# Sylvian’s Scroll

screenplay

by

Michael Beninate

Copyright 2009

INT. SCRIBAL CLASSROOM. MORNING.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 15 C.E. Seven scribal students of varying adolescent age are mixing ink in preparation for the day’s studies in Scripture copying. The master scribe is quietly circling the small tables carefully observing the ink making process. The boys are intently stirring ingredients of dark clay, henna, berries, water and olive oil into small round wooden bowls. Thirteen-year-old student Sylvian lowers his hands underneath the table as the master moves by, retrieves a needle from his leather pouch and sharply pricks his finger. He secretly adds three drops of his own blood into the ink mixture. He returns the needle to his pouch, sucks his finger and begins laying out his writing tools of shaved wooden pens, worn blades and a short ruler.

EXT. COURTYARD OF SCRIBAL SCHOOL. MORNING.

Several older boys are stretching parchment. A small pile of lamb skins are piled over a raised log. Four boys take the corners of a skin and stretch it out over a square wooden block. It is nailed at the corners, salted and left in the sun to dry. The master looks out of the classroom window observing the process correcting them as they continue their work.

INT. SCRIBAL CLASSROOM. MORNING.

The inks are prepared and the students have properly lain out their writing tools on the tables. The master approves and circles the tables laying in front of each student a small patch of parchment. He goes to the front of the room and removes from many a large scroll rolled around an adorned cylindrical wooden shaft from a high shelf. He lays it on the center table and begins to carefully unroll it to Numbers. He begins to read the text in Hebrew. The students repeat each line, not fully understanding its language or meaning but pretending to. After the section of verse is verbally completed, the master gives the instruction in Aramaic to rule the parchment. The students take their rulers and press slight indentations in equally spaced horizontal parallel lines down along the pages. The master checks each student’s space and pressure, correcting where needed.

*Slow close up view from right to left of the ancient Hebrew text. Close up view of Sylvian’s blank page.*

His hand dips his writing tool into the inkwell tapping off the excess ink. He slowly and nervously crafts the first letters of the first words of the text onto the first faint line of the parchment.

INT. 10TH GRADE CLASSROOM. DAY.

Albuquerque, New Mexico. 2003 C.E. Ben Jacob is teaching his not very interested high school world history class. He is using his best skills and technique as a teacher to try to keep the attention of his students. Ben aims to a projected map with a laser pointer.

## BEN JACOB

This area of the world was called Mesopotamia. It was the fertile

crescent; the cradle of civilization.

It was at *this* point in history

where you could say people began

to learn how to cooperate with

each other enough to run small

villages in connection with other

villages. The first *writing* was

invented. The people learned

that they could record

transactions and events with

markings on wet clay tablets.

They would make indentations

into the clay with reeds. The

tablets were dried in the sun

and kept safely in what you

could call the first libraries

or city halls.

Noticing the class is not as excited as he.

**BEN (CONT’D)**

The first *writing*! *Think* about

it. Imagine the world without

writing or an understood language.

How did people communicate with

each other?

He looks to the class questioningly for answers.

### STUDENT 1

They grunted.

### BEN

They may have grunted.

### STUDENT 2

They sent smoke signals.

### BEN

Yes, that was done. Anyone

else?

### STUDENT 3

They sent text messages.

The class laughs.

### BEN

Very funny, Tyler. You all

think cell phones and computers

have been around forever? Well,

they haven’t.

Ben takes the cell phone from out of his pocket and holds it up to the class.

**BEN** **(CONT’D)**

*These* were only invented in the

last few decades. What we’re

talking about here occurred

about seven thousand years ago.

Whether you text message or email

or telephone or read a book or

see a movie, it all began with

these intelligent people for

the first time in history

learning to communicate with

each other in written form.

The school bell rings. All the kids start clamoring collecting their things in a rush to leave.

**BEN (CONT’D)**

The assignment due tomorrow,

*pay attention*, is an example

of writing, not in any language,

to convey an understandable

*short* message to another person.

The class looks at him confusedly.

**BEN(CONT’D)**

*Use your imaginations*. I’ll see

you all tomorrow.

The students rush out of the classroom. Ben Jacob smiles shaking his head and rolling his eyes.

INT. LIBRARY. DAY.

Ben Jacob is in the archeology section of the Albuquerque/Bernalillo Public Library. He is searching for reference material on a recently renewed excavation of an ancient town in Israel named Sepphoris. He retrieves several books from the shelves and proceeds to the tables in the center of the library. He flips through the books and comes to a section with color photographs of the recent discoveries made there.

*Close up views of astonishing blue tiled floor mosaics and the ruins of what once was a common market.*

FLASHBACK:

EXT. DESERT. AFTERNOON.

Outside Albuquerque, New Mexico. 1974 C.E. Twelve-year-old Ben Jacob is looking for dinosaur fossils in a stretch of desert close enough to his suburban neighborhood to get to by bike. He is using tools found in his stepfather’s garage to dig up what could perhaps be a bone. He painstakingly uncovers the artifact, puts it in his backpack, climbs on his bike and rides home eagerly to add it to his collection.

RETURN:

INT. LIBRARY. DAY.

Ben continues leafing through the books. He stops at a small black and white photograph of the professor from the University of South Florida who is leading the excavation at Sepphoris.

#### BEN

(to himself)

Dr. Peter A. Leonard. What

an interesting looking man.

He begins scrawling down contact information.

INT. SYLVIAN’S PARENTS HOUSE. AFTERNOON.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 15 C.E. Sylvian’s father Asaph is rounding the four ground rooms checking the shelves for provisions and making mental notations. His mother Esthon is seated by the corner of the room abutting the courtyard at a table directing several servants while stitching woolen cloth.

#### ASAPH

We are short of firewood and

flint. Olive oil remains plenty.

More milk will be needed after

Sabbath.

#### ESTHON

Fresher fowl is needed. The

last rotted before it could be

served. Grains have been good.

The need for cloth is great.

Matya’s apron is falling apart.

Sylvian is growing fast. I must

make them new clothes.

#### ASAPH

I will speak to the butchers

tomorrow. How is Sylvian

coming along in his studies?

#### ESTHON

He is not doing as well as he

should. The other boys are

passing him. The master

recommends homework.

#### ASAPH

Well, you will see to it that

he does homework. These classes

are expensive. He must make

something of himself.

Asaph leaves the rooms and exits into the courtyard to speak to the servants.

INT. SCRIBAL CLASSROOM. AFTERNOON.

The master corrects Sylvian sternly.

## MASTER

No, no. Straight down and

tightly curved. You are ruining

the parchment! Sharpen your pen.

Sylvian nervously takes a blade and quickly sharpens his wooden pen.

**MASTER (CONT’D)**

Do it slowly. You cannot make

this many mistakes. Again.

Now. Aleph, semekh…

The master puzzlingly notices to himself how much more brilliant the color of Sylvian’s ink is to the others.

INT. LIBRARY. DAY.

Albuquerque, New Mexico. 2003 C.E. Ben Jacob has decided and is intent on making a trip to Israel during his intended sabbatical to pursue his archaeological interests in Sepphoris. He stuffs Dr. Leonard’s contact information into his pocket and hurriedly leaves the library leaving the books scattered as they are.

INT. BEN JACOB’S STUDY. NIGHT.

Ben is at his desk looking up information about Sepphoris and Dr. Leonard on his computer. There is an online application form to participate in the 2003 summer excavation season. He begins to fill out the application.

Ben is verbally mouthing to himself as he is quickly typing the letters:

**BEN JACOB**

*Dear Principal Carter, I am writing*

*to request sabbatical time this summer to*

*make an important trip to participate in*

*an archeological excavation taking place*

*in Israel…*

*Dear Patricia, I know that this is an*

*unusual request. Please hear me out. I*

*have an opportunity to participate this*

*summer in a fascinating excavation underway*

*in Israel. I know I’m supposed to have*

*Matthew for the summer and always look*

*forward to having him, but would you*

*consider the possibility of…*

*Dear Professor Leonard, I have just applied online to participate in this season’s*

*excavation at Sepphoris. Please understand*

*my eagerness and earnestness. I have been interested in archaeology since my childhood*

*and have spent much of my adult life pursuing knowledge of this most interesting field*

*of study. I feel it will make a great*

*impact not only on the continuation of*

*my own studies, but also on my high school student’s interest in history…*

Ben finishes the emails then clicks the mouse on *SEND.*

INT. SYLVIAN’S PARENTS HOUSE. EARLY EVENING.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 15 C.E. Sylvian is walking home alone from scribal school to his family’s house. Ox-driven carts are passing on the roadway carrying timber followed by sheep and goats herded by many shepherds. The sights and sounds of construction are taking place throughout the town. Smoke rises across the horizon. Several small children run past playing and laughing. Another cart passes containing loudly squawking caged poultry on its way to market. He runs into some of his neighborhood friends.

**EPHRAIM**

Hey, Sylvian! We’re going to

the courts to play ball. Come

with us!

**SYLVIAN**

I have to go home first. I might

be in trouble.

**BENJAMIN**

So what? He’s no good anyway.

**EPHRAIM**

See you later, Sylvian. Hope

you’re not in too much trouble.

Ephraim and Benjamin run off to play ball. Sylvian approaches downhill towards his family’s house. Some of the servants are in the courtyard working. He can see his mother sitting at her table by the courtyard stitching cloth. He hears the sound of another caravan of carts passing on the roadway. He turns back to see. What looks like a family is passing carrying lumber to market. Sylvian notices one of the family members near the rear of the caravan that particularly strikes his attention. He is a young man of about sixteen years old carefully leading an ox pulling a heavily laden cart. He exudes a sense of calm and peacefulness. He is physically beautiful. Sylvian stops to watch them pass.

Sylvian’s attention is captured by the older boy. He stands still watching as the group passes. None of them notice him except the older boy. The older boy sees Sylvian looking and gently nods and smiles to him as they pass. Sylvian nods and smiles in return watching them as they pass then hurriedly rushes home.

As he enters the courtyard of his home, Sylvian interprets his mother’s expression that he is indeed in some kind of trouble. He and the servants say hello to one another.

**SYLVIAN**

Hello, mama.

**ESTHON**

Did you do better in class today?

**SYLVIAN**

I did my best, mama.

**ESTHON**

Master has sent word that you

can do better and that you should

work at home, too. I must see to

it that you do. Your father has

set up a table in the upper room

for you to practice your writing

after school.

**SYLVIAN**

Mama!

**ESTHON**

Do not argue. It is your

father’s will and you will

do as you are told.

Asaph hears the commotion and enters the courtyard. Sylvian is silent holding his head down. Esthon remains quiet.

**ASAPH**

Sylvian. You will practice your

writing everyday after school

beginning with Genesis. For

now, you will use my scraps of

parchment and what little papyrus

we can spare. You will make

your own ink and you will make

your own parchment.

**SYLVIAN**

But Ephraim and Benjamin want

me to play ball with them…

**ASAPH**

No ball until you finish your

studies. Now go!

Sylvian rushes into the house noticing a tall ladder in front of his room leading to what once was an upper storage area. He climbs the ladder noticing a cleared space occupied by a chair and table on top of which sits a lighted oil lantern. There are scraps of parchment, an old scroll of the scriptures and the makings for ink on the table. He unburdens his pouch, lays out his writing tools, mixes his ink, presses his lines and opens the scroll to Genesis and again begins the process of Scripture copying. He stops. He reaches for the needle in his pouch and deliberately punctures his finger adding his blood to the ink before writing. He looks at the Scripture on the scroll and begins to copy. He is not focused. He stops. He slowly pushes the patch of parchment to the side. He takes another patch, swallows deeply and begins nervously writing down in Aramaic the thoughts that have intensely preoccupied his mind recently.

EXT. FRONT PORCH. DAY.

Albuquerque, New Mexico. 2003 C.E. Ben is seated on the front porch swing with his luggage awaiting the arrival of his taxicab to bring him to Albuquerque International Sunport. An older car pulls quickly and unexpectedly up to the house. Ben’s sixteen-year-old son Matthew jumps out of the car and approaches the porch.

**MATTHEW JACOB**

Where’re you going, old man?

**BEN JACOB**

What are youdoing here?

They hug.

**MATT**

Mom told me you were going to

Israel today. I’m driving you

to the airport.

**BEN**

I’ve got a cab coming!

**MATT**

Cancel it. You can’t get away

from me thateasily.

They both get into Matthew’s car and drive toward the airport.

INT. CAR. DAY.

**BEN**

Matthew, I’m not trying to get

away from you. I wish you could

come with me! Do you wantto

come?

**MATT**

Oh yeah. Just what I want to

do going into my senior year of

high school: dig up bones in

Israel with my daddy. I hope

your ass doesn’t get bombed

while you’re out there.

Terrorists, man!

**BEN**

I’m not digging up bones. And

there won’t be any terrorists

where I’m going. I hope.

(pause) Is everything OK

at your stepfather’s house?

**MATT**

Yeah, dad. Everything’s OK.

**BEN**

You’ve got everything you need?

**MATT**

I could use some more money.

Ben opens his wallet and gives Matt some money.

**BEN**

Just like your mother.

Matthew pulls the car up to the airport terminal, gets out and pulls his father’s luggage out from the back seat.

**MATT**

Don’t tellme you need a skycap.

Ben goes over and tightly hugs his son holding back his emotions.

**MATT**

Dad. Get off.

**BEN**

You’re not upset with me, are

you?

**MATT**

Old people.

Matthew gets in his car to drive off and looks back to Ben.

**MATT** **(CONT’D)**

Call me if you need a ride home.

Ben nods to him with pride and an indistinguishable sadness. Matthew takes off in the car toward Albuquerque. Ben enters the terminal with his luggage to board his flight.

INT. SYLVIAN’S DEN. EVENING.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 15 C.E. The sun has descended and the sky is filled with twilight stars. The lantern sheds golden light onto Sylvian’s blank page. His hand is nervously shaking as he begins to write.

