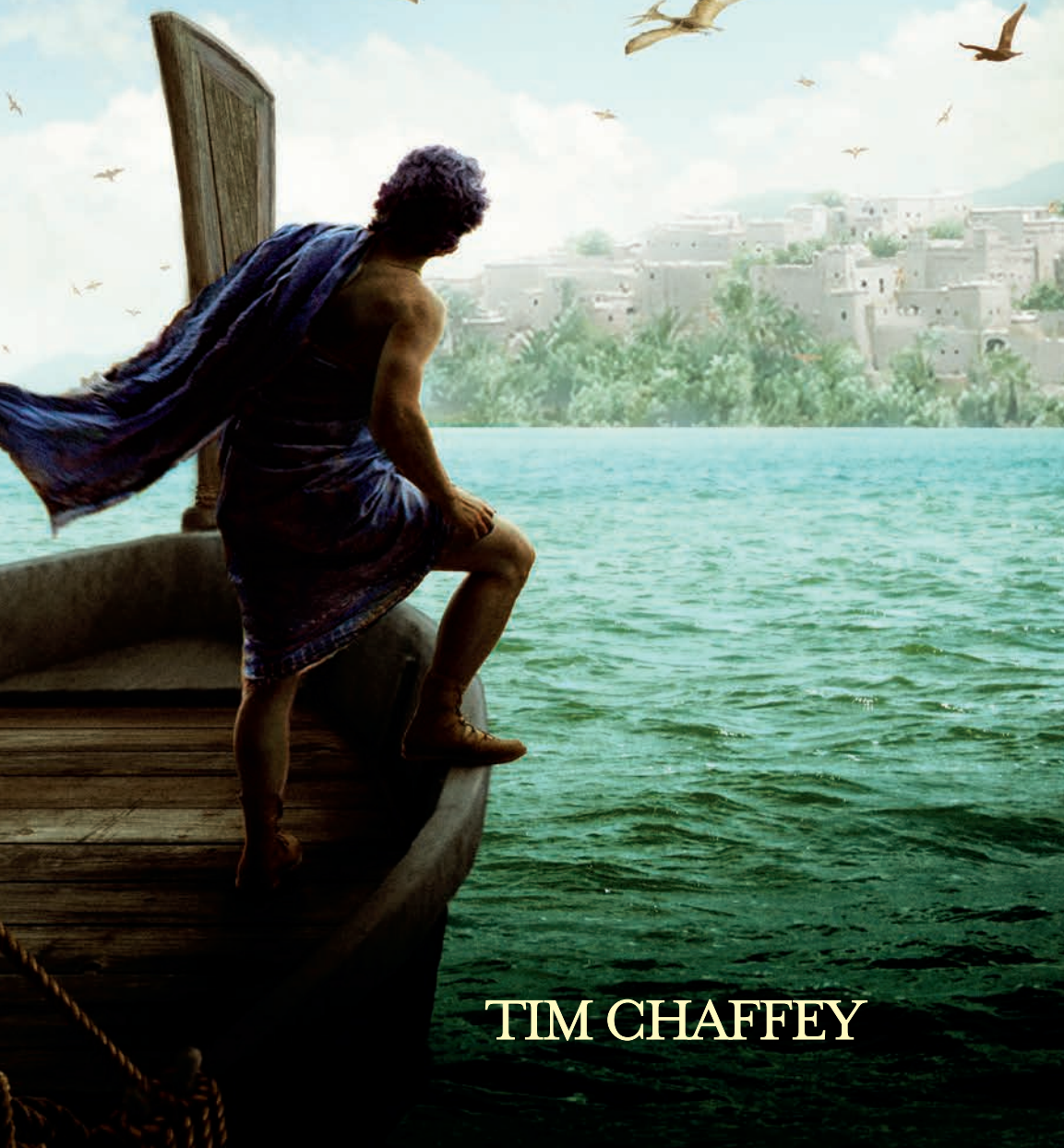


THE REMNANT TRILOGY | BOOK 1

NOAH

MAN OF DESTINY



TIM CHAFFEY

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Thank You

Writing a novel requires a tremendous commitment of time and energy from many people other than the authors. We realize this project could never have been completed without the assistance of so many wonderful individuals. We would like to offer a sincere “Thank you” to the following people.

