

THE GENTILE KNEW?!

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It was a dark and overcast night. The moon was flirting in and out between the clouds. The wind was against us and we were finding it very hard to make any headway in the direction that we wanted our boat to go. And then we saw Him! He was coming toward us walking on the water! We all panicked thinking that it was some kind of ghost or demon, but then we heard His Voice saying, 'Be strong! It's Me! Don't be afraid!' We still couldn't believe for fear but I heard myself saying, 'Lord, if that is You, command me to come to You on the water.' And He did!, and I found myself climbing out of the boat, and walking on the water toward Him!

Suddenly the winds became very strong, and the waves were making crests in the water that were higher than me! I became afraid and I began to sink. I cried out, 'Lord save me!' and I felt His strong Hand around my wrist, pulling me up. He said, 'Oh you of little faith, why did you doubt?' I felt so ashamed. How could I not believe in Him? I had seen Him give sight to the blind and cleanse the lepers with a touch. He had multiplied just a few loaves of bread and fish for thousands of us to eat and we were all stuffed to the gills and satisfied. He was even raising the dead. And His Words to us and the Jewish crowds, had always sweetly pierced my heart with Joy. Even the Words He said that I didn't understand. I knew He was the Messiah of Israel. How could I have doubted and not trusted Him with my life on the water? But this would not be the last time that I would fail Him.

We came to the boat and we climbed back in. His Feet weren't even wet! It shouldn't have surprised me but things like this always did. I remembered how Moses and our People had crossed the Red Sea on *dry* ground and how Joshua had done the exact same thing with the Jordan. How could the ground be dry if the waters had just parted? But Yahveh our God was with His People Israel then, and things happened that were miraculous. I remembered also Elisha, when he had asked for the double portion from Elijah. Elijah's mantle had come down to Elisha from the Chariot and Horses of Fire, and the first thing that Elisha did was to strike the river with it. The Jordan parted and he walked across it, just as Elijah had done with him a few minutes earlier. Those were ancient stories that I knew, but I had never experienced anything like that. Not until I started following Yeshua.

The wind had ceased and the waves were calm now. I could see on the faces of John and the others, a kind of awe, inspired by the Presence of God. They were falling on their knees and then to their faces saying, 'Of a Truth, You are the Son of God.' God was in our midst again! I knew that. Why did I doubt His ability? I wasn't sure what I was to believe. Many of us Jews 'believe' in God, but our belief is so superficial. It has no meaning. I'm beginning to see that belief entails walking with God into places where one might not want to go. And that isn't always so easy. I didn't know if I could believe the way that Yeshua wanted me to. I didn't think that I could believe that much.

It was great after we arrived at land and got out of the boat. All the Jewish people of the Galilee region, and some Gentiles too, came to him with their sick and He healed every single one of them. Some were healed just by touching His tzit-tzit. Oh, I love the Galilee area. The Sea, the land, the people. But there were other places that I didn't want to go with Yeshua. There was a city in Judah where some of the Jews there wanted to kill Him. I didn't understand that. I couldn't understand it. I'd never seen that kind of wickedness before. After that I realized that I can't 'understand' evil, but I know it when it's happening. The same with goodness. Why would anyone want to be good to me? And most of all God?! But I have come to see that God desires with a great longing to be good to me. Not that I deserve it. Just the opposite, but that's Who Our God Is.

In Galilee all the Jews loved Yeshua. All that is, except some of those rotten Pharisees and scribes. I wish they would have just stayed home. They always tried to make life miserable for Yeshua. They were always trying to trap Him in this point of the Law or that point. They couldn't see the Messiah right in their midst! Or they didn't want to. Yeshua always got the best of them though. I remember the time we were in a crowded house and Yeshua was teaching. All of a sudden a part of the roof began to disappear as dust and pieces of the roof came down upon a few of us. Some men on the roof were tearing it apart! And when they had made an opening wide enough, they let down a paralytic friend of theirs on his cot. It was the only way that they could get their friend inside. Yeshua told the paralytic that his sins were forgiven. I could have cut the silence with a knife. That *really* upset the Pharisees and scribes. 'Who does He think He is?!', was written all over their faces. Yeshua told the paralytic to, 'Get up!' and he did! Yeshua healed him right then and there, to the amazement and glee of all the Jews present.

All that is except the Doctors of the Law. Their faces just seemed to get harder, like stone. I could tell by their expressions that they hated Yeshua. And then I knew that for all their pomp and ceremony, for all their pious prayers, their hearts were evil. They hated God. If Yeshua didn't have authority from God to forgive sins, then He couldn't have healed the man. The healing just proved that God had given authority to Yeshua to forgive our sins. For anyone can say that someone's sins are forgiven. You really can't see that. But the paralytic was healed. Everyone saw that. If Yeshua's Word was True for the paralytic's healing, than it stood to reason that his sins were also forgiven.

