



BOOK SEVEN



A.D. CHRONICLES®

# seventh day



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*Seventh Day*

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*With love to our sixth and seventh grandkids—  
Turner Graham Thoene and  
Wilke Lynn Thoene—  
Psalm 139*

# Prologue\*

OLD CITY JERUSALEM, JUNE 12, 2004

Dimming twilight stained the sky above Jerusalem. Night seeped into the Old City house where Moshe and Rachel Sachar had once lived. Jacob and Lori Kalner were the last of the old friends to leave after the Jerusalem memorial service of Professor Sachar. Old Alfie embraced the frail couple in a giant bear hug and they wept together in the foyer of Moshe's home.

Thirty-nine-year-old Shimon Sachar hung back in the doorway of his father's study and observed the farewell of the three who had been childhood friends in Berlin since before the days of Hitler. Shimon had not seen Jacob and Lori since the death of Rachel and Shimon's wife, Susan, in a Palestinian suicide bombing. Lori's sight had been failing even then. Her vision was completely gone now. A muscled black lab named Romeo served as Lori's eyes. Tears streamed from beneath her dark glasses. Dressed in a heavy black coat, she nevertheless wore a bright red scarf over her head. Lori leaned heavily on Jacob's arm. Jacob, as ramrod straight and distinguished as ever, was professor emeritus of archaeology at a major university in England. He ran a hand through his

\* For more of the story, read the Zion Chronicles series and the Zion Legacy series by Bodie and Brock Thoene.

thick thatch of silver hair and patted Alfie on his broad back. Though German was the common childhood language of the three, they had refused to converse in their native tongue ever since they fled the Nazis. They spoke in heavily accented English, making Shimon smile as he listened.

Lori placed her hand on Alfie's cheek. "Alf, dearest. We come soon as a flight was got."

"Soon enough. Seven days since Moshe flew away," Alfie remarked, brushing Lori's tears away with his thumb. "Almost we're the only ones, eh? Only ones left, eh?"

Jacob embraced Alfie again. "This new generation. The young Israelis are getting visas to go to Germany or Poland in case things get bad in Israel."

"They have forgot." Alfie spread his palms. "If there had been Israel in 1936 . . . yes? If only. How many then would be alive?"

Thus was the wisdom of the world confounded by the simple, Shimon mused.

Alfie, the gentle old man who had calmly survived wars and persecutions for eight decades knew well enough why Israel must survive. Alfie, Lori, and Jacob were the last who could tell the tale.

Lori presented Alfie with a thick file sealed in plastic. "For Shimon, yes? Jacob's letters. My journals. Our story. The three of us. Something now to add to the other memories. Someday. Someday. Yes, someone will read our words and know what it was to live in such days."

Alfie raised the packet to his lips. "Sure. The boy keeps them all safe. Many brung them . . . sent them. Shimon keeps them all safe, you know. Don't know if we'll meet again, eh? Not here, maybe."

"Only apart a short while, I think." Lori smiled. "I am blind, but I will see. And the first face I will see . . ."

"*Ja*. The Light. All the days of Shiva from all the mourning of this life . . . they will come to an end," Jacob added.

Shimon turned away from this final farewell of the trio who had been through so much together. Retreating to his father's study, he lay down on the cracked leather sofa. Closing his eyes, he slept instantly.

It may have been hours before Alfie noiselessly entered the room. Shimon felt the old giant's presence hovering over him. He opened his eyes.

Alfie's compassionate face gazed down at him. The old man placed

the packet from Lori and Jacob on the desk. “Their story. Our story. Mine too with theirs. Everybody gone now.”

Shimon sat up and cradled his head in his hands. “I fell asleep.”

“Sure. It’s good to sleep when you’re sad. I brung you something else too.” Alfie removed a letter from his pocket. “From your papa. He says to me that when he is gone, you should have this.”

Shimon gazed at the familiar handwriting on the clean white envelope. “He knew.”

“Sure. Like I said, if we live long enough, we’re all gonna die. Read. He left the best for last.”

Shimon sighed as he broke the seal and began to read.

*Dearest Shimon,*

*It is the seventh day. The end of Shiva. For seven days I have been again with my beloved Rachel, your mother. Do not grieve for us after this morning. The time for sorrow is over. In other letters which you and your brothers and sister have read since my death, I have shared how much your mother and I love you all. I have left instructions for Alfie to give you alone this letter on the seventh day after our parting. Alfie will lead you alone to the final gift. In this gift is the future. Present Time grows short. There is hope only for those who grasp the sleeve of Truth as He passes by. Alfie will show you the way.*

*All my love,*

*Baruch atem b’shem Yeshua,*

*Papa*

Shimon raised his eyes to see that Alfie had already opened the hidden entrance that led down to the Chamber of Scrolls.

“Ah, Shimon. Your good papa, he saved the best for last. He saw this day coming, and he set them aside these last years until now. He knew you would need to read them when he was gone. Put your nosh in your pocket.” The old man grinned as he slung a backpack over his shoulder. “I brung enough food for later too. A new branch tonight. Hold to my shirt. It isn’t far.”

The two men descended the narrow steps into what seemed to be

a cistern. Alfie pushed the pattern carved into the stone. A whoosh of wind announced the opening to the passageway.

“Don’t ask no questions.” Alfie held up two fingers, which he placed into a groove in the ceiling. “Hold on. It’s different, all right.”

A lump of apprehension in his throat, Shimon clung to the belt of old Alfie as they wound through the darkness. The tunnel that led to the Chamber of Scrolls seemed familiar and yet, midway, the old man’s voice whispered, “Right to left we read the words now, eh, Moshe? Not left to right.” Then he turned abruptly to the left.

Shuffling downward, Shimon remembered the many times he had asked his father where other passages led. The answer was always the same: “When you need to know, you will be shown the way.”

Minutes passed. Alfie spoke again. “Don’t move.” There followed the sound of slow counting; then the old man repeated the Shema: “*Hear, O Israel . . .*”

The clank of a latch, the groan of ancient hinges, and the scrape of moving stone assaulted Shimon’s senses. A dim light radiated from a low, narrow portal. Alfie struck a match and lit a candle. Tugging Shimon’s sleeve, Alfie commanded him not to bump his head as he entered. The stone chamber seemed to be a perfect cube of about thirty feet on every side. In the exact center was a smooth marble slab of perfect geometric proportions to the room. It was flanked by two stone benches. On the slab were six clay jars matching those Shimon had seen in the much larger Chamber of Scrolls.

Alfie blew out the candle, but the room did not darken. “Look up,” he instructed.

Painted stars on the ceiling of the secret chamber seemed to glisten with a new light. Shimon traced the stellar signs of Messiah’s birth as they were viewed in the stars by the Magi and recorded in the journals of Peniel two thousand years before.

Three planets—Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn—formed a close conjunction within Israel’s constellation of The Two Fish. Gold Hebrew letters identified the proper name of the heavenly lights:

*Mars was Ma’Adim, The Adam*

*Jupiter was Tzadik, The Righteous*

*Saturn was Shabbatai, The Lord of the Sabbath*

“The heavens declare the glory of God . . . and the birth of Messiah,” Shimon whispered quietly. “What is this place?”

