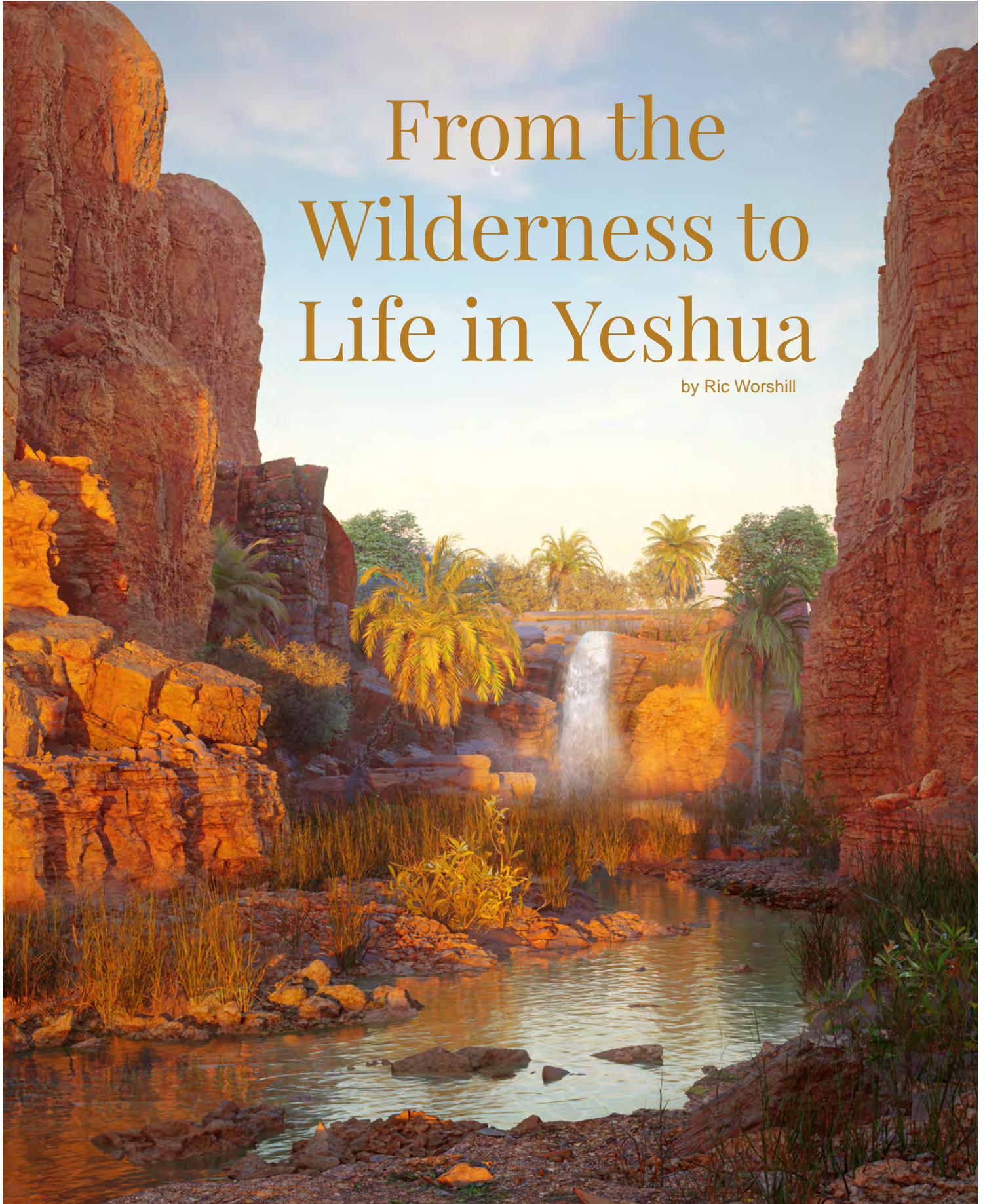


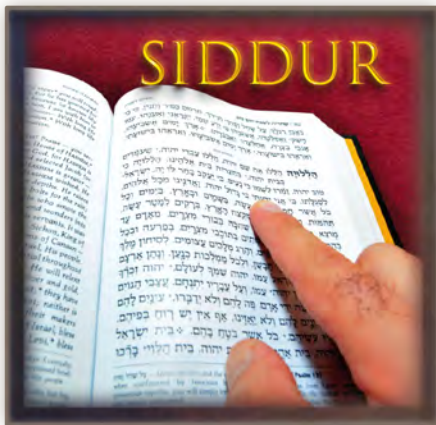
# From the Wilderness to Life in Yeshua

by Ric Worshill





I grew up in a Conservative Orthodox Jewish household. My father was a strongly Jewish man. When I was a child, he would read the *Tanach* to me all the time. He could read it in Hebrew or English and could translate from Hebrew to English. Sometimes, he would read to me and then close his eyes and keep speaking what was on the pages. At the time, I thought he could read through his eyelids. Later, I found out that he had the Scriptures memorized. He also had the *Siddur* memorized by page number.<sup>1</sup>



During my youth, my father helped to start several synagogues in Skokie, Illinois, where we had been living since 1952. One of these synagogues was Temple Judea, which we also attended. I remember being at the Thursday night study in my childhood. There were eleven men in a room that had bookshelves on every wall. There was one window seat where I would sit with an old rabbi who told me Bible stories each time. At the end of the night, my father would ask me what the passage or verse meant that they had been arguing about. I would tell them, and they would all say together,

“*HaShem* teaches the children the truth.”

I had a lot of questions for the old rabbi. They included things that I had heard from my Christian friends. He was never upset with me for asking questions about Yeshua. One day before my bar mitzvah, the old rabbi turned the tables and asked me numerous questions. Then he said, “I know that one day you will know who the *Mashiach* is. Your questions will be answered.”

I was one of those kids who asked lots of questions in *cheder* as well.<sup>2</sup>



I am dyslexic and have trouble reading out loud. One day, the rabbi came to me and told me that his son would tutor me for my bar mitzvah. He would help me memorize my passage. I asked the rabbi if I would know what it said. He said that he didn't want me to embarrass him, so I needed to memorize the *parsha* only in Hebrew. I said that I would honor my father if I understood what I was reading. I was polite the entire time. Nevertheless, the rabbi grabbed me by the ear and pushed me out the front door. He told me never to come back.

For the next several months, my father taught me all sorts of Hebrew words. One day, we went back to the

