



**Jerusalem**

# **The Long Night's Journey!**

A Novel by Faith Honorof



Escape from America

The Long Night's Journey  
(Escape from America!)  
An End Time Prophetic Novel  
by Faith Christine Honorof  
[The Escape—Book 1]

## Hitler's Shadow covers Europe

Will Yacov and his sister, Rachel, be able to escape to Palestine? And what about the rest of his family? Will they be sent to Theresienstadt, and then to a much worse concentration camp?

Will Ruth ever see her beloved Shimon again?  
Will he ever know that she carries his child?  
Fictional characters taken from true life experiences.

In 1939 Hitler invades Czechoslovakia. And the Jewish communities are thrown into a nightmare!

The Long Night's Journey and Escape from America is a story filled with tragedy, laughter, pain and joy, as you follow these families in their desperate attempt to escape to freedom. And what of the generation that comes next? Will they find that they too must escape, but this time not from Europe, but from America?

And will God's Church be counted as faithful?  
Will they be willing to lay down their lives to help the Jewish people escape the nations and come home  
to Israel?

# The Long Night's Journey

## (Escape from America!)

### An End Time Prophetic Novel

#### Copyright Page

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by Faith Christine Honorof  
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Book Covers: I want to acknowledge the Jewish Virtual Library,  
and the Holocaust Encyclopedia for the pictures on the front and  
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Hinnom Valley on the back cover is Richard's photo.

Cover art work designed by Richard Aaron Honorof  
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Editor: Richard Aaron Honorof

## Acknowledgement Page

I want to thank my step-mother, Hanna Gay, for sharing with me her childhood stories of surviving Nazi occupied Czechoslovakia, and also her memories of when the Soviet Armies came into her homeland. The story of little Lilly has been taken, in part, from Hanna's own life story.

I want to thank my editor and special partner, friend and husband, Richard Aaron, for helping me produce this book. His editing skills and insights have been most valuable to me. Thanks, Honey!

I also want to thank my Jewish friends here in Jerusalem who have shared with me some very special stories about the Holocaust. And I personally want to thank the Jewish people for being a strong and persevering people, and for persevering to see their God given dream fulfilled.

“Next year in Jerusalem!”

I wish to personally thank Richard Honorof and Sherwood Burton for all the great photographs used in this book.

Most of all I want to thank my beloved Savior and Friend, Yeshua, for all the many revelations and insights He has given me over these many months, while working on this book. I hope it brings Him joy.

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## The Main Fiction Characters

Yacov—son of Nathaniel and Lydia Gietzal  
Rachel—sister of Yacov  
Ruth—daughter of Emmanuel and Hilda Sillstein  
Shimon—son of Joseph and Hanna Cohen  
Dr Michael Romano—doctor in Croatia  
Jan and Anna—Czech people who help Ruth  
Honza and Petra—Czech people who help Ruth  
Andel and Irena—Czech people who help Shimon  
Sylvester—resistance fighter who helps the Jews  
Zako—resistance fighter—helps the Jews get out of Europe  
Steven and Veronica Callis—part of Italian underground  
movement in Assisi helps Jews get to Palestine  
Rudolph—Jewish refugee from Romania at Assisi  
Abraham and Dora—Jewish refugees who were at Assisi  
Or and Angela—Shimon Cohen's son and daughter-in-law  
David and Ellie—Shimon Cohen's grandson and wife  
Shimon Samuel—Or's younger brother  
Julie and Bennie—David and Ellie's children  
Eedie—American woman who helps Jewish people escape  
Charley Clydman—Captain of the escape boat  
Pastor Robert Briggon—Pastor in American underground  
network movement—helps Jewish people escape

## Author's Notes

This book is a fictional novel. Any of the characters resembling actual people is simply a coincidence. Much of this book was, however, taken from true life experiences of people who survived the Nazi Holocaust--including my stepmother and friend, Hanna Gay. I also spent many hours carefully researching much of the history of the Holocaust in Czechoslovakia and in other European countries.

The Catholic priests who provided a place of refuge for escaping Jews in Assisi Italy was a factual event, as were the horrible things that took place in Nazi occupied Croatia, under the Ustashi police.

The last part of this book was inspired by what I now see taking place in America, and also in most of Europe. The ugly anti-Semitism that filled the face of Europe in the 1930s and 40s has once again come to the surface. And unless this anti-Semitism is repented of it will bring forth a disastrous harvest in any country, community, or even in one's own personal life and family.

There are scriptures in the Bible that speak of the Jews coming back to Israel from the west. "And they will come trembling with a fearful heart." (Hosea 11:10) God's design to have Israel in place during this End-time season is only something He could have designed. God has told us in many different scriptures that He would bring His Jewish people back to Israel from everyplace where He has scattered them among the Nations. And this He has done, and still continues to do!



Israel is a constant beacon of proof to the unbelieving world that the God of Israel exists, and that He will perform His Word perfectly to both Israel and to the nations.

Even though every nation in the world should one day turn against Israel, her faithful Almighty Yahweh will not leave her alone. He will not fail to bring forth His wonderful promises, both for the remnant of Israel, and also for His faithful remnant believers from every nation.

There is also a great Wedding Day in Heaven that is now being planned, and then a Honeymoon to follow. And if you listen closely you can hear the sound of the horse's hoof beats, as they eagerly wait for Yeshua's command, and for His Bride to mount up and ride them, following closely behind their beloved King as He returns to earth in battle, on the Feast Day of Battle, the Day of Final Judgment, on Yom Kippur, sounding His Great Shofar, and then setting up His Millennial Kingdom.

Are you ready?

## About the Author

Faith Christine Honorof lives in Jerusalem, Israel with her husband Richard Aaron Honorof. Faith (Feryl) was born and raised in Alaska. She was a history teacher in the Alaskan school system, and she also taught both Alaskan and Russian history at an Alaskan community college.

In 1992 she completed her Master's degree paper on the rise of National Socialism (Nazi Europe).

She moved to Israel in 1999, and in 2010 became a citizen of this wonderful country. She is an intercessor for both Israel and the nations. She also shares with her husband in the work of the Lord here in Jerusalem.

She has recently published two other books, one called 'Four Short Stories on Coming Home,' and the other called 'The Orphan: A short story,' which can both be read under Author's Books, on the Jerusalem website called [www.FeedMySheepJerusalem.com](http://www.FeedMySheepJerusalem.com)



Photo of Richard Aaron and Faith Christine Honorof,  
taken by Jaffa Gate and Mount Zion hill, Jerusalem, 2010

# Prologue

New Haven, Connecticut—Present Time

David opened the door that led from the garage to the kitchen. The television was on and the local news program was discussing a new law that the President had just signed. “Another new law,” David said under his breath. “Ellie, Ben, where are you?” He spoke into the empty living room.

“We’re upstairs, David. It’s okay,” Ellie said, as she met her husband on the stairway. “He’s going to be fine.” The tears that Elisheva Cohen had been holding back began to fill her eyes, as she embraced her husband. “Benjamin is going to be fine. They had to do a few stitches, but it’s not as bad as it looked at first.”

“Hey guy,” David said as he walked into the bedroom of his eleven year old son. “So what’s this I hear about your head being a little tender?” David looked carefully at the bandage around his son’s head.

“I am okay, Dad.” Ben looked up from the computer laptop in front of him, and smiled bravely at his father. “Just those kids I told you about the other day. I don’t think they even live in our neighborhood--never seen them before. They started calling me names, on my way to school, and throwing rocks at me.”

“What did they call you, son?”

“It’s really no big deal, Dad. I guess they just don’t like Jews. But Ginger came to my rescue, and growled at them.” He laughed a little as he looked at his father. “And then they ran. Mom said she is going to tell the principal, but I wish she wouldn’t. It will just make things worse.”

Ellie, who had been standing by the door, came into the room. “Ben, we are paying a lot of money for you to go to this private school, and they need to know what is going on in the neighborhood.” She reached down and lightly touched the top of her son’s bandaged head.

“Your mom is right, Ben. We can’t allow things like this to

continue. I would like to know who these kids are, and talk to their parents.”

“Please, Dad.” Ben stood up from his computer. “You don’t understand. It’s like this at school too. I mean they aren’t throwing rocks and things, but the teachers are different now--ever since that thing in Israel. You know what I mean, that bomb thing. Sometimes I get scared, but I haven’t said anything, because I didn’t want to worry you and mom. But everybody is acting really weird--even the kids I use to be friends with, but it’s not just me.

Richie Triplinsky, down the street, and some of the other kids that everyone knows are Jews, are getting yelled at, and some of the girls aren’t even coming to school anymore.”

“Bennie,” Ellie spoke to her son. “We can get someone to help you with home schooling for awhile, and you don’t have to go back there, at least till things get better. But right now I want you to crawl in bed. The doctor said you need rest.”

“Okay, mom, but just one more game.”

David closed the door to his son’s bedroom and walked with his wife to the living room. “This is getting serious, Ellie, and I am not sure what to do. Dad has called for a meeting tonight at Beth Israel. We are not the only ones who are concerned about what is happening in the Jewish communities in America.”

“What time is the meeting?” Ellie asked her husband.

“It starts at 7 o’clock. The leadership of the Kehilah has asked Dad to do something. People are really starting to get somewhat panicked.”

“Oh, David, it’s just one of those difficult times, but it’s going to be okay. It’s because the people are really upset with Israel, because of how they just responded to the Arab nations around them. I mean they did make Syria a pretty desolate place, and now the Jews everywhere are being blamed and condemned.”

“Well, ‘upset’ is not the right word.” David’s voice grew louder. “The whole country has gone crazy. I know you have been watching some of the demonstrations on television. And have you looked at some of the signs they are carrying? Did you see how they pushed and shoved that old Jewish man, who got caught in that mob the other

day? What does that remind you of?

“If things don’t quiet down pretty soon, the government is talking about Martial Law, and who knows what that might mean?” David continued talking. “Of course the media has totally distorted the truth. I mean it’s not like Israel had a choice. They were dropping chemical weapons on her. What was the Prime Minister suppose to do?”

“I know David, but we just have to be patient. Things will get better--they always do.” Ellie pulled her loose blue sweater tight around her white blouse. Her short blond hair fell in soft, natural curls around her pretty face.

“Where’s Julie?” David asked.

She’s over at her friend’s house. She is going to stay there for dinner tonight.”

“I want her home before we leave. I want her here with Ben.”

“Oh, David. I don’t like all this paranoid stuff. Let’s not start acting crazy like everyone else.”

David looked at his wife with a stern expression. “Our son getting stoned and having to go to the hospital is not getting paranoid. Ellie, we have heard the stories from Grandpa. We can’t just stick our heads in the sand and pretend that we will wake up tomorrow and it will be all over. I am sorry honey, but I want to know where my family is every minute. And I think for the time being we need to look at home schooling for Julie too--at least till things return to normal, if they ever do. I am going to call dad and let him know what has happened, and Grandpa Shimon too. He’s been watching where things are going and he knows better than any of us how fast things can change.

It’s been 70 years, but he’s not forgotten. He has not forgotten any of it.”



# 1 Where The Birds Sing

“Hear me when I call, O God of my Righteousness...”

Psalm 4:1

Yacov could feel his mother’s presence as she bent down--gently shaking him awake. “Yacov you must get up or you will be late, and we must have the extra rations for the children. Please, Yacov, wake up.”

Yacov opened his eyes and looked at his mother. Her hair was now snow white, and her skin was pale and thin. Dark, gray shadows had become a permanent feature under her large eyes. Yacov smiled, remembering what she had looked like in the dream that he had just come out of.

In the dream, his mother and father looked just as he remembered them before the nightmare had begun--the hellish nightmare that now consumed their every day. The thought had crossed his mind how nice it would be to have stayed in the dream.

They had all sat down for dinner. The long table where they always sat had been handed down as an inheritance from his grandfather. It was a beautiful mahogany table, finely carved and chiseled. It was always kept well polished, so that it nicely reflected the deep rich wood. His mother had just lit the Shabbat candles and had begun to recite the blessing: “Blessed are You, O Lord our God...” Her dark, auburn hair had been pulled softly to the back of her neck in a French role, her brown eyes reflecting the glow of the candles. Over her shoulders lay a beautiful, white embroidered shawl. After she had recited the prayer she glanced lovingly at her husband, then at her oldest son Aaron, then at her daughter Rachel, and then with a smile that Yacov knew was just for him, she smiled at her youngest son.

The dream had been so real. Yacov had felt excitement when the spicy, beef soup was ladled into the bowl in front of him, and then came meat and potatoes with rich gravy and thick crusted Challah bread. He could still smell the cinnamon and apples, topped with

cream, that his sister Rachel had served them.

It was as if nothing bad had ever happened. His father had begun to sing the songs of his Austrian homeland, where he had lived as a youth, his deep baritone voice filling the rooms of the house.

In this wonderful dream Yacov had touched and smelled those things, like the table itself, that no longer existed. Was it really possible that in the dream he had actually laughed?

Yacov sat up on the hard, wooden cot--that was next to his sister and two of the younger children. In this small room ten adults and six children lay squeezed together on cots. It was summer and the weather was hot and muggy. They dared not open the door for some relief, or the mosquitoes would be even worse than they were. The walls were stained where the women had tried to scrub away the spots of mold and mildew that had crept up the old walls, from the floor to the ceiling. But the dampness in the walls could not be scrubbed away and so the spore laden mold was always present, causing sickness and coughing.

In the corner of the room a large tin cup collected some of the leaking water that would pour down the walls whenever it rained. In a small half room next to the door, a single faucet dripped into a rusty basin, and next to it was a broken toilet. Often times there was no electricity at all and they had few candles to spare--and what they did have would always be kept for Shabbat.

A single bulb hung in the middle of the room and they were all pleased when it worked. But for all the problems and little comfort they were still grateful. They had all heard the terrible stories of how much worse it was in the ghettos in other places in Europe, where there were no sanitary conditions at all, and sickness and disease were rampant.

Yacov stretched his arms over his head. In his mother's face he could still see the beautiful eyes that had smiled at him in the dream.

"Yes, Mama. Don't worry. I won't be late." Yacov reached for his brown shirt that lay over the cot. He always slept with his pants on. He laced his heavy black shoes and then stepped over the sleeping people, and turned on the faucet--a stream of yellowish water trickled out. He looked into the piece of cut glass that hung over the sink. His

young face had become thin and angular, but his eyes were still sharp and clear. He splashed some of the water on his face and then ran his wet fingers through his black, curly hair.

As he opened the door to leave his mother reached out to him, sticking into his pocket a piece of stale bread, wrapped in a piece of brown paper.

“No, Mama.” He reached down and gently nudged the top of her head with his face. “You must keep this for the children.” His mother raised her voice.

“Yacov, you must eat something before work. It’s going to be a hot day.

For a brief instant Yacov stood frozen in time. This voice of authority he remembered, even from when he was a small child. A boyhood scene flashed before his eyes. “Yacov,” his mother had scolded him, “you must always look carefully before crossing the street.” His mother’s invisible hand had pulled her five year old son back from the busy street, as a large truck went rambling by.

“We will survive,” his mother said, “but you must eat or you will grow faint.” He let her press the bread into his pocket. He then opened the door wider and began to jog across the barren ground to the nearby street. He did not need to look behind him to know that his mother was watching till he was out of sight.

He walked fast down the narrow dirt street. The rain from the night before had left the street muddy with sludge. He pulled the collar of his shirt up around his neck to fight off the buzzing insects, and then folded each hand into a fist and put them in his pant’s pockets.

Small, narrow houses lined the dirt road--some of them broken beyond repair. A gate had been put up on the only road leading into the ghetto, and the Jews were now checked before they went out--to make sure they had the identifying yellow star.

The sun was just beginning to rise and Yacov knew that he would get to the gate before it was closed. Shadowy figures of men, young and old, could be seen in front of him and a few in back, like ghosts passing each other in the predawn light. Every day, seven days a week, for over one year, he had been at the ghetto gate by six o clock so that he could begin a hard day’s work, and then take home to his



family, and the others, extra rations of food, that were so desperately needed. Without the extra food they would not have survived even this long.

The conditions for Jews had quickly gone from bad to worse after the Nazi German Army had taken over Czechoslovakia in 1939. Under the pretext that the people of the Sudetenland were being deprived of their German heritage, and once Slovakia claimed independence from Prague, it took little time for the German juggernaut to roll into the Czech lands. After the outbreak of war in 1939, the separation of the Jewish people into ghettos was swift and complete in Czechoslovakia, and in other Nazi occupied areas of Europe. And the deportation to concentration camps was not far behind.

From this point on, new anti-Semitic laws were quickly passed--one after the other. Jews were now forbidden to work in the so called Aryan population. However, slave labor was not prohibited from the strong, young, Jewish backs that could do the hard work, but the jobs were carefully supervised.

Jewish children were no longer allowed to attend any kind of public schools. Propaganda signs began popping up in many places telling the people how susceptible Jews were to the terrible diseases, such as typhoid and cholera, and how necessary it was for the good Aryan students to be separated from the Jewish children. However, the German people, and the people of other European nations, had been prepared for generations to accept a more permanent separation from the Jews. And now this ancient, hateful, anti-Semitic conditioning had exploded dramatically into the Jewish communities all over Europe.

Soon after the Nazi invasion, Yacov's father, Nathaniel Gietzal, had been ordered to no longer practice medicine on non-Jewish people. He was not allowed now to put his well trained and medically skilled hands on anyone but another Jew.

Before 1941 most Jewish businesses had collapsed, and only through illegal workshops within the ghetto, could Jewish goods be produced and sold on the outside. Increasingly, Jewish children were used to smuggle in life saving goods to the malnourished and starving

people behind the ghetto walls. In 1941, all Jews in Nazi occupied Europe were ordered to wear on their upper clothing a yellow star. Anyone caught without it would be shot on the spot.

Yacov's sister, Rachel, had cried bitterly when told she would not be allowed to finish her studies at the University. She had been only one year away from completing her degree in neonate nursing. But even more devastating for her was to watch the young men and women, who had been her friends, say nothing and turn their heads away from her when she was escorted off of the school grounds. Before she reached the outside gate the cruel, angry words had caught up with her, "dirty, stinking Jew--go back to where you came from."

Only Aaron, Yacov's older brother, had escaped the terrible nightmare.

In 1937 Aaron had moved to London to complete his medical degree, and his parents had now warned him not to come back home.

By 1939 it had become almost impossible for a Jew to escape to another country. Only the very rich could afford the price to be smuggled into a neutral state. And far too often, even for the rich, their money would be taken, and they would then be turned over to the Gestapo.

Yacov remembered the words of his uncle Mordechai, who had come to visit his father and mother in 1938--one year before the war started.

He had come with one small suitcase under his arm and his wife on the other arm. They had left their home in Austria. They were on their way to Italy and then on to Palestine. They were going back to their ancient homeland and they were pleading with their loved ones to come with them.

"You must take your family now, Nathaniel, while there is still time to leave." His uncle's pudgy face had become flushed with color as he talked to Yacov's father.

"No, Mordechai," his father had answered him. "You have gone off the deep end. Fear has beset your heart. This is just a bad season, but it will get better. This is nothing new for the Jews. It is not rational for me to run like a scared rabbit, dragging my family behind me. No, Mordechai! We will not do such a crazy thing."

Yacov could see the look of panic and fear that had filled his Uncle's face, when he realized that he could not change his brother-in-law's mind. With tears in his eyes he kissed his sister and family good-by. After they had left, an uncomfortable silence filled the house and no one talked to each other for the rest of the day.

Before 1942, Yacov's father was given notice that they were now ordered to leave their beautiful apartment in Prague and would be assigned a new home.

Their new home was about 30 kilometers north of the city. They had little time to put a few belongings in a horse drawn wagon that would carry the family to their new house. Yacov's mother had been told it would be a nice family home. Yacov could tell that although fearful, his mother somehow wanted to believe the lie. "Perhaps," she had said, "it will be a place that will not be so bad. Maybe it will be a nice home with a garden--a place where the birds will come to sing."

They soon found out the home they had been promised was nothing more than a very old and rundown house in a ghetto area. One small room was provided downstairs. A broken and collapsed stairway led upstairs to what had once been bedrooms, but the walls and floors were now decrepit and rotten all the way through. They had managed to tape strips of paper over the downstairs ceiling to keep the decayed floor from falling in on them.

It wasn't long before two more families were sent to live in the small house with them. But they dared not complain. Many Jewish families had already been sent to a camp north of them, called Theresienstadt. This camp, although promoted by the Nazis to be a lovely resettlement village, especially for the elderly, was nothing more than a concentration camp and a depot where huge numbers of Jewish people were then sent on to the concentration camps in Germany and Poland.

When they reached the gate of the ghetto many of their belongings, such as coats and warm winter clothing, were taken from them. They were allowed to keep only a few of their basic needs. Yacov's father was also allowed to keep part of his medical supplies. His work in the

ghetto, as a doctor, would be very important, and desperately needed. Their beautiful home in Prague, they soon discovered, was immediately taken over by the Nazi High Command.

Yacov was tall and strong for eighteen years old. The Judenrat had quickly assigned him a job with the A-1 work force. His job was to lay rail lines for the building of a new railroad--not too far from the ghetto.

The Judenrat, a selected council of Jews, appointed by the German Protectorate Occupying Forces, was responsible for employment and basically all the needs of the ghetto. For one day's work Yacov was allowed to take home one loaf of stale bread, one liter of turnip soup, and once in awhile, every few days, a liter of black coffee was given. Sometimes a small bag of half rotten potatoes and beans was added for a good week's work. Aside from the meager rations the family was given by the Nazi governing forces, Yacov's work provided the primary food supply for his family and the others that lived with them.

When Yacov and the other twenty men arrived at the work site they were immediately given picks and shovels. The work was hard and unending. Two supervisors from a near-by town sat on a hill above the men. If they finished the work that they were scheduled to complete for that day then they could pick up their food rations, but not always. Sometimes they were given nothing after work, and just had to make the long trek back to the ghetto.

They were allowed one break, and a cup of watered down soup for lunch. But with the day only half over they eagerly accepted whatever they were given. After one year Yacov wondered how long he would endure.

"I have to talk to you, Yacov."

Shimon bent down to pick up more of the heavy rails. He was stronger than Yacov and would help him whenever he could. He was Yacov's best friend.

"I've heard some terrible stories, and I think they are true. They are deporting more and more of our people to camps in Germany and Poland. Yacov, I am afraid for Ruth."

“You talk foolish, Shimon.” Yacov lowered his voice. “These are just bad rumors, because the Germans know the war will soon be over. It will not be long, Shimon. This nightmare will end. You will see.”

“No, Yacov. They are killing as many of the Jews as they can. I know this to be true.”

“Why do you repeat such talk, Shimon? It will only cause panic.”

“Yacov, I have evidence. But that’s not even what is most really important. I can’t talk here. Will you meet me at the music rehearsal tonight?”

“I will be there, Shimon.” Yacov moved away from his friend and pushed a cart of steel up a steep hill. He really liked his friend Shimon. They were almost the same age, and they liked to talk about the same things--especially what they would do when the war ended. They had even known each other when they lived in Prague. Yacov could tell that something was very wrong, and it was much more than what Shimon had told him. He wondered if it was about Ruth. Emmanuel and Hilda and their daughter Ruth had come to live with Yacov’s family almost nine months ago. Ruth was a lovely young woman. She was seventeen years old, and with Shimon it was love at first sight. Yacov knew that he could easily have fallen in love with Ruth, but her heart, from the beginning, was only for Shimon.

Yacov gripped the handles to the cart and continued to push the heavy steel up the rocky slope. At the top of the hill he stopped and stretched his back.

“Are you there God? Or have you forgotten your people altogether?” He knew his words were bitter to God, but he could not hold back the anger. He moved on when he spotted one of the supervisors watching him. He recognized him as the father of one of his school friends, when he had been about seven or eight years old.

He had been over to this man’s house a few times. Yacov’s father had been a respected doctor in the community where they lived, and Yacov was a smart student. His friend’s parents appreciated it when Yacov would help their sons with their schoolwork. But every so

often Yacov would be reminded that he was, what he was, a Jew.

He remembered the time as a young boy when he had gone with his father to a new patient's house. The home they had gone to was large and expensive. Yacov had never seen anything like it. As they entered the long, arched hallway, Yacov could sense an uneasiness on his father. He had not seen this very often on his papa. It was a look of fear.

Yacov waited in a small, plush sitting room while his father examined the old man in his bedroom. The couch where Yacov sat was covered in dark, red velvet, with heavy golden tassels on each end. It was the most expensive piece of furniture he had ever sat on. He was beginning to feel anxious for his father to come, so they could leave.

When they came out of the bedroom Yacov's father handed the old man a prescription. His father shook his hand and then turned to Yacov, indicating that it was time to leave.

"But wait!" The gray haired, stooped shouldered man spoke loudly to them. "Please let me show you my famous art collection."

Before his father could say anything the old man had put his hand on Yacov's shoulder. "This picture," he said, "is worth a million franks." He pointed to a portrait of a nineteenth century nobleman, who was dressed in fine clothes and riding a sleek, black stallion. "Joseph the Second," he said. "He was a great leader until he did something very stupid. He liberated the Jews. Yes, Jews like you." He turned and looked at Yacov and his father as if they were stick figures, as unreal as the pictures on his wall, and then he laughed a devilish kind of laugh.

"But here, look!" He pointed to a long painting at the far end of the room. "You see those great warriors?" His face had taken on a wild and excited gaze. "The great Russian Cossacks of the nineteenth century. They drove your people out of our country. They burned their homes and slaughtered them, cleansing our Russian homeland of you filthy vermin."

Yacov stood petrified. He could not move, but then he felt the firm grip of his father's hand on his shoulder. "Come Yacov. We will leave this house now!" Yacov reached for his father's hand as they walked out of his home.

“Yes! Go out of my house and out of the world.” The old man had begun to shake and curse. As they shut the door behind them Yacov could still hear him ranting and raving to an empty room, filled only with the ghosts of his past.

They had walked two blocks before Yacov said anything to his father. He held tight to his father’s hand, and then he said: “Papa, why does that old man hate the Jews so much?”

“Yacov, come here.” They sat down on a wet, near-by bench while Yacov listened to his father. “There are many people in the world, son, who are filled with hatred, and the Jews fill a very big place in their empty hearts with a fierce and unreasonable hate. But you see, my son, this is what hate does; it makes men very mean and angry and sick. In your lifetime, Yacov, you will know your share of people like that. But you must learn from this, and not let hatred enter your heart. God has no place in his heart for people who hate, and he will judge every soul for what they have done. Do you understand, Yacov?” His father stood up from the bench and they began to walk.

“Yes, Papa,” Yacov said. “But why Papa? Why do they hate us Jews?”

“Another time, my son. Today has been enough.”



## 2 When The Daffodils Bloom

“Preserve me O God, for in You I put my trust.”

Psalm 16:1

Yacov sat down as the group began to arrive. One of the jobs of the Judenrat was to organize cultural programs. Sometimes there would be group singing, and sometimes, like this evening, different people would play musical instruments. These cultural evenings had been encouraged by the Nazis, and so Rachel had been allowed to keep her violin when coming into the ghetto.

Before the music began Yacov listened to his mother and a friend reminisce about how good life had once been. Yacov also remembered the good days and the good food of Prague, before coming to the ghetto.

“Oh, fresh peaches and walnuts, mixed with cinnamon--this would always make the best sweet dumplings, with much good cream and butter.” Yacov’s mother spoke with a far away look in her eyes.

“And do you remember, Lydia, the days we would shop at the Shuk? Oh, how much fun we would have.” Her friend smiled. “I can smell the dumplings cooking now. It seems like a wonderful dream--so long ago.”

A woman with gray hair pulled back in a tight bun spoke to the two women. “Why do you talk about such things now? It is all in the past. What good does it do to remember those days? In this stinking hole nothing good exists.”

“But Irena,” Yacov’s mother replied, “should we banish all the good memories and only talk of our misery? Is this really what you want? Besides, we will soon go back to Prague, and begin a new life. This is what Jews have always done.”

Yacov watched as his sister began to tune her violin. When she played her instrument her eyes would sparkle and for a few moments her joy would return. She was so beautiful when she played her music. She would become another person--a dark haired princess in a fairy tale land.



The room grew quiet and the conversations quickly came to an end. The people immediately began to clap as Rachel played some simple melodies, and then moved into the more serious music of her culture. She played Hava Nagila and the crowd began to sing spontaneously. As the rehearsal came to an end Rachel began to play Hatikvah. Almost everyone began to move their lips to the song, gently swaying back and forth. Time seemed to stop, and life sprang forth, and moments of tear-filled joy were experienced by many in the room.

As Yacov got up to leave he saw Shimon near the back of the room. He walked quickly to where he was standing, and then they found a bench to sit down on. "Shimon, please tell me what is so serious? I've been afraid for you.

I could tell something was very wrong, and that you were troubled. Please, my friend, tell me what it is."

Shimon looked down, and for a moment said nothing.

"Yacov," Shimon took a deep breath, and looked up, "I fear they will soon be sending me to Theresienstadt. The elders of the council have said that it would be good for me, because they need strong young men there, and that if I do well it would look good on my record, and they assured me it will only be for a short while. But some of the elders can no longer be trusted. This I know for a fact. They have provided themselves and their families with good food, and even better houses to live in, by doing exactly what the Nazis tell them to say and do. So I do not believe what they tell me. I have not been able to tell Ruth. Oh, Yacov, how will I live without my Ruth? What will we do?"

"But Shimon, I have heard that Theresienstadt is not such a bad place, and that they treat the Jews there pretty good. Perhaps it is true and you will only be gone for a short while. We must, my friend, believe for the best."

Shimon looked around and then spoke quietly to Yacov. "More and more Jews are being deported to camps in Germany and Poland every day--death camps, where they are killing the Jews. Yacov, it's the truth! I have listened to our friend, Merek. They took his parents a few weeks ago. A few days ago he received a letter from his mother,

but he knows for sure that she did not write it. He said the letter was full of things that his mother would never have said. She was warning him by her words that something was very wrong! In the letter she mentioned a street where they used to live, but Merek said they never lived on Garret street. 'The only thing on that street,' he said, 'was a very large grave yard.' "

"Shimon, this is all a very bad dream--a nightmare, but we must not make it worse than it really is. If these terrible death camps you have talked about really do exist, how could they keep it a secret from the whole world?"

"The world does not care what happens to the Jews, Yacov. They never have. They hate us and want to be rid of us."

"Shimon, what are you going to do?"

"There is nothing, Yacov, I can do. I thought about taking Ruth and running into the forest. I have been told by a rabbi that there are some Gentiles who are helping the Jews escape to Palestine. But there is no time for that now. Her parents would never let her go with me. And I cannot put her in that place where she has to choose between them or me. Most of the people in the ghetto think Theresienstadt is a nice resettlement camp, but I am telling you it is not. It is a horrible place--a depot where they keep the Jews, till they send them to the death camps in Germany and Poland. For the public they have made it look very good on the outside. But it's all a trick."

"How do you know all of this, Shimon?"

"I cannot tell you everything, Yacov, but you must believe me. If they send me there, I do not know if I will ever come back. Now, Yacov, I am going to ask you something very important."

"What is it Shimon?"

"If they take me, will you watch out for Ruth, and be a good friend to her? I know that Rachel treats her like a sister, but she will need the strength of a good man to keep her from harm. Her father has grown weak and tired."

"What are you asking, Shimon?"

"Yacov, I am only asking you to be a good friend. I know Ruth's heart is bound with mine, but I don't want her to be alone. And I know that she respects you."

Yacov looked at his hands that were folded on his lap. For a moment he said nothing, and then he spoke to his friend. "I will make sure that Ruth is taken care of, Shimon. This I can promise you."

"Thank you my good friend. Now, I must leave. I am going to try and see Ruth tonight. She is working at the children's center, while the parents work late. I know that once they come for me there will be no time to say good-bye. Oh, Yacov, when will this nightmare end? Will things ever be normal again?"

Yacov sat on the bench a while longer, as he watched Shimon walk away. "Good-bye my friend," he said under his breath. "I pray you will be safe, and that you will return soon."

"Ruth." Shimon spoke her name through a partially opened window. Many of the little children were crying, and it was very noisy. He had to call her name a few times before she heard him. When she saw him at the window, she walked quickly to him. "Shimon, what are you doing here? You must leave or you will get in very bad trouble."

"Ruth, I must see you. It's very important. You know I would not risk being here if it was not. Ask Rachel if she will cover your place for awhile."

"Oh, Shimon. I am so afraid. What has happened?" Shimon and Ruth sat huddled next to an old crate inside of what had once been a farmer's storage shed. Months before they had managed to find a passage through the wire fence that surrounded the ghetto. The hut was near the trees, and had not been used in years. The evening twilight had already covered the forest, and the night sounds were beginning to make their chirping noises as they sat down in the hut for their last time together.

"Do you remember, Ruth, when we first came here during the Pesach? How beautiful the daffodils were blooming?"

"Oh, yes Shimon. How could I forget. You hid the flowers under your coat and smuggled them to me almost every day for one week." She laughed softly and then laid her head on his shoulder. Shimon snuggled his face into her dark, warm hair.

"I love you more than I ever thought it was possible to love anyone."

I will love you all the days of my life.”

“Oh, Shimon--my handsome prince--who rescued me from this dark and terrible prison. All the days we have been here together, even this ghetto has not been so bad. But now you must tell me why you came, or my heart will break.”

“My beautiful Ruth. I will love you forever. But I have bad news to tell you. I want you to hold my hand very tight. They are planning to send me to Theresienstadt. I am sure of it. The elders of the council said it would not be for very long, but I don’t know if I can believe what they tell me.”

“Oh, Shimon. My heart will break if you leave me. I know it will break into many pieces.”

“No, my darling, it will not break. You will be strong and wait for me. Perhaps what Yacov said is true. We must believe for the best. Surely God will make a way for us to be together forever.”

Shimon could feel Ruth pressing deeper into him, like she had never done before--somehow hoping the bad words he had spoken would not come to be.

“Ruth, I want to marry you.”

“I will wait for you Shimon. I will never leave your heart.”

“I want to marry you tonight, Ruth, with God as our witness.”

For a moment Ruth pulled away from Shimon’s shoulder and looked up at his face, even though in the darkness of the hut she could not see him clearly. She could feel her heart beginning to beat fast. She knew what Shimon was asking her.

“It’s all right, Ruth. We can wait till I return. It’s all right. Don’t cry.”

“I cry because I love you and want to be your wife more than anything in this world. Yes, my beloved Shimon--as God is our witness.”

When Ruth woke up the next morning, Shimon was gone. How, she thought, would she live without him. She needed so much to believe that he would be coming back to her. She remembered when they had first met.

Shimon and his family and Ruth and her parents had shared a meager Pesach meal with Yacov's family. Yacov's father, Nathaniel, had read the Haggadah, and they had recited the words of their deliverance from Egypt, but for most of the evening Shimon's eyes were on Ruth, and she was not unaware of his attention. Soon after that they began taking walks together, whenever they could. Sometimes they would sit under the trees and just hold each other's hands. The spring weather had warmed the land, and the forest was budding into different shades of green.

Hidden behind the trees, little pink and white crocos had begun popping up from the ground. In the midst of the gray and meaningless world in which they survived day by day, they had found companionship and joy. Near the road, outside the ghetto, yellow and white daffodils were blooming. What joy it had brought Shimon to secretly bring her these flowers. The days had passed into the summer months, and they were grateful to have each other.

"One day, Ruth, I will marry you, and we will have lots of children." She had blushed, looking down at the ground.

He was the only one who made her life worthwhile, and now he was gone. She laid her hand on her soft belly, remembering the hours they had held and loved each other, desperately wanting to believe a miracle would happen. They were now husband and wife. Ruth could not stop the tears that came easily to her eyes. Quietly, under her breath, she said a prayer to her God for Shimon and for the strength she would need to survive.

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When Shimon arrived at Theresienstadt he believed in his heart that he would never be going back to his beloved Ruth, or his family. He also knew that no matter what he had to survive.

Shimon Cohen had been a tough young man. He had grown up the oldest son of mildly religious parents. He had one brother and two sisters. His father was a respected math professor at a university near Prague. Shimon was tall for his age and he was smart. He had

inherited his grandfather's light brown hair and piercing blue eyes. He didn't look Jewish and he didn't care. All he wanted to do was to make something out of his life and he planned on doing just that. If any man called him a slur name, like scum Jew, then he would quickly find Shimon's fist in his mouth.

He had tried to respect his father's more pious ways of doing things, but he found it very hard to be humble. He had bought a motor bike when he was seventeen years old, and he would ride it fast with the wind blowing in his face. He would laugh when trouble came his way and then move it out of the way. He exerted a strength and confidence that caused people to stop and look. Even strangers would ask him to come and work for them. He could think two steps ahead on any problem. And he had been ready to move out on his own and conquer the world when suddenly everything changed in a different direction.

Anti-Semitism had been a problem he could deal with. The Slovak kids had come to respect his strength, and a deal had been made.

"I don't care what you do to other Jews, but you leave me and my family alone."

This agreement had never actually been spoken, but somehow it had been understood. Even when Hitler invaded his country he had managed, at first, to stay on top of things, and that was the way he wanted it. But everything changed after his father, Joseph, was told to leave the university where he worked.

Shimon then became the main source of work and support for the entire family. But even Shimon was beginning to wonder how long that would last. Things were changing faster than he could cope with. The control he had on his life seemed to be slipping away from him very fast.

The old deals made between Shimon and the anti-Semites were no longer considered to be of any value. He was a Jew, and nobody cared what he thought, and his boss could now treat him however he wanted. The pay was almost nothing anymore, and he had already gotten into a couple of fights at work. He was working many hours for hardly anything, and he did not know what to do. His family was so dependent on him. But one day when he got home from work he

found out that the problem had been solved for him by the Nazi government. Shimon's parents, Joseph and Hanna, had been told that they would soon be moved to a new home and community north of Prague. Shimon, would, of course, go with them. He had no choice.

All of a sudden Shimon found himself coming out from under a prideful and rebellious place. He was now very concerned for his parents and his little brother and sister. His older sister, Beniti, had married and moved to America with her husband. But now he feared for his brother and his other sister. They were both quite a bit younger than Shimon. He especially feared for his little sister, Lilly. She was so delicate and frail, and she was only eight years old.

He remembered the day she had come home and was so afraid that she would not talk to anyone. She sat curled up in the corner, refusing to speak.

"Lilly," Shimon had talked to her, "can you tell me what's wrong?"

Lilly looked up at her brother with large, frightened eyes.

"What is it sweetie?" he asked.

Finally, she opened her mouth and talked to her brother. "Today Renee and I were playing down by the river. I was watching this lady push her baby in a buggy across the bridge. She looked very scared when she came near Renee and me." Lilly's eyes grew even larger.

"Two men in black Nazi uniforms came up to her and started laughing. She was really afraid. Then they grabbed her baby from the buggy and threw him into the icy river. Yes, Shimon, that's what they did. When I got home I asked grandma why they had done such a horrible thing, and she said it was because she was a Jew. Shimon, is that what is going to happen to me someday?"

In one instant Shimon felt both heartbreak for his little sister and great anger at the monsters who had committed this hideous crime.

"Come, my Lilly." Shimon's mother came and kneeled down beside her. "We are going to have your favorite food for supper tonight: corn mush with goat's milk, and we will open the jar of cherry jam in the cupboard, just for you". Lilly smiled a little and took her mother's hand. Shimon knew that to open the jar of jam would be a surprise, but especially a treat for Lilly.

The next day they all boarded the train for their new home. Of course they had to wait a long time for the train that would carry only Jews. It was very old and uncomfortable, and most of the people had to sit on the hard floors.

The Nazis had separated the people according to their level of prosperity and affluence. Some of the people were allowed to sit on seats, and were treated more humanely than older people or families with many children. The Nazis knew that the Jews of Czechoslovakia were being watched over by the Red Cross, and so they had to be more careful in how they treated them--at least for a while.

Most of the people were squeezed into crowded spaces with their little suitcases, and whatever they had managed to bring with them. Nazi guards patrolled back and forth while the people climbed onto the train. The children were crying and great uncertainty seemed to be over everyone. Joseph and Hanna got on the train with two of their children in hand. Shimon was now nineteen years old. He helped his mother and father calm the children and reassure them that it was going to be all right.

When they arrived at the ghetto gate the guards took their suitcases and scattered their belongings everywhere, searching for what was valuable. Any precious items, like good coats and shoes, were immediately taken from them, and they were left with little to start their new life in the ghetto.

They moved into a small, narrow house. Another family with five children was already living there. A toilet was provided outside and one faucet gave a small amount of rusty water. For the first time in his life Shimon felt fear--even more than when he had been told to wear the yellow star. He had not yet figured out how to get himself and his family out of this place, but he knew there must be a way. But a surprise awaited him that he was not expecting. It was here, in the worst place he had ever lived, that he met and fell in love with his precious Ruth.





### 3 Ashes and Dreams

“Consider my affliction and deliver me...”

Psalm 119:153

November 20, 1943

Yacov stopped. Ruth was walking towards him on the dirt path, and she did not look well at all. He was only a block from his parent's house.

“Ruth, are you all right?” He could tell that she was very upset. Her thin face was streaked with tears and he could see that she was trembling.

“Oh, Yacov.” Her voice was so soft that he could barely hear her words. “I wish God would just take me. I am so tired, Yacov. I don't know what to do.” She looked down at the hard cold ground, pulling her worn coat tighter around her body.

“It's about Shimon, isn't it Ruth?”

“I wanted to believe,” she said, “what he had told me. They told him he would only be at Theresienstadt for a short time, but it has been almost four months. And I know if it was possible I would have heard from him by now. I am afraid Shimon has been deported to one of the camps in the east--the camps everyone is talking about. They are taking the Jews far away, and they aren't coming back. Oh, Yacov. I am so afraid, and that is not all...”

“What is it Ruth? Tell me!”

Ruth pulled away from Yacov's gentle hold and moved past him down the dirt road. It was dangerous to cause a scene in the public places of the ghetto. So Yacov watched his friend for a moment longer, until she was out of sight, and then he crossed the road to his house. When he walked into the room, Hilda and Emmanuel were seated on small make-shift stools. Yacov's mother was sitting across from them.

“I saw Ruth on the path before I came in,” Yacov said. “She is very troubled about Shimon.”

Emmanuel was a small man, but he spoke with a voice of authority. “Yes, she fears he has been taken away to one of the camps, but it is even worse than that.” Emmanuel stood up from the stool and Yacov could tell that he was very up-set.

“I don’t know what I would do if I saw Shimon Cohen right now?” he said. “Stupid young kids, what have they done?”

“Calm down Emmanuel,” Hilda spoke to her husband. “She is our daughter and Shimon is not a bad man.”

“Well,” Emmanuel turned sharply to face his wife, “our daughter is pregnant and where is this nice man you speak of--this Shimon?” He has run off and left her in this way!”

“You know better than that, Emmanuel.” Yacov’s mother interrupted his flow of angry words. “Shimon is a good man, and he loves Ruth. We all know this. It is not his fault that they took him away.”

“But he has made my daughter pregnant; that is his fault and I have a right to be angry with him.”

“Yes, Emmanuel, you do have a right to be angry.” Yacov’s father stood by the door where he had just walked in. “Yes, you have a right to be angry, but your anger will not help solve anything. We must pray and ask for Adonai’s help and direction.”

“You can pray, Nathaniel,” Emmanuel responded with anger, “but I will do more than pray.”

Yacov could see the fear and concern on Hilda’s face. “What do you mean?” his wife responded. “Emmanuel? What are you planning on doing?”

“Well, since our righteous doctor here,” he pointed toward Nathaniel, “will not do abortions then I will look for some of the older women, who know how to do such things. This is no time for a baby to be born. It is impossible! I am still the head of our home, and I will make her do what I say.”

“Stop, Emmanuel! We must talk.” Hilda ran after her husband as he opened the door to go out. “Emmanuel, you don’t mean what you are saying.”

Yacov watched as Hilda ran to catch her husband. She knew that he was going out to try and find Ruth.

“He does mean it. I have known Emmanuel for a very long time,” Yacov’s father said, as he sat with his back against the wall. “Ruth is still only seventeen. He will make her do this, if he can.”

“Not if the control is taken away from him.” Yacov’s words caused his father to turn in his direction. “He is in control of Ruth because she is still under age, and because she does not have a husband.”

“What are you saying, Yacov?”

“Ruth and Shimon are my very dear friends, Mama. I cannot let her life be ruined like this. I will marry Ruth, and then she will be under my authority. It is what Shimon would want.”

“And what if Shimon comes back?” Yacov’s father questioned him.

“Shimon is not coming back, Papa. We all know this.”

“Yacov, I cannot tell you what to do, but I do ask you to wait for awhile. Pray and make sure it is what you and Ruth want. It will take a few days for Emmanuel to try and arrange anything.”

“I will pray, Papa, but not for long. Soon I will ask Ruth to be my wife.”

“Rachel,” Yacov gently shook his sister out of her sleep, and then bent down and whispered to her. “Rachel, you must tell me where Ruth is. It is very important that I talk to her.”

Yacov’s sister hesitated and then answered Yacov. “I will walk outside with you, before you go to work. Everyone is still sleeping and we cannot talk here.”

Yacov held the door open for his sister, as she wrapped a coat around herself, and then shut it quickly as his mother began to stir from her sleep. The sun had just started to rise, and the air was still frosty with icy patches of cold sky. Rachel huddled close to Shimon. She shivered as she put her hands under his coat.

“Ruth is staying at the children’s center till her father calms down. She has volunteered to work even longer hours. I am really worried about Ruth. I wish Shimon would come home.” Her voice trembled with the cold.

Yacov looked up into the early morning sky. “Rachel, Shimon will not be coming back. He told me before he left that if he was not back in two months that I was to presume he would not be coming home. And then he asked me if I would take care of Ruth. I promised him that I would, and this is why I must talk to her.”

Rachel looked earnestly at her brother. "I will tell Ruth this morning, when I go to the children's center, that you must talk to her. Come by as soon as you get home from work. Now, I must go inside, Yacov. It is very cold."

"Thank you Rachel for helping me."

Yacov and Ruth sat down on a bench in the hallway--leading to the children's center. She looked pale, and she was shivering under her thin, blue cotton jacket. Yacov put his arm around her shoulder.

"Ruth I need to talk to you. It's very important."

"Not now, Yacov, I am so tired and I am not feeling well."

"Ruth, I need for you to listen to me, please."

Ruth lifted her face and looked into Yacov's eyes. It was true; he had always been so kind to her. All the time that Shimon had been gone, he had been like a brother to her.

"Your father has decided that you are to have an abortion."

"Yes, I know Yacov, but I will not kill Shimon's baby, not ever."

Yacov felt a strong emotion rising up in him. "But Ruth, if you don't do what he says he will be very angry, and it will be very hard for you."

"I will manage, Yacov. Besides, what can he do? It is not as if we are living like we once did."

"Ruth," Yacov blurted out, "I want you to marry me. Please think about this. We must do what is right for you and the baby, and it is what Shimon would want. We may not love each other yet, but we are very good friends, and surely in time the love will come."

"You don't think he's coming back, do you?"

"No Ruth, I don't." For a moment Ruth closed her eyes and then reached down and slipped her small hand into his hand. Yacov reached up and gently brushed the tears from her face.

Ruth bowed her head and spoke quietly. "I will let you know tomorrow. As God is my witness, Shimon and I are husband and wife. I do not know what to do! Please, HaShem, help me to do what is right." Ruth prayed softly.

"Surely, Ruth, God does not expect you to go through this alone, and have no father for your child? You must face the fact that Shimon

is not coming back. But I promise you, Ruth, that one day it will be over. This very bad dream will come to an end.”

The next day, on the way home from work, Yacov caught up with his friend. “I am sorry Merek, but I had no time to visit with you last night. I had something I needed to do.”

“Yes,” Merek answered. “I saw you talking with Ruth as I was walking home. She does not look very well. I hope she gets better soon. I know that Shimon is not coming back. He has probably been deported to one of the camps. I am sure of it. But they will not kill him right away. They need strong, young men to bury all the dead Jews.”

“Shimon told me, Merek, about the letter you received from your mother, and how you are convinced that the Nazis are going to kill as many Jews as they can. I too have heard that some of the places where the Jews are being sent are very bad. But I think people are making it to be worse than it really is. We must not let such discouragement take over our lives. I believe things are going to get better. This is what we must all believe.”

For a couple of minutes Yacov and Merek continued to stand in the cold, damp weather, and said nothing to each other. Then Merek reached out, with a firm grip, and shook Yacov’s hand. “You must be strong, Yacov, and very smart if you are going to live through this. We must see the truth for what it is, and not be afraid.”

“I have to go, Merek. I am going to speak with my father about these things.”

“Of course, Yacov. Your father is an honorable man. You must tell him and all of your family.”

“No, Merek. I won’t tell everyone, but now I must go. We will talk more later.”

Yacov was late and it was Shabbat. His family and Ruth and a few people he did not know stood around a small box that held one burning candle.

Ruth’s parents had not showed up for the beginning of Shabbat and prayer. But it was not unusual for them to work late at the redistribution center. Clothes and blankets, and jewelry, and many

other things, even undergarments, had been taken from the Jews when they entered the concentration camps. The Jewish goods were then packaged and shipped to the center at Theresienstadt, and then repackaged and sent to many places in Europe where the war had brought much deprivation. Emmanuel had once commented on how ironic it was that the Jews were supplying war-torn Europe with what they needed. "How ironic," he had said, "and how evil."

After the prayers had been said Yacov sat down and each person was given a small cup of watered down corn broth. And then half a loaf of stale bread was passed around and pieces were taken from it.

Yacov listened as his father greeted two new people who had been sent to live in the small, crowded house. Yacov was aware that Alexander was not a Jew, and he wondered why he and his wife had been sent to this ghetto. The suspicion he felt was very obvious to everyone else.

"You are not a Jew, Alexander--are you? And your wife...? Why have you come to this ghetto?"

The room grew solemnly quiet until Nathaniel finally spoke.

"Yacov, it is not for you to question one of our guests. They have been sent here by the Germans. It was not their choice."

"It's all right, Nathaniel." Alexander looked in Yacov's direction. "My wife, Sidonia, is a Jew. When I married her I knew she was Jewish. They told me to deny her and I could keep my job as a musician. I directed a great symphony choir in Prague. But I would not disown my lovely wife." He reached down with what was obviously a disfigured hand and laid it on top of his wife's hand.

"For not agreeing to what they wanted they smashed my hands, so that I will never work again as a music director. And now we have been sent here, and this is where we must stay. I am sorry to inconvenience you."

"No apologies are necessary, Alexander," Nathaniel said. "You are welcome in our home and we will all treat you with respect." Nathaniel then looked clearly in Yacov's direction.

Yacov's mother broke the silence that had settled upon all the people who were seated at the small table. "We received a letter from Aaron today." She lifted the small letter from her pocket and held it close to her heart. "He is well, but he says there has been much

destruction in London from the German air raids. The letter had been opened before I received it, but I guess they did not think it so important.” Lydia smiled as she looked down at the letter in her hands. She then reached over and handed the letter to Yacov. “Aaron is very concerned about his family,” she continued, “and has even tried to come back to Europe, but of course it was impossible. We must pray that he will not come back here.”

“Yes, Mama,” Nathaniel answered his wife. “We will pray for Aaron’s well being and safety. One day our son will be a fine Jewish doctor. Our people are going to need good doctors.”

“Yes, Papa,” Yacov’s mother replied. “He will be a fine doctor.”

Yacov looked at his father. Like his mother, he had aged greatly in a few short years. His coal black beard was now mostly gray. The tiredness in his eyes revealed the continual stress and sorrow that he was always under. So many people came to him for help, but there was so little that he could do. There was very little medicine, and the most he could do was to give them some kind of encouragement and perhaps a prayer.

Yacov looked up when the door to the room opened and Rabbi Reuven came in. The rabbi closed the door and walked immediately over to where Nathaniel was seated.

“Rabbi, please sit down.” Nathaniel offered him a stool to sit on.

“I cannot stay long, Nathaniel and Lydia, but what I have to tell you, and everyone who is here, is very important.” The rabbi looked up from Nathaniel as he glanced briefly at the people who were seated around the table. “I am no longer to be one of the elders of the council. As of today I have resigned my position there.”

“But Rabbi,” Nathaniel spoke, “you have been there since the beginning, and if it had not been for you and a few of the others, we would be in much worse condition. Why are you going to leave?”

