

Chapter 3

THE LONG WALK BACK TO NAZARETH

3-1

3/1 It was during the month of June, 1 BC. It was June 2 when a man who drew a lot of attention, for he carried a medallion that symbolized the power of the Herods, arrived in Hiatta. He also had a justification, as they used to say, in hand, with an order that the tax collectors must make any resources he requested available to him, but that meant nothing in the village, because there was no specific location reserved for the trade of products, contrary to all the other villages.^[76]

3/2 The one who came from outside, as they used to say, set up his tent next to the synagogue, and started wandering around the village. He did not talk to anyone, except the children. Jeremiah, followed by the boy they believed was his brother and by many others who were few harvests old, curious as a child is, started observing the outsider. However, along with the last fruit of Anna's womb, he went away and kept his distance, for the man had an evil face. The other boys, noticing the different garments he wore, naively believed that he was an angel who had fallen from the sky.

3/3 The stranger kept on asking questions only to the young ones. Joseph, coming back from the crops and heading for the grain storage, was surprised when he saw the man's face. He was the firstborn of the former carpenter of Nazareth, considered dead by his protector, who, after his son's departure for Upper Cesarea, had never heard any news about him.

3/4 In Jacob's only son's mind, many hypotheses concerning the presence of an employee of the dominators piled up, leaving him paralyzed. He, who had never been very brave, felt his lower limbs shake, and he questioned himself about his trust in the Lord. It was only after invoking the Father of us all that he was able to move, and then he started wondering:

[76] Ever since Herod the Great invaded Jacob's lands, they gradually became very unproductive, and thus no longer of interest to the tetrarch. When Elijah and those who followed him settled there, they paid the tributes on time, and did not accept a tax collection office to be established, also because they did not trade goods. The so-called Mammon, avid for coins, fearing that his tenants would abandon the lands, allowed them to live there without the presence of a tax collector.

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3/5 “Why did Ezechias not send Matthew news about himself? What must have happened? Could it be that he is on the Herods’ side?”

3/6 His questions were overcome by a greater desire, that of warning his wife about the man’s presence, for he would certainly recognize her, since both had grown up in Nazareth. Still thinking about the outsider, he asked himself:

3/7 “What is it that he is doing in Hiatta?”

3/8 He thought to himself:

3/9 “I say he did not remember my face.”

3/10 Joseph, because of his beard, many times went unrecognized. When he saw his cousin, he almost started a conversation with him; however, he took two steps back and went another way, deeming it to be convenient to wait for a better occasion. Maybe Ezechias was not looking for them; he may have come because of Hiatta’s affluence. He then decided to observe Ezechias’s movements until he found out what his true scope was. Painful thoughts went through his head:

3/11 “What if he is searching for Jeremiah, where will I go?”

3/12 He knew he could not venture into the desert with his family: he would not be able to fully provide for them, and the small ones would certainly perish. If he went and talked to Elijah, he thought, maybe the latter would be able to find out what one of his own blood was doing in Hiatta and tell him, Joseph, how to proceed.

3/13 When she was informed of the identity of the stranger, a fearful Mary gathered her offspring inside her shanty, and did not allow any of them to stay out of her sight.

3/14 At the right moment, having no other options, Jacob’s heir put his plan into action, and therefore let the rabbi know about all the events that surrounded Jesus’s birth. When he finished his explanation, his interlocutor confessed to him that he had judged the child not to be similar to the other ones: he always expressed himself very clearly when asked about any subject; he was kind and loving. Now aware of this new piece of information, Jarred’s husband became even more worried about the outsider’s presence, also because, just like the other inhabitants, he had been long expecting that Herod the Great would learn about the crops they cultivated, and as a result would undoubtedly demand that they deliver more than half of their harvest as taxes. Another consequence, in his opinion, would be the presence of the hated tax collectors.

3/15 With the exact notion of what had been announced by the ancient prophets, keen on assuring that the promised one could put His determination

into practice, Elijah, whose only intention was to help, said nothing more after stating to Joseph:

3/16 “Let us drop this conversation and go see what this man wants.”

3/17 He went alone to the tent set up by the outsider and said friendly:

3/18 “I know you have been in this place for some time. Since you have not looked for me, I have come to speak to you.”

3/19 He introduced himself, offering his assistance:

3/20 “If you want to talk to someone from this place, you will have to address me first. I am the one who answers for everyone, and I am the one who is the most harvests old too. You must know the customs of those who are Hebrews! When one is many harvests old, they say we know everything, and we end up being everyone’s protector, the one who cures all the evils that are inside and outside the body.”

3/21 He went on giving Ezechias explanations, who did nothing but listen:

3/22 “A man like you, who must be commanded by Herod, has not come here to learn about me. I heard that Herod no longer inhabits this world. Are you commanded by the one who took over his power over all of those who are our people?”

3/23 He promptly concluded:

3/24 “Or are you not a Hebrew? If I offend you when I say you are, it is because the tunic you are wearing underneath all this luxury was weaved by those of my people.”

3/25 Matthew’s firstborn impolitely replied:

3/26 “I do not know if my tunic was weaved by one of those who are your people. I say I traded it with a merchant, and that is all.”

3/27 Ezechias stated that he wanted nothing, adding that he was on his way to another village. As for his stay in Hiatta, it was no one’s business but his own. The man who collaborated with the oppressors went on:

3/28 “I will stay in this place for as long as I want, and I will only leave when I want. Go take care of those who are your people and leave me alone.”

3/29 The rabbi looked at the renegade and left, pondering the outsider’s words, which were certainly lies. Because of the anger he showed towards his fellow people, Elijah was convinced that nothing good would come of him.

3/30 The hot days ended with the intruder meddling in the activities of those of Hiatta, and he paid close attention to the faces of its men and women. Only with the children, as before, did he talk. He asked them about their

parents and grandparents, where they came from, how many harvests they had been living in the village; the defenseless inhabitants could do not nothing against him.

3/31 Elijah, attentively following the course of events, after talking to Joseph, who shared the same agony as his own, recommended that he leave Hiatta along with his wife, Jeremiah, and Matthew before other combatants of the oppressor arrived. Assuring him that he would take care of his other three younger children, he emphasized that the most difficult part would be persuading Mary to leave them behind; however, for as long as the outsider was present, they would not be in danger.

3/32 Since his meeting with his cousin, Joseph prudently kept himself at distance from him. Even to the carpenter's workshop he avoided going; he nonetheless assigned two apprentices to remain there and remove the bark and knots from the wood. He would spend a large part of his days at the crops repairing the plows. The minutes he had left were dedicated to the grain storage, for he was responsible for it.

3/33 The rabbi and Jacob's only son decided to appoint Jonathan, a blind man, and therefore he would not raise any suspicions, to observe Ezechias, for the special disabled man would notice any anomaly and could promptly report back to them. When Elijah asked him for help, the chosen one replied:

3/34 "I do not know what you want me to do and why, but, if it is to help you, I will do it. I will be useful, despite my blindness. I know each sound, each move, where it comes from and where it goes; I know if it is one commanded by the Herods or if it is one of our people. I say that our steps are different from theirs even in the way we put our feet on the ground, we respect the soil from which we get our food, contrary to the ones commanded by the Herods; it goes inside them that where they step on belongs to them."

3/35 The hours went by with no unusual events, until, on April 22, when they were returning from another exhausting day of work, they noticed that the barn was on fire. Joseph, who was also responsible for the safety of the building, cried for help, wishing to save the seeds for the planting of the crops. The fire burned quickly, and Joseph desperately and intrepidly climbed on the horizontal log that supported the building's roof and started pouring water directly on the flames. He was given sheep leather bags containing the precious liquid and unsuccessfully tried to put out the fire. Suddenly, the vertical beam collapsed, and Joseph fell straight into the fire, which caused him burn wounds that became irreversible for the rest of his living. Promptly helped, he was taken to the synagogue, along with all the other injured ones.

3/36 No one could understand how the fire had started, but they were convinced it had been intentional. Jarred's husband considered the outsider; but Jonathan, who had been observing the latter, had reported nothing

to him. Going after the sentinel, he ended up finding him murdered near Ezechias's tent. Since there was nothing he could do, but carry on his habitual actions, he went back to the synagogue. Shortly after, he noticed that the man in possession of Mammon's medallion was standing outside the improvised infirmary. Since he who had been born in Nazareth showed inquietude and agitation, constantly observing the way that led to Hiatta, Elijah worriedly asked himself:

3/37 "What could it be that he is waiting for?"

3/38 Growing more and more nervous, the killer perspired abundantly, a sign of weakness for the Hebrews. Unable to control his impatience, he entered the site where the moribund men were and, as if looking for someone in particular, he observed every single man, one after the other. For the more than attentive rabbi, that was surely the evidence that Joseph was the one he was hunting. When Ezechias saw the untrained fireman's inert, dirty, and burned body, he stopped. Elijah rapidly addressed him:

3/39 "Have you come to help us?"

3/40 "No," he replied curtly and dryly.

3/41 "It seems that you are looking for one of your own family, or is it someone you have already been with? Say his name and I will find him."

3/42 The outsider, who was not certain if the injured man he had seen was the one he was looking for, clumsily left without saying a word.

3/43 When he arrived in Hiatta, Ezechias asked the children what the name of its carpenter was. He was not interested in seeing him when he learned that his name was Joseph of Clopas and that he spent most of his time on the plowed field. He did not accept it could be his cousin, for he judged that the latter would never subject himself to tough work. He believed that Joseph was indeed in the village, but hiding somewhere, and not practicing his craft.

3/44 The events confirmed to Elijah that the goal of Matthew's firstborn was indeed to find Joseph. He also supposed that the feelings he, Elijah, felt, the imperative to assist not only Jacob's heir, came from God. Having no idea what to do, he prayed to Him, for Jeremiah was His protectee and would undoubtedly help him:

3/45 "I always say to the Lord how much I like the life the Lord has given me, plenty of affluence and peace, but I will make a request: I do not know what to do with Joseph, Mary, and the small ones. I will be grateful for a sign. If the Lord feels I am deserving to help all, show me the way."

3/46 Suddenly, the zealous rabbi, who immensely trusted God to overcome such an insurmountable obstacle, saw right in from of himself,

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come from nowhere, a man who was unequivocally trustworthy. The stranger revealed to him:

3/47 “There is among you a man and a woman who are on their way to Egypt. Put Mary, Jeremiah, and Matthew in this caravan as slaves given as a present to those who have just united themselves. Speak to Alphaeus, the one who leads the Caravan, who is a member of the Hebrew people and can be trusted, and he will assist you without asking too many questions. Halfway through the journey there will be a woman who will help Mary and the small ones until Joseph recovers. See that Joseph is not found.”

3/48 The same way the man had appeared before the rabbi, he vanished in the blink of an eye. Asserting to himself that it was God he had just talked to, he started crying, out of joy and thankfulness.

3/49 After the instruction, he wondered about the Egyptian couple:

3/50 “Where are this man and this woman? If the Lord said so, they will appear. I just have to say to Mary that she will not be in this place when the time comes. I do not know when this will be, but the Lord does.”

3/51 He left the synagogue in order to speak to Joaquin’s daughter. First he went to see Jarred and reported what had happened, adding that she would look after her friend’s three youngest children, a cause of great contentment for her, who had never been a mother; her joy was even greater when she found out whom her husband had spoken to. The latter told her to follow him and inform her friend what the Lord had revealed to him. Mary, after hearing the news, worried about her companion, said she would not leave without him, that she would remain in Hiatta until he fully recovered, though she was intimately persuaded that the rabbi was right. She promptly stated her intention to go see her husband. Elijah, who had remained silent until then, kindly reminded her:

3/52 “If you go, you will put the life of Joseph, your own, and the small ones’ in danger.”

3/53 Though warned of the risk that Ezechias posed, the fruit of Anna’s womb insisted that she would stay until her spouse was back on his feet:

3/54 “I need to stay with Joseph and speak to him about everything that is happening, I need to know what goes inside Joseph about everything that is happening. How can you ask me to leave my offspring behind?”

3/55 The experienced rabbi pondered:

3/56 “If you want Jeremiah to be harvests old and to bring peace to all, it is necessary that you believe in what the one promised by the Lord will be able to do, not only for those who are our people, but for all the peoples, those who are so far away we cannot even see them. It goes inside me that the Lord would

not send one of His prophets just for those who are our people. I believe that Jeremiah was sent for all those who are Hebrews and all those who pursue us; otherwise, the Lord would not be the Protector of all peoples. I say that a true protector does not feel love only for one of his family, he likes all.”

3/57 The advisor concluded:

3/58 “It goes inside me that you will decide what is better for all and that you will see your other small ones again. I say we will take care of them, that you have nothing to fear.”

3/59 Mary, called back to reality, aware of her responsibility towards her firstborn, but still not completely convinced, asked him when she would leave the village.

3/60 “I say it will be when a man and a woman who are on their way to Egypt arrive.”

3/61 “How do you know that a man and a woman who are walking to Egypt will arrive at this place?”

3/62 “It was the Lord who said it to me when I asked Him what to do,” explained Elijah, thus reporting to her what had happened.

3/63 Right after he finished his exposition, Joaquin’s youngest, who had been listening to him carefully, let him know that he could start making the arrangements for her departure from Hiatta with the two boys.

3/64 While the others tended the wounded and focused on the food, which was still burning, Ezechias surreptitiously left the progressive village, and his absence was not immediately noticed.

3/65 In the synagogue, there was a room destined to store what they called the spoils of the dead – clothes, shoes, amphorae, weapons etc., for the bodies of those who died in Hiatta were buried after being wrapped in old leather, and their belongings were kept so that they could be used by those in greater need. The respected rabbi carefully provided for what Mary and the small ones would need during the journey they were about to face while being observed by her and Jeremiah, who had not been informed he would be leaving soon. Interested in what there was inside the room, he asked:

3/66 “Why such garments and spears?”

3/67 “They are for those of our people who need to hide for a while,” replied the rabbi.

3/68 The small one curiously returned to the subject:

3/69 “Why are there not tunics and sandals that are my size?”

3/70 Since Elijah was not paying attention, the questioner answered his question himself:

3/71 “I tell you that not even one person expects a small one to have to hide.” No comments ensued.

3/72 Joaquin’s youngest, thinking that her firstborn was disturbing Jarred’s husband’s activities, removed him from the room.

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3/73 The hours of the rabbi, who was convinced that Ezechias had gone get help and that it would not take him long to return, were fully filled with the arrangements for Mary’s walk and with his care to the wounded. Constantly afflicted, he kept watch over the city’s entrance, until, at the beginning of an afternoon, he finally noticed a large group of travelers approaching. He exultantly said out loud:

3/74 “Hallowed be the Lord! I know it is the caravan He spoke of.”

3/75 He saw them arrive, pass by his shanty, and make a stop, and their members camped no further than fifty meters from the village. When he noticed that their leader, a pale Hebrew who had a limp, had finally settled down, he approached him and asked for some instants of conversation.

3/76 The outsider promptly recognized who was addressing him. It was the kind man who had come to his aid in Jope, when he was still a child and very sick, after being rejected by his parents. For three years, his savior took care of him as if he were his legitimate genitor. When the outsider turned ten, and this day of separation remained engraved in his mind, he was delivered to the care of a third family, but not before being told why: his savior was about to start a difficult journey through the desert.

3/77 Elijah, aware that the boy was in no physical condition to endure the journey he was about to start, feeling that, if he went against what he considered true, his adopted protectee would certainly die, found himself forced to transfer the responsibility over the boy to someone else.

3/78 After the charitable man left, he was never forgotten by the efficient caravan leader, who, now seeing him so many years later, felt it was just like the first time: his countenance was serene, and he spoke softly. Judging he had not been recognized, the outsider decided to conceal his identity. Pretending to be rispid, he asked:

3/79 “What do you want? Or could it be that I cannot stay here?”

3/80 “There is a woman with two small ones, and I need them to join your caravan until another woman appears. I do not know where, I just know that another woman will receive them all,” clarified the rabbi with no hesitation.

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3/81 Changing his behavior completely, the newcomer, now smiling, stopped, reflected for a few seconds, and gave the rabbi an answer:

3/82 “I do not know how to protect this woman and the two offspring, but it will cost me nothing to do the wish of the man who gave my life, which was already lost, back to me,” a response which left his interlocutor clueless.

3/83 The latter, dumbfounded, asked him:

3/84 “What are you saying?”

3/85 “I am Alphaeus, do you not remember?” He then revealed himself, and the rabbi became very happy to see him transformed into a good man.

3/86 Concluding his request, Elijah explained:

3/87 “This woman is not with her companion, she is running away from the wrath of the Herods.”

3/88 “Everyone is running away from the wrath of the Herods and their commanded ones. I say that if she is alone and with two offspring, she will be found. You know it is not allowed for a woman to go with merchants without her protector or her companion.”

3/89 Always confident in the Lord’s help, the rabbi, who was still worried about the upcoming return of Jonathan’s murderer, guaranteed:

3/90 “The Lord will say to us how to protect them all, we just need to have patience.”

3/91 He thankfully left to go get Mary and the two boys, who were waiting for him with Jarred. He instructed Mary not to say anything to anyone, not even to her future leader, about Jeremiah. With conviction, he informed her that her firstborn would have his name changed to Joseph, a very common name among the oppressed. Matthew and she would keep their names, also very common in the villages.^[77] With the intent to clarify it to her, for she would be walking towards an unknown destination and she would be unaccompanied by her husband, an unimaginable scenario for those of the time, he affirmed that these procedures were of utmost importance, because he feared that Ezechias was now aware of his cousin’s presence in Hiatta. If he returned and did not find him or his wife, he would obviously continue looking for them, but now with the information he would have. In order to comfort her, he guaranteed that he would take the necessary measures for Joseph not to be taken prisoner.

3/92 Besides having to go alone towards an unknown destination, Mary

[77] In Hiatta only there were eight Matthews and numerous Marys.

would also have to abandon the last three fruits of her womb against her will; she asked Elijah how she should behave during the journey in case the leader of the caravan inquired her about other matters. The old Hebrew man, to calm her down, asserted that the leader would not ask her anything, and judging that if he told her that she would start walking with no certain destination, she would not leave, he mentioned that he had confided to Alphaeus where he should take her and the boys, a place he knew very well. When the conversation was over, trying to cheer Joaquin's youngest up, he said that nothing would go wrong, for the Lord would be with her.

3/93 Crying, Mary bade farewell to John, Veronica, and James, and slowly left, affectionately escorted by the rabbi, to speak to Joseph, even if for a brief period of time. The latter, however, was still unconscious. Mary and the two boys were then immediately introduced to the leader of the caravan.

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3/94 When Elijah left, the head of the outsiders tried to find a solution for the newcomers in the caravan not to be captured; his savior had not told him her name, a sign that he did not trust him. He was staring at a rock, as if talking to it, when all of a sudden a crystal-clear idea came to his mind:

3/95 "What if I take this woman and these two offspring as my companion and my protectees? Everyone knows I want to go to Egypt and never come back! Since not a single person knows if I have a companion and protectees, this is how it will be."

3/96 The rabbi returned and noticed that Alphaeus had a mischievous smile on his face. Away from the trio who would be joining the caravan, he told the rabbi what had just happened. The elder of Hiatta, unable to hide his contentment, for he was certain that the caravan leader had been instructed by those who are invisible to the incarnate, assured him that the portentous rock had indeed inspired him excellently.

3/97 "Was it not good what just went inside me?" asked Alphaeus, not comprehending the true meaning of the episode.

3/98 "This will let you walk with no danger of being found," stated Elijah, without revealing to his interlocutor why he was so happy.

3/99 "You will have to be careful about a man named Ezechias, who knows this woman and the small ones you are taking with you in your caravan," he added.

3/100 "But have I ever seen this man?"

3/101 Jarred's companion instructed him:

3/102 "It will not be difficult to know who Ezechias is. I say that Ezechias is always in possession of horses, not donkeys or camels, and his tunics have not been weaved by those who are our people, they have come from Egypt. If you are not certain, ask Mary to see the face of this man, because Mary has already seen his face in Nazareth."

3/103 When the conversation was over, the rabbi went to explain Alphaeus's suggestion to the one who came from Anna's womb. She, who was afraid of being recognized during the journey, accepted the idea, but asked how she should act if another woman asked her who she was.

3/104 She was promptly instructed:

3/105 "Just say you are Mary of Alphaeus, and that the two small ones came from you. Is it difficult to do it?"

3/106 "I just want Joseph to grow up and do what he came to do," she said, and then went away, feeling miserable for leaving her companion and children behind.

3/107 As Mary went away, the rabbi saw the caravan leader approach, who, wishing to know why he had not deemed him deserving of his trust, addressed the topic frankly:

3/108 "You did not tell me that her name was Mary. Why?"

3/109 "I did not know you. Now that I do, my protectee is safe. When the Lord does it, it is well done. I say it was He who brought you to this place to take with you all those who are in danger."

3/110 Alphaeus, satisfied with the explanation, was very glad to help the daughter of the man he respected.

3/111 "Do not worry, I will take your protectee and the two offspring with me. Under my care they will never be found," he bragged.

3/112 These words convinced the rabbi that Joaquin's youngest and the boys would be safe; he went to report it to the injured fireman, but he was still unconscious.

3/113 On June 27, 1 BC, at dawn, the travelers and the trio that joined their caravan left Hiatta.

3/114 He whose name had been changed once more was thin, small, and had a fragile appearance; he had large and captivating eyes, his was skin tanned by the Sun, and he had black hair which, since he was in the desert, had become dry and turned brownish by the dust.

3/115 Far from Hiatta, the promised one approached the caravan leader,

who went, as usual, ahead of everyone pulling the first quadruped. The Hebrew man, deeming it likely that the boy would not complete the journey, willful that he spared his energy, determined:

3/116 “Go stay with the one who gave you life. I say it is not good that you stay with me in this long walk.”

3/117 “I tell you it will be to my liking to walk with you in this caravan.”

3/118 “You are a very smart offspring,” said Alphaeus, putting an end to the conversation, for Mary had asked the one once called Jesus to join her, and her request was promptly complied with.

3/119 When he approached her, he mentioned the high temperature; he was sweating like a man who was many harvests old. The helpful mother wiped his sweat, and they went on in their tiring walk.

3/120 The one now called Joseph started being referred to by those of the kind caravan as little Joseph, a name that he kept practically until he was twelve. Little Joseph, not because of his height, but because his father, in the travelers’ opinion, was also named Joseph. As for Mary, since no one asked her about her husband, she did not need to resort to Elijah’s instructions.

3/121 As the journey continued, one could only hear the animals breathing, and the silence would sometimes be broken by a disposed former Jeremiah. Curious as he was, he walked alongside the others, looking at their faces, but said nothing, something that made his mother apprehensive. When she ordered him not to do that anymore, for the others may not be pleased by his action, she was, as she always was, obeyed. Anna’s last fruit had an opposite attitude, for ever since they had left Hiatta he kept grabbing his sister’s garments and did not budge an inch away from her.

3/122 The desired deliverer noticed that the ties that fastened the seats to the camels could be used to avoid burning his injured and bleeding feet, as well as a way not to get tired. Part of the loose ends of these ties remained under the animals’ bellies; he made a net with them and continued his now easy “walk.” The animals seemed to be happy in his company. Alphaeus, noticing how he slept in the improvised net, pretended not to see him.

3/123 The one who, for the travelers, had come from the same womb as little Joseph, asked him if he could also be in the net. Little Joseph answered positively, and Matthew tried to accommodate himself. However, for no plausible reason, the docile beast that had accepted his nephew rejected him, throwing him and the load it was carrying on the ground; when he tried to occupy this space again, the most desired one by the children in the caravan, the animal behaved the same way. The experienced leader of the group did not understand why the irrational being would not shelter the boy at all. In his mind, a reason became clear: Matthew had hit the animal. As a consequence,

he ordered him to stay at a large distance from the transporters; he did not, however, forbid the boy's brother from enjoying his own idea.

3/124 Mary, who did not talk the others, kept her attention focused on finding out what the final destination of the caravan, composed of, when they all left Hiatta, fifty four individuals, was. Alphaeus had started walking towards Egypt in Sichem; as soon as the journey came to its end, he intended to settle in Gaza, for his physical problems had become worse, something that she ignored.

3/125 As each new way was accomplished little by little, some arrived at their destinations, others joined the group, some even had Galilee as their final destination. Mary, who paid attention to neither those who left nor those who joined the caravan, becoming aware only of the different settlements each one was headed for, assumed that the guide had forgotten to leave her where Elijah had stipulated, according to what the latter himself had stated. Her mind was full of questions:

3/126 "Can it be that Joseph will find us? Will I not see my other offspring?"

3/127 Little Joseph had fun with those who were the same age as he was; the other boy, however, whom they believed had also been conceived by Mary, kept himself at distance, and asked about his parents. His sister and Joseph never hid their identity from him; however, they had not told him about his mother's death, for they believed that, in the period of time he had already lived, suffering would be useless. He would be informed of Anna's murder in time.

3/128 In his innocence, Matthew, exhausted from walking, whenever they resumed the journey, invariably asked why they were moving, if they could not just settle in any village. Mary wondered how to explain to him that they were fleeing because of the promised one, his best friend; if she told him and he contested it, she would not be able to tell him all the facts without causing him distress. Little Joseph, for his part, talked uninterruptedly, full of excitement. He incessantly asked Alphaeus about the next human settlement; when given an answer, he immediately asked for details. No matter what the subject was, he kept on having explanations for it. On many occasions, Joaquin's youngest resorted to him to explain to his uncle what had been asked.

3/129 Unable to obtain answers for her questions, taken by fear, but certain of God's help, Mary brought the two boys close to her at a certain moment to, as they understood it, say a prayer as a family. Her firstborn offered to say it:

3/130 "Let us always have faith in the Lord, the One who leads us all towards the path of knowledge. We do not see Him, but we hear Him and feel Him. We hear Him in the birds that fly in search of water and food, we feel

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Him in the wind that soothes the hot afternoons, and in the Sun we perceive His heat. Lord our God, the only God in whom we trust our lives, we who are walking towards Him, we are in great need of His help ... ”

3/131 After a short pause, he finished it:

3/132 “... throughout these ways where we will sow Your teachings. Help us to reach You with no evil befalling us. I am grateful to You, Father.”

3/133 The perplexed mother said:

3/134 “He who used to say this prayer was ...,” but she did not say his name, in her opinion because of the obvious temporal impossibility.^[78]

3/135 “Your father,” the one who was first called Jesus completed his mother’s sentence.

3/136 “Are you saying that the Lord taught you to say the prayer that my protector said with me?”

3/137 “I tell you it was your father in the living that you now have.”

3/138 “But you say that Father is God.”

3/139 “When we arrive in this abode, we have a father, the father of our body of flesh. This is the father I am telling you about, not our Father, the One who created the entire universe and everything that exists in it.”

3/140 “You did not know my protector, and I have never said this prayer after he left this life.”

3/141 “I tell you that you say this prayer when you miss him.”

3/142 The one conceived by Anna intimately knew he was right, but she had never said it out loud, only to herself.

3/143 “But he who used to say this prayer was ...” she repeated, and again did not complete her sentence.

3/144 “Joaquin,” said little Joseph.

3/145 Since in the life of flesh she was completely unaware of the true life, the life of spirit, and the life of pure spirit, Mary became very scared.^[79] Concluding that her son could hear her thoughts, since she had never commented, not even with her husband, that her protector had taught her this prayer when

[78] Joaquin ended his prayer with “I am grateful, Lord,” thus without little Joseph’s addition.

[79] It is in the **true life** that, coming from the animal kingdom, we enter the human kingdom; until we reach God, we sojourn in the **life of flesh**, in the **life of spirit** and in the **life of pure spirit**.

she was young, and afraid to continue the conversation, she put an end to it.^[80]

3/146 They advanced without any problems under the command of Alphaeus, a respectable man who had an atrophied muscle that had shortened his left lower limb, and who was very familiar with the primitive roads, the pitfalls the pillagers made use of, the ruses of the combatants of the Herods when they looked for someone who dared disobey them.

3/147 The astute guide, responsible for those who had trusted their lives to him in crossing the desert, feeling he would be pursued, made use of his large experience to mislead the likely hunters. He had various pieces of wood burned in half that he left at their camping site, so that his followers would think that they had left many days before, since it was a custom among those who subjected themselves to cross the inhospitable piece of land to wish the fire to burn slowly, so that another caravan leader would find embers when he arrived at the site. When they were on the most dangerous trails or those that others did not walk on frequently, after their nightly rest, ready to restart the journey, he would dig deep right by a rock so that he could put out the fire with fresh sand. This would make others believe that they had been there long before. He also made the irrational beings and the other travelers walk backwards, so that, if their footprints were observed, it would be thought that they were walking in the opposite direction.

3/148 The limping man, by virtue of the occupation he had chosen, put to practice, in their plenitude, various tricks that only those who ventured through these unmarked pathways were minimally aware of.

3-1.3

3/149 At dusk on June 29, 1 BC, almost three days after Alphaeus had left Hiatta, the man who believed his relative had settled in Hiatta along with the one the god of his people had promised returned. Not finding them, he cruelly beat Elijah, who was gravely injured. Taking the risk of leaving the life of

To finish the first step of our evolutionary journey, our livings alternate between the true life and the life of flesh; afterwards, between the life of spirit and the life of flesh until, receiving our diploma for excellence in practicing God's teachings and for having announced them to other siblings of ours, we enter the life of pure spirit, from which we return to the life of flesh only with our Father's consent.

[80] After the death of his body of flesh, Joaquin was, on various occasions, with those he loved. When Mary fell asleep, she was instructed by him, when she woke up and felt desperate, not knowing what to do, to say the prayer he had taught her. In some of these meetings, Jeremiah was present and, in one of them, he asked his grandfather about it.

flesh, for he was aware that he would have a much better living afterwards, the rabbi did not say a word. Salathiel, who was preparing himself to replace him, having a taste for power and wanting to please the torturer, informed the latter of what he judged had happened in the group that had recently disappeared in the horizon.^[81] His action, however, spared the life of the moribund. Exclusively because he heard that a Joseph, who lived in Hiatta, had joined those who walked towards Egypt, the informant, with contagious conviction, asserted that the hunted Joseph had gone with the travelers. Furious at this discovery, Matthew's firstborn shouted:

3/150 "If Zidec had given me the animals and the men I requested, I would not have wasted the ride to come here."

