

Immanuel

By, Dr. Bob Leib

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This book is dedicated to my
chatty fourth son, sixth child,
Nathanael,
on his twelfth birthday

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This story is set a few miles east of the city of Beth Shemesh (House of the Sun), approximately 12 miles south west of Jerusalem, The Holy City of God. It begins, four Hundred years after the prophet Malachi said, “Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.” (Malachi 4:4)

Chapter One

Zophar

On a cold Spring evening freshly blanketed with the last late snow, an old rickety wagon driven by two milk kine across the gentle slopping hill country of Judah, had just arrived at a little farm house buried deep in the woods of Beth Shemesh. It began its journey, the night before, from Aijalon.

Wiping the sleep from his eyes, little Zophar couldn't figure out why everyone was rushing around him. "Where's Momma?" he called out.

There was no answer.

Stretching and yawning in that cold wagon littered with hay, Zophar reached for his old friend and companion, Whitey - a stuffed animal he's owned ever since he could remember. Somehow Whitey, who looked more like a goat, than a sheep - and now, years later, like a bundle of rags - was mysteriously missing.

Still shaking the sleep from off his face, Zophar was unaware of why he was waking up at grandma's house, or so he thought, by the smell of the animals they kept, a smell he hadn't experienced for at least half his lifetime. In fact, just last week he added it up, "I'm nine *and a half*," he thought, "...only three and a half more years 'til my bar mitzvah!"

As they were ushering him in from the cold, Zophar again calls out, "Momma ...Where's Momma?"

The impact of this quick move, from the city to the country, was something Zophar wouldn't understand for years to come. Sadly, he would learn the reason for the move in the next few moments.

"Honey, sit down here," Milcah said, "Sit down next to Gramma. I'm so glad to see you, Zo. You grew up so

much...a big man, like your Father.” Now directing her attention to all in the room, she adds, “Look how *big* he got!”

“I don’t remember Daddy. He’s with Jehovah, ‘member Gramma.”

As Milcah looks at the ground to find an answer for Zophar, he continued asking, “Gramma, where’s Momma. I miss ‘er so much, where is she?”

Silently pleading with the Lord for an answer, Milcah says, “Honey, the loneliness you feel in your heart for your Momma is the same loneliness your Daddy has been feeling for a long time ...*from Sheol*. A few nights ago, your Daddy asked her to come and join him there. Now they’re both together ...happy ...and, at peace.”

Profusely crying, Zophar says, “Yeah, but now I miss her, too. Momma, I miss you,” he calls out, “...come back Momma, visit *me*...”

“Honey, one day you *too* will see Momma again. You’ll join them *both*. But today, you’ll live here with me and the Rabbi. You remember him don’t you? He still talks about you all the time. I don’t know if anyone ever told you,” she continued “...when you were born, he’s the one that named you. You know what your name means ...don’t you...? Some say, Zophar means, chatterer.... And, from what I’ve seen of you, there’s no doubt in my mind, you’ve lived up to that name. Anyway, the Rabbi is away for a few days, but, I know, when he returns, he’ll be glad to see you again ...just like me.”

Wiping his tears, as he begins to accept his fate, Zophar puts his arms around Milcah, and sweetly says, “Gramma, I love you.”

Milcah answers, “Honey, I love you. *I love you*.”

Inexplicably, in those few moments, the baton of motherhood was passed onto Milcah, forever fusing these two together as surrogate mother, and as surrogate son.

Immanuel

The next morning Zophar, who was woken early by the roosters, attempted to venture out to the stable; to see if he could catch any of them still crowing. "It's sooo cold," he thought; making his second attempt to go out. This time he grabbed the Rabbi's old tattered tallis that Milcah covered him with the night before, as the fire, in the fireplace, was cooling. "I'll just put the Rabbi's tallis over my head", he thought. "...That'll warm me up!"

And just as silly as young boys can be, covering his head with that warm, reassuring cloth, he skipped his way to the stable, ever listening for the sounds that drew him outside to begin with. When he arrived, he was so enamored at all the animals he saw; he almost forgot his mission. "Hey rooster! ...Where are you?! ...Make some noise, so I can find you."

The only sounds he heard were coming from a few annoyed cows that were, like him, awakened early by the rooster. "I missed it!" he thought. "All that work for nothin'."

Discouraged, and determined to make his way back to the house; Zophar observed a big pile of snow that had lingered on the north side of the fence, a week before he arrived. His boyish nature surfaced again, and, without a second thought, he grabbed a handful of snow from that muddy pile, to retest the strength of his throwing arm. As he reached down, he thought, "This isn't snow...this feels like..." Suddenly, and without warning, he felt movement by his feet and legs. It startled him so much; he slipped into the snow. As he sat up, he looked straight ahead, seeing a snow covered figure, with two big black dots, staring right back at him. Before he could determine what was

happening, this figure jumped up and started shaking the snow off his body. Zophar needed no further explanation. It was a little lamb, “a baby lamb,” he thought. In the same moment it took his mind to process what just happened, he came up with a name for his new found friend. “You’re so perfect, and so white,” he reasoned out loud, “I’m gonna call you Sheshai - clothed in white....” Missing his stuffed animal, he continued, “I’ll just call you, ‘Whitey!’” he blurted out. Then he remembered where he got that name to begin with. He remembered someone, years before, quoting the Prophet Isaiah, saying, “...Though yours sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “What a perfect name,” he thought, “he’s got *white wool*, and I found ‘im in the *snow!*”

Watching him shiver, Zophar calmly asks, “How you doing fella...are ya cold?” As if to answer him, Whitey bleats and snuggles up to his side, under the Rabbi’s tallis that’s perched on his head.

For the next hour or so, Zophar and Whitey sit near that pile of snow, loving each other, and showing each other their mutual affection. Suddenly they hear, “Zophar. Zophar - where are you?”

“Gramma’s calling,” Zophar says. “I better get going. Don’t worry, I’ll be back soon. I love you! ...I’ll be back soon. You can count on me.”

Now, safely inside the Rabbi’s home, Milcah says, “Zophar, where ya been?”

“Gramma, I went out to find the rooster. But I never *did* find him.”

Milcah flies back, “You need to be real careful when you go out to the stable. ...You never know what tools are laying ‘round.”

“I was real careful Gramma - I don’t want to get hurt, either.” Then Zophar thinks to ask, “Hey Gramma, I

found a little baby sheep in the stable, but I never did see his mother.”

“Honey, a few days before you came, the little lamb’s momma died. We’ve been trying to feed it with goat’s milk, but had very little success. I think, if he doesn’t eat soon, he *too* might die.”

Zophar’s heart sank. “Gramma, what can I do?”

“Pray, baby, pray! Ask Jehovah to keep Immanuel alive. ...Maybe that old goat will let him suckle just long enough to make it to spring.”