“Nathaniel and Lydia, I have come to tell you something, and I must now speak the truth, no matter what it costs.”

“Oh, dear friend, please sit down and calm yourself.” Nathaniel reached for the old man’s hand.

“No, please listen to me. We have not told you, or the others in the ghetto the truth, and I have been quiet for too long. At first I thought what is the point? It will only bring more grief. But now I have

watched as some of the elders have been paid to be quiet, and have then been given better food, and even nicer places to live. Yes, they have sold their souls to the devil. The Nazis are sending our people to terrible places, Nathaniel--even to camps of death. They are being sent to Poland and Germany, and they are not coming back, like those evil men say. They want to kill all the Jews, and so now I will speak. God forgive me!"

Cries of unbelief and shock came from several of the people seated around the table, and then it grew very quiet. Rabbi Reuven continued to speak to the group of silent and frightened people around him.

"They are sending all of the Jews in Czechoslovakia, and from many other countries, to Theresienstadt, and from there they will be deported to concentration camps. You must try and escape while you still can. I will give you a letter, Nathaniel, which describes the best escape route to take, and there are people along the way who will help you, but you must not wait. You must leave soon.

"Right now the best way is to travel across Hungary to Yugoslavia and then Croatia. A Zionist group has arranged to take our people from there to Palestine. A few are following a route across Austria to the border of Italy, and then to a small town called Assisi. It is hard to believe that Gentiles, especially Catholic Gentiles, are helping the Jews to escape to freedom. But our God is merciful, and he has raised up some righteous goyim to help us get out."

"It is so hard to believe." A spasm of coughing took hold of Yacov's mother, as she reached for her husband's arm, and then laid her head on his shoulder and closed her eyes.

"Please stay with us for awhile, Rabbi."

"I must go, Nathaniel. I must go and tell others what I have told you. Then he prayed: "Shema, Israel; the LORD is our God, the LORD is One." He continued to pray: "Oh, Blessed and Merciful One; how long must we wait? Have mercy Holy One, and turn your wrath from us, or we will all perish."

The old rabbi then pulled from his coat pocket his small prayer book. He brought the book to his mouth and lightly kissed it, and then holding it close to his heart he rocked back and forth for a moment. A flow of unrestrained tears fell from his eyes upon his hands and upon the treasured book he held.



He spoke softly:

“Oh, Adonai, revive us according to your justice.  
They draw near who follow after wickedness  
be merciful to us!  
Return, O Adonai, and show us your steadfast love.”

Rabbi Reuven put the small prayer book back in his pocket, and with a shaky voice he stood up. “Now, I must go, Nathaniel and Lydia. I must go and tell as many as I can.” He pulled tightly the blue scarf around his neck as he opened the door. “God be with you, dear friends.”

Yacov’s father spoke to the rabbi as he closed the door. “And God be with you, Rabbi.”

“Yacov.” Ruth spoke without looking up as they walked on a narrow dirt path that ran behind the house. The last few glimmerings of evening twilight had faded and a heavy night darkness had now settled upon them. “My father will not make me have an abortion, not now. He is worn out and has no strength left. It no longer matters to him. So, Yacov, you do not have to marry me.”

Yacov put his arm over Ruth’s shoulder. “Ruth, I still want to marry you, and take care of you. Shimon would want this. And I want you to come with me. We must try and escape from here, very soon.”

“But what about our family, Yacov?”

“They will come too, but like the rabbi said we must leave soon.”

“But it will be very dangerous, Yacov. If they catch us they will kill us.”

“Ruth, we have no choice. If we stay they will come for us, and send us away with the others. If I am going to die, then it will be with dignity and not like a piece of garbage. Ruth, will you still marry me?”

Ruth looked down for a moment. Her face felt numb from the cold.

“Yes, Yacov, I will marry you.”

Yacov stopped walking. He reached down and kissed Ruth lightly on the cheek. “I know you still love Shimon, but we will learn to love

each other. Ruth, I am not asking you to marry me just because I want to help you. I also have a love in my heart for you.” He drew Ruth closer to himself. Holding her so near awakened a deep place inside of him that had not felt love for a long time.

In the silence of the ghetto night they stood quiet for a couple of minutes before going back inside the house.

As Yacov opened the door to go into his house, his father met him.

“Yacov, I need to speak with you for a minute.”

“Yes, Papa?”

“Yacov, you must take Ruth and Rachel tomorrow and leave. You must try and escape into the woods. I will give you the letter the rabbi gave to me. There are some places marked on it, and people who will help you get to Palestine.”

“Yes, Papa. Ruth and I have already talked about it. But we will all go.”

“No, Yacov. We are too old, and your mother is not well. We would never make it. We would only make it possible for you and the girls to be caught. Even Emmanuel and Hilda have agreed that you and Rachel and Ruth must go.”

“Papa, I can’t leave you.”

“You must Yacov. You must live and tell others what they have done. You must live for us and have many children.”

The tears in Yacov’s eyes fell onto his cold cheeks. He put his arms around his father and kissed him on his face. “I love you Papa.”

“You have been a good son to me, Yacov. But now you must promise me that you will take Rachel and Ruth and leave. You must promise me.”

“Yes, Papa, I promise.”

“Yacov,” Merek walked quickly to catch up with his friend, “I am going to leave tonight, as soon as it gets dark. The word is out that more deportations will be happening soon. So there are many who are thinking of running. When you have a big group like that, then it’s going to be more risky--better to leave right away. We have to make a break for it.”

“I am concerned, Merek, about the girls. They are too fragile for the cold weather they will have to endure, and all that it will take for

an escape like this to work. I don't know...?

"Yacov, wake up!" Merek spoke sternly to his friend. "Wake up from this stupor you are in. Even if we don't make it to the other side; it is better to die on a journey to freedom than a train ride to hell. I am leaving tonight, my friend. I encourage you to come with me, and I will pray for God's mercy for all of us."

They would have very little food they could take with them. Yacov's thoughts were coming fast as he walked from the gate to the house. But he had once learned at a summer camp how to live off the wild roots and plants and berries in the woods. At least Rachel and Ruth would have warm clothes to wear. It would be impossible for them to attempt this escape in the skirts they always wore, with their small, thin sweaters. Emmanuel had taken a very big risk. He had smuggled out of the redistribution center two boy's coats, and two pairs of boy's pants. He had also brought home two men's hats that would cover the girl's hair and face. They had hid the clothes under a loose board in the house. The girls would travel with Yacov as young men. Yacov was beginning to feel a little more hopeful that maybe they could actually do it.

As Yacov came near to the street where he lived he stopped short and quickly bent down behind a stone wall. In front of him was a dark green truck. A small ramp had been set up for people to climb into the back of the truck. He could hardly breathe as he watched his father and mother and then Emmanuel and Hilda and some of the children climb into the securely fenced truck.

One Nazi guard was pushing and shoving the people into place. Yacov covered his mouth from the sounds coming up from his own throat, as he listened to the fearful cries coming from his family and friends. His heart began to beat wildly within him as he watched Ruth climb up into the truck.

He had to do something! He started to stand up, but then felt a strong hand pull him back down.

"No, Yacov. There is nothing you can do. Stay down. You are your father's only hope."

Yacov's eyes blurred with tears as he looked at his friend Merek, who was kneeling behind him. "Oh, Merek, we should have gone last

night. I waited too long. Now they are being taken away. Oh, merciful God, hear my prayer! Please do something.” Yacov clenched his hands together and closed his eyes, desperately hoping that a miracle would happen. But then he watched as the ramp was removed and the truck started to pull away and move down the narrow road.

“Oh, Mama, Papa, I love you.” Yacov went down on his knees, near the side of the road, and began to release his broken heart. He cried and cried and cried.

Yacov was not sure how much time had passed, but he knew he had either blacked out for a short while or fallen asleep. When he looked up Marek was still there.

“It’s time to go, Yacov. We have to leave before it gets any later. You must go into your house and get what you need, but we must leave.”

Yacov stood up and looked around him. “I cannot leave without Rachel. She is helping with the children tonight at the center. I don’t know when she will be home. You go ahead, and perhaps we will catch up with you.” He shook Marek’s hand, and then in desperation they hugged each other and said ‘good by.’

Yacov made a quick run to the house. There was little he really needed. There were no memories in this cold, damp, pit of a house. But he remembered that his father had put the letter from the rabbi under a board. He reached under his father’s cot and lifted up the loose board. He removed the letter from its hiding place and put it in his pant’s pocket. He also lifted out of the hiding place his father’s kippa, prayer shawl, and some family papers. He held the kippa for a moment and then put everything inside his large coat pocket.

The letter his father had received from the rabbi had valuable information--listing the names of people who would help them, and also a good map, giving clear directions. He would soon memorize the letter and then bury it, so that it would never be found. He stopped for a minute. In the semi-darkness he reached down and picked up Ruth’s light gray sweater. For a moment he held it to his face.

“God be with you, dear Ruth. One day I will see you again.”

As he sat down on one of the cots he heard a soft noise, almost like the sound of a small kitten, coming from outside. He walked around

to the back of the house and there in the dark, behind a small container, he saw his sister. He ran to her and they held each other tight. “Come, Rachel. The coat and pants you need are in the house. We have no time to mourn. They could come back before the sun rises. We must leave quickly”

After Rachel had changed her clothes they put some of the food rations that Yacov had brought home from work in a back pack, and then tucked a couple of thin blankets under their coats. Yacov sat down on a cot and lit one of the Shabbat candles. He took the letter from his pocket and began to carefully look at the information that was on it. He knew the forest paths and trails from Prague to the Austrian border. He had traveled them with his father and brother many times. On the map there were dots and x’s marking safe places, where there would be blankets and food. Was it possible, he wondered, that there were people who were helping the Jews escape to freedom? He was glad that he had learned German and English in school, at least enough to get by with. He put the letter back in his pocket. He would only look at it a few more times, and then he would make sure that it would never be looked at by anyone, ever again. They closed the door and neither of them looked back. The dark, cold night and the fearful unknown lay before them.



## 4 Into The Night

“My help comes from the Lord...”

Psalm 121:2

Nathaniel covered his wife with part of his long coat. She coughed and shuddered in the cold, dark night. They held on to each other in the back of the uncovered truck as they drove down the road. The Nazi guards had not told anyone where they were being taken, but Nathaniel was sure they were going to Theresienstadt. Thirty people in the back of the truck huddled together for warmth. The sounds of crying and fear had now subsided, except for an occasionally sigh or groan. “I can’t hold it any more, Mama.” A child’s voice sounded out in the dark. “It’s okay,” came the reassuring answer.

Ruth leaned against her mother, with her hand on her belly. What a strange time, she thought, to feel the first little fluttering movements of life in her womb. “I wonder who you are, little one? Are you a little boy, and do you look like your daddy? Or maybe a little girl like me?” She whispered the words to the baby within her, and began to sing quietly:

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I will not be in want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside the still waters...”

Somehow the movement of her baby gave Ruth a feeling of reassurance--almost as if God had allowed it to bring her comfort.

Ruth had just closed her eyes, hoping she might sleep, when all of a sudden the truck lurched to one side and came crashing to a stop. Cuss words were heard from the two Nazi drivers and startled cries of fear came from some of the people in the back of the truck.

“Get out,” came the sharp and stern command. “Everyone out!” A ramp was lowered and slowly the people began to disembark from the truck into the dark night. One of the Nazi guards pulled from under the truck another tire. He muttered under his breath as he

pulled it to the ground. Nathaniel stood with his arm around his wife, supporting her. The people all stood in a close circle while the tire was being changed. No one dared to move.

“Ruth.” The voice came to her very clearly. “I want you to start walking down the road in the direction you came from and you are not to look back.”

For a moment Ruth stood transfixed. She looked at her parents--who like the others were shivering in the cold. She knew that if she hesitated she would not obey the voice. She looked at her father and mother one more time and then began to walk down the dark road. She did not look back.

A few cries of astonishment came from some of the people as they watched Ruth walk away. Ruth’s parents stood frozen, unable to move or think. What was their daughter doing? But the guards continued to work on the tire and were unaware that anyone had left. It was almost as if they had been blinded.

It took only an instant for Ruth’s parents, and the others, to realize that something great had just happened. In the dark some of the people secretly smiled, knowing that God had worked a miracle for Ruth. They all quickly turned their heads away from watching her, as she walked down the road, so as to not draw attention to her escape. Soon Ruth disappeared into the night. Ruth’s mother whispered a prayer for her daughter--that God would lead her to a good place. The Nazis were frustrated and in a hurry. They did not bother to count the people, as they ordered them back into the truck.

Ruth was scared. It was very dark and she felt so alone. As terrible as it had been in the truck, there had been others with her. The night air was stinging cold on her face. “Oh, Shimon! Where are you? If only you were here, then it would be all right, no matter what happens. Please, Adonai, show me the way. You watch over the sparrows; please watch over me.” Ruth continued to walk down the road leading back to the ghetto. But after a short while she saw a light, shining in the dense, grimy dark. She could feel that somehow the light was drawing her. She walked quickly towards the supernatural light and to a path that veered away from the road. As she began to

walk on the lighted path, she saw a small, gray cottage near the edge of the woods.

“Don’t be afraid Ruth. They will help you.” The voice came to her again. She knocked on the door to the small house. The woman who came to the door looked startled. Ruth stood shivering on the porch. Soon, a tall, brown haired man came and stood at his wife’s side. “Well,” he said, “you must be the one. Come in, please.”

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Theresienstadt was a two hundred year old fortress town in northern Czechoslovakia, once called Terezin. In July, 1941, the Nazis took control of that old fort and turned it into a ghetto-prison camp. It was to be, as far as outsiders were concerned, a model Jewish resettlement village. The German Reich needed someplace to keep thousands of Jews until it was time to transport them to the death camps in Germany and Poland.

The camp had been presented to the outside world as an example of German hospitality to the Jews. But behind the false façade of streets and shops and schools, even promenades and synagogues, there was a concentration camp.

The small fortress town that originally was meant to hold approximately seven thousand residents, was usually crammed with more than sixty thousand Jewish men and women. In small, suffocating barracks, at Theresienstadt, over forty thousand Jews died of sickness, disease, and inhumane treatment, while another hundred thousand were deported to Auschwitz and other death camps.

The deportation of Jews from different European countries to Theresienstadt continued almost to the very end of the war in 1945.

Upon arrival, the men were immediately separated from the women and squeezed into very small, unsanitary rooms together. The Jewish inmates were forced to work every day with little food or water. The work was long and filthy and soul destroying.



Many of the Jewish inmates were used to help produce goods that would benefit the German work force. The splitting of mica, mined in the mountains of Czechoslovakia, was a very hard and exhausting job. Dark and damp warehouse rooms provided other manufacturing and work activity. In these grueling chambers the inmates would often pass out from lack of air and water, and from breathing in chemically charged air.

The redistribution center at Theresienstadt occupied many Jewish inmates, as they handled and packaged apparel that still held the smell of the Jewish people who had once owned them. Everything from cheap, modest clothing, to expensive fur coats, were packaged in boxes and sent to other places in Europe.

Tragically, the false reports that went out from the Red Cross, and other agencies, about how nice Theresienstadt was for the Jews, helped to keep this deportation camp of hell operating successfully.

Shimon was still alive. In the beginning he was first assigned a job with the garbage disposal unit. For him, it was not such a hard job. But after a couple months of strenuous work all day, and even into the night, he was losing body strength, and he was not sure how long he could last. There was a ton of garbage to be hauled away every day. Wheel barrels of dirt and rocks would be emptied into deep pits that had first been dug out by the inmates. Shimon was hoping he would soon be assigned to another job.

The need to make Theresienstadt appear to be a nice settlement was a primary goal for the Nazis in occupied Czechoslovakia. This meant planting many trees, and constructing and maintaining promenades and walkways. In the summer months flower-beds flanked the streets, and theater performances by healthy looking Jews were routinely put on for visiting dignitaries. Like mannequins in a bizarre and tragic play the Jewish prisoners were forced to perform their roles, while behind the well scrubbed walls thousands of men and women lay sick and dying, in squalid and filthy conditions.

All day Shimon's thoughts were on Ruth. "Adonai," he would pray, "please watch over my Ruth. I will do anything if I just know she is all right."

By the late fall of 1943, and the spring of 1944, more and more deportations were taking place from Theresienstadt to places like Auschwitz and Treblinka, and other death camps in Poland and Germany. And more and more freight cars filled with Jews, from Hungary and Romania and even Denmark, were now coming into the depot at Theresienstadt.

Shimon's newly assigned job was to shovel out dead Jewish bodies from the freight cars. Frequently, the elderly and the sick would be found dead in the horror filled cars. In order for this macabre scene to not be viewed by agents who were visiting the "pleasant" resettlement camp, the train would stop a few kilometers away from the main station and the people would then have to walk the rest of the way, their small suitcases in hand.

Shimon's mind swirled with confusion and became clouded with unbelief at what he witnessed day after day. He knew that unless he soon found a way out of this place, he too would be deported to someplace like Auschwitz.

One night Shimon's heart was filled with a sad joy when he saw Nathaniel waiting in line for the evening soup. He was really not happy to see him at Theresienstadt, but his heart, nonetheless, was filled with joy to see a familiar face. Because he had to do extra work that night he was not able to talk to Nathaniel that evening. But the next day, as he worked at his dreaded job, the thought would not leave his mind that soon he would be able to hug Nathaniel and he would also find out where Ruth was and how she was doing.

After the sun went down the men would pour into the cafeteria room, where they would patiently wait in line for a cup of watered down soup, and possibly some old bread. They would then crowd around the small tables or sit hunched over on the floor. Shimon saw Nathaniel in line. He kept his eyes on him so that he would not lose him in the midst of all the confusion.

"Nathaniel." Shimon was finally able to get his attention. Nathaniel put down his cup of soup and greeted Shimon with a hug. After they had both finished their soup, Shimon listened as Nathaniel told him about Ruth. He wept as he heard the story of how Ruth had

miraculously walked away from the Nazi truck, as if she had been invisible. But when Nathaniel told Shimon that Ruth was almost four months pregnant with his baby, the grief and guilt he felt was almost more than he could bear. She was carrying his baby and he was not there for her. Dark and heavy remorse and shame came upon him. He put his head in his hands and wept bitterly.

“Son,” Nathaniel spoke to him, “Ruth holds no guilt towards you.” He did not tell Shimon that Yacov had wanted to marry Ruth. There was no point to it. God had stopped those plans, and Nathaniel knew that Yacov had been acting out of a kind of duty, not real love.

“When she walked away from the truck,” Nathaniel continued, “we all knew that it was a miracle from God. I truly believe that God has something very special planned for that young lady.”

Shimon looked up, his eyes still clouded with tears. “I must find Ruth. I must get out of here and find her.”

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By the time the sun had started to rise, Yacov and Rachel had walked to the very outskirts of Prague. They had stayed deep in the woods, and along the riverbanks that Yacov knew as a boy. The light of the moon had directed their way, and they were able to walk briskly, making good time.

About three hours after they had started walking, Yacov reached for Rachel’s hand, and they both stopped. They could hear voices ahead of them, and the cracking and crunching of leaves and branches under heavy boots. Quickly they moved behind a large tree and waited. Yacov could feel Rachel’s warm breath on the back of his neck, and her hands were trembling. Two hundred feet ahead of them a group of young men seemed to be on the same path, but then Yacov noticed that their voices were beginning to fade away. They were going a different direction. Perhaps, he thought, a Nazi youth group camping out for the night. They stayed where they were until they were sure it was safe and the way was clear.

Yacov was pleased at how well Rachel was doing. She had not talked much since leaving the house. Every so often he would take her hand and they would walk quietly together, side by side. When they did talk it was only in whispers.

Yacov had decided that it would be safer to walk during the night and try to sleep during the day. The rising sun felt warm on his face. He could see about one hundred feet in front of him what looked like the entrance to a small cave in the side of a hill. As they got closer Yacov got down on his knees and looked inside. There was enough room for both of them. It would work. He took out of his pocket a hand knife and cut down a few small spruce limbs. They would make good cushion for sleeping on and also provide covering for the entrance to the cave. He smiled to himself, remembering the things his father had taught him about surviving in the woods.

Once inside the cave Yacov spread a thin blanket over the branches and laid down. He was exhausted. Rachel laid next to him.

“God has been good to us, Yacov. He is making a way.”

Yacov remained silent. “Don’t be angry at God, Yacov. He is always good even if we don’t understand all his ways. The words barely came out of her mouth before she was sound asleep.

Yacov lay for a second with his eyes open. His sister’s words intermingled with the words of his father, and briefly floated across his mind. “Don’t let hatred enter your heart, Yacov,” his father had said to him. But soon everything became a blur and he too fell into a deep sleep.

He slept and then he dreamed. In the dream Yacov was younger and the family was again sitting down at the long wooden table. But this dream was focused mostly on Yacov’s father. In the dream Yacov had asked his father a question: “Papa, where are you going?”

His father had on his best Shabbat clothes and there was a sparkle of excitement in his eyes. “I am going home, Yacov,” he had answered him. “And I have been told to prepare for a very big party.” He had smoothed his beard with one hand, and adjusted his lapels on his jacket.

“Oh, Papa, can we go too?” Rachel had asked him in the dream.

“In time, my dear children,” Yacov’s mother answered her. “Soon we will all be together in our new home. Papa has seen the face of the Messiah, and he has told him wonderful things.” Yacov remembered feeling surprise that his mother was not upset that Papa was going someplace without her. Only a deep serene understanding seemed to radiate from her eyes.

“Papa, will the Messiah come for me too?”

His father, in the dream, had started to say something to him, but Yacov could only remember part of it. But he would never forget the very joyful smile his father had smiled. Yacov woke up from the dream. He was speaking the word “Papa.”

“Yacov, wake up. You’ve been dreaming.” Rachel gently shook him.

Yacov opened his eyes. The sun was beginning to set behind the brown and white mountains. His sister was already sitting up next to him.

“Yacov, are you all right?”

“Rachel, I had a wonderful dream. It was about Papa and Mother and us too.” Yacov stopped talking as a strong gust of wind, and a hollowing noise blew into the cave. He looked around. A large spider scampered up the rock behind him. He took a deep breath. “But it was only a dream.” Yacov turned his head from his sister’s questioning gaze. “Come,” he said. “We will have clear weather tonight and the light of the moon to guide us.” Yacov wondered for a moment where Merek was and if he was okay. Yacov had not talked with Rachel about which route they would take—the one that would lead them to Croatia and the Black Sea, or the other route that he had chosen ... the route that would take them to the border of Italy and then to a place called Assisi. He had to trust what the rabbi had told him, even though he knew it meant going into Austria; a country that had now become a domain of hell for the Jewish people. They would have to be very careful of every move they made. Instinctively he looked up and said a short prayer. He knew they would not reach the end of this journey without God’s help.

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When Ruth woke up she stared for a moment at the bleak ceiling, and the dimly lit room. It looked as if it had once been a storage room for vegetables, but had been made into a sleeping room. She knew by the small cross on the wall that she was in a Czech Christian home. She had slept on a cot, but it had been as comfortable as a bed and she had quickly fallen into an exhausted sleep.

As she stared at the ceiling the thought crossed her mind that she had been tricked. But then she remembered the voice and the light that had guided her here. Surely, Adonai would not have brought her here for the wrong reason? As she was pondering this thought the door squeaked open and Anna came into her room. "Please excuse me, Ruth, but I just wanted to see if you would like to join us for a small breakfast meal. It won't be much, but I am sure you must be hungry." The worrying thoughts Ruth had felt a moment before quickly left her mind.

In the days to come Jan and Anna made Ruth feel very comfortable and had welcomed her into their small house. How strange, she had thought, it was almost as if they had been expecting her. Several times she had sat with them at the little white kitchen table and they would talk. She had told them everything. They also knew she was pregnant, and yet they had reassured her that she would be safe with them, for as long as she wanted to stay.

In the weeks that followed, Ruth could not seem to get enough to eat. Jan and Anna treated her as if she was their own daughter. She followed closely the rules they had given her. Anna had told her that few people came to their home, but she must still be very careful not to be seen by anyone. Ruth understood that this was important not only for her well being, but also for them.

One evening, before going to bed, Ruth asked Jan why they had taken her in.

"I was about your age, Ruth, when my mother fell very ill. My father had died two years before, but between the two of us we had managed to keep our small farm going. But after my mother grew sick it became almost impossible for me to care for her and also make sure the farm work was attended to. I was really quite desperate as I watched my mother grow weak and more sick every day.

Out of all the people who lived near us there was only one family that truly helped us. It was a Jewish family with many children to feed, but every day Benjamin would come by in his wagon and would bring us fresh vegetables and soup that his wife had made. My mother finally got better. But then this kind man took time off from his own work to teach me the special skills that I needed to be a successful farmer. I made a vow to God at that time that my home would always be open to any Jews that needed a place to stay. I knew, Ruth, when I saw you standing in our doorway, shivering with cold, that God had heard my prayer, and had brought you to us.”

“I am so grateful to you and Anna for taking me in. Even though God had directed me to your house, I was still very much afraid. But you have not only eased my fears, but you have given me hope. If God can take care of me as he has, by bringing me to your home, then surely he is watching over my Shimon.”

Ruth reached down and massaged with her hand where her baby had just kicked. Her straight, little flat stomach was now becoming a well rounded mound.



## 5 Hidden Places

“For you O Lord are a shield about me...”

Psalm 3:3

The weather had loosed its cold grip, but Yacov knew it would not be for long. It was almost December, and in Austria it could get very cold. Rachel had pulled her hat down tight around her face.

Yacov smiled at his sister. “You make kind of a handsome young man, my sister.” He laughed softly.

Rachel’s mouth moved into a slightly embarrassed smile.

“The dream you had, Yacov, about Papa. What was it about?”

At the mention of his father’s name, Yacov smiled. His father had been so happy in the dream. “Yes, Rachel, it was about our family, and the days when we were together and things were good.” Yacov could see the tears come quickly to his sister’s eyes. He gently took hold of her hand. “Papa said he was going home, and he was very happy, and so was Mama. He smiled at me and said he had seen the Messiah.”

“Oh, Yacov, that is so wonderful.” Rachel stopped walking and turned to face her brother. “Maybe God was giving you a dream to let you know that everything is going to be okay, and that we will be going home soon?”

“No, Rachel. I don’t think it was that kind of a home.”

“You mean home, like heaven?”

“I think we need to not talk so much and watch where we are walking. We have a long journey ahead of us tonight.” Yacov did not know how to answer his sister.

“Yacov?”

“Yes, Rachel?”

“If anything happens to one of us on this journey we must promise each other that we will keep going. It’s what Father would want.”

Yacov felt a chill enter his body at what Rachel had said. He stopped and looked at her. “Don’t talk nonsense. We are both going to make it; together, both of us.”

“I know, Yacov, but just in case....”



“No. I will not listen to this. Now, enough talk! We must hurry, and not lose precious time.”

The heavy forests made it difficult to know where the borders of one country began and ended. But the map Yacov had memorized gave him a clear understanding of where they now were. Soon they would be entering into an extremely mountainous area, but also, according to the map, there would be people who would help them.

An old deserted barn had given them a good place to sleep the night before, and the loose hay had provided good beds. Their food had run out. So Yacov spent some time gathering a few edible plants and some wild roots that could be eaten. They were not very filling, but at least they provided some form of nourishment. The clear running streams and rivers offered a continual source of good drinking water. They had now been on the run for almost two weeks.

Yacov spoke to Rachel. “If I memorized the map correctly there should be a hut with some food about ten kilometers from where we are. I figure two more nights and we should be near a village where there will be help.” A cold wind was beginning to pick up and they had no place else to go. Yacov hoped he had not made any mistakes when studying the map. It could mean their lives.

Yacov thought he could see something that looked like it might be a small cave, in back of some trees. If they found the entrance to the cave then they were to look and see if the door had yellow or red twine on the latch. If it was red then it meant that it was no longer safe to stay there. But if yellow, then it would be okay. The sun was beginning to set and it was definitely getting a lot colder. He pulled some dead branches away from the path in front of him.

They were now deep in the forest and only a glittering of sunlight sprinkled through the tall trees. Yacov stopped when he got near to the cave. If he had not known what he was looking for they would have walked right past it. Someone had camouflaged the cave to blend in perfectly with the green of the forest. Slowly he walked up to the tree-like door that covered the entrance to the cave. He breathed a sigh of relief. The twine was yellow.

He had to bend down to enter the cave and the confined area. There were a few steps leading to a small room, built down under the earth. There were two cots, some tin cans of food and a couple jugs of

water. Rachel came down the steps. They looked at each other and smiled.

Warm blankets covered the cots. Maybe, Yacov pondered the thought, they would stay here for a couple of days and rest. They were both exhausted. They ravished two cans of beans and swallowed some stale crackers. They tasted good. Then they both collapsed into a deep sleep.

They slept through the day and into the night. The morning light was just starting to break forth when they woke up. They talked freely for the first time since they had left the ghetto.

“Maybe, Yacov, it’s not going to be as bad as the rabbi said?” Rachel pulled the blanket up over her shoulders and sat huddled on the cot.

“My hope, Rachel, is that soon America will come into the war, and then it will quickly be over, and we can go home. And perhaps Mama and Papa and Ruth will be okay?” Yacov sat against the wall. He was not in a hurry to leave, but he knew that they could not stay in this hiding place much longer. He had decided that it might be safe now to walk during the day. If anyone saw them they would just think they were two young men on a hike in the woods.

“What did Papa tell you, Yacov, about the Messiah?”

For a moment Yacov stopped thinking about the day’s journey and thought again about the dream. He smiled when he remembered how excited and joyful his father had been, and then suddenly he remembered the words he had forgotten.

“Papa told me, Rachel, that he had seen the face of the Messiah, and that a wonderful way had been made for them. That’s what he said to me, Rachel.”

“How good,” Rachel said, smiling freely.

“I don’t know what it all means, Rachel. The dream was not long enough, but they were both so very happy. They were so joyful that they had met the Messiah.”

“Maybe we can pray, Yacov, to meet the Messiah too?”

Yacov stood up from the cot. He was not smiling now, and his face and mouth had moved into a more thoughtful expression.

“The Messiah will come when it is the right time, Rachel. We must not get carried away by these things. It was just a nice dream. We must not let it have an affect on our Jewish faith and traditions. Remember, it was only a dream! Sometimes the mind can play tricks on you. I probably should not have told you about the dream, and made you excited. Now, come on. We must leave here and continue to walk as far as we can, while we have light.”

But just as Yacov began to climb up the steps he heard someone turn the door latch and enter the cave. He stood frozen where he was. There was no place to run, nothing he could do. He waited. The door opened all the way and a dark haired man came down the steps to where he was.

“Don’t be afraid. I am not here to harm you, but to give you help and warning.” The man was tall and thin. He had on a dark blue coat and a hood that went over his head. “My name is Sylvester.” He stepped down onto the floor and pulled the hood off his heard. He was nice looking. He smiled first at Rachel and then at Yacov. In one hand he held a large, thermos style canister, and in the other hand a sack. “Sit down,” he said. “I have some important information to share with you.” He then pulled out of the sack three tin cups. Yacov and Rachel were stunned, but they sat down, as he had directed. They could do nothing else.

“We won’t talk too much. Always better not to say more than needed.” He handed both of them a cup of hot, black coffee, and then took from his coat jacket a small bottle of brandy. He poured a small amount in each cup. “This will keep you warm for the rest of the day.” He smiled. He spoke with a distinct British accent. He sipped at his coffee. “You need to know that they have gotten wind of the work we are doing here. We have had to make some changes. We may even have to close this route down.” He then took out of his backpack a rolled up map. “If you can make it to here...” he pointed on the map for Yacov to see, “there will be a man who will help you get across a good part of Austria, to the border of Italy. You will meet him where the river changes course and the path diverts. But if you are not there when the sun has set, he won’t wait. It’s about a ten mile walk, so

you best be on your way.

I am sorry to have to bring you this bad news, but it's all we can do. We have been aware of your escape, and the partisans are waiting to help you get through to Italy." Sylvester then began to stuff everything back into his backpack.

"So, my friends, the Lord bless you and keep you safe." Pulling the hood back over his head, he said good-by, and disappeared up the steps.

They walked fast, stopping occasionally for a short break. In eight hours they had reached the place where they were to meet the man who would help them. It was only three o'clock in the afternoon. They sat down under a tree. It was a lovely day. They rested and they talked.

"Do you remember, Rachel, when Papa and Mama would take us to the fair, and how much fun we would have?"

"Oh, yes," Rachel sighed, "all the wonderful smells and foods. It was the best time of my life."

"That funny man who would ride the bike in the air? Oh how we would laugh--you and me and Aaron."

"I miss Aaron," Rachel said. "Do you think we will ever see him again?"

"Of course, Rachel. We will see him again. Don't you remember? The Messiah told Mama we would all be together again."

"I wish it would be soon," Rachel answered quietly. "Sometimes I wonder why it has been such a long time of hardship for our people."

"Rachel, you take on thoughts that the great rabbis and sages have pondered for centuries. So you think you will discover, so soon, the answer to this? I do not answer for God, but I know that what we have endured as a people has always been at the hands of those Christians who think they are doing God a favor by getting rid of us."

"But I have known Christians, Yacov, who did not treat us so badly."

"Well, my sister." Yacov's voice was tense. "Where are these good Christians now? Do you see them leaving everything and running to help our family?"

“Yacov, do you think Sylvester was a Christian?”

Yacov was quiet. “I don’t know?” he finally said.

“But soon we will be leaving here. Perhaps we should get some rest.”

“Yes,” Rachel answered, “perhaps we should.”

The sun had started to set behind the mountains when Yacov woke up with a start. He reached over and shook his sister’s arm.

“Rachel, wake up. The sun is going down. We must hurry or we will miss our ride. Come! We must run.”

Yacov could see a dark blue sedan as they ran down the path, leading to a large enclosed lake, and a winding road. He did not want to draw attention to himself, but for a moment he raised his arms in the air and waved, hoping he would be seen by the driver. As they came near to the road the car pulled up to where they were. The driver opened the door for them. “Get in,” he said, “quickly.” He was a young man, not much older than Yacov. He wore a dark brown coat and a baret style hat. Yacov and Rachel got in the back seat.

“Thank you for helping us,” Yacov said.

“Yes,” Rachel added, “thank you very much.”

“My name is Zako. I am pleased to be able to help you my brother. But now I encourage you to rest. It will be a long ride. We will not drive through any check points. We are going an older route that diverts off the main road. If all goes as planned I will get you about ten miles from the border of Italy, and then the Partisans will help you the rest of the way. But you must remember what I tell you. Do not talk to anyone you might see before you reach safety. It is not only the Nazis you must be concerned about. There are many collaborators, and they get paid a very good price for every Jew they capture for the Nazis.

“I understand,” Yacov said. “Zako, are you Jewish?”

“Yes,” Zako answered. “I am a French Jew, and I tell you that I hate the Nazis with a passion. They came and took my wife and two daughters. I came home and they were gone--deported to a concentration camp. I have been running ever since, and helping the underground, as best I can.”

“But I know that one day I must forgive. We cannot live with hatred in our hearts.”

"I am so sorry, Zako, for the loss of your family," Rachel said.

"One day, jeunes fille, (young lady) I will see my beloved again in the Kingdom of God. This I have heard from the lips of my Savior."

"You are a Jew, Zako, but you talk like a Christian?" Yacov said with confusion. "Yacov, I am a Jewish believer in Yeshua."

"A what....?"

"I have come to know my Jewish Messiah--the one HaShem promised us in the Holy Scriptures. His name is Yeshua."

Yacov was stunned, but he said nothing. The word "traitor" came up in his throat. He noticed that Rachel was looking at Zako with curiosity.

They drove the rest of the night through very mountainous hills and valleys. It was dark and it was quiet. Zako said nothing more about Yeshua.

At the first break of light Yacov opened his eyes and saw that the car had pulled to the side of the road.

"I am sorry, but here is where you must get out," Zako said.

"I cannot take you any further." He handed Yacov a small map.

"Walk up to the tree line and then follow these directions. When you come to the end of the trail there will be a large tree, over looking a lake. Don't go any further, but wait till someone comes for you. Do you understand?"

"Yes," Yacov answered him.

"God be with you." Zako reached in back and shook Rachel's hand and then shook Yacov's hand.

"Thank you." Yacov opened the car door. "Thank you very much."

Yacov and Rachel climbed up a trail that led into a dark and heavy forest and for the next three hours they walked deeper into the woods. As they came near the end of the trail an old man, dressed in ragged clothes and walking with a cane, appeared in front of them. Yacov put his arm around Rachel and they kept walking. The old man did not look up from the ground, but walked past them, continuing on his way.

Yacov could see up ahead where the trail branched off into two directions. A single, large tree stood as a marker. A radiant, turquoise blue lake, surrounded by golden green trees, lay on one side of the

path. On the other side a very turbulent, fast moving river raced past them. The rugged mountains that encircled them shot straight up into the sky, crusted at the tops with heavy coverings of snow. Zako had given them a long loaf of hard crusted bread. Yacov took it out of his back pack, and gave Rachel a piece of it. They both sat down and leaned against a tree. The sun felt warm on Yacov's face. Soon they would be on their way to Palestine. He could feel a wave of sleep quickly coming over him.

"Stay close, Rachel," he said, as he dozed off.

"Of course," Rachel answered.

Yacov started to dream, but this time it was an anxious and panicky dream. His family and other people were running from a huge, whirling black cloud that was over taking them, threatening to engulf them all. And then he heard Rachel screaming. He woke up with a start. This was no dream. Rachel was not at his side. Yacov jumped up and looked down the path, but saw nothing. He turned and ran to the river, and then he saw Rachel about two hundred yards up the path. Two men, dressed in civilian clothes, were pushing her into the woods. He opened his mouth to scream but nothing came out, and then he heard a word, somewhere inside himself, that said, "stop." But still he ran towards Rachel and the men. As he stepped away from the riverbank he caught his foot in a root, a twisted vine. He fell hard on a tree trunk and then blacked out.

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Ruth sat very still. She could tell by Jan's voice that something was not right. Some people had come to visit. And a man was asking Jan many questions--even wanting to know if Jan and Anna had taken a visitor into their home.

Ruth closed her eyes, hoping they would leave. It seemed like they had been in the house for a long time. She had now been at Jan and Anna's home for almost two months, and she feared having to leave.

"So, Jan, I have been told that you have a guest staying with you. Is it true?" The man's high pitched voice easily reached Ruth's room. She could hear everything he said. "And why have we not met this

friend of yours?" The man then looked over at his wife for a nod of confirmation.

"I have no idea what you are talking about, Guten. There is no one staying with us in our home. Perhaps, someone has seen Bene when he leaves here, and has mistaken him for someone else? You know he comes frequently to help me with the farm work."

The man then stood up and motioned for his wife to do the same. He pulled from his coat pocket a black fur hat and adjusted it to his baldhead. He made a slight grunting sound and then helped his plump, well dressed, wife up from the chair she had been sitting in. She smiled politely at Jan and Anna, and then waddled after her husband like a well trained goose.

"It has been nice to visit with you Jan and Anna," Guten said as he walked out the door. "We must get together again soon--yes, soon." He muttered something under his breath that Jan could not hear, and shut the door.

"Anna," Jan's voice was stern sounding. "Get some of the winter clothes down--some of my older clothes--the ones that will be a better fit for Ruth. We have no time to waste. Ruth, please come here I need to talk with you."

Ruth walked out of the bedroom and sat down next to Jan. "I can tell," she said, "that something is not right. Please tell me. Is there trouble?"

"Ruth, we must leave here in the morning. I will take you to my cousin's house, about 20 kilometers from here--not too far from Prague. He and his wife are good people. Yes, Honza and Petra are good people. You will be safe there."

Ruth felt sick inside. Her baby began to kick and move around, as if protesting. She dreaded having to leave these people, whom she had come to love and trust. "Are you sure, Jan, that I must go?"

"The people who came here are not to be trusted. They will be back, and I am afraid next time they might bring a Czech official with them. I could tell that they were very suspicious. There has been talk, evidently, that someone is staying with us; even though I was so sure that we have been very careful. Ruth you must trust me. At Honza's

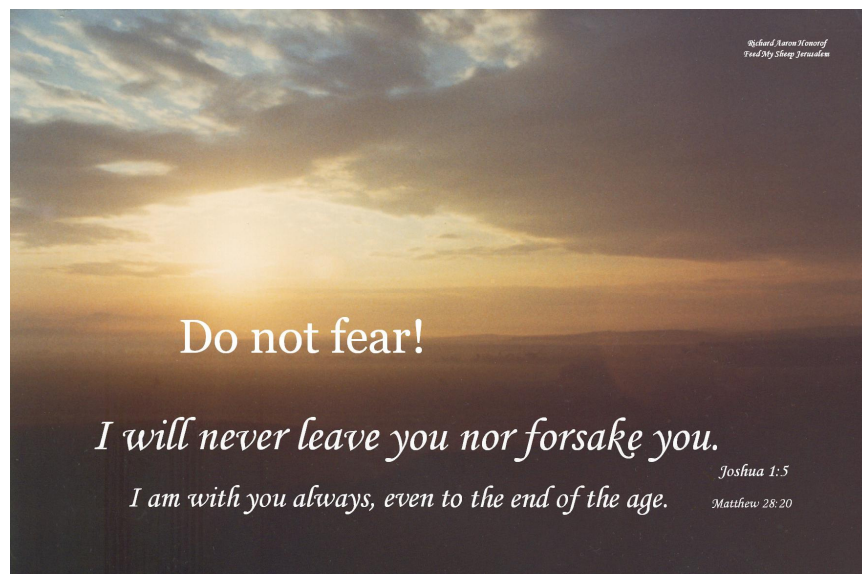


you will be safe. They have a small clinic and care for a few amputees. Rarely does anyone go to visit them.”

Anna came into the room with her arms filled with winter clothes.

“Come here Ruth,” Anna smiled, “and we will see if we can make some of these clothes fit you.”

“Yes, you must be dressed warm. It will be a long, cold ride, and we will leave very early in the morning.” Jan smiled at Ruth a reassuring smile.



## 6 Entrapped

“Make haste O God to deliver me...”

Psalm 70:1

Shimon sat with his head in his hands. He had been such a fool. If only he had taken Ruth and escaped while they were still in the ghetto. “You have always been a wild and undisciplined man, selfish and just wanting your own way,” he said to himself, “and now the one you love the most, must pay for your selfishness.” Shimon bowed his head in prayer. “Adonai, I have not been good, and have broken your Torah many times, but if you will have mercy on my life and spare my beloved Ruth, then I will become religious and serve you all of my days. I promise you. Amen!”

In his mind Shimon began to make feverish plans on how to escape. He knew that if he was deported he would never see Ruth or his family again. Ruth was out there someplace--maybe not even so far from him. The thought brought a moment of joy to his heart. Somehow, he must escape the prison he was in, before they sent him someplace worse. The only way he could envision any kind of an escape was while he was at work, but the more he considered that thought, the more impossible it seemed. He sat down on a cot. “Think, think,” he said out loud. “There must be a way.”

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“Move.” It was hard for Rachel to see where she was going. She stumbled as the man pushed her with his hand.

She had only left Yacov’s side for a couple of minutes, as she walked down to the near by river. It seemed so peaceful and lovely. She had walked just a little bit further and that was when two men grabbed her from behind. She had time to scream before one of the men put his hand over her mouth and dragged her into the woods. Once they had pulled her away from the river and into the trees, then the other man put the tip of his knife against her throat.

“Now, little lady, I can kill you right now and no one will find you for a long time. It makes no difference to me. So I suggest you do exactly as I say. You walk a few feet in front of us and don’t do anything stupid. Understand!” With the point of his knife he flipped up from her face a strand of dark hair. “Kind of pretty for a Jew,” he smirked through his gray-black beard. Rachel looked away from the yellow-brown eyes that looked her up and down.

“Yes,” she responded, with a trembling voice. “I understand.”

“Then move,” came the ugly response. “And if anyone should meet us on the path I suggest you do not get yourself and them killed by saying the wrong thing.”

The sun was starting to go down and the air was quickly turning cold. She walked and prayed softly under her breath. At times she could hear their conversation, as they kept just a few feet in back of her. The younger man, name Goran, complained to the man with the gray beard.

“We should have gone back and gotten the other one; then we’d get twice as much. This is too much work for just one Jew.”

“Did you see the shape he was in, Goran? We probably would have had to kill him, and we don’t have time for that now. We have to be at the road in a couple of hours. Marina won’t wait very long. If we don’t show up when we’re suppose to then she’ll leave without us.” He shook his head and made a strange sound. “I can’t trust that woman anymore. I am going to have to dump her pretty soon--one of these days.”

Rachel prayed. “Oh, Adonai, please help me, and keep Yacov safe. Don’t let him come after me.”

“Stop.” The voice from one of the men came at her in a sharp command.

Rachel stopped where she was. She did not turn around. “Oh, please God,” she said under her breath. Then she saw why they had yelled at her. About fifty feet ahead of them, on the path, was a young man and woman. They were laughing as they came down the trail towards them. The thought crossed her mind to yell something, but what good would it do? There was nothing they could do. And she believed what the older man had said to her. He would not hesitate

to kill them both.

Goran and Jozo walked quickly to where Rachel was standing. Goran walked ahead of both of them and then the older man, put his arm around her, partially covering her face. He then began to speak to her in a threatening way.

“Talk,” he whispered, “and say the right things.”

The young man and woman walked past them on the path. Rachel could tell by the expression on the young man’s face that he was suspicious. Maybe it was the look on her face that had given it away. She did not want them to get hurt. She looked up into Jozo’s grizzly face and spoke Czech. “How much longer, dear, do we have to go?”

He smiled down at her. “In a short while, sweetie, we will be at the border and then we will go for a nice little ride.”

Rachel feigned a weak smile. She did not turn around as the couple continued on down the path.

“You did very good, my little Jewish slut. So maybe you would like to play husband and wife?” He snorted a loud laugh.

Goran slowed down and then stopped. “There’s no time for that kind of stuff now. I don’t want that girlfriend of yours to take off. Before we turn her into the Gestapo you can have your fun, but not now.”

“Oh, listen to this big man talk,” Jozo said sarcastically. He then pushed Rachel ahead of him and the two men continued to walk together.

Rachel breathed a sigh of relief. She kept praying, softly, under her breath. She had no idea how far they had walked, but it was quickly getting dark. She shuddered at the thought of having to be with them at night, in the dark woods.

“Up ahead,” Goran yelled. “I can see the road from here.” He started walking faster. “Come on. I can see Marina’s car.” They raced past Rachel, grabbing her by the arm, and half dragging her to where the car was parked. A blond haired woman was seated in the driver’s seat. She opened the passenger door.

“Get in,” she yelled. “It’s late.”

Jozo got in the front seat next to Marina, and Goran got in the back seat with Rachel. Marina gunned the car and they sped off.

Jozo reclined back against the seat, putting his arm around the woman.

“Well, we got a little Jewish package here to deliver. You did good Marina.” He chuckled to himself.

“Yeah, well, I figure one third is mine. So how much do you think we’ll get for her?”

“Just drive,” Jozo snapped back at her.

Rachel moved as far into the corner of the back seat as she could. She closed her eyes. “Why,” she said to herself, “is this happening”? Oh, Papa, where are you, and where is Mama?” She was terrified. She tried to fight back the tears.

“Please, HaShem, help me.” She mouthed the words.

“So, what do you think we’ll get for her?” Marina broke the silence.

“The same price that we got for the last one we turned in,” Jozo said. “But this one is prettier than the others.” He laughed a sinister laugh.

Marina shot him a suspicious look. “Don’t go getting any stupid ideas, Jozo. This one could be for one of the big shots, but you go and get her messed up and we won’t get the price we want.”

“Shut up Marina, and just drive. Don’t you think I’ve already thought about that? Yeah, I know one of the Nazi big shots in Zagreb might be interested in her. But it’s another five hours of driving before we get to the great capital of our new Croatian state. I never get tired of saying it.” He laughed, shaking his head, and then turned to speak to Goran. “Finally, we will have a pure, and ethnic cleansed state; no more Jews or Serbs or Gypsies in our great new homeland.”

“Oh, yes,” Goran spoke without enthusiasm, “we will have a great state. The Ustashi army is already killing thousands every day.” He yawned. “But I don’t care about governments or religion. I just want to get my money and buy some vodka. I don’t care what they do with Croatia. It’s all a big joke.”

“Oh, Goran, you will soon see how wrong you are. Like Germany, we too will have a racially pure state. Yes, you will soon see. Now, enough talk. I am going to close my eyes and sleep. Marina if you get tired then Goran will drive. Do you understand?”

“Yes, of course.” She brushed a wisp of blond hair back from her face.

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Ruth was bundled in heavy men’s clothes, as she sat next to Jan on the wagon seat. It was a cold, clear day. The wagon bounced over the rocky path. She put her hands on her belly, and prayed that her baby would be okay. Jan did not look down from what he was doing. He seemed very determined.

Anna had hugged Ruth and had whispered in her ear before they left. “You are going to be fine, precious one. I will be praying for you and Jan. Don’t be too concerned with his mood today. He is worried for you, and wants to get you to where you will be safe. You know we live in very uncertain days, but it will not be forever.” She brushed back the tears from Ruth’s cheek. “Be brave, dear Ruth. Now, we must say ‘good-by.’ Jan is already on the wagon ready to go. It will be an all day trip. We must go now.” Jan helped Ruth climb up onto the wagon. As they drove away she turned and waved to Anna.

After about three hours of traveling Jan pulled the wagon to a stop. He then pulled from the sack at his feet a thermos of coffee. It was still warm. Ruth sipped at the warm drink that Anna had mixed with milk and cinnamon. They both ate a sandwich stuffed with meat and cheese. Ruth knew that it was pork, but she did not refuse the food. She was very hungry.

“About another four hours, Ruth, and we will be near Honza’s house. I am sure he will be glad to see us.” Jan then took a large bite of the sandwich, and washed it down with the last of the sweet-milk coffee. “I am sorry that you could not stay with us. You know my wife and I have become very fond of you.” Jan looked at Ruth and smiled. “But we can not take any chances. If they found out that I was hiding you it would not go well for any of us. But I can promise you

that where I am taking you will be more secure for you and your baby. They are good people.”

The sun was going down as they drove up to Honza and Petra’s house. A small, dark haired man came out onto the porch. He looked about the same age as Ruth’s father--maybe forty-five. His wife looked a few years younger. When he saw that it was Jan he smiled broadly. His slender, blond haired wife stood near the door. It was a large two-story house.

Ruth watched their expressions as Jan began to talk to them about why he had brought Ruth to their house.

Honza and his wife came over to the wagon to help Ruth down. The reassuring smiles they offered her said all she needed to know.

Ruth did not hold back the tears as she waved good-bye to Jan. She watched until the wagon was gone. Jan had stayed with Honza and his wife for two days, helping Ruth adjust to her new surroundings.

Ruth shared a small room with an older woman who was missing a leg and hobbled around on one good leg and a stick. She was very quiet but was kind to Ruth, and even seemed to enjoy having someone to share her room with.

There were seven other amputees living with Honza. Over time Ruth would become greatly loved by them all. Three of them, like Ruth, were Jewish.

Although Ruth missed Jan and Anna, it took her little time to feel at home with Honza and Petra. Honza had also reassured Ruth that in their home she was safe from prying eyes.

“We are a small Christian Community,” he had said, “and we serve the Lord in our own humble way--helping those who have been rejected by the world. They have a place here to live out their days in relative peace.

“It is not unusual for people in the near-by area to believe that we take care of very sick people who have contagious diseases. We do not. But I have not spent too much time trying to persuade people away from that lie. It appears that the local government leaders, including the Nazis, also believe that we are a hot bed--from time to time--of sickness and disease.” Honza laughed gently as he sat next to Ruth. “But I do ask you Ruth to be careful! Although we are seldom

worthy of visitors it is always wise to be alert. I will of course tell you, and our other Jewish residents, if anyone from the outside should come this way.”

In the weeks and months that followed, Ruth found herself drawn to Petra, almost like a loving, older sister. She would help her in the kitchen and listen to her stories of how she had come from Hungary and then married Honza. They had one grown daughter of their own, but they seldom saw her. Ruth could tell that Petra was excited about the baby that Ruth would soon have. She would frequently fuss over Ruth--insisting that she eat enough, and that her sleep was not interfered with.