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DEAR READER,

Most people recognize Noah as the man who built the Ark, but have you ever wondered what he was really like? How did he have the necessary skills to accomplish such an overwhelming task? Who were Noah's parents? When and how did he meet his wife? Was she a godly woman?

The Bible tells us he was a righteous man, but was he a faithful believer from a young age? Were there plenty of righteous people in his life as he grew up or was the world already filled with violence and depravity?

And while we're on the subject, how did Noah age? During this time, many people lived more than 900 years. Such a concept is difficult for us to imagine, but what might it have been like to live so long? Did people back then age at a slower rate so that at 600 years old, Noah could pass for someone who's only 60 today?

More than a fourth of all of human history passed by the time the Flood devastated the earth, yet this period is compressed into just six chapters of Genesis. So we are left to wonder about how many things might have been. In some cases, the Bible gives little clues on which we can build our speculations, but we must be careful to always distinguish between Scripture and our own ideas. For example, many Christians believe the Bible teaches that Noah was mocked while he built the Ark, but even though this idea is often repeated, you will never find this anywhere in the Bible. While it is certainly believable that a righteous man would be scoffed at by a wicked society, the Bible just does not tell us this about Noah. So even though it makes sense, we must realize that idea is merely speculation instead of Scripture.

As strange as it may seem, one of the goals in writing this novel was to help readers distinguish between fiction and biblical fact. Yes, you read that correctly. I want to use fiction to teach how to discern between fiction and biblical, historical account. To help in this goal, a non-fiction section is included at the end of the book that includes answers to mul-

tiple questions that may arise as you read, as well as some surprises for readers who have visited or plan to visit the Ark Encounter theme park in Kentucky. But I am getting ahead of myself. First, you need to meet young Noah. So, join me for a respectful reimagining of what life for the man who built the Ark must have been like.

— Tim Chaffey



CHAPTER 1

Iri Sana — Noah's 38th year

Wood shavings dropped to the floor like the curls of a child's first haircut as Noah repositioned the chair seat he was carving. He examined each edge, then pushed his blade along the perimeter, carving away a wafer-thin slice. Tilting his head, he examined the result, then, satisfied, exchanged the carving blade for a polishing stone and began the long process of smoothing the wood.

Having done this numerous times before, Noah allowed his mind to wander as his right fingers felt the scratchy grain of the wood and his left hand guided the polishing stone in confident, careful strokes.

He had been only 30 when his father, Lamech, declared his intention to build a new, larger shelter for their family's expanding herds. With a grimace, Noah remembered the effort he had exerted to persuade his father to include the woodshop. Only after many revisions to the building drawings — wherein father and son went back and forth — and after much reassurance that Noah's woodcarving projects would not get in the way of his helping on the farm, had this room become a reality.

Noah looked around the small space. It was well worth the many heated discussions. Here, in the place with barely enough room for him to stretch out on the floor, there was sufficient area for him to work and ample space to dream. His few tools hung neatly along one wall, their shadows dancing in the flickering light from his lamp. They weren't much, but they were enough. Each tool, each completed project, gave

him a small measure of hope that he would not always have to work in the fields with his father. Still, Noah's restlessness increased as his Rovay approached, the ceremony in which the community officially recognized him as a man.

This warm season was his least favorite. The longer days meant the stolen time before sunup afforded Noah his only opportunity to work on something he really enjoyed. Not that he hated his farm duties. In fact, he liked working the ground. It was hard work, but there was gratification in planting seeds, tending the shoots, and watching them grow to produce a harvest. But none of these labors brought the same degree of satisfaction as selecting the proper piece of wood and revealing, chip by chip, portions of the form until the final product took shape.