“Immanuel? ...Who’s Immanuel?” Zophar asked.

“Immanuel ...the lamb in the stable, right? ...That’s the animal we’re talking about here, aren’t we? ...That’s his name, you know ...or that’s what the Rabbi named him, anyway, the day he was born. If I remember right, the Rabbi was reading through some precious promises in Scripture ...of the coming Messiah. I have it memorized. Let me see if I can quote it to you.... Hmm.... ...Oh yeah, now I remember... ‘Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name *Immanuel*.’ Do you know what that name means Zophar?”

Zophar shakes his head no.

Milcah finishes, “It means, ‘God is with us.’ When the Messiah comes, He will be *with us*. And, when we see Him, we will recognize who He is!”

“Gramma, you know so much about Jehovah ...I want to know more, too.”

“Honey, when the Rabbi comes home he will teach you a lot of things about Jehovah.”

Desiring to see the baby lamb again, Zophar’s boyish nature - and, more exactly, his fallen nature - got the best of him. So, he made up a story - a lie, to go back out to the stable. But, what Zophar didn’t know, was, that Milcah, if asked, would have gladly given him permission to see Immanuel.

“I’ll be back, soon ...Gramma. I love you.”

Zophar raced back to the stable, only to find his new little friend weak, and barely able to stand. Crying out to Jehovah, he prayed, “Lord help me. ...Please, show me how to help Whitey.”

Moments later, Zophar heard a shrilled bleating. It was the family goat - a doe, whose kids were just weaned. “This mus’ be the goat Gramma was talkin’ ‘bout,” Zophar thought. And, without a second thought, like an experienced rancher, Zophar went into action. He grabbed an old rope, lassoed the goat, and walked it over to Whitey. After tying the rope to the fence, he proceeded to round the goat up to Whitey. Almost immediately, Whitey began to suckle. The rest, as they say, is history. Just like Gramma had adopted him, the day before; this goat became the surrogate for this baby lamb. Ecstatic, by what he had just experienced, Zophar fell on his knees, in the snow, to pray. “Thank You Lord for sparing Whitey. I love him ...Lord. Help him to live a long, *long* life. And Lord, bless Gramma and this old momma goat, who adopted me, and, that adopted Whitey!”

The Rabbi

When the last ray of sunlight hid itself for the evening, Zophar thought to return home. Just inside the house, he saw an old wooden tub filled with steamy water. “Wouldn’t you know it,” he thought, “Gramma has a bath waitin’ for someone... and I bet, it’s just waitin’ for me.”

“Is that you Rabbi?” Milcah said.

“It’s only me Gramma. It’s only me.” Even though he figured out already that the bath he was staring at was for him, he suspiciously asks anyway, “Hey Gramma, what’s the water in the tub doing by the fireplace?”

Waiting to hear what he thinks is the inevitable, Milcah replies, “Oh that’s the Rabbi’s bath. It’s the fifth day of the week isn’t it? He’s got to get ready for Shabbot.”

Stunned and relieved, all at the same time, that Milcah’s soaking spring of suds wasn’t prepared for him - “After all,” he thought, “it’s only been two weeks since my last bath,” he repeats back to her what she said to him. “Oh good, that’s the Rabbi’s bath...the Rabbi’s bath. ...Ready for Shabbot ...right Gramma?” Flicking at the water, he continued, “So when’s the Rabbi coming home?”

“Soon,” she said. “You get ready, too. Take a cloth, and use that bath water to wash your face and hands, so maybe when the Rabbi comes, he’ll be able to recognize you behind all that dirt and mud. There’s some kali on the middle shelf. Use it to get clean.”

Painstakingly, lifting the cloth that was neatly sitting over the side of the tub, Zophar tries to work up the conviction necessary to obey the task before him. “Oh boy...I’m clean enough,” he thinks to himself. As he cautiously begins to baptize the cloth in water, he calls out, “Do I gotta use this kali, too? That’s *women’s* stuff, ya know.” With no answer from Milcah, Zophar, witnessing his two hands betray him, right before his eyes, continued his task. Suddenly, he hears a sound at the front door. Relieved that he is granted a stay of execution; he drops the mixture of poisonous pleasantries into the water, and runs to see who’s at the door. Before he can get there, it swings open wide. “Who’s this?” he hears, in a commanding voice.

Before he has a chance to answer; Milcah calls from across the room, “That’s Abigail’s boy - your grandson! You remember Zophar, don’t you? ...Look at him, he’s all grown up.” Then Milcah said to Zophar, “Honey, give your Grampa a *big* huaaa....” Before she could finish her sentence, Milcah realized that Zophar hadn’t

finished the task of cleaning himself. Amazingly, she reached out before he touched the Rabbi, grabbing both Zophar and the unused soapy washcloth left floating in the water, and, all at once, made a clean work of it all. “There, that’s better,” she said.

“Not for me,” Zophar thought.

“Now”, finishing her sentence, Milcah concluded, “go *hug* your Grampa.”

As if Heaven and Earth had met together for the very first time, these two virtual strangers (remember; it’s been years since they’ve seen each other), gave one another a respectful and endearing hug.

“That was nice,” the Rabbi said. “It’s so good to see you again. And, Milcah’s right. ...You’ve gotten sooo big.”

“I told you,” Milcah interrupts.

“Where’s Abigail?” said the Rabbi. “Where’s your Momma?”

Zophar began to sob.

“See what you’ve done!” said Milcah.

“Done? What did I do?” said the Rabbi.

Focusing her full attention on Zophar, she concluded, “I’ll tell you later ...Later.

Shabbat

That evening, the Sabbath arrived. And, everyone, dressed in their best clothes, was sitting around the table. All eyes were on the Rabbi who began to pray, “Baruch atta Adoni....” The other nine men, who formed the quorum, joined in.

Since Zophar wasn’t raised to be as religious as the Rabbi, he wasn’t able to recite the prayers he later learned were part of the service dedicated to his deceased mother. Those prayers would be offered up three times a day, for the next four weeks.

After services were over, and the last “good yontov” was said, Zophar made it a point to get some questions answered. “Rabbi, do you have services here every week?”

“Ah yes,” the Rabbi responded, “Ve have services here every Shabbot!” Thinking Zophar had more to get off his chest, The Rabbi continued, “Vhat are your other concerns?”

“Do we ever go to Temple?”

“I just returned from there ...for Passover. Since you are now a part of this family, you vill go vith me ...next time, at Pentecost. And, ve vill go again, at the end of the year ...at the feast of Tabernacles.”

With the Rabbi answering his questions about spiritual things, Zophar couldn't help himself from asking him a question about his Mother. “Rabbi, with all the prayers we are praying to Jehovah about Momma ...will I see her again?”

