



A PECULIAR PARADE

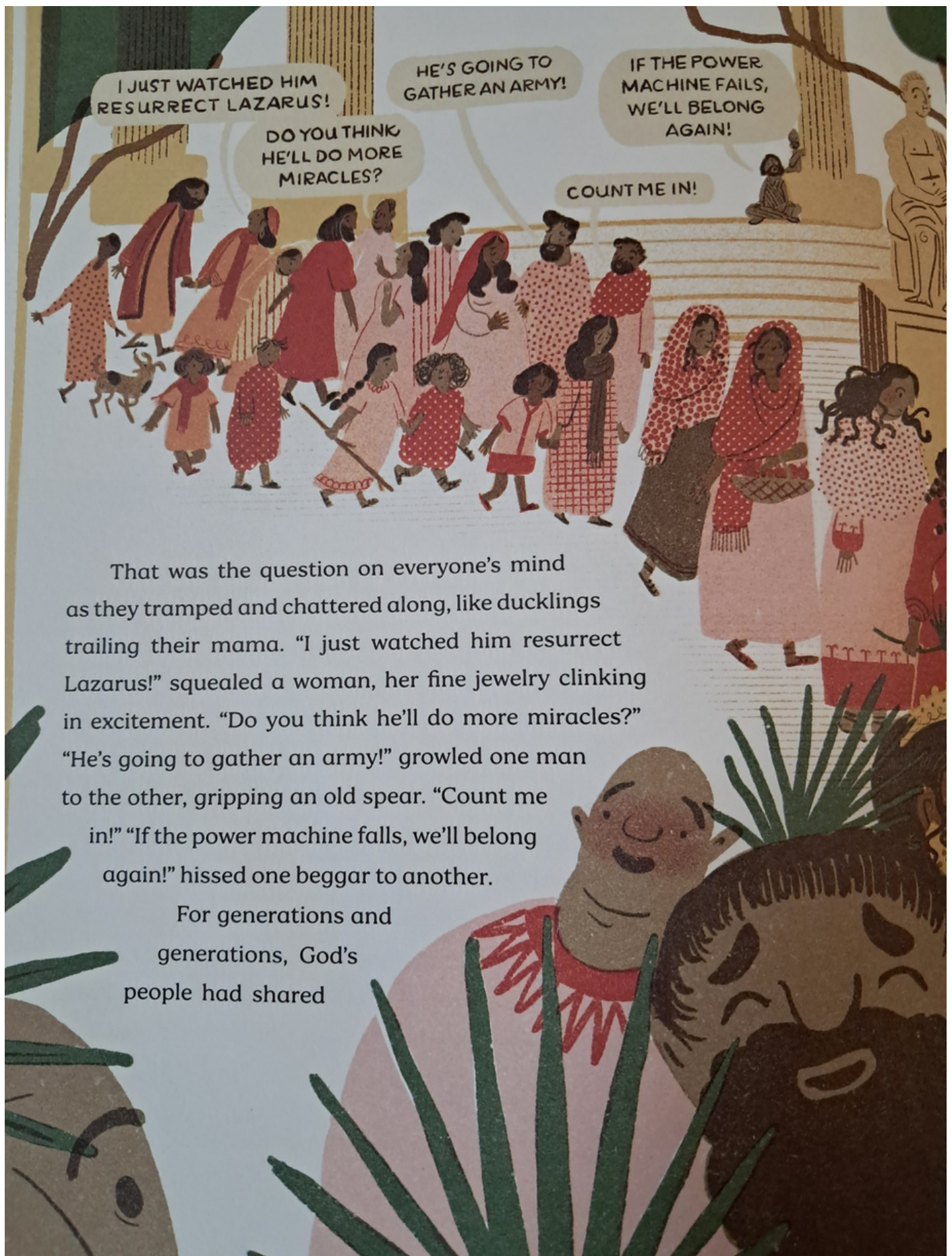
MATTHEW 21; JOHN 12; LUKE 13; 19

Yeshua is also called Jesus.



