

The Book of Seconds Sample

Prologue

HE THUMBS THROUGH THE PAGES, eyeing specific phrases that seem to repeat, even though the authors of the testimonies had been scattered across the globe and were not in communication with one another during most of the writing. Captions like "spiritual presence," idioms such as "faith," actions suggesting first-hand sacrifice and willing compassion appear in contradiction to civility's complete extinction. The contrast of what was to what now is— instantly haunting.

Have I missed something? Surely this is a work of fantasy. Even as he makes the indictment, he knows the fallacy of it. This time he speaks audibly, looking up to a once-unrecognized source to whom he now pleads with a sense of awe woven with fear. "Please tell me it's not too late. Please show me how to love you."

The silence in response crushes his heart, yet still the muscle pounds in his chest. Amos BenMadai wants nothing more at this moment than to rip out the useless organ and throw it aside. It serves to remind him that he chose his own imprisonment within the confines of this life. He struggles to feel love; faith—unfamiliar territory: *is hope all that is left?* Can he rely on that alone? Exhaustion overwhelms his body and he faints into a depressed sleep of tortured dreams. Darkness seems the victor. Amos the victim, or perhaps worse—a contributor to his own condemnation.

In the void of his nightmare, a pinprick of light—a voice? Someone or something...*calling* to him? BenMadai awakes with a start, taking up a reasonably clean rag from his meager desk to wipe his brow. *Why am I sweating?* Lighting another precious candle, he picks up the manuscript for a second time and starts again to read from the beginning—persisting without food, taking just the occasional break for water and necessities—but with a different objective, one spoken into the night as a request: "Lord, show me what I must do."

Testimony One

The Witness of Fitzgerald Elijah Hindeland

THE SHRIEKING ALERTS ME TO THEIR APPROXIMATE LOCATION before I can make them out through the hurricane darkness. The fact that I can hear them at all from the other side of the heavy glass and over the roaring wind is a good indication of the agony they experience. I have no choice; in moments they will be no more.

Donning every piece of clothing I can find, I also grab a rag, quickly wetting it with a few precious drops of water and wrap it around my head before exiting from the protective cocoon of my office building.

Immediately I am hit with the heat and the ferocity of the gale, my legs striving against its fury. I fight to catch a glimpse of those in distress, moving in the vague direction of their shadowy images. I yell out to them and quickly realize my mistake. By drawing that robust breath, I have sucked in the toxins raging in the air. They turn to lava in my nostrils and tear at my throat. But it is the strange sensation in my stomach that doubles me over. A building pressure quickly works upward past my esophagus forcing its way past the fire that used to be my tongue, erupting as bloody red soup through my mouth and into the cloth mask I wear. Falling to my hands and knees in agony, I squint desperately toward the victims I wished to save. I am too late and they are too many.

Now I can see them also fallen and writhing. Their skin melts and parts of their bodies sail past me. Finally they evaporate and I too begin to wither in the storm. The last thing I sense, as I perish, is a hand held out from a loving voice. It speaks away all of the torture, heals my agony. Three words are all I hear as I crave to catch the hand.

“Come up here.”

The hand grasps mine and I am awake.

Yes, a dream. The same dream, the one I dread to revisit because its complexion is so life-like in its unfolding. Comet-like I orbit helplessly back on a collision course with the beginnings of the tribulation. Again I want no part in it, yet knowing in its completion, You Lord God, are there. You are asking me to share something boundless with what is left of this decaying world. All I have is what You give me to offer: A living history transcribed into the written word.

This scripting is by no means an attempt at a new gospel or a book of wisdom. You have inspired other such texts and have already revealed Your good news for those with the moxie to read and believe. This is a testament to the end of it—what was to come—is now. I have heard Your calling. I am Your messenger, my disclosure coming from a source beyond my understanding. Others who read these pages will have to consider the text. They will find it best to use the filter that I utilize—faith in the One unseen. That must be their touchstone. Without faith, these words will be empty.

Who am I to even attempt this? I am a servant and an adopted child of the Most High. I have been known as Professor Fitzgerald E. Hindeland. I recognize He has called me to remain for a time. I accept this opportunity, unworthy as I am, to warn and encourage those lingering and those yet to be born. I write on these pages what is already known by God. I do so for the purpose of witnessing to eyes that might read and be opened, to spiritual hearts that might hear and believe at the telling.

For a moment let me remember back to what seems a better place. They were the thriving times when even the poor seemed blessed—not like today when all seems dead. That past consisted of so many as spoiled naïve children—all claiming to be chosen, all claiming needs and superiority at the same time. It was the age of building, what I will refer to now as *Old Culture*, when mankind thought itself unrivaled; when towers and technology aspired toward the heavens.

Then, one day, a sound in the air unlike any sound before or since. The atmosphere was shaken and then, a change. They were gone—the special ones—the ones who seemed to care most and who were best at sharing and seemed most easily taken advantage of. They had been, in some ways, very predictable and uninteresting—keeping to their provincialism and encouraging others in temperate behavior. In other ways they were exciting, having unusual abilities and skills which set them apart, made them seem strange to the rest. And as You understand all too well, Lord—to strange people, happen strange things.

They vanished in a breath, just as some of them had predicted would happen. Just as I warned would happen and on the day that You Lord said it would happen: the day called by Jews around the world as the Day of Trumpets or *Yom Teruah*—translated literally “The Head of the Year”.

