SANCTUARY ETHICS REVIEW BOARD

SERB-006 — TAL RASHA

On Informed Consent, Indefinite Confinement, and the Ethics of Voluntary Sacrifice

An Institutional Inquiry into the Voluntary Assumption of Catastrophic Risk, the Use of a Sentient Person as a Containment Instrument, and the Continuing Responsibilities of Those Who Accept Extraordinary Personal Sacrifice

Issuing Authority: Sanctuary Ethics Review Board (SERB)
Docket: SERB-006
Classification: Personal Autonomy, Extraordinary Hazard Containment, Institutional Duty of Care, and Emergency Ethics
Date: October 24, 2026
Status: Preliminary Findings, Institutional Determination, and Notice of Continuing Review

Principal Subject:

Tal Rasha, Horadric Mage and Voluntary Custodian of Baal, Lord of Destruction.

Principal Institutional Respondents:

- The Horadrim
- Tyrael, Archangel of Justice and Founder of the Horadrim

Additional Interested Parties:

- Baal, Lord of Destruction
- Zoltun Kulle
- Surviving Members and Successors of the Horadrim
- The Mortal Population of Sanctuary

Subsequent Persons of Interest:

- Marius
- The Dark Wanderer

- Persons Responsible for the Eventual Breach of Tal Rasha's Confinement

Principal Questions:

Whether Tal Rasha's voluntary acceptance of indefinite confinement constituted sufficiently informed and autonomous consent.

Whether the Horadrim and their celestial sponsor were ethically justified in accepting that sacrifice.

Whether the extraordinary nature of the sacrifice established continuing responsibilities toward Tal Rasha.

Whether the eventual failure of the containment arrangement altered the ethical assessment of the original decision.

I. NOTICE OF INVESTIGATION

The Sanctuary Ethics Review Board hereby opens an institutional inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the imprisonment of Baal within Tal Rasha.

The Board recognizes at the outset that Tal Rasha's sacrifice occupies a position of extraordinary importance in the history of Sanctuary.

His decision contributed to the containment of a Prime Evil at a moment when the failure to act could have resulted in catastrophic consequences.

The Board acknowledges the seriousness of the danger confronting the Horadrim.

It further acknowledges that Tal Rasha appears to have volunteered for the undertaking with knowledge that it would involve extraordinary suffering.

The Board does not presume that his decision was irrational.

Nor does it presume that an individual who voluntarily accepts suffering for the protection of others is necessarily incapable of meaningful consent.

Indeed, respect for personal autonomy requires recognition that individuals may make decisions involving substantial sacrifice.

The protection of autonomy cannot be reduced to preventing persons from making choices that others consider unwise.

However, the Board distinguishes between respecting an individual's decision and determining whether an institution acted properly in accepting that decision.

These are separate ethical questions.

A person may consent to undertake an extraordinary risk.

The institution accepting that consent may nevertheless possess obligations concerning disclosure, necessity, alternatives, and subsequent care.

The existence of consent does not resolve every question concerning the conduct of the parties who rely upon it.

The Board recognizes Tal Rasha's right to make an extraordinary sacrifice.

It does not recognize that sacrifice as automatically extinguishing the obligations of those who accepted it.

The inquiry shall therefore proceed.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. The Pursuit of Baal

Following the Dark Exile, the Horadrim undertook the pursuit and containment of the Prime Evils.

Baal, Lord of Destruction, presented an exceptionally dangerous target.

His continued freedom threatened mortal populations throughout Sanctuary.

The Horadrim possessed soulstones provided through Tyrael's intervention.

These artifacts were intended to imprison the essences of the Prime Evils.

The Board recognizes that the strategy represented a substantial attempt to protect Sanctuary from threats beyond the capabilities of ordinary mortal institutions.

Nevertheless, the success of the strategy depended upon the continued integrity of the artifacts.

B. Failure of the Soulstone

During the effort to capture Baal, the soulstone intended for his imprisonment was shattered.

The remaining fragments retained some capacity to bind the demon's essence but were insufficient to provide the intended confinement independently.

The Board recognizes this as an emergency involving the failure of critical containment equipment.

The Horadrim faced a choice under circumstances of extreme danger.

Allowing Baal to escape risked renewed destruction.

Attempting to contain him with the damaged artifact introduced substantial uncertainty.

The available evidence indicates that a human host possessing exceptional strength of will might serve as an extension of the damaged soulstone.

Such an arrangement would require that individual to struggle against Baal's essence for an indefinite period.

C. Tal Rasha's Decision

Tal Rasha volunteered to serve as the living prison.

The Board recognizes that his choice was made in circumstances involving knowledge of Baal's extraordinary power.

The historical account indicates that the sacrifice was understood to involve enduring torment.

The Board therefore does not characterize Tal Rasha as an uninformed civilian unexpectedly subjected to a concealed procedure.

He was a Horadric mage possessing specialized knowledge.

His experience and position are relevant to the evaluation of his consent.

Nevertheless, specialized knowledge does not eliminate the possibility of incomplete information.

Nor does the willingness to accept suffering demonstrate that every consequence was fully understood.

D. The Binding

The remaining soulstone fragment was driven into Tal Rasha's chest.

He was bound within an underground chamber in the desert of Aranoch.

The confinement arrangement included extraordinary physical and magical restraints.

The Horadrim sealed the chamber.

Tal Rasha remained within, struggling against the influence of Baal.

The Board recognizes that the arrangement succeeded in containing the Lord of Destruction for an extended period.

The eventual breach of the confinement is addressed separately.

III. THE QUESTION OF CONSENT

The Board identifies consent as central to the present inquiry.

It recognizes that an individual's voluntary agreement may provide substantial ethical justification for actions that would otherwise constitute impermissible interference.

However, consent must be evaluated according to its circumstances.