Sometimes Ruth would sit near-by as Honza and Petra conducted a Bible study every evening. She did not feel comfortable in joining the small group, but surprisingly, she found that she enjoyed when they read from the New Covenant part of the Bible. She had always heard negative things about this Bible, and had even grown to fear it, but what they read and studied was very Jewish sounding, and did not cause her any up-set. She wondered about it. They also studied the Torah, and she was familiar with many of the scriptures.

The days passed into weeks and Ruth was amazed at how God had again provided such a good place for her and her baby to be. Whenever she could get away by herself, to a quiet place, she would spend time just talking to her baby. She would talk about Shimon, and about her parents. She wanted her child to know how greatly loved he or she would be. And she also told her baby that God had something very special planned for his life. She felt in her heart that it would be a boy. And she already knew what his name would be.





## 7 Vineyards of Grace

“For the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping...”

Psalm 6:8

For a few minutes Rachel listened to what these strange people were talking about. She knew nothing about this place called Croatia, except that it had some very wicked people living there. What was becoming of the world, she thought, when so many people had become so evil? She didn't want to live in this kind of a world. She thought about opening the door next to her and jumping out. At the speed they were driving she would be killed, but still she thought about it. Her eyes became heavy from exhaustion. The man next to her was snoring. She closed her eyes but not before she prayed once more. “Please, Adonai, help me.” She then found herself slipping into an unconscious reality, as the motion of the car lulled her into a deep sleep.

In the dream she was running, desperately trying to escape a thick darkness that was covering everything in her way, and there seemed to be no end to it. She was so tired. She wanted to stop and rest, but the darkness kept coming. And then she saw ahead of her a man who had a kind face. In the dream she knew he was not Jewish, and she did not recognize him as anyone she knew. But she understood that the darkness she saw and felt all around her was also coming after him, but he did not seem to be afraid. He just stood there by the gate to an older looking house and waited--maybe for her?

Rachel's eyes flashed open. She heard Marina scream and then felt a strong impact as the car flipped over. A huge bolder on the side of a hill kept the car from plunging down 400 feet into a deep ravine. She brought her hand to her face and then everything went black.

Rachel was vaguely aware that there were people around her--she could hear them talking. And then she saw a man's face. She cried out in pain as two large arms tried to pull her out of the car. She heard the words: “think the one next to her is dead,” and then she went unconscious.

“Hello.” Rachel looked up into a square face, with very intense eyes. The woman had on a long black dress, with a cape over her head. It reminded her of something, or someone, but her head was so foggy. It was difficult to think. She wondered where she was. She was aware of very acute pain in her abdomen, and also on the left side of her body. Slowly, she brought her hand to her face. She felt a sense of comfort that she could do that. The woman in the black dress continued to talk.

She spoke very quickly, as if late for an appointment. “You are probably very confused,” she said. “You have suffered a serious head concussion, and I see here on the medical report there are a few other injuries, but minor, I am sure.” The voice that came at Rachel was sharp and clear. “You will live.”

The Catholic nurse then pulled back the sheet to examine the bandages that were over part of her abdomen. “You had some bleeding in your stomach, and so the doctor had to arrange for some surgery, but everything is going to be all right.” The nurse then pulled up the sheet and tucked it in firmly around the side of the bed.

“You are in a small hospital in northern Croatia. You have been unconscious for several days.” The nun smiled a stiff smile. “And what, dear, is your name? I see that you understand English.”

Rachel felt anxious and uncomfortable. She could remember little about who she was, or where she had come from. English? She wondered; was this her language? The name Marina came to her mind. Was it her name? She did not feel that it was. She tried not to let panic drive her thoughts.

“Maybe my name is Marina.”

“You speak English,” the nun said, “but it is obviously not your first language. Where are you from, Marina?”

Rachel did not know what to say, because she did not know where she was from. She also felt uneasy in answering the nurse’s questions. She closed her eyes. “I am very tired now,” she said, as she gently turned her head to the other side of the bed.

“Of course, dear. You will need plenty of rest. Perhaps, you can tell me more later. You know, Marina, we need to let someone know you

are here. I am sure you have family that will be worried about you.” The nurse then smiled an overly sweet smile and closed the door.

When Rachel woke up she felt less pain and was more conscious. She still remembered little about what had happened to her.

“Good morning.” The man who had walked into the room and stood next to her bed was not dressed like a doctor. He was nice looking and had a kind face. She felt she knew him from someplace, but she could not remember where.

“Do I know you?” she questioned him.

The doctor laughed softly. “Well, perhaps we knew each other in another world. My name is Michael Romano. I will be your doctor while you are here.” He examined her and then gently took her hand. “You are doing well, young lady. I understand they are calling you Marina. Is that your name?”

“It’s the name that came to me. So perhaps it is. I really don’t remember very much about myself.”

“It is not uncommon after a bad accident to lose some of your memory for a while. You are fortunate to be alive. You speak very good English.”

“I learned it at school.”

“You see,” he said lightly, “your memory is already coming back to you. You have had a head concussion, Marina, and it will take a little time for everything to be normal again. Just be patient.” He then walked over to the door and shut it tightly. “You are in good hands, Marina, and I will see to it that you are given proper care. But as you begin to remember things it might be best that you just tell me, and no one else.” His lips moved into a reassuring smile.

Rachel felt a small sense of alarm at what the doctor had just told her, but she also felt that she could trust this man. Doctor Romano then helped Rachel to sit up in her bed. She moaned slightly. Her body was still very tender and hurt in certain places, when touched.

“I am sorry,” he said, “but we need to get you up and moving around. The healing will come much faster that way.”

Rachel looked up at this doctor with curiosity. He seemed so familiar. He was not too terribly handsome, but he had a very nice look about him. She guessed that he was in his late thirties. His dark,

wavy brown hair fell nicely into place. He had a safe and kind face and large brown eyes that were very intelligent. His hands were very gentle. She looked away from him, aware of her need for his kindness.

“Have the nurses been treating you good?” he asked her.

Rachel discerned that this was more than just a polite question.

“Yes,” she responded. “No one has been mean to me, or anything.”

“Do you know what year it is, Marina?”

The response came slowly. “I am not sure? Is it 1944? I have lost track of time.”

Do you remember your age?”

“I think I will soon be twenty-three years old.”

“Can you remember anything, Marina, that happened before the accident?”

“I remember that I went to a university and was studying to become a nurse. But I can’t remember where it was. And I don’t remember anything about my family.” Rachel could feel her voice begin to tremble. “The nurse said there were other people in the car with me. Do you know anything about them?”

“Yes,” the doctor answered. “There were three other people in the car, but it does not look like they were related to you in anyway. They were not found alive. Can you remember anything about them, Marina?”

“No,” she said. Rachel then closed her eyes. A feeling of darkness and fear came over her, but she could not remember anything. “I think I need to sleep now, for a while. I am very tired.”

“Yes, Marina. I want you to rest now.” He looked down with understanding.

Doctor Romano closed the door to Rachel’s room and walked out. He spoke to the nurse who was coming in his direction. “This patient needs rest. I don’t want her disturbed, except for vitals and medicine.”

“Yes, doctor.” The heavyset nurse looked at him with what he knew was intense dislike. He started to walk away and then stopped. “By the way, nurse Ivana, I don’t want this patient bothered with a lot of questions. Is that understood?”

Doctor Romano sat down at his desk, and looked at the dark robed

priest who sat across from him. "What can I do for you today, Monsignor Travoli?"

"I understand, Doctor Romano, that you have a young lady here at our hospital who does not remember her identity. Is this correct?"

"You mean Marina?"

"Well, that is what she calls herself, but we know that is not her real name. It is the name of the woman who drove the car and was killed. The police have reported this to me. But there was nothing on the young lady to give us any information. So we need to find out who she really is."

"Why is it so important, Monsignor? She is just a young woman and will be well enough to leave the hospital perhaps in a couple of weeks."

"And where will she go?" The dark robed priest spoke with a sharp and mocking tongue. We certainly do not need any more unwanted vagrants in our new state of Croatia."

"I am sure an appropriate boarding house can be found for her," Michael said.

The priest stood up from where he had been sitting and walked past the doctor to the window in back of him. "You know, Doctor Romano, now that Croatia is a free independent state we must do all that we can to keep it ethnically and religiously pure. Do you agree?"

Doctor Romano answered the priest. "Monsignor, when my father started this hospital, fifty-five years ago, it was open to all people. No one was turned away who came here in need. And even though the Church has now assumed tighter control of this facility it is still my policy, as the head administrator, not to discriminate against anyone."

"Well," the priest walked away from the window, "that was then. Now we have been set free from the past and the old ways that harmed our country, and allowed foreigners to corrupt everything. Serbs, Jews and Gypsies have no place in our new state." He turned and walked to the door. "I will be back before the end of the month, and unless we have positive proof as to who this woman really is, then she will be taken in for questioning. It is for the good of the hospital and the Church." He shut the door hard--his long black skirt flaring out menacingly.

Michael Romano looked down at the file on his desk in front of him. It contained the information that the police had given the hospital about the people who had been killed in the car accident. He pulled out the small picture that he had hidden under the file. One of his trusted people had taken the picture out of the coat of the young woman when they brought her to the hospital.

In the picture a handsome man and woman were standing next to a tree in a lovely park. On the back of the picture were the words: "To our dear daughter, Rachel, from Papa and Mama, with love." He saw that the photograph had been developed in Prague.

"So, young lady," he whispered to himself, "your name is not Marina, of course I knew it was not. You are a Jewish daughter-- a beautiful Jewish daughter. He also knew from the police report that the people who had been in the car with Rachel were known collaborators. They all had criminal records, and were known for helping the Ustashi military round up Jews, and others, who were considered a drain and a plague on the new state of Croatia. They would then be turned over to the very anti-Semitic, Croatian government that was working hand in hand with the German SS units. Hitler's Nazis had taken control of Croatia in 1941. Michael grimaced when he thought of what these people had put Rachel through. He closed his eyes and said a short prayer.

He was not sure what he was going to do. But he knew that before the Monsignor returned he had to do something. Rachel could not be turned over for questioning. He knew what that would mean.

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For a minute Yacov wondered if he had died and gone to heaven. Under his head was a fresh smelling pillow, like the kind his mother would use, and he could feel clean, white sheets covering his body. He opened his eyes. Streams of lovely sunlight sprinkled through the light gold curtains. Clusters of large purple grapes sat in a bowl next to his bed. He rolled over, just wanting to go back to sleep, and then he remembered.

"Rachel, Rachel." He yelled her name out loud. "Rachel where are you?"

“Hello there.” A man dressed in jeans and a light blue shirt came into the room. We have been wondering when you would wake up. It’s been a couple of days. My name is Steven--Steven Callis.” He reached down to shake Yacov’s hand.

“Who are you? And where am I?” Yacov sat up in the bed.

“You are in Assisi Italy. You are safe now, and you do not have to run anymore.”

“But my sister,” Yacov pleaded. “Where is my sister? I must find her.

“When the Partisans found you by the river there was no one else with you. They brought you here. We were told you would be coming.”

“Yes, my name is Yacov, and my sister’s name is Rachel. We came from Prague and have been running from the Nazis for a few weeks. We were waiting for the Partisans to come and help us. I fell asleep for a few minutes, and when I woke up my sister was gone. She must have walked off for a few minutes and then these men grabbed her. I saw them dragging her into the woods, and I ran after her; and then I woke up here.”

“Well, we will see what we can find out from our contacts. But I am sure it was probably collaborators.”

“My head is a little unclear. I can’t remember all the details. Why am I here in Assisi?”

“This is a safe home, Yacov. We provide a place for Jewish refugees to come and rest before they go on to Palestine. We are part of a larger rescue program that belongs to the Assisi Underground. Sometime ago a group of priests came together. They were deeply concerned that the Church was not doing more to help the Jewish people, both here in Italy and in Europe. For a couple of years now they have been risking their lives, every day, to help Jewish refugees get out of Europe and go home to Palestine. You are perfectly safe in this part of Italy.

When you leave here you will be taken to Genoa--a lovely sea town north of here. And from there you will go on a fishing boat to Palestine. The Mussolini government is in league with Hitler, but it is not what most of the Italian people want. The people here are compassionate and many want to help the Jewish people, like the

captain of the boat who will escort you to Palestine. He's quite a man.

"Besides yourself, there are three other Jewish people staying with us right now, but more will be coming. They have escaped from Hungary, and Romania, and one from your country, Czechoslovakia. I hope you will meet them soon. But for now you need to rest. You have quite a bruise on your head--a small concussion, I would guess. You will be here in Assisi for a while, Yacov, but we will talk more about that later."

"Steven," Yacov asked, "are you a Jew?"

"No, I am not." He smiled and shut the door behind him.

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Shimon had a plan. He had been thinking about it for days. He knew he had to escape from Theresienstadt, and soon. The months of grueling work had sapped his strength and his health. And he knew that if he could no longer do the hard work they demanded of him, then he would be shipped out with the rest of the Jews to an even worse place. He must try and escape and find Ruth. If there was any way out he had to find it now.

He had been watching every day when he came back from his work detail and he had been keeping his eye on some openings in the fortification walls. As far as he could tell they were not closely guarded. Could it be possible to get through one of these openings to the other side and then go through one of the old tunnels that led to the outside? Perhaps, he thought... his mind began to race at how he might hide out till it was dark and then...

Excitedly, Shimon began to run the plan through his mind. The other thought would be to try and make a break for it while he was at work, but he had given up that idea. There was no way he could escape in broad daylight. He had not yet put it all together, but there had to be a way! He had to get out. He had to find Ruth. But the next morning, as soon as he opened his eyes, he heard the news that he was going to be deported.

"You will not report for work detail today. You are being deported to the resettlement camp at Auschwitz. You will report in one hour to



the train depot.” Brisk and clear the words were spoken to Shimon. He could hardly believe what he had heard. A panicky feeling raced through his heart. Was there anyplace he could hide? If he tried to run they would shoot him on the spot. He sat down on his cot. For a moment he bowed his head in prayer. “Adonai, please help me!” His only hope now was that somehow he could escape from the train. He put his hands in his pockets and walked out to the train depot.

The deportation from the ghetto to Theresienstadt was nothing compared with what he now saw happening all around him. There was no restraint shown by the Nazi guards. The Jewish inmates had been forced to walk almost one mile away from the deport center so that any unexpected visitors would not witness the brutal deportation.

People were pushed and shoved into the train. Freight cars that were meant to hold fifty people were now crammed full with hundreds of anguished, frightened people.

They were all squeezed into a small, dark place. The old and infirmed who could barely walk were shot dead and fell to the ground where they had been standing. No one seemed to care. It was an inhumane jungle of the worst kind. Children were ripped from their mother’s hands and thrown onto the train, or just separated and taken someplace else. Snarling dogs were turned loose on anyone who did not move fast enough, or who hesitated in anyway. Shimon could not grasp how evil it was. He saw a woman, and for a moment he thought it was his mother. He started to call her name, but when she turned to face him, he saw it was not her.

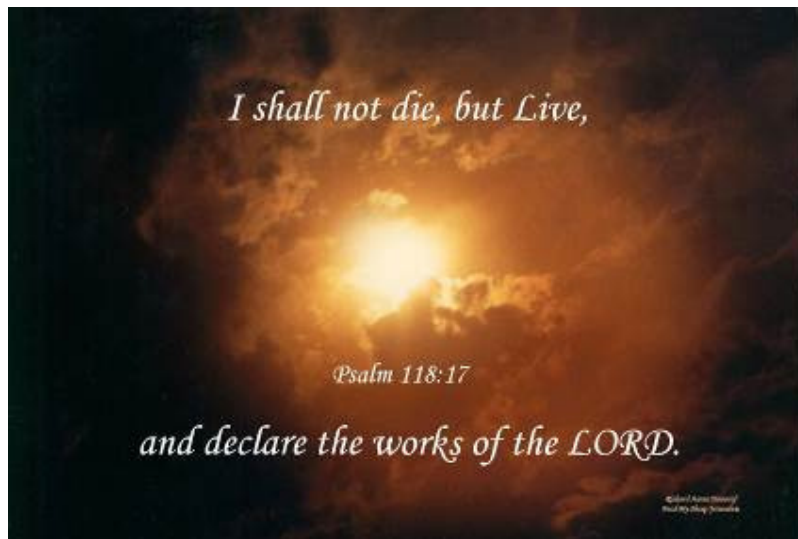
What had happened to all of his family? Had they been sent someplace even worse than Theresienstadt? Or for some reason had they been left at the ghetto? Shimon then felt the butt of a rifle shoved into his back. He stumbled and climbed onto the train. “Merciful God.” The words came out of his mouth.

There was no water, and it was hard to breathe. Some of the people were gasping for air. Those who could had crowded next to a very small window. Many had collapsed in a huddle, next to the wall.

They traveled all day and into the night. Shimon tried to keep his head clear. If he gave into the panic then he would have no hope of

surviving or escaping.

He tried to remember the days when he had felt tough and unbeatable, but now he did not feel tough at all, and he was holding onto a very thin string of sanity and life. He had started to fall into an exhausted sleep when the train suddenly came to a violent stop.



## 8 To Say Good by

“I cried out to God with my voice.”

Psalm 77:1

Rachel walked from her bed to the window. It had been almost one month since she had arrived at the hospital, but she still found that she had to move slowly. The wounds in her side had taken time to heal.

The nurses had not asked her any more questions and she was glad for that. She knew that she was in a Catholic hospital. Her memory had started to come back slowly--piece by piece. She also knew that she was a Jew, but she had not said anything to anyone, not even Doctor Romano. Somehow she understood that being in this hospital could be dangerous for her.

She had experienced a flashback memory of sitting together with a family at a big table, but she could not see them clearly. Who were they? And where did they live? She kept pressing her mind for recollection. She also knew that she eagerly looked forward to Doctor Romano's visits to her. He never tried to force her to remember anything, but his gentleness, it seemed, often times caused pieces of her memory to come back--like when she remembered her father's name was Nathaniel. She was so excited when this happened, but she still could not see his face, or the face of her mother. She so yearned for this.

For a moment longer Rachel looked out the window and watched the nuns outside in the garden. Most of them had been nice to her. But the older nurse caused her to feel fear, but she did not know why. It was nothing she had actually done to her, but she felt it had to do with her being a Jew.

One thing she remembered was that anti-Semitism and hatred was nothing unusual for the Jewish people. Every so often she would see, in a flash memory, the yellow star, as an arm-band. She didn't have a clear memory of it, but she knew this was an evil thing. In the middle of her thoughts doctor Romano came up behind her. She jumped.

“I am sorry,” he said. “I didn't mean to startle you. But please,

come over here to the bed and sit down. I have something important I need to share with you.” He helped Rachel to the bed and then sat down next to her.

“First of all I want to tell you that your name is not Marina. Your name is Rachel.”

She smiled. “Of course, now I remember; Rachel is my name. I really did not like the name Marina, and I am glad it is not mine.”

Michael Romano then took out of his pocket the picture of Rachel’s parents and he gave it to her. “This is your father and mother,” he said. “This picture was taken out of your coat pocket when you arrived at the hospital and secretly given to me. I am sorry, Rachel, but there were reasons why I could not give it to you right away.”

When Rachel looked at the picture she immediately began to cry. “Yes,” she said. “My papa and my mother. Oh, yes, now I remember them, but I do not know where they are? They have been taken someplace by evil people.” She looked up at Michael with tears in her eyes. “Thank you. This picture means so much to me.”

“Rachel, I need to talk with you about something that is very important.” He looked up to make sure the door was still closed. “The people who were with you in the car were criminals. I believe they had kidnapped you, Rachel, and had brought you across the border from Austria to Croatia. Their plan was to turn you over to the Nazi controlled government here in Zagreb.”

The word Nazi made Rachel cringe.

“I believe God allowed that accident to bring you here.”

“Some of it I am beginning to remember more clearly--especially now that I have seen the faces of my father and mother.” She looked away from Michael for a moment--trying to remember something about the men who had kidnapped her.

“Rachel, I can’t tell you everything right now. I don’t have enough time. But I need for you to trust me completely. Can you do that?”

Rachel looked up into the kind face of the doctor sitting next to her. “Yes,” she said. “I can.”

“Rachel, I need to get you out of this hospital right away. I will tell you why later. On the back of the photograph of your parents is the name of the studio where it was made. Your family lived in

Czechoslovakia, and that is where you are from.”

“Yes,” she said. Rachel then began to speak in her native Czech tongue. She looked up at Michael and laughed, and then spoke to him in English. “I wonder why my language did not come back till now?”

“God has His ways,” he said. “Rachel, Croatia has become just as bad as Nazi Germany. An agreement was signed with Hitler, and now some very evil men have taken over our country. And I am afraid that some of them are leaders in the Church. They are rounding up not only Jews from every province, but also Serbs and Gypsies. And just like what is happening in Germany, and other places, they are being taken to terrible camps, where they are killed.”

As Michael continued to talk vivid memories flashed, one after the other, in Rachel’s mind. “This is why we had to escape from the ghetto,” she said. She put her face in her hands. She didn’t want to remember what she was seeing.

“Do you remember who you escaped with?”

“Yes, my brother, Yacov. But I don’t know where he is, or how we became separated.”

“Rachel, I can’t talk for long. There are people who are watching my every move. I need to ask you something. Do you think that you can manage to walk by yourself down the steps from this floor to the garden below?”

“Yes,” she answered him. “I walked down the steps the other day when no one was looking.”

“Tonight, at exactly ten o’clock, I am going to have one of my people--someone I trust--keep the head nurse busy for a few minutes in another room. As you probably know by now, after nine o’clock there is only one nurse on duty. So at ten o’clock I want you to walk as quickly as you can down the steps. I will be waiting for you by the door. Rachel, I have arranged for you to stay with me at my house. I can promise you that you will be safe there. You will, of course, have your own room. And you will meet my daughter, Sonita.

The neighbors are never surprised when I bring a patient home with me. They watched my father do the same thing for years. Rachel, your life here is in danger and I need to take you out of this hospital right away, but you must trust me completely.”

“I have no problem with that, Doctor Romano. I have known for a while that I was not perfectly safe here.”

“I have to go now,” he said. “I have been in here too long.” He reached down and squeezed her hand. “I will see you at ten o’clock. By the way,” he smiled, “my name is Michael.”

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Yacov walked out into a small, lovely garden. He had not really been interested in getting to know the other people in Steven’s house. For the weeks he had been at Assisi he had pretty much stayed by himself. But on this lovely spring day he had been encouraged by Steven to come out and sit with the others.

Steven and five other people sat at a near by table. Yellow and lavender flowers poked through a white lattice that arched over the table. The warm spring weather felt good.

“Yacov,” Steven motioned him to the table. “Please come and join us. You know my wife, Veronica, and I presume you have met Yitzhak, from Hungary, Rudolf from Romania, and Hanna from your country, Czechoslovakia.” Steven pointed to each person at the table.

“We are so glad to have you join us, Yacov.” Veronica brushed a strand of reddish brown hair back from her eyes.”

Yacov noticed how blue her eyes were, and that there was no pain or tiredness in them.

“Yes, please sit down and join us,” Yitzhak spoke up. “I was just telling my friends how I got out of Hungary. I am so grateful to be here.” His mouth moved into a large smile.

Yacov sat down in a chair that was near by, but not at the table. No one seemed to mind. Yitzhak, a thin, dark haired man, spoke broken English, mixed with Hungarian. “Many of my people, in Hungary, were foolish and even prideful. They did not want to believe that Hitler would be as terrible to the Hungarians as he was to the Romanians. Some had even believed the lie that he would be good for our country.”

Yitzhak made a nervous sound with his throat. “After I got out of Budapest I was told a terrible story by a friend who escaped, after

I did. One day they made hundreds of my people line up along the Danube River, and made them take their socks and shoes off in the icy, cold weather. And then they shot them--young and old. It is really so hard to believe.” He then looked over at Rudolf. “I hope I am not causing you any grief, my friend.” He went on talking, raising his hands in the air. “And now they are taking twelve thousand a day from Budapest to the horrors of Auschwitz.”

“How did you escape, Yitzhak?” Hanna asked him.

“I was able to secure forged identity papers. Like I said, many did not believe it was going to be so bad for Hungary, but I was not fooled. Our government was in league with the Nazis, and I knew they would soon invade our land, as they had already done with much of Europe. My daughter and I were able to travel with false identity papers to Switzerland, and then I was given help to come here. My daughter chose to stay in Geneva. And now, with the help of my good friends here,” he smiled at Steven and Veronica, “I will go on to my ancient homeland of Israel, now called Palestine.”

Yacov said nothing, but after a few minutes he simply stood up and walked away from the group.

“Yacov,” Steven called to him. “Where are you going?”

Yacov said nothing. He did not even turn around, but just kept walking. He walked until he came to a hill, over looking a lovely green valley filled with brown vines, and lavender flowers. He sat down, putting his face in his hands, and then he wept, releasing a heart cry that could no longer be kept inside.

“Oh, Rachel, my sister, why? Why did you leave my side? And what has happened to you? My God, my God, why have you forsaken us?”

“He has not.” A voice answered him from behind.

Yacov turned around to see a man who was dressed like a farmer, or a herdsman. He even had a staff in his hand. He wore a wide brimmed hat. He had a nicely trimmed beard, like his father’s, but not as dark. He had a pleasant face and a nice smile. His dark brown hair had a slight curl to it. He could see where the sun had lightened part of it.

Yacov was especially surprised to hear this man speak in his native Czech language. His eyes had a calming effect on him, and for a moment Yacov could say nothing. He even looked Jewish. He smiled at Yacov.

“And so you think that God has forsaken you and the people you love?”

Yacov was silent. He wasn't quite sure how to answer this man. He immediately liked him, but he was still guarded.

“My name is Yacov,” he answered him, without smiling back. “I am staying up there.” He turned slightly and pointed towards Steven's house.

“You have found a place of safety, Yacov, but your heart is not at peace.”

Yacov was again speechless. Finally he spoke. “Yes, I have found, as you say, a temporary place of safety from the Nazi hell.”

“But you believe that your God has abandoned you?”

Yacov no longer felt a resistance to talk to this stranger. “They came for my mother and father, and the girl I was going to marry, and then just before we crossed over into safety they captured my sister, Rachel. Now I am the only one left, who has not been taken--except for my brother Aaron who lives in England. Could God have stopped this from happening? Why didn't He? Are the Gentiles right? Has God abandoned His people?” Yacov stopped talking. He had opened his mouth and a river of pain and anger had escaped. He looked up at the man with the staff. He did not seem to be overly offended at the anger that had just come from him.

“Do you read the holy book, Yacov?” the stranger asked him.

“What holy book do you mean? Yacov asked him suspiciously.

“The Hebrew Holy Scriptures, Yacov. Do you read the Torah, the Word of God?”

“Sometimes I would read with my father, growing up, but I do not read the Torah now as I should--there seems to be no point.” Does God hear us?”

“The Word of God, Yacov, is a light to your path. The answers you seek are there, and they are found no place else. Tomorrow if you



come back here we will have a Torah study. Did you bring the Torah with you?"

"Yes," Yacov said. "It will just be the Hebrew Scriptures, right?"

"Of course, Yacov--only the Hebrew Scriptures."

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People began crying and screaming as the box car skidded off the train track and disconnected from the rest of the train. The latch on the long, sliding door snapped and the door flew open. The people who could still move jumped from the train onto the ground. Shimon knew instantly that this would be his only moment of escape.

Without even looking to see if the guards were around, or who was behind him, he pulled himself up the stony, rock hill in front of him until he was on the other side. Then he laid flat against the hill, next to a large rock. In the panic no one seemed to notice what he had done. The guards had come out of their daze and had started rounding up the people who had been in the box car. The panicked men and women obeyed the commands they were given to line up along the side of the tracks.

Shimon could hear the guard's voices as they made plans to walk to a nearby town, about two miles away. The people were ordered to start walking. Those who could not walk were shot. When Shimon looked up from where he was hiding he could see the backs of the guards as they walked away from the collapsed train car, shoving with their guns the people in front of them.

On the other side of the hill was a dense forest. He was not sure how far he was from the Czech border, but if he kept the railroad in his sight he would not get lost. He was weak and tried and desperately needed water, but he knew he must wait for nightfall. His right thigh felt numb, and then he saw that it was bleeding heavily. When he had jumped from the train he had gouged his leg on a sharp rock. He quickly tore off part of his shirt sleeve and tied it around his leg as tight as he could. And then he curled up under the covering of the rock and tried to sleep.

Shimon looked around carefully before he started down the hill. Next to the trees was a planted field. Perhaps he could find some roots or carrots to eat. If there were fields then there must be water near by. He darted down the hill as fast as he could move, half dragging his bad leg. He crossed the valley to the dense woods. The light of the moon helped him to find a creek. He bent down and drank the much needed water. He found a stick that he could lean on and he began walking--keeping the tracks in his sight. His head was beginning to really hurt and he could feel where it was swollen. He had smacked it hard against the floor when the train had jerked to a stop, and his leg, although no longer bleeding, was extremely painful.

Three hours had passed, but he wasn't sure how far he had walked. The cold, damp weather had started to chill his bones. Random ideas jumped around in his mind. His thoughts were becoming feverish. Chills were now beginning to consume his whole body, and his leg and head were throbbing.

"Please God, help me." He could feel his legs giving out as he slumped down on the ground next to a tree. He tried to stay conscious, but delirium was over taking his mind, and he could no longer fight the need for sleep that was drawing him into an unconscious place.

Two hours later Shimon opened his eyes. Was he dreaming or was there really a man standing next to him? He immediately recognized that he was a Jew. He had on a dark green coat and on the sleeve was the identifying yellow star that all Jews had to wear.

Shimon could see that this man was not weak and did not have the terrible look in his face that so many Jews now had. In fact he seemed to be very peaceful. Shimon did not want to stop looking at him.

"Follow me, Shimon," the man said. "Come, and I will show you the way."

He reached down with his hand and helped him up. Shimon still felt weak and sick, but he knew he had to go where this man was leading him. Shimon leaned on him, and the man put his arm around him. It almost felt as if he was somehow picking him up and carrying him.

He was not sure how far they had walked, but then the man pointed to a small house at the end of a path. "Go there, Shimon, and you will

find help.” His hand still rested on Shimon’s shoulder. “I must go now. There are many who need my help.”

Shimon looked at the small, gray house about one hundred meters ahead of him. Could he be dreaming? I wonder, he thought, how he knew my name? Shimon turned to wave to him, but the man who had been wearing the yellow star had already gone. He saw no trace of him. He began walking to the door of the house, and then he knocked. A small woman, with a frightened look on her face, opened the door. “Please, can you help me?” He spoke the words and then collapsed on the floor next to her.

When Shimon opened his eyes he realized that he was in a small room, but everything was very hazy. He knew he was alive, and the chills and pain had subsided. He could see that a woman was looking down at him. The thought flashed in his mind that he had been captured, but soon his eyes closed and he drifted back to sleep.

When he woke up he saw the same woman, and a man, standing next to the bed he was on. They did not seem threatening at all. They even had a tray of food in their hands. It smelled delicious.



## 9 Desperate Love

“Many waters cannot quench love”

Song of Songs 8:7

Rachel carefully opened the door in her room. The duty nurse had come in to check on her at 9:30. She would not come back for another hour. She put on the clothes that doctor Romano had given her--a simple blouse and skirt, and a dark sweater. She also put on the flat brown shoes that were too small, but she could walk in them. She looked up at the clock in the hallway. It was two minutes till ten o'clock. Very quietly she shut the door behind her. She could hear the nurse talking to someone in the room at the end of the hall. She walked quickly down the steps, without looking behind her. She felt a little light headed. When she opened the door at the bottom of the steps, Michael Romano was standing there and quickly ushered her away. They walked on a path to the other side of the hospital, and then got into his car. She sighed and took a deep breath. “What will they do when they see that I am gone?”

“I will tell them tomorrow that you were up-set with me, when I told you that it was no longer possible for you to stay at the hospital, and that you ran away. They may not completely believe me, but there is little they can do. They would like to get rid of me, Rachel. They do not like me, but they cannot dispose of me quite yet. I have certain connections and they know it. They will most likely believe that I helped you get away, so that you would not have to go to the Croatian authorities for questioning. But since they can't prove anything, they will let it go.”

“Is that what they were going to do--take me in for questioning?”

“Yes, Rachel, that is why I had to act quickly and get you out of there.”

“Thank you,” she said.

Rachel looked out the car window. The light from the moon helped to soften the darkness. Michael Romano said little as they drove from the hospital to his house, which was about one mile away. They drove up a circular driveway, along side of a very old looking stone fence,

and then came to a gate that arched elegantly over an entrance way. A young lady had come out and opened the gate, when she saw the car approaching the house.

Rachel could not see clearly in the dark, but she could tell that it was a nice, older home. There was a very large yard. Rachel closed her eyes. She was thankful to be out of the hospital, but she wondered what lay ahead for her.

Michael's daughter opened the car door for her. She looked about twelve years old.

"Hello," she said. "I understand you are going to be our house guest for awhile?"

"I guess so," Rachel smiled.

"Come on." Michael came around to their side of the car. "Let's go in and have something nice and hot to drink, and then, Rachel, I will show you your room."

The house was spacious, but warm and appealing. They walked into a comfortable living room; the fireplace was aglow with a nice fire. The room reminded her a little of the house she had grown up in. Perhaps, she thought, it was the beautiful blue afghan that lay over the back of the couch.

"Here, Rachel, sit down." Michael directed her to a comfortable looking chair. The warmth from the fireplace felt good. Michael's daughter, Sonita, sat down next to her. In the light Rachel could see that she was a very pretty girl. Her oval face framed two very blue eyes, and she wore her blond hair pulled back in a ponytail. She was dressed, Rachel thought, like a nice Jewish girl. She wore a very conservative gray skirt with black stockings, and a pale blue sweater over a white blouse. Michael had disappeared into another room, but he quickly returned and sat down next to Rachel.

Soon an older woman served them hot drinks on a tray. Michael spoke to her in the Croatian language. "Leah has been with us for many years. We can trust her completely. She helped to raise me as a little boy." He looked up and smiled at her, as she looked down fondly at him.

Rachel looked around the room. Some of the furniture looked very antique, and some of it, she could tell, was not inexpensive. There

were some family pictures on the wall next to her. One picture in particular caught her attention. It was a portrait of a very lovely woman who was standing next to a younger Michael. Rachel could tell right away that it was Sonita's mother.

"That was my wife, Lennora." Michael smiled as he looked up at the portrait that Rachel was observing. "She died seven years ago. I still miss her very much." He continued to look at the picture for a few seconds longer, and then turned his attention back to Rachel and his daughter.

"She was very lovely," Rachel said a little nervously, feeling a wave of tiredness sweep over her body. She put the warm drink down on the table next to her. "I think, Doctor Romano, I mean Michael, that it has been a very long and exciting day for me, and I am feeling quite tired. Would it be possible for me to go to my room now?"

"Of course, Rachel. Forgive me for not being more sensitive. You still need much rest. Come I will show you your room."

Rachel looked out the window that was next to her bed. In the moonlight she could see the outline of a yard--surrounded by many trees. She laid back down on the bed and pulled a warm blanket up over her shoulders. The room was very peaceful. For a moment she thought about her life and family in Prague. She remembered her parents, Nathaniel and Lydia, and her two brothers, Aaron and Yacov.

She also remembered some of the terrible experiences of living in the ghetto. For almost two years they had lived there. She buried her head in her hands, and spoke softly into the dark. "Oh, Mama and Papa, where have they taken you?" She was very grateful for what Michael Romano had done for her. She knew, without him even telling her, that her life had been in real danger at that hospital. Once again she had been saved from something terrible, but she also wondered how long she would be safe in this house. And her heart ached to know where her family was.

She still could not remember much about the car accident, or the people who had kidnapped her, and what about Yacov? Where was he? "Oh, Adonai, I pray that my brother is still alive." She then snuggled under the warm blanket, but before she closed her eyes she thought about the words that Michael had spoken to her. "Sleep peacefully, Rachel, and I truly hope you will find our home to be

a restful place for you.”

Rachel found that the weeks, and then months at Michael Romano’s house were indeed very restful. Healing and strength came into her body. Usually in the morning she would sit outside in a lovely, garden patio. Flowers were beginning to poke through the brown and gray winter foliage and the trees were beginning to shed their winter apparel. The sweet smell of spring had come and summer was not far off. She wondered how the garden would look when fully in bloom?

Leah would often times bring her a cup of coffee--served with a nice breakfast roll. She felt very well taken care of. Almost every afternoon Michael would come home for a short visit and they would sit together, either outside in the patio, or upstairs in a very comfortable living room--with large bay windows that overlooked the yard and forest. She was very much aware of her tender feelings for Michael. And he always seemed very eager to be with her. Although he was very polite--almost going out of his way not to do anything improper. And yet she knew that when he looked at her his feelings for her could not be denied. She had now been at their home for over two months.

There had been moments when Michael would tenderly hold her hand and even kiss her lightly on the cheek, but they had never spoken of their feelings for each other. She also knew there were complications that neither of them knew how to solve.

Michael and his daughter, Sonita, enjoyed spending time in the evenings singing lovely songs of their faith and their culture. Michael would take out his guitar and sometimes Sonita would play the piano. The songs were simple and some of them even had a very Hebrew sound.

One evening Rachel had noticed a violin case under a small table, and she had asked Michael about it.

“That was my father’s, Rachel. He loved to play the violin, and his music blessed many people.”

“Would you mind, Michael, if I played it?”

“You play the violin, Rachel?”

“Yes,” she had responded. “But I am sure I don’t play like your

father did.”

“Please,” Michael had said.

Rachel had held the instrument in her hands. It was very old. She trembled when she saw that it was a Stradivarius. She began to play a favorite old Jewish traditional song about the Messiah. Tears came into her eyes, as she lost herself in her music.

Michael was breathless as he sat and listened to Rachel play the violin. Her music had penetrated his soul. This, he knew, was a very special woman. He had not felt love for another woman since his wife had died, but now he could not deny that something was happening in his heart for Rachel. He struggled over a few things, like her young age, and her faith background, but he knew without a doubt that he was falling very much in love with her.

On this day, as on every day, Rachel stayed in the house or a selected place in the yard. To leave the house would be dangerous, not only for herself, but also for Michael and Sonita. Michael’s daughter was not allowed to bring anyone home with her from school. Sonita understood the seriousness of Rachel staying at their house. She was a very bright girl. She had asked Rachel many questions about what it was like to live in Czechoslovakia, and even what it meant to be Jewish. Sometimes Rachel was a little surprised at her precocious personality, but she also understood that a true affection was developing between the two of them--not so much like a mother and daughter, but more like two sisters.

Rachel turned her head as Michael came into the room where she was sitting. She looked forward to these moments when they would talk with each other, but she was a little surprised that he had come home from the hospital while it was still morning.

“Good morning, Rachel. You look very lovely in that pretty blue dress.”

Rachel could feel a slight warmth come to her cheeks. Since she had been here she had acquired new clothes from both Michael and Leah. “Thank you, Michael. I thought it might make Leah feel good if I wore the dress she gave me. It was one of her daughter’s, but it fits me perfectly.”



“I am sorry, Rachel, that I cannot take you out someplace special, where you could wear your pretty blue dress. There are some nice places in our country, at least there used to be. But everything now has changed so much. I hope you do not feel too cooped up here, not being able to get out and do things.”

“I don’t feel cooped up at all, Michael. My time here has been restful and very peaceful for me.”

“I am glad to hear that, Rachel, but I am afraid that things are not going to stay peaceful. This is the reason I came home so early. I must talk with you.” Michael then looked out the large, bay window with a serious expression.

Rachel knew he was in a very somber mood.

“My father desired for this home to be a very peaceful place, not only for himself, but for all who would come here. He came to Yugoslavia from Rome shortly after World War One. He did much to make Zagreb a prosperous and good community. He was well liked by almost everyone, but hated by some, and those who hated him wanted him gone. But he always forgave people, and eventually outlived most of the ones who wanted to get rid of him.”

“Why did they want him gone?” Rachel asked.

“My father never wavered from the idea that the hospital he helped to start, and was the chief administrator for many years, would be open to all who were in need, and that meant everyone--all the different ethnic groups of people. He never turned anyone away, not from the hospital nor from his home. This attitude did not sit well with everyone in the community, and unfortunately that included many in the church.” Michael shook his head and looked away from Rachel for a minute. “When will the world stop hating? The Bible says that it is the sin in men’s hearts that make them so evil. People call themselves Christians and yet do such terrible things to one another. My father was a great man of faith, and he was deeply disturbed by how many Christians mis-represented the name of Jesus. This was one of the reasons he was so hated by many in the hierarchy of the church. He spent his life fighting for righteousness and truth.”

Michael looked at Rachel. “How can anyone say that they follow Jesus, but have such hate in their hearts towards the Jewish people, or any people for that matter?”

Rachel said nothing. She was a little surprised where the conversation was going. She was not sure what to make of it.

“I hope my speaking about Jesus does not offend you?”

Rachel answered Michael. “I once read part of the New Testament. I found nothing offensive about this man you call Jesus. But, as you said, many of those who claim his name have done terrible things to my people.”

“I am very sorry for this, Rachel. Many evil men throughout the centuries, have called themselves Christians, but they do not represent Jesus in any way.”

“When my father died five years ago over two thousand people attended his funeral. This was a great insult to those who had tried so hard to change what he had started. I fear greatly for what is coming to our country, now that Hitler and his anti-Semitic, fascist friends have taken over.” Michael brought his hand to his forehead. Rachel said nothing. She knew that Michael carried a heavy weight of responsibility, and was worried about her and his daughter.

“I am afraid for Sonita to leave the house anymore. It’s just not safe. Perhaps I will hire a tutor to help her with her schoolwork for a while. She will not be pleased, but I must tell her that she cannot go out anymore, at least not without me. The school teachers are now asking the students many questions about what their parents are doing and saying. And the police are informed if they think there is anything suspicious going on.” Michael sat down on the couch next to Rachel.

“There is something else I need to talk with you about, Rachel. My dear Rachel,” he said. “I guess I have not done such a good job of keeping my feelings hidden from you. But now I must speak to you about something that is more important than how I care for you.”

Rachel looked up into the face of the man whom she had come to love. “Oh, Michael, you have also become very important to me, but I guess you know that too.”

“Rachel, I fear for you and for my daughter.”

“Michael, tell me. What is it?”

“I really believed that the whole thing about how you disappeared from the hospital would soon be forgotten. But Monsignor Travoli

continues to ask questions, and is pressing for a complete investigation. The Ustashi military is waiting for his report, and they are ruthless. I speak the truth, when I tell you, that they inspired the Nazis on how to terrorize a community.

"This is what I face, Rachel. I cannot let you or my daughter fall into the hands of these butchers; and if this investigation takes place they will tear my home apart. They are looking for anything they can use against me. So I fear for both you and my daughter. She is also in jeopardy."

"Oh, Michael," Rachel reached up putting her hand on his chest. "I wish I could help you. I know you are deeply troubled."

"I have given much thought to this, Rachel. I must do something, and do it soon. I have connections. There are people who admired and respected my father, and some of them are in high places of authority, even in Rome. I have thought this through very carefully. I can have a fake passport made for you. Sonita and I already have our passports, and we have diplomatic privilege with them. With this kind of a passport you will be able to travel with me as my sister."

"Travel where?" Rachel asked.

"There is a place in northern Italy called Assisi. An underground resistance is there, and they have homes--even monasteries--where they are hiding Jews.

"From what I have been told there is a small group of priests who have laid down their lives to make a way for Jews to get out of Europe and get to Palestine. It is probably the safest place I know of for you and Sonita, at least for now. My daughter's life is in danger, simply because she is my daughter.

"I know this must sound incredible to you, especially with what you have seen in your homeland and here in Croatia, but I need you to trust me on this. I must get you and my daughter out of here, and there are few places of safety."

Rachel tried to absorb what Michael had just told her. The idea of going to a place of hiding, run by Catholic priests, was a very strange idea, but she did trust Michael, and she had to believe that it would be all right. But what about Palestine? Would she ever get there? She wondered about her parents. What if they were still alive at

Theresienstadt? How would they know where she was? And then there was Michael. Before she had met him she was more clear on what she would do once the war over, but now...? She was not sure about anything. She felt sudden fear at what lay ahead for her and Michael.

“Will you come with us, Michael?”

“Later,” he answered her. “But first I have things here that must be taken care of. Then I will come and join you. But now, Rachel, my thoughts are for you and my daughter’s safety. I have till the end of this month before they decide if they are going to pursue this investigation. This gives me some time to do what I need to do. But now I must return to work.” He reached down and kissed her lightly on the cheek. “I can’t take anything for granted any more.”

Rachel walked to the door with Michael. She watched until he had driven away, and then she went into the house. She could not deny what was in her heart. She did not know how to reconcile their faith differences, but surely God would not have saved her and brought her into Michael’s life if it was not His plan? “If only he would come with us,” she cried out loud. She knew he was trying to protect her from what he really knew--that staying in Croatia was more dangerous than he was telling her.

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As Yacov walked back up the path he looked behind him to wave goodbye to the man he had met, but he had already disappeared. Yacov wondered where he lived.

By the time he got to the house the sun was already setting and no one was sitting at the garden table. He went into the house. The rich smell of beef stew cooking drew him into the kitchen. Veronica had a red apron on over her jeans and blouse. She immediately could tell that something was different about Yacov.

“Well, hello there.” She smiled at Yacov. “Hope you like stew and corn bread. It’s nothing fancy, but it should be filling.”

Yacov said nothing. For a quick moment he saw a picture of the small room where he had lived with his family in the ghetto. His parents, and the other people were seated around a card-board table that held one burning Shabbat candle. "Let us be thankful," he could hear his mother say, as they each drank their cup of thin cabbage broth.

"I am sure it will be very good. Thank you very much," Yacov answered Veronica.

Veronica put her spoon down and turned to face her young guest. "You are very welcome. You know, Yacov, Steven is still trying to find out some information about your sister. We hope that some of our contacts might still be able to tell us something. Do you have any other brothers or sisters, Yacov?"

"I have one older brother who lives in England, and I am so glad he is not here. I don't know where they have taken my parents. I miss them very much."

Veronica felt a rush of sadness for Yacov. There was little she could say to bring him any comfort. "My father was Jewish, Yacov. He came here, as a young man from France, because he knew how to grow grapes. But he died when I was very young. I never really knew him, but from what I was told he was a good man, and loved God very much."

Yacov did not know what to say to Veronica. They lived in two different worlds, and he was also feeling weary from the excitement of the day.

"If you don't mind, Veronica, I think I will go and lay down for awhile before supper."

"Oh, sure, Yacov. It has been a long day for everyone."

"By the way," Yacov spoke as he left the kitchen, "there was a farmer down in the valley today. He wore a wide brimmed hat. Do you know who he was?"

"What was his name?"

"I don't know, Yacov said. "I forgot to ask him, but he seemed like a nice man."

"Well," Veronica replied, "there are many farmers around here, and they are all pretty nice people." She smiled. "And they all wear wide brimmed hats."

When Yacov returned to his room he sat down and began to write a long letter to his brother, Aaron. He had even thought about going to visit his brother, and not leaving for Palestine right away. He so desired to be with his family, but he also knew that Aaron would drop everything he was working on to be with his brother, and Yacov knew that would be a terrible mistake. It was his father's desire for Aaron to be a good doctor, and now that dream was coming true, regardless of the insanity in the world around them. A day would come, Yacov knew, when he would see his brother again, maybe even in Palestine.

After he finished writing the letter to his brother he picked up his father's Tanakh and prayer shawl--that he had carried with him on the inside of his coat. He held the book in his hands. He opened it to where his father had left a marker in the book Nehemiah. This was one of his father's favorite books; the story of how the children of Israel had come back from the dispersion to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. Yacov wondered if once again God would truly put Jerusalem back into the hands of Israel. He remembered how often his father would meditate on the promises of God, concerning the return of the Jewish people to their Covenant land. Could it really be true?

He closed the book and began to think about whether it was wise to meet with this stranger tomorrow. After all, he knew knowing about him? He just seemed like a nice man, but that was no guarantee. He could be a crook or a robber. There were little voices in his head telling him that it would be a big mistake to meet with him. He held the Bible close to his heart. "Come," the man had said, "and we will study the Torah together." But what if he was not Jewish? The rabbis had told him that no one knew the Word of God except scholarly Jews.

Yacov wondered if perhaps he was a secret Jew, but what if it was some kind of a trap? He suddenly felt very anxious. It would be wise, he decided, not to go--better to be cautious than foolish. He opened the Tanakh again. This time it fell open to psalm 142:

"I cried out to the Lord with my voice,  
I poured out my complaint before Him."

As he read the words Yacov could hear the voice of his father. He brought the book to his face, like his papa would sometimes do. "Oh, Adonai," his father would often say, "your word is so sweet to me, as sweet as honey to my taste." Yacov closed his eyes, wanting to possess this same hunger for the Word of God, but nothing came to him. The well used Holy Scriptures lay open in his lap. But the book had no life for him, and he did not really believe that it possessed the words of instruction that he now so desperately needed in his life.

The next day Yacov did not go down the hill to meet the man with the wide brimmed hat, and the staff. Yacov had decided that he was probably not a bad man, but just someone who wanted to help this poor, pitiful Jew. He shrugged, but still, he thought, he was a most unusual man.

He had now been in Italy for over two months. The time had gone by so fast. He had spent many days just resting and getting stronger again. It was, he thought, a most beautiful place. It almost seemed blessed. The days were mostly warm and sunny and the people were very friendly. He looked out the window. The sun was beginning to rise over the purple hills and valleys, spreading a golden glow over the land. If only it were more Jewish, he thought.

He wondered if there were any synagogues near by. Surely there were at least ten Jews in this part of Italy. And then once again he thought about Rachel, as he did every morning. He spoke softly to himself as he watched the early rising sun. "Where are you my sister? Where have they taken you?"

His thoughts were interrupted as he watched Rudolph sit down at the patio table with a cup of coffee. He was tall and thin, like his brother Aaron. Yacov wondered if he had once been religious. There was something about him that reminded him of the religious Hasidic Jews in Prague. He had a very quiet, almost pious attitude, but also a deep loneliness and rejection seemed almost imprinted on him.

Before going outside, Yacov poured himself a cup of hot, black coffee. How good it tasted to him. It brought back a memory of his life in Prague. He closed his eyes, savoring the thought. Every Shabbat morning they would have delicious, rich coffee--served with fresh bagels, and on special occasions they would have lox and

delicate little pastries, served with jam. He had been blessed with a good life and family--at least until it all changed. It had all come so fast, so horrible. "Why God?" He could find no peace for his soul on this question.

He walked outside and sat down next to Rudolph. He sipped his coffee. The spring rains had left a clean sweet smell, and it was quiet!

Rudolph interrupted the serenity. "So what do you see, Yacov, when you look out across these lovely valleys--with there little patch-work vineyards and the small homes planted here and there?"

Yacov did not really feel like talking, but he knew that Rudolph needed some company and friendship. "Well, I guess I see a land and a people that have survived this war rather well."

Rudolph continued to talk. "I see children Yacov. I see lots of happy, running children. I see families so close that they can touch each other's hearts; that's what I see, Yacov. I see life the way it should be.

"You know the Romanians despised the Jews long before Hitler came to kill us. When I was a little boy I used to hide in the woods until it was dark, and I knew it was safe to go home--so that I would not get beaten up. I can never remember a time when people did not hate the Jews. What about you Yacov? Did you also grow up knowing such hate?"

Yacov sat still for a minute. He really wanted to get up and leave, but he did not know how. "I had a good family," he finally said. "But yes, of course, I am a Jew like you, Rudolph, and I know what it is like to be hated."

Rudolph looked past Yacov, with a blankness in his eyes. "I don't know why I am here? Why did I live and my wife and children all die? They took us out of Bessarabia in a truck..."

"Perhaps, I had thought, they were going to take us to a work camp. But they drove us to a clearing in the woods, and then they told us to get out of the truck and line up in front of a ditch. I knew then



what they were going to do. I was able to hold my wife's hand, and tell her, 'I love you,' before they shot everyone. I laid there till they were all gone and then climbed up out of the pit of dead bodies. I just started walking. I did not care if they came back for me or not. But someone found me and took me to their home. And then I was given assistance and was brought here.

"I have no hope, and no God, but I will go with the others to Palestine, and maybe there I will learn to live again. Or perhaps I will die. It doesn't matter anymore. God has forsaken us."

"No, he has not!" Yacov heard the words coming out of his mouth, but he had no idea why he had just said what he did. Maybe, he thought, he just had to give this man some kind of hope, but how could these words be coming from him?

