

"YESHUA"

Screenplay by
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*"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ."
Philipians 2:5*

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"YESHUA"

FADE IN:

EXT. LAKEFRONT BEACH - DAWN

The sun has not yet risen. A dozen small fishing boats are pulled up on the beach. A few yards shoreward from the water is a sparse stand of scraggy trees, within which we see the dimly-lighted windows of a few shanties, the simple homes of everyday fishermen 2,000 years ago on the Sea of Galilee.

Shadowy figures stir about by the water's edge in the grey pre-dawn light, preparing to depart for another day's fishing on the big lake. The bows of their boats, pulled onto the beach the night before, rest on the sand like chins of little children peering over a fence, waiting to be loaded with men and nets.

The faint early light casts everything in subtle shades of hazy grey. The only real color is the dim yellow of distant lighted windows and the ruddy glow of a few small open fires built on the beach to warm the fishermen and shed some light on their pre-dawn tasks.

The boats are wide-beamed, open working boats, full in the bilges, single-masted, 16-20 feet in length. When working they are manned by 3-6 men. No two are alike. Something about the shape or rigging of each is uniquely distinctive and, of course, in the daylight each is painted with its owner's characteristic colors. These boats are hand-made, not manufactured. Some masts are already erect, others lie on deck, waiting to be stepped. Sails are various shades of tan, light to dark, as we'll see when the boats are out on the lake working in the light of day. Some rigs are of the older "squaresail type", while Simon's and Benjamin's boats (we are about to encounter) employ the "triangular lateen" sail similar to the simple sail you may have seen on little board boats like the popular Sunfish® and Sailfish®. The lateen sail is known to have existed by the 2nd Century and, since it is clearly superior to the less maneuverable squaresail for small vessels that need not cover long distances in steady tradewinds, we are safe to assume Yeshua employed just such a rig in the boats he built. After all, he *is* the Master Carpenter.

Nets hang on nearby mending racks or drape over the gunwales of the boats to dry. Here and there a fisherman mends holes in his net while others warm themselves over the small fires or work in the dim light to load their boats with small baskets of food, nondescript bundles, etc. The dim light of the fires catches a weathered face here and there, young, old, worried, joyful. Their clothing is the simple garb of working watermen.

Three men ready one of the more distant boats a few yards farther along the shore. They shove their boat into the water, climb aboard, raise their big square sail, and move slowly and silently away from the beach. Another boat is dragged off the beach and follows suit. These two boats slip away noiselessly away as the credits end.

Nearer, a broad-shouldered man (Yeshua, 33) is seated on a weather-beaten wooden box, his back to the camera. He warms his hands over a small fire.

Across from and facing Yeshua, illuminated by the dim ruddy glow of the fire, a young boy (Benjamin, 11-12) sits on a water cask, also warming his hands over the fire. He studies the face of Yeshua (a face we never see throughout the film). The boy's innocent, inquisitive countenance is dimly lighted by the fire, but in that glow he intently, lovingly studies the carpenter.

A few feet behind Benjamin, dimly illuminated by the fire and pre-dawn light, is an un-painted boat, smaller than the others, 14 feet in length. Its single mast is lying on deck. No sail is seen. The boat's skeg rests on large wooden blocks, lifting it a few inches above the sand. The hull is kept from falling over by posts propped against each side. A few primitive wood-working tools are seen. Chisels, a small axe, a two-handled drawknife, wooden mallet, caulking iron, loose strands of oakum, paint bucket, and two primitive paint brushes. These are not carelessly lying in the dirt. They are carefully placed on boards or in buckets or leaned against the hull as a skilled workman would place them, the valuable tools of the first-century boatbuilder's trade.

The light of dawn increases.

Yeshua takes a flat wooden board from a nearby pile and places it across his knees. He pulls a small fish from a cloth bag by his feet, places the fish on the board, and withdraws a sharp, narrow-bladed knife from a sheath on his hip. With this he deftly fillets the fish for roasting. He flips each fillet over as soon as it's removed from the bones, slides the knife along beneath the meat to remove the skin, then tosses skins and bony carcass into a nearby wooden bucket. Then, taking a long sharpened stick, he impales one fillet and holds it over the fire to cook, turning the stick slowly.

Benjamin watches with admiration and a young boy's eager appetite.

As the introductory music dies down a bit, we hear the crackle of the fire and the noise of the other men nearby, readying their boats, jesting each other AD LIB, warming themselves, roasting fish, etc.

Yeshua lifts the impaled piece of roasted fish away from the fire, inspects it closely for a moment, then passes the stick and fish to Benjamin. The boy eagerly wraps the meat in a large piece of bread, pulls it off the end of the stick, politely passes the stick back to Yeshua, and begins to eat like the hungry boy he is.

BENJAMIN

Thank you, Yeshua.

YESHUA

You are most welcome, Benjamin.

Yeshua spears the remaining fillet on the roasting stick and leans forward to cook his own breakfast over the open fire.

Morning birds call to each other. The sky lightens a bit more. It is dawn as usual on the shores of the lake. Life as it has been lived for many centuries.

Benjamin is an inquisitive young fellow, full of energy and zeal for adventure. His clothing is that of a typical peasant boy of the time, sandals, fisherman's half-sleeved buttonless coat. The only thing that marks him as different from other boys his age is a thin silver ring on the third finger of his right hand.

Unlike other Hollywood Christs, our Yeshua does not speak with a British accent, glow in the dark, nor show any weakness of human emotion like rage, disgust, or condemnation that we've seen in other films. He is fully mature at 33, calm and composed at all times, given to laughter, loving, wise, and physically powerful. He is, after all, The Christ.

But, in our film he is a master carpenter, the builder of unusually fast-sailing fishing boats.

His arms are fully developed. His hands are strong, veined, and weathered. His broad shoulders are square with a thick neck and powerful back. His stout legs are those of a sailor. Strong angular calves, muscular well-defined thighs, wide ankles and feet. Taller than most. The build of a heavy-weight prize-fighter. He stands a full six feet, somewhat taller than most men of the time.

During the film we see these parts of his body, however at no time do we see his face. We want our audience to form their own image of the unique, loving countenance of their Lord, instead of being distracted by a familiar modern actor's peculiar, identifiable visage and mortal personality.

The voice of the actor chosen for the part should not be one the audience will recognize. It is vital that the audience not attach to a familiar voice the face and personality of an actor they know.

They will each see our Christ in their own way, through their own eyes ... not ours.

Our audience is about to meet their Lord in a new way.

A rooster crows.

In the dim dawn light, more of the men push their little boats into the sea, shouting to their colleagues AD LIB.

One boat, much larger than the others and substantially more weather-beaten and shabbier than the others, is laboriously dragged by five men who wade knee-deep in the water to push the heavy hull from the beach. They struggle clumsily and with great effort, shouting orders to each other AD LIB, garnering laughter and jibes from those already sailing way as well as those still readying their boats on the beach. The good-natured teasing is merciless AD LIB. "Andrew! Shall we bring a team of oxen?" "You might do better if your crew weren't quite so scrawny!" "You're just jealous 'cause your boat is such a tiny thing!" "At least my boat catches fish!" Etceteras.

Yeshua sets aside the roasting stick, rises, and rushes to help. He puts his shoulder to the task beside the other men, now waist deep in the water. Soon the boat is floating as all but Yeshua struggle to climb into the boat and raise its shoddy sail. Yeshua wades ashore. The men in the boat look back at Yeshua with mixed emotions. Some wave appreciation, pleased and grateful. One scowls, brooding and resentful.

Excluding only the brooding, resentful man, there is much good-natured laughter and friendly shouting between the men in this rag-tag boat and the others still on shore AD LIB. The men on shore continue to poke jibes at the condition of the older boat. The occupants defend themselves with jibes of their own. Friendly fishermen chiding and challenging each other at the start of another day of hard labor pulling nets.

Yeshua approaches the last boat on the beach (not nearly so large as the weather-beaten boat that was the brunt of earlier jokes) ready to assist in shoving this boat off the beach, also. This boat is in excellent repair and freshly painted.

At the bow, feet widespread in the shallow water, is a very large, powerful man, who grasps Yeshua's outstretched hand of friendship. With Yeshua's aid, the two wordlessly shove the boat off the sand until the boat floats freely.

The large man deftly swings himself up, over the gunwale to join his crew already on board. He has a powerfully stern countenance, the intense eyes of a leader.

As he looks back at Yeshua, who remains on the beach, a smile of admiration and affection flood the leader's eyes. He waves a giant upstretched hand as his boat glides away from the beach, then turns to bark orders to his crew who move quickly to obey.

Yeshua returns the wave, then strides back to where the boy is still seated. Yeshua picks up the roasting stick and finishes off his own piece of fish. As he places the stick on the wooden box, Benjamin rises, still clutching what's left of his bread-wrapped fish. The two stand side-by-side watching the fishing boats glide farther out on the lake.

Yeshua puts his arm on the boy's shoulder as a golden glint of sunlight just begins to touch the watery horizon.

Benjamin hungrily bites off and quickly swallows a large chunk of his fisherman's breakfast.

BENJAMIN

Aren't you fishing with Simon today,
Yeshua?

YESHUA

(pleasantly)

Not today, Benjamin. We must ready
your boat for its first sail.

BENJAMIN

(eagerly)

Today?

YESHUA

Perhaps.

(beat)

If we work hard this morning.

Yeshua takes the roasting stick to stir the coals of fire into the sand before tossing the stick aside.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

I've almost finished shaping the
bow. Everything else is ready. The
mast, boom, sail, rudder. All we
need now is some paint.

(MORE)

Yeshua points to a nearby bucket and brush.

Wide-eyed and eager, the boy stuffs his youthful mouth with a last giant bite of the bread-wrapped piece of fish.

He looks admiringly, expectantly at Yeshua. Ready to work.

Throughout our film Benjamin's expressions show boyhood curiosity mixed with gratitude, wonder, adoration, and

profound respect. This is no modern day youth. Energetic and filled with youthful enthusiasm for fun and adventure, Benjamin also displays a deep-seated maturity and thoughtfulness seldom found these days in a boy so young. He is both boy and man. Boy becoming man.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Just a few more shavings. A bucket of paint, a few swipes of the brush, and she'll be ready to show those other fishermen what a fast boat looks like!

Benjamin runs a hand along the planks of the hull, admiring his prize.

BENJAMIN

Will she really be so fast?

YESHUA

(laughing)

That depends on your steady hand at the helm and how you trim the sail!

BENJAMIN

(anxiously)

You *will* teach me, won't you?

YESHUA

We will teach each other.

Yeshua looks about, feigning confusion.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

But, where *is* that paint? I don't see much here on the hull where it belongs. It must be around here somewhere!

Benjamin eagerly grabs the bucket and brush. He hurriedly begins, a bit too enthusiastically, slopping some paint on the ground and quite a bit on himself.

Yeshua takes the brush and demonstrates proper technique.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Gently! Peaceably! Try not to get the paint on yourself or the sand at your feet. Don't throw paint on the wood in globs and blotches. Lay it on smoothly. Like this.

(MORE)

With long sweeps he lays the wetted brush tips against the wood, spreading the paint evenly in graceful horizontal strokes, lifting the brush at the end of each stroke.

Yeshua hands the brush back to Benjamin.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Now you!

Benjamin takes the brush and does as he was shown. In a moment he is in his own world, painting *his* boat. Yeshua watches for a moment.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Good! Now I can finish shaping the bow.

Yeshua takes a two-handled draw knife in both hands and shaves wood from the stem of the boat. Benjamin continues painting, stealing glances at Yeshua's workmanship with each dip of the brush.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Pay attention to your duty, instead of watching me, and we'll be finished that much sooner.

Benjamin returns to his task with renewed enthusiasm.

The morning light is brighter. Yeshua continues scraping wood shavings from the bow of the boat. Benjamin paints.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

We may be able to launch before Simon and his crew return with their catch.
(laughing)
If the paint dries.

Benjamin pauses his work in mid-stroke, admiring the boat, dreaming of that first sail on the lake.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

We'll sail out to meet them and then race them back to the shore!

BENJAMIN

Really?

Yeshua laughs good-naturedly at Benjamin's boyish enthusiasm.

YESHUA

First, we work!

Yeshua points to the paint with his drawknife.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

We can't sail if the paint's still wet.

(MORE)

Benjamin begins again with the brush but, in his boyish eagerness, slops another big splotch of paint on the ground.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(laughing)

If you work *carefully*, there'll be enough paint to finish the job.

Benjamin slows down, begins to lay the paint on properly with long, laboriously slow sweeping strokes.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(still laughing)

And, if you work *quickly* enough, the paint will dry before nightfall.

Benjamin picks up the pace.

BENJAMIN

(obediently)

Quick and careful! Quick and careful.

The sun now paints sparkling golden pathways across the tiny ripples on the lake. The beams pierce through the trees on the beach, throwing long shadows and streaks of brightness on the ground around the workers. Sunlight glints on pine needles and glances off the polished tools and wet paint.

Yeshua pauses to study the sky.

YESHUA

This is a good day for paint to dry.

Yeshua's easy, joyful laughter is almost musical as he returns to shaving wood from the bow of the boat.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

It will be a good day for many things!

Benjamin pauses to look up at the sun, then quickly returns to his chore. Again with a bit too much enthusiasm, this time getting some paint on his fingers.

Again, Yeshua sets aside his drawknife and takes the brush to demonstrate.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Try to get *most* of the paint on your boat, and not so much on yourself. As I showed you.

BENJAMIN

I'll try harder.

YESHUA

Dip just the tip of the brush in the paint. Then, with long, sweeping strokes like this, lay the paint on the wood evenly.

Benjamin reaches for the brush, eager to start again. Yeshua continues the demonstration.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Lightly brush out the wrinkles and runs so the finished hull is smooth, like the surface of an egg.

Benjamin smiles gratefully at Yeshua, as only a young boy can when helped by a kind and encouraging older man. Yeshua returns the brush to the boy, who takes the brush and works more carefully.

After a few more strokes, Benjamin sets his brush aside, picks up a paint-stained stick, stirs the paint in his bucket, lays the stick carefully against one of the props holding up his boat, and starts again to brush paint on the side of the boat. By now he's covered a substantial portion of the hull in shiny robin's egg blue.

Yeshua continues working with the drawknife, shaping the wood.

Fish jump in the lake near shore.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(thoughtfully)

When we finish your boat this morning, I must go up the hill to the city of Chorazin.

BENJAMIN

(disappointed, still painting)

I thought we were going to launch my boat today.

YESHUA

(laughing)

Later. When Simon returns from fishing.

(beat)

Perhaps.

(MORE)

Benjamin stops painting and stares at Yeshua with disbelief and disappointment.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(laughing)

If ... the paint dries.

Benjamin smiles. Yeshua steps aside from his work to check the young painter's progress. The boy proudly makes a few careful strokes with the brush to demonstrate his new-found skill. Yeshua nods approval and returns to shaving the bow.

BENJAMIN

How long will you be in the city?

YESHUA

(still laughing)

Long enough for the paint to dry.

BENJAMIN

Will you be back in time to sail my boat with me today?

YESHUA

(laughing)

If the paint is dry, Benjamin.

Benjamin redoubles his efforts and, in his renewed haste, again spills a few more drops of paint.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(noticing)

And, if the paint holds out.

BENJAMIN

(sheepishly)

Sorry.

YESHUA

(assuringly)

I think there'll be just enough.
Pace yourself. Another two or three hours, and we'll finish together.

Benjamin slows his pace, working more purposefully, carefully laying on the paint.

Yeshua puts finishing touches on the shape of the boat's bow.

Yeshua whistles a happy tune as they work. Benjamin twists his mouth various ways in a vain attempt to form a pucker, blows earnestly, but fails to make a sound beyond that of rushing air passing teeth and lips. His disappointed boyish expressions should draw some laughter from our audience.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Would you care to come along?

Benjamin emits an audible gulp that swallows his attempts at whistling.

BENJAMIN

(anxiously)

You know I would!

YESHUA

It's quite a hike. A good 5 miles.
Mostly steep and rocky.

(beat)

All uphill!

BENJAMIN

(excited)

I've never been to the city. I've
always wondered what's up there.
I've heard it's wonderful!

YESHUA

Compared to Jerusalem, it's not much
of a city. Just a small town with a
big ambition.

Benjamin stops painting. Looks anxiously for an answer.

BENJAMIN

May I ... may I come with you?

YESHUA

I'll be pleased to have your company,
but the way is hard and the path is
crooked and steep.

(laughing)

Are you certain you're up for such a
difficult journey after all your
hard labors here?

Benjamin nods his head enthusiastically while paying closer attention and hurrying his work.

BENJAMIN

Of course!

YESHUA

Good! We'll set out as soon as our
work here is finished.

They work in silence a moment or two, as we survey the surroundings in the brightening morning light. Colors are returning from the gray. The green of leaves. The deep blue of the lake. The gold of sunlight glistening on the waves and leaves, etc.

BENJAMIN

(anxiously)

Who are we going to see?

Yeshua stops working. He looks out on the lake. The sails are distant now. After a long pause, Yeshua turns to Benjamin and answers in a more serious tone.

YESHUA

It is *what* we're going to see that matters, Benjamin.

(beat)

What *you* are going to see.

Another rooster crow, nearer, much louder, more pronounced, distinctly noticeable.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

We will see together.

(beat)

I want *you* to see what I see.

(with emphasis)

I want *you* to see as *I* see.

Yeshua resumes working with the draw knife, shaping the stem of the little boat below its waterline.

(The stem is the forward extension of the keel that wraps up to the bow at the front of a wooden boat. This is the first part of the boat that meets the water as the boat moves forward, parting the fluid to make room for the rest of the boat. This wide, flat-faced beam of wood was traditionally left square, jutting forward from the curved planking behind it. Water doesn't flow easily over square cornered surfaces.)

Yeshua rounds the square wooden edges of the stem of Benjamin's boat, shaping it more like the round nose of a fast-swimming dolphin or the bottle-nose of a porpoise.

Yeshua takes off a few shavings, then feels the leading edge with powerful, weather-worn hands. He looks at the rounded shape from various angles. There are no longer any square corners.

With each dip of his paintbrush, Benjamin steals a glance at Yeshua's workmanship, watching eagerly, anxious to learn the Master's trade.

Yeshua steps back a pace to examine the shape.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

A fish, Benjamin!

BENJAMIN

A fish?

YESHUA

Your boat must slip effortlessly
through the water ... like a fish!

Yeshua rubs the bow of the boat a bit more, again studying
the shape from various angles.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(laughing)

Like a *fast* fish!

Benjamin steps back to admire his boat.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

And *you* will be a great fisherman!

(beat)

But, first, you must have the *mind*
of a fish.

Stunned by this strange pronouncement, the boy stops painting,
almost drops his brush, and stares at Yeshua as if the kind
carpenter had lost his mind.

BENJAMIN

How can I have a fish's mind?

YESHUA

(laughing)

I'll explain. You paint.

Benjamin resumes painting, shaking his confused head.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(noticing - laughing)

Imagine you are a fish. Have the
mind of a fish. See with eyes of a
fish. Feel what a fish feels as it
works to swim through the water.

Benjamin stops painting to pay closer attention. He nods
assent, tightly shuts his eyes, wrinkles his lips, wiggles
his nose, and tries to obey this strange request.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Now you have it! Imagine you are
under the waves, pushing yourself
ahead by wiggling your tail fins,
forcing the water aside with your
nose as you move forward.

Benjamin opens his eyes wide as discovery strikes.

BENJAMIN

I can imagine that!

YESHUA

Now think, Mr. Fish.

Benjamin shuts his eyes once again and wrinkles his brow.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Do you want a square, flat-cornered
nose like Andrew's old boat, or a
round one like the smooth bow of
Simon's boat?

With outstretched finger, Yeshua gently taps Benjamin on the
tip of his nose.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

What shape is *your* nose, Mr. Fish?

Benjamin rests his paint brush on the edge of the bucket.
With paint-spattered fingers he feels the shape of his nose.
Of course, some robins egg blue appears on his beak.

Yeshua points at the paint and laughs. Benjamin, realizing
what he's done, also laughs.

Using a clean rag, Yeshua lovingly wipes the paint from
Benjamin's nose, then gives it a friendly tweak. The two
laugh together.

BENJAMIN

(beat - thoughtfully)

It must be hard to push through the
water with a fat, square nose like
Andrew's boat.

YESHUA

Have you ever seen a square-nosed
fish?

BENJAMIN

(laughing)

Of course not.

YESHUA

Why, then, do men build square-nosed
boats and push through their lives
with square-nosed thinking and square-
nosed hearts?

Benjamin wipes his hands on a rag hanging on his girdle,
then scratches his head.

BENJAMIN

I don't know.