At first, the Rabbi took his time to respond, but, because of the seriousness of the question, quickly comes up with an answer. “Our God is a *good* God,” he said. “He vill let us see our loved ones again. Ve vill see them again, one day ...in the great Resurrection.” Thinking that Zophar still has another unanswered question about Abigail, the Rabbi continues, “It looks like you have another question. ...Don't worry. ...Say on!”

With his best speaking voice, Zophar blurts out, “Did the Messiah come yet?”

Almost shocked at the change of venue, the Rabbi raises his bushy eyebrows, and just as quickly lowers them, answering, “Soon, my son...He vill come *soon!*”

Chapter Two

The Trip

As time went on, Whitey got better, the snow melted, and Zophar figured out that he only had about three years until his Bar Mitzvah.

“Gramma, can you tell me again, in what month was I born?”

“Honey, as far as I can recollect, a few months back you were ten,” she answered.

“That’s great!” he said. I can’t wait till I’m all growd up!”

Knowing the bond that has developed over the last few months between Zophar and Immanuel, Milcah knows if she provides him with the next sterling piece of information, she will become a queen in his eyes. “Honey, you don’t know this, but Immanuel was born right around your *birthday*.”

“Was it the same day?” he quickly asks.

“Well, I don’t remember your day, exactly ...but, I do remember, it was around the beginning of springtime - like yours is.”

“I can’t believe it! Me and Whitey...I mean, Immanuel ...with the *same* birthday. Wow! Thanks for telling me Gramma.”

After excusing himself to Milcah, Zophar rushes down to the weather-beaten barn, throwing his body, with open arms, at Whitey. “Hey fella ...you ain’t gonna believe this! You and I have the same birthdays!!! Ain’t that exciting?!” Then being silly for a moment, he jokingly says, “I wonder if they got bar mitzvahs for thirteen year old lambs? What do you think, Whitey?” Thinking a little harder now, and more seriously, he concludes, “When your birthday comes,

you'll be one. But, I'll be ten plus one - a whole lot older than you, fella."

As the new found excitement of that moment was wearing away, he remembered what the Rabbi said. "Whitey, I gotta go. I almost forgot. The Rabbi, and me hafta get ready for the trip." Zophar again reaches out to Whitey to hug him good bye, and, as he begins to pray, tears begin to flow. "Lord, thank you for giving Whitey and me the same birthday...." Now, remembering that Jehovah has healed his precious friend, and remembering what the Rabbi said about God being a *good* God, he continued, "...And Lord, I thank Thee for Thy goodness ...to me and ta Whitey, and especially ta him!" It was time to get back home, and Zophar knew it. With one last hug, tugging Whitey's wool with two pinched fingers, Zophar makes haste over the fence, without looking behind him.

"Gramma, I'm back," he says. "Did the Rabbi leave without me?"

Milcah answers, "No honey, but you better hurry. I packed a few of your clothes, and ...look in here. I put the Rabbi's old tallis in this bag, so you won't get cold at night. Hurry, I think he already started up the road."

With only time for a quick embrace, Zophar starts running to catch up to the Rabbi, who's so far up the road, is almost out of sight.

As Zophar draws near to the Rabbi and the ass that's carrying the supplies, the Rabbi smiles and says, "I thought you wouldn't make the trip. You vere so interested in your little friend; I vas going to leave you behind. But, I'm thankful to Jehovah you're going vith me up to Jerusalem."

A Little Chatter, Up the Road

The Rabbi's long trip seemed to go much faster this time, since, as far as he could recollect, this was the first time he had a companion - an inquisitive chatty companion - traveling along side.

"Are we almost there yet, Rabbi?" Zophar asked.

"Soon, very soon", he flied back.

"Tell me again," interrogated Zophar, "why are we going up to Jerusalem?"

"I told you earlier, Zophar," now explaining more fully, "Moses, in the Law, said ve should go to Jerusalem three times in a year. Do you remember vhat I quoted?"

"Deuteronomy, right Rabbi?" Zophar answers.

"Right!" the Rabbi affirms. "Ve are to go up to Jerusalem in the Feast of Unleavened Bread - Pesach, the Feast of Veeks - Shavuot, and in the Feast of Tabernacles - Sukkoth. Remember now? Tomorrow is the Feast of Veeks, Pentecost...fifty days after the Feast of First Fruits begins."

Exasperated by all the Rabbi's information, Zophar blurts out, "There is so much to learn, Rabbi."

The Rabbi takes his cue, by consoling Zophar with the last sentence spoken before they reach Jerusalem's gates, "You vill learn. It takes time. You vill learn."

Returning Home

Disappointed to the point of lamenting, Zophar complains to the Rabbi, "You didn't tell me we would only stay here *one* day! ...I thought we were gonna see it *all*."

The Rabbi answers wisely. "You didn't ask. That's why we need to know the Torah. You forgot your lesson."

"What lesson," Zophar inquires.

"See I told you. You forgot already. On the way here, I taught you that the next day - yesterday - would be the Feast of Weeks, Pentecost...fifty days after the Feast of First Fruits begins. If you knew that, you would have understood that the feast would only be one day."

Still lamenting, Zophar answers, "I remember now, but it's too late."

Knowing that Zophar's spirit might break, by his forthcoming remark to his grandson's harsh lesson, the Rabbi stops in his tracks, turns to Zophar, holds him by the shoulders, and begins to pray. "Thank you Lord for your mercy, and my traveling companion ...my Grandson. May Milcah be safe, and have some good warm soup waiting for us when we get home. Amen."

Half smiling about the Rabbi's soup comment, and feeling strengthened by his prayer, Zophar continued, "...And, how 'bout all that singin' and shoutin' to Jehovah. I bet there were a thousand 'Hallelujahs' ...and ten thousand 'Amen's'. What do you think Rabbi?"

Under his breath, the Rabbi answers Zophar's question, by praying out loud, "Hallelujah ...Amen!"

Chapter Three

A Second Hard Lesson

Hearing them coming home in the distance, Milcah flies open the front door, and briskly runs toward Zophar and the Rabbi, unaware she is still holding a soup ladle. “Welcome home, welcome home,” she excitedly shouts.

Zophar sees the ladle in Milcah’s hand, and remembers the Rabbi’s prayer. Before he even thinks about greeting his Grandmother, he blurts out, in amazement, “Are we eating soup, Gramma? ...are we eating soup?”

Surprised by the snappy inquisition, she answers, “How’d you know?”

Zophar looks at the Rabbi, and the Rabbi looks back with a big smile, and they both reach out toward Milcah to give her a long, glad to be home, hug. Still hugging Milcah, Zophar remembers the other reason he was glad to be home, let go, and headed for the barn.

No one had to tell Milcah and the Rabbi where Zophar was going. They headed to the house, while he, almost running, made his way to the barn.

“Whitey ...Whitey”, Zophar called out.

And, as if he knew his own name, Whitey came running to him. It seemed to Zophar that Whitey missed him as much as he missed Whitey.

