

# Apples of Gold

Zvi Kalisher's life-changing spiritual conversations

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## WISDOM WITHOUT FAITH IS USELESS

I recently noticed several posters announcing a famous rabbi would be speaking at our community center. I decided I must see him in person, rather than on television.

He was scheduled to appear at 8 p.m., but he did not arrive until 9 p.m. More than three hundred people were waiting to see their hero. When he did not arrive, I asked some men around me why such a well-known rabbi could not keep his word; but they all defended him, saying he was very busy.

When he finally came, everyone stood and cheered. He immediately started to speak, without so much as “Shalom.” He spoke about the fictitious stories passed down from generation to generation—nothing new. He concluded by saying the most important thing a Jew can do is study the writings of our fathers, which he stated is even more important than having faith in God! Knowledge and the traditions of Judaism are all that count.

The people listened to him as if he had been sent from heaven. Although I knew the crowd would go against me if I spoke up, I silently prayed, asking the Lord to give me courage. Then I rose to my feet. I said to the rabbi, “Please explain how knowledge can be more important than faith in God, when the Scriptures clearly tell us, ‘the just shall live by his faith’” (Hab. 2:4).

The rabbi seemed annoyed and replied, “I do not have time to answer

you.”

I continued, “Do you have some kind of an insurance policy to get you into heaven? What about our father Abraham? He never went to a great university; but the Scriptures say, ‘he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness’ [Gen. 15:6]. Was Abraham’s faith in God of no value because he did not go to a great school and study all his life?”

The rabbi now was very unhappy because I had diverted everyone’s attention away from him. Almost all were looking at me, waiting to hear what I would say next. The rabbi asked me to explain what I meant. The Lord reminded me of Hebrews 11; I shared all the things our forefathers experienced because of their faith in God. I told them, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, but without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:1, 6).

The rabbi was growing nervous. He said, “The posters advertised my speech; you have no right to take the spotlight away from me.” Everyone was quiet—even the bodyguards, who were listening to me instead of to him. I was surprised, but I knew it was the Lord’s doing.

The rabbi said, “Explain how you arrived at your strange beliefs.”

I said, “Wisdom is good, but wisdom without faith is useless. How can you point others to God if you do not consider faith as important as knowledge?” I then asked the crowd, “Who is greater, the wisest professor who has no faith, or a man who has spent his life in the desert, but is faithful to the Lord? Which will God bless?” Most responded the one from the desert.

“You are correct,” I said, “Isaiah 40:3 says, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a

highway for our God.” This voice did not come from Oxford University, but from the Judean desert.

The rabbi was now furious. He said, “You have wasted my valuable time. I never want to see you at one of my meetings again!” He then stomped off the stage.

I was happy these people had listened to me with such interest and patience. I would never have believed such a thing could happen, but the Lord is able to do the impossible. I pray the small seed that was planted in that large group will grow into a great, fruitful tree.