

Four Roads Diverged

The day had finally come for young Micah, son of Madon, heir of the house of Henosh. It was time for him to leave on a mission of his own for the honor of his father and the building up again of his family's wealth and reputation. If he would find good success in this venture and resolve this caravan trade dispute in the upper Galilee it would reverberate all the way to Jerusalem. Men of the established aristocracy of all Judea would say, "Yes, it is fitting. Micah fills well the sandals of his father and his father's father."

After all, wasn't that the fate for which he was sired and trained? He had always known that he, in due time, was destined to assume leadership of the house of Henosh. Was he not a true heir of the line of old Hasmonean nobility, a direct descendant of Alexander Janneas? Was this not the fitting purpose of his life of privilege in the manor overlooking the temple and the city?

From earliest childhood young Micah had known that he was not as others, his destiny was decidedly more fixed than the simple children who floated leaf boats in the Kidron beneath the compound of his family's expansive residence. As those common children played in the Kidron Micah splashed in the tiled fountain in the courtyard of his home. As the waifs of Jerusalem laughed and muddied their simple clothing Micah, each day, walked in marble hallways and wore garments that were freshly cleaned and meticulously prepared for him by servants of the house of Henosh.

From very early in life, Micah had known that those who lived outside the wall of his manor were not as he was and never could be. Those other children did not live behind the guarded gates of the residence of Madon where a young boy was taught of

diplomacy, trade and commerce, Greek language, and matters of international finance. The simple children of Israel were not raised with the constant reminder of their honored heritage and opportunities. Few other children in Israel knew the privilege and responsibilities of life as did Micah.

As a small boy Micah was neither disdainful of those who had less nor jealous of the apparent freedom that the children by the side of the Kidron knew. He just accepted that his role in society was different, and necessary. Someone had to be the heir of the house of Henosh. Someone had to be the link with the aristocracy of an Israel that once was free and independent. Micah knew that Heaven had ordained him to this role and he accepted it.

So it was that the day came that Micah sensed that childhood had truly passed. His father, Madon, had revealed that he was to be given his first independent mission within the family business. "My son," the venerable old man said, "you have learned well the intricacies and importance of being of the line of Henosh. I deem you fit and worthy to now go to begin your role as the patriarch of this noble lineage."

"I am honored, my father," the striking young man responded. "If you have determined that I am prepared for the task I will trust that I might, with the help of Heaven, not fail you in your confidence."

"Well spoken, my son, well spoken!" The sage eyes of the father beamed as he realized that his son truly had assimilated the lessons that had been ingrained from childhood.

"With a response such as this I can see that you understand the weight of your responsibilities and the nuances of diplomacy that will be required for you to fulfill your tasks as head of this house."

The young man bowed slightly and said, "I am honored, father."

Madon leaned back upon his couch and stroked his beard slowly. He knew he had little to fear as he placed more and more responsibilities in the capable hands of this young man. The house of Henosh would be served well by this generation.

"The task I send you on is exceedingly delicate, but I am confident that it is not beyond your skill," the father continued. "As you know, our northern trade routes have

recently become compromised by those displaced Nabateans and their assertion that they alone should control the highway from Damascus. We, of course, dispute this claim but are finding little assistance from our guests, the Romans." Madon had perfected the art of saying the word, "guests" with a sinister inflection, a hissing response whose implications could never be mistaken by any listener.

"One might have wished that the volume of taxes that we send to the senate might bring a bit greater return in reciprocal benefits," Micah responded, almost in jest.

"Your words are true, my son, but it appears this is not to be," Madon shook his head slowly. "No, our Roman friends seem only to take from this land and bring very little in return. When I raised the one-sidedness of this relationship with the procurator his response was a sarcastic statement that 'stability has a value'." The father sneered as he spit out the Roman justification. "What that senatorial puppet does not realize is that when our fathers, the Hasmoneans, ruled in Jerusalem we had all the stability we needed."

"The coming of Pompey to this place is not at all the blessing that they assume we should feel it to be," Micah laughed.

"Oh, I agree with you completely, my son. But beware with whom you share that sentiment," the old man leaned forward. "Our Roman guests are a reality that we deal with at this time. It would serve no helpful purpose for the house of Henosh nor for Israel for us to be too honest with those who command the legions here in this place." Then the patriarch whispered, "But, the day will come when the banner of the house of Henosh will fly again over this city and the Roman eagle will rust under the feet of Jerusalem."

"But not today, my father. No, not today."

Madon agreed, "This is true, very true. Therefore, we must do our business with diligence. This is why I send you to our summer residence in Philippi. You will negotiate a settlement of this dispute with these neighbors and I have full confidence that when you return it will be with the good news of a festering wound that has been healed."

"I will do my best to honor your confidence in me, my honored father." Then, for a moment young Micah sensed that he might not be fully prepared for such a task and asked, "Would you desire that Malchus accompany me on this mission?"

Malchus was the steward of the house of Henosh. For long years he had been the right hand of Madon and Timoteaus, Madon's father before him. There was nothing of the house of Henosh with which this old servant was not entrusted. When Malchus spoke it was as with the authority of the house. Everyone in Judea knew this.

Micah knew that all would go well if Malchus was with him and was quite surprised, and a bit flattered, when his father responded, "No, this is not at all necessary. Malchus will remain here as you resolve this in your own manner. You will, of course, choose three or four of the young men of our employ to travel with you and attend to your needs but I see no reason for Malchus to accompany you in this."

And with that it was done. Micah, son of Madon would go to negotiate the Nabatean trade dispute alone. This was the purpose for which he had been raised and the time had come.

