

NAEME

Book 28

Max Seltmann

Recommended chronological reading list:

(with regard to Jesus' life in flesh and Spirit, up to the time of the book of Revelation. All books are written by **Max Seltmann**, unless otherwise indicated. The book marked with **bold**, is the book currently opened.)

1. Childhood years of Jesus (Jakob Lorber)
2. Book 1 – John the Baptist
3. Book 2 – John the Apostle in his youth with Jesus (Love overcomes Part 1)
4. Book 3 – Jesus' Life
5. Book 4 – Jesus' Life
6. Book 5 – Jesus' Life
7. Book 6 – Jesus' Life
8. Book 7 – Jesus' Life
9. Book 8 – Jesus' Life
10. Book 9 – Jesus prepares for His ministry Part 1
11. Book 10 – Jesus prepares for His ministry Part 2
12. Great Gospel of John, Volumes 1 – 10 (Jakob Lorber)
13. Great Gospel of John, Volume 11 (Leopoldt Engel)
14. Book 11 - Good Friday
15. Book 12 - Judas Iscariot in the beyond
16. Book 13 - On the road to Emmaus
17. Book 14 - The Risen One!
18. Book 15 - The New Life in man
19. Book 16 – At Bethany – story of Theophilus
20. Book 17 - Ascension
21. Book 18 - Pentecost!
22. Book 19 - Among the first Christians
23. Book 20 - Divine guidance of the first Christians
24. Book 21 - The chamberlain from the Orient
25. Book 22 - The God-spark and Saul's conversion
26. Book 23 - Awakening the Divine life
27. Book 24 - Experiences with Jacob, Part 1
28. Book 25 - Experiences with Jacob, Part 2
29. Book 26 - Experiences with Jacob, Part 3
30. Book 27 - Experiences with Jacob, Part 4
- 31. Book 28 - Naeme**
32. Book 29 - John the Apostle as a guide (Love overcomes Part 2)
33. Book 30 - John the Apostle as a guide (Love overcomes Part 3)

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1. The conditions in and around Jerusalem after Jesus' death

A change had taken place within the Roman occupation of the Jewish land. Cyrenius and many aged officers, who had been initiated into Jesus' teachings and held their protective hand over His followers, had died and the younger ones had been replaced by them over time. Thus, things were intense in Israel, because the temple in Jerusalem could now develop its activity against the followers of the Nazarene, who were so hated by it, and tried to eradicate Jesus' teaching in the cruellest way, by secretly raiding Jesus' followers, capturing and martyring them until they finally denied their faith, or by simply killing them, one by one. No-one was sure of his life anymore. Only when the name 'Bethany' was mentioned, a smile, a glow flitted across the features of the persecuted. Yes, Bethany! Like a joyful sigh of relief, they repeated it. Bethany, the possession of Lazarus, was an oasis of peace in the desert of hatred it meant for the Jewish land. By the fact that Lazarus was a Roman subject, Bethany remained beyond the grasp of the temple.

Lazarus with his two sisters Mary and Martha, who had now also already both white hair, as well as its proven servants, did everything in their strength to relieve and help. So it was no wonder that people sought shelter there and that many a one wandered to Bethany to rest and find peace again for his restless heart.

One evening, before the sun set in the west, Mary came to Lazarus and said: "Ah, brother, tell me, how long shall this dreadful state last? I have just heard that two more of our friends have been taken to the temple prison, and they will certainly not come out alive. How much longer? What will happen if one day the Templars attack you and take you and us with them? Oh, I still cannot believe the horrible hatred of the Temple!"

"But Mary" - Lazarus replies - "have you completely forgotten that everything is in the hand of Eternal Love? If you allow even one doubt to arise in you because of this, you are already weakening His power in you!"

"Yes, Lazarus, you are right, forgive! But I ask you one more thing: How long do you think it will be before the Lord comes to complete the work of redemption?"

"Do not ask about the time, Mary, ask yourself if you are ready to give Him the worthy welcome! With your worries and doubts of just now, certainly not. Therefore, let us confidently continue to create and not grieve the Lord. Be sure, He knows the time and the hour."

The courtyard is noisy. Guests have arrived, asking for the master of the house. Lazarus goes into the entrance hall and looks at his visitors. They are three priests from Jerusalem - an aged man accompanied by two younger ones. Eli is his name. Lazarus knew him for a long time. He is one of the few still living, who promoted the crucifixion, and comes frequently to Bethany, because the open and unfeigned love given to him, clearly draws him again and again. Lazarus now goes to meet his guests, greets them according to the custom of the Jews and invites them to come closer and make themselves comfortable. Eli is trembling, and Lazarus can easily see that there must be a special reason behind Eli's visit.

When he asks him about it, Eli says: "Lazarus, you good humanitarian, the concern for you and yours drives me to you. As you know, the temple is keen on the Nazarenes, and

many a one has to spend his days in prison in bad company. They have their eye on you, too. But they don't quite know how to catch you. Love for you drives me to tell you this."

Lazarus smiles. He already sees through the priest's mission and says: "Eli, you worry in vain, for without the will of the Lord Jesus, you all can do me no harm. Moreover, as a Roman subject, I alone am the master on my land and untouchable by the temple. But I thank you for your care and love. I will have some soldiers quartered here again at my expense. Are you satisfied with that?"

"My dear Lazarus, I am not. Only when you return to the temple will I be satisfied. So I am here also for this reason to propose this to you. They want to grant you a high position if you will break away from the faded sect of the Nazarenes."

"My friend Eli" - Lazarus replies - "don't waste words on that. Likewise, after all, you could join the Nazarenes, and you could experience the love and mercy of God. But see, you shake your head. So at least accept from me a parchment that I received from John, a disciple of the Lord Jesus. I have had so many copies made of it that it is no sacrifice to me. If you take it, you would give me immense joy."

Eli hesitates, but he declines. Lazarus has a servant serve food and drink to his guests. Their conversation, however, dwells on the events of the day, on the arrests the temple is making on its own. Lazarus becomes agitated at the cruel harshness and injustice of this action. Eli, on the other hand, defends the temple, explaining that it has stood its ground for centuries and that not even the Romans dared to lay a hand on it, while everything else is transitory.

"Jehovah knows how to protect the temple" - says Eli.

Then Lazarus replies: "Eli, let us not quarrel, but strive, for my sake, to ease the lot of the captives, and work for their freedom."

"Lazarus, you ask the impossible of me! If they renounce their false faith, pledge allegiance to the temple anew, they will be free. But that is the despairing thing! They would rather let themselves be ruined than to realize their injustice. Come to the temple and talk to them! Maybe you will save them? Because they trust in you a lot. You should ask them to return to the temple."

"Eli, you know our cause badly if you think you can make me a traitor to my Master! You want me to persuade my fellow believers to do something I would not do myself? No, Eli, I would rather die for the truth of our doctrine of love than become a traitor. If we are to remain friends, speak no more of this."

"Very well" - replies the priest - "but you have been warned. I would be sorry if you were in the same position. Behold, indeed, we have limited power, but he who transgresses against the temple, transgresses against Jehovah. For your sake, I will wish you well."

Thereupon only a few everyday things are discussed, and Lazarus is glad that the three then soon take their leave.

A few days later, Lazarus looks for the new city commander in Jerusalem and offers to him to take 100 soldiers at own expense in Bethany in quarters for the time being. The meeting runs in friendly tone, since the request of Lazarus meets already cherished wishes of the commander. He is especially pleased to recognize in Lazarus a good man and Roman citizen. But he evades questions about the temple and the Christians.

Thus, in the next few days, 100 Roman soldiers with their weapons take up quarters in Bethany under the leadership of a young patrician. Several horsemen are also among them. The relationship with the new occupation soon develops to a quite good one, and the relationship with the sub-leader, who comes from a considerably old patrician family, soon becomes an intimate friendship with Lazarus.

It also does not last long, until the bright Roman provides himself with insights into Jesus' teachings, which he also accepts. Lazarus spends many beautiful hours with his new friend and learns to appreciate him more and more. He makes no secret of it also before his two sisters. Julius is the name of the Roman. He is 25 years old and a noble man with high spiritual gifts. With reserved respect he meets Maria and Martha as well as all other people belonging to Bethany. Lazarus employs over a 1000 workers on his grounds, and among them, there is not one who longs to leave Bethany. All speak with love of their father Lazarus.

In Jerusalem, however, the matter around the Nazarenes becomes more and more bleak. A great number gets attacked at a secret meeting and a large part is captured.

One afternoon, Mary is walking - as she has done many times before - through the vast estate of her brother. At a brook, which at that point forms the border of Bethany, she sits down under the shady branches of a tree. In her heart she is united with Jesus and experiences again the strength of His caring love, so that she forgets all hardships and tears roll down her cheeks with inner happiness.

She does not notice a young girl approaching her, and looks up in surprise when the girl asks if there is anything she can do to help. Smiling, Mary thanks her, shakes her head and says: "Oh my daughter, I lack nothing. On the contrary, I dwell with my Creator and feel His heart-gratifying nearness. That is why I weep with love and joy! But come, sit down here with me, for the sun is still high in the sky. Tell me, who are you? I have never seen you before.

"I am Naeme, the daughter of Eli the priest of Jerusalem, and I went with a family friend to their property. Today I went for a walk, and since I am a stranger here, I went to see the ruins by the brook. But now I have probably gone a little too far. I hope to be back before dark. Now you know who I am, and now I want to know who you are, too."

"Call me Mary, I am of Bethany, that is our home. If you like, I will invite you to Bethany with your friends!"

"Yes, Mary, I would like to accept. But I cannot dispose of myself, because my father as well as my brother Samuel dictate to me with whom we may associate. For we should not and must not associate with Christians."

"O woe, Naeme! I am a Christian and will remain so. I only wish that you, your brother, and all yours would also become Christians, for it is a great blessedness that those enjoy who have joined themselves to Jesus Christ!"

"Never will I become a Christian, nor can I become one, since your faith is based on a crucified man, and besides, that was a man who called the institutions of the temple devilish. When I look at my father in this way, I see in him a true and right servant of God."

"Naeme, and I am a Christian and have experienced many, many things in my long life. I could be your mother, even grandmother. But look, the greatest experience of all was when Jesus, the same Jesus whom you misjudge, did such wonderful things at the grave

of my brother! 'Lazarus, come out!' - were His words, and my brother, who had been dead in the grave for four days and already bore signs of decay, came out alive! There is much more I could tell you about Him who loved us all so dearly and loves you, my daughter, as if you were His child!"

"Mary, do not tell me about Jesus! But let me find you again; then, when I ask you, tell me more. I want to talk to my mother about it first. Or are you afraid that I will betray you? For as father has told at home, Christians are being eagerly hunted."

"Child, you cannot betray me, for all the world knows that we are Christians and Bethany is a free ground. So visit me in Bethany, you will be most welcome! But before you go, let yourself be blessed. May the Spirit of true love of God fill you fully for your salvation. Get home well!"

The girl jumps back across the stream. Mary sends prayer thoughts after her and then quietly goes back home.

Jerusalem with the landmark of the temple, is in a state of greatest activity. Roman patrols walk the streets, but in the evening, no-one dares to go outside alone, because every passerby is suspected of being a Christian. People disappear en-masse. Of course, with most of them the temple has to realize that it was mistaken. This excitement also causes a lot of trouble for the priests.

In one of the big side streets stands the big house of the priest Eli. Midnight is near, but the master of the house as well as his son Samuel, also a priest, are not home yet. The housewife Hannah and her daughter Naeme await the long-distance travellers with great anxiety.

Then Naeme tells her mother about the encounter with Mary of Bethany, and with shock, Naeme learns that her mother is also a Christian.

"My child! Because I love you more than my life, I am telling you! I met Jesus when He healed a leper. I was also a witness when He calmed the storm on the sea. The mother of the young man of Nain, who died and is still alive, was a motherly friend to me. Of course, it was a very long time ago, because at that time I was only twelve years old. Your father and I agreed not to talk about matters of faith, because Father holds a position in the temple as a priest and thus feeds us. But when I think of the past and of Jesus, the Savior, I become strong and happy inside. I would have spoken to you about Jesus of Nazareth long ago, but for the sake of peace and your youth, I kept silent, waiting and hoping only for a favorable moment.

Now you know everything so far. So I will gladly give you permission to go to Bethany. However, the father will not want to know anything about it, although I know that he often stays as a guest in Bethany. Lazarus, the owner, is a fine man, even the very poorest is his friend, and everyone gets work and bread there."

Then the knocker sounds. Naeme goes to open the gate. Her father and brother return home, and both talk very excitedly to each other. "Samuel, my son, come to your senses! Blind zeal only does harm! Tell me, do you have anything to gain from Christians being handed over to judgment on any given day? Have you seen such excessive zeal in me?"

"Yes, Father, it is sad that you watch so lukewarmly as the Nazarene cause increases! There must be particularly great severity. If it goes on like this, in ten to fifteen years, all will be Christians."

Naeme listens in shock and grabs her heart. Then she hears her father continue: "Samuel, have I earned this for you, that you want to be above your father in all things? Is this the filial obedience which Jehovah requires? If I consider everything rightly, we must not complain about the Christians, as far as I know them, because they are people who command respect from me. If their faith in the Nazarene is their all, why do you want to bring them back to the temple by force? I, for one, give thanks for such Jews and leave judgment to Jehovah, for He knows His own and knows about His own! But we will serve the Lord together with all our house!"

"Father, you are already half a Christian! All that is missing is for mother and Naeme to convert to Christianity! But I already know what I am doing!"

With these words, he leaves his father and goes to his room. The old man, however, is disgruntled, and in silence they eat the evening meal, to which Samuel does not appear.

Naeme wishes her parents good night and then lies down to rest. But sleep flees, and the afternoon scene with Mary of Bethany does not want to leave her mind. Should there really be a mystery about the life of God? So her thoughts circle around Jesus of Nazareth. Why did mother always keep silent, and why did she tolerate everything? How arrogant her brother is in comparison! The more her thoughts are occupied with this, she literally begins to freeze. She longs for love. Didn't Mary say: "He also loves you as if you were His child"? Then a burning longing awakens in her, and she cries helplessly tears never known before: "Yes, Jesus! I want to know You!" With that, she falls asleep.

Early in the morning she wakes up bathed in sweat. A terrible dream robs her of peace. She dreamt how she was riding in a carriage with two white horses to visit a friend. The sun was good. The horses are running on their own, so she holds the reins very loosely in her hands. There, chased by several dogs, a buck jumps across the road. The horses spook, jump to the side, the cart skids, overturns, and she flies out in a wide arc, right under the dogs. They are frightened at first, but then they attack Naeme, who tries to fight off the dogs with loud screams. But the more she screams and fights back, the wilder the dogs become, and already her clothes are hanging down in shreds. Then a young man rushes over and drives the dogs away with his stick.

At that moment, Naeme wakes up and dries the sweat from her face and chest. "Oh God, what a dream! What may it mean?" Now she remains awake until morning, for sleep has passed her by for that night.

