm of time and space and perceive the Eternal Now. However, his greatest development pertained to the blossoming of his throat chakra and the creative words that sounded forth an inner wisdom whenever he said, "Thus says the Lord." This development went hand in hand with his awareness of the role that the northern extremity of the spinal cord, the medulla oblongata (the symbolical Samaria, the northern capital of the human body—the mind), played in his life when he became the mouthpiece of divine consciousness.

His first task in serving mankind came at the request of an alliance of three kings (Israel, Judah, and Edom), who asked the prophet for a prognosis of their upcoming battle with the king of Moab. Like a true oracle, he foresaw the events leading up to the complete conquest of the kingdom of Moab (physical realm) by the alliance of the mental, soul, and emotional realms. What he didn't foresee, though, was the king of Moab's sacrifice of his oldest son, heir to his throne, as an offering to appease the alliance of kings, who left afterwards.

His second task came about when a poor widow complained to the servant of man about creditors coming to take her two sons away as payment for debt. He asked, "What can I do for you?" She told him she didn't want to lose her sons. He found out she had a pot of oil in the house, so he had her borrow empty vessels into which he had her pour the never-ending supply of oil. She sold the oil, paid her debts, and lived with her two sons free of debt.

The third task involved the use of the life force which the man of God had conserved within his body for a creative purpose. It happened one day, as he was on his way from Samaria to Mount Carmel, that "a great woman" in a small village named Shunem ("two resting-places") invited him to eat bread with her and her old husband. Her hospitality was extended to him, and he stayed in a chamber prepared for him, within

which was placed a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick. He discovered through his servant Gehazi ("valley of vision") that the woman was childless. He asked, "What is to be done for you?" She did not respond, but the man of vision knew that she would conceive and bear a son. Unfortunately, when the child was grown, he died after he complained of something happening in his head. The woman went to Mount Carmel to tell the man of vision about her son. He had his staff of life placed upon the child, and then he placed his body on top of the son and breathed the breath of life into his mouth. The life force from the heart of the master flowed into the child's seven life centers and energized the body. The child came back to life and sneezed seven times.

"Do you understand the significance of the tasks you have undertaken so far?" whispered the still small voice of Binah into Yeshua's conscious mind.

"I think I do," responded Yeshua, as he tuned into the inner dialogue that he was having with his guiding intelligence, Binah. "In the first task the master of the physical body aligns himself with his mental, emotional, and spiritual bodies and coordinates their unified activities to bring the physical under submission to a higher purpose. However, I didn't anticipate the necessity of the sacrifice of the ego, the first-born."

"That is always the hardest lesson for the aspiring disciple to understand and the hardest task to accomplish," coached Binah.

"The second task teaches the requirement of keeping the supply of regenerative oil in the spine always full in order to keep the energy centers completely energized and the dual currents, Ida and Pingala, vibrantly active," said Yeshua, who internalized the object lessons as he reviewed their impact on his life. "And the third task demonstrates mastery of the life forces in the staff of the spinal energy, which awakens life within the feminine pole of the brain, the pituitary gland, and gives birth to the son, the pineal gland. The atrophied pineal gland must be brought back to life by the energy of the staff of seven centers."

"Good," remarked Binah admiringly. "If you wish to see the great woman in the story from a cosmic perspective, you can visualize Virgo, the Virgin mother who gives birth to the solar child."

Yeshua returned to his meditative circle of consciousness and reflected on the laborious turning of the wheel of life. The mantra, "He that endures to the end will be liberated," sounded as a chant in his mind as he put his hand to the plow, again.

The fourth task that Yeshua (Eliseus) had to complete was the transmutation of poisonous food into edible food for his initiates (sons of prophets), and the multiplication of twenty loaves of bread to feed a hundred people. Transmutation of evil (or negative) into good (or positive) was a mark of mastery of polarity, the dual forces of life. Multiplication of food, with lots to spare, demonstrated mastery over matter and the ability to manipulate cosmic energy to produce a desired result.

As each new task presented itself to the consciousness of Yeshua (Eliseus), an awareness of progress on the path dawned in his mind. As he watched Naaman, the captain of an army, dip seven times in the Jordan to cleanse himself of leprosy, he realized the necessity for purification of all seven centers of the nervous system in the spine. When an initiate lost an axhead in the Jordan while cutting down a beam of wood, the master demonstrated how to retrieve the iron and make it float to the top, thereby teaching the initiate a lesson in sublimating the energy of the spinal fluid in the sacral

center at the bottom of the spinal river and making the metal (energy) rise to the top (surface of the head).

The seventh task brought Yeshua (Eliseus) to an understanding of the omnipresent and omniscient aspects of the seer's superconscious mind, which understood ultimate reality to be in essence vibrations of light and sound. Thus when the king of Syria plotted to attack the land of Israel, Eliseus picked up on the sound vibrations emanating from the king's camp and warned the king of Israel. When the king of Syria sent an army of chariots and warriors to capture the seer, Eliseus showed his servant a phenomenal etheric army of chariots of fire surrounding and protecting them. As a master of the subtle laws that operate behind the play of chiaroscuro in the mental projection of light and shade, Eliseus demonstrated the illusory aspect of physical reality by making the enemy army blind as he led them to the king of Israel, and then he opened their eyes when they were captured. Like a master magician, he told the king of Israel to feed the captives and let them go back home, and thus he demonstrated complete control over the phenomenal world of light and sound.

As the eye of the soul developed within the seer, he was able to envision a time of plenty in the midst of a famine. He was shown through his mind's eye the death of one king and the evil reign of the successor. As an oracle of the intelligent consciousness behind the scenes of the human drama, he orchestrated the anointing of a king, Jehu ("Jah is He"), who brought down the house of King Ahab in a dramatic karmic retribution for the Baal-worshipping Ahab's bloody slayings of the prophets. Thus, Eliseus was able to finish the task that his guru Elijah had started, and he brought to an end the remnants of the Age of Taurus, the age of the Bull (Baal).

On his deathbed, Eliseus predicted partial victory for the king of Israel over his enemy. King Joash ("whom Jah supports") put his hand on the bow and, like Sagittarius the Bowman, shot the arrow of deliverance eastward. Then the king watched as the divine fire in Eliseus' spine rose like a chariot of fire, crossed at the base of the skull, and ascended through the top of the head. The king cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen."

Joshua felt a fire in his spine rise to his head and illuminate his mind with light. The ethereal fire formed an overarching mantle-like fabric of starry space on the dome of his skull, and he saw a solar being in a chariot rise to the zenith and then descend below the ocean of consciousness in his visionary mind. The thought, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen," resounded in his inner ear.

"The kingdom of heaven is within you," annunciated the angelic voice of Binah. "The manner in which you saw the spirit of Eliseus leave is also the manner in which he will return."

One final image flashed on the screen of Joshua's mind as he started to sense the return of physical consciousness: a dead man was lowered into the sepulcher of Eliseus, and when the dead man touched the bones of the holy man, he was revived and came back to life.

"That was the twelfth and final task of the great seer," explained Binah. "Like St. John of the Cross, his physical body underwent total alchemical regeneration and became incorruptible. No physical disintegration or deterioration of tissues occurs in a body that has become united with the invisible, eternal fire of the One Universal Spirit."

Joshua opened his physical eyes and looked up at the sky. The sun was starting to descend toward the Mediterranean Sea.

"You have a great task before you," stated Binah. Joshua felt a bulge in the center of his forehead, and it started to throb with an intense rapidity. He closed his physical eyes again and focused on the single eye in his mind. An image of a bearded old man in a black suit and black hat materialized in his mind's eye. "You will go to Jerusalem and meet the old rabbi at the Western Wall."

"Isaac," voiced Joshua as he suddenly recognized the old rabbi who had shown him the Chapel of Adam at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The next day, Joshua arrived at the Western ("Wailing") Wall in Jerusalem early in the morning. He looked at the wall of huge limestone blocks that were stacked about 18 meters high. The wall was the last remnant of one of four retaining walls of the Second Temple, which had been built by Herod the Great and then destroyed by the Romans in 70AD. The wall was sacred to the Jewish people, for it stood as a lasting memorial of the rock of their indestructible faith. Joshua watched as the pilgrims of the Eternal One came to worship at the sacred shrine of the symbolical Rock of all Eternity. His eyes were scanning the row of bodies bowing and gesticulating in front of the large stone layers. He specifically was searching for the figure of Isaac, the Jewish rabbi who befriended him on his first visit to the Old City of Jerusalem.

It did not take long for Joshua to spot the medium-sized bearded rabbi in his black suit and black hat walking briskly across the Western Wall Plaza toward the wall known as the Kotel ha-Ma'aravi (the Western Wall) to the Hebrew people. Joshua took a step forward and then hesitated. He thought perhaps he should not interrupt the rabbi's prayers this time, like he had the first time he met the blue-eyed rabbi. Instead, he watched as the rabbi walked up to the wall. He noticed the rabbi glance in his direction. For a split second, Joshua imagined that the rabbi knew he was there, waiting to talk to him. The next moment he saw the rabbi reach with his right hand into his suit pocket and pull out a piece of paper. The rabbi placed the kvitlach (written prayer or message) in a crevice between the stones in the Wall, and then he proceeded to say his prayer: "Shema Yisraeil: Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad (Hear, O Israel: The Eternal is our God, the Eternal is One)."

Joshua all of a sudden was drawn to approach the Wall. As he came closer, he could hear the chants and prayers ascending to the stone surface and ricocheting from the wall and out to the plaza. He could also hear birds chirping from the cracks and hidden spaces further up the wall. The mixture of sounds vibrated in Joshua's head as he came nearer to the twenty-four stone layers of which the visible wall was composed; he did not see the other layers underground. He thought the vibrations of past ages resounded from the stone enclosure, and he could hear the march of history, from the ruin and exile of an ancient people to the rebirth of a nation. He heard in his inner ear the sounds of war and the silence of peace, the sounds of noisy activity and the eternal pause to tune in to a divine presence. He stopped within earshot distance of the rabbi's prayer, to which Joshua listened with respect and devotion: "Baruch Ata, Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam (We praise you, Eternal God, sovereign of the Universe)."

Joshua felt an inner prayer project itself from his heart to the Wall, which became like a spiritual receiving station for the thoughts and prayers directed toward the center of spirituality that was embedded in the framework. The rabbi felt the presence of Joshua

near him, and he turned to look over his right shoulder at the young man two steps behind him. The rabbi reached into his left pocket and pulled out a plain black yarmulke (skullcap) with an inner white lining and handed it to Joshua, saying, "You'll have to wear this kippah if you're going to pray at the Kotel."

Joshua put the yarmulke on the crown of his head, closed his eyes, and slowly recited the prayer, the Shema, that his Hebrew mother taught him: "She-ma Yis-ra-eil: A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu, A-do-nai E-chad! Ve-a-har-ta eit A-do-nai E-lo-he-cha be-chol le-va-ve-cha, u-ve-chol naf-she-cha u-ve-chol me-o-de-cha (Hear, O Israel: The Eternal is our God, the Eternal is One! You shall love the Eternal One, your God, with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your being)." Joshua felt a close proximity to something sacred, a Higher Reality, as he sensed the prayer from his heart ascend through the Wall and up to the heavens.

When Joshua finished his prayer and opened his eyes, he saw the rabbi looking intently at him with smiling eyes. The rabbi motioned for Joshua to follow him to a section of the plaza where they could talk.

"I didn't know you knew Hebrew," said Isaac as soon as they were off to the side and away from the Wall (Kotel).

"My Hebrew mother taught me how to pray the Shema," said Joshua, referring to the confession of faith in the One God.

"So you have a Hebrew heritage," remarked Isaac proudly.

"But my father is an American Christian," disclosed Joshua.

"So you are from a mixed heritage," said Isaac, with a slight inflection of his voice showing disappointment.

"May I ask you what that piece of paper was that you placed in the crevice of the wall?" asked Joshua out of curiosity and also as a means of deflecting the conversation away from his bicultural background.

"That is the kvitlach that I bring to the Kotel every morning," responded Isaac, using the Hebrew word for the written prayers. "It's a reminder to the world of the kvitlach that the leader of the Christian world brought to this Kotel, imploring God's forgiveness for injustices committed in the name of religion."

"Are you talking about the Pope's visit to Jerusalem?" asked Joshua, remembering Pope John Paul II's visit to the Holy Land.

"Yes," emphatically asserted Isaac. "Here, I want you to read what he wrote." Isaac took a piece of paper out of his right suit pocket and handed it to Joshua. "I always carry an extra copy in my pocket."

Joshua unfolded the kvitlach and read what Pope John Paul II had written and placed at the Western Wall on Sunday, the 26th of March, during the Great Jubilee Year, for the whole world to see: "God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your Name to the Nations: We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer and, asking your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant."

Joshua finished reading the kvitlach and was ready to hand it back to Isaac, but the rabbi told him, "Keep it. Keep it as a reminder to yourself and to anyone who forgets the One Eternal God that the descendants of Abraham revealed to the nations of the world."

"And you bring this same kvitlach to the Wall each morning?" asked the incredulous Joshua.

"Every morning till I leave this world and go to the next world," asserted Isaac.

"I want to ask you another question," said Joshua, suddenly remembering something that was on his mind since the moment he saw Isaac look at him as he approached the Wall. "Did you know I was going to be here this morning?"

"Yes, I did," admitted Isaac. "From my childhood, I was taught by my father to listen to the guiding divine voice within my neshama, my soul. Last night I heard the voice directing me to meet you here this morning. That's why I brought the yarmulke for you. I knew you would need the head covering."

"I, too, heard an inner voice directing me to you," disclosed Joshua.

"I know," succinctly stated Isaac.

"You know, I think I should also write a prayer on a kvitlach and put it in the Wall," said Joshua, divulging a secret desire that burned in his heart.

"Make it a prayer that will invoke understanding between religious points of view," advised Isaac. "Maybe with your bicultural heritage, your vision will encompass all monotheistic religions, just like this Wall which encompasses and supports the Temple Mount. And perhaps the One who stands behind our Wall will hear and answer your prayer."

Joshua took out a pen and tore a piece of blank paper from his small pocket notebook and began writing a prayer and a message: "May the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man be realized on earth." Joshua was just about to cross out the sentence and write a politically correct statement, thinking that the male-oriented words might offend the sensitivity of those who believed in the equality of the genders, both on earth and in heaven. So he wrote a second sentence to embrace all humanity: "May the One Spirit of Life living in All be realized on earth. And may we all live in Peace."

"So," began Isaac when he saw Joshua fold the piece of paper and put it in his pocket, "I would like to ask you a question, now. Which Messiah were you brought up believing in, the Jewish Messiah or the Christian Messiah?"

Joshua looked at the serious look in Isaac's blue eyes. "The Christian Messiah," he confessed, after a moment of hesitation. "Although, after years of personal thought and investigation, and after a thorough searching of my own soul, I believe that both Messiahs represent humanity's quest for the ideal deliverer or redeemer, the perfect man. And both religions await the arrival of that god-like person in the flesh."

"We have had many failed Messiahs throughout our Jewish history," said Isaac somberly. "The Moshiach, or the Anointed One as we call him, is expected to be a king that arises from the House of King David and restores the Jewish people to their homeland and rules during an age of universal peace. The Moshiach will restore the Law of the One God. But above all, the Moshiach will rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem." Isaac looked longingly at the Western Wall and envisioned a rebuilt Temple on the Temple Mount behind the Wall, with a reconstructed Holy of Holies where the Divine Presence would descend.

Isaac's mind withdrew into a meditative silence. Joshua looked at the same wall and reflected on the sad history of hatred and persecution that the Jewish people endured at the hands of Christian intolerance. His mind tried to rationalize the teachings that his father taught him as the convictions of a true believer in the Christian savior, and yet he

couldn't forget his mother's constant admonition to never forget his Jewish roots and the belief in the One God as the true Savior. He couldn't reconcile the two points of view, for on the surface they were two totally different belief systems, each claiming exclusive superiority for itself. And yet, in essence, he reasoned that both were valid paths to God.

"Do you know why the Jewish people consider the Christian Messiah to be a failed Messiah?" asked Isaac when his mind and attention were directed back to Joshua. Joshua looked back into Isaac's sorrowful eyes and felt the rabbi's soul opening up to him. "He did not drive the oppressors, the Romans, out of the land, and he turned the people away from observing the laws of the Torah; and to top it all off, instead of inaugurating a reign of peace, a reign of terror arrived to bring a final destruction of the Temple. Besides, in the Talmud version, he is known by the name of Yeschu ben Pandera, whose father was a Roman soldier, whereas in the Christian version, he is known as Yeshu ha-Notzri (the Nazarene), who belonged to an Essene community. O, the patchwork of stories that were fabricated to put the blame on the Jewish people for his supposed death, instead of finding the Roman Empire at fault."

"Supposed death?" interrupted Joshua, whose brow was furrowed with a quizzical look.

"You're not familiar with the Essene story of the crucifixion and subsequent resuscitation of the Nazarene?" asked Isaac incredulously. Joshua shook his head. "According to their version, Yeshu was a reformer who wanted to eliminate animal sacrifices in the temple, like the Essenes, and he was a healer who went around the countryside doing good. He was not a zealot fighting against Roman authority, or a false messiah in the mold of Judas of Galilee, Theudas, or the unnamed Egyptian, of whom the Jewish historian Josephus writes. He was more like an itinerant teacher. Some say that he was willing to be a martyr for his faith, and others say that he willingly gave himself as a sacrificial lamb to the Romans so they would leave the Jewish people alone. Another version says that there was a mix-up with a certain Jesus Barabbas, whose name Bar-Abbas means son of the father, and the wrong person was released. Anyway, with so many Jesus names, and false messiahs, and insurgents or zealots fighting the Romans, there was bound to be lots of confusion with the crucifixion stories. You must remember that the Romans were crucifying hundreds of Jewish people in those days. Well, in the Essene story, the friends of the Nazarene save him by getting the Roman ruler to allow them to take the unconscious body from the cross and put him in a special garden tomb where they could revive him. You've probably heard that the Essenes wore long white robes. Well, they were the angelic-like men who brought healing herbs and salves to reanimate the body and rescue the Nazarene from death. The Essenes told the Nazarene's disciples and friends that he would meet them in Galilee. That's the gist of the story. I won't elaborate on another version that I heard, about a certain Simon the Cyrene who was the actual person who not only carried the cross of execution, but was also the person who was crucified on that infamous cross. Nor will I try to confuse you with an apocryphal book that was discovered where the Christian savior tells his disciple John that he is not the body on the cross."

Joshua's mind was spinning and perplexed by the onslaught of cross imagery. There was a bell-like ringing in his ears. He looked at the Wall, and he felt compelled to go to it and touch it. He was drawn to it like metal to a magnet. He started walking back to the spot at the Wall where he had said the Shema prayer. As he came nearer to the

Wall, the sound in his head and all around him became a crescendo of thunderous sounds, like the waves of the ocean breaking on volcanic rocks. He reached for the kvitlach in his pocket, and he placed the written prayer in a crack between two large limestone blocks. In his mind he saw the message being transmitted through the Wall to the Eternal One Behind and Above the Wall. He sub-vocalized the words, "May the One Spirit of Life living in All be realized on earth, and may we all live in Peace." Then he reached out with the palms of both of his hands and placed them on the smooth surface of the Wall.

Joshua closed his eyes, and the image of a man with a noble countenance materialized in his mind's eye. The head of the man was covered with wavy brown (like the color of earth) hair, which flowed down his shoulders and was parted in the middle of the head in the fashion of the Nazarenes. A dark beard and moustache adorned the lower part of his face. A compassionate smile beamed from the face and from the bright brown eyes. "Yeshua the Nazarene," annunciated the inner voice of Binah at the same moment that it dawned in Joshua's mind who he was seeing. The translucent face of the Nazarene revealed a panorama of a distant time, and Joshua saw a little boy being raised in an Essene community beside the sea on Mount Carmel. There was an older boy with the active lad, and Joshua heard Binah's voice gently say, "Yohanan and Yeshua." When the boys became adolescents, their paths bifurcated: Yohanan went to the Wilderness of Judea and lived with an ascetic community, and Yeshua left home and traveled with a caravan to India. Neither of the boys wanted to get married and settle down.

Joshua continued watching the changing face of time through the placid clear water-like face of the Nazarene, which became totally transparent and revealed a grown man coming to the Jordan River. Joshua felt a powerful warm sensation along the entire length of his spinal cord. He watched as the grown man Yeshua approached the ascetic Yohanan – their paths had crossed once again. Joshua sensed a flow of energy at the base of the skull surge through the medulla oblongata, like a river arriving at the mouth where it merges with the sea. As the two men entered the stream, Joshua heard a whirlwind descend from the clouds, and within the whirlwind a golden chariot appeared. The crown of Joshua's head seemed to open up in the area of the fontanelle, beneath the center of the inner white lining of the yarmulke, and a stream of golden light flowed through the soft membranous opening. The golden chariot descended upon the head of Yeshua, and Yohanan cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen." A fiery current of energy raced through Joshua's skull, illuminating it with the creative light and intelligence of the universal mind, and then it flowed through the seven centers of the spinal cord, bringing light and energy to the entire body.

"The guru and disciple have been reunited," gently spoke the inner voice of Binah. Joshua realized that she meant Elijah and his disciple Eliseus. At that moment of realization, Joshua saw the mind and consciousness of Yeshua the Nazarene become one with his mind and consciousness, and the wall of separation disappeared, and so did the image of the resplendent face. "You are not the body, which dies and passes away, nor the feelings of bodily consciousness," instructed Binah as Joshua no longer felt any bodily sensations. "Nor are you the mental ideas and images which cause the appearance of astral and physical consciousness. You are, in essence, the immortal soul."

One last image illuminated the mind of Joshua as it merged with the vast consciousness of Yeshua the Nazarene, like a drop of water becoming one with the ocean: an infinite Cross of Light whose rays expanded to the four corners of the starry

heavens. Within that Cross of Light at-one-moment, like the flash of an Eternal second, Joshua saw a stream-of-light-consciousness unveil the mystery of the immortal body crossified on the mortal cross of matter: At the head of the majestic panoply was a conscious spark of an eternal flame that emanated from an invisible source and projected itself onto the wheel of existence by immersing itself into the elements of fire-water-air-earth and forming them through mind-and-desire into a physical body which was born-lived-and-died and returned to its source in a recurring cycle until one day the conscious spark awakened from the endless cycle and realized it could reverse the entire process by consciously building a bridge between the world of coming-into-existence or matter-in-nature and the world of coming-into-being or spirit-of-the-source within the temple of one's inner being by replacing or transforming the cells or building blocks of the mortal physical body with etheric deathless cells of light-energy from the source and uniting the male aspect of spirit with the female aspect of nature into the original spark of its inherent immortal self which would no longer be subject to an endless cycle of births and rebirths but could travel in its conscious regenerated immortal body through existence or being by conscious choice saying I will arise and go back to my Father's House—the Source of All Life.

As the image of the Cross of Light faded, and only an afterimage of its recent brilliance remained, Joshua made a conscious decision and withdrew his consciousness from bodily awareness by mentally affirming the instructions that Binah had given him: he affirmed his independence from the solid physical body, the liquid sensations and feelings of the astral body, and the vaporous mental ideas of the causal body. He visualized himself tearing the veil between his mortal body and his immortal soul. He projected his consciousness beyond the confining encasements of his bodies and stepped beyond the wall of limitations. He pierced the star of the pineal gland with the sacred spear of his concentrated mind, and he drank from the cup of the holy grail of the pituitary gland, filling himself with infinite light and life. He knew he was the immortal soul.

"You have gone beyond the image to the Source," soothingly cooed the dove-like voice of Binah. "The images in your mind may serve as windows or doors to the Eternal Source, but always remember that they are not the Source."

Joshua now knew that he didn't need to see an image of the Nazarene to connect with the Oneness of the Spirit of Life. He knew his consciousness was of the same essence as the consciousness of the Nazarene, a consciousness that was present in everything that existed, in every cell and atom of the vast body of the expanding universe. "I am with you always, even unto the end of all ages," rang the words of the avatar-like consciousness.

It took Joshua several minutes to release his hands from the powerful vibrations that pulsated from the Wall into his body, mind, and soul. When he finally withdrew his hands from the Wall and opened his eyes, he saw that Isaac was standing next to him with both of his hands attached to the Wall.

"Isaac," whispered Joshua, trying to get the rabbi's attention so he could tell him what he had seen. Isaac lowered his hands from the Wall and turned his head to face Joshua. "Isaac, I know how he rebuilt the temple! I know how he became immortal!"

Isaac looked at Joshua with tears streaming down his face. "I know," said Isaac as the tears continued to roll down his face and into his gray beard. "I also saw King Moshiach. I saw him rebuild our temple in Jerusalem and bring peace to the world."

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Paul's eyes continued to look at the face of Bannus, whose piercing eyes tried to penetrate into the depths of his soul.

"What did you see?" asked Bannus, his curiosity piqued to a high expectancy.

"Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead?" asked Paul as he sat up, simultaneously thrusting aside the bark-woven robe that covered his body. The dawn light was brightening up the interior of the cave in which the master and the disciple sat.

"Do you mean rising from the dead in this life or in a future life?" inquired the perceptive mind of Bannus.

"What's the difference?" asked Paul, whose mind was trying to fathom the mysteries of life and death.

"Rising from the darkness of our dead mortal body in this lifetime, and rising to the light of our immortal body, is one meaning," explained Bannus in his succinct manner. "The other meaning is where the soul returns to earth through rebirth into another body, as taught by great masters like Pythagoras."

"What I saw falls into the second category," reasoned Paul, his mind visualizing his future-life experience. "I was living the life of Elisha ben Abuyah. The Romans had just destroyed the temple, and . . ."

"Destroyed the temple!?" interrupted Bannus. "Are you sure you saw that?"

"Yes, not one stone was left on top of another," remarked Paul sorrowfully. "A new messiah named Bar Kokhba appeared on the scene to deliverer our people from the oppression of the Romans."

"A new messiah!?" exclaimed Bannus. He jumped up and ran excitedly out of the cave before Paul could tell him that the three-and-a-half year revolt led by the valiant "Star," as Simon Bar Kokhba was referred to, would end in utter defeat for the Jewish nation. The emperor Hadrian would turn Jerusalem into a pagan city called Aelia Capitolina and build a temple on the Temple Mount dedicated to Jupiter (king of the gods), Juno (queen of the gods), and Minerva (goddess of wisdom). And the country's name would be changed from Judea to Palestina.

"Elijahu!" yelled Bannus through cupped-hands, shaped like a megaphone, to project the sound through the etheric waves. "Elijahu!" The transmitted sounds were accompanied by a mental transmission from the mind of Bannus to the receiver, Elijahu. When Paul came out of the cave, he saw Bannus lifting his hands with palms extended in the direction of Ein Feshka. Paul wasn't sure, but he thought the master was sending out

heartfelt vibrations through the concave-like palm and antenna-like fingertips to Elijahu. It looked like the uplifted gaze of Bannus' face was communicating through mental telepathy with the mind of Elijahu, and the interior mental apparatus was transmitting and receiving auditory sounds and visual images.

"Bannus!" called out Elijahu from the top of the hill overlooking the cave. Bannus and Paul turned around simultaneously to witness the majestic sight of a white-robed Essene master with the rays of the morning sun streaming directly above his head.

"How in heaven's name!?" wondered Paul aloud. The spectacle of Elijahu standing on top of a hill surrounded by the aureole of the sun was too dazzling for Paul to look at.

"Didn't I tell you that he comes and goes whenever and wherever he pleases?" stated Bannus emphatically. "This time I called and he answered, thankfully."

"Come up to the top of the mount!" commanded Elijahu in a stentorian voice.

Paul and Bannus scampered to the top of the hill with hurried steps. They did not want to keep the master waiting.

"Now tell me," intoned Elijahu in a gentler tone when the threesome sat down cross-legged on the dry blades of wild grass. "Why was I called back to this place?"

Bannus explained in an apologetic tone of voice the urgency of the matter, and Paul filled in with crucial details of the destruction of the temple and the devastation of Jerusalem by the Romans which he had envisioned. Elijahu sat quietly for a long time, looking out over his beloved land across the Jordan and musing over the unfolding story of his people.

"Our life in exile is our life in the flesh of bodily existence, and our return to our homeland is our return to life in the spirit of celestial existence," said Elijahu contemplatively.

"Is what I saw bound to happen?" asked Paul anxiously. A sense of despair like a small dark cloud appeared in his consciousness, and he felt as if he were the cause of the impending doom upon the land.

"What you saw was a true vision and revelation of things to come for you and for our people," replied Elijahu straightforwardly. "The wheel of life turns for all of us, and the Eternal One directs where on the wheel we need to be to fulfill the grand design of the ages. The wheel turns in a progressively upward manner, so that what once was will be again, but with the condition of changing physical mortal forms. Henceforth, though our people are dispersed or sent into exile, they will in due time return to our homeland." Elijahu was referring to the Diaspora, the scattering of the Jewish people outside their traditional homeland.

"Is there anything that can be done to prevent the trials and tribulations that will befall our people and to keep them together in the Law of our God?" asked Bannus with a sense of urgency.

Elijahu pondered the question for several minutes before he answered: "The history of our people, like the rest of suffering humanity, must traverse through the manifold wilderness of life and through the variegated landscape of many ages. The names and faces of the Eternal One are many. However, the Law of the Most High must be preserved. We are the people of the everlasting Covenant, which abides forever in the mind of God for thousands of generations. I believe I have a plan that will save our

people from assimilation into foreign religions, especially the zealous messianic sects that keep sprouting in our midst."

"You mean the Zealots who have been revolting against the Roman occupation of our land since the time of Judas of Galilee?" inquired Bannus, who was familiar with the new politico-philosophic sect that exhorted the people to throw off the yoke of slavery to Roman taxation and fight for liberty and national independence.

"It is now thirty years since that rogue cleverly aligned himself with the religious Pharisees to proclaim a kingdom for Israel, ruled by God alone," recounted Elijahu. "He wanted to bring in the Kingdom of God by force with himself as the Messiah-King, but his violent revolt only led to his own violent death."

"So what is your plan?" asked Paul impatiently.

"Well, Saul, the plan will require your whole-hearted assistance, your complete dedication, and your unwavering loyalty, even unto death," stated Elijahu solemnly. "You will be the instrument of divine justice. You will divert the messianic sects into the Gentile stream to keep the Jewish strain pure."

Paul's face turned ashen at the mention of the word death. He recalled his ordeal in the desert, when he had confronted the terrifying specter of death. He had wondered if he was capable of dying for a cause. Now, he had to decide whether or not he was willing to put his life on the altar of martyrdom.

"I can see that he fears the sting of death," commented Elijahu to Bannus when he noticed that Paul stood stiff as a stone. "Has he been initiated into the little death?"

"Yes, he has completed the death which leads to a knowledge of rebirth," explained Bannus. "That's how he saw the destruction of the Temple. But he has not undergone the ritual where he is crucified to the world and reborn to an awareness of the immortal body."

"So he has yet to destroy the enemy called death," confirmed Elijahu, who realized he needed to ascertain Paul's readiness to slay the mortal self. "Saul, remember when I initially accepted you on a probationary basis into our community?" Paul nodded his head. "And remember how I agreed to assist you in your quest to become a disciple of Bannus?" Paul nodded his head, again. "Well, now you must decide if you are ready for the final step in your initiation into our brotherhood."

"Son," interjected Bannus, as he put his hand on Paul's shoulder to reassure him of the master's guidance, "I will guide you through the entire ritual, with Elijahu's help. So far, you have worked out your own spiritual regeneration with discipline and perseverance. You had a revelation of the journey of the soul on the eternal great wheel of life. Your next revelation will be of your deathless immortal body. Then you will know that you have nothing to fear, for you can never die."

The reassuring words brought tears to Paul's eyes. He was ready to step into the vast unknown, for he already knew that life was continuous.

"I am ready to die to the old man, my mortal self, and be born anew to a new man," spoke Paul through his tear-choked voice. "I am ready to die in Jerusalem, if need be." He spoke from a heightened sense of a perceived destiny.

"It is customary to undergo seven days of purification before submitting the body to the three day ordeal," instructed Elijahu. "Bannus will prepare you. I will return in seven days."

Without saying another word, Elijahu turned away from Bannus and Paul and slowly walked down the hill. The two men kept their eyes riveted on the descending figure of the old master until he disappeared from view.

Afterwards, Bannus took his disciple to the cave and began the prolonged preparation for Paul's mystical crucifixion. Paul was shown how to slow down his breathing and, consequently, his heart rate. He was instructed how to tune out and disconnect the mind from the senses of the physical body. He was directed to concentrate on the single eye of the soul within the cavern of his skull. He was instilled with a profound inner state of silence. For seven days, Paul fine-tuned his body, mind, and soul to its optimum capability.

On the seventh day after Paul began his rigorous preparation for the transformational experience, Elijahu returned. Bannus already had a specially prepared sacred fire burning in his cave, and Paul was sitting cross-legged beside the red-orange-blue flames, warming his body. The morning air around him was moist and cool.

"Peace be with you," said Elijahu as he entered the natural cave in a half-stooped manner. He was using the traditional Essene greeting.

"Peace be with you," responded Bannus and Paul together.

Elijahu sat down beside the sacred fire and intoned in a long drawn-out monotone the sacred sound: "OM." The interior of the cave resounded with the three voices chanting the sacred Word. The resounding vibrations appeared to bounce off of the walls of the cave like ocean waves breaking on the rocks, and the amplified sounds seemed to harmonize the souls of the participants with the cosmic sound of the universe. Once the keynote was sounded, the etheric space within the cave appeared to be filled with a sacred presence.

After the sound in the cave resumed its usual muffled stillness, Elijahu ceremoniously announced: "Saul, today your spiritual eye will see what human eyes cannot see, and your inner ear will hear what human ears cannot hear. You will die to your old lower physical self, and you will rise to your new higher spiritual Self. The revelation of your celestial or immortal body will assure you of the resurrection of the dead."

Elijahu handed Paul a white linen robe which he had tucked under his arm. Paul slipped out of his old bark-woven robe and put on the new white linen robe. Elijahu motioned for Paul to lie down on the soft sandy ground. Paul lay down and adjusted his new robe.

"Be not afraid," said Bannus, who had stepped aside to let his master perform the initiatory ceremony. He wanted to let his disciple know that he was committed to taking care of him throughout the journey of the soul to a rendezvous with its ultimate reality. "We will both be right beside you, watching over you."

"Close your eyes and focus your gaze on your spiritual eye, the star of the East," instructed Elijahu, placing his right index finger gently, but firmly, on the center of Paul's forehead. A white star on a dark blue circular background appeared in his mind at the touch of the master's electromagnetically-charged point of contact. A golden glow surrounded the image of the star that beamed like a beacon of light on a distant shore. As Paul peered into the light of the star, he felt as if he were traveling on a beam of light through a tunnel of endless dark cosmic space. And then, after what seemed like an eternal night, a brilliant flash of light, like the manifestation of a supernova, dispelled the

darkness and flooded his consciousness with a golden radiance. Within that radiant light he saw a great fiery wheel revolving in the wide expanse, and within the wheel he perceived a resplendent cruciform image.