The next day, after rapid preparations, Micah waved farewell to his father as he stepped down the path from the manor with his entourage and provisions. The journey, he knew, would not be physically arduous and he was actually looking forward to seeing the Galilee again. His father had seemed pleased that when he shared that it seemed to be wisdom that upon the conclusion of the matter in the headwaters that he would go to the central highlands to take accounting of the work and care of their land holdings near Megiddo before he returned to Jerusalem.

As he turned his back on the city and began up the small slope that would bring overlook to the Jordan river valley young Micah felt ready to step into his destined role and set his eyes to the future.

On the second morning the company approached the base of the lake. They could see her shimmering as multiplied diamonds in the distance and Micah looked forward to pausing by her for a while. The sight of the Galilee had always warmed him, even as a small child when he'd look down into the valley from marble and tile portico of the summer residence.

But this day there was some commotion near the river that exited the base of the shining lake. The young men traveling with Micah pointed out that a large crowd seemed to be gathered by the water and they wondered if they should delay their passage until the crowd dispersed. Micah scanned the scene and responded that, at least from a distance, it did not appear to be an unruly gathering and there should be no reason to traverse off of the highway just to avoid the group.

As they drew near it was evident that the people had gathered around one young man who appeared to be the center of attention. From a small rise at the edge of the crowd Micah said to his group, "Let us pause here and see what manner of man this is. If he's an insurrectionist we shall be able to remember him and avoid him. After all," Micah said knowingly, "it is wise business to have a pulse of the people and the nation if we are to lead them well."

The young men settled down on a shelf rock, above the common folk, and observed the young teacher as he went about his mission among the crowd. Micah found himself somewhat entranced as he heard the words that the man spoke. There seemed to be a freshness and conviction that directly contrasted from the language and manner of the spiritual leaders of his synagogue and the temple class. This young teacher seemed to have insights into God and His thinking that Micah found particularly refreshing.

It was evident that this man seemed to have no particular privilege of this earth but was perfectly contented. Micah was amazed that one could be so self-disciplined and controlled and yet free. There was something intriguing about the persona of a man who seemed to have no possessions and taught as though possessions were bondage and not joy.

One other factor of the young rabbi's manner that held Micah in deep consideration was the teacher's interaction with children. Randomly, as the young man taught, small children came and sat on his knee. He'd pause and whisper a small secret to one child or another and they would laugh together as though they alone might be in on the gem. Micah could read in the eyes of the children that they had complete comfort with this man and cherished being in his presence. Never had he seen that with a religious leader before.

In fact, much to his surprise, after about an hour of discourse and teaching the young itinerant stood, stretched his legs and then said, "I'd invite you all to take a few moments for yourselves. Please, stand and stretch. I have a very important thing that I must do for a brief time and then we will gather together again." And with that the teacher took two small boys by the hand and went down into the shallows of the water and began to catch small minnows for the boys to see and hold.

Micah was absolutely charmed. What manner of man was this? A man unfettered by the common responsibilities of life and yet so obviously disciplined? A man without any rank or privilege and yet completely fulfilled? A man who could sway masses of people with his word and influence and yet felt that catching minnows with children was a high priority in life?

For the first time in his life, Micah, son of Madon, heir of the house of Henosh was truly jealous of another person.

After a while it was evident that the young Nazarene was intending to move on with his band. Suddenly, as Micah saw him turning away something snapped inside of him. He scrambled down off of his perch, pushed through the dispersing crowd, and approached the young teacher. "Rabbi," he called out, "Rabbi, please wait."

Jesus turned and saw one of the privileged sons of Israel approaching, oblivious to the fact that he was making a bit of a spectacle of himself. People in the crowd peeled back and some of them began to whisper to themselves and each other, "Is that not the son of Madon? Why would he be here? What is it that he would seek?"

Micah approached and suddenly felt something very strange. He sensed that he was in the presence of One who was greater than he, the honored heir of Henosh. He stood looking the young Teacher in the eye and then dropped to his knees as was fitting of one who was going to make appeal. "Rabbi Master, what must I do to possess what you possess? What must I do to live with the sense of dignified security that you know?", and then stopped for a moment and finished, "What must I do to have the life that is yours?"

Jesus smiled. This young noble of Israel understood what so very few did. He saw something to deeply covet. Jesus knew that at that moment the prospects of guaranteeing the export of the blue glass of Hebron to the north and east had become

incredibly insignificant to the son of Madon. In the presence of this Man the privileged son of the house of Henosh, for a moment, desired a completely different priority for his life.

"Yes, I've known from childhood what it is to inherit great privilege and wealth but I sense that you, alone, know what I must do to inherit eternal life."

"Son of Madon, it is very simple," Jesus replied quietly, "you must keep the law."

"What? Keep the law?" Micah was incredulous. "From my earliest childhood I have lived a life of discipline and regularity. I've known for my whole life that it was my duty to perform well as a son of Israel and a noble within the house of my father." For a moment Micah sank down upon the dust and seemed nearly desperate. "Do you not know who I am? Do you not understand what I have done? When others fulfilled their whims in life I kept my affairs regular and honorable. My earliest memories are of a grandfather and a father who ingrained duty and responsibility into the fiber of my being."

"Yes, I know," Jesus said. "And that is the point. I'm sure that you've assumed that doing all of your deeds must have earned you merit in Heaven. But this is not so." Jesus looked down on the young noble very intently and continued. "Your disciplined life has kept you from scars and regrets but if it had met the needs of your deepest heart you would not have approached me. You would have continued on your journey, contented with your life."

Then Jesus knelt down on one knee next to Micah and unveiled His true heart. "Son of Madon, now that you understand how impotent your life of duty has been to fulfill your deepest need I will answer your question truthfully. If you would live this life, if you would know my peace and fulfillment you must surrender all of your wealth and status and privilege and be willing to follow me in my journey." Jesus looked intently into the eyes of the young man before him and concluded, "Everything else will be temporary. Nothing else will bring you contentment, I guarantee you of that."

