

From Bethlehem to the Gates of Heaven

Bible based
stories about
Micah, his family
& his adventures
growing up in
New Testament
times, after
meeting Jesus.

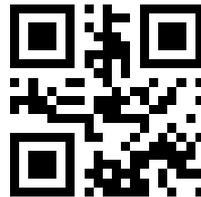


Book ONE of a Five Book Series



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[Hf5m.com](https://hf5m.com) is our
master website

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Preface

PLEASE READ TO UNDERSTAND THE UNIQUENESS OF THIS DIGITAL/ELECTRONIC EDITION.

To assist the reader with knowing the characters, the author has added a list of the characters in an appendix, starting on page 103, describing each character.

The story of the Nativity Scene will not be portrayed as it has been on Christmas cards. The historical facts surrounding this world-changing event have been interwoven with the best understanding of the culture and times of the first century; and what is told here, the events that are not Biblically based nor historically accurate are presented as close as possible to the Israeli culture of the times, with the expansion of the imagination of the author.

As this series unfolds, Joel, 14 and Jesus, age 11 grow up as best friends when Jesus came up from Egypt.

Their adventures, while living in Nazareth, are presented closely based on the Jewish culture of that time. Later, Joel's son, Micah, takes over as the main character after he meets Jesus and saw his small lunch feed over 5,000 people.

It is the desired hope of the author that this series will inspire the reader to seek out a personal relationship with God, to learn of His desire to show mercy to all who seek Him; go to the Holy Scriptures and read the stories as God has written them, and not only grow closer to the Creator of this world but reach out to others and share the unmerited love of God with them.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”¹

1 i.22.1 - [John 3:16](#)

Dedication

The first book in our series, “from Bethlehem to the Gates of Heaven” is dedicated to my father (**Virgil Dean Freed**), who inspired in me the spirit of servitude and helping those in need by his living example of the Golden Rule: “**And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.**”²



He gave and gave until there was nothing more he could do; leaving this sin-cursed earth at the age of 44. He lived his life fulfilling the words of Jesus: “**Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.**”³ and my mother, (**Mary Elizabeth Freed**), who truly enjoyed completing crossword puzzles and raised three children with the words of Psalm 118:24, “**This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.**”⁴”, and my daughter, (**Crystal Dawn Freed**) who suffered a paralyzing cancer for nearly six years but left me with great inspiration when I asked the toddler “What are you going to do when you get to Heaven?”



2 i.22.1 – [Luke 6:31](#)

3 i.22.1 – [John 15:13](#)

4 I.22.1 – [Psalm 118:24](#)

Before I could even blink my eyes, she responded with a smile,
“I’m going to help Jesus with the babies!”



Crystal has been very busy since November 1979.

Introduction

This series begins with the unique journey of Micah's grandparents, Jeremiah, Ruth, and 18-month-old son, Joel. (Joseph and Mary, the divinely chosen guardian and mother of Jesus, make a similar journey two years later.)

Jeremiah was born in Bethlehem in 33 BC, so he was glad to move back. At the age of 13, his family moved to Nazareth because his father needed to help Jabir, Jeremiah's older brother, who supervises a large farm just south of the village.

Through the small farming community, Jabir became friends with Nir, a wealthy olive and citrus grove owner and encouraged him to hire Jeremiah to work in his orchard in the Jezreel Valley. Nir hired him to work in his orchard; however, he perceived that Jeremiah had a connection with animals and had little interest in farming or working with trees. He quickly transferred Jeremiah to work in the stables and was impressed when he so quickly adapted.

In the Spring of 9 BC, <https://hf5m.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Book-One-Identity-of-Characters.pdf>asked his uncle Nir to assist in finding a manager for his Bethlehem Stable, Inn, and Café. Caleb owned Hezekiah's Inn & Café located in Bethlehem and the larger one in Jerusalem, managed by his sister, Kalanit, and his father Chacham until his recent death. Nir immediately recognized the family's need and recommended Jerimiah for the management of the stables and Inn and his wife Ruth, who worked in his kitchen, to oversee Caleb's Café. Due to the urgent need for a manager, Caleb accepted his uncle's advice and began arrangements to hire whoever the couple his uncle recommended.