Meanwhile, in Bethany, Lazarus is talking with his sisters. His face is troubled, and he says: "What shall I do? The whole temple is becoming a prison! I have just received news again that four of our best friends have disappeared. It is quite certain that they are also trapped in the temple. The worst thing for the temple is that no-one denies his faith."

Replies Mary: "Say, Lazarus, couldn't the Roman ruler have a serious word for once?"

"Yes, Mary, but do not forget that these prisoners are not Romans, but Jews. If we did not have Roman citizenship, it would not be for the best. The protection of our guard I have not for our sake, but for the sake of our people, who are Jews. But let us call Julius once and initiate him into the temple business."

Lazarus goes out and sends a worker to the Roman, who is just present in an adjoining house and is glad about the invitation. He comes also immediately. Lazarus welcomes him and tells him his worries. He ask him to undertake more frequent patrols, so that he would be constantly informed as soon as again a man or a woman disappear, so that he

could free them again as his property. Julius agrees to the wishes and wants to go again. There Lazarus holds him back and invites him to stay. It is necessary to initiate him deeply into the truth of the teaching of Jesus!

As they talk for a long time, Julius exclaims: "Yes, such a God of love and mercy always lived in my imagination! What a miracle! This image becomes more and more vivid in me. Jesus must have been a glorious person! Only once I would like to see Him! Just once to look into His eyes and read in them!"

"Julius, your desires miss the mark, for in your soul you shall always look into His eyes. See, if you see anything in a man that is not right and pleasing to you, imagine the opposite, and Jesus' life makes itself known and before you! Suppose you see a person who has worries, always looking around with dull eyes, immediately imagine a free person who is completely carefree, with satisfied, shining eyes. Behold, this is how Jesus, the Master, looked at us, and then also the sensitivity that lived in Jesus, which cannot be described.

If Jesus had only taught or healed the sick and confirmed His teachings with miracles, His teaching would perhaps already be in decline. But where Jesus lived and stayed, He lived Himself into the hearts and thus created a fullness of truth, love and power in the hearts of all who saw Him, so that it is not at all possible to forget Him again. Every day His love becomes new, and every day we come closer to life. The earthly struggle is necessary to cool and firm our soul, because it so ardently desires this love. So I know Him here, because His word: 'I am with you all days', is an anchor and a foundation for me and gives me incentive to do everything only according to His will!"

The days now continue with work and duty. In the evening, Martha and Mary, Lazarus and Julius often talk for a long time. Julius becomes a disciple and zealot for Jesus' love.

2. Naeme becomes a Christian

One day Naeme comes from Jerusalem to visit Bethany. A warm welcome is extended to her. Martha and Mary surround their guest with motherly love. Naeme, however, who has always been short-changed in her life as far as love is concerned, feels as if she is in paradise. Because she was accustomed to austerity at home and was always brought up without any right of her own, her soul remained small, and here in Bethany, her heart begins to widen.

Whether Lazarus speaks to her or to a worker, it always happens full of love, kindness and friendship. It is no miracle that her stay extends ever longer. In the house of Lazarus everything proceeds in harmony, order and the greatest freedom. Early, one hour after sunrise, the work begins. At noon there are two hours of rest, and then work is done until the sun is down. After supper, the family sits together for a long time with most of the guests present. The most frequent guests are Mary, the mother of Jesus, and John.

For Naeme it is a very special experience to be with Mother Mary, to whom her heart draws her more and more. The hunger of a very big heart is revealed, and Naeme never tires of asking new questions. It takes the patience of heaven to answer all her questions.

Naeme could not speak freely with the men, but she freely confesses: "Jesus I could love with all the ardor of my heart, but my love is not satisfied. I want to see Him, to press Him to my heart! It only makes me hungrier every time I hear about Him! Oh, if I could only believe in Him and live according to His teaching, happiness recedes into ever greater distance. Yes, you, dear friends, have known Him! He lives in your memory. You comfort yourselves that He will come again, when, is unknown to you, but in me He lives only as a longing, He lives as something, which makes me more and more longing instead of more content! I am consumed with longing for this love!"

Then tears trickle down her flushed cheeks: "Oh help me, you dear, good people! Now that a new world is opening up for me, you must not stand still with me and let me, like Moses once did, see the glorious goal from afar! Oh, continue with me! For if Jesus lives and surrounds you with His love at all times, then I do not understand his hesitation. If I call out to Him, everything remains silent. When I search under palm trees and believe to meet Him, I remain alone. I know I will perish from this love if He does not come to me!"

On another day, she goes with Lazarus to the fields and is interested in the plantations. Then suddenly she asks: "Tell me, dear friend, where shall I go to meet Jesus? For if He has risen and dwelt among you, it would no longer be love if He were to hide and conceal Himself, so that from His hiding place He might observe all your doings, and take heed how you all, whether here or there, live according to His commandments. It would be devastating for the temple if Jesus suddenly came and said: 'Listen, you priests and all you who serve false gods, I am here to prove to you that death and the grave cannot harm Me. I am there to cause you to serve Me only and leave all other sacrifices.' It should be over with the dead temple-faith!"

Lazarus looks the girl in the eyes and says: "Do not search for what would harm you and cause disappointment, but believe in His love and faithfulness! Believe in Him in such a way that your love no longer demands a sacrifice from Him, but adjust yourself in such a way that you could make the greatest sacrifice! Then you will become calmer and live into the Spirit of the merciful love of Jesus. For behold, what you demand cannot come to you, because it would interfere with your inner development. For everything you want from Him

will not arise from outside, but from in you, when you have reached the maturity for it. Remember, my child, if your and also my Jesus and God and Lord had not given you so much, no longing would ever be able to seize you. But the fact that you are consumed with love-longing for Him, is a sign of your impatience. You want to grasp everything with both hands - but first your heart must have grasped everything completely. Only then you live with Him! You imagine our Master as He still lived as a man among mankind! But now He is a spirit-man and can be grasped only by the inner spiritual life. This spiritual life connects you with Him, as well as with all people and creatures, into one community. If you understand this, you will see more clearly again. Therefore I give you the good advice: let your heart speak and seal your mouth; then you will recognize the love that seeks you!"

From far away, some soldiers come with Julius at the head. When they reach Lazarus, they stop. Julius reports that strangers had approached the plantations to sound out the workers and contrast their master's wealth with their poverty. "When they saw us Romans approaching, they changed the subject and talked about the estate. But the one thing I could tell was that the strangers were not happy. 'We are not poor' - the workers replied - 'we possess the love of our brother, and it is fortunate for us to possess and serve such a master!'"

Lazarus thanks Julius, asking him to send his people on and keep him and Naeme company. Julius likes nothing better than that, for he loved the girl from the first time he saw her. But he could not and was not allowed to approach her, because order and custom forbid it. So he is grateful to Lazarus in his heart, because he can now safely learn something about her, because until now he only knew that her name was Naeme and that she was the daughter of a priest in Jerusalem.

"Julius" - says Lazarus - "here we have a little bird that cannot yet use her wings. It dreams of a giant flight, but has not yet learned to fly properly. Say once how you stand with Jesus. Are you ready to represent Him without His intervention?"

"Certainly, dear friend Lazarus! That is not so difficult! For he who has experienced since childhood what dead gods accomplish, or, rather, their priests, and is now allowed to experience this sublime teaching, ought to be able to do it. Here in Bethany, I experience Jesus' love from the early morning until late night! Only one circumstance is to be considered, and that is that I have peace only since I hold on to Jesus' nature and not to His person! And satisfaction grips my heart only when I see Jesus' love and nature. I often wonder why people are so strange and cold about their happiness. Is it not glorious guidance that I was allowed to meet you? Is it not heavenly providence that Naeme is staying in Bethany? Is it not providence that just in these serious times, the power of the Gospel is becoming more and more manifest? Here, where heavenly things are revealed, my humanity becomes mute, and compared to before, the present with the consciousness of Jesus, becomes ever more vivid to me and a thousand times dearer than the lost past!"

The girl's eyes are directed questioningly at the Roman. Only now she consciously sees his powerful and beautiful figure. It is to her as if her heart calls: With this you reach the goal! Thus she is confused. Her eyes wander to Lazarus.

"See, Naeme" - says Lazarus - "Julius has succeeded; but there are still drosses of the old religion to be removed. But this, time brings about with it's struggle, while you do not yet want to tear down anything in yourself. You want to build a temple for Jesus in addition to the temple of Jehovah. But this does not and cannot work. You must break with everything that still stands between you and Jesus. If you feel and recognize the truth and

genuineness, you must not only want to look at the goals, but you must go the way and walk until you reach the goal. Therefore, I say to you, my daughter, it is better for you now to return home to your parents and to your brother. When you are at peace with yourself, come back to Bethany. I know that you will return, for our love accompanies you and draws you back again."

Naeme would prefer to stay in Bethany. She also tells it to Lazarus. But Lazarus understands it just out of the ordered Jesus-love, to make her understand that her parents possess the claim to her love. Finally Naeme allows herself to be convinced; it seems to her unbelievable that she should have already spent a whole month in the house of Lazarus. Time has passed so quickly. For Julius it hits close to his heart that he is not to see Naeme any more. But the hope of a reunion comforts him. So they agree that Naeme will return to Jerusalem the next day. Lazarus now gives his instructions in this regard, and Julius agrees to accompany the girl, since he has business in Jerusalem the next day anyway.

So the last evening arrives. Everyone living in the house, gather as usual. Lazarus let the room be festively arranged, it applies to honor a dear guest. The climax of the evening is then, when a faithful, old worker tells that Jesus appeared also to him.

"As I was working" - he says - "with the worry in my heart about what had become of my son whom the temple had persecuted and driven out of the country, I prayed quite fervently to Jesus, the Lord and Savior, that He would take the burden and worry about my son from my heart. Then a young man dressed as a shepherd came up to me and brought me greetings from my son. If he sends greetings, he is still alive and anxious for his parents. I grasped the hand raised in greeting and asked: 'Where is my son? How is his life? Is he well?'

'Your son is alive and rejoices to be with people who serve their Master Jesus in faithful devotion. He is in Greece with good friends, earning his bread. Only one sorrow he carries in his heart, that his parents worry about him. In the evening, as well as early in the morning, he implores in fervent prayer that a message may go to Bethany, so that their heart may become calm and quiet. So I found your son and made him know that I want to go to Jerusalem, to Bethany. At this, his joy was great.'

When I became completely silent with great joy, I completely forgot that the stranger could also be hungry and thirsty, because I only wanted to hear about my son. Then the stranger said: 'Yes, dear old friend, don't you know that when God answers prayers, He also answers them completely above all things? Actually, you should already be content with the news that your son is well, and should now offer praise and thanks to your faithful God, who made this possible and has well exercised the guardianship over your son.'

Then I looked into the stranger's eyes, and suddenly I was struck as if by lightning. 'Is it possible' - I thought and asked: 'Yes, dear friend, you are right. But you only wanted to test me by your words, because to rejoice is also to give thanks. And so I am happy to see you again! For my heart tells me: It is You Yourself who accompanied my son! You are the One we are waiting for! It is You Yourself who give the greatest joy to Your children! You did not want to send a messenger or an angel, no, You Yourself arose and came to me, a sinful human child, in order to make me happy with Your merciful love! Lord, I would like to say: Return to us, return to Lazarus and his sisters! But your will be done!'

Be blessed, My son, because you have prepared for Me in your heart the place that belongs to Me, I now come to you and say to you: Hold high the banner of My love! Show the world that I live! And even if the world tries to destroy My life among you, bring proof

by your life that I am with you and support and strengthen you all according to your love. Greet your brothers and assure them of My love!

Then I sank down with joy and clutched His pierced hands and kissed the scars and wept with exceeding delight. Then He laid both His hands on my head, blessed me and said: 'That we may remain brothers for all eternity!'

I then looked around, no-one was with me anymore, only the current that went out from His hands, I still feel it now."

With tears, the speaker continues: "Lord Jesus, and if my life is taken from me, I will never cease to praise You and thank You!"

Naeme is quite shaken, sees the old man's tears and asks Mary if this can be truth. "Why doesn't He come to me too?"

"Let it be, my child" - says Mary - "The Lord knows everything, knows also how it is in you. Let the testimony be enough for you. Behold, how often the Lord dwelt among us, and yet had to leave us in the flesh. But now we may dwell in the spirit in His fullness of life and love. And so He lives in us and we in Him. Rejoice! He loves you! Embrace Him lovingly in your heart, and He will reveal Himself to you as well. But let us let the men speak."

Julius asks Lazarus if he can speak a few words with the old man. It is granted to him. Then Julius asks the old man: "Listen, dear friend, your encounter with the stranger, whom you recognized as the Lord, gives me concern. For if a stranger had come, he must have been seen by my people. But nothing was reported to me! On the other hand, you knew Jesus of Nazareth as a man! Tell me, why did you not recognize Him from afar? Did He have a different appearance? Doubts are rising in my mind, and I have no peace until I have full clarity."

"Dear young master and friend, your questions are justified, but not your doubts. If you cannot believe the event of this meeting, think that my age is 70 years; I have experienced many things, but this event is the greatest miracle of my life. All sorrow, grief and worry have been erased. The words of the Lord at His departure back in Bethany, were: 'My peace be and remain with you all!' And this peace proceeds only from Him Who is a Father and will remain our Father for all eternity! But you, examine your heart, whether or not it grants to enemies of Jesus the ability to give peace!"

Julius cannot answer a word. He muses to himself. Then he says: "Oh, if only I could meet Jesus once! Could my heart also become so peaceful, how I would thank You, Lord Jesus!"

When it is time to go to sleep, Lazarus gives the blessing, and all go to rest. Naeme, however, does not find sleep; she knows that she is facing great tasks! Early in the morning, after the early meal, she thanks her hosts again and asks for faithful remembrance and heartfelt intercession, and then, accompanied by the Roman and some soldiers, sets off for Jerusalem. Julius asks cordially to see her again, and Naeme promises to come again to Bethany. But she does not yet know how the future will turn out, since she wants to profess herself as a Christian. It is not easy for her to say goodbye to the Roman, but strengthened by her will to believe in Jesus, she confidently goes to her father's house.

3. Naeme witnesses for Jesus

The mother is beside herself with joy to have her Naeme with her again. Father and brother are at the temple, and so there is no end to the questions and stories. But the harsh reality reminds them of their duties, and the day passes. Meanwhile, the mother confesses that father and brother have been misinformed and think that she was with relatives. "So, dear Naeme, be careful and don't tell."

But Naeme replies: "Oh mother, what have you done? I will not conceal anything! Father will understand me and will not oppose my happiness. Oh mother, why are you not as happy as the others? Why are you afraid to confess Jesus? Is it so difficult? You will see that your Naeme is no longer afraid. I will not rest or relax until Father and Samuel also recognize Jesus and give Him glory!"