Micah seemed overwhelmed. Part of him was angry and frustrated. "How dare this young itinerant speak to me of this?," he thought to himself. "He does not know me. He does not know of the years that I have dedicated to learning how to be a noble son of Israel. And now, when I first encounter him, he demands that I walk away from

everything I have known and every security that I've carried to follow him to God knows what!"

Still, within the handsome son of Madon a battle raged as he stood to his feet. He was hurt and angry and disappointed at the demands of Jesus, but as he turned to leave there was a portion of him that ached to stay, to pay the price, to find the life that had flashed before him just a moment before. Jesus could read the struggle, he yearned for Micah to say, "I'll try it. I'll try your way as the life I've lived to this point has not been enough", but it was not to be.

Micah shrugged his shoulders, slowly bit his lip and started to speak but the words died within him. He finally turned and motioned for his servants to join him as they headed north up the path, away from the watching crowd. As the small band reached the summit of a little rise in the pathway he turned to look one last time at the congregation by the shoreline. He saw the teacher's followers gesturing and asking questions and from a distance he thought he detected a sadness in the eyes of the prophet from Nazareth.

Little did the young man know that two days later he and his entourage would be accosted on the highway in the headwaters above the lake. Little did he know as he turned from Jesus that day that in less than a week his father would be burying the favored son in the tombs of his fathers on the east slope of Jerusalem. It never crossed his mind as he walked away from that moment of decision that he would never come back to that point again.

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Was this not the fitting purpose of his life of privilege in the manor overlooking the temple and the city?

From earliest childhood young Micah had known that he was not as others. He was born to a disciplined life with a special purpose. This had been ingrained into him from the days of earliest awareness.

Micah had known that those who lived outside the wall of his manor were not as he was and never could be. Those other children did not live behind the guarded gates of the residence of Madon where a young boy was taught of diplomacy, trade and commerce, Greek language, and matters of international finance. The simple children of Israel were not raised with the constant reminder of their honored heritage and opportunities. Few other children in Israel knew the privilege and responsibilities of life as did Micah. This son of Madon knew that Heaven had ordained him to this role and he accepted it.

So it was that the day came that Micah sensed that childhood had truly passed. His father, Madon, had revealed that he was to be given his first independent mission within the family business. "My son," the venerable old man said, "you have learned well the intricacies and importance of being of the line of Henosh. I deem you fit and worthy to now go to begin your role as the patriarch of this noble lineage."

"I am honored, my father," the striking young man responded.

The sage eyes of the father beamed as he looked at the son who had learned well the lessons that he had been taught from childhood. "I know that you understand the weight of your responsibilities and the nuances of diplomacy that will be required for you to fulfill your tasks as head of this house."

The young man bowed slightly and said, "I am honored, father."

Madon leaned back upon his couch and stroked his beard slowly. He knew he had little to fear as he placed more and more responsibilities in the capable hands of this young man. The house of Henosh would be served well by this generation.

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recently become compromised by those displaced Nabateans and their assertion that they alone should control the highway from Damascus. We, of course, dispute this claim but are finding little assistance from our guests, the Romans. No, these Roman seem only to take from this land and bring very little in return. When I raised the one-sidedness of this relationship with the procurator his response was a sarcastic statement that 'stability has a value'. What that senatorial puppet does not realize is that when our fathers, the Hasmoneans, ruled in Jerusalem we had all the stability we needed."

"The coming of Pompey to this place is not at all the blessing that they assume we should feel it to be," Micah laughed.

"Oh, I agree with you completely, my son. But beware with whom you share that sentiment," the old man leaned forward. "Our Roman guests are a reality that we deal with at this time. It would serve no helpful purpose for the house of Henosh nor for Israel for us to be too honest with those who command the legions here in this place." Then the patriarch whispered, "But, the day will come when the banner of the house of Henosh will fly again over this city and the Roman eagle will rust under the feet of Jerusalem. Until that glorious day we must do our business with diligence. This is why I send you to our summer residence in Philippi. You will negotiate a settlement of this dispute with these supplanters and I have full confidence that when you return it will be with the good news of a festering wound that has been healed."

"I will do my best to honor your confidence in me, my father." Then, for a moment young Micah sensed that he might not be fully prepared for such a task and asked, "Would you desire that Malchus accompany me on this mission?"

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Micah was surprised when his father responded, "No, this is not at all necessary. Malchus will remain here as you resolve this in your own manner. Take with you a few of the young men of our employ to travel with you and attend to your needs but I see no reason for Malchus to accompany you in this."

And with that it was done. Micah, son of Madon would go to negotiate the trade dispute of the highway to Syria alone. This was the purpose for which he had been raised and the time had come.

The next day Micah waved farewell to his father as he stepped down the path from the manor with his entourage and provisions. The journey, he knew, would not be physically arduous and he was actually looking forward to seeing the Galilee again. He determined that it seemed to be wisdom that upon the conclusion of the matter in the headwaters that he would go to the central highlands to take accounting of the work and care of their land holdings near Megiddo before he returned to Jerusalem. His old father agreed wholeheartedly.

As he turned his back on the city and began up the small slope that would bring overlook to the Jordan river valley young Micah felt ready to step into his destined role and set his eyes to the future.

On the second morning the company approached the base of the lake. The sight of the Galilee had always warmed him, even as a small child when he'd look down into the valley from marble and tile portico of the summer residence. But this day there was a large gathering near the river. Micah's servants pointed out that a large crowd seemed to be gathered by the water and they wondered if they should delay their passage until the crowd dispersed. Micah scanned the scene and determined that it did not appear to be an unruly group and there should be no reason to leave the highway just to avoid them.

