

A black and white portrait of Edwin A. Abbott, an elderly man with a full white beard and mustache, wearing a dark cap and a dark jacket over a collared shirt. He is looking slightly to the right. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some indistinct shapes.

***EDWIN
A. ABBOTT***

***PHILOCHRISTUS:
MEMOIRS
OF A DISCIPLE
OF THE LORD***

Edwin A. Abbott

Philochristus: Memoirs of a Disciple of the Lord

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CHAPTER I

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Of my Childhood in Galilee; and how I gave myself wholly to the Study of the Law.

MY former name was Joseph the son of Simeon, and I was born in Sepphoris, the metropolis of Galilee, in the twentieth year of the reign of the Emperor Augustus, about four years before the death of King Herod. In those days Israel was grievously afflicted, and tribulation befell the righteous. Satan put it into the heart of the rulers of the land to move the people to the worship of false gods, and the Lord God had not yet raised up a Redeemer for Israel.

In my fourth year my father's brother, the Rabbi Matthias, was burned alive by Herod for causing his scholars to cast down the golden image of an eagle which the king had set up over the gate of the temple of the Lord. Not many months afterwards, the Romans marched through Sepphoris in order to bring succour to Sabinus, who was hard beset by the men of Jerusalem in the fortress called Antonia; and we fought against them, and my father was taken captive and crucified by Varus. Now as concerning my father and my father's brother, how they were slain, perchance I remember their deaths rather from my mother's often mention of them in after times than from what I heard then: but this thing can I never forget, for I saw it with mine own eyes: namely, how, when my mother brought me forth from the caves of Arbela whither we had been sent for refuge, behold, where Sepphoris had stood, there was not now one house standing; and I saw also the bodies of many

of my kinsfolk, which lay unburied and crying unto the Lord for vengeance. Yet the Lord sent no avenger.

After this came tidings that the Parthians, which went with Varus, had laid waste the country in the south far and wide, and had slain our brethren with the sword; and that Varus had taken two thousand of my countrymen in Jerusalem and had crucified them, and among them Eleazar, the youngest and dearest of my mother's brethren. Then my mother led me to a rocky place not far from Sampho. There was a cave there, and only one path led to it, and that so narrow that no multitude of men could force an entrance, if one brave man withstood them. When we were come thither, my mother lifted up her voice and wept, and pointing to the cave she said, "In former times this cave was held by my mother's brother, Hezekiah by name. Six children he had; and he fled from Herod the King with them and with his wife, and here they took refuge. Now when the king could by no means drive Hezekiah hence by force, he offered much gold unto him if he would come forth from the cave quietly. But when Hezekiah refused, the king began to let down armed men by ropes from the top of the hill, with firebrands in their hands, to kindle fires at the mouth of the cave. Then when no hope of safety remained, behold, my mother's brother brought out his children, and slew the youngest with his sword in the sight of the king. Afterwards he laid his hands on his second child., But Herod, perceiving his intent, stretched out his right hand and besought Hezekiah to spare his children and to come forth in peace. But he slew the second also, heaping reproaches on Herod as an usurper and a son of Edom, sitting on David's seat;

and he slew the third and the rest likewise, even to the sixth, and last of all his wife; and then he cast himself down the steep place and perished." Then spake my mother unto me and said, "The Lord do so unto thee, my son, and more likewise, if thou avenge not the blood of thy kinsfolk and of thy father." So it came to pass that, even from a child, I hated the very name of a Gentile with an exceeding hatred; insomuch that I should have accounted him blessed who should have taken the children of Borne (according as it is written) and dashed them against the stones.

There stood up at this time divers to lead Israel; but they were no true leaders of the people, and the Lord had not sent them. Athronges the shepherd, a man of great stature, and Simon, one of the servants of Herod the King, rose up in the south of Judah; but they both perished, and their followers were scattered. Again, about the time of the numbering of the people, when the decree went forth from the Emperor Augustus that all Israel should be taxed, there rose up Judas of Gamala. This was about the thirty-third year of the Emperor Augustus. The people came to him from all sides; and Judas taught them that it was not lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, nor to call any man Master, save God alone. At that time I was some thirteen years old; and I saw him when, with a thousand men, he marched into Capernaum and burned down the house of customs there; and as I looked upon his face, and the numbers of his followers, I thought within my heart, "Surely the hand of the Lord is with this man, surely this is the Redeemer of Israel, even the Messiah to whom all the prophets bear witness, that he must arise and judge the land." But five Sabbaths

had not passed away before he also had been cut off; and all the men that were with him were either scattered to their homes or slain.