“Hey fella, how ya been?” Zophar asked. Now, trying to sound important, he continued, “The Rabbi and I went together on a special trip. We went to the Promised Land, to worship Jehovah.”

Whitey bleated to all his words, making Zophar happy, pretending he was answering him back.

“And the Rabbi knew that Gramma was gonna serve soup ...too!” Zophar informed Whitey.

After a long time of loving his treasured friend, Zophar thought it best to get back home before Milcah called him. As he began walking toward the house, Zophar got louder and louder, as he was saying good night to Whitey. “I gotta eat some of Gramma’s soup, you know. ...But I’ll see you tomorrow. ...I love you.”

Making it home in record time and throwing the front door open, Zophar, unlike before, was ready for the tub of warm water that was waiting for him. “I knew it!” he said. But, this time, without anyone asking, he slipped off his traveling clothes, and climbed slowing into the tub of suds, he formerly distained and feared.

He was surprised that no one, from the back room, came out to check on him. “I guess I’m gettin’ older,” he thought, with aplomb.

After a few good minutes of bathing, when he thought he was “clean enough” - enough for the likes of him, anyway - he got out, and got redressed with clothes that were neatly folded on the Rabbi’s table, next to the tub. By chance, under some parchments on the table, he saw something shiny that caught his eye. “No ones around,” he thought, peaking again under the parchments he later realized were scripture portions. Now, under conviction for meddling where he didn’t belong, Zophar hurried to unveil what those scriptures covered. “Wow!” he thought, “I never saw so many coins in my life. This must be all the money in Jerusalem ...and then some!”

After gazing a bit at them, he reasoned, “There is so much here ...the Rabbi wouldn’t miss just a few coins. I’m his Grandson,” he continued. “He’d want me to have some, too. Wouldn’t ‘e?” And, just as quickly as those thoughts came to his mind, his hands wilyly snatched up four coins, slipping them into a little pocket Milcah had recently sowed for him on his tunic.

Hearing the Rabbi and Milcah emerging from the back room, he immediately recovered the coins with the scripture portions, calling out, "All done," to make them think he had just gotten out of the tub.

"Are you dressed, Zo?" Milcah called out.

"Dressed?" he replied, "Oh yeah, I'm all done."

Knowing her little grandson must be famished by now, and making her way to the kitchen, Milcah calls out, "Zo, come sit here, while I ladle you out some soup."

Zophar walks toward the table, all the while, watching the Rabbi putting the coins inside a pouch about the size of his fist. Zophar thinks that he should cover his tracks by calling to the Rabbi from across the room, "What you doing, Grampa?"

The Rabbi answered, "That's the first time you called me 'Grampa.' Is there something wrong?"

"Noooo ...no *Rabbi*," Zophar replies, "I just wanted to know what you were doing."

The Rabbi answers him by saying, "Dis is the money I received for bringing sacrifices to the temple ...to offer up to Jehovah."

Ridden full of guilt, Zophar now realizes why the Rabbi met with the High Priest at Jerusalem. Holding his bowl mid air, he carefully watched the Rabbi slide each and every coin into the bag, until the last coin made it in. He was hoping the Rabbi wouldn't count them, and was glad when it was tied. Suddenly, Zophar remembered that he owed the Rabbi a response to his last statement. To deflect any concern he might have for suspecting any missing coins, Zophar answered nonchalantly, "That's nice, Rabbi. ...That's nice."

Milcah blurts out to Zophar, "Eat your soup, before it gets cold. Tomorrow is the Sabbath, and we need to rest, in order to be ready, to tell everyone what great things the Lord hath done for us."

“The soup is good Gramma,” Zophar says to Milcah, rushing to get done, so he can confide in Whitey about his dilemma, before bedtime is called.

Finding himself in the barn, Zophar says to Whitey, “First I lied to Gramma, and now I stole money from the Rabbi ...money that came from Jehovah.” Looking down on the ground, he continues, “My heart hurts Whitey, and I don’t know what to do. I never meant to hurt ‘em ...and ...here I am ...full of sin. That’s what the Rabbi calls it, anyway. He said if we break the Law of Moses in one point, we have broken it all. How can I get forgiveness, especially since I stole sacrificial money?”

All of a sudden Whitey looks up to the sky.

Zophar responds by saying, “Your right, Whitey. Jehovah will help me learn how to get forgiveness. I feel so bad in my heart, I... I...”

Just then Milcah calls out from the farmhouse doorway, “Zophar ...Zophar, it’s time for bed.”

Deeply under conviction for the coins he has slipped into his pocket, Zophar begins, one by one, to pull them out, attempting, the best he could, given the brevity of time, to hide them under Whitey’s water trough. “I wish I never took ‘em,” he blurted out. “I hate this....”

Rising up from the ground, and recomposing himself, so Milcah doesn’t suspect anything, he says, “Good night my friend. Remember to pray for me.”

And, as if to say, “I will,” Whitey bleated.

Chapter Four

Thou Shalt Not...

With Shabbat in full throttle, the Rabbi felt impressed to help the newest member of his congregation - his Grandson, to understand more about the Law of Moses. With a stern and convicting voice, taking aim squarely at his new student, the Rabbi begins to enumerate the commandments. After the first five were quoted, he noticed that Zophar was beginning to lose interest. Trying again to help his Grandson, the Rabbi's voice got louder and louder, with the passing of each commandment. "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. Next," the Rabbi continued, "Thou shalt not steal." By the time the Rabbi got to this commandment, Zophar was under such deep conviction of sin he began to look away from him, onto the floor. Thinking Zophar was just bored from his studies, like any good teacher, the Rabbi called out, even more intensely, "Now Zophar, can you quote the commandment I just mentioned?"

Still looking away from the Rabbi, and trying not to be disrespectful, all at the same time, Zophar attempted to answer him, "Thou shalt not..."

Trying to help him continue the answer, the Rabbi demanded, "Thou shalt not ...WHAT?"

With all the velocity that a ten year old boy could muster, Zophar got up from his seat and ran out the door yelling "I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

With everyone startled by the chaos, Milcah was the first to follow her Grandson out the door. "What is it, what is it? Zo ...what is it?" calling as she followed. She knew exactly where he was headed.

With no way now to finish the interrupted service, everyone filed out the door to see what was happening.

As the crowd of about fifteen people now stood near the weather worn barn door, Milcah and the Rabbi walked inside to see how they might console their only Grandson.

This time the Rabbi spoke first. "Zophar, you know ve love you. ...Vhat happened? ...Vhat made you run out of the synagogue?"

"I sinned." Now addressing the Rabbi, "I sinned, Grampa, I sinned. ...And, I sinned against you, and I sinned against Jehovah. I'm sorry, Grampa. I'm so sorry. Can you ever forgive me?"