Noah set the stone down and ran his palm across the seat. He grinned, thinking of what could ensue if a guest happened to sit on this chair without all the splinters removed. Pleased with his work, he turned and stared out the open window. A gentle breeze cooled his sticky skin and carried the scent of springal blossoms, a welcome relief from the barn's customary pungency. An almost-whole moon bathed the earth with its soft light, and a faint glow on the horizon indicated that the sun would be up soon.

Another long day in the fields. It was up to him and Jerah to prepare the orb plant field today. A stab of rebellious energy pierced him at the thought of the tedious work stretching before him. He resolved anew to speak with his father, only to deflate moments later at the thought of his father's look of disappointment. Noah shook his head, muttering to himself as he returned the stone to its place on the shelf. "He just won't understand."

Noah gazed at the quickly fading stars. Following the example he had witnessed countless times from his grandfather and father, he offered a quick prayer. *God, thank You for providing in abundance everything I need. Help me to remain faithful to You in all things today. May my work —*

A shout from inside the house shattered the silence. Noah's head jerked up. Why would his brother be creating so much noise this early in the morning? He strode to the doorway of the barn just in time to see the silhouette of a man crash out of the door of their house and into the dusky terrain. Moments later, Jerah ran out the door and yelled again.

"Stop!"

The shadowy figure ran across the yard in Noah's direction as Jerah gave chase. Alert, heart pounding, Noah tightened the knee-length cloth wound around his waist before he sprinted away from the barn. The stranger spotted him and turned left toward the row of springal trees Noah's mother had planted on the north side of the house. Knowing that only 20 of the short, bush-like trees were in that row, Noah altered his course and dashed down the other side of the trees, hoping that Jerah would pick up on his strategy and flank the fleeing man.

The row of trees between them made judging the man's speed in the faint light difficult, but hearing sounds of brush cracking under feet nearby, Noah guessed they were nearly even in their pace. He sped toward the last tree, hoping to tackle the man as they came into the open. As Noah attempted to plant his left foot to cut in front of the stranger's path, he slipped in the dew-covered grass and slid to the ground. The intruder jumped over him, but Noah shot his arm out in a desperate attempt to thwart his escape. He barely missed as the man twisted to avoid Noah's grasp.

While the man's maneuver prevented his capture, he landed awkwardly and stumbled. He splayed in the long grass and skimmed across the moist ground ahead and to Noah's right. Both men scrambled to gain their footing as Jerah approached.

"Stop!"

The invader ignored Jerah's command and ran into the malid orchard, which was about one hundred paces from the house.

"Come on, Noah," Jerah said as he sprinted past. "Try to keep up."

Needing no further taunts, Noah bolted into the trees. *There's no way my little brother is going to outrun me.* Ducking under branches as he ran, Noah struggled to keep the stranger in his sights, thankful it wasn't later in the year, when he would need to dodge the large fruit that would dangle from the limbs. He strained to hear the man's footsteps, but his own breathing and his brother's yelling blocked out any other sounds.

Knowing the wide river at the edge of the orchard would likely force the man to head right in a few moments, Noah cut across the second-to-last row of trees, aiming to put himself directly in the path of the trespasser. If Jerah continued his pursuit directly from the rear, the fleeing man would be trapped between the stream and the two brothers.

Slowing his pace slightly, Noah broke free of the orchard just in time to see the darkly clad man veer right to avoid the river, exactly as he had

guessed. The stranger took several steps in Noah's direction before spotting him. He was only 20 cubits away when he stopped. He glanced first at Noah and then at Jerah, who emerged from the orchard and closed in.

Now that his eyes were well-adjusted to the dusky morning light, Noah saw a loaf of bread in the man's hand. "Who are you?"

The burglar looked at the brothers, dropped the bread, and then raced toward the river.

Noah shook his head before continuing his pursuit. Jerah, who had not slowed, tackled the man, sending them both toppling down the waist-high riverbank into the mushy silt of the river's edge below. Undeterred, the thief punched Jerah's cheek and then kicked himself free.