Meanwhile, as I grew up, I was being trained by my mother with all care in the paths of the law of Israel; and according to the custom of my people, at five years old I had begun to learn the Scripture, and, at ten years, Mishnah; and I profited more than my companions in the study of the Traditions. But when I read how great things God had done in times past for His chosen ones, and how He had redeemed Israel by the hand of His servants Gideon and David, then did my heart burn within me; and I besought the Lord that He would repeat His mercies upon His chosen people, and that He would speedily send that Messiah of whom all the prophets spake, for the Redemption of Israel. Afterwards I questioned one of my teachers, by name Abuyah the son of Elishah, and I said unto him, "It is revealed and known before the All-seeing (blessed is He) that our will is to do His will: and what hindereth?" Then he answered and said, "The dough in the leaven" (meaning Gentile customs, which corrupt the customs of Israel even as leaven changeth bread) "and servitude to the Kingdom." Then I said, "Why therefore do we not rise up against the Gentile Kingdom?" But he answered, "Joseph, son of Simeon, busy thyself with the Law. Whosoever is busied in the Law for the Law's sake deserveth many things; and not only so, but he is worth the whole world. He is called friend, beloved; loveth God, loveth mankind; please th God, pleaseth mankind. And it clotheth him with meekness and fear, and fitteth him to become righteous, pious, upright,

and faithful; and removeth him from sin, and bringeth him towards the side of merit." Then said I, "But wherefore doth not the God of our Salvation bring freedom to Israel?" But he answered, "It is said, The tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. Read not *charuth*, graven, but *cheruth*, freedom; for thou wilt find none free, save only them which be occupied in the learning of the Law. For whoso is occupied in learning the Law, behold, it magnifieth him and exalteth him over all things."

Then I applied myself more diligently to the study of the Law, and I observed Sabbaths and festivals, and practised ablutions with all scruple; and I became known among my companions as a sin-fearer, instructed in the wisdom of the Law, avoiding those lesser faults which are called the "Descendants," as well as those which are called the "Fathers"; insomuch that I would not even curdle milk on the Sabbath, because that had been declared by the decisions of the Wise to be a lesser kind of building; neither would I walk upon grass during the Sabbath, because that also had been pronounced by the Rabbis to be a lesser kind of threshing.

Also in the matter of fringes and phylacteries, and in smaller matters, even to the burning of nail-parings, I walked diligently according to the decisions of the Ancients. Thus in all things I strove to bear in mind the saying that "While in the written Law there are light as well as weighty precepts, the precepts of the Scribes are all weighty." I took little sleep, little merriment; I associated myself ever with the wise, and abstained from the company of the people of

the land (for by this name the Pharisees were wont to call them that gave not themselves to the study of the Law); I settled my heart to study; I asked, and answered, and whatsoever I received I strove to add thereto. And it came to pass that, because I had a strength of memory more than was usual among my fellow-students, my teacher said to me, "Joseph, son of Simeon, thou art a plastered cistern, which loseth no drop of water"; and by this name of "plastered cistern" I became known among my fellows. And when I perceived that the Traditions said little concerning a Messiah; and that my teachers also said little, and had no hope, nor so much as a desire (for the most part) that a Messiah should ever come, but were wholly given up to the study of the Law; then I endeavoured myself also to do the same, and to put away the thought of a Redeemer.

Nevertheless at times the question would arise within me, "Wherefore do I serve God for naught?" For all around I saw the wicked and the scornful seated, as kings, in high places, and the poor and the humble trampled under foot. There was the name of peace among us, but it was no peace; for Satan was making war upon us under the semblance of peace. Everywhere defilement was taking the land by force or by stealth. Many Greek cities, called by the names of the great ones among the Gentiles, were built in the midst of us, such as Tiberias, and Julias, and Caesarea Stratonis, and Caesarea Philippi; and even in our city of Sepphoris, now rebuilt, we were constrained to admit Greeks to be our fellow-citizens. Theatres and amphitheatres, and games, and alien rites in honour of false gods, had been brought in among us. Images of living things

began to be seen on every side, and even our coinage was defiled with the uncleanness of the Gentiles; so that, in place of the vine-clusters and wheat-sheaf and star of Israel, we were forced to handle the semblances of Thracian shields and helmets, and the winged rod of enchantments, called by the Gentiles the caduceus. Moreover, as each year passed, our fears waxed greater and greater, lest at last the eagles of the Gentiles should be brought from Caesarea into the streets of the Holy City itself, and lest the image of the Emperor should be set up therein. For the former Emperor, even Caesar Augustus, was now dead, and a new Emperor reigned in his stead, whose name was Tiberius. But he attained not unto the former Emperor in wisdom; wherefore the minds of many were unsettled, the common people fearing lest the Romans should take away their religion, and the Scribes fearing lest the common people should incense the Romans by fresh revolt, and so bring destruction on the nation.