The Board therefore distinguishes several elements.

A. Capacity

The individual must possess sufficient ability to understand the nature of the proposed action.

B. Information

The individual must receive, or otherwise possess, adequate knowledge of material risks and consequences.

C. Voluntariness

The decision must not be obtained through coercion or manipulation that defeats meaningful choice.

D. Specificity

The consent must relate to the intervention actually undertaken.

E. Continuing Relevance

Where an intervention endures or changes materially, questions may arise concerning the scope and continued applicability of the original consent.

The Board recognizes that emergency circumstances may prevent the use of ordinary deliberative procedures.

It further recognizes that an individual possessing exceptional expertise may understand certain risks without requiring extensive explanation.

Nevertheless, the urgency of an emergency does not render consent irrelevant.

Nor does it automatically establish that every expression of willingness is adequately informed.

The Board therefore finds that Tal Rasha's voluntary participation is established by the historical account, while the precise scope of his informed consent warrants additional examination.

IV. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN CHOICE AND NECESSITY

The Board considers whether Tal Rasha possessed meaningful alternatives.

The circumstances were extraordinary.

The soulstone had been damaged.

Baal threatened to escape.

Failure to contain him could have resulted in widespread suffering.

Under such conditions, Tal Rasha may have perceived his own sacrifice as the only acceptable course.

The Board recognizes that moral necessity may influence an individual's choices without rendering those choices involuntary.

A person who volunteers to rescue others from danger may sincerely choose the undertaking even where every available alternative carries grave consequences.

The absence of a comfortable alternative does not automatically eliminate agency.

However, the Board distinguishes between circumstances that create difficult choices and conduct by an institution that improperly restricts those choices.

The question is therefore not simply whether Tal Rasha faced pressure.

He plainly did.

The question is whether the pressure arose from the emergency itself or from coercive conduct by those who accepted his offer.

The available record does not establish that the Horadrim compelled Tal Rasha to volunteer.

Nor does it establish that Tyrael threatened him into submission.

The Board therefore makes no finding of coercion by either party.

Nevertheless, the extraordinary circumstances warrant examination of whether alternative containment methods were reasonably available.

An individual's willingness to accept the most severe available option does not eliminate an institution's responsibility to consider whether a less severe option could achieve the same protective purpose.

V. ON THE USE OF A PERSON AS AN INSTRUMENT

The Board next considers the ethical implications of employing a sentient person as a containment mechanism.

The original Horadric strategy involved the use of soulstones.

These were artifacts designed to imprison dangerous entities.

Following the damage to Baal's soulstone, Tal Rasha became an essential component of the substitute arrangement.

His body and spirit were thereby placed in service of a function ordinarily assigned to an inanimate artifact.

The Board recognizes that human beings may voluntarily employ their bodies in dangerous protective activities.

Individuals may undertake rescue operations, confront hostile forces, or accept personal injury in the defense of others.

Such conduct is not inherently unethical.

However, the substitution of a person for a failed instrument raises particular concerns.

An artifact may be maintained, repaired, replaced, or destroyed according to its physical properties.

A person possesses interests that cannot be reduced to operational usefulness.

The Board therefore distinguishes between a person who voluntarily performs a dangerous function and an institution that subsequently regards that person solely as the function being performed.

Tal Rasha's consent did not eliminate his status as a person.

His usefulness in containing Baal did not render his suffering irrelevant.

Nor did the dependence of Sanctuary upon the arrangement automatically transform his interests into matters of secondary importance.

A person may voluntarily become indispensable to a system.

It does not follow that the person ceases to matter independently of that system.

VI. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HORADRIM

The Board considers the obligations of the Horadrim after Tal Rasha volunteered.

The original emergency required urgent action.

The Horadrim possessed substantial reasons to accept an available method of containing Baal.

The Board therefore recognizes that refusal to accept Tal Rasha's sacrifice might itself have carried grave ethical consequences.

If no feasible alternative existed, refusing his voluntary offer could have exposed large populations to destruction.

The Board does not presume that ethical responsibility required the Horadrim to reject the sacrifice.

However, acceptance created responsibilities distinct from the original decision.

These responsibilities may have included:

1. Ensuring that Tal Rasha understood the contemplated procedure.

2. Confirming that his decision was voluntary.
3. Considering alternatives compatible with the emergency.
4. Implementing the procedure with due regard for the risks.
5. Preserving knowledge of the arrangement.
6. Maintaining the integrity of the containment site.
7. Considering subsequent developments that might permit safer or less burdensome confinement.
8. Preserving Tal Rasha's status as a person rather than treating him solely as an instrument.

The Board acknowledges that some of these responsibilities may have been impossible to discharge fully.

The containment site could not necessarily be accessed without risking Baal's release.

Periodic direct examination might have endangered Tal Rasha and the broader population.

Accordingly, the Board does not impose a requirement of physical intervention regardless of consequences.

It instead identifies a responsibility to consider what could reasonably be done.

The existence of an obligation does not establish the feasibility of every conceivable means of fulfilling it.

Equally, the difficulty of fulfilling an obligation does not automatically establish that the obligation never existed.

VII. THE ROLE OF TYRAEL

The Board next examines the involvement of Tyrael.

As the celestial founder of the Horadrim and the provider of the soulstones, Tyrael possessed an important role in the containment strategy.

His knowledge substantially exceeded that available to ordinary mortals.

The Board recognizes that this knowledge may have enabled the Horadrim to undertake actions otherwise impossible.

However, the respondent's superior expertise also raises questions concerning disclosure and responsibility.

The Board therefore requests clarification concerning the information available to Tyrael at the time of Tal Rasha's sacrifice.

Did Tyrael understand the long-term limitations of the damaged soulstone?

