

MESSIANIC HESPED (FUNERAL SERMON)

[Before the Funeral Service, the keri'ah black ribbon had already been torn and pinned to the right lapel of the surviving family members in the anteroom outside the Ohel (funeral chapel) with the prayer, "Baruch Atah Adonoi Eloheinu Melech HaOlam Dayan HaEmes." Later, at the burial site, The 23rd Psalm was read and while the family took turns putting a symbolic shovel of dirt on the casket, a soloist sang the Kaddish and Moshiach's Kaddish (Mt.6:9-13) and the Aaronic Benediction (Num.6:24-26) in Hebrew. The sermon below was preached at the Funeral Service to the Jewish family and friends of the deceased. At the end of the service, the preacher, wearing a yarmulke, followed the casket as the Funeral directors moved the casket out to the hearse in order to proceed in a motorcade to the cemetery.]

In her condominium kitchen I had a flashback. Leah was preparing me something to drink a few months ago in her condominium kitchen, but I was mentally not there in New York City. In my mind I was in Florida in Jamie Lash's condominium kitchen in 1976 and it was Jamie who was preparing me something to drink, in a time so long ago when many messianic synagogues were about to bloom in Florida.

I thought, Leah is our "Jamie Lash" here in New York City. Surely many messianic synagogues will bloom in New York City now. That's what I thought a few months ago that day in Leah's condominium kitchen. You see, Leah was a founding member of a New York City messianic synagogue. And that's what I was thinking that day about Leah. But, Leah, Leah.. where have you gone?

I remember Leah going to a wedding. She had been preparing herself for months, losing weight, buying beautiful clothes. I have a picture of her and her husband, not the way she might look today in this closed wooden coffin in front of me, with the beautiful Star of David engraved on the top. No, I have a picture of her the way she looked at the wedding! Smiling, happy, dressed to kill. Maybe, without knowing it, she was getting prepared even then for another wedding...

Did you know that Heaven is Moshiach's wedding?

Leah knew. She was a Messianic Jewess.

One day Leah wanted to go to a town called New Hope, in Pennsylvania. A little tourist village, with antique shops, with the Paper Mill Playhouse, restaurants, an old train for the tourists to ride. I'm a workaholic, but we took the day off to humor her. I think it was significant that that quaint little town in Pennsylvania is called New Hope. It says somewhere, "We do not want you to grieve like non-believers who have no hope." So we went to New Hope.

I'll always remember Leah
...in New Hope.

I remember the tourist shops in New Hope. Selling clothes, souvenirs. But some were occult places, selling ghoulish things like Tarot cards. You could smell the sickening incense, even from the sidewalk. But Leah had no interest in going into any of these shops. She was a Messianic Jewess. And I remember that day. I remember the look of intensity on her Husband's face. His eyes seemed so mesmerized as he went into antique store after antique store looking for antique treasures. A treasure was going to be found in New Hope! But no one was paying any attention to Leah. Yet *she* was the treasure! We see that now. Now that she's gone. Only forty-seven years old. Leah was the treasure in New Hope.

It was a sunny day that day. But it was starting to get cold. I remember wishing I'd brought a sweater. We didn't have a covering.

Do you have a covering? It's called a kapporah. The Torah says that G-d can't look at the nakedness of our guilt. G-d has to turn away. Unless we are covered.

Nothing is colder than the grave. It's getting cold now, too. Winter is coming. Do you have a covering? Put on Moshiach. Let Moshiach be your covering. The Tanakh says that by the suffering of his nefesh, he made kapporah to cover the nakedness of our guilt. The guilt of all mankind. It's too cold to go to Sheol uncovered. Put on Moshiach Adoneinu.

In my mind, today, as I think of Leah, she is pleading with you from New Hope. Through Isaiah's words, Leah is talking to you about your covering, and in my mind today Leah is saying words from her Messianic Scriptures: "Eem tah-seem ash'am nahf-shoh" ("If you place [Moshiach's] nefesh as an offering for guilt"**) ...If you place Moshiach's ash'am guilt offering kapporah covering over the nakedness of your guilt, yes, if you place Moshiach's kapporah over you like a covering against the guilt, like a Tallit against the cold of Sheol, this is the New Hope, the sure and certain New Hope of the Resurrection to Chayyei Olam through Moshiach Adoneinu.

Pray this prayer with me: Moshiach, Adoneinu. I confess you with my mouth, Ye-shu-AH (Your Name is Salvation, Yeshua) and believe in my heart in your Tchiyas HaMoshiach.

Omein.

**These Hebrew words are found in Isaiah 53:10

