

*THE NEW WAY SERIES*



*Following the Way*  
*in*  
*Cana of Galilee*

*Dale Weatherford*

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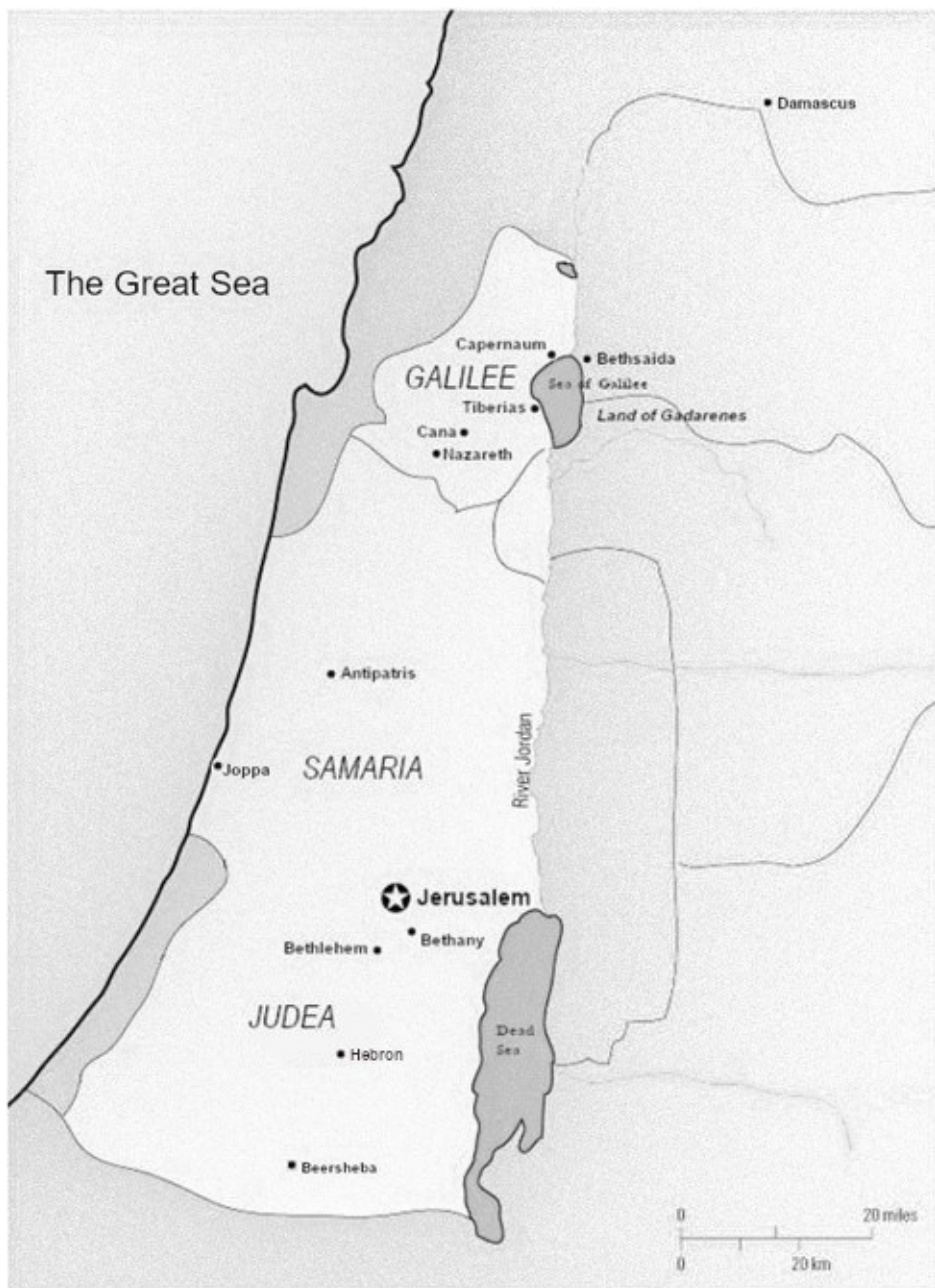
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# Acknowledgements

Special thanks to my husband for all his patience in getting this Series ready for publication. He is not only the technical genius behind the production of these books, but he's my editor, cheerleader, and sounding board. These books would never have happened without his help, encouragement, and prayers.



# First Century Times and Measurements

In First Century Israel, a new day began at sundown and was divided into two twelve-hour segments. The first hour of the night was approximately what we call 6 pm to 7 pm. The first hour of the day was approximately 6 am to 7 am. So, the tenth hour of the day would be approximately 4 in the afternoon. But since no one had clocks, everything was based on the sun's setting and rising.

Normally there were twelve months in each year. Each month started at the new moon and was 29 or 30 days. Occasionally another month was added to keep the seasons straight. The first month was Nisan and occurred at the Spring Equinox, sometime in what we would call March or April.

Length or distance was not used except as travel time. However, I have used miles to help the reader comprehend the distances involved. They would have actually said, "It was a two-days' journey" or "It was a half-day's journey."

The money used at that time was a mixture of Roman and Greek coins. The most common were the pieces of silver that equaled small fractions of the denarius. There were various names for these (mites, lepta, quadran). So, I just called them pieces of silver. The denarius was considered a day's wage for a common laborer.

I used the English measure of gallon instead of the Hebrew terminology for volume.

A handbreadth is approximately four inches.

# **PREFACE**

## **THE NEW WAY SERIES #4**

### ***Following the Way in Cana of Galilee***

In *Following the Way in Cana of Galilee (The New Way Series #4)*, I have continued to imagine how the citizens of Cana attempted to apply the New Way to their lives. They experienced the same joys and heartbreaks that life brings to all of us even today. Jesus said that He was the Way and I invite you to join me as we imagine the difference that following Jesus made in the citizens of this small village in Galilee. Imagine with me how they wrestled with determining God's leading and what it meant to sacrificially follow Jesus wherever He leads. I believe that the manuscript entitled *Acts of the Apostles* mentions these great sacrifices but does not elaborate. I have simply tried to read between the lines and let the characters become real for you. I ask you to imagine with me: What would it look like today to follow wherever God leads?

Dale Weatherford

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# Chapter 1

It felt good to be back at work on Sunday and Orly was glad to see that he was missed. At the noon break he heard the reports from the men regarding the Gentile groups. Orly was amazed at what God was accomplishing. He had begun the groups with just five men and three women and those eight had not only become followers of Jesus, but they had become leaders of more groups. It was breath-taking to see how quickly the New Way was spreading in Cana. Already there were seventeen Gentile groups meeting and learning how to follow Jesus as their Messiah.

On Sabbath night, the eight men and women of the original Gentile group met at Orly's house and celebrated all the new followers of Jesus. Most of the time was spent singing worship songs and Psalms. But as Orly closed, he realized that he didn't even know the names of all the new group leaders. He knew that God was doing something that had nothing to do with him. He had used him and blessed him for being obedient. He shared his feelings with the group that it would only be one or two more multiplications before they, too, would be unable to know all the people who were being reached with the good news.

"Along that line, I wanted you to know that two of the men in my group were talking about starting a group in Nazareth next time. They have a friend in Nazareth who is asking questions and they are starting a group in his home."

"Oh, now I think my heart will explode," said Orly. "The Jews in Nazareth have totally rejected Jesus as Messiah even though it was His hometown. But God is finding a way into their hearts through the Gentiles. This is amazing. Just tell me how I can help you in any way." The group finally dismissed with lots of hugs and promises to be praying.

Orly spent Sabbath morning caring for Gabriela, his wife, while everyone else attended synagogue and Zan slept. Gabriela was carrying triplets, a very rare and life-threatening situation. She required constant care and God had provided everything they needed by bringing two young couples from Jerusalem to help him and his mother care for her. And friends had loaned him Zan, a slave girl who was experienced caring for women during and after childbirth. Zan watched Gabriela each night. Her help made it possible for Orly to work and the other ladies to keep up with all the work required to care for Gabriela.

Mid-afternoon Orly heard Mr. Kenan's group going to the stream. Orly had led this group until recently. It was made up primarily of Mr. Kenan's family and slaves and was limited to Jews. The group had walked over to baptize five new followers of Jesus. After a while, they all crowded into the courtyard and sang Psalm 150 and a couple more

Psalms. Orly opened the door to Gabriela's room so that she could hear. He stepped out in the courtyard for just a minute and thanked them for coming. Lena and Leah both came in and changed robes, then walked back to Mr. Kenan's. These two young ladies had traveled to Cana from Jerusalem with their husbands and were helping Orly with Gabriela's care. After watching a Gentile baptism, they had realized that even though they were followers of Jesus, they had never been obedient to be baptized. Today was a special day for the two sisters, and they came home refreshed and ready to start a new week.



Sabra, the midwife, arrived during breakfast and went in to examine Gabriela. She listened to the babies and then to Gabriela's heart. She measured Gabriela's girth and said that the babies were still somewhat slow on their growth rate. She encouraged Gabriela to eat as much as she could without overloading. She suggested drinking more goat milk and adding more fish if possible and certainly eating her goat liver once a week. Gabriela said, "Mother Ruth has learned to cook it and it's delicious. She serves it to me every Wednesday."

"Good, it contains a lot of things these babies need to stay healthy. Okay, everything looks good. You know the rules. I don't see any changes, but I will probably check on you midweek if I get a chance. I've got two other babies due this week. You are getting close, but we don't want them arriving a minute earlier than they should. Call me if you need me. Shalom."

"Shalom."

Mother Ruth took Gabriela's breakfast into her as Sabra sat down at the table to visit with Lena and Leah. "I need to speak to Zan, so, I'll just wait here if that's okay. Also, can we increase Gabriela's intake of goat milk, fish, goat liver, and olive oil? The babies still aren't growing as fast as I would like."

"Certainly, but should we wake her up more often during the day? She seems to really need the rest."

"Continue to wake her every two hours to eat. But why don't you wake her up every hour and give her a cup of milk then let her go right back to sleep? I don't think it would disturb her that much. Do you have enough goat milk?"

"Sure," said Leah.

Zan came out of the room and left Mother Ruth to help Gabriela with breakfast. She was surprised to see Sabra still there. "I need to speak with you up on the roof, please."

"Yes, ma'am," said Zan and followed Sabra to the roof.

"What are you hearing when you listen?" asked Sabra, giving Zan permission to speak.

"Well, I always find one heartbeat and most of the time I can find two. I've only found a third one occasionally. But it sounds weak and far away. Is that because it is behind the others?"

"It could be, but I'm concerned about her girth not increasing at a steady rate. It's still increasing but has dropped off. That could mean that labor is imminent, or it could mean that we've got a baby in trouble. Have you shared any of this with Gabriela?"

"Only that I was thrilled to hear three heartbeats, but it was really far away like it was behind the other babies."

"Good, because we don't want her worried about the babies. There's nothing we can do for a baby that isn't thriving. I'm hoping you are right that it's just farther back. Keep listening and let me know next time. Hopefully, we can keep these little guys kicking inside their mother for a while longer. Shalom."

"Shalom," said Zan. *She trusts me. She's treating me like a peer. I know that this is what I want to be doing. Dear Father, please hear the desire of my heart.* Zan crawled into her blanket and heard Ruth getting Basha ready to take over Gabriela's care. Basha was the Apostle Philip's widow and was espoused to be married just before Passover. She had plenty of time on her hands and volunteered to help out with Gabriela's care. She and her daughter, Sarah, came over twice a week to give Mother Ruth and the other ladies a break.

When Mother Ruth returned to the table, the girls told her what Sabra had said. "Should we talk to Orly about getting another goat because we don't have enough milk as it is?"

"We can stop drinking milk and drink juice instead."

"Absolutely not. You two need that milk to stay healthy. We will have to buy some at the market, or Orly may want to get another goat. It seems that would be the simplest solution. I'll ask Lucas to catch some fish twice a week. Gabriela loves it roasted over the fire."

The girls collected the soiled blankets and Mother Ruth headed to the market with Sarah. They quickly bought the vegetables and fruits. Mother Ruth also bought a supply of pickled fish and walnuts to entice Gabriela to eat more. She enjoyed Sarah's chatter. Once again, she put Sarah to work carrying things to the cellar. Then instead of asking to play with the goats, Sarah asked if she could start her pillow.

Mother Ruth was glad to sit down and showed Sarah how to load the small loom. Sarah was so excited and really concentrated on each stitch. Mother Ruth was impressed that she was already weaving almost as fast as she could. Leah and Lena returned carrying the wet blankets. They took them upstairs to the roof and spread them out to dry. Lena started the bread and Leah headed down to start another batch of cheese. Sarah saw that the goats had returned to the yard and asked if she could play with them for a while. "Certainly, but don't forget the rules. Stay where I can see you from the courtyard."

"Mother Ruth, I need to tell you something."

"What is it, Lena?" asked Mother Ruth tenderly. She already suspected what this discussion would be about.

“Mother Ruth, I don’t want to get Gabriela sick, so I think you should know that I vomited several times this morning as we were washing the blankets.”

“Did you feel bad before you started washing the blankets?”

“No. And I don’t feel bad now, just a little more tired than usual. But that was a lot of blankets.”

“Yes, it was. Was the smell what triggered the vomiting?”

“Yes, ma’am, I think it was. I don’t usually have a weak stomach, but today it just made my stomach turn and I had to go and vomit.”

“Have you had any other symptoms?”

“No, I don’t think so. Just the vomiting this morning and I have been going to sleep earlier at night. Mario doesn’t like that, but I just doze off while we are supposed to be praying together.”

“Lena, my dear, you are not sick. Do you want me to tell you what’s wrong, or do you want to talk with Sabra?”

“Sabra? Why Sabra? Oh, oh my. Do you mean? Mother Ruth are you sure?”

“I’ve lived a long time and seen these symptoms an awful lot. I guess you’ve probably never been around anyone who was carrying a child.”

“No, not really. I was so young I didn’t notice until a new baby appeared. Oh, Mother Ruth, I don’t want everyone having to wait on me. We can move out and Leah can take care of me.”

“Hush. We knew when you moved in with us that both of you would probably be carrying a child soon. That’s God’s plan. Unless something goes terribly wrong, you’ll have some tiredness and some nausea, but just like today, it won’t stop you. You just deal with it and go on. It just means you are carrying a baby. A better example for you would be Joelle. She’s only two months away from birth, and she walked over here the other day with no problems. She’s running her household, and everything is perfectly normal. Don’t look at Gabriela. She’s having a really terrible time, but that’s not normal.”

Lena threw herself into Mother Ruth’s arms and sobbed. “Thank you for knowing what I was thinking. When you said, ‘with child,’ all I could think of was Gabriela. I want to be happy, but I’m scared.”

“Of course, you are scared, but it’s a very blessed and happy time when God allows a woman to carry life. Why don’t you take some time today to be alone and pray and ask God to fill you with peace and joy? Would you like me to send you to the market, or would you prefer to go back down to the stream? Or would you like to visit Joelle? Then you have to decide whether to tell Mario or Leah first.”

“What do you need from the market, Mother Ruth?” asked Lena.

“Get me some pomegranates and anything else that sounds good to you.”

“Okay, I won’t be gone long. My bread is rising. And thank you.” She took a basket and headed for the market just as Leah came up from the cellar.

“Where is she going?”

“Oh, I forgot the pomegranates, so I sent her to the market. She had to hurry because her bread is rising.” And Mother Ruth busied herself chopping vegetables and hoping that Amata would arrive soon so that there would be a distraction. She made a plate of snacks for Gabriela that included pickled fish as well as her usual cucumber and goat cheese sandwich. They were out of goat milk, so she squeezed some plum juice and took it in to Gabriela. Ruth asked if there was anything Basha needed and realized she needed to check on Sarah. “Why don’t you take a break. Sarah is playing with the goats in the yard, and I’ll sit with Gabriela for a few minutes.”

Mother Ruth touched Gabriela’s hand and offered her some juice. When Gabriela was awake, she asked her what all she wanted on her sandwich. She requested a sandwich of goat cheese and pickled fish with onion. Mother Ruth just laughed and asked if she should top that with jelly. “No, maybe next time,” Gabriela giggled. “Tell me what you saw at the market today.”

Basha returned and Ruth said she would get the plate later. “What are you eating?” Ruth laughed as she left them alone.

Sarah came in and asked if she could go to the stream to wash her hands and Mother Ruth agreed that a walk to the stream was just what she needed. They walked down together, and she watched as Sarah carefully tied up her robe and washed her hands. Sarah chattered happily and shooed away the goats — explaining to them that she needed clean hands to sew on her new project.

By the time they returned, Lena and Leah were wiping away tears and hugging on the cushion in the living room. She checked Lena’s bread and punched it down for her. Then she watched as Sarah easily resumed her weaving. When Lucas and Amata arrived, Ruth told them that Sabra wanted Gabriela to eat more fish. “Do you think you could go fishing, or is it already too cold?”

“I’ll try. I doubt I can catch enough for everyone, but I’ll pray for God to send at least one good fish for Gabriela.”

Orly had hired Lucas and Amata, a Gentile couple, to help out long before Gabriela had started having complications. In fact, they had just learned that she was with child when Amata started helping her with the weaving and sewing and some housework. Lucas was the property manager and took care of the animals and raised a garden and anything else that Orly and Gabriela needed. It was Lucas who had insisted that Orly answer his questions about Jesus and was one of the original eight Romans who began to attend a Sabbath night class. Now, Lucas was a close friend and fellow follower who was leading his own group of Gentiles and teaching them about Jesus. They only worked for Orly for two hours each afternoon, but they were an invaluable help since Orly needed to be at work until sunset except on Fridays. On Fridays, he had arranged with Mr. Kenan to come home early to prepare for the Sabbath.

Orly asked Mother to prepare him a plate to eat with Gabriela. He would let Zan eat at the table. He didn’t want Zan treated like a slave,

but rather as a sister, because she, too, was a follower of Jesus. When Mother Ruth brought in the roasted fish, Orly and Gabriela recalled many happy picnics and giggled about her forgetting the blankets and the lantern. Orly asked if she thought chasing three babies would clear her head or make her addlebrained for the rest of her life. "Would you still love me if I stayed addlebrained?"

"I just love taking care of you, and I'm glad you need me to rescue you every now and then. I miss getting to pick you up and hold you in my arms."

"Zan told me last night that a woman carrying one baby takes about ten months, but there's usually a plus or minus of two weeks that they could be perfectly healthy and just form faster or slower than other babies. Then twins usually come about two weeks early because they get crowded. Only God knows when the time is right for these little guys," Gabriela shared with Orly.

"So what month are you now? I've lost count."

"Me, too. But Sabra always counts from the wedding, so we should be able to figure it out." They worked together to count the weeks since their wedding and discovered that the babies were just over eight months. He kissed her and told her it had been the best eight months of his life. He reminded her that everything was going well and that she should rest knowing that God had good plans for them.

Lena talked Mario into walking with her down to the stream. He went to get a lantern. Gersham suggested that he and Leah join them. Leah quickly said, "Gersham, is it okay if we don't go tonight? I'm tired and I wanted to show you this lap loom that Sarah has been using. I was wondering if you could make me one. I'll need one to make your robes." She knew he would be happily distracted for the rest of the evening. Both of their husbands were carpenters and worked for Palti at the local Carpenter's Shop.

Zan took over for the night and Ruth promised to pack her a snack but needed to talk with Orly first. Mother told Orly about Sabra's request for Gabriela to drink even more goat milk. She asked whether she should buy it at the market, or whether Lucas could maybe purchase a third goat. Orly said for her to purchase what she needed now, and he would ask Lucas to start looking for another goat.

Orly went up to the rooftop to pray and to praise God for the good news that he had heard today. At noon, the men at the shop had reported that fourteen more Gentiles had accepted Jesus as Messiah this week, bringing the total to over seventy for this session. Orly wanted to pray about what his role should be regarding the future, but his thoughts were on Gabriela. He finally went to sleep in the living room.

At breakfast on Monday morning, Mario and Lena shared their news with Orly. He congratulated them and prayed over them and their precious little one. But inside he knew all too well that carrying a child was not a totally safe thing to do.

While Lena was caring for Gabriela, she shared her news with her, and they giggled together about how much fun it would be. Gabriela assured her that she felt great up until the babies just got too heavy for her. "That shouldn't happen as long as you aren't carrying triplets. My mother carried twins and took care of everything as far as I remember. I was only four, but I don't remember her needing to be cared for like this!" It was reassuring to Lena to have another woman to talk with.

The week went well with no changes for Gabriela. On Wednesday Amata showed up alone and said that Lucas had located a new goat and would be arriving soon. A while later, Lucas stuck his head in the door and said he was going to take the new goat down to the pen and introduce her to the others. He asked Amata to find out what Gabriela wanted to name it. Gabriela and Lena discussed the names and decided on Mizzy.

On the Sabbath, the Gentile group gathered to discuss the baptism lesson that Orly had prepared. He had designed a seven-week class that he reviewed with his group and then they shared it with their own group the following day. They spent some time in worship. It was a sweet night of fellowship, and they lingered over the dinner that Markus and Diana had provided. Julius reported that two of the families from his first group were moving to Capernaum soon in order to start a group there. They would be unable to attend weekly training sessions. Orly asked Julius how mature he felt this team was and whether they would get the lessons right or whether they would mix in Roman ideas. "Marcella and I have prayed about it, and we feel that they have been through the material for themselves twice. They are solid and rely on the Holy Spirit. We believe they will be fine. And don't you have friends in Capernaum that would help them out if they had questions?"

"Yes, I would like to give them Zebedee's and Yanis' names. Lucas, do you think your son would be interested in attending a class?"

"I've already told them how to get in touch with him. I hope he will. Now, you also need to know that two couples in this newest group are coming over from Nazareth, so, they want to start a second group in Nazareth. They will continue to attend their own group here but lead a group at their home in Nazareth."

"That's incredible. The Jews in Nazareth have really strong objections to Jesus, but I don't think they will care what the Romans are doing."

"And finally, we've talked as a group, and we think it would be best if we quit meeting for this next rotation. We can talk at the shop if we need you. We'll keep an eye on things while you and Gabriela focus on your family," said Lucas.

"But you are my family. I don't think it's a great idea, but I've got to admit, I'm exhausted, and my heart is in there with Gabriela," said Orly sadly.

“We’ll be praying daily for both of you and the little ones,” said Marcella and everyone agreed. As Orly tried to pray for the group, he became too choked up, and Markus took over and led a prayer for each of the groups that would be meeting tomorrow and for their time apart. There were a lot of hugs and tears as the group left, but everyone knew that it was time to let Orly focus on his family for now.

The group had cleaned up the courtyard, so there was nothing left for him to do. He just sat and cried. *Have I failed You, Father? My group just quit! They don’t know how much I need them right now. But I also need this time to concentrate on Gabriela. Lord Jesus, did you ever feel you needed to be in two places at once? I know you must have. Help me to be like You and let the Holy Spirit be my guide. I’m rejoicing that the groups don’t need me, and I’m grieving that the groups don’t need me. Is that okay to admit? You trained the apostles and then You left the earth, so I guess it’s okay. Your Holy Spirit is perfectly capable of leading them and accomplishing Your will. Let Your will be done and not my own selfish wishes. Help me to accept it as part of being a shepherd and, I guess, an abba. Are you teaching me to release my children into Your hands? I hurt, Father. Hear my pain. I feel like I’ve lost something tonight. Teach me to seek You instead.*

He finally stood and went into the house. All was quiet. He peeked into Gabriela’s room and Zan gave him the thumbs up that all was well. He asked if she needed anything, and she shook her head. Orly crawled in his blanket and felt surrounded by God’s peace.

Mario and Orly milked the three goats every morning. Mizzy fit right in with the other two and followed them around without needing to be staked or watched. And now the men carried three jars of milk into the house every morning. That gave them plenty of milk to drink and they could make bigger batches of cheese and butter to feed their growing family.

Orly woke Gabriela and together they ate their breakfasts. She wanted to know about group. He told her about the couples planning to start groups in both Nazareth and Capernaum. But he didn’t tell her that their own group would not be meeting for a while. It didn’t feel right just yet. Soon she was sleeping again. Orly whispered that he would be in the living room if she needed anything. He would wake her in about an hour. Everyone had left for synagogue, and he assumed that Zan was sleeping. He tried to pray, but it felt more like fretting. *I feel that I’ve failed the Gentile group. They are like sheep without a shepherd.* He remembered the followers in Jerusalem meeting each Sunday morning for just a simple time of worship and a few words of encouragement. *We could do that, but where? James and John had said Jonathan met in an amphitheater. Cana doesn’t have any place like that.* Orly kept thinking of the intersection right in the heart of town and wondering what would happen if all the followers of Jesus, both Jew and Gentile, gathered right there in the streets on Sunday morning for worship. *Would that be illegal? Who would be opposed to*



*it? We could meet for just less than an hour and worship together and I could share short messages about Jesus' teachings and encourage everyone. Maybe we could have a few minutes to pray together with each other.* Suddenly he realized that he needed to take Gabriela some goat milk. It was well past the hour. He grabbed a cup and took it to her room. He woke her and held the cup to her lips as she drowsily drank it. She went right back to sleep, and he continued his thoughts. None of this could happen until after Passover because he and Gabriela would be overloaded with babies and their upcoming trip. By the time they returned, the weather would not be so rainy and cold, and Gabriela would be able to help with all the planning. He felt excited, but sad about the wait. He needed to fix Gabriela a snack and wake her up to eat. He carefully prepared a sandwich from the things Mother had left on the shelf. He poured them both a cup of goat milk.

"May I feel the babies?"

"Certainly, everybody else does!" They laughed and decided that they were dancing, until Gabriela was certain that one had just turned a complete flip.

"And I know a mother who needs to get her rest," said Orly. "I'll bring you some milk in about an hour."

"Okay," Gabriela agreed sleepily.

Orly wanted to pray and thank God for the peace that he felt inside. He was reassured that he still had a role to play in the future and that he was not being cast aside. He wanted to be in the center of whatever God was doing, and this felt right. He asked God to let him know when and where and how to get it started. He was reminded that Jesus told his apostles to wait until they received power from the Holy Spirit before they began their ministries. Orly felt renewed and refreshed in a special way.

When Zan woke up, he told her he needed to go and milk the goats, but that Gabriela had slept most of the day and had had no pain. Zan grabbed some fruit and headed into Gabriela's room.

On Sunday morning, Sabra announced that Gabriela was back on track with her growth. "The babies are growing and that tells me two things: They still have room to grow, and all of you are doing a great job caring for her."

The next few weeks passed quickly. Everyone knew their roles and Gabriela had stayed at this level for three weeks. Having Zan do the night shift, and Basha cover twice a week, took the stress off the others. Amata showed Gabriela the three carriers that she had completed. Gabriela declared them perfect. All the baby things were stacked neatly in the sewing shelves. There were twelve swaddling cloths, thirty baby shawls, three swaddling bands, and three baby carriers. When Palti delivered the oxcart and the three cradles on Friday afternoon, Amata declared that the cradles would need pillows. She asked Leah and Lena to pick out the thread and wool that she would need to make each cradle a soft pillow. She would start those on Sunday.

When Orly arrived home early on Friday afternoon, Lucas invited him to take a drive with him. Orly crawled up on the oxcart and began giving the orders. They drove the cart to Palti's Carpenter's Shop and Orly paid him. Then they returned home, put the ox away, and started milking the goats. Sabbath began as Mother Ruth lit the candles and Orly prayed a blessing on each, including Mario and Lena's expected one and he prayed for Gabriela's safety.

Orly ate with Gabriela in her room and let Zan enjoy the Sabbath meal at the table with the family. Orly was in a celebratory mood. "The babies are getting bigger, and we have so much to be thankful for."

"Do you think it will be this week?"

"Remember, the longer they stay inside, the safer they will be."

"I know, but I want to hold them," declared Gabriela, "and I want to meet them."

"Me, too!" agreed Orly as he put his hand on her bulging belly.

Sabra checked early on Sunday morning and found that the babies were still growing, and nothing had changed with the tightenings. After each visit, she talked alone with Zan who continued to express concern about the third heartbeat. She felt that it was not only weak, but a little irregular and fluttery. Sabra asked her to continue to listen, but to not reveal anything to Gabriela or anyone else.

Basha was watching Gabriela on Sunday when Gabriela told her that her belly was really tight. "Is it painful?"

"Well, it's not pleasant, but not unbearable. It's just the first one I've noticed in a while," said Gabriela.

That afternoon, she had another tightening that was uncomfortable, but it had been several hours since the first one, so Basha told her there was nothing to worry about. With both of her children, once the tightenings started coming about every ten minutes, that was time to call the midwife. She encouraged Gabriela to eat and then try to get another nap. Basha woke her in an hour and gave her a cup of goat milk. Gabriela went right back to sleep.

Lucas and Amata arrived, and Lucas worked with the ox and the cart. He was gradually loading more and more weight on the wagon so that the ox would become accustomed to pulling heavy loads. Amata was weaving on the cradle pillows and was almost through with the last one. Leah and Mother Ruth were stuffing the second pillow when everyone heard Gabriela cry out. Zan woke and came running. She took over for Basha. When Orly arrived after work, Zan left them alone.

"I've had three pretty big tightenings today. The first one was just uncomfortable, but the third one was a doozey. I couldn't help but yell and it woke Zan up and she came running."

"But everything is okay? I mean, it settled back down."

"Yes, I think it just means we're getting closer. But I'm glad Zan is here." Orly started to tell Gabriela about his busy day. He noticed that

she had fallen asleep again. He left Gabriela's door open so that they could hear if she called.

Zan asked, "Orly, may I have your permission and an escort to Sabra's? I don't think that she needs to come, but I've noticed some changes, and she asked me to let her know."

"Certainly, would one of you couples like to take a stroll with Zan while I watch Gabriela?"

"We will," said Gersham, Mario, Leah, and Lena all at the same time.

"Well, I guess you've got an escort party," said Orly as the young people all headed to Sabra's.

Orly and Mother cleared the table and then Mother sent Orly back to take Gabriela a cup of milk. "She will need her strength."

"Do you think it will be soon, Mother?"

"I have no idea."

Zan asked the others to wait outside while she talked with Sabra. She explained what she had heard and felt. Sabra said that she would be over first thing in the morning, but if anything changed during the night, send for her and she would be there.

As the group walked home, Zan simply said, "I saw some changes I needed to report, and I will tell them to everyone when we get home. I just wanted to be sure that everything was okay." When they arrived home, Gabriela was sleeping, so Zan asked Orly if he could come to the table. He sat with the family and Zan told everyone, "The babies have moved to a lower position today and are in a good position to be born. That's probably what is causing the increased tightenings."

"How long before they will be born?" asked Orly.

"Some babies get in position a couple of weeks before birth, some wait until the last hour or two. It really doesn't tell us much."

Orly heard Gabriela cry out a couple of times during the night and he would jump up and try to help her relax. He refilled the snack plate once and was glad to see that she was eating more. He brought both girls a cup of milk to drink about the tenth hour of the night. "I don't mean to disturb you, but I can't sleep."

"That's okay. I wanted to ask you a question anyway if you feel like talking," whispered Zan.

"Sure. How can I help you?"

"It is customary for a woman to have her friends around her to help with the birth and the newborns. Of course, Sabra, Denna, and I will be here. Gabriela suggested Ruth, Leah, Lena, Joelle, and Basha. But Gabriela also wanted to ask Amata and I need to know if that's okay with you. I mean, Amata is not Jewish."

"Yes, if Gabriela says that she wants her here, then I see no problem. Amata is a follower of Jesus. She is our sister and equal. She may not understand all the Jewish traditions, but she will respect them, and she is an experienced mother of six grown boys and many, many grandchildren. She could be a real asset to Denna."

“It’s a large team, but it could be a really long birthing, or a really quick one. Either way it would be better to have extra hands than to not have enough. And Orly, you may want to invite someone to wait with you down at the barn, but you will not be allowed inside. Understood?”

“You sound like Sabra,” teased Orly.

Soon he heard Mario stirring and they headed down to the barn to milk the goats. They were still sitting at the breakfast table when Sabra arrived. She went in to examine Gabriela. Gersham and Mario headed to work, and the others lingered at the table waiting for Sabra. Finally, she called for Orly. Sabra told him exactly what Zan had reported last night. Now, they would just wait. “Normally, I would say that this stage could continue for three to five weeks but as crowded as these babies are, I think we are within a week, two at the most. You might as well go to work and stay busy. I would say that we are still in the waiting game, and she has not begun the birthing process. I’ll be on call night and day. If you get three painful tightenings in a row, send for me immediately. Do you have any questions?”

“No, I guess not. I was just hoping it would be today.”

“I know it’s hard to wait. This has been an especially rough one that has made it seem much longer. Shalom.”

“Shalom.” Orly kissed Gabriela on the nose and left for work. He hated to leave her.

When Lena was ready to watch Gabriela after breakfast, Zan said that she was sleeping soundly and asked if she could talk to all the ladies. They sat at the table so that they could hear if Gabriela stirred. “You have all been selected by Gabriela to be part of her birthing team. I wanted to make sure that you were all willing to participate.”

“I’ve never seen a birth. I wouldn’t know what to do,” said Leah.

“Me, too. But I want to help if I can,” said Lena.

“Sabra will be in charge of Gabriela. Denna will be in charge of the babies. They will both need a lot of helpers and depending on how long the birthing takes, we’ll take naps and swap teams around as we get tired. But you won’t be on your own.”

Everyone agreed to help. Then Zan said, “Now I need help in contacting the other three ladies. I need someone to contact Joelle, and Basha, to see if they can come whenever needed. They need to have their bag packed and ready to come anytime in the next two weeks starting today.”

“We’ll take care of that,” said Ruth.

“And the final member of the team will be Amata, but I suppose she is coming today so you can talk with her then.”

All three ladies agreed to be ready at a moment’s notice, but things continued pretty much the same as the past few days. Gabriela experienced some painful tightenings that occurred randomly, but she learned to feel them coming and was able to call for help without screaming. The babies continued to kick and grow. Gabriela said that she was having more lower back pain and felt sometimes that the

babies were pushing downward. Everyone was on edge and waiting for the next change. Orly had a hard time concentrating on his work and just wanted to stay home with Gabriela. He spent every minute that he could with her.

On the Sabbath, Orly was grateful to get to lie beside Gabriela and rest between feeding her. Since she needed to eat or drink every hour, it wasn't deep sleep, but it gave him time to nap. Gabriela didn't feel much like talking, and she fell asleep when he talked. So, he often sang Psalms so that both of them could worship. Mother had left plenty of snacks for them and Orly tried to get Gabriela to eat, but she kept saying that she felt too full and would quit after only a bite. She seemed to enjoy the goat milk and so he continued to give her sips. By late afternoon the tightenings were occurring more often and Orly was eager for Zan to wake up. She had had three or four since midafternoon and he wasn't sure what qualified as painful since Gabriela usually slept through them. But just before Zan woke up, Gabriela cried out and woke up clutching her belly. Zan came running and it seemed to take forever to go away. They tried everything they knew to help her get comfortable. When the tightening finally released, Gabriela was crying and telling them that that was the biggest one yet. Zan listened for the babies and found that their hearts were racing, too. She checked Gabriela's heart, and it seemed fine. She suspected that this last tightening was the beginning of the real thing, but she knew they still had a long way to go. She tried to distract Gabriela and get her back to sleep. She wanted to talk with Orly but didn't dare leave the room. She stayed while Orly fixed them all a sandwich. Gabriela refused to eat and only wanted milk to drink. After she drank the milk, another strong tightening hit. Gabriela was exhausted and ready to sleep again. Zan made the decision and told Orly to tell Sabra that they needed her to check things out. "But Orly, it's not an emergency. You don't have to run. We are probably still several hours away from birthing."

"Should I get the team? They are all at Mr. Kenan's except Amata."

"Let's wait and see what Sabra says. She'll decide."

Orly couldn't stand to be away from Gabriela, but he grabbed a lantern and ran all the way to Sabra's house. He could hardly speak when he arrived. "Zan said to come. She said it wasn't an emergency, but I want to get back to Gabriela. Can you come?"

"Yes, wait on me and I'll come with you. Hilmar is visiting friends, so I don't have an escort."

As they walked, Sabra grilled Orly on what was going on. He told her about Gabriela refusing to eat and about the bad pains she was having. She had only had two in a row, but Zan wanted her to come. Sabra walked as fast as she could, but she was practically running to keep up with Orly. "Slow down or I won't be able to function when we get there."

"Sorry. I wasn't thinking."

“That’s okay. This is a hard time for abbas, too.”

“Thanks, can I stay with her until you call for the team?”

“Well, I need to examine her first and then I’ll call you in. Just wait here in the living room and I’ll call you in a few minutes.”

When Sabra entered the room Gabriela was having another tightening and instead of calling Orly in, Zan told Orly to go get Denna first, and then the rest of the team. “Be careful. It will probably still be several hours.”

Orly gulped down a cup of water, grabbed the lantern, and ran to Denna’s house. Denna grabbed her bag and asked him to escort her to the house. Orly remembered to walk more slowly this time, and by the time they arrived, Mother and the others were returning from Mr. Kenan’s house. He sent Mario to get Joelle and sent Gersham to get Basha while he ran to get Amata. He knocked on Lucas’ son’s door and waited for the servant. The servant informed him that Master Lucas and Mrs. Amata were hosting a group and could not be disturbed. Orly explained to the servant that Amata was needed at his house to help with the birthing of his baby, and it was time. Would he please, please tell her. “Certainly, sir. I’m sorry I didn’t recognize you. Please come in and rest.”

In a few minutes both Amata and Lucas arrived at the door. Amata had her bag packed and they all started toward Orly’s house. “Amata, please keep me informed. Everyone is rushing around, and they won’t let me see Gabriela. Please check and let me know.”

“I’m waiting with Orly until we know something,” said Lucas.

The men sat on the courtyard benches, but they could hear Gabriela screaming in pain followed by short periods of silence. “It sounds to me like you might be an abba before morning.”

Sabra came out to talk with Orly. She told him that they had Gabriela up and walking around and she was doing great. Her heart was doing fine, and they would do everything possible to keep her comfortable. There was no way to know when the babies might come. She suggested he move far enough away to not hear the screams. The tightenings would just get closer and closer and there was nothing he could do but wait and pray. She returned to Gabriela.

Amata came out and told Lucas and Orly that Gabriela was definitely preparing for birth, and she was going to stay. Lucas said he would leave soon because he would need to work tomorrow. She told him to be careful and returned to the house.

“Where are Mario and Gersham? They surely have been kicked out of the house, too.”

“I don’t know, but I guess they are down by the stream or in the barn.”

Lucas said, “Come on, let’s find them.” They took their lanterns and headed to the barn. The ox and goats were sleeping but there was no sign of the men. They walked down the trail and found that they had built a small bonfire and were sitting and talking.

Lucas told the men to call him if he was needed, but he had to get his rest since he was sure Orly wouldn't be working tomorrow. He started up the trail and met Seth. They talked for a few minutes and then Seth joined the men at the bonfire. He suggested that since Gersham and Mario both needed to work tomorrow that they try to get some sleep. He and Orly would wait by the barn. "It seems fairly quiet there and we will be in calling distance when the ladies need us." So, they said good night to Gersham and Mario who had both thought to grab their blankets before getting kicked out of the house.

Orly and Seth sat down in the grass with their backs up against the barn. They could hear muffled screaming occasionally, but it was too far away to really know what was going on. Orly felt comfortable talking to Seth because he had already gone through this four times. He asked what they were doing inside. "Well, honestly, Joelle couldn't remember much. She told me that they built a pile of blankets on the table. She bent over that when the midwife told her it was time to push the baby out. The rest of the time the ladies rubbed her back with spices that helped distract her from the pain. They let her walk around to help the babies push down. The women will keep Gabriela as comfortable as possible."

"That's encouraging. I don't think I could forget something that hurts that bad."

"I think that's why they lock the men out. Maybe we weren't designed to forget. It's women's work. Hey, are you cold?" asked Seth.

"Yeah, and I never did eat my dinner, so I'm starving, too," replied Orly.

"Is there anything in the cellar that we could get? I don't mind sneaking in. I don't think the ladies would know, and it's not my wife."

"Sure. There's actually a couple of new blankets that I stored down there. Grab those. Then there should be some jars of walnuts, almonds, and raisins. I don't know whether there's any goat cheese, but Gabriela may need that. Just look around and get us some food."

Seth took his lantern and headed to the cellar. He found everything that Orly had suggested plus a couple of plums. Neither man was used to staying up late, and soon, with their hunger pains relieved, they both began to doze. Seth finally stretched out on his blanket, while Orly continued to sit and stare at the house. He tried to pray, but no words would form. He just wanted to be with Gabriela. Tears ran down his cheeks as he thought about what she must be experiencing. It was about the eighth hour of the night when a lantern appeared in the courtyard and then started toward him. He ran toward the light. Mother was grinning from ear to ear. "You are an abba. You have a healthy baby boy. He's tiny but kicking and screaming beautifully. Denna is cleaning him up now and he doesn't like it. She will keep an eye on him. Gabriela is doing fine, and she's already sleeping. I suggest you get some rest, too. Are all the men asleep?"

"Yes, Gersham and Mario went to sleep about midnight, and Seth and I talked for a while and then he fell asleep, too. I was just watching

for someone to come tell me what was going on. A son. I'm an abba. How long before the second birthing starts?"

"Nobody knows. Sabra says it could be several hours or even days, but she thinks it will be short because the second baby is pretty low. I've got to get some rest."

"Okay, let me know when anything changes. And Gabriela is doing okay?"

"Yes, she's doing great," assured Mother. She headed back to the house and Orly threw his blanket beside Seth's and fell asleep. The next thing they knew, the sun was in their faces and Orly heard Mario milking the goats. He got up and stretched and joined him in the barn. Orly asked Seth if he would go to the kitchen door and ask for the milk jars so they could refill them. Seth agreed to give it a try.

Everything was quiet, but as he approached the courtyard Amata asked him what he needed. She got the milk jars for him and told him to set them on the shelf and she would get them. All was quiet inside, so Seth assumed that Amata was watching the baby while everyone else was sleeping. Seth took Mario and Gersham to Mr. Kenan's house to grab some breakfast and asked Benjamin to pack two breakfasts for him and Orly. Mr. Kenan greeted them, and Seth shared the news. "One healthy son has been born. Gabriela is resting and everyone is just waiting for the next birth to begin. I won't be at work today."

"Do you know if Lucas is coming in?" asked Mr. Kenan.

"I know that last night he was planning on it."

"Okay, so we'll just be short you and Orly. I think we can manage that."

"I've got to get back, Dad. Orly needs me. I don't want him to be alone. It's hard waiting."



## Chapter 2

Seth brought back two breakfasts from Mr. Kenan's and reported that although he heard the ladies stirring in the kitchen, he didn't hear Gabriela.

"Is that good or bad?"

"Well, we never had twins. But I would think that the longer she gets to rest, the better prepared she'll be to handle the second birth, don't you?"

"I guess so. We don't want her to get over tired." They sat and ate in silence.

"Have you thought about a name for your son?"

"Yes, it will be Hosea. Hosea was the only abba that I can remember. I became a slave at the age of five and I can't remember my own abba. Hosea taught me everything. He taught me about life. He taught me what he knew about the Jewish Scripture so that I had a respect and love for God long before your dad took me to Jerusalem for the first time."

Soon the men noticed that Gabriela was screaming again, and it was intense like last night. Seth asked Orly to take a walk down to the stream. "We need to stretch our legs. Do the animals or garden need care?"

"You are just trying to distract me," accused Orly.

"Yep. That's my job today. I'm afraid it could be a long one. Did you get any sleep?"

"Yeah, I went to sleep after Mother told me that Gabriela was sleeping."

"Good. Let's walk around a little."

"I wonder if this one will be faster?"

"I have no idea. We just have to trust that God's timing is perfect."

