

יוחנאנא

DEBORAH GALILEY

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ONE

25 A.D.

I'll never forget the first time I saw the Rabbi. I had awakened that morning, my hip throbbing with its usual pain, knowing I should go to the Temple as was my sporadic custom. My maid, Rachel, accompanied me. We left the cool interior of the palace and emerged into the cloudless glare of another hot day. Servants and guards alike deferentially made way for me as I inclined my head briefly in recognition.

Once we were past the palace grounds, I breathed easier. Living in close proximity to Herod Antipas was a tense and sometimes overwhelming experience. Like his father before him, he saw the slightest wavering as treachery and was quick to throw formerly trusted friends and allies into prison to be tortured and killed. Often he misread people, which resulted in a fatal mistake for those misunderstood. Too many people over the years had fallen prey to his paranoia. Lately, since he had divorced his first wife and married the beautiful yet wickedly manipulative Herodias, political intrigue increased by tenfold. And it hadn't been lacking before. I found the palace more and more distasteful; a snake pit.

Now we headed east to the Temple grounds. Except for the three great pilgrim feasts each year when the City filled to overflowing, Jerusalem was relatively easy to travel through. For some reason, though, today was wall- to-wall people.

By the time we approached the outskirts of the Temple Mount, the Temple itself towering above us in a dazzling mass of white marble and gold, the crowds surged against us. Everywhere we turned, men, women and children jostled and pushed, struggling to get by.

“What is going on today?” I remarked irritably to Rachel. My plan had been to come down, put some money in the Temple treasury, offer up some prayers, and then proceed to the *shuk* for some shopping. All of these unwashed hordes annoyed me.

Rachel looked as dumbfounded as I. “I do not know, my lady,” she answered me, shrugging her delicate shoulders. “It is not a feast day. Where are they all coming from?”

“Ask someone,” I commanded her.

Haltingly, Rachel pulled at the sleeve of a respectable-looking woman to her right. “Excuse me, madam,” she politely said, her natural reticence overcome by my request. “But can you tell us why so many people are at the Temple today?”

“Don’t you know?” asked the woman in some surprise.

Rachel shook her head while I strained forward to hear.

“It’s the Prophet,” said the woman, a hungry look in her eyes. “The Prophet is speaking in the Court of the Gentiles.”

Rachel and I looked at each other quizzically. *Who was this prophet?*

The woman turned, impatient to keep going.

“Wait,” I shouted after her. She looked back at me. “What is the name of this ‘prophet?’ ” I asked.

“Don’t you know?” she said again, amazed at our ignorance. “It’s Yeshua ben Yosef. Of Natzeret.” And without waiting for a response, she vanished into the crowd.

“Have you heard of him?” I asked Rachel, not pleased at appearing unknowing.

“I’ve heard rumors, my lady,” she said, brow furrowed in concentration. “But I haven’t paid much attention to them. Something about an uneducated carpenter’s son from the Galil who supposedly heals the sick....”

Heals the sick. Even as she spoke those words my hip began to throb again. I was never one to put much stock in the so-called miracle workers. Many of these charlatans plied their trade in and around Jerusalem, making fantastic sums off a gullible and desperate populace. Still..

I made a spontaneous decision that would irrevocably change my life. “Rachel.”

“Yes, my lady?”

“Let’s go and listen to this man. I’m curious to see who he is.”

“Are you sure, my lady?” Rachel turned horrified eyes to me. We *never* mingled with the common people. I was acting extremely out of character and Rachel knew it.

I had not been entirely convinced that my plan was a good one, but when she questioned it, I felt bound and determined to defend it. "Of course I'm sure," I snapped. "Let's go." I plowed my way through the crowd, pulling rank and staring people down whenever it would help me make progress. The slowness was tedious.

After several minutes spent clearing a path through the vast sea of people, we found ourselves at the entrance to the Court of the Gentiles. This was the large outer boundary of the Temple where anyone was free to go. A square of 750 feet, it was paved with the finest marble. No Gentiles were allowed past here. Further up lay the Court of Women, beyond which I, as a Jewish woman, could not progress. Normally, I would have swept right up to the Court of Women, but not today. Straining to see, I stood on tiptoe; then, as if by some giant invisible hand, the whole assembly seated itself on the ground. It appeared that only I remained standing.

"Can you sit, my lady?" whispered Rachel, crouching, hand at my elbow, ever attentive to my needs.

