

Apples of Gold

Zvi Kalisher's life-changing spiritual conversations

<https://www.foi.org/zvikalisher/>

WITH AN ARAB FAMILY IN BETHLEHEM

A few days ago, I went to Bethlehem to visit an injured Arab friend who had worked with me on a building and had fallen from the scaffolding. All of his family and friends were there.

At first the conversation was about general matters, but then someone remarked, "When God created Eve, He deceived and desecrated Adam by putting him to sleep and robbing him of his rib to make a woman. Apparently, already back then God was on the side of the Jews."

I did not understand the logic of this statement. Soon the people became more excited, and I could not get in a word. Sensing their fanaticism and bitterness, I decided to leave, but the head of the house became hostile and prevented me from going.

I said, "I came here to visit a fellow worker who was injured, and you treat me like this? Shame on you! This is not at all in the Arab tradition of hospitality to a guest!"

My words apparently had a sobering effect on them, especially when I said in Arabic, "God is one, and He is for all people without exception. He is for the Arabs, the Jews, and everybody else. When God created mankind, there were no Jews, no Arabs, no other nationalities. But when man sinned, he soon learned to hate others and to kill. People began to spread lies about each other and despise each other. For instance, you have been told that Jewish people have horns and tails, but you live among us

and can see that we are the same kind of people as you are. In fact, we are your relatives through Abraham. God promised him that through his seed there would come forth many nations. Over time, the children of Abraham began to hate and persecute one another. They lacked mercy and compassion, until the time came when our Father in heaven sent His salvation into the world. And where did that happen? Right here in this little town of Bethlehem. Here was born the one whom you call Isa, and the Jews call Yeshua, and all the world knows as Jesus. This Jesus brought to all people forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation, and He taught us to love one another.”

The eldest man present remarked, “How amazing! I thought the Jews hated Jesus, but you defend Him. Are you really a Jew?”

I replied, “Yes. We who believe in Jesus are completed Jews. I came to see you because Jesus put love into my heart and told me to come see you. Jesus told us to love our enemies.”

One of the men said, “We all respect you for what you believe, but we cannot agree with one thing. This Isa was a prophet, but Muhammad was the greatest of all prophets.”

I showed them from the Scriptures that the Lord Jesus Christ was the one promised in the Old Testament. I explained that the New Testament tells us how He brought love into the world, in contrast with the Qur’an, which says in Sura 190, “Hate your enemy, kill him wherever you find him.” They looked at each other perplexed and could not answer me. I then read John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Finally one man said, “The Jews are smarter than we Arabs.”

“No,” I said, “this is not cleverness, but the wisdom and love of God.”

The eldest man began to cry. He walked over to me, embraced me, kissed me, and said, "Thank you very much. You taught us a great lesson today. We have so much to learn, especially about love. This is so strange to us."