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Prophet X

A Novel by David Johnson

About 95,000 words

Chapter 1

John Davidson sat in the car waiting for his wife to appear in front of the gift shop. His gaze ran across all the storefronts of the small, strip mall. Through the pouring rain, his gaze stopped on a small bookstore. His thoughts immediately returned to the last time he had purchased a book. If he had only known what events that simple book purchase would spawn, he might have settled for a good novel. The book John had purchased that day was a nonfiction dissertation. He already had three on the same subject. This one would in fact add little to the information he already had on the subject. But by the time he finished the book, it would spawn the seed of an idea for a new programming project. This seed would fall on the fertile soil of John's creativity, talent and skills. In time, the seed would bare fruit. The forbidden fruit of old would bring with it an exacting price.

In a small room, on the campus of the Israeli Hebrew University, Avraham sat and stared at the computer screen. The ceiling, walls and floors were new enough. But the table and chairs seemed to have been diverted from the garbage truck. The wooden straight-back chairs were wobbly and threatened to collapse when sat upon.

This was Avraham's third year on the project, and he was beginning to feel the project would never bare fruit. He had considered not joining the Bible Codes project team this year. If the team made a significant breakthrough while he was on it, he would have the edge he needed to get a good job. But the project had made very little progress in the past few months.

The project had started out with a bang. The team had followed up on some little known features of the Bible. Apparently the Hebrew text of the Bible contained encoded words in it. They had discovered many more words, since then. Their work had been published in many places. But the ultimate goal of the project remained elusive as ever. If they knew what to search for, they could find words relating to almost anything that was historical or newsworthy in the Bible Codes. However, this was just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. There had to be a logical organization to the Bible Codes. If that were discovered, then the Bible Codes could tell them much more. But after five years the project was no closer to finding the logical organization of the Bible Codes than before.

Perhaps, Avraham thought, God never intended for man to view all of the Bible Codes. One thing he knew for sure was there were at least three, and perhaps many more, similar projects under way, at various locations around the globe.

In a very lavish and spacious house on the outskirts of Jerusalem, a very wealthy businessman was entertaining. The house appeared to be large, but not overly so, from the driveway. But once inside it became clear that no expense had been spared. There were high cathedral ceilings in expansive rooms, polished marble floors covered with large Persian rugs and huge tapestries and paintings hanging on the walls. All these quickly impressed anyone with the feeling that they were now in the presence of the power and wealth. In fact, the instructions to the architects had been that from the outside the house should appear only slightly above average. But the inside was to be extravagant.

The owner of the house was Zelig Rosenberg. Zelig, was called "Zee" by his close friends and associates. Zee was in his mid-forties. He had classic Arabic features and was rather slender for his stature. His wealth and business dealings had rarely afforded him time to pursue companionship. Thus, at the age of 49, he was the sole owner of a vast empire of very lucrative and diverse businesses. His empire included assets all over the world. Zee never did interviews and he never allowed others to use his name in any publication, if he could prevent it. To those who met him, he appeared kind, generous and always a perfect gentleman on the surface. From even the briefest of meetings, it was

immediately apparent that Zee was always in control and accustomed to getting what he wanted. However, people who, for one reason or another, had endeavored to investigate Mr. Rosenberg's business dealings had all learned two additional things about Zee. First, his business practices were shady at best and often just down right illegal. Second, Mr. Rosenberg did not allow anyone to nose around in his business dealings. The latter was normally learned just prior to the individual's funeral or, at best, an extended visit to the local hospital's intensive care unit.

On this particular afternoon, Zee was entertaining Rabbi Aaron Bachayah. The Rabbi was old and had been teaching classes at the Hebrew University for many years. He always dressed in the traditional attire befitting a Jewish Rabbi. As Rabbi Bachayah waited in the cool, air conditioned study he was nervous about meeting Mr. Rosenberg. He knew that almost all of the Bible Codes project funding came from this one sponsor. While the Rabbi had sent monthly reports to him for the past three years, he had only been introduced to Mr. Rosenberg once before. But everyone had heard of Mr. Rosenberg's wealth. This afternoon the Rabbi was to ask for more funds to buy faster computers.

The Rabbi had been somewhat surprised by his appointment to the Bible Codes project. He had only the simplest understanding of how Bible Codes were hidden in the Torah and knew even less about computers or the programs that seemed to excite those who worked on the team. His title was project leader.

However, he was there just to provide religious guidance and manage the team's efforts. The research was actually directed by the dean of the computer science department. The Rabbi reviewed the submitted theories and proposals, none of which he could begin to understand, and forwarded them to the dean of computer science, who in turn decided if the team should explore a proposed avenue of research. Mainly the Rabbi just managed the team's task assignments and reported the progress they made.