As they approached the stream, Orly invited Seth to pray with him. Together they sat in the grass and poured out their hearts to God. His mind wandered back to the first time he had sat in Mary's living room and heard everyone in the room praying aloud at the same time. It had been a special time. *How does God keep all the prayers sorted out? It just sounds like noise to me. Father, You know our every thought and I praise You.* They both lay in the grass and watched the big, puffy clouds overhead. "Good thing it's not raining today," said Seth. But Orly was sound asleep. He slept for about an hour and then woke with a start. He insisted that they needed to return to the yard so that he could find out what was going on. But as they reached the edge of the woods, they could tell that Gabriela was still birthing baby number two. Orly showed Seth the ox and the oxcart he and Palti's men had made. They checked the garden and Orly pulled a few weeds from the cucumber patch. The cucumbers reminded him of Gabriela, and he left quickly. He explained the funny looking fence that

Lucas had built around the garden to keep the goats out. They talked of many things, but the day dragged on. Noon came and went, yet the birthing continued. The men mostly sat by the barn with occasional walks to the stream. Time seemed to just stand still. Lucas joined them after the noon break at work. He said that all the guys were praying privately, and Mr. Kenan had even allowed them to pray together while on break. Orly commented that he thought Zuri was the only man working at the shop who was not a follower of Jesus. That got them talking about work, and Seth explained about his business in Jerusalem. He said he was hoping to start another shop in Capernaum soon, but he needed to train more apprentices. "I think Joshua would make a good apprentice for you. His freedom is coming up around Passover, I think."

"No, I'm pretty sure that Jordan finishes at Passover and Joshua completes his slavery around Pentecost," offered Lucas.

"He's a good man and a good worker. Thanks, Orly," said Seth.

"Sure."

Finally, the kitchen door opened and Orly ran to hear the news. He realized he didn't hear Gabriela and knew that the birthing was over for now. It was Mother again, and she announced the birth of his second son. Again, she proclaimed him tiny, but perfect. She asked Orly how he was doing. He said the waiting was hard, but that Lucas and Seth were visiting with him and that helped. "How's Gabriela?"

"She got tired, of course, but she's sleeping now, and Sabra says she is doing fine. Hopefully, she'll get some good rest before we start round three. We've been taking turns getting some sleep, but we are all exhausted, too. I love you, Son. I've got two grandsons to watch."

Orly stood in the courtyard and heard his son screaming. Soon the house became quiet. He decided it might be a good time for him to get a nap, too. He walked back to the other men and told them the good news. They rejoiced with him but agreed that they should rest while they could.

"Would you mind if I went home to check on things since Lucas is here? Gersham and Mario will be here soon and then I'll be back just as soon as I get the children to sleep."

"That will be fine, Seth, and thanks for spending the longest night and day of my life with me."

"Hey, with three newborns, you might as well get used to not sleeping!" Seth teased. Orly and Lucas were soon asleep. They woke up when Enoch arrived with an oxcart filled with food. He knocked on the kitchen door and was greeted by Ruth. She thanked him profusely and several women came to the door to receive the food since Enoch wasn't allowed inside.

Benjamin had sent a separate meal for the men and included everything that they would need to eat in the yard. Lucas took the goats to the barn and Mario went to the kitchen door to ask for the milk jars. He kept one jar for the men, and he delivered the other two to the women. Orly told Enoch to tell Mr. Kenan's household that they had

two healthy sons. The four men ate and visited and sang some Psalms together in worship. Soon Seth joined them and caught up on the news. After a while they welcomed Jordan to the group. They sang a few more Psalms and prayed together. Lucas and Jordan left and reminded Gersham and Mario to get some rest, too. They would all need to work tomorrow.

Seth suggested they walk down to the stream and fill the milk jar with water for the night. They took their lanterns and followed Gersham and Mario down the trail. Suddenly, the two young men started pushing back against the others. They whispered that there was a large animal in their camping area. Orly moved to the front and saw for himself the glowing eyes of a very large animal. He told Mario to run to the barn and find out if Samson was there. He quickly reported that the ox was missing and that there was a hole in the fence. Orly thanked him and sent all three men back to the yard for safety. "Samson, stay." Orly walked up to the beast. "Come up." Samson obeyed quite docilely, and Orly led him back to his pen. Samson went in through the hole and took his usual spot in the barn. "Sorry guys, but we need to repair a fence tonight." Gersham ran to get the tools they would need from the cellar, and Mario examined the broken fence. Only one board had broken. The others had just come unnailed. Orly stood by Samson to protect the men and noticed that Samson's water trough was totally dry. *This is one smart animal. He was thirsty and he remembered where the stream was, then decided to enjoy the sweet grass.*

Orly asked Seth if he would mind carrying Samson some water from the stream. He explained that he had forgotten to water him when they milked the goats. Gersham and Mario soon had the fence repaired and they all walked back to the stream to get a jar of water for themselves. They laughed at the monster that they had found, and Orly teased them that they were welcome to sleep in the yard if they preferred to hear screaming all night. Mario replied, "I think I prefer monsters, thank you very much!"

By the time Seth and Orly returned to the barn, they could hear that the third birthing had begun. "What time do you think it is? The moon is hidden by clouds. I hope it doesn't rain or we'll all be sleeping in the barn with Samson, and he doesn't smell very good."

"I imagine it's getting close to midnight, but I'm not sure."

The men packed away the dishes into the boxes that Benjamin had sent but kept out the pomegranates and nuts to munch on through the night. It was only a couple of hours before the screams stopped and Orly started watching the door intently. But there was only silence. "Seth, I think I prefer the screaming. Has Gabriela died?"

"I think they would let you know if there was a problem. Maybe the third baby was just faster than the others. But I'm pretty sure that she is resting now before she births the womb."

"How long does that take?"

“For Joelle, she usually rested about an hour before she gave birth to the womb.”

“So why aren’t they telling me that the baby was born?”

“I guess they are trying to get everything cleaned up so that you can meet all three of them at the same time. They will get all the blankets and stuff cleaned up. They’ll clean the floor and put everything right before they let you come in.”

“There’s something wrong. I can feel it. Please pray with me.”

Seth began to pray with Orly, and they began to sing Psalm 23. *Oh, please God, don’t take Gabriela. I can’t handle that. Oh, Father, I can’t handle that. Please help me, Abba Father.*

Once more the screaming started, but it didn’t sound so intense now. It just sounded tired. But at least Orly knew that Gabriela was alive and that was all that mattered to him right now. For once he was grateful for the screams. Orly heard Mario milking the goats but had no strength to help him. Seth went to the door to get the milk jars and could feel the sadness in the house as Lena handed him the jars. All she would say is that just as soon as the sac was birthed, they would clean Gabriela up and let Orly in. She made no mention of the third baby and Seth suspected the worst. He took the jars to Mario and was surprised when Enoch arrived with breakfast for everyone. Enoch stayed with the men for a while. They thanked him and helped him gather up the dirty dishes. Orly wasn’t feeling hungry but ate his bread roll in silence. Gersham and Mario left for work. Finally, the screaming stopped. A huge pile of blankets was thrown out on the courtyard but as Orly ran to help, Mother ordered him to stay away and let the women clean it up. “That’s women’s work. Now, you’ll be allowed to see Gabriela and your three sons just as soon as we get things cleaned up.”

Orly reported to Seth what Mother had said, but he still felt that something was wrong. There was not a celebratory feeling in the house.

“Maybe everyone is just exhausted,” volunteered Seth.

“I don’t think so. I feel deep within me that something is wrong. I want to be with Gabriela so badly right now.”

Sabra called Orly and held the door open for him. She led him into their room where Gabriela was lying on her mat propped up with pillows. The tiniest baby he had ever seen was on her breast. There was a dull look in Gabriela’s eyes and all he could do was kiss her cheek and stroke her hair. She showed him the baby as tears poured down both their cheeks. He was tiny and gasping for breath. Sabra came back in and explained that the third baby just didn’t grow enough to survive. She left them alone.

Orly tried to take him from Gabriela, but she refused. “He needs his mother right now,” said Gabriela.

“Okay, but may I touch him? I want him to know his abba loves him, too.”

“Of course.” So Orly put his hand on the infant’s back and felt him gasping for air. There was nothing to do but wait. Orly was not sure how long they sat there together but it seemed like only minutes before the gasping stopped and the baby lay still. Gabriela let out a scream and Sabra came in. But when she tried to take the baby, Gabriela refused to let her. “Bring me the teal shawl that I made and bring me a swaddling cloth. Can you show me how to wrap him properly? Orly, can you do a burial service for him? I want him buried. Can we do that? There’s that nice area just behind the garden. Can we bury him, please? He’s our son and I want him to have a proper burial.”

“I will do anything that will help you, and I think I would like that, too.”

In a few minutes, Zan came in and showed Gabriela how to start at the neck loosely and then bind the arms. The swaddling cloth should have stopped at the waist, but this baby was so tiny that Gabriela wrapped him twice. She then laid the baby in the center of the beautiful teal shawl and began to talk to him gently. “Your mother picked out this beautiful yarn just for you. Isn’t it pretty? It’s a special shawl just to keep you warm. Isn’t it soft? Your abba and I love you and we will miss you so much. Now, I give you to Jesus. He’ll hold you and make you breathe again.” She handed the wrapped baby to Orly and let him hold him. Again they just sat in silence and cried. “Orly, I know you had a name picked out, but could we name him Lazarus? I saw Lazarus come back to life and I want to be reminded every time I think of him that he’s alive with Jesus and growing healthy and strong.”

“I think that’s a perfect name for him. I need to contact the group and Mr. Kenan’s group and invite them to the burial, maybe at noon today. Would that be all right with you?”

There was a knock at the door and Mother Ruth and Sabra came in holding two crying babies. “I believe Orly should meet his two sons, and they are hungry.” Mother Ruth placed the baby she was holding in Gabriela’s arms and guided his little mouth to her breast. It took a few tries, but he began rooting around and soon latched on and began sucking. “Now here’s the tricky part. I’m going to put two pillows under your arms so that you can hold them both securely,” said Sabra as she placed the second baby in Gabriela’s arms. It didn’t take long before she was nursing both of her sons and smiling contentedly. They only nursed a few minutes before falling asleep. Orly watched as Sabra wrapped each baby in a fresh shawl and put him in his cradle. Orly couldn’t take his eyes off of them as he sat and held baby Lazarus in his arms.

“They will need to be nursed every hour night and day. That’s why Zan is going to stay for another month and help you during the nights. After that, you should be strong enough to feed them by yourself and they will grow enough to spread out the feedings. But right now, I need to examine you and make sure you are doing okay.

Then I think you need to sleep before the next feeding. Are you ready to eat?"

"No, but I would drink some goat milk, please."

"Sabra, we have decided to do a burial for our son at noon. I need to let Mr. Kenan's group and our other friends know. Some will want to be here."

"Why don't you ask the ladies to help you get the word out? I think Zan and Ruth and I can handle Gabriela and the babies."

"Thanks," said Orly. "Gabriela, do you want to hold the baby for a while, or do you want me to lay him in his cradle?"

"I want to hold him. I want to remember every perfect detail about him." He handed baby Lazarus to her, and she laid him on her chest. In a few minutes Mother Ruth returned with the goat milk. Mother held baby Lazarus while Gabriela slept.

Orly informed the ladies of the burial and asked for their help. Each one volunteered to tell those that Orly felt would want to know. Orly returned to the room and took the baby from Mother. "God knows best," is all he said.

"I've never seen such a tiny baby," said Mother.

"The other two are smaller than I expected, too," said Orly. "But I guess I've never seen a newborn."

"Well, they are small. They are about half what a normal newborn should be. But the important thing is that they are healthy, and they will grow. Are you going to lead the burial?" asked Mother.

"Yes. Oh, I guess I'd better prepare the hole. I'll be back in a few minutes." He handed the baby back to Mother. Orly went to the barn and grabbed the shovel. As he headed to the garden, Joelle and Seth joined him. They expressed their sorrow, and he thanked them for being there for both of them. He also thanked them for Zan's help. Seth took the shovel from Orly and started digging where Orly pointed. Joelle agreed that it was a lovely place. After a few minutes of digging, Orly took over and made the hole a little deeper. They had just completed the hole when friends began to gather around them. Joelle went into the house to get Mother and the baby and wake up Denna. They carried the two cradles into Gabriela's room and left them in Zan's capable hands. Everyone else gathered around Orly and admired the beautiful little boy. Orly held him as he talked. "Thank you for coming. We are breaking age-old tradition here, but Gabriela and I want to be obedient to how the Holy Spirit is leading us. I want to introduce you to our son. He was born this morning and only lived about a half hour. But he was loved and wanted, and we are grieving. We are trusting that God who knows what is best has had this planned all along. His name is Lazarus because it will always remind us of Gabriela's neighbor. She saw Jesus raise Mr. Lazarus from the grave and give him life again. When we think of baby Lazarus, we will remember that he is already in Jesus' arms and is breathing just fine. He is healthy and strong. We will see him again when we join him and Jesus in Heaven one of these days." Then Orly kissed him and pulled

the beautiful teal shawl over the baby's head so that he was completely covered. He laid him gently in the grave, and taking the shovel, put the first shovel of dirt on top. Other men took over and finished covering the little body. Jordan asked the crowd to sing Psalm 23. They sang together and then Ruler Jedidiah led them all in prayer. Everyone left quietly. Mr. Kenan told Orly to take off as much time as he needed. He would pay him for the rest of the week.

When Orly returned to Gabriela, she and the babies were still asleep. But as he spoke with Zan, both boys began crying. Gabriela's eyes opened immediately and Zan handed her the babies one at a time. Orly went out to the kitchen and prepared her a sandwich. He knew that she needed to eat to get her strength back. By the time he returned, the babies were through nursing. Zan had changed their shawls and put them in their cradles. She said to call her if they needed anything.

Gabriela asked Orly to tell her all about the burial. He told her every detail that he could remember. "I'm so sorry you couldn't be there, but it was beautiful. Now I want you to picture him in the arms of Jesus. You told me how special you felt when Jesus spoke your name. Can you picture Him healing little Lazarus and making him whole?" Gabriela nodded even though the tears were streaming down her face.

Leah, Lena, and Mother Ruth were in and out all day changing Gabriela's blankets and encouraging her to eat. Orly watched Gabriela and the babies sleep. It was amazing to him that every time one baby cried, they both cried, and Gabriela would immediately wake up. He knew that Gabriela would be a great mother. He learned to hand her the babies and help them begin to nurse. She assured him that he was already making a great abba. "Can I get you anything to eat or drink? I'm used to feeding you every hour. Does that change now?"

"I don't know, but I'm really thirsty. Is there more goat milk?" Orly quickly poured the last of the goat milk for her. He was glad everyone else was sleeping. It made it feel like it was just the two of them — except now they were four.

## Chapter 3

At the tenth hour, Lucas arrived but said that Amata was exhausted and hoped that it would be okay if she took some time to rest up. Orly carried the babies out one at a time to meet Uncle Lucas. Orly assured him that all was well and other than milking the goats and caring for Samson, he should take the rest of the day off and rest up, too. He told Lucas about Samson breaking out of the pen and going to the stream and nearly scaring Gersham and Mario to death. Lucas looked concerned until Orly assured him that it was his fault for failing to water him. Lucas just nodded.

“Mr. Kenan told me to take the rest of the week off from the shop, but I figure I’ll be in on Thursday or Friday. I think the five ladies can take care of things here without me once they get rested. But we’ll see. I’m supposed to be watching Gabriela, so just go ahead and bring in the milk without knocking. Everyone else is sleeping.” Orly put the babies back in their cradles and both continued to sleep contentedly. Orly sat on the cushion and relaxed for the first time all day. Tears rolled down his cheeks as he realized how very, very blessed he felt that Gabriela had survived carrying triplets and they had two beautiful healthy sons here, and one beautiful healthy son in Heaven. *You are a good, good God. You have given me my heart’s desire. Help Gabriela gain her strength back quickly. Thank You for my sons. Help me be a wise abba.*

There was a gentle knock on the door. Once again, Mr. Kenan had sent Enoch to deliver dinner to his family. He realized that it was almost time for Gersham and Mario to arrive home, so he knocked on Lena and Leah’s doors to wake them and asked them to help get dinner on the table for their husbands. Benjamin had sent enough food for two days. The girls filled a plate for Orly and Gabriela and then sat down to eat with Gersham and Mario. Soon Zan, Sabra, and Mother Ruth joined them for their first sit-down meal in a while.

Orly woke Gabriela and encouraged her to eat while the meal was hot and before the boys woke up. “I just want to hear Sabra say that I can get up and move around by myself again. She let me walk during the birthing, so I don’t see why I can’t be up moving around now.”

“Did I hear my name?” asked Sabra as she stuck her head in the door.

“Yes, you did. When can I get up?”

“Well, that’s a good sign. I like it when my patients get impatient. But not tonight. Maybe tomorrow. You are still bleeding heavily, and I don’t want to risk a crisis. We’ll see how you are doing in the morning, but no promises. I have no idea how quickly you will recover after two days of birthing. Orly, if you’ll step out, I’ll examine Gabriela and then we’ll talk. Would you mind sending Zan in?”



Orly sent Zan in to Sabra and he joined the others at the table. He told them that it looked like business as usual at least for a while. Gabriela would need to nurse the babies every hour but couldn't lift them yet. So, Zan would do night duty, and someone would have to do day duty. "Also, Gabriela is not allowed up, so her blankets will need to be changed and washed. I know that is a messy and heavy job, and I will be glad to do it." But Leah insisted that it was a woman's job, and she and Lena could continue doing it. They would just go back to their previous schedule, and assured Orly that everything would be fine.

"But don't forget we're adding two newborns to the mix. So, someone will also have to be on baby duty all the time and their shawls will have to be washed out every day, too."

"Let's just get a good night's rest and find out what Sabra has to say, and we'll all think better in the morning," said Leah.

"Also, I'll be here tomorrow, so I can help with whatever you need. Of course, I prefer to watch Gabriela and the babies all day."

They all helped clear the table and Sabra called Orly back into the room. Gabriela was nursing the babies again. Sabra said she needed to spend some time giving them a little information and answering their questions and then she would need an escort home. "First of all, Gabriela is bleeding heavily. That's perfectly normal. She can't be up for any reason until that slows down. I don't know how long that will take but Zan will examine her several times a day to make sure everything is okay. Zan will make that decision, and Gabriela, you must abide by her rules. Once the bleeding has slowed, Zan will instruct you in what you can and cannot do. As you heal, you can increase your activity level. The goal is to have you perfectly recovered and ready to be on your own again within the forty days prescribed by Scripture. You will progress a little slower just because of the multiple births, so you must be patient. Do you have any questions?"

"I understand," said Gabriela. "I'm just eager to be up. I guess I thought once the babies were born, I would be up and running. I forgot about this stage. But I will be good and try to be patient."

"Okay, point number two, we haven't worried about it today, but I want you to find a way to permanently mark which baby is the firstborn. Denna smeared some blood under the firstborn's swaddling cloth. When you change the cloth and bathe the baby it will come off and you won't be able to tell these twins apart."

"My mother used bracelets for my brothers."

"That should work as long as they can't get them off. You'll need to feed them every time they wake up. They are so tiny, they will need to nurse often. Zan will help you with that. Also know that it's normal for little babies to have a crying period. It's just their way of praising God. I suggest that you sing Psalms and join them. I'll check on you again on Thursday morning early. Let me know if you need anything before that. Do you have any questions?"

When they did not, Orly said, “Everyone else has gone to sleep, so I’ll walk you home.”

As they walked, Sabra said, “Orly, I want you to know that I am amazed at the example that you and Gabriela set for the rest of us. You two seem to be handling the death of your son with real peace. I know you are hurting, but I’m really glad to have been a part of your lives these past months. I feel that I’ve grown in my faith by watching how you two live every day.”

“Thank you, Sabra. But we’re just trying to be obedient to what the Holy Spirit tells us. When we are obedient, He gives us amazing peace and joy that can’t be explained any other way.”

“Here’s the house. I’ll see you on Thursday before you leave for work. Shalom.”

“Shalom.”

Orly walked back slowly, almost too tired to put one foot in front of the other. He found the house all settled for the night. He made sure that Mother had set out plenty of snacks for Gabriela and checked to make sure Zan didn’t need anything and then was asleep before his head touched the mat. On Wednesday he and Mario milked the goats and Orly took breakfast to Gabriela. She was awake and ready. Zan had examined her and asked Orly to wake her at noon so that she could check again. But for now, Gabriela needed to stay flat. Gabriela seemed more alert than she had for months and was eager to talk. In between times, he handed her the babies to nurse. They quickly returned to sleep after he changed their shawls. Then he would change Gabriela’s blankets. It seemed there was always a mountain of dirty blankets for Leah and Lena to wash. He wondered whether he needed to hire a full-time slave just to do laundry. Lena and Leah did laundry all morning long and Mother Ruth tried to work out a better schedule so that no one got so tired. She walked to the market to get goat liver for Gabriela. The rest of them would eat Benjamin’s leftovers. At noon, she made Gabriela a sandwich from Benjamin’s cheese and sliced an onion for her. She added jelly to the side just in case she wanted it. Gabriela ate the whole thing without hesitation.

When she was finished and started to nurse the babies, she found it hard to nurse. The babies kept choking and pulling away from her breast and then crying. Orly remembered that Zan had said to call her at noon to check Gabriela, so he knocked lightly on her door and asked for help. Zan stayed with her through nursing both babies. She showed Gabriela how to help the babies nurse better. She changed their shawls and assured Gabriela that she would do fine. Zan examined Gabriela and declared that she still needed to stay flat. She would check again after dinner. All afternoon, Orly watched over Gabriela and his sons. With them nursing about every hour and Gabriela needing milk to drink and snacks to nibble, he stayed busy all day. By the end of the day, he was an expert at wrapping the boys in fresh shawls, since they seemed to be constantly needing to be changed or fed.

Orly ate dinner at the table with the others and let Zan watch Gabriela eat the goat liver in her room. After dinner, Zan examined Gabriela and called Orly. She asked him to be available as Gabriela stood up for the first time since giving birth. Gabriela admitted to feeling a little dizzy and Zan encouraged her to just sit and adjust before she tried walking. She walked a little and then successfully got herself back on the mat. Zan took over for the night and Orly fell onto his mat exhausted. *It's definitely easier to hammer metal all day than to care for two babies and a recuperating wife. And I have four ladies to help me. This has got to get easier!*

On Thursday morning, Sabra came and asked Orly to wait while she heard Zan's report. Sabra and Zan retreated to the rooftop to talk. Zan caught her up on all the progress. Sabra told her, "I am very impressed with your work and will gladly accept you as an apprentice midwife when your slavery is complete. Let's go examine our patient and see how she's doing."

"Thank you, ma'am. But I cannot pay for an apprenticeship."

"I know. But I need your help and I will gladly put you to work immediately while you learn. I'll also provide you with a room and food. So, don't worry about anything. It will work and soon you'll be able to support yourself."

"I am so grateful. Thank you, ma'am."

Gabriela was just finishing her breakfast when they returned to her room. She asked if she needed to continue to eat every two hours or if she could just eat when the family ate.

Sabra said that she would like to see her continue a midday snack so that she could provide plenty of milk for the boys. "And you need to drink plenty of liquids. Just remember every time you nurse, be sure and drink a cup of something."

"Can I progress to walking around a little? I would like to walk to the living room."

"That's Zan's call. But no lifting the babies yet, and no lifting anything heavy. If you'll be patient, you'll heal much faster than if you overdo and have a setback."

"I understand."

Sabra examined Gabriela and asked if she had any questions.

"Is it all right to let the babies sleep until they are hungry, or should I wake them at a specific time?"

"They won't starve. These two are pretty demanding about food, and unless they are sick, they will wake up and start screaming when they are ready. You will find as their tummies get bigger; they will sleep longer. They may start nursing longer, too. God has built into them a knowledge of what they need to survive. They will teach you if you will listen. Now, I need to run, so I'll let you share all this with Orly. I've got another patient that I need to see somewhat urgently. I'll see you again on Sunday morning unless you need me sooner. Shalom."

"Shalom," said Gabriela and Zan together.

“Oh Gabriela, it happened. Sabra offered me an apprenticeship. I’m so happy I’m not sure that I can sleep. May I tell Orly? He’s been praying for me, too.” They called Orly who was eagerly waiting to hear the report. He was surprised that Sabra had left.

Gabriela explained, “She had an urgent appointment and couldn’t stay, but Zan has good news to share first.” So, the two girls caught Orly up on all their news. Orly listened and congratulated Zan. He asked if they felt comfortable with him returning to work since Basha and Sarah had arrived to watch her and the babies today.

“Oh, I’ll miss you. But of course. You need to get back to work and Basha will take good care of me. But you are late, so you had better hurry.” Orly kissed Gabriela on the nose and asked if he should check at noon. She said, “No, I’ll send one of the girls if I need you. I’ll see you after work.”

Basha came into the room and Zan briefed her on the changes in schedule. She also asked Basha to find Gabriela’s monthly rags so that the girls wouldn’t have so many blankets to wash. Basha changed the blankets and asked Gabriela if she was ready for a nap. “No. I want to hear what’s going on with you. Everyone has been so focused on me. What are you doing these days?”

Basha settled down on the cushion and they began to talk. Basha caught her up on all the news about Matthew. She expected Gabriela to fall asleep, but she was alert and ready to listen. “Well, I have never told anyone except Matthew this, but my abba, who was a priest, taught me to read and write both Hebrew and Aramaic. I never told Philip, and the children don’t know. Anyway, Matthew asked me to start writing down everything that I could remember about those three years that we followed Jesus. I’ve used up just about all my savings to purchase papyrus and ink, and every day while Sarah is outside playing, I write a little. Matthew is doing the same thing. When we marry, we hope to put it all together so that people like Orly and Ruler Jedidiah will have a record of what Jesus did, said, and taught while He was on earth. There’s not many of us left who can record it.”

“Basha, that’s incredible. Orly has been begging the apostles to prepare something like this for him to use. He said he would learn to read if he had such a document.”

“But it’s our secret. You can’t even tell Orly because I don’t know if it will ever be good enough to adequately cover Jesus’ life. But that’s what I’m working on, and it’s very satisfying. Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and write. I just don’t want to skip anything.”

Both babies woke up screaming and Basha laughed at the memories of little newborns’ demands. Basha handed her first one baby and then the other. They had just gotten the babies back in their cradles when Mother Ruth and Sarah returned from the market. Sarah asked if she could see the babies and Gabriela invited her in. Mother Ruth rested a few minutes and then called Sarah to come and help her put away the fruits and vegetables that they had purchased. At noon she fixed Gabriela’s snack. Lena started a batch of bread. Leah

started a batch of cheese and the house began to feel more normal. Everyone had jobs, but they were not so overwhelming.

Mid-afternoon, Leah asked Basha if she was checking Gabriela's blankets. Basha and Gabriela both giggled and said, "No." Then they explained the newest change and Leah was thrilled. She said that that was the hardest part — washing the heavy blankets.

"You and Lena have done such a great job caring for me. But hopefully, it will get easier as the days go by. I'm getting stronger every day and will soon be able to help more. Zan says I can walk to the living room bed tonight if I'm still feeling good."

When Lucas and Amata arrived, Lucas stuck his head in the door to say hi to Gabriela and the babies. Then he headed for the barn. Gabriela told Amata she needed bracelets for the boys. One bracelet for the firstborn and two bracelets for the wrist of the second born. She would like them to be blue or teal or green or mixed, but they had to be tight enough that they couldn't remove them, but loose enough to grow. Amata suggested just crocheting some soft yarn by hand and then tying them with a knot. When they became too tight, they would just cut them off and make three more. Amata brought the yarn into Gabriela's room so they could talk. Gabriela wanted to hear about the burial again and Amata told her how touched everyone was by it. When Amata had completed the bracelets, they put one bracelet on each boy. "After you remove the swaddling cloths, you can put the second bracelet on." They agreed to wait for Zan's help to identify the first born. Amata also asked about the Jewish circumcision and naming party. Gabriela was startled. She hadn't even thought of it. They needed to check with Ruler Jedidiah to see when he could do it. It was supposed to be on the eighth day, so they hoped it wasn't too late to ask. She promised to talk with Orly about it tonight. Gabriela had just asked Amata to please get her a glass of milk when the babies began to scream. So instead, Amata handed her the babies one at a time. "Oh, and Sabra offered Zan an apprenticeship."

"Zan will be a great midwife," agreed Amata.

"Did I hear my name?" asked Zan as she stuck her head in the door.

"Oh, I hope we didn't wake you. Gabriela just told me your news. Congratulations!"

"Thank you, and no, you didn't wake me. I was just thinking that we should probably check the swaddling bands and change their swaddling cloths. I was wondering if you wanted to do that now or wait for Orly."

"I think Orly would want to watch, so let's wait until after dinner."

Zan said that Gabriela could walk to the living room bed if she wished. Gabriela asked how she was supposed to nurse the babies with the men present. "You use a baby shawl to cover yourself up. I'll help you with it. You lay the shawl over your breasts and slip the babies under it. They'll nurse and you can lay there and be modest about it," said Zan.

“Yeah, that works until the babies get a little older, and decide to play hide and seek and peek out! But by then, you can nurse them in your room,” laughed Amata.

Gabriela sat on the cushion until the dizziness passed and then decided she was ready to walk. Zan walked beside her while Amata carried her pillows and blanket. They helped her to get settled, and Amata got a baby shawl ready for when the babies woke up hungry. She and Zan carried the cradles into the living room and the babies slept through the move with no complaints. From her living room bed, Gabriela could watch the table being set and everyone coming and going from the outside kitchen. For the first time in a month, she was freed from her prison. When Orly arrived, he ran to her and gave her a hug and a kiss on the forehead. “You got to walk? That’s terrific! So, you are doing better?”

“I’m doing great. It’s still going to take time, but I’m making progress. How was your first day back?”

“Crazy busy. There’s quite a backlog, but it will only take us a few days to catch up and get back to normal. I couldn’t wait to get home to you and the boys. Were they good today?”

“Yes, Abba, they were very good.” Just as soon as Gersham and Mario arrived, the ladies got the meal on the table. Lena’s bread was hot, and the vegetable dish was wonderful. Gabriela enjoyed hearing all the chattering around the table. Zan seemed to fit in so well with the other young people and she hated to have to send her back into slavery, but she knew that Joelle needed her. When the babies cried, Orly and Zan both jumped up to help her. Zan covered her and placed first one baby and then the other under the shawl. When they were finished and sound asleep, Zan placed them back in their cradles. When Orly finished his dinner, he walked with Gabriela back to their room and then returned for the two cradles. Orly could hardly believe he had a family to call his very own.

## Chapter 4

When Zan heard the babies crying again, she prepared a small bowl of olive oil. She grabbed two fresh swaddling cloths and a supply of shawls, and gently knocked on Gabriela and Orly's door. "Are you two ready to have some fun? When the babies are well-fed and asleep, we are going to remove the swaddling cloths. Now, the first thing we need to do is see which one has the blood smeared on his back. Denna used it to identify the firstborn. Let's do that first. Here, put a shawl in your lap because the babies will be slippery."

"I'm going to sit on my mat. I don't want to drop him," said Orly moving from the cushion.

So once Gabriela had fed them and they were both asleep, Zan handed Orly one baby and laid the other in Gabriela's lap. "First, we very gently begin unwrapping the swaddling cloth. Find the end and start unwinding them. Go slowly and see if the babies will wake up and be curious, or just sleep through it all." When they had completely unwrapped the babies, they could find no blood on either back. Zan was certain that that was what Denna had told her to look for. She wondered if the olive oil had washed it off. Then she grabbed the swaddling cloth that she had just removed and discovered that it was indeed blood stained. Just to be sure, she looked at the swaddling cloth that Orly had removed and there was no blood stain on it. Crisis averted. She tied the second bracelet on the baby that Orly was holding and declared him to be the younger of the two.

"Now the real fun begins. Very gently begin to stretch out their arms and help them to exercise their muscles. They may cry at first because they would prefer to sleep, and it will be new for them. But most babies love it after they get used to it. As you hold them and move their arms around, you'll want to look for any irritations or dry spots on their skin. I've brought a little olive oil to put on those spots. Then I'll help you get them all wrapped up in fresh swaddling cloths, and they will be ready for sleep."

Orly watched Gabriela and Zan begin to stretch out the little arms of the firstborn. Orly tried to mimic their actions. Both babies opened their eyes and stared at their parents. They seemed to enjoy the interaction and flailed about kicking but didn't cry. Zan said that she needed to check their swaddling bands. She checked the firstborn and felt that they should leave the bands on for a few more days. Then she began to check him for any skin irritations or dry spots. She declared him to be perfect. She rubbed him with some fresh olive oil, and he seemed to enjoy it. Then she began to slowly wrap him in a fresh cloth. By the time she was finished, baby number one was fast asleep. Zan then sat beside Orly and checked the younger twin for any irritations and found one under his arm. She oiled it thoroughly and then rubbed his tummy and back with oil. She helped Orly wrap the

little one in the swaddling cloth. Again, the baby relaxed and was asleep before she finished. She wrapped both babies in clean shawls and placed them in their cradles for the night. She told Orly that she was ready to take over Gabriela's care whenever he was ready, and she would wait in the living room until he called.

After Zan had left the room, Gabriela asked Orly if he had thought about the circumcision and naming party that they should host. He said he had not. He agreed to talk with Ruler Jedidiah tomorrow.

On Friday morning, Orly told Lucas that he needed to talk with Ruler Jedidiah at noon and might be a little late. Lucas said he could cover for him. Orly ran to the synagogue and sat down with Ruler Jedidiah. He was warmly welcomed but the Ruler had another appointment so couldn't talk for more than a few minutes. Orly told him that he needed his boys circumcised and wondered when that would be possible and what all was involved. Ruler Jedidiah asked Orly to remind him when the two were born. Orly told him that the two healthy boys were born on Sunday. Their brother died on Monday. "Could I come and meet with you two tomorrow night after Sabbath has ended and we'll plan the circumcision for the following evening?"

Ruler Jedidiah visited as promised and talked with them about what they wanted. He felt it was probably too cold and rainy to plan a large event and wanted to be sensitive to their loss. Orly and Gabriela agreed that a small group would be best.

On Sunday morning, before the men left for work, they shoved most of the furniture into the back rooms. Only the table and Gabriela's bed remained. The ladies were preparing bread and cheese and fruit for seventeen people. It would be crowded, but no one would stay long.

That evening after dinner, Mr. Kenan; Seth and Joelle; Jordan, Basha, and Sarah; Lucas and Amata; Gersham and Leah; Mario and Lena; Zan; Mother Ruth; and Ruler Jedidiah packed into the little living room to witness the naming and circumcision of the two boys. Gabriela was able to lie on the living room bed and watch. The first born was named Hosea and his brother was named Kobe. Ruler Jedidiah led them in singing Psalm 23 in memory of baby Lazarus, and then sang Psalm 150 to praise God for two healthy sons born on the fifteenth day of Shevat. Afterward, everyone enjoyed the snacks and stayed to visit for just a short time.

For the next three weeks, Zan helped Gabriela with the babies during the night hours. Gabriela continued to get stronger and was able to move around the house and lift her own babies. How she loved the freedom. She wasn't allowed to do any of the housework, but she could take care of herself and her two little ones. The babies were nursing about every two hours now, and she could generally tell when they were hungry before they began to scream. Zan also taught her to be sensitive to the babies' needs and hold them over the chamber pot when necessary. This really cut down on the amount of laundry. Amata designed a double carrier that was easier to tie on. Soon,



Gabriela was able to load the babies and walk about as she pleased. She began to walk around in the sunshine when it was warm enough to be out. And she looked forward to the day when she could return to helping with chores. But she knew that her primary job was to feed and care for these little ones. Each night after dinner, she and Orly would unwrap the swaddling cloths and play with the babies, stretching their arm muscles. All four of them enjoyed this special bonding time.

At the end of the babies' first month, the family ate their last meal together with Zan. They were sad that she would be re-entering the world of slavery. Her freedom would come in just over a year. There was much hugging and tears as she said goodbye. They would see her at Mr. Kenan's each Sabbath, but she would be in charge of Seth and Joelle's four children and have no time to visit with other adults. The two couples walked with her to Seth's house immediately after dinner and everyone felt as if there was an empty hole left in their family.



When Gabriela's forty days of confinement were complete, Sabra stopped by to check on her. She also checked on the boys and was amazed at how big they had grown. Gabriela thanked her over and over for helping her survive such a tumultuous time in their lives. "You are not just a midwife; you are a wise friend who understood my needs. We'll never be able to thank you enough."

"Well, I think it was one of the highlights of my time as a midwife. I had never cared for a woman carrying triplets, and I've never cared for a woman who has so much peace and love and joy. You are one of the kindest and most caring persons I've ever been around."

"Thank you, Sabra. You know that that's the Holy Spirit inside of me. It's not me."

"Yes, I know. But I wish I could get more of it for myself. I've got to run, but I'd like to talk with you again sometime."

"Stop by anytime. You are always welcome," said Gabriela.

Orly took the noon hour off from work to walk with Gabriela to the synagogue. There was no place to make a sacrifice, but Ruler Jedidiah accepted their offering of money as a purification sacrifice and ransom for the first-born son. He suggested that when Orly went to Passover, he sacrifice a lamb at the temple. Orly assured him that he would. Ruler Jedidiah said that he hoped they would soon be able to return to synagogue, and Orly told him that they were planning to attend this Sabbath. Orly walked Gabriela back to the house and then went back to work. Gabriela needed to rest after such a long walk, but she was still feeling good.

While she was now allowed to contribute to the work, she was constantly being interrupted by needing to care for the babies. They

stayed awake for longer periods of time and one or the other constantly needed her attention.

Amata had started on birthing robes for Lena. But with Passover approaching, she began to make some heavier blankets for the babies to layer over their shawls. Gabriela and Mother Ruth began making longer swaddling cloths because the twins were quickly outgrowing their newborn ones.

Gabriela and Orly were excited to be able to attend synagogue again. It had grown and there were a lot of new faces. Jordan and Ruler Jedidiah made a great team. Jordan had established a strong leadership team to lead Mr. Kenan's group, but welcomed Orly to join them and teach every six weeks. He missed their Gentile group, and Orly was getting restless and felt he could be doing more in ministry. He felt certain that God would guide him and show him the plan after their Passover trip. He knew that he needed to be patient and wait until the Holy Spirit gave him direction.

Gersham and Mario were excitedly watching their finances grow and would probably be able to purchase a small house in a few months and begin remodeling it for the two couples to live together comfortably.

Basha approached Mr. Kenan and asked if he would consider releasing Jordan early from his apprenticeship so that she and her two children could walk to Jerusalem and visit friends in Samaria before the wedding. "I will talk with Jordan tomorrow about making those arrangements," said Mr. Kenan. "He has been an excellent worker and I believe that he is prepared for his future wherever that leads him."



Mr. Kenan called Jordan into his office at the shop. He invited Jordan to take a seat and said, "Jordan, have you given any thought as to your plans after your apprenticeship with me is completed?"

"Yes, sir, I have. I would like to be considered as a permanent employee if that is possible. I love my work. I am happy in my ministry, both in training leaders for your group and the synagogue. I love the little village of Cana and could see myself staying here permanently. But you know as well as I do, I cannot call anything permanent. I don't know the future. But, if the job were offered to me, I would take it."

"When we started this apprenticeship, you planned to move to a foreign land to preach the gospel."

"Yes, sir. But when my dad passed, I found that my passion lay more in training others to go. That may change, as I've said, but there is no desire to return to Carthage at this point. I have too much work to do here."

“You understand that when you complete the apprenticeship, you will need to provide your own housing, make arrangements for food, clothing, taxes, and all the other adult responsibilities?”

“Yes, sir. I am prepared to do that — although I haven’t started looking for a house yet.”

“Kobe found his own place, but was unable to do his own cooking, so he paid me for his evening meals. I want you to understand that we can work out something similar if you need it.”

“Thank you, sir. So, are you saying the job is mine?”

“Yes, certainly. But there’s another matter that I need to discuss with you.”

“Thank you, sir. How can I help you?”

“Your mother has requested that I terminate your apprenticeship early so that you can accompany her to Jerusalem on the first of Nisan.”

“What? I mean, I haven’t heard this. I was planning on riding up with you and the other men as usual.”

“Your mother would like you and Sarah to walk to Jerusalem together as a family and visit friends in Samaria before the wedding. I told her I would ask if that was agreeable with you. You are a man and have the right to say no.”

“I don’t want to walk all the way to Jerusalem!” declared Jordan.

“Yes, I wouldn’t either. But I want to remind you that this is your mother’s request, and it will give you some special time with her and Sarah before they leave. It may be a very long time before you see them again. I would like to ask that you take a while and pray about it before giving me a definite answer. I am agreeable to terminating your apprenticeship early and I will still give you the highest recommendation, but I will not pay you for the time off. Do you have any questions?”

“No, sir. And thank you again, sir. I will pray about my decision and give you an answer soon.”

“Fine. Now back to work,” said Mr. Kenan.



It was time to make final plans for traveling to Basha’s wedding and the Passover trip to Bethany. Passover would take place on Tuesday, Nisan fourteen, and Matthew and Basha’s wedding was planned for Sunday, Nisan twelve. It would just be a small ceremony followed by a short celebration. The trip to Jerusalem and Bethany was all that Gabriela and Mother Ruth could talk about. “It will be good to be home, but I feel that I’ve changed so much, I feel a little uncomfortable. Is that normal?”

“I think so. You are Orly’s wife now, but you’ll always be their little girl. I’m sure they are counting the days until you arrive. And what a

surprise these little ones will be.” Gabriela kept imagining what her mother and abba’s faces would look like when she showed them the twins. They would be so excited. And her brothers would be thrilled to be their uncles! She remembered how excited Jared and Jabet were when Adam’s and Amram’s babies were born.

On the Sabbath, Mr. Kenan announced that he would be taking any Jewish men who wanted to go to Jerusalem for Passover; however, he would not be providing housing. He, Omri, and Enoch would stay with his brother Zeke, but anyone else who wanted to go would be on their own. At last report, there had been no recent problems in the olive garden, but that didn’t mean there wouldn’t be. Joshua, Jonah, Oren, and Levi decided to make the trip. Mr. Kenan talked with Orly and suggested that they travel together so that if there were any problems along the way, they could help each other. Orly grinned as he realized that Mr. Kenan was nervous about Gabriela, Ruth, and the babies traveling alone with him. He thanked Mr. Kenan and said he liked the idea, but he didn’t want to slow them down. Mr. Kenan suggested that they leave on Tuesday so that they would have plenty of time to travel before the wedding on Sunday. If they got there early, it would just give Gabriela more time with her parents. Orly agreed.

Jordan had left the week before, walking with his mother and Sarah. Seth would be leading Mr. Kenan’s group while they were gone for the two Sabbaths. He would not be traveling for Passover with Joelle being so near birthing. The two young couples had no desire to return to Jerusalem, so they would stay in Cana.

On Sunday, Lucas asked to speak to Mr. Kenan at the shop. “Mr. Kenan, I know that Passover is a Jewish celebration and for years, I’ve kept the shop running while you were away. But now that I’m a follower of Jesus and most of the other guys are, too, I would like to ask permission to close the Metal Shop to celebrate Jesus’ death and His resurrection. I suppose that would be Nisan fourteen through sixteen. Would that be the right dates?”

“Yes, that would be the right dates, but let me think about it and I’ll get back to you.”

Mr. Kenan walked into Seth’s office and told him about Lucas’ request. “It sounds fair to me. In fact, I would probably give them that Friday off, too. Then we could open back up on Sunday. I think they deserve the time off and we don’t do much business during Passover anyway.”

Just before noon, Mr. Kenan walked back to Lucas’ bench and asked him to gather the men together under the back tree. “Do you just want our men, or Seth’s too?” asked Lucas.

“All the men, including the slaves.”

“Yes, sir.”