Unsure of what the sin was, and thinking in his heart, "What could a ten year old boy do?" the Rabbi asked him, "My son, vhat did you do?"

Without saying a word, Zophar shoos Whitey away from the water trough, and reaches down for the coins.

Startled at the partially muddied coins being shown him, the Rabbi said, "Vere did you get these?"

Now, crying even more, Zophar answers, "From you. I took them from you."

The Rabbi remembered the coins that were scattered, the day before, on the table, and, asked Zophar, "You took the coins I got...from selling sacrifices ...for the Temple?"

Looking at the ground, again sobbing, he whimpers, "Yes, Rabbi."

Because of his Grandson's broken spirit and contrite heart, he quickly forgives him. And, as any good teacher would do, given this scenario, he proceeds to teach this lad a brand new lesson, right out of the Torah. "Let's see here," he begins. "If a man stole an ox, he vas to restore it five times. And, if he stole a sheep, he vas to restore it four times. I guess a coin is closer in size to a sheep, than to an ox ...wouldn't you say, Zophar?"

What else could Zophar answer his Grandfather, but, “Uh huh.”

“Then you owe me four days of cleaning out the barn, wouldn’t you say?” concluded the Rabbi. “But, wait.... Veren’t there four coins that vere taken, Zophar?”

Again, Zophar answered, “Uh huh.”

“Vell, then ...you must owe me ...four TIMES four days ...to clean out the barn. ...Right?!”

Zophar now understood that there was a penalty connected with his sin. And, even if there wasn’t a penalty, he was so sorry for what he had done, and all the sorrow it brought, he was only too glad to pay the Rabbi for what he had now owed him.

The Next Morning

After an almost sleepless night, the Rabbi reflected on all that occurred the day before. As he was collecting his thoughts, he concluded that, with all the information he gave Zophar about his sin, and the penalty for sin, he missed telling him the reason there were sacrificial offerings, to begin with. Deliberating again, he thought, “Let the boy spend the next sixteen days to see how Jehovah hates sin, and then I vill tell him about sacrifices. Then ...he vill see and understand.” But, what the Rabbi didn’t know, was, he was not the only one that did some reasoning that night. Zophar did some reasoning, too. And, his sorrow was turned into joy, once he concluded that as long as he could spend time with Whitey, he’d gladly labor in the barn for as long as the Rabbi wanted his punishment to last.

Chapter Five

No Kisses Goodbye

As time went on that year, Milcah unexpectedly died, the Rabbi got forgetful, and Whitey got a lot plumper from Zophar's love and care. For some reason, they never went up to Jerusalem for Sukkoth. All Zophar could figure was, the Rabbi didn't go because he forgot, or because Milcah died. Either way, he was determined not to ask.

With a milder winter than the year before, the next six months passed by rapidly. Springtime and excitement filled the air. This was birthday month for Zophar and Whitey. And, almost more important to Zophar than that, *this* was Passover month. "If he didn't forget," Zophar thought, he and the Rabbi would go back to Jerusalem for the second time. "Maybe, the Rabbi will make a celebration for my birthday, when we're at Jerusalem."

Back to reality, he heard, "Take this rope, and tie it around Immanuel's neck."

After carefully examining the rope that the Rabbi placed in his hand, Zophar remembered it was the exact same rope he used, months earlier, to lasso the goat to the fence, to save Whitey's life.

"Why are we tying up Whitey, Grampa?" Zophar asked.

"He's going with us, up to Jerusalem," the Rabbi muttered back.

Zophar was ecstatic. "I was right," he thought. "Now we'll celebrate together; the Rabbi, Me, *and* Whitey!"

"Grab that tarp over there," said the Rabbi, "it looks like rain. Put it in the ass's saddle. And, tie that vater bottle better, ve don't vant to loose it."

After about an hour, they were packed, and ready to go. This time, sadly, there were no goodbye kisses from Gramma.

Halfway There

About halfway to Jerusalem, with no one saying much of anything, the Rabbi calls out to Zophar, “Slow down. ...You are too far ahead of me. See that tree over there? Tie off the ass ...and the lamb.”

“Okay, Grampa,” Zophar calls out, and proceeds to obey his Grandfather’s wishes.

“Oy, this trip - for this old man, gets harder and harder, every year,” the Rabbi said. Then, after a long breath, continues his sentence, “...vell, except for last year, when you came vith me.”

“I’m with you again, Grampa,” Zophar answers, as they both find solace together, simultaneously sitting down onto the ground. Zophar has waited a long time to ask the Rabbi a question, and thinks, “Now would be a good time to ask.”

“Rabbi...?”

“Yes, my son, what is it?” the Rabbi replies.

“Rabbi, when Gramma died, where her sins atoned for?”

This question jolted the Rabbi’s heart and memory, concluding, “That’s vas vhat I was supposed to tell Zophar, the day after he sinned. Oy, I forgot. I never told him. Never!” Then the Rabbi says to Zophar. “I’m glad one of us has a good memory.”

“What do you mean?” Zophar interjects.

“Never mind,” the Rabbi finishes. “Anyway, Like I vas telling you” (referring back to Zophar’s sin, about nine months earlier) “...dere is a penalty for sin. Jehovah hates sin. He has told us in the Scriptures that ve are to get clean from our sin. ...Ve are to get clean, from

year to year, by shedding the blood ...the blood of unblemished animals. Vonce a year the high priest goes into the temple to atone for our sins. Moses said, 'I have given blood to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul.'

"How 'bout Gramma?" Zophar quickly asked. ...Was the blood shed for her?"

"Yes, my son", the Rabbi continued, "vithout the shedding of blood there is no remission of our sins. Your Mother - my Daughter ...and your Father, too, are all forgiven, and are all vaiting for the Messiah to come to resurrect them."

"I will see them again ...when the Messiah comes?" Zophar asks.

"You vill, you vill, vhen Messiah comes, you vill," said the Rabbi. "If ve die the death of the righteous, ve vill die in peace. And vhen Messiah comes he vill resurrect us. There is hope ...hope in the resurrection. Now let us be going. There's not a lot of light left. Let us go."

Chapter Six

The Passover

Still traveling on the way to Jerusalem, Zophar slows down to ask the Rabbi another question. “If we go to Jerusalem, for the Day of Atonement, during Sukkoth, why are we going now?”

“Vhat ...more questions?” the Rabbi answered.

“I don’t understand,” Zophar said. “If our sins get atoned for at Sukkoth, why are we going again for the Passover?”

The Rabbi thought, “If I don’t answer his questions now, he’ll keep asking me ...all the way into town.”

“Okay, okay, let me answer you. Just before Moses led us out of Egypt, Pharaoh wouldn’t let us go...”

“...I know that part Grampa...” Zopar interrupted.

