

## The Day God Came To Earth For Lunch

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Few people know that I attend a Jewish Messianic synagogue, an Orthodox Jewish synagogue and a charismatic Christian church. After forty years of being religious I've decided to spread myself around. (I'm not comfortable anywhere.) Week after week I tire of lengthy liturgy, idealistic songs, conflicting theologies, etc. Grumpy? Me? C'mon!

I recently read an Orthodox Jewish textbook on human suffering, the Holocaust, and Scripture. (There is a saying: A Jew cannot pass up a book. True with me.) This literature and the Sunday morning synagogue classes which I attend interest me. I remarked to myself how different my thinking is from forty years ago. Back then, this hippie-ish, non-religious, yet sort of spiritual Jew, became a Christian. But, I was scared about this God and His connection to (the unnecessary?) Jesus. Yet, I believed this deity of the Christians sought me and then reached out to me. Whom? I wasn't sure.

And, with that confession of faith I accepted a peculiar, hard-to-understand, impossible-to-explain, doctrine—the Trinity. Apparently this was something gentiles grasped and comprehended, but Jews couldn't and wouldn't. So, Christians scooped up this three-headed, semi-Jewish Godhead and have been feeding and watering it for 2,000 years. I experienced a squirmy squeamishness about this twisty spin on the good ol' monotheistic God of Israel. Three Persons in One? Uh-huh, mmm.

Forty years ago, as my mother once said during one of our pointless (no points scored) discussions on Christianity versus Judaism, "I don't need to pray to any Holy Ghost!" (Well, that did make the whole thing sound silly.)

What does this have to do with lunch? *Hang on.*

While reading the student textbook, I read verses in the Tenakh, or Old Testament, in Genesis 18. I knew this passage and had heard teachings on it. But now this hit-me-up-side-the-head—nearly knocking my skullcap off!

Circa 4,000 years ago, three men approached the soon-to-be patriarch Abraham at his tent in his vast encampment. One hundred year-old Abraham followed the cultural obligation to befriend strangers and travelers bidding them to stop, be refreshed, and eat. They did. He settled them in a shady spot by his own tent.

SPOILER ALERT: the next day God destroyed Sodom, Gomorrah, and several nearby towns.

SPOILER ALERT #2: the three men were not human.

One of the strangers proved to be in charge. (Actually, He always was and still is.) Bingo! Yep, somehow Almighty God, Yahweh, and two of special hit-men angels sat there on Earth—eating lunch. Sandals, turbans, robes, beards, armpit odor, real teeth to chew and swallow food, while seated on soft, animal-hide rugs.

After the meal and polite chit-chat, the one-in-charge sent his two servants down the road toward a cluster of problematic population centers. But, He remained behind to engage Abraham, include Abraham, and be challenged by Abraham too. He wanted to dialogue with a man. Not only is singled out, but also

called, “a friend of God.” That’s when it hit me about Yahweh. He was just a guy...*right then*. And He was just sitting and eating with another guy. This understanding blew EVERYTHING out of the water. But some of my theology stayed, sank and rose again, refreshed and upgraded. If God came as a guy for lunch, He could come back as a guy who did carpentry—for years. These two incidents linked heaven to flesh and back again. I saw how traditional Judaism lacked this all-important link. Indeed, 1,800 years later someone saying, proving, acting, as is he were God’s Son (or some part of God), made an appearance.

(BTW If God became a man, then who was in heaven running the universe? To me, you can’t have both. Perhaps God put everything on auto-pilot or done some time-travel trickery.)

Again, once I realized that Yahweh came as a man waaaaay before Jesus did—that could mean two different persons. This all took place in Hebrew contexts, which then clicked BIG TIME for me. A Jewish Trinity! Yes, the Trinity was a Jewish thing, not a pagan invention or Christian misrepresentation.

You ask me, “So, Mark, where’s the Trinity? Hmm? Y’ know the Spirit, the Three? You mentioned only Two Persons.”

“Ahh...that’s another blog.”

Side note: throughout the Jewish Scriptures there are appearances of supernatural beings visiting Earth. They are always on missions for the God of Israel. Genesis 3:2 “The angel of Adonai appeared to Moses in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush.” In Daniel 3:22-25, three Jews were tied up and thrown into a huge, intensely hot, outdoor fire. Suddenly, a fourth man was seen protecting and helping them. After thank-yous, chit-chat, and debriefing, this angel or ? disappeared.

On and on, there are other examples.

Christianity teaches that some of these appearances probably were a member/part/person of the Trinity. A pre-incarnate Jesus is the best guess, since he did come as a man, a real man, at a later date. These visits are called theophanies. Sometimes the “Word of the Adonai came...” is personified too. To back this up, in John’s Gospel, Jesus is pointed out as the “Word...in the beginning.”

Why didn’t or *don’t* the Jews believe in the Trinity if this is true? Where was this stated in the Old Testament? The first is easy to answer; the second I’m going to set aside for now. In the early years of the first Messianic communities the disciples of Jesus were Jews only. 20 years later, a rabbi known to us as Paul, traveled much in the Roman world. He taught on the Messiah and the Godhead to Jews and pagans. Recorded in Acts 21:20, he reported to the leaders in Jerusalem, “See how many thousands of Jews have believed, and these are all serious about the teachings of the Torah,” implying that the Torah (writings of Moses), plus Jesus’ mission and the concept of the Trinity were compatible.

In conclusion, reading about the face-time my ancestor Abraham experienced settled me down, and I am more confident in my aging faith. For all of us, the incomprehensible truth of God—this way or that way—will continue with mysteries. But, even a special lunch guest can be good for a squeamish stomach.

*These Things (Still) Make Me Grumpy...*