"The wheel of Ixion," thought Paul as he consciously recalled the vision in the wilderness, where he saw himself impaled on the cross. Except this time, fastened on the cruciform, he saw an archetypal man, a cosmic emanation of a creative intelligence which pervaded the entire universe. A visible projection of a cosmic blueprint for all human beings! The etheric light body of the archetypal first man in its original state displayed an androgynous being – both male and female. "You are that," a voice in his inner ear sounded like a trumpet. "You are that being."

Paul no longer had any sensation of a physical body, which seemed to have evaporated in the brilliant heat of the etheric light body. Everything seemed to stand still, and the illusion of time and motion were no longer part of his awareness. The silence in his heaven-like brain was void of vibration. He knew he had risen in his consciousness to a realm of, what appeared to be, an eternal day of pure creative light that expanded in infinite directions. He identified himself with the image of the celestial light body, whose light particles encompassed the sun, moon, and stars; ethereal rivers and streams flowed through it, majestic mountains of light formed its backbone, and energetic sinews of strength moved its luminous form. The creative mind and intelligence of the immortal body of light was one with the universal mind.

From the conscious mind of the immortal light-body emerged a thought, "I am that, a conscious immortal being of blissful light." The thought sprouted like a seed into a luminous image that reflected the androgynous archetypal man, the Anthropos, and became a Self-contained, bubble-like sphere floating on the ocean of manifest reality. The miniature spherical light-body took on a life and mind of its own and projected itself by a conscious will, born of the desire to experience the field of manifestation, into an astral form that merged with a physical form.

At that moment, Paul's consciousness appeared to reside in an etheric double of his immortal light-body, and the etheric body appeared to hover like a bird above the physical form and pulsate with a light substance that scintillated with all the colors of the rainbow. As the etheric body merged with the physical form, Paul became aware of his desire to experience life connect with the feeling of a physical form, and for a split-second he thought he was being swallowed by a fish. The sensation of being entombed remained in his consciousness for an indeterminate amount of time. Paul recalled Bannus' words, "Be not afraid." He realized that he was experiencing the consciousness of the light-body imprisoned in the proverbial house of clay, the mortal human body. He felt as though he had entered the netherworld, and the only light that remained was his conscious realization that he was in essence the immortal soul, a body of light.

The realization of a higher Self opened a door within Paul's mind, and he knew he would need to walk through that door to regain the lost paradise of blissful light. He felt an awakening within his etheric nervous system, and he sensed a fiery energy flow like a river from the base of his spinal cord to the base of his skull, where he saw a cross of two electrical currents, the positive and the negative, enter the stem of the brain. At the convergence of the two currents with the river of life, Paul noticed the birth of a solar light which radiated from a white stone-like protuberance, the pineal gland, which was immersed with oily secretions from the seven activated centers of the brain, producing a

golden glow and a phosphorescent radiation that brought the dormant brain cells to life and illuminated the entire cavernous skull.

The secret place of the Most High, the pineal gland, opened up like a lotus flower, and the intense stream of light vibrated at an incredibly fast rate, causing the cup of anointing luminous oil to overflow into the entire nervous system, forming an inner body of light. The thought raced through Paul's enlightened mind: "You are the light of your own little world."

"Awake, O Saul, and rise from the dead," said Elijahu in a soft voice into Paul's right ear. Paul was not aware how long he had been in the rapturous trance, and the voice of Elijahu calling him seemed so distant. "You are the awakened one, and you have attained the resurrection of the dead." Upon hearing the affirmation of attainment, Paul's consciousness made a dramatic shift from the immortal back to the mortal, and he felt as if he had taken off the interior imperishable garment and put back on an exterior perishable garment.

"I have vanquished death," stated Paul as he opened his eyes and looked at the bright smiling faces of Elijahu and Bannus. He wanted to jump out of his coat of skin and fly above the rooftops, proclaiming the good news of his victory over darkness, ignorance, and death. But he couldn't move. His limbs felt numb from lack of movement.

"You have inherited the Kingdom of Light," proclaimed Bannus. He started massaging Paul's arms and legs to bring back circulation to his body parts.

"The light streamed from the back of your neck and formed a magnificent aureole," confirmed Elijahu, who moved his hands several inches above the entire length of Paul's body, back and forth along the aural electromagnetic field that surrounded his physical body.

"The light is with me, and I am with the light," affirmed Paul, his eyes seemingly still transfixed by the heavenly vision. "Everything is made of light. We live, move, and have our being in light."

"Now you know why we affirm that God is Light and we are the children of light," substantiated Bannus.

"You have been to the Source, and you drank from the Source," attested Elijahu with a note of finality. "May the wisdom and light of the Source always be with you. Now you are ready to go to Jerusalem to fulfill your mission."

God in Three Persons: A Spiritual Odyssey
888

Ιησονς (Iesous), The Higher Mind
I …. 10
η …. 8
σ …200
ο …. 70
ν … 400
ς ….200
_____
888

"Then also shall a child of the great
Come, clothed in Flesh, to men, and fashioned like
To mortals in the earth; and he doth hear
Four vowels, and two consonants in him
Are twice announced; the whole sum I will name:
For eight ones, and as many tens on these,
And yet eight hundred will reveal the name."
[The Sibylline Oracles, Book I, lines 394-399
Translated from the Greek into English Blank Verse,
By Milton S. Terry, 1899]

Apollos looked out of the small oval window of the airplane. Down below, in the midst of the Aegean Sea, he noticed a cluster of islands, the Dodecanese. The northernmost of the twelve ("dodeca") islands looked like a tiny dot in the ocean of space.

Sophia leaned her head on Apollos' shoulder and reflected on their journey up and down the Nile River, which took them five months to complete. Apollos had convinced Simon that the mysteries of Egypt, which Pythagoras, Plato, and Apollonius had mastered, could only be understood by personally following in the footsteps of Apollonius. Sophia felt the entire time like she was the Egyptian Isis on a pilgrimage to recover the fourteen scattered pieces of her consort Osiris as they stopped at each of the sacred sites.

Simon sat behind Apollos and wondered if he would have enough money from the church coffers to pay for the rest of the trip. He regretted having agreed to Apollos' plan to investigate the mysteries of Egypt; to Apollos the sacred sites resonated with the vibrations of ancient voices, but to Simon the sites were just empty ruins. The only reason Simon agreed to go along for the ride was because Apollos and Sophia had promised to pay for their share of the expenses.

Apollos looked over his notes on the sojourn through Egypt, and his eye caught sight of an encapsulating quote about Apollonius that resembled his personal experience throughout the present trek he was on: "In several places they took boats across the river in order to visit every site on it; for there was not a city, fane (temple) or sacred site in

Egypt, that they passed by without discussion. For at each they either learned or taught some holy story, so that any ship on which Apollonius embarked resembled the sacred galley of a religious legation." (Life of Apollonius, Book V, Chapter XLIII)

The airport south of Izmir (ancient Smyrna), Turkey, was thirty-seven miles from their destination: ancient Ephesus. Sophia had found a suitable hotel on the world-wide-web (www), and Simon had called to make arrangements for a ride from the airport to the hotel. Nazar, the chauffer, was waiting for them at the airport when they arrived.

"Welcome to Turkey, Crossroads of Civilizations," said Nazar, who shook his guests' hands and then placed the baggage in the trunk of his small European 4-door sedan. The three guests squeezed into the economy-sized ocean-blue Fiat. Nazar shifted the manual transmission into first gear and drove south to Selcuk, the city built around the ruins of the ancient city of Ephesus.

"So what brings you wise seekers to the land of ancient civilizations?" asked Nazar after he had guided the car past the traffic of the airport and onto the highway. "Are you studying the Ottoman Turk, the Seljuk, Byzantine, Roman, Greek, Persian, or Phrygian civilization?"

"Actually, we are more interested in a person, a Greek philosopher who lived during the first century, a Cappadocian named Apollonius of Tyana," stated Apollos succinctly.

"I'm sorry," apologized Nazar. "I am not familiar with that person."

"He was a disciple of Pythagoras of Samos," added Sophia.

"Ah, Pythagoras, the sage of Samos," declared Nazar with a note of familiarity. "Everyone in this part of the world has heard of that man, the philosopher who raised the teaching of the sacred numbers to an elevated height, so that now we think of him as a theologian of the One, whose perfect symbol is the circle."

"This man is no ordinary chauffer," commented Simon, breaking his cautious silence. "He sounds like a philosopher, himself."

"In this country we are all philosophers who think we know truth," affirmed Nazar, glancing at Simon, who sat beside him. "Some of us even reason that we are also theologians, because we talk about the Deity, of one god or another, all the time. But enough of this serious talk. Let me ask you a question: Do you want me to book a ferry to Samos for you?"

Apollos and Sophia looked at each other with an affirmative glint in their eyes. "Yes!" they said simultaneously.

"This is the season of the Celestial Lamb," informed Nazar, "and in our calendar the month Nisan is rainy at times. However, if you'd like, I can drive you around the island. I can even show you the famous cave where Pythagoras meditated and was inspired to reveal great truths to his fellow man. I will be your guide, like the mythical Charon, the ferryman, guiding you to the other side."

"That sounds too ghastly for me," remarked Simon in a tone of disapproval. "I'd rather you be Jason who leads us to the Golden Fleece."

"That settles it," announced Sophia. "You'll be our hired driver for the duration of our stay here."

"I'll take that to mean that Your Majesty has decreed the matter at hand," affirmed Apollos jovially.

"So let it be done," reaffirmed Simon, joining in the mirth.

One hour later Nazar drove the Fiat into Selcuk. He parked the car outside the hotel entrance and called for assistance with the baggage.

"So this is Hotel Nazar," said Simon as he looked at the modest-looking building. "We'll definitely be saving money here at this family-run business."

"I chose this place because of the Turkish hospitality that they advertised on their web site," explained Sophia. "And for the ride from the airport."

"Are you sure it wasn't because of the name?" asked Apollos, who associated the name Nazar with the biblical Nazirites, like Samson, who were consecrated by a special vow to avoid cutting the hair, eating meat, and drinking alcohol. It was identical to the Pythagorean way that Apollonius followed his entire life.

"That was a bonus feature," explained Sophia with a pixie smile on her face.

"Nazar Hotel could just as well have been named Nazarene Hotel," stated Simon. "Both names mean set apart or dedicated to service of a divine nature."

"Nazar basically referred to a class of initiates of the sacred mysteries," pronounced Apollos authoritatively. "The story of Paul being initiated at Cenchrea, the eastern port of Corinth, where Apollonius is said to have stopped at the Temple of Apollo to pay homage to the Sun of Truth, curiously connects in a circular path to Ephesus. If you think about the circuitous biblical account, Paul leaves Corinth after taking his initiation vow and comes to Ephesus, where he reasons with the people in their temple, and then he leaves; immediately afterwards, Apollos (a.k.a. Apollonius) arrives in Ephesus and teaches his Pythagorean philosophy, called the baptism of John, in the Temple of Artemis. Then Apollos leaves Ephesus and comes to Corinth, whereas Paul returns to Ephesus. What we have is a curious movement of Paul from Corinth in the west to Ephesus in the east, and a movement from Ephesus in the east to Corinth in the west on the part of Apollos or Apollonius. The Temple of Apollo, the sun-god, stands in the west, whereas the Temple of Artemis, the moon-goddess, stands in the east."

"So are you saying that Paul travels from the sun to the moon, and that Apollonius travels from the moon to the sun?" asked Simon in his wry manner.

"I think what he's trying to say in his roundabout way is that the ancient mysteries revolved around the revolutions of the sun and the moon in the sky and in the inner being of man," explained Sophia in defense of Apollos' attempt to correlate the puzzling stories.

"What are you discussing so intently?" interrupted Nazar, who brought a family member to help him carry the baggage to the guests' rooms.

"We were discussing the meaning of your name, Nazar," offered Simon.

"We aim to serve, and we aim to please," said Nazar with a smile, which shone as brightly as his nearly bald head. "Follow me, and I'll show you to your rooms."

After registering his guests, Nazar took them to the roof-terrace restaurant, where they were treated to traditional Turkish home cooking and to a spectacular view. Directly west, about 200 meters from the hotel, a vista of the expansive and well-preserved ruins of the sixth-century A.D. St. John's Basilica unfolded to the eye of the beholder. Above the immense cross-like skeletal framework of the ancient monument rose an imposing medieval fortress on top of a thousand-foot hill.

"That's an impressive castle, isn't it?" asked Nazar as he watched his guests stare at the majestic sight just north of the basilica. "The walls of Ayasuluk Castle go one-and-a-half kilometers around the top of Ayasuluk Hill, and it has fifteen towers. Some people

say the name Ayasuluk comes from the Byzantine Hagios Theologos and means Holy Breath or Holy Divine, but I think it refers to the holy theologian."

"Which one, John the Apostle or Pythagoras the philosopher?" asked Simon, whose quick wit thought of Nazar's earlier statement about Pythagoras.

"You take your pick," answered Nazar diplomatically. "There are many Christian legends about St. John in Ephesus, but there are many more legends about Greek gods, goddesses, and philosophers that attract pilgrims from all over the world to this ancient site. And who knows if maybe those legends have been retold and reworked by a skillful writer to mold an archetypal figure in a new form with new attributes, and even a new name. We've seen many civilizations pass through this land, and each civilization molded the images and stories of the gods and the personalities in their own style, to their own liking. Take for example the Greek moon-goddess or Celestial Mother Artemis, who was called Cybele by the Phrygians, Astarte by the Assyrians, Ishtar by the Babylonians, and Diana by the Romans."

"And Isis by the Egyptians," added Sophia.

"And Mary by the Roman Catholics," added Simon.

"The goddess of a thousand names," concluded Apollos. "And I call her Mother Nature, She Who has Many Faces."

"Finish your lunch, and, if you'd like, I can take you to the Temple of Artemis, which is a short distance from our hotel," proposed Nazar, who was aiming to please and accommodate his guests during their stay in his hotel. The idea was acceptable to the three guests, who finished their meal of lentil soup and the notable dolma dishes of grape leaf wraps stuffed with rice. Apollos savored the small baklava pastry, which was his favorite Turkish sweet, as he got up from the table and followed Nazar to their first excursion in the land known as Asia (or Asia Minor) during the first century.

When Sophia heard Nazar say that the ruins of the temple were only a little over 800 meters southwest of the hotel, she suggested that they walk there. Within minutes they were walking south down the main boulevard, Ataturk ("Father of the Turks") Caddesi (Boulevard), which gave them a chance to see the active city. A Turkish flag with a crescent moon and a five-pointed star on a red background waved in the slight spring breeze over a government building; the crescent seemed to be composed of two circles, one overlapping the other. At the ring-road, which was in the center of the city, they headed west along Sahabettin Dede Caddesi past the museum and toward the Temple of Artemis (Artemision in Greek).

The Artemision was nowhere to be seen with the human eyes; only some stacked remnants of blocks stood in the open space of a flat field. One half-restored column of misfit sections stood in the midst of the scattered stones as a forlorn sentinel of an invisible past. What once had been one of the seven wonders of the ancient world was now only a sad reminder of the impermanence of physical labor, echoing the philosophical maxim: "This too shall pass away."

"We've come this far just to see this?" asked Simon sardonically. "There's nothing here but a bunch of old useless stone blocks."

"Tomorrow I'll take you to the ruins of Ephesus, three kilometers south of here," conceded Nazar, realizing that the unattractive emptiness of the site was not pleasing to the eyes. "There's so much more to see there."

"From what I recall," interjected Apollos, trying to salvage the moment from being ruined by Simon's pessimism, "the biblical Paul spent three months here in the temple disputing and persuading through his reasoning power the existence of the superphysical universe, the kingdom of God. Apollonius came to Ephesus after his journey to India and gave discourses here from the platform of the temple, urging the idle citizens to devote themselves to the pursuit of higher wisdom by studying philosophy. Both set up a school of learning, Paul disputing or debating in the curious school of Tyrannus, which sounds peculiarly reminiscent of Tyana, the hometown of the philosopher, and Apollonius teaching philosophy by means of lectures."

Sophia, whose back was turned to the men, who were listening to Apollos' discourse, faced the solitary upright pillar and sensed an unusual flow of energy emanating from it. The pillar shimmered with a bluish-green energy field, which seemed to correspond to the background of the green in nature and the blue in the sky. Behind the pillar, the ruins of the basilica on the lower southern portion of Ayasuluk Hill and the castle on the higher northern portion seemed to fade into the distance. Sophia felt a surge of energy, like a bolt of lightning from the hand of Jupiter, descend from the crown of her head to the base of her spinal column. As the energy began its ascent through the seven centers of the cerebro-spinal system, Sophia saw each center light up like a golden star on top of a candlestick. A solar current coincided with a lunar current in her head and a beam of light projected from her mind's single eye, materializing the archetype of the original seventh wonder of the world: the Artemision, in its pure unspoiled form.

"Sophia! Where are you?" cried out Apollos as the sky suddenly turned dark, like during a solar eclipse.

"What in the world!?" called out Simon as he turned to face the materialized temple.

"Oh my God!" exclaimed Nazar in sheer amazement.

The three men couldn't believe their eyes as they approached the towering edifice. They were mesmerized by the white marble Ionic columns, which seemed to reach into the heavens. They walked dream-like closer to the façade of the building, looking up to see the image of the yellow-colored many-breasted goddess Cybele at the center of the tympanum, with images of brown horses, golden lions, and a huntress with a bow to the sides. They walked up thirteen steps to the platform on which the rectangular monument stood.

"One hundred and twenty-seven columns," said Nazar, looking up at the scroll-like tops of the columns which upheld the blue-colored firmament of the ceiling.

"The sacred twelve of the zodiac and the sacred seven of the ancient planetary spirits," said Apollos, who felt a magnetic attraction drawing him past the 18 meter tall columns toward the central cella or house of the goddess.

"This temple appears to be four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens," said Simon, who walked through the forest-like double row of columns on all four sides of the dipteral temple.

As the three men arrived at the massive doors of the enclosed chamber within the open space at the center of the temple, a stream of yellow light broke through a crack between the doors and slowly pushed them open. A gravitational pull drew the men inside the dwelling place of the goddess. The interior of the chamber appeared to be a vast universe that emanated from a formless central light, and in the center of the light

appeared an ivory statue-like form of the Great Mother Cybele in her multi-breasted, nourisher-of-all-life aspect. A triple tower-like tiara – symbolizing her dominion of the causal, astral, and physical worlds – adorned her royal head. Lions of solar energy and bulls of generative powers adorned her body; bees, symbols of Ephesus and devotees of the queen (nectar of life), adorned her sides. The crescent moon was marked in her forehead, and her head seemed to rise from a solar garland around her neck. The symbols of Mother Nature flourished as manifestations of her manifold being.

Suddenly the statue-like form transformed herself into a lovely maiden whose hair was the rain-bearing clouds in the sky, her skin the soft covering of soil, her eyes the soul of every creature, her spirit the life of every living thing. Her hands were extended in benevolent care for every form of life that she gave birth to as she transformed herself into a mother. The seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter emerged from her being and dissolved back into her being.

A drama of countless worlds and beings circulated with cyclical precision within her cosmic substance. A subtle reproductive energy flowed through the entire scheme of things, keeping the process of life reoccurring in cycles of birth, growth, and death. Behind the veil of her material physical aspect resided a vast creative intelligence guiding the growth and evolution of all life forms. Her cosmic mind and body pervaded every part of the fabric of the universe. She was matter in her visible and invisible aspect. She was the Queen of the Heavens and the Mother of all Life. She was the One giving birth to the Many.

At that moment the vision of the Great Mother dissolved like astral particles in a dream, and the three men beholding the inner goddess within the sanctuary of the Artemision beheld only Sophia standing with eyes wide open in front of the ancient pillar.

"Wisdom has made her house of seven pillars," announced Sophia in a cryptic manner as the three men stood speechless before her, like statues. "The causal principles sustain the known universe like seven mighty pillars." She was referring simultaneously to the planetary spirits of the macrocosm, and to their correspondences in the seven centers of the microcosmic human universe.

Sophia walked away from the pillar and headed back towards the city. The men were too dumbfounded to ask where she was going, and they were still too awe-struck to ask questions about what they had witnessed. They just followed Sophia in contemplative silence.

She came to the Selcuk Museum and stopped. There was something inside that compelled her to convince the men to see. After they entered the museum, they saw what Sophia wanted to show them: the statue of the Great Mother Cybele, which in the biblical account was called "the great goddess Diana, the image which fell down from Jupiter." (Acts19:35)

"Holy Mary, Mother of God," said Simon reverently, recognizing the universal mother image in the majestic sculpture.

"This is a splendid artistic representation of the celestial archetype that we saw in the sanctuary of the goddess," said Apollos, recalling the image that was imprinted in his consciousness.

"I can understand why certain religions would prohibit the forms of gods and goddesses created by human hands," said Nazar, who lived in a land of conflicting beliefs

from various traditions. "Personally, the stone image in no way, shape, or form comes close to the beauty of the heavenly vision of the Great Mother goddess that was granted us by divine favor."

"The visible form is only a feeble attempt at representing the invisible archetypal form," said Sophia, whose mind's single eye flashed the archetypal image to her conscious mind. "The creative mind of man, nevertheless, always tries to reproduce on the concrete physical level that which he visualizes on the spiritual or abstract level. Thus we have man building grand temples and making material images of universal principles. The Seven Wonders of the World, of which you saw the principle of the generative moon or Mother embodied in the Temple of Artemis, were erected to symbolize the mysteries of life. The greatest mystery was the mystery of the sun, whose life-giving rays bring light to every man and woman that comes into the world; the symbolic representation of that universal solar principle was embodied in the Colossus of Rhodes, an island in the Great Sea. The mystery of Jupiter, who was enthroned as the chief or ruling principle of the twelve gods and goddesses, was embodied in the statue of Zeus in Olympia, Greece, the place of the holy Mount Olympus. The mystery of Saturn, who was the father of the gods, was embodied in the Pharos, or lighthouse, of Alexandria, where the illumination of the human race and the light of learning as a guiding principle was established. The mystery of Mars, the principle of the courageous hero who sacrifices his life for a cause, was enshrined in the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus. The mystery of Venus, the principle of love and beauty, was embodied in the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, where the goddess Ishtar (or Aphrodite) arose each morning in the form of the five-pointed star of the East. The mystery of Mercury, the grandest and most sublime of all, was embodied as the principle of the wisdom of the ages within the initiatory chambers of the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt."

The three men listened with utmost attention as Sophia expounded on the mysteries of life. Their inner beings seemed to open up, step by step, like flowers opening up to the light, as each mystery was unsealed. Each mystery was like a sacred receptacle or temple of truth. And each mystery was esoterically enshrined in the seven centers of the cerebro-spinal system of man.

The following day, Nazar drove his guests to the ancient ruins of Ephesus. The spring showers of April fell lightly on their heads as they strolled up the Arcadian Way (or Harbor Street) towards the large semi-circular theater at the western foot of Mt. Koressos. Nazar related the geographical and historical facts of the area:

"Two thousand years ago, the waves of the Aegean Sea came close to Ephesus, and there was a harbor at the end of this street. If you look west down this street, you will see where it ends and the green weeds and brush take over. From the top of the theater, you'll be able to see how the silt deposits from the Kucuk Menderes River, which runs just north of Selcuk, filled in the entire area of what used to be the seaport of Ephesus. Kusadasi, the port city where we'll board the ferry to Samos tomorrow, is eight kilometers from here. So you can imagine how much the coast has receded in two thousand years. Now, as we walk this wide street eastward to where it ends at the theater, you have to use your imagination – try to see a marble walkway, with towering columns on both sides of the walkway; there are some columns left, so you have an idea of what the colonnaded street must have looked like; and try to imagine oil-fueled lamps lighting the way from the harbor to the city. Ephesus, along with Rome and Antioch, was what

we call a city of light. It was even once known as the light of Asia, meaning the gateway to Asia Minor. This was also one of the places where the Silk Road led merchants and their caravans to the fabled East.

Nazar stopped talking when they reached the theater, which was set into the side of a steep hill. Simon's first impulse was to climb up the large blocks of stone which served as rows of seats. Instead, he used the steps that led to the top of the Great Theater, which was layered into three tiers of seats and divided into wedge-like sections.

"There are 58 staircases and 55 sections in this Greco-Roman theater," explained Nazar to Apollos and Sophia, who wanted to hear what Nazar had to say about the theater. "As you can see from this view from the stage area, there are three tiers of seats, which originally had 22 rows in each tier, making a total of 66 rows. There are two walkways between the tiers, and the cavea or seating area had room for about 25,000 spectators. The theater looks like a semi-circle from a distance, but when you get closer, it is about 40 degrees larger than a semi-circle. As you might notice, some parts, especially the upper cavea, were destroyed by earthquakes in the first millennium and were never repaired. But the theater is in good enough shape to be used as a cultural site and for dramatic presentations."

"Apollonius attended a play here," interjected Apollos, "a play called Ino by Euripides, where the son of a queen is separated at birth from the mother and is reunited with her in the end after Artemis arrives to verify his semi-divine identity. Ino, like the Greek heroes, was the son of Apollo."

"Sounds like an interesting play," said Nazar. "Was your hero Apollonius a son of Apollo, also?"

"Actually, the story of Apollonius begins with Proteus, the god with the ability to appear in many forms, telling the mother of Apollonius that the child would be Protean in character, just like the wise Proteus, who had the ability of knowing both the past and the future," explained Apollos in a lengthy manner. "And even though Apollonius had the same name as his wealthy human father, my guess is that the oracle of Apollo spoke through Apollonius because his words were wise and good."

Sophia was ready to climb up the steps to the top to see the view out to the ancient harbor. Apollos followed her up to the top, where they sat together for a while and savored the moment.

"I can just imagine the day Apollonius brought the people of Ephesus to the theater to purge the city of the plague," visualized Apollos, as Sophia listened. "He had appeared instantaneously from Smyrna, and he told the people to set up the Averting god, Hercules, on the stage. What a performance that was. There he is – on the great stage of the Great Theater of Ephesus – with the entire populace of the city gathered to witness the event. He tells the people to stone a poor beggar dressed in rags. The people are appalled at the idea of stoning a poor stranger. Apollonius tells the people that the person in rags is in reality an enemy of the gods. So one person after another starts throwing stones at the miserable creature, who suddenly reveals his fiery eyes and demonic nature. When the people realize that they are dealing with a furious demon, they hurl the stones even harder and faster, until the creature is completely buried by the avalanche of stones. After the stones are uncovered, one by one, the dramatic conclusion is displayed in a gruesome scene, for the demon that had brought the plague to the city was a dog the size of a lion, foaming at the mouth like a mad dog. Apollonius tells the people to give credit

to the Averting god, Hercules, for saving the people from the plague. However, the people know that the divine genius (Greek 'daemon') of Apollonius not only foretold the danger of the plague, but it also accurately diagnosed the cause and the treatment."

"That was a masterful performance worthy of a magician," stated Sophia ebulliently. "I was able to see the performance down on that stage just like you described it."

"What are you two watching?" asked Simon, who came over to their vantage point. "I saw both of you making faces and gesticulating as if you were witnessing some kind of performance."

"Apollos was recreating the dramatic exorcism of the city of Ephesus by Apollonius," explained Sophia.

"I've got a good story to tell, also," boasted Simon. "It took place here in Ephesus. Paul had been casting evil spirits out of the afflicted citizens, so these seven vagabond exorcists, who were of the left-hand (the black magic sort), decided to use the magical name that Paul had been using; however, the evil spirit that they were trying to cast out leaped on them and tormented them to the point that they threw off their clothes and ran out of the town naked. Now when the citizens of Ephesus saw what had happened, they decided to get rid of the magical scrolls that the exorcists had sold to them. These scrolls and parchments, or Ephesian letters as they were called, had magical incantations on them to expel diseases and evil spirits. So the people of Ephesus gathered that night, here at the great theater, and burned the magical scrolls and parchments in a huge bonfire, which seemed to make the sky turn red. As the books burned, the magical words pierced the air with strange intonations: askion, kataskion, lix, tetrax, damnameneus, and aisia. A sorcerer standing near the bonfire recited the foreign names in the people's native tongue, calling askion-darkness, kataskion-light, lix-earth, tetrax-year, damnameneus-sun, and aisia-truth. The people were perplexed and confused, for the sorcerer seemed to indicate that the magical words were symbols of the divine order of things: darkness and light, earth and year, sun and truth. What was once a babbling of mysterious incantations and spells became holy and sacred affirmations."

"It sounds like you embellished that story somewhat," said Apollos disapprovingly.

"Aren't all stories embellishments of a simple kernel truth?" debated Simon.

At that moment Nazar finally managed to ascend the three flights of steps to the top of the third tier. "What are you discussing?" asked Nazar, pausing to catch his breath.

"Apollos was giving a dramatic presentation about Apollonius, and Simon just finished a dramatic story about Paul and the Ephesian letters," replied Sophia, informing Nazar of their activities in the theater. "Do you have a story or dramatic presentation to share with us?"

"I once performed in a play here when we were having our annual festival in May," admitted Nazar. "I believe it was called The Great Diana of the Ephesians. Act I began with the goddess Demeter looking for her lost daughter Persephone. Demeter had to descend into the underworld and demand that Hades release her daughter. Hades had captured her and claimed her as his queen. Demeter appealed to Zeus for help, and when Demeter scorched the earth and refused to produce crops, for she was the goddess of the harvest, Zeus told Hades that he needed to release Persephone for at least half of the year.

And that is why half of the year, when Persephone is with Demeter, we have spring and summer, and the other half, when Persephone returns to the underworld, we have autumn and winter. In Act II, the people of Ephesus receive a visitor from another country who wants to change the Eleusinian mysteries of Demeter and Persephone, but the people rebel. A leader named Demetrius, who is a hierophant of the Eleusinian mysteries, appeals to the local patron goddess Artemis for help. She appears in the form of the virgin, chaste Diana, with her bow, and she tells the people that the mysteries will not perish from the earth. She says even if a new way is instituted by a future ruler, the mysteries will return, just like Persephone. So Demetrius honored the goddess by having a silver (the symbol of the moon) shrine authorized for personal use in the home. In Act III, the visitor returned and convinced the residents of Ephesus that gods made with hands have no eyes to see, nor ears to hear prayers. So the people decided to follow the new way of worshipping a formless God, an invisible Being who was everywhere, and thus didn't need a shrine or a temple. However, the hierophant Demetrius, who was committed to preserving the mysteries of Demeter and Persephone, fought back. He gathered the adherents of the Eleusinian mysteries in the theater. He had them shout, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians.' This started a mob revolt against the followers of the invisible Deity. In Act IV—that's where I come in—I am the mayor of the city of Ephesus, and I appeal to reason and to the wisdom of Mercury, who seemed to speak through me as a messenger of the gods. He said that it was self-evident that the chaste virgin, and her example of chastity, which was a virtue that the Ephesians honored foremost above all other virtues, was an everlasting principle that would never be destroyed. He also said that the archetype of Diana, the chaste virgin, was sent from the celestial Jupiter, himself. The people rejoiced and gave me credit for saving the day, even though I tried to tell them that Mercury, the god of wisdom, deserved the credit."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Sophia when Nazar finished his dramatic presentation. "That was a splendid adaptation of the biblical account, and a profound interpretation of the Eleusinian mysteries, which are hidden in sacred scripture."

"We haven't heard your dramatic presentation, yet," said Apollos, turning to Sophia.

"Wasn't yesterday's performance at the Temple of Artemis sufficient for you?" asked Sophia, looking at each participant individually.

"That was an unforgettable performance, One for the Ages," said Nazar, offering an obeisance with a nod of his head.

"You demonstrated to us why even our Holy Father bows down to the Mother Mary," said Simon, referring to Pope John Paul II.

"I'll grant your wish with your favorite story about Apollonius in Ephesus," said Sophia, looking at Apollos with a loving smile. "However, this story doesn't take place in this theater, but in yonder grove near the northern columns of the Arcadian Way." She pointed to the large green plain near where they had entered, and it appeared as if their minds were transported to the historic day when Apollonius was delivering an address to the people of Ephesus in the peaceful setting of the grove. They saw a long-haired bearded philosopher in a long white linen robe teaching the principles of the immortal soul. They watched in their mind's eye as the philosopher stopped in the middle of his speech and looked inward into his own mind, as if he were witnessing an event in a faraway place at that same moment. They heard him say, "Smite the tyrant, the gods

demand justice," and then they listened as he explained his mysterious words: "The tyrant Domitian has been slain this day in Rome." The witnesses of the sage's strange behavior waited for verification of his pronouncement. The news arrived, and the people realized that the sage was not only wise, but that he had been favored with a true revelation from the gods.

"Thank you," said Apollos with tears in his eyes. He had finally been granted a vision of Apollonius in the form of the Greek philosopher of the first century. He looked at Simon and Nazar. They also had tears in their eyes. The words "thank you" were barely audible as they expressed their heartfelt gratitude, too.

The rest of the day the foursome meandered from site to site within the large Ephesus complex. Most of the remains of buildings, like the Library of Celsus, were built after the time of Apollonius, so Apollos and Sophia weren't particularly attentive to the bits of factual information that Nazar tried to impart. However, Sophia was impressed by the statue of her namesake, Sophia—representing wisdom as one of the virtues—at the front of the library. Apollos could only see the figure of Apollonius in his mind as he walked down the Marble Way. At the entrance to the Prytaneion, where the city's eternal flame was kept, Simon had his biggest amusement: he saw a relief on a marble slab of the nude image of Hermes with his face and private parts chipped and broken off; Simon remarked that the iconoclasts of every age have disfigured and destroyed the things they didn't understand. By late afternoon, the group could hardly walk anymore. That night, everyone had a good night's sleep.

"Today I have a surprise for you," announced Nazar after he woke up his guests. The sun had not broken through the clouds on the eastern horizon, yet. "I not only have a trip to Samos planned for you; I also was able to plan a trip to the island of Patmos for tomorrow." Of course, the guests were not about to object to Nazar's wise planning on their behalf.

No sooner had the ferry left the harbor of Kusadasi in the morning than Apollos started relating the life of Apollonius to his spiritual ancestor, Pythagoras: "Apollonius throughout his life considered himself no more and no less than a Pythagorean philosopher. Like Pythagoras, he abstained from all flesh diet, believing that it would benefit him in communing with the wisdom of the gods; he lived life in the spirit of Pythagoras, seeking first the treasures of the mind and the soul, rather than earthly goods; and he traveled in the footsteps of Pythagoras to Egypt, Persia, Greece, India, and other places in order to gather, like a bee, the nectar of wisdom from the ancient mystery schools. Both men had the extraordinary gift of synthesizing the wisdom they had gathered into a philosophical way of life that enabled them to transcend the mortal and ascend into the realm of the Immortals."

"What amazed me most about the life of Pythagoras," interrupted Simon, who felt he had something equally important to relate, "was that he was predicted by the Pythian oracle of Delphi to become the wisest of men, surpassing even Solomon in wisdom. That's why he was named Pythagoras, after the Pythian prophetess of Apollo. He supposedly was the first person to call himself a philosopher, because he did not claim to know ultimate truth like the sage; he was simply attempting to find out, through the love of wisdom, what the mysteries of life were all about."