Alfie spread his hands as if offering a banquet in the cold chamber beneath the place where Solomon’s Temple had once stood. “A miracle.”

Shimon peered upward as he spoke in hushed tones. “I went online, you know? To verify the account of Peniel’s journals against scientific details about the conjunctions of the stars the year Jesus was born. E-mailed Tom Wickersham, a friend of Susan’s at NASA. He e-mailed me a series of photos from an astronomical program—the skies above Jerusalem in 7 and 6 B.C. And there they were. The conjunctions. This . . . this ceiling . . . it’s like a planetarium, you know?” Shimon raised his arms as if to embrace the stars.

“Yes. Full of treasures. Your great-grandpapa used to say, ‘Everything means something.’”

“More than that, Alfie.” Shimon turned his face toward the walls, where Hebrew letters carved in smooth stone identified the words of the prophet Zechariah. “Everything . . . has meaning.”

Alfie placed the backpack on the floor. He ran his finger around the rim of a first-century clay jar to check the seal. “Of all the boys your papa wanted you to know. So much more.”

Shimon cleared his throat. “After Susan and Mama were killed? The intifada? No peace in Jerusalem. No life for Israel, I thought. All the dreams of you and the others coming here . . . struggling, dying . . . the rebirth of Israel as a nation. It seemed to amount to nothing. I didn’t want to live without Susan and the baby.”

He touched the jar containing the first scroll of Peniel. “Then you and Papa brought me here. I read the scrolls and saw myself for the first time. I knew I was blind like Peniel. I was a leper like Lily. Bitter like Alexander. Afraid like Yosef. And then, Yeshua was born in my heart. Now when I’m outside, I walk through the streets in a different century. I go to the Pool of Siloam, where Peniel washed clay from his eyes and gained his vision. I search the faces of everyone as I pass by, thinking I’ll see Peniel. Hoping I will round a corner and find Yeshua teaching his talmidim. I drink a cup of coffee at Starbucks—and count the hours. Can’t wait to come back here. To read. To learn. To know Yeshua better.”

Alfie replied, “Yes. Truth is like food, nu? Such stories. Warms the

bones of an old man. Like a good cup of tea. Yes, tea. I brung enough for a while. Your papa said you should start with Peniel's Seventh Day. It tells the future. Everything they say they want to know in the outside world, but they don't really want to know. They see it, but they don't know what it means."

Shimon placed six scrolls in the correct order, marked with the name of *Peniel: Face of God*. In the large library Shimon had seen thousands of other containers. Each jar contained a personal eyewitness account recording Jerusalem's long history. This small chamber denoted a portent of something greater than all the other stories combined.

Shimon could hardly speak. His thoughts tumbled out in a rush. "How will we ever . . . how will I ever read them all? All of them. Papa told me each scroll represents a life. An event. A miracle. So much more Yeshua did. So much never recorded. All the books in all the world can't hold everything.<sup>1</sup> They were real, these people. More than just names in a story, eh?"

The knuckles of Alfie's hands were swollen. He fumbled through a leather briefcase before removing a single sheet of paper. "Here. The list where your papa and me started in 1948. Your papa. These was his favorite." Alfie's voice echoed in the room. "Here it is. Here. You read. This was his most favorite. He saved it for you because he knew you would need it most. And I brung tea. A fresh pot. No more biscuits. We should bring biscuits and apricot jam and bread down tomorrow. Your mama always made good scones to send along. And sandwiches. We was never hungry when Rachel was alive."

The slope-shouldered old giant lumbered toward the study table. He grasped the pottery jar marked in Hebrew *Seventh Day*. It was sealed with Peniel's mark. Alfie grinned. "Ah! I like this one best too."

Shimon frowned. "So, the man born blind. What else did he see?"

"You'll see. Best so far."

"You like them all."

Alfie nodded. "Peniel's stories, yes. This one? Proof?"

"Proof of what?"

"Your papa said, this one . . . a time machine."

Shimon studied the painted stars that had glowed in the night sky above Jerusalem two thousand years before. "It was a winter sky?"

Alfie's faded eyes glistened with pleasure. "Almost Hanukkah. The

baby in the manger's grown up. A man. Hanukkah's coming. They're in the Galil. All afraid, but . . . he's not afraid. Me neither. Hanukkah. I like the lights. The best for our last journey, I say."

"Last?"

Alfie nodded. "Almost home. Almost the end. But you won't be alone. They'll always come to hear you read."

"They?" Shimon asked the old man.

"Sure, Shimon. Them." Alfie jerked his thumb toward the portal. "Always watching over us."

Shimon raised his eyes, hoping to see the angels Alfie spoke to with such certainty. There was no one there.

"So?" Alfie nodded eagerly at Shimon, indicating that he should open the seal and remove the seventh scroll of Peniel. The document was tied with scarlet cloth and wrapped in linen like that used for a shroud. It was smaller and lighter than the other scrolls.

Shimon carefully unwound the covering. The sheepskin had more than survived two thousand years. It seemed as fresh and supple as it had when it was new.

Alfie clapped his hands and chuckled as if someone had spoken to him. "Come on, then! It's beginning! Hurry, Shimon. See? They're coming. Shining. Bright. Sent! Coming . . . joy calls to them. Just there!" He inclined his head toward the end of the table as Shimon opened the document. A sprig of pressed lavender fell from the scroll, and suddenly the chamber was filled with its sweet aroma. "Shalom," Alfie cried, greeting unseen guests with joy. "So many of you today! Shimon, golden ones! Tall! Come to hear you read Peniel's story like your papa."

Shimon blinked at the place where Alfie said angels had gathered. Was there a glimmer of unexpected light? the faint rustle of wings?

Shimon raised his hand in greeting, just in case what the old man saw was more than imagination. "Shalom."

Suddenly Alfie bowed and addressed the empty air. "Shalom! Yes, you'll have to stay with Shimon when I go. Today is Peniel's Seventh Day. Thanks. Thanks." He sat down, propped his head in his hands, and confided in a whisper to Shimon, "Read good, boy. They come a long way to hear it. Want to hear it again. What Peniel seen that day! Sad, sad story. A friend . . . dies. But happy too, though. Don't worry. Best ever, I said when he read it to me first. 1948. Above us demons

danced in the streets . . . burned down the Jewish Quarter. Synagogues burning and burning above our heads. So many good friends died. Haj Amin Husseini told the world there weren't no Jews left in Old City Jerusalem. Said there never would be no Jews here again. Didn't know about us two down here, or the angels with us. Moshe and me down here under the Temple Mount. This is where the stones of Jerusalem wait for him to come. Where Israel lives. Your papa opened the books and read and read. Best story in heaven and earth since the day one brother first killed the other. Seventh Day it was—the future. Never such a day. . . .”



