

## SIMON AND THE CROSS

Beaten beyond recognition, weak, bones out of joint, His heart was like wax; softened; His strength was dried up like a fragment of clay pottery, so thirsty He was that His tongue cleaved to his jaws (Ps 22:15). That's how YAHSHUA was found after they scourged Him merciless. At the right time, a man called Simon was coming from in (Jerusalem) from the country, when they laid on him the cross and made him carry it behind YAHSHUA. (Luke 23:26). I wonder if he knew what was going on that day, with YAHSHUA accompanied by soldiers and a host of people behind Him. Did he even know who YAHSHUA was, since he lived in a "Greek city in the province of Cyrenaica. This was a place where 100,000 Judean Jews had been forced to settle in 323-285 BC." (Wikipedia). He was the father of Alexander and Rufus, who together with their mother were saved. Nothing is said in the Bible concerning Simon's relationship with YAHSHUA. His name is of Jewish origin, but that does not confirm that he was a Jewish man. We read that he was made to carry the cross behind the Lord. That reminds us of YAHSHUA'S teaching about following Him; one must deny self, take up the cross and follow Him. Simon, here was doing what he was told to do, without realizing the deep meaning that was hid in that event. First of all, the cross he was carrying was not YAHSHUA'S. That cross was his and the world's. Simon unaware of all the spiritual meaning of what was happening, was representing the world's spiritual condition and in need of a Savior to save it. That cross signified a curse. The Bible says "Cursed is everyone who is hung on the tree (cross). Christ purchased our freedom from the curse of the Law by [Himself] becoming a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree (Gal. 3:13). Simon was carrying a curse we all were under. Since Simon could not liberate us from it, YAHSHUA took it when arriving to the place for the sacrifice by means of crucifixion. That's all Simon could have done, for he too needed a Savior to free him from the curse.

Simon's carrying of the cross for YAHSHUA made history. One that will never fade way in the minds of people. He probably could not understand why he had to carry that cross. I am sure when he saw the condition of YAHSHUA'S body he was touched by compassion. The Bible does not mention much about him, except for his two sons who accepted the Christian faith together with their mother, according to Paul in Romans 16:17). Remember me to Rufus, eminent in the Lord, also to his mother, a mother to me as well. His experience in carrying the cross, turned his life and that of his family in the spiritual direction God planned for them. Perhaps YAHSHUA was a stranger to him, or maybe little he did know about Him. His travel to Jerusalem for Passover was interrupted for a few minutes for a very special reason. For that Passover was the fulfillment of God's promise of many years past to our forefathers Adam and Eve. There, the Lamb of God, stood ready to be slaughtered for the salvation of mankind, including him. We don't know if he witnessed the entire process of the crucifixion until YAHSHUA'S death. Simon had many opportunities while being there to see God's love being expressed through the shedding of His Son's blood for him and the world; He had the opportunity to ask, Who was that man for whom he carried the cross, whose body was beyond recognition? A little curiosity would have him knowing about that Man. But the Bible does not tell us the rest of the story, so we will just wonder.

When YAHSHUA taught His disciples the lesson of how to follow Him as in self-denial, the carrying of the cross, that's what He was going to do for us. First, He had to give up His life to carry our cross and die as the Father planned it. The future looked bright for us when He arose on the third day. That's our hope, because He lives, we shall live also. We have hope in the living God. As we deny self and carry our cross, we go through the process of sanctification by the Holy Spirit. This is necessary for us to be worthy of heaven, for without it we cannot see God. Paul said in his letter to Romans 8: For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God; and if we are [His] children, then we are [His] heirs and also heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ; only we must share His suffering if we are to share His glory. For those whom he foreknew, He also destined from the beginning to be molded into the image of His son, that He might become the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:14,17,29).

The cross that Simon was carrying for YAHSHUA had an important picture for us to see. It was the world complete in sin and condemnation, which was released from those who have made a decision to accept YAHSHUA'S sacrificial love. As a picture showing the distant future of what was to come, Abraham (as the Heavenly Father) took the burnt offering and laid it on [the shoulders of] Isaac his son, (YAHSHUA)... (Gen. 22:6). Isaac took the wood to where he was going to be sacrificed by his father, who took the fire (the firepot) in his own hand, and a knife; and the two of them went on together (22:6b). It was as when God gave His Son to die for us. We read in Isaiah the following: "Yet, it was the will of the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief and made His life an offering for sin... (Isaiah 53:10a). That was the test that Abraham went through to prove his faith in God. This specific cross, was some time ago a tree. Perhaps healthy, providing shade for all who needed its shade. This tree was chosen to hold the Son of God hung between heaven and earth, connecting sinners with the holy God. That tree also became an instrument of curse, as did all others that held a person crucified. When Simon carried the cross, he was carrying the curse. YAHSHUA then took it from him and suffered the curse for us, so we would be free from it.

The emblem of shame and suffering constituted for Paul the meaning of salvation through the One Who hung on it - our Lord YAHSHUA, as he said, but far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord YAHSHUA the Messiah, through Whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world (Gal. 6:14). The glory does not go to the cross, but to the One Who died on it. The cross was the instrument by which they used to nail our Savior on. We must love not the cross, but the One hanging on it. God's creation was used against Him, when they nailed Him on a tree. We all have our cross to bear. It is the command of our Lord to do it in order to follow Him. Simon, symbolically followed the Lord carrying the cross. There is no short way to heaven. YAHSHUA did not spare pain, but went through all that took to redeem us. We must live to love and to serve Him without counting the cost even unto death!