"Those mysteries were investigated in every mystery school that existed five centuries before Apollonius arrived to perfect them," interposed Sophia, who wanted to

expand the theme of the mysteries. "Pythagoras was initiated into the mysteries of Isis and Hermes in Egypt, where he learned the principles of geometry, which were perfected in the pyramid; he was initiated into the mysteries of Adonis, the dying and resurrecting god, in Phoenicia and Syria, where he learned the science of cycles and numbers; he was initiated into the secret lore of the Chaldeans in Babylon, where he mastered the science of astronomy and the language of the stars; he was initiated into the Greater Eleusinian mysteries of Greece, where he learned about the soul's descent from a spiritual world into the material world, as personified in the story of Persephone's descent into the underworld; he was initiated into the mysteries of the Brahmins in India, where he was introduced to the complete science of the soul; he was initiated into the Persian and Assyrian mysteries, where he learned about the ages of man as symbolically portrayed by the master Zoroaster and about the great wheel of the zodiac and the universe as symbolically portrayed by the prophet Ezekiel; and finally, he was initiated into the messianic mysteries at the school of the prophets at Mount Carmel, where the Essenes lived."

"What can I, a humble mortal, say after such wise discourses?" said Nazar, posing a valid rhetorical question. "All I know about Pythagoras is that he taught the sacred science of numbers and that he was a theologian of the sacred One; the One was known as the Monad, which in essence was Everything. This Monad was the supreme mind and intelligence spread out everywhere; and since it was One, its body had to be a circle that included everything within it. And we are all little dots or miniature monads circling within the grand Monad. I love the simplicity of that concept. I also love the symbol of the holy tetractys—the ten dots—the complete number encompassing all numbers; the beauty of having the unity of the 1 and the duality of the 2 combine with the triangular 3 and the square 4 to produce the 10—that is an archetype that is eternal. And last, but not least, to discover the five solids, which correspond to the five basic elements of the universe—that displays a universal mind. Especially, may I add, the discovery of the dodecahedron, the sacred plan of the universe within the twelve of the zodiac—that is simply divine."

"And don't forget the twelve convolutions of the human brain," added Sophia, "which float upon the waters of the ventricles, just like we're floating on this sea."

"That was amazing," said Apollos, who wanted to give an acclamation for Nazar's prodigious discourse. "I thought I was listening to Maestro Salvatore D'Aura talk about the unity of life. He said that God is Everything. And the nature of God is omnipresence and omniscience. So naturally, that unity must be spread out throughout the universe and include us."

"And thus we have the unified field theory of the physicists," contributed Simon, "making the single permanent atom comparable to the concept of the Monad."

"You'll have to save the rest of the discourse for a later time," announced Nazar as the harbor of Samos Town came into view. "We have to go to the car and get ready to disembark."

Nazar drove his Fiat to the center of the capital city, showing them the sole tribute to the ancient philosopher: Pythagoras Square. In the center of the square was a statue of a marble lion on a pedestal, overlooking the natural harbor.

"Leo the Lion," interpreted Sophia, "the symbol of the initiate of the ancient solar mysteries."

"The place where Pythagoras lived is on the other, southern, side of the island, in Pythagorion," narrated Nazar. "Pythagorion was built on the ruins of the ancient city of Samos. I'll take you there. It's only eight miles southwest of here. And I'll show you the apartment we'll stay at overnight."

"We're staying at an apartment?" asked Simon, with a surprised look on his face.

"I have friends and connections on these islands," explained Nazar. "We'll be staying at the most beautiful spot in Pythagorion, overlooking the blue waters of the Aegean Sea. On a clear day like today, you can't tell the difference between the sky and the sea—everything is blue."

Less than an hour later, Nazar drove up a hill to the Astra Village Hotel. From the balcony of their roomy maisonette they saw the picturesque port of Pythagorion and the blue view that Nazar promised.

In the afternoon, Nazar took them to the nearby ancient ruins of the Temple of Hera, a World Heritage Site. As they walked along the ancient Sacred Way to the sanctuary, Sophia told the men that Hera (Juno) was the consort of Zeus, which symbolized the soul joined to the higher Self. That sounded too esoteric, so she approached the subject from another level: "Hera was basically the goddess of marriage," explained Sophia, "which is why young maidens prefer to be June brides, the month named in honor of Juno (Hera). Since she is the protecting spirit of females, Hera watches over the five stages of their life as they grow from a girl to a bride, then develop from a lover to a child-bearing mother, and finally pause from their labors when they become a widow. The Greeks used to identify those stages with the new moon, the first quarter or waxing moon, the full moon, and the last quarter or waning moon; and I would venture to say that the dark moon was when they went through menopause."

The men laughed at Sophia's mention of menopause, especially Nazar, who was very familiar with that period in his wife's life. When they arrived at the ruins, they noticed one solitary column standing among the restored foundations that delineated where the largest temple in Greece, the monument to the birthplace of Hera, once stood.

"I would appreciate it if you men would give me a private moment with the goddess," appealed Sophia. "This is a woman's shrine, and the image of Hera is a mystery that only the intuition of a woman may behold." The men went to wander among the stone foundation walls of the various monuments that once formed the impressive sanctuary of Hera.

Sophia approached the area where the great altar welcomed the women of all ages. She knelt at the altar and closed her eyes. A gentle breeze swept over her face, and a light shower from a round cloud in the sky fell on her head. She visualized a gentle motherly face smiling down on her. The face gave way to a large auric egg that opened up and revealed an emergent bride; the bride was dressed in a white bridal gown, and the face of the bride was the face of a radiant Sophia. The bride slowly was transformed into an expectant mother. The vision culminated with Sophia-the-mother holding a newborn child in her arms.

Sophia stood up and walked up to Apollos. She took his hand in her hand and leaned over to whisper something in his ear. Apollos stopped and embraced her, assuring her that he would be with her through good times and tough times in order to help her realize the fulfillment of her vision. "I'll be with you through it all," he whispered back in her ear.

"Are we ready to drive up the mountain to visit the cave of Pythagoras?" asked Nazar. The guests acquiesced without a murmur. "I might as well inform you that we'll have to climb about 300 meters up a rocky trail to the cave, which is on the eastern slope of Mount Kerkis."

As they drove through the heart of the island—through vineyards, olive groves, and evergreen forests—to the western side of the island, Nazar narrated a legend about the highest mountain of Samos, which rose 1,440 meters into the sky: "The mariners say that on stormy nights, when they're coming home from a hard day's work at sea, and it's hard to see where the boat is sailing, they look up to Mount Kerkis as a guiding beacon. They say that the top of the mount shines like a lighthouse. Even though a fog or a cloud envelopes the mount, they still see that guiding light shining through. They say that the light on the peak is the spirit of their native son, Pythagoras, the wisest, and thus brightest, man on earth."

At the end of the road, just outside the picturesque city of Marathokampos at the foot of the mountain, Nazar parked his car and motioned to his guests that they would have to go the rest of the way by foot. They walked up the path past a scenic waterfall that seemed to flow from the crown of the mountain into a deep pool. Apollos tasted the water and declared it to be good to drink. Sophia drank a handful, as did Nazar, but the cautious Simon refrained.

At the cave there was a metal bar set across the width of the entrance to discourage entrance into the depths. "We can go a little way, before it slopes down," recommended Nazar. They followed him several meters and then sat down in a semi-circle, facing the opening towards the east. The stillness in the cave put their minds into a similar meditative silence. Apollos let his mind contemplate the rewards of being a Pythagorean that Apollonius listed: greatness of soul, knowledge of the gods, quickness of perception, and the realization of immortality. Sophia reflected on the ultimate secret teaching of Pythagoras—that man's destiny was to function in a body of spiritualized ether that would exist side by side with the physical form. Simon's mind seemed to geometrize the various principles of Pythagoras, starting with the dot that expanded into a line to form a surface of a solid shape. Nazar recited in his mind the aphorisms of Pythagoras that he had learned as a school-boy: Walk in unfrequented paths, for wisdom awaits you there; it is best to revere silence, for it is golden; adore the sound of harmony in nature, for it will give you a sense of the order in the universe; remember that the human body is sacred to the sun and the moon, so be sure to feed the soul as well as the body.

Within the depths of the four contemplative minds, a mysterious universal mind seemed to make its presence felt. Within that vast mind the golden verses of Pythagoras resounded throughout the ages, and presently those verses echoed in each of the minds that were tuned to the thoughts of Pythagoras: "Let reason, the gift divine, be your highest guide; then you will be able to separate from the body and soar in the spiritual ether; then you will be imperishable, a divinity, no longer a mortal."

When the four Pythagoreans left the cave, they knew that they had communed with the wisdom of Pythagoras.

The next day, they rode the ferry to the island of Patmos, which Apollos discovered was the northernmost island of the Dodecanese—the chain of twelve islands off the southwest coast of Turkey. He recalled seeing it as a dot in the ocean of space

from the airplane. The ferry landed at Skala, the harbor of the small volcanic island, which was shaped like a seahorse. The edge of the harbor was glistening in the rays of the morning sun with the sparkling-white buildings of the town.

"Skala," said Simon reflectively. "Sounds like it comes from scala coeli, the stairway to heaven."

"That might very well be the case," informed Nazar, "for there is a stairway to the central point on this island—the Sacred Grotto."

Nazar drove south past the white buildings of the harbor town and up the winding pine-covered hill to the edge of the small town of Chora, which surrounded the lower slopes of the majestic fortress-monastery. Nazar told them the maze-like alleys at the base of the monastery were too narrow to drive through, so he parked his car and they walked the rest of the way past the whitewashed houses toward the massive brown walls of the monastery that crowned the lower part of the mountain. A higher peak rose to the highest point on the island further south of the medieval-looking fortification.

"That castle-like structure is visible from almost every part of the island," said Nazar, slowing down to catch his breath. "The monastery was built on the ruins of the temple of Artemis-Diana. This island, according to the mythology preserved by ancient sources, was given as a gift by Zeus to his daughter Artemis, and it was originally named Litois. Litoida was the original name of Artemis, for she was the daughter of Lito; anyway, the island was named in honor of Artemis. There is also a legend about the island sinking, and then Artemis raised the island from the sea back to the surface with the help of her twin-brother, Apollo."

The pilgrims to the holy shrine soon reached the Church of the Apocalypse, which was located on a slope below the monastery. Within the depths of the church was the goal of their pilgrimage to the island: the cave, according to tradition, where St. John, the Beloved Disciple of Christ, had an apocalyptic vision. A sign to the left of the entrance acclaimed the traditional site: HOLY CAVE OF THE APOCALYPSE, "I WAS ON THE ISLAND OF PATMOS." (Apoc. Chap. A,9) They descended thirty stairs to the door of the Holy Grotto, above which was painted a scene of St. John looking heavenward while dictating his vision to his disciple-scribe Prohorus.

"Looks like St. John had his amanuensis just like Apollonius had Damis as his scribe," whispered Apollos to Sophia as the door was opened by a monk dressed in the traditional black robe of the Greek Orthodox church.

"This is the Sacred Grotto where John wrote the Apocalypse or the Book of Revelation," said the white-bearded monk as he welcomed the pilgrims into the candle-lit interior. The small-sized cave had a depth of four meters and a low overhang. A cleft in the rock stretched from north to south, dividing the rock into three parts. "The fissure in the rock wall you see before you is considered to be the passageway to heaven, through which St. John heard the voice of the Lord revealing the divine mysteries. St. John would hold his head near the crack in the wall to hear what was coming from the other side, the celestial world."

"I thought the seer of Patmos beheld the vision while he was in a sleep-like trance," said Apollos, hoping to elicit a reasonable explanation for the varying traditions. He thought of a twentieth-century seer named Edgar Cayce who gave readings while in a trance-state.

"The Great Visualizer, as we symbolically refer to him," said the monk, "was told to write what he saw or visualized with his spiritual sight. You can see that we preserve that tradition by having a red book on a white cloth, which rests on an indentation in the wall where St. John recorded his visions." He showed them the objects on one side of the room-sized cave.

"We used to call him John the Revelator," said Simon, "because of his revelations of the end of the world."

"I would call him the Oracle of the ancient mysteries," said Sophia, who recalled her experience as the oracle of Delphi, channeling the esoteric Key to the Initiated of Apollonius. "The Apocalypse is in reality a brilliant amalgamation of all the ancient mysteries."

"Which the Great Theologian brought from the ancient religious centers of the known world," added Nazar, remembering what Sophia had related about the travels of Pythagoras to the countries where the mysteries were enshrined.

"And which was transmitted from the master Pythagoras to the disciple Apollonius," concluded Sophia.

"According to our tradition," continued the white-bearded monk, who returned from the venerable objects, "St. John was exiled to the island of Patmos in 95 AD by the emperor Domitian, who thought John was an immortal god." Apollos wanted to tell the monk that Apollonius disappeared from the court of Domitian in 92 AD to prove his immortality, and the philosopher was thereafter considered to be in exile because he never returned to Rome again.

"Wasn't there a tradition that John died at Ephesus when his exile ended after the assassination of Domitian?" asked Nazar, who had a flashback of the vision that Sophia projected at the theater in Ephesus.

"There are actually two traditions about St. John's death," said the kind and patient monk, who was willing to answer any questions. "One tradition says he is buried under the Basilica of St. John's at Ephesus, or modern Selcuk; the other tradition says that he disappeared or ascended to heaven." Apollos wanted to tell him that Apollonius was also said to have died at Ephesus, where he was attended by two maid servants, whereas other reports said that he entered a temple and disappeared.

"Isn't there a tradition that the Beloved Disciple would remain on earth until Christ's return?" asked Simon, who was familiar with the scriptural reference and legend in the last chapter of the Gospel of John, which many biblical scholars considered to be an appendage or addition from another source. Simon had read the sacred writings of the Nag Hammadi library, especially the Pistis Sophia, where the Savior had remained with the disciples for eleven years after his spiritual ascension, teaching them all the mysteries in a private setting.

"That is a mystery which I am not able to answer," admitted the monk as he wrinkled his forehead. Apollos wanted to tell him that Apollonius was the beloved disciple of Pythagoras and was still living on the earth in the sacred Himalayas. "I'll let you ponder on your own the mysteries of the Sacred Grotto." The old monk went into a corner of the cave and said his prayers silently in front of an icon of an enthroned Christ, the culmination of the vision of the seer of Patmos.

Apollos sat silently on a small bench beside Sophia. Nazar sat with Simon on another small bench. Each one of them contemplated the mystery of the cave in their

own manner: Apollos saw the cave as the home of the sacred fire at the base of the spinal cord, which was symbolically portrayed as the angel of the church of Ephesus in the Apocalypse, and he visualized the ascend of the red flame to its throne in the Pineal gland in the brain; Sophia saw the cave as a place of exile for the immortal soul, and the goal of the soul was to transcend the mortal Patmos and rise like an eagle into the heights of the immortals, again; Nazar saw the cave as a place of spiritual darkness and ignorance, and he strained his ear to hear the divine voice speaking through the crack in the wall of his mind and to see the illuminating light of reason shining through; Simon saw the cave as the allegorical cave of Plato, where the human mind sees only the shadows of living things on the cave wall, not the true images in the world of light.

When the four pilgrims reached the Monastery of St. John on the crown of the hill later that afternoon, they saw the highest mountain of the island to the south. Mount St. Elias, the Christianized version of the former name Mount Helios, rose to an altitude of 888 feet.

"Elias, or Helios, is the name that stands for the abode of the sun-god Phoebus, or Shining One, Apollo," said Nazar, pointing to the ancient sacred abode of the sun-god.

"Apollo inherited the sun-god role from Helios," stated Simon.

"Apollo embodies the ideal that man aspires towards," said Apollos.

"The mortal man standing in his inner sun of divinity," added Sophia.

The mountain seemed to bathe in a luminous light as the sun broke through a cloudy sky and beamed its long angular rays on the sides of Apollo's shrine.

That night, as Apollos tried to fall asleep in the Adonis Hotel in Skala, he kept seeing an image of Diana, the goddess of the moon, and Apollo, the god of the sun, circle in his mind like two spheres, and it seemed like the moon was continually trying to catch up with the sun. All at once, he somehow managed to slow down the motions of the two bodies and he saw the moon merge with the sun. At last he understood the mystery of the twins, Artemis and Apollo, who were in reality the mortal and the immortal aspects of an individual monad.

Simon, who was also trying to fall asleep, kept seeing a dying and a rising god journey through the hemisphere of his mind; he saw the sun die at the time of the winter solstice as the sun set in the western sky, and he saw the sun being born at the time of the spring equinox as the sun rose in the eastern sky. His mind was still perplexed by the question of Apollonius' death. Apollos insisted that Apollonius didn't die, but was transported to India to live with the Immortals. Sophia had promised that his perplexing question would be resolved in Ephesus. He had already seen the same projected hypnotic vision of Apollonius as Apollos and Nazar had seen. Nevertheless, he was still skeptical, and he wasn't convinced of the immortality of the soul, nor of the immortality of Apollonius.

However, as the light of dawn was breaking on the eastern horizon, Simon rushed to the room that Apollos and Sophia shared, and he knocked loudly on the door. "Sophia, you were right!" said Simon when the door was opened to let him in. "Apollos, now I believe you. Apollonius recited wondrous verses about the soul to me."

"What verses did he recite to you?" asked Apollos.

Simon recited what he had heard verbatim, exactly as another man from the time of Apollonius had recited the oracular words:

"The soul is immortal, and 'tis no possession of thine own, but of Providence,
And after the body is wasted away, like a swift horse freed from its traces,
It lightly leaps forward and mingles itself with the light air,
Loathing the spell of harsh and painful servitude which it has endured."
(Life of Apollonius, Book VIII, Ch. XXXI, p. 405)

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Joshua followed Isaac to the Kotel (Western Wall) every day, rain or shine, for the next five months. Isaac had convinced Joshua to stay with him in his two-room apartment in an area one kilometer west of the Old City. When Isaac told him, "I will teach you to read and write Hebrew," Joshua realized that a lifetime wish was within his grasp. He had always wanted to learn his "mother tongue," as his mother called it. Joshua agreed to extend his stay in Israel on one condition: Isaac must allow him to pay his share of expenses for room and board.

There was an additional advantage to staying with Isaac: the rabbi was well versed in the hidden wisdom of the unwritten tradition of Judaism known as the Qabbalah (Kabbalah).

"There is a legend that the secret science was written by Abraham, who brought the wisdom of the heavens from his homeland in Mesopotamia and the mysteries of the Egyptians when he went down to Egypt," taught Isaac. "However, the roots of the secret teachings probably go further back to the time of the antediluvian patriarch, Enoch, who traveled through the seven heavens to obtain the wisdom of the ages. In my humble opinion, I think the rabbi, Akiba, compiled all of the hidden tradition and set it into a written form before the Roman forces advanced to completely destroy the Jewish civilization in the second century."

Joshua had a difficult time understanding the complex concepts of the new words that he was hearing for the first time: Ain Soph, Sephiroth, Kether, Chochmah, and many others. The Sephiroth was the symbolical Tree of Life with ten symbolical spheres representing the essential nature of man and the universe: Crown (Kether), Wisdom (Chochmah), Understanding, Mercy, Severity, Beauty, Victory, Glory, Foundation, and Kingdom. Then there were the four worlds that seemed to represent four planes of existence: (1) Atziluth, the World of Emanations or causal plane; (2) Briah, the World of Creation or mental plane; (3) Yetzirah, the World of Formation or astral plane; and (4) Assiah, the World of Substance or physical plane.

Isaac tried to simplify the mind-boggling display of abstract ideograms that he wrote on paper by drawing four concentric circles.

"You've seen a flat cut cross-section of a tree showing its growth rings, haven't you?" asked Isaac. Joshua nodded affirmatively. "Now, if you imagine a Tree of Life

with forty rings, you can see how each of the rings represents a rate of vibration emanating from the eternal state of being known as Ain Soph, the Eternal One. The vibrations of the ten outer rings belong to the emanations that come from the intangible realms of the divine names, starting with Eheieh (the first crown, or I AM). These ten outer rings are in essence the roots of a great Tree of Life, and they are also the head and body of Adam Kadmon, the prototypical Grand Man of the Heavens, who stands with one foot on the land of the material universe and with the other foot on the sea of cosmic space."

"I've seen him," interjected Joshua, who suddenly recalled the image of the archetypal Universal Man, "but I didn't know his name is Adam Kadmon."

"Where did you see him?" asked Isaac, whose face displayed an incredulous look.

"In the cave of Elijah at Mount Carmel," answered Joshua, remembering his first encounter with his angelic guide Binah.

At the fond thought of Binah, a sudden transformation occurred in his mind, and he didn't hear the next question that Isaac posed: "What did he look like?"

Instead, he saw Binah's beaming face materialize in his mind's eye, and he heard her gently say, "You were going to tell me about your dream that you had in the cave of Elias." He saw himself telling her about the vast being who seemed to stretch from the earth to the heavens.

"What did he look like?" repeated Isaac, whose voice projected a tone of exasperation at Joshua's sudden lapse into a state of unawareness. He reached his hands out and shook Joshua back into conscious awareness of his surroundings.

"He, I," stuttered Joshua. "I'm sorry. Can you repeat that question?"

"I asked, what did he look like?" repeated Isaac, who was bewildered by Joshua's unexpected behavior.

"He had a long white beard and around his waist was a solar system with rings of orbiting planets," responded Joshua, whose memory of the lucid dream was vivid and clear. "In his hands he held a circular disk that he twirled around his upper body, and the disk had twelve pictures on it, the most prominent being a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle."

"The Merkabah, the chariot of Yahveh," muttered Isaac to himself as he recognized the wheel of the zodiac and the circular solar system, the tangible physical manifestations of the intangible spiritual reality.

"Ask him about Metatron," whispered Binah into Joshua's inner ear. Joshua was pleased to know that she was still near him.

"What can you tell me about Metatron?" asked Joshua, following the instructions of his inner voice.

"Where did you hear that name?" asked Isaac, whose curiosity was aroused.

"First you tell me about Metatron," replied Joshua carefully, "then I'll reveal how I came to hear that name."

"Metatron is the angel of the Lord, the Prince of the Divine Presence," stated Isaac, eyeing Joshua suspiciously. "In essence, he is the reflection of the first crown, Eheieh, the I AM. Thus, he is the head or crown of the second world or plane of existence, the world of the ten creative intelligences or archangels, who are reflections of the ten divine names in the first world. Metatron is called the lesser YHVH (Yahveh) because he is the Son who reflects the Father. There is a story in the Hebrew Apocalypse

of Enoch about a certain anonymous man, whom Hebrew scholars believe was Elisha ben Abuyah, and this man went into Paradise and saw Metatron sitting on a throne with a crown on his head and he thought there were two gods in heaven. This man was called a heretic, afterwards."

"Could Metatron, then, be a reflection of Adam Kadmon, the archetypal Universal Man?" asked Joshua, hoping to prolong the in-depth study of the subject.

"Most definitely," asserted Isaac, "for the whole process of creation from Spirit to matter goes through four stages, and the archetypal or causal stage, which, by the way, is represented by divine fire, is reflected into the crystal clear water of the creative or mental stage. The combined powers of the causal (fire) and mental (water) worlds are mirrored downward into the airy formative or astral world. Within that astral world is the Merkabah, or the chariot of Yahveh, which is the invisible universe of the wheel of the zodiac and the solar Son of God as the crown or king of that world, making his journey through all the signs of the zodiac. Last, and least in the scale of emanations and vibrations, is the physical world, where the Son of Man makes his journey through the material world."

"So Adam Kadmon becomes Metatron, who becomes the Son of God, who comes down to earth as the Son of Man," postulated Joshua, whose head felt like it was splitting open at the crown of his head.

"And if you reverse that process," said Isaac, initiating a train of thought that would keep them busy for weeks to come, "then you have the story of Enoch, the antediluvian patriarch who ascended into the heavens and became a Metatron."

"Now it's my turn to reveal to you my source," divulged Joshua, noticing Isaac patiently awaiting an answer to his question. "My angel Binah told me to ask you about Metatron."

"Binah?" asked Isaac, becoming more perplexed by the minute. "The Divine Mother is your personal guide, your angel?"

Joshua couldn't contain himself any longer. He sat on the floor in a cross-legged position and closed his eyes. He took a deep breath. He turned his attention to the divine eye, through which he saw a chariot of fire ascend through his spine, up to his skull, and out through the crown of his head.

"This is where you're supposed to say, My Father, My Father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen," chuckled Binah in her own witty way.

The tension in Joshua's body dissipated at the sound of Binah's soothing tone of voice. The pressure in his skull subsided, and he felt totally at ease in the stillness of his meditative mind. The only thing he saw was the chariot in which he was seated with Binah. The four wheels of the chariot were inscribed with four letters (Y, H, V, H), four elements (fire, water, air, earth), and four creatures (lion, eagle, man, ox).

"Where are we going in this chariot?" inquired Joshua, who didn't feel any movement.

"Nowhere, and everywhere," replied Binah mysteriously. "Remember, you are the center of your own universe. And the kingdom of all the heavens or dimensions of existence reside in you. With that in mind, you are going to become the seer, the one who sees in all directions at once with the inner spiritual eye."

"What am I going to see?" asked Joshua impatiently.

"Hold your horses," laughed Binah, who was having a merry time with Joshua. "You are going to see the lifetime when you were – or should I say, from the perspective of the Eternal Now, your aspect as – Enoch, the seventh patriarch."

All at once the Merkabah (chariot) seemed to vibrate at a rate where it was able to enter the causal world, where the wheel of life existed in all its infinite potentialities and the foundations of all creations lay in the form of a seed. From Joshua's perspective, he instantaneously saw all worlds – superior and inferior, supernal and infernal – within an infinite field of light. One point of light radiated within Joshua's range of vision and materialized as the antediluvian patriarch Enoch.

Enoch sat in the privacy of his house and wrote about the visions that he had seen of other worlds. People called him the heavenly scribe because he claimed to have spent sixty days in the heavens. Joshua watched over the scribe's shoulder as he wrote about the knowledge and understanding he had received of the other worlds:

"I was raised up to a place that had the appearance of a burning fire. (Joshua felt a burning fiery sensation flow through his spinal cord). I was carried to a mountain whose top reached to heaven. (Joshua visualized the soul ascending to the heights of consciousness in the head). I came to a river that flowed like water from the mountain top to a great sea. (The soul perceived the spinal fluid that descended from the reservoir in the brain and emptied in the sea of the generative organs). I examined the great stone that supported the corners of the earth. (The soul looked within to see the divine eye that was the basis for seeing reality). I watched the paths of angels. (The soul became aware of planetary spirits). I perceived seven stars, like great blazing mountains, within which resided the spirits. (Joshua realized the seer was aware of the seven spiritual chakras and the vast nerve plexuses within the body). I witnessed the angels—Gabriel, Raphael, Michael, and others—co-habiting with the spirits of men. (Joshua saw the divine spirits directing and watching over the life and intelligence of the etheric centers of man). I wondered why the seven stars of heaven were bound in a desolate place of suffering. (The soul is perplexed by the suffering that occurs in the physical body by way of the cerebrospinal system). I arrived at a delightful place where the souls of the dead awaited judgment. (The Elysian Fields or Paradise is perceived as the dimension where the scales of justice determine the future state of the soul). I perceived seven mountains that were surrounded by aromatic trees, and the top mountain had a throne for the everlasting King to sit on. (The seer enjoys the beauty of the inner Garden of Eden within his spine, and he looks up toward the Higher Self who rules for ever)."

Joshua moved into a position to take a closer look at the man they called the heavenly scribe. He noticed that the robed man was totally wrapped up in his work. When Joshua was finally close enough to see his face, he saw the bright countenance of a youth.

"That is you," whispered Binah, not wanting to disturb the concentration of the young initiate into the secrets of the heavens. "That is when you sought knowledge and understanding of the mysteries of life. You had secluded yourself from the eyes of men for fifty-seven years in order to write your three hundred and sixty-six books about all the knowledge you had acquired from your research into the secrets of the forces of nature and the heavens."

"Is that all I did throughout my life?" inquired Joshua, who continued to watch the youth with admiration.

In answer to Joshua's question, the scene of Enoch the scribe vanished, and in its place another scene came into view on the screen of Joshua's inner consciousness: Enoch, the Initiator. Joshua watched as an older and wiser Enoch was summoned by the voice of his inner god to teach the wisdom he had garnered from his years of study. Enoch initiated the sons of men into all the ways of right living in order to be righteous. He showed them all the hidden things of the heavens and the revolutions of all the luminaries in the sky. He taught them to count the 364 days and the four seasons of 91 days each. He revealed to them the mysteries of the zodiac and the twelve gates (signs).

"People began to flock to you from all the lands of the earth in order to hear the wisdom of the Supreme One that was revealed through you," informed Binah. "One hundred and thirty kings and princes assembled to make you king, and you consented to rule over them with wisdom. Your reign of peace, justice and righteousness lasted for 243 years."

"And then what happened?" asked Joshua in a voice denoting the suspense that he felt.

"Well, as it happens to all souls who come to earth to fulfill their mission," replied Binah, "you were called home by your divine Self. All the people gathered to receive blessings from you before you parted from this world. The elders proclaimed that you would be glorified throughout the ages for your wisdom, and they determined that you were the Chosen One, the redeemer of men from the darkness of ignorance to the light of wisdom."

Joshua watched as the concluding scene of his life as Enoch appeared in his mind's eye: Enoch stood before the people who came to bid him farewell, and he told them that everything he had learned from the Eternal One was for the benefit of all mankind. From the invisible, the Eternal One made all things visible. Enoch reminded the people that before the world was formed, all the souls of mankind were already prepared for eternity.

Enoch told the people of the final vision he had received from the Eternal One:

"In the stillness of your mind and in the silence of your soul—He is there.
At birth, when you open your eyes and see the light of day—He is there.
When you see the face of your mother and your father—He is there.
In the mountain, valley, forest, and meadow—He is there.
In the rain, snow, lightning and thunder—He is there.
Where you are—He is there.
Through all space and time—The Song of Life,
The Heart of the Infinite, and the Wisdom of the Ages
Will abide in you, with you, and all around you."

Then the people watched as a horse descended from the ether, and Enoch sat on the horse and rode away. A dark cloud enveloped the horse and its rider, and the people didn't see Enoch anymore.

Joshua, however, saw with his mind's eye the ascent of the Initiator's soul in a chariot of fire. The last image that appeared to Joshua's inner perception in a flash of illumination was Enoch sitting on the throne of the celestial worlds as Metatron. Within the face of Metatron-Enoch Joshua recognized the immortal Hermes.

"Ascension is followed by exaltation," remarked Binah. "Enoch came to earth on the sixth day of the month Sivan, and he left on the sixth day of Sivan. That is significant

because the Torah was given to mankind on the seventh day of Sivan. Enoch lived 365 years, the number of days in a year, and he ruled as the Solar Logos. He ascended from Mount Moriah, the hill of the temple in Jerusalem, to become the lesser YHVH, the Prince of the Divine Presence. Now you know the nature of Adam Kadmon, the God in man, the ruler and center of your universe."

Joshua opened his physical eyes. Isaac was sitting on a chair in front of him.

"Where have you been?" asked Isaac anxiously when he saw Joshua finally open his eyes.

"I went to the time before the flood, and I saw Enoch," answered Joshua after he stretched his body. "How long was I gone?"

"You were gone seven hours," replied Isaac.

"It felt like I was gone an eternity, or at least 365 years," commented Joshua, recalling the number of years Enoch spent on the earth.

"Tell me everything that you saw," appealed Isaac, who was starting to believe that Joshua was a true visionary.

Joshua told him exactly what he had seen, heard, and experienced with his soul. When he finished relating the entire story of his journey to the antediluvian world of Enoch, he noticed tears in Isaac's eyes.

"Now I believe that Binah, the Great Mother, has given you understanding, for that is the nature of Binah," said Isaac through his tears. "As the wise Solomon wrote, through Wisdom is a house built, and by Understanding it is established."

Isaac suddenly felt inspired to show Joshua something that he had wanted to show him ever since the first Hebrew lesson. Isaac started writing Hebrew letters (from right to left) with their numerical equivalents:

ה(5) י (10) ה(5) א (1) ר(200) ש(300) א(1) ה(5) י (10) ה(5) א (1)

Ahiye Asher Ahiye or [Ehyeh asher ehyeh]

Then he added the numbers of the words: 21 + 501 + 21 = 543.

"That's the Gematria for the Hebrew expression I AM THAT I AM," stated Isaac, referring to the study of numeric equivalents of letters in order to find hidden meanings in the words.

He continued writing some more letters: ה(5) ש(300) ם(40).

"Moses in Hebrew is spelled with the three letters Mem (40) that means water, Shin (300) that means fire, and Heh (5) that means the breath of life," explained Isaac. "Moses, the Hebrew deliverer, has a Gematria of 345. Now, Moses (345) is a reflection of I AM THAT I AM (543). Furthermore, if you take the two numbers 345/543 and add them together 345 + 543, you get 888, the number of the Christian Messiah, Yeshua or Joshua."

Joshua was amazed at the beauty of the letters and numbers as they brought life and meaning to a name. Everything became clearer to him as he realized that he carried a very special name with an important mission to fulfill.

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Paul stood on top of the Mount of Olives and looked down at his destination: Jerusalem, the City of Peace. He thought of the mission that Elijahu had given him – to preserve the purity of the Jewish religion and the Law of Moses by driving a theological and political wedge between the two major parties. The Jews of the Temple were fighting for self-preservation by remaining loyal subjects of the ruling Herodian dynasty and the Roman overlords. The Jews of the Kingdom were fighting for independence from the Roman rulers and their puppet government, and for the establishment of a messianic kingdom on earth. The Temple party was for peace by any means; the Kingdom party was for liberty at all costs. Paul knew the Temple party very well, for he had been a zealous agent of their law and political authority, wreaking havoc upon the opposition party. Now he was asked to switch parties and align himself with the zealots who had been trying to overthrow the Roman yoke for thirty years.

As Paul's eyes scanned the vista before him, his mind projected images of his happy youth on the screen of his expansive awareness. He remembered the years of study in the school of the Pharisee sect, devoting his youthful mind to the exploration of the Torah and Jewish laws, teachings, and traditions. He also remembered the joyful moments when he used to come to the mount with his sister Phoebe and play the naming game: Phoebe would point in the direction of a structure, or a place, and give a clue, and Paul would have to name it. He could hear her voice say, "I know you won't guess this one – the sacrifice of Isaac." "O, that's easy – it's Mount Moriah, the Temple Mount," replied Paul confidently. "Alright, let's see if you know this – the bones of the anointed one," quizzed Paul. "Can't you think of something harder?" teased Phoebe. "That's the Tomb of King David."

The temple, the palaces, the Antonia fortress, the monuments, and the gates – all had a special place in Paul's memory. It was at the temple that he had learned the wisdom of the rabbis and where he had watched the ceremonious rituals of the priests. The palace of the High Priest Caiaphas in the upper western section of the city brought to mind his first encounter with the rulers who hired him to be their enforcer and commissioned him to bring to justice suspected messianic insurrectionists. Paul's eyes stopped at the four towers of the notorious Antonia fortress that was located adjacent to the Temple Mount on the northern side; here was the prison where he had brought the captured suspects. Further north, he saw the monument of King Alexander Jannaeus.

Paul's thoughts were interrupted by the sudden arrival of two black-bearded men dressed in long gray robes. Paul turned to face them and cordially said, "Peace be with you."

"Peace be with you, stranger," said the stocky man of medium-height.

"I think we guessed correctly when we saw you standing here, that you were an Essene," said the taller slim man. He looked at the white robe that Paul was wearing. "That white robe is an obvious sign of an Essene."

