

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL  
**LEGACY**



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and

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**THE MOST BEAUTIFUL  
LEGACY**

1<sup>st</sup> edition

CAMPINAS, SP, Brasil

2014

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**Dados Internacionais de Catalogação na Publicação (CIP)**  
**(Câmara Brasileira do Livro, SP, Brasil)**

Cirino, Ana Maria

The most beautiful legacy / Ana Maria Cirino e  
Marcelo Romano . -- 1. ed. -- Campinas, SP :  
Editora Legatariu, 2014.

ISBN 978-85-65594-01-1

1. Romance brasileiro I. Cirino, Ana Maria.  
II. Título.

14-00919

CDD-869.93

Índices para catálogo sistemático:  
1. Romances : Literatura brasileira 869.93

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## Chapter 1

# **THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA ON PLANET EARTH**



## 1-1

1/1 In the Galilee of bygone days, where maidens dressed in white from head to toe, and only their faces were uncovered, and where the will of the merciless Herod Antipas was carried out with no hesitation, we are introduced to a typical family of God-fearing Hebrews: Joaquin, his wife Anna, his graceful daughters Sarah and Mary, and the boy Azaham.<sup>[1]</sup>

1/2 It was the year 18 BC, as we nowadays count time. An invasion in Nazareth by the tyrant's soldiers was taking place, and its goal was to capture women to serve as slaves, in all senses of the term, to the cruel ruler, who was trying to affirm himself as a man by showing to himself and to those who surrounded him his manly status.

1/3 In that faraway time, it was usual for the captured women, when they no longer interested the ones in power, to be murdered or, so that those of their own blood would be humiliated, to be returned to their places of origin, and rarely would they not arrive mutilated. Many fathers, facing the shame caused by the return of their daughters, for they would now have an outlaw inside their residence, would take drastic, albeit natural in barbaric times, measures: they would kill their own daughters in order to regain honor.

1/4 It was in this invasion that Sarah met Joseph, who had just arrived in the village. Not finding her younger sister, who was only eleven, she made the brave decision to go look for her. She feared that Mary would be arrested and deprived of her freedom. Her imprudent, albeit admirable, race against

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[1] **Maidens** were the women who had already menstruated for the first time and were not betrothed; in case they were, they were called virgins. Until their first menstruation, generally around their tenth year of age, regardless of being betrothed or not, girls were considered pure, and did not wear a veil. All the other women were told apart by means of the color of the ornament on their heads: maidens, white; virgins, blue; married women, brown; and widows, black.

In the small villages, adulterous women were invariably murdered; in the large ones, however, that did not necessarily happen all the time. The ones who were tolerated subjected themselves to wearing a brown headscarf with a black stripe on it.

The signaling piece was provided by a mother for her daughter; as for the one which would convey that the girl was betrothed, it was the father of the man forced to marry who would give it to her, in case he had arranged the union; otherwise, it was the husband-to-be who would give it to her himself.

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time reminded her of bitter moments she had been through. In an instant of distraction, lost in her restlessness to find before it was too late the one who had come from the same womb as she had, she bumped into the slender Hebrew. Despite the commotion, he was immediately charmed by his fellow countrywoman's beauty, and, wishing to know what made her so anxious, asked her:

1/5 “Why such a hurry?”<sup>[2]</sup>

1/6 An afflicted Sarah replied that Herod Antipas's soldiers were abducting young women, and that her sister was not in their shanty – especially her, who was so beautiful and was so few harvests old.<sup>[3]</sup> A solicitous Joseph offered to help her.

1/7 Some minutes later, the outsider noticed a soldier cornering a scared girl who insistently knocked on a plank of wood that blocked the access to a residence, pleading in vain to be let in. Joseph did not hesitate. Grabbing a stone, he climbed from roof to roof until he was close to the oppressor and finally threw it at him. It did not hit him, but Joseph's action startled the oppressor's horse, which fled in a disordered gallop, and therefore the girl being chased was safe. Climbing down to where she was, Joseph was surprised at the child's spontaneity, for she started censoring him, claiming that the small stone could have hurt or even killed the king's subordinate, which would go against the Laws they believed had come from God.

1/8 Sarah, for her part, still looking for her sister, finally saw her next to the man to whom she had talked shortly before. The one who had been spared was Mary. She quickly approached them, manifesting her gratitude to the hero for having found her sister.

1/9 “Is this the woman you were looking for? She does not seem to be respectful,” said Joseph.

1/10 The charming brunette's embarrassment was visible. Not knowing how to proceed, she mentioned that Mary always spoke her mind, and that she always acted this way regardless of the circumstances.

1/11 The sisters returned to the shanty they lived in, followed by the migrant. Soon the trio met the girls' desperate father. Sarah promptly reported what had taken place. Thankful to the outsider, Joaquin asked him who he was.

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[2] We have tried to be as faithful as possible to the verbal manifestations of those involved in these events; this is the reason, on various occasions, for our detachment not only from (and not restricted to) grammatical rules.

[3] They counted years based on the **harvest** of wheat.



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1/12 “I am Joseph, from David’s residence.”

1/13 He was instantly invited to stay for supper. During the second meal, he was deeply shocked by the way Sarah was treated.<sup>[4]</sup> When questioned, Joaquin revealed that his daughter had been subdued by Antipas for six moons.<sup>[5]</sup> At this moment, what Joseph understood was that she, for whom he was beginning to take a liking, had worked without receiving payment.

1/14 A Hebrew woman who, after being enslaved and returned to her family, but was not killed by her own, became, in the dwelling she came back to, even less than a servant. This was a piece of information that the outsider ignored. And the unfortunate genitor who did not resort to killing his daughter was forced to look down amongst those of his community; he was not greeted, and was also deprived of the right to trade whatever he grew or produced. Joaquin, a melon grower, did not take his daughter’s living, even though he was aware that, should he do it, his own living would go back to normal.

1/15 The melon grower, truly thankful to Joseph, asked him how long it had been since his arrival. Joseph affably replied:

1/16 “I say I arrived today.”

1/17 Wanting to be helpful, his host proceeded:

1/18 “Which family do you belong to in this place?”

1/19 “I do not know, but I know I have a relative here, and also that he is a carpenter.”<sup>[6]</sup>

1/20 “The carpenter in this place is Matthew, and his residence is not far from here. After supper, I will take you to him.”

1/21 Joaquin, getting even more interested, persisted in his questioning, now asking him about his lineage.

1/22 “I come from Jacob’s protection, who was crucified right after my coming into this world. It was in the lands of my protector, in Bethlehem, that I became a man, and I took care of them until they were invaded by those commanded by Herod nine moons ago. They took the life of the one who carried me in her womb, and they seized everything that belonged to my protector. Having nowhere to go, I went to David’s residence,”<sup>[7]</sup> he explained.

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[4] The **second meal** always took place before sunset.

[5] Each **moon** started counting from the moment that the new moon appeared.

[6] **Relative**: having the same origin.

[7] **Protector**: father.

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1/23 Joseph, who was sixteen years and three months old at the time of the death of Anna, his mother, and Salomon, whom he believed was his grandfather, remained in the famous orphanage to recover from the shock for only four moons, for David, the benefactor, only accepted those in need until they were fourteen.

1/24 Located in Bethlehem, David's residence was a place for the unprotected whose providers had been murdered under the command of Herod the Great.<sup>[8]</sup> Material goods were not left for the abandoned children, since an inheritance, if available, was confiscated by the ruler. David, the defender of uncountable helpless ones, referred to as king for his wisdom and kindness, was protected by the Lord, as the Hebrews guaranteed, for the sovereign's soldiers never broke into his dwelling place, which sheltered about thirty children. Those who finally left it were identified as children of David, which was considered an honorable epithet.

1/25 The generous man, aware of Anna's lineage and of the fact that a brother of the murdered woman had settled in Nazareth as a carpenter, instructed Joseph to walk to the village and look for his kinsman, whose name, however, he did not know.

1/26 Joining a caravan of merchants, it took the exile five moons to reach Galilee.

## 1-2

1/27 Since he ignored all the facts, Joseph could not relate to Joaquin the circumstances surrounding his birth. His father had only seen his newborn son as he agonized on the cross. Jacob, following the instructions of whom he believed it was the Lord Himself, six days before the usurpation of his property, took the necessary measures to guarantee the safety of his wife and of his firstborn, who was about to arrive in this world.<sup>[9]</sup> Forty-eight hours after the announcement, he hid them far from the village and warned his companion, as they referred to a spouse, not to name his only son after him, but rather name him Joseph, for the boy would one day be the genitor of the promised one the Hebrews had been expecting.

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[8] When Herod the Great ordered massacres, children, with few exceptions, were spared.

[9] For many of the oppressed Hebrews, it only took a man to show up before them suddenly and disappear in the same way for them to affirm that they had seen the Lord.

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1/28 When the alert that the warriors of Herod the Great were approaching was given, he informed his friend and rabbi Solomon of Anna's exact location, leaving him in charge of her, for he knew he would perish.<sup>[10]</sup>

1/29 Since Jacob considered Salomon to have come from the same womb as he had, he put him in charge of watching over his family and passing over his share of land to his son, his protectee, as they used to say, when he reached the age when he would be allowed to inherit it. It was not to be known whom his son was, and Jacob also confided to Solomon that his son would be the father of the highly expected, to a degree that we nowadays cannot fathom, redeemer.

1/30 Unlike others at the time, those who worked with Joseph's protector were not slaves, but a type of sharecroppers, as we now refer to this occupation. Despite always paying taxes, Jacob was not well regarded by Herod the Great, because he owned a large piece of land, where there were innumerable combatants. He was crucified for having defied, with weapons in hand, the tetrarch's orders.

1/31 Sixteen springs after the death of the fearless Hebrew, Judah, a rebel who called himself the emancipator of the subdued population, pillaged Bethany, a tiny village erected not very far, at least for our current standards, from Jerusalem. As retaliation, the brutal ones commanded by the dictator destroyed Hiatta, located thirty-one miles from Bethlehem, on Jacob's lands, and also murdered the gathering of people previously maimed by the despot who lived there under Salomon's consent.

1/32 Hiatta was attacked as a personal choice of the tyrant, since its rabbi and also elder had recently passed away, thus its inhabitants were unprepared, having no one to guide them.<sup>[11]</sup> Both male and female young adults and the elderly were murdered. Joseph, who used to hide in a distant cave after being told off or when he was feeling sad, found out about what had happened when

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[10] A **rabbi's** function was that of passing to his people the Lord's Laws received by Moses, so that they would not go astray. At the synagogues, they exclusively reported about the Lord. With the exception of deviant ones, they were not interested in trading coins or in any kind of offering. Similarly to those they advised, they worked the soil and, in case they had a daughter, they unprotestingly waited for the coming of a son. Even if their wives only conceived girls, they would never leave them for other women. They mandatorily had to be of Hebrew descent on both their mother's and father's sides.

Most rabbis were generous and trustworthy. Despite being considered a counselor, he spoke to unaccompanied women only when his spouse was present; if he was alone, he would only talk to one of the opposite sex if she was accompanied by a man, and only if the latter allowed him to.

The rabbi was chosen by the eldest man in the community, for the latter had lived enough to know the former's past. Among his functions were instructing boys, tending for the respected buildings where he spoke, and reading the writings of ancient vaticinators. He would only not perform the latter function when a respectable prophet visited the village.

[11] **Elder:** the oldest man in town, whom people, including the rabbi, went to see concerning topics of their material life. He would advise on what was the best seed to plant, what time of the year, in what soil etc.

he saw the children who had been spared being taken to David's residence. Since he had been educated by David, he decided to follow them.

1/33 Solomon, who had no descendants, but was considered related to Jacob, had been in charge of the lands where Hiatta and its surrounding areas stood; after the massacre, Herod the Great took possession of the place. Joseph, explaining to his benefactor his desire to reclaim the lands, for he believed he descended from the wisest one in the small village, was advised not to do it. It was then that he found out about his ancestry, for he whom the oppressed ones called king had become the bearer of the secret revelation. David, convinced that his interlocutor would meet his death should he carry out his intentions, advised him to go look for his mother's brother, who was a carpenter in Nazareth, Galilee.

1/34 Those who had become aware of the Lord's revelation to Jacob, as the latter had alleged, did not at any moment report it to Joseph.

## 1-3

1/35 After the meal, Joaquin took his guest to the widower Matthew, Ezechias's and Ananias's protector, who practiced his occupation in his own residence. After listening to what had happened in Hiatta and to Joseph's request for shelter, the craftsman told his nephew he could not be of help to him, for there was barely any work for himself and his own. It was in vain that Joseph guaranteed that he would learn fast if his uncle taught him his skill. In truth, little was Matthew moved by the circumstances. In his opinion, the one conceived by Anna had no calluses on his hands, an unequivocal sign that he did not work, nor did he have a beard, a token of respect amongst the Hebrews. What he ignored were the reasons for the aspects he judged negative: his kin had no rough skin because he used to help Jacob run his lands; as for the beardless face, the young man was still mourning the death of his mother. Matthew, however, invited him to live with him, assigning him the task of piling up wood.

1/36 The grape harvest feast, scheduled to happen one day after the invasion in Nazareth, was not postponed. Joseph, a single man, took part in it along with his cousins. He observed Sarah, who remained isolated from the others, and studied her beauty: she had green eyes, rare in those distant times, her skin was tanned by the Sun, and her hair was black and long. He did not understand why the fascinating brunette kept herself at distance, far from the unbetrothed girls who had already menstruated for the first time. In his mind, she was not engaged; however, even if she were, she would be

squashing the fruit from the grapevine.<sup>[12]</sup> Unable to draw a conclusion, and as his muse did not cover her head with any ornament, he wondered if she could be the companion of a non-Hebrew, for the beautiful woman must have been betrothed at birth.<sup>[13]</sup> Feeling eager, he did not wait for the right opportunity when the issue would be cleared, and went on and asked Ezechias if Joaquin's daughter was married, but received a negative answer.

1/37 During the maceration, the young men flirted with the young girls while keeping themselves at a certain distance. The rabbi, who carefully supervised the course of the ritual, did not authorize the boys to cross the line he had established. When the boys were finally allowed to approach the girls to engage in conversation, for among one of them they could find their prospective wife, Joseph went to confer with Sarah, since they had exchanged approving looks, but kept himself some large steps away from her.

1/38 "If you are not engaged, and you are so beautiful, why are you not among the maidens?"

1/39 She did not reply and, crestfallen, went away, leaving the infatuated Joseph dumbfounded.

1/40 After her abduction and subsequent return to her home, the first of Anna's children did not wear a veil of any kind. In her protector she found a safe harbor. The circumspect man, not abiding to the customs of his people, did not kill her. It was his understanding that doing so would go against the Lord's Laws, and besides he was certain that, given the dazzling charm of his daughter, someone would take a liking for her.

1/41 Not yet reaching the conclusion that Sarah had been enslaved by Antipas for six moons, Jacob's heir did not understand why she would not partake in the joyful activity, nor did he grasp why, when not alone, she would stay with the betrothed ones.

1/42 Joaquin's eldest daughter was named after one of her maternal aunts who had died under the oppression of Herod Archelaus, when he was in the incipient Cerculis in 45 BC in order to build an arsenal.<sup>[14]</sup>

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[12] The **fruit from the grapevine** was trodden upon by maidens and virgins who were not menstruating. Those who were menstruating had to stay in their residences, for they were considered impure.

[13] Some women who married men belonging to other peoples did not wear veils; many of these people, especially the Egyptians, did not follow this custom.

[14] Archelaus remained in Galilee during its construction. Feeling lonely, he ordered three of his soldiers to go to the neighboring villages and bring him the most beautiful Hebrew woman around. They should resemble the fresh breeze of dawn.

The following morning the brute ones found four young women by a well. When they noticed among them one who had long hair and perfect teeth so that each time she smiled, her surroundings became even more beautiful, they captured her.

Sarah remained chained by the eldest son of Herod the Great, and she lived only until the end of the construction.

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1/43 Joseph, after returning to his relative's humble residence, questioned him about what had happened to Sarah, for she had remained far from the other women. Matthew succinctly and sharply declared:

1/44 "I say you go ask Joaquin."

1/45 The following day Joseph, determined to clarify what had really happened with his prospective father-in-law, went to look for him. The latter, feigning harshness, asked him if he was enamored of his daughter.

1/46 "She is a beautiful woman," stammered Jacob's legatee.

1/47 Given Joseph's explicit declaration, Joaquin gave him additional information concerning what had happened to Sarah, despite omitting some important details.

1/48 Time went by with no further changes. Since he had no steady occupation, Joseph started trading the melons Joaquin grew. As a consequence, he started visiting Sarah's residence more often. He could, therefore, observe her daily routine, and was not satisfied when he saw that, when a visitor stopped by, she had to leave or even stay with the animals. On these occasions, the Hebrew woman could not speak, not even to one of her own. Tired of witnessing such humiliation and suffering, he questioned the captivating brunette's protector:

1/49 "Is there anything you can do to change the life of your protectee?"

1/50 Realizing his interlocutor's furtive intentions, Joaquin was extremely cunning:

1/51 "You do not know everything that happened to Sarah yet. I will tell you, and after that you may not want to come to this residence anymore, like everyone else."

1/52 Adding to what he had previously told him, he confided that only the two girls were his children. Azaham was the fruit of his eldest's womb with Antipas. He asserted that his honor was in the mud, for he had under his roof a disgraced one who had, on top of that, brought the Herods' blood into his lineage. In a lamenting tone, and predicting Joseph's attitude, he described the two ways in which he would be again well regarded: he could either negotiate a husband for Sarah, or he could kill her, as well as the boy. He emphasized that, if one of the two hypotheses came to be, the reason for his vilification would be extirpated; he nonetheless stressed that he would never take a human life, he would rather look down when he walked and not be greeted by friends. At last he pointed out:

1/53 "I believe the Lord has not given me the right to take the life of a single person. If I now sin, it is the Lord who will judge me, not those who are my own people."

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1/54 After this explanation, Joseph had no other attitude to take, despite feeling truly attracted by the disgraced one, and also despite his emerging interest in Mary, who was very graceful in her eleven years of age:

1/55 “If I have your permission, I will ask the one who came before in my family to ask Sarah in union, and I will be Azaham’s protector.”<sup>[15]</sup>

1/56 Joaquin elatedly asserted:

1/57 “You have my permission.”

1/58 Jacob’s only son was trading melons at the square in Nazareth when Antipas’s soldiers, always crude, made themselves present. They destroyed whatever was before them and confiscated all the products to be traded. The unfortunate episode deeply revolted Joseph, especially because he would still have to pay taxes on the products he had lost.

1/59 Among those who did not agree with the current state of things were Judah and his followers. Whenever a village was attacked by the oppressors, he would appear and incite an uprising. To draw the attention of the community, he would blow on a type of strident horn and would begin his speech, invariably appealing to the Lord, for he was aware of the faith of the subdued ones in Him.

1/60 In Nazareth it was no different. After the despot’s soldiers left, the instigator arrived. Climbing a rock, he spoke verbosely, and was avidly heard by Joseph:

1/61 “People of Israel, how much longer will you be slaves to the caesars and the Herods? How much longer will you be your own slaves? You do not respect yourselves: you pray to the Lord and obey the caesars, who are false gods. You make it go inside them that they are of the Lord. Why will the Lord help you, if you do not help yourselves? As the people elected by the Lord, you must not remain slaves to the Herods and the caesars.”