Did he anticipate the possibility that Baal might eventually dominate the host?

Did he consider the possibility of replacing the containment arrangement?

Were the risks associated with indefinite confinement communicated to Tal Rasha?

What continuing responsibilities did Tyrael believe he retained?

The Board recognizes that Tyrael may have possessed incomplete knowledge.

His celestial nature does not establish omniscience.

Nor does the fact that he participated in the binding establish that he could later reverse it.

Nevertheless, the Board finds that superior knowledge may create an obligation to disclose material risks to persons who rely upon that knowledge.

The Board further identifies a potential conflict between celestial strategic interests and the welfare of a mortal volunteer.

The containment of Baal served a substantial protective purpose.

Tyrael's responsibility to protect Sanctuary did not necessarily eliminate his obligations toward the individual whose sacrifice made that protection possible.

The Board recognizes the legitimacy of seeking to save an entire civilization.

It does not recognize that objective as an automatic exemption from responsibilities toward the person asked to bear its cost.

VIII. ON THE MEANING OF INDEFINITE CONFINEMENT

The Board identifies the anticipated duration of Tal Rasha's confinement as a matter of exceptional ethical significance.

The arrangement was intended to endure indefinitely.

The historical account describes a struggle that might continue for eternity.

The Board recognizes that the precise metaphysical meaning of eternity may differ from ordinary mortal understandings of time.

Nevertheless, the anticipated absence of a defined endpoint materially affected the nature of the sacrifice.

A person volunteering for a dangerous operation of limited duration makes a different decision from a person volunteering for confinement without an established possibility of release.

The Board therefore considers whether Tal Rasha understood the sacrifice as potentially permanent.

The surviving account strongly indicates that he did.

However, the Board distinguishes understanding the anticipated duration from understanding every possible consequence of that duration.

A person may knowingly accept indefinite suffering while remaining unable to predict the character of that suffering after centuries of exposure to a Prime Evil.

The Board does not conclude that this uncertainty necessarily invalidated Tal Rasha's consent.

Some risks cannot be fully known in advance.

Nevertheless, uncertainty concerning the nature and severity of an extraordinary intervention increases the importance of institutional caution.

Consent to an indefinite undertaking is not equivalent to complete knowledge of every consequence that may arise during its continuation.

IX. ON THE RIGHT TO RECONSIDER

The Board next considers whether Tal Rasha's original consent could be reconsidered.

Ordinarily, meaningful autonomy includes some capacity to revise a previous decision.

However, the circumstances of his confinement were exceptional.

Releasing Tal Rasha could also release Baal.

The interests of other persons were therefore directly implicated.

The Board recognizes that the freedom to withdraw from an undertaking may be limited where withdrawal would foreseeably impose catastrophic harm upon others.

Nevertheless, the existence of those interests does not render the original volunteer's wishes irrelevant.

The Board therefore distinguishes between three propositions.

First, Tal Rasha might have retained an interest in reconsidering his decision.

Second, the Horadrim might have lacked a safe means of honoring a request for release.

Third, the inability to provide release would not automatically eliminate the responsibility to investigate less harmful alternatives.

The available record does not establish that Tal Rasha sought release while retaining independent control of his judgment.

Nor does it establish that a safe alternative existed.

The Board therefore makes no finding that the Horadrim improperly denied an actual request for withdrawal.

It does, however, identify the absence of an established reconsideration procedure as ethically significant.

A person's inability to be released safely does not establish that their continued suffering is no longer a matter of institutional concern.

X. THE PROBLEM OF CONTINUING CONSCIOUSNESS

The Board considers the uncertain condition of Tal Rasha during his confinement.

The historical account indicates that his essence struggled against Baal.

However, the extent to which his independent consciousness survived throughout the confinement remains uncertain.

This uncertainty materially affects the ethical inquiry.

If Tal Rasha retained awareness and independent agency, his ongoing experiences constituted a continuing interest of the person who originally volunteered.

If Baal eventually overwhelmed his identity, the nature of the injury and the possibility of subsequent intervention would differ.

The Board cannot conclusively establish the precise chronology of these conditions from the available record.

Accordingly, it declines to presume either uninterrupted independent consciousness or its immediate destruction.

The Board nevertheless finds that uncertainty concerning consciousness does not eliminate the significance of the original sacrifice.

Nor does it establish that the resulting arrangement was harmless.

The possibility that Tal Rasha endured prolonged suffering must be considered.

The possibility that his identity was eventually overwhelmed must also be considered.

Neither possibility converts him into an ordinary object.

The disappearance of a person's capacity to speak does not establish the disappearance of that person's moral standing.

XI. THE QUESTION OF PERIODIC REVIEW

The Board now examines whether the Horadrim possessed a responsibility to reassess Tal Rasha's confinement as circumstances changed.

The original decision occurred during an emergency.

However, the arrangement continued long after the immediate battle.

During that period, knowledge of soulstones and infernal containment developed.

The Board recognizes that the emergence of new knowledge does not necessarily establish that the original decision was mistaken.

Nevertheless, developments may alter what continuing conduct is justified.

A measure necessary at one moment may become avoidable at another.

The Board therefore identifies a potential obligation to consider whether subsequent discoveries could reduce Tal Rasha's burden without endangering Sanctuary.

Such consideration might have occurred through research conducted away from the containment site.

It might have involved the examination of alternative artifacts or methods.

It might have required consultation among surviving Horadrim.

The Board does not presume that direct inspection was appropriate.

Indeed, the deliberate restriction of access to the tomb may have been essential to maintaining security.

The relevant obligation is therefore not a requirement to open the chamber periodically.

It is a requirement to consider whether meaningful alternatives have become available.

Review does not necessarily require intervention.

It requires that the original decision not become permanently immune to reconsideration merely because it was once necessary.

