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Rose Aspinall
PraiseGathering Music Group
praisegathering.com



Jesus

NO OTHER KING

Created by Randy Vader and Jay Rouse
Drama Companion
by Rose Aspinall

Characters

Simon – An olive farmer, dark, strong, forties or fifties, part of the Jewish community living in the region of Cyrenaica, husband of Rivka, father to Alexander and Rufus

Rivka – Wife of Simon, approximately the same age, devoted, warm

Alexander- older son of Simon and Rivka, early teen

Rufus – younger son of Simon and Rivka, pre-teen

Jesus – Non-speaking

Crowd at Crucifixion

Setting

Scene 1 - The home of Simon, a small flat roofed building. Simple furnishings: rolled up mats for sleeping, low table, wooden stools, clay oil lamps, earthen jar and bowl for washing hands. A Mezuzah is attached to the doorpost of the home.

Scene 2 – Rented room in Bethany. If you use the same building for both scenes, make some simple changes in the appearance to indicate the change in location: a wooden ladder that leads to the roof, a small fence, some plants. Shifting the angle of the building would also change the appearance.

Simon clings to his Jewish heritage even as the culture around him continually erodes his belief in the one true God. Long years have passed since he last saw his parents in his beloved Yerushalayim (pronounced Ye-ru-sha-la-yim). Simon longs for two things; to see his family again and to celebrate Passover in the Holy City with them. Even while Simon faithfully follows the rituals of his faith, he wonders why God allows His people to suffer. He chafes against the Romans and their burdensome taxes. “If this is what it means to be ‘chosen’ then choose someone else,” he thinks secretly.

As for himself, how did he end up here - a thousand miles away from the land of his people? He longs for that land. It is his heritage. His heart echoes the Psalm “If I forget you, Yerushalayim, may my right hand wither away!” Simon comes to view his life as one of continually being in the wrong place at the wrong time. A Jew belongs in Jerusalem. A good Jew should help care for his aging parents. And what of Eli, his brother? Once they were close. But that was before Eli got sick. Where was he now?

Simon finds himself carried along by events that bewilder him. His once idealistic nature is giving way to cynicism and the claims of false Messiahs anger him. But for the sake of his beloved Rivka and his

young sons, he continues hoping and longing.

Some insights on Jewish ritual:

Shema: The oldest fixed daily prayer in Judaism is the Shema. Shema is a declaration of faith, a pledge of allegiance to One God. This consists of Deut. 6:4-9, Deut. 11:13-21, and Num. 15:37-41. The first paragraph commands us to speak of these matters "when you retire and when you arise." From ancient times, this Mitzvah (*commandment*) was fulfilled by reciting the Shema twice a day: morning and night. (*For our purposes here, we will only be using the first paragraph.*)

Netilas Yadayim: (Washing of hands) For meals, as a religious (not hygienic) ritual, it is done in a specified way. It is customary to fill a vessel with water, and pour the water over the hands. The most common practice is to pour first over the right hand three times, then the left three times. A little of the water from the last pouring is left in the palm of the left hand, and with this both hands are rubbed together. Since the washing is preparation for eating, there is no talking between washing and eating the bread.

Mezuzah: from the Hebrew for "doorpost", a small parchment inscribed with short Torah passages in Hebrew. The parchment is rolled up, placed in a decorative case, and attached to the doorpost of Jewish homes. The mezuzah is fastened on the outside of the door post and usually on the right hand side as one enters. It should be within the upper third of the doorway, and hung diagonally with the top of the case leaning into the house. When entering the house, it is customary to kiss the finger tips and touch the mezuzah. The mezuzah serves as a reminder of God's laws and presence and is a symbol of Jewish identity.

Song: Jesus, No Other Name

Narrator: (*page 7*) Yes – this is love's greatest story. It is a story of a King who relinquished all the riches that were His to take on all the debt that was ours.

It is a story of a King who offered His divine perfection to atone for our human imperfection.

So, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross.

This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.