# PART I

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## THE LORD'S SEVENFOLD COVENANT WITH ISRAEL

*I will bring you out of Egypt.*

*I will rid you of their bondage.*

*I will redeem you.*

*I will take you to Me for a people.*

*I will be to you your God.*

*I will bring you into the land.*

*I will give it to you.*

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EXODUS 6:6-8

*Journal of Peniel the Scribe  
Blind Beggar of Nicanor Gate Healed by Yeshua HaMashiach*

*This account of the works of Yeshua is set down by the hand of Peniel, the beggar of Nicanor Gate. Blind from birth, I first received my sight from Yeshua HaMashiach, the Eternal Potter who formed man from the red clay of the earth.*

*Yeshua, who created everything seen and unseen, came to dwell among men in the time appointed. Conceived in the womb of a virgin in Nazareth, He was born in Beth-lehem and grew to be a great teacher and miracle worker known by all the world.*

*Men ask me how a man born blind became a scribe.*

*In Jerusalem I sat in darkness, incomplete, unable to comprehend the glory of The One who created the stars. And though I heard the psalms that spoke of the beauty Hashem had created, I could not understand.*

*One day Yeshua saw me in the Temple Gate, and His compassion was warmed for me. Then He who is the Great Potter, forming all creation with His hand, knelt beside me. He spit into the dust of stones King Solomon had raised. He made clay from the dust of Israel's fallen greatness. This dust of Jerusalem, beloved by God, still bears witness to the covenant power of Hashem to forgive and heal the land and the people.*

*The truth of God's love and mercy is recorded in Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. Everything in Scripture means something. Every story written about an individual or the whole nation of Israel is meant to teach us to trust God. Even my blindness, such a grief to my father and mother, was meant to prove to Israel that "nothing is impossible for God!"<sup>2</sup>*

*In my darkness I longed for The Light of the World, as did all of Israel. Yeshua, The One Sent from Olam Haba, anointed my unformed eyes with the clay of glory He made. Then the Anointed One sent me to wash in*

*the pool called "Sent." When I washed, I could see as well as any man born with vision. In this way Yeshua created eyes for me to receive the light.*

*I was blind and now I see. By this miracle God strove to prove the identity of His Son and awaken faith in the hearts of His beloved people.*

*I am only one among a multitude who have been forever changed by a touch or a word from Yeshua. There are miracles beyond counting in the lives of men and women I know well.*

*Those close disciples who walked with Yeshua from the beginning have set down the true facts as they witnessed them. These chronicles set the standard of all stories about Yeshua that follow. There can be no disagreement with these first accounts, which are purest truth.*

*These are stories beyond counting, as the great disciple John says. Your own life is a story written by the very hand of the Lord. Every event in your life is meant to teach you to trust that God loves you. Perhaps it is easier to believe what God has done for others.*

*I will attempt to share these with you as you have asked me. I pray with trembling that the words I set down may be acceptable to the Most High.*

*I am Peniel the Scribe. Once I was blind, but now I have seen His face and The Light shines brightly in my heart.*

*Even so, there were those who witnessed my miracle with their own eyes who refused to believe Yeshua gave me sight. Instead they sought to dishonor and kill The One who is my Light, The Light of Israel.*

*Yeshua, The Light of the World.*

*Yeshua, proof that God's covenant promises are Truth.*

*There was a time at the campfire in Perea when I looked at His face and saw that His heart was consumed with grief at their rejection of God's mercy. Unbelief betrayed Him.*

*"This is not meant to end in death. . . . You will yet see the glory and power of God."*

*Even now He grieves for those who will not trust Him.*

*"Only believe me and you will see. . . ."*

*But the rejection of the power of the Holy Spirit and the salvation of*

*Yeshua the Messiah began long ago. The rejection of Yeshua's gift of mercy began with those among whom He had grown up.*

*I, Peniel, man born blind, scribe of the Way, record these memories for generations who will be born after us.*

*Is it still true in your day that those who should trust Him with the faithfulness of a child are instead the very ones who deny the glory, might, and power of The One sent to open the eyes of the blind?*

# I

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## CHAPTER

**I**t was some time after the death of Yosef, His earthly father, that Yeshua returned to Nazareth to reveal the secret—to plainly share the testimony of His true paternity, as prophesied in Torah.

Though certain they had known Him all their lives, the people of Nazareth had no idea who Yeshua was or where He had come from. Nor could they imagine the eons that had passed since this moment of divine revelation had been planned.

Despite the fact that every detail of Messiah's life and mission was revealed within the text of ancient law and prophets, the good people of Nazareth did not comprehend.

Not surprising.

After all, could Messiah live next door?

*"Yeshua, my mother wonders, please, could she borrow two eggs?"*

Was it possible that The Lord of All the Angel Armies, El Olam, and Ancient of Days, had descended to earth from His throne and was singing in the carpenter's workshop?

Could the descendant of David—Prophet, Priest, and King—be more than a metaphor? Could He truly be Immanu'el, God-with-us?

They had heard of Yeshua's miracles, yes, but even then, few in Nazareth believed.

*"Messiah, remember me? I gave you water when you were building new stairs to my roof. So . . . just give me a sign."*

One particular Shabbat, Yeshua stood among His neighbors.

It was in the autumn. The fifty-first week of the cycle of Torah portions. The reading for that Shabbat was Nitzavim, which means in Hebrew, "Standing."

Certain men of the congregation, including Yeshua, were chosen to make aliyah, to ascend the bema to read. One section of the Parashah was recited by an old man with a quavering voice. It was taken from the last chapters of the book of Deuteronomy:

*"Today you are standing, all of you, in the presence of Adonai, your God . . . in order to enter into a covenant with Adonai, your God; a covenant Adonai is making with you today and sealing with an oath."*<sup>3</sup>

Taken literally, the verse informed the congregation plainly that they were in the presence of the Lord, that He was physically there.

Yet the hearers did not hear.

Those who saw Him did not see.

Another read:

*"But I am not making this covenant and this oath only with you. Rather I am making it both with him who is standing here with us today before Adonai our God and also with him who is not here with us today; those of future generations. See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. Now choose life."*<sup>4</sup>

The truth of the message escaped them. After all, Scripture was just Scripture. Familiar. Boring. An obligation. They studied it, read a different Parashah every week, memorized it, and talked about it all the time. It never meant anything literal, did it?

That the Lord Himself was standing in their midst?

Torah readings completed, the congregation recited the blessings:

*"King, Helper, Savior, and Shield! Blessed are You, O Eternal! Reviving the dead; You are all powerful to save! He sustains the living in*

*mercy, and reanimates the dead in abundant compassion; supports the fallen, heals the sick, releases those who are bound! Who is like You, Lord of mighty deeds?"*

Praise was on their lips, but what was in their hearts?

Then their Redeemer, Messiah, Adonai, Immanu'el, God-with-us, stood before them at the bema of the little synagogue.

*If only!*

Yeshua's deep brown eyes, flecked with gold, searched each familiar face, knew every unspoken thought and secret.

