

Unparanoid Jeremy Schmut

Do you ever feel the pain of rejection? How would you like to be a genuine, bona-fide, social castaway? Such was Jeremy Schmut. Even his name was repulsive. Perhaps it was that which got him off to such a bad start in life.

Unless it was his nose, or lack of one. He was born without it—just two holes in the space between his black eyes and toothless gums. (He lost his front teeth at school when the class bully couldn't handle Jeremy Schmut's lispy words and broken-guitar-string-sounding voice.)

Other than that, Jeremy was quite normal; at least a psychologist would say so. For he had never experienced *paranoia*, the delusion of being persecuted. Jeremy's persecution was very real. He had every reason in the world—or on the school campus—to feel rejected. He was generally and genuinely despised. Period.

Something happened to Jeremy, however, that became immensely beneficial to those half-persons who feed on the flaws of others to make themselves "whole." No, nobody gave him a polyester nose or pearly new dentures. The Home for the Homeless, where he lived, did not change his last name. Instead, he discovered the original Jeremy, the biblical prophet, Jeremiah.

Could there have been another mortal without a nose or front teeth, another Jeremy saddled for life with the name Schmut? How he relished each tidbit of news about this unusual man of God. "What sorrow is mine," Jeremiah wrote. "Oh, that I had died at birth! I am hated everywhere I go. [I have done no wrong] yet they all curse me." (Jer. 15:10 *New Living Translation*)

Somehow the outcast survived long enough to write one of the longest books in the Bible. Jeremy ached to know how it was possible for a defenseless, warm-blooded human to stay alive in a jungle crawling with cannibals. So he searched for the secret till he found it nestled neatly in the same chapter: "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts." (v.16)

So this had been Jeremiah's diet? What a relief! And what a clue to improving the diet of his carnivorous companions: he would have to improve his taste!

So up in the morning early, Jeremy ate words. For lunch and dinner, more words. Midnight snacks were mouth-watering as he munched and munched on words, chewing on the same bite until every word seemed to come alive in his mouth and heart.

Crunchy, crackly words from Moses and the prophets; sweet, rich words from the Gospels; tangy morsels from Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and chewy, yummy words from the Psalms. And how could he forget those powerful jaw-zercisers from the knife of Paul and John, meat for the mighty?

What was that about being "called by Your name"? mused Jeremy. With a little help from Mrs. Stern, the school librarian, he found that Jeremiah means *Jehovah is exalted*, or *Jehovah exalts*. Jeremy gleamed, *I like that: "Jehovah is exalted, Schmut, or is it "Jehovah exalts Schmut"?* *Either way is okey with me.*

Now, Jeremy fared so well on his new menu—and his name—he soon lost his reputation. Oh, the two little holes instead of a nose continued as sentinels above his toothless grin. He still had a few flaw-feeding foes, probably partially paranoid themselves. But the rest of his chums were growing healthy and happy on their new nourishment.

In the morning or at noon, on the way home from school, at the homeless shelter sometimes till midnight, they munched and crunched on words: sweet, tangy, juicy, and I do mean yummy, choice delicacies from the table of—excuse me, from the heart of—Jeremy Schmut.

Scriptures from the New King James Bible unless otherwise noted

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