



THE LIFE OF YOCHANON THE BAPTIST

by Serapion

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Introduction.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Ruach HaQodesh, one Alahayam. Asking for Alahayam's help and hopeful of his support for this endeavor, we write here the history of holy Yochanon the Baptist, the son of Zakaryahu, may he intercede on our behalf. Amen.

The birth of Yochanon the Baptist is foretold.

1 During the reign of king Herod of Yehud, there was among the people of Yashar'el a prophet, an old man named Zakaryahu, who was a Leviyte priest from the tribe of Judah, a He had an Alahayam-loving wife called

Eliysheva who was a descendant of Aaron from the tribe of Leviy. ² She had no children and both she and her husband were getting on in years. They were righteous before Alahayam, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of Adonai.

³ Zakaryahu was constantly officiating in the temple. When his turn came to offer incense to Adonai, he entered the temple at the time of the offering as usual. ⁴ Suddenly an angel of YAHUAHA appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar. When Zakaryahu saw him, he was terrified and startled, but the angel said to him, “Rejoice and do not be afraid, Zakaryahu, because Alahayam has heard your prayers. ⁵ Your wife Eliysheva will bear you a son who will be named Yochanon and he will cause you great joy and jubilation. ⁶ He will be great in the sight of Adonai; he will not drink wine or strong drink and he will be filled with the Ruach HaQodesh even in his mother’s womb. He will turn many of the people of Yashar’el to Adonai their Alahayam. With the spirit and strength of Eliyahu, he will go before him to prepare the people for YAHUAHA.”

⁷ When he heard these words, Zakaryahu was astonished and doubtful since he was old and did not have any children. He did not remember Avraham, the greatest among the patriarchs, to whom Alahayam gave Yitschaq, although he had already passed the age of hundred. Nor did Zakaryahu remember Sarah, Avraham’s wife, who was childless just like him.

⁸ Zakaryahu said to the angel, “How will this happen? I am old and my wife is getting on in years.” ⁹ The angel replied, “I am Gavriy’el, the angel. I was sent to speak to you and bring you this good news. Because you did not believe my words, from now on you will be mute and unable to speak until the day these things occur, which will come in due course.” ¹⁰ And with this, the angel disappeared.

¹¹ Meanwhile, the people who were waiting outside for Zakaryahu were starting to wonder at his delay in the temple. When he finally came out, he could not speak to them, and they realized he had seen a vision in the temple and could only gesture at them. When his time of service ended, he went home. ¹² Eliysheva already knew of all that had transpired.

¹³ At that time, Eliysheva conceived, and she remained in seclusion until the fifth month because she was ashamed. She was afraid to be seen as an old woman with her belly growing and milk dripping from her breasts. So she spent her days alone in a small room in her house with everything she

needed there with her. ¹⁴ Zakaryahu too lived like this and there was a locked door separating the two of them. For some time, both were completely cut off from the world.

The birth of Yahusha is foretold.

2 When Eliysheva reached the sixth month, the angel Gavriy'el was sent by Alahayam to a town in Galiyl called Natsareth, to the fiancée of a man named Yoceph, of the house of David. This virgin's name was Maryam. ² When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, Maryam, for you have found favor with Alahayam. You will conceive and bear a son and you will name him Yahusha. He will be great and he will be called the son of the Most High." ³ Maryam said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel replied, "The Ruach HaQodesh will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born of you will be holy; he will be called Son of Alahayam. ⁴ And now, your relative Eliysheva has also conceived a son, even though she is advanced in years. This is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with Alahayam." ⁵ Maryam let go of all her doubts and said to the commander of angels, "I am the servant of YAHUAHA; let it be with me according to your word." The angel then said goodbye and departed from her.

⁶ But Maryam was still astonished at hearing about Eliysheva's pregnancy and said to herself, "Your deeds are truly great and wonderful, O omnipotent Alahayam, for you have brought forth offspring from an old barren woman. ⁷ I will now go and will not stop until I meet her and see the great miracle Alahayam has performed in our times: a virgin giving birth and an old woman breastfeeding."

⁸ At that time, Maryam set out and hurried to a Yehuda town in the hill country. ⁹ She entered the house of Zakaryahu, and she greeted Eliysheva, who came out to meet her with joy and jubilation and greeted Maryam with the words, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

¹⁰ The pure holy Virgin kissed the Word's true turtle dove and the Word baptized Yochanon while he was still in his mother's womb. David appeared between them and said, "Mercy and justice have met and righteousness and peace have embraced." And Yochanon moved in his mother's womb as if he wanted to come out to see his Adonai. ¹¹ After they finished greeting each other, the Virgin stayed with Eliysheva for

three months until Eliysheva was about to give birth, at which time she left and went home.