So it came to pass that by reason of my continual sorrow for the burdens of Sion, my heart was pressed down with care, and my trouble became too heavy for me to bear; and I found no peace, no, not even in the study of the Law. In vain I repeated to myself the saying of the Wise, "Whoso studieth the Law, he becometh modest and long-suffering and forgiving of insult "; and again, "The Law is acquired by long-suffering, by a good heart, by faith in the Wise, by acceptance of chastisements." I looked upon my countrymen in their servitude, and I could not feel long-suffering; neither could I attain to the wisdom of the acceptance of chastisements.

When I mentioned my trouble to my teacher, Abuyah the son of Elishah, he rebuked me for presumption; for he said that such doubts came of evil, neither would he hearken unto me. Therefore I turned to another of the Scribes, whose name was Jonathan the son of Ezra. Now Jonathan was older than Abuyah the son of Elishah, but not so learned. Howbeit he was of a more gentle and loving disposition. He said to me, "Beware lest thou follow the path of Elishah the son of Solomon." "What path?" I asked. Then Jonathan answered as follows: "It is reported that Elishah the son of Solomon was once studying the Scriptures, and he saw two men taking birds' nests. The one obeyed not the Law, but took the mother with the young; yet he went his way in peace. The other obeyed the Law and took the young only, but let the mother go free; yet as he descended from the tree a serpent stung him and he died. Then said Elishah the son of Solomon, "Is it not written, The young thou mayest take to thyself, but the mother thou shalt surely let go, that it may be well with thee and that thou mayest live many days? Verily the promises of God are naught, for the man that obeyed hath not lived many days, but the man that disobeyed is unhurt." Then said I, "And what answer was made to Elishah the son of Solomon?" And my teacher replied, "Whosoever obeyeth the Law, his days will be long in the world to come." Then was my heart comforted for a while, and I devoted myself even more diligently than before to the study of the Law.

CHAPTER II

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Of my Doubts concerning the Law; and of the Patriots or Galileans; and of the Expectation concerning John the Son of Zachariah.

FOR the space of nine or ten years I was content to give myself wholly to the study of the Law; but when I had now numbered thirty years, my doubts and fears came back to me again. While I sat in the school with the Scribe, and heard his answers and asked him questions, so long I seemed to myself righteous and on the path of righteousness; but when I came forth into the streets, or back to my mother's house, then seemed my righteousness immediately to have vanished away. At such seasons the learning of the Wise seemed to me not bread, but a stone.

Moreover, my heart was turned from some of the Scribes that lived in Sepphoris, even them that were counted as props and pillars of the Law. To Jonathan the son of Ezra I ceased not to pay honour; but Abuyah the son of Elishah I could not reverence, and others also like unto him: for they had regard unto the praise of men rather than to the love of God. As, for example, Abuyah, whensoever he was delayed by the crowd so that he came not to the synagogue in time for prayer, he would stand where he chanced to be, at the hour of prayer, praying in the middle of the market-place. When he walked, he walked with a mincing gait and with his eyes half closed, feigning to be given up to the meditation of the Law, so that he saw no passer by. On fast days he would ever look pale and worn, as if with watching and

hunger; and whensoever he met a woman as he went in the way, he would shiver and turn aside. It came to pass that on a certain day one of his pupils asked him which was the most weighty of precepts. Then Abuyah answered, "The Law of Tassels "; and continued he, "so do I esteem this law that once, because I had chanced to tread upon a portion of the fringe of my garment, going up a ladder, I steadfastly refused to move from the spot where I stood, till such time as the rent had been repaired." Another day, this Abuyah chid my mother because she wore on her dress a ribbon that was not sewn, but only fastened to her vesture. For thus, he said, my mother transgressed the Law by bearing burdens on the Sabbath. But by such teaching Abuyah himself laid upon his pupils burdens grievous to be borne; and among the Rabbis of Israel there were more like unto Abuyah the son of "Elishah than unto Jonathan the son of Ezra.

