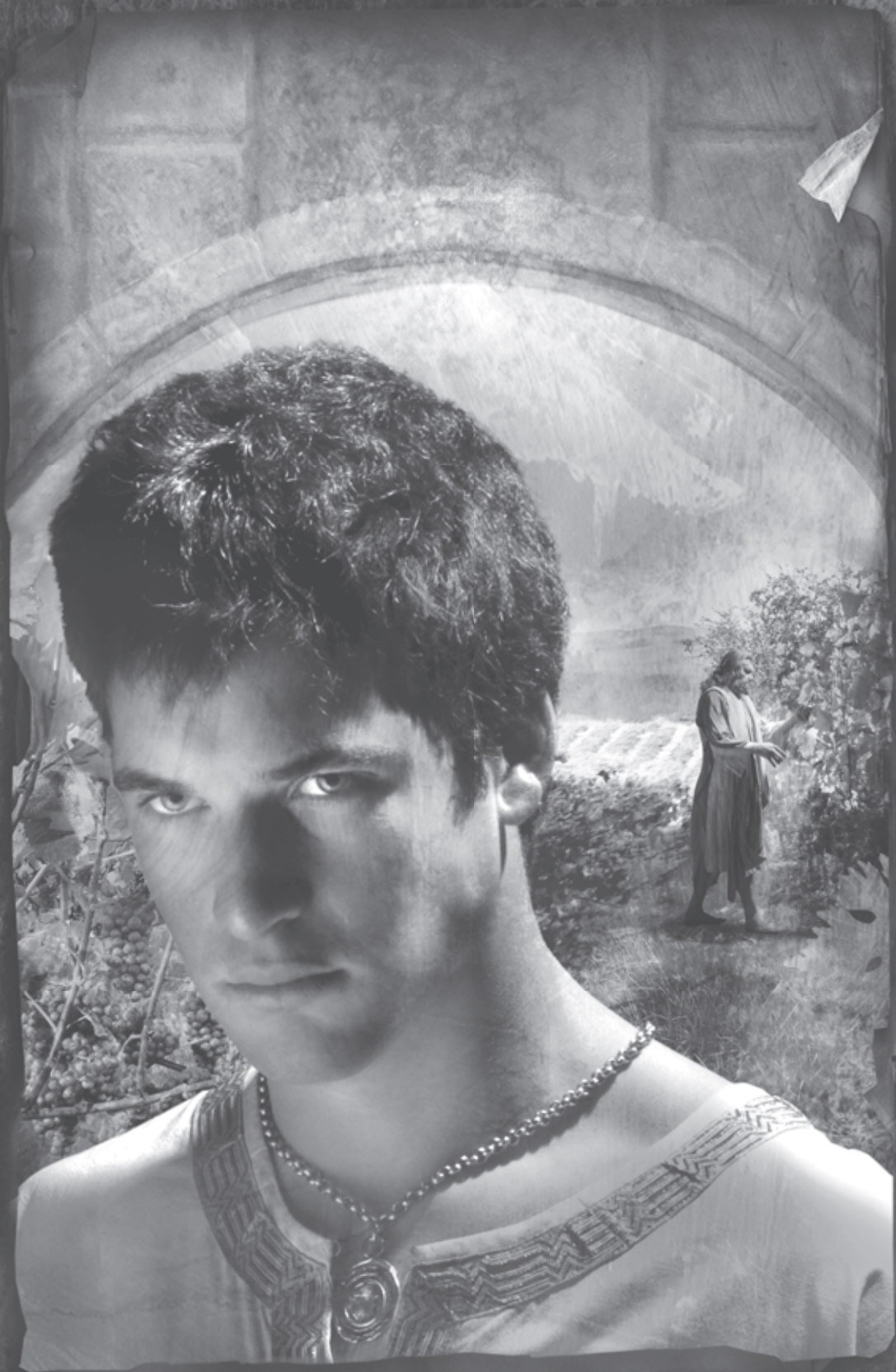


tenth stone



BOOK TEN



A.D. CHRONICLES®

tenth stone



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Tenth Stone

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For Sarah Palin—America's Northern Light

Psalm 20

Yeshua did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

JOHN 21:25

Prologue

London was cloaked in the perpetual dusk of January. The sky was heavy from midday on. The leafless trees of Regent's Park scraped the gloomy underbelly of the clouds.

Shimon Sachar, wrapped in his heavy Burberry overcoat, sat on a cold bench outside the ticket booth of the Outdoor Theatre. The bushes of Queen Mary's Rose Garden, which bloomed in the summer months, were pruned back to stubs.

Shimon adjusted his hat and tan plaid scarf until only his nose and eyes were visible.

He glanced at his watch—3:37 p.m.

“Late,” Shimon muttered, wondering if the old man would show up.