As they drew near it was evident that the people had gathered around one young man who appeared to be the center of attention. From a small rise at the edge of the crowd Micah said to his men, "We'll pause here and listen. If he's an insurrectionist we shall be able to remember him and avoid him. After all," Micah said knowingly, "it is wise business to have a pulse of the people and the nation if we are to lead them well."

They settled down on a shelf rock, above the common people, and observed the young teacher as he taught the gathered crowd. Micah found himself somewhat entranced as he heard the words that the man spoke. There seemed to be a freshness and conviction not heard from the temple class. This young teacher seemed to have insights into God and His thinking that Micah found particularly refreshing.

By looking it was evident that this man seemed to have no particular privilege of this earth but was still contented. Micah was amazed that one could be so self-disciplined and controlled and yet free. There was something intriguing about the persona of a man who seemed to have no possessions and taught as though possessions were bondage and not joy.

One other factor of the young rabbi's manner that held Micah in deep consideration was the teacher's interaction with children. Randomly, as the young man taught, small children came and sat on his knee. He'd pause and whisper a small secret to one child or another and they would laugh together as though they alone might be in on the gem. Micah could read in the eyes of the children that they had complete comfort with this man and cherished being in his presence.

Much to his surprise, after about an hour the young itinerant stood, stretched his legs and then said, "I'd invite you all to take a few moments for yourselves. Please, stand and stretch. I have a very important thing that I must do for a brief time and then we will gather together again." With that the teacher took two lads by the hand and went down into the shallows of the water to catch small minnows with the children.

Micah was absolutely charmed. What manner of man was this? A man unfettered by the common responsibilities of life and yet so obviously disciplined? A man without any rank or privilege and yet completely fulfilled? A man who could sway masses of people with his word and influence and yet felt that catching minnows with children was a high priority in life?

For the first time in his life, Micah, son of Madon, heir of the house of Henosh was truly jealous of another person.

When it was evident that the young was leaving Micah scrambled down off of his perch, pushed through the crowd. "Rabbi," he called out, "Rabbi, please wait."

Jesus turned and saw this privileged son of Israel approaching. People in the crowd peeled back and some of them began to whisper to themselves and each other, "Is that not the son of Madon? Why would he be here?"

Micah approached and as he did he sensed that he was in the presence of One who was greater than even he, the honored heir of Henosh. He looked the Teacher in the eye

and then dropped to his knees as was fitting of one who was going to make appeal. "Rabbi Master, what must I do to possess what you possess? What must I do to live with the sense of dignified security that you know?" He stopped for a moment and finished, "What must I do to have the life that is yours?"

Jesus smiled. This young noble of Israel understood what so very few did. He saw something to deeply covet. Jesus knew that at that moment the prospects of guaranteeing the export of the blue glass of Hebron to the north and east had become incredibly insignificant to the son of Madon.

"Yes, I've known from childhood what it is to inherit great privilege and wealth but I sense that you, alone, know what I must do to inherit eternal life."

"Son of Madon, it is very simple," Jesus replied quietly, "you must keep the law."

"What? Keep the law?" Micah was incredulous. "From my earliest childhood I have lived a life of discipline and regularity." For a moment Micah sank down upon the dust. "Do you not know who I am? Do you not understand what I have done? When others fulfilled their whims in life I kept my affairs regular and honorable."

"Yes, I know," Jesus said. "And that is the point. I'm sure that you've assumed that doing all of your deeds must have earned you merit in Heaven. But this is not so." Jesus looked down on the young noble very intently and continued. "Your disciplined life has kept you from scars and regrets but if it had met the needs of your deepest heart you would not have approached me."

Then Jesus knelt down on one knee next to Micah and unveiled His true heart. "Son of Madon, now that you understand how impotent your life of duty has been to fulfill your deepest need I will answer your question. If you would live this life you must surrender all of your wealth and status and privilege and be willing to follow me in my journey." Jesus looked deeply into the eyes of the young man before him and concluded, "Everything else will be temporary. Nothing else will bring you contentment, I guarantee you of that."

Micah seemed overwhelmed. "How dare this young itinerant speak to me of this?," he thought to himself. "He does not know me. He does not know of the years that I have dedicated to learning how to be a noble son of Israel. And now, when I first encounter

him, he demands that I walk away from everything I have known! This is preposterous..."

But, a battle raged within as he stood to his feet. He was hurt and angry and disappointed at the demands of Jesus, but as he turned to leave there was a portion of him that ached to stay and find the life that had flashed before him just moments before. Jesus read the struggle, he yearned for Micah to say, "I'll try it. I'll try your way as the life I've lived to this point has not been enough", but it was not to be.

Micah shrugged his shoulders, slowly bit his lip and started to speak but the words died within him. After a long, poignant moment he turned and motioned for his servants to join him as they headed north up the path. When they reached the summit of a little rise in the path he turned to look one last time at the congregation by the shoreline. He saw the teacher's followers gesturing and asking questions and from a distance he thought he detected a sadness in the eyes of the prophet from Nazareth.

Micah was quiet for the rest of the journey. He could not get the view of Jesus quietly imploring him to return from that little rise of the path, but he knew that he had to move on. He was on a destiny for his father and there was a job to be done with these displaced Arabian merchants who threatened the stability of his family.

Madon's confidence was well placed. Micah was firm and yet charming. His winning ways and acute mind soon won over his adversaries as he convinced them that it was to their mutual benefit to work together and keep the northern trade routes open. "After all," he shared with the Nabateans, "if the Romans sense even the least provocation they will find some way to enforce their will on this situation. They will see this dispute between neighbors as an opportunity to raise the tariffs upon us all. They will justify it as a necessary response in order to 'guarantee stability'."

The Nabateans were amazed at his insights into the situation and agreed not only to stop their resistance to the transport of the blue glass of Hebron, but to actually increase its availability within the markets of Damascus. This, they realized, would actually weaken the position of Rome in their region.

