

Whispers of Raziel

Story Goal: To transport the *Sefer ha-Razim*, The Book of Raziel safely to the Temple vault while it is under siege.

Main Villain: Satan

Villain's Allies: Roman soldiers, and the Rabbi in whose heart has been planted a poisonous seed of doubt.

Genre: Drama, Epic

Time Period: 69 A.D.

Setting: Jerusalem

Mood: Paranoid

Backstory:

Jerusalem is in an uproar, buildings burn and the temple is being attacked by Roman soldiers who, learning of a loss of pay from Rome upon the new Emperor's ascension decide to compensate themselves with treasures from the Temple of the Hebrews.

Amidst the uproar, every faction of Jewish faith and followers of competing religions take the chance to settle their debts with enemies in the streets of the Holy City.

But beneath the city, in one of the many crypts where heretics, zealots and sub-sects of faith meet in secret, a group of Rabbinic mystics hold a regular meeting to practice the Jewish art of Merkava – the meditation on the Wheel of Ezekial.

Four old men open their eyes from the state of contemplation, as the ceiling of the crypt shakes. Each has had a vision of the angel Raziel. Into each of your ears he has whispered a secret of things that are to come, revelations, and the hint of what you must each do if you are to fulfill your *tikkun*, your destiny.

Character Revelations:

These initial revelations should be given automatically to each player.

Noah: *'You are a true son, and honest. You must find the evil in your midst and drown it as the world once was drowned so that the righteous might survive.'*

Yahonatan: *'Your daughter sleeps in peace no more. Rise, and bring her to path of righteousness.'*

Jonah: *'The head of the dragon is about to consume your feet, but you can save everything before you fall. Be bold, and Yahweh will lift you up on wings.'*

Namiah: **No whispers from Raziel came to Namiah** – for in the meditation, as he looked through the gate, and rose on the chariot to the light he looked back, and saw the dragons face. Now all he sees is night.

Though while each of you has been told something different about your destiny, you were all were told this one thing:

All: *'For I have left you my works, and you must taken them to the Temple, and lay them in the Holy of Holies. 'Else shall Jerusalem fall this night.'*

Character Info: (For the Storyteller)

Noah

New to the age where Rabbinic mysteries are shared (45 years), Noah is very much curious of the new teachings of the many mystics and desert prophets who have been spreading their word around the Holy Land. Yeshua Di Nazaret being among the most prominent, and you have heard many of his words and even read some of his followers writings.

Yahonatan

The oldest of the Rabbis in your Merkavic sect, at 67 years of age you prefer to do little in the world, and spend your days chatting with your daughter about her love of God, and her hopes that Yahin will be a good husband to her when he is finally brave enough to wed her.

Jonah

You turned fifty this year. Your eldest son had a boy, and your daughter married well. The field ploughed by your younger brothers yielded a fair crop and you gained your portion. Half of your flock was sold to great wealth. You have no doubt that Yahweh guards your life and Faith in Him will lead you through the trials ahead, however dark and treacherous they may be. You know that evil cannot stand against the Chosen Ones of God.

Namiah

Having lost your wife to sickness and your two sons the previous year to Roman execution (they joined the Zealots and were got in a raid on a soldiers' armoury), you have grown desperate for justice. When the opportunity to join your respected brothers in their search for truth and righteousness in the mystical teachings of the Tanakh, you earnestly took up the calling. But months have gone by and all you have learned is chants and spells, and no revelation has come. Finally, on this night of death and chaos, despair caught up with your heart, darkness entered your might, and evil gained sway over your soul. You know naught what you shall do, but neither do you any longer care. You still seek justice, but for yourself alone – and against all the world, even your friends.

Yahin

A young man, you favour the girl Rebekah and respect and honour her father, Yahunatan – a wise Rabbi. More than once in a moment of bravery you have declared your love for her. But always after you doubt your courage and ability to support her, despite your love. The world around you is hard, and life with the Romans precarious. You fear making promises you can't keep.

Deep down, you sense there is some great purpose to all life. Even yours. You know that one day Yahweh will call upon you and you must serve the God of the Chosen People. And yet, you want to live a simple life and have a family.

