

This is a true biography of a Hebrew Palestinian.

ROCKY THE FISHERMAN

Shimhone ben Yoelah grew up in an industrious fishing town on the north-east coast of Lake Geleel, named Beythsayth (The Abode of Nets)

Lake Geleel, nestled in the northern mountains of Palestine, is at its extremities only six miles across and thirteen miles long. Looking over that placid water on a calm day it is hard to realise that it can suddenly be turned into a boiling cauldron by winds funnelled down the steep gorges that surround it, striking terror into the most experienced fishermen.

When we first meet Shimhone he is a married man living with his wife and her mother in a fairly large house near Kaparnaoum (the city of Nahum) on the north-west shore of Galeel. Rumour has it that they had at least one child, a daughter. This part of the country being very Grecian, it was fashionable for Hebrews to give their children Greek names and Shimhone's brother was named Andreas. These hardy fishermen worked on lake Geleel with their partners Yhaqove and Yoelah ben Zevadtheyoh and their hired hands.

Life was hard and living under Roman occupation was to say the least unpleasant. The Hebrew people lived hoping for the promised Mashiyach[@], who would liberate their nation, ("ch" is pronounced as in the Scottish word "loch"). Because of predictions made hundreds of years before, by their esteemed prophets, they expected Him to appear at any time. He was to be preceded by the return of the notable, long dead, austere prophet Elijah.

They had had no prophets for over three hundred years. Excitement mounted at reports from the south of a prophet Yoelah, campaigning in the semi-desert by the river Yardayn. Shimhone, Andreas and their companions joined crowds flocking to see this new prophet from all over the country. There were people from all walks of life; peasants, artisans,

intellectuals, soldiers, even tax-collectors. Prophet Yoelah claimed that he was sent by God to introduce an even more notable person, decidedly superior to himself. Then they must leave Yoelah to follow Him.

One day Prophet Yoelah pointed-out to the crowd an ordinary looking man of about thirty years old saying: "Look! God's lamb, who takes away the world's sin!". Without delay Andreas brought his brother to the stranger saying "We have found the Mashiyach!" Some rocklike characteristic in Shimhone prompted the stranger to rename him Kefas, an Aramaic word meaning rock. Aramaic was their mother tongue.

The stranger, Rabbi Yashuah, gained numerous followers. Shimhone, Andreas, Yhaqove and Yoelah became part of a small group, specially selected to go with Rabbi Yashuah as he travelled the country telling folk that God's Kingdom was imminent. He called these men His envoys. Was then that prophet Yoelah the predicted reappearance of the esteemed prophet Elijah and was Rabbi Yashuah going to be king of liberated Israel? Imagine their excitement when they heard Rabbi Yashuah preach to huge crowds, that many of them would not die before experiencing the inception of God's kingdom. Surprisingly the people most upset by His preaching were not the Roman occupation forces but their own religious elite. But that is another story.

Kefas, without hesitation, declared his conviction that Rabbi Yashuah was the Mashiyach, even the living God's only Son. Rabbi Yashuah commended him saying that He would build His society on this firm foundation, that is on the conviction that He, Rabbi Yashuah is the Mashiyach, the living God's Son. Then He decided to tell His envoys that He would be arrested, executed and afterwards rise from the dead. Kefas could not accept this. To him it seemed nonsense that God's chosen Mashiyach would suffer defeat. He was so shocked that he had the effrontery to rebuke his Rabbi: "This cannot happen to you." Rabbi Yashuah, called him an

hindrance, telling him to get out of His way, because Kefas was wanting to do things man's way, not God's.

Daily Rabbi Yashuah's popularity with the common folk increased. Yet no freedom fighters were recruited. There was no rallying call to throw off oppression. In fact Rabbi Yashuah discouraged resistance. He demanded goodness towards each other, and even that the enemies should be loved. Was he really God's predicted Mashiyach the liberator of His people? On the one hand He announced the imminent start of the kingdom and on the other hand of Him being arrested and executed. [Later, accused of treason, Rabbi Yashuah protested to the Roman governor that if His kingdom was to be an earthly one, His attendants would have struggled to prevent His capture.]