"I was initiated into their sect just recently," remarked Paul. "And may I venture to guess by your speech and your mannerisms that you are Galileans?"

"You have a sharp eye and a keen mind," said the stocky man. "You are absolutely right. And what, may I ask, is your name?"

"I am," Paul hesitated for a moment, wondering whether he should divulge his infamous Hebrew name, or not. "My name is Paul of Tarsus."

"That sounds more like a Roman name than a Hebrew name," roughly commented the slim man in a tone of disdain.

"My Hebrew name is Saul," admitted Paul, who felt that honesty was the best policy in order to gain their confidence.

"The first king of Israel would be proud that you carry his namesake," said the burly man. "My name is Simeon bar Judas." He extended his hand in friendship.

"And I'm his brother, Jacob," said the slim man, extending his hand, also. "We're sons of Judas of Galilee."

Paul's face betrayed a look of shock at the mention of the name of his nemesis, Judas of Galilee, who had launched the anti-Roman movement known as the Zealots.

"By the look on your face, you must have heard of our father's revolt against the taxation imposed by the Romans during the census of Quirinius," remarked Simeon. "Is that true?"

"Yes, that's true," confessed Paul. He looked long and hard into the eyes of Simeon and tried to gauge the kind of man he was dealing with. "I am Saul of Tarsus, who three years ago persecuted the messianic sect that was trying to overthrow the Roman government. But after being with the Essenes for three years, I am a changed man. I've seen the light."

"Saul of Tarsus!" screamed Simeon, whose face turned red with rage. "I ought to kill you right here and now!" He grabbed Paul by the throat with both of his strong hands and started choking him.

"Stop, Simeon!" interjected Jacob, pulling his stronger brother away from the struggling body of Paul. "Didn't you hear him say that he's a changed man? He's been gone for three years. He probably doesn't even know what happened last year during the feast of unleavened bread."

Simeon released the hold he had on Paul's throat. Paul stumbled backwards and fell to the ground; he was gasping for air. For a second he thought he was going to faint or go into one of his seizures, which he hadn't experienced since the time in the wilderness when Elijahu rescued him. However, he took several deep breaths, and his mind cleared and became lucid.

"Did you hear what happened a year ago in Jerusalem?" asked Simeon when he saw Paul had regained his senses.

"I have been gone from the world for three years," said Paul slowly. He felt soreness in his throat, and it was painful for him to talk. He wanted to tell Simeon about his three years living as a recluse with Bannus, but he was sworn to secrecy, and he wasn't permitted to reveal any of the revelations he had seen or teachings he had learned.

"So you haven't heard what happened to our oldest brother Ioannes when he tried to lead an insurrection against the temple authorities who were polluting the temple and collaborating with the Romans to enslave our people?" asked Simeon incredulously. He thought the news had spread like wildfire throughout the country.

"I was in an isolated area, away from all distractions of the world, so that I could concentrate on the spiritual life," revealed Paul, saying only what he thought was proper about his life with the Essenes. "I didn't hear about your brother Ioannes. What happened to him?"

"The same thing that has happened to thousands of our people who dared to raise their hand or voice against the supreme authority of the masters of our enslaved people – he was crucified!" bellowed Simeon in anguish. "He had just turned fifty years old. He was in the prime of his life."

"He was just trying to fulfill his father's dream of bringing the kingdom of God on earth and of restoring the throne of David in our land," bemoaned Jacob.

"So he suffered the same fate as his father and wasn't able to drive out the Romans with an insurrection," said Paul without expressing any commiseration for the zealots' loss.

"Except that our father was brutally slain between the altar and the temple, while our brother was crucified outside the city walls," said Simeon angrily. "And the aftermath of our father's death resulted in the slaying of thousands of innocent lives."

"All we have tried to do for our country is righteous and just," said Jacob, who displayed a calmer tone of voice than his hot-blooded brother. "We have sworn loyalty to our God rather than to the Roman god, who masquerades as a human Caesar. We fight for liberty and freedom from oppression by the cruel taskmasters. We know that God is on our side, and we believe he'll come to our assistance in time of need. Those who have died for this noble cause of bringing God's kingdom to earth will receive honor and glory for their dedication and sacrifice."

Paul sat silently on the stony ground with his hands resting in the folds of his robe; his mind was deep in thought. Jacob sat down on a soft spot of ground nearby, and Simeon found a flat rock several feet away to sit on.

"So, Saul of Tarsus," said Jacob curiously, after a profound moment of silence, "why are you back here in Jerusalem, instead of staying with the community of Essenes in the wilderness?"

"I was sent here on a mission by my master, Elijahu," divulged Paul.

"Elijahu!" said Jacob in a tone of recognition. "Now there's a name I haven't heard in many years. The mysterious man who comes in the spirit of the prophet Elias, who ascended into the heavens in a chariot of fire. And pray tell us, what mission did he give you?"

"Come down to Jerusalem with me, and you will hear me proclaim a plan of salvation for our Hebrew nation," professed Paul presumptuously.

"What! Are you going to make a claim to be the new deliverer, the Messiah who will at last set up God's kingdom on earth?" scoffed Simeon, ending his derision with a loud guffaw.

Paul did not respond to the scorn hurled at him. He calmly stood up, brushed the dust from the back of his robe, and decisively headed down the hill to Jerusalem. The two brothers looked at each other with perplexed faces. After a moment's hesitation, they also stood to their feet and followed the former archenemy down the hill.

Paul entered the city through the east gate. The city was streaming with pilgrims coming from all parts of the country to celebrate the nation's greatest pilgrimage festival: Pesach (Passover), the festival of the Exodus and liberation from bondage. Paul weaved his way through the mass of people to the Temple Mount. He walked through the Beautiful gate at the entrance to the temple enclosure, and he made his way up twelve steps to the doors that opened up to the inner court, where the majestic towering square-shaped temple stood. He stopped at the top of the steps, turned around to face the crowd

waiting to enter the temple, and raised his hands high over his head. He called for the pilgrims to listen to the words he had been sent to deliver:

"People of Jerusalem, listen to me. I have been sent to bring a message of deliverance to you. Today we celebrate the deliverance of our forefathers from the land of bondage. The story of our fathers is also our story. The great liberator, Moses, took us out of the land of darkness and led us through the wilderness of life, but it was the conqueror Joshua who took us across the Jordan River and brought us to the Promised Land. Our people triumphed over all the enemies they encountered. We enjoyed a golden age when the kingdom expanded throughout the land, and we suffered exile when the empires of the world took us back into slavery. There was a time, not too long ago, when our valiant leaders led us against the mighty Greek empire, and we were victorious, just like David was victorious over the giant Goliath. Now we face a more formidable foe in the invincible Roman army, which threatens to destroy our stiff-necked people who continue to rebel against her might. Moreover, our nation is presently divided, one party against another. Can a house that is divided continue to stand? You are descendants of one father, Abraham, so why do you continue to fight brother against brother? You must choose this day whether you will follow the stony path of war or the smooth path of peace."

"What do you suggest?" yelled a voice from the crowd.

"What's your plan to save us from ourselves and from our enemies?" yelled a loud husky voice from the middle of the crowd. Paul recognized the voice of Simeon, the Zealot.

"My plan for our nation's salvation will provide a peaceful resolution to our conflict. Those who want peace, you have the Law of Moses and the Temple. Those who want the Kingdom to arrive in the here and now, there is a better way to accomplish that goal than to resort to war. The Lord from heaven showed me through divine revelation that those who are zealous for the Kingdom should separate themselves from the community of the Temple and follow the straight and narrow path of righteousness: First, we will observe the first day of the week as the holy day, for it was on the first day of creation that God said 'Let there be Light,' and we will be followers of the Light. Second, during the spring festival, we will celebrate our deliverance from the bondage of the flesh and the darkness of this world by observing the resurrection of the dead from the tomb of matter. Third, instead of the pilgrimage to celebrate the beginning of the harvest and the ripening of the first fruits, we will make a pilgrimage of the spirit and ascend to the Kingdom of heaven and reap the harvest of our faith. Fourth, we will observe circumcision of the heart and mind, instead of concentrating on the flesh."

"That man is asking us to be apostates!" yelled an angry voice from the crowd.

"He's telling us we should profane the Sabbath, and he's advising us not to observe our sacred festivals," stated a legal-minded old man.

"He's a messenger from Elijahu!" shouted Jacob, who stood together with his brother Simeon in the middle of the crowd.

At that moment, a tall man in a white linen robe appeared through the open doors (leading to the court of the temple) behind Paul. He had heard everything that Paul had said, and he felt that he needed to step in before there was a mob revolt. The people hushed their voices when they saw the respected leader of the Nazarene sect, who was known as a righteous man and was called the Just One. Paul turned to look at the long-

haired man with dark brown eyes, and his mind was stunned by what he thought he saw – the face of the Nazarene who had confronted him on the road to Damascus three years ago. Paul's mind recalled the words the gentle-voiced Nazarene had spoken, "You will be shown the true Light within your own soul."

"Let James tell us whether this messenger is telling us the gospel truth!" called out a reasonable voice.

James stepped alongside Paul and began to speak to the assembled multitude of people:

"Last year at this time, my oldest brother, Ioannes, came to this city as the promised Messiah and King who was going to deliver our people from the stifling occupation of Roman forces and inaugurate a renewal of David's kingdom. A year later, we still see Roman soldiers in our streets, and we still wait for a messianic leader to fulfill our long-held dreams. I have listened to this man, who is dressed as an Essene, speak of bringing peace to our land by changing our laws. Now, I know that the Essenes, together with the Nazarenes – for we have grown like two branches from one tree – are a peace-loving people. I also know that my brothers, the Zealots, are an offshoot from this same tree, except that they love liberty more than they love peace. We can believe that someday we'll have peace and the Romans will leave our land, but I say that faith without works is useless and brings no results. Nevertheless, our three sects – even though we differ in strategies and methods of bringing the messianic Kingdom of God to earth – we share the same goal of working diligently and faithfully to restore that Kingdom in the here and now. But not in the manner that this apostate from the Law of Moses prescribes. And I know that Elijahu would not send an apostate, whatever his name is, as a messenger."

"His name is Saul of Tarsus!" loudly proclaimed Simeon in a booming voice, which shocked the populace and sent a shudder of fear through their hearts.

James turned to look at the traitor in their midst. The shockwave that swept through the crowd simultaneously sent a shockwave straight into Paul's brain, and his mind went blank as if he were in a trance. Paul stood petrified and couldn't move; his eyes were glazed and expressionless. A voice within his head said, "Balinas, or rather Saulus, you must run for your life, for these people wish you bodily harm. They are not ready for the Light of Truth." Paul recognized the voice of wisdom, and he listened to that voice.

Just as Paul came to his senses, James was shaking him with both of his hands and saying, "Saul, what's wrong with you?" Paul thought that someone was already causing him bodily harm. Without thinking rationally, Paul instinctively reacted by forcefully pushing the person away from him and yelling, "Get away from me! Leave me alone!" James did not expect the violent reaction from Paul, whose strength was magnified by the fear of bodily harm that raced through his mind like a bolt of lightning. James fell backwards down the solid-rock steps, bruising his ribs and knocking his head into unconsciousness.

Paul was astounded by his violent action against an innocent man. A state of disbelief merged with a resurgence of the instinct of self-preservation, and Paul, believing that he had just unintentionally killed James, ran down the steps. He saw the shocked pilgrims huddle around their fallen leader, who was lying like a lifeless corpse at the bottom of the stone steps. "What have I done? What have I done?" he muttered to

himself as he threaded his way through the befuddled throng of people. Tears ran down his cheeks as he pushed with determination against the tide of pilgrims. One thought, mingled with a burning emotion, controlled his mind – to make it to the exit, and then to leave Jerusalem.

Paul was at the point where he was moving through the gate called Beautiful when he heard a female voice behind him, calling, "Paul, Paul, wait for us." He thought he recognized the voice, and as he turned around to see who was calling him, he heard the voice again, "Brother, wait." And then he saw his sister's face behind a sea of bobbing heads.

The tears of sorrow turned into tears of joy as Paul embraced his sister Phoebe outside the Beautiful gate. She wiped the tears from his face with her soft fingers and said, "Don't cry, my dear brother. Everything will be all right, God willing."

When Phoebe released her hands from her brother, she turned her attention back to the child who was holding onto her light blue robe. Paul had not noticed the child before, and he looked with delight at the curly-haired boy, whose blue eyes looked shyly up into Paul's face.

"This is my son, Theodas, a gift from God," proudly said Phoebe, introducing the boy for the first time to his uncle. "And Theodas, this is your uncle, Paul."

"Hello, Theodas," said Paul, kneeling down on one knee so he could be at eye-level with the boy. "I am honored to meet you." Paul gave the young boy, who was going on three years of age, an affectionate hug.

"Say hello, Uncle Paul," coached Phoebe, giving her child a slight nudge on his shoulder.

"Hello, Uncle Paul," said Theodas in a soft-spoken voice, with his eyes lowered.

"Come, brother," said Phoebe suddenly, as she spied a burly man heading in their direction. "You can come to the Essene quarters where I'm presently staying." She took Theodas by the hand and headed toward the southwestern corner of the city. Paul walked slightly behind her, feeling a sense of urgency in her hurried steps. Paul was not aware of the disguised movements of Simeon, who was following them at a short distance to see where they were staying.

When Phoebe finally led her brother through the entrance of her humble dwelling place in the Essene quarters and shut the door, she breathed a sigh of relief and explained her evasive behavior: "I think we were being followed by someone. I saw a burly-looking man coming toward us back there by the gate. He had a vindictive look on his face; and, after what happened with you and James on the temple steps, I thought that man was coming after you."

"You saw what happened?" asked Paul, with a look of shame on his face.

"Yes, I saw and I heard everything," admitted Phoebe. "Although I wasn't quite sure it was you until I heard that loudmouth yell out your name."

"That loudmouth was Simeon, the Zealot," stated Paul, who was acutely aware of his presence in the middle of the crowd.

Suddenly, a loud knock on the wooden door aroused their mutual apprehension.

"Who is knocking at the door?" asked Phoebe firmly.

"This is Simeon," replied the brusque voice. "I need to speak with Saul."

Paul opened the door and faced the irate Simeon.

"May I come in?" asked Simeon as he stood at the threshold and waited for Paul and Phoebe to let him in. Theodas was hiding behind Phoebe's robe, with his face peeking out the side curiously to look at the strange visitor. "I don't want the neighbors to hear what I have to say." Paul looked back to get Phoebe's approval. "I assure you I'm not here to harm anyone," Simeon added.

Phoebe nodded her head to signify it was all right if Paul wanted to let the burly man into her humble abode.

"I come to relay a message from my brother James, whom you nearly killed," said Simeon after he closed the door behind him.

"James is alive?" interrupted Paul incredulously.

"Yes, he regained consciousness after someone threw some water in his face to revive him," reported Simeon.

"O, thank God he's alive," rejoiced Paul, as if a heavy burden of guilt had been swept from his anguished mind.

"When he saw me kneeling over his body," continued Simeon, "the first thing he told me was – go tell Saul to flee the city. I understood that he meant people would want to kill you after what you did to him. So I came looking for you. That's when I saw you outside the gate Beautiful."

"That's curious," mused Paul thoughtfully. "That's the same thing the voice of wisdom told me when I went into a trance on top of the stairs."

"Is that what happened to you?" asked Simeon in disbelief. "You went into a trance?"

"Yes, that was after I thought I was seeing a spirit of the Nazarene, whom I encountered on the road to Damascus three years ago," explained Paul. "That thought came to me when I saw James, your brother, who looked just like the Nazarene."

"So you met my oldest brother, Ioannes," declared Simeon. "A lot of people say that Ioannes and James look alike."

"So that explains everything," said Paul, who felt as if a hidden mystery had been solved. "Tell James that I am truly sorry for what happened. I pushed him away unintentionally. The voice of wisdom warned me that people would wish me bodily harm; and when I came out of my trance and saw James shaking my body, I thought he meant me harm. I was sorely mistaken."

"I'll tell him," promised Simeon. "Where will you go?" Simeon wanted to know where he could find him after he left the city. He wanted to keep an eye on him. He had his suspicions about the former Roman agent, and he didn't completely trust his alleged conversion and claims to divine revelation.

"I might have to leave the country for a while," answered Paul, reflecting on his future plans. "I will go into a self-imposed exile for several years."

"Wherever you go, may God be with you," stated Simeon. He extended his hand in farewell, and then he opened the door and left.

When Simeon left, Phoebe and Paul decided that they would return to Tarsus in Cilicia, where he could avoid notoriety, rebuild his life, and renew his image. It was while they discussed their plans for the future that Paul found out that Phoebe had lost her husband, Alexander, in the insurrection of the previous year.

That night, Paul tossed and turned in his sleep. His soul was tormented by the realization that he had failed in the mission that Elijahu had sent him on. He was now

called an apostate by the very people that he wanted to save from destruction. In his feverish state of mind, Paul kept seeing images of the Romans burning the temple and destroying the city of Jerusalem. He saw the promised Messiah, the star known as Bar Kokhba, fall to the ground like a meteor from the heavens in the Roman year 888 A.U.C.

999

επιστημων (epistemon), Intuitively Wise
ε …. 5
π …. 80
ι …. 10
στ…. 6
η …. 8
μ …. 40
ω …800
ν …. 50
_____
999

Jesus said, "It is to those who are worthy
Of my Mysteries that I tell
My Mysteries."
- - The Gospel of Thomas (62)

Apollos, Sophia, and Simon had a difficult time saying good-bye to Nazar. After seven days of guiding his newfound friends through the ancient land of Anatolia ("land of the rising sun") and its neighboring islands, Nazar was sad to see them leave. When he hugged them affectionately at the airport, he felt tears welling up in his eyes. Apollos and Simon offered to give him a good gratuity for his gracious services, but Nazar declined the generous present.

"Others have given me physical gifts of temporal value," Nazar explained, "but you have given me spiritual gifts of eternal value."

As the Turkish Airlines plane lifted off from the runway and soared into the eastern sky towards India, Apollos turned his thoughts from Nazar back to Apollonius. He was looking forward to a culminating and climactic experience in India—the end of a long pilgrimage in search of the ageless Apollonius. Two prominent thoughts occupied his mind as he contemplated a potential encounter with the object of his devotion: first, the fact of Apollonius' immortality, which he demonstrated at his defense in the court of the Emperor Domitian when he announced, "For thou shalt not kill me, since I tell thee I am not mortal" (Book 8, Ch. 8); and second, the probability that Apollonius was somewhere in the Himalayas, where he had learned the wisdom of the masters, who taught him "to travel through the heavens" (Book 3, Ch. 51). Apollos was also preoccupied with the possibility that he might never encounter the physical form of Apollonius, for he was familiar with the motto that the sage imparted to his disciple, Damis: "Live unobserved, and if that cannot be, slip unobserved from life" (Book 8, Ch. 28).

Sophia had her eyes closed during the initial stages of the flight to the land of mystery. She projected her vivid thoughts into the future, imagining herself as a bride dressed in a white gown. She replayed the vision she had seen at the sanctuary of Hera (Juno) on the island of Samos over and over in her mind, lingering contemplatively at the

part where she held her newborn baby in her arms. In her mind she visualized the baby smiling at her with bright blue eyes, revealing an inner world of pure innocence. Sophia wasn't sure if the baby was a boy or a girl, and it really didn't matter. To her, the child represented a soul whose Edenic qualities of happiness and goodness overshadowed any consideration of gender or race.

Simon breathed a sigh of relief after the captain's voice welcomed the passengers and informed them of the clear weather ahead on their flight to India. He always felt uncomfortable during lift-off and landing, fearing a certain vulnerability in his physical body and thinking that most incidents and malfunctions with the airplane occurred during those two crucial events. He had never overcome his fear of flying, and it was while he was in an airplane that he prayed the most, repeating continuously the prayer to Mother Mary to "pray for us now and in the hour of our death." However, this time something dawned in his consciousness that seemed to make him reanalyze his focus on a personal mortality—the light of reason illuminated his mind as he tuned in to the instructive words of Apollonius that he had heard in his dream-state: "The soul is immortal, and after the body is wasted away, the soul leaps forward, like a swift horse freed from its earth-bound footprints, and flies into the open air of space." Simon also began to rethink his entire approach to the perplexing mystery of Apollonius.

When the airplane landed at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi, India's capital city and soul of the country, the three pilgrims took a free shuttle to the domestic terminal. There they waited for their flight to Srinagar, Kashmir. Apollos wanted to explore modern-day Delhi, whose name originated from a word meaning threshold or frontier, but there was not enough time between their connecting flights. He had read that the city was made up of seven successive cities, and he was curious to know if traces of the ancient cities were visible anywhere. Perhaps he would have an opportunity to satisfy his curiosity when they would leave the country, he thought to himself.

The beautiful valley of Kashmir—India's jeweled crown—was in full bloom, with spring-blossom fragrances permeating the air, when the three pilgrims landed at the airport near Srinagar, the summer capital of the integrated state of Jammu and Kashmir. Dal Lake—located on the eastern side of the city—was surrounded from north to south by snow-capped mountains. A water taxi took them over the slightly rippling waters of Dal Lake to an accommodating houseboat with plenty of room for the three of them. They quickly learned to utilize the shikaras—long gondola-type boats—to visit the waterfront gardens during the day and the floating vegetable market in the morning. The shikara was also an inexpensive way of exploring the labyrinth of waterways throughout the lake. Best of all, simply relaxing in a gently-swaying houseboat in an atmosphere of peace and tranquility was cause enough to believe that one was living in a paradise on earth.

However, there was an obvious undercurrent of animosity between religious and political factions in the valley. The idyllic location, amidst a tension-packed history of violent confrontations between India and Pakistan for territorial rights to the valley, was trying to regain its reputation as a popular tourist destination. Even though peaceful co-existence during the past several years was the norm, no one could guarantee that another conflict wouldn't bring turbulence to the area once again and undermine all attempts to make the beautiful location an "Eden of Bliss."

Apollos tried to keep the awareness of the previous history of conflict in the area from obstructing his present goal of adapting to the land where the masters lived. He quickly adapted to the staple diet of Kashmiri rice, which was slightly sticky and dense. His favorite daily vegetarian dish was dum-aloo—roasted potatoes in a curd-based gravy. Sophia's favorite dish was chaman—fried paneer or cottage cheese in a thick sauce. Simon tried a popular local dish, fish and lotus root, and that soon became his favorite.

A week passed, and the splendid scenery and sites of Dal Lake and Srinagar became a thing of the past. Apollos began to rise earlier each morning in order to spend more time meditating, like Apollonius used to do. He greeted the rising sun from the sitting room in the front of the houseboat each morning. He started to send mental signals into the ether, asking for help in locating Apollonius. His intuitive mind kept reassuring him that the trip was not in vain, and Sophia kept repeating the ancient adage to him: "When the chela (student) is ready, the master will appear."

A fortnight after their arrival in India, a young man with long brown hair appeared at the houseboat. He was wearing a light saffron-colored robe; he appeared to belong to a religious order. The youthful face was smooth and beardless; it seemed as if the face had never been shaved. The young man stood eye to eye with Apollos and announced his mission in a vibrant baritone voice:

"I have come to take you to the Master," he said with a mysterious look in his brown eyes.

"Did Apollonius send you?" asked Apollos, whose tone of voice displayed an excitement that he couldn't control.

"You will be told everything in due time," answered the young man, avoiding a direct response to the question. "We will be traveling light through the forest, so take only a small pack with some extra clothes. Food will be provided, so don't bother to bring anything to eat."

"What is your name?" asked Sophia, who noticed a kind look in the man's eyes.

"You may call me Ananda," he replied, looking directly into Sophia's eyes with a captivating smile on his face.

"The Sanskrit word meaning bliss," said Sophia, who smiled understandingly at Ananda. "And may I add, Ananda was Buddha's beloved disciple."

"Your wisdom exceeds your beauty," said Ananda as he placed his hands together and bowed his head in recognition of Sophia's spiritual nature. Sophia bowed her head slightly, also, and made the pranam gesture with her hands as a sign of mutual respect.

"Where are you taking us?" asked Simon as he lifted his daypack on his shoulders. He wasn't sure if he wanted to follow a stranger into the forest, least of all a young man who looked like an ascetic or a yogi.

"You may stay in the safety of the houseboat if you have apprehensions about the journey," replied Ananda, whose eyes pierced into the depths of Simon's mind. Simon was stunned by the young man's perception of his innate fear of the dangers of the forest, and he stood speechless at the threshold as Ananda turned to leave. Simon had thought of abandoning his egomaniac plan of exploiting the story of Apollonius for personal gain and advancement in the hierarchy of the church ever since his encounter with the immortal words of Apollonius on the island of Patmos.

"Are you coming with us or are you staying?" asked Sophia as she followed Ananda and Apollos out the door. Simon felt comfort in knowing that Sophia cared

enough about him to ask, and he felt secure in the thought that she would look after him if anything unexpected happened.

"I just hope I can keep up with you young robust hikers," said Simon as he followed close behind Sophia.

Ananda led the three pilgrims past the river Jhelum, which flowed through the city of Srinagar, and up into the foothills of the Himalayas. He walked in silence and stopped only at strategic places along the way where hermits or ascetics lived; there the hikers shared whatever food was available and rested for a short period of time. Then Ananda would say, "We must be on our way," and they would start following him further up the path along the streams flowing from the glaciers. Whenever they were thirsty, they would stop by the stream and drink from the pure glacial waters. Ananda drank only water throughout the journey. At the end of each day, they would stop at a designated site, which Ananda seemed to have arranged ahead of time, and build a warm fire. There was always either a small ashram (hermitage) at the appointed place, or a small clearing beside a stream, where they would sleep.

On the seventh day, as they neared an area in the mountain range known as Dunagiri, Ananda stopped on the trail and pointed to a building, which looked like a castle, on a nearby peak.

"That's where the Masters live," stated Ananda matter-of-factly.

Apollos instantly recalled the abode of the Dragons of Wisdom, as the sages were called, and the castle on the hill of the summit that was "about the same height as the Acropolis of Athens" (Book 3, Ch. 13). Sophia noticed a cloud floating around the castle, and the cloud seemed to obscure the castle and the hill from sight immediately after the pilgrims caught a glimpse of it. Simon felt a fear of heights overcome his senses, and he stumbled backwards a few steps.

They ascended the hill on the south side of the ridge on a well-concealed path. When they finally broke through the cloud cover that circled the hill like a protective shield, they saw the splendid castle, which resembled a city on a hill. After they entered the palatial settlement, Ananda left the guests in the care of an attendant while he went to make arrangements for their audience with the Master. They were shown their living quarters for their temporary stay, and they were escorted to warm springs where they were able to bathe themselves. Afterwards, they were given fresh fruit and vegetables to satisfy their hunger.

As they finished eating the delicious repast, they heard a melodic chant fill the air, and they saw a chorus of saffron-robed sages heading toward a circular temple in the center of the settlement. Their attendant told them that they were chanting the Gayatri, an ancient Vedic mantra:

"Om bhoor bhuwah swaha
Tat savitur varenyam
Bhargo devasya dheemahi
Dhiyo yo nah prachodayat."

The attendant also explained the meaning of the Sanskrit words:

"O Brahma (Life), destroyer of suffering, bestower of bliss,
You are That, bright Sun, worthy One,
Purifying Light, divine and absolute,
Our intellect You guide and enlighten."

The three pilgrims tried to chant the words along with the chorus as they followed them into the temple, where they sat in a semi-circle around a black copper stool where Ananda was sitting. Ananda was wearing a white linen garment that left his right arm and shoulder bare. He chanted along with the chorus for a prolonged period of time with his eyes closed. Apollos and Sophia also closed their eyes and chanted the sweet-sounding melody over and over until their hearts and minds were totally absorbed in the rhythm of an inner universe, transcending time and space. The movement of the earth underneath them, and the heavens above, seemed to revolve round and round in a circular path and in a repetitive motion similar to the movement of the chanting. All existence and the consciousness of all beings vibrated with the blissful music of the spheres.

When the chanting of the Gayatri finally subsided, and a long sonorous OOOOOOOMMMMMMM chant was repeated three times, Apollos and Sophia opened their physical eyes and saw, with newly opened spiritual eyes, a youthful Apollonius as he appeared to Iarchus and the sages of the Himalayas when he came seeking the wisdom of the Masters in India his first time. Ananda was the youthful human form that Apollonius had used to appear incognito to the three pilgrims. Simon, however, was unaware of the darshan (seeing a holy person) that Apollos and Sophia had experienced in their inward eye of awareness; he only saw a young man who looked like a yogi, or maybe a young guru.

"Today we have guests from afar who are searching for Apollonius of Tyana," began Ananda, looking directly at Apollos and Sophia with a perceptive gaze. "That Greek philosopher came to this same place almost two thousand years ago seeking to learn all the wisdom of the ancient masters. Here he learned to breathe in prana—the etheric substance of which the gods are made—and his mortal nature steadily transformed into an immortal nature by his union with the divine source. When he left this abode of the masters of the east, he went back to the western world and contributed to the salvation of mankind by liberating them from the darkness of ignorance and showing them the light of their true divine nature. His entire life of moral and intellectual excellence was a testament to the truth that Self-knowledge, or knowledge of the hidden wisdom of the divine within the soul, leads to God-realization, or comprehension of the Ultimate Reality. When he completed his mission in the west, he dematerialized his mortal body at Ephesus at the age of 100 and returned as an adept in an immortal body to the Himalayas to continue working for the salvation and liberation of mankind. His teachings of the Pythagorean way were dispersed through various mouthpieces to the world, and they continue to influence the course of mankind's spiritual evolution in one form or another.

"When Apollonius transcended his mortal body by performing a secret yogic process known as the second birth, he made the conscious choice to relinquish his limited self-identity or ego-personality as Apollonius in order to become a bodhisattva, or embodiment of compassion and wisdom, for the divine purpose of demonstrating the supreme evolutionary plan for each human being.

"In the parable of the rivers and the ocean, which serves as an example of the process of that evolutionary plan, the river that flowed from the east in the Himalayas said, I am named the great Ganges River that descended from the heavens. The river that flowed from the south said, I am named the Nile River, the longest in the world. The river that flowed from the north said, I am the Father of Waters, the Mississippi River.

The river that flowed from the west said, I am the Golden Waterway, the Yangtze River. When the rivers flowed into the one ocean that circles the globe, and is known by various names in different parts of the world, the rivers no longer said, I am this river or I am that river. When the many rivers merge with the one ocean, they merge with the source of their individual life. The metaphor of the rivers and the ocean can be extended to include all living things.

"So Apollonius, who merged with the ageless Source of Life, the boundless ocean of our existence, no longer has a limited identity. Like the god Proteus—the one with many forms or shapes—the immortal soul inhabits many bodies. Apollonius in one age, Balinas in another place, Artephius in another place and time—streams that flow into a river that flows into the ocean of one life.

"All creatures, when they die, merge with the One Supreme Being. They steadily lose awareness of what they once were. From the Source of Life they continue to go through the cycles of birth, death, and rebirth, just like the water rises from the ocean in order to descend on land and then return once again to the ocean. You are that river that flows to the ocean. And in the ultimate sense, you also are that boundless ocean when you merge completely in union with the infinite.

"Apollonius, who merged with the boundless and the infinite Self that contains all living creatures—the greater Self that contains all the lesser selves, the One that contains the Many—he stands before you today in the form of the Ageless Youth, the wielder of the sword of wisdom."

Ananda at that moment stood up and materialized a fiery sword of light that he struck to the earth, and in the next instant he dematerialized his body and disappeared, just like Apollonius had done before the court of the Emperor Domitian in the first century. Apollos felt an electrical fire descend from the crown of his head to the base of his spine at the same moment that the sword of light appeared in Ananda's hand. Sophia closed her physical eyes and saw with her mind's eye the smiling Ageless Youth enthroned in her consciousness. Simon couldn't believe his eyes—at the same moment that he realized Ananda was the immortal Apollonius in another form he also felt a transformation of his own consciousness. He no longer wanted to exploit the story of Apollonius for personal gain; in fact, he knew that no one would believe him if he tried to tell the story. He would give the manuscript and tapes back to Apollos and let him tell the story from his scholarly perspective.

Four days later, when the moon in May was waxing into its fullness, Ananda reappeared in the presence of the three pilgrims.

"You must fast and meditate for three days," instructed Ananda. "Drink only water. On the third day, when the hour approaches the exact moment of the full moon in the constellation of Scorpio and the sun is in Taurus, I will return to take you to the sacred Wesak festival. We will travel very light. Your attendant will provide you with saffron robes for the event."

Before Simon could ask how many days they would be traveling this time, and how far it was to the event, Ananda disappeared. Apollos wasn't sure if Ananda had appeared to them in the flesh or in an astral form. Sophia knew that to an ascended master like Apollonius, there was only a difference of vibration between the light particles of the physical form and the spiritual form.

Apollos couldn't help but think of Ananda's admonition to drink only water. He recalled the conversation Apollonius had with Phraotes, the moderate wine-drinking king of Taxila: "Those who drink water, as I do, see things as they really are, and they do not record in fancy things that are not; they are wide awake and thoroughly rational; and they go to bed with a clear, pure soul in order that they may drink oracular visions in a state of complete transparency. You may consider me also as a fit vehicle of the god, O king, along with all who drink water." (Book 2, Ch. 36-37)

Simon was curious to know more about the unfamiliar Wesak festival, and he discovered that it was a celebration of the three momentous days of the Buddha's last earthly life—his birth, his enlightenment, and his departure from the physical body. Apollos inquired a little further into the subject and found out that initiates and adepts from all over the world traveled in their astral bodies to the Wesak Valley to join the pilgrims arriving there by foot. Sophia intuited that the energy at the festival would be so enormous that the celestial creative force in the atmosphere would generate a transformation of consciousness within each participant.

On the day of the full moon, the three pilgrims were given saffron-colored robes to wear. They sat in meditation, awaiting the arrival of Ananda. At the appointed hour, Ananda appeared and told them to rise to their feet. He had them close their eyes. Ananda placed his index finger, which was covered with consecrated oil, on the center of Apollos' forehead for several seconds. Apollos felt his pineal gland vibrating, and a warm sensation spread across the entire crown of his head. When Ananda placed the oil-drenched finger on Sophia's forehead, an instantaneous golden glow surrounded her head, and she felt a stream of etheric energy rise with the light of seven fiery rays from the back of her neck in the medulla oblongata region to the crown chakra above her head. Simon felt the chrism touch his forehead, and he felt the oil drip down his nose, bringing tears of joy to his eyes.

The next moment, the three pilgrims felt themselves lose gravitation, becoming extremely light and seeming to float above the earth. In an instant, like a twinkling of an eye, Ananda had transported them through the air to the Wesak Valley, on the northern side of the Himalayas near the mystical Mt. Kailash. A multitude of pilgrims, initiates and adepts had already gathered from the four corners of the earth in the oblong-shaped valley, forming an expansive circle around a huge block of grayish-white stone. A loud chant resounded repeatedly throughout the two-kilometer-long valley:

"OM MANI PADME HUM" (Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus)

The mantra spoke of the soul's destiny to become an embodiment of the OM (Word, Logos) by opening the jewel of the third eye (Mani) and blossoming forth as the lotus of the awakened mind (Padme) and becoming the wisdom of enlightenment (Hum).