*I have been for the first time to the*

*public baths. I was scared. I was ashamed*

*and excited by what I saw. Everyone was*

*naked. Everyone seemed to act as if nothing*

*was different. Everyone went about their business doing what they came to do. I did*

*what I was told to do. The boys washed and*

*were quiet. The men and older boys talked*

*and laughed. I wanted to cry. I made myself not. The men stayed on the other side. The older boys were close to me. They have hair*

*on their legs and arms and on their chests*

*and under their arms. Their penises are big*

*with hair all over it. I have little. Some*

*of the men have no skin. I wanted to look but*

*knew that I should not look. I still kept*

*trying to look in secret. I must be sinful.*

*I will pray long tonight.*

Sylvian sets this secret parchment out of sight on a shelf to dry and reluctantly begins his homework.

EXT. MARKET. EARLY AFTERNOON.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 15 C.E. Asaph, Esthon and Sylvian are on their way to market. Matya is following them pulling a small cart filled with foods and goods to trade. Asaph carries in a leather satchel deeds to land he wishes to sell. The market is bustling with activity. They all notice different people from different lands bringing products familiar and those that they have never seen before. Indistinguishable languages are overheard. Asaph recognizes one of the tongues as Greek.

**ASAPH**

Those people are speaking Greek.

We must learn what we can to

trade with them. Alert me if you

find someone who can translate.

They nod in agreement and continue walking through the sights, sounds and smells of the marketplace.

The family approaches the first market stalls of people offering linen and cotton fabrics in various colors and patterns displayed in unfurled bolts on several tables. Esthon stops to make trades for linen cloth with figs, pomegranates, honey and feathers as Asaph quietly supervises. Before their transactions are completed, a woman leads Esthon aside to a covered stall in which is kept a special fabric and reveals it to her. The fabric shimmers in the light. Sylvian approaches behind and is also amazed by the wondrous sheen of the cloth. The merchant invites Esthon to feel it. Sylvian follows suit. Matya walks up behind them with amazement. Noticing their interest and intrigued himself, Asaph approaches and feels the new fabric. His thoughts are filled with images of well-told tales of profitable and dangerous Eastern caravans. Returning from his reverie, he thanks the merchant, presumes the cloth too extravagant and leads the family forward.

They pass a band of musicians consisting of various woodwinds, small harp-like stringed instruments, leather drums, cymbals and vocalizations surrounded by the scent and haze of unidentified incenses.

**SYLVIAN**

Mama, Matya, look!

Appreciatively and nudging Sylvian to notice as they enjoy, Asaph drops a coin into the band’s opened purse on the ground as the family passes. The band members nod in acknowledgement. Matya squints her eyes and turns away sneezing as she follows.

The family proceeds to the portal to an interior section of the market. There are many large rooms filled with the congestion of people and voices from many different lands speaking loudly at once.

**ASAPH**

I must go in here to sell the

parcel of land. Wait for me.

Asaph enters the building disappearing into the crowd. The family waits outside watching the activity in the market.

The sounds of the sawing and hammering of wood are heard in the close distance. Sylvian’s attention is drawn to it and notices the carpenter family that he had seen before on the roadway. They are cutting and fashioning wood in an open stall not far away. He recognizes the older boy.

The activity of the market evaporates as Sylvian stands transfixed looking at the older boy. He is overcome by an intense and unfamiliar sensation. He is enamored by the look of his eyes, his mouth, his hair, the arms, the legs, his movement, demeanor, expressions, his sense of peace and calm, his smile. He wanted nothing more than to be closer to him.

Asaph returns to the family successful in his transaction. Sylvian is awakened from his reverie.

**ASAPH**

Come. Let us go.

The family continues along the market path. They approach stalls filled with many kinds of fruits and vegetables. Matya, pulling on Esthon’s cloak excitedly halts the caravan.

**MATYA**

Here! Here is where we must

stop.

**ESTHON**

Yes, we are stopping, Matya.

**MATYA**

We need grapes and figs and

lettuces and lemon…

**ESTHON**

Yes, Matya. I know.

**MATYA**

Yes, mam.

Esthon and Asaph begin trading fruits and vegetables with the merchants while Matya eagerly watches on. Sylvian’s attention is divided between them and the carpenters ahead.

**ASAPH**

Let us speak to the woodworkers.

We need new shelves and more

cabinets.

The family continues along the market path toward the carpenter’s workshop.

**ASAPH** **(CONT’D)**

Who is master here?

**JOSEPH**

I am master.

The two men embrace.

**ASAPH**

I have ore of iron and many

pieces of bronze and copper.

What fair trade of carpentry

will you consider?

**JOSEPH**

What manner of carpentry do

you need?

**ASAPH**

I am in need of shelving and

cabinetry.

**JOSEPH**

Come. Let us discuss your

needs and means.

The two elders go to a small table with chairs in a shaded cove to discuss their possible business. Esthon and Matya begin to organize their groceries on the cart. Sylvian quietly approaches the young men fashioning wood, awkwardly observing them. The older boy notices him.

**YESHUA**

My young friend.

Sylvian looks up to him standing frozen in his steps.

**YESHUA** **(CONT’D)**

Why so silent?

Sylvian’s still cannot muster any words.

**YESHUA** **(CONT’D)**

Come. Rest yourself among us.

We are brothers.

**SYLVIAN**

I, I, am here with my father.

He is trading with, with your

father.

**YESHUA**

Would you like to help us?

**SYLVIAN**

What can I do?

**YESHUA**

Help me carry the lumber from

the cart to where my brother

James is.

Yeshua motions to James. James nods a greeting.

**YESHUA** **(CONT’D)**

What is your name?

**SYLVIAN**

Sylvian.

**YESHUA**

I am Yeshua. (pause) You seem

nervous.

**SYLVIAN**

It is nothing. I remember you

from the road.

**YESHUA**

I remember you too. You are

very observant. That is a good

thing to be. How old are you?

**SYLVIAN**

I am thirteen. How old are you?

**YESHUA**

Sixteen. If you can, take your

time growing up. The older you get,

the more you’ll see there is to be

done.

**SYLVIAN**

I already have enough to do.

**YESHUA**

There are also many wondrous,

joyous things yet to come to you.

You will see in time.

From the cart, Sylvian and Yeshua carry sawn boards at each end together toward the brothers and lay them in a pile.

**YESHUA** **(CONT’D)**

Are you studying?

**SYLVIAN**

Yes. The Holy Scriptures. I

am learning to be a scribe.

**YESHUA**

A scribe. Impressive. Before

long we all will be seeking

wisdom and understanding from

you. Tell me. What are your

favorite passages?

**SYLVIAN**

I like Exodus; when Moses led

our people to the promised land.

**YESHUA**

Have you been to the Temple

in Jerusalem?

**SYLVIAN**

Yes. Many times. Have you?

**YESHUA**

I have been there before. When

I was about your age.

**SYLVIAN**

Father takes us each year for

Passover. And our master took

us students once. We got to see

where the Torah and Talmud scrolls

are made.

**YESHUA**

Surely, one day you will take your

place there amongst the learned.

You can help me to understand.

**SYLVIAN**

There is much I do not understand.

**YESHUA**

There is much all of us do not

understand.

Asaph returns to the family.

**ASAPH**

Esthon. The sun is getting low.

Let us prepare to leave. Where

is Sylvian?

**ESTHON**

He is helping the carpenters.

**ASAPH**

Matya, please gather Sylvian.

**MATYA**

Sylvian!

Sylvian hears her call looking toward his family.

**SYLVIAN**

I must go now. I hope to see

you again.

**YESHUA**

You will; when I seek you at

the Temple to help me understand

the Scriptures. Thank you for

the help, my young friend.

The group gathers their belongings and prepares for the journey home. Sylvian looks Yeshua in the eye and he at him. There is an unspoken understanding between them. Sylvian lifts his hand in farewell. Yeshua responds likewise, slightly smiling. The family departs.

INT. AIRPLANE. DAY.

Midway over the Pacific Ocean. 2003 C.E. Ben Jacob is reading reference material of Sepphoris en route to Israel. Flipping through the pages, his thoughts wander in reverie to a remembrance from his adolescence.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. CAMP SITE. NIGHT.

Outside Albuquerque, New Mexico. 1979. Ben Jacob and a group of boys and girls from high school are on a summer camp out in the desert. Ben and his best friend Robert Stratton are playing guitars around a fire. Ben’s girlfriend is seated close to him with her arm around his back. A single girl is seated a foot away from Robert. Ben’s girlfriend kisses him on the cheek.

**KELLY**

Do you want to go for a walk?

**BEN**

Sure. I’ll meet you. Give me

a minute.

She gets up and leaves. Ben notices the other girl’s interest in Robert. Robert doesn’t seem to notice. Ben stops playing. Robert stops.

**BEN**

Wendy, do you mind if I talk

to Robert?

**WENDY**

Sure. I’ll see what Kelly’s

doing.

There is a long silence.

**BEN**

Bro, don’t you see she likes

you?

**ROBERT**

Who?

**BEN**

Who? Wendy. She’s practically

throwing herself at you. What

are you waiting for?

**ROBERT**

Ben, that’s not what I came

here for.

**BEN**

Well, Kelly wants to be with

me and so do I. We’re going

off. Wendy wants you, man.

What’s wrong with you?

Robert stares at him trying to conceal his hurt.

**ROBERT**

There’s nothing wrong with me.

He gets up, puts his guitar in its case and walks away into the darkness by himself.

RETURN:

Ben Jacob shakes his head and continues his reading.

INT. SYLVIAN’S DEN. NIGHT.

Sepphoris. Palestine. 15 C.E. Sylvian is in his room continuing his secret scroll.

*I cannot believe what has happened today.*

*I still do not know how to talk about it.*

*Jeremy and I were at the cove where we go.*

*We thought no one knew about it but us.*

*They must have followed us. The big boys*

*came in after and found us there. At first*

*we were mad that they found our spot but we forgot about that soon. The biggest one*

*laid down and the other one laid next to him.*

*They made us sit down next to them. The*

*big one took my hand and pushed it under*

*his tunic. I could feel the hair on his*

*legs and then on his penis. He made me*

*hold it. It got big and hard. I tried*

*to leave but he would not let me. I did not*

*know what to do. I was scared. Jeremy too. Then he took my head. He pushed it down*

*over his penis and made me open my mouth.*

*I could hardly breathe. I punched him in*

*his stomach and then he pulled my hair real*

*hard and would not let go. I bit him and he slapped my head as hard as he could. I*

*started to cry. He started rubbing my head*

*after that. It felt better. They were*

*laughing. And then he filled my mouth.*

*It was terrible. He held my head down*

*but I spit it out. They got up and laughed*

*at us and went away. I’m going to pray*

*more tonight because I am dirty and sinful.*

EXT. EXCAVATION SITE. DAY.

Sepphoris, Israel. 2003 C.E. Ben Jacob is contributing

to the team of archaeology from the University of South Florida in excavating the ancient town of Sepphoris. The team has just recently uncovered a stunning blue colored tile mosaic floor from what appears to be an ancient villa.

**RAMI BARUCH**

Unbelievable.

**TREVOR PARKINGHAM**

Absolutely amazing.

**CHIN ZHA ZHANG**

Never see anything like it.

Ben Jacob is witnessing this discovery with the amazement of everyone else. The experts are surrounding the site and Ben now feels rightfully somewhat out of his league. He takes several photographs of the site and then decides to take a walk along the outskirts of the town.

He has walked much longer than he has realized. The sun is beginning to set. The Israeli horizon of earth and sky is colored in stunning shades of turquoise and pink outlined in a brilliant orange unseen in the American Southwest. The pewter dust of the Middle-Eastern desert is rising in a gasoline fume mirage against the heat of late summer sands. There is no one around for miles. Ben takes refuge in a cave-like stone outcropping to rest and to refresh himself.

A faint rumbling is heard in the distance. Ben settles himself in a corner of the cave. He does not want to be noticed. As the sound comes nearer, he can decipher what seems to be a traveling caravan of man and beast; perhaps Bedouins. He can hear the crunching of gravel and sand beneath wooden wheels and the beat of animal hooves on a pathway and unidentifiable voices lingering in the distance. They are coming closer. They are almost overhead. They seem to be traveling right above the very spot in which he is resting. He sits motionless. He can feel the vibrations as they pass above him. The sounds fade into passage. He breathes a sigh of relief when suddenly the rock above him shakes loose and mounds of debris come tumbling forth shedding earth and rock and sand and dust all over him and the bedrock about his legs and feet.

Many moments transpire before Ben can see anything. The cave is filled with dust and lingering sunlight. He is not sure if he is injured, but enough time has let him know that he is not. He stands and shakes off the remnants of the collapse, trying to retrieve focus of his vision. After leaving the outcropping, letting it aerate and pouring water into his eyes and mouth, he cautiously reenters the opening of the cave. He takes off his shirt and waves it about, further clearing the air. It is at this point that he notices something. Through the haze and dust, there is definitely an unmistakable opening; a crevice of some sort along the back wall of the cave. It appears to be a kind of shelf. And on it seems to be sitting what appears to be some kind of a jar.

**BEN JACOB**

What on earth?

INT. SYLVIAN’S DEN. NIGHT.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 16 C.E. Sylvian is continuing his secret scroll.