This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Glorify the Lord with me;

Let us exalt His name together. (Hebrews 12:2/ John 4:9-10)

SCENE 1

Next year in Yerushalayim

(before page 15)

It is Friday evening, Shabbat. Simon, returning from his day's work, pauses for a moment before entering his home.

Simon: *(Looking up as he addresses Adonai with a shake of his finger, a la Tevye from Fiddler on the Roof)* Tonight, tonight I could use your help. Perhaps You will talk with Rivka to pave the way a bit? The journey won't be an easy one, You know. If we are to endure sea sickness, it would be good to have her on my side. *(He starts to enter the house, pauses and turns back, addressing Adonai again)* Another thing, You might tell my parents to expect me. It's been years. They might not recognize me. They're not getting any younger. And me, I'm not as young as I once was either. *(rubbing his stiff back)* Taxes and Romans have a way of aging a man. Would it hurt if You did away with them? They're worse than the fruit flies that destroy my crops. I'm not complaining... although, I have been waiting for Messiah for a long time. I know, I know, You have Your own timing. But it seems that if You just sent Him, it would save us all a lot of trouble. *(he turns to go in again, kisses his fingertips, touches the Mezuzah on the doorpost, then turns back one more time, pauses as he looks up again)* Oh, the olives? Best harvest in years! Thank you.

He enters. Rivka and their two sons, Alexander and Rufus have been waiting for him. Simon greets them.

**Alexander
and Rufus:** Shalom Abba.

Rivka: *(a towel tossed over her shoulder)* Shalom, husband. I was about to send your sons after you.

Simon: Shalom. *(He gives her a quick embrace)* Forgive me, some business with the Almighty that couldn't wait. *(She gives him a quizzical look. He sniffs the air)* Smells good.

Rivka: *(smiling and drying her hands)* Wash and we'll eat.

Simon: *(repeats the blessing as he washes and dries his hands, follow instructions on page 1)* Blessed are you, Lord, our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us concerning washing of hands.

They gather around the table which holds 2 candles and two covered loaves of bread, drink(s) and bowls of soup and cheese.

Rivka: *(lighting the candles, then covering her eyes she recites)* Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has made us holy through His commandments and commanded us to kindle the Sabbath light.

Simon: *(removes the cover from the two loaves of bread, lifting them while reciting the following blessing)* Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth. Amen.

Simon rips the bread into pieces and passes them around the table. They begin their meal.

Simon: *(dipping his bread in his soup and addressing his sons)* The harvest is ready. After this Shabbat's rest, there will be many long days of work.

Alexander: *(excited)* We're ready to help, Abba.

Simon: Rufus, Alexander is older now and has new duties. He will not be able to watch out for you. You must make sure that you stay with Avram. You can help him at the trees.

Rufus: Why can't I help Alexander, Abba?

Simon: Your time will come, Rufus. You must allow Alexander to get used to his new duties.

Rufus: *(disappointed)* Yes, Abba.

Simon: Alexander, are you clear on what you must do?

Alexander: Yes, Abba. I'll be ready.

Rivka: Enough talk of work then. Finish up. It's dark already. Today we rest. Tomorrow we work. *(They get up from the table)*

Simon: Your mother is right. *(motioning to them)* Come, come.

Simon places both hands on each child as he says a blessing over them.

Simon: May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh. *(They remain beside him while he recites the Shema, covering his eyes with his right hand he enunciates each word clearly)* Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and your gates.

Rivka blows out the candles and begins to clear the table.

Simon: Now off to bed, both of you.

Alexander and Rufus in turn kiss their parents good night.

Alexander: Yes, Abba, lilah tov. *(lye-lah tohv; good night)*

Rufus: Lilah tov, Abba. Lilah tov, Imi. *(ee-mee, mother)*

Alexander and Rufus exit to go to bed. Simon and Rivka step outside and talk before retiring.

Rivka: *(surveying the night sky)* How clear the stars are tonight!

Simon: *(Preoccupied)* Yes, and with the harvest ready there is much to do. Alexander is excited to be responsible to oversee the loading. He's ready, but there can be no delays or the crop will be a loss. Perhaps Rufus can help shake the trees instead of picking up olives. He'll feel more grown up and won't miss Alexander's company so much.