The scroll of the prophet Isaias was presented to Him. Unrolling it, He found the appointed place and began to read:

*"The Spirit of Adonai is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the favor of Adonai."*<sup>5</sup>

Yeshua rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the shammash, and sat down. The eyes of everyone were fastened on Him, and He said to them, "Today this passage of the Tanakh is fulfilled in your hearing."

*"What?"*

*"Fulfilled?"*

*"You don't say?"*

The congregants eyed each other in consternation.

Yeshua's earthly father was dead, His mother left a widow.

*"If you are truly the Messiah, why did Yosef die?"*

Broken hearts in Nazareth were still broken. The poor were still poor. Blind were still blind. The oppressed were still burdened. If Yeshua *was* Messiah, He had not done them any favors!

*"Today the Scripture is fulfilled, he said? Who does he think he is?"*

*"Isn't this Yosef's son?"* an old man asked.

Yeshua said to them, "Surely you'll say to me, 'Doctor, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard you did in Capernaum.' I tell you the truth, no prophet is accepted in his hometown. There were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine in the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath."<sup>6</sup>

*“Elijah was sent to outsiders, he means!”*

*“Is he comparing himself to Elijah? Saying he can raise the dead, is he?”*

If only they had let Yeshua speak, He would have taught them how Elijah raised the widow’s son from the dead and miraculously provided flour and oil enough for her and her son to eat while all the rest of the country hovered near starvation.

If only they had opened their hearts, they might have understood that Yeshua was The One Sent from heaven to lavish Yahweh’s endless *chesed*, mercy, on all who called out to Him.

*If only!*

But the people of His hometown were in no mood to listen.

*“He’s a nobody, this son of a carpenter!”*

*“Yet now he declares he meets the criteria to be Messiah!”*

*“Heal the sick and raise the dead? To cleanse the Temple of corruption and set up a kingdom? And bring the exiles home?”*

*“Yeshua claims he is the fulfillment of all the writings of Torah and the prophets?”*

*“He’s a madman! Or worse!”*

It was a mob comprised of old friends and good neighbors who dragged Him outside the town with the goal of hurtling Him over a cliff.

The Sovereign Lord of the Universe, the Anointed Messiah promised by the prophets, had indeed lived next door. And they drove Him away.

The Parashah proclaimed, *Listen! Today you stand before Adonai! He has come to you personally to seal the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! Choose life!*

They chose, instead, to try to kill Him.

Yeshua never returned to Nazareth. Not ever. There were other towns, other needs, others who hoped He would come to them . . . and His time to live as a man among mortal men was growing very short.



His name was Abel. Abel begins with *alef*, the first letter of the alphabet. He was Eve’s first and only son—her miracle, her joy. He was her life. He was everything . . . the substance of every hope.

Like Isaac, the baby was a miracle child—a gift from God, his father, Absalom, said. So they named him Abel, meaning “God is my Father.”

Circumcised into the covenant of Abraham at eight days, Abel was the lone offspring of Eve and Absalom the Scribe.

Perhaps her dreams for him were unrealistic, her love for him too extravagant. Much later the people of Nain would say she should have known better, should have been more cautious with her love.

After all, nothing ever turns out the way it should.

Eve, daughter of the innkeeper, was a homely girl with a kind spirit. Married off to the childless and much older scribe after his second wife died, she was a good match for him. Absalom treated her kindly. When she became pregnant, he was pleased and felt young again, though friends in the synagogue jokingly called him “Father Avraham.”

Like the original Father Abraham, Absalom was proud to have a son learn his craft and carry on his trade.

A sign bearing the image of a writing case and a quill pen hung above the door of their house near the center of the town.

Letters and deeds and sales documents were the bread and butter of his business. However, Absalom the Scribe was best known as a *ketubah* artist. Famous throughout the Galil, he drew up marriage contracts that were works of art.

Ordinary legal terms for matrimony—bride price, dowry, and the like—were set down on scraped and bleached lambskin. Perfectly formed Hebrew letters were intertwined with a garden of gold leaf vines and flowers created from the rare purple ink of a sea snail.

No matter if the bride was homely or the groom a dolt, a *ketubah* drawn by Absalom was fit for the wedding of King Solomon and the queen of Sheba. It was said that arranged marriages, if sealed by a document drawn up by the Scribe of Nain, were sure to be blessed with many strong, healthy sons.

For some, this may have been true, but Eve, the wife of Absalom, had only one son. Abel was neither strong nor healthy. Even so, his mother widely proclaimed that Abel was better to her than ten sons. She thanked Adonai daily for the gift of Abel’s life.

As befitting the son of a scribe, Abel learned his alef-bet easily and could read and write his name before his fourth year.

It was whispered that if he lived, Abel would inherit the writing case of his father, along with his father’s reputation.

If he lived? The issue was indeed a matter of concern. Almost from the beginning Abel’s hold on life was tenuous. He could not run and

play like other boys in the village of Nain. When the winds blew in from the fields and orchards, he was put to bed and ordered not to venture out. The boy sat beside his aged father in the doorway and wheezed worse than the old man as they watched the world pass by.

Though Abel did not have the breath to sing, his mother sang to him constantly. He knew and loved the psalms and could write the words by heart before he was seven.

Abel was only eight when his father suddenly died. And just that suddenly the boy was the lone remaining joy in his mother's life. She clung to him and thanked Adonai that at least she had this one reason for living, so her life was not over!

Even then people whispered that she should hold something back—be cautious in her dreams. After all, nothing ever turned out the way it should . . . not on this side of *olam baba*, the world to come.

Abel mourned for his old father seven days. In the silence of his grief it was as though the boy was old and wise beyond his years. When he rose from the ashes, he whispered aloud a thought that was surely a prophecy about his future.

He told Adonai how very much he longed to be with his father one day. When Abel became very ill, he told Adonai he wouldn't mind dying, except for the fact that his mother needed him.

He was only thirteen years old when the life that had begun with such joy moved inexorably toward its end.

Much later, perhaps, Eve would say she knew all along there was something greater, something eternally necessary, some purpose more important than the suffering she endured for the sake of loving her child.

But not now.

*Not yet! He's so young!*

Not in this terrible hour when night fell heavy and crushed out the only light left to her.

*There is no dawn for me without him!*

Not as she sat helpless at his bed and bargained with a silent God for the life of the only one who loved her in all the world.

*Please! My life for his!*

Not as she held her son in her arms and watched him die.

*Don't leave me all alone! Hazak! Be strong!*

Help for her only child had been a mere twenty-five miles away

from the tiny house, yet she knew now that help might as well have been at the other end of the world.

*If only!*

Vain hopes for his healing had killed him. She was responsible.

She would have to live with that guilt.

*If only. If only we had stayed home. If only we had not set out in search of a miracle! If only!*

No one else in the village would blame her for trying, except perhaps the doctor. After all, was there anyone—anyone—in Galilee and Judea who had not heard about Yeshua, the wonder worker of Nazareth?

Mired in hopelessness before Yeshua came, the *am ha aretz*, the common folk, were resigned to suffering. Bitterness was a kind of opiate that numbed the pain of living and the inevitability of death. Beaten down by unrelieved despair, they accepted the fact that life was brutal and unmerciful, and they made the best of it.