*Those big boys must have told other*

*people what happened at the cove. I was*

*playing ball in the courts with Jeremy and Ephraim and some other boys when these older*

*boys came and started to yell at me. They*

*were pointing and laughing and calling me*

*names. Jeremy knew what they were talking*

*about but he did not say anything. He just*

*stood there. All the other boys started to*

*laugh too. The game stopped and then everyone started to point and laugh at me. I tried*

*not to, but I started to cry. That made*

*them laugh even more. One of the bigger*

*boys pushed me down onto the ground. I*

*hurt my arm. All I could do was run away.*

*I ran away as fast as I could all the way*

*to the olive fields. I could not run any*

*farther. I fell against a tree and covered*

*my head and cried. I did not want to live anymore. I stayed there for many hours.*

*I think I fell asleep. I remember waking*

*up and looking into the sun. And then a*

*shape took form in the sun. I could not*

*tell what it was. And then I knew it was*

*a face. The face was looking at me. It*

*was not laughing. I covered my head with*

*my arms. He touched my shoulder. I began*

*to cry again. He put his arms around me*

*and held me. We stayed like that until I*

*did not cry anymore. When I could see*

*again, I knew who it was. It was Yeshua.*

 *He asked me what was wrong and I could*

 *Not say anything. He just held me. And*

 *he smiled. I think he knows what the*

 *matter is. I stopped crying. My head*

 *hurt so bad. He held my head in his*

 *hands and it stopped hurting. I had*

 *to go home. I kissed his hand. He*

 *walked me half way home. I love him.*

*I think about him all of the time.*

*I want to be close to him. I want to*

*be with him. He is so beautiful.*

EXT. INSIDE THE CAVE. EARLY EVENING.

Sepphoris, Israel. 2003 C.E. Ben Jacob is looking with amazement at the revelation of the hidden jar. He can hardly contain his excitement but gathers within himself all of the patience and determination that he has learned that is required to successfully excavate an artifact without letting emotions cloud better judgment. He begins reviewing to himself protocol that should be followed upon making a discovery. The area must be secured. He should notify the excavation chief. It is getting dark. He cannot secure the artifact and still have time to make it back to the site before nightfall. He decides to do his best to secure the site himself and sleep there in the cave until morning. He calls the excavation chief.

**BEN JACOB**

 Dr. Leonard. I’m sorry to

 interrupt you. This is Ben

 Jacob. I’m several miles

outside of the site in a cave

and I’ve come upon something

rather extraordinary. I’m

certain you will want to see

this. (pause) It appears

to be some type of terra cotta

jar. (pause) I can’t tell you

over the phone how to get here.

(pause) No, I’m going to stay

here tonight. I can secure it

myself. (pause) I give you my

word. I’ll make my way back at

daybreak. (pause) Thank you.

Good night, sir.

Dr. Leonard has given Ben permission to stay at the cave overnight to secure the artifact. Ben is overcome with excitement. He must move quickly before natural light is gone. The only artificial light he has with him is a flashlight. Securing the artifact involves making sure it is not in a precarious position; if so, adding supports to prevent movement and breakage. Ben Jacob gave his word that he would accomplish this by morning.

Ben begins unpacking his back pack laying the various tools he had brought with him on a flat surface on the floor of the cave; the different sized picks, brushes and solutions collected over years of amateur excavating. Most were purchased, but many were of a household nature; like a fingernail polish brush he had taken from his mother when he was a teenager. He was proud of his homemade tool collection. Each piece reminded him of past finds and how he had acquired it. He wanted nothing more than to put them to use on what could be a once in a lifetime find. He struggled to restrain his eagerness.

He began by slowly approaching the crevice. He stepped gingerly over the debris of rubble to within a few feet of the shelf that held the jar. It didn’t move. He carefully bounced his weight lightly on the floor. No movement. Harder. Harder yet. Harder still. He could approach safely. He took his handheld whisk broom and started sweeping the floor of debris. He cleared a footpath from his tools to the shelf. Light was fading fast. He would need to secure his flashlight to himself to further see. He had devised a technique as a teenager that had served him well in the past. Without a lighted helmet, he had learned he could fasten a flashlight upon his right shoulder with a bungee cord and aim it where needed and see rather well. He applied this technique and was glad it still worked. The beam of artificial light hit the jar. Ben was taken aback by the beauty of its shape. It was mottled gray in color and shaped like an elongated apple. To his amazement, it had a lid. It was completely intact. He stood there just staring at it for what seemed like time stood still. It projected a grace and innocence that overwhelmed him with serenity and calm.

INT. SCRIBAL CLASSROOM. DAY.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 16 C.E. The master is reading from a scroll. Leviticus.

**MASTER**

If a man lies with a male as

with a woman, both of them have

committed an abomination; they

shall surely be put to death;

their blood is upon them.

Sylvian copies the Scripture onto the parchment in his best penmanship.

INT. SYLVIAN’S DEN. NIGHT.

Sylvian continues writing his personal scroll.

*The more I learn to write, the more I am*

*troubled by what is being told to be true.*

*I do not doubt my faith. My faith is strong.*

*I want to serve God. Why is what I am*

*being told to be evil? I am not evil. I*

*love God. Why would not God love me?*

*I am not against God. I am of God.*

EXT. INSIDE THE CAVE. NIGHT.

Outside Sepphoris, Israel. 2003 C.E. Ben Jacob approaches the artifact closer aiming the flashlight with his shoulder. Using a large soft make-up brush taken years ago from his older sister, he carefully brushes out the rocks, gravel and dust from around the base of the jar. Some of the material seems to be manufactured; a kind of mortar. Between his fingers, it crumbles with little effort. He knows the jar was placed here and deliberately concealed. His intention is to reinforce the artifact with supports to prevent any movement. He can use many items of fabric that he has with him to do so. He considers his clothing and what pieces could be used in which places. The shelf itself seems to be manufactured. It’s too level a surface to be completely natural. Returning to the tools, he brings back a large magnifying glass. It doesn’t appear that the lid is detachable. The thought that the jar could possibly be opened fires his imagination. He completes the work of stabilizing the jar with bath sponges and fabric used from the sleeves of his shirt. After he is satisfied with his progress, he goes back to his tools and returns to the artifact with his dentist’s stainless steel long handled tooth pick.

He stops himself. He knows this must be photographically documented. He retrieves his digital camera from the back pack. He takes pictures from all conceivable angles. The strobe effect bouncing out from the outcropping out into the desert twilight creates a futuristic and ghostly appearance.

Ben sits himself along the side wall of the outcropping. He is thirsty and tired. Drinking from his canteen, he relaxes and fixes the aim of the flashlight onto the jar, just staring at it. Again, he considers the dental pick, wondering.

His curiosity and inexperience have gotten the better of his judgment. He decides to start excavating the top of the jar. Trying to diminish his excitement, he steadies his nervous hands, chooses an artist’s paint brush and approaches the illuminated shelf. Ever so slightly, he brushes away the debris from the top. It is so quiet, the particles dropping seem loud. He cannot use a liquid softening solution that might compromise the possible interior and contents, so he takes the pick. He slowly scratches the surface around the outer edge of the top. Surprisingly, the material is rather soft. Continuing scraping, he uncovers a circular indentation; a sign that that it is hollow and that the lid may be removable. For hours through the night, Ben Jacob painstakingly clears the material from around the lid of the jar.

He had made his way almost entirely around the lid of the jar. There were just a few millimeters left to go. He maneuvered the pick once more and the lid to the jar released and slid a quarter of an inch circular with a slight scraping sound. The top was free. All he had to do was lift it off and he would be able to see into it. His hands began to tremble. He had to stop and calm himself. He was becoming delirious. He sat himself down leaning against the wall of the cave allowing his nerves to calm. He shifted his lighted shoulder toward the jar and again just stared.

He was ready now. It was time to lift the lid. Using the dental pick in one hand, meticulously and carefully, he lifted the lid a half an inch and grasped the edges with two fingers of his other hand. He slowly lifted it, aimed the flashlight in, lowered his head to it and was completely astonished to see inside what looked like a scroll. He allowed only enough time to be sure of what he was seeing. He then lowered the lid as carefully as he had raised it and slowly backed away, trembling once again.

He exited the cave and began walking around the outside of the outcropping, shaking his head and flailing his legs and arms. He took deep breaths. He looked up at the sky. It was clear and brilliant with millions of stars. The fingernail moon was high in its orbit. Dawn was approaching on what felt like the first morning of Ben Jacob’s middle life. Never had he felt such relevance and sense of purpose and accomplishment. He savored the sublime moment with immense gratitude and heightened awe of existence.

He fell fast asleep on the floor of the cave with the thrill of a child on Christmas Eve.

INT. SYLVIAN’S PARENT’S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 16 C.E. Sylvian is in the upper room doing his “homework.” The family is below planning their trip to market for the next day. Matya is preparing food in the kitchen.

**ASAPH**

I am considering purchasing a

tract of land in the southern

region. More and more people

are coming to Sepphoris and will

need places to build their houses.

I can make a reasonable profit.

I just regret having to pay more

damnable inflated Roman tax.

**ESTHON**

Asaph, nothing can be done to

change that. That worm tax

collector will surely be here

by month end with his hand out

and his pockets full. He is the

one inflating the tax.

Sylvian climbs down from the upper room.

**SYLVIAN**

Papa, Can I help Yeshua and his

brothers work again?

**ASAPH**

Are you finished with your work?

**SYLVIAN**

Yes, Papa. Can I stay at the

market? I can come home by myself.

**ASAPH**

How long do you plan to work?

Are they paying you?

**SYLVIAN**

No, Papa. I *want* to help Yeshua.

**ASAPH**

No pay. Why have you taken such

interest in this boy?

**SYLVIAN**

He is my friend.

**ESTHON**

Sylvian, he is much older than

you. You have friends your own

age. Do not pester him. He will

tire of it.

**SYLVIAN**

No, Mama. Please? I am learning

to build.

**ASAPH**

Build. I send you to an expensive

school and now you want to be a

carpenter’s helper. You were not

interested in building before.

**SYLVIAN**

I don’t want to be a carpenter?

I just want to help. What’s wrong

with being a carpenter, anyway?

**ASAPH**

You are the son of a landowner

and receiving formal education.

It is beneath you.

**SYLVIAN**

I won’t stay long. Please, may I?

Esthon turns to Asaph with a pleading look.

**ASAPH**

You will be back before dark.

**SYLVIAN**

Thank you!

Sylvian rushes back up the stairs. Asaph shakes his head.

EXT. EXCAVATION SITE. MORNING.

Sepphoris, Israel. 2003 C.E. Dr. Leonard is overseeing the excavation at the blue villa. Approaching in the distance can be seen shirtless Ben Jacob.

**DR. LEONARD**

That must be Ben. I’m anxious

to hear about what he’s found.

**TREVOR PARKINGHAM**

What did he tell you he found?

**DR. LEONARD**

Some kind of terra cotta jar

in a cave.

**CHIN ZHA ZHANG**

Sounds interesting. Do you think

it could be ancient?

**DR. LEONARD**

Well, now, we’ll just have to

see. But it’s certainly

possible.

Ben Jacob reached the group working at the site.

**DR. LEONARD**

Good morning. You must have had

a comfortable night (pause)

sleeping in a cave.

**BEN JACOB**

Dr. Leonard, you have no idea

how comforting it was to me.

**DR. LEONARD**

Why don’t you go and get showered

up and have some breakfast. I’ll

meet you in the trailer in about

an hour.

**BEN**

Sure thing, sir.

As Ben turns to walk away, he gives Dr. Leonard a devilish grin which piques his curiosity. The team continues their work uncovering the amazing blue tiled floor revealing more of the pattern.

Dr. Leonard returns to the trailer in less than the prescribed hour. Wet haired Ben is eating breakfast at the small kitchen table.

**DR. LEONARD**

Well, Mr. Jacob. Tell me about

what it is that you’ve found.

**BEN**

Dr. Leonard, I know you’re not

going to believe this, but I think

what I’ve uncovered could very

well be ancient.

**DR. LEONARD**

Ben, the most experienced

archaeologists in the world all

think that what they’ve just

uncovered is a rare and precious

artifact that will alter the

course of history. You wouldn’t

be human if you didn’t think that.

Of course, it is a possibility.

It is also possible that you came

across the remains of someone’s

grandmother who died last year.

I don’t want you to be disappointed.

**BEN**

You’re right. (pause) I have

something to tell you. And I

hope you won’t be disappointed.

**DR. LEONARD**

What are you telling me Ben?

**BEN**

I went ahead and excavated the

top of the jar. Dr. Leonard,

it contains a scroll.

**DR. LEONARD**

A scroll. You opened the jar?

**BEN**

Yes. I’m sorry. I couldn’t

help myself. Everything is

fine, though. You would be

proud of me.

**DR. LEONARD**

That is only one of the places

where you are mistaken, Mr. Jacob.

You are in no way qualified to

be tampering with an artifact

found under my authority. And

the fact that you think I would

be proud is another.

**BEN**

Dr. Leonard, I know what I’m

doing. I apologize for going

ahead without your supervision

but I am not very sorry. It

is perfectly intact and it

is because of me that it

remains so.

Pause.

**DR. LEONARD**

You’re lucky, Jacob. You’re

taking me to this site as soon

as I’m finished my work here.

Do not ever take such liberties

with me again. Do I have your understanding?

**BEN**

Yes, (pause) sir.

INT. SYLVIAN’S DEN. NIGHT.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 16 C.E. Sylvian is writing in his personal diary.

*Today was a great day. I spent most of the afternoon helping Yeshua and his brothers at*

*the market after I helped Father and Mother*

*with the trading. Mostly I bring the*

*unfinished wood to James and hold it while*

*he cuts. He will not let me cut yet. Yeshua*

*let me try cutting a piece of scrap wood but*

*I made too many mistakes. He told me I was*

*doing good. We have much fun together. He*

*makes me happy and laugh. I wish I was older. Sometimes he treats me as a child. He is very wise. He never mistreats and is kind to the lowliest people. Today he gave his lunch to*

*a poor woman and her child. I mentioned*

*something Father had told me about the sins*

*of the Romans and he told me I should not*

*judge them for we are all sinners. We talk*

*about Torah. He helps me to understand the Scriptures that I do not. He makes it all*

*so simple. He commented about my eyes today.*

*He said he had never seen such color eyes in*

*our people. He told me I am special. I feel very special when I am with him. His father offered me money when it was time to*

*go but I would not take it.*

EXT. CAVE SITE. MORNING.