As the morning sky turned from pink into a lighter, brighter hue, Noah caught his first good look at the man. Dark, unkempt hair draped over his forehead. He possessed a muscular, but wiry, build. Noah clenched his fist. *Who is this man who thinks he can steal from us?*

Upon clearing the last several patches of tall orchard grass, Noah jumped down the embankment and used the drop as well as his anger to fuel his force as he slammed into the man. They fell into the cool, shallow water with a splash.

Keeping a grip on the stranger was more difficult than Noah had imagined. Quickly sizing up his opponent, Noah concluded the man was a little shorter and lighter, but he was solid and quick. Noah would have to use his height to his advantage if he wanted to maintain control. He gripped the man's shoulder and pressed his weight down to keep the challenger off balance in the soft, muddy river bottom, which squished and shifted constantly beneath their feet. Before Noah could react, the thief grabbed him around the neck with his left arm, and with his right, he delivered a sharp elbow into Noah's ribs, knocking the wind out of him.

As Noah staggered back, he saw Jerah attempt another jump on the man. However, this time, the man dodged the attack, causing the momentum of Jerah's body to slip right over him and drop in the deeper portion of the river. Anxious not to lose the intruder, Noah fought for air, but nothing seemed to enter his lungs. With great effort, he lunged toward the man and clipped his foot just as he exited the water. Any air left in Noah's lungs whooshed out as he landed flat on his stomach.

Gasping, Noah expected to hear sounds of the man scrambling away, but he only heard a splat as the thief landed in the nearby muck. Noah

wanted to get to his feet, but the breathless sensation in his midsection caused him to contort in pain instead.

Jerah trudged through the water's edge and bent over to give his brother a hand up. "Ouch. That can't feel good."

"Go." Noah whispered, each word taking great effort. "Get him."

"There's no need. Look."

Fully sitting up now, Noah took in a deep breath and turned. He spotted the motionless man lying face up on the shore only a few steps away. "What happened?"

"You tripped him, and he got knocked out by that big rock. I don't think he's going anywhere for a while."

"Make sure he's still breathing."

Jerah walked over to the still figure and knelt down. "He's breathing." He checked the man for further injuries. "He's a little torn up, and already he's got a pretty good knot on his head. But nothing looks broken."

"Are you both alright?"

Noah looked up to see his father standing on top of the bank, wheezing from the sprint. "We're fine. That's more than I can say for him."

Lamech studied his two sons and then the man who had broken into his house. "Looks like you did a good job. Tie him up, and let's get him back to the house. We'll have to keep an eye on him."

Noah untied his belt and handed it to Jerah. "Here, use this." He wound his knee-length tunic around his body a little tighter and tucked the end of the cloth into the fold at his waist.

Lamech stepped down next to his sons as Jerah took the pliable leather strap and bound the man's hands together with a series of tight knots. "Tell me what happened," Lamech said. He reached out his hand to help steady Noah, who slowly climbed to his feet.

"I woke up early and heard some noise coming from the main room," Jerah said. "I assumed it was just Noah heading out to the woodshop, but decided to check because it seemed too late for Noah to be starting out. When I came around the corner, I saw him" — he gestured with his thumb to the prone man — "in our house. He was grabbing some food." He glanced at Noah before adding, "It's a good thing Noah was already out in the barn. I wouldn't have caught him alone."

Lamech frowned, though whether because of the invasion of his home or because of Noah's activities in the barn, Noah couldn't tell. Not

caring to discover the source of his father's displeasure at the moment, he turned away and began climbing up the embankment. He paused at the top to pick up a soggy loaf of bread lying in the tall grasses. As he held it up to show his father and brother, it began to separate and slop into pieces down his raised arm. Quickly dropping the rest of it, Noah shrugged, "I doubt he'll want this anymore."

Jerah's quick grin lit up his face. "He won't miss it."

Lamech put a hand on Jerah's shoulder. "Come on, let's get him back to the house."

CHAPTER 2

Noah emerged from his room wearing a clean work robe. He strode from the side hallway into the main living area, where he watched as his mother, Nina, pulled two rounds of bread from the back of the brick oven.