"Not very well, with this hip." I winced. Already I felt foolish, knowing that I blocked the view of the people behind me. But with everyone else sitting down, I could suddenly see the man who stood at the very front of the assembly. He must have been about fifty meters away. Dressed in the rough garb of the poor working class, dark haired and bearded, he could have passed for any one of a hundred men like him I saw every day on the streets of Jerusalem. It was when he lifted his eyes and looked straight at me that I suddenly and inexplicably felt overcome by an emotion I could not name.

His gaze penetrated the thin veneer of my public persona such that my soul stood exposed. Overcome, I averted my eyes and sank slowly to the ground, unaware until later that the pain in my hip had subsided to the point where it was possible to sit like everyone else.

The man lifted his hands in the air and prayed in a loud voice, "*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha olam*, Blessed are you, O Lord my God, King of the Universe. O my Father, bless the words of my mouth as I speak forth Your truth to Your people. Open their ears that they may understand. In Your holy Name, Amen."

"Amen," echoed the crowd, the word rolling off thousands of tongues like rumbles of thunder, reverberating again and again. All around me, men, women and children settled expectantly on the ground, lifting up faces so that they might catch the Prophet's words as they flowed through the assembly.

Despite my customary skepticism, I, too, leaned forward eagerly.

Slowly and clearly, with great projection, the man spoke. “A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

What kind of teaching was this? It made no sense! I looked over at Rachel. She met my eyes and shrugged, as if to say, *It was you who wanted to come here. Don't expect me to know what's going on.* All around me I heard murmuring, as people spoke to their neighbors, trying to make sense of what had been said. This man was nothing like the Torah teachers and religious leaders I had seen—and grown to despise—all of my life. He did not hold himself apart from us, contemptuous of the very air we breathed as if being near a woman, a Gentile, or a commoner would contaminate him. His air of authority mixed with humility was a refreshing change. Very different. So different that I didn't know what to make of him.

“Tell us the meaning of this parable, Rabbi,” boomed a man's voice from somewhere to my left.

“Those who have ears to hear, let him hear,” repeated the Prophet, looking back at all of us with a look of—was that love?—on his face. He waited, then, allowing his words to seep into our dark, cluttered minds. Some faces started to brighten, illumination coming forth. Others turned dark and angry. Scores of people got up and left. If the man saw them go, he gave no sign.

After several minutes, he spoke again. “Listen! The time is short. The Kingdom of Heaven is near. Now is the time to repent. Now is the time to seek out God the Father. Don't look back! Don't wait! Repent of your sins and He will forgive you.” With these and many other words, the Prophet encouraged us to follow God. When he finished speaking, he prayed a blessing and dismissed us.

Confused and stiff, I slowly rose from the ground, unsure of what I thought. Just then a man rushed up to the Prophet. His left hand was shriveled, and with his right he reached out beseechingly in a gesture of supplication.

“Help me, Rabbi,” he begged. “Help me!”

“What would you like me to do for you?” responded the Prophet,

though it seemed obvious to me that he already knew exactly what the man wanted.

“Please, sir,” he said earnestly. “If you are willing, heal my hand.”

“I am willing,” stated the Prophet. Then he reached out and touched the man’s left hand and instantly it grew and became healthy, like his right hand.

Amazed, I blinked, not quite sure that I had really seen what my eyes witnessed. Never, *never*, had I known such a thing could be done on this earth! As I stood there in shock, the crowd surged forward. Cries of *Yeshua, heal me! Lord, heal me!* rang out on all sides, the tightly held longings of a desperate people unleashed. At least a dozen men who had sat right under the Prophet’s feet sprang up and surrounded him protectively, allowing only one person at a time access to him. I too had a need, but that crowd! I shuddered. I knew that it would be impossible for me to spend hours here, waiting while the Prophet prayed for hundreds of people. Instinctively, I realized that he would not be pleased if I attempted to push my way through ahead of others. There would be another opportunity. Inexplicably confident that I would meet the Prophet, Yeshua, again, I turned to Rachel.

“Let’s go.”

Dumbly, she nodded, eyes wide as she took in the scene around us. Carefully we threaded our way through the lines of people waiting to be healed and made our way out of the Temple courts and back toward the palace.



“You did WHAT?” my husband exploded, his normally inscrutable face registering anger and surprise.