synagogue, and my father told the rabbi that it was the Worshills' day to read. My dad was a large supporter of that synagogue. When it came time, my father placed his *tallit* on me and told me to go and read. The rabbi stopped me halfway through my reading and told me to translate the passage. *Baruch HaShem*,<sup>3</sup> I did. After the service, we went out for a special dinner with the family. I wanted to become a rabbi and *chazzan*.<sup>4</sup>



While at college, I met Gwenn, a wonderful girl who had an amazing relationship with God that none of my other girlfriends had had. Gwenn was a believer in Yeshua. In September of 1972, I married that wonderful girl. She is still my sweetheart. She and her fellow church members loved Yeshua into me. When several of the brothers in the church learned about my Jewish faith, they showed me the connections to Messiah. The whole church was praying for me and my family. I became a close friend to several of the brothers.

My wife would ask me a hard question on a regular basis. She would

<sup>1</sup>The *Siddur* is a Jewish book of prayers.

<sup>2</sup> A *cheder* is a school for Jewish children in which Hebrew and religious knowledge are taught.

<sup>3</sup> *Baruch HaShem* means “Blessed is God.”

<sup>4</sup> A *chazzan* is a person who leads synagogue services, especially as a professional cantor.



say, "You are Jewish, right? Where do you sacrifice for sin?" In my studies, I had read about the Council at Jamnia and Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakai, who, after the destruction of the Temple, quoted Hosea 6:6 (*I desire mercy, not sacrifice*) and said that sacrifices were not necessary without a temple. *Teshuvah*, *tefillah*, and *tzedakah* (meaning repentance, prayer, and good deeds) were the new sacrifices for sin. Yet, despite the rabbinic teaching, I knew from reading my Tanach that the only place where God had said we could sacrifice was the Temple in Jerusalem. Oh boooo, I in trouble.

### MY SALVATION STORY AND THE END OF MY WALK IN THE WILDERNESS

I had had a successful business in specialty automotive repair since 1977. Many of my customers were police officers who would have both their personal cars and their squad cars fixed and souped up in my shop. Many of these officers would share their personal problems with me and my wife, Gwenn. My wife would feed them and minister to those who were believers. I would minister to the others as best as I could. In 1982, I began making plans for a career change and started testing for a position in law enforcement. I wanted to serve God in a better way.

