

The Bronze Bow



INTRODUCTION

Galilee, raising Jairus's daughter back to life, and teaching through vivid parables.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ELIZABETH GEORGE SPEARE

Elizabeth George was born and grew up outside of Boston, where she enjoyed a happy childhood—she had a large, loving extended family and spent much time exploring both the city and the outlying countryside. Elizabeth first discovered her love of writing stories as a child. After earning a Bachelor's degree from Smith College and a Master's in English from Boston University, she taught high school English for a few years. Though she always wanted to attempt writing as a career, marriage and children (she had two, Alden, Jr., and Mary, with her husband Alden Speare) occupied most of her time in the 1940s and early 1950s. After getting articles published in several women's and parents' magazines, she published her first book, *Calico Captive*, in 1957. Her second, *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, in 1958, won numerous awards, including the Newbery Medal, an award given by a division of the American Library Association for a "distinguished contribution" to American children's literature. *The Bronze Bow* and *The Sign of the Beaver* also earned Newbery accolades, putting Speare on a short list of multiple Newbery winners. In 1989, she was also awarded the Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal for her achievements in children's literature.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The novel is set during the life of Jesus and features a first century Jewish political group known as the Zealots. The name *Zealot* comes from a Hebrew word meaning someone who's zealous on God's behalf. Galilee, a region of northern Israel, and neighboring Judea came under Roman rule in the early part of the first century C.E. Zealots rose up in these regions seeking to rebel and throw off Roman rule, believing God would help them. One of the noted rebels was Judas of Galilee, who is mentioned in the book as a former comrade of the character Rosh. Around 6 C.E., Judas particularly resisted a tax imposed by Rome for tax purposes. Like Daniel and his friends in the book, the Zealots were inspired by the Maccabees, a family who mounted a successful rebellion against their Greek oppressors about 150 years earlier. The Maccabees rose up against suppression of Jewish practices and rededicated the Temple at Jerusalem (an event commemorated by the festival of Hanukkah), founding the Jewish Hasmonean Dynasty which lasted until it became a Roman client kingdom in 63 B.C.E. In her portrayal of Jesus, Speare adheres fairly closely to episodes described in the New Testament Gospels, such as Jesus's preaching in the synagogue and on the shores of the Sea of

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The novel draws regularly on books of the Bible, tracing the New Testament narratives of Jesus's ministry fairly closely (especially those found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke), as well as referencing the Psalms from the Hebrew Bible. It also draws on non-canonical Jewish writings (books not regarded as part of the biblical canon) which were studied for their insights on the Messiah's coming and Jewish history, respectively: the Book of Enoch and 1 Maccabees, both written roughly around the second century B.C.E. Speare's other celebrated historical novels include *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* (1958) and *The Sign of the Beaver* (1983), both featuring young protagonists in colonial New England. Another historical novel featuring a portrayal of Jesus is Lew Wallace's immensely popular 1880 novel *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Bronze Bow*
- **When Published:** 1961
- **Literary Period:** Modern
- **Genre:** Children's Historical Novel
- **Setting:** Ancient Palestine (Roman-occupied Galilee)
- **Climax:** Jesus heals Leah.
- **Antagonist:** The Romans
- **Point of View:** Third person limited

EXTRA CREDIT

Guardians of Meaning. In her Newbery Award acceptance speech, Speare stated that she sees books as not just companions, but "guardians" to help equip children in a perilous world. In her view, the most dangerous thing in the world is the possibility that young adults "may settle for a world without meaning."

Sunday School Curriculum. Speare served as a Sunday School teacher in her church, and *The Bronze Bow* came about because of her desire to give her students a more colorful sense of life in ancient Palestine, and to present Jesus as not just a mythic figure, but a compelling and heroic leader.



PLOT SUMMARY

Daniel bar Jamin is an 18-year-old Galilean living under the Roman occupation of Palestine. A Zealot (or fighter for Galilean Jewish freedom), he lives with a rebel band in a cave overlooking his home village of Ketzah. One day he encounters Joel bar Hezron, a former classmate from synagogue school, and Joel's twin sister, Malthace (or Thacia), sightseeing on the mountain. Awkward, yet anxious for news of his grandmother and younger sister Leah back home, he approaches the twins. They recognize him as the runaway apprentice of the village blacksmith Amalek.

The twins don't know much about Daniel's family, but they invite him to share their lunch. Though wary, Daniel slowly relaxes enough to tell them his story. After suffering much abuse, he fled Amalek five years ago. Since then, he's worked for the outlaw Zealot, Rosh, who is training a band of men to fight and overthrow the occupiers. The boys talk about their shared hatred of the Romans and their hope that the Messiah will soon arrive to liberate the Jewish people.

As Daniel escorts his new friends down the mountain, he's summoned to join Rosh's men in seizing an enslaved man from a passing caravan. Joel jumps into the action, too, and tells Rosh he'd like to work for him. Rosh says he'll send for Joel in due time. Back in Rosh's cave, Daniel is given the job of filing the chains off the former slave Samson's wrists. Though Samson does not seem to talk or fully understand Daniel, he bows in gratitude after Daniel frees him. He quickly grows attached and loyal to Daniel.

A few weeks later, a fellow former apprentice, Simon the Zealot, brings Daniel the message that their old master Amalek is dead, freeing Daniel to visit the village. Daniel reluctantly goes to his grandmother's house. He is grieved to find his grandmother bent and frail, and Leah, who has been allegedly demon-possessed since childhood, remains weak and fearful, never leaving the house. The next morning, Simon stops by and invites Daniel to attend the synagogue service with him. The visiting preacher, Jesus, is intriguing, but his message is baffling—he tells the people to repent because God's kingdom is near, but he says nothing about overthrowing the Romans. That night, Daniel retreats to the mountain again.

Weeks later Daniel, restless, travels to the city of Capernaum, where Joel's family has moved, to visit them. He feels out of place in Joel's and Thacia's wealthy villa, and their father, Hezron, kicks Daniel out for his violent Zealot sympathies. Before he can leave Capernaum, Daniel gets into an altercation with a Roman soldier and is badly injured. He flees back to Joel's house, where the twins conceal him in an obscure passageway and nurse him back to health. While Daniel heals, Joel reads him passages from the Bible and the story of the Maccabees. On Thacia's urging, Daniel also tells the story of his

father's death at Roman hands, crucified with several others who tried to rebel. Therefore, ever since childhood, Daniel has vowed to avenge his father by fighting and killing Romans. Leah, too, has been traumatized ever since. Joel and Thacia, moved by Daniel's story, vow to join him in fighting for "God's Victory." They decide that a **bronze bow**, an image from one of the Psalms, will be the symbol of their bond and pledge.

The next time Daniel visits Capernaum, Simon introduces him and Joel to Jesus. Daniel sees Jesus heal some sick people and hears him tell a crowd of the poor that they belong to God's kingdom. Daniel can't understand how this could be true, since these miserable people cannot fight the Romans. Not long after, Daniel's grandmother dies. Simon, who has decided to follow Jesus as a disciple, asks Daniel to take over his blacksmith shop. He and Leah can move into the adjoining house; that way, Daniel can both provide for Leah and keep an eye on her. Though he feels trapped, Daniel agrees. Now that he has a proper shop with real tools, Daniel soon gains a reputation for his fine work. He reconciles himself to serving the occasional Roman customer, though he resents a certain blond soldier who gazes curiously at Leah.

In the village, Daniel begins gathering and leading recruits—mostly raw, untested young men—to support Rosh and prepare to fight the Romans. "The bronze bow" is their password, and they begin meeting in an abandoned watchtower. Meanwhile, Thacia befriends Leah, who blossoms with newfound confidence. Daniel also begins going to Capernaum almost daily to hear Jesus's teachings. Leah loves to hear about Jesus, especially the story of Jesus restoring a dead little girl to life, but she still refuses to leave the house.

Daniel's band of recruits begins doing jobs for Rosh, but it's mostly petty raiding and stealing, which disappoints Daniel. But one day, Joel, who's been spying for Rosh, is taken prisoner by the Romans. Rosh refuses to help, causing Daniel to see his former mentor's self-serving nature. He decides to lead the boys in a raid to rescue Joel themselves. The group conceals themselves on a mountainside and throws rocks on the detachment of Roman soldiers who are leading the prisoners past. Just as they're about to be overpowered by the Romans, Samson appears, saving Daniel's life and breaking Joel's chains with his bare hands. In the process, Samson is fatally wounded, and another of Daniel's recruits, Nathan, is killed. Heartbroken, Daniel is totally disillusioned with Rosh's cause.

Joel moves to Jerusalem to study to be a rabbi. Before he goes, he tells Daniel to warn Jesus that synagogue leaders see him as a threat and are conspiring against him. But when Daniel speaks to Jesus alone, he ends up confessing his guilt over Samson's death and his desire to avenge his friend. Jesus tells Daniel that Samson's love can't be repaid by hatred—after all, killing only causes hate to multiply. Jesus asks Daniel to follow him by loving others, but Daniel declines, feeling constrained by his vow to fight.

A few days later, Daniel watches Thacia dance at the Day of Atonement festival and admits his love for her. However, he tells her that because his loyalty is to God's victory, he can't marry her. When he gets home, he learns that Leah has befriended the blond Roman soldier, Marcus, in secret. He flies into a rage, and Leah retreats into silent depression once again. When Daniel goes to Capernaum to seek Jesus's help for Leah, Simon tells him he is convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, but he also believes that Jesus will never march against the Romans. Instead, Jesus offers his followers peace in their hearts right now, if they refuse to let hatred and fear rule them. Daniel is disgusted and returns home.

Eventually, Leah falls sick with a delirious fever. Even when she is dying, Daniel refuses to let Marcus, who's hovering outside the house, visit her. Instead he sends a message to Thacia that Leah is dying. When Thacia shows up, she brings Jesus with her. Jesus prays at Leah's bedside, and she is soon restored to health. Seeing this, Daniel also surrenders to Jesus at last. He realizes that even though he doesn't understand Jesus's mission for God's kingdom, he trusts Jesus and wants to give up his hatred in order to be part of that mission. Now that Daniel is freed from a life of fighting, he and Thacia make a wordless vow to one another to get married. Then, as Daniel steps outside to thank Jesus, he sees Marcus standing there. He remembers Jesus's words of love and invites Marcus to come inside.

Daniel finally breaks with Rosh when he recognizes that Rosh only sees people as tools to do his bidding; he doesn't care about human beings or about Israel's cause, only about himself. He also becomes disillusioned with the cause after his group narrowly succeeds in rescuing Joel from Roman imprisonment, and only his friend Samson's intervention spares their lives. Jesus then tells Daniel that his hatred for the Romans won't bring freedom, and that the only thing stronger than hatred is love. Daniel resists this message until Leah becomes deathly ill and Jesus miraculously spares her life. At this point, Daniel gives up his vow to hate the Romans and his personal resistance to Jesus. He also opens his heart to Joel's sister Malthace, whom he's loved throughout the book, and he forgives Marcus, the Roman soldier whom Leah has befriended behind his back.

Leah – Leah is Daniel's younger sister. In the story, she is 15 years old, a graceful girl with long blond hair. (In appearance, she takes after their mother, who was half Greek.) However, she is childlike and afraid; having witnessed her father's crucifixion when she was five, she's never left her grandmother's house. Because Leah is withdrawn, timid, and given to fits of terror, most people think she is demon-possessed. However, Leah is also loving and gentle with an appreciation for beauty. She loves and trusts Daniel to care for her, a loyalty he reciprocates, though he often feels trapped by Leah's dependence when he'd rather be fighting the Romans. Though she is too sickly to provide for herself, Leah is a skilled weaver whose cloth fetches high prices in surrounding villages. Thacia becomes Leah's first friend and, behind Daniel's back, Leah also befriends a homesick Roman soldier named Marcus because she's too innocent to fear the Romans. Leah is hungry for stories of Jesus and she presses Daniel for details about his teaching and healing, though she won't go to him herself. After Daniel forces Leah to stop seeing Marcus, Leah falls into a deadly fever, but Jesus heals her and saves her life.

Jesus – Jesus is a carpenter's son and traveling preacher from the Galilean town of Nazareth. Daniel first hears Jesus speak when Simon takes him to the Ketzah synagogue where Jesus is a guest. While there's nothing striking about Jesus's physical appearance, he has a quiet, calm intensity that draws people to him. At first, Daniel doesn't know what to make of Jesus, but he is disappointed that Jesus doesn't call the people to arms against their Roman oppressors. Indeed, Jesus often preaches to ordinary people on the streets, and he spends much time with the sick and disabled, as well as with children. He seems to view all of these supposedly inferior groups as inherently worthwhile and precious to God, capable of entering God's kingdom. Jesus's regard for people as human beings makes his leadership style a stark alternative to Rosh, who views people simply as tools to be used for his own benefit. Jesus's indifference to Jewish priestly tradition also makes him a targeted enemy of the religious authorities. When Daniel finally



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Daniel bar Jamin – The protagonist of the novel, Daniel is an 18-year-old Galilean living in Palestine under Roman rule. He grew up in the village of Ketzah, outside the city of Capernaum. When Daniel was eight, his father and uncle were crucified by the Romans, and his mother died soon after. Because of this, he and his sister, Leah, were raised by their grandmother. Daniel has hated the Romans ever since his parents' deaths, and he dedicates his life to getting revenge on them by winning Israel's freedom from occupation. Because of this obsession, he can have a surly and suspicious temperament, but he's capable of caring about others, too. Daniel once served as blacksmith Amalek's apprentice, but he fled Amalek's abuse by joining Rosh, a Zealot rebel on the mountain overlooking Ketzah. There he continues blacksmithing and trains to fight the Romans someday. After Daniel's grandmother dies and he's forced to move back to Ketzah to care for Leah, he feels torn between his passion to fight Romans and his obligation to provide for Leah. At this time, he takes over Simon the Zealot's smithy and becomes a respected artisan in the village. He also begins listening to Jesus's sermons in neighboring Capernaum. At the same time, Daniel gathers and trains a band of village boys, including his friend Joel, to resist the Romans. However,

speaks with Jesus in private, Jesus tells him that hatred can never bring freedom, and that to become his follower, Daniel must be willing to love his enemies. Though Daniel resists this message, he changes his mind after Jesus heals Leah.

Joel bar Hezron – Joel is Daniel's former classmate at the synagogue school in Ketzah. He becomes Daniel's first and closest friend. Malthace is his twin sister. Their father, Hezron, is a wealthy, scholarly rabbi. When Joel meets Rosh by chance, he decides to join Rosh's movement to fight the Romans. With Daniel, he also takes a vow to dedicate his life to God's kingdom. Over time, he becomes a shrewd spy for Rosh in the city of Capernaum. When he gets caught by the Romans and sentenced to labor in the galleys, Daniel's band of rebel fighters saves his life. Soon after, Joel decides he can better serve God's kingdom by studying to become a rabbi in Jerusalem.

Malthace (Thacia) – Malthace is Joel bar Hezron's twin sister. She is called Thace or Thacia for short. Thacia is a spirited, loyal, kindhearted girl with a gift for seeing the potential in others; she even becomes Leah's first friend. Thacia puts others at ease and seems at home in any environment, whether it's her father Hezron's splendid house or Daniel's humble shop. She is also spiritually discerning, seeming to understand Jesus's message before the boys do. After helping Joel nurse Daniel back to health, Thacia eagerly pledges along with the boys to fight for God's Victory. When Rosh sends Joel on a job, she even disguises herself as Joel in order to distract attention from his spy work. Daniel is attracted to Thacia early in their friendship and admits his feelings at the Day of Atonement festival, but he believes that his vow to fight the Romans prohibits him from marriage. After Daniel decides to follow Jesus, however, Daniel and Thacia make an unspoken vow to one another, implicitly agreeing to marry after all.

Rosh – Rosh is a Galilean Jewish freedom fighter who has dedicated his life to resisting the Roman occupation. He lives with his band of rebels in a mountain cave overlooking Ketzah. After Daniel ran away from the abusive Amalek, Rosh saved Daniel's life and gave him a purpose. At the beginning of the book, Daniel is fiercely loyal to Rosh, whom he idealizes as a leader and warrior. In fact, Daniel believes that Rosh is likely the messiah. As Daniel spends more time with ordinary people and also gets to know Jesus, however, he begins to question Rosh's attitudes. For example, he notices that Rosh looks at people as if they're objects to be used and discarded, unlike Jesus, who sees them as human beings precious to God. When Rosh starts plundering Jewish villagers and later refuses to help rescue Joel from the Romans, Daniel breaks from Rosh entirely, realizing that Rosh doesn't even care about Israel's cause; he mainly looks out for himself.

Samson – Samson is an enslaved man whom Rosh's group steals from a passing caravan. Daniel is placed in charge of him. Samson doesn't appear to understand Daniel's language, but after Daniel removes Samson's chains, Samson becomes deeply

attached and loyal to him. Samson is immensely strong, which is the only thing most people value about him, but Daniel takes the time to talk to Samson and grows fond of him. When Daniel leads a raid to rescue Joel, Samson leaps into the action at the last moment and saves Daniel's life. He is fatally wounded in the fray.

Grandmother – Besides Leah, their grandmother is Daniel's only living relative. After Daniel and Leah were orphaned, their grandmother cared for them. When she could no longer afford to feed the three of them, she sold Daniel into Amalek's keeping as an apprentice. When Daniel returns to Ketzah from Rosh's cave hideout, he finds his grandmother very old and frail, spending most of her time sleeping. She dies not long after.

Simon the Zealot – Simon, like Daniel, was once Amalek's apprentice. Since then, he's opened his own blacksmith shop. After Simon encounters Jesus and decides to follow him, he closes his shop, and after Daniel's grandmother dies, he offers the shop and adjoining house to Daniel. Simon is a kind, gentle man who knows how to extend charity to others without making them feel ashamed. He ends up believing that Jesus is the Messiah. (In the Bible, Simon the Zealot is one of Jesus's Twelve Apostles.)

Rabbi Hezron – Rabbi Hezron is Joel's and Malthace's father. He is a Pharisee, a devout Jew and religious scholar who is scrupulously observant of traditional priestly laws as well as the biblical Law. Hezron forbids Joel from seeing Daniel because he doesn't want Joel to be influenced by Zealot violence. He believes that Jews must wait patiently for the Messiah. After Daniel saves Joel's life from the Romans, however, Hezron welcomes Daniel into his home.

Marcus – Marcus is a blond Roman soldier who often visits Daniel's blacksmith shop, to Daniel's chagrin. Unbeknownst to Daniel, Marcus has befriended Leah and visits her when Daniel isn't home. Marcus is from a German warrior tribe, he is homesick, and he has no particular loyalty to the Romans; he serves in the army so that he'll get citizenship one day. He begins talking to Leah in halting Aramaic over the garden wall, and they grow fond of one another. When Daniel finds out, he furiously forbids them from seeing each other. However, after he becomes Jesus's follower, Daniel gives up his hatred of the Romans and invites Marcus to see Leah once last time before he leaves for a different army posting.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Amalek – Amalek is the blacksmith to whom Daniel was apprenticed as a boy. He had a reputation for abusing his apprentices, and Daniel ran away from him.

Nathan – Nathan, a young man from Ketzah, is Daniel's first recruit to his and Joel's band of fighters. Nathan is the son of a tax collector who is ashamed of his father's maligned occupation. Nathan gets killed in the raid to rescue Joel, leaving

a young widow behind.

Kemuel – Joel brings Kemuel to Ketzah as a recruit for their rebel group. He's a wealthy young man from Capernaum who's spirited and serious about fighting the Romans.

Simon bar Jonas – Simon is a fisherman and disciple of Jesus. Jesus stays in Simon's house in the fishing village of Bethsaida, near Capernaum.

Jairus – Jairus is a synagogue ruler whose little girl is restored from death to life by Jesus.

Joktan – Joktan is a skinny, stuttering 12-year-old in Rosh's band. After Daniel breaks ties with Rosh, Joktan joins Daniel's group and later lives with Daniel, running errands for him.

Ebol – Ebol is one of Rosh's sentries.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



LOVE VS. VENGEANCE

In *The Bronze Bow*, Daniel bar Jamin, a first-century Jewish Galilean, lives under oppressive Roman occupation. Daniel has a black-and-white view of the situation in Palestine: Romans are enemies to be fought, and Jews are victims to be avenged. However, because of his inflexible outlook, Daniel fails to see either Romans or Jews as human beings; instead, they become just symbols of occupation and subjugation in his mind. This symbolic view blinds Daniel to concrete realities of life in Palestine, including the harmful consequences of his vengeful perspective. But when Daniel gets to know a strange traveling teacher named Jesus, his vengeful outlook is challenged and eventually shattered. Through Daniel's encounter with Jesus, *The Bronze Bow* suggests that revenge is a dead end, and that loving real people, instead of fighting for abstract vengeance, is the only way to peace.

A fighter for Israel's freedom from Rome, Daniel's life revolves around revenge—meaning that both the Romans and, ultimately, their Jewish victims become mere objects in his eyes. Other Jews don't always share Daniel's sharply polarized view of the Romans. When Daniel sees city dwellers going about their everyday lives, the people's apparent indifference to Roman oppression upsets him: "Everywhere, the Jews went about their business, paying no attention. The boy who had lived for five years in the solitude of the mountain, nursing his hatred and keeping it ever fresh, could not credit his own eyes. [...] Where was their pride? Had they forgotten altogether?" For

years, Daniel has thought of nothing but vengeance against the Romans. Therefore, when he sees his fellow Jews living alongside their oppressors, he's infuriated. After living with freedom fighters for years, isolated from ordinary life in Palestine, Daniel doesn't understand either the Romans or the Jewish people he wants to avenge.

Daniel gathers a group of village boys around him, and they carry out raids for rebel leader Rosh, often harassing and robbing wealthier Jews. "For none of these victims did the boys feel the slightest pity. Any traitor who sold his goods to the Romans did so at his own risk. Those who flaunted their wealth or patronized a Roman theater were fair prey. And every cruse of oil, every silver talent" would support a future army of Israel. The boys don't see their victims primarily as human beings; they see them as symbols of Rome's oppression and therefore fair game. Perceiving this, Daniel begins to feel misgivings about what, if anything, revenge really accomplishes.

