

THE PRODIGAL SONS

Part Seven

"Now that was a wonderful meal, out here in the middle of nowhere," Abe thanked Telesphor profusely.

"You can thank my wife and my daughters," Telesphor said pleased at Abe's delight. "We do eat like this at every main stop we make, since it isn't very often."

"The spices are different but delightful," Michael added. "What say you, Eliud?"

"We are used to the spices," he replied. "They are part of our inventory that we trade in, and some are worth a fortune in other parts of the world."

"I guess that is why your caravan travels from one end of the world to the other," Abe said.

"I wonder if the caravans are what really unite the world in trade and peace," Michael wondered.

"We surely encourage it," Eliud said, "since it is good for business."

"Telesphor," any news from your end of the world?" Eliud asked.

"I was visited by our friend Simon of Cyrene," he answered. "He did mention you."

"I would not be surprised if they were still around, out there," Eliud said with a bit of confidence and a hint of security, looking nowhere in particular.

"My men informed me that he was," Telesphor said.

Abe looked at him with surprise. "It is good to see that you have these connections, even in the middle of nowhere."

"In the end," Telesphor explains, "there really is no middle of nowhere. We are all connected. I believe that the only difference that separates us is our own making."

"You are right, Telesphor," Michael joins in. "Even in my many short travels and business trips around our own little world I see many common traits that unites us, usually in our desires for a better life for ourselves and for our families."

"You have surely experienced them, Michael," Eliud said with interest. "But even those who are home bound still experience the world, just in a microcosm of relatives and friends."

"And still what variety," Telesphor adds.

"And a blessing," Abe admits.

"I'm not in touch as much as when I was younger," Michael admits. "Any news from your travels," he asks Eliud, "or you Telesphor?"

"We both know that Jerusalem always goes through its tumultuous problems," Eliud mentions, "since they are on main routs from Egypt to north of Syria and beyond."

"I always try to glean news for my officials, since it is best to know ahead of time what is happening," Telesphor said. "But things have quieted down since the Christians have been chased from Jerusalem."

"That is too bad," Eliud said. "I had hoped they would bring peace to that city of unrest."

"Now hopefully they will bring peace to the rest of the world," Telesphor added. "We have seen their peace spread throughout our land."

"We too have seen the affect on our people," Eliud said. "There is more brotherly love and understanding between our people and especially the people we deal with, yourself included," he added.

"I don't quite know what you are talking about," Abe finally spoke up. "This is all new to me. Are you talking about this Jesus ben Miriam, Eliud?"

"Why yes," he finally confirms. "That is what I wanted to talk about at the last oasis, but Simon interrupted, and we needed to move on a little further to put that area behind us for safety's sake."

"What make this place any safer," Michael asked confused.

"As you said," Eliud tries to ease them, "it is in the middle of nowhere. And trust me, we are well protected here with my men, Telesphor's men and Simon's."

"In fact," Telesphor added, "from now on until we reach Egypt, we will be quite safe. I am in no rush to head into Jerusalem with all their problems."

Looking at Eliud, "I do have several extra days to spend with you here before I have to move on."

"That would be great, since this is Abe's and Michael's first trip to Egypt," he explains. "I wanted to use this time to talk about our Jesus of Nazareth."

"Oh," Telesphor was delighted, "that will be wonderful. We both have much to tell."

"You mean this Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus ben Miriam are the same," Abe asked.

"One and the same," Eliud said. "Only his official name is Jesus ben Yosef of the House of David."

"Although most of his followers call him Jesus, the Christ," Telesphor added. "I guess that is what really connects us when I think of it. Simon of Cyrene, Eliud and myself are all followers of this Jesus Christ and his way of peace."

"I was blessed to meet a disciple called Paul while I was in Damascus," Eliud said. "I'll save that for another time."

"I got to know about this Jesus through my father who personally knew one of his disciples called Philip," Telesphor added.

"And Simon's grandfather, for whom he is named, claimed that he even carried the cross that Jesus died on," Eliud revealed.

"What cross?" Abe asked. "You mean he was executed by the Romans?"

"Yes," Telesphor said. "This man of peace, who was different from all the others who tried change the world by force, was put to death on the cross by the Jewish authorities."

"Well, I guess we should say, they arranged for the Romans to have him crucified on a cross, hoping the shame and curse would end his following," Eliud offered.

"It seems it did the opposite," Michael stated.

"You said this Simon is a follower," Abe asked.

"I guess you could put it that way," Eliud answered.

"He doesn't seem a man of peace to me," Abe added.

"The Roman's crucified his son," Eliud said bluntly. "He was caught in a round of persecutions encouraged by the Jewish leaders, after one of their leaders was killed, James, I think was his name?"

"I am sorry to hear that," Telesphor said. "We have accepted the Words of Jesus throughout our land without any bloodshed. Of course, it helped that our King also accepted him first through my grandfather other disciples that followed."

"So, your grandfather met this disciple, Philip, and was won over to this Jesus of Nazareth?" Michael asked.

"Oh, yes, it was even more simple than that," Telesphor was excited now. "He was traveling home from Jerusalem and Philip ran up to him and asked what he was reading?"

"Reading?" Abe asked.

"Yes, my father knew of this Messiah, through the writings of Isaiah," Telesphor tried to explain.

"I have read Isaiah and I am familiar with the messiah that is to come," Abe responded, "but I am still looking."

"Isaiah 42," Telesphor gave him the passage. "Look no more!"