Outside Sepphoris, Israel. 2003 C.E. Dr. Leonard, Ben Jacob and a small team of archaeology students approach the outcropping on foot.

**BEN JACOB**

Here it is.

**DR. LEONARD**

Unassuming. I wouldn’t have

thought to look here.

**BEN**

I wasn’t looking. I was just trying to get some shade.

**DR. LEONARD**

From which direction did the

caravan come from?

**BEN**

From what I could surmise, South.

I was already in the cave, so

remember, I couldn’t see them.

Dr. Leonard climbs to the top of the outcropping.

**DR. LEONARD**

There’s no road here. Why would

they be traveling so close to

this area?

**STUDENT 1**

Maybe they were tracking an

errant sheep.

**DR. LEONARD**

It’s possible. Good observation.

Do you see the tracks from the

ox and cart?

**STUDENTS**

(collectively)

Yes.

**DR. LEONARD**

Is there anything else you see

that might be significant?

The students begin looking around. No one responds.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

Look at this bone here. It has

recently been discarded. It is

the leg bone of a quail. It

appears to have been eaten by

a human. Quails are not indigenous

to this region. Chances are it

came from Syria or Northern Africa.

The caravan Mr. Jacob speaks of

may well have come from much

farther south of here. It may

explain why they were off track

and unfamiliar with the roads.

The students nod in affirmation and respect.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

Now, let’s see what you have

found here, Ben.

Led by Ben Jacob, the group climbs down from the top of the outcropping and into the shadow of the cave.

Allowing just enough time for their vision to adjust to the darkness, Ben leads up the cleared path towards the shelf.

**BEN**

This is it.

Ben shines his flashlight onto the jar. Dr. Leonard’s eyes are intent upon the object. He moves closer with increasing curiosity.

**DR. LEONARD**

May I?

**BEN JACOB**

Help yourself.

Dr. Leonard slowly begins removing the sponges and pieces of supporting cloth.

**DR. LEONARD**

I don’t want to jump to any conclusions, but the shape and size of this jar is reminiscent of the ones found in Qumran.

The coloring is also similar.

Ben, would you lift the top and

give me a glimpse of the scroll?

**BEN**

Sure. Hold the light.

Ben retrieves his dental pick from the back pack and slowly lifts the lid and removes it completely from the top of the jar. One of the students holds their hand open to receive the lid. He places it in her hand.

**DR. LEONARD**

Be very careful.

The students study the object amongst themselves. Dr. Leonard moves nearer shining the flashlight into the opening of the jar. Ben couldn’t be sure, but he thought he heard him slightly gasp. He watched him study the scroll more closely aiming the light in different directions. He turned to Ben and the group.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

We must excavate this artifact

completely. It must be carbon

dated. Ben, if this is as old

as I think it is you may just

have stumbled onto a piece of

first century antiquity.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE. AFTERNOON.

Jerusalem, Palestine. 16 C.E. Sylvian’s family has taken their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the celebration of Passover. They are guests of Shai and Pelia, Asaph’s Uncle, his wife and extended relatives. They have prepared the caravan to go to the Temple leading a sacrificial lamb. Everyone is in their best clothing. The roads are filled with pilgrims and an air of festivity and merriment abounds. Music and singing can be heard amidst the sounds of laughter and lambs. Roman sentries are lined periodically along the roads making their presence known. A long line of families with their sacrifices has formed outside of the gates to the Temple. Many are seen leaving from the side going back to their homes to begin their Passover suppers. A single trumpet blast sounds and the next group of caravans is led into the gates to the courtyard leading to the great hall toward the priests and altar. The children are excited and chasing each other around the carts. Friends of the family approach and the groups join each other in reunion with hugging and greetings of Shalom. Coming out of the Temple from the side Sylvian notices Yeshua and his family. He strains himself to see where they are going. The trumpet blasts again and Sylvian’s group is led into the courtyard. The parents gather the children in orderly fashion. Sylvian walks a ways to the side trying to appear more mature. Once the doors to the gate are closed, the sounds shift to chanting and hymns. The people become quiet. Each family is led one behind the other leading their sacrifices. Sylvian’s family enters the great hall. It is resplendent with magnificent columns and arches decorated with banners of shimmering fabric in many colors. Exotic incense fills the air. The cry of a lamb is heard in the distance as it is sacrificed upon the altar. Approaching the chamber, alms collectors are there taking contributions. Asaph and Shai open their purses and make their donations for the families. They are led toward the altar. Smoke is billowing from the burning fat of lamb over a large smoldering pit of steaming rocks. Servants are fanning the smoke out toward the window openings. Asaph leads the lamb to a priest who takes it to the priest at the altar. Another priest quickly slices the neck of the lamb with a large blade. Other priests collect the blood in gold and silver goblets and pour it onto the altar. The Levites sing the Hallal. The lamb is dressed and it is given back to the family. They are led out of the chamber to the side.

The families regroup and prepare to make their way to Shai’s house. Sylvian is looking around for Yeshua. He sees him with his family and friends not far away. Asaph is busy talking to friends. He turns to his mother.

**SYLVIAN**

Mama, I see Yeshua. I am going

to wish him Shalom.

**ESTHON**

Do not be long, Sylvian. We

are soon ready to leave.

Sylvian rushes off into the crowd toward Yeshua. He reaches their group.

**SYLVIAN**

Yeshua! Shalom, Yeshua!

**YESHUA**

Shalom my young friend, Sylvian.

They embrace.

**SYLVIAN**

Where have you been? I have

not seen you at market in months!

**YESHUA**

My brothers and I have been

working in Cana.

Sylvian notices a beautiful girl coming closer to Yeshua.

**YESHUA** **(CONT’D)**

Let me introduce to you Galya.

This is my friend Sylvian who

helps us with our work in

Sepphoris.

**GALYA**

Shalom, Sylvian.

**SYLVIAN**

Shalom.

**YESHUA**

Are you here with your family?

**SYLVIAN**

Yes. We are celebrating at my

Great Uncle Shai’s house. Would

you like to come?

**YESHUA**

Thank you for your offer, my

good friend, but I am celebrating

with my cousins (pause) and Galya.

Galya smiles shyly. Their family is ready to depart.

**YESHUA (CONT’D)**

We must go now. Good to see you

Sylvian.

**SYLVIAN**

Will I see in Sepphoris soon?

**YESHUA**

We will be finished in Cana in

Iyyar. Will I see you there?

**SYLVIAN**

Yes. I will be there.

**YESHUA**

Shalom, Sylvian

**SYLVIAN**

Shalom, Yeshua.

Sylvian watches them walk away with his heart sinking and trying his best not to cry. He makes his way back to his family.

INT. SHAI’S HOUSE. NIGHT.

The Passover feast is in progress. The central table is lit by the fire from the hearth. The outer rooms are warmly lit with many oil lamps. The families are seated throughout the house and are passing platters of blessed lamb, matzo and maror. Shai is telling the story of the Jews’ exodus from Egypt, occasionally asking questions of the children who are eager to answer. Sylvian is seated in a corner of the room alone and aloof. Esthon glances over to him disturbed by his distant mood. He doesn’t notice her.

**SHAI**

And what was the second plague

sent upon Egypt?

Several of the children raise their hands.

**SHAI** **(CONT’D)**

Sylvian?

Sylvian barely notices the question directed to him. Asaph and Esthon are looking at him questioningly.

**SHAI (CONT’D)**

Sylvian?

**SYLVIAN**

Frogs.

Shai exchanges a concerned glance with the parents.

**SHAI**

Yes. And who can tell us the

third?

Asaph discreetly excuses himself from the table and makes his way over to Sylvian.

**ASAPH**

What is the matter, child?

Are you ill?

Sylvian does not answer and stares ahead.

**ASAPH** **(CONT’D)**

Sylvian! Answer me. What is

wrong?

Sylvian quickly gets up and rushes out to the courtyard. Asaph looks confusedly to Esthon.

**ESTHON**

Let him be.

EXT. CAVE SITE. DAY.

Outside Sepphoris, Israel. 2003 C.E. The main trailer with tall extended antennae is parked near the cave site along with several trucks and a large vehicular generator. A bustling of activity is seen under tents and around the exterior of the outcropping. Groups of students are carrying equipment toward the entrance of the cave. Others are removing rocks and debris from inside the cave. Dr. Leonard can be seen at a high point motioning different directions to the group. From below the outcropping, a metal scaffolding is being erected which will form a planked and rubberized gangway leading from the ledge of the cave to the opened double doors on the side of the main trailer. Inside the cave, an elaborate lighting system illuminates the interior with brilliant artificial light. Two specialists are taking measurements of the artifact; one making measurements with intricate tools, the other manually recording into a logbook in pencil. A global positioning device has been secured to the shelf connected to a laptop computer on a small table operated by a technician. Ben Jacob is seated at the table with the technician zealously observing the activity and proudly answering any questions presented to him. Dr. Leonard occasionally steps in overseeing all of the progress.

The computer technician is entering data into the laptop:

***DMS*** *Degrees Minutes Seconds (49°30'00"N, 123°30'00"W)*

***DD*** *Decimal Degrees (49.5000°,-123.5000°)*

The measurement specialist verbally translates his findings; the other marks his words:

**SPECIALIST 1**

Height level 27 centimeters.

Circular width 11.7 centimeters

31 degrees. Circumference level

27c 24.3 centimeters. Height

level 27.5 centimeters…

Dr. Leonard enters the trailer. He observes a laser printer generating an image on paper of the precise measurements of the shape of the jar. Several students are fashioning a dense black foam rubber inlay cutting it with specialized tools to receive the exact contours of the jar to be laid into a reinforced wooden crate.

INT. SYLVIAN’S DEN. NIGHT.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 16 C.E. Sylvian finishes his studies, puts the parchment away and retrieves his diary from its hiding place.

*Many troubles lay deep in my heart tonight. Something I heard Father say to Great Uncle*

*Shai. They must have thought I was sleeping*

*but I was not. They were in the courtyard*

*at Passover in Jerusalem and I could hear*

*what they were saying through the window.*

*I could tell they were still drinking wine.*

*They talked about many things but then I*

*heard my name. I listened close by the*

*window. Father said he was ashamed of my behavior and he apologized to Great Uncle.*

*Great Uncle comforted him and told him to*

*be patient. Then Father said something I*

*do not understand. He said that he regrets*

*that I am not of his own blood. I do not*

*know what it means but it makes my heart troubled.*

*Last week, I almost got caught writing my*

*scroll. I did not hear Father coming up*

*the stairs until he was almost to the top.*

*I pushed the parchment under the scriptures*

*I was practicing before he came to my desk.*

*He wanted to see how I was doing on my work.*

*I showed him where I was in Deuteronomy.*

*He said I was getting better. It felt like*

*he was looking around to find something.*

*He saw blood on my finger. I told him I*

*cut it sharpening my pens. I continued*

*working and he went back down. I must be*

*more careful.*

*I hope to see Yeshua at the market tomorrow.*

*I pray every night that he will be there.*

*As much as I try, I cannot stop feeling as*

*I do about him. He must love that girl*

*he was with. I know I want to be with*

*him more than she. If only I had the*

*courage to tell him how I feel. I know*

*he will understand.*

EXT. CAVE SITE. DAY.

Outside Sepphoris, Israel. 2003 C.E. The work in the cave is making progress. They are almost ready to lift the jar and place it into its specialized crate. The scaffolding erected to wheel the crate into the trailer is complete. An unusual device is being brought in that Ben Jacob is not familiar with. It looks like some sort of vacuum cleaner connected to a transparent sealed box containing a light colored fluffy material.

**BEN JACOB**

What may I ask is that?

**DR. LEONARD**

Ben, this is a fairly new technique

that I’m going to use to secure

the scroll within the jar. It’s

been used successfully in past

excavations. The scroll itself

cannot be lifted out of the jar.

Even though it is in remarkable

condition from what I can see due

to its having a sealed lid and

being mortared into the shelf,

we cannot be sure if it will

fragment if moved. We do not

know how many fragments are in

the inner part of the scroll.

Every piece must be preserved

if we want to correctly arrange

and make sense out of many possible

pieces. This sterilized synthetic

material is similar to spray on

insulation. This pump will gently

fill each nook and cranny within

the jar. It will stabilize the

scroll when we move it. It is

painstaking work but easy to

remove in the laboratory. I

think it is the best course of

action to take in this case.

**BEN**

Makes sense to me.

Dr. Leonard positions himself with the spray handle aimed directly over the top of the jar.

**DR. LEONARD**

Everyone please stay perfectly

still until I am finished. It

will only take a few moments.

He waits for the air within the cave to calm.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

Power.

A soft motorized hum is heard from the engine of the device. He depresses a lever which softly sprays the featherlike material into the contents of the jar. It only took a few moments to fill. He passes the sprayer to the first assistant who moves slowly away.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

Lid please.

The second assistant gently passes the lid to Dr. Leonard. He carefully places it on top.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

Wrap.

A third assistant hands Dr. Leonard the beginning of a roll of cloth tape and releases it as necessary. He slowly and meticulously secures the lid to the top of the jar in mummy like fashion.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

Cut please.

The third assistant cuts the cloth.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

Clips.

The cloth tape is fastened with tiny clips similar to what are used with an Ace bandage.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

Ladies and gentlemen, there

we have it.

He turns to face the group.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

We are ready for the crate.

Have it pulled to a meter of

where I am.

Two assistants at each end of the opening of the cave pull on ropes leading the wheeled crate up the ramp to where Dr. Leonard is standing.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

Mr. Zhang, we are ready for you.

Chin Zha Zhang has been selected to lift and place the jar into the crate for his remarkably steady hands and feet. He trades places with Dr. Leonard.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

Take your time.

Mr. Zhang slowly grasps the sides of the jar. He carefully lifts, slowly walks and gently nestles it into place in the crate like a newborn baby.