Then rumors stirred the watch fires of Israel. The quiet whisper was passed from one to another as water was drawn from the village wells.

*“They say the Deliverer is alive! His name is Yeshua!”*

Hadn’t Yeshua healed someone who knew someone who told someone who told everyone?

Yeshua, a descendant of King David, restored health to the sick, gave galaxies and sunsets to the blind!

Poetry and song poured from the throats of the mute!

Music and laughter tickled the ears of the deaf!

Cripples danced at the Temple gates!

Lepers were made whole again!

There was free bread for all who were hungry!

*Messiah!*

Tenuous roots of possibility sank deep into hearts and minds with every new report. Then suddenly it was not enough simply to hear about Him anymore. Those who were most desperate for an answer lay in bed and stared into the darkness at night.

*If only!*

With trembling hands they constructed an image of their savior out of the very stones that weighed them down. But it was a false image, nothing like the truth of Who and What He Was and Is.

They plotted ways they might meet Him personally. Imagining

themselves close enough to touch Him, they rehearsed what they would say to Him if only.

*If only . . .*

*“You are the Messiah? I’ve been waiting for you to come. You see, I want a lot! But I’ve heard you can do everything for me. Health, first of all. Yes. You haven’t got anything if you don’t have your health. Heal me. And after you make me healthy, please make me be happy always! I heard you can arrange everything. I want to be loved. I want my children always content around me, appreciating me, honoring me. I want my problem solved right now. You can do it if you’re really the Messiah. I want to be right, and I want everyone to know how right I am. I want to win. I want those who hurt me to be punished. I want guaranteed success. Prosperity for my business. Always. I want you to thank me for being so righteous. I want . . . I want . . . I want. . . .”*

Everyone wanted something. Few made the journey simply to meet Yeshua face-to-face. Tens of thousands of the *am ha aretz* took up the pilgrim staff, drawn to Him as the baker of endless bread, the panacea for every problem. Searching, longing for a personal miracle, they swept in like the tide.

*“His name is Yeshua! Where can I find him?”*

So many glutted the roads and camped in the fields that year that it was impossible to count them or know their names or ask why they had come.

They sought him in cities and in desolate places.

*“Yeshua. Have you seen him? You’re looking too? Do you know where he camps? I have a favor I must ask him.”*

Here and there pilgrims who had set out too late in life ended the quest as they were carried to their graves.

Families turned back, disappointed, with new reasons for bitterness.

*“If only he had been here! Where is he? The journey was too much! If only! Why didn’t he come? Why? If he is the Messiah, why did this happen?”*

So it had been that morning when the widow and her thirteen-year-old son set out in search of Yeshua. Their need was as great as anyone’s need. Perhaps Yeshua would answer their request, and life would forever be different for them!

The wonder worker was in Capernaum. Only a day’s walk for a healthy person. Surely the boy could survive the journey. Mother and son would take it slow. Camp early. Make the trip in two or even three days if necessary.

It was spring. The flowers of Galilee bloomed. Hills were a vibrant green. The tendrils of vines grew strong in the sunlight. Orchards blossomed. In the ultimate irony, this season was the most dangerous for Eve's son. Normally he would be confined to his bed in the corner of the one-room house. The Greek physician had decreed that the boy must never inhale the scent of flowers or ever, ever attempt to run across the fields with other boys on pain of death. Travel beyond the city walls in the spring was strictly forbidden.

And yet . . . perhaps a miracle waited in Capernaum. Wasn't it worth a try?

"Mother, remember . . . remember . . . the Parashah of my bar mitzvah? Maybe the Torah portion was a sign."

How could she forget? Every night Abel had recited the words of Deuteronomy until he fell asleep in midsentence:

*"All of you are standing today in the presence of Adonai . . . in order to enter into a covenant with the Lord your God. . . . See, I have set before you life and death. . . . Choose life!"*<sup>7</sup>

The boy believed the Scripture so completely. *Choose life!* He was certain he would breathe and live even in a place where there was no breath! The Lord would be with them when they traveled in spite of the danger. Yes! Yeshua of Nazareth was just over the hills in Capernaum!

"*Hazak!* Mother! Be strong!" he had said to her.

To be so near and not go?

*If only!*

So mother and son joined the surging tide of pilgrims.

On the verge of the orange grove less than a mile from home the boy's lungs closed as though the sea had swept over his head. Where was the Lord? Where was the promise? Abel gasped and collapsed, clawing his throat for air. Two young men from the local synagogue carried him back home. The doctor was sent for.

"What have you done to him, woman? I warned you! Warned you! Your son can hardly draw a breath to walk across the room, let alone go all the way to Capernaum to meet some trickster! What have you done? Your son may well die of your foolishness!"

Guilty, ashamed, Eve turned away and wept silently. What, indeed, had she done? Daring to hope? Willing to believe that a miracle could be

in the future of her only son? Freedom? Release from the unseen plague that strangled him every year? What had she been thinking of?

*If only it would rain!* Her thought was half a prayer as she gazed out the window at the cloudless sky. *Oh! Wash the world with my tears and let him breathe!*

It was not supposed to be like this. It was unnatural in the order of life. A mother was not meant to outlive her child. No, not ever. Such a tragedy would crack the still-beating heart of any woman into so many pieces that it would never properly heal.

She reminded the One God of Israel of this fact as the doctor toiled to save the boy that afternoon.

*Take my life instead. Anything! Please. Only let him live.*

At last the gray-haired Greek physician rummaged through his leather satchel, then held up a bottle of amber liquid in his right hand as he extended his left for payment. “Nothing more to be done. Four drops of this twice a day mixed with honey and wine for the cough. Half-shekel.” He wagged the medicine over the boy temptingly. “And you’ll pay every penny of it as a reminder to obey my instructions.”

Eve frowned at the upturned palm for a moment before fumbling for the money pouch hidden in the nearly empty flour sack. Two copper coins and one silver half-shekel coin were lodged in the leather purse. She had saved the half-shekel for the boy’s first payment of the required Temple tax. His bar mitzvah had been celebrated only two months ago. The rite formally initiated him into the responsibilities of Jewish manhood in spite of the pale skin and fragile frame that made him appear much younger than his thirteen years.

The doctor’s fist snapped shut around the coin. He extended the medicine.

She clutched the vial to her heart. “Spring. Every year since he was a baby. I only wanted . . . I hoped, maybe . . .”

“There’s no hope for this, woman. Haven’t I told you? *Anbelitus*, it is called in Latin. The gasping disease. *Asthma* in my own language. I don’t know what you Jews call it in Hebrew. A curse from your God, I suppose. Galilee. The orchards. The fields. Everything in bloom.” He packed the bleeding lance, tourniquet, and cup into the bag. Bloodletting had finally relaxed the spasm of coughing that had given the boy’s skin and lips a faintly blue pallor.

“Will he get well?”