Jesus teaches Daniel that abstract revenge is a dead end because it locks people into a cycle of violence, and the only way out is to love real people. Daniel leads an ambush to rescue his friend Joel, who has been captured by the Romans. Rattled after the ambush only narrowly succeeds, Daniel reflects, "They who live by the sword will perish by the sword! At first he could not recall where he had heard these words. [...] Then he remembered. Jesus had spoken them [...] To live by the sword was the best life he knew [...] But something he had not reckoned on had happened. [...] [His friends'] deaths were on his head. And freedom was farther away than before." Because Daniel has based his life on fighting for Israel's political freedom, he's never questioned the connection between revenge and freedom. But Jesus's words, and the loss of people Daniel loves, make him question whether revenge is leading him anywhere, much less to freedom from Rome.

When Daniel speaks with Jesus alone, Jesus directly refutes Daniel's past commitment to killing by arguing that love is the only alternative to revenge. Daniel asks Jesus, "Should I love the Romans who killed [his friend Samson]?" [...] Jesus smiled. [...] 'Can't you see, Daniel, it is hate that is the enemy? Not men. Hate does not die with killing. It only springs up a hundredfold. The only thing stronger than hate is love.'" Jesus argues that hate only generates more killing, which generates more hate—a never-ending cycle. Though Daniel can't imagine loving a Roman enemy, Jesus teaches that such concrete love is the only thing that can overcome the cycle of hate. In the end, overcoming hate is the only thing that leads to lasting freedom—fighting can't achieve that.

At the very end of the book, after Jesus heals Daniel's sister Leah from her illness, a Roman soldier lingers worriedly outside Daniel's house. Daniel hates this Roman, who had secretly befriended Leah, and until now has forbidden them to see each other. After long hesitation, Daniel finally approaches the soldier and invites him into his house to see Leah. After

witnessing Jesus’s love for others firsthand and being a beneficiary of it, he feels able to offer love in place of hatred. This outreach to the individual soldier suggests that Daniel’s hatred for Romans as a whole will soften, too.



TRUST, DEPENDENCE, AND FRIENDSHIP

Daniel’s early life is marked by independence. After his parents are killed by the Romans, Daniel is apprenticed to an abusive blacksmith and finally runs away. Rosh, leader of a group of Galilean rebels, grants Daniel a new life as one of his fighters. When Daniel grows used to this free and relatively secure life, he balks at returning to his home village and his younger sister, Leah. But after their grandmother dies, Daniel must care for Leah himself, and this burden threatens to entangle him in the village life he’d hoped to leave behind. In the process, he makes friends for the first time—like siblings Joel and Thacia—and realizes the goodness of connecting with and finding support from others instead of avoiding them. Over the course of the book, Daniel’s growing friendships make him realize the importance of relationships—even caring for and depending on others—for a truly meaningful life.

For years, Daniel has lived with a group of anti-Roman rebels on a nearby mountain—a life of relative freedom. Because of this, Daniel fears being tied down by others, especially having to support them. When Daniel was at his lowest point, Rosh gave him a home and something to live for. At the beginning of the book, as his old schoolmates Joel and Thacia question him about his life on the mountain, Daniel remembers “how Rosh had reached out a hand, not to strike him but to help him to his feet [...] had picked him up and carried him like a baby all the way to the cave.” Up till then, Daniel’s life had been marked by orphanhood and abuse. So Rosh’s rescue—and then getting to live on the mountain and fight for Rosh—felt like a kind of rebirth, even a rejection of conventional family commitment.

Because his life now revolves around Rosh’s cause, Daniel sees his family—namely his troubled younger sister, Leah—as a threat to his independence. When he visits Leah for the first time in years and sees how desperately she needs him, Daniel sees his sister’s dependence on him as a fearful trap: “Suddenly he was afraid again. He looked away, trying to shut out the sight of her [...] Everything he cared about and worked for was threatened by that small helpless figure.” Daniel knows that supporting Leah will hamper his ability to fight for Israel’s future with Rosh, the only commitment he cares about.

After Daniel returns from the mountain to the village and takes up blacksmithing in order to support Leah, he feels imprisoned by his sister’s demands on him. One day he arrives home to find that Leah “had not combed her hair or bothered to get herself breakfast. With irritation he saw that the water jar was empty and that he would have to stand in line at the well with the snickering women. [...] [T]he bars of his cage slid into place

around him.” Not only is Leah helplessly needy, but her needs feel emasculating to Daniel, the antithesis of the rebellious role he’d rather fill. Instead of living an unfettered life on the mountain and fighting for a higher cause, he’s bound to his sister. Caring for Leah feels like a trap (“the bars of his cage”).

But when he experiences the benefits of friendship for himself, Daniel realizes that connection between people is indispensable for a meaningful life, not a trap to be feared. After getting injured in Capernaum and being secretly nursed back to health by his friend Joel, Daniel realizes he’s been missing something without even knowing it: “He had never admitted to himself that he was lonely here on the mountain. [...] But the few days in Joel’s passageway had shown him a new world. He had found someone to talk to, someone who had shared his own thoughts, and who had instantly taken Daniel’s burden as his own.” Before, Daniel has shared common goals with fellow rebels, but he’s never had a real *friend*—someone who genuinely cares about Daniel and is even willing to put Daniel’s needs first.

As Daniel continues to let Joel and his sister Thacia into his life—even at the cost of becoming more tied to village life—Daniel also sees the benefits of friendship for Leah. Sheltered all her life, Leah blossoms when others finally see her as valuable, a reflection of what Daniel himself is experiencing through friendship. Thacia tells Daniel, “Every time I come, Leah has changed [...] It’s like watching a flower opening very slowly. From week to week I can hardly wait to see how it has opened since I saw her last.” Daniel tells Thacia that Leah has never had a friend before, so her blossoming is Thacia’s doing. Friendship—being really recognized and cared for by another person—is indispensable for a fulfilled life.

Daniel’s experiences of trusting friends and serving his family prepare him for what the novel presents as the ultimate step of trust and dependence—trust in Jesus. When Jesus comes to Daniel’s house to heal Leah, Daniel finally gives up his resistance to Jesus: “Suddenly, with a longing that was more than he could bear, he wanted to stop fighting against this man. He knew that he would give everything he possessed in life to follow Jesus. [...] To know Jesus would be enough.” Giving up his vow to fight the Romans—the thing that’s given shape and meaning to Daniel’s life—no longer seems like a sacrifice, as it did before. Even though he doesn’t yet know what following Jesus will mean for his past dreams, just *knowing* Jesus—having a relationship with him—is portrayed as worthwhile in and of itself.



LEADERSHIP: POWER VS. SERVICE

In the first half of the book, Daniel idolizes Rosh, leader of the rebel band that took him in after he was orphaned. In Daniel, Rosh sees a potential champion for Israel, and Daniel comes to see Rosh as the ideal kind of leader. After Daniel meets Jesus, however, his view of

what constitutes good leadership is challenged and finally overturned. The difference between Rosh and Jesus is their contrasting ways of seeing other people. In short, Jesus sees other people—even insignificant people—as inherently valuable. Rosh, on the other hand, sees people as valuable only as far as they benefit his cause. In other words, Jesus sees people as people, and Rosh sees people as tools to be used for his own ends. By contrasting Rosh’s and Jesus’s leadership in Daniel’s eyes, the book suggests that true leaders seek the good in others, especially the weak, instead of seeking to dominate them.

Daniel initially sees leadership as aggressive and dominating, as exemplified by Rosh. “He’s like a lion!” Daniel tells a friend, “[T]he men obey him without question. [...] Rosh would drive every cursed Roman back into the sea!” To Daniel, Rosh is an admirable leader because of the way he fearlessly commands obedience and dominates his enemies.

But Daniel’s first encounter with Jesus baffles him because Jesus’s leadership is different from anything he’s seen before. He hears Jesus say to a crowd of wretched, suffering people, “Do not be afraid [...] For you are the children of God. And does not a father understand the sorrow of his children, and know their need? For I tell you, nor even a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father seeing, and you are of more value than many sparrows.” To himself, Daniel wonders, “What good would it do to speak of a kingdom to these miserable wretches [...] when not one of them could lift a hand to fight for it?” Having served Rosh for years, Daniel thinks of leadership as something that makes demands of followers. In contrast, Jesus sees his followers as worthy of God’s attention and care, and he serves *them* accordingly.

Later, when Daniel tells his sister, Leah, about Jesus healing a little girl, he recalls that Jesus welcomed children; he even saw children as uniquely worth his time. He tells Leah, “He won’t even let them send the children away when they’re a nuisance. He insists on talking to them, and finding out their names, and listening to their foolishness. It makes some of the men furious—as though he thought children were important.” With this, Daniel implies that most people *don’t* regard children as important or even worthy of notice. Jesus stands out because, in spite of the huge crowds he attracts, he specifically takes time to focus on those whom the rest of society ignores.

After seeing Jesus’s caring example of leadership, Daniel recognizes that Rosh looks at people as objects to be used. At one point, Rosh criticizes Daniel for showing mercy to an old man whom Rosh had ordered him to rob. Daniel then realizes the difference between Rosh and Jesus: “Suddenly words were echoing in his mind. ‘For each one of you is precious in His sight.’ Not scripture, but the words of the carpenter. [...] Rosh looked at a man and saw a thing to be used, like a tool or a weapon. Jesus looked and saw a child of God.” The two men, Daniel realizes, view human beings in totally different ways. While

Jesus sees people as intrinsically precious because they belong to God, Rosh sees them as means to his own goals and therefore expendable.

When Rosh refuses to help Daniel, Daniel finally recognizes Rosh for who he is. Daniel’s friend Joel is captured by the Romans while doing an errand for Rosh, and Rosh refuses to spare any of his men to rescue Joel. When he confronts Rosh, however, Rosh sees something in Daniel as well: “‘I’ve warned you before,’ [Rosh] said, his voice ugly. ‘There’s a soft streak in you. Till you get rid of it you’re no good to the cause.’ The red mist of anger cleared suddenly from Daniel’s mind. [...] He saw the hard mouth, the calculating little eyes. He saw a man he had never really looked at before.” Rosh sees Daniel’s concern for another person as “softness” that compromises Daniel’s loyalty to Rosh’s cause. At the same time, Daniel is confirmed in the belief that Rosh doesn’t see inherent value in people; he sees them as objects to be used. And anyone who values others—as Daniel now does—is useless to him.

By the end of the book, Daniel’s friend Simon sums up Daniel’s new view of leadership. Simon explains why he has accepted that Jesus will never lead Israel in rebellion against the Romans, as both he and Daniel once dreamed of: “you’ve seen [Jesus] caring for those people—the ones so low that no one [...] cared what happened to them. When I see that, I know that the God of Israel has not forgotten us. [...] I’m a poor man, and ignorant, but I know now that with a God like that I am safe.” A real leader, Simon recognizes, is not someone who charges into conflict no matter the cost to others, but someone who cares for those who have seemingly nothing to offer.



EARTHLY HOPES VS. HEAVENLY VALUES

In *The Bronze Bow*, the people of Galilee are both enthralled and puzzled by Jesus. For centuries, the Jewish people have longed for a leader who will rise up against their oppressors—most recently the Romans. When Jesus begins preaching in the synagogues, offering hope to the poor, and healing the sick, many hope that he is the long-expected messiah who will deliver them from Roman bondage. But the more Daniel and his friends hear of Jesus’s message, the more Jesus disappoints their hopes. Jesus rejects violence as the means to freedom, and he even seems to prize a different kind of freedom altogether: spiritual freedom, rather than physical freedom. Over time, Daniel and others who are drawn to Jesus begin to see that he preaches a heavenly kingdom, not an earthly one. By tracing Daniel’s and others’ changing views of Jesus, the book suggests that the hope Jesus offers is ultimately rooted in heavenly realities and not in the earthly ones that people typically value.

Daniel and his fellow Galileans hope that Jesus will be a revolutionary leader who will rise up against the Romans, but Jesus undercuts these hopes. Fighting with Rosh’s rebels, Daniel expects an uprising rivaling ancient biblical battles. He

tells his friend Joel, “Joshua, Gideon, David, all of them fought on the soil of Galilee. [...] It will be so again.” Joel agrees, “‘God will send us another David.’ His eyes glistened, as though he too could see the shadow of a vast army moving on the distant plain.” Both boys believe that Israel’s deliverance will resemble past episodes of deliverance in Jewish history.

Similarly, when Jesus speaks in the village synagogue, Daniel and others look for a revolutionary who will lead them in resisting Roman oppression. Jesus tells the congregants, “‘I say to you, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe.’ Now! Daniel leaned forward. Tell us that the moment has come! Tell us what we are to do! [...] But Jesus went on speaking quietly. [...] Others too waited for the word that was not spoken.” In contrast to the people’s eager expectations, Jesus is quiet and restrained, not fiery, and he calls them to faith, not revolution.

The more Daniel and his friends get to know Jesus, however, the more they suspect that the hope he offers won’t align with their expectations. It becomes apparent while they’re doing a job for Rosh. The task requires them to carry out a deceptive plot. Feeling troubled about these measures, Thacia suggests that Jesus wouldn’t agree with them that ends justify means. Daniel argues that Jesus surely understands that in war, lies are sometimes a necessary weapon. Thacia replies, “Daniel, what makes you and Joel so sure that Jesus means to make war?” When Daniel reminds her that Jesus claims that God’s kingdom is near, Thacia continues, “Did you ever think he might mean that the kingdom will come some other way? Without any fighting?” Daniel suspects that Thacia might be right, but he can’t yet fathom what it means to wait for a heavenly kingdom instead of fighting for an earthly one.

Indeed, Jesus’s views of healing and freedom point to heavenly realities, not worldly ones. Even physical healing does not primarily have to do with what the world sees as valuable. Discussing Jesus’s healing ministry, Daniel muses to Thacia, “Haven’t you ever wondered [...] what good it is for them to be healed, those people that Jesus cures? [...] What does a blind man think, when he has wanted for years to see, and then looks at his wife in rags and his children covered with sores?” In other words, Daniel wonders if these miraculous cures really do much good for poor people whose lives don’t seem worthwhile to begin with. In turn, Thacia wonders if this is why many of those who flock to Jesus for healing don’t end up choosing to be cured by him. Their discussion suggests that when Jesus chooses to heal someone, he sees a heart that’s hungering for something even deeper than physical healing.

According to Simon, Jesus “says that the only chains that matter are fear and hate, because they chain our souls. If we do not hate anyone and do not fear anyone, then we are free.” Appalled by this notion of freedom, Daniel retorts that “you know what [the Romans] could do to you! How could you possibly not be afraid?” “I don’t say I am not afraid,” said Simon.

“But Jesus is not.” By choosing to follow Jesus, Simon chooses a kind of freedom that transcends mere physical safety. Even though this “freedom” looks absurd to those who don’t embrace it, that doesn’t make it less real to those who believe in Jesus.

Throughout the book, the contrast between fighting versus waiting, and earthly solutions versus heavenly hope, reveals the novel’s belief that Jesus’s teachings weren’t *primarily* oriented toward fixing the present world, but toward the promise of a better one. At the end of the book, Jesus relieves Leah’s illness, but this healing is overshadowed by her joy in meeting the Messiah. Seeing this, even a hardened rebel like Daniel accepts that Jesus’s heavenly kingdom is better than an earthly one. After a lifetime of fighting for earthly hopes, Daniel shifts his loyalty to eternal ones.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



BRONZE BOW

When Daniel, Joel, and Malthace vow to stand together for God’s victory, they agree that a bronze bow will be the symbol of their pact and mission. The image comes from Psalm 18, “He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.” Since it’s not actually possible for someone to bend bronze, Malthace suggests that the bow symbolizes the strength God grants which enables people to do what seems impossible. At this point, the friends believe that “God’s victory”—the arrival of his kingdom—means defeating the Roman occupiers of Palestine. Accordingly, the bow also becomes the symbol for Daniel’s amateur band of freedom fighters, who resist and harass the Romans. As Daniel’s band falters and he later parts ways with the Zealot Rosh, however, he becomes disillusioned with the idea that God will bring victory through violence. After getting to know Jesus, Daniel accepts that God’s victory—“[bending] the bow of bronze”—refers to the triumph of love over hatred. This triumph can only occur once Daniel surrenders to Jesus, trusting that though he doesn’t understand how, God’s kingdom will arrive by means of love and forgiveness instead of the self-perpetuating cycle of hatred and killing.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Houghton Mifflin edition of *The Bronze Bow* published in 1961.


Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ Up here, in the clean sunlight, Daniel bar Jamin, orphan, runaway slave, had found something to live for.

“All the mighty ones,” he said, remembering Rosh’s very words. “Joshua, Gideon, David, all of them fought on the soil of Galilee. No one could stand against them. It will be so again.”

“Yes,” breathed Joel. “It will be so again. God will send us another David.”

Related Characters: Joel bar Hezron, Daniel bar Jamin (speaker), Rosh

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 11

Explanation and Analysis

On the mountainside overlooking the village of Ketzah and the country of Galilee beyond, Daniel and his friends dream of the past and the future. After Daniel was orphaned, he was taken in by Rosh, a Zealot, and his small band of followers. Daniel’s father was killed by the Roman authorities, and Daniel longs to help Rosh overthrow the Roman occupation. To do this, both Daniel and his friend Joel hope to emulate military figures from Israel’s past: Joshua (who led Israel into the land of Canaan after Moses’s death), Gideon (judge of ancient Israel who defeated the Midianites), and David (ancient King of Israel). In Jesus’s day, Jews hoped for a Messiah, or divine deliverer, who would succeed David by restoring the kingdom of Israel. Daniel and Joel expect this new David to be a political leader and conqueror like his ancient predecessor. As the story develops, however, their expectations for the Messiah—and their hopes for the restoration of God’s kingdom—will shift from such worldly values to more spiritual ones.

Chapter 3 Quotes

☞ “You mustn’t be afraid of him. He is our brother Daniel come home. When he milks you, you must be good and stand still. See how big and strong he is. He will take care of us and keep us safe.”

Suddenly he was afraid again. He looked away, trying to shut out the sight of her with her golden hair shining in the lamplight, trying to shut out the sound of that murmuring voice. Everything he cared about and worked for was threatened by that small helpless figure.

Related Characters: Leah (speaker), Daniel bar Jamin

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 41

Explanation and Analysis

When Daniel returns to his home village of Ketzah, he is distressed to see that his younger sister, Leah, is still trapped in childlike fear. (Ever since their parents died when they were children, Leah has refused to leave her grandmother’s house.) He hears her talking to her pet goat, and her soothing words reflect her own uneasiness about Daniel’s sudden reappearance in her life. She also hopes that Daniel will take care of her now—a hope that Daniel finds frightening. For the past several years, he has lived with Rosh’s men on a nearby mountain, free from conventional responsibilities. There, he waits for the day when he can help overthrow Roman tyranny, and he tries to forget his family back home. Therefore, seeing Leah’s helplessness threatens everything he’s worked for, because he sees that he may need to move back home. However, the fact that he’s so moved by Leah’s vulnerability already shows development in his character. It suggests that, though part of him still resists, he is already taking a step toward accepting the importance of obligations to other people.

☞ Why did I come here? he thought. Already he yearned to be away from this place. Hunger gnawed at him. Up on the mountain the men would be still sitting about the fire, their stomachs satisfied [...] He wondered if Joktan had made sure that Samson had enough to eat. He wondered how long the man had waited at the top of the trail. Suddenly he flung himself on his face and buried his head in his arms and could have wept for homesickness.

Related Characters: Samson, Joktan, Daniel bar Jamin

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

As Daniel tries to sleep on the roof of his grandmother’s house, he is overcome by homesickness. The visit to his family has not been a joyful reunion. His grandmother is poor and can’t give Daniel enough to eat, and his sister’s helplessness troubles him (Leah never leaves the house and clearly can’t fend for herself after their grandmother is

gone). After years on the mountain living with Rosh's rebels, Daniel doesn't understand how he fits into his biological family's life. On the mountain, Daniel is sure of his place. He even misses Samson, the formerly enslaved man who now lives in the camp and has developed a deep loyalty to Daniel. Daniel's conflicted emotions show that he feels pulled between his obligations—his desire to bring about revolution in Israel and the unwanted call to provide for his family. As Daniel's character develops, he will continue to be pulled between the desire to fight and the desire to love those closest to him.



Chapter 4 Quotes

☞ “I say to you, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe.”

Now! Daniel leaned forward. Tell us that the moment has come! Tell us what we are to do! Longing swelled unbearably in his throat.

But Jesus went on speaking quietly. A rippling murmur passed across the crowd. Others too waited for the word that was not spoken. What had the man meant?

Related Characters: Jesus (speaker), Daniel bar Jamin

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 47

Explanation and Analysis

In this chapter, the novel introduces its fictionalized portrayal of Jesus. Author Elizabeth Speare adapts a scene from the Gospels in which Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah in his hometown synagogue. In the writings of the Old Testament prophets like Isaiah, the coming of God's kingdom is often foretold. Jewish readers expected the kingdom to be ushered in by a divinely anointed figure called the messiah. A Zealot like Daniel believed that human efforts would have a role in bringing about the messiah and his kingdom—specifically by rising up against the Roman occupiers. So when Jesus reads the scripture saying that “the time is fulfilled,” he believes Jesus will summon the Zealots to fight. However, to Daniel's disappointment, Jesus doesn't do this. This introduces the tension between earthly hopes (that God's kingdom can be brought through human efforts) and heavenly values (that the kingdom won't line up with people's expectations) which proceeds through the book. Jesus's relationship to this kingdom will be an ongoing question.

Chapter 5 Quotes

☞ Everywhere, the Jews went about their business, paying no attention. The boy who had lived for five years in the solitude of the mountain, nursing his hatred and keeping it ever fresh, could not credit his own eyes. How could these city people endure to be reminded on every hand of their own helplessness? More shameful still, he saw merchants joking with the soldiers. He could not understand. Where was their pride? Had they forgotten altogether? If Rosh were here he would open their eyes. Why did that Jesus do nothing?

Related Characters: Jesus, Rosh, Daniel bar Jamin

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 58

Explanation and Analysis

When Daniel visits the city of Capernaum, he's shocked by what he sees—or rather, what he doesn't see. The Jewish people of Capernaum go about their lives without seeming aware of or greatly concerned about their oppressed condition, even laughing with their Roman oppressors. Because Daniel has spent years living in isolation in a group whose main purpose is to overthrow the Romans, the contrast in Capernaum is stark and difficult to understand. Having just listened to Jesus (a strange traveling preacher) instruct the people, he can also see no value in Jesus's apparently nonviolent ideas. Daniel's isolation has distorted his perception of human beings. He assumes that people's motivations must share his own deadly focus, or else it means they simply don't care. His obsession with vengeance also prevents him from understanding Jesus's values. At this point, the only life that seems valuable to Daniel is one dedicated to hating and resisting the Romans. Ironically, this makes it difficult for him to understand his fellow Jews as well.