XII. THE SECURITY OF THE TOMB

The Board next considers the physical and magical measures established to prevent Baal's release.

The Horadrim concealed Tal Rasha within a sealed burial chamber.

The arrangement included extraordinary restraints and mechanisms intended to prevent unauthorized access.

The construction of multiple tombs and the use of specialized Horadric instruments complicated efforts to locate and enter the true chamber.

The Board recognizes these measures as substantial security precautions.

It therefore rejects any characterization of the arrangement as an unguarded or casually accessible prison.

Nevertheless, the eventual breach demonstrates that the safeguards were not absolute.

The Board considers whether this outcome establishes negligence.

It provisionally concludes that breach alone is insufficient.

A security system may fail despite reasonable design when confronted by extraordinary hostile capabilities.

The relevant inquiry concerns whether the measures were reasonable in relation to the threats that could have been anticipated.

The possibility that another Prime Evil might attempt to release Baal was foreseeable in general terms.

The specific means through which that effort would occur may not have been.

The Board therefore requests evidence concerning the original threat assessment.

Did the Horadrim anticipate intervention by Diablo?

Did they consider manipulation of uninformed mortals?

Did they establish safeguards against individuals attempting to remove the soulstone under the belief that they were rescuing a prisoner?

These questions remain open.

The Board recognizes that the tomb was difficult to enter.

It does not presume that difficulty of entry addressed every means by which the containment could be compromised.

XIII. THE EVENTUAL BREACH

The historical record establishes that the Dark Wanderer, acting under Diablo's influence, traveled to Tal Rasha's tomb.

Marius accompanied him.

Within the chamber, Baal manipulated Marius into removing the soulstone fragment from Tal Rasha's body.

The removal permitted Baal's release.

The Board recognizes that Marius did not necessarily understand the nature of the entity requesting assistance.

Indeed, the deception depended upon his belief that he was helping a suffering person.

The Board therefore distinguishes between the immediate physical act of removing the fragment and the intent underlying that act.

Marius's conduct materially contributed to the breach.

However, material contribution does not automatically establish equivalent culpability.

The relevant circumstances include his knowledge, the representations made to him, his capacity to recognize the deception, and the extraordinary conditions in which he acted.

The Board makes no final finding concerning Marius's responsibility.

It does, however, identify the method of breach as instructive.

The containment arrangement was not defeated solely through superior force.

It was defeated through manipulation of a mortal observer.

The entity responsible exploited the appearance of suffering and the impulse to provide assistance.

The Board therefore recognizes a tragic inversion.

The suffering that had resulted from Tal Rasha's protective sacrifice became part of the deception through which the imprisoned entity obtained release.

This outcome requires careful consideration.

A system designed to contain a malicious intelligence must account, where reasonably possible, for that intelligence's capacity to manipulate the moral judgments of those who encounter it.

XIV. THE ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY OF BAAL

The Board considers the direct responsibility of Baal for the eventual failure of containment.

Baal was the entity whose actions created the original danger.

His continued destructive capacity necessitated the Horadrim's intervention.

The confinement arrangement was established to prevent further harm.

The eventual breach occurred through deliberate infernal manipulation.

The Board therefore rejects the proposition that the Horadrim's responsibility for containment eliminates Baal's responsibility for attempting to escape through deception.

Responsibility may be distributed among multiple actors without becoming identical.

The existence of an institutional duty to prevent harm does not absolve the person deliberately causing that harm.

Likewise, the presence of a malicious actor does not eliminate the need to evaluate safeguards intended to restrain that actor.

The Board therefore distinguishes between direct wrongdoing and possible institutional deficiency.

Baal's manipulation presents substantial grounds for a finding of direct responsibility.

Whether the Horadrim could reasonably have prevented the breach remains a separate question.

The Board further observes that the use of Tal Rasha's apparent suffering as a means of obtaining assistance was particularly grave.

The conduct exploited the moral concern of another person while advancing the interests of the entity responsible for the original suffering.

The Board recognizes that Baal sought release from confinement.

It does not recognize that desire as sufficient justification for deception resulting in renewed danger to Sanctuary.

XV. WHETHER THE SACRIFICE WAS IN VAIN

The Board identifies a question frequently arising in retrospective assessments of extraordinary sacrifice.

Tal Rasha's confinement eventually failed.

Baal escaped.

The Lord of Destruction subsequently resumed activity within Sanctuary.

Does this establish that Tal Rasha's sacrifice was futile?

The Board concludes that it does not.

The ethical and practical value of a protective action cannot necessarily be determined solely by whether its benefits endure forever.

A measure may preserve lives for generations and later fail.

Its later failure does not eliminate the lives previously preserved.

Nor does a subsequent catastrophe retroactively establish that every preceding protective action lacked value.

The Board therefore distinguishes between temporary effectiveness and permanent success.

Tal Rasha's sacrifice delayed Baal's return.

That delay possessed substantial protective significance.

The Board does not attempt to calculate the precise number of lives preserved.

The available record does not permit such a calculation.

Nevertheless, it recognizes that the containment provided Sanctuary with a period of protection that would otherwise have been unavailable.

The eventual breach therefore establishes that the arrangement was not permanent.

It does not establish that the sacrifice accomplished nothing.

The Board rejects the proposition that a sacrifice must succeed forever in order to have mattered.

XVI. THE PROBLEM OF POSTHUMOUS PRAISE

The Board considers the manner in which institutions commemorate extraordinary sacrifice.

Tal Rasha became a figure of great significance in Horadric history.

His name became associated with exceptional courage, magical expertise, and selfless service.

The Board recognizes the importance of honoring persons who undertake grave risks for others.

Commemoration may preserve institutional memory.

It may also communicate values that guide future conduct.

However, praise presents an ethical difficulty where it becomes a substitute for examining the circumstances of sacrifice.

