

Historical Perspective – New Jerusalem by Robin Matchett

New Jerusalem is an exciting retelling of the story of the origins of Christianity. It is a drama based on new forensic evidence uncovered with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Ringing true, though undoubtedly controversial, the story is collectively supported by the pivotal research of the biblical scholar Dr. Barbara Thiering, the Gospels, and early Judaic ritual. What emerges is a human story without the religious or indoctrinate haze of tradition. In this retelling, we enter the political, ancestral, and sectarian divisions that provided the environment that Yeshua (Jesus) had to contend with. Who were these characters as living breathing people? This story gets to the essence of their reality. Let me digress with some historical background.

Yeshua was born as the direct descendant of the thousand year dynastic line of the David Kings. This line was rigorously protected and maintained by the strict ascetic community of Essene monks living in the little communal city compound called Qumran near the Dead Sea (known at the time as Lake Asphaltites). Yeshua was born into this community that was at various times referred to symbolically as 'New Jerusalem', 'Galilee' and 'Egypt', because of the ruling Pope or faction in power at the time. The Jewish sects: Sadducee, Pharisee, Samaritan, Therapeutae and Magian all vied for influence, but the aristocratic Sadducees and their more liberal branch, the Pharisees, were dominant. These traditional authorities viewed Yeshua's birth as prince, then ascension to king (upon his father Joseph's death) as illegitimate. This was grounded on Joseph having held Magian affiliations, which according to the strict procedural laws of the celibate Essenes – the Sadducees and Pharisees - manifested in Yeshua's conception and subsequent birth as apostate under law. Dynastic babies were to be born around Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, the first month of the New Year in September-October. Yeshua was born March 1st 7 BC (the veracity of which is based in part on his Bar Mitzva in 6 AD *Laurence Gardner, Barbara Thiering). Therefore, Queen Mary, Yeshua's mother, impregnated by the 'Holy Spirit' (Joseph, the Star of Bethlehem), was given a nun's status, as virgin, and honor intact. It should be noted that dynastic queens were always named Miriam or Mary after Moses' sister – subsequently no one knows what their original given names were. The Magians, of course, endorsed Yeshua's nativity as the prince and future king.

Upon the election of High Priest Caiaphas as Pope by the Tetrarch Antipas Herod (the Roman-appointed principal of Palestine), Yeshua was released from the Qumran community as the 'man of the lie', an outcast. His status in the hierarchy

was then no more than a nun, or villager, and younger brother James Joseph was made the king, as he was born at the proper time of year. Yeshua had spent his entire life learning the sacred ways, from initiate to graduate; he was brilliant and like his father and grandfather believed in the prophecy of the Messiah (return of the David king to rule all of Palestine and Jews everywhere). As well, at the time many Gentiles sought the comfort and compassion of Judaism's monotheistic system of the one true God. However Gentiles were not allowed communion, and were prohibited from advancing in the age-old hierarchy. As well, there was a lot of money given to the Essenes from the Diaspora, by wealthy Hellenized Jews – Roman and Greek - and Gentiles around the Mediterranean. Through this network, Yeshua had from the outset a strong following, especially among the Magians, Samaritans and other progressives. The leaders of these sects: High Priest Simon Magus (Zebedee), Theudas-Barabbas, and Angel Gabriel, Chief Scribe and Treasurer Judas Iscariot, all high ranking Jews and zealots, were for the overthrow of Roman domination in Palestine. With Roman hegemony and oppression thrown into the mix, we have a veritable hotbed of insurgent fervor. Yeshua represented the peace faction, as well as the wayward high ranking Zadok Priest, John Baptist. The Popes were generally for peace. But Simon, Theudas-Barabbas and Judas, as allies to the ascension of Yeshua, were for war.

Using his gifts and knowledge, Yeshua began his mission to realize the prophecy of his ascension, and even resurrection as the ancients prophesied, to renew David's kingdom, but also to reconcile disparate elements of the faith. Yet he became an enemy of the ruling classes, the priests and authorities, who accused him of blasphemy. Then Simon ordained him as a priest, which was considered illegal, because he was not of the priestly bloodline, as Zadok or Levite. As priest, his mission sought to give communion to the masses by feeding the thousands by making lay Gentiles bishops (loaves) who could then give communion. Moreover, by letting Gentiles and the underclasses drink wine reserved for the ranking clergy at communion instead of water, Yeshua was stoking a mighty fire of revolt against the system. It followed that as a priest, Yeshua could then 'walk on water' a ritualized mass baptism to sanctify and purify many men and women (caught by 'fishermen' as 'fish' to greatly increase his following). He could raise the dead excommunicated priests (considered dead and lepers to the world – a ritualized death); he could cure the blind and heal the sick, those Jews who were born again and cured under his influence as the 'Son of God'. Eternal salvation was the reward for one's faith in Yeshua, as the Messiah, and righteous vanguard of reform. The miracles were metaphors for reform and salvation.

Although ascetic and celibate, Essenes like Yeshua, made it necessary to continue their dynastic bloodlines. Near Qumran, was the Queen's House (euphemistically called the Manger for the large animal containment sheds and yards) which domiciled in the house the ranking women, mostly nuns. Down the coast farther was Ain Feshka and Mazin, which were centers for women, orphans and outcasts, who were taken care of by the Essenes and their charitable institution. Yeshua chose a wife, a 'Mary' (Mary Magdalene – no one knows her birth name), and she became his closest companion, and bore him three children, the eldest Tamara, a girl, and boys Yeshua Justus, and Josephes. Procreation was deemed unclean and an 'animal state'. Marriage had three ceremonies: betrothal, marriage three months after conception, and full motherhood once the baby had been born. After a girl, three years must be awaited before the next conception, and after a boy, six years. In the meantime the father would remain celibate in seclusion for long periods, and mother reverted to a nun.

It should be noted that the dramatic and thrilling retelling of this story has the same outcome - a new religious awakening. Furthermore, it must be said that the crucifixion wasn't quite what tradition has enshrined. For some, this retelling is an enrichment of the old story, a deeper more realistic interpretation; for others, it may be disheartening that the miracles and resurrection didn't happen the way that many have assumed through faith. Nonetheless, it is about time that the modern world acknowledged a rational illumination of its Christian heritage. Yeshua himself never wanted his legacy to be built on a myth. He was all about the truth, as the opening quote inducting the script clearly subscribes – he let it be known that those not acquainted with his personal history must seek out the meaning - in effect an interpretation of the seeming parable of the New Testament. Some of this was written in part by him or with his guidance which served to secure his survival and that of his family, devotees and worshippers. It must be said that in Yeshua's day, the Romans, Greeks and multi-ethnic pagan world were by far the majority. Yet, his fledgling reformation had eventually captured the imagination of the masses by offering a humane alternative. In this story the main characters may be well known, but not within the context of the newfound reality. New Jerusalem is a true rendition commensurate with the need for truth in the world today.