☞ Mark my words, boy. Israel has one great strength, mightier than all the power of Rome. It is the Law, given to Moses and our fathers. When the last Roman emperor has vanished from the earth, the Law will still endure. It is to the Law that our loyalty must be devoted. I wish Joel to understand this, and I must forbid him to see any old friends who will turn his mind to violence. I ask you to go now, at once. Go in peace, Daniel, with a prayer that you may see the truth before that rash tongue of yours betrays you.

Related Characters: Rabbi Hezron (speaker), Joel bar Hezron, Daniel bar Jamin

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 68

Explanation and Analysis

When Daniel visits his friend Joel's house in Capernaum, he has an unsettling encounter with Joel's father, Rabbi Hezron. Though Hezron shares Daniel's hatred of Roman rule and his longing for the Messiah's coming, he expresses those things very differently. He especially rejects Daniel's belief in an armed overthrow of Roman power. Instead, he believes that Jewish believers' primary duty is to obey the Law (as written in the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, and elaborated in centuries of commentary and tradition). Through adherence to the Law, Jews will help usher in the Messiah. It's not their job, in other words, to bring about the kingdom of God by earthly means. Because their beliefs about the messiah are starkly at odds, Hezron forbids Joel from seeing Daniel. Daniel's commitment to violence threatens Joel's study of the Law and his whole way of life. This controversy—exactly how and by whom God's kingdom will come about—is one of the book's main tensions.

Daniel declares that he is. This belief is hugely consequential, since the messiah's coming has been anticipated for centuries. As proof of Rosh's messianic identity, Daniel points to the man's strength, fearlessness, and ability to command other men's respect and obedience. On the basis of these traits, Daniel believes, Rosh will overcome Israel's Roman occupation and restore Jewish freedom.

Daniel's faith in Rosh shows that he identifies the messiah mainly with earthly hopes—that is, he's waiting for political peace and a figure strong enough to enforce it. This faith shapes Daniel's reaction to those like Rabbi Hezron and later Jesus who challenge such messianic ideas. Daniel will later question whether the kingdom is primarily earthly or heavenly in nature, and thus whether Rosh is the right man to introduce it.

“God is my strong refuge,
and has made my way safe.
He made my feet like hinds' feet,
and set me secure on the heights.
He trains my hands for war,
so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.”

“It couldn't really be bronze,” said Daniel, puzzled. “The strongest man could not bend a bow of bronze.”

“No,” Thacia spoke. “I think it was really bronze. I think David meant a bow that a man couldn't bend—that when God strengthens us we can do something that seems impossible.”

Chapter 7 Quotes



“Did you ever think that Rosh—that he might be the leader we are waiting for?” [...]

“I know he is,” said Daniel.

They sat silent, trembling at the immensity of the secret they shared.

“He's like a lion!” Daniel said, his confidence mounting. “He has no fear at all. Up there in the cave, whatever he says, the men obey him without question. If there were more of us—if we could only get enough—Rosh would drive every cursed Roman back into the sea!”

Related Characters: Daniel bar Jamin, Joel bar Hezron (speaker), Rosh

Related Themes:  


Page Number: 79

Explanation and Analysis

Despite Rabbi Hezron's rejection of Daniel, Joel continues to see Daniel in secret. Together they discuss biblical passages anticipating the coming of the messiah. Here, Joel asks Daniel if he thinks that Rosh might be the messiah, and

Related Characters: Malthace (Thacia), Daniel bar Jamin, Joel bar Hezron (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis


While Daniel is healing from his wounds in the secret passageway at Joel's house, he, Joel, and Malthace often discuss the Bible. Here, they discuss Psalm 18, a song of the ancient King David. In this Psalm, God is described as one who protects his followers, readies them for battle, and strengthens their hands. Thacia suggests, however, that there's more to the Psalm than meets the eye at first. Since nobody can bend a bow of bronze using his or her natural strength, Thacia suggests that the image is pointing instead to God's strength—to God's ability to strengthen a person

for those tasks that seem impossible from a human perspective. Based on this interpretation, the friends decide to use the bronze bow for their secret symbol as they fight together for God's victory. Over time, though, the symbol develops. Whereas Daniel initially saw it as referring to armed conflict on Israel's behalf, he eventually sees the bronze bow as the symbol of a far harder task: loving one's enemies. Like bending bronze, this kind of love is something only God can empower a person to give.

Chapter 8 Quotes

☞ For Daniel nothing could ever be the same. He had never admitted to himself that he was lonely here on the mountain. He had worshiped and feared Rosh. He had fought and eaten and slept side by side with the hard-eyed men who made up Rosh's band. But the few days in Joel's passageway had shown him a new world. He had found someone to talk to, someone who had shared his own thoughts, and who had instantly taken Daniel's burden as his own.

Related Characters: Malthace (Thacia), Rosh, Joel bar Hezron, Daniel bar Jamin

Related Themes: 



Page Number: 91

Explanation and Analysis

After Daniel heals from his injury under his friends' care and returns to the mountain, his outlook is very different. Before, he never wanted to depend on anyone else. Now, because he was forced to depend on the twins, he's experienced true friendship for the first time—not just fighting side by side, but trusting each other and sharing one another's hopes and dreams. Being friends, he realizes, is something altogether different from being comrades in arms. As it turns out, when Joel and Malthace showed up on the mountain, Daniel was right to worry that he would get pulled back into community life. Now that he cares about people in the community and doesn't see the town as just an abstraction, he has a greater stake in its wellbeing. That means he's also more vulnerable—not just to injuries from Roman spears, but to loss and heartbreak, too. In time, this change of perspective will also challenge Daniel's view of what it means to fight for God's kingdom.

☞ The other mighty ones had lived and fought in distant ages. But Judas had lived in a time like his own, not two hundred years ago, when Israel was helpless, as it was now, under the foot of the heathen. Judas, with his heroic father and brothers, had dared to rise up and defy the oppressor, and for a time Israel had breathed the free again. [...] This time—! There were young men everywhere who longed for such a chance again. Together, he and Joel would find them.

Related Characters: Joel bar Hezron, Daniel bar Jamin

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 91



Explanation and Analysis

Among the Bible stories that Joel and Daniel discuss is the story of the Maccabees. Like the Book of Enoch, the book of 1Maccabees is not regarded as part of the biblical canon, but it's treasured for its story of Jewish resistance. In the second century B.C.E., when Judea was occupied by the Greek Seleucid Empire, a man named Judas Maccabeus—alongside his father Mattathias and his brothers—rose up in revolt against their oppressors. The festival of Hanukkah commemorates their success. Because the Maccabean revolt took place not too many generations ago, Daniel and his fellow Zealots are inspired by the story in their present-day fight against Roman oppression. Daniel's love of the story of the Maccabees shows that he models his understanding of God's kingdom on Jewish history. That is, he expects that creating the kingdom of God will look like something that's already happened before. That's why, when Daniel encounters Jesus, Jesus's view of the kingdom seems so strange and even repugnant to Daniel. He's spent his whole life preparing to rise up like one of the heroes of history. Jesus's nonviolent view will undercut this model of the kingdom and what it means to fight for freedom.

☞ “Try to bear your suffering with patience, because you know that God has made a place for you in His Kingdom.”

The kingdom! Daniel looked about him. What good would it do to speak of a kingdom to these miserable wretches? What could it mean to them, when not one of them could lift a hand to fight for it? But he saw their faces, white, formless blots in the darkness, all lifted toward this man. He heard their harsh breathing all around him, stifled in their straining not to miss a word. They listened as though his words were food and they could never get enough.

Related Characters: Jesus (speaker), Daniel bar Jamin

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 103

Explanation and Analysis



When Daniel goes to hear Jesus speak at Simon bar Jonas's house, he is baffled by what he sees and hears. The house's courtyard is filled with those who are cast out of mainstream society: the poor, hungry, sick, disabled, and demon-possessed. But Jesus walks among these people, gets close to them, and even touches and heals some of them—which would be considered a breach of the Law, rendering him unclean. Yet Jesus's words to the crowd are even more shocking: that such outcast people belong to God's kingdom. This claim shakes up Daniel's understanding of the kingdom altogether. To him, the kingdom is something that must be fought for and seized. These people are completely incapable of doing that because they're too feeble. Yet their apparent faith in Jesus hints at a different way of seeing the kingdom—that it's something God gives to the weak and needy. Though Daniel cannot yet grasp this idea, he begins to see the special challenge that Jesus will present in his life.

Chapter 9 Quotes

☛☛ Somewhere, Daniel had been taught in his childhood, there would be an answer in the scriptures, for Moses had handed down in the Law an answer for every situation a man could encounter in this life. [...]

Suddenly words were echoing in his mind. "For each one of you is precious in His sight." Not scripture, but the words of the carpenter. That was what had confused him. Rosh looked at a man and saw a thing to be used, like a tool or a weapon. Jesus looked and saw a child of God. Even the old miser with his moneybag?

Related Characters: Rosh, Jesus, Daniel bar Jamin

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 111

Explanation and Analysis

Rosh gives Daniel his first solo job—to rob an old smuggler. Daniel completes the task, but seeing the old man's helplessness, he allows the man to keep his weapon. When Rosh finds out, he tells Daniel that he has a soft streak that will threaten Daniel's usefulness to Rosh's cause. At first,



Daniel suspects that Rosh is right, but something nags at him. He heard something recently that seemed to contradict Rosh's beliefs. At first Daniel thinks it was from the Bible, but then he remembers it was actually a saying of Jesus. Jesus tells the weak, sick, and poor that they are precious in God's sight, because they are God's children. When Daniel looks at the feeble old miser, he wonders if even this man could be considered a child of God. This idea couldn't be more opposite from Rosh's view, which sees a person as disposable once they've fulfilled their function. This extends to their ways of leading others: Rosh exerts power over others while Jesus seeks to serve them. As Daniel realizes this, his idealization of Rosh begins to fade.

Chapter 10 Quotes

☛☛ He fumbled for the words, and they came, slowly, from the depths of his memory. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want; He maketh me to lie down in green Pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul' [...]"

Leah sank down beside him. Side by side, without speaking, the brother and sister sat and listened to the breathing of the old woman. Leah's hand in his own was like the hand of a small child reaching out to him in trust and helplessness. It was a sign that even now the devils did not have complete dominion. Fear retreated into the shadowy corners.

Related Characters: Daniel bar Jamin (speaker), Grandmother, Leah

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 118

Explanation and Analysis

Daniel is summoned home to the village because his grandmother is dying. As she draws close to death, Daniel reaches deep into his memory to recite the twenty-third Psalm, a biblical poem praising God as a faithful, comforting shepherd. For years, Daniel has been living among Rosh's Zealot rebels on the mountain. While there, he has scarcely practiced his Jewish religion at all. Now, as Rosh recites the Psalm, it appears that childhood influences remain stronger in Daniel's mind than those he's gained from his life as an outlaw. His ties to his family and village are stronger than he thought.



Since returning to the village, Daniel has also been wary of Leah. Everyone believes she's demon-possessed because of her reclusive, easily frightened temperament. Even Daniel worries that Leah's "demons" could overpower him, too. But

as Leah reaches out to Daniel trustingly, he realizes that she's still there—no matter what she suffers, she's still his sister. This passage shows Daniel's growth, in that caring for those who depend on him doesn't have to feel like a trap.

Chapter 11 Quotes

☝ [Daniel] was almost at the point of tears. Yet in the same instant such a fierce resentment sprang up in him that he dared not look his friend in the face. [...] Everyone—the doctor, Leah, the neighbors, and now Simon, took it for granted that he had come home to stay. [...] What about his life on the mountain? What about Rosh and Samson, and the work that must be done in the cave? Wasn't that more important than a few farmers who wanted their wheels mended? Everything he loved [...] the irresponsible life, the excitement of the raids, rose up and fought off the shackles that Simon held out to him in kindness.

Related Characters: Leah, Samson, Rosh, Simon the Zealot, Daniel bar Jamin

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 121

Explanation and Analysis



After Daniel buries his grandmother, Simon comes to him with a proposal: that he take over the blacksmith shop Simon has abandoned while following Jesus. Daniel is moved by Simon's generosity in the midst of his helpless situation. Yet the offer brings him to a crisis point, too. Daniel is used to being in charge of his own life. Now that Daniel's grandmother has died and Leah is unprotected, everyone assumes that Daniel must move back to Ketzah for good. Daniel resists this new role. In his mind, fighting for the overthrow of the Romans must be more important to Israel's future than helping "a few farmers" who might come into his shop. While Daniel has loved the irresponsibility and excitement of his life on the mountain, he has also loved the sense of importance that came with it. Limiting himself to village life and caring for Leah forces Daniel to humble himself—and that's something he's not used to.

Chapter 14 Quotes

☝ He lay filled with meat and wine, his old comrades stretched out beside him. It was all just as he had imagined it on those endless steaming nights in the town. Yet sleep did not come. He turned over, twisting his shoulders to fit a hump in the rocky ground. In these few weeks his body had forgotten the feel of pebbles. In the same way, his mind shifted uncomfortably, trying to find a resting place [...].

All at once he thought of Leah's little black goat. Would some child in the village be hungry because of tonight's feast?

Related Characters: Rosh, Leah, Daniel bar Jamin

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 157

Explanation and Analysis

Restless in Ketzah, Daniel returns to the mountain for a visit, but he finds he doesn't fit into life in Rosh's camp as smoothly as he'd expected. Just as his body and mind can't find a comfortable resting place, he also hasn't figured out exactly where he fits in the world—on the mountain or in the village.

Rosh's men have started raiding villagers' flocks and harvests in order to feed themselves. Before, Daniel had taken such behavior for granted. Now that the villagers are his neighbors, however, he begins to question it. What if Rosh's men stole Leah's goat? The villagers are no longer faceless victims to him—he's starting to see them as human beings worthy of consideration and empathy.

This quote shows how much Daniel's character has developed since he began taking responsibility for his sister. Before, he savored the freedom of life on the mountain and saw life in the village as an imprisoning trap. But now that he has a greater stake in village life—running his shop and caring for Leah—he begins to see some of the costs of the outlaws' "freedom."

☝ Where did he himself belong?

The fire in Simon's forge had almost gone out. He raked back the ashes, blew on the coals and coaxed it back to life. Then he opened the inner door to the house. Leah looked up at him, her blue eyes as lifeless as the fire. She had not combed her hair or bothered to get herself breakfast. With irritation he saw that the water jar was empty and that he would have to stand in line at the well with the snickering women. He bent and picked up the jar, and the bars of his cage slid into place around him.

Related Characters: Leah, Daniel bar Jamin

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 158

Explanation and Analysis

Daniel feels unexpectedly alienated on the mountain. As much as he'd missed his friend Samson, for example, he realizes that Samson belongs to the freer world of the mountain and could not thrive in the village. Daniel feels less sure about where he fits in, however. When he returns to the village after a brief visit, he sees that Leah hasn't been taking care of herself in his absence, and household chores have been neglected. Daniel has to pick up the slack.

While he was living on the mountain, Daniel was free from family obligations, and only Rosh's opinion mattered to him. Yet he's begun to doubt the wisdom of Rosh's measures, and he can't visit the mountain without worrying about what's happening in the village. Now that he's back in the village, however, he feels burdened—even “caged”—by the demands of providing for and supporting Leah. Worse, these demands require him to take up conventionally “feminine” roles like drawing the family's water supply from the village well. While the mountain allowed Daniel to keep such specific and sometimes humiliating demands at arm's length, his love for Leah won't let him dodge them, either.

Chapter 15 Quotes

☝☝ “Do the people—crowd together and push each other?”

“It's all you can do to stay on your two feet sometimes.”

She was silent so long that he thought she had stopped thinking about it. Then she asked, “Are there children, too? [...] Jesus wouldn't let them hurt the children, would he?”

“He won't even let them send the children away when they're a nuisance. He insists on talking to them, and finding out their names, and listening to their foolishness. It makes some of the men furious—as though he thought children were important.”

Related Characters: Daniel bar Jamin, Leah (speaker), Jesus

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 169

Explanation and Analysis

When Daniel starts hearing Jesus's teaching regularly, Leah becomes curious about Jesus and begs for detailed

retellings of Jesus's stories and actions. Though she's afraid to approach him herself because of the crowds, Leah feels instinctively drawn to Jesus. That's why she asks Daniel about Jesus's attitudes toward children. Though Leah is nearly an adult, she feels as vulnerable as a child and fears being trampled on or overlooked by adults. Daniel reassures her, describing how Jesus stands out from other leaders of his day: he doesn't just tolerate children, but delights in them and seeks them out. This is totally opposite from Rosh's view of people; he only takes notice of those who can benefit him. Jesus makes time for those who are least able to repay him, like children, the sick, and the poor. This attitude infuriates those who believe he should be paying more attention to “important” people—people in positions of power or influence.

Chapter 16 Quotes

☝☝ “Daniel, what makes you and Joel so sure that Jesus means to make war?”

“He says that the kingdom is at hand. What else can he mean?”

“Did you ever think he might mean that the kingdom will come some other way? Without any fighting? [...] You see, Jesus has made me see that we don't need to wait for God to care for us. He does that now. [...] If everyone understood that—every man and woman [...] Suppose—the Romans too could understand?”

He stopped in the road and stared at her. “*Romans?* You think God loves the *Romans?*”

Thacia sighed. “That's impossible, I suppose.”

Related Characters: Malthace (Thacia), Daniel bar Jamin (speaker), Jesus

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 178



Explanation and Analysis

Daniel and Thacia are embarking on an errand for Rosh. Thacia dresses up as Joel so that Joel can secretly go about Capernaum in search of information for Rosh. But Thacia doesn't want Jesus to know about their plan, suspecting he won't agree with the deception behind it. She senses that Jesus wouldn't share Daniel's view that lying is a necessary weapon of war. In fact, she suspects that Jesus doesn't believe God's kingdom will come about through fighting whatsoever. His kingdom isn't a matter of earthly hopes, in other words, but of heavenly values—like trusting that God cares about each person. He even cares about the people

that Daniel instinctively views as enemies: the Romans. Nothing could be more counterintuitive to Daniel, who still sees the Romans as an abstract enemy to be defeated. But Thacia suspects that God doesn't look at human beings the way Daniel does. God's way of valuing people, as demonstrated by Jesus, is different from human beings' way, which is naturally self-serving.

●● With a snap of his finger he indicated the two packs. [...] Black anger rose in Daniel. He knew well enough the law that allowed a Roman to command that a Jew carry his burden for one mile. But the man didn't live who could make him shoulder a Roman pack! He looked squarely at the soldier. Then he spat, deliberately. The blow across his mouth came instantly and staggeringly, but he did not lower his head. [...] There was a stifled gasp. Then Thacia very quietly stepped forward and lifted one of the packs.

Related Characters: Malthace (Thacia), Daniel bar Jamin

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 179

Explanation and Analysis



While Daniel and Thacia are walking to Ketzah from Capernaum, they encounter Roman soldiers who demand that the two carry their packs. This demand is repugnant to Daniel; it basically forces him to collaborate with the hated Romans.

Jesus addresses this scenario in the Gospel of Matthew ("And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles"). The principle here is that even when faced with an unjust demand, one shouldn't spitefully resist an enemy, but endeavor to show love in return for hatred. The novel includes this scene to show how difficult such a demand really was. It requires Daniel to deny a lifetime's worth of resentment and choose to undergo humiliation instead of satisfying his desire for vengeance.

At this point, the demand is really too much for Daniel. He'd prefer to fight the soldiers, even at risk of his life. It's only because Thacia acquiesces that he's shamed into complying himself.

●● "Haven't you ever wondered," he attempted, "what good it is for them to be healed, those people that Jesus cures? They're happy at first. But what happens to them after that? What does a blind man think, when he has wanted for years to see, and then looks at his wife in rags and his children covered with sores? That lame man you saw—is he grateful now? Is it worth it to get on his feet and spend the rest of his life dragging burdens like a mule?"

Related Characters: Daniel bar Jamin (speaker), Malthace (Thacia), Jesus

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 185

Explanation and Analysis

As Daniel and Thacia walk back to Capernaum, they ponder the nature of Jesus's healing. When Thacia observes that Jesus seems to heal those who truly desire healing and who surrender to him in some way, Daniel wonders if healing is worthwhile—especially for the poor. In other words, he thinks such people's lives are so miserable that healing isn't really a benefit to them. What inherent value does a poor man find in his life?

Though this question isn't directly answered, Thacia goes on to suggest that Leah might be open to Jesus's healing, and that the world is beautiful—healing is definitely worth it if it means that Leah could then enjoy the world's wonders. She implies that the same is true for other people who accept Jesus's healing, even if their lives continue to be marked by poverty and other things the world devalues. Thacia's attitude balances Daniel's cynicism and shows that she has a way of drawing better things out of Daniel. She catches onto Jesus's values more quickly than he does.

Chapter 17 Quotes

●● Dismayed, Daniel climbed the mountain to take the warning to Rosh, only to have Rosh laugh in his face. "They are afraid of their own shadows," Rosh jeered. "What good are they but to raise food for men who will fight?" "They are desperate," Daniel urged. "You know they cannot carry arms themselves. They are going to appeal to the centurion for protection. They want him to send legionaries." "Let them come!" Rosh boasted. "Let them get a taste of the mountain. They will only break their teeth on it."

Related Characters: Rosh, Daniel bar Jamin (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 196

Explanation and Analysis

For months, Daniel has been gathering and training a group of young men to join Rosh in fighting the Romans. More and more, however, Rosh sends the boys to do petty jobs like harassing soldiers and even stealing from and destroying Jewish villagers. Daniel begins to recognize that Rosh's brand of revolution isn't what first inspired him to fight. When villagers complain to Daniel about Rosh's behavior, he tries to warn his old leader. Their conversation reveals Rosh's true character. Rosh only sees the villagers as worthwhile when they serve a purpose for him by raising food for himself and his men to eat. They aren't valuable in their own right, and Rosh certainly isn't fighting for them. In fact, his boastful words suggest that he's only fighting for his own glory and not for any higher values. This is a turning point in their relationship, as Daniel steps closer to a full repudiation of Rosh's leadership style. He'd always trusted that Rosh fought for the people, and it is difficult for him to accept that Rosh doesn't really care about other people or see himself as one of them.