After a few minutes, Zee entered the study. He was dressed, as always, in a very expensive, light colored, tailored business suit with a silk tie. As he entered the study Zee said, "Oh, Rabbi, this is truly a blessed day. I am honored to finally have the good fortune of your visit to my dwellings."

"The good fortune is mine. I assure you. There are none that have helped us in our research more than you."

With the greetings out of the way they both sat down. Zee said, "I must apologize, I have some urgent business to attend to and will have to leave you in a few moments. But what is it that I can do for you?"

The old Rabbi knew it was best to come straight to the point. "Our efforts are not progressing as quickly as they could be. We need new computers. The ones we have are much too slow."

Zee's grin broadened. "But, Rabbi, would you spoil my surprise? I have just ordered a dozen of the fastest computers available for your team. They should arrive in two weeks."

The Rabbi had not expected this would be so easy. He felt he had to offer Mr. Rosenberg something in return. He thought a moment and then spoke. "Mr. Rosenberg, it has come to our attention that a Russian programmer in Moscow, Dmitry Povo, has discovered 15 new Bible Codes. He claims to have done this using a program of his own design. We are attempting to find out more about his program. It may have things in it we can use. Our team is hard at work developing the computer models I mentioned in the last monthly report."

Zee smiled. "Rabbi, I can not begin to tell you how much I look forward to reading your monthly reports. I would love to hear more news of the team's efforts. Unfortunately, I must leave. Is there anything else you wished to discuss?"

The Rabbi stood. "No, we are thankful for your generosity and pray the Lord will watch over and bless you."

With that they both shook hands, and the Rabbi made his way to the front door.

As soon as the Rabbi left, Zee returned to his study and called out, “Cam, come at once. I have an assignment for you.”

A large, trim man entered the study. This man was Zee’s personal bodyguard, but he did many other things for Zee as well. Although his real name was Carlos Abib Melantek, everyone simply called Cam.

“I need you to go to Moscow and relieve a certain programmer named Dmitry Povo of a Bible Codes program he has written. You must use his own computer to send the source code to the Hebrew University’s email address. Do you understand?”

“Yes. As you wish. What shall be the status of Dmitry Povo when I leave Russia?”

“Leave him alive and well. It would be best if you could accomplish this without him or anyone else knowing you were there.”

“Yes. I shall leave at once.”

With that Cam left the study and Zee to his thoughts.

Zee had hired Cam when he was little more than an out-of-work brawling, street thug. Zee knew Cam had been in the army and had no living relatives. Zee had hired him as pure muscle. At the time Cam was all of 22 years old, jobless and broke. But, over the past five years Zee had invested in Cam. Zee had sent Cam to specialized training programs and had been grooming him ever

since. Now Cam was polite, good mannered and possessed outstanding social skills. But these were all for show. When needed, Cam was a highly skilled burglar, assassin and bodyguard all rolled into one. Cam could hold his own in any situation. Not only had he been trained in survival and killing, he had also received much training in outsmarting an adversary. Despite his trim, well-toned muscular frame, his polite, soft spoken manner was often mistaken for kindness and weakness. Cam's appearance and mannerism was a carefully crafted facade. Zee had always treated Cam like a son. In truth, Cam was the closest thing to family that Zee had ever known.

Zee had been funding the Hebrew University's Bible Codes research project for the past three years. The money was nothing compared to the power Zee would have, if and when they were successful. The prospect of knowing in advance when people, politicians, governments and countries would rise and fall made it all worth while. Besides, it was great for his image to be seen making large donations to the University.

Dmitry Povo was 19 years old and lived alone in his small one-bedroom apartment. He wore slacks and a dress shirt to work. But outside the office, he always wore jeans, t-shirts and sneakers. Not particularly unattractive, he was of average height and thin in stature. He rarely ate anything but junk food. The act of cooking or even going to a restaurant was just too time consuming and detracted from the time he had to play on his computer. He had always been

good with computers and had recently learned he enjoyed the challenge of hacking into other computer systems and networks more than almost anything. This is how Dmitry spent most of his free time. A girlfriend was out of the question, a complication he could live without. His first and only love was computers. But he never really had the opportunity to gain experience and excel in this area. He currently worked as a data entry clerk at a large office building. It was not the job he would like to have. But, he was much more fortunate than most.

The Bible Codes were just the type thing for which Dmitry and his on-line, hacker, friends were looking. It was a problem that would help them develop their Internet-distributed, multi-processor network. This network of Internet-linked computers could be any size, from two computers to several thousand. The goal was to develop an Internet-distributed network of computers that could be combined to simulate a huge multi-processor supercomputer. They had used this network before to crack new advanced encryption schemes. But, their group was trying to adapt this same technology to other problems. After all, they should at least seem to be respectable. The Bible Codes problem was as good a test as any other. The team of on-line hackers had never been interested in making any breakthroughs in the area of Bible Codes. The hackers' goal was to learn how to manipulate the Internet-distributed, multi-processor network to solve complex problems better, faster. After some tweaking, they had accomplished their goal. They had used pieces of some of the standard Bible Codes search programs and

adapted them for their network. Dmitry had posted the results of their project to the Israeli website as proof of their success. Since then, he had simply deleted all emails he had received from the Israeli Bible Codes team.