Rebekah

Rebekah is a young girl of 19. She has loved the boy Yahin for five years and has waited for him to grow into manhood enough to care for her, raise and protect her family. Recently, your waiting has become sadness, and you worry about your father's health. He seems to have lost interest in living and constantly speaks of an after life you do not really believe in. Your rich friends, daughters of Sadducees (aristocrats) clearly think that Yahweh has granted the Chosen one life in which to live and be abundant. Sheol (the Underworld) is all that awaits the dead – and in Sheol nothing exciting ever happens. You wonder if Yahin will ever marry you?

Storyteller's Note: *Throughout the story, each character is capable of gaining revelations. It is up to you if the character receives this revelation or not. Each section lists the revelations available to each character (it is recommended that you write these on cards to give privately to the player when the revelation is had). Revelations should be gained through the player's playing of the character in fidelity and accordance to the initial revelation (or belief) at the start of the story.*

Some of the revelations come with powers, Faith based or magical or demonic. It is up to the player what to do with these gifts.

1. An Angel at My Table

Introduction – Inciting Incident

Strange words and omens heard from the voice of Raziel in meditation stirs four Merkavic Rabbis to undertake a dangerous task on a night when death and darkness are easily found.

Goal: To retrieve the book from Yahin and leave the house together as a group.¹

Opposition: The threat of danger in the streets, each other's doubts, and Satan.

Setting: A crypt beneath the city, and the kitchen of the Yahanatan's house above.

Tie-In: Rebekah sits awake in the dark, awaiting her father and the other Rabbis to come up from the crypt. She also waits for Yahin, the nephew of Rabbi Noah, who has declared his love for her, but is plagued by nightmares. He arrives to the house moments after the rabbis find Rebekah sitting awake. He carries a book given to him by a dying man in the street, crushed by bricks of a fallen wall.

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A Woman in the Parlour

After discussing the what you think of your communion with the angel Raziel, you leave the crypt and find Yahanatan's daughter waiting for you at the table, awake.

Brief Description:

(Read aloud): The room is dark, and there is a strange energy in the air. You do not know if it is because of the angel you have just experienced in the crypt, or because of the chaos of the streets, or if some other force of heaven is touching Jerusalem this night. But there sits Yahanatan's daughter, awake, and wary. She obviously sense everything that you do.

Yahin & The Book

Moments later, Yahin arrives from the streets – which grow ever louder with the noise of mobs and villainy.

He looks disheveled and on edge. He grasps a large book between his arms. The book was found in the arms of a dying prophet near the city gate. Yahin was returning from the field and met the man. The man said that the book contained the gathered wisdom of an angel who has never before spoken to the People of God. The text is original and unique, and must be saved by being brought into the Holy of Holies, in the Temple of Jerusalem.

Note: The Book

If the book is examined, it is written in Chaldean (the common tongue, today called Aramaic), and seems to have been written by many hands over many years. The last entry in the text

¹ In a game with less than six players, Rebekah should be played as an NPC. In a four player game, Yahin can also be an NPC, although ideally he is played by a player.

contains fresh ink, possibly only a week old. *Skilled inspection would tell you that the last writing is, in fact, only hours old.*

Test: Palaeography -20%

2. Fire in the Streets

Rising Action – Significant Event

Goal: To survive the streets with Faith and hope intact.

Opposition: Mobs and Soldiers

Setting: The streets between Rabbi Yehonatan's house and the gates of the Temple.

Tie-In: All the signs upon the way show that the characters are obviously on some holy mission, and the forces of Light are there to help them, even as the darkness tries to pull them down.

[MAP – the map at this part of the story involves the characters winding their way through the labyrinthine part of the city. As they do so, they will come upon atrocities which will test and challenge their lives, faiths and resolve. Some will have revelations, some might show valour, or cowardice or draw peril, yeah, even death to themselves.

Different routes on the drawn map will show the following scenarios, road blocks, tests and trials. (The storyteller may use the map provided, or design their own, depending on how much detail is wanted. Or, you might simply narrate the paths, give options at intersections, and let focus on descriptions over a drawn and detailed map.)

Encounters: Tests & Trials

If the storyteller is running a particularly long game, more encounters could be added to prolong this part of the story.