“Give him the dose as prescribed. Care for him as best you’re able. A warm damp cloth over his nose and mouth with a few drops of camphor oil will help him breathe when he begins to cough again. If he survives the spring, he’ll improve after the summer months. My advice? Instead of chasing after prophets and holy men for a cure, move away from here. Move to the sea.”

“The sea.”

“If he comes round, feed him oxtail broth and bread every day until he can eat meat.”

“Oxtail. Broth.” Eve repeated the instruction. She would find a way to buy the ingredients. Somehow. There had to be a way.

For a time, Abel seemed to be at rest, breathing easier. Eve inhaled and exhaled each breath with him, willing him to get well. *Hazak! Be strong!*



# Digging Deeper into SEVENTH DAY

Dear Reader,

Have you ever waited so long for something that you couldn't believe it when it finally happened?

The people of Nazareth had waited a long time for the Messiah of prophecy to rescue them from the reign of the Romans, who crushed their spirits, their bodies, and their finances. The people had waited so long, in fact, that they were rather cynical about anyone who made messiah claims. So many men had come to Israel and declared themselves messiah, but most had either faded away or had died under a Roman sword.

But Yeshua was different. When He touched people, their bodies were healed. Their hearts were healed. Hope was reborn. Though the Sanhedrin had the authority to judge and condemn men, Yeshua had the far greater authority to heal men's souls and bodies. He called them back to God from the far exile of sin and proclaimed mercy and forgiveness in the name of His Father.

El'azar of Bethany was a different man. Witnessing Deborah's death and return to life had changed the young landowner forever. He had come to the Galil with Nakdimon as an arrogant, opinionated, bitter young man. Together the friends had moved from suspicion and ambiguity to the belief that Yeshua was at the very least a great prophet. . . . But was there more to Him than even that?

Who was Yeshua? By what authority did He speak? Where did His mysterious power come from?

Through the written records of Peniel, Shimon Sachar was confronted with the Truth about who Yeshua is. And Shimon experienced an emotional, spiritual miracle:

“I read the scrolls and saw myself for the first time. I knew I was blind like Peniel. I was a leper like Lily. Bitter like Alexander. Afraid like Yosef. And then, Yeshua was born in my heart. Now when I’m outside, I walk through the streets in a different century. I go to the Pool of Siloam, where Peniel washed clay from his eyes and gained his vision. I search the faces of everyone as I pass by, thinking I’ll see Peniel. Hoping I will round a corner and find Yeshua teaching his talmidim. I drink a cup of coffee at Starbucks—and count the hours. Can’t wait to come back here. To read. To learn. To know Yeshua better.”

—SHIMON TO ALFIE (P. XI)

In *Seventh Day*, El’azar himself experienced a physical miracle: Yeshua raised him from the dead—when he had been four days dead, no less. And Yeshua not only raised him but restored him to full health!

What kind of miracle do you long for today? Physical health? The healing of a relationship? Calm for a mind clouded with worry? Do you feel guilt over the past? Do you fear the future? Do you wonder, like Shimon did after losing his wife and baby, if life is worth living anymore? Come to Yeshua! Come to know the Truth! Read, learn, and get to know Him better.

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 questions such as:

- Could a man walking the earth really be God?
- How can you handle personal suffering?
- Are miracles real—or made-up, dramatic stories?
- What is your life story, and what do stories from the Bible have to do with it?
- What’s the difference between the facts of your life situation and God’s ultimate Truth . . . and how can you bridge the gap?
- What do you think heaven—or the afterlife—will be like?

Through *Seventh Day*, may the promised Messiah come alive to you . . . in more brilliance than ever before.

# I THE MAN NEXT DOOR

“The baby in the manger’s grown up. A man.”

—ALFIE (P. XIII)

*Yeshua, who created everything seen and unseen, came to dwell among men in the time appointed. Conceived in the womb of a virgin in Nazareth, He was born in Beth-lehem and grew to be a great teacher and miracle worker known by all the world.*

—JOURNAL OF PENIEL (P. 3)

If you heard stories that your neighbor was performing miracles in your local community, what would your first reaction be? Why?

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What would you do next?

- Call another neighbor to find out if he/she had heard the same thing?
- Check out the facts for yourself with someone who had been “healed”?
- Talk to the supposed miracle worker?
- Shake your head and call all your neighbors crazy for even thinking such a common person could work miracles?

Why? What does your response have to do with your own background and experiences?

Nazareth was a peaceful little village. The people there were relatively untouched by King Herod's maniacal rage and the deadly politics of Jerusalem and Rome. They lived fairly uneventful lives. Among them was Yeshua, the son of a carpenter, who left the village after He had grown. But His return caused a great stir. . . .

## READ

It was some time after the death of Yosef, His earthly father, that Yeshua returned to Nazareth to reveal the secret—to plainly share the testimony of His true paternity, as prophesied in Torah.

Though certain they had known Him all their lives, the people of Nazareth had no idea who Yeshua was or where He had come from. Nor could they imagine the eons that had passed since this moment of divine revelation had been planned.

Despite the fact that every detail of Messiah's life and mission was revealed within the text of ancient law and prophets, the good people of Nazareth did not comprehend.

Not surprising.

After all, could Messiah live next door?

*"Yeshua, my mother wonders, please, could she borrow two eggs?"*

Was it possible that The Lord of All the Angel Armies, El Olam, and Ancient of Days, had descended to earth from His throne and was singing in the carpenter's workshop?

Could the descendant of David—Prophet, Priest, and King—be more than a metaphor? Could He truly be Immanu'el, God-with-us?

They had heard of Yeshua's miracles, yes, but even then, few in Nazareth believed.

—PP. 7–8

## ASK

If you were one of the people in Nazareth—Yeshua’s neighbors—would you immediately believe that He, the little boy you’d seen grow up as an ordinary carpenter’s son, could perform miracles? Why or why not?

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What sign would you require in order to believe that Yeshua was a miracle worker? Why that sign in particular?

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If you were going to research Yeshua’s claim, what source would you turn to first?

## READ

*Written record:*

Ben Dives turned the pages of the journal he had acquired from the archives under the Temple Mount. . . .

The journal recounted how prophecies about the promised descendant of David had been fulfilled thirty-three or so years previous, or around the time of the conflagration. According to Eliyahu, a whole sequence of miraculous events began when an angel appeared to an aged priest named Zachariah, promising that he and his equally ancient wife would have a son. This baby was said to be the forerunner of the Messiah, as spoken of by the prophet Malachi. King Herod, disliking any reference to someone other than himself as “king of the Jews,” sought the parents but could not find them.

Then, the record continued, about a year and a few months after the first angelic announcement, Jerusalem was again disturbed by astounding

news. A group of Levite shepherds, Beth-lehemites, were said to have also had angelic visitors. Rabbi Eliyahu claimed that he had been with the shepherds when the angels appeared. At their direction, he and the shepherds found an infant whom Eliyahu believed to be the promised Messiah . . . newly born in a lambing cave and lying in a manger.