Jeremiah and Ruth moved to Bethlehem from Nazareth. They traveled with a merchant's caravan, owned by Lampros, who purchased olive oil and various fruits from Nir. During previous years, Lampros and Jeremiah became good friends. Even though Jeremiah was a Jew and Lampros a Greek,

neither were devoted to their religious heritage.

The family of Mary, the mother of Jesus, had just recently moved to Nazareth from Sepphoris,⁵ Anna Marie, her mother, worked for a wealthy landowner, but was paid a very meager wage.

When she married Heli, she moved to Nazareth to be with her husband, This is where Ruth met Anna Marie, the maternal grandmother of Jesus.

A major turning point for Micah's life occurred in Bethsaida when Jesus used his small lunch to feed over five thousand people.

That miracle, followed by seeing Jesus and Peter walking on the water made a deep impression on this eight-year-old's life and he wanted to live the life that God had planned for him.

This decision drove Micah to learn all he could about Jesus; the teachings and miracles of Jesus led him to a life of service to God that provided an excellent Christian example for others.

5 Book 29 page 43 *The Land of Galilee & the North*, Colonel Sir Charles W. Wilson; Ariel Publishing House, Jerusalem November 1975: "the supposed site of the home of the parents of the Virgin." – The mother of Jesus

Book 1 Chapter 1

Day 1 Sunday

*Jeremiah and Ruth Leave Nazareth in early spring, 9 B.C.
The move to Bethlehem was a major leap of faith,
that would change their lives entirely.*

As they entered the Jezreel Valley, a glance at each other, as their eyes met, the couple knew this was it; there was no turning back; the life they shared in Nazareth was gone. An unpredictable future lay ahead for the young couple and their 18-month-old son.

“A new world is about to open for us,” Jeremiah told Ruth, as they watched Joel, toddle through the spring flowers.

Jeremiah, who was born in Bethlehem, wondered what the village would be like and what history he could learn. He knew Bethlehem was an important village to God, but he had never taken the time to learn of its significance.

Ruth had never been to Bethlehem; however, she was excited to accompany her husband wherever God would lead them. Then she smiled, remembering what Rabbi Tamir told her, referring to the prophet Jeremiah, before Joel was born: “***Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.***”⁶

A house, owned by their new employer, Caleb, was being prepared for them, five miles south of Jerusalem, in the village of Bethlehem, Judea, and only half a mile from the Inn & Café where they would be working.

The move, the long journey, and the small village culture were not the only things they would be facing.

6 i.22.1 - **Jeremiah 1:5**

One hour into their journey, Ruth said, “Joel is getting hungry.”
“We will stop before Nain to rest the donkeys,” Jeremiah replied,
“I need to rearrange their loads, too.”

The couple sat under the shade of an oak tree for a few moments while Joel was playing in the sand after eating his fill of bread and fruit.

“Thank you,” Jeremiah complimented Ruth, “for packing our provisions for this journey.”

“Little Joel was a great help too,” she replied, smiling. “He slept most of the time.”

“He is a lot of fun,” replied Jeremiah. “There is something special about him. He will grow up incredibly wise, he has a good teacher in his mother.”

“I agree he will be incredibly special when he grows up. Our son will be like his father. Your skills and talents, Jeremiah, have always amazed me.”

Jeremiah laughed, “When I was younger, I wanted to build a boat and take it out to the sea. It was a childish dream of mine to work with my hands and create something from a dead tree, but the result was good firewood.”

“I remember,” she said “how your life changed when you began working with the animals. You have a special talent for taking care of them, they understand you.”

“I was seventeen years old when I began working with Nir in his orchards southeast of Nazareth. He quickly transferred me when he saw I was better with horses than trees! My new job was to maintain the stables for the farm animals; however, my care for them proved I had the talent to go above and beyond his expectations of an employer,” Jeremiah continued.