An institution may celebrate the willingness of an individual to suffer while failing to consider whether the suffering could have been reduced.

It may preserve the individual's name while neglecting the responsibilities associated with the individual's continuing condition.

It may describe a sacrifice as noble while leaving unanswered the question of whether it was necessary.

The Board does not suggest that honoring Tal Rasha was improper.

It suggests that honor and accountability are separate obligations.

A monument may recognize extraordinary service.

It cannot perform an inspection.

A historical account may preserve the memory of courage.

It cannot independently establish that the underlying containment remained safe.

A declaration of gratitude may express genuine appreciation.

It does not automatically fulfill every obligation owed to the person being thanked.

The Board recognizes that Tal Rasha became a legend.

It does not recognize legend as a substitute for care.

XVII. THE QUESTION OF MORAL DEBT

The Board now considers whether those protected by Tal Rasha's sacrifice incurred obligations toward him.

The Board does not adopt a theory under which every beneficiary of a voluntary sacrifice becomes personally indebted to the volunteer.

Such a principle would impose obligations upon persons who had no meaningful role in the decision.

Nor does the Board suggest that future generations must surrender their autonomy in repayment for the actions of their predecessors.

Nevertheless, the institution accepting the sacrifice may acquire responsibilities arising from its participation.

These responsibilities need not take the form of a debt capable of repayment.

Indeed, Tal Rasha's suffering may have been beyond compensation.

The Board instead considers the obligations of recognition, care, preservation of knowledge, and continued examination of available alternatives.

The relevant relationship is not merely transactional.

Tal Rasha did not necessarily offer his suffering in exchange for a benefit.

He acted to prevent catastrophe.

His decision may have been motivated by duty, compassion, courage, or some combination of these.

The Board does not presume to assign a single motive.

It nevertheless recognizes that the Horadrim knowingly accepted a benefit secured through the extraordinary suffering of one of their members.

That acceptance created an ethical relationship that did not automatically end when the tomb was sealed.

Gratitude is not ownership.

Sacrifice is not a contract of abandonment.

And the receipt of an extraordinary benefit may create responsibilities even where the person providing that benefit demands nothing in return.

XVIII. THE LIMITS OF INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Board recognizes a necessary limitation.

An obligation must be evaluated in relation to the means reasonably available to fulfill it.

The Horadrim could not necessarily alleviate Tal Rasha's suffering without releasing Baal.

They may have lacked the technology, magical knowledge, or resources necessary to replace the original containment system.

Attempts to intervene might have exposed Sanctuary to catastrophic harm.

The Board therefore rejects any standard requiring an institution to undertake futile or disproportionately dangerous actions merely to demonstrate concern.

The presence of suffering does not establish that every possible response is justified.

Nor does an institution's moral obligation to consider alternatives establish that a safe alternative exists.

The Board therefore proposes a distinction between responsibility for an outcome and responsibility for a process.

The Horadrim could not necessarily guarantee Tal Rasha's release.

They could nevertheless bear responsibility for preserving knowledge, considering developments, and evaluating feasible measures.

Where no alternative existed, continued confinement might remain justified.

Such a conclusion would not render Tal Rasha's suffering ethically irrelevant.

It would recognize that the available choices remained tragic.

An institution may be unable to prevent suffering without thereby becoming entitled to disregard it.

XIX. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Following review of the available historical record, the Sanctuary Ethics Review Board enters the following findings.

Finding 1 — Legitimate Emergency

The Horadrim confronted an extraordinary and immediate threat following the damage to Baal's intended soulstone.

Finding 2 — Voluntary Participation

The historical record establishes that Tal Rasha volunteered to become part of the substitute containment arrangement.

Finding 3 — Significant Knowledge

Tal Rasha possessed specialized knowledge concerning the danger and the contemplated procedure.

His expertise is relevant to evaluating informed consent.

Finding 4 — Incomplete Record of Consent

The available evidence does not conclusively establish the full extent of the information provided concerning every foreseeable consequence.

This deficiency does not establish that consent was invalid.

Finding 5 — Potential Legitimacy of Acceptance

The Horadrim may have been ethically justified in accepting Tal Rasha's offer where no reasonably available alternative could prevent catastrophic harm.

Finding 6 — Continuing Personal Standing

Tal Rasha's participation as a containment instrument did not eliminate his independent moral standing.

Finding 7 — Continuing Institutional Responsibility

Acceptance of the sacrifice created grounds for continuing consideration of Tal Rasha's welfare and the feasibility of alternative containment arrangements.

Finding 8 — Limits of Reassessment

The Board does not presume that direct inspection, intervention, or release would have been safe.

Any continuing responsibility must be evaluated according to reasonably available means.

Finding 9 — Unresolved Celestial Responsibility

Tyrael's role in establishing the Horadrim and participating in the containment strategy warrants additional examination.

Finding 10 — Substantial Security Measures

The Horadrim established significant safeguards around Tal Rasha's confinement.

The eventual breach does not, by itself, prove that those safeguards were originally unreasonable.

Finding 11 — Manipulation by Baal

The eventual release involved deliberate infernal deception directed toward Marius.

The conduct of Baal must be distinguished from the responsibilities of other participants.

Finding 12 — Unresolved Culpability of Marius

The available evidence requires consideration of Marius's knowledge, understanding, and circumstances before responsibility may be assigned.

Finding 13 — Protective Value of the Sacrifice

The eventual failure of containment does not eliminate the protective significance of the period during which Baal remained imprisoned.

Finding 14 — Limits of Commemoration

Historical honor and institutional gratitude do not automatically satisfy continuing responsibilities toward the person whose sacrifice is commemorated.

