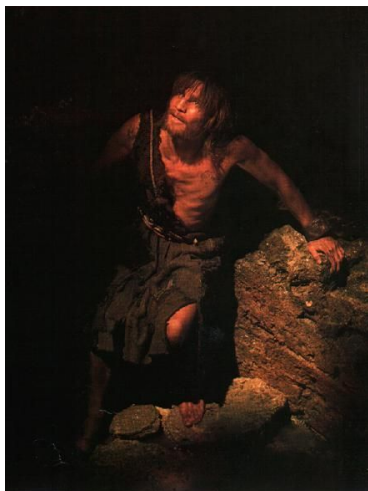


Shayla: In Luke 7:18-23 why did John the Baptist ask his disciples to go ask Jesus this question? I know there is a bigger lesson that I am missing. Didn't John and Jesus know one another since they were cousins or were they not around each other?

Midrash:



When studying biblical texts, it is critical to make sure that we understand their full context: historical, geographical, cultural, political etc. This is the main reason I developed a simplified harmony of the gospels in chronological order (titled *The Life of the Master*) and why I continue to work at developing a chronological Bible with study notes.

If you will consider section 99 of *The Life of the Master*, you will see that the passage in question synchronizes with Matthew 11:1-9. There¹ we discover that John the Baptist was in prison and could not go to Jesus. Apparently he was not in isolation however, and thus was able to call for a couple of his disciples and send them to the Messiah with his question.

Though John had always previously been bold and outspoken, when placed in jail and faced with near certain death, he began to struggle with fear. However, it's important to note the nature of his question because it gives us insight into the nature of his fear.

He asked, "Are You the One who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"² He was not afraid for his life. He was afraid that he had missed the boat and perhaps even steered others wrong.

It reminds me of another suffering saint – our brother Job – who, when also faced with great suffering said, "It would still bring me comfort, and I would leap for joy in unrelenting pain that I have not denied the words of the Holy One. What strength do I have that I should continue to hope? What is my future, that I should be patient? Is my strength that of stone, or my flesh made of bronze? Since I cannot help myself, the hope for success has been banished from me."³

Job's principle fear was that, in his fleshly weakness, he would end up denying the Lord as his wife already had.⁴ The lesson that we learn from Job and John is that true godly concern, driven by godly fear, should focus on our spiritual condition and our stewardship of Hashem's resources (including time and opportunities) rather than on our physical circumstances.

I think that another important lesson is the necessity of replicating the Faith in others and thus surrounding ourselves with godly friends who can help us in tough times. Had John not faithfully made disciples, he would not have had the wherewithal to communicate with the Lord. As Quohaleth said, "Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up. Also, if two lie down together, they can keep warm; but how can one person alone keep warm? And if somebody overpowers one person, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not easily broken."⁵

The Master's mandate to "go and make disciples"⁶ is not merely to be obeyed for His sake. Every disciple that we make is another member of our family, another adopted Jew who can stand with us in the gap⁷ and help push back the darkness.

¹ Matthew 11:2

² Matthew 11:3; Luke 7:19-20

³ Job 6:10-13 HCSB

⁴ Job 2:9

⁵ Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

⁶ Matthew 28:19

⁷ Ezekiel 22:30