

From the Son of Sam to the Son of Hope

In the early 1990s during my entrepreneurial days, I was asked to help finance a DVD project about the life of David Berkowitz, who was the Son of Sam.

When you meet Yeshua/Jesus for the first time you become acutely aware of the overwhelming forgiveness of God. I simply could not resist participating as I knew how much God had forgiven me from my own life and as I became more and more aware of Scripture that even murder itself was a forgivable act—as long as the person was truly repentant.

In fact, two of my biblical heroes, Moses and King David, both committed acts of murder and were ultimately forgiven from God (Ex. 2:11-13; 2 Sam. 11-12).

When you get in touch with the reality of your own sin—which usually happens right before we meet the Lord—it becomes a whole lot easier for us to contemplate and understand that all of us are actually capable of some truly wicked things.

In my mind, this is one of the major differences between the world and the kingdom of God. How we forgive, as in the world, is so difficult for us to contemplate.

For those of you who may be too young to remember, back in the 1970s, the Son of Sam (David Berkowitz) was found guilty of multiple murders in the New York area. For a time, he put the whole city in a state of fear and panic with his demonic attacks.

I thank God that I serve a God that totally understands this concept of sin in each of us, and yet loved us so much that He sent His own Son to die for that sin, that we can truly be free from its curse, which is spiritual death and separation

from God. It's a reality that today no one in the world wants to really discuss or address.

Yet it was Yeshua's/Jesus' mission to the cross and ultimate resurrection that overcomes this spiritual death that all of mankind is in such great need of to live eternally with God, including all of my Jewish brethren who are still yet to be restored (Rom. 11:25,26).



Jesus took sin's punishment on for each of us so we could free to return to Him. When each of us are close to meeting Him for the first time, we are always dealing with the sin issue in our own hearts because this is what actually separates us from Him in the first place.

Yeshua said we would know the truth and the truth will set us free. This is one of the main realities of the gospel that the world has so much trouble dealing with or even accepting, which is why no one wants to address it. In reality, we are all sinners saved by the grace of a most wonderful and merciful God. So if God could forgive me of my sin, then He could also forgive David Berkowitz of his.

As I write this article, I am reminded of the sinful woman who the Pharisees used to try to trick Jesus with the law. How awful she must have felt when at that moment when all those men picked up those stones to kill her. Yet there before her kneeled one who truly understood her condition, for she knew her own guilt and felt condemned by it.

Jesus knelt and gently twirled his finger in the sand as He waited for the wisdom from on high to flow, as each man stood eagerly with stone in hand to finish her off. Then suddenly the words of heaven spoke, *"Let him who is without sin, cast the first stone."*

What pearls of wisdom!

In response, each man dropped his stone and from older to younger began to walk away, because heaven had just declared the truth about mankind's heart and there was no place for them to go, except to leave the scene, with only our Lord and Savior remaining. *"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"* Yeshua said to her (John 8:1-11).

It was that same loving, gentle voice that reached out to that woman that reaches out to the untold millions of us who ultimately bend our knees to our Creator. He has led us to know the truth about ourselves and that we indeed are all sinful, falling short of an incredible, loving, holy and righteous God who is jealous for our every breath as a heavenly Papa.

Similarly in a prison cell many years ago now, David Berkowitz knelt, wept and prayed—condemned by man with nowhere to turn, painfully aware of the horrific acts he had committed. Then Jesus, in a similar way, spoke those same words to David.

It is that moment in each of us who have accepted this incredible grace and are so beautifully aware of Yeshua's love and presence that overwhelmingly fills our hearts at that moment of confession and repentance, when we first meet our Creator through the power of the Holy Spirit; who brings God directly into each of our hearts (John 14:23).

Love so powerful simply washed away David's sin, never to be raised again. *"Go and sin no more,"* Jesus said. And just as that woman turned away from her old life, so David Berkowitz turned away from his.

Over the years I often thought of visiting David, especially when he wrote to me to thank me for my help. But it just wasn't the time yet. However, last month I was invited once again to visit Him by one of my Messianic friends Alan Binger, a lawyer and a spiritual author (*Manna For Your Soul*). Alan has faithfully visited David since the middle 1990s and is

truly a good friend and brother to him. We were also joined by another brother by the name of Pastor John Ramirez, who has a powerful deliverance ministry and fellowships at Times Square Church in New York City ().

It was an incredible day of fellowship in the Lord and we spent several hours with David Berkowitz, breaking bread and eating lunch in the prison cafeteria with words of encouragement flowing for one another.

Before me was a changed Jewish man to the honor and power of the Messiah Yeshua/Jesus; not only kind, but thoughtful, insightful and considerate. In David Berkowitz, I recognized a humility that only God Himself can produce in His children, and I had no doubts, even back then, as to the authenticity of his salvation experience with Messiah.

A merciful God has transformed David Berkowitz's life; he is totally free from the demons that had beset him and controlled his life, much like a number of the characters in Jesus' day from whom He had cast demons out and were then free; you could see it on his face.

David Berkowitz been saved for many years now and spends most of his days ministering God's love, promise and hope to the many who are desolate in prison life. He has become a strong student and minister of the Word of God, and I must say I was quite impressed with his depth and knowledge of Scripture and theology. May the Lord continue to bless him and strengthen him in his ministry focus.

If you are wanting to know the God of Israel and have been troubled by any of your own actions in your life; if you have done something you think is even unforgivable—know that there is a God in heaven that truly understands us. If you are wanting a fresh start, please know that your sin can be washed away; if you are truly repentant over it. If you have been struggling from within and you know something is not quite

right, please know the truth about ourselves, that it is indeed our own sin that separates us and a lost world from a most loving God, who came not to condemn us, but rather to save us from ourselves (John 3:16,17).

Many thanks to Dr. Michael Brown, Chuck Cohen and Pastor Don Wilkerson, who produced the DVD documentary on David Berkowitz's life, *"Son of Sam—Son of Hope,"* which you can purchase here for a small donation.

Grant Berry *is a Jewish believer in Jesus and author of The New Covenant Prophecy and The Ezekiel Generation. He has founded Reconnecting Ministries with the specific focus to help the church reconnect spiritually to Israel and considers it vital to the kingdom of God in the last days.*