Suddenly, at the exact moment of the full moon, which hovered over the valley like a giant eye in the sky, a speck of light appeared in the eastern sky. The speck of light turned into a four-armed cross of white light as it came closer, beaming its rays to the four directions of earth. The participants stood erect and spread their arms to the sides in imitation of the grand design in the heavens. When the light transformed itself into a five-pointed star, the participants closed their eyes and concentrated on the white star that was unveiled in the blue center of their golden-rimmed third eye. When the light beamed within the participants' consciousness—up and down the seven centers with the seven colors of the rainbow—the avatar of the age appeared in the white center of the

concentric circles of the rainbow. The participants bowed their heads and made the pranam gesture with their hands folded together next to their hearts.

Apollos wasn't sure if what he was seeing was an external event in the material world or an internal event in his inner consciousness. The inner and the outer worlds seemed to have merged in his mind. Within the center of the enormous rainbow-colored aura, he saw the Buddha sitting cross-legged in a saffron robe on an opened pink lotus flower with his right hand extended in blessing. A stream of energy seemed to flow from the mind of the Buddha directly below to the surface of the altar-like rock, where two circles of light formed a mandorla. Within the almond-shaped center of the overlapping circles appeared a Christ-like figure dressed in a white robe. Apollos simultaneously felt the light of wisdom in his head merge with the warmth of love in his heart, revealing the hidden divinity of his immortal soul within the inner sanctuary of his human body.

Sophia saw the Lord of Wisdom and Compassion all around her, within each participant and in all the natural surroundings. The blessings which streamed from the mind of the outer and the inner Buddha engulfed every aspect of her being. The entire transcendent form of the avatar (the manifestation of deity) radiated the four noble truths and the eightfold path as a message for the ages: (1) there is suffering in the world; (2) the cause of suffering is desire; (3) suffering can be ended by removing desire; (4) the eightfold path eliminates desire—right view, thought, speech, behavior, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration. With her mind Sophia understood the message of the teachings of the Buddha; with her heart she felt the compassion of the Buddha to bring all sentient beings out of the depths of suffering into the heights of bliss.

Simon's mind focused on the mandorla of light that formed on the solid rock. It seemed to represent to him the interaction between two seemingly separate worlds: east and west, light and dark, feminine and masculine, heaven and earth, yin and yang, and numerous other interactive opposites. He had seen the ancient symbolic design before in the geometrical form of the vesica piscis with the fish shape in the center, representing the union of the Son of Man and the Son of God in the person of Christ. Now, he saw the figure of Krishna in one circle, and the figure of Christ in the other circle. The figure of Krishna appeared to him to metamorphose into an awe-inspiring vision of the successive stages of creation, preservation, and dissolution of the universe, which repeated in endless cycles as part of a universal drama. The figure of Christ appeared to him as a benevolent shepherd, friend, and savior. And then the two figures seemed to merge into one dynamic Pantocrator, ruler of the universe, displaying both benign and destructive aspects, forming both light and darkness, bringing both good and evil, and creating both peace and war as part of the creative process of a universe operating under the cosmic law of cause and effect.

As the three pilgrims received the inner illumination that was dispersed by the three avatars—Buddha, Krishna, and Christ—they felt rose petals fall on their heads and a wet shower of blessing sprinkle their faces. The rose petals opened their minds to the enlightenment sent from above, and the water that flowed into their mouths gave them the water of life that energized their cerebrospinal systems, the inner tree of life. Apollos thought that he was partaking of the sacraments of a new age, the age of the water-carrier Aquarius. Sophia became aware of the inner temple being regenerated by the wisdom of the enthroned higher Self. Simon realized that his mind had been transformed by the experience, as if he had been baptized or initiated into a new millennium.

The mantra OM sounded forth like a trumpet blast seven times from the adepts, who turned around and faced the initiates and the pilgrims. The adepts led the multitude in a new song for a new age, sending forth the vibrations of the creative word (Aum, Om, Amen) to produce the seven virtues (planetary attributes) that are highlighted in the new spiritual body:

"OM. Blessing and Glory and Wisdom,
and Thanksgiving and Honor,
and Power and Might,
to our God for ever and ever.
OM. AUM. AMEN. AMIN."

Apollos, Sophia, and Simon sang the song over and over until the vision of the Buddha and the Christ faded from the sky and the valley. One final message was relayed by thought-transference to the multitude by the Great Ones: "In the new age to come, each person will enter the kingdom of his inner temple to receive wisdom and enlightenment from the inner master."

When the message ended and the participants in the grand event contemplated the meaning of the message for each one of them, the adepts lifted their hands in blessing towards the multitude. It was at that moment that Apollos recognized the face of one of the adepts—it was Maestro Salvatore D'Aura. Even from a distance, Apollos could see that D'Aura was looking at him and sending him a personal blessing. He heard his voice in his mind saying, "Didn't I tell you that you would have invisible friends with you on your journey? And didn't I tell you that I would be with you in spirit, to serve you in whichever way possible? Don't ever doubt the presence of those who serve humanity. You, too, are serving humanity by following the guidance of your inner master, the still small voice within."

Apollos opened his eyes and looked around him. He was standing with Sophia and Simon back in the houseboat in Srinagar. They still had their saffron robes on, but Ananda/Apollonius was gone. He was nowhere in sight. Beside the open door they saw their daypacks, which were filled with the clothes they had taken on their journey into the Himalayas.

"Was it just a dream?" asked Simon, who knew his journey with Apollos and Sophia had come to an end. He had already resolved in his mind to return to Rome as soon as possible and continue his work as a servant of the church he was raised in.

"It was much more than a dream," responded Apollos, who felt more alive and aware than ever before. He wanted to stay in India as long as possible in order to learn all the wisdom of the masters who resided in her sacred land.

"It was a revelation of the hidden mysteries that are the crown on the head of the seeker of truth and wisdom," stated Sophia in a culminating note.

"Amen!" sang Apollos and Simon in unison.

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Joshua and Isaac sat together at the table to celebrate the Pesach (Passover). The sun had gone down on the 7th day of April, and Isaac had lit two festival candles in the center of the table. He said a prayer to the Creator of the great fire that dispersed the darkness and brought warm radiance and bright light to the world, and then he raised a cup of wine in order to sanctify the sacred occasion. Joshua drank his cup of the fruit of the vine along with Isaac. He felt a sense of communion with a momentous historical event and a profound reenactment of the soul's journey.

When Isaac washed his hands with water, Joshua was seeing the descent of the soul from the bright light of the astral world into the waters of the womb. In performing the ritual of dipping a piece of green parsley into salt water, Isaac spoke of the rebirth of the land in springtime, and Joshua was thinking of the rebirth of the soul into the hardships of physical life. As Isaac took the symbolical matzah (unleavened bread) from a separate plate and broke it into two pieces, calling it the food of slavery ("the bread of affliction") and freedom, Joshua pictured the bread of life that nourished both the body and the soul. Joshua looked at the six symbolical foods on his Seder (order) plate and thought of the story of oppression and slavery represented in the bitter herbs and horseradish, and then he thought of the great sacrifice represented by the shank bone and the roasted hard-boiled egg, which signified the deliverance from bondage and the birth into a new life.

"Do you know the epic story of our Hebrew people?" asked Isaac, breaking up Joshua's reflection on the symbolical foods.

"Yes, I've read the story of the Exodus in the Bible," answered Joshua.

"That's the next part of our Pesach Seder," said Isaac. "Would you like to tell the story as you know it?"

"I would be honored," responded Joshua. "The way I understand the great epic of the Hebrews is that it, like other epic journeys, describes not only the story of an enslaved nation that leaves the land of bondage and journeys to a land of freedom, but it also simultaneously depicts the great pilgrimage of the spirit through matter and the soul in the physical body. Didn't you tell me that your Zohar, the Book of Splendor, encourages the seeker of truth to penetrate beyond the outer garment of the simple stories of the scriptures?"

"Yes, I remember telling you that every story has an inner garment of truth that can only be seen when the outer garment of literal historical facts is discarded," admitted Isaac.

"And so it is with the physical body, which is the outer garment of the inner soul," continued Joshua. "The physical body must be transcended in order to see the soul. So if we look at the story of the Israelites leaving the land of Canaan and coming to Egypt as the descent of the soul from the heavenly world into the physical world, then we can follow the rest of the story in Egypt and the journey through the wilderness as the human condition in the flesh. And the subsequent Exodus, or release from the human condition, is not consummated until the soul returns in its ascent back to the Promised Land. The first part of the epic journey explains the manner in which certain conditions caused the Israelites, or the manifold soul, to fall into physical slavery; the middle part of the journey describes the struggle and the suffering encountered throughout the life of the soul as it tries to overcome limitations and difficulties, which are represented by the plagues that are inflicted on the Egyptians (the physical body); and the last part of the

journey shows the redemption that comes to the soul when it discovers the inner redeemer, the initiate Moses, who leads the soul from the darkness of Egypt or bondage in the body to the light of Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey. On the upward path back to the source from where it originally came, the soul is given the great Law (Torah) that serves as a guiding principle for its ascent up the fifteen steps to the inner temple, the true House of God. Once the soul achieves this grand pilgrimage through life, it passes over into the land of Canaan (land of Spirit) where the soul at long last experiences freedom from all bodily concerns. The spiritual soul must sacrifice or transcend the physical body in order to be liberated or achieve redemption. That's the way I see the allegorical story of Exodus, the great pilgrimage of the soul from bondage to freedom."

When Joshua finished telling the story, Isaac recited a blessing, raised the second cup of wine, and said, "The fruit of the vine. With it, let us drink to peace, freedom, and to Life! L'Chayim!" They both swallowed the red liquid and felt it flowing through their bodies, through their veins, and through all humanity, signifying that the same red blood courses through each living person from the same stream of Life.

Isaac continued with the prescribed fifteen-step Seder (order) of the celebration: the washing of hands before partaking of the matzah, symbol of bondage and freedom, and the eating of bitter herbs to recall the time of bitter slavery. When Isaac finally arrived at the ritual where the door was opened for the hopeful arrival of Elijah, the forerunner of the arrival of the Messiah, Joshua cried out, "My Father, my Father, the Chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" His spine was on fire, as if a spiraling pillar of fire ascended from the base of his spine to the crown of his head.

"What are you experiencing?" asked Isaac, who noticed Joshua's eyes roll upward, as if he were looking into the spiritual eye in the center of his head.

"My kundalini is rising in my spinal cord and I feel like I'm on fire," replied Joshua, whose gaze continued to turn inward.

"The Shekinah, the union of the soul with the spirit in the most Holy Place," acclaimed Isaac, whose face beamed with joy at the sight of what he was witnessing.

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Joshua as a beam of light filled his mind. Within the light he recognized a familiar face.

"Yes, Yeshua, that is your true nature," cooed the soft dove-like voice of Binah as Joshua was entranced by the beatific vision.

"Isaac!" called out Joshua as he was overwhelmed by the feeling of euphoria and bliss. "The Messiah dwells in each one of us. It is through us that he brings the kingdom of heaven on earth. It is through our minds that his wisdom flows, and it is through our hearts that his love is manifested. When we seek to bring peace and justice to the world we live in, it is the Messiah-nature that operates in us. When we help our fellow man, it is the hand of the Messiah reaching out to offer help."

Isaac broke out in song at the jubilation he felt in his heart:

"Bless the Lord, oh my soul.
The Lord is my strength and song,
and is become my salvation.
I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the Lord."

Joshua joined Isaac in the singing of the joyful song. They sang it over and over until tears of joy were flowing down both of their faces. Isaac embraced Joshua and said, "Our Pesach Seder has been accepted, and we are truly blessed."

Isaac concluded the evening with the proclamation, "Next year may we be in Jerusalem rebuilt!"

"Next year may we be in the New Jerusalem with a spiritual body as our temple!" added Joshua.

The following week, Joshua went to the Old City early in the morning by himself. He knew that his pilgrimage in the Holy Land was soon coming to an end, and he would have to return home. He wanted to walk down the Via Dolorosa (the Way of Sorrow) in the solitude of his own mind. There was heaviness in his heart as he followed the path that the Essene Teacher of Righteousness epitomized in his life.

Each step that Joshua took along the way that the Essene Master traveled was like a grand procession of the Ancient Mysteries. Joshua realized that everything in the life of the Master was done in a mystery that only the participant in the mysteries could comprehend. Each step was a stage of the path that the soul of Everyman (everyone) had to travel on in order to accomplish the grand design of the cosmos. From the first step on the path when Joshua sensed the need for self-knowledge, to the second step when he took up his own cross of the burdens of physical existence, he realized that there was a long road ahead that required self-discipline, dedication, and perseverance. He saw himself fall many times as he struggled with his physical, emotional, and mental natures. He began to understand that life was an ocean of suffering that needed to be crossed on the ship of soul-awareness. He became aware of the Divine Mother, the compassionate principle of nature, who commiserated with the suffering pilgrim and offered encouragement each step of the way. She brought help to the aspiring initiate in the form of fellow travelers who would help the pilgrim carry his personal burden and perform acts of kindness and love. Joshua, as the initiate, became cognizant of masculine and feminine forces, the sons and daughters of man, cooperating with the soul's quest for wholeness and union with the divine. When he finally arrived at the place of the great renunciation, he knew that he would need to divest himself of the three garments of the physical, emotional, and lower mental bodies in order to be clothed in the royal spiritual body. Joshua saw himself make the final decision to crucify the horizontal feminine nature and the vertical masculine nature on the cross of finite matter in exchange for infinite repose in the deathless androgynous body. As soon as he felt himself liberated from the body, the cross of material awareness, Joshua knew that death had been overcome. In one climactic final act, Joshua saw his physical body placed in the tomb of matter, where the physical elements were dissolved, and the spirit rose in the deathless body. The fifteen-step drama of the Way of Sorrow culminated in the Way of Attainment. The Son of Man (the physical self) had become the Son of God (the spiritual Self).

Three weeks later, on the full moon of May, Joshua ascended with Isaac to the top of the Mount of Olives. From an area near the Seven Arches Hotel, they looked down at the Temple Mount and the Old City of Jerusalem.

"So today is your last day in the Holy Land," sighed Isaac, holding back a tear that was forming in his eye.

"You've been a great teacher and a great friend," said Joshua, showing his gratitude for the rabbi's generous hospitality. "And you've been like a father to me."

"And you've been like a son to me," said Isaac. "Hopefully, you'll be back sometime in the future. My door will always be open for you."

"Like the saying goes, next year in Jerusalem," chuckled Joshua with an infectious laughter that caused Isaac to join in the merriment.

"And may those golden gates be open so the Messiah can appear on Mount Moriah, the Temple Mount," said Isaac, expressing a deep-felt desire that was his inherent way of thinking about the future.

"This entire Holy Land is Mount Moriah," said Joshua, expressing his way of looking at the world. "In fact, all the bickering and fighting over physical holy sites would end if everyone realized that the true Mount Moriah, and the Temple Mount, exists in the heart and mind of man. It's the spiritual essence that matters, doesn't it?"

"You're right, my friend," replied Isaac. "Nevertheless, the heart and mind of physical man wants a physical temple to worship at."

"And a physical Messiah to appear as a deliverer and king of a physical kingdom," remarked Joshua, who smiled at Isaac with an understanding heart.

"It is very difficult for the human being to sacrifice his physical consciousness on the altar of selflessness," commented Isaac, reflecting on his own life.

"I know what you mean," said Joshua, sympathizing with the old rabbi who was set in his ways.

They sat on the ground in silence for several minutes, reflecting on their life in relationship to the Old City in front of them. Joshua felt like a pilgrim just passing through, while Isaac thought of himself as an old patriarch who had lived there forever.

Isaac suddenly rose to his feet. "I'll be back in a moment," he said hurriedly. "I want to visit the Tomb of the Prophets and then pay my respects to my ancestors at the nearby Jewish cemetery." Isaac picked up a stone to place on the grave of a cherished ancestor; the stone would be a sign that the ancestor is still remembered and is dear to someone's heart.

As soon as Isaac left, Binah's still small voice sounded in Joshua's mind: "It's time for you to make your final journey on your way home." Joshua closed his eyes and waited for the inner vision to unfold. Within minutes he felt a cloud envelop him and carry him through the opened golden gate of the Old City. He was dressed in a white robe, and he was walking with several followers to the Essene Quarters of the city. "The Essene Master," he heard Binah's voice through his elevated consciousness. He heard the Essene Master speaking of a Heavenly Father, who brings sunshine and light from above, and an Earthly Mother, who provides food and nourishment from below.

"There are creative forces that operate in the earth and in our bodies," taught the Essene. "They are the intelligent agents of creation, bringing us air in our lungs, water in our blood vessels, and fire in our nervous system. When we give homage to the Earth Mother, we commune with the forces of life in our physical being. When you breathe, you should think of the higher atmospheric energies that enliven you. When you drink water or the fruit of the vine, you should contemplate the circulation of water in the earth as being the same as the circulation of fluids in your body. When you stand in the sunshine in your morning communions, remember that the solar deity is the fire of life in all living beings, including the plants and trees. Live in harmony with all the energies

flowing in you and around you, and you will have joy in your life, and you will appreciate the beauty in all life. And when you stand with your bare feet on the green ground of Earth Mother, let her generative and regenerative forces enter into your organs; feel her sap flowing through your being like the sap of a tree flows to give energy to its limbs and leaves."

Joshua followed the life of the Essene Master to Mount Carmel, where he continued to teach: "Remember that you and your Heavenly Father are one. You are a reflection of his peace and tranquility, like the light of the moon reflected on a calm lake. You have in your being the stars of the heavens empowering your nervous system and connecting you with the higher worlds. In your heart dwells the ocean of love that flows from the center of the universe and connects the hearts of all living beings. In your mind dwells the wisdom and creative intelligence that flows from the Universal Mind. In your soul dwells the Eternal One that joins the separate parts of your being into a cohesive wholeness, like a wise king that rules the cities of his kingdom."

Joshua continued to follow the Essene Master to India, where he was called Issa (Lord of all things) and Yuz Asaf (the divine Healer). There he taught the yogic science of union with the divine: "It has been said that there are two trees within man: the Tree of Knowledge, through which man gains self-knowledge, and the Tree of Life, through which man gains immortal life. However, in reality there is one tree within man, whose roots reach into the earth and whose branches reach into the heavens: the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life in man unites his soul with Brahma, the Lord of the creative consciousness, and his body with Prakriti, or Mother Nature. The soul and the body of man continually unite to perform the great dance of the universe, with Brahma and his consort Prakriti leading the dance. When you become one in your inner kingdom—joining soul and body, the above and the below, the male and the female—and you no longer differentiate between the two opposing forces of the same reality, then you become Ishvara, the Lord of your inner universe."

Joshua watched with his divine eye of inner consciousness as the vision expanded in his mind, and he felt at one with the Essene Master. He saw himself materialize in two bodies, one which was known as Judas Thomas (the twin), and the other as Issa-Masih (Lord Messiah). The form of Judas Thomas was identical in appearance to the form of Issa, and so they were called brothers of one another. Issa called Thomas his twin, referring to him as "one who knows his higher Self." Issa told Thomas the hidden mystery of his existence in three mystical letters: I, A, O (I AM Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end). Thomas was called a sorcerer and a wizard by some people because he was accused of manufacturing an astral double of himself.

Finally, he felt himself transcend the physical body, which was laid in a tomb, and he saw the astral and physical bodies dissolved back into the elements. Later, when people would visit the tomb in Srinagar's Kanyar district and would enter the building called Rozabal (Tomb of the Prophet), they would find only an empty tomb. A rumor was spread that some disciples stole the body and took it to Mesopotamia, but others insisted that it was only the Twin, Thomas the Knower, who was interred in the sepulcher.

Suddenly, Joshua became aware of Binah's hand on the crown of his head. She spoke softly to him: "Yeshua, you will now see your final vision as the multiform Lord." The sky seemed to open up at the crown of his head, and he saw his own transcendent

nature: Adam Kadmon, the archetypal Universal Man; Enoch, the heavenly scribe; Melchizedek, the high priest; Joseph, the dreamer and ruler of Egypt; Joshua, the conqueror; Jeshua, the rebuilder of the temple; Yeshua ben Pandera, the initiate; Issa, the Essene Master; and many others. "You are one with Ishvara, the Lord of the universe, and the Christ, the creative intelligence in all life," explained Binah.

Joshua all of a sudden saw himself standing in a circle wearing a white robe. All around him circled a multitude of people, dancing the dance of the world mystery, imitating the circular path of the constellations within the zodiac. Joshua felt in harmony with the rhythm of the revolving universe. He felt like he was Nataraja, the Cosmic Dancer at the center of the universe, and he was leading the dance with the accompaniment of a cosmic chant that caused the manifestation of all worlds:

"OM, hear the first creative sound,
AMEN, the Word that was, is, and always will be,
OM, the redemption from bondage,
AMEN, the release from death to life,
OM, the light that pierces the heart,
AMEN, the birth of a new man,
OM, the absorption of all living substance,
AMEN, the creation of the visible from the invisible,
OM, the thought from the Universal Mind,
AMEN, the immersion in the waters of Oneness,
OM, the harmony of all vibrations."

Joshua moved around in the circle dance with all the participants, and he felt himself enter a consciousness wherein he knew that he was part of the entire cosmic movement through time and space. He saw himself adorned in a robe of pure light, and he felt at-one with all places, temples, and people. He saw an inner light illuminate his being, and the light reflected its rays of warmth and love into the hearts of all who danced the dance of life.

As Joshua danced, he looked at the multitude of faces that danced with him. One particular face caught his attention—the face of his father, who was looking at Joshua with a beaming smile on his face. Something jolted in Joshua's mind and jarred his memory, and he remembered driving in a car with his father.

"What happened, Dad?" Joshua mentally transmitted the words to his father.

"You will be told everything when you return home," said Joshua's father mentally. Joshua heard the words in his mind, and at the same time he felt a strange sensation of bodily awareness returning to him, something he hadn't felt in a long time. "Your mother is calling you. It's not time for you to leave this world, yet." Those were the last words he heard his father transmit mentally to him as he became aware that the vision of the dance was fading from his consciousness.

"Joshua," he heard a voice calling him. He opened his eyes, expecting to see the angelic face of Binah greet him. Instead, it was his earthly mother, who was holding his hand.

"Mother," whispered Joshua, who barely managed to say the words through his dry throat.

"Son, you're back!" cried Joshua's mother. She gave him some water to drink.

"What happened, Mom?" asked Joshua after he drank the water and cleared his throat, enabling him to speak.

"You were in a car accident with your father," answered his mother. "Your dad was killed, and you were left in a coma."

"How long have I been gone?" asked Joshua, who was beginning to notice his surroundings in a hospital room.

"You've been gone a whole year," answered his mother, who was wiping the tears from her eyes with a napkin.

"Three hundred and sixty-five days?" asked Joshua incredulously. He thought of his encounter with Enoch, who lived the exact same number of years.

"Yes," answered his mother. "Where have you been all this time?"

"That's a long story," replied Joshua with a smile on his face. "It'll take me a whole year to tell you all about it."

"We have all the time in the world," said Joshua's mother. She leaned over and gave Joshua a big kiss on the forehead.

"I saw Dad," said Joshua, reflecting on the last image that he saw before he awakened from his long dream.

"Where?" asked Joshua's mother.

"In a valley, somewhere in or near India, where there was a multitude of people dancing the Dance of Life," replied Joshua, who wanted to close his eyes and return to the Edenic valley.

"I'm so happy that you're finally back home," said Joshua's mother, giving him a warm embrace.

"I'm glad to be back home, too," responded Joshua. He hugged his mother and felt the warmth of her love. He closed his eyes momentarily, and he saw the angelic face of Binah appear on the screen of his mind. Her loving smile told him that both the physical mother and the spiritual mother were part of his life and would watch over him at all times.

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Paul and his nephew Theodas sat side by side on top of the Mount of Olives. They looked from their Olympian heights down on the turmoil brewing in their beloved city, Jerusalem. The city was convulsing in the throes of civil war. An ominous dark cloud had descended on the inhabitants of the city, creating a madness that threatened to tear the city apart. Paul had recently returned from a voyage to Greece as an emissary to the emperor, appealing for immediate assistance in saving Jerusalem. Now he waited to see if the efforts of the pro-Roman party would produce the desired results – to drive the liberty-loving rebels out of the city and bring life back to a semblance of normalcy.

"How did our country and our people manage to arrive at such a terrible impasse?" asked Theodas, breaking the profound silence in which their minds were absorbed.

"We've come a long way in the struggle for religious freedom and national independence," answered Paul, looking thoughtfully into the heart of the matter as his eyes stared at the city below. "There were times when I sided with the zealots, who have been fighting for over sixty years to achieve independence from the stifling grip of the Roman taskmasters and occupiers of our country; and there have been times when I sided with the pro-Roman authorities in order to maintain the status quo and be a loyal subject of the empire. Our country and our people are fighting the same eternal battle that the soul fights with the body: will the soul be in bondage to the flesh, or will it be liberated from that bondage and soar like a bird to the heights of freedom?"

"I don't think I want to live in a country where fear and terror reign, and the battles of life and death never cease," asserted Theodas, who had learned to think and talk in multiple layers of meaning, like his uncle. He knew that his uncle loved to give a spiritual perspective to physical manifestations, and he had been trained to think that every action stemmed from a thought, which was derived from a higher source. He remembered the first time his uncle – who was his personal tutor throughout the formative years of his life while growing up in the peaceful environment of Tarsus in Cilicia – showed him a crystal ball. He recalled his uncle telling him to peer into the mirror-like crystal and asking, 'What do you see?' At first he saw only a reflection of his own face, but with practice and concentration he began to see a projection of his innermost thoughts. Then he was taught to close his eyes and trace the images, which his thoughts projected, back to their source. His uncle called the inner crystal ball a mystic bowl into which the thinker peered to see reflections of the inner Lord or spiritual Self. He could always tell when his uncle was turning his gaze from the outward world and turning it inward into his mystic bowl, as he was doing at the present moment.

"You and your mother will have to decide what you want to do and where you want to go," announced Paul after a minute of reflecting on the present situation. "I already know what I have to do." Paul knew that the master-disciple relationship had to come to an end on the physical level. He had been the wise master-builder that had laid the foundation of knowledge for his pupil, who had voluntarily decided to become a disciple and develop an awareness of the hidden wisdom that Paul had learned from his master, Bannus. Paul knew that the guru-disciple relationship would continue on a spiritual level; nevertheless, he felt a tinge of sorrow at the thought of parting from his nephew and his beloved devotee and disciple.

"Here comes mother," said Theodas with a sense of anticipation. They watched as the blue-robed figure crossed the brook at the bottom of the hill and started to ascend towards them. "What are you going to do?" asked Theodas, recalling the thought that stood out in his mind.

"Remember when you and your mother decided to come back to Jerusalem with me nearly ten years ago?" asked Paul, bringing into focus a sequence of events that jeopardized all of their lives.

"How can I ever forget?" stated Theodas. "After all, if I hadn't uncovered the plot to kill you, you would have had the knives of forty sicarii in you." Theodas

shuddered each time he thought of what the assassins, the extremist zealots, had in mind for his uncle and master.

"I remember the day I came up to this mount – the day people thought I would lead a charge into the city – like it was yesterday," continued Paul. He evaded the question that Theodas posed about his future plans. "I had left you and your mother in the Essene quarter, and I had come up to this mount to spend the night in meditation. All night I wrestled with my conscience, like Jacob wrestling with the angel. The past tormented me – my dual life, sometimes Saul the Roman agent, and sometimes Paul the God-fearing zealot, kept revolving in my mind like an unstoppable wheel of fate. Ten years previously, I had tried to rectify the wrong that I had done to James, the Nazarene leader, by accepting a mission to bring food to Jerusalem during the great famine in the time of the procurator Tiberius Alexander. That mission ended in disaster – no sooner had I arrived in Jerusalem with Joses, the brother of James, and extended the hand of fellowship to James, when word got around that the apostate was back in the city, and a mob gathered and demanded my head; 'this man should not be allowed to live,' they cried. When the Roman authorities arrived to break up the mob uproar, they took me in for questioning. They wanted to get to the bottom of the uprising before it turned into a full-scale insurrection. I made the God-awful blunder of telling the Roman commanders about the incident with James at the temple steps, and how the brother of James warned me to leave the city. When the Roman commander reported the mob uproar to the governor, Tiberius Alexander, he demanded to speak to me immediately. I was taken to him in Caesarea, where he told me that the only way he could protect me and ensure my safety was for me to divulge the names of the zealots who were responsible for the mob tumult. I honestly didn't know if any one person was responsible, I told the governor. He asked me if I knew Jacob and Simeon, the brothers of James. I told him that I had met them, and that Simeon had relayed the message from James to leave the city. The governor said that he had his spies from the temple watching those zealot brothers, sons of Judas of Galilee, and they were suspected of masterminding raids on villages and revolts in cities. The next thing I knew, the governor decided to show the zealots that he wouldn't tolerate their insurrections against the Roman government, and he had the seditious Jacob and Simeon crucified as an example of what would happen to any of the zealots who threatened the stability of the Roman Empire. I felt as if I were personally responsible for their deaths. I left the city, and I didn't ever want to come back."

Paul paused in his personal recollection. A solitary tear flowed down his cheek. He looked down at the city that had caused him so much sorrow.

"Uncle Paul, you started telling the story of the time the people thought you were going to lead the charge into the city from this mount," reminded Theodas, who was well aware of his uncle's idiosyncrasy of going off on a tangent in his discourse.

"I'm sorry I digressed," apologized Paul, wiping the tear from his face with the palm of his hand. "When I wrestled with my inner angel, I became so exhausted that I fell into a trance, and I saw Hermes. It was the same Mercurius, the messenger of the gods, who appeared to me at the holy mount in the wilderness and revealed to me the ten archetypal forms of existence on an emerald tablet: Light, Duality, the Sacred Three that bring forth the sacred elements of fire, water, air, and earth; everything happens in the archetypal Man, who is the microcosm that reflects the macrocosm; within man is the sacred candelabrum of seven centers of light that light up the eightfold path that spirals

along the spinal column, generating a Tree of Light. The heavenly vision reappeared in my mind once again, and the sacred word vibrated in my consciousness, so that when I came down from the mount and began to speak about my vision to the pilgrims who were streaming toward the city to commemorate the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot, or seven weeks after Passover), they thought they saw a light around me and that I was an angel. Some pilgrims from Alexandria said that I spoke like Thoth, who personified the wisdom of the Egyptians; others said that I spoke with the authority of Moses. Thoth-Moses-Mercurius-Hermes, they all seemed to represent the wisdom that resided in me and overshadowed my mind as I spoke. I told them that I had been to the holy mount, and they all compelled me to lead them to that mount, prodding me with their hands toward the top of the Mount of Olives. I told them that the walls of the city would fall down at the command of the Lord from heaven, signifying the manner of defeat that the physical body would undergo when the spiritual man took control of the body. They thought I was going to produce a miracle and deliver them from the Romans and lead them to the promised land of liberation and independence. Word quickly spread that an Egyptian prophet had foretold the destruction of the city walls, and pilgrims flocked to the Mount of Olives to witness the event. There must have been at least 30,000 people that had been diverted from celebrating the harvest festival and commemorating the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Instead, here they were, on top of the Mount of Olives, expecting me to be a messianic deliverer, at once delivering them from Roman rule and leading them to the land of milk and honey, freedom and independence. It didn't take long for the Roman authorities to become informed of the unusual convocation on the mount, and the procurator Felix sent Roman soldiers against the assembled mob. Many innocent people died that day at the hands of the Roman soldiers, but most of them ran down the mount and dispersed in all directions and concealed themselves. I ran into the city and managed to make it to the Essene quarter without detection."

Phoebe arrived at the top of the mount just as Paul finished telling his story. She stopped in front of them to catch her breath, and then she blurted out, "What story are you telling my son this time?"

"Uncle just finished telling me the story of the Egyptian at the pilgrimage festival Shavuot," answered Theodas in Paul's place.

"Did he tell you that he cowered in our temporary dwelling in the Essene quarter for several weeks before he felt it was safe to come out of hiding?" asked Phoebe, putting her brother in an uncomfortable position. Phoebe found a soft grassy spot and sat down next to her son.

"No, he didn't," responded Theodas. "I was waiting for him to get to the part where I saved him from the sicarii conspirators."

"You're skipping the aftermath of that Egyptian story, where the chief captain recognized me as the Egyptian on the Mount of Olives," interjected Paul.

"I remember you had to submit yourself to a seven-day purification rite before James the Nazarene would admit you back into their community and into the temple," said Phoebe, recollecting the days after their return to Jerusalem. At the time, she was not in favor of leaving Antioch, where they had settled down in the Jewish sector of the cosmopolitan city. Phoebe had initially traveled to Antioch with Theodas when Paul traveled through there on his way to Jerusalem on his famine relief mission. She decided to stay in Antioch with her son, her pride and joy. He wanted to study Greek, which was

the primary language of the city, and Antioch was the perfect place to be for a young man who wanted to immerse himself in the Hellenistic culture. For Phoebe, the scenic beauty of the valley with surrounding mountain ranges, especially the majestic snow-capped Mount Silpios to the south, and the meandering Orontes River that flowed through the city to the sea, made it all worthwhile to stay. The third largest city in the Roman Empire was aptly called the "Queen of the East" by the Romans. Phoebe, on the other hand, preferred the title bestowed on the city by the Greeks – "Crown of the East."

"Much good it did me," said Paul in a sorrowful voice of dejection. "Even after I proved to James and his community of followers that I was a law-abiding Jew, the people who knew me from the past spread rumors that I was still teaching people to forsake Moses and the Law. I had tried that strategy, which Elijahu suggested, as a method of preserving the religion of the Jews in its pure state and as a means of separating the Zealots from them. However, I saw that James and his Nazarene movement, which was not as militant a movement as the Zealots, nevertheless sided with the Zealots in their anti-Roman position. There was to be no compromise with the Romans, I remember James saying. So James, who believed that I would always side with the Herodians and the Romans because of my family's connection to them, did not defend me when the Zealots attacked me in the temple and dragged me out with the intention of killing me outside the sacred refuge. Lucky for me, the watchers from the towers of the nearby Antonia fortress saw the mob riot, and the chief captain and his soldiers quickly arrived to save me from certain death. That's when the chief captain recognized me, just as he was about to take me into the fortress for questioning. He asked me, 'Aren't you that Egyptian who caused such an uproar not too long ago with four thousand zealots?' That was the first time I had heard that zealots were in the crowd of pilgrims. When I thought about it later on, I realized it was the zealots who spurred on the maddening crowd and turned them, as they usually do, into a tumultuous mob. I told the chief captain, whose name was Claudius of Lycia, that I was a Jew and that I wanted to speak to the people, which I did in Hebrew to convince the chief captain that I was not the Egyptian."

"I remember, I heard that speech, like all the other speeches you've made," chimed in Phoebe. "That's when you told the listeners about the trance that you experienced just before you pushed James the Nazarene down the temple steps. That wasn't too smart of you. Some of those people in the audience remembered that you nearly killed James, and they cried out that you shouldn't be allowed to live because of what you had done."

"You're right, I shouldn't have tried to explain what happened, for it seemed as if I was trying to justify my actions," acknowledged Paul. "As it turned out, Ananus, the high priest, condemned James four years later and had him thrown down from a parapet, beaten by a club, and stoned to death. It seemed as if the sons of Judas of Galilee, who had a messianic claim to the throne of David, were being eliminated one by one."

