

The New Jerusalem
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Other Books by Jack Holt

The Cup of Christ Mystery/Thriller Series:

The Cup of Christ and the Forgotten Disciple

The Tree of Life

The New Jerusalem

Introduction

The high history of lé Sangraal has never been told by any mortal man since Saint Joseph de Arimathea wrote these sacred words about our Lord and Savior. However, I declare to all men and women who wish to own this book, if God allows me to live in good health, it is certainly my intention to bring his story together.

If God blesses my holy quest, these parchments will be found.

—Lord Robert de Borron
Anno Domini 1190

The High History
of lé Sangraal and the Forgotten Disciple
is Dedicated to My Patron and
Brother-in-Law
Comte Gautiér de Montbéliard
—Lord Robert de Borron



Dedication

To my loving wife, Carol, who had patience for the last twelve years listening to me speak about my book. Also, to my late mother, Charlotte, who gave me the interest to write, and my late dad,

Jack, who had a great thirst for history.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge author Stephen Lawhead, for inspiring me to write my first book in The Cup of Christ trilogy. His tireless research in Celtic lore and the legends of King Arthur motivated me to create my own ideas.

Dan Brown, author of *The Da Vinci Code*, provided the inspiration for me to use symbols, codes, and arcane terminology.

I am grateful for Joanna Penn whose success as an independent author contributed to me taking the same route.

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I offer my humble thanks to my great taskmaster, Pam Johnson of Pam the Editor. Without her helpful advice and developmental editing, I would not have accomplished this writing journey. Also, to my copyeditor Joni Wilson who kept me in the proper boundaries of literary grammar. Last but not least Gaye Mack, my spiritual guide for ideas from Glastonbury Abbey.

My printing company, IngramSpark, offered great advice about getting my book published for all those who love historical fiction and mystery thrillers.

Jack Holt

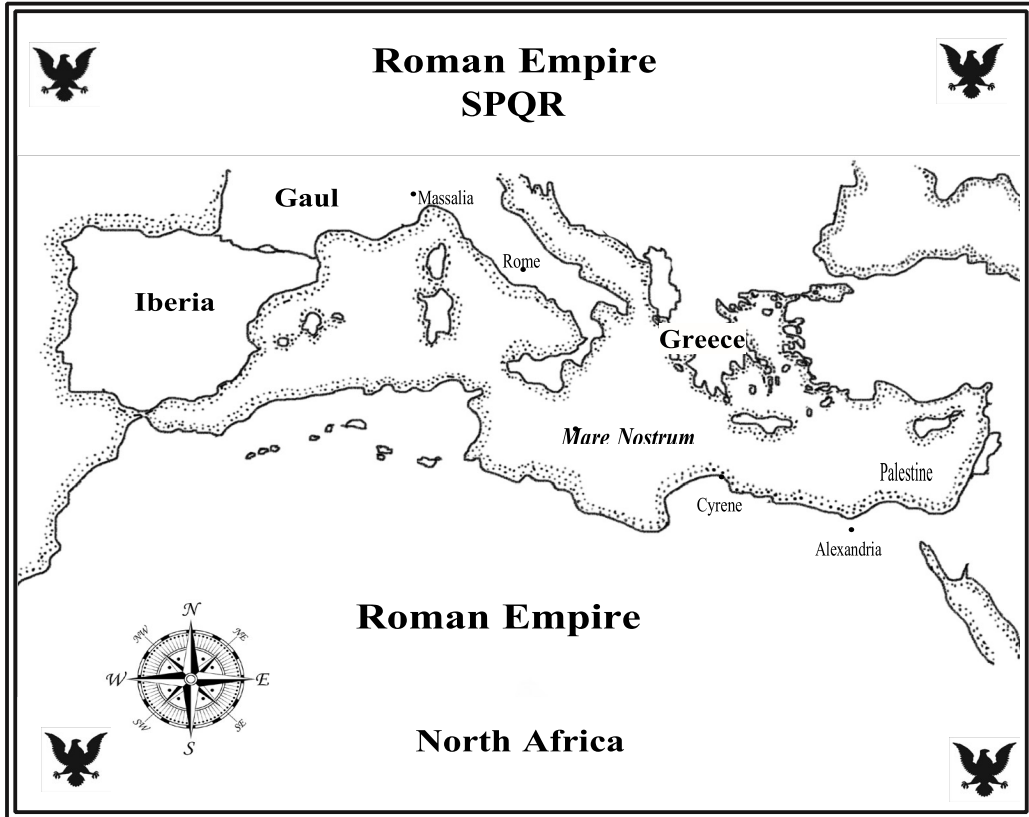
The New Jerusalem

“I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had disappeared, and so had the sea. Then I saw a New Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down from God in heaven. It was like a bride dressed in her wedding gown and ready to meet her husband.