3/151 Addressing of one his subordinates, he concluded:

3/152 "I will have to return and trade animals. I need camels, not horses, and food. I say this Alphaeus knows what he is doing. The paths this Alphaeus is treading are just for those who know them very well. There are not many caravan leaders who know these ways, only one who knows them very well would tread them with so much confidence. All I need to do is to find a caravan leader who knows the ways as well as this Alphaeus does, and soon I will reach those of this caravan. I know you cannot go fast with women and offspring."

3/153 Since he had nothing left to do in Hiatta, he returned to Bethlehem, certain that his cousin had left in the damned group of travelers. In his opinion, Mary and the one born under the Star of Bethlehem would be with him.^[82] Satisfied with the information he received, he abandoned his intent to murder the man who refused to answer his questions, also because he thought that the unfortunate man had perished anyway.

3/154 The despot to whom Ezechias subjected himself with great pleasure acted even more atrociously towards the Hebrews than his predecessor did. Anyone who refused to pay, or could not pay, the taxes he demanded became deprived of their piece of land and of their own children. When the collection took place, the elder and the rabbi of the settlement, responsible for the inhabitants who had not fulfilled their duties, were violently beaten, and most of the time died. This was the reason that many villages would not prosper, for there was no one there to guide their inhabitants.

[81] A rabbi had to be very knowledgeable of the Mosaic Laws, and that was the reason that Salathiel **was preparing himself** for the function, studying them diligently.

[82] It was inadmissible, not only for Ezechias, but for all the Hebrews, that a wife would not go along with her husband.

3-1.4

3/155 Despite his old age and fragile appearance, Elijah resisted his injuries with the goal of protecting Jacob's heir, who had finally come to and remained hidden inside a hole purposefully built on top of the synagogue. Elijah thanked the Lord profusely for the fact the Matthew's firstborn judged that his prey had escaped. He was also thankful to Salathiel: the latter, intending to denounce the man whom Elijah had saved in the past, whom the coward aggressor had qualified as a merchant of slaves, actually ended up helping him to keep the injured fireman safe, for the Joseph who had left Hiatta was no one but Jeremiah. He felt calm; Mary had left on the third day of the full moon, and that meant at least forty-eight hours of advantage in the flight. Since Alphaeus was experienced, he inferred that they were already many miles away.

3/156 The rabbi made plans. He concluded that the circumstances would allow him to continue his daily routine, but not with the same agility he had before, because of his injuries; they nevertheless did not affect his mind: now with greater care, he would instruct those of his people in the work that had to be done, for the informant could incriminate them once more. Fearing that his disincarnation would make his students be under the ambitious man's direction, he planned to teach what he knew to the second oldest after him, who would replace him as the elder of Hiatta. He intimately understood that his actions would avoid discord among the ones he guided, for discord would mean that they would become slaves of the Herods. He did not worry about the fact that Salathiel, who was indeed more educated in the Mosaic Laws, would replace him as rabbi, for he thought it legitimate that it would not take long for little Joseph to bring them the Lord's truth, which would eradicate the ignorance of those of his people. In his understanding, the informant's unstoppable ambition would lead to his own destruction and to that of those who surrounded him, for whoever did what was issued from him would end up forgetting to practice the Lord's Laws.

3/157 He was absorbed in insightful reflections. He pleaded to God for Him to allow him to live until his recovering friend could leave the village, something that would make him very grateful. Suddenly the same being who had made the comforting prediction concerning the caravan of Egyptians appeared in front of him out of nowhere. The one Elijah deemed was the Lord Himself stated:

3/158 "I tell you I am not God, but one of those He sent to this abode, just like you, and that we are brothers and much loved by our Father. I have come to tell you that, for the moment, you will not leave your tired body."

3/159 After a small pause, he went on:

3/160 "I ask you to choose two men you trust to go with Joseph, who will

be able to start walking and go meet Mary, to Jope. When Joseph leaves, you will see the arrival of a man named Matthew, who will be feeling sick. Tell him that pain does not take one's living, and that he must go to Nazareth, where he will be coming from, and that he must take not only the ones who are with him, but the small ones who stayed with Jarred."

3/161 Apprehensive about his wife for the last sixteen years, aware of the joy she felt and the intense dedication she had for the offspring of Mary, whom she considered a daughter, since the latter's arrival in Hiatta, the rabbi, still believing he was talking to the Lord, explained his own conviction:

3/162 "If I take the small ones away from Jarred, she will no longer live."

3/163 "I tell you that the small ones need to go with Matthew because Jarred, in two days, will no longer be in the life of flesh."

3/164 The news of the upcoming death of his companion did not cause any indignation in Elijah. The Hebrew man was very confident in God. With no other goal in mind but to participate in the events that surrounded the savior announced to the respectable prophets of yore, and according to His wish, he asked:

3/165 "But I do not know this Matthew. How will I trust Joseph's small ones to a man I have never seen? How will I know who he is?"

3/166 "I tell you that Matthew will be with a man and a woman, who will call him protector. The man is Judas, and the woman, Martha, and they are twins. I tell you that it will not be difficult to identify the three of them."

3/167 Nodding his head as a sign that he had understood, the rabbi saw his interlocutor vanish the same way he had appeared.

3/168 After such a revealing conversation, he focused his attention on his wife, who would leave him, when in his understanding he was to die first. With no feelings of sadness or loss, he thanked the Lord for the burden taken from his back, for now he would not have to worry about how she would carry on after his death.

3/169 Realizing that his wounds did not hurt as they did before, and remembering the words of the man who had recently disappeared, in order to stop feeling sorry for himself, with the energy he once had, he considered what he needed to do: send some men to Bethlehem to trade wool for seeds, for theirs had burned; prepare for a new sowing; wash Joseph's wounds; and wait for Matthew to arrive. He was ready to resume his duties, but before, he again gave thanks for the help he had received:

3/170 "I do not know how the Lord came to me, but I know He heard me and I am grateful for the help He has given me. I know I do not deserve it, but I know that the Lord helps, with His forgiveness, not only the one who

deserves, but also the sinners, whether they deserve it or not. I am grateful that His eyes are open for those of us who are in need. The Lord is the light of all and I know He is taking care of Alphaeus. He seems very weak to me, but he trusts the Lord. Now I know why the Lord has sent Alphaeus to take care of Jeremiah, the one the Lord has promised to the prophets.”

3/171 He finished his prayer by now addressing himself:

3/172 “I will start doing my part.”

3-1.5

3/173 Those of the caravan, of which the redeemer was an unknown member, had been walking for more than twelve days. Hedrom had stayed behind, and they had not yet slept an entire night. In Eshtemoa they made a stop, and there they finally rested satisfactorily. When they left, they walked backwards, not understanding their leader’s conviction of its urgency. The beasts, however, refused to comply.

3/174 “Do you want me to talk to those who lead the animals?” little Joseph offered to help when he took notice of such a strange situation.

3/175 “How come you want to speak to those who lead the animals? You are already speaking to me.”

3/176 “I tell you that besides you, there are other leaders that you cannot see, and the animals obey these leaders.”

3/177 Alphaeus found it funny how Mary’s firstborn assured him that he talked to imaginary beings, but it could somehow work, for the camel that had not allowed Matthew to lie in the net allowed the smart child to travel there from the beginning of the journey onwards without objecting to it. He concluded that it should be tried, for he could feel they were coming after him, and it would not be nice if they were found. The ones he was transporting had trusted themselves to him and he would lead them safely, even if that cost him his living. The Lord knew what went inside him, and he believed in Him. He wished for nothing bad to happen to those whom he led. Looking at his weak-looking interlocutor, who was waiting for an answer, he said, as though he were joking:

3/178 “You can speak to those who lead the animals. Say to them that it is only for a part of the way.”

3/179 Little Joseph then headed for where the animals were. For those who observed him, he was talking to them; however, it was with God’s messengers who had no physical body who were standing right by them that he conversed.

3/180 A deep silent reigned. When he was ready, the one who was first called Jesus and then Jeremiah told the leader of the caravan that the order to start could be given. Placing himself in front of the first of the loaded animals, he followed them, along with the other travelers, in the unusual backwards movement.

3/181 Those who could only see the life of flesh were immensely stupefied by such prowess.

3/182 When he was told that such stratagem was indispensable, Mary's firstborn asked the travelers to stop. After talking to those freed from brute matter, he asserted to Alphaeus that he could order the restart of the walk, telling the travelers to keep advancing. And again the ones we classify as irrational complied with what was requested. No one could stop wondering how much power the boy possessed.

3/183 The competent leader doubled his attention to the ways they were walking on, analyzing if they were being followed.

3/184 After exactly three weeks since their departure from Hiatta, they arrived in Arad, where Alphaeus instructed them to reload their stock of the vital liquid and wheat. The stop also gave him the opportunity to trade one of his donkeys with an injured paw for provisions. If the animal had proceeded, Alphaeus would certainly have lost a substantial part of his patrimony.

3/185 The luxurious village was not large. Its inhabitants, who were not welcoming, seemed not to like outsiders. It was there that Joaquin's youngest became aware that some of the travelers had decided to go to Debi, an incipient settlement composed only of Hebrews. Also in Arad other travelers joined the caravan.

3/186 Mary's half-brother was also causing her trouble, for during the freezing nights she needed to hug him so that he could rest. Absorbed in her thoughts, she wondered:

3/187 "The night is cold, the day is very hot. There is water only for us to wet our lips, we cannot drink it every time we feel thirsty, otherwise it will be over when we most need it."

3/188 She wanted to be informed of her destination and of how much time had passed since she left Joseph; even though she observed the daily dusk of the Sun, she was not counting time. Since the feet of the caravan leader had deep cracks and bled, believing him to be accustomed to the rough living she was experiencing, she deducted that they had been walking for many moons. She, who had not addressed a single word to any traveler, always absorbed in her thoughts, asked herself how her husband's recovery was going. Looking at Matthew, who during the day grabbed her garments uninterruptedly, she thought of and longed to see her other children. She wondered:

3/189 “Why is little Joseph not afraid of anything? He goes back and forth all day, even when the night falls he is walking in every direction. What is it that the Lord has in store for him? It is true what Joseph says: my offspring is not like the others. He learned little of the letters, and now he is already teaching. I saw little Joseph read a writing to Alphaeus. Where did he learn? Could it be that the Lord taught my offspring, or he came from the womb already knowing everything? Does little Joseph have an angel with him all the time? Why is it that, when I look at my offspring, he is talking alone? When one of our people is on the ground, little Joseph says to him to stand up, that he will make it, that God is looking at all His children. A man or a woman on the ground stands up when they look into his eyes. They hold his hand with so much confidence that little Joseph looks like a grown man, but he is only an offspring who is few harvests old.”

3/190 Bringing her back to reality, her firstborn informed her:

3/191 “Alphaeus told me that we have been walking for three parts of a moon, and that everyone should make their animals walk, because we need to be on our way.”

3/192 They stayed only half a day in Arad because the caravan leader feared he would come across someone who would recognize him, and, as a consequence, he would not be able to explain how he suddenly had a companion and two children.

***IT IS ONLY THE PRACTICE OF GOD’S
TEACHINGS THAT LEADS US TO HIM.***

see 3/196

***WHOEVER HAS FAITH IN OUR FATHER AND
PRACTICES HIS TEACHINGS, IN THIS LIVING OR IN A
FUTURE ONE, RECOVERS NOT ONLY ONE’S HEALTH.***

see 3/196

3/193 Little Joseph, who constantly accompanied Alphaeus, asked to see the ulcer in his leg. In a mixture of curiosity and worry, the surprised wounded man asked him how he had obtained that piece of information, for he had neither showed it to anyone nor spoken about it.

3/194 “Many times it is not necessary for you to tell me what you have.”

3/195 The caravan leader begged him not to mention the matter to anyone because, if he told others about what he had found out, they would no longer give him credit as a leader.

3/196 “I tell you that you will no longer have this open wound, that it will be cured by those sent by God. For you to remain cured, clear your mind

of any feelings that lead us astray from the way that leads us towards our Father. **I tell you that anyone who has faith in God and practices his teachings will obtain the cure for their ailments, in this living or in another one that is to come.**”

3/197 Feeling comforted, Alphaeus confided to him that he only wanted the ones who had hired him to reach their planned destinations safe from the perversities of the Herods and the ones they commanded.

3/198 *“I tell you that one day those who govern will take care of all those who are governed the way it pleases them to be taken care of,”* prophesied the desired savior, who then went away.

3/199 His interlocutor, who understood nothing of these words, wondered how it could be that the boy referred to the Lord with so much confidence, for he was fleeing, just like everyone else, except the Egyptian couple, who were both free.

3/200 After more than six days of walking without any incidents, they arrived in Beersheba, another village whose inhabitants were not welcoming, who obeyed no Laws. The caravan leader warned them that they would not stop, and urged them to ration their provisions. Just like Mary, he was unaware of how long they had been walking; however, his wound inexplicably did not hurt. Eager to see if it had stopped bleeding, he asked himself:

3/201 *“Can it be that little Joseph was right? This offspring is different: he does not cry out of hunger or thirst like the others; he does not complain for having to walk without sleeping, on the contrary, he keeps saying to everyone that they will soon be able to sleep, that they will have all the water they need, they just need to wait a little. He says to everyone that they should trust God, because God knows what He does, and they all feel good and confident.”*

3-1.6

3/202 The brave travelers started showing signs that they were burned out. Most of them had nothing to drink, and those who had some did not share it. To everyone’s general happiness, right after dusk on July 28, they saw from the distance the beginning of the road to Rafah, almost a straight line, which enabled them to feel certain that there were no threats of their coming across pillagers. They could at last rest without keeping guard. Throughout the not very inhospitable way, trading with others from other caravans, they obtained food. Their need for the liquid essential to life was met in the wells available to those who ventured into such shiny territory. They arrived in Rafah in the middle of the afternoon of August 18, 1 BC, where they made a full stop.

Alphaeus told them they would stay there for two days, so that they could rest and get provisions.

3/203 Mary's firstborn, who physically did not remember having been in a village larger than Hiatta, marveled at Rafah, full of individuals wearing ornaments, a village that had a large market with various kinds of food and many animals. Different from the site where he had spent his childhood, he did not see poor people in the streets, the miserable ones, as they used to say. He noticed a huge residence, as big as he had ever seen. He deemed it to belong to a powerful man, for thugs holding spears guarded it. He learned from the caravan leader that it was the palace of king Neco, who was descended from Egyptian pharaohs. Distancing himself from the area where they were camping, he walked alone about the place. He found the behavior of its inhabitants odd, for they did not greet one another, something he did not like, and concluded that it was because they did not know one another. For the time he remained in Rafah, there was nothing he did not minutely examine.

3/204 Not knowing how to justify the sense of responsibility he felt for Joaquin's youngest and the boys, believing that, in his company, they would not be completely safe, Alphaeus felt obliged to find them a place of refuge. He assumed that in the village there would be an elder, just like in every other village, and that he would help him. When he learned that in Rafah there was a respected predictor who instructed those who deceived others to change their behavior, he felt enthusiastic. His name was Isaiah, and he was one of the last Hebrews who were still slaves to the monarch. He was fifty, and had always been persuaded that the Lord would send the promised one to free his people.

3/205 Since the man was said to be trustworthy, the caravan leader imagined that, if he narrated his worries to him, he would shelter Mary and the boys in a safe place. It became more and more evident to him that he could not take care of the three on his own. However, when Alphaeus found out that the predictor was a voluntary slave to Neco, an old man who, according to his words, resembled a mummy come from Egypt when his empire collapsed, he wondered:

3/206 "How can I trust a man surrounded by so much luxury? But if the Lord sent him to me, and I have never been interested in prophets, rabbis or prophecies, it is because I must speak to him."

3/207 The morning after his arrival in such a mixed village, in one of the gardens of the sumptuous and large palace, where Isaiah received those who went to see him, Alphaeus, without introducing himself, was straightforward and clear about his reasons to see him:

3/208 "I would like to ask you to find a safe location for my companion and protectees, who are running away from the Herods."

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

3/209 To his surprise, he heard from the vaticinator:

3/210 “I have been waiting for you.”

3/211 “They spoke to you about my arrival?” asked the dumbfounded experienced leader.

3/212 Isaiah calmly explained:

3/213 “It was the Lord who spoke to me about the arrival of a man who drags one of his legs, and that his words would be those you have just pronounced.” He then offered them the much needed shelter, and asked no questions.

3/214 Leaving the beautiful environment, a stupefied Alphaeus, in Mary’s presence, confessed to his inquietude regarding her and the small ones, for she was exhausted, and her feet were hurt. To make it all worse, Matthew did nothing but cry rivers of tears. He reported to her that he had found them shelter, and asked her if she would go there. Since she held as true that, the more they walked, the more difficult it would be to be found by Joseph, Joaquin’s daughter consented. They immediately headed for the illustrious predictor’s residence, located outside the royal mansion.

3/215 The caravan leader faced a dilemma: he deemed it unadvisable to continue his journey towards Egypt with the three fugitives he was assisting, but he did not think it advisable to leave them either: he had promised Elijah that he would help them. Even though he did not understand why, he decided to remain in Rafah with them. But in order to implement his deliberation, he needed to find someone to replace him, and without raising any suspicions, because it was uncommon for one of his occupation to give up doing what he had been hired to do.

3/216 At the main square of the village, the meeting point of not only those who shared his profession, he felt like never before: he was apprehensive about a Hebrew woman and felt attached to a boy. Him, who had not united himself in order to avoid problems; but now he found himself afflicted because of a woman and the son of a man he did not know. Suddenly, his attention was drawn by a colleague of his who was approaching. It was Solomon, who had the same occupation and was very responsible. He could certainly finish the task Alphaeus had committed to without any complications. But how could he make such an unusual request? All of a sudden he thought of partially showing him his wound, and Solomon would think it reasonable not to proceed. It had, however, healed three days before. However, the moment he started thinking about his wound, blood started pouring from it, which greatly astonished him, for it looked like the last drop of his blood was about to leave his body. Given the situation, his friend happily accepted to comply, and it did not take him long to leave with the now well rested travelers towards Egypt.

3/217 Until Alphaeus bade farewell to Solomon, blood ran abundantly

down his sheen; it nevertheless stopped the same way it had started as soon as his friend left. It became crystalline for the man who had been saved by Jarred's companion:

3/218 "I receive help every time I make decisions about Mary and her offspring. It seems like the Lord is protecting them all."

3/219 He immediately went to see the one hunted by Ezechias. He revealed to her his wish to stay in Rafah with her and the boys, and asked if he had her consent. Smiling, she expressed her opinion:

3/220 "You seem to want to help us. If Elijah were here, he would be happy to see what you are doing to protect us."

3/221 The residence of the man whom the inhabitants of Rafah considered a prophet was not large, and he barely stayed in it. The location reserved for them, which to Alphaeus seemed to be safe, would allow the ones who were escaping to settle comfortably.

3/222 Joaquin's youngest felt sheltered by the caravan leader. She saw in him a sincere desire to help, and he would ask for nothing in return. When the custom allowed him to address a woman, he was extremely polite. He always started his sentences by apologizing to her, a behavior that the other men did not have, because, since they were men, they gave orders, and a woman's share was to subject herself to them. The small Hebrew man was different from other men, and she could trust him. She thought:

3/223 "The Lord is leading Alphaeus, the way He leads me, Joseph, and all those who are together with little Joseph."

3/224 Taking a deep breath, she concluded:

3/225 "The prophecy is being fulfilled."^[83]

3/226 The efficient caravan leader, at the beginning of a new afternoon, leaned back on a rock in front of Isaiah's home and fell asleep. It was then that a young woman, with a meek and subtle voice, said:

3/227 "Go to the third residence beyond the market and look for a woman called Abigail who, together with Mary and the small ones, needs to be led by you to Gaza."

3/228 Waking up from his sleep in a bout of astonishment, he did not see anyone; he nevertheless went straight to the residence that had been

[83] From the age of nine on, Mary always heard from her father that the prophet Isaiah had announced that an angel of the Lord would come to save those of her people, spreading His ignored truth, and that this celestial delegate would be hunted, which, since the birth of her son, had been happening.

appointed to him. He tried to understand what happened. He had feelings he had never experienced before, and, like never before, he had daydreamed with impressive realism.

3/229 “Am I seeing shadows in front of me because I am tired, or could it be that, for being too long in the Sun of the desert, I am sick in the head?” he considered.

3/230 When he arrived at the market place, he thought of giving up; however, he clearly saw whom the messenger had indicated; he asked himself again:

3/231 “Not long ago I saw this woman while I slept. How can she be in front of me so fast?”

3/232 He observed the Hebrew woman, who had brown skin, black hair that she wore untied, entering the residence that had just been appointed to him. He was hesitant to approach, for, if she were married, he would be punished in the public square. The thought that the young woman could be uncommitted caused him greater fear, for he would have to unite himself to her for the sole reason of having addressed her without the presence of her protector or an elder. He decided to wait around, expecting that another man would appear, so that he could then talk to the stranger. But what a surprise it was when she came to see him and, asking no questions and promptly saying his name, meekly stated:

3/233 “Do not be afraid, I was expecting you.”

3/234 Dumbfounded, he stammered:

3/235 “But how were you expecting me? And how do you know what I am called?”

3/236 “Do not be afraid. It was an angel of the Lord who said to me, right after my protector’s death, that a man called Alphaeus would come, and he showed me your face. He said you would bring along a woman and two offspring and that you and I must lead them to Nazareth.”

3/237 Despite his astonishment, the caravan leader, trying to find a pretext not to go to the faraway Galilee, replied:

3/238 “I do not even know where this place you speak of is. I cannot walk with an injured leg. We need water and bread. How will you walk through the desert without one who knows the ways?”

3/239 The Hebrew woman, who had not yet introduced herself, stated with uncontained conviction:

3/240 “The Lord knows all the ways. The Lord sent you to me and will send all to Nazareth.”

3/241 She asked incisively:

3/242 “Do you trust the Lord?”

3/243 Receiving an affirmative answer, she went on:

3/244 “If you arrived as far as here, how will you not arrive in Nazareth? As for food and water, I am confident that the Lord will provide for someone to acquire what I will weave in the stops we make, with the wool that Uzziah saved.”

3/245 Finding no words to counter-argue, the qualified leader remembered the latest events of his living and secretly agreed with what she had made explicit. He admirably asked the woman about little Joseph’s mother:

3/246 “What could it be that is happening to this woman? Every day the Lord directs me and shows me the way to follow.”

3/247 Abigail, who saw many of God’s children who were not in the life of flesh, certain that it was the right way to act, replied:

3/248 “I do not know, but, if the Lord is helping, it is necessary for Mary and her offspring to be protected, and we are here to obey.”

3/249 She concluded:

3/250 “Go get Mary and her offspring.”

3/251 Before being given another order, an amazed Alphaeus exclaimed:

3/252 “You even know what she is called! How do you know?”

3/253 “The same way I knew what you were called.”

3/254 She impatiently put an end to the conversation:

3/255 “Go.”

3/256 The man whom Elijah saved from death, not wishing to speak to Joseph’s wife alone, asked his interlocutor to follow him. She nevertheless informed him that she was neither pleased with sovereigns nor with the ostentation that surrounded them, when there were so many of her own people who had no food or water. The caravan leader, assuring her that Joaquin’s youngest would not restart the journey otherwise, insisted; a firm Abigail emphasized:

3/257 “I say that Mary knows that where she is is not safe.”

3/258 Not very convinced, Alphaeus slowly walked to Isaiah’s residence, wondering:

3/259 “I am obeying a woman. If those who are my people see me obeying a woman, they will throw stones at me and will no longer speak to me, but if this is what the Lord wants, I will speak to Mary.”

3/260 “I know that he who is a prophet will not like it. I asked him for help, and now I do not want it anymore.”

3/261 “I say that women only put me in danger. I know the Lord will give me a good word ...,” but he could not finish his reasoning, for his attention was drawn to a newly formed crowd.

3/262 Believing that the monarch had finally accepted to die, he went on, still pondering the subject, and his urgent preoccupations were pushed to the background:

3/263 “I do not know why some men do not accept to leave this world where all we have is suffering. I say that king Neco does not want to leave this life because he does not suffer. There are many people with him, a lot of luxury, but I do not want to be him, I prefer the small life full of peace that I have. I know the Lord because of His love for all of those who are my people. I am a sinner, and the Lord forgives me and leads me all the time,” and he remembered the moment when he had fallen asleep and had been with the meek young woman.

3/264 He walked some more meters and got inside the place of refuge, but did not find little Joseph there, for the boy was wandering about Rafah. Matthew was nevertheless sleeping next to his uterine sister. The latter, observing Alphaeus’s unusual behavior, who, unable to gather the courage to start a conversation, kept staring at her, asked him:

3/265 “What is going on? You look at me as if you wanted to speak to me. What happened?”

3/266 “I do not know how to say it to you, but we have to leave this place.”

3/267 The one conceived by Anna did not oppose to him whatsoever, she only wished to know where they were going. The man, surprised at her deliberation, asked if she did not mind walking again, for they had just arrived, and she needed to rest.

3/268 “Nothing happens without the Lord’s permission. If we have to leave, it is because He allows,” she meekly replied, and was then informed of what had happened while he was asleep and of his conversation with Abigail.

3/269 Showing great contentment that their destination was Nazareth, Mary commented, referring to her nephew and niece Judas and Martha and her stepfather:

3/270 “I will see my other offspring and Matthew.”

3/271 “What other offspring does this woman have in Nazareth? Are they from the same companion? I do not know, because I did not see if she had a companion in Hiatta,” thought Alphaeus, unaware of all the details.

3/272 Since she had agreed to continue the journey, he told her he would go find little Joseph, so that he could stay by her side. When he returned, his countenance was alarmed. Explaining the reason to his interlocutor, he reported that the presence of the strangers he had seen gathered before was not due to Neco's death as he had thought. He had seen a man he judged was Ezechias, whom Elijah had warned him about. He was not sure, but he had heard the ones under his care being asked about. Confessing to his ineptitude in the art of recognition, and since the man's tunic was different, the type the Egyptians wore, he told Mary to, from a hidden place, attest to whether or not he was Herod Antipas's wage earner.

3/273 When she saw him, Joaquin's youngest confirmed Alphaeus's suspicions. The qualified leader then asked her not to show herself to anyone and not to let the two boys stay away from her; as for himself, he was going to find out what the intentions of the tyrant's follower were. Now with the latter, pretending to be trading two carpets he was sitting on, he offered them to him:

3/274 "Take them, I am running out of them."

3/275 Now that his intent to approach the murderer was accomplished, the latter asked him if he was trading them. When he answered positively, Jonathan's cruel executioner went on:

3/276 "You must know all the other traders," to which Alphaeus gave an affirmative answer.

3/277 "I am looking for three slaves of mine who have escaped many moons ago. I heard they are in a caravan that stopped at this place," Joseph's cousin went on.

3/278 The pseudo-merchant stated that many had stopped in Rafah.

3/279 "The caravan I am searching for is being led by a man with no experience. I have information that it went to Egypt. I just want to know when it was that it stopped here," added the barbaric traitor.

3/280 What he said made Alphaeus feel fortunate: Ezechias did not have a clue that the prey after whom he had crossed the tetrachy was right there under his nose. Noticing that the hunter was heading for Neco's palace, he thought to himself:

3/281 "It is better for me to stop shaking and go see Mary. This commanded one may speak with that luxurious prophet."

3/282 He did not understand why, but he felt great antipathy for Isaiah; perhaps, he thought, it was because he worked for free for a man who made the Hebrews beg for what was left of the crops they cultivated themselves.

3/283 He left the square and made up his mind that the hidden ones would not spend the night at the vaticinator's residence, but at Abigail's, as she had assured him, something he first denied to accept for it had been said by a woman. At dawn, he said to himself, they would leave Rafah. While he was walking, his thoughts focused on those of his own people, who produced for Neco:

3/284 "You are either a slave to the Herods or to the Egyptians. Even this prophet, instead of taking care of those who are my own people, those who need him, is kissing the hands and the feet of this king who looks like a mummy!"

3/285 Sorry for the situation, he pleaded to God:

3/286 "If I am sinning, Lord, I ask for forgiveness one more time. I ask the Lord to help me help those who are my people, who are living to sow and harvest for those who never work the soil, who do not know of the Lord's existence, who do not know that the Lord protects them the way He is protecting all those who are of my people."

3/287 Absorbed in his plea, he said:

3/288 "Let those who are my people, who suffer so much, never forget the Lord."

3/289 Now moved, he finished his prayer:

3/290 "I know the Lord is with me, because I spoke to Ezechias, and he did not know me. Ezechias, twice as big as I am, if he found out who I am, I would be with no life. I know I do not deserve it, but I ask the Lord to allow me not to leave this life before taking Mary and the ones who came from her to Nazareth. That maiden, when I was sleeping, said that I should go to Gaza, and Abigail says it is to Nazareth. I know the Lord knows that the way is long and full of dangers, but, with the Lord's help, we will arrive. I am thankful that the Lord listened to me."

3/291 When he was with the children and the one conceived by Anna, he informed them of his decisions. An attentive little Joseph asked him:

3/292 "Are there others like us, who always need to hide?"

3/293 Still feeling sad, Alphaeus replied:

3/294 "For as long as power is in the hands of these kings, there will always be someone who needs to hide."

3/295 After an uneasy rest, when darkness fell, he went to prepare the camels so that they could start the journey. He was surprised to see that his animals were ready, and in addition there were other three ones, loaded with water and food, even dates. All of a sudden the respected predictor of Rafah

appeared, his countenance as serene as usual. He immediately went to confer with the caravan leader. Face to face with him, he guaranteed:

3/296 “I know you do not trust me. It was necessary for me to become a slave just for this very moment. You will see what I am saying now be confirmed.”

3/297 Alphaeus heard him add, not understanding his words:

3/298 “I prefer losing my life to delivering you to Ezechias.”

3/299 When Isaiah said the name of his hunter, the caravan leader got scared. He did not understand how Isaiah knew about the latent fear that controlled his mind and about the conversation he had had with the one commanded by Herod Antipas. But there was no need for questions, for Isaiah immediately clarified:

3/300 “Do not be scared. I say that the Lord always shows us what we need to know.”

3/301 Believing that the extra animals and the supplies had been stolen, Alphaeus thought that, by his action, the vaticinator had sealed his destiny.^[84] He curiously asked him:

3/302 “What will be of you?”

3/303 “I have already done what I came to do in this life and I can leave this world in peace. I was this king’s slave for eight harvests so that he would trust me until this day arrived. I say that my part has been done. When you finish yours, you will understand what I am saying. The only difference is that I knew that the one promised by the Lord would make a stop here.”