"You can choose, if you want, Yacov, to believe in a God who is not there for us, but I will not. No," he said, "I will not. Someday I hope I can forget, but I will never forgive. I will not forgive God or the evil people who killed my wife and children--not now, not ever." Rudolph then stood up from the table and walked away without looking back at Yacov.

Yacov was amazed at the food they were served every night at Steven and Veronica's house. Tonight Veronica had served fried chicken and mashed potatoes, with a fresh garden salad and French bread. At first Yacov had felt guilty when he sat down to these meals, and remembered how many people had no food at all in the ghettos and the concentration camps. How was it that the world, outside the ghetto, could eat like this, while his people were starving? He noticed that Rudolph also ate very little. But Yitzhak seemed to have no trouble consuming as much food as he could eat.

"Yacov, if you would be so kind as to pass me the bread?" Yitzhak smiled as he talked. "And also the butter, please." He then directed his attention to Steven. "Oh, you are such a lucky man, to have such a good cook for a wife." He chuckled to himself.

"Yitzhak," Hanna spoke to him, "you have a very good appetite. Have you always enjoyed eating so much?"

Yitzhak answered her. "I escaped from Dachau concentration camp, and this escape was truly a miracle from God." Yitzhak looked around the table at the different faces. "I swore that if I ever got out of that horrible place I would never go hungry again, and so, as you can see, I eat and enjoy food with great relish." Yitzhak looked at Hanna to see if she understood what he had said, and then continued to finish his meal.

After dinner Veronica served each person a piece of cherry pie, topped with a spoon of homemade ice-cream. Yacov and Rudolph both declined. Yacov remembered how his father had once told him how fortunate they were, because there were many starving people in the world but they had plenty to eat and should always be thankful to God. Yacov had listened to his father, but had felt no guilt.

"We are very fortunate," Steven said, "that we have such an abundance of garden vegetables and there is also much poultry in the area. And I am very blessed to have not only a lovely wife, but one who is very talented." He smiled at Veronica.

When Yacov looked at Steven he remembered how his own father would sometimes come into their kitchen in Prague, and would lovingly embrace his wife. "My beautiful wife," he would say. "You treat me like a king." Yacov's mother would then blush and look down demurely.

After dinner Steven spoke to all of the people at the table. "Next week you will be going by train to Genoa. You will be safe there, but you must be careful--not only for yourselves, but for the men and women who are risking their lives to hide you. You will, most likely, be staying at an old monastery. Although there are other places they use for hiding Jewish refugees."

Yacov could feel his stomach tighten, as he listened to what Steven said. He noticed that Rudolph and Hanna were also uneasy. Yitzhak, who was eating his second piece of pie, did not seem to hear what Steven was saying, or he was just not paying attention.

"You will need to have your identity papers before you can board the boat, but they know that most of the refugees do not have any papers, and the captain does not make a problem out of it. We have

also made sure the papers we have given you will not be questioned. I am not sure when the boat will leave for Palestine. You may be in Genoa for a while. The captain of the boat has made this run many times. Everything should be fine, and you should not have any problems refueling in Greece. So far they have not encountered too many problems there.”

“But what if the boat can’t refuel in Greece?” Rudolph asked.

“I don’t know?” Steven answered him. “But let’s believe for the best. You have come this far. We will pray and believe that you will go the rest of the way to Palestine.”



## 10 New Life

“Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants.”

Psalm 8:2

April 15, 1944

Ruth held her little baby boy to her breast. She stroked his face. He seemed very content. He had been born early, almost two weeks premature. The birth had not been easy, and Honza had driven the buggy into Prague to get Petra's sister, Adela, who was a trained midwife. But by the time they got back the baby had already been born, and Ruth was holding him on her chest, and resting peacefully.

Petra's sister, Adela, was very surprised to find out that her sister and brother-in-law had this young Jewish woman living with them, but she promised not to tell anyone.

Ruth had named her little boy Ben Or, which in Hebrew means 'son of light.' Gently she laid her little son in the small cradle that Honza had made for her. Honza and Petra, and all of the people that lived with them, were so in love with Ruth and her baby. Their presence had filled the home with new life and hope.

There had been much talk in the house about how the Allied forces would soon come into the war, and then it would finally be over. Ruth had pondered the thought, many times, of how when the war ended she would find Shimon and show him his new son. She smiled at the thought. Could it be possible?

Ruth reached over and picked up the Bible that she had been reading now for some weeks. She had been reading from the New Covenant, and had discovered that it was a very Jewish book. In the evening she would listen carefully to Honza and Petra as they read through the different chapters of the Bible. She had not told anyone yet that she had come to know this one they called Jesus in a very real way. She knew that he was the one who had first led her to Jan's house and now to Honza and Petra's Home. He was also the one who brought her comfort when she thought of Shimon and her family, and when darkness and worry would try to steal her peace. He was so very

real to her. She had started to drift off to sleep when Honza gently knocked on her door.

“My dear Ruth, I hope I am not bothering you, but there is something I must speak to you about. I am afraid it might be something important--perhaps a warning for all of us.”

Ruth looked up into the gentle eyes of this man who had become such a wonderful substitute father to her, and she saw fear. It caused her to tremble slightly. “Please tell me, Honza. What is it?”

“We may have a visitor tomorrow, Ruth. And I am afraid I am very suspicious as to why he is coming to visit us.

The other day when Petra was at the store she was asked many questions by the owner’s son--as to who the new people are that we are keeping in our home. Evidently, someone who came near to our property, a couple of days ago, was curious as to why we had baby diapers on the line. I should have known better then to let Petra hang them up out there, but so rarely do people come by the gate.

“Petra acted surprised and said that we only have the same people as usual, a few sick, old, amputees. Fortunately, my wife was very quick to give a reason for the diapers. She told Anton that our daughter, Christa, had come for a short visit, and that because of her current situation she has had to leave her little child with us. But that did not satisfy him, and he said that he and his wife must come out to see this new grandson of ours--perhaps tomorrow. He has never been interested in visiting with us before, so I think he may be up to something. He is known to work closely with the Nazi government.”

Ruth looked over at her sleeping baby. “If the Nazis come will they take my baby too?”

Honza remained silent. “We will pray that no evil will come near you or your precious little son. I only tell you this, Ruth, so that you will be very careful to not be seen by anyone who should come to the house. But do not worry. I have an idea to be sure that nothing goes wrong. Early in the day I will take you to the shed, at the end of the field. It will not be so bad there for a short while. And if these people should come I will tell them the baby is sleeping. They will not see him! I will make sure of it. Now, dear Ruth, it is not good for you to

worry.” Honza patted Ruth on the hand and then quietly left the room.

“So, Honza, you and Petra are looking well, considering all that you must put up with. Tell me! Why do you house these invalids? They would be much better off in a state home, don’t you think, Honza?” Anton leaned his head back against the soft head cushion on the chair, and sipped from the cup of coffee that Petra had given him. He and his wife had been visiting for about an hour.

“I must tell you,” Anton continued, “that a rumor is going around the community that you have a new little addition to your family. Could this be true, a baby?”

“As my wife told you, our daughter, Krista, was here for a short while. But this should not be such a big surprise to anyone.” Honza cleared his throat. “Mindless people like to talk about things they know nothing about. My daughter has left our grandson with us for a season.”

Anton darted a quick smile at his wife. “Well, you know, Honza, there is great suspicion that some of the amputees you have here in your house are Jews. So what do you say to that?”

“I don’t say anything to that, Anton. These are all fabrications. But I will tell you that two of our invalid people, as you call them, have been very distressed with a sickness. So you might not want to extend your visit for too long.”

Anton puffed out a breath, and then pulled himself up from the chair, spilling some of the hot coffee on his shirt. He swore and then threw the cup down. “Well, before we leave I would like to see this baby that you say is your grandson?”

“The child is sleeping, Anton--perhaps another time. I think it is best that you and your wife leave; for the sake of your own health.”

“All these tales about your people being sick is a clever lie just to keep the officials from coming out to check this house. I will leave, Honza, but perhaps not for so long.” Anton then pulled his coat on and stomped out of the house. His wife hurried to keep up with him.

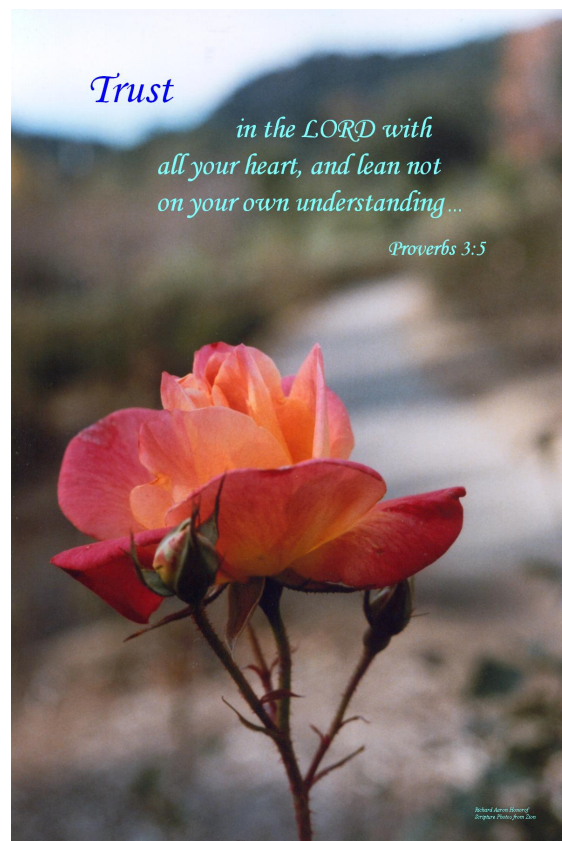
Ruth cradled her baby in her arms, touching gently his little ears and tiny mouth. She reached down and gently kissed him on his forehead. She watched with joy as he reached up with his little fist

and smiled happily. “What is it you see, little one? She spoke tenderly to her baby. Do you feel God’s presence? Are you giving him praise?”

Ruth looked up from her baby and spoke to Honza and Petra. “I cannot risk that the Nazis will come and take both me and my baby. No! This I will not allow. He will easily pass for your grandchild. He is fair and blue eyed, and so for now I must say ‘good by’ to my little son. I ask you Petra and Honza to take care of my child until the war is over.” Ruth could no longer hold back the tears that fell from her eyes on to her baby’s soft skin.

“Ruth, if you are sure about this, then I will call my friend in Prague—Rabbi Adler. He is both a rabbi and a fighter for the underground. He has a small home a few miles outside of Prague, nicely hidden in the woods. He once had a small synagogue, but that has long since been dismantled. I will go by myself, tomorrow, and see if he can hide you in his house till the war is over.

I will only be gone for one day. It’s our only hope. We will pray, Ruth, and we will believe for God to help us.”



## 11 The Righteous Ones

“In the way of righteousness is life...”

Proverbs 12:28

“We thought you might want to try and eat a little.” The plumpish woman with very round, blue eyes smiled down at Shimon. He was hungry but he could only eat a little at a time. He was badly malnourished.

A man with light brown hair and a lean face came into the room and stood next to his wife. They had a kind look about them and he felt no fear. Near the doorway he saw a young boy and girl. The little boy reminded him of his brother, Yannie.

“My name is Andel and my wife is Irena, and that is our son Pavel and our daughter Aleana. We are here to help you, young man, but right now you must rest and get strong again. Your right leg has been badly injured. It’s a miracle that you walked to this house. I have cleaned your leg and bandaged it, but you must not try to walk on it for a while.”

The friendly man continued to talk to Shimon. “You must pay close attention to what I tell you. We have two other people living with us for a while. They are from the Ukraine. You have nothing to fear from us, but you must do what we tell you, for your sake and for our own.” Andel spoke to Shimon kindly but with authority. “We will tell you when it is safe to come into the main part of the house--usually in the evening when the curtains are pulled. My children will also help you.” Andel smiled at his son and daughter. “But now you must get some rest. Come children.” He directed his son and daughter out of the room, and closed the door.

Shimon saw that he was in the back room of the house. It was small without any windows, but it was not uncomfortable. A lamp sat on a table next to the door. A picture of a young boy was also on the table and a couple of books. One of the books was a Christian Bible. He knew he was in a Czech Christian home. He knew little about the



Christian faith, but he knew it was really not something for him. He laid back down on the bed. He was safe, and this was the house where that unusual man had directed him to come.

Perhaps, he wondered, he had only been dreaming, and had stumbled here on his own? But that made no sense to him. In the shape he was in how could he ever have found this place? And how did that man know his name?

The days quickly passed into weeks. It was hard for Shimon to know exactly how long he had been in this home. Every morning the door would crack open and Pavel and Aleana would peek in to see if he was okay. They made him miss his family. Shimon passed his days reading many of the books that Andel had in his small library. Andel had told Shimon that he had once been a high school teacher.

Usually Andel's wife, Irena, would bring him his meals. And sometimes, after the sun had gone down, he would hobble out into the main part of the house. He had met the other two people who were also staying with Andel. They had a room behind Shimon's. Johan and Tonya, a father and daughter, had escaped from the Ukraine--the Nazi controlled Ukraine. Johan's daughter was ten years old. Sometimes, when he knew there was no one around, but Andel or his wife, he would open the house door and stand outside on the porch for a few minutes. The fresh air felt good. He would look across the farm to the dark, heavy forest on the other side. He would think about his family, but most of all he would think about his beloved Ruth. Where was she? And had their baby been born?

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Rachel looked at the passport that Michael had put in her hand. It was perfect. A friend of Michael's had taken her picture and then had it developed.

The passport forgery was done by an underground connection that Michael knew in Italy. It took ten days to get it back by courier. Everything was now in place for their departure. The papers were impeccable. No questions should be asked. It had been almost one

month since Michael had first told her about his concern for both her and Sonita, and now the time had come for them to leave Croatia. The investigation would soon be under way.

Later in the evening Michael sat down at the table with Rachel and Sonita. Rachel had noticed that in the last few days he was nervous and more on edge, but she understood why. Lately he had not come in the afternoons to visit her. There seemed to be a distancing, on his part, in their relationship. She knew it had to do with what was being planned, but she still found herself fighting against feelings of rejection.

With his elbows on the table and his hands clasped together, Michael spoke to both of them. "We will drive from here, across Slovenia, and then down into Italy. It should not take us more than two days to drive--maybe less. I have been told by the underground which roads to avoid, and also directions to places where we will be safe, if we need to stay the night. But most of all we must believe for God to go before us and protect us on this journey to Assisi."

Michael reached over and took hold of his daughter's hand. "And now I will tell you both why I must come back here to Zagreb. There are important reasons why I must be here for a while longer. There are financial considerations that must be taken care of and things concerning my father's house and estate. There are also some patients who really need my help right now. I cannot desert them. Believe me I did consider just leaving with you and not coming back here till this war and madness has ended." He squeezed his daughter's hand and looked seriously into Rachel's eyes. "But to do that would be running like a coward, and that I will not do. It is not unusual for me to be gone for a day or two, or even longer. So my leaving here should not arouse any suspicions. The investigating team that is being sent to the hospital has not yet told me not to leave the area. This is why we must leave tomorrow. And so now, my dear daughter and good friend," he looked again into Rachel's eyes, "shall we see if Leah has made a surprise for us?"

"Papa," Sonita tried to fight back the tears that had started to overwhelm her eyes, "can I stay with you?"

“Oh, my beautiful daughter, you are such a picture of your mother. I am afraid I must firmly say ‘no.’ The investigation into Rachel’s escape from the hospital will begin before long. But even if Rachel had not come into our lives, it is apparent to me that my position at the hospital is dangerously at stake. One way or the other they will force me out, and maybe more than that. But God is on our side. You must be brave my Sonita, and trust the Lord for me every day.”

Before he had finished speaking to his daughter, Leah had come into the room with a delicious, fresh baked apple cake. “Ah,” Michael said, “my favorite dessert. Now, let us not be sad, but enjoy our last evening together in my father’s house.” As he spoke the words he looked around the room at the familiar things he had grown up with. He laughed softly. “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” He then bit into the warm cake and cream frosting, enjoying it fully.

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Ruth sat curled up in a small chair in the corner of the house. She pulled a blanket up over her legs as she listened to the men at the table talk about their plans--their dangerous plans. Rabbi Adler had agreed for Ruth to stay at his house till the war ended. And they all hoped that it would be sooner than later.

She listened to the underground Jewish resistance fighters talk about how the American and British forces would soon bring an end to the war. The Russian Army was planning an invasion from the east and plans were already being made to take control of Czechoslovakia. She could tell from their talk that they now had great hope. But she could also tell that they feared a Russian conquest. The Russians, they believed, could be as bad for their country as the Nazis.

There was one other woman in the house, besides Ruth. She was one of Rabbi Adler’s helpers, but she was cold and indifferent to Ruth. In this house there was none of the loving, warm care that she had received at Jan and Anna’s home or at Honza and Petra’s house. A couple of the young men had shown her kindness, but she was very cautious in how she responded to these men. She did not want to give

them any wrong ideas. Rabbi Adler had also been very nice to her, but his mind and heart were totally focused on the liberation of Czechoslovakia, and he paid her little attention.

She was grateful for a safe place to stay, but her heart ached to once more hold her precious baby boy. Her only prayer was for God to keep him safe. She knew that Honza and Petra would give him all the love he needed, but oh, how she yearned to see his little face one more time.

Honza had wanted to bring her to Rabbi Adler's in his wagon, but Ruth had insisted on walking to a small town near the Rabbi's home, where two young men had then escorted her the rest of the way. She did not want to jeopardize in any way Honza and Petra or her baby son.

Rabbi Adler's house was set back in the forest, out of view. And when everyone was gone it was very dark and lonely. But it was during these times that she would take her Bible out from her small backpack. The words of Yeshua brought her hope and joy, and sometimes she would feel him so very close to her. He had told her that He would never leave her, and she knew it was the truth.

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Shimon stretched his arms out and looked up into the blue sky. He had now been at Andel's house for several months. The late fall harvest had ended and the spring of 1945 was not far off. Andel was very busy, in spite of the war still raging around him. Shimon now felt more comfortable being outside and was glad to help his friend whenever he could. But he was always careful to watch for any strangers that might come down the road to the farm. His body had grown strong and healthy, and by now his leg had healed completely.

In the evening they would all gather around the radio and listen for the latest news of the war. Several months before a great D-day invasion had taken place and they all knew that soon the German army would be forced to retreat. The Soviet forces were invading from the east, crossing the borders of Poland and Czechoslovakia.

One evening, after the radio had been turned off, Johan, and his daughter Tonya, told of their escape from the Nazi devastation of their

homeland in the Ukraine. "It is still hard to believe." Johan shook his head, as if somehow he could escape thinking about what had been done to his family and friends.

"You can not find one; no, not even one village or town in my country where most of the Jews have not been driven out, or murdered. I say no, not one!" He looked away from the people who were sitting at the table and brought his trembling hands to his face. "By 1941," he continued, "I knew that I must take my wife and daughter and get away--as far as we could go.

"I tried to tell the others, but they would not listen. They said I was crazy to leave everything. But we were not crazy. The face of evil was all around us, and I knew that we must leave right away."

"We crossed over into Romania, and that is when I heard the terrible news. Not long after we had left the Ukraine, the Nazis came into our town and forced more than thirty thousand Jews to march to a huge ravine outside of Kiev, and then they machine gunned them to death. It took those Nazi butchers a long time to prepare that huge pit to kill all those people. You know it was not done so quickly. It is hard to believe that men can be so evil. My wife became sick from hearing this news and she never recovered. We could not even give her a proper burial. It was time to take my daughter and once again flee to safety.

"A family in Romania hid us until it was no longer safe to stay there, and then, somehow, God worked a miracle for us and we came here." Johan looked up with tears in his eyes. "These dear people, Andel and Irena, have helped me to believe that not all people are so evil. I owe them my life."

Tonya knelt down and put her hand on her father's face. "Yes, Papa," she said. "We are going to live and God will help us to forget those bad days. The war will soon be over and we can go back home."

"No, my daughter," he said. "I will never go back to that place. But you are right! We will live and we will tell everyone we can what the Nazis did to our people in the Ukraine."

Shimon found himself anxious, every day, to move on and to start looking for Ruth again. He bent down to pitch fork some hay into the barn. Most of Andel's animals had been stolen from him, but he still had one cow and a few chickens. Andel considered this a small miracle.

Shimon had watched how Andel would go out of his way to help his neighbors, even risking his own life at times to make sure they were taken care of. Sometimes he would even feed his friends with food that had been meant for his own family table.

"You are a good man, Andel," Shimon said to him one day. "I will never forget what you have done for me. You are a righteous man."

Andel looked up from the work he was doing. "I only do, Shimon, what is expected of me by my Lord.

There are many people who call themselves Christians--this you must understand. But there are few who really know him and follow him. At one time I too was like all the rest. But one day, a long time ago, when I sat watching my son die, I called upon my God with all of my heart, and he came to me and gave me back my son. And I have loved and served him, however I can, ever since then."

Shimon had listened to Andel. He admired this man's life, and was even slightly jealous of his relationship with God. Shimon knew that God had somehow spared his life, and had sent that man to him--the one who saved his life, and then brought him to Andel's house. He also remembered that he had promised God that he would try to be more religious, but now there was so much to do. Many things needed to be accomplished, and he needed to find Ruth. Surely God understood that?

Shimon started to say something else, but then they were both startled, as they looked up and saw a wagon coming down the road near the barn. Shimon quickly stepped back into the barn, out of the way. But was it too late? Had he already been seen?

The wagon stopped and two men got off the seat. Andel called them by name, but he was not smiling. "Hello, Detrick and Gladamere. What brings you to my house this time of day?"

“We just stopped to say ‘hello.’ We see that you now have someone to help you with your work?” Dietrick’s eyes darted quickly from the wagon to the barn.

“You mean my son, Pavel? He has always been a great help to me.” Andel called to his son. “Pavel, come out of the barn and say hello to your neighbors.”

Dressed in dark pants and a checkered shirt that was too big for him, Pavel came out from the barn. “Hello.” He spoke politely to the two men.

The men’s faces quickly became hard and angry. There was nothing they could do, and they knew it. They turned and walked back to the wagon.

“The war may soon be over, Andel, but don’t ever forget that we are more than you, and always will be.” Dietrick snorted and then laughed out loud as they drove away.

Shimon waited till they were a long ways out of sight before he came out of the barn. He walked over and put his hand on Pavel’s shoulder. “You have quite a smart son, Andel.” He smiled down at the boy. “It was his idea to put my shirt on.”

## 12 The Encounter

“Indeed, I Myself will search for My sheep  
and seek them out.”  
Ezekiel 34:11

After the other guests had left the table Steven continued talking to Yacov.

“I need to share with you some information, Yacov, about your sister. We have finally found out some information, but I am afraid it’s not good news.” Steven continued. “We have known all along that there were collaborators in the area where you and your sister were waiting for the partisans. These traitors get paid a lot of money for every Jew they turn over to the Nazis. This is why you were told to be careful of anyone you might see in the woods, even if they appeared harmless.”

As Steven spoke, Yacov saw in his mind’s eye a quick picture of the old man, who had come in front of them on the trail. Only now Yacov did not see him as being so old. “What will they do with my sister if she has been turned in?” Yacov could feel his heart beginning to beat faster.

Steven was quiet for a moment and then he answered Yacov. “They are now deporting all the Jews, Yacov. They are sending them to camps in Germany and Poland, and other places. But we must believe for the best. We do not know for sure where your sister was taken. Sometimes they keep them in work camps in Croatia or Slovenia. So we must not give up hope. We must believe, Yacov, that you will see your sister again, and also the rest of your family too. And perhaps you will even be able to go back to where you once lived?

Yacov looked at Steven. He had been a good friend. If it had not been for Steven and Veronica he would have no hope of going to Palestine. But he wondered how much he really understood of what it meant to be a Jew in the evil world in which they now lived. Perhaps, he did?



“My father, Steven, was a very good man--a kind man and a good doctor. He helped many people, where we lived in Prague. Some of his patients were not able to pay him very much, but he never said anything. After the Nazi forces took control, do you know how some of our neighbors repaid him? They spit on him as he walked down the sidewalk. Yes, they spit on him, like a dog.” Please excuse me, Steven, but I think I need to go outside for a little walk.”

Yacov walked out into the fresh night air. He breathed deep, and looked up at the stars. For a moment he wondered if his mother and father, and Rachel could possibly be looking at the same brilliant night sky.

He turned and went back inside the house. He was tired and went straight to his room and to bed. He pulled to one side the pale curtain that covered the window above his bed. He could see a little bit of the golden moon in the dark sky. He spoke softly to himself. “There must be a God,” he said as he looked up at the stars, “but why has he been so quiet? If only he would come and speak to me that I might know he is real.” Yacov listened for a few minutes, but he heard nothing--just the sounds of a night breeze fluttering through the open window. He dropped the curtain, rolled over and went to sleep.

And Yacov dreamed. In the dream he had been walking for a long time. It was a long road, and many people were walking the same way. From the one road there seemed to be many paths that would go off in different directions. Some of the paths would eventually disappear from view, as did the people who were walking on them. There were old people and young people, professional looking people, mixed with young mothers and little children, who followed close behind. There were religious men of every race, from many nations--Christian pastors, Jewish rabbis, and men dressed in long Buddah style robes.

Every so often Yacov saw someone he recognized, or at least someone who looked familiar. He had no idea where they were all going, but he knew, like himself, they were all searching for something. Some of the seekers had pulled off into small groups. Their voices could be heard above the others as they yelled and

complained about almost everything.

In this dream Yacov had a strange sense of light and darkness. He noticed that some of the men and women seemed to be drawn into darkness, almost propelled into it, while others who were truly seeking the light of God, were able to avert the darker paths.

One path in particular caught Yacov's attention. It was a very ancient path, and he could see that it went back a very long ways into Jewish history. On this path he saw Abraham leaning on a staff, and speaking to a man in a dazzling, white robe. Both Abraham and this man seemed to be filled with great joy. The man with Abraham was pointing off into the distance to a glorious city; maybe it was even heaven itself?

There were other patriarchs as well. He saw King David and other Biblical people, whom he recognized, all walking on the path, going the same way.

Yacov saw that sometimes his people would get off the main path and would go in a direction that God had not called them to walk in. And then the path would become a dark, and fearful place, and the Jewish people would huddle together--sometimes around their Shabbat tables. But eventually, in the dream, he saw that they discovered the right path again. He could just barely make out what looked like a glorious new place. He tried to see it, but the dream ended.

When Yacov woke up the next morning the sun was shining through the window. He knew without any doubt that today he would go down into the valley--to see if he might be able to find, once again, the man with the staff.

The vineyards that had only been brown sticks, bare and empty, when he had been there before, were now blossoming with green leaves and little yellow flowers. The man that Yacov was looking for did not seem surprised to see him, as he came down into the valley where they had met before. It was as if no time had passed at all. Yacov sat down and almost immediately the stranger began to expound on the scriptures--beginning with the book of Genesis.

In three days time the stranger with the staff had walked Yacov through the Tanakh. And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to him in all the scriptures, the things concerning the Messiah, and He had even made clear God's plan and purpose for the Jewish people, and all the nations.

Yacov was continually amazed at how easy it was for him to listen and understand what he was teaching him. This most incredible man did not even read from the Torah, but talked simply about each story, almost as if he had been there himself. He would stop frequently to make sure Yacov understood when they came to a Messianic scripture. He spoke clearly and with great understanding all the words of Isaiah 53.

“Surely He has born our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted; but He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities... And by His knowledge My Righteous Servant shall justify many.”

Yacov was fascinated with this man. He was not just reading the Torah, but speaking with real passion. He had been interpreting the Word of God for him now for three days. He no longer wore his hat. When Yacov looked at him something would happen inside his heart, something he had never known before. It was not a human experience. It was transforming. His eyes held so much promise, so much truth, so much love. The Word of God had begun to burn in Yacov's heart in a new way, and he was finding that he wanted to read it all the time.

“What is it you want Yacov?” the man asked him simply.

Yacov felt like a recording was going off in his head. There were so many things he needed to know and understand. How could he explain? What had happened to his family? Why was there so much suffering? What about his own life? Was God real? “I am so confused,” he finally said.

“The people who are helping me have been good and kind friends. Sometimes I want to share with Steven about things that trouble me, but what would my father say? Steven is a Gentile.”

The man with the staff looked deep into Yacov's eyes. "You have too many fearful thoughts, Yacov. Do not be worried about your father. He is at peace. Your father knows me."

"Who are you?" Yacov stood up trembling. "What is your name?"

"My name, Yacov, is Yeshua. I am your Jewish Messiah."

When Yeshua stood up from where they had been sitting, a transformation occurred and His face began to radiate with Glory. His whole countenance was like the bright shining sun. Yacov could no longer see His face, but only the brilliant outline of a golden crown. He fell to the ground, but he clearly heard the words that were spoken by Yeshua. "Come and follow Me, Yacov. You are weary and I will give you rest."

Yacov knew that this was the Holy One of Israel. And he also knew that he understood all of his pain, and the pain of his people. There was so much more he wanted to know, but when he looked up Yeshua was gone, and he was alone.

He laid on the ground in the same position for a long time. When he finally got up everything was normal. He looked at his hands, and touched his face. On the outside everything seemed the same, but on the inside of him was a burning, white hot passion. As incredible as it seemed he knew that he had been in the presence of Almighty God. He could hardly believe that God Himself had expounded the Scriptures to him, and showed him such wonderful things. He wanted to go home now and read every word of the Torah. He felt such great joy. He wondered, smiling, if he could talk to God right now? Would God really hear him? He had always believed that God heard his prayers, but now it was so much more real to him. And what if he prayed, not in a religious way, but as a friend would talk to a friend--the way Abraham had talked to God? He laughed out loud. He felt great peace and excitement all at the same time. How he yearned to see Him again.

As he walked up the path towards the house he saw Rudolph.

"Yacov, where have you been? Your face is aglow. You look like Moses when he stepped out of the burning bush." He laughed a little.

“Oh, Rudolph,” Yacov could not contain the joy in him, “I have found the Messiah. He talked to me and my life has been changed.”

“Yacov,” Rudolph’s face dropped, “that is not possible! Even Moses did not see the Messiah. Who are you, Yacov, to have such a great thing happen? You have been badly deceived and you are talking like a fool. You have bought into a terrible lie. This Christian house is having a bad effect on you. Repent and turn from this nonsense.”

Yacov stood very still for a moment. He did not like the feeling of fear that he felt moving through him. “You don’t even believe in God, Rudolph, so why does this make you angry?”

“Because, Yacov, I am a Jew. But if you keep talking like this you will make yourself a laughing comedy, and you will not be respected as a true Jew.”

In his room Yacov sat down on the bed and picked up the Tanakh that had now become so precious to him. But doubts and thoughts had begun to assail his mind. Could Rudolph have been right? Could he have been deceived? He closed his eyes, remembering all the words that Yeshua had spoken to him, and how his heart had burned with joy. “No,” he said out loud. “I have not been deceived.” He opened to the book of Isaiah and slowly began to read Isaiah 53, and many of the other Messianic scriptures that Yeshua had shared with him. The sweet savor of each word again filled his heart.

At dinner Steven once again prepared his guests for the trip they would soon be taking. “We will be leaving day after tomorrow for Genoa. The boat is scheduled to leave not long after you arrive. You need to know that when you arrive in Palestine it will not be easy. The boat will take you to Caesarea, and from there will go to a refugee camp in Haifa. You will be held there for several days, maybe even a few weeks. There is much turmoil in Jerusalem now. The Arabs have been trying to stop the Jews from coming back into the land. So you will be leaving one battle here in Europe for another one in Palestine--you might as well know it now.”

“But at least,” Yitzhak said, “we will be fighting for what belongs to us, and not just lying down and dying.”

Yacov was glad to have a room to himself. He folded his arms across his chest, and paced back and forth across the room. The wonderful peace he had felt earlier seemed to be leaving him. "Oh, Adonai," he prayed out loud, "it seems I have tasted the sweetness of infinite love." Yacov came to his knees and rested his head on the bed. "Is Yeshua truly the Son of your Right Hand? Is He, indeed, the Promised One to come? And have I not known the truth?"

The excitement of the day, and the tension he now felt seemed to hit him all at once. He laid down, pulling the pillow under his head and fell quickly asleep.

Yacov found himself in the same dream, where he had been a few nights before. Once again he was on a path, with many people going the same way. There were people from many different nations and faiths. Some had even melded together--forming a united religion. These people had diverted off the main path and were now going in their own direction.

"Hey, you can't cut in." The voice of a large man came at Yacov in a threatening way. "Yeah," some other people chimed in. "Who do you think you are?" Yacov was sure he heard Rudolph's voice, but he could not see him. He stepped quickly to the side of the path.

"Excuse me," he spoke to a pretty young woman, "do you know where all these people are going?"

"Well, I am not sure." She giggled a silly sound. "I think they are planning a big meeting. They want God to explain Himself to us. Why should we have such pain in our lives, and why hasn't he done something about it? I think they are going to put him on trial, or something. Anyway, I'm just a follower."

Yacov watched as this great movement of people, from every nation, surged ahead of him on the path. Some of them changed paths and disappeared from his sight. "He owes us an explanation...." Yacov could barely make out the words as the young lady waved to him, and then continued to follow the crowd of people.

He wondered what he should do? Should he follow everyone else? Or maybe he should just sit down and rest. Even in the dream he felt tired.

As he was pondering what to do he looked up from the ground and once again he saw Abraham and the man with the glistening white robe, but this time the man looked away from Abraham and motioned to Yacov to come and join them. Yacov began to run in their direction, but as soon as he did he woke up. He was so disappointed that the dream had ended. He knew that the man in the dream with Abraham was Yeshua.

The morning sun was beginning to shine through the window. Yacov got out of bed and put on his jeans and a shirt and then went outside. He began to run down into the valley--where he had last seen Yeshua. He was so anxious to see him again. But where was he? Yacov could not see him anywhere. He sat down and put his head in his hands and he wept. He felt convicted of so many things.

“Yacov.” The voice of the Lord fell on him like a cool water fall. He lifted up his eyes to behold his Messiah. But this was not a dream. Yeshua had on a simple white robe. He wore sandals on his feet, and on his hands Yacov could see the scars where the nails had pierced his skin. Yeshua sat down on the ground next to him, and Yacov looked into the eyes of eternal love.

“You are alive, Yeshua. You are real. You are not a dream.”

Yeshua smiled at Yacov, and put his arm around his son. When Yacov’s head fell on his chest a great light entered his heart, and Yacov truly knew for the first time that he was loved with an eternal love.

“You belong to Me, Yacov. The price has been paid. The Love of my Father is in Me, and now this love has been shed in your own heart. My Father and I are One. We have great plans for your life, Yacov. It will not always be an easy path, but it will be a glorious one. This journey requires much humility and the ability to forgive. It is a priestly walk, requiring much surrender. And the more you are able to surrender all things to me, the more my Glory will fill you. The greatest lesson for my children to learn, Yacov, is to trust me with all of their hearts.”

Yacov looked into the eyes of Yeshua. They were like pools of divine love. He knew that all he wanted to do was to follow Yeshua and live his life for Him. He also knew that by looking into the eyes of the Son of God he was experiencing the love of his heavenly Father, his eternal Abba.

“The Holy Spirit, the Rauch, will always be with you, because he now lives in you. My Father sent the Holy Spirit to be the guide and counselor of all true believers. You will never be alone. Your life, Yacov, will bring me much glory, but you must learn to be obedient to all that I tell you through my Spirit. It is most important.

“Yacov, My people, Israel, have become barren and without hope. Many have given up believing that there is a personal Messiah, and have even believed the lies of the enemy, that their God has forsaken them. How it breaks my heart that they should believe such a lie.”

As Yacov looked into Yeshua’s eyes he could see a great sadness in him. It was almost too much to bear.

“I am also very angry at the ones who call themselves Christians, but have turned against the Jewish people. Some of these ones have used my name but have hated my Jewish family, and they have made it very difficult for them to believe that I am truly their Messiah. You have seen this, Yacov, and you know it well. Yes, this breaks my heart, because one day they will all have to stand before me and my Father, and they will be accountable for their actions. Sometimes people forget that God is also a true and righteous Judge.

“The devil, my great adversary, has brought much confusion and destruction to the people I love, both Jews and Gentiles. But you have met and known those Christians, like the ones here, who are truly my friends, and they have laid down their lives for me and for the people I love.

“It is a great tragedy, Yacov, that my Church was led astray from its Jewish roots, and even went into religious things that have nothing to do with me. And because of this many in the church have failed to be a true testimony to the Jewish people. But I have not failed them!

“I was always there for them! Even when the enemy led my people to their deaths in the horrible camps, I was there. I was there for all



who would receive my love and my forgiveness for their own sins. I was there to show them that I am the Way and the Truth. And many of my people are now sharing my great paradise in heaven with Abraham and the other patriarchs, and all of my beloved family--the one new man, both Jew and Gentile.”

Yacov knew that what Yeshua had said was true, and it filled his heart with joy to know that so many had received his love and forgiveness.

Yeshua continued to share with Yacov. “I have made Israel a strong people. They are a testimony, proving the absolute faithfulness of God. My people are being gathered back to their homeland--just as the scriptures, again and again, have proclaimed. The land is waiting for them to return. The mountains and the trees will be singing for joy when they come home.”

Yacov could see that this brought great joy to Yeshua, and it also filled him with new hope and meaning for his life.

“Before the end comes, Yacov, I will pour out my Spirit upon the House of Israel, and the House of David, and they will know me for who I really am, their redeeming Messiah. You will be there to see that day, and so will your children. So be strong and of good courage, and follow me.

“Your father and mother both know me. You can be assured of that. And I tell you now, Yacov, your sister lives.

“Your life, Yacov, on this earth will bring me much glory, as you share who I really am with my Jewish people. But, Yacov, you need to read the rest of my story--the New Covenant. The prophet Jeremiah talked about a New Covenant that would be given to my people. You will be delighted to see that it is all Jewish.” Yeshua smiled at Yacov with a sparkle in his eyes.

“One day your course on this earth will be finished, and you will come to the end of the wonderful path that we have chosen for you. And then you will enter the Glory of your heavenly Father, and you will see the place we have prepared for you. Yacov, it is truly a surprise worth waiting for. I will never leave you. I have chosen you

for myself.”

For a brief moment Yacov closed his eyes, not wanting the moment to end, but when he opened his eyes Yeshua was gone. He was surprised that he did not feel sadness. Instead a joy unspeakable began to fill every part of him, and the tears that came were tears of real joy.



## 13 To Say Good by

“Where has your beloved gone...”

Song of Songs 6:1

“Michael and Rachel sat together at the dining table. They were both quiet for a few minutes. They could both feel the awkwardness.

Michael spoke first. “I am not sure what the future holds for us, and I want you to be free to live your life. This is very difficult for me to say, Rachel, but I must speak it. Forget that you ever met me.”

“Oh, Michael, don’t talk like that, please! We must believe that it will be okay. I cannot bear to think of anything else.”

“Yes, Rachel, we will believe for the best, but...” Michael started to say something else, but then stopped. He pulled back from Rachel’s touch. “Tomorrow will be a very busy day,” he said, “and so we must all get a good night’s sleep. Good night, Rachel.” Michael then got up from the table and without looking back he went to his room.

Rachel sat where she was for a few minutes longer. She fought back the tears that had built up in her eyes. “I do love you, Michael Romano, and I know that you love me too--no matter what happens.”

The next morning Rachel put a small satchel in the back seat, next to Sonita. She sat in the front seat, next to Michael. It was very early, but Michael wanted to get a good start. They had a long drive in front of them.

Michael looked first at Rachel and then at his daughter. “Let’s pray before we go.” He bowed his head and said a short prayer: “Dear Lord, please be with us on this journey. We ask for your direction and your mercy over us. Amen!”

Rachel looked out the window as they drove across miles of hills and forests in Slovenia. Small farming communities dotted the land. The country reminded her a little of her own homeland in Czechoslovakia. Michael did not talk very much as he drove, but Rachel knew that he was occupied with what lay ahead of them.

“I was told,” Michael said, “there has been a great deal of partisan fighting in Slovenia, and it looks like the Communists will be in control before too long. But for now this nation is still firmly in the hands of the Nazi-Fascist party.

“The black-shirt army that occupies this country is no different from the one in Germany, but I don’t believe it will last much longer. Unfortunately, I do not believe the Communist agenda for the people of Croatia or Slovenia will be much different then what they are getting from the Nazis, and we know the Russian army has no love for the Jews.”

Rachel breathed deep and then sighed over what Michael had just said. She had not forgotten what it had been like when Hitler’s black-shirt military units took over Czechoslovakia. She shuddered at the thought of once again being in their domain. Michael looked at her. “Don’t worry,” he said, “our passports are good.”

They had driven about half way across Slovenia. Rachel and Sonita had fallen asleep. Michael quickly woke them both up. “Okay, here is our first test. Pray!” A few hundred feet ahead of them was a road stop. Two men in black shirt uniforms came out of a small enclosure and one soldier put his arm out in a motion for them to stop their car.

Michael responded to the soldier’s directive and then pulled out of his pocket his Italian and Croatian passports. He spoke Croatian.

Rachel had learned only a few words of the Croatian language. “Oh, please,” she said under her breath, “don’t let them ask me any questions.”

“You are from Zagreb?” the guard asked Michael.

“Yes.”

“So where are you going?”

“I am a doctor in Zagreb, and I am taking my sister for some rest in Italy. She is recovering from a very bad sickness.”

The soldier looked curiously at Rachel. “And what is she recovering from?”

“She came down with a bad case of typhoid fever. They had to keep her separated from others for some time. She is just now well enough to travel.”

The black shirt soldier immediately stepped back from the car. He handed the passports back to Michael, and motioned them on their way. They drove almost one mile before they stopped and said anything.

“Papa,” Sonita said, “how did you think to say what you did?”

“It just came to me,” Michael said. “I had not thought of it before.”

“You sounded very convincing,” Rachel said.

“Well,” Michael said, “I do not feel good about lying, even to that man. But somehow I knew that he was not going to let us go through, and then those words just sort of fell out of my mouth.”

Before they got to the border they stopped near a river and ate some sandwiches and had some coffee that was still warm in the thermos. Rachel could see how tired Michael was. She looked across at him a couple of times, but he did not look back at her in the kind of meaningful way that he used to do.

While they were parked a military police car drove by and slowed down. Sonita waved to them. They all held their breath as the car drove on.

When they came to the border Michael once again took from his pocket his passports. The uniformed man at the booth took them quickly from his hand.

“So you come from Zagreb?”

“Yes,” Michael answered.

The tall, thin officer, in his black shirt, looked at Sonita in the back seat. Michael did not like the smile he had on his face, as he continued to look at his daughter. He drew his attention back to him.

“As you can see by my Italian passport, I have diplomatic privilege. Can we please hurry this up?”

The soldier at the window looked at Michael with distain, and then looked over at Rachel.

“And who is she?” he said suspiciously.

“My sister,” Michael responded. He then took Rachel’s passport out of his coat jacket and handed it to the officer.

“And where are you staying in Italy?” the officer asked while examining the passport.

“At the Villia Terre,” Michael answered him.

Rachel's heart began to beat fast as the guard continued to look at her passport.

"We are here for a little vacation." Michael tried hard to smile at him.

The man stepped back from the car window. "I am sorry to tell you but the road up ahead has been closed for the rest of the day. You will have to go back to one of the villages and find a place to stay for the night. And then tomorrow we will see if you are to continue." He glanced once more at Sonita and Rachel.

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Shimon, Johan and Tonya sat at a small table, and listened to Andel.

"We know from the reports we have heard that the American and British troops have the Germans on the run. And the Russians are invading from the east. Before summer comes the war will be over, I am sure of it. But the madness is still long from ended. The Nazis want to hide their evil deeds, and are even now accelerating their horrible plans, and I fear for your safety. There are people in this community who do not like me, because I refuse to go along with their corrupt ideas. They have been talking and stirring things up, calling me a traitor. So, I am afraid I must take you away from here. It is not safe for you to stay here anymore. It is all madness and anarchy, and no life is valued. Tomorrow, I will take you in my wagon. You will stay hidden under some blankets and hay. I will take you, Shimon, as far as I can go, without getting into trouble. And I will pray, Johan, where God would have me take you and your daughter."

The next morning Shimon was the first one to crawl into the back of Andel's wagon. Johan and Tonya squeezed in next to him, and then Andel covered them with a blanket and some hay.

They had traveled for about two hours, and then Shimon felt the wagon come to a stop and Andel began to speak to someone.

"Where are you going with this wagon?" the Czech official asked him. "Don't you know that a war is being fought and that it is dangerous to be out here?"

“Oh, please forgive me my foolishness,” Andel responded meekly. “I have only to drop this load of hay off at a friend’s house, and then I will be on my way back home. He is in desperate need.”

Shimon then heard Andel say ‘good-by,’ and the wagon jerked to a start. Shimon and the others sighed with relief.

When they had traveled about thirty miles from Andel’s house the wagon stopped and the hidden refugees shook off the hay and sat up in the wagon. Shimon looked around. They were on a small, narrow road, with dark forests on both sides of the road.

“I will let you out here, Shimon. Theresienstadt is only about ten kilometers down the road, and there is a small town on the other side of it. Perhaps, this town is where you will find the young woman you are looking for. But you must be very careful. I have heard that many of the inmates at Theresienstadt are now trying to escape. It is still very dangerous. You must stay close to the trees and hide yourself if you see anyone coming. No one can be trusted.”

Andel then spoke to Johan and Tonya. “As I was driving the wagon I heard the Lord tell me that you and your daughter are to come back to the house with me--at least for the time being. I do not always understand, but I always try to obey what God tells me to do.” Johan seemed relieved at what Andel told him. He laughed softly. “And so we get back under the hay for another ride.”

Shimon looked down the road that lay ahead of him and then he glanced back at Andel. “Thank you, my dear friend. I will never forget what you and your family have done for me.” He walked over and shook Andel’s hand, and felt in return a firm, confirming hand shake.

“God bless you, my Jewish friend. And may you soon come to know the One who brought you to my house.” He then smiled at Shimon with understanding.

Shimon said “good by.” He shook Johan’s hand and gave Tonya a quick hug. “Find happiness, my friends.” He smiled at them, and watched as Andel started back down the road to his house. He wondered what Andel had meant when he mentioned the one who had brought him to his house? But his thoughts soon turned to what lay ahead and the possibility of finding Ruth.

Shimon had been walking for about one hour. He had moved away from the road and closer to the trees--in case he had to hide quickly. He could hear gun shots and armament explosions coming from Theresienstadt. He feared for the people there. He knew the Russians were already gaining ground on the German armies, and that the Germans were desperate.

What was happening? Soon it would be over. Why didn't the Germans just surrender? He knew there was no way they could win against the Allied forces. In the midst of his thoughts he was surprised to see three very bedraggled men standing in front of him. He could tell they were prisoners who had escaped. They were just as surprised to see him. They looked pitiful. They were terribly thin and dressed in ragged clothes. When they saw Shimon they started to run. "No," Shimon yelled at them. "I am a Jew, like you--don't run. I am not going to hurt you."

Once they were sure Shimon was not going to hurt them, they came over and sat down next to him on a log. The spring sun felt warm on Shimon's face, as it filtered through the tree branches. The men who sat next to him had escaped from Theresienstadt. One man, named Jozef, did most of the talking. He talked like a man who had once been a school teacher.

"It's total anarchy," he said. "The Russians are beginning to cut the rail lines to Auschwitz and also to Theresienstadt, but not before the Nazis deported another thousand Jews from Slovakia and Hungary to Theresienstadt--that wretched gate-way to hell." He stopped talking for a moment, but then continued. "And now there is even more sickness and disease. Typhoid is raging, and it is certain death to stay there. Many are trying to escape, and some have been shot, but better to be shot than to die in that hell hole.

"We broke into a house down the road. No one was there. Everyone is afraid of the Russian Army that is coming this way, and are trying to get out. We grabbed some food and blankets, and now we are going to Prague--to see what we can find. We have heard that Jews are there who have now started an underground resistance movement of their own. We will join it if we can. You know," Jozef said, as he looked down at his feet, "we became like animals in that



place. Over a scrap of food we would kill another man.” He reached down and pulled up from the ground a white poppy that was beginning to bloom. Tears came to his eyes. “I pray that God can forgive me.” He then stood up and pointed in the direction of Theresienstadt. “I hope that liberation will soon come. It is becoming a terrible death pit.

“There is a town just a few kilometers north of here, called Litomeric. I know some Jews who have been hiding there. At least they were still there a year ago, before they took me to the prison camp.”

Shimon felt some excitement that Ruth might be one of the people that Jozef was talking about.

“Stay away from the roads,” Jozef said. “The Nazis are shooting and not asking questions. And the collaborators are just as bad. No one knows what is coming next. But now we must go,” he said. And then without looking back at Shimon they darted back into the woods.

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“It’s only about a two hour drive from here,” Michael said, as they drove away from the border crossing.

They had spent the night in a village near the border. They had prayed and believed that God would make a way for them. Their only other choice was to go back to Zagreb, but for Michael it was not a consideration. He would not take his daughter and Rachel back there. They would have to take their chances back at the border.

They drove up to the crossing early in the morning, and were relieved to see that a new man was there. When Michael asked if the road was now open, the guard looked at him with surprise.

“You must have received wrong information,” he said. “This road has not been closed at all. Who told you such a thing?”

“Oh, someone in the village said something and I must not have heard them correctly. You know, maybe a language confusion.” He laughed lightly. “Sorry to bother you with it.” Michael knew not to say anything to this man about what the other guard had said. It could certainly raise suspicion.

“The guard who is normally here was called away. He suddenly became very sick, but when he returns I will ask him if he has heard anything about the road being closed, but I see your passports are in order. So, you may leave.” The guard then waved them on their way.

Michael and Rachel and Sonita joyfully responded with a loud “hooray.”

“Surely God has been with us,” Michael said.

“Yes,” Sonita agreed, “he truly has.”

Rachel wondered at the relationship that Michael had with his daughter. It was very unusual. She had been watching how this man lived his faith. He was not a shallow man, and God certainly did seem to be there for him.

As they drove through the Italian countryside, and through a couple of villages, Rachel noticed that there was not the tension that she had felt as they drove through Slovenia, and there were fewer uniformed police around.

“I have been told,” Michael said, “that some of the police are looking the other way, and are not harassing the people here as much. They most likely know that one day soon this war and this evil government will come to an end. I have been told by my contacts that where you and Sonita will be staying is pretty much left alone by the police. I think it’s going to be okay, Rachel. I have a feeling.” He smiled at her as they drove up a winding road that led to a small house.

It seemed very peaceful. It was not what Rachel had thought it would be. She had envisioned an old monastery with black robed priests walking solemnly around the grounds.

“Will you stay here with us for awhile, Michael?”

“Only for tonight, Rachel. I have to get back to Zagreb before they get suspicious.” He parked the car next to a tree.

A man, who had just walked out of the house, came over to greet them. He was dressed in jeans and a light yellow shirt. “Hello,” he said. “You must be Michael Romano. My name is Steven Callis. Welcome to our home.”

Rachel and Sonita felt relieved after they saw Steven and Veronica's house. It was a nice home, and very comfortable. Everything seemed to fit together very nicely. Rachel immediately noticed that Steven and Veronica did not act overly religious, which made her feel better.

They had arrived late in the evening, and Veronica had waited till they came before she served dinner. Rachel liked Veronica, and thought she was very pretty. She looked very American. She was dressed in jeans and a red-checkered shirt, with a white apron around her waist.

She served them a wonderful spaghetti dinner, with home baked bread, a fresh salad and a delicious cream pie for dessert. Rachel was also aware that Michael seemed much more relaxed now that they had arrived at the house. He would frequently look over at his daughter and would then look over at Rachel and smile.

There were two other people staying at Steven's house. One was a woman named Dora, and the other was a man named Abraham. They were both young adults, maybe in their thirties. Rachel noticed that Dora was very thin, probably from poor nutrition. She had kind of an owlish look about her. She seemed very nervous, and even afraid. Abraham was just the opposite. He did not hesitate to talk, and would often laugh out loud. Dora had escaped from Bulgaria and Abraham had daringly escaped from a prison in Romania. They had both expressed their belief that being at this house in Assisi was a true miracle from God. Every one, except for Dora, seemed quite comfortable, and talked freely, even Sonita had joined in.