Shimon missed the sun and warmth of Jerusalem. Even in winter the weather of Israel was as comfortable to him as his own skin. It was during the cold weather like today that he especially regretted agreeing to fill the guest lectureship at the University of London left vacant at the death of his father.

Soon enough he would be home again.

This clandestine meeting with an old colleague of his father's was

his last London duty as the son of Moshe Sachar before he boarded the El Al jet and flew south like a sensible bird.

But where was the old man?

Shimon had never met “Abe” Golah before, but he had grown up hearing Moshe tell stories about him during World War II. Moshe had never missed the opportunity to meet with Abe every time he passed through London. Abe had been unable to come to Moshe’s funeral in Jerusalem. A letter of condolence had arrived two weeks later and, with it, an intriguing note in Moshe’s handwriting . . . rather, half a note. The paper was torn in two but contained instructions to Shimon to contact Abe and meet with him in London before the year was out.

So. Here Shimon was, with a torn slip of paper in his pocket and no idea why his father had commanded him from beyond the grave to travel to London to meet with Eben Golah.

It was getting dark. Shimon decided he would wait only until 4:00. If Abe did not appear by then, they would both be lost in the early winter twilight in Regent’s Park.

Shimon pulled his folded copy of the *Times* from his coat pocket and scanned the latest war news from Iraq. Violence had escalated in Fallujah. The count of British and American casualties continued to rise.

Depressing news. Not meant to be read on a lonely park bench on a freezing cold afternoon.

A stiff breeze picked up errant leaves that skittered across the sidewalk. From somewhere across the park, Shimon heard what he thought was the piercing cry of a hawk. Raising his chin, he caught sight of the aviary in the London Zoo. He regretted that he had not been to visit it and now probably never would.

Shimon opened the newspaper and covered the slats of the bench with it for insulation.

A voice behind him spoke. “Fallujah. In the news again.”

Shimon spun around, expecting to see a wizened old man. Instead, he found himself face-to-face with a tall, well-built man probably in his midthirties.

The hawk called again. From the aviary? Or closer?

Green eyes glinted with amusement and crinkled at the corners. “You’re Moshe’s boy.” It was not a question.

“I’m Shimon Sachar.” He extended his hand.

Firm grip. Strong shake of the hand. “You look just like him,” said the stranger.

“Thanks. I mean, I was expecting to meet a friend of my father’s. . . .”

The stranger replied as he sat down on the headlines, “Your father was a great man. Always.”

Perhaps something had happened to the old man, Shimon thought. Perhaps the cold had kept him indoors, so he had sent someone in his place.

“And you are . . . a friend of Mister Golah?”

Again the smile flashed. He tugged at his gloves. “Sit, Shimon. You look so much like Moshe at the same age.”

Shimon remained standing. Suspicious now, he glanced over his shoulder at the thought that perhaps the meeting was not as it was supposed to be. “You’ve seen photos of my father.”

“Anyone who studies biblical archaeology has seen photos of Moshe Sachar.”

“Where is Mister Golah?” Shimon instinctively centered his balance as though he expected an attack.

“Here.” The stranger patted his chest. “I am Eben Golah.”

“What’s the joke?” Shimon asked. “My father has known Mister Golah since . . .”

“1941. The political coup against British rule in Iraq. Moshe and I fought against the Nazi-trained Muslim nationalists together. The grandfathers of the very same chaps who are fighting in Fallujah today. Same war, really. Ancient war.” He tapped the bench. “Do sit down, Shimon. Your father wanted me to meet with you after his death.” He produced the other half of Moshe’s letter and placed it in Shimon’s gloved hand.

Yes. It matched. But how had this fellow come by it? What did he want? Where was the old man? Eben Golah, the exile. His father’s friend.

“You’re too young to be . . .”

The stranger smiled gently. “Age one way or the other is a foolish supposition from a man who knows the secrets beneath Yerushalayim.”

Shimon’s breath caught. “What . . . what are you saying?”

“You know what I’m saying. The tunnel that leads from your father’s study. The grooves in the roof of the tunnel.” He held up his fingers. *One, two, three.* “Shimon . . .”

“Where is Eben Golah? He must be at least eighty-five years old.”

“At least.”

Shimon stared at him, refusing to believe. Yet there was something about his eyes—behind his look of confidence. He knew the secret. But how?

