

## Yoceph, an Upright Man

*This is how Yahshua the Messiah came to be born. His mother Miriam was betrothed to Yoceph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Yoceph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her quietly. He had made up his mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Yoceph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Miriam home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Yahshua, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil what the Sovereign had spoken through the prophet: Look! the virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'. When Yoceph woke up he did what the angel of Yahweh had told him to do: he took his wife to his home, but he knew her not until she gave birth to her Son, the first-born. And he called His name Yahshua... (Mt 1:18-25)*

The smell of fresh sawn wood filled the small shop at the end of the narrow lane in Nazareth. A carpenter worked diligently there, preparing a table, then a stool, then a bench, and a new door. The man's arms were strong from hard work, cutting and carrying trees, sawing the boards, building the strong furniture. It was a fine and honorable craft in the heritage of Betzelel who built the tabernacle under Moshe's command. The man was called Yoceph. He was a quiet man, who felt the load of a society who lived as slaves in their own land. This was an even greater weight for him, because he carried the proud heritage of being from the line of King David, several generations back. Yet now he was only a poor man, working under the yoke of Roman overlords in their village of Nazareth.

But he did not allow himself to become embittered though with these hard circumstances. He guarded his heart, devoting himself to keeping the commandments of his God and doing good work with his hands that would reflect the dignity of his heritage.

He had to work hard for several years to get to the place where he felt he could take a wife. He would have to pay the "bride-price" to the family of the girl along with providing a home for her to begin their new family in. Finally the time came and he felt that the perfect woman had been found for him. Her parents saw that Yoceph was an upright man and entrusted their young daughter to him. They were betrothed. But still more time was needed for her preparation for marriage, so Yoceph set himself to work hard and wait. He already loved the girl. Her name was Miriam.

*Knowing who these two people are now must not let your mind run to the way you always thought they were. We want you to see this man Yoceph as the man he really was. You have always heard of Joseph and Mary. But no one knows this man, and no one has really given him much consideration... well, no one but our Father. For our Father did a lot of considering about this man, Yoceph.*

*Just think of it. The great and almighty God of heaven and earth had a plan. He had determined to send His own Son, His only, beloved Son to earth with a great purpose in mind. But His Son was coming as a fragile, innocent, tiny baby who would need an abba and an imma to take care of him. He was not coming as a full-grown man. This tiny baby would need someone very special to raise Him. So, our Father considered each and every human being. He was looking, searching, for ones with just the right qualities to raise this baby into the man He would become. So, he found Miriam. He could see that she would be the BEST mother for this little baby. She would be the most important input into his life for the first few years. But then, the boy would need more than just an imma. He would need someone else. He would need a "foster father" (one who would foster his growth), to be an abba, and a "mentor", a master to apprentice him in a trade that would build character into this boy, and turn him into something great. It would have to be a special man, a man who would not be driven by just the "natural fatherly instincts" that an abba feels for his "flesh and blood" son. For this abba would not be the "flesh and blood" abba of this little boy. It would be an "adopted son" whom he took into his family. That makes a difference.*

*So, our Father searched and searched and finally he spotted a man in a little carpenter shop in an obscure village in Israel. He found Yoceph, the carpenter... He wanted to "add to", "increase" this man with a great task...*

*But then the world of this man Yoceph fell apart one day when his sweet bride came to visit him and told him something that he could never imagine could happen. Miriam told him that she was going to have a baby... Now, Yoceph was a man of character. He was not the man with lots to say, standing among the villagers telling all the stories. He was a hard worker, not a big talker. He was wise, but not a boaster. You could find in his diligence, practical answers and solutions to every problem, as he thought things over. But the passionate prophet he was not, nor the impetuous zealot. Not plagued with a fiery temperament, he calmly listened to the young woman try to explain why she got into this situation. Yoceph could hardly concentrate on her words though, as his heart had already broken and he tried not to react with tears.*

*He dutifully told Miriam the penalty of the law for such a thing, and saw her painful reaction as she realized that he did not believe the story she was trying to give in explanation. He politely dismissed her from his shop, ignoring her pleading, before his emotions flooded him beyond control. He was not in a fit of jealous rage; it was not his character. He was disappointed, confused, and wished that this were all just a bad dream. He cried and wanted to just run after the girl and tell her he loved her and forgave her... but he knew he could not. He was afraid to go against the laws and he knew the penalty her actions deserved. But he was afraid to go against that. He feared God. He decided after much agony to just quietly divorce her without a word. He could not stand to shame her. He could not stand to have the ordeal of a public trial... he hated all the talk. He loved the girl. He would put her away quietly... and remain the rest of his life alone. Had it not been for a miracle that happened in the night, that would have been the end of the story for Yoceph. But our merciful Father came to this tormented good man with a message... "Do not be afraid, Yoceph! Do not be afraid to take the girl as your wife!" was the message in his dream. It was not "do not be angry" or "do not be upset" or "do not be indignant" or "do not be jealous"... it was "do not be afraid." What does that say to you about the character of Yoceph?*

Once our Father had spoken to Yoceph through the messenger, he was confident to do what was on his heart. He took Miriam as his wife. And he waited in anticipation for the birth of this child. He would raise that child as his own, though it was not his own. He would give everything in him to raise him up into the name that our Father had spoken to him... "Yahshua, Yahshua, you shall name the baby Yahshua, for his shall save His people from their sins!" Those amazing words were spoken to Yoceph... he knew the vision for this baby. So, all the years that followed he remembered what was spoken about this child. Yoceph had heard our Father and he would set himself to the task of raising this child.