YESHUA

Because they are blinded by tradition.
Most just blindly follow the crowd,
imitating what others do, thinking
what others tell them to think, seeing
what others want them to see, instead
of seeing with their own eyes and
thinking with the new mind of Yah,
who transforms all those who ask in
prayer believing.

Yeshua carefully removes a few more shavings from the stem
of Benjamin's boat.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Instead of thinking for themselves,
they accept what they're told, stuck
in the rut of other men's traditions,
like those who build flat-nosed boats.

Yeshua wipes a bit more paint from Benjamin's nose.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Find your own point-of-view. See
past the short-sighted vision of
others and discover the wonders Yah
has prepared for those who receive
the mind of Yah filled with wisdom
from above.

Yeshua tilts his head upward. Benjamin does the same. A
dove lands on a branch above them. Then another close to
the first. The two birds seem to converse with each other
in silent bird language.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Pure. Peaceful. Gentle. Willing
to compromise. Full of mercy. This
is the wisdom from above, the mind
of Yah I wish you to receive.

(beat)

With the mind of Yah, you will think
for yourself and dare to be different.

BENJAMIN

Is it better to be different?

YESHUA

(laughing)

It is better to be better!

(MORE)

Yeshua takes the brush from Benjamin, while the boy ponders
this last lesson.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Like getting less paint on yourself,
more on the boat, spreading the color
evenly so it can dry before sundown.

He brushes for a moment while the boy watches, then hands the brush back. Benjamin now begins in earnest to paint more carefully.

Yeshua puts a few final touches on the shape of the bow.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

I shaped the nose of Simon's boat
like yours, and Simon's is the fastest
boat on the lake.

(beat)

You'll see for yourself when we sail
out to meet him at sundown.

Yeshua taps the excited boy's nose once again.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Like a *fish's* nose.

Benjamin lays down his brush, moving forward to examine the rounded bow with his hands as well as his eyes. Yeshua shoos him back to his painting. Yeshua shaves more wood. Benjamin paints.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Do you see?

Benjamin, paint brush working away, looks at Yeshua with growing awareness.

BENJAMIN

I do see. That's why Simon's boat
is the envy of all the others.

YESHUA

And, your little boat will be fast,
too. The fastest of its size.

BENJAMIN

I hope so!

Benjamin again pauses between brush strokes to admire his fast boat.

YESHUA

Both you *and* your little boat will
soon be ready, and you will prevail
when the waves of life come against
you.

BENJAMIN

(eagerly)

We will swim ... *like fish!*

YESHUA

(approving)

Yes!

(beat)

You will go easy through life, instead
of forcing your way as others do.

Yeshua reaches with an outstretched finger once again to touch the tip of Benjamin's nose. Benjamin walks a few steps away from his painting, bucket in hand, body bent forward, nose at the forefront, brush held high in the air, as if he were pushing his nose through the water like a fish.

BENJAMIN

Like this?

YESHUA

(laughing)

Back to your painting, young man, or
we'll have to sail another day.

BENJAMIN

(excited)

Yes. Of course!

Benjamin begins to sense the double meanings.

YESHUA

You will not depend on force as others
do, making great splashy waves and
leaving a noisy wake behind them.
You will move through life with grace,
at one with the sea of life, having
the mind of a fish.

Yeshua sets aside the draw knife and steps back to survey his finished workmanship.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

I've given your boat a graceful nose,
and she will bring you safely home
when the day's work is done.

The name painted on the stern of the little boat is "Grace".

BENJAMIN

How do you know so much about boats
and fish --

(beat)

-- and people?

YESHUA

(patting the boy on
the shoulder)

Once you begin to receive Yah's mind,
you will understand wonderful things
that now seem strange and mysterious.

(beat; thoughtfully)

Storms will test and teach you, but
you will survive them all. Trials
of life will shape you, as we shape
your boat. You will sail the stormy
seas in safety, growing stronger
each day as you discover the mind
Yah wishes to put in you. You will
be amazed by Yah's grace. And, when
you are older, you will hardly know
yourself.

(beat)

Then you will know what I know. You
will see as I see. You will think
as I think. And ...

(beat)

... You will care about the things I
care about as you discover Yah's
life within you. Life that has no
end.

Yeshua picks up another brush, dips it in the bucket, and
begins to paint by Benjamin's side.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

When we finish painting, we'll set
off together for Chorazin. You will
see the magnificent synagogue and
the great stone seat where Moses
sits!

BENJAMIN

But, Moses has been dead two thousand
years!

YESHUA

(laughing)

Still, you will see where he sits
this very day.

(beat)

And, you will see those who compete
to sit in that stone seat so they
may exercise power over the poor and
impose their selfish traditions on
those they rule.

(beat - laughing)

First, however, let's cover your
boat with paint!

(MORE)

They alternate dipping in the bucket and laying paint on the boat. Yeshua whistles. Benjamin tries to whistle. They laugh without speaking.

A third rooster crows in the distance ... distinctly.

Yeshua pulls Benjamin away from the work. He points across the lake to where the sun now paints an even brighter river of gold on the waves.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

See the beauty of Yah? A new day is upon us! We must finish and be on our way.

Yeshua indicates with his paint brush.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Work first. Revelation later.

The two continue painting.

A bright early-morning sun is now well above the rim of the horizon, casting long shadows through the trees. A deep blue sky is sparsely flecked with gold and crimson clouds. Out on the lake we see the distant sails of fishing boats.

EXT. FOOTPATH TOWARD SMALL TOWN - LATE MORNING

The town of Chorazin is some 900 feet above the level of the Sea of Galilee, nearly 5 miles from Bethsaida, where Christ is believed to have spent a considerable amount of time with Simon and other fishermen before his recorded ministry began.

The name Bethsaida means, "Place of fishermen".

The name Chorazin means, "The secret, here is mystery".

Yeshua and the boy trudge along a winding uphill path toward the high-seated city above them. Along the way are stands of olive trees and small wheat fields tended by peasants.

They come upon a shabbily-dressed elderly woman, struggling to push a loaded wooden cart up the rough and sometimes rocky path. Yeshua walks up to her, takes the handles of the cart from the old woman, and pushes the cart for a few yards, as Benjamin and the old woman walk along with him.

A well-dressed young man (18-24) begins to pass them by. The obviously affluent young man flashes a scornfully arrogant gaze at the old woman whose presence requires him to move a bit from the center of the path.

At that moment, Yeshua stops pushing the cart. The young man glances at Yeshua, does a subtle double-take, and at

once his countenance is overtaken by a modestly courteous and merciful expression. He steps toward the cart and bows to the old lady.

YOUNG MAN

May I help?

The old lady gazes at the young man in astonishment. No words are needed. Yeshua turns the cart over to the young man, who smiles gratefully, begins to push, and engages the elderly woman in friendly conversation AD LIB as they walk on. Yeshua turns to Benjamin, who looks admiringly up at Yeshua.

YESHUA

Yah will bless that rich young man, Benjamin. Not because he stopped to help, but because he expects nothing in return.

Yeshua and Benjamin walk on, quickly overtaking the old woman and her young helper, who continue their friendly chatter AD LIB as the young man struggles with the cart. They pass by the two and continue up the path.

A clatter behind them, and they turn back to see something has fallen from the old lady's cart. The woman starts to bend over to pick it up, but the young man quickly stops the cart and gently pushing her aside retrieves the fallen object and places it carefully back on the cart. Yeshua and Benjamin laugh softly as the young man resumes his cart-pushing with the old woman managing to keep up the pace.

Yeshua and the boy walk on.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Yes, assuredly, that young man is *already* blessed. And, even greater blessings will be his this very day. Yah is faithful and true.

Ahead is a grown man pulling a cart from which a small basket has fallen. The man does not notice but walks on, pulling his cart behind him.

BENJAMIN

Yeshua. The basket.

Again, no words. Benjamin looks to Yeshua for direction, then knowingly runs ahead a few yards, picks up the basket, and catches up with the man and his cart.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Excuse me, sir. You left something behind.

The man, with an angry glance, gruffly snatches the basket from Benjamin's hands, as if the boy had stolen the basket from his cart and deserved some form of punishment. Benjamin steps back a step in shock at the unexpected response.

The man then sees Yeshua approaching. His countenance changes first to fear, then to shame. He sees something in the eyes of Yeshua (that we do not see). He is forgiven. His countenance softens then breaks into a relieved smile.

The man now speaks to Benjamin with kindness, glancing at Yeshua with wonder.

MAN

Thank you, my good fellow! You are very kind!

He hands Benjamin a piece of fruit from his cart. Benjamin takes the fruit eagerly and begins at once to eat, looking to Yeshua, then the man, back and forth, sheepishly.

BENJAMIN

Thank you, sir.

MAN

(smiling widely now)

No, thank you!

The man offers another, larger piece of fruit to Yeshua, who declines with a wave of his hand. The man's expression turns momentarily to disappointed sadness and rejection.

YESHUA

(laughing)

And, thank you, kind sir, but I have eaten my fill already this day.

Yeshua rubs his trim waist.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Too much food clouds one's spiritual eyes, and my young friend and I have much we need to see today.

Yeshua gives Benjamin's head a friendly rub. The man's countenance turns to grateful joy.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

I had my fill of fish and bread this morning, but my young friend here is always hungry. We have a long journey ahead of us. Your kindness will not go unrewarded.

(MORE)

The man begins to go down on one knee in reverence, but Yeshua takes him by the arm and raises him up before his knee can touch the ground.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

We are brothers, my friend. Worship our Father, Yah, who rules the stars of heaven, transforms men's hearts, and makes the tiniest blossoms grow.

Yeshua gestures with his hand toward a thick expanse of nearby flowers.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

It is Yah who has made us, and not we ourselves. In Yah we are one family. None is above another in our Father's House.

The man rises to his feet, saluting respect with his eyes and a nod of his head.

Yeshua nods a friendly salute in return.

Yeshua and Benjamin walk on.

The man stands by his cart, looking after them with an expression of wonder and gratitude.

BENJAMIN

Will I be blessed for my deed?

Yeshua points to the half-eaten piece of fruit in the boy's hand.

YESHUA

(laughing)

You already are!

(MORE)

They walk on.

The pastoral scenery is a contrast between the beauty of the land and its natural life (golden wheat fields, olive trees, flowers, birds, perhaps an inquisitive squirrel, etc.) and the harsh human condition (extreme poverty punctuated by an occasional well-dressed and disdainfully proud passer-by).

Fleecy cloud formations. Flocks of migrating birds. Sheep grazing peacefully. The bleat of a hungry baby goat.

They approach three women working an olive press near a grove of olive trees. One, a middle-aged woman rolls the heavy millstone, circling the press while pushing the wooden beam. Another much older woman works removing pits, placing olive flesh in the basin to be crushed.

The third is a girl of 13 or so, who collects the oil in small clay pots while talking incessantly AD LIB about trivia. The others ignore her.

Yeshua sniffs the air, walks a pace toward the women, with Benjamin close behind, and pauses to speak.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Oil flows clear from your gethsemane
today, and the aroma is sweet. It
is a good time for a rich harvest!

The three stop work, turn silently toward Yeshua, bow their heads, and remain motionless. The girl sneaks a peek and grins with childlike demurity. None speak.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Press on, you daughters of Israel.
The time of true harvest draws nigh.

At this, the oldest looks up in wonder, discerning Yeshua's meaning. Her countenance is filled with mother-love. A tear comes to her cheek. She lowers her head again slowly.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Rejoice and be glad. The days of
your labor will soon end.

At this, Yeshua indicates to Benjamin, and the two walk on.

The women watch as Yeshua and Benjamin move away, nodding and whispering to each other.

Yeshua and Benjamin come to an intersecting path where a well has been dug. This is not a Renaissance well with neatly cemented round sides and spindled bucket rope wound on a crank beneath a shingled roof. It is little more than a hole in the hard ground, ringed with rough stones.

A young servant girl in shabby attire strains to fetch water from the bottom of the deep well. Benjamin rushes to assist. The two struggle together to pull the long rope, making little progress, raising the heavy bucket only a few feet. Benjamin looks imploringly over his shoulder to Yeshua for assistance. The young girl continues to pull with no progress whatever.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(laughing)

There is an easier way, you two.
(MORE)

Yeshua takes the rope from the pair, who release their grasp and step back to see what he'll do. He grabs the rope with one hand, leans out over the open well, and gives the rope a sharp tug with an abrupt snap of the wrist.

He hands the rope back to the two who grasp it firmly and begin to raise the bucket with greater ease.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

There! The bucket is half-empty.

The two, looking at each other with mild amazement, easily bring the lightened bucket to the surface.

The young girl smiles brightly at Yeshua and modestly thanks Benjamin with her eyes, as a girl smitten by her hero.

Benjamin blushes and sheepishly looks away.

The girl then fills one of the two clay amphorae at her feet to overflowing. A short rope tied to the neck of each amphora is secured to the opposite ends of a wooden yoke that lies between the two large clay bottles.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(to the girl)

Next time drop the bucket in upside-down, fill it again, then shake out some of the water with a snap of the rope to lighten the heavy load.

(to Benjamin)

Obtaining is easy when we seek no more than we need.

Benjamin steps aside so the servant girl can do as suggested.

She drops the bucket upside-down, snaps the rope, and in a moment easily lifts another half-full bucket to the surface. This she offers to the two travelers.

Yeshua takes a carved gourd ladle from an empty bucket near the well, dips out some water, and offers it first to the girl, who drinks. He dips with the ladle again and offers it to Benjamin who, squaring his shoulders for the girl's notice, also drinks from the gourd like a thirsty working-man, spilling a great deal down his chin. They all laugh.

Yeshua returns the gourd ladle to its place without drinking.

The young girl curtsies clumsily as Yeshua and Benjamin walk on. Benjamin looks back.

The girl fills the other amphora. She gives Benjamin no further notice but, instead, sets down the bucket and lifts the yoke and its weight onto her small shoulders before walking off by another path with her burden of water for someone else to drink.

Benjamin scratches his head. Yeshua laughs and nudges the boy to keep walking.

The path becomes busier as they approach the town. More contrast between the beauty of Yah's natural surroundings and the tension of competitive humanity and its social distinctions.

An old man with an intelligent countenance, well-fed but dressed like a beggar, leans against a nearby tree, surveying the parade of people passing by. He sees Yeshua and nods his notice almost imperceptibly, secretly. Yeshua acknowledges with a slight wave of his hand held down by his side, not to be noticed. The beggar quickly looks away, then steals another glance at the two as they walk on.

Benjamin turns to look back. Yeshua urges him forward with a brush of his hand on the boy's shoulder, indicating that the beggar should not be noticed lest others discover that he and the beggar are acquainted in some clandestine way.

They walk on. The beggar does not look at them again but, instead, continues to take careful notice of those who pass his station.

The two are approaching the town in the distance. There are a few small hovels by the path, run-down, low-roofed, shambles good for little more than hiding from the wind and rain. Trash increasingly litters the landscape, spoiling an otherwise beautiful scene with random refuse tossed aside by carelessness and sloth. A broken wagon. Some dirty rags. Broken pottery. A pile of rotting fish and bones.

Benjamin holds his nose as the two pass by.

Ahead we see a tavern made of mud bricks. There is no sign outside to tell us it's a place of business. A lusty, large-breasted maiden leans in the doorway, flirting with men passers-by. A man comes stumbling through the doorway onto the path, nearly knocks down another fellow, and staggers drunkenly away on another path.

A half-dozen dusty, drunken Roman soldiers are seated on a low wooden bench in front of this much better-maintained structure. The doorway and a wide paneless window open onto the dusty path. Another, much older but equally large-breasted woman passes a pitcher through the window to the soldiers seated outside, showing as much of her ponderous cleavage as modesty (and our G-rating) will allow.

The soldiers are loud and boisterous, deeply inebriated, insulting the woman and threatening passers-by with menacing glares and occasional jabs with a broad-sword or spear, punctuating their threats with cruel laughter.

One soldier takes the pitcher and tries to grab the woman, who too quickly pulls back within the darkness of the building.

He pours from the pitcher into his leather flask, then passes the pitcher to his fellows. Each fills his flask in turn and drinks deeply. The first soldier shouts through the window AD LIB, setting the empty pitcher on the ledge of the window to be refilled.

The woman reappears at the window, takes the pitcher, and disappears once more.

In a moment an elderly man appears at the door with the pitcher, shaking his finger at the soldiers. One of the soldiers withdraws his sword and swipes at the man, who jumps back as another soldier grabs the pitcher and laughs. They all laugh drunkenly.

The shamed man hurriedly disappears behind the door. The refilled pitcher is passed around as before and quickly emptied.

More laughter and loud talk AD LIB.

When the soldiers see Yeshua and Benjamin approaching, they turn to themselves, hush their loud talk to a mere murmur, and ignore the two except to dart furtive glances at Yeshua, as he and Benjamin walk past the tavern and continue on their way.

The soldiers do not laugh after the two pass by. One places the empty pitcher on the ledge of the window. When the woman comes to take the pitcher for its customary refill, the soldier gestures with a palm-down wave that they have had enough. He rejoins his fellows, and they talk among themselves soberly, though we do not hear their words.

As Yeshua and Benjamin draw nearer to the edge of town they see the predominant height of the synagogue in the distance, towering over the much smaller buildings of even the more prominent villagers.

The two stop to survey the scene ahead.

Yeshua unslings the cloth strap of a goatskin water flask he carries over his shoulder and passes it to Benjamin, who drinks deeply, looking up into Yeshua's eyes with boyhood wonder. Benjamin passes the flask back to Yeshua.

BENJAMIN
(out of breath)
Are we almost there?

YESHUA
(taking a drink)
Almost.

(MORE)

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(indicating)

You can see the synagogue in the distance. It is there we will find Moses' seat and those who rule from it by law alone.

(beat - thoughtfully)

Law without mercy.

Yeshua passes the flask back to the boy.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Drink more water. You will need it as the sun bears down more hotly on us.

BENJAMIN

(excitedly)

I do see the synagogue, Yeshua!

Benjamin takes another deep drink, then passes the flask back to Yeshua, who slips the sling over his left shoulder once more without drinking.

YESHUA

(sadly)

Yes, Benjamin. Therein lies the great hope and the utter failure of Israel.

(beat)

If only they knew what the prophets meant when they said, "Yah wishes mercy and not sacrifice!"

(beat)

Come. We have much to see, and it's a long hike back to your boat before we can discover how fast she is!

They walk on as we watch from behind, their forms disappearing in the crowds of busy humanity bustling for temporal rewards.

EXT. BUSY CITY STREET - DAY

We enter the small but bustling 1st Century city of Chorazin.

The synagogue is by far the largest, most prominent building, ornately decorated, constructed entirely of black basalt.

Shoddy ox-drawn wagons and hand-carts pull past the walkers coming from and going to the city. The people wear mostly browns, tans, drab whites, etc.

The bright red and yellow uniforms of Roman soldiers and the glint from their polished weapons and shiny breast armor punctuate the scene.

When people must pass near a soldier, they shrink aside and deferentially lower their eyes, hoping to escape the soldier's drunken abuse.

An older man passing near a trio of soldiers is pushed aside by one of the Romans and falls to the ground. The soldiers laugh. The old man scrambles to his feet and scurries quickly away to safety.

Dirty children dart here-and-there.

Street noises AD LIB.

Yeshua and Benjamin pass through the busy streets until they reach a busy market square where street merchants hawk every kind of ware imaginable. Pots. Chickens. Vegetables. Fish. Items of clothing.

Some have a table or two and, of these, a few have elaborate tents or a just simple sheet held up on four flimsy posts to shade the open-air shopkeepers. Others have no covering at all. A few spread their goods on blankets or rugs on the ground where they sit cross-legged, imploring passers-by to stop and inspect their meager offerings.

The air is filled with the hectic noise of sellers' barking and customers' price-cutting arguments AD LIB.

Yeshua stops at a rickety, table under a makeshift, open-front tent, where a very old man offers for sale a meager pile of various vegetables and few pieces of fruit. Benjamin comes alongside and watches the old man intently.

The man's hands and face are deeply weathered by time and worry. His clothes are nearly threadbare. One eye sparkles with wisdom and kindness. The other is a withered empty socket.

A much smaller man in even shabbier attire fingers a large piece of fruit on the table. When the old man sees Yeshua, he shoos the smaller man away with the business end of a cane and turns with profound respect to address Yeshua.

EFRAN

Good morning, Yeshua! How nice to see you on such a bright and sunny day as this!

YESHUA

And, good morning to you, Efran!
(MORE)

With a sweep of his hand, Yeshua scans the table and its sparse offering.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

I see business has been good this bright and sunny day. You are nearly sold out already, and it's barely past midday.

Efran offers them each a piece of fruit. Yeshua declines with a palm-down wave of the hand. Benjamin follows Yeshua's lead and, reluctantly, declines the offered delicacy. Efran insists. Yeshua declines once more.