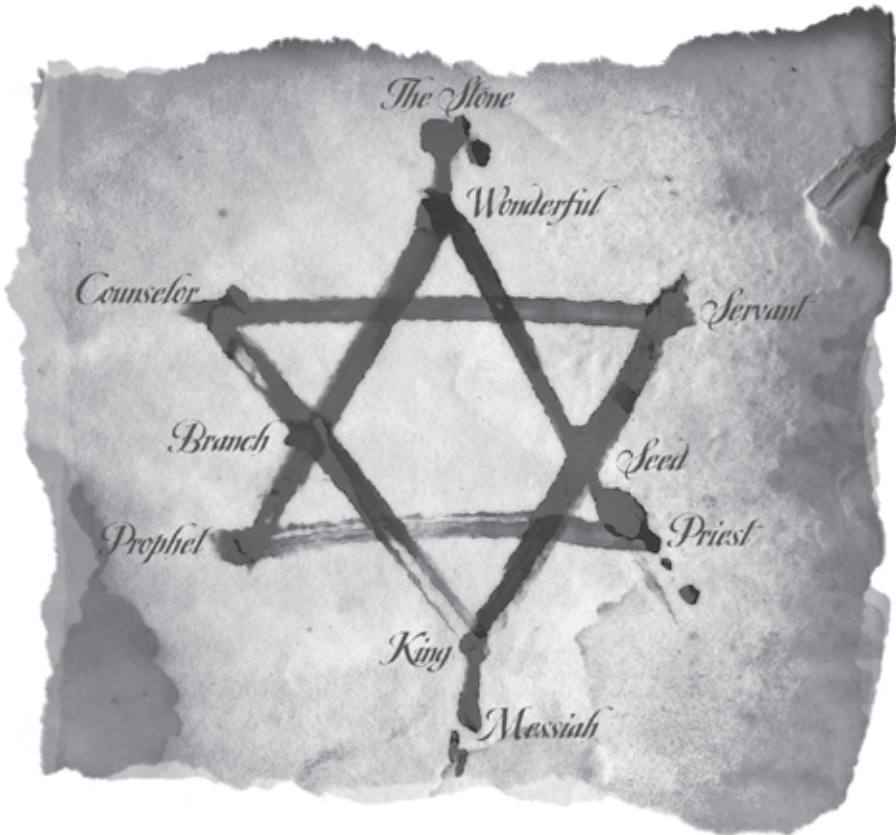
“What do you want from me?” Shimon asked.

The stranger produced a padded envelope. “There is something in the Chamber of Scrolls that you must see.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Open it. Take out the page.”

Shimon complied. A fragment of what appeared to be ancient papyrus was sealed in a plastic sleeve. Ten Hebrew words were written on it in what appeared to be first-century script, interconnected by lines forming the geometric pattern of the Star of David.



The stranger said, "You know this pattern."

"The foundation stones." Shimon nodded. "Fallujah. 1941. My father was taken to the site by a man. . . ." He raised his gaze.

The stranger was smiling. Confident of what he knew and who he was. "Eben Golah," he whispered.

Could it be? Shimon wondered, scanning the youthful face and strong white teeth.

"There was a story Papa used to tell," Shimon said slowly. "At least I always believed it was just a story . . . the reason the battles were so fierce in that location."

"You are the guardian of the truth now. It dates from the exile from Eden."

"How can this be?"

"He healed them all."

"Healed . . . but for how long?"

"I'm not alone. There are others."

"You say you want nothing from me?"

"Read what your father wrote. . . . Go on. A few words to ponder, but they explain the headlines, eh? Go ahead. I've got time. He knew this day must come."

Shimon fit the two halves of the note together. Moshe's blocky Hebrew handwriting was unmistakable.

Shimon, my dear son,

Meet

Golah Geulah

ALEF NUN

BET BET

NUN ALEF

The stranger squinted at the lowering sky. At the top of a giant plane tree a hawk swayed on a dancing branch. "It will be dark soon. I have never become accustomed to the long nights of these northern winters." He stood. "You're going home? Israel?"

Shimon nodded and tucked the thick envelope beneath the protection of his coat. "Yes. Tomorrow."

"When you return, there is a jar. Tenth on the tenth row in the first

room. You'll find all the proof you need there." He extended his gloved hand and clapped Shimon on the back. "Your father asked me to look in on you from time to time. I'll see you again . . . soon."

Eben Golah turned on his heel and walked briskly back through the park the way he had come. The hawk launched from its lofty perch and soared above him.

It was dark by the time Shimon reached the Baker Street tube station and descended into the depths beneath the city.



PART I

“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The Kingdom of God is near you.’”

LUKE 10:8-9

I

CHAPTER

And so it had come to this.

It was the night when Rabbi Ahava's shofar echoed in the Valley of Mak'ob, summoning the lepers of Israel. All that remained of the child's life could be counted in a thousand heartbeats. She was the smallest of all the lepers in the Valley of Sorrows. Born in a cave to a diseased mother four years before, she began her life with the certainty of death on her horizon. Her mother died giving her life.

Rabbi Ahava named the baby girl Ya'el but called her Yod, after the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. "Yod," he said to the children in his Torah school, "is the most important letter, after all.