Three years had passed and they were in the capital, Yerusalem, to celebrate the annual Pascha feast, which commemorated their nation's deliverance from slavery, centuries before. There had been no servant to wash their feet as they entered the house, a common courtesy for weary travellers. None of them offered to wash each others or even did their own. It embarrassed them when their Rabbi proceeded to do it. Kefas' reaction was "You will never wash MY feet". He felt he had more respect for his Rabbi than the others. Rabbi Yashuah told them that when He was in trouble they would all abandon Him. Kefas blurted out that even if the others left Him, he never would, insisting that he would even die for Him. "Shimhone, Shimhone" said His Rabbi, "This night, Satan wants to sift you all like wheat, but I've requested that your trust, (Shimhone, in Me) does not fail and when you have done an about-turn, fortify your brother (envoys)" [words in brackets mine]. He also told Kefas that he would denounce his Rabbi three times. What was so wrong with Kefas that he had to do an about-turn? In what way then was Kefas rocklike? Had Rabbi Yashuah been mistaken in calling him Kefas, Rock?

That very night Rabbi Yashuah was arrested. Loyal Kefas gained entry to the precinct outside the

interrogation room but his northern accent gave him away. Three times he was accused of being "this man's" accomplice. Each time he emphatically denied it, the third time saying he didn't even know "the man", reinforcing it with oaths and curses. Glancing up, he saw Rabbi Yashuah passing by under escort, looking at him. Recalling his Rabbi's stern prediction, Kefas fled outside and sobbed bitterly, his self-image shattered. - What had he done? - Even though everything had seemed to be going so terribly wrong, he was now even more convinced that his Rabbi was genuine. Who else could have foreknown his downfall in such detail. He was indeed the Mashiyach.

After the resurrection, The Lord Jesus[#] confronted Peter^s with the question "Shimhona ben Yoeha, are you devoted to me more than the others?" He always called Peter by his ordinary name, Shimhona, when Peter's opinion of himself was in question. Peter could only reply "You know I admire you." The next question was more emphatic. "Shimhona ben Yoeha, are you DEVOTED to me". He still could only reply with the word "admire". The third question cut him to the quick, because his Rabbi used the word admire; "Do you ADMIRE me?". In a new found humility Peter replied "You know everything. You know that I admire you. Nothing is hidden from you."

His opinion of himself had proved unstable. His rocklike confidence in the Lord Jesus had sustained him. His confidence in the right place, that is in the Lord Jesus Christ, he was now ready to nourish his Lord's "lambs", to care for his "sheep" and to strengthen his brothers who had gone through the same devastating trauma of those crucial hours, the arrest and execution of their hero.

Who could see in the degrading execution of the Lord Jesus - God triumphant? Myriads of people down the ages have! Those whose hearts have been won by it to Him. Repenting of their past, they have buried their old life in the water of immersion*, a graphic demonstration of their conviction in His

historic death, burial and resurrection. From it they rose to walk a new life with Him.

Those who wish to be His, must in humility "take up their cross and follow Him. Will you renounce self and unreservedly trust Him, be buried with Him in immersion and start a new life with Him?"

NOTES:-

- # "Yashuah" is the Hebrew word from which we get the name Jesus.
- @ "Mashiyach" is the Hebrew word from which we get the word Messiah, which means the same as the word Christ.
- ^s "Peter" is from the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic word "Kefas".
- * "Baptism" is an anglicized Greek word. It is from Baptizma which means immersion.

This is the fifth of this series of leaflets
The previous pamphlets in this series were:-

Yashua the Craftsman
No Corpse !
Guilty or Not Guilty ?
Is This a Church ?

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Rocky

(Shimhona ben Yoeha)

Sequel to the pamphlet "Is This a Church?"