EFRAN

The soldiers took the best of what I had this morning. I sold little after that. This is all that's left. Not such a good day, after all.

The old man looks quizzically at Yeshua with his single eye, twisting his mouth into a peculiar grin.

YESHUA

(laughing)

Then surely, my friend, with so little left, you will sell out quickly!

Instantly, several passers-by crowd up to the table and buy nearly all that's left, buzzing among themselves how lovely the fruit looks, how reasonable the prices AD LIB. They pay the old man in shiny silver coins. Efran pockets these quickly with furtive glances to see if his good fortune is noticed by the thieving, drunken Roman soldiers.

Only one last piece of fruit remains on the table when the unexpected customers turn away with their bargains.

Efran hands the remaining piece of fruit to Benjamin.

EFRAN

What brings you to Chorazin this bright and sunny day? And, who is your intelligent young friend?

Benjamin, after looking to Yeshua for approval, eagerly takes the offered fruit and aggressively begins eating, wiping its juice from his chin with the back of his hand, then hastily wiping his hand on his clothing.

YESHUA

(aside to Benjamin)

Manners?

BENJAMIN

(to Efran - sheepishly)

Thank you, sir!

YESHUA

(laughing)

This hungry young man, dear Efran,
is the soon-to-be-famous Master
Benjamin, able skipper of the tiny
fishing vessel "Grace".

EFRAN

(mock surprise)

Indeed!

(to Benjamin)

Is this true?

Benjamin grins modestly, nodding enthusiastic affirmation.

YESHUA

Benjamin is learning how to build
fishing boats that swim like the
fish they catch!

Efran eyes the boy carefully.

EFRAN

He does have a very good nose, don't
you think?

The old man smiles, places his left hand on his hip, covers
his empty socket with three fingers of his right hand as if
in salute, then winks at Yeshua with his good eye.

EFRAN (CONT'D)

Such a good nose as that will precede
him everywhere he goes, no doubt!

YESHUA

(laughing)

You have a good eye for noses, Efran!

Yeshua gently pinches Benjamin's nose. Benjamin stares at
the old man, wondering.

A vast variety of humanity mills about them in the surrounding
street. AD LIB noises of the market crowd rise and subside
as the conversation continues.

EFRAN

(chuckle)

I see much that passes by my little
table here in Chorazin. The plight
of our people is not unknown to me.

At hearing this, Benjamin looks to Yeshua for an explanation.

YESHUA

It could be worse, my friend.

Efran looks about to see if his words can be heard by a pair of nearby soldiers.

EFRAN

(quieter)

The Roman occupation grows more intolerable each passing day.

(beat)

If only Messiah were here. He would take them to task!

(MORE)

In the milling crowd surrounding Efran's table are all walks of life. Well-dressed priests and rabbis in pretentious ornate garb. Peasants in rags. Merchants at tables, with and without tents, hawking wares to passers-by. Itinerant merchants without tables carrying a few fish, dead chickens, and the like displayed on wooden boards or wrapped in soiled linens, wandering through the crowd, hoping to make an impromptu sale.

We see an occasional woman decked with bangles and beads hanging from colorful headdresses and decorating the hems and sleeves of their flowing garments. The jewelry both beautifies and, at the same time, provides needed camouflage for what were once younger, innocent faces.

Harsh countenanced men, some with phylactery boxes bound to their heads or arms, make a show of chastely ignoring the bangled women, secretly stealing furtive glances or, when they are certain no one notices, shamelessly leering or openly flirting with the painted women of uncertain virtue.

A woman's terrible, frightened scream and the crash of falling pots and pans are heard in the distance. Yeshua, Benjamin, and Efran look to see two soldiers dragging an unconscious man between them, an arm under each of his shoulders. The man's bare heels drag along in the dirt of the unpaved street. A third soldier follows alongside, viciously kicking the inert body and jabbing it forcefully with the dull end of his spear.

A distraught woman follows at a safe distance, wringing her hands with hopeless despair, weeping and crying out for the soldiers to have mercy on the man AD LIB.

The market crowd freezes. Every soul watches in fear.

In a moment the bizarre parade disappears around a corner, the woman's laments slowly fading to silence.

Just as quickly, the familiar noises of the marketplace resume, as people busy themselves once more, buying and selling, as if nothing out of the ordinary had taken place.

Efran looks left and right again to see if it's safe to speak.

EFRAN (CONT'D)

(quietly - aside)

We've been wondering when you might visit us again. The others are increasingly worried matters here may soon worsen. The Romans steal our best olive oil. They take the finest of our wheat. You see for yourself how they treat us. There is no law and order here. Only the unbridled force of Roman occupation.

YESHUA

And, the priests and rabbis do nothing.

EFRAN

They are afraid, even as we are.

YESHUA

As it is written, my friend. "The hirelings flee when the wolf comes."

EFRAN

We don't know what to do. The Roman prefect assigned to our village is unwilling or unable to control his troops. He cares nothing for the way his soldiers destroy us.

Efran leans forward and whispers in Yeshua's ear.

EFRAN (CONT'D)

We need your leadership, wisdom, and strength!

The boy, absently chewing at the remains of his fruit, studies the two men curiously.

YESHUA

Yes, Efran, I know.

EFRAN

(imploring)

These are hard times.

YESHUA

Yes, but the time for deliverance is not yet. We must wait for the will of Yah to be shown. And, we must wait ... together.

EFRAN

We need to be delivered from this Roman occupation.

YESHUA

Wait for the Passover, Efran. That is Yah's perfect time for salvation. Just as the blood of lambs saved the children of Israel in Egypt, so shall it be in this age.

EFRAN

So many Passovers have already come and passed us by, yet, the condition of our people grows worse, not better.

YESHUA

Be patient, my friend. Seek first the will of Yah, or all we purpose to do will surely fail.

EFRAN

What can I tell the others?

YESHUA

Tell them to wait and watch. The time for deliverance is truly near.

The single-eyed old man glances heavenward, his lips mouthing a silent prayer. He looks back at Yeshua, intently, deeply.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

It is not for you to know the times or the seasons that our Father Yah has put in his own power, Efran.

(beat)

But you will receive power in due season if you do not falter or fail.

(beat)

Be vigilant, Efran.

(laughing)

Keep watch with that single eye of yours.

When Yeshua mentions the "single eye" he points to Efran's heart, the center of his breast. Efran looks down to see where Yeshua points, then looks up with an expression of recognition and partial relief.

EFRAN

I understand you. But, the souls of our ancestors cry out from the graves!

YESHUA

Can the night hurry to become day?

(beat)

Yah will not fail you.

(MORE)

Yeshua takes a tiny seed from the now empty table, holds it between his thumb and index finger to illustrate a point.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Can this tiny fig seed rush to bring forth fruit? Indeed, can the seed of anything become what Yah intends without the patience of those who plant, water, and wait for harvest?

EFRAN

But, the soldiers!

Efran slams a heavy fist down on his table. Benjamin jumps back, bumping into an older man passing behind him. The two almost fall as Yeshua reaches to steady them both. Efran looks both ways, afraid his striking the table will bring the soldiers' unwanted attention.

YESHUA

I know, Efran. Believe me, I know their cruelty.

EFRAN

(outraged)

And, in all our troubles the priests and rabbis do nothing to help us.

YESHUA

I know that, too, Efran. Believe me. I know.

(beat)

The travail of a woman giving birth is more than any man can understand, yet her trials are the will of Yah. Without pain no life comes forth. We thus came into this world, taken from our mother's womb midst pain and unspeakable suffering.

(beat - now laughing)

But, when the babe is born at last, the mother is free from her pain. She forgets the unspeakable agony and celebrates the precious gift of life with greater joy than she has ever known.

EFRAN

(wearily)

Your wisdom guides us, Yeshua.

YESHUA

Endure this present time with patience and thanksgiving, knowing the hour

(MORE)

YESHUA (CONT'D)

draws quickly near when the joy of your deliverance will be shared by all, including the Romans, rabbis, and priests.

Children chase a ball through the street with sticks. They laugh as only children laugh. They dart through the market place, bumping tables, followed by one or two scrawny dogs. In a moment, they pass close to a huddle of soldiers. The armed men with menacing, drunken countenances shoo them away. The children deftly evade harm and continue their free-spirited play, laughing all the while.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

There is much we must endure before the will of Yah can rule men's hearts. Enjoy the good of these troubled times. Let your heart be merry, as that of a little child. Be not so troubled that you miss the joys of this present moment, my friend.

EFRAN

I know what you say is true. We are graced by your wisdom and courage.

Efran absently counts the coins from his pocket into a small leather bag as he furtively looks about the marketplace with his single eye.

YESHUA

The rich man knows not what he has, until he loses all. Both the rich and the poor man yearn for more. In so doing, they miss the moment, and the will of Yah is delayed and frustrated.

Efran quickly tucks his tiny money bag in the folds of his clothing.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

The seed of hope must first be buried in the earth and then, when its life springs forth again, you will know and understand the perfect, loving plan Yah has for every soul, not only in Israel, but in all the world. Not only for this present time, but for all eternity.

EFRAN

(confused)

The hope you speak of is too distant.
We need Messiah now!

YESHUA

Messiah is near, Efran. Much closer
than you can imagine.

A twisted cripple, weakened with age, pushed by a nearby soldier, falls to the pavement, losing his walking stick in the process. Yeshua goes to his aid, helps the man to his feet, hands him his walking stick, and steadies the old fellow on his way. The drunken soldiers laugh derisively. Yeshua looks in their direction. Immediately their laughter stops. The soldiers quickly turn away and go about their business.

Yeshua returns to Efran's table.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

It is like Benjamin's boat, Efran.
When the will of Yah moves through
the sea of humanity, it will move
with grace and not by force.

AD LIB more street commotion.

Efran begins taking down his makeshift tent, folding it away in a dirty canvas bag, stacking the props aside.

EFRAN

Surely, now is the time when Messiah
will come forth in power to overthrow
our cruel oppressors!

Three soldiers push a young man into the table of a nearby merchant, sending pots and pans crashing to the pavement and pulling down the tent.

Efran hurries the task of dismantling his tent and table.

The soldiers laugh drunkenly. The young man and merchant at the nearby table cower in fear, timidly gathering up their pots and pans, trying to right the table and re-rig their tent once more as the soldiers, crazy with wine and comrade cruelty, walk away to entertain themselves by tormenting others.

YESHUA

The time is indeed near, Efran.
Yet, the seed must first be buried
in the earth.

(MORE)

Efran pauses his work, giving Yeshua the puzzled look of an old man seeing for the first time a new thought.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Only then can Messiah emerge as Yah's perfect vine bearing the sweet fruit of peace, binding all peoples together in unity, like grapes drawing life from strong branches, connected to the eternal root of everything, who is Yah.

Efran looks around at the crowd of busy people in the street, clamoring, competing for favor and advantage, shouting angrily at each other, AD LIB. He then studies peaceful Benjamin for a moment. Finally, thoughtfully, he looks intently at Yeshua and asks his question one final time.

EFRAN

How long?

YESHUA

The hope of mankind will soon be lifted up for all to see, as Moses lifted up the wilderness serpent so all who looked on it were healed.

(beat)

Pray for the Passover and the Lamb's Blood of Protection.

(beat)

Make ready to receive into your very own heart the powerful, loving Spirit of Yah who is pure, peaceable, gentle, and full of mercy.

(beat)

Rage and violence cannot accomplish the will of Yah!

Benjamin tugs on Yeshua's hand, not his sleeve. Yeshua puts an arm around the young boy's shoulders.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

We must be off, Efran. I will visit again soon.

EFRAN

Bring us good news.

YESHUA

I will.

Yeshua looks at Benjamin, busily chewing still on the seed of his fruit. He gently shakes the boy by the shoulders.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Thank you for Benjamin's fruit.

Benjamin wipes his mouth on his sleeve.

BENJAMIN

Oh! Yes, sir! Thank you very much!

Efran smiles as he gathers the rest of his display, folding table, tent, and props into a neatly-tied bundle.

YESHUA

Much more than fruit and vegetables
will soon be yours, Efran!

Efran throws the tidy bundle over his shoulder.

EFRAN

I will tell the others you were here.

YESHUA

Tell them to heed what I said.

EFRAN

I will.

YESHUA

Tell them to seek mercy rather than
sacrifice.

(beat)

Tell them to pray for the Passover
lamb and the blood of redemption.

(beat)

Tell them to pray for Yah to anoint
the doors of their hearts with that
precious blood, every day, every
moment.

Efran lifts his right hand in farewell salute and nods obediently as the two walk away. After a moment, the old man shakes his head, shrugs, turns away, and walks off in another direction with his burdens.

Yeshua and Benjamin wind their way along a busy street in the direction of the ornate synagogue.

Efran stops, looks back, shrugs again, then continues on his way once more.

EXT. BUSY SQUARE OUTSIDE SYNAGOGUE - DAY

Many of the buildings in Chorazin are fairly well-appointed homes and places of business owned by successful merchants and tradesmen, rich from the rendering of skilled services or the sale of quality olive oil and the excellent wheat that grows in the region.

Most, however, are meager mud brick structures or flimsy wooden hovels where the masses of impoverished and disenfranchised souls endure their miserable lives without sufficient food, clothing, or other provisions for health and happiness that characterize the modern lives of most of us today.

Yeshua and Benjamin walk past this assortment of buildings along a widening street that leads them to a much cleaner open area and the imposing synagogue that dominates the north end of a public square.

The door of the synagogue faces south, toward Jerusalem, so sunlight shines on the entrance during daylight hours.

The synagogue punctuates the city as its central and most prominent feature.

(Further details of this building can be found by searching the internet for "Chorazin synagogue". There are photos and text explanations of what this 1st Century synagogue may have looked like, based on digs and now-standing remains of a 3rd Century synagogue that attracts tourists to Chorazin today.)

Christ made reference to this city, the synagogue that was the "center" of it, and the seat of Moses within the synagogue where members of the priesthood ruling class sat to impose their self-interested theocratic power over the people.

The synagogue is built of black basalt, richly decorated with sculptured stone foliage, fruit, animals, and human faces.

A crowd is gathered in the small courtyard below the steps that lead up to the door. Two men in long robes, ornately decorated with purple sashes and gold embroidery, stand on the steps near the door, as if their importance were confirmed by the venerable old stones behind them and by the ancient theocratic hierarchy for whom the stonecutters erected them.

One of these men, a Pharisee, has a painted wood phylactery bound to his upper arm with a simple white ribbon.

The other man, a wealthy scribe, has a brilliantly shining gold phylactery bound to his forehead with a ribbon of bright scarlet silk.

Both have their heads covered with prayer shawls. The scribe's shawl is more brightly colored.

The two pray in competition with each other, so their social importance may be recognized by those walking by as well as those who pass through the impressive double doors to enter the synagogue.

Each attempts to out-do the other with flowing rhetoric and vain repetition, hoping to impress the few who bother to pause and listen.

The majority pass by as if the display were too commonplace to notice.

AD LIB with a touch of humor as each accuses the other of hypocrisy. Our audience should chuckle, if only inwardly, at the obvious foolishness of their pretentious conceits.

Yeshua motions for Benjamin to pause and listen.

After a moment, an ornately-adorned rabbi approaches. The small crowd withdraws to provide him a clear path to the steps. The rabbi turns to smile condescendingly to a few of the better-dressed in the crowd as he passes. The working class nearby are, of course, ignored.

When the rabbi sees Yeshua, his countenance darkens at once. A malevolent expression twists his face with contempt touched with fear. He points at Yeshua with an outstretched finger, starts to speak, and then, with a haughty jerk of his nose, brusquely pushes past the remaining crowd, bumping a few who cannot back away quickly enough to let the self-important leader pass.

As the rabbi ascends the steps toward the pretenders posing at the doorway to be seen by the crowd and the ruling members of the priestly class, the two nearly fall over themselves with obsequious bows and praises.

The scribe interrupts his ornate prayer in mid-sentence.

SCRIBE

Good afternoon, Rabbi! You are
looking very well today! And, what
a bright and sunny day it is!

The Pharisee interrupts with a louder, more precise voice, dismissing the announcement of his competitor.

PHARISEE

More to the point, Rabbi, we are
deeply honored by your visit today.

The Pharisee bows even more deeply, eyeing his competitor as he does so.

PHARISEE (CONT'D)

We anticipate gaining much wisdom by
your learned discourses among us
this fine day.

The rabbi pauses briefly to soak up the flattery, then turns to present a hint of disdain for the benefit of the crowd, so they may know he is superior to all. Especially to those whose pretense of scriptural knowledge is restricted to the streets. Most especially to common carpenters.

He flashes another glance of hatred and contempt at Yeshua, this time from his elevated position on the marble steps. With an arrogance inflated by his sense of self-importance confirmed by the imposing building behind him that is his official domain and justification, he turns on his heel and stops at the doorway and waits to be served.

The scribe hurriedly pulls open one of the double-doors of the synagogue. The Pharisee pulls open the other. Both bow from their waists as the rabbi turns about once more to face the crowd with ceremonious haughtiness.

He pauses to receive more of their flattering adulation, nodding almost imperceptibly to each in recognition of their presence. As he turns to pass into the building at last, he pauses once again, looks over his shoulder, and shoots Yeshua another look of brooding hatred that instantly melts into a disfiguring visage of dreadful fear. With a snap of his head and a self-important sweep of his flowing robes, he turns away and disappears within as the scribe and Pharisee, still bowing obsequiously, hold the door for others, so they may be seen by all who enter.

Benjamin stares at the scene for a moment as merchant and working class stream into the building for their spiritual instruction.

BENJAMIN

(beginning to ask)

Why . . .

Yeshua puts a finger to the boy's lips.

YESHUA

You will see yet more of this godless hypocrisy, my young friend. Let us hold our peace for now. The time is coming when all that is hidden will finally be revealed.

They follow the crowd entering the synagogue, passing by the scribe and Pharisee who gaze on Yeshua and the boy with wonder and curiosity. They look at each other and again at Yeshua. They are suddenly struck speechless, as if they were seeing a ghost. They back away to make room for Yeshua and Benjamin to pass. They release their hold on the door handles, but the doors do not close. They back away further, taking care not to honor this common carpenter whom the rabbi clearly condemns.

They ignore each other, glancing about or looking at the ground as Yeshua and the boy pass by.

Once everyone else is inside, they nervously wait before entering, lest they seem to be in company with the hated one. After a nervous moment, they timidly enter, still ignoring each other, bumping together as they try to enter at once, too embarrassed to look at the other or apologize. They stand inside by the still open doors, ignoring each other.

INT. INSIDE SYNAGOGUE - DAY

The floors, walls, and ceiling are whitewashed stone, painted here and there with colorful symbols. Internal buttresses strengthen the walls. The roof is supported by two rows of columns between the aisles. All is richly decorated with stone carvings of fruit, animals, human faces. Openings on the side walls near the ceiling admit a small amount of light.

At the front of the chamber is a large, ornately carved stone chair beside which, mounted on the wall, is a closed cabinet. The ark wherein the scrolls of the Torah are kept.

Those assembled inside are silent.

After a beat the scribe and Pharisee finally manage to pull the doors closed behind them, one door to each. Darkness seeps into the chamber as the sun is locked outside.

Yeshua and Benjamin stand at the rear of the room. Yeshua is broad-shouldered and somewhat taller than the others, so he can see and be seen from anywhere within the chamber.

Hampered by his stature, however, Benjamin fidgets. He cannot see over the taller men in front of him.

Those standing nearby murmur AD LIB and draw away from the two. A vacant space surrounds Yeshua and the boy.

Yeshua is silent, attentive.

BENJAMIN

(whispering)

Yeshua, . . .

Yeshua puts a finger to the boy's lips, then with one hand pulls the boy up onto his shoulder, so the boy can see over the heads of those ahead of him. The boy can now examine the strange and impressive fixtures near the front of the room where the imposing stone chair predominates.

A lit minora. Tapestries interwoven with bright gold threads. Carved ivory figures. Intricately patterned mosaic floor. Grotesque stone images.

A clear-toned bell strikes once.

The rabbi, who earlier disappeared through a small door near the front of the synagogue now appears with demonstrative self-adulating flourish and seats himself importantly in the great stone chair, slowly and carefully straitening the folds of his long robe with an imposing haughtiness as the previous murmurs of the crowd turn to cold silence.

His robes are sparkling white. The borders of the hems are ornately embroidered with intense scarlet, brilliant blue, and bright woven gold patterns.

Another bell.

A small man, also dressed in sparkling white but without the garish adornments, appears with a golden bowl and tasseled towel. The rabbi dips his hands in the bowl, takes the towel, and wipes his hands in a manner intended to show the crowd his great importance. With condescending disdain, he hands the towel back to his assistant, ceremoniously turns his face to the crowd and clears his throat as a command for all to attend closely to his words of great wisdom.