"The letter *yod* hangs above the other letters like a little bird. *Yod* begins the word *Israel* . . . Yis-ra-el." The old man held up a gnarled forefinger to inscribe the *yod* upon the air in a single crooked dash. "So Israel begins with what is smallest. As it is written in Deuteronomy, *The Lord did not set His love upon you and choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all the people.*"¹

Rabbi Ahava taught them, "Israel begins with the smallest stroke, *yod*. Israel ends with the largest letter, *lamed*. This proves that the

Almighty, blessed be he, loves all of Israel from the smallest to largest. From the youngest to the eldest. And everyone in between.”

Yod was a good name for the child. She had never known any world but the leper colony, so she was happy even in the midst of suffering. Little Yod was indeed the smallest citizen of the Valley of Sorrow. She was nursed by three women who had lost their children to the disease. Yod thrived on the milk of her surrogate mothers, though she was a tiny infant when the spot of leprosy appeared on her right hand.

Each of her mothers perished before her third birthday. All the lepers of Mak’ob, from the eldest to the youngest, were her mothers and her fathers and her brothers and sisters.

She loved the kind young man named Cantor and his wife, Lily, most of all. Perhaps she imagined that they were her true father and mother and that they could live a long and happy life as a family. Cantor praised her spirit. Fearless. Quick to learn. Yod fed Cantor’s hawk and was not afraid even when children twice her age cowered in fear of the fierce raptor. *If I am a brave girl, Cantor will want me to be his daughter*, she thought.

But it was not to be.

Cantor, handsome and kind, became sick one night and died suddenly. When he was buried, Yod hung back from all the other children who had loved him. She wept the tearless grieving of a leper . . . and became blind.

The death of Cantor shattered all hope in the Valley but one.

A baby boy was born to Lily’s friend Deborah. His name was Isra’el. Like his name, beginning with *yod* and ending with *lamed*, his life somehow represented all the dreams of the lepers of Mak’ob. From the smallest to the largest, it was decided that the baby boy must not remain in the Valley, where he would surely sicken and die. So Cantor’s grieving widow, Lily, had carried the newborn up the steep path to the Outside in order to save him.

When Lily had topped the rim of the Valley and turned to look at those who remained, Yod began to weaken. Only days passed before Yod was carried to the Dying Cave. There she remained until, at last, only one thousand heartbeats remained before the end of her life.

It is told that the last sense to leave before death is the sense of hearing.

Yod did not know how long she had been in the Dying Cave. She could not see. She had no sense of touch or taste. She could not speak.

1,000 heartbeats . . .

Yod heard the call of Rabbi Ahava's shofar. Suddenly around her there was stirring. Voices. A whisper of excitement.

"Lily's back!"

"The Great Healer!"

"The One we have been waiting for!"

"He's coming!"

"The Light!"

"The Prophet? Help me. Oh, help me!"

"Someone get me my stick."

"Yes! Messiah! Healer of Lepers!"

"Let me help you. He is here! On the stone of the bema. Teaching! Healing!"

"He has come to heal us all!"

"Hurry! Please!"

Yod heard the shuffling of feet near where she lay. Did they not see her?

There was a rustle of tattered blankets as those who shared the darkness with her moved toward the light. Had they forgotten her?

Yod tried to speak. Tried to ask for help. She could not move her hands. Her mouth, a festered sore where lips used to be, would not form even one word.

There was silence in the Dying Cave.

818 heartbeats remained.

Then a single voice called, "Anyone else? Anyone still here?"

Yod's thoughts raced. She could not form the words, *Me too! Though I'm the least! Don't forget me!*

The sounds of faraway excitement filtered in.

But Yod was alone. Forgotten. Left behind in the darkness.

749 heartbeats . . .

Outside the bonfire blazed. Torches streamed toward the source of light like molten metal about to be remade.

670 heartbeats . . .

"Me first!"

"Please, Lord!"

"Heal me first!"

But Yeshua of Nazareth commanded that the children of Mak'ob be brought to Him before any others.

612 heartbeats . . .

Rabbi Ahava identified each faceless boy and girl by name and guided them toward the arms of the Great Healer. All were thin and gaunt. Some were blind, all lame, and a few so eaten away that they were unrecognizable as human. Their faces were a mass of sores and rotting flesh. They were atrophied specters of what boys and girls should have been. Those who gathered round Yeshua were from ages twelve to six.

572 heartbeats . . .

Yeshua saw them all. He saw them each. One by one He passed down the line of thirty-two, from the tallest boy to the smallest . . . and He healed them all.

“Tell no man,” He said to Ahava. “These children are in danger. You must take them all to the synagogue of your brother.” Then He asked, “But is this every one of us? All the lepers of Israel?”

The old rabbi frowned and scanned the ranks. “Everyone?”

Yeshua questioned him. “One little lamb is missing. Counting from the smallest to the largest. *Yod to lamed*. All of Israel.”

400 . . . 399 . . . 398 . . .