1/62 When he narrated to his future father-in-law what had happened, Joseph found out that the latter was opposed to what Judah preached. However, he insubordinately stated that it was necessary to stand up against the oppressors. Joaquin prudently instructed him that the Lord did not want any violence, that they should practice patience and tolerance, and only when they did so would the redeemer arrive. The one conceived by Anna, becoming growingly indignant, replied that his mother had also taught him submission, and then specified his own lot: first his father was savagely killed, and then the woman who had given him life.

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[15] **Union:** marriage.

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1/63 Disillusioned with the current political situation, Joseph sought Judah, the man who, after pillaging Bethany, had given a pretext for Hiatta to be crushed, a fact of which Joseph was not aware. In Joseph's understanding, Judah was defending the Hebrews, but he was nothing other than the leader of a band of thieves, stealing without distinguishing his target – soldiers, tax collectors, and people in caravans off their guard. Believing that the insurgent man longed for the welfare of his people, Joseph offered to fight on his side, but was not admitted. The pseudo-rebel explained:

1/64 “How come you want to join me, if you seem to be a man of power? I do not like those who have no beard. I say I know you and I will look for you.”

1/65 Judah also ignored the past of the man still regarded as an outsider, who had a refined appearance, and was beardless because he was still in mourning.<sup>[16]</sup>

1/66 Getting ready to leave with Matthew to go ask Sarah in union to Joaquin, Joseph rehearsed, trying to memorize the names of those of his lineage, not only for the sake of remembering them per se, but also because that was the custom at the time. His uncle, seeing him rehearse, advised him:

1/67 “Speak of those you are descended from humbly, for the humbled will be exalted, and those who exalt themselves will be humbled. Let me talk to Joaquin first.”

1/68 The carpenter of Nazareth explained to Joaquin that he had given a piece of land for his nephew to build his own residence, and also that he was making progress as an apprentice in his craft, an activity he had been teaching him after he returned from the market; he also spoke of his nephew's feelings for the graceful brunette.

1/69 At the right moment, the prospective husband stated whom he had come from in the right order:

1/70 “I am Joseph, of Jacob's protection, who was of Nathan's protection, who was of Mathuselah's protection, who was of Enoch's protection, who was of Jared's protection, who was of Mahalalel's protection, who was of Cainan's protection, who was of Seth's protection, and they all came from the Lord.”

1/71 After Joaquin's consent, the now betrothed Sarah escorted Joseph to the exit of the shanty. She heard from her future companion that, the day before, Judah had summoned him to go see him and, should he be invited to fight, he would join the group.

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[16] The period of **mourning** lasted for as long as pain was still present.



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1/72 “With the spears we have in our possession, we will vanquish all of Herod Antipas’s commanded ones,” he added.

1/73 Sarah reminded him of what had happened in Cerculis, when the truculent soldiers, who supported the tyrant with weapons in hand, crucified innumerable individuals. Joseph, thirsty for revenge, nonetheless insisted that he would go see the man who would deliver them from the control of the murdering rulers. She sensibly tried to reason with him:

1/74 “Why this fight? Do you not understand that Judah is sinning?”

1/75 “The Lord will only help us when we are strong,” a hardened Joseph retorted stubbornly.

1/76 “Taking lives and that which does not belong to us make us strong? Do you not understand that the Lord will only help us when we become better than the Herods? Do you feel that the Lord wants us to violate His Laws?”

1/77 “I say that some of those who are Hebrews feign not to know what the Lord wants from each one of us.”

1/78 Sarah, peaceful and aware that her interlocutor was doing her protector a favor by uniting himself to her, refreshed in her memory the Mosaic Laws she knew and asked:

1/79 “What the writings say has no value? And what the prophets say, or Eli?”

1/80 She answered her own question herself:

1/81 “They tell us to seek love and peace; to try to like those who are our own people.”

1/82 Inflexible, Joseph, distorting the meaning of the esteemed rabbi’s words, put an end to the conversation:

1/83 “Do you know what Eli said?”<sup>[17]</sup>

1/84 In his determination, he stated to her:

1/85 “Eli said to everyone that if those who are Hebrews are not for those who are Hebrews, then no other people will be for those who are Hebrews.”

1/86 He impolitely bade his future companion a cold farewell and promptly left:

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[17] **Prophets:** those who predicted the future, and their predictions came true.

**Eli:** a rabbi born in Nazareth who taught the Laws of the Lord throughout Galilee. He became very popular among the oppressed ones, who trusted him. According to many, he was a man who spoke words of wisdom and a role model.

1/87 “I have to go.”

1/88 According to their custom, celebrations took place after the harvest of wheat; however, the day after Joseph’s request, because of what had happened to the bride, the union was carried out. Because of the marriage, the father-in-law, thankful to the Lord, regained respect from others. The celebration, like every other one, took place by the lake. The ritual began with some words from the local rabbi who, pointing at Jacob’s only son, proclaimed:

1/89 “Joseph, from David’s residence, who is part of the family of Israel, wants to unite himself with Sarah, of Joaquin’s protection, and build his residence among those of his people.”

1/90 With no hesitation, he took off Sarah’s blue veil, which she had been wearing since instants after Joaquin’s consent to Matthew’s request, and gave it to the future husband.<sup>[18]</sup> The latter immediately covered her head with a brown veil. They were thus married.

1/91 A week later, Joseph conferred with Judah, unaware that his companion was expecting a child, despite the fact that a second pregnancy was extremely risky, for Azaham’s birth had been the cause of atrocious suffering. When the boy came to this orb, the helpless mother was living far from her family, helped only by a woman who, since she had also been a slave, dwelled in an ancient sepulcher. In this dark place Sarah gave birth, and because she had to push too hard, her uterus ended up dislodged.<sup>[19]</sup>

1/92 Arriving at the insurgent’s hiding place for a conversation, Joseph, himself a candidate to be an insurgent, was asked if he would fight against the Herods and the caesar.

1/93 “I will follow you. If I have protectees, I do not want them to fight for a piece of bread.”

1/94 Judah explained how he acted, assuring Joseph that he was not a pillager, but a defender of his people. When he stole the tributes collected by the Herods, he did not return them to those from whom they had been taken because the tyrannical rulers would send their soldiers to collect them again,

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[18] The moment after being betrothed to Joseph, Sarah started wearing the **blue veil**, which was only removed at the time of the nuptial ritual.

[19] During delivery, in case a **dislodged uterus** caused the death of the woman giving birth, her harvests were said to pass on to her child. It was believed that the child would be immensely wise, an erudite, regardless of its gender, for the mother’s living would be transferred to it, to wit, the mother’s age would be added to the child’s.

They were rarely girls, for their size did not require that their mothers, during delivery, push too hard in order to bring them to the life of flesh.

and this time the amount would be doubled. He also claimed that it was his love for his wife Rebecca and his two children that made him keep on fighting the arduous battle against the oppressors.

1/95 “I do not want my protectees to fight for their freedom,” confessed the one conceived by Anna, who had been listening attentively.

1/96 Taking advantage of Joseph’s sincere words, the astute criminal incited him:

1/97 “It is for our protectees that we must fight, but if we have to fight for the coming of the one promised by the Lord, we must be ready to sacrifice our protectees.”

1/98 Four months later, now a member of Judah’s band, Joseph returned to Nazareth. Joaquin disclosed his feelings to him:

1/99 “I am very grateful that you have returned me my honor, but I say to you to take your own to Jerusalem. Your companion must not stay in this place. Every time that those of our own people see Azaham, they threaten to stone him. They say Azaham will be as evil as those of Herod Antipas’s protection.”

1/100 As Sarah approached her fifth month of pregnancy and because of his stepson, Joseph, albeit upset, accepted Joaquin’s recommendation and settled in Bethlehem, a city he was familiar with. Conferring with his companion, with the goal of safeguarding the first fruit of her womb who was twelve years old at the time, just a year older than Mary, he asserted:

1/101 “If one of our people comes from Nazareth, they will know that Azaham has Herod Antipas’s blood. I know that Azaham will be recognized, even if he changes as harvests go by.”

1/102 He advised her to call him Simeon Joseph, and, if anyone inquired them about him, they would say he was their firstborn.

1/103 Since he envisaged his stepfather as his authentic protector, the one conceived by Sarah loved him a lot. As for the name imposed on him, he adopted it for the rest of his living.

## 1-4

1/104 Herod the Great, whom many Hebrews called Mammon, so that they would not have to pronounce his hated name, privately divided his empire in 32 BC, making the division official in 30 BC. It was merely a division of land, for the entirety of the Laws was still issued by him. His sons, also called kings

and who also had the notorious Herod as their first name, would rule the provinces according to the guidelines issued by their father. A substantial part of the collected resources would be immediately sent to the central power.

1/105 Before the division became effective, Antipas ordered his father to assign him Judea, and the barbaric dictator had to warn his son that he would disown him as a Herod. It was only after these threatening words, to avoid getting no share of the empire, that the likewise perverse son accepted his father's resolution. He nonetheless wandered around Samaria, Galilee and Perea for three years in order to, according to his own words, choose which one he would rule. The sovereign then incontestably deliberated very clearly: whoever did not accept his wishes would be given nothing.

1/106 Judea was the richest and the most important portion of the tetrarchy, and therefore remained under the absolute rule of Herod the Great. Samaria, composed of peoples of different origins, each one with its own Law, was given to Archelaus, the eldest son, whom Herod the Great believed would circumvent any difficulties at the place, since he was calmer, wiser, and more patient than his brothers. Philip was granted Galilee, and Perea, contrary to what Antipas had been trumpeting, remained with Agrippa.

1/107 Mentally disabled and considered Herod the Great's youngest, Agrippa was in fact Mammon's both son and grandson. Herodites, the mother of the mentally challenged one, was a direct descendant of the tyrannical ruler with another slave, similarly named Herodites.<sup>[20]</sup>

1/108 Fearing that Agrippa would be left to wander as a beggar should he be trusted to Antipas, Herod the Great put Archelaus in charge of his portion. As for the one who had in advance declared himself the owner of Perea, Herod the Great ordered him to assist Philip, who would head for Galilee.

1/109 Born in 45 BC, right after Philip, Antipas, who did not accept his homosexuality, behaved almost irrationally, which was the decisive reason for his father to partition his kingdom. The latter, also fearful of the greed for power and money his son had been conveying since he was eight, claimed as a pretext that he could not afford his expenses and sent him to the distant province, so that he would be as far from him as possible, and also so that he could start his own fortune there.

1/110 Philip took over his portion in 29 BC. He was, however, sent there right after the division, because Antipas, growing more and more violent, had physically assaulted his father during one of the frequent arguments they had.

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[20] The female slaves of Herod the Great had no name. When they roused their owner's interest, they started being called **Herodites**.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/111 In one of the duo's journeys to Galilee, always escorted by a great retinue, Antipas subdued and impregnated Sarah, Mary's sister. When she was no longer useful for his purposes, he expelled her from Cerculis, which caused her to return to Nazareth.

1/112 Antipas started showing the great cruelty that controlled him already in his youth. With unconcealed pleasure he tortured the female slaves kept under his roof, even sacrificing the ones these slaves had conceived. Despite his effeminacy, he had a protectee, regarded as illegitimate, who was named after his father and in vain fought for his grandfather's spoil.

1/113 Philip, not as evil as his brother, used to give him much advice. Since his brother's presence had been forced on him, he accepted it without defiance. Mammon erroneously believed that he would soften Antipas's behavior and rebelling character. Right at the beginning of his rulership, Philip, who came to this orb just moments before the brother with whom he had shared their mother's womb, lost control to him, his pseudo second-in-command, who manifested unrestrained despotism.

1/114 The territory of the brothers conceived in the same pregnancy had nothing extraordinary, except for an old arsenal, surrounded by few huts. This fact deeply despaired Antipas, for his share of the tetrarchy would yield nothing. Given his cunningness, he suggested a Law to his father; since it would also benefit the latter, it was enacted in 23 BC. It came to be known to us as the Law of the Widows.

1/115 It was established that the scribes would manage the estate of the unfortunate women whose husbands passed away if their descendents were unable, according to an explicit determination, to administer it.<sup>[21]</sup> If the confiscated estate was eventually returned, it was only by half. However, it was usually the case that only one tenth was destined to the legatees, and this tenth was extortively taxed.

1/116 The detested Law stated that if the widow did not have a son, the estate would be confiscated in its entirety, and she would be evicted from her property; in case she had a son older than sixteen, he would become the heir, and would be responsible for his mother. If he were younger than sixteen harvests, however, the scribes would manage it and return it with a deduction of fifty percent when he turned the stipulated age or when he got married; if the unfortunate widow had a son-in-law, she would be under his care until the end of her stay on this planet, and her estate, regardless of its size, would

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[21] **Scribes:** Hebrew or non-Hebrew men who, for a wage, wrote down what the Herods called the Law; they also made copies of the Laws on leather.

be expropriated. In case her daughter was not married, she would again be expelled.

1/117 By virtue of the ignominious edict, the inconsolable Hebrew widows who had neither a son nor a son-in-law ended up in poverty, and their daughters could barely avoid subjecting themselves to debasing prostitution.

1/118 As time went by the decree came to be practiced abusively. It was enough for a male oppressed one not to have a successor for the greed for his estate on the part of the Herods and the scribes to manifest. As a consequence, he almost invariably perished.

1/119 Antipas, who in 27 BC started refurbishing Cerculis, desiring more resources but being unable to obtain them, incremented the production of widows. Any reason would lead to the murder of the head of a family. If he voiced an opinion contrary to that of the subjugators, or if he simply stated not to be able to afford paying taxes, he would be certainly sentenced to death. Philip, disagreeing with these actions, warned his brother that he would report them to their father; a day before he left, however, he was found dead. Antipas spread a version according to which Philip had lost his life because of the black death, for when one died of it, purple stains were visible on the body.

1/120 As an anesthetic, a mixture of the fruit of the mandrake and olibanum was ministered in small doses with wine or another drink.<sup>[22]</sup> In larger doses, the mixture had a paralyzing effect. This was what Antipas gave his brother in an excessive dose. After savoring his wine, Philip rapidly fell into a deep sleep, and later woke up with great pain right below his navel area. Due to high blood pressure, he passed away. His body was covered in purplish spots, similar to those that appear in cases of heart attacks.

1/121 Olibanum, also burned to purify the Temples, came from the far south of Arabia, and only a wealthy person could buy it, for, in addition to its expensive price, it had to be previously ordered from merchants.<sup>[23]</sup>

1/122 Agrippa died before his protector. One of his sons, named after his uncle who had disincarnated in Galilee, replaced him as the ruler of Perea. In 8 BC, when his grandfather died at the age of seventy-five, he also took over Judea. Samaria came to be under his authority after Archelaus's death in 12 AD. After Antipas's exile in the 15th year of our era, Herod Philip became the sole ruler of the entire territory, adopting, to pay homage to his father, Herod Agrippa as his name. He ruled it until 44 AD.

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[22] **Mandrake**: a crawling plant abundantly picked in the region bearing a yellowish fruit when ripe.

[23] There were innumerable **Temples** in the tetrarchy; the most important one was in Jerusalem.

## 1-4.1

1/123 Cerculis, the then distinguished settlement in Galilee, had a number of seven hundred twenty inhabitants when its construction came to an end in 20 BC. The fertile period of its construction, which lasted about a decade, was a source of even greater suffering for those of the province.

1/124 The main city of ancient Galilee was located about \_\_\_\_\_, a distance done on foot at the time in approximately \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>[24]</sup> Its ruins can be found at around one hundred fifty meters \_\_\_\_\_, a minuscule ancient village which had a strategic view of the region, allowing its defenders to observe the approach of enemies.

1/125 Those of the tetrachy believed that when Philip and Antipas arrived, they would transform the old arsenal, erected in 45 BC, into a magnificent palace. Contrary to their belief, the brothers made it into a real war fortress, where their savage soldiers trained; the royal palace was built on the opposite side.

1/126 Cerculis had two main streets. On the one reserved for the populace, where the growers from adjacent villages and human settlements came to trade, there was a series of pillars. The space between them is irregular, ranging from two to two and a half meters, and it was in these areas that the growers displayed the food they harvested or the animal skins they tanned. The other street was reserved as a passageway for Antipas and his retinue, as well as for his followers and fighters.

1/127 Many artificial lakes were built in Cerculis to serve for the purification of the powerful ones. The ritual, invariably paid, was under the exclusive control of the priests, who did not allow the inhabitants to approach the reservoirs.<sup>[25]</sup> Disobeying them resulted in immediate death.

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[24] Nowadays, the same distance can be done \_\_\_\_\_. Those who had few resources walked barefoot, which caused them serious wounds in their feet; those who had more material means wore very fragile sandals made of sheep skin. Even if they layered two or three up, they would tear very easily.

[25] **Priests:** the holders of religious power among the Hebrews. Their main function consisted of making sure that the Mosaic Laws and the ones issued by the Temple of Jerusalem were honored. As an additional activity, they read the prophecies and the Laws, and also collected gifts. Those established in the then sumptuous Temple also decided who was granted access to it. These priests, in the people's opinion, only carried out the Lord's wishes; they were His messengers, since it was the Lord Himself who indicated to the austere men who the lucky ones would be.

Because of the trust the oppressed ones had in the Lord, they were implicit slaves of the deciders in the famous Temple, where it was believed He resided.

The priests, who guaranteed to those of their people that whoever disobeyed Him would have his or her descendants punished for his or her sins, either had to be Hebrew or have Hebrew blood in their families; and in the meantime, these false guides accepted anyone from another country provided that they received a large quantity of coins.

The boys who would enter the profession had to be delivered to the Temple when they were no more than five years old, so

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/128 With few exceptions, the priests became rich, going against the Laws of the Lord, as many Hebrews who became poorer and more starving affirmed. These impoverished ones asked themselves what was the source of their coins, for many of the priests did not come from families who had authority. The Lord-fearing ones did not find the situation fair and kept praying for the coming of His promised one.

1/129 To Cerculis, where there were highly fortunate ones, and the rest of the population was very destitute, came Judah, always Judah, who claimed to fight for his enslaved people; he invaded and pillaged both the arsenal and the royal palace, possessing information obtained from Bruno and Galineus, two of the men from Rome, as the soldiers from abroad were referred to. This greedy pair saw the opportunity to take possession of that which the intimidating tyrant valued the most: his treasures. In addition to the pillage to both places, the rebel and his band, which at the time consisted of seventy members, set fire to numerous properties which belonged to powerful ones liaised with Antipas. A night of destruction caused great fury in the cruel ruler, and many moons of atrocious suffering to the inhabitants of Galilee. Children saw their parents being decapitated or crucified; the spared ones had to deal with the damage, and those who still had property ended up losing it.

1/130 Bruno and Galineus, among others, arrived in 18 BC to manage the oppressed ones who refused to comply with the taxes imposed on them; they came to answer Mammon's request, for he had learned that the distant and colonizing metropolis trained invincible warriors. These merciless soldiers, he was told, would impiously kill even someone of their own blood to defend the caesar's dominions.

1/131 The first foreigners to arrive in the tetrarchy were those trained to battle. It was in 14 BC, with the arrival of the preeminent delegates with their families, that they subtly started giving orders to the Herods. From then on, they stopped accepting what was generally paid to them, and started

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that their instruction could be supervised and they could be educated according to the learned men's precepts, and would therefore not keep the customs and vices of their genitors. The priests had a peculiar way of finding out the age of the candidates: they had pieces of wood of predetermined height as a measuring instrument by which they concluded how many harvests old they were. From this moment on, a father would no longer have any rights over his son. The ones who were accepted, after being instructed in the religion, were sent to villages, generally in groups of four, to make sure that the Laws issued by the Lord and the Temple of Jerusalem were enforced.