When Cam's flight arrived in Moscow, he rented a car and drove to an apartment complex just north of the business center. Cam pulled up to the curb and waited. A few minutes later Bruno opened the passenger door and got in. Bruno was a large, shabby man. His thick black hair always looked oily and like he had just gotten out of bed. Bruno was slightly overweight only because he could afford the food. This was not the case for everyone in Russia. Times were hard. Bruno's large thick coat only served to make him look bigger. He had dealt with Cam before and liked his cool professional demeanor. He had never known Cam to raise his voice or make a threat. But Bruno was certain that Cam could be lethal, if he wanted to be. Bruno had first noticed Cam had the kind of eyes that didn't miss anything. They were like doll eyes, cold, always watching and never betraying the thoughts behind them. Cam asked, "Have you located Mr. Dmitry Povo?"

"Yes. I have someone watching his apartment."

"And the specialist?"

"He has experience in these matters. I am told he is very good. He will meet us near Povo's apartment."

"You know exactly what it is you are to do?"

“Yes. We enter the apartment, find the program and source code that does something with the Bible. Email the program, source code and message you gave us to the Israeli email address and leave.”

“You will take special care that Mr. Povo does not know we have been here. Is that clear?”

“This is not a problem. I have made all necessary arrangements. However, it would be much simpler to have him disappear.”

“Agreed. But that is not your assignment today.”

Bruno directed Cam to a parking space half a block from the apartment building in which Dmitry Povo lived. Bruno handed Cam a small two-way radio and said, “I must get a report from my people. You wait here. You can monitor our progress with this, should you wish to.”

Cam said nothing and casually looked out on to the busy street.

Bruno left the car. After several minutes there was a sudden burst of Russian chatter on the two-way radio. Cam could almost follow what was being said. Russian was not one of his better languages. He had seldom used it. It was clear that Bruno was giving short commands to various people. Cam just closed his eyes and relaxed in the seat. There was nothing for him to do but wait for Bruno to return.

Bruno and his two associates took the stairs two at a time. Dmitry Povo was at work and would be gone until that evening. When the three men entered the hallway on the floor of Dmitry's apartment, one of them went to the far end of the hall and sat in the window that looked out on the street below. He was in contact with another man on the street, and was primarily there as a second lookout. Bruno and the other man continued down the narrow hallway. They stopped at Dmitry's apartment door, and Bruno pulled a lock-pick set from his pocket. In less than three minutes, Bruno had both the door and deadbolt locks undone and was opening the door. Without a word, Bruno's associate quickly moved towards a small, cluttered table in the far corner of the front room. Bruno watched as the man quickly removed the case from the computer under the table. He unplugged and removed the hard disk from the computer. Next he opened his bag and removed a laptop computer and a small box with cables that connected to the laptop. He connected the hard disk to some wires in the small box and booted up the laptop. Bruno wondered why the man had not just turned on Mr. Dmitry's computer and started looking for the Bible program. But Bruno knew that this was not really his area of expertise, and the specialist had come highly recommended. All Bruno could do was sit on the couch and wait on the man to finish his job.

After 35 minutes, the specialist was replacing the disk drive in Dmitry's computer. He handed Bruno a CD out of a slot on the laptop and said, "I burned

you a copy of the program and source code. It will take another 10 minutes to send the email.”

Bruno said, “Good”, and placed the CD in his pocket.

The specialist had started out as a hacker himself and knew most of the tricks. He definitely knew better than to boot up another hacker’s computer. There were hundreds of ways to mess-up someone’s day if they stole your computer or tried to use it without your permission. He used his laptop to scan the hard disk and find the program and source code. After that he had hacked the dial-up, email and registry on the hard disk to find the email account that had been used to send the email to the Israeli website. He plugged his laptop into the telephone jack, dialed into Dmitry’s Internet service provider, logged in as Dmitry and sent the email with the program as file attachments. “Not bad”, he thought as he packed his gear back in his bag. The whole thing had taken less than two hours of his time, and he would get the equivalent of two months wages for it. He had called in sick that morning. He would now have the rest of the day off to play on his home computer. He turned to Bruno and said, “Unless you need something else, I am done here.”

“Will he know what you have done?”

“No. Not unless he is told.”

“Good. Wait for me at the front door.”

