



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

How I Found Peace in Israel

by Antony Simon

I was born in Manchester (England) of Jewish parents and so attended Jewish schools where I learned about God from an early age. I was taught that He was omnipresent (everywhere). Jonah thought he could escape from God but found that it was impossible. The Psalmist says, 'If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there' (Psalm 139:8). God is also holy and He hates sin, but I did not know this.

We celebrated all the festivals, such as Passover, the Day of Atonement, etc. We were going along with everything but the question I repeatedly asked myself was 'Where is God?' God says 'Forasmuch as this people draw near with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men' (Isaiah 29: 13).

Why could David say in Psalm 23:6, 'I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever'?

I asked my father what happens after death and he said that we all go to heaven, yet the prophet could say 'your iniquities have separated between you and your God. and your sins have hid His face from you' (Isaiah 59:2). This is so true in time and will be so in eternity. Again, Isaiah 64:6 says, 'All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags' and 'there is no man which sinneth not' (2 Chronicles 6: 36).

How then can we know God's forgiveness? God says that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness - 'it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul' (Leviticus 17: 11). Today there are no sacrifices yet God always gives us a way to get right with Himself. Rabbis say 'do repentance, pray and give charity', but the Bible says blood makes atonement.

Furthermore saying prayers at Yom Kippur is not the same as sacrificing. Let me illustrate. If you go into a shop and buy some goods and read the bill out instead of paying it, it is not the same as paying for the goods. In the same way, saying prayers is not the same as sacrificing.

When I was 18 I went to Israel for a month to work on a Kibbutz. During that time I met a man called Terry. He was a Christian and I used to call him John the Baptist. Needless to say I got into trouble for doing so. I always thought that if you were not Jewish then you were a Christian. Now I know that not all Gentiles are Christians. The word Christian means 'Christ-one', one who knows Christ as their Saviour and Lord. My room-mate was a Christian but he never spoke to me about his faith! After one month I went back home only to return a few months later.

When I arrived on a different Kibbutz, I met a girl I knew in Manchester and she told me there was a Christian on the Kibbutz called Charlie. She said 'Be careful because he might try to convert you.' I replied, 'Not me, I am not interested.' I visited my former room-mate and he returned to my new Kibbutz with me. He then introduced me to Charlie and we started discussing prophecy and the Scriptures together. I had never read the Bible before apart from the Book of Esther.

Charlie did not tell me about Jesus until one day he referred to a chapter which read like this: 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? . . . I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint: My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue cleaveth to My jaws; and Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death. . . they pierced My hands and My feet. . . all they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him; and none can keep alive his own soul. . . They shall come and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this.'

After hearing this I said 'I am Jewish, I do not want to know about the New Testament and I do not want to know about Jesus. ' I had a big shock when I found out it was not in the New Testament but was written by David one thousand years before Jesus came (Psalm 22: 1, 14-16, 29-30). I read other prophecies: 'They shall look upon Me Who they have pierced' (Zechariah 12:10). 'He was wounded for our transgressions. He



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was bruised for our the chastisement; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep ave gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all . . . Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief; when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin (guilt offering)' (Isaiah 53:5, 6, 10).

This was the Lamb without blemish, the Messiah Who had to be pure and sinless - not the nation of Israel. Thus the need for a unique birth as predicted Isaiah 7: 14 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel' (which means 'God with us'). Of all others the words of David are true 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me' (Psalm 51:5).

I used to argue with Charlie but day by day I began to realise that Jesus was in fact, the Messiah. I went to see a Rabbi in a place called Kfar Habad. I asked him a few questions and he convinced me even more that Jesus was the Messiah.

One question I asked related to Daniel 9:24-27, verse 26 says, 'And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.' In other words, the Messiah would have come and died before the second temple was destroyed. There was only one person Who fulfilled that prophecy and that was Jesus.

The answers he gave me were from a commentary. He did not look directly at God's Word. There are many commentaries and they all differ, so they are not inspired. God is not the author of confusion but of peace. I knew Jesus was the Messiah yet believing about Him is not the same as believing in Him. I did not believe in Him at that time, only about Him.

We were taught to say the Shemah - 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD (echod)'. Maimonides, in his 13 Principles of faith, changed the word 'one' to yachid instead of echod. Yachid means absolute one, echod is a complex unity. In Genesis 11: 6, God looked down from heaven and said 'Behold, the people is one (ecbod)', many people yet all one. Genesis 2:24, 'Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh' - two becoming one (echod).

Again: Genesis 1:26,, 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Isaiah 48: 16, I have not spoken in secret from the beginning' from the time that it was, there am I; and now the Lord GOD and His Spirit hath sent Me.'

A Rabbi read Isaiah 50:1, 6, 'Thus saith the LORD. . . I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not My face from shame and spitting.' He said to himself, Has God a beard? Is God a man? We were taught there was only one God. Then he looked and realised that Jesus of Nazareth was no ordinary man and he trusted in Him as Saviour.

When Moses lifted up the serpent in! the wilderness in Numbers 21, whosoever looked upon the serpent lived. The Bible says, 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life' (John 3:14-16)

On December 24th 1982 at the age of 18, I realised my need of Jesus the Messiah, trusted Him as Saviour, and repented of my sins. From that moment on I had peace with God, a peace which the world cannot take away. Now I can say like David, 'I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever' (Psalm 23:6) .

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