Rachel spoke to Steven as they sat at the table. "I was really not sure what to expect before I got here. I had pictured a far different place--something more dark and oppressive. And you are obviously not a priest?"

Steven laughed softly and looked over at his wife. "No, I am not a priest. My wife and I have been here for almost two years. We are supported by a church in America that strongly believes in the Zionist cause, that all Jews should have the opportunity to go back to Palestine, the land that God has promised them. We are a small home

here in the hills of Assisi. Fortunately, we are set back and not easily seen by too many curious eyes. We are part of a much bigger resistance movement.

The priests, that started this refuge home and way of escape, were deeply troubled when they found out the truth about what was really happening to the Jews in Europe. And they became very grieved and concerned when the Church did little to intervene.

Some of these brave men, I can tell you, have been tortured and even killed by the Nazi-Fascist controlled government in Rome. But they knew that it might cost them their lives to rescue even one Jewish person. Some of the hiding places are, in fact, in monasteries.” He looked over at Rachel, “Which is probably what you were expecting. We have a few people staying there now.”

“And what about your position here?” Michael asked him.

“We have to be very careful. I think most of the people in the valley below probably suspect what we are doing here, but no one talks openly about it, and so, it seems, we have some sympathy. The police have only stopped by here once this year. They did not press us into showing them the whole house. Fortunately, they seemed satisfied with what we told them--that we are Christians who love Italy, and enjoy visiting here.

My feeling is that some of the police may know more than they are letting on, but really do not want to do anything about it. We do, of course, have some hiding places that we will show you later.

“Since you are not Jewish, Sonita, you should have no problem coming or going as you please. You can tell anyone, who asks, that you have come to visit your parent’s good friends.”

Rachel was so amazed at what she had just heard. She had witnessed so many terrible things that Christians had done to her people. But the Gentiles here at Assisi, were truly laying down their lives for the Jewish people. She also remembered the help she and her brother had been given after their escape from the ghetto.

“Rachel,” Veronica interrupted her thought, as she passed her a piece of delicious lemon crème pie. “You came here with Michael. Are you also from Croatia?”

Rachel looked across at Michael. “No,” she said. “I am not from

Croatia.”

“Rachel was brought to my hospital after a bad car accident,” Michael answered Veronica. “Some very evil people had kidnapped her and were going to turn her into the Nazis, but God intervened.”

Veronica looked curiously at Steven, her eyes growing big.

“Rachel,” she said, “did you escape from Czechoslovakia?”

“Yes,” Rachel answered.

“And do you have a brother named Yacov?”

Rachel looked at Steven and then again at Veronica. “Yes,” she said with great excitement. “Do you know where my brother is?”

Steven and Veronica looked at each other and smiled. “Yes, we do, Rachel. Your brother was brought to our home a few months ago by the partisans. They had found him unconscious, near the border of Austria. He had tripped and fallen on a tree trunk, after running after you.”

“Oh, no!” Rachel responded.

“It’s okay,” Steven said. “He was fine after a short while--except for his concern for you. We tried very hard to get information about you, but I am afraid we feared for the worst.”

“Where is he now?” Rachel asked anxiously.

“A few weeks ago he was taken to Genoa. He has now gone on to Palestine, and is in good health. But he will be so excited when we let him know that you are here. We will make contact with our people in Palestine very soon. What a miracle God has worked.” Steven smiled broadly.

With tears in her eyes Rachel looked across the table at Michael. “My brother is alive and in Palestine. What a great and wonderful surprise!”

In a spontaneous outbreak everyone at the table began to clap. Even Dora had a smile on her face, at the joyful news that had come to Rachel.

After dinner Rachel walked outside with Michael. He had something in a small sack. He put it down on the patio table and then he turned to her. He knew Rachel was tired from all the excitement of the evening. But she looked so very beautiful--her dark hair catching the silver light of the moon. She was so excited after hearing the good

news about her brother, but they both also shared an unspoken sadness. In a few hours he would be gone, and neither of them knew for sure if he would be coming back.

“My princess,” Michael said, “I have something for you.” He lifted out of the sack a violin case and handed it to Rachel.

“Oh no! Michael. I can’t take this.”

“I want you to have it, Rachel. Then I will know that it is being well taken care of. I think it is what my father would want too.”

“Oh, Michael, my feelings are so mixed up right now. I am so happy to hear that my brother is alive and well, but I am so sad that you will soon be leaving me.” She sat the violin case down on the table. “What do I do? I cannot keep my feelings hidden from you. My life is now so intertwined with yours. What will happen to us?”

“I am sorry, Rachel, that I can’t stay with you. It has not been an easy decision. But it is the direction that God is leading me in. My father built something good in Croatia, and I owe it to him to not run away like a coward with my tail between my legs. I must be there for the people who look to me for help. It will not be for long. My dear Rachel, I will come back.”

“Michael, my father once said something similar, that he would not run like a coward. But the enemy came for him and my mother, and they offered him no dignity, and now I do not know where he is. I do understand, Michael, but if I could keep you from going, I would.”

Michael drew Rachel close to him. A river of emotion was released as he kissed her tenderly and passionately. “I don’t know a lot of things, Rachel, even the differences in our lives, but I do know that I love you.”

He then spoke softly in her ear. “If for any reason I don’t come back, please don’t grieve for me. I know that I am in God’s hands, and that he is watching over me.”

“I can not promise you, Michael, that I will not grieve. But I can tell you that I will make sure Sonita is taken care of.”

Michael then handed Rachel an envelope. “In this letter is my mother’s address in New York. There is enough money for both you and Sonita to go there, if you choose. My father made sure my mother

was well taken care of. So you would have no financial concerns. It is where I want Sonita to go, but I will honor your decision, Rachel, as to where you want to go. I know that Palestine is on your heart and mind.”

“Oh, Michael.” Rachel laid her head on his shoulder, not wanting the moment to end.

“I will leave early in the morning, before you and Sonita are awake. And now I must go and spend some time with my daughter. I will write to you, Rachel, as soon as I get back to Zagreb.” For one more moment Michael held Rachel very close, and then he went back into the house.

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While at Genoa, Yacov spent time walking the golden-brown hills and sitting quietly while he read the New Testament. It brought him such joy to read about Yeshua and the disciples. As he read the chapters he felt like he was one of the early Jewish disciples who first followed Yeshua. He cried with them, and laughed at some of the things they did. They were, he thought, just normal people like himself. They made many mistakes, but Yeshua was so patient with them, as he taught them the ways of his Father. This was the rest of God’s Word that he had been searching for, and now it made so much sense to him.

A few times he had noticed a lovely young woman named Hadassah, walking the hills by herself. She was one of the Jewish refugees whom he had met when he first came to the monastery. They had talked a few times, and he felt from the Holy Spirit that this woman was going to be very special in his life; but he could also tell that she was carrying much grief and pain.

The second week that Yacov was in Genoa a group of Jewish men were brought over from another monastery. There had been some concern that they would be discovered in the town where they were hiding. Yacov was wonderfully surprised to see that Merek was one of the people who was part of this group. How delighted they were to see each other. They hugged one another and cried tears of real joy.

Merek then told Yacov about the night he had escaped the ghetto, and how a righteous Gentile had given him a place to sleep and then offered to drive him across Austria to the border of Italy. Yacov felt a pain in his heart as he listened to Merek relate this miracle story. If he and Rachel had hurried that night and had gone with Merek then Rachel would still be with him. But then he remembered Yeshua's words to him: "Yacov, your sister lives." He smiled at Merek and was grateful to God for bringing him through safely.

"Yacov," Merek looked at his friend with curiosity. "You are looking so good. I see something different about you. What is it that has happened to you? Have you fallen in love with a beautiful woman? You must tell me the great secret in your life."

Yacov smiled at his friend--a friend he owed much to. But he was now learning to speak to others only when the Holy Spirit instructed him, and he had also learned that it was very wise to pray before talking to any one about Yeshua--especially to another Jew. "We will have some days on the boat together, my friend, and then I will share with you what has happened in my life."

In the group that had come with Merek there was a man named Burton, who had escaped from Theresienstadt. Yacov was immediately interested in talking to him, to find out if he had any information about his family. He listened as the man described the horrible condition of the camp.

"The men were immediately separated from the women, and put into barracks. Hundreds would be put together in one small room. In the beginning we were sent off every day to work different jobs. This was much better than being all together in an almost unlivable space. Sometimes we were able to glimpse our wives or daughters in the vegetable gardens, where they were often sent to work. There was much sickness, and no one ever had enough to eat.

"Eventually, many became too sick to work, and then they just had to wait out the terrible days until it was time to be sent away to one of the death camps."

For a moment Burton's eyes lit up. "Yes, I remember your father, Yacov. He was a very kind man, and he helped many people. He was a father to us all."



“Oh, Papa,” Yacov said under his breath, “I miss you so much.” Tears began to fill his eyes.

Burton continued to talk. “And the one you call Shimon...? There was a young man when we arrived at Theresienstadt who had been there for a while. A strong, nice looking boy, and his name was Shimon. Your father knew him and they spent much time talking together. He was desperate to know about a young woman, named Ruth. I guess she must have lived near to your family?”

“Yes,” Yacov answered him. “She lived with her parents in our house.”

“Well, the man continued. “Your father told us the most amazing story of how Ruth escaped from a Nazi truck. Your father told Shimon that she got off the truck, after it had stopped, said ‘good-by’ to her family and then just began walking down the road, and never looked back. The Nazi guards seemed blind to what was happening. Your father told Shimon that it was a miracle from God.”

Burton lowered his eyes and then he said: “Your father also told Shimon that Ruth was carrying his baby. I remember that Shimon seemed so desperate that I believe he would have tried to escape from Theresienstadt that very night, if he could have. But as it was they deported him a few days later to Auschwitz.

“And my father? What has happened to him and my mother?”

“I do not have the answers you want, Yacov. I just remember your father. There were so many that were deported--even before I came to that pit of hell. My escape from there was a true miracle. I am so sorry, Yacov, but I do not know what has happened to your family.”



## 14 The Boat Ride Home

“How excellent is your Name...”

Psalm 8:9

There was much confusion as everyone came on board the La Gloria, and great excitement as the boat prepared to leave the boat stall. The weather looked good. They would sail the length of Italy and then refuel in Greece, before the last part of their trip from Cyprus to Palestine. The men would sleep under the stars with blankets and pillows and the women would sleep down below. They all sang songs of Israel. They danced and they hugged. They all knew that it would not be easy, but they were going home, and right now that was all that mattered. The traveling accommodations were very sparse, but nobody complained. The sun was warm and the passage from Italy through the Greek islands was spectacular.

Yacov spent hours by himself, reading the Word of God. He had finished reading the New Testament before leaving Genoa. The words that Yeshua spoke were like fire in his heart. He read them again and again. One evening, before it got dark, Merek came to him and Yacov told him about how he had met Yeshua. At first Merek was apprehensive, but as he listened to Yacov relate the truth of the Messiah from the Torah and the Tanakh, his heart began to soften, and he began asking more questions.

It was their last night on the boat. Yacov could not sleep. He was so excited and his heart was beating fast. He stood up from his sleeping bag and looked out over the ocean. Far in the distance he could see the lights of Palestine. He began to weep.

“Oh, HaShem,” he prayed quietly. “You have been so merciful and good to me. You have revealed to me my Messiah, and have brought me back to my ancient homeland. I am so thankful. I pray that my life will bring You glory.”

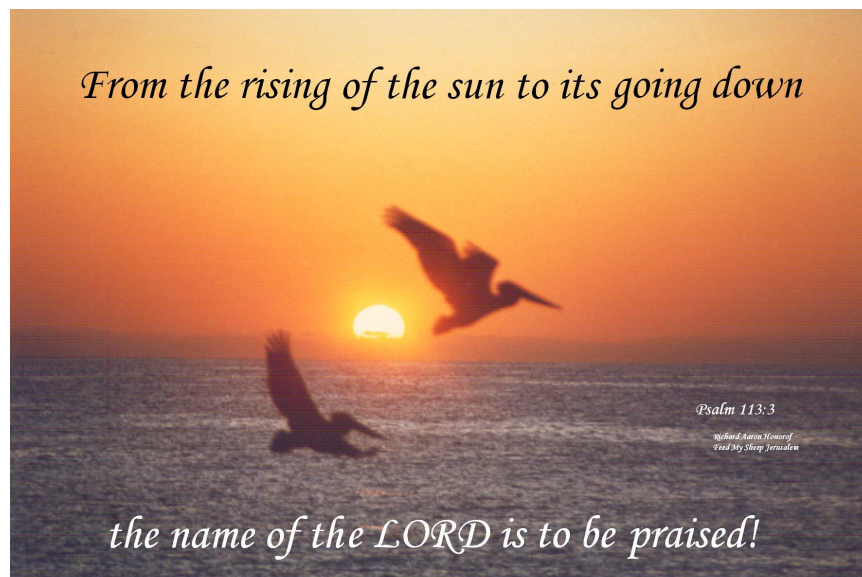
And then he cried out, “I have made it home to Palestine, Papa. I am here for you and Mama. God has brought me home for you and for all of my Jewish family. I don’t know what awaits me, but one day

I know that I will see you again, and we will all rejoice in Yeshua.”  
As Yacov looked down at the tranquil, blue ocean, he saw a vision.

He watched as his family set up a picnic in one of the lovely, wooded parks, outside of Prague. His father was on his knees, blowing into the flames of a small fire. He looked strong and healthy, full of life and vigor. His mother was preparing a table for their picnic lunch. Her beautiful dark hair had been pulled back from her face; how lovely she was.

And there was Rachel, kneeling by her papa, looking up at him with adoring eyes. Aaron sat under a tree, quiet and gentle, reading one of his favorite books. And then he saw himself. He was about six or seven years old. He was standing back by the trees, watching his family.

“Did you know, little boy,” Yacov spoke into the vision, “what would happen to your beautiful family? Did you have any understanding of the heartbreak and sorrow that would come?” Tears flowed from his eyes, but then he felt Yeshua’s loving arms embracing him, and holding him close. “Oh, Yeshua, your love is sometimes more than I can bear. How you have wept over your people.” He then felt a soft presence at his side. He turned to see Hadassah standing next to him. She looked into his eyes and he reached for her hand. They said nothing to each other, but only watched as they drew closer and closer to the homeland that God had brought them back to.



## 15 What God Has Brought Together

“I sleep but my heart is awake...”

Song of Songs 5:2

Shimon watched as the men who had escaped Theresienstadt walked away from him. There was nothing more he could say to them. He understood their anguish and bitterness. He continued to sit on the log awhile longer. He had been spared so much! Why? In the bleak, fearful times in the ghetto, God had given him Ruth, and he had known real love and joy. And for all the time he had been at Theresienstadt, even though he had become very weak, he had never come down with a terrible sickness or disease. God had also provided for him a miracle escape, and had sent someone to guide him to Andel's house. He smiled at the thought of Andel and his family.

Shimon then spoke aloud, into the loneliness of the forest around him. “HaShem, you have spared me much grief. “Why? I have not been a good man, like my father.” He looked up where the sun sprinkled down through a space between the trees. “What do you want from me?” He knew he was speaking from a place of guilt and confusion. As good as God had been to him, he was not ready, he knew, to become a pious, religious Jew.

Shimon had made up his mind when still a teenager, that he never wanted to become religious, like some of the Hasidim he had watched in Prague. There was something missing from their lives, and he did not want to live like that.

When he had lived in Prague he loved to ride his motor bike and feel the wind blowing in his hair. He liked to look at the pretty girls, and sometimes even wink at them. And after he had fallen in love with Ruth they would spend hours talking about the adventures they wanted to share together when the war ended. Even though Ruth was more conservative than he was, they still wanted to enjoy life together. “I am sorry, Adonai,” he finally said. “I can't tell you that I will ever live the life of a religious Jew, but I will always try to do what is right. And I will always be thankful for what you have done

for me, and maybe, if it's all right with you, we can talk sometimes together, like this." Shimon smiled, believing that God had heard him.

Shimon continued to walk on the path through the forest. A loud explosion rocked the ground near where he was walking and he ducked under a tree. In another hour the sun would be going down. The early spring weather was still very cool. He walked a little faster. He later hid behind another tree as he watched a small brigade of Soviet soldiers hiking up the road in front of him.

A short time later, a large Czech family with bundles on their backs, came down the same road. Shimon had heard the news that some of the Czech towns, like Kilanov, had already been liberated by the Russian Armies. He also knew that there would be much panic and confusion. Many of the Czech people feared the Soviet liberating forces as much as the German Army.

When he came to the town he was looking for, he could tell that it was partially deserted. There were no children playing in the yards, and no people on the sidewalks. He saw a man inside of a store, and he walked in. The man behind the counter looked shocked when he saw Shimon. "What do you want?" he said in a mean tone. "Get out of here. You Jews now think that you can come and go as you please. But the war is not over yet. You have been the cause of all my problems. Go! Leave my store and don't come back."

Shimon pulled his collar up around his neck. It had started to rain. He wondered how the man in the store knew he was a Jew? He had heard this kind of anti-Semitic ugliness before the war, but then he had been able to shrug it off, but now he could not. He had watched how this evil monster had pervaded all of Europe, and what it had succeeded in doing to his people. But he had also come to know some of the ones who had not let this vile poison into their lives. He thought about Aniel and Irena and their family. He prayed and hoped that they would be safe till the war was finally over.

Shimon looked into the window of a house that looked vacant. The door was not locked, and so he walked in. There was very little left in the house. He found a small bed in one of the rooms and he laid

down. He was very tired. He took a piece of bread and an apple out of his sack that Irena had given him. The gun shots he heard in the out-lying areas no longer caused him concern. He stretched out and closed his eyes.

In the dream he saw Ruth. She looked fresh and beautiful. The sky was blue and there were butterflies and flowers of all different colors. He called out to her. She turned and waved to him, but said nothing. He could see that she was in a place of peace. He was in a hurry to catch up with her, but he could not seem to make any momentum. It was a strange feeling, like running, but standing still at the same time. He called out to her again. "Ruth, it's me."

She was walking across a wooden bridge that went across a river. And then Shimon saw him. He was on the other side of the bridge, but now he was not dressed in dark, prison like clothes, and he did not have the yellow star on his arm. He looked beautifully radiant. He was dressed like a shepherd. In one hand he held a staff, and in the other hand he seemed to be carrying a loaf of fresh bread. In fact Shimon was sure he could smell the delicious fragrance.

The man looked at Shimon and smiled. They were the same eyes that had pierced his heart with love when he lay dying in the woods.

Ruth was walking towards Him, and Shimon could see that he was beckoning her. She turned for one second and looked again at Shimon. "Follow Him," she said.

"Ruth," he cried out, "wait, I want to join you." But still he could not move his legs. "Ruth," he said one more time, and then woke up.

The sun was starting to rise, but the sky was heavy with clouds. He pulled the blanket over his shoulders. "But who is he?" The words came out of his mouth, laced with confusion and anger. "Who is this one I am supposed to follow? God, please tell me!" He snuggled back under the blankets for a while longer. He wondered where Ruth was.

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The early morning sun danced through the windows, waking Rachel up. And the morning bells from the town below caused her to

wake up even more. She sat up in bed. She looked out of the window. She reached over and picked up the letter from Michael that lay on her nightstand. She had received the letter about two weeks after he had left Assisi, and that had been months ago. She had not received anything since then. She held the letter close to her heart, and prayed that Michael was safe, wherever he was. Sonita also knew that her father would have written them, if he had been able to. But Rachel was amazed at this young girl's faith. She prayed and she believed that her father would come back to them. Although it had been Rachel's intention to be the one to comfort Sonita during this difficult time, she found that Sonita was the one who brought her comfort.

Any apprehension that Rachel may have had about coming to Assisi had disappeared completely. Steven and Veronica had been so kind to her and to all the people who came to their house, seeking refuge. But lately she had noticed that Steven was more nervous and stern with her and the others than he had been before.

Abraham had gone on to Palestine, and Dora had followed him a short time later. Before Dora left the house, she and Rachel had become good friends. It had been hard for her to talk about what happened to her in Bulgaria. But one day they had sat under the peaceful shade of an old tree, and she had told Rachel how she had escaped her country.

"It was early in the spring," she had said, "when the Nazis rounded up all the Jews of our town and confined us into a small space--a ghetto. Before this they had come for my grandfather and my grandmother, my mother, my sisters and my brother, Karl. There were many women and children..."

And then one day they just lined up hundreds of them up in the ghetto and they just shot them. They killed them, all of them. It was so horrible. We just stood there, thinking we would be next. But they chose not to kill us that day.

"I did not want to leave my father. He knew ahead of time what they were planning to do next. Some of the leaders in Bulgaria, that he had connections with, had given him warning. And he had made a deal with them to get a few of us out--that very night. It cost him all that he had, but he insisted that I leave. We were smuggled in the back

of a truck out of Bulgaria to the Black Sea, and then we were taken on a boat to Italy, and finally here, to this house. I found out they deported my father to Treblinka one day after I left. And now they are deporting thousands in Bulgaria and Greece every day.

“It has been good for me to be here, but now I must leave. I do not feel it is safe any longer for me to stay here. And what will you do, Rachel?”

“I don’t know, Dora,” Rachel had told her. “I will wait as long as I can for Michael to come back.”

“May God keep you safe, Rachel. I hope I will see you soon in our home land.” The next day Dora had left for Genoa, and had then gone on to Palestine.

Rachel had walked outside, and was talking with Sontia about going for a short walk when Steven approached them. He spoke directly to both of them.

“Rachel must be very careful where she goes, Sonita. In fact I am afraid that I cannot allow either of you to leave the house anymore. I am sorry, but things have changed. And you must be ready quickly, Rachel, to go into one of the hiding rooms below if anyone should come.

“The Nazi government is putting more pressure on the police to be more vigilant about rounding up Italian Jews, and also the Jewish refugees who have come to Italy seeking safe haven. Now, it’s important that I sit down with both of you and tell you what we are going to do.”

Rachel could feel the fear come over her, like a sheet of cold, icy water. She had so dreaded this ever happening again. If only Michael was here with her. And where was he now?

“I know you have not gone on to Palestine, Rachel, with the others, because you have been holding out hope that Michael would come back. But now I must tell you both some bad news. Our contact in Zegrab has given me some information about your father. Two months ago the Ustashi military police in Croatia brought charges of treason against your father.”

“Oh, no!” Sonita exclaimed.

“Where is Michael?” Rachel asked, her voice trembling.



“He has been taken to a work camp near the border of Serbia. The good news is that they will use his skills as a doctor, and he will not be forced into slave labor. But I am afraid I must tell you, Sonita, that your home has been confiscated, and the hospital has been completely taken over by the Croatian government and the church hierarchy.

Your father and grandfather’s names have been totally removed from ever having anything to do with the hospital. I am so sorry!”

Rachel’s face felt numb. She had not wanted to hear this kind of news about Michael. She looked over at Sonita. Michael’s daughter had brought her hands to her face and was praying for her father. She looked over at Rachel. “We must trust God for Papa, Rachel.”

“Yes,” Rachel said, with a little less conviction.

“I am sorry to hit you at one time with so much distressing news. But I must also tell you that we are going to shut this house down for a while. Because of important safety concerns we cannot allow any more Jews to come here. I am going to send Veronica back to America, and I will follow her shortly. There is not much else we can do. And right now, Rachel, it’s too dangerous for you to try and go to Palestine. They are checking all the boats that are leaving Genoa. But there is possibly another escape route, but it will not take you to Palestine. It will take you to America.”

Rachel felt dizzy from the bombardment of news that had just come to her.

“What is this escape plan, Steven?”

“I know a man--a contact--who is making night boat runs from the coast of France to England. And then there is a place in Ireland where a man has been flying a seaplane to New York. Getting there is a little risky, but staying here is far more dangerous. Many of the Jews in Italy are now being deported to places in Germany and Poland. And the people who have been helping them are suddenly just disappearing. The underground resistance will help us get to the coast of France, and from there it’s just a short trip across the water to England, and then Ireland. The man who is making the boat run has room for two more people, besides Veronica. I will come later. I know it’s not much time, but it’s just the way things have happened. There are no other choices.”

After Steven had left the table Rachel and Sonita continued to talk.

“My father told me, Rachel, that if for any reason he did not come back, right away, that I was to try and get to my grandmother’s house in New York. I know she would want you to come too.”

“Sonita, Rachel said, “you are a very brave young woman, and I admire you. As you know, my brother, Yacov, wants me to come to Palestine and live with him and his wife. But now that seems impossible. I waited too long to leave for Palestine. So, if your grandmother is willing to have me, then I will go with you, Sonita, to New York. Your father left me money for both of us. This is now what we must do. Like Steven said, we really do not have any other choice.”

“I am glad, Rachel, that you will come with me, but now we must pray for Papa.”

“Yes, Sonita.” With tears in her eyes Rachel hugged Michael’s daughter. “We will pray for your father, your dear father.”

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The rain had stopped and only a scattering of clouds remained in the sky. Shimon picked up his back pack and began to walk down the narrow street, cluttered on both sides with dingy, gray apartment houses. He saw a mother with a baby carriage and then he saw two children, a boy and a girl, at the end of the path. No one paid any attention to him.

He walked for a while longer, but he did not feel that this was where Ruth would have gone. There was nothing here that made him feel welcomed.

Shimon stopped. On the other side of the trees he could see a river, and on the other side of the river was a house that had caught his attention. He was not sure why. When he came to the river he was amazed. The bridge that went across it looked just like the one in his dream. He took a deep breath. Could it be a sign for him? He took hold of the railing and for a minute looked down into the fast moving water. But this time his legs were not frozen and he walked across.

He had walked only a short distance when he came to the house that he had seen when he looked through the trees. It was a small, cottage style home. There was a white fence partially encircling the yard, and there was smoke coming out of the chimney. He walked up the cobble stone steps to the door and knocked. The woman who came to the door reminded him of his own mother. Her hair was pulled to the back of her neck, in a braided roll. She had on a worn, blue cotton dress. She did not seem afraid when she saw Shimon on her doorstep. "Yes," she said, "how can I help you?"

Shimon was nervous. "Hello," he said. "I am looking for a friend of mine, and I think she might have come this way, and I was wanting to ask if you might have seen her. She is very pretty and her name is Ruth? It would have been some time ago, several months." Shimon stopped talking. Everything had come out too fast--not the way he wanted. "I am sorry," he said, "It's just that I really need to find her."

The woman's face did not change expression. "What did you say your name was, young man?"

"Shimon," he answered.

"My name is Anna. You can come in, Shimon. I do have something to share with you. I've been expecting you for some time."

Shimon's heart began to beat excitedly as he walked into the front room. It was a simple but comfortable house. Shimon began to look around, hoping that Ruth would walk out of one of the other rooms.

"Please, sit down, Shimon. Ruth is not here."

Shimon knew that an obvious disappointment was showing on his face.

"Your friend, Ruth, did come to our house. It was in late November, 1943. It was already dark and my husband and I were getting ready for bed when she knocked on our door. She looked so cold and tired. My husband said she could come in. We knew, of course, that she was a Jew, but we could not turn her away. I really don't know how she found our home? But she once told me that a heavenly light had directed her this way."

Shimon could hardly contain himself. "But where is she now? My Ruth--where is she?"

Anna continued to talk, not immediately answering Shimon's panicked question. "How Ruth escaped from the Nazi truck was really

quite a miracle. She told me that she had heard clearly from God, that when the truck stopped, she was to start walking down the road. Your friend, Ruth, must have a very pure heart to have heard the voice of God so clear.”

“Yes,” Shimon responded. “She is very special--far too good for me.

“Ruth walked the whole way. The light from heaven guided her to our house.”

“But where is she now?” Shimon was getting impatient with this nice lady.

“We have a room that Ruth stayed in. My husband and I both felt it was what we were to do. We knew, of course, that if we were caught providing a room for a Jewish woman that we would all be killed. But sometimes you must do, what you must do. How could we put this precious child out? She stayed with us for almost three months, but then it became evident, from what someone told us, and from our snoop neighbors, that it was not a secret that we were hiding a Jew in our home.

“One morning my husband bundled Ruth up in some of his winter clothes. I had to do some quick sewing,” Anna explained, “to make everything fit.” She laughed softly. “They got in Jan’s wagon. I remember that it was a cold morning. Jan drove the wagon about 20 kilometers to his cousin’s house.

“They run a small hospital, or clinic, for amputees and people who are dying and have no place to go. They don’t have to worry about many people dropping by to visit them. So it was a good place to take Ruth. They are such dear, sweet people.”

“So Ruth and my baby are at this house?”

Anna looked past Shimon for a moment. “Shimon, my husband died about two weeks after taking Ruth to Honza and Petra’s house. His heart just gave out. I miss him every day. I’m sorry, Shimon, but I have not heard anything about Ruth. I have not left my house since the day my husband died. I don’t know if Ruth is still there.”

Shimon was stunned. He could hardly take it all in. He was disappointed, and yet also very hopeful that perhaps he would now find Ruth and his baby at this other house.

“It will soon be dark, Shimon. You can stay here tonight and sleep on the couch, if you want.”

Shimon looked out the window. He wanted to leave right away, but Anna was right. It would soon be very dark. “Thank you Anna. I would be thankful to stay here tonight.”

“I don’t have a lot of food--things are pretty sparse. But I have a small pot of bean soup and some bread to offer you for dinner.”

“Thank you. That would be very nice.”

“It’s been a long time since I’ve had any company.” Anna smiled at Shimon.



## 16 Follow That Light

“But joy comes in the morning...”

Psalm 30:5

The next morning Steven came into the kitchen with his wife, Veronica. Rachel could tell that she had been crying. They sat down at the table with Sonita and Rachel.

“We will be leaving early in the morning,” Steven told them. We drive from here to Genoa, and that is where we meet the man who will be driving you to the coast of France. He is with the French Underground, and does whatever he can to help get Jews out of Europe. He knows the best routes to take.

“He drives a truck and transports vegetables from the French farms to the coastal cities. Of course it’s all a cover for the underground work he does. You will stay hid in the back of his truck, but it will not be so uncomfortable.” Steven smiled. “He will be driving to a coastal town near a place called Calais. When you get there it will be night. Zako will let you out of his truck and you will run quickly down the beach to a raft. Then you will meet another man who will take you across the channel. He told Zako that you should be in English waters in a couple of hours. Of course we will all be praying for God’s help on this one! He reached over and took hold of his wife’s hand.

Rachel noticed that Steven’s demeanor was now more like the captain of a ship. Things had changed and he wanted to make sure everyone understood the serious situation they were now in. Rachel was also trying to remember something Steven had said....what was it? Then she remembered. It was the name of the man who would be driving them across France. Rachel smiled.

“So Zako, we meet again, so soon.”

Both Sonita and Rachel had much to do. Steven helped her to wrap the violin in a small box, so that it could be shipped to the United States. There was little she could take with her, other than a small back pack, but this was not a real problem for Rachel, since she had few belongings to take with her to America.

As Rachel opened the door to the kitchen she saw that Veronica and Sonita were praying. She went in and sat down with them, and they prayed together for what lay ahead of them--the dangerous journey they were about to embark on. And then they prayed God's Mercy and protection for Michael. "Oh, Michael," she spoke softly to herself, "my beloved Michael--where are you?"

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After Shimon and Anna had eaten a very simple meal they sat at the kitchen table and talked. The explosive sounds of bombs going off on the other side of the forest continued to increase, as the Russian armies drew closer and closer to the small towns and villages of Czechoslovakia.

"Ruth was very much in love with you, Shimon," Anna said. "She talked about you all the time."

Tears came quickly to Shimon's eyes.

"Her family knew, of course, that she was pregnant, and they did not believe that you would be coming back. Perhaps they believed the Nazis had killed you. One evening Ruth told me that a young man, named Yacov, had asked her to marry him. She did not believe that he really loved her, but he was a good friend, and had been very kind to her, and wanted to provide a father for her baby."

Shimon was listening to everything Anna was saying. He felt grateful that his friend Yacov would have watched over Ruth. He certainly would not want her to be alone, but if only he could be there for her. He knew that Yacov had escaped the ghetto. He hoped he was still alive.

"You are the only one Ruth loved." Anna spoke as if truly recognizing the emotion that Yacov was feeling.

Both Anna and Shimon turned quickly as a bright light flashed in the window, followed by a loud explosion.

“I fear,” Anna said, “the deal that President Benes will make with the Soviet forces for control of our land. They are already talking about the provisional government that will be put in place before long. And it will, no doubt, be put under the control of the Soviet Army. I especially fear for our German neighbors in the Sudetenland. If the Soviet leaders are given full reign, then there will be a very bloody revenge. I am sure of it. And some of the Czech people will play a part in that revenge. They have not forgotten the massacres in Lidice and Lezaky, when Hitler’s reprisal, for the murder of Heydrich, included the brutal deaths of thousands of Czech people. The German people have lived in the Czech lands for decades, but they will be blamed for much of the suffering. How much longer will all this hate and revenge go on?” Anna looked past Shimon into the night sky.

“I am not religious, Shimon, but I believe that God loves all people. My husband was a good man. He was always willing to help other people.” Anna could not hold back the tears that filled her eyes. “That is why we had to help your dear Ruth. We could do nothing else.”

For a moment longer Shimon and Anna continued to sit in the kitchen, under the shadow light of a small oil lamp. And then Shimon heard someone speak some very unusual words, and he knew they had not come from Anna.

“If you do it unto the least of these my brethren, then you are doing it unto me.”

Shimon had no idea why he had heard these words, or where they came from? But very little in his life, as of late, had been normal. But still, he thought, what did these words mean, and who spoke them?”

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It was only about a four hour drive to Genoa. And it was here that Steven would say good-bye to his wife and friends. As much as he wanted to go with them, he could not. As Zako had reminded him, how would he get back to Italy? It certainly would not be safe for him to take the train--not through Nazi controlled France.



When Zako saw Rachel he smiled a wide smile. "Ah," he said, "my little Jewish friend from Czechoslovakia. I see that you managed to get to Assisi safely. And where, Rachel, is your brother?"

"Well, Zako, it's a long story, but Yacov is safe, and is now in Palestine. We were separated, and we both ended up in Assisi at different times. Maybe, if we have time, I will be able to share my story with you."

"But you are well! This I can see," he said, and smiled.

"Yes, Zako, I am well." Rachel then introduced him to Sonita.

"A little golden princess," he laughed, and kissed her hand lightly.

"So come now, all of you, we must start our trip. I am sorry that you will be buried for a while under the lettuce and spinach, but perhaps you can catch up on some sleep. Of course, you do not have to stay buried all of the time--only if I stop the truck, and then you must quickly get down into your hiding place."

"And so my friends, Steven and Veronica, who have been so kind to me--what can I say? When I come to your house it is always for me a great time of bon appetite." He laughed again. "If you were not leaving so quickly, Veronica, and if I were not a man of God, then I would steal you away from him." He looked at Steven and laughed. "But now we must say 'good-by.' It is time to go."

For the next few hours Rachel, Sonita and Veronica sat huddled together in the back of a vegetable truck. They talked and they prayed and they slept. They could hear Zako singing French songs in the front seat. Occasionally, he would sing even louder, knowing they could hear him. After driving for about three hours they felt the truck slow down and then come to a stop. They immediately crawled into the hiding place that Zako had shown them. This secret compartment had been built into the truck, like a hidden room would be built in a house. Crates of vegetables covered them completely.

Rachel could hear Zako talking to the police officer who had pulled them over. Soon she heard the back doors to the truck open, and the conversation between Zako and the police grew louder. Rachel held her breath--afraid that even her breathing would be heard.

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The next morning Shimon eagerly drank a cup of black coffee. It tasted good. He gulped down a large piece of homemade bread with some jam. He watched as Anna wrapped another piece of bread and some carrots and put them in his backpack. First he would find Ruth, and then as soon as the war ended he would try to find his family. He hoped and prayed they might still be alive.

Anna spoke to Shimon. "It will take you about five hours to walk to the house of Jan's cousin."

Shimon stood in the doorway. He extended his hand to Anna, but then reached over and kissed her lightly on the cheek. "Stay safe," he said. "Maybe one day we will see each other again. I hope so. Thank you so much for taking care of my Ruth. I will always be grateful to you."

"Be careful, Shimon. The roads are filled with crazy and angry people. It's best not to talk to anyone." She spoke the last words as Shimon shut the gate and began walking down the road. Shimon looked back for a moment and waved to her.

The sun had been up for a couple of hours and it had stopped raining. It was early spring and the road was muddy in places, but he hoped he would make good time. His heart was filled with excitement. In a few hours he would be holding Ruth. He wondered if their child was a boy or a girl.

Anna had told him to follow the road, and she had given him specific instructions, but he could already see that there was much chaos, as the Soviet Armies began to liberate many of the towns. Frequently, he would see groups of people who had left Prague and were walking down the road. Some were carrying large bundles on their backs, and holding onto the hands of their children. Many people were fleeing the towns that would soon come under Soviet control. Shimon also saw a car filled with Nazi SS guards racing towards them. They were honking the horn, and not stopping for anyone who might be in the way. The people immediately darted off the road into the woods. A little while later he saw a contingency of Czech

resistance fighters, who were part of the underground. He recognized one of the men, as someone he had once worked with. The man also instantly recognized Shimon.

“Shimon,” he called out his name. He then stopped and talked to one of the men walking with him. He pointed in Shimon’s direction. “Now, there,” he said, “is one of the toughest Jews around.” He crossed the road to where Shimon was standing, and slapped him on his back, as if they were long lost friends. “Come and fight with us, Shimon. It’s your chance to get back at these dirty, rotten Nazis. And we are also going to get every German still living in our land. We will drive every Sudetenland traitor out, or hang them. We are going to kill as many as we can. Come with us. We need strong men like you.”

Without stopping Shimon quickly answered him. “I have important business to take care of, Yado. I cannot go anyplace else, not now.” He walked even faster.

“There is nothing more important than to fight for our homeland. But then you are just a Jew--no better than the rest of them. We will get rid of people like you, too.” He laughed and turned back to his friends.

Shimon walked even faster up the road. He did not turn around to see what they were doing. Nothing was going to get in his way, not now. He shuddered at the thought of how much revenge and bloodshed would come upon his people from men like this.

Occasionally Shimon would see a frantic and frightened Jew walking along the road, but most of them stayed hidden in the woods. He knew that some of them had joined the Czech resistance fighters. He had also heard that some of the Jewish men had formed a resistance of their own.

It was mid-afternoon when he saw the town he was looking for. He figured he was about ten miles from Prague. He only had to ask one person for directions to Honza’s house and hospital.

It was a fairly large, two story house. It did not look anything like a hospital or even a clinic. A long, rambling path led to some steps and to the door of the house. A few people were walking around in

the yard. The afternoon sun felt warm. He saw one young man who was sitting in a rocking chair. He had a blanket over his legs, and seemed totally unaware of Shimon's presence. And then he saw a woman about Anna's age. She was standing near the man who was in the rocking chair. She was also holding a baby in her arms. Shimon could tell that the baby was about one year old. He had light brown hair and large blue eyes. He seemed very happy. Shimon felt a sudden joy when he looked at this little boy.

The woman looked curiously at Shimon and then darted for the door of the house. As Shimon walked up the path to the door, a dark haired man came outside to greet Shimon. He smiled at him. He was probably around fifty years old. When Shimon looked inside the house he could see the woman who was still holding the baby. It was hard for Shimon to keep his eyes off of the child. He could see that the baby looked a lot like him.

"Hello," the man said to Shimon. "How can I help you?"

"My name is Shimon. I have just walked here from Anna's house. She told me that this is where Ruth is staying. Would you please tell Ruth that Shimon is here." Shimon could see that the woman holding the baby was very agitated.

"Please come in." The man then turned to his wife. "Petra, we have always known that one day he would come. He is the baby's father. But while we talk please take the child in the other room."

Shimon was feeling confused. "Please," he said, "let me see Ruth."

"Come in, young man and sit down. My name is Honza. I will explain to you what I can. We knew that one day you would come here. Ruth was very sure of it. Ruth came to us almost one year ago, just before her baby was to be born. Yes, that is your son. His name is Ben Or. It's the name Ruth chose for him. In Hebrew it means 'son of light.' She called him her little son of light.

"Where is Ruth?" Shimon could feel his voice starting to break with disappointment.

"After Or was born Ruth stayed with us for another month, or so. It was the spring of 1944. First I must explain something to you. In the past we have had little trouble with people coming to our home to snoop around; even the Germans did not want to come here. You see, some of the amputees who come to our clinic are quite sick and die

shortly after they come here. The rumor has been spread around quite successfully that communicable diseases abound in this house. It is not the truth. But we prefer to let people think what they will. That way we are not bothered by meddling people, and we, of course, prefer it that way.

“But shortly after Ruth came to stay with us the Nazi Command had also become suspicious about the hospital-clinic that we run here. This is a Christian hospital. If people do not have money then we do not ask them to pay us anything. We do this work because we believe it is what Jesus would do. Ruth felt pretty secure here. She had a room with her baby in the back of the house, and the people here in our home loved her very much. She was a very special lady.

“One day a local anti-Semite, whom we know works for the Nazis, began asking my wife a lot of questions about who was staying at our house. And then they came for a visit. That’s when Ruth became very nervous. She knew that with Or’s light hair and blue eyes he could easily pass for a Czech baby, maybe even our grandson. As you can see this little boy has become very precious to my wife and to me.

“Ruth decided it was too risky for her to stay any longer with us. If the Nazis should come, they would take her and the baby. This she could not allow to happen. She asked us if we would watch her little boy till the war was over. Of course we told her ‘yes.’ She also really believed that you would be coming here. I do not know why she was so confident of this.

“And so we made contact with a friend of ours who lives outside of Prague. He is a rabbi, but now spends most of his time in the Jewish underground, fighting with the resistance. He agreed to take Ruth, and let her stay at his house till the war was over. But I am sorry to tell you, Shimon, I have not heard anything from Ruth or from Rabbi Adler. Only for a short time, after she left, was there any communication. I am sorry, Shimon, but I do not know if Ruth is still there.”

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The women became stone quiet as the police stepped into the back of the truck, and began to push the crates of vegetables from one place to another.

Soon Rachel heard the doors clang shut and the truck began to drive slowly away. No one moved. After a short while Zako stopped the truck, and opened the back doors. "It's okay," he said. "You can come out now. That was close, but I've not had one of my hiding places discovered yet. But now I have some good news. We will be at the coast of France in less than two hours. So, my fair maidens, relax and enjoy the rest of the ride. They will not stop me again."

When they arrived at the beach near Calais, Zako drove the truck to a small road, hidden behind some sand dunes. When he opened the back door to the truck, it was cold and dark. Only the dim light of the moon helped them to see where they were.

"Now, lovely and brave ladies," Zako spoke in a quiet voice. "You are going to run from here to the water. When you get there you will see a large raft. Get in quickly. My friend, and comrade in this great adventure, Adrien, will appear out of nowhere." He laughed softly. "And then you will be on your way."

Zako then helped the women out of the truck. "Be safe, and God be with you. Goodbye for now." Zako then quickly got back in the truck and started the engine. Rachel felt a strong pang of fear that he was leaving them.

"Come on! Run," Veronica said to both Rachel and Sonita.

Without looking back the women ran the length of the beach to the water's edge. Just as they had been told a raft-like boat was anchored in the shallow water. They scrambled onto the boat and sat down on the wet seats. Two other people were already in the boat. Almost immediately a man appeared out of the dark. He said nothing, but pulled up the anchor that had been stuck in the sand, and pushed the raft into the ocean. He then handed each person an emergency life vest, and told them to strap it on.

Rachel breathed in the sea air. The cold waves splashed against her as the boat, with the help of a small engine, began to make its way across the narrow channel. After they were well on their way the man

who was piloting the boat from the back, spoke to them. "My name is Adrien. I am a French patriot, and it is my duty and privilege to escort you ladies to the other side. We should have good weather tonight, and we will soon be at the Straits of Dover. So relax. I do not anticipate any problems. I know you are probably all scared to death, but fear not. I have done this many times, and my contacts in England know we are coming."

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Shimon lowered his face into his hands. All he had thought about for days was that he would soon see Ruth. He suddenly felt very exhausted. He looked up at the kind man sitting across from him. "Thank you very much, Honza, for what you did for my Ruth. God has surely provided good people to watch out for her. Tomorrow I will go by myself to Prague and see if I can find Ruth, and then we will come back here for our son."

"We will take care of Or as long as you need us to," Honza replied. "We would like to make him our own son. We love him very much."

"I will come back for my son, Honza. Even if I do not find Ruth, I will come back. And now if it's okay with you and your wife, I would like to spend some time with my son."

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Less than an hour after they had been in the ocean a heavy fog suddenly began to cover them. Rachel could tell that Adrien was very nervous. They could not see anything ahead of them, or where they were going.

"Perhaps," he said, "it would be a good idea for you ladies to pray-- if you know how to?"

Before the words were out of his mouth Rachel saw that Sonita was already in serious prayer.

"There," Sonita exclaimed, pointing to a light that suddenly appeared in the midst of the dense fog. "Follow that light. God is showing us the way."

No one said anything, but Adrien began to speed the boat up, as the light began to guide them across the foggy sea.

Rachel could hear the sounds of the waves crashing against the rocky shore, as they neared the beach landing. "You are now in England, my friends." Adrien slowed down the engine as they came onto the sandy shore.

"Sorry for the excitement back there," Adrien said. "I wasn't expecting that fog to roll in like that. I always check my weather out pretty carefully. But you obviously have a very good friend who is watching out for you, and hears your prayers."

After Adrien had pulled the boat ashore next to a long pier, that jutted out into the water, a black sedan pulled up. "Go!" Adrien commanded them. "That's the next part of your journey. Have a good trip. You're home free!" he yelled to them, as they ran towards the car.

The sun was just beginning to rise as Rachel and Sonita and Veronica looked out the car windows at the huge seaplane that sat next to a small hanger and runway, surrounded by the wild rolling hills of Ireland.

Sonita was the only one who had slept on the drive to Liverpool, where they took the ferry to Ireland. Rachel had spent much of the night, as they drove, thanking God for helping them, and feeling such amazement at what he had done on their behalf. Tears would come to her eyes, as she thanked God for bringing them safely to England and then on to Ireland.

As they got out of the car a young man dressed in a black leather jacket, with a red scarf around his neck, came over to them. Rachel had never heard such a strange dialect before.

"Well, darlen," he said, "ever got yourself a ride on one of these little flying giants?"

"No," was all Rachel could say. The plane looked like a giant goose that had somehow found its way into the countryside of Ireland.

"Well, you are sure gonna now! So come on, y'all."  
"Time's a wasting."



## 17 Hope Endures

“In thee, O Lord do I hope...”

Psalm 34:18

Shimon waved to his son as he walked away from Honza's house. They had been very kind to let him spend the night with them, so that he could get to know his son better. Shimon could see that they loved Or very much, but when they saw how Shimon and Or immediately connected with each other, they knew that he belonged with Shimon. There was no doubt that he was his father.

While at Honza's house, Shimon learned that the Czech resistance fighters were holding back the Nazi armies until the Russians had totally seized control of Prague. The American and British forces had taken control of many German cities. The Third Reich could not possibly hold out much longer.

Shimon's mind was only on finding Ruth, and then being able to find out what had happened to his family. He wanted nothing to do with any more fighting or any more war.

Shimon stepped back into the woods as he watched a truck load of Soviet soldiers drive past him. Soon, there would be thousands of displaced and homeless Jews walking on the roads, trying to get back home.

He was only a few miles from Prague. Gunfire could be heard. He stayed out of sight from the underground fighters who were waiting for the Soviet Army to take control. He had no intention of being dragged into more bloody fighting. Shimon had been given clear directions to where Ruth was staying, but it took a long time to make any progress. There was chaos everywhere. Many of the SS units had already escaped from Europe to other countries--using the money they stole from the Jewish people to bribe foreign politicians.

Shimon found the address of Rabbi Adler. He was familiar with the area where the rabbi lived. A small house sat at the end of a narrow dirt road, surrounded by tall trees. He knocked on the door. An older, gray haired man opened the door for him. He recognized Shimon.

“Shimon,” he said with surprise and excitement. “I am so glad to see that you are alive. How did you find us?”

Shimon remembered Gilad. He had been one of his father’s special friends. They would sometimes walk together on Shabbat to the synagogue. Like Shimon’s father, Gilad was not overly religious, but every Shabbat morning he would show up at their house. The two men would enjoy a nice cup of coffee together, with one of his mother’s special Shabbat rolls, before they began their early morning walk down the road to the small community synagogue.

As a little boy, Shimon would sometimes watch out the window as the two men would walk away from the house.

A burst of emotion filled Shimon’s heart, and tears came to his eyes. The two of them hugged each other and went into the house.

After going inside he quickly looked around, hoping to see Ruth sitting quietly, somehow waiting for him. They sat down at a small table in the kitchen. Shimon could see where someone had taped over some holes in the walls, to try and keep the house warm.

“How did you find us, Shimon?”

“It’s a long story, Gilad, but right now I really need to find out if Rabbi Adler is still here.”

“I’ve only been here a few days, Shimon. I have not seen him since I have been here. But there will be some others coming back tonight. They have been here longer, and I am sure they will be able to answer your questions. I have been hiding in a damp cellar for a few months--ever since I escaped from Auschwitz. My escape from that pit of hell was a miracle from God. I was given the names of some people who might be able to help me. Those righteous good people hid me and took care of me until I came here a few days ago. If they had turned me in, then I would have been sent right back to that death camp. Sometime I would like to tell you my amazing story. When I heard that the Nazis were on the run, then I felt it would be safe to come here. I knew Rabbi Adler before the war began.

“But now I must tell you, son, some bad news. Your father and I were deported from Theresienstadt at the same time. I am so sorry, Shimon, but your father was killed only a couple of days after he arrived at Auschwitz. I do not know what happened to the rest of your family, but I know that they too were deported, and I would not hold

out much hope for them.”

Shimon sat stunned. Although he had prepared his heart for this reality, it was still very hard to hear. He wept when he was told the news, and he also remembered the shame he had brought to his parents, as a wild and disobedient teenager. If only he could go back and tell them how sorry he was. Shimon brought his hands to his face, trying to hold back the tears and emotion. All he wanted to do now was find Ruth and then go back and get their son, and then get out of this wretched land forever. His sister, who lived with her husband in America, would be their way out.

Gilad spoke. “In the midst of this hell, Shimon, an underground network has existed, where safe places could be found. And God has placed many good people along my way.”

“Yes, Gilad,” Shimon answered. “I too have found places of refuge and good people to help me, but I came here to see if someone knows about my Ruth. About a year ago she came here to hide. That is why I must talk to the Rabbi.”

“Again, Shimon, I wish I could help you. Since I have been here I have not seen Rabbi Adler, but the others will be here shortly. Some of them work with the Jewish underground. They have been fighting with the Czechs to hold the ground till the Soviet commanders take control. But most of the Jewish fighters are already making plans to go on to Palestine. They want nothing to do with Europe anymore. They have set their hearts and minds on the liberation of our ancient homeland. They will follow the ones who have already gone ahead of us, to establish Israel once again as a nation. What about you, Shimon? Will you go to Palestine? We need strong young men like you who can still fight.”

Shimon was silent for a moment. He did not want to fight anymore. He had already made up his mind to go to America.

“I don’t know for sure what my plans are, Gilad. First I must try and find Rabbi Adler.”

“Yes, of course. I understand. You know, Shimon, I am glad that God took my lovely wife before this horrible war started. And it is a blessing that we did not have any children--just to be killed at the

hands of the Nazis. I guess that may sound selfish, but it is the way I feel.”

“No, Gilad. It does not, but now if you will excuse me. I think I will go for a short walk, before it gets too dark.”

“Be careful, Shimon, the streets are in great chaos and it is not safe anywhere. I presume you have already heard the good news?”

“What news?” Shimon answered.

“The war is over, Shimon. Last night the German Command surrendered. They gave up and agreed to end the war. It’s over, Shimon. It’s all over!”

Shimon stood where he was, his hand still on the doorknob. “One day Ruth, the war will end and then we will be together forever. I promise you.” The words came back to Shimon, as if he had just spoken them--stabbing him in his heart. “Yes, Gilad. This is very good news.”

Shimon walked down the road for a short ways, his eyes were blurred with tears. His family was gone, and his hope of finding Ruth was fading. He felt empty and alone. But then he remembered the face of his son. He wiped the tears from his eyes.