Given the scarcity of learned men, or at least men who knew how to write, the priests, with few exceptions, also acted as scribes, an activity for which they were paid. No matter how absurd the edicts of the Herods were, they copied them onto animal leather. Whoever did not act according to the unwritten laws would no longer be part of the clergy; these ones who did not ply were told that, because of such reluctance, the ones from the Temples would lose their coins of trade, animals, and other gifts from the people, which would be confiscated by the Romans. The majority let themselves be led for they appreciated what they obtained because of the inexperience of the ones who let themselves be controlled who, just like us, were far from the stage when rational faith guided them.



determining what their lot would be. The only other option left to their Hebrew managers was not to agree with their request and stay unprotected, at their enemies' mercy.

## 1-5

1/132 Veneram, located off the primitive road that united Lower Cesarea and Jope, was a dwelling place with few shanties. It was built by Zechariah and Zacchaeus on the piece of land that belonged to them in order to shelter those who sought a refuge from the pernicious consequences of the Laws issued by the insensitive oppressors. Almost all its inhabitants were women, who worked with clay and sheep wool then traded in markets of many other cities, especially in Samaria. On very few occasions the two men, the ones who traded the products, walked to Jerusalem and neighboring regions, whose ways were twice as much guarded by the Herods' soldiers, for it was very likely that their products would be taken from them.<sup>[26]</sup>

1/133 On one of the trips that the rabbi of Veneram and his brother took, going off the way, they came upon a dwelling of lepers with approximately one hundred inhabitants, located between Sepphoris and Nazareth. They saw, right at its entrance, Athabam, one of those who constantly caused them trouble. The thief had not developed the then terrible infection; he nonetheless inhabited the inhospitable area, claiming that he had been moved by such piercing suffering and misery.

1/134 Believing in the imminent coming of the promised one, the pillager had traded all his possessions for a pearl, a ruby and a jar of myrrh to please him eventually. With no hesitation he went to Bethlehem looking for the deliverer of the Hebrews, accompanied by a slave assigned to him by his protector. However, stumbling upon the site inhabited by lepers, he settled there. With the intent to help them, he disengaged himself of his belongings; what he earned for them, he claimed he would use to help the invalids who lived there, for no one cared about them. Since the number of sick people always increased, and his resources always decreased, he stole from wayfarers. From

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[26] No matter where they came from, Zechariah and Zacchaeus always returned with seeds, a product very desired by pillagers, something that demanded them to be twice as much careful, and forced them to find ways where these criminals were not very present.

The pillagers hardly went to the villages to get their victuals. They would generally only go there unworriedly during feasts, which, given their crowds, allowed them to circulate without having to be very careful.

what they could assess, the pair of travelers believed they had understood the reason for his actions.

1/135 When still in Veneram, two days before his departure for Jerusalem, the village where he would take part in the annual offering to the Lord, Zechariah had a conversation with Isabel, his spouse, in which he mentioned his pleasant teenage illusions:

1/136 “When I was not too many harvests old, it went inside me that I would become the greatest priest in the Temple on the Mount, that I would have a lot of land. See what happened: I am just the rabbi of a small village of women who have had their lands and their honor pillaged from them after their companions had their lives taken.”

1/137 He bitterly concluded:

1/138 “What great harm Herod Antipas has done to these women! As for the lands, I only have this small plot, and I am forced to make an offering, after every harvest, to that priest of the Temple, who does nothing but judge those of my people. And it went inside me that I wanted to be a priest so that I could speak at the Temple on the Mount!”<sup>[27]</sup>

1/139 When he was done lamenting, his silence was interrupted by his spouse:

1/140 “But to speak at the Temple of Jerusalem is the dream of everyone of our people.”

1/141 “If those of my people knew what the high priest does, they would not want to be priests.”<sup>[28]</sup>

1/142 Isabel assuaged her husband’s assurance:

1/143 “When one is little, one has so many dreams that we never see time pass. When I learned I was betrothed to you, it started to go inside me that, when I united myself to you, I would have such a large offspring that I would

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[27] The Temple of Jerusalem, because it was located on top of a small hill, was known as the **Temple on the Mount**.

[28] The **High Priest**: he who had authority over all the other priests. His function was to dictate what his subordinates, who strictly obeyed him, would do and how. Those who among the oppressed did not obey the Laws of the Temple and those issued by the then much respected legislator were brought before him, and he determined what punishment would suit the offender.

Considered the wisest and fairest amongst the proud men, he who would never act with iniquity, he was the oldest of all the priests. His replacement would always be the second oldest, for they believed that the passing of time brought them wisdom.

Basically all powerful Hebrews consulted him, but that did not mean that their goal was to benefit from their counseling.

The position of high priest, whose tenure was for life, was inspired by that of the Egyptian priest one century before the birth of Jesus.

not know what to call each one of them.” Those were words which scared away some of the sadness he was carrying around.

1/144 Zechariah was forty-eight years old.

1/145 In Veneram, unlike other villages, unions were celebrated right after the new moon’s sermon, for the inhabitants did not grow wheat, and thus could not have the harvest feast. Right after one of these sermons, an event that symbolized abundance for the entire next year, the rabbi asked his companion:

1/146 “Why did you remain silent?”

1/147 Isabel, considered an old woman at only thirty-five, believing to have discovered the final proof of her infertility, replied:

1/148 “It went inside me the moment of our union, the large offspring we would have, and I was not even able to give you a single child. I am a dry tree. It was your obligation to find a woman who would give you offspring, it was your duty as a rabbi.”

1/149 Zechariah listened to her without consternation. The gaunt Hebrew woman proceeded, emphatically asserting that she could no longer give him a child. Her interlocutor calmly asked her why she was so certain of it.

1/150 “It is now two moons since I am no longer a woman.”

1/151 Caressing her, the respected man added:

1/152 “Do not have inside you that I do not like you because you did not give me any protectees. Even if you had given me many protectees, I say you would not be more of a woman than what you are now, and that I would not wish you better than what I wish you now. To stay with you was my greatest sin, and I am sure that the Lord will forgive me.”<sup>[29]</sup>

1/153 The morning after, he left for Jerusalem, leaving Isabel behind, for she did not have the right to enter the Temple. Zacchaeus, allowed to take part in the ritual, accompanied him.

1/154 The high priest was the one who appointed the members of the annual meeting for the selection, on the part of the Lord, of who, in a special enclosure within the building, would make the offering. The ones chosen to attend the meeting received a clay sphere, made by the sons of the

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[29] A **sin** meant a man or a woman’s going against their sexual attributes, eating pork, commit adultery, taking possession of something that did not belong to him or her, taking the living of one of his own people, speaking meanly regarding the Lord, not offering at the Temples, working the soil on the Sabbath, at last, doing whatever went against the sacred Laws obtained directly from the Lord.

priests, engraved with their names and the villages to which they belonged. Immediately after entering the then sumptuous building, the spheres were put in a bag made of sheep leather. When the last one arrived, the passageway was closed, and the bag was given to the one who would replace the high priest after his death. After the prayer, he gave it to the high priest, who took one of the spheres and announced the name of the fortunate one.

1/155 Zechariah and his unconditional ally, when they arrived in Jerusalem in the afternoon of June 2nd, 11 BC, observed Judah, who at the market place pretended to be indignant and trumpeted, as usual, against the much hated legislation concerning widows:

1/156 “Those who are scribes make use of this Law about the ones who have no companions so that they will not have to justify these deaths that have no explanation.”

1/157 Always compassionate for the Hebrews, the rabbi asked Zacchaeus:

1/158 “How much longer will these deaths take place?”

1/159 “For as long as those who are Herods are in power,” his younger brother incisively expressed his opinion.

1/160 Then they walked towards the Temple on the Mount, in which the lateral spaces were where the youngest ones stayed, grouped according to their number of harvests, and there they participated in the prayer said by the high priest:

1/161 “Lord! For mercy’s sake, take pity on all those who are my people. The same way You guided the one who was my protector, I ask You to guide all who are in this place now. I know You are the only Lord, and the one who was my protector’s protector and the one who was my protector also knew it, and that You are the only king. Show Your Laws to my eyes so that with wisdom I can take them to all those who are my people.”

1/162 When the prayer was over, the high priest took one of the spheres from the leather bag placed in front of him and announced:

1/163 “Zechariah of Veneram: you were elected by the Lord to enter the most sacred place in the Temple and make your offering. It befalls you the greatest task a man who fears the Lord may wish for.”

1/164 Despite what he felt for priests, the rabbi was exhilarated. He had never been invited to the assembly, and in his first opportunity there he had been selected. He entered the sacred site with feverish thankfulness:

1/165 “I am sorry for committing offenses against the Lord because the Lord did not give me a protectee, forgive me for the many times I did not have faith in the Lord and for my blasphemies.”

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/166 He would continue apologizing, but a light came from above, and from it a voice that identified itself:

1/167 “I am Gabriel, do not be afraid.”

1/168 He tenderly proceeded:

1/169 “I have come to tell you that you and Isabel will have a protectee, whom you will call John, and that you will be very happy with his arrival, he who is one of those sent by God to this abode before the one promised by the prophets, the promised one who will show all the peoples how to love one another and how to practice the teachings of our Father, who is God.”

1/170 Startled by the sound, not understanding his future firstborn’s objective, and remembering the conversation he had had with his spouse some days before concerning her not being able to have children anymore, Zechariah categorically said:

1/171 “There is no way a protectee will come from Isabel to me. It has taken the Lord too long to help me.”

1/172 The visitor, then materialized, patiently explained his words until he was fully understood. Seeing the charitable Hebrew’s elation, aware that the latter was not known for his discretion and, if he talked too much, he could ruin events to come, he asked him:

1/173 “In order not to disturb the coming of your protectee and that of the one promised by the prophets, do not tell everyone what John will do.”

1/174 When no questions had been left, Gabriel concluded:

1/175 “Now go to Veneram.”

1/176 The high priest, seeing the fortunate one leave the more than respected location, ended the activities with a prayer to the Lord.

1/177 Zechariah, accompanied by Zacchaeus, who was informed of the good news, immediately returned to the village that he had built along with his brother.

## 1-6

1/178 Mary, whose innocence made itself more visible than in those of the same age as her, seeing a social reject, invited him for supper, an action which she considered normal. Later on, when she came across Philip, one of the sons of the rebel Judah, she asked him to walk the beggar to her residence, since she was going to inform her father that they would have company for supper.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

She ran like a child looking for him, and found him talking to Bartholomew, a priest sent to Nazareth to ensure that the inhabitants there respected the Mosaic Laws and those of the Temple. Being shy to none of them, she announced to her genitor:

1/179 “An excluded one is coming for supper.”<sup>[30]</sup>

1/180 Indignant with what he saw and heard, the high priest’s representative informed Joaquin:

1/181 “A woman inviting an excluded one for supper? It is a blasphemy! I say that the duty is yours.”

1/182 Remaining calm, and not seeing anything out of the ordinary in the girl’s behavior, the peaceful man disagreed with his interlocutor:

1/183 “We should not see the one who invites. I have always taught my protectees that, after the Sabbath’s meal, it is our duty to be charitable.”<sup>[31]</sup>

1/184 Bartholomew indignantly asserted:

1/185 “You give this woman too much freedom. I say it is your duty to keep an eye on what your protectees are doing.”

1/186 When the conversation was over, Joaquin returned to his residence. The vengeful priest immediately went to confer with one of Antipas’s followers in Nazareth and reported Joaquin’s indiscipline to him.

1/187 The old mendicant, after being well fed, with uncommon politeness, which could possibly raise suspicion given the powerful ones’ stratagems to

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[30] **Excluded ones** or the ones rejected by the Lord: the lepers, or any disabled person abandoned throughout the ways.

[31] With the intent to exploit the Hebrews even more, from the Temple of Jerusalem it was issued, in 18 BC, the Sabbath Law, and the ignorant Hebrews were made to believe that it was Moses who had brought it from the Lord.

The time when the horns would sound was determined by the position of the sun where there were priests or Herod’s soldiers. Regardless of their occupation, the subjugated Hebrews would abandon their activities to dedicate themselves exclusively to the Lord. According to the Law, they were forced to wear their best tunics and garments, and display on what we nowadays call a table, then called the supper stone, their most valued possessions and their most appetizing food; furthermore, they needed to keep a shining light in their shanties throughout the day. No action could they do, not even clean their shanties, nor could they bathe themselves, that is, wash their faces, hands, and feet. Those who worked would be unmercifully punished.

The people agreed that the priests talked to the Lord and brought them His decrees. Because of them they established that this fundamental day was made to worship Him, when no one would do anything but go the Temples and synagogues; they had this Law as an absolute truth. They believed that, if a single one of them did not keep it, the Lord would be angry and would punish them with sandstorms and grasshopper plagues, destroying their crops; that their animals would bleed to death, and their children’s bodies would be covered in ulcers. In case a natural phenomenon affected a certain community, they suspected one of their own, and spontaneously accepted the priests’ assertion that the fundamental Law had been broken, and that the Lord was angry.

During the important day, the priests and Herods’ soldiers inspected the population’s shanties to find out how many material goods each one of them had; this way, given each one’s clothes and the food one ate, they would know if one was wealthier than one claimed to be.

take possession of the property of convicted ones, expressed his wish to leave, notwithstanding his host's invitation to stay and only leave in the following morning. However, he announced that he preferred to walk at night, since it was generally cooler, and promptly removed himself from the residence. Anna and her husband, exhausted from another day of work, under the protests of their daughter who wished to keep on talking, went to get their deserved rest. In the middle of the night, someone knocked on the wood that closed the passageway that led to the inner part of their shanty. Answering the call, the patriarch came face to face with one of the tyrant's fighters.

1/188 "Are you Joaquin?" he harshly asked him.

1/189 The answer was affirmative, and the savage, feeling satisfied, sentenced:

1/190 "Joaquin Benier, by order of Herod Antipas, your king, you are under arrest."

1/191 "Where are you taking me?" asked the prisoner; however, he was not informed of his destination.

1/192 He was taken without even being informed of the reason of his arrest, as Anna and Mary intensely cried; the latter desperately exclaimed that it was because of her, remembering what Bartholomew had said.

1/193 In the morning, an inhabitant informed the one who had conceived Sarah that her husband had been crucified. Her youngest daughter, who also heard the news, cried that she was responsible for it, and quickly went to look for the one who had been executed. At the market place she found Joseph, who had recently arrived in the village, and he tried to stop her from seeing the moribund man's suffering; he was nevertheless unable to restrain her. Consequently, she fully saw her father's tragic destiny.

1/194 Only the dead man's relatives took part in the funeral, as the custom went. Mary, seeing Judah, who observed them from a distance, approached him and naively asked him to search for her father's killers, concluding:

1/195 "Why are you here? Lamenting is not a solution," but she obtained no answer from the one who uninterruptedly guaranteed that he was on the Hebrews' side.

1/196 A while later, looking at her brother-in-law and noticing him again in mourning, now for Joaquin, she glossed with her peculiar naiveté.

1/197 "Your beard will never grow."

1/198 When the head of a family died, the scribes came and, drawing the community's attention, read out loud, in front of his residence, the edict that employed the Law of the Widows and marked with a x what we nowadays call

a door so that they would be aware that from then on they, the scribes, would be in charge of the deceased man's estate.

1/199 When they returned from the sepulture and noticed the x, they became aggravated. Judah, taking advantage of the feelings resulting from the nefarious action on the part of the oppressors, plotted a scheme to destroy the statue that symbolized Antipas's power, an eagle in between two spears, located on the main square of Nazareth. The imposing sculptures, present in many villages of the tetrarchy, had the goal, for the despot, of showing everyone that it was he, and not Herod the Great, who ruled Galilee. The pseudo-rebel, before an ignorant and oppressed audience, spoke with vehemence against the detested Law, his only banner:

1/200 "Why this decree? It is an unfair decree. What those who are scribes want is for no miserable ones to exist anymore, so that these women who are the companion of these miserable ones can be annihilated, and their offspring always be afraid. I ask you: what will you do? What can you do?"

1/201 Inciting his listeners to join him in the intent of eliminating Antipas, asking them to make up their minds immediately, he was forced to leave, thus not making his intentions come true, because the alarm sounded, which warned them that the crude fighters of the one who trumpeted that he was the king were approaching.

1/202 After Joaquin's body was placed in the grotto, Joseph, wishing to inform Sarah, whom he had left alone, of her father's death before she heard it from another source, left for Bethlehem, and Anna and Mary were left under Matthew's care. When he arrived there, he learned from Rachel, the same woman who had helped her in Azaham's delivery and had been brought from Nazareth, that the beautiful brunette had lost her living about two weeks before.

1/203 Far from her mother and from those of her native land, with her husband constantly absent, Sarah, at the end of her complicated pregnancy, also learning of her genitor's passing, gave birth, three days later, to a couple, Judas and Martha, and left her life of flesh a month later, when she was twenty-six years old.

1/204 Inexperienced with children, Joseph, in his opinion having no other option, returned to Nazareth planning to ask Anna for her consent to have her youngest one help out Rachel, the nanny who had suffered so much and who, like us, with a few exceptions, had come to this orb to readjust herself. When he was talking to his mother-in-law about what had happened and all the upcoming difficulties his children would bring upon him, before even making his request, the very bold girl, who was twelve harvests old, offered her assistance. After her mother's consent, Mary, along with Joseph, left for Bethlehem.



## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/205 With no further ado, Jacob's heir trusted Judas, Martha, Rachel, and the beautiful Nazarene girl to Simeon Joseph, who was then thirteen, and returned to, in his opinion, the rightful fight against the empire that the foreigners had imposed upon them.

1/206 Some days later, Judah asked him about the destiny of Joaquin's spouse. Despite the time that had elapsed since the death of his own, irate and still seeking to take revenge on the oppressors, Joseph informed him that he had left Matthew in charge of the matter. Astonished at his fellow fighter's ignorance of the Law of the Widows, the rebel explained to him that it was his responsibility to support her, not his relative. He curiously added:

1/207 "Why have you joined me? What do you fight for?"

1/208 Joseph's answer was emphatic:

1/209 "To avenge my protector's murder."

1/210 When, along with the rest of the band, he once more returned to Nazareth, Anna's stony son-in-law found her still within the deadline given to her to leave her property.<sup>[32]</sup> He immediately went to speak with his uncle, as it was usual, to seek advice concerning how to proceed.

1/211 "I say that Anna has nowhere to go. It is your duty to look after her and Mary," asserted the man who, since he was older, had more authority.

1/212 Feeling disappointed, his nephew, also a rebel, irritably asked:

1/213 "Will I be taking care of women only?"

1/214 "It is your duty. You will be talked about, and many of those who are our people will turn their faces away from you, but it will pass," Matthew encouraged him.

1/215 Having no other option, he accepted the unpleasant recommendation and took the woman to Bethlehem. For the next six harvests, the living of those who inhabited the humble shanty went on according the routine of those times: Anna and Mary took care of the children, while Simeon Joseph worked vigorously.<sup>[33]</sup>

1/216 During the years he kept company with the cruel pillagers, Jacob's only son was barely in Bethlehem, for the resistance against the usurpers of the Hebrews' lands demanded that he move around the tetrarchy.

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[32] Since she was under the responsibility of one of Joseph's relatives, Anna could choose to enjoy her **property** for one harvest while she awaited her son-in-law; in case Matthew died, she would be immediately evicted.

[33] Rachel passed away three springs after the arrival of Mary's mother.