"Uncle Paul," impatiently interposed Theodas. "You skipped completely over the conspiracy to kill you."

"Go ahead, son, you tell the story," intervened Phoebe, who wanted to give her son a chance to develop his story-telling skills. Paul looked at his nephew with a glance of approval.

"The way I remember it," began Theodas, who was glad to have a chance to relate the momentous event in his life, "you were held in custody in the fortress, where the chief

captain found out that you were previously a Roman agent, and a Herodian. He couldn't do anything to you except to try and find out why the mob wanted you dead. By submitting you to face Ananias the high priest, the chief captain discovered that there was a religious feud between the pro-Roman group and the pro-Zealot group. He did not uncover the real cause for the high priest's anger against you, which was that you had left the pro-Roman party and no longer sought out seditious zealots; instead, you had sided with the Zealots in their fight for independence. The Zealots, on the other hand, felt betrayed by you because you wanted them to leave their Jewish ways, laws, and customs, and you wanted them to follow a strange new way. They did not understand that Elijahu had proposed the plan, and you had embellished it in your own way, in order to save the Jewish religion from being overrun by the Zealot's militant philosophy. You were basically caught between a rock and a hard place, and both parties wanted to see you terminated. That's why, the following morning, when I saw a band of suspicious-looking Roman sympathizers head out from the market in the upper city to the palace of Ananias, the high priest, I decided to follow them. I sneaked into the palace behind the group of forty conspirators. I heard the sicarii, knife-carrying bandits, vow to kill you the next day, and the high priest agreed to help their murderous plan succeed. That's when I discovered that the pro-Roman group would do anything in their power to maintain their positions of authority. And since you were a threat to their authority, you needed to be eliminated. So I came to the fortress and told you about the nefarious plot to kill you, and you told me to inform the chief captain, who took immediate action and had Roman soldiers escort you by night out of Jerusalem. After that, we didn't see you for two whole years. We only knew, from the word of the chief captain, that you were taken to the praetorium in Caesarea for your own protection, probably because you were a Roman citizen, and a relative of the Herodian family."

"Well done, son," applauded Phoebe when she saw that her son had finished relating the story of the conspiracy to kill her brother. "You were a brave young man to risk your life for your uncle."

"Yes, my dear nephew," concurred Paul. "Your mother gives credit where credit is due. Your heroic efforts saved my life once, but this time I go to Jerusalem knowing that I cannot avert my fate any longer."

"Is that your decision, to stay in Jerusalem in the midst of a civil war?" sobbed Theodas, who suddenly realized that he wouldn't see his dear uncle, and beloved master, anymore.

"Brother, what is the meaning of this announcement?" questioned Phoebe. "I thought you asked us to come up to this mount to discuss our plans to leave the city and determine where we should seek refuge from the tide of imminent war with the Romans."

"Way back when I was confined to the Praetorium, the military headquarters of the imperial forces," explained Paul in his usual digressive manner, "I did a lot of thinking about my purpose in life. When I was brought to trial before the procurator Felix in Caesarea, I was accused of being a ringleader of the seditious Zealot branch of the Nazarene movement. That greedy Felix thought I would pay him a large bribe to obtain my freedom. I wasn't about to pay for my soul's freedom, and I let him know that his love of money was the root of his evil ways. So he left me in confinement. I had to wait two more years before a new procurator came to Caesarea. Festus, the new governor, was no better. He thought I was mad. So I appealed to the representative of

Caesar in the provinces of our part of the world – King Herod Agrippa II. When he found out I was a former Roman agent and had brought many Zealots who rebelled against the Roman Empire to justice, he struck a deal with me. He had me promise, for my freedom, that I would be his emissary to Caesar, if and when he needed me, to appeal to Caesar for help in saving Jerusalem and our country."

"So that's how you managed to get released," said Theodas in amazement.

"Festus was partly right, though," inserted Phoebe what she considered to be her personal observation, "for you were never the same afterwards. A year or so after you came back, you started going around the city like a prophet of doom, crying, 'Woe to Jerusalem." You told me you were having nightmares – you called them visions – of the destruction of the temple and the city. You looked so terrible, and your beard and hair were so long that nobody recognized you. They thought you were a prophet of the coming of the Messiah when you foretold that a star would come out of Jacob, and a scepter would rise out of our land."

"And sure enough, a Messiah did come to Jerusalem, about six months ago," added Theodas. "Everybody thought he was the anointed king. He even entered the temple in a royal robe."

"That was a false messiah," asserted Paul angrily. "He was Menahem, the youngest son of Judas of Galilee, who thought, like the other sons of Judas, that he was the rightful heir to the throne of David."

"That was a short-lived reign," recalled Phoebe. "He thought he could be high priest and king at the same time, so he killed the high priest and assumed complete authority. The captain of the temple revolted against the despotic messiah and killed him, yelling as he stabbed the unwanted messiah, 'We will have no master but the Lord!' And so another hope for liberation and independence was wiped out."

"That was a time of great upheaval, the beginning of the end," sighed Paul. "Some people thought the great war for liberation had begun. I, on the other hand, knew that desperate times called for desperate measures, and I went to King Agrippa and asked for assistance against the revolutionaries that had invaded our city. When I returned to Jerusalem, I found out that Agrippa's cavalrymen, which he had sent to suppress the uprising, had suffered defeat. Even Cestius Gallus – who was commanded to descend from his headquarters in Antioch, Syria, which was 300 miles from Jerusalem, a two weeks journey – couldn't subdue the rebellion in the city. After the defeat of the Roman forces, commanded by the inept commander Cestius, the rebels in the city became even bolder in their insurrection. The pro-Roman party turned to me in desperation and begged me to appeal to King Herod Agrippa II for help from Caesar. Agrippa told me he had pleaded with the militant people of Jerusalem to reconsider what they were doing, starting with the tribute they refused to pay, and their suspension of the daily sacrifices for the Roman emperor. Agrippa had given up reasoning with the stubborn, rebellious people. However, he reminded me of the promise I had made to act as his emissary to Caesar, and that the time had arrived for me to travel to Caesar and appeal for help in saving Jerusalem and our country. As it turned out, Emperor Nero was in Greece attending the special Olympics that were held in his honor, and he wasn't at all pleased to hear bad news in the middle of his athletic contests and drama spectacles, in which he participated. The Greeks were ingenious in awarding him hundreds of prizes, for which they were rewarded with freedom from Roman taxation. When I told Nero all about the

Roman defeats in Judea, he turned to his trusted general Vespasian, who had fallen asleep during the emperor's singing recital, and assigned him the task of bringing Roman law and order to the lawless inhabitants of Judea."

"So now our entire country awaits the arrival of the Roman savior, Vespasian, who will subdue the rebellion and restore the land to peace and tranquility," acclaimed Theodas with a voice of expectant victory. He was brought up by his mother and uncle in the Essene tradition of loving peace more than war.

"Or he might be the destroyer, who ravages our villages, our people, and our way of life and belief," envisioned Phoebe in a somber mood.

"So we come to the decisive moment, my dear sister, and my beloved nephew," said Paul, sounding a plaintive note of finality. "We have come to a parting of the Way: You must both continue to fight the great battle of life and persevere to the end; I have completed my mission in this life, and I must descend to Jerusalem to face my final judgment. Throughout my life, I've learned to accept death on a daily basis; I've faced the 'little death' initiation by crucifying the flesh and the material world. Now I am ready for initiation into the mystery of the final release of the soul from the body. For me, being imprisoned in a mortal body and partaking of the calamities and miseries of the flesh no longer holds any appeal. I seek to be crowned with the immortal body. I know I will emerge from this mortal life and rise in my immortal body – a resurrection from what I am into what I am going to become."

"And where are we supposed to go without you?" cried Theodas, voicing a concern that Phoebe shared with her distraught son.

"I've thought a lot about your future," revealed Paul, "and I saw you following in my footsteps and becoming a master of the hidden wisdom, and passing it on to other disciples. The best place to further your development in that direction would be in Alexandria, which is a safe haven for our people. It is also the greatest center of learning in the Roman Empire, and I know you would thrive there. I believe your mother would support you in your decision to seek a peaceful and edifying life there."

"So you've already made the decision for both of us," contested Phoebe, who was torn between her brother's wish and what she thought was best for her son.

"Mother, I think Uncle Paul wants what is beneficent for both of us," affirmed Theodas. "Besides, I've always wanted to visit the great library in Alexandria and encounter the great thinkers of the world." His eyes beamed with an inner light and joy that melted his mother's heart and determined their future.

"We'll go to Alexandria, if that is your desire," said Phoebe, resigning herself to a life with her son. She wouldn't want it any other way.

The three members of the close-knit family descended the Mount of Olives and entered the east gate together for the last time. Phoebe and Theodas left the Essene quarters later that morning with other refugees who were leaving the divided city and dispersing to other places, other lands; Phoebe and Theodas each carried a bundle of necessary belongings on their backs. Phoebe's bundle contained a hand-written scroll that her brother had asked her to keep in her possession; the scroll contained his writings, which he had worked on throughout his life, starting in Tarsus while in exile, and ending in Caesarea while in confinement.

Years later, when Theodas was writing his memoirs, he had a special section devoted to his master-teacher, his uncle, about whom he wrote the following memorable testimonial:

"Yesterday I had a visitor from the land of Judea. He said he was the last surviving member of the royal family of Herodians to which my uncle belonged. His name was Costobarus, and he told me that before he escaped from the murderous anti-Roman rebels in Jerusalem, his brother, my uncle Paul, told him to inform me and my mother of the tragic fate that awaited him. Costobarus said that when Vespasian arrived and began destroying all of Galilee, the stronghold of the rebels since the time of Judas of Galilee, people started fleeing south to the walled city of Jerusalem for safety. That caused chaos in the city, and the civil war escalated to unbearable heights, with daily atrocities perpetrated by all the factions, pro-war and pro-peace, that fought each other. In the winter, as Vespasian was launching his attack on Jerusalem, the remaining royalists were being systematically executed by the militant zealots, who wanted to ensure complete loyalty to the anti-Roman cause in the remaining inhabitants. According to Costobarus, my uncle was executed with a Roman sword; the person who beheaded him was Judas Barjudas, the last remaining son of Judas of Galilee. According to witnesses, Judas said that he was avenging the blood of his brothers, for he blamed my uncle for their deaths. Costobarus reported that slain corpses were cast outside the city walls into the valley of Gehenna without proper burial. That was all he had to report. He considered himself fortunate to have escaped before they could capture and execute him. He said he was sorry to be the messenger of bad news, but he wanted to fulfill his brother's last wish.

"My uncle will continue to live in my heart and mind. There isn't a day that I don't think of him and his life's mission, which I'm determined to carry on for him. My mother showed me the scroll of his writings that she preserved for him. I copied the contents for my personal perusal and study. Someday my master's writing will be shared with the world, but for the present I will continue to incorporate his three basic principles into my own life and into my writings: (1) Redemption for the soul begins with crucifixion – the world of self, the flesh, and the material body must be crucified; the lower, animal body, must perish. (2) Regeneration of the body and mind is an ongoing process that involves a daily renewal of the mind from material things to spiritual things. (3) Resurrection of the dead is a mystical experience where the soul rises from the lower mind to a union with the higher mind, the spiritual higher Self.

"There was a vision that my uncle once told me about, which I will never forget. The vision was about a young scribe named Lucanus, whom he had met in Antioch and to whom he had told his life story. In the vision, my uncle saw the scribe writing a story of a young Hebrew man named Saul, who came to Jerusalem. The story sounded familiar at first, but when the scribe began to write of Saul's journeys throughout the Roman world, my uncle tried to stop the scribe, saying, 'That wasn't me.' My uncle said he saw the face of a Greek philosopher as the famed teacher of the

Roman world. When the scribe wrote about Saul making a sea voyage and being in a shipwreck, my uncle tried to stop the scribe, saying, 'That wasn't me.' Instead, a face of a Jewish historian on his way to Rome appeared on the scroll. Then the vision moved on to another scribe writing about Saul, now named Paul, becoming a martyr and being beheaded in Rome, and my uncle tried to stop that scribe, also, saying, 'My beheading occurred when I was crucified to the world, when my master initiated me into the mystery of death and the resurrection of the dead; I had to slay my mortal mind in order to perceive the immortal mind.' The vision finally ended with the official Church making him into a saint, and my uncle wagged his finger in disapproval at the priestly authorities, saying, 'I was just a man, whom some considered to be a pestilent fellow and a mover of sedition among the Jews, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Some even considered me to be an Apostate.'

"My uncle, whose disciple I remain to this day, once told me that during his lifetime on earth he felt privileged to have been the recipient of many revelations. One revelation, which he claimed to have received from Hermes, involved the mystery of his own life, which spanned the ages. Hermes told him that the story of his life, as told by others, would be like a great tree with two trunks: One trunk grew tall and spread its branches into a world where a Hebrew man named Saul of Tarsus would grow up and spread a new message about crucifying the old natural man and resurrecting the new spiritual man; the other trunk also grew tall and spread its branches, but its branches tapped into the sap flowing from the deep roots of the ancient mysteries, which were spread throughout the ancient world by the Greek philosopher, Apollonius of Tyana. To an outside observer, the double-trunked tree seemed to be two different trees growing side by side; however, to an inside observer, who became one with the roots, the branches, and the sap of the tree, it was One Tree of the Hidden Wisdom of the Mysteries of Life.

"In conclusion, I would be remiss in my memoirs if I failed to mention a secret that I believe my uncle entrusted to me alone. It concerns the overarching theme of his mind, his writings, and his great work on earth – the resurrection of the dead. My uncle told me of his out-of-the-body experience, where he went into the future and saw his lifetime during the time of a future Messiah named Bar Kochba, 'the Star,' who was prophesied to come: 'Behold a Star will come.' My dear uncle firmly believed that when he left this life, he would return during the time of the future Messiah. He affirmed that he would be born again and be called Elisha ben Abuyah."

1000

ονικων (ho nikon), The Conqueror
ο …. 70
ν …. 50
ι …. 10
κ …. 20
ω….800
ν …. 50

1,000

"Into the innermost circle have you come,
into the Mystery of Mysteries."

-- Essene Gospel of Peace

Apollos and Sophia left India three years later at the time of the full moon of May. They had made a final visit to see Srinagar before they left. There they made a special visit to the renowned Tomb of Jesus that they had skipped the first time around because Simon felt it would be sacrilegious to acknowledge the existence of a tomb that claimed to contain the body of "a resurrected savior who ascended bodily into the heavens," as he put it. This time, Simon was not with them. He had returned to Rome the same day that they flew with him to New Delhi. That's where their paths separated.

At the alleged Tomb of Jesus in the Khanyar district of Srinagar, Kashmir, Apollos saw a sign at the Rozabal (Tomb of the Prophet) shrine that described (in Arabic) the tomb as "the stone of the grave which, according to the people, is the prophet's who arrived from a far off place during ancient times." The sign indicated that the building housed "the resting place of a messenger whose name was Yuz Asaf."

Sophia had her doubts about the actual identity of the messenger named Yuz Asaph. "It could have been a saint who achieved Buddha-hood, especially since the name could be a modified form of Iosaphat, which means a Buddha," reasoned Sophia. "Furthermore, it could also have been a great yogi or a swami who sacrificed the physical body that clothed him, and devoted followers later made a memorial for him as a place of pilgrimage."

"That's not the way Maestro Salvatore D'Aura explained it when I asked him about the stories of Jesus in India," rebutted Apollos. "He told me that he knew certain things by reading the Akashic records. 'I've gone to see the Tomb of Jesus, not in the physical,' I remember him saying. 'The vibrations of that tomb are fantastic. And while I was doing that, I took off a great deal of time, and I went to live in one of those houseboats in Kashmir. I made a pilgrimage. The body of Mary is also on that road to Kashmir, and Moses, and things like that. I made a pilgrimage, you see, in the soul realm.' Those were his words."

"I remember you telling me that D'Aura said there were many Jesuses," confuted Sophia. "Therefore, the legends surrounding those many individual manifestations of

deity spread in all the lands of the known world, and people later ascribed the various individual stories to one individual."

"That's something similar to what Maestro D'Aura said when he told me that there were at least five or more stories that were compiled and mixed together to form the character of Jesus the Christ," asserted Apollos. "Also, I remember him telling me that a master usually slips from this life with as little fanfare as possible. They dissolve their physical body in order to be free from encumbrances and attachments to the earth plane as they ascend into the spiritual worlds."

"Unless it's a master who needs to demonstrate the incorruptibility of the physical body," stated Sophia, offering an opposing viewpoint. "For example, the body of Paramahansa Yogananda."

"We'll call Maestro when we return to America," said Apollos, concluding the argument. "He'll tell you what he knows."

"I'd be happy to meet him," said Sophia, imagining a wise old man with a friendly personality.

Several days after they settled into their apartment and took care of personal business, Apollos phoned D'Aura to tell him the story of his travels and his reunion with his fiancée Sophia. The operator on the other end of the line informed Apollos that the number he was calling had been disconnected. Apollos was determined to find out what had happened, so he drove down with Sophia to Palo Alto. When they arrived at D'Aura's house, they saw a "For Sale" sign on the edge of the property. Apollos looked through the windows and saw that the interior was completely empty.

"Maestro told me once that he was thinking of selling his house and moving to Arizona," said Apollos, trying to think of where he was. "He was hoping to find a master who would teach him the secret of dematerialization, like Apollonius was able to do. He was even considering a move to India, if necessary."

Apollos and Sophia watched a squirrel looking for food beside the large tree near the corner of the lot. A lady on a bike rode by them.

"Excuse me, Ma'am," called Apollos as the lady pedaled her bike past D'Aura's house. She put the brakes on and stopped. Apollos walked briskly up to the middle-aged woman and asked, "Did you by any chance know the man who lived in that house?"

"No, I didn't know him personally," replied the woman, "but I heard that he passed away sometime near the end of April. He told people that he was going to live to be a hundred, and then he would pass away."

"He was a celibate his entire life, and he was in quest of the fountain of youth," said Apollos. "So I guess he did find immortality by living to be a hundred."

Apollos thanked the kind lady for the information. She sat back on her bike and rode away. Apollos wrote down the pertinent information from the real estate sign, and he made a call to the real estate lady. She told him of the trustee who could tell him whatever he needed to know about the former owner of the house, Salvatore D'Aura.

Apollos called the appointed trustee of the final arrangements, who informed him that D'Aura died on the 23rd of April at 9:30 PM. The trustee had seen the final hours of Maestro's life, and he told Apollos that D'Aura was pretty much unconscious for the final hours of his life. There were no final words, only several difficult breaths and then a cessation of breathing.

Apollos found out about a voice student of Maestro's who was willing to tell him the rest of the sad news:

"Maestro Salvatore D'Aura turned one hundred on the 21st of April, and he passed away two days later. He started having problems with prostate cancer sometime in February. Since he was too old to have surgery, according to his doctor, he was given chemo pills, which made him sick. He knew he was dying, so close friends paid their last respects while he was still alive. He did not want a funeral, so there were no services for him. He's really missed. He did live a wonderful life, and he didn't suffer too long. He was cremated since he belonged to the Neptune Society. His ashes were simply spread over the ocean just beyond the majestic Golden Gate Bridge."

When Apollos called Peter, a former voice student who introduced Apollos to Maestro D'Aura, he was appreciative of the remembrance. "Maestro taught me much more than how to sing," recollected Peter. "He taught me how to live. The main teaching he imparted to me was: 'In this world there is no one better than you and no one worse.' That teaching has stayed with me throughout my entire life. He also told me that if I want to pursue the path of God-realization, I should read and study the works of St. Teresa of Avila."

"I can never thank you enough for introducing me to the great adept," said Apollos. "I would like to send you copies of some pictures that I took of him and some words of wisdom that he wrote to me."

On one Christmas card, Salvatore D'Aura had written in cursive: *"To welcome another with love and affection is the highest religion. To find God in your own heart is to experience the highest religion. And to carry that awareness with you seeing the same divinity in others is to manifest it in your daily life. Best Wishes, Salvatore D'Aura."*

On another Christmas card, D'Aura had written: *"My best wishes for the realization of God within and without – the only Joy."*

In a letter enclosed with another Christmas card, D'Aura wrote: *"To Soul travel is the greatest experience man can have. It opens the gate to reality and dispels all -isms and mental confusions. It cannot be explained on paper nor can it be granted. I will contact you and will explain how it may happen or how it can be realized."*

The following day, Apollos and Sophia drove to the Golden Gate Bridge. It was a sunny day in May, and they walked on the pedestrian sidewalk to the middle of the bridge and threw a dozen red roses into the ocean in remembrance of Salvatore D'Aura. Apollos meditated silently on the visitations he had with his spiritual teacher and the correspondence they shared. He breathed a silent prayer: "Thank you for encouraging me to continue on the path of Self-Realization."

On their way back to their apartment, they passed a place on 19th Avenue, not far from the university where Apollos had taught, that caught his eye. He stopped the car and said, "I didn't know that San Francisco had a flag."

"And what a symbolical image," remarked Sophia, noticing the Phoenix rising from the ashes in the center of a white field with a yellow border.

"The Phoenix is a symbol of immortal life and the resurrection," said Apollos as he thought of the life of Maestro D'Aura and his rising from the ashes to the spirit world.

"Yes," acknowledged Sophia, "it's the mythical bird that bursts into flames at death and rises from its own ashes."

Soon afterwards, Apollos and Sophia made their final plans to consummate their relationship by getting married at the National Shrine of Saint Francis of Assisi. They planned the wedding to coincide with the same day that they had originally planned for their wedding day: Midsummer Eve, in honor of Shakespeare's romantic comedies that ended in reunion and marriage. Sophia chose the historic shrine in the North Beach district not only because it was dedicated to the city's namesake, St. Francis, but mainly because the saint represented the ideal life that Apollos and Sophia shared: to see the divine life (the Creator) in all of creation – in Brother Sun, Sister Moon and the Stars, in Brother Wind and Air, in Sister Water, in Brother Fire, in Sister Earth, and in Sister Death.

On the day of the wedding, Sophia, the bride, walked up the center aisle in her beautiful white dress to unite with Apollos, the bridegroom, in Holy Matrimony. They ascended four steps together to the altar for the official sacred ceremony. The seven murals of the life of Saint Francis, whose baptismal name was Giovanni (named after the patron saint St. John the Baptist), formed the background above them in the sanctuary. Apollos couldn't help but notice the significance of each mural that portrayed the exemplary life of Saint Francis: (1) in looking at the saint embrace the suffering man on the cross, he saw the identification with suffering that was the first step on the path; (2) in observing the saint crossing a lake in a boat, he realized that the ocean of life's illusions, especially fame and fortune, must be overcome; (3) in watching the saint subdue the destructive wolf, he knew that man's lower nature had to be tamed; (4) in witnessing the saint receive the stigmata wounds, he understood that the compassionate heart identified with all life; (5) in following the saint's call to perform the work of a teacher, he valued the spoken word that changed lives; (6) in recognizing the saint's admission of women into the order, he contemplated the importance of the feminine aspect of life; (7) and in perceiving the saint's vision of the risen Savior, he realized the climactic moment of union with the divine.

"Do you take this woman, Sophia, to be your lawfully wedded wife, to love and to hold from this day forward," asked the priest as Apollos came out of his reverie. "I do," answered Apollos, looking at his beautiful bride. When Sophia answered "I do" to the question that was posed to her, Apollos saw tears of happiness form in her eyes. She would finally be able to realize the fulfillment of her dream that she saw in the Temple of Hera on the Island of Samos. Apollos felt like he was the sun and Sophia was the moon when they finally kissed and walked out of the national shrine into the light of day.

The next day was Midsummer Day (St. John's Day), and Apollos and Sophia headed to Yosemite National Park for their honeymoon. Apollos had convinced Sophia that a week in Yosemite would be like heaven on earth. They both loved the great outdoors, and they felt closer to Mother Nature in the grandeur of Yosemite than anywhere else. Also, Apollos wanted to visit Sentinel Dome again and show Sophia the grand circular panoramic view of the entire valley and its surroundings.

"Here's where it all began," said Apollos when they finally reached the top of Sentinel Dome, which was located on the south wall in the middle of the valley. "It's like coming back to the same place where you started and recognizing it for the first time, like a certain poet said."

"It's a breathtaking view," remarked Sophia as she breathed in the fresh air and twirled slowly around to view all the majestic sights in the valley below and the grand peaks in the Sierra Nevada above.

"Oh, my goodness!" exclaimed Apollos as he caught sight of the ancient Jeffrey pine tree. It was no longer standing up in defiance of the elements; it was reposing on its side. "The last time I was here, that gnarled wind-swept tree was still standing." Apollos walked up to the ancient tree, which symbolized longevity and perseverance through all the storms of life, and he thought of his spiritual teacher, Salvatore D'Aura, whose physical body also succumbed to the forces of time and the dissolution of the physical elements that was inherent in the grand design of life. Apollos walked away sadly from the fallen tree and headed to the other significant spot on top of Sentinel Dome.

"Here's the round stone landmark with the major features from the dome's vantage point," said Apollos, showing Sophia the metallic disc that was etched with geological landmarks.

Sophia looked into the gray-blue reflective surface of the disc and saw a compass rose with the four cardinal compass points and the four intermediary points. "Is this where you saw the four compass points as the lion, man, ox and eagle?" asked Sophia, remembering the story of the vision Apollos saw in the circular disc.

"That, plus the vision of you crying out for help," added Apollos.

"Let me see what I can see in this oracular circle," said Sophia, brushing her wind-swept hair from her face as she leaned over the disc facing the east. Within the inner two circles she saw a cruciform that pointed to the four cardinal directions. Her eyes focused on the point in the center, which she saw as a seed from which emanated all the wide expanse of the entire 360 degree panoramic panoply of the natural beauty of Yosemite and its surroundings.

"I'm beginning to see a pink lotus with eight petals emerging from the central point," said Sophia as her gaze continued to concentrate on the images she was perceiving with her oracular vision. "The eight petals appear to be the eight cardinal and intermediary points of the cosmic wheel. And arising from the sun-like glow within the center of the pink lotus is a Buddha and a Bodhisattva, the male and female principle of existence in their original unity."

Sophia paused as she watched the unfolding picture of the Lord and his consort take on the appearance of two familiar faces. "Oh, my God!" exclaimed Sophia as she suddenly recognized the faces as the bridegroom and his bride. "I see your handsome sun-like face as a Buddha and my radiant moon-like face as a Bodhisattva."

"Are we united in blissful oneness?" asked Apollos as he put his arm around Sophia's waist and leaned over her shoulder to get a glimpse of the ineffable vision.

"We have always and we will always be united in blissful oneness," said Sophia as she turned her face to look into the eyes of her Beloved. "In the center of the circle there is no up or down, no left or right, no male or female – only the unity, where the two have become one, just like the unity candle that we lit together at our marriage ceremony."

"That's what I love about you," said Apollos, giving his newlywed bride a kiss on the lips. "You know how to touch my heart and my mind at the same time."

"And the angels in heaven know I love you," responded Sophia, returning the kiss with a warm embrace.

Apollos intuitively broke out in song as he recognized the words that Sophia quoted:

"Roses love sunshine, violets love dew
Angels in heaven know I love you
Know I love you, dear, know I love you
Angels in heaven know I love you."

Then he began to improvise as the creative imagination flowed through his mind:

"Down in the valley, Yosemite valley,
Up on the bald dome, Sentinel Dome,
There was an old tree, a Jeffrey pine tree,
There were two lovers, Apollos-Sophie."

Sophia joined in with the creative flow:

"Down in the valley, the river runs free
Up in the mountains, the waterfalls drop
Waterfall-river unite in the sea
Apollos-Sophie, the river and sea."

All at once Apollos and Sophia joined in harmonious unison as they walked hand in hand down the slope of the dome to the circular tent that served as their bridal chamber:

"Roses love sunshine, violets love dew
Angels in heaven know I love you
Know I love, dear, know I love you
Angels in heaven know I love you."

The End

KEY TO THE INITIATED

APOCALYPSE UNVEILED – Esoteric Version
King James Version (KJV)

Revelation 1

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:
When the Initiate first sets out on the Path to regenerate his body, an inner teacher (the Higher "Christ" Mind) appears and opens up the inner consciousness. The "book" which is unveiled are the states of vibration of inner activities (past, present, future) in the regeneration of the body.

2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.
The Initiate receives these vibrations as a revelation of the Higher Mind. These are all the vibrations of all the inner states of experience and existence ("Christ-within").

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.
The mind of the Initiate receives the ability to perceive and understand the vibrations from the high spiritual realms. The Eternal Now is the "time" in which any person who qualifies may experience "illumination."

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;
The Initiate recounts the peaceful and beatific experience when the vibrations (spirits) in his body opened up the doors of his energy centers (churches) to the enthroned consciousness which abides in the Eternal.

5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,
The realm of Christ-consciousness contains the highest Memory of Nature and the Intuitive Mind, which is the first of man's faculties to awaken from dormancy to become the dominant power in the body, and which also directs the purifying fire with its cleansing influence to eliminate evil in the body.

6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.
The entire completed process of initiation opens up the way for initiates to function consciously in the Higher Divine Mind, which rules the higher class of people. The chanting of the Aum (Amen) vibration stirs up the electro-magnetic forces in the spinal cord to arouse the regenerative serpentine fire.

7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.
The awareness of the spiritual body (aura) allows the spiritual vision to see the enlightened Higher Mind, even the sense perceptions and faculties of the mental and psychic constitution which previously were unable or unwilling to perceive it.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.
The awareness of the God Within – Pure Spirit – is the beginning and end of our existence, after we have learned all (past, present, future) lessons and discarded the physical world.

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The Initiate begins recounting the ordeal of initiation which occurred in the kingdom of the higher intellect when the mind was in a state of inner introspection. The Heart of the initiate is a partner in the ordeal with the Mind, which is related like a brother (i.e. lower mind and higher mind).

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,
The Initiate was in contact with the heaven worlds through deep meditation, and the vibrations of the inner voice raise his consciousness to a higher plane.

11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.
The vibrations strike the keynote of the Process of Initiation from its beginning to its end, which is the steady unveiling of the Mystery Temple within the Human Body, starting with the lowest spiritual center (church) and progressing to the highest center: (1) Ephesus=sacral region, Muladhara chakra; (2) Smyrna=procreative region, Adhishthana chakra; (3) Pergamos=abdominal region, Manipuraka chakra; (4) Thyatira=cardiac region, Anahata chakra; (5) Sardis=throat region, Vishuddhi chakra; (6) Philadelphia=cavernous region or Pituitary Gland, Ajna chakra; (7) Laodicea=Pineal Gland or 3rd Eye, Sahasrara chakra.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;
The Initiate tries to visualize and realize the "voice within." By directing the consciousness in the direction of the posterior side of his body, the initiate becomes aware of the 7 spiritual centers in his spinal cord.

13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.
And he becomes aware of the appearance of a High Initiate who functions as a Divine Man in the midst of the 7 spiritual centers, with the body of an all-encompassing aura, and enclosed with wisdom.

14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;
The Divine Man has the Mind of innocence and his thoughts are pure; the control of his emotional nature allows his eyes to be opened and illumined with soul energy.

15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.
The spiritualization of his feet allows them to run errands of mercy; and the controlled force of his voice allows him to speak with power and authority.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.
The Divine Man rules his own stars or planetary influences, and he speaks with the qualities of spiritual justice and impartial judgment; a charismatic force shines through his personality.
[Note: The composite image of the Divine Man or Logos as the incarnating Soul, with its 7 planetary spirits or influences can be seen from a Cosmological Point of View:
(8) Saturn's white hair = Ancient of Days, or Father Time
(9) Jupiter's flaming eyes = All-Seeing Father God
(10) Mars' two-edged sword = Divine Justice
(11) Sun's shining face = Light of the World
(12) Venus' girdle = Divine Love
(13) Mercury's feet = Divine Thought
(14) Moon's voice = Sea of Generation]

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:
Upon entering the state of awareness of the divine consciousness, the initiate loses consciousness of the physical world. The hand of power descends on the initiate and he is encouraged to tread the path of regeneration from beginning to end.

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.
The Divine Man becomes "dead" during the cycle of physical incarnation, but it is "resurrected" to life when the soul-intuition is awakened by means of the vibration of OM (regenerative energy force), which brings consciousness of immortality and control over the physical and astral worlds.

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;
The impressions of the higher consciousness are conveyed to the heart and the mind as an eternal reminder of the soul's destiny.

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.
The mystery of the human body is determined by the 7 ruling planets and their influences, and the 7 centers (chakras) in the spinal column. The 7 ruling planets are the ruling intelligences (divinities) of the 7 centers (churches), and the 7 energy chakras are the 7 spiritual centers (churches).

Revelation 2
1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;
The divinity of the center at the base of the spinal cord, the sacral region, is the home of the spinal serpentine fire (kundalini or sushumna). The Divine Man, who controls the 7 planetary influences within the body, travels up and down the spinal column and through each of the 7 centers.

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:
The instruction that the initiate receives about this center is that work and patience are needed in order to overcome the evil tendencies which arise from using the lower center in a false way.

3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.
The attainment of higher awareness is a process of patiently reviving and giving birth to the consciousness of the incarnating soul.

4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.
The process of regeneration entails a conservation of the life force (sexual energy), whose loss means a dissipation of power in the center.

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

The fall of life force from the high divine love to the lower human love can be reversed by adhering to the conservation of the life force; otherwise, the rapid loss of energy through the misuse of the center's light-force will degenerate the creative function.

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.
The quality of the center still remains intact because it has an aversion to the sensuality of the lower animal nature, and it is capable of being controlled and overcome.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.
To the conqueror of the centers of the cerebro-spinal system, that person enjoys the fruit of his labor and will receive the capability to partake of the creative energy of the kundalini which flows throughout the nervous system of the body and enlightens the Higher Divine Mind.

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;
The divinity of the procreative region, which is the beginning and end of generation, is the center which is dormant at birth and comes to an end when the process of regeneration begins and comes to life.

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.
The function of generation goes through many trials and temptations and is impoverished if the enriched life force is spent in sensual gratification; however, when the "circumcised" or conserved sexual energy is chosen for a higher purpose, then the inner temple is rebuilt through regeneration.

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.
The path of regeneration has many trials and temptations, and the sexual function puts many a person into a prison of lower physical consciousness. The 5 physical senses (with the dual polarity of masculine and feminine) are the avenues through which suffering is inflicted on the lower nature; however, the person who conserves his vital life force and defeats the lower animal nature will be able to send the life force to the crown of his head.

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.
To the person who heeds the instructions to the initiate and conquers the energies of the centers, to him will be given the ability to avoid loss of consciousness at "death" and to escape the purgatorial sufferings which the soul undergoes if it hasn't conquered the lower animal nature.

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;
The divinity of the navel or abdominal region (center of the solar plexus) instructs that the Divine Man is able to execute sharp and exact judgment and brings justice with the sword of Truth.

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.
This center is controlled by the lower nature, the animal self, and by forces which work to keep the physical man down. By slaying the faithful higher nature, the lower nature usurps control over man from the lower beastly center.