As the men gathered under the tree, most suspected that this was Mr. Kenan’s usual announcement of what he expected while he was gone and who would be in charge. They were not expecting what

they heard. Mr. Kenan did announce that he would be leaving on Tuesday with Joshua, Oren, and Levi to celebrate Passover. He said that with Jordan and Orly also out, they would be very short-handed. He wanted them to know that he appreciated their hard work. "Seth will be in charge until the thirteenth of Nisan — that's next Monday. But we are going to completely shut down the shop for the remainder of that week, from the fourteenth of Nisan until the following week. This will allow you to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus. You will reopen with Seth and Lucas in charge on Sunday the nineteenth of Nisan. Are there any questions?" A cheer went up from the men followed by excited chattering. "Thank you, sir," said Lucas. "It's break time for the free men. The rest of you need to return to work."



All day Sunday and Monday, Mother Ruth, Gabriela, and the girls baked bread and packed food for the trip to Bethany. Orly and Lucas had anchored two baskets onto the floor of the oxcart so the babies would have a place to sleep during the ride. Early on Tuesday morning, Orly, Gersham, and Mario placed the two women's mats on the floor of the oxcart, stuffed the babies' baskets with their crib pillows, and finished loading the food bags, baby supplies, cradles, extra blankets, heavy cloaks, and travel bags for everyone. Mario had milked the goats, and everyone ate a quick breakfast prepared by the girls. Orly went into the cellar and pulled out some silver pieces to give to Gersham in case of emergency while they were away. Gabriela finished nursing the boys and placed each one in a basket. Both were sleeping soundly, swaddled tightly and wrapped with a clean shawl. Orly and Lucas had built the ladies a ladder to aid in their access to the cart and they climbed up and got settled on their mats. They waved to the two couples and began their journey. They had promised to meet Enoch and Mr. Kenan at the road to Tiberius — about an hour's drive away. Orly took it slow at first to make sure everyone was comfortable with the ride. The babies were doing fine so he gradually allowed Samson to pick up speed. Orly wasn't exactly sure how fast to drive the young ox in order to not tire him out, but Samson seem to enjoy the pace and wasn't getting overheated. The ladies were excited, and the babies continued to sleep. Everything was starting off great.

When they arrived at the well, Mr. Kenan's men had already filled the water trough so that Samson could get a good drink, and Orly apologized for traveling a little slow. Enoch assured him that he was only a few minutes behind them and was doing fine. They arranged for Enoch to lead the way and Orly to follow. But Enoch also suggested a signal for Orly to give the men if he needed to make a stop or slow down. Orly agreed, and everyone reloaded onto the wagons. Gabriela and Mother Ruth had had a chance to walk around and stretch their

legs and the babies were still sleeping soundly. But they had only been back in the cart for a few minutes before the babies woke up hungry. Gabriela crawled to the first basket and handed Hosea to Mother Ruth. Then she crawled to the other basket and picked up Kobe. She put Kobe in his carrier, and he settled down to nursing quickly. She then crawled back to her mat and put Hosea in the carrier. Both babies felt cold to her. When they finished nursing, she kept them in the carrier to keep them warm. They were sleeping soundly, and Gabriela enjoyed holding them close to her, which was her habit while she did her chores in the mornings. She wanted to keep the babies in as normal a routine as possible. It was too noisy in the back of the cart to do much talking, so Gabriela just enjoyed watching Mother Ruth's face as they traveled further and further away from Cana.

It was almost two hours later before they stopped at another well to water the oxen. The rolling farmland was beginning to be replaced by definite foothills. Mother Ruth pointed out the mountains that were looming ahead. Gabriela told her to keep looking to her right and she would see glimpses of the Jordan River. The road would follow it all the way into Jerusalem, but you could only see it through the trees in certain places. Gabriela asked Orly to help her find the warm blankets for the babies as she would put them back in the baskets after she nursed them the next time. He found the box and unpacked the blankets. He reminded the ladies to let him know if they needed to slow down or stop. He kissed Gabriela on the nose and could see that she was glowing with happiness at the thought of seeing her family again.

Just as Gabriela crawled into the wagon both boys began to howl with hunger. Since they were already in the carrier, it was easy to nurse them, but she wasn't sure how she was going to get them wrapped and back in their baskets. She finally yelled for Orly to slow down for a few minutes. He signaled Enoch and they slowed down so that she and Mother Ruth quickly got the babies wrapped in fresh shawls and then Gabriela tucked them one by one into their baskets and covered each one with a blanket. She then told Orly they could speed up again and he signaled the men ahead of him. Mother Ruth and Gabriela watched the babies as they looked around at the blue, blue sky over their heads. It wasn't long before they both were asleep, and the ladies could relax. Gabriela offered Mother Ruth some of her sandwich, but she refused. It was hard to eat while they bumped along, but Gabriela needed the extra meal to feed these growing babies. At noon, Enoch stopped at a nice grassy area and led his oxen to a stream to drink. When Enoch's oxen were finished, they grazed while Orly watered his ox. The ladies walked around while Orly stayed close to the babies. Gabriela explained to Orly that it was scary to move the babies from the basket to the carrier and back again and that's why she had asked him to slow down earlier. He realized that he should have nailed the baskets closer to Gabriela so that she wouldn't

have to crawl so far to reach them. "I promise I'll move them closer to you when we get to Bethany. But until then, just let me know and we'll slow down. I don't want you or them to get hurt."

Enoch led them on one more two-hour section before stopping for the night. He and Orly watered the oxen and staked them in the grass. The men began to gather wood to make a bonfire and then they began to fish. Mother Ruth and Gabriela took turns walking around while the other watched the babies. Orly was fishing with the men. Mother Ruth sliced a plate of onions and noticed that Jonah was doing the same. They both set out plates of bread. When the babies were ready to nurse, Gabriela crawled back into the oxcart and put them in the carrier. They had had a pretty normal day, but she was worried that they might have slept more than usual and could be awake more tonight. She hoped they wouldn't keep the men awake. She wrapped them in fresh shawls and tucked them back in their carrier. She joined Orly, Mother Ruth, and the men at the campfire. Soon the men were relaxing and teasing and laughing and seemed totally comfortable having Ruth and Gabriela with them. Once Orly was finished eating, he asked, "Do you think it's warm enough to unwrap the babies?" Gabriela thought it would be a good idea for them to be awake for a while, but she didn't realize that most of these men had never seen such tiny babies. She took Kobe and Orly held Hosea. As they began to unwrap them, the babies woke up and began to watch the flames of the bonfire. They were mesmerized. The men gathered around and watched as Orly and Gabriela began to play with the babies and talk with them and stretch their little arms and massage their bodies. Orly explained that the swaddling cloth helped them to stay calm and quiet and to feel secure, but they also needed time to stretch their muscles and move around. "Gabriela and I usually play with them for a while every night." Some of the men were brave enough to reach out and touch the babies' hands. The babies played for almost an hour before hunger hit and Mother Ruth handed the parents fresh swaddling cloths. Orly and Mother carried the crying babies back to the oxcart and Gabriela climbed in and began to nurse them. They nursed greedily and settled down quickly. Gabriela hoped they would sleep and indeed they seemed exhausted, so she put them in their baskets and covered them with the warm blankets. Orly and Mother Ruth pulled out the extra blankets they would need, and the two ladies lay down on the mats in the oxcart. Orly slept nearby with his blankets on the grass. The babies slept longer because of all the fresh mountain air. Gabriela teased that she might just start sleeping outside with them.

Mr. Kenan decided to let everyone eat their breakfast before they got on the road since they were making great time. Because of the wedding, they were ahead of the usual crowd that traveled for Passover. Gabriela helped Mother Ruth set out their olives, olive oil, and rolls of bread. Thankfully, the babies continued to sleep.

Wednesday was an almost exact repeat of Tuesday, except that the mountains were getting steeper, and the oxen needed to travel a little slower. At their second stop, Orly showed his mother the glow of the temple at the top of the mountain. Tears flowed as she realized that this was a dream that she had never allowed herself to imagine. *I'm going to Jerusalem. I will get to visit the temple of Jehovah. I can hardly wait to worship there.* Ruth couldn't keep from turning to look at the temple and Gabriela enjoyed watching her excitement. But Gabriela had to admit, she was not as excited about seeing the temple as she was to see her parents and her brothers. *Father, forgive me, but I just want to see my Abba's face when he sees his newest grandsons. And Mother will be ecstatic that I've had twins.* She continued to daydream about how excited Jabet and Jared would be to be uncles to identical twins like themselves. Her older brothers already had children, but neither of them had twins. Oh, it would be so good to be home!

That night, as they sat around the bonfire, the men eagerly reached out to touch the two little babies and talk to them. Gabriela smiled at their attempts to get the babies to look at them. They were fascinated by all the attention and rewarded the men with crooked smiles and crossed eyes. Mr. Kenan asked if he could carry Hosea to the cart. Gabriela agreed and handed him the baby. He congratulated Orly on such fine-looking boys — even though both boys were howling angrily from hunger. Gabriela took the boys, and they began to nurse. Once the boys were satiated and sleeping, she put them in their baskets and covered them with the blanket. It had been a fun evening.

Maybe the stimulation was a little much, because she nursed them five times during the night, and she was exhausted when morning came. Then she realized that the babies felt cold, and she wondered if that could have contributed to their not sleeping well. She would have to remember to cover them more. She and Mother Ruth unpacked the breakfast food and Orly searched for the box of heavy cloaks. They all bundled up and hoped the sun would warm things up soon. Orly assured Gabriela that they were only about a half day out from Jerusalem. He told her that if she needed to take a nap this afternoon, she could, but they both knew that she wanted to get to Bethany as soon as possible. After breakfast, the carts were loaded, and a new day began. Gabriela could feel her fatigue being replaced by sheer excitement.

The oxen slowed because of the steepness of the road, and the slant of the oxcart made it hard to handle the babies. Once she had them in the carrier, she decided to keep them there so that she wouldn't risk dropping one. Both boys slept all morning since they had been awake most of the night. Of course, they wanted to nurse just as Enoch decided to take a break. Gabriela sat in the wagon and fed them while Mother and Orly got out and walked around. Orly was surprised to learn that Mr. Kenan had decided to stop for the night. He didn't want to arrive at Zeke's too early and had decided to just camp



out until the wedding. Jonah was checking their supplies to see if that would be possible. They were only about an hour out of Jerusalem according to Enoch. Orly walked back to the cart and talked with Gabriela. She said she was ready to continue to Bethany if he and Mother Ruth didn't need to rest. But she was willing to wait until morning if he thought it best. Orly talked with Mother, and they decided to simply water the ox and take a short break before continuing. They would arrive easily by midafternoon. So, Orly watered the ox and let him graze for a while before they started the last leg of the journey. They promised to see Mr. Kenan at the wedding on Sunday. Gabriela was able to get a short nap after her snack and it refreshed her. She told Orly she thought Mother Ruth should ride on the seat with him so that she could see as much of the temple as possible. There was nothing like the first glimpse. He said he would take it slow, and she assured him that she would keep the babies in the carrier so that she wouldn't need Mother Ruth's assistance. She could always yell for him to stop if she needed help. He asked if she wanted to go to the Mercantile Store or the house first. Gabriela replied, "Can we stop at the well so that I can make sure the babies are ready?"

"Certainly."

## Chapter 5

So, they began the last section of their long-anticipated journey. Mother sat beside Orly, and everyone waved goodbye to Mr. Kenan and his men as they started on their way. Orly could tell that Samson was uncomfortable not following the other cart. He talked gently to him and urged him to come forward. The mountain was steep, but Samson obediently followed Orly's commands. Orly talked with Mother about the things she was pointing out. He showed her the olive garden where he had spent many nights with Kobe. He said they would visit friends during Passover and introduce her. But when they approached the temple, neither one of them spoke. Mother just looked in wonder at the outside walls and the beautiful golden dome that stood inside. Orly turned off the main road to begin the last six miles to Bethany.

At the well, he stopped and watered Samson. Everyone needed to stretch, and then Gabriela nursed the babies, and placed them in the baskets. She asked Mother Ruth to watch the babies while she talked with Orly. Mother Ruth agreed and Gabriela and Orly took a short walk. "Orly, something is wrong."

"What is it? Are you sick?"

"I'm fine, but I feel the Holy Spirit telling me that there's something really wrong at home and I'm scared. Don't you feel it?"

"Yes, I do. I've been feeling it since we left Mr. Kenan. I couldn't decide what it was, but I'm concerned that things may not be as we had hoped."

"Do you think my parents are dead?"

"I don't know, and I don't think we will know until we get there."

"Orly, I'm afraid. I'm not sure if I want to go home. I've never felt this way. Your mother said it was pretty normal for me to feel strange since I'm a married woman and not a child. But this is different. This is something deeper."

"Let's pray together and see if we get any clear direction." They sat in a grassy area and bowed their heads together. After a while, they admitted that they were not hearing anything except that they needed to be prepared for being disappointed and to stand strong.

Gabriela started crying and said that she had looked forward to this special trip ever since the wedding. Orly agreed that he had, too. But they needed to continue and look forward to whatever God had planned for them. Gabriela said that she was ready to go, and they walked back to the cart. Mother Ruth offered to change places with Gabriela, but Gabriela said she wanted to be near the babies since there was no telling when they would wake up. They told Mother that they were only about a quarter of an hour away. Gabriela and Mother Ruth got settled and Orly began the last leg of the journey.

When they pulled up to the house, no one came running to greet them. Orly and Gabriela walked to the door and knocked. Keturah answered the door and grabbed Gabriela and hugged her. "I knew you would come. I knew it. I knew you would come."

"Mother, what's wrong?"

"Come in, come in. I'm sorry. Come in and visit. Oh, I see you've brought Ruth. Please invite her in. We are not prepared for company, but please come in."

Gabriela noted that her mother looked totally stressed out, had lost a lot of weight, and looked twenty years older. She continued to hold onto Gabriela, so Gabriela went inside and let Orly collect the babies and his mother.

"Is Abba still at work? And where are the boys?"

"The boys are still at school, they'll be home shortly, but your abba is sleeping right now."

"Keturah."

Gabriela recognized the voice, but it sounded strange. "Mother, is that Miss Martha?"

"Yes, I'm trying to take care of her. Let me see what she needs, and I'll be right back."

When her mother returned, she said, "Please sit down and we'll visit. You'll need a place to sleep tonight. I don't know where I'll put all of you. I guess you could stay at Martha's house, but I haven't had a chance to clean it. It's probably a mess."

"Mother, can you tell me what's going on? You look exhausted. What is happening and why is Abba sleeping?"

"Oh Gabriela, I forget that you don't know. I'm not thinking straight. I'm sorry. Where do I start? Your abba and Lazarus went down to Beersheba with Yoseph and Zane." She began to cry, then wiped her face and continued to talk without any emotion at all. "We waited and waited for them to return. They left right after Sukkot. They planned to be back in about a month, but they didn't come. While they were away, Mary passed. Martha's still alive but she's blind and very weak. They were both so sick. I moved them here so I could take care of them. Two weeks ago, someone brought your abba home. He is in really bad shape. Lazarus, Yoseph, and Zane had been stoned to death and they left your abba for dead. Somebody took care of him and then brought him home two weeks ago, but he's still not well. I don't know what's going to happen."

"May I visit with Abba?" said Gabriela.

"No, let him sleep. He'll wake up in a little bit. He needs to rest, and I need him to rest as much as possible. Every day he seems to be getting stronger, but I'm not sure he'll ever be the same."

"May I visit with Miss Martha?" asked Gabriela while Mother Ruth and Orly waited with the babies in the living room.

"Sure, come with me. Martha, Gabriela is home. She wants to say hello. Can you say hello?"

Martha looked ancient. She was too weak to sit up and was lying on her mat, covered by heavy blankets. Gabriela went and took her hand and told her that she had come home to visit for Passover and was sorry to hear that she was not well. Miss Martha didn't seem to have the energy to answer, and Gabriela slipped out with her mother and shut the door.

"Mother, what can I do to help? Are the boys helping you to take care of Abba and Miss Martha?"

"Oh, yes. There's not much they can do, but they help. I kept them out of school for the past two weeks, but the rabbi was upset so I sent them back this week. They are really behind, and now they'll be working to catch up."

Both babies began to cry, and Gabriela picked up the boys and nursed them. Her mother didn't seem to notice. She felt as if her mother couldn't see the babies because of her fatigue. Gabriela wasn't even certain that her mother knew who she was or that they had come to celebrate Passover. She put the boys back in their cradles. Her mother had returned to Miss Martha's room. When her little brothers quietly entered the front door, they hugged her and seemed to be glad to see her, but there was a dullness about them that scared Gabriela. She looked at Orly and could tell that he, too, was alarmed. While they greeted Gabriela and Orly, they showed no interest in the babies. They looked exhausted and old.

Mother Ruth stood and took charge. "I know one thing I can do. We need to unpack the food that we brought and get some dinner on the table and let you get some rest. Orly, why don't you and the boys carry in the food boxes and then walk over to Miss Martha's house and see what needs to be done over there so that we can get everyone settled down for the night. Keturah, why don't you sit down here and visit with Gabriela."

Orly and the boys unloaded the food boxes and Mother Ruth began putting together a meal. Then Orly asked the boys to show him Miss Martha's house. Neither boy would go inside. They said it stunk and they seemed afraid. When Orly opened the door, he understood. It reminded him of the root cellar at Mr. Abraham's house. He asked the boys if there was a root cellar and they said they didn't know. "Is it okay if we go home now? We need to start on our homework."

"Sure, and thanks for your help," said Orly.

Orly began to search for a root cellar and found that indeed it was filled with rotten food. He remembered Mr. Kenan's warning about not lighting a lamp and searched around for a shovel. He decided his best bet was to purchase one. He walked quickly to the Mercantile Store and discovered Gabriela's older brother Amram there instead of the steward that he had met before. He greeted him but encountered that same dull fog of grief. Orly didn't identify himself and he was certain that Amram didn't recognize him. He purchased a shovel and hurried back to Miss Martha's root cellar and began to dig it out. It was not what he had planned for their visit, but at least they had come when

Gabriela's family needed help. Orly carried the rotten food down to the woods behind the house. He took breaks and drank from the stream and was reminded of the joy that he and Gabriela had shared there. Once he got the cellar shoveled out, he decided to check the house. The kitchen shelves were also filled with rotten food as if no one had entered the house at all. They had just walked out and never returned. He carried out several pans filled with rotten food and opened all the doors to let it air out. He would have to tackle the smell tomorrow since it was getting too late, and he was afraid to light any lamps. They would just camp outside one more night. Keturah would never need to know.

He walked down to the stream and washed up as much as possible and returned to find Gabriela and Mother Ruth setting the table for the six of them. Gabriela's mother was feeding Miss Martha on her mat in the room. When she heard her abba call for his dinner, Gabriela got up and took him a plate of food. She hugged him and sat down beside him. He couldn't believe that she had come to help. It seemed that no one remembered that they had promised to come for Passover. She helped her dad sit up and put some pillows behind his back so that he could sit on his mat and eat his dinner. "Oh, that's much better. Your mother won't let me do anything and this feels better than being spoon fed. Where's your mother?"

"She's feeding Miss Martha. She seems to be quite weak."

"Yes, I'm afraid she won't be with us much longer."

"I'm sorry, Abba. After you finish eating, I've got a couple of guys I would like for you to meet. And Orly, of course, would like to visit with you."

"Oh, yeah, I forgot you are a married lady now and not my little girl. I remember you always being by my side. I've missed you."

"Thank you, Abba. You know I love you, but yes, I'm grown up and married to Orly. Do you remember coming to my wedding?"

"Of course. That donkey cart made it a better trip for the ladies. Call Orly in; I want to say hello."

Gabriela called Orly in and asked him to bring the babies. They were both sleeping soundly so he just carried the cradles into the room. "Abba, God has blessed us with twins this year. This is Hosea and Kobe. They will wake up shortly and you can hold them, but I need them to sleep as long as they will." Mr. Simon greeted Orly but barely glanced at the babies. Gabriela carried her abba's plate back to the kitchen and let them visit. Gabriela took the babies to the living room to nurse them. Mother Ruth brought her clean swaddling cloths and lit the lamp in the room. Gabriela unwrapped Kobe and started stretching his arms and talking with him. Her mother got up and walked out of the room.

Orly returned to the living room and picked up Hosea. The boys were finishing their homework. They watched Orly unwrap Hosea and went to their room without showing any interest. It was like the whole family was not functioning. Just as soon as Mother Ruth finished

washing the dishes, she suggested that they get settled for the night. They carried the babies and walked to Miss Martha's house while Orly explained they couldn't sleep indoors.

Orly lit a lantern and walked to the back of the yard. They set up for another night of camping. Gabriela was grateful that she had packed extra blankets and made sure everyone was warm enough. She nursed the boys three times during the night but woke eager to see how they could help. Mother Ruth said she had checked the kitchen and found very little food there. She didn't know if there was a root cellar. Gabriela said that there was not. They had shared Miss Martha's. If that food was gone, she suspected that her mother was out of food.

Orly suggested they hook Samson to the cart and go to the local market to stock their shelves. Just as soon as the sun came up, they rode to the market and Mother Ruth and Gabriela began purchasing food for Gabriela's family as well as for themselves. They loaded the cart with necessary staples and then began to purchase fruits and vegetables. Gabriela said that a year ago they had had two goats but did not know whether they still had milk. Orly purchased enough milk for her to drink today. Orly told the women that he would need to shovel dirt into the cellar and let it soak up the smell. It might take a whole day to do that. Then he would need to shovel it out and clean it all before it would be safe to use a lamp in the house. When they got back to the house, Jabet and Jared had already left for Hebrew School and Mrs. Keturah was not there. Orly began to carry in groceries and Mother Ruth and Gabriela set out their breakfast. Just as soon as she had eaten, Gabriela took a bread roll with a bowl of olives and olive oil to Miss Martha and fed her. Gabriela remembered how hard it was to eat lying down, but Miss Martha was unable to sit up.

Orly knocked on Mr. Simon's door and asked if he would like some breakfast. "Yes, please," was the reply. Orly entered and helped Mr. Simon prop up on the pillows so that he could feed himself. Orly went back to the kitchen to put away the groceries. He asked the ladies if they had seen Mrs. Keturah, and Gabriela suggested that she probably had gone to the synagogue to pray. She used to do that every morning.

"Can you ladies handle this while I start work on the root cellar?"

"Sure, and I'm certain my mother will return shortly. She wouldn't leave two invalids for very long," said Gabriela.

When her mother returned, Gabriela sat her down at the table and insisted that she eat some breakfast. Gabriela said that they had plenty of food and assured her that they had already fed Miss Martha and Abba. "Mother, you need to tell me what has happened."

"It's so good to have you home to help. I knew you would come. I was praying that God would send you. He knew that we needed you."

"I'm glad that we came, too. But we couldn't travel until the babies were old enough. Now what else do you need help with? Orly is

cleaning Miss Martha's house, and Mother Ruth and I will help with anything you need."

"There's no food left. We still have the goats, but they aren't providing much milk. I give it to the boys so they can go to school, but I don't have food to cook."

"Why don't you have food?"

Mother began to cry and said that the Romans had taken the Mercantile Store.

"Okay, so what I'm seeing is that you are all starving. We can help with that. Do you know where we could purchase another goat?"

"No, but your abba would know."

"I'll talk with Orly and see what we can do." Gabriela put the babies in the carrier and walked down to where Orly was working. She shared with him what her mother had told her. Orly said that he would check at the Mercantile Store and see what was going on. He said that he was there yesterday and Amram was working. Gabriela returned to her childhood home and went out to check on the goats. They were grazing in the yard, but they were indeed getting too old to produce adequate milk. Mother Ruth had started a large batch of bread. Gabriela decided to walk back to the market after she nursed the babies. She purchased another jar of milk and churned some butter.

Orly filled the cellar and kitchen shelves with sand to absorb the smells. It was nearly noon before he finished, but tomorrow was the Sabbath, so lots of things had to happen today. He washed up at the stream and walked back to the Mercantile Store. Amram was there, but the shop was empty just as it had been the previous day. Orly identified himself as Gabriela's husband and he saw a flicker of recognition in Amram's eyes. Orly asked him to please tell him what was going on. Amram seemed surprised that Orly didn't know. "Your parents won't tell me anything except that the Romans have taken over the shop. I can't help you unless I know what has happened."

Amram hesitated and then said to come to the back room where they wouldn't be heard. Orly followed him into the back. Amram told him that the tax collector had accused the steward of not paying enough taxes. It wasn't true, but he had turned him over to the Romans and he had been sold into slavery since he was the manager and Dad was out of town. "When my brother Adam filed a complaint against the tax collector, he claimed that Dad owed back taxes and Adam was thrown in jail and sentenced to ten years of slavery. His wife and children had no income and went home to her abba. He demanded a divorce for her, and it was granted. We've heard that they moved, and no one knows where she and the four children are. She and her parents were not followers of Jesus."

"I am so sorry. Your family is really grieving."

"Since Sukkot they have lost Adam, four grandchildren, our faithful steward, Miss Mary, Lazarus, and two of our close friends. We thought we had lost Dad, but two weeks ago he was brought home crippled. And Miss Martha is sick. It's just been too much."

“So, what’s happening to the shop now?”

“I’m trying to run it, but the tax collector is taking every penny of my profit. My family will soon be in the same state as Adam’s. I can’t support my wife and babies and we will be sold as slaves because I can’t pay the taxes. I expect any day for the Romans to arrest me and sell me and my family. My wife is a follower of Jesus, so I know she won’t desert me, but I will probably never see her or my children again. The thought of doing this to my wife and children, my parents, and my little brothers is killing me. Orly, I don’t know what to do.”

“Let me pray about it and I’ll let you know something post-Sabbath night. Your parents have no food. We are trying to take care of them, and I’ll do everything in my power to help.”

Amram grabbed Orly in a huge hug. “Thanks. I can’t stay here any longer. I need to take my family and get out. But I don’t know how. I can’t just leave my parents and little brothers here.”

“Spend the next two days in prayer, and I’ll do the same. We’ll decide on something and then present it to your parents. Should I meet you here?”

“Yes, that would be best.”

“Do you know where I can buy a goat? Your parents and brothers need more milk.”

Amram told him and he headed to the farm just outside of town. He bought two young females. The owner gave him some rope to lead them and some cucumbers to bribe them. Orly brought them back to the house and helped Jabet and Jared milk all four of the goats. He could tell that the boys were really hungry.

As the sun set, he asked Mr. Simon if he thought he could sit at the dining room table if he helped him. Mr. Simon said he would like to try. Orly helped him to get off the mat and move to the table. Mrs. Keturah lit the Sabbath candles, but Mr. Simon asked Orly to lead the prayer. Orly knew that he needed to pray carefully to not hit sore spots. But he prayed for God to bless each one who was present and thanked God for the Sabbath.

After dinner, Orly helped Mr. Simon back to his mat and then they visited with Mrs. Keturah before heading to another night of cold camping. Orly lit a bonfire that he had built earlier so that they could talk. He asked Gabriela if it was okay for them to talk in front of Mother Ruth. She agreed. So, Orly caught them up on what he had learned. Gabriela cried until she could cry no longer. Long after Mother Ruth had gone to sleep in the oxcart with the babies, Orly and Gabriela continued to talk about options for her parents and brothers. It was clear that the tax collector wanted to destroy her family and she suspected the Pharisees were behind it. He asked Gabriela what she thought about helping them relocate to Beersheba since there were followers there and apparently no problems with the Romans. He remembered her dad saying that he would love to stay there and help out the priest who had become a follower of Jesus. “I was thinking, I would leave you and Mother here, and take them down with Samson. I



could get them out before we headed home. But I don't know if Miss Martha would survive the trip."

"She seemed a little stronger today after a couple of decent meals. She may just be starving."

"May be. Gabriela, would you be disappointed in me if I used the Sabbath to shovel out Miss Martha's house? I feel that Jesus would approve, and I need to get that finished before we talk about doing anything else."

"I could never be disappointed in you. But we need to get some sleep. Tomorrow may not be a day of rest."

"Gabriela, I haven't mentioned moving them to Cana, because when I pray about it, I get a very distinct no. I don't understand why. I would love for you to be able to care for them. But it is very clear, and I cannot disobey it."

"Somehow, I feel the same way, but I am not sure why. Thank you for telling me," said Gabriela.

After breakfast the next morning, Gabriela stayed with Miss Martha and her dad so that Mother Ruth and Mrs. Keturah could take the boys to synagogue. They asked about Orly, and Gabriela said that he was going to spend the day in prayer down by the stream and would join them later. Orly shoveled all the dirt out of the cellar and kitchen and was pleased that it was smelling much better. He lit a lamp out in the yard and gradually walked toward the house. When there seemed to be no more gas coming from the rotten food, he lit several lamps and brought them into the cellar. He scrubbed all day long until the cellar, the kitchen area, and the two sleeping rooms were clean. All he lacked was the living room when he realized that it was almost sundown. He went back to the stream and washed up. He wanted to eat quickly and then meet with Amram to discuss possibilities. Then he realized that he needed to empty the oxcart and move everything inside. He apologized for being late but was pleased to see that the two boys had been able to help their dad to the table. Orly ate a quick sandwich and said that he had another appointment and would probably be late. He whispered to Gabriela that he had left a lantern on for her and that it was safe to sleep indoors.

After dinner, Mother Ruth and Gabriela took the babies to Miss Martha's house, lit the lamps, and unwound their swaddling cloths. Mother Ruth dragged her mat into one of the rooms and left Gabriela playing with the babies. She wanted to wait up for Orly, and the babies needed time to play. She laid them on the mat and watched them attempt to roll themselves over. They were lifting their heads, and she couldn't resist laughing at their antics. She thanked God for her two healthy sons and prayed a prayer for Adam and his family wherever they were. She prayed for Orly and Amram. The babies played for over an hour before they were hungry. After nursing them, she wrapped them and put them in their cradles for the night.

When Orly slipped in, it was almost midnight, and she was up nursing the babies again. They sat and talked about what had been

decided. Amram had agreed on the move to Beersheba and indicated that it was about four days of walking. They had decided that Orly would talk to Mr. Simon in the morning after breakfast and give him the option to move or let them know what he intended to do. Orly knew after working with Lucas that it was important that Mr. Simon make the decision and not his son or son-in-law.

## Chapter 6

On Sunday morning, they walked to Gabriela's childhood home and ate breakfast with the boys who were now on Passover holiday. They had milked all four goats and were enjoying the milk. Gabriela promised to churn more butter and Mother Ruth would make bread again today. They would go to the market to get fresh fruits and vegetables. Mr. Simon had let Orly help him to the table and back to his mat. "Mr. Simon, before you get too tired, I would like to talk with you privately about something."

"Sure. Why don't you hand me those pillows and let me prop up so that we can talk."

"Sounds good. Mr. Simon, you and your family have been through an awful lot this year, and Gabriela and I were totally unaware of it until we arrived. I don't want you to think I was prying into your business, but I strongly feel that honoring our parents is required by God. Therefore, I met with Amram and discussed some possible options for you. Because you've been away and so very sick after returning, I'm not sure how much you have been able to make plans. I want this to be completely your choice, but I want you to know that I am available to help you in any way I can. It is my understanding that you are being run out of town by a tax collector who intends to rid Bethany of Jesus' followers. I believe that if you continue to stay here, you and your wife and two sons and Miss Martha will starve to death. Amram and I have come up with a possibility, but it is your call. Would you consider hearing it?"

"Certainly, I never thought that I would lose everything I have worked for including my son and my grandchildren. I need all the help I can get, and I do appreciate it."

"Amram and I were trying to figure out a place to relocate you and your family for a fresh start. We have prayed together and apart for the past two days and keep coming up with Beersheba. Now, neither of us knows anything about the town. Does it need a Mercantile Store? Could you restart your business there? Would you feel safe there? Could you start a different business there? Is there another town that would be better? Those are the questions that only you can answer. I feel that we need to get you and your family, and Amram and his family, out of Bethany as soon as possible. Gabriela and I want to see you settled somewhere before we return to Cana."

"That's a big change. May I have time to think about it and discuss it with Keturah?"

"Well, you need to know that Amram and I feel that he and his family will be arrested next. He's eager to leave as soon as possible. We both feel it would be safer if we could load everything and leave during Passover. No one would expect good Jews to do such a thing.

We really need to make a decision before tonight so that we can start packing up the houses.”

“I don’t know what to say. Let me pray about it and I’ll get back with you as soon as possible.”

“I’ll be working over at Miss Martha’s house getting it ready for you to sell. You can send someone to tell me when you are ready to talk.”

“Thank you.”

He left the room and found Mother Ruth and Keturah busy in the kitchen together. Mother Ruth was making another batch of bread and Keturah was chopping vegetables to go into a soup for dinner. Orly asked Gabriela if she would walk over to Miss Martha’s house with him. “Sure,” she said. “Just let me get the babies.”

He caught her up on what he’d told her dad and that he was thinking about borrowing Mr. Kenan’s oxcart and Enoch. If her dad agreed to the plan early enough today, they could still go to Basha’s wedding. If he delayed, they would have to miss it. She knew that Jordan needed him to be there, but it was out of their control. They continued to discuss while Orly started scrubbing on the living room and sweeping out the accumulation of dust. She sat on a cushion and nursed the babies and waited. It was just before noon when Gabriela’s mother knocked on the door and told Orly that Simon wanted to talk with him. “Tell him I will be there within a half hour. I’m almost finished here.”

He went and washed in the stream, then he and Gabriela walked back hand in hand. Orly knocked on Mr. Simon’s door and was invited in. “Orly, if you can make this happen, I think it is our best option. As far as I know, Beersheba doesn’t have a Mercantile Store, so if we can move as much inventory as possible, it would help us to get started there. I have friends that we can stay with until we locate a place to live and find a store front. It’s a small town, but it’s growing because more people are using the trade route to the south.”

“Okay, here’s what is going to happen. Gabriela and I are going to Jerusalem for a wedding this afternoon. We will see Mr. Kenan there and ask to borrow his oxen and cart. We’ll load your and Amram’s houses tomorrow and begin traveling on Tuesday. We’ll need to return on Wednesday. Then on Thursday I’ll start loading up everything that I can fit on my cart from the Mercantile Store and let it be known that the three houses and shop are all for sale. They may not sell until after Passover. I don’t know. But just as soon as they sell, I’ll bring another load and the money from the sales to you so that you can purchase what you need in Beersheba. Does that work for you?” Simon simply nodded.

Orly then went into the living room and told Gabriela that she needed to get ready for Basha’s wedding. Mother decided that she would stay with Keturah and help her with dinner and the two invalids. They would also need to start preparing food for the trip. Orly said he would take the oxcart so that they wouldn’t get Gabriela overtired. She

would need to take the baby supplies, but they would not spend the night. And he would like to leave as soon as possible. She got busy getting things together while Orly hitched Samson to the cart. He packed a couple of lanterns and put a mat in the back in case Gabriela needed to ride with the babies. He put the pillows back in the baskets. She packed additional shawls and blankets for the babies, and they left for Jerusalem. Orly stopped Samson in front of the Mercantile Store and ran in quickly to tell Amram that tomorrow was the day for him and his wife and children to be ready to leave Bethany and move to Beersheba. Amram said he would come and help load his parent's home at sunrise tomorrow. Orly assured Amram that Mr. Simon was in complete agreement, and he would explain it in more detail tomorrow. He reminded Amram not to tell anyone that he was planning to move. They would just simply disappear for Passover.

Orly returned to Gabriela, and they began to drive into Jerusalem. James and John were hosting the wedding at their home, so Orly staked Samson around back and they knocked on the front door. They were greeted with much enthusiasm and love. Gabriela was able to show off the babies and the ladies were quickly catching up on news. Jenay should have given birth by now, but no one from Capernaum had arrived for Passover yet, so they hadn't heard. It was good to be surrounded by friends and fellow followers. Orly talked with Mr. Kenan privately in the back courtyard and explained the situation. Mr. Kenan said that Enoch was due to return at the fourth hour. Right now, they needed to concentrate on Matthew and Basha. Orly agreed and they rejoined the others waiting for the couple to arrive. Gabriela was visiting with Sarah, Kayla, and Marta. Orly waited with Jordan, James, John, Mr. Kenan, and James the Just who would be conducting the ceremony. Orly's mind was not really on the wedding. He realized that he needed to go to the market to see if he could find a walking stick for Mr. Simon. Maybe he could slip away for a few minutes if the wedding happened soon.

The couple arrived and James the Just had prepared a special service for them since this was a second marriage and both wanted to honor their first marriages. It was beautifully done and then everyone sat around visiting and enjoying the sweet fellowship. Orly whispered to Gabriela that he needed to run to the market and would be right back. He had forgotten how large the marketplace was, but he finally found a walking stick and returned to the celebration. He apologized for being late and took his place at the men's table. He tried to enjoy the conversations but found himself almost dozing off a couple of times. These had been very stressful and physically demanding days. He was glad to see that Gabriela was showing no sign of fatigue. She and the babies were surrounded by loving friends and seemed totally happy.

Finally the party ended, and James and John invited everyone to return for more fellowship tomorrow. Orly walked outside with Mr. Kenan to talk with Enoch. He stated that he would much rather be

helping Orly than to be stuck sitting in Mr. Zeke's barn. Mr. Kenan agreed and told them as long as he was back and ready to travel by next Tuesday, he was free to do whatever Orly needed him to do. Orly asked Enoch to meet him at Mr. Simon's house as soon after sunrise as he could arrive.

"I will be there a half hour after sunrise," agreed Enoch.

"Perfect," said Orly. He went back into the house and explained to the men that he was very sorry, but he needed to help Gabriela's parents tomorrow since Mr. Simon had been injured on their latest mission trip and Lazarus and two other followers had been killed. He and Gabriela would both be needed to help take care of things at her home. They were all saddened to hear of Lazarus' death and the other two followers. They promised to pray for Mr. Simon's recovery and for Gabriela as she dealt with this. Jordan thanked him for coming tonight and agreed with his need to be with Gabriela's family.

Orly and Gabriela said their goodnights and headed back to Bethany. The stimulation and night air helped the babies sleep most of the night. When she woke up early on Monday morning, Orly was already moving all of their supplies into one room at Miss Martha's house. He moved Mother's and Gabriela's mats inside that room and shut the door so they wouldn't accidentally get packed. He packed a travel bag for himself and asked Mother if she and Keturah had made food for the journey. If not, she would need to use today to prepare whatever food they needed. "There will be thirteen of us traveling down and two of us traveling back. It's supposed to take a day's journey, but better plan for a day and a half with the invalids."

"Yes, I prepared plenty of bread yesterday, but I need some money to purchase traveling food at the market. I can get the food packed and ready in a couple of hours."

Gabriela and Mother headed to the market.

Orly walked over to Mr. Simon's home and found everyone gathered around the breakfast table except Miss Martha. Orly told them that they had secured two carts, and Amram and Enoch were due to arrive shortly. After breakfast Orly helped Mr. Simon back to his mat and asked him where he would get a key to his Mercantile Store. Orly saw that Keturah had already packed his travel bag. Other than the mats and blankets, there wasn't anything else he needed to take from the room. Orly walked out to the barn and picked up several tools that were stored in a corner and put them in the cart. He took the two boys into their rooms and discovered that they, too, were already packed except for their mats and blankets. He asked them to help him carry them to the cart along with their travel bags. He checked and could not find anything that they had missed. The rooms were bare. Then they moved to Miss Martha's room and peeked in. All they could see were her mat, blankets, and pillow, which would be loaded last. Then they began to help Keturah pack her kitchen. Orly and Gabriela packed everything in shopping baskets and the boys carried them to the cart. The food bags were already packed. Orly loaded the table

and some cushions, then asked if she wanted anything from Miss Martha's home. She said she didn't think so, but Orly encouraged her to look anyway. He and Gabriela walked over with her and together they suggested a few large serving bowls and baking dishes that she might want in the future. They also found a cheese box that was in good shape for making cheese. Orly added a handful of rags and a broom and made sure that Keturah was okay with leaving everything else behind. Gabriela suggested she pack Miss Martha's beautiful blankets and pillows. Keturah agreed that they would be nice to have, so Orly handed them to the boys to put in the oxcart. They found some wood carving tools that had belonged to Lazarus in a shed, but didn't feel that Simon would want them. They packed some extra lamps and lanterns. Orly suggested that everyone just relax and wait for Enoch and Amram to arrive and then they would load Mr. Simon and Miss Martha and start their journey. Enoch apologized for being late but said the crowds in Jerusalem were terrible and he couldn't get out of town as expected. When Amram arrived, Orly and the two younger brothers rode with him and Enoch back to his house. Orly was introduced to Amram's wife, Jora. She had obviously been packing all night and had everything organized and ready to go. They loaded the boxes and bags quickly and Orly sat down to ask Amram a question. "Would it be better to take the four goats or just sell them and buy new ones there? I know they are a lot of trouble to transport."

"Actually, I was going to ask you the same question. I also have goats. What would you say if I walked with Jabet and Jared and my two oldest boys? We could probably arrive in four days, and we'll bring the goats. My sons are pretty attached to our goats, and I think they have had enough loss. Maybe it would be a fun trip. I'll need to stop at the market and get some rope and some cucumbers, and the boys can wrestle with the goats. It might make the transition a little easier for them. Jora made us food bags and travel bags; we just need to get Jabet's and Jared's travel bags if that's okay with you."

"It's fine with me as long as you feel safe. Jora, let's get you and the little ones in this corner so that you can crawl in and out. We may re-arrange this so you can ride with the others, but right now, you'll be riding alone with Enoch. He'll take good care of you, and you just tell him what you need. I'll be driving the other cart right behind you. Please let me know if you need anything." Amram kissed Jora and the two babies, and she kissed her older sons. Orly rode with Enoch back to Mr. Simon's house. He told them that Amram and the four boys would be walking and bringing the goats. He asked Keturah to help him find Jabet's and Jared's travel bags while he helped Mr. Simon get into the cart. Orly picked up Mrs. Martha with her mat and pillows and blankets all together. She was so fragile, and he hoped that she would survive the trip. Keturah sat between Martha and Simon so that she could be available to both of them. Orly kissed Gabriela on the nose and told her that he had left her brothers' travel bags just inside the house so the goats wouldn't eat them. He pulled her inside the door

and kissed her tenderly. He left her a supply of silver coins and told her to buy whatever she needed. She nodded and said that she and Mother Ruth would be fine. And suddenly they were gone. About a half hour later, Amram and the boys arrived to get the four goats. Gabriela gave Jabet and Jared their travel bags. Amram was carrying a large sack of cucumbers in addition to their food bag. Gabriela kissed her older brother and they cried together. He gave her the key to his house. She kissed her two nephews, and then she had to say goodbye to her two younger brothers. She told them she would always love them and that they would always be welcome in Cana if they wanted to apprentice there. She kissed them and sent them on their way. Amram, four boys and seven goats headed out of town walking south. Gabriela stood in the yard and waved until she couldn't see them. She came into the house and cried until there were no more tears. Mother Ruth fixed her a cup of goat milk and brought her a sandwich that she had hidden from the packers. Gabriela thanked her and then they sat down to plan what they needed to do in the next few days.

Suddenly, Gabriela realized that the market would be closed tomorrow for Passover. They needed to buy everything right now. She and Mother Ruth planned some basic meals so that they wouldn't have to cook much. Mother Ruth would make unleavened bread for Passover, and they agreed on what they needed until the market reopened. Gabriela found some baskets at Miss Martha's house and they rushed to the market. They agreed she would have to come back for the potatoes, onions, and cucumbers. They decided to stay at Miss Martha's home since their mats and all the baby supplies were there. Mother Ruth started mixing up the unleavened bread while Gabriela sat down and nursed the babies. Mother Ruth insisted she leave them in the cradles with her while Gabriela went back to the market to get the heavier vegetables. Gabriela agreed, but she had never been away from her babies. She hurried as fast as she could. The crowds seemed to be worse since everyone was preparing for the market to be closed for a week. She finally got home and found the babies still sleeping soundly. She hugged Mother Ruth and thanked her for understanding how scary it was.