3/304 The honest caravan leader still did not understand anything. Not worrying about what came out of his mouth, he commented:

3/305 “You have been staying in the Sun for too long. I do not understand what you say.” This made the predictor laugh, and he also encouraged Alphaeus to have energy for his upcoming journey.

3/306 The encouragement he received made Alphaeus feel ashamed of having suspected his interlocutor, who had walked away and observed him at a distance of about two meters. Alphaeus, however, extroverted by nature, only asked himself:

3/307 “How come Isaiah knows he did not have my trust? How does he

[84] The prophet of Rafah acquired the animals before becoming Neco’s slave, as well as the coins that were necessary for their trade for the supplies.

know that I spoke to Ezechias, if not even Ezechias knew who I was? This prophet knows everything. Can it be that the Lord speaks to him?”

3/308 His thoughts were again clearly captured by Neco’s voluntary slave. Since his goal was to make the caravan leader believe that he indeed spoke with God, he assured him:

3/309 “You have been sent in order to lead this woman, her offspring and her relative because you trust the Lord.”

3/310 It was clear for the teacher that, if Alphaeus accepted his words, he would be even more watchful during his daily performance, thus not endangering the long-awaited deliverer:

3/311 Isaiah noticed his student’s regret for not having trusted him, and again he encouraged him. However, the experienced leader’s mind was confused given such a plethora of oddities: how could he, who had been with Mary for so long, ignore that one of the boys was her brother, and not her son?^[85] Allaying his student’s concerns, the one who correctly prophesied in Rafah tried to calm him down:

3/312 “Your questions will soon be answered,” and he walked away, feeling that his duty had been accomplished.

3/313 Returning to where the ones he would be leading were making the final arrangements for the journey, Alphaeus, unable to contain the joy he was feeling, guaranteed to them that their host spoke with the Lord. Both women, seeing him behave like a young man, smiled. He emphatically repeated what he had said. Abigail then confessed that Isaiah was her father’s brother, but they did not go to each other’s residences, for an angel of the Lord had thus instructed her uncle.

3/314 Unsatisfied with the vague remark, the caravan leader asked her:

3/315 “But how does the one of the same family as you know what will happen?”

3/316 Unable to explain herself, Uziah’s daughter said that the Lord had certainly put someone by his side who always warned him what to do and not to do. Alphaeus, curious and talkative as usual, wished to understand why she had not gone to the vaticinator’s residence to speak to the one conceived by Anna and why she had said she did not appreciate all the ostentation. Abigail justified herself:

3/317 “I do not like that luxury, but it is true that the one who came after

[85] Alphaeus believed that Anna’s son was actually Mary’s, for the boy remarkably had many of her features.

my protector has always been distant. There has never been any friendship between him and me. The one who came after my protector said that he had a mission that no one would understand, according to what the Lord had said to him. He always stayed with king Neco and never complained about the life he led. But now I know why.”

3/318 Accepting her words, having nothing else to ask, the caravan leader announced that they should start walking before the day got hot.

3/319 Judging that, even if it was just for a short period of time, they would not be in danger, he asked the women to keep the children by their side, and they started walking towards Gaza.

3-2

3/320 Isaiah had been different from the others since his youth. After waking up, he would narrate the memories of what he had seen in his sleep, events that afterwards came true. When he reached the age of thirty, these reminiscences were still persisting.

3/321 When he was young and an inhabitant of Bethlehem, the Hebrew women were terrified at the idea of uniting themselves to him because, according to some, he predicted disgrace for he saw evil and spoke to the dead.

3/322 His fame as a powerful predictor among those of his people grew day after day.

3/323 Along with his only and older brother, Uziah, the latter recently married to an Egyptian woman, for many years he lived in Jacob’s ancient lands. Two moons before they were invaded by the wage earners of Herod the Great, in 19 BC, he left Hiatta and headed for Rafah, following the couple.

3/324 When they arrived there they were full of hope; however, when they realized that its inhabitants were, in their majority, foreigners, they felt desolate. But since his brother refused to return, they ended up settling there.

3/325 Isaiah’s reputation nevertheless followed him. He became known for seeing the future and drew the attention of the man who claimed to be a king, who consulted with him with private questions, and also those concerning his rule. Because of the accuracy of his predictions, he became a person of interest to the sovereign, who was rich and had many jewels, something that really seduced him. No longer needing to work in the hot Sun, with little water and a small piece of bread for food, he allowed himself to make the predictions he was asked for, and even moved to the royal mansion. After seven harvests of

a pleasant existence, he was told, according to his words, by the Lord:

3/326 “You will become a slave to this king from whom you earn part of his treasure and everything will be the way he wants. You will not take a step back from what has been entrusted to you, because the one promised by the prophets will come to save everyone who accepts him. When the king invites you, you will accept it and remain his slave for eight harvests, so that no one will suspect you whenever you need to leave or enter the palace.”

3/327 For half a decade, the vaticinator refused this assertion; however, when he saw whom he thought was the Lord again, it was enough for him to understand its meaning, and he voluntarily deprived himself of his free will. What he had heard, not very clear to many, he accepted it as incontestable. He understood that the desired redeemer would come and would need him in the palace. The only thing that was not clear was whom he would have to assist. For years, many wayfarers were helped by him, for he was sure he was helping the redeemer.

3/328 When he became a slave, he provoked aversion in the other Hebrews, for now he was not helping them with his predictions. He became distant from Uziah in order not to harm him; however, he never told him why. And then came the day when Alphaeus, mentally perfect and shorter than one meter, came to see him asking for shelter for a woman and two boys. Shortly before meeting the caravan leader in the life of flesh, he had identified him in a vision.

3/329 At dusk on the day Ezechias arrived, aware that, on the following day, his hosts would start their journey, he left the stately building where he worked without being noticed. With the animals he owned well loaded with an abundance of the liquid essential to life and food, he went to where those of Alphaeus were and waited for him to bid farewell.

3/330 Despite the faith he had in the Lord, and despite being His instrument for the desired redeemer to do what He willed, Isaiah was not introduced to little Joseph. Some months after the quintet left the village, he was crucified and died as a thief, a pillager, as they used to say, accused of having stolen some of Neco’s jewels and given them to his niece, as well as many camels so that the others could escape.

3/331 Those who held power in Rafah, even the smallest part of it, interpreted the attitude of the oppressed ones, who did not even come close to the wood where the prophet agonized, as the confirmation of the accusation made by Neco’s main counselor, who did not particularly like Isaiah.

3-3

3/332 As the Lord Himself had revealed, according to Elijah's understanding, Jarred left the life of flesh on the specified date. Not able to take care of Jeremiah's siblings fully, as he had guaranteed he would do, he asked one of the women to help him throughout the day until the fireman in recovery became healthy again.

3/333 One morning, walking in a caravan that did not even make a stop, two youngsters and a man old enough to be an elder arrived in Hiatta. The old man, whose white hair resembled Moses's beard, as they referred to the white clouds in the sky, walked contortedly. The frowning young man seemed to be always angry; the Hebrew woman, however, was meek and gentle.

3/334 Informed of the news in its details, the rabbi almost discarded that the two young people, nowadays classified as adolescents, were Joseph's children, for they were very different; however, he wondered about the man who had a hunch:

3/335 "Could it be that he is the man the Lord spoke of? If it were not for the two ones who are with him, I would not accept that he is the man I am waiting for. He looks more like a moribund, those who do not want help and pass by here only to leave this world. I say that the Lord would not give him such a great mission."

3/336 When he went to see the trio, who had made a stop outside Hiatta, he asked the grumpy outsider if they wanted help.

3/337 "You can go, I will take care of my relative," was the impolite reply.

3/338 "Is he your relative?" asked Elijah, still not believing that they were the ones who had been announced to him.

3/339 The stranger was rude once more:

3/340 "I say he is, and just go. I do not need your help."

3/341 The submissive maiden, who had remained silent and kept her head down during the conversation, raised it, and delicately addressed her brother:

3/342 "Forgive me, I know you are the one who came first, but we are in need of help."

3/343 Turning to the rabbi, she pointed at the old man lying on the ground, and added:

3/344 "This one who is sleeping is Matthew. He is our relative and he is sick."

3/345 Elijah remembered the conversation he had had with the Lord. He immediately asked his interlocutor:

3/346 “What does your relative call you?”

3/347 “I say I am called Martha.”

3/348 She went on, introducing the man who still seemed to be bothered:

3/349 “This is Judas, the one who came together with me. Judas never speaks respectfully.”

3/350 She went on:

3/351 “Have you heard of our protector?”

3/352 With uncontained anxiety, Jarred’s companion asked what his name was. The one who came from Sarah said the name that put all the facts together:

3/353 “Our protector is called Joseph.”

3/354 As a sign of respect for the older man who, after hearing her last statement, got lost in his own thoughts, and since she was a woman, she had to be submissive, Martha said nothing further: she was not being paid attention to, therefore she refrained from speaking.

3/355 Elijah, pondering the situation, stated to himself that, despite the obviousness of the event, he had to be absolutely sure that they were the ones he was waiting for, because what those who were on the Herods side wanted was very well known. His thoughts were disturbed by the disrespectful young man, who affirmed:

3/356 “Do not listen to this woman. I do not want to see a single person. Let me take care of her and my relative. I say I am the one who decides, because I came first.”

3/357 “But your relative is not well. Let me take care of him. When he is well, we will see who is the one who gives orders,” answered the rabbi, with the authority the older ones had.

3/358 Joseph’s firstborn did not dare confront the teacher who, as a cautionary measure, said nothing further, given that he was unsure of how much wrath the twin had within him.

3/359 When the man devoid of vigor woke up, he actually turned out to have no disease at all, whether a skin or an internal one, as they used to say. He then narrated to the elder of Hiatta his existence. He was in fact, in the opinion of the man who was patiently listening to his pseudo-difficulties, unwilling to live. Matthew, repeating the complaints that had been filling his days ever since his companion’s death, asserted:

3/360 “I have been suffering since they took Anna’s life. Before, I had already lost all my protectees. I say the Lord is not very happy with me.

What sin could I have committed? Why is the Lord punishing me? And this offspring, Judas, only brought me suffering. I want to find Joseph to deliver his protectees to him, and then life can leave this tired body of mine peacefully. Since they took Anna's life, I have no energy to work the soil or take care of the carpenter's workshop, I just want to leave this life and go meet her."

3/361 Elijah, also experienced regarding human nature, with the intention of encouraging the weak man, forcefully said to him:

3/362 "You have a good life and you are losing it for no reason. You are weak, contrary to Anna, who gave her life for the one who came from her womb and for the life of Mary's small one, and you are there just losing your life!"

3/363 Since these words were true, the melon grower started crying copiously, asking to be left alone with his pain; Jarred's husband nevertheless went on:

3/364 "You will return to Nazareth because you are not sick, you are afraid of meeting death, afraid that the man commanded by Herod Antipas will come meet you and do the same he did to Anna. I say you are afraid, and not sick. A man like you, who resisted so many dangers, is afraid? Joseph is alive, and I know where he is. It is Joseph who is sick, and he needs you to go to Nazareth. Joseph was defending the small ones and those of Hiatta who are of our people, and you want to run away? He needs you. I say you do not miss her, what you have is fear, and fear never took anyone's life. On the contrary, it makes life longer: the more fear we have, the more careful we are. Let us eat milk and bread, and I will get Joseph and his small ones ready so that you can take them and the ones who came with you to Nazareth."

3/365 Stunned by such frank and assertive words, and aware that they were correct, Matthew did no object; he only asked which children would be going with him, and Elijah informed him of the other small ones. Elijah also told him why Martha's twin was so discourteous:

3/366 "After Joseph left you, three other small ones came, who are very different from this one Judas, whom you allowed to become a man before teaching him how to be a man. Judas does not accept that you are sick, and you are not; if you were, the Lord would not give you such commitments. I will go get Joseph, I hid him because I do not know who will come by here. I do not know if you know that Hiatta is part of the way of all those who are escaping the Herods, and Antipas is worse than his protector and all the others together."

3/367 Noticing that his grandfather-uncle was healthy, the impolite young man approached and interrupted them, stating that they would be leaving the village immediately. The rabbi spoke again:

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3/368 “I do not know what your relative taught you, but here the ones who are harvests younger obey those who are harvests older, and I am many harvests older than you. You will obey me, and also your relative. I say that Matthew will not leave until I allow it.”

3/369 He assertively added:

3/370 “Go fetch wood with the others, or water, if you want a piece of bread, and leave the decisions for those who are harvests older.”

3/371 Judas lowered his head and left, and the former carpenter was astonished at how simple it had been to restrain him.

3/372 Before conferring with Jacob’s heir, Elijah prayed to the Lord and asked Him to forgive his forceful behavior; however, he did not know how to behave with the young man who, despite his young age, had a very sharp tongue. He said:

3/373 “How can we speak with one of the Lord’s protectees who does not feel we are taking care of him with respect? I do not want to go against the Lord, but towards Him. I seek in the Lord the patience I do not have to speak with Judas.”

3/374 On the way to the synagogue, he was convinced that he could not deliberate on Joseph’s behalf. It was urgent to find out what the latter wanted to do, and not what he himself thought was the best solution. When he was with him, he warned him about the outsiders:

3/375 “A man called Matthew is here, who is many harvests old, along with a man named Judas and a woman, who are both few harvests old. I do not know if they are your protectees, but the woman called Martha has your eyes and your smile, but the man has nothing of you in him. Judas does not like it when someone says what he does not want to hear. He does not know how to deal with those of our people.” Joseph was very happy with the arrival of his family.

3/376 Jacob’s stubborn firstborn, who was recovering not from the injuries caused by the fire in the barn, but from how worse they had gotten, contrary to what he was instructed to do, decided, right after being told of his family’s arrival, to walk to the village Elijah was informed he had to go. He barely paid attention to the latter’s comments concerning his firstborn. The unpredicted presence of his own justified the decision he made, which was not approved by the elder of Hiatta. He emphasized that, had he not returned from the journey he had made to Joep, Sarah’s twins would not have found him.

3/377 The rabbi, who did not reveal the message he had received in its entirety, tried to explain to him what he previously had been unable to do:

3/378 “What I said was that you were in no conditions to go on that walk, and besides with the three small ones with you; that your wounds were still

very fresh, and that the Sun would only make them worse. But you wanted to leave when I told you that Mary had joined Alphaeus's caravan and that the Lord had said to me that you had to go to Jope. You did not want to listen to me, and returned only after one day of walking. If you had waited for the days the Lord had spoken to me of and had gone without the small ones, you would have already found Mary."

3/379 Always wanting that his wishes be fulfilled without disagreement, Joseph arrogantly did not take responsibility for his actions:

3/380 "You have all the truth with yourself. My wounds opened and I had no alternative but to come back. I could barely carry James, who is very small, nor could I prepare supper for the three offspring. It is good that you sent two men you trusted with me."

3/381 Realizing that Joseph would not benefit from the conversation, Jarred's husband once more told him about those from Nazareth, cautioning his friend regarding the young outsider:

3/382 "That man does not tread good paths. I say he will not be happy to see you."

3/383 The former rebel, who had not seen his firstborn since his flight from Nazareth more than eight years before, complained:

3/384 "Sometimes I feel that the Lord sends us troublesome protectees to see if those who are their protectors can wish them all well."

3/385 Unwilling to listen to more complaints, Elijah replied:

3/386 "You have had enough sadness for one day. Look at the small ones you have, all normal, with arms and legs, whom the Lord gave you. Do not complain, otherwise I will be in debt with the Lord for being so forceful with the ones who suffer. Let us see what to do with those of your family who have arrived. I say that everyone has a path to tread, and you have to tread yours. Come speak with Matthew and with your protectees from Nazareth, who are waiting for you. I only feel sad that I will be far from the small ones, who are now everything I have."

3/387 He playfully provoked Joseph:

3/388 "You will not lament your life!"

3/389 "I am very grateful to the Lord for having given me everything I have in this life. What I did not have, it is because I did not deserve it, but I will be worthy of deserving it. Let us see your stake."^[86]

[86] A **stake** was where those who would be publicly whipped were tied to. Joseph's stake, according to Elijah, was Judas.

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3/390 Together they went down for the greatly desired reunion, at least for Martha's part.

3/391 Tired of suffering and believing he would die soon, Anna's widower had been looking for the vanished man so that he could pass on his offspring to him. He tried to get information with Simeon Joseph, who offered shelter for his uterine siblings, because their tutor had guaranteed to him that he would soon die. However, Matthew affirmed he had a duty that needed to be accomplished: he had to deliver his relative's descendants to him. He then learned from the carpenter of Bethlehem of his nephew's whereabouts.

3/392 Jacob's heir, when seeing his firstborn, assuming he would behave aggressively, promptly took the lead:

3/393 "Do not say anything that you will regret later. Try to know everyone's commitments before you say what you know, or what goes inside you that you think you know. I say you do not know the reason that I had to leave you."

3/394 Realizing that Judas would reply, he was even more assertive:

3/395 "Wait for me to speak, and then you judge, if you want to. I did not leave you because I wanted to, but because it was necessary."

3/396 He incisively added, putting an end to the matter:

3/397 "I say I am your protector. You have respect for me, no? Well, I have respect for you. Let us go to Nazareth, and there you will follow the direction you want for your life."

3/398 The twin was not happy at all. He nevertheless surprisingly remained silent, surprisingly, that is, because he always talked back at his interlocutors.

3/399 Martha, who ever since her father's arrival was joyful to see him again, did not notice his reprimands. When seeing that she was present, Joseph assumed she would complain as well; however, when he realized she had a majestic smile on her face, he asked her for a hug, which caused his daughter to feel elated, for she was well aware of the fact that it was unusual for daughters to embrace their protectors. Joseph immediately stated that they would break with tradition, asking Jarred's husband, who remained by his side, to corroborate his words.

3/400 His friend's behavior was a source of joy for Elijah, and his intuitions about the twin had come true: she was indeed meek, polite, and compliant, the kind of daughter that brought along nothing but contentment, and she would indeed help Mary take care of the small ones who were very few harvests old. Opposing himself to such a clear conclusion, Judas thought that his absent father's behavior would turn his sister into an adulteress; notwithstanding his distaste, he said nothing.

3/401 When it was confirmed that the newly arrived were the ones announced by the Lord, the rabbi, leaving Jacob's only son in a certainly difficult conversation with his firstborn, led Sarah's lastborn to her blood siblings.

3/402 When she met them, the young woman was exhilarated. She affectionately commented with James that he looked like a lamb because of his minute size, but said she would be able to carry him; as for Veronica, who remained silent, she asserted that she would not let Judas be with her a lot, otherwise he would assign her his own tasks. John asked about his mother and Jeremiah:

3/403 "He who is our protector wants us to say little Joseph," she reminded him.

3/404 Caressing his hands, she went on:

3/405 "I will take care of you, but before I need to have a conversation with the one who is our protector. I ask the Lord for Joseph to listen to me."

3/406 "I say that Joseph will hear. He hears everything, even when I go get bread," said the boy.

3/407 The beautiful young woman tenderly explained to him:

3/408 "Joseph does not hear, he sees when you look for bread."

3/409 After feeding the children, she told them she would be back soon. She headed for the synagogue, speaking to God:

3/410 "I know the Lord is a man, but I wish the Lord no evil. It is just that I see all of those of my people who are women and who are delivered to men during the harvests appear with black eyes and, sometimes, with broken teeth. If I will have a black eye and broken teeth when I have a companion, I prefer looking after those who came after me. If I am to be a slave to a man, let me be a slave to those of my family. I accept to spend the night at the livery stables with the animals, but I ask the Lord to allow Joseph not to want me to unite myself. I say I do not want to, but if it is the Lord's will, I will accept it. I am thankful to the Lord for listening to me."

3/411 When she arrived, she witnessed the one who came to this world before her raise his voice to his genitor; however, when he noticed her, he furiously left. Afflicted for not knowing how her father would react concerning the theme that caused her deep despair, extremely hesitant about the answer she would get from him, she did not realize that Elijah was also present, but at a certain distance. Matthew, her adoptive grandfather whom she called her protector, and Judas claimed that she was at an age when they could impose a husband upon her. Despite being aware of this custom among her folks, she would not bear to have an owner. She bitterly asked the institutionalized

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decider of her future, who was standing in front of her, if they could talk, and she had his consent.

3/412 Her father, who had been away from her for a long time, noticed that she was extremely cold. He asked her if she was afraid.

3/413 “How do you know I am afraid of you?” asked a blushing Martha.

3/414 “I say that your hands are cold and shaking. If it is not out of fear of me, then what could it be?”

3/415 Now confident in her genuine genitor, she narrated her intense anguish:

3/416 “Judas and Matthew say that it is time for me to have a companion. I do not want you to betroth me, I do not want to unite myself. There are women in Nazareth who, after their protectors betrothed them, never smiled or spoke to anyone again; others, after their union, have their tongues cut off by their companions,” but she could not finish her sentence, for she started crying heavy tears.

3/417 Before the compulsive crying of the beautiful Hebrew woman, Joseph stated:

3/418 “It is not a custom among those of our people, but you will only unite yourself to the one you like. I am enough harvests old to know that choosing a companion for a woman is not the right thing to do. I will not force you to unite yourself to any man, nor Veronica, but do not bring shame upon your protector, my protector, and those who came before and after you.”

3/419 Comforting the girl, he added:

3/420 “Do not cry, do not be afraid of your protector, who is your friend, not your enemy,” words that made his gracious daughter happy.

3/421 Jarred’s husband, surprised at what he had heard, said to Jacob’s heir after the young woman left:

3/422 “It never went inside me that you would do for a woman what you did for your female protectee. I say it is time we changed our custom of delivering our female protectees as if they were female animals to make our herd more numerous. If I had a protectee, I would act the same way as you did. I know this is what the Lord expects us to do, that we respect everyone.”

3/423 In the rabbi’s rustic residence, a relieved Martha pondered how they could return to Nazareth, for the ways they had treaded were tiring, and Joseph’s wounds were not in good shape; however, she would not say her opinion, even though her genitor was different from the others. As she did her duties, she wondered:

3/424 “Elijah is a man of wisdom, he knows everything before it happens.

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It must be because he came to this world a long time ago. They say that, as harvests go by, you acquire the Lord's wisdom. Can it be that women also become wise? It must not go inside me that women become wise, I must get Mary's offspring ready for us to return to Nazareth."

3/425 Since peace reigned at the moment, she went on:

3/426 "Mary must be about to arrive in Nazareth. If protector Matthew had not been sick, we would not have needed to leave Nazareth. What will become of Judas, who says that, when we get to our residence, he will no longer obey protector Matthew and Joseph? Judas says that, if with only one protector he has no freedom to go his own way, with two protectors it will be even worse. He said he will not work the soil and that he will not be a carpenter; that he wants to do the best to be respected by all wherever he goes; that he wants to have slaves, and not to be a slave. He said that it goes inside all of those who are my people that they are free, but Herod Antipas comes and takes all they produce. He said Herod Antipas leaves behind only a little just so that they will not lose their lives for lack of bread because, if they lose their lives, there will be no one to work the soil."

3/427 She could not continue, for she was abruptly interrupted by her brother who, complaining about his father out loud, stormed into where she was.

3/428 "I do not and will not work the soil for Herod Antipas, and I will not make stools, as if I were his slave. I want to live with him, and not run away from him. I am enough harvests old to do what I want, and I will not hide like Joseph and Mary. It is not my fault if they want to take the life of the one who was called Jesus."

3/429 Showing Martha the Hebrew tunic that covered his body, he concluded:

3/430 "Still in Nazareth I did not talk to those of the inferior race. I deny being one of them. I want to be with Herod Antipas and, if it works, rule in his place. I do not want to follow Joseph and always hide."

3/431 He stormed out saying nothing further, leaving his twin very saddened by his tough words.

3-3.1

3/432 Jacob's heir was willing to leave immediately; however, Elijah asked him to stay another couple of days to help build another storage for the grains, not to touch the wood himself, but to teach others how to do it. Grateful to

the man who had sheltered him in moments of extreme difficulty, he accepted to stay in Hiatta until the upcoming moon, on August 19, when the waning moon would be replaced by the dark one.

3/433 Not accepting to return to Nazareth and then decide what to do, as had been suggested to him, Judas left in a caravan of merchants that passed by Hiatta, without letting his family know, for he was old enough to choose what he was looking for. Before Judas, already a grown man for those of the time, chose another direction for his living, Matthew, predicting his intentions, for he knew him very well, went to speak to his nephew and advised him to try to compel the young man to follow them.

3/434 “Judas will only slow us down. I left Martha free to elect her companion, so why would I force Judas to stay? The Lord will lead us to where we are going, and in this I believe. Did you see what happened when I did not trust the Lord?” said the experienced father.

3/435 After his initial conversation with the rabbi, Anna’s widower, realizing that he could be useful and that he was needed, as if spellbound, started conveying health and enthusiasm. Noticing him with a jovial disposition, Elijah could not stop himself from saying:

3/436 “It is enough for us to feel needed that our ailments disappear. I say you arrived here almost lifeless, and now you are even watching over the new storage.”

3/437 With three camels and four donkeys, on August 23, 1 BC, Matthew, Joseph, Martha, John, Veronica, and James left Hiatta in order to meet Mary and the boys. They were headed for Joep, a village from which they would walk to Nazareth, according to the directions that had been received.

3/438 The walk went on with no great obstacles, except for two pillagers whom the melon grower scared away by saying that the burns on his fellow traveler’s body were a disease that made those who caught it rot alive. The pseudo-leper grumbled at his uncle’s providential idea, and Matthew then asked him:

3/439 “Do you want to see Mary and the offspring? I say I want to. It is good that the pillagers announce it to everyone, because Martha is very beautiful, and we do not want her to be taken by one of these Hebrews who do not have the Lord’s Laws inside them.”

3/440 Sarah’s daughter, because of her attitude, remained vivid on the mind of Jarred’s companion, who would die six months later, for he was certain that the one considered ready to unite herself was different from the others who were the same age as hers, as well as extremely meek, aware of her wishes, intelligent, and inventive. He remembered when she put the wheat under an oval rock, transforming it into some kind of see-saw so that

the young ones could pleasantly play. As she made food, the small ones had fun, ground the grains, and remained under her watch at once.

3-3.2

3/441 Mary, Abigail, little Joseph, the young Matthew, and Alphaeus had been walking for four days since their departure from Rafah, when two of their own people, who not far from them headed for the same place and whose starting point the one responsible for the journey had not noticed, asked for permission to join the quintet. The caravan leader consented, since he had deemed them to be Lord-fearing men who prayed, as the custom among the oppressed ones dictated.

3/442 The one who seemed to be older and was uneasy and quiet only spoke to say his name and ask if they could join the caravan; the other, who claimed to be a weaver by trade, mentioned that they were looking for a piece of land where they could sow far away from the Herods.

3/443 It was not a custom among the oppressed ones to have a name linked to diseases, but the worried man was an exception to the rule. Alphaeus, extremely curious, asked himself:

3/444 “Why is this man called Pustule? Could it be that he had the ulcers, then they left his body, and now he is called Pustule? It is not a good thing to ask him. The other one who is with him does not seem to like working the soil. He says he is called Simon, and those called Simon are only those who are harvests older, but, if one is not called Simon when one is harvests young, one cannot be called Simon when one is harvests older.”

3-3.3

3/445 Before reaching Gaza, the caravan leader went to speak to Mary and warned her that they would make a stop at his sister’s residence. She, who had not asked any questions until then, said:

3/446 “Does she who is from the same protection as you not have a residence in Jope? I heard rabbi Elijah say that she was in Jope, not in Gaza. I do not want to say that what you are saying is not true, I do not want to say what you should do, I am only asking, and only if you want to answer. I know I must not say how you must lead your caravan, and I apologize for addressing you with words.”

3/447 Noticing that his interlocutor was trembling, Alphaeus replied:

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3/448 “I know you do not want to give directions about what I should do. Do not feel uneasy, she is only a woman I met when I was with rabbi Elijah and who became part of my family. I say that rabbi Elijah found her on the way to Azotus, with a woman who was almost lifeless, and brought her to Gaza. The one who gave life to her left this world, she was a ...” but he interrupted his explanation.

3/449 He hesitantly asked Joaquin’s youngest permission to proceed:

3/450 “If you allow me to say what the woman was, I will, otherwise you will not ask me questions about the one who came after me. The life of the one who carried her in her womb was not beautiful, and she asked rabbi Elijah to give another life to her offspring.”

3/451 Seeing the frankness in Alphaeus’s words, Mary spared him such an embarrassing situation:

3/452 “You do not need to say anything else. I know what kind of life she led. I was judged and condemned for what you do not want to speak of.”

3/453 “It is good that you understood it. If a man hears me speaking of the life of these women to you, I know stones will be thrown at me.”

3/454 The one conceived by Anna allayed his concerns:

3/455 “The one who is part of your family and you are protected. It no longer goes inside me what you just said.”

3/456 Also with the intention of not only being pleasant to her future host, Mary asked him what her name was.

3/457 “Zilah. Do you know what those of our people say about the creation of the world? Do they not say that one of the first women was called Zilah?” the caravan leader said to her.

3/458 When they arrived in Gaza, they bade farewell to Pustule and Simon and went straight to the shanty of the woman who became an orphan when she was still a baby. In Alphaeus’s opinion, nothing had changed since his last stay there. The young woman, always surrounded by small ones, was getting water at the well, always repeating the same stories about her people. As soon as she saw her brother, she ran like a child towards him and embraced him affectionately. In fact, it was a group hug, for she had also carried little Joseph and Matthew in her arms.

3/459 “Where have you been walking that it has been many moons since you were last here?” she asked the experienced leader.

3/460 Looking at Mary, who was studying her, before Alphaeus could say anything, she stated:

3/461 “You miss your other offspring. Did they come from your womb?”

3/462 Alphaeus reprimanded her:

3/463 “I say that if they see you trying to see what goes inside other people, they will thrown stones at you for abusing them.”

3/464 Joaquin’s youngest asked on what grounds his sister would be stoned. Alphaeus explained to her that only men could prophesy, not women. Zilah, still happy, only looked at Abigail and said nothing further, and they all entered her shanty.

3/465 Mary could indeed attest to the woman’s different behavior. The one who had been saved from certain death by Elijah did not allow those who accompanied her brother to do any activities, for she had stated that it was of utmost importance that they rest, and that the ways they still had to walk would be long. Not for a single moment did she prevent herself from having a captivating smile on her face, not showing any signs of frailty.