He speaks with a noticeable accent and slow, deliberate pacing.

RABBI

Peace in this place and in all of
Israel!

He slowly scans the room, acknowledging the presence of each familiar face, careful to avoid noticing Yeshua and the boy.

RABBI (CONT'D)

It is good you should assemble to
gain wisdom ...

He now fixes his glaring gaze on Yeshua.

RABBI (CONT'D)

... from us who are learned in the
law and prophets.

One man near the front prostrates himself on the floor. Two others kneel.

RABBI (CONT'D)

May you live long if you obey.
(beat - deprecating)
And, not so long if you refuse!
(beat - pompously)
Wisdom and life are one!
(beat - louder)
Learn, live long, and prosper!
(MORE)

He claps his hands.

The assistant, previously withdrawn to one side, now goes to the ark cabinet and reverently withdraws the well-worn sacred scrolls contained therein. The parchment is rolled on two polished wooden pins with handles at each end. Trying his best to seem important, the assistant ceremoniously presents the scrolls to the rabbi, who with a great show of religiosity unrolls them, takes the handles in each hand, and raises the scrolls above his head. The assistant, awed by the unrolled scrolls, backs away with his head bowed and withdraws.

RABBI (CONT'D)

(confidentially)

By the law we are one people, Israel.

(beat)

And, by the law we are set apart from the heathen gentiles. We are Yah's chosen people. We are pure descendants of Moses and Abraham. We are the only true children of Yah.

He lifts the scrolls higher above his head.

RABBI (CONT'D)

(beat - louder)

So, we *obey* the law of Yah.

(beat)

The Torah!

He stands with the scrolls still raised above his head.

RABBI (CONT'D)

(still louder)

We *do* what Yah demands, and Yah rewards us accordingly!

Two men at the front go down on one knee, bowing their heads. One looks aside to see if he's been noticed.

RABBI (CONT'D)

(more controlled)

This is the way of Yah. Your priests and rabbis learn Yah's will by studying the law of Moses and the writings of the prophets. We study day and night so you may know what is Yah's will *and obey!*

(MORE)

He leans forward a bit, feigning compassion for the crowd before him.

RABBI (CONT'D)

Your obedience and sacrifice, my children, are all that Yah desires.

Three more go down on one knee and bow their heads so they may be noticed and approved. Another spreads himself out on the pavement, face down.

RABBI (CONT'D)

(pleased)

You are wise to attend to my words.

He religiously rolls the scrolls together and takes his seat in the impressive stone chair. The assistant comes alongside, officiously takes the scrolls, replaces them in the ark, and then ceremoniously closes the intricately carved wooden doors that conceal the sacred writings that are the soul of Israel.

The assistant then rings the clear-toned bell once again.

RABBI (CONT'D)

Only by searching the scriptures and the law can you know the will of our God who is One God, the Is Who Always Is, Who Always Was, Who Always *Shall* Be. Yah is the maker of heaven and earth. Yah is the preserver and sustainer of our people Israel.

(beat)

Obey us your leaders and save yourselves from punishment and death.

(afterthought)

Obey Yah, as we, your leaders, teach you.

(beat)

Be blessed by your obedience and sacrifice.

(longer beat - agitated)

Rebellion will be punished!

He glares at Yeshua, his face contorted with rage and fear. He shakes an upraised finger in the air.

RABBI (CONT'D)

No man is above our law!

A purposeful look at Yeshua.

RABBI (CONT'D)

(louder, trembling)

No man!

(MORE)

Benjamin, frightened, begins to squirm. Yeshua comforts him with assuring pats on the boy's leg.

The rabbi's gaze fixes on Yeshua. Others notice and murmur.

RABBI (CONT'D)

(enraged)

Refuse to obey, and suffer you will!

He scans the room again in search of faces that support his pronouncement.

RABBI (CONT'D)

It is so written in *our* law!

(beat)

As we, your leaders, have taught you since your birth.

(beat)

We are bound together as a people by this *your* law!

(beat)

The law of Moses.

(beat)

The law of your ancestors and the prophets.

(beat)

The way of Abraham, our father.

He continues scanning the room for support.

RABBI (CONT'D)

Should an ordinary hand-worker, a tekton with no formal training in the interpretation of our scriptures, be allowed to live among you while denying the authority of your temple leaders?

He leans forward in his large stone chair.

RABBI (CONT'D)

(louder)

Should not such a man be put to death?

Another look toward Yeshua, however Yeshua and the boy have now disappeared. The rabbi scans the room. Others look about to see what he's searching for. His countenance fills first with wonder and amazement. Then with trembling fear.

EXT. OUTSIDE SYNAGOGUE - DAY

Yeshua swings Benjamin down from his shoulders.

YESHUA

(laughing)

What did you think of *that*, my young friend?

BENJAMIN

I ...

(beat)

... I don't know what to think. It was very strange, indeed! The teacher seemed troubled, and he looked at you when he said those terrible things.

YESHUA

When they teach us from Yah's Law the Torah, we should obey, for by obeying we please our Father Yah.

BENJAMIN

That is what I've been taught.

YESHUA

However, Benjamin, those men do not follow Yah's Law with their heart. Though they teach well what all men should be happily willing to do for Yah's sake, they themselves deny Yah's law of mercy.

The two walk on through gradually narrowing streets, each step taking them farther away from the whitewash and charm of the synagogue square.

A large older woman shakes out a blanket from a window, waves with a smile for Yeshua, who waves back.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Come. I have much more to show you.

BENJAMIN

But, I ...

A man coming toward them with a pushcart filled with twigs nods knowingly at Yeshua and the boy. Yeshua returns the salute, pointing heavenward with the index finger of his right hand. The man smiles broadly at the two, similarly pointing heavenward with the index finger of his right hand, then passes on.

YESHUA

What I want you to see will become much clearer as the day passes.

(beat)

You were born with a special purpose, Benjamin.

(good-natured laughter)

Before you were born, Yah put the wisdom of love in your heart.

(MORE)

YESHUA (CONT'D)

To know good and evil. To know what things are of Yah and what are not. What things to choose. What things to refuse. A new day will soon dawn in Israel. A new sun will light the world!

BENJAMIN

But, that man in the synagogue . . .

YESHUA

(reassuring)

Come. We have much to see before we test your boat on the lake. The day is already half gone, and we have a long way yet to go and more for you to learn before we sail away.

They walk on, leaving the synagogue square and marketplace behind. They pass through increasingly narrow passageways between mud brick and wooden buildings -- some much smaller than others. An occasional wooden shutter hangs at an angle from broken hinges. Empty water pots sit outside a few of the doors. Here and there an abandoned pushcart filled with empty baskets or twigs. Trash strewn in corners. Broken wagon. Shattered clay pots.

A shriveled beggar wrapped in rags sits by his bowl, leaning against one of the buildings. Yeshua reaches into the folds of his garment and retrieves a small loaf of unleavened bread. He bends down and gently hands it to the seated beggar, who grasps the offering with grotesquely arthritic fingers. Using both hands, he hungrily stuffs as much as he can into his rotten-toothed mouth. Grinning absurdly as he chews (we see his missing and discolored teeth) the beggar looks up at Yeshua with eyes filled with appreciation for the kindness. Suddenly, his mouth snaps shut as recognition strikes. Still holding the remains of the loaf in his crippled hands, the beggar swallows quickly and begins to speak with the parched, broken voice of one unaccustomed to speech.

COMMON BEGGAR

(excitedly)

You are ...

(beat)

You are the ...

Yeshua interrupts with a silencing wave of his hand.

YESHUA

Yes, my friend.

(kindly)

Soon your suffering will end.

COMMON BEGGAR

But ...

YESHUA

Be still and eat your fill.

Yeshua unslings the goatskin water flask from his shoulder and passes it to the filthy beggar, who drinks aggressively then, as if remembering his manners, apologetically passes the flask back. Yeshua waves the flask away.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Drink on, my friend.

The beggar lifts the flask to his lips once more and drinks deeply. Some water spills from his mouth and runs down his scruffy beard.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Soon you'll drink deeply of the water
of life Yah will pour out for your
soul! Then you will thirst no more.

The beggar holds the flask aside for a moment and looks up with loving wonder at the man pronouncing such strange things. He takes one last drink from the flask and passes it back. Tears of wonder and appreciation well up in his eyes. Without hesitation, Yeshua swings the flask to his own lips, and drinks deeply. This wordless communication of acceptance infuses the beggar's countenance with glowing joy that seems inconsonant in the face of one so accustomed to suffering. His previously forlorn, dejected, haggard, hopeless face is now composed, at rest. A toothless smile adorns his features. Words are no longer needed. The beggar receives the treasure stolen from him by cruel years of waiting. Hope is his at last.

Yeshua leans down to whisper in the beggar's ear.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Pray for the Passover Lamb.

(beat)

And seek the merciful protection of
the blood that will be shed for your
soul's salvation.

The beggar looks heavenward for a moment. He points to the sky above him with the crooked index finger of his withered right hand. A knowing look fills his eyes. He points the disfigured finger at the heart of Yeshua.

COMMON BEGGAR

(silently mouthing
the sacred word)

Yah!

Yeshua gently encloses the beggar's right hand as he whispers in the beggar's ear once more.

YESHUA

Tell no one.

The beggar nods assent and looks heavenward again, his twisted finger points once more to the sky.

COMMON BEGGAR

Yah!

Benjamin digs in his leather pouch. After a few seconds he withdraws a small coin. He holds the coin between his finger and thumb, surveying it a moment as if it were his last, as if he were reluctant to be separated from it. Then, shrugging away his self-interest, he carefully leans down and somewhat hesitantly places it, rather than tossing it, in the beggar's bowl. The beggar's wordless gratitude is communicated only by the strong emotion in the beggar's eyes, a look of wonder that triggers Benjamin's realization that a great and wondrous thing has taken place.

The beggar, looking now at Benjamin, still points skyward and smiles once more, revealing the pitiful condition of his teeth and gums.

COMMON BEGGAR (CONT'D)

Yah!

Benjamin digs in his pouch once more. This time there is no hesitation. The boy withdraws another, larger coin and places it in the beggar's bowl with the first.

The beggar smiles once more at Benjamin, who blushes and turns his face away.

Yeshua proudly draws Benjamin to his side with one hand and gently places palm of his other on the beggar's shoulder.

YESHUA

You will see me soon again, my friend!

The beggar looks lovingly to Yeshua, then turns to Benjamin with an expression of grateful admiration for such unexpected generosity from one so young.

Yeshua removes his hand from the beggar's shoulder, draws Benjamin back with him, and indicates with a gesture in the direction they were going that there are miles they yet must travel.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Pray for the blood of the Passover.

The beggar nods, waves a grateful goodbye with one hand and with the other digs anxiously in his bowl for the two coins.

The two walk on.

BENJAMIN

That poor man ...

YESHUA

Not so poor, Benjamin.

BENJAMIN

But ...

YESHUA

He is richer than the rabbi who speaks
of the law and prophets but does not
know Yah in his heart.

Yeshua stops and turns to Benjamin.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Knowledge without love is emptiness.

Benjamin looks up with wonder transmuting into knowledge.

BENJAMIN

I understand.

Yeshua takes Benjamin by the shoulder and shakes him gently. Benjamin struggles to understand why. Then, an expression of further recognition crosses his face with a bright smile as he corrects himself.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

I have *begun* to understand.

YESHUA

(laughing)

Yes! You have begun!

(MORE)

The two walk on.

A staggering drunk stumbles by without notice, bumps into a wall, then turns to curse the wall AD LIB. He trips over a child's battered toy wooden wagon.

He picks up the wagon with a quizzical, drunken look as if remembering his own childhood for a moment, then bitterly throws it against the same wall, breaking it in several pieces.

A small boy timidly peeks out of a doorway. It is his toy wagon.

As the drunk struggles to his feet, he notices the boy. Shame and pity flood his face. He stumbles toward the wall and stoops in a fumbling attempt to reassemble the shattered toy. He manages to gather a few fragments but is abruptly distracted by boisterous voices, the characteristic clink of armor, and the heavy footfalls of military boots as two Roman soldiers round a corner of the street.

He quickly pulls himself drunkenly erect, absently tosses the retrieved pieces of toy aside, and leans nonchalantly against the wall to steady himself, hoping to avoid the soldiers' familiar abuse.

The soldiers ignore him, laughing derisively about one of their colleagues AD LIB as they walk on in lock-step. They carry their spears tight to their sides, points perfectly upward, ready to torment whomever they please, confident the local theocratic leadership will do nothing to stop their cruel parties.

Once the soldiers pass, the drunk mutters disgustedly AD LIB and stumbles on until he disappears around the corner of a shabby building in the distance.

The boy rushes out to gather the shards of his toy wagon, trying vainly to piece them together once more.

Dogs bark, mongrels.

Babies cry for attention.

Older children laugh and taunt each other in play.

Adult arguments fester behind closed windows and doors.

From one window come loud, angry shouts followed by a rusty pot thrown out on the street with a crash. The missile nearly hits an old man. He turns and shakes his fist at the window, then walks on wagging his head in judgmental disgust.

Typical street noises of a run-down neighborhood. Poverty rules. Trash as before. Ragged clothing hangs on slumped clotheslines to dry.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Words, Benjamin!

BENJAMIN

Pardon me?

YESHUA

Yah created the universe and all that's in it by speaking everything into existence with words.

(MORE)

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(beat)

The foolish draw evil into their lives by the power of their words. The words they speak. The words they think. The words they believe and therefore act upon.

(beat)

Words are spirit! They have power!

A crash of shattered glass and a woman's scream.

A small girls anguished cry, "No, daddy! No!"

Benjamin trembles and draws near to Yeshua for protection.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Words, Benjamin. The power to give life, and the power to destroy.

From hidden doors and windows of this impoverished part of town we hear AD LIB men and women loudly arguing and cruelly demeaning each other and their children. "You never help with the cleaning!" "I hope you drop dead!" "You're just no good!" "I hate you!" "I wish I'd never been born!" "You'll never amount to anything!" Family frustrations and character assassinations AD LIB, typical of those dwelling in squalid conditions where hope is strangled by want.

Yeshua pauses to let Benjamin hear and ponder the agony and forsaken hope of these lost souls who destroy love by cruel criticism, break the sacred bond of marriage by unrestrained condemnation, destroy the peace with unbridled anger, wound their children with hope-stunting criticism, and hide their shame in the darkness of invisible rooms abandoned by joy.

BENJAMIN

Is there nothing we can do?

YESHUA

They invite sorrow into their lives by refusing to control their tongues. They bring to themselves the certain consequence of despair that follows words that ignore the will of Yah, for Yah takes note of every word we speak and holds us accountable for every careless thought. They do not know the truth, so they remain imprisoned in the darkness of the horrible lies they themselves freely choose to believe.

(beat)

Only the truth can set them free.

(MORE)

They walk on.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

The longer one hides from truth, the
harder truth is to find.

A bird lands on Yeshua's shoulder. He gently urges it to fly to Benjamin. The bird lands on Benjamin's shoulder for a moment. Benjamin tries to touch the bird. The bird flies away as Benjamin watches it disappear in the distance.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Truth, like that little bird, obeys
only its own will, not ours.

BENJAMIN

The rabbis say Yah is truth.

YESHUA

Yes, and love, also.

Yeshua stoops to pick up a fallen nest with three tiny eggs therein and places it carefully in the branches of a nearby tree. Benjamin watches intently, a broad smile on his face. They sit on the ground at the base of the tree, surveying the rescued nest above them.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Love and truth are one. The rabbis
search for truth in the scriptures.
In the darkness of their conceit,
they trip on the stumbling block of
law without mercy.

(beat)

Yah searches for the law of love in
our hearts, the truth that lights
the world with forgiveness and hope.

BENJAMIN

Is love better than law?

YESHUA

(laughing)

They are two parts of the same truth,
the two pillars of Solomon's Porch
at the old temple in Jerusalem. Law
and love. By the law, truth is
established in words. By love, truth
is fulfilled in power. Truth cannot
be found without both. Law proposes.
Love makes complete. Law without
love is death. Love without law is
folly. The two in harmony are life
eternal.

A sudden strong wind rushes through the trees and just as suddenly subsides. With a worried look, Benjamin jumps up to secure the nest, but it's above his reach. Laughing, Yeshua stands to his feet and pulls down on the end of the branch so Benjamin can see the nest is as it was, its three tiny eggs still safe and secure.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Yah cares even for the tiniest things.

Yeshua gently allows the branch to return to its place as Benjamin beams a delighted smile of relief. Yeshua rubs Benjamin's head affectionately, and the two begin once more to walk on.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Those who deny the truth of Yah deny both love and law. They deny eternal life. Many believe truth is whatever they wish it to be, foolishly thinking they can escape the consequence of their thoughts and actions.

Yeshua presses a finger to the center of Benjamin's chest.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Yah is not mocked. Whatever we sow, that we also reap. Sow mercy, and we reap mercy. Sow forgiveness, and we reap forgiveness. Sow love, and love fills our lives with joy. Yah wills it so. Immutable law ordained from the foundation of the world. No man can change it or escape its unavoidable consequence.

(beat)

Sow lies with words on your lips, and your life will be destroyed by darkness, dread, and disease. Sow hatred with unspoken words in your eyes, and the comforts of love will leave you lonely and forever lost. Sow pride with stony, rebellious words hidden in your heart, and in this world failure will descend on you as surely as night follows day and, when death comes to silence you at last, that black night will fall complete and hopelessly eternal.

(MORE)

Benjamin trembles. Yeshua assures him with a friendly arm on his shoulder.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Fear not. Yah's will for you is
life abundant, filled with joy and
many great successes!

Yeshua whistles a bit as the two walk on. Benjamin puckers
once more and manages to bring forth a few quavering notes.
The two laugh.

BENJAMIN

I have indeed begun to understand.

YESHUA

Yes, Benjamin, you have begun. And
soon you will receive the mind of
Yah, transformed and victorious.

Yeshua gives Benjamin an approving pat on the shoulder.

Benjamin smiles.

They walk on.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Most people fail to experience the
wonderful things Yah has planned for
them, simply because they refuse to
bridle their tongues.

(beat)

Pride prevents prayer. When they do
pray, it is only to ask for things,
improved health, wealth, temporary
pleasures. They never find eternal
satisfaction, the inheritance only
received by those who have Yah alive
within. They ask for things that do
not last, instead of seeking the
mind of Yah, the will of Yah, the
love of Yah, and the life of Yah
that never ends.

BENJAMIN

Yah wishes to live *inside* me?

YESHUA

(laughing)

Yah created you for just that purpose.

BENJAMIN

What must I do?

At this Yeshua stops, bends down on one knee, and turns the
boy to face him.

YESHUA

Ask.

BENJAMIN

(gulping)

Ask?

YESHUA

Yes. Ask in prayer every moment of every day. Seek to understand what is meant by the blood of the Passover, and ask for Yah to fill you with the Spirit of Truth with mercy.

BENJAMIN

Is that ... is that all?

YESHUA

(laughing as he rises)

Listen for Yah's quiet voice within you, the still small voice that will instruct you in all things and lead you to life's victories!

BENJAMIN

The voice of Yah?

YESHUA

The voice of Yah.

(beat)

You will hear the voice within your heart, and you will know it is Yah because Yah's voice is gentle and kind.

BENJAMIN

I will do as you say.

Yeshua pats the boy once more on his shoulder.

YESHUA

That pleases me.

BENJAMIN

You are wise, Yeshua.

YESHUA

(pointing upward)

Yah alone is wise.

The two walk on.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

The farther they advance through the narrow streets, the greater is the horrible hold of wretched squalor and disease that infect those who lack the preference enjoyed by the affluent elite who feast on society's favor by lofty speeches and crafty manipulation of political preference, financial advantage, and spiritual intimidation.

They approach the refuse dump that was an essential facility on the downwind outskirts of every 1st Century city.

At this forsaken end of town, poverty is nothing like we know here in America. This is an oozing, fetid disease of humanity that feeds on itself. Half-clad bodies, shrunken by hunger, filthied by every form of contamination. Faces devoid of joy or hope, stare vacantly at an empty, meaningless world around them. Scrawny mongrel dogs run the streets like packs of wolves. Rats gnaw on rotting garbage in the shadows.

Rags pulled over sticks of wood afford the only shelter for some. Still others crowd behind doorless holes, peering from their darkness.

Yeshua and Benjamin walk through such a place as this.

Ahead in the distance a frightened woman's anguished screams are punctuated by hateful taunts of enraged, self-righteous men AD LIB.

