

WEIGHING — A — MIRACLE

A Silent Spaces Story



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THREE NOTCH PUBLISHING

This is a work of fiction. Any similarities to real people, places, or events are entirely coincidental.

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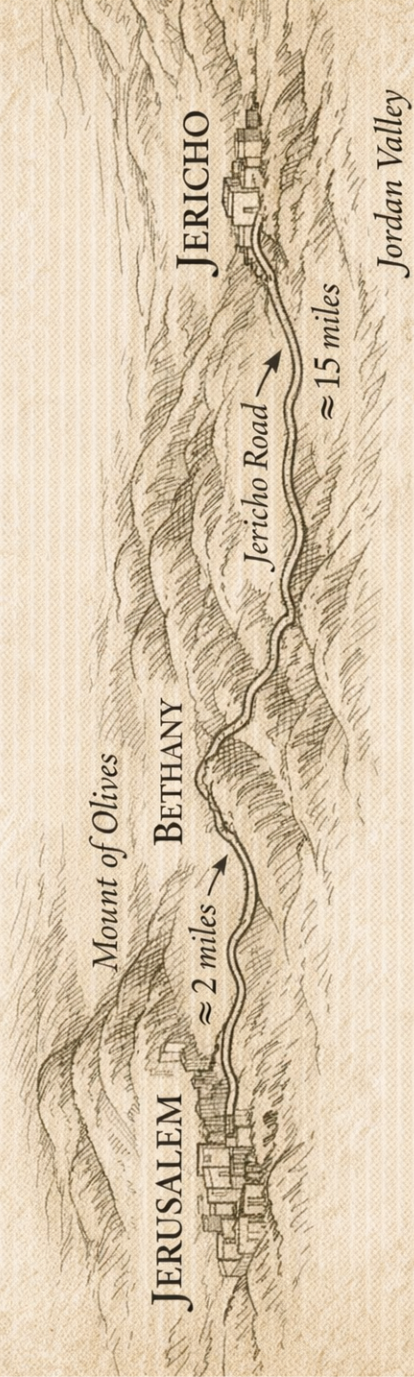
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Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

John 11:25-26 (Jesus to Martha)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This novel is a work of biblical fiction rooted in John 11:1–44. The core events—the raising of Lazarus after four days—are presented exactly as Scripture records them. No alteration has been made to the biblical narrative. All additional characters, dialogue, and inner reflections are imaginative explorations intended to enrich, not revise, the sacred text.



Mount of Olives

JERUSALEM

BETHANY

≈ 2 miles

JERICO

Jericho Road

≈ 15 miles

Jordan Valley

THE MERCHANT'S WORLD

The warehouse doors resisted, swollen from last night's dew. Caleb set his shoulder against the wood and shoved. The hinges groaned—a sound he'd heard every morning for fifteen years, pitched low and metallic. Eli grabbed the opposite door and pulled. Together they opened the building to the road.

The dust rolled in. The Jericho road never slept, never paused. Even this early, a caravan of grain merchants was already passing, their donkeys plodding in that dead-eyed way animals had when they'd walked the same route too many times. The lead driver called something in Aramaic. Caleb didn't catch it over the noise.

"Father." Eli coughed, waving a hand through the haze. "We should have arrived earlier. The best light's already burning off."

Caleb said nothing. He stepped into the warehouse's cool interior and let his eyes adjust. The rows of amphorae emerged from shadow—clay vessels stacked two-deep along the eastern wall, each one sealed with cork and wax. The air inside tasted of earth and oil, thick enough to coat the back of his throat.

Eli followed him in, already moving toward the corner where they kept the accounting materials. The boy—though at twenty-three, he wasn't a boy anymore—had his mother's quick hands. He opened a

wooden hinged tablet across the low table, smoothing the wax surface with the flat end of his stylus.

“Lazarus is due this morning with the new pressing,” Eli said. He didn’t look up from the tablet. “He sent word yesterday. Three amphorae, maybe four, depending on yield.”