3/466 Since Zilah was spellbinding, the only brunette with green eyes in Judea, Joseph’s wife did not understand why she had not united herself and went to ask the caravan leader. He said nothing in return, but went towards a rock at the back of the room which was used as what we currently call a door. When he removed it, a room carved out of the ravine was revealed, full of paralytic and disabled adolescents. The unmarried charitable woman gathered them from around and took care of them with contagious joy. Mary asserted that it could only be the Lord who was with the kind Hebrew woman, who had faith in Him to a degree she had never noticed in anyone before. Alphaeus concluded:

3/467 “You see that they cannot leave for any reason.”

3/468 The promised one was very happy in Zilah’s company.

3/469 They stayed in Gaza for three days and, when they left, the gracious brunette waved until they disappeared in the horizon.

3/470 Talking to herself out loud, Joaquin’s youngest did not notice her firstborn approach, so impressed she was by Zilah. She was wondering about her great source of euphoria.

3/471 “I say it comes from the Father,” said the boy.

3/472 “How does it come from the father, if she does not know Joseph?”

3/473 “I am not telling you about Joseph. It is about the One who created the fields, the green grass. I am telling you about God, the creator of the entire universe, the Father of us all.”

3/474 Mary started wondering about her son, who had just turned nine:

3/475 “Can it be that an angel taught little Joseph the words he is saying? My offspring seems to be harvests older than what he is now.”

***ONE WHO SHARES A LITTLE OF WHAT ONE HAS
AND DOES NOT REGRET GIVING IT AWAY WILL
RECEIVE ONE'S OWN GOOD DEED IN RETURN.***

see 3/510

3/476 They were one day and a half away from Ashkelon when Pustule and Simon reappeared, again with the caravan leader not noticing them beforehand. Since he trusted them, he only asked what their destination was.

3/477 "I say I am walking to Capermaum," stated the one with the odd name.

3/478 Given Alphaeus's comment that the village was very far away, the man said with resignation:

3/479 "It is just that I wanted to go to a place where you do not give so many seeds as taxes, but it seems that the Herods rule over all these lands. Wherever you go, you only hear about them. Whatever the Lord has in store for me is not in the places I have been now."

3/480 During the walk, the three Hebrew men started getting acquainted with one another. Simon blabbered, mentioning that he had a son and a daughter, who always asked him about their grandfather, who had died when he was still a baby, and also that he had had two sisters: the first one had taken care of him until he was a young man, but had left this world; however, he had not heard of the second one ever since he was a boy. Like his interlocutor, who was descended from no one, he emphasized that his heirs would for their part have things to say about him. The caravan leader, who was attentively paying attention to his story, asked him:

3/481 "What is your protectee called?"

3/482 "For a man who has no history like me, is it not normal to call my protectee what I am called?"

3/483 Alphaeus agreed and trivially mentioned his interlocutor's daughter, which prompted the man who did not seem to work the soil to say:

3/484 "Why do you ask? Do you want to be part of my family?"

3/485 When Simon noticed that the caravan leader had gone pale and silent, he immediately understood that the question of matrimony caused him agony. He comforted him:

3/486 "Do not be scared. I say that my protectee, just like you, is afraid of uniting herself. I do not know what is happening: it seems that all the protectors no longer have authority over their own family."

3/487 Pustule, after being repeatedly encouraged by his friend to narrate his living, asserted there was not a lot to say about his ancestors, for he was

the product of many generations of diseased ones, who lived like animals in caves on the mounts. When they received food, thrown to them by those of the same lineage who kept their distance, afraid of coming close to them, they desperately went towards it, not minding if it had been thrown on rocks or on the sand, and many got it with their mouths because they could no longer hold it with their hands. Alphaeus, listening to such a painful testimony, inadvertently asked him why he was not sick. He was promptly given an explanation:

3/488 “Sometimes one who has the ulcers rises from this disease. I have had three companions, and all left the same way. I say I have a protectee who does not have this disease and will soon be ready to go, like a donkey that no longer wants milk.”

3/489 Though he had made up his mind not to ask the man about his odd name, unable to control his nosiness, the skillful caravan leader could not contain himself. The former leper, full of himself, whose intention was to prove that he knew the region better than his short guide, which was, by the way, not true, narrated a tradition that ran among those who were affected by such a terrible disease:

3/490 “It is visible that you do not walk these ways. When one has the ulcers, one is called by the ulcers one has. This is the way for all to know it and not to mix themselves.”

3/491 Aware of the braggart’s past and of the sadness he felt when he talked about such a theme, Simon interrupted him. When he announced that his friend, also a colleague in the walk, had betrothed himself to a beautiful Hebrew woman, he caused him great happiness.

3/492 Now feeling satisfied, the one who broke free from leprosy revealed:

3/493 “And my protectee is called according to the customs of the excluded ones where he came from.”

3/494 Alphaeus, now even more interested, asked:

3/495 “If you are called Pustule, what is your protectee called?”

3/496 “I say that my protectee is called Lazarus. There is a sign that not even one person misses.”

3/497 They walked and talked. The caravan leader felt at liberty to exert his curiosity over the two men. The now not so quiet traveler added, concerning the goal of his journey:

3/498 “It went inside me that the Herods were not in every place you go. In Capermaum, when we go get fish, there are already many of the ones they command taking the fish. From what I saw, the same happens with the wheat that is sowed.”

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3/499 The third member of the dialogue gave his opinion:

3/500 “And anywhere you go, you are a slave, whether or not you want it.”

3/501 Full of hope, he went on:

3/502 “The Lord said to Pustule that we should go back, because He sent His promised one with powers that have never been seen, and he will need Pustule and me in Capermaum. The Lord said to Pustule that His promised one is very close, we should only pay attention to our surroundings. And now we are going back to Capermaum. It is not that I do not believe in the Lord, but I cannot be the one who will take care of His promised one: I am many harvests old, and Pustule is not losing parts of his body only because he no longer has the ulcers. Every step he takes, Pustule wants a shade to rest. How can we take care of His promised one?”

3/503 Alphaeus, accustomed to the heat of the desert, secretly made a judgment:

3/504 “These two men must be sick, but not sick with the ulcers, but because the Sun has damaged their heads. Now they are even speaking to the Lord. I have never seen the Lord appear and speak to merchants. I know that the Lord only speaks to rabbis and prophets. I say it is better to stay away from them, otherwise I will see the Lord like they do, these two who only show up for supper. Since our respect is to share our bread with those who arrive, that is what I do, and they accept it every time. I know they will even say that the Lord ordered me to give bread to all those I come across along the way.”

3/505 Finishing his thoughts, he begged Him:

3/506 “It is not that I do not want to give it away, but if I give to eat to everyone I come across, I will have no bread, and those who are with me will have no bread. If the Lord speaks to all and is listening to me, I ask the Lord to speak with me.”

3/507 When he finished saying his prayer, he realized that little Joseph was staring at him. The latter gently encouraged him:

3/508 “I tell you to trust Him, the One who created the sky, who made the green grass that feeds the donkey.”

3/509 Not understanding him, the caravan leader asked why little Joseph had said those words.

3/510 “When we have no bread for supper, I tell you that we need not worry, because we will find siblings who will share their bread with us. They will share their bread because another sibling shared his bread with them when they were hungry. **I tell you that everyone who knows how to share a little of what one has and does not regret giving it away will receive one's good deed in return.**”

3/511 The explanation left the student even more confused:

3/512 “Did you say I am a donkey’s offspring, and not a woman’s, and that even though I am a donkey’s offspring, the Lord feeds me?”

3/513 “What I am telling you is that a donkey’s young is a donkey, and that you are God’s son before being a man’s son.”

3/514 Alphaeus still did not understand little Joseph’s words. He wondered:

3/515 “First he says I came from a donkey, then, from the Lord; now, that I came from a man? I have never seen a man have offspring. Are not women the ones who have offspring? This offspring is very few harvests old to know how he came to this world, but he speaks as if he had knowledge.”

3/516 Without asking any questions, he was again instructed by his weedy interlocutor, as if the latter were aware of his thoughts:

3/517 “I know you do not understand what I am telling you, but the time will come when all will know God’s teachings. I tell you that our Father will show his teachings to all.”

3/518 These words made the one who led him through inhospitable lands wonder:

3/519 “It is better that we arrive soon to a place where there is some shade. Even little Joseph is getting confused with words. I will ask all to put a mantle on their heads.”

3/520 But he immediately noticed the desired deliverer smile. The boy was nevertheless summoned by his mother, which put an end to their conversation.

3-3.4

3/521 Joaquin’s youngest asked her firstborn not to stay away from her. She kept the reason to herself: the presence of three individuals wearing white garments made her apprehensive, for, all of a sudden, they would become perceptible to her sight and some moments later disappear. She asked herself:

3/522 “What is it that these men want with little Joseph, who talks to them a lot?”

3/523 “Little Joseph seems to know these men, but where was it that they joined this caravan, and I did not notice it?”

3/524 “How come their tunics are so bright? And why has Alphaeus not spoken to them, like he does with all others? I say these men must know Alphaeus; if Alphaeus knows them all, there is nothing to fear. But I have not seen Alphaeus speak to these men a single time!”

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3/525 Though Abigail was beside side, she did not share her worries, for the silent Hebrew woman did not seem to be receptive to listen to her.

3/526 Mary was lost in conjectures and barely asked the caravan leader any questions, nor did she speak to the two men who had joined them. Uneasy about the trio dressed in clear garments, she constantly told the boys to stay by her side; however, as soon as she got distracted for a second, her son would restart talking to the mysterious strangers. Intrigued by these odd events, she kept on wondering:

3/527 “When I was in the caravan of the Egyptians, I could not see all the faces and keep inside myself who came and who left, there were many, but here we are only two women, two offspring, and three men.”

3/528 Suddenly, the three unknown men reappeared. Joseph’s companion counted again:

3/529 “Or are there six men? What I know is that these three men were not walking with us when we left Zilah’s residence.”

3/530 To find a solution for such an impasse, she asserted to herself:

3/531 “When these three men are with little Joseph, I will ask Abigail what she sees.”

3/532 But she immediately counter-argued:

3/533 “And what if Abigail asks me what I see? If I say I see three men, and she does not, it could go inside her that I am sick in the head.”

3/534 She had a question in need of an urgent answer:

3/535 “What if these three men are angels sent by the Lord to take care of my offspring? I say I saw my angel when little Joseph was about to come to this world and I feel he has come back.”

3/536 At last, she decided on how to act:

3/537 “Now I know what to do to know if Abigail sees these men: when they are with little Joseph, I will ask her to go get my offspring. If Abigail says that little Joseph is talking to those who wear white tunics, I will know they are not angels; if she does not see these men, I will know they are angels and that they are taking care of my offspring.”

3/538 When little Joseph and the men were gathered, she went on according to her plan. Uziah’s daughter, though she did see some of the layers beyond the life of flesh, did not notice anything. As soon as she was asked, she went where he was and got him by the hand. He who at the moment of his birth was named Jesus stared at Mary, as if asking her why. She embarrassedly said nothing. Aware of his mother’s reasoning, the boy addressed her:

3/539 “I tell you that I am learning what I have to do.”

3/540 The caring mother, just like any other one, asserted that he was only nine harvests old.

3/541 “It is my body of flesh that has the living that your eyes see. I tell you that my spirit, just like yours, has been learning throughout time.”

3/542 She did not understand him and asked him what he meant.

3/543 “I tell you that I have not come to this abode to sow and harvest wheat. I have come to redeem mistakes of past livings and to bring God’s teachings to all the peoples, and I want them to multiply wherever they arrive.”

3/544 “I say that words do not survive the passing of time.”

3/545 *“I tell you that God’s teachings will survive the times to come. Walls, castles and Temples will fall, but our Father’s teachings will remain in this abode forever. Even if men tread paths other than the practice of God’s teachings, I tell you that they will one day give up these paths and see that it is the Father of us all who shows us the way that is free of any suffering.”*

3/546 “But I do not see a single person protecting you.”

3/547 Her firstborn reminded her that God does not abandon any of His children. She then confided to him that she was afraid, for they always had to escape.

3/548 “I know you are running away for me,” mentioned little Joseph, aware of the circumstances.

3/549 Since she missed her husband, Mary lamented:

3/550 “When I united myself to Joseph, I said I would never leave him. Now I am here, far from Joseph.”

3/551 The attentive boy purposefully proclaimed that Joseph had guaranteed they would not be apart. If that eventually happened, he would find them, and he always did as he said, and these words comforted Mary. When her restlessness returned, little Joseph explained to her:

3/552 “I tell you that Joseph will come to us, you can wait for him.”

3/553 Joaquin’s youngest got lost in her thoughts, and her firstborn, aware of the impossibility of not assimilating what she was thinking about, made an extra effort to soothe her:

3/554 “I tell you that for some time in the life of flesh we will be away from one another, but you will not lose me. After this living, we will meet each other. I tell you that we will not see each other only for some time.”

3/555 Mary barely understood his words; she did not realize that her son was answering her unspoken questions, which kept popping up in her head:

3/556 “Little Joseph says words I have never heard. Can it be that he is learning everything with the Lord? Or it is those three men in clear tunics who are teaching him? Little Joseph is little only in his size, but he is great in knowledge! All the words he says are a wise man’s words.”

3/557 “If little Joseph comes to free all those who are Hebrews, why do they want to take his life, if he has not done harm to anyone? He is only an offspring who is few harvests old. Why has the Lord not sent a man like those who wear white tunics, who can appear and disappear and whose life cannot be taken?”

3/558 Full of questions, she did not notice that she was now alone. Suddenly, without discovering where the sound came from, she heard:

3/559 “I tell you that God shows us in His teachings that we can live among evil without taking part in it, even if we are enabled to take part in it, because we know the way that leads to Him. I tell you that it is enough to refuse the momentary happinesses of the life of flesh that distance us from God that evil passes and good remains.”

3/560 “But how will I understand, if you speak and do not explain what you say?” the one conceived by Anna asked the voice, but there was no reply.

3/561 Scanning the area in search of her son, she saw him talking to the ones sent by God. Again she was lost in thoughts and conjectures:

3/562 “I know it is the Lord who is teaching little Joseph because men do not have that much wisdom. Only the Lord knows what is good for each one.”

3/563 Some seconds later, she asserted to herself:

3/564 “It is better that nothing else goes inside me. I am already mixing words with the many questions I have asked.”

3/565 Since she always said her customary prayer when she was unaccompanied, she pleaded to the only god of her people:

3/566 “Father, as little Joseph says, I do not know what the Father wants from me, I just know that I am afraid of what is about to happen. I know that little Joseph is the Father’s promised one, but I cannot forget that He elected me to be the one who carried him in my womb. I do not know the Father’s laws, but I am sure that He has the way for all: I ask that the Father does not allow my other offspring to have to flee these Laws of men, Laws made with hatred because we follow Him. Lord, I know I must not fear about their future, but the Lord knows that I am the one who brought them to this world, and I have not learned to let my offspring go. I ask the Lord to forgive my mistake, it is just that sometimes it seems that I am very lonely.”

3/567 When she finished praying, she wondered:

3/568 “Where could Joseph be, and my other offspring, who cannot walk alone yet?”

WHOEVER SHARES WHAT ONE HAS AND DOES NOT EXPECT TO RECEIVE WHAT ONE HAS SHARED LOVES ONE’S NEIGHBOR THE WAY ONE WANTS TO BE LOVED BY HIM.

see 3/575

3-3.5

3/569 The group slowly overcame obstacles, and for Mary there was nothing to do but observe:

3/570 “Alphaeus says we are arriving in another place. Are all those of this place peaceful? Will we have to hide, or will we have to go on without making a stop?”

3/571 “Abigail is always quiet. She does not speak much. Sometimes I see Abigail cry and, when I ask her why, she says she misses her protector. I know it is not easy to lose someone you like: the pain does not go away. I still feel the pain of seeing Joaquin on that cross.”

3/572 “Now I see Alphaeus being more confident, because he has two men to speak to. He seems not to stop asking questions to Simon and Pustule. I say these two men are beginning to stay away from him. I know that not everyone likes to answer questions all the time.”

3/573 “Once more Alphaeus says we are making a stop to leave the camels and the donkeys on the pasture and he says we have to fill our amphorae with water. Alphaeus asks if we want to trade: trade what, if we only have wheat and wool? Abigail said that Alphaeus has two mantles that could be traded for roots and bread. How can this maiden work the wool as she walks? There are so few stops. It is not easy to work the wool when you are not moving; when you walk, it is even more difficult. This maiden works the wool very well and it will not be hard to trade the mantles, they are so well made.”

3/574 “I heard that our next stop will be in Jamnia. We have made so many stops that I no longer know how long we have been walking: I only see the night fall and the Sun appear again. There are places where Alphaeus makes a stop just to give water and wheat straw to the donkeys. And when we encounter dry wells! When we throw in our amphorae and only sand comes up, it goes inside me that we will not be able to arrive where we want to.”

3/575 “I see many caravans of merchants walk by. Some pillage the small quantity of roots we have, but, faithful in the Lord, we always find one of those of our people who shares the little they have. Little Joseph said that **‘whoever loves one's sibling shares what one has and expects nothing in return.’** Where does my offspring's wisdom come from? The right words always go inside him.”

3/576 “Alphaeus said we are getting closer to Jamnia, where we will only spend the night, and that he will ask for permission to make a stop, because you cannot stop without the consent of the one who is the most harvests old in the place.”

3/577 “My offspring is always speaking to everyone, as if he had already seen their faces, he even knows what some of the inhabitants of the villages where we arrive are called.”

3/578 “When it is time for supper, little Joseph asks everyone to come talk to the Lord. If anyone remains afar, he asks, with a smile on his face, ‘that we not stay far away from our Father, we cannot hide anything from Him, even if one does not talk to Him.’ My offspring also says that ‘our Father knows what we need, but if we talk to Him, He will see that we know that He exists; that it is enough to practice God's teachings for us to be on the way that leads to Him; that only those who do not want to know His teachings remain in the darkness of the ignorance of His existence.’”

3/579 “My offspring is saying to everyone who wants to be on the way that leads to the Lord how to talk with him: ‘Father, creator of the universe, You have made Sunlight so that men will not walk in darkness, and You have made the night so that men would know the time to rest. Father, if You did not separate day from night, men would leave their living before the harvest; if you did not separate night from day, men would always sleep in their own ignorance. I am grateful to you, Father, because we are together.’ I see Alphaeus, Pustule and Simon look at each other and ask among each other about the one who taught little Joseph to make this prayer, and my offspring replies, without being asked: ‘it was the one God has sent.’ Alphaeus does not understand what my offspring said, and asserted he did not see him speak to anyone he did not know. I know about the ones little Joseph speaks to, the men who are always with him.”

3/580 “Alphaeus says that in front of us there is a caravan coming from Gibeon, a place where they are taking the lives of one another among themselves, and what we do not know is if they are sick or if they are slaves who are running away. It looks like that they are moving. There are entire families, offspring, sheep, and donkeys. The women's raiments are torn, and they seem to be suffering. They are all very different. The man has the face of a rabbi among those who are my people, and he shouts a very strange prayer,

that he repeats all the time they walk. He says he is grateful to the promised ones as they move along the sacred mounts. But what promised ones is he speaking of? Alphaeus asks Abigail and me not to show ourselves, and I know why: since that caravan has more men than ours, Alphaeus is afraid that they will come and take us. Pustule has offered to see if they are sick, because he had the disease once. If they are, he will not be sick again. I know that after the ulcers dry, you are no longer possessed by them. Those who are from Gibeon sent Pustule away and said he was possessed by the forces of evil. When Alphaeus makes a detour, they make a detour and do not let anyone pass. They seem to want discord, but does Alphaeus want discord? We will spend the night where we are, Alphaeus says, to see if they understand that we do not want discord and we do not want to reply to their insults. Will they leave us alone and follow their own way? It is night, I hear cries. It goes inside me that little Joseph is praying: I called him many times, and he did not move. He is still sitting with his eyes closed, the way he spent the entire night. When he woke up, soon after the sun rose, he said to Alphaeus that he would go speak to that man who shouts all the time. Alphaeus did not want to let him go, because he is still an offspring who is few harvests old, and I agreed, but he could not stop him, not even when he said that they did not listen to Pustule, who is big. Little Joseph said: 'if size imposed respect, the camel would be commanding, and we would be carrying the load; God has given us a small size, but He also gave us intelligence to overcome difficulties in our lives.' When Alphaeus insisted and said that my offspring was little, just like he was called, my offspring replied 'that God created us to be little, not to be bold and victorious in the struggles of the life of flesh.' It seems that Alphaeus did not understand, because he said he did not want to struggle with the flesh with no life. When he asked him to explain himself, my offspring said words I did not understand: 'we should stop seeing with our eyes only and perceive the One who gave us our living around us, who created the sky, the Earth, and everything that lives in it. Let us have in mind a Being greater than what we can imagine: this Being knows everything before it happens and is looking at us at this moment. Like you and me, we are all His creation, we are His children.' Before little Joseph went to speak to that man who says strange prayers, he said that they were our siblings who had not yet heard about our Father. I see little Joseph speaking to the man who looks like our rabbi, and everyone looked at my offspring. Alphaeus, who went with him, repeated my offspring's words: 'I know you are leading these people, and wherever you go, you will not be accepted, you will have neither peace nor bread. Even if you have it, you will still be looking for it. If you are lost, not lost in the desert, but inside your own self, you need to redeem your poverty, not that of the residence where you live in, but the one that is lodged inside you.' After little Joseph's words, the man who wanted to take the life of everyone who came across him asked my offspring to sit on the rock he was sitting on and

they talked, until he started kissing his hand and came to our caravan. What did my offspring do? When I asked, he said he had only showed that brother a different path. The man who said strange prayers said that, since my offspring was few harvests old, he could not have so much wisdom, that he could only be coming from that god he was speaking of. Some of those who were with him did not join our caravan, they followed another path, but the greatest part will go to Jope. Alphaeus, when he heard from little Joseph that they would walk with us to Jope, that they would not go to Nazareth, was happy that he would not have to give bread to all of them. Alphaeus said that he liked those people, but those who were in his caravan had to be well fed, and the animals he had brought to trade for bread and water would not be enough for all. Little Joseph said to Alphaeus, something that made me very happy, and made Alphaeus ashamed: ‘we cannot consider something lost if we do not have it yet. In Jope, we will meet Joseph, my father in the life of flesh, and he will bring the bread that Martha made. You can give them what we have. You did not know about Joseph and you were worried about us all. Be at peace, this preoccupation of yours is normal for man.’”

3-3.6

3/581 When she heard the news about her husband, Mary counted the minutes, and she barely slept just to see another sunrise. She had barely spoken to the caravan leader before, but now, every twenty steps, she asked him if it would take them long to arrive. The very small Hebrew man, who felt responsible for her and had learned little before that she had a husband, imagined how grievous her last few months had been, since she was away from her offspring. Since he was single, he could not imagine the happiness in seeing one’s child’s face again, but, given the joy in the face of the woman he had been watching over, he supposed what it would be like.

3/582 According to his own words, by means of a light from the Lord he understood that he was not just leading a woman and her boys. He then understood why Elijah had asked him to take great care of them. Because of the facts he witnessed, he suspected that little Joseph, too wise to be a mere child, could be the desired redeemer. Not happy with his pseudo-doubt, when he saw him approach, he asked him straightforwardly:

3/583 “Are you the one promised to the prophets?”

3/584 “I tell you that, just like you, I am one of those that God sent to this abode.”

3/585 “Did you come from the Lord Himself?”

3/586 “Since we are God’s creation, I tell you that we have all come from Him.”

3/587 Alphaeus did not understand the words, but still wishing to have his conclusion confirmed, he insisted:

3/588 “Did you come straight from the Lord without passing through the womb of a woman?”

3/589 “I tell you that everyone who has a body of flesh came from the womb of a woman. If we do not come from the womb of a woman, we will not have a body of flesh. I tell you that I came to this abode just like you did, and when we are no longer in the life of flesh, we will no longer need the body that we now have.”

3/590 After instructing him, little Joseph waited for more questions. Since he understood nothing, Alphaeus did not ask the questions he had, and then he saw the boy he felt affection for walk towards his mother.

3-3.7

3/591 It was almost four p.m., the Sun was still strong, and they all showed signs of exhaustion because of the long walk of the day, when Alphaeus decided that they would rest in a type of cave that had been dug by human hands in a ravine, for they would be arriving in Jope shortly. Since there was no more of the liquid essential to life, he left in search of a cistern that was not dry.

3/592 Mary, as usual, remained thinking. Little Joseph, aware of her thoughts, noticed they were addressed to him.

3/593 “It goes inside me that one day you will be a man,” said Joaquin’s youngest, who then asked the boy if he had understood her.

3/594 “Will you leave me? Will I lose you when you become a man?” she added.

3/595 “I tell you that this is what every mother fears: that their children will become men and women, and that they will lose them.”

3/596 He affectionately reminded her of what he had guaranteed to her:

3/597 “Again I tell you that you will not lose me.”

3/598 When she heard him, she lamented:

3/599 “I say that the days that will come will be difficult. What will happen on these days?”

3/600 “I tell you that there is a lot to do throughout these ways, where

there are siblings who do not know God’s teachings. I tell you that everyone who comes to me will find them.”

3/601 “These are beautiful words. Do I know who said these words to you?”

3/602 “It was the man from Galilee.”

3/603 “I have not seen a single man who is from Galilee,” but they did not continue their conversation, for a group of men armed with spears approached them from behind.

3/604 It was enough for men to have weapons or show authority to be identified as soldiers of the Herods. They immediately captured them and ordered them to follow them without providing an explanation. Pustule’s protests that they were not slaves were in vain.

3/605 They were escorted to a rough building site at the entrance of Jope and there they were imprisoned. Mothers and children were separated from the single women, though they were next to one another, and the men were kept afar.

3/606 The caravan leader, after finding a well and filling three amphorae with water, returned to the area where, in his opinion, the ones he was leading would be safe, but still in time to see them being arrested. From a prudent distance he followed them, until he was spotted when they had practically arrived in Jope, and he was equally detained. Since he was captured far from the others, he did not draw the attention of the three men who were hunting him, for a respectable guide would always be with the ones he was leading. Therefore, the small Hebrew man was not considered the one responsible for the caravan. Ezechias did not notice him either, for, besides the fact that Alphaeus was wearing a turban, something he was not wearing at the market place in Rafah, he was also covered in dust, and his tunic was almost torn to pieces. Deeming it likely that he would be recognized if he limped, he tried to walk as normally as possible. Since the ones from the crowd showed signs of extreme fatigue, and their feet were bleeding, the one who limped was not of interest.

3/607 The darkness of the night reigned, and a desperate Abigail, not knowing why they had been arrested, asked Mary what would be of them. The latter stated she was incapable of predicting it, and, since they were already in Jope, she lamented:

3/608 “Now how will I find Joseph? They say nothing to us, they look at our faces all the time as if they were in search of someone. They took all our animals.” The conversation with Uziah’s protectee, who was crying a lot, was interrupted by the arrival of two individuals escorted by the one who was mounting guard.

3/609 The one conceived by Anna, taken by surprise, suspected that she had been recognized, for she was summoned:

3/610 “Come, woman, and the ones who are yours”

3/611 Astonished, she grabbed her two boys and pulled them closer to her, and they were silently taken to the place where the men were being held. Again the man who commanded whom she thought she had recognized, noticing the caravan leader, Pustule, and Simon, told the sentinel to set them free.

3/612 The man whose duty was to watch the prisoners ordered them to leave quickly. The six of them left the place immediately, and did not take anything with them. They only noticed Abigail’s absence when they were out of such a degrading site, for they saw her running towards them, according to what Alphaeus reported, disoriented like a weaning sheep and crying copiously like he had never seen before. Stunned, he asked her what was the source of such a large amount of alkaline secretion. Not concealing her discontent with such an untimely comment, Mary explained that Abigail was still very scared.

3/613 As for the other ones who had joined the small group, they remained prisoners.

3/614 The caravan leader, Joaquin’s youngest, the desired redeemer, the last fruit of Anna, Isaiah’s restless niece, the former leper and his friend continued walking to their planned destination in the village, but did not take the main way, terrified that the followers of the Herods would change their mind about their release. Alphaeus considered what had just happened, trying to answer his own secret questions:

3/615 “I heard those commanded ones, and I do not know where they came from, speak of taking the life of us all. Suddenly, two men appeared out of nowhere as if they knew me and ordered my release, and that of the two ones who were with me. I have never seen their faces. Where do they know me from? How could they set Mary, the two offspring, and Abigail free? Mary and the offspring, that I can even understand, but Abigail, a woman? When they find a woman as beautiful as her, well, I should not even imagine it, and the same men who released me ordered their release too. I know it was the Lord who came to me, because I could not have left without help.”

3/616 After taking another couple of steps, he stopped and suggested that they pray to the Lord as a token of gratitude. Pustule offered to say the prayer:

3/617 “I am grateful to the angels of the Lord that I cannot see for delivering us from losing our lives in the hands of those who do not know the Lord yet, but I am sure they will know Him. Let me and those of my family learn to be grateful and trust the Lord more than we ask the Lord. I say that the Lord does not open where we are enclosed, but He sends His angels who set us

free, because He knows the time of truth of each one of us. I am thankful for listening to me, Lord.”

3/618 When the prayer was over, they silently resumed their journey. The small Hebrew guide was again immersed in questions. Observing the one who, when he was born, was named Jesus next to his mother, he approached them both, stating to himself:

3/619 “Little Joseph has not said a single word since our arrest. He was not even noticed, contrary to Matthew, who cries when he is hungry, cold, or tired. I say that little Joseph is strong, just like the wood from a cross.”

3/620 He immediately noticed the meek look directed at him by the boy when he thought of the instrument of execution, the trunk of an oak tree.

3/621 Mary was also thinking about the events, and could not understand the actions of the follower of Herod who had gone to Nazareth looking for Joseph. In her opinion, the same man who was in the central square and whom her stepfather pointed to through a minute aperture had shortly before peremptorily determined that they be released.

3/622 “Why? They are looking for us and, when they find us, they let us go?”

3-3.8

3/623 Ezechias, after leaving Rafah in search of the group in which, in his opinion, Joseph and his family were, was no longer the commander of the enterprise; now it was Zidec, who, along with Zephir, had joined the searchers when his contract killer returned with the news that the one promised by the god of the Hebrews had fled towards Egypt.

3/624 Not only the merchants they came across were questioned about the caravan coming from Bethlehem with some of the Egyptian people in it; at last they reached the ones who were being led by Solomon. Terrorized by death threats, they answered the questions they were asked. The searchers became aware that those who were forcing them to scrutinize the tetrarchy had stayed in Rafah, that Alphaeus had a disability in one of his lower limbs and that one of his legs bled plentifully.