Gabriela put the babies in the carrier and walked over to check her mother's house. The babies began to cry, and she sat down and nursed them before returning to Miss Martha's. Mother Ruth's pan of bread was ready, and they quickly covered it with butter and onions and called it a good meal. They prayed together and then decided to unwrap the babies and let them play for a while before night. They were out of clean swaddling cloths, so had to rewrap them in the same ones. Tomorrow was a new day with no rushing or hassles. They both crawled onto their mats totally spent.

After breakfast, Gabriela nursed the babies and then left them in the cradles for Mother to watch while she took the pile of swaddling cloths and shawls to the stream and began to wash them out. She



began to sing Psalms of praise as she worked. She and Mother Ruth started cleaning her parents' home. By noon they had finished the three sleeping rooms. "Mother Ruth, I'm tired. Let's walk to Miss Martha's and make a snack. I need to nurse these boys and then I think I'd like a nap."

"Actually, it sounds like a perfect way to celebrate Passover."

They walked to Miss Martha's home and Gabriela nursed the boys. She changed their shawls and placed them in their cradles. Mother had prepared her a sandwich and then she crawled onto her own mat and was fast asleep.

The boys woke her up and she fed them again, put them in the carrier, and then began to search for Mother Ruth. She had set up a picnic in the floor at Gabriela's parent's home with unleavened bread, pickled fish, cheese, onions, and cucumbers. They declared it to be their Seder meal. The two ladies talked about the way that Jesus had challenged their thinking about life and remembered His sacrifice to forgive their sins. Both were amazed at all the changes in their lives since last Passover.

They took a lantern and headed back to Miss Martha's. They unwrapped the babies and played with them until they got hungry. "Look how much they have grown on this trip. I think we'll have to start some new swaddling cloths when we get home. These are already getting short. My goodness. I need to be weaving constantly to keep up with them. They will be two months old tomorrow. Where has the time gone?" They watched the babies play. They seemed to enjoy lying on the mat and just cuddling with each other. She remembered her brothers doing that even after they were older, and tears came to her eyes.

On Wednesday the ladies continued to clean at her parents' house. They worked all morning and by noon they had finished. She looked around and then closed the door to her childhood home. She walked slowly back to Miss Martha's.

After she had nursed the babies, she asked Mother Ruth if she would watch them while she took a walk up the mountainside to see the place where Jesus ascended back to Heaven. She thought it was probably too steep for Mother Ruth but wanted to see it one last time. Mother Ruth agreed and Gabriela put on her warm cloak and began to climb the trail. She wondered if Jenay had given birth. She thought of Jonathan and his work with the Gentiles in Antioch, and she cried over her little brothers now in Beersheba. *Who would have thought we would be scattered so far apart?* She walked quietly humming until she found the grassy spot. Then she fell on her knees and worshipped. She sang Psalm 150 and felt such an incredible peace. *I can't wait to get back home and begin more work with the Gentiles. I know that that is where God is calling me.* She stood up and carefully hiked back down the mountain side. She knew that it was the last time she would see this place. She had just walked in the door at Miss Martha's when both boys began to scream for their mother. How good it felt to pick

them up, comfort them, and hold their warm little bodies up against her own. They nursed eagerly and then fell back asleep totally trusting in her care. *Father, no matter what the future brings, I ask that I can be as trusting of You as my babies are of me. I want to lie in your arms and feel You wrapping me in Your love. I love you. I trust You. Please bless Orly and Enoch and bring them home safely.*

Mother Ruth and Gabriela began to set the table with the unleavened bread, some cucumbers, and rolls of cheese. Mother Ruth set out some pomegranates and it was the perfect way to end the day. They were just clearing the table when Orly and Enoch arrived with the empty carts. Orly asked the ladies to set out some food while they cared for the oxen. Orly invited Enoch to eat at their table as they told Gabriela and Mother Ruth about the trip. They had arrived about noon yesterday and had already found a store front. Orly loaned them the money to purchase it. Then they located a house. They would all have to live together for a while because they couldn't find two small houses. Orly had helped them purchase a fairly large place that would give both families room to spread out. They had unloaded the two carts and got everyone settled and left early this morning.

They planned to load up the Mercantile Store tomorrow during the day. Once it was loaded, they needed to sell the shop and all three houses. "If they sell quickly, we'll both travel to Beersheba on Friday and return on Sunday. But if not, Enoch will travel alone, and I will wait until the houses and shop sell before I take the second load."

When they finished dinner, Enoch said his goodnights and started out the door. "Enoch, you are not a slave when you work for me. There's plenty of room here. Mother has already claimed the front room. But there's a mat in that room and you can put your blanket on it. It will be a lot warmer than sleeping outside."

"But where will you sleep?" asked Enoch.

"Right here. This dining room is big enough for the four of us and we don't even have to move the babies. Do you want to play with the babies awhile before you call it a night?"

Orly picked up Hosea and started unwrapping the swaddling cloths. Gabriela began unwrapping Kobe. The four of them sat in the floor and watched the boys wrestle on the mat. Orly would pick one or the other boys up and stretch his arms. Enoch would reach out and rub their backs. "Orly, they can flip over now. If you lay them on their stomachs, they will flip over to their backs. Try it!" said Gabriela. They watched as the boys twisted and turned and were determined to be near each other.

Orly told Gabriela all the details about the trip and about her family's new home. He felt that they were all feeling better and assured her that her abba and Miss Martha had made the trip without any problems. Mother Ruth brought them the swaddling cloths, and Orly and Gabriela wrapped them. By the time they were finished, both boys were hungry. But soon they were ready to be placed in their cradles, and for the first time in two months, Gabriela got to sleep the

entire night without nursing. She knew that her little newborns would turn into full-grown men before she blinked.

## Chapter 7

Early Thursday morning, on the second day of Passover, Orly and Enoch drove the carts slowly and quietly into town. There were enough Romans around that it was not unusual to see an oxcart. But most Jewish men were in Jerusalem for the Passover, so they still got some curious looks. They drove behind the shop and led the oxen inside the warehouse. They walked through the entire building and found that it was still quite full of merchandise. He entered Mr. Simon's office and packed everything into some wooden storage boxes that he found. He assumed they would be important to Mr. Simon. As Orly would pack a box, Enoch would carry it out and place it in one of the carts. Then Orly looked around at things in the warehouse that were already in crates and boxes. He and Enoch carried them out together and stacked the largest ones along the edges of the carts. Once they had all the packaged goods loaded, they discovered that there was really not a lot left. Those things that were single items and not breakable, like shovels and rakes and plows, were just piled in a heap right in the middle of the carts. They were amazed at all the things that fit on the two carts. They had left out ropes to tie everything down and make them secure. By noon, the wagons were extremely full, and Enoch said they needed to stop or risk hurting the oxen.

Orly asked Enoch to pray with him about what their next step should be. They prayed together for God's guidance to know how to go about selling the shop and houses. When they were through praying, both men agreed that Orly should walk to the market. They assumed it would be closed today, so it didn't make sense. But Orly was determined to be obedient.

He and Enoch drove the carts home and parked them as far behind Miss Martha's house as possible. They staked the oxen near the stream, and Orly and Enoch walked to the market. They were amazed. The market was closed, but there was a large group of Romans gathered for a feast of some kind. The booths had all been moved to one side and Roman families covered the area. Orly simply walked up to one man and told him that he was interested in selling the Mercantile Store on the main street of town and he also had three nice-sized houses to sell. "Do you know anyone that might be interested?" He kept moving through the crowd and asking. Most of the men said they were not interested. But within an hour Orly had a group of fourteen men who all wanted to look at the shop or the houses. Orly led them to the Mercantile Store and explained that it was the only one in town, but the owner had become ill and needed to shut it down. He had moved away to live with his son. Someone could start another Mercantile Store and be very successful, or they could turn it into a different type of shop. He showed them the back of the shop and then opened the door to the warehouse. The men asked his

price and he told them. Some of the men nodded and said they were interested. Then he took them to Mr. Simon's house and showed them the five-room house with the goat pen out back and just enough room for a modest family. Then he took them to Miss Martha's house and showed them the same sized house but complete with a root cellar, a tool shed, and a stone tomb. It also included a beautiful picnic area with a year-round stream. He showed them where the property line was and explained that there would be room to add on to this house as needed. "Now the oxcarts and oxen are not included. Those are our personal possessions."

Then he walked with the interested buyers back to the other side of town and showed them Amram's newer house. He showed them the five rooms and emphasized the large living room and courtyard area, as well as the goat pen and large yard. "Gentlemen, that completes the tour."

Now, I will be staying in the second house I showed you — the one with the stream. I will stay until these three houses and the shop sells, and I will honor the highest bidder. But I will also give consideration to the quickest bidder. I am eager to get my mother, wife, and sons back home. I would like to complete this sale as quickly as possible. Please let me know if you are interested. Now, I know it's hard to process all this information, so, I'm going to start this tour again and you are welcome to see each property again and ask any questions you might have."

Orly and Enoch headed back to the Mercantile Store. They still had ten men following them. They walked through and asked several questions. Some Orly could answer and some he could not. He told them that it belonged to his father-in-law, and he was just trying to get it sold for him since he was no longer able to do so. He invited them to look around and explore for themselves. He waited for a few minutes then reshowed the three houses.

At the end of the tour, he headed back to Miss Martha's house and sat down in the courtyard. He asked the ten men who were still following him if they would like to make an offer. All ten of them did. Some wanted the shop, and some wanted a house. Orly said, "I will accept the highest bidder from this group and get it settled tonight." Orly suggested that they discuss one property at a time. "Let's take care of the Mercantile Store. How many of you want to bid on it?" Four men stepped forward. "I will hear your first bid privately and then allow you one more chance to top the other bids. Is that clear? Is that fair?"

"Sure," they agreed.

Orly listened to their first bid and then announced that the number three bidder won that round." He told them the amount and asked if anyone wanted to make a higher bid. Orly was amazed at how high the bidding went because they knew they only had one chance at it. Orly announced the highest bid. "Now," he said, "how do we formalize this Roman style? I am unable to gather a group of Jews to witness

the transaction on this Passover holiday, but I am happy to do it the Roman way if someone will explain it to me.”

“If he can produce the money, you give him the key, but not before he produces the money. It’s that simple.”

“I’m okay with that. Can you produce the money?”

“I will have to run home and get it.”

“You will have to be back here before sunset, or you forfeit to the next bidder which will be man number three.”

“That sounds fair,” they all agreed.

“Now we’ll take care of the house across from this one. Who wants to bid on that house?” They used the same procedure, and it was settled quickly.

“Now, we’ll take care of this house, minus my wife, sons, my mother, and the baby supplies scattered around. I promise you that they will be cleared out by Monday morning and the house will be completely yours. You would need to pay me half of your bid tonight and half of the bid on Monday when I hand you the key and clear out all our supplies. But I want to see the full amount tonight to make sure you can produce it. All the furniture is included except for our travel bags, three mats, two cradles, and boxes of supplies. Is that clear? Now, the bidding goes the same way.” And it was quickly decided.

“The final house is the newer one with the three sleeping rooms and goat pen. We’ll do it the same way.”

“Could I take possession tonight?”

“Certainly, if you are the highest bidder.”

The bidding became intense, and God blessed Orly’s obedience in incredible ways. By sundown all the houses had been sold and Miss Martha’s buyer promised to provide the remaining money to Orly when he moved out on Monday morning at sunrise.

There was great rejoicing as Orly and Enoch told the ladies how it was handled and that all four buildings were sold. The buyers all produced the money before sunset and after dark, Orly took what he had collected and put it into Mr. Simon’s cash box that was buried underneath a lot of other items in the cart. He felt it would be safer there.

Early Friday morning, while it was still dark, Orly kissed Gabriela goodbye and Mother handed him and Enoch food bags. If all went well, they would arrive before sunset and enjoy the Sabbath with Gabriela’s family. They would travel back on Sunday.

Orly and Enoch nibbled on bread and fruit and nuts as they traveled. They stopped and watered the oxen every hour because they were pulling such a heavy load, but it was mostly downhill, so they didn’t become overtired. The trip back would be steep, but the carts would be empty and easy to pull. They made great time and arrived at Mr. Simon’s new home just as the Sabbath began.

They were invited in but insisted on taking care of the oxen. They needed a place to water them. They unhooked their carts and led them to the town well. There was a trough that they filled for the oxen

to drink. After they were satisfied, they led them back to a grassy area in the yard to stake them and finally entered the house. Everyone was thrilled that Orly had accomplished the task so quickly and that they could bring two whole loads of merchandise. It would help them tremendously to get started. Orly asked Amram and the boys about their walk and learned that they had had an enjoyable trip. Orly and Enoch ate a few bites of the Sabbath dinner and Orly began to sense that Enoch was not welcome. He had done so much for them, but Mr. Simon especially seemed to resent Orly bringing him to their table. When the meal was finished, Orly asked where they had placed the extra mats because they were exhausted. They indicated that there were extra blankets to place on the grass for Enoch. Orly got up and Enoch followed him. They got their travel bags from the cart and threw their blankets on the grass. Orly hoped it would be warmer than Jerusalem. It was, and they both slept soundly. On Sabbath morning, Jora invited them to come in for breakfast. "We don't want to offend," said Orly, "We can sit out here in the courtyard."

"If you prefer, I will bring it out to you. I'm sorry, but Mr. Simon and Mrs. Keturah have been attending synagogue under a new priest in Bethany who is teaching strict Jewish traditions."

"Well, I hope you know that it is contrary to what Jesus teaches, but I will respect your wishes."

"Oh, it's not our wishes; it is theirs."

"I see," said Orly. "We'll take breakfast out here."

Amram and Jora came and sat down with them in the beautiful courtyard and thanked them for all they had done for them.

"How did Miss Martha do on the trip?"

"She did remarkably well. I don't see that she's any worse for the wear."

"Good. I think Enoch and I are going on to synagogue and look around a little. Can you help us unload the oxcarts after the Sabbath? We need to get on the road very early on Sunday morning."

"Certainly, and I'll bring Jared and Jabet to help."

"Yes, they would be a help."

"You will come back and visit after synagogue, won't you?" asked Amram.

"Will my friend Enoch be welcomed?"

"I really have no say in that," said Amram apologetically.

"In other words, he won't be. I'm sorry, but I refuse to fellowship with followers of Jesus who know the truth, yet refuse to obey Jesus' teachings. Jesus taught that there is no difference between slave or free, male or female, Jew or Gentile. I can't enjoy fellowship knowing that one of my best friends is excluded."

"I understand and we agree, but Mr. Simon has become very rigid under his priest's teaching."

"So, we'll see you at the warehouse tonight after dinner. Shalom."

"I'll see you at the synagogue in a little bit," said Amram.

Orly and Enoch wandered around Beersheba. It seemed about the same size as Cana and very peaceful and friendly. Many people spoke with them and welcomed them. They entered the synagogue and could tell that the priest was a follower of Jesus. They hoped that he would share all of Jesus' teachings and not just pick and choose the ones he agreed with. They enjoyed the message and stood and talked with Amram and various other men afterward. They told them they were just helping a friend get settled and would be returning to Jerusalem soon. They talked with the priest and visited with him briefly. He greeted both of them warmly.

They asked if they could spend the Sabbath in the garden behind the synagogue and he welcomed them. Amram and Jora and their boys visited with Orly and Enoch for a while. They thanked them again for all they had done and tried to express how grateful they were to be out of Bethany. Orly discussed whether there was anything more that could be done for Adam and his family. They agreed that prayer was the only thing that would help Adam and the steward as they faced this time of unjust slavery. They prayed together that their masters would be merciful. Orly and Enoch assured Amram that some masters were good men like Mr. Kenan. Amram and Jora needed to get the babies home for a nap. "Shalom, and may God bless your journey back to Cana," said Jora.

"Shalom, my brother. I'll see you after Sabbath at the new shop," said Amram

"Shalom. You know that Gabriela and I will be praying for all of you."

After they had gone, Orly and Enoch stretched out on the grass and slept. They were glad Mother had packed plenty of food for them. Just before the sun set, they walked back to Mr. Simon's new house. They sat in the courtyard for just a few minutes. But just as soon as the sun went down, they hitched up the oxen and took the carts to the warehouse. Amram and the boys followed the carts and opened the doors for them. They pulled the carts into the warehouse and started unloading the goods. The boys could unload the lighter-weight things while the men unloaded the heavy things. It only took a couple of hours with all of them working together.

When Orly uncovered the money box, he counted out the silver for Amram's house and gave it to him. Then he handed the money box to Amram to take to Mr. Simon, but Amram refused. "You need to come and say goodbye to my parents. You bring the money box." He took Jared and Jabet and headed home.

Orly and Enoch drove the oxen to Mr. Simon's home and Orly knocked on the front door while Enoch waited in the courtyard. Mr. Simon greeted him and said that he needed to repay Orly for the money he had loaned him to purchase the shop and the house. Orly told him that it didn't matter. God was blessing him and would provide for them.



"I'm sorry I offended you this morning regarding slaves. I'm just old-fashioned. Please forgive me."

"You are forgiven, but because I love you, I want to encourage you to practice what Jesus taught."

"We love you, too, Orly. And we appreciate everything that you have done to help us," said Mr. Simon.

"Enoch has worked very, very hard this past week to make sure that you and your family were safe. You need to know that Mr. Kenan gave him his choice on whether to help or not and he chose to help you because he is a fellow follower of Jesus. He did not help because he happens to be a slave."

Mr. Simon made no reply. He took the money box and counted out the amount that Orly had loaned him and insisted that he take it. Orly counted back to him the amount he would receive from the sale of Miss Martha's house on Monday morning then put the rest in his robe. Mr. Simon was pleased to see that there was still quite a bit of money remaining from the sale of the business and houses. "Yes, sir, God provided ten Gentile men who were interested in buying your shop and they kept bidding higher and higher. God used them to bless you and help you get started."

Mr. Simon was turning redder and redder and began screaming at Orly. "You spoke to a Gentile? Was it a Roman? You let them in our house? They bought our house and my business? How could you do that? You are unclean! You should be stoned! What kind of Jew are you? I don't want any of this money! It is unclean! You have betrayed me! You have betrayed Jehovah God! Get out of my house and never come back! Do you always associate with Romans or is this just your way of polluting me and my family?"

"Sir, I minister to people of all kinds. Jesus was friends with Romans. He healed them and called them to follow Him. Gabriela and I minister to Romans and help them discover God's love and forgiveness."

"GET OUT! GET OUT! Don't ever come back into this house! I don't want to ever see you or your wife again! She is unclean! She is dead to me! It would have been better if you had killed her! You should be stoned! You should be crucified! Jesus died for Jews! He didn't die for Romans!"

"I'm sorry, sir. I'll continue to pray for you and for your family." Orly turned and walked out. Enoch and Orly led the oxen to a grassy area about a mile north of Beersheba and staked them for the night. Now Orly knew what the earlier warning was from the Holy Spirit. He and Gabriela had both felt it before they arrived. He prayed for Gabriela as he fell into an exhausted sleep.

On Sunday morning, Orly and Enoch woke an hour before sunrise and hitched the oxen to the carts. The empty carts were easy for the oxen, and they made great time. It was almost noon before they decided to stop and water them. They walked around and stretched while the three oxen grazed and drank from a small stream.

Orly thanked Enoch for all his help and hard work, but he also thanked him for being his friend. "I know you were embarrassed by my reaction to your treatment as a slave yesterday, but I want you to know that the Holy Spirit was preparing me for something bigger that I was not expecting."

"I heard some of the yelling last night. I was in the courtyard, but I could tell it must have been hard."

"It was hard. Mr. Simon has decided that Jesus died only for the Jews and has convinced himself that everything that Jesus taught is wrong. I have looked up to Mr. Simon and will always be grateful for his raising Gabriela, but he is the one who is wrong."

"Yes, sir."

"Enoch, it's going to be hard to tell Gabriela. It's going to be really hard. Pray for me, please. Let's get on the road." They got the oxen back on the road that was getting steeper as they approached Bethany. They had to stop every two hours now to let the oxen rest and drink even though the carts were empty. They were still able to arrive just before sundown. Gabriela and Mother Ruth had dinner on the table and Enoch joined them as a friend and fellow follower. Orly finally felt his strength returning and normalcy coming back into his life. He encouraged Enoch to spend the night and return to Mr. Kenan tomorrow. Enoch agreed and they spent the evening playing with the babies and laughing together at their antics. Mother Ruth and Gabriela packed the kitchen and extra baby supplies. After the babies were asleep, Orly and Enoch started loading Orly's cart. They re-nailed the baskets so that they were closer to Gabriela and Mother. It would be more convenient for the trip home. *Home. How good that sounds.* They loaded everything the ladies had packed and only left out the travel bags that Mother Ruth had indicated they would need in the morning.

On Monday morning, they ate breakfast together by lamp light and then told Enoch they would meet him for the return trip to Cana tomorrow. He hitched his oxen and left. Orly began to load everything while Gabriela nursed the babies and placed them in the baskets in the cart. Mother Ruth walked around and made sure that everything had been packed. When she walked out the door, Orly was handing the key to a Roman couple with two small children. Gabriela was smiling happily as she climbed into the oxcart to sit between her two boys. Orly helped Mother onto the front seat of the oxcart, and they drove away. Orly wasn't sure where they were headed. They could probably stay with James and John, but he really wanted to stay with Mary if she had room. Then an idea began to form. He stopped at the well and asked if they would mind camping out in the olive garden. They both agreed that it was fine and since no one needed a break, he continued to drive toward Jerusalem. He would leave his ox and cart with the farmer who had housed Enoch's oxen one time when he and Kobe had come to Jerusalem without Mr. Kenan. Orly stopped near the olive garden and staked Samson. He carried the babies' baskets

and a load of supplies from the cart and found a few families scattered here and there, but it was mostly empty. Orly selected an area and began to set up camp. He left Mother and Gabriela and the babies there and returned to the cart for more baby supplies. He told the ladies that he needed to take the ox to a farm and would be back shortly. The weather had turned quite pleasant, and it was comfortable and beautiful in the olive garden. Gabriela had never spent the night there, but she had heard Orly tell her about how special it was to him. She felt sad that Mother Ruth's first trip to Jerusalem had been interrupted by so much work.

When Orly returned, he said he needed to talk with Mr. Kenan and would return shortly. He promised that he would take them to the market for dinner and they should just relax and rest until he returned.

Orly had not been to Mr. Zeke's in a while and was pleased when he found the correct side road. He took a deep breath before knocking on the door. He informed the servant that he was Orly and needed to speak with Mr. Kenan. He was escorted inside and asked to wait in the living room. Orly had never seen this part of Mr. Zeke's house. It was quite elegant, but rather old and stuffy feeling. Soon Mr. Kenan came to greet him. Orly asked if they could talk privately somewhere for a few minutes and apologized for disturbing his last day with his brother. "Mr. Kenan, this was a most upsetting visit for my family, and Gabriela doesn't even know the worst of it yet. How much time do you have?"

"I am free all afternoon and Zeke is resting and doesn't want to talk, so it's been a rather disappointing visit for me, too. Shall we walk to the market? There are benches there to sit and talk and it should not be crowded."

As they walked, Orly began to talk with Mr. Kenan. "We arrived feeling that the Holy Spirit was telling us to be on guard and be very, very careful what we said and did. As I told you at the wedding, Gabriela's parents needed to relocate. We used our time off to move Gabriela's entire family to Beersheba. Thank you for letting Enoch help me with that. We made two trips, one for the families and one to transport most of the Mercantile Store there. I was able to secure them a house and shop to start over. I was also able to sell their shop in Bethany and their three homes for a very good price because of my understanding of the Romans' ways."

"Orly, I'm very proud of you. You haven't mentioned Miss Mary. Is she okay?"

"She's fine, sir. She's in Heaven. She passed just a few weeks after Lazarus and Mr. Simon left for their trip, so she didn't have to deal with all the things the family went through waiting for news and not knowing."

"I see."

"The reason I'm telling you all this, sir, is that after completing all of this, Mr. Simon became enraged when he found out that I had even talked with a Gentile. He ordered me out of his house and said it would be better if I killed Gabriela than to lead her astray. He declared her to

be dead and said she would not be welcome in his house. He said that I should be crucified.”

“Oh, Orly, I am so sorry. You know that is not true.”

“Yes, sir. I know, and I’m being very strongly encouraged day by day, but I have not told her yet. I am asking if you could allow us a few days to recuperate in Jerusalem before we return to Cana. Mother has not even seen the temple, and we haven’t seen Mary. And, as I said, I haven’t told Gabriela anything yet.”

“How much time do you want off?”

“I believe that we should start home on Sunday and hopefully I can return to work by the end of the week.”

“That sounds reasonable to me. Take off as much time as you need. Your family is more important.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Now, do you feel safe traveling alone, or should I leave Joshua or Jonah with you?”

“Thank you, sir, but I think we would just want to be alone.”

“Is there anything else I can help you with?”

“Gabriela and I both feel so supported and loved by you. I could never thank you enough for all your help.”

The two men hugged, and Orly walked with Mr. Kenan back to Mr. Zeke’s. Then he walked back to the garden to greet the ladies. Orly entered the olive garden and found the ladies resting on their blankets. They both sat up and Mother began to fuss. “Orly, it’s near the tenth hour, and I haven’t even begun to prepare dinner. We have nothing to eat except a few nuts and raisins and we need to prepare for the trip home tomorrow.”

“Mother, I appreciate your concern, but I promise to take good care of you.” Both ladies looked skeptical. “First of all, I’ll take care of the cooking for tonight, so relax. I have decided that all of us need a break from the stress of this past week, and I am not ready to go back to Cana. I have arranged with Mr. Kenan to spend a few more days here, and we’ll begin our journey home on Sunday. That will give us time to visit friends, pay our vows at the temple, and show Mother around. Now, will you please relax, let me take care of you, and just enjoy yourselves?”

“Mr. Kenan was okay with this?” asked Gabriela.

“Yes, in fact, he encouraged me to do so. Pack up the babies and let’s do some exploring. Tonight, we will simply go to the market and purchase what we need for dinner. I will do the cooking, but we need to go before the market closes at sundown.”

Gabriela packed the sleeping babies in the carrier and Orly helped the ladies climb down the steep ravine and up the other side. It wasn’t far to the market and Mother was properly impressed. She agreed with Orly that the market was as big as all of Cana. Orly expertly led them to the food area where they found every imaginable food for sale. He assigned the ladies what to shop for and they all had their hands full as they headed back to the garden. He built a bonfire

and found sticks for roasting lamb pieces. He ran back to the market and purchased a jar of goat milk. By the time he returned, Mother had set out the plates and cups for a picnic while Gabriela nursed the babies and placed them in their cradles. Mother sliced the onion and watched as Orly seasoned and roasted the lamb over the fire. As they ate, Orly told them stories about people he had met in this garden.

He reminded them that this was where Jesus was arrested and that this was the place where Kobe had finally told him how to invite Jesus to be his Messiah. He described how during the first three days of Passover the garden was literally packed with people as closely jammed together as possible. They would talk most of the night and sing Psalms and there would be groups praying together. It brought back really good memories for him. "Someday," he said, "Heaven will be like this, and we'll sit around Jesus' campfire and listen to Him tell us stories." They unwrapped the babies and watched them enjoy the fire. "Mother, since this is your first trip to Jerusalem, what would be your most important thing to do while you are here?" asked Orly.

"Oh, I definitely want to see the temple. I never dreamed I would see it with my own eyes."

"Okay, we'll do that first thing in the morning. What about you, Gabriela?"

"Oh, that's hard. I'm torn between two."

"That's okay, we should have time to do both."

"I would like to see Mary and show her the babies, and I would like to see Kayla and Marta and find out if they have heard from Jenay."

"No problem. I would like to take you to Kobe's and my special retreat. I know you were there late one night, but you didn't get to see the beauty of the place. It's really a special place where Kobe would go to honor his mother and Mrs. Mary. And I know both of you ladies would like to see more of the market. Then I was thinking we could probably worship with Mary's group for the Sabbath and maybe James the Just's group on the night after Sabbath. We need to be ready to leave on Sunday morning, so that's a lot to pack in. But I don't want us to rush. I just want us to relax and refresh so that we can look forward to the journey home."

"I think we better get these little guys wrapped up. The fire is dying out and they are getting cold. Let's wrap them and let me nurse them before we call it a night. Brr! It's getting cold out here."

Orly helped her get the babies wrapped in two layers of swaddling cloth and then she nursed them while he found the extra blankets for all of them. Mother Ruth was so excited she could hardly shut her eyes, but discovered that dawn was brightening the sky before she woke up. Gabriela, too, was sitting up and looking shocked. The babies had slept through the night again. She was very, very pleased with that progress.

Orly was setting out their breakfast of olive oil and bread rolls. He laid out some apricots and plums that he had found on his trip to the

market to get fresh milk. While Gabriela packed the babies for the day, Orly moved all their camping supplies into a neat pile and covered it with their blankets.

They walked across the ravine and up to the temple. Mother touched the walls and exclaimed over the size of the stones. Orly paid the temple tax for them, and they entered the Courtyard of the Gentiles. Mother hated the smell of the animals and said, "I agree with Jesus that it is just wrong to sell animals at the temple!" Orly reminded her to keep her thoughts to herself and they would talk about it later. He purchased three lambs and hired three servant boys to carry the lambs. As they walked up the courtyard steps, they saw John and Bartholomew preaching to a large crowd. Orly waved, but they didn't notice.

As they entered the temple, they had to adjust to being in the candle-lit darkness. Gradually, the ornate carvings and gold designs all around became focused. Orly and Gabriela went to the priest and handed him the lamb. They presented their first-born son according to Jewish Scripture. The priest asked his name and Orly responded, "Hosea."

"A worthy name," replied the priest, who said a prayer of blessing on Hosea and declared him redeemed as a first-born of Israel. "Would you like your other child blessed?"

"Certainly," said Orly and reached into the carrier to get Kobe.

The priest added matter-of-factly, "Then you will need to purchase another lamb."

"No, thank you, then." Orly helped Gabriela get Hosea back into the carrier and he indicated to the slave boy that he should give the lamb to the priest. This time Orly indicated that this lamb was for Gabriela's purification since they lived too far away to come at the proper time. The priest very routinely took the lamb and sent the slave to carry it to the altar. "I declare you purified according to Jewish Scripture," he said dully. "Next."

Orly motioned for the third slave boy to bring his lamb. Orly spoke to the priest. "This is Ruth, my mother. She is bringing a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God for His provision for her."

"Bless you my daughter," the priest said, more kindly. They watched as a servant was summoned to carry the lamb to the back of the temple to be cooked for the priests' dinner.

Orly asked the women to either wait inside the temple or to go out to the courtyard, and he would meet them there. He wanted to go into the men's area and worship for a few minutes. He stood quietly and prayed. Later he found Gabriela and Mother listening to John and Bartholomew. He asked if they were ready to go or would like to stay awhile. Both indicated that they were ready to go. They left the temple and walked back toward the market. Orly purchased all of them some fruit juice and Gabriela a roll with cheese. They found a bench and sat down to let Mother process what she had seen at the temple. "It was a life-long dream. It was extremely beautiful, but somehow very

disappointing.” Orly agreed. Gabriela admitted that she had never made a sacrifice there. She, too, was disappointed by how empty it all felt. Mother added, “It was so based on money and greed. I didn’t feel God’s presence like I thought I would.”

“Yes, Mother, that’s exactly how I’ve felt every time I’ve been here. Remember, Jesus tried to clean it up and make it what God intended — a house of prayer and worship.”

“It’s just a pretty building, but it’s empty,” Mother summarized.

“Sadly, yes. Jesus says it will be torn down before He returns. I don’t know whether I’ll ever bother to sacrifice there again. I just don’t know. I am Jewish and I guess I will continue to pay my temple tax, but I agree that it is empty.”

“Son, may I ask you a question?”

“Certainly.”

“Every time you returned from Jerusalem, you would come and tell all of us servants how wonderful the temple was and how beautiful. You never told us about the emptiness and the filth and the greed. Why?”

“Because I never dreamed that any of you would be able to travel here and see it for yourself. I told you what I believed God intended it to be. I’m sorry that I deceived you.”

“I’m glad Hosea didn’t know the truth. You did a good thing, Son.”

“Thank you, Mother. Now, I would like to do something fun.”

“What’s that?”

“Oh, you’ll see. Are the babies ready to travel?”

“Yes, see them looking around? They are fascinated with all the new things to see and smell and hear,” said Gabriela.

“Let’s purchase some things for Mary. She feeds so many people in need and I like to surprise her with food.” He asked Mother to pick out a basket and fill it with spices and herbs, and asked Gabriela to pick out fresh fruits and vegetables. He picked up a large sack of flour, a bag of salt, and a large jar of olive oil. They arrived at Mary’s door and knocked gently.

When Rhoda opened the door, she squealed with delight and invited them in. She led them to the kitchen, and they unloaded the groceries. Mary was out but would return shortly. Orly introduced Rhoda to his mother, Ruth, and they all sat in the living room to catch up. Orly asked how many people were staying with Mary right now and Rhoda replied that there was only one young girl who was expecting a baby in about a month. She and Mary had gone to the midwife to make arrangements for her birthing. That’s when Rhoda realized that Gabriela was holding twins. Once again, she squealed with delight and demanded to hear everything. Mother realized that even though Rhoda was introduced as a slave, she was not treated as one. She and Gabriela were talking like old friends. When Mary and Zara returned, Mary was laughing, and crying tears of joy. She was trying to meet Ruth and hug the babies at the same time. Finally, introductions were made all around.

Mary asked why they were in Jerusalem when Passover had just ended. Orly shared that Simon the Leper, Gabriela's dad, was being starved out of Bethany and they had spent the entire Passover helping them to relocate to Beersheba. Mary had heard about Lazarus' and the two others' deaths but had not heard that Gabriela's dad had returned home. She expressed her sorrow at what they had suffered for being followers of Jesus. She had heard that the Jews were being squeezed out. It seemed like more and more Romans were moving into the surrounding areas, but not necessarily into Jerusalem itself.

Mary asked where they were staying and when she found they were staying in the olive garden, she insisted that they use her two empty rooms. They agreed, and Orly left the women to visit while he made multiple trips to the olive garden to retrieve all their things. Mid-afternoon, Orly asked, "Mary, would it be okay with you and Mother if Gabriela and I took a walk? We haven't had much time together recently."



## Chapter 8

Gabriela was surprised but pleased to be alone with her husband and sons. She felt that Mother Ruth was settled and comfortable with Mary and Rhoda and they could relax. Orly led her to his and Kobe's private retreat. "I didn't think Mother would enjoy such a long hike and it is pretty secluded back in these woods." When they finally arrived, Gabriela agreed that it didn't look anything like she remembered from that horrible night when people were hiding in fear for their lives. They sat in the grass and sang a couple of Psalms of worship. "Gabriela, I have something to tell you that is going to hurt really, really badly."

"Is it Miss Martha? You know that that is not a sad thing. She's with Jesus."

"No, I wish that was it. Gabriela, you know all the time we were with your parents, we never had time to tell them about our ministry. They were so injured and needy that it didn't come up. I'm not even sure they were able to see their grandbabies because of their pain. I know you were disappointed, but I was so proud of the way you handled it — not thinking about yourself but just pouring yourself out for them. I am so proud of you, and I praise God for you constantly. I could not do any of this without your prayers and support and encouragement. I know that God sent you to me."

"Thank you, Orly. I love being your wife and helpmeet and the mother of your children. You know that. But if there is something wrong, please tell me."

"Gabriela, when Enoch and I finished unloading all their home supplies, they were unhappy that I brought Enoch into their house to eat Sabbath dinner. When they refused to let Enoch stay in their guest room, I went outside and slept in the yard, too. I want you to know that I ate breakfast out in the courtyard with Enoch. Amram and Jora joined us, but your parents didn't."

"Oh, Orly, I'm sorry. They weren't like that before. I wonder what has changed them?"

"Amram says that the new priest in Bethany is teaching that all Jews, whether followers of Jesus or not, should go back to Jewish traditions. He is teaching that Jesus has no love for the slave, the sick, the poor, and certainly not the Gentiles."

"Oh, Orly, are you telling me that my parents have been caught up in this teaching?"

"Yes, Gabriela, and to a radical point."

"So, that was what the Holy Spirit was saying about not inviting them to Cana to live with us," said Gabriela.

"Yes, I think so. I only hope that they don't destroy the new followers in Beersheba. I went to the synagogue there on the Sabbath. The priest seems to be solid. Maybe getting under good teaching

again and with the help of the Holy Spirit they will heal. But at this point, we are not welcome in their home.”

“Not welcome? What do you mean? They are my parents! Are you refusing to take me to visit?”

“No. I will take you. But right now, you would be turned away as unclean because of our contact with Gentiles. We are not welcome in their home. Your abba has declared you dead.”

“Dead?! My abba has declared me dead to him. Oh, Orly. Oh. Father, that hurts.”

“I’m hoping that as they heal, their eyes will be opened to our love and God’s love for them and for all people. But right now, I’m most concerned about you. I know it’s hard.”

“Oh, Orly. Can you hold the babies? I need to process this. I need to pray, and I don’t want them to be upset.” She took off the carrier and laid it in the grass before Orly. She walked closer to the stream so that her cries would be muted, but Orly could still hear her screaming more deeply than with birthing pains. It broke his heart, but he knew that Jesus would carry her through this and strengthen her and sustain her. He prayed for her as the babies slept peacefully. When the babies woke up crying, Orly picked them up and walked around with them trying to comfort them. When she noticed that the babies were hungry, she came back and nursed them, but she was still holding back the tears and groans that were too deep to express. She nursed them and handed them back to Orly. She returned to her place of prayer, and again cried out in agony. But gradually her screams turned to sobs and she sat quietly staring at the stream and asking God to wash away the pain. Finally, she walked back to Orly and the boys. They were awake and enjoying watching the trees all around them. Gabriela sat beside Orly and asked him if he would sing Psalm 23. He sang and she was able to sing a few words with him. When he looked deep into her eyes, he could see that God had won the victory, and she was going to be okay. It would just take time to heal. “We need to get back to Mary’s. I didn’t bring a lantern or a flint. We will have to spend the night here if we don’t leave soon. That might be a little cold!”

She slipped the carrier on, and he helped her get the babies settled. They quickly fell asleep while Orly and Gabriela walked back to Mary’s in silence. “We need to warn Mary and the other apostles in case my dad tries to make trouble here.”

“I don’t think your dad is physically able to travel here, so I’m not sure that is necessary, but I will leave it up to you,” said Orly.

“You knew that I would need Mary, didn’t you?”

“Yes, Mary, and Kayla. You need to know that you have family that will not desert you.”

“I have that in Cana.”

“Yes, but you have it here, too.”

“Thank you. Did you tell Mr. Kenan?”

“Yes. But only because I needed his prayers, and of course Enoch knows. I wasn’t sure how many others you would want to

include. It will be entirely up to you, and I will respect your wishes to tell or not to tell.”

“I don’t know. Right now, I don’t want Mother Ruth to know. Have you told her?”

“No. That will be up to you. I have only told Mr. Kenan. I would talk with Philip if he were still alive, but...”

“I don’t know that I’ll tell anyone. Let me pray some more about it.”

When they arrived, Gabriela explained to Mother Ruth and Mary that she had been so busy taking care of everything that she hadn’t really had time to grieve her losses. “Orly realized that I needed a quiet place to just grieve what all has happened. Of course, we didn’t know about any of it until we arrived, and it is a lot to process.” Everyone agreed and welcomed them back. Mother had helped Rhoda prepare a simple dinner, and they sat around the table and caught up on news — both in Jerusalem and Cana.

When they told the ladies about Gabriela’s ordeal with carrying triplets, Zara exclaimed that she was glad she was only carrying one! There was a lot of laughter and many tears as they shared. Mary was eager to learn how Gersham and Mario and their brides were doing. There was so much to catch up on. Gabriela and Orly unwrapped the babies and let the ladies hold them. Gabriela taught Zara how to stretch their little arms. “Now, these guys are getting huge. You’ll have to be a lot gentler with your newborn.”

“How old are they?” asked Mary.

“Two months and almost a week. They are about four times bigger than when they were born, and they’ve slept all the way through the night a couple of times on this trip. I hope that that’s the beginning of my getting some real sleep. They were so tiny at the beginning they had to be fed every hour. That was exhausting, and I was so blessed to have the two couples living with us to help. Also, you know Basha, Philip’s widow. She and Sarah helped us out a couple of times a week. And we have a Gentile couple who are followers of Jesus who help us. Lucas manages the outside of the house and Amata helps us with housework and sewing. She made all of the babies’ things. Zara, have you got things prepared for the baby?” Zara said that different ladies from various home groups had been weaving baby shawls and swaddling cloths for her. She didn’t know what she would do without the groups.

After the others had gone to sleep, Orly and Mary talked long into the night. He told her about the synagogue baptisms and then Jordan’s call to lead them. He told her about his own call to reach the Gentiles. “Yes, that’s been the topic of a lot of discussion since James and John got back and told us what the Holy Spirit is doing all along the Great Sea coast and in Cana. We all agree that this is what Jesus had in mind. We just don’t know what it will look like.”

“Well, it looks an awful lot like our own gatherings. I feel such a bond with them once they have accepted Jesus as their Messiah, I feel that they are as much brothers and sisters as we are.”

“That’s amazing. Some Gentiles here in Jerusalem are becoming Jews in order to follow Jesus. But you are talking about a totally different thing. This is fascinating. So, James was saying that Jonathan had almost fifty new Gentile followers. How many are you working with?”

“Well, I got to lead eight of my Roman friends to accept Messiah and that group meets at our home. When I left Cana two weeks ago, we had about a hundred and forty total who had committed their lives to Jehovah and accepted Jesus as Messiah. They have started sixty-six additional groups. Two of those are in Nazareth and one in Capernaum. Hopefully, we’ve doubled by now. It’s growing like wildfire and actually, I have more leaders now than I have people to reach.”

They began to talk about leadership and accountability, and Mary was amazed at what God was doing through this humble young man who had spent his childhood as a slave. She declared that she wanted to know more about his leadership training but had to get some sleep.

On Wednesday morning, the ladies continued to visit, and Mary and Orly sat out on the back courtyard and discussed his training techniques for the Gentiles. Mary was amazed and agreed that he was teaching them everything that they needed to know to begin their walk under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. She was so proud of Orly for not taking credit and not holding himself up as the leader. He was simply planting seeds and cultivating them faithfully. He told her that he felt God was definitely calling him to work with Gentiles, but he had no idea where or how. He had thought about beginning a Sunday morning worship time that would be open to both Jew and Gentile, but the plan wasn’t fully formed. She promised to pray with him. As they rejoined the others, Orly asked Gabriela if she wanted to visit Kayla and Marta or if she wanted to visit the market. She asked Mary what her plans for the day were. She said that she was just going to be home unless something came up. Gabriela asked Orly if he would mind taking his mother to the market to look around and let her spend time talking with Mary. They laughed and said, “Poor Mary. Everyone needs her ears.”

Mother was eager to see the market, and Gabriela assured her that she had seen it all her life. Zara and Rhoda were going to visit a needy family to take them some food. This would be the perfect time for Gabriela and Mary to talk.

Orly and Mother leisurely walked through the market. It reminded them of their day in Capernaum when she became a free woman. “It’s hard to believe that I ever was a slave. God has indeed set me completely free. He’s been so good to me.” As they walked, Mother saw goods from all over the Roman world. Orly pointed out Seth’s Sword and Knife Shop and told Mother about Benjamin working there. They would walk awhile and then sit on a bench and just watch the

people from many, many nations walk by in a parade of color. It was a lovely afternoon. Before they headed home, Orly and Mother loaded their arms with fresh food for dinner and staples to help Mary feed those in need.

Orly and Mother cooked the meal and let Rhoda and Zara visit with Gabriela and Mary. What fun they had playing with the babies, and it thrilled Gabriela's heart and helped it to heal. She had told Mary everything, and Mary had encouraged her to keep praying and keep believing that the Holy Spirit would work in her abba's heart to heal him physically and spiritually. It was good for Gabriela to be reminded that someday they would be reunited in Heaven because of God's promise of eternal life to all those who accepted His Son, Jesus.