## 1-6.1

1/217 Since he had joined the rebels, the absent father was sure he was fighting for the deliverance of his people, which quenched his thirst for retaliation. An incident, however, made him aware of the true scope of the leader of the pseudo-rebels. In a combat with Antipas's soldiers, one of the rebels was gravely injured. Judah ordered that he be left behind, for he would only slow them down. Joseph disobeyed him and helped the moribund, a decisive move to preserve the living of the much injured man.

1/218 Malaleus, thankful for the help Joseph had offered him, was an accomplice of the leader and aware of his objectives; thinking it was unacceptable that his savior remain ignorant of the evident intentions of those of the band of which he was part, he confessed to Joseph that the massacre that had taken place seven harvests before in Cerculis was carried out by them. His self-love shaken, and furious by the revelation, Joseph informed Judah that he would no longer follow him. The latter, a smart and controlling man, made use of blackmail, for his group was now composed of only nine members. Assuring Joseph that, if he left, he would let everyone know that Simeon Joseph, whom all believed was his interlocutor's son, was in fact Antipas's, he queried:

1/219 "Does it not go inside you what all those of Bethlehem will do to the one of your family when they hear that you have the Herods' blood in your residence?"

1/220 As he was preparing to destroy the statue of an eagle, which symbolized the godliness and the strength of Mammon, erected in front of the Temple on the Mount, he disdainfully proposed to Joseph that, if he cooperated in the task, he would be able to return to his own the morning after without his secret's being told.<sup>[34]</sup> Left with no options and aspiring to protect his own, Jacob's heir accepted the pernicious stratagem and followed the outlaws for the last time.

1/221 On June 2, 11 BC, before midnight, as the hateful image was brought down, many of the tyrant's soldiers came to the square, and the face-to-face combat started. Fighting with one of them, Joseph immobilized him, pressing him against a wall with his sword against the man's throat. However, he did not have the courage to kill him.

1/222 "Take his life," furiously ordered Judah.

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[34] The **statue** that expressed the power of Herod the Great was a portentous eagle, different from that which served as an emblem of that of Antipas, which was the same bird, but flanked by two swords. For the tyrant of Galilee, the deadly blades conveyed that he was superior to his father.

1/223 Looking into the immobilized man's eyes, Sarah's widower let him go, thus making the leader of the band excessively outraged as he said:

1/224 "It is better that you leave us. I say you are a threat to all."

1/225 Suddenly, a soldier hit Jacob's only son on the head, and he fell to the ground. Seeing him unconscious, the assaulter, followed by the other savage soldiers, started chasing the other rebels and took them prisoner. Right after dawn, before the monument they had tried to level down, eight men were displayed in the public square in two cages. It was Judah and what was left of his band. Sentenced to burn, they were executed three days later, at the same place, in a huge bonfire, still inside their fetid cages.

1/226 Joseph, after being hit, fell next to the wood that blocked the access to the residence of one of his acquaintances, who promptly rescued him, delivering him from certain death.

1/227 Reire had a daughter at the age to be married. Joanna, who had learned that the afflicted man had only married Sarah to remove Joaquin's name from the mud, became very interested in tending him, hoping to obtain his gratitude. For a week Jacob's heir stayed in the shanty, exchanging not so innocent, thus concupiscent, actions with the Hebrew woman, until his host, who had noticed what was going on, made himself clear:

1/228 "I know that she who is my protectee is many harvests old to unite herself, and the way you look at her is not the way those who want to unite themselves look at one another. If you want to unite yourself, commit yourself to her, or go find those who are your family. I say that your wounds already leave your body and that you can go your own way."

1/229 Not knowing what to say, Joseph replied that he wanted to take his sack and leave. He was stopped by Reire who, few seconds later, gave his guest's his scarce belongings. Joseph bid his farewell to his savior and left never to return, an action that brought onto Joanna great despair.

1/230 From Jerusalem, his mind fixed on what he would do, Jacob's only son walked straight to Nazareth. Since his relative no longer worked as a carpenter, he would ask his permission to use his tools and practice this craft in said village. He possessed the property he received when he united himself to Sarah, and there he would take residence and work, which would allow Simeon Joseph, who had always showed him a touching affection and who was well regarded by the population, to continue to have his noble and lucrative occupation in Bethlehem.

1/231 After Joaquin's passing, Matthew started growing melons, since one of his sons, Ezechias, had moved to Upper Cesarea, and his other son, when a log rolled over his leg, had to have it amputated, and he could no longer help his father.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/232 After his uncle acquiesced, he left for Bethlehem intending to bring his own to the very small village of Nazareth. Before doing so, he, however, looked for the pseudo-rebel's wife to inform her of her husband's death. Praising Judah, for two of his children were around, he told her that he had died in combat. Knowledgeable of the rebel's true motivations, Rebecca disdainfully commented:

1/233 "I say that all meet their death as sheep."

1/234 With the intent to aggrandize the deceased man's image, he expressed his opinion that he had died for the sake of his own. Juda's wife, enraged, pointing at the two boys, replied:

1/235 "He lost his life for my offspring? What should I say to my offspring? That he who should protect them lost his life for them, when not even for them he lived?"

1/236 Contradicting her, Joseph affirmed that the rebel liked them. Not allowing him to finish his sentence, his interlocutor added:

1/237 "Not enough to teach them what is right and what is not, how to be fair and merciful. He left all this to me. You, men, think it honorable to fight and lose your life, but you leave the hard part for women. See if it is difficult to lose your life here! It is enough not to go after food and water, not to hide your offspring from soldiers for a single day. What did he teach my offspring?"<sup>[35]</sup>

1/238 The suffering Hebrew woman answered her own question:

1/239 "I say he taught them to be like him: take lives and hate."

1/240 She was still expressing her feeling when she noticed that the boys were fighting with hard wood swords, and she approached them to separate them. Having no other persuasive arguments, Joseph, who had gone see her with the best intentions, went to make the last arrangements for the journey he would take.

1/241 Jacob's heir was twenty-four harvests old when he started heading for Bethlehem, accompanied by Matthew, who would learn to use the new instruments that Simeon Joseph, then nineteen years old, had bought from merchants and successfully put to use. Since Joseph was not experienced in the profession, his uncle would first learn it and then instruct him. The respected teacher assigned his son, the one who had been in an accident, to be in charge of his activities.

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[35] **Teach:** to pass along to one's male descendants what one had learned.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/242 They arrived in Bethlehem on June 27, 11 BC.

1/243 Noticing only the presence of the twins Judas and Martha, aware that his stepson was working in his workshop, Joseph asked his mother-in-law:

1/244 “Are you alone with the small ones?”

1/245 Anna replied that, at the moment, she was, for Mary had gone get water; she also told him that every day she went where her father’s remains were.<sup>[36]</sup> She somberly went on to narrate the sadness that overpowered the girl, even six years after Joaquin’s death.

1/246 “Mary does not talk to anyone who is not from this residence.”

1/247 They were still talking when Simeon Joseph, whose arduous workday had ended, arrived. When he learned that his aunt was the subject of the conversation, he, who generally accompanied her along the smelly alleys of the village, pointed out that he was on his way towards the grotto. Jacob’s only son, however, because of his older age, and in fact taking advantage of this privilege, meddled in Sarah’s firstborn’s daily routine.

1/248 “I say I will go get Mary.”

1/249 When he entered the sepulcher, he witnessed the girl talking to the urn.

1/250 “What should I do? It always went inside me everything you taught me to trust: the Lord’s kindness, His Laws, and to wait for Him to send us the savior. How can I accept that you were right when you talked about a Lord who is just and good, if He let you lose your life, you who were the kindest man?”

1/251 Confessing to the feeling that overpowered her, she concluded:

1/252 “It is all my fault.”

1/253 Joseph consoled her:

1/254 “I say it was not your fault. The Laws of the Herods are not right.”

1/255 Mary surprisedly turned towards the voice she had heard. She was extremely happy to see the no longer rebel. She spontaneously and mildly said:

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[36] The custom among the oppressed people dictated that, when they moved to another village, they should take the remains of their deceased ones. They would put them in the funeral vase in the order of the deceased ones’ generations: each father with their children and respective wives.

Joaquin’s bones, put in a stone urn with his name inscribed on it, along with that of the family he belonged to, were taken by Anna from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and again when she returned to her native land.

1/256 “All these harvests have not changed you, except for your hair, which is now white.”

1/257 Joseph, approaching the beautiful Hebrew woman, sat on a stone and, observing her with admiration, replied:

1/258 “But with you the harvests did not do the same: you have become a woman.”

1/259 When they were returning, Mary, crying a lot, as if finally externalizing all the tears she had welled up since her genitor’s death, leaned over the jubilant ex-pillager’s shoulder.

## 1-7

1/260 From this day on, for the next three moons, Joseph accompanied her, either from the well, the lake or the cave used as a tomb to the shanty where they had settled.<sup>[37]</sup> On many occasions he carried the amphorae with water, an activity that was not habitual for a man at the time. Since they invariably arrived at dusk, Anna was not pleased: Jacob’s heir was a widower, and her daughter, who had not even menstruated for the first time, was still a child. If anyone saw them together, they would defame her, and once again her husband’s name would be in the mud. She also disagreed with her son-in-law’s behavior, for it was enough for a man to approach Mary for him to become jealous.

1/261 Joseph, who had decided to express his long repressed desire, routinely conferred with Joaquin’s protectee. Not finding her by the main well, nor at the almost marsh, he would look for her at the cave, which was not very far. During one of these afternoons, his sister-in-law, with simplicity and spontaneity, said she had always felt affectionate towards him, and that she had always seen him as a man who was different from all the other ones, who had never disrespected her sister. After her declaration, she announced that she would be happy if they also united themselves to one another. Joseph, extremely satisfied, but already unwilling to honor what he was about to say, shamelessly asked her to be patient, for he would soon try to get Anna’s

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[37] The inhabitants of Bethlehem used water from the well, located in the main square of the city, only to drink it, and that of the natural **lake**, located on the foot of the hills, for less noble activities.

The marsh dried up in 90 AD, as a consequence of the greed of those who had power who, thirsty for profit, charged even the water that animals drank, and they dug too much around its spring, causing it to disappear. It originated, then, the waterhole that nowadays supplies water to the poorest area of Bethlehem.

consent for them to marry. Still prevaricating, he argued that he needed time to earn his mother-in-law's trust, because she was angry at him for dedicating himself much more to his interlocutor than to Judas and Martha.

1/262 After what he deemed had been a confession, he went to look for her only when she brought the last buckets of water from the marsh, for he knew that before that, she used to talk to her father. He astutely arranged for Simeon Joseph to remain at the workshop and waited for her. They conversed for a long time, lying down by the reservoir. Despite his reason's being intoxicated by his vile yearning, he was charmed by Mary's innocence and her stories, how she told him about her conversations with whom she called her angel and her assurance of the coming of the redeemer. Wishing to be around at the time of his advent, she asked him, in case he learned where it would be, to take her there to meet him.

1/263 Impatient to fulfill his wish and with ulterior motives, the then well-versed Hebrew plotted a theatrical game. As Joaquin's protectee did her last trips of the day, he hid behind a rock. When he saw her approach, he called her, changing, and thus disguising, the tone of his voice. She asked him who he was.

1/264 "I say I am your angel."

1/265 "If you are my angel, why do you not show yourself?"

1/266 "You will only hear my voice. I say that seeing me is not yet possible."

1/267 "Why do you come speak to me?"

1/268 Jacob's only son inconsequently, unaware of the result that his action would cause to those involved in it, said:

1/269 "To say to you that the one promised by the Lord will really come, and it will be from one of your people."

1/270 "That is what everyone has been saying."

1/271 "I say that you have been elected to give life to the one promised by the Lord."

1/272 Feeling elated, Mary requested that more information be revealed to her; the invisible interlocutor nonetheless went silent. After some minutes, pretending that he had just arrived, Joseph made himself visible with deceiving modesty. The girl undeterredly reported the conversation she had had to him. Joseph found her narration amusing, feeling radiant with the success of his staging. When she announced to him that she had been chosen to be the mother of the longed-for savior, he enthusiastically endorsed her assertion.

1/273 Days went by, and so did the talented actor's speeches. Unable to restrain his impulses before the girl's attributes, but having no intention to

commit to anyone, and persuaded that he would not inseminate her, for he believed himself to be very experienced, Jacob's heir, in another session of gallantry, again pretending to have been sent by God, proclaimed:

1/274 "I say that the one promised by the Lord will come from a man and his companion, just like everyone else, and that you will be the one who will have the one who was promised in your womb, and that he will be of Joseph's protection."

1/275 "But how?"

1/276 "I say you must unite yourself to Joseph."

1/277 After a short period, they went by the lake, where Joseph knew Mary as a woman, and Mary knew Joseph as a man. They kept seeing each other, until she noticed that her abdomen was growing.

1/278 From the moment Joseph arrived in Bethlehem until the conception of Mary's firstborn, less than a month elapsed.

1/279 For Joaquin's daughter, the two first moons after the copulation were vigorously joyful, but, for the shameful man, they were incessantly worrisome, for he feared he would be exposed. His anxiety was crowned when she, in her naïveté, mentioned the transformations her body was going through, though she did not understand why.

1/280 Joseph, who after Sarah's death did not have the least intention to remarry, when realizing what he had previously thought had zero chance of hapenning, did not accept that it was him who had gotten her pregnant, for he was sure that Mary, since she did not wear a white veil, had never menstruated.<sup>[38]</sup> He knew that, without physical contact, a woman was barren, and furthermore he had taken precautions to avoid a pregnancy.<sup>[39]</sup> He asked himself how such an unpleasant fact had come to be. In his own thoughts, the answer was immediate.

1/281 "I know that this offspring is not mine."

1/282 What he ignored was that, during their intercourse, Mary was ovulating for the first time.<sup>[40]</sup>

1/283 Since his object of desire did not wear any veil because her first

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[38] It was a mother's duty to make her daughter, after her first menstruation, wear the ornament that signaled that she was now able to unite herself.

[39] The only practiced contraceptive method was coitus interruptus.

[40] When she knew Joseph as a man, Mary's first menstruation had not occurred yet, despite the fact that she was eighteen years of age, as a consequence of the malnutrition and the roughness of living that was so common, conditions which did not allow the human body to develop fully.



menstruation had not yet occurred, and she had not been betrothed to anyone, she always played with the other children.<sup>[41]</sup> His private justification for his intention not to unite himself consolidated his truth: Mary was an adulteress.

1/284 According to the customs of the Hebrews at the time, a man who tended his wife's family after her death, in the absence of a brother-in-law, could unite himself to her sister, as long as he obeyed, in case there was more than one, their order of birth. Consequently, Joseph was allowed to marry the no longer, in his opinion, attractive girl, if he so wished to. Since she was pregnant, and their union had not been made official, they would be punished, fifty strokes of the whip each to be made an example, and then they would be expelled from the town.<sup>[42]</sup>

1/285 This was the only honorable action that Joseph could do. If he did not, Mary would be deemed sinful and sentenced to be stoned. The insensitive man, as a punishment for not having taken good care of her, would only be banished from the village, and his property would be confiscated, but nothing more.

1/286 After learning about her pregnancy, Joseph instructed Mary not to confide to anyone that she was feeling different, for he would solve the problem himself. On the same day, he left Bethlehem, with the excuse that he was going to acquire wood for the carpenter's workshop, and returned a week later.

1/287 Believing she was sick, and not to worry Anna, the loving girl accepted his suggestion, persuaded that, when her future husband returned, he would bring her the medication for her disease.

1/288 Jacob's only son returned from Jerusalem with a plan in mind to excuse himself from the responsibility for the conception that so much revolted him. According to his plan, he would not need to unite himself again, and nothing would happen to Mary. Finding her in the cave, and aware of her ingenuousness and her lack of knowledge of her own condition, he asserted that the problem in her belly would be over after the union, an action he had no intention to carry out. He asked her, with restrained rudeness, not to say anything about their encounters, for it was necessary for her to become his fiancée first. He warned the child that, since he had not talked to his mother-in-law and had not yet gotten the rabbi's approval, she, for the only reason that they had stayed together by the lake, would be stoned, and he would be expelled from Bethlehem.

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[41] For many Hebrew families, in case their daughter was betrothed, she would wear the blue veil, even though she had not menstruated yet.

[42] The whip was made of braided dried leather.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/289 Not understanding what had happened, believing their union would happen immediately, Joaquin's protectee consented to Joseph's words, for she trusted him completely. In addition to his request, the Hebrew who was trying to get away from the implications of his actions guaranteed that the Lord's envoy would manifest himself, words that made her exhilarated, for she would be guided on how to proceed.

1/290 Two days later, still taking advantage of Mary's innocence, Jacob's heir resumed his plan. In the cave, pretending to be the charitable angel, he made himself be heard:

1/291 "Why do you cry?"

1/292 "I cry because my protector's life was taken from him."

1/293 "The Lord is with you. I say that you have been elected by the Lord to be the one who will carry His promised one in her womb."

1/294 After the dialogue, Joseph remained silent. Some minutes later, he pretended to have just arrived.

1/295 Showing an even greater happiness than on the previous occasion when she had received the same information, Mary, never suspecting that she was pregnant – she only believed she would sometime be the mother of the immensely longed-for savior – told the liar what had just happened, and mentioned to him her wish to share it with her mother. She was advised to wait a little longer, for, according to him, Anna was still suffering because of her spouse's death. She accepted his arguments and, with stupefying simplicity, asked:

1/296 "When are we uniting ourselves to one another?"

1/297 For the young woman, who ignored the then concept of being pure, it was indispensable to be married for a child to be born; that was the reason for her question. She obviously did not understand what had happened. She was sure that his answer would be that it would happen quickly, for she had in mind that Joseph would be profoundly elated in helping her, assuming the role of the redeemer's father, helping her raise him, the same way Joaquin had proceeded with Azaham.<sup>[43]</sup>

1/298 "It is because my angel said that he who was promised by the prophets is about to come to this world," concluded, with sincere feelings, she who interpreted her symptoms, never experienced before, as a disease.

1/299 Since his plan was working to his contentment, Joseph, with absolute solidity, positioned himself:

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[43] In her naïveté, Mary was not aware of a woman's monthly bleeding and its meaning.

1/300 “I must not unite myself for the moment. How can I tell Judas and Martha that I will unite myself so fast with you, who are harvests younger than Simeon Joseph?”

1/301 Despite being reminded that Sarah’s firstborn was not his son, he unflinchingly concluded:

1/302 “Only you and I know about it. I ask you to let me decide what to do.”

1/303 Until then, not for a single moment did Mary suppose she would be giving birth. She was indeed certain of the coming of the longed-for savior, who would deliver those of her people from the great suffering imposed on them, according to what her interlocutor had assured her of, whom she unlimitedly trusted. Since the celestial and much awaited man would soon arrive in the tetrarchy, she pleaded with Joseph for him to decide, before they left the cave, on how he would behave.

1/304 The reason that Jacob’s heir carried out his plan was that he did not intend to marry again and did not accept that the conception of Mary’s child was of his doing. If he accomplished his scheme, not only would he be delivered from the consequences of his action, but Mary would also not die. He believed that no one would hesitate to accept immediately the version he had produced about the coming of the one sent by the Lord when they saw that a woman largely considered to be chaste showed up pregnant, since nothing wrong had ever happened in her living.

1/305 Joseph plotted the situation for he knew what was widely believed by the oppressed ones: the woman who would bring the promised one would not, at any moment of her existence, have been touched by a man, not even a strand of her hair, except for her father, who carried her in his arms when she was a child. Furthermore, as the capable vaticinators of the time had affirmed, the longed-for deliverer would be born from a woman who would conceive by an act of the spirit of the Lord, and, notwithstanding her pregnancy, she would be immaculate. Besides, he was taking advantage of the profound wish the Hebrew women had of being the mother of the savior. Another reason for the collective acceptance of his intention, as he inferred, was that the inhabitants of Bethlehem were aware of Mary’s ingenuousness and talked about it a lot, for she still played with the young ones, despite her age.