3/625 The executioners returned to the village where Neco ruled and were informed that the caravan leader they ardently wished to capture was heading for Gaza. The counselor and the other killers, always making use of threats, redid, with devastating fury, their preys’ itinerary. Anyone who did not give them the information they deemed this person had was made a slave, or even

got killed, and the person's family was also murdered. The killers were not, however, with Zilah.

3/626 The horde of murderers, in the outskirts of Jope, stumbled upon a group of travelers composed of twenty-two individuals and some irrational beings. They asked for the leader and, when a very old man came forward and announced that they had not been deprived of their own will, they concluded he was the one responsible for the group. But since they were looking for a guide who had a limp and was not old, they decided to arrest them for further inquiries. Zidec, Zephir and Ezechias diligently tried to spot among the travelers, who were all in ragged and dirty clothes, a man, his wife and a child whose height would be the same as a ten-year-old boy, but this proved unsuccessful. Matthew's firstborn was the only one who could recognize Joseph, but since he had not, they assumed that the carpenter had died, or had gone away after food or water. The one who had switched sides then tried to spot Mary, for she had grown up in Nazareth, just like himself; however, he did not remember her features very clearly, even though he was positive he would recognize her because of her usual naïveté. As he walked, he paid attention to the women; but since they wore veils that completely covered their faces, this measure was also unsuccessful. Extremely frightened, Joaquin's youngest looked downwards, not allowing the boys to budge an inch away from her.

3/627 Since none of the female prisoners had only one child with them, they decided to leave a more detail inspection for the following morning.

3/628 When they arrived at the arsenal in Jope, where there was a prison, the one who had uninterruptedly been the royal counselor ordered that they be kept in it until the following day. To Saul, the guard, he asserted that he was the one who gave orders, and whoever dared disobey him would be punished by death. These strong words were clearly understood by the Hebrew who was less than a mere subordinate of Rufus.

3/629 At almost eleven p.m., the sentinel was visited by two strangers, and one of them was the one who had said before that he was in command. The latter immediately ordered the release of two women, two small ones and three men. As soon as the seven of them disappeared in the dark of the night, the two men left without uttering a word. What a surprise to the guard when, at sunrise the following morning, the one who had ordered the release of the prisoners reappeared, now followed by his cronies, shouting that the prisoners should be put in front of him. When what he had ordered was done, he stated that the runaway woman he was looking for was not among them and promptly left.

3/630 Saul understood nothing, for the one who had ordered him to release the prisoners from the degrading cell now returned to interrogate them. Not reporting what had happened to anyone, he thought to himself:

3/631 “I know it was Zidec and Zephir the ones who were with me, and they pretend not to know anything? If Zidec pretends he was not here, that he does not remember telling me to release the women with their offspring and those men, it escapes my understanding, but I will remain silent. When you speak to one of these commanded ones, if they have some mercy you are whipped, or you have your life taken only because you looked in their direction. The best thing to do is to do my part, because these ones commanded by Herod Antipas are sick in the head.”

3-3.9

3/632 Jope was different from the other villages because it was enclosed by thick wood. The wall had only two gates: one to enter, and the other one to leave the city. Whoever did not need to enter it, for an admissions fee was charged no matter the reason or the duration of the stay, followed the outside path alongside the wall.

3/633 After he left prison, Alphaeus, because of the darkness, chose paths he did not fully know, and ended up getting lost. He arrived at the entrance gate, since his sister lived in the surrounding area, only at dawn. They came across a priest saying a prayer that the oppressed ones believed had been left to them by the great prophet, mandatorily said when someone who became a leper was expelled, for the person was now envisaged as a sinner. The religious man said:

3/634 “Lord, You said to Moses and Aaron that, when a wound or a shining body is found on a person’s body, or when facial hair becomes white, this person will be declared impure. You said that they must be declared impure for as long as these wounds are on their body: ‘They will be impure and segregated to a residence outside of every place.’”

3/635 When he finished it, he addressed a woman covered from head to toe:

3/636 “I say to you to go away from this place.”

3/637 Another Hebrew woman who was standing by the leper’s side and who had not repeated the condemning words burst into tears:

3/638 “My offspring, such a perfect offspring. How could this happen to my only offspring? Let the Lord allow her not to go. I will never see my offspring again,” and, in a gesture of despair, she uncovered her daughter’s face, displaying her infected pustules.

3/639 Since there was nothing they could do, the outsiders, who were observing the ritual, felt helpless before such distressing suffering. Mary noticed that her firstborn, besides holding her very tightly, was barely moving

his eyelids. As if paralyzed, he stared at the one sentenced to die alone in the desert.

3/640 The leper's unfortunate mother, covering the expelled one's face, begged:

3/641 "Please let my offspring not go."

3/642 The men, led by the local priest, ordered her to go away. Aware that this was the last time she would see her daughter, the mother tried to lift her mantle in order to kiss her, but she was stopped from doing it.

3/643 Witnessing such indescribable suffering, Joaquin's youngest, in tears, noticed that little Joseph was returning from his apparent apathy. She instructed him not to approach the two women; he nevertheless asked the mother to kiss her daughter who was about to be banned from her residence. When the mother lifted the thick mantle, there were no wounds on her daughter's body anymore. The sick woman's body was completely clean, as they used to say. The euphoric Hebrew woman started shouting:

3/644 "The power of the Lord cured my daughter."

3/645 Since her ulcers had vanished, the no longer leper was allowed to continue her living alongside her mother.

3/646 After the cure of the leper, they went on for another day of learning, with Mary still holding her firstborn by the hand.^[87] Now that a good period of time separated them from what had happened, Mary, certain that little Joseph was responsible for the disappearance of the woman's wounds, discreetly tried to confirm it with him:

3/647 "Did you cure the one possessed by the ulcers?"

3/648 "I tell you that the ulcers our sister had were cured because she and the one who carried her in her womb have faith in God and trust Him, and this is what frees us and cures us."

3/649 From this unusual happening onwards, an event that became famous not only in Judea, many of the oppressed ones interpreted it as a sign from the Lord for them to pay more attention to their sick ones.^[88]

[87] When the group of prisoners who had recently been released came across the two miserable women, the one promised by the prophets held Mary tightly and, free from the body of flesh, put his hands above the unfortunate one, whispering in her ear:

"Your ulcers will be cured."

[88] Basically the entirety of the oppressed ones believed that, only by seeing a leper, they would catch this terrible disease. Since this was the truth they believed in, the incarnate spirits redeeming their blemishes were taken outside the village and abandoned, and on top of that they were forced to cover themselves from head to toe so that no one would see their wounds.

3-4

3/650 Alphaeus and the travelers arrived shortly after at Adah's residence, built off the external path that surrounded the wall of Jope, a residence in which he planned to stay few days. It was a shanty in which, not only through its sides, sunrays, rain and wind went in. The site was called the great sand for in it resided various unproductive individuals. The soil there yielded nothing that was sowed.

3/651 The caravan leader's sister seemed joyful taking care of others' children; some were orphans due to the killings carried out by the followers of the Herods, others had been abandoned along the inhospitable ways by their parents because they were disabled; some others were the daughters and sons of adulteresses, and thus also considered sinners. Six women abandoned by their husbands who ignored the reason for the latter's actions also lived with Adah, but she knew why: they had only conceived girls. Their husbands left them for other women because, since they were Hebrew men as well as prideful combatants of the ruling despot, they needed to behave irreproachably, and that included having direct male descendants.

3/652 One afternoon, while little Joseph, exhausted from playing too much, and also from having accompanied his host to fetch water many times, which was a sixty-minute walk away from where they were, rested under a dry tree, the one conceived by Anna spotted him and approached him to ask what he was thinking about.

3/653 "It went inside me about that maiden who is no longer possessed by the ulcers."

3/654 Mary stated what she believed was true:

3/655 "I say that those who are commanded by Herod and those who are Romans will now know where you are because you cured that maiden. You should not have cured that maiden who was among so many people."

3/656 "I tell you that I will bring cure for all by means of God's teachings."

3/657 A frightened Mary, forgetting what her firstborn had come to do, asked:

3/658 "How do you know that you will bring cure for all? Was it the Lord who said it to you?"

3/659 "I do not know if it was the Lord. What I know is that it was the same man who told me to go to Galilee ... "

3/660 He went on, after a brief pause:

3/661 "... where I saw myself in a man's body, and many men displayed on crosses," but he was interrupted.^[89]

3/662 Terrified by her memories of her genitor, his interlocutor said:

3/663 "Do not say anything, I do not want to know what will happen."

3/664 Unwilling to continue the conversation, Joaquin's youngest went away, and her child went to play.

WE SHOULD REPORT EXCLUSIVELY WHAT WE OBSERVE.

see 3/671

3/665 The one who came to this orb when the shining Star appeared was still playing when he noticed some people on the path: they were his father and his siblings. Joseph hugged him affectionately, confessing to him:

3/666 "I was so scared that they would take you. Where is Mary?"

3/667 "I tell you that Mary is helping Adah."

3/668 Jacob's heir was about thirty steps ahead of the others. Leaving little Joseph with his siblings under the care of his relative, he went to see his wife. After the greetings, Pustule asked him how he had found them.

3/669 "We were very tired, we stopped for a while, and I fell asleep. When I woke up, I remembered a voice saying to me not to go into Jope, that I should look for a residence outside Jope that seemed not to have a single person in it, because there were those we were looking for. It was what I did."

3/670 Right after Joseph, the patriarch Matthew, Martha, John, Veronica and James arrived, the young ones and the children who lived with Adah started talking about real and imaginary facts they guaranteed they had witnessed; little Joseph, also instructing us, stated:

3/671 **"I tell you to announce to others only what we witness."**

3/672 Since they all understood the instruction, they only narrated what had effectively happened to each one of them, and added nothing untrue to their report.

3/673 At first, the elimination of the ulcers of the leper was of little interest to those of Jope; nor was it of interest to the royal counselor and Ezechias, because, in their certainties, the one promised by the god of the oppressed people, who had come to free them, would be a formidable warrior. For those

[89] ... **and many men displayed on crosses** ...: throughout the ways all over the tetrarchy, it was very common to find Hebrews thus executed by the oppressors.

who shared the same opinion, the desired redeemer, who would expel the oppressors, would never worry about the excluded ones.

3/674 The recovery of the diseased woman was considered a grace from the Lord, a miracle, as it is nowadays said; however, Zephir, the mercenary, was curious and intrigued. Not understanding why, he felt that the episode had caused a deep change in his behavior. He said nothing about his suspicion that the hunted ones were probably in the neighboring area. Zidec, the one who was heading the enterprise with his usual cruelty, accompanied by Matthew's firstborn, the owner of the irrational beings who also knew the arduous ways very well, decided to make a stop in Jope because they believed that the limping caravan leader had altered his itinerary and gone to another village, or that he would be arriving soon, since the animals he had were undoubtedly old and exhausted.

3/675 The still royal counselor, not Herod the Great's, but Antipas's, informed the one who had first chased the desired savior that he would no longer pay him the price that had been agreed upon, even if the latter found him, for it had been years since he was scrutinizing the tetrarchy, but had accomplished nothing, and that from then onwards his services would no longer be needed.

3/676 Having no one to complain to, the now unemployed mercenary decided to proceed with his investigations concerning the whereabouts of the one born under the Star of Bethlehem autonomously. Judging that Saul was concealing information, he questioned him. With the intent to intimidate the sentinel, he showed him the medallion that symbolized the sovereign's authority to ask questions and obtain answers. He feigningly stated:

3/677 "They say that, in times of persecution, many of those who are Hebrews pass by here. Is it true?"

3/678 "Are you Hebrew?"

3/679 Given the energetic negative answer by the man who claimed he was a soldier, Saul informed him that he was not allowed to cooperate, because, since he was Rufus's property, he could only speak in the latter's presence. Now convinced that the sentinel was hiding crucial information, Zephir offered him, as payment for his words, the medallion he had in his hands, declaring that if he were in its possession he would be a free man, welcome at all places, and that he would have enviable authority. He pompously displayed Herod Antipas's personal mark engraved on the precious treasure. The slave wondered what information he could have that was worth such an object. Since the mercenary assumed that Joseph was dead and that Mary was alone in a caravan, not necessarily Alphaeus's, he guaranteed:

3/680 "A woman without her companion and an offspring passed by here some days ago."

3/681 Completing his thought, he asked the guard:

3/682 “Where did they go?”

3/683 Realizing that Zephir knew very little about the fugitives, and since they were members of his people, he would not denounce them, Saul boldly replied:

3/684 “Forgive me, but this medallion only gives power when it is given by Herod Antipas. For me it is useless: I will be arrested and sentenced to lose my life on the cross just for being in possession of it.”

3/685 These words persuaded the man who hunted human beings in exchange for payment that his preys had been in Joep. Physically assaulting his helpless interlocutor, he angrily stated:

3/686 “I know you helped them, but I will find them all,” he said as he left, overcome with wrath.

IN ORDER TO ACCEPT GOD AND PRACTICE HIS TEACHINGS, IT IS NOT ONLY THE UNRESTRAINED PURSUIT OF WEALTH IN OUR MATERIAL LIVES AND THE HARMFUL TEMPORARY ENJOYMENTS OF THIS ABODE THAT WE WILL HAVE TO RENOUNCE.

see 3/692

WE MUST REMOVE THE BEAM FROM OUR EYES TO PERCEIVE THE ANSWER TO WHAT WE REQUEST.

see 3/694

3-4.1

3/687 Matthew, unsuccessful in his purpose to approach his youngest, who, since he did not remember his father, refused even his company, became very sad. The boy went on calling Mary mother and did not stay away from her for a single second. Joseph suggested to his uncle that he wait a while, for it was common for the young ones to find strange those whom they were not used to seeing.

3/688 The travelers stayed twenty days in the shanty Adah had as her permanent place of residence. During this time, the short caravan leader remained reclusive, afraid of being recognized and thus denounced to Ezechias, who, in his understanding, was looking for him, for he had certainly found Solomon and been informed of his name. With his description in mind, the commanded one would know he had been deceived at the market place in Rafah.

3/689 After being informed by his wife, Jacob's heir talked to his relative concerning his cousin's actions. The melon grower was even more disturbed when he found out what his firstborn had been doing; ever since Ezechias had left Nazareth, he had never sent him any news. He lamented the fact that he, who had been raised aware of what the Herods inflicted upon the Hebrews, was on the side of the oppressors. Lost in his thoughts, he did not notice the one who had come under the shining Star approach him. When he considered that his son could be in fact helping them instead of pursuing the promised one, the latter meekly told him:

3/690 "I tell you that many of our siblings who return to the life of flesh do not want to hear about God. Some, because they remember nothing about our Father, but, again, they will know Him through His teachings and will accept Him, either in the living that they now have or in a future living. I tell you that many of our siblings, when they learn about the Father in the life of flesh through His teachings, will again not accept Him because practicing what they heard will make them abandon the ways that bring them the momentary happinesses that distance us from Him."

3/691 "What should I do for Ezechias to accept and practice what you bring from the Lord?"

3/692 "I tell you that, in order to accept God and practice what He shows us in His teachings, it is not only the desperate pursuit of wealth in the life of flesh that we will have to renounce, it will be necessary that we renounce our own selves."

3/693 Since his interlocutor was overcome with anguish, he concluded:

3/694 "I tell you that if we only feel our pain and suffering, we will not perceive the help that is offered by the sibling who has been with us since we started our living in the body of flesh that we now have. If we do not even notice this sibling's presence, how will we recognize the way that leads to God that is shown to us? I tell you that it is necessary to remove the beam from our eyes to perceive the answers to our requests."

3/695 Old Matthew said nothing, accepting that his adoptive grandson was right. He then said to himself:

3/696 "Little Joseph saw that I was suffering because of Ezechias. I must not forget that, like me, Ezechias will have the opportunity to know the Lord's truth, even though he is on Herod Antipas's side."

3/697 He asserted with conviction:

3/698 "I know that this offspring is the one who will show everyone of my people the Lord's truth. I say he is different: he knows and is certain of what

he says. It is only the one who knows the Lord's truth who can trust Him so much."

3/699 Thanking our Father for the understanding he had reached, he finished:

3/700 "I know I will no longer have my life when this offspring speaks of the Lord's truth: it has been three nights since I see Anna when I sleep, and I do not know what she wants from me. If I see Anna after so much time, it is because there is life after death."

3/701 He quietly disincarnated three weeks later in the afternoon, after resting from another day of the exhausting journey. He did not see his firstborn again to pull his ears, as he had said he would do.

RESPECTING ANIMALS IS RESPECTING GOD AND OURSELVES.

see 3/730

3-5

3/702 Since they had traded some of the irrational ones for seeds for the sowing they would do for Adah and for provisions for the journey, they left for Nazareth with only three loaded beasts. The caravan was composed of Alphaeus, Joseph, Mary, Martha, the one born under the shining Star, the two Matthews, Veronica, John, James, Pustule, and Simon. Uziah's daughter remained in Joep, completing the period of her living as Abigail without seeing the desired deliverer or hearing about him again.

3/703 Since she was busy with her other children, Mary seemed to have forgotten about her firstborn, who grew more and more silent as the days went by.

3/704 Throughout the journey, food became scarce, which forced the caravan leader to make a stop in Gulgal, a village inhabited only by Hebrews, the reason that, in his opinion, they would not be in danger. However, even if they were under threat, they would need to stop, for, if they continued, they would certainly die of starvation before reaching Lower Cesarea. They were welcomed by Matthias, referred to as shepherd, not because he tended the docile bovids, but because he had the greatest number of them and was in charge of dividing the work. They were granted permission to stay in the village for as long as they needed.

3/705 He who had also been named Jesus became a constant fellow of the great owner as he went about his tasks. The latter, one morning, asked him if, when he grew up, he would be an artisan like his protector.

3/706 “I tell you that I would be very pleased to: Joseph builds tracers so that men can work the soil and from it get their nourishment, he builds protection from the Sun and the rain for residences and works the wood so that men can protect their residences from siblings who enter them to take what does not belong to them, but I tell you that the day when these siblings will respect the residence of other siblings will come ...”

3/707 With a discreet smile, he concluded:

3/708 “... but I will not be a carpenter, I tell you that I will be a shepherd.”

3/709 What little Joseph said made the one in charge of those who lived in Gulgal mention the custom among the oppressed ones according to which genitors would teach their male descendants the occupation they had. The tiny outsider then revealed:

3/710 “I tell you that I will not be a shepherd of sheep.”

3/711 That was too much for the astonished Matthias, who exclaimed:

3/712 “But what are you saying? There is no other animal to tend. The donkeys do not get lost, they always come when they are hungry or thirsty; we never have enough camels that we need to watch them; horses, it is only the ones commanded by the Herods who have them. I say that there is nothing to shepherd but sheep.”

3/713 Making use of a recent situation his interlocutor had been through, little Joseph said:

3/714 “I tell you that you have many sheep, just like God, the Father of us all, has many children. When one of your sheep is lost, you go look for it. Until you find it, you do not give up looking for it. During the time you spend looking for it, what is on your mind is what made it get lost, if it will find the way back.”

3/715 He meekly proceeded:

3/716 “During the time you spend looking for the lost sheep, which sheep needs you and your care more: the one which is fenced, or the one who got lost from the herd?”

3/717 His interlocutor replied with conviction:

3/718 “The one who got lost from the herd.”

3/719 The desired savior sealed his exposition:

3/720 “I tell you that I will be the shepherd of those who strayed away from the path that leads to our Father. I tell you that I will be a shepherd of men for God.”

3/721 His host, even though he understood these words, asked him, for he was still very short in height:

3/722 “How will you shepherd men? Will you put them in an enclosure like the sheep so that they can see you and hear you? I say you are too few harvests old to speak to men and you know little about the writings to speak about the Lord.”

3/723 He added to the attentive boy:

3/724 “I know that since you are of a carpenter’s protection no one will listen to you. I say you would have to be a prophet or of a rabbi’s protection for those who are our people to listen to you. How will you learn the Lord’s Laws if you are walking through the desert?”

3/725 Given such overwhelming obstacles listed by his interlocutor, Mary’s firstborn only said :

3/726 “I tell you that God will send the help that I will need.”

3/727 On another occasion, when little Joseph was quietly sitting on a rock, Matthias, who had been watching him, asked him what he was doing:

3/728 “I tell you that I am learning about men and the paths that they want in this abode.”

3/729 Since he believed the boy would say he was praying to the Lord, not the words whose meaning he had not understood, the man who owned a lot put an end to the conversation. Later he commented with Alphaeus about his guest:

3/730 “Where does this offspring’s wisdom come from? He speaks like a man, but he is an offspring who is few harvests old; he gives answers that are those of a wise man, and he has not had time to learn the Lord’s Laws yet. What will this offspring do? I heard him say to those who are our people ‘not to hit the animals, which give us milk and carry our loads’, and he explained why: ‘we should not treat those who do not have intelligence badly just because we have it.’ This offspring also said that ‘**respecting animals is respecting our Father and ourselves.**’ I know the Lord is with this offspring.”

3/731 The caravan leader agreed with his words; however, he did not mention his suspicions that he was the desired promised one.

3/732 There was a beautiful valley in Gulgal, a place where its inhabitants lived in peace, as if they were of the same descent. The nutritious and lukewarm liquid provided by the docile animals was abundant, as were roots and wheat. Alphaeus, assessing the attributes of the village, started considering that, since Joseph was now with his family, and since Pustule and Simon could continue their journey on their own, he would not mind remaining the rest of his existence there. The water was fresh and largely available; when one lifted one’s amphora filled with water from the well, it could be instantly refilled.

3/733 Mary’s firstborn, when he was not with the shepherd, used to sit on one of the many knolls to meditate and contemplate the landscape. The

diligent caravan leader started noticing that the boy he constantly observed talked to the invisible. He would hear him thank the Father as if there were someone at his side. On many occasions, the boy would say out loud:

3/734 “I state that God’s will is my will.”

3/735 On one of these occasions, Alphaeus wondered:

3/736 “Is the one called Father inside little Joseph or is it the rocks? What if it is inside him? No, little Joseph is an offspring who is too few harvests old to be sick in the head. Can an offspring who is few harvests old become sick in the head? Or can it be that little Joseph speaks with the Lord? Little Joseph says words of wisdom, which is impossible for an offspring who is few harvests old.”

3/737 Despite the tranquility in Gulgal, Joseph, in a conversation with his wife, informed her of the decision he had made. He said it was urgent that they continue their journey so that, among other reasons, he could take care of old Matthew’s property. If they took too long, they would not be able to support themselves, for the scribes would put their slaves in it, something which would actually not happen, but Joseph ignored the measures his uncle had taken before leaving Nazareth for the last time. He peremptorily concluded:

3/738 “I say that those who are our small ones cannot just walk through the desert learning merchants’ stories. The offspring we have need to be taught by a rabbi, and this is something that we cannot give them now.”

3/739 Joaquin’s youngest understood her husband’s worries. She believed that, since his upper members were injured because of the fire in Hiatta, he was afraid of dying and leaving his own at the mercy of the Herods or of pillagers that infested the paths they treaded. She stated to herself:

3/740 “Martha and Veronica need to be in a place which is free of hatred. Sarah suffered so much, and that was enough. I say I will not let what happened to Sarah happen to them. Let the Lord help me.”

3/741 Absorbed in her thoughts, she concluded:

3/742 “I say that having offspring in these times is not good.”

3/743 After agreeing with her husband, she started making the arrangements for their departure, and for two days she uninterruptedly made the baked dough from the essential grain along with the other women from Gulgal.

3-5.1

3/744 They now had an abundance of bread; as for roots, Mary, followed by

her firstborn, in the afternoon of the third day after her husband had decided that they would resume their journey, went to get them. Jacob's heir, feeling isolated after Matthew's death, decided to go work in the crops that those of Gulgal cultivated.

3/745 All those of the village had tasks to do, except the children. To the latter, when the Sun indicated it was three in the afternoon, as we nowadays count time, a man who came by the road went to speak. He asked about a caravan that may have passed by, for he had gotten lost from it during a storm and he needed to find it. Feigning disinterest, he prudently guaranteed that, even if they had no news of it, he would go away, and that was the reason that they did not need to mention his presence to anyone.

3/746 "I heard that one of those of my family is hurt and needs help to continue his walk; the others are many harvests old. I say they are led by a man called Alphaeus," explained the outsider.

3/747 Pointing at one of the young spectators, he stated:

3/748 "Alphaeus is the size of that offspring and he drags one of his legs."

3/749 He immediately asked:

3/750 "Have you seen them?"

3/751 One of the small ones who were playing, pointing towards the shanty where the fugitives lived, answered:

3/752 "I say they are in that residence. My protector said they arrived in the last moon."

3/753 The stranger was informed that Joseph and the men were absent, that the small ones were having fun with Martha, and that the mother of the offspring was in the valley. The opportunist also asked if Mary was there alone. He was again informed that her firstborn was assisting her. They also told him that the guide was in the cave where they got water from.

3/754 The stranger was now in possession of the pieces of information he was after. Seeing an opportunity to be with the woman and one of her own, he went towards them, careful not to draw attention to himself, though, among the men of Gulgal, only the caravan leader did not work the soil; his days were of thorough inactivity.

3/755 When the outsider saw a woman with a young boy, he said her name. Since she paid attention to him, he added, discerning the boy who was assisting her:

3/756 "Is he the one who was promised to the Hebrew prophets? Have you said to him what he came to do in this world?"

3/757 "Leave him alone," said Mary without hesitating, words which

confirmed to the stranger that the two of them were in fact the ones he was looking for.

3/758 He ordered them to start following him, otherwise the other members of the caravan would be punished, thus making them believe that he was accompanied by men he commanded. Joaquin's youngest, believing that the cruel man's words were likely to be true, obeyed. Little Joseph did not utter a single word; he only focused on the hunter's movements, who constantly shouted that he must not be looked at.

3/759 When he returned from another day of work, Joseph asked Martha about her aunt's whereabouts; he was intrigued by her absence, since whenever night fell, she thought they were in danger. He looked for her in the valley, five hundred meters away from their residence, where his daughter told him her stepmother had gone in search of food. Not finding her, he kept going down the valley. When he saw his wife's mantle with some roots she had gathered, he feared the worst. Terrified, he went back seeking help.

3/760 Matthias immediately gathered the children, for he was aware that, since they were constantly just right off the way, they would invariably have news. He asked them if they had seen Mary leave the village. They said they had not; they nevertheless informed him that one of Joseph's relatives had been with them. These words made the already afflicted carpenter even more frightened; he said that Matthew's firstborn was the only one of his own blood whose presence was likely; however, in his opinion, he had not been in Gulgal, for he would not have come alone, and he would have wanted to receive payment not only for the two missing ones.

3/761 "It cannot be Ezechias. I say he does not have the courage to fight me, even though I am now weak."

3/762 The shepherd asked the young ones to describe what the man looked like. They compared him to Alphaeus, but said he was taller. He had a thin beard, and only on the lower part of his face. The lazy caravan leader, who had remained in the cave the whole time, was summoned; he nevertheless stated that he was not aware of anything that had happened. After hearing him, Joseph said there was nothing they could do and concluded:

3/763 "We know nothing about the man who took Mary and little Joseph, nor about the way they took. All we can do is wait for the Lord, the One who will send help."

3/764 The stranger who arrived in Gulgal was Zephir, who had cruelly tortured Adah and only got the information he wanted when he stated that, each time she gave him a negative answer, he would kill one of those whom she took care of.

3/765 Right after taking the desired savior and his mother prisoner, the

mercenary continued the journey on his camel, protected from the heat of the afternoon. Joaquin's youngest was walking right behind, and she was tied with a leather string to her capturer by the hand; her firstborn was nevertheless free, and kept on looking at the man who was no longer commanded by Herod Antipas.

3/766 Not long after, Zephir got down from the animal that was transporting him. Quenching his thirst, he observed little Joseph and could not resist his serene and meek look. He offered them water; he even held the amphora for the boy to drink from it. Mary did not understand the barbaric murderer's actions, nor did she understand why, when they resumed their walk, he untied her.

3/767 A little further in the walk, the one promised by the prophets, unable to bear the heat, stopped, and the mercenary, who was in reality also a Hebrew, rudely said:

3/768 "What are you doing? I have already said to you to keep walking."

3/769 Little Joseph remained silent. The one who was no longer Zidec's subordinate brought Mary even closer to her son, and ordered them to sit down. With a piece of her garment moistened with the content of the amphora she had been given, she wet her son's face, an action that the kidnapper contemplated with unusual interest.

3/770 At dusk the day after the abduction, the trio approached a hovel off the road to Nazareth which avoided Lower Caesarea, mainly used by pillagers. The mercenary, noticing that the hovel was occupied by thieves, hid the one conceived by Anna and warned her not to cry for help, for she would not be respected; however, he could not do the same with the awaited redeemer, who ran towards one of the members of band of thieves. To everyone's surprise, the boy was affectionately carried by one of them, who asked him if he knew what he was doing there.

3/771 "I tell you that you are a shepherd without your sheep, and that you lost one of them," was his prompt reply.

3/772 The man said, putting him on the ground:

3/773 "I say I will never forget these words."

3/774 In the hiding place, the outlaws, whose main head had a trading agreement with Zephir, shared part of a pillage carried out shortly before.^[90] With them, there were numerous men who would be traded for irrational beings. When they left, only the one whom Mary's firstborn knew accompanied them.

[90] They used to refer to the chief of a band of outlaws as the **main head**.

3/775 The pseudo-criminal who had held the desired savior in his arms was Matthias, who, along with Alphaeus, going against Joseph's resolutions, had left in search of the duo right after his conversation with the children. The caravan leader took the usual road to Jope, whereas the great owner took the one that pillagers made use of. When he came across some of them, in order not to be killed, he pretended to be a pillager himself. Given the circumstances, he was compelled to walk with them. After meeting the boy and being forced to leave, he asserted to himself how he would proceed:

3/776 "When they do not notice my absence, I will return to little Joseph's side."

3/777 After the outlaws left, Zephir announced that they would spend the night in that bleak place. He surprised Mary when he offered her his mantle so that she could protect herself from the cold. He did not rest for a single moment. At dawn, he left them, an action that was incomprehensible to Joaquin's youngest, therefore setting them free, and he also left them an amphora full of the indispensable liquid.

3/778 Not used to making decisions, Mary did not know what to do. She mentioned to her firstborn:

3/779 "I say this is the first time we are alone, you and me."

3/780 She instantly wondered:

3/781 "Will we be alone other times?"