"Naeme, stop! Don't say a word! Father, yes, he would surely forgive, but Samuel would not. Oh do not bring sorrow and strife into our home."

"Ah, Mother, with Jesus it is not possible to bring care and strife into the house! No! As long as I have known, in spite of our wealth, there has always been worry and discord in the house, and I have only known about love and forbearance since I was in Bethany. If it is possible there through Jesus' love and power to live a life of happiness and harmony, it is not clear to me why it could not be here with us. May Samuel be convinced of the spirit that reigns in Bethany; there the temple must hide a hundred times. Mother, I have seen and experienced with people in Bethany that there is no hiding of Jesus there. A young Roman, of ancient lineage, lives with soldiers in Bethany as a protective guard, and this one has also become a Christian. He would like to visit us. But I asked him to refrain from doing so, since I could not yet see clearly. In any case, I would like to see him again, for I am not indifferent to him."

The two men are now coming home. They are hungry, so everything is quiet at the meal. But after the meal, Naeme tells about her impressions and the life of the relatives.

"You didn't even let us know, but we are used to that from you."

"Father" - says Naeme - "you must see that I was well. Besides, you didn't miss me. But I was not with our relatives, but in Bethany with Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters, and there I led a life such as there is none in the temple. I am also invited to visit again, but I may only come if I have your consent. I would like to go there again, please allow me."

Then Eli exclaims in horror: "You were in Bethany? With my friend Lazarus? And I'm only finding out about this now that you've come back? If only I had known, I would have brought you back to your parents' house the next day! And though Lazarus may be good a thousand times over with his sisters, and do much good to others, yet he has been unfaithful to the temple, and therefore Jehovah will judge him."

"Father, take back this word! You prove to me that you do not know Jehovah. I have changed my mind since I experienced the kindness and love of the people in Bethany. What a difference between here and there! Instead of being happy to see your child happy, you want to rob me of all joy and peace! I now know my way, whether it finds your promise or not - it is the way of love!"

But you, Samuel, do not look at me so gloomily! You are full of wrath! I am no longer a little child dancing to your desire. I am a child of the great love of God, who wants the best here on earth.

Good father and you, mother, why do you look so horrified? Was Jesus, the alleged criminal, so great that you get excited already at the mention of His name? In Bethany, the name of Jesus caused joy and delight. But how often did the name 'Jehovah' fall from your lips, and yet your hearts remained unchangingly bitter against the Nazarenes. In Bethany, they remember the temple and it's servants in intercessory prayer."

"Be silent!" - yells Samuel at his sister - "Otherwise I will forget myself! We are still alive and determine your actions; and that you no longer will go to Bethany, the temple will see to it. This shame, father! I demand of you that other measures be taken against Naeme, and that you become aware of the serpent we nurtured in the house. The high priest will make beautiful eyes."

"Samuel, be quiet and do not get so excited, and do not forget that Naeme is your sister. She is still with us, so there is still time! Our task is to convince her that she is mistaken and going wrong ways."

Then Naeme answers: "Father, I like to be convinced, but there is no power of persuasion in this tone. What you testify of, is hatred! Samuel, go once to Bethany and learn there from the least worker love and godliness! But you cannot understand such people, because you do not want to understand them! No example will shine there! For you alone are driven by ambition, which goes over dead bodies and which already sees itself as a high priest. Well did father speak the word: 'Jehovah will judge him!' But I say to you and also to you, Father, you are already judged, for you do not know what love and peace are, nor what it takes to beget love and peace! If only Lazarus or his sisters had shown unkindness or discord, I could have believed that their lives were artificial. But there is a pure life of natural love there, and that is obviously the work of the Savior Jesus!"

Samuel angrily leaves the room. Mother Hannah sits full of fear at the table and weeps softly. Eli, however, does not know what to say. He does not want to hurt his daughter and feels a great guilt. The daughter was kept too short.

Naeme goes to her father, sits on his lap and wraps her arms around his neck, leans her head against his chest and says: "Father, dear father, leave the temple! For it is what holds you captive. It is only your office that does not let you take hold of this great spiritual life. Father, your child asks you, leave this place of hardness and let me go my way! Go to where you - you and mother - will also be happy! Lord Jesus, help with your great grace of love and let your Spirit of love and mercy enter into our oh so peaceful house."

Then Eli stands up and says: "Naeme, I, your father demand obedience. I demand that you never speak of Jesus. Do not try to go against my will; you may one day regret it."

"Father, you cannot be serious. God wants everyone to be helped! The blood of the goats has proven useless, while the blood of Jesus is ripening a Spirit that is sky high over your temple. Father, I am inflamed with this Spirit-fire and want to help, help, help."

"Let it be well my child, go to your room and leave me alone with your mother."

Naeme submissively obeys, warmly wishes them both a good night and goes to her room. As she is now alone, a wild pain almost crushes her, because father and brother do not

want to understand her. For a long time she lies on her knees and prays until she finally finds peace. Then she lies down.

Again she has a strange dream. In the morning, she first has to remember that she is in her parents' house. She dreamt that she was a bride, wearing a splendid wedding dress decorated with myrtle. Downstairs, in front of the house, there was a carriage with four white horses waiting for her to come. The bridegroom, however, was absent, and yet it was to be a wedding. They all waited, but the bridegroom did not come. Then a messenger came and brought news that Naeme was to come to the castle with her mother. Father and Samuel, however, were to go to the temple where the wedding ceremony would take place. After a short discussion, they decided to do so. But when Naeme went through the door, her long dress got caught because Samuel closed the door at that moment. She fell down and there was a long tear in her wedding dress. Terrified, she noticed this and cried loudly. The damage was quickly repaired.

So they got into the wagon, in front of which the horses were already stomping impatiently, and off they went. When the destination was almost reached at a sharp trot, an old woman came along the way with a heavy load on her back. She lifted her cane in front of the carriage, so that the horses shied and now sped along the road at a sharp trot. Screaming loudly, Naeme held on to her mother. The coachman, however, held the reins tightly in his hands. Little by little, the horses calmed down again. Finally they arrived at the castle unharmed. Servants came and helped them to get off. But how astonished Naeme was when she recognized her bridegroom in the coachman! She hurried to his breast and he led her into his castle.

Now she awoke. But she tried to fall asleep again, to dream some more. But she is wide awake and wonders who the bridegroom was. He did not have the features of the noble Julius. Then the longing for the loved ones in Bethany comes over her again, especially for Julius. She got up and, since everything was still quiet in the house, went into the garden. This refreshes her, and she feels as if the two dreams she had, were connected with Jesus. Now it occurs to her, and she remembers clearly, that the young man who had driven the dogs away with the stick and the bridegroom as coachman, had been one and the same person. "Should Jesus have appeared to me in a dream?" - she asks herself, but she finds no answer in her heart.

Now, as she is pondering, her father comes to meet her. They are both surprised that they meet here in the garden. "I couldn't sleep" - Eli explains to his daughter after greeting her - "and I had a bad dream, so I'm trying to recover in the morning air."

"May I know your dream, dear father? I, too, have been dreaming. It was so beautiful and beatific, that I wish the dream were real or had continued. But, dear father tell me yours, and I will tell you mine. Come, let's sit down in the arbor."

With a few steps they are there, and now Eli begins to tell: "When you had gone to bed last night, I talked with your mother for a long time and agreed with her to let you go free in your beginning and in your faith. I also want to visit Lazarus in Bethany soon and I want to work on my release from the temple and perhaps go away from Jerusalem. But I do not want to rush into anything. Samuel may take over this house. He will marry soon anyway. Everything shall be settled, that you, as well as your mother, may be content. You were right last night, there has never been peace with us.

After praying to Jehovah for a long time for advice and guidance in these matters, we went to bed. I might have slept two hours, when a voice called out, 'Eli, Eli what are you limping around on three crutches? Take the right stick in your hand and you will be able to walk!' I

looked around but couldn't see anyone, and I was in a strange place. It was going on evening, and I still had a long way to go. I pulled myself together and walked on, but kept looking around again and again. To my misfortune, a heavy thunderstorm was brewing, and far and wide there was neither house nor shelter. But not far away was a grove, and to this I directed my steps. A thunderstorm erupted. I penetrated deeper and deeper into the unknown woods to seek shelter from the storm. But it did not help me much. Lightning after lightning, thunder after thunder, made me more and more fearful, and the masses of water had completely drenched me and turned the ground into a muddy puddle. Finally the storm subsided, but night came. I knew no way out; finally, the morning dawned. With the dawn, however, I also saw the disaster that the storm had brought. Trees had been uprooted by the storm, strong branches had broken off and weaker trees had bent.

I did not know how to get on the road, because around me it looked like a jungle. As I was looking for a way out, a whole pack of wolves came towards me. I grabbed a broken branch and fought back as best I could, but with little success. One wolf was the most dangerous, and think of it, Naeme, this one wore the face of your brother Samuel. At last I had fought off the beast. Slowly I pushed through the ominous grove. There was another obstacle, for a few trees lay uprooted, their branches entangled. But I couldn't avoid this tangle of branches and twigs either, because there was a proper lake to the left and right.

As I want to look for a way through the tangle of branches, I still see at the right time how a big snake with shimmering eyes wreathed towards me. With the branch I still have in my hands, I strike at the head of the snake - and think, this snake also bears the face of Samuel! I strike and miss, but it retreats and takes flight. I cannot hurry after it because of the tangle. I made my way with my hands and feet with difficulty, and as I see the road in front of me, I awake from this heavy dream, drenched in sweat. But everything hurts in and on my body, and without waking mother, I quietly came into the garden."

"Father," Naeme replies: "Samuel is planning bad things! Shall we not wake mother and prevent Samuel from doing bad things? I too dreamed of a mischief in Bethany, and the mischief-maker also bore the features of Samuel. This night I had a beautiful dream, I was celebrating a wedding, and you and Mother were also happy. Only Samuel, through carelessness, had torn my wedding dress!"

"Samuel?" - asks Eli - "child, this does not bode well!"

"Father, I was finally able to rush into the arms of the bridegroom. Only I didn't know the bridegroom, but I suspect that it could be Jesus, since he turned out later to have been the protector. But now come, Father, let us leave no stone unturned to put everything in it's proper order."

The stay in the garden had lasted longer after all, for Mother was already busy around the early meal. Samuel, however, had already gone to the temple without taking the early meal. Hannah was quite worried about Naeme and Eli. But when they wished her well for the day, her troubled mind became calm. Thus the morning passes.

Near noon, two priests, old good friends of the house of Eli, come to take Eli to a council meeting. Eli says: "Today I will not attend, because I know in advance what it is about: my daughter Naeme! I will ask for my leave! Samuel and I are no longer going together, but apart. If Naeme is given time, everything will turn out for her salvation and ours! Therefore, I ask you to excuse my absence today. I must come clean and clear with myself."

Says old Jeremiah: "Eli, Eli, your words sound as if we are losing you! Have you considered all the consequences that a breach of faith on your part can bring you? As an old friend, I don't think I need to warn you first! I cannot, therefore, understand your hesitation, and so I beg you to follow us to the temple."

"Not today, Jeremiah, tomorrow I will be at your disposal. Yes, I am asking you to arrange for the high priest to have the council meet tomorrow as well."

Jeremiah looked at Naeme and said to her: "Child, does it not depress your heart, that you want to plunge your old parents into new worries and cares? Take Samuel as your example, as he is careful to bring joy and honor to the house of Eli!"

Naeme looks at Jeremiah firmly and says: "Jeremiah, you have always been a friend to us. As long as I experienced nothing else, everything was right to me what father, Samuel and also you said, I never gave reason to complain. Never would I have believed that there could be anything else than what I learned and experienced in the house and in the temple. But now, just by special circumstances, I have come together with other people whom I did not seek. Through the guidance of God, I have been led and experienced there a spirit that is just the opposite of the spirit that you represent. I have experienced such happiness that I feel the need to talk about it and help others to experience this happiness. Can there be anything wrong with that?"

"That is not for me to judge, but for the temple to judge!" - retorts Jeremiah. "Therefore, I beg you, Naeme, leave the care of your happiness to us elders, and you will be satisfied."

Naeme was silent. To say anything more, would have been a waste. She shook Jeremiah's hand and said: "I thank you for your well-meaning words, but still they do not penetrate the heart."

Eli is glad when the two colleagues have left. To Hannah he says: "I wish tomorrow were over, for I feel the impending storm that Samuel is conjuring up."

Says Naeme: "Father and mother, why wait until tomorrow? Let's leave everything here and go to Bethany! Even from Bethany you can arrange your affairs with the temple, for the temple will never, ever release you. What did Jeremiah say? A breach of faith it would be and would have bitter consequences for you. O beloved ones, do not consider, but come! Peace and joy await us there, sorrow and suffering here! Mother, do not be so long in coming! Father, everything is at stake, temporal and eternal!"

"Naeme" - says Eli - "I still will not become a traitor. I am known and all my life is known, and with Jehovah's help, I shall succeed in setting everything straight."

"Father, as your child you taught me not to disagree. But this time your Naeme tells you that you are walking completely on the wrong path. Never will the temple release you. Never will you be able to count on understanding, and never will your Naeme be able to tear out of her heart the love she feels for Jesus, the Savior."

Eli looks helplessly at the two and says: "Put everything in order so that we can leave the house early tomorrow morning. I cannot run away head over heels. Therefore leave me alone. I will arrange everything so that you can be satisfied."

Samuel was already at the high priest's house very early in the morning. He spares neither father nor sister. For the time being, the high priest is not inclined to respond to Samuel's accusation. After all, he knew his priest Eli. Samuel, however, asserts with

certainty that his father is fickle and gives Naeme a free hand, and demands that a council meeting be called where his father Eli must not be absent. The high priest agrees, and Jeremiah, Eli's friend, is instructed to summon Eli.

The high priest is angry when Jeremiah says to him: "Don't count on Eli anymore. Naeme has been able to prove to her father that not everything is done according to God's will in the house of Jehovah. Eli asked for a council meeting tomorrow; he will ask for his release."

The high priest is apprehensive; he asks: "What did you think of Eli and his daughter? Surely you, as a friend of the house, are familiar with them. What did his wife say?"

Jeremiah replied: "High priest, what can I say? Eli's wife was silent, Eli dismissive, and Naeme I knew no more. That's what the Nazarenes made of her."

The high priest asks Samuel again: "Is your father to blame? How did it happen that Naeme met with Nazarenes?"

Says Samuel: "My father or mother is not to blame in the least. Naeme claimed to be visiting relatives, and did so, but must have come into contact with Lazarus' sister in the process. The misfortune took place in Bethany. Only this I could not understand from my father, that he took Naeme in his protection. And this I do not and cannot tolerate. So I am here."

"Well" - says the high priest - "tomorrow we will hold a great council meeting. But today your sister must present herself here at the temple. If she comes voluntarily, she can immediately return to her parents' house. But if she has to be fetched, strictness must prevail! But 'no violence' is my advice to you, Samuel."