EXT. GARBAGE DUMP AT EDGE OF TOWN - AFTERNOON

A crowd of men, some much better-attired than others, gather large stones from the ground and hurl them mercilessly at a young woman humbly dressed as a maidservant. She crouches in the dirt, covering her head with her arms, vainly trying to protect herself from the cruel missiles viciously thrown at her from all sides. She is battered and bleeding. Several rough stones litter the dusty ground near her crumpled body. These are not pebbles. Some are the size of golf balls. Others the size of grapefruit or even larger.

WOMAN

(loudly pleading)

No!

The cruel stones strike her helpless body with sickening thuds. Those that miss her kick up clouds of dust.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

(less loud)

Please, no!

(MORE)

Her sobs of protest are nearly drowned out by cruel, derisive laughter as the men press forward.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

You don't understand!

She reaches for a nearby stone to throw back at her attackers, but as she strains to lift it, her strength fails. She is too weak. Her arm drops. The stone rolls out of her bloody hand.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

(weaker still)

It's not true!

She looks imploringly around for help.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

(almost inaudible)

I did not ...

A heavy stone strikes her in the chest. She vainly tries to prop herself on one elbow to be heard, but her entreaties are the incoherent whimper of a wounded animal. A larger stone strikes her squarely in the head, knocking her prostrate and motionless on the ground. Her disheveled clothing is pulled above her knees, showing her battered, bleeding legs. One man in the group, one of the better-dressed men, leers lasciviously.

The men continue taunting her AD LIB, laughing as the stones strike the now lifeless woman. Blood seeps through her torn clothing.

The men hear Yeshua running toward them, stop throwing their stones, and withdraw a pace or two from the woman's battered body.

Yeshua runs past the men and falls to his knees beside the lifeless body. He gathers her in his arms and lifts her up, as a mother would lift a wounded child.

The face is bloodied and disfigured past recognition.

Yeshua lifts his hands, stained crimson by the blood seeping through the woman's clothes and streaming from her ashen face.

He sobs convulsively.

All is silence for a beat or two.

The astonished men draw back another pace, still circling the woman's body and Yeshua, who holds her in death's throe.

Benjamin boldly pushes through the crowd and falls to his knees beside Yeshua and the bloodied, lifeless woman.

BENJAMIN

Is she?
(beat)
Is she dead?

YESHUA

(sadly, not angrily)
Yes, Benjamin. She is gone.

Benjamin stares into the face of the battered woman.

Yeshua looks up at the circle of men, now dispersing. We do not see his face. We see *their* faces. Mixed expressions. Some show shame. Some fear. But, mocking pride is the only face of the one who threw the killing stone, a man in the garb of a temple priest, the man who leered.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(to Benjamin)
The spirits of guilt and fear have robbed this innocent woman of her life.

Yeshua speaks to the men, gently but firmly.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Yah will hold you accountable for the guilt that drove you to commit this unjust crime.

The man in the priestly garb, who threw the killing stone, is last to leave the scene. He hefts a large rock in his right hand, ready to throw at Yeshua in defiance. Suddenly, he drops the stone and clutches his chest with both hands. An agony of pain and fear floods his face. He turns on his heel and hobbles away with a decided limp, still clutching his chest.

BENJAMIN

(weeping)
Why did those men kill her?

Yeshua looks in the direction of the retreating man, raising his voice to be heard clearly in the distance.

YESHUA

They choose to believe lies to cover their own black guilt and to hide from their mortal fear of judgment!
(MORE)

Yeshua pulls Benjamin nearer.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

It is always the same. They willingly allow lies to take root in their hearts. They make themselves servants of falsehood and death, approving themselves by themselves, hiding in the trappings of their outward show of religion, maddened by the crippling deceit of their own guilt-driven fear.

(beat - thoughtfully)

The entire world is tortured by lies, tormented by the fear of death they deny and the terror of one day being held accountable for their deeds and thoughts.

A few people emerge slowly, fearfully, from the dark, dirty doorways of nearby squalid dwellings, anxious to learn more of this courageous man who dares to interfere with the too-familiar "legal" ritual of stoning. They approach from all sides in small huddles, drawing only near enough to hear what Yeshua is saying, afraid to draw too close.

A child of 3 or 4 emerges from one of the huddles and begins walking unsteadily toward Yeshua. A woman darts forward and pulls the child back with a silent reprimand, as the huddle inches forward to hear more clearly, emboldened by the child's thwarted attempt.

Each little group moves *en masse*, a few steps forward, pausing to listen, then a few steps more. Anxious to hear. Nodding and gesturing to each other with amazement and hope.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(louder)

All that is evil begins with a lie.

(beat)

Disease and every form of human suffering is born in falsehood and thrives in the lies people willingly believe. Lies are demon spirits infesting the souls of all who rebel against the authority and majesty of Yah, our creator.

At the sound of the Holy Name, the huddles draw back with a gasp, the people nodding and gesturing to each other, shaking their heads.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(to the people)

Yah is Truth. All truth, from the beginning to the end.

(MORE)

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Yah created you and wishes to live
in you, to be your Counselor and
friend, protecting you from the
deceits that destroy you, preserving
you from the horrible consequence of
the lies you choose to believe.

(beat)

That consequence is eternal death,
separating you forever from the truth
and love that is Yah.

The people gasp again.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Those who believe lies become blind
servants of darkness. They not only
wound themselves with the falsehoods
they believe, but they perpetuate
the evil of darkness by proclaiming
it as truth, encouraging others to
follow them on their foolish path to
destruction. They inherit every
kind of failure in this life and
unthinkable self-torture, unending
sorrow, and unquenchable remorse in
the life beyond.

More gasps. More nods and gestures.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

The prince of darkness is your enemy,
the father of lies, the spirit of
deceit who ceaselessly strives to
steal the joy Yah intends for you,
robbing you of life itself, condemning
your soul to eternal anguish ... all
because you choose to believe lies.

Two men withdraw themselves from one of the huddles, wagging
their heads, returning to the filth of their individual
dwellings and the comfort of their squalid self-importance.

One is stumbling drunk. The other mildly so. The first, in
an attempt to steady himself, claps a hand on the shoulder
of the second, who in turn places a hand on the shoulder of
the first. The two withdraw together, mumbling and shaking
their heads, stumbling along in their stupor.

MAN

What rubbish!

(MORE)

The first man pulls a leather flask from within his clothing
and passes it to the other, who eagerly takes the flask and
drinks deeply.

MAN (CONT'D)
(guttural, slurring,
but not humorous)
Who does he think he is?

The first man trips over his own feet and falls to his knees, nearly pulling the second man off balance. The second hands the flask back to the eager upstretched hand of the fallen first man then, with both hands now free, pulls the first man to his feet once more. Having regained his full height, the first takes another tug for courage and nods a crooked, rotten-toothed smile of thanks to the second.

They look back at Yeshua with feigned superiority, and stumble arm-in-arm through one of the doorways where they disappear from sight.

Yeshua looks around at the huddles of fearful people, now drawing nearer on all sides, murmuring among themselves.

A few nod to each other, as if they recognize the wisdom of the words they hear and the value to themselves of paying closer attention.

YESHUA
Cruelty, arrogance, pride, contempt,
lust, intoxication, greed.
(beat)
All these are spirits of the darkness
that forever seeks to dwell within
the hearts of those who will embrace
them. It is their goal to rob you
of the light of life that is your
Father Yah.

A lesser gasp, fewer nods.

YESHUA (CONT'D)
The demons seek residence with your
souls, to clothe your being with
their darkness. If allowed to remain,
they soon bring other demons with
them, bound in chains to the author
of deceit, the one who seeks to steal
from you the light of Yah who is
eternal life.
(MORE)

Yeshua gently lifts the dead woman's body higher, cradling her in his arms so the people can see the consequence of falsehood more clearly, showing the crowd the horrid result of believing lies.

More gasps and nods.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

All human suffering comes from the lies you choose to believe, and the worst results from those you *most* wish to believe. The lies you cherish and hold fast to ...

(beat)

... even unto death.

The people murmur again. More nods.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(lovingly, imploringly)

You are what you believe!

BENJAMIN

Do people *choose* to believe lies?

YESHUA

(still to the crowd)

You believe lies to hide from the guilt you set free in your hearts when you separate yourselves from Yah. You hide in the darkness to avoid the Light of Truth that is and was and always shall be!

The drunken first man emerges a few feet from his darkened doorway, waves his flask above his head, and shouts.

MAN

What lies do we believe, rabbi?

(drunkenly angry and fearful at once)

Can you read my mind?

YESHUA

(louder)

Your words reveal the lies you hold within, my friend. You know what you believe. You choose the master you serve, and you are your master's slave.

(MORE)

The man stumbles back against the wall behind him, begins to drink from his now-empty flask, holds the container up to the light as if he could see through it, inverts it, and realizing it's empty throws it to the ground in anger and disgust. His comrade now emerges from the doorway, and each throws an arm over the other's shoulder for support. They now are listening. There is no more to drink.

Yeshua addresses the huddled crowd once more.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

The worst of lies are the ones you most wish to believe, for they are the ones that take root in your soul. They are the ones that make room for other lies to invade until you are finally filled with utter darkness and inescapable death!

Yeshua gently strokes the woman's blood-stained hair with a powerful, work-worn, calloused hand.

The fearful, seeing this unusual display of kindness, look with wonder at each other and murmur AD LIB.

One draws back, eyes wide with recognition of who Yeshua is, then turns and runs away.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Only by embracing truth can you be saved.

(beat)

Yah is truth . . . the same both now and forevermore.

The anxious crowds draw a step or two nearer.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

The measure of your faith is displayed in the words and deeds that spring from your faith. Love and life are one, as Yah is One.

Yeshua gathers the lifeless body in his arms and stands up. The bloody, stone-torn face is serene in death. The stress of fear and pain has ebbed away.

Tears stream down Benjamin's face. He is trembling with sorrow for the woman. And for humanity's condition.

BENJAMIN

Cannot the priests and rabbis show them truth, Yeshua?

The people draw back a pace.

YESHUA

Much of what the priests and rabbis teach is true.

The impoverished people nod to each other in agreement.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

They teach the law of our people.
(MORE)

Those in the small crowd nod to each other. They agree, proudly. They are indeed *the* people.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

However, the law Yah wrote in their hearts before they were born is the law of mercy they have forgotten. They cannot find it in words alone, so they cannot teach it to others. The law of mercy must be purchased with blood. Innocent blood.

Benjamin draws nearer, studying the woman's face closely. One of her arms falls. Benjamin lifts it gently and folds it across her waist as Yeshua turns to face the people.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

The priests and rabbis teach but do not do. They see Moses' law only with their minds, while the eyes of their hearts are blinded by pride and the hateful traditions they hide within to escape the fear that only love can cure.

He lifts the lifeless body still higher, so all may see the curse that blindness brings.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

They have forgotten the law Yah wrote in their hearts before they were born.

BENJAMIN

(weeping audibly)

What can remind them?

YESHUA

It is good you use that word, for it is *just* what is needed. They must be re-minded. Receiving new minds in exchange for the old.

(beat)

Light for darkness.

(beat)

Soon they *will* be re-minded. New minds for souls that remember the law of mercy Yah wrote in their hearts before they were born.

(beat)

It is the holy mind of Yah they will receive. A mind freely given to all who humble themselves and ask.

(MORE)

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Then they will remember and follow
the will of Yah cheerfully, for Yah's
will shall be within them.

(beat)

They will desire what Yah desires.
They will live as one people at last,
the children of Yah in truth, guided
by Yah's indwelling Spirit, enjoying
life to the fullest and inheriting
life without end!

BENJAMIN

Why does Yah delay, Yeshua?

Some people draw nearer to hear.

YESHUA

(sadly)

First the seed of Messiah must be
buried, as a seed is planted in the
earth. Then the Promised One will
emerge from death to sow eternal
life in every heart, shining the
light of Yah's truth through all the
world with peace and joy.

(beat)

Only Yah's truth can set souls free
from the darkness of demonic lies
that sicken hearts and bring eternal
death.

A slight gasp from the people once again.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

The mystery of Yah's good news will
soon unfold. A mystery hidden from
the world too long. It is the life
of Yah that will enter the minds and
hearts of people through mercy that
is purchased with innocent blood.

(beat)

That spirit of mercy will transform
souls and usher in the promised age
of paradise on earth.

Another gasp.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

First there must be holy shame, for
mercy is born in shame, and true
repentance is impossible without it.
Then the priests will see the evil
they've allowed their lies to commit.

(MORE)

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(beat)

The life-giving shame of Yah's sorrow
will cleanse their souls, and Yah
will give them new life, filled with
joy and victory.

Tears drop from Yeshua's unseen face onto the bloody face of
the lifeless form in his arms.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Life with no end.

We focus on the lifeless woman's face for a beat. A soft
glow from Yeshua's face (that we still cannot see) filters
over her so she seems only to be sleeping peacefully in the
glow of his loving countenance.

Yeshua carries the woman's body through the crowd as people
obligingly make room for him to pass. He walks to the door
of a nearby dwelling with Benjamin close behind.

A few of the less fearful separate themselves from the nearest
huddle and follow, hoping to hear more from this strangely
wonderful, fearless man.

A timid male figure emerges from his hiding place, tearfully
takes the body of his wife in his arms. Grieving but still
fearful and trembling, he looks at Yeshua with wonder, love,
and shame.

With a wordless glance of tortured gratitude, he turns to
carry his wife's body into the dark recess of his dwelling.

Yeshua leans a bit forward to peer into the darkness beyond
the doorway, then turns to Benjamin as the tiny crowd
disperses. Benjamin is transfixed.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

There is more for you to see and
learn this day.

Yeshua gently turns the boy away from the scene, and the two
walk on.

EXT. ROCKY PATH BEYOND GARBAGE DUMP - DAY

A dozen silent, somber soldiers approach from the distance,
marching slowly, ceremoniously as a unit, in perfect step,
two abreast.

Yeshua steps off the path to let them pass, pulling Benjamin
aside with him.

Following behind the tiny column is a lone soldier, attired differently from the others. He wears no headgear, carries no sword or spear. His garb is clearly that of a soldier, yet his uniform is without distinction. No epaulets. No emblazoning. Nothing to indicate any rank above the lowest possible order. At his waist hangs a tattered, blood-stained lambskin workman's apron. A pouch clumsily stitched on the front of the apron holds large iron spikes. Hanging from the man's left hand is a long-handled iron hammer.

He drags along, several paces behind his peers.

His countenance is brooding, dejected, the face of a broken man, a lost soul mechanically performing an unwanted task, obeying a duty he is powerless to resist.

He is the prefect's executioner.

Benjamin stares at the man with unimaginable horror.

A dark cloud hides the sun as the forlorn man marches slowly by.

The death soldier dejectedly follows the others, condemned by his grisly duty.

His empty eyes see nothing but his own perdition.

The tiny column moves silently, steadily, slowly.

Over their heads the wealth of the city and its prominent synagogue are seen in the distance.

BENJAMIN

(trembling)

That man with the hammer ... He
seemed so ...

(beat)

... empty!

YESHUA

He *is* empty, Benjamin. His eternal
soul is in peril.

BENJAMIN

But, why?

YESHUA

(sadly)

See for yourself.

EXT. THE KILLING PLACE - AFTERNOON

They crest a small dusty hill. Beyond are six bodies in various stages of death, hanging by nails from crosses and rugged posts driven into the ground.

Two posts sit a bit higher on the hill. These are fitted with cross-beams, one nearly horizontal, the other cocked at a slight angle as if affixed by a drunken or utterly careless carpenter. On these the victims' wrists are tied to the cross-beams with cords or leather straps to support the weight of the bodies. Iron spikes pierce their palms. Their feet are secured with a single spike driven into a tapered block attached to the post a few feet above the ground. The block is positioned so they can raise themselves a few inches to catch a breath.

The one on the crooked cross is already dead, his legs bent at the knees, his full weight hanging from the wrists.

The other manages to hold onto life by occasionally raising himself by the ebbing strength in his legs so as to relieve the strain on his arms. In this painful manner, he is able to catch more life-sustaining breaths before he suffocates or bleeds out. Death is imminent.

The dying man laboriously struggles to push himself up for another breath. After two successful tries, he is at last unable to repeat the process. His body goes limp. He hangs motionless at last.

Victims on the cross-less posts are merely spiked to the bare poles, hands above their heads. There is no block for their feet to rest on. The spikes do not pierce the victims' palms like those on the cross-beam posts. They are driven through the bones of their wrists, so the bodies will not fall as they would if the spike were driven through fleshy palms alone.

A single spike pins both feet to the cross-less poles but with the legs fully extended, so they cannot raise their body to catch a breath. Without the block to support their feet, every effort to lift themselves results in the most excruciating pain imaginable.

The dead hang on these posts, suspended only by the spikes in their wrists and feet, having bled to death or suffocated.

One is a withered skeleton covered with dry-rotted clothing.

Other bodies on the cross-less posts, more recently dead, are in differing stages of decomposition.

One of the condemned men on a cross-less post is still barely alive.

Blood runs down his arms and flows in streams over his nearly lifeless body, soaking into the sand below his nail-pierced feet. His head droops forward, but we see a vestige of life in the contorted death-throes of his body and the agony in his face as he struggles to breathe.

A lone soldier stands guard nonchalantly at the base of the cross-less post on which the barely living man is hung. At the soldier's side is a six-foot lance. His uniform is plain, his feet and sandals dusty and stained. His pinched face shows a bored, weary countenance. There is no evidence of intellect. He is another puppet doing his job. There is no malice. Just the blind resignation of a soldier to the duty of a familiar routine.

He casually leans his spear against the post, withdraws a roasted leg of meat from a pouch on his girdle, and begins to eat.

The hanged man's groans are barely audible as Yeshua and Benjamin draw nearer on the path. Benjamin gasps at the horrible scene and starts to run ahead. Yeshua takes hold of Benjamin's garb, stopping the advance. He waves warning with his other hand.

YESHUA

No farther.

The soldier sees the two and quickly grabs his spear.

He takes a single step toward them and lowers his spear point in their direction to warn them to approach no closer.

Seeing they've held back a safe distance, he carefully leans his spear against the bloody post once more and resumes his meal. As he tears into the meat, he keeps a wary eye in the direction of his two observers.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

The brutal force of law, Benjamin.

BENJAMIN

But. That man ...

YESHUA

It is too late for him.

(beat)

The law's brutality will prevail.

(beat)

There is nothing we can do.

The two hold their place, observing the hateful scene from a safe distance.

BENJAMIN

But, why so cruel a punishment?

Yeshua rests on a boulder by the side of the path and beckons Benjamin to sit beside him. The two survey the dreadful scene together.

YESHUA

Morality and man have forever been
in mortal conflict.

(beat)

It is the struggle of the ages.
Morals and dogma. Yah's law and
man's law.

Yeshua looks heavenward a moment. He then turns his attention to the boy at his side.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Someday the two will be one. Men
will seek the Will of Yah and work
in unity to bring man's laws into
agreement with Yah's laws. In this
way they will usher in the long-
awaited age of peace on earth.

(beat)

Till then there will be more cruelty
and senseless suffering.

(MORE)

The dying man manages sufficient strength to raise his head to notice Yeshua and Benjamin watching from a distance. A brief expression of recognition flashes across his tormented face. The contorted anguish and fear of imminent death drains away, replaced by comfort and peace.

Seconds later his head drops forward. Lifeless.

Yeshua bows his head in prayer, then lifts his head and his hands to the sky for a moment before putting his arm around Benjamin once more, as a loving father would his son.

The two watch on.

Benjamin draws nearer Yeshua's side, seeking protection under his wing.

The soldier finishes his meal and tosses the bone aside. He wipes his greasy mouth on his sleeve, takes up his spear, carefully places its tip at the base of the lifeless man's rib cage, and forcefully shoves the spear point upward, deep into the lungs and heart. A long-practiced routine performed without emotion. The soldier withdraws the bloody spear and carelessly leans it against the post once again.

Blood and a clear slightly-viscous watery liquid pour briefly from the hanged man's wounded side, pooling in a muddy puddle on the ground beside the ugly post.

The soldier withdraws another piece of roasted meat from the pouch on his girdle followed by a large chunk of bread, and resumes his meal as if nothing out of the ordinary had taken place.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(louder)

May we approach, sir?

The soldier is startled by this unusual request and takes up his spear once more. He fumbles his bread and meat into the pouch on his girdle.

SOLDIER

Who is it there?

(beat)

Whadya want here?

He lowers the tip of his spear until it points its menacing authority once more at Yeshua and the boy.

YESHUA

We mean you no harm, sir. We wish only to see the dead men up close.

SOLDIER

You can sees 'em quite plain from where yer standin'.

YESHUA

We wish to see them closer, if you please. They are already quite dead. What harm can come of it?

The slow-witted soldier looks about for an officer to assist him with this difficult decision. Finding none, he jabs the spear in Yeshua's direction to punctuate his power to prevent their approach and give force to his trembling words.