Ahava’s eyes widened. “But where has she gone? There is a little girl, you see. Yod is her name . . . you know. But where is she?” The old rabbi peered into each face, behind each boy and girl. “Where is your sister?”

336 heartbeats . . .

“In the Dying Cave,” Lamed, Yod’s oldest brother, replied sadly.

Ahava stretched his hands out to the congregation. “Our little one! Our youngest child! She was in the Dying Cave. Did anyone carry Yod here?”

No one answered. A moan rose up from the congregation. Had the littlest in Israel perished just before the moment of deliverance? Had they left this one precious soul behind?

212 heartbeats . . .

Yeshua tucked His chin. Snatching a burning brand from the fire, He strode alone toward the face of the cliff. He ducked and entered the low limestone entrance of the Dying Cave.

“Yod,” He cried as her pulse raced toward the end.

All the people of Mak’ob watched in silence as the light of Yeshua’s torch fell on every rag and mound of blankets in His search for the child.

100 . . . 99 . . . 98 . . . 97 . . .

The Great Shepherd cried, “Yod! It’s Yeshua! I have been looking for you, little one! Searching . . .”

The light paused, illuminating the smoke-scarred stone of this last refuge. Yeshua planted the torch in the ground and stooped beside the tiny body. He drew back the tattered rag that covered her.

Ahava whispered, “Does she still survive?”

77 . . . 76 . . . 75 . . .

Yeshua gathered Yod into His arms and held her close.

35 . . . 34 . . . 33 . . .

He kissed her bloody cheek and stroked her hair. Tiny stubs that had been feet protruded from His arms. Moments passed as He held her.

16 . . . 15 . . . 14 . . .

The flame of the torch flickered in a sudden wind, then was extinguished.

5 . . . 4 . . . 3 . . . 2 . . .

The smallest of all Israel. The dearest of all in Israel. Yod . . . floating like a little bird above the others. . . .



Three days had passed since Yeshua of Nazareth had gone down into the Valley of Mak’ob to heal the lepers. Of all the 612 afflicted, only Lily and Cantor, healed and whole and waiting, remained now, watching, on the rim high above the valley floor.

The hawk spread his wings and swung in a lazy circle over the place of separation. There was only one man left below of all who had entered that exile of loneliness: His common name was Yeshua, which means “God is Salvation.” The prophets who foretold His coming to this valley of suffering called Him the Great Leper. They wrote what the God of Israel had commanded them concerning Messiah: *A Man of Sorrows. Acquainted with Grief.*²

But other words of prophecy had come true for the people of the Valley of Mak’ob: *By His wounds we are healed.*³

From the top of the precipice Lily and Cantor gazed at the floor of the canyon, where the outcasts of Israel had tended gardens and lived until they died.

The Valley of Israel’s Sorrow was vacant. Smokeless, blackened pits punctuated the spaces where only one day before, men and women

without hands or feet or faces had spent all their energy keeping the watch fires lit.

Lily stared at the mounds of the cemetery. She fixed her gaze on the open grave where Cantor had lain. She said, “What was here . . . and who we were before he came . . . it will be forgotten, I suppose.”

Cantor nodded, testing his voice. “When the time is right, he will call them each by name, like he called me. And they will also hear and come forth healed from their graves. Better than healed. They will walk up the steep path to where we stand now.” He stretched his hand up to Hawk in a signal that it was time to go. “Or maybe on that day we will all know how to fly.”

Lily smiled softly. “Will you tell me . . . everything?”

Cantor nodded. His eyes reflected light from a distant place. “There is no death there.”

“And where he is sending us now? The land where Eden once existed? The land he said is waiting to hear our story—that the Redeemer of Eden has come back?”

Cantor frowned for the first time since he awakened from the long sleep. “It was perfect once. I saw it as it was . . . before. There was no death until there was a murder of brother by brother.”

Lily asked, “What was it like?”

“Too much to tell. Beyond beauty . . . beyond fear. Lily, I will never be afraid again. They are all there, waiting for us, and waiting for him to return home.” Cantor inclined his head toward Yeshua.

Yeshua sat alone on the broad flat stone where Rabbi Ahava had led the minyan of ten lepers in prayers each morning. Now Yeshua, the Great Leper, healer of all, prayed alone.

Lily wondered aloud, “Cantor, do you think Yeshua will stay here? Do you think since he has healed us all and has taken our disease upon himself . . . do you think he will remain in the Valley? Will he suffer here in the place of those of us who are free?”

Cantor answered, “There are too many lost living in Israel for him to stay here for long. It is written: *He sent forth His Word and healed them; He rescued them from the grave.*⁴ And so he still has work to do. It must be fulfilled while he is on earth.”

Cantor looked up at the hawk he had trained to hunt—so very long ago it seemed. The arc of the bird’s flight grew ever higher, almost to the top of the cliff.