“You asked me, now let me tell you...” the Rabbi finished. “Now, where vas I? Oh, yeah. Jehovah told Moses to stay indoors that night, to protect them from the Angel of Death. That Angel vas sent by God, to come into Egypt, to kill the firstborn child of each family...”

Thinking that he was the firstborn and only child in his family, Zophar had to interrupt the Rabbi again, “...Did they *all* die?”

The Rabbi answered, without a hitch, “Not the vones with the blood on the lintels of the door - you know, where ve place the mezuzah. Ve go up to Jerusalem every year, to remember our great deliverance from Pharaoh and Egyptian bondage. And, ve offer a sacrifice to remember ve vere saved with blood, from the Death Angel.”

“Look Grampa, we’re almost there,” Zopar said.

“Almost,” the Rabbi said, “almost.”

The Price

Safely inside Jerusalem, on the way to the marketplace, Zophar, overhearing the Rabbi haggling with a stranger, lends his ear to the conversation.

“That’s too much!” the stranger says.

“What’s too much? Look at him!” the Rabbi says, as he points in Zophar’s direction.

“I can’t afford that price,” the stranger continued.

Fed up with the man’s rantings, the Rabbi explodes, “Did you sin?”

The stranger said, “What?”

The Rabbi repeated himself, “Vell, did you sin? ...Did you sin against Jehovah?”

The stranger answered the Rabbi with the only answer he could come up with - the truth. “Yes, I sinned against Jehovah.”

Real calm now, the Rabbi points again in Zophar’s direction, and says, “Vell that’s vhy you need the lamb ...at a fair price, may I add.”

All of a sudden, Zophar panics, and figures out what’s happening. “We’re not here to celebrate birthdays, Whitey; we’re here to sell YOU!”

Zophar listens more intently, as the two men continue to haggle. “I can’t meet your price,” the stranger finished.

“Vell...I can’t please you!” the Rabbi finished. As he was walking away from the stranger, the Rabbi threw him one last zinger, “Not even Jeh...hovah could please you!”

Now back with Zophar, the Rabbi says, “The nerve of some people.”

Almost crying, Zophar says to the Rabbi, “Are you gonna sell Whitey ...I mean, Immanuel, Grampa?”

“Sure. What do you think I’m here for?” the Rabbi answers.

With tears streaming down his face, Zophar continued, "I thought we were here for the Passover, and to celebrate my and Whitey's birthday."

Realizing that Zophar missed the whole point of coming to Jerusalem, he gently says, "Vell ...that, too. But, vhy do you think I own a farm, and have so many animals?"

"I thought you liked 'em," Zophar answers.

"Vell, I do like them," the Rabbi continued, "...because, vhen I don't eat 'em, I sell 'em for sin offerings. Last year vas my best year ever. I sold many animals. I guess our people did a lot of sins, that year. Vere do you think I got all that gelt from? Remember? ...the gelt that *you* stole from me."

Concerned for Whitey's welfare, Zophar says, "If that man didn't buy him, he won't have to be sold ...will he ...Grampa?"

"Listen," the Rabbi said, "Immanuel is just an animal. And, he's just the right age. Look at him. He's so plump ...and not *one* scratch on 'im. I'll get a good sum for *your* 'Whitey.'" Then the Rabbi thinks to himself, "Vhy did ve let the boy name the animal, to begin with. Doesn't he see that he's just a beast - a sacrifice ...to offer to Jehovah?"

While the Rabbi was thinking, Zophar came up with an offer for him. In his best speaking voice, Zophar asked, "Rabbi, if no one buys him, can I take him back home?"

Thinking this was a trick question, the Rabbi strokes his beard, and answers, "Vell, I guess. But even if there is vone buyer, I'm gonna sell. That's vhy he came, you know."

Relieved, Zophar starts to hug Whitey, and making sure the Rabbi is listening to his conversation, says, "The Rabbi promised, Whitey. You can come home with me."

No Sinners, Please

Zophar did his best that day to avoid as many people as possible. When he saw the Rabbi talking to someone, he walked as far away from them as possible, hoping it would be harder for someone to see Whitey's beauty. One time, hoping the Rabbi didn't get upset, he walked around the corner, leaving the ass, all by himself, where he was standing. Exhausted, in his attempt to hide Whitey, Zophar finally prayed, "Lord, please keep all sinners out of our path." He knew that his prayer was truly an impossibility – "For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not", but he prayed it, anyway.

By the end of the day, they settled down in a stable, for the following day's solemn preparation of the Passover.

The next morning, hearing a commotion, Zophar is startled awake, from his sleep. Wiping his eyes, he calls out, "Rabbi, what's going on? Why are all these Levites here?"

The Rabbi, still groggy himself, says, "I don't know either. Let's hear what they have to say."

One of the twelve Levite priests standing before them walks forward, and immediately begins speaking. "This has never happened before," he said. "Tomorrow is The Lord's Passover. A spotless lamb was ready to be slain, and offered up for tomorrow's feast, but a makeshift wall fell on him, crushing his hind legs.

Scripture says, 'not a bone is to be broken.'

Yesterday," he continued, "one of our brothers saw you on the street, and noticed your unblemished animal. He told us how beautiful and perfect he is... ..and, well taken care of. Is he under a year?"

The Rabbi answered with a nod.

“Then, we ask you” the Levite pleaded, “...we implore you ...will you give him up, to be God’s Passover lamb?”

With a lump in his throat, the Rabbi, without speaking, turned, staring in his grandson’s face, for an answer.

Zophar, with tears streaming down his cheeks, seizing all the strength he could muster, answered his Grandfather and the many men at his feet, by saying, “If Jehovah needs him, I will let him go.”

The men moved quickly, grabbing Immanuel by the old tattered rope, and were gone, in seconds.

There were no words at first, but after a few moments, when the Rabbi pulls his Grandson to his side, he reminds him, “Do you remember stealing those coins from me, my son?”

Zophar looks dead into his Grandfather’s teary eyes, and slowly nods.

“Do you remember how sorry you felt, when you confessed your sin to me?”

Again, Zophar nods.

“The pain you are feeling now,” the Rabbi said, “is the pain that Jehovah feels when ve sin against Him.”

Chapter Seven

Prepare Ye the Way of The Lord

We are again transported forward in time. Zophar's Bar mitzvah came, and went. The Rabbi lived for six more years. And, Zophar, who learned animal husbandry at the hands of his grandfather, inherits the family farm.

Back in Jerusalem, leading some sheep to market, Zophar hears someone in the distance, yelling at the top of his lungs, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight!" Almost tripping over his own feet, Zophar observes those around him laughing at him. Then, he too begins to laugh at himself for being so clumsy.

Introspective, he thinks to himself, "Hmmm, what does that mean," Zophar thought, "to 'Prepare the way of the Lord'?"

Suddenly someone calls out to him, "Hey brother, how much for that one? She's a beaut."

