

SCENE 9

MARIAM and YEHUDIT walk through the audience aisle.

YEHUDIT

For how much longer can you carry this out? How long do you think it will last?

MARIAM

Every minute means another Jewish life I helped. I will not regret a single moment of it.

YEHUDIT

Really? Even when the very people you help steal the food meant to save others?

MARIAM

(stubbornly)

Even then.

YEHUDIT

Even as you pass by hundreds dying from hunger in the streets, eating their shoes and saddles?

MARIAM

Even then.

YEHUDIT

(throwing up her hands)

I do not understand you Mariam! I do not understand this stubbornness of yours, this inability to see that the downfall of our people is not hastened by the hands of the Romans, but by our very own!

MARIAM

They have lofty goals.

YEHUDIT

You think that nobility of purpose guarantees nobility of deed. At least the Romans don't talk from both sides of their mouths together. They do not pledge loyalty with one hand while striking with the other.

While MARIAM and YEHUDIT are talking, CHAIM, YOSEF, and YONATAN sneak up behind them.

Once they are up on the stage,
the three men pounce on them.

MARIAM

No. They strike with both.

YEHUDIT

(shaking her head)

You are blind, blind -

CHAIM and YOSEF cover their eyes
and mouths with gags.

CHAIM

Be silent if you value your lives!

He signals to the other two who
tie MARIAM and YEHUDIT's hands
with ropes and then to each
other. Then he removes their
blindfolds and gags.

YEHUDIT

(spitting)

What is it? What is it you want with us? We have done you no
harm. Let us free.

YOSEF

I am sorry. We cannot do that.

MARIAM

Why not? What have we done? We seek only to help our fellow
Jewish brothers and sisters.

YOSEF

Exactly!

YEHUDIT

Excuse me?

CHAIM

The Jewish spirit is strong, but is tamed by comfort.

YEHUDIT

(sneering)

Yes. That is why you burned down the granaries of wheat, is
it not? To help free that Jewish spirit.

YOSEF

(proudly)

Yes.

YEHUDIT

And in its term, condemning thousands of Jews to painful death!
May all the wrongs you wish on the heads of the Romans fall upon
you!

MARIAM

Quiet Yehudit! You are hardly helping.

YOSEF

We know what you do. We know that you offer medicine and food
to those in need.

MARIAM

Yes. What of it?

YOSEF

We cannot have it! Your comfort soothes the feelings of the
people, making them more docile.

CHAIM

We need fighters who are desperate. Who have nothing left to
lose. Who consider death preferable to continued existence
under the Roman threat.

YOSEF

But for you and your
(spits the word)
Hospital, we have accomplished our goal.

MARIAM

What do you intend to do with us?

CHAIM and YOSEF are
uncomfortable, shifting in
their place.

CHAIM

We capture two fish in the same net.

YOSEF

Yes. We eradicate a source of hope and inflame the populace
even more in the same stroke.

MARIAM

Of what do you speak? Plainly if you will.

YEHUDIT

(bitterly)

Do you not see it clearly enough for yourself Mariam. These
(scoffs)

Worthless traitors seek to deliver us to the Romans!

YONATAN

(heatedly)

We are not traitors! We are defenders of our people! We do
what we must!

YEHUDIT

(with narrowed
eyes)

What you must? You must needs hand us over to our enemies to
do with as they see fit?

(looks at Yonatan
closely)

You! My cousin saved your life!

(screaming)

Is this how you repay her?

YONATAN

(shuffling
uncomfortably)

We do what we must. For the survival of our nation!

YEHUDIT

Are we then to be the sheep led to slaughter?

CHAIM

(sharply)

Keep your voice down!

YOSEF

It is no matter! It is time to go!

They blindfold and gag the girls
again and push them forwards.
MAXIMUS, LATINUS, and GLUTINUS
enter from the other side.

LATINUS

Well, what is it Jew? Make it quick, for my sword is hungry
and impatient.

MAXIMUS

Yes. We grow weary of endless practices and drills while denied our share of glory by a beggarly group of defenders on a wall.

CHAIM

We come here not to argue, but to offer.

GLUTINUS

(hands folded over
chest)

Let us first see what you have to offer and if it is worth your lives spared.

CHAIM motions and YOSEF and
YONATAN push MARIAM and YEHUDIT
forward. GLUTINUS's eyes
widen.

GLUTINUS

You are offering us your people? We have no need. We shall take prisoners for ourselves soon enough when we have razed your wall and your city to the ground.

MAXIMUS

(in an aside, to
Glutinus)

Yes but this does make it easier for us, does it not? Two free captives without having to fight our way for them.

GLUTINUS

(sneering)

Coward! As if fighting through a sea of bodies weakened by hunger and fear is any harder than wading through knee high water.

LATINUS

Yes, but we can use them. Parade them before their brethren on the walls and force them to ask their brothers for peace.

MAXIMUS

Yes! And if that fails, why, I believe you said that Rome has need of more workers?

GLUTINUS

(smiling evilly)

Yes, yes, 'tis true enough. A blunt hammer is bound to strike a nail or two.

(turning to the
Jews)

Hand them over Jews. And flee for your lives before I change my mind and end all five of you right now!

YEHUDIT

(writhing)

No! No! Do not! Do not do this brothers! Have mercy on us!

YONATAN stops pushing her for a moment, then shakes his head and carries on.

MARIAM

Do not degrade yourself so cousin. Their hearts have been hardened like Paroh and their eyes have been blinded like the citizens of Sodom. They have sunk to the lowest of lows.

MARIAM and YEHUDIT are handed to the Romans. The Jews leave. MAXIMUS and LATINUS start pulling MARIAM and YEHUDIT across the stage.

YEHUDIT

Father in heaven! Do you see your daughters disgraced and abandoned by their own brothers? Why have You hidden Your face from us? Father! Why have you left us?