The bird was rising on the prayers of the Messiah, Lily thought. Flying upward with a single purpose: to do the will of the Master.

Through the unbroken spiral of the raptor, a high, shrill cry tore the fabric of the sky.

Yeshua lifted His face, ravaged by the sickness of others. He held up leprous hands in farewell to Hawk. And then He waved to the silent observers who perched on the rim of His suffering.

Cantor cupped perfect fingers around his mouth and shouted down, “Shalom! Yeshua! HaMashiach!”

The stones of the surrounding hills echoed in antiphonal song:

“Yeshua!”

“Mashiyah!”

“Shalom!”

“Shalom!”

“Yeshua!”

“Shalom!”

And there followed on the breeze a scattering of voices, living stones, who watched over the Great Leper from secret places in the cliffs.

“Give thanks . . .”

“To the Lord!”

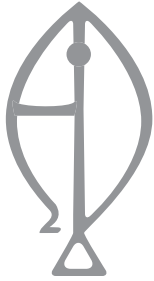
“For He is Good!”

“His Love endures forever!”

“Forever . . . forever . . . forever . . .”⁵

Lily whispered, “Though the place is empty except for him, even the stones cry out to praise him!”⁶

When the last echoes died away, Lily and Cantor turned from the Valley of Mak’ob and left that place. Hawk came along, flying from stone to stone, alternately following and preceding the newly created couple as they walked toward the place where Eden had been, to the far country where Yeshua had commanded they must go.



Digging Deeper into TENTH STONE

Dear Reader,

Have you ever wondered what your worth is to the Creator of the universe? if He would stoop to help somebody like you? Have you ever grieved for the path a loved one has taken? Or for the path you yourself have taken, and all the hurt you've caused others? Do you wonder if you could ever rebel against God so much that He'd stop caring for you? Do you fear your present circumstances—or the future?

If you've had these questions and thoughts, you're not alone.

In *Tenth Stone*, Yod, Lily, Cantor, Rabbi Ahava, and other former lepers leave the Valley of Mak'ob after they are healed by Yeshua. Yod, the littlest of the lepers, is considered of no value in society, yet to Yeshua, she is of the greatest value! He holds her in His arms as she dies and brings her back from heaven to become part of Lily and Cantor's family. Lily, who would have died in the Valley, and Cantor, who died and was brought back to life by Yeshua, were entrusted with the most important of all missions—to take the good news of Yeshua's transforming touch and redemption to those who need His hope and the freedom from fear.

Melchior and Esther grieve for Daniel, their rebellious son. They wonder what they have done wrong . . . what

they could have done differently. Should they have let him go his own way? Where could he be now? Is there any way to regain their lost son? any miracle great enough to bring him back to their arms?

It is only when Daniel, the arrogant young rebel, realizes that his undisciplined, selfish behavior has caused Lono, his devoted friend, to be beaten nearly to death that he becomes broken. How far Daniel has strayed from his childhood faith. Is it possible his life can be redeemed? Will he ever be able to return home?

Lord Tannis, who has done so much wrong in his life, harbors a secret sorrow. Would the Healer—if that's truly who Yeshua is—stoop to help someone such as him? Even if it is to restore his son, Daniel—an innocent victim of a horrible evil?

Dear reader, what plan might be unfolding in your life? Do you think God has enough grace and mercy for you, and for those you love?

Following are six studies. You may wish to delve into them on your own or share them with a friend or a discussion group. They are designed to take you deeper into the answers to these questions:

- Does God really see and hear me? Does He care? How much am I worth to Him?
- Is Yeshua who He says He is? How can I know for sure?
- Can God still love me, even if I've chosen to walk away from Him? Can I be forgiven, no matter what I've done? no matter whom I've hurt?
- How can I break free from fear?
- My heart is so broken; how can I find hope again?
- Is heaven real? And if so, what will it be like?

What are you longing for? searching for? Why not come home, as Daniel and Lord Tannis did, to Yeshua's embrace of love, warmth, and acceptance? He's waiting, just for you. In *Tenth Stone*, may the promised Messiah come alive to you . . . in more brilliance than ever before.

I | THE LEAST OF THESE

The Lord did not set His love upon you and choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all the people.

—DEUTERONOMY 7:7

What people do you consider to be “important” in today’s society? What people do you consider to be “least”? What qualifications do you use to decide “important” or “least”?

On a scale of one (being of no importance) to ten (being of great importance) to God, where would you place yourself, and why?

In the days when *Tenth Stone* took place, leprosy was greatly feared. All those who showed even a beginning spot of leprosy—even children—were sent to the Valley of Mak’ob to live out the end of their days. All who came to the Valley knew they could not leave . . . except through death. Yod, the smallest citizen of the leper colony, had never known anything but Mak’ob, since she was born there.