Caleb grunted. He crossed to the nearest row of vessels and ran his palm across the wax seal of the foremost jar. Still solid. No cracks. The weight of it when he tested it told him the oil inside hadn’t separated or gone rancid. Good. He’d paid Lazarus fair silver for last month’s pressing, and the man’s product never disappointed.

Outside, a Roman courier clattered past on horseback. The sound of iron-shod hooves on stone cut through the morning like a blade. Caleb glanced toward the open doors. Sunlight spilled across the threshold now, bright and clean, painting a hard line between the dim warehouse and the world beyond.

“We’ll need to move the older stock forward,” Caleb said. His thumb absently traced the permanent oil stains on his knuckles. “Rotate the back rows. I won’t have oil sitting long enough to lose quality.”

“Already noted.” Eli tapped the tablet with one finger. “I marked which jars came in during Elul. Those go to the front.”

Caleb nodded. The boy learned well. Miriam would have—

He stopped the thought before it finished. Pushed it down. Turned instead to the row of grain sacks stacked against the western wall. They’d taken delivery two weeks ago from a supplier in Jericho, and the quality had been inconsistent. He needed to inspect them again before the next buyer arrived.

A voice shouted from the road. Not directed at them—just a drover cursing his animal. The donkey brayed in response, high and grating. Caleb stepped back toward the open doors and watched the traffic for

a moment. Pilgrims mostly. A few merchants. A beggar limping along the roadside with a wooden crutch.

The dust never settled here. It hung in the air like fine gauze, turning the morning light hazy and gold. Caleb breathed it in—grit and animal sweat and the faint iron tang of the road itself. This was the smell of commerce. Of movement. Of the world that ground forward whether or not a man was ready.

“Father, should I prepare the scales?”

Caleb turned back. Eli stood by the table, waiting. The boy’s face carried that patient, slightly expectant expression he always wore when he wanted instruction.

“Yes,” Caleb said. “And check the weights. All of them. If Lazarus brings four amphorae, I want no delays.”

Eli moved to the wooden chest where they stored the bronze weights. Caleb watched him work for a moment—efficient, methodical, his movements clean and sure.

Then Caleb stepped into the warehouse and let the rhythm of preparation take over. There were seals to inspect, invoices to review, a day’s worth of trade to anticipate.

The noise from the road continued. Endless. Indifferent.

He gripped his bronze stylus and got to work.

The sound reached him first—wooden wheels grinding over stone, the plodding rhythm of oxen, and Lazarus’s voice carrying across the distance in greeting. Caleb stepped out of the warehouse into the glare. His eyes watered some before adjusting.

Lazarus sat beside the driver on a flat cart loaded with clay amphorae. Four of them, just as Eli had predicted. Each vessel was wrapped carefully in sacking and secured with rope. The old man’s face split into that familiar, generous smile as he raised one hand.

“Peace, Caleb.”

“And to you.” Caleb moved toward the cart, already scanning the load. The amphorae were substantial—probably twenty liters each, judging by their size. The cart creaked as the oxen halted, and dust settled in a slow cloud around the wheels.

Lazarus climbed down with surprising ease for a man his age, though the slight hitch in his right leg was visible. He landed and steadied himself with his walking staff before turning his full attention to Caleb.

“First pressing from the new harvest,” Lazarus said. He gestured toward the amphorae with obvious pride. “The yield this season exceeded my expectations. The rains came exactly when we needed them.”

Caleb approached the cart and examined the nearest vessel. The seal was perfect—fresh wax pressed with Lazarus’s signet, showing the interlocked vine pattern that marked his estate. He tested the cork beneath with his thumb. Solid. No give.

“Eli,” Caleb called over his shoulder. “Bring the scales. And the weights—all of them.”

The boy appeared carrying the bronze balance in both hands. The chain links clinked softly as he walked. Behind him came Judah, Caleb’s middle son, hauling the wooden case of calibrated weights.

Lazarus watched the preparations with that patient, unhurried expression he always wore. He leaned against his staff and turned slightly to address the driver. “Unload them carefully. One at a time.”

The first amphora came down with the driver straining under its weight. Caleb and Eli guided it to the ground just inside the warehouse entrance, where the packed earth was level. Caleb circled the vessel with purpose, inspecting the seal from every angle. The clay showed no cracks, no stress fractures from transport.