The group applauds its appreciation.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

Thank you, Mr. Zhang. Thank you

everyone. Work well done.

Dr. Leonard wipes his brow.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

Ben, is that enough excitement

for you for one day?

Ben is sitting at the table overwhelmed.

**BEN**

Is there a beer in the trailer?

The group laughs.

**DR. LEONARD**

If this thing is as old as I

think it is, you might want to

consider champagne.

The crate is then carefully pulled down the ramp and into the side of the trailer.

EXT. LARGE COURTYARD. DAY.

Qumran, Palestine. 16 C.E. The Master has brought the scribal students on a pilgrimage to Qumran to observe the superior scroll making skills of the Essenes. A pen of live sheep occupies one corner of the courtyard. Sheep can be heard being slaughtered outside of the courtyard wall. In another, sheep skins are being stretched and salted to make parchment. Many potters are spinning wheels shaping clay in the third corner. The fourth corner is the portal to a massive library with large wooden tables and shelves housing multitudes of ornate scrolls of many sizes. There are other shelves containing various sized jars of pottery. Many Essene scribes are intently working at the tables writing passages of Torah and Talmud on fresh parchment. One corner of the library is reserved for ink making. The Essenes work in quiet. An Essene student of seventeen years has been charged with guiding the master and students from Sepphoris through the compound.

**ESSENE GUIDE**

The lambs brought in from pasture

are kept here. They are slaughtered,

skinned and butchered just outside

of the courtyard. As you see over

here, the skins are being stretched

and dried for parchment making.

He begins to move them along to the entrance of the library. They pass the area where the potters and spinning wet clay. Several Essenes are pumping by foot the wheel mechanisms and crafting beautifully shaped tall round vessels. Sylvian is engrossed in observing the process.

**SYLVIAN**

What is the pottery used for?

**ESSENE GUIDE**

The pottery is made mostly for

keeping water, wine and olive

oil. We keep some but most

are sold to traveling merchants.

The guide leads them into the great library.

**ESSENE GUIDE** **(CONT’D)**

Here is where the writing is done

and the Scriptures are stored.

This is the largest collection

of Hebrew Scripture outside of

Jerusalem. Our ink is made here.

It is said that the ink of the

Essenes is the most brilliant.

We think it is because we use

some of the lamb’s blood in the

mixture. This is where you

will be spending the rest of

the afternoon. Your master wants

each of you to sit with a scribe

to observe their writing technique.

After you have done so, you will

copy the same passage and he will

compare your work to that of the

scribe. There are tables for you

to sit and work in the back.

The guide excuses himself.

**MASTER**

I want you all to pay close

attention to the work of these

scribes. They are the finest

in the land and their manuscripts

are some of the most valuable

you will ever see. I expect

all of your work to come as

close to this level of workmanship

as possible before graduation.

He seats each student on a stool at a different table to observe the Essene master scribes. Sylvian takes his place next to his scribe. The scribe looks at him, smiles and continues his manuscript. Sylvian smiles in return and looks on.

The students go to the back tables to complete their assignment. Sylvian’s work is improving greatly. His final work is among the best in the class when compared to the master scribes. He and two other students are complimented and excused for the rest of the day. The other students are sent to the tables to continue working.

Sylvian goes out into the courtyard and returns to the area where the potters are working and quietly observes. One of the potters notices him looking.

**POTTER**

Come. Sit.

Sylvian sits at the potter’s wheel. The potter places a lump of clay on the center of the wheel.

**POTTER** **(CONT’D)**

Turn the wheel with your feet.

Sylvian begins pumping the wheel until it reaches a steady spinning rhythm.

**POTTER** **(CONT’D)**

Put your hands around the clay.

Sylvian shapes his hands around the clay as the potter slowly pours a small amount of water over them from a jar. He carefully molds it into a cylindrical shape.

**POTTER** **(CONT’D)**

Hold out your right hand.

Sylvian holds out his right hand as the potter pours water on it.

**POTTER** **(CONT’D)**

Press your fingers into the

middle of the top.

Sylvian presses his middle fingers into the top of the rounded clay with his left hand maintaining its shape and is thrilled to see how it opens to form a bowl.

**SYLVIAN**

This is easy.

**POTTER**

You are very good for a

beginner.

Sylvian becomes over confident in his abilities and begins turning the wheel too fast. The clay object collapses in his hands. He stops spinning.

**SYLVIAN**

Maybe not so easy.

The potter chuckles to himself.

**POTTER**

I have something for you.

Wash your hands.

The potter leaves to go into the library. He returns carrying an elongated lidded jar and hands it to Sylvian.

**POTTER** **(CONT’D)**

This is for you. I made it.

**SYLVIAN**

Thank you. I promise I will

use it for something special.

INT. DR. LEONARD’S TRAILER. DAY.

Sepphoris, Israel. 2003 C.E. The archeological expedition has returned to Sepphoris to examine the scroll. In the trailer are Dr. Leonard, Rami Baruch from Israel, Trevor Parkingham of the U.K., Chin Zha Zhang of China and Ben Jacob. A small rectangular side table holding the jar has been sterilized and prepared with instruments to receive the scroll. The temperature and humidity of the trailer has been matched to that of the cave. Each of the experts is wearing white gloves. Ben Jacob is standing on a step ladder behind them ready to videotape the proceedings.

**DR. LEONARD**

Is everyone ready?

They nod in agreement.

**RAMI**

Ready.

Dr. Leonard unclips and unwraps the cloth tape from around the top of the jar. He lifts the lid off and places it on the table.

**TREVOR PARKINGHAM**

I’m surprised the scroll is not

wrapped in linen like the Qumran

scrolls.

**RAMI BARUCH**

I don’t think this is the work

of the Essenes.

**CHIN ZHA ZHANG**

It wouldn’t be left so far away.

**DR. LEONARD**

Chin, I want you to lift it out

and lay it right here. Everyone

else notice any fragments that

may fall out. (pause) Here goes.

Chin Zha Zhang slowly and gently lifts the scroll out of the jar and lays it on the table. Only a few small fragments drop from the bottom of the scroll. It is tied at the center with a single leather bind.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

Thank you, Chin. Are you getting

this, Jacob?

**BEN**

Getting it all.

Dr. Leonard takes a pair of shears and carefully clips the bind. He pulls the binding out from underneath and sets it and the tool aside.

**DR. LEONARD**

I will hold the beginning in

place. You do the unrolling.

We don’t know how long it is

so just go as far as the end

of the table. If it starts

to fragment, then stop.

Chin Zha Zhang meticulously begins to unroll the scroll. They are all amazed to see the first evidence of writing. To everyone’s surprise, the scroll is in remarkable condition with very few fragmentations. Chin continues unrolling the scroll to the end of the table.

**RAMI**

It is beautiful.

**TREVOR**

Perhaps not as old as we might

have hoped.

**DR. LEONARD**

I wouldn’t be so sure. This is

written in Aramaic.

**TREVOR**

There are people who speak Aramaic

to this day.

**RAMI**

They don’t write it on scrolls

like this.

**CHIN**

Radio carbon dating will tell.

**BEN**

Is there anything else in the

jar that you can see, Dr. Leonard?

**DR. LEONARD**

Let’s have a look.

Dr. Leonard shines a small penlight into the jar.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

A small pile of fragments. It’s

hard to tell. There could be

something made of metal on the

bottom. I cannot get my hand

in there. We’ll have to wait

and see. (pause) Well, I feel

confident that none of us read

Aramaic.

**RAMI**

I do know somebody who does.

**TREVOR**

Let’s get them on the ringer!

INT. SYLVIAN’S DEN. NIGHT.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 16 C.E. Sylvian continues his private writing.

*I have not seen him in over a month. He*

*is all I think about. I hurt so badly I*

*cannot tell it in words. I do not know*

*what to do. It is hard to pay attention*

*at class. I have no one to talk to. Why*

*is it that I do not feel what I should*

*for girls? Father expects me to marry*

*soon. I do not want to get married.*

*I do not think I can do it. I know the*

*other boys who feel the way I do. They*

*are always being tormented. I feel sorry*

*for them. No one knows about me. I do*

*not look or move or talk like they do.*

*I would hate to be like that. They are*

*good people. They have done nothing*

*wrong. Noam spends most of his time*

*taking care of his sick mother and always collects for the poor. Shimon was sent*

*away. I cannot speak of what happened*

*to that Daniel. If I get sent away, I*

*would want to go to Greece or Rome.*

*I could never tell this to Father. He*

*despises the Romans. I have heard about*

*what they call the theater. They build*

*palaces dedicated to performance. I met*

*a Roman guard who told me about plays*

*written about comedy and tragedy that*

*people pay to see. They have actors who*

*play the different roles. Men play the*

*parts of women. The stage is lit with*

*torches and they have pulleys to create*

*different scenes. He said many of the*

*writers are famous there. People come*

*to them to write their names. If father*

*knew I wanted to go there he would send*

*me away. But surely not to there.*

*I must go now.*

INT. DR. LEONARD’S TRAILER. DAY.

Sepphoris, Israel. 2003 C.E. Rami Baruch has contacted Dr. Uriela Vashdi, a college companion and longtime friend of the family. She has earned a P.H.D. in ancient Middle Eastern languages. Rami enters the trailer with Uriela.

**DR. LEONARD**

(shaking hands)

Dr. Vashdi. Thank you so much

for coming so quickly. Rami

tells me you’re the one to go

to for ancient translations.

The others shake her hand.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

And this is Ben Jacob, the one

who made the discovery.

**BEN JACOB**

It is a pleasure to meet you,

Dr. Vashdi.

**URIELA VASHDI**

Call me Uriela. It is a

pleasure to meet all of you.

I hear you have found something

interesting.

**DR. LEONARD**

Take a look for yourself. It

was found in a cave about three

miles outside of Sepphoris.

He walks her over to the unrolled scroll. Uriela puts on her reading glasses.

**URIELA**

Yes, Rami has told me. (pause)

It is definitely written in

Aramaic. Such form. The

penmanship is magnificent.

(pause) It is written in the

form of scripture. But it is

not scripture. It is more of

a *personal* nature.

She continues reading through the scroll.

**URIELA** **(CONT’D)**

It reads like the journal of

a young girl.

**TREVOR**

The journal of a girl? Impossible.

Girls were not trained in language;

much less anything else.

Uriela gives Trevor a disturbed look.

**URIELA**

I said, it *reads* like the journal

of a girl; like something one

would write in a diary. It

speaks of classrooms and

woodworking; activities a girl

would not have participated in

at the time scrolls like this

were produced. This has not

been dated yet, am I right?

**DR. LEONARD**

You are correct. That is the

next course of action.

**URIELA**

I can tell you what it says.

But it will have no historical

significance until its age can

be deduced.

**BEN**

Please, Dr. Vashdi, tell us

what it says.

Uriela looks to Ben Jacob with his camcorder and smiles at his childlike curiosity.

**URIELA**

Should I start here at the

end or should we begin at

the beginning?

**BEN**

Begin at the beginning.

Ben Jacob looks to Dr. Leonard for approval. Dr. Leonard nods to Uriela. They begin to carefully unfurl the scroll to its beginning.

After the scroll has been opened to the beginning and Dr. Vashdi has read through several sections, she quietly says something to herself with no one’s understanding.

**URIELA**

Yeshua. Jesu. Jesus.

INT. SYLVIAN’S PARENT’S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 16 C.E. The family is seated around the table having supper. Matya brings more food from the kitchen to the table. The room is warmly lit with oil lamps and a glow coming from the hearth in the kitchen. Matya takes her place in the kitchen to eat. Prayers are said and the family begins to eat.

**ASAPH**

Is everyone excited about going

to Liav’s wedding on Friday?

**ESTHON**

Yes, yes. Yardina will make a

lovely bride.

**ASAPH**

And you, Sylvian? Are you

excited to go to your cousin’s

wedding?

**SYLVIAN**

(not very excited)

Yes, Father. I am excited to go.

**ASAPH**

Maybe you will meet a young girl

at the wedding, ay?

**SYLVIAN**

Maybe.

**ASAPH**

You are coming of age to find

a suitor, son. Are there any

girls you are interested in?

**SYLVIAN**

No, father.

**ASAPH**

Why, son? I hear all the other

boys your age talking about the

girls they wish to dance with.

You know, it will not be long

before it is your time to get

married.

Pause.

**SYLVIAN**

I do not know if I *want* to get

married, father.

**ASAPH**

Do not *want* to? Why, son, it

is your duty to your family

and to God. It is what

all men do.

**ESTHON**

He is yet too young to be

thinking of such things. He

will be ready in his own time.

Esthon pats Sylvian’s arm.

**ASAPH**

Esthon, I am concerned about

the boy. He shows no interest

in girls at all. He is not

too young. He is nearly fifteen

years old. All of his cousins

and friends his age are already

making their choices for marriage.

And he has excellent prospects.

**ESTHON**

Asaph, please. Not while he

is before you.

Matya enters to pour water interested in hearing more of the conversation. Esthon gives Asaph a warning glance.

**ESTHON** **(CONT’D)**

Tell us, Sylvian, about your

day in class.

The subject is changed and the family continues their supper.

INT. DR. LEONARD’S TRAILER. DAY.

Sepphoris, Israel. 2003 C.E. Dr. Leonard and the other archaeologists have left the trailer to continue working on the blue villa. Ben Jacob and Dr. Vashdi are left alone to examine the scroll.

**URIELA VASHDI**

So, here we are at the

beginning.

Uriela begins reading to herself.

**URIELA** **(CONT’D)**

Hmm. Interesting.

**BEN JACOB**

What is it?

**URIELA**

This was written by a young

boy. He’s telling about the

first time he was taken to the

public baths. (pause) He’s

nervous about seeing the older

boys naked. He’s noticing the

hair under their armpits and

legs (pause) and penises.

(pause) He wants to look but

is frightened.

Uriela finishes the first entry and is smiling to herself.

**BEN**

What?

