

The Cure for Spiritual Blindness

For years, I have read the narrative of Joseph and his brothers with great curiosity—not doubt, just simple curiosity. I have been especially curious about the part of the story in which Joseph's brothers stand before him more than once and dialog with him face to face and yet do not recognize him. Now, I know the explanations for the lack of recognition. Many years had passed by, so Joseph was wearing Egyptian clothing and did not resemble his Israelite roots. However, it wasn't until reading the book of Luke that I realized what I believe to be the real reason for Joseph's brothers not knowing who he was.

In Luke 24, after the execution of Yeshua, we read the following verses: "While they communed and reasoned together, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing Him" (Luke 24:15-16).

Here, we find a couple of faithful followers of Yeshua walking on the road to Emmaus, discussing the events of Yeshua's persecution and execution. They are downhearted and recognizably gloomy. In fact, they are so depressed about the loss of Yeshua that when he starts walking next to them, they don't even recognize Him. In fact, Yeshua begins to question why they are so miserable and dejected. Their response is one for the records. Cleopas actually asks Yeshua, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that happened there in these days?"

Think about that for a minute. Yeshua was walking with these two men, and they were so caught up in their own understandings and expectations that not only did they not recognize Yeshua, they asked the very One who was executed by the horrors of crucifixion if He was the only one who didn't

know what happened in Jerusalem.

The key to understanding how they had become so blinded to reality that Yeshua had become unrecognizable to them lies in Luke 24:21: "But we were hoping that it was He who was to redeem Israel. Moreover, today is the third day since these things happened."

Notice "they were hoping." You see, it wasn't that Yeshua looked different; it was that they saw Him differently. Before the crucifixion, they saw Him as the Messiah who would redeem Israel from the Romans by a great victory like King David. Their expectations of what Messiah would be and would do had been unfulfilled, and the result was that they could no longer recognize Yeshua, even though he was walking right next to them.

It wasn't Yeshua who looked different; it was the way these two men looked at Yeshua that changed how they saw Him. I believe this is the same reason Joseph's brothers couldn't recognize Joseph. It wasn't because Joseph changed; it was because they had changed. The sins of envy and deception changed the way they viewed life and Joseph.

Yeshua's response to the two men found in verse 25 sheds more understanding: Yeshua said to them, "O fools! And slow of heart to believe what the prophets have spoken!"

He tells them they should have trusted everything the prophets had said. In the case of Joseph and his brothers, Joseph had prophesied through a dream and even though the dream had not yet come to pass, they believed Joseph to be dead.

These two different stories have the same theme running through them, and that theme still speaks to us today. I know many people who get very discouraged because things don't happen the way they "hope" and the result is that the way they see Yeshua changes. If enough things don't happen the way they "hoped" they would, Yeshua becomes unrecognizable to them. Remember, it isn't Yeshua who changes the way He appears—it is

our eyes that see Him differently. It may be time to double check that our hopes line up with His Word. {eoa}

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