

Messianic Rabbi: Praying for Your 'Saul'—Even When You Don't Feel Like It

One of the most powerfully moving moments shared in the Bible is when Yeshua (Jesus) spoke words of forgiveness from the cross.

We find His words in Luke 23:34 (TLV): “But Yeshua was saying, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Just imagine the level of compassion it would take to utter those words while enduring the nearly unimaginable level of pain and humiliation that Yeshua was experiencing at that moment. He was being crucified by the very people He came to deliver and as He hung there, they literally added insult to injury.

Yes, I know that He was able to demonstrate such a high level of compassion and love because, after all, He was G-D robed in flesh. However, I believe that regardless of our humanity and our lack of deity, we as believers not only can but should, or rather *must*, demonstrate that same level of compassion, love and mercy. For those who would question that statement, please consider the testimony of Ananias that we read about in Acts chapter 9.

The chapter begins with these words: “Now Saul, still breathing out threats and murder against the Lord’s disciples, went to the kohen gadol. He requested letters of introduction from him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any men or women belonging to the Way, he might bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem” (9:1-2).

While Saul was traveling to Damascus, G-D was having a

conversation with Ananias. Many times in the Bible, we read only what G-D says to people or what people are saying to G-D. However, this conversation was so important that both sides are provided within the sacred text of our Bibles. In the same way, we read conversations between Abraham and G-D before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the conversation between Moses and G-D before the Exodus from Egypt.

In Acts 9:10-12, we read what G-D says to Ananias:

"Now there was a disciple named Ananias in Damascus. The Lord said to him, 'Ananias.' He said, 'Here I am, Lord.' The Lord said to him, 'Get up and go to the street named Straight, and ask in the house of Judah for someone from Tarsus named Saul. For look, he is praying; and in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.'"

Then what follows is Ananias' response: "But Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man—how much harm he has done to your kedoshim in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the ruling kohanim to tie up all who call on Your name'" (Acts 9:13-14).

The conversation ends with G-D's reply: "But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a choice instrument to carry My name before nations and kings and Bnei-Yisrael. For I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake'" (Acts. 9:15-16).

In this conversation, we see G-D speaking to a mere mortal, someone just like you and I; someone who was being persecuted because of his faith by both the religious and political people of his day. G-D spoke to Ananias and he was called by G-D to go and pray for his chief persecutor. Ananias knew that Saul carried with him an arrest warrant for Ananias and all other believers in Yeshua. Yet, Ananias obeyed G-D's voice and went to pray for Saul.

You will notice that when Ananias responded to G-D's calling

by saying how dangerous Saul was, G-D didn't correct Ananias. He simply said to Ananias that Saul had a calling on his life. You will also notice that when Ananias found out Saul was blind, he didn't rejoice in Saul's suffering.

No, Ananias showed the same type of forgiveness to Saul that Yeshua demonstrated on the cross. We see this in the words Ananias spoke in Acts 9:17-18:

"So Ananias left and entered into the house. Laying hands on Saul, he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord-Yeshua, the One who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming-has sent me, so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Ruach ha-Kodesh.' Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was immersed."

Notice when he prayed for Saul, he referred to him as his brother. Think about that for a moment. Then take a moment to think about the "Saul" or "Sauls" in your life; those who persecute you because of your faith.

Now that you are thinking about them, realize the reason they are persecuting you is because they are blind—*spiritually* blind. Then realize that as Ananias was called to pray for Saul so that he might receive his sight, you and I are called to pray for those who are our "Sauls."

But in order to do that, we have to follow the example of Yeshua and Ananias because in order to effectively pray for someone who is a "Saul," we must forgive them, understanding that they are "blind" and know not what they are doing. We must forgive them so fully that we see them as part of the family of G-D. When we do, the scales will fall from their eyes, and they will become born anew and join us and Saul in proclaiming that "Yeshua is *Ben-Elohim*."

We should view every "Saul" in our lives as if they have been called by G-D to be choice instruments in His kingdom.

Forgiveness of a persecutor can be hard, but it is important and is part of our calling as followers of Yeshua. {eo}

Eric Tokajer is the author of *Overcoming Fearlessness, What If Everything You Were Taught About the Ten Commandments Was Wrong?*, *With Me in Paradise*, *Transient Singularity*, *OY! How Did I Get Here?: Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry*, *#ManWisdom: With Eric Tokajer*, *Jesus Is to Christianity as Pasta Is to Italians* and *Galatians in Context*.

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