

## Historical Fiction

### Chapter 3

With one hand, Shemreet wrestled a tight tunic over Micah, and with her other hand she wriggled a sandal onto Korah's fat little foot. By the time she started preparations for the morning meal I was feeling useless, just standing around when I could be helping. But I was not allowed to help. I was unclean. Just then, I noticed Yosef walking away from our little wagon and mother nodding for me.

"Tikvah," she said to me, as I neared the back of the wagon. "I will walk around the city with you today, so you will not be alone." I felt my heart plunge into her dark brown pools of concern, her mouth slightly pouting—reflecting my own sorrow.

"Thank you, Ima." I turned and studied Yosef's attempt at a half tent. It would afford me some privacy for certain, and I was grateful but this was not home. Mother nudged me inside the tent and lifted a blanket high above her head for me to change behind.

I hid close to the curtain, knowing that beyond it a world of strangers were passing by, and I could feel their critical gazes. *This is too much to carry sometimes, Jehovah.* I wondered though, was this mother's fault. My father's? Had they sinned, and now I was paying for that sin? The thought repelled even me. "Forgive me, Lord, for thinking such a thing. But what have I done to deserve this judgment from you?"

My dress, folded neatly on the wagon seat felt soft in my hands. I gathered the edges and slipped the dress over my head, fully aware of Mother's arms in the air. I let the material fall over my skin into place. So regally it once defined my figure. Now it drooped unbecomingly. *I must look like a half-filled vegetable bag.* I tried fluffing the sides away from my bony hip. *When did I lose my fullness?*

"Tikvah! Aren't you finished yet?" Not since I was a child and had exasperated her had I heard that tone. Her arms must be aching.

"Yes, Ima. Please forgive me, you can drop the blanket now." Her arms fell to her sides. The groan and pinched brows more than conveyed her impatience with me.