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.
There is a warning issued here by the divinity against the misuse of this center by sensuality and base desires, which causes the corruption of the followers of pure desires, especially teaching them the falsehood of sacrificing the life force through sexual copulation.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.
The teaching of sexual promiscuity or phallic sorcery also causes the dissipation of the life force through the animal nature.

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.
A reversal of the use of the life force is necessary in order to avoid the judgment of the energizing principle.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.
The person who heeds the call of the higher nature and overcomes or masters the lower nature will partake of the divine essence of the Pineal gland (stone) where a new consciousness is given to the initiate.

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;
The divinity of the heart center gives instructions about the Divine Man, the Sun whose reason (eyes) are like the all-seeing Zeus, and his swift feet (thoughts) are winged like Mercury's.

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.
From the heart center proceed good qualities of love, service, faith, patience, and with emotions (works) that are both high and low.

20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.
The servants of the body have been seduced by the harlot (Jezebel), who prostitutes her emotions to the faculties of a medium, and causes her followers to perform acts of erotic psychism and to partake in moral disintegration.

21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.
She refused to give up her sexual promiscuity and continued to indulge in and misuse the life force in a dissolute manner.

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.
She is cast into the lower emotional consciousness of the heart center, and those who indulge in the licentious life with her will suffer immensely in their emotional body, unless they reverse the flow of the life force and turn to the pursuit of a higher nature.

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

The outcome of the sensual life is death to higher development. All the centers of the body are tied to the emotions and desires of the heart, therefore each person receives that which they really desire, for better or worse.

24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.
However, those who followed not the alluring propaganda of sexual promiscuity, and who did not fall into the depths of the lower beastly nature, they will still be able to overcome and control the lower nature.

25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.
Those who can control the emotional heart center should continue to do so in order to gain the higher centers.

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:
He who rules the heart center for the good of the higher nature will be given power over every other part of his being (nations).

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.
The master of the world within is the master of the world without. Every part of the body will obey and follow the commands of the ruling soul.

28 And I will give him the morning star.
And he will see the dawning of a new day, and he will have a planetary guide to call upon for "illumination."

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.
Let him be attuned to the teaching of the Higher Self to the center of the body.

Revelation 3
1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.
The divinity of the throat (pharyngeal) center instructs that unless the lights (stars) of the 7 centers are lit up and kept burning, the spiritual light is extinguished (dead). This center manifests the voice of conscience if it is not deadened by self-centered feelings.

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.
By watching what we say and by controlling the use of our tongue, which can bring destruction through its powerful vibrations, we can improve ourselves by using kind and positive words in order to strive for perfection.

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.
The inner man is encouraged to develop a strong, melodious voice, because the good vibrations of positive words are instrumental in harmonious living. Wrong usage of words will cause the energy to be robbed and lost and stolen from the person who is struggling to be in tune with the higher life.

4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

Those who overcome lustful conditions (in word and deed) will be clothed in the pure soul-body of the initiate because they mastered and controlled the throat center and the right usage of words.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.
The person who overcomes (master of Self) will be clothed in pure thoughts and words and will be acknowledged by the guiding divinities and the Higher Divine Mind.

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.
Let the inner man attune himself to the teachings and instructions given to the centers of the body.

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;
The divinity of the center in the cavernous region of the brain which contains the Pituitary gland gives the following instruction: The spiritual center in the head is opened by the Life Force only to those who lived a pure life (which is the key to regeneration); those who didn't live a pure life are unable to open that master center.

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.
Being true to the Divine Man, the soul-initiate stands at the threshold of regeneration by the strength of his inner life force and by the vibrations of the energy which ascend up the spine to open the door to the Higher Mind.

9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.
But those who are not "circumcised" spiritually (not Jews), they're hurled back to the lower beastly nature (Satan). The lower shall understand and regret the loss of the higher nature.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.
Patient perseverance and mastery of the lower nature means that the higher Self can't be tempted to lower his consciousness back to the earthly carnal nature.

11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.
The key of the raised Life Force can open the awareness to higher consciousness at any time, and the "crowning" moment should be guarded with care.

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.
To the Master who overcomes there will no longer be a necessity to reincarnate. The raised spiritual consciousness (city) will have a new conception of the nature of God and the universe.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.
Let the inner ear be attuned to the teachings of the spiritual centers.

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

The Divinity of the center in the head located in the Pineal gland, also known as the 3rd Eye (or the Single Eye). The Word (OM), the vibration that starts creation, at the top of the head (crown chakra), is the pinnacle of divine consciousness.

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.
The center is presently dormant and unawakened in most of humanity, and it is of no benefit to the soul in this condition.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.
Because of the insensible condition of the Pineal gland, the spiritual consciousness cannot be raised, and so must descend to the lower centers of the body.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:
The materialist is blind to the possibilities of spiritual unfoldment and believes the end result of earthly existence is to possess material goods; whereas in reality, the materialist is nothing without the soul qualities that bring enlightenment and bliss.

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.
The initiate (or candidate at the door of initiation) is advised to apply spiritual force and to buy spiritual wisdom (gold) and put on the pure body in order to see higher consciousness.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.
Instruction comes to those who are worthy, sincere, and clean, and display a penitent heart.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.
The Christ-consciousness waits for the mind center to be opened or awakened, then the inner man will partake of a spiritual feast with the Master teacher of the Higher Mind.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.
The Divine Master has set the example of the manner in which the inner temple is rebuilt and regenerated, and the manner in which the Soul-Conqueror can rule over his own kingdom.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.
Let the inner ear heed the teaching of the inner spirit within the centers of the body.

Revelation 4
1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.
After the awakening (opening) of all 7 centers, a passageway (door) opens up to the heaven worlds. The First Logos (Word, or first vibration that stirs up the cosmic consciousness within the causal body of the initiate) announces an unveiling of the Absolute Reality.

2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

The Initiate enters a trance-like "state of mind" (contemplative), and the enthroned Eternal is revealed to the higher consciousness.

3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.
A symbolic description of the effect of building or creating the "Philosopher's Stone" – two stones (Pituitary and Pineal glands, feminine and masculine) blend together to form a triad (or trinity) of the 3 primary colors of the Eternal (jasper, sardine, emerald), which occurs when the 3 phases of the Godhead are internalized and the 7 rays of the rainbow surround the solar body of the initiate.

4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.
The 24 elders symbolize the 24 hours of the day, the divisions of time which serve the timeless center around which they revolve; also, the 12 spiritualized attributes (12 positive and 12 negative) which do the will of the Soul in purity and in consciousness of the Divine nature of the Soul.

5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.
The activity of the enthroned Eternal proceeds with electro-magnetic vibrations, and the 7 awakened and energized light-centers are accompanied by the 7 planetary divinities.

6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.
In the crystalline region of the seat of power where the consciousness of the microcosm in the Higher Mind reflects the macrocosm in the Cosmos, the Fixed Cross of the Heavens with its 4 all-seeing Beings revolves like a Cosmic Wheel.

7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.
The first arm of this wheel is Leo, the Lion, representing summer (Bible-Mark); the second arm of this wheel is Taurus, the Bull, representing spring (Bible-Luke); the third arm of this wheel is Aquarius, the water-bearer, representing winter (Bible-Matthew); and the fourth arm of this wheel is Scorpio, the scorpion or eagle, representing autumn (Bible-John).

8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.
Each of the 4 arms of the fixed cross in the heavens is a septenary, radiating from a focal point into the six directions of space; the four-fold archetype of the heavens is an eternal sign in the heavens of the Eternal ONE.

9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,
The 4 great Beings are also the 4 planes of existence (both subjective and objective) within which the entire universe lives and moves and has its being throughout all the seasons and the cycles (Wheel of the Zodiac).

10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,
The forces which govern the various time-periods of the revolving Wheel are the 24 Ancients (divisions of time into the hours of the day), which rule successively one after the other.

11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.
The Eternal ONE is the Life of the Universe, for from the ONE has the universe come into existence, and it is the Will of the ONE which maintains its existence.

Revelation 5
1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.
The "book" is the human body in its entirety, containing the 7 spinal centers that send their forces within the body along the spinal cord (backside).

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?
The initiate sitting on the throne of his inner consciousness cannot open the mysterious secrets of the centers through the physical senses or by means of the physical body.

3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.
Man in his mental or physical or psychic capacities is unable to pierce through the secrets of his inner universe.

4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.
The sad truth is that man in his present stage of development is not capable of understanding the mysteries of his own "book" (the human body).

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.
However, one of the Ancients declares that the sign of Leo the Lion (Judah), solar power of the Solar Body, and the Root of the Tree of Life, with the roots in the heavens and the branches on the earth, is capable of revealing and illuminating the contents of the centers of the inner body.

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.
The inner awareness of the initiate becomes aware of the central dramatic figure in the center of the revolving Wheel – the Lamb in the sign of Aries, the exalted first sign of the Zodiac, with the 7 powers of the planetary spirits influencing the 7 illuminating powers of the Higher Mind.

7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.
This higher principle in man is capable of lifting the consciousness to reveal the mysteries of the inner worlds of the body.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.
When man takes up the Great Task of opening his inner book (spiritual centers), all the spiritual attributes shift toward the Higher Mind, and each attribute is connected to a nerve plexus (chakra) with connecting nerves which vibrate with the chants of the spiritualized qualities of the Divine Man.

9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;
A new vibration is set into motion, and every part of the body is attuned to the Great Work set before the initiate: to open all the spiritual centers to higher consciousness and mold all the inner qualities into a noble kingdom.

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.
The Higher Mind when perfected becomes the ruler of his own body (earth).

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;
All the innumerable inner forces and creative energies within man become energized for the Great Task at hand.

12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.
The raising of consciousness to the Higher Mind brings rewards of 7 virtues: power (over Self), riches (of awareness), wisdom (to know), strength (to action), honor (in deeds), glory (of the solar body), and blessing (radiance).

13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.
All the somatic divisions of the human body – physical (earth), mental (heaven), phantasmal (under the earth), and psychic (sea) – all 4 worlds of Form share in the self-awareness of the initiate.

14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.
And the Word (vibration of Creative OM) of the Higher Mind and all the attributes join together to accomplish the eternal plan.

Revelation 6
1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.
When the Higher Mind (Lamb) begins the process of initiation at one of the lower centers (2nd chakra), Taurus, the roaring bull, announces the process to the body.

2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.
The rider on the pure (white) horse is Sagittarius; he begins the process of Involution (descent to earth) to conquer the material world (through the procreative center).

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.
The 2nd chakra to be opened is the Solar Plexus (the abdominal somatic division), and the ruler of that body division is Desire, symbolized by the dragon.

4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.
The rider on the red (Mars) horse is Scorpio, who rules the Desire body and takes away peace and makes war on the body.

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.
The 3rd chakra to be opened is the heart center (cardiac somatic division) with the lower mind ruled by the material discursive nature (beast), and symbolized by Libra, the Balance.

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.
The story of the balances is one of discrimination and the Law of Cause and Effect, where physical indulgence must be paid for in physical loss; there is a warning not to waste the essence of life (oil & wine), which signifies the conservation of the life force.

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.
The 4th seal is the throat center (pharyngeal), which belongs to the sympathetic nerve system, and is also part of the highest somatic division, the head, where the Lamb rules.

8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.
The rider on the pale horse is the sign of Virgo, ruler of life and death in the womb, and the after-life follows that cycle of life. The self-imposed tortures come to those who persist in living in the lower 4th division of the body, the life of the bestial nature in the sacral region.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:
The 5th seal, the Pituitary (Ajna center), reveals the spiritual qualities that lay dormant (slain) because of the dominance of the physical senses.

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?
Spiritual qualities cry out for revenge against the evil ruler of the body and desire to overcome (avenge) the lower controlling faculties.

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.
When the faculties and qualities are purified and sanctified to the higher purpose, patient waiting for the powers to develop allows time for the overcoming of the lower qualities.

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;
When the 6th center is opened (at the base of the spine), the sense centers start shaking with the vibrations of the regenerative force from the head (sun) to the base (moon).

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.
The planetary spirits begin operating from the head to the base of the spine (earth), and the regenerative force (fig) begins to force its way in a spinning motion at the base chakra.

14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.
The spiral motion (scroll) of finer etheric atoms causes the spiritual body (heaven) to leave the body and to function on higher planes, thus having control over both the mental and physical.

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;
All the lower ruling qualities of the body that were former rulers now lose mastery, for their day of power has passed, and they withdraw from dominance.

16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:
The rulers ask the body to spare them from complete oblivion or destruction by the dominance of the Higher Mind.

17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?
The energizing principle of the Soul has arrived, and its work will be accomplished.

Revelation 7
1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.
After the preceding instructions, the four bodies of the ruling planetary spirits begin to control the Prana-Breath (winds) of the physical, desire, and vital bodies.

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,
The ascending life force (east), which has the power to regenerate the body, gives instruction to the ruling spirits of the physical body (earth), and the desire body (sea).

3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.
Telling them that bodily vehicles (physical, desire, vital) are not to be harmed by the releasing of energy until the generative force has had time to rise from the lower mind to the higher mind.

4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.
The 144,000 represents all of humanity (1+4+4=9, the number of humanity); all of humanity will undergo the process of regeneration. All the higher faculties will be regenerated. All the signs of the Zodiac (tribes of Israel) will be involved in the process.

5 Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.
The sections of 3 (a triad) represent the higher faculties of the mind; each attribute with its 12 influences (powers) operating through the 12 centers of the electro-magnetic aura body. Each attribute and power is magnified to the thousandth degree (infinite). The leader of the procession is the Lion of Judah (Leo), then Reuben (Aquarius), and Gad (Aries).

6 Of the tribe of Asher were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.
Next in the procession is the triad of Asher (Libra), Nephthalim (Capricorn), and Manasses (Scorpio).

7 Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.
The next group of 3 is Simeon (Gemini), Levi (Virgo), and Issachar (Taurus).

8 Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.
The last triad in the procession is Zabulon (Pisces), Joseph (Sagittarius), and Benjamin (Cancer).

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;
After all the higher faculties are spiritualized (sealed), they (all the elements of the body) overcome the power of the lower nature and put on pure spiritual bodies and carry signs of peace (palms).

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.
The exalted state of being demonstrates the arrival (salvation) at a very high state of development.

11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,
The planetary ruling spirits together with all the spiritualized attributes of the 4 somatic divisions of the body achieve Divine awareness.

12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.
The vibrations of the creative Word (Aum, Amen) produce the 7 virtues (and planetary attributes), which are highlighted in the new spiritual body.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?
Self-awareness includes the realization of how purity in the inner body was achieved.

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
The initiates are those who pass the ordeal of reincarnation and have transmuted their bodily elements by means of the life force.

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.
The head region becomes the inner temple of the divine Soul, the God-within who dwells within and rules the initiates.

16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.
Physical attributes will fall away, as well as physical needs; even solar heat will become unnecessary.

17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.
For the Eternal enthroned Self shall provide nourishment, and shall give energy, and shall wipe away all sorrows.
[Here ends the Vision of the 1st Heaven, the Desire World.]

Revelation 8
1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

The Pineal Gland, or 3rd Eye, is finally opened. The entrance into the 2nd Heaven, of Concrete Thought, brings with it the Mystic Silence. Silence in deep meditation for a period of half an hour to an hour is a prerequisite to lifting the life force to that inner region.

2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.
The 7 planetary spirits (influences) vibrate into the 7 spiritual centers in man to produce an illumined state of mind.

3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.
The desires and thoughts ascend and spiritualize the faculties within and fill the head (golden censer) with wisdom, which radiates a golden aura.

4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.
The mental thoughts provide the basis for regeneration of the region of Concrete Thought, as the psychic senses of smell (incense) and hearing (prayers) are aroused.

5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.
The kundalini fire in the brain descends to the base chakra in order to permeate the physical atoms of the body; various manifestations occur simultaneously in the senses.

6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.
The 7 planetary spirits are ready to vibrate and open the 7 centers, with the vibrant sound penetrating the aura (electro-magnetic field) of the body.

7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.
The first directing intelligence sets up the vibration of the positive (fire-solar) and negative (hail-lunar) phases of energy, permeating the body (earth) as it takes physical form, and causing a partial (third) loss of enlivening energy to energize the physical atoms.

8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;
At the vibration of the 2nd directing intelligence, the creative force begins to function through the desire body (sea), and another third of the creative energy is used up in the Life Force.

9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.
As humanity (creatures) descends into generation through the desire body, the carriers of vital energy (ships) are wasted through generation (i.e. the life force "dies").

10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;
As the vibration of the 3rd directing intelligence, the Venus-Star becomes the life force taken from higher planes in the head (heaven) and descends (or falls) into the third lower part of man, the lower mind (heart chakra).

11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.
The Venus-Star as Eros (Divine Love) becomes bitter fluid when the body's vital essences are misused (died), causing pain (i.e. "a bitter pill to swallow").

12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.
As the 4th directing intelligence vibrates, the mental activity on the objective and subjective planes is suspended, signifying a loss of ability to understand spiritual things because of the loss of the Life Force.

13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!
An intelligence in the mind reminds the initiate of the 3 forces which are yet to manifest within the body and which are related to the 3 higher functions of the body: the dual nervous system (sympathetic & parasympathetic) and the aura (electro-magnetic field surrounding and interacting with the physical body).

Revelation 9
1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.
The 5th directing intelligence reveals the fallen "star" descending from the heights (heaven) as Venus and descending into the depths (earth) as Lucifer, who presides over the Abyss of the lower region (sacral plexus).

2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.
The sacral plexus reveals a mind polluted by carnal passions, and the lower mind cannot reason because of the impure thoughts.

3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.
Because of the corrupt nature, various diseases plague the body, and the stinging sex force controls the body.

4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.
However, the evil thoughts which torment the body cannot touch the good that prevails, nor the positive growth (green), nor hurt the higher mind consecrated to the Good.

5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.
Even though the low thoughts cannot destroy people, they have the power to torment and tempt the lower nature through the five senses.

6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.
The lower mind will try to kill the impure desires, and try to eliminate the carnal nature, but the sensual nature cannot be killed – only transmuted.

7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.
The evil thoughts are the lower generative forces in the body which use the power of mind to form images in the imagination that fight against the higher spirit of man.

8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

The generative force in the sacral region is the feminine pole of the body, and it is torn to pieces by misuse.

9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.
The strength of the passion in the sacral region, and the destructive nature of the generative forces, is a depiction of its power over the nature of man.

10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.
The carnal nature afflicts with a dying sting in the lower region (coccygeal); the five senses are the channels through which the sex energy overpowers man.

[Note: Another version tries to correlate the parts of the locust with the 7 centers in the body: (1) shape of horses=Pituitary gland; (2) crown on head=Pineal gland; (3) faces of men=throat center; (4) breastplate=cardiac region; (5) wings=epigastric region; (6) tail=sacral region; (7) sting=prostatic.]

11 And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.
The ruler of the lower generative force is known as the Destroyer because he ruins the lower mind by taking away the vital energy.

12 One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.
To consume the essence of life in carnal generation leads to depletion of energy, and yet, the worse is still to come.

13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,
The 6th directing intelligence vibrates, and the Higher Mind with its 4 powers of higher intellect and discrimination makes its presence known.

14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.
The Higher Mind instructs the 6th Divinity to release the 4 divinities of the cerebro-spinal axis (river), which is the Life Force manifesting through the 4 planes of existence (physical, astral, mental, causal) and through the 4 seasons and the 4 divisions of Time.

15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.
The 4 divisions of time (hour, day, month, year) are ruled by the 4 solar regents, and a third of mankind is under its control.

16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.
The vast armies of horsemen represent the limitless powers of the Nous (intellectual "sun" of the Higher Mind). Two -- signifies the dual nature of positive and negative or masculine and feminine.

17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.
The lion-headed (solar) horses represent the intellectual powers and thoughts which have the ability to express fiery words and create confusion.

18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.
And the armies of the Higher Mind are capable of destroying the evil, false, and superstitious thoughts and tendencies of the psychic nature (a third of man's nature).

19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.
The serpent-power (cerebro-spinal energy) is the force which rises from the coccygeal area of the tailbone and ascends to the vibratory force in the throat chakra, where the Word is made powerful and forceful.

20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:
The part of humanity that was not reformed by the suffering caused through the misuse of the lower force, they continued to idolize material things, the lower nature, and phenomenal nature (the Unreal).

21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.
And they continued to misuse the spiritual force, the psychic nature, the sexual nature, and the higher nature.

Revelation 10
1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:
The 7th and cumulative Divinity is from a higher plane of the Divine Mind where the 7 rays of Divinity radiate and the light-energy of the cerebro-spinal axis flows through all 7 centers.

2 And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,
The little book, which is the body with 7 centers, has its foundation based on the psycho-physiological processes in Man, and on the positive (masculine) and negative (feminine) energies in the body.

3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.
The opening of the 7 centers (chakras) causes them to respond and vibrate together in harmony.

4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.
The initiate can only witness the mysteries himself, since he was the one who raised himself to the higher spiritual realm by spiritualizing his own body.

5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,
The Divinity who controls both the desire body (sea) and the generative force (earth) has mastery and can ascend higher.

6 And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

The promise of the Eternal One, master of the Head (heaven), the physical body (earth), and the astral or vital body (sea), is that the spiritual understanding can transcend the Time-Space continuum.

7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.
The opening and vibration of the 7th center reveals the 3rd Eye, or Eye of the Seer (mystery of God), where the timeless consciousness reigns.

8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.
The vibration from the Higher Mind (heaven) opens the book of 7 seals (centers), which is founded on the psycho-physiological processes in Man.

9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.
The initiate asks the Divinity of the Higher Mind to reveal the essence of the 7 centers to him. And he is told to assimilate it and make it part of his consciousness and inner being.

10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.
The initiate assimilates the instruction (Gnosis) and finds the knowledge sweet to the Higher Mind, but bitter to the lower mind, since it means eliminating impure thoughts and desires.

11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.
The initiate is required to proclaim the future status to the ruling qualities of the Self (Soul).

Revelation 11
1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.
The initiate is given the spinal cord to work on, and to measure the amount of force that ascends through the spinal column up to the brain, where 49 forces await (7 centers x 7 lights).

2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.
The physical body is not included in the great work, for it is left to the unspiritualized elements of the lower nature, which continues to rule 3 ½ years (the first half of the initiation process).

3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.
The dual force of the electrical currents (Ida & Pingala; sympathetic & parasympathetic nerve systems) will pervade the nerve system during the 2nd half of the initiation process (1,260 days = 3 ½ years). The entire process is completed in humility.

4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.
The 2 centers that stand at the top of the Divine Man (in the skull) are the Pituitary gland and the Pineal gland, which bring the peace (olive) of illuminating knowledge to the awakened initiate.

5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.
The fire of the creative force (shekinah fire, or kundalini) excites into activity the 2 highest centers (in the head) and overcome the lower qualities that oppose them. [Also, the misuse of the force brings destruction to the body.]

6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.
When the Pituitary and Pineal are active, using the force solely for higher mental use (heaven), the generative force is stopped (continence of nerve-fluid) and the magnetic auric substance together with the golden electric fire overwhelm the body.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.
When the trance-like contemplation ends, the neophyte returns to the ordinary state of consciousness, and the energy returns to the carnal nature, which again takes control of the being.

8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.
Within the physical body, where the central spinal cord circulates through the entire body via the nerve currents attached to the cerebro-spinal system, the powers lie dormant. The Soul is said to be "crucified" when it incarnates in the physical body (Egypt).

9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.
The four classifications of mankind (also known as castes) are divided according to the four somatic divisions of the body: (1) men of learning=head; (2) warriors=heart; (3) merchants=abdominal; (4) laborers=sacral. The body, especially the pituitary and the pineal glands, are in a dormant stage for half of the 7 year initiation cycle (3 ½ years) as a time of undisturbed preparation.

10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.
The lower senses are pleased when the higher faculties are dormant (asleep), and they're strengthened to act without the stifling conscience of the inner guiding voice.

11 And after three days and an half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.
After the required 3 ½ years of preparation to spiritualize the body, the higher faculties awaken from their dormant state, and the lower nature now has to submit to the higher nature.

12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.
The power of the 2 higher centers (pituitary and pineal) opens up the inner world (heaven) of the neophyte, and he ascends in the presence of his lower attributes to his higher nature.

13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.
At the great change of consciousness, from lower to higher, the base personal nature falls to the wayside, and the physical (material) nature of the 7 centers of consciousness is transformed from fear (of lower attributes) to the splendor of divine consciousness.

14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.
The second major test of initiation has been passed, and the 3rd major test follows.

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.
And the 7th directing intelligence vibrated the spiritual sounds (harmonic resonances in the heart), awakening the highest center (chakra) of divine consciousness, which in turn now rules all the lower centers of the body.

16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,
All the positive and negative (dual) phases of the inner 12 faculties (and the Ancients that rule the 24 hours of the day), awaken to the enlightening influence of the dynamic change that has taken place.

17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.
The Eternal Creative Energy of the Logos (Word or Vibration) within the MIND of the initiate now has power to rule and to preserve the vital forces of his body.

18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.
The physical aspects of the lower nature realize that the creative energy has come to take away power from the destructive forces of the body, and the higher faculties of the Seer will dominate now.

19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.
The body now opens up to Cosmic Consciousness and reveals the celestial vessel, the place of birth within the Mind where the union of positive (masculine) and negative (feminine) takes place in order to produce the SOUL body. The birth of the SOUL body is accompanied by sights and sounds, and outpouring and uplifting of energy waves.

Revelation 12
1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:
After the Pineal gland (3rd Eye) is energized, a sign of the World Mother (Virgo the Virgin) appears in the mind (heaven), clothed with positive masculine energy (sun) and raised by the feminine negative energy (moon) by way of mastery over the generative forces; now she is crowned Queen of the 12 higher faculties (12 Zodiac energies).

2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.
The result of the union of the masculine (head) and feminine (heart) is the birth of the SOUL-child.

3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.
The energizing of the cerebral centers produces a reflex action in the lower nature, the Desire Body (dragon), which is the exact opposite of the higher nature, and which uses the

7 centers of the body, and the dual energies of the five senses, to rule and misuse the seven energized centers.

4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.
The force of passion, and the "sting" of consequences for misusing the life force, causes a portion of the accumulated regenerated power (child) to be lost if misused.

5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.
The man-child (mature soul) is brought into awareness by the blending of masculine (head) and feminine (heart) forces, which rule with strength from the higher consciousness in the head.

6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.
In the initiation process, the Higher Mind has to go through a wilderness experience of trial and purification, which is the 2nd half (3 ½ years) of the 7 year process.

7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,
The battle of a personal nature, which occurs in the Mind of the initiate, begins when the creative Soul with its higher faculties fights against the lower desire faculties of his generative nature.

8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.
And the "dragon" of darkness, ignorance, and degeneration was defeated by the higher consciousness, which eliminated the "adversary" from his awareness.

9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.
The sensual consciousness and the lower energy center are subdued, and the deceiving adversary is confined to the lowest center of the body.

10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.
The vibration is sounded and it reverberates with the message that the initiate is now delivered from the accuser and deceiver of mankind, and now strength and power are given to the initiate to control the desires within his own mental kingdom.

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.
The conquest is achieved by the vibrant force of the Higher Mind and the creative energy of the spinal cord; and the psychic body (lunar, negative, force) is disregarded in order to eliminate the desires of the lower nature.

12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.
The higher consciousness receives a blissful state of mind. The lower nature of man and the desire body, however, are in a dismal state of mind because the fiery tempting energy still has a temporary hold of the lower consciousness.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.
When the adversary is confined to the lowest center in the body, his debilitating influence still continues to obstruct the spiritual growth of the neophyte.

14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.
The mother of the child is the creative energy force (kundalini) with the two-winged nervous system in the body (sympathetic and parasympathetic, or Ida and Pingala), which ascends into the purifying solitude of the spinal cord, where she spends the remaining 3 ½ years in the subjective serpentine force.

15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.
The energy of the serpentine (kundalini) force sends a cascade of psychic phenomenon or illusions to bombard the mind and to drive it insane with bizarre imagery.

16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.
But the psychic phenomenon is absorbed by the physical nature, and the lower nature takes in everything that the Desire Body thinks or desires.

17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.
And the Desire Body in its anger still combats the finer elements of the instinctual nature and tries to overcome the intuitions of the intellectual Higher Mind.

Revelation 13
1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.
From the perspective of the emotional (desire) body, the inner animal soul or nature, which is a blending of the desires and lower thought-forms, is an inverted shadowy being with 7 lower desires and 10 perverted mind qualities.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.
The animal-soul, which has a pseudo-reality (reflection of higher soul) with blemished auric elements and a destructive brute-force as its inner nature, is given authority by the lower nature to rule the body.

3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.
The desire for life of the pseudo-intellect is overwhelming, and hard to eradicate, because the pseudo-intellect is admired by all the bodily senses as the Ego of the body.

4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?
The lower expression of the Life Force as egoistic intellect, dissociated from reason and intuition, is allowed to rule in the heart because of the desire of the lower nature to give rein to the emotions, not to control them.

5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.
The emphasis again falls on the preparatory phase of initiation during the 1st half (3 ½ years = 42 months) of the process, during which the lower nature tries to continuously usurp full control of the body.

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.
The lower nature always mocks and ridicules the Higher Mind, and it endeavors through such action to denigrate and lower the higher faculties of the mind.

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.
The lower nature constantly wages war against the good nature of man, and the beastly animal-soul is given control over the 3 lower divisions of the body (and also the 3 lower classes of mankind).

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.
Those who continue to dwell in the realm of material consciousness will be victims of their animal nature, and they will not attain to the higher life consciousness during any incarnation within their cycles of physical evolution.

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.
This is a matter of serious consideration, so listen up!

10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.
The principle of Cause and Effect (Karma) rules supreme in the universe: the person who craves material bondage, by that very desire he condemns himself to bondage; the iron law of retribution follows a person even into the next life. The initiate patiently endures this Cosmic Law.

11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.
The other aspect of the animal-soul is the dual sex-force, with the positive and negative (lamb and dragon) poles of the Life Force.

12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.
This inverted image of the Higher (Divine Love) force is the carnal love force, which attaches itself to the revitalized heart center, and in this case is ruled by the lower mind.

13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,
In its sentimental forms of fervor and emotional impulses, the erotic principle in man can bring down creative energy from the heights of religious cant to the depths of erotic perversions.

14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.
And this deceptive psychic force, which feeds on the creative forces within the central nervous system, can perform miraculous deeds and persuade hero-worshippers to create an anthropomorphic god and make it seem to be a living being.

15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.
And so the vague yearning for something to worship takes shape in the mind, and the worshipped being is endowed with human attributes and causes its worshippers to follow its commands.

16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:
And the power which is misused for lower purposes and for self-gratification and vain-glory becomes a tool of the manipulative lower self, which causes every part of its being to worship at the shrine of materiality by acting and thinking in accord with its wishes and desires.

17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.
Thus no person will have free will or the ability to overcome the influence of the lower self unless he knows the exact character and nature of the lower beastly man which he needs to conquer.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.
The wisdom of the teaching is that it pertains to the Nature of Man, and the story is enacted in the inner man. The esoteric number of this lower mind (the beast) is 6+6+6, which adds to 18, and in the mathematics of numerology 1+8=9, the number of humanity.

Revelation 14
1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.
The Higher Mind with its ruling regent, and all of its inner human attributes, now stand in the divine consciousness, which is exalted through the Pineal (3rd Eye) gland as it impacts the area of the forehead. The 144 is again the number of humanity (1+4+4=9).

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:
The vibratory variations of the One Cosmic Sound (OM, Amen) resound with great force, and the initiate enters the higher vibratory realm of tone, where he hears the harmony of the spheres.

3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.
The Song of the Eons, sung throughout the seasons and the ages, is the song of the celestial four: Leo the Lion (fire), Taurus the Bull (earth), Aquarius the Water-Bearer (air), and Scorpio the Scorpion/Eagle (water). The people, or vibrations that resonate with the celestial revolutions of the signs, planets, and elements, are the ones whose awareness has reached the higher level of consciousness, where that song is heard.

4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.
The higher consciousness requires a pure, undefiled life, regenerated by conserving the life force. The initiates who follow the guidance of the Higher Mind become the first to conquer the fruits of the flesh (monthly life-force-seed).

5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.
Their words will speak Truth all the time, for they stand faultless before their inner conscience.

6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,
This, the beginning of the 3rd conquest, begins when the divinity brings the timeless truths which the four somatic divisions of the body have imprinted in their archetypal forms within the Soul.

7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.
The awe-inspiring Truth is declared that every portion of the Eternal Soul-Man (head, sacral region, navel region, and heart) will be judged according to the Law of Cause and Effect.

8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.
A second Truth is declared that the carnal nature of man is set free from the lower physical expression of the creative energy of generation.

9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,
A third Truth is declared of what will happen to those who still succumb to the tempting allure of the lower nature and are imprinted with the animal consciousness in the mind.

10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:
The lower nature will continue to partake of the miseries imposed by the law of cause and effect, and the suffering, purifying discipline of incarnation, until the lower is transmuted into the higher (Mind).

11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.
The suffering continues without rest to those who are unable to satisfy their desires, because the lower carnal nature is paramount in their mental imagery.

12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.
However, those who overcome their beastly passions and lower nature, and patiently refrain from impure thoughts and selfish deeds, will receive their just reward.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.
The Voice of higher Inspiration reveals that there is Bliss to those who die to their carnal nature (i.e. are liberated from the carnal body and live in a world of heavenly bliss), for they will no longer have to battle their desires and lower impulses, for their good deeds will be rewarded.

14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.
In self-awareness, the initiate sees his Higher Self within the golden Divine Consciousness in his Mind, and he senses the "time for reaping."

15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.
And the Divinity in the Temple of the Mind sends a message (inner voice) directly to the initiate: The moment has arrived to reap the results of the experiences in the body. Also, this refers to the time when the course of life is finished.

16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.
The initiate with his inner awareness sees the results of his deeds (in his body).

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.
The overshadowing Divinity (2nd Logos – incarnating Self) also reaps what the initiate accomplishes on earth.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.
The Divinity in the Mind, which has control of the creative fires in the spinal cord, vibrates with great force and sends the dynamic innervating current throughout the spinal cord and out through each nerve plexus (chakra), which have become ripe with vivifying clusters of energy.

19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.
And the Divinity of the Higher Mind gathers the solar forces and prana (vital breath) within the spinal cord (cerebral-spinal axis) of the body and impresses the aura body with the innervating energy.

20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.
The aura body (of light substance around the physical body) produces an electro-magnetic current which returns to the chakras (energy centers) of the 4 somatic divisions of the body to form the Solar Body with its 1600 nerve currents.

Revelation 15
1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.
A sign in the heavens operates at two levels: above and below (macrocosm and microcosm). In the sky it's the sign of Taurus the Bull, the generative (earth) force, along with the Pleiades; in the initiate it's the directing intelligences of the 7 centers filled with regenerative force and prepared for the final conquest.

2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.
Within the crystalline ether of the brain, the initiate has managed to blend fire and water in order to achieve the alchemical union of positive and negative poles, and to unite the masculine Mind and feminine Heart of his being. The initiate controls his dual nature, higher and lower.

3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.
The victorious and harmonious vibrations of conquering the Sea of Generation (Red Sea), and the vibrations of the higher intuition, are the cumulative effect of the great inner work of building the solar body of the initiate.

4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.
The initiate stands in awe of the glorious and illuminating nature of his Soul-body, whose attributes now manifest the just reward of a pure life.