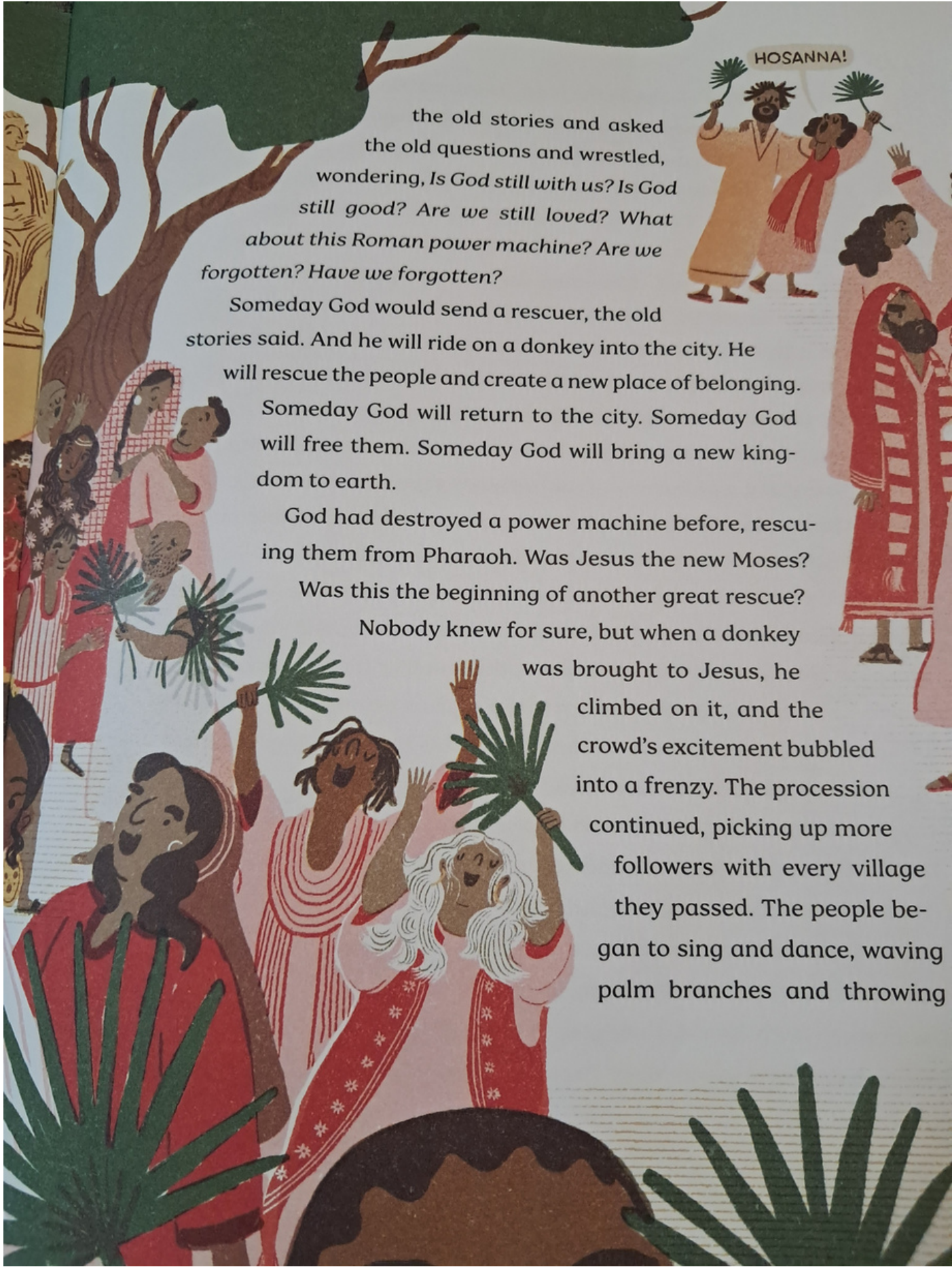
HE ROCK GOATS STOPPED GRAZING TO STARE. The wild dogs trotted alongside, eager tongues lolling. The falcons circled low and curious.

The strangest procession was meandering down the road to Jerusalem. Students and scholars. Rich women in their finery. Fishermen with their stooped posture. Lepers and beggars and children and animals. All following behind Yeshua (Jesus), who walked slowly and deliberately as if the dusty road had been unrolled for his purpose alone. *But what is his purpose?*



That was the question on everyone's mind as they tramped and chattered along, like ducklings trailing their mama. "I just watched him resurrect Lazarus!" squealed a woman, her fine jewelry clinking in excitement. "Do you think he'll do more miracles?" "He's going to gather an army!" growled one man to the other, gripping an old spear. "Count me in!" "If the power machine falls, we'll belong again!" hissed one beggar to another.

For generations and generations, God's people had shared



the old stories and asked
the old questions and wrestled,
wondering, *Is God still with us? Is God
still good? Are we still loved? What
about this Roman power machine? Are we
forgotten? Have we forgotten?*

Someday God would send a rescuer, the old
stories said. And he will ride on a donkey into the city. He
will rescue the people and create a new place of belonging.
Someday God will return to the city. Someday God
will free them. Someday God will bring a new king-
dom to earth.

God had destroyed a power machine before, rescu-
ing them from Pharaoh. Was Jesus the new Moses?
Was this the beginning of another great rescue?

Nobody knew for sure, but when a donkey
was brought to Jesus, he
climbed on it, and the
crowd's excitement bubbled
into a frenzy. The procession
continued, picking up more
followers with every village
they passed. The people be-
gan to sing and dance, waving
palm branches and throwing



their cloaks on the road. "*Hosanna! Hosanna!*" they sang. "*Rescue us, please! Blessings to the new king!*"

A group of religious leaders hurried up to Jesus as he sat atop the donkey, calming it as the crowd surged around him. "Correct them!" they sputtered. "Hush them!" This talk of a new king would only anger the power machine.

But Jesus shrugged, dismissing them. "If the people don't cry out, then the stones will!"

And it truly felt as if the stones just might cry. The joy and expectation seeped out from the crowd until it felt as if even the trees were dancing, the rocks singing, and the clouds humming along. It seemed this strange celebration could not be contained. It tumbled and bumbled closer to the city, without any of the order or frills you might expect from a royal procession. The songs got louder, and the dust cloud grew among stomps and whirls as the ragtag crowd spilled over the road.

But if you'd have been there, if you had seen Jesus's face, you might have noticed something. Amid all the swirling celebration, Jesus was weeping. He stared at the grand city, at the center of the Promised Land, where God had promised Abraham so many years before that God would bless the whole world. Tears streamed down his face, soaking his beard. "Oh, sweet city," you may have heard him sob. "Oh, my people. You think you know what peace is and how I will bring it. You don't understand, do you?"

And they didn't understand. Do we ever fully understand what God is up to in the mix of heaven and earth? But on trudged the donkey, with its rider weeping and the crowds singing—a most peculiar parade indeed.