—Saint John the Writer

Anno Domini 96

Anno Domini 37

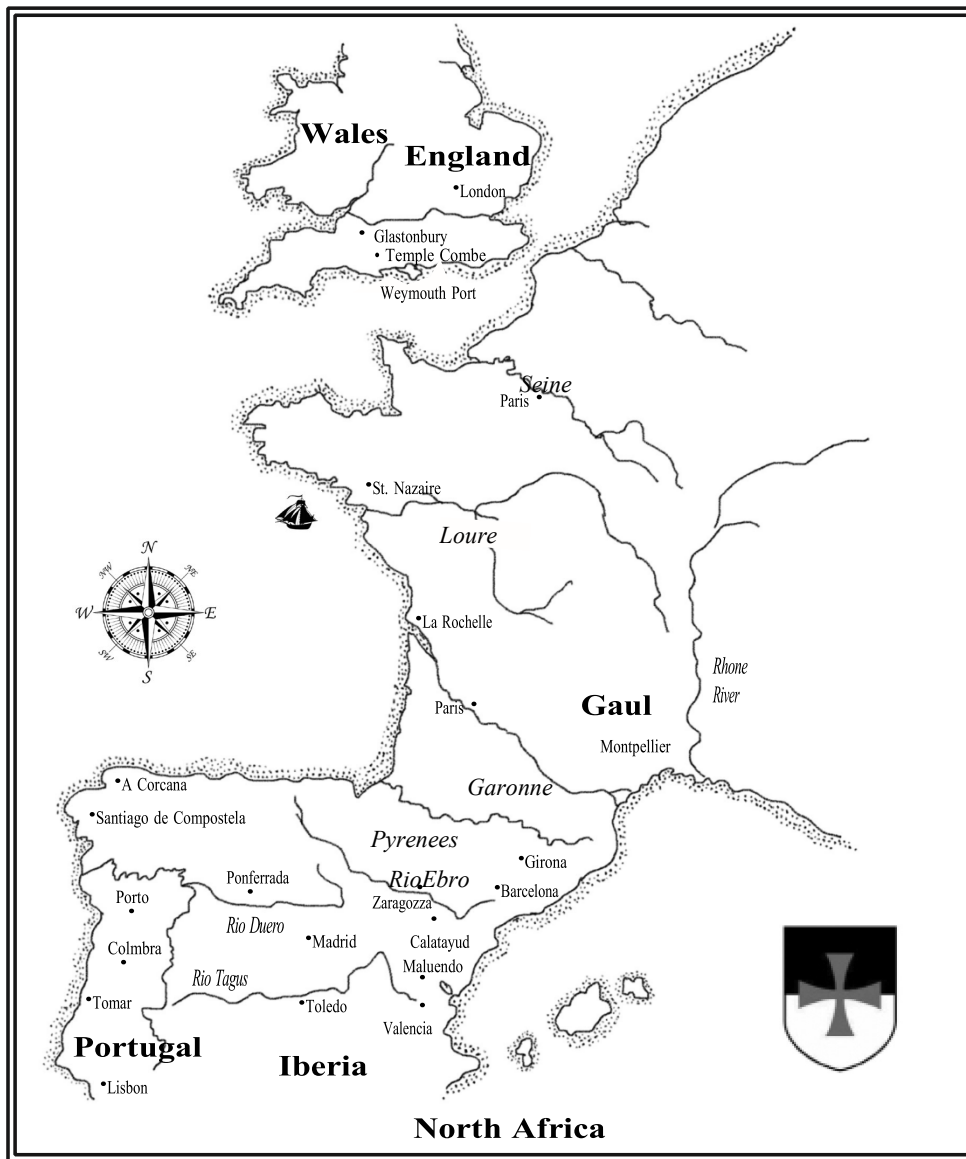


† Anno Domini 37 †





Anno Domini 1190-1191





Anno Domini 1191





The Principal Characters of the City of Jerusalem and Palestine

Anno Domini 37

Alein Yosephe—son to Yoseph of Arimathea, partner in his father’s business

Barabbas—the murderer set free by Jewish Sanhedrin, instead of Jesus the Christ, and released by Pontius Pilate

Cephus—fisherman, “the Rock,” disciple of Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph, brother to another disciple called Andrew

Clotho—Greek woman and early follower of Yoseph of Arimathea living in Palestine with new baby and wife to Georgeus

Eli of Yerushalayim (Jerusalem)—camel and cloth merchant; with two sons, Eliyah and Isaiah

Eliyah—son of Eli, the camel and cloth merchant

Enoch—infant son of Hebron and Enygeus; also name of Old Testament prophet who walked with God and didn’t die

Enygeus—sister to Yoseph of Arimathea, husband to Hebron

Gaius Cassius Longinus—Roman Centurion guard, at the cross

Gaius Sertorius—centurion

Georgeus—Greek man and early follower of Yoseph of Arimathea living in Palestine with new baby and husband to Clotho

Hebron—brother-in-law to Yoseph of Arimathea, overseer to Yoseph’s merchant business, husband to Enygeus

Herod Antipas—tetrarch of Galilee-Perea; one of the sons of Herod the Great

Isaiah—Eli’s son

King Arviragus—ruler of the Celtic Silures

Lazarus—(**Eleazar**) resurrected from the dead by Yeshua ben Yoseph (Jesus the Christ), brother to Miriam and Martha, later follower of Yoseph of Arimathea

Martha from Bethany—sister to Lazarus; sister to Miriam of Magdala

Miriam of Magdala—landowner, mystic, student of Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph, a new friend to Yoseph of Arimathea

Miriam of Nazareth—niece to Yoseph of Arimathea, mother to Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph, widow to the late mason and carpenter Yoseph of Nazareth

Nathaniel—friend to Philip; from Cana; early follower of Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph

Nicodemus—member of the Jewish Sanhedrin ruling council, scholar, lawyer, old friend of Yoseph of Arimathea