¹² When the chaste Eliysheva gave birth, there was great joy and jubilation in her house. ¹³ After eight days they were going to circumcise him and name him Zakaryahu. But his mother said, “No; he is to be called Yochanon.” They said to her, “None of your relatives has this name.” She said to them, “Ask his father what his name should be.” He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is Yochanon.” ¹⁴ Immediately after he finished writing, his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, praising Alahayam who gave him this great blessing. And he spoke prophecies concerning his son Yochanon the Baptist, since he was aware of the gift Alahayam bestowed upon him.

Yochanon and his mother escape from Herod.

3 Yochanon grew into a beautiful child and his mother breastfed him until he was two years old. The grace of Alahayam was in his face and he grew healthy and strong with the help of the Ruach HaQodesh.

² When Yahusha was born in Beyt Lechem of Yehuda, wise men came from the East, saying, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Yehudim? For we observed his star in the East and have come to pay him homage.” ³ When Herod heard this, he was frightened because of what he heard from the wise men about this king of the Yehudim and he immediately wanted to kill him. ⁴ An angel of YAHUAHA appeared to Yoceph and said to him, “Get up, take the baby and his mother, go to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you.” ⁵ Herod did search for the Master in order to kill him, but did not find him, so he started killing all children in Beyt Lechem.

⁶ Eliysheva feared that her son might be killed as well, so she took him and went to see Zakaryahu in the temple and she said to him, “My Adonai, come, let us go with our son Yochanon to some other land, lest Herod the unbeliever kills him because of Yahusha the Messiah. Maryam and Yoceph already left for Egypt. Come, before they kill our son Yochanon and turn our joy into grief.” ⁷ Zakaryahu answered, “I cannot leave the service of the temple of YAHUAHA and go to a foreign country where they worship idols.” ⁸ She said to him, “What should I do to save my little boy?” ⁹ The old man replied, “Rise and go to the wilderness near ‘Ayn Kārime and if it pleases Alahayam, you will save your son. If they come looking for him, they will shed my blood instead of his.”

¹⁰ O how he cried when the time came they had to be separated from each other! Zakaryahu held the boy to his chest, kissed him and said, “Poor me, poor Yochanon, my son, the treasure of my old days, for they are keeping me from your face full of grace.” ¹¹ He then took him to the temple and blessed him, asking Alahayam to save him. Suddenly, Gavriy’el commander of the angels came down to him from heaven, holding a scapularf and a leather belt, and said, “Zakaryahu, take these and put them on your son. Alahayam sent them from heaven, this scapular that belonged to Eliyahu and this belt worn by Eliysha.” ¹² Holy Zakaryahu took them from the angel and prayed over them before putting them on his son, attaching them to his clothing which was made of camel’s hair.

¹³ He brought him to his mother and said to her, “Take him and go with him to the wilderness, for the hand of YAHUAHA is with him. I have learned from Alahayam that he will live in the wilderness until the day he shows himself to Yashar’el.” ¹⁴ The blessed Eliysheva took him with tears in her eyes and Zakaryahu was crying as well when he said, “I know I will never see the both of you again while we all live. So, go with Alahayam’s peace and may he guide you.” ¹⁵ And so Eliysheva walked away with her son; and they went to ‘Ayn Kārim where she stayed with him.

Herod’s soldiers come looking for Yochanon.

4 When king Herod sent his soldiers to Yerushalayim to kill her children, they began killing them as soon as they arrived and did not stop until the evening. ² This was on the seventh day of the month Tūt (that is the month Elūl). ³ As they were about to return to their king, suddenly Satan came to them and said, “Why did you leave the son of Zakaryahu without killing him? He is hiding with his father in the Temple. Do not let him get away; kill him, lest the king will be angry with you. Go to him, and if he tries to hide his son from you, kill him instead.”

⁴ The soldiers did as Satan taught them and went to the temple early in the morning. They found Zakaryahu serving YAHUAHA, and they said to him, “Where is your son whom you have hidden from us?” He said to them, “There is no child here with me.” They said, “But you do have a child and you have hidden him from the king’s order.” He replied, “You fools whose king drinks blood like lionesses, how long will you continue to shed the blood of innocents?” They said to him, “Bring out your son so that we can kill him, or we will kill you in his place.” The prophet answered, “My son left for the wilderness, and I do not know where he is.”