Finding 15 — Ethical Significance of Alternatives

Where new methods of containment become available, institutions may possess responsibilities to consider whether they can reduce the burden imposed by an earlier emergency arrangement.

Finding 16 — No Automatic Right to Dangerous Release

The Board does not conclude that Tal Rasha's interest in personal autonomy would necessarily justify an intervention foreseeably resulting in catastrophic harm to others.

Finding 17 — No Presumption of Abandonment

The inability to relieve suffering does not establish that the suffering person has ceased to be a subject of ethical concern.

XX. QUESTIONS DIRECTED TO THE HORADRIM

The Board hereby requests responses to the following questions.

Question One:
What information did Tal Rasha possess concerning the expected consequences of the binding?

Question Two:
Was the anticipated duration of confinement explained as indefinite, permanent, or conditional?

Question Three:
What evidence established that the damaged soulstone could not be repaired or replaced?

Question Four:
What alternative methods of containing Baal were considered?

Question Five:
Did Tal Rasha independently propose the arrangement, or did another member first identify the possibility of a mortal host?

Question Six:
Was Tal Rasha afforded an opportunity to reconsider before the binding was completed?

Question Seven:
Did the Horadrim distinguish between Tal Rasha's willingness to suffer and the institution's responsibility to determine whether the procedure was necessary?

Question Eight:
What role did Tyrael play in evaluating the proposal?

Question Nine:
Were the long-term effects upon Tal Rasha's consciousness understood?

Question Ten:
What procedures existed for determining whether Baal was gaining control over the host?

Question Eleven:
Were any safe methods of communicating with Tal Rasha contemplated?

Question Twelve:
Did the Horadrim preserve records necessary to evaluate the arrangement in future generations?

Question Thirteen:
Were subsequent developments in soulstone research considered as possible grounds for reassessment?

Question Fourteen:
What safeguards were established against deceptive attempts to obtain access to the chamber?

Question Fifteen:
Did the institution contemplate the possibility that an uninformed person might interpret the imprisoned figure as a victim requiring immediate rescue?

Question Sixteen:
What continuing responsibilities did the Horadrim believe they owed Tal Rasha?

Question Seventeen:
Did any formal institution inherit those responsibilities following the order's decline?

Question Eighteen:
What evidence establishes that the arrangement remained the least harmful reasonably available method of containing Baal throughout its duration?

Question Nineteen:
What measures, if any, could have reduced Tal Rasha's suffering without compromising containment?

Question Twenty:
Did the Horadrim regard Tal Rasha as a continuing member of their institution after the chamber was sealed?

The Board considers the final question especially significant.

The answer may illuminate whether the institution understood the binding as the completion of Tal Rasha's service or the beginning of an obligation requiring continued institutional attention.

XXI. INSTITUTIONAL DETERMINATION

The Board finds that Tal Rasha's sacrifice was undertaken during an extraordinary emergency involving the threatened release of Baal.

The available historical record supports the conclusion that Tal Rasha volunteered for the undertaking.

The Board recognizes the substantial importance of his decision and the protection it provided to Sanctuary.

The Board further finds that the Horadrim possessed legitimate reasons to consider the proposed containment arrangement.

It does not conclude that acceptance of the sacrifice was necessarily improper.

However, the Board determines that the voluntary character of Tal Rasha's participation did not eliminate the continuing moral significance of his suffering.

Nor did it automatically extinguish the responsibilities of those who accepted his offer.

The Board therefore enters the following preliminary determination:

An institution may be justified in accepting an extraordinary voluntary sacrifice without thereby becoming relieved of every subsequent responsibility toward the person who made it.

The scope of those responsibilities depends upon the circumstances.

The Board does not require impossible intervention.

It does not presume that safe release was available.

It does not infer negligence solely from the eventual breach of confinement.

Nevertheless, it recognizes an obligation to preserve relevant knowledge, consider feasible alternatives, and avoid reducing the volunteer's moral status to the function performed.

The Board further determines that the later release of Baal does not retroactively eliminate the protective significance of Tal Rasha's sacrifice.

The containment's eventual failure is relevant to evaluating its durability.

It does not establish that the lives preserved during its operation were without value.

The Board therefore declines to characterize the sacrifice as either entirely successful or entirely futile.

Its consequences require a more careful assessment.

XXII. CONCLUDING OBSERVATION

There are moments in the history of a civilization when the preservation of many depends upon the sacrifice of one.

Such moments are often remembered through the language of courage.

A person steps forward.

A danger is confronted.

Others survive because someone accepts a burden they were not required to accept.

The act becomes a story.

The story becomes a legend.

And the legend, repeated through generations, may eventually obscure the person at its center.

Tal Rasha was such a person.

He was a scholar and a member of the Horadrim.

He possessed knowledge of the threat confronting Sanctuary.

He understood that Baal could not safely remain free.

When the intended instrument of containment failed, he offered himself as its replacement.

The Board recognizes the magnitude of that decision.

It further recognizes that the circumstances may have rendered every available alternative unacceptable.

The choice was not made in comfort.

It was made under the shadow of catastrophe.

Yet the extraordinary character of the moment does not eliminate the questions that followed.

Tal Rasha was bound.

The chamber was sealed.

The Horadrim departed.

And the world continued.

The danger that had threatened Sanctuary remained confined.

Communities endured.

Generations passed.

Persons who never knew Tal Rasha lived beneath a protection secured through his suffering.

His sacrifice became part of the foundation upon which their ordinary lives could continue.

The Board recognizes the value of that protection.

But the passage of time introduces a question that the original emergency could not fully resolve.

What becomes of the person whose sacrifice permits everyone else to resume living?

The world he protected may forget the danger.

It may forget the circumstances of the intervention.

It may forget the institution that accepted his sacrifice.

It may even forget the individual himself.

Yet none of these developments necessarily alters the condition of the person left behind.

