A light breeze, which would have been pleasant enough out in the spring sun, had cooled into a draft in its journey through the stone Temple into the Chamber of Hewn Stone. It wormed its way under the hem of the thin, linen tunic of Amahl ben Nachdimon, chilling his ankles and making his bones complain. Trying to ignore it, the old Pharisee shrugged deeper into his woolen outer cloak and returned his attention to the business before the Sanhedrin.

That business concerned a beggar who, despite his tatters, showed no sign of discomfort in the nippy council room. He was tall, or would have been, had he not become habitually bent over from picking his way cautiously along the streets. His patched *kethoneth* — his tunic — left bare his knees and elbows. No headpiece covered his ragged black hair, curling in scraggy tufts that matched his wild beard. No sandals on his stained, leathery feet. His olive skin dark from years in the sun. The flesh on his frame spare, lean in the way of the hungry.

Amahl recognized him. He pondered his tolerance of the cold. *Privation has hardened him.* For years, the fellow had sat at a corner of Batel Maahse street between the market and the Temple, first as a child, now a young man. Blind, he had begged for alms, holding out a wooden bowl toward the sound of passersby, his cry for mercy plaintive. For years, Amahl had placed shekels in his bowl.

Often the beggar offered cords and straps that he had plaited with heavy thread. On occasion, Amahl purchased one, partly from pity, partly to encourage his limited craft, partly because he was intrigued by the beggar's patterns. These items were unadorned, of plain color, and often rife with errors because of his sightlessness. But the plaiting designs were unusual. Amahl had shown these to the artisans in his textile industry, hoping they could replicate the patterns.

Today, the beggar was no longer blind. Word of his healing had spread through the city faster than a swarm of locusts. Rumor had it that one Yeshua bar Joseph, a carpenter from a village in