It so happens that Samuel, as the most amiable brother and son, makes a request to Naeme to answer to the high council in the temple, but still today.

Naeme says: "Samuel, if I had sinned, there would be a reason to answer me, and if your way of inviting had sprung from an invitation of your love as a brother, I would go to the temple without restraint. But now no more. For it is only you who has evil in mind for me, because I asked you to go to Bethany and to experience the true life of God there. Oh Samuel, where is your filial love towards your parents? Where is the exemplary life as a servant of Jehovah? I give you good advice, turn back and become a true son and brother, and we will shower you with love as few are granted."

"Silence, you hypocrite!" - says Samuel, clenched - "I know my way. But do not think that I have any regard for you because you are my sister. I don't know you anymore!"

Eli put his son in his place with calm words, but this embittered him even more. "Tomorrow in the High Council, I will give you the right answer." With these words he went and left the house again.

4. Naeme gets abducted by the temple

Eli works in his room without interruption. Naeme stays with her mother. But when it gets dark, she is called out of the house to a friend who urgently needs her. Naeme asks her mother not to go.

"Send a message that you cannot leave father alone or you will not be able to go. Please, mother, it is the last evening, we will go away for a long time."

"Exactly, Naeme, because we are leaving tomorrow, I have to fulfill this request. I will stay only for a short time and say goodbye. Because you will not want me to refuse the last service of love. But, Naeme, you could come with me. Father will certainly work half the night, and we will be back long before he is finished. I'll go and explain it to father."

Eli gives his consent. "I am far from finished. Feel free to extend your visit a bit."

Unsuspecting, the two walk. But as they walk through a narrow, dark alley, Hannah receives a push that sends her flying to the side, and before Naeme knows it, a dark sack is placed over her head so that she cannot defend herself. A man quickly helps Hannah to her feet, and two men grab Naeme, who is resisting and screaming in the sack, and hurry away. The two men disappear into an open house with the bundle.

It all happened so quickly that Hannah did not know what had happened to Naeme. The man who was helpful to Hannah, was one of the accomplices and pretended to help her. But on the contrary, his help expressed itself, because through it, Hannah lost sight of Naeme. It was dark. No other human being was to be seen, and a faintness came upon her. She overcame the weakness and hurried back to her home, where she told Eli about this misfortune with hurried words and heavy sobbing.

"My dream is coming true" - he said to Hannah - "It is useless to do anything today. This is Samuel's work! Tomorrow I will learn the whole truth in the temple and hopefully bring Naeme back. If I have been wavering about our future until now, I tell you, Hannah my wife, this deed has opened my eyes and the temple can hear something."

That night would not and did not want to pass. Hannah was in a fever, always crying out for Naeme. Eli did not know what to do. No remedy worked until finally day broke and brought Hannah a short slumber. Without having eaten a single bite, he dragged himself to the temple, where he was already expected.

When the two men disappeared into a room, they freed Naeme from the sack and told her to stop screaming because it would make her condition worse. "There will be no consideration for Nazarenes! We will take you to the temple, where you did not want to go voluntarily. It is now up to you whether we should bring you to the temple with compulsion or without compulsion. But so that you do not damage the reputation of the temple, we will use a wagon. At the slightest cry, you will get a gag in your mouth, so act accordingly."

She realized her powerlessness and kept silent. Her thoughts circled around Lazarus and Julius. She knew these two would not rest until she was free again with the Savior's help. No sooner had she arrived at the temple, than she was brought before the high council. Her father and Samuel are not present, this she notes with satisfaction.

"My daughter" - the high priest began - "by an unusual way I have had you brought here. If you had come to me today all by yourself, without a question I would have had you

brought back to your father. But as it is, I cannot help it. I must ask you, what is your attitude toward Jesus of Nazareth?"

Naeme looks at the high priest fearlessly and says: "To answer this question, I, who walked with my mother in the way of the Lord, had to be attacked, deprived of my freedom and brought to the temple in the middle of the night under the most severe threats? This act of the temple and its servants makes it easy for me to answer. Since that hour, Jesus is everything to me, for Jesus of Nazareth would never have been capable of such brutal violence. Only a short time was enough for me to have an experience that can never be forgotten forever. For years I dwelt in the halls of the temple, and my heart remained as it was, joyless and poor."

"Naeme, Eli's daughter! Your answer has judged you. But that you may gain time to return to the temple and to faith in Jehovah, I will give your assurance. At the hour when you let me know that you repent of having lost yourself to the Nazarene, you will be free to return to your parents' house. What your parents say is irrelevant for now. From your mouth I want to hear that you hate the Nazarene like us."

"This will never happen" - Naeme replies - "It would be a crime against myself, and my earthly life would be worthless."

The high priest is disappointed. Looking strongly at Naeme, he says: "Now you are beyond help. So let fate take its course. But I will not cease to hope for the sake of your father and brother."

The two who brought Naeme, also led her away. Wordlessly she follows, for in her heart is calm, peace and confidence. When Eli enters the temple, the members of the high council are already waiting. Before Eli can say anything, the high priest says: "Eli, what do you have to say to us? Yesterday you had enough opportunity to tell us your wishes and excuses; today it is too late, your daughter is a lost one."

Eli looks at everyone with a scrutinizing gaze and says: "What you say, chief priest, about my daughter Naeme is true. She is lost to the temple, but through your fault. Was it necessary that my wife and daughter, on their way to their relatives to whom they were summoned, were attacked and treated like wild animals? Is this the way of those who want to be worshippers of God, to raid peacefully walking women and take them to safe hiding places? Never did I give my consent to such raids, never did I promote the violence that is usurped by the younger priests. Since I do not wish to present any further reasons, I submit my resignation to the Council and ask them to approve it. I will not ask for Naeme for now, for my further conduct will depend precisely on Naeme's future."

The high priest scornfully replies: "Don't think that we will let you go so easily. According to your son, you are already half Nazarene. It is necessary to consider whether we should not withdraw our trust from you. Certainly, you have become white with us in the service, your services have always been worthy of recognition. Just now, when a member of your family commits this great infidelity, you become unfaithful to your oath. No and again no! Your request is rejected, and only because of your previous loyalty, we do not change our behaviour towards you. It is fortunate that you and your wife did not know that your wayward daughter was in Bethany."

Eli was stunned. Wordlessly he left the meeting, hurried out of the temple and went to his home. His inner being was shattered. He, who had always been a fighter, felt defeated, felt dull. Around him, everything could go to ruins, he would not have noticed anything. His interior was already a heap of ruins.

He comes home in this state. Hannah is still in bed. She also cannot get up, she is miserable. They now live through the most agonizing hours, days and weeks in Eli's house - except Samuel, who rarely comes home. He avoids his father and mother. Jeremiah, the old friend and colleague, comes daily; he is shaken by the struggle of the two. He too had corrected his point of view and begins to understand Eli. They do not speak of Naeme; but Jeremiah's heart is soon torn by the way Hannah cries out for Naeme.

Without having spoken a single word, Jeremiah leaves for Bethany. Wearing a Greek dress and with another merchant, he seeks out Lazarus, but he recognizes him immediately. And soon Lazarus knows all that has happened in the house of Eli. Lazarus is shocked. The fact that a priest, and even the brother, wanted to deliver his own sister to death, brings him in large agitation, because he loves Naeme like a daughter. For Julius, this is a nightmare!

For a long time they both discuss what to do, and so they go, accompanied by two soldiers, to Jerusalem and stop at the inn Bethany. The tenant is delighted to see Lazarus, for many a priest appeared at the inn, partly disguised, partly in priestly garb. Schyba, a grandson of the tenant, a clever young man and capable of several languages, is taken into confidence to sound out the Templars and the merchants and to keep in touch with Bethany. The city commander is also visited. The latter, however, is hostile, since the temple lays emphasis on its own jurisdiction.

The matter seems to be hopeless, but Lazarus says: "Julius, do not become tired, because the Master knows about everything. He never yet failed in His love and wisdom! Trust completely! Then the solution will come. That the Master already has His hand in the game, is proved by the fact that Jeremiah, an old, unforgiving priest, came to Bethany. So pay attention to the Lord's guidance, because it is not He who will bring Naeme to you, but you have to get her. The 'how' will come overnight, you only have to be alert."

5. Julius rescues Naeme

Julius has become eager. His soldiers are fired up even more. There happens an incident at the border; where Naeme saw Mary for the first time, there were two Templars in disguise, harassing Mary. It was difficult for her to get rid of them. This was observed by some soldiers who were on patrol. When those became physically rough with Mary, the soldiers were also on the spot and took away the two Templars, tied up. They became small before Julius when they received the assurance that he will free them from the temple yoke and make them Romans if they openly and freely reveal the outrages of the temple and its servants. One asks Julius for help, the other does not; he fears the temple, having experienced enough in recent times.

"Precisely for this reason" - says one - "I can no longer reconcile it with my conscience when these innocent people are driven so slowly into the arms of death. The way Samuel is going about it, this cannot have a good end."

Julius perks up. Samuel is Naeme's brother. He says, "Here is my hand, I will help you, if you will help me!" They take the offered hand, and Julius says: "With this handshake, you have become Romans. Change your clothes, which your comrades will help you do. In an hour, you will report to me at the manor house."

Julius is shocked by the revelations of the two Templars. But he learned nothing about Naeme. But he did learn the names of the prison guards, and this is enough for him for now. He hands them over to one of his sub-leaders for training, and in a short time, he is on his way to Jerusalem. The tenant of the inn of Bethany is delighted to welcome this young Roman, and after a few words, the tenant is informed of everything. "You can count on me! My grandson Schyba is made for the task you gave him. It is good that no-one sees you with him, for the place is swarming with spies."

The very next day, Schyba reports to Julius in Bethany. His eyes shine. He reports: "When I was told yesterday of your visit and your desire, I knew at once that Samuel, the son of Eli, had his hand in it. I went to the temple when the sun was inclining, and there where the priests on duty pass by, I waited. The priests always leave the temple at the same time. They usually go to the inn belonging to the temple. My plan was to follow them to the inn to hear something. Samuel, whom I know well, came with some priests, and talking loudly, they passed me by. They must have had a very clear conscience, because not once did they turn around!

Then Samuel said: 'But for once you can already look at this business to me. The Nazarenes are really the biggest fools.'

I stayed a little behind so as not to attract attention. And sure enough, the other three walked with Samuel through some streets and alleys and I followed. In front of a big house they stopped, knocked loudly three times, then waited a little while. The gate opened and the four disappeared into the house. I waited and waited; it became dark. I already begun to think that they had left the house through another exit, when at last they came out of the house. One of them said: 'Samuel, your sister has attitude, for there was not the slightest sign that she considers you to be the author of her suffering. I, at any rate, would not have been able to do it.' Samuel replied: 'Still more I would finish off the wicked Nazarenes.'

I knew enough, Lord. If my guess is correct, Samuel goes to visit his sister every day. Probably to torment her with his presence. The street is quiet, no traffic at all at this time. It would be easy to dig out the nest along with the priests along with the people in need."

Julius says: "Yes, it could be done. But to tamper with the priests would be to interfere with the rights of the temple. How about pretending to be priests and we would release the prisoners? With the two young priests who have pledged themselves to me, it could be done quite easily. I will have them both called in a moment."

They agree, as Julius takes charge. And when lunch is over, a wagon with soldiers in priestly garb leaves for Jerusalem. Schyba leaves with Julius a few minutes later, his heart full of hope for Naeme's liberation.

In the inn, the tenant has kept a special room for Julius' people. Thus, the other guests have not even noticed that soldiers have arrived. As darkness falls, Schyba in his priestly robe and the two former priests go to the house where Samuel and his colleagues had stayed yesterday. Julius with his people spread out, follow them slowly. In his heart is a prayer for success, a request for strength and wisdom, but also thanksgiving. Soon the goal is reached.

Schyba knocks on the gate, just as he had heard, and after a little while, it is opened. Without a word, the three of them pass the door-guard and, as they had guessed, go to the basement. They hear voices, and go in that direction. There is an iron curtain on one door. Schyba takes it off, and in front of them is a large, very dimly lit room with many people. Schyba looks over the crowd of people for a moment, then calls out: "Naeme, Naeme!"

Slowly the girl approaches and says: "I am Naeme, let the others go."

Schyba says softly: "Are you Eli's daughter? But speak the truth!"

"Yes, I am. There is no second Naeme among us."

"Then tell your sisters and brothers in the back corner to all set out for freedom, for Julius is waiting outside."

Naeme is speechless with joy, hardly able to speak, she calls out: "Come, come, salvation is here! Come quickly, before it is too late."

As they are, they hurry after Schyba in the lead. The two priests also go ahead to inform the door-guard that everything is all right. It is getting dark outside. But one could still see enough, that the soldiers could make a way for the men and women. Julius has taken Naeme by the hands and says: "Don't say a word, let everyone follow us!"

Not without noise, the liberation proceeds. Pedestrians think that the Templars have caught a crowd of Nazarenes again, and get themselves out of the way, for it was dangerous on such evenings. Unchallenged, they arrive at the inn. Everything is already prepared.

Then Julius speaks: "Dear ones! Let us thank the Lord and Master that it was possible for me to open the door of captivity for you. Let us thank the Lord and Savior Jesus! You are not yet completely free, because your future still lies ahead of you. I have orders to offer you the home of Lazarus, who will take care of your future. So make up your minds by tomorrow morning, so that I can take care of the transfer. The temple will become

poisonous. By now, it certainly already knows that you have escaped from its clutches. Worry about nothing but that the love of the Lord and Savior Jesus may become your life."

What joy Julius now experiences! What takes place in him in this hour, cannot be described in words. Naeme, however, presses his hands to her face and says: "Julius, a life full of love would not be enough for thanksgiving! I would not have been able to stand it much longer and would have died."

Julius replies: "Naeme, a long life lies ahead of us. We want to spend it united in the Spirit of Jesus. We want to bear everything that may come in unity. The love we carry within us commits us and increases our tasks. Would you be willing to strive with me for that glorious goal? Your mother is sick with longing for you, help is needed soon. Therefore, I beg you, give me the right to care for her like a son."

Naeme leans her head against his chest, looks up at him and says: "Julius, I am yours. From the first moment I knew that you alone live in me! I was afraid of this knowledge in the beginning, because father and mother paled before this love, and now, through the grace of Jesus, I belong to you!"

That night, few slept. The events were too powerful, and Julius constantly had to tell about life in Bethany, which he did with pleasure. After the morning meal, it is again Schyba who goes to Bethany to fetch wagons and soldiers, for there are many of them together there and do not want to stay in Jerusalem. Naeme would prefer to go to her father and mother, but Julius says: "Not now, your brother is a beast of a man, he would not shrink from the worst. Let Lazarus decide what we should do."

Julius with the two priests and Naeme go after Schyba. The others remain in the care of the soldiers. Everything goes as desired, and in the evening at supper, all are united.