The Board therefore distinguishes between the completion of a protective act and the continuation of its consequences.

The Horadrim could depart from the tomb.

Tal Rasha could not.

They could return to their communities.

He remained confined.

They could undertake new work, develop new knowledge, and eventually pass their responsibilities to others.

He remained bound to the original decision.

The asymmetry is profound.

Those who accepted the sacrifice retained the ordinary possibilities of life.

The person who offered it surrendered those possibilities for the protection of others.

This does not establish that the sacrifice was improper.

It establishes that the obligation to examine its consequences cannot be dismissed lightly.

The Board recognizes that there may have been no safe means of relieving Tal Rasha.

It recognizes that opening the chamber could have released Baal.

It recognizes that the original custodians may have lacked the means to improve the arrangement.

These limitations matter.

But the impossibility of immediate relief is not identical to the absence of responsibility.

An institution can preserve knowledge when it cannot provide rescue.

It can investigate alternatives when it cannot perform an intervention.

It can continue to regard a suffering individual as a person even when that person's circumstances prevent ordinary participation in institutional life.

And it can resist the temptation to transform an unresolved burden into a completed story merely because the story is easier to honor than the burden is to confront.

The Board finds particular significance in the relationship between sacrifice and gratitude.

Gratitude may be sincere.

It may be profound.

It may endure across generations.

But gratitude is not an action sufficient for every purpose.

To honor a sacrifice is not necessarily to fulfill the obligations arising from its acceptance.

The erection of a monument may preserve a name.

It does not establish that every reasonable effort was made to preserve the person.

The telling of a heroic story may communicate courage.

It does not answer whether the suffering could have been reduced.

The recognition of necessity may explain why a decision was made.

It does not automatically establish that the decision required no further examination.

The Board therefore regards institutional gratitude as incomplete when it excludes accountability.

This conclusion does not diminish Tal Rasha's courage.

It places responsibility alongside it.

For there is a moral difference between honoring those who suffer for others and constructing institutions that depend upon such suffering without seeking to reduce it.

The former may express gratitude.

The latter may convert extraordinary sacrifice into ordinary procedure.

That conversion is dangerous.

A civilization that repeatedly relies upon individuals to assume catastrophic burdens must eventually ask whether its protective systems are adequate.

It must distinguish between the sacrifice that could not reasonably have been avoided and the sacrifice demanded because institutions failed to prepare.

It must also recognize that the willingness of a person to suffer does not make suffering an institution's preferred solution.

Tal Rasha volunteered.

The Board accepts this.

His decision may have been courageous, informed, and ethically defensible.

But the Board declines to infer that his willingness eliminated the need for further care.

A volunteer does not cease to be a person upon becoming indispensable.

A promise to endure suffering does not necessarily authorize others to disregard that suffering.

And a sacrifice undertaken for the protection of future generations does not become meaningless merely because those generations eventually confront the same danger again.

For a time, Baal remained imprisoned.

For a time, Sanctuary was protected.

Those years mattered.

The people who lived during them mattered.

And the man who made them possible mattered.

The Board therefore refuses to evaluate Tal Rasha solely according to the eventual success or failure of the containment system.

His moral standing did not depend upon the duration of his usefulness.

His courage did not require perpetual victory to possess significance.

Nor did his willingness to sacrifice himself establish that the institutions benefiting from his decision could regard their responsibilities as permanently concluded.

The Board recognizes Tal Rasha's consent.

It does not recognize consent as abandonment.

The Board recognizes the necessity of confronting Baal.

It does not recognize necessity as an exemption from continuing care.

The Board recognizes the value of the lives preserved.

It does not recognize that value as grounds for disregarding the life upon which their preservation depended.

And the Board recognizes one final distinction.

A person may freely choose to give everything.

That choice does not entitle everyone else to conclude that nothing more is owed.

The inquiry remains open.

XXIII. DISPOSITION

SERB-006 shall remain open pending further evidence concerning the original decision, the scope of Tal Rasha's consent, the availability of alternative containment methods, and the continuing responsibilities of the Horadrim and Tyrael.

The Board enters no finding that Tal Rasha's sacrifice was involuntary.

It enters no finding that acceptance of the sacrifice was necessarily unethical.

It further enters no finding that subsequent custodians possessed a safe means of releasing him.

The Board nevertheless determines that the voluntary and heroic character of the sacrifice does not, by itself, eliminate the ethical responsibilities arising from its acceptance.

The Board reserves separate examination of the eventual breach, the manipulation of Marius, and the conduct of Baal.

No directive requiring renewed physical intervention at the historical containment site is entered.

The Board recognizes that the original arrangement has already been breached and that its historical circumstances cannot be recreated.

The present findings concern the evaluation of those circumstances and the principles relevant to future extraordinary containment decisions.

So entered.

Sanctuary Ethics Review Board
Office of Personal Autonomy and Extraordinary Sacrifice
Division of Continuing Institutional Obligations

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM A

Regarding the Sufficiency of Voluntary Consent

The Office of Personal Autonomy has received a preliminary response indicating that Tal Rasha volunteered for the binding.

The Office acknowledges this fact.

It has been entered into the record.

However, the inquiry concerns both the validity of the volunteer's decision and the responsibilities of the institution accepting that decision.

Accordingly, the statement that Tal Rasha volunteered does not independently resolve the following questions:

- Whether the risks were adequately understood.
- Whether reasonably available alternatives were considered.

- Whether the procedure was necessary.
- Whether subsequent responsibilities were established.
- Whether new information warranted reassessment.

The Office respectfully requests that the institutional respondents address these questions separately.

The Board recognizes that Tal Rasha said yes.

It asks what obligations arose when the Horadrim accepted that answer.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM B

Regarding the Duration of Confinement

The Office of Continuing Obligations has reviewed the description of the anticipated confinement as eternal.