They wrapped the babies and put them in their cradles while they ate dinner together. Afterward, Mary suggested that they sing together for a while. As they sang, Orly and Gabriela unwrapped the babies again. After the other ladies were asleep, they finally wrapped them, fed them, and tucked them into their cradles for the night.

On Thursday, Orly, Gabriela, and Mother took the babies to James and John's house about midmorning. They knocked on the door and were met by a servant who invited them in. Soon they were surrounded by hugs and welcomes from Kayla and Marta. They said the men were out preaching, but they would just miss the fun. Orly introduced his mother, and everyone moved into the back living room that was more comfortable. Kayla was like a second mother to Gabriela since she and Jenay had been best friends. Gabriela wanted to know if she had received word from Jenay. "Yes! We have a granddaughter, and both she and Jenay are doing great. So, we need lots of hugs and squeezes from these two little guys."

"John said that you were expecting triplets, so I'm assuming this was a very difficult pregnancy." And the ladies surrounded Gabriela and Ruth with healing love and sweet fellowship.

Orly said that he was going to walk around and would be back later. "I'd like to find where the men are preaching if I can. I've got some questions for them."

"They are usually at the temple this time of day, but they also walk over to the market if they need a break," suggested Marta. Orly left the ladies and walked back toward the temple. He wasn't sure why he wanted to be there but felt antsy and restless. He was tired of sitting around and ready to get on the road. He wondered if they should start home now, but Mother and especially Gabriela needed this time. And he needed some good fellowship, too.



Back in Cana, Mr. Kenan and his men were arriving home about noon. Mr. Kenan told the men to take the rest of the day off and reminded Jordan that he needed to locate housing as soon as

possible. Jordan walked to Mr. Hilmar's Mercantile Store and asked about finding a small rental. Jordan looked at two different ones and decided on the one closest to work. He walked back to Mr. Kenan's and informed him that he would be moving out this afternoon but would like to start paying him for dinners if that was okay with him. Mr. Kenan assured him that he and Mrs. Vada would enjoy his company and suggested Jordan find Joshua and let him help him with the move. Joshua was glad to help and by sunset, they had moved Jordan's things into the little house. It was just a small room with a fire pit in the back. There was not even an oven. Jordan decided he'd better go to the market and get breakfast supplies for the week. He bought a large jar of olive oil, some olives, and some bread rolls. He wondered how long they would last before he would need to buy more. But he realized that hard bread was the least of his problems when he discovered that he didn't own a mat to sleep on, and there was no lamp anywhere in the house. He went back to The Mercantile Store and purchased a lamp and a lantern and asked about purchasing a mat. While he was eating dinner at Mr. Kenan's he mentioned how ill-supplied the rental was. Mrs. Vada asked him "Does it have a water jar? You'll need that for drinking water and for washing your breakfast bowl. Do you have a breakfast bowl?"

"Oh, I don't think so. I bought olive oil, olives, and some bread rolls, but I didn't think to purchase the basics."

"That's okay. Why don't you eat breakfast with us for a few days until you really get the house furnished. We usually allow about a week to get everything situated. You'll figure out what you need, and you'll do fine."

"Thank you, Mrs. Vada. I've heard horror stories about Kobe, and I was determined I wouldn't make the same mistake."

"You weren't planning on being gone for an extra two weeks for your mother's wedding, so we'll blame it on that. You're doing great so far. You've already got your stuff moved."

"Yes, ma'am. Thank you," said Jordan. But he didn't feel great. He was paying rent and buying food and yet he was camping out in his yard and had no way to eat the breakfast he had bought. He decided he would ask Lucas where to buy a mat at noon tomorrow.

## Chapter 9

When Orly arrived at the temple, he saw the Apostles James and John preaching on the right side of the courtyard and James the Just, Jesus' half-brother, preaching by Solomon's Portico. Orly stood and listened to James and John. They always inspired him and encouraged him as he listened to their stories of time spent with Jesus. As they wrapped up their stories and closed with an invitation for anyone to come to know Jesus as their Messiah, the crowd began to disperse. Orly waited around until they were finished answering questions and then joined them. He received an effusive welcome. "You are just the man we were wanting to see! What brings you to Jerusalem after Passover?"

"It's a long story, but we got tied up helping Gabriela's parents get out of Bethany. Long and terrible story, but then I wanted to take a few days and just de-stress with my friends, and Mother had never been to Jerusalem. I took some time off and the ladies are visiting at your house."

"Good. Good. Come with us. Have you met James the Just?"

"Well, just at Basha's wedding, but we didn't really have time to talk."

They stood around the edge of the crowd until James the Just finished the sermon he was preaching and then gave an invitation to those who wanted to receive Jesus. When the crowd had gone, James and John took Orly up to James the Just. "Here he is!" John said.

Orly looked really puzzled. *What a strange introduction.* Then he realized that they were talking about him. "What's going on? Why do I feel that I've walked into something?"

"Orly, we've been praying for you since the wedding and was wondering when we could get a message to you. Let's go to the house and talk right now if you are available," said James the Just.

"I guess so," Orly said, trying to figure out what was going on.

James the Just led them to a very small house and invited them to sit in the back courtyard. He went inside and brought out fresh fruit for everyone, then sat down and began, "Orly, we have been praying about how to best reach the Roman population in Jerusalem. There are several Romans who saw Jesus crucified, some who actually participated. They are asking questions about who Jesus was and what it all means. When we explain to them the steps required to become Jews, they run, and I don't blame them. James and John were talking at Matthew's wedding about your ministry to the Romans in Cana and we feel that you could have a very effective ministry here, and a very needed one. We cannot include the Romans without making them Jews because the Jewish leaders would immediately kill us. But we would be willing to support you and your family if you would come and start a work here in Jerusalem with the Romans. If you

stayed totally separate from the Jews, I don't think they would care what the Romans were doing. Tell me again how many weeks this training session that you've developed takes?"

"It takes about seven weeks before we start a new series of classes."

"And how many Gentiles have become believers in Cana?"

"Before I left Cana two weeks ago, we had about a hundred and forty followers of Jesus and approximately sixty teams trained to begin teaching the next classes."

"That's incredible. So, I understand that you just teach them the essentials and then let the Holy Spirit guide them from that point on."

"Basically, yes. I am available to answer questions, but for the most part they are led only by the Holy Spirit and growing like wildfire."

"We were thinking that James and John could host you and your family here in Jerusalem for however long it takes to get this started, and then you could return to Cana without upsetting the Jewish leaders."

"I appreciate your interest in reaching the Romans and I will certainly pray about this, but I see some serious flaws in your plan," spoke Orly boldly.

"What's that?" asked James the Just.

"In the first place, I don't believe that the Romans will listen to Jews. They will best be reached by fellow Romans. And sending Jews into Jerusalem doesn't make sense to me. Jesus said that Jerusalem would be destroyed. I know I need to pray about this, but my first reaction is that something is not right."

Suddenly there was complete silence. The three men looked at Orly with a new respect. "We want to join in whenever we see the Holy Spirit at work, and we felt that He was leading us to facilitate a ministry to the Romans. I guess we need to pray some more. It's getting late. Can we meet again tomorrow and talk? I would like to hear your suggestions on how to reach the Romans in Jerusalem."

They all agreed to meet again tomorrow at noon and discuss the matter further. James and John walked home with Orly. They apologized for putting him on the spot like that. "I was just shocked that we had been talking about your ministry and how much we needed your help and poof! You appeared out of nowhere. We thought that God had answered our prayer really quickly," said John.

"So, what brings you to Jerusalem after Passover?"

As they walked toward James and John's home, Orly explained their busy Passover and that he was allowing Gabriela and Mother some time to visit and heal and recuperate before they returned to Cana. Both men invited them to stay for dinner and spend the night. He accepted the invitation to dinner but assured them that they planned to return to Mary's tonight.

When they arrived home, the table was prepared, and they enjoyed a simple meal together. No more was said about the Gentile work. Most of the focus was on their beautiful sons who sweetly slept



all through dinner and allowed Gabriela to visit, too. As they said goodnight, Orly promised to meet them at the temple tomorrow around noon. They walked home and Gabriela and Mother chattered happily about their day with Kayla and Marta. Orly tried to follow the conversation but had such a strong urge to pray that he could hardly focus on anything. He was glad that the ladies were tired and ready for sleep when they arrived. He told Gabriela that he would be spending the night in the retreat area to pray. She nodded and told him to be careful. He grabbed a couple of blankets from their supply and left.

*Here is a field ripe for harvest. Why am I not excited about harvesting it? Am I afraid of persecution? Am I afraid of death? Am I afraid for my family? Am I a coward? What is the problem? What an honor to be asked to do such a work by James the Just. Why would I throw away such a position of prestige and authority?* He fell on his knees before God and cried out to Him. *Father, help!* No answers came. So, he did what he knew to do. He waited and he worshipped. He began to sing the Psalms. He remembered snatches of what Kobe and Jordan had taught him. He wished they were here to guide him. And finally, in the quietness of the night, in the gentle rustle of the leaves, he knew God's presence. He trembled as he waited silently before Him. "Orly, I have not called you to do this. I have called you to do another work." And that was all he heard, but it brought an incredible peace. He lay down and slept for a few hours and then felt ready to pray again in the early, early hours of the morning. He knew what he needed to say to James the Just. He felt secure and surrounded by God's presence. He knew for sure that God would provide for the Gentiles in Jerusalem who were seeking Him, and he knew that it was not his responsibility. It was God's.

He returned to Mary's house in time for breakfast and felt remarkably refreshed. He told Gabriela and Mother that he would need to spend another afternoon with the apostles but asked if they would be able to go to the market with him this morning to get supplies. He picked out what they needed for a three-day trip home, while Mother and Gabriela picked out things for the Sabbath with Mary. Orly promised that he would load the cart after the Sabbath. They would leave bright and early on Sunday morning. Orly gave Gabriela a supply of coins to purchase whatever they needed. He carried two loads of food to Mary's and then left to go to the temple courtyard to meet James and John again. Orly enjoyed listening to the message of James as he preached about the Son of God donning a towel and washing His apostles' feet. He urged the people to see the difference between their Jewish way of life and the way that Jesus was calling them to serve and love others. As the crowd moved away, the three men joined James the Just who had spent the morning in prayer at his house instead of preaching.

The four of them gathered in the courtyard and Orly spoke confidently. "Gentlemen, I cannot do what you have asked of me because it is not what God has called me to do. But this is what I will

do. I will place your request before my Gentile brothers and sisters. If God calls a team or multiple teams to move to Jerusalem and begin a work here, then I will be thrilled, but that is the extent of my involvement. I am not the Holy Spirit in their lives. I am not their leader. They can only go where God leads them and I can only go where God leads me.

“But let me share with you what Mr. Kenan’s all-Jewish group has done to help with the Gentile ministry. He and his group pray for me constantly. They provided all the food that we needed to meet weekly with the initial eight. They have filled water jars and provided an afternoon snack for about three hundred curious Gentiles. They have provided men to help me with baptisms and to help answer questions. They have showed love and acceptance to the Romans. The Jewish followers are a vital support of prayer and encouragement to me and a sounding board when I have questions or concerns. I would hate to ask a Roman believer to move here without that support. I believe that many Romans in Jerusalem could be reached. But I do not believe that they will be reached by Jews. I believe that the Jewish nation as a whole has failed at that. I believe that it will be Gentiles reaching Gentiles. But I believe it will happen faster with the support and facilitation of the Jewish followers.”

“Orly, I see why James and John are so impressed with your work. I hope you will forgive us for coming up with our own solutions instead of waiting on God.”

“Certainly. It’s a very easy thing to do. You see what needs to be done and your heart knows that it is God’s will. I believe that God will send exactly the right people to reach the Romans here in Jerusalem. I pledge you my prayers as we wait for Him to call them to the task.”

“And Orly, I will be a contact person for any Gentile followers who choose to move here to work among the Romans.” said James the Just. “They will be my brothers and sisters and I will support and encourage and guide them just as I attempt to shepherd the Jewish leaders.”

“I will pass that along to them. How will they be able to contact you since they won’t be welcome at the temple?”

“I eat breakfast at the market every day. Let’s walk over there now and I’ll show you my favorite bench.” The four men walked over and Orly chuckled to himself. The bench was directly across from Seth’s Sword and Knife Shop.

“Yes, sir, I can tell them exactly where to find you if they need your help.”

“Jesus talked to Romans openly and I choose to follow my Lord,” said James the Just very humbly.

Orly said his goodbyes and thanked the men for their encouragement. He thanked James and John for the fellowship and said that he needed to spend some time with his wife and mother getting ready for their trip home early on Sunday morning. They invited him to drop by on the Sabbath if he had time. John put his arm around

Orly's shoulder and said, "I'm really proud of you, Son. You are a man after God's heart and you challenge and inspire me every time — not because you are great, but because you are so trusting in the One who guides you. He's using you in mighty ways and I'm just glad to call you my friend."

Orly couldn't hold back the tears. He grabbed both men in a hug and told them what a scary, scary year this had been with almost losing Gabriela and feeling the weight of the Gentile ministry, and yet at every turn, God had provided encouragement and sustenance.

He wiped away his tears as he entered Mary's house and smelled Mother's bread hot from the oven. Soon Mary's group would arrive, and they would enjoy the Sabbath feast together. As the sun began to set about twenty more people packed into Mary's house and everyone greeted each other like family and enjoyed sweet fellowship. The twins were awake and being passed around the room by adoring women who were trying to tell them apart. Some in the group recognized the name Kobe and wanted to know who Hosea was named after. Mary invited Orly to share with the group, so he told them how he and his mother were sold into slavery when he was five years old and how God had provided a wonderful Jewish bond-slave to watch over him and train him in the ways of his people. He then told of God's provision for him through a God-fearing master who allowed him to apprentice in his blacksmith shop. He told of Kobe coming to apprentice and telling them about Jesus. And he told how just this year God had allowed a Roman judge to revoke the bond-slave agreement that his mother had made, setting her free. He encouraged them to trust Him even when things looked impossible or very dark. They sang a few more hymns and dismissed.

Gabriela and Orly wrapped up the babies and Gabriela nursed them while Orly told her that he felt refreshed and renewed and ready to tackle. He wanted to start home now but knew that it was important that they enjoy the Sabbath rest. They both needed it. "Mother and I have been pretty busy today cooking for thirty people, but with all five of us, it wasn't terrible. It's a good thing you helped us buy our own groceries this morning, because we wouldn't have had time otherwise. Mary and Rhoda are really special people. I can't believe they cook like this every week and often with very little supplies."

"Which reminds me —" Orly walked over to the little cup hidden on the kitchen shelf and dropped in a handful of coins. "That should help for a little while." He helped Gabriela tuck the babies in their cradles and carried them to the room. *It won't be long before they will be outgrowing these things. My goodness, time is flying.*

At breakfast on Sabbath morning, Orly asked Mary if they would be attending synagogue and she sadly said that it wasn't safe. She, Rhoda, and Zara usually spent the morning relaxing and enjoying the quiet day after such a busy night. Mary added, "You are more than welcome to relax with us. We would love to have you. Of course, if you prefer the crowds, James the Just will be preaching at Solomon's

Portico at the temple. He usually preaches eight times before the end of the Sabbath. He draws quite a crowd and it's always a great message, but there's no place to sit. Everyone stands and I just need the rest after running all week."

Orly consulted with Gabriela and Mother, and they agreed that just being still sounded good to them, too. After the babies had nursed, Orly and Gabriela let them play for a while. Gabriela began to hum some joyful Psalms and soon they were all singing and praising God in sweet fellowship. The babies listened and played and enjoyed the peace.

The day passed lazily, and no one felt compelled to entertain, or cook, or host. They just enjoyed being together. "Heaven will be like this house. Now I know what Orly meant when he came home and told me that he wanted to someday have a home like Mary's in Jerusalem. He and Gabriela have done that. Their home has become a place like this where love is lavished on everyone who enters," said Mother Ruth.

"Oh, that makes me so happy," said Mary.

Before the sun dipped behind the horizon, Mother and Rhoda prepared quick sandwiches for everyone. Mary lit the lamps and Orly left to get the ox and oxcart. It was almost an hour before he returned and by then, Mother and Gabriela had everything packed. Orly found a large bucket to water Samson in the backyard and staked him to graze there. They parked the cart beside the house and began to load all the supplies into it. With everyone helping, it didn't take long to pile all the extra supplies near the front of the cart. Orly left room for the mats and baskets. The baskets now sat between Gabriela and Mother so they could reach the babies more easily. They packed all the food supplies except what they needed for breakfast and then returned to the house for one last visit before they all tried to get some sleep.

Before the sun was up, Orly was watering Samson again and hitching him to the cart. He loaded their mats and put the pillows into the babies' baskets. When everything was loaded, he sat down and ate breakfast. By the time the sun was fully up, they had said their goodbyes and were on the road to Cana. Because Passover was over, the roads were mostly deserted, and Orly could allow Samson to trot as fast as he liked. Samson seemed to enjoy pulling such a light cart downhill and made great time. Orly wasn't sure where the great camping spots were, but he was hoping that he would recognize a good spot for fishing. Orly had so much to tell Gabriela. The day seemed terribly long, but around midafternoon, he recognized one of Mr. Kenan's favorite stopping places. He pulled off the road and helped the ladies out of the cart. He carried the boys' cradles over to a campsite and started building a bonfire. He left Mother to watch the boys, who were quite content, while he and Gabriela went down to the stream. They quickly caught enough fish for dinner and left them in a net so they would stay fresh. When the boys became fussy, he asked Gabriela to take a walk with him and nurse them in the carrier. She

agreed and they left Mother Ruth by the campfire enjoying the beautiful scenery. It was still an hour before sunset and so tranquil. Orly and Gabriela walked down the road and Orly told her about the meeting with James, John, and James the Just. He told her what they had offered him and explained why he had left to pray. He told her about hearing God speak so very clearly and knew exactly what to tell the men. "So, what did you tell them?" Gabriela prodded.

Orly repeated what he had told the three men. "How did they respond to that?"

Tears rolled down Orly's cheeks as he said, "James the Just agreed to be that person. He agreed to meet the Roman followers anytime they needed him. God is so good. I guess I was hurt by your dad, and I needed that trust reaffirmed. James the Just, James, and John helped me to see that I can trust the leadership of the New Way again. I didn't realize that I was slipping into a position of doing things alone and without support. I need Mr. Kenan's group to help me stay on track. It's too dangerous to do ministry alone. This is God's work, not mine. My time with the men was really healing and affirming, and I've been eager to get a chance to share it with you."

"Thank you, Orly. I'm so excited about the next steps with you. Let's see where God leads us and what He can do with us as we stay tuned to Him."

"We'd better get back; I don't want Mother to be afraid." They turned around and hiked back to the camping area. Mother was fast asleep wrapped in her blanket by the bonfire. Orly quickly cleaned the fish while Gabriela sliced an onion and laid out bread and plates for the fish. Orly woke Mother and handed her a fish on a stick. They roasted the fish and the boys lay in their cradles and watched with wide eyes as the fire danced over their heads. After dinner they unwrapped the boys and let them play. The three of them sang Psalms and worshipped together as they enjoyed God's beautiful creation. It was warmer than their trip almost three weeks ago. Now they were headed downhill and would be home soon.

All day on Monday they traveled, stopped, and stretched. They stopped for their last night of camping by sunset. Orly lit the lanterns, and they ate cheese and cucumber sandwiches to save time. They knew that they would be home tomorrow and were trying to be wise and take plenty of stops, but everyone just wanted to get home.

## Chapter 10

Tuesday midafternoon they pulled into their own yard and Lena and Leah ran out to meet them. The girls couldn't believe how much the babies had grown and changed. And Mother Ruth and Gabriela were amazed at how big Lena was. She was in that final stage of growth and soon there would be another little one in the house. They carried all the supplies and leftover food and travel bags into the house and collapsed in a heap. Gabriela pulled the swaddling cloths off the babies and let them play. Had they really been gone only three weeks? It seemed like a lifetime. Lena and Leah insisted on them resting while they prepared dinner. Lucas and Amata arrived shortly, and the greetings started all over again. Orly and Lucas went outside and walked around the property while the girls giggled together over the babies' antics.

Gersham and Mario arrived home and everyone said goodnight to Lucas and Amata. At dinner, they drank their own goat milk. It tasted so much better than anything they had had on their trip. The twins nursed at least five times during the night and Gabriela woke up exhausted.

Orly went to work on Wednesday but missed visiting with the other men by running to talk with Ruler Jedidiah over his noon break. Ruler Jedidiah agreed to visit with them for the Sabbath meal in order to talk about Orly's new ministry plans. Orly made it back to work just as Lucas called time. That night, he asked Gabriela to prepare a place for Ruler Jedidiah at the Sabbath meal.

On Thursday's break, Orly heard the reports from the various groups and was blown away by the number of new followers they reported. He asked when the eight of them could get together to hear a report of their trip and a possible new ministry. They decided to meet this Sabbath morning at the third hour. So, once again, Orly asked Gabriela to provide some kind of snacks for the group on Sabbath morning. She and Mother agreed and laughed. "You want us to get back to work fast, don't you?"

"I forget about all the behind-the-scenes work. I'm sorry. I'm just excited about making plans and want to get started," said Orly. The ladies sat down to plan out the rest of the week. Mother Ruth would be in charge of the Sabbath meal and Gabriela the Sabbath brunch. Leah reported that she had started a large batch of cheese on Wednesday that should be ready to serve for either or both. And Lena volunteered to make all the bread and help with anything else that was needed. Friday was a busy day for the ladies.

Gabriela was discovering that it was harder and harder to get anything accomplished with the babies always wanting to play. They cried to get out of their swaddling cloths and learned to unwrap each other. Gabriela would laugh because she remembered her little

brothers doing that. Then she would cry for a few minutes before wiping away the tears. "It's hard being so far away from home. I remember," said Mother Ruth sympathetically. But she didn't know how very, very far Gabriela felt from her family.

On Friday the ladies were working on a lovely Sabbath meal. Orly got home early and worked with Lucas in the garden. Suddenly, Orly realized that he had totally left Jordan out of the loop. He ran back to the shop and begged Jordan to join them for dinner. He would explain later. Jordan looked puzzled but asked Joshua to convey his apologies to Mr. Kenan and Mrs. Vada. He knew that they would be eating alone tonight, but he felt it must be important. Orly suddenly realized that he was the one running ahead of the Holy Spirit's instructions. He slowed his pace and began to pray even as he headed home. *Father, direct my path. Please give me favor and understanding of their position, and please help me to listen to You and follow as You lead. Thank You for showing me my mistake and giving me time to correct it.*

By the time he arrived home, Lucas and Amata had already gone, and Gersham and Mario had arrived. Orly quickly explained that he had also invited Jordan and all the ladies groaned. Now there was no way to fit around the inside table. Orly apologized and decided it would be easier for the ladies if they moved the large table inside, especially since it was still a little chilly in the evenings. The ladies removed all the things they had already prepared off the little table and allowed Gersham and Mario to set the table outside. Then they carried the larger table and two extra benches from the courtyard. Mother Ruth gave it a quick scrubbing and the girls scrambled to get it all set before the Sabbath. Orly kept offering to help, but Gabriela just handed him the two boys and told him to make himself useful. Jordan and Ruler Jedidiah arrived just in time for the lighting of the Sabbath candles. After the big rush, the ladies found it hard to relax. They eventually forgave Orly, and everyone seemed to enjoy the evening.

As they sat around the table, Orly asked for an update on what was happening at the synagogue. Ruler Jedidiah reported that he was very pleased with Jordan's decision to stay. "We are alternating the messages so that one week I bring a message based on The Law and The Prophets and teach how it applies to followers of Jesus. The next week, Jordan brings a message based more on Jesus' teachings and life. Together I think we make a great team, with the Holy Spirit's leading, of course."

"How was your trip to Bethany? Were your folks thrilled to see the babies? Were they surprised?" asked Jordan innocently.

Gabriela replied, "It was a very hard trip." She shared with them about the death of Lazarus and their ministry partners and the crippling of her dad on their ministry trip. "We spent most of our time helping my family relocate to Beersheba because they were being literally starved out of Bethany. It seems the Romans are squeezing out all the Jews from areas around Jerusalem. It reminds me of what Jesus said about the end times. Anyway, God's timing was perfect,

and we were able to get them out safely with Enoch's help. Then we spent some extra time in Jerusalem. So, the very best part of the trip was our visits with Mary, James and Kayla, and John and Marta. They really ministered to us."

"How about you, Jordan? Were you able to celebrate Passover or was it too hard with your mother and Sarah leaving?"

"It was pretty good. Of course, the most fun was camping in the olive garden after the wedding was over. I celebrated the Seder with Matthew and Mother at a friend's house and then they left the next day. I joined Joshua and the other guys and played tour guide. It felt relatively safe for a change. It was good to see old friends, too, but that made me miss my dad." Mario and Gersham shared about a new home they were building for a wealthy farmer on the east side of town. On and on the conversations went until everyone felt satiated with news and food. The babies began to cry, and Gabriela took them into the room to nurse them. Once again, they had not had a lot of time to play, but maybe that would change tomorrow. *How are mothers supposed to find time to do everything?*

Orly suggested that Ruler Jedidiah and Jordan join him on the roof. He found a couple of blankets and pillows, and everyone got settled. He told them that he was feeling a distinct call from God to get back to work. It had been a long time since he had felt useful in God's kingdom, and he wanted to run a plan by them. "Could I share this with Mr. Kenan's group tomorrow?" Jordan readily agreed. He said the group was always eager to hear what was happening with the Gentiles. "This new ministry is not limited to the Gentiles. And that's why I need to know what you two think."

"Okay, let's hear it," said Jordan.

"My vision is for us to have a Sunday morning worship time like the followers in Jerusalem, except make it open to all — Jews and Gentiles." They sat and talked until nearly midnight. They asked questions, they made suggestions, but most of all, they agreed that this was a good next step for both the Gentiles and the Jewish believers. They would stay separate for their groups, but united in their worship. They liked it and promised to pray for and support its beginning.

Orly tried to sneak quietly onto his mat. "How did it go?" Gabriela asked.

"Really well. But I almost blew it. I was working in the garden this afternoon when, all of a sudden, I realized that I had totally left Jordan out. That's why I ran to the shop and invited him to dinner. I'm sorry for causing all the last-minute mess. But if I had left him out, this could have all exploded in my face. As it is, they are both completely on board. Thank you for covering for me."

"I'm so glad that you listened. Goodnight, Orly." Gabriela had a sick feeling in her heart and felt that Orly was leaving her out. She knew she was busy with the babies, but usually, he shared his plans openly with her. She had no idea what it was that he was talking with



the men about. *I guess I'll hear tomorrow with the rest of the Gentile group, but something seems off. It's not like Orly to not tell me what's going on.* She wondered if he felt she was too overwhelmed by her family's problems. She lay awake for quite a while wondering if she had failed him as a wife. *Am I just too busy with the babies?*

Sabbath morning, after milking the goats, Orly and Mario left them in their pen so they wouldn't bother the guests. Mother Ruth walked to the synagogue with the young couples. Gabriela set out the food trays that she had prepared ahead of time. The twins were asleep when Lucas and Amata arrived with the rest of the Gentile group. The ladies all sat at one end of the table, and it was great fun to catch up. Gabriela had not seen Marcella and Diana since before the babies were born. Everyone was busy with their own groups. It was so good to be back together again. When the boys woke, she slipped them in the carrier to nurse. Orly and the men worked together every day, but they seemed to be enjoying this special time of fellowship, too.

Orly stood and said that he really appreciated their taking time to meet with him. "As you know I have just returned from Jerusalem and there's a problem there." All ears were listening. "The Roman population is expanding tremendously and many of them want to know what makes the New Way followers of Jesus different from the Jews. The problem is they have no one to tell them. I am not requesting people to go. I am simply asking that you pass this news on to your groups so that if God is calling out leadership to begin work in Jerusalem, it can happen. Right now, a Roman who wants to follow Jesus in Jerusalem must become a Jew. You and I both know that that is not right. I believe if the Romans in Jerusalem are going to become followers of Jesus, they must be led by fellow Romans. But I want the team that God calls to understand that they have the support of the Jewish followers. If God calls a team to go, I need to let you know that James the Just, Jesus' earthly half-brother and leader of the Jewish followers in Jerusalem, has agreed to be a support person for them. I don't believe the Jewish leaders can make trouble for you Romans, but you should know that James the Just volunteered to do this at the risk of his own life. That's how strongly he feels that the Romans be reached with the good news about Jesus."

"So, if someone feels called to relocate to Jerusalem, should they contact you?"

"What do you want to do? You are the leaders."

There was talking among themselves. Markus spoke up, "Why don't we announce the need and just see what happens. I'm trusting that God will call out at least one team, maybe two, and we'll arrange a meeting with you to brief them before they go. How does that sound?"

"That would be fine."

"Or maybe we ten could meet again and do an official send off, like a commissioning," suggested Appius.

"That could be good, but let's not run ahead of God," said Lucas. "What's the other item of business?"

Orly continued, "For almost four months, I've been thinking about beginning an early Sunday morning worship service right in the center of Cana." Orly went on to explain what he had designed so far and simply asked the group if they felt it would be a benefit for their groups. The response was greater than he could have hoped. They were excited that the worship would not be Jewish or Gentile, it would be Christian. They agreed that they liked that new name. It would be Christians gathering weekly to celebrate Jesus. "I need to present this to Mr. Kenan's group, but I already have the synagogue leadership's approval."

"So, when will it start?" asked Marcella.

"I believe we should start next week, but I'll let the guys know at work tomorrow for sure. That reminds me, Diana, we need more songs. Gabriela will be leading the music, and we can easily sing Psalms, but we'd also like to teach everyone some of your music. Would you be able to meet with Gabriela sometime and teach her your songs? Is it okay if we use 'Jehovah is My Rock' on that first Sunday?"

"Oh, that would be so special. Gabriela, I can come over any morning next week."

"That will be great," said Gabriela, still feeling strange about being left out of the planning. She would gladly lead the music, but she felt hurt that Orly hadn't mentioned it to her before announcing it.

The group visited together for a few more minutes, then Orly said he needed to be at Mr. Kenan's and everyone began to say their goodbyes. Amata helped Orly clear off the tables while Lucas walked down to the barn and let the goats out. Gabriela got the babies packed for the rest of the day at Mr. Kenan's. Quickly the two couples said their goodbyes and walked out to the main road together.

Orly squeezed Gabriela's hand and said, "Pray for me as I share this with Mr. Kenan's group. I should have talked with them first. So, I'm hoping I haven't jumped ahead of the Holy Spirit. Something doesn't feel right." Gabriela assured him of her prayers.

By the time they arrived at Mr. Kenan's, Jordan was signaling that it was time for the group to begin. Everyone took their places in the courtyard. Gabriela thought: *Why does it seem like forever since we have seen everyone? I feel so distant, almost like a visitor. It has only been three weeks, but my whole world has changed. I need to be praying.*

Jordan led the group in several Psalms and then asked Orly to share some exciting news with the group. Orly moved to the front and began by thanking them again for their support of the Gentile ministry. "While I was in Jerusalem, I visited with James the Just and the Apostles James and John. They requested assistance to try to reach the Roman people in and around Jerusalem with the good news of Jesus. Many are asking questions but cannot be reached by the Jews because of the Jewish leadership. I'm asking this group to pray for God to call out Gentile teams who would relocate to Jerusalem and minister there." He asked if anyone felt led to pray for those teams

right now. Several men stood and prayed aloud for the teams that God would call. Others prayed that God would provide for all their needs. Others prayed for clarity of God's call. Some prayed for a great harvest. It blessed Orly's heart to have these faithful followers praying with him. He felt home again.

"Now I would like to share with you something that is on my heart. Ever since Jesus' resurrection, there have been groups of followers in Jerusalem that meet each Sunday morning to celebrate. About four months ago, God placed in my heart the desire to begin a similar worship time in Cana. However, this one will be for all followers — Jews and Gentiles." Orly went on to describe in detail the plans for this gathering. Then he asked for input from the group and waited expectantly. There was no response. Orly said, "I really need to hear your thoughts, or I need you to tell me to allow you more time to pray about it."

Seth was the first to speak. "Orly, I really like your idea, but I have a question."

"May I hear it?" asked Orly humbly.

"Are you trying to replace the synagogue and our group and blend us all into one group?"

"That was not my intention. No. I see this group as a Jewish group and the Gentile groups as Romans, but I feel there needs to be a place where we can just take a few minutes at the beginning of each week to celebrate what we have in common."

"So, this would be an additional gathering, not a replacement?"

"That is what I envisioned. Yes," agreed Orly.

"Thank you," said Seth as he sat down.

No one else spoke. There was just silence and lowered eyes.

Finally, Nathan stood. "I don't think it would be possible for me to attend, since I couldn't get back to Nazareth in time for work. This group is meeting our needs for worship and fellowship, and I don't see a need for an additional group."

Jordan spoke and said that he would look forward to attending each week.

Orly thanked him and Levi also said that he would try to attend even though it meant he would have to get up really early. Everyone laughed at his emphasis. And then there was silence again. The babies began to cry, and Gabriela put them in the carrier to nurse. They quieted down quickly.

The tension in the courtyard was thick and as Orly stood before them and waited, he knew without a shadow of a doubt that he had run ahead of God. He addressed the group. "You know that it is my desire to be completely obedient to everything the Holy Spirit shows me. I have emphasized over and over to you that you need to be certain it is the Holy Spirit Who is leading and not your own selves. Please forgive me for bringing this proposal. I feel a definite check in my heart this afternoon. Somehow, I have run ahead of God's plans.

Please pray with me that I can know His clear direction for my future ministry. Something is not right, and I want to ask you to forgive me.”

Mr. Kenan stood and sadly said, “Orly, I’m sure that everyone in this group is praying and will pray for you to get this sorted out with God. My personal belief is that you need to spend more time in prayer concerning this. You’ve been very busy with family lately.”

“Thank you, sir. I appreciate this group helping me to determine God’s will. I ask for your continued prayers as I seek God’s clarification. I’m feeling confused right now and would appreciate your prayers for me.”

Orly sat down and Jordan called for those who wanted to pray for Orly to do so. Several prayed for clarity and direction and peace for him and Gabriela as they sought clear direction. Orly left immediately after the group and headed back to the house. He milked the goats and then returned at the end of the Sabbath to join Mr. Kenan’s family for the post-Sabbath meal. Everyone could tell that he was deep in thought and troubled. Jordan offered to come over and talk with him, but Orly said he needed to be alone. He and Gabriela and Mother walked home soon after dinner. He took his lamp up to the rooftop and prayed until dawn.

On Sunday at the noon break he told the men that there would be a delay in starting the Sunday worship time, but he was praying about some things and would let them know when he knew. They said that the idea had been received enthusiastically by the groups.

Orly worked hard and spent evenings with Gabriela and the babies, but she could tell that he was deeply troubled and not sharing with her. Gabriela felt that her best position was to support and encourage, but not pry. She felt that this was between Orly and God.

Joelle gave birth to a third son for Seth, and Orly and Gabriela attended the circumcision and naming party. Orly and Gabriela attended synagogue each week and learned from both Jordan and Ruler Jedidiah. They attended Mr. Kenan’s group and enjoyed hearing from the various leaders. They continued going through the motions, but both were feeling empty and far away from God. Once, Orly expressed to Gabriela that maybe they should have moved to Jerusalem and started a Gentile work there. But she quietly reminded him that God had said no, and they needed to wait until they had clarity.



A few weeks later, on a Sunday, Lucas told Orly that the group would like to meet with him during their break at noon. Orly agreed and wondered what was up. When noon finally came, the five men met with Orly and told him that six teams had committed to moving to Jerusalem and starting a ministry there. Orly felt a glimmer of excitement and asked when he could meet with them. They agreed on

the following Sunday night and would let the women decide on food. When Amata arrived on Monday afternoon, she let Gabriela and Mother know the plan. There would be over fifty people attending, so they would meet at Markus and Diana's courtyard. "Could you two bring a complete meal for ten people? Lucas and I will provide the wine for everyone, but could you also bring goat milk for the six children who will be attending?"

"Certainly. We'll be glad to provide whatever you need."

Amata was finishing up the last shawls for Lena's baby who would be arriving any day now. Lena was still able to handle most of the daily chores other than lifting heavy objects. After dinner, the young couples often strolled around looking at houses and wondering what they would purchase when they would need to leave Orly and Gabriela's home. They had intended to buy one house and live together, but would they prefer two houses close together? They discussed all these questions and just enjoyed anticipating the arrival of the baby.

Mother agreed to watch the twins while Orly and Gabriela went to the rooftop to talk. "Orly, are you okay? I mean, we both want the Gentiles to grow up and take responsibilities, but are you okay with Markus hosting this?"

"Yes, and no. Yes, I would love to host it. You know that. But this is a very special occasion, and we need to honor these people for their sacrifice to pull up roots and move to a new place to share the New Way. We don't have room and Markus and Diana will do a great job."

"Oh, Orly, you are so unselfish. We still get to do our part for the meal."

"And we praise God for the Gentiles maturing. Are there any other ways I can make my wife proud of me?"

"Orly, I'm praying for you and understand that this is a really hard time for you. Please, don't leave me out of your life for too long. I miss being part of your ministry."

"Gabriela, I'm not leaving you out of anything. I don't have a ministry! Something is just off. I can't figure it out. I don't think I've ever felt this frustrated. I mean, I thought God was using me to reach the Gentiles, and He did. But now they don't seem to need me anymore. I've got to be so careful that I don't run ahead of God, but I thought He had shown me this new worship time on Sunday mornings, but now that door seems shut, too. I'm just struggling."

"Orly, I'm here if you ever want to pray together or talk things out. I, too, feel that we are in a bad place. I don't know how we got here, or how to get out, but I miss worshipping with you. I miss you."

"I promise just as soon as I know something, I'll let you know." He kissed her and they went downstairs to discover that Mother was trying to keep Hosea in his cradle. Every time she would lay him in, he would pull himself up and tumble out. He never whimpered or cried. He would just give her a look of total triumph that he had escaped.

“So that’s the reason for swaddling!” exclaimed Orly. “Now we know!”

The minute the babies saw Gabriela they decided they were starving and began screaming. Gabriela thanked Mother Ruth for her help and she and Orly started wrapping the boys in the swaddling cloths. She quickly nursed them and put them into their cradles. Lately they had been sleeping through the night.



On Wednesday morning, the ladies all sat around the table and planned out the meal for Sunday’s Gentile banquet. Mother suggested that if Gabriela was willing to go fishing on Sunday morning, she would make her fish sauce. Gabriela agreed that that was a really special dish, and it was all inclusive so would not need additional vegetables. Lena would make the cheese and have it flavored. Leah would make the bread on Sunday morning. They were happy with the plan, but everyone knew that Lena’s baby could arrive at any time. Mother had a private back-up plan in case they were busy with a birthing.



Everyone but Lena attended synagogue and then visited at Mr. Kenan’s. Orly reported to the group that God had heard their prayers. Six teams of Gentiles had felt God’s call to relocate to Jerusalem to minister to the Romans. “Please continue to pray for them to get settled in their new surroundings.”

Orly left just as soon as the group time ended. He just felt off. He was setting aside time to pray and seeking clarity from God, but he was still coming up with nothing. He wasn’t getting the feeling that he should move forward with the worship service, nor was he feeling that he shouldn’t. He just couldn’t find peace. So, he continued to pray and tried to be patient.



Sunday, after breakfast, Gabriela took the boys and headed to the stream. She carried her fishing line, hook, and two large nets. They needed enough fish for ten people, so she prayed the fish were hungry. She got settled on the shore and tossed her line in. It wasn’t long before the fish started biting and by noon, she was sure she had plenty of fish. She took off the carrier and laid it in the grass. The boys were sound asleep. Suddenly Gabriela found herself kneeling by the side of the stream crying from the depths of her being. How many times she had kept watch over her little brothers while they played in

the stream at Miss Martha's. Now, she would never know where her brothers were or what they chose in life. The depth of her loss poured out in torrents of sobbing. She knew she didn't have time for this, but she also knew that she needed to let God cleanse the pain that was deep in her heart. She kept her eyes on the carrier but continued to cry and seek God's face. "Abba Father, heal me and help me to trust You with my precious little brothers. Help me to trust You with Adam and Amram and with Mother and Abba. Please set them free from these lies that fill their hearts. Please heal me deeply and help me to trust You." She got up and wiped her face with the cool water of the stream, then picked up the babies and carried them back to the house. She ate a snack and nursed the boys. She asked Lena to watch them while she returned to the stream to clean the fish. Mother sent her two large bowls but suggested that maybe Leah could come down and help her to carry them back up the trail. Leah was happy to help and said she would be down just as soon as she finished putting the bread in the oven. Gabriela began cleaning the fish and quickly filled one bowl. She had definitely caught enough for ten people. She cleaned most of the second net and threw back some of the smaller fish. Leah arrived to help her carry the bowls back up to the kitchen. Mother prepared the fish with her wonderful sauce and slid it into the ovens to bake just as soon as Leah removed her bread. Now, all they needed was to put the cheese into a serving dish and slice a plate of fruit.

Amata arrived and helped them prepare the tray of fresh fruit and then set it aside covered with a cloth. Now the ladies were simply waiting for Orly to arrive and escort them to the celebration, when Lena and Leah realized that they needed to fix dinner for their husbands. Leah had plenty of bread rolls and Mother showed them a fast recipe to simply fry some onions and potatoes over the open pit. The women worked in the kitchen and Amata suggested that Gabriela might want to change robes. Gabriela began to giggle when she realized that her earlier prayer time had been at the edge of the stream and her robe was covered with mud from the knees down. She laughed about the impression she would make on the fashionable Roman ladies. Gabriela was so grateful that Amata had made her two maternal robes, and she quickly changed and sat down to rest after a busy day. She unwrapped the babies and let them play all around the living room while they waited for Orly to arrive home. Lucas milked the goats and then hitched Samson to the oxcart. He pulled the cart up to the courtyard and loaded three mats so that the ride would not be so rough. The ladies began to load the dishes into the cart. Lucas added two jars of milk and left the other for the couples' dinner. Lucas asked if she wanted the baskets for the babies. "No, I'll keep them in their carrier. They will be fine."

"Do you want me to grab their cradles? It will be no problem and it will mean you don't have to hold them all evening."

"Do you think it would be okay?"

“Certainly. Let me grab them and you will be more comfortable.” Finally, they had everything loaded. Orly and Jordan arrived from work and quickly helped the ladies into the oxcart. Their first stop was Lucas’s house to pick up the wine. Then Lucas drove the oxcart to Markus and Diana’s house. Others were still arriving, and many servants helped them unload the cart. Mother Ruth and Gabriela were seated, and the two cradles were placed near their feet. She had nursed the babies on the drive over and knew that they should be settled for a while. She took them out of the carrier and put them in their cradles. They were immediately surrounded by ladies who wanted to see the adorable little boys who were just alike. Soon Gabriela was laughing and sharing with the ladies. Many of them were her own age and some were carrying babies. Orly and Jordan had been whisked away to meet the other men. There was much laughter and joy in the crowd. Gabriela could feel it. She felt God’s presence. *I never imagined that I would feel this comfortable totally surrounded by Gentiles. No, it’s more than that. I feel at home here. I feel... I feel... I feel loved and accepted. But it’s more than that. I feel I’m exactly where I need to be. I don’t understand it, but I feel right. I wish I could share these feelings with Orly, but we seem so far apart these days.* Once again, she wondered if the babies had put a wedge in their marriage. She longed for the oneness they had shared earlier.