Many things also in the traditions of the Wise seemed to me not worthy of wise men, nor even of honest men. I had joined myself to a certain brotherhood (who all, or almost all, were Pharisees), such as bound themselves to observe the Law with special strictness, and in particular to pay tithes of all things. The brotherhood was called Chabura, and each of the brethren was called a Chaber. Now it was the custom of us Chaberim to meet on the Sabbath day at one another's houses that we might sup together. But the space between our houses often exceeded two thousand paces, which distance was not to be exceeded by a man journeying on the Sabbath day. Therefore to a plain man it would have seemed that we could not sup with one another

on the Sabbath day and at the same time obey the Law. But the Scribes were otherwise minded; and many of them, yea even of the strictest sect, escaped from the Law after this fashion. On the evening before the Sabbath, they would place small pieces of meat, distant two thousand paces one from another, on the road whereon they desired to journey. Where a man's meat is, said they, there is his home. So when they were come in their journeying to the first piece of meat, they would say, "Now I am at my home and may walk yet another two thousand paces." And so, walking from this home to other homes if need were, they walked as far as they listed. This mixing of distances they called *erûbh*, or "mixture;" and the device remaineth unto this day.

Again, if a man's ox were dying on some holy day, and the owner thereof desired to kill it; he was forbidden. But if he slew the beast and then took of the meat and ate thereof, yea, even though it were a piece of flesh no bigger than an olive, and if he said, "I slay the beast to provide a necessary meal," then he was held excused. Likewise, though a man might not buy from a butcher on the Sabbath, yet if he abstained from mentioning the number or weight of the things bought, and the sum of money to be paid, then he might buy as much as his heart desired and be held blameless. Thus he would say, "Give me a portion, or half a portion of meat," and the butcher would give it; and the buyer would go away, paying naught. But next day the money would be paid. And this was called not a sale, but a gift. After the same manner they did away with the Law which remitteth debts in the Sabbatical year. On the day of payment the creditor would come (such was the ordinance

of the Scribes) and say, "In accordance with the Sabbatical year I remit thee the debt." Then the debtor was bound to reply, "I nevertheless wish to pay it," and the debt was paid, and the Law was made of none effect.

About the thirteenth year of the Emperor Tiberius, it came to pass that I (being now thirty-three years old or a little more) discoursed with a Greek proselyte concerning the Law. He said to me that it seemed to him better to disannul such ordinances as were not convenient (just as a man might prune a too luxuriant vine); and not to say, "I will obey the ordinance, but I will make my obedience the same as disobedience." His words pleased me; but when I reported this saying to some of the Scribes my friends, they with one consent rejected it. Abuyah the son of Elishah said, scoffing at my doubts, "The Law drowneth them that cannot swim." Then said I (repeating a certain saying of the Greek), "But water groweth bad if it be kept long in one vessel." But he straightway put me to silence saying, "Is this likewise the case with the Law? Nay, it is like unto wine which groweth better as it groweth older." Jonathan the son of Ezra also added in a gentle voice, "My son, thou knowest the saying of the Elders, the first of the sayings of the Wise: Be deliberate in judgment, and raise up many disciples, and make a fence to the Law. But thou, my son, wouldst fain pull down fences. But if we begin to destroy a part of the Law, who shall stay the hand of the destroyer?"

And in the end we shall be even as the Gentiles, which have no law. Is it not better to be too careful rather than to be too careless? Is it not better to have too many fences rather than to have too few? For to what is the matter like?

Even to a man watching a garden. If he watch it from without, it is all watched. But if he watch it from within, the part in front of him is watched; but the part behind him is not watched. Be thou therefore careful to go in thine obedience even beyond the things which the Law require th at thy hands; and watch the Law not from within, but from without."

There seemed much wisdom in the sayings of Jonathan, and I knew not what answer to make. For if to transgress the Law, even in the smallest matter, was to fall into destruction, then it seemed wise to fence round the Law, even as a man would fence round a pit; and not to suffer the unwary to go near, and peradventure to stumble, and so to be swallowed up. Yet I could not but perceive that it was not well for men thus to resort to the Law and to the Traditions as to a sacred oracle, even on those occasions and in those matters wherein the voice of the Lord speaking unto the heart saith clearly, "This is right, do this. This is wrong, do not this." For thus it must needs come to pass that men would pervert even the Law to the contradicting of the voice of the Lord. And so indeed it was with us. As, for example, the Law forbade fornication, neither did it permit us to marry a woman with intent to divorce her; but one of the Traditions, making the Law of none effect, told us that "If a man first tell her that he is going to marry her for a season, then it is lawful."