1/306 Crowning his own plot, aware of the not unusual fact that even if a woman had not had her first menstruation, but was betrothed, she would wear the respective veil, he believed that the transgression would be very convincing, for it was irrefutable that Mary did not wear the virgins’ veil. In his understanding, these facts would be tremendous evidence that the Lord had chosen her to conceive the longed-for redeemer.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/307 Anna, a very experienced woman, realizing that her daughter was behaving unusually, for she felt sick and, despite eating very little, she was gaining weight, went to talk to Matthew in Simeon Joseph's workshop, sadly narrating her piercing worries:

1/308 "I say Joseph deceived me only because he came from David's residence. It goes inside him that he is more powerful than those of our people. If Joaquin had not lost his life, I know he would be helping me."

1/309 "It may not be true what goes inside you," spoke the widower in favor of his relative.

1/310 Intimately convinced of the opportunist's pernicious action, she asked:

1/311 "What should go inside me? Mary wants to unite herself, and she says Joseph does not want me to know what happened!"

1/312 Since Mary ignored what was happening to her, when she confided it to Anna, it was because of her love for Jacob's only son. When she mentioned that he did not want Anna to know what happened, Mary was referring to the fact that she would be the deliverer's mother, not to her pregnancy.

1/313 To please his interlocutor, Matthew proposed, given that, because he was older, he had more authority:

1/314 "I will speak to Joseph. I expect him to have an answer."

1/315 Both quickly went where the no longer rebel worked.

1/316 In the meantime, Mary, feeling confused, was talking to Joaquin in the cave. What her angel, whom she ignored was an impostor, had guaranteed would happen, her future husband had asked her not to mention to anyone, but Anna told her that her behavior went against the Lord's Laws.

1/317 "I do not know what to do! If you were alive, I know you would tell me, but I know I am the one who has to decide what to do."

1/318 At this very moment, Matthew had started questioning a cunning Joseph. The latter, pretending not to know what was happening, cynically stated what Mary had told him after she heard it from someone sent by the Lord.

1/319 "I say this is not true!" his mother-in-law firmly contested.

1/320 Accepting what his nephew had reported, the protector of Ananias and Ezechias gave his verdict:

1/321 "Now I know that Mary found a way to escape from Joaquin's death."

1/322 Turning to Anna, he concluded:

1/323 "I say that every woman wants to be the one who will bear the one promised by the Lord."

1/324 The indignant Hebrew woman, who had noticed the changes in the body of the girl she had conceived, did not accept the explanation. She knew her son-in-law had been insincere and that, taking advantage of the circumstances, was suggesting that her daughter was sick in the head, an expression they used at the time to refer to the mad.

## 1-7.1

1/325 At the beginning of Mary's fourth month of pregnancy, the Beniers went to the market. One of Anna's acquaintances asked her if Mary would unite herself to Joseph, for they had been seen together various times, and since she no longer went to get water from the well, but from the lake, people inevitably started talking. Given Sarah's mother's silence, Rachel asserted:

1/326 "I no longer want my offspring to speak to Mary. Ruth will unite herself, and I do not want your offspring to ruin everything."

1/327 Stupefied at the revelation, Anna started looking for her daughter, who was attentively listening to one of the many prophets that existed at the time. He proclaimed:

1/328 "Caesar wants to enslave even the inside of you, he wants to make you accept that he is a god, but there is no god but our Lord. Imagine, all of you who now listen to me, the greatest warrior the world has ever seen, and how he will come."

1/329 He emphatically announced:

1/330 "I will say how he will come: the skies will open, and the one promised by the Lord will descend among all those of our people, impregnated with the blood of Israel and that of those of our families who are already gone, leading everyone in the great battles against those who are our enemies. The promised one will invoke all the filthy beings, which will devour our enemies in the Lord's great banquet. I say that all the filthy beings will feed on the soldiers and the kings who humiliate us."

1/331 Mary, aware of what an angelic being, or so she believed, had made explicit to her, addressed the ignorant ones in the crowd, composed mainly of men, with the intent to instruct them:

1/332 "Do not listen to him."

1/333 Looking straight at the orator, she concluded:

1/334 "I know you think that what you say is the truth, but you do not understand that the promised one," but she did not finish her sentence, for she started feeling dizzy.

1/335 She paused, took a deep breath, and proceeded:

1/336 “You are mistaken. The promise one will arrive soon, but not the way you describe, not as a commander among blood and death. I say the promised one will come to bring us peace and order.”

1/337 She assertively stated:

1/338 “I know the promised one will bring peace, and not discord.”

1/339 She was interrupted by one of the men indignant at her attitude, who, in a bout of astonishment, exclaimed:

1/340 “A woman speaking at the square? Heresy! Take this woman away from the square.”

1/341 Mary, however, concluded with conviction:

1/342 “I know what I am saying: I will be the one who will bear the promised one, and Joseph will be with me. Accept it, I am telling the truth.”

1/343 When she claimed that Joseph would be with her, she did not mean that he was the father, but that he would take the role of protector of the more than longed-for redeemer.

1/344 Recovering her ability to reason, she was immediately guided by her mother and other women to Rachel’s residence, which was not very far, where they were assured, because of the evident signs, that the girl, who did not even wear a veil, was pregnant.

1/345 Observing the frenzy around her, Mary confided to Joaquin's widow:

1/346 “I say I am afraid.”

1/347 Hugging her affectionately, Anna reassured her that she would not allow anything bad to happen to her. Accompanied only by her daughter, the brave Hebrew woman walked to their residence, marching through the crowd, who, infuriated, shouted:

1/348 “Heresy, blasphemy.”

1/349 When he learned what had happened, Joseph, who was working at the workshop, went to see his fiancée, as if he had finally decided to commit to his responsibility. When he was with her, Anna reprimanded him:

1/350 “You made us believe that Mary was not being herself, when in fact you were betraying us all.”

1/351 Turning to Mary, who was lying in bed, she asserted:

1/352 “Joseph told me he wanted to protect you. But from now on, I will not let him be alone with you for a single second.”

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/353 Mary submissively asked her mother to leave for a few minutes, because she needed to talk to Joseph. Anna, feeling frustrated, insolently said:

1/354 “Traitor. Was it not enough to make it go inside my offspring that it was an honor to belong to your family? What a great honor!”

1/355 Jacob’s heir, supposing that Mary had revealed his doing by the lake, roughly tried to confirm if that was true. Believing that her faint was only a warning that she was expecting a baby, his interlocutor urged him to change his behavior:

1/356 “The Lord wants you to be part of the coming of His promised one. Why did you not unite yourself to me when I said? If you want, we can unite ourselves to one another now.”

1/357 Aware that he had gotten her pregnant, but not accepting such indisputable truth, Joseph, nervously and fearfully, since he ignored how many of his acts had been exposed, and also desiring to disentangle himself from the responsibility for what had happened not long before, harshly said:

1/358 “Could it not be that your offspring comes from that one who wanders throughout the ways, the one who made you smile? Could it not be that you did the same with another one? I respected you, but you showed me no respect.”

1/359 He insensitively concluded:

1/360 “Does the offspring you carry in your womb come from the one who made you smile?”

1/361 “What you say is not your fault, it is the hatred you have in your heart. I do not understand why you have so much rage. Why do you not accept what I say?”

1/362 “You know I had only my company to give you, which I would have given you very happily. Now what I have is my pride, and I will not let you take it away from me.”

1/363 Cordially, but assertively, Mary said to the immodest Hebrew, who silently listened and subsequently left:

1/364 “I have never wanted to harm your pride. I say that I would like to be with you.”

1/365 Joseph’s feelings were not very different from those of the men of his time, and perhaps those of our own times; he, by not uniting himself to Mary, only desired her for his absolute delight, never allowing another man to approach her. The wrath and contempt in his words were caused by a previous event: Mary, answering to her mother’s request, went to the market, along with Martha and Judas, who were both six years old, to buy fruit and roots. At the fair, the first of the twins had his attention drawn towards an illusionist

who played his tricks, and he instantly asked his aunt if he could go watch him. She did not allow him to; but since Sarah's lastborn expressed the same desire, she acquiesced to their pleas, and they stood right behind the other highly amused children.

1/366 The magician placed three pigeon eggs in a box, which was then placed inside a larger one. Looking at Mary, he touched the container with a small stick; however, with a disappointed face, he announced that he had made a mistake. With greater determination, he repeated the operation. When it was over, he elatedly stated that it had been successful. He opened the fantastic container, and six grown birds flew out of it, which he offered to the children as a gift. The woman who was generating a new physical body commented that she had never seen anything like that, and she came a little closer to him. The also puppeteer introduced himself:

1/367 "I am like a merchant. I have no residence in a single place, my residence are the ways."

1/368 Still looking at the interested spectator, he searched among his props for a puppet named Cogo, and he restarted the spectacle making it talk:

1/369 "I want to dance and sing. Oh, what do I see? A beautiful woman, but she looks so sad. Come here, beautiful woman, I will make you smile!"

1/370 Shaking the speaker, the prestidigitator demanded that he remain silent and not disturb the woman; however, the live object exclaimed that, if she did not come closer, he would start crying. Judas and Martha, mesmerized by the rag doll, encouraged Mary to satisfy his wish, saying her name out loud. The illusionist likewise encouraged her to come forth. Joaquin's protectee timidly consented, and walked until she was face to face with Cogo. The latter, speaking in a funny voice, asked her:

1/371 "Beautiful Mary, why are you so sad?"

1/372 Unable to resist, Anna's youngest daughter majestically cheered up.

1/373 "You see, I made you smile. Now I want a kiss, just a kiss."

1/374 The magician begged the puppet to stop, but was not obeyed.

1/375 "Only one kiss," continued the puppet.

1/376 Surrendered by the scene, Mary assented to Cogo's plea. It was enough for Joseph, who attentively watched them without being seen by her or even his children, to leave his hiding place furiously, feeling betrayed. Similarly to the entirety of those of the masculine sex at the time, with rare exceptions, he considered her his exclusive property, despite his lack of interest in marrying her.



## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/377 Bartholomew, the same priest who had sent Joaquin to his death in Nazareth, being informed of the prestidigitator's presence, ordered the young ones to leave the square. Addressing Mary, he reprimanded her:

1/378 "I can understand those who are few harvests old, but not you, who know the Lord's Laws. You know that the Lord forbids anyone from making images of men, and I find you here?"

1/379 Defending his way of making a living, the puppeteer replied, affirming that Cogo was nothing but a rag doll. The censored woman, crestfallen, removed herself from the place, holding her nephew's and niece's hands. Dismayed by what had taken place, the illusionist followed her and asked her if they would be punished because of him. Since she remained silent, he insisted:

1/380 "Where do you live? I can take you to your residence."

1/381 Mary shook her head; Judas, however, seeing that the man had a wagon pulled by two horses, became very excited. He immediately climbed on the rustic means of transportation, followed by Martha. Having no other alternative, their aunt approached the children and consented to being transported by the foreigner, who, along the way, entertained his passengers with his theatrical gifts.

1/382 Jacob's only son, despite having left unnoticed by his family when Mary kissed the puppet, kept on spying on them. Arriving at their shanty before them, he jealously asked Mary when he saw her entering the residence:

1/383 "Were you happy?"

1/384 "What are you speaking of?"

1/385 The proud man silently left, and did not speak to Anna's youngest child until the day she had returned from the market, when she had proclaimed to the foreign foreboder and to everyone else what she knew about the coming of the much awaited savior.

1/386 Shortly after Joseph's abrupt exit, feeling abandoned by him, who was supposed to be with her, Mary went to the cave where she usually prayed. When she was before the urn containing Joaquin's remains, she saw, at the opening of the cave, a shadow.

1/387 "Why are you crying," he mildly asked.

1/388 Despite realizing that he was not the man she loved, as she had at first thought, she replied:

1/389 "I say it is because they want to take my life and that of the promised one who will come to this world."

1/390 Mary still ignored that she was pregnant. She believed one could die

of sadness, for she was feeling profoundly prostrated because of the content of her conversation with Jacob's heir; that is why she said they wanted to kill her and the much desired redeemer.

1/391 The man surrounded by a shining light resumed his speech:

1/392 "Do not be afraid, God is looking at you. I tell you that very soon you will have a son, who will be called Jesus. He will be acclaimed all over the universe, and the Hebrews will announce him to be of David's family and the one promised to the prophets. The son you carry in your womb will bring God's teachings to everyone in this abode, teachings that will never find an end."

1/393 "How can it be, if they want to take my life and that of the promised one?"

1/394 She was affectionately assuaged:

1/395 "A spirit sent by God is with you, protecting you. The son who will come from you is the one promised by the prophets. Now go to Zechariah's residence, and not one person will lay their hands on you."

1/396 Mary euphorically returned to her residence. Forgetting about Joseph's unkind behavior, she narrated to him what had happened in the cave:

1/397 "What you said was true. Now I have seen my angel, who once again said to me that I will be the one to bring the promised one to this world."

1/398 She enthusiastically continued:

1/399 "If you want, I say that you can be the protector of the one promised by the Lord."

1/400 She immediately informed her skeptical interlocutor of her desire to spread the news. Joseph, certain that she had gone mad because of what had happened, to put an end to the contagious elation she manifested, protested:

1/401 "You cannot, it could be dangerous. Those who are many harvests old, the priests, and the Herods will not like to know that the one promised by the Lord will come among those who have neither land nor coins. Does it go inside you that they will like it?"

1/402 As for taking responsibility for the paternity, or, as Mary believed would be the same case as Joaquin's concerning Sarah, helping her to raise the much desired savior, Joseph did not say a single word.

1/403 Accepting his reasoning, Mary, who was still a girl, confided, the same way Joseph had assured her, albeit from a hidden place, that she would be bringing the deliverer who had been announced by the respected vaticinators, and that she would like to report it exclusively to her mother. Convinced of Mary's insanity, and aware that Anna would contest the story, Joseph explained:

1/404 “Do not say a word to anyone. I know you want to make everyone as happy as you are, but those of our people will not accept it. Remember that, if Herod only hears about the coming of the one promised by the Lord, it will already be a threat to your offspring.”

1/405 Again the beautiful pregnant woman consented. Remembering the conversation she had had with the sibling who had no physical body, she concluded:

1/406 “I know that our union cannot wait. My angel said that the coming of the promised one will happen soon. I say you cannot wait any longer.”

1/407 Such words confirmed to Jacob's only son that she was indeed sick, for she clearly demonstrated a total alienation of her state, in spite of what had happened.

## 1-8

1/408 After the second meal of the day, two of Mammon's soldiers, after Bartholomew's accusation, knocked on the heavy wood that blocked the access to Joseph's residence and proclaimed:

1/409 “Mary of Joaquin's protection: you are under arrest and will be judged for blasphemy,” and they took her to prison, where she spent the night.

1/410 At the market place, while they waited for sunrise, many inhabitants gathered around a small bonfire, positioned in the best places, for, regardless of the fault the infractor would be charged with, they would have a spectacle to see. They were observed by two other people, who commented:

1/411 “How to understand this? They pray so much for the Lord to send the one He promised to the prophets, and, when someone announces that he is about to come, they want to take the life of the woman who announced it to everyone.”

1/412 In the early morning, at the Temple of Bethlehem, six priests, the rabbi, and the oldest person in the village congregated to deliberate how they would officially qualify Mary's action. The eldest of the proud sextet presided the solemn hearing. Bartholomew, feeling great pleasure, was the incriminator. The other two members who did not report to the high priest of Jerusalem were in charge of the defense of Anna's youngest daughter.

1/413 The meeting was necessary because the one responsible for Joaquin's murder had instigated the debate, trying to turn the charges into blasphemy,

contrary to the rabbi's desire, who favored charges of adultery and opposition to the established doctrine, for he considered that insulting the Lord was an extremely severe offense. Furthermore, when the charges being debated were accepted, he, as a function inherent to his profession, would be forced to watch the execution of the sentence, which would not take place if the charges were other than the non-disastrous offense.

1/414 Bartholomew listed his arguments with satisfaction:

1/415 "Mary affirmed that the one promised by the prophets will come from her womb, that the offspring that is now in her womb is the Lord's Himself, and here you all discuss adultery? You laughed when I said that Mary would not leave the market and that she talked to all the false prophets, even to that one who gives life to wood and makes the wood talk. You said I was saying something that did not happen. Now what you must do is to charge Mary with blasphemy."

1/416 Blinded by hatred, having as an ulterior motive that Anna suffer a lot, Bartholomew added words that the defendant had not pronounced, such as that the Lord had inseminated her, so that they would all accept his proposition.

1/417 "A charge of blasphemy is very serious," said the rabbi, who had a placid and conciliating temperament.

1/418 The hardened priest replied:

1/419 "Do you know what those who are from this place are saying? I say that those who are from this place are ready to stone Mary because she concealed her sin. Should we ignore all the people who live in this place?"

1/420 Aspiring, since he had known Joaquin, to be far away when the unfortunate one was punished, the peacemaker addressed everyone, urging them to use their commonsense. Then, counter-arguing Bartholomew, he asserted:

1/421 "You speak of stoning when there has not been a verdict."

1/422 His interlocutor, as vindictive as those who do not practice God's teachings are, feigning inquietude, asked:

1/423 "And what about those who are from this place? Do we not have to take care of them?"

1/424 "Those of our people never know what is best for themselves. Blasphemy, adultery, heresy? The punishment is the same: death," replied the rabbi, pessimistic about the chances of the defendant's being found innocent.<sup>[44]</sup>

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[44] Stoning was the method used against adulterous women – those who had sex in exchange for coins, as long as they

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/425 In the meantime, as the debate took place, Mary, alone where prisoners were kept, talked to God, and was also comforted by Anna and Matthew, who were standing outside her prison.

1/426 “I cannot understand why the Hebrews want to take my life and that of the Lord's promised one, whom every has been awaiting, but if this is the Lord's wish, so be it, I only ask the Lord to help me to be strong.”

1/427 When she had barely finished saying her prayer, two priests arrived. They roughly demanded Anna's presence. They prepotently ordered her to assist her youngest in changing into black clothes that they had brought with them. Both women obeyed mildly and peacefully; however, the defendant did not remove the white veil she was wearing, for no other one had been provided for her.

1/428 “I know the Lord will help me. If you find Joseph, say to him that he is of my liking,” and Mary bid farewell to her crying assistant.

1/429 The widow of the man murdered in Nazareth was the one in charge of giving her daughter the ornament corresponding to that of a maiden right after the latter's first bleeding; however, she only gave it to her after her pregnancy was proved, and only after her detention. When Mary received it, she, in her youthful mind, accepted it, since it was given to her by her mother, who told her to wear it, also adding that if she left without it, she would be punished even more, since she would be the mother of the longed-for deliverer.

1/430 What Anna had untruthfully asserted was for the sake of avoiding questions from her daughter, for she did not consider a prison the appropriate place to explain to her what she had never had the courage to explain before.

1/431 Escorted by the priests, Joaquin's protectee left the cage and was taken to the place where she would hear the verdict. On the way, the inhabitants insulted her a lot, calling her a sinner.