Old Tobiah confesses: "My now new housemates! The love and grace of the Lord is so wonderfully glorious that eternities are not enough to fathom it. I am the happiest person the earth has ever borne. Those were glorious times when the Master welcomed us here at the tables and ate with us the food from heaven prepared by angels. Yes, we experienced miracles upon miracles.

However, when I look at the guidance now, I see much, much more in our dear Master of Love than I did then. At that time it was love from above, which He transplanted to this earth through His struggle and fight. Now, however, it is love that comes to fruition in us through His grace, love and mercy and it radiates out from the heart as a rising sun enlivens the sky for us; as He longed for it as Jesus, as the Son of Man!

Dear ones! You have experienced horror upon horror. But I say to you: The Master has gone through the same horrors, since the suffering that has affected you, is laid to His charge. He cannot confront the adversary, since appearances speak against Him. But we, as His children, see His glory, which wants nothing else than to make us ready for new glories.

Therefore, oh Jesus, You glorious One, Who in Your love dwells among us. Your and our hearts are filled with joy, because we feel Your life and Your love as the life of a free child and put it out into the night and darkness, so that it may shine as a signpost and admirer of Your oh so glorious and lovely love. Take our heart, let it be Your resting place. Sanctify us with Your presence, that all may be sanctified. Amen!"

6. Dissolution in Bethany and death of Mary and Lazarus

After two days, Julius and Naeme, accompanied by some soldiers, go to Jerusalem to Naeme's parents. Eli, who had already heard about his daughter's liberation, waited impatiently for a sign of life from her. When Julius and Naeme knock on the door, the maid cries out: "Naeme has come home!" Eli rushes out into the hallway and takes Naeme in his arms and leads her to his wife, who lies as if dead on her resting bed. Then life comes into the almost lifeless figure. Naeme lifts her mother up and presses her to her breast. Every passing minute she becomes better, and finally she can speak: "Naeme, do not go away any more, stay with us, otherwise I must die."

"You will live, mother!" - says Naeme - "But live in sunshine and happiness. A new life is before us, a life in Jesus, where all suffering ceases and begins in joy, happiness and contentment."

"Where is Samuel?" asks Hannah. Naeme begs: "Father, don't let him in."

"Samuel is no longer here" - Eli replies - "nor can he bring any new misfortune, since the old Eli is strong enough."

Samuel, however, is in the house and because of the noise the maid made, he has become curious and came to look into the room. He sees the Roman and Naeme, but only says: "Ah, you have a visitor" - and leaves the room again. Julius, however, looks sharply at Samuel, and that moment is enough to know: This is an irreconcilable enemy! Eli reaches out his hand to the Roman and says: "It must be thanks to you that Naeme is back home with her mother. But there will be no more happiness for us, for the temple is full of hatred."

"Not at all, dear Eli! Naeme is going back with me to Bethany, and I have a commission from Lazarus to bring you both with me. Let me speak freely, since we have little time. Naeme has pledged herself to me. As soon as circumstances permit, I will make her my wife. Only in this way will she be protected from the temple, and you two will come with us."

Eli takes Julius' hands again and says: "If your hearts belong to each other, I will gladly give my blessing. Whether I ever come to Bethany again, depends on the temple. None of them want to know anything of departing, but to force Naeme to curse the Nazarene."

Julius replies: "Father Eli, just let me worry about that. Now that I am your son, I have a duty to see to your welfare, and that I can do so, you will shortly learn. But now prudence dictates that you be wise and not challenge the temple."

Turning to Naeme, he says: "Naeme, we must go back. The ground is not yet cleared, and your brother is not to be trusted. Ask your mother and father to let me come get them tomorrow."

Eli agrees. This time is enough for him to become completely clear, and so they take their leave until tomorrow.

* * *

Samuel had nothing more urgent to do than to hurry to the temple and tell the high priest that Naeme was staying with the Roman with his parents.

Says the high priest: "Samuel, all zeal in honor, but here I say nothing more about it. For Naeme is in any case under Roman protection, and there is nothing more to be done. See to it that you deal with yourself and your sister. The temple will not be able to protect you if you fall into the hands of the Romans in an unlawful act."

"Well, well, so dismissed. But you are mistaken in me! What I have set out to do, I shall accomplish, in spite of the Roman. How will it be now with my father?"

"He will remain faithful to the temple. This is my conviction. By the way, I expect news from Rome soon to get rid of the tutelage."

* * *

The next day, Julius really does bring Eli and Hannah to Bethany. The joy of having Naeme back, had worked wonders for Hannah. Without seeing Samuel, they left home, leaving only the old maid behind. Eli stayed in Bethany for one day, then he went back to Jerusalem in one of Lazarus' wagons. Hannah stayed.

Quiet weeks now follow. Now and then Eli comes, but never stays longer than one day. The only thing he accepts from Lazarus, is the writing of John. In this time, Naeme and Julius get to know each other better, and Julius expects a message from his father Vespanus, whom he asked for the blessing.

Now comes a heavy blow for Bethany, for Jerusalem in general. Julius is transferred to Corinth. The whole garrison is withdrawn from Jerusalem. The temple has won. Within a radius of four hours, the Romans have to withdraw according to the order of the governor. Only Lazarus is aware of what this means for Bethany. He is silent about everything, only Julius is privy to it.

On the day when Julius is ordered to Jerusalem on duty to the city commander, he meets three priests on the way, but still on Roman ground. He quickly dismounts from his horse, his two companions too, and ask what they are doing here. One of them turns his face to the side as if he does not want to be seen, but Julius has already recognized him.

"What are you doing here?" - he asks again - "I demand an answer, but quickly! For here is Roman ground, and there you have no business!" He receives no answer.

Then Julius says: "You are Samuel, Naeme's brother! Turn back at once and don't let anyone see you here again! If you were not Naeme's brother, I would have you arrested and punished. Beware lest I catch you in an unlawful act, for then I will not show the least consideration. But now hurry back to Jerusalem, or I will make you."

There the Templars run even faster than the horses. Julius, however, now also has an irreconcilable enemy.

The city commander tells Julius that he has been promoted to captain despite his youth, and hands him a letter from his father. In the presence of the city commander, he opens the letter. He received his father's blessing on the union with Naeme. Further, his father wrote that he thought it would be better if Naeme, his bride, would come to him in Joppe, where the wedding was to take place.

"There will soon be war with Judea, so I want to make provision. You are now a centurion and cannot stay in Bethany either. But so that you can stay in touch with your bride, we have transferred you to Corinth. But I greet the generous Lazarus, the benefactor. I advise him to sell and build a new Bethany far from Jerusalem, for war can no longer be averted."

Julius informs the city commander of the letter. Then the city commander said: "Your father must be a generous man and also a noble character, for otherwise he would not ask Lazarus to sell. Your father must know more than we suspect, there is something wrong with the temple."

Lazarus is astonished at the news that Julius conveys to him. But it is consistent with what the Lord so often called out to him: "Provide homes when judgment comes." Julius departed with his people. One last evening brought much that was glorious and beautiful, so that Bethany could no longer be blotted out from his memory.

Naeme was composed. She knew that Julius would come to Bethany as often as he could. How good that man does not know what lies in the bosom of the future. Because for Bethany, the hour of probation was approaching.

In Jerusalem it was hell on earth. No longer did patrols of soldiers roam the streets. The Roman citizens were treated as if they were not Roman subjects. If Lazarus did not have the big watchdogs, Bethany would long ago have been a heap of ruins and rubble. The Templars tried in every way to harm Lazarus. Yes, for a long time Lazarus did not dare to go to Jerusalem anymore. Thus he sold one piece of land after the other to Greeks and Romans, because Julius had also trained Lazarus' workers in the handling of weapons. When he, Lazarus, let younger sisters and brothers move to brothers in faith, then he gave them the proceeds from the sold properties, so that they did not come as poor to their new brother-lord.

On a pre-Sabbath, Hannah fell seriously ill. Eli was in Bethany at that same time. After a short illness, Hannah went home to her Savior and Redeemer. Eli almost collapsed under this blow of fate, but Naeme remained composed.

She said: "A father and friend can want nothing bad, only good! That's why I trust Jesus with all and full heart! He knows why and for what!"

A few days later, Mary again goes to the Kidron on a beautiful day. She is completely absorbed, and within her is a glorious calm and silence. She does not notice how two men in disguise approach her and want to take advantage of her. They want to bind her with ropes and drag her away. Then she cries out: "Lord Jesus, now I need your help, now make Your word true and prove Yourself to be the glorious One!"

Then the two laugh and cry out: "You, my Jesus?" They grab Mary by the hair and want to pull her to the ground. Then they realize that Mary is dead. Frightened by the dead, they take flight.

Then one of them says: "Never again will I touch a Christian. The temple has seen me for the last time today. I will go to Lazarus and report the incident and the temple's guilt to him."

How were the inhabitants of Bethany affected by the death of Mary! Lazarus felt burning pain, but also fervent gratitude. He was selling more and more of his lands, and this infuriated the Templars.

Eli now no longer came to Bethany because of the temple. But he studied the writings of John all the more eagerly. He always carried them with him. It was his talisman. He felt more secure, and his heart warmed to Jesus! Now he had tasks! Informed of the wickedness, he was able to prevent some of the actions the temple was undertaking. So he let Lazarus know that a raid was planned on Bethany, he was to post guards. It was certainly true. Even from a robbery the temple did not shrink. Through the communication of Eli, Lazarus was protected from harm and the captured temple-soldiers were sent to the Romans at Jericho.

At all these events, Lazarus became so annoyed that he had to lie down and did not recover. On a pre-Sabbath at sunset, he entered into the arms of his Lord and Master Jesus; and for Bethany also the sun had set. There was great mourning for Lazarus, not only in Bethany, but far out into the lands that heard of his death.

Martha remained calm: "Now I would not ask the Master of love for help" - she said to Naeme - "I grudge him the rest and bliss he is experiencing with the Lord."

And with zeal she continued her brother's work. The Templars acted like lords, but the people were on their guard. They did not let the Templars get cocky. And all the time there were friends who purchased Bethany. Only a small cottage remained for Martha, where, under the safe protection of the new friends, she waited with Naeme for the message from Julius' father.

7. Naeme is taken captive a second time and again freed by Julius

A courier, coming from Jerusalem, rides toward Bethany. He is tired from the long ride, also the horse is tired and hungry. So he pays less attention to the wanderers he meets. He sees the destination from afar, and suddenly he is torn from his horse and receives a blow to the head that deprives him of consciousness. Samuel with some accomplices, was the one who was eagerly awaiting the courier. He knew for sure that Naeme's father-in-law wanted to send a messenger who would give Naeme instructions on where and how to go to Joppe. With eagerness he tore open the bag and searched for the letter and soon found it. He tore it open and read the few lines. They were enough for him. At last he had reached his goal.

When the courier regains consciousness, Samuel is quite a helping Samaritan. He helps him onto the trembling horse, leads it a few steps and says: "Thank your Creator that we just came by the way, otherwise you would have become a victim of your carelessness. If you want to go to Bethany, there is the destination!"

The courier is still dazed, he believes it was an accident. He easily finds Naeme and Martha. In their eagerness and excitement, they do not notice that the letter is opened. Naeme is overjoyed. Martha is ready to take her to her new place of residence. She is now in a hurry. They have to manage all the way to Jericho on their own, and from there, soldiers were ordered to bring Naeme safely to Joppe. Martha and Naeme leave Bethany at the appointed time. Eli, who had been notified, came to say goodbye to Naeme.

Again and again Naeme says: "Father, come with me! Come along! Why can you not free yourself?"

"For your sake, my child. Only by remaining faithful to the temple can I serve Jesus! Believe me, many miseries would have become and many sorrows would have come if I had not been a watchman. I simply cannot resign from my service to Jesus. Go with Jesus! With blessing love I accompany you; follow your man and your blood. My home is here! Now I am all alone. Samuel no longer comes to me, nor do I see him in the temple. Consider him as one lost."

Naeme kisses her father over and over again. Martha urges and says: "Soon you will meet again! Eli, my faithful brother, you have given the greatest joy not only to me, but also to the Savior Jesus, by considering yourself a guardian of His love in His service. Continue to do what your heart dictates, and we are one! My little house, which I still possess, it is yours. If you ever want to rest in His love, go there; there you will find rest and be united with us in spirit. May the love of Jesus make you strong and willing in His Spirit!"

Still under the spell of the last hours, the servant steers the team on which there were many filled boxes and chests. Martha considers Naeme as her daughter and gives her the appropriate dowry.

"Julius should not marry a poor girl" - she says to Naeme. We do not want to burden the father Eli, it shall all belong to Samuel. What I have is yours, and I will stay with you forever. If I have been a mother to you in your trouble, I will be a mother to you in your happiness. There is nothing left for me in Bethany."

So they quietly travel along the road. Unsuspecting and believing in the protection of Eternal Love, they look forward to the wonders that the foreign environment would reveal to them.

A loaded carriage comes toward them. It stops, five or six men jump down and pull the unsuspecting Naeme from the wagon and whip the horses so that they rush madly along the road. When the horses calm down, the robbers look backward. No-one was coming towards them on the road, and there was nothing to be seen from behind.

"That went well!" - says Samuel, because he is the one who planned the robbery and carried it out. He does not say a word to Naeme, who is still lying unconscious in the wagon. Her feet and hands were tied. Samuel makes a rather long journey. He stopped at an inn. It is not far from Jerusalem and is shunned because it houses lepers. Without negotiating with the innkeeper, Naeme is carried into the house and freed from her bonds, recognizing her brother Samuel.

He scornfully looks at Naeme and says: "Now let's see who is stronger - me or Jesus. In there is your place, with those who are bound to die!"

Without saying a word, she turns away from him and goes to meet her fellow sufferers.

Martha, overcoming her pain, says to the servant: "Go on quickly to the destination. We are not able to save anything after all. How frightened will Julius be if I come without Naeme!"

So she can only pray, pray and pray again. Finally she hears the comforting words: "Martha, the blow was aimed at Me! Stay strong and trust in My love and care. All will be well!" Now Martha became calm. She knew, yes, everything will have a good end.

With confidence they reach Jericho; but Julius is not there, but a sub-leader who has orders to bring Naeme to Joppe under safe protection. "Where is the captain Julius?" - asks Martha. "Surely I can't get to Joppe without Naeme! What would Julius's father think?"

The sub-leader says: "I'll get you to Joppe in the shortest time imaginable. Everything will be arranged there. I cannot deviate from my command. My people are ready to march. We will ride and drive at sunset. We will not reach the captain within eight days."

Only on the road can Martha tell everything to the sub-leader in an orderly manner. She also describes to him that the courier had brought the summons and had told that just before Bethany, his horse had shied and he had been strengthened again by some priests and helped onto the horse.

"We also did not notice that the letter was not closed at all, because it was a joy as well as a great excitement."