The Office acknowledges that the term communicates an intention or expectation of indefinite duration.

It does not, however, establish that every relevant condition would remain unchanged throughout that duration.

The Office therefore requests clarification concerning whether the Horadrim contemplated any future reassessment.

The respondent is not required to demonstrate that release was feasible.

It is requested to identify whether the feasibility of alternative containment could be reconsidered if material circumstances changed.

The Office recognizes that an indefinite commitment may be necessary in extraordinary circumstances.

Nevertheless, indefinite duration does not automatically establish permanent sufficiency.

The Office respectfully observes that "eternal" is a description of duration.

It is not, by itself, a documented schedule of institutional review.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM C

Regarding the Status of Tal Rasha as a Containment Instrument

The Office of Institutional Classification has received an inquiry concerning whether Tal Rasha should be recorded as personnel, infrastructure, or a containment asset.

The Office recognizes that his body and spirit performed a function essential to the containment arrangement.

Nevertheless, the respondent was a sentient person who voluntarily assumed the undertaking.

The Office therefore determines that classification solely as equipment would be inappropriate.

Tal Rasha shall remain identified in the record as a person.

His role as a containment component may be described separately where necessary for technical analysis.

The Office further advises that the operational dependence of an institution upon a person's continuing service does not eliminate that person's independent status.

The Board respectfully requests that the term "living soulstone" not be used as a substitute for the individual's name in records concerning his welfare.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM D

Regarding the Responsibility of Tyrael

The Office of Celestial Accountability has reviewed Tyrael's participation in the original containment strategy.

The Office acknowledges his role in establishing the Horadrim and providing the soulstones.

It further acknowledges the extraordinary threat confronting Sanctuary.

Nevertheless, the Office requests clarification concerning the extent of the respondent's continuing responsibilities.

The respondent may submit evidence that intervention was impossible, excessively dangerous, or otherwise beyond his capabilities.

Such evidence will be considered.

However, the respondent's celestial status does not independently resolve the inquiry.

Nor does the designation *Archangel of Justice* establish that every decision undertaken in that capacity was necessarily just.

The Office recognizes the respondent's distinguished history of service.

The question remains whether the person who assisted in establishing the arrangement retained any duty to consider its consequences.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM E

Regarding the Eventual Release of Baal

The Office of Containment Integrity has reviewed the circumstances of the historical breach.

The available record indicates that Marius removed the soulstone fragment after being deceived by Baal.

The Office recognizes that this act materially contributed to the release.

However, the responsibility of Marius requires assessment according to his knowledge and circumstances.

The Office therefore declines to classify him as an intentional collaborator solely on the basis of the physical act.

The Office further observes that the containment arrangement was vulnerable to a form of manipulation that exploited the appearance of a suffering prisoner.

The historical design may have included substantial physical safeguards.

Their adequacy against deception requires independent examination.

The Office respectfully notes that a security measure intended to prevent the release of a Prime Evil should, where reasonably possible, account for the Prime Evil's willingness to misrepresent its identity.

The matter is referred for further review.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM F

Regarding the Evaluation of Heroic Sacrifice

The Office of Institutional Ethics has received an inquiry concerning whether further investigation might diminish the honor properly afforded to Tal Rasha.

The Office acknowledges the concern.

It does not agree that ethical examination is incompatible with respect.

The purpose of the inquiry is not to invalidate the volunteer's courage.

Nor is it to characterize his decision as necessarily mistaken.

Rather, the inquiry concerns the obligations of those who benefited from and participated in the sacrifice.

The Board therefore considers the distinction between honoring an individual and exempting an institution from scrutiny.

The former may be appropriate.

The latter requires separate justification.

The Board respectfully observes that examining whether a person was adequately protected does not constitute an insult to the person who accepted danger.

The objection is overruled.

FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE NOTICE

SERB-006 — ON THE CONTINUING STATUS OF THE VOLUNTEER

The Board has completed its preliminary consideration of the proposition that Tal Rasha's voluntary participation terminated all subsequent institutional responsibilities.

The proposition is not sustained.

The Board recognizes that the original undertaking was extraordinary.

It further recognizes that safe release may have been impossible.

Nevertheless, the Board does not accept that a person who freely assumes a grave burden thereby relinquishes all ethical claims upon the institution accepting that burden.

The scope of continuing responsibility must be evaluated according to circumstances.

The Board makes no determination requiring impossible action.

It does, however, reject the proposition that the sealing of the chamber necessarily concluded every relevant obligation.

The Board recognizes that the Horadrim were permitted to depart.

Tal Rasha was not.

The distinction is entered into the record.

No further explanation concerning the heroic nature of the sacrifice is required.

That matter is not in dispute.

The question concerns what followed.

END OF SERB-006

NEXT PROPOSED INQUIRY

SERB-007 — ZOLTUN KULLE

On Arcane Research Ethics, Institutional Dissent, Unauthorized Experimentation, and the Presumption That Discovery Justifies Its Methods

Preliminary Notice:

The Board recognizes that Zoltun Kulle made significant contributions to Horadric knowledge.

It further recognizes that his research into soulstones produced discoveries of extraordinary consequence.

However, the value of a discovery does not necessarily establish the ethical legitimacy of the methods employed to obtain it.

The Board requests clarification concerning the use of human subjects, the treatment of dissent, the concentration of experimental authority, and the development of the Black Soulstone.

The respondent may submit evidence concerning the scientific necessity of disputed procedures.

The Board further invites the Horadrim to provide documentation concerning their response to his research.

The Office respectfully reminds the respondent that being correct about an artifact's capabilities does not establish unlimited authority over everyone potentially affected by the experiment.

The inquiry is reserved.

END OF DOCUMENT