Philip—one of the twelve disciples chosen by Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph; also, good friend to Yoseph of Arimathea

Pontius Pilate—Roman *procurator* of Yehudah (Judea)

Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph—itinerate preacher, mystic, biblical scholar, son of Miriam of Nazareth, rumored to be the foretold *Maishiach* (Messiah)

Saul of Tarsus—later called Paul, before Christian conversion was a tent merchant and member of the Jewish Sanhedrin and a persecutor of Christians

Shimon bar Yona—also known as Cephas or Peter; brother to Andrew, fishing merchant

Shimon the Zealot—half-brother of Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph and apostle; also, later follower of Yoseph of Arimathea

Stephanos—first martyred Christian deacon in Jerusalem; later scholars say Saul of Tarsus (Paul) had Stephanos stoned to death

Thomas Didymus—apostle of Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph; also, a later member who joined Yoseph of Arimathea

Yohanán bar Zebedee, the Writer—disciple of Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph, biographer, a close friend to Rabbi Yeshua

Yohanán Marcus—writer, student of Rabbi Yeshua, his two-story home used for the Seder (Passover meal)

Yohanán the Baptizer—cousin to Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph. He foretold Rabbi Yeshua as the Messiah, and he would baptize his disciples with the Holy Spirit. Yohanán was possibly Essene trained. He had a son named Zechariah and, after Yohanán's beheading, his son was raised by Yoseph of Arimathea's family.

Yosa—daughter to Yoseph of Arimathea

Yoseph ben Caiaphas—high priest of the Jews; head of the Sanhedrin

Yoseph of Arimathea—richest merchant in the Mediterranean region, member of the Jewish Sanhedrin ruling council, uncle to Miriam of Nazareth, great uncle to Yeshua ben Yoseph of Nazareth

Yudas Iscariot—treasurer, disciple for Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph, rumored to be a member of the Sicarii (daggermen), a group who assassinates Roman officials

Zechariah—orphan son of Yohanán the Baptizer, toddler second cousin to Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph



The Principal Characters of Frankish Gaul and the Levant

Anno Domini 1190

Baroness Marie de Borron—wife of Lord Robert de Borron; mother to Robert's sons, Brian and Henri; sister to Count Gautiér de Montbéliard

Cardinal Folquet de Marseille—archbishop of Toulouse, former troubadour, head of the Roman curia

Chevalier Marcel de Tournay—seneschal to Cardinal Folquet, archbishop of Toulouse

Commander Armound de Polignac—Templar leader at the commandery of Carcassonne, old friend of Grand Master Gilbert de Érail

Comte Gautiér de Montbéliard—former Crusader, writing benefactor to Lord Robert de Borron, brother-in-law to Robert de Borron

Grand Master Gilbert de Érail—Iberian grand master of the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ (Knights Templar)

Hughes de Montbard—Templar squire, great-nephew to Saint Bernard de Clairvaux, under the command of Grand Master Gilbert de Érail

Muhammad Nur Adin—former emir from the Levant, constable of the Templar horses in Gaul, scout.

Richard I, le coeur de lion—king of England; duke of Normandy, Aquitaine, and Gascony; lord of Cyprus; comte of Poitiers, Anjou, Maine, and Nantes; overlord of Brittany; reign 1189–1199

Robert de Borron—Lord of *Château Borron*, poet, writer, troubadour, swordsman, from Northern Burgundy

Robert de Sablé—grand master of the Templar's entire order, reign 1190–1193

Saladin (Salāh ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb)—Muslim Kurdish Suni sultan of Egypt, Syria, and part of Palestine; led a great army against Christian crusaders; reigned from 1174–1193

Sergeant Guy de Béziers—Templar scout, former seaman, under the command of Grand Master Gilbert de Érail

Sergeant Jacque de Hoult—Templar scout, under the command of Grand Master Gilbert de Érail



The Principal Characters of Iberia (Spain)

Anno Domini 1190

Admiral Hidalgo de Fernado—admiral of the Templar fleet and uncle to Commander Juan Felipe

Alfonso II (The Chaste)—king of Aragón; conde de Barcelona, Catalonia, Provence, Cerdanya, Y Roussillon; husband to Queen Sacha; brother-in-law to Princess Helena

Alfonso VIII—king of Castile (Toledo) and nephew of Princess Helena

Andreas—king of Iberian Romany (Gypsies); spouse of Queen Esmerelda

Averroes (Ibn Rushd)—polymath, philosopher, Islamic scholar, jurist, and Grand Mufti of Córdoba

Benjamin and Esther—Jewish father and mother of Deborah, maternal grandparents of Chaplain Jeremiah Santiago de Compostela, son of Grand Master Gilbert de Érail

Chamberlain Rodrigo—Chamberlain to King Alfonso II and Princess Helena's bastard half-brother

Commander Hugo de Joffre—Hospitalier monk commander of Zaragoza

Commander Juan Felipe—commander of the castle fortress at Ponferrada and nephew to the admiral of the Templar fleet

Deborah—Jewish lover of Gilbert de Érail; mother of Jeremiah Santiago de Compostela

Diego—deceased infant son of Princess Helena of Aragón; lived just one day

Esmerelda—queen of the Iberia Romany (Gypsies) and seer

Esperanza—lady-in-waiting to Princess Helena of Aragón

Frère Carlos—Armarius, scribe, and cantor of priory and castle of Calatayud

Frère Chaplain Jeremiah Santiago de Compostela—Templar chaplain, scholar, and son to Grand Master Gilbert de Érail

Gerard de Ridefort—infamous tenth grand master of the entire Templar order (1184–1189) who lost the battle of the Horns of Hattin in Levant

Helena—princess de Aragón; marquésa de Barcelona, Castile, y Provence; widow of the martyred prince Pedro, late brother to King Alfonso II of Aragón

Holy Roman Emperor Fredrick Barbarossa—emperor of central Europe and commanding 150,000-man army on the third crusade; drowned in a Turkish river on the way to the Levant. Lore says he dropped the spear that pierced the side of Christ and the emperor then drowned.