**URIELA**

This is adorable. This appears

to me to be the private thoughts

of a sweet young boy growing up.

**BEN**

Can you tell where?

**URIELA**

There is no place of reference

yet mentioned. Relax. This is

going to take some time.

**BEN**

I hope I’m not disturbing you.

Would you prefer to work alone?

**URIELA**

No. As a matter of fact, you

can help transcribe if you’d

like. Take this notebook.

Copy the sentences in English

as I translate.

The two continue to transcribe the beginning of the scroll into English.

INT. SYLVIAN’S DEN. NIGHT.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 17 C.E. Sylvian runs up the ladder to his study crying and immediately mixes ink and blood to write another entry into his scroll.

*I have much to tell tonight. We went to*

*Liav’s wedding today. I wanted to be*

*happy but I could not. After the ceremony, everyone was drinking wine and dancing.*

*I did not want to dance. Father kept*

*bringing me over to the girls so that I*

*would dance with them but I would not.*

*Then he started bringing the girls to me.*

*It made me angry. I lost my temper and*

*shouted for him to leave me alone. Many*

*of the family heard. They were all looking*

*at us. I have never seen father so mad.*

*He grabbed me by the back of the head and*

*pulled me out of the celebration. Mama*

*followed after us. She pulled him away*

*from me. They began to yell at each other.*

*I began crying and ran to our cart. I*

*stayed there for a long time by myself.*

*Then it was time to go. For most of the*

*way home we were silent. Then father told*

*me I was punished and would only leave the*

*house to go to class. I told him that I*

*am supposed to go to market on Friday to*

*work with Yeshua. He said I will not be*

*going to work with him anymore. I begged*

*and he began shouting at me. He called*

*me a very bad name. Mama started crying.*

*I could not believe it. Then I asked him*

*what he meant when he told Great Uncle*

*Shai that I was not of his blood. He*

*turned to me with fury in his eyes and*

*said that I am not his son. He said that*

*he had made a big mistake. I asked him*

*what did he mean and he spoke no more.*

*Mama cried the rest of the way home.*

INT. DR. LEONARD’S TRAILER. DAY.

Sepphoris, Israel. 2003 C.E. Uriela continues reading and translating the scroll. Ben continues to write in the notebook after she speaks her conclusion of the meaning in English.

**URIELA VASHDI**

This is fascinating.

**BEN JACOB**

What is it, Uriela?

**URIELA**

Now don’t get too excited.

We still don’t know how old

this is.

**BEN**

What?

Uriela points to several different places on the scroll.

**URIELA**

This name. Yeshua.

**BEN**

What about it?

**URIELA**

This name translates to Jesu.

You would know it as the name

Jesus. I noticed it earlier

but it has repeated itself too

many times to ignore. It is

also used in relation to the

names Joseph and James. Jesus’s

father’s name was Joseph. One

of his brothers was named James.

**BEN**

You have *got* to be kidding me.

**URIELA**

Don’t get excited. Like I said,

until this is dated correctly

we just don’t know.

**BEN**

You mean to tell me that if

this dates to the beginning

of the first century than

this boy could be talking

about Jesus? *The* Jesus?

Christ?

**URIELA**

If this dates to the beginning

of the first century, then it

is very well possible that

this young boy was a friend

of *the* Jesus, Christ.

**BEN**

Holy mother of…

**URIELA**

What’s even more fascinating,

if my womanly intuition is what

it used to be, I think this boy

had a, how would you say?, a

*crush* on him.

**BEN**

You mean (pause) he was gay?

**URIELA**

Seems like it to me.

Ben is dumbfounded and shakes his head slowly in wonder.

EXT. CARAVAN CAMP. NIGHT.

Road to Sepphoris, Palestine. 2 C.E. The younger Asaph and Esthon are returning from Cana in their cart with several servants. They have been married now for three years. They have not been able to produce any children. Esthon has been distraught for almost two years. She loves her husband but wants nothing more than to have a child. Asaph too is disappointed about their infertility but maintains strength for Esthon and hope that they might one day conceive.

They are approaching the encampment of a traveling caravan consisting of about twenty people. Strange music can be heard amidst the crying of children. Asaph slows the cart as they reach the encampment.

**ASAPH**

They must be hungry. Let us

share our food with them.

Esthon agrees.

The group hears the cart approaching and several of the adult males move toward the road. It is obvious that they are in need. Asaph stops the cart.

**TRAVELER 1**

Please. We have been traveling

far. We are hungry. Do you

have any food to spare?

**ASAPH**

We do not have much, but we

will give you what we can spare.

Many in the group hurriedly approach the cart including children. Asaph goes to the back of the cart and begins unloading some of the parcels. The servants assist in dispersing food to the children.

**TRAVELER 2**

Thank you. You are very kind.

We have not eaten in two days.

The younger children are weakening.

Esthon notices a mother with several despondent children clinging to her. She climbs off the cart and gets goat’s milk from the cart to bring to them.

**ASAPH**

Where do you come from?

**TRAVELER 1**

Syria. We are going to Jerusalem

to sell our wares. We have run

out of supplies.

**ASAPH**

You have many days yet to travel.

Esthon brings the milk to the mother and children. The mother clasps Esthon’s arm.

**MOTHER**

Thank you mam.

The mother feeds the children then herself. She walks away from the group pulling Esthon with her.

**MOTHER** **(CONT’D)**

Please, mam. I cannot care

for all of the children. You

seem to have much. Please.

Take my son. I will give him

to you. You can give him a

good life.

She begins to cry. Esthon is silent.

**MOTHER** **(CONT’D)**

Please, mam. Take my son.

I beg you. He is a good child.

I can see him hunger no longer.

Esthon’s heart is breaking. She desperately wants to take the child. She runs to Asaph pulling him aside.

**ESTHON**

Asaph. You must listen to me.

The mother wants us to take her

child. Her son. He is only

two years old. Let us take him

and give him a better life.

**ASAPH**

Esthon. We will one day soon

have our own child.

**ESTHON**

Asaph, listen to me. I cannot

bear you children. Every day

that I cannot do so I carry more

pain in my heart. Please. Let

us take this child and raise him

as our own. We will be helping

her. And the child. And ourselves.

We will have grandchildren.

Asaph is silent.

**ESTHON** **(CONT’D)**

Asaph, please!

The mother comes to Asaph with the child.

**MOTHER**

Please, sir. Take my son.

He is yours. I cannot care

for him. You can give him

what he needs. His name is

Sylvian. I leave him with you.

The mother sets the child down by Asaph and Esthon, looks fiercely at the child then runs away crying. The child tries to follow her but Esthon grabs him by the forearm. She leads the child away to the cart.

INT. LABORATORY. DAY.

Jerusalem, Israel. 2003 C.E. Chemistry Department of Hebrew University. Previously provided samples of the scroll and of the jar are being radio carbon dated. Dr. Leonard and Ben Jacob arrive for their appointment with the heads of the Chemistry and Physics Departments to review the results. Dr. Leonard and Ben enter the laboratory shaking hands with their hosts.

**PROFESSOR DANIEL SELBERSTEIN**

Good day, Dr. Leonard. Mr. Jacob.

You remember Judith Cherwitz?

**DR. LEONARD**

Yes, of course. It is a pleasure

seeing you both again. Did you

experience any problems with the

carbon dating?

**DR. CHERWITZ**

No, not at all. Due in part

to the quantity of samples you

provided us and the good quality

of their condition, we encountered

no problems.

**BEN JACOB**

Have you determined the age of

the samples?

**PROFESSOR SELBERSTEIN**

Yes. I believe we have. Now,

keep in mind, these results will

have to be retested by another

panel, but we’ve completed the

accelerator testing. The results

of the gas counting and liquid

scintillation have just arrived.

Professor Selberstein retrieves a file and begins spreading documents across a table.

**PROFESSOR SELBERSTEIN** **(CONT’D)**

Dr. Cherwitz, would you like to

explain the results to our guests?

**DR. CHERWITZ**

Certainly.

The group gathers around the table.

**DR. CHERWITZ** **(CONT’D)**

By measuring the reduced ratio

of carbon14 atoms to regular

carbon atoms in an artifact

that was once alive, in this

case parchment made from the

skins of sheep, we could

determine how long the carbon14

has been decaying, or how long

it was since the living substance

died. The results of the dating

place this object to be about

1,887 years old, give or take

a few years as margin for error.

Ben mentally calculates.

**BEN**

That’s 16 A.D. Uriela was right.

Ben turns away from the table and looks out of a window overwhelmed considering the ramifications.

**DR. LEONARD**

And these results in your expert

opinions are conclusive?

**PROFESSOR SELBERSTEIN**

In mine, yes. Remember, the

tests still must be repeated.

**DR. LEONARD**

And you, Dr. Cherwitz?

**DR. CHERWITZ**

I am certain the results of

this dating are conclusive.

They will be verified in no

more than three days.

Dr. Cherwitz collects the papers, places them in their file and hands them to Dr. Leonard.

**DR. LEONARD**

Thank you both for your work

and for adjusting your schedules

to fit us in so promptly. We

can only be here for a few

more weeks. Your efforts

and accommodation are very

much appreciated.

Dr. Leonard looks for Ben.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

Ben?

**BEN**

Yes. Yes, thank you, thank you

very much. Much appreciated.

The group shakes hands.

**PROFESSOR SELBERSTEIN**

I will email the final results.

**DR. LEONARD**

Yes, right. Thank you both

once again. Good day.

**BEN**

Thank you. Goodbye.

Dr. Leonard and Ben Jacob take the results of the carbon dating and leave the laboratory.

INT. SYLVIAN’S DEN. NIGHT.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 17 C.E. Sylvian slowly climbs the ladder to the upper room. He is visibly dejected. He sits in the chair at the small table and holds his head in his hands. He takes his scroll from its secret place, gets the inkwell, sharpens his pen and gathers his thoughts before beginning to write.

*Never have I felt so much that I do not*

*belong. I do not belong here. I do not*

*belong in class. I do not belong with*

*Yeshua. I do not belong to my parents.*

*Father has apologized to me for his cruel remarks. He said that he was angry and*

*that he did not mean what he said and*

*that he loves me. I do forgive him. I*

*know what it is to be angry. We do say*

*things we do not mean when we are angry.*

*Mama told me all about how I was left*

*with them when I was a small child. She*

*told me she will always love me as if*

*she had given birth to me herself. I*

*know she is sincere. I am grateful to*

*have been given this life. I went to*

*see Yeshua today. Not to work. Just*

*to talk. I asked him to come with me*

*to the olive grove. He did. I told him*

*about everything that happened on the day*

*of the wedding. I told him about how I*

*was brought here as a child. He listened*

*very closely. There was such compassion*

*in his face. I was crying after I finished telling him. He put his arm around my*

*shoulder as we sat against a tree. He*

*looked at me and smiled and said that*

*explains the eyes. He told me that it*

*is important that I forgive my father.*

*He told me to remember how much they have*

*given of themselves to have taken me in.*

*He said that it is because of their love*

*that I will one day be able to someday*

*love a wife and my own children. I stopped crying. I wanted only to tell him the*

*truth. I told him that I do not think I*

*will ever have a wife and children. He*

*asked me why. I gained my courage and*

*told him that I want to be with a man.*

*He was not surprised. He told me that I*

*am still young and what I was feeling was*

*only natural. Then I told him it was he*

*that I want to be with. I told him that*

*I love him. He told me that he loves me*

*too like his own brother and that would*

*never change. He smiled his beautiful*

*smile at me and lifted me up off the ground.*

*He said he should get back to work. He*

*wanted me to come with him but I wanted*

*to come home. As I turned to leave he*

*called me back to him. He took a gold*

*ring from his finger and placed it in my*

*hand. He said it was given to him when*

*he was born. I was at once filled with*

*joy and filled with sorrow. I know now*

*that it can never be.*

INT. OCTAGONAL MEETING ROOM. DAY.

Jerusalem, Israel. 2003 C.E. Rockefeller Museum ~ The Palestine Archaeological Museum. Dr. Leonard has gained audience with the council of international trustees of the Israel Antiquities Authority. It is attended by the High Commissioner, two on behalf of the High Commissioner, one from the British Academy, one from the British Museum, one from the French National Academy, one from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, two from the Antiquities Departments of the Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese, Iraqi and Jordanian governments; one from the Hebrew University, one from the Royal Swedish Academy, one from the American Institute of Archaeology, and one from the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem. Ben Jacob is overwhelmed by the beautiful architecture of the building and by being part of a reception of such a prestigious group of international archaeological experts. They are seated at a large round table at the center of the room underneath the domed ceiling. The High Commissioner enters the octagonal room.

**HIGH COMMISSIONER**

Welcome everyone. And a very

special welcome to Dr. Peter

Leonard of the University of

South Florida in the United

States and to his constituency

who uncovered this artifact.

Everyone nods in welcome.

**HISH COMMISSIONER** **(CONT’D)**

We have all been briefed on the

particulars of this excavation.

I would like to start by giving

the floor to Dr. Leonard to share

his extrapolations regarding the

discovery.

Dr. Leonard stands to address the group.

**DR. LEONARD**

Good day to all. Let me first

thank you for receiving us here

today. It is a great honor to

be seated amongst such

distinguished archaeological

luminaries. Secondly, I would

like to introduce Mr. Ben Jacob,

who made the discovery of the

scroll outside of Sepphoris.

Ben stands, nods to the group and is again seated.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

We would not be here without

his, uh, how should I say it,

*boredom* of what we were doing

at the villa in Sepphoris.

The group quietly laughs.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

In all sincerity, Mr. Jacob is

not an archaeologist. He is

an American high school teacher.

He presented an irresistible

proposition to me to be included

in this summer’s excavation,

and against my better judgment,

I accepted.

They laugh again.

