

chastisement of our peace was upon Him;
and with His stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have
turned every one to his own way; and the Lord
hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and He was afflicted,
yet He opened not His mouth: He is
brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and
as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,
so He openeth not His mouth.

He was taken from prison and from judgment:
and who shall declare His generation?

For He was cut off out of the land of the
living: for the transgression of my
people was He stricken.

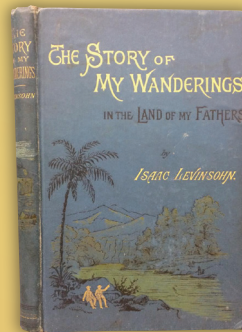
And He made His grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in His death; because
He had done no violence, neither was any
deceit in His mouth.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He
hath put Him to grief: when thou shalt
make His soul an offering for sin, He
shall see His seed, He shall prolong His
days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall
prosper in His hand.

He shall see of the travail of His soul,
and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge
shall my righteous servant justify many;
for He shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore will I divide Him a portion
with the great, and He shall divide the
spoil with the strong; because He hath
poured out His soul unto death: and He
was numbered with the transgressors;
and He bare the sin of many, and made
intercession for the transgressors.

Eventually, much to Isaac's dismay, his family cut him off completely as one accursed. But he said, 'I studied the Bible only, and found that unless Christianity is the true religion, then the God of our holy fathers has not spoken His words in the book we call the Holy Bible ... and the words of God cannot be true.' He read the New Testament and saw it as the key to the Bible. He loved the four Gospels which tell of the life, death and resurrection of Christ. He had come to know Jesus in a personal way. The inward struggle, and desire to find peace with God, was replaced by a calm knowledge that he was forgiven, and was right with His Maker, because he was trusting in Jesus who had died and risen again for him.



When he was baptised as a Christian, friends and family disowned him; he was even turned out of the synagogue. But he gave away gospel tracts and booklets and led other Jewish people to trust in Jesus as their Messiah and Saviour. His autobiography became a popular book in Victorian times, and it is still in print. Eventually he became a preacher, well known in churches in the south of England. He said that he would have shed the very last drop of his blood if it would bring his family 'out of the darkness of Judaism to the marvellous light of the Sun of Righteousness.'

After 10 years he heard again from his family. His father had died during a wave of persecution in Russia against the Jews. Isaac showed great love to his family, supporting his mother financially and, from a distance, caring for her needs. He sent them a printed copy of a sermon of C.H. Spurgeon on 'Christ our Passover'¹. In time, his mother, brother, sisters and a number of old Russian friends came to faith in Jesus. Right until his death he would quote St. Paul, 'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they might be saved.'

¹This can be read or heard on YouTube

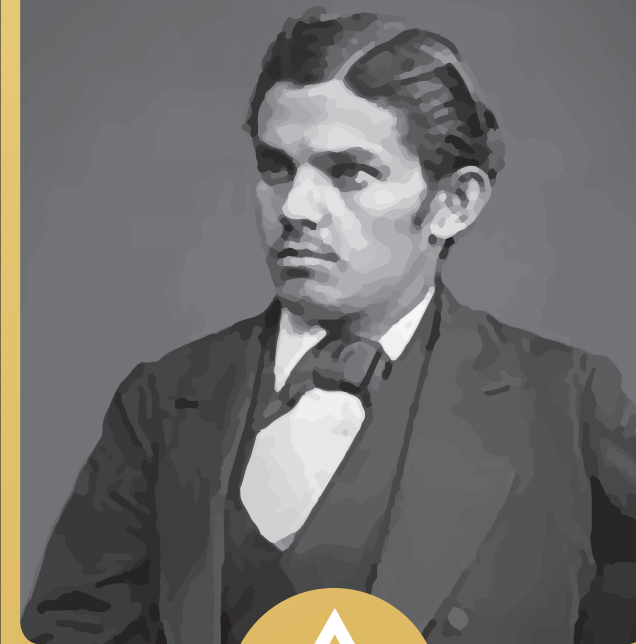
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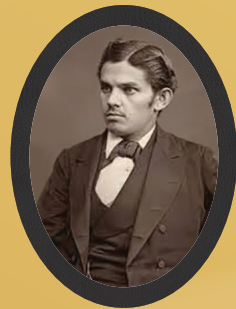
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THE STORY OF A RUSSIAN/POLISH JEW ISAAC LEVINSOHN





Isaac Levinsohn was born in the town of Kovno in Russia in 1855.

