



Babel

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Books
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Gershom stood alongside his mother, who knelt beside her husband, Adir's, body. Next to the body, two workers dug a hole in the sand and clay.

"He is not coming home tonight," she said.

"Is this my father?"

"Yes."

"How can you be sure? I don't recognize him." He paused, and she did not respond.

"What happened? His face is smashed in, and his body is broken apart with bones sticking out."

Gavriella cried from the depth of her gut. Tears streamed down her cheeks. Then a hand touched her shoulder, and she looked up to acknowledge the one that touched her.

There stood a huge man in a gray tunic with a belt sheath that held a giant sword, and in his hand a spear. "May I assist you and the boy, ma'am?"

"Sir, I was summoned here by a messenger of Babylon to come quickly to the tower. I didn't know why until the men digging the hole told me this was my husband."

The two men paused their digging. One said, "Adir was a good worker, representing his grandfather Shem's tribe most admirably. This morning, he stood on top of the tower, measuring the cubic feet needed to reach the clouds in the sky. For some unknown reason, the wind suddenly increased and swept him from the top as if a hand had swatted him off. He fell some three hundred feet from the top."

The first one seemed unable to speak any more, so the second one said, "We stopped working to have a moment of silent respect for Adir. We summoned Gavriella, and we

summoned you, sir. We were unharmed. But not Adir. Such an accident must have been for some insult to the God of Babylon, Marduk.”

Gavriella and Gershom wept as the others stood still.

“Ma’am, if you want the body, take it. But when someone dies on this job, we bury them within sight of the tower. It is a free service, and it is up to you.”

She nodded and motioned for the diggers to continue.

“How old are you, boy?”

“Twenty.”

“Good! You are of adult age. You must stay and take your father’s place. You will represent Shem’s tribe as your father did.”

Gavriella raised her hand. “No! Y-You—”

“I will take Father’s place, Mother. Father would be proud of me.”

The work was hard from sunrise to sunset. Gershom’s job was greasing the slide so the blocks of rock could be heaved from one level up to the next. His hands were endlessly blistered and raw. His back was scarred from the taskmaster’s whip that forced him to work faster. His whole body ached.

He worked at the tower, ate meals at the tower, and slept with the camels at night to stay warm. He could only see his mother on the Sabbath day when the work would stop so workers could worship the Babylonian God Marduk all day.

But Gershom’s mother taught him to worship Great Grandfather Noah’s God at home on the Sabbath. So together at home, they prayed to the God of Noah to relieve Gershom from the burden of building a tower to heaven in the name of Marduk.