Other Traditions sinned yet more grievously in the cloaking of sins and impurities. Hence also the duties of children to parents (albeit upheld indeed by the better part

of the Wise) were by many diminished, or even made of none effect.

Now I have heard certain Romans say that in their Law they also use the same devices to observe the letter and to break the spirit. But the mischief was, that our Law was not as the laws of the Gentiles, which concern naught save lands, and houses, and slaves, and the like, and which have not to do with the souls and spirits of men. The Gentiles could break the letter of their laws and sin not: for what sin was it to make a slave free by feigning to sell him, or, in disputing about a farm, to treat of a clod as though it were the farm? But our Law had to do with the supreme God, the Maker of all things, the All- seeing (blessed is He). Therefore to observe the letter and to break the spirit of His Law seemed to be a profaning of His Holy Name. Now I had been trained up from my earliest years to dread the pulling down of the fences, having this precept, as it were, engraved and characterized in my memory, "Whoso pulleth down a hedge a serpent shall sting him:" and I had been taught to prefer Sinai, that is, the teacher of the Law, even to an " uprooter of mountains," that is, to a teacher which hath understanding to remove all manner of offences and stumbling- blocks from the path of the weak ones. Howbeit, at times, after discourse with the Greek proselyte whom I mentioned above, there would arise in my heart this thought, that when the words of the Law seemed to contradict that which was right, then we ought to go into the presence of God and to say, "Thou, God of righteousness, art righteous altogether, neither can it be Thy pleasure that we should be unrighteous "; and again,

"Thou art a God of truth, neither can it be Thy will that we should lie with our hands in Thy presence. Therefore permit us in this case to break Thy Law. For Thy righteousness is greater than Thy Law." But the Scribes would not so much as listen to such words as these; for they said that scarce even a prophet durst speak so exceeding boldly. But when I asked them whether it might be that a prophet should arise in Israel, then the most said that it was not possible; for the Shekinah and the Holy Spirit had departed from Israel when the first Temple had been destroyed. Thus my words were an abomination unto my teachers, so that I hid my thoughts in my heart: but it was pain and grief to me.

Yet another trouble was added to me. For as I grew older and understood more of the ways of men and perceived the thoughts of men's hearts, it seemed to me a strange and horrible thing that the Law of the Lord should be cut off from the greater part of the Lord's people: so that it was a current saying with the Rabbis that the common people were an accursed rabble which knew not the Law: insomuch that one of the most pious of our teachers, even Hillel the Great, said that no boor could be a sin-fearer, and that the people of the land (for by that name they called the common people) could not be pious. This, I say, seemed an horrible thing: yet indeed I could not deny that the Scribes must needs be right, and that the people of the land could not be pious, so long as to be pious meant to be obedient to the light precepts of the Law, such as the laws concerning the exact observance of the Sabbath, and concerning purifications, and concerning the consumption of nail-parings, and the like. For the knowledge of all these things was not to be

obtained save by men of leisure, that could give their time, and settle their minds to the study of such matters: and how was this possible for them that must needs earn their bread with the sweat of their brow, to wit, the sailors and fishermen, the vine-dressers and ploughmen, the dyers and glassmakers; who all were called of the Scribes "the people of the land"? So it was borne in upon me that our Law was a Law for the schools, but not for the lives of men; and for Scribes, but not for the whole nation. Then my heart sank within me, and I remembered the words of the Prophet, how that a time shall come when men shall no longer teach each one his neighbour, saying, Know the Lord; but all shall know Him from the least even to the greatest; and I wondered if it would please the Lord to bring such a time as that to Israel, and to make His Law clear to all our nation, yea, even to the poor and simple, even to the people of the land.

Others that did not observe the Law so exactly as I did, nor felt the burdens thereof so sorely, were nevertheless ill pleased that the Scribes did naught to free them from the yoke of the Gentiles. Of these some dwelt in Judaea, and a few in Peraea; but the more part dwelt in Galilee, insomuch that the sect of Patriots was known by the name of Galileans. There were also living among us James and John, the two eldest sons of Judas of Galilee, and their youngest brother Manahem. To these, for the sake of their great father, we all had respect. Many also (like myself) were ever in a readiness to avenge upon the Romans the blood of kinsfolk shed in the Galilean wars. Hence it came to pass that in Galilee more than in any region of Syria, the minds of

men were ready for revolt against the Romans, and waited but for the ripening of occasion.

