

A Disciple who Loved our Master

Today we are going to learn something. Something they learned a very long time ago in the very first community.

Remember last week with Kepha? Well, this was the same time in the Edah in Jerusalem. There was a really nice girl there. She was a real girl, one who was concerned about serious things. She heard the message about Yahshua rising from the dead and she heard how she could be saved. She heard Kepha when he was out on the streets preaching. She heard him say, "If anybody wants to become Yahshua's disciple he has to forget about himself, take up his cross and follow Him."

And she wanted to be a disciple! She said, "Yes, I want my sins forgiven. And I want to live a new life, a life where I don't think about myself anymore, where I don't live for myself. I want to be a different person."

Kepha said, "Sounds like you want to be a disciple. Just hurry down to the river."

And there she went. She cried out in the river. She said, "I want to be a disciple, I want my sins forgiven. I don't want to live for myself, just for Yahshua." They baptized her into the name of Yahshua. She came out of those waters and she was happy.

But... Was she happy like that the next day when they said, "Okay, you're going to live over at Miriam's house."

Someone else said, "Ho, this is a hard household to live in. Do you know why?"

The new disciple said, "No, I don't."

"Well, there is not so many single women there. And if you move into this household you know what that is going to mean."

The new girl shook her head; she didn't know what that meant. "Well, let me tell you what it's going to mean if you're a single woman there. It means there is a lot of work at this house."

But the girl surprised them and said, "I'll do it. I have a new life, and I don't live for myself anymore!! I want to move in there. That's where I should be."

That is what the brothers said, so in she moved. And right away it started. First thing she was told, "You have to do this and you need to do this as well. And then this."

After she got those things done, she was told, "There are so many women here that are sick and you're going to have to do this and this and this..."

And they just looked at her and she said, "Yes!! I want to live for Yahshua because I gave my life to Him!!"

Really, they thought, this is how she is! She was really baptized; she really became a disciple. She helped everyone in the house so much. And then one of the older women came to her and said, "We need a volunteer to wash all the dishes – a whole pile of dishes."

She said, "ME, I want to do it, because I gave my life to Yahshua and I don't live for myself anymore but for Him who died and rose again for me."

Wooah! People thought, she is a real disciple, and everybody was so amazed. She was really keeping the commandments. She was a real example to everybody. She really served. She jumped every time there was a need. Everybody said, "That's what we want to be like, because she is like Yahshua."

And she loved the other disciples because they were the ones who told her about Yahshua.

So it came time that night to send out Kepha. They decided to send him up north to go talk to some of the brothers up there. We're going to lay hands on him. She was there when they sent him out. And she remembered that when she became a disciple they said that a disciple comes when he's called and goes where he's sent. When she had heard that she had said, "That is what I want to do!"

And it was obviously the truth. She had meant it. Well, after they sent Kepha out she waited at home to hear the news about Kepha. One day someone came to her all concerned and said, "Did you hear the news about Kepha when we sent him to those communities up there?"

"No," she said, "I didn't. What happened?"

"Well, when he was up there he went into one of those houses of those uncircumcised people."

“Really?” The girl said. She was surprised about that since she knew what Jewish tradition said about the Gentiles. She had been raised a Jew too.

“And you know what else he did? He ate with them!”

“Really?” She said, “It must be a good thing to do, because Kepha does good things! Kepha is a good man!” She could never think ill of the man who had preached the good news of Yahshua to her.

“But they are uncircumcised and we don’t do that.”

“Yes, but there must be a good reason because I know Kepha.”

“Well,” the older girl said, “they are going to have a meeting with him. He is coming home and they are going to talk to him.”

“Good,” she said, “there must be a good reason that he did that.” She always believed the best. She was a good disciple.

And so there came a knock on the door. Kepha was there. He was back! Some people had real serious looks on their faces. They said, “We want to have a meeting with you, Kepha. We hear that you were eating at the house of uncircumcised people.”

The girl looked at Kepha and was happy to see he wasn’t threatened. She knew there must a good reason and sure enough Kepha said, “Well, please sit down here.”

And everybody sat down. And you know what he did? He told a story. It was the same story I told you last week. “There I was,” Kepha said, “and the sheet came down...”

He told the whole story. It was such a wonderful story. And this girl, she loved it. She knew it would be a good reason. And then Kepha said, “And then I tried to tell them about Yahshua and I could barely get the words out of my mouth and they cut me off and started praising our Father.”

And this girl, she was so happy. And Kepha continued, “And I said to the other brothers with me, ‘How can we keep from baptizing these people?’”

And the girl blurted out; “Did you baptize them? Did you baptize them?”

“Yes,” Kepha said, “we did.”

And she was so happy to hear the news – the good news had gone to the Gentiles. It had gone to the other nations and that was the heart she had as well. And then the news started traveling around. Then they heard more news. Somebody else up north had heard about Yahshua. It was one of those people of those other nations there. Now, they all want to follow Yahshua.