SOLDIER

I ain't got no authority to let you see these fellers!

YESHUA

(laughter)

You haven't been commanded to *prevent* us from approaching, have you?

The soldier thinks a bit.

SOLDIER

No. I ain't been told either way.

YESHUA

After all, the men are already dead.
The law condemned them fully, and
their punishment has been carried
out as completely as can be. What
could a small boy and a mere carpenter
such as I do to rescue them now?

This question requires more thought. The soldier lowers the blood-stained point of his spear to the ground and rubs the top of his bare head with his other hand, perplexed.

He looks around at the dead men, then beyond them again in search of some higher-ranking official to save him from making this decision on his own.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Well, friend?

(beat)

The men hanging there on your posts
are not coming to life again, are
they?

SOLDIER

Nay. That they ain't, and that's
for certain. I dispatched this last
one myself, though I'm sure he was
quite dead before I gave 'im the
point of my spear.

He proudly pats the shaft of his spear as if it were a trusted friend and his gruesome duty one to be highly praised by all who truly understand its grand importance.

YESHUA

Then, what harm can come from our
approaching nearer?

Yeshua takes a few steps nearer the soldier, who instantly lifts the tip of his spear once more, pointing the sharp end more defensively than offensively.

Yeshua halts his advance, raising both hands in a gesture of peace.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

I promise to bring you no harm. My
young friend and I wish only to see
these dead men more closely.

(MORE)

Benjamin, who remained motionless till now, advances to Yeshua's side, whereupon Yeshua again puts his hand on the boy's shoulder.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

You are posted here to see that no man interferes with these men's dying. Is that not so?

SOLDIER

That's me job, and ...

The soldier proudly pats his spear once again.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

... I does a good job of it, I does.

YESHUA

But, these are already dead. So, you have done your duty well.

(beat)

Have your officers commanded you to protect the dead from being brought back to life?

More head rubbing followed by a sheepish grin.

SOLDIER

I ... I guess not. Well ... I mean, after all, ...

The soldier looks around at the corpses then turns to Yeshua with an evil, leering smile.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

They is quite dead, ain't they?

YESHUA

I think we can agree they are at least quite very much asleep.

At this the soldier, thinking he's heard a joke, breaks out with a coarse guttural laugh and a rotten-toothed smile.

SOLDIER

I guesses it'll be alright, then.

A crooked wink.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

They is quite mostly sleeping, I'd say. And it ain't much likely they is gonna to wake up any time soon.

(MORE)

Another crooked wink and twisted grin.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Why don't you and the other gent
come on ahead and take a peek fer
yerselves, if ye still have a mind
to?

At this the soldier proudly hoists his spear point high in the air, snaps his feet together at attention, and with a clumsy sweep of his hand indicates approval for them to draw as near as they wish to examine the hanged bodies.

As Yeshua and Benjamin pass within a few feet of the soldier, a look of astonishment sweeps his face. As they draw nearer the last victim to die, the soldier turns his back to the camera, drops the point of his spear to the ground, and with his other hand rubs his bald head as one who has seen an impossible vision.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Yer ... uh ... yer that holy man I
been hearin' the other soldiers talk
about, ain't ye?

Yeshua, without turning around, raises a hand, wordlessly silencing the soldier, before proceeding to survey the grim scene more closely.

As soon as Benjamin detects the stench of rotting flesh, he covers his nose and mouth with a wrap of his clothing.

He looks with wonder at Yeshua, who has not covered his nose or mouth.

Yeshua advances to the post on which hangs the most recently deceased man.

Benjamin reluctantly follows close behind, still covering his nose and mouth.

Yeshua reaches out with his right hand and tenderly touches the dead man's feet. He looks up at the lifeless head. (We do not see Yeshua's face.)

YESHUA

(gently - sadly)

Sleep in peace. Resurrection is
near.

The eyelids of the lifeless man snap widely open, then close slowly, as the eyes of a weary man draw the curtain down on a peaceful afternoon slumber.

The soldier drops his spear and stares in disbelief.

Benjamin draws nearer Yeshua, grabbing tenaciously at his clothing, staring at the motionless man impaled on the cruel blood-stained post.

BENJAMIN

How?

Yeshua touches an outstretched finger to Benjamin's lips.

YESHUA

Tell no one what you have seen. I will explain before the stars appear this night.

BENJAMIN

But ...

YESHUA

(laughing softly)

After we put your boat to its test.

Yeshua withdraws his finger from the boy's lips.

BENJAMIN

But, how?

YESHUA

(again touching the boy's lips)

Keep silent for now. The day draws near when you will tell the world far greater things than this.

The soldier remains transfixed, motionless, stunned by what he has seen. He stares at the dead man, as Yeshua, with Benjamin at his side, passes to each post, touching the feet of each victim in turn.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(to Benjamin)

These men are not dead, as they appear. They are asleep, awaiting their soon resurrection. Those whom Yah has chosen will arise to life eternal, experiencing the paradise of being one with Yah. Others, who believe the great lie and reject the light of Yah's Truth, have condemned themselves to eternal darkness.

(beat)

No matter what you see, remember it is not Yah's will that any perish. Each chooses freely life or death, truth or falsehood.

(MORE)

At this the two reach the cross-beam post of the man who earlier managed to keep alive by lifting himself with his legs to gasp another life-giving breath. As Yeshua gently touches this man's bloody, nail-pierced lifeless feet, a tear from the face above drops onto that magnificent loving hand. Benjamin notices the tear and looks up in wonder to see another wind its way down the dead man's motionless face.

Benjamin places his young hand on that of Yeshua, who still has his hand on the dead man's lifeless feet.

Yeshua puts his arm around the boy's innocent shoulders.

A moment later, Yeshua withdraws his hand and Benjamin's from the dead man's feet, takes Benjamin's hand in both of his, and looks directly into the lad's upturned wondering eyes.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Be not afraid.

Here the pronounced shadow of that cross falls on them both for a beat.

The sun's brilliant halo shines from the top of the cruel post and, from the blazing brightness of that moment, we fade to the two walking on, leaving behind the bewildered soldier and his lonely watch over the silent dead.

YESHUA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Savor every moment, Benjamin.

EXT. FARTHER ALONG THE PATH - DAY

Yeshua picks up a stick, tries it as a bat and, finding it suitable, picks up a stone, tosses it in the air, and bats it off into the bushes.

He picks up another stone and hands the bat and stone to Benjamin.

YESHUA

Here. You try.

Benjamin tosses the stone in the air and, this first time only, misses. He picks up another two or three and hits them squarely into the distance, looking to Yeshua for approval each time.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

As we live, new things come our way.
Sometimes you fail at first. Just
keep pressing on.

(MORE)

Benjamin tosses a last stone aside and begins using the bat as a walking stick.

A rabbit runs out in front of them, stops, looks squarely at Yeshua for a beat, then scurries off the path to disappear in the bushes. Yeshua laughs. Benjamin laughs, also, then swings the bat over his shoulder. The two walk on, Benjamin lagging behind a bit to see if he can spot where the rabbit may have gone.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Come, Benjamin. We will return to Capernaum by another path. There is still time to take your boat for its first sail.

EXT. PATH ALONG A CREEK - DAY

They slowly descend along a narrow path beside a small, muddy, tree-lined, shallow creek.

They come on a group of women washing clothes, dipping their garments in the muddy water, beating them out on large stones at the water's edge, hanging them on tree limbs to dry.

The women gossip and giggle, splashing each other, kicking their bare feet in the water. A few talk seriously of the times and the horrors AD LIB.

Yeshua and Benjamin walk slowly by, observing.

One of the younger women, stooping down like the others to wash her dirty laundry in the muddy creek, has her back to us. Her skirt is gathered above her knees. She wears nothing but her skirt, however we see only her bare back, from her uncovered long flowing hair down to her narrow waist. Her skirt is wet, clinging. (All within our G-rating, of course)

Five small children play in the water at this woman's feet. Their ages vary. Two, three, four, five, six. The younger four are boys. The oldest is a girl. All are clearly her children. The smaller ones tug on her ankles or splash in the water nearby. The oldest tries to help with the wash. Her mother pauses once to correct the girl's technique, then lets the girl continue. Mother strokes her daughter's hair as a sign of approval, appreciation, and affection.

Three drunken Roman soldiers stand on the far side of the shallow creek, shamelessly watching the young woman with prurient interest.

She looks up from her laundry now and then to notice them, teasingly tossing her hair, as would a woman wishing to be noticed, a woman with no husband, no father to provide for the needs of her five young children.

The youngest of the three soldiers, far better-looking than his inbred roughneck companions, is overcome by his desire and begins to enter the shallow water, intending to cross. His companions, unable to suppress their laughter, try to hold him back, but he pulls himself free and starts across the shallow creek anyway.

His two companions stay on shore, hands on hips, raucously laughing as their younger friend presses forward, nearly stumbling on unseen slippery stones beneath the surface of the muddy water. He waves his arms to steady himself. They taunt him mercilessly from the shore AD LIB. "Where are you going, handsome Flavius?" "Does your mother know where you are?" "That young woman looks dangerous!" "Do you need our help?" Etceteras.

The woman, obviously pleased to have won this youthful and clearly determined attention from such a handsome young soldier, feigns modest inattention. She looks down to attend to some matter near her feet, head bowed and long hair hanging like a dark curtain over her curious eyes. She pushes back her hair with a brush of her fingers to steal a coquettish glance at her approaching admirer, then lets the hair fall once again to hide her interest. This further fans the flames of his youthful ardor.

In his hurried enthusiasm, he slips on a hidden rock and falls on his back with a great splash and an explosion of laughter from his comrades on the shore. The woman throws back her hair, points a finger, and laughs at him. The children laugh. Several of the other women laugh. Two of the children splash water in the young man's direction.

The young man's countenance darkens with cruel determination as he tries to regain his footing. The children scramble to their mother's side in fear as the soldier rises, dripping wet, and stands erect in the middle of the stream, only a few yards from where the woman gathers her children in her arms for protection.

Yeshua puts out a hand to stop Benjamin in his tracks. He takes a few steps forward, motioning Benjamin to hold back. A dried twig is at his feet. He steps purposely on the twig. The twig snaps with a crack that echoes across the valley.

Startled, the soldier looks past the woman searching for the source. When he notices the tall figure of a man shrouded in the shadowy trees and bushes on the other side of the creek, he freezes, pushes back the visor of his helmet and peers intently at the distant, indistinct figure.

Suddenly, with a flash of fearful recognition, he turns away and runs clumsily toward the shore where his comrades are now in uncontrollable stitches at the sight of his foolish antics. Their jibes become more biting AD LIB.

"What's the matter, Flavius? Ain't she pretty enough up close?" Etceteras.

Stumbling on the slippery rocks he finally regains the shore, dripping wet, and without words tugs on the other soldier's sleeves, pointing across the creek, motioning them to move on. They look where he points and instantly obey, walking quickly away together without looking back.

The woman covers her torso with an article of clothing she was scrubbing, rises defiantly to her feet, and turns to search for her unwelcome rescuer. Her three oldest children still cling to her legs. The two youngest resume splashing.

There is no one on the path.

Yeshua and Benjamin have walked on.

A puzzled countenance crosses her face, softening the hardness of her widow's desperation. A flash of awareness is followed by an expression of abject shame. She unfolds her skirt, ties back her hair, and kneels to gather her children in her arms once again.

Nearby, a much older woman stops her laundry labors, while the other busy women continue to soak and scrub. She looks lovingly with pity and the wisdom of age at the young mother and her children. She smiles knowingly, looks heavenward, then attends to her laundry once again, cleaning her clothes in the muddy creek.

The women resume their gossip, giggling, and splashing.

The young woman still clings to her children as we draw away. She looks heavenward, treasuring the mystery that's changed her heart.

EXT. FARTHER ALONG THE PATH - DAY

Yeshua whistles happily. Benjamin manages a decent note now and then. The women can still be heard, but far behind them.

BENJAMIN

They can't possibly get their clothes clean in such muddy water, Yeshua.

YESHUA

Perhaps not, but this is how they've washed their dirty clothes for generations. Dipping in the water. Pounding on the rocks. The clothes do not come out so white and clean as those of wealthy men, but the women make do with what they have.

(MORE)

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Rich men like rabbis, priests, and scribes have cisterns to gather clean water when it rains and servants to wash their clothes in clear rainwater.

(beat - laughing)

At least these women's dirty laundry is out in the open for all to see!

Benjamin is perplexed, not understanding the metaphor.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Washed white on the outside, Benjamin. But, what is within?

He points to the boy's heart.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(laughing)

Come.

Yeshua indicates the path ahead.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

There is much more for you to see before we can go sailing in your fish-nosed boat.

BENJAMIN

Do you suppose the paint is dry?

Yeshua points to the sun, blazing from a clear, bright sky.

YESHUA

(laughing)

On such a bright and shiny day as this? What paint could resist?

EXT. VINEYARD - AFTERNOON

The two come upon a lush vineyard by the side of the path, enclosed by a neatly trimmed hedge.

Within the vineyard, a hotly contested argument engages the attention of three vine workers wearing shoddy clothes and the wealthy vineyard owner, older, larger, better-fed, and attired in the expensive garb of a wealthy land owner.

The three workers advance toward the vineyard owner with threatening expressions, wielding their hoes and pruning hooks like weapons, shaking their fists, spitting on the ground, etc.

The vineyard owner stands in an opening in a low stone wall behind which is his moderately affluent home.

A fourth worker, wearing clothing noticeably cleaner than those of his peers, stands behind the wall and the vineyard owner, somewhat protected from the others by the low stone wall, smiling contentedly.

The points of the argument remain indistinct until Yeshua and Benjamin are near enough to hear the words clearly.

Vineworker 1, pruning hook in his left hand, shakes the fist of his right hand in the owner's face.

The vineyard owner shows no sign of fear. He remains calm, sturdily blocking the pathway to his home and the safety of his family, who dwell securely, unseen within the pleasant confines of the structure behind him.

There's not the slightest flinch, blink, or twitch of the vineyard owner's eye. He is firmly steadfast in his stern resistance.

Yeshua and Benjamin approach near enough to overhear.

VINEWORKER 1

(enraged)

You *cheated* me! I worked *all* day
for you!

VINEYARD OWNER

(calmly)

Yes. And, you've done a very fine
job of it.

VINEWORKER 1

But, the day is nearly spent, and
you paid these other fellows the
same as I.

Vineworker 2 nudges Vineworker 1 aside. He steps forward, shakes his finger first in the vineyard owner's face, then points over his shoulder at Vineworker 1.

VINEWORKER 2

I worked as hard as this man. And
nearly as many hours. Throughout
the heat of the midday sun, and I
worked for the same amount.

Here he points to Vineworker 3, who is crowding for his turn, and then at Vineworker 4, who shrinks behind the vineyard owner and the vineyard owner's wall for protection.

VINEWORKER 2 (CONT'D)

These two fellows worked fewer hours
than us both, yet they received the
same amount as we.

(MORE)

Here, Vineworker 2 grabs the arm of Vineworker 1, attempting to pull the reluctant man by his side, as if the two should be joined as allies in their dispute over the vineyard owner's hiring methods.

Vineworker 1 shakes off the hand of Vineworker 2, obstinately crosses his arms across his chest, and firmly stands his ground.

Set back a bit, Vineworker 2 regains his composure and points his accusatory finger again at Vineworkers 3 and 4.

VINEWORKER 2 (CONT'D)

These men received just as much pay
as I, and I worked harder and longer
than them both!

Vineworker 3, remaining behind these first two, merely raises his hand, waiting to be recognized. The first two look at him. He looks at them and then, imploringly, to the vineyard owner, who gestures a consent to hear him speak. The first two make room for the third to step forward, and he does so, planting himself firmly between them and almost nose-to-nose with the vineyard owner.

VINEWORKER 3

(almost apologetically)

Have I not done the work you employed
me to do?

Vineworker 3 looks side-to-side, from Vineworker 1 to Vineworker 2 and back again as he continues addressing the vineyard owner.

VINEWORKER 3 (CONT'D)

Am I not entitled to the pay that
you promised when you hired me on
this afternoon?

At this, Vineworker 1 turns angrily on Vineworker 3, lifting his hoe and threatening to strike. Vineworker 2 intercedes, as Vineworker 3 sheepishly recedes to his previous position behind the first two.

VINEWORKER 1

(angrily)

You only worked three hours! And
all of that past the midday heat. I
worked all morning as well as all
afternoon. Why should you receive
the same as I?

VINEWORKER 2

Or I?

With a sudden sweep of his right arm, Vineworker 1 pushes Vineworker 2 behind him where Vineworker 3 is hiding, turns to the vineyard owner, steps even closer to the older man, and shakes his fist in the vineyard owner's face as he looks at each of the other three in turn.

VINEWORKER 1

(angrily)

None of these men have worked all day as I have!

Vineworker 1 points at the other three with the handle of his hoe.

VINEWORKER 1 (CONT'D)

Look at their clothes!

(beat)

Look at mine!

Vineworker 1's clothing is substantially more soiled than that of the others. Everything about him shows weariness and the toil of a long, hot, sweaty day's labor. The other three show progressively less evidence of hard work.

Vineworker 1 raises the hoe handle over the vineyard owner's head as if to strike him.

VINEWORKER 1 (CONT'D)

(enraged)

Yet, you paid all three of these the same as I?

The vineyard owner shows no sign of fear nor the slightest concern that he might in any way be injured by the threat.

VINEYARD OWNER

I paid you what I promised.

(beat)

I paid each of you exactly what you agreed to work for.

(beat)

You received the benefit of your bargain, and I owe you nothing more.

The vineyard owner looks steadily at each of the three in turn.

VINEYARD OWNER (CONT'D)

(calmly)

Each of you received what I promised.

The fourth, still hiding behind the vineyard owner, clears his throat nervously.

The first three now press more closely, all brandishing their tools as weapons, ready to attack.

VINEWORKER 1
(out of control)
And *this* man!

He shakes his hoe handle at the cowering fourth worker hiding behind the wall and the vineyard owner.

VINEWORKER 1 (CONT'D)
He arrived not more than an hour ago. The scorching heat of the day was already past. He did nearly no work at all. Yet, you paid him the same amount as us!

The fourth moves farther behind the vineyard owner and the low wall that affords him uncertain protection. From his presumed safe position, he taunts the others with a showy smile of triumph.

Vineworker 1 leans forward with his hoe handle, trying to hit Vineworker 4, who jumps back just in time, still smiling his taunt.

VINEYARD OWNER
I paid each of you what we agreed,
and each of you received what you
asked for.

The three men murmur angrily, as the fourth continues his dangerous game.

Benjamin looks at Yeshua with an expression of understanding and approval of the vineyard owner's position. Yeshua proudly pats the boy on the shoulder. They continue to look on from a distance, not yet noticed.

VINEYARD OWNER (CONT'D)
Then I've wronged none of you. You
have what you asked.
(MORE)

At this he boldly takes a step forward. The three men nearly fall over themselves, stumbling backward to make room for his fearless advance. There is now no longer any safety for the man behind the wall, whose former smiling countenance is replaced by trembling, cowering fear.

Remembering the fourth worker, the vineyard owner steps back through the opening in his wall, grabs the fourth man by the ear, and flings him bodily forward, where the frightened man falls at the feet of his fellow workers.

He quickly scurries away on all fours to evade their reach then awkwardly scrambles to his feet and runs as fast as he can in the opposite direction.

The vineyard owner again boldly steps toward the remaining three who, again, cower backward at his fearless advance.

VINEYARD OWNER (CONT'D)
Now, for the rest of you. *Be gone!*

The vineyard owner shoos them back with his bare hands.

VINEYARD OWNER (CONT'D)
You'll not work in my vineyard again.

Vineworkers 2 and 3 retreat a few paces.

Vineworker 1 takes one step back then holds his ground.

Vineworkers 2 and 3, emboldened by the first man's courage, now hold their position as well.

VINEWORKER 1
(insistent)
Why should the others be paid the same as I? Why does it matter what we agreed to? Is it fair for one who does less to receive more, or for one who does more to receive less?

Vineworkers 2 and 3 nod agreement with this argument. They then cautiously advance until they're standing only slightly behind Vineworker 1, who ignores them and continues with an even more imperative tone.

VINEWORKER 1 (CONT'D)
(menacing)
It isn't fair!

VINEYARD OWNER
(calmly)
It *is* fair.

Again the vineyard owner takes a step toward the men, driving them back once again with nothing more than the threat of an old man's index finger pointing harmlessly at their noses.

VINEYARD OWNER (CONT'D)
It is fair because you agreed.
(MORE)

Another step. Another nervous retreat.

VINEYARD OWNER (CONT'D)

All of you agreed, and you have what
you asked for.

He raises his hand as if to strike the first man, who jumps
back, bumping into the other two, who lose their balance and
fall backward in a tumble, banging their tools together in
the process.