“Nir was extremely pleased with your work. We should be going now. Netanel and Rebecca are expecting us for dinner. She is preparing a special meal of lamb especially for you,” Ruth reminded Jeremiah.

“Wonderful,” Jeremiah replied. “She can cook almost as good as you. I look forward to my visits with Netanel, your highly

intelligent brother-in-law. I have been wanting to ask him about the battles that occurred in the Jezreel Valley.”

“You'll have plenty of time after we eat.” Ruth encouraged him, “and I must get some of Rebecca’s recipes she has collected from foreign countries.”

After loading their few things on one of the donkeys, they headed up the northwestern slope of Mount Moreh, approaching Netanel and Rebecca’s home. She had a light meal of barley bread, olives, lentil stew, grapes, figs, and fish already prepared.

“Shalom, we are so glad you came to see us.” Netanel greeted them.

Ruth and Rebecca hugged as only sisters can, knowing it may be a long time before they see each other again.

“Wow, little Joel has grown so much,” Rebecca exclaimed, as she snatched up her little nephew. The trio went inside leaving the men to talk about things of lesser interest to the ladies. While they set the table for lunch.

“Soon he will be two, and wandering all over the place,” Ruth said. Rebecca continued bragging about her nephew, “He is so cute, and those beautiful eyes! You could leave him here if he is too much to manage on the trip,” she teased her older sister.

“Oh no, not a chance,” grinned Ruth as they sat at a table outside to eat.

After eating their brief lunch, the two groups returned to their discussion.

After the evening meal, Netanel and Jeremiah sat outside on the porch, enjoying the setting sun.

“What a beautiful view of the Jezreel Valley, I shall remember this site for a long-time,” remarked Jeremiah.

“But the valley’s beauty is also marred by the many wars that were fought down there, major battles have stained the valley.”

Netanel replied.

“I’ve been meaning to ask you about that,” Jeremiah said.

“To the south was the battle of Saul and the Ammonites where Saul and his three sons died.”

“The Ammonites found their bodies, cut off their heads, and hung

the bodies on the walls of Beth Shan but the valiant men of Jabesh-Gilead came in the night and removed their bodies, burned them, and buried their bones under a tree in Jabesh”⁷ Jeremiah said, “Netanel you have studied well; I am always amazed by your research. But why did the men from Jabesh-Gilead risk their lives to get Saul’s body and those of his sons?”

“Thank you,” he replied, “God has blessed me with time and talent to learn the many battles our people have suffered in the past. The prophet Samuel told us of the bravery of Saul and the power of God when Nahash, the Ammonite, wanted to conquer Jabesh-Gilead, he proposed an agreement with the men of the village to spare them:

“On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel.”⁸ ***“The Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly.”***⁹

Therefore, Saul rallied the others of the Israelites, and 300,000 men came from Israel and 30,000 came from Judah. And it was so on the morrow, ***“that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together.”***¹⁰

“No wonder these men wanted to get King Saul’s body and bury it properly.’ Jeremiah said. “I have so enjoyed our discussions. “However, it's getting late but tell me again of the great battle of ***“The sword of the Lord and Gideon”***¹¹ and why did he take on such a large army with so few men,” asked Jeremiah.

7 i.22.1 - [1st Samuel 31:1-13](#)

8 i.22.1 - [1st Samuel 11:2](#)

9 i.22.1 - [1st Samuel 11:6](#)

10 i.22.1 - [1st Samuel 11:11](#)

11 i.22.1 - [Judges 7:18](#)

“That was a true ‘Miracle Battle’ that God won with just the three hundred men,” Netanel explained. “They were handpicked by God for Gideon; and He gave Gideon the wisdom to go directly into battle against odds that far outnumbered his troops. What the Midianites did not consider was the spiritual strength and wisdom that only the One true God could provide for such a battle as this.”



“I have a scroll¹² for you that lists the major battles fought outside my front door in the Valley of Jezreel over many years. Our tradition tells us the great prophet Samuel wrote about Gideon. He explains it better than I ever could.” Netanel concluded.

“Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth

12 i.22.163 - [List of Remarkable Battles in the Bible, Scott J. Shifferd.](#)

down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place. So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

*And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with **Phurah** thy servant down to the host: And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.*

And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.

And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian. And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.

So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Bethshittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abelmeholah, unto Tabbath. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites.

And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together and took the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan.”¹³

“That scroll would be wonderful,” said Jeremiah. “Because I know when I get to Bethlehem and folks find I’m from Nazareth some will talk about these battles, and your research will help me tremendously.”

The men decided to continue their discussion of the warfare history of Israel until morning; little Joel was fast asleep, and the two sisters excitedly exchanged recipes of foreign origin.

“The recipes that you have picked up from travelers in different parts of the world will be very helpful,” said Ruth. “At the Inn we will have folks from the Via Maris¹⁴ road from Rome to Egypt and from other faraway places: China and India traveling the Silk Road. We will be just a short distance off the main road to Jerusalem.”¹⁵

“We must talk more of the different foods for China, India, Rome, and Ethiopia in the morning, but you need to get some rest,” Rebecca had prepared a special bread for their journey; from a new recipe she received from her friend Anna Marie of Sepphoris¹⁶. She mixed up the regular wheat bread dough, rolled it out flat, then added a thin layer of honey, cinnamon, and a small amount of nutmeg. She prepared her large pottery oven over the hot coals from the evening’s fire. Next, she rolled the flattened dough into a log and with a large sharp knife cut the log into pieces at an angle to make them larger.

14 [i.22.24 Jewish Virtual Library](#) - One of the most important trade routes in the Middle East during ancient times

15 [i.22.83 Transport Geography](#) - “The Silk Road was the most enduring trade route in human history, being used for about 1,500 years. Its name is taken from the prized Chinese textile that flowed from Asia to the Middle East and Europe, although many other commodities were traded along the route.”

16 i.25.255 – Sepphoris was known to the Roman world from the second century CE by its Roman name, Diocaesarea.- Dr. James Strange, [The Bible and Interpretation](#)

DAY 2 Monday

Leaving Nain Monday morning they arrived at dusk just outside of Jenin.

The next morning, Rebecca gave the bread and recipe to her sister and told her it was from a recipe her friend from Sepphoris had given to her.

“Anna's little girl, Mary, figured out the process and chose the ingredients. A very smart young girl she is,” explained Rebecca.

“These are very tasty. I hope to meet Anna Marie and Mary someday when we return for a visit,” said Ruth.

“We must get going,” said Jeremiah “Lampros and Cyrus will meet us in Jenin tonight.”

Following an abundance of hugs and goodbyes, Rebecca reluctantly surrendered Joel to his mother, with a kiss on his cheek.

Joel tired quickly of the early morning walk and soon Jeremiah lifted him up and put him on one of the donkeys to ride. He was much happier up there because he could see more than just donkey knees.

The little lad enjoyed seeing the valley. He had no knowledge of the battles of the past that Jeremiah and Netanel discussed for hours the previous evening. The walk across Jezreel Valley was very refreshing. Springtime brought out the abundant colorful Anemone wildflowers and off in the distance the orange and lemon trees of Nir's orchards could be seen blooming as the couple paused to look back for one last view of home.

As they gazed back at the distant orchards near Nazareth, Jeremiah continued, “We may return here someday.”

Resuming their walk, southward toward Jenin, Jeremiah said.

“Many of our family and friends thought it was foolish of us to leave. Rabbi Tamir told me something I still do not understand: *‘But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak*

*things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.*¹⁷ Maybe it is similar to what God did with Gideon, He took a few men to win a major battle. It may be that God has a specific plan for our lives.”

What seemed like a short walk through the beautiful valley took the family four hours to arrive near Sandala, just as the noon sun began to heat up everything around.

Joel had fun playing in the shallow stream that flowed gently past an exceptionally large oak tree where Ruth and Jeremiah sat in its shade.

“We will rest here in Sandala until a gentle breeze comes, then we will know the chill of the evening will follow in a few hours. We should have our campsite set up in Jenin by the time Lampros and Cyrus arrive.”