3/782 They stayed in the hut throughout the day. When they were getting ready for another freezing night, Joseph's wife, covering her son with the mantle the mercenary had intentionally forgotten within their sight, completely unaware of where they were, decided that it was urgent to choose a direction to follow. But which one? She said, but not sounding very convincing:

3/783 "When the Sun appears, I say we will choose one of the ways, which will lead us somewhere."

3/784 She was so worried that she could not sleep. During the night, she believed she heard footsteps. She was afraid that Zephir had regretted his decision and returned, but, in order to put a stop to her thoughts, she concluded that they were the doing of her imagination. Little Joseph woke up and allayed her concerns:

3/785 "You do not need to be afraid. I tell you that God will send us help, you can be at peace."

3/786 At dawn, when they started their journey, Mary randomly chose the way to follow. At about lunchtime, they reached a minute human settlement, Gravel, inhabited only by women and children who made a living collectively making amphorae. Unaware of this fact, she asked one of the women to call

the one responsible for the settlement, for she would try to get his permission to make a stop there.

3/787 “There are no men here, all of them left to fight. All those of this place who are men say they have to fight for the promised land, that it is written that it is an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” This was the straightforward answer given to Mary.

3/788 Not understanding the words, Mary asked whom they were fighting:

3/789 “Those who are commanded by Archelaus who came from Assyria.”

3/790 Asking for food for her son, she was invited to come in and eat.

3/791 “Not something that is soaked in water,” commented the boy, putting himself between the two women.

3/792 The one conceived by Anna and the unknown deliverer were granted permission to stay in Gravel, and they would lodge in the livery stable. When they settled, Little Joseph approached his mother and with simplicity asked:

3/793 “Do you remember that man who kept us prisoner?”

3/794 She responded affirmatively, and he went on:

3/795 “I now understand why that man did not want me to look at him: I tell you it is because I could see some kindness in his eyes.”

3/796 “But how can there be kindness in a cruel man’s eyes?”

3/797 “I tell you that our eyes reflect what is in our minds.”

3/798 Trying to explain to his mother that Zephir was not as barbaric as he seemed to be, he concluded:

3/799 “That man did not want me to witness it, but I could see kindness in his eyes.”

3/800 Mary pondered her son’s words. After each new conversation, she understood him even less.

3/801 “I am beginning to feel, Lord, the weight of being the one who carried the Lord’s promised one in my womb. I ask the Lord not to let me give up having to deliver my offspring, who is the Lord’s promised one, to those who are my people,” she pleaded.

3/802 And for another night she rested far from Gulgal. But when she was awake again, she fixed her attention on an individual who was on an adjacent elevation, deeming him to be a man, due to the speed at which he moved. Even though he was distant, she secretly supposed that she knew him, which was confirmed by her firstborn:

3/803 “You are saying things I do not understand,” she meekly informed him.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

3/804 “I tell you that that man is Matthias, who came to take us.”

3/805 Minutes seemed like centuries for Joseph’s wife. When she saw that the man was indeed the shepherd, she intimately thanked our Father:

3/806 “I am grateful that the Lord listened to my prayers.”

3/807 When the great owner arrived, she asked him how he had found them.

3/808 “I do not even know it myself. It only goes inside me that I heard many times little Joseph’s voice saying ‘take the way on the right; go up the hill and take the way on the left; do not go down the valley.’ I heard that I should go to a place where there were only women as I went down the hill, and that is what I did.”

3/809 Mary wondered if he had imagined it all in his sleep; Matthias nevertheless asserted that he had been awake and walking when he heard the instructions. Neither one of them understood the event, but they asked nothing about it to the boy, who had been watching them as they talked. Matthias left to thank the inhabitants of Gravel for having welcomed and assisted the duo. He spent the rest of the day helping the wanting women.

3/810 Recovered from his journey after a relaxing sleep, the shepherd, in the early morning, told them that they would start their journey towards Gulgal. When they were about to leave, almost all the inhabitants gathered around them, and he addressed God:

3/811 “I say I have a humble heart, that there is no arrogance in me, that I do not doubt the Lord’s power and that His will is my will. I have faith in the Lord, now and ever.”

***WE MUST NOT FEAR OUR FATHER, WHO KNOWS US
MORE THAN WE KNOW OURSELVES, AND WHOSE
ACTIONS ARE FOR OUR OWN GOOD IN THEIR ENTIRETY.***

see 3/834, 3/836 and 3/840

WE ARE THE ONES WHO PUNISH OURSELVES, NOT GOD.

see 3/838

3/812 Now far away from Gravel, the desired savior, who had been given a donkey as a gift by the inhabitants of the settlement and now pulled it along the way, suddenly stopped under a dry tree and announced:

3/813 “I tell you that I have already been here with the man from Galilee. He asked me if men know their future!”

3/814 Matthias serenely clarified to the well-disposed traveler about the man he constantly mentioned:

3/815 “I say that all see men’s shadows when they sleep. Just like you, I see shadows when I sleep. Do not let only the shadow of this man you saw go inside you.”

3/816 Encouraging the boy, he concluded:

3/817 “Let us follow our way to see if we find this man from Galilee.”

3/818 A little while later, he confessed to Mary that it was difficult for him to have conversations with little Joseph. She agreed and added:

3/819 “I do not know how to understand the Lord’s will.”

3/820 The shepherd tried to take the usual path with the intent not to come across the pillagers he had been with. In the outskirts of Gulgal, after three days, he noticed that some of the tyrant’s combatants were approaching from the opposite direction. Since he was popular in the area and was not accompanied by his wife, he would not be able to successfully explain why the wife and child of another Hebrew were with him. An idea he deemed efficient came to his mind: he would hide Mary’s firstborn and introduce her as his recent wife, the one who would give him his firstborn. He immediately concealed a smiling little Joseph under his tunic and asked him to hug his chest, tighten his lower limbs around his hip and remain silent. He then covered himself with the mantle he wore in the cold nights.

3/821 When they came across Ezechias, Mary kept her head down, and her attitude did not raise any suspicions at all, for it was customary at the time.

3/822 The leader of the men who were at the terrible king’s service was Zidec, who had inexplicably remained in Gulgal only a few minutes. When he approached the couple, he recognized the man and asked:

3/823 “What are you doing here?”

3/824 Matthias, before answering, mentally pleaded with the Lord to protect and forgive him:

3/825 “With my new companion I went to Gravel, to the residence of the one who came from the same womb as me, to see if she needed help. As you know, there are only women there, and women do not know how to work the soil. If they do not know how to work the soil, they will not be able to pay taxes.”

3/826 Noticing that the shepherd was different, the counselor said:

3/827 “You are a little round. This new companion of yours gives you good bread for supper. You need to make a stop, otherwise you will drop dead in the desert.”

3/828 He was about to resume his walk when he asked:

3/829 “Have you heard of a Joseph and a Mary who are running away throughout these ways?”

3/830 Again begging God for forgiveness, Matthias said that he hadn’t. After such an assertive reply, the perpetual royal counselor left them.

3/831 Waiting for them to disappear in the horizon, and only after making sure there were no soldiers behind them, the shepherd then removed a sweaty little Joseph from his hiding place. Since he still seemed to be happy, Matthias asked him the reason:

3/832 “It is because you were shaking the entire time, not out of fear of Zidec, but out of fear of God, for telling him something that is not true.”

3/833 He stated with unheard of clarity:

3/834 **“I tell you that God is our Father, and that we do not need to be afraid of Him.”**

3/835 “Are you saying that the Lord knows I fear Him because I said that which is not true?”

3/836 **“I tell you that God knows the reason of everything, that God knows us more than we know ourselves.”**

3/837 “What if the Lord punishes me because I said that which is not true?”

3/838 **“I tell you that our Father does not punish us, we punish ourselves.”**

3/839 “Will the Lord wish Zidec well, who is chasing you and all the other ones who are of our people, Zidec, who denies His existence?”

3/840 **“I tell you that God wishes all of us well, His children, even when we deny Him.”**

3/841 An astonished Matthias stared at his interlocutor, who had said words whose meaning was deep, and asserted to himself that he was indeed different, because, despite his young age, he was teaching about the Lord.

3/842 “It is this God that you are showing me that I want, the one you call Father,” he stated out loud.

3/843 “Father of the spirit, not of the body of flesh,” added the desired redeemer.

3/844 “What are you saying? Are you speaking of flesh?” asked the great owner.

3/845 “I tell you that there are lives after the death of the body that we now have, and I will show it to everyone.”

3/846 Matthias’s arrival with the ones who had been abducted was a source of great joy in Gulgal. His deed made him even more respected.

3/847 Joseph, his children, Pustule and Simon remained in the village waiting for Alphaeus, who returned after six days. The caravan now recomposed and fully provided for, they left for Nazareth.

3-5.2

3/848 After setting Mary and little Joseph free, Zephir walked alone until he joined some men who fought for Herod Archelaus, a definition that the outlaws did not accept, for they affirmed they were Assyrians who only did as they pleased, who did not obey anyone. When Anna's executioner was asked what he was doing, he did not respond. One of the strangers, who knew him well, gave an answer:

3/849 "I say that this man is hunting the one who came under the Star of Bethlehem. It seems that he was not successful."

3/850 Now addressing the mercenary, he asked:

3/851 "You have not showed up in a while. It went inside me that you had lost your life. This time, how long will you stay?"

3/852 "I was very sick. I am no longer commanded by Herod Antipas, I am searching for the one promised by the Hebrew god on my own," replied the executioner who had dedicated his last ten years to finding the whereabouts of the one who came when the fulgurant star appeared.

3/853 When he heard that they would spend the night where they were, since the common opinion was that it was a safe location, Zephir, feeling very tired, slept heavily. The same happened to the others, including the sentinel. During the night, they were attacked and murdered by the men from Gravel. Since the latter would purposefully leave one of the invaders of their land alive, they randomly chose Zephir.

3/854 During incursions, the Assyrians split themselves into two or three groups, each one having predetermined functions. The first group would find water and food; the second would obtain any necessary information; the third, when needed, would watch the prisoners. It was with those of the third group that the abductor spent the night.

3/855 At dawn, when the second group arrived, they found their fellow men dead. Rufus, the chief of the band, ordered that the bodies be counted, because, for each one of his own who had died, he would kill four individuals from the oppressed people. He believed the mass murder had not happened as retaliation for the despicable oppressed ones brutally killed some days before, but that they had just been surprised as they slept. If it had been revenge, they would have put the one they deemed to be the chief on the cross.

3/856 Inspecting the neighboring area, they found the only one who had been spared in shock, and he kept murmuring:

3/857 “They took everyone’s lives.”

3/858 The chief was intrigued. Who was this crazy man? One of the Assyrians who was acquainted with him and knew the reason that he was in Judea approached and said that they should look for the bodies of a woman and a boy. Informed that the outsider had come from afar to kill the one born under the shining Star, now face to face with the traumatized man, Rufus asked him:

3/859 “Do you know me?”

3/860 “There was a massacre and all lost their lives, except me, just like that day in Bethlehem. But why, why?” Zephir kept asking, referring to the extermination of the Josephs and children, still under Herod the Great’s rule, when only the desired savior, in his opinion, had not died.

3/861 Alienated from his environment, he continued wondering why he was the only survivor of the mass murder of thirty-one Assyrians. Since the owner of Saul, the sentinel, did not accept that the rebels had killed his accomplices, he took Zephir prisoner and went to Lower Cesarea. During the journey, those of the band determined that his deranged behavior was either triggered by remorse or it was a strategy to escape death.

3/862 In the village, the prisoner said words whose meaning the ones who guarded him did not understand:

3/863 “I say he will set me free, I must wait. I know he will come. I should have left the camel with the one who does not have the protection on his feet that comes with the passing of harvests. Now they must be hurt from walking so much. I say I did not leave the camel to him because I did not know what I know now. I know he will come see me.”

3/864 He remained confined for three days. When the Sun set, noticing the market place shining with three piles of wood on fire and wishing to know why, he shouted for an explanation. He was informed by the guard that, since that was the occasion when the new moon remained in the sky for some extra hours, there was a feast under way. However, since he had lived among the usurpers, he understood why: someone would be executed, but he could not accept that it would be him. He felt anguished, dreading something bad would happen. As he observed the flames through an aperture, he suddenly saw the boy he longed to see, who then told him:

3/865 “I tell you that you will be judged by men, not by God, the Father of us all, who is looking at you, the same way He is looking at all His other children.”

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3/866 The same way he appeared, he vanished. Zephir then continuously shouted out of joy:

3/867 “I say that he came to see me!”

3/868 Shortly after he was led from the prison to the place where trades were made and he was tied to the stone where the ones deemed guilty received their punishment.

3/869 “Where is the one they say was promised to the Hebrew prophets?” Rufus asked him.

3/870 He repeatedly denied knowing his whereabouts. Overcome with wrath, the interrogator ordered that he be whipped until he provided an answer, for he had been seen with one of the young oppressed ones.^[91]

3/871 The man who was being whipped spoke with great calm:

3/872 “I do not know, but even if I did, I would not say it to you. There is more light in that offspring than in all of the bonfires. The one promised to the prophets has already forgiven me for everything I did, which was because I did not know the Lord’s truth. Now I know why this is the longest night of all and why it is another day of ceremony: it goes inside you that I know where that offspring is and that I will say it to you. You can stop the ceremony.”

3/873 Completely aware of the circumstances, he reasserted:

3/874 “I do not know where the one promised to the prophets is, and even I did, I would not say it to you. I accept what that offspring is teaching and I know I am on the right side.”

3/875 He decidedly concluded:

3/876 “You can take my life on the cross, in the fire or in the water, but I make you one request: I prefer losing my life on the cross or in the fire.”

3/877 Curious about why Zephir would rather not drown, and despite finding his behavior odd, Rufus asked why he had made such an unusual request:

3/878 “It is because those who are my people need water. The one who was promised to the prophets came to deliver all of those who are my people from the rule of the Herods, and I have no right to dirty the water.”

3/879 Anna’s executioner continued his explanation, causing perplexity in his listeners:

[91] One of the rebels who had been in the abandoned residence, the place where Matthias pretended to be an outlaw, noticed Zephir arrive with a boy. When he saw him again in Lower Cesarea, he informed Rufus of it.

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3/880 “I have not only broken free from the Herods, but also from the evil that exists inside me.”

3/881 With the energy he still had, he pleaded with Mary’s firstborn:

3/882 “I am grateful, wherever you are, for delivering me from my own evil.”

3/883 Not minding the audience, he addressed God:

3/884 “I say I am ready, Lord. I know I do not deserve to be with the Lord, but I will be grateful if the Lord can look at me, this sinner who took many lives of those who are my own people because I did not know the Lord’s truth. Now that I know the one who was promised to the prophets, I do not want to leave this life without the Lord’s forgiveness.”

3/885 Furious at the condemned man’s pleas, the wrathful inquisitor ordered that he be made silent by having him whipped. When the strokes were over, he insisted on being informed of the whereabouts of the wanted child. Every negative answer that Zephir uttered frustrated the entertainer of the crowd even more. When the latter again ordered that he be whipped, the two efficient executioners made him pass out. When he saw him unconscious, Rufus sentenced him to be tied to the trunk of the oak tree and die there. However, one of the executioners informed him in astonishment that he had died.

3/886 He was made an example: to serve as a warning, the body of the bounty hunter was put on the execrated cross and there it remained for three days. Since no one offered to remove it from the cross, it was abandoned in the desert, lying on its stomach, a position of great dishonor to any of the oppressed ones, in order to serve as food for vultures.

3/887 A man who became weak in the face of danger, who allowed himself to be killed by another one, regardless of the circumstances, and this was thus considered a sign of cowardice, had his humiliating name forgotten, easily erased from the minds of those who knew him, something unconceivable for us, because saying his name was deemed repulsive, and that was the reason that it took Zidec and those who followed him a long time to find out what had happened to Zephir. To crown the public dishonor of the repented man, he was executed as being sick in the head, and therefore his name was immediately forgotten.

3-6

3/888 The inhabitants of Gulgal were very sad when those who were heading for Galilee left. When they approached Lower Cesarea, Alphaeus,

fearing he would be recognized, decided they would make a stop at Antipatris, an insignificant human settlement located in the outskirts of the enormous village. Experienced in the customs of his time, he knew that, since they were just travelers, they would not be recognized. The settlement and its surrounding area were a momentary place of residence for many: since there one could not keep what one harvested, it was usual for travelers to stay for only a short period of time.

3/889 After they stopped, Joseph, noticing that the roofs of many of the residences were damaged, started repairing them, and was followed by his son who, always keen on finding out about everything, asked him about Nazareth, if it was large, and how much longer they would have to walk. Wishing to get closer to his interlocutor, the awaited redeemer started climbing the improvised ladder.

3/890 “But you are bigger than me and you do not fall,” he expressed with captivating ingenuousness as a reply to his genitor’s thought that he should stop his action, for one of the damaged beams could collapse because of his weight.

3/891 Jacob’s heir smiled, having no other alternative but to let his son join him.

3/892 Mary did not share their state of relaxation. Ever since she had been found by Zephir, she no longer felt joyful, for what he had said deeply affected her:

3/893 “Does the prophecy that says that your offspring will have a life of glory go inside you? Your offspring will be a man who will know the pain and the suffering caused by our sins.”

3/894 Since she had never doubted that God would protect her firstborn, Joaquin’s youngest prayed to Him, asking for strength to endure whatever would happen. She meekly finished her prayer:

3/895 “Because I do not know the Lord’s Laws.”

3/896 Ever since the mercenary had said such unfortunate words, whenever she saw a small one, he reminded her of little Joseph. In the settlement, since she barely spoke to her fellow women, she was believed to have lost her voice.

3/897 Matthew, the inseparable uncle of the one promised by the prophets, as he played, mentioned to his partners that he had walked through the immense sea of sand and became the target of mockery: the others affirmed that he had eaten lizards and grasshoppers. Taking pity on the one he considered a blood brother, little Joseph denied it.

3/898 But the other boys did not accept his words; the two then complained

to Joseph, who instructed them to explain that what the others were saying was not true. But since the one who came from Mary immediately told him that he had already done so, Joseph asked him if he had never displeased his colleagues.

3/899 “Only a few times,” the complainer confessed.

3/900 Noticing that the two were now calmer, the able instructor said nothing more; he watched them go play with the other children again, who were gathered around the space where the irrational ones ingested water.

3/901 The two were told that each one of their fellow players had a small dead fish that they pretended was swimming. The last fruit of Anna’s womb wanted to take part in the pastime, but they wouldn’t let him, because he did not have a fish to play with. The desired redeemer surreptitiously left, headed for the lake, and caught one. When he returned, carrying it in his hands, certain that it would die since it was out of its natural environment, he quickly put it in the small tank. The boys who were entertaining themselves with the lifeless animals marveled, for his was moving on its own. It was obvious that they believed that little Joseph’s was dead; they asked him how he had done it.^[92] Dumbfounded, he answered them:

3/902 “I tell you that I just released it.” The small spectators spread the news for weeks.

3/903 When the fun was over, the Nazarenes walked to the residence they were lodged in; Matthew was pulling the donkey little Joseph had been given by the inhabitants of Gravel. They suddenly heard someone cry for help. When they arrived where the sound was coming from, they came across an extremely injured man. They put him on the donkey’s back and took him to the so-called cave of the sheep. The awaited redeemer then said:

3/904 “I tell you that we will help you because you asked for our help,” and, after making sure that he was properly sheltered, he left, followed by his uncle.

3/905 Since he believed that Herod Antipas’s soldiers wanted to kill him, the stranger insisted that the boys keep him secret. This was why Anna’s youngest mentioned his presence to no one, and also because he was afraid of the Hebrew man.

3/906 At the late afternoon supper, little Joseph did not eat his portion. Mary, finding his behavior odd, informed her husband that their son had not liked the food. Joseph, who was savoring the same root broth, allayed her

[92] Antipatris was not devoid of the essential liquid, unlike many other villages. It had a small weir, as we nowadays call it.

maternal concerns, assuring her that there was nothing wrong with it. The boy, he went on, was just not hungry. In the meantime the desired savior saved his portion to give it to the hidden man.

3/907 After supper, Jacob's protectee mentioned to his wife that the inhabitants of Antipatris got to keep only a minute quantity of what they harvested. Herod Antipas collected more than fifty percent of it, and the remainder was shared among his cruel soldiers and others who claimed they were Romans. Almost nothing was left to those who worked the soil. As they talked, they did not notice that little Joseph and Matthew discreetly left and went towards the cave. When they arrived there, little Joseph's ever-present henchman got frightened and decided to stay outside.

3/908 The fugitive, who was a slave, an inveterate and bereft gambler, because of a high fever, was hallucinating. He would only see the cruel soldiers. He was soothed by the promised one, who offered him nourishment for his body. The gambler asked for water, and the one conceived by Anna was put in charge of fetching it. At its source, when he filled the amphora that the stranger carried in his bundle, he noticed there was a hole in it. He returned to the cave to report it to little Joseph. The latter, having no one else to help him, went to the source of water and brought it on his tunic; his uncle and the hidden man watched him in sheer incredulity. The feverish man, after quenching his thirst, lost consciousness again. Leaving him inside the cave, the two boys returned to their temporary residence.

3/909 Matthew was intrigued by his nephew's incredible feat, but asked him nothing about it. Had he done it, he would have learned that, since the amphora was useless, his nephew broke it and, after many unsuccessful attempts to transport water in one of the container's half, put it on the first layer of his tunic, filled it with the liquid, covered it with the second layer, and then walked slowly not to spill the water too much.^[93]

3/910 Before sunset on the following day, when the two helpers returned from where the injured man, who was no longer feverish, was hiding, they were summoned by the rabbi to join the rest of the children. Ishmael, who was also the elder of Antipatris, started his speech by stating that all were aware of what had happened two days before. Speaking forcefully, given his persuasion – and by the way, he was never troubled by doubts – that one among the spectators was responsible for it, he went on:

3/911 “A man known by those commanded by the Herods is hiding in this

[93] The Hebrew travelers and those who always needed to be prepared to run away at the very first sign of danger wore, when they could, **two tunics**. For many, their clothes were their only material goods.

place, and I know that one of you is helping him. I say that this man is not one of those of our people, he is a rebel who only does evil, a man who only knows how to play and pillage. I do not know where he is hiding, but I know that he will be punished, for the Lord's vengefulness is infinite."

3/912 Trying to convince the gambler's helper to admit to his deed, he added:

3/913 "I remind you all that either mercy or punishment will come from the Lord: the punishment for the one who is hiding the truth, and mercy for the one who reveals it. I say that it is necessary to be fair and punish."

3/914 When the reprimand to the children was over, one of the boys spoke up:

3/915 "You say that it is necessary to be fair and punish this man, but on the sacred roll of the Law it is written that, if you take revenge on a person, the Lord will take revenge on you; if one of yours offends you, you must forgive him, because, when you sin, the Lord will forgive your sin. Why will the Lord punish the one who is helping this man from dying at the hands of the Romans?"

3/916 The rabbi responded according to what he had learned, but did it aggressively, something that really frightened little Joseph:

3/917 "I say that the Lord forgives, but He knows how to punish. The Lord will make the sinner feel the weight of His wrath."

3/918 "But is it necessary to punish, or to forgive?" insisted Luke.

3/919 Incapable of answering such a profound question, the rabbi found a solution that would not implicate him:

3/920 "The one who will be able to answer these questions is the one promised to the prophets. Our time is that of waiting."

3/921 Since the meeting abruptly came to an end, and nothing else could be explained, the gambler's helpers could not give their version of the subject.

3/922 At dawn on the third day since the two boys had been hiding the stranger, the latter regained consciousness. When Mary's firstborn approached him, the gambler asked:

3/923 "Did you bring me water on your tunic, or did I see it when I was sleeping? Did it happen or not?"

3/924 "It depends on you. What do you want to believe as true?"

3/925 The pillager, who understood the reply, remained silent.

3/926 When he announced he was about to leave, the desired redeemer was asked by the hunted man why he was helping him.

3/927 “Because you asked for our help,” he explained.

3/928 “I say you are different from those who are as many harvests old as you are,” concluded the gambler.

3/929 “You have already told me that,” said little Joseph, who then left and returned to his temporary residence, followed by Matthew, who had been waiting outside the cave.

3/930 Still thinking about Zephir’s words, Joaquin’s youngest explained her consuming worries about the first fruit of her womb to her husband. She told him about what had happened that morning, when she was absorbed in thoughts and the boy, whom she was holding by the hand, stated:

3/931 “I tell you that those who are sick are the ones who need poultices and infusions, not those who are healthy.”^[94]

3/932 She had been stunned by his words; her firstborn seemed to know what she was thinking. She asked Joseph, her attentive listener, what could be happening.

3/933 “You knew before his arrival that your son would be different. Did you not say that your angel announced that he would come with the mission of setting free all of those who are our people?” responded Joseph.

3/934 Remembering why her son had been born, and predicting his future, she could not accept the possibility of being deprived of his presence. Her husband, who understood her pain, trying to soothe her unspeakable suffering at that moment and foreseeing what would happen, instructed her:

3/935 “Do not feel disturbed, little Joseph is an offspring who is few harvests old, but we must prepare ourselves for what we do not know.”

3/936 Mary did not reply. However, her maternal intuition was that the boy once called Jeremiah was hiding the gambler. She finished the conversation with the following words:

3/937 “I know that the life of the one who came from me does not belong to me, but I ask you to speak to him, he still needs our help.”

[94] At the end of the previous afternoon, when she was fetching sticks to keep the fire lit during the night, Mary saw, from the distance, Matthew outside the so-called cave of the sheep. Without being noticed, she remained observing, so that she could see if little Joseph was in the cave; indeed, he was: she saw him leaving it. It was enough for her to suspect that they were hiding the fugitive, but she did not question them. Her worries, however, persisted.

Later, when she thought to herself that her son should not be helping a gambler and pillager, a source of shame for those of her people, the promised one instructed her:

“I tell you that those who are sick are the ones who need poultices and infusions, not those who are healthy.”

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3/938 Indeed realizing that, given his actions, the boy was being mischievous, Jacob's protectee promised to talk to him. He immediately wondered:

3/939 "But what will I ask, if I saw nothing?"

3/940 And the desired savior was still not eating supper, invariably giving it to the man he was assisting.

3/941 In the cave, not a long time afterwards, the now recovered pillager initiated little Joseph in the secrets of the stones of the animals, which could also be made of wood. On five of the six sides of the cubic pieces a specific number of images of the same irrational being was represented, from one to five, and the sixth surface was blank. The animals most reproduced were the camel, the donkey, the serpent, the sheep, and the dove. The players previously made their bets, tried to guess the result, and cast the stones. The winner was the one who guessed the addition of the numbers that the pieces displayed.

3/942 The stranger asked his apprentice to guess the result; right after, he would cast the rough artifacts.

3/943 "One," guessed little Joseph.

3/944 The hidden man discourteously said:

3/945 "If there are many animals and two stones, why do you say the number one? Sometimes you are not wise."

3/946 "If I am one, if you are one, and if God, the Father of us all, is one, what is the use of the other numbers?" naively asked the one who was called Jesus when he came to this world.

3/947 Not answering his question, the outsider insisted on another guess.

3/948 "Seven."

3/949 After he cast them, the number said by the young boy was correct.

3/950 "I say you win."

3/951 "But what do I win?"

3/952 "We need to determine what we will win. You put in your donkey, and I will put in another one. Whoever guesses right gets the two donkeys."

3/953 The stranger ecstatically went on:

3/954 "You do not know what these stones are. I say they are the essence of life. When I win, I feel that the Lord is with me. It is as if the angels were guiding my hand, because I know the future."

3/955 He concluded with sincerity:

3/956 "Winning brings joy to my heart."

3/957 The promised one, who was listening carefully, asked him what would happen if he eventually lost.

3/958 “I say that evil will laugh.”

3/959 With his eyes fixed on the man who was running away from Herod Antipas’s soldiers not only for cheating on games of chance, the boy emphasized:

3/960 “I tell you that evil does not smile.”

3/961 The gambler, whose own living was proof of those words, agreed, for when he lost, he surely felt its consequences.

3/962 “Have you not told me that you would not play anymore, and that you would not take possession of that which does not belong to you?” little Joseph reminded him of the promise he had recently made.

3/963 The outsider had no excuses to have the stones of the animals again: he had vehemently stated that he would change his behavior. He had not, however, honored his own words. Now feeling sad, he affirmed once more:

3/964 “I will return everything I have taken and I will no longer be in possession of what does not belong to me. I will do as I say. Our life takes paths we do not know: I have committed many sins, then you came, and what goes inside me changes.”

3/965 He was indeed fully able to change his living; he was only nineteen. When asked about the reason of his actions, he stated that he did not know it, and restarted casting the objects that gave him so much pleasure. Coincidentally, on the three times that followed, the result was seven. The addict found it very odd. Forgetting about what he had just said, he felt very enthusiastic. Assured that it had happened by influence of his interlocutor, he asked him what he had done, extremely wishful to copy his actions.

3/966 “I tell you that you have made me a promise and that I will see how long you will keep it,” the awaited redeemer answered affectionately, and immediately left to go help his father, who was gathering large shrubs to make a fire.

3/967 Joseph, after his conversation with his wife, started paying more attention to Matthew’s and his son’s actions. He noticed that they did not eat the second meal of the day; that they left immediately and returned not long after with their containers, made with pieces of rocks, empty. He believed they were helping the pillager that the inhabitants were talking about.

3/968 Observing them gathering wood for Mary, an idea suddenly came to his mind. Pointing to a large piece of wood, he asked little Joseph to bring it to him, and the boy promptly obeyed. However, he could not move it even a

single millimeter. He immediately informed his genitor that he could not do it, and the latter pretended not to understand why:

3/969 “So you cannot carry that wood. Why can you not do it?”

3/970 “Because this wood is large and heavy.”

3/971 Not wishing to accuse him, for he had no proof he was being mischievous, Jacob’s heir managed the conversation intelligently, telling him to try it again. Even though he made a great effort, the one whose name was Jesus at the moment of his birth failed.

3/972 “This wood does not seem to be large and heavy. I can carry it,” asserted Joseph, who approached it and easily lifted it from the ground.

3/973 “I tell you that you are big and that you have a lot of strength, which I do not have.”

3/974 “You must not forget that you are an offspring who is few harvests old and that you need a protector to know what is right and what is not. Our destiny is to have patience and to wait to help. I say that it was for those who are Hebrews that it was written that the soil will yield thorns ...” Joseph was saying when he was interrupted by his son who, understanding the goal of the dialogue, stated that he needed to report an event to him.