5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:
The initiate now sees the inner building that opens up in divine consciousness.

6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.
The 7 androgynous (Hermes + Aphrodite, Mercury + Venus) divinities, who are the combined forces of the masculine and feminine inner dual natures, present their highest mental vibrations for the finishing work of regeneration.

7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.
Within the 4 somatic divisions of the body, the lowest center (sacral) with its conserved generative fluid, which is innervated by the 7 centers, now prepares for its final ascent up the spinal cord.

8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.
The inner sanctuary of the initiate is electrically (positively) charged with the primordial (ever-present) substance of the creative force, and the physical or lower nature is not privy to the inner awareness that is about to take place with the etheric consummation of the Soul-body.

Revelation 16

1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.
The vibrations from higher consciousness stir up the 7 centers and begin the re-energizing process within the entire aura body of the initiate.

2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.
The first somatic (lower) division (carnal, sacral region) receives the first impulse of serpentine energy, which eradicates the beastly physical nature and its desires.

3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.
The second somatic division (the navel, abdominal region) is next in line to receive the regenerative energy, which causes the lower psychic desires to dry up and have no further effect on the initiate.

4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.
The third somatic division (the heart) is energized with life force throughout the circulatory system of the body.

5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

The Intelligence of the heart center now merges with the consciousness of the eternal space-time continuum, which is the true and just nature of the Soul-body.

6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.
The intuitive mind (the Seer) now absorbs the life-force, and the entire body is illuminated with the regenerative light-fluid.

7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.
The overshadowing Self of the initiate also bears witness to the true nature of the Soul-body, whose work has been accomplished according to the just Law of Cause and Effect.

8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.
The fourth somatic division (the Mind) receives the light-energy with such a fiery impulse from the serpentine force (kundalini) that the "blinding light" overwhelms and strains the mental body.

9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.
Because of the intense fiery-energy which pulsates through the mind, the intellect feels the torture of passion and the vital energy of the unregenerated lower nature.

10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,
And the 5th Divinity, which is centered in the Heart and spreads through the entire sympathetic nervous system, becomes imbued with invisible (dark) energy, causing intense vibrations within the throat region.

11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.
The emotional nature of the initiate suffers the last vestiges of carnal (physical) distress as the lower qualities are eliminated from the construction of the Solar-body.

12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.
The 6th Divinity, which controls the functions of the cerbro-spinal system as its magnetic nerve force flows through the entire body, diverts the flow of energy from the lower generative use and directs it upward for the use of the Solar-body.

13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.
The final cleansing of the initiate includes the purging and elimination of the psychic elemental specters of his former self, which presided in the three lower divisions of his body: the desire body, the lower mind, and the sacral region.

14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.
These ghosts of discarded thought-forms become specters (shades), which were the ruling depraved portions of the lower man, and they are gathered together for one last battle within man as he faces the ghostly remains of his former lives.

15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

The initiation is at hand. The Immortal Self, the initiate, is prepared to walk the straight and narrow path clothed with his purified bodies.

16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.
Cosmically, the battle takes place in the sign of Leo (Head="Lion of Judah"), where the sun and moon rule (Pineal and Pituitary glands). Individually, the last conquest occurs when the consciousness (head) and intuition (heart) gather all the energy of the cerebro-spinal axis and pierce or open the 3rd eye in the temple, and the positive and negative, the masculine and feminine, the height and the plain (Megiddo), and all opposites are united.
[Note: the allegory of Armageddon, which means the "Height of Megiddo", is best explained by the allegory in the book of Judges, chapters 4 and 5.]

17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.
The 7th divinity sends the purifying, energizing force into the Mind (air), which is the hardest part of the battle to conquer the body; the proclamation from the Higher Mind declares that the Great Work is finished.

18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.
The electro-magnetic vibrations and disturbances in the physical body accompany the birth of the Solar-body of the initiate.

19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.
The entire body is now composed of three major divisions: the head, heart, and abdominal region. The lower procreative centers, along with the lower elements of the body, undergo transmutation, and the mystery of the human body is revealed as a fiery illuminating field of creative energy.

20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.
The isolated spiritual centers and the elevated physical traits merge into the One Spirit-body.

21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.
Every last vestige of physical-mental egoistic traits that weighed down the Soul is delegated to the scrap heap of history as the transformation of elemental form to the Solar-body comes to a completion.

Revelation 17

1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:
After the conquest of the generative forces in the body, the initiate is shown the divine retribution of the lower feminine or sex force which controls the emotions.

2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.
The physical senses of the body had been under the control of the sensual pleasures, and the physical body had been under the sway of the temptress.

3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.
In the collective unconscious state of mind, the initiate understands the subtle control of the lower feminine or sex principle which feeds on the beastly nature of man by stealing the life force of the 7 centers and by stimulating the dual nature of the 5 senses.

4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:
As a goddess temptress, the sex force courses through the arterial and venous blood streams, and it takes the most precious solar and lunar germs (seeds) for dissemination, thus filling the sacral region with various afflictions and diseases because of the misuse of the sex force.

5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.
The inverted sex force with its energy flowing into the head of the coiled serpent is truly a Mystery of the Human Body, for its dynamic energy can be the divine Mother of the Soul-child through regeneration, or the infernal Aphrodite who denigrates the human body through degeneration.

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.
The temptress-goddess is saturated with the sex force of her victims, both saintly (pure) and beastly (impure), who fall victim to her seductive force.

7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.
And the Divinity explains the marvels of the serpentine force (kundalini) in the body; the feminine nature or sex principle is dominated by the lower mind (carnal nature), which controls the 7 centers with 5 senses of dual polarity.

8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.
The lower carnal nature was instrumental in the development of the physical body, but it disintegrates when the soul is purified. It comes from the sacral region and is sent to the elements upon dissolution. The uninitiated can only marvel at the sex energy as it comes and goes.

9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.
The wisdom of the intuitive mind reveals that the manifestation of the sex force occurs through the 7 centers (chakras) of the human body, and it dominates even during the last 7 incarnations of the Soul.

10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.
The Conqueror (initiate) is at the stage where he has passed the preparatory stages in his previous five incarnations, and is now in the penultimate stage; at the ultimate stage the initiate will speedily make the final conquest.

11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

The lower carnal nature, which disintegrated, becomes a separate (eighth) spectral existence (entity), and it becomes the elemental self in the astral world.

12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.
Five Pranas (or vital forces) with dual (positive and negative) energy fields merely receive strength and vital energy from the lower nature and have no ruling capacity on their own.

13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.
These vital forces act with one purpose, and they pass their force and authority back to the lower nature.

14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.
The animal vitality intensifies the passional nature, but it succumbs to the overpowering influence of the Higher Mind, which now rules the body, including the higher true faculties which lead to the higher life.

15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.
The various traits and attributes of the four somatic divisions are the various castes and races which are controlled by the lower emotions or desire natures.

16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.
The five vital forces of dual nature, which are ruled by the lower nature, cause much suffering, therefore the lower nature is hateful, for it uses up the vital energy and burns the body with passional fires, and consumes the life force.

17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.
Even the vital forces have the impulse to fulfill a divine purpose, for they operate on the physical-emotional lower nature until the higher vibrations bring about a total transformation.

18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.
And the physical body with its ruling lower consciousness is the underlying principle of the material forces of the world.

Revelation 18

1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.
After the preceding instructions, the initiate, who has conquered the ordeals of his initiation and achieved the illuminating spiritual rebirth, receives a final exhortation.

2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.
The great city of humanity is still in a corrupt state of existence, desecrated by evil thoughts and the habitation of immoral desires.

3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.
The lower castes of people – the warrior-rulers, merchants, and laborers – are debauched by the misuse of the life force and are under subjugation to the physical temptations.

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.
The divine intuition of the mind (the conscience) is always the guide, exhorting that the Law of Consequences decrees that for every cause there is an effect, pleasure of a physical nature bringing pain of a physical nature.

5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.
For the effect of physical debauchery affects the Higher Mind, and the deeds are imprinted on the mental Book of Remembrances.

6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.
The reward of the lower nature is doubled in intensity, and the emotional nature of humanity is also doubled in intensity with each misuse of the life force.

7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.
The carnal nature is glorified and sits enthroned in the body, but she only brings tormenting pangs of conscience and sorrowful results.

8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.
And the end result of carnal pleasure is depletion of the life force and death to the creative energy, which is a just recompense.

9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,
The warrior-ruling class indulges in lamentations for the sensual pleasures when they see their dissipated sex force has ruined them.

10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.
For they will be witnesses of her tormenting effect when the creative energy is gone and judged to be wasted.

11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:
The merchant class of commercialism (and also the faculties of the body) will weep when the sexual lures are no longer attractive and become worthless, and the life force becomes valueless.

12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,
The wares of the merchants of the earth (and also faculties of the body), including gold (solar) and silver (lunar), precious intellectual qualities, pearls (of wisdom), and various other elements, qualities, and faculties of body, mind, and soul.

13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

And various essences of the body, including the vital essence (wine and oil) that produces circulatory and bodily fluids for the building of the creative energy of the body and the purity of the soul.

14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.
And the enjoyment of the lust of the flesh, and everything gratifying from that pleasure, shall no longer exist.

15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,
The business of all the physical things that attracted the lower man will end in the realization that there is no satisfaction in such things.

16 And saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!
The carnal nature, alas, that bedecks itself with the finest material goods, including all the physical, intellectual and emotional qualities that on the surface enrich the body.

17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,
This too shall pass and come to nothing. And the various business concerns and the entire economy of the world (including the physical and emotional concerns of the body) share the same fate.

18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!
They all see the ruin of commercialism and trafficking in the material goods (including attentiveness to physical concerns) that focused solely on the physical nature of man.

19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.
And the merchant class of people (including all the physical attributes of the body) were in a great state of depression, for everything that made them rich is suddenly taken away from them, and there is a momentary experience of existential emptiness.

20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.
For this experience the Higher Mind can rejoice, because it now understands the impermanence of material nature.

21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.
And a mighty divinity took the weight of material possessions which weighed down humanity (and the soul of man) and returned it to the desire world in order to take the material weight off of the shoulders of developing humanity (and individual man).

22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;
The vibrations of the material universe, and the building elements, and the motion of the spinning material world will come to an abrupt halt.

23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.
Light in the physical sense, and the union of the positive and negative elements, will no longer manifest in the body. The dealers in physical and material aspects of the body were once prominent and deceived humanity by the attractive forces of the material world.

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.
And the devotees and seers, the highest caste of people, were also part of humanity, but they had conquered the allure of earthly things.

Revelation 19

1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:
After the lamentations of the materialists (and attributes of the physical being), a vast vibration was heard in the Higher Mind, announcing through the microcosm of the body the victorious attainment of the Soul-Conqueror.

2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.
The chorus repeats the just triumph of the Soul-Conqueror over the sex force that formerly had degenerated the body through the misuse of the life force, but now it was used for the higher faculties of the mind.

3 And again they said, Alleluia And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.
The chant directs the energy upward for the use of the higher faculties.

4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.
And the 12 spiritualized attributes (with dual nature) – and also the 24 regents of the hours of the day – and the four somatic divisions of the body (or qualities associated with them: courage, labor, regeneration, discrimination) all obey the inner Soul of the Conqueror. The vibration (OM, Amen) of the universe is chanted in Praise to the Higher Nature.

5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.
And the vibration from the highest center illuminated the Soul-Conqueror and made all his attributes, minor and major, become awe-inspiring.

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.
The vibrations of all inner forces, and the motion of all wave-particles in the body, resonated forcefully with the unison of Cosmic Consciousness.

7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.
The immortal Soul has unified within his Higher Self the masculine (positive) and the feminine (negative) principles of his being.

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.
The feminine principle is the solar body, which is clothed in the pure white light (of right living).

9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.
The inner voice declares that the immortal nature of the Soul can be experienced by the dynamic creative force in the spine, which ascends to the conscious Higher Mind.

10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.
The Soul is awestruck by the magnitude of the vision of the Higher Consciousness. Nevertheless, the initiate is reminded that the Higher Self is to be viewed as the Seer, and not as the Almighty One, who only is the Real.

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.
The Higher Mind reveals another wonder: the spirit of man, the incarnated Soul-Conqueror, now rides in absolute purity, having judged and eradicated everything that relates to the phases of physical, material existence.

12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.
The fire of the kundalini (life force) radiates through the eyes as spiritual vision, and the initiate now possesses all his energized attributes as mental faculties; and he receives a new character (and consciousness), which is the Soul-body.

13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.
The vehicle of his Solar (Soul) body is imbued with the life force, and he now possesses the inner quality of the overshadowing Logos (Over-Soul or Christ-Mind).

14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.
At his command he now has the forces of nature, which accompany him as gifts and pure qualities of heavenly substance.

15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.
The power of his spoken word will rule and control all his inner qualities with perfect mastery of Self, and he will control the force of his creative energy for a higher purpose.

16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.
And on his Soul-body, and within his generative region, will be imprinted the consciousness of a Ruler of the body (senses), and a Master of the inner traits and characteristics.

17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;
The solar divinity (Michael, who is like unto God) declares with a strong vibration to all the thoughts and powers of the mind: the time has come for the mental forces to completely rule all facets of the body.

18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

The Higher Mind will now conquer and completely rule all former rulers of the four somatic divisions of the body, from the highest centers to the lowest, including all forces of the lower nature.

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.
The lower nature, and all the former rulers of the body with their lower attributes and qualities, makes one last attempt at controlling and ruling the Soul and his higher faculties.

20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.
The lower nature, and the sensual nature that enticed the lower nature to be marked with a beastly nature, and all the lower desires, is thrown into the astral world where the lower elements become part of the phantasmal world.

21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.
The high initiate now discriminates with sound judgment and refrains from uttering anything of the lower nature; thus his thoughts are clothed with a creative force.

Revelation 20

1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.
The ruling divinity in the Higher Mind has the key (knowledge) to bind the carnal nature in the sacral region where it lies.

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,
The Soul-Conqueror has power over his lower (beastly) nature and the serpent force that vibrates in his spinal cord and rules for a prolonged period of time. [Also, in the case of the adept, there is the life cycle of 1,000 years for the last incarnation, the 7th.]

3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.
The seat of the kundalini (serpent force) in the sacral region contains the life—generative, regenerative – force, and it is controlled by the Soul-Conqueror for the period in between incarnations, and then released for one last incarnation (and final conquest).

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.
During the periods between incarnations, the enthroned Self passes judgment on the actions of the lower nature during the preceding earth-incarnation. The pure thoughts, aspirations, endeavors, and actions are retained in the Eternal Mind throughout the thousand years (or prolonged period of rest).

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.
The evil elements remain dormant in the lower astral realm (the second death) and come back to the former self (resurrects) when the soul again descends to earth.

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.
The immortal soul of the initiate-conqueror, however, does not lose consciousness at the moment of physical death, for the evil elements have already been purged; therefore, the divine consciousness is alive and active for higher work during the thousand year cycle (or prolonged period).

7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,
For the final incarnation of the Soul-Conqueror, after the allotted period of time expires, the lower beastly nature will once again assail the Soul.

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.
The lower desire body with its passions and cravings will try to tempt the four somatic divisions of the body, and its multitude of surviving physical impressions will gather as a malignant spectral entity to attack every part of the being with countless temptations.

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.
The multiple impressions ravage the body and try to set up a permanent dwelling place in the Soul-body, but the solar energy from the illuminating Soul-Conqueror overcomes the lower nature.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.
And the purifying fire obliterates the deceptive phantoms of the lower beastly nature, and they are transmuted into the original primal substance.

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.
The initiate stands before his inner God (his personal conscience) at the threshold of his cumulative judgment day of past lives in a realm where the physical and astral worlds have receded out of consciousness.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.
At the after-death judgment, the Conqueror-Soul faces his Higher Self and renders an account of all his previous incarnations (books), and judged for better or for worse by reviewing all past deeds. Then the comprehensive record of the Soul's incarnations is placed in the great scroll of life (the Akashic Records or Book of Remembrance).

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.
All the deeds in the sea of sensuous life in the desire body, and all the deeds done in the physical and psychic (astral) worlds, return to the Eternal Memory and are judged for better or worse, according to the Law of Recompense.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.
The physical and psychic (astral) worlds, and the elements of unworthy character, are purged and delegated to the scrap heap of refuse in the primal world of chaos.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Those things which are not of the Higher Mind substance are purged from the account of the Soul's comprehensive record, which is stored in the Eternal Memory, and they're restored to their primal substance.

Revelation 21

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.
The Conqueror-Soul has acquired a new consciousness and has risen above the illusions of physical existence and the desires of the material world. The immortal Soul sees the inner kingdom with the higher senses.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
This inner kingdom is the Solar (Soul) body that has been formed by the Higher Mind of the initiate by uniting the feminine (negative) pole and the masculine (positive) pole of his inner being.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.
The vibrations of the Higher Mind now generate a highly energized (spiritualized) energy field within the Unified Nervous System, which acts as a Cosmic Consciousness within all the faculties of the Soul.

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.
In this new world, there are no more ordeals or suffering to undergo, hence no cause for unhappiness. The former awareness of physical existence, and its cycle of birth and death, is non-existent, for the transcendent nature of the inner kingdom supersedes all previous existence.

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.
The inner awareness of the Conqueror-Soul now becomes a new universe (microcosm), and the Soul takes its place among the immortal beings whose vibrations are of a True Eternal Nature.

6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.
And so the Great Work is finished. The beginning and end of the Great Work is the Soul's realization of its own origin and perfecting work. The invigorating and re-energizing currents of the spinal life force now continually feed the Higher Mind with creative consciousness.

7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.
To the Conqueror-Soul belong all the bountiful gifts of the inner kingdom where the soul consciousness reflects the Cosmic Consciousness.

8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.
Whereas the second birth (of the Conqueror-Soul) brings about the merging of the Soul's consciousness with the universal and divine, the second death (of the personality in its lower carnal nature) brings about the obliteration of all that pertains to the lusts, passions,

and desires of the lower nature, which are recycled into the primal substance of the elemental world.

9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.
The vibration of the serpentine (kundalini) force, which completed the conquest of the generative centers (chakras), now reveals the finished and adorned celestial being of the Higher Mind.

10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,
Through the Breath of the inner spirit, the Conqueror-Soul ascends to the brain in his skull, where the inner revelation of the deathless Solar (Soul) body occurs.

11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;
The spiritual sight of the Seer perceives the Pure Light of the Pineal gland (stone or Philosopher's Stone), or 3rd Eye, and the crystal-clear consciousness which it provides to the Solar body.

12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:
The aura surrounding the Solar body reflects the 12 force centers through which the 12 cosmic forces of the 12 signs of the Zodiac (12 tribes) focus their energies into the microcosm of the human body.

13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.
The foursquare body with its four directions (corresponding to the four regions of space) is arranged in four triads (by 3's).

14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.
The aura has 12 force centers, where the 12 Zodiacal signs (12 apostles—Matthew 10:1-4) have their patterns or archetypes written into the 12 spiritualized qualities of the Conqueror-Soul.

15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.
The golden measuring reed of the spinal canal, with its amount of force of the ascending kundalini fire, determines the size and dimensions of the aura, and its centers of force, through which the energy flows.

16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.
The Solar body has the shape of a cube, whose equal sides in three dimensions is analogous to the mathematical length, width, and height, and whose height and breadth are the same when the arms are stretched out. The measurement of 12,000 is the magnified influence of the 12 Zodiac signs on the microcosm.

17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.
The aura (wall), which is the electro-magnetic body of the man (or of his astral self), has the identical number (144) as the previous 144,000 (number of humanity, 9).

18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.
The aura is a brilliant crystalline substance and self-luminous; and the body itself radiates like the sun, with crystal clarity.

19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;
The force centers of the aura surrounding the body, through which the powers of the 12 constellations (signs of the Zodiac/12 tribes of Israel) send their colorful gemlike (rainbow-colored) vibrations, are: (1) jasper = Virgo (Levi), (2) sapphire = Aquarius (Reuben), (3) chalcedony = Capricorn (Nephthalim), (4) emerald = Cancer (Benjamin),

20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.
(5) sardonyx = Leo (Judah), (6) sardius = Aries (Gad), (7) chrysolyte = Gemini (Simeon), (8) beryl = Scorpio (Manasses or Dan), (9) topaz = Taurus (Issachar), (10) chrysoprasus=Libra (Asher), (11) jacinth = Pisces (Zabulon), (12) amethyst = Sagittarius (Joseph).

21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.
Each of the signs of the Zodiac (operating in the Solar body) was formed in wisdom (Pearl of Wisdom), and each operates as a concentric circle within One Wheel of Life; and the crystal clear spinal cord is the High-Way through the entire body.

22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.
The entire spiritualized (energized with etheric fire) body is now the Temple of Divine Consciousness.

23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.
The Solar body is now illuminated from within by the inner sun (Pineal gland—3rd Eye) and inner moon (Pituitary body). The enlightened Higher Mind is the Temple of the Solar body.

24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.
And the qualities which are preserved, and the purified senses that rule the body, are illuminated by the higher consciousness which makes the entire body glorified.

25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.
For the Conqueror-Soul, there is perennial consciousness now that his Higher Mind is illuminated.

26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.
The newly illuminated qualities become light-bearers to all parts of the body.

27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.
The beastly dark lower nature has no place in the Solar body, and only the pure, the true, and the beautiful reign supreme in the life of the Enlightened Consciousness.

Revelation 22

1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.
The One Force in the universe, in which all life moves and has its being, proceeds Now like a waterfall or a downpour from a cloud through the Enlightened Mind and courses through the spinal cord.

2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.
In the central path through which the energized fluid flows, and on each side of the central canal (the spinal cord), the entire cerbro-spinal axis with its ganglia and the two nervous systems (sympathetic & parasympathetic, Ida & Pingala) function in unison to produce a lunar seed each month, which matures at the end of a year's cycle to help regenerate the body.

3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:
The accursed function of the generative act will dry up, and only the regenerated (conserved) elements and life force that serve the higher purpose of building the higher intuitive mind will exist in the Conqueror-Soul.

4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.
The Soul is now conscious of his Divine Self, which imprints the Divine Consciousness in the 3rd Eye.

5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.
The inner kingdom of the Soul is illuminated by the Enlightened Mind, which brings the Light, the Truth, and the Way to all the faculties of the body.

6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.
The vibrations of the true teachings, which the Seer perceives by his inner sight, are for the benefit of the Great Work that must be accomplished.

7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.
The work is soon to be consummated, and the bliss of achievement comes to the Soul who perceives and understands the method by which the Great Work is accomplished.

8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.
I, the Initiate, have witnessed the inner workings of the mysterious body, and I wanted to bow down to the divine form that revealed the mysteries of the body.

9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.
Once again the initiate is reminded that the divinity appears to help with the Great Work, and that the Seers are a brotherhood of workers who follow the universal mystery teachings and bow down only to the Universal Divine Life that IS.

10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.
The initiate is encouraged to reveal the truths of the human body to those who are ready for initiation into its mysteries.

11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.
But to those who desire to continue in their unjust ways and be ruled by the lower carnal nature, that is their choice. But the person who through right living and a pure life strives for something better . . .

12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.
Well, to that soul the actuality of the Immortal Soul comes speedily, and when it comes, there is a balancing of merits and demerits, and the Law of Cause and Effect (Karma) brings a just reward.

13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.
The divinity announces that he is the first Logos (Overshadowing Self or the Knower), and the last Logos (incarnating Self or the Thinker), the beginning of our Higher Self and the only permanent part of our being.

14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.
Immortality belongs to those who learn to use the Life Force to open the centers of their body in order to partake of the Cosmic Consciousness that is inherent in the cerebral-spinal Solar (Soul) body.

15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.
To those who refuse to use the Life Force correctly, and continue to live the low life and wallow in carnal pleasures and commit crimes against the soul and body, those will continue to live a life of falsehood.

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.
The divinity reveals itself Now as the Christ-Mind that is the consciousness that operates through the centers of the body. It is also the same consciousness that has its roots in the heavens and the branches on earth, and the star that always shines in the 3rd Eye.

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.
The initiate, unified in heart and mind, Now hears the inner voice (conscience-spirit) always reverberating with the message of using the waters of the Life Force for regeneration.

18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:
The testimony of the initiate is for the purpose of perceiving the mystery of the human body. Any change to the fundamental principles of the teachings which lead to regeneration will only harm the person who misuses the Life Force.

19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.
Those who misuse or lose the Life Force in their bodies will suffer the consequences of losing part of the vital essence which will cause loss of higher consciousness.

20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.
And so the testimony of the initiate affirms the Truth of the Faithful Vibration (OM, Amen), which brings about the coming of the Higher Mind in man.

21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.
The Master Christ Consciousness is within all mankind. OM, Amen.

OM

AUM

AMEN

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1 – Obituary – Salvatore D'Aura

Appendix 2 – Pictures of Salvatore D'Aura, 1983

Appendix 3 – Christmas Cards from D'Aura

Appendix 4 – Letter from D'Aura dated Oct. 4, 1979

Appendix 5 – Statue of Apollonius of Tyana (a.k.a. St. Paul, Paulus, Apollos, Pol)

APPENDIX 1
Obituary – Salvatore D'Aura

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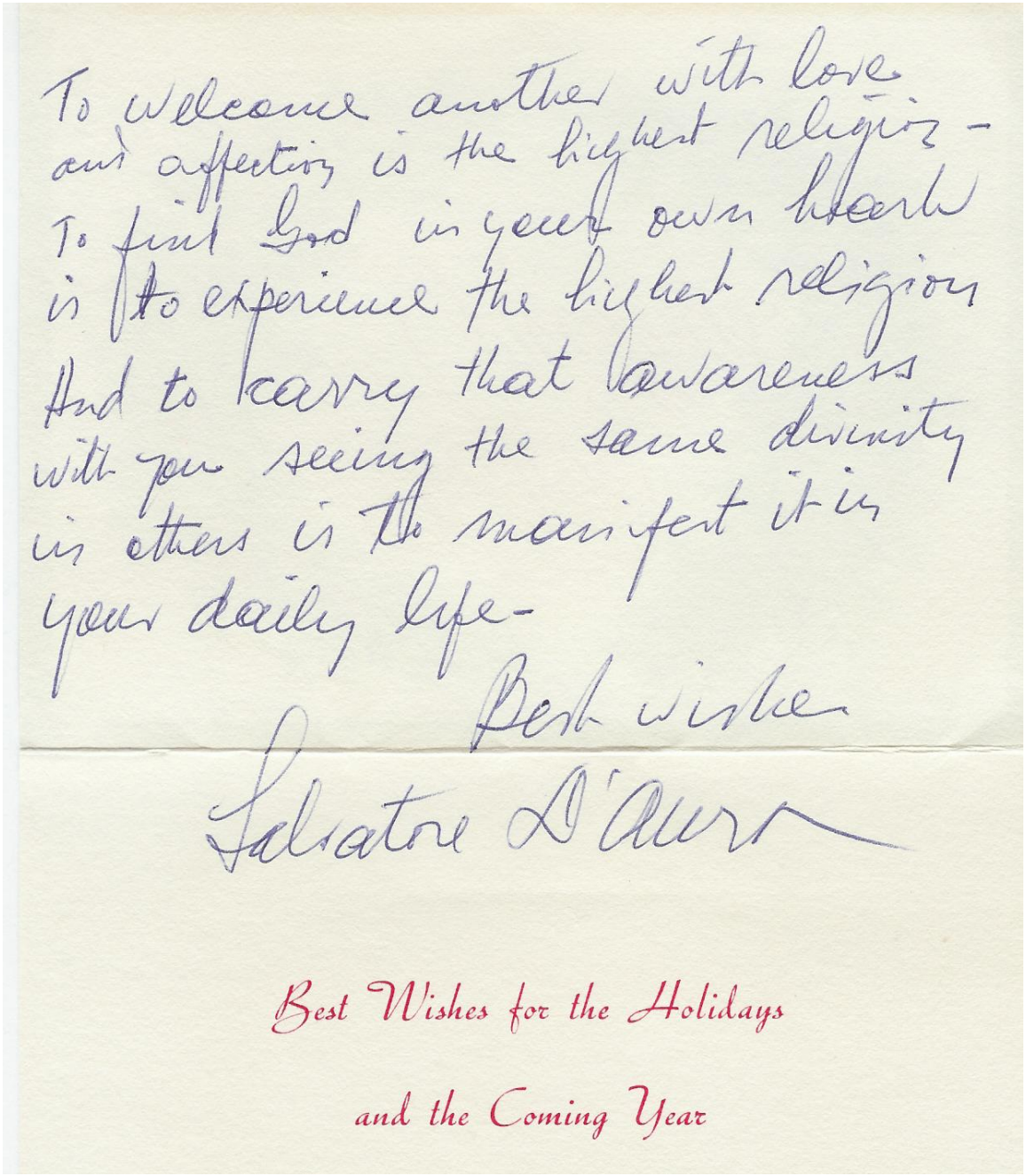
These search terms have been highlighted: maestro salvatore d aura
Page 1
Maestro Salvatore D'Aura, a 35-year- resident of Palo Alto and an opera singer who studied under Giacamo Puccini and helped found the New York City Opera, has died.
He died two days after his 100th birthday.
D'Aura began his career in opera early as a sitting conductor at the Vatican in his teens. The Arch Bishop quickly promoted D'Aura to the conductor of the Boy's Chapel, which sang in the Sistine Chapel and at the Vatican.
In 1922, when D'Aura was 18, he sang one of Puccini's arias at a festival in Rome, and was embraced by Puccini himself afterwards, who asked the young performer to coach his singers.
Puccini was dying from throat cancer, and could not demonstrate to his singers how he wanted his music sung.
D'Aura was thrown into the opera at the last moment when a key tenor came down with a cold.
At 18, he sang in the Caracalla, a famous Roman stadium that holds 2,000 people.
D'Aura's career in Italy included con- ducting operas, teaching students and putting on music festivals.
His early career was highlighted by an invitation to sing at the Metropolitan Opera.
He sang at the 1925 World's Fair in New York City and fell in love with America. He returned in 1934 and became a citizen. During World War II, he flew as a captain in the U.S. Army Air Corps and was involved in transmitting and receiving secret codes.
He retired in California in the late 1960', and settled into his home on El Dorado Ave. In retirement, he coached opera singers and worked as the artistic director of the Bayshore Lyric Opera in Capitola.
D'Aura was born in Tunis, North Africa on April 21, 1904 and died April 21 in Palo Alto. [Note error: Should be died April 23]
He is survived by two brothers who live in California.
Daily News
Tuesday, May 4, 2004 29
OBITUARIES

APPENDIX 2
Pictures of Salvatore D'Aura, 1983

APPENDIX 3
Christmas Cards from D'Aura


To welcome another with love and affection is the highest religion - To find God in your own heart is to experience the highest religion And to carry that awareness with you seeing the same divinity in others is to manifest it in your daily life-

Best wishes

Salvatore D'Aura

Best Wishes for the Holidays

and the Coming Year

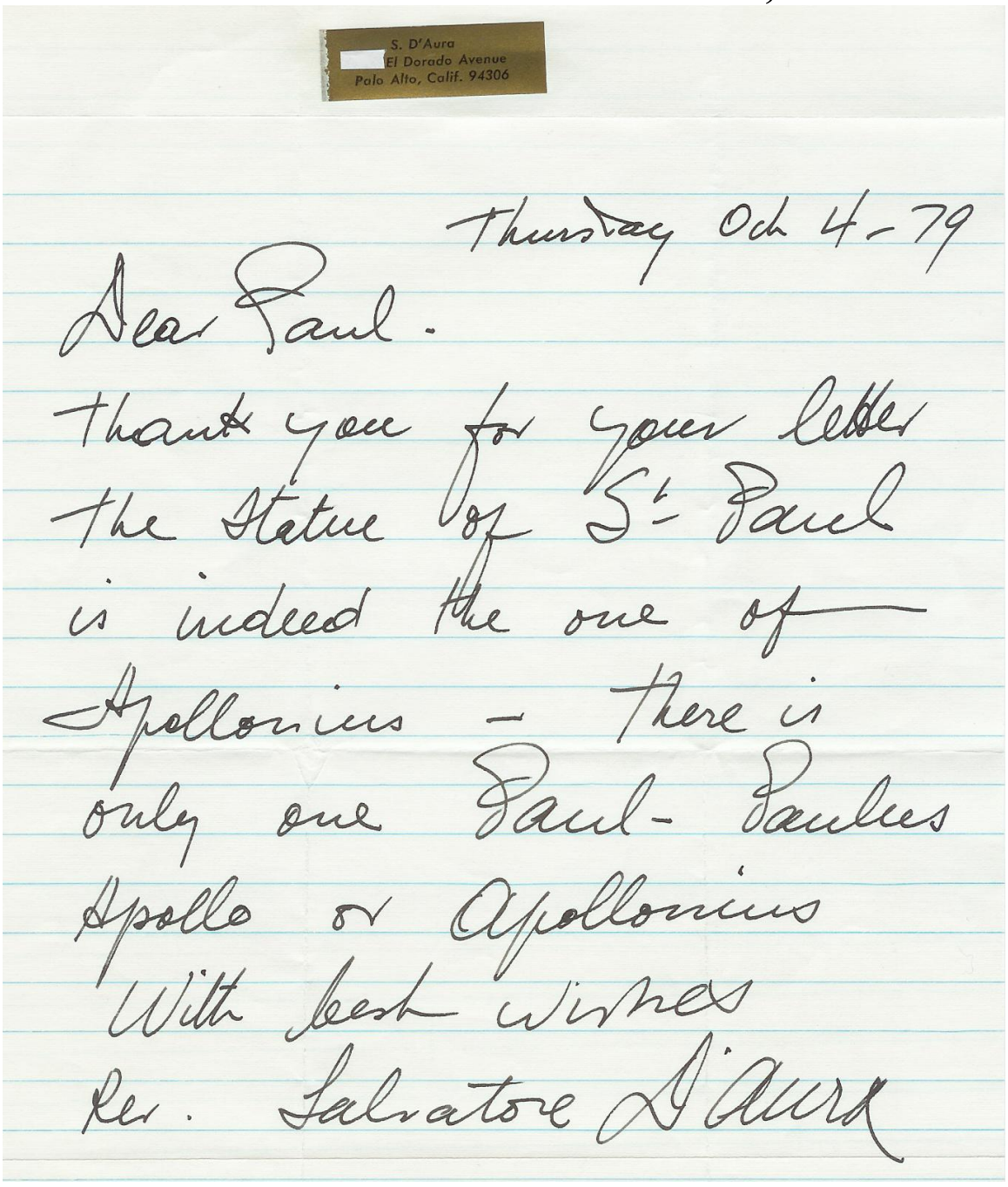
POST CARD

PLACE STAMP HERE

Dear Paul
My best wishes for
the realization of God
within and without
the only joy

Salvatore D'aura

APPENDIX 4
Letter from D'Aura dated Oct. 4, 1979



[redacted] S. D'Aura
El Dorado Avenue
Palo Alto, Calif. 94306

Thursday Oct 4-79

Dear Paul.

thank you for your letter
the Statue of St. Paul
is indeed the one of
Apollonius - there is
only one Paul - Paulus
Apollo or Apollonius
With best wishes
Rev. Salvatore D'Aura

APPENDIX 5
Statue of Apollonius of Tyana
(a.k.a. St. Paul, Paulus, Apollos, Pol)