Bruno went to the small kitchen and looked in the cabinets. He soon found what he was looking for. He carefully removed an old coffee cup from the back of the cabinet. He retrieved a permanent marker from his pocket and wrote his initials on the bottom. The marks would most likely not be noticed. Bruno replaced the cup exactly where he had gotten it. One never knew when it might come in handy to prove to someone that you could invade his or her home at will, undetected.

As they left the apartment, Bruno took extra care to ensure they had left everything just as they had found it. He used his pick set to lock the deadbolt on the door and headed back down the stairs. Just before entering the street, he raised the two-way radio and said, "Clear the area." That was the signal that the task was complete and everyone was to leave the area. He had already paid the specialist, and he too was free to go. Everyone went his own separate way. Bruno walked back to the car. Once behind the wheel, he started the car and pulled out into traffic. He removed the computer diskette from his pocket and handed it to Cam. He said, "This is a copy of the Bible program and source code we sent to the Israeli email address."

"Any problems?"

"No. He will never know anyone was there, unless you want him to. If that is the case, then please let me know. I am sure that I can persuade Mr. Dmitry Povo to do anything you wish from here on."

"For the moment, he is to know nothing of this matter. Understood?"

“As you wish.”

It was less than four hours when Cam entered the airport terminal, on his way back to Israel.

John Davidson was just an average American guy. He was 39, a short 5'-7" tall and weight 165 pounds. He had brown hair and brown eyes with a hint of green thrown in. For the past four years John had lived just north of Houston, Texas. There was nothing special about him. John loved his wife, Rhonda and had been faithful to her ever since their first date, some 20 years before. They had two teenagers, Daniel and Amanda.

John and his family lived in Arkansas until four years ago, when the utility company he worked for had offered him a job just north of Houston. He had worked for the utility company for the past 20 years. He enjoyed his job, as a computer programmer, and it gave him the opportunity to explore new technologies. The people at the office asked him to build all sorts of programs. Normally, John decided how to do it and what technologies were best suited to the task at hand.

John had a specific order to the people and things in his life. That was his way. Everything had to be logical and ordered. He had grownup watching old Star Trek movies and reading Sherlock Holmes. This all contributed to his interest in logic and computers. When John got his first computer, he began to

learn how to write his own programs. He did not need classes or instruction. After all, the computer books on programming were always laid out in a very logical order. He soon found that all he needed to learn a new computer skill or programming language was a few examples and a good reference manual. Beyond that he just needed to sit down with a specific task in mind and the program was soon finished and a new skill mastered. John loved a challenge.

John had been interested in computers for about the last 18 years or so and had actually been developing software programs for the past 14. The software he had written over the years had given him the tools and experience he needed to tackle almost any problem a computer could solve. He wrote programs that did calculations, text manipulations, file transfers, database interfaces, built web pages and various other things. John also enjoyed studying the Bible and read many books about the Bible. These qualities would also lead him down an unforeseen path that would threaten everything he valued and forever change the way he looked at life's many problems.

John first started reading about the Bible Codes in 1998. He was fascinated to learn that there were actual modern-day events encoded in the Bible. Bible codes had been found that made references to Hitler and the Nazi war machine, the Gulf War and many prominent figures in recent history. These codes had not been known in the past because finding even one encoded word, could take months or even years. Some minor finds had been made by a few obscure bishops and priests in the distant past. But these were considered

minor curiosities of which no one took notice. By the time John heard about the Bible Codes, they were making big news. Now that most everyone had a computer, intense research was occurring. Computers made the searches that once took months or years possible in just a few minutes.

John read everything he could find on the latest research findings. Anyone could order the software and search for Bible Codes. People were finding that almost any item that was newsworthy was encoded in relatively small sections of the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament. The statisticians would review the new Bible codes found and make estimates as to the likelihood this could happen by chance. Most of the statistics showed that with out the aid of a computer it would be virtually impossible to purposely construct meaningful text with the level of encoded words found in the Bible. Some would argue differently. But to John's way of thinking, this was proof that the Bible was not just a collection of stories, as some had tried to prove. The Bible was inspired by God and written according to His plan. It was God's word, not man's.

Chapter 2

One day in late 1999, John had just finished his fourth book on Bible Codes. He had begun to wonder if there was an order to the placement of the Bible codes in the Bible. If this order could be discovered, then would it allow us to read the encoded words not just as words but as text with full sentences? His research into data encryption several years prior had taught him one way to break a coded or encrypted message was to know in advance some of the text encrypted in the message to begin with, things like a date and time or a persons' name. Because there were many publicly posted Bible codes on the Internet , he had this. As he pondered it, the thought grew. Think of the possibilities! Just to imagine all of history, past present and future, at our fingertips. The very idea was so big that he could not even begin to consider all the ramifications. Surely all the researchers in Israel were working on the same thing. In his thoughts the

idea continued to grow. Like a splinter in his mind, the idea festered. How to approach the problem? Where to look for the logic he would need in his program? And so the idea grew until he knew he had to try it.