“Shhh,” I hushed him, pointing toward our closed bedroom door, not wanting news of what I did today spreading throughout the palace before it even completely left my mouth. “Don’t be so loud,” I cautioned him.

Kuza glanced toward the closed door, opened his mouth, closed it again, and sat down heavily on one of the several elaborately brocaded chairs that graced the room. “Look,” he said, quieter this time. “Whatever possessed you to attach yourself to the rabble that follows this pretender?”

“He’s no pretender,” I corrected, shaking my head. “I tell you that I’ve never seen anything like it before! I *saw* this fellow’s arm restored. It was amazing!” Unexpectedly, my eyes filled up with tears. “Oh, Kuza, this

man Yeshua actually *heals* people. What if, what if..." I stopped, unable to continue.

Kuza's face softened. He rose from his chair and came over to me, wrapping his arms around me. "I know how much pain you're in, Yohana. I understand that you would like nothing better than to believe this man can really change that—"

"You understand nothing!" Angrily I shook off his embrace and took a step backwards. "You know nothing of what it's like to be in pain, day after day. To wake up two, three, four times in one night, constantly changing positions and doing everything you can to alleviate some of the stress. To watch yourself worsen every day. To hear the snickering of children because of the lopsided way you walk. To know that it's only a matter of time before..." I would have gone on, but the love on the dear face of my husband stopped me. He didn't deserve this tirade.

"I'm sorry, *motek*," I said wearily, apologetically.

"I'm sorry too." He sighed. "It's not easy for me to see you like this. But surely you know that *he*," meaning Herod, "would not take lightly a member of his household seeking after this man. Don't forget what happened with Yochanan the Immerser," he warned.

"I don't know if I am seeking after him right now," I said, ignoring his last comment. "All I know is that I had an extraordinary experience today and it's changed the way I'm looking at things."

"Well, why don't we both sleep on it, then," suggested my husband mildly. "Tomorrow we can talk some more."

"Yes, tomorrow." Suddenly I was terribly tired. I attempted to smile affectionately at Kuza. "I think I'll go to bed now. Will you be in?"

"In a bit," he answered. "I still have some accounts to go through for today. When I'm done." He reached over and kissed me briefly. "Sleep well, dear Yohie."

"I'll try."



That night, lying in bed, unable to sleep, many images flashed through my mind. I remembered my childhood, growing up in Jerusalem. I hadn't always lived in a palace, fearful of those around me. Once I lived in a small but beautiful home, hidden in the side of a hill. Orange and lemon trees spread their fragrant perfume over the limestone terraces. Pomegranate trees dropped deep orange blossoms. Brightly colored flowers filled earthen pots, their sun-drenched petals splashing color along

the walls of the house. Shoulder-high walls blocked our comings and goings from the prying eyes of anonymous passersby. Fruits, flowers, scented air, hot outside, cool within. Growing up, I was convinced that the Garden of Eden must have closely resembled home.

There were five of us: Abba, Ema, two older brothers, and me. Abba was a spice merchant, often away on buying trips. My earliest memories of him center around homecomings: the pure joy of seeing him again, clasped into big, strong arms, the acrid smells of the road still clinging to his hair, his beard. Laughing eyes crinkled at the corners, kissing me—*ah my little girl, I have missed you!* And then there would always be a special gift, a small piece of inexpensive jewelry, or a little doll, or perhaps a carved wooden animal. How I loved those treasures! Ema would visibly soften. Ema, who sternly disciplined us in his absence, always threatening and chasing us with a stick when we misbehaved, now stood quietly behind Abba, one hand on his shoulder, relief at his presence flooding her face. Now she could relax and be the nurturing mother since he had returned to take up his rightful place as head of the household.

And my brothers. Aharon, the elder. Self-confident, eager, ambitious, well-liked, he was being groomed to take over the family business. When only a young lad of twelve, he had made contacts among his friends' parents, expanding the trade. I adored him, even though he ignored me. Every so often, though, he spoke to me and included me in something he was doing and then I floated on clouds all day.

Caught in the middle between myself and Aharon was the irrepressible Yishai. Sometimes my best friend, often as not my worst enemy, we played and fought our way through the years. Even now, so very many years later, I could clearly see his mischievous grin, bright eyes, and grubby fingernails. Always with a plan, always doing something. I loved him and hated him. Now I missed him terribly.