The sub-leader, also a disciple of Jesus, said: "Only Samuel can be the criminal who swore vengeance on his sister. But we want to leave everything else to Julius, for where shall we begin and end? Jerusalem is closed to us, and the Templars consider their hatred as worship. We also do not want to shadow our hearts, but to make them even freer. I have found that I can be more useful to my Lord and Master with a free heart than with a weighted one. Don't you want to tell me something from the life of the Lord? I so often imagine the Lord, even now, as a man - and I think this is most comforting for me. It

must have been glorious times when the Lord stayed with you, where He blessed the meal and healed the sick!"

"Yes, brother, you are right. Those were glorious times. But today's times are no different either. There, the Lord's love took care of our welfare, everything fell into place so gloriously that we thought heaven had taken us in. Today I am of a different mind; heaven is our free property, and only the Lord alone shall be the enlivening and the blessed One in it through His love and grace. All these troubles serve to make heaven and the free and invigorating life out of Him accessible to us. And so it happens that the Lord wants to come up with blessings and benefits, and we just hinder Him. I can think as I want, with Naeme it will come to a good end. The troubles must be considered as training. The Lord's help can come only if our hearts are opened to Him. What struggles we have had in the last times! But do you think, dear brother, that the Lord has become less in us? No and again no! His glory is that we become aware in all situations of life: everything will produce a glorious happiness and life."

After three days they are in Joppe. They are picked up by soldiers sent ahead by Julius' father Vespanus. There is no sign of Julius himself. No-one knows anything about him. But a welcome meant for Naeme, is given to Martha. What a fright, when Martha tells the failure, which had affected her. She is surrounded with love, she does not need to worry about anything. All things are put in place, and when she has recovered from her exertions, Vespanus has her summoned to him to have the whole affair told to him in peace. Now Vespanus has the right picture. He sends for some subordinate leaders through servants, sends out orders and assembles a detachment to Julius, which leaves at the same hour.

Now comes a long time of waiting. Martha soon finds many friends in the big city and is able to plant good seeds, to raise many a weak heart and, above all, to give Julius' father the right image of Jesus. - Months go by!

In two days, Julius had his father's report. The sub-leader who brought Martha to Joppe was the leader of the commando who had to make himself available to Julius. Julius now learned all the details. Vespanus knew that Martha had reported everything accurately to the sub-leader, and so Julius also got the right picture. They immediately rode to Jerusalem.

Julius did not yet make up his mind. He only hoped for Jesus, the Savior and Helper. So he came to Corinth, where he arranged for some sub-leaders to patrol, who had to watch the caravans and, if necessary, also detain them. He then immediately go on to Jericho, where he informs his people of his plan. His sub-leaders were instructed to wait for news from him, and a time and place were arranged so that no useless time would be lost.

"Watch caravans closely, check around Jerusalem as best you can, but keep the law and obligations!"

Over his robe he put a dark cloak, looking like a traveller. Like this he rode all alone to Jerusalem. Before the gate closed, he was within the walls of Jerusalem. His way went to the inn of Bethany. The innkeeper could hardly believe his eyes when Julius asked for a place to sleep and food for his horse.

"Is it really you, Julius?"

"It's me" - he said softly.

"Is Schyba still with you?"

"Yes, but not yet. It may be another hour before he comes. So he may come to my chamber, which you assign to me."

When he had strengthened himself, he went to the chamber. He was tired and needed rest and collection. He still had no plan and no summons from the Lord. Schyba came, the greeting was warm. Immediately Julius felt the tiredness leave him. In a short time, Schyba knew everything that was known to Julius.

"Just let me only go my ways, I must learn where Samuel frequents. He is seldom with his father, for they no longer keep contact, probably because of Naeme."

The next day, Schyba left early. All day he did not let himself be seen once. For Julius, this was a trial. All the inns he saw, he visited without even having a specific destination. By evening, he felt tired and battered, and even Schyba could not yet come with any favorable word. At last he had made an observation. Two Templars, completely unknown to him, dropped a cloth when they saw a Greek merchant coming. The latter picked up the cloth and put it in his robe. Schyba followed this merchant, who went to an inn far away. In this inn, the merchant seemed to be a well-known person, for the innkeeper was very pleased, and the two talked together for a long time. Schyba, who had taken a seat at the nearest table, heard that the merchant owned a caravan. 'Now I must try to find out what he has to do with the Templars.' - the thoughts circled in his head.

Soon an opportunity was found to get acquainted with the merchant. Chatty as all merchants are, Schyba learned that he was still waiting for goods that he had to take far to the north. Schyba asked what kind of merchandise it was. Then the merchant smiled and asked if he also had merchandise. Schyba answered in the affirmative and said: "But I would like to bring them to the man myself, with one more. I need only one to take us in his caravan, to enjoy the protection that an armed caravan gives."

"If it's worth it, why not!" - replied the merchant. "Actually, though, I shouldn't go into the deal, since the bulk of the goods are supplied by the temple."

"By the temple?" - asked Schyba in amazement. "What kind of goods does the temple have? Surely not people?"

"Nazarenes who deserve to die. I don't care, goods are goods. By the way, the temple brings it's goods itself, like you, on the spot. I only provide my wagon, animals and drivers, as well as the upkeep, and I don't do badly at all. Times are bad, the Romans are a big pain, so it is always better to keep my hands clean and earn money. That's the only reason it's possible to take you with me."

"When do you want to leave?" - asked Schyba further. "I still have something to do."

"The sooner, the better I would like it. The time is still undetermined with me, too. The Templars are strange fellows. First it can't happen fast enough, and when it does, they make all kinds of objections. Only today I received another message that it can still take two to three days. But these lords do not consider that my animals also want to eat, and the stay in Jerusalem is expensive."

"Well, I am not stingy" - said Schyba - "the main thing is that the goal is reached and that too in not too long time. My order is not petty."

"Come the day after tomorrow at this time, then it will be possible to let you know the hour."

Schyba had agreed something with the merchant without knowing if it had any purpose. But he thought: "There must be some stealth in it. How do priests come to give message to a strange merchant all secretly? Anyway, I'll keep my eyes open."

For better or worse, Julius had to continue trusting Schyba, for he was having no luck. Nothing he learned, nothing he saw, and to act openly did not suit him.

The next day, Schyba came to him all excited and said: "Lord, I think I have the right clue. I overheard those two priests who sent the cloth to the merchant. They were on their way to the temple.

Then the one said: 'I refuse transportation to Samuel, because it does not proceed from the high priest, but from Samuel. The high priest just allows Samuel. I refuse because he directly despises his father, old Eli, and why? Because of Naeme.'

To which the other replied: 'Don't be a coward, what's it got to do with them? You do your duties, and everything else remains the same.'

The first: 'No, no, my dear Joseph. I have come to know that Samuel is holding his sister captive; they did not tell me the where and how. In any case, Samuel is not a priest in the sense of Jehovah, but a vengeful man with whom you do not want to mess. This I say to you and also today to the high priest.'

I knew enough! It can only be Samuel who has the sisters and brothers taken away. By this time tomorrow, we will know more. It is now time for your people to be on guard."

"We'll get that taken care of" - Julius said. "I can reach my people every day, and tomorrow the hunt starts."

At the appointed hour, Schyba was at the inn. But the merchant was not yet to be seen. He did not want to ask, and so he had to wait.

He thought about leaving, when he arrived, and after a short greeting, the merchant said: "Tomorrow morning we will start. Unfortunately, I have to make a detour, because I have to stop at the Hostel of the Forsaken. If you want to come along with your assistant, but not when I leave or stop at the inn, but join us when we stop at noon at the height of the Jordan. Then no-one will take any notice of you, and I will have safeguarded my interests. So about noon in the Jordan Valley!"

A step forward at last! "Will Naeme be there?" - Julius constantly wondered! His people had yet to be told exactly. So he still rode to Jericho and was going to join Schyba tomorrow, far outside Jerusalem.

Schyba rode out of the gate with two pack animals. With a merry song on his lips, he rode to the place where he expected Julius, who was also there on time. Slowly they rode to the Jordan, and here it was no longer difficult to meet the caravan. Soon they learned that a caravan had left an hour before. And now they went along the way, and closer and closer they came to the caravan. The caravan rested, but the two of them remained far behind. When the caravan moved on, the two of them rode after it without shortening the distance. They did not yet know where the whole journey was going. Julius, with his sharp eyes, also did not notice any unnecessary movements.

"Everything is fine there" - he said - "But if this pace is maintained, it may be a long time before they reach their destination."

Still he did not see his people. He had ordered two detachments on scouting duty. Signs had been agreed, they had to join him before night fell. Late in the afternoon, the front ones changed course. Then Schyba opened a small barrel and let the content of flour spill out and let the barrel fall to the ground. After half an hour he repeated the same thing. He was about to open the third barrel, when Julius saw his soldiers even farther away.

Gratefully he looked up and said: "Lord Jesus, You know best the time and hour, now give success."

They continued a while, and in another hour his soldiers greeted their captain. Julius instructed his men, and now they went after the caravan at a sharp trot.

* * *

Naeme, quite dazed, had received a shove and was pushed into an open door. She could hardly believe her eyes, for before her sat and lay many people. She went closer, and a woman said: "Do not touch, unclean, unclean!"

Naeme was frightened, but then she got a hold of herself and said: "Do not be afraid that you will defile me. It is not my fault that I have to be here with you, but the blind hatred that is not for us, but for our Savior Jesus. But one thing I ask of you: If truly our Jesus, our Savior, is to save us, then we must also have courage and trust. What have you done so far?"

"We prayed! We do not believe in salvation, but in deliverance from all our evil and suffering."

"Quite right" - says Naeme - "above all, let us help one another and not fear infection. The Savior, who is among us in His Spirit and knows about everything, will not deny us His assistance and will save us from the hands of His adversaries. Of course, He must let happen to us what His enemies have intended for us; this is just to serve us, to set free in us what does not yet belong to Him."

Then an old brother comes to her and says: "Sister, say it again, this word that He is among us and knows about everything!"

"Yes, He is among us in all His love, therefore no-one will continue to be unclean. But whoever is unclean will be clean when He finds it in time. Exactly what you fear, is for your salvation. This very disease the Lord's enemies fear the most."

Thus Naeme raised up all the fellow sufferers. They became more and more cheerful, and the jailers waited day after day for all of them to get leprosy. They kept to themselves. No Templar came near them, and the five who were unclean, usually squatted at the door. Food and drink were placed at the door for them. Another door had an exit into the courtyard, which was delimited by a high wall. If they suffered from anything, it was boredom. But Naeme knew how to enliven those who were suffering. Samuel never saw her once, but she knew he was the culprit who had everyone's misery on his conscience.

How long the misery lasted, no-one knew; one day was like another. There was neither Sabbath nor a change, and in Naeme, trust in the Lord began to wane. Then, all at once, several became ill; it was a fever that would not go away. There were no failures, but it

made Naeme more lively; now she had no time to think about the gloom and heaviness. Julius was only a brief memory. The distress of the others lifted her up, and everything of her own disappeared with and also in her. Her jailer also became friendly. One day he told her that now the end of her isolation had come and they would be handed over to another master. Some rejoiced, others mourned. But Naeme said: "Let it come as it will! The Lord knows about everything and will bring everything to a good end."

That was true - the other day chariots came, as well as many people, including some priests. Samuel did not see Naeme. The people willingly got into the wagons. They were threatened that if they did not go willingly, violence would be used. The men separately and the women separately. Voluntarily Naeme went with the unclean; she knew that without the Lord's will, nothing could happen to her. Without much delay, they proceeded.

From the wagon they saw that it was going along the Jordan River. About noon they rested, the food was little. And all at once their hands and feet were bound.

Naeme now sees her brother. She does not say a word, but in her heart she has a pain, she is bled dry. She turns her face away. As the others come and also want to bind Naeme and the sick, they are frightened and reproach Samuel for taking the unclean and just leaving his sister Naeme with the unclean.

"It is my firm will, and it will remain so!" - is his word. But the others are afraid of Samuel.

The transport continued, further towards an uncertain fate. Naeme is bound with hands and feet to the sick. Through her love, hope enters her heart, and she sings her mother's favorite psalm: "Praise the Lord who dwells in Zion, proclaims among all peoples His doings, He remembers and asks for the blood of the poor. Lord, be merciful to me, behold my affliction among my enemies, Who lifts me up out of the gates of death, that I may declare all Your mercy, and that I may rejoice in Your help. Sela!"

Samuel, riding a mule close by, cried out: "Stop, stop, or you will know the whip!"

Naeme, however, continued to sing, she was not misled, nor did she know that it was Samuel shouting like that. Then Samuel rode up to the wagon and shouted: "Stop and do not drive me to extremes. Sing your death song, but not the one that angers me!"

"Surely this will do you no harm in your temple glory, Samuel, or has it also come to this, that you could forget your mother? Samuel, Samuel, turn back, for you are going forth to dreadful things! Are you already so hardened that a psalm of thanksgiving will put you out of joint? What will happen to you when you stand before the judgment seat of God and his Son Jesus? Then you won't be able to shout: 'Stop it!' - when the call of God enters your ears 'too late!'"

"Be silent and do not disturb me further! Now may it be proved who is stronger: I or your crucified Jesus!"

"Samuel, you have broken the rod over yourself! Now I will not answer you, for Jesus is holy to me!"

Naeme looks sharply at her brother, snuggles up to the sick and lets Samuel go.

The campsite was reached. The wagons pulled together, as they had done perhaps a hundred times before. The shackles were removed from the prisoners, and they

encamped in a large circle. The drovers tended their animals, and the guards walked around the camp.

Hoofbeats were heard. The guards look up, Romans ride like the storm wind into the camp, jump from their horses and quickly the guards are deprived of their weapons, before they can make use of them.

"Where is the leader of this caravan?" - cries Julius - "for it was he who provided this caravan."

Then Samuel came and asked who was asking for him. Samuel looks the Roman cheekily in the face and say: "By what right do you disarm my people? Since when do the Romans attack peaceful caravans?"

"By the right of humanity! Where is your permission to transport people like merchandise?"

Said Samuel: "We are priests and do not need permission according to the chartered right of the emperor."

"So, people. Make sure that you do not lose your mind! Now I want to see first whether these people also went along voluntarily. If I find only one or the other, then do not count on me to let mercy go before justice. I told you once: Beware that I do not catch you in an unlawful act, because then you will experience the full severity of the law, and I believe this is the case now!"

Samuel was so quickly bound, he could not resist. Then Julius walked towards the circle of people, and the first one he saw, was Naeme. He rushed toward her, who was about to fall down with fright, lifted her up with strong arms and pressed her to his breast, covering her mouth with hot kisses.

Naeme livened up and said, crying: "Julius, what have you done? You are lost! You kissed me, we are unclean!"

"So be clean in Jesus' name, and also all those who are unclean! No, no, Naeme, now you are given to me by the Lord! I will not leave you again until you have become my wife!"