Zophar looks around at the small crowd of people, trying to discern who called out to him. As he inaugurates an answer, to track down a response, he sees the most beautiful girl he has ever laid his eyes on. He is so captivated with her comeliness; he forgets where he was, and why he was there, in the first place. Still enamored with her splendor, he manages to blurt out, "...Twenty sheckles of...."

Chapter Eight

Upstarts.... All of 'Em

"This was the mildest winter in years," Zophar thought, "maybe, the best one, since Gramma died." For some reason, springtime had not yielded as many kids or lambs as Zophar had expected. And, the few he had would need to wait to go up to Jerusalem until they were stronger. "Until Shavuot," he concluded.

Business was off, but that didn't bother Zophar. He was "wealthy enough", he thought, but, living alone, for the rest of his life, on his Grandparent's farm, was a topic too hard for him to bear. As his custom was, before leaving on a long trip, he reached for the Rabbi's tattered tallis, pulling it over his head, believing Jehovah would answer his prayer, even before he prayed. "Lord, I beseech Thee; let Rebecca be in Jerusalem this year. I can't explain it, but I know I love her. And, Lord ...I know she loves me. Magnify thy blessing, O Lord, and be gracious unto me. Give me Rebecca to wife. Amen ...and, Amen!"

Instead of leaving immediately on his journey, like he normally did, after prayer, this time, for at least an hour, Zophar sat in Milcah's old tub of suds. "I want to smell fresh" he thought, "when I get there, in three days." Taking clean, neatly folded clothes along, reminded him of Milcah. "Gramma would sure be proud of me," he thought, with a tear running down his eye, "I wish she was here ...here, to say goodbye."

With only one goat and two sheep following, Zophar wasn't sure if the normal three day journey into Jerusalem hadn't been two instead. Either way, he was determined to sell the animals, even if it meant

they were sold for chevron and for mutton. One thing about this trip was sure. His mind, the whole way there, stayed on Rebecca.

There It Is Again

Settling into the market place, vigilantly searching for Rebecca, Zophar hears what seems like the town crier yelling and declaring something he couldn't make out. "There it is again," he said to himself. "I wonder if it's the same brother," he thought, "that was crying out, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord'?"

Zophar turns around, and notices a Judean merchant, who's also trying to hear what's being said from the now distinguishable direction of the temple. "Do you hear that, too?"

The Merchant answers, "Yeah."

"Well," Zophar continued, "Is that the guy who usta' yell, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord'?"

"Naaw, that guy got his head chopped off, about three years ago..." answered the merchant, "...an upstart, trying to tell the King how to live."

"Well then, who...who is this guy?" Zophar responded.

"There's a bunch of 'em." The merchant answers, as he tries to flag down a customer. "Upstarts. ...All of 'em. They should take people like that, and...."

Zophar interrupts, "...Who are they?"

The merchant answers, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass, in these days?"

"What things?" Zophar blurts out.

Another man overhearing their conversation takes over, saying, "...Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our

rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.”

The Merchant interrupts him, “See, I told you. You can’t get away from ‘em. Just like I said.... ...Bunch of upstarts ...*all* of ‘em’!!!”

Zophar asks the man, “Who’s preaching? Who’s bringing that message I hear?”

The man answers, “Well, let’s go see....”

At this point, any thoughts about Rebecca have long been laid dormant.

As they turn the corner to the Temple mount, things seem to have calmed down. One man, standing forth in the crowd, begins to speak. “Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words... Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the

flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Zophar turns to the man he met in the market place, and says, “That’s him.”

“That’s who?” the man from the market says back to Zophar.

“That’s who the first Prophet was speaking about, when he said, ‘Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Make his paths straight.’ I know who he meant, now! It was Jesus of Nazareth!”

The man from the market said, “Let me introduce you to Peter.”

Zophar said, “Sure, let’s go, I’d like to meet him. He speaks good Hebrew!”

After a long talk with Peter about how Jesus suffered for Israel’s sins, and for Zophar’s sins, Peter quotes from the Book of Isaiah. “...Like I said Zophar, Jesus is God’s promised Messiah... Let me quote it for you. Listen to this... ‘Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.’”

Zophar shouts, “I see it.... I see it! Immanuel, like Whitey – ‘the LAMB of God’ suffered and died for my sins.” Falling on his knees, calling upon Isaiah’s Immanuel; Zophar understood Jehovah’s wonderful

plan of Salvation. "Lord Jesus, Lamb of God, I'm sorry for my sins. Against Thee, and Thee only have I sinned, and done evil in Thy sight. Please ...forgive me, and save me from wrath...in Sheol. Thank you, Immanuel... for bearing my sins in your crucified body. Amen."

When Zophar rose from kneeling, Peter said. "Zophar I have two questions for you. Are you saved from your sins, by the blood of the Lamb?"

"Yes I am. I know it!" Waiting for Peter to ask him the second question, he says, "So what's the other question, Pete?"

Peter says, "Hey ...who's 'Whitey'?"

With a big smile on his face, Zophar said, "A friend of mine. ...A *good* friend of mine."

Finale

Well, that wasn't the end of the story. Zophar found Rebecca, in a prayer service, that very evening. A few days earlier, she had become a believer; sending James, the Lord's brother, to the market place, to tell Zophar about Jesus.

Three years after they were married - settling in on the Rabbi's old farm house, Zophar and Rebecca brought forth their firstborn son: and called his name IMMANUEL.

The End

GLOSSARY

Beth-Shemesh – House of the sun. (Joshua 15:10) A city located in the mountains of Judah, in Israel. Its high elevation has a few snow days and ice storms, every year. It was given to the sons of Aaron as a Levitical City. (Joshua 21:16; I Chronicles 6:59)

Kali - Soap. The Hebrew term borith is a general term for any substance of cleansing qualities. As, however, it appears in Jeremiah 2:22 in contradistinction to nether, which undoubtedly means "natron" or mineral alkali, it is fair to infer that borith refers to vegetable alkali, or some kind of potash, which forms one of the usual ingredients in our soap. Numerous plants capable of yielding alkalies exist in Palestine and the surrounding countries; we may notice one named hubeibeh (the *Salsola kali* of botanists) found near the Dead Sea, the ashes of which are called el-kuli, from their strong alkaline properties.

Kaddesh - Mourning prayer recited 3 times a day: morning, afternoon, and evening for 30 days.

Mezuzah (Hebrew: "doorpost"; plural: mezuzot) is a piece of parchment (often contained in a decorative case) inscribed with specified Hebrew verses from the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21). These verses comprise the Jewish prayer "Shema Yisrael", beginning with the phrase: "Hear, O Israel; the LORD our God is one LORD." A mezuzah is affixed to the doorframe of Jewish homes to fulfill the mitzvah (Biblical commandment) to inscribe the words of the Shema on the doorposts of your house. (Deuteronomy 6:9) Jewish law requires a mezuzah on every doorway in the home apart from bathrooms, and closets too

small to qualify as rooms; but many families only place one in the front doorway. The parchment is prepared by a qualified scribe (a "sofer stam") who has undergone many years of meticulous training, and the verses are written in black indelible ink with a special quill pen. The parchment is then rolled up and placed inside the case.