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were denounced by their husbands; those who left their spouses and fled with another partner; those whose spouses announced having caught them having intercourse with someone else, regardless of the veracity of the allegation; those who were not united and lived in the same residence as their sister's husband and got impregnated by the latter without the rabbi making their union; those who were pregnant but single; those who said blasphemies – commented about the Mosaic Laws in a common space, or even admitted to having knowledge of them; those who asserted having seen or even talked to the Lord; and the heretic – those who addressed a man at the public square or bore false witness against someone.

As for those who did not have a companion but were already betrothed, if the fiancé impregnated them and did not consolidate the union, in most cases their own father murdered them; if he did not kill his daughter, he would be devoid of honor, similarly to what happened to Joaquin. If the betrothed man opted to marry her, they were tied to one another, whipped, and then expelled from the village.

Deaths on the cross, which served as a warning, were exclusively reserved to men – witch doctors, magicians, instigators, thieves and pillagers who acted by themselves etc., who did not obey the Laws of the Herods and of the caesars.

Those sentenced to be burned alive were the members of groups which opposed what the rulers determined.

1/432 The crater to which she was led, solely used for the stoning of unfortunate ones, was a hole in the ground in a funnel-like shape; it was about three meters deep, and had a diameter of about twenty meters.<sup>[45]</sup>

1/433 Matthew, since he was the oldest of Joseph's relatives, from the moment Anna looked for him to tell him about her suspicion of Mary's supposed pregnancy, dedicated special attention to her, for his nephew was negligent and did not worry about his own family. When he learned why the priests were after Mary, he desperately attempted to locate the remiss man. Finding him at the carpenter's workshop, Matthew grabbed his left forearm and, almost dragging him, made him walk alongside him. When asked what was going on, he answered that time was up.

1/434 Arriving at the execution site, he saw the stones piled up in small heaps, and the defendant inside the hole. Aware of the gravity of the moment, he purposefully pushed the protagonist of the afflicting situation down the coarse steps and into where the capital punishment was to be carried out. To Jacob's only son there was no option but to place himself in front of Mary with his back to her, for the plan he had devised failed. Because of his action, he provoked the multitude who was there waiting to make justice happen. They furiously shouted at the one who presided this sinister solemnity:

1/435 "Sentence them to lose their lives."

1/436 From a strategic vantage point stood the oldest priest of the Temple of Bethlehem, Bartholomew, and the one in charge of the ritual, the rabbi. The latter, despite not advocating for the decision made that the nefarious crime was blasphemy, nonetheless picked up one of the largest stones, and made it available to the irascible accuser, even though Joseph was in there with his fiancée, so that the punishment could start. With incommensurable shamelessness, the executioner, pretending not to understand it, asked the rabbi, with the intention of being noticed by the horde of people:

1/437 "Why are you giving this stone to me?"

1/438 "You were the one who made the accusation. I say it is on you to cast the first stone."

1/439 However, before the permission to proceed was granted, Jacob's heir, having looked at Matthew hoping that he would come to his assistance,

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[45] Great stones were gathered around the hole, the smaller ones weighing about five hundred grams, the heavier ones about one kilo, and they were used to carry out the punishment. The first to throw a stone was the accuser, and after that, the others would follow, until the woman deemed guilty was completely covered.

The execution lasted for about forty-five minutes. It was generally impossible to recognize the victims, so broken were their bones. There was no burial for those who died this way: their bodies were removed from this place of execution by a family member and taken to the desert, so that the vultures would feed on them.

but noticing that his uncle had not even moved, begged the one made judge for a conversation in private. Bartholomew loudly reminded the eldest amongst the men of the same position as his that the trial had already taken place, and that he who was asking for a private conference should show respect to the community, who had the right to know what was going on.

1/440 Bartholomew was thirsty for revenge. He had nourished a great love for Anna, secretly desiring to unite himself to her since his youth. Disregarded in favor of Joaquin, he now observed Matthew approach his muse. Since he could not have her, he found satisfaction in making her suffer.

1/441 While the two oldest authority figures conferred in search of a solution for the request, Bartholomew offered the testimony of some of the spectators, who then said out loud what Mary had announced in public. They falsely affirmed that she had claimed she was betrothed to the Lord and had guaranteed that Joseph was not the father of the baby who would be born.

1/442 When it was announced that the request of Judah's former accomplice had been rejected, the rabbi addressed the defendant urging her to deny that the child she was expecting was the Lord's, for every condemned one had the right to defend herself.

1/443 The circumstances were clear: in case Mary did not retract that the fruit of her womb would be the one promised to the prophets, they would deem her guilty of blasphemy; if she took her previous assertion back, and Jacob's only son refused to take responsibility for the conception, she would also perish, but in this case for adultery.

1/444 Anna, feeling anguished and foreseeing the outcome of the situation, had advised her to ratify that the child was Joseph's, for she knew that, if Joseph took responsibility for the act, her daughter would be spared.

1/445 Though drowning in fear, the young woman remained assured that she would be the longed-for redeemer's mother, for the day before the disincarnate brother had corroborated it. She determinedly voiced that she would not retract, and concluded:

1/446 "What I said at the market square is the truth, just like my angel said. Why do you not accept it?"

1/447 Now no alternatives remained, for she had incriminated herself. The conductor of the grievous festivity declared:

1/448 "I say that your life will be taken by the stones thrown at you. Death shall remove your sins."

1/449 Neither feeling nor showing opposition to the verdict, Mary made herself be heard by many:

1/450 "To the Lord I deliver my life."

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1/451 When the resolution was announced, he who presided the assembly left Bartholomew free to throw the lethal artifact, which had remained in his hands this entire time. The latter cynically justified himself:

1/452 “You make it look like vengeance.”

1/453 Joseph immediately took three steps forth and, in a loud voice that reached the furthest one amongst the crowd, again addressed the then judge:

1/454 “I declare that this woman is betrothed to me!”

1/455 The ones of the crowd gathered around the hole, thirsty for blood and eager for the spectacle, shouted:

1/456 “Stone them both!”

1/457 Taking advantage of the reigning fury, the first executioner raised one of his upper limbs to throw the large stone; at that moment, he who had most authority nonetheless exclaimed, raising his voice, which was not customary of him:

1/458 “All witnesses must be heard. You know the Law.” With these words, he made everyone silent.

1/459 Perceiving in the rabbi’s attitude the only opportunity to keep his living, Jacob’s heir begged to explain himself in private. His request was not even considered. Terrified of being stoned to death – it was not the case that this was part of the Law, it was due to the ignorance of those who kept waiting for the execution, classified as a distraction – he lucidly shouted to the judge:

1/460 “I know what Mary said. Since her protector lost his life, she has not been herself. I think her head has been affected. I am sure that when Mary is my companion, I will see that it does not happen again.”

1/461 “Are you certain of what you are saying?” surprisedly asked the judge. Joseph categorically asserted his wish before the community.

1/462 The immaculate man, without consulting anyone else, much to Bartholomew’s and all the others’ frustration, announced his decision:

1/463 “I accept your word. Let Mary be your companion. Since you decided to act in an offensive manner towards all those who are your people, I sentence you and Mary to be punished with the leather braid one hundred strokes.”

1/464 “I say that she who united herself to me is expecting offspring. I ask you to transfer her punishment to me.”

1/465 “I accept your request.”

1/466 The very satisfied authority figure then ordered the whipping to take place promptly.



1/467 Joaquin's youngest was startled by Joseph's assertion in which he advocated for taking the whipping meant for her. She instantly asked herself:

1/468 "How does Joseph know that I am expecting offspring? Could it be that my angel said to him that I am the one who will carry the promised one?"

1/469 She naively concluded:

1/470 "If my angel spoke to him, I already have the promised one inside me. I know that Joseph came to save me because the promised one will show everyone the truth that comes from the Lord."

1/471 In Mary's understanding, the action of Jacob's only son consolidated her belief in what she had announced and in his consent to help her raise the desired redeemer.

1/472 Witnessing the development of the facts, Matthew and Anna, after the rabbi's pronouncement, afraid of the reaction of the crowd, who was continuously instigated by the rancorous Bartholomew, quickly entered the hole and rescued the pardoned woman, who assured her mother that:

1/473 "I know that my angel spoke to Joseph. Did you hear what he said?"

1/474 Before both Anna's and Matthew's silence, she added:

1/475 "Joseph said I am expecting offspring."

1/476 Joaquin's widow, knowledgeable of her interlocutor's naïveté, tried to draw her attention to the changes that were happening in her body. Mary nonetheless asked:

1/477 "But what is changing?"

1/478 She had never talked to her daughter about issues that concerned women. She timidly attempted to make Mary's state evident to her:

1/479 "Look at your womb, it is growing. If your womb is growing, it is because you will have offspring."

1/480 "What my angel said is true. I say I will be the one who will bring to this world the one promised by the Lord," guaranteed Mary, smiling at her mother, who gave up trying to explain anything else to her.

1/481 Jacob's heir was placed as if hugging a great stone post one meter seventy centimeters tall, his wrists tied up and his tunic torn so that his back was exposed.<sup>[46]</sup> His faced pressed against the stake, he started receiving the strokes of the whip. Up until the one hundred twentieth, he felt them

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[46] They called the mantles that covered men's bodies **tunics**, and those that covered women's, raiments.

consciously; however, after passing out, nothing else did he feel of the harrowing punishment. He was removed from the stake by Matthew, who carried him to his residence, and he only regained consciousness three days later.

1/482 The rugged crowd who watched the show raved every time Joseph manifested pain, and almost its entirety felt disappointed and left the scene after the one being beaten passed out, for they felt it was no longer entertaining. It was only after everyone in the crowd had left that the whipped one was rescued from such painful site of agony.

1/483 Joseph's deep wounds were tended to by Anna, and only by her, for she had prohibited her daughter from coming close to him. When the rough Hebrew came to, seeing his now wife, he crankily told her to leave his shanty. The docile woman, having judged she would now live with her beloved one, who would help find solutions for the eventual difficulties she would have with the more than awaited deliverer, did not understand his tough words. She asked him why. He, due to the terrible and unjustified sorrow that governed him, explained nothing to her, and only told her to leave once more. He had accepted before those of Bethlehem the child that he did not consider his own, but not before Mary.

1/484 Leaving the shelter from which she had been expelled, Joaquin's youngest went to the place where she always found peace, her worldly refuge, the cave in which she talked to her father for hours. On her way to the cave, she was insistently insulted by those of the village. They yelled and swore at her, and some threw small pebbles at her:

1/485 "Adulteress! Sinner! You committed blasphemy against the Lord. You cannot stay among those who are from this place."

1/486 Though in the epicenter of such a commotion, Mary heard the directions of the one sent by God:

1/487 "I tell you to go to Zechariah's residence."

1/488 Due to the circumstances, she had to keep walking towards the cave. When she was inside it, standing exactly where she had first seen the figure of whom she from then on trusted immensely, she called for him, for walking without a husband was unusual and dangerous.

1/489 "If you appeared again, I would know what to do. They do not accept what I say and I do not know what to do. I want to do as you say, but how can I do it alone, without Joseph? If only you said to me what to do!"

1/490 She, however, realized that it had been revealed to her how to proceed. She immediately started walking towards Veneram, on her own and with no provisions, and not informing anyone of her decision.

1/491 She had walked half of the deserted way when, exhausted, feeling hot, thirsty, and hungry, she leaned against a huge rock and fainted. When she came to her senses, still feeling sleepy, she remained sitting in the shade, devoid of vigor to proceed. That was when the messenger reappeared, calling her twice:

1/492 “God is looking at you. I tell you that He does not abandon you and He is working for His promise to be kept. Believe in God, and you will make it. Stand up and keep walking towards Isabel’s residence, where you will find peace.”

1/493 Feeling reinvigorated, she resumed her arduous journey, which lasted twelve days. Food and water were provided by merchants of two caravans, who traveled with their wives and children. On the tenth dawn, she satiated herself with honey she obtained from the skull of a camel’s skeleton, which revitalized her until she arrived at the residence of her aunt, whose seventh month of pregnancy had just started.

1/494 It was December 2, 11 BC. After another workday, Zechariah, who had only confided to his wife and brother, having kept his mouth shut with those who surrounded him, what the one who was still in gestation was planned to do, was pleasantly napping when Gabriel manifested himself again. Zechariah quickly wrote down what had been said to him and went back to sleep. Isabel, followed by Zacchaeus, approached him to invite him for supper. Observing the piece of leather on his side, she asked her brother-in-law to read it, since she was illiterate:

1/495 “He who is an angel of the Lord said that my protectee will be a man of power in spirit just like Elijah and that he will prepare all those who are my people for the coming of the one promised by the prophets.”

1/496 At the same time, she who would give birth soon, considered at the time too old for such a thing, guaranteed:

1/497 “So the coming of the one promised by the Lord must be soon. But when?”

1/498 Not offering her interlocutor a chance to express his opinion, she said:

1/499 “If only the Lord gave us a sign! I say we are so blessed...,” but she did not finish her sentence, astonished by a figure that was approaching and seemed to be that of a woman.

1/500 She continued staring at it, but now with redoubled attention. It was undoubtedly a Hebrew woman. But how could she have venture to cross the desert alone? When the stranger came closer, she recognized her by her walk, for she had visited Anna fewer than two harvests before: it was Mary.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/501 She rapidly went to her niece's aid, leading her into the shanty, and then became acquainted, along with Zechariah and Zacchaeus, of the girl's version of what had happened in Bethlehem.

1/502 Isabel ignored the fact that the brave Nazarene woman was pregnant, but she secretly and immediately accepted that she would be the mother of the desired redeemer. Since she had asked God for a sign, she believed that the presence of her relative, who had walked alone through the sea of sand, was the proof of her request, for He had certainly aided her in her journey; if He had not, she would have failed.

1/503 Mary started helping with the housework, also helping to tend the animals etc., and started seeing her aunt very frequently. Turning her host into her confidant, she tenaciously guaranteed that the redeemer would come from herself.

1/504 Even though she had accepted Anna's daughter's arrival as a nod from the Lord, Isabel was intrigued by her words, since the young woman, from what she had understood, had not had intimate relations with her husband. She cautiously asked her guest about how she knew she was expecting the promised one. Even though Joaquin's daughter reported what had happened since the return of Jacob's only son, after leaving Judah's band, and since she ignored the absolute necessity of a man to conceive a baby, she omitted some parts of the facts, but peremptorily asserted that it was from her that the savior would come to the world. After Mary's narration, Zechariah's wife asked her:

1/505 "How are you expecting offspring, if no man has touched you?"

1/506 Unable to avoid a smile, she proceeded:

1/507 "Has any man approached you?"

1/508 "I say it was only Joseph."

1/509 "How did Joseph approach you?" continued Isabel, since she had some basic knowledge of how conception takes place.

1/510 The girl then told her what happened in detail, including the meetings by the lake in the afternoons.

1/511 "I say that Joseph will be the protector of the offspring that is in your womb," the also pregnant Hebrew woman categorically stated, but was met with her interlocutor's disbelief.

1/512 The latter, after many conversations, ended up understanding what had happened. She comprehended that the fruit of her womb would be the desired savior and, similarly to her aunt's, was God's son, but not conceived by Him. It was only after what Isabel explained to her that she inferred that Jacob's heir, whom she much loved, was effectively the father of the fetus.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

She rejoiced, for now he did not need to pretend to be his father, unlike what Joaquin, to her great elation, had done concerning Azaham.

1/513 Isabel, on December 20, started bleeding, and, until the delivery, she was kept in absolute rest.

1/514 Mary neither saw nor heard her not always visible friend again. She constantly prayed, a habit that she had adopted into her life since she was very young. One morning, while she was sewing, she said out loud:

1/515 “Let the Lord help me be a good mother to my offspring, and that He show me everything I must know, and that He protect Joseph.”

1/516 She candidly concluded:

1/517 “If it is the Lord's wish, let Joseph be my offspring’s protector.”

1/518 Zechariah’s companion, noticing her niece sewing her own garment, thought to herself:

1/519 “Could it be that Mary knows that the offspring that is in her womb will be born dead?”

1/520 Coming closer to her, she asked her what she was doing:

1/521 “I am sewing my tears. My protector would not have wanted me to keep the black wool on my raiments any longer,” she mildly and slowly explained.<sup>[47]</sup>

1/522 Isabel thought that Anna’s youngest was sewing a new stripe to manifest the pain that overcame her because her child would be born dead; when she learned that her sewing concerned Joaquin, she agreed with Mary and added:<sup>[48]</sup>

1/523 “You have another reason to stop wearing the black wool on your raiments: those who are many harvests old say that, when the offspring is in the womb, the Lord speaks to the offspring of everything there is in the universe, but, when they arrive in this world, one of the Lord’s angels puts his finger on their lips, and they forget everything that the Lord said. Since your offspring will be a prophet sent from the Lord, He will allow him to remember everything.”

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[47] Even though seven years had passed since her protector’s death, Mary was still in mourning, for her unhappiness had not ceased to be.

The garments that women in mourning wore had two black stripes, shaped as an “x”, sewn from the shoulder line to the hemline, and these stripes were only sewn off when their suffering had stopped. They referred to the act of removing them as **sewing one’s tears**.

[48] In case a Hebrew woman who had on her garment the mourning stripe lost another beloved one and for him or her she still suffered, she would sew, alongside the first one, another one in order to convey what she felt.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/524 Understanding these words, Mary said:

1/525 “I wonder what the offspring I bring in my womb will do in this world!”

1/526 Her interlocutor, who had noble feelings, expressed herself with incontestable resignation:

1/527 “It is beyond my understanding, but I know you are blessed. You accepted what the Lord said He would do and you never forgot about it.”

1/528 Feeling no pride for being the redeemer’s mother, the wife of Jacob’s only son continued:

1/529 “I know that my offspring is the one who was promised by the Lord and that he will change the world in some way. It went inside me that I would understand how he would change this world, but I know I will not understand. Does it go inside you that he will be a king, like king David?”

1/530 Remembering what had been said to her husband about the fetus in her own womb, Isabel offered her opinion:

1/531 “I do not know if they will be kings, but I know they will be remembered forever.”

1/532 When the conversation was over, Mary’s relative, whose rest was mandatory, asked her to clean the sacrificial stone and get water for the container where they would wash their hands, since that was the day of a ritual in which a lamb would be killed.

1/533 Mary obligingly did what was asked of her.

1/534 When she was done, Zacchaeus showed up with the lamb she had been taking care of since its mother’s death when it was born. Feeling upset, aware of the fate of the harmless animal, she questioned him:

1/535 “Why did you choose this lamb among so many others?”

1/536 “The one who chose this lamb was Zechariah, not me.”

1/537 Anna’s last fruit went to see the rabbi and, after reporting to him what had just happened, was told that the lamb was the most suitable one, for it was the only orphan there; that, in case another one were chosen, its respective mother’s milk would dry up, and that would harm all the children. Unconsoled by his words, she had to be removed from the premises; she, however, watched the unfolding of the ceremony through an aperture as she cried copiously.

1/538 Zahaias, the one who was in charge of the outer part of the sacrificial place, intending to assuage her suffering, ventured to comfort her:

1/539 “You should not suffer for the lamb. It must be sacrificed for the sins

of all those who are our people. I say it is an offering to the Lord, who will send us all the one He promised.”

1/540 The elder concluded what he deemed to be legitimate:

1/541 “He who was promised by the Lord will take away the sins of those of our people and as a lamb he will be sacrificed.”

1/542 After hearing his words, Mary, unable to refrain herself, started shouting that it could not be, and tried to get inside. The good-hearted old man could barely restrain her. Even though he was aware of the Laws and of what the prophets had announced, he was unaware of the fact that she was pregnant with no one other than the desired redeemer. Not understanding her reaction to such an ordinary practice, he asserted:

1/543 “It is written that he who was promised by the Lord will be sacrificed. You should not let the sacrifice of the promised one disturb your heart. I say that, when he is sacrificed, he who was promised by the Lord will save all those who are our people.”