1. The Soldiers and the Beggars

A group of six soldiers, obviously drunk, have devolved into beating a group of three beggars. Standing in a ring, swords sheathed, they hold sticks and bottles as they torment the three beggars (a blind man, a lame boy, and an orphaned girl). They throw small stones at the beggars and swipe at them only when they try to escape the circle. They urinate, spew wine and shout profanities about the wretches as they discuss the final punishments that shall befall each of the poor souls.

It seems likely the players could walk by this obstacle without drawing too much attention. Even if the soldiers did notice, they would not want to break their circle to harass a group of Jews, albeit mostly elderly, whose number equals their own. (*IF*, the soldiers spot how beautiful Rebekah is, if she forgets to cover her face, then things could change drastically...and for the worse.)

The players may decide to go another route.

2. The Dead Corpse and Children

Near an alley, against a wall sits the slain body of a woman. The wife of a notable Sadducee stares vacantly, a Roman dagger clearly imbedded in her chest. By her side sits her 8 year old daughter. She holds her crying, infant brother and, while she looks scared and dares not move from her mothers' side, she does not cry.

Clearly, it is only a matter of time before some ill-willed men or soldiers will come across the child and her brother.

The mother was the victim of a simple robbery, wearing as she would have been the jewelry of any aristocratic, Sadducean wife.

3. A Mob of Zealots

In a side alley, in the dark, a raucous is heard. Down the alley some forty strong men gather and yell. They are clearly Zealots, chanting a battle prayer before they flood the streets to attack the raiding, Roman soldiers.

Though Jews, the Zealots tend to think everyone should feel their fervour and act with as much force against oppressors. If the characters are spotted, the mob might try to recruit them to their number, (or at least the aid of Yahin, who is strong and young.)

Not only is Yahin the holder of the book, supposed to carry it to the Temple, but the Zealots have a well known dislike of Pharisaic liberality, and mystical interpretations of the Torah (Law).

They might take and burn the book!

Or, they may even be persuaded to aim their rampage toward the Temple, thus providing a safe escort through the city streets?

4. Knife Fight

Two Roman soldiers have captured a young girl. She lies shackled against a wall. They seem to have come to a disagreement about what shall be done next. They stand facing each other, daggers in hand, squaring off.

This could easily become messy. Not only are the soldiers angry enough to possibly attack and slaughter a group of older Jews, (once they overcome Yahin). But seeing Rebekah might seem an easy solution to their disagreement.

5. A Burning Wall

The side of a stone wall of an aristocrat's house is aflame. If you get closer, it can be seen that what is aflame is bodies strung up along the side of the wall. Devilish smoke and odours rise into the air like a foul invocation to the powers of Moab and the pagan gods of Rome! Some soldiers can be seen atop the wall, the manor is being raided, drinking and yelling curses against the new Emperor and his greed, obviously infected by Rome's permissiveness with the Jewish people. Other soldiers idle about, casually counting their treasures, or glancing about for more trouble to cause. Many are drunk, but some are not yet satisfied with the night's yield.

This could be very dangerous for the characters. Walking by the burning bodies of the Jewish nobles, their servants, slaves and family might seem an open invitation to the soldiers.

Or they might be completely ignored. Watched as a passing spectacle on this odd night of death.

6. The Devil and the Dog

As you near the Temple [possibly from the back side], a man robed in dark and dirty rags leans against the wall. A pipe of Persian origin smokes from his mouth and a dog sits by his feet and stares out at you. The man's face is shadowed and ominous. He smells of death and looks like Hades.

The characters could choose to say something, though nothing about this solitary figure invites discourse. He seems the final omen that the night is indeed a night of death and evil.

Staring at the stranger might invite trouble, but that depends on what has already occurred and what the storyteller wants to visit upon his players.

The stranger is indeed a demon, minding his own business and just reveling in the beauty he sees that night to be.

Note:

By the time they reach the Temple gates, the characters should be hurt, harried and have struggled. Arriving at the gates is a frying pan into the fire experience as they begin to walk into the soldiers den and their destiny.

3. Drunk Soldiers and a Dead End

Complications – Plot Twist

Goal: To overcome the threat of the soldiers and enter the Temple.

Opposition: The Roman soldiers and the priests barring the Temple doors.

Setting: The Gates of the Temple

Tie-In: At any point, if you can get to the doors, both Yahonatan and Jonah are personal friends with some of the priests who bar the Temple door.