Milcah (Queen or Counsel) - Bible name used for Zophar's Grandmother, in this story. (Genesis 11:29)

Passover (Pesach) is celebrated on the 14th day of the month called Nissan (Leviticus 23:4; Numbers 9:3, 5; 28:16), first month of the Jewish year (on the Hebrew calendar). It immediately precedes the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Chag Hamatzot/s), a Jewish holiday which begins on the 15th day of Nissan (Leviticus 23:6; Numbers 28:17, 33:3) and is celebrated in the northern spring season. Passover commemorates the Exodus and freedom of the Israelites from ancient Egypt. As described in the Book of Exodus, Passover marks the "birth" of the Children of Israel who become the Jewish nation, as the Jews' ancestors were freed from being slaves of Pharaoh and allowed to become followers of God instead. In the New Testament, it is said, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." (I Corinthians 5:7)

Shabbat - (the Sabbath) is the weekly holy day of rest celebrated every Saturday, beginning at sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, both at home and in the synagogue. It is a time of rest, and a time to remember God and his creative works. There is no work, no cooking, no traveling, no buying or selling, no gathering wood, nor kindling fire. Of course, men go to the synagogue, but the most important part of the Sabbath is the celebration by the family at home.

Shavuot (literally, "Feast of Weeks") is a Jewish holiday that occurs on the sixth day of the Hebrew month of Sivan (late May or early June). It marks the conclusion of the Counting of the Omer and the day the Torah was given to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai. It is one of the shalosh regalim, the three Biblical pilgrimage festivals mandated by the Torah.

Sheol - The Place of departed souls. The Israelites had a conception of, and beliefs in, a state of being beyond death. Believing that death of the body was the extinction of existence, was very far from being the case. Sheol denotes really, the place or abode of the dead, and is conceived of as situated in the depths of the earth (Psalms 63:9; 86:13; Ezekiel 26:20; 31:14; 32:18, 24; compare Numbers 16:30; Deuteronomy 32:22). The dead are there gathered in companies; hence, the frequently recurring expression, "gathered unto his people" (Genesis 25:8; 35:29; 49:33; Numbers 20:24, etc.), the phrase denoting, as the context shows, something quite distinct from burial. For example, Jacob, was "gathered unto his people"; afterward his body was embalmed, and, much later, buried (Genesis 50:2). Even the Christian can bewail a life brought to a sudden and untimely close. But, even on natural grounds it is hardly credible that the pious Israelite thought of the state of the godly gathered in peace to their people as quite the same as those who perished under the ban of God's anger, and went down to Sheol bearing their iniquity. There is a pregnancy not to be overlooked in such expressions as, "The wicked shall be turned into Hell (Sheol)" (Psalm 9:17), a "lowest Hell (Sheol)" unto which God's anger burns (Deuteronomy 32:22), "...Brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit" (Isaiah 14:15; Ezekiel 32:23) to which the proud and haughty in this life are consigned. "Mark the perfect

man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." (Psalms 37:37), or (with reference to the being taken from the evil to come), "He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness" (Isaiah 57:2; compare Isaiah 57:21 "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked"). Even Balaam's fervent wish, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" (Numbers 23:10), seems weakened when interpreted only of the desire for a green and blessed old age. It has already been seen that, in the Old Testament, Sheol, like death, is not the natural fate of man; a connection with sin and judgment is implied in it. Writers who suppose that the hopes which find utterance in passages of Psalms and Prophets have any connection with existence in Sheol are on an altogether wrong track. It is not the expectation of a happier condition in Sheol, but the hope of deliverance from Sheol, and of restored life and fellowship with God, which occupies the mind. Job said, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." (Job 19:25-27) And, last, David said, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." (Psalm 17:15)

Sukkot (also known as Succoth, Feast of Booths or Feast of Tabernacles) is a Biblical pilgrimage festival that occurs in autumn on the 15th day of the month of Tishri (late September to late October). The holiday lasts 7 days. Outside the land of Israel, many people continue to sit in the Sukkah on the following day, Shemini Atzeret. In Judaism it is one of the three major holidays known collectively as the Shalosh Regalim

(three pilgrim festivals), when historically the Jewish populace traveled to the Temple in Jerusalem.

Synagogue - is a Jewish house of prayer and study. The Hebrew term for synagogue is Beit Knesset (House of Assembly) or Beit Tefila (House of Prayer). There are usually separate rooms for prayer (the main sanctuary) and smaller rooms for study. Rooms set aside for study are referred to as, "Beth midrash" (Hebrew, House of study.)

Tallis - The Bible does not command wearing of a unique prayer shawl or tallit. Instead, it presumes the people to already use an outer garment of some type to cover themselves and instructs them to add fringes (tzitzit) to the 4 corners of these. (Numbers 15:38, Deuteronomy 22:12) These passages do not specify tying particular types or numbers of knots in the fringes. Nor do they specify a gender division between men and women, or between native Israelite/Hebrew people and those assimilated by them. The commandment was addressed to all adult Israelites and those of "the mixed multitude" that exited Egypt with them. Jewish tradition added rabbinical interpretations to provide guidance and "fence" commandments to prevent unintentional transgression by believers. Rituals for donning the garment are an example of this. They are extra-biblical observances important to Jewish worship and culture. Encyclopedia Judaica, Second Ed., Vol. 19, Som-Tn, 2007, describes the prayer shawl as "a rectangular mantle that looked like a blanket and was worn by men in ancient times." Also, it "is usually white and made either of wool, cotton, or silk." Strictly observant Jews prefer tallitot made of coarse, half-bleached lamb's wool. A few decades ago, the horizontal stripes which run across the narrow ends of the shawl were exclusively black. They are

now (in 2009) seen in colors including: blue, maroon, white, purple, gold, silver, rainbow, pink, and combinations of colored stripes with metallic stripes. According to the biblical commandment, a blue thread known as "tekeleth" is included in the tzitzit. (Numbers 15:38) Various methods of knotting the fringes have evolved. According to Rabbinic Judaism, the important part of the tallit is the tzitzit. Traditionally, tzitzit have 613 knots, as a reminder of the 613 commandments comprising the entire code of law. The fringes themselves - knotted or not - were commanded as a reminder not to wander from God's commandments (Numbers 15:39).

Zophar - (Tsofphar) Chatterer; to skip about. This author took this character's name from the Zophar in Job (2:11; 11:1; 20:1; 42:9). He lived nearly 3,500 years ago, in the south frontier of Judah.