Rivka: *(interrupting she slips her arm through his and says firmly)* You are a good father, Simon. But today is Sabbath, not harvest day and *(pointedly)* tonight, the stars are clear.

Simon: *(Repeating her words absently)* The stars are clear... *(now really looking)* The stars are clear. Dear Rivka, forgive me, I'm afraid I've yet to lay aside the day's work.

Rivka: *(Chiding)* Not only today's work, Simon, but the season's as well. *(seeing his chagrin)* It's alright, I know how hard you work and I've seen the olives. They are beautiful this season. But, sometimes I think you grieve the loss of even one of them.

Simon: *(passionately)* They're our passage, Rivka. Each one takes us a step closer to our dream. *(with satisfaction)* It's been a calm season, not too much rain and this year the Holy One seems to have sent the fruit flies north. The trees hang full as an expectant mother and they'll deliver a fine crop indeed.

Rivka: Yes, and you won't sleep until they are all safely in the presses.

Simon: *(Smiling affectionately)* You know me well, wife.

Rivka: Easy lessons after 30 years. Life teaches us many things, if we're patient and want to learn.

Simon: I've learned that with such a harvest the Romans will take half of my profits.

Rivka: *(Countering)* I've learned, that Adonai is faithful and we will have our daily bread.

Simon: *(Smiling ruefully)* And I've learned that my wife won't let me court cynicism and that I'm a better man because of it. *(taking her hands in his)* But listen, I have news. *(he pauses for effect, closely watching her reaction)* This year's harvest is the one.

Rivka: The one?

Simon: *(Barely containing his excitement)* Yes, when we're paid, it will be enough. We can book passage, enough for all of us, Rivka. We celebrate Passover in Yerushalayim this year. I've already spoken to the captain of a freighter. We leave from the port of Apollonia. We'll arrive just before Passover. It's all worked out.

Rivka: *(Stunned)* This year? You're sure? But I thought...

Simon: *(Interrupting)* I know... what you thought. You thought... all these years of doing without, all these years of saving... you thought it wouldn't happen. You thought it would never be enough. I'm right, yes? But, my dear Rivka, in this one thing I have never lost hope; me, the cynical one. *(shaking his head)* It's been the one dream that I couldn't do without, like hoping for Messiah.

(Agitated) How many years have we said “next year in Yerushalayim”? How many years have we said, perhaps this year He will come? Every year we wait while Rome mocks us. But this year, this one thing will be different. This year, I will be in the right place at the right time. Not far away from my parents, but celebrating Passover with them in my homeland. You understand what this means to me?

Rivka: After 30 years? I think I know.

They continue looking at the stars in silence for a moment. Finally Rivka speaks.

Rivka: Simon?

Simon: Yes

Rivka: Adonai has been faithful. We have a good life right here in this place. We are a family. We have our sons.

Simon: You always speak the truth, even when I would rather not hear it. I count on that. And yet, there are always the unanswered questions.

Rivka: Not all questions have answers. I’m content with that.

Simon: *(frustrated)* Adonai has the answers, wife. Haven’t I been faithful? Wasn’t it David who asked “Who may stand in His holy place”? And isn’t the answer, “He who has clean hands and a pure heart?” All my life, I’ve sought to fulfill these commandments. And yet the unanswered questions persist. Why was Eli stricken? Why? He wasn’t just my brother Rivka, he was my closest friend. *(passionately)* I can still see him standing there all alone. They made me turn my back on him! He was weeping as he spoke the required “unclean”! Where is the justice in that? He was cast out and I never saw him again. Does Adonai see him? Does Adonai see me? Does He remember that we are still waiting for Messiah?

Rivka: *(looking at him intently)* Do not grasp the knife of your suffering by the blade, husband. Grasp it by the handle so it will serve you, not cut you. Adonai knows your questions. When Messiah comes, He’ll set things right.

Simon: *(finally)* Forgive me, tonight was to be a night of celebration. I’ve done my best to spoil it by reliving the past. I do continue to hope, in spite of myself. And this year a dream is realized. You’ll go with me, and our sons?

