

Joseph and Jeschua

Jakob Damkani grew up in Israel. His parents were Jews who immigrated from Persia. As a young man he found his way to Jesus. Today he is a confessing Messianic Jew, and maintains a service in Israel under the name "Trumpet of Salvation to Israel". This service is aimed at the goal of making the Jews acquainted with their Jewish Messiah Yeshua.

In Hebrew, the name Jesus becomes Yeshua. Messianic Jews like to speak of Yeshua even when using other languages, because the European pronunciation of Jesus is often incorrectly transposed by Jews into Hebrew as "Yeshu". This word is an abbreviation for "jemach schmo we zikhro" ("May his name and memory be blotted out"). In a Jewish context this is the equivalent of a term of abuse, and is associated with the Christian persecution of the Jews.

JAKOB DAMKANI



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I really enjoyed telling everyone who would listen about Yeshua, which was how I met Joseph one day. »Jossi« came from a secular home. And like many of the secular *sabras* (native Israelis), he regarded the Tenach only as a historical document that described the ancient history of the people of Israel. He also knew something of modern Bible criticism and was not willing to accept the words simply as they were written. He liked to argue very loudly about almost everything I told him, and I am sure the whole street could hear our lively discussions.

"You cannot convince me," he cried out passionately, "that this Jesus is mentioned in the Tenach! That is nothing but a Christian invention, which considered our "Old Testament" a Christian allegory. The Tenach is a purely Jewish book, free of every Christian doctrine!"

"Of course it is a Jewish book," I replied. "An Gentile who wants to be saved must accept this Jewish book and the Jewish Messiah it prophesies about. Didn't I tell you that I have not left Judaism and that I have no intension of doing so? I have always believed that there is nothing more ridiculous than the idea that a Jew must 'convert' to Christianity in order to believe in the Jewish Messiah of Israel! No, it is these Gentiles who decide to follow Yeshua who adopt a Torah that is strictly Jewish."

Joseph clearly defined Christianity by what he had seen and heard: religious garb, crosses, and organ music. He did not know Yeshua and the new covenant, the only mean by which Jews and the whole world can be saved. "Come on," he replied, "do you mean to tell me that those Christians who worship their idol in sound of pipe organs are actually Jews who believe in a Jewish religion? If you imply anything like this, I must conclude that you do not have the faintest idea what it means to be Jewish, and that you do not know anything about Christianity either. These two religions are so far apart from each other that there is no bridge long enough to span the gap between them!" «

"I must agree with you about this point, too, Joseph. These two religions are not only totally different, but they also hate each other passionately and are willing to fight one another to the death. By nature, every religion IS hostile to its rivals, because each conspires it elf to be the sole custodian of the divine oracles of God. But, I am not talking to you about either Judaism or Christianity. Yeshua did not come all the way down from heaven, nor did He go all the way to the cross, just to introduce us to a new religion that would eventually rise against its own mother! Yeshua Himself condemned religious rituals that were void of any inner meaning, be it Jewish or non-Jewish. Instead, He taught us that God is a Spirit, and they who truly worship God must do so in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24)."

"Tell me," Joseph suddenly changed the subject. "Do you lay tefillin (put on phylacterie)? Do you keep the Shabbat? What kind of a Jew are you, anyway?"

"Let me answer your question the Jewish way, with another question: Do you do these things yours If? No, you don't, but that doesn't keep you from calling yourself a Jew, doe it? You are Jewish because you were born of a Jewish mother, isn't that right? Well, so was I. Can you see? The Jewish rituals don't make us Jews or non-Jews, nor does the cultural legacy we inherited by birth. We were circumcised when we were eight days old. Even the chief rabbi was circumcised when he was eight day old, long before he had any opportunity to keep even one commandment. Nobody asked us during the act of circumcision whether or not we believed in the Jewish religion, true?"

"You told me earlier that the Tenach speaks about Yeshua," said Joseph, changing the subject again. "Can you show me where, please? And do me a favor. Don't start with Isaiah 53."

"As a matter of fact, I did want to talk to you about this extremely important prophecy, but let's talk about something else if you prefer.

You are probably familiar with the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob and Rachel."

"Of course! Joseph is my favorite biblical figure. My parents' name are Jacob and Rachel, and so they named me Joseph."

"So, let's review the story of Joseph, and I believe you are about to hear several things that will make your hair stand on end," I challenged him.

"Joseph was the beloved son of Jacob and his favorite wife, Rachel, and was born in Jacob's old age. Jacob preferred this son above all his other sons and made him a coat of many colors. In other words, he considered that young boy greater than all his older brothers, who noticed that special attitude, of course, and hated their brother for it. Yeshua was also called 'My beloved Son' (Matthew 3: 17) by the Father. He was hated by His Jewish brother - and still is to this very day."

"Oh, this is just a coincidence!" Joseph laughed. "It doesn't really mean anything." I just laughed, too.

Joseph's curiosity was stirred, and he stopped his arguments for a moment. This gave me the opportunity to proceed.

"Joseph was known as 'the dreamer.' He had prophetic dreams that revealed to the Jews (his brothers) and to the Gentiles (Pharaoh and his servants) what was going to happen to them in the future. Yeshua was also a prophet, who predicted to His generation what was going to happen."

"Jacob, Joseph's father, sent him to visit his brothers and wish them peace. Although Joseph was well aware of their hostility toward him, he nevertheless obeyed his father and kept his commands. The New Covenant tells us that God the Father sent His beloved Son Yeshua into this world to save His own kindred, the Jews. Yeshua knew what the consequences of that visit would be-that He would be delivered to the Gentiles to be crucified-but He obeyed His heavenly Father anyway, and He did so willingly and lovingly."