Flashback to Eliysheva.

5 When Zakaryahu said goodbye to Eliysheva and his son Yochanon, he blessed him and made him a priest. Then he handed him to his mother, and she said to him, “Pray over me, my holy father, so that my journey in the wilderness is easy.” He said to her, “May he who gave us a child in our old age guide your path with him.” ² So she took him and went to the wilderness where no one else lived. ³ O blessed Eliysheva, your story is truly wondrous and righteous, for you did not ask another adult to accompany you, although you did not know where to go or where to find shelter. You did not worry about having bread or little water for the child to drink. You did not say to his father Zakaryahu, “To whom are you sending me in the wilderness?” ⁴ There were no monasteries in the wilderness at that time, or any communities of monks, so you could not say “I will go and stay with them together with my son.”

⁵ Tell me, blessed Eliysheva, what did you rely on, for the evangelist testifies that you grew old without having children, yet now you have been breastfeeding this child for three years. ⁶ Listen to the answer the blessed Eliysheva gave. ⁱ She said, “Why are you astonished that I would go alone into the wilderness? I am not afraid of anything, because I have one of Alahayam’s kin in my arms; and Gavriy’el travels with me and paves the way before me.” ⁷ She said, “I rely on the kiss I received from Maryam, mother of Adonai, because as I greeted her, the baby in my womb leaped with joy and jubilation and I heard both of them kissing each other in our wombs.” ⁸ And Eliysheva said, “I went and dressed my son in a garment made of camel hair and a leather belt, so that the mountains in the holy wilderness may become inhabited, communities of monks grow and multiply and offerings are made in them in the name of YAHUAHA. ⁹ So if Alahayam sustained Hagar and her son Ishmael, who were slaves, as they wandered through the desert, how can he not be bound by a rule he himself established?”

The death of Zakaryahu.

6 We have described to you virtues of holy Eliysheva, let us now return to holy Zakaryahu the holy martyr and explain to you his many virtues. ² Me, I wish to recount your true story, but I am afraid that I will only hear your reproach, just like the happy Eliysheva did. ³ I am in awe of you, pious Zakaryahu! When Herod’s soldiers came to you asking, “Where is your little boy, the son whom you had at an advanced age?” you did not

deny him, nor did you say “I do not know him,” you said “His mother took him to the wilderness.”

⁴And when Zakaryahu said this about his son to the soldiers, they killed him inside the temple. The priests shrouded his body, and they placed it next to the body of his father Berechiah in a hidden tomb out of fear of the wicked. ⁵ But his blood boiled on the ground and continued to do so for fifty years until Titus Vespasian, the king of Rome, destroyed Yerushalayim and killed the Yashar’el priests for the blood of Zakaryahu as YAHAUAHA ordered him.

The death and burial of Eliysheva.

7 As for blessed Yochanon, he wandered in the wilderness together with his mother. Alahayam prepared locusts and wild honey for him to eat in accordance with the instructions Eliysheva received not to let anything unclean enter his mouth. ² After five years, the blessed and pious venerable Eliysheva passed away. Holy Yochanon sat down to cry over her because he did not know how to shroud her or how to bury her, as he was only seven years and six months old. Herod also died the same day blessed Eliysheva passed away.

³ Adonai Yahusha, whose eyes see heaven and earth, saw his relative Yochanon sitting next to his mother crying. He also started crying and cried for a long time, but no one knew why. ⁴ When Yahusha’ mother saw him crying, she said to him, “My son, what happened, why are you crying? Did Yoceph or somebody else make you upset?” ⁵ The mouth filled with life said to her, “No, mother, it is your relative, the venerable Eliysheva. She left my beloved Yochanon an orphan and he is now crying over her body which is lying in the mountains.”

⁶ When the Virgin heard this, she started crying for her relative, but Yahusha said, “Do not cry, my virgin mother, for you will see her with your own eyes this very hour.” And as he was talking to his mother, suddenly a cloud filled with light appeared and landed between them. ⁷ Yahusha said, “Get Salome, k we will take her with us,” and they mounted the cloud and it flew with them to the wilderness near ‘Ayn Kārim, to the place where the body of blessed Eliysheva was together with holy Yochanon.