After dinner was completed and everyone stretched their legs, Markus stood to give the welcome. He introduced each of the six leaders who were present and asked them to introduce the six teams who would be moving to Jerusalem. There were fifteen adults and six children who would be ministering there. Then Markus introduced each of the original eight. He introduced Appius and Titus and explained that they had started the first all-men’s group. He introduced Julius and Marcella and said that their group was made up of mostly friends. “And in case you don’t know us, this is my lovely wife, Diana, and our group was made up of a combination of family and friends. Our leader and the one who kept insisting that we pursue more information about Jesus is Lucas and his wife, Amata. Their group consisted of their five sons and their families. They are our elders and the ones we turn to for help. And finally, it is my great pleasure to introduce to you, Orly and Gabriela, Orly’s mother Ruth, and of course their two beautiful babies, Hosea and Kobe. Orly and Gabriela risked their lives to share the New Way with us and we will be forever grateful. Orly has some words he wants to share with us tonight, and then we’ll pray over the couples who have been obedient to what they are hearing from God regarding the people of Jerusalem.”

Orly stood slowly and said that he wanted to introduce his friend Jordan who had encouraged him to follow what God was telling him to do. “Without Jordan, there might not be a Gentile group following Jesus in such a bold way. Jordan told me that he had a vision of me speaking to fifty Romans. Now I know that there are many more who have become followers of Jesus, but Jordan, one of the reasons I



invited you here tonight was to see the fulfillment of your vision and the answer to your prayers.

“We do not work alone, and I want to encourage you to form your first group — not in the community in which you find yourself, but to unite with one another and form a group consisting of each other. Grow together, love together, encourage each other, review the material together, share together, take care of one another, lift each other up, look after each other, and be a group that washes each other’s feet the way Jesus did with His disciples. I believe that if you go to Jerusalem and only focus outwardly, it may become too heavy a burden. But if you go and form the bonds that Jesus formed with His apostles, it will be unbreakable. Then when the Holy Spirit guides you, you’ll be ready to minister to others.

“Finally, you will be far away from the leaders who have mentored you. I would like to say that the Holy Spirit is sufficient to guide you, and He is, but it’s so nice when you have a trusted friend to ask questions. James the Just is the earthly half-brother of Jesus. He is in charge of all the Jewish home groups in Jerusalem. He preaches at the temple to hundreds of people each day. He was one of the men who requested help to reach the Romans. I told him that I would not send you there unless there was someone that you could go to in times of trouble, or when you encountered a question. James the Just graciously volunteered to be that contact. Are any of you who are going to Jerusalem familiar with the market?” Four of the men and one woman raised their hands. “Does anyone know where the Sword and Knife Shop is in the market?” Two of the men indicated that they did. “Good. James the Just eats breakfast every day on the bench across from the Sword and Knife Shop. You may approach him, identify yourself as being a Gentile Christian team member and tell him anything you need or ask any question that is on your heart. I have found him to be a most gracious man and willing to do anything necessary to help. I will now turn it over to Markus or Lucas or whoever is going to lead us in the commissioning prayer.”

Orly took his seat to much applause. Lucas called the team members to the front of the courtyard. He spoke with each team member and then prayed for each one. He prayed very specifically for their personal needs and Orly got tears in his eyes as he watched Lucas take the role of shepherd for this flock. His heart was bursting with praise that God had grown Lucas into such a man.

It was very late when they dropped Lucas and Amata at their home. Then Orly drove Mother Ruth and Gabriela home and told them to leave the cart and he would empty it in the morning before they let the goats out. Orly carried the babies’ cradles into the house and Gabriela laid them down without nursing them. They had not been unwrapped since the afternoon, but she had to get some sleep. The babies surprised her and only needed to nurse once during the night. Somehow, this celebration felt like closure, but it also felt like a new beginning. She wasn’t sure what she was feeling.

# Chapter 11

At the Metal Shop the next morning, Lucas warned the men to not let their late-night partying affect their performance today. He encouraged them to get busy and do a full day's work. At the noon break, Markus and Appius asked to speak to Orly alone. As they walked away from the rest of the group to talk, they asked, "So what's with the worship service that you talked with us about? Is that going to happen soon? You talked about it and then it just dropped, and you never said anything."

"I'm sorry. I got a very positive response from Jordan and Ruler Jedidiah. I got a positive response from you and your groups. But then I felt that something was not right, and I was running ahead of God. Mr. Kenan's group felt that I needed to pray for more clarification. They agreed with me that it was not entirely right. They asked me to pray about it further and I have been. I see advantages and disadvantages to it, but I can't seem to get any clear direction from God. I need to know clearly before I move forward with it. I'm sorry I got your hopes up. I should have talked with Mr. Kenan's group first, and I should have let you know the outcome. But honestly, I'm still praying about it," said Orly.

"May we meet with you sometime this week after dinner? You can come to my house, or we'll come to yours, whichever is easier for you, but we need to talk," said Markus.

"Sure. Would tomorrow night be good? We can talk on my rooftop," said Orly.

"Tomorrow night would be great. We'll meet you after dinner," said Markus.

Orly was troubled. He was bracing himself for them to beg him to get the worship service started. But the more he had prayed about it, the more he was feeling the Holy Spirit saying that he had run ahead of His plan.



There was such a mess of pots and dishes from all the cooking on Sunday. The ladies enjoyed working together to get back to a normal schedule. The babies demanded much of Gabriela's attention and Mother was busy preparing longer swaddling cloths because they were growing so fast.

After dinner, as Orly and Gabriela were sitting and playing with the twins, Orly told Gabriela about the urgent request from Markus and Appius to meet with him tomorrow night. He asked her to pray for him about what was going on. She agreed and they enjoyed a nice

relaxing evening with the babies. They wrapped them and prepared for sleep.

On Tuesday morning after helping with the chores, Gabriela decided to check on Joelle. The boys were getting really heavy by the time she arrived. She was glad that she was strong and healthy and had no trouble climbing the steep path. She knocked on the door and Zan greeted her. They hugged and Gabriela whispered words of encouragement to her. It was only a few months until her freedom and the beginning of her apprenticeship with Sabra.

Gabriele went into the room where Joelle was nursing the baby boy and Joelle squealed in delight. "You didn't tell me how fast they would grow up!" And the girl talk began. Joelle wanted to know all the news and Gabriela told her about the Gentile commissioning celebration. Zan brought both ladies a glass of juice and some small sandwiches around noon. Gabriela started home soon afterward to let Joelle rest.

The boys enjoyed the walk and looked around, but they were ready for their nap by the time they arrived home. Gabriela fed them and tucked them in their cradles. She asked Mother if she could keep an eye on them if she walked down to the stream for some prayer time. Mother agreed but reminded her she needed her help with dinner. "Certainly! The boys will be awake within an hour, and I'll be back to help you."

As Gabriela prayed, she realized how very, very alone she felt inside. She felt deserted by her birth family, but she also felt deserted by Orly. She didn't feel connected to him, and she knew it was because they were not praying together and planning messages for any groups. *Is it because of the babies?* She longed for the day when they would minister side by side. It seemed that something had changed between them, and she cried out to God in pain. Then she hurried back to the house to help Mother Ruth with dinner.

The weeks passed as she and Orly went through the motions, but both felt distant and sad. Just before Shavuot, Gabriela felt an overwhelming desire to spend time in prayer. When she put the boys down for their nap, she asked Leah if she could watch them while she took a break.

Gabriela felt drawn to the grassy area where she and Orly had often prayed together. She sat and sang Psalm 150 and felt God's presence healing the pain that lived deep inside. The Holy Spirit kept bringing to mind Jewish Scriptures that mentioned joy. She was focused on joy and felt that somehow God was saying that He was taking her to the city of joy. *I like that*, thought Gabriela. *I don't want to live in sadness or fear. I want to live in a city of joy surrounded by God Himself.* Her mind continued to focus on verses of joy: *Joy comes in the morning and the joy of the Lord is my strength.* But the one that stuck in her mind was Isaiah 55:12:

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the fields shall clap their hands.

She realized that she needed to get back to the house but returned refreshed. The babies were already awake and were letting their grandmother know that they were hungry and not to be ignored. Mother Ruth was just about to send Leah to get Gabriela when she burst through the door apologizing to Mother Ruth and to the babies, "I'm so sorry, but I was having a great prayer time. Here, little ones, I'm sorry your mother got distracted, but I've got to listen to God when He speaks, and it was important."

When Amata arrived, Gabriela asked her if she would mind unwrapping the boys and letting them play. She needed to prepare dinner. She knew that Amata didn't mind being assigned to the babies anytime. She and Mother Ruth laughed at their antics and the boys rewarded them by trying their best to talk and crawl. "Gabriela, look!" called Mother Ruth. Gabriela came running to see what the noise was about, but it was too late. Mother Ruth told her, "Kobe just sat up. He was crawling around and sat up on his own." Gabriela shook her head and said to yell if it happened again. Of course, it didn't. Gabriela could tell that Orly was distracted through dinner and focused on what Markus and Appius' visit would involve. He helped the ladies clear the table and sat down to hold his sons while they cleaned the kitchen.

When Markus and Appius arrived, Orly greeted them and invited them to go up to the rooftop with him. "You gentlemen seem to be in a hurry. So, I'll simply ask if you would like something to drink or if you want to get on with it?" asked Orly.

"I'm sorry, we don't mean to be rude. It's just that we think that God is calling us to a new ministry, and we need to hear your thoughts."

Orly relaxed and realized that he had been fretting about nothing. *When will I learn to relax and trust God's leading?* "Then, how can I help you two?"

Markus began, "You told us about a worship service that you wanted to start on Sunday mornings. We all agreed that it would be a good addition. We waited for you to get it started and the other night you indicated that you were not feeling led to start it. Am I correct? Are you sure of that?"

"Yes, I have prayed even more about it after we talked, and I'm positive that this is not what God is calling me to do," agreed Orly.

"Well, Appius and I were talking, and we both feel that God is speaking to us. Would you be opposed to us starting a Sunday morning worship time that is open to all followers of Jesus, Gentile or Jew, but led by us? Diana has put together quite a few songs for the groups and Gabriela could teach her more of the Psalms. We just think it would start our week off right."

Appius stated, “We don’t want to steal your ideas, but every time I pray, I just keep hearing God asking when I’m going to start this worship time. It’s driving me crazy. I can’t seem to think about anything else. When I mentioned it to Markus, he said that he and Diana were feeling the same way.”

“How do we make sure that this is God speaking and not just some idea of our own?” asked Markus.

“You’ll know. At the beginning, you may be unsure, but there’s never been a time when God is speaking to me that I haven’t known that it was Him. When you know that it’s God speaking, you can’t very well say no. And if it’s not from Him, and you are genuinely seeking His will, He’ll let you know. So, when are you starting?” asked Orly.

“This Sunday, if you say it’s okay,” said Markus.

“It’s not up to me. God said it needed to be done and then He told me that I was not the one to do it. I was just waiting for Him to call out the right person for the job. It seems that He has done that.”

“Wow! This is exciting. We want to call it a Christian gathering for worship. Does that sound right to you?”

“Perfect. If God has indeed called you — and only you can determine that — are you willing to see it through a slow beginning until it is established?” asked Orly.

“We understand that it may take a while to grow, but there was so much excitement about it before, at least among the Gentile groups, I think it will grow quickly.”

“Be sure and let Jordan know so that he can announce it to the synagogue on the Sabbath. I have no idea how many will attend, but I promise Gabriela and I will be there, and I’ll be praying for you every step of the way.”

Orly showed them to the door, and they quickly waved at Gabriela and the boys and were gone. “That was a fast meeting,” she said.

“Yes, it was. I have to confess that I got myself all messed up fretting about it, and God took care of it completely. Markus and Diana and Appius are starting a worship service on Sunday mornings before work. Would you like to attend with me?”

“Orly, are you okay with that?”

“Yes, but it feels better than okay. I’ve been fretting because I’ve been feeling the weight of this call for so long. But God made it clear that the call was not for me. That left me with my hands tied and it has not been a comfortable feeling. I’m afraid that I’ve left you out. Gabriela, please forgive me. I don’t want to ever leave you out of my ministry – our ministry. I promised you we would do everything together, and I’ve broken that promise. I let Satan sidetrack me to focus on this project.”

“Orly, I forgive you. I think we’ve both been focused on other things. The babies, my family, everything has been pulling me down. But I’m feeling that God is healing me and I felt His presence this afternoon for the first time in a long time. He said that He would take

me to a place of joy. I think that if you are ready to include me in your ministry, that would bring me incredible joy.”

“Not my ministry, our ministry. We need to pray together even if we don’t have messages and groups to prepare for.” Orly laughed and said, “Now I understand how James the Just felt when God showed him what needed to be accomplished in Jerusalem. God was using me to pray for His will to be accomplished — not for me to do it myself. It’s so easy to try to complete God’s will for Him. We need to wait on Him to show us our role. Now that it is settled, I’m certain He will reveal the next step for us. Are you ready for sleep?”

“Help me get the babies wrapped and then I’ll put them down. Kobe sat up on his own today and I missed it. I was in the kitchen. Hopefully, he’ll try it again tomorrow.” Together they got the boys swaddled. How good it was to feel united with her husband and share their lives with each other. Orly was sound asleep before Gabriela crawled into her blanket.

After breakfast on Wednesday, Gabriela took the babies in their carrier and walked to the market. She needed to order some heavier things to be delivered since the babies were making it hard for her to carry much of anything else. Then she walked to the Mercantile Store and asked Mr. Hilmar to send her more lamp oil. It was the first time she had been in the Mercantile Store since her family had moved, and she found it hard to hold back the tears. Mr. Hilmar wanted to visit with her and his love for the two babies was obvious. They responded to his attention by cooing and crowing in typical baby fashion. Gabriela laughed at all three of them, and then headed home.

When Amata arrived, she asked what Gabriela wanted her to do. She had finished Lena’s baby supplies. Gabriela said she was beginning to need longer swaddling cloths. She and Mother Ruth told Amata about Hosea escaping his crib repeatedly the other night. “I may need to swaddle him until he is ten!”

Mother Ruth asked, “Have you noticed that Orly is outgrowing his robe again? I could start more swaddling cloths and it would give me an excuse to sit down in the afternoons.” So, Amata and Gabriela walked to the market to pick out threads for Orly’s two new robes and the boys’ swaddling cloths.



The Sunday before Pentecost, Mr. Kenan called Benjamin into his office. Benjamin came quickly. “Benjamin,” began Mr. Kenan, “I must apologize to you.”

Immediately Benjamin’s rage began. *It is happening again. I’m being let go for some reason or another. Mr. Kenan has taken advantage of me, and I knew it wouldn’t work. I knew it was too good to be true.* Mr. Kenan continued, “I put in a request for a room to be added to my home months ago and Palti has been unable to get to it.

As you saw, the stone masons got the foundation put in, but even though I have asked him repeatedly, Palti just doesn't have enough help. He thinks he can start on it in about another month. Until then, I'm wondering if you would like to move into the apprentice room that I showed you, the one that Jordan has recently moved out of."

Benjamin's jaw dropped in amazement. His master was apologizing for not keeping his promise to build him an adjoining room.

"That would be no problem, sir. I understand that Palti is running behind."

"So, can I assume that you are still content to stay and be my permanent head chef and manager of my kitchen when we talk next week?"

"Yes, sir, I would like that very much."

"Okay, I just wanted to make sure, because I wasn't able to keep my end of the deal. I will make that happen as soon as possible."

"The apprentice room will be quite comfortable, and I consider it an honor to work for you, sir."

"Thank you, Benjamin. You have learned your lessons well and have proved to be a very valuable asset to my home. I'm glad that Orly recommended you to me. Return to your work and we'll talk next week."

"Yes, sir." Benjamin nearly cried as he realized that his dream really was going to come true. *I assumed when the room had not been built, that Mr. Kenan had changed his mind and would let me go at the end of my apprenticeship. It was just a minor setback! I will get to move out of the slave quarters. I will finally be free again and be able to support myself, maybe even marry someday. Now, that's a pleasant thought.* He realized that he had been staring into space and needed to get back to work. His staff was busy making preparations for the day and he needed to focus.

Mr. Kenan finished up some paperwork, and then told Mrs. Vada he was going on to the shop for a while. When he arrived, he asked Lucas to send Joshua to his office. Joshua arrived promptly and Mr. Kenan invited him to shut the door and take a seat. "Joshua, I believe that your time of slavery will come to an end next week. Have you given any thought as to what you want to do in the future?"

"Yes, sir, I have."

"I have certainly been pleased with your work. You have been a good and faithful servant to me."

"Thank you, sir."

"What do you plan to do in the future?"

"Sir, I would really like to learn to be a blacksmith. I am willing to remain a slave in order to complete my training."

"You have worked in the shop for almost three years now and you have learned a lot. Are you sure that's what you want? I could apprentice you to Palti to learn wood working, or to Benjamin to learn cooking, or even Mr. Hilmar to learn business. There are a lot of places that I think you would excel. But yes, I was in hopes you would

want to apply yourself and learn a trade before trying to go out on your own.”

“I really like blacksmithing. The guys have taught me a lot and they always seem to have work to do.”

“Would you be willing to remain my slave for two more years in order to learn to be a blacksmith?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Let me talk with Lucas and Orly and we’ll talk again next week.”

“Yes, sir.” Joshua’s heart felt ready to jump out of his chest. He knew that either one would give him a good recommendation because they were the ones encouraging him to do this. He was only fourteen and had his whole life before him. They said it would be wise to learn a trade now so that he could support himself and a family later.

Mr. Kenan worked in his office for a while. Just before the noon break, he asked Lucas to call all the men to meet under the break tree, including the slaves. Mr. Kenan announced, “I just wanted to let you know that I will be closing the Metal Shop on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday for the Jewish festival of Shavuot and for the celebration of Pentecost. Please give me a full day’s work until Tuesday evening, then the shop will be closed the rest of the week and will re-open on Sunday morning. Are there any questions?”

Lucas looked around and said, “No, and thank you, sir.” The men cheered.



## Chapter 12

On Sunday morning, Orly and Gabriela, Gersham and Leah, and Mario quickly walked to the town center for the very first Christian worship time in Cana. It didn't start small as Orly had warned. There were over a hundred people singing praises to God. Most of them were from the Roman groups, but Orly recognized quite a few Jewish men from the synagogue. Diana led the group in singing Psalms and praises. Markus welcomed everyone and reminded them of Jesus' great love for them and why they were gathered. Then a Roman Christian prayed that God would help them to be light and salt to a dark world this week. Jordan led in a prayer of blessing over the town of Cana and especially those present. It lasted less than an hour and everyone seemed to enjoy it. Most, like Orly, Gersham, and Mario had to rush to work, but others stood around and visited. The downtown merchants were pleased that so many people were gathering in front of their shops, and they hoped it would increase their business. It seemed to be exactly what God had shown Orly earlier.



On Wednesday, Lena began to complain of a backache, and Gabriela checked her belly for tightenings. She told Lena there were some small tightenings beginning to happen. She encouraged her to lie down and rest if she could. But Lena was too excited to be still. She sat in the living room and played with the twins. She looked through her supplies and made sure that all was ready. Then she began to scrub her room. Gabriela watched in fascination as she had never seen a healthy birth and couldn't believe how much energy Lena had. During dinner Lena announced that she had felt a few fairly strong tightenings, but they were not regular or painful. Everyone was excited for her and discussed whether or not to call Sabra. Mario wanted to know what he was supposed to do. Lena told him to relax, and she would let him know. After dinner, Lena asked Mario if he would get a lantern and take her for a walk to Sabra's house. Sabra checked Lena and told them both to try to get some sleep and call her when the tightenings became regular and painful. Lena said she understood, and they returned home. She convinced Mario to go on to sleep and she poured herself some goat milk. She sat up in the living room for a while after everyone else had gone to their rooms and finally felt that she could sleep. The tightenings weren't getting any harder and she was growing accustomed to them. When the sun woke her, she realized that Mario was already up and milking the goats. As she stood, the first real pain hit. She cried out despite being determined not to. Leah came running. She talked Lena through the tightening and

helped her relax. By the time Gabriela and Mother Ruth arrived, it had already passed. Lena encouraged everyone to not get excited. Sabra had said it would take a while since this was her first baby. She insisted that Mario go on to work and she would send for him if she needed him. All morning, Lena busied herself with starting a fresh batch of bread. She occasionally experienced a tightening and cried out. Whoever was closest would support her and talk her through it. Mother went to the market for fresh supplies and Leah churned some butter. But everyone was watching Lena and waiting. By midafternoon the tightenings were becoming regular and closer together. Gabriela put the twins in her carrier and walked to Sabra's to let her know the update. Sabra said she would be there after dinner and plan to spend the night. She asked if Orly or one of the men could pick up the necessary birthing blankets. Gabriela promised to send them when they got home from work. The tightenings were now becoming more painful and Gabriela was wondering if she should send for Mario, but Lena insisted that he be allowed to work. She didn't feel it was imminent. When the men got home and realized that this was the night, they began to panic. The ladies insisted that they eat a good dinner and then go to Sabra's to pick up the necessary birthing supplies. They were glad for something to do. Gabriela asked Orly to fill three water jars for her and then plan to take his blanket outside and camp with the other men. Sabra arrived and examined Lena and said the baby was perfectly lined up for a good birth. Mother got the salt and oil ready for the baby and brought a swaddling band, swaddling cloth, and a shawl into the kitchen. She instructed Gersham and Mario to place the pile of blankets on the table. Then she firmly told them to get their blankets quickly and join Orly outside. They were not to come near the house until they were called. Both men were ready to get away from the screaming. Gabriela got the twins settled for the night and called for Orly to come and get their cradles. They should sleep through the night and Orly could keep them outside with him unless she was needed.

Sabra said that Lena was progressing rapidly and unless something changed, they would have a baby by morning. Gabriela was fascinated that Lena was allowed to walk around by herself and only needed assistance during a tightening. Then she would lean over the pile of blankets on the table and muffle her cries until the pain passed. "I didn't realize how different my birthing was," said Gabriela out loud.

"Yes, I thought it would be important for you to see a normal, healthy delivery so that you would not be afraid next time. And Lena is doing very well. But that doesn't mean that it won't be long and hard. Anything could happen, but she's doing great."

By the ninth hour of the night, Lena was into final stages of tightening and Sabra was instructing her to push the baby out. Shortly Sabra cut the cord and laid a healthy man child on Lena's breast. Gabriela opened the door of the courtyard, and all three men came

running. She told Mario that he was an abba. His first-born son had been born. It would be a while longer before he could see him. Lena birthed the cord while Mother rubbed the baby with salt. His healthy newborn screams were a welcome sound in the night. Soon Mother rubbed him with olive oil, and he settled into sleep. She placed the swaddling band around his cord and then began to gently wrap him with the swaddling cloth. Leah and Gabriela were cleaning up the soiled blankets and throwing them on the courtyard. Gabriela called for Mario to come in and meet his son. Mother Ruth had wrapped him in a shawl and laid him in Lena's arms. Mario was speechless. Everyone left them to be alone. The other two men were invited to bring their blankets back into the house and try to get some sleep. Each carried a cradle, and the twins were still sleeping soundly. Sabra said that she would stay with Lena and the baby for the rest of the night and Mario needed to get some sleep in the living room. Soon the house was quiet, and everyone got a couple of hours of sleep before dawn. Orly went to milk the goats and left Mario and the ladies sleeping. Orly walked to Mr. Kenan's and announced the birth of a healthy little boy. He told Mr. Kenan he needed to get some sleep but would be in to work by noon and asked if he could send word to Palti that the men had had a long night. Mr. Kenan assured him that he would take care of it. Gabriela was nursing the twins when Orly returned. He said he needed a nap before going to work. She agreed, finished nursing the boys, and crawled back in her blanket for another nap, too.

When Gabriela woke, she could hear Sabra talking with Lena, so she asked if Sabra wanted breakfast. She said she needed to be on her way, but Lena was definitely ready. Gabriela prepared a cup of goat milk and a cheese roll and took it to her room. Sabra reminded Gabriela what to watch for and suggested that Lena needed to nurse the baby soon. "I'll be back in the morning to check on both of them and we'll go from there. Just let me know if you need anything. Otherwise, I know I'm leaving her in experienced hands," said Sabra. "Don't forget to change her blankets and keep her flat until the flow decreases. She should do fine. I'll see you in the morning."

Gabriela brought the baby to Lena and showed her how to nurse him. He was so tiny compared to the twins. When Gersham and Mario woke up, they decided that they would eat breakfast and then head on to work. Palti really needed them, and Lena assured them that there was nothing that they could do to help today. In another hour, Orly woke up and went into work, too.

The ladies were pleased that this birth had gone so smoothly and weren't exactly sure what they were supposed to do. One of the ladies took the baby into Lena when he cried, and Gabriela declared that her flow had halved by midafternoon. They assisted her in sitting up and then walking and everything was going fine. By the time the men were home for dinner, the household was running smoothly. Lena mostly slept and nursed the baby, but she could get up and move around as needed.



The ladies worked to make a special Sabbath dinner. Orly got choked up as he prayed for this new little one's safety. He prayed for wisdom for the parents and then blessed each member of the family. The talk around the table was regarding the circumcision and naming ceremony. Mario and Lena wanted something fairly small since they didn't really know that many people. Orly reminded Mario that he needed to make arrangements with Ruler Jedidiah and see when he was available. They finally decided that they would like to invite Ruler Jedidiah, Jordan, Lucas, and Amata, and that was all. The eighth day would be on Thursday, and Orly offered to provide dinner for all those attending. Gabriela volunteered to stay with Lena so that Mario could attend synagogue and talk with Ruler Jedidiah. She said that she would like to go to Mr. Kenan's at noon. That would give the young family time alone, and it was Mario's responsibility to care for his wife and son. Mario beamed every time she mentioned his son.

Everyone celebrated Pentecost on Wednesday at Mr. Kenan's house, except for Mario and Lena. He had asked Orly to be in charge. Gabriela shared about seeing the ascension and Jordan told about the Holy Spirit coming at the first Pentecost since they were eyewitnesses. There was much singing and celebrating and lots of wonderful food.

On Thursday morning, the ladies were busy preparing the special meal for their guests. That evening, the chosen friends gathered for dinner and afterward, Ruler Jedidiah led the circumcision and naming ceremony. Mario stated that his first-born son's name would be Zebulon after Lena and Leah's abba. After everyone had gone, Orly and Gabriela sat in the living room floor and played with Hosea and Kobe. Mario and Lena unwrapped the swaddling cloth and stretched little Zeb's arms. He was quickly ready to be re-wrapped and nursed, while Hosea and Kobe wanted to play longer and longer each night.

Gabriela was trying to leave them un-swaddled as much as she could during the day, but she had no choice when she needed to be busy cooking or cleaning. Without the swaddling cloths, they were into everything. They were requiring a lot of her attention, and after Lena and Mario had gone to their room, she mentioned to Orly that she was dreading the day that Lena and Leah moved out. She was going to need help with these rambunctious boys and hoped that they could find another couple who would be willing to help. Orly asked if she thought they could hire Leah during the daytime. Gabriela felt that she would probably be helping Lena. She sighed and said, "I just wish things would stay the way they are. I don't like so many changes. They have become my sisters and soon that will all change. It's been a really good experience for me, and I think Mother has enjoyed it, too." They continued to talk until the boys were ready for sleep. Orly helped

her wrap them, and Gabriela nursed them before putting them in their cradles.

Orly and Gabriela took time for some long walks while Orly was off work for Shavuot. They spent a lot of time talking and praying about the future. Both felt that God was calling them to something new, but could not figure it out.



On Sunday, Mr. Kenan asked Joshua to wait for him in the kitchen after breakfast instead of going to work. He wanted to talk with him but needed to talk with Benjamin first. Joshua waited nervously at the kitchen table.

Mr. Kenan made it official that Benjamin was a free man and told him that he could take some time off to move into the apprentice room since his new room was not ready. Benjamin could hardly believe all the good things that had happened since he came to Cana.

Then Mr. Kenan called Joshua into his office. "I need to complete some formal paperwork that indicates you have completed your four years of slavery. It will take me a few minutes. Then I need to fill out more paperwork to show our agreement for you to voluntarily enter into two years of slavery in exchange for an apprenticeship as a blacksmith. Is that your desire?"

"Yes, sir," said Joshua, his eyes filling with tears of joy.

Mr. Kenan asked Joshua how old he was, and Joshua indicated that he was fourteen. Mr. Kenan signed the papers and welcomed Joshua to his new apprenticeship. Joshua was still a slave, so, he would stay in the slave quarters where he had lived for the past four years. "I'll be ready to go to the shop in a few minutes. Wait in the courtyard."

"Yes, sir." Joshua waited and waited, but as a slave, he knew his place. So, he kept waiting even though he was eager to get to the shop. Mr. Kenan finally arrived with a boy named Edam. Edam looked terrified. They walked to the Metal Shop together. Mr. Kenan quieted the men and made his announcement. "Men, I want you to meet our newest apprentice. Joshua will begin learning the blacksmith trade." Everyone cheered and whistled, and Mr. Kenan pointed Joshua to his new bench. "I also want to introduce Edam to you. He will be our new shop boy. Please welcome him to our group." Again, the men cheered and whistled. They knew that the shop boy was one of the hardest jobs around and there would be much for Edam to learn. He was an essential member of the team, and they needed him to learn quickly. Mr. Kenan gave him a broom and told him to keep the place swept out. He introduced Edam to Lucas and Orly and told him that they were in charge. If neither of them was available, then he or Master Seth would answer questions.

When Mr. Kenan went back up front, Orly stopped what he was doing and made it a point to talk with Edam. "Edam, I started out doing

your job. If you have any questions, I'll be glad to help. You can do this. It will be really hard at first. But if you decide you like it, you might get my job one day." Orly remembered how Kobe greeted Joshua on his first day.



Lena couldn't attend the synagogue for forty days after Zebulon was born, so Mario stayed home with her. Gabriela noticed that Lena was often crying, but she quietly ignored it. She knew that there was an adjustment period in a marriage after a baby was born and she didn't want to interfere in their personal business. Both young couples seemed withdrawn and quieter than usual.



Now that Benjamin was once again a free man, he could come and go as he pleased. He had a staff that kept things going when he took his day off. He asked Jordan what he did when he had free time. Jordan hesitated and then asked, "How comfortable are you with Gentiles?"

"I've never spent any time with them. But I know that Mr. Kenan and Orly don't see it as a problem. Why?"

"Because there's a group of us guys that get together after work on Tuesdays to play ball. You'd be welcome to join us, but you need to know that most of them are Gentiles. Do you want to go with me on Tuesday? I usually go straight from work, so if you decide you want to go, just meet me at the shop."

"I don't know where that is," admitted Benjamin.

"Sorry, I forgot. Do you want to take a walk this evening and I'll show you around?"

"Sure."

As they walked, Jordan again asked Benjamin if he wanted to join him on Tuesday night.

"I'll go with you, but just this once. Should I bring food?"

"No, we take turns providing the meal. This week it's Appius's turn. Oh, and it won't be kosher. Are you okay with that?"

"I guess. I don't know. But if you are willing, I guess I'll give it a try — once."



Forty days after Zebulon's birth, Mario took an afternoon off work to walk with Lena to the synagogue and make an offering for her purification and for the redemption of their first-born son. Ruler

Jedidiah accepted their offering and prayed over little Zebulon. He declared Lena cleansed and ready to return to normal life.



Mr. Kenan and Seth were discussing whether they were going to Jerusalem for Sukkot. Mr. Kenan didn't want to make the trip, but he knew that every visit with Zeke was a possibility for him to come to know Jesus as Messiah. They discussed closing down the shop since the Gentiles were no longer taking off for most of the Roman holidays. In the end, they decided that Seth and Mr. Kenan would travel to Jerusalem with Enoch and Omri. Seth would stay with his cousin Jacob and check on his shops, while Mr. Kenan stayed with Zeke. They would close the Metal Shop for the eight days of Sukkot even though they knew that no one would celebrate it.

Lucas called the men together and Mr. Kenan announced that the Metal Shop would be closed for Sukkot beginning next Thursday. The men would have Thursday and Friday off as well as the entire next week. The men celebrated the news and Mr. Kenan took Oren, Zuri, Joshua, and Edam back inside while the other men were on break.



For over two months, Orly and Gabriela had been spending time daily seeking God's direction. They felt united in purpose, and their hearts were tuned not only to God, but to each other. They waited, they worshipped, they asked for others' prayers, but still no word from God came to them. Each time Gabriela prayed alone, she felt God saying that He was taking her to a place of joy. And she felt His joy and tried not to fret about the unknown.



Palti assigned Gersham and Mario to build Benjamin's room at Mr. Kenan's house. They talked with both Mr. Kenan and Benjamin and knew exactly what needed to be built. They would add a room with an outside entrance and once it was completed, they would add a door into the back wall of the kitchen.

## Chapter 13

Mr. Kenan and Seth left for Jerusalem on Monday, but the Metal Shop remained open until Thursday. Orly and Gabriela had discussed visiting Yanis and Jenay in Capernaum but didn't feel right about it. They felt their time would be better spent in prayer and knew without a shadow of doubt that God was calling them to a new ministry; they just didn't know what it would look like. They were trying to wait patiently but felt the urge to get busy as soon as possible. They intended to ask Seth about locating another couple to come to live with them since Gersham and Mario planned to move out soon, but had felt the Holy Spirit tell them not to.

On Thursday, Orly's first day off work for Sukkot, he spent the day with Gabriela and the twins. While Gabriela enjoyed his presence, she could feel the tension and stress and knew that God was dealing with him. By midafternoon, he was so restless that he had to get away. "Gabriela, could you take care of milking the goats since Lucas is on vacation? I need some extra time for prayer." Gabriela agreed and Orly packed a blanket and lantern and headed for the stream. He fell on his face before Jehovah and worshipped and cried out to Him for wisdom and guidance and clarity. After dinner, Gersham and Mario took the girls and baby Zebulon out for an evening walk. Gabriela and Mother watched the twins play and attempt to pull themselves upright. They had mastered crawling and sitting and now they were trying to find new ways to reach the things they wanted. The couples came in from their walk and went straight to their rooms. Gabriela hoped that they were not having marital problems. Everyone looked tense and they were fretting about something. She knew that they were looking for housing. Maybe they were fussing over whether to continue to live together or apart. Marriage was hard work, and she was glad that they took it outside and discussed it in private.

She felt lonely without Orly, and after Mother went to sleep, she slowly wrapped the babies and nursed them. She put them in their cradles and then went up to the rooftop. She lay down on one of the benches and stared up at the stars. Very clearly, she heard, "I am taking you to a city of joy." She began to pray and told God that she didn't understand what that meant but that she wanted to be completely obedient. She felt that He was asking if she would give up everything to get to that place of joy. That took her breath away. She remembered the look in Jesus' eyes when as a little girl she had told Him that she loved Him. He had said that that was the most precious gift that she could give Him. Now, she knelt and surrendered everything, yes everything, to be obedient to His plan for her. There was an incredible peace that filled the rooftop. She knew that the Holy Spirit was pleased with her, and she knew that God was at work in their lives whether they could see it or not. She still had no idea what



God's plan was. All she knew was that she was loved and that He would guide her step-by-step.



Orly stayed down at the stream all afternoon and all night. In the early morning hours just before dawn, he felt certain that he heard the Holy Spirit speak. "Are you willing to give up everything to follow Me?"

Orly heard it clearly but knew that it was not an easy question for him to answer. *Could he give up Gabriela? Could he give up his sons? Could he give up his dream of home? Was God asking him to give up everything he held dear, everything he had worked so hard to accomplish?* He got up and began to pace. Then He heard the Holy Spirit remind him that everything he had was a gift from God, a blessing that could easily be taken away. In truth, what he clung to showed who or what he served. That brought Orly to his knees again. "Oh, Father, Abba, you know my heart. You know that I've longed for a family for so long. But no, I will not place anything before You. I will worship and serve You and You alone. Be merciful to me, a sinner. I love my family, but they are a gift from You, and I praise You for them. If you are calling me to a distant land, I will go. I will serve. I will obey. I thought you had given them to me to help me serve, but I am not all wise. You are. You know the plans You have for me, and I surrender completely." He lay in the grass and wept with relief. The sacrifice had been made — death to self, death to personal dreams and desires, death to anything except obedience to Jesus. And suddenly there was peace. A peace that passed all understanding. He had no idea what God's plan was, all he knew was that he was finally ready to obey with no reservations. He thought of Kobe leaving it all behind to go East. He thought of Philip's death. He thought of other apostles that had left family, and others who had taken family with them. He thought about entire groups being stoned to death for their obedience, but there was no fear. He felt only confidence that God would provide everything he needed to be obedient. So, he waited. The stars seemed brighter and the night more crystal clear, but still he heard nothing more from God.

As the sun rose, he returned to the house totally spent, yet filled with peace. He joined his family for breakfast and said goodbye to Gersham and Mario who had not been allowed a Sukkot holiday. Mother and the girls were dividing up chores so that they could prepare for the Sabbath. Lena and baby Zebulon were going to the market to get fresh fruit. Leah was seasoning some cheese and needed to churn more butter. Mother was preparing a pot of vegetable soup that she asked Orly to move to the fire pit for her. She sat down in the grass to wait for it to begin to boil.

Gabriela was trying to decide how to entertain the boys. Orly asked her if she would walk down to the stream with him. She grabbed a blanket and each of them carried a baby. They walked in silence because each of them knew that they needed to talk but neither knew

what to say. They laid the boys on the blanket and sat on either side to try to keep them safe. "I had a very interesting prayer time last night," began Gabriela. Orly nodded and she continued. "After I put the boys down, I went up on the rooftop, and I heard the same thing that I've been hearing for several months. God just keeps telling me that He is taking me to a city of joy. Always before, I have just felt joy and peace and was willing to wait for Him to reveal more. He has indeed given me much joy these last few months even though it's seemed strange. But last night was different." She hesitated and wasn't sure how to continue.

"How was it different?" prompted Orly tenderly.

"I felt that God was asking me what I was willing to give up in exchange for going to that place of joy. Orly, that was hard. Maybe the hardest thing that I've ever done." Tears were flowing down both their faces while the boys played between them.

"I had a similar experience, I mean, not about joy, but about being willing to give up everything. What is weird is this incredible peace that I have. I still don't know where or what or when. I just know that I agreed to obey no matter what, because I know that He knows what is best for me, and for you, and for the boys. He knows and He loves us, and I trust Him. I don't know what else to say."

"I understand. It's strange, but I've felt this incredible peace ever since then, too."

"I know you need to be helping Mother with the Sabbath meal. I'll watch the boys today and let you help with dinner. I'll need to milk the goats because Lucas is gone, but the rest of the time I can do anything you want me to do."

"Thanks. Mother Ruth will probably just want me to stir the pot."

They picked up the boys and started walking back up the trail. Gabriela told Mother Ruth that Orly would be taking care of the babies today. "What do you need me to do?"

"Do you want to make the Sabbath bread? Leah usually does it, but they've been in Lena's room ever since she got back from the market. I don't know what's going on, but something is up. I hope she's not sick."

"I'll check on her before I start the bread," said Gabriela. Orly sat on the grass beside his mother and wrestled with the babies. They wanted to crawl toward the fire pit, and he learned just how determined two six-month-old boys could be. *How does Gabriela get anything done while keeping these guys out of trouble?* Mother reminded Orly that Lucas wasn't coming, so he needed to pick the garden sometime today. The summer garden was loaded with fresh vegetables, and they wouldn't be able to pick them on the Sabbath. He asked Mother to watch the boys and he would be right back. He ran in the house and grabbed Gabriela's carrier. Mother showed him how to put it on and then helped to get the babies inside. They were peeking out and excited about this new adventure of riding on Abba instead of Mother. Orly had also grabbed a basket and headed to the garden to

pick the vegetables. Every time he leaned over, one of the boys would grab a handful of leaves and put them in his mouth. Orly decided to try another tactic. He laid the carrier down at the end of the garden and left them inside. He managed to pick a few peas before he noticed that both boys had escaped and were sitting in and eating the dirt. He knew that Gabriela would not be happy with him. He put the carrier back on and managed to get Hosea in one of the holes. He carried Kobe and took them both to the house. He grabbed the swaddling cloth and bound them securely. He promised them it would just be for a little while, but their wails broke his heart. He asked Gabriela if they would take a nap sometime. She said to give her a few minutes and she would nurse them and put them down for their nap. "How long will they stay asleep?"

"Maybe an hour if it's a good day. Sometimes a quarter of an hour. But I thought you were going to watch them today?"

"I was! But Mother asked me to pick the garden and they want to help." He grinned sheepishly. "I think I need to build them a pen!"

"Your mother's finished now, and I'll take you from that mean ol' prison guard. Let's get some yummy milk and take a nice long nap while your wonderful abba picks the garden." Gabriela grinned as she took the babies from Orly and settled them down for a nap. Fortunately, the morning play in the sunshine had made them tired enough for a good nap and she was able to rest awhile before Orly returned with the vegetables. He helped her get them washed and stored away. Together they made a platter of fresh vegetables to serve with the bread and soup for dinner. When Gersham and Mario arrived, Gersham grabbed the soup pot for Mother and carried it inside and Mario helped Orly carry the milk jars. Gabriela was ready to light the Sabbath candles and Lena and Leah had joined them. Both girls looked like they had cried all day. Orly prayed a prayer of blessing over each one present and asked God again for guidance for the future.

As they enjoyed the meal together, Orly and Gabriela felt lighter than they had in months, but Gersham, Mario, Leah, and Lena looked like they were carrying the weight of the world on their shoulders. Orly wisely refrained from commenting and instead told how outnumbered he felt trying to take care of his two sons. He praised Gabriela, Mother, Leah, and Lena for helping keep this household running even with three babies. Suddenly, the tears turned to sobs and the sobs to outright crying. Gersham spoke sternly to Leah and Lena, "I told you I would talk with Orly tomorrow night. This should be a private conversation without your interference!"

Orly had never heard Gersham speak harshly to anyone, and he was surprised by it. "Hold it, Gersham. I know you are head of your family and I'm trying to respect that. But if there's something the girls want to talk about, let's do it. Gabriela and I do everything together. You need to respect your wife enough to let her speak."

“I’m just afraid that her tears will make you feel obligated when you hear our proposal,” said Gersham. “I don’t think that’s fair to you and Gabriela.”

“Why don’t you let me hear your proposal and I’ll decide whether it’s fair or not. If it’s not, then I’ll let you and them know. But when a man makes a woman cry or tells her to quit being who God has designed her to be, I have a problem with that.”

“I’m sorry, Orly. We’ve been praying and praying and trying to figure this out on our own. We decided we would present our proposal to you after the Sabbath, and you would have time to pray about it while you are off work this week.”

“Let’s hear it.”

“In front of everyone? Now?” asked Gersham.

“Yes, we’re a family. We don’t keep secrets. If you are really uncomfortable with that, then we’ll go talk on the rooftop, but you need to know that I’ll immediately come down here and share it with Gabriela and probably Mother. That’s how this home operates. You ought to know that by now.”

“Okay,” said Gersham tentatively. “We have been looking at houses. We have found several that are suitable for our needs. We have discussed building our own house, but every time we think we’ve decided, we come back to the same basic problem. We don’t want to leave. You invited us to be a part of your family for one year, but we feel God saying that this is our family, and we should stay put. Our proposal is really just a question. We don’t have any plans. But we want to let you know that we would like to discuss staying permanently and raising our children together and continuing to be a part of this family. We would contribute our fair share for food and clothing and housing costs, but we would like to become a permanent family. I don’t know how it will all work, but we feel that God is asking us to help you and you to help us by uniting together as a ministry team.”

“There. Now that wasn’t so hard, was it?” asked Orly. “Gabriela and I have often said that we wished our arrangement was permanent. We will ask for time to pray about this and work out some of the details. Now we have a question for you. Recently God has been working in our hearts, and we have something for the four of you to pray about.”

“What’s that?”

“Actually, Mother, it’s a question you need to pray about, too. We feel that God may be calling us to another location in order to share the New Way with more Gentiles. We have no idea where. But God has asked if we were willing, and we have said yes. Would your offer of staying with us be the same if that does not include Cana? Pray about it and let me know when you have an answer. We’ll pray about your question and let you know soon. In the meantime, no discussion is off the table. Ladies, you have as much of a right to ask questions as your husbands. While you will always want to submit to your

husbands as Sarah did to Abraham even when he was wrong, Jesus gave you the right to speak up and ask, at least in this house.”