His parents were devout Jews, regulars at the synagogue and they fasted two days a week. At the age of 5, Isaac's father taught him Hebrew, and to pray 3 times each day. Soon he was studying the Talmud, Hebrew Scriptures and other Jewish writings and was being prepared to be a Rabbi. He was bewildered though that he was being steered away from reading the Bible, which he loved to read.

At the age of 13, he was told that now he was considered a man and would have the responsibility for his own sins before Jehovah God. For him this was a daunting burden, and he began to wonder how he could be forgiven, asking 'What must I do to be saved?' He knew that compared with a holy God, he was very sinful. He was attending the synagogue with his tefillin (or phylacteries), praying for up to two hours at a time, and sometimes fasting for twelve hours, but he was questioning whether his good works could make him right before God. He knew that if he was to die, he would be unworthy of standing before God.

His rabbi told him that he would have to be punished in Hell for some time for his sins, but that afterwards he

would enter Paradise to be with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. All this troubled him deeply.

To settle his mind his father suggested that he should stop studying the Bible and Talmud and join the police force. But still he couldn't get away from the issue, 'What must I do to be saved?' So intense did the question become that he decided, despite the grave concerns of his father, to leave Russia to find the way of salvation. He was only 16. As he left home, his father, whom he loved deeply, prayed, 'May the God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob, our fathers, keep and preserve thee near to His Holy word, the Bible and to the holy writings of our holy rabbis.'

First, Isaac travelled by train to Verbelow on the Russian border, but he did not have the necessary government permission to leave the country. After sleeping in the open, early the next morning he made a dash across cornfields to Germany. A Russian guard spotted him and shot in his direction, but he fled unhurt.

For the next two years, he found himself alone in the world. Travelling westward, he was robbed, threatened, badly bitten by a dog, and even imprisoned on false charges. Sometimes he slept in the open, in fields and cemeteries; other times he found employment as a milk-boy, or boot cleaner,



lodging with Jewish families. Sometimes abused; other times welcomed, but often he was destitute, desperate and even suicidal. In winter months he would be cold and hungry.

Throughout his journeyings he would seek out Jewish families, synagogues and Rabbis, always enquiring as to how he could find forgiveness. Some were understanding towards him, others severe, but none gave him answers to his questions. He tried to correspond with his parents back in Russia. They would send him money, but always pleaded with him to return home. Everything within him wanted to be with them, but the quest for peace with God was overwhelming.

Eventually he crossed the North Sea and arrived in Hull, but not knowing English he couldn't make anyone understand him. He did his best to communicate using a German/English dictionary, but life was still harrowingly difficult. From Hull he sailed to London, where again he was robbed of his clothes by a young man who 'befriended' him. He found a Jewish hostel in which to lodge, and was delighted to visit the synagogue on the Day of Atonement. He found employment as an apprentice stick carver. He had been



abused by some Roman Catholics in Germany which confirmed his disdain for Christianity. He had an aversion to anything Christian, even the name of Jesus. But one evening, through curiosity, he entered a church and was struck by the absence of pictures and graven images. He listened to the church service though he did not understand much, but he was impressed by its simplicity.

After a few visits to the church he began a conversation with a man there who looked Jewish. He was a Messianic Jew – Jewish by birth, but had trusted Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. Isaac's problems were only just beginning.

As he began to consider Jesus as the promised Messiah, fellow Jews in his lodgings cursed and ostracised him. He met with a German-speaking missionary, Rev. H.A. Stern, who had worked in Ethiopia, and had been imprisoned for his faith there. They read the Bible together, and prayed to 'The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'. They expressed the sinfulness of the human heart, and the impossibility for anyone to please God and gain favour in His sight apart from the One who said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.'

Isaac's father wrote to him, begging him to have nothing to do with 'meshumadim' (apostates or imposters), saying that the religion of their fathers cannot be changed, just as God cannot change. He called Jesus 'the Nazarene bastard'.

Isaac replied, quoting many Bible passages about the Messiah. He noted Micah 5:2 which says that out of Bethlehem will come forth One who is to be the Ruler in Israel. In one letter to his father, Isaac wrote out parts of Isaiah 53. The passage, written 700 years before Jesus was born, foretells the Messiah suffering, dying and paying the price of our wrongdoing. Hanging on the cross, Jesus fulfilled this and many other prophecies, as He purchased salvation, carrying on Himself the sin of the world.

Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the