Sighing deeply, I turned over on my side, thoughts straying back to the man Yeshua. What was it about him that caused me to recollect those hazy, golden years of love and family? He bore no resemblance to any life I had ever known, yet he seemed infinitely familiar. What was it about him? I *did* want to seek him out again. Kuza was right, though. Herod would not be pleased if I became a follower of this man. Well, asking for healing made me no man's follower. Was I intending on asking for healing, then? My sleepless mind ran in circles.

Herod was pleased with less and less these days. Another prophet, Yochanan the Immerser, the one to whom Kuza referred, recently raised his voice against the marriage of Herod and Herodias and now lay rotting

in the dungeons below the palace floors. I shivered. I had never seen the dungeons myself but heard enough descriptions of them: filth, darkness, rats and torture, generally leading to a grisly death of some sort. My stomach lurched at the images.

Some months earlier, reports of Yochanan and his ministry of immersing people in the Jordan River south of the City had reached us. Herod always grew alarmed at the prospect of someone gaining any kind of following, and it seemed that more and more people were flocking to Yochanan and calling him a great prophet of God. Herod's approval ratings with the public were at an all-time low due to his marriage to Herodias, so he thought it would pacify the people to go down and be immersed by Yochanan, thereby showing that he identified with Judaism and the common man.

His advisors (the *yes men*, I secretly called them) fell all over themselves assuring him what a spectacular idea this was. Kuza stood out as the only one objecting.

"And why, my dear Kuza, is this a bad idea," casually asked Herod, stroking his chin (he had no beard, like the Romans), eyes shrewd.

I'm very proud of my husband. He held firm. "Because, Your Excellency, this man Yochanan sees only Adonai as his authority. I have heard that he believes himself to be the forerunner of someone of such significance that he refuses to clearly state who that man may be. He may act in a manner which will cause difficulty for you. We cannot depend on his response."

Herod stared thoughtfully at Kuza for several moments while Kuza held his breath. "Maybe," he said vaguely. Then, shaking his head, he snapped his fingers. "Thank you for your advice, but we will proceed with my original plan." Kuza bowed his head in deference and the meeting was adjourned.

So it was that Herod, Herodias, and several members of the court, my husband included, rode camels out to the Judean wilderness one fateful day as if they were on a day trip. When the royal entourage appeared at the desolate section of the Jordan River where Yochanan immersed, the crowds who were already there drew back to let them through in fearful respect. Only Yochanan himself seemed less than awed by their presence.

Kuza told me later that one would have had to search the world over to find a man as different in appearance from Herod as Yochanan. Dressed in a tunic woven from the hair of camels, a leather belt around his waist, hair long, beard shaggy, he looked utterly bizarre to the king and

his followers. Apparently, this Yochanan made locusts and wild honey his food. "If Elijah the Prophet had come back to life," said Kuza, "this is how I would have pictured him."

He went on to tell me how Herod and Herodias emerged from their chariot and blithely tripped down to the man of God, sniffing with distaste but determined to seem congenial. Herodias attempted to ooze charm, but it was an effort as she was hot and sweaty and not used to discomfort on any level. But any smile was wiped off her face when she heard the greeting Yochanan gave her husband:

"Have you come to repent then?" he boldly asked, staring at Herod.

"I've come to be immersed with the rest of the people," replied Herod carefully.

"Good," said Yochanan, walking over to Herod and standing within a few feet of him. He was a big man, muscular and hairy. He towered over the tetrarch. "Torah says that it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. Repent and be immersed into the Kingdom of Heaven." His voice rang with the truth and power of God's Spirit.

Herod's face turned red, then purple. Furious beyond imagining, at first he was incapable of speech. Herodias could be heard gasping with rage. Before Herod could regain his breath, one of his top advisors whispered something in his ear. Nodding curtly, Herod swung on his heel and he and his entourage headed right back to Jerusalem.

Later, after the crowds around Yochanan had dispersed and there was no chance for a riot, Herod sent several guards and had the prophet bound and arrested for his remarks.

Hip throbbing, I propped up several pillows and lay back on them in a sitting position, knees bent for relief. The faint glimmerings of anxiety reached its icy fingers toward me. Remembering the Prophet Yochanan in the dungeon robbed me of any fragile claim to peace of mind I may have had. What was it Yeshua had preached today? *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near!* We at the palace were so very, very far from the Kingdom of Heaven.