Chapter 18 Quotes

☝ Daniel's control gave way. "You'd just use him and then let him go? Without even a try—?"

Rosh squinted up at him. "I've warned you before," he said, his voice ugly. "There's a soft streak in you. Till you get rid of it you're no good to the cause."

The red mist of anger cleared suddenly from Daniel's mind. He looked at the man who had been his leader. He saw the coarsened face with its tangle of dirty beard. He saw the hard mouth, the calculating little eyes. He saw a man he had never really looked at before.

Related Characters: Rosh, Daniel bar Jamin (speaker), Joel bar Hezron

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 199

Explanation and Analysis

After Joel gets captured by the Romans in the process of spying for Rosh, Daniel is sure that Rosh will spring into action to help. Even though he no longer trusts Rosh as he once did, he still believes that Rosh possesses a basic loyalty

toward those who risk their lives for him. But their conversation becomes the final breaking point in his relationship with Rosh. For Daniel, his idealization of Rosh as a leader is finally stripped away for good. He sees that Rosh is simply cruel and calculating and does not see himself as accountable to anyone else. Rosh sees Daniel as compromised by his "softness." Though Daniel once agreed with Rosh, he is slowly recognizing that this "softness" is actually his strength—it's his capacity to see other people's humanity and care about them. This capacity also enables him to see Rosh as he really is and to repudiate his leadership for good.

Chapter 20 Quotes

☝ In the darkness the same words echoed over and over. "They who live by the sword will perish by the sword." [...] Jesus had spoken them on a hot summer morning under a blue sky. Daniel had not questioned the words. To live by the sword was the best life he knew. To take the sword for his country's freedom and to perish by it—what better could a man hope for? But something he had not reckoned on had happened. He had taken the sword, but Samson, instead, had perished by it, who had no freedom to gain, and Nathan, who had left behind a bride. Their deaths were on his head. And freedom was farther away than before.

Related Characters: Jesus (speaker), Nathan, Samson, Daniel bar Jamin

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 213

Explanation and Analysis

In one of the story's turning points, Daniel leads his friends in an attack on Roman soldiers in order to free Joel from captivity. The attack only narrowly succeeds, and it would have failed if it weren't for Samson's intervention—which leads to his death. One of Daniel's first recruits, Nathan, is also killed. Devasted and disillusioned by this, Daniel no longer knows where to turn. He has repudiated Rosh's leadership, but he continues to abide by some of Rosh's principles—namely, that fighting is the way to attain God's kingdom. He has always believed that "living by the sword" (a phrase from the Gospels) is the best way to live. Now that this code of living has resulted in the deaths of his friends, though, Daniel's whole approach to life is undermined. What can it mean to fight for freedom if fighting leaves him heartbroken and indebted? Jesus's words hint that there's another way. However, Daniel isn't yet able to understand

or embrace what that alternative might be.

Chapter 21 Quotes

☝☝ “[Samson] did not give you vengeance. He gave you love. There is no greater love than that, that a man should lay down his life for his friend. Think, Daniel, can you repay such love with hate?”

“It’s too late to love Samson. He is probably dead.” Then, as Jesus waited, “Should I love the Romans who killed him?” he asked with bitterness.

Jesus smiled. “You think that is impossible, don’t you? Can’t you see, Daniel, it is hate that is the enemy? Not men. Hate does not die with killing. It only springs up a hundredfold. The only thing stronger than hate is love.”

Related Characters: Daniel bar Jamin, Jesus (speaker), Samson

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 224

Explanation and Analysis

After the near failure of Daniel’s raid to rescue Joel, Daniel feels that everything he’s worked for has collapsed. Rosh’s way has not led to freedom; it’s only multiplied Daniel’s sorrow through the deaths of his friends. Unsure where else to turn, Daniel seeks out Jesus at night, and their conversation further challenges Daniel’s assumptions about what it means to strive for God’s kingdom. Jesus points out that it doesn’t make sense to try to repay Samson with vengeance. After all, Samson died for Daniel out of love. But Daniel balks at the idea that he could love Samson’s Roman killers instead. Jesus tells Daniel that this is exactly what he should do. The only thing hatred accomplishes is to multiply killing and suffering. The only thing that can possibly overcome this cycle is love. Daniel can’t yet accept Jesus’s claim. It overturns his lifelong commitment to vengeance and forces him to think of enemies as human beings. But the conversation plants ideas in Daniel’s mind that will bear fruit later on.

Chapter 24 Quotes

☝☝ Unable to endure that smile, Daniel bent his head. Suddenly, with a longing that was more than he could bear, he wanted to stop fighting against this man. He knew that he would give everything he possessed in life to follow Jesus.

Even his vow?


He tried to cling again to the words of David that had always strengthened him. *He trains my hands for war—*

But Jesus said that the Victory was God’s promise. He called men to make ready their hearts and minds instead.

Was it possible that only love could bend the bow of bronze?

Related Characters: Jesus, Daniel bar Jamin

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 252

Explanation and Analysis

When Leah is dying, Daniel sends for Thacia in desperation. She brings Jesus with her. Even before Jesus miraculously restores Leah’s health, though, it is clear that he has come for another purpose, too—to heal Daniel’s heart. Daniel can tell that Jesus reads all the despair and regret in his heart, and he finds himself surrendering to Jesus. He does not understand Jesus, but he realizes Jesus is the only leader who is worthy of his trust. This is true even if it means giving up his vow to fight. But as he recalls the Psalm verse that has sustained his vow, he realizes that God’s kingdom is still within reach—but it can only be attained through love, not vengeance. This breakthrough allows Daniel to give up his earthly hopes and trust in Jesus instead, trusting that even if victory looks much different than he had always believed, that doesn’t make it less real. In fact, as Jesus had told him earlier, “love” is the only thing that’s strong enough to bring an enduring victory.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

Daniel bar Jamin, a tall, slender 18-year-old with tanned skin and expressive dark eyes, stands on a mountain path overlooking the sea. He is a Galilean, whose homeland, Palestine, has been conquered by the Romans. Daniel refuses to accept this occupation, however, and won't recognize the rule of Emperor Tiberius.

The olive terraces are filled with signs of spring, but Daniel is focused on two figures moving on the path above him. Preferring to forget life in the valley below, he resents their appearance on the mountain. Yet he's curious about the boy and girl, apparently brother and sister. He soon recognizes the boy as Joel bar Hezron, with whom Daniel once attended the synagogue school, and Joel's twin sister, Malthace.

Daniel used to sit up here and think about his grandmother and sister Leah, living in the village of Ketzah below. He'd stopped thinking about them for a long time, but seeing Joel and Malthace has reminded him. Though self-conscious about his ragged tunic, Daniel emerges from the rocks and awkwardly greets the two. Startled, they hold their ground and soon recognize Daniel as the runaway apprentice of the blacksmith, Amalek.

Daniel asks for news of his grandmother and sister. Malthace knows of them, but she tells Daniel that Leah never comes out of the house, and nobody has ever seen her. Daniel wishes he hadn't asked. Joel adds that another apprentice, Simon the Zealot, has opened his own shop now. Daniel remembers Simon as a good man, and he asks Joel to tell Simon that he's up here on the mountain. Joel agrees, but he asks Daniel why he doesn't return to the village himself. Daniel points out that even though it's been five years, he'd still get dragged back to Amalek if he showed his face in Ketzah.

Galilee is a mostly rural, mountainous region in the northern part of what's now Israel. (Throughout the book, characters refer to Galilee as part of the geographical region of Palestine; "Israel" is a religious designation for the nation of the Jewish people.) Beginning in the early 1st century C.E., Galilee was ruled by the Romans under Tiberius. Daniel's longing for the overthrow of Roman rule establishes one of the story's primary tensions.



Though Daniel apparently has a connection to a more conventional Galilean life, he wants to forget it for some reason, suggesting his past is complicated. Joel and Malthace's appearance threatens to bring that past into the present again.



Having ties in both places, Daniel feels torn between life on the mountain and life in the village—a tension which will persist in the story. Joel and Malthace's reaction suggests that Daniel has a reputation for rebellious actions.



Though it's unclear why, Daniel's grandmother and sister are associated with painful memories. Daniel's choice to run away from Amalek prevents him from seeing his family. Apprentices were legally bound to their masters—in cases like this, virtually enslaved. If Daniel returned to Ketzah, he could be forced to resume his servitude.



When Daniel tries to walk away, Joel and Malthace invite him to share their lunch. Wary but hungry, Daniel agrees. He's surprised when Malthace pours water over Joel's hands—he hasn't seen the hand-washing ritual in five years. Though embarrassed, he lets Malthace pour water for him, too. The three share olives, flatbread, and honey cakes. Slowly, Daniel relaxes.

In answer to Joel's questions, Daniel explains that he first fled here to hide from Amalek. Hungry, cold, and wounded from Amalek's recent beating, Daniel wandered until Rosh found and rescued him. He tells Joel that Rosh is a good man, and that he and the other men in the caves hunt for their food. Daniel also made himself a forge in order to continue his blacksmith trade. Joel says he's studying to become a rabbi, although he's learned the sandal-making trade, too. Today, he and Malthace snuck up here to explore while they have the chance—soon, they're moving from Ketzah to the nearby city of Capernaum.

Suddenly Daniel notices Roman legionaries further down the mountain. He spits contemptuously. His eyes meet Joel's, and he sees that Joel hates the Romans, too. Malthace feels left out of the conversation. She looks down at the valley and wants to know where Joshua once marched into battle. Daniel points to the battle plain. Years ago, Rosh had pointed to the same sight, and it gave Daniel something to live for.

Joel and Malthace talk about their childhood longing for the Messiah. Joel imagined that he would be the first to see and announce the Messiah's coming. That's why he doesn't want to move to Capernaum—he doesn't want to miss the Messiah's arrival. He believes that the Messiah will be ushered in by armed, trained men, and that such men can be found here. A glance at Daniel confirms Joel's suspicions.

As Daniel leads Joel and Malthace back down to the main road, he regrets talking with them—they've stirred up unwanted memories. While Malthace is distracted, Joel whispers to Daniel that he's heard rumors of Rosh—that he fought in Judas's rebellion against the Romans—and had hoped to meet him. Unable to restrain his pride, Daniel tells Joel that Rosh is as great as the rumors say. Someday, all of Israel will know about him. Joel longs to join Rosh's band in the mountains, but he's afraid to disappoint his father. Daniel wonders what it would be like to have a family waiting for him. But then one of Rosh's sentries, Ebol, appears on the path.

Washing hands before meals was a Jewish ritual, though it is not written in the biblical Law. (This matter comes up again later in the story.) Daniel's embarrassment suggests that he hasn't been a religiously observant Jew for years and feels uncomfortable about that fact. Meanwhile, he tentatively begins to trust the twins.



Amalek treated Daniel cruelly, prompting him to run away from village life altogether. This also explains Daniel's fervent loyalty to Rosh, the man who rescued him and gave him a new life on the mountain.



Daniel misses no opportunity to show his disdain for the Roman oppressors—it's his life's primary passion and motivation. Even though Joel lives a more conventional Galilean life, his feelings are much the same. Part of Daniel's motivation is his sense of connection to Jewish history (Joshua led the Israelites into the "promised land" in which they now live).



Jews waited for the coming of the Messiah, a divine figure who was expected to restore the nation of Israel from its oppressors and introduce God's kingdom on earth. Joel believes that the kingdom will be brought about, in part, by military means, a common belief.



Daniel is torn between the opportunity for friendship and the possibility that his friends will draw him back into village life in ways he doesn't want. Earlier in the first century, a figure named Judas of Galilee led a rebellion against Roman taxation. Rosh's rumored association with this figure would make him a hero in many people's eyes. Though Joel longs to become part of the rebellious action on the mountain, Daniel feels a wistful tug at the thought of having a family who expects him to come home.



CHAPTER 2

Ebol tells Daniel that Rosh has a job for them. A group of traders from Damascus will be passing by soon and Rosh wants them to seize one slave. Ebol tells Daniel to get rid of Joel and Malthace. When Joel balks at the order, Daniel can't help admiring Joel's defiance and eagerness to take part in whatever's coming. They push Malthace out of sight and hide behind a rock. Daniel loves the unpredictability of life with Rosh. He notices that Joel is exhilarated, too, and that he doesn't intend to stay hidden.

Soon the small caravan appears—a handful of traders followed by a cluster of enslaved men. At the whistled signal, Daniel seizes his assigned guard, a heavysset man in a headdress, holding the man's own dagger to his ribs. After a scuffle, the rest of Rosh's group grabs the desired slave, and within moments, the caravan is back on its way. The man they seized, a wary-looking, immensely powerful Black man, doesn't resist.

Rosh, a short, muscular man with gray hair and a matted beard, approaches Daniel and Joel. Unlike most, Joel doesn't shrink before Rosh's questioning, though his voice shakes as he introduces himself and explains that he wants to join Rosh's efforts to fight the Romans. He promises to keep silent about what he's seen today. Rosh tells Joel to go along to Capernaum, and when the time comes, he'll have work for him to do. Daniel feels a twinge of envy.

Daniel volunteers to lead the enslaved man (who doesn't seem to talk) back to the cave. He and Joel exchange a farewell glance as Daniel trudges up the trail with the man's chain in his hand. As he goes, Daniel also notices Malthace's confident beauty. As night falls, Daniel regrets volunteering to lead the enslaved man to the cave. He knows he was jealous of Joel.

When Daniel and the enslaved man finally arrive at the camp, most of the group has already finished their dinner. In their absence, they've named the enslaved man "Samson," and they've decided that Daniel is Samson's guardian. After Daniel gives Samson food, he gets to work filing the chains off Samson's wrists. It's weary work, and Daniel talks to Samson to pass the time. He tells Samson that he'll have a better life on Rosh's mountain than he would have had in the slave galleys; Rosh is a fine leader, and soon, he'll gather a big enough following to beat the Romans.

Joel, who's just expressed his longing to be part of the rebels' life on the mountain, quickly gets a chance to see what it's really like. The connection between seizing an enslaved man and overthrowing Rome is not clear. At this point, though, Daniel takes it for granted that if Rosh gives an order, it must be for a good cause.



Rosh's group of rebels is experienced and efficient; it doesn't take much effort to overpower a caravan and kidnap a single enslaved man.



Joel shows courage when he's introduced to Rosh. Likely because of Joel's willingness to jump into the action, Rosh is willing to give Joel a chance. Sensing that Joel has impressed Rosh, Daniel is envious. He looks up to Rosh and longs for his leader's approval.



Like Joel, Daniel jumps at an opportunity to take initiative and impress Rosh. Again, identifying with Rosh and gaining his approval is a big part of Daniel's motivation at this point in the story. Malthace also catches Daniel's eye.



Samson was a biblical figure known for his immense physical strength. The men's naming of Samson shows that they don't really think of him as a person—he's more of an object, valued for his strength. Daniel is already different, taking the time to talk to Samson even though he assumes the man can't understand him. Daniel instinctively cares about someone who, like himself, has no one else to depend on.



When Daniel finishes filing off the chains, Samson suddenly kneels in front of him and presses his forehead to Daniel's foot. Daniel, shocked and embarrassed, throws cloaks over the two of them and falls asleep with Samuel huddled by his feet.

Samson demonstrates his gratitude to Daniel for freeing him, but Daniel doesn't want to be recognized for this and finds the attention humiliating. However, it's the start of a bond between the two.



CHAPTER 3

Daniel works at his iron forge on a hot day, with Samson working the oven's bellows by his side. Samson has been in Rosh's camp for a month, but he never takes anything for himself, and he only acts on Daniel's orders. Rosh and others think Samson might be stupid, though they value his strength. Daniel sometimes wonders if Samson actually understands him, and he begins to develop a liking for the newcomer.

After Daniel frees Samson, Samson becomes deeply loyal to him. The others in Rosh's camp continue to look at Samson in a one-dimensional way, but Daniel sees Samson's humanity, at least more than his peers do.



That afternoon, a blindfolded stranger is led into the camp. Rosh explains that the man is looking for Daniel. When the man's face is uncovered, Daniel recognizes him as Simon, his former fellow apprentice. Joel had told Simon where to find Daniel. Daniel is happily flustered to have a visitor. He shows off his forge, which impresses Simon. Daniel tells Simon about his life on the mountain and asks Simon why he, a Zealot, doesn't join their group. But Simon is just here to inform Daniel that Amalek died two weeks ago. That means Daniel could return to Ketzah if he wanted.

Village life—Daniel's old life—intrudes on mountain life again when Simon comes to visit. Amalek's death means that Daniel, Amalek's former apprentice, is no longer bound to him. He's free to return to the village. This opens up possibilities that Daniel hasn't known before.



Daniel is reluctant to return to the village, and he's ashamed to tell Simon that he doesn't want to see his grandmother or his sister Leah. But Simon convinces him to stay for just a day or two, and even Rosh consents, grudgingly admiring Simon's persistence. Samson tries to follow Daniel down the mountain until Daniel angrily waves him off.

Daniel is uneasy about renewing his ties to his family; he thinks of himself as belonging to life on the mountain. At the same time, Samson's loyalty makes Daniel feel uncomfortable. He'd rather be accountable to nobody but himself.



As they head down the mountain, Daniel asks Simon why he doesn't join Rosh. Simon says he disagrees with Rosh on some things—like stealing food. Daniel goes silent, offended. As they cross a pasture, Simon pauses by a stream to bathe, noting that it's nearly sundown, the beginning of the Sabbath. Daniel blushes; he hasn't been keeping track of the passage of time. But he soon plunges into the water himself, relishing the rare bath.

Though Simon opposes the Romans, too, that doesn't mean he automatically approves of Rosh's methods. Daniel's reaction suggests that his conscience is conflicted when it comes to Rosh, too. Daniel's lack of religious observance comes up again. The Sabbath is a day dedicated to rest and worship, so it was important to be fully prepared before the sun went down (marking the start of a new day).



When they reach the village, they hear the ram's horn signaling the approaching start of the Sabbath. The village looks the same as it did five years ago, only smaller and shabbier. Simon walks Daniel to a small, sagging clay house at the end of a narrow street. He tells Daniel that his family is expecting him. Before Daniel can react, his grandmother, bent and frail, appears at the door. Daniel shakily greets her as she clings to him.

As Daniel enters the house, he instinctively touches the *mezuzah* in the door frame. Nervous, he sees that the table is set for the Sabbath meal. His grandmother summons Leah, and Daniel is startled to see a beautiful young woman with flowing blond hair. When Daniel wishes her "Peace," he sees fear in her blue eyes. Gradually, Leah seems to recognize him. As Leah brings water to wash Daniel's feet, he is grieved to see that his sister, now 15, is still so frightened.

Daniel's grandmother lights the lamp and invites him to recite the Sabbath blessings, which Daniel haltingly does. When Leah hesitates to eat, he begs her to share the meager food with him. His grandmother admits that they eat from the pauper's share. After supper, his grandmother dozes, and Leah cuddles her pet goat. Daniel feels troubled when he hears Leah talking soothingly to the goat, telling it that Daniel will take care of them now.

Settling into his old sleeping place on the roof, Daniel wonders why he came back. He's still hungry, and he thinks of Rosh's men enjoying a stolen meal around the campfire. He wonders if Samson has eaten enough. He is so homesick he could cry.

CHAPTER 4

Daniel awakens to a silent Sabbath morning. Soon, Simon knocks on the door and invites Daniel to join him for the synagogue service. He says there's going to be a visiting preacher from Nazareth. Though Daniel is reluctant, Simon has brought Daniel a clean cloak and shoes to wear. This persuades Daniel to go along.

As they walk to the synagogue, Daniel tells Simon about his homecoming—his grandmother just sleeps nowadays, and Leah remains demon-possessed. He explains that when Leah was five, she started hiding in the house and hasn't come out since. He is somewhat cheered, though, when Simon tells him that Leah does good weaving, which is sold in a nearby city.

Daniel is reintroduced to village life for the first time in years. Everything about Ketzah, including his grandmother, seems older and frailer than it did five years ago. The realization is jarring for Daniel.



The mezuzah is a little niche containing the words of the prayer called the Shema: "Hear, O Israel: God is our Lord, God is one." Even though Daniel hasn't followed Jewish traditions for years, they're still deeply influential to him. It's not yet explained why Leah is so timid and withdrawn. Daniel's sudden appearance is a shock to her.



According to biblical law, poor people were allowed to gather the sheaves of grain that the reapers left behind. Daniel's family is dependent on this "pauper's share," showing how much they're struggling. Leah's trust in Daniel feels like a threat because it constrains him. He doesn't want to stay—he wants to return to his life on the mountain.



Even though Daniel balks at his feeling of responsibility for Leah, he does feel a sense of obligation to Rosh's group, and specifically to Samson. He is capable of caring for others. He just feels torn between various obligations.



Carrying a bundle of clothes on the Sabbath would be considered work—against the Jewish laws governing the day of rest. Because Simon carried clothes for Daniel anyway, it shows that he takes this invitation very seriously, and Daniel feels obligated to accept.



Leah's weakness and withdrawal are interpreted as demon-possession, a condition that's understood to cut her off from God and from the normal rhythms of community life. Yet Leah is still capable of contributing something worthwhile, suggesting she isn't as lost as she seems.



Simon explains that the preacher, Jesus, is the son of Joseph, a carpenter. Jesus has left carpentry and begun traveling between towns, proclaiming the arrival of the “kingdom.” In his hometown of Nazareth, Jesus was nearly killed. The people of Ketzah crowd into the small synagogue. Anticipation builds during the reading from the Torah, which is given in both Hebrew and Aramaic.

When the stranger mounts the synagogue platform, there’s nothing especially striking about his appearance. He is dressed simply. Yet when Daniel gets a glimpse of his face, he’s stirred by the look of intensity. He feels that Jesus is “one of us,” a fighter.

When Jesus reads the Torah passage, which begins “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” he actually recites it from memory. His confident voice is both gentle and powerful. When he finishes reading, he tells the congregation that God’s kingdom is now at hand, and therefore they must repent and believe. But when Jesus says nothing more, Daniel feels let down. Why didn’t Jesus tell them to rise up against the Romans?