Now it came to pass that in the fourteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, there arose a quarrel between the Tetrarch of Galilee and his father-in-law, the King of Arabia; because the Tetrarch had behaved ill to the King's daughter his wife, and sought to divorce her. Then it seemed good to some of my friends to join the army of Antipas the Tetrarch, to the intent that they might thereby gain experience in war; but others spake against it, saying that it was not lawful to take up arms for the unjust against the just.

At this time also a rumour went forth that a new prophet had of late appeared, John by name, the son of Zachariah a priest, who was calling the whole of Israel to repent and to be purified with baptisms, prophesying that the Lord would soon send the Deliverer of Israel, or Messiah: for by this name of Messiah, the Deliverer that was to come (of whom the prophets had prophesied) was commonly known among us. Some said that John himself was the Messiah; others denied it, but said that the Lord had sent down Elias from heaven, and that John was Elias. Many other rumours also were noised abroad, and this rumour prevailed most, that "One from the East would come forth to rule the world," which saying had spread even to Italy and Spain: and we in Galilee thought that this conqueror from the East would be our Messiah. Thus, the hearts of all men everywhere being in expectation, it came to pass that many of my friends (who were the leaders of the sect called the Patriots or Galileans), having purposed these many weeks to hold a council, determined at this time to confer together in a little

valley between Sepphoris and Nazareth, there to resolve what should be done.

Most of those present were from the inland parts of Galilee: of these Barabbas, and one other, were from Jotapata. Only Hezekiah, the son of Zachariah (a Scribe, who was thought to be well affected towards the Galileans), came from Jerusalem. And from Capernaum came my cousin Baruch, the son of Manasseh, with three others. There were present also from the region of Gaulonitis James and John and Manahem, sons of the famous Judas of Galilee. James the son of Judas spake first, giving his judgment for war, and saying that Israel had slept too long: "For while we sleep," said he, "the leaven spreadeth; Greek cities cover our land; our own cities are being defiled with Gentile abominations. They are stealing from us even our language. No man may earn a living in Galilee now, unless he speak Greek. With Greek theatres and amphitheatres, and baths, and market-places; with Greek pictures and images, and feasts and games; with Greek songs, and poems, and histories,— they purpose, by easy degrees, to beguile the hearts of our young men from the religion of their forefathers. Our princes are Edomites in the pay of Rome. Our rich men long for the fleshpots of Rome, and call themselves by the name of Herod. Our Scribes, our wise men, cry peace when there is no peace, and wink at the payment of tribute. Publicans and harlots bring down the wrath of God upon the nation, and go unpunished. All these things are as the meshes of the net wherein Borne is encompassing our city. And lo, the fowler layeth the net and the silly bird stayeth still." Then Baruch said: "But is it so indeed that the Romans would blot out our

religion? Do they not suffer all religions? The Gauls, the Spaniards, the Numidians, Egyptians and Scythians, all worship divers gods: so have I heard from a Greek merchant at Capernaum; and this, without let or hindrance from the Romans."

"Nay," cried Barabbas, "but thou seest not that the Roman suffereth all false religions and hindereth them not; but he hateth the worship of the true God of Israel. For this alone putteth other gods to shame. The Syrians and the Egyptians scruple not to worship the Roman gods, besides Astarte and Osiris, and to offer incense to the emperor of Rome, to boot. But the children of Israel will bow down to no false god, neither offer they incense before the image of the emperor. Hence cometh it to pass that the Romans hate our religion and would fain destroy it. James therefore speaketh the words of truth; and whoso speaketh otherwise allegeth naught but pretexts of delay and cowardice."

"Peace, Barabbas," said John, the son of Judas; "we meet to hold conference, not to cast reproaches. Nevertheless, my judgment goeth with my brother, that our choice lieth between lingering perdition and speedy deliverance. Hereof this is proof. But lately I was at the Holy City, not many days before the Passover; and there went abroad a rumour that the Procurator Pilate was minded to bring the eagles of the legions from Caesarea to Jerusalem, yea, even into the streets of the Holy City. Then the Priests, even the Chief Priests, yea, even the whole Council, fell down at Pilate's feet, if perchance he would change his purpose. Multitudes ran together round the Praetorium. In vain did they pray and were disquieted. Under the cloak of night the procurator