“GOOD!” The girl said.

The brothers said, “We are going to have send someone up there to see whether they are real disciples or not. Who shall we send this time?”

They decided they would send Bennaby. “We’ll send Bennaby up there,” they told the Edah in Jerusalem, “because he goes where he is sent and comes when he is called. He is a disciple.”

When he went away they told him, “Go and see if these people are really genuine.”

Later, he came back down. “What happened up there?” Everyone asked him.

“Sure enough,” he said, “the brothers up there, they’ve received the Holy Spirit too.”

Everyone rejoiced, “YEA!! More disciples.”

When the uproar quieted down, Bennaby continued, “I’ve encouraged them to deny themselves and live for Yahshua.”

The girl spoke up, so happy, and said, “Yea! That is the gospel, isn’t it?”

It wasn’t hard to notice that there was something real special about this girl. People talked to one another about who she might be; what her name really was. They said, “She’s really a good disciple, isn’t she?”

And someone else, one of the older brothers, said, “Well, she is a normal disciple, actually. When you get around her you get this kind of good smell coming up like a really nice flower. So we should call her Shoshannah because it is a beautiful flower.” “Wow,” people said, “she’s a good disciple. She comes when she is called. When someone says her name, she runs to them and says, ‘What do you need me to do?’”

“Yes,” someone else said, “that is how Shoshannah has always been. She has always been a sweet flower.”

Shoshannah often answered the door and cheerfully went to get whoever was wanted. She would run to answer

the phone if she lived in our houses nowadays. She wouldn't hope others would answer it because it might mean she would have to go searching through the house for someone. She loved Yahshua and didn't want to live for herself. Days later, there was another knock on the door, but this one wasn't friendly. They were soldiers of King Herod. And they wanted Kepha, her friend!

You see life wasn't always so easy for the disciples in Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin had put Stephen to death some time before. If everyone hadn't known it already, this reminded them of what the cost of following Yahshua might be – that it might be the same price He paid for loving His Abba. After the wonderful news of the gospel going to the Gentiles up north, King Herod seized one of the leaders of the Edah. It was Yacob, the brother of Yochannan. He had him put to death. When he saw that this pleased the leaders of the Jews he sent to have Kepha arrested.

When Kepha learned who it was and what their mission was, he willingly came forward. He didn't want any unnecessary bloodshed or violence in one of their houses. He had peace in his conscience and in the Holy Spirit to go with them. He knew what it meant. Shoshannah was so sad to see him go. She started crying out in her heart right away for the life of her friend.

Everyone gathered and they were saying to one another, "They took Kepha! We have got to pray. We need Kepha. We've got to pray to our Father."

They cried out to Him, "Abba, please, we need Kepha!" They were praying with all of their hearts.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door, not very loud, but persistent, *knock, knock, knock*. Shoshannah heard it. She wondered, "Who could it be so late at night?"

Kepha said to her, not loudly, "Shoshannah, please, let me in." When she recognized his voice she was so excited and full of joy she didn't let him in! She went back inside instead of opening the gate. She shut the door on Kepha and went back to tell everyone Kepha was here. No one could hear her in all the noise of crying out for Kepha and when they did finally understand her, they said, "You are out of your mind!"

But she kept insisting that it was so and finally they heard his knocking and look, there he was! Everyone was jumping around; "It's Kepha! It's Kepha!"

"Shhhh," Kepha said, motioning for them to be quiet. They didn't realize how serious the situation was.

"Tell us what happened," they said.

"After I left here, they put me in a prison. I had chains all around me, on my arms and my legs. And I heard they were going to kill me this morning. And I fell asleep. I had nothing against me in my conscience. And all of a sudden someone was trying to wake me up. I thought I was still sleeping and that this was a dream. But he woke me up and said, 'Come on, Kepha. Get up quickly.'"

"I thought I was having a vision. When I stood up my chains fell off, and he told me to dress myself and put my cloak around me. He told me to put my sandals on. It was really bright in there somehow and I saw all the soldiers lying down. I still thought I was having a dream or a vision. So he started walking out of the cell and I followed. We went past the first and the second gate and then we got to the big iron gate that leads to into the city. It opened for us by itself. So we went out of the prison together and walked down that street. You know, the street that runs down there, and then he was gone.

"And I realized I wasn't sleeping. I was so happy. I was out of prison! It was an angel that led me out! And I said to myself, 'Now I know for sure that the Sovereign has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.'"

Everyone was rejoicing as they heard Kepha describe our Father's faithfulness to deliver him. "YEA!!! It was an angel. Our Father heard our prayers. We were praying night and day for Kepha."

And Kepha finished his story by saying, "And then I walked back to the yard and I knocked on the door and Shoshannah came and then she closed the gate on me and I had to keep on knocking. And then you all believed her and came and let me in!"

Shoshannah was a true disciple, she didn't have one thought for herself and so our Father blessed her. If you don't have one thought for yourself, you might be like Shoshannah.