John prayed for guidance as he read Bible scriptures the next morning. The day after that, he prayed that if the Lord's will was that this be done, he might be the instrument to give God the glory. If not, then that he would fail totally. These were the conditions that started John down a path he had not intended to travel.

The next day John ordered several of the most popular Bible Code finder software packages and compared them. They all worked against the Old Testament, and English words had to be converted to Hebrew before the search engines ran. Next John took all the published Bible Codes he could find and placed them in a database. He wrote many lines of code that analyzed the known Bible Codes in an attempt to discern a pattern in their position, occurrence or relevance to each other. He got nowhere for several weeks and was getting tired of trying different methods of analysis. His small database had grown to include tables for known Bible Codes, numeric mapping of the Hebrew alphabet, English-Hebrew conversion tables and Hebrew-English tables. The program had several routines for converting dates to the Hebrew calendar and back. He was spending every free moment he had trying to figure a new way to approach the problem. He was sure all this information was organized in a certain order.

Perhaps it would not be full sentences. But it had to be encoded in an organized way that would allow one to find text without searching the entire text. Thus his obsession continued for the next few months.

One night, after another unsuccessful try, John decided that to understand the logic behind the Bible Codes, he should first learn all he could about how the organization and grammatical syntax of the surface (plain text) in the Bible. It took several weeks to find and digest the resource materials he needed. It was clear he needed to know how to read and write Hebrew, the way it was originally written in the Old Testament. But this would take too long. He didn't have time to take a night course in a foreign language. He learned all he could about the Hebrew language and the Bible's textural construction.

One night when he looked at the Bible Codes problem again he had a thought, an approach he had not considered before. He would need to utilize some of the many formulas used in the forecasting programs at the office. If this failed he would use some other regressive analysis formulas. One of these had to be the key. He had already tried fuzzy logic and even a few neural net type routines to speed things up. But, none of these had solved the problem, and John had given up on them. He would tweak these and other ideas with the rules about the Hebrew language he had learned. It took several days of trial and error to develop and test the new code each time. Finally, several months later, after hours of code tweaking, out of the blue, it worked. It was rough and not optimized for speed at all. But it finally worked! He started gleaning Bible Codes - names,

dates, places, events. It was in chronological order! The Holy Grail of Bible Codes was his at last. But it was too slow. The program had been running for 3 hours and had returned only five lines of text. But, these were previously undiscovered Bible Codes, as far as he knew. He needed to optimize the code and run it on a much faster machine.

Cam had returned from his trip to Russia. The following morning he delivered the computer diskette to Zee.

“Did it go well?” Zee asked him

“Yes. There were no surprises.”

“Very well. Have the phones and house checked again for listening devices. Also, review the security system. I always feel better when you have checked everything personally.”

“As you wish.”

With that Cam left the room. Zee was becoming concerned about the whole Bible Codes project. This Russian programmer made the fifth time in the past six months that someone else had made progress exceeding the best efforts of the Israeli Hebrew University project. Before, there had been none. Computers were the key, and everyone had access to a computer these days. Zee felt whatever lead the Israeli Hebrew University may have had was quickly slipping away. However, the University’s Bible Codes project could still be used as bait. It was only natural for other interested parties to seek communication with them. They had been at the forefront in the research for so long. Several years ago, Zee had

arranged for a security specialist to be placed in charge of the security on all servers at the University. Since then, all email communications to and from the University were routed through Zee's office. Most of the emails passed through untouched. But Zee could flag email from anyone to be blocked. He could then respond as if he were someone at the University. He had rarely used this capability. But, one never knew when this might be a useful tool.

At the office, John had several computers on his desk. The fastest machine had four processors, tons of on-board RAM and a built-in hard-disk array that was to die for. This computer had been purchased to replace one of the servers on the corporate network. But, it would be a month or so before they installed it. Until then, it was John's to play with. While he was optimizing the program to take full advantage of the multi-processor machine, he noticed a mistake in the code. The long mathematical equation he had tried to replicate had been coded wrong. So a mistake had caused his success. He planned to run the program nonstop over the weekend. It was 2:00 in the morning Thursday, and he needed to get some sleep before coming back to work. He went home. But sleep was not to be found. He was too wired and excited about his discovery. It was like he was a runner who had not paced himself and now at the last fifty yards needed a booster to win the race. He was totally spent, and yet he had to kick it in high gear to see this thing through. His mind was still racing, but John's body was long overdue for a pit stop. Part of him said, "You know you've done it. You deserve a break." The other part said, "No, you are not

through. You have not finished what you started.” At some point his body won the battle, and he drifted off to sleep.

The next morning, after he had dozed for a full 50 minutes, John took a shower and raced to the office. He had copied the program to his home computer from the one at the office. He still had a nagging question if this was the right thing to do. This question had been pushed aside in his intense effort to solve the problem. Now that the end was near, he had to face the question, and deep down he knew he needed to find the answer before he could continue.