He stepped back from the road as he watched four Czech resistance fighters dragging down the street, from behind a wagon, two German soldiers, who had been hiding in the woods. Their heads were covered with black hoods, and their hands were tied in front of them. Their uniforms were ripped and shredded. He really could not tell if they were dead or alive. He turned away from the carnage in front of him. He knew there would be much revenge. And he also knew that in this climate of hate and bloodshed things could easily turn against the Jews. Shimon then walked back to the house--hoping someone would be there by then who could help him. After he had walked into the house Gilad immediately introduced him to Caleb and David.

“They have been here the longest,” Gilad told him. “Perhaps, Shimon, they can give you the information you are looking for.”

Shimon spoke first to the man named David. “My friend, Ruth, came here almost one year ago. Rabbi Adler told her she could come and stay here. But no one has heard from them and....”

David interrupted Shimon. "Rabbi Adler was taken by the Gestapo in May, 1944. He was arrested and tortured and then sent to Auschwitz."

Shimon's heart was pounding.

"I am sorry, Shimon, but Ruth was taken a few days after Rabbi Adler was arrested. I met Ruth, and she was a lovely lady. She told me how she had left her baby with Honza and his wife, because she could not bear the thought that they would take him too. She was heart broken, but determined to do what she did. She would not even let Honza bring her here in his wagon. She walked most of the way, from Honza's house, but then she accepted a ride from someone, to the town where we picked her up. And that was a mistake. Two weeks later they came for the rabbi, and then for her. We all scattered, and only came back a couple of weeks ago."

Shimon felt paralyzed. He could hardly believe what he had heard, although he knew they were telling him the truth. He could feel the blood drain from his face, and his legs began to grow weak.

"Come and sit down." Caleb helped Shimon to a near-by chair.

"Do you know," Shimon asked, "where they took her?"

"As far as we know, Shimon, they did not take her in for questioning, but deported her to Theresienstadt, and then most likely to Auschwitz."

"You are positive she could not have escaped?"

"No, Shimon. Our people in Prague do not give us false information. Your Ruth is not in Prague, and it would truly be a miracle if she was still alive today."

After a few minutes Shimon got up from the chair and walked outside. He took a deep breath and walked in the woods till he came to a small hill. He sat down next to some yellow daffodils that were beginning to open. He put his head in his hands and he cried softly to himself. Then he spoke into the silence around him. My dear, sweet Ruth. I am so sorry I was not there for you. Please forgive me. I will always love you. And I promise you that I will take good care of our son." He closed his eyes, seeing again the face of his little boy. Shimon then laid down under a tree and closed his eyes. He was so tired. When he woke up the sun had already set, and darkness had

come upon the forest. When Shimon walked back to the house Gilad greeted him at the door. "David wanted me to tell you, Shimon, that the day after tomorrow he is going to take some Red Cross people to Theresienstadt. He will only be gone for a day. He said there would be room for you, if you want to go?"

"I will see, Gilad. I have no more expectations. My family and Ruth are gone, and now I must go and get my son. But yes... tell David I will go with him. I must make sure."

"I am so sorry for your loss. The war is over, but how long will it take for our people to be healed, and when will this ugly monster of Jewish hatred rear its head again? You are like a son to me, Shimon. We could begin a new life together in Palestine. Please think about it."

"You must excuse me, Gilad, but I really need to go to bed." Shimon could see the disappointment in Gilad's eyes, but he did not want to give him any thought that they would go to Palestine together, like father and son.

"I have something I need to do tomorrow, Gilad. So, good night, and thank you for being a friend."

"Good night, Shimon. Sleep well."

Shimon got up early the next morning. The two men who had been sleeping near by were already gone. He put a few things in his backpack and walked out of the house. It was only a short distance to the river. He would go up stream, about an hour's walk. This was where his father had taken him just before they were sent to the ghetto.

"Shimon," he had said, "your mother and I do not have very much. But I have managed to save some money and have put it into gold coins. I do not believe the Nazi thugs have anything good planned for us. They will take everything we own that has any value. Tomorrow, Shimon, we are going to take a walk to the river--where we used to take you when you were a little boy. I have put the gold coins in a tin can and buried it. If we come back from this war then it will be there to help us begin a new life. But if we do not come back, then I want you to know where it is buried. Do you understand, son?"

“Yes, Papa,” Shimon had said. “But you and Mama will come back. I am sure of it.”

“We will see,” he had answered him.

Shimon had been walking for about half an hour when all of a sudden a young man and a boy appeared right in front of him. He could not tell for sure where they were from.

“Please, sir,” the man said to him, “do you have anything you can give the boy?” Shimon could see that they were very thin and emaciated. He took a piece of bread and cheese and an apple out of his pack and gave it to them. The father gave it all to his son. They did not even notice as Shimon walked away.

When Shimon came to the place where the river went down a sharp cliff into a water-fall, he stopped and looked around. He could no longer see the familiar trail that had gone into the woods, but as he continued to walk he saw the two trees that were growing out of a strange, bent stump. This had been one of the markers his father had shown him.

He looked around to make sure no one was following him. He got down and began to dig under the stump with a sharp knife. After a couple of minutes the knife hit the tin can. He reached down and with his hands pulled the can up. He removed the top. The gold was still there. Once more he looked around to make sure he was alone, and then buried the can back in the dirt. Now was not the time to take it with him. He would wait till he was ready to go and get his son, and then he would come for it.

Shimon sat in the back of the truck with David and two men from the Red Cross. He had not forgotten how so many people from different agencies had been led around Theresienstadt like dogs on a leash. They had believed all the good things the Nazis had told them about Theresienstadt. And then they went back home and wrote wonderful reports on how well the Nazis were treating the Jews. But he also knew that he could not be angry at these men sitting next to him. They were not responsible for what had happened back then. The Red Cross had now been given authority over the camp, until the Soviet Army took control of it.

“It’s a terrible thing,” one of the men said, “that the Allies didn’t destroy this place a long time ago. Didn’t anyone know what was going on behind those false fronts? This is my second time to come here, and I will tell you ahead of time, you will be shocked at what you see. It’s amazing that anyone lived through it.”

Shimon remained very quiet.

“I am sorry,” the man said, “Perhaps I’ve said too much?”

“Yes, David replied, “perhaps you have?”

“When they arrived at the camp several very thin and tragic looking men came to meet them at the gate. Shimon was not surprised by any of it. He knew what this death pit was like. He turned and spoke to one of the men, named Charley. “I have come here for only one reason. I need to find out if a young woman, named Ruth, could still possibly be here. And maybe if any of my family....”

“Well, follow me,” he said. “If she was deported they will have a record of it, and your family too. The Germans, you know, kept very good records.” They walked into a small, make-shift office that was stacked with files and papers. Shimon could barely see the head of the man behind some of the files.

“What do you need, Charley?” he snapped.

“We brought a young man with us from Prague. He needs to see if he can find out some info about a young woman, and also anything you might have on his family. Could you take just a minute and maybe help him?”

“What’s the family name?” the clerk responded wearily.

“Cohen,” Shimon answered him. “My father’s name was Joseph, but I have already been told they deported him to Auschwitz over a year ago. My mother’s name is Hanna and my brother Yannie, and my sister Lilly.”

The man immediately pulled out a file and soon found the names of Shimon’s father and mother, and his brother. “Everyone but Lillie,” he said. “But that doesn’t mean anything, not really. Who was the other person?”

“Her name was Ruth--Ruth Sillstein. It would have been in the spring of 1944.” Shimon could see that the man was not happy with the disturbance.



He picked up some files and began to thumb through them. "Nope," he said. "Can't find anyone with that name, during that time."

"Does that mean she might still be here?" Shimon spoke anxiously.

"No," came the response. "That's not what I said. It just means that her file is not here. Wait a minute, there's a stack of files for that time right here, someplace. I just saw it awhile ago." He reached in back of some papers and pulled out another file, and began thumbing through it. "Yep, here it is. Ruth Sillstein. She was also deported on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1944. Sorry," the clerk responded, without looking up.

Shimon said nothing as he walked out of the office. Ruth was gone. He would go back and get Or, and leave as soon as he could.

"I am really sorry," Charley said as he caught up with Shimon.

Shimon did not answer Charley, but as they were walking to meet David they both stopped and watched a group of young children who were sitting against a wall. Some Red Cross workers were feeding them soup and bread. They all looked ragged and malnourished. A couple of little children had started to sing an old Czech lullaby. Their voices were so soft they could hardly hear them.

"Amazing how they could survive?" Charley turned to speak to Shimon, but saw that he was no longer there. He had gone over to where the children were hunched up against the wall. He had bent down in front of a young girl.

"Lilly," he said. "It's me, Shimony."

The young girl was dressed in tattered pants and a blue sweater that was too small for her. Her blond hair lay straight and limp against her face. The blue eyes that had once sparkled when she would see her brother were now dull and lifeless. Shimon continued to talk to her.

"Lilly, it's me, Shimony. Sweetie, it's me." Gently he pushed a strand of hair back from her face. Slowly a look of recognition came into her eyes.

"Shimony?"

"Yes, sweetie, it's me. And I am going to take you away from here. He picked up his little sister, holding her very close. She was eleven years old now, but she looked only six or seven. The tears flowed unrestrained from Shimon's eyes.

Charley said nothing as they walked away from where the children had been gathered. But soon a Red Cross worker appeared out of nowhere, and stepped in front of Shimon.

“What are you doing with that child?” His voice was hard and sharp.

Shimon was very calm. A strong feeling of authority rose up in him. “This is my sister and she is going with me.”

“Not till we check it out,” came the angry voice back at him.

“I know this man,” Charley said. “He came with us from Prague, and I can vouch for him. If he say’s this is his sister, then he’s telling you the truth.”

“This is my brother.” Lilly’s small voice came up from Shimon’s chest.

“Well, all right” the man backed down. “But just make sure you check her out.”

Lilly stayed very close to Shimon at Honza’s house. She had started to talk a little bit more, and once in a while Shimon would see her smile, the way she used to. She also seemed to enjoy being around Honza’s wife, Petra. And she especially liked being around her little nephew, Or. He had now become like her little brother. Sometimes Or would laugh out loud as he followed Lilly around the house, and this always brought a smile to Lilly’s face. Shimon knew that having a family was what she needed to help her grow strong and well. He was also very much aware of how much hope it had restored to him.

Lilly had not talked about what had happened to the rest of her family at Theresienstadt, or why she was left and the rest of them were deported. When Shimon would tuck her in at night she would look up at him and say, “I miss Papa, and Mama, and I miss Yannie. Shimon’s younger brother would have been nine years old. “Bad people hurt them,” she would say. And then she would pull the blanket up to her face and over her eyes--as if the memory was too much to think about.

The clinic that Honza owned had now become more of a center for displaced Jews. Since Shimon was in better shape than most of the

other people, he spent much of his time helping Honza with all the work that needed to be done.

Most of the Jewish men, and a few women, were desperately trying to find out if any of their families were still alive. Honza would spend days and hours traveling to different areas and to the camps to find out what he could.

Shimon would often take the men and go for short walks in the woods. Looking at the birds and the flowers and trees helped to focus their minds on something positive. He would also encourage them in other activities, giving them less time to think about the horrors they had lived through.

Honza had encouraged a couple of the rabbis who wanted to start a Torah study. And anyone could join Honza's Bible study--that he and his wife had every evening. Of course it would include the New Testament. Some of the people would sit near by and listen to what was being said, but would not join the Bible group. But no one complained about the Bible evenings, and most enjoyed the peace and quiet that resonated during these times.

Shimon had noticed one man in particular, who looked like a rabbi. He had a dark beard and was neatly dressed. They called him Rabbi Moshe. Shimon could not help but notice how peaceful and even happy he seemed most of the time. He was different from the others. He joyfully attended Honza's Bible study every evening. Perhaps, Shimon thought, he had somehow escaped the terrible destruction that had come upon most of the Jewish community.

One morning Shimon spoke to him as he was coming back from a walk.

"Hello, young man," Moshe had responded to him. "I have watched you, Shimon, with Or and the little girl, Lilly. You are a good and kind man." He then spoke in a straight forward way. "Tell me, was their mother killed in the terrible destruction that has taken place?"

"Yes, probably," Shimon answered him. Or is my son, but Lilly is my youngest sister. I found her at Theresienstadt. It's a miracle that she is still alive.

"Yes, I can see that she has gone through much trauma, but God is going to heal and restore her, and make her whole again."

“Yes,” Shimon replied. “I believe that too, but you sound so positive. Do you mind if I ask you something, Moshe?”

“Certainly--go ahead.”

“You do not look or act like the rest of the refugees here. Did you somehow escape all of the terror of the last several years?”

Moshe looked at Shimon with eyes that held much peace. “I lost my wife and four daughters, Shimon, and also my father and mother, and four of my brothers. Out of this terrible holocaust I have only one younger brother who survived.”

“I don’t understand” Shimon said. “Do you not feel any grief?”

“Not now. I did, of course, experience much pain and grief. I loved my family with all of my heart. They were everything to me. But one day I knew I had to make a decision. I could go on grieving and feeling hate and bitterness in my heart, or I could choose to forgive the people who did this horrible thing. This is what my Lord did for me on the Cross. Making this decision has brought the peace of God back into my heart, and also His joy.” Moshe smiled at Shimon.

“I also know for certain that one day I will see my family again.”

“So, you are a Christian?”

“No, Shimon. I am not a Christian. I do not celebrate many of the Christian expressions of their faith, although I do have Christian friends. I am a Jew who believes in the One that HaShem promised to send to us, to redeem us from our sins. There are many Messianic scripture prophecies in the Torah and the Tanakh, and they all point to Yeshua.”

“You mean Jesus?”

“Jesus is what most Christians call him, but his real name is Yeshua. That is the name his mother gave to him when he was born in Bethlehem.”

Shimon found that he was very interested in listening to this man, even though inside he still recoiled at the idea of him being a Christian, or as he explained, a believing Jew. This man had something Shimon had never seen before on a religious man—great joy and peace. Shimon envied him.

Moshe continued to talk. “I spent most of my young adult life, Shimon, studying the Jewish books and many of the Talmudic

writings. My family was Orthodox. But as hard as I searched I could never find anything that truly told me that my sins had been forgiven--nothing that could comfort or guarantee me that I was free from this terrible burden of sin, and eternal separation from God because of my sins. One day I met an older Jew, a very scholarly religious Jew, who told me about Yeshua. At first I rebelled completely. 'This is the Gentile religion,' I told him, 'and they do not know any better, but for a Jew like you, a religious Jew, to believe in that name is just too much for me...'”

“Even though this man seemed far happier than most men, I simply could not receive what he had told me. But eventually God won! I spent more than one year comparing the Tanakh with scriptures in the New Testament. I had decided to read the Christian Bible just to prove it wrong, but the opposite happened. I began to see and understand that Messiah Yeshua never commanded his Jewish disciples to hate and persecute our people. No, on the contrary. In the heart of Yeshua there was nothing but love for us, his people. I felt I had been betrayed by many of the rabbis who had spoken against him.

“One night, after much battle, I came to my knees, and I said to Adonai: ‘If this one who is called Yeshua is truly my redeemer then I will follow him all of my days, and I ask that he be Lord of my life...’”

“Something very wonderful happened after I prayed. The burden of my sin was lifted off of me, completely and forever. From that day on, Shimon, I have never totally lost the peace of God. My heart grew hard after so much death and destruction came to my family, but even through those very dark days of grief and sorrow, when my faith was tried in the fire, he never let go of me. And one day, Shimon, I know that He will be revealed as the true Messiah of our people.”

Shimon looked at this man who had been talking to him for almost an hour. “Thank you,” was all he could say to him. He got up and walked to the house.

“Shimon,” Honza met him at the door. “A way has been secured for you and the children to go to a displacement camp in Switzerland. It will be much easier for you to go to America from there. But I need to have an answer from you soon.”

“Yes,” Shimon said quickly. “It’s what I’ve been waiting for.”

That evening Shimon packed his few belongings and put them in a small bag, along with some of the children's things. He also had strapped around his chest a belt that contained a few of the gold coins that he had retrieved from the buried box by the river. Honza had helped him package the other coins in a secure box, and they had then been mailed to his sister in America. They would be waiting for him when he got there.

He went in and covered up Or and Lilly, and then came out and sat down and listened to the Bible study that Honza and Moshe were having. Shimon had to admit that the words of the New Testament were not what he had expected.

As they came to the end of the study, Moshe began to commend Honza for how he had helped the Jewish people. "The Lord has much to say," he said, "on what he will do to those individuals who have brought so much death and destruction to his people, but he also tells us that there will be great reward for those who have laid down their lives to help them." He then read a scripture out of Matthew twenty-five,

"In as much as you have done it to the least of these my brethren,  
you have done it unto me..."

Shimon sat up and listened intently when this scripture was read. He got up and walked over to Moshe to see what he was reading. He picked up the Czech Bible that Moshe had in his hands, and began to read the same scripture again. He was utterly amazed. These were the exact words that had been spoken to him the night he was at Anna's house. He gave the book back to Moshe, shook his head, and then walked outside.

"It was you!" He spoke into the night air. "Yeshua, it was you all the time. You are the One who came to me in the woods, and saved me. And yes, you came as the 'least of your brothers.' Shimon could still see the yellow star on his arm. And it was you that Ruth was crossing the bridge to follow."

"Yes!" The audible voice of God fell upon Shimon. He then went down on his knees, his head against the bench, and he wept.

When Moshe came outside looking for Shimon he found him sitting on the bench. He was talking softly, as if someone was sitting right next to him. Moshe watched for a moment longer and then quietly went back inside the house.



## 18 One More Thing

“You have put off my sackcloth...”

Psalm 30:11

The camp at Geneva, Switzerland, was filled with hundreds of anxious and confused people. The love and care Shimon had received at Honza's home was now replaced with inefficiency and much impatience. Some of the people had been at the camp for a few months, without any promising of going someplace new.

Every day Shimon would walk through the compound with Lilly and Or. Lilly had started to withdraw again into a very quiet place of her own. Shimon was concerned about her, and he would check every day to see if their paperwork had been completed. As soon as they could, they would secure passage on one of the big steamers that would depart from the coast of France or Spain, for America.

He also watched almost every day as trucks filled with Jewish refugees came into the compound. Many of these people had survived the terrible death camps in the different countries of Europe. Emaciated, tired and hurting, they would climb down off the trucks. Most of them had no idea what they would do next, or where they would go.

One day Shimon sat with Lilly and Or on a small blanket, away from most of the people. He watched as a couple of canvas covered trucks pulled into the camp. One by one the people began to disembark. Occasionally, a husband and wife, with children, would get off the truck together, but most of the people were alone and frightened.

He looked down for a minute at Or and Lilly, and gave thanks to God for his family. While they were still at Honza's house the Lord had shared with Shimon many wonderful things. His life had changed and it would never be the same again.



Whenever he could he would read the Bible, both the Tanakh and the New Covenant, and he would remember the life giving words Yeshua had shared. How wonderful his Messiah had become to him.

As he looked up he noticed a young woman who had gotten off one of the trucks. She was not facing Shimon, but there was something about her--something strangely familiar. He caught his breath and stood up from the blanket. He picked up Or and took Lilly by the hand. Could it be?

He kept his eyes glued on the woman next to the truck. She was wearing a plain, dark green dress, with a white sweater. She was very pale and thin, and like everyone else she looked sad, lost, and confused. The closer Shimon got to her the faster his heart began to beat. He was so afraid that if she turned around...

"Ruth," he cried out!" In the noise and confusion his voice could not be heard. His heart filled with panic as she started to walk away. "Ruth!" This time he screamed her name. Slowly, the young woman turned and faced Shimon. And then she started to walk towards him. "Shimon," she cried weakly, "is that you?" She shook her head a little, and just began to cry. "Is it really you, and my baby?"

Shimon walked as fast as he could to Ruth--with Or and Lilly holding tight to his hands. He could hardly believe his eyes. There she was, standing right in front of him--his beautiful Ruth.

She went down on her knees and reached out for her baby. "Little Ben Or," she said, "my son."

Shimon reached over to lightly touch Ruth's face--afraid that if he actually did she would go poof and disappear right in front of him. She was so thin, and Shimon could see the pain hidden in her eyes.

"It's me, my darling," she said. "I knew you would come for me. I never gave up hope."

With tears running down both of their faces Shimon slowly and delicately embraced his beloved wife in his arms, as they both just cried and cried and cried. And they thanked God.

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The sun had broken through, and the sea had grown calm. They were now only about one day's journey from the New York harbor. Shimon stood on the deck of the boat with his arm around Ruth, and holding Lilly's hand. Ruth held Or in her arms--letting him look down at the blue ocean water below.

They had stayed at the camp at Geneva for almost one month. As soon as they were legally married, then Ruth was allowed to book passage on the same trans-Atlantic boat for America that Shimon and the children would be on.

It took little time for Ruth to reunite with her son, and develop a mother relationship with Lilly. Shimon and Ruth spent as much time as they could just talking and sharing about what had happened in their lives, and they were so grateful to God for bringing them back together again. Sometimes they would sit quietly, after the children were asleep, holding each other's hands, and just looking at each other--not wanting to lose a moment of what God had restored to them.

Ruth shared with Shimon part of the long story of what happened to her after she was arrested at Rabbi Adler's house.

"I was almost immediately sent to Theresienstadt," she told him. "When I got there I looked for my family, but I did not see any of them. One of the women there told me that they had probably been deported to Auschwitz, and most likely had been killed. I remember her words were so icy cold, as if she had no feelings left in her heart. But I would soon grow use to this--the deadness that had come into so many people's lives.

At Theresienstadt it was not so horrible for me. I worked every day in the garden, and I shared a sleeping cot with only one other woman. Every evening I would read the Words of God from my little Bible, and would share with some of the other women. I would tell them who Yeshua was, and how he had saved my life so many times. It was a miracle that no one took my Bible from me. They took everything out of my backpack, but somehow did not touch my little Bible. It seemed almost invisible to them." She looked up at Shimon. "God's Word has given me such strength in the darkest times."

“I was only at Theresienstadt a couple of weeks, and then they deported me to Auschwitz. Many of the people who had survived the terrible, suffocating train ride were immediately sent to the gas chambers, especially the elderly and the children. I was sent with another group to another place. When I put on the gray uniform that they gave me, I asked the Lord to hide my Bible for me. And once again God worked a miracle. They did not see my Bible, even though it was hidden under my clothes. It was truly so amazing.

“Because I was very fast with my hands I was sent to the sewing room, where I sewed all day, till my hands were stiff and sore, but I knew that I was very fortunate to have that job.” Ruth looked up to see if Shimon understood what she was telling him.

“I was able to stay inside most of the day--except for the very long times when we would have to stand out in the cold, while they counted everyone. Sometimes there would be confusion during the count and so they would have to start over again. And then we would stand for hours shivering in the cold.

“When these dreaded days happened I would begin to recite the different scriptures I had memorized, and I would ask the Lord to keep me warm. Of course we had very little to eat, and everyone grew weak from hunger. But in the evening hours, when I could hide away and read my little Bible, then the hunger pains would lessen and then I could go to sleep. There were other terrible things that happened while I was there, but I don’t want to talk about it now.”

Shimon put his arm around Ruth, holding her close to him.

“I shared with many of the women the miracle of how Yeshua had saved me, and how I had come to know he was my Jewish Messiah.

Sometimes I only had enough time to tell them that Yeshua would reveal himself to them, and that when they saw him, they would know who he was. Of course these times of sharing were not always without persecution. But the Lord always gave me wisdom to know what to say, and when to say nothing.

“When the allied troops started bombing the near-by towns there was much confusion, and nobody knew what would happen next. They started marching people off to different places. This was the most horrible time and it was brutal.

“The Nazi guards panicked at the sounds of the American soldiers drawing closer and just started shooting people. I decided to just lay down and I didn’t move, and they left me there. A short while later some American soldiers came and I was rescued. I was sick and in shock. One of the American soldiers felt real pity for me, and made sure that I was taken to a good hospital for treatment. This was not a common thing. I knew that my God was watching over me. I was in the hospital for a few weeks before being brought here.” She smiled softly, and picked up her small, worn Bible, and then leaning her head on Shimon’s shoulder she said: “It has always been with me.”

Shimon also shared with Ruth about all the times Yeshua had kept him alive. He also told her about the vision he had of her with Yeshua, which led him to their son Or. And now the greatest miracle of God’s great love and mercy was that He had brought them back together again.

On the seven day journey from France to New York, Shimon and Ruth spent many hours reading and sharing the Bible together.

“Are we going to have our own home, Shimony?” Lilly asked him as they neared the harbor entrance.

“You bet, sweetie,” he said, holding her hand. “We are a family now and God has good plans for us.” Shimon looked out across the vast blue ocean. Strong and sweet the words ‘new beginnings’ came into his heart. He smiled as he looked up at the clear blue sky, and then reached over, drawing Ruth and his family closer to him.



## 19 Leaving the Past Behind

“Love never fails...”

1 Corinthians 13:8

America 1949

The new born baby gave out a strong yell as Rachel washed him and then wrapped him in a blanket and handed him to his mother.

“Thank you.” The pretty young Jewish woman responded.

Rachel never got tired of helping to deliver another Jewish baby into the world. She could think of no greater victory against the evil men who had tried to kill all the Jewish people, then to help in birthing many Jewish sons and daughters.

Rachel had completed her degree in neonatal nursing just one year after arriving in America. The program she had started in Czechoslovakia was, in many ways, more like a doctor's degree in America. Her skills, as a head nurse for newborn babies, were greatly admired at the hospital where she now worked. Often times in the very crowded and understaffed hospitals, following the war years, she would just step in and do the work of a doctor.

In the beginning her only hindrance was not having a more complete understanding of the English language, but a one semester course on English grammar helped to solve that problem for her. She passed the course with flying colors. But in order to work in America she still had to finish a very intensive examination to become a citizen of the United States.

For a few years after the war was over there were people who had worked for the Nazi government, who were trying to secretly get into America--some of them were even Jews.

Rachel was not prepared for the grueling interviews that she would have to go through. She was asked questions by a panel of very hard and determined men and women. It was up to her to prove to them how she had managed to escape Czechoslovakia and eventually arrive

safely in America. They had even asked her certain questions, suggesting that she might have been involved with high ranking officers in the German military, and that a way of escape was provided for her because of these relationships. "You are," they had said, "a young and attractive woman." Sometimes Rachel could say nothing. She was completely stunned at their accusations. But she had no papers or documents to back up her story. Fortunately, she had stayed in contact with Steven and Veronica.

They had made a special trip from Florida to New York to testify in Rachel's behalf. The timing was perfect. A short time after living in Florida, Steven and Veronica moved back to Italy. Two years after the war had ended Rachel was granted her American citizenship.

"I will stop back in before I leave for the night." Rachel smiled down at the young woman. You've done a lot of work today, Renie. You need rest and sleep, and don't worry. Your baby will be well taken care of."

Rachel remembered as she left the room that she had not eaten much at all. She walked down the steps to the hospital cafeteria. It was not unusual for her to forget about eating. She sat down at a small table and started eating from the cheese lasagna she had ordered. It tasted good. But her mind was so busy that she soon lost interest in the food she was eating. She sipped at her coffee and then stuck a piece of lasagna in a wheat roll and took a bite. In another hour she would go home. She only had one new patient to visit.

She now had a comfortable apartment in a nice area of Queens. She had lived with Michael's mother for almost two years. Anika had been very kind to her, and they had also grown very fond of each other.

His mother had spent many hours and days trying to find out something about her missing son, Michael. She had even talked with different congressmen in Washington DC, about what they could do to help find her son. After the war, Croatia had come firmly under Soviet control, and there was little information being given out about anyone. It was a known fact that the Soviet police had their own special work camps for so called undesirable citizens.

One congressman had taken a special interest and had pressed the Croatian government for some information, regarding Michael Romano. After a couple of months he finally got back with Anika, but it was not good news. All he could tell her was that Michael had been sent, as a criminal, to a work camp in a distant part of Croatia. They could not even guarantee that he was still alive. The congressmen said he would continue to do what he could, but he did not sound hopeful. Sonita and Rachel and Michael's mother never stopped praying or believing that Michael would be found alive and rescued, but as the days became months and then years, their hope had grown dim.

Sonita had grown into a beautiful young woman, both physically and spiritually. She had become involved with her church group, and was now talking seriously about wanting to become a missionary. Rachel had gone with her a few times to her church. She had long since asked Messiah Yeshua to be her personal Lord and Savior. But the Christian Church that Sonita belonged to, although very nice and friendly, was just not what Rachel needed. For some reason it never seemed right for her. But on the days when she had Shabbat off, she would spend hours just reading the Bible and talking to the Lord.

Yeshua and she had become very good friends. She wondered if there were many Jews who believed as she did? But she was so busy with her work that she had little time to think about another church, or fellowship.

Before Rachel got up from the table she pulled out of her purse a small picture. "Oh, Michael," she spoke softly, "what has happened to you?"

"Hey, beautiful, can I join you?"

Rachel put the picture back into her purse. She looked up at Doctor Bens. He was tall and lanky, and reminded her of Jimmy Stewart, the movie star; "Of course, Doctor Bens. I only have a few minutes, but please sit down."

"By the way," he smiled warmly at her, "my name is David, not Doctor Bens."

Rachel was aware of the interest this doctor had shown in her, even before now. He seemed like a very nice man. And she had seriously

started to wonder if it was time to let the past go, and get on with things in her life. She would soon be twenty-seven years old. Maybe she really needed to think about getting married and having a family of her own?"

"So, Rachel," David said, "you must have a certain someone out there? You are far too lovely to be without a special love in your life?"

Rachel found herself blushing. "I do have someone," she said, "but well, it's a long story and...."

"Oh, one of those long stories...!" He smiled politely, and then laughed softly. You are Jewish, aren't you, Rachel?"

"Yes, I am."

"Well," he smiled more broadly. "So am I. The name Bens used to be Benjamin. My grandfather changed his name when he came through Ellis Island. I guess like a lot of Jewish people did."

Rachel suddenly felt slightly uncomfortable. "Yes," she said. "I guess for different reasons many Jewish people changed their names when they came to America. But listen, I really do have to check on a new patient. So I am going to have to excuse myself."

"I didn't offend you, did I Rachel?"

"No, not at all, but I really have to go."

She really had not been offended, she thought, as she walked away from the table and a slightly embarrassed Doctor Bens. But she knew that even as he was talking something was happening inside of her heart, and it did not feel right. She had managed to find out from the Red Cross in Czechoslovakia that both of her parents had died at Auschwitz. It was not so much of a shock. She had suspected that they had been killed. But she still had not come to grips with how the Holocaust could have happened, and would something so horrible ever be allowed to happen again? And then there were the flash-backs of what she had experienced in Nazi Europe.

One day she had been waiting to catch the bus on a street in New York, when all of a sudden she was taken back to a time in 1942. It seemed very real.



In this flash-back memory even the people around the bus, where she was standing, began to look like the Jewish people of that time. And then all of a sudden there were Nazis surrounding the bus that she needed to get on. They were all dressed in black Nazi uniforms with snarling dogs. The flash-back was just like an incident that had really happened. They had been ruthless. She remembered how some of the people had fainted from fear, and had been dragged off the street, like sacks of garbage. The man they had been hunting for was savagely attacked and killed. It was as if she had been transported back to that time. She was filled with such a feeling of fear and panic. But she quickly called on the name of Yeshua, and her peace returned. These terrible flash-backs, that were so real, had happened more than once. She had prayed many times for them to stop, and it was now getting much better.

She had been in touch with her brothers, Yacov and Aaron, who were both now living in the new state of Israel. They kept asking her when she was coming to Israel. Rachel had thought about it many times. But something always seemed to hold her back from making the decision to go. Perhaps, she had thought, she was not meant to go there? Lately, she had been confused about what she was to do with her life. She had prayed a lot, but God did not seem to be answering her. She knew that she still loved Michael very much, but she was really beginning to wonder if she should just settle down with a nice man in America, and let the past go.

Rachel opened the door to the new patient's room. She immediately picked up the chart that was near the foot of the bed. She briefly read the woman's name but then looked for the vitals. The young woman was curled up with her knees to her chest. She was moaning softly.

"Ruth," Rachel spoke to her. "My name is Rachel Gietzal, and I am going to help you bring this child into the world." As Rachel moved closer to the side of the bed, her mouth fell open and she stood motionless. "Ruth?" she said with a startled voice. "It's Rachel, Yacov's sister. Do you remember me?"

Ruth opened her eyes and looked at Rachel. "My friend, Rachel, what a wonderful surprise." She smiled at her as another hard

contraction began.

“Rachel Gietzal?” Rachel turned around to see Shimon standing by the door to the room. “I can hardly believe my eyes,” he said, “that you are really here.” He then turned his attention to Ruth. He sat down next to her. He took her hand and spoke lovingly to her.

“Well,” Rachel said, “I think it’s time to roll your beautiful wife into the delivery room.”

Shimon sat down at the cafeteria table next to Rachel. “Dear friend, thank you so much for being the doctor who delivered our beautiful new son, Shimon Samuel.”

“How long have you been in America?”

“With the help of some wonderful people I was able to escape Nazi Europe and come to the United States. I have been here for almost four and a half years. I am so excited, Shimon, that you found Ruth, and now you have a beautiful baby boy.” Rachel could not help but stare at Shimon. He still looked the same, but now with an American accent. He had on a green tweed jacket and cap. His eyes were still the same brilliant blue.

“Yes, Rachel, and we also have our first son, Or. He is such a fantastic little boy, and now he has a new little brother. It is truly a miracle story of how I found Or and Ruth. And Rachel, I also found my sister, Lillie, at Theresienstadt. It’s all so incredible!”

“Oh, Shimon,” tears filled Rachel’s eyes, “what can I say? Except that I am so happy for you.”

“Tell me, Rachel, about Yacov. Did he make it out of Europe?”

“Yacov and my brother Aaron are now living in Israel. Yacov fought in the Israeli war, and was a real hero for Israel.”

Shimon began to clap his hands. “I am so very happy for this, Rachel. I didn’t even know if he was still alive.”

“Yes,” Rachel said. “In the midst of much suffering God has been very merciful to us.”

“I must tell you sometime, Rachel, the whole story of how I found my beloved wife and son. And now we have a new son, Shimon Samuel. Soon you must come to visit us. You must promise me!”

“Of course, Shimon. I look forward to seeing you and your lovely

family soon. But tell me, what are you doing in New York?”

“I have started my own business, Rachel. The times are good and America is booming. I have opened some financial offices and my business has become very successful. But I must tell you, Rachel, something that is more important to me than my business. I have received Yeshua as my Jewish Messiah and as my Savior.”

“So have I, Shimon. And also Yacov and Aaron have meetings at their home in Jerusalem every Shabbat. They too have become believers in Yeshua. What a wonderful thing God has done for us all.”

“Oh, Rachel, this really fills my heart with such joy. I also have a small group of people who meet at our home on Shabbat.” He reached over and took hold of Rachel’s hand. God has been so good to bring us back together again. It is truly another miracle.” He smiled with enthusiasm. “But now I must go and see if my wife is awake, and kiss her goodnight. But soon we will get together.”

“Yes, Shimon. I will not forget--how could I?” She laughed happily.



## 20 All Things Made New

“For low the winter is past...”

Song of Songs 2:11

Instead of taking a cab Rachel decided to walk to her apartment. It was only a few blocks from the hospital, and she needed the fresh evening air. She wanted to think about some things. Meeting Shimon and Ruth had awakened many memories. How precious Ruth was. It filled her heart with such joy that they had come out of the Holocaust and had found each other. She knew that far too many had not found any of their family and had been left all alone.

She could imagine that Shimon was doing well for himself. After the war, great economic activity had burst forth in America, and anyone with savvy was getting ahead. And if she remembered correctly, Shimon certainly fit that description.

It had been a very long day and she could feel the tiredness in her body. The doorman greeted her at the apartment building, and then she took the elevator up to the third floor. She opened the door and was startled and surprised to see Sonita standing there. Sometimes Sonita would surprise her with a visit, and she had her own key to the apartment. Sonita had a big smile on her face. Rachel walked over and gave her a hug and a kiss.

“Sonita, you look like you are about to burst with happiness. What is it? Did you get accepted into the mission’s program at your church?”

“Rachel,” Sonita beamed. “Papa is alive!” Grandma got a telegram this morning. Papa is alive and he is coming home, tomorrow. Here you can read it.”

I am finally free---stop---coming home on Pan Am  
Transcontinental flight 858 from Rome---stop---tell you  
everything soon---stop---love, Michael.

Rachel sat down, the telegram still in her hands. She was in shock.

She smiled a big smile at Sonita, and then stood up again and they hugged each other. "Michael is coming home! I can hardly believe what I just said.

"Grandma is so excited, she can't even sit down. The flight comes in at eleven o'clock tomorrow morning. We will try and get out to the airport to meet him, and we figure we should be home by about three o'clock. Can you come with us Rachel?"

"I can't get off work tomorrow, but I will be there as soon as I can. Oh, yes, I will come." Rachel and Sonita hugged each other again as they twirled around in a little dance.

Rachel pulled the light blue curtain to one side and looked out of her bedroom window. She could see the stars through a partly cloudy sky. The street lights shadowed the people on the road below, as they hurried past the closed stores.

"Michael, my dear sweet Michael, you are alive and you are coming home." She still could hardly believe it. But in this moment of feeling great joy her heart began to race. She wondered if he would be the same man she had fallen in love with five years earlier? Would he have changed a lot? She took his picture out of her purse one more time before she turned off the light, and restlessly tried to sleep.

Rachel stopped and looked at herself in one of the department store windows. She had pulled her hair back into an elegant French roll, but then had decided to let it fall loose around her face. She felt silly. But she kept wondering what Michael would think of her. She walked to his mother's very nice apartment in an elegant neighborhood of Queens. She had decided not to call Sonita or Anika. If for some reason he had not arrived in New York, she did not want to hear about it on the phone.

The doorman let her in and she took the elevator up to the fifth floor. When she opened the door she saw Michael standing by the living room window, with his back to her. Sonita and her grandmother had left the room. The man standing there was very thin, and in his right hand was a cane. He turned to face Rachel.

"Michael." She had not wanted to cry, but she could not help the tears that were beginning to cloud her eyes. "It's you! It's really you." Even though his face was thin and there were lines where there had

not been before, his kind, sensitive eyes had not changed.

“Look at you,” he said. “Do you know how many times I have imagined actually seeing you standing in front of me? I cannot believe that you are here in the same room with me. As you can see I am not quite the same man I was before.” With the use of his cane Michael walked with a limp to where Rachel was standing. But then instead of coming over to her, he sat down in a near-by chair.

“When Sontia told me that you were here in America I could hardly believe it. And then when she told me that you had received Yeshua as your Messiah, my heart almost burst with joy. And look at what you have accomplished! My beautiful Rachel.” For a few moments he said nothing. “I survived Rachel. I never really believed that they would put me in a prison for five years, but they did.

“Actually, they had sentenced me to ten years of what they called ‘re-education, community work,’ but after an investigation from some people in high places, they reduced my time to five years.” He laughed a little. “They told me to leave Croatia and never return. I survived, Rachel, because I never stopped believing God would rescue me, and I never stopped hoping that I would see you again. But now I must stop talking and listen to you.

Please tell me, Rachel, what is truly on your heart. Do not hold the truth back from me.”

All Rachel wanted to do was to run to Michael and put her arms around him, but her feet would not move. So she stood where she was. “Michael, I have never stopped loving you. I almost gave up hope, but I have never stopped loving you. And to me you are the same beautiful man that I fell in love with five years ago.” She did not even try to stop the tears that ran onto her cheeks.

Michael stood up. He limped over to Rachel and put his arms around her. They held each other. They wept and they laughed, and they talked and talked. All things were being made new.

In the days and weeks that followed his return to America, Michael and Rachel spent every day they could together. Rachel had arranged for some extra time off from her work at the hospital.

Once Michael began to eat his mother's nutritious cooking and had time to rest, his leg began to strengthen. Rachel prayed for his total healing every time she was with him, and soon he was able to walk without the use of his cane. They spent hours just talking to each other. Rachel told him all about what had happened in Assisi, and how they had escaped into France, and then across the sea to England.

At first Michael had found it difficult to talk about everything that had happened to him in Croatia, but with the love of Rachel and his family around him, he was finally able to release much of the pain--especially the memories of the torture he had received from the Utashi Gestapo.

"They found one person," Michael said, "who testified that I had kept you hidden in my house, and that was all they needed to arrest me. They called it an act of treason. And then they trumped up even more charges against me from people at the hospital who hated me, and who were willing to say anything the Utashi wanted them to say. They took me in for interrogation. When I would not sign the papers they wanted me too, then they crushed my legs. It was months before I could use my legs to walk again.

"Oh, Michael," Rachel gasped, bringing her hand to her mouth. But Michael's mother could not bear to hear what her son was saying and had to leave the room.

"The first camp they sent me to was not so terrible. I worked every day in an unsanitary small hospital for Russian soldiers. But I was able to share the Gospel with many, and there were more than a few soldiers who died knowing Jesus Christ as their Savior. The last two years they sent me to a camp on the border of Serbia. Here too I worked every day caring for Russian soldiers and some of the inmates in the camp. But food was very scarce.

One day, because I complained about how they treated the other inmates, they put me in a hole--solitary confinement for ten days. It was nothing more than a small, damp hole in the ground, with no light, and a board over the top. But I must tell you the amazing part. While I was in that death-like-pit, the Lord came to me in His light and glory. Every day He would come and sit with me and tell me the most wonderful things. This is how I knew that some day I would be released and would be coming home, and would see you again."

Michael reached over and took hold of Rachel's hand. "He is very much alive and very real, and His love is so wonderful."

"Oh, papa," Sonita said. "I knew that you would come home, and that Jesus would protect you." Michael greatly rejoiced with his daughter at what God had done in all of their lives.

Soon after that Rachel told Michael about Shimon and how God had brought him and Ruth back together again, and how she had only recently met them in the hospital while she was making rounds in the maternity ward. And that she was the one to help in the delivery of their new son.

"Michael," Rachel said to him, "Shimon wants us to come to his Shabbat meeting this Friday evening. Would you like to go? I really want to see Ruth and their precious sons, and Shimon's little sister, Lillie."

"Of course, Rachel. We will go together to their place soon."

The Shabbat meeting at Shimon's house was so much more than Rachel had expected. Shimon had a lovely home in a new residential neighborhood. Michael and Rachel had gone early so they could visit with Shimon and Ruth, and see their family. Lillie was now a lovely young lady. She was in her last year of high school and was preparing to go to an excellent Jewish college. Her heart, like her brother's, was to share Yeshua, their Jewish Messiah, with as many people as she could.

Rachel could immediately tell that little Or had been given much love by his parents, for he was a very happy little boy.

Rachel and Michael were deeply touched by the Jewish worship, the reading of the Torah, and then the teaching by Shimon on the life of Yeshua. Rachel now understood why she did not feel comfortable at any of the Christian churches she had attended. They were not Jewish. And this was what she needed for her soul. She also knew that Michael had truly enjoyed his time at Shimon's, and wanted to come back. It had been a wonderful evening for both of them.

Shimon could see how deeply in love they were with each other. He had made the comment that they would soon be the first 'one new



man' at their meetings. Both Rachel and Shimon looked at each other and smiled.

After the meeting was over Michael and Rachel went for a walk before catching the bus home. They walked a short ways to a lovely park and sat down for a while on one of the benches. A man with a violin was standing not far from them, near one of the streetlights. A small group of people had gathered around him. Rachel recognized some of the Jewish melodies he was playing. She stared into the soft darkness while the music filled the air around them.

"Rachel," Michael talked while he had his arm around her. "Before I left you at Assisi I had felt that you would probably go to Palestine, but you came here instead. Why?"

"I came here, Michael, because it's where the Lord directed me, after it had become too difficult to get to Palestine. I have thought about Israel many times, and my brothers are always asking me to come there, but until now I could not decide to go. The Lord was keeping me here until you came." She looked up and smiled at Michael. "Sweetheart, they need good doctors like you in Israel. And it's truly gong to be a land of milk and honey--just like God has promised. What do you think? Can we move to Israel?"

Michael looked at Rachel with a slightly more serious look. "Well, Rachel, I think there is something we need to do first, before we can talk about Israel."

"Yes, Michael?" Rachel answered with a knowing smile.

"Rachel, will you marry me, and become my most beloved wife?"

"Oh, Michael, you know the answer to that is yes. I have been waiting a long time for you to ask me."

"Look, Rachel!" Michael and Rachel looked up into the night sky as two giant shooting stars exploded over their heads, one after the other. The man with the violin stopped playing for a moment and also looked up into the sky. In the semi-dark Rachel could see that he was smiling. And then he continued to play his music, his beautiful Jewish music...



## 21 Escape From America

“They shall ask the way to Zion...”

Jeremiah 50:5

America Today....

Beth Israel Messianic Congregation was only three blocks from David and Ellie’s home. The building sat back in a nicely wooded area, and it now had a very secure fence, all the way around the property. The fence had been put up two years before, after the leadership had become concerned over all the anti-Semitic incidents that were taking place in near-by areas.

David and his wife sat in the front row. A large number of people had come to the meeting. David had put his hand on the shoulder of his grandfather as they walked in. He was sitting in the last seat of the first row---the place where he always sat. David acknowledged a few of the people they knew, who were sitting in the first couple of rows. He also noticed that there were a handful of people in the room that he had never seen before. But the meeting had been opened to anyone in the Brownstone community in Connecticut where they lived, and also to the neighboring areas.

A nice looking man, dressed in gray slacks and a navy blue jacket walked up to the front of the room and took the microphone next to the podium. His light brown hair was streaked with gray and silver, as was his neatly trimmed beard. He began to speak to the audience.

“Most of you know who I am, but since I see a few unfamiliar faces I will introduce myself. My name is Or Cohen. I am the Rabbi of Beth Israel Messianic Congregation. We have called this meeting because of some recent anti-Semitic acts that have been done in our communities, and in America at large.” Rabbi Or then pointed to a young man he knew and asked him to please make sure the door to the meeting was shut.

“It has been a very troubling time for many of us. But before we go into our discussion let us pray and ask for the Lord’s help and strength.” Or then said a short prayer, asking for God’s covering and protection over the meeting.

“We have been watching with what I can only say has been great alarm at the rapid rise of anti-Semitism in our country. We all know that this most recent rise in anti-Semitic fervor has been ignited by what happened ten days ago in Israel. They were, of course, doing what they had to do to survive, but this is not what is being presented by the news media or by our government.

Nonetheless, we are grateful that God has given Israel a prime minister who was not afraid to act courageously. But that is not the reason we have called this meeting. We are here to talk about what we can do to protect our families and homes, and what our responsibilities are to ensure the safety of our own Jewish community. My own grandson was stoned today as he was walking to school, and they had to take him to the hospital. Thank God he is okay. But then the hospital made him sit with his mother for over an hour in the waiting room, before a doctor could help him. This is not the usual behavior at the hospital. I am not really sure what to make of it?”

David leaned over to Ellie. “You didn’t tell me about that?”

Or continued. “I could also talk about the recent anti-Semitic attacks at other local synagogues and even at some of the homes of our Jewish families. But rather than my continuing to talk, I will now open this up for discussion. Please limit your words, in that there are many people who might want to speak.” Rabbi Or then pointed to a man in the second row. “Go ahead Dennis.”

“Well, I will say this! I am going to take my kids out of school before they get hurt, and another thing....”

“Oh, come on Dennis.” A large man in a long sleeved blue shirt spoke up. “You always exaggerate things. No one is going to hurt our kids, or kick them out of a private school. And, by the way, it doesn’t hurt any of them to learn that being a Jew in this world is not always such an easy thing. I think people are making a big thing out of nothing. All this incitement will stop before long; it always does. So why waste all this time?”

“Let Dennis finish speaking,” Or said from the platform, “and please let’s not interrupt each other.”

“What I was saying,” Dennis glanced over his shoulder at the man who had interrupted him, “is that it’s becoming like Nazi Germany. All these new laws of protection that the government has passed-- who do you think they are for?”

“I am taking my family as soon as I can and moving to Israel. I should have done it a long time ago. God’s Word has warned us to leave, but most of us, including myself, have not wanted to leave our comfortable life style here.

“A trap is being set, and I don’t think we have a lot of time left to leave, before the door gets slammed shut. You can laugh at me, if you want, or say I’m exaggerating,” he again glanced at the man who had interrupted him, “but you can’t argue with the Word of God.”

For a moment no one said anything. A few people stuttered and cleared their throats. A plumpish, middle-aged woman spoke up. “Well, we can’t all go running back to Israel! I mean some of us have older family here. What are we going to do? We can’t just walk away from everything. And besides, America is my home, not Israel. I am an American first, and then a Jew. So you think, Dennis, that they are going to come and put us all in camps or something? Let’s be serious, and not stupid about this.” She then looked at the man with the long sleeved blue shirt, as if to agree with him.

A young man, with his wife sitting next to him, raised his hand to speak. He cleared his throat, and spoke in a nervous way. “Most of you know me. My name is Brian, and that’s my wife, Anita. She had a dream the other night, and it was pretty frightening. I think she should share it with you all.” He then looked down at his wife, nodding his head, as if to encourage her to stand up.

“Well,” Anita spoke somewhat timidly. “I had this dream. It was very real. We were all in our yards, enjoying the day. I had said ‘hello’ to a few people as they walked by the fence, but then I looked up and noticed a very dark cloud coming our way. It was huge. It took up most of the sky. I said to my children, ‘come on! We have to get someplace safe.’ And then I told some of the people in the other yards too. But they just looked at me, as if they couldn’t understand what I was saying. I pointed up to the sky, but they were not paying any

attention to me. And then the cloud became like a tornado. My children and I began to run, leaving everything behind. That's when I saw some people, up ahead. They were standing along the roadside. They were reaching out with their hands, and I could tell they were there to help get us to safety.

"But most of the people in their yards just kept standing there. One man shook his head, as if everything was going to be okay. The tornado like cloud got closer and closer, and we just kept running. That's when I woke up."

The man's wife then sat down in her chair. "That was my dream," she said.

A hush fell over the room. "That's just scare stuff," one man yelled out. "Yeah," another person spoke directly at the woman, "just a stupid dream."

Or then watched as his father stood up from his chair and began to walk up to the podium. He had a cane in his hand. He was neatly dressed in slacks and a gray jacket. His hair was completely white. He held his body erect and did not shuffle. He took the microphone from his son, Or.

"Hello," he said. "My name is Shimon Cohen. I want to say just a few things." He looked up from the podium. "Son, would you hand me that chair, so I can do a little story telling? I promise to keep it down to three or four hours." He laughed a little. "That's an old joke." He sat down in the chair. "That's better," he said.

"Well, I've lived to be an old man, but I can still remember pretty clearly what happened back then. I have buried my lovely wife, Ruth, and have left many loved ones behind in Europe. But God has also given me a wonderful family here." He smiled at David and Ellie. "You know," he said, "many of the ones who have come out of the Holocaust don't talk about it too much. I know that I don't, and there is a reason for that." Shimon looked out, unflinching, at the audience in front of him. "It was, you see, an unimaginable hell. Yes, it was. I want to tell you just a few things that I believe are important for what we are talking about today, and what is happening in the world around us.

“The Holocaust that murdered over six million Jews, and many others, like the tens of thousands of righteous Gentiles who gave up their lives because they would not deny the Jewish people, or the God they served, did not just happen in a few days or weeks or months or even years. The seeds that brought forth this horrible fruit were planted decades before the event itself. Satan took his time in filling the minds and hearts of people with his ugly hatred for the Jewish people, and it was passed from one generation to the next. The ground had been made very fertile for these anti-Semitic seeds to sprout at just the right time.

“And I must tell you! The idea that what happened under Mr. Hitler could not happen again, because we are now a humane and an educated people, is a pathetic joke, and should be recognized as that--at least in the Body of Messiah.

Shimon closed his eyes for a moment but then continued to talk. “And so there was a period of time needed to condition the hearts and minds of the people in Germany, and all of Europe. The seeds, of course, for this Holocaust had been planted hundreds of years ago, when the Church decided to uproot all of its Jewish teachings, and the essential foundation in which it had been originally established. I have taught on this subject many times. What does the word Easter have to do with the resurrection of our Lord? But that’s a subject for another day. I will try not to get side tracked.” He laughed softly.

“The evil government, under Hitler’s reign, used the schools to mold and manipulate young minds into believing that the Jews were less than human. Someone--don’t remember who--once said that if you continue to repeat something enough times, you can make almost anyone believe anything.