“I’m sorry, Orly. That’s one of the reasons we want so badly to stay with you two. I need to learn so much. Our dad was the ultimate boss and our mother had no say in anything. I’m sorry that I treated Leah and Lena unfairly. They have wanted to talk with you for weeks, but I was the one who ordered them not to.”

“I forgive you, Gersham, and I understand, but you need to apologize to the ladies.”

“I’m truly sorry for causing you all this pain and making you wait. If I’d let you speak, you wouldn’t have been so miserable these past few weeks. I realize now that you need to know the answers to your questions.”

“Can you also acknowledge that often God speaks through women the same as He speaks through men? Last night God spoke to us both at the same time, but often He speaks through Gabriela. If I fail to listen, I miss out on God’s blessings. Let’s sing some. I think we could all use some worship.”

Gabriela led them in several Psalms and then taught them Diana’s song, ‘Jehovah is My Rock.’ Everyone loved it. Gabriela said, ‘I’ve never written a song, but I keep hearing one in my head. I keep hearing God saying that He is taking me to the city of joy. I can almost hear the tune but not quite. It keeps recurring in my prayer times but then I can’t re-create it.’

Mario said, “The city of joy? Isn’t that what they call Joppa? Is God calling you to Joppa in Samaria?”

“I don’t know. I know we’ve got a lot of praying to do. If indeed we are going to move forward as a ministry team, you need to know that last night I prayed down by the stream and Gabriela prayed on the rooftop. God spoke clearly to both us and asked if we would surrender everything that we love in order to be obedient. We both said yes. We don’t know where God is leading, but there’s been an incredible peace today as we are trusting Him to show us step by step. I think we should call it a night and start fresh tomorrow. Let’s pray. Father, guide us. Show us Your plan. Help each one of us to be obedient.”

## Chapter 14

On Sabbath morning, as they gathered for breakfast, there was an awkwardness because answers had not been given to any of their questions. After the table was cleared, Orly said that he would like to ask the young couples to take a walk down to the stream and spend some time in prayer and discussion of his question. The synagogue was closed for Sukkot, and he would like to talk with Mother and Gabriela alone. Lena packed her carrier and a travel bag of shawls for baby Zebulon. It was agreed that they would return around noon.

Gabriela put the boys on the living room floor and let them scoot around. With three adults watching them, maybe they could keep them corralled. “Mother, I think that you are the one I am most concerned about right now. What are you thinking and feeling as we talk about pulling up roots and moving? Have you had time to pray about it, or should we hold off this discussion until later? I want to remind you that I’m not positive that God is saying that we need to relocate, but I know He has asked if I am willing. I would like to hear what is going through your mind.”

Mother began quietly and very carefully chose her words. “When I moved in with you, I knew that God had called you to do a great ministry with the Gentiles, but when I actually saw with my own eyes what God was using you to do, I felt left out — like I didn’t have a part to play. The longer I live with you, the more I realize how much a role I do play in your ministry. I cook; I clean; I babysit; and I love on the Gentiles that you bring into our home. I never dreamed of living someplace other than Cana. It will be hard to leave Mr. Kenan, but he is surrounded by a loving family, and he’ll be fine. I will miss Amata, and Benjamin, and Jordan. But I know that God will give me more people to love. I’m okay with pulling up roots, as long as you are sure that God is leading you. Just throw me in the oxcart, and I’ll go wherever you take me.”

“May God bless you for your attitude, Mother. You are a vital part of our ministry. Neither one of us would have survived this year without you. Now the second question is, are we willing to form a permanent relationship with these two couples and whatever children they produce? It would not be a legal adoption, but it would be a spiritual one. These girls are seeking a sister and loving mother to help them raise their families. They are seeking an abba figure, too. I know I’m too young for that role, but it seems Gersham and Mario look up to me. Would you say that it has been a positive working relationship with them and one that will enhance our ministry, or will it hold us back?”

Gabriela spoke, “I think it only enhances our ministry because it frees me to go and do what I need to do. Especially as the children get older, I’ll be able to leave them with Leah or Lena more easily and they will be able to leave theirs with me while they do ministry. Even now, I

often leave the boys with one of them while I take time to pray or spend time with you. I think that we can double our ministry possibilities.”

“Early in our marriage, you were not comfortable with the idea of having anyone living with us. Has that changed?” asked Orly.

“Yes, because our love has deepened, and I think I’m not so afraid of having to share you with others. If anything, I believe having others around has caused us to grow closer, and to work harder on our marriage.”

“Mother, do you have any questions?”

“Do you think Mario was right? Do you think God is calling us to Joppa?”

“I have no idea.”

“How will we know?”

“We wait and let Him guide us,” said Orly.

Gabriela moved to the kitchen and set out a small plate that Mother Ruth had prepared for her and Lena because they were nursing. She poured Orly a cup of milk and asked if Mother Ruth wanted some. “Joppa? Isn’t that the city that Enoch took Basha’s friends to?” asked Gabriela.

“Yes,” said Orly.

“Then we could ask him what it was like,” said Mother Ruth.

“No,” said Orly. “I would prefer that you not mention this to anyone. We don’t want human input or opinions. We want to know what God has planned for us.” Mother agreed.

When Gersham and Leah returned, they said that Mario and Lena were right behind them. They all came in and found places on the floor in the living room. The three babies played beside them. Orly told them that the answer to their proposal was an enthusiastic yes. “We will always need partners in ministry. We are pleased to make this a more permanent relationship with the four of you and little Zebulon and all your future children. However, we will need to figure out what is involved. And I have posed a question for you four to answer. Do you still want to enter into this relationship if God calls us to another location?”

“We have talked about it. We had no idea where Seth was bringing us before, and we have no idea where God is leading us now. All of us have talked about our surprise that we are so comfortable around the Gentiles and feel strongly that God is calling us to be a part of His work with them. We are certain that God is calling us to join with you as a team. Now we are committing to pray for God to lead us wherever He desires for us to serve Him,” said Gersham.

Mario added, “While I was praying, I had one strange impression. I remembered the story of Abraham. The Jewish Scripture says that the Lord called Abram and told him to go from his country and away from his people to a land that He would show him. There’s no indication in The Law and The Prophets that Abraham knew where he

was going. He just packed up and started walking and let God lead him.”

“Are you suggesting that we just pack up and start walking?” asked Orly.

“I’m not sure that that’s from God. But I’m wondering if God is waiting on us to take that first step. You know, quitting our jobs and loading the cart,” suggested Mario.

“I see. But speaking of carts, I only have one oxcart and that’s barely large enough to hold all of us — let alone our possessions. Are we supposed to leave all our possessions behind? Or are we supposed to ask Mr. Kenan to borrow Enoch for the move? But we can’t do that if we don’t know where we are going. Okay, I think we are back to square one.”

“No. Not quite. I think we are settled that we have a forever family, and we will be together to raise our families,” said Leah. “That’s a big relief to me.”

“Me, too,” said Lena.

“I think it is for all of us,” said Mother. “I didn’t know how I was going to manage without you two.”

“So, it’s almost time to go to Mr. Kenan’s. Should we keep quiet, or should we ask for prayer and guidance from the group there?” asked Orly.

“I believe we should keep it quiet until God shows us the next step. I don’t want everyone getting upset until we know something,” said Gabriela.

“So, are we in agreement?” Everyone nodded. The ladies quickly began putting together supplies for the babies for the afternoon at Mr. Kenan’s house. They walked together to Mr. Kenan’s. They arrived just as Jordan was beginning the music. Everyone had been concerned that they were not in their usual places earlier but were reassured when they said they were just talking and lost track of time.

Jordan led the music and then introduced a special guest. The Apostle Peter was headed to Damascus and needed a place to spend the night. He had been directed by someone in the town to Mr. Kenan’s house late last night. Jordan had asked him to share with the group whatever was on his heart. Jordan sat down and the Apostle Peter stood at the front. Orly was fascinated. *He looks just like Kobe described him. An ornery old fisherman but full of fire and vigor for Jesus.* Peter looked at Jordan and said, “When did you grow up so fast? I remember you chasing around after your abba. He was a great man of God who’s gone before us. He would be proud that his son is serving our Lord Jesus.” Then Peter began to teach the group.

“I tell you to remember that you are not of this world. You are foreigners here. Your home is in Heaven and life will pass quickly. If you spend all your time amassing wealth and building buildings and collecting this world’s goods, aren’t you living just like the pagans? Those are perishable things. You weren’t redeemed by perishable things. You were redeemed by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus



Christ. God redeemed you from emptiness and empty living. He wants you to live, not in emptiness, but in purpose. He chose you to serve Him and honor Him. He raised Jesus from the dead so that you would place your hope and trust in Him.

“Remember that you are foreigners. This world is not your home. Wage war against evil desires and do those things that are good. This will cause all those around you to notice you and glorify God the Father. Live your lives openly among the pagans so that they may see your good deeds and glorify God.

“You may suffer for living for Him, but that will help you to focus on what is most valuable. Don’t live for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. You’ve lived long enough like the pagans. It’s time to move forward and live for the will of God. The gospel must be preached to those who are dead so that they, too, can come alive and avoid judgment.

“The end is near. Jesus said He would return for us and asked if He would find faith on the earth when He returned. Spend your life in love for others. Love as He loved. Each of you should be using whatever gift you have received to serve others.

“To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”

Peter sat down, and Jordan rose. “Thank you, Peter, for your challenging words. Let’s sing Psalm 150 before we leave.” Because it was one of their favorites, everyone sang heartily, and Peter smiled with a far-away look in his eye.

Afterward Gabriela introduced herself as the little girl with Jenay and Jonathan who got to watch Jesus return to Heaven. “I remember you shared your apricots with me.”

“Then you know that I will never sing that Psalm without remembering.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And these are your sons?”

“Yes, sir, and this is my husband Orly. Kobe told him about Jesus. I met him on the day he accepted Jesus as his Messiah and God told me that he was the one I would be serving beside.”

“And are you serving?” Peter looked penetratingly at Orly.

“We have been serving and lately have been looking for clarity. We know that God is calling us to a new ministry but are not sure of a clear direction. We would love to talk with you later. There’s a crowd wanting to speak to you, sir.”

“But what if God brought me here to speak to you two? Don’t rush away. Is there a quiet place where we could talk?”

“We could go into the house, or we could go to a grassy spot behind the garden, whichever is most comfortable for you,” said Orly.

“I prefer the outdoors. Now tell me about this service of yours.”

“Sir, God has used me, and I’ve tried to be obedient.”

“Son, I appreciate your modesty, but sometimes human modesty just covers up an opportunity to praise God for His work through us. Tell me what you consider service?”

“Do you remember Ruler Jedidiah who allowed Jesus to preach here at the synagogue in Cana even when the priest in Nazareth was threatening to kill Him?”

“Yes, I do. I had forgotten him, but now that you mention the name, I do remember.”

“God used me to lead Ruler Jedidiah and most of his synagogue to accept Jesus as Messiah. And God used this group to help me baptize almost two hundred people from the synagogue. Jordan and Ruler Jedidiah are discipling these new followers.”

“Excellent. But why did you quit? Were you tired of shepherding them?”

“No sir. God was calling us to another ministry. And He was calling Jordan to that one.”

“And what ministry was that?”

“Well, I had befriended eight Gentiles, and God led us to invite them to learn about Jesus. They agreed, and now there’s over a hundred Roman followers of Jesus here in Cana. They are multiplying and spreading. Some have started work in Nazareth, some in Capernaum, and most recently, we have sent six teams to work in Jerusalem with the Romans.”

“I see,” said Peter. “And now you have no current ministries?”

“We feel the Gentiles here are capable of following the Holy Spirit’s leading and they have a strong leadership team. So, lately we have been seeking God’s face to know what is next. We are certain that God is calling us to begin a new work with Gentiles. But we are not sure of the location. We want to be obedient, but we don’t know where. That’s what we are praying about currently. We have two other couples who have joined our ministry team.”

Suddenly, Peter seemed to totally change the subject and Orly felt that his time was up with the apostle. “Orly, I need to get to Capernaum in the morning to visit with my Uncle Zebedee and arrange transport across the Sea. God said that I should ask you if you had a faster method than walking.”

“Yes, sir. I have an oxcart and will take you whenever you desire to go. I’m off work this week.”

“What is your line of work?”

“I’m a blacksmith.”

“Excellent. Can you pick me up at sunrise tomorrow morning? We can talk as we travel.”

“Certainly.”

“I will meet you here and I will be praying for God’s clear direction for you.”

“Thank you, sir. I will be here at sunrise.”

“You are a good man. Now I need to get back to Jordan, or he will think I have deserted him.”

The men walked ahead, and Gabriela followed behind with the two babies. Thankfully, they hadn’t made a sound. Soon they were howling, and Gabriela moved into the house to nurse them. She sat

and visited with Mrs. Vada. Gabriela told her that Peter was as strange as ever and admitted that she had always been afraid of him.

"I think it's the intensity that makes people frightened of him. He is very passionate about our Lord. Radical to a point. But he challenges me to remember that this life is short, and we've got a mission to fulfill," said Mrs. Vada.

"Yes. It's easy to get buried in day-to-day life."

"The twins are getting huge. How old are they now?" The ladies continued to visit inside the house where it was cooler. Gabriela enjoyed the excuse to avoid the others.

Benjamin served the post-Sabbath dinner in the courtyard where Peter was being bombarded with questions. Right after dinner, he disappeared with Jordan and the crowd scattered. Orly walked home with his family, and they talked all the way home about the plans for tomorrow. Orly and Gabriela had wanted to see Yanis and Jenay, and this might be their last chance to do so, depending on where God might be leading them. It was decided that Gabriela would ride with Orly and Peter to Mr. Zebedee's and then they would try to connect with Yanis and Jenay before returning on Monday.

Orly and Gabriela woke before dawn on Sunday morning. He hitched Samson to the oxcart while Gabriela nursed the babies. Orly nailed down the baskets on each side of Gabriela's mat so that she could easily reach both babies. By the time he had the oxcart ready, Gabriela had set out breakfast for the two of them and packed the babies' supplies for a couple of days. Mario would take care of the goats. Before the sun touched the horizon, they were on their way to Mr. Kenan's to pick up the Apostle Peter. Benjamin had packed his breakfast, and he was carrying his travel bag. Orly invited him to ride up on the driver's bench so they could talk. They began to quietly and gently leave the town of Cana headed due East. As the sun rose, it was blinding. Once they had cleared town and Peter had finished his breakfast, Orly gave Samson permission to travel as fast as he wanted, and Peter held onto his seat. "I haven't traveled this quickly in a while," he laughed.

"Would you prefer to slow down?"

"No. No. This is great."

"You said you were in a hurry and Samson will accommodate whatever speed you desire. He's just young and likes to run off some energy. He'll slow down in a few minutes."

Sure enough after about ten minutes of running, Samson settled down into a brisk trot and the men were able to talk a little easier. "I see you brought your wife," said Peter.

"Yes, she wanted to visit Jenay, if possible. We haven't seen them since the babies were born. They have a new baby girl that we haven't met. I try to check on Yanis when I can, and we keep each other updated on our ministries."

"You won't be able to do that very often if you relocate to Joppa," said Peter matter-of-factly.

“Joppa? Why do you say Joppa?” demanded Orly.

“Isn’t that what you told me yesterday? You said you were relocating to Joppa to work with both Jews and Gentiles there. It is a multicultural city and there will be many challenges in getting the various groups to focus on their commonalities instead of their differences.”

“Sir, I know that I didn’t mention Joppa. That has been and was my prayer request to you yesterday. I asked if you could help me to clarify where I was supposed to begin our ministry.”

“I’m sorry if that displeases you, but I was certain that I heard you say you were moving to Joppa and wanted my help in knowing who to contact there. I have a friend who houses me when I visit there. His name is Simon the Tanner. You can ask around to find his house, or he has a booth at the market. Just tell him that I sent you, and that you need help getting settled there. Are you familiar with working with Phoenicians? There are a lot of them that will need to be reached, and of course the Romans. There are some synagogues that you will need to avoid, but there are many Jewish people who live there and are not practicing. They are ripe for the harvest. Then there are the Samaritans and the Greeks. And actually, because of the seaport, you will meet people from all over the world. Now there are some followers who you will want to get to know. Ask Simon the Tanner how to contact them. There are some Jewish followers who may or may not be open to your Gentile work. Simon will be able to guide you. I usually preach at the synagogues when I’m in town. There’s really no one trying to reach other people groups like Jesus commanded. God has perfectly gifted you to work there, and He will bless your obedience.”

“Sir, I am not displeased. I just had no idea where God was leading. He seems to have made it fairly clear to you. After these months of waiting for the right timing, I’m excited to finally know His direction.”

“How soon will you be ready to go?”

“We haven’t talked about it — just that we were available to go wherever He leads. I suppose we could be ready to leave in a couple of weeks.”

“Don’t delay. There’s much work to be done before our Lord returns.”

“Yes, sir. Let’s take a break at this well. It is halfway and I need to water my ox.”

Orly helped Gabriela and the babies out of the cart, and she put them into the carrier. She stretched her legs and visited with Peter while Orly watered Samson. “I don’t know whether you’ve heard that Lazarus and Miss Mary are in Heaven with Jesus.”

“No, I had not heard. When I saw Jesus raise him from the dead, I wondered if he would live until Jesus returns. Did he get sick again?”

“No sir, he and my dad and two other men were on a ministry trip to the south of Bethany. They were attacked by the Sadducees in

Hebron and my dad was the only survivor. He is in poor health. Miss Martha is not well, either.”

“I spent many happy times with Lazarus. Now he is with our Lord Jesus,” Peter said with that faraway look in his eyes again. Gabriela wondered if he was picturing Heaven because he had a very definite look of longing on his face. *I guess he misses being with Jesus and his friends.*

“Okay, I think Samson is ready to travel whenever you two are,” said Orly.

“I’m ready,” said Peter as he climbed back on the oxcart seat. Orly helped Gabriela into the wagon and made sure the babies were secure in the baskets. They would be getting hungry about the time they arrived at Mr. Zebedee’s. At least she felt comfortable there with Grandmother Salome.

In another hour they were pulling into Mr. Zebedee’s. Peter hopped off the cart and thanked them for the ride as he grabbed his travel bag and strode toward the front door. Orly circled back out of the driveway and staked Samson near the market. He helped Gabriela out of the cart. “What just happened?” she asked.

“I think we got dismissed. He’s just in a hurry. Kobe told me about him and said he was so focused that he scared some people.” Gabriela giggled and agreed.

The babies began to howl because the cart had stopped. Gabriela put them in the carrier. She and Orly walked around the market for a little bit while she nursed the babies. “So, were you able to hear the conversation?”

“No, I couldn’t hear anything back there. I’m nearly deaf from the road noise.”

“I’m sorry. It was quite interesting. Let’s find a bench and sit down. Do you remember talking to Peter yesterday?”

“Of course.”

“Peter said that we told him that we were relocating to Joppa and that our conversation yesterday was asking him how to get started there. He gave me a contact and some suggestions for various people groups there. He’s totally convinced that we are headed to Joppa and that’s exactly where God wants us to be. He says it will be the perfect fit for our abilities.”

“That’s strange. Do you think he’s gone mad?”

“No, I think that God revealed it to him so that he heard what we needed to know. I believe that God is calling us to Joppa. As he spoke, the Holy Spirit just kept confirming that this was the right direction.”

“Oh, Orly. I’m excited but scared. How are you feeling?”

“Same way. He also encouraged me to not delay because Jesus is returning soon, and we have lots of work to do there.”

“How soon is soon? I mean, what are you thinking? Do we have time to visit with Yanis and Jenay or should we go home and pack?”

“Since we are here, I think we need to tell Yanis and Jenay and ask for as much prayer support as we can get!”

## Chapter 15

Jenay was thrilled to see her friends and invited them to sit in the courtyard. Yanis was out and wouldn't return until midafternoon. They had no plans this evening, so had agreed to eat dinner with Grandmother Salome and Grandpa Zebedee. "We just dropped off the Apostle Peter there a few minutes ago," said Orly.

"So, Grandmother knows that you'll be coming," Gabriela and Orly exchanged looks.

"What?" demanded Jenay. When they told her about their abrupt dismissal she just laughed. "That's Peter. He's always in a hurry and doesn't even notice the world around him. But you'll never meet a man who is more helpful or diligent in serving Jesus. Peter hasn't visited in a while, so I imagine the whole family will be there tonight. You two will fit right in."

"I want to see your daughter, what did you name her?" asked Gabriela.

"She's sleeping right now but will be awake any minute now. Her name is Abie and she's four months old." They sat in the courtyard and visited until Abie woke up from her nap. Jenay ran to get her and introduced her to Gabriela and Orly. They agreed she was perfect.

"Do you mind if the boys crawl around? They get into everything, so we'll have to keep an eye on them."

"Of course not; I'm sure they are ready to be turned loose." They went into the tiny house and began to unwrap them and let them explore their new surroundings. Jenay and Gabriela began the girl talk and Orly left to take care of Samson. He visited with Mr. Ezekiel and found the goat business was doing well. He asked where he could water Samson. Mr. Ezekiel directed him to the well which was about a mile away. Orly unhitched the cart and led Samson to the well for a good drink. No one else was there, so Orly just filled the trough and let Samson drink as much as he wanted. It gave Orly some time to think. *How long have I been waiting for this answer? And now that I have the answer, what do I do with it? I think I've been waiting ever since that night when the Gentile group decided that they should take over their own leadership and I should focus on Gabriela. I agree with their decision, but something happened deep inside of me that night. I knew then that my work in Cana was completed. How can I say goodbye to everything and everyone that I love?* He knew the answer. And he stood and led Samson to Yanis' back yard and staked him there so that he could graze.

He sat in the back courtyard to allow the girls privacy to talk, and he began to mentally pack the house. *Should I ask Mr. Kenan to let Enoch help me with a second cart, or should we downsize and rebuy everything after we arrive? The house will need to be sold. I have no doubt that someone will jump at the chance for the property. But*

*when? Now we know where, but I can't leave before Mr. Kenan returns from Jerusalem. It will take four or five days at least to arrive in Joppa, and with the babies, it could take even longer. How do I fit everything into one oxcart? No, that won't work. Maybe I should go first and secure a house and then return for the others.* An idea began to form, and Orly wondered if it was from God, or just his own thinking. It seemed like the best solution, but he would need to run it by Gabriela. He was still muddling through ideas when Yanis arrived.

"Congratulations, Abba!" They hugged and Yanis called to Jenay that he was home. Yanis sat down in the courtyard and visited with Orly. The men were catching up and comparing notes on their ministries. Orly told Yanis how his idea of a leadership team was exploding in Cana and spreading. Yanis reported that he and Jenay were still leading three groups and he was pleased with their maturity. Mr. Ezekiel was totally running the goat business which was finally making a profit and he shared that he and Jenay were enjoying their marriage now that they weren't so overtired. For some reason, Orly was not ready to share his new adventure, so he just kept the conversation going by asking about Yanis. The afternoon passed quickly and Yanis called to Jenay that it was time for them to leave for Mr. Zebedee's if she wanted to be there for dinner. Gabriela introduced the babies to Yanis. He got tears in his eyes and took baby Kobe in his arms. "Man, I miss Kobe."

Orly offered to take the oxcart, but the ladies wanted to walk, as long as Orly would carry one of the babies. Yanis carried baby Kobe, while Orly carried Hosea. Gabriela carried baby Abie and declared her light as a feather compared to the boys. The two couples compared notes on parenting while they walked together to Mr. Zebedee's. Jenay said, "I just wish we lived closer so that we could support each other more. It's been a year since we have all been together." Orly felt certain that their new ministry would be discussed but decided that he would just relax and let it happen.

As expected, Zebedee's family had gathered for a visit with their cousin Peter. Orly had already met all of them on the last visit, so he felt comfortable there. Peter seemed surprised to see him and Gabriela, but welcomed them warmly and thanked him again for providing transportation. Gabriela and Jenay were showing the twins to Grandmother Salome and the two daughters-in-law. They were fascinated at how alike the boys were. As dinner began to wind down, Mr. Zebedee asked Orly how the Gentile ministry was going. He very simply told him that he could never have imagined how fast the gospel would spread among them. They were so ready and so hungry to hear the good news. "They have received the same Holy Spirit as we have, and now they are leading their own groups and spreading. You may have heard of some Roman Christians in the Capernaum area since two families have relocated here to start a class. There are three teams working in Nazareth and we just commissioned six teams to start work among the Romans in Jerusalem."



“Orly, every time we see you, we hear amazing things that God is accomplishing. We are so pleased to call you a part of our family. How can we pray for you and your ministries?”

“Well, sir, we haven’t told anyone else yet, but Gabriela and I are feeling called to relocate to Joppa and begin a multicultural work there. For the past eight or nine months we have felt the stirring of the Holy Spirit telling us that our work is complete in Cana and there are others who can carry on the work. We were not absolutely certain of the location until Peter confirmed it just this morning. We feel that that is where God is calling us. We will be moving within the next few weeks and making Joppa our home. My mother Ruth will of course relocate with us, and we have two other couples who have formed a ministry team with us. We need your prayers for just about every aspect. It will be hard to say goodbye to all our friends in Cana. We need to find a place to live. But my primary request is that many, many men and women would come to know Jesus as Messiah from all different backgrounds. We just want to be obedient to go and tell.”

“Let’s gather in the living room now for prayer,” said Zebedee. Orly and Gabriela said later that it felt like a commissioning service for them. Zebedee, Peter, Jaden, Jonas, Benji, and Yanis embraced him, and Orly allowed himself to feel the deep, deep, bond of Christian brothers. Salome insisted that they spend the night, but they assured her that they would be perfectly comfortable staying with Yanis and Jenay.

As the two couples walked home, Yanis broke the silence, “So, you came to tell us goodbye.”

Orly laughed, “No, we came because Peter forced me to bring him here in my oxcart! We had wanted to come and talked about it, but we were feeling so unsettled and unsure of God’s call, that we decided the time off work would be better spent in prayer.” Then Orly explained what they had been through the past few months as they had surrendered everything they loved to God and gave Him permission to use it all. The two couples shared late into the night. Gabriela put the babies in their baskets in the cart and they sat in the courtyard and talked with Yanis and Jenay while all three babies slept. They finally got too sleepy to talk any longer, and Orly helped Gabriela onto the mat in the cart and covered her with a blanket. He took his own blanket and slept in the grass. The next morning, they ate breakfast together, but decided that since Yanis and Jenay already had a busy day planned and there would be little time for visiting, they would return home and begin their great adventure. “I hate long goodbyes, so I think it’s time we started home. We’ve got a lot to accomplish this week.” They hugged and said their goodbyes pretending that they would see each other soon. Both couples knew that they would probably not meet again until they were with Jesus in Heaven.

“Come see us, whenever you are in Joppa,” Gabriela called as they drove away.

Orly only drove the oxcart to the market and stopped there. He checked to make sure the back wall was secure in case the boys managed to escape their swaddling cloths and baskets, then he invited Gabriela to join him on the driver's seat. Orly made Samson slow to a gentle walk so that it wasn't noisy or harsh like their trip yesterday. Orly took Gabriela's hand and asked her how she was feeling and what she was thinking about all this. Together they talked, and cried, and laughed, and remembered the incredible blessings that God had given them. They sang some Psalms together and enjoyed the early morning drive. It felt like just the two of them alone in the whole wide world with the sun exploding behind them. Orly told Gabriela about his conflicting thoughts regarding how many trips would be needed to move, and whether they should sell everything and just start over in Joppa to avoid having to pack and move. They discussed the pros and cons, asked questions, and started all over again. Gabriela checked on the babies often and noticed that Hosea was awake. But he was just staring at the sky and seemed to be enjoying the rocking cart ride. It wasn't much further to the well and Orly said they would stop there and stretch while he watered Samson. They rode in silence for a while and just enjoyed the beautiful day.

"Gabriela, I need to clear this with Gersham and Mario. But if they are finished with Benjamin's room, I was wondering what you thought about us — I mean, the three men, taking a load to Joppa and securing housing. If we left on Wednesday, we should be there on Friday, hopefully. Then we could check things out, find a house to rent or buy, and be home again before the next Sabbath. Then we would say our goodbyes and bring you ladies and the last load. I said that I wouldn't make decisions without you, but I can't figure out how to include everyone without just selling everything. The only way we could all fit in one cart is to only allow one travel bag apiece."

"Orly, I think you three should go first. When I came here I had no idea what kind of house you would prepare for me, and it has been more than adequate. I trust you to make the right decisions. If that sounds best to you, then I'm okay with it."

They stopped at the well and Orly helped Gabriela down from the high seat. Both boys began wailing when they realized the cart had stopped. Gabriela nursed them and put them back in the baskets. They were ready to be released from the swaddling, so she sat in the back and tried to distract them. By noon they were home. They had agreed not to mention anything until Gersham and Mario were home. Gabriela handed off the babies to Leah and Mother and she helped Orly get the oxcart emptied so the goats wouldn't help themselves to the mats. Orly said he wanted to talk with Jordan and left. Gabriela unwrapped the babies and turned them loose in the floor. They squealed in delight to be free from their shackles. Gabriela caught up with the ladies and found out that Gersham and Mario had finished Benjamin's new room and had moved on to another project. They laughed together about the Apostle Peter's abrupt ways and Gabriela

caught them up on Jenay and Yanis and their beautiful baby girl. The afternoon finally passed. But it was stressful to not mention Joppa. Amata and Lucas weren't coming this week. They had arranged a vacation with their sons and all their grandchildren along the shores of Tiberius. Gabriela was glad to get to escape the house to milk the goats.



Orly went to Jordan's rented house and found that he wasn't home. He walked over to Mr. Kenan's house and asked if anyone had seen him or knew where he was. No one had seen him since dinner last night. Orly didn't want to be home until he could talk with Gersham and Mario, so he walked by the Metal Shop. The back doors to the warehouse were standing open and someone was hammering. He peeked around the edge and saw Jordan hard at work. "Jordan, my friend, it's a holiday and you are working?"

"I seem to remember you doing the same not so long ago," replied Jordan.

"What's going on that I don't know about?" asked Orly realizing that Jordan was making skilletts. Jordan grinned and told him that Gayla's dad had given them permission to become espoused.

"Wow! Where have I been that I've missed all this?" asked Orly.

"I would say that you've been busy with a houseful to care for and not a lot of time for your friends."

"That is too true. I feel like I haven't talked with you in forever, which is why I came seeking you today. I was in hopes we could spend some time together," said Orly.

"Would it be cheating if you helped me with this soup pot? I can't seem to get it smoothed out inside."

"Well, Lucas helped me get Gabriela's smoothed. Here, I'll show you the trick he showed me." Soon the guys were working side by side and they quickly finished the first pot.

"So, who is this lady? And when is the espousal?"

"I met her at the synagogue. She's always there and has the most beautiful smile. I talked with her dad a couple of weeks ago and he pledged her to me. So, I've been making espousal gifts and we hope to make it official in three weeks."

"May I ask you a question?"

"You just did. Sure."

"Does she share your love for our Lord?"

"Yes, Orly, she's a passionate follower of Jesus and as far as I can tell is being obedient to His leading her. You know that's important to me."

"Yes, I know it's very important to you, but beautiful smiles have a way of making us men forget the important things."

“Thanks, brother. Actually, Jedidiah has become a really good friend, and even though his wife has passed, he does a lot of marriage counseling and sees a lot of messes. He’s been guiding me through the kinds of questions I should be asking and things like that.”

“Good for him, and congratulations. I didn’t see this coming.”

“Don’t beat yourself up, I know you’ve been struggling lately.”

“That’s why I was looking for you. I finally know where God is calling me. It’s been a long journey, but I think He’s been orchestrating everything so that the timing is right. Who would have thought that you would settle down in Cana, and I would be called to leave?”

“Leave? What’s going on?”

“Jordan, I’m absolutely certain that God is calling Gabriela and me to relocate to Joppa. Just yesterday, God brought it all together and I know for sure. I wanted you to be the first to know.”

“I want to hear all about it. Let’s go to my house and talk.”

“Okay, but I have to be home for dinner because Gersham and Mario need to hear this final confirmation. We need to get started packing once they know. Right now, no one in Cana knows.”

The men shut down the Metal Shop and made their way to Jordan’s yard. There Orly told Jordan everything. “So tonight, I’ve got to find out if Gersham and Mario want to go with me for this first load, or what the plan is.”

“I’m sure Mr. Kenan will help you move. You aren’t leaving before he gets back, are you?”

“We’ll probably go this week and secure a house, but then we’ll be back to officially say goodbye. It will be extremely hard.”

“Hold it. Orly, are you saying that your house will be for sale? I love your house! And we’ve got to have that stream for baptisms. Can I bring Gayla over to see the house?”

“As long as I don’t have to be there. I plan to be gone by Wednesday. But Gabriela would be glad to show her around anytime.”

“Orly, it’s almost sunset. You need to hurry, or you’ll be late for dinner. I’m sickened by the thought of your leaving, but I’m filled with absolute awe that God is calling you to this needed ministry. I know that both the synagogue and Mr. Kenan’s group will want to support you in prayer. Don’t leave quietly. Let us pray for you. Okay?”

“I promise. Gabriela and I have already agreed that we need all the support we can get.”

Orly ran home, but the guys had already arrived home ahead of him. He apologized to the ladies for making dinner late and then they sat down to the lovely meal. After everyone had finished eating, Orly said that they had news and needed to talk. He suggested that they simply clear the table and move into the living room and let the babies play while they talked together. Everyone agreed and quickly gathered in the little living room to hear the news that Orly had. He told them step-by-step what he had said to the Apostle Peter on Sabbath afternoon and then told them what Peter had said on Sunday morning. They all were in shock. This was exactly the confirmation that they had

been seeking. "Let's take a break and let that sink in for a few minutes, because I want us to make a decision on something else tonight."

When they were all together again, Orly said he wanted to share what he felt was best, but everyone was free to discuss it, question it, or rearrange it. "I would suggest that Gersham and Mario go with me to take the first load and leave you ladies here. If we could leave by Wednesday, we should arrive before Sabbath or early on Sunday. We will secure housing, either renting or purchasing a place, before we return. With God's favor, we will only be gone that week and be back by the following Sabbath. I can't promise, because I don't know the housing situation. Then when we return, we'll spend time saying our goodbyes and selling this house. We will need to meet with each of the groups and secure their prayer support. Then we will leave as soon as possible after that. So, that's my recommendation, but I'm totally open for suggestions," said Orly.

Gersham was the first to speak. "Actually, we finished a barn right at quitting time today. It will take us about a half day to do the cleanup. Then we'll move to another location and start setting up. I suggest, if it's okay with Mario, that we tell Palti that we are quitting and will stay to finish cleaning up the barn but won't start the new project. We should be home no later than midafternoon and can help with the loading." Mario nodded that that was okay with him.

"Thanks, guys. Now, are all of you ladies okay with the idea of us making the first trip without you?" Again, everyone agreed that that would probably be best.

"Now, for some very great news. Our friend Jordan has just become pledged to a young lady and he's very interested in buying this property. He and Gayla will be arranging a time to stop by and look the place over in the near future. That's just another little detail that God is taking care of."

"Oh, we attended the Christian worship service this morning and it was even bigger than last week," reported Gersham.

"That's good. Marcus and Appius will do a good job with it," said Orly. "Okay, let's call it a night and I'll start loading things on the cart in the morning. We also need to use up all the stuff in the cellar so that it doesn't ruin or waste. Jordan doesn't know how to cook, so until he marries it will just sit there and rot. Oh, and I obviously told Jordan this afternoon, so you can tell anyone you wish. Now that it's decided, it's not a secret anymore."

## Chapter 16

On Tuesday morning, everyone tried to pretend it was just a normal day. They all sat down for breakfast and Gersham and Mario left for work. The ladies started planning out what they needed to prepare for the men's trip. Orly looked over the tools in the barn and decided to save them for later. He didn't know whether there would be space for a garden or goats. He hitched Samson to the oxcart and pulled it up to the house. He took Samson back to the barn and began to look through the items stored in the cellar. It was hard to decide what to take and what to leave. There were extra mats and blankets, lanterns, and woodworking tools. He put them in one side of the cart. He asked Gabriela about the chamber pot and the two beds. She said she saw no need of taking them. If they needed them, they could buy them there. There was some scrap lumber and Orly began to make boxes to pack the kitchen. Mother and Gabriela helped him pack away all the dishes they wouldn't need before the move. He used Gabriela's beautiful wedding towels to pad between the dishes. They packed another box of just cups that they had used for guests. When Gersham and Mario arrived soon after noon, they helped Orly load the courtyard table and the large loom. Mother told them they could pack the large soup pot. By the time they loaded the ten courtyard benches, there was no more room. Mario ran to Mr. Hilmar's Mercantile Store and bought several lengths of rope. They tied the two living room cushions onto the top of the benches and there was only a tiny spot left for one of the men to sit in the cart while the other two were on the driver's bench. When they were finished, it wasn't even midafternoon, and they decided to go ahead and leave. Mother said it would only take her a few minutes to finish packing the food for the trip. While they told their wives goodbye, Mother wrapped the fresh bread rolls in cloth and put them in sacks with the other traveling food. The ladies put on cheerful faces, and waved goodbye as Orly drove Samson out of the driveway. The minute the cart was out of sight, all four women grasped each other in a tight hug. Tears were wiped away and they fell to their knees in prayer for safety for the journey. Gabriela unwrapped the boys and let them crawl around the living room.

"I think I'm going to make another pan of bread. There will be time for it to rise before dinner," said Leah.

"Mother Ruth, can you watch Zebulon while I go pick the garden?" So, Mother sat and held baby Zebulon, while she watched Hosea and Kobe wriggle around the living room. All afternoon the ladies felt that time was dragging and the day would never end. Gabriela asked Lena if she could watch the boys while she milked the goats, and then they sat down to a quiet dinner.

On Wednesday, Gabriela visited with Joelle. Gabriela shared everything with her and thanked Joelle for being such a sweet sister to

her. The ladies cried together, but Joelle assured Gabriela that she wanted her to be obedient even if they couldn't raise their sons together. Gabriela tried to thank her for all her support during her pregnancy, but Joelle insisted that it was just what sisters do. Joelle said she would try to persuade Seth to start a Knife and Sword Shop in Joppa so she could visit someday.

On Friday, Gabriela and Mother Ruth visited with Mrs. Vada. While there were a lot of tears, Mrs. Vada assured them that she had seen it coming ever since Passover. She knew that God was at work and promised them her prayers. She thanked Ruth for her years of service to her and Kenan, and assured them that while she would miss them, she was excited for their adventure and would be eager to hear great results.

Each morning and each evening the ladies prayed for their men. Were they there yet? Were they safe? What were they finding? They prayed for God's provision and Mother kept them focused on God's blessings while they waited. It was a very long week. They spent a lot of time just letting the babies play in the living room. They looked forward to the Sabbath because it was a distraction, but they all dreaded the questions that would be asked when they had so few answers.

On Sabbath evening, Gabriela lit the candles and led the prayer of blessing over each one present and then for each one absent. All the ladies cried and prayed silently that the men would be safe and return soon. On Sabbath morning, after Gabriela had milked the goats and they had eaten their breakfast, they all walked down to the stream and held a worship service of their own. The synagogue was still closed for Sukkot travelers, so the ladies held the babies while they sang Psalms and worshipped and wondered if their husbands were worshipping in Joppa.

About noon they walked to Mr. Kenan's house and enjoyed visiting with their friends there. Ruth took Benjamin aside and told him the news. He was surprised that she would even consider such a change at her age but suggested that she had no choice. She tried to convince him that she was excited about the possibility of God using her to reach new people for Jesus. Cana had become predominantly followers, and while many had rejected Him, all had heard the truth. She tried to explain this longing in her heart to let the Gentiles know about Jesus. He just said that he would miss her and wished she wouldn't go. He suggested that she move back to Mr. Kenan's. He would certainly hire her. She smiled and felt sad for Benjamin.

When it was time for the group, it felt strange with so many men missing. Mr. Kenan, Seth, Omri, and Enoch were in Jerusalem and Orly, Gersham, and Mario were in Joppa. Levi had gone out of town with a group of friends, and Nathan and Rebecca had not come. Jordan led the small group in a couple of Psalms and then called Gabriela to the front as they had planned. Gabriela faced the group and thanked them for all their support and prayers through the past

few months as she and Orly had wrestled before God concerning future ministry. She stated, "A long time ago, the Apostles James and John told me a story about Jesus talking to a rich young ruler who wanted to know how to please God. Jesus told him to go and sell all he had in order to follow Him. The rich young ruler had turned away sadly and rejected the invitation to follow Jesus." She looked around at the group and continued. "Orly and I have been taken to that same depth and we feel the Holy Spirit is asking us if we are willing to give away everything that we love in order to be obedient. When we finally said yes, the Holy Spirit made it very clear that our new ministry will be in Joppa. God has instructed us to tear out our roots and follow Jesus to a place of joy. I was surprised to learn that Joppa actually means joy. Right now, Orly, Gersham, and Mario should be in Joppa. When they secure housing, they will return for us. God has called us to reach many different people groups and teach them about Jesus. We are excited. We are thrilled that God has chosen us. But we are also terrified, and incredibly sad to be leaving Cana. You have been such a big part of our ministry and our journey here. We can't imagine beginning a new ministry without you. We need your prayers. Will you please pray for the men to find housing quickly? Will you pray for strength for us to say goodbye to so many friends? But most of all, will you please pray that many Jews, Romans, Greeks, Phoenicians, Syrians, and people from all over the world would come to know Jesus as their Messiah?"

Gabriela sat down and realized that there was not a dry eye in the place. Before Jordan closed in prayer, he added that Orly had promised that when he returned, he would spend a Sabbath with them and let everyone say goodbye. They would have a special prayer time for the group. He then prayed that God would use all of them this week to be light to those in darkness. Gabriela, Mother, Leah, and Lena were surrounded by well-wishers. Everyone wanted to assure them of their prayers, but some, like Benjamin, were just sad that they would want to leave Cana. Ruth was surprised to learn that even some of the faithful followers were not particularly concerned with others coming to know Jesus as Messiah. It just made her feel even more committed to being obedient.

Gabriela told Mrs. Vada that she and Lena were going home to take care of the goats, but Leah and Ruth wanted to stay. Could she please send a servant to escort them home after dinner? Mrs. Vada agreed. Jordan asked if he could bring Gayla over to look at the house while it was still light, and Gabriela agreed.

Lena and Gabriela carried the babies home and nursed them. Gabriela left the twins with Lena and told her that Jordan would probably stop by with Gayla to look over the property. She took two jars down to the barn and then came back for the third one. She began to milk the goats. She was surprised at her own feelings. She was actually glad to be home and away from Mr. Kenan's group. She felt



that God had already disconnected her heart. It was a strange feeling. “Gabriela?” Jordan called.

Gabriela went to the barn door. “I just finished milking. Can you help me with the jars?” she called.

In a few minutes Jordan stuck his head in the barn and introduced Gayla. Gabriela asked, “Have you seen the house yet?”

“No, we just got here.”

“It should be light a little longer, do you want to see the picnic area and stream, or would you rather see the house? You are welcome to come back in the daylight while Jordan is at work before you make your final decision. We’re not going to be ready to sell for another week at least. And we won’t tell anyone it’s for sale until you two decide.”

“I saw the stream when I was baptized several months ago, but I’d love to come back and see it this week sometime if that’s all right with you,” said Gayla.

“It’s my favorite prayer place, and Orly and I like to have picnics down there. We build a huge bonfire and fish for our dinner.” Each one of them carried a jar of milk and Gayla asked what she did with so much milk. “Well, there are two other couples living with us, and because I’m nursing twins, I eat a lot of cheese and drink a lot of milk.”

