



The Third Tablet of the Holy Covenant

Michael Baum

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Michael Baum was inspired by his experiences living in Israel and working on the archeological excavation of Masada, and draws on his family history of breast cancer and his Ashkenazi heritage in *The Third Tablet of the Holy Covenant*. He skilfully blends the molecular and biblical genealogy of the Jewish people with the fictitious search for an ancient relic to produce a gripping semi-autobiographical novel. The story follows Martin Tanner, who grows up in a poor Jewish family in the East End of London during the Second World War. A brilliant student, he goes on to qualify as a surgeon at University College London, learning along the way that his family is cursed with the Ashkenazi mutation, a defect in the DNA coding that leads to an increased risk of cancer. Martin is faced with many trials, including his mother undergoing a radical mastectomy and her subsequent suicide whilst he is serving in the RAMC during the Suez crisis. He immigrates to Israel in 1960 and serves as medical officer on the Masada dig in 1963 where he meets and falls in love with Sara, a nurse who suffers the same fate as his mother. The tragedy of Martin's life is coupled with the discovery of the 'Eliezer Scroll' on the dig, which provides evidence that a codicil to the Mosaic tablets of the holy covenant could exist. The translation of these scrolls reveals that twin sisters escaped from the sacking of Jerusalem in 70 CE, carrying with them holy relics from the Temple... This book combines the quest for a biblical relic from the second Temple in Jerusalem, with the biblical and genetic anthropology of the Jewish people. Michael Baum uses passages of humour mixed with pathos, jogging along with the pace of a detective story.

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