Together they sealed the agreement and congratulated themselves on the resolution of a potential crisis that would have brought long lasting repercussions that they had never envisioned until they were taught by the son of the house of Henosh. "We will

be dealt with wisely by this young man," the Arabians remarked to themselves. "He has learned well the arts of diplomacy from his noble father."

With the ring-seal of the line of the Hasmoneans young Micah marked the agreement and retired from the Galilee to the central highlands. There he found that some of the stewards had grown a bit casual in their duties but he soon resolved those issues and knew that the chain of command that he established within the family's holdings would serve them well for many years to come.

There was great rejoicing in the house of Madon when Micah returned. He modestly explained the events of the journey to his father and it was only because of his father's insights and the generous compliments that were reported by his fellow travelers that the truth was known of his great success.

And so it was that Micah assumed the leadership of the house of Henosh in Jerusalem. The victory in the negotiations with the Nabateans was but the beginning of a long and prosperous career.

He did not report to his father with regard to the encounter by the lake, in fact he never spoke of it again with any person at all. He lived to observe the events of the crucifixion of Jesus and the rapid spread of His teachings following the death, but through it all he remained distant and aloof.

Micah survived to a ripe old age, a wealthy man and if you are lucky you may find his tomb in the west slopes of the city along with many other graves of the privileged of Jerusalem.

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It was finally time for young Micah, heir of the house of Henosh step fully into manhood. He was to go on a delicate trade mission his father, Madon, and take his first step as one who would build up again of his family's wealth and reputation. If he would be successful in this caravan trade dispute it would reverberate all the way to Jerusalem. Men of the established aristocracy of all Judea would say, "Micah fills well the sandals of his father."

After all, wasn't that his fate, was he not a true heir of the line of old Hasmonean nobility, a direct descendant of Alexander Janneas?

From earliest childhood young Micah in the walled manor house overlooking the temple mount had known that he was not as others. He was born to a disciplined life with a special purpose. Other children did not live behind the guarded gates of the residence of Madon where a young boy was taught of diplomacy, trade and commerce, Greek language, and matters of international finance.

"My son," his venerable father said, "you have learned well the intricacies and importance of being of the line of Henosh. I deem you fit and worthy to now go to begin your role as the patriarch of this noble lineage." The sage eyes of the father beamed as he looked at the son who had learned well the lessons that he had been taught from childhood and he continued, "I know that you understand the weight of your responsibilities and the nuances of diplomacy that will be required for you to fulfill your tasks as head of this house."

The young man bowed slightly and said, "I am honored, father."

Madon knew he had little to fear as he placed more and more responsibilities in the capable hands of this young man. The house of Henosh would be served well by this generation.

"I send you to free up our northern trade routes on the highway from Damascus. The Romans probably relish this dispute but I know that you have the skill to resolve it. This senatorial puppet that we call "procurator" will learn that when our fathers ruled in Jerusalem we had all the stability we needed." Then the patriarch whispered, "The day will come when the banner of the house of Henosh will fly again over this city and the Roman eagle will rust under the feet of Jerusalem. Until that glorious day we must do our business with diligence. This is why I send you to our summer residence in Philippi. You will negotiate a settlement of this dispute with these supplanters and I have full confidence that when you return it will be with the good news of a festering wound that has been healed."

"I will do my best to honor your confidence in me, my father." Then, for a moment the magnitude of the task overwhelmed him and he asked, "Would you desire that Malchus accompany me on this mission?"

Malchus was the steward of the house of Henosh and for long years the right hand of both Micah's father and grandfather. He was trusted as no other in the house of Madon. Micah was surprised when his father responded, "No, this is not at all necessary. You are able to resolve this in your own manner. Take with you a few of the young men of our employ to travel with you and attend to your needs."

And with that it was done. Micah, son of Madon, would go to negotiate the trade dispute of the highway to Syria alone.

The next day Micah waved farewell as he stepped down the path from the manor with his entourage and provisions. He was actually looking forward to seeing the Galilee again and determined that upon the conclusion of the matter in the headwaters that he would go to the central highlands to take accounting of the work and care of their holdings near Megiddo also.

As he turned his back on the city Micah felt ready to step into his destined role and set his eyes to the future.

On the second morning they came to the base of the lake. Even as a small child, viewing the scene from the lavish portico of his summer residence he loved the lake. To his surprise on this day there was a large gathering near the river that exited the lake. The servants seemed concerned and wondered if they should delay their passage until the group dispersed. Micah scanned the scene and determined that there appeared to be no reason to avoid the crowd.

It was evident that the people were gathered around a young man and listening to his words. At the edge of the crowd Micah said to his men, "We'll pause here and listen. After all," Micah said knowingly, "it is wise business to have a pulse of the people and the nation."

They settled down above the common folk, and observed the young teacher as he taught the gathered crowd. Micah found himself somewhat entranced as he heard the words that the man spoke. There seemed to be a freshness and conviction not heard from the temple class. But, on the other hand, it was evident that this man seemed to have no particular privilege of this earth but was completely content anyway. Micah

felt there was something intriguing about the persona of a man who seemed to have no possessions and taught as though possessions were bondage and not joy.

One other thing that held Micah in deep consideration was the teacher's interaction with children. Randomly, as the young man taught, small children came and sat on his knee. He'd pause and whisper a small secret to one child or another and they would laugh together. Micah could read in the eyes of the children that they had compete comfort with this man and cherished being in his presence.

Much to his surprise, after about an hour of his discourse the young itinerant stood, stretched his legs and then said, "I'd invite you all to take a few moments for yourselves. Please, stand and stretch. I have a very important thing that I must do and then we will gather together again." With that the teacher took two lads by the hand and went down into the shallows of the water to catch small minnows with them.