brought in the Abomination. Then all the men of Jerusalem, and all the pilgrims which had come together from the uttermost parts of the earth, clothed themselves in sackcloth, and sat down in the streets about the palace, with ashes on their heads after the manner of suppliants; crying aloud that they would sit there for ever rather than endure the presence of the Abomination. But when Pilate saw all the streets of Jerusalem thronged, so that no one might pass night and day, and all business was at a stand, did he yield from his purpose? Nay, he gave orders that the armed cohorts should beset the streets around us, threatening to smite us with the sword if we should not straightway void the streets. And when we would not, then went the word forth from the captains to draw the swords; and the swords were drawn, and the soldiers were in act to fall upon us. But we uncovered our necks and held them out to the soldiers, crying 'Give us death rather than defilement.' So at the last, but not till blood had been shed, the procurator gave consent that the images should be sent back. Suppose ye that this was a little matter, naught but an error in judgment of the procurator? Would a procurator have dared to risk the peace of the whole province for a little matter? It was no little matter. Pilate did what he did, not of himself, but at the express instance of the emperor; to prove the limits of our slavishness, and to force us into defilement and into the worship of the Abomination."

Hereat there was a general applause; but he, not heeding it, continued, "If ye be of one mind with me that the hour is come to smite with the sword; then how and where? I say, let certain of us join ourselves to the army of the

Tetrarch, which even now maketh ready to march against Aretas. Thereby we shall gain experience of war, and, as I hope, win over some of the army to our side. As for the tyrant's guards, the Gauls, Germans, and Thracians, they are bought with his money, so that we have no hope of them; but by far the larger part of the army consisteth of our own countrymen; and many of them may revolt on our side; as they did with Simon against Archelaus, and some also helped Athronges, whom men call a rebel. Meantime, let the rest of us make ready our friends in our several cities to take up arms next Passover. They in Jerusalem will attack the garrison there, others break open the armoury at Sepphoris and in Masada. On the same day our countrymen in Joppa, Caesarea, and Ptolemais will attack and drive out the Greeks. Then will rise a flame of war from one end of Syria to the other. Our rich men, even the Herodians, seeing all the people to be of one mind, will stand with us; and having Israel with us as one man, doing battle for the name of the true God against the gods of the Gentiles, doubt not but we shall have also the sword of the Lord on our side, as in the days of Gideon."

The applause was now yet louder than before; and at first it seemed as though the whole assembly were minded with one consent to obey the words of John the son of Judas of Galilee. But one of the companions of Hezekiah, Levi by name, an old man and grey-bearded, rose up presently and said that the hour had not yet arrived, because, said he, the Sabbath was not yet duly observed, and the wrath of the Lord still weighed upon Israel. Then Barabbas answered with indignation, saying that it was only the rich and delicate, or

else they that were enfeebled with old age, who were thus content to be the slaves of idolaters.

Upon this Hezekiah the Scribe stood up to speak: "These young men of Galilee gladly make mention of the old times of Gideon and David, yet do they not themselves imitate the old times in having respect unto old age. For even though Levi were old and enfeebled, yet what saith the Tradition? 'Old age, though it be broken, is yet to be held in reverence, even as the broken tables of the Law were kept in the ark of the Lord.' But what meaneth this youth of Jotapata, when he calleth my friend and companion Levi, the son of Ezra, delicate or enfeebled; and all because the advice of Levi is not the advice of Barabbas? Hear, ye young men of Galilee, the words of Levi are true: the hour hath not yet arrived. 'What hindereth?' ye ask. I answer in the words of the Wise, 'The dough in the leaven.'

"I also, like John the son of Judas, will give proof of my words; but do ye, being Galileans, incline your ears to the saying of a Galilean, according to the proverb, 'A Galilean said When the shepherd is angry with his flock, he appointeth for their leader a blind bell-wether.' Note therefore the leaders of Israel, which have risen up against the Romans of late. Hath God sent them in anger or in mercy? Have they been blind bell-wethers, or endowed with sight? I say naught of Judas of Gamala, in the presence of his sons: but Judas the son of the robber Hezekiah, how went it with him? He thought in his heart that he was a second Joshua, and that the waters of Jordan would part at his word. But who knoweth not his miserable end? As also the end of Athronges: who aimed at the kingdom because,

forsooth, he was in stature a second Saul. Simon also, the slave of Herod the king, when he had shown forth his valour by destroying the king's palace at Jericho, became a portion for foxes at Amathus, and his head was cast before the feet of the conqueror. Answer then unto me, ye young men. Hath the Lord sent Simon the slave, and Athronges the shepherd, and Judas the son of the robber, in mercy or in wrath?