Joanna—twin sister of Deborah (deceased) and aunt to Chaplain Jeremiah de Santiago and sister-in-law to Grand Master Gilbért de Érail

King Alfonso I (The Battler)—Iberian king who reconquered more than half of Moorish Iberia; great uncle to King Alfonso II (The Chaste)

Marshal Poncho Diaz de Vivar—Templar ancestor of El Cid and carried El Cid’s sword, Tizona

Miguel—hermano, frère abbe, abad, abbot of San Pedro el Viejo in Huesca, Iberia; traveling companion of Lord Robert de Borron

Noir Ombre—War dog trained by Muhammad and Lord Robert de Borron

Pedro Bernardo Ramón—principe de Aragón; Marqués de Barcelona, Provence; martyr of the Battle of the Horns of Hattin in the Levant; late brother to Alfonso II (The Chaste); late husband to Princess Helena

Pope Clement III—papacy reign 1187–1191

Prior Etienne—manager, wine merchant, and sommelier of Princess Helena’s vineyards

Ramiro II—late monk, abbot, and king of Aragón (1134–1137); married Agnes of Aquitaine; sired the child Petronilla, future mother of King Alfonso II (The Chaste)

Reccared—Visigoth king of Southern Iberia, reign 586–601

Rodrigo de Balaguer—double agent working for Cardinal Folquet

Alfonso VII—king of Castile, late brother to Princess Helena

Sancha—reina de Aragón; Condesa de Barcelona, Catalonia, Provence, Cerdanya, y Roussilon; also, spouse and queen of Alfonso II (The Chaste)

Shandar—son of Romany (Gypsy) King Andreas and Queen Esmerelda

Suleiman—one of the assassins of the *Hashishiyya*

Yitzhak the Blind (Rabbi Saggi Nehor)—his name means much light, he is a seer, Jewish mystical leader, philosopher, and teacher of the Kabbala



The Principal Characters of England

Anno Domini 1190-91

Abbot Henri de Sully—abbot and overseer of Glastonbury Abbey 1189-1193

Cernunnos—Merlin, Hern, and the Green Man. A supernatural being with powers of shapeshifting, a seer, and the ability of immortality

Frère Ambrosius—armarius, scribe, and cantor at Glastonbury Abbey

Frère Cedric—brother (blood) to Sergeant Jacque de Hoult, an accountant, and residing at the London Temple

Grand Master Guillaume de Newham—leader of the London Temple and has jurisdiction over England

Guillaume de Longchamp—Bishop of Ely, Lord Chancellor, Chief Justiciar of England, and legate to Rome

Guillaume le Marshal, Earl of Pembroke—good friend of Grand Master Gilbert de Erail and King Richard the Lionheart's marshal and fixer

Preceptor Roger de Shelborne—commander of the Templecombe preceptory and friend of Grand Master Gilbert de Érail



Anno Domini 37-43

Britannia, Gaul, and Mediterranean Sea

Adair—Celtic Druid priest in diaspora from Britannia and friend of Yoseph of Arimathea

Alein Yosephe—son to Yoseph of Arimathea, no longer a partner in his father’s worthless business

Ammon—Jewish name means “hidden one” and is the evil Barabbas

Azazel—Jewish demonic name which means “hot desolate place”

Barabbas—the murderer set free by Jewish Sanhedrin, instead of Jesus the Christ, and released by Pontius Pilate

Bedwyr—Celtic clan chief for the Glass Isle or Avalon

Beli—Arch Celtic Druid and his name means “shinning one” and grandson to Adair

Cephus— “the Rock,” disciple of Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph, brother to another disciple called Andrew

Clotho—Greek woman and early follower of Yoseph of Arimathea and was living in Palestine with new baby and wife to Georgeus, traveled with Yoseph to Gaul

Eli of Yerushalayim (Jerusalem)—camel and cloth merchant; with two sons, Eliyah and Isaiah

Eliyah—son of Eli, the camel and cloth merchant

Enid—Druid priestess and great granddaughter of Adair

Enoch—infant son of Hebron and Enygeus; also name of Old Testament prophet who walked with God and didn’t die

Enygeus—sister to Yoseph of Arimathea, husband to Hebron

Finn—Arch Druid of southern Britannia and old friend of Yesha ben Yoseph and Saint Yoseph of Arimathea

Georgeus—Greek husband to Clotho and earlier follower of Yoseph of Arimathea and traveled with him to Gaul and has a baby son named after Yoseph of Arimathea

Hebron—brother-in-law to Yoseph of Arimathea and husband to Enygeus and now a teacher

Hiram of Yoffa—captain of the ship King Solomon, son of the widow Tabitha (aka Dorcus)

