

Driven To Run

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They called me a 'sinner.' I was branded by the 'righteous' community. An outcast. Rightfully so I guess. I didn't want anything to do with them and they didn't want anything to do with me. I didn't even want to try to live as they did, with all their rules and regulations. I wanted freedom, the freedom to be me, to live as I wanted, to do as I wanted. I could choose, I wasn't *stupid* about what was good for me.

Can you imagine?! Having someone else tell you what to do and what not to do. They were strangers to me now. What did they care about my life...*really*?! I figured they were just control freaks; busybodies, bored with their own insignificant lives so they had to try and meddle with everyone else's life.

And the gall! To say they were representing God, if there really *was* a god to represent. I mean really! Where was he if he *really* existed?

Oh yeah I grew up with all the stories about how he delivered our people out of Egypt and all that stuff...you know...the miracles and stuff.

Well if that was all real where was he today? Where was he in my life? I never saw him or felt him. Oh, I'd look at animals and trees and birds and things and I'd wonder. But then I'd look at the people around me.

I mean take for instance my parents. When I was growing up all I can seem to remember is their arguing, disagreeing and their fighting with each other. They always seemed angry at each other or angry with me. Always the arguing and the yelling. And if they weren't yelling they just didn't pay attention. Distant; often seeming hard, cold and indifferent...you know what I mean? I wanted to run away; to hide from their harsh, biting words and their spiteful, selfish actions.

Oh, in front of other people they'd kind of pretend to be okay, but the anger and impatience would creep out somewhere. A little nip here and a little nip there. Always the strife and contention. But, they were religious. My father was a chazan, the one who leads the prayer service in the synagogue and my mother rarely missed a Shabat service.

It was all pretty empty and painful for me. And then on top of it all they eventually divorced..."some uncleaness" my father said. A few months later he was remarried.

Anyway, to make a long story short...it didn't seem to hold anything for me. In fact I grew to despise them for the hypocrisy that I saw continually in them, and many if not most of the others in our small community.

I mean every Shabat or at least every feast day everyone would troop off to the synagogue, but after the service or even *during* it, the women would be gossiping, the men would be doing the same and talking business and, or politics.

And during the week...ha, ha...the yelling, the screaming, the bickering, the cheating, the divorces. I'm sure you must know what I'm talking about.

Did you know marriage only hurts if you've been in one? Seems every pretty young girl ends up in one, I was no different. I had hopes it would be different for me than my parents marriage and much deeper fears that it would be the same. It was worse. I got into trouble when he hurt me one too many times and

looking for solace and comfort, I slept with another.

After being ‘put away’ I decided I’d make my own way. I’d do what I thought was good and pleasing to me. I thought why not choose who I wanted, when I wanted...no strings attached, even knowing that was going outside the boundaries of the law and our community.

I knew this was pretty chancy to live this way, but with Roman rule I felt pretty protected, especially by some of my Roman ‘friends’ if you know what I mean.

You can see now that I hated everything that the religious community *seemed* to hold near and dear. And it wouldn’t have mattered anyway to them, they grew to hate me as well, as they often announced to others in the street as I passed by.

I have to admit, not openly of course, but sometimes their scorn and rejection would cut deep into my heart, or maybe it just caused all the other biting, angry and critical words to come up to the surface of my mind.

Anyway I had a remedy for that. You see I had grown to love wine. It was cool and calming and lightly sweet, and after one or two glasses it became warm and comforting, stilling my agitated soul and mind. Sometimes, really probably often, I’d drink more than two cups, maybe three...sometimes I’d even lose count, especially at parties. Sometimes I’d have a visitor. I’d like that most of the time because often I was really haunted by the darkness and the loneliness and it was as well my living as I was a single, ‘put away’ woman. I *really* liked parties because they were light and lively and I could usually find someone to be with at the end.

Well, one day a most unusual thing happened. You know Levi the tax collector? He wasn’t liked anymore than me, but we were friends. He asked me to a party he was having at his house. Said he’d met somebody special he wanted his friends to meet. So I said, “Okay, I’ll be there, wouldn’t miss it.”

I went home and got really ‘ready’ for this party. And off I went excited about meeting this somebody ‘new’. Maybe he’d be somebody I could get to ‘know’ and be with.

Well, what a surprise! Who do I meet in the road coming from evening prayers at the synagogue, but the ruler of the synagogue and some of his friends. At first they mocked me, calling me a harlot and other such things and then they all spit on the ground in my direction. Wow! I was fit to be tied. What *chutzpah*!¹ If their wives knew some of what I knew. I was **so** angry I spit back at them and cursed them out and then, within moments I was at Levi’s door. I was still a bit disheveled but I knew everyone would understand, we had these kind of things happen quite often. It would be the talk of the party...at least for a little while.

The door was open. I stepped inside to find a large crowd around the table with lots of food and drink... Levi was a good host. But some things were different tonight. There were a number of men who I’d never seen before at Levi’s house. Two or three I recognized but had never seen here before. And then there was this one man. He was kind of in the middle of it all.

He turned and looked right at me. I mean *right at me*, right in the eyes.