The Gates of the Temple

The gates are open to the courtyard. Inside, the doors to the Temple are barred by the Sanhedrin priests from the inside.

[MAP of the courtyard]

Brief Description:

(Read aloud) As you enter the courtyard you realize too late that there are bodies of slain Temple guards. Their bodies have been moved just out of sight.

Then you notice the soldiers. Roman soldiers have been waiting behind columns, and in corners for anyone to enter the courtyard. For what purpose, you do not know.

Note:

The Roman soldiers desire to ransack the Temple and take their pay denied them by the new Emperor of Rome. However, the Temple guards all died willingly and the priests have locked the doors. The soldiers now seek hostages to offer in trade to the group of Temple priests (a mixed group of Sadducees, Pharisees and members of the Sanhedrin Council) who have barred the doors.

REVELATIONS:

There is only enough divine power for one act of Faith in this situation.

Noah:

If you call upon your faith, you will realize the truth, that the world has needed a Messiah and why should you not believe that one has come. By calling upon your Faith, successfully, you can summon the following power:

The Light of Heaven

Faith:

Range:

Effect: All those who do not have a Faith rating of ** or higher are blinded by the light of God – if your eyes are closed or you are blind, this light blinds your mind and all of our sense ring with the cry of righteousness. This also effects all those who are possessed or under the influence of black magic, demons or Satan.

Story Note: This means that Namiah is effected. Be sure and describe or let his player describe the character's response to The Light of Heaven.

Yahonatan:

If Yahonatan invokes his faith, he will realize that there is evil in their midst, and that the soldiers' threat is nothing compared to what has possessed his friend Namiah.

Story Note: Yahonatan will see the black light of an evil spirit in the aura of Namiah, and sense the evil

in his heart.

Being a superstitious time, simply telling this to the soldiers or his friends would be enough to awaken their sense to the very real evil that does indeed plague Namiah, and would like cause the soldiers to stand down in fear.

Jonah:

If Jonah calls upon the Lord, then an unseen angel whispers into the ear of his friend, Z'ev Abram, a member of the Sanhedrin barring the door to the temple. Z'ev in the moment of inspiration from God has the priests open the door, allowing the characters a fighting chance to escape inside; to the surprise of the soldiers.

Namiah:

If Namiah summons his will – for he cannot sense the will of God – then the Stranger with the Dog appears at the entrance to the courtyard. The soldiers see the dark man and become filled with dread, backing off.

However, all witness this devilish man and realize that he and Namiah are somehow, now, akin. The dark presence around Namiah is felt by all.

Story Note:

During this plot twist, it may be tempting for characters to have it out with Namiah then and there. But they need to enter the Temple. So, if the players tarry, have the dark man move along, and describe the soldiers beginning to regain their courage. The players need to enter the Temple.

Again, Jonah and Yahunatan would realize that Namiah is in need of purification, best gained by inside the Temple.

Yahin:

If Yahin calls upon God, then the book begins to glow; and in the minds of all are heard the ancient words of Enoch spoken from the lips of the angel Raziel. The angel threatens to blight any soul that stands in the way of the carrier of this book.

Rebekah:

If Rebekah prays for aid she will realize that Yahin holds the key to their safety in his hand, and moving over to him she knows to lay a hand on the book, invoking the same protection as if Yahin had prayed to God.

4. The Sadducees and the Pharisees

Crisis – Decisive Moment

Goal: To get through the Temple to the Holy of Holies.

Opposition: The priests of the Sanhedrin refuse entry to all but the High Priest. The Sadducees present demand to know the purpose of the four elderly Pharisees, and are furious that a woman stands in the threshold of the Temple. Not to mention Namiah, and the evil within him.

Setting: The Temple halls.

Tie-In: The text must get to the Holy of Holies, no matter what!

The Halls of Yahweh

Brief Description:

(Read aloud) Entering through the doors you see fifteen or so priests and members of the Sanhedrin council. Z'ev Abram, Sanhedrin member and long time friend to Yahunatan and Jonah is there. Everyone looks concerned and frightened. Many mutter prayers and some more fearful men wring their hands.

The Presence of a Female!

As soon as it is seen the players have a woman with them, many of the priests grow enraged. Some are just angry, but some think it will bring doom and a greater curse upon them:

Hurl her back to the soldiers! One man cries.
She is an omen of doom to us all! Says another.
Yahweh has punished us enough this night!

