

“I AM BARABBAS”

**Don't Miss YOUR part of the story in this account
(28 minutes)**

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Summary: This touching account about Barabbas will change how you read that story forever, especially in the Passover season. Don't miss the teaching imbedded in a story so personal, and involving each of us so much, that all four gospels include it.

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Hello, brothers and sisters in Christ, in Yeshua the Messiah. Do you ever wonder why certain stories get “air time” in Scriptures? We know the apostle John says at the end of his gospel account that the world could not contain all the books that could be written about the Messiah if everything was written down.

So why did every single gospel writer take the time to tell the story about Barabbas being released, instead of Jesus, on the Passover day? Why was that such a big deal? What lesson is there supposed to be in that story? After all, Barabbas was a convicted murderer, robber and insurrectionist.

Come on – let's find out together. It will forever change this story in your mind when you read about it or think about it.

I wrote this up as an article about 7 or so years ago. Several have asked for permission to use the research and of course I said “fine”, but it made me realize that it was hitting a chord with people and perhaps I should share it on my website as well. I am not the first, nor am I the only one who has ever revealed this, but when I first came across this myself, it was like an epiphany to me, an “aha!” moment of understanding. I hope you get something from it also.

Imagine with me, if you will, what it must have been for Barabbas. The convicted and condemned murderer, also notorious for sedition and robbery, sits dejectedly in his filthy cell, watched closely by Roman guards. He surely tried without success to keep the mental pictures of gruesome crucifixions out of his mind, crucifixions he had observed by the dozens over the years. And now his turn was coming to be beaten (scourged) and then nailed to a tree or beam.

The Romans were infamous for how they cruelly lined their roadways with crucifixions —their manner of warning would-be enemies of the State to mend their ways. This slow death was designed to torture the condemned for up to three agonizing days! Criminals punished in this way usually died of asphyxiation, no longer able to lift their chests one more time for another searing breath. The pain of crucifixion was so intense that it gave its name to extreme agony: excruciating, which derives from Latin words meaning “the pain one experiences while being crucified.”

OK – so that was Barabbas' fate. Why did Yahweh inspire precious space be taken up, FOUR times, in the gospel accounts, on this murderer?

As Pilate finishes his interrogation of Jesus, he can find no fault in Him. He may have even begun to like him. Pilate’s wife sends a message, late in the proceedings, warning her husband of a dark dream she has had concerning this innocent Man. Moreover, Pilate has figured out that the Jewish leaders are really just jealous of Jesus’ popularity and are afraid He could cause them to lose their positions of authority.

To appease the restless mob—and save himself some trouble with Caesar should the Jews decide to appeal to him—he is willing to shed the blood of this human sacrificial Lamb, the innocent Jesus, and let Barabbas go free.

The story is told in Mark 15:6-15:

Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow insurrectionists; they had committed murder in the insurrection.

Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?"

For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. And Pilate answered and said to them again, "What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?" So they cried out again, "Crucify Him!" Then Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?"

And they cried out more exceedingly, "Crucify Him!" So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.

Each of the four gospels gives an account of Barabbas’ part in Jesus’ trial (see Matthew 27:15-26; Luke 23:18-25; John 18:39-40). Matthew 27:16 says Barabbas was a notorious prisoner; John 18:40 calls him a robber. Many find the whole story little more than a curiosity, an interesting detail of the whole sordid affair. But is that all it? Here’s this “bad guy” the Romans had captured and surely he deserved punishment.

Me? Like Barabbas?

Do we ever identify with Barabbas, the murderer? Perhaps we should.

Like Barabbas, each of us has also been found guilty of murder. How? On the day of Pentecost after Jesus’ death, Peter explains that we all have killed the Messiah (Acts 2:36). We all, by requiring His blood be spilled to cleanse us of our sins, are really the ones who crucified Him. As surely as the Jewish mob agitated for His condemnation, and as surely as the Roman lictor tore His flesh with his whip, as surely as the Roman soldiers pounded nails into His hands and feet, as surely as one ripped His side open with a spear – we caused the death of the innocent Son of Man, the very Son of God. Yes, the shed blood of this Innocent drips from our hands.

So far no one’s even mentioned any of our thousands of other sins. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:33). God loved you and me so much He sent His only begotten Son to die for us, and for those who accept it and believe in Him, forgiveness and eternal life is offered (John 3:16-17).

We know Yeshua is the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). He is our Passover (I Corinthians 5:7). Yeshua took on Himself all the sins of all time and paid the penalty for all who will receive Him as Lord and Savior.

1 Timothy 2:6 – “He gave himself a ransom for all”. A ransom was required: the life of the son of God. He paid the ransom money – giving up himself – for you.

Hebrews 2:9 says that He was willing to taste death for everyone.

1 John 2:2 makes it clear that this didn’t happen just for “us” – but for the whole world. John 1:29 says He is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”.

So now, we can stand before Yahweh without condemnation, for "there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ, who no longer walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). Even this sin—of murdering the Messiah—is washed away forever.

After we repent and accept Jesus as our personal Savior, God regenerates us and brings us into His Family by His Spirit (John 3:5-6, 8; I Peter 1:23). He no longer sees male or female or any differentiation (2 Cor. 6:18).

What's In a Name?

So what about Barabbas? Where does he come into this story? It is a moving reminder at Passover time each year that God leaves nothing to chance. Remember what I’ve been saying about how the holydays are “dress rehearsals”? Even the man who receives unmerited pardon is in the story for a reason: to remind us what we were and who we are now.