The vineyard owner takes another determined step toward the
three. The first draws back still farther, while the two
behind him scramble to their feet and beat a hasty retreat
down the dusty path.

VINEYARD OWNER (CONT'D)

Should I not be allowed to do with
my own as I wish?

Vineworker 1 backs up as the vineyard owner closes in.

VINEYARD OWNER (CONT'D)

What I paid those other men is up to
me. You received what you agreed to
work for.

VINEWORKER 1

But, those others!

The vineyard owner with a sweep of his hand indicates the
expanse of trellises behind the wall.

VINEYARD OWNER

When I was young like you, I worked
for other men, as you have this day.
I saved my money, bought this land,
and tended these vines 30 years. If
this were yours, would you not also
have the right to do with it as you
wish, to bargain with workers as I
have?

Vineworker 1 rubs his chin.

VINEWORKER 1

I suppose you are right.

VINEYARD OWNER

(smiling)

You've been paid what you asked for!
Now, come again tomorrow, and I will
pay you double.

VINEWORKER 1

But, what of those other fellows?

VINEYARD OWNER

I will deal with them as I see fit.
You see to your own, and I will see
to mine.

At this, the vineyard owner waves for the man to depart, and the weary fellow obediently turns on his heel and walks off, just as Yeshua and Benjamin approach.

From a distance, Vineworker 1 looks back. He gazes on the three for a curious, wondering moment, as if remembering a scene from the past, then disappears along a smaller path through the trees.

YESHUA

(pleasantly)
Greetings, Hiram!

The Vineyard Owner, much relieved to see Yeshua, extends his hand in welcome.

VINEYARD OWNER

(relieved)
It is good to see you, Yeshua!

Yeshua wraps the vineyard owner's soft, pudgy hand in his larger, calloused, work-worn hand and throws his other arm around the vineyard owner's shoulder as they walk together toward the opening in the wall.

YESHUA

(laughing)
I see you've been teaching the law
of contracts again this afternoon.

Reaching the opening in the wall, they stop.

Yeshua removes his arm from the vineyard owner's shoulder and places it proudly on the shoulder of young Benjamin by his side.

VINEYARD OWNER

(shrugging)
It's always the same. In the morning,
when the air is cool and the early
breeze is scented by the fragrance
of jasmine, they are full of energy
and anxious to work for whatever I
offer. In late afternoon, when the
sun has sapped their energy and the
air no longer bears its sweet aroma,
they weary of their promise and want
more money.

YESHUA

Wisdom keeps her word!

VINEYARD OWNER

Indeed.

The vineyard owner turns to the boy.

VINEYARD OWNER (CONT'D)

And who have we here, my friend?

YESHUA

This strong young man is soon to become the worlds finest fisherman, Hiram. Meet Benjamin of the soon to be launched fishing vessel "Grace".

The vineyard owner extends his hand to the boy.

VINEYARD OWNER

Grace is it?

The vineyard owner raises his bushy eyebrows and shoots a knowing glance at Yeshua.

VINEYARD OWNER (CONT'D)

How comes a boat to be called by such a name as that?

The vineyard owner smiles at Benjamin, then looks again to Yeshua for the answer.

Benjamin takes a determined step toward the old man.

BENJAMIN

(proudly)

It is the name of a fish, sir!

The vineyard owner raises his bushy eyebrows once more and gives Yeshua another sideways glance.

VINEYARD OWNER

Is it now?

Benjamin nods stubbornly, without apology, holding his ground.

BENJAMIN

She moves through the water with the silent ease and grace of a fish!

The vineyard owner feigns greater interest.

VINEYARD OWNER

And, pray tell, how do you know this to be so?

BENJAMIN

Because ...

Here Benjamin pauses and looks to Yeshua for the answer before beaming a big smile and replying.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Because she has a graceful shape!

VINEYARD OWNER

Then ...

The vineyard owner casts another knowing glance at Yeshua.

VINEYARD OWNER (CONT'D)

May we say that she is *full* of grace?

BENJAMIN

(proudly)

Yes, sir! And she will swim more swiftly than them all!

At this, sensing the boy's pride has begun to press the limit, Yeshua pulls the boy gently to his side.

YESHUA

(to Vineyard Owner)

We are launching the boat later today for her maiden voyage, Hiram.

BENJAMIN

(apologetically)

That's when we'll see just how fast she is, sir.

VINEYARD OWNER

If Yeshua has anything to do with her, she will sail like the wind!

BENJAMIN

Like a fish, sir!

VINEYARD OWNER

Of course. Like a very fast fish!

Yeshua pulls Benjamin gently to his side and turns his attention to the older man.

YESHUA

(intently)

How goes the vine, Hiram?

VINEYARD OWNER

Many strong branches are grafted in.
(MORE)

VINEYARD OWNER (CONT'D)

Some had to be pruned away to make
room for new growth.

This is said in a way that bespeaks something other than the
branches of the grapevines in Hiram's vineyard. Benjamin
looks quizzically at both men, trying to understand.

YESHUA

(sadly)

The time draws quickly near. Many
are called, my friend. Only a few
choose to be chosen.

VINEYARD OWNER

We will be ready, Yeshua. We are
praying for the Passover.

(beat)

As you have instructed us.

YESHUA

And those in the caves near Jerusalem?

VINEYARD OWNER

They are ready.

YESHUA

Then the vine will truly bear much
fruit.

VINEYARD OWNER

(smiling sadly)

Yes.

YESHUA

And, its beautiful branches will
fill the world, feeding the flocks,
bringing hope to the hopeless and
life to those who are dead.

(beat)

And, you will look out for my little
friends, as you promised?

VINEYARD OWNER

(smiling assurance)

All will be as you wish.

YESHUA

(turning to Benjamin)

Then, we will be on our way!

Yeshua and Hiram shake hands.

Hiram removes a very large bunch of incredibly plump grapes from a nearby vine and hands them to Benjamin, who struggles a bit with the heavy burden.

VINEYARD OWNER

You'll need life-giving nourishment
on your faith journey, young man.

Benjamin looks to Yeshua for an explanation.

VINEYARD OWNER (CONT'D)

Be a good grape, Benjamin.

The vineyard owner winks at Yeshua.

VINEYARD OWNER (CONT'D)

Remember: Every good grape takes its
nourishment from a good vine. Hold
fast to what is good, Benjamin.

With some help from Yeshua, Benjamin manages to swing the bundle of heavy grapes onto his shoulder.

BENJAMIN

(eagerly)
Thank you, sir!

YESHUA

Yes, Hiram.

Yeshua takes Hiram's hand in his once more.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Thank you.

HIRAM

All thanks, my Lord, is to you and
you alone. Nothing we do can ever
repay.

YESHUA

It is as Yah desires, my friend.

Yeshua and Benjamin turn to walk away. Hiram waves goodbye. Yeshua waves in reply. Benjamin, struggling with his burden of grapevine and grapes, waves, too. Hiram smiles.

The two walk on.

EXT. PATH - AFTERNOON

BENJAMIN

What did he mean when he said I need
nourishment for my faith journey?

YESHUA

We see with our eyes, Benjamin, yet
much of what we see is only the
surface of that which is truly real.

Benjamin plucks a large grape from the bunch on his shoulder,
studies it carefully, looks up to Yeshua for an explanation,
then pops the grape into his mouth with a satisfied smile.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Yah gives us faith to see what our
eyes cannot.

BENJAMIN

How can I see what I cannot see?

YESHUA

(laughing)
Most people see only what they wish
to see.

BENJAMIN

But the truth is always true, is it
not?

YESHUA

The truth is most assuredly always
true, and nothing is true but the
truth.

BENJAMIN

Then, only the truth is true!

YESHUA

(laughing)
But, lies promise things that never
can be, just as darkness can never
give light.

(beat)

Consider those men back in Hiram's
vineyard or those who stoned that
poor woman. They act on the lies
they choose to believe. And, by
their actions they condemn their own
souls.

BENJAMIN

They are bad men, Yeshua!

YESHUA

Deceived, Benjamin. Deceived by the
lies in their hearts. The lies that
promise what they can never give.

BENJAMIN

But, they are bad men, aren't they?
The rabbi's teach us that such men
are bad men.

YESHUA

They are merely men who believe the
lies they choose to believe. The
darkness of their lies drives out
the light, so their deeds are evil.

Benjamin hands Yeshua a grape and takes one for himself.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

When the eye of their souls sees the
truth at last, the light will dispel
the darkness and set them free.

BENJAMIN

But, the priests and rabbis teach us
there are good men and bad men, as
if some were born good and others
born bad. Then they command us to
be good and warn what will happen if
we're bad.

YESHUA

(laughing)

Can you command an acorn to be a
fig?

BENJAMIN

I don't understand.

YESHUA

It is good to try to be good, but
everyone falls short of the goodness
of Yah. The darkness in their hearts
blinds them to the truth. That is
why we ask Yah to give us a new mind,
to re-mind us, to put Yah's life-
giving spirit of truth within us.
Only then can we know what we knew
before we were born.

BENJAMIN

Can I not remember on my own?

YESHUA

No, Benjamin. From the days of their
youth, men's minds are filled with
the commands of their parents, the
teachings of priests and rabbis, and
the disappointing sorrows of life in

(MORE)

YESHUA (CONT'D)

the world. Before Yah can re-mind
you of the truth, a new thing must
happen. The old must be washed away.
Then there will be room for the mind
of Yah to return.

BENJAMIN

But, how can the old be washed away?

YESHUA

By faith, Benjamin.
(beat - soberly)
By faith and the blood of the Passover
lamb.

Benjamin is now understandably bewildered. He plucks another
grape and studies it, as before.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(laughing - then sadly)
Yah will show you very soon.

The stream beside their path is now much wider. No longer a
shallow creek, it is a deep, muddy river.

They hear a commotion in the distance.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - AFTERNOON

A noisy crowd is gathered on the shore ahead AD LIB.

A bearded, rough-looking man stands in the muddy water above
his waist and waves people to come down from the shore and
be baptized AD LIB.

One after another is dipped beneath the muddy water and sent
on his or her way rejoicing.

Benjamin and Yeshua draw nearer.

The voices become more distinct.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Heed what the priests and rabbis
tell you, and do as they say.

(beat)

But be not as they are.

(MORE)

He looks up to the shore, where two heavy-set men in fine
clothing stand proudly in the midst of poorly dressed, much
thinner working folk. The working-class people separate
themselves from the two rich men, leaving them in a small
opening of souls, alone in a space of their own.

They are spies for the priests, observing, listening, occasionally nodding to each other with dark, threatening countenances.

John shakes an angry fist in their direction. They react with even darker looks, warning him of the grave consequence that befalls those who dare to criticize priestly authority.

Unmoved by their menacing intimidation, he boldly continues his attack.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

(angrily)

The priests and rabbis do not practice
what they preach!

He points to each poor soul on the shore with a look of pity, imploring them to heed his words.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

(softly - paced)

They make a grand and pompous show
of their religious knowledge.

(beat - much louder)

Yet, they lift not one small finger
to help the poor!

He takes a single purposeful step forward toward the shore. The two rich men draw back in fear. John stops.

With eyes burning with zeal, he scans each face in the small gathering, searching their hearts, seeking to touch their souls with the truth he cannot refuse to proclaim.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

Their religion is a sham! They do
not what they teach. They use their
position of favor among us so they
may live without laboring. Their
pretended faith is mere pretense for
their insatiable gluttony. There is
not one drop of mercy in them!

He points the index finger of his right hand heavenward and shakes it violently against the sky.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

(shouting)

They speak of Yah!

(beat - softly)

But, they know nothing of Yah in
their hearts!

(MORE)

The two men in fine clothing proudly puff themselves up.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

They teach you of Yah with their
high-sounding words, yet mock the
Most High with their merciless deeds!

The people withdraw from the two men a few feet farther. The space in which they stand is now much wider. This seems to please the two men, separated further from the stench of poverty, the shabby appearance of the un-groomed, the filth of working hands and feet. The brilliant prominence of their starkly white robes stands in blazing contrast to the drab tans and grays that humbly adorn the common folk who crowd the shore.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

Yah calls each of us to have mercy
on the poor, to lift up the
downtrodden, to assist those unable
to help themselves, to forgive, and
to live in unity as brothers and
sisters caring for each other as
family.

(MORE)

A young woman descends the bank and wades out toward the bearded, gruff-looking man awaiting her with open arms. Her eyes avoid his look of pity, giving evidence of the guilt and shame that have her for the moment caught in the grip of conviction. He takes a small step toward her. She takes a last step toward him. And, as she looks into his eyes as a small child might look at a loving father with trust and hope, John leans her back and shoves her gently but fully beneath the muddy water of that blessed river.

He holds her submerged for a beat.

The crowd gasps. The two men stare, disarmed and angered by what they see as a heathen practice. After all, are not the ornately-carved marble lavers in the city by the synagogue for the cleansing of souls at the hands of the authorized priesthood alone.

John smiles.

With a splash and joyful shout the young woman is raised from the muddy water to newness of life. She throws her arms around John's neck, gives him a cheerful hug, then separates herself to splash shoreward.

Once at the bank, she takes her mother's hands in hers, urging the older woman to follow her out in the water to be baptized. Her mother shrinks back, pulling away from the tugs of her daughter's imploring hands, nervously surveying the looks of those nearby, embarrassed, unwilling to be seen by the others in such an humble circumstance as public water baptism.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

There is no shame in sorrow for past sins regretted. Such sorrow comes only by the blessed grace of Yah and leads to true repentance.

Hearing this, the woman darts additional suspicious glances at those standing near her, as if they could see her past sins through the eyes of the baptizer. Shielding her face from their onlooking stares, she works her way nervously through the crowd, away from the river's edge, disappearing in their milling midst as her daughter follows after.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

Without genuine sorrow for sin, deeply felt and acted upon, there can be no repentance in the eyes of Yah.

John glances again at the spies.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

Those who think repentance is a mere act of the will deceive themselves.

The spies glower with indignant pride.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

The priests and rabbis who teach you repentance is a decision to turn from sin, without first hating the sin and experiencing deep sorrow for those wounded by it, are unworthy of leadership.

One of the spies loudly clears his throat.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

Though the priests and rabbis follow the law and teach you every jot and tittle, they cannot teach the truth they do not know, the weightier truth at the very heart of Yah, the law of love found only in mercy and grace.

Enraged by this affront to the priesthood's authority, one of the spies takes a step toward the slope of the bank, intent on challenging the upstart head-on, but his comrade holds him back. They hold their position, observers only, ready to report to those who pay for the information they bring.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

What the priests and rabbis teach you is true, but what they teach is not all truth.

(MORE)

John looks again intently at the now nervous spies.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

Moses gave you the law, and the rabbis
and priests teach you that law. The
law is good, it is your friend.

(beat)

But, law alone leads only to death.

(beat)

The law must be tempered by grace,
sprinkled with mercy, exercised with
charity that has no expectation for
itself, and understood with wisdom
that knows that none of us is more
than Yah allows us to be.

The mother, who earlier hid herself in the crowd, now emerges from the observant muddle of disparate souls lining the bank and, with her daughter by her side, makes her way into the river to be baptized. Her countenance is radiant. Godly sorrow has already begun cleansing her soul. John sees this in her eyes and smiles, approving, grateful for Yah's eternal mercy.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

All wisdom is from above, and every
good gift comes from on high, by the
merciful grace that calls us to unity.

He gently dips the now compliant woman backward, lowers her body beneath the water till only her upraised praising hand remains seen. Then, this too disappears before John raises her wet and dripping, anointed with joy and rejoicing. The young woman silently shows her gratitude with a smile, and the two gingerly inch their way to the bank where they turn, drenched with renewed hope, to hear more of the baptizer's words.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

True faith is more than believing.
It is doing as Yah commands, confident
that good does come to those who do
good.

(beat)

Hope is rooted in the confidence of
faith, trusting Yah for the promise
of a better tomorrow.

(beat)

And true love is charity that denies
itself, gives with no expectation,
and rejoices in the bounty of others.

(MORE)

At this, a young man wanders out from the shore, glancing at his friends behind him who watch from the bank, seeking their notice, hoping to be praised for his display of humility.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

Seek to receive the mind of Yah that alone can transform your soul. Pray for the grace that allows you to see in your heart what Yah sees. Reprove the blindness of your hearts and turn from your wicked ways.

As the young man approaches John waist-deep in the river, he slips and falls, disappearing for a moment below the muddy flow. When he regains his footing, he looks up to see that his friends are now laughing at his predicament. He hangs his head, mortified, returns to the shore, and like the old woman disappears through the crowd, presumably hoping to be seen no more.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

Without sincere heartfelt sorrow for one's sin, nothing can wash away the guilt nor kindle in a shameless heart the life that never dies. Pride is the poison of life, and by its power the mighty fall.

He directs his gaze once more at the well-dressed men in the crowd above him, looking down on him with glaring contempt.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

The sorrow that saves is a gift of grace, given to all who ask for Yah's cleansing mercy. That sorrow leads to repentance, and true repentance alone leads to life eternal.

A small boy of 8 or 9, his mother protectively close behind and trying to catch up but having more difficulty with the slippery rocks beneath the surface, enters the water, wading toward John, who takes a few steps nearer where the water is not so deep.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

The joy of redemption is denied only to those too proud to be humbled.

He baptizes the child in the shallower water then lifts the boy into his mother's arms before wading backward until the water again covers his waist.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

Humility precedes redemption, for true godly sorrow is impossible for the proud.

(MORE)

He looks again at the well-dressed men in the crowd. They look down on him with glaring contempt, the embodiment of contemptuous pride.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

The priests and rabbis believe they are better than you. Rather than caring for your souls, they live off the fruit of your labors. They put themselves above you and condemn everyone who falls short of their commandments. They require you to bring them sacrifices and gifts.

He points to the two. Their only reaction is to lift their proud noses even higher.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

Yah is Love.
(beat)
They do not know love.
(beat - sadly)
They do not know Yah.

One of the two now notices Yeshua. He tugs at the clothing of the other, who now also notices Yeshua. They quickly withdraw behind the crowd, away from the river and Yeshua's gaze, where they hold their position, looking on as the spies they are, ready to report to their superiors.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

The sacrifice of bulls and lambs can never wash you clean of your sin. Only a heart of mercy can save you.

John looks up at the spies with mercy and sorrow in his eyes.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

(louder)
Only faith in the certain blessing of charitable love by Yah's grace can save you from eternal death!

The countenance of one of the two men softens, the other jerks his arm, remonstrating. The first man steels his gaze once more.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

Come through the water and be cleansed of your past.
(MORE)

The two disappear beyond the crowd, into the trees. A young woman wades out to the baptizer.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

Do you wish to be clean of your sins,
to start life anew, to turn from the
past and renew your walk with Yah?

PENITENT

I do.
(weeping joyfully)
I truly do.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Then I baptize you in the name of
Yah the Eternal One!

He leans the woman backward, supporting her shoulders with his left hand and forcing her completely under the muddy water with his right. He holds her there a full five seconds before bringing her sputtering and coughing to the surface.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

(quietly to the woman)
Go. And sin no more.

She waves her arms in the air joyfully, spinning as she dances happily up from the water to the shore, grabbing the hands of her friends excitedly as she reaches the crowd, urging them to do as she has done.

John watches her rejoin her family, then turns to the crowd on shore.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

Know this! You must repent! You
must turn from your past and begin
life anew! The old has passed away.
Now is the time for new beginnings.

(beat)

But, only godly sorrow given by Yah's
grace can lead you to the repentance
that saves your soul.

(beat)

Seek earnestly in constant prayer to
find the merciful heart of Yah, while
the light of life is still within
you, today while Yah may yet be found.

At this he sees Yeshua, whom he recognizes at once, then in a more enlivened voice he speaks again.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

I baptize you merely with the water
of this muddy river where even your
ancestors were baptized, the water
into which Naaman set his foot seven

(MORE)

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)
times at the prophet Elisha's command
and was instantly cleansed of his
leprosy, the water across which Joshua
led the children of Moses dry shod
when Yah blew the river aside with a
mighty blast of wind.

The formerly murmuring crowd, now completely silent, listen intently to every word as more souls wade into the water to receive what awaits them.

John takes the next in line, an old man barely able to wade out to him with the help of two others. He dips the old man beneath the muddy water.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)
(louder)
This is only water!

He raises the old man dripping and sputtering.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)
You must be cleansed within!

He looks with gentle kindness deep into the old man's eyes and speaks softly so the others do not hear.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)
Go, my friend.

The old man smiles uncertainly.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)
Sin no more.

The old man's eyes are suddenly filled with wonder and new understanding. John assists the old man to regain his footing, smiling kindly to those who helped the man enter the water a moment before. Those two take the arms of the man, who gives John a brighter smile then turns toward the crowd. He pushes aside the others' help and, waving his arms over his head in jubilant praise, strides out of the water with the vitality of a younger man, climbs the steep bank, and disappears into the crowd still waving his hands above his head.