“Eli.” Caleb straightened and gestured toward the amphora. “What do you check first?”

The boy didn't hesitate. "The seal, Father. To verify it hasn't been tampered with or broken during transport."

"Good. And?"

"The vessel itself. For damage that might compromise the oil inside."

Caleb nodded. He reached down and tested the rope securing the sacking. Still tight. He unwrapped the protective covering and let it fall aside, then ran his hands along the amphora's surface. The clay was cool under his palms, slightly rough, with the faint texture of the potter's marks still visible near the base.

"Now we weigh it," Caleb said. He looked at Judah. "Set up the scales."

The bronze balance came together quickly—the beam suspended from its central support, the two pans hanging level on either side. Judah positioned it carefully, checking that the ground beneath was flat. When he released the beam, it swayed for a moment before settling into perfect horizontal alignment.

Caleb lifted one end of the amphora while Eli grabbed the other. Together they maneuvered it onto the scale's larger pan. The beam dipped sharply. Metal groaned under the sudden weight.

"The twenty-talent stone," Caleb said.

Judah retrieved it from the case—a smooth, palm-sized weight stamped with official marks from the Temple treasury. He placed it on the opposite pan. The beam shifted but didn't balance.

"Another ten," Caleb instructed.

Judah added a second weight. The beam rose slightly on the amphora's side. Close now. He added a five-talent stone. The beam hovered, trembling, then settled into equilibrium.

Caleb watched it for several breaths. The beam remained steady, neither pan dipping. He glanced at Eli. "What does this tell you?"

“The weight matches what Lazarus declared.” Eli leaned closer, studying the balanced scales. “Twenty-five talents. About nineteen liters of oil, accounting for the vessel itself.”

“Which means?”

“The measure is honest.”

Caleb straightened. He looked at his son, holding the boy’s gaze. “A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, Eli, but a just weight is His delight. YHWH is a God of order, not chaos.”

The words sat in the air between them. Eli’s expression didn’t change, but something shifted behind his eyes—recognition, perhaps. Understanding.

Lazarus had moved closer during the weighing. He stood now with both hands resting on his staff, watching the exchange with quiet approval. His smile had softened into something more serious, more contemplative.

“Your father speaks truth,” Lazarus said. His voice carried that deep, resonant quality that made every word feel weighted. “In all my years, I have never once altered a measure or broken a seal. Not for profit. Not for convenience.” He paused, then added, “Because a man’s word before God is worth more than any silver.”

Caleb met the old man’s eyes and gave a single, deliberate nod.

They worked through the remaining three amphorae with the same methodical precision—unwrap, inspect, weigh, record. Each vessel balanced against the declared weight. Each seal remained intact. By the time they finished, the morning had burned away most of its coolness, and sweat traced lines through the dust on Caleb’s face.

The payment came next. Caleb retrieved the leather purse from inside the warehouse—heavy with silver denarii, each coin counted twice before he’d sealed it this morning. He loosened the drawstring

and poured the contents into his palm. The metal caught the light, glinting.

Lazarus watched without counting. He never did. The old man extended his hand when Caleb offered the coins, accepted them with a brief nod, and tucked the purse into his belt.

“Your trust honors me,” Caleb said.

“Your honesty earns it.” Lazarus shifted his weight onto his good leg. “Same arrangement next month?”

“If the yield continues.”

“It will.” Lazarus glanced toward his cart, then back. “The groves are thriving. Martha insists the Lord is blessing our labor, and I’ve learned not to argue with my sister when she speaks of such things.”

Caleb rubbed the scar on his forearm. He said nothing.

A shout erupted from the road—sharp, frustrated. Both men turned. Traffic had increased in the last hour. What had been a steady flow of pilgrims and merchants earlier now resembled something closer to a bottleneck. Carts jammed against each other. Donkeys brayed. Drivers cursed.

A heavy wagon had stopped completely, blocking most of the road’s width. The owner—a thick-shouldered man in a sweat-stained tunic—stood beside his vehicle, gesturing at the mass of people trying to squeeze past.