What was not known was the reaction and aftermath of the unexplained disappearance of a billion people from all walks of life. Almost immediately, society fell apart. Those remaining who had power titled themselves *masters*. Those who hungered for power, but had little, conspired for opportunity.

It is difficult to extrapolate when and what was the final breath before Old Culture’s demise. Many have blamed the portent, now referred to as the “Dark Blue”. Some of us had known it, still understand it for more than that; a singularity in space designated by scientific nomenclature as V4641. This strange anomaly incredibly shifted neighborhoods, from the center of our galaxy to a patch very close to Earth. V4641 now can be observed in

the night sky, not by brilliant light, but by its astrographic signature, the strange cobalt-tinted void absorbing the light of any mass near enough to enter its irresistible pull.

I still am in awe of its placement, far enough from our solar system to avoid complete disintegration, but close enough to alter our planet and lives, alerting us to Your presence in all that has taken place and all that will take place. The most drastic of changes so far has been what some of us refer to as the Gathering-Up, when God-believers vanished before the very eyes of those who denied or marginalized His existence.

Of course problems had started well before the appearance of V4641. Expansion of warfare beyond anyone's comprehension, earthquakes on a scale unparalleled, strange weather patterns, floods and pestilence—all this and more—contributed to a catastrophic death toll that no one was willing to define in real numbers. The losses were too large for our feeble minds to comprehend. And yet that auditing became small in comparison to the devastation after the Gathering-Up. Since that moment, the world has known only chaos—hunger, strife and disease have become the absolutes of survival. Because of the strange effects of V4641, the magnetic poles reversed and...something else. I remember it well; not even I as an astrophysicist could have predicted the possibility. Energy died. No, not all energy, but the ability of electrical current to conduct from one terminal or location to another...failed.

I had just completed a cell phone call with my close colleague and mentor, Rabbi Moses Folzman, instructing me to find my way to Jerusalem. That is when the lights in my facility at the University of Texas shut off. I thought the backup generators had run out of fuel. We had been running them continuously due to the failure of the utilities network in our Austin, Texas location where my group had obtained sanctuary. Since I was alone (the rest of my group having been “gathered-up”, I refer anyone reading to my earlier epiphany about my remaining for a purpose), I tried making another call on my cell phone and found the device useless.

I groped for and clutched a flashlight, but it also had no power. When daylight came, I hunted for anything that might have a battery or stored power. Every facet of electrical mechanics was and remains now, dormant.

By my continued research, limited in scope as it is, I am convinced that electricity has not ceased to exist. But its ability to travel—through solids, liquid, gas; by any means—has somehow been inhibited. Had an electromagnetic pulse bomb been set off by some world power? A nuclear device set off at maximum altitude would render everything electronic or electrical inert or overloaded. The strategy would disable all communications, computer use, most transportation and all electric convenience...temporarily.

The true dilemma revealed itself days after. I was able to make contact with some local authorities. The power reduction could not have been caused by any known earthbound device because no electrical power could be restored whatsoever. Not even a hand crank generator would function.

How then, if electrical power and communications have caved, do I know so much about the disharmony apart from my own area? God has supplied an incredible spirit of stamina and resourcefulness to those remaining. Though the methods are primitive at best, word still travels. There is the element of exaggeration and misinformation to be considered, but repetitive reports from diverse sources validate what I already knew to be escalating prior to the Gathering-Up.

As for determining any scientific explanation for our new environment, without the assistance of sophisticated instruments, that is more the challenge. After reviewing all my notes, the only empirical answer continues to dazzle me:

The matter-antimatter reaction purposely set off within V4641 by the minions of Darius Mede, then chairman of the Green Order Government, initiated an energy reaction. V4641 had already consummated some kind of kinetic bond with earth—a phenomenon that my group had been researching. I believe the rocket sent to

destroy the singularity caused instead a permanent static transfer disruption (as best as I can define it), so that nothing, not even a simple electric current will now move from one point to another. Not wirelessly or along more outmoded wired lines. The lingering capability we appear to still have is simple friction—the ability to cause a minute spark by flint or friction allowing the generation of flame. Thank You Living God for this remnant; otherwise I believe mankind, for that matter all life, might have perished.

Do you readers of this account, in whatever time you now abide, doubt me? What if flame were rendered inert? What if the basic function of fire combusting fuel and producing heat had been disabled by the stupidity of those who had thought themselves all-powerful? What if our very sun had been doused by the folly? Who or what would be left to complain? But here we are, still existing, still surviving. For what purpose? The same purpose as always: there are others to be gathered to the love of the Creator.

Many will question my choice of words: Creator? Love? Of whom do I speak? And if He loves so much, why is the world in this state of affairs? Rather than try to justify His plan, I will simply expose the obvious: we have been deserted here, not because of God's errors, but because of our own.

I am chosen to remain to shine a light on these times at the beginning of the *Messianic Age*, what may be called the *New Advent*. My writings offer on His behalf, one final overture for all remaining humanity to return to Him—to worship YHWH, my God as Creator and to accept His Son as Messiah of this fallen world.

Most will scoff at the existence of God. I ask those doubters now: *how is that doubt working for you?* If any of you do recognize Him as reality, why strike out angrily at Him, indicting Him rather than yourselves for what we now endure? Why do you persist?

The world is red-hot with rage and overwhelming hopelessness—ideal times for redemption. But there must be a willingness: a want for greater, not just better things.