Rivka: Willingly. After 30 years, the dream is not yours alone. *(he smiles at her tenderly)*

Simon: Have you noticed how clearly you can see the stars tonight?

Rivka: *(smiling, she lays her head on his shoulder)* Yes, husband, I noticed.

Simon looks up at the sky and mouths, “Thank you”.

Lights fade.

Song: Sing Hallelujah!

Narration for Sing Hallelujah!, ms. 2-30

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;
for He founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.

Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place?

He who has clean hands and a pure heart,

Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors,

that the King of Glory may come in.

Who is this King of Glory?

The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors,

that the King of Glory may come in.

Who is He, this King of Glory?

The Lord Almighty— He is the King of Glory!

The King of Glory is about to enter the ancient gates. He will come in the person of Jesus – the Christ.

As Passover draws near, the population of Jerusalem grows by the hour. God's children from near and far converge on this city to remember and celebrate the ancient miracle that led to their exodus from Egypt.

Those who have endured the long journey gain new excitement as the Holy City begins to appear on the horizon glowing like a great diamond in the desert.

God's chosen and loved people are back in their homeland – they have come to worship and to sing praises to Jehovah.

Song: Ancient of Days Triumphant Processional

Narration for Ancient of Days Triumphant Processional

In the midst of the celebration there is a disturbance beyond the Eastern Gate. Word spreads quickly that Jesus is coming to Jerusalem.

Some rush through the gate to meet Him. They join those who have been coming with Jesus from Bethany. As the two crowds unite, the excitement is electric.

Jesus enters the Holy city through the Eastern Gate, the prophesied entrance into Jerusalem for Messiah.

The enemies of the Master are keenly aware of the prophesy, and the joyous abandon of the multitude fuels their hatred.

But this is the Lord's moment, and the crowd showers adulation on Christ as He rides in triumph.

SCENE 2

Sunrise in Bethany

(begins before page 45 –What Kind of King?)

It is just after sunrise on the morning after Simon, Rivka, Alexander and Rufus have arrived in Bethany, just 2 miles outside of Yerushalayim, where Simon has managed to find a room to rent. Having arrived after Jesus has entered the city in triumph; they find the whole of Bethany and Yerushalayim in a state of excitement. Everyone is talking about Jesus. Alexander and Rufus are already out exploring the city. Simon and Rivka are seated on mats and sharing bread and boiled eggs. They are obviously excited to be there.

Rivka: I would not have thought we would be able to find a room to rent so quickly with Passover so near. And right here in Bethany, just a short walk to Yerushalayim. A blessing after such a long journey!

Simon: *(holding a chunk of bread and tearing off a piece to eat. He speaks rapidly)* Yes, there will be thousands going into the city this morning. I'll take lunch with me. I don't expect to return until after nightfall. When I get into the city, I'll inquire after my father and mother. *(hopeful)* If Adonai wills, we share Passover with them this year.

Rivka: Alexander and Rufus couldn't sleep, they were so excited. *(Shaking her head)* Up and out at the crack of dawn! No doubt, they have already seen and heard enough to fill our ears with endless stories.

Simon: I've made arrangements to meet them at the synagogue for the evening service. It's a good thing you sent lunch with them as well. They'll be ravenous.

Rivka: We'll eat after you come back. There's much to do here. When I draw the water, it will give me a chance to hear more about this Jesus. Did you hear all they were saying last night? What do you make of it, Simon? It seems the whole city is taken with Him. *(incredulous)* They say that He raised a man from the dead right here in Bethany.

Simon: I say, don't believe everything you hear. Jews are so anxious for Messiah that we create him easily enough. This Jesus, I'm told is a carpenter from Nazareth. Does that sound like a Messiah? No, I expect Messiah will have better credentials than wood working.

Rivka: Surely you're right, but last night I spoke with Lydia. Her husband owns this room. She said Jesus was back in Bethany and they had just come from the home of a man where Jesus stayed for dinner. She said his name was Simon too – Simon the leper!