The door to the room opened and I saw the silhouette of a man cross the room. Kuza. My husband. A fine man. I thought, as I often did, that I was very fortunate to be his wife.

Slight, of medium build, balding, brown eyes haggard from the demands of his job, Kuza was the type of man who was liked by most everyone due to the irresistible combination of unassuming competence with a non-threatening demeanor. In a world where all involved jostled and pushed for position and power, he seemed content to merely excel in

the same position, year after year.

I almost hadn't married him. At sixteen years old, several suitors vied for my hand, and Kuza seemed one of the least exciting. Even his position at the palace—he was a clerk at the time—failed to thrill me as he neglected to make capital of the glamour, not realizing at the time how interested I would have been. I had pretty much decided that I wanted the boisterous Shimshon, since I was dazzled by his flashing white teeth and curly black hair. But Abba and Ema took me aside one day.

My father cleared his throat. "Yohie, *beeti*, you're a marriageable young lady now, no longer a child," he began.

"And we need to talk about who you're going to marry," finished my mother, interrupting him.

Raising his shaggy eyebrows at her, my father persevered. "We think that Kuza will make a good husband for you."

"Kuza!" I laughed. "Oh, no! It's Shimshon I love."

Abba and Ema didn't look surprised. "We don't think Shimshon will make you happy," Ema pointed out.

"Of course he will," I replied, with all the careless confidence of the young. "Why wouldn't he?"

"He needs a lot of attention," said my mother.

"He spends more time in front of the mirror than you do," grumbled my father.

"He keeps losing jobs," my mother reminded me.

"He has walked away from three possible betrothments that we know about," elucidated my father.

With these and many other arguments, they kept speaking to me day after day. And after a while, to my credit, I *did* notice flaws in Shimshon to which I had previously been blind. At the same time, Kuza looked more and more appealing.

It came about at this time that Herod the Great sickened and died. Treacherous and murderous, his passing caused no sorrow. Indeed, it was cause for rejoicing, or should have been. Evil to the end, he imprisoned the most illustrious men of Israel from every village and held them in the Hippodrome. His will ordered them killed at his death so that there would be mourning in Israel at the time of his passing since he knew that the Jews would otherwise hold a festival. Instead, after he died, his sister Salome and her husband, Alexas, freed these men and sent them home. There was no mourning in Israel.

Herod's kingdom was divided among his three sons. Archelaus inherited Judaea and Samaria. Philip received the northeast territories.

Herod Antipas succeeded him as tetrarch in Jerusalem, receiving the Galilean and Peraean portions of his father's kingdom.

The new administration of Herod Antipas entirely revamped the palace staff, and, as a result, Kuza was promoted to the post of undersecretary of finance. This new position came with a small suite of rooms on the lower level of the palace, as well as a substantial pay increase. Nothing appealed to my girlish fancy more than the idea of being in the center of all that was luxurious and powerful in Jerusalem.

The extra hours Kuza worked during this time also made him less available to court me. I was less and less able to take him for granted since he just didn't have the time to pander to my whims. This, combined with the allure of the proximity of royalty, succeeded in greatly elevating his desirability.

And for some reason he looked better. I didn't find him attractive when we first met, but as I grew to love and appreciate him, he got more and more appealing. Kuza has a nice face that is pleasing to the eye yet doesn't draw undue attention. Perhaps this is another reason he has lasted so long with Herod.

So we were married in the spring of my seventeenth year. I wore orange blossoms in my hair and a long sheer veil inherited from my grandmother trailed on the floor behind me. All of our friends and family stood in attendance, and one would have been hard-pressed to find a more perfect day. As the prophet Jeremiah stated, *Yet again will be heard in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem the sounds of joy and gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and bride.* That day, when Kuza lifted my veil and looked into my exultant eyes, and beheld the rosy bloom of youth on my cheek and the lush curls of my shining black hair, his eyes grew wet and he was overcome by happiness. I looked up at him through dark eyelashes, made even darker from kohl, and saw boundless vistas of realized dreams, a golden aura stretching far into the future.

And where is that elusive gleaming future now, I thought bitterly, turning restlessly on my side. The bed creaked as Kuza, now undressed, settled himself into bed next to me.

"Still awake, Yohi?" he asked.

"Yes, my love." I reached my hand out in the dark and he took it and grasped it. We lay silently for several moments, holding hands.

Then he spoke: "There's something I neglected to tell you earlier."