Zev looks concerned and wary.

The players must work this out however they can. As well, they must figure a way to get to the Holy of Holies. No one is allowed there except the High Priest.

An Evil In The Temple

Not only is a woman present, but if Namiah's possession *did not* get uncovered in the courtyard, it is now clear that a darkness fills his eyes.

A very old priest might see him and declare that *Satan* has gripped his soul!
Everyone feels the power of darkness around Namiah.

If Namiah's condition is seen in the courtyard, he may have had to fight to get into the Temple. With his dark powers he could. But he may have been taken in by his friends so to be cleansed.

The priests inside would have mixed feelings about an impromptu exorcism on this particular night. Some yay, others nay!

Storyteller's Note:

The situation here is truly one of decisiveness. Everyone must choose how to act; and those actions could lead to success and placing the *Sefer ha-Razim* in the Holy of Holies, or the situation could explode into open physical and spiritual conflict.

Depending on how you want things to go, you can apply more or less persuasion to this part of the story.

Part Four is really about role-playing, however, if it breaks down into combat, that is okay; basic priest stats and characters can be found in *Mythical Realms*, or the Appendix of this book of stories.

5. Death & the Holy of Holies

Climax – Confrontation

Goal: To place the text, *Sefer ha-Razim* inside the Holy of Holies.

Opposition: The unrighteous, or those stained by sin, are said to die upon entering the Holy of Holies.

Setting: The Inner Temple.

Tie-In/Notes: Jonah feels righteous and does not fear death. Yahunatan is ready to die if Yahweh so chooses to take him. Namiah realizes that the text should not be saved, and rather, destroyed. Yahin knows it is his time to be righteous and brave.

The Holy of Holies

There are many stories about the Holy of Holies. Once a year, the High Priest enters to pronounce the sacred name of God, YHVH (from which Yahweh is derived). However, if he says it wrong, or has sin upon his soul, he is struck dead. For this reason, it is said he would have a rope tied up his waist with which to be pulled out by the other priests, in case he died.

Within the Holy of Holies lies the Ark of the Covenant, the Staff with the Bronze Serpent,

Nehushtan, used by Moses to heal the Israelites, and many other artifacts of Hebrew faith.

[MAP of the entry way of the Temple, and the main rooms, including the Sanhedrin council chamber and the Holy of Holies.]

Story Notes:

The High Priest is missing. The priests, Sadducees, and members of the Sanhedrin council – all present – would resist the notion of letting anyone enter the Holy of Holies to place a text (the *Sefer ha-Razim*), even one supposedly written by the angel Raziel.

At this point, the players have several options to continue their quest. Explaining their mission, how the book was found, and what they heard in the crypt that night (Merkavah mystics, such as these old men, would be respected by some; but not by the aristocratic Sadducees – who abhor mysticism and prefer a literal understanding of the Torah) might help.

Or some other revelation or power could be used.

Also, Namiah's situation must be dealt with.

REVELATIONS:

Any character might have a revelation in this part of the story.

Noah:

If Noah listens to his conscience, it will be clear that the faith he has gained from the Messiah is unknown to these priests and aristocrats. They should not be tolerated. The will of God must be done. Noah's Faith rating and Spirit increases by half for all dealings against evil and heresy for the remainder of the scene.

6. The Heights of Heaven & Depths of Sheol

Resolution – Outcome

Goal: To deal with Namiah and his possession by the evil spirit.

Opposition: Differing opinions. Satan.

Setting: The stairwell and rooftop above the Temple.

Tie-In: Yahnatan, Jonah, and Noah all recognize that Namiah is possessed and seek to exorcise him.

Notes: By this point it is quite likely that some of the characters have died. Namiah seeks to be free of the darkness (muttering he needs to escape the dungeon and see the stars. The evil spirit has come to close to Yahweh and seeks freedom, by drawing Namiah away from the Holy of Holies or by doing away with his body by jumping off the roof). In the process, Namiah may have taken the text, or Rebekah as hostage to ensure his escape.

APPENDIX: STATS & NPCs

Roman Soldier, average

Roman Soldier, Legionnaires

Roman Soldier, Centurion

Roman Soldier, Tribune or Prefect

Mobsters (random folks in the mob)

Stray Dog