Yet in spite of the continual reminder of death that surrounded her, she dreamed of being Cantor and Lily's daughter—of being part of a family. Then Cantor died . . . and those in the Valley lost hope. When Lily left the Valley to take a baby boy to safety, Yod weakened and was carried to the Dying Cave. Only heartbeats remained of her life when Yeshua entered the Valley. . . .

READ

"Messiah! Healer of Lepers! . . . He is here! On the stone of the bema. Teaching! Healing!"

"He has come to heal us all!" . . .

Yod heard the shuffling of feet near where she lay. Did they not see her?

There was a rustle of tattered blankets as those who shared the darkness with her moved toward the light. . . . But Yod was alone. Forgotten. Left behind in the darkness. . . .

—P. 5

[Yeshua] asked, "But is this every one of us? All the lepers of Israel?"

The old rabbi frowned and scanned the ranks. "Everyone?"

Yeshua questioned him. "One little lamb is missing. Counting from the smallest to the largest. *Yod to lamed*. All of Israel." . . .

Ahava's eyes widened. "But where has she gone? There is a little girl, you see. Yod is her name . . . our little one! Our youngest child! She was in the Dying Cave. Did anyone carry Yod here?"

No one answered. A moan arose from the congregation. Had the littlest in Israel perished just before the moment of deliverance? Had they left this one precious soul behind?

—P. 6

ASK

If you were Yod, what would you be thinking? Would you be resigned to the fact that everyone has left you? Would you still hope in the stories of the great Healer? Why or why not?

Have you ever felt forgotten by God? In what circumstance(s)? How has that time influenced the way you think of God now? the way you live?

If you were one of the people in the Valley who had suffered so greatly and you just realized little Yod was missing, would you be most concerned with your own healing? finding Yod? Both? Something else? Explain.

READ

All the people of Mak'ob watched in silence as the light of Yeshua's torch fell on every rag and mound of blankets in His search for the child. . . .

The Great Shepherd cried, "Yod! It's Yeshua! I have been looking for you, little one! Searching . . ."

Yeshua gathered Yod into His arms and held her close. . . .

He kissed her bloody cheek and stroked her hair. Tiny stubs that had been feet protruded from his arms. Moments passed as he held her.

—PP. 6–7

"The letter *yod* hangs above the other letters like a little bird. *Yod* begins the word *Israel* . . . *Yis-ra-el* . . . So *Israel* begins with what is smallest. . . . *Israel* ends with the largest letter, *lamed*. This proves that the Almighty, blessed be he, loves all of *Israel* from the smallest to largest. From the youngest to the eldest. And everyone in between."

—PP. 3–4

ASK

Why do you think it was so important to Yeshua to find this *one little child* in the midst of the crowd?

Do you believe the Almighty loves *everyone*, from the smallest to the largest? From the youngest to the eldest? And everyone in between? Why or why not?

Do you believe the Almighty loves and values *you*, specifically? Why or why not? What has happened in your life to bring you to that conclusion?

READ

Hawk perched on the highest window ledge of the classroom. A flock of children laughed and pointed and called out. One cry rang like a bell above the others: “It’s Cantor’s hawk, I tell you!”

Lily recognized the voice of little Yod, child of the last thousand heartbeats! But she did not recognize the little girl—with curls now the color of cinnamon and bright, clear eyes a slightly darker shade of brown.

Lily gasped with joy. Cantor grasped her hand.

Yod exclaimed, “It is! Cantor’s hawk come all the way from Sorrow!”

A boy, a year or two older, agreed. “Hawk! He’s followed us here and found us!”

Children, beautiful and perfect, discussed the identity of the speckled raptor who observed them solemnly. . . .

I’m praying again, You Who Are the God of the Living . . . you who love us in this world and love us in olam haba. You saw these children always. You knew what they looked like beneath their ragged flesh and suffering. You remade them what they would have been if . . . if only there were no sickness or sorrow or death. Beautiful! . . .

How many had been destined for the Dying Cave before the evening Yeshua entered the Valley of Sorrows? Blind from leprosy, they had lost the ability to see. Robbed of speech, they had been unable to laugh . . . until Yeshua came into the Valley of their sorrow.

Throughout the long night Yeshua had healed them all . . . all . . . hands, feet, noses, and ears . . . new faces . . . laughter! Life! . . .

—PP. 103–104

What did Yeshua teach about the smallest child in His Kingdom? “The smallest, the youngest child, the *tsaowr*, the most vulnerable of all in the kingdom of *olam haba*, is greater than the greatest prophet.”

Lily’s heart understood what He meant. *Tsaowr*, the word for “child,” was so close to the word *tsara*, the word for “leper.”

Yeshua had proven that those little ones the world labeled valueless were of the greatest value to Him in heaven. Meanwhile, they were here on earth to try the metal of every man’s heart. All the wealth and knowledge and position in the world were of small value compared to the worth of a child . . . a child like Yod, the smallest and least valued in all of Israel.