## 1-8.1

1/544 Two days after Mary’s disappearance, Joseph said to Sarah’s firstborn that he was leaving, omitting his destination from him. He followed some zealots without bidding farewell to anyone else, completely unworried about his undesired companion.<sup>[49]</sup> Matthew, unlike his nephew, tried really hard to find her. With merchants he sought information about both. Regarding the unreasonable man, some said he was dead; others had no information about him; however, regarding Joaquin’s protectee, he obtained no information whatsoever. Feeling unhelpful, a feeling shared by Anna and Simeon Joseph, he assumed she had been murdered by one of the residents of the village who had not accepted the outcome of the situation, something that was quite usual to be done to a woman who infringed the Mosaic precepts; she could also have been kidnapped because of her beauty, something that was also quite usual at the time.

1/545 Matthew, given the urgency to move on, and becoming the guardian of Joseph’s children, requested permission from the rabbi who had presided the trial to marry Anna, for he had fallen in love with the widow who had been

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[49] **Zealots**: ones devoted to the promised one.

hosting him.<sup>[50]</sup> From Simeon Joseph, the respected carpenter of Bethlehem, who had united himself to Rebecca, the heiress of a rich merchant, since he was effectively, according to the tradition, responsible for his two young siblings, as they believed the twins to be, Matthew obtained the consent for the children to follow them.

1/546 Martha, who was seven, and as meek and mild as her aunt become her stepmother, and who spent a lot of time keeping the house by request of her now sister-in-law, accepted the move without complaining. Judas nonetheless was deeply indignant to have to walk to Galilee, for in the residence where the head was his uterine brother, abundance reigned.

1/547 Married to Anna, Matthew returned to Nazareth and resumed trading melons with his youngest son; in the meantime, since his companion had experience in the activity, he started growing them himself. At the beginning of January 10 BC, a man belonging to a caravan, answering Matthew's questions, informed him of the whereabouts of his stepdaughter. With this discovery in mind, noticing his wife's gloom as they plowed the soil, he asked her if she would rejoice in seeing her daughter. The Hebrew woman firmly said she would not, for the fruit of her womb would be better cared for if she stayed in Veneram with her sister, who was, and this she held as genuine in her mind, in a better position to advise her daughter about what happened to a girl as she became a woman. She sadly went on:

1/548 "I did not know how to understand Mary at the time when she most needed me. Since Isabel is also expecting offspring, Mary will find better company with her than with me."

1/549 In a tone of voice that was both sweet and inquiring, she concluded:

1/550 "Could it be the Lord's wish that they are both expecting offspring at the same time?"

1/551 "Since Isabel, who is many harvests old, expects offspring, it goes inside me that it is the Lord's wish."

1/552 The couple, returning from the field after another day of work, was informed by Judas that Joseph was in the settlement. Matthew immediately went after his nephew at the shack he had used as a workplace when he was married to Sarah. When he heard that Joseph had been hiding there for two weeks, Matthew could not contain himself.

1/553 "What a great protector you turned out to be! Besides leaving

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[50] It was necessary for him to ask for permission because Anna was under Joseph's responsibility, but the latter had vanished.



Bethlehem without letting me know, you did not even say anything to your protectee. And Mary? You made me feel ashamed for saying that she was expecting the Lord's offspring, and on top of that, you left her. It is not what a good man would do, and I do not think your protector would have approved of it."

1/554 Irrefutably convincingly, he commanded:

1/555 "You must go after Mary and correct your mistake. Go, and I will take care of everything. If you do not go look for Mary, I will crucify you myself, and I hope the Lord will forgive me if I am wrong and you are right, but I do not think this is true. Mary is too innocent to do what you say she has done. Go, before I do something I should not do." Matthew then told him where his wife could be found.

1/556 Astonished by his uncle's attitude, who had energetically conveyed his habitual determination, Jacob's descendent obediently and silently left. He asked Anna for water and some food. Prepared for his journey, he, who was immensely familiar with desert trails, unwillingly headed for Veneram.

## 1-9

1/557 As he walked, he wondered how he would be received by Zechariah, for he believed that Joaquin's youngest had mentioned all the facts to those of the household. He went after her only because he believed that Matthew, then considered an old man, and consequently worthy of others' respect, would carry out his threat. His greatest fear was that the rabbi, also an old man, would act as firmly as his relative.

1/558 In the small village he was welcomed by Zacchaeus. The latter, assured of the identity and the motives of the stranger, and also aware of his actions, asked him what he wanted from the young guest.

1/559 "I only want to speak to Mary," an impolite Joseph replied dryly, and then remained silent.

1/560 The mindful man, seeing no other option, asked him to wait and went inside to let his brother know who was there. The similarly pregnant woman, who was helping her aunt deliver, for the desired heir, at that same instant, was waking up in the life of flesh, marveled when she heard the news. Unable to leave her aunt, she continued to perform her activity, feeling immensely happy.

1/561 January 16, 10 BC, thirteen days before the nine months after his conception, marked the birth of the only son of Isabel and Zechariah.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/562 Such a common event was the first one Mary took part in, and it left her both very impressed and frightened. When she left the location, she commented to Zacchaeus that with her own child it would all be different, for he was the one promised to the prophets. Laughing at Mary's candor, he explained:

1/563 "I say that all offspring come the same way, and that it is better for you to learn it."

1/564 She embarrassedly expressed her opinion about the child who had just come to the physical world:

1/565 "He is so stunted you cannot even hold him. This offspring will not develop. I have never seen such a thin offspring."

1/566 Zacchaeus instructed her again:

1/567 "I say all offspring arrive stunted and thin, and they need a lot of care from the one who carried them in her womb."

1/568 He put an end to the conversation, emphasizing that:

1/569 "Isabel's offspring is thin, but he is strong."

1/570 Mary curiously asked him how he could so undoubtedly attest to the newborn's health. The experienced man, knowledgeable of popular erudition, made himself clear:

1/571 "Isabel's offspring already knows how to yell and, since he has a good throat, it seems that he has come only to speak."

1/572 Joseph, who had distanced himself to freshen up and drink some water, ordered Zacchaeus to call Zechariah. The latter, accompanied by the outsider's wife, heard Joseph's reason for the journey he had ventured in. It was only after a nod from Zechariah, interpreted as an approval, that the former rebel addressed Joaquin's protectee.

1/573 "It was the Lord who sent you," Mary emphasized.

1/574 When they were alone outside the residence Joseph confided to her that he aspired to raise the baby that would come from her as if he were his legitimate genitor, and also told her that what had happened no longer mattered. Mary's smile faded off of her beautiful face, and she asked him, looking down:

1/575 "And what is it that I have done?"

1/576 "I say I no longer dislike you for what you have done."

1/577 Mary reasoned:

1/578 "You still do not accept what I say to you."

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/579 His pride wounded by what he assumed had happened between her and the magician, and insisting to posit himself as superior to her, the arrogant Hebrew told her that the episode no longer mattered. As a matter of fact, he was tired of his living as a vagabond, and intended to settle in Nazareth; however, were he not to return with his wife, he believed Matthew would carry out his threats. Believing himself to be in a difficult position, he tried to deceive her, telling her he loved her. To his astonishment, the young woman vigorously replied:

1/580 “You like me, a woman you say is not respected? You will not have me with you until you believe me.”

1/581 When he realized that he had gotten carried away, that, in case he did not change his behavior, she would remain in Veneram, Joseph deceived her:

1/582 “I say I cannot live without you.”

1/583 “I like you more than my own life, but I understand that the life I have is not mine. I do not know what I did for the Lord to choose me, and the Lord chose you, which you know is true, because otherwise you would not be here,” said Mary, no longer duped by false words.

1/584 In a glimpse of lucidity, Jacob’s heir concluded that his minuscule certainty was not incontestable, for she acted with absolute firmness. Acknowledging that he had gone too far, he confessed to her:

1/585 “I ask you to forgive me.”

1/586 “I say there is nothing to forgive.”

1/587 A little less hardened than ever before, Joseph expressed his incipient, but truthful, feeling:

1/588 “I want to be your offspring’s best protector. I want to like it, I want to teach your offspring everything I know.”

1/589 “Why do you not accept that the Lord has chosen you to be the protector of the one He promised to the prophets?” Mary insisted, eager for her husband to accept her words.

1/590 Jacob’s only son kept on suffering from his private drama. He had cunningly come up with a talented explanation for the undesired pregnancy, and he intimately believed his victim had lost her mind due to what happened to her and now deeply experienced the farce he had engendered. Furthermore, he deemed as authentic his interlocutor’s involvement with the illusionist, an assumption he was blinded with.

1/591 Joseph, in addition to his fear of his uncle’s behavior, who was convinced that his acts had damaged Mary’s mind, asked her to help him to

accept that the child-to-be would be the desired savior. She, as faithful to God as she had always been, mildly replied:

1/592 “I do not know how to help you, but I know that the Lord can. Why do you not seek the Lord’s help? I say it only depends on our faith in the Lord to receive from Him the help we need.”

1/593 When the conversation was over, they went in so that Joseph could see the newborn. While they chatted outside, Zechariah, euphoric because of the birth of his first son, holding him in his hands, showed him to all those who were waiting to see him, but also under Isabel’s worried watch, who asked him to be careful with the baby. After the introduction, the baby went back to his mother, and Mary showed up. She gladly introduced her husband, and they were all thankful to God for his presence.

1/594 Again with his son in his arms, the rabbi showed him to Jacob’s heir, who asked him:

1/595 “What will be your protectee be called?”

1/596 It was she who had just given birth, previously informed of the name of the fruit of her womb, who, before an ecstatic Zechariah, asserted:

1/597 “I say my offspring will be called John.”

1/598 Her husband’s sister, a single woman who lived with them, not happy with the choice, rudely suggested:

1/599 “John? There is not even a single John in our family,” she said as she took the baby from its father’s arms and returned it to its mother, who was still bedridden.

1/600 Then she immediately addressed the good-hearted pastor waiting to see whether or not he would validate Isabel’s assertion. Looking at him, she asked:

1/601 “How am I supposed to call your protectee?”

1/602 He who aided many of those harmed by the Herods’ tyranny walked towards Isabel and serenely confirmed that:

1/603 “I say this is John.”

1/604 Feeling immensely content, and forgetting Gabriel’s recommendation, before the awed spectators, he proclaimed:

1/605 “Hallowed be the Lord, who sends the powerful one promised to the prophets, the one who is of David’s ancestry, and my protectee will prepare the way for him. The dawn of the skies is opening up and it will shed light on those who live in darkness. I say the one promised to the prophets will lead all those who are our people on the Lord’s ways.”

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/606 It was not only Zechariah who regarded David as an example of rectitude; all the Hebrews did it as well. They believed that the respected sovereign had been taught by the Lord in order to govern them, and that the Lord Himself had always been by his side. Consequently, it could not be more natural that the deliverer would belong to such noble lineage. They also stated that the Lord also guided the redeemer, who would rule supremely.

1/607 When the aforementioned event came to an end, Joseph left the site, followed by his silent wife.

1/608 When the night fell, one could still feel the heat of the day. Because of the extreme heat, Joseph had lied outside the shanty on a mat, made of wheat stems, placed on the hard soil. Feeling sleepy, he heard his name said twice. He tried to get up, but failed; he tried to open his eyes, but did not succeed. The third time, he understood what was being revealed to him:

1/609 “Do not fear to accept Mary as your companion. I tell you that Mary brings in her womb the one who was promised by the prophets.”

1/610 The voice resolutely continued:

1/611 “I tell you to call the one who will be your protectee Jesus.”

1/612 He clearly complemented:

1/613 “I tell you that he who is about to come to this world will be a man of wisdom, the wisest that has ever been in this abode, and will announce God’s teachings to all the peoples.”

1/614 Joseph looked around, but saw no one. First he imagined it had been a reverie, but then in his mind he was certain it had indeed been a sign from the Lord. He quickly went into where his wife was sleeping. Speaking out loud, he expressed his gratitude to Him:

1/615 “I am grateful, Lord, for saving me. I have been a sinner, full of pride, and now I know why I have been humiliated. I cannot believe that I was chosen among all of those who are worthier than me. Lord, help me be a good companion to Mary, take care of the one who will come from her, as it has been determined, and always follow the Lord's will.”

1/616 After receiving the message, he dedicated himself diligently to the care of the child who would be born; however, for the entire time he was alive, he denied being his father. Joseph loved him deeply, not because he was the savior, but because of the kindness, affection and attention conveyed by his son.

1/617 Realizing that Joaquin’s youngest had been woken up by the sound of his prayer, he decidedly told her:

1/618 “I say I will take you to my residence.”

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/619 They left at dawn, under Zechariah's protests, for he did not agree that a pregnant woman in her sixth month of gestation should travel on the back of a donkey.

1/620 After accomplishing the difficult journey that lasted six days, they arrived in Nazareth in the middle of the night.<sup>[51]</sup> They went to where Joseph had lived with Sarah, a place they would use as their residence, and it was also there that the head of the couple would practice his profession. When they entered it, Judas was calmly resting.

1/621 The ones who had just arrived made an exception and did not wake up at the usual hour. When she woke up, Mary was drowning in joy. She got ready to go see her mother; however, when she left her home, various women were waiting for her. She got frightened and called for her husband, for unpleasant memories of what had happened in Bethlehem were still present in her mind. Joseph, still exhausted, was sleeping, for in addition to having pulled the donkey, he had carried part of their luggage on his back, but he got up and appeared in the passageway that led to the outer side of the shanty. To his surprise, before he could ask the women what they wanted, they immediately offered to help. One would clean up the site, another would bring them water, the other would wash their garments, etc. Even though he did not understand the reason for such sudden generosity, he smiled, asked the volunteers to discuss all the matters with his wife, and quickly left, looking for Matthew, but he could not prevent seeing his mother-in-law approach, walking fast and showing no embarrassment.

1/622 Anna, informed of the hearsay that had filled Nazareth, imagining that the nightmare would restart, was desperately arriving.

1/623 But what kind of hearsay?

1/624 Not resigned to have to move to Nazareth, Judas, the first one who noticed the presence of Joseph and Mary, plotted a stratagem to make them all return to Simeon Joseph's. As soon as the sunrays appeared, he placed himself by the well where people went to get the precious liquid and spread the news that she who was at once his aunt and stepmother would have a son whose protector was the Lord. If they intended to see her, all they had to do was to go to his genitor's residence. He believed that, by this action, the inhabitants of Nazareth, becoming aware of what had happened in Bethlehem, would equally revolt against them and expel them from the village. In his reasoning, they would have to go back to where they had been judged and incontestably nothing bad would befall them.

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[51] Nazareth, similarly to almost all the other villages in Galilee, was very small. In it and its outer limits, there were about two hundred fifty dwellers.

1/625 The boy, who was not even eight years old, behave in such a way because he lost the comfort which only his uterine brother could provide him; furthermore, he had become Rebecca's favorite relative, who had promised him to find him a teacher, something that would be impossible if he stayed away from her.

## 1-10

1/626 Nothing out of the ordinary happened in Nazareth to disturb Mary's days. Her fellow women helped her keep the residence; Martha and Judas, who had come live with their father and her, did not give them any trouble. Joseph, with the help of his relative, had finished building his carpenter's workshop, and there he now practiced his workmanship.

1/627 One given day, noticing some of Antipas's soldiers doing the census, Joseph, having heard some comments about it, asked Matthew:

1/628 "Why are they doing the census?"

1/629 "I say it is because of taxes. I know nothing else they could want from those who are our people."

1/630 Saddened by the inevitable consequences that the action would cause, he concluded:

1/631 "I say that, after the census, the Herods will know how many Hebrews there are."

1/632 As it was commonly known, every man should be registered in his native village. Since this was mandatory, the ex-rebel asserted:

1/633 "I will have to go to Bethlehem for the census."<sup>[52]</sup>

1/634 With his particular authority, his respected interlocutor glossed over the long journey he would have to face. Since it was very common that wives followed their husbands wherever they went, he stated:

1/635 "Your companion's offspring is about to arrive. I say she cannot follow you."

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[52] The oppressed ones should be registered in their native village as long as, and obviously, censurs had been established there. In Hiatta there were no censurs, and those lands now belonged to Herod the Great; since Bethlehem was also his residence of power, as they used to put it, it was to the village where Mary had been judged that Joseph went.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/636 Agreeing with his prudent reasoning, Jacob's only son shared with his wife the urgency of his absence and solidarily explained that the arduous walk would not be good for the baby who would be born. Despite Mary's insistence to accompany him, he maintained his reasonable position.

1/637 "And what if the offspring arrives and you are far away?" she asked him, having no other argument to convince him.

1/638 Resolute that she had to stay in Nazareth, he told her he had spoken to Anna and Matthew, and that any help she would eventually need would be provided, in case the delivery happened before his return.

1/639 Joseph left for the village where his stepson had settled, but he did not take the usual road; he went through the desert, which he did not fear, since he was deeply familiar with its hard-soiled footpaths, a knowledge he had acquired during the many harvests he had spent with the rebel Judah.

1/640 On the third day of the exhausting walk, he came across a majestic campsite. The first one he saw was Demetrius, who had formerly set in motion his sense of possession concerning, at the time, his sister-in-law. The magician was the guide of an important merchant, Balthazar, who, because of his immense wealth, considered himself a king, and those who spent time with him had to refer to him as such. Invited by the monarch to join them for the second meal, he learned that the caravan's destination was also Bethlehem.

1/641 The merchant was of Egyptian descent. In his youth, as he traveled with his own, he was captured and turned into a slave. After being enfranchised, he gathered a considerable fortune and never returned to the land of his ancestors.

1/642 Aware, in its smallest details, of what had been written so far about the coming of the promised one, Balthazar announced that he was headed for Bethlehem, where the redeemer would come according to the famous prophecy, for he wanted to be around at this unforgettable time. Pointing towards the celestial body we nowadays call Jupiter, which, in a unique brightness, was shining absolute in the stellar night, he proclaimed that for years he had been observing it and that, by virtue of its alignment, someone extremely wise and powerful would come to this world. He peremptorily guaranteed that it was also the one whom he eagerly waited for.

1/643 Joseph cautiously said nothing about what he knew. Later, he remembered what Mary had glossed concerning Joaquin's narratives when she was a little girl: when the redeemer arrived, the tribes scattered throughout Israel would gather to offer him gifts.

1/644 When supper was over, the accidental diner thanked his sovereign



host, civilly bade farewell to Demetrius, and went on in his journey.<sup>[53]</sup>

1/645 When he arrived at his destination, he went straight to the registering site, located at the central square.<sup>[54]</sup> He told Herod the Great's soldier his genealogy, the village where he had been born, his occupation, how many children he had and the age of each one of them, and paid his taxes, a sheep. The child his wife was expecting was not counted, which was a common practice, for the newborns would only be taxed if they were perfect.<sup>[55]</sup>

1/646 Since he aspired to return at the next dawn, anxious that the ones who were arriving at the village, since that was the last day of the census, would do the same, right after registering, he provided for the trade of his animals.<sup>[56]</sup>

1/647 After finishing up his duty, he went towards Simeon Joseph's residence, telling him about the imminent presence of the desired savior and all the other matters. The news did not cause any awe. Sarah's firstborn explained that he had been informed of the fact during his nightly rest, when a voice told him:

1/648 "I tell you that the one promised by the prophets will come in your family. He will be of Joseph's protection and you will help him bring forth the way that will free all the peoples from the ignorance of the existence of God."