Micah was absolutely charmed. What manner of man was this, unfettered by the common responsibilities of life and yet so very disciplined? A man without any rank or privilege and yet completely fulfilled? A man who could sway masses of people with his word and influence and yet felt that catching minnows with children was a high priority in life?

For the first time in his life, Micah, son of Madon, heir of the house of Henosh was truly jealous of another person and coveted the life of the itinerant.

In the first rash and impulsive act of his life Micah scrambled down the rock and cried out, "Rabbi, Rabbi, please wait."

Jesus turned and saw this privileged son of Israel approaching. The crowd peeled back and some began to whisper, "Is that not the son of Madon? Why would he be here?"

Micah approached and sensed that he was in the presence of One who was greater than even he, the honored heir of Henosh. He quickly fell to his knees as was fitting of one who was going to make appeal. "Rabbi Master, what must I do to possess what you possess? What must I do to have the life that is yours?"

Jesus smiled. This young noble of Israel coveted what so very few did. Jesus knew that at that moment the prospects of guaranteeing the export of the blue glass of Hebron to the north and east had become incredibly insignificant.

"Son of Madon, it is very simple," Jesus replied quietly, "you must keep the law."

"What?", Micah was incredulous. "From my earliest childhood I have lived a life of discipline and regularity."

"Yes, I know," Jesus said. "And that is the point. I'm sure that you've assumed that doing all of your deeds must have earned you merit in Heaven. But this is not so." Jesus looked down on the young noble very intently and continued. "Your disciplined life has not met the needs of your deepest heart or you would not have approached me."

Then Jesus knelt down on one knee next to Micah and unveiled His heart. "Son of Madon, now that you understand how impotent your life of duty has been to fulfill your deepest need I will answer your question. If you would live this life you must surrender all of your wealth and status and privilege and be willing to follow me in my journey." Jesus looked deeply into the eyes of the young man before him and gently concluded, "Nothing else will bring you contentment, I guarantee you of that."

Micah was overwhelmed. "How dare this young itinerant, demand that I walk away from everything I have known! This is preposterous..."

He was hurt and disappointed at the demands of Jesus, but even as he turned to leave there was a portion of him that ached to stay and find that life. Jesus read the struggle, he yearned for Micah to say, "I'll try it. I'll try your way as the life I've lived to this point has not been enough", but it was not to be.

Micah shrugged his shoulders, then after a long, poignant moment he turned and motioned for his servants to join him as they headed north up the path. When they reached the summit of a little rise in the path he turned to look one last time at the teacher by the shoreline. He thought he detected a sadness in the eyes of the prophet from Nazareth.

After the encounter by the lake Micah found great success in his negotiations with those who sought to control the trade of the highway to Syria. He convinced all involved that continuing the dispute only gave the Romans greater justification to intervene in the affairs of the region and none of the partners truly desired that.

Flushed with success and a newly negotiated treaty he went toward Megiddo to resolve some issues of family business and then returned in triumph to Jerusalem. Madon received his son with joy and together they planned their next venture for the expansion of their family enterprises.

Micah felt that they were losing out on a great deal of profit by not taking advantage of the current weakness of the Egyptian position in the region. He felt that there was a void in the commerce of the region that soon would be filled by others if the house of Madon did not act with haste. Together the father and son planned a scheme that would, if successful, bring great new wealth to the house and would spread their name and reputation throughout the Mediterranean world. It was a bit risky but they sensed that their destiny was to find such a level of power and control that eventually they would be able to challenge the stranglehold of Rome and would eventually usher in the day when Israel would be free.

"This will not happen in my lifetime," old Madon said. "No, I shall not live to see this and I would think that it would also not come to pass before you rest with the fathers either, my son. But, it may be that your son, or your son's son will know this victory because of the foundation that we lay for them!"

Little did they know that the Romans were wise enough to read the wind. Rome had not controlled the world by being politically naive and the leadership of the region immediately sensed the potential danger of such expansion by the remaining royal house of Israel. "This place is as unmanageable as mercury as it is," the procurator wrote to the senate. "We can all imagine what will come of the place if these Jews sense that the heirs of the Hasmoneans are ascending again. This may be a very clever and quiet insurrection, but I, your most humble servant, assure the gentlemen of the senate that this is exactly what we are facing. If this is not dealt with decisively I guarantee that we will see the day that Judea will erupt under the banner of the house of Henosh."

Judea had always been more trouble than it was worth to Rome and if there was one thing that the Romans had perfected it was the science of intimidation. Madon and Micah would be made an object lesson for any other leader of Israel to remember.

Within weeks of his return from the negotiations to the south Micah heard the gate of the manor house crash in. He ran to the courtyard to find a large contingent of the garrison of Jerusalem, pillaging the property and arresting the servants as they scrambled throughout the court.

"What is the meaning of this?", Micah demanded. "By whose authority have you invaded this home?"

The garrison commander of the Fortress of Antonio stepped forward and sneered, "By the authority of the procurator. It has been determined that this home has become a nest of insurrectionists and we have come to quash your little rebellion." Then the leader turned to his men and shouted, "Arrest this man, he will be tried for treason before the governor!"

After the brief mockery of a trial the governor spoke of the emperor's "magnanimous spirit" and that Rome would, "out of generosity and deference to the sensitivities of the Jewish people spare the life of this insurrectionist". The verdict was that Micah was to be taken to Antioch and there sold as slave to the highest bidder. His slave price was to return to Jerusalem in order to reimburse the garrison for the costs of arrest and detaining him.

Within days the honored son of Madon stood chained before the merchants and nobles whom had previously been his business partners. One wise Syrian, Icathedes, recognized that Micah could be an asset as a house steward and outbid the others with 50 pieces of silver. But, Icathedes had not taken into account the nature of the loyalties that others had to Micah, nor to the strong willed nature of the privileged young man and after only two years he sold him to Lucius, a wealthy Roman merchant from Three Taverns on the Appian Way as it approached Rome.