In 1984, I was hired by a police department and was scheduled to start the academy in July. On July 9, I closed my business. I had given all of my accounts away, found jobs for all of my employees, and given one of

them his first year's tuition for school. Everything that I had built was gone. While closing the garage door for the last time, the spring broke, and in an instant, the door went from weighing 30 pounds to about 700 pounds. I caught it the best I could. I was to start the academy the next day.

That night, I had really bad pain in my chest. I thought I was having a heart attack. My wife was at a Bible study. When we connected, she told me that I couldn't die without Yeshua. I had never been in fear of death before. I had climbed mountains, hunted, camped in the wilderness, ski jumped, gone through military boot camp, and jumped out of an airplane. Yet, that night I knew that I had no sacrifice for sin. Just before midnight, I prayed to God for forgiveness and asked Yeshua to be my Lord.

Shortly after, my father picked me up from the academy to take me home. I was in so much pain that we stopped at a hospital on the way. The doctor in the ER was a Navy doctor working a side job. After an EKG, blood tests, and x-rays, he came into the room and told me to stand up. Then I was to look up to the ceiling and hold my hands above my head. The moment that I was in this position, the doctor punched me in the chest, and I rolled over the gurney. When I got back up, I was ready for a fight. But the doctor said, "It stopped hurting, didn't it?" And it had! He explained that as a combat doctor, he had seen the kind of injury I had many times before. Obviously, I had pinched a nerve, and the doctor told me that many soldiers with the same injury ended up having real heart at-

tacks. Given the circumstances, he was very surprised and asked, "How did you survive so long?" Without considering what I was saying, I told him that I had received Yeshua as my Lord and Savior after the symptoms had started. I asked Yeshua to heal me and to shame Satan. The doctor was a believer and praised God for what He had done on my behalf. All of a sudden, I remembered that my father was standing behind me. There were all sorts of heavy items laying on the countertop where my father was standing, and I prepared myself for an impact. Instead, all I heard was my father saying, "Omain v Omain," and then he walked out of the room.

The next morning, I notified the police superintendent that I wouldn't be attending the academy. All he said was, "You have to be kidding," and then he hung up. A few days later, I was standing in front of the broken garage door asking the Lord what He wanted me to do now. I was in a shoulder brace with an elastic bandage around my chest. People walked by while I was praying. I didn't care. I kept praising Yeshua for saving my life. A short time later, I received a call from the police superintendent. He asked me if I would be ready for the academy by September. I told him yes. When I went to be sworn in, he called me into his office. He told me that I had better not disappoint him. Then he ordered me to tell him the full story. With excitement, I stepped over the top of the chair in front of his desk and told him about my salvation experience. I walked him through the gospel and my prayer to receive Messiah as Lord and Savior. He started to cry. I asked



him what happened. He told me that he was an evangelical minister and that he had been concerned about giving me a job but now knew that this was of the Lord. Even though he was the superintendent of police, we became brothers and prayer partners.

I have served as a police department chaplain since October 1987 and as a Jewish evangelist since December 1999. I was licensed into ministry in 1987 and ordained in 2007. The Southern Baptist Church and local association that ordained me wanted me ordained as a Messianic rabbi in pastoral ministries. That is what my ordination *ketubah* states.<sup>5</sup>



Gwenn and I serve the Lord together. She is also a law enforcement and disaster relief chaplain. I am blessed that the Lord called me to take care of 438 SBC-endorsed chaplains in six states. It has been my honor to serve in the leadership of the Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowship since 2005. It is a true blessing from the Lord to minister to and take care of missionaries who serve in the mission fields. Both of my parents have become believers. *Toda raba, Yeshua!*<sup>6</sup> My God has done so much in my life. I praise His holy name.

<sup>5</sup> A *ketubah* is a contract.

<sup>6</sup> *Toda raba* is Hebrew and means "thank you."

Ric Worshill came to faith in 1984 at the age of 34. He currently serves as Executive Director of the Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowship and is the lead chaplain for Police Shomreem Ministries Emergency Services Chaplaincy in Lindenhurst, IL. He and his wife may be reached through their website ([www.sbmessianic.net](http://www.sbmessianic.net)) or via email ([chaplain@shomreem.org](mailto:chaplain@shomreem.org)).