Joel came from chasing fish in the stream to join his parents in the shade, only to fall fast asleep.

All too soon, the anticipated cool breeze drifted in from the east. Jeremiah prepared the donkeys for the next part of the long journey.

Ruth asked if Jeremiah was concerned about going by way of Jenin, as it was the northernmost border of Samaria and was settled exclusively by Samaritans.

“No,” he replied. “The Jewish-Samaritan conflict is mostly with the extremist of the groups. Lampros has many friends in Samaria and as long as we travel with him, we should not face any

problems.” Arriving in Jenin brought an end to a beautiful day’s walk. The hills behind them were colorful in the evening



Jeremiah’s camp at Jenin
Credit: i.174 - Adventure.com

17 .22.1 - [1 Corinthians 1:27](#)

sunset, and their former home was hidden somewhere in the distant mist. After giving Joel his bowl of vegetables, Ruth began preparing the evening meal for Jeremiah and the soon-to-arrive caravanners.

Her thoughts wandered back to their home, and she was instantly saddened by the realization that her family was going to live so far from her sister Rebecca. “Goodbye, Nazareth; we are on our way,” Ruth’s was thinking,

But Jeremiah statement interrupted her thoughts by his statement, “It will not be long before it is dark,” Jeremiah said as he pitched their tent. “Lampros and Cyrus should be here soon.”

He anxiously watched the northwestern horizon in anticipation of Lampros’ caravan coming from Megiddo.

The golden sun was sinking slowly behind the hills when the silhouette of camels and donkeys appeared just before dark.

The caravan arrived at Jeremiah's campsite in time for the evening meal.



Lampros’ caravan seen at sunset.

Credit: i.256 - [Dreamstime.com](https://www.dreamstime.com)

Lampros operated his caravan differently than most other caravans. Others were in a hurry to get to their distribution points, Lampros preferred to travel slower and peddle his wares along his route. This was great for Jeremiah as he met many of Lampros’ customers and Ruth enjoyed the visits with the ladies of the caravan, discussing recipes.

“So good to see you again my friend, you have quite a large cargo,” he greeted the caravanners.



Cyrus's new camel

Credit: i.140 - [Sergio and Rhoda](#)

“Thanks to Cyrus’s hard work, he purchased a considerable amount of goods while he was in Acco. After traveling a bit by ship, I think he forgot how much our camels could carry, so we purchased another camel,” Lampros teased Cyrus. “When we arrive in

Jerusalem, we meet up with Arun, our contact from India. He is a merchant that supplies us with the wonderful spices and ointments of his country. The chief spices we sell are myrrh, frankincense, saffron; calamus and cinnamon, and aloes.”

“Thank you, Ruth, for preparing such a refreshing meal,” he continued. “Morning will come all too soon, and the day will be busy for us. At Jenin we have four faithful accounts; I hope to pick up two others as well.”

“At the bazaar, we will sell a lot of spices and a considerable variety of materials because we are at the major crossroads running to Haifa, Afula, Nazareth, and Sychar and our buyers have a large geographical customer base. We also sell a wide selection of vegetables and fruits.”

“This will also lighten our burden on the animals, so we will stock up with specialty items in Sychar for Jericho and Jerusalem. Our clients west of here buy differently than the ones that live south of Sychar.”

“You were wise in traveling this early in the spring. By late Sivan, the weeds will be overgrown in the uncultivated areas, and the pesky bugs would be your continual torment,” Lampros commented to Jeremiah.

“Tell me about your journey from Tyre,” he continued. “The camels seem more heavily laden than when you would stop in to purchase from Nir’s orchards.”

“Going north, we sell more fruits, vegetables, and olive oil. I will have lots of room for oranges and lemons from our good friend Nir, when they are almost ripe. Coming back from the

north, we carry extra products, most of which we will sell at Sychar.”

The unanimous decision was quickly made to retire to their tents because the next day's visits to the bazaar in Jenin would take up most of the day. Lampros had two new clients he wanted to have sign contracts.