"What?"

"You know that it's Herod's birthday next week? Well, he's throwing a huge banquet and I'm expected to be there. It's mostly men, though, so

you're off the hook.”

Another banquet! These affairs came along far too frequently for my taste. They tended to be elaborate, never-ending drunken bashes, with enough food to feed half of Jerusalem stuffed down the palates of men who sought to imitate Rome with their unlimited appetites. As Herod's finance minister, Kuza was expected to be at these things, working the crowd, politically available. He treaded cautiously though, as restraint was thrown to the wind once the drinking really got going. These were violent times we lived in, and volatile, angry men needed very little encouragement to blow up. I already knew that I would spend the night pacing our apartment until he returned safely.

“Oh, Kuza.” I sighed. “I suppose there's no way out?”

I felt him shake his head in the dark. “None. But don't worry. I'll be fine. I'll just slip out at the first opportunity.” He yawned. I wanted to keep talking but he needed to rest.

“*Lilah tov.*”

“*Lilah tov,*” he responded, voice fading as sleep overcame him.



All throughout the week that followed, I thought about Yeshua, and the words he had spoken at the Temple courts. Whether I was directing my servants in their daily duties, or shopping, or walking through Jerusalem, or sitting and reading, or lying in bed, I would see his face before me. The parable of the farmer scattering seed came back to my mind, and a longing I could not identify rose up in me, desiring to be the good soil. *My life has not been very fruitful thus far*, I reflected wryly, sitting in my rooms one bright afternoon, a book opened but unread on my lap.

Twenty-seven years had come and gone since the day Kuza had taken me for his wife. We greatly desired to have a family, only to bear dead baby after dead baby. Finally, one child lived, a girl. Small, sickly, fragile, but so beautiful that my heart would ache just looking at her. She was the light of our life for years, until...resolutely, I pushed those memories away. I could not yet face them.

One by one, those I loved dearly on this earth passed away or vanished, leaving me desolate. Mother, father, brother, child. When my dear father died, I inherited a substantial fortune. It seemed that the spice business was highly lucrative, indeed. I also discovered that my father had taken his extra profits and had quietly bought several houses in Jerusalem and the outlying areas, which he rented at a considerable profit. I

suddenly owned half a dozen homes. Somehow, the thought of all that real estate comforted me in a way that money did not.

By this time (I was in my mid-thirties), palace life had lost all its charm so I suggested to Kuza that we move to the nicest one of these homes. The dear man would have done so, but Herod, in a fit of ill humor, said *no*.

“What does he mean, *no*?” I stormed aloud to Kuza, in the sanctity of our own apartment. “We’re not his prisoners! Why can’t we live in our own home?” And I kicked the leg of a chair, frustrated and angry.

Kuza attempted to calm me down. “He’s the tetrarch, Yohana,” he patiently explained, as if to a small child. “In effect, we *are* his prisoners. Being so close to the throne has many benefits but brings danger with it. You know that. Herod wants me available day and night. If I’m living outside the bounds of the palace, I’m not so accessible. And besides,” he added with an inscrutable look, “it appears that I have become invaluable.”

And so we stayed at the palace....

For more of the story, read on...

וְהָאֵלֹהִים

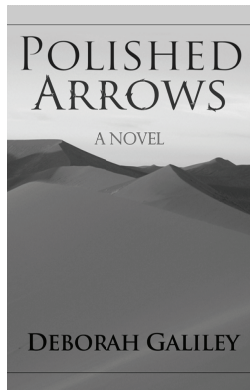
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About the Author



DEBORAH GALILEY is a Jewish believer in Yeshua (Jesus). She grew up in a conservative Jewish home on Long Island, came to faith in Los Angeles, and has lived in Central New York since 1989. Deborah is a rebbetzen (rabbi's wife—her husband, Steve, is the rabbi), mother of five, author, percussionist, bread baker, and clarinetist. She has been healed of breast cancer in a miraculous fashion and prays for healing in others.

Deborah's first book, *Polished Arrows*, is the Devorah/Yael story from Judges 4. In addition to writing journalistic articles for several publications in the Messianic Jewish Movement, she is also working on a book called *From the Garden to the Heights of Hermon*. These are two short, complementary novels in one volume. *The Garden* is the story of the original Eve, while *The Heights of Hermon* details the spiritual odyssey of an American Jewish girl.

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