As they leave the synagogue, Daniel, disappointed, asks Simon if Jesus is a Zealot or not. Simon doesn’t answer directly. Instead he tells Daniel about the attempt to kill Jesus in Nazareth. People thought Jesus was calling himself God’s anointed messiah, even though everyone knew he was a local carpenter’s son. He isn’t sure how Jesus escaped. Just as the crowd was about to push Jesus over a cliff, they fell back. Then Jesus walked away, calmly and fearlessly. Daniel again feels disappointed. He wishes Jesus had fought back.

As Daniel wanders home toward his grandmother’s house, he hears a trumpet blaring. People scramble out of the street. A small group of Roman cavalry and foot soldiers march past. Daniel feels filled with hatred, especially when he sees that some of the soldiers are Samaritan mercenaries. He yells, “Infidels!” but two men yank him out of the way, covering his mouth. When the men release him, they call him a troublemaking Zealot. When they hear Daniel’s name—bar Jamin—they say he ought to have known better.

Aramaic and Hebrew are from the same linguistic family. Aramaic would have been spoken by Jews in Palestine in Jesus’s time; thus, an Aramaic paraphrase of the Hebrew Bible passage would be offered.



Outwardly, there’s little about Jesus to suggest that he is anything special. But his expression makes Daniel think that Jesus must be on his side—a Zealot.



The passage quoted here is from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. Jesus’s reading suggests that the prophecy is coming true here and now—yet he doesn’t explain how. In the New Testament, a scene like this occurs in three of the Gospels, only it takes place in Jesus’s hometown of Nazareth.



Daniel doesn’t know what to make of his first encounter with Jesus. It’s not clear whose side Jesus is on, or whose views he aligns with. Either way, Jesus stirs up controversy wherever he goes. To some people, Jesus feels like a threat, hence the assassination attempt. Yet, to others like Daniel, Jesus falls short of their hopes. His role in the coming of God’s kingdom remains a puzzle.



The people of neighboring Samaria were racially mixed, both Jewish and Gentile. Because of their assimilation to aspects of Gentile culture, Jews often looked down on Samaritans as people who diluted and betrayed Judaism. Being a mercenary (fighting for the Romans for money) was even worse. But Daniel’s scorn threatens to bring down the soldiers’ wrath on everybody. The men’s comment hints that there’s more to Daniel’s family background that hasn’t yet been revealed.



That night, Daniel retreats to the rooftop soon after dinner. He overlooks the village with disdain. The people of Ketzah seem oblivious to their oppression and unwilling to act. At first, it seemed like Jesus was different, but he, too, offered only words. Daniel knows that Rosh and his army will someday act, and Daniel will be with them. After that, he'll be able to take care of his grandmother and Leah properly. He climbs down from the roof and heads back up the trail toward the mountain cave. When he gets there, he's greeted by Samson's beaming smile.

Daniel doesn't feel he belongs in the village. He looks down on the villagers for not standing up to the Romans. They don't even seem sufficiently angry about their oppression. Daniel feels that even Jesus is a disappointment in this regard. He returns to the mountain, where at least he knows exactly where he fits in.



CHAPTER 5

During the springtime barley harvest, Daniel grows impatient. He wants to fight the Romans, but Rosh keeps sending them into brief skirmishes that don't seem meaningful to Daniel. He wishes he could talk to Joel. Finally he convinces Rosh to let him visit Capernaum. Rosh tells Daniel not to get his hopes up about Joel, whose grandfather was wealthy—Joel has much to lose. But he lets Daniel go.

Even up here on the mountain, life doesn't proceed quite to Daniel's liking. Rosh isn't moving quickly enough for him. At least Joel shares Daniel's enthusiasm to fight. But Rosh warns Daniel that because Joel has a family legacy at stake, he's unlikely to follow up his convictions with actions.



Before dawn the next morning, Daniel leaves the mountain for the journey to Capernaum. He eventually travels down a slope toward the Sea of Galilee and enters the city. He wanders the bustling streets down to the harbor, feeling hungry and realizing Rosh hadn't given him any money to buy food. A smiling young woman offers him a cooked fish, fresh from last night's catch, and asks if he's looking for the teacher. Curious, Daniel pushes down to the beach where Jesus is standing among the fishermen, joking with the crowd. Again, Daniel is struck by the man's warmth and strength.

Daniel isn't prepared for city life. He's used to stealing and foraging for his food, so he thinks fending for himself will be a challenge in Capernaum. But when he stumbles upon Jesus's followers, his expectations are overturned again. The people around Jesus seem to look out for one another and for those who don't have anything.



Jesus begins to teach the crowd. He compares the kingdom of heaven to a valuable pearl and a net bursting with fish. Daniel's attention is interrupted by the appearance of two soldiers among the crowd. Neither Jesus nor the rest of the crowd seems to notice them, but Daniel spits and angrily walks away.

Jesus's talk about the kingdom of heaven doesn't fit into Daniel's understanding. He talks about it in terms of pricelessness and abundance. These images are lost on Daniel because he's too distracted by the intrusion of the Romans. He doesn't believe they can have any part of God's kingdom.



As Daniel wanders through Capernaum, he can't escape the sight of Roman soldiers. Yet other Jews seem to take the soldiers' presence in stride. Daniel can't understand this. Do the Jews have no pride? Why doesn't Jesus do something about it?

To Daniel, the Romans' presence in Capernaum is a constant provocation—it's all he's capable of seeing. It even distorts his perception of his fellow Jews. He interprets their inaction as indifference to their own suffering.



Finally, Daniel remembers his errand and searches for Rabbi Hezron's house, on a steep hill above Capernaum's harbor. Among wealthier houses, Daniel begins to doubt his welcome. When a servant lets him into the house, he is astonished by the sunny courtyard filled with trees, marble, and a splashing fountain. Soon, he's greeted by Malthace, who seems dismayed by his appearance. But Joel welcomes him exuberantly. When Daniel starts to take off his cloak, Joel notices the battered garment underneath and tells him to leave it on.

As Daniel cleans up, he updates Joel on happenings in Rosh's camp. Then they join Hezron for dinner. Daniel awkwardly imitates Joel in reclining on the Roman-style couches. He feels out of place in the midst of the finery and formality, and when he gobbles down his food, he senses Hezron's disdain. When Daniel mentions his father, Jamin, Hezron remembers Jamin as a rash man, though his fate was tragic. Throughout the conversation, Daniel feels angry and alienated.

When Hezron says that Capernaum's Jews are indebted to the Romans for their synagogue, Daniel jumps up in anger, saying he would never enter a synagogue raised with Roman funds. Hezron scolds Daniel for speaking too freely and for insulting his hospitality. Daniel blushes and apologizes, but he tells Hezron that he can't bear to see Jews living alongside Romans as if nothing is wrong. At this, Hezron softens and tells Daniel that though all Jews grieve the occupation, they must be patient. The Zealots may be brave, he thinks, but they lack judgment.

Hezron goes on to tell Daniel that Israel's greatest strength is the Jewish Law. The Law will outlast Roman occupation, and it commands Jewish people's highest loyalty. That's why, Hezron says, he can't let Joel associate with Daniel—he cannot let Joel be swayed toward violence. He dismisses Daniel from his house. Daniel storms out, but as soon as he does, he feels ashamed. He's let Rosh down—and he's also lost the first friend he ever made.

The contrast between Daniel's life on the mountain and city life is more apparent than ever, as Daniel is obviously out of place in Rabbi Hezron's opulent home. Though Malthace sees this immediately, Joel tries to tactfully brush it off.



In ancient Roman society, wealthier people ate their meals while reclining on couches. This Roman cultural practice is especially chafing for Daniel, both because he hates the Romans and because he's lower class. But Hezron's offhand comment about Daniel's father is even more off-putting.



A Roman-supported synagogue is an especially sore point for Daniel. He believes that Romans and Jews should be totally separate, so entering this synagogue seems like a traitorous act. It suggests that it's possible for Romans and Jews to live in harmony, something Daniel can't accept. Hezron isn't unsympathetic, but he disagrees with Zealots' reckless tactics.



Not only is Hezron tolerant of the Roman presence, he's also a Pharisee—something just as alienating for Daniel. The Pharisees upheld a detailed observance of the biblical Law, meaning a less scrupulous Jew like Daniel would be seen as unclean. Because Daniel is a Zealot, he's dangerous as well.



CHAPTER 6

Leaving Hezron's house, Daniel feels hurt and resentful. He decides to leave Capernaum for good. But before he gets very far, he stops at a well, and a Roman soldier orders him to draw water for his horse. Then Daniel offers the same water bowl to the soldier. When the insulted soldier kicks Daniel, Daniel throws the bowl into the soldier's face in anger. Then he runs. The soldier throws his spear at Daniel and strikes him in the ribs. Only after Daniel flees into a nearby orchard does he realize how much pain he's in; his thoughts and vision become clouded. He summons enough strength to flee back to Joel's house.

At first, when she sees Daniel, Malthace tries to get him to leave again. Her father will get angry, and she can't let Daniel disrupt Joel's studies—Joel already feels torn. Daniel is about to leave when he collapses, unconscious. When he wakes up, he's in pain, lying somewhere dark. Malthace, leaning over him, explains that he's in a storage room. She offers him a drink of strong wine, then cleanses his wound. Then Daniel dozes until, sometime later, Joel appears in the room, carrying a candle.

Joel is distraught. He tells Daniel that people are searching for him all over Capernaum. He also doesn't think Daniel is safe in the storage room. He proposes moving Daniel to a passageway in the wall where nobody from the household will stumble across him. The twins manage to pull Daniel on a mat into the narrow, stuffy passage. Before he leaves, Joel apologizes for his father's anger—Hezron fears that Joel will run off to join the Zealots. As Daniel falls asleep, he thinks he hears a voice whispering, "Goodnight, Daniel." He imagines it is his mother's voice.

CHAPTER 7

Daniel and Malthace listen breathlessly as Joel reads from a papyrus scroll. The passage is from the Book of Enoch, and it describes God's vengeance against those who oppress his children. When Joel finishes reading, Malthace asks if their father Hezron has studied this book. Joel says yes, but that Hezron believes they must wait for God to establish his kingdom on earth; it's not up to people to fight for it. But Joel thinks they've tried Hezron's way for long enough, and that perhaps God is waiting for the Jewish people to rise up.

Hezron had warned that Daniel is too heated, and that warning is quickly proven true. Daniel insults the soldier by offering him the same vessel his horse just drank from, and then he fails to contain his anger. The soldier finds this sufficient cause to try to kill Daniel, seeing him as disposable.



Despite their father's warning and their own misgivings, Malthace and Joel unhesitatingly shelter Daniel. This move is not just loyal but risky, since their family would be seen as complicit if the Romans discovered Daniel in their custody.



The twins continue to show their loyalty and courage as they take responsibility for Daniel's safety. Even if Joel doesn't become a Zealot, his protection of Daniel would be little different in his father's eyes. When Daniel imagines he hears his dead mother's voice, it suggests that Daniel feels safe in his friends' care. Used to depending only on himself, he entrusts himself to others as he once did to Rosh—which will be a turning point for him.



The book of Enoch isn't considered to be part of the formal biblical canon by either Jews or Christians. However, its prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah were still valued and studied in synagogue schools, leading to varying interpretations. While Hezron believes that people should continue to focus on the Law while awaiting the Messiah's coming, Joel wonders if the book is a call to arms.



Daniel remembers that in another Bible passage, Phinehas was praised for killing God's enemies. He believes another Phinehas is needed—rather, a whole *army* of such men. Joel suddenly asks Daniel if he thinks Rosh might be the leader they're waiting for. Daniel has been waiting for this exact question. He *knows* Rosh is the one they've been waiting for—after all, he is a fearless leader who commands men's obedience. It doesn't matter to him if Rosh is an outlaw, as Malthace protests. If Rosh can get rid of the Romans, Daniel is sure that God's kingdom will follow.

Daniel explains that he wants Roman blood—it's all he's wanted ever since the Romans killed his parents. Malthace gently encourages Daniel to tell them the story. Hesitantly, Daniel begins to tell the story he's never told anyone. When he was eight years old, and Leah was five, their father had a good job as a vineyard overseer. Daniel attended the synagogue school, and their mother taught them Bible verses. (Even though their mother was half Greek—Leah takes after her in looks—she believed in the God of the Jews.)

Daniel's father was very close to his younger brother, Daniel explains. When Daniel's uncle and aunt had a baby son, his uncle purchased an expensive gift to honor his wife. Then, when tax time came, he didn't have enough money left to give the collector. For this he was jailed and soon sentenced to the quarries to work off the debt. Though Daniel's father was a peaceful man, he gathered some friends to make a rescue attempt, at his distraught sister-in-law's urging. However, the men were all captured and made an example of—all six, including Daniel's uncle, were crucified. Daniel's mother, after keeping vigil by the crosses for days, died soon after.

Even though he was only eight, Daniel vowed that he would live the rest of his life to hate, fight, and kill Romans. He continued to live with his grandmother, but because there wasn't enough for them to eat, she removed Daniel from school and sold him to Amalek as an apprentice. Leah, for her part, has been sickly ever since her parents' deaths. When she was five, she snuck out and saw the crucifixions taking place, and she has suffered from nightmares ever since; she never left the house again. Daniel attributes this to "demons."

After hearing the story, Malthace is in tears. Joel solemnly vows to join Daniel in avenging his father; he says this fight belongs to *all* Jews. Daniel is surprised and moved, but he also feels guilty. He'd come to Capernaum to win Joel to Rosh's cause, but he hadn't intended to do it *this* way.

The term "Zealot" is connected to the story of Phinehas in the Hebrew Bible's Book of Numbers. Phinehas was praised for his "zeal" in executing an Israelite chief's son and a foreign princess for their illicit liaison. Daniel believes that fighting for God's kingdom by eliminating the Romans requires this kind of zeal, and that Rosh is the man to lead them.



The story has hinted at Daniel's past several times, but the full story has stayed hidden until now. As a small child, Daniel's life was much more secure and conventional by first century Galilean standards, until things changed catastrophically. This is also a first example of Malthace's ability to coax things out of Daniel that others can't.



Daniel's uncle's story is a good example of Rome's infamously oppressive and cruel policies. Work in the quarries was as good as a death sentence, and all this simply for unpaid taxes. Crucifixion was a more torturous method of execution that was often given to traitors. The condemned men's ordeal was meant to stand as a horrifying example for onlookers.



Daniel's parents' and uncle's ordeal has a powerful effect on him. With little else to live for, Daniel places revenge at the center of his existence. Leah's life is devastated as well, though people categorize her emotional disturbance as demon possession. These events put Daniel's hatred of the Romans into perspective.



When Malthace and Joel commit themselves to Daniel's fight, he learns more about friendship—namely that friends help carry one another's burdens.



Though Malthace is stunned and afraid, she steadies herself. Her expression becomes passionate like her twin brother's. She argues that a girl can serve Israel, too—like Deborah and Esther did. Daniel protests, though he isn't sure why. But Joel speaks up and agrees that the three of them should take a vow for "God's Victory"—like the Maccabees did. They place their hands on the scroll containing the Book of Enoch and swear to stand together for God's Victory.

Daniel says that Joel shouldn't join him on Rosh's mountain just yet. He will send a message to Capernaum when Rosh needs Joel. Then Joel shows Daniel a secret opening in the wall of the passageway, near the storage room. It's used to bring in sacks of grain from outside, but a person can also fit through it. If Daniel ever needs to bring a message, he can squeeze through the opening and hide in the passage. If he does, he should place a mark on the wall to let his friends know he's there. They agree that the sign should be a **bow**—like the "bow of bronze" mentioned in one of David's Psalms.

After the twins leave, Daniel feels warmth as he thinks about the imagery of the **bow** and the loyalty of his new friends. He decides that tomorrow, even though it's the Sabbath, he must leave—he's strong enough now. Very early the next morning, he squeezes through the hole in the wall and makes his way back to the mountain.

CHAPTER 8

Daniel still hasn't recovered fully from his wounds. By the time he staggers up the mountain, he isn't sure he'll make it. Suddenly Samson hurries down the trail and scoops Daniel up. He carries Daniel carefully back to the cave. For the next few days, he lovingly nurses Daniel back to health. Some of the other men admire Daniel's run-in with the Roman soldier. Before long, however, they forget about it.

For Daniel, though, life is no longer the same. He loves Rosh; he has fought alongside Rosh's men. But Joel and Thacia (which is Malthace's nickname) are the first friends he's ever had who've actually talked with him and shared his burdens. While he heals, Daniel recalls the Bible stories Joel read aloud. He's most inspired, though, by Judas Maccabeus.

Daniel also thinks about Thacia. He's puzzled by her; he doesn't understand girls very well in general. Thacia is unpredictable and disturbing to Daniel. Though she is so different from Leah, she, like Leah, feels like a threat to Daniel's plans.

Deborah and Esther were a judge and queen, respectively, who fought for Israel. As Joel and Daniel draw inspiration from figures like Phinehas and the Maccabees, Thacia looks to biblical heroines as examples. Daniel feels a protective instinct toward Malthace that he isn't yet able to understand. But the three join together in a vow to help bring about God's kingdom.



The friends choose a symbol from Psalm 18, "He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze." The Psalm refers to God's ability to give strength to those who fight on his behalf. If left to human strength, bending a bronze bow would seem to be impossible. The point of the symbol is that God makes such things possible. For now, the friends think of feats of rebellion against Rome, but the symbol will change as the story develops.



While injured and dependent on his friends, Daniel gains far more than he's lost—his first real friendships. But he feels there's no time to lose in his fight, so he leaves, even though traveling was forbidden on the Sabbath.



The dismissive attitude of Daniel's comrades on the mountain contrasts with the warmth and loyalty of his new friends Joel and Malthace. Samson is the only one on the mountain who shows him any loyalty.



Up till now, Daniel has only known the company of Rosh's men. Now that he's experienced the twins' friendship, he realizes it's something altogether different. Friends actually take a personal interest in one another and share one another's pain.



Daniel is beginning to develop romantic feelings for Thacia, though he doesn't yet recognize them. He just knows that she poses a challenge he can't understand.



About a week after Daniel has resumed his blacksmithing work, Rosh brings him a special dagger he wants Daniel to mend. It's a kind of good luck charm for Rosh, but it's gotten damaged. Daniel knows he doesn't have the right tools to repair the dagger. Rosh tells him to get supplies from Simon, but he refuses to offer any money for the expensive parts needed.

When Daniel reaches Ketzah the next day, he finds Simon's smithy closed down. A villager tells him that Simon left town a month ago to follow a traveling preacher. Daniel realizes Simon has followed Jesus, and he tries to imagine what could have kept Simon away for all this time. He refuses to steal from his friend, so he decides to go to Capernaum in search of him.

When Daniel reaches Capernaum, he goes straight to the harbor. He learns that Jesus won't be preaching until tomorrow. In the meantime, Jesus can probably be found in the home of Simon bar Jonas in the neighboring town of Bethsaida. It's still early, so Daniel decides to visit his friends first. He scratches the symbol of the **bow** on the wall outside the passageway at Hezron's house and crawls inside. After a long wait, Joel enters the passage. Daniel invites Joel to come along to meet Jesus. Curious, Joel agrees.

At dusk, Daniel and Joel walk to the fishing village of Bethsaida. On the way, they encounter a couple with a young boy. The man explains that they're seeking Simon bar Jonas's house, too; in fact, they've walked all the way from Cana in search of the preacher, Jesus. The woman shows them her son's swollen hand. It was bitten by a camel two months ago and is still unhealed; they hope Jesus can fix it. They've heard many stories of Jesus's healings. Daniel is puzzled.

Soon, they reach Simon bar Jonas's house. The courtyard is crowded with people, many of them ill or injured. When Daniel speaks to a man by the door, the man explains that Jesus is finishing his supper and will come out soon. He calls Simon for Daniel. Simon insists on introducing the boys to "the master" and guides them into the house. When Daniel faces Jesus, he is struck by Jesus's kind yet searching gaze.

The boys are seated at the table. Before Jesus can break bread, someone interrupts, objecting that no water was provided for the ceremonial hand-washing. The women of the house are dismayed, but Jesus reassures them—he says it's more important that people's hearts be prepared to receive the food than their hands. He blesses and passes the bread. Daniel notices that Joel looks troubled as he begins to eat the bread.

Rosh's request is both an expression of confidence in Daniel's abilities and a test of his resourcefulness and loyalty. Daniel wants to prove himself to his mentor.



Simon seems to have found something in Jesus that is worth giving up everything he has. Though this puzzles Daniel, he doesn't take advantage of it. His refusal to steal suggests that he already has greater integrity than most of Rosh's men.



Jesus is already a fixture in Capernaum. Everyone seems to know who he is and where he can be found. At this point, Daniel doesn't know how Jesus's mission will connect with his own, but he and Joel both sense that there's something different about this traveling teacher.



The village of Cana was southwest of the Sea of Galilee, with Capernaum situated on the Sea's northern shore. In other words, this family has walked a very long distance, probably days, in hopes of Jesus's healing. The mystery surrounding Jesus deepens: not only is he an enigmatic teacher, he's rumored to have healing powers, too.



The scene Daniel finds at Simon's house is very different from his life on the mountain. He's used to living among powerful men capable of getting what they want. The kind of people who are attracted to Jesus are weak and helpless.



Washing hands before a meal was actually not part of the Jewish law (as contained in the Hebrew Bible), but a development in later Jewish tradition. This is why Jesus dispenses with the practice, and why Joel—who's been raised in a strictly observant family—feels troubled about the omission of this practice. Jesus's interpretation of Judaism is very different.



After the meal, Jesus goes outside. He is immediately greeted by pleading voices. The outcry grows quieter as Jesus calmly moves among the people, speaking to them and sometimes touching them. At one point, a woman cries out that she has been cured. When Daniel sees the family he'd met earlier, he follows them to find out what their encounter with Jesus was like. Shaken, the man tells Daniel that his son's arm is healed. Though the arm remains swollen, the little boy says it no longer hurts. At first, Daniel is angry, thinking it's a trick.

Back at the house, Simon tells the boys that he has seen many people healed. He can't explain why Jesus doesn't heal every person who asks for it. Simon suggests that those who are healed seem to possess faith of some kind—an ability to surrender to Jesus.

Jesus addresses the people gathered there. He tells them that in God's sight, they are more precious than many sparrows. He also promises them that God has a place for them in his kingdom. Daniel can't understand this. These suffering people are incapable of fighting for the kingdom—so what can it possibly mean to them?