Isaiah—Eli’s son

King Arviragus—ruler of the Celtic Silures

Lazarus—(**Eleazar**) resurrected from the dead by Yeshua ben Yoseph (Jesus the Christ), brother to Miriam and Martha, later follower of Yoseph of Arimathea and bishop of Marseilles, Gaul

Marcella—related to the late Queen Cleopatra and hand maid to Martha

Martial—friend of Lazarus and follower of St. Joseph of Arimathea

Maximinus—follower of Lazarus (Eleazar) and bishop of Aix, Gaul

Martha from Bethany—sister to Lazarus; sister to Miriam of Magdala and formed a Christian Church for women (nunnery) in Gaul

Martial—Bishop of Limoges, Gaul

Miriam of Magdala—former landowner, mystic, student of Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph, an old friend to Yoseph of Arimathea, preached and taught many years in a cave near Baume, Gaul as an anchorite teacher. Also, one of the *les Maries de le mare*

Miriam of Salome—possible sister to Yeshua ben Yoseph (The Christ), was at the tomb, and traveled to Gaul where she drifted ashore with the two other Miriams (les Maries de le mare)

Miriam Cleopas—one of the Mirams at the crucifixion and later preached in Gaul. Also, one of the *les Maries de le mare*

Nathan—good friend of Yoseph of Arimathea and Lazarus, follows Yoseph to the Glass Isle

Nicodemus—expelled member of the Jewish Sanhedrin ruling council, now a rabbi, apostle, and old friend of Yoseph of Arimathea

Philip—first apostle of Gaul and good friend to Yoseph of Arimathea

Philo—mystic, theologian, philosopher, Jewish leader in Alexandria, teacher of the Kabbala, and good friend of Yoseph of Arimathea

Sarah—from the ancient land of Abyssinia and the line of Queen of Sheba, hand maid to Martha and Mary Magdala in Gaul

Saturninus—teacher and preached Christianity in Toulouse, Gaul

Shimon of Cyrene—friend of Yoseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, he carried the cross for Jesus the Christ

Sidonius—aka Restitutus the man born blind and preached in the upper Rhône Valley, Gaul

Tabitha also known as Dorcas—clothing maker and widowed mother of Captain Hiram

Thomas Didymus—apostle of Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph; also, a later member who joined Yoseph of Arimathea and left for India and became an apostle

Trophimus—bishop of Arles, Gaul and commissioned by St. Philip of Gaul

Yohanan the Baptizer—cousin to Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph. He foretold Rabbi Yeshua as the Messiah, and he would baptize his disciples with the Holy Spirit. Yohanan was possibly Essene trained. He had a son named Zechariah and, after Yohanan's beheading, his son was raised by Yoseph of Arimathea's family.

Yohanan Marcus—writer, student of Rabbi Yeshua, his two-story home used for the Seder (Passover meal), later becomes a pupil of Philo of Alexandria

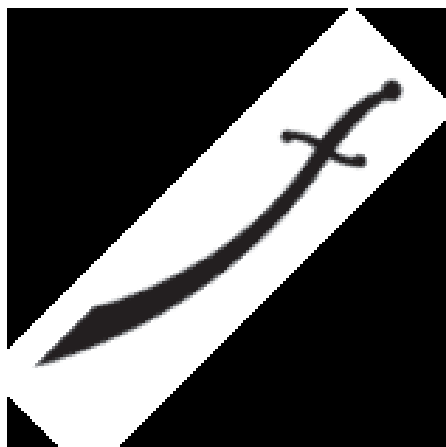
Yosa—daughter to Yoseph of Arimathea

Yoseph of Arimathea—richest merchant in the Mediterranean region, member of the Jewish Sanhedrin ruling council, uncle to Miriam of Nazareth, great uncle to Yeshua ben Yoseph of Nazareth. Now a Christian teacher (rabbi), apostle, and penniless

Yoseph ben Caiaphas—former high priest of the Jews; past head of the Sanhedrin

Yudas Iscariot—treasurer, disciple for Rabbi Yeshua ben Yoseph, rumored to be a member of the Sicarii (daggersmen), a group who assassinate Roman officials, later committed suicide

Zechariah—orphan son of Yohanan the Baptizer



PART ONE

Death Lingers

Kingdom of Aragon

Winter

Anno Domini 1190

CHAPTER I

I placed my steaming clay bowl of *café* on a protruding stone block while sitting down and focused my eyes on Sulieman's departure. He disappeared from my sight down the steep hilltop as fast as a male hare chasing a female in springtime. Quickly, I dashed to the portcullis just as it was lowered, thwarting my attempt from further pursuit. A sudden cold wind heightened my thinking as I observed him abandon his cart, and then gallop his horse down the treacherous fortress path. He wore the same distinctive clothing that I now remembered from both Vézelay and Huesca.

I grabbed my bowl of brew, gulped it down, and raced off in search of Grand Master Gilbert to tell him who I just observed. I noticed *Abad* Miguel coming my way.

"*Pax vobiscum* Lord Robert," he stated. "Are you upset about something?"

"*Oui*, and I urgently need to see Grand Master Gilbert. Have you seen him this

morning?" I hoped he would say *oui*.

"*Si*, he is at the training grounds practicing with his big Damascus sword. Just follow the metallic sound of striking swords, you will find him there."