3/975 With the purpose of preventing the boy from imagining that he had become aware of his actions concerning the gambler, Sarah’s widower asked him if it was urgent.

3/976 “For me it is very important: I tell you that I hid that man that everyone is looking for.”

3/977 Joseph, with the experience that only age brings along, pondered:

3/978 “Before we talk to the one who came from outside, let us ask ourselves if it is our duty to deliver this man to the rabbi or if we should keep hiding him.”

3/979 His intention was genuinely only to instruct; he concluded:

3/980 “I say that it is our knowledge that everyone in this place is restless.”

3/981 Given the tiny young man’s explanation, that is, that the man he was sheltering had promised not to gamble or steal anymore, his father instructed him, making it clear how he interpreted one of the Mosaic Laws:

3/982 “Do not plant two types of seeds in the soil where there is already a wheat crop, the writings say. I say we are no longer in the desert, that we are among good men, who respect the Laws. How would it be possible to live together, if the evil ones were not expelled?”

3/983 Convinced of his own words, he added:

3/984 “If the evil ones are not banned from living with the good ones, I say that not a single person will have good inside him.”

3/985 The desired deliverer, after this explanation, with his eyes fixed on his father, and then on Mary, who had approached and was listening to the conversation, smiled and did not reply; he only asked for permission to take some broth to the man he was assisting, who had not eaten since the night before. His mother, however, suggested that he invite him to come eat with them.

3/986 Happy with the outcome, the one who was named Jeremiah in Hiatt ran to the cave of the sheep; however, he could not find the outsider, who had been secretly listening as his helper acknowledged his deed, and left at that very moment.

***WHEN OUR PERVERSITIES BECOME MORE MANIFEST
THAN OUR QUALITIES, WE SHOULD WATCH OURSELVES.***

see 3/1029

3/987 The following day, Ishmael led his students to a very small building that they called Temple. When they all walked by the center of the village, they noticed a man on the punishment stone, as the Hebrews referred to the buttress used for corporeal punishment. Little Joseph, who knew his uncle very well and was aware that he was terrified when he witnessed acts of violence and consequently could not sleep, asked him not to pay attention to what was going on: Herod Antipas’s soldiers were punishing the pillager, and some inhabitants of Antipatris were enjoying the scene with satisfaction, enthusiastically counting the number of strokes of the whip out loud.

3/988 The rabbi asked one of the men who were walking with him to lead the students to their destination, and, from where he was, he shouted at those of his people who were enjoying another person’s suffering, stating that the spectacle was the devil’s pleasure, that evil would contaminate and turn those who took part in it into sinners; however, no one paid attention to him.

3/989 The desired redeemer discreetly left the group that was walking to the Temple for another day of studies and, after the punishment was over, approached the thief; however, he was removed from the site by the elder, who ordered him to stay with the other children.

3/990 Ishmael, when he started his classes, would always offer gifts to the Lord, so that their days would be good. Each one of the students carried a twig that, after being blessed, was laid on the purification stone. When the offering was over, he would stare at the horizon and proclaim:

3/991 “I say that the Essenes, who are men of great wisdom, stare at the orient, where the one promised by the Lord will come from. Those who are

Essenes are not different from us, but they sacrifice their days, they renounce what is comforting to the life of every man and pray, because they know that the moment when the one who was promised to the prophets will come to bring salvation is approaching.”

3/992 When his tasks at school were over, Mary’s firstborn, making sure that Anna’s youngest was safe, quickly went to the cage, as they used to refer to the site where the prisoners were kept after being tortured, which had strategically been left in the settlement as a warning to the other inhabitants. The pillager tried to cover his face; however, he was unsuccessful. The boy asked him how he was feeling and, given his answer, went on:

3/993 “I tell you that you do not seem to be well. What did you do?”

3/994 The outsider confessed to cheating on a game of chance; but he immediately corrected himself, asserting that he had been deceived by one of the cruel oppressors.

3/995 Little Joseph asked him if his injuries were hurting.

3/996 “I say I deserved this punishment,” he said with unintelligible haughtiness, asking his interlocutor to read the piece of wood that had been nailed to the foul-smelling cage.

3/997 “This man will have no one’s respect until he returns what he pillaged.”

3/998 Now that he knew the cause of the punishment, the one who was born Jesus asked:

3/999 “Have you taken what belonged to another sibling once more?”

3/1000 “No, I played and I won, but the man who lost did not like losing,” stated the thief, who then said the name of his adversary: Zidec.

3/1001 He had barely finished his explanation when the guards, noticing the boy’s presence, prohibited him from staying there, for no one was allowed to talk to a condemned one.

3/1002 Mary’s son left the front of the mobile cell, but he nevertheless went to its opposite side, where he remained unnoticed, even though the wage earners who were watching the prisoner were still mounting guard, though distracted by the women who were getting water from the cistern.

3/1003 The pillager, who was still holding his primitive dice, was completely convinced that they were under a spell. Believing that little Joseph had some sort of power, he asked him to choose a number so that he could cast the objects of chance. The man believed that he would be set free if the result corresponded to the number his interlocutor would say. The latter suggested three. The one who had been found guilty cast them and the addition was indeed the same as the boy had said.

3/1004 “I say that I am free” he concluded, and stated to his interlocutor that he must always be with him.

3/1005 All of a sudden, an old Hebrew man approached the sentinels and asked what the prisoner had done. One of them explained:

3/1006 “He is a player throughout the paths.”

3/1007 “I say to you to release this man” stated the unknown man, which made the subordinate of the Herods laugh, for the stranger did not know whom the prisoner belonged to.

3/1008 “This man is being held by order of Zidec,” the other sentinel said.

3/1009 “Go call the one who commands you,” replied the old man.

3/1010 Zidec, who was camping in a neighboring area, came to see the traveler. The old man asked him without hesitation:

3/1011 “How much do you want for this man?”

3/1012 “Ten camels and twenty sheep,” answered Zidec, also without hesitation, adding that this was the quantity he had been robbed of.

3/1013 The newcomer offered him ten animals, emphasizing that, regardless of his acceptance, the prisoner, because of the punishment that he had imposed on him, would certainly die. The royal counselor did not understand why the man was so eager to buy him. He asked him the reason, and the old man explained:

3/1014 “My caravan was coming from beyond the Jordan River, and, when a sandstorm befell me, I was devoid of water and asked the Lord for help. I promised that, if I found water, I would help the first person that needed it, and this man is the first person in need that I have seen.”

3/1015 “I say that this man is a pillager and a gambler, that he will take your possessions,” warned Zidec, still not understanding the old man’s motivation.

3/1016 The merchant insisted:

3/1017 “I promised I would help the first man who needed help I came across.”

3/1018 The counselor accepted the price, ordered that the prisoner, who was paying attention to the negotiation, be released, and went away, feeling extremely pleased.

3/1019 Now that the counselor was absent, the pillager went towards Mary’s firstborn, who silently remained where he was. Believing that the boy had prayed for him, and only because of this he had been saved, he said:

3/1020 “I do not know if you asked the Lord to forgive my sins. Ten animals is a lot. I am grateful to you.”

3/1021 Turning to the outsider, he added:

3/1022 “I will be your slave for seven harvests.”

3/1023 “I say to you that I do not possess you. The trade I made was to redeem my own sins,” answered the old man, who then invited him to join his caravan, if he truly wished to pay him back with work.

3/1024 The pillager consented and, when bidding farewell to the desired redeemer, heard from him:

3/1025 “I tell you that there is a brother who loves you very much on your path. Do not hit the hand that helps you, do not steal from your brother while he is asleep. I tell you that this son of God is giving you much more than your freedom.”

3/1026 “What are you saying?”

3/1027 “You should keep in mind what I am telling you now for all your lives: ...”

3/1028 And then the one who was born Jesus instructed us:

3/1029 **“... when our bad side shows itself to be stronger than our good side, I tell you that we must watch ourselves, and we will conquer the evil that exists in our minds.”**

3/1030 The inhabitants of Antipatris did not learn what the destination of the merchant’s caravan was when it left their village. The one otherwise named Jeremiah went to his residence, where he narrated to his mother what had happened in details. The latter, not understanding why her firstborn had distanced himself from the rabbi without his permission, received an explanation:

3/1031 “Because they were hitting that man who needed me.”

3/1032 “But what is it that you could you do for him?”

3/1033 “I tell you that I could listen to his complaints. Now I am trying to figure out how I will be able to help that man.”

3/1034 “Why do you not help me?” asked Joaquin’s youngest, who was extremely worried about what would happen to her interlocutor in the future, for she was still more than convinced that she would lose him, a feeling that her son was aware of.

3/1035 “I tell you that I do not want you to suffer because of me.”

3/1036 The restless mother remained silent, and Joseph, who was taking part in the conversation, advised her after the boy left:

3/1037 “You are suffering because of what goes inside you that will happen. You must not forget that little Joseph is just an offspring who is few harvests

old, and as an offspring who is few harvests old he will live, until the Lord says to him what to do. I say that we must not go against the Lord's Laws."

3-6.1

3/1038 Zidec was in Antipatris not only with the intent to hunt the one promised by the prophets of yore, but also to capture men. He would take possession not of wheat or animals, but of healthy men.

3/1039 On November 26, 1 BC, one day after the good-hearted old man's departure, the savage soldiers gathered all the men from the village at the central square, with the exception of young boys. The royal counselor was about to explain why he had given such orders, but the oppressed ones recalcitrantly stomped their feet as a sign of protest. Even though his words were being muffled by the noise, he went on:

3/1040 "What you do, just like what your protectors did, is not to my liking. I know your protectors wanted to expel Pefid-Haman, commanded by king Artaxerxes, who wanted to put an end to those who are Hebrews."

3/1041 He emphatically proceeded:

3/1042 "It is useless to resist. I am in this place to follow orders."

3/1043 He was interrupted by Joseph, the former carpenter of Nazareth, who had proclaimed himself the spokesman of the community:

3/1044 "I see that you know the past of those who are my people."

3/1045 "I know some of the writings of your people, which is enough for me to know what goes inside you."

3/1046 "I say you do not show that you know these writings."

3/1047 The royal counselor wrathfully pointed at the man who had dared defy him and promptly replied:

3/1048 "You are wrong. I know that you know that you will not have any peace until you expel us from your lands. For you, all those commanded by Herod Antipas are filthy beings. I know you would slit my throat, and that is enough for me."

3/1049 He added indifferently:

3/1050 "I am here to confiscate."

3/1051 "Confiscate what, if you have taken everything we have?"

3/1052 Joseph impetuously and boldly added:

3/1053 “Why have you marked on the wood what the men of this place are called? I say we are wasting our time; then you want to collect taxes. How will we pay, if you will not let us work the soil? Or will you want our work?”

3/1054 “That is what I want. From now on, you will be slaves to Herod Antipas.”

3/1055 And the men, thus acting prudently given the circumstances, were made slaves, with the exception of the old and the sick ones. They showed no resistance as they followed Zidec, for they knew that any act of disobedience would entail the murder of their family.

3/1056 They enslaved Jacob’s heir, despite his old age and his injuries, as an example to the others of what a wrong behavior led to. Alphaeus and Simon, who were hiding, were not deprived of their freedom; neither was Pustule, because of his age.

3/1057 Now that her husband was absent, a terribly worried Mary informed her firstborn that he would be in charge of giving thanks for their food both at lunch and supper. Understanding he would also be in charge of other tasks she had not verbally listed, little Joseph became, albeit disastrously, the head of the family. His father had started making a bench for the small Temple, and with a lot of determination he tried to finish it; however, when he lifted it, it collapsed into pieces. Unhappy with his new function, he went to speak to his mother and asked, showing her the pieces of wood on the ground:

3/1058 “It is impossible for me to be the man of this residence. I tell you that I do not know how to work the wood.”

3/1059 His words made Mary smile jovially. She told him:

3/1060 “That is not what I said to you. Since you are the one who came first, you will pray when we have our meals. If anyone asks about the man of this residence, we will say it is you. We are not women who have no head of the family. It is just until Joseph returns.”

SINCE WE DO NOT NEED TO SUFFER, HOW CAN WE FINISH OUR CURRENT STAY IN THE LIFE OF FLESH WITHOUT SUFFERING?

see 3/1068

3/1061 Still in Antipatris, the one who was born Jesus again tried to prepare his mother concerning the visions he had of his own future:

3/1062 “I tell you that I have seen myself on a cross that was on top of a mount.”

3/1063 His interlocutor decidedly assured him that she would not let anything bad happen to him.

3/1064 “I tell you that I may be on a cross if some of those who prepared themselves to come to the life of flesh with me change their paths, and you know you will not be able to change what is to come.”

3/1065 “I know I cannot change what will happen, but if you do not say to a single person the words you say that are teachings and if you become betrothed, I know you will not be on a cross.”

3/1066 “I tell you that I have not come to this abode to help multiply the bodies of flesh, like many of our siblings, but I have come to bring to all the teachings of our Father and to redeem commitments of past livings.”

3/1067 “But if you say to all these words you say are teachings, I know you will be pursued and that you will suffer a lot.”

3/1068 **“I tell you that God has for all of us, His children, a path that is free of suffering: it is just a question of practicing His teachings that we will find peace and relief of our pains. Our Father will not make us stop feeling pain if we practice His teachings, but the ones He sends will help us to find another path to follow. I tell you that we will then have the opportunity to choose which path we want: that of pain, or that which leads to God, which is the practice of His teachings.”**

3/1069 “But will you be able to make everyone know the path that leads to the Lord?”

3/1070 “I tell you that this is what I have come to do in this abode: to show to all the peoples the path that leads to God and to redeem commitments of past livings.”

3/1071 Concluding the conversation, he confessed to her:

3/1072 “I do not want you to suffer because of me.”

3/1073 Mary got lost in her thoughts, but neither asked nor said anything concerning his words.

3/1074 Because of what happened to the patriarch of the Clopases, Alphaeus believed that they should restart their journey without him; however, because of his descendants, Pustule and Simon recommended that he ask other two men to accompany them to help take care of them. But if he really decided to leave, the ones who had joined the caravan emphasized, he would take too long to make all the arrangements and, since they needed to return to their residences, they would not be able to wait. They suggested that he stay in Antipatris with those who were under his responsibility for some other moons, so that the children could get stronger and not take unnecessary risks in the tiring journey.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

3/1075 “You can even lose one of them. I say that the ways of the desert are full of suffering for offspring who are few harvests old,” added the former leper.

3/1076 As for Joseph, the opinions of the three men were unanimous: he would not return.

3/1077 The caravan leader explained his reasoning to the one conceived by Anna. The latter, when she heard that one of her children could die in the journey, opted to extend their stay in Antipatris:

3/1078 “Zidec and the ones he commands have already been here and will not return soon.”

3/1079 Having no goods to trade for provisions, she started working the soil with the other inhabitants, and thus obtained her share of food and milk. It was not rare for her to find herself staring at the horizon, expecting to see her husband. One of the women, whose husband had also been enslaved and was also named Mary, during one of these moments approached her and warned her:

3/1080 “Do not let it go inside you that it is only what you believe in that will happen. I know that nothing will change our paths.”

3/1081 Little Joseph’s mother then asked her if it had been some outsiders, who were talking to Alphaeus, who had mentioned the building of roads, for that was the news they had heard concerning the reason for the capture of the Hebrew men. The one who had the same name, an experienced woman, something that explained why she was so skeptical, replied:

3/1082 “They said they saw it, but it does not go inside me that they saw someone building ways. They say what they heard from others.”

3/1083 Joaquin’s youngest mentioned her hope that her husband would return. Her interlocutor discouraged her:

3/1084 “I say they will not come back. It is just like the time of the rebellion, when the ones commanded by Herod captured men and said they would take them to work the soil, and not a single man came back.”

3/1085 The following morning, an outsider, who seemed to be very old, wearing a very white tunic and turban, introduced himself to Ishmael and asked to see Mary, the wife of Joseph, the carpenter, and her children.

3/1086 “This man came from afar, from Alexandria, in Egypt, to speak to you,” said the rabbi, who immediately went away so that the two could talk.

3/1087 “Let God’s peace be with you.”

3/1088 After the greeting, the newcomer proceeded:

3/1089 “I have come to lead you to where your son will be safe, but I will respect your wish if you do not want my help. I ask you to keep the signs sent by God in mind.”

3/1090 Emanating tranquility, he said:

3/1091 “I will return after the Sun goes and comes back six times to learn what you have decided,” and, saying nothing more, he went away.

3/1092 Escorted by Ishmael, who had been waiting for him some twenty steps away, he left, heading towards Jope.

3/1093 The other Mary, who had listened to the conversation, curiously asked the mother of John, Veronica, and James why the stranger had come to lead her. Full of suspicion, she carried on with her interrogation:

3/1094 “What is it with your offspring? Which one of them is in danger?”

3/1095 “When the Sun rises we are already in danger. It is not only my offspring who are in danger, it is all offspring. For as long as the Herods and the ones they command still do what they want, we are all in danger,” Martha’s aunt and stepmother inspiredly replied .

3/1096 Her interlocutor agreed with her, and added:

3/1097 “It is not only your offspring who are in danger. All the offspring will be slaves to the Herods when they are older.”

3-6.2

3/1098 Along with the ones captured in Antipatris and in other villages, Jacob’s only son was building roads for the Romans; however, he had no idea where he was. They were breaking rocks and digging ravines. During the first days of their journey, they were not allowed to sleep; they were not given any food either, only water, even when they started dying. Quirinus, the major executioner, as the Hebrews used to say, would mention as his group of workers became smaller:

3/1099 “That was one who wanted to run away, and he made it.”

3/1100 The bodies were thrown into ditches and were not covered, for soon other unfortunate ones would be thrown on top of them.

3/1101 “The Lord gives life, the Lord takes life. Receive, Lord, this man in the Lord’s peace,” Joseph would say after each new death.

3/1102 Some of the slaves suggested that they confront the soldiers, inciting their peers to remember that Moses had killed one of the men commanded by

the pharaoh, who had treated, according to what they guaranteed, his parents as slaves; however, Sarah's widower, at long last a prudent man, who was suffering what he had brought onto himself on his own, for he would not need, given his age, to become less than a servant, did not take part in any actions.

3/1103 Blood was pouring from his wounds caused by the fire in Hiatta; he was nevertheless forced to work with the others with redoubled tenacity.

3/1104 At a moment of scarce rest, a man approached him, calling him by his name.

3/1105 "Do you know me?" he surprisedly asked the stranger.

3/1106 "I say you are little Joseph's protector."

3/1107 "How do you know me?"

3/1108 "I am the one little Joseph hid."

3/1109 Remembering what had happened in Antipatris, when, in his understanding, the hidden pillager had made Mary's firstborn lie, Jacob's heir, with intentional rudeness, asked:

3/1110 "What else do you want from little Joseph?"

3/1111 "I am one of those who do not do good, and even though he knew it, little Joseph helped me. Little Joseph is a different offspring. When you are near him, different facts happen," a reply that made Joseph distance himself from him without saying a single word, for he inferred that the pillager wanted to obtain information about the boy.

3/1112 Their struggle would start at sunrise and would only end at sunset. Even though Joseph was considered an old man, and despite being truly sick, he was not spared from anything.

3/1113 One morning, Quirinus, the Roman in charge of the building site, ordered that the old man be brought forth. Telling him that he had been observing him for several days, he emphasized that his fellow men respected him. He then immediately asked him, not before stating that he believed he had a wife and children, who were probably having a difficult time without him:

3/1114 "You would like to return to your residence, is it not true?" These were words to which Joseph acquiesced.

3/1115 The executioner added:

3/1116 "I know the others are speaking of escaping. It is better that what you want goes inside you, because not even a single escape will be successful," and he promptly went away.

3/1117 Joseph did not say a single word, also because he did not understand the oppressor's motives.

3/1118 The following day, he again was summoned before the executioner, who had gathered the ones he suspected had been planning the escape. He rudely demanded that each one say their name. Zaleth said it first. Cainan, from Judah's tribe, was the second, followed by Nathan and Faleth. The usurper asked if the four were from Nazareth, which they confirmed. At last he addressed Sarah's widower, informing him:

3/1119 "I know you are from Nazareth."

3/1120 Then he stated to the five of them:

3/1121 "I know you have been planning an escape. For now, I have you, who say different prayers."

3/1122 Pointing his finger at Jacob's heir, he asserted:

3/1123 "I am certain that among you is the one who speaks for all. If you do not say to me who the head is, you will be considered his accomplice. Are you sure you do not know who the head is, the one who speaks for all? Or do you not want to say who he is?"

3/1124 The members of the quintet said nothing. Quirinus, enraged by the lack of a denouncement, convinced that Joseph knew who was behind the planned escape, stated:

3/1125 "Your silence is useless, because I will find out who is the one who speaks for all."

3/1126 When he was done, he ordered that only Joseph, whom he had judged would inform him who the head of the rebellion was, be imprisoned, and that he not ingest anything for three days.

3/1127 Mary's husband was led to a hole, a kind of cell where the slaves were punished that was three meters long, two-fifty wide, and one and a half deep. As soon as he was placed there, he fixed his attention to the figure of his companion's firstborn. He was certain that, if he denounced Nathan, he would be set free. But since he refused to act as the executioner dictated, he again put what the promised one had come to do in danger. However, he justified it to himself:

3/1128 "I know that Quirinus wants me to denounce one of those who are my people. I say that the Lord would not forgive me and my freedom."

3/1129 His condemner approached the hole and assured him:

3/1130 "You did not act wisely when you did not listen to me. Let us see how long you will have your life. They say that a man no longer has his life after three nights there. How long will a Hebrew man stand it?"

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

3/1131 Joseph tolerated the first day. On the second one, he started hallucinating, and felt his life slipping through his fingers. On the third day, he begged the Lord:

3/1132 “I know it is my own fault that I am suffering, that I should not have confronted Zidec. Now, Mary and all of those who came from her are under the Lord’s protection. I ask the Lord not to allow me to leave this life for not having water to drink.”

3/1133 He concluded, full of hope:

3/1134 “I ask the Lord to give me at least some water. I know the Lord can do it. Let the Lord use one of the men who are here. I say that I trust the Lord.”

3/1135 When he finished his prayer, he piously believed he had been heard. The gambler immediately approached him with some water, and said to him:

3/1136 “It is just a little. I will bring more when I can.”

3/1137 In tears, the imprisoned man thanked the Lord for what he received. His helper asked him to quench his thirsty quickly, otherwise they would be caught. Joseph guaranteed to him that nothing bad would happen, for they were protected by an unconquerable force. Lamenting the circumstances, he told the still addicted man that he would not be conscious for much longer, and he pleaded out loud with the Lord to forgive him, because his children would now be alone. Suddenly, as clearly as the Sun shone, he heard:

3/1138 “You asked for some water, and it was given to you. Are you afraid of losing your living? What about the faith in God that you have just spoken of? You went after suffering, and now you are afraid? Trust God.”

3/1139 Ashamed and scared at once, he asked the pillager if he had said anything. Since the latter replied negatively, he asserted that it had been the Lord, and he no longer complained about his fortune.

3/1140 In the morning of Joseph’s fourth day in the hole, Quirinus, offering no explanations, approached his prisoner with water and food and ordered that the slave be released. He confessed to Jacob’s heir:

3/1141 “Do not say anything to me, and I do not know why I am doing this.”

3/1142 With the one little Joseph had helped, who was free to come and go, Sarah’s widower mentioned the attitude of the Roman, who remained away from them. He affirmed it had been the Lord who had softened the executioner’s feelings. When he was out of the hole, he observed Quirinus go away, escorted by the pillager, and then a valuable gold coin fell from the Roman’s clothes. Joseph took it, for he interpreted it had been a deliberate action on the part of the executioner of so many of his own people. In his understanding, he had not had the courage to give it to him, and had resorted to this trick. At dusk, the gambler told him he was leaving for Jope; restless

about his wife's situation, Joseph asked him to give her the coin he had and tell her that he would be back.

WHAT IS THE MERIT OF LOVING ONLY THOSE WHO LOVE US?

see 3/1149

3/1143 In Antipatris, Mary was still sad due to her husband's absence and the unfavorable outcome that her children were facing; she was still pondering the words the man who had come from Alexandria to help her had said.

3/1144 After another exhausting day of work, one of the women who had been working the soil found her son in embers, as they used to say. The desperate Hebrew woman, already mourning her firstborn's death, asked for help. Worried about her children, Joaquin's youngest gathered them around her, something that other mothers also did, for they feared that the boy's fever was the first symptom of leprosy.

3/1145 The desired savior stated that he would like to help the desperate mother. Even though Mary forbade him, he kept on insisting. She then asked him what he would be able to do to help her.

3/1146 "I can carry water for her to wash those who are few harvests old. I tell you that we cannot leave her alone, especially now that she needs help."

3/1147 "I like you and will not stand to see you sick. I say that no one likes that woman."

3/1148 Other women who had been diligently listening to the conversation heard him teach:

3/1149 **"What merit is there in loving only those who love us? For us to be on the path that leads to God, besides loving those who love us, I tell you to love those who do not love us, to praise those who slander us, to do good to those who hate us."**

3/1150 The spectators immediately started helping the woman in need. One went to prepare a broth; another, a decent mat and tunics for the feverish boy; the one conceived by Anna, holding the satisfied teacher by the hand, headed for the residence of the unfortunate mother.

3/1151 After they were taught how to love their neighbor, not a single woman of Antipatris avoided the more than bereft woman, who indeed did not practice God's teachings. Mary, from this event onwards, never again distinguished her children when they were sick from other women's.

WE MUST INDEED WORRY ABOUT THE BODY OF FLESH WE HAVE, BUT WE MUST NOT FORGET OUR SPIRIT.

see 3/1159

**FOR OUR FUTURE TO BE ONE OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS,
WE MUST SOW GOOD SEEDS EVERY DAY.**

see 3/1163

3-6.3

3/1152 Since it was likely that it would rain, and because only half of the crops had been harvested, Ishmael, due to the recent confiscation, gathered the young ones and assigned them the division of labor with the intent to finish the harvest at last. The strongest would uproot the wheat and would be in charge of obtaining stones that would be used to separate the new one from the previous harvests; others would shake the plants so that the seeds would fall on a mantle weaved with sheep wool; the rest would transport the product from the harvest to the cave. The one born Jesus, who had assigned the heaviest task to himself, was prevented from doing so by the rabbi because the latter judged him to be too small. Despite his insistence, he was not granted permission to work.

3/1153 The families of those who somehow took part in the activities would be entitled to obtain a larger amount at the time of the food's distribution. Since he was aware of this practice, the desired redeemer made himself available to work, because only Mary and Martha worked to support the five children and Alphaeus, who, since he was the caravan leader and had made a stop, had to be nourished by those who had hired him.

3/1154 As the rabbi divided the working children into groups of four and told them where to go – to the crops of Acam, Caleh, or Eleazar – he observed that the eldest of the Clopases was walking away with his head down, feeling sad for having been denied the opportunity to work. Calling him, he asked:

3/1155 “You, who need coins, do you know how to tend sheep?”

3/1156 Smiling broadly, the boy answered affirmatively, and started shepherding them on a daily basis.

3/1157 During his watch, he noticed that each one of them desperately devoured the green grass that it found, so that no other one could come close to it.

3/1158 One day at dusk, participating in the conversation that his mother was having with the women who shared the same residence as they did concerning what they would do the following morning, if they would shear the docile bovids, if they would plow the soil, he stood up and, being attentively listened to, taught:

3/1159 **“I tell you that we are only worrying about the food for the body of flesh, only about taking care of the body of flesh that we now have, but not about looking for the food that comes from our Father, His teachings, not about the lives after the death of the body of flesh that we now have. Is the spirit who was created by God not more important than the body of flesh? I tell you to practice our Father’s teachings, because, if we do not do it, there will be no abundant harvest for any single one of us, His children.”**

3/1160 Given the sepulchral silence, he went on:

3/1161 **“Look at the birds that fly over the lilies of the field. Just like us, they sow the fields, but they do not worry about how much they will have to harvest. I ask you all: how many of us can change the course of a single river with our worries?”**

3/1162 Since they said nothing, he concluded:

3/1163 **“I tell you to practice what our Father, who is God, shows us in His teachings, and let us leave it for the soil and the rain to make the seed we plant germinate. We must do our part and wait for abundant harvests, like the birds that sow and, when the night falls, sleep in tranquility on the trees without worrying about what is yet to come. I tell you that we must sow every day, so that we will have abundant harvests in the lives that are to come after the death of the body of flesh that we now have.”**

3/1164 The women, who had been excessively worried about attaining the cost of their bodies of flesh, understood the boy’s words accurately.

3-6.4

3/1165 In the Romans’ building site, the pillager, who was unable to keep anything of value, found himself again carrying gold, which Joseph had asked him to give to his wife. Shortly before he had been in possession of jewels and some coins, obtained when he betrayed the trust of the man who had freed him in Antipatris, which he gambled away. He had left in the middle of the night with a considerable portion of the merchant’s treasure. Since he believed he would be pursued, he accepted to work for Quirinus, and since he was a Hebrew, he would be able to walk among the slaves without being suspected; as a consequence, he would know what was happening among them, and to the manager he would denounce those who acted against his orders. Because of his theft he decided to be close to the ones commanded by Herod Antipas, for he deemed it unlikely that his deliverer, who had faith in the Lord and feared Him, would look for him in this place of so much suffering and violence.

3/1166 Since the gambler now had gold in his hands, he decided to gamble it, and if fortune favored him, something he was completely sure would happen, he would acquire beasts and set up a caravan. Intending to profit a lot, he came across some soldiers playing. He begged to take part in the game and was accepted. When one of them asked him to say a number, his answer was uncommon. Finding it odd, the soldier asked him:

3/1167 “If there are two stones, why do you say one?”

3/1168 The gambler gave the same answer as Little Joseph’s, intending to sound like a learned man:

3/1169 “If you are one, I am one, and the Lord is one, what is the use of the other numbers?”

3/1170 “To lose or to win,” ironically said the brutal warrior, for the delight of the other spectators.

3/1171 The gambler, changing his mind, said the number seven and cast the stones. The result was indeed the same as he had said; however, since he had not wagered anything, he did not win anything either.

3/1172 Now enthusiastic, remembering what had happened in Antipatris when he played with Zidec and the result was rarely not seven, he gambled what he had received from Jacob’s only son. He won, and repeated his feat in the majority of the following games, always demanding in his thoughts the protection of the boy who had helped him. He gathered a significant amount of the Roman objects of trade that circulated in the tetrarchy and four donkeys. At dawn, he announced that the game that had just started would be his last. When they had all made their wagers, he promised to himself that he would give half of what he got to the boy. He said the number seven. When his inseparable sources of pleasure were cast, the result was seven. He therefore found himself in possession of several irrational beings and abundant financial resources, which would allow him to organize not one but three caravans.