Naeme leans tightly against Julius, and only now does she see her sisters, they are truly healthy! Everything unclean is as if taken away! Then she says: "Samuel challenged the Lord, what happened to him?"

Said Julius: "Do not worry about that one. The court will deal with him. For once, in our joy, let us not forget the others, tell everyone aloud that they have their freedom back! But I want to clear up the unpleasant first."

The other Templars would have gladly fled, but the Romans had their eyes everywhere. Julius asked the Templars: "Are you volunteers, or are you commanded? Speak freely and openly!"

"Lord" - says one - "we are under compulsion, we would rather have stayed at home!"

"That changes the picture, we will negotiate with each other later. Now I want to speak to the owner of the caravan!"

Schyba had already brought him by the arm to Julius and said: "Deal with this one according to the Spirit of the Lord, for he served me and also you."

Julius reached out his hand to the merchant and said: "Dear friend! You are decidedly unlucky this time. But because I am all the more fortunate - for among the captives is my bride - I want your misfortune to turn out to be your good fortune. Don't you want to bring this caravan to the place I wish? You will also sell your goods in Joppa at a good price. I guarantee your expenses and the corresponding earnings."

"Well, so be it!" - replies the merchant. "As a Roman, I may trust your words. Command, and I will carry out everything according to your wishes with the best of my knowledge and conscience."

"That's right, let nothing be lacking! I hope to get along well with you, and so be it known to you at once, I am like those who were prisoners in your wagon, a Christian."

"Then I do not understand your action with Samuel, who is bound, for all the Christians were calm, quiet, and devoted, while you stand like an avenger."

"Yes, an avenger, but only to those who with wantonness transgressed the law of humanity, like Samuel the priest just now. But don't worry, I will become a friend and helper to those who repent of their wrongdoing and want to mend their ways. Therefore, it is dear to me that you have confidence in me. We will be together for about eight days."

8. Julius as a herald of the love of Jesus and the conversion of Vespanus

That evening, a true day of joy had come to a close. When the evening meal had been distributed, all the animals had been taken care of, and Samuel had been placed in safekeeping on a wagon, Julius took the opportunity to describe the glorious love of the Master and Savior Jesus, as he experienced Him in Bethany and also in Joppa. How the crowd listened to his words, how their hearts thawed after the suffering they had experienced, and how their hearts were full of gratitude that they now experienced the Savior quite differently from how He had lived in them! How gladly one or the other would have asked something, but they were not yet so free. But they were also shocked by the news that all hell had broken loose on earth in Jerusalem and that no world-power had any right any longer to reject the temple rulers within its borders.

Julius said: "Naeme is the last great proof of this! Not even her father knows about it, and he is also a priest. But now I will present to you the Master of Love in another light. Many of your loved ones have known Him, many of your loved ones have perhaps experienced blessings of His love, or you as a child have been blessed by Him! All this has produced an impression of His power, might and greatness in you, and the image of His greatness animates you always and forever! With me, as with Naeme, the image of the glorious Savior is different. What we experienced as greatness, as power in Him, was born from His love, His humility, His devotion, and was revealed through the Spirit, who made us full of the liveliest longing to see Him too, to experience Him, which was also satisfied! Yes, this longing has been satisfied, because what we hoped for from outside has become us, has become ours through His love, which became our property. This love, which is His life in us, wants to help, serve and please. In this love, I give back to the Savior Jesus the power of His love and the greatness of His life revealed to us, and I myself become a source of His living love.

Oh my dear friends, sisters and brothers! I knew Jehovah through the law and the words of the prophets before I came to Jerusalem. It left me cold, although I had to acknowledge some wisdom. When I met with the people in Bethany, I experienced a different life. My task was to see clearly, because in my parents' house they also lived faithfully to our gods. How life schooled me, how evil and suffering moved me, and our priests were callous! Just as callous as I experienced it in the Jewish priests. And now in Bethany, the opposite! Suffering was opening their hearts more and more. The Spirit of the glorious Master Jesus led them all into still deeper depths of the eternal Godhead, and they became aware of the high position into which they were lifted by the great Savior's love. How poor I was before, how rich we are now! How rich you are that through the guidance of His love, you may now recognize your position with Jesus, for it was not I who could set you free, but He! I was only the instrument of His love, grace and mercy.

Now we step out into life! We are placed completely free by grace, He does not even oblige us to give thanks. Therefore, our life should be one of thanksgiving, rejoicing, serving and giving, which first of all pleases the Lord and Savior Jesus and through Him, all people! So let this evening become an experience through which all of you will also recognize the Lord in such a way that He will accomplish everything in you and through you, and He will say: My beloved ones! In this your love I am with you always and forever! Amen!"

Julius fell silent. A ray shone in his heart. He took Naeme to his breast and said to her: "In this Spirit let us be one and seek to embody only one desire, that only Jesus and again Jesus remain our love!"

Early in the morning, Julius had prepared the protocol and a copy and appointed a sub-leader with three men to deliver Samuel to a Roman court. Before doing so, he made one last attempt to persuade Samuel to repent, but it was completely fruitless. He concluded with the words: "So go forth to meet your misery, which will bring upon you the greatest terrors. For through me, Jesus the Nazarene Whom you so hate, gave you His hand of salvation for the last time. And now I tell you, the time is coming once again when tears and again tears will not be able to extinguish your inner fire and burning, and torment and anguish will again and again put your wicked life before your eyes."

But Samuel hissed in anger: "Never, never will I change! I will remain what I am, a despiser of His name and His Spirit!"

Naeme was sad that her brother remained in his hatred, but Julius had to promise to do everything to make the punishment lenient.

How beautiful the journey now turned out to be! The caravan owner now also recognized the value of people to whom respect had to be paid, and he now no longer regarded the message of the Savior Jesus as a fairy-tale. He became more and more calm and hungry for the truth about Jesus. Then the merchant described his experiences, which took a while.

Julius wondered what kind of stories were circulating in the world around Jesus' name. For next to the pure love of Jesus, a poisonous seed had risen that threatened to devour all that was good, and Julius took it upon himself to be vigilant and to lead, only in the spirit of understanding, the erring into the truth about eternal life out of God.

At Joppe, Vespanus caught up with the caravan, whom Julius had sent notice to through express couriers. Martha of Bethany was also in the entourage of Julius' father. Naeme now experienced a love that leans toward Bethany. She constantly thought she was dreaming. But Julius proved again and again that it was only Eternal Love that shapes everything so in living love.

Thus the wedding day approached. Martha was now completely a mother. With a heavenly love she adorned Naeme, and when Julius saw his bride, it was to him as if the figure of Jesus was bringing Naeme to him. He hardly dared to breathe so as not to destroy this image.

Then Martha said: "Julius, as a representative of the high love of the Savior, I bring you Naeme, whom Eternal Love prepared for you, so that with her, you may represent Him in His place and substitute according to the move of your love in Him."

After the wedding, which took place entirely in the Roman rite, was a celebration as has been done in the world of that time. The next day the friends met in the house of Julius, which Vespanus had arranged and which was to be inhabited by Naeme and Martha for the time being, until the future was settled. On this day, the friends experienced Julius as a herald of the great love of the Savior and representative of the truth of God as they had never experienced it before. In this way Julius created an experience for all of them which was directional in their lives.

Not only had Martha already made hearts alive, on that day a glow was kindled that caused all hearts to burn. Martha, in her old, faithful, completely motherly, serving way, did not neglect to serve and care for all. Whatever wishes she could read in their eyes, she fulfilled. Naeme did not even get to perform housewifely duties, because Martha preceded her in everything.

Old Vespanus did not know what happened to him! He had never experienced such love. He said to Julius: "My son, do you also know what a lovely lot has fallen to you? You have been given not only a lovely wife, but also a mother who puts all mothers in the shade."

"I know, father, but it is no mean feat with such help!"

"Why, Julius?"

"Well, because yes, Jesus, and Jesus again, is the driving force and also the executor. At Bethany, hundreds were cared for with such love. There was not one who was deferred there in the least, whether he came as an enemy or a friend."

"Not possible, Julius, it is a mystery to me!"

"It was a mystery to me, too, the first time. But when I was longer acquainted with all, and had to recognize in everything the lord of the house as an example for all people, then, father, I had to ask how all this was possible. These are sacrifices upon sacrifices!"

But Lazarus said: 'Not at all, the sacrifice was only once-off and concerned me alone; I had to overcome everything in me that wanted to prevent me from letting the Spirit rule, which knows no enemies but only friends. Jesus, who was an example for me in everything, once said: 'My brother, become all love, and then love will serve you too!' I never asked whether love, given to an unworthy person, was something lost. I had the conviction that the more I serve in the Spirit of love, the more gloriously I see the image of my Savior Jesus, to whom I give thanks for all possessions and blessings!'"

Vespanus then said: "My Julius - to talk about this any longer, would be a waste! I have experienced enough in Martha, in you and Naeme. I wish I could also say, like Lazarus: 'My Savior, to whom I give thanks for everything!'"

Julius said: "Father, you can and may do it, because Jesus is no longer a man like us, but a man in highest perfection, everything human died on the cross! His Spirit came forth in radiant glow, spiritualizing everything living in His soul, to create a heaven through the power and might of love from Jesus! It is not Jesus who is the builder and creator of your heaven arising in you, but His Spirit stimulates our spirit to grow and mature in love, so that it may become for us a content without which our life would not be alive, but dying."

Vespanus replies: "My son, I have never heard you talk like that. This is too high for me, and yet I feel you are right. Not the least thing could I object to, only I cannot yet represent it. What you tell me about Jesus, I absolutely believe. But what you tell me about yourself, goes too far for me, because without Jesus I have lived up to this hour, and I could not say that my life was one of dying!"

"Father, our life was one of dying - a dying away from the Divine. Now that I know what life is and what life means, I can say this. Our body will also die, since it is a part of what must die. But our soul comes to life only when it is flooded by the Divine, and the divine can come only out of the Divine. What did we know about life? Nothing! What did we know about our soul? Nothing! We knew only that we must die, and that was the end of our

wisdom. Today I know what life is, what life announces to me, and that I shall live forever in the spirit of the glorious Master of love and life!"

Vespanus said: "Julius, what was it that made you so aware and convinced? I too know the teachings of the Savior Jesus! His deeds are sky-high above all that has been, but because of that, I cannot say I will live forever!"

"Oh Father! The Savior's love, if one has not experienced it, is no proof; but not only once, almost all the time I experience it. Just as I was about to pull Naeme to my breast, she said: 'Julius, don't touch, we are unclean!' What did I do? I said in firm confidence: 'So be clean in Jesus' name!' And what did we experience? They all became clean! There sit the cleansed ones. Ask them for how long they were unclean. And the glorious love of the Savior was able to do that! Not only did they become clean, but they also gained eternal life."

"Julius, Julius, you are unrecognizable! Now I really have a desire to experience this Savior's love one day, too!"

A purified one came to Vespanus' table and said: "Even if you had not expressed the desire, I would have had to say this: By the grace of the Lord, I may behold beings no longer in the flesh. Today, on the honorary day of our Naeme, who was our good angel in captivity, she too should experience how wonderfully the Savior's love cares for and wants to please, not only us people who believe, but also the loved ones who cling to us in ardent love.

Two women have stepped into our midst. One is your mother, Naeme; she wears a white dress, but still a black belt, by which is expressed the pain for her son. The other is your mother, Julius, and your wife, high sir. Her eyes shine with joy, and her mouth speaks words that I cannot understand. Both women bless you, dear ones. And on our table they have put a bouquet of the most glorious flowers. Now your mother approaches you, Julius, and takes your hand; leave it to her, and lay it on your father's head."

Julius did according to the urge he felt. He laid not only one, but both hands on his father's head. Then Vespanus said: "Is it really you, Arabella? Yes, it is you. I look into your faithful eyes, which shine much brighter than usual. Oh, now I hear you too; still the dear tone that I liked so well in you. You are happy about the gift of God's love for Julius; do you mean Naeme? There our joys merge! Oh Arabella, why did you have to leave me so soon? I still need you. You say, 'No, because the Savior wants to replace me and give you even greater happiness.'

But there is no such thing, because you were my happiness! You shake your head and say: 'The greatest happiness has he who has received in himself the glorious Savior, like these who came out of the trial by fire! I am to tell you all that the good Father Jesus wants to thank you all most sincerely because you have remained faithful to Him in spite of fear, sorrow and chastisement. He has crowns ready for you, and He wants to be concerned for your further life, as a mother cannot be better. You, dear Julius, shall always feel the loving hand of your eternal Father on the hard path you now have to tread, in holy fulfillment of duty and in love and loyalty to all people. And in the hope of greater graces, do not give up on Samuel so that his mother can wear a white or yellow belt. Open now also your hearts for all - when the vision will be closed, the blessed moment shall come when the Savior Jesus shall be visible to you.'"

The grace was over. Vespanus was about to tell everyone that the vision was over, when everyone saw the Lord coming closer and closer with both hands in blessing. He

approaches Julius and Naeme and speaks to all in an understandable way: "I also do not want to miss and give My love the visible expression! You, Julius, have taken the gift of My love into your care, and you, Naeme, hold fast with all the strength of your love what I give you as proof of My love and faithfulness. Be one in will and ability! Be one in serving and pleasing! What you both do in My Spirit, will be as if I had done it. Those you liberate, will be liberated! And those you have taken into yourselves, I will consider as if I had taken them in. So receive My love in you and in your love in you, enable Me to serve you as your Savior, Friend and Brother! Receive My Father's blessing and abide in Me, so that I may abide in you! Amen!"

Slowly the Lord disappeared before their eyes, but He was still perceptibly in their midst. Then Martha said: "Dear beloved ones! Just as He lived and spoke among us, so I experienced Him in this holy hour. Do you want more proofs of His love? He will remain love for you for all eternity. This is my firm knowing, and through this, I can always give happiness to others."

Vespanus said: "We are children in His eyes, but to us He wants to be Savior, friend and brother! This is much, very much! What a man this must have been! To appropriate this love to me shall be my first commandment, and you, Naeme, will have to have much patience with me!"

"Dearest father, you need not ask your Naeme! She will do her utmost so that you will soon be a joyful and free child of God!"

How happy they all were! They were blessed to be honored by love and to be accepted as children. Thus they all parted with burning, grateful hearts and yet remained united in spirit.

Vespanus gave the newlyweds only seven days, then it was time to part. Couriers went and came. The armies marched to Judea. Naeme, the soldier's wife, was steadfast, and in her heart was the joyful hope of reunion. If she had known how long it would be before the reunion, her eyes would not have shone like that. After a heartfelt kiss and a long wave, Julius disappeared from her eyes, and full of blissful hope, she entered her house. Martha had remained in the house, there she could bless more undisturbed; then she said to Naeme: "Child, now we will be alone for quite a long time and can practice patience. The separation will only be on the outside; the Master will take care of the rest."

9. Eli's last days of life and death. Destruction of the temple

Eli is surprised that a young priest visits him once. It has been a long time since he was visited; he was shunned, and this was Samuel's doing.