"*Merci*, for the information," I nodded to him and ran toward the *clanking* sound of swords. On the far side of the large keep was a fenced practice area, which to my surprise held both Gilbert and Chaplain Jeremiah. Each man wore full chain mail that covered a bulky aketon coat while fighting each other as if it were a matter of life or death. Chaplain Jeremiah was quick as a cat as he sidestepped his *père's* thrust, yet Grand Master Gilbert instinctively backstepped his thrust as the blade tip found empty air. A steaming exhale of breath came from each man in the cold December morning. Each had beads of sweat dripping from the tips of their noses. Their focus was on the fighting arena, and they didn't see me approach until I started waving my hands back and forth. Grand Master Gilbert glanced in my direction but didn't stop his slashing movements. His *fils* continued fighting, not noticing my signal as he struck his *père* across his shoulder with the flat blade of his sword.

"*Halte*," shouted Grand Master Gilbert, as he dropped his sword on the frosty ground. "What's wrong? You appear distressed Lord Robert, and you have black circles under your eyes." He wiped his face with a cloth a young squire just handed him.

"*Oui*, you are correct on both counts, but it's not the lack of sleep that concerns me. We need to speak in private as soon as possible."

"*Abbé* Jeremiah please take my sword," he said, "then meet us in the parlor right before Terce." He reached down, grasped his sword, and threw it toward his *fils*, who caught it with the quickness of an eagle.

"What's troubling you *mon ami*?" Gilbert asked, as we moved toward a stone alcove.

“I think the *Qahwa* Moor vendor has been following us since we left Huesca. Possibly even before I met you,” I added.

“What makes you think that?” Grand Master Gilbért inquired.

“Do you remember me describing the strangely, dressed Moor I glimpsed one night back at Huesca?”

“*Oui.*”

“Remember, Commander Sancho gave him a sack of coins there at the old mosque, while hidden I observed his strange clothing. I viewed the same, red-colored boots and red sash covered today by a brown tunic and black mantle. He was the same height and weight as the man at Huesca. However, what caught my observation was his diminutive size. Back in the woods at Vézelay, one of the three men who murdered your sergeant fits his small height. I never ascertained their faces, and the vendor had a black cloth around his head, which only exposed his eyes.”

“Are you positive it’s the same man?” asked Gilbért as he rubbed his beard.

“Absolutely, I recognized his voice from Huesca, and he became suspicious when I stared at his attire. After I paid him, he mounted his horse, left the fortress, and seemed to vanish from the rocky hilltop. This showed me at once he was excellent equestrian just like the ones at Vézelay.

Is this one of de Tournay’s scouts who is trailing us?”

Grand Master Gilbért gazed down at his boots in deep thought.

“*Non, mon ami*, this smells of the cardinal. Your description of his clothes and riding abilities sounds familiar to me, but I don’t think he is entirely a scout. Did he have a *Jambiya* style dagger similar to Muhammad’s?”

“*Oui*,” I quickly answered, “but the handle was plainer.”

“We must speak to *Abbé* Jeremiah about his attire. He’ll give us his scholarly opinion on this man’s clothes. Follow me to the parlor and we can further discuss this new incident.”

Hurriedly, we both bound up the tower steps and reached the parlor room breathless. Grand Master Gilbert entered first and sat next to the fireplace.

“Was the *Qahwa bon*?” he asked as I sat down in front of him.

“*Oui*, it was excellent. The drink is amazing, the cloudiness of my still sleepy mind vanished. What do the Christians of Iberia call the drink?”

“They call it *café* and others say *coffeé*,” he replied with a slight smile. “Do you think this Moor is trying to poison me and my men?”

It was an unexpected question I hadn’t anticipated, which sent fear through my body. “I think he is shadowing us to see if we will find the next *Sangraal* parchments. He or whoever is aiding him needs me alive and won’t kill me or the rest of us until our quest is completed. Though I fear the cardinal may kill others who aren’t essential to our trip to Toledo.”

“Your good reasoning makes sense and I agree with you, but we must be aware of the cardinal’s ruthless ever-changing tactics.”

“What kind of ruthless tactics is the cardinal using now?” came *Abbé* Jeremiah’s question as he entered the room.

“Barón Robert and I were discussing a strangely dressed Moor posing as *Qahwa* vendor who is spying on us. What do you know about the local dress, customs, and daggers of the Moors?”

“I know some of their clothing styles and weapons. Please explain more, Lord Robert.”

I repeated the description to Chaplain Jeremiah, not leaving out the slightest detail. He sat

at the end of the table with his hands clasped under his chin, listening to every word, mirroring his *père's* contemplating mannerisms.

“I’ll leave for the scriptorium and discuss this with my armarius, Carlos. He may have some answers or books that could help us.”

He sprung up from his seat, quickly rounded the table, and exited the parlor.

“I know my chaplain will find an answer. He hasn’t failed me yet.” We then both moved closer to the roaring fire.

It was just a short period of time before he returned holding a dust-covered book and placed it on the table. Meticulously, he unstrapped the small leather belts holding the book’s contents together and slowly opened it.

“Where did this book originate?” I asked, curiosity pulling on my mind.

“Carlos told me it came from a great Muslim library at Cordoba. It says here on the first page, *Ahl al-bayt* or the ‘People of the House’ authored this book. It’s referring to the great prophet, Muhammad’s bloodline. It states on the second page that this book helps those who seek the *haqiqa* or inner truth.”