They had lived in this home for only 20 years now. Noah remembered watching as his parents planned for the expansion soon after his sister, Misha, had been born. On more than one occasion, he had peeked through a break in the curtains that sectioned off Jerah's and his bed pallets to see his parents sitting at the low table, heads bent, as his mother sketched in the dim light from nearby oil lamps. His father would point at a few places on the sketch and comment. Their soft voices carried no discernable words, just excitement.

Noah and Jerah, as young as they were, had helped build the expanded timber-frame house. The back half of the large, single room was separated into two equal-sized bedrooms. Two other sleeping quarters were added, along with a hallway connecting all four rooms. The hallway turned at a right angle, opening into the large room at the front of the house, which contained the kitchen and dining area, and was the hub of family activity. Growing up, Noah liked that his room was the closest to the kitchen. That meant fewer steps to get to the food.

"Noah."

Noah jolted at his mother's voice.

"Can you get some honey on the table?" she asked. "Firstfeast is almost ready."

“Of course.” Noah passed by the low table where the family ate their meals, noting that it was already filled with food. The clay oven on his right held a prominent position, dividing the table area from where the main room extended back in an “L” shape — the place they now kept their food stores. Noah moved to the right of the oven where he had installed the wooden cabinetry he built for his mother a few years ago. He inhaled the fresh aroma. *Mmm. There’s nothing like the smell of fresh-baked bread.*

Noah opened the cabinet closest to him and reached on the topmost shelf, fumbling around the containers of dried figs and preserves until he found the honey. Stomach grumbling, he retrieved a crock filled with golden goodness. Had he been a bit younger, he might have given in to the urge to sample the contents.

The door opened. Lamech entered and hugged his slender wife. “Looks delicious, Nina.”

Brushing back a strand of wavy hair that never would stay out of her face, she leaned in, gave him a quick kiss, and pointed to the table. “The fruits, nuts, and herbs are out, and the rest will be ready soon.”

“Here’s the milk. I’ll go wash up.”

Noah took the warm, fresh milk from his father and placed it and the crock of honey on the table. He walked over to the far side of the main room, where they kept all their dried goods stored in large earthenware pots and woven baskets. Jerah and Misha looked up at him from where they kept watch over the unconscious intruder, who lay on a low cot usually reserved for visitors. Noah had constructed the wooden frame of the bed, and Misha’s talented fingers had tightly looped many cords around it in a diamond pattern, weaving and knotting them to provide a firm base.

Jerah stood at the head of the cot, one leg casually crossed over the other, and leaned his arm on the wall. Misha sat on a stool close to the injured man and checked a bandage on his arm.

Sunlight beamed through the large, open window next to Jerah, giving Noah an opportunity to get a good look at the prostrate man. He looked younger than Noah had guessed — perhaps just a few years older than Noah. Dark, curly hair spilled over a bandage covering the wound on his head, and a short scraggly beard gave the impression that he hadn’t groomed himself much in recent days. Noah saw scratches and other

marks on his limbs from the tussle early that morning. Peering closer, he noticed other scabs and scars, indicating deeper wounds that had mostly healed.

Noah glanced at Jerah. "How is he?"

"He's groaned a few times, but other than that, he seems to be resting well."

"And you?"

Jerah smiled and touched the bruise that swelled on his cheek. He winced but kept his grin. "This? This is nothing. I'll be fine."

Misha nudged Jerah with her bony elbow and looked up at him. "The girls at the market are going to think you look tough now."

Jerah laughed, stuck out his chest, and placed his hands on his waist, elbows out.

"Well, except those skinny arms will betray him," Noah said pinching his brother's biceps.

Jerah turned red as Noah and Misha laughed. "Hey, you would've never caught him by yourself."

Noah nodded. "That's true. You were pretty brave this morning. You should've seen him, Misha."

"Yeah, I jumped on him twice."

"And got thrown off twice." Noah smiled, turning up just one side of his mouth. "I'm the one who took him down."