**DR. LEONARD** **(CONT’D)**

After the results of the

radio carbon dating proved the

age of the scroll to be from

about 15 C.E., and the fact

that the jar itself comes from

the same time period, and after

reading and rereading the

esteemed Dr. Vashdi’s translation

of the scroll, and after

researching every possible

meaning to almost every word

with Dr. Vashdi, I have come

to the conclusion that this

is the uncommonly rare personal

diary of an adolescent Jewish

scribe in training who was

just as bored with his work

as Mr. Jacob here, and used

his practice time to record

his own personal sentiments.

(pause) That in itself is not

the most remarkable aspect of

what we’ve found. What is *most*

remarkable and will surely be

of historical significance is

the repeated mention of the

name Yeshua. (pause) The name

Yeshua, in itself a first

occurrence in artifacts of this

age, in relation with the names

of the relative’s names James

and Joseph, plus the family’s

occupation in carpentry, adding

to it the proximity of the

locations involved and the

coincidence of the subject’s

own life ages, is in direct

reference to the person whom

all of history knows and whom

about one third of the world’s

population knows as their

Savior, Jesus Christ.

There is a long silence in the room.

**DR. LEONARD (CONT’D)**

This is the first artifact of

any kind ever found to even

mention the life of Jesus in

his teenage years. This finding

will be of great historical

significance to religious

scholars and to believers all

over the world. Thank you.

**HIGH COMMISSIONER**

Are there any dissenting opinions?

**HEBREW UNIVERSITY**

How can we be absolutely sure

that the Yeshua referred to in

the scroll is indeed *the* Jesus

from history?

**GREAT BRITAIN 1**

Naturally, there is always a

degree of uncertainty, but to me,

the evidence is irrefutable.

I will not repeat Dr. Leonard’s

compelling argument. I concur

with him completely.

**EGYPT**

Is it possible that there may

be bias in this group to promote

the cause of Christianity?

**SWEDEN**

Apart from the mention of Hebrew

Scriptures, which is what the boy

was studying, there is no dogma

presented in the text to further

the cause of any religion besides

Judaism. This obviously occurred

before there was any such thing as Christianity.

**SYRIA**

What about the sexual orientation

of the boy. Are we to admittedly

tell the world of his (pause)

nature?

**AMERICA 1**

That matter could be nothing

more than an adolescent phase.

We cannot be certain of it.

**FRANCE 1**

Maybe he should he have drawn

pictures?

**GREAT BRITAIN 2**

It is just not prudent to make

that assumption.

**FRANCE 2**

It is obvious to me and should

be to anyone who reads it the

boy was homosexual.

**AMERICA 2**

This behavior could be symptomatic

of molestation. I don’t think we

can draw a definitive conclusion.

Silence.

**HIGH COMMISSIONER**

Well. If there are no more

arguments to be presented, then

I will schedule the press

conference.

No one responds.

**BEN JACOB**

May I speak?

**HIGH COMMISSIONER**

Certainly.

**BEN**

I find it telling that no one

here has mentioned the name of

the author, Sylvian. I am not

as well versed in history and

archaeology as all of you are.

I am an amateur. And as much

as I respect and appreciate

what each of you have to say,

the only reliable thing I know

is my own intuition. It was

no accident that I found refuge

in that cave. That caravan

passed over me right when I

was there. Those rocks fell

so that I could find this scroll.

I can’t explain it, but I feel

a connection to this boy. I

know its truth. (pause) This

scroll contains the first

person account of a young man

who not only knew *the* Jesus,

but was friends with him.

He *was* homosexual. He was in

*love* with him. He wrote these

writings in secret and hid them

from his parents. He treasured

it so much that he ran into

the desert, carved a shelf into

a cave and mortared it shut

so no one but he could find it.

He expected to come back to

get it some day. He didn’t

find his way back. Lord knows

what happened to him. But I

found it. And it is my

responsibility to tell what I

know to be true about his story.

The room remains silent.

**DR. LEONARD**

(aside)

Ben, I admire your integrity.

(pause) But you’d better be

prepared for the repercussions.

EXT. MARKET. DAY.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 17 C.E. A maturing Sylvian has gone to the marketplace by himself. He is going from stall to stall admiring the different wares from other regions. Along a narrow road he walks toward the appealing sounds of music and merriment. Upon approaching the sounds, he notices a band of musicians playing various types drums, cymbals and wooden pipes. Several Eastern men are seated nearby on colorfully designed woolen carpets smoking hookah. Several other men imbibing libations are joined in dance around the band laughing and clapping. A merchant is selling small jars of beer from an ox-drawn cart carrying many wooden casks. Sylvian approaches the merchant.

**SYLVIAN**

How much for a beer, sir?

The merchant looks him up and down.

**MERCHANT**

How much have you got?

Sylvian retrieves a silver piece from his purse and holds it up to the man. He hands him a jar.

**MERCHANT** **(CONT’D)**

Here you are, young fellow.

Come back for more.

Sylvian sits on a ledge at the side of the road enjoying the beer and observing the music and dancing. Before long, he begins feeling the effects of the beverage. Finishing the first, he returns to the merchant to buy another. His head is bobbing and his body is moving to the rhythm of the drums. One of the dancing men notices him and grabs his arm and swings him into the group of dancers. Sylvian tries his best not to spill the beer with not much success. He is laughing and trying to learn the steps of the dance. After having his fill, he waves goodbye to the dancers and continues up the road away from the market.

Along the side of the road, Sylvian notices Marcus, the young Roman sentry he had met once before standing guard. Sylvian realizes how handsome he is and is instantly attracted to him. Marcus remembers him as he approaches.

**MARCUS**

Hello my friend. How does the

day find you?

**SYLVIAN**

I am well, thank you. And you?

**MARCUS**

I will be better when my shift

is over, which will be in half

an hour.

**SYLVIAN**

What will you do after that?

**MARCUS**

Go to my quarters. (pause)

Drinking beer, are we? I have

a good mind to tell your parents

what you’re up to.

**SYLVIAN**

Tell them. You won’t find them.

**MARCUS**

You’re here alone?

**SYLVIAN**

Yes, I am.

**MARCUS**

Are you still interested in

theater?

**SYLVIAN**

Yes. I have thought about

what you have told me very much.

It sounds fascinating.

**MARCUS**

Do you understand Greek?

**SYLVIAN**

Not fully, but I’m doing much

better.

**MARCUS**

Then I have something to show

you. It is very rare. Wait

for me to be relieved of my duty.

**SYLVIAN**

Alright. I will. What is it?

**MARCUS**

Patience, young man.

**SYLVIAN**

I’ll be right over here.

Marcus nods in agreement. Sylvian sits underneath the shade of a tree not far from the road watching him stand guard.

The sentry to relieve Marcus of his duty arrives. They talk with each other for a short while. When they are finished, Marcus motions to Sylvian to follow him. Sylvian trails him to a complex of connected villas up a small hill nearby. Sylvian is impressed by the modern Roman architecture. Marcus opens an ornate heavy wooden door and leads him into an opulent alcove leading to a hallway with many doors. They continue down the hallway until Marcus opens one of the doors leading to the quarters he shares with a roommate who is gone. There is a low square table in the center of the room with two sofa type beds in L shape around the two far sides. Two walls are furnished with wooden compartments and shelves on each side housing uniforms and other personal items belonging to each guard. There are two colored glass windows filling the room with warm ethereal light. Marcus closes the door, removes his helmet placing it on a shelf.

**MARCUS**

Recline.

Sylvian takes a seat on Marcus’ bed. Marcus looks at him curiously.

**MARCUS** **(CONT’D)**

This is how you recline?

Sylvian looks at him puzzled.

**MARCUS** **(CONT’D)**

Take off your sandals. We

lay on our left side.

Sylvian obeys and awkwardly tries to recline in the proper fashion. Marcus goes to his shelves and retrieves a leather satchel. He sits on the bed next to Sylvian and places the satchel on the table.

**MARCUS** **(CONT’D)**

This, my friend, is a manuscript

of Sophocles’ tragic play,

Antigone, in his own hand.

**SYLVIAN**

Sophracles?

**MARCUS**

Soph-A-Cles. He was a remarkable

and very famous Greek playwright.

His plays are still performed to

this day. Do you have any idea

of how rare this is?

**SYLVIAN**

No. How did you get it?

**MARCUS**

Let’s say it took some convincing

of a wealthy Patrician and a good

bit of (pause) charm.

**SYLVIAN**

What is the play about?

Marcus stands and animatedly gives Sylvian a synopsis of Antigone.

**MARCUS**

Well. After the bloody siege

of Thebes by Polynices and his

allies, the city stands unconquered. Polynices and his brother Eteocles,

however, are both dead, killed

by each other, according to the

curse of Oedipus, their father.

Outside the city gates, Antigone

tells Ismene that Creon has

ordered that Eteocles, who died

defending the city, is to be

buried with full honors, while

the body of Polynices, the invader,

is left to rot. Furthermore,

Creon has declared that anyone

attempting to bury Polynices

shall be publicly stoned to death.

Outraged, Antigone reveals to

Ismene a plan to bury Polynices

in secret, despite Creon’s order.

When Ismene timidly refuses to

defy the king, Antigone angrily

rejects her and goes off alone

to bury her brother. Creon

discovers that someone has

attempted to offer a ritual

burial to Polynices and demands

that the guilty one be found

and brought before him. When

he discovers that Antigone,

his niece, has defied his order,

Creon is furious. Antigone

makes an impassioned argument,

declaring Creon’s order to be

against the laws of the gods

themselves. Enraged by Antigone’s

refusal to submit to his authority,

Creon declares that she and her

sister will be put to death.

Haemon, Creon’s son who was to

marry Antigone, advises his

father to reconsider his decision.

The father and son argue, Haemon

accusing Creon of arrogance,

and Creon accusing Haemon of

unmanly weakness in siding with

a woman. Haemon leaves in anger,

swearing never to return. Without

admitting that Haemon may be right,

Creon amends his pronouncement on

the sisters: Ismene shall live,

and Antigone will be sealed in a

tomb to die of starvation, rather

than stoned to death by the city.

The blind prophet Tiresias warns

Creon that the gods disapprove

of his leaving Polynices unburied

and will punish the king’s impiety

with the death of his own son.

After rejecting Tiresias angrily,

Creon reconsiders and decides to

bury Polynices and free Antigone.

But Creon’s change of heart comes

too late. Antigone has hanged

herself and Haemon, in desperate

agony, kills himself as well.

On hearing the news of her son’s

death, Eurydice, the queen, also

kills herself, cursing Creon.

Alone, in despair, Creon accepts responsibility for all the tragedy

and prays for a quick death.

**SYLVIAN**

That is so terrible.

**MARCUS**

It’s supposed to be! It’s a

tragedy.

**SYLVIAN**

What is to be learned from this

horrible story?

**MARCUS**

Well, the way I see it, it is

a study in civil disobedience.

There are times when following

the laws of the state is not

always the right thing to do.

Sometimes we have to make

important decisions based on

our own consciences; what we

feel is right in our hearts,

whether it is against law or not.

**SYLVIAN**

You have given me much to

think about.

Marcus pauses. He looks at Sylvian seductively.

**MARCUS**

Well, it’s not good to spend

too much time thinking. (pause)

Why don’t we just lay here

and not think at all?

The hair on Sylvian’s arms raises. He says nothing. Marcus sits on the bed near Sylvian and reaches down to loosen his sandals removing them. He stands and slowly unfastens his cloak removing it and hanging it in his wardrobe. He is left wearing only a loincloth. Sylvian is transfixed looking at his statuesque physique.

Marcus sits on the bed next to Sylvian. He begins to rub Sylvian’s leg with his hand. Sylvian is startled but does not move. He is nervous but excited. He lies behind Sylvian, wraps his arms around him tightly and begins to gently kiss the back of his neck. Sylvian clasps his hand around his forearm and reaches his other hand back and places it on Marcus’ thigh, slowly rubbing it across the course hair.

All the laws he has ever been taught disintegrate into the colored light of the late afternoon.

INT. AIRPLANE. DAY.

Midway over the Pacific Ocean. 2003 C.E. Ben Jacob is on his return flight to the United States flipping through his photographs of Sylvian’s scroll. He imagines Sylvian telling Jesus he loves him.

FLASHBACK:

INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Albuquerque, New Mexico. 1980 C.E. Ben is spending the night at his best friend Robert Stratton’s house. They have spent the evening working on a new song.

**ROBERT STRATTON**

Ben. There’s something I really

need to tell you. It’s been

weighing on me for a long time

now. I know you have your

suspicions about me and I want

to tell you the truth. I’m gay.

**BEN JACOB**

Are you sure?

**ROBERT**

Yes, Ben. I’m sure.

**BEN**

Well, that’s, that’s O.K.

**ROBERT**

Ben, (pause) there’s more.

**BEN**

What?

Pause.

**ROBERT**

I have feelings for you Ben.

Long pause.

**BEN**

I’d better go.

Ben gathers up his guitar and backpack and leaves the room. Tears roll from Robert’s eyes as Ben closes the door.

RETURN:

Ben puts the pictures back in their file. He looks out over the ocean with a deep sense of regret.

The plane lands into Albuquerque International Sunport. Emerging from the gangway into the terminal, Ben is happy to see his son Matthew waving to him. They reunite with a hug. Several photographers are taking pictures. They walk away with arms around each other quickly toward baggage claim.

**MATTHEW JACOB**

Welcome home, old man. You’re

famous!

The reporters follow Ben and Matt.

**REPORTER 1**

Mr. Jacob, what can you tell us

about Jesus’ gay friend?

**BEN JACOB**

He was a good kid.

**REPORTER 2**

Does the scroll say if they were

involved in a relationship?

**BEN**

They had a very close

relationship.

**REPORTER 3**

Are you saying Jesus had a

gay relationship?

Ben ignores the question. Matt is looking around utterly confused. Ben pulls him faster toward the exit.

INT. CAR. DAY.

Matthew is driving his father home from the airport.

**BEN**

So, tell me about your summer.