Jesus, who looks very tired, is guided back to the house by his disciples. Then Daniel remembers his errand and speaks to Simon about it. Simon observes that Daniel puts a lot of faith in Rosh. He directs Daniel to an ironworker in Capernaum who can help him. For the time being, Simon will stay with Jesus. Daniel asks if Jesus is a Zealot. Simon doesn't have an answer for that—and what's more, he doesn't care. He just wants to be with Jesus.

As Daniel and Joel walk away, Joel is troubled. He doesn't understand how that crowd of people could be considered children of God—after all, they do not observe the Law. He thinks Hezron is probably right that Jesus is a dangerous influence. And yet, he still feels drawn to Jesus in a way he can't express.

CHAPTER 9

A few days later, Daniel sits at the foot of the mountain, nervously anticipating his first solo job for Rosh. He knows it's both a reward for fixing Rosh's dagger and a test of Daniel's usefulness. Rosh wants him to steal a bag of gold from an old smuggler who, he says, disguises himself as a poor beggar. Daniel tries to accept Rosh's point of view—that this smuggler should spare some of his gold for Israel's cause—but he feels uneasy about it.

Jesus has a peaceful effect on the distraught people, and sometimes, with little fanfare, he heals them. Daniel can't understand this. In fact, when he sees the little boy is healed, he can't accept it at first. He doesn't trust that Jesus is authentic.



Jesus's healing presents challenges. He doesn't heal everyone who comes to him. Jesus seems to ask for something from the people he heals—their complete trust.



Jesus is a totally different kind of leader than Rosh is. Rosh teaches his men to fight for the kingdom. Jesus appears to teach that God gives the kingdom to those who have no ability to fight for it, simply because they are valuable to God. Daniel is baffled by this.



Jesus is not inexhaustible; he is human and capable of weakness himself. This suggests that Jesus's ability to serve others comes from his ability to sympathize with their weaknesses. Even Simon doesn't yet understand Jesus's ideas or his loyalties completely. But he trusts Jesus, and on that basis, he's willing to give up his whole life.



Having been raised with a very different interpretation of the Law, Joel can't make sense of Jesus. He believes that God's children are exemplary followers of the Law. Jesus's followers clearly aren't. Yet even he finds Jesus's style attractive.



Daniel is moving up in Rosh's world, being entrusted with new responsibilities. But every new responsibility also comes with a test. In other words, Daniel is expected to prove himself over and over. And he must prove himself on Rosh's terms, adhering to Rosh's values. Daniel is starting to question those values.



When the wheezing, tottering man finally appears, Daniel leaps on him. The man doesn't resist. He moans that he's poor and doesn't have anything valuable. But the instant Daniel reaches for the beggar's money-pouch, the man strikes with a dagger. Daniel wrestles with the surprisingly strong man until he sees he's holding a second dagger as well, then Daniel knocks him down. He's about to walk away with the gold when he glances back and sees the old man sprawled in a way that reminds him of his grandfather, when Daniel was a child. Suddenly Daniel can't leave him there, helpless. He waits until the man returns to consciousness, gives him back one dagger, and sends him on his way.

When Daniel brings the bag of gold to Rosh, it's clear that somebody was watching Daniel and brought back a report of what happened—Rosh knows the man carried two daggers. He angrily tells Daniel he was foolish not to have killed the man when he had a chance. But then, more gently, he tells Daniel he has a “soft streak,” a weakness, that he'll have to get rid of if he wants to be useful to the cause. When Rosh offers his hand, Daniel clasps it.

As Daniel gets back to work at his anvil, he suspects Rosh is right. Rosh doesn't even know how much Daniel worries about Leah and his grandmother—or how much he thinks about Thacia. He tries to pound the weakness out of himself as he works. Yet he also feels a nagging doubt. He recalls something—maybe from the Scriptures—that seems to disprove Rosh's argument. Yet what finally comes into his mind is one of Jesus's sayings: “For each of you is precious in his sight.” He realizes that Rosh and Jesus look at people differently. Where Rosh sees a person as something to be used, Jesus sees a person as a child of God.

This is an important moment for Daniel's character. Though Daniel completes the job for Rosh, it becomes clear that there's an additional test—can he actually leave an old man unconscious and vulnerable? It turns out that he can't. His childhood love for his grandfather is still strong, and this moves him to empathize with the old man, no matter how despicable he might be otherwise. Daniel isn't coldhearted or vengeful, even though the man was willing to hurt him.



Rosh was monitoring Daniel's behavior to see how he reacted in this specific situation. He wanted Daniel to kill the helpless old man. If Daniel wants to advance in Rosh's world, he'll have to become more ruthless and reject his “softness.” For now, Daniel accepts this.



It's no news to Daniel that he is “soft.” He continues to feel torn between his various responsibilities, especially between the mountain and the village. Yet, having met Jesus, he begins to suspect that this part of himself can't be easily removed—and that maybe it shouldn't be. He identifies the big difference between Jesus's attitude toward people and Rosh's. Jesus thinks people should be treated with dignity because of their value in God's sight. Rosh thinks people can be thrown away when they're no longer “useful.”



CHAPTER 10

The sentry, Ebol, brings Daniel a message one morning. It's from Simon, and it reads simply, “Your grandmother is dying.” The message is several days old. Daniel heads down the mountain to the village. When he knocks on his grandmother's door, no one answers. Neighbors tell Daniel that the house has been locked for 10 days, and nobody wanted to break in for fear of his demon-possessed sister. However, people have tossed bread through the window.

Daniel is abruptly pulled out of his life on the mountain by his family's needs again. Villagers' misconceptions about Leah discourage them from getting too close to the family, showing how fear can cause people to mistreat others.



Daniel manages to climb up to the high window and peer inside. Seeing little, he calls to Leah, but she doesn't respond. Terrified, Daniel finally breaks down the door, letting sunshine into the dank house. He sees Leah crouching in a corner, her eyes wild and her hair tangled. His grandmother is lying on a bed of straw. She slowly turns to Daniel and says, "You've come." She doesn't speak again.

Daniel sends for a physician, who tells him that his grandmother is dying; all he can do is let her go and tend to his sister. Awkwardly, Daniel brings in fresh straw, bathes his grandmother's hands, and feeds her broth brought by a neighbor. The whole time, Leah watches him fearfully from the corner. At nightfall, a neighbor quietly brings Daniel oil to light his lamp. Daniel had forgotten that the people of this poor village could be kind. But as he keeps vigil beside his grandmother, he feels afraid. He wonders if the "devil" that's possessed his sister will seize him, too.

Daniel's grandmother seems to have known he would come back. He doesn't know why—he feels he's never done anything for her, and he never even told her why he ran off to join Rosh. So finally he begins to talk. He tells his grandmother he remembers when he was a child, and she took care of him and Leah, telling them Bible stories. He thinks he sees a faint smile on her face, and he hears Leah stir in the corner. He digs a certain Psalm out of his memory and recites it: "The Lord is my shepherd." Leah silently sits beside him, taking his hand, and Daniel's fear subsides. At some point in the night, his grandmother stops breathing.

CHAPTER 11

The next morning, Daniel leads a small funeral procession to the outskirts of the village. After the burial, he meets Simon on his way home. Simon and Daniel eat a silent funeral feast, provided by the neighbors, outside his house. Then Simon gently prods Daniel about his plans. He tells Daniel that he has given up his smithy since beginning to follow Jesus—it would be a favor to him, he says, if Daniel would take it over. All at once, Daniel is filled with both gratitude and resentment. What would this mean for his life on the mountain?

Daniel realizes he's trapped. He can't leave Leah to fend for herself. Miserable, he gives in. Simon suggests that he and Leah move into the house adjoining his shop; that way, Daniel can keep an eye on Leah while he works. He doesn't say a word about the sorry condition of Daniel's house. He keeps his tone practical as he advises Daniel on the ins and outs of his business.

Daniel finds a heartbreaking scenario at his grandmother's house, as his grandmother is near death and Leah seems to have declined into childlike helplessness. It's much closer to the sorrowful scene in Jesus's courtyard, full of needy people, than the carefree life on the mountain.



This scene contrasts sharply with the scene a chapter earlier, when Daniel jumped on an old man. Instead of attacking, Daniel now undertakes the most tender caretaking. He's still scared and uncertain. The scene suggests, though, that Daniel is capable of much more than Rosh thinks. In fact, he's acting more like Jesus (serving) than Rosh (asserting power).



Despite everything Daniel's done, his grandmother still loves him and seems to have faith in his capabilities. In turn, this love draws more out of Daniel—even childhood Bible teaching. As he recites the Psalm describing God as a loving, caring shepherd, Leah is drawn to Daniel as well. The whole scene suggests that childhood influences have had a much deeper influence on Daniel than even Rosh has had.



After his grandmother dies, Daniel has to make a decision. Leah can't provide for herself, and Simon quietly offers Daniel a way to care for her while supporting them both. Daniel appreciates the gracious gesture, but at the same time, he sees that in some ways, this means the end of the life he loved on the mountain.



Daniel accepts Simon's offer. In doing so, he learns that love sometimes means giving up one's own preferences, even to the point of feeling trapped. Simon continues to show Daniel tact and kindness, not making a big deal of the fact that Daniel is poor and has no other options. He sees Daniel's potential instead of defining him by his limitations.



When Simon warns Daniel that Roman legionaries sometimes come to the shop, Daniel's anger flares. He says he will never serve Romans. But Simon tells him he will have to learn to do so. In the village, each person holds their neighbor's safety in their hands. Therefore, insulting a soldier could endanger the entire town. Simon comforts Daniel with the reminder that Zealots sometimes visit the shop, too.

When Daniel approaches Rosh with his news, Rosh scorns him—it's proof that Daniel is as "soft" as he's suspected. But Daniel says he'll prove Rosh wrong. He will keep fighting for the cause within Ketzah. The next day he gathers the few belongings in his grandmother's house and gently explains to Leah what's happening. But when he opens the front door, Leah shrinks from the gaze of neighbors. Daniel quickly realizes that forcing Leah to leave would backfire.

Later that day, just as Daniel is giving up, he hears a knock at the door. A smiling old carpenter has brought a litter—a vehicle with sewn-together cloaks for curtains. He explains that his wife helped him prepare it, and there are men standing ready to carry it. This way, Leah can ride to her new home without being seen by strangers—like a biblical queen. Daniel feels like crying again. He explains the litter to Leah, giving her time to get used to the idea. At last, she agrees to go. Daniel tucks her into the litter and follows it across town to Simon's house, leading Leah's goat.

At Simon's house, Daniel becomes quite busy. It's difficult to tend to the house and care for Leah at the same time—and then customers begin to arrive. But Daniel enjoys the challenge of impressing Simon's old customers, who are cautious about him at first. He's been practicing his skills for five years, and now he finally has proper tools to work with. He begins to gain a good reputation around town and to earn money for the first time.

Leah begins to settle down in her new life, too. She finds pleasure in small details, like brushing her long hair and arranging their belongings. She watches Daniel through the shop door all day, hiding whenever customers come in. One day, a man comes into the shop with fine linen. It turns out that he's the servant of a rich woman from the town of Chorazin. This woman used to buy Leah's woven cloth. Daniel is amazed to learn that Leah's cloth is sought after. He gives her the linen and watches as she confidently threads her loom. Leah also begins to tend the overgrown backyard garden and help Daniel bake bread. Daniel realizes that, contrary to many people's assumptions, Leah has never lost her wits. However, Leah is still weak and fretful, rendered helpless for days by a small fright.

Simon points out how village life is different from what Daniel has been used to. Daniel can't devote himself to his anti-Roman stance in the same way. He has to think about consequences to his neighbors if he tangles with any Romans; he can't just think about his own feelings. At the same time, running Simon's shop doesn't mean that Daniel has to give up his efforts on Israel's behalf.



Daniel hopes to fulfill his obligations in both parts of his life—to his family and to his fight. His first challenge is to help Leah adjust to their new circumstances—something that requires tenderness more than toughness.



Though Daniel's neighbors have been fearful of Leah and still don't understand her, they're also capable of showing great kindness, accommodating her fears as she's transported to her new home. Daniel is also patient with Leah, showing his ability to put others' needs before his own.



After years of living on his own and not being dependent on anyone else or caring for anyone else, Daniel must provide for himself and his family for the first time. He begins to take satisfaction in the work and in being part of the community.



Despite Leah's reputation for being "demon-possessed," she is capable of creating beautiful things and contributing to the household. Daniel realizes that although Leah needs a lot of support and understanding, people have also unfairly dismissed her. He's even been guilty of this himself.



One day a Roman legionary appears in the shop. Daniel ignores the man for a long time. When he reluctantly gets to work on the man's broken bridle ring, he watches the soldier out of the corner of his eye. He's surprised to see that the soldier is a young man Joel's age, pale-skinned and likely new at his post. But when he notices the man staring through the shop door at Leah, Daniel slams the door angrily. He feels that the man's gaze defiles his sister. That night he thinks of his comrades on the mountain again.

Daniel has never really looked at a Roman soldier closely enough to see him as an individual. That's why it comes as such a surprise that the soldier reminds him of Joel—in his mind, there's nothing human about Romans, much less sympathetic.



CHAPTER 12

One day, a restless young man comes into Daniel's shop to get his scythe mended. Daniel seldom talks to customers, but he's curious about the pacing boy and asks him about his black eye. The boy finally admits that a group of his friends jumped him last night. They did it because the boy's father has gone to work for Shomer the tax collector.

It was considered shameful for a Jew to work for a Roman tax collector; it was seen as making oneself complicit in the Romans' exploitation of the Jews.



The boy goes on to explain that his father couldn't earn enough money to pay his taxes after years of poor harvests, and he refused to sell his daughter. So he was forced to make a living by collecting taxes instead, though he would never take a coin for himself. Daniel feels embarrassed for the boy. But after he finishes the job, he offers to walk the boy—Nathan—home, just in case his friends are lying in wait again. He has an axhead to deliver anyway.

Daniel himself was essentially sold to Amalek and enslaved by him as an apprentice. The implication is that the boy's sister would have been sold into a sexually exploitative situation. Daniel's tactful kindness shows that he's learned, probably from Simon, the importance of helping others without shaming them.



Soon, as Daniel walks Nathan home, a half dozen boys rush out of the darkness to attack them. Daniel finds joy in beating them back, with capable help from Nathan. The attackers quickly scatter, recognizing him as the blacksmith. Once that's done, Daniel invites Nathan to put his fighting skill to better use. He tells him about the Zealots.

Though Daniel is finding his place within village life, that doesn't mean he doesn't miss aspects of his life on the mountain. And Nathan presents an opportunity for Daniel: bringing part of the mountain down to the village.



A few days later, Joel shows up in the shop; Simon told him where to find Daniel. He brings a proud-looking, clearly wealthy friend named Kemuel. Daniel quickly finds that Kemuel is spirited and serious about fighting the Romans. When Nathan drops by, the four hold a meeting on the spur of the moment, and they agree to meet here weekly. Nathan offers to bring more recruits. Daniel warns that they won't be able to fight immediately. He remembers Rosh's words about getting strong enough before fighting. He wants only committed, trustworthy boys to join.

As Daniel begins to gather recruits, he looks to Rosh for leadership tactics. Some of these are wise, like not jumping into the fight too early. It remains to be seen whether Rosh's influence will be enough to sustain Daniel as he takes on his own leadership role.



Before the boys can begin quarreling about the best way to proceed, Joel jumps in to suggest the symbol of the **bronze bow**: it can be their password. Within a few weeks, 16 young men have joined. They identify themselves to one another by asking, “Did you ever see a bow made of bronze?” By the time 21 boys have gathered, Joel becomes eager to tell Rosh about the new band. Daniel knows that will be a proud moment. It might even lead to Rosh being recognized as the messiah by the people.

One day, the Roman soldier shows up at Daniel’s smithy again. This time he needs his horse’s stirrup mended. Daniel works anxiously, afraid the soldier will notice some sign of the rebel meeting. Over the coming weeks, the soldier keeps coming back with random jobs, sometimes making a silly excuse. Sometimes he just rides his horse past the shop. Daniel realizes his group needs a new meeting place. One of the recruits offers an abandoned watchtower in his father’s cucumber field. Soon the soldier stops coming, but Daniel still feels uneasy.

CHAPTER 13

Leah’s confidence is growing. She doesn’t mind Daniel’s absences for meetings, and she spends more time working at her loom, even earning money for her fine work. One day Joel and Malthace come to visit. Joel and Daniel step out for a while to meet with a recruit who has some theological questions only Joel can answer. On the way back, Joel tells Daniel that he has gone back to Bethsaida several times to hear Jesus. Daniel is surprised to hear that Jesus has answered some of Joel’s questions about the Bible. Joel says that he doesn’t know where Jesus was trained, but he truly knows the Bible. He has a way of getting to the heart of what the scriptures say, even more than Rabbi Hezron does. Daniel wishes that Jesus and Rosh would join forces.

When the boys get back to the smithy, Daniel is surprised to find Thacia and Leah sitting together in the back garden. Leah happily tells Daniel that Thacia has come to visit her. Thacia shoots Daniel a warning glance. She says they’ve had a great time discussing Daniel in his absence. Daniel blushes, baffled by girls as always, but he’s touched by the smile on Leah’s face.

The image of the bronze bow comes to symbolize more than just Daniel’s small group of friends. The movement to fight for God’s kingdom is bigger than that. For the time being, however, Daniel still associates the fight with Rosh. He assumes that Rosh is the one who will end up leading Israel to freedom from Rome.



Daniel fears that the Roman soldier will catch onto his rebellious activities. Later on, it will become clear that the soldier is interested in something very different, and that there’s more going on in Daniel’s home than he knows.



As Leah’s trust in Daniel and the security he provides grows stronger, she flourishes more and more. Up till now, Joel has been somewhat resistant to Jesus’s teachings. Jesus doesn’t neatly conform to Joel’s understanding of the Jewish Law. Yet Joel knows a serious Bible student when he meets one, and he respects Jesus even though he doesn’t understand him. For his part, Daniel cares less about Jesus’s theological position and more about his possible political alliance with Rosh. Daniel believes the two men’s goals are the same.



Leah’s openness to Thacia’s friendship shows how much she’s grown. Not long ago, she wouldn’t see anyone but Daniel inside the house. Even though this is Thacia’s first time visiting Leah, she treats her new friend’s feelings delicately—she silently warns Daniel not to make a big deal of this breakthrough so as not to embarrass his sister.



When Leah spots Joel, she shrinks behind her headscarf again. But Thacia gently places a gift in Leah's lap—an embroidered girdle. Daniel watches as Leah traces the delicate embroidery with her finger. The gift jolts Daniel. He realizes that Leah makes beautiful cloth for rich women, but she dresses in rags herself. The next day, he makes his way to the market and awkwardly prowls among the sellers. Too embarrassed to haggle, he buys an overpriced length of blue cotton and hastily returns home. When Daniel presents Leah with the gift, she can't believe the cloth is for her. Daniel hears her laugh for the first time.

Daniel is growing in sensitivity toward his sister, too. When Thacia's gift causes him to recognize Leah's poverty, it's another example of Thacia's ability to bring good out of Daniel. Days earlier, Daniel grumbled at having to fulfill the "womanly" duty of going to the well. Now he willingly braves the marketplace just to make his sister happy.



CHAPTER 14

One morning, Leah and Daniel sit together over a late breakfast. Daniel was up late celebrating Nathan's wedding, and he's feeling tired and foggy. Abruptly, Leah asks Daniel what a wedding is. Daniel realizes that his sister knows so little of the outside world. Awkwardly, he tries to describe the modest feast and the bride's dress. When Leah asks if Daniel will someday bring a bride home, Daniel snaps at her that he's taken an oath to rid the Jews of their Roman overlords. He doesn't have time for anything else. But he's not sure who he's yelling at.

When Leah innocently asks Daniel to tell her more about the wedding, he feels guilty about Leah's isolation. More than that, however, Daniel's annoyance suggests that deep down, he does want to bring a wife home. He thinks his anti-Roman oath will interfere with that—suggesting that, deep down, Daniel suspects that vengeance gets in the way of love.



Leah seems puzzled by Daniel's words. Eventually, she says it's silly to call the Romans the masters of the Jews—after all, the nice Roman soldier who visits the shop is just a boy, and he's homesick at that. Daniel is furious. He blames the Romans for Leah's condition. He doesn't know where Leah would have learned the word "homesick." That day he fights to keep his mind on his work, thinking often of the mountain. At the end of the day, he tells Leah to bar the door, and he heads up the mountain.

Leah seems to know something about the Roman soldier that Daniel doesn't. Her innocence causes her to look at the Romans differently than Daniel does—as human beings with needs and sorrows, instead of as abstract enemies. Because of what her parents' deaths did to Leah—contributing to her weak and needy condition—Daniel can only see the Romans as oppressors.



At first, the men of Rosh's camp welcome Daniel with glad shouts. But the feeling of homecoming fades quickly, and people soon ignore him. When he talks with Joktan, he learns that Rosh's men have had trouble stealing food from the shepherds. Daniel feels uncomfortable. He used to assume that he was entitled to whatever he could steal. Now he knows the village shepherds personally, and he knows they aren't wealthy.

Daniel feels caught between worlds. In the village, he feels caged and unable to fight as he's vowed to do. Yet, on the mountain, he's beginning to grow uncomfortable with some of Rosh's methods. He has a stake in village life nowadays; he can identify with the struggles of the shepherds he knows personally. Before, he thought of them as faceless victims.



When Samson strides into camp with a large sheep, he and Daniel greet each other joyfully. Later Joktan tells Daniel that Samson sensed he was coming back—he just seems to know these things. When Daniel goes to sleep beside his old comrades that night, he feels content at first. But soon he's tossing and turning, thinking about Leah, Joel, and Thacia. He also thinks of Simon and the leader Simon has found in Jesus. Among Jesus's followers, there seems to be a close fellowship. But among Rosh's men, only Samson really cared that Daniel came back. He also thinks about Leah and her goat. He wonders if a village child will go hungry because of the mutton feast.

The next morning, Daniel wishes he could take Samson back to the village with him, but he can't see Samson fitting into village life—he belongs up here on the mountain. But Daniel isn't sure where *he* belongs. When he gets back to the shop, he finds the fire has gone out. Leah is sitting there with hair uncombed, not having bothered to get water from the well or make breakfast. Daniel irritably picks up the water jar, feeling caged once again.