"You just got lucky that he hit his head when you tripped him. Otherwise, as slow as you are, he would have been long gone."

Before Noah could fire his next comeback, Misha pointed. "Look."

Noah looked down at the bound man and called out to his father, "He's waking up."

The stranger briefly opened his eyes and then squinted hard. He tried again, looking toward Misha and blinking several times.

Lamech strode into the room and stood next to Noah. "How is he?"

Noah shrugged.

The young man attempted to see where the voice had come from, but flinched and quickly rested his head back down. He tried to move his hands, but the binding held fast. "Where am I? Why am I tied up?" His speech slurred a little. "Who are you?"

"Why don't you tell us first who you are?" Lamech placed a hand on Misha's head. "Let your mother know that we'll be there soon."

Shoulders slumped, Misha walked out of the room.

“Who are you?” Lamech resumed his questioning as he sat down on Misha’s stool.

Rolling his head slowly, the stranger looked up at Noah and then at Lamech. “My name is Aterre.” He opened his mouth to speak, but then stopped and closed his eyes. “Are you the ones I fought with?”

Noah nodded. “I’m Noah.” He motioned to his brother, who was still standing by the window. “And that’s Jerah.”

Aterre shifted slowly and placed his bound hands unsteadily on the edge of the cot. Using them as a prop, he carefully scooted himself into a more upright position and leaned his back against the wall. With clenched jaw, he squinted into the sunlight, trying to see Jerah better, then he turned guarded eyes back to Lamech as the older man continued.

“I’m their father, Lamech. What were you doing in my house?”

“I was trying to find something to eat.”

Noah noticed Aterre had a different accent. He pronounced some vowel sounds much more quickly than Noah had ever heard. *If I’d been able to travel, maybe I’d know where he was from.*

“And you thought to steal it from us?”

“I was hungry. It’s how I’ve been able to survive these last several whole moons.” He shifted again in obvious discomfort. Noah couldn’t tell if it was because Aterre was uncomfortable over getting caught or if his injuries caused the distress.

“What about before that?” Noah asked.

Aterre shook his head. “I was never a thief, but lately I’ve had to.” He paused and closed his eyes, his whole demeanor hardening. “All because they came.”

Noah and his father exchanged glances.

“Who came?” Lamech leaned closer.

Aterre sat there stiffly.

“Young man.” Lamech’s voice firmed in a way Noah knew all too well. “I’m asking because I’m trying to decide whether I should turn you over to the town protectors. So unless you want to be punished by them, you need to start talking. Who came?”

“Men. They attacked my village one night. It happened so fast. I heard screams and saw bodies strewn everywhere.” Aterre’s eyes fixed on nothing, and they were filled with hatred. “My mother and sisters are

gone. They would've killed me if I hadn't grabbed the knife I keep under my pallet and swung it at the face of the man who grabbed me. Judging by the amount of blood I felt, I think I cut him pretty bad. He screamed and let go of me." He slumped, his voice falling to a whisper. "I fled and kept on running until I was sure no one was following me."

Lamech gently placed his hand on Aterre's shoulder. "Do you know who the men were?"

Aterre shook his head, wincing at the sudden movement, and then shrugged off Lamech's hand. "No. There were just too many. They came so suddenly."

"Were they from around here?" Noah asked.

"I doubt it." Aterre sighed and looked at the wooden poles that comprised the main frame of the peaked thatched ceiling. "I've been on the run for nearly six whole moons, so I'm not sure if I know precisely where 'here' is. We lived in the land of Havilah, on the southwestern side of the Blue Sea. With no family left and no clue who attacked us, I just wanted to get far away from that place. I thought I'd take my chances and go to the land of Eden. I knew no one would even try to find me there."

Noah knew rumors about the land of Eden, which was located far away to the northwest, following the Hiddekel River up through the land of Asshur. Still he was curious to know what Aterre had heard. "Why there?"

Aterre raised his eyebrows. "You don't know?"

"Tell me." Noah knelt down to be at his eye level.