Ben Dives raised his head, frowned, and bit his lower lip. Not an auspicious beginning for the Anointed One. Maybe the rabbi was crazy, or maybe he was trying to cover something up. . . .

After the prescribed forty days, the child was presented in the Temple. This occurrence was said to be witnessed by many, including an ancient holy man called Simeon the Elder. . . .

Eliyahu wrote that King Herod, taking no chances with any baby's claim to his throne, ordered the slaughter of all the two-year-old and younger males in Beth-lehem. This command, carried out in a single night's slaughter, eliminated all such children, including Eliyahu's own son. . . .

Then the scroll added a startling, cryptic, and final note. In a firmer hand it stated: *But he escaped.*

The child, the messianic pretender, escaped that destruction? And today He would be . . . thirty-two. How old was Yeshua? It could be Him, ben Dives mused. It could be. . . .

—PP. 47–48

*Eyewitnesses:*

“Thirty years ago angels spoke in the Temple to an old priest named Zachariah. The father of the Baptizer. Shortly afterward the signs in the heavens declared a King had been born in Israel. Angels showed themselves to Temple shepherds on the same night the prophet Haggai promised. The echoes of their shouts are still in the memory of the people. No baby is ever born already ruling as a king. First the baby must be a prince. But those who saw the signs knew that the one born in Beth-lehem in the time of the Feast of Dedication was, according to the prophecies of Haggai and Micah, the true King of the Jews. Wise men, who had studied the weeks of years spoken of by Dani’el, came from distant lands to worship this new King. My grandfather—Reb Gamaliel’s father, Simeon the Elder—actually met the promised infant when he was brought to the Temple for his dedication.” . . .

Nakdimon continued, “Old Herod feared this prophecy above all others and ordered the children of the City of David murdered.” . . .

Gamaliel finished, “Each year at this time, the people recall the

prophecy of Haggai. They wonder if the Son of David, grown to manhood, will come to the Temple.”

Nakdimon added, “Herod Antipas, the son of the old Butcher King, now sits on his father’s throne. He fears the same prophecy. He killed the Baptizer, succeeding where his father failed. Antipas fears that maybe the butchery of that long-ago night in Beth-lehem did *not* kill the promised King Messiah. And he is right, eh?”

El’azar concurred. “Yes. It is Yeshua. I’ve heard the story myself from the lips of old Zadok the Shepherd, who saw the angels. He whose own baby boys were murdered. The Feast of Dedication comes soon again. The shepherds of the Temple flocks in Beth-lehem say this is when the angels told them to seek a baby in the lambing cave.”

Gamaliel pondered the statement. “And was that baby Yeshua? High Priest Caiaphas and his minion ben Dives dread that Yeshua *is* the child the shepherds found. They fear he escaped the slaughter and that he may come to the Temple on that date.”

El’azar counted the remaining days. “The twenty-fourth day of Kislev.”

Nakdimon stared hard at the book of Haggai. “As Haggai predicted. The Feast of Dedication.”

—PP. 55–56

*Yeshua Himself:*

*“Today you are standing, all of you, in the presence of Adonai, your God . . . in order to enter into a covenant with Adonai, your God; a covenant Adonai is making with you today and sealing with an oath.” (Deut. 29:10-12)*

Taken literally, the verse informed the congregation plainly that they were in the presence of the Lord, that He was physically there.

Yet the hearers did not hear.

Those who saw Him did not see.

Another read:

*“But I am not making this covenant and this oath only with you. Rather I am making it both with him who is standing here with us today before Adonai our God and also with him who is not here with us today; those of future generations. . . .” (Deut. 29:14-15)*

The truth of the message escaped them. After all, Scripture was just Scripture. Familiar. Boring. An obligation. They studied it, read a different Parashah every week, memorized it, and talked about it all the time. It never meant anything literal, did it?

That the Lord Himself was standing in their midst?

—p. 8

*Scripture:*

The scroll of the prophet Isaias was presented to Him. Unrolling it, He found the appointed place and began to read:

*“The Spirit of Adonai is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the favor of Adonai.” (Isa. 61:1-2)*

Yeshua rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the shammash, and sat down. The eyes of everyone were fastened on Him, and He said to them, “Today this passage of the Tanakh is fulfilled in your hearing.”

—p. 9

## ASK

If you were to believe that Yeshua was the promised Messiah, which evidence would you find most compelling?

- Written record (journals)
- Eyewitnesses
- Yeshua Himself
- Scripture

Why?

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If you read the above evidence, what would your conclusion be about who the man next door is?

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If you did believe Yeshua was the Messiah, what, if anything, about your life would change? If you don't believe He's the Messiah, what are your reasons? Do any past experiences, beliefs, or philosophies hold you back from trusting that Yeshua is who He says He is? If so, which ones—and why?

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## READ

*“What?”*

*“Fulfilled?”*

*“You don't say?”*

The congregants eyed each other in consternation.

Yeshua's earthly father was dead, His mother left a widow.

*“If you are truly the Messiah, why did Yosef die?”*

Broken hearts in Nazareth were still broken. The poor were still poor. Blind were still blind. The oppressed were still burdened. If Yeshua *was* Messiah, He had not done them any favors!

*“Today the Scripture is fulfilled, he said? Who does he think he is?”*

*“Isn't this Yosef's son?”* an old man asked. . . .

If only they had opened their hearts, they might have understood that Yeshua was The One Sent from heaven to lavish Yahweh's endless *chesed*, mercy, on all who called out to Him.

*If only!*

But the people of His hometown were in no mood to listen.

*“He's a nobody, this son of a carpenter!”*

*“Yet now he declares he meets the criteria to be Messiah!”*

*“Heal the sick and raise the dead? To cleanse the Temple of corruption and set up a kingdom? And bring the exiles home?”*

*“Yeshua claims he is the fulfillment of all the writings of Torah and the prophets?”*

*“He’s a madman! Or worse!”*

It was a mob comprised of old friends and good neighbors who dragged Him outside the town with the goal of hurling Him over a cliff.

The Sovereign Lord of the Universe, the Anointed Messiah promised by the prophets, had indeed lived next door. And they drove Him away.

The Parashah proclaimed, *Listen! Today you stand before Adonai! He has come to you personally to seal the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! Choose life!*

They chose, instead, to try to kill Him.

Yeshua never returned to Nazareth. Not ever. There were other towns, other needs, others who hoped He would come to them.

— PP. 9–10

Gamaliel rubbed a hand over his brow and muttered, “What a time we live in. If he is who we believe, can it be?”

“We should warn him.” El’azar’s brow wrinkled with worry.

Gamaliel sighed and sat down heavily. “Warn? Yes. By all means. We should send a delegation . . . or a messenger into the Galil. And they’ll bring the saddest tidings in the history of Israel’s rebellion against the Lord’s Anointed. ‘So, Yeshua,’ they’ll say. ‘Don’t come to Yerushalayim. Don’t reveal yourself to your people now, though we know who you are already. The rulers of Israel are sold out to the Romans. They will kill you. Plunge a dagger into the heart of your blessed mother. Do not come down to the Festival of Lights this year . . . although you alone carry the light of God within you.’”