“You see, all that Hitler needed were some clever minds to put forth his evil propaganda: pictures, newspapers, posters on every sidewalk, and large protest movements, where the Jews were blamed for all the economic woes in the country. And of course you had respected college professors who could make the Aryan beliefs sound so very convincing. When the crack down against the Jewish people began in earnest, everything had already been set in place.

“Laws had been legislated that would make it legal for that evil man to do whatever he wanted, and also the hearts and minds of the people had been so conditioned that there was little objection. And the righteous men and women who refused to go along with his evil agenda died right along side the Jewish people, and that is a fact of history.

Shimon then pointed at the man who had interrupted Dennis. “So,” he said, “you do not think that Jewish children will be kicked out of our nice private schools? Perhaps, because you think they need our money so badly? Let me tell you something. They do not. The principals and teachers will do what they are told to do by the local governments, or they will be conveniently dismissed. And sadly, I am afraid, I must tell you that there are many people, even among the Christians, that when it comes to feeding their own family, will do exactly what they are told by the government. That is the way it has always been.

“Let me tell you what happened in the schools of my country of Czechoslovakia. The children I grew up with all understood about anti-Semitism.” Shimon looked again at the man in the long sleeved shirt. “This is nothing that we should ever want our children to experience.

“After Hitler gained power in Germany in 1933 the restraints were lifted, and anti-Semitism became the accepted rule. At first the Jewish children would be held back from going to lunch with the other children. Then they were made to sit by themselves, separated from the other kids. The teachers would explain to the students that this was needed to keep them from catching the dreaded diseases that Jewish children were so more susceptible to.

“Often times the teachers, yes, nice teachers, would look the other way when a Jewish child was beaten up on the play ground, or stoned on their way to school--just like what was done today to my great grandson, Benny. Jewish children as young as five years old would be called terrible things, and I don’t want to even speak those names, but the name calling was just a small part of how they robbed the children of their dignity.



“The very worst teachers would openly spit on them and even slap them hard across their faces. Of course, ultimately they legislated a law forbidding Jewish children from attending public schools, but by that time many parents had already taken their little ones out of those horrible schools. And so I tell each one of you... watch over your children, and ask them questions about what is going on in their schools.

“Now, I will share a couple more things, and then I will be done.” Shimon brushed back from his face a strand of white hair. “We are in a time of great economic hardship in this country. It has gotten far worse more quickly than I thought it would. People are angry and they are looking for someone to blame. Most of you have heard the anti-Semitic things being said in some of these protest groups, and on television, and on the internet. You are not blind to the propaganda that is now being used to blame this depression on Jewish bankers and leaders. Yes, that ugly anti-Semitic monster is once again raising its head out of the mud.”

Shimon took a deep breath, closed his eyes and waited a minute. “You know they didn’t just walk up to the Jews one day and put that yellow star on them. It was a carefully planned and orchestrated, hideous event.” Shimon then picked up his Bible. “I have been to Israel with my family many times, and have spent precious moments with dear friends and loved ones who now live there. But I never did what I should have done a long time ago. I should have moved there, as the Word of God has instructed all Jews to do. But I had much to take care of and oversee in America--a firmly established, successful business, with many employees, a small Messianic congregation, and... well, there just seemed to be so many things. And I just kept thinking that when it was the right time, I would move. But you see, now I am an old man.

If I went back to Israel now it would only be to die, and that would not be such a bad thing.” Shimon looked down for a moment and smiled.

“Pop.” Or put his hand on his father’s shoulder. “You are tired. Maybe you should stop.”

“In a minute, son.” He continued. “I do not believe that what you are all hoping and praying for will happen right away. Something

very evil has taken root in our land, and it's going to get worse, much worse." Shimon then read from the Bible in his hands.

"For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land... and then I will give you a new heart and put a new Spirit within you..."

Shimon stood up from his chair--his Bible still in his hands.

"The prophet Ezekiel spoke of our return to the land over twenty-five hundred years ago. And now I pray for you all to make the right decision." He whispered as he walked back to his seat, "the hunters have arrived."

Rabbi Or took the microphone from his father's hands. "I think you've been given much to think about this evening," he said. "So I am going to close this meeting. Go home and pray, and God willing, we will be here again on Shabbat. God bless you all."

Or walked over and stood next to his father, as a few people came by and spoke to him. "I think it's time to go home, pop. It's late, and I know you must be tired. That was quite a talk you gave. They waited a few more seconds and then walked out of the room. Most of the people were gone. But Or noticed that two of the people he had not recognized in the meeting were watching them and talking on their cell phones. For some reason it made him feel very uncomfortable.

As they walked into the parking lot suddenly two patrol cars, with glaring red lights, drove in through the open gate and pulled up next to them. A policeman dressed in a black uniform spoke through a bull horn: "Put your arms up against the car, and don't move."

David, who was not yet at his car, turned to face them. "This is our building. My father is the Rabbi here. What's going on?"

In an instant another security guard jumped out of his car and rushed over to where David was standing. He threw him to the ground, pulling his arms in back of him. Ellie screamed. "What are you doing?"

Shimon started to walk over to where they had David on the ground. "Leave him alone! You black uniformed gangsters."

One of the guards then walked over to Shimon and pushed him, so that he lost his balance, and then shoved him hard against the car.

“Pop, we have to do just what they say.” Or put his arm around his trembling father, and then helped him put his arms up on the roof of the car.

The policeman then walked over to the car and began to pat them both down. No one said anything. The guards then looked at Or’s driver’s license and examined Shimon’s identification card. “We’ve been told,” he said, “to keep an eye out on these places back here in the woods. We’ve had some burglars in the area. Sorry, if we caused you any alarm. You can go home now.” He looked over at the other guard and smirked. “Yeah,” the other man said, “you can go home now.”

Or helped his father into the car and then went over to help David. He spoke quietly and quickly. “Are you all right, son?” Both of the patrol cars spun their tires as they drove out of the gate. “Those guys are crazy,” David answered his father. “What is going on?”

“I am going to take dad home. This has been too much for him. I will call you tomorrow.”



## 22 A Generation Ends

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches...”

Proverbs 22:1

Or helped his father into bed. He pulled a blanket over his shoulders. “Are you going to be all right, Pop? You look a little pale.”

Shimon took his son’s hand. “You’ve been a good son, Or. Your mother would be proud of you. I’ll be all right--just a little too much excitement for one night. You go home and get some sleep too.”

“Are you sure you’re okay?”

“Go home, Or. Angie is waiting for you.”

Or reached down and squeezed his father’s hand. “Goodnight Pop. I love you.”

“I love you too son.”

Or climbed into the front seat of his car. He knew not to argue with his father, but he did not feel comfortable leaving him alone. But Sammie would be coming tomorrow, and would be staying with his dad. He felt better when he thought about that. Or’s younger brother, Shimon Samuel, had made some mistakes along the way, but he was a good man, and he loved his father. It was good that he was coming home for a while.

Or thought about what his dad had said: “Your mother would be proud of you.” His mother, Ruth, had died when he was only twelve years old. The traumatic years of the Holocaust had damaged her physically, and she had struggled with kidney disease. But she was at perfect peace with the idea that God would either heal her or take her home. She never complained about anything or anyone, and found joy in the days that God gave her.

Every so often Or would take her picture out of his wallet and look at it. Her death still brought tears to his eyes. She had been a wonderful mother to him and Lilly and Samuel. And sometimes he would reflect on the idea that his parent’s marriage was almost like a fairytale. They never lost touch with the understanding that God had given them a great gift to let them find each other again. Shimon

never remarried. But sometimes he would reminisce about the day when he would see Ruth and his beloved Savior in heaven. During those times he would get a far away look in his eyes, and Or knew not to intrude into those beautiful moments.

Or pulled into the driveway of his home. It was late, but he sat in the car for a moment longer. He thought about all that had been said, and everything that had happened at the Messianic meeting, and of course the frightening event that had taken place in the parking lot.

He put his mother's picture back in his wallet. He was glad that she was not here to see some of the things that were now happening in America. Shimon and Ruth had shared a deep understanding that if there was not true repentance, especially coming from the Church, concerning the ever increasing rise of anti-Semitism, that had first brought forth the Holocaust, then the horrible events that had happened in their lifetime could now happen again, even throughout the United States.

The next morning Or drove quickly up the winding driveway to his father's house. His heart fluttered when he saw that an ambulance was already there. Bonita, his father's housekeeper, had called him as soon as she had gotten to his house. When she didn't see Shimon in the patio, his usual place to have his morning coffee, she sensed something was wrong. When she went upstairs to his room she found him on his knees by the bed. He was gripping the bed-post in obvious severe pain. She immediately called for an ambulance.

The large country home with its finely landscaped yard had always been Shimon's favorite retreat. He had first moved here when his company had decided to expand their financial offices to Connecticut, forty years before.

His father had established Beth Israel Messianic Congregation at almost the same time. It had taken several years for the congregation to grow and for the community to eventually accept a Messianic ministry. But eventually, through Shimon's determination to reach out and just love and forgive people, the Messianic congregation had been received and even welcomed. Once in a while the local reform synagogue would even invite them, on a Shabbat morning, to worship

with them. Shimon had been very patient in his desire for the Jewish community to accept their Jewish Messiah, and many of them had.

Some years after moving to Connecticut, Shimon had been able to retire from his business, as a financial advisor, and give his full attention to the care and building of Beth Israel Congregation, and to sharing the Messianic scriptures with as many people as he could, both Jews and Gentiles.

Or drove up the driveway and parked his car. He jumped out quickly when he saw the paramedics bringing his father out on a stretcher.

“Pop!” Or ran to his father’s side. Shimon opened his eyes and tried to speak, but then closed his eyes again. Two of the paramedics got into the ambulance with him and closed the door. Or turned and saw Bonita standing by the door. She was crying. “I helped your father the best I could,” she said. “I pray he will be all right? He is such a good and kind man.”

“Thank you, Bonita,” Or said as he rushed to his car, and followed the ambulance to the hospital.

“What do you mean? Or almost screamed at the doctor standing in front of him. He did not know this man very well. This doctor had only recently replaced their family physician, who had been with them for many years.

“It’s the policy, Mr. Cohen. I am sorry I can’t do anything to change it--not for you, or anyone. When a patient, who has had a stroke or heart attack, and is seventy-five years or older, and is brought to our hospital, we can only give them sympathetic care.”

“What does that mean?” Or exclaimed loudly.

“We will try to keep your dad free from pain, but we will not offer him anything that will add to his longevity. It would not be productive for us to do that. Your dad has had a very significant heart attack. At his age the best we can do is to give him an injection.”

“An injection....? An injection of what?” Or responded.

The doctor answered with a cool voice, detached from any emotion. “We can spare him from any more pain by giving him an injection, that will just put him to sleep forever.” He then smiled at Or, and

at the rest of the family that had gathered in the room, as if pleased with the rational idea that he had just spoken.

“Actually, Mr. Cohen, we no longer need the permission of the family for such action, but it would be nice.” He turned and walked away, but then stopped and said, “I will be back in an hour or so, and then you can tell me what you have all decided.”

“What do we do?” David looked at Or, and then at his wife Ellie.

“They don’t even have him in a room,” Ellie said. “But I don’t think he’s aware of very much.”

“They have him stuck behind a curtain in the hallway,” came another voice.

“Sammie!” Or turned, as his younger brother who had been standing near the door, walked into the room.

Shimon Samuel spoke to his family, who were all seated in front of him. “I heard what he just said. I think we should get dad out of here, right now. Listen, it’s called Eugenics. It’s the idea that if a person, especially an older or retarded person, is of no more value to society, then it is better for him to just be eliminated. It’s the standard practice now in most hospitals, under the government’s new socialized health care package. And it’s becoming an iron-fisted policy. Many old people refuse to come to hospitals anymore. But right now,” he said, as he turned to walk out of the room, “I want to see my father.”

“Hey, Papa.” Sammie reached down and took hold of his father’s hand. Tears came quickly to his eyes. “We love you pop, and we are all here.”

Or stood next to his brother. David and his family were on the other side of the bed. Shimon opened his eyes. He spoke in a whisper. A smile came to his face. “The glory,” he said. “I can see the glory. I can hear the angels singing. I think they are getting ready to carry me home, son. Hallelujah,” he whispered, and then again repeated, “hallelujah.” And then he closed his eyes. No one said anything, but a flood of tears were wept, tears of sadness, and tears of joy.

“Well, Mr. Cohen,” the doctor walked up to Or, “have you come to an understanding on what we discussed?”

Or did not acknowledge the doctor. He bent down and kissed his father on the forehead, and then gently pulled the sheet up over his head. Then he turned to face the doctor. "We will have our father's body removed from this hospital very soon. I will instruct an agency that we are familiar with to perform the normal pre-burial procedures. My father is a Jew. There will be no autopsy performed on him. And if you do anything to my father," Or came face to face with the doctor, "I can guarantee you the biggest law suit you can imagine. I hope, doctor, you understand clearly what I am saying!" Or then put his arm around his wife and walked away from a surprised and somewhat embarrassed doctor.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, he who believes in Me,  
though he may die, he shall live!"

Rabbi Chaim who performed the funeral service for Shimon had been a long time and valued friend. He spoke without holding back his emotion. "We now entrust our dear friend, and father, and grandfather, and greatly loved one, into the Lord's hands. He has earned and will receive a great and just reward for a life-time of love and service to the Lord, and to so many of us." He stopped for a moment, and then controlling his voice, he continued. "Good-by dear friend, until we soon will meet again."

A small group, mostly family and good friends, had come for Shimon's burial. Earlier in the afternoon hundreds of people had crowded into Beth Israel congregation to pay their last respects at the passing of Rabbi Shimon Cohen.

A gentle breeze had now begun to blow across the brown-gray hills. His family turned and walked away from the gravesite. Angela smiled. "Bonita has prepared some of Pop's favorite foods--those delicious meat dumplings that we all enjoy so much. I think it will be a pretty full house this afternoon."

"Yes," Or said, "dad would want us to celebrate, and not mourn."

Sammie answered in agreement. "Yes, Pop would want us to celebrate life. He hated funerals, and so that is what we will do." He put his arms around Or and Angela as they walked away from the cemetery.



By the time they drove to Or's home, several people had already arrived at the house. Some of the leading rabbis from near-by synagogues had come to say good-bye to their good friend. Bonita had set out a wonderful buffet. Later in the afternoon testimonies were offered by several people. Tears and laughter, and fond memories were shared by many.

An older man, dressed in a neat black suit, came to the front of the room. "I remember when the hard times would come. It was Shimon Cohen that we would all go to for help. How many times did we go to Beth Israel for free meals and counsel. You know," he said with tears in his eyes, "it was the reflection of the One we call Yeshua in Shimon's life, that really first caused me to question, and then finally believe what he had shared with me about my God.

I am so glad for the love that came from that man's life, and revealed my wonderful Messiah to me."

Others came forward to speak of the small and big things that Shimon had done in all of their lives, and how so many of them had really come to know and love their Jewish Messiah because of Shimon Cohen.

"I have something I need to share with you, Or." Sammie took his brother by the arm. "Let's find someplace quiet to talk for a moment."

"What's up Sammie?"

Samuel looked out the window, staring for a moment at the green landscaped yard. "Merriam has asked me for a divorce."

"What?" Or turned to face his brother.

"She says now that Jody and Robert are gone and have established their own lives, that we have nothing to hold us together. She was quite brazen in telling me that it's over. I think there is someone else. But you know, I didn't even ask her. She has made up her mind, and does not want to hear any of my talk about a God honored covenant relationship."

"When did this happen, Sammie?"

"Well, actually it's been in the making for a couple of months now. The divorce will be finalized in a week or two. I had been waiting and postponing before I had to tell Pop. That was one of the reasons I drove all the way up here from Florida."

“So what do you think you are going to do, Sam?”

“You know, Or, it’s always been my heart’s desire to live in Israel. Of course Merriam never would have gone there--not even to visit. I know I’ve messed up on some things in my life--some of those crazy business adventures. I guess I should have listened to dad a long time ago. But I always had these big ideas.” He looked up at his brother with a child-like smile. “But at least I’ve hidden away some gold coins over the years. Not that I am rich, but I’ll survive. Merriam is financially established on her own, and I have no problem with giving her the house. It’s not going to be a messy divorce.

“You know, Or, I think she was happier in my early rebellious years, when I would have nothing to do with God. You remember?” Sammie bent down and scratched the head of the small collie that had partially stretched out under the patio table.

“Yes,” Or said with a smile.

“But when I changed, and began to really grow up and know that I needed God in my life, that was when the separation really began--years ago. So here she is,” Sammie shook his head, “the spokeswoman for all the new age, liberal ideas, and she is stuck with a Jewish husband gone religious, as she puts it.”

“Have you told the kids?”

“Yeah, Merriam told them. They have their own lives now.

Jody is a replica of her mother. She has little communication with me, and when she does it is just surface stuff. And Robert is dealing with his own marriage problems, and says he doesn’t have time for God, or to listen to what he calls my religious lectures. I guess I have failed them as a father, but I am doing the best now that I can. I don’t know how many years I have left, but I want to spend them in Israel. Maybe one day my son and daughter will come too. I don’t know. I just have to put everything in God’s hands.

“That’s the family stuff, Or. It’s not a pretty picture. But now I want to talk to you about something more important than my failed life.”

“Hey, guys.” Angela spoke to her husband and brother-in-law. “Don’t be out there too long. People will be leaving pretty soon.”

“You know, Or, I pretty much keep on top of what’s going on in this country, the behind the scenes kinds of stuff.”

“I know, Sammie, but sometimes I think you kind of go off the deep end.”

“Or, this country is in big trouble--has been for awhile. Things have been set in place to bring this country down, and guess who the scapegoat will be?

“The Jews are already being blamed for the economic depression, and it’s going to get worse. Believe me! Laws have been put in place for years now that will make the ‘unthinkable’ a reality. Nobody believes the horror show that took place in Nazi Germany could happen again in the United States. But I am telling you it’s already taking place, behind the scenes. The Constitution is rapidly being taken apart piece by piece. And the gangsters--the elite controllers--who are running the show can now pretty much do whatever they want with our lives and our country.”

Or had not said anything to Sammie about what had happened before his father had been taken to the hospital, when the police, or whoever they were, had pushed his father around and frightened the daylights out of his family. Or also knew that this was what had triggered his father’s heart attack.

“They can stop anybody whenever they want,” Sammie continued, “and they don’t need a warrant, not anymore. Have you heard about the Patriot Act? It became law a couple of years ago. Under the covering of being able to go after real criminals, without any legal restraints, they threw in a little addendum. They have also made it legal to go after any American citizen--no court appearance, no legal rights, nothing. You just disappear. Does that remind you of some of the things Dad used to tell us happened in Nazi Europe? Or, it’s already happening! And now with this national explosion of anti-Semitism, the Jews are being targeted like never before. Have you been watching some of these out of control mob riots on television?” Sammie took a deep breath and put his hand on Or’s shoulder.

“Brother, I am telling you the truth. We don’t have much time left. Please pray about taking the family and going to Israel?”

“Let’s go inside, Sammie, we can talk more later.” Before shutting the patio door, Or looked out across his nicely manicured yard, as the setting sun cast a lavender pink glow across the brown, green hills. He really had no desire to leave America. It had been his home since a young boy, but Sammie was right. Things were changing. What was he to do?

Angela brushed her dark brown hair back from her face, and then slipped into her warm, lavender pajamas. She sat down on Or’s side of the bed, as she would often do before crawling under the blankets.

“You looked a little blown away when you came into the room with Sammie. What’s up?”

“Merriam has asked him for a divorce. It’s almost ready to be finalized. He had not said anything because he didn’t want to worry Pop.”

“You aren’t surprised, are you?”

“What do you mean? Or looked up at his still youthful and attractive wife.

“Oh, come on! You mean you didn’t see this coming? I am surprised it has lasted this long. They have lived in totally different worlds now for years.”

“But I guess I never thought it would end up in divorce--not in our family.”

“So what’s Sammie going to do?”

“He’s planning on moving to Israel, as soon as he can. He’s scared about what is happening here in America. He thinks it’s time for us to leave too, while we still can.”

Angela grew quiet. “I know, Or, some bad things have been happening.” She reached down and stroked his forehead. “But Sammie has always had some rather crazy ideas. Everything we have is here in America. I was talking with Ellie today, and we both believe that things are going to get better. I just can’t imagine anything else. And have you looked at what is happening in Israel?

“I know Pop was strong on us moving there, because of what it says in the Bible, but maybe that’s not for every Jew? Anyway, it’s been a long day—and a very long week. Things have happened so fast with Dad and everything. Let’s go to bed and we can talk some more

in the morning.”

Or put his arm around his wife, as she snuggled up next to him. He closed his eyes, remembering the words his father had whispered, as he left the podium and went back to his chair, “The hunters are here!”



## 23 Once Upon A Time

“Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me...”

Psalm 40:13

Peter Millman stood up from his very nice, heavy wood desk. His office was large and tastefully decorated. He briefly glanced over his shoulder at the expansive, scenic view of New Haven, Connecticut. He then stepped into the bathroom and looked into the full-length mirror before leaving for the conference room. He was, as usual, dressed to the tee. He had on one of his better gray silk suits. He adjusted his expensive tie, and brushed with one hand his short, but not too short, black, wavy hair. With two fingers he patted his well trimmed mustache. He smiled at the image in the mirror, and then closed the door behind him as he left.

Peter knew Or Cohen much better than he had known his father, Shimon. The firm had managed the family's affairs for many years. He also knew that they would not be happy with what he had to tell them.

Or and his wife, and David and Ellie, with their two children were seated at the long table when Peter walked into the room. Sammie and his son and daughter were there also. Bonita Garcia also sat at the table with the family. Peter sat down at the head of the table and cleared his throat.

“We are here this morning to read the last will and testament of Shimon A. Cohen.” He stopped and looked at each person sitting at the table. “Does anyone have anything to say before we continue?”

After the will had been read everyone looked at each other. There were no big surprises. Most of Shimon's estate had been left to his two sons, Or and Sammie. Some additional money had been given to his grandson, David, and a fair amount had been put in a trust for his great-grandchildren until they reached the age of thirty-five. A sizeable amount had been donated to Beth Israel Messianic Congregation. After the part had been read concerning Shimon's great

grandchildren, Sammie's daughter, Jody, got up from the table in a huff and walked out of the room.

"But now," Peter said, "I have some rather unpleasant news to give you. None of Shimon Cohen's estate can be touched for one year, from this date.

"I don't understand, Peter?" Or sat down with his lawyer after everyone else had left the room. Samuel had wanted to stay, but Or felt it would go better if he talked with Peter by himself. The family had all been very surprised at what the lawyer had just told them.

"How can all of dad's estate be frozen? He was not in debt to anyone, and all of his bills were paid. I don't understand?"

"It has nothing to do at all, Or, with any of that. Your father was very careful to keep a clean slate. It has to do with the new law that was signed last month at the White House. It puts all estate distributions, through death wills over fifty thousand dollars, into a frozen status for one year. It's all wrapped up in the new monetary re-distribution plan--set forth by the IMP for every nation."

"My father worked hard for what he earned. Nothing was given to him on a silver platter. And he always paid his taxes on time." Or felt a wave of exhaustion coming over him. "And as you know he gave much of his wealth away. He had a right to give away his estate however he chose."

"Or, I agree with you one hundred percent. There is, however, nothing I can do. It's the new law. One year from now the state will allow the estate holdings belonging to your deceased father, to be given as he requested--depending, of course, on the Federal Government's okay on the matter. I am sorry Or. It's just the way it is. But if I remember correctly your father handed over to you and your brother some pretty hefty bonds and securities--didn't he?"

"The gifts my dad gave to us, over the years, have nothing to do with what is going on here, concerning his estate. And by the way, some of those stocks became worthless when everything hit bottom, not long ago. It has nothing to do with the fact that I have resources of my own, Peter. It has to do with a system that is corrupt and unrighteous. It's just plain wrong!"

“Well, my friend.” Peter put his arm around Or’s shoulder. “I am afraid it is no longer ‘once upon a time in the ever happy land of the golden USA,’ not now! You know,” he continued, “you can join any number of protest movements out there, but what good is it going to do you? Sometimes we just gotta flow with the flow, and dance with the music--no matter what they are playing.” He then patted Or on the back, as he opened the door for him to leave.

“I told you!” Sammie brought a cup of black coffee, that Angela had just made, to his lips. “This is what is now happening all over America.” He looked at Or, and then at his wife Angela. “Do you remember when dad told us how it happened in Europe, under Hitler? The Nazis established the same kinds of laws, maybe not as legally sophisticated as today, but the same idea was behind them. The Anti-Semitic laws at that time were introduced slowly at first, so that the Gentile civilian population would not realize the extent of the Nazi Party’s anti-Semitic agenda. But eventually the confiscation of Jewish property was regulated so that it could be transferred into non-Jewish hands easily. And that was just the beginning.” Sammie took a long sip of his coffee, while he waited for Angela or Or to say something.

Or was very tired from what had just taken place in the lawyer’s office. “But Sam, this is not Nazi Germany, and we have a Constitution to protect us. I know there have been some infringements on it, and on the Bill of Rights, but the people in America are not going to let those kinds of things happen here. I just can’t believe it will get to that.” Angela shook her head in agreement with her husband.

“Do you remember,” Sammie continued, “how dad would sometimes talk about how most of the people, where he grew up, simply could not believe it would get any worse. Even his parents, he said, just couldn’t come to grips with that thought. You see it’s called ‘normalcy.’ We get up every day and basically go through life, but in our thought process we have established these little borders, that keep us from accepting anything that seems too unreal for us. And so we just refuse to believe the unbelievable, even though it is happening all around us. I will tell you an amazing little story to illustrate this idea.” Sammie took another long sip of coffee.



“In the spring of 1944, two inmates at the Auschwitz concentration camp miraculously escaped. They then went on a fifteen day escape journey through Nazi occupied lands that would make your worst video game look dull.

“When they reached the Slovakian border they went to the Hungarian Jewish council, the Jewish underground. They presented them with documented material as to what was taking place in Auschwitz. You see, the Jewish leaders knew that these prisons, or resettlement camps, as the Germans called them, were probably worse than they had been told. But when shown the evidence of what was really happening there--that millions of Jews were being deported, and then immediately killed in warehouses filled with poisonous gas--it was just more than they could accept or believe. So they refused to believe it. Of course there was probably little they could actually have done, except to try and get the reports to the Allied forces.

“The evidence was finally brought to the light, but it was not until late in the fall of 1944 that the Allied forces took any action to stop the death mill going on at Auschwitz. In the meantime tens of thousands of more Jewish men, women and children were killed at this death camp, because no one could believe that anything so terrible was really happening there.”

Angela stood up from the table. “Sammie, I remember the stories that Pop would tell us, even though he did not talk about it very much, and I know it was very terrible. But you cannot convince me, at least not yet, that anything like what happened back then, is going to happen here. I love you, Sammie, but I am tired. It’s been a very long day, and I am going to bed.”

“Yes, me too,” Or agreed. “Goodnight Sam. See you in the morning.”

David and Ellie and their two children, Ben and Julie, sat in front of their large screen television. They were listening intently as the President of the United States was speaking in an emergency broadcast. The president looked up from the podium in front of him with a serious and stern face.

“Israel” he said, “has now agreed to the monitoring of any nuclear weapons they may still have. And all sides have agreed to a total cessation of hostilities, and Israel has agreed to UN supervision of a concrete peace plan.

“Also, I must say,” the president looked up from his written speech, “that if Israel had been willing to do this months ago, in accord with what the rest of the world has always wanted, then none of these terrible tragedies would have happened. The world holds Israel responsible for this grievous display of aggression against its Arab neighbors. But now,” the president raised his voice, “we are believing for a time of peace and security in the Middle East. It must be achieved without any delay, and I will see that Israel stands up to this commitment. I promise you.”

A loud applause erupted from a room full of people, and many stood up on their feet. “And now,” the president continued, “I must address a serious concern in our own country. With the recent riots that have been taking place in many of our major cities, and other locations, I am seriously seeking the advice of my security council as to whether Martial Law must now be implemented in order to re-establish law and order in our country again.”

“Wow! What does that mean?” Bennie asked his father.

“Well, for one thing it means that Israel is in big trouble, and for America...? Well, we will just have to see what happens.”

“Dad,” Bennie interrupted his father. “What’s the red and blue list mean?”

“What are you talking about Benjamin?” Ellie asked her son.

“I heard these teachers talking while everyone else was in the gym, and I was in the classroom with Tony and a few others, and they were talking about the red and blue list.”

“Why were you held back from your gym class, son?” David asked him.

“The Jewish kids are being separated from certain activities, for a while. I guess it’s some kind of research study or something. But I heard one of them say it was because Jewish kids are more susceptible to certain kinds of communicable diseases. What does communicable

mean?”

“You are kidding me?” David stood up from where he was sitting. “You are not going back to that school, Bennie. And this time I mean it. No arguments.”

“Julie,” Ellie questioned her daughter. “Are they doing these things at your school too?”

Julie turned away from her mother.

“Julie, answer me!” Ellie turned her daughter around to face her.

“It’s no big deal, mom. It’s just a practice thing they are doing for a short time.”

“You mean they separate you if your name is Jewish?” her father asked her.

“Like I said, it’s just for a short time. So let’s don’t talk about it right now. It will be over soon.”

“Oh look,” Bennie pointed to the television. “There’s that goofy man again. They show him ever day when the crowd begins forming in Washington DC. He’s always quoting the Bible and telling people to leave while they still can.”

“Look,” Julie said, “he’s dressed like a prophet or something.”

“The voice of those who escape out of Babylon to declare in Zion the vengeance of our God.” The prophet pointed into the crowd. “Come out of there, my people. Turn from your wicked ways; repent and be saved.”

The man was dressed in a dark, sack-cloth robe, and when he spoke his words were etched in fire. Some people turned to listen and had startled looks on their faces, but many of the others, in the large protesting crowd, seemed unable to hear him. They were oblivious.

“Look!” Ellie got closer to the television. “The police are pulling him down from the platform and beating him. Oh, my God! What is happening to our country?”

The crowd began to shout as the police dragged the older man down the street. “Go back, Jew, where you came from.”

David clicked the television off. “I think we have had enough for tonight. Come and sit down with me for a minute, and let’s pray for our country.”

“Dad? Julie responded with some surprise. “I just want to go to my room.”

“Julie,” Ellie spoke to her. “We are going to pray.”

“Dear Father in heaven,” David reached down for the hand of his wife on one side, and his daughter’s on the other, “we are in serious trouble in this nation of ours, and we ask for your help and mercy. Please, dear Lord, pour out your Spirit upon this dry and Godless nation of ours, and turn this country back to You. Our hope is only in You. And please, dear Lord, show us what we are to do as a family. I ask this in the name of your Son, Yeshua, our Messiah.”

As Julie and Ben got up to leave, David spoke to both of them. “Hey, guys, have you been reading your Bible?”

“Uh....yeah, Dad, sometimes,” Ben answered. Julie remained quiet.

“Goodnight. Sleep good.” Ellie’s voice followed her children up the stairs.

“I don’t understand, Ellie?” David looked at his wife. “What happened to our Bible reading times that we used to have as a family?”

“Oh, you know David. They are getting older and they want to do their own things--not the same things we do.”

“Well, I think it’s time that we start reading the Bible together again. How can I look at anyone else, when my own family is not what it should be?”

David looked at his wife without smiling. “And I am going to take back a little authority over this family. Neither of them will go back to their schools; not unless there are some drastic changes. A red and blue list....what the heck? I am going to talk to some of our friends about home schooling. I know the kids won’t like it, but it’s just the way it’s going to be.”

“Did you hear about that monster tornado that hit the Houston area?” Ellie put her arm around her husband, as they walked into the kitchen for something to eat before they went to bed. Tornadoes like that in January! I’ve never heard of such a thing?”

“Samuel say’s it is just another sign of God’s judgment on America.”

“I am sure he would say something like that.” Ellie shook her head. “But then I am not sure of anything anymore.”

David picked up his cell phone. It was early. He looked at the time on his watch. It was only five o’clock. “Dad?” He answered Or’s call. “What’s up?”

“David,” Or said, “keep the kids home today. It’s getting pretty rough out there. I was told that they even have some of the major highways blocked. I need to talk to you, son. I think we need to take the bull by the horns and make some quick decisions.

“I had a dream, David, and it was very real. It was a warning. I am sure of it. I have been on my knees for an hour, seeking God’s wisdom for my family.

“What was the dream about, dad?”

“It had to do with these big trucks coming to the schools and taking the children to a huge warehouse, where they were separated into groups. The scary part was that the parents were taken someplace else. A man on a platform kept shouting, ‘This is a Homeland Security evacuation emergency. Please stay calm...’ Then there was something about your names being on a red or a blue list.”

“What?” David responded.

“A list--a red or blue list. Peoples names had been put on one or the other.”

“Dad, I think it’s important for you to drive over here for a few minutes. I want to tell you something that Bennie told me happened at school.”

“Why didn’t you tell me this before?” Or looked first at David and then at Ellie. “Separating the children at school? What in the world is happening?”

Or walked into the kitchen to get a cup of coffee and then came back into the living room. David spoke to his father as he walked back in. “We didn’t want to say anything right away. I guess, like everyone else, we’ve been waiting for everything to just get back to normal.”

“I don’t like where this is going--not at all.” Or stood up from the couch, holding his coffee in his hand. “It is eerily really reminding me

of some of the things that Dad talked about. Did he ever tell you, David, about the red and blue list?”

“No, he did not.”

“Well,” Or continued, “he told me this story a long time ago, but I never forgot it, and that’s why when you said they had a ‘red and blue’ list for the children, it really freaked me out.

“One of the things he found out, early on, when he arrived at the ghetto, was that they had two lists for the people who would be deported from there to a concentration camp. The red list meant they would be deported soon. The blue list meant they would not be taken right away. In some cases the children were put on different lists from the rest of their family. Pop once told me that this was the reason that Lillie, his younger sister, was not sent to Auschwitz with the others. These were very painful things for him to think about. And he seldom talked about it.”

“Wow!” David said, “that is really horrible.”

“What’s horrible?” Bennie walked into the room. “Hi Grandpa. What’s up?”

“Hi guy. Oh, your dad and I were just talking about some things. Listen, I need to get back to my house. Roger is coming over pretty soon. He said he has some important information to share with me. So, I’ll call you later, David. I think we need to pray and consider the possibility of going to Israel for a break. At least until things change--if they ever do? Pop’s words are becoming more real to me all the time. Maybe I should have listened to him a long time ago. Stay in the house today, Bennie. There is just too much stuff going on,” Or said as he walked out of the room.

Roger’s Honda Accord was in the driveway when Or got home. Roger walked out of the house when he saw Or, and opened the car door. “Let’s go for a drive around the neighborhood. I have some things to share with you—just for your ears, at least for right now.”

“Sure.” Or waited for Roger to get in, and then backed down the driveway.

“As you know, Or, I have some rather high connections in military security, because of the work I was once involved in. And I can

usually press some of these guys to give me an idea of what is really going on in government circles--things that are about to happen.”

Or pulled over to the side of the road and parked his car. He looked at his friend, whom he had known for the last twenty years. Roger was a strong Christian, and served as a part time minister at Hope of Glory Church. The members of Beth Israel and Hope of Glory would frequently come together for prayer events, and would celebrate the Feast days together. The Christians at Roger’s church had a real love for Israel, and could be counted on to stand with this small nation, even when things got really hard.

“What did you want to tell me, Roger?”

“Like I said, Or, I have some connections. My contact--I’ll call him Joe--said that the rioting will continue and even get worse; certain people will make sure of that. And probably in the next three to five days, after everything is set up, the president will make an announcement and declare that Martial Law has been ordered. Now, Or, let me ask you something? Do you know what that really means?”

“Somewhat?” Or answered his friend. “Basically, the military and police take over and everyone is sort of told what to do.”

“Well, yes, but much more than that. All of the country’s resources, including food, water, people, everything you can think of, are put under the government’s authority. Your homes, and everything you own--including your children--will come under absolute, dictatorial powers.”

“Wow! What exactly does that mean?” Or could feel his face go pale.

“It means that if they want to relocate you to another part of the country, where they think your skills might be needed, they can do it. It means, Or, they can pretty much do whatever they want.”

“Then we’ve got to get out of here. Is there still time?”

“Okay. Here is the other news. “I’ve been told that right after they declare Martial Law they will be forcing everyone to take a new kind of ID. It could be the mark, but I don’t think so, not yet. But that one is probably coming down the pipe pretty soon. This new ID will also serve as a passport, and if you are a Jew you get a big fat ‘J’ on it. For true Bible believing Christians it doesn’t get any better. We are in this one together.”

“So I’ll take my family tonight,” Or said, “and go to the airport and get on the first plane out of here. We’ll go back to Israel.”

“Too late for that now, Or. Anyone who tries to run will be quarantined under some phony accusation, until the government takes control. And then, basically, no one is going anywhere.”

“Roger, we’ve got to do something. God is still in control of our lives and He will make a way for us to escape.”

“There is a way, but it’s a risk. There are some people who have known for a long time that this day was coming. And they have set up a network to help get the Jewish people back to Israel. I’ve got the names of people who are willing to lay down their lives for God’s Jewish people. But Or, I have to tell you the truth. You have no time to loose. Decisions have to be made right now!”

“We need to be over at Dad’s house before seven o’clock.” David talked to Ellie on his cell phone, while he opened the door to the house. “It’s important. I’ll tell you more when you get home. No. The kids do not need to go. This is not a family decision thing.”

Or and Angela, and Sammie and Roger, with his wife, Karen, were seated in the living room when David and Ellie walked in. Roger had been telling them part of what he had already shared earlier with Or.

“Sorry we are late,” David said. “Ellie had a hard time plowing through the six o’clock traffic. They are putting up more check points all the time.”

“Well,” Sammie said, “I am surprised they don’t have the whole neighborhood cordoned off.”

“You mean like the Polish Warsaw Ghetto?” Angela said with mild sarcasm.

“Yeah, something like that” Sammie shot back.

“Okay,” Or interrupted, “let’s pray and get off to a right start.”

“Amen!” Sammie said.

“Father, we come before you, and we are in great need. Please help us to hear from you clearly, and to remember your commandment to love one another.” A resounding ‘Amen’ went around the room.

“Go ahead, Roger, and finish telling us what you came over to share.”

Roger lifted up a briefcase and pulled out several papers. “What



I am going to share with you is not some crazy, conspiracy plot--even though it may sound like it at times. The subversion of America has been planned for a long time.” Roger looked up from the papers in his hand. “As Messianic Jews, and as Christians, we must never forget something. One of the devil’s most important agendas, his primary evil plan, has always been to get rid of the Jewish people.

“Remember, Jesus said that he will not return until his people, the Jews, cry out to him. So in the devil’s exalted, prideful thinking, if he can get rid of Israel and the Jewish people, then God has a problem, according to his Word. Of course we know this will never happen because God is in charge, and he has also promised us, in his Word, that unless all that is in the heavens disappears, then the seed of Israel shall by no means cease from being a people. But I guess that shows you what pride will do. The devil is still trying to do all that he can to bring destruction to the people of God---the Jews first, and then her offspring, the true Christians.

“This is what I want to share with you. I’ve already shared some of it with Or, which is why we are all here tonight. I want you to know that God has called me to lay my life down, if necessary, to help you get back to Israel.

“A network has already been established, and is in place. When I say a network, I mean dedicated people all across this nation of ours, who will help the Jewish people get back to Israel. You know during the Civil War there existed something called ‘the Underground Railroad.’ It was not a railroad, and it was not literally underground. But it is the story of many people who laid down their lives to help black Americans escape from the slave states to freedom in the northern states.

“Once again, in his love and mercy, God has established safe houses, and people. Some who have pretty good sized boats, and even airplanes, and they will all be used to help the Jews escape America. Of course this will all be done underground, and hidden from public view. These will be ordinary men and women who will look like they are doing a normal kind of job, but actually will be working for the underground. I know it sounds incredible. But there are Christians who have been preparing for these days for many years. None of what is happening has taken God by surprise. Reminds me of some

of the stories I have heard about World War Two. Even then people had secret rooms hidden in their homes, and some even had trucks that had secret hiding places. Amazing stories for sure!

“In the next four or five days, maximum, Martial Law will be declared. Now, hold on, because I don’t want to scare you, but I have to tell you what you might not know. When this order is declared by the president everything will already be in place. Every community in America will be put under guard, and I am not talking about your ‘friendly auxiliary police department.’ I am talking about black shirt, hostage trained, military police. And they will cordon off every community and every neighborhood in this country. Everything you own will then belong to the government--your home, all your property, even your children, everything!

“You see, the whole Martial Law scenario will just be a false flag event. The need for Martial Law has been engineered. This nation is out of control economically, and the ‘controllers,’ as I call them, need to bring in a one-world monetary system--a program where people are trained to be robotic pawns for its use. In the book of Revelation it’s called the Beast.”

“I don’t think I want to hear any more of this.” Ellie stood up from the couch.

“Sit down, Ellie,” David said. “It’s the truth, and we all know it. We have to listen to Roger. It could mean our lives and our children’s lives.”

“Thank you, David,” Roger responded. “I don’t want to scare you like this, Ellie, but this is what will happen. We can’t hide from it.”

“So what happens after they shut everything down?” Sammie asked.

“Well, they already have everyone on a data list. They know everything about you. They know your age, and your work potential. They know how educated you are. They even know if you are cheating on your spouse. It’s all covered. If you can serve them, and their robotic, one-world government, then you will be sent away for re-education. Children, of course, will be educated to comply with their one-world agenda. But then I guess you know that’s been going on in our schools for decades. If you’re a Jew, then they will use your

brains and special talents, but probably not for long. This demonic inspired, elite world club has no place for Jews or true Christians. If when they add it all up and you score a big zero, then they will just use you for their labor force, or maybe even get rid of you. Population control is one of their big agendas.”

“You mean like what they did in Nazi Germany?” Angela asked.

“Along the same line, but much more sophisticated. Remember back then they did not have computers. Now they are able to acquire much more information, and do it so much faster.”

“Roger.” Or stood up from the couch where he was sitting. “Give us all the information we need to escape America and go to Israel.”

“Yes,” Ellie said, “tell us what we need to know.”

“I will, but first I want to remind you of something very important. No matter what actually happens, we must never forget who we really are. We are sons and daughters of the King!

Our destiny is not wrapped up in this world--no matter what happens. Jesus said to not ‘fear’ what man can do to us, and that needs to be our rallying cry every day while we are on this earth. However my life is lived, and will one day end, I pray that it will be for His Glory only. Okay,” Roger smiled, “my sermon for the day--but an important one.”

“They already know that more than a few people are getting suspicious and will try to get out. Those who try to fly to another country, through an airport, will most likely have their passports confiscated, until after Martial Law is declared, and then, like I said, your current passport will be useless.

“Right now any person driving outside of their own state is likely to be stopped and told to go back. Checkpoints will be established at all the borders, and major entrances to every city. The good news is that there are still a few country roads that have not been fully covered, but I am sure they will be before too long.

“We’ll drive down through Pennsylvania. There are a few houses of refuge in some of the Amish villages. From there we will make our way across West Virginia to the coast of North Carolina, and then shoot on down to Brunswick, Georgia. That’s where the fun begins. You will go by a small boat out to a large freighter or fishing boat,

and then across the Atlantic to Israel. You will not be the only ones trying to escape. I guarantee you.”

Roger put the papers back into his briefcase, and smiled. “My friends! I guess I don’t have to tell you that this is a risky adventure, and there are no guarantees. But it’s going to be a lot harder if you delay. Israel is not turning back any Jews. They have been coming in droves from Europe and America. Your father, Or, was a Holocaust survivor, and you have all the papers you need. You will not have any problems getting in. So I ask you to pray, and then let me know as soon as you have decided, what you want to do.”

“Roger, will you go with us, if we decide to go?” David asked him.

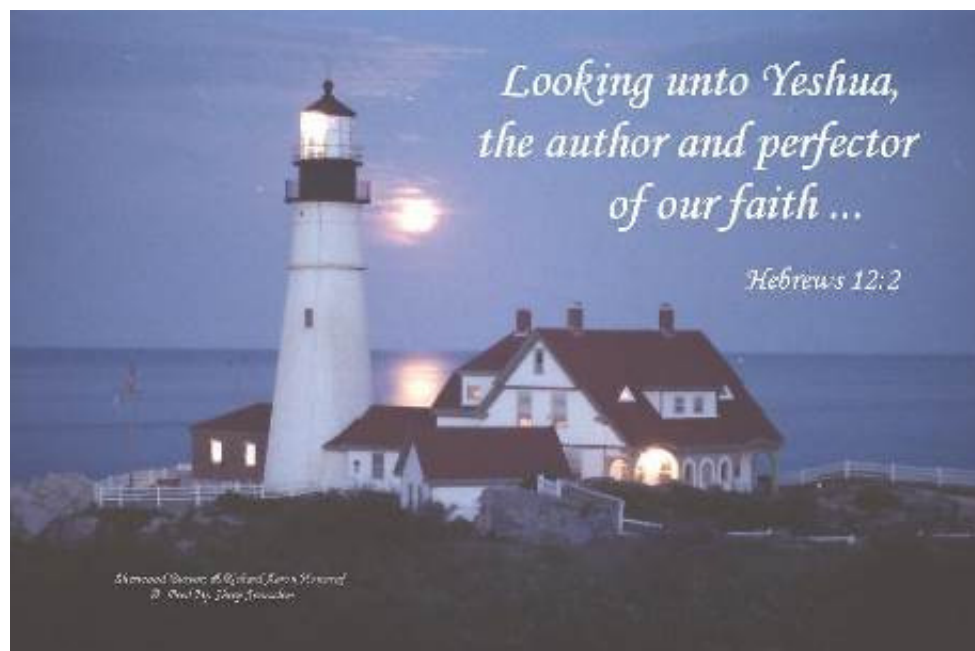
“Yes, David. I will go with you to Brunswick, and make sure you get on the boat, but I won’t be taking my family to Israel. I am afraid they would just send us back. Besides,” he smiled, “my place is here in America--no matter what happens. It’s not going to be a piece of cake in Israel right now either, but God has promised to protect his people, and you will have a much better chance over there than here.” Roger looked over at his wife. “We have to go now, but I will be waiting for your call. Or, you can call me anytime--day or night.”

It was two o’clock in the morning when Roger got Or’s call.

“We are ready, Roger, the sooner the better. We are all in agreement that we need to do this before the trap door slams shut. Well, at least most of us. My granddaughter is not real pleased about any of it, but Ben thinks it’s going to be exciting. Is this morning going to be too soon?

“How about if I’m there at 7:30 am,” Roger said. Since we are going to do this, let’s get an early start.”

“We will leave a note for our neighbors telling them that we have gone for a few days on a short family trip. So nobody gets suspicious and says anything to the wrong people. So, we will be ready when you get here. Thanks, Roger.”



*Looking unto Yeshua,  
the author and perfecter  
of our faith ...*

*Hebrews 12:2*

*Woodward Design: Richard Aaron Howard  
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## 24 Time To Flee

“As for God His Way is Perfect...”

Psalm 18:30

“This is so crazy.” Julie stormed down the stairway to the living room—her blond pony tail swinging in movement with her steps. Her brother Bennie was right behind her. “Why can’t I stay with Maggie till this blows over? Her parents would let me stay with them. They think of me as their daughter. I don’t want to go to someplace that’s all Jewish. They do weird things there.”

David sat down with his third cup of coffee. Neither he nor Ellie had slept much at all. His eyes were tired and his body ached. He looked at his daughter and his son. They really had no idea of what was happening, and what was about to happen in America. And they also did not have a true understanding of what it meant to be Jewish, and that was his fault. He had not really resisted their absorption into the popular culture, nor had he realized that their Messianic Jewish faith had become just something they did. For the last couple of years Julie, in particular, had stopped going to the Shabbat service on Saturday morning at Beth Israel. It too often interfered with her sleep-over parties at her girl friend’s house, and her Saturday get together times. At least Ben had shown some interest in understanding the Jewish Feast holidays.

But the evidence of his and Ellie’s failure to raise their children with a deeper understanding of their Jewish heritage and a deeper relationship with their Jewish God was now becoming very evident.

“Well, my dear, but spoiled daughter, whether you think being Jewish is weird or not, you are one hundred percent just that! And right now there are people in America who do not like Israel or the Jewish people very much.

“Pretty soon I think it would be appropriate to sit down with you and share some of the horrible things that your great Grandpa Shimon went through, because he, like the rest of us, was one of those weird Jews. But we don’t have much time this morning, and so you might as

well just get it settled in your mind that you are going with us. I do not have a lot of patience this morning. So go get something to eat, and be quick. We will be leaving pretty soon, as soon as Grandpa Or, and Sammie and Roger get here. I want to get going before the world is up and wide awake. Sorry I had to wake you up so early.”

“Here’s the plan.” A pot of coffee sat in the middle of the table, with a plate of warm cinnamon rolls, as Roger spoke to Or and his family. Roger had his map laid out in front of them...

“We will cut across New York into Pennsylvania, and then shoot down into West Virginia. I have the most current information on the best routes to take. The underground is already established and there is a link all across America, connecting one part with the other. After computers are completely monitored then it’s gong to be a little more difficult to connect with people, but we’ll find a way. You can be sure of that.” Roger looked up from the map with a grin on his face.

“God has been working on this one for some time.”

“We will probably spend our first night in West Virginia--a little place called Beverly. The next day we will head on over to North Carolina, and then down to Brunswick. If for any reason we are stopped by TSA agents, we will just tell them that we are on our way down south to visit family, and that we are taking a little break, but we will pray that won’t happen. I have made reservations at a place on the North Carolina coast, just in case they decide to check up on us. The fact that you have your kids out of school, David, and it’s not a scheduled break, could draw suspicion. But... we just have to know that God is on our side, and he will make a way. Let’s face it! Without God’s help we won’t even get out of this state. So are we ready?”

For a moment no one said anything. David took hold of Ellie’s hand as she started to fight back some tears. Or stood up from the table. “Let’s pray! And then we are off.”

The drive from New York across Pennsylvania had gone smooth. They had deliberately stayed on the back roads that were less traveled. Bennie had sat next to his uncle Sammie, in his truck, most of the way into West Virginia. Angela rode in the back seat of David’s bronco

with Julie, and Ellie rode up front with David. Or rode in Roger's car with him, as they talked about the details of their escape plan. They had stopped by a river while they were in Pennsylvania, and had eaten some of the sandwiches that Ellie had made for everyone. But no one was in the mood for a picnic, and they soon continued on their way.

By the time they drove into the small West Virginia community of Black River the sun was setting and they were all tired. Roger pulled over to the side of the road so that he could carefully study the directions to the house where they would spend the night. David pulled up in back of him and walked over to the window on his dad's side. "What's up?"

"Just checking things out, David. There are a lot of little roads and hollows around this part of the country, and not everyone is interested in strangers--especially with what has been going on lately. People everywhere are on edge. Anyway, according to this map we take a right hand turn after the next bridge, and then we hit a dirt road and go up about a mile, until we see a red mail box on the left side of the road. Then we take the next right turn and we should see a white house on a large wooded lot.

"The name of the woman who owns the place has not been given to me, for security reasons, but if it's the right place then she will come out to greet us, and if not.... Then someone might very well step out with a shotgun." Roger smiled at David, as he put the map away.

The road to the house was rough and bumpy, not much more than a trail. As they turned into the driveway, leading to the house, a woman dressed in a long, blue-jean skirt and a heavy sweater came out on her porch. She had on a floppy hat that was tied under her chin.

David was impressed with how beautiful the country was. The house sat in the middle of about an acre of heavily wooded land. A white fence encircled the yard. Two dogs immediately began barking as the three cars pulled up next to the house. Or and Roger, and then David and Ellie opened their car doors.

"Hush em," the woman yelled at the two black labs.

"Hello," she said. "My name is Cynthia Waynback. Welcome to our home. Come on in. It's cold out here."



A light snow covered the tops of the trees and partially covered the yard. Angela pulled her jacket tight around her waist, and buttoned her collar. They all gladly followed Cynthia into her home. The old house was warm and comfortable. The spicy smells of a chicken stew cooking in the kitchen, quickly caught Bennie and Julie's attention. "Smells really good," Bennie said.

An older woman, dressed in black slacks and a long sweater sat curled up on a large, comfortable chair, next to a black pot-bellied stove. The stove was planted in the middle of the room. There were a few chairs scattered around it.