No sacrifice was too great for this child. Yoceph waited until He was born to even have relations with his wife. Forced to go to Bethlehem as a son of David, for the census, he found himself to be the one who would deliver the child – in a stable with only straw for a bed and only a feed trough for a crib. Yoceph's whole life was turned upside down. Now he was a long way from his carpenter shop, and the security that comes from doing what you know how to do ... He became a "vagabond" for a while. Without even enough money to buy a lamb for his wife's sacrifice for purification after the birth, all he got her was two doves... the provision for the very poor. Yet the encouragement they received as a very old man took the little boy and prophesied over him right in the middle of the temple was so strengthening to him and his young wife, that the great trial that they had to face next was much easier. For after the strange visit of some foreign men on camels who brought gifts for their son "the new king," Yoceph was warned in another dream to get up and leave that place to save the life of his son. He did not need to say, "Do not be afraid" this time, because Yoceph was not afraid to do anything like this. He was told to get up from his sleep and leave in the night to go to Egypt.... And off the little family went into the dark night. Yoceph, the carpenter, became a world traveler. He cared for his family in a foreign land until another dream called them back to their home in Nazareth... it was now safe to raise his son. Had it not been for those gifts of the strange foreigners, that two-year trip would have been too great of a financial burden for this poor family. Yoceph learned that our Father never asks you to do something that he will not give you the grace to do.

Back in Nazareth, Yoceph was able to return to his trade... he was a carpenter. He loved to work with wood and created useful things that people needed. He had two jobs now though. He could not just set his mind on the work. He had to set his mind on the work AND set his mind on the young boy that would soon be joining him

in the shop.

As a very young boy, Yahshua stayed at home with his imma. But as soon as he could be trusted to work alongside of his “abba” he was allowed to join Yoceph in the woodshop. He looked forward to that day, and took it seriously when he was given the responsibility to “work as an apprentice.”

Now we can see the importance of Yoceph in our Father’s plan. Of course he was also chosen because our Father knew he would have a heart to obey when the messenger was sent to him, and would have the character to respond rightly to the situation with his wife, and that he would be courageous in the face of Herod in protecting his son, and he would be clever enough to live in a foreign land for a long time, but Yoceph’s main job would be to “apprentice the son of God.”

That was a day-by-day task. That meant teaching his physical skills, spiritual lessons, and proper behavior. Our Master did not just learn those things mystically. He did not turn out to be the man of wonderful character that he was without the care of a man like Yoceph who would invest everything into him. Yoceph had vision for the boy. He saw that he had a great future. So, Yoceph selflessly invested into him all that he could.

Our Father searched to find a man like that. And it was not just “by chance” that Yoceph was a carpenter. Somehow our Father knew that the woodshop would be the perfect place to put the things into the character of His Son that would help him to endure to the end in what was planned for Him. There are no coincidences in our Father’s plan.

People in the area of Galilee knew Yoceph. They knew he was a carpenter. He probably did work for them. And they also knew that he had a son who worked with him (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3).

Lk 2:51-52 — So, as our Master increased in wisdom and stature, surely this was due to the input of this great man, Yoceph. He was the one man who had input into the life of young Yahshua. He loved that boy. He had vision for His life. This is an example to all those who would apprentice young men.

That carpenter shop where Yoceph worked daily with his “son” Yahshua was full of life and vision. It was not a *factory* where those who worked there were working like *slaves*, but as *sons*, working hard they certainly had vision and purpose in what they were doing, never thinking of it as a *slave pen*. The people of the village probably loved to drop by there to see what Yoceph and his son were working on. Surely they were kind to their neighbors, taking the extra time to do the little jobs for them, and doing them well. It is in such environments that good character is formed in a man.

Our Master took over the shop from Yoceph. It does not tell us when Yoceph died, but it was just at the right time for sure. He had served a very great purpose in His life and it was time for him to go home to his *reward*. And that reward will be great. It has been said that (Mk10:40) those two who are specially chosen to sit on the right and left of our Master in honor will be Yoceph and Miriam... and this could certainly be true. For surely Yahshua would rise when this man entered the room and acknowledge, “This man poured his life into me as his apprentice... I will forever honor him for that!” He would honor his *abba*, his mentor, Yoceph... and we will also honor him.

And in the spirit of that man Yoceph, we will apprentice our sons to be “little Yahshuas”.... A Male Child, who will also be trained to have character and to stand the test.... the Zakar...