Nakdimon stood slowly. “I’ll travel north. Find him. Warn him of danger.” . . .

“You’ll have to leave without being seen. The chief priest and his contingent have hired assassins. We know that. You’ll have to leave Yerushalayim quietly.”

— PP. 56–57

One of Gamaliel’s talmidim openly heckled, “Tell us again, Rabbi! Who are you? This time in plain language!”

Yeshua did not falter. He fixed His gaze on ben Dives and then past him to where the bulk of High Priest Caiaphas stood framed in the doorway of a dressing chamber. “The proof is what I do in the name of my Father.”

There was a ripple, then a roar from the scribes and Pharisees. “Your *father!*”

At the hatred and scorn poured into the word, I jumped as if stung. I moved toward Yeshua, wanting to be a shield for the man who had given me eyes . . . and sonship. . . .

“Do you mean the Holy One, blessed be he forever, is YOUR father?” a Levite challenged Yeshua. “You claim to be the Son and Heir? You claim that what you do is from the Holy One?”

“Your *father?*” one of the Pharisees bellowed at the Teacher. “You are the Son of the Almighty? Blessed be he, and cursed is your blasphemy of HaShem today!”

—P. 93

But Yeshua was widely known as being from the Galil, even called Yeshua the Nazarene—not that being from Nazareth was anything of which to be proud!

Ben Dives chuckled and it became a snort of derision.

Still . . .

This would bear closer examination. Not that ben Dives believed Yeshua’s claims . . . not for a minute. But if He was the same as this fortunate surviving infant, might He not use that circumstance to advance His claim?

And ben Dives would be able to turn that news to his own advantage.

—PP. 48–49

## ASK

How did these people respond to Yeshua’s claim to be Messiah?

- The townspeople of Nazareth
  - Nakdimon, Gamaliel, El’azar
  - The religious leaders
  - ben Dives
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Explain why you think these groups responded differently. What did each have to gain—or lose—if Yeshua’s claims were true?

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## WONDER . . .

*The rejection of the power of the Holy Spirit and the salvation of Yeshua the Messiah began long ago. The rejection of Yeshua’s gift of mercy began with those among whom He had grown up.*

*I, Peniel, man born blind, scribe of the Way, record these memories for generations who will be born after us.*

*Is it still true in your day that those who should trust Him with the faithfulness of a child are instead the very ones who deny the glory, might, and power of The One Sent to open the eyes of the blind?*

—JOURNAL OF PENIEL (PP. 4–5)

How could they accuse Yeshua of blasphemy when clearly the miracles were proof of His goodness? . . . I raised my fingers to my eyes, remembering my darkness. I thought of the shadowed quiet of the Holy Place, where prayers were recited day after day. I considered how in the interior of that sacred building men spoke in hushed whispers as they breathed air thick with the incense of half a thousand years. And yet! Had none of the holiness of the place entered their souls? How could those who lived and breathed the worship of the Almighty be so insensitive to the fragrance of Messiah? . . .

Yeshua raised His fingers slightly as if to draw in the clamor and hold it in His palm. “You don’t believe me because you’re not part of my flock.” Then embracing with His eyes all those who had risked everything to follow Him, He continued, “My sheep know my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish.”

—PP. 93–94

What do you believe about the man next door? Is your heart sensitive to the presence of the Messiah? Do you know His voice and follow Him? Why or why not?

# Scripture References

- <sup>1</sup> John 21:25  
<sup>2</sup> Luke 1:37  
<sup>3</sup> Deut. 29:10-12  
<sup>4</sup> Deut. 29:14-15; 30:15, 19  
<sup>5</sup> Isa. 61:1-2  
<sup>6</sup> Luke 4:23-26  
<sup>7</sup> Deut. 29:10-12; 30:15, 19  
<sup>8</sup> Deut. 6:4  
<sup>9</sup> Num. 6:24-25  
<sup>10</sup> Ps. 51:15  
<sup>11</sup> John 5:24  
<sup>12</sup> Ps. 103:1  
<sup>13</sup> Ps. 103:11  
<sup>14</sup> Ps. 103:17-18  
<sup>15</sup> Ps. 103:19-22  
<sup>16</sup> John 21:25  
<sup>17</sup> Hag. 2:18-19  
<sup>18</sup> Hag. 2:20-22  
<sup>19</sup> Mark 9:33  
<sup>20</sup> Mark 9:35  
<sup>21</sup> Mark 9:37  
<sup>22</sup> Mark 9:38-41  
<sup>23</sup> Matt. 18:6, 20  
<sup>24</sup> Luke 2:49  
<sup>25</sup> Luke 9:51-56  
<sup>26</sup> Read the story in  
John 10:22-30.  
<sup>27</sup> Read the story in  
John 10:31-39.  
<sup>28</sup> 1 Kings 3:6-7, 9  
<sup>29</sup> 1 Kings 3:18-22  
<sup>30</sup> 1 Kings 3:25-27  
<sup>31</sup> Isa. 5:20-21, 24  
<sup>32</sup> John 14:6  
<sup>33</sup> John 11:25  
<sup>34</sup> Deut 30:6  
<sup>35</sup> Ezek. 36:26-27; 37:26  
<sup>36</sup> Matt. 5:13-14  
<sup>37</sup> Matt.10:29-31  
<sup>38</sup> Isa. 51:12-13  
<sup>39</sup> John 11:3  
<sup>40</sup> John 11:4  
<sup>41</sup> Luke 7:1-10  
<sup>42</sup> Ps. 136:1  
<sup>43</sup> Ezek. 36:26-28  
<sup>44</sup> Ezek. 36:32-33  
<sup>45</sup> Ezek. 36:33-36  
<sup>46</sup> Ezek. 37:1-6  
<sup>47</sup> Ezek. 37:11  
<sup>48</sup> Ezek. 37:11-12  
<sup>49</sup> Ezek. 37:13-14  
<sup>50</sup> John 11:11  
<sup>51</sup> Luke 16:19-31  
<sup>52</sup> Luke 18:25  
<sup>53</sup> 1 Sam. 16:7  
<sup>54</sup> Luke 16:31  
<sup>55</sup> Ps. 119:105  
<sup>56</sup> John 8:12  
<sup>57</sup> John 11:16  
<sup>58</sup> Ezek. 37:5  
<sup>59</sup> Read the wonderful story of  
Lazarus in John 11:1-44.  
<sup>60</sup> John 2:1-11  
<sup>61</sup> John 4:43-54  
<sup>62</sup> John 5:1-15  
<sup>63</sup> John 6:1-15  
<sup>64</sup> John 21:1-14  
<sup>65</sup> John 9:1-41  
<sup>66</sup> John 21:25  
<sup>67</sup> John 11:35-36

# Authors' Note

**The following sources have been helpful in our research for this book.**

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- Starry Night™ Enthusiast Version 5.0, publishing by Imaginova™ Corp.

## About the Authors

BODIE AND BROCK THOENE (pronounced *Tay-nee*) have written over 45 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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