—P. 211

I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited Me in. I needed clothes and you clothed Me. I was sick and you looked after Me. I was in prison and you came to visit Me. . . . I tell you the truth, whatever you did for the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.

—MATTHEW 25:35–36, 40

ASK

When has a child taught you a lesson about life? What was that lesson?

How do you naturally respond when you pass by one of “the least of these” on a street corner?

The next time you encounter a child who needs help, a lonely elderly person, a hungry street person, a disabled person, or anyone else considered “the least of these,” in what way(s) could you respond like Yeshua? How will you put those good intentions into action in the next few months?

WONDER . . .

Lily touched each stone on the window ledge. The blessings and promises of Israel were hers even in this place of exile.

I'm praying again, You Who Number the Stars and Number the Grains of Sand. . . We who are valueless in the eyes of the world are worth the world to you. Protect us as we wait for the return of our Hope.

—P. 211

Do you see your worth through the eyes of other imperfect humans or through the eyes of a loving Lord? No matter your “value” in society, your value is inestimable in God’s eyes. If you lived every moment in the light of that Truth, how would your life and relationships change?

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- ¹ Deut. 7:7
² Isa. 53:3
³ Isa. 53:5
⁴ Ps. 107:20
⁵ Ps. 136:1
⁶ Hab. 2:11
⁷ Isa. 53:5
⁸ Mal. 4:2
⁹ 1 John 4:1
¹⁰ Gen. 32:22-30
¹¹ Deut. 6:4
¹² Ps. 23:4
¹³ Isa. 49:16
¹⁴ Matt. 2:1-12.
 Also see *Sixth Covenant*, in
 the A.D. Chronicles series.
¹⁵ Matt. 11:5; Luke 7:22
¹⁶ Exod. 20:8
¹⁷ Heb. 11:33-34
¹⁸ Matt. 6:25-30
¹⁹ Lev. 26:11-17
²⁰ Ps. 101:5
²¹ Lev. 14
²² 2 Kings 5
²³ Ps. 103:3
²⁴ Num. 6:24-26
²⁵ Deut. 11:18
²⁶ Prov. 5:3
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³⁰ Mark 5:35-43; Luke 8:49-56
³¹ Luke 7:11-17
³² Ps. 91:5
³³ Ps. 46:10
³⁴ Matt. 5:44
³⁵ Matt. 18:3-4
³⁶ Eccles. 3:1-8
³⁷ Ps. 88:1-2
³⁸ Ps. 88:3
³⁹ Ps. 88:4-5
⁴⁰ Ps. 88:6-7
⁴¹ Ps. 88:8
⁴² Ps. 88:14
⁴³ Ps. 88:15
⁴⁴ Ps. 88:16-17
⁴⁵ Matt. 10:8
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Authors' Note

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About the Authors

BODIE AND BROCK THOENE (pronounced *Tay-nee*) have written over 50 works of historical fiction. That these best sellers have sold more than 10 million copies and won eight ECPA Gold Medallion Awards affirms what millions of readers have already discovered—the Thoenes are not only master stylists but experts at capturing readers' minds and hearts.

In their timeless classic series about Israel (The Zion Chronicles, The Zion Covenant, and The Zion Legacy), the Thoenes' love for both story and research shines.

With *The Shiloh Legacy* and *Shiloh Autumn* (poignant portrayals of the American Depression), *The Galway Chronicles* (dramatic stories of the 1840s famine in Ireland), and the *Legends of the West* (gripping tales of adventure and danger in a land without law), the Thoenes have made their mark in modern history.

In the A.D. Chronicles they step seamlessly into the world of Jerusalem and Rome, in the days when Yeshua walked the earth and transformed lives with His touch.

Bodie began her writing career as a teen journalist for her local newspaper. Eventually her byline appeared in prestigious periodicals such as *U.S. News and World Report*, *The American West*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. She also worked for John Wayne's Batjac Productions (she's best known as author of *The Fall Guy*) and ABC Circle Films as a writer and researcher. John Wayne described her as "a writer with talent that

captures the people and the times!” She has degrees in journalism and communications.

Brock has often been described by Bodie as “an essential half of this writing team.” With degrees in both history and education, Brock has, in his role as researcher and story-line consultant, added the vital dimension of historical accuracy. Due to such careful research, the *Zion Covenant* and *Zion Chronicles* series are recognized by the American Library Association, as well as Zionist libraries around the world, as classic historical novels and are used to teach history in college classrooms.

Bodie and Brock have four grown children—Rachel, Jake, Luke, and Ellie—and seven grandchildren. Their children are carrying on the Thoene family talent as the next generation of writers, and Luke produces the Thoene audiobooks. Bodie and Brock divide their time between London and Nevada.

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www.thoenebooks.com
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