They carried the jars of milk into the kitchen area and Gabriela explained that because they were getting ready to move, things were a little messy. She introduced Gayla to Lena, and Gayla wanted to meet the babies. “Jordan talks about these identical boys all the time. Now I think I can tell which one is Zebulon, but which one is Hosea, and which one is Kobe?” Gabriela showed her their bracelets, and she agreed that that must be hard. Gabriela explained that her little brothers were identical twins and that she had spent most of her life dealing with their trickery and deception as to who was who. She showed Gayla the four sleeping rooms and the sewing closet filled with shelves of baby supplies. She took them into the kitchen prep area and showed her all the shelves that Orly had built to store dishes. It was already getting dark, so she invited them to eat dinner with them and they agreed. Gabriela poured them all cups of milk and then set the jar beside Jordan. She set out the rolls and cheese and quickly sliced some cucumbers and onions.

After dinner, Jordan and Gayla stayed awhile and played with the boys in the floor. She handed Jordan a swaddling cloth and asked if he wanted to try. She handed another cloth to Gayla and she and Lena laughed as the twins squirmed and wiggled to try to escape. Lena quickly wrapped Zebulon and left to nurse him and put him in his cradle. Gabriela put the boys in the carrier and nursed them while they continued to visit. “You’ll have to come back to see the root cellar. I keep potatoes and onions and my cheese making supplies down there. Then, outside, Orly has built two ovens so that you can cook bread and a dish at the same time. Then there are two fire pits.”

“My dad has already said that he will secure a cook for me as a wedding present for Jordan since I’m not a great cook. And we’ll need to purchase servants to help me with the house.”

“Jordan, also don’t forget that Lucas has managed our outside property and the animals for several months now. He has a wonderful garden growing year-round, and he usually does the evening milking. With you working full time, you’ll need someone to take care of the outdoor stuff. We pay him to do the outside work and his wife, Amata, to help with the indoor. But she primarily does the weaving since she’s a retired seamstress. She makes all our robes and all of the baby things. I’m really going to miss her. Of course, it will be up to you whether you hire them or not. They usually work two hours a day for us. Do you have any questions?”

“Are you sure you don’t mind me coming back tomorrow to look it over in the daylight?” asked Gayla.

“I would welcome your company. We are really just waiting for our husbands to return so that we can finish packing the second load. You need to be sure that this is the type of place you want.”

“Would the fourth hour be convenient for you?” asked Gayla.

“Sure. The boys and I will give you the royal tour,” said Gabriela.

Jordan and Gayla left, and Lena came back to talk. They discussed whether or not Jordan would purchase it. Gabriela told Lena about Jordan being upset about his mother marrying a man who had servants do all the work. Now, it looked like Gayla wanted the same. They giggled about young love and the differences it made in your plans.

Joshua walked Ruth and Leah home and the girls spent some time catching up while the babies played. Gabriela let them know that Gayla was coming to visit again tomorrow at the fourth hour. She might need some help with the babies so she could show her around. They prayed together and then everyone went to their rooms while Gabriela let the boys play a little later.

Gabriela rose early on Sunday morning and got the goats milked while Mother Ruth prepared breakfast. The ladies all walked to the Christian worship service and then Gabriela told the other three, “I just realized that Lucas will be expecting Orly at work.” They agreed and reminded her that Gayla was coming later that morning. She assured them that she would be right back. She hurried to the shop and went around back like Orly had taught her. Lucas was just getting the fire started and she told him that Orly would not be in to work today. He was out of town, and she would explain everything when he and Amata came this afternoon. She left quickly as some of the men were arriving. She didn’t know whether Jordan would tell everyone on the noon break or not. But at least she had let Lucas know first, and that was important. She hurried back home.

She sat down to nurse the boys while she was catching her breath. The boys seemed out of sorts and couldn’t settle down to nursing. They were fussy, which was really unlike them. She thought

about taking a walk over to Joelle's to see if she knew what to do, but when she mentioned it to Mother Ruth, she just smiled. "What?" demanded Gabriela.

"Feel of their gums. They are red and sore and very, very swollen. I think our boys are cutting teeth."

"What can I do for them? Poor babies."

"I made Orly teething biscuits. Let me see if I can figure out how to do that. If not, you'll have to get a recipe from Joelle's cook."

Mother and Lena cleaned up the breakfast dishes and then Mother began to make unleavened bread dough. She made baby-sized rolls and put them in the outside oven. When Gayla arrived, she told her that the babies were teething, and she wanted to keep them with her. She put on her carrier and Gayla handed her the babies one at a time. They were so heavy, but Gabriela felt that they needed their mother. She and Gayla walked down to the stream and sat in the grassy area. Gabriela enjoyed getting to know her and felt that Jordan had made a wise choice. She told Gayla that she and Orly felt a little responsible for Jordan since Orly was the one who encouraged him to come to Cana. "Jordan speaks very highly of Orly. I remember when your husband was teaching at the synagogue, and that's when I invited Jesus to be my Messiah."

"Now, God has called us to Joppa, and we are excited to begin a new chapter of ministry. When do you think you and Jordan will marry?"

"We are supposed to be espoused in two weeks, and Abba says that if Jordan can provide me with a house and everything we need to live comfortably, then he will not make us wait a whole year."

"My dad did the same. We were espoused at Sukkot and married two weeks after Passover."

"That's what I'm hoping will happen. Let's go look at the rest of the property."

"You saw the barn last night, but here's the goat pen and this is the ox's pen. Back here is storage for the oxcart and other tools and things. Then here's the garden I was telling you about."

"What a strange fence around it."

"Well, it keeps out the goats! If you raise goats, you have to always be aware of anything that they will eat, which is anything and everything. I have to dry clothes on the rooftop, so they won't eat them."

They walked around inside the garden. Then Gabriela showed her the fire pits and ovens. They looked at the root cellar and Gayla admired all the shelves built there. Gabriela explained that the courtyard would easily seat twelve to fourteen, but they had always thought that they would enlarge it someday. So, there was plenty of room to do so.

Then they went indoors. Gabriela put the babies into their cradles. She invited Gayla to go up to the rooftop and look around. As she did, Gabriela realized that the men had not considered the

furniture up there. They might have to leave it behind. *At least we are taking carpenters with us!*

After Gayla had gone, Mother and the other ladies spent some time in prayer. They prayed for God's favor toward the men as they looked for housing. They prayed for their safe return. And they prayed that many people would come to know Jesus because of this relocation.

When the twins woke up from their naps, Mother handed each one of them a cooled roll of bread. It was hard as a rock and the boys sat and gnawed on them like little puppies. They were still uncomfortable, but it kept them entertained and apparently helped some of the pain.

At the tenth hour, Lucas and Amata arrived, but instead of heading to the barn, Lucas looked around the empty courtyard and quietly asked what was going on.

"Come in, both of you. Let's go up to the rooftop. It's the only place that still has furniture. Mother, can you watch the babies? Call me if they get too fussy. They have decided to cut their first teeth and they are really miserable," Gabriela explained to Amata as they walked up the stairs. Gabriela invited them to sit. She told them how God had been dealing with them and how they had struggled. She explained how God had confirmed His call and how they had agreed to be obedient so that hopefully others could come to accept Jesus as their Messiah.

Amata and Lucas looked at her with tear-streaked faces. "You two are like our own children. We love you. You are the ones who told us about Jesus. Now our entire family believes and is following obediently."

"Even Magnus?" exclaimed Gabriela.

"Yes, just last week while we were in Tiberius, he and his entire family decided to follow Jesus. Now our family is complete because of you."

"No, it is complete because of Jesus' great sacrifice. We just told you about it."

"I guess our jobs here are over."

"Not yet. Lucas, I still need your help with the goats and keeping the grounds ready to sell. And of course, picking the garden. We've tried to keep up with everything while you were away, but we've found it really hard. And Amata, we still need you to help, too."

"Does Mr. Kenan know?" asked Lucas.

"No, we didn't know for sure until last Sunday and the men left on Wednesday headed to Joppa. I will tell Mr. Kenan just as soon as he returns. The men won't come back until they have secured housing. Then Orly said that he wanted to meet with the original Gentile group, the synagogue, and Mr. Kenan's group to make sure everyone knows to be praying for us as we begin this new ministry."

"So, Ruth and the two young couples are going with you?" asked Amata.

"Yes, but none of us can weave like you can. Hopefully, I can master the large loom and start weaving a little every day as the boys get older. Right now, they seem to take up all my time."

"It will get easier in a couple of years. Until then, you just survive and take all the help you can get."

"I always thought Orly would take over my place at the shop," said Lucas deep in thought.

"Yes, Orly thought so, too. But Lucas, you do understand that we must be obedient."

"Yes. But it doesn't change the hurt. Orly has been like a son, yes, but more like a spiritual father to me." Her heart broke as she watched Lucas weep. She could tell that he was not accustomed to doing so.

"So, is this place for sale?" Lucas asked.

"Yes and no. We already have an interested buyer. He's supposed to give me an answer this week. If he wants it, it is his. If he doesn't, then yes, it is for sale. Do you and Amata want to buy a place of your own?"

"No, but I have a grandson who is looking. This would be just about the right size for him and his new wife."

"Then I'll let you know if Jordan decides not to buy it."

"Oh, it would be perfect for Jordan, too. And they could continue to baptize at the stream. That would be sweet to keep that."

"And while I can't promise, I think Jordan will need some help with the grounds."

"Yes, he probably would."

"And Amata, you might help Gayla the way you've helped me. But of course, I can't promise that."

"Okay, let's get busy and earn our pay," said Amata. "What shall we do today?"

"We have no loom. You have your choice of helping Mother Ruth in the kitchen with dinner or watching my two very fussy boys."

"Oh, I'll take fussy boys any day!" said Amata. "Teething is not fun."

"I've got to get that garden picked and it's almost milking time," said Lucas. Gabriela headed for the kitchen and asked Mother how she could help with dinner.

About midmorning on Monday, Gabriela put the boys in their carriers, handed them a new roll to gnaw on, and took them for a visit to Sabra's. Gabriela called to Sabra from the open door and Sabra invited her in. Sabra welcomed her and indicated that things had been slow for a few days, and she had plenty of time to visit. "Well, it's not just a social call," admitted Gabriela. "Look at these boys' gums. Is there anything more I can do to help them with teething?"

"Ruth knows that the sooner those teeth break through the gums, the better the boys will feel. I don't see any problems, and I think you'll see some beautiful white teeth in a couple of days. But it does affect your nursing. Don't let them chew on you. Now, enough of the

professional advice. How are you? I see you are getting your strength back if you are carrying these two chunks around.”

“They are getting heavy. I wanted to thank you for taking such good care of me, but I also wanted to let you know some news that you will hear shortly. That’s my real reason for the visit.”

“What’s that?”

“Orly and I, along with Mother and the two young couples, are relocating to Joppa. We feel that God has called us there to minister to many different people groups. God has prepared our hearts, and we are ready to pull up roots and follow where He leads. The only problem is, pulling roots is hard. We will miss you terribly.”

“Gabriela, I will miss you, but I have learned that when God calls you and Orly to do something, you don’t do it half-way. I expect to hear great things from you. When will you be leaving?”

“The men are there now trying to find housing for us, and they will return as soon as possible. We will spend one Sabbath saying goodbye and then be on our way. As the Apostle Peter told us, when we know what God wants, we should be in a hurry to be obedient.”

The boys were being fussy, so Gabriela said her goodbyes and tried to distract them with the lovely walk. They just screamed most of the way home. She wrapped them tightly, nursed them and put them in their cradles.

On Thursday, both boys woke up with a shiny white spot cutting through their gums. Their happy dispositions returned, and they were back to their playing and entertaining the women. Mother continued to give them the hard rolls to chew on, and they seemed to enjoy them. They looked so grown up sitting up and chewing on the rolls. It was still early, when Gabriela answered a knock on the door and a haggard-looking Mr. Kenan asked if he could come in. “Vada told me last night, and Lucas confirmed it this morning. So, Orly is leaving?” He looked like he wanted her to tell him that it was not true. She asked if he wanted to hear the whole story from her, or if he would prefer to hear it from Orly since he had obviously already heard the basic news. He took her in his arms and began to weep over her like a daughter. Mother Ruth came into the room to check on him, and Mr. Kenan indicated that he wanted to hug her, too. “Ruth, Ruth, I will miss you so much. I thought when I let you go that you would stay close, and we would grow old together as friends. You and your son mean the world to me. Before Seth moved here, I intended to turn my whole business over to Orly. He is my spiritual son and I’m so proud of him. I just want to wish you both the very best and promise to pray for you night and day. I know that God is going to use you in a mighty way.” Then he turned and left quickly. Gabriela heard Mother crying in her room but decided to let her have her space. The day seemed unusually long.

Soon after dinner someone knocked at the door. She heard Jordan ask Mother if there was any goat milk left and Mother laughed and poured him a cup. “Gabriela, I know you won’t do business without Orly, but I would like to purchase this property if the price is

right. I was wondering if I should wait for Orly to return or if it would be okay if I asked Mr. Hilmar to come look it over and give us a price that would be fair to both parties.”

“Jordan, I don’t think Orly has thought about a price. And I think it would be a reasonable thing to do,” agreed Gabriela.

“I can run down on my noon break tomorrow and ask him to take a look, if it’s okay with you.”

“I’m so glad that you and Gayla want it. It will make me happy to think that the stream will still be used for baptisms. So, I’ll expect Mr. Hilmar tomorrow or Sunday. Thanks so much Jordan, and just think, you can have fresh goat milk every day,” said Gabriela.

On Friday morning, Mother declared that she was fixing a Sabbath meal for tonight and would make enough for the men, too. Gabriela reminded her that they might not make it until later. But she agreed if the men did get in today, they would need a good hot meal. She couldn’t believe it was already Friday. Leah said she would make the bread and Lena said she would churn the butter if Gabriela watched Zebulon. So, Gabriela was assigned baby duty, while the other three cooked. Kobe’s latest trick was crawling under the benches at the dining table and getting himself stuck so that Gabriela would have to come and rescue him. He could crawl forward but not backward and would scream in anger until someone picked him up and turned him around. Then he would be off searching for a new place to get stuck. It was going to be a long day.

After noon she put the babies down for a nap and Leah agreed to keep an eye on them while Gabriela took the laundry to the stream. The hard work would do her good and get her mind off where the men were. As she scrubbed, her heart was filled with songs of worship, and she sang with abandon. When the laundry was complete, she gathered up the wet shawls, swaddling cloths, and her robe and headed back to the house. She ran the last few steps because she heard screaming from one of the boys. All the ladies were gathered around Hosea and trying to quiet his screams. He refused to be comforted and a red knot was growing on his forehead. “What happened?” she cried. She put him to her breast and comforted him.

Leah explained, “We were all in the kitchen and suddenly we heard a very loud bang and then screams. When we came in, Hosea’s cradle was upside down and he was stuck under it. I don’t know what happened, but I think he flipped it over on top of himself!”

“I’m so sorry. I thought they were sound asleep. We were listening for them, but didn’t know he could do that.” All three ladies were upset that they had allowed little Hosea to get hurt.

Gabriela threw back her head and laughed, “These boys! He must have been really surprised to find himself penned in by his own mischief. Maybe that would be a way to keep them safe. We’ll just put them under their cradles!” All the other ladies began to laugh and described Hosea’s face. They agreed he looked more surprised than

hurt. Mother put a wet rag on the red spot, and it was already beginning to fade. He would probably have a bruise.

“What are we going to do to keep them safe? We may need to build a pen. They are too young to just put on a mat, aren't they? Where are the men when we need them?”



## Chapter 17

“We’re right here! What do you need two strong men to do for you?” Gabriela and Lena ran into their husband’s arms and Leah and Mother Ruth looked on as they, too, were greeted. Orly took Leah aside and explained that Gersham had already secured a job and had decided to stay and start investigating the area. Gabriela handed Hosea to Orly since he had calmed down.

“Hey, Hosea, who’s been punching on you? You’ve got war scars! What happened?” Orly asked Gabriela.

“Apparently, he thought he had figured out how to escape the cradle, but the cradle won!” she explained as she checked on Kobe who was still sleeping peacefully.

“Mother Ruth, was Orly this strong when he was a baby?” asked Gabriela.

“Enough of the chatter, I want to know the news,” said Mother Ruth.

“And where is Gersham?” asked Lena.

“Can you wait just a few minutes? We passed Lucas and Amata, and they will be here in just a second. Then we can just tell everyone all at once. But yes, we bought a house and yes, Gersham has already secured a job and is working. God has indeed directed us every step of the way.”

Lucas and Amata arrived and Orly invited them to come in and hear the news. He offered them a dining bench or the floor. They chose to sit on the floor with the others. Orly began, “We made it to Joppa late afternoon on Friday. We found Simon the Tanner and he invited us to spend the Sabbath with him and was very helpful. We enjoyed getting to know him and his family. Several other followers dropped by, and they all agreed to be on the lookout for a home for us when they learned of our purpose in being there. Simon spent Sunday morning showing us some beautiful parts of the city. It overlooks the Great Sea and is breathtaking. When we went back to his home about noon, his servants reported that various followers had reported a total of six houses they felt we should explore. Simon had work to do, but he generously allowed Asa, one of his servants, to be our guide. We looked at four of the homes but none of them felt right. But on Tuesday morning, the very first house we looked at was perfect. Asa insisted that we look at the other one just to make sure we didn’t miss anything. We discovered that it was better than perfect. It seems like it was designed just for us.”

“It is well built and in a great location and well, better than perfect,” added Mario.

“So, tell us about it,” begged Gabriela.

“Shall we start at the top or the bottom?” Orly teased.

“Just start!” demanded Gabriela. Everyone laughed at their bickering.

“Okay, the top has a nice rooftop that is about four times the size of our current rooftop. It overlooks the Great Sea and gets a great evening breeze. We’ll all have to get used to it being a little warmer there than here. But everyone uses their rooftops to catch the sea breeze. Next layer is yours to describe,” Orly said to Mario.

“Okay, the next floor is made up of four sleeping rooms and we think that it will be our rooms with Gersham and Leah.”

Orly took over again. “Then the main floor is larger than the second floor and rooftop. It has an indoor preparation kitchen that is well done, a dining area, and a living room that will probably seat twenty. It’s about the size of Mary’s in Jerusalem. And there are five sleeping rooms. Then outside, there are two courtyards. The one in the front will seat approximately fifty, while the one in the back will seat about fifteen at the most. It is more private and for family.”

“Oh, Orly, I was thinking of a much more modest house.”

“Actually, it is fairly small compared to the ones around it. It is in a nice neighborhood, but all the houses are large. They do a lot of entertaining, and this house doesn’t stand out as being too large.”

“What about the grounds? Tell us about the barn and garden, and is there a stream?” asked Gabriela.

“Well, that’s where living in Joppa is going to be a change. No, there is no barn. There’s a man who sells milk and brings it to your front door twice a day,” said Orly.

“I suppose there’s no garden area either,” said Gabriela.

“No, but there are carts that deliver every morning, and all the ladies go running to pick out their fruits and vegetables right from the cart. Then they spend time talking and I think it will be a great way for you ladies to get to know your neighbors. Or you can buy from the market. But the market is huge. Most of the locals use the market to buy other things, but not food. Asa says that they also go to the well every morning, so that’s another place to get to know people,” said Orly. “It will be different, and it will take some getting used to.”

“So, it’s a coastal town like Bethsaida?” asked Mother.

“It is a coastal town, but a lot larger than Bethsaida. Simon said that we would baptize in the Great Sea,” said Orly, “and it is beautiful.”

“Wow. That’s a lot to take in,” said Leah.

The ladies all agreed, and Leah began to softly sing Psalm 150. They still had a thousand questions, but their focus was on obedience and looking forward.

Mother said, “Ladies, I believe we have a Sabbath meal to finish. Lucas and Amata, will you stay and join us for dinner?”

“No, we are meeting with our group tonight.”

“I thought your group met tomorrow,” said Orly.

“We do still meet occasionally with them, but we’ve started a new group. I think Markus and Diana, Julius and Marcella, and Titus and

Appius have all started new groups, too. We didn't want to miss out on the fun."

"So how many are in your new group?"

"We have twelve — well, counting us. So, ten new seekers. And I believe the others have about ten apiece, too." Orly and Lucas got up to leave when Gabriela remembered her news. "You two will want to hear this news that we learned last night. Jordan and Gayla want to buy the property whenever you give him a price. He's asked Mr. Hilmar to help you come up with a fair price."

Lucas and Orly left to walk over the property. Lucas asked when he would be leaving. "I want to meet with the synagogue in the morning and Mr. Kenan's group tomorrow afternoon. Then I would really like to meet with the original Gentile group if they could find a place to meet just to say goodbye and pray together. I don't see how we could meet here since there aren't enough benches or tables." Lucas said he would take care of something and asked if Sunday night would be okay.

"Sure. I've got to get the property settled with Jordan, so I'll probably be around until at least Tuesday or Wednesday. How did Mr. Kenan take my leaving? Did you tell him when he got back?"

"No, I guess Gabriela told him, but when he came in on Friday, he seemed to be in good spirits. He promoted Markus to supervisor in the afternoons and Julius to be backup to both me and Markus if either of us need time off. I think he gave them both raises. They were pretty happy. The new boy, Edam, is a good worker and fast learner. He reminds me of you when you were first starting out. He's determined to learn everything and get it exactly right. Mr. Kenan knows how to pick his men."

"I dread saying goodbye to him. It's hard to leave everyone, but you know how close I feel to Mr. Kenan. He's been so very, very generous to me," said Orly.

They picked the garden together and took the basketful in to the ladies to sort. They milked the goats and then said goodnight. Gabriela lit the candles as tears flowed down her cheeks. She realized that this was the last time they would celebrate Sabbath in this house. Orly prayed for each person present and especially for Gersham as he was away. But then he prayed that God would accept their sacrifice and that it would be pleasing in His eyes.

After dinner, he told Gabriela that he needed to talk with Jordan if he was home. He might be late. She let the boys play late and wondered whether it was safe to put them into their cradles. Finally, she just folded up several blankets and after swaddling them and nursing them, put them on the blankets on the floor. She carried out the boxes of personal things that they might get into if they decided to explore. She was still sitting in the living room praying when Orly returned. He said that Jordan was not at home but figured that he was at Gayla's, so he walked over to talk with Benjamin. "Gabriela, Benjamin is attending a Gentile group."

“Yes, Jordan told me that he was playing ball with the group at Appius’ house after work on Tuesdays,” said Gabriela.

“That’s where it started, but now he’s actually attending a group led by Titus and Appius. They are on the third lesson, and he said he was really enjoying being able to ask his questions.”

“Orly, that’s great. Wouldn’t it be weird if the Gentiles start teaching the Jews about Messiah? I’ll be praying especially for Benjamin.”

“After I talked with Benjamin for a while, I went back to Jordan’s, and we decided how to handle the synagogue and Mr. Kenan’s group tomorrow.”

“I want you to know that I spoke to Mr. Kenan’s group last week, so they already know the basics,” said Gabriela.

“Jordan said you did a magnificent job. I’m so proud of you.”

“Thank you. I just didn’t want them to be in the dark. Of course, Mr. Kenan and several others weren’t there, so you’ll need to start at the beginning.”

“I will.”

“I’ll be praying for you. I didn’t know what to do about the boys, so I just put them down on blankets. I’m scared they will just flip cradles all night for the fun of it. I’m not sure Hosea is old enough to realize that that nasty bump was his own fault. So, be warned, you may wake up with a son in your face!”

“Great!” said Orly wryly, but Gabriela could tell he was grinning.

“And even though you think I’m totally distracted, I noticed that our sons sprouted a tooth while their abba was out of town. We need to get to sleep. It’s going to be a long day tomorrow.”

Everyone walked together to synagogue the next morning. A new man that Orly didn’t recognize led the group in singing several Psalms. It was a good time of worship. Ruler Jedidiah announced that there would be another baptism next Sabbath at the stream immediately following the worship time. There were twelve people signed up to be baptized and he invited any others who were ready to talk with him afterward. Jordan preached about Jesus’ commission and said, “We are to be doing these commands as we go about our daily life, just like the Shema of Jewish Scripture. We do them as we sit, as we stand, as we eat, as we work, as we play.”

Then Jordan said, “This morning, there is a group of seven individuals that have been a vital part of our synagogue. They have been called by God to serve not only in their everyday life, but to relocate to Joppa in order to share that Jesus came as their Messiah with people who have never heard. I am going to ask them to come to the courtyard now. When they have all assembled, we will have a time of prayer.” Ruth, Gabriela, Leah, and Lena got up from the women’s area and walked down the stairs to the courtyard carrying the babies. They were not expecting this. They joined Orly and Mario. Soon the entire synagogue had emptied into the courtyard and surrounded them. Jordan introduced them individually and said that Gersham was

already in Joppa. “This week, Orly and his team will be joining him. They will live among many different cultures and peoples and attempt to be light to a dark world. God has called them, and it is this synagogue’s responsibility to pray for them and encourage them. We will miss them, but I pray that you will also feel incredible joy that they have felt God’s call and have responded with obedience. I for one, am very, very blessed to call them my friends. Many of you are followers of Jesus because of their ministry.” Ruler Jedidiah led in a prayer of commission, Jordan prayed for an abundant harvest, others voluntarily prayed for their relocation, others prayed for their courage and wisdom. After several had prayed, Jordan asked those who would make a vow to pray for them daily to raise their hand. The group looked up into the faces of many, many friends committing to praying for them.

“My heart overflows with gratitude to you. We will need your prayers, but the people of Joppa need them even more. Thank you,” Orly said on behalf of the team.

Ruler Jedidiah prayed the traditional prayer of blessing, and the people were dismissed. But no one wanted to leave. Everyone wanted to encourage them, and many reminded Orly that they had accepted Jesus because of his faithfulness. It was a sweet farewell.

By the time they reached Mr. Kenan’s house, it was time to start the group meeting there. Jordan led the worship music and more or less summarized his same message. Then he called on Orly to give his report. Orly stood in front. He said, “I understand that my wife did a little preaching in my absence last week. Let’s give her some praise for that. It was a very personal and hard thing to do.” The group clapped enthusiastically. They all loved Gabriela and wanted her to know it.

Orly continued, “Last week we were able to locate six Jewish followers in Joppa who may be interested in forming a group once we get settled. God blessed us by providing a beautiful house for our team. There will be a lot of changes for us. But we are totally convinced that this is where God has called us to minister. And like Jordan’s message, it will begin with us making friends, going to the well, finding jobs. And by the way, Gersham found a carpentry job on our first day there. He stayed to work and begin getting acquainted. We need prayer that God will continue to direct every step and every detail. At this point, we don’t know whether we will be starting groups in each of the various people groups, or whether we will be starting classes for mixed groups. We just don’t know and will need your prayers to determine that. Thank you for your prayers for us to find housing. Now we ask that you pray for our boldness and courage to be light. But we ask you to especially pray for the people of Joppa to be hungry for Messiah.”

Orly sat down. Jordan asked those who wanted to pray for Orly’s team to please stand. Most of the men stood and a few of the women. Jordan called on five men and two women to pray aloud for the team. At the end, Jordan led the group in singing Psalm 150. A deep joy

permeated the courtyard, but it was filled with a sadness that was real. Saying goodbye was incredibly hard and there were many tears.

Orly and Mario left to go milk the goats but returned so that they could eat dinner with Mr. Kenan's family. Seth and Joelle sent the children home with the servants immediately after the post-Sabbath dinner, but they lingered to spend more time together with Gabriela and Orly, Mother Ruth, Mario, Leah, and Lena. Everyone knew that it would be their last time together as a family for a long, long time. Mr. Kenan insisted that whenever Orly was ready to pack up and leave, Enoch and Jonah would accompany them with an oxcart. Orly told him, "I thought that we would be able to do it in two trips, but I think these boys have grown too much and honestly, I forgot to count the furniture on the rooftop. So, if that's something you want to do, I would appreciate your help. You've always been there for me."

"Orly, I can't talk about it and probably never will be able to. I've tried to express my love and appreciation for all you've done for me and my family. But now, God has called you elsewhere, and that love will never change. We just may not see each other until we sit at Jesus' feet. Won't that be something? Let's look forward with joy."

"Thank you, sir. I'll let you know what day we'll be leaving just as soon as I can get some last-minute details taken care of."

On Sunday morning, Orly and his family walked downtown for the Christian worship time. They saw Jordan and Mr. Hilmar there and joined them as they worshipped together. Afterward, the men walked home with Orly and Gabriela. Jordan had taken the morning off work to talk with Orly. He explained that since Mr. Hilmar knew a lot about property value and what would be an appropriate price, he had asked him to come and look over the place. Mr. Hilmar had agreed. Orly said, "That's totally agreeable to me. I'll accept whatever Mr. Hilmar says." Mr. Hilmar asked Orly to show him the property line down by the stream and how much of the wooded area was his. He had a few other questions such as whether the goats and ox and oxcart were included. They walked up to the house and Mr. Hilmar examined the house from top to bottom. Orly reminded him that it did not include any furniture or personal items.

"Could I use your rooftop for a few minutes? I need to add these numbers up and I'll get you a price in just a few minutes," said Mr. Hilmar.

"Certainly," said Orly as he walked him to the foot of the stairs. "I noticed that Ruler Jedidiah announced a baptism here on Sabbath."

"I felt certain that this would work, so I told him to go ahead," grinned Jordan.

"Are you aware that the Gentile groups have been baptizing here quite often while we meet at Mr. Kenan's?"

"No, but I don't see a problem with that. That's really cool."

Jordan noticed that the boys were each sporting a new front tooth that was shining every time they smiled their silly grins. He played with the boys and Gabriela told him about Hosea's cradle attacking him.

Jordan laughed and soon Mr. Hilmar called the two men to join him. He showed them his numbers. "You have certainly improved this place since you bought it from Mr. Abraham. This is the number I came up with. Do you need me for anything else?" asked Mr. Hilmar.

"Just to let me know what I owe you," said Orly.

"Gentlemen," he said as his eyes filled with tears, "I have never known two finer young men. It has been my privilege to help you out in this matter. Please consider it a gift to both of you for your service to this community and to God."

"Thank you, sir."

"Jordan, this number looks high to me," said Orly, "Let's talk about it."

"And it looks low to me, so let's not. I'm off work until noon and then I would like for us to ask the men at the shop to witness the transaction, if that's okay with you. I've already cleared it with Mr. Kenan. Until then, is there anything I can do to help you?"

"I guess I just need to figure out my schedule. Gabriela and I are meeting with the Gentile group tonight, so I'll probably get the ladies cooking for the trip today, then we'll load tomorrow and be out of here on Tuesday. Will that be agreeable to you if I stay on your property until then?"

"Well, it hasn't happened yet, but certainly. Actually, I need to let my landlord know that I'll be moving and go home to pick up the silver. I'll meet you at the shop at noon."

"That would be perfect. I'll see you then. And thanks again for making this so painless."

"That's what friends are for."

"I can't believe I'll miss your wedding. No, don't get me started. I'm just thrilled to have met Gayla. She seems like a great lady. I know your dad would be proud of you, and I also know that he taught you how to treat women right. God bless you, Jordan."

"And you, my brother."

Jordan told Gabriela and the babies goodbye. Leah and Lena and Mario had gone to the market to get travel food, so he went into the kitchen and talked with Mother Ruth. "I will miss you so much. Thank you for helping me through those first years of being away from home. I don't know whether I would have made it without you. May God bless you as you let God's love shine through you."

"Thank you, Jordan. I have a hard time expressing it, but I am so excited about this new adventure. I never thought that God would use me as anything but a slave to serve people. But now He's using me to serve Him and I'm so excited."

"You are an inspiration and encouragement to me," Jordan said as he left by the kitchen door.

"Mother, Gabriela, are you where we can talk?" asked Orly.

"Jordan will be buying the property, so we are free to leave as soon as we attend the Gentile meeting tonight. Of course, we need to load the cart and prepare for seven days on the road — it should only

take five, but I would feel better if we packed extra and we'll stop for the Sabbath. There is very little fishing along the way, so you will need to pack every meal and don't forget snacks for Gabriela and Lena. I will be doing the transfer with Jordan at the shop at noon today. Then, I will come home, and Mario and I will start loading the cart. Just as soon as everything is loaded either tomorrow or Tuesday, we will get on the road. Now, Enoch and Jonah will be traveling with us. Mother, will Benjamin pack for them or is that our responsibility?"

"I would think that Mr. Kenan will provide for them."

"How soon can you be ready to leave?"

"I would say by noon tomorrow."

"I'm going to talk with Mr. Kenan and get that scheduled for Enoch and then I'll stay for the property transaction and visit with the guys a few minutes at work. Then I'll be home and start loading. Oh, and Mother, Marcella told me to make sure you know you are welcome to attend the Gentile group tonight. You are a vital part, you know."

Orly kissed Gabriela on the nose and left. He walked to Mr. Kenan's house and knocked on the door. Omri answered and told him that Mr. Kenan was in his office. Orly knocked on his door and was invited in.

Orly said, "I did not come to get us both crying. I merely need to settle some business. Will you officiate at the property transaction at noon today at the shop? Jordan and I have come to an agreement, and he said he had mentioned it to you."

"Certainly, I was just about ready to go there now," said Mr. Kenan.

"And I believe that we will be ready to leave by noon tomorrow. Mother said she would spend the day cooking and Mario and I will spend the day packing. I hope to be on the road by noon. It is a three-day journey, and I can house Enoch and Jonah for the night. I will make sure they are stocked with food from the market before I send them home."

Mr. Kenan replied, "First of all, Benjamin will prepare all of the meals for everyone for the trip to Joppa. I just need to let him know when to have the boxes ready. I don't want Ruth to have to worry about it and she will need to pack up her kitchen, I'm sure."

"Mr. Kenan, that is very generous of you. It will really help and it means we could probably get on the road by mid-morning. Could Enoch bring your cart over this afternoon? I really appreciate all your help. I know. I know. But how can I not say thank you? Someday Jesus will thank you for me."

"Omri, please tell Benjamin to prepare meals for seven adults for five days on the road to Joppa. They will need to be delivered to Orly's soon after sunrise tomorrow morning. And send someone to let Ruth know that we will be taking care of the food so that she doesn't need to prepare anything. Ask Enoch to take the large oxcart to Orly's at



noon today. Enoch and Jonah will need to be at Orly's soon after sunrise on Monday ready for their journey."

"Is that all, sir?"

"Yes, Omri, and thank you.

"Let's let you say goodbye to Mrs. Vada one more time and then we need to head to the shop."

Orly hugged Mrs. Vada, and when he teared up, she simply said, "You are always welcome here, Son. We are so proud of you. Now go. Get busy. God needs you there."

Mr. Kenan and Orly walked toward the shop. Mr. Kenan asked how he and Jordan had agreed on a figure for the property. "Sir, I was amazed at Jordan's wisdom. He asked Mr. Hilmar to come and evaluate the property and we agreed that we would abide by whatever Mr. Hilmar said. It was a very good price for me. I felt it was too high and Jordan felt it was too low. So, we agreed to keep our agreement and settled on it."

"That was indeed very wise. Jordan is a good man. Thank you for recommending him to me."

"He is a good man and will make a great husband."

"Yes, we have another wedding to plan it seems. He doesn't have a dad, and I think I'll volunteer to host it like I did yours."

"I think that would be great. I only wish I could be here. But we must move on."

Lucas had just called for the noon break when Mr. Kenan and Orly arrived. All the men were glad to see Orly again and he enjoyed the break with them. When Jordan arrived, Mr. Kenan officiated at the property exchange and the men agreed to witness the transaction. Orly named his price. Jordan counted out the silver and handed it to Orly. Orly counted it in the presence of the men and agreed. He presented Jordan with the key to the house but told him he had never used it and would leave it unlocked when he left sometime on Monday. Jordan talked to Lucas about continuing to manage the property and Lucas agreed. Jordan told Orly to take all the milk and produce that he needed for the trip. They shook hands and then hugged. It was hard saying goodbye. He asked Lucas if he was coming this afternoon and Lucas reminded him that he needed to milk the goats and Amata wanted to say goodbye privately. So, yes, they would come over but not accept payment.

When Markus called time, the men headed back inside and Lucas and Orly left. Lucas said he would be over in a little bit to help load the carts.

Orly ran home to let the ladies know that the plans were to be on the road by midmorning tomorrow. "We need something to eat for dinner tonight and something for breakfast in the morning and then I hope we will be on the road. Gabriela, do you know of any family that needs our excess food?"

"No, but I could ask Sabra. She knows a lot of people who aren't getting enough to eat."

“Go talk to Sabra and find out. Mario and I are going to start in the root cellar and work our way up. I’m assuming you ladies would all prefer to ride together in one cart. Am I right?”

“Yes, please,” said Lena.

“Do we have a shopping basket large enough for Zebulon to sleep in or do you need to go to the market?”

“Will this one do?” asked Mother Ruth.

“Should I make a small batch of bread?” asked Leah.

“Yes, bake just one batch of bread for dinner tonight and breakfast in the morning, and whatever is left over we’ll pack for extras.”

Mario and Orly began carrying everything out of the root cellar. When Mario saw the beds he had made for Gabriela, he told Orly, “I can always build Gabriela another bed, but what we really need is packing boxes for the dishes. Would you like for me to modify these beds to pack dishes in?”

“That would be great!” said Orly. Mario flipped the beds over and simply added walls to the legs so that they could pack them full of dishes. They set the beds in the carts before filling them and would unload them the same way. Then the bed could easily be transformed back to a bed when needed. Orly assigned Leah and Lena to pack bags of food that were in the cellar.

Gabriela returned with the information about a family who lived near Denna who was struggling to feed their four children and was expecting another one in a few months. The ladies had filled five shopping bags with potatoes, onions, squash, melons, beans, and cucumbers. Orly and Mario helped the ladies carry the food to the woman’s home and told her that they were moving. It would go to waste if she didn’t accept it. She was very grateful.

Mother set out all the dishes that they would need for the trip and for dinner tonight and breakfast in the morning. Then she told the men they could pack the rest. She had already put a mixed vegetable dish in the outside oven so it would cook without needing her attention. The ladies were busy packing their rooms, the sewing, and the baby supplies. They also wanted the babies to play as much as possible today, because they would be fairly confined for the next three days. They took turns watching them. Amata and Lucas arrived a little earlier than usual, and she volunteered to sit in the floor and entertain the babies. The three men finished the kitchen and the cellar. They carried out the cheese-making box and table and made sure everything was left clean. They began carrying down the rooftop furniture. After a while, Lucas said he needed to pick the garden and milk the goats. Orly told Lucas he better check and see what Jordan was doing about the goats on Tuesday morning. “We’ve already taken care of that. I’ll teach Jordan how to care for them.”

Orly and Mario continued to carry furniture from the roof. The ladies had packed all the baby supplies that they were not currently

using into baskets and bags. These were set in Enoch's cart. But all the supplies that they would need for the trip were put into Orly's cart.

Tonight, after dinner they could load the table and benches ... dinner ... dinner. They were supposed to be at Julius and Marcella's for dinner. He called for Mother and reminded her to get ready to attend the group. She said that she wanted to but was feeling a little tired and felt an early night would be better for her. Gabriela was also feeling exhausted but knew that this would be too special to miss. Amata apologized for not reminding them of it and sent Gabriela to her room to freshen up. Gabriela packed a travel bag for the boys and hoped they would behave tonight. They couldn't just plop them in the cradles anymore and she wasn't sure what would happen. She hoped that the other women would want to pass them around until they were sleepy.

As the sun hit the horizon, Lucas brought in a basket of fresh produce, and three jars of milk. Lucas and Amata, Orly and Gabriela began their walk to Julius' home. Lucas carried Hosea and Orly carried Kobe. Gabriela and Amata walked together and talked. Amata told her about her dream of opening a booth at the market just for baby cloths. She would make swaddling cloths and baby shawls. She felt that there would be a good market for them as she had seen a similar shop in Capernaum. She still had her large loom and Lucas said he would rent her a booth and put the loom in it if she promised not to overdo. She was thinking about working only in the mornings just to stay busy. She would love talking to all the new mothers. Gabriela agreed it sounded perfect for Amata.

When they arrived at Julius and Marcella's home, Gabriela forgot all about being tired and thoroughly enjoyed the sweet fellowship with the group. Everyone asked about Ruth, and they assured them that she was just a little tired with all the packing. The boys had thoroughly enjoyed the walk with their Abba and Uncle Lucas. They were behaving, so the men kept holding them while they talked with the other men. Of course, when dinner was announced the twins suddenly appeared needing a mother's attention. She popped them in the carrier and managed to juggle both boys and her plate. The other ladies smiled their understanding. Gabriela told them about the cradle incident and asked them what they did when their children outgrew the cradles. Most agreed that it was time to just put them down on mats in an empty room and let them sleep. They usually would sleep all night anyway, and if there was a problem, she would hear it. She agreed that in the new house, they would have an empty room. "But is it really time to give them their own room? They are still so young."

"It will be harder on you than on them, but once you get used to it, you'll sleep better and so will they."

"What a wonderful meal, Marcella. Thank you for hosting this. We just had to see this group again before we left. I hate it that we couldn't host you, but our house is a wreck."

"When are you leaving?"

“Early tomorrow. Just as soon as everything is in the cart. We’re just about finished except for the last-minute stuff.”

“Julius and I were very happy to host it. I just hope you know how much we appreciate all the hosting you did for us.”

“If I remember right, I mostly lay flat on my back and everyone else did all the work.”

Soon Lucas called the group to gather around, and the women let the men move their benches into a circle and scooted the tables out of the way. Servants cleared the tables quickly and it was just the ten of them again. What sweet memories. Lucas said that he had thought about asking everyone to go around the room and tell a special moment or memory that had happened while in group, but he really didn’t want this to be a crying time. So instead, he just wanted to say that each one of them were indebted to Orly and Gabriela for being willing to answer their questions and point them to Jehovah God. Now they would spend all eternity together with Jesus. They would be forever grateful. Now God was calling them to a new place, and they wanted to hear from Orly and Gabriela how God had called them there and confirmed it. Orly and Gabriela both shared their journey of seeking God’s will, being asked to surrender everything, and accepting the call before God told them where they would be assigned. They described the incredible excitement and total peace that they had felt since it had been settled. They couldn’t wait to get started.

Lucas asked if each member of the group would pray for Orly and Gabriela, and one by one each of the eight prayed for them. Then Gabriela felt led to pray for the group as they continued to lead the Gentile followers in Cana and see it spread all over the Roman world. Orly closed with a prayer of blessing on each member of the group.

After the prayers ended, they remained a little while because no one wanted to say goodbye, but Lucas reminded them that they all had big days tomorrow. He and Amata walked Orly and Gabriela back to the main road. When they came to the place where their ways parted, Orly tried to express how much he would miss Lucas and thank him for his friendship. Lucas just repeated that he couldn’t talk about it, but he knew that he would see them in Heaven someday all because of their love. Brief goodbyes were said, and Orly and Gabriela walked home in silence, each carrying a baby.

Before sunrise, they were up and found Mother, Leah, and Lena in the kitchen. Mario was milking the goats. They drank all the milk they could and poured out the rest. They washed and packed the breakfast dishes for the trip while Orly and Mario fit the table and benches in Enoch’s cart. Enoch and a crew of servants carrying food for the trip arrived just after sunrise. Enoch and Jonah got all the food packed away under the driver’s seats. All the mats and blankets were laid as padding in Orly’s cart. Orly told the ladies it was time to get into the back of the cart and get the babies settled. Mother, Hosea, Gabriela, and Kobe faced backward, and Lena, Zebulon, and Leah faced forward. It was a tight fit, but everyone seemed happy. The four

men were on the driver's benches. Orly made one more walk through the entire house and made sure that nothing had been forgotten. As Orly walked through his room, he saw three little rocks lying on the windowsill. His heart skipped a beat as he quickly grabbed them and put them in his pocket. It was just about an hour after sunrise when the two carts left Cana headed to Joppa. The love that had been shared with Cana by Kobe was now spreading all over the world.

## **The End (Or Only the Beginning?)**