

## **THE PRODIGAL SONS**

### **Part Four**

"I can't believe we are on our way," Abe said.

"Why not?" Eliud said. "It's simple."

"How's that?" Michael replied.

"Well, your daughters-in-law are ready to settle down," Eliud continued.

"Your sons will do anything to please their new wives. And besides, now that they have gotten a taste for business, they have your whole fortunes to practice while we are gone."

"What do you mean your daughters are ready to settle down," Michael asked.

"Not everyone likes to travel...their whole life, constantly on the road," Eliud said. "I have learned over the years that it is better to let them settle down, and then..."

"And then..." Michael encouraged.

"Trust me," he said, "they will be ready to hit the road again given a couple of years."

"But that may be a problem for our sons," Abe challenged.

"Oh, your sons will be ready to travel with them," Eliud said confidently.

"How can you say that?" Michael asked. "We were counting on them to take over the family business."

"We were ready to travel in their place," said Abe.

"And that is why I believe your family are truly members of the Rechabite Tribe!" Eliud said confidently. "This journey that we are taking will confirm it."

"Is that why you were so willing to have us travel with you?" asked Abe.

"No. That is not why," said Eliud. "Maybe part of the reason. I figure that if you find your true calling in living the life of a nomad, you will know soon enough on this trip. But to tell the truth, I enjoy being with you, and conversing with you, and knowing that you are my distant relatives. It is always a blessing to have God fearing men as companions for the journey!"

"This is all new for me," said Abe, "but not for my brother." One could detect a sense of teasing which was always common among the brothers.

"Now you can make up for missed time," Michael said.

"If this trip is not in your blood," Eliud ventured, "you can always return to the land, and let your sons do all the work...since they are young," he said laughing.

"I am sorry that Miriam couldn't join us," Eliud said.

"After you wife, Sarah, decided to stay with her daughters," Michael added, "I guess they decided to leave us take off on our adventure!"

"But they both gave us nine months at the most!" Abe said rather puzzled.

"Ha, ha," the strong bodied man, Eliud, laughed. "You don't live with women, like me, so you don't know them as I do."

"What do you mean," Michael asked.

"Hopefully, nine months from now," Eliud said rather excitedly, "we should all be expecting grandchildren!"

The other two could see the dreamy look in Abe's face. "Grandchildren!" he said. "Think of it!" If they weren't riding the animals, Abe would surely be dancing in the road.

"You will like the first stop tonight," Eliud said. "I will try to pick the best places for you on this first trip. On the next trip we will hit the worse ones."

"You're kidding," Abe said laughing. "What could be more adventuresome than traveling under the stars at night?"

"As we near the desert," Eliud said, "we may have to travel mostly at night and sleep during the day. But this oasis that we are heading for, you may not want to leave!"

"Not to change the subject," Michael interjected, "but do you always travel with the whole family?"

"Yes!" Eliud said emphatically. "This is the first time that Sarah has decided to remain behind!"

"She must have felt a need," Michael said. "Newly-weds need all the help they can get in their first years together, and we are blessed that she is able and willing to be with them."

"I just hope the others will not find her intrusive," Eliud said.

"She is a wonderful woman, Eliud," Abe added. "She will be a great help for my wife, especially nine months from now," he smiled brightly.

"Sarah is a wonderful woman," Eliud said proudly and fondly. "She is the light of my life, and I will miss her on this trip. There was one time that she stayed behind, now that I remember."

"Oh," Abe said with a thoughtful but curious face. "Please tell us about it. We have the time," he laughed.

But Eliud started more seriously. "There was a young couple who asked to join us on our trip out of Bethlehem. This was many years ago. They were very poorly equipped for any journey. I couldn't believe that they were going to make a journey to Egypt with hardly anything to their name."

"Maybe they were running from someone," Michael ventured.

"I will tell you later who they were really running from," Eliud teased. "But my wife took a liking to them, since they were newly-weds from Nazareth...and they had a new born son!"

"Maybe running from their parents," Abe guessed.

"No, from King Herod!" Eliud admitted. Abe and Michael had a look of shock on their faces.

"Nothing good from that adulterer!" Abe said.

"I am getting ahead of the story," Eliud offered. "They were a wonderful couple, full of life, full of faith and the perfect parents!"

"Now, what made them the perfect parents, or any parent?" Abe asked interested.

"Because they were very much in love," Eliud answered. "You could see by how much Ben Yacob loved his wife, Miriam, by the tenderness they showed each other every day that we traveled with them all the way to Egypt and back!"

"That is a long enough time to get to know someone well," Michael admitted.

"Even my wife said," Eliud continued," that whenever she was in their presence, she felt in the presence of God."

"Who is this Ben Yacob?" Abe asked more curious now.

"A simple man, it seems to me," as Eliud tried to describe him. "He is called Joseph of the House of David, and he is quite the handyman."

"But not much help on a caravan to Egypt," Michael thought out loud.

"It didn't matter," Eliud defended him. "He always knew what to do whenever practical problems arose. And Sarah never had better help with all the girls when Miriam was around. She was like another mother to the girls. She was from the House of Levi, and her uncle was a Levitical priest." Looking up ahead, "We are almost there, now!"

"I can't wait to hear more of this Joseph Ben Jacob," Abe said.

Eliud quickly added, "I'm surprised you haven't heard about his son!"