Many look at the name "Barabbas" and think it is just a name. Perhaps they realize that it is an Aramaic word. But what does it mean? Bar means "son of" and abba means "father," with the connotation of closeness and intimacy similar to our "dad," "daddy," or "papa."

Therefore, Barabbas is "the son of the father" or "the son of his dear father." That Passover day in AD 31, there was a guilty "son of the father"—Barabbas—and a totally innocent "Son of the Father"—Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

There is possibly even more. Extant ancient texts say that Barabbas' full name was Jesus Barabbas. If that is correct—and it may be—then the crowd picked the wrong Jesus to be freed! Is that not typical of human nature?

On our own, we too would choose the wrong savior and doom ourselves to bondage to sin and death rather than freedom from sin and eternal life (John 6:44; Romans 2:4). As individuals, we are whom Barabbas depicted, "the sons of our dear Father" who did not measure up.

Each one of us is that child of God. When our Elder Brother Jesus Christ stepped up to be crucified for us, though He should have been the one released, having committed no wrong at all, Abba (our

dear father) also released the rest of His children who would call upon the name of Yeshua (Jesus) and accept His sacrifice in our stead. Just as surely as Barabbas walked out of that prison a free man, Jesus gave Himself so each of us can walk free as well.

That day was an agonizing, terrible day for Yeshua, the Son of Yahweh. Were these not His own people? Some of these now screaming for His death were ones He had often seen, talked with, perhaps even dined with. These were people He knew, and some He knew well. Think how Yeshua must have felt.

He knows you, and knows me, real well too.

Someday, when those of the house of Judah see the wounds on his chest, they will indignantly ask the Lamb, "Who *did* this to you?" (Zechariah 13:6). His prophetic reply is tinged with pain: "My wounds happened in the house of My friends." Jesus even calls Judas His "friend" (Matthew 26:50).

Those "friends" include Peter, who denied Him; the Roman soldiers who executed Him; Pilate, who condemned Him; Caiaphas the High Priest, the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the Jerusalem mob who schemed and clamored to crucify Him. He died for His friends. His friends include us, those who will form His Bride (John 15:13-15), whose sins made His gruesome, excruciating death necessary.

Yeshua is getting married soon. His Bride—the church of God—is bone of His bones, flesh of His flesh, (Genesis 2:23), one body with Him (Ephesians 5:27-32). Yeshua gave Himself for her—for us.

This next part is key: converted children of God are said to "be in Christ" and to be one with Him. We are His body, and He is the Head of that body of believers. We are part of Him. I've said for years, it helps me when I see a brother or sister, to think, "Hello, Yeshua".

If Jesus Barabbas was the murderer's name, perhaps Barabbas actually pictures those who are of Christ who are handed undeserved pardon. He may picture those of us who want to take on the name of Jesus but who have fallen short spiritually. We were guilty of sin and earned the death penalty.

But the Eternal God saves. The Lord is salvation, which is what "Jesus" or "Yeshua" means. Thus, just as Barabbas was granted his life and freedom that day, the real Jesus, the real Son of the Father, steps up beside us and lovingly offers to take our place.

A New Life

You are Barabbas. I am Barabbas. We have truly become real "the sons of the Father" because of what Jesus did in our behalf. We have been released from the penalty of eternal death because our Savior and affianced Husband, Jesus the Christ, died in our stead.

All of this came about when the true Son of the Father took the place of Barabbas, who represents us all. As the despised Roman guards marched up to him, he was expecting the worse was about to begin. But instead, they broke off his heavy chains, dropping them to the stone floor with a clang that echoed through the corridors of the prison. Slowly, reality began to sink in: They were letting him go! Before long, Barabbas learned that the innocent Jesus of Nazareth, whom some considered a

prophet, had given him a new lease on life—a fresh start, a new life. He was free! No crucifixion awaited this murderous, thieving rebel after all! He undoubtedly could not believe his "luck."

Don't forget we're told that what's written is in the Book for OUR admonition. So it's not about Barabbas. It's about you and me, and even more so, it's about what a loving Abba we have in this Passover season. It's about what a great Master, what a loving Savior, what an awesome King we have in King Yeshua. If you hear my other teaching on the website – the one about Passover's "Dress Rehearsals", you'll see that one of the cups of Passover was the cup of Deliverance. The iron shackles of slavery to Egypt – to sin – are broken by the blood of the Lamb. We have victory by the blood of the Lamb.

So now we walk about as truly free men and women. His sacrifice and resurrection make it possible for God to give us of His Spirit, to bring us into His household, the Family of God.

We are regenerated to a new life, and made part of the very Family in which Jesus is the Firstborn. The Father invites us to be His Son's Bride, whom Jesus is preparing for the Great Marriage Supper, giving of Himself totally for us, so that we can be totally free of sin as He is.

When we pronounce our wedding vows to the King of kings, He will present us faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Ephesians 5:25-27; Jude 24; II Peter 3:14).

This year, as we eat of the Passover bread representing His body broken for us, and drink the from the cup, symbolizing His blood shed for the remission of our sins, let us remember who we are. We can be even more grateful for Jesus and the liberty and life He has given to each of us (Luke 4:18).

Yes, we are Barabbas, sons of our dear Father, children of God. But we are Barabbas without the condemnation, for there is no more condemnation when Jesus passed over our sins and paid the ultimate penalty for us.

Did Barabbas reform as a result of Jesus' sacrifice of Himself for him? Nobody knows. But we have a say in our future.

As Paul admonishes, because of what the Father and the Son have done undeservedly for us, "we should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). We are now debtors to live a life of righteousness, showing our appreciation.

Romans 8:12-17

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors — not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Praise Yah for all His wonders. Hallelu Yah!