**MATT**

Forget about my summer. Tell

me about your trip. Dude, you

were on the news. You were

in the paper. The New York

Times! Everybody’s talking

about it. Four different girls

called me asking about it.

**BEN**

How are you handling all of

this?

**MATT**

I haven’t gotten this much

attention ever.

**BEN**

No. I mean what are people

asking you and what are you

saying to them?

**MATT**

Dad, you won’t believe it.

You’d think more people would

be asking me about Jesus, our

Lord and Savior, but most of

them keep asking me if the kid

who wrote it was a queer.

**BEN**

Matthew, I don’t want to *ever*

hear you using words like that

again.

**MATT**

Hey. Calm down, man. I haven’t

been saying it. You asked me

what people are saying and I

told you. (pause) Aren’t I a

little too old for you to be

scolding me?

**BEN**

Yes, you are. (pause) Let me

ask you. What do you think

about gay people?

**MATT**

Hey, whatever floats your boat.

Hell, Brandon and Parker are gay.

This aint the fifties, dad.

Pause.

**BEN**

Parker’s gay?

**MATT**

Big time.

EXT. COURTYARD OF SYLVIAN’S HOUSE. LATE AFTERNOON.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 17 C.E. Sylvian returns home from class. The sound of his mother crying can be heard from inside.

INT. SYLVIAN’S HOUSE. LATE AFTERNOON.

Sylvian enters the house. Matya is consoling Esthon in the kitchen. Matya sees him come in and tearfully motions with her head for him to go to the upper room.

Sylvian climbs the ladder. Asaph is sitting at his desk. His private scroll is unrolled on the desk. Sylvian walks slowly toward him and stops.

**ASAPH**

(viciously)

Is this what you have written?

Silence.

**SYLVIAN**

(quietly)

Yes, father.

Silence.

**ASAPH**

Blasphemer. (pause) How could

you do this? After all that

I have given you. You defile

your family, the laws of your

faith and your God in my own

home!

Asaph sends the scroll flying across the room. The pens and ink scatter and spatter across the floor.

Sylvian stands trembling with lowered head.

**ASAPH** **(CONT’D)**

Have you nothing to say?

**SYLVIAN**

That is what *you* say I have

done.

Long pause.

**ASAPH**

(gravely)

You will leave this house.

You are no longer my son.

Asaph gets up from the desk and begins to descend the ladder.

**ASAPH** **(CONT’D)**

You will be gone by first light.

Asaph descends the stairs. Esthon can be heard wailing from the kitchen.

**MATYA**

Master!

Asaph slams the door and leaves the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Albuquerque, New Mexico. 2003 C.E. A clean shaven Ben Jacob is at his home watching the news on television.

**ANCHORPERSON**

The startling discovery of an

ancient scroll involving the

teenage life of Jesus written

by a young scribe excavated in

Israel outside the town of

Sepphoris has continued to

create controversy among much

of the religious community.

At the heart of the story is

the question, “Was Jesus

friendly with a homosexual?”

**RELIGIOUS LEADER 1**

This is a disgraceful display

of vulgarity and slander against

our Lord on the part of so

called “religious” revisionists

who want nothing more than to

promote their own deviant agenda.

**RELIGIOUS LEADER 2**

Well, all you really have to

do is look at what happened

to the boy. He was exiled by

his father and excommunicated

from the community. That is

in keeping with the Sriptures.

**HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST**

This is an important discovery

historically and religiously.

It gives us as a society a

firsthand account of what it

was like to be gay in Jesus’

time. And it shows that Jesus

did not condemn him and was

accepting of his gay friend.

The telephone rings.

**BEN**

Hello.

**MATTHEW JACOB**

Dad! Are you watching TV?

You’re on the news again.

**BEN**

Yes, I’m watching it.

**ANCHORPERSON**

Nightly News has obtained this

exclusive comment from the

Albuquerque teacher who made

the discovery, Ben Jacob.

**BEN JACOB ON TELEVISION**

What the writer of the scroll

describes about Jesus’ reaction

to him is one of non-judgment

and compassion; qualities that

are in line with what is at the

heart of Christianity.

**BEN**

Matt, how are you handling all

of this? Are you getting any

flak from people.

**MATT**

Nothing I can’t handle. Anyway,

those people are just religious

fanatics. I just blow them off.

Are they still harassing you?

**BEN**

Nothing I can’t handle.

**MATT**

Oh, gotta go. Brianna’s

calling. Talk to you later.

The telephone rings again.

**BEN**

 Hello.

**VOICE ON THE TELEPHONE**

 I hope you’re proud of yourself,

 you sick fuck. Jesus is a

 holding a spot for you in hell,

 pal.

He hangs up shaking his head. Ben goes into his office to check his email. He clicks on one from an unknown sender. It opens to a manufactured picture of an effeminate looking boy with his tunic in flames. Below the picture in bold letters: SYLVIAN MAKES FRIENDS IN HELL.

INT. SYLVIAN’S DEN. NIGHT.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 17 C.E. Sylvian is alone in the upper room. Esthon and Matya can be heard quietly crying from below. He kneels down to collect his scroll spread open on the floor. He carefully rolls it closed and gathers the writing tools from around the floor. His hands and knees become stained with his ink. He puts the things on his desk. From a shelf, he finds a cord of leather and carefully ties it around the scroll. He begins to pack his clothing and a few belongings and his tools into a woolen sack. He visually scans the shelves noticing his Torah. He reaches to lift it up but then stops. He begins to pray.

**SYLVIAN**

Most Holy God. Protect me on

my journey. Give me the strength

and courage to forgive my father.

Please take care of him and Mama

and Matya. Let Yeshua know that

I will miss him. Let them know

that I will always love them.

And keep me on the path of

righteousness.

He straps the sack across his shoulder and descends the ladder. He enters the kitchen.

**SYLVIAN (CONT’D)**

Mama. I must go now.

Esthon falls to her knees hugging him around the waist crying.

**ESTHON**

Oh, my son. My son.

Matya begins placing food into his sack.

**MATYA**

God love you, child.

Matya takes his head in her hands and kisses both cheeks.

He pulls himself away from his grieving mother, goes to the front door, opens it, turns back to see his mother once more then leaves the house closing the door.

**ESTHON**

Sylvian!

Esthon wails in grief. Sylvian is about to leave the courtyard then stops. He turns and rushes back into the house. He runs up the ladder back to the upper room. He takes the jar that the Essene potter had given him from the shelf and runs back out of the house carrying it with him. He heads off down the road not knowing where to go.

EXT. DESERT. NIGHT.

Sylvian has walked several miles away from Sepphoris. He is tired and needs to find a place to sleep. In the moonlit distance he sees what looks like a large mound. Coming closer, he sees there is a cave where he can rest. He disappears into the cave.

EXT. DESERT. DAWN.

First light is brightening the morning sky and the desert sand. Sylvian is in the cave asleep with his head on his sack. The jar is standing next to him. He awakens slowly realizing where he is and how he came to be here. He takes some food from his sack, begins to eat and looks around the interior of the cave. He takes a pick from among the tools he has brought and starts examining the walls of the cave. He finds a spot toward the back with a natural indentation. He hits the spot with the pick. The limestone breaks apart rather easily. He continues working on the wall throughout the morning until he has shaped an open compartment. Thunder can be heard in the distance. The sky becomes overcast with clouds and soon a gently rain begins to fall. Sylvian takes a chisel from the pack and with the pick begins shaping a flat surface at the bottom of the opening. It takes him well into the afternoon to complete the task. Using pieces of fallen rock, Sylvian sands the flat bottom of the opening to a smooth finish. His fingers are bleeding. His hands are worn and blistered. He stretches his aching body and goes outside to find a puddle of water to drink from and to wash in. Returning to the cave, Sylvian retrieves his scroll from the pack and places it into the jar and puts the lid on top. He takes the jar and stands it on the shelf of the opening. He stands there just staring at it noticing how beautiful it looked there. He was reluctant to cover it up but knew it had to be. Sylvian goes outside back to the puddle of water. Next to it, he forms a pile of crushed limestone mixed with sand and begins to moisten it with water. He carries several handfuls back into the cave placing it on the ground by the opening he has made. He spreads a layer of the mixture along the front of the shelf and starts to stack the broken rocks on top of it. He continues to build a wall sealing the crevices with mortar enclosing the opening housing the jar with his scroll. Halfway through, he remembers something. He goes to his sack and comes back. He reaches into the opening, lifts the lid and drops the ring Yeshua gave him into the jar. Sylvian completes the job of enclosing the opening, makes a mental note of its location, goes out to wash his hands, packs his few belonging and prepares to go the villa in Sepphoris to find Marcus.

INT. HOME OFFICE. DAY.

Albuquerque, New Mexico. 2003 C.E. Ben Jacob is seated at his desk using his computer. He logs on to an online directory and types the name Robert Stratton. He scrolls down to Robert J. Stratton, Santa Fe, New Mexico. He picks up the phone and dials the number.

**VOICE ON THE PHONE**

Hello.

**BEN JACOB**

Is this Robert Joseph Stratton,

from Albuquerque?

**ROBERT STRATTON**

Yes it is. May I ask who’s

calling?

**BEN**

Robert. This is Ben Jacob.

**ROBERT**

Ben Jacob? You mean to tell

me this is *the* Ben Jacob who’s

been traveling the world finding

ancient artifacts that could

one day alter the course of

history?

**BEN**

You haven’t lost your flair

for words.

**ROBERT**

And you haven’t lost yours for

finding things in the desert.

How the hell are you?

**BEN**

Fine, Rob. And you?

**ROBERT**

Things are good. It’s good to

hear your voice.

**BEN**

Look Rob. I was wondering if

we could perhaps get together.

There are some things that I’ve

done in the past that I’m not

very proud of.

**ROBERT**

Ben, you don’t have to do this.

I understand. Really. But I

*would* like to get together.

And you can meet my partner.

(pause) I’ve missed you, Ben.

**BEN**

I’ve missed you too, Rob.

EXT. MARKET. DAY.

Sepphoris, Palestine. 17 C.E. Sylvian is on the road outside of the market leading to the villa where Marcus is quartered. He climbs the hill and enters the courtyard and approaches the great door. It opens. He goes into the alcove and down the hallway to Marcus’ door. He knocks. Marcus answers the door.

**MARCUS**

Sylvian. My young friend.

What brings you here?

**SYLVIAN**

May I come in?

**MARCUS**

Of course. Come in. (pause)

You look awful. Are you

alright?

Marcus sits with him on his bed.

**SYLVIAN**

I have been sent away from

my home.

**MARCUS**

What do you mean? Sent away?

**SYLVIAN**

I have been writing in a scroll

about my life. I wrote it when

I was supposed to be copying

Scripture. It was not meant

for anyone else to read. My

father found it and read it

and now he has sent me away.

**MARCUS**

What was in it that would make

him do such a thing?

**SYLVIAN**

I wrote about the things that

happened to me in my life and

what I was feeling. I wrote

about my love for Yeshua, my

carpenter friend. I wrote about

the time when you brought me

here with you for the first time.

**MARCUS**

What is so terrible about that?

**SYLVIAN**

You do not understand. Being

with a man is forbidden by my

people, forbidden by the Torah

and by the Talmud. It is

forbidden by God.

**MARCUS**

Because of this, you have been

cast out by your family forever?

**SYLVIAN**

Yes. By my father. (pause)

Can I stay here tonight?

**MARCUS**

No. That is impossible.

Soldiers are not allowed to

keep anyone in their quarters.

The rooms are checked every

night.

Marcus stands thinking.

**MARCUS (CONT’D)**

Are you hungry?

**SYLVIAN**

No. I have some food.

**MARCUS**

What will you do?

**SYLVIAN**

I do not know. Maybe I will

go to Jerusalem.

**MARCUS**

Where will you live?

**SYLVIAN**

I will find somewhere to live.

**MARCUS**

There must be something else

better for you to do. (pause)

Did you not tell me that you

understand Greek?

**SYLVIAN**

I can get by.

**MARCUS**

Then it is settled. I am

taking you with me to Caesarea.

You are a scribe. Your talent

is needed there. You will work

copying scripts in the theater.

**SYLVIAN**

 Where is this place, Caeserea?

**MARCUS**

 It is near the sea about three

 days march from here.

**SYLVIAN**

When will you be leaving?

**MARCUS**

I am relieved of my duty here

in a fortnight. You will

camp outside of town until

then. I will bring you food,

water and wine.

**SYLVIAN**

Marcus, I am frightened.

Marcus sits on the bed next to him taking him by the shoulders.

**MARCUS**

Listen to me. You will need

to find your courage, Sylvian.

There is no place in this world

for the faint of heart. (pause)

Marcus gets some clean undergarments from his bureau.

**MARCUS (CONT’D)**

Now go down the hall to the

baths and clean yourself.

Hurry on.

Sylvian takes the clothing from his friend looking into his eyes with gratitude and sincerity.

**SYLVIAN**

 I will find my courage.

Sylvian takes the garments from Marcus and leaves the room.

INT. 11TH GRADE CLASSROOM.

Albuquerque, New Mexico. 2003 C.E. The new session of school has arrived. Ben Jacob returns to his classroom prepared to teach world history to a new set of students.

The noisy room becomes quiet as he enters the room.

**BEN JACOB**

 Good morning, class. My name

 is Mr. Jacob. In this room

 each day we will be talking

 about the history of the

 civilized world. We will be

 learning about events that are

 so significant to modern

 existence that they are still

 remembered and written about

 today. (pause) Let’s get started.

Ben turns on the projector and aims his laser pointer to a map of the world on a screen. A gold ring on his finger catches the light.

## BEN JACOB

This area of the world was called Mesopotamia. It was the fertile

crescent; the cradle of civilization.

It was at *this* point in history

where you could say people began

to learn how to cooperate with

each other enough to run small

villages in connection with other

villages. The first *writing* was

invented…

FADE.

END.