For many years Micah yearned for home but eventually accepted his fate. He was never to return to Israel again. He served the house of Lucius, married, and had three sons.

Never once did he speak to his sons of the old dream. Never once did he tell them of his childhood of privilege. The years past and the manor house of Jerusalem became a distant memory.

At first, every once in a while, he would consider how life might have been. What if he'd been successful in his journey to Egypt? What if the Romans had not felt threatened? What if he'd stayed that day by the side of the lake and come under the discipline of that young rabbi from Nazareth?

After nearly 30 years of service to the house of Lucius one of his sons, Pudens, entered his father's room overlooking the coastline. Micah was pouring over the accounts and records of a recently returned caravan from Spain. "Father," the young man said, "do you not wish to come to the street to view the spectacle?"

"No, not at all. There is work to be done," Micah responded, still studying the caravan records.

"Oh," the young man said quietly, "I thought that you might wish to see him."

Micah looked up from the scrolls and frowned, "See him? Why would I wish to do that? I see slaves and prisoners pass by this way every day. Italy is full of his ilk."

"Yes, I know that father," Pudens replied. "It's just that this man is different. He's one of your people and has become very famous for turning the world upside down in the name of this Jesus of Nazareth. This man Paul is not your ordinary prisoner."

Micah raised his eyebrows, shrugged his shoulders, and said, "You go ahead without me. I no longer chase dreams."

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The day had come for Micah, privileged heir of the house of Henosh step fully into manhood. He was to go on a delicate trade mission that would solidify his family's wealth and reputation. If successful in this caravan trade dispute his reputation would reverberate all the way to Jerusalem. Men of the established aristocracy of all Judea would say, "Micah fills well the sandals of his father, Madon."

After all, wasn't that his fate as a direct descendant of Alexander Janneas?

From earliest childhood young Micah had known that he was not as others. He was born to a disciplined life with a special purpose. Other children did not live behind the guarded gates where a young boy was taught of diplomacy, trade and commerce, Greek language, and matters of international finance.

"My son," his venerable father said, "I deem you fit and worthy to now go to begin your role. I know that you understand the weight of the responsibilities that will be required for you to fulfill your tasks as head of this house."

The young man bowed and said, "I am honored, father," and as he spoke Madon knew that the house of Henosh would be served well by this generation. "I send you to free up our northern trade routes. The Romans probably relish this dispute but I know that you have the skill to resolve it. This senatorial puppet that we call "procurator" will learn that we never needed Rome." Then the patriarch whispered, "The day will come when the banner of the house of Henosh will fly again over this city and the Roman eagle will rust under the feet of Jerusalem but until then we do our business with diligence. This is why I send you north. You will negotiate a settlement of this dispute in this and I know that when you return it will be with the good news."

"I will do my best to honor your confidence in me, my father." Then, for a moment the magnitude of the a task overwhelmed him and he and asked, "Would you desire that Malchus accompany me on this mission?"

Malchus was the steward of the house of Henosh and was trusted as no other in the employ of Madon. Micah was surprised when his father responded, "No, this is not at all necessary. Take with you a few of the young men to attend to your needs."

And with that it was done. Micah, son of Madon, would go to negotiate the trade dispute of the highway to Syria alone. The next day Micah waved farewell and set his face toward the Galilee.

On the second morning they came to the base of the lake. To his surprise on this day there was a large gathering near the river that exited the lake. The servants seemed concerned but as Micah scanned the scene he determined that there appeared to be no reason to avoid the crowd.

It was evident that the people were gathered around a young man and listening to his words. At the edge of the crowd Micah said to his men, "We'll pause here and listen for it is wise business to have a pulse of the people and the nation."

They settled down above the common folk and Micah soon found himself entranced as he heard the words of the rabbi. There seemed to be a freshness and conviction not heard from the temple class. Still, it was evident that this man seemed to have no particular privilege of this earth and yet, curiously, was completely content anyway. Micah felt there was something intriguing about a man who seemed to have no possessions and taught as though possessions were bondage and not joy.

One other thing that Micah admired was the teacher's interaction with children. Randomly, as the young man taught, small children came and sat on his knee. He'd whisper and giggle with them and they would laugh together. Micah could read in the children a complete comfort with this man.

After about an hour of his discourse the young itinerant stood, stretched his legs and then said, "I'd invite you all to take a few moments for yourselves. Please, stand and stretch. I have a something that I must do and then we will gather together again." With that the teacher took two lads by the hand and went down into the shallows to catch minnows.

Micah was totally charmed. What manner of man was this, unfettered by the common responsibilities of life and yet so very disciplined? A man without any privilege and yet completely fulfilled? A man who could sway masses with his word and yet felt that catching minnows with children was a high life priority?

For the first time in his life, Micah, son of Madon, heir of the house of Henosh was truly jealous of another person. He momentarily coveted the life of the itinerant.

In the first rash and impulsive act of his life Micah scrambled down the rock and cried out, "Rabbi, Rabbi!", and as he did he sensed that he was in the presence of One who was greater than even he. He quickly fell to his knees as one who was going to make appeal. "Rabbi Master, what must I do to possess what you possess?"



Jesus smiled for he knew that at that moment, for Micah, the export of the blue Hebron glass to the east had become insignificant.

"Son of Madon, it is very simple," Jesus replied quietly, "you must keep the law."

"What?", Micah was incredulous. "From my earliest childhood I have kept all."

"Yes, I know," Jesus said. "And that is the point. Your disciplined life has not met the needs of your deepest heart or you would not have approached me."

Then Jesus knelt down on one knee next to Micah and unveiled His heart. "Son of Madon, now that you understand how impotent your life has been to fulfill your deepest need I will answer your question. If you would live this life you must surrender all of your wealth and status and privilege and be willing to follow me." Jesus looked deeply into the eyes of the young man before him and gently concluded, "Nothing else will bring you contentment, I guarantee you of that."