Now, you have to understand, maybe you do already, that I’m not one that’s given to embarrassment, but in that moment I felt uncovered in my soul; naked, standing there, but ironically at the same time I felt he loved me; not like my lovers, different somehow...there was a sweetness. His eyes seemed to see everything in me and at the same time he wasn’t condemning me for what he saw. There was no hardness there.

¹ *Chutzpah* is the Hebrew word for audacity.

I only saw and experienced gentleness and tenderness.

It just pierced through my heart. How could his eyes do that to me? No one...I mean *no one* had *ever* looked at me that way before!

I didn't know what to do. Should I run out the door or should I go in?! I was stunned.

Then he rose and came over to me. He took my hand in his and led me to the table where he made room for me to sit right beside him.

I could tell right away he wasn't one of us... 'sinners' I mean. But he wasn't a Pharisee either. I mean he wasn't all dressed up like one of them. He had tsit-tsit and a full, untrimmed beard, dressed plain and simple and clean.

Then he began to speak, often turning and looking again in my eyes. He was talking about our God. Telling us our God was our true Papa; our Father, and that He loved us and wanted to heal us and make us His own; that He was calling us back to Himself.

But it was not just his words, although they seemed to wash over me in such a calming, peaceful way...kind of like the wine but very different...not numbing.

It was his eyes. They made me feel safe and secure, soft and warm.

I couldn't believe it! I couldn't believe tears were coming to my eyes! I hadn't cried for years! I'd forgotten how. Even when I hurt and I was alone I'd gotten to where I couldn't cry, and I'd drink myself to sleep because I couldn't bear the pain locked up inside me.

Now here I was, tears starting to stream down my cheeks. For a moment I felt self-conscious of them and tried to brush them away, and then it didn't seem to matter anymore.

Then he turned and he took my face and pulled me to his shoulder and I felt all my heart melting...melting...and melting into his shoulder, and it was as if all the darkness fled away; all the emptiness, the bitterness, the sorrow, the anxiety, the hatred, the feeling driven to run and run and run. And then I just *knew* there really was a God and He'd touched me.

He held me as I sobbed and when I stopped he wiped my face *so* tenderly.

I felt *so* different. I felt *clean*. I mean *really clean!* I never fully realized how *dirty* I'd felt.

Who was this man who touched and changed me? I heard them say his name...Yeshua. All of a sudden that was the sweetest name I'd ever heard. All I knew was that I loved him, like a child loves a loving father...but more than that, *more* than that. There are no words to express that love for Him.

Needless to say, I began to follow Him. Wherever He went I followed. And I began to learn about our God through Him. Now I began to understand what it was all meant to be...God and us I mean. Like a marriage, the very thing I had despised but now was beginning to see was meant to be something beautiful.

But I was changing still. His words were changing me. The way I'd think, the way I acted were all changing. His words just washed over me again and again like waves.

His words were *real*. His actions; the things He did, the way He lived...it was *real!* And we, those that followed Him, we were becoming real, too. I could see it in the others.

And when we made mistakes Yeshua would teach us what was right and He would *forgive* us. Such mercy, such forgiving, loving, kindness I'd never known! I didn't have to hide my heart, good or bad, anymore. And because of Yeshua's awesome love and forgiveness for me, I began to feel compassion and mercy even for those who had hurt me the most. I found myself *wanting* to forgive them and *wanting* to

do kind and tender things for them. Can you believe this?! **Even** when they continued to revile and reject me!

Oh, sure it would hurt, but now I took that hurt to my best friend Yeshua and amazingly He would **always** have this way of transforming it into my **wanting** to return kindness to the one who hurt me! I didn't want to entertain bitterness in my heart anymore. I'd lived in that prison, **too** long!

Then one day they took Him away and hung Him on a tree. What they **did** to Him! I couldn't bear it! My heart was to be broken again?! But then I heard Him say, "Father forgive them for they don't know what they are doing". And His words washed my heart again.

I saw Him! I saw Him first! Three days later at the tomb, I saw Him! I didn't recognize Him at first for grief I think. But then He said my name. I heard His voice and I **knew** He was alive!

I was there, too, when He ascended forty days later. And ten days after that, I was there when the Spirit of the Holy One descended upon us in fire on *Shavu'ot*.²

I'm here to proclaim to all those who are looking for our Messiah that I have **known** Him and He is **Alive!** Forevermore He is **Alive!**

Just **ask** Yeshua. It's not so hard if you really **need** Him; if you really **want** Him.

And you will be **Alive**, too!

With His Love For You,

Miryam of Magdala³

May You also be. Abundantly Blessed to find Him, too!

² *Shavu'ot* is Hebrew for Pentecost (Lev. 23:15-21). It's most likely the day that Yahveh descended upon Mt. Sinai in fire, smoke, thunder and His glory Cloud, and it's the day that He chose to immerse the Apostles of Yeshua with the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, which manifested as tongues of heavenly fire upon each one of them in fulfillment of prophecy (Joel 2:28f.; Ezk. 36:24-27). Also on that day, 3,000 other Jewish men received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-47), as well as many women.

³ Written by a Jewish woman who lived in the same manner as Miryam of Magdala may have lived, who was also found and healed by Yeshua our Messiah and now loves Yeshua and the Torah (the Living Word of our Papa God). If you'd like to contact me please do it by emailing me at AvramYeh@Gmail.com and ask for Ruti.

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