"Nay, but since shame hindereth your answering, I, even I, a man of Judaea, will answer for you, according as it is said, 'From Judaea grain, from Galilee straw, from Peraea chaff.' The Lord sent these men in wrath. All these were blind bell-wethers, blinded by the lust of fame or gain. But do ye therefore wait for the true leaders whom the Lord your God will send? Leave it to this young man of Jotapata to follow any knave that may chance to call himself the Redeemer of Israel because, forsooth, he may be a head taller than his neighbours, or may have dreamed a dream, or may perchance have gained some knowledge of herbs or unclean spirits.

"Even now they say there hath appeared in the southern parts (so I heard, coming but now from Jericho) one John the son of Zachariah, concerning whom I judge (if he be indeed a true prophet and no deceiver) that he is either the prophet spoken of by Moses, or else Elias. For that Elias is to come again we all know, because it is so written; and that the prophet like unto Moses must needs appear, this also the Scriptures tell us: but that other prophets should appear is not written, neither is it likely; for the age of prophets is past. But whether this John be Elias or whatever else, meet it is that we go to him; for he may perchance reveal to us

what it is our wisdom to do. If ye ask 'What shall be the sign of the true prophet?': I answer, it is written in our traditions, 'A false prophet may show signs on earth and in the deep; but a sign from heaven he cannot Rabbis.' Wait therefore till the sign from heaven shall be vouchsafed, revealing the true Prophet, whom it will be our wisdom to obey, and for whom (during this present) it is our wisdom to wait."

When Hezekiah had made an end of speaking, James the son of Judas was sore displeased at his words, and made as if he would have spoken in answer; but John (who was of a gentler disposition) prevented his brother, and said that Hezekiah gave good counsel. For he, like the rest of us, had been moved by the mention of John the Prophet. So in the end it was determined according to the words of Hezekiah the Scribe; and we brake up without resolving anything further, except that we would go straightway, so many of us as conveniently could, to Bethany beyond Jordan, where the prophet was baptizing. But on the morrow and on the day after, when I spake to my friends and acquaintance concerning John the son of Zachariah, it was a marvel to see how greatly the hearts of all men were stirred at the thought of a new prophet in Israel. For that after so many hundreds of years a prophet should arise in Israel (none having prophesied since the time of Malachi, the last of the prophets, more than four hundred years ago) this seemed a marvellous thing and well nigh impossible, and almost as if a man should rise again from the dead. For the prophets were counted as it were dead and out of mind in Israel, meet to be revered for their past words, but not to be hoped for in the time to come. For this cause were we much

moved by the mention of the name of John the son of Zachariah. And as the Prophet Elias from the top of Carmel looking out into the Great Sea and discerning a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, foretold the imminent storm, so did all we in Galilee, on the first breath of the rumour of the coming of a prophet, begin to forebode in our hearts of the coming of one that should be no common prophet; but, in all likelihood, Elias from the dead; or else one greater than Moses, to give us perchance a new Law and a new Kingdom.

CHAPTER III

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Concerning the Casting out of Unclean Spirits; and of the Nature of the Redemption of Israel; and how I first saw Jesus of Nazareth.

ON the fourth day, I set out in company with Baruch my cousin, the son of Manasseh, my father's brother, intending to go to Capernaum, and thence to take ship for Gamala, where we were to meet James and John the sons of Judas of Galilee; and so to journey all together to Bethany, where the prophet was. When we were come to Capernaum, we tarried two days in the house of Manasseh: and the second day was the Sabbath. Now the house of Manasseh was nigh unto the wharf, so that nothing stood between it and the lake.

It happened that I was sitting on the house-roof and the sun wanted yet an hour or two of setting; and a tumult arose on the beach below, between a Greek merchant and certain of the townsmen. Word had come to the Greek that his son was sick in Bethsaida and nigh unto death: so he had besought certain of the sailors that they would launch their ship and put out to sea, although the sun had not yet set; to the intent that he might pass over with all speed, if perchance he might see his child before he died. The sailors were persuaded by the man's prayers and gifts, and were preparing their vessel to launch it. But the inhabitants, those of the more devout sort, coming together with stones and staves, threatened the sailors, and forced them to cease, declaring that not a boat should leave the strand till the Sabbath should be ended.