"Joseph's brothers seized the opportunity and decided to kill him, but finally they changed their minds and decided to sell him instead to the Gentile Midianites for twenty pieces of silver (Genesis 37:28). The Jewish leaders also sought to kill Yeshua, and when one of His disciples betrayed Him to them for thirty pieces of silver, they handed Him over to the Romans."

"Joseph' brothers stripped him of the garment that symbolized authority and dominion and threw him into a pit. Before His Crucifixion, Yeshua was stripped of all His clothes, and afterwards He was buried in the pit of the tomb."

"Hey, I like it!" Joseph got excited. "I've never seen these things this way."

"Just wait. You haven't seen anything yet!" I promised.

"Soon after his arrival in Egypt, Joseph faced a severe temptation and withstood it honorably. The Scriptures tell us that at the very beginning of His public ministry, Yeshua was tempted severely by Satan, but withstood all of that temptation without sin.

"Potiphar's wife was furious with Joseph for rejecting her advances. She got even with him by falsely accusing him, although he was not guilty at all. Yeshua, too, was innocently punished for our sins, which He Himself had never committed."

"Joseph spent over two years in prison before he was vindicated and raised by Pharaoh to be second in the kingdom. Yeshua spent two nights and three days in the grave before He was raised by God in power and great glory."

"Joseph was appointed second to Pharaoh over Egypt. Yeshua was appointed King over the nations, and He sits now on the throne at the right hand of God in heaven, as it is written, *«The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet'»*" (Psalm 110: 1).

"Joseph was made the provider, who distributed grain not only to the Egyptians, but also to the entire world that suffered from hunger. Yeshua, as *'the bread of life'* (John 6:48), sustains the whole world with His grace and merciful love."

"Joseph's brothers came down to Egypt to buy some food because of the heavy famine that was in Canaan at that time, and finally they appeared before Joseph. The children of Israel starve today spiritually, and those of them who come to Yeshua receive the Bread of Life from Him."

"Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. Yeshua knows well all of His Jewish kindred, although their eyes are still blinded so that they do not recognize Him."

"Joseph's brothers mistook him for an Egyptian and spoke to him through an interpreter. The Jewish people still treat Yeshua as though He were a Gentile, refuse to call Him by His Jewish name, and fail to recognize Him as their brother."

"Joseph treated his brothers roughly until he proved, to his complete satisfaction, that they had repented wholeheartedly. Yeshua is still waiting

until His family acknowledge their sin against Him and stop accusing Him for their misfortunes."

"Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and told them, 'I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt' (Genesis 45:4). Yeshua will soon reveal His true identity to the house of David, after pouring out on them the Spirit of grace and supplication. Then they will look on Him 'whom they have pierced' (Zechariah 12:10) and acknowledge that they had sold their brother, their own flesh and blood, to the Gentiles."

"Joseph told his brothers not to be grieved or angry with themselves because they had sold him, because God had sent him before them to preserve life (Genesis 45:5). He said to them, 'As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order ... to preserve many people alive' (Genesis 50:20). Likewise, the children of Israel were not aware of what they were doing when they delivered Yeshua to the Romans to be executed. But even on the cross, Yeshua cried out, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing' (Luke 23:34). God brought good out of this and used the rejection of Yeshua by the Jews to bring about the salvation of the Gentiles."

"Joseph invited his brothers to come and live in the land of Goshen because of the famine. Yeshua also reserves places in His kingdom for His people, the Jewish people."

Joseph closed his eyes and thought quietly. I saw that he was bothered. After a few moments of silence, he said, "This is really interesting. I've read the story of Joseph many times, but I never saw this striking similarity between his life and that of Yeshua. I find it quite difficult now to explain it away as merely a coincidence. I could understand if it were only a matter of one or two details, but the way you presented it gives me the impression that the entire story of Joseph and his brothers is a reflection of Yeshua and His attitude toward His Jewish kindred."

At this point my mother came into the room, carrying a tray with two glasses of hot peppermint tea and a plate of cookies. Our conversation obviously had come to an end. At once we descended from the heavenlies and came back down to earth. After some small talk, Joseph left, and I never saw him again.

Afterward, I prayed for him and committed him to the Lord's faithful hands. The Bible says that the Word of God, which we speak to other people, is not given out in vain, but that it will certainly fulfill the purpose for which it was sent.

6 *Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.*

7 *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.*

8 *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.*

9 *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.*

10 *For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;*

11 *So shall My Word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. "*

(Isaiah 55:6-11)

I believe that the day will come when Joseph will also recognize Yeshua. The people of Israel are God's chosen people, whether they are conscious of that fact or not. They remain God's chosen people even if they refuse and fail to fulfill the task for which they were chosen. The day will surely come when Yeshua will reveal Himself to His people. Then they will accept Him with repentance and remorse: *"In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity"* (Zechariah 13: 1). This is the day of which Paul spoke:

26 *And thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion. He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.*

27 *"This is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins." (Romans 11:26-27)*

What a glorious and blessed day awaits us! It is with this day in view that God called, and is still calling, His people to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, not to shut themselves away and waste their time on irrelevant relics of the past, but to be a light shining to the world, so that the earth might be filled with *"the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea"* (Isaiah 11 :9). I pray to God that many of the children of Israel will desire to be found faithful to God and to serve the Messiah

before He comes as the roaring Lion of Judah *"to judge the living and the dead"* (2 Timothy 4: 1).
Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