CHAPTER 15

Daniel starts going to Capernaum to listen to Jesus's preaching. This makes village life feel less burdensome to him; in fact, it becomes one of the happiest times in his life. At first, he goes just to humor Joel, but he quickly finds that Jesus's puzzling words stay in his mind, and he feels drawn back. Soon, he's getting up before dawn every morning and walking three miles to join the crowd gathered beside the lake. Sometimes he visits Simon's house at Bethsaida in the evenings, too.

Over meals, Daniel tells Leah stories from his time with Jesus. Even though Leah has scarcely ventured outside their house, Daniel tries to help her see the outside world: the lake at sunrise, the boats heaped with newly caught fish, the fishermen and their wives and the merchants and traders. Jesus stands on the shore and talks to all of them. Beggars and disabled people join the crowd, as well as curious onlookers.

Daniel tries to remember Jesus's stories for Leah. Sometimes it's easy because of the vivid images, like a Samaritan helping an injured traveler whom the Jewish priests passed by. As Daniel walks home from the morning teaching, he finds it easy to believe that God's kingdom is near. The nighttime visits are often sadder, though. At Simon's house, weary laborers, the hungry, and the sick pack together and fight over bread. After these nights, Daniel feels depressed by the human misery he's seen, and he finds it hard to believe that deliverance could be near.

Daniel continues to feel caught between different worlds. Rosh's camp only briefly feels like home, as part of his heart is now focused on the village and his new friends. He also realizes that Rosh's men, with the exception of Samson, don't really care about him as a person, which is not like the way Jesus's followers regard one another. Daniel also knows that someone—perhaps somebody like Leah—has suffered because of the theft of the sheep. Before he had a stake in village life, he never thought about such things.



Daniel can see that Samson wouldn't thrive in the constricting life of the village. As for himself, Daniel doesn't fit neatly into either the village or the mountain camp. When he gets home, he feels burdened anew by Leah's dependence. He even has to take on traditionally feminine jobs like fetching water since Leah can't handle them.



Daniel takes an interest in Jesus's teaching. At a time in his life where he doesn't feel that he fits in anywhere, somehow he feels a sense of belonging while listening to Jesus's puzzling sermons, blending into the odd crowd that flocks around him.



Leah feels drawn to Jesus, too. The outside world is foreign to her, but something about his teachings, and the kind of people he draws to him, feel welcoming to her.



Daniel mentions the story famously known as the parable of the Good Samaritan, found in the Gospel of Luke, in which a hated Samaritan is a better neighbor than an observant Jew. Daniel still thinks of God's kingdom largely in terms of human power and victory. He can't square that with the weak outcasts whom Jesus tends to gather around him.



Leah often demands, in detail, the story of a little girl who was healed. On this occasion, Daniel was standing with the crowd on the shore when a man suddenly pushed to the front. The people recognized him as Jairus, one of the synagogue rulers. Everyone jumped out of the way, intimidated, then watched in shock as Jairus knelt humbly before Jesus and begged the preacher to help his dying daughter, his only child. The whole crowd followed Jesus to Jairus's house. When they got there, the women of the house were wailing; the little girl was already dead.

Daniel went on to tell Leah that although the crowd jeered at Jesus, he took a few of his closest disciples, went into the house, and into the child's room. He confidently took the little girl's hand and said to her, "Little girl, get up." Immediately the little girl got out of bed and walked. Jesus told her family to give her something to eat, then quietly left. The story always delights Leah. Daniel remains puzzled by it, however. To this day, Jesus and the disciples keep the story very quiet.

Leah wonders if Jesus will ever come to Ketzah and if there will be big crowds. The thought seems to disturb her. Then she asks Daniel if children ever come to see Jesus, and if the children ever get hurt among the crowds. Daniel assures her that they don't. In fact, Jesus won't let anyone send the children away. He loves to talk to the children, find out their names, and listen to them. It angers some of the men in the crowd.

Daniel feels hopeful about Leah these days. Thacia's visits have opened up her world. One day, he even caught Leah staring wistfully into a hand mirror that Thacia had given her. Sometimes she seems to be lost in daydreams, as if listening for something. Daniel feels a bit uneasy about it, but he attributes it to how little he understands girls.

These days Daniel also takes growing satisfaction in his blacksmithing skill. He even begins to experiment. One day when he doesn't have much business, Daniel heats a spare piece of bronze in his forge. After beating the bronze into a fine piece of wire, he heats it again and carefully twists the wire into the shape of a bow. Then he fits a bronze pin into the **bronze bow**, making a brooch, like the kind that city people sometimes fasten their cloaks with. He hides the brooch, feeling both proud and embarrassed. He thinks of Jesus and wonders if Jesus is the one who can "bend the bow of bronze."

The story of the healing of Jairus's daughter appears in the Gospels of Mark and Luke. The novel puts Daniel among the curious crowd who followed Jesus to the synagogue ruler's house to see what would happen. To put it mildly, a synagogue ruler would not be expected to beg Jesus for anything. He would more likely side with those religious leaders who mistrusted and rejected Jesus.



In the Gospel accounts, the crowd is barred from the house while Jesus heals Jairus's daughter. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus often encounters people in private and cautions his disciples not to talk about his miraculous healings, wanting to avoid disruption to his mission. Leah seems to identify with the little girl in need of Jesus's healing.



Though Leah is drawn to Jesus, she is still hindered by her fear of the outside world. Daniel reassures Leah that Jesus cares especially for the most vulnerable. He takes the time to listen to those whom "important" people dismiss and overlook. Jesus's approach also differs starkly from Rosh's approach, which mostly sees people as objects to be used.



Leah's wistful distraction hints that there's more going on with her than Daniel suspects. In any case, contact with the outside world has obviously helped Leah. Because of others' kindness, she is becoming more hopeful and less fearful.



Daniel's life in the village isn't all a burden. Besides giving him a means of providing for Leah and himself, Daniel's shop gives him a way to develop his talent and express himself. He gravitates to the imagery of the bronze bow, symbol of God's victory. He still conflates Jesus's mission with Rosh's mission, not yet considering that their goals might be distinct.



CHAPTER 16

Daniel receives a message for Joel from Rosh. Hours later, he's huddled in the passageway of Joel's home with the twins. When Daniel first got the message, he felt a bit jealous. But he's beginning to see the reasoning behind Rosh's bigger plan.

Daniel explains to Joel that Rosh needs certain information: King Herod is hosting some Roman officials at the imperial city, Tiberias. The group will be coming to Capernaum to inspect the garrison. A rich Jew named Mattathias will be throwing a banquet. Rosh wants Joel to find out the names of the guests and the precise time of the banquet. Joel eagerly speculates about the best way to do the job. Thacia suggests that he pose as a fish merchant. He can get some fish from Jesus's disciples Simon and Andrew and peddle them to the servants in Capernaum's wealthy houses. Seeing the twins' excitement, Daniel begins to worry about the danger involved. Daniel is a nobody, but Joel has a future to consider.

Suddenly Thacia has an idea. She suggests that she dress in some of Joel's clothes, as they sometimes did when the twins were little. Then she and Daniel can be seen going out of the city together, so that people will think—and can testify if needed—that Joel was seen leaving Capernaum. That way Joel won't be suspected when he pretends to be a fish peddler. Daniel agrees. The next morning he meets the twins on the shore and is startled by Thacia's transformation, thanks to a carefully wrapped turban, into "Joel."

As Joel heads off with his basket of fish, Daniel and Thacia start heading out of Capernaum. Daniel wants to stay to hear Jesus, but Thacia declines, preferring not to be seen. Finally she admits that she doesn't want Jesus to catch her in an act of deception. Daniel argues that, in this case, Jesus would understand the need for a lie—such things are necessary in war, after all. But Thacia doubts this. For one thing, she isn't sure that Jesus intends to make war at all. She thinks Jesus means that God's kingdom will come in another way.

Thacia goes on to say that Jesus's teaching has helped her understand something—that people don't have to wait for the kingdom in order to know that God loves them. God cares for each person right now. Perhaps even Romans can come to understand this. Daniel is appalled at the suggestion—how could God love the *Romans*? Thacia agrees it seems unlikely, but doesn't Jesus say we have to love our enemies? Daniel angrily says that a girl can't understand these things, though deep down, he wonders the same thing.

Daniel's character continues to evolve. Earlier in the story, he would have been filled with envy at Joel's summons, but now he's able to look at the bigger picture and even support his friend's role.



Herod Antipas ruled Galilee as a client, or subordinate, kingdom of the Roman Empire. The Bible identifies him as Galilee's ruler at the time of Jesus's death. For Rosh and other Zealots, Jewish cooperation with Herod would be viewed as collaboration with the enemy. Therefore Rosh's interest in Mattathias's banquet is certainly sinister. Joel doesn't consider this, though. He's just excited to be involved in a real plot. This worries Daniel, since, unlike him, Joel has hopes and dreams beyond fighting.



Thacia finds a way to be involved in the plot, tricking people into thinking Joel isn't in Capernaum and therefore can't be involved. It's a risky move that shows Thacia's loyalty to her brother as well as her willingness to face danger for a bigger cause.



Thacia is spiritually perceptive. She senses that what they're doing doesn't line up with Jesus's outlook. In other words, she senses, before the boys do, that maybe Rosh's mission isn't the same as Jesus's. Daniel still assumes that Jesus is on the Zealot rebels' side. Thacia believes that his mission for God's kingdom is altogether different.



Thacia further demonstrates her understanding of Jesus's teachings. The Kingdom isn't something distant that must be fought for. It's a matter of believing that God's love is already present and accessible to each person. This suggests it could even be within the reach of those she and Daniel consider enemies. This is too difficult for Daniel to accept.



As Daniel and Thacia leave Capernaum, Daniel sees two Roman soldiers resting by the road. Before they can turn back, one of the soldiers gestures to Daniel to carry his pack. Daniel is furious. It's legal for a Roman soldier to make this command, but he refuses to comply. But when Daniel contemptuously spits on the ground, the soldier hits him across the mouth. Then Thacia quietly shoulders one of the packs. Filled with shame, Daniel joins her by picking up the other man's pack.

After they reach the milestone and are relieved of their burdens, Thacia scolds Daniel for almost getting them in trouble. As they make their way toward Ketzah, though, she admits that she was proud of Daniel's courage before the soldiers. Daniel has never been praised like this before, and he's happily caught off guard. When they get back to Ketzah, Leah and Thacia enjoy visiting together. At the noon meal, Daniel admires Thacia's attitude about the modest meal. She acts just as natural as she would in her own, more luxurious home.

At one point, Daniel sees Leah looking out the front door, blushing at the sight of the blond Roman soldier. Daniel angrily slams the shop door. As the visit draws to an end, Daniel takes Thacia aside. Because she has given Leah so many gifts, he explains, he'd like to offer Thacia one. He takes out the little brooch shaped like a **bronze bow**. She chose the symbol, Daniel continues, and to him, it's come to symbolize everything they stand for. Daniel sees Thacia shaken for the first time as she accepts the gift. She tells him he should be a silversmith one day.

As Daniel and Thacia head back toward Capernaum, Thacia once again disguised as Joel, she tells him that Leah is blossoming from one week to the next. Daniel gratefully tells Thacia that this transformation is her doing. Thacia asks if a physician has ever examined Leah. Daniel explains that a traveling magician once claimed that Leah had demons which made her afraid, and that these are the hardest to expel—especially since Leah did not want to be healed. Thacia considers this—when Jesus visits with the sick and lame, he sometimes asks them if they wish to be made well. She can't understand why anyone would say no.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus refers to the Roman law that permits soldiers to force civilians to carry their bags. This would be incredibly galling to a Zealot like Daniel; he'd feel forced into complicity with his enemy. Thacia's willingness to carry a pack cuts his rebellion short. He can't bear to refrain if a girl—especially Thacia—will obey the order.



Thacia is good at quietly defusing volatile situations. She thinks nothing of carrying a soldier's pack and is mainly concerned for Daniel's safety. Later, Daniel also notices her ease in his home. Though she's wealthier than him, she doesn't behave as if she feels out of place and she doesn't condescend. She cares about making other people feel more comfortable.



After just being forced to carry a Roman pack, Daniel is even more disgusted than usual at the sight of his Roman customer. Again, in his mind, every Roman belongs to the category of "enemy." In contrast, Thacia is quicker to see people as individuals. In particular, she is able to see the potential in others, recognizing that Daniel could have a better career.



Thacia's friendship is helping Leah to become less fearful and isolated. Though others have tried to diagnose and heal Leah, no one has been successful. Thacia perceives that healing has something to do with a person's willingness to embrace the healing offered. In Jesus's case, that willingness seems to take the form of a personal trust in Jesus that overcomes their fears.



Daniel has wondered about this, too. He sometimes wonders what healing accomplishes for such poor people. Is a blind man happy to see his ragged and sickly children, for example? Neither of them knows the answer. But Thacia thinks that Jesus should come to Daniel's house someday to see Leah—she knows he'd be willing. Daniel wonders if this world is worth it for Leah. Thacia gestures to a flock of cranes flying over the lake and says that life in Galilee is beautiful. Daniel gazes at her, and they briefly hold hands before they both blush and hurry onward.

Daniel wonders if the kind of healing Jesus offers—a healing that doesn't necessarily change a person's material circumstances—is worth it. Used to thinking of success in terms of earthly victory and strength, he doubts Leah would gain much from it. But Thacia more readily sees the simple beauties of life and believes these are worth living for. Daniel is moved by Thacia's sensitivity and grace.



CHAPTER 17

Daniel is mending an ax while some villagers complain of Rosh's latest actions. They say Rosh's men robbed five of the wealthiest houses in Capernaum last night while the owners were at Mattathias's banquet for Herod. The men got greedy, they explain, and then tried to rob the centurion's house as well. Daniel tries to defend Rosh, suggesting he takes from the rich in order to give to the poor. But he's troubled. He's never thought of Rosh as just a bandit, and this looting doesn't seem worth the risk and effort Joel put in.

Rosh is beginning to stir up resentment among the people of Ketzah. His men opportunistically robbed Jewish citizens during Herod's festivities. Daniel hangs onto his faith that Rosh has a greater purpose in mind. Deep down, though, such activity seems petty. It doesn't fit his exalted image of Rosh as a leader.



The other boys in their group laud Joel as a hero, and Joel himself is excited to keep going with the work. The boys debate what Rosh will do with the money—maybe buy weapons, or pay back farmers whose livestock he's taken. Daniel, uncomfortable, finally puts a stop to the discussion. Seeing the boys' eager loyalty, he tries to ignore his own doubts.

Daniel begins to suspect that Rosh's intentions aren't as noble as he's hoped. However, he's not yet ready to entertain the idea that Rosh isn't the person and leader Daniel has always believed he is.



Villagers, too, condemn Rosh more. Some still think he's a defender of the Jews, while others feel he's turned against them. Overall, though, Rosh's reputation as a freedom fighter persists, and the boys grow more and more excited about contributing to his cause. They feel they're finally *doing* something. They don't even feel pity for their victims. They figure that anyone who does business with the Romans or shows off their wealth deserves what they get. Best of all, they love harassing Roman soldiers.

The boys give Rosh the benefit of the doubt. They classify their victims as Roman collaborators, instead of seeing them as human beings who might be harmed by the boys' actions. Their mission is more important than anything else. Daniel used to feel this way, too.



Daniel feels disheartened. This wasn't what he'd trained and longed for, and he fears the boys will exhaust their efforts before real revolution comes. When they overpower guards and successfully dismantle and steal a Roman catapult, Daniel starts to worry about the boys' swaggering arrogance.

Daniel feels let down by Rosh. He thinks Rosh's leadership is backfiring—the boys are wasting their time, and their petty successes are shaping their character for the worse.



As the boys get more aggressive, and Roman reinforcements are sent to patrol the town, the atmosphere becomes more charged. One morning, men enter Daniel's shop. They know he's said to be in contact with Rosh, and they have a message for Rosh: they want his men to stop slaughtering the sheep of local farmers. They have had enough of what Rosh calls "freedom"—they're the ones, after all, who bear the brunt of it. Days later, a local farmer's crop is found plundered and destroyed.

When Daniel goes to warn Rosh, Rosh just laughs. He says the villagers' job is to raise food for fighting men. Daniel feels sickened by this. He'd pictured Rosh gathering up followers from the villages, but now nobody will follow him.

CHAPTER 18

One day, Thacia, disguised in Joel's turban, bursts into Daniel's shop, pale with fear. She gasps that the Roman soldiers have taken Joel. He was taken prisoner yesterday when he showed up at the centurion's house to talk to the slaves there. Thacia fears Joel will be sentenced to the galleys. Leah, hovering at the door, embraces her weeping friend while Daniel hurries off to find Rosh. He knows Rosh will have a plan.

When Daniel reaches the cave, Rosh is nonchalant at the news. He says Joel got too cocky, and that rescuing him isn't his business. He may have given Joel orders, but he considers every man to be responsible for himself. And he's unwilling to spare his men to rescue someone who was careless enough to get caught.

Daniel loses his composure, unable to believe that Rosh is willing to use Joel and then dispose of him like this. Rosh tells Daniel again that he has a useless "soft streak." Suddenly Daniel feels he sees Rosh clearly for the first time. He doesn't think Rosh understands "the cause" whatsoever. He tells Rosh he'll no longer serve him. Though Rosh looks angry enough to attack Daniel, Daniel just turns away.

Things reach a breaking point between the villagers and Rosh. Though they once looked up to Rosh as their champion, the villagers now believe he's hurting their cause. In fact, he's hurting them directly by stealing and damaging their property. Rosh is not above provoking and retaliating against his own people; his true character is coming out.



Rosh sees the villagers as existing for the benefit of the fighters. He's not actually fighting for them in any sense, just using them for his own purposes.



Joel's spying activity has finally gotten him into trouble. A sentence to work on the galley ships would almost certainly end up killing Joel, as such a sentence was meant to do; Daniel can't let that happen. Instinctively, he still turns to his old mentor for help, believing he'll care.



Rosh cannot be bothered to care about Joel. As usual, he doesn't care about other people, especially once they've exhausted their usefulness in Rosh's eyes.



Rosh's reaction to Joel's capture finally allows Daniel to see his old leader clearly. Rosh, he now sees, doesn't actually care about anything outside of himself. Rosh's accusation that Daniel is "soft" no longer bothers him, as he sees that he and Rosh don't value the same things after all.



As Daniel starts heading down the mountain, skinny, stuttering Joktan runs after him, begging to join Daniel's band of fighters. Daniel quickly agrees, though he feels disappointed that Samson didn't follow him instead. He and Joktan join the boys waiting in the watchtower and tell them the bad news. But Daniel also tells them he has a plan. Their force is too small to fight the Romans, but they can at least get Joel. They'll wait until the Romans pass by on the road near Arbela, then throw rocks down from the mountain pass above, overwhelming them and grabbing Joel in the confusion.

The boys agree that Daniel is their leader—there's no need for a vote. He feels no joy in this fact, just the weight of responsibility. He explains that they can't risk wasting lives. The boys must stay hidden on the cliff while he frees Joel from his chains, then retreat quickly. He tells them to remember the Bible heroes Joel read about—the God of those heroes will strengthen them now. The boys clasp hands and pledge themselves to "God's victory."

CHAPTER 19

In the predawn darkness, the boys hide on a steep, rocky bank beside the Via Maris, the road the Romans take to the coast. They gather stones and watch caravans and other travelers pass by below them. Further down, Daniel posts Nathan and Kemuel—they'll grab Joel after Daniel has freed him from his chains. Daniel himself doubts that he will make it back up the cliff.

As they wait in the hot sun, Daniel grows more anxious. This isn't like anything he ever did for Rosh, which mostly involved lightly guarded caravans. Now he's leading a band of untested boys against a detachment of Roman soldiers. It's different from what he's ever imagined, and he can't help wondering if his dreams of fighting for God's Victory will ever come true.

In midafternoon, Joktan warns them that a group of about eight horsemen, some foot-soldiers, and prisoners are on their way. Daniel gives the whistled signal. Soon after, the Romans appear. Daniel waits tensely as the horsemen and then 16 foot-soldiers slowly pass by. Once the prisoners come into view—an unkempt Joel among them—Daniel finally gives the signal to move. Rocks begin flying down the slope and hitting soldiers. Though several men are driven back, Daniel's heart sinks as he sees the rest organizing themselves as if preparing to charge the bank.

Even as he rejects his old leader, Daniel is becoming a leader in his own right; Joktan and the other boys instinctively recognize this. Daniel himself, though, isn't self-conscious about the fact. He is focused on rescuing Joel. This shows that his approach to leadership is already a departure from Rosh's. He cares about risking everything for someone else—something Rosh would never do.



Daniel's recognition of the weight of his role further suggests that he's a better leader than Rosh is. He doesn't care about being honored or recognized. His focus is on helping Joel, not on serving his own interests. He also instinctively understands that such selfless efforts align with "God's victory," unlike Rosh's.



Daniel has always been willing to die for a cause. Now, however, instead of dying for a more abstract cause (like political revolution), Daniel is willing to die for something very specific—his friend. This is a big shift in his view of leadership.



Daniel sees that he's stepping into unknown territory—venturing to do something bolder than Rosh ever did. Though he doesn't acknowledge it, Daniel's effort also follows in his father's footsteps. (His father mounted a foolhardy rescue attempt for his brother and ultimately died for it.)



The rescue attempt gets underway. Though they're brave, cohesive, and earnest, Daniel's little group is clearly outnumbered and outmatched. It quickly becomes clear that they're no match for a detachment of Roman soldiers.



Just then, Daniel hears a thunderous noise. A huge boulder crashes down the slope. Then he sees a crouched figure charging down the bank and realizes it is Samson! Seizing his chance, Daniel throws himself down after the rushing man and thrusts his dagger into one of Joel's guards. He quickly begins chiseling into Joel's chains, ignoring the screams and crashing noises around him. Just as he's making progress on Joel's chains, he finds himself lifted off the ground and smashed against a rock. Soon, he sees nothing but darkness.

The next thing Daniel knows, he's lying on a rock in glaring sun, and his body is filled with pain. He sees Joel sitting nearby, his head down. Kemuel warns Daniel to move slowly—he's got some broken bones because Joel landed on top of him and his irons struck Daniel. The soldiers have gone. Daniel suddenly remembers seeing Samson. Joel explains that it was Samson, not a soldier, who threw Daniel against a rock. Then he twisted Joel's chains off with his bare hands and freed him. Daniel realizes that Samson was following them all along. He may not have understood Daniel's plan, but he knew they needed help, and he almost single-handedly scattered the soldiers. But then, Joel tells Daniel, Samson was badly wounded by a spear-thrust and taken prisoner; he surely won't live long enough to reach the galleys. When Daniel turns his head in grief, he sees Nathan, the newlywed, lying facedown, with blood pooled beneath him.