"There are tales that the land was cursed in ancient times and is haunted by the spirits of everyone who has died attempting to enter it. They say that anyone who goes there will either die or lose their mind."

Noah raised his eyebrows. "And you aren't afraid to go there?"

"My mother always taught us not to believe the legends. She said spirits of people couldn't harm anyone — that when we die, we just go to the ground and stay there. I guess I trust her more than the stories."

"We have our stories about Eden here too." Jerah leaned in.

"What stories?" Aterre tried to scoot closer but his jaw clenched and he quickly abandoned the attempt.

Jerah sat at the foot of the bed. "My great grandfather was named Enoch. He spent a lot of time in the land of Nod warning people that the Creator would judge the wicked."

“Of course, they mocked him,” Noah said. “Father says the people there are pretty evil.”

“One time he decided to go to the land of Eden with my father’s uncle, Berit.” Jerah lowered his voice. “But Enoch never came back.”

“What happened to him?”

Lamech held his hand out to stop his second son from continuing. “My uncle says that he was walking behind my grandfather. He looked to the side for a second, and when he turned back he only saw a flash of light and my grandfather was gone.”

“Really?”

Lamech nodded. “My uncle thinks he crossed the border to Eden and was turned into a spirit.”

“Is that where the rumors come from?” Aterre looked more awake now.

“Maybe, but I don’t think that’s what happened. My grandfather walked closely with the Creator.”

“What do you mean? They took walks together?”

Lamech shook his head and smiled. “No, that’s our way of saying he faithfully followed the Creator’s ways. So, my family and I believe that the Creator took him because he was so faithful.”

“Why would He do that?” Aterre asked.

“Maybe to spare him from all the wickedness in this world.”

Aterre raised an eyebrow. “By killing him?”

“He didn’t die. He was taken so that he didn’t need to face death. Now, he lives with the Creator.”

Aterre let out a deep breath.

Lamech studied the young man for a long moment. “Do you have any idea what happened to your mother and sisters?”

Sadness swept over Aterre’s face. “If they’re still alive, my guess is that they’re slaves.”

“Slaves?” Lamech asked. “That’s happening in Havilah too? My grandfather said that some places in Nod took people as slaves, but I didn’t know anyone else would do something like that.”

“I’d heard rumors about it,” Aterre said, “but I never imagined it would happen to my family.”

“I’m sorry about what you’ve been through.” Lamech paused, looking critically at Aterre. “How would you feel about staying with us?”

Aterre looked up with widened eyes. He appeared as stunned as Noah felt. “With you? But I just robbed you and fought your sons. Why would you be so kind to me?”

“The Creator expects us to be kind to others, particularly to those in need.” Lamech shifted in his seat. “If what you told us is true, then it seems to me that you need to be part of a family again.” Lamech motioned to Aterre’s hands. “Noah, Jerah, untie him.”

“Yes, sir.” Noah worked to untie the leather belt that had secured Aterre’s hands together while Jerah undid the one at his feet. Misha entered the room again and stood next to their father.

Aterre stretched out his hands and gingerly flexed his arms. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. You know, there are other ways of getting food around here.” Lamech motioned to Noah and Jerah. “I’m sure the boys wouldn’t mind having some more help in the fields.”

“The fields?” Aterre’s eyes lit up ever so slightly. “You’re a farmer? I’d love to help.” Aterre attempted to sit up straight but quickly changed his mind. “I guess my head is still spinning.”

Lamech lightly patted Aterre’s shoulder. “Just take your time. I’ll have Misha bring you a plate.”

Misha jumped to her feet and smiled at Aterre. “You talk funny.”

Aterre grinned. “I might say the same about you.”

She laughed and hurried into the kitchen.

Lamech stood up. “Here’s my proposal. Take some time to heal up, and then as long as you’re willing to work on the farm, you’re welcome to stay with us. Noah can teach you what you need to know.”

Aterre looked at him steadily. “I don’t know what to say.”

“Don’t thank me just yet,” Lamech said. He smiled and put an arm around Noah and pulled him close. “You haven’t had to work with my son yet.”