3/1173 Not accepting his fate, his opponent, the last one who was also persisting in the competition, sarcastically asked him what magic spell he had done, challenging him for a final match. The addict did not accept it, saying he wanted to keep what he had won. But his greed had been sparkled: the man who always covered his face when he was being punished with strokes of the whip heard from his competitor:

3/1174 “I wager everything you won with your seven and add four coins and a camel. I choose number two, the eyes of the devil.”

3/1175 Not resisting to such tempting provocation, for, if he won, he would double his possessions, the gambler gave in. What really tempted him was the extra possessions that were now at stake. He promptly foresaw himself as the owner of portentous caravans. Before casting the malevolent

stones, he solicited the assistance of the one who had saved him in Antipatris, concluding:

3/1176 “I am in your hands.”

3/1177 The eyes of the devil, because anyone who said two would certainly be defeated. However, to the misfortune of the gambler, the result was indeed two.

3/1178 Since he had nothing else to wager, the prodigal Hebrew begged the winner to give him at least one of the valuable round objects used as a form of payment; his wish was nevertheless not granted. Since he was being insistent, the soldier said he could have it in case he had something interesting to wager.

3/1179 “I wager the donkey I have,” stated the gambler shamelessly, omitting that the animal in fact belonged to Quirinus.

3/1180 The outcome was the same: he lost. Since the pernicious habit of gambling was ingrained in his character, he wagered his own freedom. The hooded soldier warned him:

3/1181 “You know that, if you lose, I will pierce your ear, and you will become my slave.”

3/1182 “How much is the life of a free man worth?”

3/1183 “Yours? Only this coin,” and he threw in one of the smallest ones.

3/1184 Not long afterwards, at the market place of Lower Cesarea, with a substantial addition to the amount that had been wagered, the pillager was sold to Numidia, Marunus’s counselor, who was acquiring strong and healthy workers for the important Roman man.

3/1185 Since he had become a mobile possession of the executioner, the pillager intimately declared to himself that little Joseph would set him free, and every boy he saw he thought it was him.

3/1186 The new owner of the man corrupted by the stones of the animals was heading for Jope, and they would mandatorily have to stop by Antipatris.

***OUR SPIRIT WILL BE UNBOUND IF WE
PRACTICE OUR FATHER’S TEACHINGS.***

see 3/1227

***WHEN WE FEED THOSE WHO ARE HUNGRY, GIVE
WATER TO THOSE WHO ARE THIRSTY, COVER
THOSE WHO ARE COLD, WE ARE PRATICING GOD’S
TEACHINGS AND WE ARE HELPING OURSELVES FOR
WHEN WE RETURN TO OTHER TEMPLES OF FLESH.***

see 3/1243

3/1187 Standing by the primitive road, the one promised by the prophets observed a caravan approaching. When it passed by him, he followed it with his eyes. The thief who had basically turned himself into a slave was carrying a litter and, now resigned to his condition and not wishing to be recognized, he hid his face; however, the shepherd, pulling him by his tunic, asked him:

3/1188 “Why are you always hiding every time I see you? I tell you that every time we meet ...” but he was interrupted by the one who worked for no pay who, now censoring his interlocutor, told him it had taken him too long to arrive.

3/1189 “Why has it taken me too long?”

3/1190 “I say I waited for you for a long time.”

3/1191 “I did not know I was supposed to meet you.”

3/1192 “For a moment it went inside me that you would come and help me,” confessed the man who had no longer free will.

3/1193 Noticing his interlocutor’s affliction for now finding himself in such an unpleasant situation, the desired redeemer, who was walking by his side, asked him if it had not been him who had said it himself that it was not necessary to despair when one was defeated by chance. The prodigal man was unable to reply, for the one representing the man he had to obey blindly ordered them to stop and remain silent.

3/1194 “Why can you not say anything?” little Joseph naively asked.

3/1195 “A slave can only speak when he is ordered to.”

3/1196 Shortly thereafter, Marunus informed them that they would make a stop, for his wife was about to deliver. When he was still lowering the litter, the gambler heard that, during that night, he would no longer be someone else’s material possession. Aware of his owner’s reputation with regard to the class he belonged to, the man who had recently been turned into a slave stated that it was impossible.

3/1197 “I tell you that you will be free,” repeated the one otherwise named Jesus, who then went away and, not very far, sat on a rock and remained attentive to the herd and to what was going on.

3/1198 At the usual time, he led the animals back to their enclosure, told Mary where he would be, and returned to where the caravan was. When the night fell, his mother came to pick him up; however, the boy told her that it was urgent that he remain there, for a woman would need him.

3/1199 When a cry of pain echoed, which she deemed had come from the woman who would be helped, Joaquin’s youngest looked at her firstborn, who seemed to be praying. She immediately went back to her other children and asked Alphaeus to keep her firstborn company.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

3/1200 When the woman who was giving birth started groaning, Marunus left his tent and energetically warned his chained men that he would not tolerate a single sound, not even that of breathing. After three hours, a strident cry broke the silence. His heir had arrived in this abode. He joyfully ordered to Numidia that he place the men he owned in a row and that they remain silent.

3/1201 After doing what he had been told, the foreman, climbing a short elevation, addressed the subjugated ones:

3/1202 “The grace of the gods is present. On the fourth day of the calends of the third moon, on the twenty-eighth harvest of Augustus’s empire, the young Terentia Fabiola brought to this world a descendant. Senator Quirinus Marunus will call him Marcus Balet. According to the Roman law and tradition, when a descendant arrives, the slaves the Roman Marunus touches will be set free.”^[95]

3/1203 The fortunate father left his luxurious tent to indicate which of the thirty-six slaves would be set free. Before them, he kept his distance, feeling disgust. With a long twig he touched the heads of his chosen ones and said:

3/1204 “Go, you are free. Take your ransom.”

3/1205 His counselor immediately offered the chosen ones a reasonable quantity of the desired gold object that circulated in the tetrarchy. Eight men were set free, one of the most significant enfranchisements on the part of an outsider, a fact that many of the uncountable oppressed remembered.

3/1206 A slave who was on either side of the one who was now presented with the opportunity to choose his own fate was remotely likely to be touched as well. When the legislator approached the gambler, he touched his neighbor with the twig and just passed by him; however, he stopped, as if pondering, took a step back and also touched him. Just like the other released ones, the pillager kneeled down in tears.

3/1207 When the ritual was over, he immediately went to see little Joseph, who, along with Alphaeus, who had not made any noise, was waiting to see the outcome of events. The addict said:

3/1208 “It was like you said: I was set free, and you did not leave from here. What powers do you have?”

3/1209 “I tell you that once again you have your freedom. Take better care of it.”

[95] ... fourth day of the calends of the third moon ...: March 4.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

3/1210 The prodigal man, with the money he had been given in hands, confessed:

3/1211 “Losing my freedom was not all. I say I was with your protector, who gave me a coin to give you, but I lost it in the game of stones, and you gave me back my freedom.”

3/1212 “I tell you that I was not the one who set you free.”

3/1213 As the Hebrew, despite having an ulterior motive, thanked the one born under the fulgurant Star of Bethlehem, many of the released men approached and surrounded them, along with others who were unfortunately still slaves.

3/1214 The ones set free said in unison that it had been the shepherd who had inspired some kindness in the Roman and stated their wish to proceed according to the wish of whom they judged was their real savior. They offered to give him the coins they had received, the very coins that would allow them to restart their living or to trade them for animals that would then belong to them. Their offer, obviously refused, made the pillager’s eyes shine with greed.

3/1215 The one who had been called Jeremiah for a long time was aware of what his brother was thinking:

3/1216 “If among those who are slaves this offspring makes all want to give him their wealth, what could happen when he is with those who have a greater wealth?”

3/1217 The prodigal man, judging that the more he praised and announced the authority he was certain Mary’s firstborn had, the more he would acquire a fortune of his own, expressed himself more profusely:

3/1218 “You said I would be free this very night, and that is what happened. I am thankful to you. You are a powerful offspring.”

3/1219 The enfranchised slaves were now even more eager to make their benefactor happy. The latter, aware that the gambler was debasing his recently regained freedom, reasserted:

3/1220 “I tell you once more that I was not the one who released you.”

3/1221 To achieve success in his enterprise, the intelligent gambler needed the boy to acknowledge that he was the one responsible for their enfranchisement. With the intent to force him to reveal himself, he ascertained:

3/1222 “I know it was you who set me free with the power that comes from the Lord.”

3/1223 “I tell you I do not set a single person free, that the one who sets us free is God, the Father of us all.”

3/1224 “How could the Lord release me if He is not here?”

3/1225 “I tell you that we break free from our ignorance by means of God’s teachings, which are the light for all of those of this abode, with which we can guide ourselves in all the lives we have.”

3/1226 “Words never set me free from prison. The coins I offered were what set me free from prison.”

3/1227 **“I tell you that those who practice God’s teachings, even if they are bound to a body of flesh, will be free, because one cannot imprison the spirit who inhabits the body of flesh of those who practice our Father’s teachings. I tell you that it is only the practice of God’s teachings that sets us free from all types of prison.”**

3/1228 “How will I know which person I must follow to know the Lord?” asked one of the former slaves.

3/1229 “Those who are prophets? You?” he added.

3/1230 “I tell you to come with me as I sow God’s teachings and you will know the path that leads to our Father.”

3/1231 The former slave reframed his question:

3/1232 “Is it you that we must follow to be with the Lord?”

3/1233 **“I do not take a single person to God. I tell you that what leads us to our Father is the practice of His teachings.”**

3/1234 As he answered the question, he was interrupted by a different spectator, who understood nothing of what he was saying:

3/1235 “Should I give the Lord my coins when the Lord’s teachings come? Or should I give my coin to you, who spoke to the Lord on everyone’s behalf and asked Him for my freedom? I say I will give you everything you ask: mantles, water, even the bread that will satiate my hunger. If you ask me, I will give it to the Lord and to you.”

3/1236 “I tell you that God, the Father of us all, does not need bread, water, or lambs. As for me, it was not for the wealth in the life of flesh that I have come to this abode. **I tell you that if we give to eat to those who are hungry, water to those who are thirsty, if we cover those who are cold, we will be on the path that leads to God.**”

3/1237 Among Marunus’s former slaves, the one who would come across the promised one when he started spreading God’s teachings asked:

3/1238 “In the times that are to come after you, how will I know that I am doing what the Lord teaches me, as you are saying?”

3/1239 **“I tell you that if we love everyone we find throughout the**

paths the way it would please us to be loved we will be doing what God shows us in His teachings.”

3/1240 “Will everyone who listens to the teachings you are bringing take it to everyone else as you are saying now?”

3/1241 *“The teachings of God, our Father, for the time being will not be announced by everyone as I say them. Many of our siblings will not believe in what I am bringing to all the peoples, others will deny that they walked by my side, other ones will even exchange God’s teachings for coins, but there will be those who will announce them the way I announce them and will practice them. I tell you that everyone who wants to take a sibling to our Father’s teachings the way I bring them and practices them, when they are in the life of spirit and no longer remember the good they did, they will hear from those they helped: ‘I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I came from another place, and you welcomed me in your residence; I was sick, and you took care of me; I was imprisoned, and you came to see me.’* **I tell you that God, our Father, shows us in His teachings to do good to all of our siblings, His children.”**

3/1242 “When I do good to all those who are my siblings, as you said it, what reward will I have?”

3/1243 **“I tell you that if we do as God shows us in His teachings, we will be sowing the good seed to harvest its fruits in the lives after the body of flesh that we now have. I tell you that if we do good to all of our siblings, we will be doing it to ourselves when we are in future existences and, every time we deny help to one of our siblings, it will be to ourselves that we will be denying help when we are in other bodies of flesh.”**

3/1244 Since the man who was asking these questions found all the tribulations he had been through since his birth unfair, the one otherwise called Jeremiah offered us and them the following direction:

3/1245 “Now that you are learning God’s teachings, practice them even with the guiltiest person you have in mind. In this abode, there are many who claim that they are faultless and who judge the guilty: let the one who does not have a single fault cast the first stone. **I tell you that there is no other path that leads us to God other than the practice of His teachings.”**^[96]

[96] Differently from what was the truth among the Hebrews, the one promised to those of this orb, on a different occasion, said to a man who appreciated inciting discord:

“I tell you that a sin is every wrong we do to any of our siblings.”

The instruction given to the instigator was a reply to the latter’s question:

3/1246 When the conversation was over, the pillager, as he bade farewell to the unknown savior, invited him to follow him. He was secretly positive that:

3/1247 “With the power this offspring has and with the wisdom that I have, I will have many coins.”

3/1248 Answering what his brother was thinking about, the temporary shepherd guaranteed to him that he had not come to accumulate wealth, but to spread God’s teachings. Not understanding his words, the prodigal man informed him that he was going to Jerusalem. He was instructed to settle in the village, where he would be able to work the soil, an environment where he would be less likely to be tempted by his desires; however, the man addicted to gambling muttered:

3/1249 “I need to go after ... ” but he did not have the courage to reveal his motives, wealth and what entailed from it.

3/1250 Strongly willing that the boy came with him, for, if his wish were fulfilled, he would achieve the material goals he wanted, he went on, saying that he wanted to confide something to him, but he did not know how to put it in words.

3/1251 “It depends on what you want to tell me,” explained his interlocutor.

3/1252 The prodigal man said nothing more. Having no reason to remain in Antipatris, he headed for Lower Cesarea, wondering why Mary’s firstborn had always helped him. He thought as he walked:

3/1253 “This offspring does not need to do anything, it is enough for him to be around that wonderful things happen. What a powerful offspring!”

3-7

3/1254 Little Joseph was playing with Matthew when the man from Alexandria returned; he asked Ishmael the same as before. With the two boys by his side when he was in the presence of Joaquin’s youngest, he emphasized that the time he had given her to reflect was up, adding:

“Since there is no sin in me, and there is no sin in those who are my family, why do all those of this place not want to speak to me? When I arrive, everyone leaves, even at the well I am alone.”

After such an answer, the young man looked down and left, now knowing what to do if he wanted his time to become better.

3/1255 “I have come to lead you and your children, but I tell you that I will only lead you if you want me to.”

3/1256 Apprehensive about how they would be located by her husband if they left, she asked for instructions, and she was promptly informed:

3/1257 “Do not worry. I tell you that God will send the help Joseph needs, and he will meet you in Nazareth.”

3/1258 Even though she believed in her interlocutor, Mary asked the one who was born Jesus if the outsider was being sincere.

3/1259 “He is one of those sent by God. I tell you that whoever trusts him will not get lost throughout the paths.”

3/1260 Given such reassuring words, the fearful mother agreed to follow the man in white along with those who came from her womb.

3/1261 “It was good that you asked your son. I tell you that we know one another, and he knows what is on my mind. I will return with help after the Sun goes and comes back three times,” said the visitor, who then left.

3/1262 When he was informed that the ones he was responsible for were going to Nazareth, Alphaeus objected. He stated it would be impossible, for they had neither animals nor men to help with the children, and besides there were two girls who needed protection. How would they be able to walk the ways without being attacked? The one conceived by Anna found herself forced to deliberate with a man. Though aware that the caravan leader would not be pleased, she needed to do it; they were, after all, her children. Since her husband was absent, she was the one who needed to act:

3/1263 “I cannot ask you to come with me, but I need to take my offspring to Nazareth, and I will do it. If you help me, I will be very grateful. It goes inside me that Joseph will be grateful to you. I know that nothing will happen, because the Lord has sent help.”

3/1264 Alphaeus found it odd that the determined woman was so firm and so confident about the Lord’s help. When he arrogantly asked her what kind of help she would have, he learned about the Egyptian benefactor. Deeming his authority to be under attack, he disdained the figure of the man who seemed to be old, assuring her that he would not even reach half of the journey, let alone arrive in Nazareth.

3/1265 “He is many harvests old and if he had to walk, he would not go very far, but it is true that he is stronger than all of those who are Hebrews put together. Where are his camels? His donkeys? His amphorae with water? His bread, milk, or roots? His tunic is white, there is no sand on his body, and he is not tired,” replied Mary, who had accepted that the outsider was a messenger of God.

3/1266 Expressing herself with simplicity, she asked him:

3/1267 “Who is stronger, you or him?”

3/1268 Since he understood her fully, the caravan leader said nothing, he only agreed to go with her to Nazareth. Informing her that he would go talk to Ishmael to see what arrangements he could make so that they could restart their journey, he went away.

3-7.1

3/1269 On the due date, a caravan coming from Jope with twelve members, led by Alcaeus, arrived in Antipatris, and the man from Alexandria was part of it. They were headed for Capermaum.

3/1270 Two of its members were brothers who had come from Hiatta and were heading for Nazareth with the intent to reunite with their families. Nathaniel, after passing by Jope and being informed by the bright spirit that the family of the carpenter Clopas needed help, mentioned to Ishmael about the assistance that had been asked of him. They were very happy to be useful, for the good-hearted man had helped them a lot when he lived in Jacob’s ancient lands. Ishmael, despite having been born first and not seeing what his brother saw, agreed with whatever came from him, for whatever he predicted invariably happened. Invited by the man whom rabbi Elijah had saved from a premature death, they joined his group, leaving Alcaeus’s caravan.

3/1271 The man, imperceptible to many, in charge of guaranteeing that Mary completed the journey, a result of Joseph’s non-compliance with what he had prepared himself to do in the life of flesh, warned her that he would be leaving, for she and her family were in good company in the journey they were about to start. However, he reassured her that, in case they needed him, he would be present. Joaquin’s youngest was intrigued by his assertion. How could that be? In her thoughts she addressed our Father:

3/1272 “The Lord has paths for all. I know that it is just a question of believing in the Lord that all the paths will be shown. I am thankful to the Lord for being on our paths.”

3/1273 With seven beasts which belonged to the new members of the group, they left by order of a discontented Alphaeus, who had not yet accepted that Mary had made a decision on his behalf, on December 26, 1 BC, towards Galilee.

3/1274 Every stop they made, the Egyptian would show up, and would instruct them where to find the precious liquid, which was the best way to follow etc. He guided them even concerning the most insignificant details.

The one conceived by Anna believed he had come from another world, for no one else could see him but her son, but she did not mention it to anyone.

3/1275 Because the real leader of the journey was visible only to mother and son, Alphaeus believed that it was the two of them who were making the suggestions. He did not understand how there was always water where they said there would be, and, which was even more paradoxical to him, that the caravans they met along the way confirmed, as predicted, that they had encountered pillagers who had robbed them, that they had come across Romans and soldiers of the Herods. Belittling the mother and her son, he would ask himself how come they knew about such events:

3/1276 “Mary is a woman, and little Joseph is not enough harvests old to have walked throughout all of these paths.”

3/1277 He paid a lot of attention to Nathaniel and Ishmael in order to find out if they were responsible for all those pieces of information.

3-7.2

3/1278 When the recalcitrant leader was making the arrangements for another stop now that another exhausting day of journey was over, Joseph’s wife stated that it was imperative that they rest in a different location, for there were soldiers coming up from Lower Cesarea. If they stayed, they would be found. Despite the protests of the limping Hebrew, they continued walking. When they finally camped out, Alphaeus, extremely dissatisfied with what was going on, reminded himself that he was the one who was familiar with the ways, not Mary, a woman, who had been guiding him now for a long, according to his understanding, time. He made up his mind to tell her that he would no longer accept her directions, but he did not carry out as he had deliberated only because the outsider who had arrived in Alcaeus’s caravan in Antipatris and had spoken to the woman he was now disaffected with showed up right before his eyes:

3/1279 “You could have warned me when you arrived. You could have taken my life,” he fearfully said to the outsider.

3/1280 Smiling, the man who showed himself as an advantageously old man and whose origin he had stated was Alexandria docilely tried to explain himself:

3/1281 “I tell you that you are a man who in the life of flesh did not know the way ... ” but he was discourteously interrupted.

3/1282 “I have been throughout these paths of stone and sand and I know

where they all lead to, and Mary and little Joseph are teaching me how to lead the caravan. Now you come and say I do not know these ways!”

3/1283 Politely and patiently, the man who had suddenly appeared said:

3/1284 “I tell you that I am the one telling Mary and little Joseph which ways are safer, where you can all sleep peacefully with no dangers whatsoever. As for the way I was telling you about, it is not the ones you know.”

3/1285 “Which way are you speaking of?”

3/1286 “I want to tell you about the way that leads to God.”

3/1287 “I do not want to know about other ways! The ways I know are enough for me to earn some coins. If I learn about other ways, I will certainly get lost, and not a single person will trust me to lead a caravan.”

3/1288 “The way I am telling you about is the way that leads to God, the Father of us all, the One who created this abode and all the other abodes that exist in the universe.”

3/1289 “If this god you are speaking of created this abode, then say to me why I am in this abode and where I will go after my life leaves the body that I now have.”

3/1290 “I tell you that it is God who knows why His children come to this abode and where they will go when they leave the life of flesh.”

3/1291 Still feeling that his authority was being dismissed, and not willing to understand anything whatsoever, the caravan leader impolitely asked:

3/1292 “And what is the connection between what you are saying and what I am doing?”

3/1293 The one who seemed to be an old man calmly said:

3/1294 “I tell you that you can only see the path you are treading, you only see where you set your foot on. I ask you: what is there beyond that rock that is sixty steps away from you?”

3/1295 “I say that I do not know. I am not a deceiver, and if I were, I would not be here.”

3/1296 Wishing to instruct his interlocutor about paths other than the worldly ones he was aware of, the Egyptian went on:

3/1297 “I tell you that there are two children who have been abandoned by a father who feels no love for a child of God. I ask you to take these children of God to Nazareth and deliver them to a woman called Ruth.”

3/1298 He was about to leave; however, since Alphaeus privately believed that the one he was talking to was illusory, the old man added:

3/1299 “I almost forgot to tell you that I am from this abode, I just do not live the life you are living. Let God enter your living more times and do not announce your deeds to a single sibling: your words could lead you to death. I tell you that if you want to keep your living, keep your deeds to yourself.”

3/1300 And he immediately disappeared from his student’s physical sight. The latter, frightened for having spoken to a soul from another world, went towards the place that the old man had pointed to, determining to himself that he would not mention what had happened to anyone. As predicted, there he found two rejects: the first girl was about four; the second, given her size, was no more than two. During the rest of the journey until Nazareth, he was no longer stubborn, nor did he argue with Mary.

3/1301 With Alphaeus’s pride and vanity clouding the old man’s recommendation, he did not assimilate it; in fact, he did not even listen to what the man from Alexandria had warned him about. He bitterly regretted not having practiced it.

3-7.3

3/1302 Nathaniel, who kept himself ahead of the caravan, according to the custom, when returning to where the others were, informed that they had finally reached the destination of their exhausting journey. It was not dawn yet, and from the top of one of the five elevations that encircled Nazareth, which its inhabitants referred to as mounts, they saw the hospitable village. Joaquin’s youngest, after a long absence, mentioned that she could barely recognize it.

3/1303 The recent explorer, feeling that the firmament was shining, as if it were celebrating that the stars could be seen, said out loud:

3/1304 “I say that our path is over. Even the sky is waiting for us,” words with which the boy turned into a guide agreed.

3/1305 As they were coming down the mount, little Joseph offered his opinion that Nazareth was minute. Alphaeus affirmed he had never said it was large.

3/1306 The boy, very happy that the journey was over, asked his mother if there were children among her relatives. She assured him that there were, for those of Nazareth were like one large family:

3/1307 “You came to life in this place, you only did not become harvests older here.”

3/1308 “I tell you that this place will be to my liking,” emphasized the boy who, along with his uncle, started running towards the village.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

3/1309 The shanty that had belonged to the melon grower and Anna became that of Mary's, Martha's, little Joseph's, Matthew's, John's, Veronica's, and James's.

3/1310 The day after the Clopases arrived at the welcoming settlement was one of solemn joy. During a walk, the promised one asked his mother:

3/1311 "Are they dancing because of us?"

3/1312 "They are dancing because it is the ceremony of the first harvest, and also because of our return, because they like us. They are thankful to the Lord for an abundant harvest."^[97]

3/1313 When one of the women taking part in the celebration asked her if she was happy to be back, Mary nodded; but she could not stop thinking about what Zephir had told her, something that persisted in coming to her mind.

3/1314 The desired redeemer, along with Matthew, in order to fulfill his mother's wishes, went to see the rabbi so that he could carry on with his studies, the first writing, as they used to say, for she believed that, since the boys had barely gone to school, they knew nothing. However, both could read and write perfectly, even though they had been taught very few lessons.

3/1315 When Joaquin's youngest purposefully placed herself in front of the residence where she had been born, she started remembering her family. All of a sudden its new inhabitant appeared and asked her what she wanted. Mary embarrassedly told her the truth, and added that she had been thinking about the days of her youth. Invited to enter it, she thanked her and left, for it was beginning to get dark.

3/1316 During the frugal supper, her firstborn said with simplicity:

3/1317 "I have seen Joseph. I tell you that he is free and that he is coming to Nazareth."

3/1318 The confident wife asked for further details, but the reporter could not provide them: he was actually not aware of them. He only said that they should wait for the one who had been made slave in Antipatris, guaranteeing that he would be arriving soon.

3-7.4

3/1319 It was April 17, year 0. Jacob's heir had been talking on many

[97] **Ceremony:** festivity.

occasions to the same visitor, when he was informed by the latter that he would be set free in three days. He skeptically claimed that there was no way to move the Romans' hearts, that he would never succeed in no longer being a slave. Explaining his dissatisfaction with the continuous oppression over the Hebrews, he complained about the usurpers. The stranger stated:

3/1320 "I cannot set everyone free, each man has to do his part. I tell you that I am here so that you can do yours, which is to go to Nazareth."

3/1321 "How can I go to Nazareth if I am a slave? Sometimes it goes inside me that the Lord forgot about me: I am afraid I will not see my protectees again. I feel as if life were leaving me little by little."

3/1322 The man who seemed to be just another one of those who walked about in the area, with the intent to draw his stubborn interlocutor's attention to the acts he had done himself and which were the cause of his predicament, instructed him:

3/1323 "I tell you not to lament the suffering we bring onto ourselves by ourselves. We make mistakes, and we want God to deliver us from the evil we did to ourselves, and we even ask Him why He did not warn us when we are treading paths that are not right, when we are already intelligent enough to know what is right and what is not, especially when we have commitments with our siblings, His children."

3/1324 Aware of what was to come, he guided his student:

3/1325 "I tell you that it was not God who put you here, and He is sending siblings who will set you free. Do you not have eyes to see?"

3/1326 He added:

3/1327 "I will leave this place, and you will no longer see me, but keep in mind what is happening to you, and then you can say to yourself if it is our Father who is guilty, if you really feel that He put you where you are."

3/1328 He immediately left, never to return.

3/1329 Even though Joseph understood the man's words in their entirety, he did not accept they had been addressed to him, because he did not admit that he was the one responsible for his captivity.

3/1330 In the early morning of the following day, Quirinus, the major executioner, who was the brother of senator Quirinus Marunus, the father of Marcus Balet, enfranchised him, even though he had no logical explanation for what he was doing.

3/1331 "You do not need to stay here. Go to your residence," said the executioner to Mary's husband, who did not understand the man's motives either.

3/1332 The carpenter promptly left; but he walked aimlessly, for he did not know how where he was. After about three hours, he sat in the shade of a rock and fell asleep, but not before wondering about what had just happened:

3/1333 “Why was I set free, and no one else? Was that man who came every day one of my own people or a Roman? I say that his tunic was so bright that it even shone in the dark.”

3/1334 After pondering, he deemed it legitimate that the Lord had taken pity on him. He woke up at dusk, and then he saw a merchant who showed him the way to Nazareth: it was enough to walk straight ahead. After the stranger, who also gave him food, departed, he spent the night alone right there where he was. When he woke up, he followed the path that had been directed to him; however, he walked just for a short while, for he came across many of those affected by the ulcers and disabled ones, who asked for help to obtain water.

3/1335 In Nazareth, little Joseph and Matthew were playing when the children who remained off the way started shouting. Asking the name of the man who was arriving in the village, they repeated it to others, who now trumpeted:

3/1336 “Joseph! Joseph! It is Joseph who is arriving.”

3/1337 To his uncle’s incomprehension, the promised one, almost immediately after hearing what the other kids were announcing, stood up and went towards his genitor’s direction.

3/1338 It was April 20, year 0, when Jacob’s heir arrived in Nazareth, as had been predicted by the man wearing white garments.

Chapter 3

3-1 The pursuit restarts:

- Joseph is seriously injured;

3-1.1 Alphaeus;

3-1.2 As *little Joseph*, in the caravan towards Egypt;

3-1.3 The Hebrew commanded by those who subjugated his people returns to Hiatta;

3-1.4 A new message to Elijah;

3-1.5 Mary heading towards the unknown;

3-1.6 Under Isaiah’s protection;

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3-2 Isaiah, the prophet of Rafah;

3-3 The events that preceded the reunion of Joseph and Mary:

Matthew, the melon grower, arrives in Hiatta;

Joseph with Sarah's twins;

3-3.1 Joseph leaves Hiatta, and his firstborn treads a different path;

3-3.2 Simon and Pustule;

3-3.3 Zilah;

3-3.4 *His* advisors;

3-3.5 The walk according to Mary;

3-3.6 Alphaeus's discovery;

3-3.7 The group of which Mary was part is arrested and mysteriously released;

3-3.8 The ones who were looking for *him* track down Alphaeus;

3-3.9 *Curing* a leprous woman;

3-4 At Adah's, Mary and Joseph reunite:

3-4.1 The sadness and passing of Old Matthew;

3-5 Joseph and his family start walking again:

- The passage about the lost sheep;

3-5.1 *His* kidnapping;

3-5.2 The death of the commanded one who had hunted *him* for many harvests;

3-6 Making a stop in Antipatris:

- *Helping* a gambler;

3-6.1 Joseph is turned into slave, and the presence of the man from Alexandria;

3-6.2 Joseph at the building site of roads for the Romans;

3-6.3 *Shepherding*;

3-6.4 *Persisting* in helping the inconsequential gambler;

3-7 The last stage of the journey:

3-7.1 Nathaniel;

3-7.2 The advice to Alphaeus;

3-7.3 The travelers, without Joseph, finally in Nazareth;

3-7.4 The enfranchisement of the slave Joseph.