I was just a fisherman by trade, but I knew human nature, and there's nothing I hated worse than those who held themselves out to be godly and righteous, but despised God in their heart. Some of those scribes and Pharisees were so cold. No wonder I didn't want to have anything to do with God till Yeshua came along. All the 'God' that I knew was what the Pharisees and the Rabbis presented to me. And if that was God, well, I didn't want any part of Him.

I've seen religiosity all my life. We Jews find our identity in the 'Jewish things' we do: being part of the Jewish community, giving to people and causes in need, perhaps even lighting Sabbath candles, not eating meat with dairy, and observing the Commandments. But shouldn't we first have our Jewish identity grounded in the Messiah of Israel? Only in Him can we have a living relationship with the God of our Fathers and truly come to understand what it means to be a Jew. Is it not sheer hypocrisy to be a Jew, and not want the Jewish Messiah?!

When Messiah stood in front of those hypocrites they all turned away. Oh, they were 'looking for Messiah' they said, but 'not Yeshua, thank you!' Yet, the most incredible thing was happening. The outcasts and the common people were following Yeshua. I remember when we went past the tax booth of Levi. Oh, how I hated him. Always taking more money from me than Roman law required. The weasel! There was one thing that I agreed with the Rabbis on. All the Jewish tax collectors were going to Hell! And there were days when I would taunt Levi with that. Of course, he would always exact more money from me the next time I came through. Hmm...

Then it happened! One day as we passed Levi, Yeshua said, 'Levi, come with Me.' And Levi left his booth and never returned! He became one of us. One of the twelve. Oh, I had to do some heavy soul searching. I didn't like Levi and here he was with us! I finally went to Yeshua with my problem. It took me a few days. I didn't want to tell Him that I was struggling with Levi being with us. But as soon as I entered His Presence, I could tell that my bitterness and resentment for Levi was beginning to fade away. It wasn't anything that I did. As I began to speak, I could see that Yeshua knew exactly what was on my mind, and that He was glad that I was sharing it with Him.

He told me that He had come for people like Levi. Jewish people who were far away from God. He said that He could heal the hearts of many of them because they knew that they were not right with God, unlike many Jews and Rabbis who were self righteous. At one time, He said, hearts like Levi's had hungered for God. With religiosity ruling the day, their hunger for God had been buried. Well, I could understand

that. And when I left Yeshua that day, I had a love for Levi. And a deeper love for Yeshua. It hasn't vanished. It was things like that that really spoke of Yeshua being my Messiah. The miracles were wonderful and every one of them produced a sense of awe and amazement in me, even if I saw a thousand of them a day. Some days I saw more. The miraculous had become commonplace. God was truly dwelling among us as the Prophet Isaiah had spoken of. With each miracle, it was like I was seeing it for the first time. I never lost my sense of awe and total wonder. But the thing that spoke to my heart the most, was seeing people like Levi come to Yeshua. Levi gave up everything to follow Him. Why would someone do something like that? Why had I left my fishing business? Because we had found Living Waters in Yeshua. It would eventually cost me my life, but my life is a small price to pay, to be able to drink from the Fountain of Living Waters.

That Last Passover

We were all a little excited. We were going into Jerusalem again to celebrate the Passover and we were thinking that this would be the one. This time, Yeshua would openly declare Himself to be Messiah and ascend the Throne of David. We would fight against the Romans and destroy their armies and the Kingdom of God would begin in Israel and go on for eternity. At least that's what some of us thought at the time. We were also a bit scared because every time we'd come to Jerusalem, the Priests, Pharisees and scribes would gang up on Yeshua. We had no idea what God had planned.

We celebrated the Passover with Yeshua and He told us that one of the twelve would betray Him. We couldn't believe our ears. It turned out to be that Jew from the town of Keriot in Judah. I never did like him. He was always talking about money. He left early, for what we didn't realize at the time, and the rest of us just fell back into celebrating, drinking too much wine and trying to forget what Yeshua had said about betrayal. As the Passover ended, we sang some Psalms and left for the Mount of Olives. It's just outside the Temple grounds to the east, across the Kidron Valley. Yeshua took us there often to sleep out under the stars.

We came to our spot and Yeshua told me and two others to come with Him. We did, and reaching another place, He told us to stay there and pray for Him. He left us there and I could tell that He was praying also. Well, I really wanted to pray, but I had drunk too much wine. I had thought that this Passover was going to be like the last two that we had celebrated with Him. I had no idea it would be any different. I fell asleep. So did the others. And then, all of a sudden, there was Judah with a number of soldiers and servants of the Priests. They were coming for Yeshua.