“Move!” The carter’s voice carried over the noise. “I’ve got grain that needs to reach Jerusalem before midday!”

No one seemed particularly interested in accommodating him. The crowd flowed around the wagon like water around a stone, slow and indifferent.

Lazarus frowned. “That’s unusual. The road is never this congested unless—” He stopped mid-sentence, eyes narrowing as he studied the movement of the crowd. “They’re heading east.”

Caleb followed his gaze. The old man was right. Most of the travelers weren't moving toward Jerusalem at all. They were walking in the opposite direction, toward the Jordan Valley.

The frustrated carter abandoned his wagon and stalked toward the nearest group of pilgrims. Caleb couldn't hear the exchange, but he saw the man's exasperated gestures, the way he pointed first at his blocked wagon, then at the road ahead.

One of the pilgrims responded—an older woman with a walking stick. She spoke animatedly, her free hand moving in broad sweeps as she explained something. The carter's expression shifted. Frustration gave way to something else. Curiosity, maybe. Or disbelief.

He turned and shouted back toward his wagon. "They're going to see the Galilean! The teacher everyone's talking about!"

His assistant—a younger man who'd been trying to calm the donkeys—looked up. "Jesus?"

"That's the one!" The carter pushed his way back through the crowd, nearly stumbling over a clay water jug someone had set down. He grabbed his assistant by the shoulder. "The woman says He's near Bethany. Teaching by the river, or healing, or—I don't know. Something."

Lazarus went very still beside Caleb. His grip on his walking staff tightened.

The assistant laughed, shaking his head. "Another charlatan working the pilgrim routes. They multiply like locusts during festival season."

"No, no—listen." The carter leaned closer, his voice dropping but still audible across the short distance. "She says he healed a Roman centurion's servant. Last week. The servant was dying—paralyzed, in terrible pain—and this Jesus didn't even *go* to the house. Just spoke the word, and the man was cured."

“That’s ridiculous.”

“I’m telling you what she said!” The carter threw his hands up. “Half of Capernaum witnessed it, apparently. The centurion himself spread the story.”

The assistant spat into the dust. “Romans. They’ll believe anything if it serves their purposes.”

But the carter wasn’t finished. He glanced back toward the moving crowd, then lowered his voice further—though not far enough that Caleb couldn’t still hear. “There’s more. She says he raised a widow’s son from the dead. In Nain. The funeral procession had already started when he stopped it and told the boy to get up.”

Silence.

Even the assistant had no quick dismissal for that claim. He stared at the carter, mouth slightly open.

Caleb’s jaw tightened. He looked at Eli, who had moved closer during the exchange, clearly listening. The boy’s face showed nothing but mild interest—the detached curiosity of someone hearing a traveler’s tall tale.

Lazarus, however, had turned toward the road. His expression was hard to read. Not skeptical, exactly. Not convinced either. Something between the two—a careful, measured attentiveness.

The traffic shifted. As the pilgrims continued their eastward migration, the crowd thinned slightly. The carter climbed back onto his wagon and snapped the reins, finally coaxing his vehicle forward.

Eli stopped tallying. His bronze stylus hovered above the wax tablet, no longer moving. He stared at the road where the pilgrims had passed, his expression no longer detached.

“Father.” The boy’s voice carried a careful uncertainty. “What do you make of this Jesus of Nazareth?”

Caleb's hand stilled on the amphora he'd been inspecting. He didn't look up right away. Instead, he ran his thumb along the vessel's neck one more time, checking the seal that had already been checked twice. The wax was smooth, unbroken. Perfect.

"I make nothing of Him," Caleb said finally. He straightened and turned toward his son. "I've never met the man."

"But the stories—"

"Are stories." Caleb moved past Eli toward the table where the bronze scales still sat, the pans hanging level and empty. "Travelers tell them. Crowds repeat them. They grow larger with each telling."

Eli set down the pen. His fingers left faint impressions in the wax where he'd been gripping too hard. "The carter said a Roman centurion witnessed the healing. That it happened in front of witnesses."

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