1/649 Jacob's heir felt bad when he heard the other's words, for those who became aware of the revelation accepted it in its entirety, and the first time around. He, arrogant and selfish, did not understand why the Lord had given him such a huge blessing; however, he would play his role of father the best way possible.

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[53] Concerning Balthazar's wish to offer the promised one presents, he never did it, dying without achieving his goal.

[54] At the time of the census, the region that comprised Bethlehem, Bethany, Emmaus and Jerusalem had around four thousand inhabitants.

[55] The disabled newborns, when they were not murdered, were left anywhere, for it was believed that the disabled were the Lord's collection for the mistakes of their ancestors. In order not to be regarded as a member of a family of sinners, their hardened protectors, with very few exceptions, put an end to the period of learning of the defenseless ones by burying them alive, throwing them into bonfires, or into wells, so that it would look like an accident. The less hardened ones left them at the doors of those considered prostitutes or alongside deserted ways; if they had resources, it was in baskets tied to donkeys that they went adrift. Regardless of which hypothesis, the chances of survival of these disdained ones were significantly low.

A man who considered himself perfect, when finding out about his baby's disability, invariably put the blame on his wife, whom he deemed incapable of producing a non-deformed child, and also got angry with his ancestors, for they were vicious and now, in the present, gave origin to such unbearable evil.

The babies who seemed to be physically normal but who were blind, mute, deaf, or mentally disabled did not find the same fate; however, when they grew older, they were employed as beggars or driven away mercilessly. Many of them, welcomed by the adulteresses, made the number of those who sold their bodies even larger.

[56] The merchants of donkeys generally traded tired animals for fed and rested ones, getting paid for the animals' food and their own work.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

1/650 Simeon Joseph suggested to the man he considered more than a father that he sleep in his residence, but his father-in-law, who knew his daughter-in-law very well and did not want to bother her, did not accept the invitation, and chose to sleep at an inn.

1/651 After her father-in-law's departure, Rebecca, who observed him from the distance, asked her husband what they had been talking about, and was informed, without specific details, of the good news. She, a proud woman who would not appreciate the presence of her husband's relatives under the same roof as hers, asked nothing else, for she was certain that the unwanted ones would find a lodge to sleep.

1/652 Joseph looked for a lodge. In all of them where he looked for a bed, he was unsuccessful, for they were all crowded. Observing the beautiful moonlight, which encouraged him to walk, and since he had traded the animals which carried his load, he analyzed how much he would save if he didn't spent anything by putting them in a stable, and therefore he would be able to use these coins to buy wood; furthermore, he wanted to return in time to be present at the birth of the desired redeemer, so he started walking towards Nazareth, choosing the same road he had taken to come to Bethlehem. When he left, he looked at the firmament and noticed that Jupiter, as we nowadays call it, was shining like never before.

1/653 By returning through the desert, he was spared half of the twenty days it would have taken him had he chosen the common way. He nonetheless was subject to the danger of coming across bandits, which would have been lethal to him. Even though he knew those paths deeply, he was at risk of encountering sandstorms that would erase the reference marks that directed him. Out of ten people who attempted said journey, no more than two would make it.

1/654 The itinerary was achieved without any incidents. When he arrived in Nazareth, he noticed an unusual back and forth commotion between his residence and Matthew's. He eagerly approached, imagining that Mary had delivered her son. But he saw his uncle jumping like a goat, for he had found out that Anna, despite being many harvests old, was pregnant.

## 1-11

1/655 The morning after Jacob's visit to his stepson, Rebecca, avid to spread the news she had learned, and with the memories of the trial of Joaquin's youngest in her mind, told Simeon Joseph, who was startled with her unusual behavior, that with the help of her servant she would bring water to their residence. While the paid servant, aware of the captivating subject,

went to the well to spread the news, her mistress did the same at the shanty of her friend and confidant Rachel.

1/656 Since amongst the oppressed people it was immensurable the wish that the report became true, the news spread surprisingly fast. From mouth to mouth, from September 13 to September 14, the incipient notice became an undeniable certainty, even reaching those who lived around, including the cruel sovereign, who ordered the immediate detention of the one everybody asserted was the one promised to the Hebrew prophets.

1/657 Near lunchtime on March 15, the savage soldiers of the feared Mammon started looking for the newborn and his parents, whom they knew were Joseph and Mary, in all the lodges. Since pregnancy, then, was extended until the end of the bleeding period, about forty days after the advent of the child, they assumed the hunted ones had not returned to their original village. Since it was also a custom that a wife would always remain with her husband, they never considered an alternative hypothesis.

1/658 The lodges were inspected. In three of them, when they questioned whether a Joseph had been a guest, they obtained negative answers; however, the witnesses remembered that one Joseph had asked for shelter. Since there was no vacancy, he had moved on in search of another inn to stay. In two of these three lodges, when they asked if the man was accompanied by a woman who would soon deliver a baby, they obtained positive answers.

1/659 Not finding any Joseph whose description had been previously given to them, the soldiers, aware of the most recent hearsay, that a king had been born in a manger, a sign, for the oppressed, more than evident that this king was for them, and not for the Herods, and that his protector was named Joseph, they turned their investigation to the location of the livery stable, and at the end of the afternoon they were successful. There they questioned its inhabitant about the name of the pregnant woman.

1/660 “I heard her companion call her Mary,” affirmed a frightened Magdalene, who also added that, the night before, a boy had come to this world in that happy place; their parents had nonetheless left at dawn.

1/661 She also let them know that, right after the delivery, the place where the horses ate from had been turned into a crib, covered only with a mantle, and it was there that the baby had remained.

1/662 Believing that they were on the right track to find the fugitives, they rapidly decreed that all the ways be shut down, in order to capture the three ones. Despite the measures taken by Herod the Great and his accomplices such diligence was unfruitful. Since the execrated ruler, despite his old age, could not stand that someone superior to him would arise, he reiterated that the intruder had be to murdered at any cost.

1/663 For such an order to be carried out, they even looked for Joseph, for his wife and his descendent in Jacob's ancient lands, the deserted Hiatta.

1/664 The conquered and much oppressed ones who lived in the surroundings of Bethlehem, as well as those who, attracted by such an inebriant event, arrived in the region, qualified the child as being the savior and wanted to be in his presence. The latter, along with the despotic ruler's soldiers, looked for him in vain.

## 1-12

1/665 The census lasted for a week. On the last day, March 12, 10 BC, the planet Jupiter, the fulgorant celestial body, by the learned men of the time baptized as the Morning Star, and by the Hebrews, who awaited the proclaimed promised one, the Star of Bethlehem, showed itself with magnificent splendor, tearing the sky, as it has been glossed, in a way that it would be an eccentricity not to notice it.

1/666 Given such a conspicuous fact and unmistakable proof, many of the residents of Bethlehem, convinced of the coming of the aspired deliverer, started trumpeting that the star had shone more intensely over their village.

1/667 For the population of the area that comprised Jerusalem, Emmaus, Bethany, and Bethlehem, the other happenings did nothing but solidify their conviction in the advent of the divine messenger, and these facts were interpreted according to what the population accepted to be true. A more than evident manifestation of the collective mood happened on March 14, for Tigrane, Flavius, and Heros, the three wise men of the hated Mammon, coming from Jerusalem, arrived in Bethlehem; on this occasion, the comments were that these very important authority figures from abroad had come to offer gifts to the desired savior, despite their ignorance of where he could be found.

1/668 The more the manipulated dictator took steps with the intention of taking possession of the newborn, the more the oppressed ones became certain that the Lord had kept his promise to the noble prophets of yore.

1/669 Herod the Great was immediately informed of the news brought to him by his learned counselors, namely that the tetrarchy had indeed seen the appearance of an exceptional person. Since the latter was not a wealthy one, Herod the Great asked his interlocutors and himself about his whereabouts, sarcastically suggesting the hypothesis that he would be the son of the god of the miserable ones he ruled. Aware of the irrepressible gossip that circulated among the oppressed ones, he proceeded, still talking to those of his court,

that if such an unconquerable figure had indeed been born, the delivery must have happened alongside those who had power. Flavius daringly alerted him of the possibility that the child had come amongst poverty in another village and then transported to Bethlehem. Conveying an unusual wrath, the tyrant made himself clear:

1/670 “This offspring must be found.”

1/671 Since the hearsay among the oppressed was that the child had come to planet Earth from a pure woman, Herod the Great supposed that his soldiers would not find any difficulties in arresting her, for she was unquestionably sick in the head. The orders he gave made it clear that they should inspect even the most secluded places and find a Hebrew woman who had given birth when the Morning Star had appeared. However, his wage-earners asked about a woman whose eyes were as clear as her soul, who talked to the god of the oppressed, for she was his wife.

1/672 According to the one the people called Mammon, it was crucial to capture the child, and thus the circumscribed hearsay would be over. If not, the oppressed would rebel, since it was enough for an insurgent to appear for them all to revolt, something he would not allow.

1/673 The existing lodges were inspected, for the woman was probably bedridden and resting. They exhaustively endeavored to find her, but they only came across more hearsay. An unstoppable hunt was then ordered for the one Tigrane had qualified as a super-king.

1/674 The usurped ones were on the verge of madness due to the happiness they felt with the irrepressible certitude that the desired deliverer had arrived, a certainty that was only confirmed by the unrestrained search for his anonymous mother. Many asked themselves:

1/675 “If he were not the one promised to the prophets, why would they be looking for him?”

1/676 They wanted to know in which family he had come into to this world, and what Rachel had spread, that it, that Joseph was the father, provoked a great polemic.

1/677 Those who opposed this thesis sustained that such an assertion was the reversal of reason, for the long-awaited redeemer would not arrive near a man so full of transgressions: the artisan had first united himself to Sarah, had three children, disgraced his sister-in-law’s living, and on top of it all, he was not a Lord-fearing man.<sup>[57]</sup> However, since he was the honorable Jacob’s

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[57] Because he had connived with Judah.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

protectee, they conjectured that there could be one of his relatives who was faithful to God and who practiced the rituals issued by the Temple on the Mount.<sup>[58]</sup> They accepted that, since Simeon Joseph was not called Joseph Ben Jacob, Joseph probably had other descendants, or even a brother.<sup>[59]</sup>

1/678 But where could they be?

1/679 Sarah's firstborn, many times nosily questioned about the matter, focused his attention on what he had naively mentioned to his wife. The latter had certainly transferred the piece of information to her close friend. Aware of Rachel's reputation, he believed it had been her who had spread the auspicious news, which would compromise the safety of not only his dear stepfather. Some time afterwards, he cautiously sent, through one of his employees, Eros, financial resources to the one he considered his father, so that he could use them if needed.

1/680 The ecstatic Hebrews of the region, not finding anyone else of the same lineage as Joseph, admitted that Mary's action had been true, for she had guaranteed, even inside the hole and about to be killed, that she was the mother of God's protectee, and that Jacob's son had also behaved sincerely when he stated that Joaquin's youngest was expecting a baby.

1/681 Many accepted the story as incontestable, spreading it even more. They stated that Mary was not like the other women, for she had never grown up, having always acted as a child. Others, however, asserted it to be impossible, given that the sinner had taken advantage of the exemplary man's pain to find herself a companion. If it were true, he would have willingly taken care of her, something he had not done; he had left her lonely.

1/682 The ones who had met the couple nonetheless ignored their whereabouts. She had vanished after her trial, which gave those of Bethlehem relief, and they were never interested in her destination, for they considered her an adulteress; Joseph had disappeared shortly after.

1/683 The debates became heated regarding the authenticity of Mary's words, especially because it was unanimous that the desired promised one had been born and was in Bethlehem.

1/684 Many truths sprang forth: the deliverer would rule from the village, changing it completely; he would exterminate the Herods and no one would

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[58] From the moment he found out he was **the honorable Jacob's protectee**, Joseph never tired from spreading the news.

[59] Simeon Joseph, who did not use to go to the Temple, was equally regarded as not fearing the Lord. Besides, according to the then current logic, he would certainly take his grandfather's name, who was very respected, and not his father's, who was a rebel.

Simply because he was not named Jacob, they believed that Joseph had a brother, and that this brother feared the Lord.

shut him up; the Lord would give him armies of highly armed men and, wherever he went, only the blood of the murdered sovereigns and their soldiers would be seen.

1/685 With the spread of comments, many Hebrews started looking into the redeemer's lineage, and many con artists pretended to be his parents in order to receive gifts. Oppressed ones coming from various villages went to Bethlehem to offer presents to the one who had come under the shining Star. Some of those who arrived in the city hoping to locate him ended up settling in its surroundings.

1/686 Among the abundant stories that were circulating, and those of this oppressed people who were engaged in the situation affirmed they were genuine, one convinced many: the possibility that the savior was the Lord Himself. They asked themselves how he could come as a simple offspring, a member of an oppressed people, who did not even have the right to identify and mark down letters? It could not be a small one, for it would take too long for them to be enfranchised from Mammon's oppression. Conversely, they insistently asked themselves why the cruel monarch continued his efforts to come across the heir of a certain Joseph.

1/687 But which Joseph, if this name was so common?

1/688 Rachel never invented facts, she only reported what she had seen or heard, and she had affirmed that the promised one would come as a relative of Simeon Joseph. As a consequence, what Mary had testified on the verge of being stoned was believable. That was the version that became accepted. It became even more legitimate when Julius, a respected prophet and wise man, guaranteed that the then carpenter descended from David.<sup>[60]</sup> What was true for many became the most crystalline legitimacy for basically the entirety of the population of the region.

1/689 From the appearance of the Star of Bethlehem until the moment that the certainty that it was in the family of Jacob's only son that the promised one had come became engraved, eight months elapsed.

1/690 Among innumerable rumors that flourished and flooded Bethlehem, the brutal soldiers of the perverse despot uninterruptedly searched for the desired savior; they nonetheless found nothing but stories narrated by the oppressed ones so confidently that they too became an unconditional certainty for the hunters, who were as ignorant as all the others.

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[60] **Julius**, born in Arramed, had adopted a Roman name in order not to be pursued.

## 1-13

1/691 Herod, the Great, whose imperial territory was comprised of the provinces of Judea, Perea, Samaria, and Galilee, was extremely superstitious and always had an expert in the firmament and the stars by his side. Whatever opinion the latter offered, he followed it by the book, because he believed that his proficient vaticinator was absolutely sure of what would happen. When he planned to go to a certain village, have children of the male sex, or make any important decision, he discussed it with his proud counselor, incorporating with exemplary diligence his words into his daily routine. However, when the unfortunate one was mistaken, he was promptly murdered.

1/692 Those who prognosticated held the constellation of Sheep as their source of studies and conclusions.<sup>[61]</sup> It inspired them especially with regard to their predictions about those who would become supreme and incontestable authorities and the death of the current ones. For these learned men, when the Morning Star appeared in Aries, it was a sign that a sovereign of great power, a conqueror, would arrive. Furthermore, if any of them died when it was observed, he would remain alive and return even more glorious, like a god. Moreover, if the Star of Life, Saturn in the current terminology, was equally visible in the constellation of Sheep, aligned to the Star of Bethlehem, he would be extremely intelligent and would live very long. In addition, if the Sun was seen in the same imaginary line, it meant that his days would be bright, shining, and copiously happy. Last but not least, if the Moon was also seen in Aries, aligned to the king star, to the Star of Life and to Jupiter, he would bring along, according to these erudite men, abundance and wealth.

1/693 For such learned men, the advent of the Morning Star in the constellation of Sheep along with the nightly star had two possible meanings. If they remained adjacent and at dawn the terrestrial satellite simply disappeared, but the Star of Bethlehem remained visible, it was proof of the physical coming to this world of a monarch or of one of his lineage. However, if from around four-thirty to five-fifty in the morning the Moon covered Jupiter and revealed it again, and only then disappeared, the birth of an unbeatable person was unequivocal.

1/694 On March 12, 10 BC, the most praised one amongst the six wise men who worked for Herod the Great, Tigrane, also known as the Wise One, noticed that the Morning Star was in Aries; he also saw that Saturn was in the constellation at thirty-five degrees. The following night, he realized that the

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[61] **The Constellation of Sheep** was thus called because, when one stared at the firmament, one could see a group of stars that had the shape of this meek animal.



nightly star had equally entered Sheep and, at dawn, exactly at four forty-five in the morning, he conjectured marvelous events, for the nightly star, when it obfuscated itself again, revealed the Star of Bethlehem, something that forecasted extraordinary facts.<sup>[62]</sup>

1/695 Aware of the inexistence of the birth of anyone noble, and conscious of what the ancestors of the Hebrew people had claimed, he mentioned to Flavius, one of his apprentices, that that was the sign of unforgettable events, for he was completely confident that the Sun was also in the constellation of Aries, and the preeminent figure who would bloom would come with the plenitude of light into this world.

1/696 He continued observing the approach of Jupiter, of the Star of Life, and of the Moon, following the phenomenon with lively interest, until the alignment took place, on April 17, 10 BC. As he watched the sky, familiar with the history of the oppressed ones, he paid special attention to it, accepting that an uncommon episode would happen.

1/697 The astronomer could not confirm his conviction that the king star, the natural satellite of planet Earth, Saturn, and the Morning Star were all aligned, which was in fact true at the time of the dawn of the promised one.

1/698 What Tigrane witnessed, given its triviality, was given little importance by the modern researchers of the firmament, but, for those of ancient times, whose living was ruled by the position of the celestial bodies, when the fulgurant stars, the Moon, and the Sun were all present in the constellation of Sheep, it was a matter of extreme relevance. The happening meant a lot, and drew a type of attention that is unimaginable for us, who currently stay on this orb created by our Father.

## Chapter 1

1-1 Joaquin, Anna, Sarah, Mary, Azaham, and Joseph:  
- David;

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[62] When it hid itself, the Moon made Jupiter visible, given that, its trajectory observed from appearance to decline, it first covered the luminous Star of Bethlehem and then uncovered it, since it is closer to us than the colossal planet.

# THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

- 1-2 Jacob, the well-doer;
- 1-3 Joseph settles in Nazareth:
  - Matthew, the carpenter;
  - Joseph's genealogy and his first union;
  - Joseph's return to Bethlehem with Sarah and Azaham;
  - From Azaham to Simeon Joseph;
- 1-4 The division of the tetrarchy of Herod the Great:
  - The Law of the Widows;
  - 1-4.1 Cerculis, the main city of Galilee;
- 1-5 Zechariah and Zacchaeus:
  - Athabam, the pillager;
  - Isabel;
  - Zechariah and his brother at the Temple on the Mount;
- 1-6 The passing of Joaquin and Sarah:
  - Joseph's first children;
- 1-6.1 The rebel Joseph fighting in Jerusalem;
  - The new routine of the widower Joseph;
- 1-7 *His* conception:
  - Joseph does not recognize his paternity;
  - Joseph's solution for Mary's undesired (on his part) pregnancy;
  - 1-7.1 Mary announces, at the market place, *his* coming;
  - The announcement to Mary from the legitimate messenger of God;
- 1-8 Mary's arrest and trial:
  - Mary in Veneram with Isabel;
  - 1-8.1 Anna, Matthew, and Joseph return to Nazareth;
- 1-9 The coming of John, *his* precursor:
  - The announcement to Joseph, and Mary's return to her native village;
- 1-10 The census of the Hebrews:
  - Balthazar;
  - Confiding in Simeon Joseph about *his* coming;
- 1-11 The news of *his* coming invades Bethlehem;
- 1-12 The hearsay when the shining Star of Bethlehem appeared;
- 1-13 The prediction that a super-monarch would make an entrance.