I took out my sword and began to fight, but Yeshua told me to put it up. They arrested Him and all of us fled. They took Him back to the Temple area and I stayed close behind, but out of sight. I didn't want to be arrested. I positioned myself outside the Sanhedrin, both in order to warm myself by the fire, and to find out what was happening. While I was warming myself, this maid servant of the Priests came and spotted me. She said I was one of the followers of Yeshua. I was scared. Me, Simon, as big as I am, scared. But there were others there, and I didn't want to go to prison, even though I had told Yeshua just a few hours before, that I would die with Him if need be. The maid fingered me twice and I failed Him both times. I left to go to another fire and while I was there, a man there said that I was a follower of Yeshua, by my Galilean accent. I denied Him again! And just then, through a window, I saw Yeshua's Face. He looked at me with such sadness in His Eyes. I ran away and started crying. How could I have denied Him after all I had seen and been through with Him?

They beat Yeshua, all the learned men of the Sanhedrin. They spit in His Face and mocked Him. As darkness gave way to dawn, they brought Him to the Roman governor, Pilate. They demanded his execution, although He had not broken a single law. The High Priest had placed Yeshua under oath and asked Him if He was the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One. Yeshua told them that He was. They said that He had

blasphemed and was worthy of death. This was His crime and why they murdered Him. Yeshua claimed to be the Messiah of Israel.

Pilate handed Him over to his soldiers. They beat Him on the head with a staff, spit on Him and pulled out part of His Beard. They placed a crown of thorns on His Head and scourged Him, ripping the Flesh out of most of His Back, with their Roman hooks on the ends of the lashes. I saw the Romans taking Him out and I wanted to stop them, but there were too many of them. It happened so quickly. They led Him to the place of crucifixion. He was half dead already. And there they pierced Him to a piece of timber. Yeshua could have stopped it with just one Word. I didn't understand then why He didn't. I do now. All these terrible things King David, Isaiah and Zechariah spoke of, concerning Messiah's Death. But then, my whole world was coming apart. The day before, I thought Yeshua might make me the new minister of agriculture and industry in His Kingdom. And now, my heart broken, I was in fear of being crucified myself.

I've come to see though, that I wasn't the only one to deny Him. We have all denied God access into our inner most being. From childhood, many of us realize that we must not give that part of our self to anyone. And in that, we sin against the Almighty by not fully loving Him and trusting Him, by not yielding to Him in all areas of our life. I found this out a number of times. Perhaps you've seen this in yourself as well? It's a place that we can't let anyone in because of fear or pride. What if they hurt us? And people have, from our parents to our best friends. If we give our total self to God, whom we don't know, how do we know that He might not *really* hurt us?

I was crushed as I realized that I had denied Yeshua. I couldn't think straight. For three days I was in shock. All pride was crushed. And then I saw Him! Alive from the dead! And not just alive but glorified! Raised by Papa God into the Glory that Yeshua had with Him before Creation. Never to die again. And I wasn't the only one. Many of our Jewish People did too. It's a new day for us now. We Jews have found our Messiah. We are giving Him our perverse hearts and He is giving us new hearts, just like He gave to Levi.

Why did He die for you? Lord knows you don't deserve it! But He loves you with an overwhelming Love. The Sweetest Love in all the world. He took our just punishment, death, upon Himself. We have all broken God's Laws, the greatest of which is to love Him with *all* our heart. Yeshua was totally humiliated, scorned and rejected, that you might be honored, chosen and accepted by God. Now, I don't doubt anymore. I failed God many times, but I have come to experience His Tender Forgiveness. Now I love God with all my heart and I know that Yeshua is my Messiah. I no longer look to myself for my strength, but Messiah Yeshua. And one day, I look forward to seeing my King in Glory and hearing Yeshua say to me, 'Well done Simon! Enter into the Kingdom that has been prepared for you by my Father.' And Eternity will have just begun. I hope to see you there, too.

Don't believe in Messiah Yeshua?! Even the *Gentile* woman knew that Elijah was a Man of God, and that Truth was in his mouth. When Elijah raised her son from the dead she said to Elijah, 'Now I know that you are a Man of God and that the Word of Yahveh in your mouth is Truth!' (1st Kings 17:24). How is it that the Rabbis and Pharisees 'couldn't determine' if Yeshua was from God or not?! He did the *exact* same miracles and many, many more!¹

¹ For further reading about the things that Yeshua said and did, consult your nearest, complete Jewish Bible. That's a Bible with the Old *and* New Covenants in it. If you don't have access to one, buy a New King James Bible. Then go to the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and begin reading, asking the God of Israel to open your eyes to if Yeshua of Nazareth is the Messiah of Israel or not. Then you, too, like Levi before you, will come to know the Messiah. It's the most Jewish thing you can do! *Gospel* is an archaic word for 'Good News' like in, 'How lovely on the mountains are the feet of Him who brings *Good News*, who announces Peace and brings Good News of Joy, who announces Salvation and says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!' (Isaiah 52:7) If you have any questions about Messiah Yeshua, contact my good friend, Avram, through his website at <http://SeedofAbraham.net>.
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