John was popping extra strength pain relievers by noon. The headaches were an all too familiar side effect of little or no sleep and way too much caffeine. That evening, after most folks had left the office, he closed all services and applications on the fast computer on his desk. He disconnected it from the network, rebooted it, started the program and let it run for 30 minutes. It ran with only a few minor problems. By 7:00 that night he had the program running as good as he thought it ever would. It was dumping out text at an astonishing rate. He aborted the program and erased the output files. Now was not the time to read what the Lord had hidden for so long. For some reason the term “forbidden fruit” jumped to his mind. The tree of knowledge had held the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. Perhaps it was just the sleep deprivation. But, before he could continue, he had to put some nagging questions to rest.

On the way home from the office, John used his cell phone to call his pastor. As it turned out, the pastor was eating dinner. He gave John directions to his house, and John promised he would not take more than an hour of the pastor's time. John called home and told Rhonda not to hold dinner and that he should be home before 10:00 pm. When John arrived at the pastor's house, he was greeted and asked inside. The pastor's house was a simple one-story design, set on a five-acre lot. From what little John could tell in the darkness, the yard was well-maintained. Inside John saw a comfortable and well-used den, furnished with old but comfortable furniture. John and the pastor sat in the pastor's den and exchanged pleasantries for the first few minutes. John began by asking if the pastor had been following the fascinating research into the Bible Codes. After the pastor determined what type of Bible Codes John was talking about, he said he knew of them but had not really paid much attention to them. John briefly covered a few of the discoveries that others had made. The pastor seemed to be following the conversation with interest, so John pressed on with the barest of relevant facts about the research others had done. John included the reported predictions some folks had tried to make and how he and others had thought this foolish, given our limited knowledge of the Bible Codes. The pastor agreed.

By this time they had been visiting for about 30 minutes, with John doing most of the talking. He needed to phrase the next topic of their discussion very carefully. He asked the pastor for some water or coffee, if he had it. The pastor

was gone for a few minutes and John was grateful for the time alone. John said a silent prayer. The pastor returned with a glass of ice water and sat back down. John took a long drink.

John asked the pastor if he would keep the next part of their discussion confidential. The pastor assured John that he would not relate anything John did not wish known to anyone. He seemed to be an honest man, and John felt he could be trusted.

John approached the question as hypothetical. Perhaps he had seen too many movies, but it seemed the right tact for the discussion at the time. He asked, "If someone were to break or discover the scheme or pattern used to create and order the Bible Codes, what should they do with the knowledge?"

John elaborated that if this were done, someone could accurately find the Bible Codes that pertain to future events and thus would have knowledge of future events. The pastor was silent for a while. Finally he said, "I don't know, but predicting future events is a mine field from a theological view point".

John was sure the pastor felt the urgency in the question and surmised what John had done. John asked him why God might allow this to happen if He did not intend for it to be known. Again the answer, "I don't know.... I'd think I'd have to pray a whole lot about it. I'd say that if this did happen then the Lord

definitely has a purpose in doing it. Given that, I'd be trying to discern what it was the Lord would have me do. I guess that is perhaps why you came to me. Right?"

John sat for a moment and then simply replied, "Perhaps." Clearly John had entered a realm of humanity the pastor had never considered. Perhaps the pastor just needed time to contemplate the hypothesis, something John had been doing for quite some time. Only John knew it was not a hypothesis. It was after 8:00 pm and John thanked the pastor for his time and asked that he pray for him and let him know if he had any further thoughts on the subject. The pastor said he would, and John left. Driving home John thought, "Well, that was a dry hole". John was not sure what he had expected the pastor to say. But John was no closer to resolving the question now than when he had arrived. The pastor likely thought John was a first-class nut. Well, at least now he might have someone to help him navigate this course.

When John got home, he told Rhonda what he had done and expressed all of his concerns to her. She was predictably proud and supportive of his accomplishment. Other than supporting John, she could only pray the Lord would help John in his struggles to understand what he should do next.

When they went to bed that night, John had a strange compelling feeling he needed to ask forgiveness for all the times he had fallen short in his Christian

life. He wanted, no, he needed purification to bring him closer to the Lord. The urge was so great, and yet he could not point to a single reason why he might feel this way. He went to the bathroom, closed the door, knelt down and began to pray as he had seldom done before. He felt as if there was an extreme crisis in his life. But things were going well. What was this crisis that was tormenting his soul? At some point he began to cry, silent weeping that precluded speech. He could not stop the flood of emotions. He was like a child who cries out because he needs. The child does not know what he needs; only that he needs something. It was so irrational for him to feel this way for no reason. Something must be wrong with him. At some point he went back to bed, and slept the sleep of the dead. The next thing he knew, the alarm was going off, and he was in bed.