"That's my mom," Cynthia said. "Her name is Emma. She is a little hard of hearing, but she does pretty good for eighty eight years old.

"Mom, we have company." Emma turned, looked up from her book, pushed her glasses up from the tip of her nose, and greeted her guests. "Hello," she said. "You must be the family that has come to stay with us for a while. Well, you are most welcome in my home. Come, sit down here, and get warmed up. It's getting pretty cold out there. I hope you didn't have any problems with that ole road of ours. It can be a bugger in the winter."

"No," Or said. "We did fine, and really had no problems finding your home."

"It's okay," Cynthia said. "Go on in and sit down by the stove. I am going to bring some hot drinks in. I'll be back in a minute.

"You have a lovely yard and home," Ellie spoke to Emma.

"Yes, my husband bought ten acres up here, not long after the big war." She smiled, as she pulled a red afghan around her shoulders. He brought me home from the war with him--this little Jewish girl who lived through the Holocaust. That was a little over seventy years ago, but sometimes it seems like just such a short time. To begin with the neighbors didn't quite understand--thought he'd gone too far. But we lived a good life up here. We always minded our own business, and so eventually people got use to the idea that I am a Jew."

"I noticed your accent was not completely West Virginia," Or said, smiling.

"Yes," she said. "I guess I still carry a little Hungarian in me. But now tell me? Where are you all from, and where are you headed? I know from what Cynthia told me that you are wanting to get out of

the good ole USA, for a bit.” She chuckled a little.

“Well, we just feel it would be smart to leave for a while, till all of this anti-Semitic stuff dies down,” Ellie responded.

“Well, you are smart. I wish more Jews would wake up, before it’s too late. But look! Cynthia has brought us some nice hot tea, and what about you, young man?” She pointed at Bennie. “What would you like to drink? And what would you like, little lady? Why don’t you go back into the kitchen, dear ones, with Cynthia and see if you can find something good to drink and maybe some of those good nut cookies she just made. I think there are still some left.”

After Ben and Julie had followed Cynthia into the kitchen, Emma continued to talk. “I’ve been keeping up with the news, and what some of these thugs are trying to do, and I can tell you that it has alarmed me more than just a little. I’ve been watching for some time where things are headed. You are going to Israel, and that’s a good thing. God has always known that one day that ugly ole devil would try to do it again. You know,” Emma sat her tea down, “that is why God had to have Israel in place. The Lord said he would bring them back, from where he scattered them, and that’s what he has done.

“If I were just a few years younger, I’d be going myself, but now listen to me rambling on. You all must be tired. There is a nice bunk house out in the back for the men to sleep in--has a nice stove like this one. You ladies have two nice rooms here in the house. My dear daughter will show them to you. And I think right now I need to take a little nap too. I will see you all at six o’clock, supper time, and then we will talk a little more. So you go get some rest, and I’ll see you all later.”

Or’s family and Roger all sat down at a long wooden table, covered with a white tablecloth. Large bowls of chicken with fat dumplings were served, with fresh home baked bread, and a fresh, green salad.

“I can’t tell you how grateful we are for your wonderful hospitality,” David spoke to Cynthia and Emma.

“Yes,” Ellie added, “thank you so very much. You’ve been so kind to us.”

Emma Waynback nodded politely to the words of gratitude that

went around the table.

“I would guess” Emma said, “that I was right about your age when they came for me.” She pointed at Julie. “Yes, right about your age.”

“When who came for you?” Julie responded.

“The Nazis,” Emma said, without emotion.

David could feel Ellie move a little uncomfortably next to him, but she said nothing. Ellie had always protected her children from hearing the stories that Shimon would tell about the Holocaust, but now she said nothing as Emma continued to answer Julie’s question.

“I was just a young girl, and I was pretty back then.” She laughed softly. “And probably like you I had a special boyfriend. Of course like everyone else I just believed that one morning I would wake up, and it would be okay again, kind of like a bad dream.”

Julie looked down at the plate in front of her, and everyone became very quiet.

“Most of the people, including my family, never thought it would get as bad as it did. We thought the Nazis would see what good Hungarians we had been, at least that is what I remember the adults saying. But by the summer of 1944, it had all changed. They put us on those horrible trains and took us to those places of hell.”

“My great grandfather Shimon and my great grandmother were both sent to concentration camps too,” Julie said, almost apologetically.

David and Ellie looked surprised at what their daughter had just said. It was not like her to talk this way.

“What was her name--your great grandmother?”

“I just know her first name was Ruth,” Julie answered.

“Her name was Ruth Sillstein,” Or interjected.

“And she was sent to Auschwitz.” Emma said, nodding her head.

“How do you know that?” Or looked surprised.

“Well, well, well,” Emma exclaimed, “I guess this is what you call one of those divine appointments by God.” Everyone became very quiet, waiting for Emma’s next word.

“I knew your mother, Or.” She then looked at Julie. “She was a lovely woman and looked a bit like you, young lady. Yes, Ruth Sillstein was a lovely lady, and she had a very good heart. We even shared a bunk together, with some others, in that pit of desolation. She was the one who first began to tell me about my wonderful Jewish Messiah, Yeshua.

“She had a small Bible she had smuggled in, and whenever she could, at night, she would share the scriptures with us. What light and joy would come from those moments. I can still remember! Many of us came to believe in Yeshua because of Ruth. No matter how bad things got, I could always see this peace on your mother, and I desperately wanted to know the one who gave her this peace. Of course she faced persecution for witnessing to us about Yeshua, but her joy in sharing the Lord with us was far greater than any persecution that she had to endure.

“I was spared the gas chambers because I could speak different languages--a gift God gave me. And the camp guard used me to instruct his children, at least till near the end, and then I just managed to hang on till the camp was liberated. Your mother was sent on one of those horrible marches, and I never knew what happened to her.”

Or looked up from the table, with tears in his eyes. “God worked many miracles in my mother’s life--amazing things. I am sure she told you how she had left her baby, that was me, with some good people, because she could not bear the thought that if the Nazis came for her, they would also take her child.”

Or smiled, his eyes still teary. “But after the war God worked his greatest miracle for my mother, when he brought her back to my father, and to me. I listened to them tell the story many times. My mother never fully gained her strength back, and she went to be with the Lord when I was twelve years old. But more than anyone I’ve ever known, my mother enjoyed every day she lived. She was always so thankful for life.”

Softly, Angela put her hand over her husband’s, as he lowered his head. No one said anything for a moment.

“Yes, that is how I remember your mother. I am so pleased to hear the rest of the story,” Emma said with a slight tremor.

“I offer my home to any Jew who can find us up here in the hills, because I lived through it, and...”

“Mom,” Cynthia walked over and put her hand on her mother’s shoulder, “you look a little weary. Maybe you need to go to bed?”

“Yes,” Emma said. “It has been quite an evening, and I am feeling a little tired. Perhaps, I will see you all before you leave in the morning, but if not, God be with you and keep you safe. Good night, dear family.”

The family all sat down at the table where they had eaten the night before. It was very early. The sun was just starting to rise, and the temperature outside was cold and crisp. Roger held the map out in front of him, as he poured himself another cup of hot coffee. “From here,” he said, “we will shoot straight down to North Carolina, then over to the coast and hopefully right on down to Brunswick. If all goes as planned we should be there by nightfall. My prayer is that we will not run into any bad weather, or any road problems.

“Mine too,” Sammie agreed.

Everyone turned their attention to Cynthia, as she came through the kitchen door with a cart, and on it was a wonderful, old fashioned country style big breakfast. There were fresh farm eggs, and blueberry muffins, hash brown potatoes, beef sausages and toast.

“Wow!” Bennie exclaimed. “What a breakfast.”

“I had a dream last night,” Julie spoke up rather suddenly.

“What was it about, Sweetie,” David asked his daughter as he bit into a piece of sausage and toast.

“It was very scary and strange,” Julie answered her father. “I was being pushed onto this train with all these other people. They spoke a language I did not understand, and everyone was scared. Some of the people were screaming and fainting. There were these terrible men in black uniforms, and they had mean dogs. The train they pushed us onto was very dark and it smelled terrible. We were all squeezed together. I began to cry out to Jesus to help me. But before I woke up I saw this huge field of people, miles and miles of them. They were dressed in uniforms with black stripes, and they were holding their arms up, and crying out for someone to come and help them. I was glad when I woke up.” Julie looked down, twisting a strand of blond

hair around her fingers.

Or looked across the table at Emma, but her eyes remained steadfast on Julie.

“Don’t be afraid, dear one,” she said. “God obviously has something planned for you, and he is beginning to prepare you for it. I believe one day you will have great compassion for people. This is something only God knows how to do in us.”

Emma then looked at David and Ellie. “It has happened before--a couple of times to my daughter, Pattie. Sometimes things in the spirit are passed down to our children, even our grandchildren, just like a certain gene might be in the physical, and they see things that a parent or grandparent might have experienced in the Holocaust. It’s almost like a flash-back, but not quite.

“Many years ago my youngest daughter had a couple of very profound visions. She described something that I had a clear memory of in the Holocaust, but had never told anyone.

“But don’t be alarmed, dear.” She looked at Julie. “God has you in the palm of his big hands, and he is watching over you for good--just like he did your great grandma.” Emma stood up from the table. “Now, before you all leave, I would like to pray a blessing over you. She then prayed:

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you his peace. Amen.”

Emma and Cynthia stood on the porch as the family got in their cars to leave. They waved goodbye to them until they disappeared down the road.

“What an amazing evening that turned out to be.” Or sat next to Angela in the back seat of Roger’s car. “Can you believe it? She actually knew my mother.” He looked out the window as they drove down the winding road. “I wish Pop could have met her too. He would have loved to have heard what she said about mom.”

“Well,” Angela said, “I am sure they will meet in heaven.” She smiled at her husband.

“I am sure of it.” Or laughed out loud.

“You know, I think I am going to sleep a little more,” Angela said, as she leaned her head back against the seat cushion. “I still feel so tired.”

While Angela was sleeping Roger stopped the car, and Or moved up front with him, so they could continue to talk about the plans for the day. He could see Sam’s truck behind them, and David’s Bronco was close behind Sam’s truck. He breathed a sigh of relief that so far everything had gone so well.

They had only been on the road, after leaving Emma’s house, for a couple of hours when Or’s cell phone rang.

“Hey, Or.” Sam sounded stressed. “I’ve got a problem with my car. It’s starting to smell like something is burning. There is a town up ahead. I am going to have to find a service station real quick.”

“You think it’s that bad?”

“Yeah! I’ve got to stop now, or I am going to be burnt toast.”

“Hmm, I reckon you got yourself a bad one here.” The service station was small--a one man job. But Sam had been told that it was the only one in the town where they had stopped. David and Roger had parked near-by.

“Your water pump is plumb gone bad. Good thing you done got here when you did. So where’s you all headed? And where you all from?”

Sammie did not like all the questions. This guy made him a little uncomfortable. “So can you fix it?” Sam tried to not sound impatient.

“Maybe two, three days. So what’s the big hurry?” The mechanic wiped his greasy hands on his well used overalls. “You runin from the law or sumthin?”

“No.” We aren’t running from anyone. Sam was not even trying to conceal his impatience anymore. His stomach was turning into a tight ball. “We have some family down south, and we need to get going!”

“Not a good time to be out and about, ya know?”

“I will give you double the amount if you can fix it today.”

“Well, Mr....? Wha’d ya say your name was again? Now, double the amount, and I might get it fixed by tomorrow, no guarantee though.”

“How much to do it today?”

“Oh, I figure a thousandotta get me a used pump, and might get it back to you in a few hours.”

“Okay, it’s a deal. If I can have it this afternoon?”

“Sure Mr...? Wha’d ya say your name was again?”

“I didn’t. Come on! My family is waiting for me.”

“I am really sorry, Or. The mechanic in New Haven told me the truck was in good shape. Listen, I want you guys to go ahead of me. I will catch up with you later. I’ll keep you up-dated, as to what is happening here. And I’ve got the phone number I need in Brunswick.”

“I don’t like the feel of this place, Sammie.” Or looked around the small cluttered garage.

“I don’t either, but I don’t exactly have any options.”

“Okay, but I want you to call every hour--till you get out of here.”

“Just pray,” Sammie spoke to his brother, “that this guy will do what he says he will do.”

After they had been on the road for an hour, David spoke to Roger on his phone. “Have you been watching those dark, snow clouds? I just heard a pretty serious snow report. I am especially worried about Sam.”

“I know,” Roger said, “but all we can do is keep going and pray!”

“This is strange,” Roger said to Or. “It looks like a road stop up ahead. I’ve not been told anything about this, not on this road. We are only about half an hour from the coast.”

“So what do you think?”

“Not sure, but I think that little he-haw mechanic might be getting a kick-back for telling the police if he sees anything suspicious. But then again they might just be tightening things up.”

“So what do we do?”

“Pray!” Roger said.

The dark gray state patrol car sat horizontal in the middle of the road, as a block to traffic. The trooper stepped out of his car as



Roger's car approached him.

"Yes, officer, what can I do for you?" Roger handed the man his driver's license.

The state trooper was tall and good looking, with a square jaw and broad shoulders. He took the license from Roger--his lips adjusting to a smile of authority. "Milton," he said, "Roger Milton?"

"Yes, sir."

"What is your destination, Mr. Milton? And is that your family in the back seat?" He reached in the back and took Or's identification card from him.

"Just good friends, sir. We're going down south to see some family and take a little break. Is there anything wrong?"

The trooper handed Or's card back to him. "Your name is Cohen—that correct?"

"Yes, that's my family name."

The trooper eyed him suspiciously. "It's kind of strange to be out and about right now, even on a family visit?" The trooper examined the car while he questioned Or. "Don't you know there's a lot of instability and terrorism in the country right now? We're especially looking for home-grown terrorists.

"Now," he spoke to Roger, "I want you to pull to the side of the road, while I go visit those people in the car in back of you."

Angela looked at her husband. "What are we going to do?"

"Please Lord, help us," Or spoke under his breath.

After a couple of minutes the trooper strolled back to Roger's car--one hand on his side pistol and the other hand occupied with a cell phone. "You folks need to get comfortable. Someone will be coming this way, pretty soon, and they will decide if you are to continue on your way, or go back home. You know," he said, lowering his head to talk to Or and Angela, "it's not a good time to be driving around. I already see there is concern by the local authorities that these other folks have taken their children out of school."

"They haven't taken them out permanently," Or answered him quickly. "We're just going to be gone for a short time."

“Uh-huh,” the tall trooper responded, as he looked at something he had scribbled on a sheet of paper. He then turned and walked back to his car.

Or looked out the back window at David, and shook his head with concern, but he turned around quickly as the patrol radio in the trooper’s car began to blare. A moment later the state trooper jumped out of his car and came over to Roger. “There is some kind of an emergency in a town not far from here. They need all the patrol cars. You,” he pointed his finger in Roger’s face, “stay here. Someone will be here after a while. You understand?”

“Yes,” came Roger’s immediate response.

David got out of his car and walked over to where Roger was standing. “What are we going to do?”

“I feel strongly,” Or said as he joined the other men, “that we need to make a break for it, and get out of here. If we don’t do something now, then it may be too late for any of us to escape.” They all looked at each other with uncertainty on their faces. “We can’t go back,” David agreed. “We don’t have any choice.”

At that moment Or’s phone rang. It was Sammie, and he was back on the road. His car, at least for the time being, was running. Or began to tell him what had just happened.

“You can’t come this way, Sam. It’s too dangerous. You’ll have to check the map for another less traveled road. We are going to make a break for it. So pray for us, and hopefully we’ll see each other in Brunswick. I love you brother. Just remember we are in God’s Hands.”

Or looked at Roger and David. “Come on. Let’s go!”

“Dad I am hungry,” Bennie complained. “Me too,” Julie agreed.

“Sorry, guys. I know it’s been long, but we’re only about an hour from Brunswick. Maybe we will pick up a hamburger on the way to where we are staying.”

“You want me to drive?” Ellie asked her husband. “You look really beat.”

“No,” David answered her. “But when we get into Brunswick start looking for Norwich Street. Once we get onto that main drive then it’s not far to where we are going. We are going to need to do something about these cars. They have become a glaring problem for us. I guess you understand that we are now wanted by the law. But then it’s only been by the Grace of God that we’ve gotten this far.” He reached down for Ellie’s hand, “You’ve been great sweetie, really great.”



## 25 Helping Hands

“...done unto one of the least of these, my brethren...”

Matthew 25:40

It was dark when David and Roger pulled their cars into the back parking lot of a small steeple church. Roger had already called the pastor, who would be their next contact, and told him they would be later than they had expected. They had only parked for a few minutes when another car pulled up next to them. Roger got out of the car.

“Pastor Briggon?” he asked.

“That’s me! Robert Briggon, but just call me Pastor Rob.” He got out and shook David and Roger’s hands. “Follow me, and I will show you where you will be staying.”

The small cabin was set back in the woods. It was part of the church property, but used very rarely anymore.

“Come on in.” Pastor Rob opened the door for the exhausted family. The cabin was nice and clean and warm and cozy.

“We were told,” Pastor Rob said, “that there would be six adults and two children?”

“Well,” Or answered him, “hopefully there will be. My brother had some car problems back in West Virginia. That reminds me, I need to call him and find out where he’s at.”

“Are you all hungry?” Pastor Rob asked them.

“Yes,” Bennie piped up.

“Well, young man, I think we need to do something about that.” Rob then looked at David, “Why don’t I run up the street and get you all some hamburgers and fries, and maybe a milkshake for you.” He smiled at Bennie.

“You will find a few things in the cupboards, and some milk and things in the fridge, but I’m not really sure what kind of shopping has been done. The Lord woke me up the other night, and told me you would be coming. And then one of the people in the underground also gave us some information. Some pretty decent people God has raised up to help our Jewish brethren in these hard times.” Rob smiled again

at the tired family. “You need to know we are not telling many people that you are here--except for a few others. I’ve learned over the years that it’s always best to keep the lid on things, as much as you can. I hope you find this little cabin comfortable. I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

“I just crossed over the border from South Carolina into Georgia--a little town not too far from Savannah.” Sam spoke to his brother on the phone. “But it looks like I’ve been taken for a ride. I am not really too surprised.

Whatever that guy did to the truck only lasted for a few hours. The engine is starting to burn again, and it keeps cutting out. He probably jerry-rigged it to just get me down the road a bit. I am really glad to be out of there. It started snowing in West Virginia pretty heavy, but I got out of there before it got really bad. But right now that’s not even my biggest concern.”

“What’s up, Sam?”

“The last gas station I pulled out of I saw a couple of drones in the sky, not too far away from where I am. If they get me in their sights then I am done for. It’s all over! Right now they aren’t fooling around with anyone. They will just lazer you with one shot and take you out in an instant. So pray that God will keep me hid from those deadly eyes in the sky.

I am going to run the car until it stops, and then, hopefully, before it quits altogether, I will stick it off in the woods someplace, and then take the license. Before we left New Haven, I felt I was to put my bike in the back of the truck. Kind of interesting how God works, isn’t it? And so I’ll just start peddling down your way. Maybe I’ll get there sometime early in the morning--if all goes well.”

“Don’t be in a panic, Or said to his brother. “The plans have changed a little. We will not be leaving for a couple of days. It’s a good thing God knows everything ahead of time.”

“Well, that’s good news--at least for me. Everyone around here is asking a lot of questions. They have done a good job, evidently, getting the people pretty paranoid in believing that their neighbor is a terrorist. Don’t even think I’ll stop for something to eat--just keep pushing on through. I’ll keep in touch.”

“Love you brother,” Or said. “See you soon. It’s a good place that God has provided for us. Nice man, this Pastor Robert Briggon.”

It was four o’clock in the morning when Sam knocked on the door to the cabin. It was pouring down rain, and it was cold. Or had been expecting Sam after giving him directions on the phone.

“My God.” Or pulled his exhausted and wet brother off of the porch, and hugged him, getting his own clothes wet.

“The car went for about another thirty miles.” Sammie spoke with a shivering voice. “I chucked it in the woods before it quit altogether, and then pulled my license off it. I don’t think it will be found for a while. I covered it up with branches. I rode my bike the rest of the way. It’s been raining half the time. I am sure glad the Lord showed me to bring my bike along.”

“Come on in, and sit down,” Or said to his brother. “I am going to get you some dry clothes, and then fix you something to eat. You must be starved. I will bring you up to date on some of the exciting things we have been through, after you get some sleep.”

When David and Ellie woke up it was still pouring down rain. They were both really glad to see Sammie sleeping on the couch, snoring loudly.

They sat down with Ben and Julie and had some dry cereal and toasted muffins. And then David took out of his backpack his Bible and they read some scriptures and prayed together, and they thanked God again for getting them there safely. Ben and Julie did not complain. A short time later someone knocked on the door.

“Good morning, ya’all! My name is Edith, but you can call me Eedie.” The energetic woman who had just knocked, began talking before the door was shut. “So here’s the news--at least what I have been sent to tell you, and what ya’ all need to know.”

All of the family, including Sam, had gathered around the kitchen table to listen to Edith. It was about ten o’clock in the morning. Eedie was not a very big lady, but she had the voice of a commander. Her blond hair was wet from the rain and she had clipped it back from her face. “Well,” she spoke with a strong Georgian accent, “they are beginning to tighten things up. They could declare Martial Law any day now.”

“Oh, Lord,” Or exclaimed.

Eddie continued. “When they do, all of the country’s resources--including you and me--will come under the total control of the government. It will be awhile yet before everything is tied together, but it won’t take them long to do it. They have been working on this plan for sometime. So let’s just pray they hold back for a day or two.

“Everything is still on for getting you out to the boat. We will just have to schedule our route a little different. Many of the road blocks, set up by TSA agents, are already in place. Some of our own local law enforcement bailed out of police work when they saw this freight train coming down the tracks--not all, but some. Anyway, they sent the Feds down here, but they don’t know diddly-squat when it comes to the back woods of Georgia. But we’ll talk more about that when you meet your captain. He’s a God-fearing man, and not easily intimidated.

“Also need to tell you that Pastor Rob will probably not be coming over here anymore. We need to keep the fact that you are staying here kind of under our cap, if you know what I mean? Most of the people in our church feel like the Pastor does, but you never know when a plant may have been sent in. The government is doing that now in a lot of the churches. So, like I said, we want to keep it quiet that you folks are staying here.”

“The first thing we need to do,” Eddie continued to talk, “is get rid of your cars. Even though we are pretty well hidden back here in the woods, those cars can be seen by the police, if they are looking for em. And you never know when one of them drones might get em in their radar sight. I know a guy who will take them down the road a bit, and then dump them into the lake. It’s deep. So it will be sometime before anyone discovers them. The fewer things you have to pin-point you, the better.”

“Good-by Bronco,” David said weakly.

“It’s going to get real serious in the next week or so. It will take them a while to really get the ball rolling, so to speak, and that will be good for all of us. You know,” Eddie pushed a strand of wet hair back from her face, “I love Zion with a passion, and I know that God is jealous for her, and I also believe that it’s a good thing you all are getting out now. It will be much harder pretty soon, and unfortunately

that's when most of the Jewish people will be waking up and wanting to get out." She smiled and then took a long sip of water. "But then I know that God is also going to make a way for them too--even through it will be harder. He promised in his Word: 'And they will come trembling from the west.' Do you know that scripture?"

"It's in Hosea," Or answered.

"That's it--Hosea 11:10. God's Jewish people have grown too comfortable here in America, and I am afraid they've also forgotten the Word of God. And the Church is in a pretty big mess too. They have been running after every titillating thing that floats by, and not abiding in the Word of God, but enough of my preaching. I've got to get back to my job. In the next few days there's going to be some changes; and the job we have today, may not be the job we have tomorrow.

"Now, just so you know, they have all the major intersections blocked, and they're checking everyone. I understand you had a little run in with the law, before you got here? So they will for sure be looking for ya' all. And I guess you know that pretty soon everyone is going to have to take a new ID. I am pretty sure it will be the chip--implanted in your hand. I don't know if this thing is really the mark, that is talked about in the book of Revelation, but it really don't matter." Eedie chuckled. "Any government that says you have to take this thing to live? Well, sorry, I ain't going there. When I go out of this world it will be in a flame of love for my Beloved, not a whimper." She laughed out loud. "Praise be to the Living God. Gotta go. See you all later."

The next day was Shabbat. Roger and Or's family all sat in the living room. They sang praise songs, and read verses from the Bible, and they all thanked God for his loving kindness and his great mercy in their lives. They all held hands, and even Julie and Ben smiled as they felt the presence of the Holy Sprit come down upon them.

Early in the afternoon Pastor Rob stopped by for a couple of minutes. He told them they were invited to the Sunday church service the next morning. "Not sure, exactly, who all will come, or what is going to happen? But we've decided to come together as the family of God and give Him our praise." Rob smiled as he walked to the door. "Sometimes you just have to do, what you have to do, and stand



strong no matter what happens. So that's what we are going to do."

The next day Or and Angela and Sammie walked into the small chapel and sat down in the back row. They listened to some anointed worship music and felt the presence of the Lord. They were glad they had decided to come.

The rest of the family had stayed at the cabin. They had not wanted to be seen as too big a group. After the worship was over Pastor Rob began to share a message on the power of the Blood of Jesus, and on resurrection life. It was a good sermon.

Towards the end of his ministry he talked to the people of his congregation on not fearing what the days ahead might hold for them. "Have a courageous heart," he said, "and do not fear. For greater is He that is in you."

Before he was finished speaking he nodded his head to a couple of men who had just walked in and had sat down in the front row. "Welcome," he said, "to our church."

Shortly after Pastor Rob had said these words the two men walked up onto the platform and took the microphone out of the Pastor's hands.

"This church," he blared over the mike, "has now been confiscated. It will now be used by the protective government of America for it's unifying and rehabilitating purposes. All religious services, everywhere, will now be brought together for that which is beneficial for the community, and people will finally be told the truth. Everyone here is ordered to leave now." He then took Pastor Rob by the arm and led him forcefully out of the church.

Or and his wife and brother walked quickly out the back side door, and disappeared into the woods. They watched for a moment as the government agents led the pastor and a couple of other people, outside, and then put them into a security car and drove off.

"Wow!" Sammie said, as they sat down under a tree and waited till everyone was gone. "I can hardly believe this is happening. It's so unreal! These are the kinds of things you hear about in places like China, and what Dad talked about."

“Well, brother, it is happening. Come on. Let’s go back to the cabin and we will pray for Pastor Rob.”

When they got back to the cabin they were surprised to see a rather unusual man sitting at the table with David and Ellie, and Roger.

“Or,” David spoke, “this is our captain. He is the one who will be taking us on his boat across the ocean to Israel.” The man was dressed in jeans and had on a long sleeved, green plaid shirt. He had medium length hair, and wore a sailor’s cap. He looked about fifty-five years of age.

“Good morning.” He stood up from the table and reached out to shake everyone’s hands. “My name is Charlie Clydman. The first thing I want to tell you,” he jumped in, “is that we are getting out of here tomorrow morning. You will be leaving early, before daybreak. Eedie will come and get you, and take you to her boat. Not too smart to drive anymore, so it will be a bit of a walk. Hope you are all up to it? She will bring you out about five miles to my boat. It’s anchored near a small island.

“Now, you’re probably going to want to know a little something about me, and about the boat you will be cruising in for a little over one week. The Lion of Judah is a good sized trawler, and can easily carry up to forty or more people, and it’s certainly big enough to cross the ocean. I’ve been working on this boat for a few years now. Those were my instructions from the Lord.” He laughed. “Kinda like Noah, huh?”

“I’ve spent most of my life on the sea, one way or the other. I’ve crossed the ocean a few times. I know what I am doing, and I’ve got a pretty good crew. But you may be wondering just why am I doing this? Well, first let me explain to you that I am a retired businessman, and I have nothing I want to do more than spend my money for the Kingdom of God, and right now God wants his people in Israel.

“I saw what was coming to our country years ago. Heh,” he chuckled to himself, “and so I began investing in gold and silver, and told others to do the same thing. I don’t trust governments, never have. They made it illegal to own gold in the 1930s. My pop told me so. That’s why the government could inflate the currency and

stimulate the economy out of the Great Depression.” He laughed again. “You can inflate a federal reserve note, but you sure can’t inflate a \$20 gold piece. So I have my currency where they will never find it. And some of it is in heaven.” He chuckled again.

“But that’s all unimportant stuff. This is what matters. One morning, during my devotion time, I hear the Lord say to me, ‘My people, Israel, are going to need you to help them get out of this country.’ So I said, ‘Lord, how can that be?’” Well, to make a long story short. I started doing some investigation, and I found out that God has people all along the east coast, and many places in America who have been planning this for a long time--to provide places of refuge for the Jewish people, and also securing ways for them to get back to Israel. I’ll be dog-gone, I thought, and God wants me to be a part of this great adventure. You know, I’ve always thought that maybe God is giving His church another chance to not blow it so bad--like we did during the time of Hitler. There were too many people during that time--people who called themselves Christians--who did nothing to help the Jewish people get out of Nazi occupied countries.

“It’s important that you know this is not some kind of a game. It is very deadly and serious. Some of you saw that this morning when they came and took our Pastor away! If this goes wrong for any reason, then it’s all over for all of us. I guess you know that!”

“I think,” Or said, “that we are gaining a fast understanding of how really serious this is for all of us.”

“Good. Because it’s not going to be a picnic, let me tell you that right now. So if any of you want to back out, there is still time to say “no.”

David and Ellie looked at each other. “No,” Ellie responded, “we aren’t backing out now, and God has already shown us that he is going before us, every bit of the way.” David reached over and squeezed his wife’s hand.

“When my God tells me something is important, I listen with both ears. Let the chips fall where they may.” Charlie brought his hands together for a second and closed his eyes. “They took our Pastor away this morning, but I know he’s not a man who walks in fear. God be with him and his family.”

“I think we all need to try and get a little sleep,” Or spoke to his family. “Eddie will be here early in the morning. We’ve come this far, and God will take us the rest of the way.”

It was four o’clock in the morning when Eddie knocked on the door to the cabin. It was very dark, and a cold breeze had started to blow. She was dressed in black leather pants and a black jacket. As soon as she entered the cabin she began to give orders to the nervous family. “I hope you all brought some good shoes. Ellie, you and Angela need to tie a scarf around your head--keep the hair out of your eyes, while we walk through the swampy land, that we’re gonna have to cover. And you, young lady,” she pointed to Julie, “pull those pant legs down and button up your coat. No time to be worrying about what you look like now. Nobody is gonna see ya anyhow.

“We’ll be tromping through heavy forest--lots of bugs too. I’ve got some mosquito repellent, if you don’t have any with you.

“Now,” Eddie sat down with a glass of juice in her hand, “it’s about a two mile hike through the woods to where my boat is tied up. I took it out last night and beached it where it should not be noticed. During this last week I’ve deliberately been taking my boat out almost every evening--just so they get use to seeing me out there. The back of my boat has a pretty large covering over it, and that’s where you all will be. The only person the Coast Guard will see is me. But just pray that we don’t have any surprise inspections. I don’t think we will. They usually just check on the boats they aren’t familiar with. And I know you have been praying too. So, if ya all are ready, let’s be on our way. I want to get out to Charlie’s boat before things get too active on the water.”

Before they left the cabin, Or went over to shake Roger’s hand, but instead gave him a big hug. “You’ve been faithful, my friend. You’ve got a big reward waiting for you in heaven.”

“Well, I don’t know about that?” Roger chuckled. “But I will be praying up a storm for all of you. I am sure gonna miss you guys. We have been through quite an adventure together.”

The rest of the family all came over and hugged Roger--everyone except Bennie. He stood off by himself, with tears in his eyes.

“Hey, buddy,” Roger said, “don’t I get a hug from you too?”

“I want you to come to Israel with us, Roger. I am sure they won’t mind if you come too?”

“Well, my little friend. There is just one small problem. You see, I have a wife and son back home, and they would be real sad if I didn’t come back. So come on over here and give me a big hug I will remember, and then you all need to be on your way.”

Or spoke up, “Lord, protect Roger, and bring him back to his family safely. Roger, we will stay in touch when we are able, and contact you from Israel.”

“Come on!” Eedie spoke up with some frustration. “We don’t have any more time for this stuff. We gotta go.”

It was still dark when they had walked into the marshy forest. They had only walked about an hour when the ground became very wet and spongy.

“Ug.” Ellie pulled her shoe and leg up out of a wet bog. Mud was clinging to her pants, all the way up to her knees.

“You guys are doing great.” Eedie turned around, cheering them on, “but keep your voices down. There are some houses not too far from here, and people will be getting up pretty soon.”

“Oh, mom,” Julie whispered, “I wish I was home. This is horrible.”

David put his arm around his daughter. “No, you don’t sweetie. You really don’t want your life to come under the direction of some kind of out-of-control government. That was the main reason why your mother and I decided we had to leave. We have to protect you and Bennie, and I am not about to let some thugs get their hands on you.”

“But what about everyone else--my friends and things? What’s going to happen to them?”

“We will pray, honey!” Ellie turned to answer her daughter.

“We are going to be coming to the beach pretty soon,” Eedie said. “I’ll go first and make sure it’s safe. David, you listen for my whistle, and then you all come running.”

The dawn was just starting to break as Or and his family ran to the beach, and to the shallow water where Eedie had her boat anchored. In the dim light Or could read the name ‘Jealous Fire’ on the side of

the boat. They all waded out a few feet to the boat, climbed up the steps and got in. David stayed in the water to help Eedie push it out a little further, and then they both got in. The anchor was pulled up. “Hang on,” Eedie shouted to them from the cockpit as she started up the engine. “We’re on our way!”

Or watched out the boat window as the shoreline became more and more distant. He prayed silently. “Dear Father in heaven. I hope I have done what is right for my family. I feel you are leading us. I do not know if we will ever see America again, and I don’t know what is waiting for us in Israel, but I know that you do.”

“My dear Savior,” he closed his eyes for a moment. “Thank you for all that you have done for us, and for all that you are going to do. Amen. Oh, and please Lord, help Julie. This is going to be a real challenge for her.”

Charlie’s trawler was large. There was a full kitchen downstairs, and plenty of room to sleep about thirty people, not counting the crew. There were three men who served as Charlie’s crew members, and also his wife, Anita, who had joined the crew. Charlie had already bragged about what a great cook she was. There were twenty-five other people on board, besides Or and his family, and they were all grateful to be going back to Israel.

“This is not a luxury ship,” Charlie had said. “But if everyone will work together,” he had cautioned all of them, “the job will get done.”

In a short time they had cruised and had made it safely out into international waters. Two days later they listened to the sad news that Martial Law had just been declared in America.

The first three days out at sea, Julie, Ellie and Sam were terribly sea-sick, even without being in really rough waters. But by the fourth day they had gained their sea legs and felt strengthened. Occasionally, Charlie would point out schools of porpoises and even whales, swimming not too far from the boat.

Every day, before the evening meal, Or would sit with his family and read from the Bible, and they would pray. A couple of the younger people on the boat showed some interest in what Or was reading and praying. One young man had made the comment that

“he understood his need to go back to Israel, but had never been drawn to the Bible, or to any kind of religion.” But he was now beginning to think more seriously about the “Creator of all things.”

One day Or was looking out at the expansive blue ocean in front of him, and a vague memory came back to his mind. He remembered when his father had once lifted him up and showed him a big ocean. He wondered if it was when they had left Europe for America? And now, after all these years, he was going home, not to Europe—but to his ancient homeland, Israel.

Or had visited Israel a few times, and had reunited with his Aunt Lillie--although he had always thought of her as his big sister. She had gone to Israel as a young woman, and had married and raised her family there. She was older now, but still in pretty good shape. Or had also met and visited many times, with Yacov and his wife, Hadassah. They now had a very large family: three daughters, two sons, six grandchildren, and four great grandchildren. Yacov had once mentioned, in passing, that it had been his father’s desire to have many grandchildren. “Every Jewish child,” his father Nathaniel had said, “will be a testimony to the defeat of Hitler’s plan to annihilate the Jewish people.” Or had also met Brian—Michael and Rachel’s youngest son—who was a Messianic pastor in Israel. Michael and Rachel had both gone home to be with the Lord a few years before his last visit.

Or also remembered when he was last there how Yacov had talked about his brother, Aaron. He had come to Israel at almost the same time as Yacov, and had become a successful and well loved doctor. But he had been killed some years later in a tragic terrorist attack. Or felt good that he knew the history of this wonderful family in Israel, and that they were all interconnected with each other. He looked forward to getting to know them even better.

Charlie had explained what their route would be. When they reached the other side of the Atlantic ocean they would go through the Strait of Gibraltar and into the Mediterranean Sea, and then down to the coast of Israel. They would dock at the northern port of Haifa. He had also told them what would happen when arriving in Israel. They would be held as refugees for a few days until it was clear to the authorities that they had definite places to stay. Or knew that Yacov

was well known in Israel, and also highly respected, and the fact that they would be staying with him was important.

Besides having an established business, Yacov was also a well known Messianic leader in the community of Jerusalem. In normal times being a Messianic Rabbi was not something that was looked on favorably by people in government positions. But right now, Israel was anything but normal. They were holding on by a string. And there was a flood of people who were trying quickly to get out of Europe and America and immigrate to Israel. The Israeli government offices were swamped with applications, and they did not have the time or the manpower to do a complete investigation of every person wanting to get into the country. Tens of thousands of Aliyah applications were pouring in every day, and Israel could not turn away any Jew, because of all the anti-Semitism that was sweeping the nations.

There was much confusion in the land of Israel, and most of the people knew that it would get worse before it got better. Israel had taken out Iran's nuclear facilities. Chemical weapons had been used against Israel by Syria, and Israel had retaliated with devastating force, and the world had gone ballistic. The truth no longer mattered. The ugly anti-Semitic demon that had been hiding for decades, under a civilized society, now came to the surface with new rage.

Many organizations, even nations, had increased their boycott of all Israeli goods. And there were many resolutions by the United Nations to try and force Israel to comply with all their new demands.

All of the Arab world was raging for vindication, and preparing a major counter attack against Israel. A United Nations peace accord had quickly been suggested, and most of Israel was crying out for peace and security, and was willing to do almost anything for this war-time scenario to end. The economy of Israel was in dire straits.

But the people of Israel, in these desperate times, were joining together like never before. They were volunteering their services and talents to help wherever they could. They had now let go of much of their pride and petty bickering to unite and save their country.



## 26 They Will Come With Singing

“I am Jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion...”

Zachariah 1:14

Two days before reaching the Straits of Gibraltar, a fierce early spring storm was drawing near to where the Lion of Judah had safely crossed the ocean.

Charlie was looking closely at the charts in front of him. “We’ve got less than a day to try and get to the edge of this gulf stream, before this bluster hits. I will do my best to get us out of the center of it. It looks like it’s going to be a real strong one. But we’ll handle it okay,” he assured everyone. “But if you’ve never rode out one of these storms, then you are in for a big thrill.”

Before nightfall the first strong waves had hit the boat. “Batton down the hatches,” Charlie yelled to the crew, “and hang on! The rest of you,” he pointed to David and Ellie, “get down below, and stay there.”

When the storm hit full force, Or and his family hung on for their lives. It was a huge storm. Forty-five knot winds, with gusts of up to fifty five knots, battered the boat; with thirty-five to forty foot waves breaking over the bow more than once. They would mount up as if going to heaven, and then plunge downwards, as if descending to the bottom of the sea. Everyone held on with all their strength to whatever was fastened down, and they all prayed.

**“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...  
yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death  
I will fear no evil, for thou are with me...”**

Only Charlie seemed confident that his boat would hold. And because of his skillful sailing he managed to bring them out of the storm before the night was over. As quickly as it had come upon them, the storm had past, and the sea became calm again. Everyone began to laugh and cry. “Thanks be to God,” one of the younger

travelers cried out. Charlie, with his wife next to him, stood up near the bow of the boat, and began to declare praises to God.

“Truly the Lord is a great God, great above all gods.  
In his hand are the deep places of the earth.  
The strength of the mountains belong to him.  
The sea is His, and he made it.  
O come let us worship, and bow down;  
Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.”

And then he began to sing an older song--his strong, deep voice belting out across the boat and the sea,

“You raise me up so I can stand on mountains!  
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas.  
And I am strong when I am on your shoulders.  
You raise me up to more than I can be...”

Everyone began to sing, feeling the morning sun on their faces and the joy of this new day.

Charlie steered the Lion of Judah through the narrow straits of Gibraltar. As they came through into the Mediterranean Sea everyone on the boat began to yell and cheer. A large school of dolphins went ahead of them, leaping into the air at their safe arrival. They were now only two days away from Israel.

Charlie walked into the coffee room of the boat, where Or and Angela were sitting. “I have some really bad news to tell you,” he said. “I just heard this news over the wire.” With a cup of coffee in his hand Charlie sat down at the table. “A huge earthquake has just happened in America. The Madrid fault has ruptured, and an 8.9 quake has hit with massive destruction. The last I heard it also set off a quake on the east coast, and something about a tsunami...”

The damage assessment is beyond anything we can imagine. I can’t tell you everything right now. The news is still coming in. But the initial reports are saying that this shattering earthquake has brought an already tottering economy crashing down.” He looked across the table

at Or and Angela. "Let's hold hands and pray," he said with much emotion. "Oh, Lord, we lift up our country, the United States of America, and we ask you for your great mercy..."

David put his arm around Ellie. Ben and Julie stood next to them, as they drew near to the Port of Haifa. Ellie had tears in her eyes. "We made it," she said. Or and Angela and Sammie stood near by. They were all watching as they came into the land of Israel. They were all filled with excitement, and anticipation, but also with sorrow. "What about America?" Bennie said out loud.

"I will be going back as soon as I can get a couple of repairs finished on my boat," Charlie told the family. "There are good people in America, and God is going to raise up his Church once again." He then began to prophesy:

"Our great and Mighty God is going to bring forth from the ashes of our country a people who will glorify his name. But first He will pour out his Spirit upon His Beloved Israel. He will restore to her the years the locusts have eaten.

Though bloody and bruised, He will bring her back to be the head and not the tail. And He will bring His people back to the land of Israel, and there He will reveal Himself to them. He will cleanse them with clean water, and they will be His people, and He will be their God.

He will also pour out his Spirit upon America--His wayward child. Yes, He will pour out his Spirit upon all the nations before the great and terrible Day of the Lord. And once again He will bless America with His loving kindness, and many will repent and turn back to the Lord. But our great and mighty God also speaks to this family." Charlie looked at the people seated in front of him.

"The Lord would say to you, 'I have brought you back to Israel. It is My plan and purpose, and it was always meant to be. It is here that you will finish your work for Me, before I come for My glorious bride. Be of good cheer. I have much planned for you.' "

*You shall Arise and have Mercy on Zion,  
for the time to favor her, yes, the set time is come.*

*Psalm 102:13*



## Epilogue

Or and Angela and Sam stood outside on Yacov's balcony--which extended well beyond the large and comfortable living room. They had now been in Jerusalem for three weeks. The view from Yacov's home in Yemen Moshe was spectacular. The afternoon sun had cast a golden glow on the chalky stones of the Old City wall. Below them was a lovely park and valley. They could see Jaffa Gate from where they stood, and also the busy traffic that whizzed back and forth on Hebron road.

David and Ellie and the kids were staying with Aunt Lill, at her house in the old and exclusive neighborhood of Abu tor, which was only a few blocks from Yacov's home. There had been room for everyone, and they had all been warmly greeted and received. Or had stayed a few times before at Yacov's home, during his past trips to Israel, and he knew of their warm hospitality.

Yacov and his wife Hadassah came in and sat down next to Or and Angela. Or was amazed at how healthy and fit Yacov looked. He was now eighty nine years old and Hadassah was eighty five, but they both looked more like seventy.

They had pursued good eating habits for many years, and almost every day, including Shabbat, they would go for a long walk, either down to the Old City, or around the neighborhood where they lived.

On Shabbat they would meet with the rest of their large family and their congregation for their Kehilah meeting inside the Old City. The Messianic Congregation that Yacov had first started, almost forty years before, was now a well established Jerusalem assembly. Yacov's grandson, Daniel, was now the pastor. They would meet every Shabbat in an old Christian church, just inside Jaffa Gate.

Or and his family had already gone with them on Shabbat a couple of times and were beginning to feel very much at home there. Julie and Bennie were also getting involved with the young people from the Messianic youth group.

Yacov brought a sip of rose wine to his lips. "Your father, Or, was a good man. I was sorry to hear of his passing on, but then how can we grieve for a loved one when he goes to his true heavenly home, and to be forever in the glorious presence of our Lord.

"He had a sure reward waiting for him in heaven. He was a tough kid, Shimon Cohen--yes, he was!" Yacov chuckled. "But then God knows how to mellow us all, doesn't He.

"I am so glad that the Lord allowed us to be reunited, and we became even better friends than we had been in the days of the ghetto. Shimon Cohen was a true servant of the Lord. And it was truly our gracious and loving God who miraculously brought your parents back together, after so much destruction."

Yacov looked past the others for a second, as if deep in memory. "She was a very special woman--your mother, that is. When we all believed that Shimon would not be coming back, I felt an obligation to watch over and protect Ruth--your beautiful mother. She was so delicate, and yet in many ways very strong. I asked your mother to marry me. I knew, of course, that she was still very much in love with Shimon, but I felt it was what I should do, and perhaps I too was a little in love with Ruth."

Again, Yacov looked away from the others for a moment. "But God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways like our ways. Your mother came to know her Messiah in a very special and unique way, and that was what was most important--not the love feelings of

a young, rebellious son. But then our God works in such wonderful and mysterious ways--doesn't He! Look at the beautiful jewel he has given me." Yacov reached down and took hold of Hadassah's hand. "He has given me a wife and wonderful mother for our children, far greater than I ever deserved."

Yacov then stood up and walked over to the railing around the patio. "Tell me, Or, do you feel anything different from when you were here before?"

Or said nothing for a few moments. "Well, I sense more of a brokenness on the people, and I think a greater desire to know their God. This is something I have not seen before. It's a very hard time in Israel."

"Hmm! Yes," Yacov murmured. 'Until the power of my people is broken,' right out of the Book of Daniel." He then pointed his hand in a direction southeast of the Old City. "Over there is a valley called ben Hinnom. You have probably even walked there. The Jewish people call it the valley of hell. Three thousand years ago, in that place, Israel offered their sons and daughters in the fire to Molech. Today, Israel is doing the same thing, but now in clean clinics or hospitals. Abortion is just a modern version of that same horror. (Jeremiah 7:30-31)

"You know," Yacov sat back down, "it was this terrible sin, and all the other idolatry in the land that brought the wrath of God down upon our people, and caused God to scatter us into all the nations. But He promised us that one day he would bring Israel back into their own land, and so he has! Yacov shook his head. "And he has also promised that one day the valley of ben Hinnom would be holy unto the Lord."

"But why," Or asked, "would God choose that valley, and why not the Temple Mount?"

"Israel was scattered to the nations because of the sins of idolatry, done by our people, primarily in the Temple, but also in the valley. But our God is a God of redemption. In their understanding of obedience to God and to the scriptures, the Temple Mount area will be the place where the Orthodox Jews will build their Temple, after the soon coming Arab war. But I believe we will see that God has

chosen the lowest place to bring his presence and his glory.

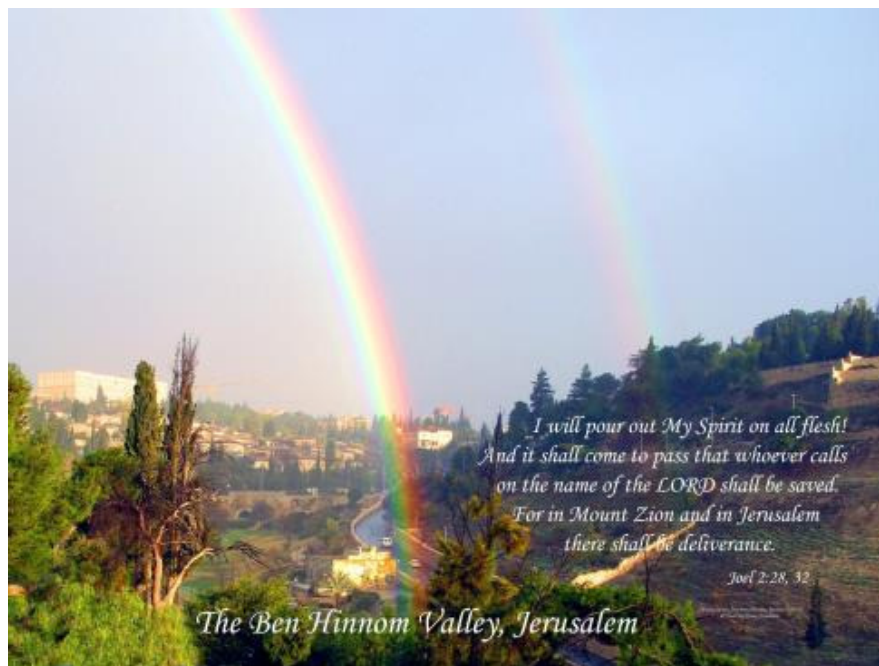
“It will be the most unlikely place imaginable for his people. God prophesied about this valley in Jeremiah 31:40. For Elohim wants his people, once again, to see and know the difference between just religion and his manifest presence! God has already made the ultimate sacrifice by sending his son, Yeshua, to pay for our sins. For God has always wanted a personal and intimate relationship with each of his sons and daughters.”

“And the whole valley of dead bodies and ashes,  
(the ben Hinnom valley, located south of Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem) and  
all the fields as far as the Brook Kidron, to the corner of the Horse

Gate toward the east, **shall be Holy to the Lord!**

It shall not be plucked up or thrown down anymore, forever.”

Jeremiah 31:40



“Years ago, I had two visions of that Valley,” Yacov continued.

“I saw it filled with people, with their hands up, praising God, and the Glory of the Lord was being poured out upon them. It will be great revival!” Yacov stood up from the table and took hold of the railing

as he spoke out over Jerusalem, “We do not deserve such a great deliverance--the Salvation of Yah! He rides on the clouds of the heavens and shows his kindness and mercy to us in each and every generation.” Hadassah and the others smiled at the fire that still came forth from the mouth of this old, but articulate preacher. “And now, once again, the enemies of Israel are at our gates wanting to destroy us. But they will not!”

“In this coming war of Gog and Magog that will soon be unleashed upon our land, the name of the LORD will be glorified, and the nations will once again learn that they are but men. After this great war it will not be too long before the great and terrible Day of Adonai will begin. But first there will be a great outpouring of his Spirit with a great revival, and many will be saved. For His mercy is very great.”

“But now, my dear friends,” Yacov turned to face Or and Angela and Sammie, “we shall prepare; for the day of Pesach will soon be upon us. We will gather with our Congregation and read the Haggadah, and once again celebrate the mystery of our deliverance out of the land of our enemies.

“Hmm,” Yacov reflected. “I remember a time, Or, when we gathered together, your family and mine, and we shared in the ghetto a very meager Pesach meal. And my father read the story of the Exodus. When you have nothing,” he sighed, “sometimes the glory of God is so much richer.”

Yacov then excused himself from the table. “Perhaps, during the days of unleavened bread, we will go for a drive up to the Galilee and let David’s youngsters enjoy Yeshua’s lake. But now I will go and read the Word of God for a bit, and then maybe take a little snooze.” He smiled.

(To be continued)





*Behold, He who watches over Israel  
neither slumbers nor sleeps.*

*Psalms 121:3*

*Jerusalem and the Temple Mount  
Viewed from the Temple Mount*

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD,  
“when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the  
treader of grapes him who sows seed. The mountains  
shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow  
with it.

I will bring back the captives of My people Israel;  
they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them.  
They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them;  
they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them.

I will plant them in their land, **and no longer shall  
they be pulled up from the land I have given them,”**  
says the LORD your God.

Amos 9:13-15

12/13/2016

# Escape from America

“We have been watching with what I can truly say has been great alarm at the rapid rise of **anti-Semitism** in our country. We all know that this most recent rise in anti-Semitic fervor has been ignited by what has just happened ten days ago in Israel ... ”



“I saw in a vision years ago of **the ben Hinnom Valley**, located just below Mount Zion Hotel in Jerusalem, and it was filled with people with their hands raised up, **repenting** and praising God, with the Power and Glory of the LORD being poured out upon them. It will be the Great Revival!” Jeremiah 31:40