Daniel and the others gingerly make their way to the cliff-top. After darkness falls, a few of the boys reclaim Nathan's body from the slope, and they bury him. Then, one by one, each boy heads home along the road. Everyone is grateful to have succeeded in the mission to rescue Joel. Yet they also know that if it hadn't been for Samson, they would have failed altogether. Their confidence is shattered.

CHAPTER 20

As the autumn rains move in, the boys no longer meet in the watchtower. They murmur about starting to stockpile weapons and resume their preparations. But Daniel knows that he and his friends have "lost faith in the mountain."

Daniel gets back to work, progressing slowly because of ongoing pain in his shoulder. He keeps thinking of Jesus's words: "They who live by the sword will perish by the sword." Before, he thought of "living by the sword" as the best life. But now that he's taken the sword, all he has seen is death—with Samson's and Nathan's deaths on his head. Freedom is no closer than before.

Samson, ever loyal to Daniel, comes through for him at the last possible moment, in an act of self-sacrificing love and courage. Though Samson wasn't included in Daniel's training or planning, he trusts Daniel to do the right thing—especially when it involves someone who's in chains, as he used to be. The suspense mounts as Daniel is thrown aside and disabled by unseen hands.



When Daniel regains consciousness, he learns that it was actually Samson who saved Joel, not him. Samson even saved Daniel's life, and it will end up costing Samson his own life. Samson had nothing to gain by acting in this way. He did it out of love for Daniel. Samson's action is therefore the opposite of selfish vengeance.



The near failure is a turning point for Daniel. Seeing what it took to overpower even a small group of Romans, he begins to see that God's victory won't be achieved by mere strength. Whatever his lingering faith in Rosh's approach to fighting, it is being crushed.



The group's experiences in the raid have broken their confidence in Rosh's way of doing things.



Daniel has lived his whole life "by the sword," or by using fighting to get what he wants. (The saying is found in the Gospel of Matthew.) For the first time, though, he questions whether fighting leads to freedom. He only feels imprisoned by guilt, complicit in the deaths of those he loved.



Other things have changed since the raid. Joktan has been a great help to Daniel. He's never lived in a house before, so he gratefully sleeps on the roof, gets water from the well, delivers goods, and generally relishes village life. But Daniel hasn't seen Joel and Thacia for more than a week, and he worries.

Late one evening, a stranger, wrapped in a heavy cloak, knocks on Daniel's door. Joyfully, Daniel recognizes Joel. Joel explains that he's been watched, so he hasn't been venturing out. He's told his father everything. Far from hating Daniel, Hezron welcomes him into their home at any time. But Joel says he's snuck out of his father's house for the last time. He wants to join Rosh's band on the mountain. His father wants him to study in Jerusalem, leaving tomorrow. Daniel is moved by Joel's loyalty, but he's also troubled. He tells Joel that he no longer trusts Rosh as a leader. Nothing Rosh is doing has helped weaken Rome; it has only weakened his followers.

Daniel agrees with Joel that a new, better leader will come someday. But until then, he wants Joel to keep studying. He tells Joel that the movement won't just need fighters and laborers, but scholars, too—especially scholars like Joel, who might be able to win over the priests. As Joel considers this, he feels renewed hope. He feels he's been given a second chance to do something worthwhile with his life.

Joel has brought a gift for Leah from Thacia. Daniel is skeptical that Leah will receive it from Joel's hands, but he opens the door to the house. Leah is shaking, but Joel gently conveys Thacia's greetings and places a package on the threshold. Daniel is amazed—it's only the second time Leah has allowed an outsider to get this close. Joel also has a message for Daniel—in a few days, Thacia will dance in the festival for the Day of Atonement. She wants Daniel to come to Capernaum for the festival. Finally, he promises Joel that if Daniel ever has to go away, he and Thacia will take care of Leah.

Joel also says that Hezron wants to arrange a marriage for Thacia with a family friend, but Thacia is refusing. Daniel says that Thacia must make a choice, and that it will be better for her to marry someone who is like her. Besides, how can someone like him—who is sworn to vengeance—get married? Joel doesn't reply.

Daniel tries to regain a sense of normalcy in his life. He's able to offer shelter for young Joktan, showing his generous nature. But his certainties about life—especially his sense of purpose in fighting for the kingdom—are lost.



Even after his brush with death, Joel is willing to give up everything for Rosh's cause. This is exactly what Daniel has been working toward. Yet his faith in Rosh is now fatally undermined, and he receives Joel's expression of loyalty with ambivalence. After the near disaster in the raid, not to mention Rosh's refusal to help, Daniel is totally disillusioned with Rosh and his way of resisting Rome. In fact, he doesn't believe that's truly Rosh's goal after all.



Daniel's outlook on the cause has shifted. He used to believe that fighting for Israel's freedom was all about violence. Now he sees differently—the fight is multifaceted and needs the gifts of all sorts of people. His willingness to encourage Joel not to fight shows how much his thinking has changed—and what a good leader he is.



Leah has overcome her fears to the extent that she's willing to get close to Joel—a huge development. Thacia's invitation suggests that she continues to reciprocate Daniel's feelings for her. And Joel and Thacia's willingness to care for Leah is a further indication of the friends' deep trust in one another.



Joel's message about Thacia's marriage shows that he's aware of Daniel's feelings for his sister. Daniel maintains that he isn't a suitable match for Thacia. He claims they are too different and that his loyalty to Israel's freedom precludes loyalty to anything else.



Joel has one last message. He tells Daniel that somebody needs to warn Jesus—he has enemies everywhere. Not just Romans, but synagogue elders. They don't understand him and believe he is trying to tear down their authority. Some even accuse Jesus of being in league with Satan. Joel wonders if Jesus is the leader they've been looking for all along. Daniel promises to try to warn Jesus. The friends join hands "for God's Victory" one last time. As Daniel shuts the door, he fears it's the end of everything they've worked for.

Jesus is making enemies everywhere he goes—both among the Romans and among his fellow Jews. Both groups see Jesus as a threat to their authority. The boys suspect that Jesus might be the one who really stands for Israel's freedom after all. But, no longer loyal to Rosh and watching the breakup of his own group, Daniel no longer knows how to join that fight.



CHAPTER 21

Daniel walks to Bethsaida in the rain after work, but when he reaches Simon bar Jonas's house, he is annoyed—Simon the Zealot tells him that Jesus already knows he's in danger. He appreciates the warning, but Jesus is too busy to see him now. Daniel waits in the courtyard for a long time, yearning for a single word from Jesus. He feels it would give him strength to go on.

Daniel fulfills his promise to Joel, but the warning isn't needed. Jesus is well aware of the hatred and plots against himself. However, this isn't really what's brought Daniel. He suspects Jesus himself is the answer to what's now missing in his life.



Even when Jesus retreats to the upper room of Simon bar Jonas's house, Daniel lingers in the dark garden, unable to walk away. Eventually, the door opens, and Jesus holds out a lamp, asking who is there. He tells Daniel to come upstairs. Daniel sits down with Jesus in the nearly bare, earthen room. Jesus receives Daniel's warning with thanks, but he asks Daniel why he is troubled. Daniel tries to hold back, but his conscience has been nagging him. Finally, everything spills out.

Daniel finally has a chance to meet with Jesus one on one. (This is the most heavily fictionalized part of Spenser's portrayal of Jesus.) Jesus perceives that Daniel hasn't come here primarily to give him a warning. In response, Daniel instinctively trusts Jesus as worthy of his confidence.



Daniel tells Jesus that everything he has been living for has failed—freedom for the Jews, and vengeance for his father's death. Jesus points out that these are two separate things. Daniel argues that he can fight for both things at once. He has worked and planned for that very thing, but it has all gone wrong, leaving him with a debt to pay. Jesus asks Daniel about Samson, and Daniel explains how Samson died for him, as well as the rest of the story.

Daniel sums up his failures and sorrows. Jesus suggests that maybe fighting for vengeance isn't the same thing as fighting for freedom. In fact, fighting for vengeance only seems to have deepened Daniel's troubles instead of freeing him.



Jesus agrees with Daniel—Scripture says that we must repay each other in kind. But Samson did not give Daniel vengeance—he gave him love, the greatest kind of love. How, then, can Daniel repay him with hate?

Jesus's words are an allusion to John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." Jesus's point is that getting vengeance for Samson's death wouldn't actually take away Daniel's debt—because Samson died for him out of love.



Daniel says it's too late to love Samson, as he's probably dead. Is Jesus saying that Daniel should love the Romans who are responsible for Samson's death? Jesus smiles at this. He tells Daniel that *hate* is the enemy, not people. Killing doesn't eliminate hate—it just causes hate to spring up anew. The only thing that's stronger than hatred is love. Daniel is disturbed—this isn't what he had come to Jesus to hear.

Daniel tells Jesus that he doesn't understand, but he knows that Jesus could lead the people of Galilee if he chose. After a long silence, Jesus tells Daniel that he wants Daniel to follow him. Ecstatic, Daniel vows to fight for Jesus until the end. But Jesus asks for something harder—will Daniel love for him to the end? Daniel, deflated, says that he wants to fight for the coming of the kingdom. He has even made a sacred vow to do so—to live and die for God's Victory. At this, Jesus's grave expression lights up again. He tells Daniel that this is not a hateful vow. In fact, he is not far from the kingdom.

CHAPTER 22

On the Day of Atonement, most of Ketzah is in a holiday mood. At noon, Daniel reluctantly closes down the shop and ventures out (not before Leah throws his best cloak around his shoulders). When he reaches Capernaum, he makes a customer delivery, still telling himself he doesn't plan to attend the festival. Nevertheless, he finds himself drawn to the vineyards. He sees festively dressed youths dancing, with a line of wreathed, singing girls drawing near them. When Daniel spots Thacia among the dancers, he loses his breath. Thacia moves with a natural grace, neither bold nor shy, looking searchingly into the crowd. Daniel is seized with fear in case Thacia sees him. He knows he is grimy and shabby compared to the rich young men in the crowd. He runs down the hill.

Thacia runs after him, her veil floating behind her. She asks Daniel why he left. Does he see her as just a child? Daniel admits he has loved her ever since she tended him in Hezron's passageway. But he has never wanted her to know—his loyalty must lie elsewhere. Thacia points out that both she and Joel vowed to live for God's victory, too, and have found other ways to fight. But Daniel says he knows only one way.

Daniel struggles to conceive of loving his Roman enemies instead of hating them. Jesus suggests that this is the key to freedom for Daniel. Continuing to fight would just perpetuate the cycle of hatred and vengeance. Something more than hatred is necessary. Even though Daniel has questioned Rosh's way, Jesus's way is still too radical for him.



Daniel still thinks Jesus might be a Messiah who will fight on earthly terms—to win freedom for Galilee by overthrowing Rome. But that isn't Jesus's plan. He wants Daniel to follow him for a different purpose. According to Jesus, this doesn't negate Daniel's vow in any way. God's victory, in other words, is not dependent on fighting for vengeance. He calls upon Daniel to accept this.



The Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, is the most important Jewish festival. Its synagogue services focus on atonement for the past year's sins. By inviting Daniel to the climactic celebration, Thacia hints that she wants to make a new beginning in life—with him. Daniel wants this, too, but when he sees Thacia dancing, he is filled with insecurity and flees. He doesn't yet believe that they're suited for one another.



Daniel admits his love to Thacia. However, he continues to maintain that marriage isn't possible for them. His life has room for nothing else besides his vow. Though Thacia and Joel might be able to fulfill their vow in different ways, Daniel doesn't believe he's capable of that. He doesn't see in himself what Thacia does.



Daniel walks home heavy-hearted, but he can't dodge Leah's eager questions about the festival. When he sits down to the supper Leah has prepared for him, she brings out a basket of fine, ripe fruits, seldom seen in Galilee. When Daniel asks where she got them, Leah admits that they were a present from Marcus—the soldier who comes on horseback. Daniel immediately throws a pomegranate against the wall. He flies into a rage. Leah shrinks from him in terror.

Daniel finally calms down enough to ask Leah how she knows this man. Leah explains that Marcus has been her friend since last summer. He sits on his horse and talks to her over the garden wall—that's all. He doesn't even know much Aramaic; he comes from a little village in a faraway place called Gallia. She's wanted to tell Daniel, but she's been too afraid. Growing angry again, Daniel makes Leah swear never to speak to Marcus again, or even step outside where he can see her. He storms out of the house and walks the streets all night, until his anger abates. He realizes he should not have shouted at Leah and that she can't be blamed. But why wasn't she afraid of the Roman? When Daniel finally gets home, he sees Leah slumped in a corner. She doesn't look at him.

CHAPTER 23

Daniel realizes he has undone months of progress. Leah sits all day, idle, depressed, and fearful. He does all the housework and shows greater gentleness and patience than he's ever shown anyone before. But he fears Leah is completely demon-possessed now.

At some point, Daniel timidly begins to place his hope in Jesus. He's heard that Jesus can cast out terrible, violent demons; can he cast out silent ones, too? Having declined to follow Jesus, he hesitates to ask Jesus for anything. He also blames himself for Leah's decline. Yet he remembers Jesus's kindness and the way Jesus removed Daniel's guilt when he spoke of Samson. One day, after work, he goes to Capernaum.

A man directs Daniel to the opposite side of the lake, where he finds a massive crowd of people, pushing and shoving. He makes out an indistinct chant. Eventually he figures out that they're saying, "Hosanna! Blessed be He that cometh!" Daniel is overjoyed, thinking this means that Jesus must have declared himself the messiah. He asks a man what Jesus said. The man says Jesus did something better than talking—he fed them. Daniel notices that the hillside is littered with crusts of bread.

Leah makes a shocking admission—she's befriended a Roman soldier behind Daniel's back. Some hints from earlier in the story fall into place; Leah has seemed distracted at times, believed the Roman customer was homesick, and has gradually become more open to outsiders. Daniel, oblivious to all this, cannot accept Leah's confession.



Isolated and innocent, Leah doesn't find Romans more frightening than any other type of person who comes to the shop. In fact, she is sympathetic to Marcus because of his own loneliness and isolation far from home. She sees the soldier as a unique person worthy of friendship. To Daniel, though, any soldier is an enemy. Leah's way of seeing the soldier is beyond him, and her friendship with Marcus feels like a betrayal of him. His anger intimidates Leah.



Daniel's anger and prohibition of seeing Marcus causes Leah to regress. To his credit, he treats her kindly, but he fears she won't recover from this heartbreak.



Jesus seems to be the only hope for Leah's healing. Jesus has already shown himself to be a trustworthy confidant. Out of love for his sister, Daniel is willing to set aside his pride and seek help.



The people's acclamation of Jesus ("Hosanna!") is described in several of the gospels. They openly celebrate Jesus as the messiah who has come to rescue Israel and restore its freedom. This outcry occurred not because Jesus declared himself their leader, but because Jesus miraculously fed the massive crowds. The people conclude that Jesus will grant them earthly liberation.



Eventually, Daniel finds Simon in the crowd. Simon tells Daniel that Jesus has retreated into the hills with a few of his closest disciples. Nobody is to follow him. Disappointed, Daniel asks Simon why Jesus would do this—surely the people would have given him a crown. Simon doesn't know—but he is sure that Jesus is the Messiah. He has given up hope that Jesus will lead the Jews against Rome. Daniel's lingering doubt is confirmed, and he feels crushed by the bitter blow. What could Jesus offer that's better than freedom?

Simon says that Daniel will not understand this, but that Jesus gives his followers the kingdom of God. Even if the world has not changed, it will someday. And in the meantime, even the lowliest people are promised God's care. He is a shepherd to the poor and ignorant, and he teaches that if the soul is not chained by fear or hate, then a person is free. Of course the Romans are still frightening. But Jesus isn't afraid—and, even without understanding the future, Simon has chosen Jesus. Jesus's promise is enough for him. Daniel will not listen further. He is tired of words. He wanted a leader who would do something. But now he knows he is alone, with only his hatred and his vow.

CHAPTER 24

It's springtime again in Galilee, but Daniel remains inside his shop, working and quietly nursing his rage. He longs to seek out more Zealots and form a new band of fighters, but he is bound to provide for Leah.

One day, Leah's beloved little goat dies. Within a couple of days, Daniel realizes that Leah has fallen into a fever. She lies on her mat, her mind wandering, occasionally crying out in terror. The physician cannot do anything for her. Daniel just sits by Leah's bed, thinking that everyone he has cared about has ended up leaving him. When Leah dies, he will be free. But he realizes that there's nothing to fill that freedom with—just more hatred.

Finally, it occurs to Daniel to send Joktan to Thacia with the message that Leah is dying. While he's waiting, he sees the Roman soldier Marcus outside his door. Marcus seems to embody all of Daniel's hatred and rage, but he can't bring himself to hurt Marcus while Leah is still alive. When Marcus asks how Leah is doing, Daniel just spits on the ground.

Though the people are ready to proclaim Jesus as their leader, Jesus appears to reject this honor. He even flees from it. Daniel can't understand. This is completely opposite from the way a leader is supposed to act, he thinks. A leader welcomes recognition and earthly honors. Simon isn't deterred by Jesus's withdrawal, but Daniel is troubled even more. Jesus doesn't fit in a category he can understand.



Simon tries to explain Jesus's way to Daniel. To Jesus's followers, the kingdom of God isn't dependent on concrete realities. That doesn't mean the kingdom won't arrive in an earthly sense someday. It does mean that nobody must wait for that kingdom's arrival in order to enjoy its blessings—even, or especially, those who are weakest. This way of thinking is completely alien to Daniel, and he doesn't trust it. At this point, he thinks Jesus is just another leader who makes big promises he can't deliver.



Daniel is back where he started when he first returned to Ketzah. He's even worse off, because he has no leader. He has only his gnawing anger for companionship.



Daniel despairs as Leah begins to succumb to illness. On one hand, Leah's death is an answer to his selfish desire for freedom instead of dependence. Yet he realizes he won't actually be gaining anything. He effectively has nothing to live for. Spiritually, he is as sick as she is physically.



Daniel is still filled with vengeance toward Marcus. His presence reminds him that Leah's decline is partly Daniel's own fault, and he's a convenient scapegoat for all of Daniel's feelings of anger and helplessness in his life.



Every day, Marcus stands across the street and watches Daniel's house. One day, he forces Daniel to stop. He says he understands Daniel's hate. His own people were conquered by Rome—he is German. But everyone in his tribe is a fighter, and he is no different. Tomorrow he is being transferred. He knows there's no hope that he could ever marry Leah. He just wants to see her before he goes. But Daniel says he would rather have Leah die than let a Roman soldier through the door. Eventually, Marcus squares his shoulders and walks away.

That afternoon, Leah lies still, barely breathing. Daniel falls asleep at one point, and when he wakes up, he sees Jesus standing in the doorway. Thacia is with him. Jesus goes to Leah's side. Thacia whispers that she has been with Joel in Jerusalem, and Joktan just found them this morning. Daniel is overwhelmed by Jesus's arrival. He longs to talk to Jesus and explain everything. But Jesus sits silently at Leah's side for a long time. Finally, he looks up and meets Daniel's eyes. In an instant, Daniel knows that Jesus understands everything—Leah, Daniel's rejection of him, everything. But as Jesus looks into Daniel's eyes, he suddenly smiles.

Daniel can't bear Jesus's smile. He feels an overwhelming desire to stop fighting. He'll give anything to follow Jesus. He thinks of his vow. Jesus had told Daniel that victory means trusting in God's promise, preparing their hearts and minds. Suddenly Daniel wonders if love is what is able to bend the **bronze bow**. He realizes he can't know for sure. But he remembers Simon's words—he has to make a choice without knowing. And he believes that simply knowing Jesus will be enough. Suddenly, Daniel's weight disappears, and a strong peace fills him.

After a while, Daniel feels Thacia taking his hand. She tells him to look at Leah. As Daniel watches, Leah's eyes slowly blink open. She says, "Jesus?" When Jesus smiles at her, Leah knows everything is all right. He tells her not to be afraid. Daniel falls to his knees, sobbing as he never has since childhood. When he collects himself, Jesus has gone.

When Daniel looks at Thacia, he sees the love in her eyes and realizes that he's finally free to give her his own. They silently make a new vow to each other. Then Daniel hurries out the door to thank Jesus. But when he reaches the street, all he sees is the Roman soldier. He struggles for words, and finally tells Marcus that Leah's fever is gone; she will be well. He looks away in shock when Marcus sobs—a Roman crying! He knows Leah will want to say goodbye to the soldier. Glimpsing the flash of Jesus's robe farther down the street, Daniel turns back to Marcus and asks, "Will you come in to our house?"

Marcus forces Daniel to listen. He wants Daniel to hear who he is as a person—not a faceless Roman. In fact, he's from a conquered people himself. But he doesn't see this as defining his life. Being a soldier is just one part of it, and Leah is another important part. But Daniel is unable to heed his plea. Humanizing Marcus is still beyond him.



When Daniel's hope is gone, Jesus appears. He comes for Leah, but it quickly becomes clear that he has also come to heal Daniel. He performs this healing just as miraculously, too—silently understanding what's in Daniel's heart, forgiving his rejection of Jesus and his hatred for others, and setting him free.



Daniel's desire to give up and surrender to Jesus is that intangible thing he and Thacia speculated about earlier. The only prerequisite for Jesus's healing, in other words, is to recognize one's need of it and to want it. This doesn't include full understanding—Daniel is still baffled by Jesus. But Daniel chooses to trust that Jesus is the leader he's been seeking—the one who can "bend the bronze bow."



Leah recognizes Jesus instantly. It's obvious that she, too, desired his healing and receives it fully. Daniel is overcome by Jesus's mercy toward his sister and himself.



Now that Daniel has been set free from his vow for vengeance, he realizes there is room in his life for another vow. But that's not all. He realizes that the hatred in his heart must give way to love, and this requires choices on his part; it's not automatic. The first and hardest is to forgive and welcome Marcus—to see him as a human being. The story comes full circle as Daniel, once motivated entirely by hatred of the Romans, now receives a Roman into his house. Thanks to Jesus, Daniel is discovering that love does indeed "bend the bronze bow."





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