John dressed and raced off to work. All day the program he had written invaded his thoughts, like an itch he couldn't scratch. Around four that afternoon the pastor called and asked if they could meet. They set a time to meet at the church and said goodbye. They were to meet at 6:00 that evening, and then John would go back to the office and start the program for a weekend run.

On the drive from the office to the church, John was excited at the prospect the pastor might be able to share some insight that would help him determine the course he should take. John had considered many aspects of the situation already. But he had only succeeded in developing more questions and

no answers. For example, if he were to read about future events, then what should he do with this knowledge? If he told anyone of a future date when someone would die and how he or she would die, then what good would the knowledge be? He could not change it. He could not set into motion anything that might affect the outcome. Or could he? If he changed any future events, what use would the Bible Codes be beyond that date? If he could not use the Bible Codes for any reason, then what use was it to decipher them? So the logic went, round and round in his totally inadequate brain. This stuff was so far over the fringe of his experience that to even begin to understand it seemed impossible. He knew he was standing on the edge of a great unknown. Should he start the journey into the unknown, with no way back, or be content to have traveled thus far and destroy all his work? A familiar phrase kept haunting him, "Once a thing is learned, it cannot be unlearned". Where had that come from? Would he learn things he had rather not know? The most likely answer was yes. Who was he to have stumbled on that which so many others had worked for years to find? Philosophy was definitely not his long suit, and he was way in over his head.

When John arrived at the church he saw only the pastor's truck in the parking lot. Good, they would be alone. Once in the pastor's office, they greeted each other and sat down. The pastor had several books on his desk. He told John he had been contemplating the hypothesis and had done some research into some Biblical references and commentaries. He said he had invited a

former seminary teacher to dinner and wanted to ask his advice. He also asked if John would mind meeting his old seminary professor. The hair on the back of John's neck suddenly stood on end. He was about to take a step into the unknown, and he was scared to death he would live to regret it. This would bring the total to three, other than himself, who knew, or at least suspected, about the program. This increased the odds exponentially that word would unintentionally get out. John had to proceed with great caution. Despite his fears, he needed help in deciding what to do. He reluctantly agreed to meet the pastor's former seminary professor. John was horrified when the pastor said, "Great, he's sitting in the sanctuary and very much wants to meet you".

In short order John was introduced to the professor, and they were in the thick of the discussion. They covered many Biblical subjects, and John soon got the sense the old professor was gauging him, testing him. Was he trying to determine what John's motives for developing the program were? Was he trying to determine what sort of Christian John was? Was he trying to lead John into his personal views on the situation? No, the professor was still not sure what, if anything, should be done. He was concerned about the threat to current Biblical beliefs of the church. Wise, predictable and prudent, John decided. After several hours of discussion and debate, it was clear to all of them there was no clear answer to the question John posed. After they prayed, the professor turned to John, "I don't have the answers you are seeking, and I don't think anyone else on this earth does either. However, if you are persistent in seeking God's guidance

in this matter, I am sure He will steer you away from the wrong answers. I will pray for you”.

Was that it? Was that the extent of his opinion? John gave him the biggest secret of his life and that’s all he got in return?

On the way back to the office, John began to ponder the professor’s comment. John had been praying for guidance in the right direction and now the professor tells him he is sure God will steer him away from the wrong direction. A small change in perspective, but one that might confirm that God would stop John from doing what He would not want him to do. What would God do or allow to happen to stop him? John could see it now. A fire at the office destroys all his work and kills him in the process. A massive heart attack while he is working at the office; as he is dying, his fingers just happen to alter or delete the Bible Codes program. Man, the questions just kept getting harder and harder. If this was one of life’s many tests, John was not prepared for it. If it were a test, it occurred to him this could easily be his final exam. John said another silent prayer, “Lord, help me do your will, not mine”.

John ended up driving around in a daze for the next few hours. His mind was flooded with so many “ifs, buts and maybes” he was not able to clearly consider any one of them. He wasn’t even sure if he ever wanted to run the program again. If he ran the program, he’d have to review the results. Did he

really want to know when and where he, his wife or anyone else was going to die? This was just one of many questions to which he was sure he did not want the answer. Somehow he ended up in his driveway, looking at the closed garage door. He sat there and wondered why he had not automatically reached for the garage door opener when he pulled in the driveway. He was overloaded to the point of not being able to think at all. "No! Snap out of it!", he commanded himself. "You can do this. It's a simple little decision. Yea, right! It's just a simple little decision that could ruin my life, or kill me. No sweat. Right!"

John was exhausted when he finally went to bed. Earlier that evening Rhonda could tell something was bothering him. John had sat and watched television for a few hours. But Rhonda had noticed his gaze was not focused on the TV. He was lost in his thoughts. She had seen him do this before when trying to solve difficult problems.