What specific members is it referring too?” I asked.

“Muhammad had a daughter by the name of Fatima, and she later married Muhammad’s cousin, Ali. Thus, Muhammad’s bloodline continued through this marriage. Ali became the first Imam of the Muslim faith. The Shiite sect of Islam started with Ali and his wife, Fatima. The scholars have told us that before Muhammad died, he passed on secret knowledge to Ali. The Saracen’s call this secret knowledge *Nass*.

“What does the word Imam mean?”

“It means ‘supreme guide or leader of the Muslim faith that originated with Allah’s

authority. The Shia Imams are said to interpret the hidden meanings of the *Qur'an*, which is called the *Batin*.”

Abbé Jeremiah paused for a moment, turned one of the red and green-colored designed Moorish pages, and perused it, before speaking.

“What I am seeking is a section of epistles called the *Rasail Ikwan al-Safa*. It’s a collection of fifty-two epistles divided into four parts that discusses all the known sciences, including astronomy, geometry, and music. In addition, there are treatises on philosophy, religion, the cosmos, and eschatology. Ah! Here it is. I will read this opening line for you, Lord Robert. ‘He who knows himself best knows his creator best.’ It’s at the heading of an epistle, which speaks of the Brethren of Purity. It further states this group has learned the way to enlightenment. The goal of the student is to purify his soul and achieve salvation, which he accomplishes by studying a combination of Greek philosophy, Christian ethics, Sufi mysticism, which is another sect of Islam, and Muslim law. The book tells of nine degrees of wisdom administered by *dais*. The *dais* are the direct representatives of the Imam.”

“What does all this esoteric information have to do with the Moor who has been tracking me and my companions?”

“Lord Robert let me continue. We may understand what motivates him and how many more are like him. Please bear with me.”

I nodded my agreement and Chaplain Jeremiah continued.

“The word *Dais* means ‘summoners.’ They summon their pupils to teach them the nine secret degrees.”

Suddenly, he stopped speaking with his eyes widening.

“How can this be?” he asked while turning several pages forward. “The pages explaining

the nine degrees are expunged, they aren't here. Please forgive my lapse, however, there's an *ulama* or Muslim scholar in Toledo who knows about the nine degrees. We will speak to him when we arrive there."

His momentary pause to gather his thoughts gave me a brief opportunity to ask about an update on the *Sangraal* parchments. "Chaplain Jeremiah, when you were in the scriptorium, did you ask *Frère* Carlos how the book was progressing?" I prayed to myself its completion might be earlier than we thought.

"He said he's ahead of schedule and you'll have the bound parchments tomorrow."

"I am sorry to interrupt you ... you were saying something about a scholar you know in Toledo who could tell us more about the 'Brethren of Purity.'" I hoped the scholarly *abbé* wasn't offended at my numerous interruptions.

"*Si*, there are two scholars there who could be of service to our quest. One is a *Judio*, and the other is a Moor I just mentioned. The *Judio*'s name is Isaac the Blind or Rabbi Yitzhak Saggi Nehor, which means of much light. The Muslim's name is Averroes or Ibn Rushd. After we return the *Marquésa* Helena to Zaragoza, we'll plan our trip in more detail. In the meantime, I will contact *Hermano* Enriqu  at our commandery at San Servando. Chaplain Enriqu  knows both men and we can use the *castillo*'s good library.

"Where is Muhammad Nur Adin?" I asked, wondering why he wasn't here to help us."

"Before we came here, I sent him a note to track the *Qahwa* vendor you saw. I hope he'll have some useful information. He should be back by Vespers, and we can defer any discussion until he returns. Let's proceed to the *chapelle*, we have already missed Terce and now it's time for Nones."

Quickly, we adjourned and proceeded to the *chapelle* with my mind still trying to

comprehend all the information from the dusty old tome. The “Brethren of Purity” was the name Commander Armand de Polignac mentioned at Carcassonne to beware. So far, I had concluded the “Brethren of Purity” was a violent and secret organization, yet I feared to hear more.

Ringling bells suddenly distracted my thoughts as they announced the daily office of Nones. Helena jumped up from a kneeling bench in the *chappelle* and her dark brown eyes met mine as she hurried out a side door holding her chaplet beads.

After the service, I returned to my cell and found a note on my writing table. Upon examining it, the folded paper had a red wax seal embedded with the royal crest of Aragón. Quickly, I broke it, and my nose caught the fragrant rose-vanilla scent of Helena. My fingers carefully unfolded the note, and I began to read its contents. She requested my presence in her room as soon as I returned from Nones. Hurriedly, I washed my face, then combed my hair, after which I put on a clean Templar surcoat, and exited my quarters. I bound up the spiral stairway with my rapid heartbeat anticipating our meeting. What new illuminations would she reveal today to surprise me? My hand forcefully pounded on the door and then I announced my name.

“Roberto, please come in,” came her silky sounding voice. Upon entering, I observed she was by herself.

“Where is Esperanza?” I inquired, surprised to see her alone.

“Lord Robert, at least you could say hello and give me a proper greeting,” she said in a mild rebuke. “My subjects are better mannered than you.”

“I am sorry Helena for my poor manners. I wasn’t expecting you to be alone. Again, please forgive me for my thoughtlessness.”