Micah was overwhelmed. He had so very much to lose. He was hurt and disappointed but even as he turned to leave there was a portion of him that ached to stay. Jesus read the struggle, he yearned for Micah to say, "I'll try it," but it was not to be. No, not on that day.

After a long, poignant moment Micah turned and motioned for his servants to join him as they headed north up the path. When they reached the summit of a little rise in the path he turned to look one last time at the teacher by the shoreline. He thought he detected a sadness in the eyes of the prophet from Nazareth.

Micah's trade mission went exceedingly well, much better, in fact, than he ever could have dreamed. He also found great success in resolving some of the issues of the family holdings near Megiddo before he returned to Jerusalem.

Madon was so pleased at his son's great success that he immediately arranged for a mission to Babylon. The old man had often coveted expansion of the family enterprise into such a wealthy portion of the empire and he decided that this was a challenge fitting the obvious abilities of Micah.

Micah was thrilled at the prospect of traveling to such a storied part of the world but expressed concern that it would only be possible if he was to miss Passover in Jerusalem. Never before had he lacked being part of the pilgrimage festival. It would hardly seem right to be gone at that time but his father assured him that the Lord would not have opened the door to such an opportunity if it was not His will for Micah to go, even at that time. "We must seize what has been opened before us my son. Yes, you shall miss Passover but God knows your heart will be in Jerusalem and you will be fulfilling the mitzvah as you go to honor your father and your mother."

The journey to Babylon took nearly three weeks. Every sight, every smell was a new experience to him and he knew that it broadened his horizons for becoming the family leader that God had destined him to be.

While in that region his obvious diplomatic skills and negotiating wit came into play often and the Orientals found him refreshing, honest, and a very convincing young man in argument. It was determined that the market of Babylon would welcome the quality of import from the house of Madon of Jerusalem. After four weeks the treaties were sealed and Micah knew that if he hurried he could be back to Jerusalem by Pentecost.

Upon returning to the walled manor the young son was able to report to his father of the success that he had attained for the family and his people. The house of Madon rejoiced and a large banquet was held to celebrate the new opportunity that God had given to this honored old house of Israel.

Over the evening meal many around the table were astir with stories of the events that had transpired in Jerusalem during Micah's absence. Some spoke of the incredible turn of events for the young rabbi from Nazareth who was executed during the holidays. Others sat and debated their sense of the rumor that this man had not remained in the tomb but was resurrected from the dead and had actually been seen walking within Israel on several occasions.

Micah was dumbfounded. No one could seem to fully justify what had brought this all about. Some of the merchants and relatives spoke of the necessity of the crucifixion. "It had to be. This man was going to bring down all of Rome's might against us if he was not dealt with and his rebellion quashed in its infancy," Zecharias proclaimed loudly.

"Not so," challenged Mattathai. "This is not true at all. Rome had no concern for this Jesus. I tell you it was all the conspiracy of the temple leadership as they saw their security threatened if this man remained unchecked."

"And for what purpose?", Zecharias disputed. "Exactly what would be accomplished by the leadership by aborting the mission of a man if he was actually going to be successful in restoring Israel again? Don't you think that the temple elders would have rallied around a man if they considered at all that he might be Messiah ben-David? No, they had to know that this man was nothing but a fraud and the only logical end of his revolutionary teachings would be further subjugation at the hand of our enemies. He's gone and I say that I am fully glad of it!"

"Oh, and are you sure he's gone?," asked young Johannen from the corner. "I don't believe that he is gone at all for I, myself, saw him and I know that some state that I am only one of hundreds who saw him alive again and interacted with him for nearly seven weeks after the Passover weekend."

"You say you saw him, did you?" Zecharias asked sarcastically. "And if this is so then I ask you, my insolent young friend, where he is now?"

"I cannot know for sure," Johannen responded. "All I know is that I did see this Jesus of Nazareth alive and that many claim, both his followers and his detractors, that just over a week ago he was seen leaving the streets of Jerusalem with a large entourage. They testify that he came right up the path against this manor and was whisked to Heaven in the presence of hundreds of eyewitnesses."

"Is this so?," Micah asked. "Can this truly be?"

"Micah, my friend and brother," Johannen answered, "I cannot testify to that with my own eyes but it is all the talk of the city. This land is ablaze with this rumor."

"Aye," Zecharias cut it. "A rumor it surely is, and nothing more. But," he leaned forward and enunciated the words very clearly for all to hear, "it is a rumor that will get us all crucified if we don't stop promulgating it. I assure you of that."

Past midnight Micah stood on the portico of the manor house and looked over the valley toward the city. His head was spinning with all the claims with regard to this young rabbi, Jesus. As he scanned the familiar scene of Jerusalem and her temple Micah wished in his heart that it was true. He wished that the young teacher of the lake was alive.

In the morning, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, Micah, the honored son of Madon, heir of the legacy of the Hasmoneans in the line of Henosh went again to the temple. After all, he'd kept the law since his youth and it was commanded that at Pentecost he should bring first fruit to the temple.

On this day Micah brought exotic wares and fruits from Babylon. These were the first fruits of his new trade with the nobles of the east and he was glad to present them to God on this occasion.

Little did he know as he passed into the temple gate that a great appointment with destiny awaited him. Little did he know that though he had once walked away sorrowful from the demand and invitation of Jesus of Nazareth at the base of the lake, that this day God had ordained that he might choose again.

*Now, when they heard this they were pricked in their heart,  
and said unto Peter and the other apostles,  
"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"  
Then Peter said unto them,  
"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ..."  
Then they that gladly received his word were baptized...  
-Acts 2:37,38,41*