John awoke around 9:00 the next morning. Usually he was up by 6:00 every day, even on weekends. As he was pouring his first cup of coffee, John saw his Bible on the table. He remembered a time when he had let the Bible fall open to a random page and would start reading until he found an answer to a current crisis. He had not done this in years, and it seemed somewhat like a game of chance to him now. However, in doing this he had never failed to find just the right phrase he needed to help him through the problem he was facing. He decided that this might just be the magic bullet he needed to resolve so many

unanswerable questions or give him the guidance that he so desperately wanted and needed.

He picked up the Bible and held it vertically so only the binding rested on the table. He closed his eyes, said a silent prayer and let the Bible go. When he opened his eyes, the book was laying closed on the table. He could not recall this ever happening before. Did this mean he was doing the right thing, that he was on his own or what? Startled by the occurrence, he tried again. This time the Bible fell open to the book of Psalms. He closed his eyes and placed a finger on the exposed page of the book. When he started reading at the spot his finger had landed, it was Psalm 23. He did not have to read it to know what it said. He had committed it to memory years ago. But, he read it anyway. It comforted him much in the same way it always had. He was at peace for the first time in several days. He was no closer to an answer, but he knew no matter what happened, he was going to be OK.

As he drank his coffee, he had a sudden thought of the researchers in Israel. Did they not face the same questions he did? He got on the Internet and searched many of the Bible Codes websites for the name of anyone closely related to the research program in Israel. He found some names. But with little more searching, he found the email address for the Israel team. He was sure the email would be mixed in with dozens or hundreds of others. He needed it to stand out. He would use his English-Hebrew converter to translate the email into

Hebrew before he sent it. What should he say? After several cups of coffee, he felt he knew just what to say. He quickly drafted a short email, converted it to Hebrew and sent it. The message was short and to the point:

Dear Sir or Madam,

I have a problem that you may have already considered. What am I to do with the knowledge once I am able to decipher all the Bible Codes? To what purpose should I use this knowledge? Any help regarding this urgent matter will be greatly appreciated.

Thanks,
John Davidson

Somehow reading Psalm 23 and sending the email had placed things in some semblance of perspective again. He had effectively placed the whole matter on hold. No, it was more than that. He was reassured the Lord would watch over him, and he had placed the matter in God's hands. Now that he thought about it, it had really always been in God's hands.

Over the next few weeks John tweaked the program a little to allow it to lookup relevant information based on dates and subjects. It was truly amazing the sheer amount of data that had been encoded in the Bible. He marveled at how deep and intricate the encryption scheme was. He only created searches for things that had occurred in recent history. These searches were only used to

verify the program was functioning correctly, not to discover anything new. He was not yet ready and dared not look any deeper.

One Sunday after church, the pastor ask John how “things” were going. The pastor seemed to be asking for an update. John responded, “No action taken yet. I’m discreetly trying to check with the researchers in Israel.”

The pastor raised a questioning eyebrow. John simply added, “All is well.”

When John got home, he began to wonder if he should send another email to the Israel research team. He did not have to wait long for an answer to that question. He found an email from the Israel research team in his inbox on Monday morning. The reply was just as short as his original message. He converted it from Hebrew to English. It read:

Dear Mr. Davidson,

I cannot comment on your question. However, if you wish, you may contact us at (972) 2 726 9778 to discuss further.

Sincerely,
Abib

OK. Just what did he really expect them to say? He decided it was now time to get their full attention, and he knew just how to do it.

John ran the program with all the dates from the next week in it. He got quite a bit of data from the run. He did not recognize most of the names returned.

He selected four that looked Arabic and two that looked French. He placed all the associated data in an email and added the following message:

Dear Sir,

Should all of the six events (see attachment) occur on the dates indicated, then contact me at 281-297-3572 (USA). Should even one of these events fail to happen on the date indicated, then please disregard. I have completed my own Bible Codes research and now require your assistance. When you call, it will be necessary to speak to me in English, as I do not speak your language.

Sincerely,
John Davidson

John converted the message to Hebrew and sent the email. "That should get their attention", he thought. Just how much of an understatement this was he would learn soon enough.

The next day in Israel, Avraham was sifting through all the emails from the project teams website. One out of every five weeks each team member was pulled off the project and given a break. The break from the project was not wasted. Those on break were to answer the emails from the project team's website. All emails were answered and signed with the name Abib. There was a standard response for most of the emails they received. If there was not a response that fit the email, then it was sent to the team leader who would prepare an appropriate response. When Avraham read the email from John Davidson, he knew the project team leader would be the one to respond. This

John Davidson could just be another crackpot. But, somehow Avraham did not think so. Before sending the email to the team leader, he printed a copy and placed it in his backpack. He wanted to see if any of the predictions came true.

SAMPLE