John raises a hand, halting the next person seeking baptism.

He addresses the crowd with greater emphasis.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)
Here me, people!
(MORE)

We see from a vantage behind Yeshua and the boy, that John is looking reverently, lovingly up at Yeshua.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

There comes one after me, far greater than I.

Again, from a vantage behind Yeshua we see Yeshua motion with an outstretched hand for John not to recognize him.

John acknowledges then surveys the crowd, looking intently at each one in turn.

The people are a kaleidoscope of souls. The expressions on each face are intense. Some are filled with joy, others with guilt. Some fear. Some sorrow. There are as many of these variant faces as our director can imagine to paint on this canvas of the human condition.

Old. Young. Male. Female. Hopeful. Doubting.

John surveys this sea of faces, continuing with deliberate pace.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

When Messiah comes at last, you will be baptized in truth and receive the very Spirit of Yah who will come upon you all, enter you, and take up residence within your hearts.

Some in the crowd audibly express wonder, turning to each other for understanding.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

His truth will put new life within you.

(beat - exuberantly)

The life of Yah that never ends!

As more and more crowd into the water, anxious to be baptized, John pushes them aside, making his way toward the bank.

Looking up, however, he sees that Yeshua and the boy have disappeared.

He stops. Searches the crowd. Then takes another by the shoulders and walks back into deeper water.

JOHN THE BAPTIST (CONT'D)

You must repent and be cleansed of your sins.

He absently pushes another beneath the water, still surveying the crowd on the bank, searching for a glimpse of the master.

The two walk on along the path, further downstream, away from the bustling crowd.

EXT. PATH - AFTERNOON

BENJAMIN

Who was that man, Yeshua?

YESHUA

He is the only son of the prophet Zacharias and my mother's sister Elizabeth. He is my cousin.

(thoughtfully)

His name is John. The people call him The Baptizer.

BENJAMIN

Why does he dip those people in the muddy Jordan river? Getting them wet in *that* water cannot possibly make them clean.

YESHUA

(laughing)

Not on the outside, but somewhat on the inside.

Benjamin looks up at Yeshua with a boy's incredulity.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

It is like the women and their dirty laundry. Clothes go in dry and dusty. The fibers are thoroughly soiled with grease and sweat. The women push the filthy cloth beneath the water, remove them, then beat the fabric on rocks. When the clothes come out, they may not be brightly white on the outside, but the fibers within are clean.

He waits for Benjamin to understand.

BENJAMIN

But, the fibers will be soiled again with use and must be cleaned again and again.

Yeshua pauses where a baby bird has fallen to the ground. He caresses its wings and sets it to flight once more.

YESHUA

As a soul grows older, the fiber of his being becomes soiled by lying

(MORE)

YESHUA (CONT'D)

spirits. Spirits of pride, lust, greed, murder, and even religious hypocrisy. In time these spirits of darkness displace the light of Yah's truth, entrenching themselves in the fibers of the soul, just as grime and sweat stain the fibers of our clothes. The lies invade the souls of those who wish to believe them, just as dust from the road finds its way between our toes, no matter how carefully we walk.

BENJAMIN

So baptism cleanses the soul.

YESHUA

Yes.

(beat)

And no.

Benjamin is once again perplexed. Yeshua takes him by the hand and hoists him once again onto his shoulders.

They walk on. Benjamin tries to reach the branches overhead, now closer.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

What's needed is a way to *keep* the soul clean, so those lying spirits cannot take hold again with their filth, soiling the people with false promises, polluting their lives with thoughts that kill joy and separate them one from another by pride and the cruel deceit that makes some believe they are better than others because of nothing more than the accident of their birth or the circumstance of their education.

BENJAMIN

Cannot those who are baptized by water resolve thereafter to serve only truth and have mercy as that man John was preaching?

YESHUA

(laughing)

Most of those people only get wet!

(beat)

Some will try to be good, of course.

(MORE)

YESHUA (CONT'D)

For a brief time they will succeed.
Some longer than others. Water
baptism gives them a fresh new start,
another chance for a better life, a
second opportunity to leave their
sins and tradition-bound religious
ideas behind.

(beat)

But, too soon they begin again to
believe the lying spirits, and many
times the new lies are more evil
than the first.

(beat)

Water baptism is a special moment
when they are humbled, and in that
instant of humility they may reflect
on their past, behold their pride
more clearly, and see their need for
a new mind ... Yah's mind.

Yeshua, with Benjamin still riding on his shoulders, picks a
fig or similar fruit from a nearby tree and hands it up to
the boy who eagerly eats.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Many believe because they've been
baptized they are better than those
who've not yet been baptized, as if
they were made perfect by nothing
more than getting wet. The lying
spirits tell them that because they
were once made clean by something
beyond themselves that they can now
keep themselves clean by their own
effort. This new lie they believe
is the filthiest of all, the spirit
of pride, the seat of all sin.

A well-dressed man followed by several servants approaches.
Yeshua, with Benjamin still on his shoulders, steps to the
side of the path. The man insists on staying to the center
of the path, haughtily dismissing the two travelers as mere
nuisances.

His servants slow their pace to look on Yeshua with varied
expressions of wonder as they pass. The self-important man
beckons for his servants to keep up.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

We are what we are by the Grace of
Yah alone, and without that Grace we
are nothing.

(MORE)

The self-important man, irritated that his servants still steal glances at Yeshua behind them, now gazes at Yeshua with a haughtiness that soon softens to an almost penitent gaze, as if he wished he too could tarry a bit. In a moment, however, he roughly grabs one of his servants and pushes him forward. The tiny procession moves on. None look back.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

An evil mind infested with spirits of falsehood can never know the will of Yah nor receive Yah's blessing of eternal life.

BENJAMIN

Then, what hope have any of us, if baptism by water only cleanses us of sin until we sin again?

YESHUA

(sadly)

Soon, my young friend.

(beat)

You will understand completely.

They reach the crest of a low hill.

Below them the Sea of Galilee spreads out to the rolling hills on all sides. A few fishing boats approach the shore together. One boat has reached the beach already, dropped its sail, and sits safely on the sand, its busy crew unloading the day's catch and spreading the nets to dry.

A few others are still far out on the lake, apparently fishing a good spot together.

Another, much farther than the rest, sails alone.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

I see Andrew has given up for the day, but Simon is still busy hunting alone, as usual. We have plenty of time to sail out and catch him for the race to shore!

Benjamin shades his eyes from the sun and peers out on the lake.

BENJAMIN

Andrew's is the first boat in?

YESHUA

(laughing)

Late going out. Early coming in. And, predictably, never the heaviest catch.

A few small dwellings are seen among the trees near shore. A wisp of smoke rises from one of the houses, where a small woman sweeps outside with her broom, singing a wordless tune AD LIB. She notices Yeshua and Benjamin passing by on the path.

She waves. Yeshua waves back. Benjamin follows suit, then looks to Yeshua, tugging his hand.

BENJAMIN

That's Simon's wife, isn't it?

YESHUA

Yes. A good woman.

BENJAMIN

It's a hard life, the life of a fisherman's family.

YESHUA

It's a *good* life when there's love in the family, and there's a lot of love in *that* family.

Yeshua leans against a large rock overlooking the lake and the beach. He pats the rock and smiles.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Simon is a solid rock.

Benjamin pauses on the path, looking anxiously to where his boat is waiting on the beach, then to Yeshua, to his boat, back to Yeshua, the boat, etc. Yeshua waves his hand for the boy to run on ahead.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(laughing)

Go! See if the paint is dry. I'll rest here a moment then join you on the beach.

Benjamin grins excitedly, turns, and runs as fast as he can along the dusty path toward the beach and his prize.

Yeshua wipes his brow, watches carefully after the boy for a beat, then turns to look back up the long hill behind him.

EXT. BEACH BY THE SEA OF GALILEE - EVENING

Benjamin is at his boat, organizing things, looking back anxiously to see if Yeshua is coming.

An older man approaches.

ANDREW

What have we here?

Benjamin looks up, startled?

BENJAMIN

Andrew?

The older man inspects the boat, paying particular attention to the shape of the bow.

ANDREW

You're a very fortunate young man!
Yeshua is a master carpenter. He is
the one who built Simon's boat, you
know.

BENJAMIN

(proudly)

Oh, yes sir! And, Simon's is the
fastest on the lake!

ANDREW

(good-naturedly)

Yes, but not the largest.

He points toward his own square-nosed boat pulled up on the beach and motions for two of his crew to come closer. They draw near and admire the little boat while awaiting orders.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Is she ready to sail?

BENJAMIN

That she is!

Yeshua approaches.

YESHUA

Then, let's shove her in!

The four men, with Benjamin's help, lift the little boat off its blocks and carry it a few yards to the water's edge, setting it down gently with its stern in the lake and its round fish-nose bow sticking proudly up on the beach.

ANDREW

I see you've rounded the bow, as you
did with Simon's boat, Yeshua.

YESHUA

Yes, Andrew, and I will do the same
for yours if you but ask.

ANDREW

My father's boat, you mean. It is as he left it to me, and thus it shall remain until it sinks to the bottom or the resurrection rescues me from the monotony of pulling fish from the lake to feed my family.

Yeshua indicates Benjamin, standing respectfully nearby, anxiously awaiting the blessed moment when his boat and the master carpenter set sail.

YESHUA

Have you met my young friend, Benjamin?

ANDREW

Aye, that I have. And, he's a fine strap of a fellow. Is his mind set on following my trade.

YESHUA

(laughing)

Well, I hope he catches more fish!

At this Andrew laughs, until his two crew members join in, whereupon he turns to them with an oppressive glance that silences both at once. He dismisses them with a wave of the hand.

ANDREW

Be off, you two! Tend to the old boat over there. Tomorrow will be here before we know it.

As the two sidle out of earshot, he steps closer to Yeshua and speaks softly in his ear.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Does the boy know?

YESHUA

He will soon, my friend. As will you all.

Andrew draws back, as if offended by the brevity of this response.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Here. Give us a hand with the rigging.

At this, Andrew, Yeshua, and the boy prepare the little boat for its first voyage. There is no need for speech. Each knows what to do. The mast is stepped. The stays secured.

The sails lashed securely. The rudder shipped.

Yeshua winks at Andrew and motions the boy to climb over the gunwale to take his place at the helm. Andrew smiles an older man's knowing smile, helping the boy into the boat with one hand while steadying it with the other.

As soon as Benjamin is seated, Andrew and Yeshua push the bow of the boat off the beach. Then, with a final shove, Yeshua swings himself deftly over the side where he takes charge of the sheetline and halyard, while Andrew wades backward onto the shore with a friendly wave.

BENJAMIN

Perhaps we will see you tomorrow on
the lake, sir.

Andrew smiles and waves once more before turning away to attend to his own craft a few yards away on the beach.

A steady wind blows along the shore from west to east, favorable for sailing out (south) and sailing in (north).

As Yeshua hoists the sail and hauls in on the sheetline, the little boat heels a bit and picks up speed.

YESHUA

Steady on the tiller, there.

BENJAMIN

Aye, sir!

YESHUA

Take us out in the deep. Steer for
Simon's boat there in the distance.

Benjamin does as ordered, while Yeshua minds the lines and begins to relax.

In a moment they pass through the pack of boats that were earlier fishing together. "Grace" is sailing out. They are sailing in. Salutes and friendly hails on all sides AD LIB.

BENJAMIN

How am I doing?

YESHUA

You're doing fine. I'll trim the
sails, so you can keep a steady hand
on the tiller and a keen eye on that
tiny sail in the distance.

(MORE)

The pack is left behind. The distant solitary sail of Simon's boat gradually grows larger as "Grace" presses on.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Do you feel how easily she slides
through the water?

Though making way nicely, the little boat creates no wave at her bow and leaves no wake behind. She is one with the water around her, propelled by the wind overhead, and held to a pencil-straight course by the sensitive touch of the young boy's hand on the helm.

BENJAMIN

Look, Yeshua! Simon has pulled his
nets. He's coming in!

YESHUA

Good. Then we'll run alongside,
come about, and steal his wind coming
back.

By now the only boats on the lake are Simon's and the little ship "Grace". The pack that passed by earlier are dropping their sails at the beach, their crews climbing out into knee deep water, dragging the boats onto the sand and starting to unload their catch and straighten out the tangled nets.

BENJAMIN

Look, Yeshua! He's heading right
for us!

YESHUA

Hold your course.
(beat)
Steady.
(beat)
Wait till he is almost upon us.

The two boats draw ever nearer as the lowering sun paints a pathway of glistening gold on the waves to the west.

The wind pipes up with occasional stronger puffs that cause the little boat to heel a bit now and then. Benjamin's boat leans into each puff with enthusiasm, speeding forward.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Hold fast. The wind will die soon.
This may be the last of it.

Both boats are on a beam reach. (The wind blow at 90-degrees across both their courses.) Simon sails north toward the shore. Benjamin sails south toward Simon.

For the moment a collision seems imminent.

They are now about one-half mile from the shore and less than 100 yards apart, closing quickly.

A tall man steps forward to the mast of Simon's boat and cups his hands.

SIMON

Sail ho!

The boats are now close enough that Simon's voice is clearly heard. The fisherman turns to his helmsman and, with a loud voice intended to be heard by Yeshua and the boy, calls out.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Steady there! Hold your course!

In another moment the boats will surely collide.

Yeshua turns back to Benjamin with a voice only intended to be heard by the boy.

YESHUA

Stand by to come about.

(beat)

On my signal.

Yeshua starts hauling the sheetline smartly in and cries out to Benjamin.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Now! Hard over! Bring her about close alongside, upwind, and ahead of them!

Benjamin does as commanded, and in a moment the two boats are side-by-side, Simon's boat just a bit behind the proud fishing vessel "Grace", unable to escape the wind shadow created by the little boat's much smaller sail.

SIMON

Grace is it?

YESHUA

And, how are you this lovely evening, my friend? And, how is your crew?

Simon's crew are barely able to hold back their amusement. Simon glowers at them for a moment then bursts into laughter, joined by his crew.

SIMON

You're a clever one, Master Yeshua, you are! And, you've quite a good helmsman with you, I see.

(MORE)

Benjamin, contentedly proud to be keeping ahead of the fastest boat on the lake, relaxes his attention just long enough to absorb this compliment.

Simon notices, pleased with the intended effect.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Why, that looks like young Benjamin.

Yeshua motions for Benjamin to pay closer attention to his helmsmanship.

YESHUA

Hold her steady, Benjamin!

Too late. Already, that moment of inattention let Simon's larger, taller boat catch a breath of the wind blowing past the bow of "Grace". With a friendly grin Simon waves as his boat inches surely ahead and soon separates itself completely from the temporary trap.

SIMON

See you on shore!

Yeshua waves. Benjamin, somewhat disappointed, also waves.

Simon sails on as the wind strength drops to a gentle breeze.

Yeshua eases out on the sheetline, secures it to a cleat, and trades places with the boy.

YESHUA

Here. Let me try for awhile.

Benjamin moves to a thwart just ahead of the helm and stares at Simon's receding sail. The wind dies further, till no more than a zephyr's breath touches the sagging sail.

Simon's men drop their sail, rig out two oar sweeps on each side, and begin pulling for the beach.

BENJAMIN

We brought no oars!

YESHUA

Don't worry. A light wind will rise from the east once the sun disappears.

Benjamin surveys the beauty being painted for them in the western sky.

BENJAMIN

Simon's boat is faster.

YESHUA

And longer. And taller. The longer boat is generally faster.

BENJAMIN
(laughing)
Except for Andrew's.

YESHUA
Except for Andrew's.
(beat)
And the taller boat can reach more
air.

Yeshua reaches forward and pats the boy assuringly on his
shoulder.

YESHUA (CONT'D)
Your's is fastest for its size.
(beat)
Someday you'll sail in larger boats
and tell the world what you've begun
to learn this day.

EXT. BENJAMIN'S BOAT OUT ON THE LAKE - EVENING

Yeshua and Benjamin sit silently together, alone on the lake
in that little speck of a boat.

The sun paints an intricate tapestry of crimson, violet, and
gold across the western sky.

The breeze has died completely. The boat rocks gently.

From their position on the lake, the synagogue on the distant
hill is clearly visible above the trees. Though the sun has
set at lake level, it still shines brightly at the height of
that solitary structure marking the pride of Chorazin. The
synagogue reflects the sun, as if mocking it with a majesty
of its own.

A large fish jumps, splashing the water a few feet from the
little boat.

BENJAMIN
Will I truly be a great fisherman
like Simon?

From shore comes the crow of a rooster.

Yeshua does not answer.

In the distance, halfway up the hill a shepherd gathers his
sheep and settles himself beneath a tree to rest.

An obviously weary traveler pulls his rickety wooden-wheeled
wagon along the path not far from Simon's house.

The fading noises of Simon and the others unloading their buckets of fish, stretching their nets, and securing their boats for another day tomorrow filters softly across the nearly silent sea then fades to silence.

A window here and there is brightened, one-by-one, with the soft yellow glow of a candle or oil lamp set within to guide the weary fishermen home.

Business as usual.

YESHUA

Ask for the wisdom of Yah.

They look absently across the lake, as fishermen often do when day is done and the mystery of dusk falls on the water at the end of day. The wind has died completely, and the sails hang limp. The first stars of evening faintly glimmer in a lavender sky. The fading glow of the setting sun still lights the western sky. It's a time when sailors reflect on past deeds and contemplate their future. A time when wisdom shines her light into our souls. A time when we may see ourselves for what we truly are and wonder at the mysteries of life.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Pray for the Passover Blood to protect you from the lying spirits, Benjamin.

A jagged stroke of summer lightning illumines a distant cloud.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Seek Yah's perfect will at all times.

A few seconds later a low, rolling rumble of thunder from the distant summer lightning finally reaches the boat.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Be always guided by the gentle voice that speaks of peace and mercy, the still small voice of Yah, who seeks what's best for you.

A sudden puff of wind momentarily ruffles the sail.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Give thanks for everything.

A fish jumps nearby, then another, then one more.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

(laughing)

Soon you will think with the mind of a fish.

(MORE)

He puts his arm around the boy's shoulder as the little boat begins to gather speed. We see from their point of view, the shoreline, the darkening sky, the peak of the synagogue still glowing in the fast fading light of the setting sun.

YESHUA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And, you will have my mind also.

From above them (if our budget allows, or we can find stock footage) we watch as the little boat courses its way to the shore. Music rises, as if this were the end of the film.

But then we fade to the beach once again, where Simon stands knee deep in the water, hands on his hips, a broad smile on his face, ready to help pull Benjamin's boat securely onto the sand.

As the boat strikes, Yeshua jumps over the side and, having gained his footing, helps Benjamin down as well.

The three pull the boat safely onto the beach, laughing.

SIMON

So, you think your little boat is faster than mine, do you?

Simon winks at Yeshua.

BENJAMIN

Were she as long as your boat and her sail a bit taller to catch more wind, I believe she might pass you by on occasion.

SIMON

By some amazing grace, perhaps.

They all laugh as they un-step the mast, furl the sail onto its yard, and secure the boat for the night. Crickets chirp. Frogs burp.

YESHUA

Benjamin will need a crew to sail with him tomorrow, Simon.

SIMON

I have just the fellow in mind.

Benjamin gives Yeshua a curious glance, as Simon's wife enters the scene, bringing a small loaf for each of the three sailors. She distributes the loaves and lays an affectionate, motherly hand on Benjamin's shoulder.

BENJAMIN

But ... I thought you ...

Yeshua silences the boy by raising both hands as a sign of the Priestly Blessing. The position of the fingers and thumbs, along with further information, may be found by searching Wikipedia for "Birkat Kohanim". Yeshua extends his hands toward Benjamin, palms slightly upward so the sign may be clearly seen.

Simon places a strong hand on the boy's other shoulder.

YESHUA

(paced)

May Yah bless you, guard you, shine
his loving face upon you, be gracious
to you, and give you peace.

Tears now stream down Benjamin's face. He is comforted by Simon and Simon's wife.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

Yah is watching through the windows
of your heart. Invite him in.

BENJAMIN

But ...

Yeshua is already withdrawing on the path toward Chorazin.

YESHUA

The time has come, Benjamin.

(beat)

Remember all you learned this day.

Simon waves. Benjamin sobs. Simon's wife pulls the boy closer as Yeshua walks further. He turns and looks back with a wave. We see the three from a point behind him.

YESHUA (CONT'D)

I will never be far from you.

If budget allows, draw up and over the trees until the four figures diminish below and the very last of the sun's glow fades on the distant horizon.

YESHUA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Listen for my voice ... within you.

FADE OUT: