

IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY

“MY MENTOR”

IT was about the hour that Tom Hammond entered the Hall to listen to the Major's second address. Cohen, the Jew, was in his workshop, his brain busy with many problems, while his hands wrought out that wondrous Temple work.

The door opened, quietly, and Zillah entered. She often came for a talk with him at this hour, as she was mostly sure of an uninterrupted conversation. Her sister, to a large extent, lived to eat, and always slept for a couple hours or more after her hearty two o'clock dinner.

The young Jew gave the beautiful girl a pleasant greeting. Then, after the exchange of a few very general words, the pair were silent. Zillah broke the silence at last.

"Abraham," she began, "I want to talk to you on-on-well- I've something important to say."

He eyed her curiously, a tender little smile moving about among the lines of his mouth. There was a new note in her voice, a new light in her eyes. He had caught glimpses of both when they had met at breakfast, and again at dinner, but both were more marked than ever now.

He had laid down his tool at her first word of address.

Now she laid one of her pretty plump hands on his, as she went on: -

"You could not have been kinder, truer, dear Abraham, if you had been my own brother, after the flesh. I have looked upon you as a brother, as a friend, as a protector, and I have always felt that I could, and would make a confident of you, should the needs-be ever arise."

The gentle smile in his eyes as well as his mouth encouraged her, and she went on:-

"A gentleman has asked me to marry him, Abraham -"

Cohen gave a quick little start, but in her eagerness she did not notice it.

"I have promised," she continued, "for I love him, and he loves me as only -"

"Who is he, Zillah?"

"Mr. Hammond, dear!"

His eyes flashed with the mildest surprise. But, to her astonishment, she noticed that he showed no anger.

In spite of all his usual gentleness she had half expected a little outburst, for to marry out of the Jewish faith, was equal in shame almost to turning Meshumed, and usually brought down the curse of one's nearest and dearest.

"He is of the Gentile race, Zillah!" Cohen said quietly. She noticed that he said race, and not faith, and she unconsciously took courage from the fact.

She was silent for a moment. Her lips moved slightly, but no sound came from her. Watching her, he wondered. She was praying!

Suddenly she lifted her head, proudly almost. She suffered her great lustrous eyes, - liquid in their love light - to meet his, as she said, with a ringing frankness: -

"Abraham! I have found the Messiah! He whom the Gentiles call the CHRIST; The man-God, JESUS, is the Messiah!"

His eyes dwelt fixedly upon her face. She wondered that there was neither anger nor indignation in them.

"May I tell you why I think, why I know He is the Messiah, Abraham?" she asked.

"Do, Zillah!"

He spoke very gently, and she wondered more and more.

She made no remark, however, on his toleration, but began to pour out her soul in the words of the Old Testament scriptures, connecting them with their fulfillment in the New Testament.

Cohen, watching her, thought of Deborah, for all her beautiful form seemed suddenly ennobled under the power of the theme that fired her.

"Now I know, dear Abraham," she presently cried, "How it is that The Lord is allowing our Rabbis - you told me, you know, the other day, of the one at Safed - to be led to dates that prove that Messiah is coming soon? Now I know why GOD has allowed our nation to be stirred up, - the Zionist movement, the colonization of Jerusalem and its neighborhood, and all else of this like - yes, it is because the CHRIST is coming.

"Only, dear brother, it is not as the Messiah of the Jews that He comes soon - He came thus more than 1,900 years ago - this time, when He comes, He will come for His church, His redeemed ones - Jew and Gentile alike who are washed in His blood that was shed on Calvary for all the human race. For He was surely GOD's Lamb, and was slain at the Great, the last real Passover, dear Abraham, if only we all - our race - could see this. What the blood of that first Passover lamb, in Egypt, was in type, to our people in their bondage and Blood-deliverance, so JESUS was in reality."

Moses, of old, wist not how his face shone. And this lovely Jewish maiden, as she talked of her Lord, wist not how all her lovely face was transformed as she talked - glorified would not be too strong a description of the change her theme had wrought in her countenance.

"And now, dear Abraham" she went on, "that same JESUS has not only blotted out all my sin, for His name's sake, but he bids me look for Him to come again. When next He comes - it may be before even this day closes -"

Cohen shot a quick, puzzled glance at her. She did not notice it but went on:-

"I have learned many things from the scriptures since. I have been going to the little Room at Spitalfields, and from the Word of The Lord, Himself, I have learned that JESUS may now come at any moment.

"He will come in the air, and will catch away all His believing children. Then, as the teachers show from the Word of GOD, when the church is gone, there shall arise a terrible power, a man who will be Satan's great agent to lead the whole world astray - *Antichrist*, the Word of GOD calls him - then, during a period, probably about seven years altogether, there shall be an ever growing persecution of those who shall witness boldly for JESUS, and -"

"Who will they be, Zillah," he interrupted, "if all the Church, as you say, will be taken out of the world at the coming of CHRIST?"

"One of the teachers, the other night, Abraham," she replied, said, "that the natural consequence of the sudden taking away of the Believers from this earth would probably be, at first, a mighty revival, a turning to GOD. If this be so, then these converts will be the witnesses to JESUS during the awful seven years, which the Word of GOD calls The Great Tribulation."

Her face glowed with holy light, as inspired by the thought in her soul, she went on:-

"At first, dear Abraham, our own race will return to Jerusalem. and to all the land of our Father, still believing in the coming of the Messiah.

The temple - that wondrous Temple for which you are working - will be reared to The Lord. The morning and evening sacrifices will be resumed. Then presently the Antichrist will make our people believe that he is the Messiah. Pretending to be Israel's friend and protector he will deceive them at first, but, by and by. He will try to force idolatry upon them, he will want to set up in our glorious Temple, (which will have been reared to the Lord), an idol, an abomination.

"The teacher whom I have heard, Abraham,- and many of them are of our own race - see from Scripture that the great mass of our people, in the land of our fathers, will blindly accept this hideous idol worship.

"But The Lord will not let Antichrist have all his own way. JESUS, with all those who were caught up with Him into the air, will come to the deliverance of our people. He will come, this time, to the earth. He will fight against Antichrist, will overcome him, His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives.

"Our poor deluded, suffering people will see Him, as our own prophets have said:- **'I will pour out upon the House of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication, AND THEY SHALL LOOK UPON ME WHOM THEY HAVE PIERCED, AND THEY SHALL MOURN FOR HIM, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.'**"

She paused abruptly, struck by Cohen's quietude of manner, where she had expected a storm. Gazing up wonderingly into his face she cried:- "Abraham, why are you thus quiet? Why have you not cursed me for a Meshumed, dear? Can it be that you, too, know aught of these glorious truths?"

There was sadness and kindness in his eyes as he returned her pleading glance. But there was no trace of anger.

"I wonder why, little sister," he began, "I am not angry, as the men of Israel's faith usually are with a Meshumed, even though the defaulter should be as beautiful as Zillah Robart?"

His glance grew kinder, as he went on:- "I began to wonder where my little sister went, twice a week, in the evenings, and, anxious about her, lest she, in her innocence of heart and ignorance of life, should get into trouble, I followed her one night, and saw that she entered a hall, which I knew to be a preaching-place for Jews." Zillah's eyes were very wide with wonder. But she did not interrupt him.

"I did not enter the place myself," he went on, "but that very first night, while waiting about for a few minutes, I met an old friend, a Jew like myself, by race, but a Christian by faith. He talked with me, pointed to the Scriptures, quoted from the Gentile New Testament, showed, from them, how, in every detail, the birth, the life, the death of JESUS, the Nazarene, fulfilled the prophecies of our father, and -' "

"And you, Abraham -" Zillah laid her hand on the Jew's wrist, in a swift gesture of excitement, "you, dear," she cried, "see that JESUS was the Messiah?"

Slowly, almost sorrowfully it seemed to the eager girl, he shook his head.

"I cannot say all that, Zillah," he went on, "I sat in a seat, last night, in that Hall, where I could see you and Hammond, where I could hear all that was said upon the platform, but where I knew that neither you nor Hammond would be able to see me. All that I heard, last night, dear, has more than half convinced me, but - well, I cannot rush through this matter, I have to remember that it has to do with the life beyond, as well as this life."

He sighed a little wearily. "I saw the meeting between Hammond and you, Zillah," he went on.

"I had before begun to sense something of Hammond's probable feeling for you, and I had seen you look at him in a way that, though you did not yourself probably realize it, meant, I knew, a growing feeling for him warmer than our maidens usually bestow on a Gentile. I saw you enter the cab together, and drive off, and -"

He sighed again. Then without finishing his sentence, he said: "Perhaps I shall see with you, Zillah, soon. Meanwhile, dear -"

He lifted his hands, let them rest upon her head, and softly, reverently, cried:-

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

The sweet old Nazarite blessing never fell more tenderly upon human ears than it did upon Zillah Robarts. The Lord had been very gracious to her. She had feared anger, indignation from her brother-in-law, she received a blessing instead.

As he slowly lifted his hands from her head, she caught them in hers, lifted them to her lips, and kissed them gratefully.

"May that blessing fall back upon your own head, upon your heart, your life, dear Abraham?" she cried. Still holding his hands, she lifted her head. An eager light filled all her face, as she added:-

"It wants but a few days to Passover, dear, I shall pray GOD that He will reveal JESUS fully to you before that!"

She dropped his hands, and made for the door. "I hear the children from school," she cried. Then she was gone. Cohen did not turn to his work. But taking a New Testament from his pocket, began to study anew the Passion of JESUS, as recorded in the Gospels.

~ end of chapter 20 ~

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