"Eli, I come to cause you pain, for I must submit a sad message to you."

"Dear Joseph! What sad thing can you tell me? Everything is sad in me since my wife went to her fathers. How happy I would be if I could go to my fathers too! Naeme is far away, and Samuel is going his own way."

"Eli, I want to tell you something: When your daughter Naeme was on her way from Bethany to Joppa, Samuel your son intercepted your daughter Naeme and took her to the inn of the forsaken among the unclean. For a long time she was there. Then all the Nazarenes were taken away in a wagon by a caravan, Samuel being the leader. Your daughter behaved heroically all the time. Never a complaining sound came from her lips, she was the good angel of all the prisoners. The day we left and camped for the first time, we were all captured by a troop of Romans under Captain Julius, your daughter's husband. I and the other priest were able to leave because we could prove that we were acting under duress. Samuel, however, was handed over to a Roman court. - What awaits your son, we do not know, but this we do know: the Roman went to great lengths to dissuade Samuel from his blind notions. Samuel even became very insolent, and so his fate is sealed."

"Joseph, it has come to pass as I predicted. I have no more tears for him. After all, Samuel is to blame for everything. What did you think of Naeme? Is she still healthy after being with the unclean for so long?"

"Dear Eli, that was the miracle! Samuel wanted to make everyone unclean, but only those who were unclean remained unclean! When the Roman freed all, the first thing he did, was to make the sick well in the name of Jesus. Have you ever heard that a Roman, a Gentile, could make sick people well, and lepers at that? I haven't yet. The high priest will make eyes when I describe to him the thing as I reported it to you now."

"Joseph, will you grant me a request? Your whole life's happiness depends on it. Leave the temple! Go somewhere where you can lay down your priestly glory and start another life. Samuel will not come back. Leave the temple in the belief that you too have become a victim. You know how I would like to leave the temple; they hold me like a criminal because I know too much. If you knew only a fraction of all this, you would not have returned. Again, the healing by the Roman is the proof for you that Jesus is alive after all and will live, despite the temple and its ugliness. I too have accepted the teaching of the Nazarene and do my service in the temple in Jesus' name. How misguided was our life! How foolish of us to spend our lives in discord and hatred! What we have failed to do, cannot be recovered; but what you have done wrong, you can now make right. By the way, the temple will soon see its last days. The fruit is overripe. The words of Jesus will come true, that not one stone will be left upon another!"

"Eli, do you really believe that the temple will be destroyed? Surely it cannot be the will of Jehovah?"

"Jehovah will not will it. But the conduct of the priests is such that it is no longer Jehovah who lives in the house of the Lord, but His adversary! Therefore, save yourself for your salvation! It is not about me; I have too much to make up for, and I shall perish with the temple!"

"Eli, you act as if this is all a done deal; I can't believe it!"

"Belief or no belief, act as a wise man and save your soul. There is nothing Divine left in the house of the Lord!"

"Eli, I will consider it all. You will not be so wrong, for Samuel has set too much evil before us!"

"Leave Samuel, he has poisoned his own life and that of a thousand others with it. What have I asked of him! Now it has come to pass, as I told him. What a glorious life we could live under Roman protection, and therefore is my word to you: Become a Roman! They will take anyone who is honest and able to do something. You have a good education, so go and do it! God be with you!"

When Eli was alone, everything came back to him. Samuel had intercepted Naeme, days before she had asked him to come with her. "Oh, if only I had gone with her! In her kindness, my tired and sore soul would have been healed. Oh Samuel, now hardship is coming upon you because you have brought so much hardship upon others. And yet I am the guilty one, because I raised him that way! But Naeme opened my and Hannah's eyes, and so we could take hold of the saving hand of Jesus. Oh Jesus! You are incomprehensible in Your love and You are the right One in everything! Oh let me know You more and more, and make good my faults and sins!"

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Julius forced himself to be calm. He could not turn back soon enough to that which so attracted him. 'Duty above all else' - that was his motto. So he had to be an example to his people, and he felt in himself the power that came from the Master of Love, and once again he gave thanks for the happiness he was allowed to experience. But he was now completely a soldier. On the way to Jericho, a courier reached him, inviting him to the trial. Great changes had taken place in Jericho. Large reinforcements had arrived. A legion was approaching to draw a circle around Jerusalem.

The trial brought to light all the wickedness of the temple. Then Samuel rolled all the guilt onto the temple. But all this did not help, death was certain for him. Julius, however, moved the court to such an extent that the punishment was changed to ten years in the galleys. Discussion with Samuel could no longer happen, because Samuel refused.

After months, the ring was drawn around Jerusalem. The Jews who made a stand, were beaten back step by step. The victorious advance of the Romans could no longer be stopped. Julius' life was more than once in the greatest danger. But soon some gates were free, which led into the interior of the city. Orders were given to spare the temple; but the fighting was so fierce, that the temple was affected after all. There was fire in all places. Julius, who was fighting there, ordered the fire to be extinguished. He wanted to preserve the magnificent building by all means, but the fury of the fire was too great and too powerful, so he wanted to at least save human lives.

A priest was still at an altar, a burning beam had seriously injured him, he lay collapsed on the ground. Julius noticed it and quickly rushed to help, picked him up and carried him out

of the hearth of fire, where the battle was still raging. Now he recognized the priest - it was Eli, Naeme's father. He carried him out of the battle and wanted to examine the wounds.

Then Eli opened his eyes and recognized Julius and said: "My son, now you make up for everything I missed. I know I must die; do not leave me alone in my last hour!"

"Father" - said Julius - "do not worry about anything! Jesus, the Savior, makes all things good, and in His name I tell you, He saw your repentance, your good will to make amends. He has accepted you too, and so confidently cross over with Him into His kingdom! His love wants you too!"

"What does Naeme do?" - his lips whispered - "Naeme, you love!"

"She is my wife, and far from here, where there are no terrors of war, and is happy with Martha!"

"Thanks, a thousand thanks, my son! Now I will gladly go. Hannah beckons - Hannah, Hannah, I'm coming!"

Eli was gone. Julius could not take care of the dead man; but he took one roll from him, it was the record of John, which stuck out of his robe. He called a soldier to him and gave him orders to carry the dead priest, who was his father-in-law, to a quiet place, and then to designate a spot for him to bury him later. Then he hurried back into the thick of the battle. The next day he was able to take care of Eli's burial. He felt light when the sad task was done.

10. Samuel's end

If Julius hoped that the war would soon be over, his hope was sorely tested. He was tied up in Judea for almost two years, only then orders came to embark for Tyre from the port of Caesarea. His father sent word that he would stay in Tyre, where Naeme and Martha would be waiting for him. With that longing he was drawn to Naeme!

* * *

Naeme had moved to Tyre at the instigation of her father-in-law. Vespanus provided the ship and arranged for a dwelling for his son quite befitting his dignity. Naeme was treated and looked after with all love and care, for she was looking forward to her delivery. When everything was settled in Tyre to the greatest satisfaction, it took only a few weeks and Naeme gave birth to her first son, who was given the name of his father: Alexander Julius.

In the meantime, many became acquainted with Martha and Naeme; a lively interaction developed. Martha in her serving love was the soul of it all and a large congregation arose in Tyre. High dignitaries went in and out of Martha and Naeme's home; in fact, Naeme called their home: New Bethany!

Long before the coming home of Julius became known, Vespanus stayed with his daughter Naeme and with mother Martha, as he called her. They enjoyed hours of heartfelt love and tranquillity. And closer and closer he came to the Lord and Master, whom he divinely revered. The love for Him was only a slow glow; for this the very war was to blame, which outwardly so hardened his heart.

Martha, surrounding him with love, said: "Brother, your heart must glow in a holy fire! It is not love for Him that makes you long for His person, but that your eyes no longer see shadows in your fellow man. I know that this will be the most difficult thing for you, because your concepts of honor are based on justice. Set yourself completely on love, and your honor will be shone with a much more glorious light. Sow love, and you will be amazed at the harvest you will experience. Scatter seeds even where you are feared, in the Spirit of our Loving Master, and you will experience joy upon joy in what friends you will win, and all this with Jesus!"

Vespanus smiled and said: "Jesus could have gained no better representative than you. For truly, every word falls on fertile ground. I am only curious to know how Julius stands by his Jesus, for truly he has a great part in this victory."

Martha said: "Brother Julius will still be the same. I feel his love and his thoughts, they are always with us."

A whole fleet had gathered at Caesarea to take the soldiers to their new garrison. Captain Julius was on the flagship with them. Taking an interest in everything, he also went to the rowing room. About sixty rowers were chained to the benches; they were galley convicts. Going through them, he sees Samuel rowing, his leg locked to the chain. He goes to the ship's captain and asks to speak to the chained man, it is granted. Samuel is led to Julius, and Julius asks him how he feels about his life now and if he has any regrets about his failed life.

"Your father is dead. He died in the temple. There is no longer a temple in Jerusalem. Jesus' words have come true! Not one stone has been left upon another."

"What do I have to do with you? You are the destroyer of my life. You have poisoned Naeme with a love that the Nazarene brought to you from hell. I would rather be dead than associate with you any longer."

Julius says: "Samuel, for the last time I make this request to you: turn back and throw the past far behind you. I will plead for your pardon, because you are my brother-in-law."

But Samuel says: "Never, never will I go with you, you traitors to Jehovah! This is my last word."

Julius left Samuel standing. He gave the keeper a wave to lead the prisoner back down to the oar. It hurt him, for Naeme's sake. Nevertheless, he interceded so that Samuel would no longer be locked to the chain and would be given some liberties. But how did Samuel repay him? He incited and fomented against the Romans and brought it to the point that some mutinied. Samuel as the instigator was sentenced to death, the others to life sentences in the galleys. Julius was shaken. He reproached himself because Samuel abused the relief he had received.

But the ship's captain said: "My friend, what a pity for every good thought you waste on this person! For him, your love was weakness. If you had taken the whip and beaten him until he could no longer writhe in pain, he might have cowered and crawled to his knees. You will live to see it; in his death throes, he will still curse you."

"When will the sentence be carried out?" asked Julius.

"Tomorrow morning at sunrise he will be dragged up by the yardarm with his feet, his hands tied behind his back. Or have you other plans for him? I'll have a cross erected, too, if you want it."

"No, no, I won't come out of the cabin all day until it's all over. If I had one request, don't let him suffer too long."

"Julius, I respect your merciful love, but a deterrent example must be set according to the court's order. Perhaps I can still find a way out to serve you."

At dawn, all the prisoners were brought on deck. Julius could not be induced to come up. Samuel, bound, was closely guarded. The judge once again pronounced the sentence; then the convicts had to pull Samuel up by his feet with long ropes. Some convicts had to fasten Samuel suspended in the air so far out that he hung between the sky and the water. All day the convicts had to take turns watching this. There was also nothing to eat that day, because they did not report that Samuel was trying to stir them up.

Samuel was calm at first, he still hoped for a pardon. But when he did not get to see Julius, he became restless. He was quickly pulled up by his fellow prisoners. But when he was pushed out over the water, he begged: "Let me fall into the water." It was no longer possible, for the soldiers were trained, and they would not be deceived. There was a strong guard with the prisoners. Samuel cried out with all the strength at his command, but no-one moved. Towards noon, when the sun burned down mercilessly, he became calmer, only moaning could be heard. It looked as if he were dead, but from time to time, he still moved. A pleasant faintness took away his senses.

Then the prisoners were brought down again, and a sub-leader had heavy stones brought up. The teams had to line up and do target practice with the heavy stones towards the hanging man. A good throw soon hit him on the head, blood oozing from a wide wound.

Now the sub-leader urged his men to hit better, so that he and they would be delivered from the evil. Then the stones just hailed against the body, and all life seemed to be over. The sub-leader reported the death of the executed man to his captain, who came and looked at the bloody corpse. He then gave orders to cut it off and let it fall into the water. In a short time, Samuel was no longer to be seen - as a dead man, he went to the fish.

Julius was informed, but he communed with the Lord and freed his inner being from the pressure that threatened to crush him. He asked for a word from the Lord and for mercy for the lost one, but in his heart it remained silent and still. 'How should I tell Naeme? Should I keep it quiet?' He could not cope with the thoughts, and so the journey to Tyre remained a torment to him.

11. Conclusion

At last they were on the coast of Tyre. Already from afar they saw the people who were waiting for them. Dressed in festive robes, everyone was on their feet. The flagship was the first to be caught up by the barges and pulled to the unloading ramp. On deck, the crews were ordered, and united they walked from the ship to the open harbor square, where the festively decorated crowd greeted their returning soldiers with cheers that Tyre had not yet experienced. After all, it was time to honor the victors!

Soon the ceremony was over, and the teams were given the day off. Julius looked for his father and Naeme. Naeme had seen her Julius for a long time already, and finally he saw her too, and Naeme held her son out to him. Julius embraced them both and said: "At last, at last I have you again! And you come and bring me this wonderful gift."

"Your son, Julius. This hour erases all thoughts of longing. This hour is the reward of all waiting, and now all shall be forgotten that lay so oppressively upon me all this time. Now come home! Father did not want to diminish your happiness, so he is waiting for us at home."

"Yes, Naeme, your father has gone home. He was there during the fighting. We alone remained in Judea until it was completely settled."

Vespanus embraced his son and said: "Julius, I don't want to see any more of all that business. Martha and Naeme taught me otherwise. I can no longer be a soldier, having recognized in your Jesus a perfection of love that cannot stand the harshness of being a soldier."

"Father, now my happiness is complete! Now there is only life in and with Jesus."

"Amen" - said Martha - "now Jesus will come to His right here, too, and we will do everything to make ourselves worthy of this glorious love. But that your happiness may be perfect, our glorious Savior bids you, saying: 'Be aware in all things that nothing, even the smallest thing, happens without My will. You had to fight your battle with yourself only because of Samuel. You did more than your duty as a brother. Yes, what you did, filled the Lord's heart with joy. As a representative of His love, you offered your reconciling hand for conversion, felt the pain that burned in Jesus' breast as much as in yours. He who scornfully rejects such grace, must be educated by the means that lie only in holy earnestness."

Eli is saved thanks to his love. The gate is open for him. But Samuel has slammed the gate shut, and so only time can complete the work you began on him in love through the grace of Jesus.

So also Eternal Love welcomes you to your home! Be a brother to all, be an example to all in the love that should and can live as a child from the heart of God. Behind all that is past, forget the evil, and see before you the holy success of the work, that the Son of God may be crowned in you and in those whom you make His own in your love."

Julius also resigned from his profession as a soldier and became a judge with provisional powers. It was for him the way he walked in the Spirit of Jesus. Blessing after blessing blossomed from his actions, and it was Naeme who felt the need of all, for whom only the love of Jesus could become the saving and redeeming factor. But everyone who went in

and out of the house of the town-judge, experienced the Spirit of Bethany - the Love that died for all and brought salvation for all people.