“You’re forgiven,” she said with a sly smile. “Just for your information, Esperanza is mending some of my riding dresses; otherwise, she would have been here. Now sit down and tell

me about the mysterious parchments you're having *Frère* Carlos make into a book."

I was surprised. How did she know this? Had he disclosed to her our secret?

"You can remove that silly surprise expression on your face," she stated this time with a crooked smile. "You should know me by now to realize I have many sources who will divulge information to me, and *non*, *Frère* Carlos didn't betray your secrecy."

"I must admit Helena, you have better information than the evil Cardinal." I shook my head in disbelief.

"As I mentioned earlier, the royal family members of the *Royaume* de Aragón's survival depends on punctual accurate information about our enemies as well as our financial interests. It's a live chess game we can't lose. Now tell me more about this holy book?"

I was in a dilemma; how much should I divulge? Yet, I had sworn to secrecy not to speak of the book or its contents. Did she know everything or was bluffing to gain further information?

"For expediency's sake, do you have any idea what the book contains?" I asked.

"*Non*, only it's a copy of something written by a man at the time of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ, she answered, while crossing herself.

"*Oui*, that's true, but what do you know about the saint, Joseph de Arimathea?" She thought a moment then replied.

"He was the man who dressed our Lord in a burial shroud after taking Him off the cross. In addition, he placed Jesus in his own sepulcher, from which our Lord resurrected himself from his human death."

"*Oui*, you are correct again Helena, but there's more to this man's life than in the twelve verses of the four Gospels of Saint Jerome's translated bible."

Her eyes widened "I think you have found something about Saint Joseph de Arimathea

that nobody else knows.” She gave a sly grin.

“You’re right, but I can’t say anymore. I’ve been sworn to secrecy and my mortal soul may be at stake if I reveal any further information.” I hoped my statement would deter her demanding curiosity.

“What did he say in his parchments, Robert?” Once again, she didn’t give up but pressed on for more answers. Her weak smile now turned into a frown of frustration.

“One last piece of information; there may be additional parchments written by Joseph de Arimathea. However, let’s discuss your vineyards that you want to show me.” I hoped to change the subject and stave off any more questions. Helena had a way of making me say things I knew I would later regret.

“One final thought, Robert. It’s apparent Cardinal Folquet won’t stop until you and Grand Master Gilbért lead him to the additional parchments, if they still exist. What is written on these parchments, and the importance of its worth; the cardinal must greatly value in pursuing you here and losing his numerous *chevaliers*. His evil and greedy heart is his fuel to follow you to the ends of the earth. Beware, Robert, he is a Godless man and a cardinal in title only.

“So, you want to know more about my vineyards, *oui*?” Helena suddenly changed our topic of conversation. I have many large oaken casks at *Château Maluenda* holding my *vino*. There are fifty workers tending the fields and fermenting the grapes, which the *moines* at the nearby priory supervise. The *moines*’ expertise and assistance have made the vineyards quite profitable for everybody in *Roi Alfonso’s royaume*.

“Now, I have a question for you, Robert. When will *Frère Carlos* have your codex completed?” She still was not giving up.

“Soon,” I replied.

“I need to depart in several days,” she stated. “Both the prior and I are to meet and plan for a large shipment of *vino* sailing to England. It’s urgent the shipment arrives... before our Christ’s mass.”

“*Frère* Carlos will have the tome completed tomorrow and we could leave any time after the holy book is returned to me.” She gave a quiet sigh of relief.

My *château* is a retreat away from the obfuscation of court life and at Maluenda I feel like a normal woman. Overseeing my vineyard is always a good excuse to flee from the burdensome responsibility of royal duties.”

“Tell me, Robert, how did you meet your *épouse*? Was it an arranged marriage?

“*Non*, it was the *comte* who introduced us, while I was entertaining at his court. Her graceful young countenance and lovely shape captured my eyes and heart. It wasn’t because she was a *mademoiselle* of high degree, but her kind demeanor. She didn’t dominate our conversation yet wasn’t shy. Marie had the patience to examine with care and comment with pertinent thoughts. She would speak her mind, just like her *frère*, in a convincing fashion, which wasn’t emotional in nature. It’s quite uncannily similar to you, for I feel you and I have known each other far longer than a week.”

“You’re too kind to a lonely woman,” she replied, reaching for my hands, and grasping them in a tight warm grip. Both our eyes met, and we each smiled, while Helena still maintained her grip. It felt good to have a woman touch me once more, yet I could see in her eyes the sadness of losing a soul mate. I concluded we both longed for something we couldn’t have, just as she released her hands from mine.

“Robert, I have enjoyed speaking to you this afternoon; let’s meet here tomorrow. I suspect we’ll be departing the day after tomorrow for my *château*. For now, *au revoir* Roberto,”

she said, translating my name into her native language.

We both rose for me to leave. Her closeness filled my nose with her wafting vanilla-rose scent, which permeated the entire room. Her full breasts brushed up against my surcoat with each step she made toward her door. Quickly, we reached her room door, she turned to face me with our eyes staring at each other. There was a moment of hesitation before she released my arm. After the *clanking* of the released lock, she turned once again toward me, gave me a kiss on my cheek, and then retreated into her room. My giddiness overcame me, and my heart raced with excitement as I started back to my room. Was our loneliness capturing us in its snare? Yet, I knew her beauty and our common interests were propelling me closer to her, too, yet still reflecting on the faces of Marie and my two *files*.