

הַנְּגִי מִבְּיַא אוֹתָם מֵאַרְץ צָפוֹן, וְקַבְּצָתִים מִיִּרְכַּתִּי אֶרֶץ.
בָּם עֵוֶר, וּפְסֻחַת, הָרָה, וְיִלְדֹת יַחֲדָיו, קָהֵל גָּדוֹל יָשׁוּבוּ הִנֵּה.

“Behold I bring them from the north country and gather them
from the farthest ends of the earth, the blind and the lame
amongst them, the expectant and birthing mothers all together;
a great *kahal* shall return there.”

(Navi Yirmiyahu, Perek Lamed-Alef, Possuk Zayin)

EPILOGUE



PENINA

...One thousand nine hundred and fifty-four; one thousand
nine hundred and fifty-five.

She stops counting her steps. After all these years, her brain must have skipped a few anyway. This ultimate journey hasn't been without a few bumps in the road, what with shattered headstones and the roots of archaic olive trees...and then there are all the confusing but wondrous novelties of the new age, like that ingenious air-traveling apparatus that works like a caravan of flying camels, plus these moving pathways and stairways. She much prefers walking the pilgrimage road on her own power, having recently slipped back into her *guf* that had been waiting patiently for her like a worn and much-loved rocking chair at the end of a long day—

She's arrived.

She stretches her old, old body right here while streams of people continue to swell around her. She feels the urge in her trembling legs to move forward for the last descent before the final climb, but she waits.

עֲמֻדוֹת הָיָו רַגְלֵינוּ בְּשַׁעֲרֵיךָ יְרוּשָׁלַם.

She watches the babes in their mothers' arms, she sees the ancient matrons like herself, and all the stages of *nashim tzidkanios* in between...and so colorful, so achingly beautiful, is the tide of youth that, even amongst the other righteous women, seem to lead the way. She hears their excited voices; it's the song of spiritual freedom, of basking in His holy light.

There's a flash of silver up ahead, and she wonders...

She's moving again, toward that indefinite, shiny object, as the images in her mind come in waves. The joys, tinkling brooks, but also the struggles, which are like tsunamis in her memory. She has seen it all. Contained within the space that modern people call "grey matter" is a review of the entire *golus* of the Jewish people.

But she also knows, though not quite sure how she knows, that those who have previously floundered, or even drowned, are arriving too.