⁸ The Savior said to the cloud, “Set us down here” and immediately the cloud stopped and descended to earth. The sound it made reached the ears of blessed Yochanon who became afraid, left the body of his mother,

and ran.⁹ Immediately a voice reached him which said, “Do not be scared, Yochanon, my beloved. It is me, Yahusha your Adonai, Yahusha your relative. I have come to you with my beloved mother to fulfill the command of your happy mother Eliysheva because she is a relative of my mother.” When he heard this, the blessed Yochanon turned back and the Messiah and his mother both kissed him.¹⁰ The Savior said to his virgin mother, “You and Salome, come and wash her body.” So, they washed the body of blessed Eliysheva in the spring from which she and her son used to draw water. The pure Virgin Maryam held the Blessed One, cried with him and cursed Herod for the many evils he had committed.

¹¹ Suddenly, Miyka’el and Gavriy’el came down from heaven and dug a grave. The Savior said to them, “Go and bring the soul of Zakaryahu and the soul of Shimon the priest so that they will chant hymns while you bury her body.” Miyka’el brought the souls of Zakaryahu and Shimon and they buried Eliysheva’s body and sang over it for a long time while Yahusha’ mother and Salome cried.¹² The priests then made a sign of the cross and prayed over her three times before laying her to rest. Then they sealed the grave with the sign of the cross and went back to where they came from in peace.¹³ Yahusha and his mother then sat down next to the blessed Yochanon and consoled him for seven days because of his mother. They also taught him how to get by in the desert.¹⁴ And the blessed Eliysheva passed away on the 15th day of the month Amšir n (Ševat).

¹⁵ Yahusha said to his mother, “Come, let us go to a place where I can complete my mission.” But the Virgin cried because Yochanon was all alone and still a small child. And Maryam said, “Son, let us take him with us, he is an orphan and has no one.” Yahusha said to her, “This is not the will of my Father in Heaven. He will stay in the wilderness until the day he shows himself to Yashar’el.¹⁶ Instead of wild beasts, he will find a wilderness filled with multitudes of angels and prophets. I have ordered Gavriy’el the commander of angels to watch over him and give him the power of Heaven. I will also make the water in this spring sweet as his mother’s milk.¹⁷ Who was it who watched over him since he was a small child? Was it not me, because I love him, o mother, more than the world itself? Zakaryahu loved him as well and I had him come and ask about him, for his body is buried in the ground, but his soul lives on. His mother Eliysheva will come see him regularly to take care of him and comfort him as if she had not died at all.

¹⁸ “She truly is blessed, o mother, because she bore my beloved. Her mouth will never succumb to rot because she kissed the pure lips. Her tongue will not fall apart in the ground because she spoke a prophecy concerning you which said, ‘*And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by YAHAUAHA.*’ Her insides will not putrefy in the ground, but her body will remain free of decay just like her soul. And my beloved Yochanon will persevere as he gazes upon her, and he will be comforted.” ¹⁹ This is what the Messiah said to his mother while Yochanon was in the desert.

²⁰ They mounted the cloud while Yochanon was looking at them crying. Maryam cried with him and said, “O poor Yochanon, you will be all alone in the wilderness! Where is your father Zakaryahu? Where is your mother Eliysheva? Let them come and cry with me today.” ²¹ Yahusha said to her, “Do not cry for Yochanon, mother, because I will not forget him.” And as he said this, the cloud lifted them up and flew with them until they arrived in Natsareth where he lived to become fully human in all things except for sin.

Yochanon rebukes Herod and his voice haunts Herodias.

8 While holy Yochanon lived in the desert, Alahayam and his angels were with him. He led a strict ascetic life in great devoutness, did not eat anything but grass and wild honey and prayed and fasted constantly, waiting for the salvation of Yashar’el.

² In the second year of his reign, king Herod the Younger, p who ruled of the province of Yehuda, took the wife of his brother for his own. He did not do so openly but found opportunity to send for her and usher her into his private chambers filled with filth where the two of them perpetrated their perversions. ³At that time in the desert, Gavriy’el the commander of angels taught Yochanon the son of Zakaryahu to say, “O king, you must not take the wife of your brother while he is alive.” He kept repeating this in a loud voice as the angel taught him in the wilderness. ⁴ At night, people could hear his voice and Herodias would light a lamp and search her rooms believing there was somebody there with the two of them. But she could never find anyone and only heard the voice. ⁵ Both of them were distraught over this and she said to Herod, “Go and send your soldiers to the wilderness near ‘Ayn Kārim to kill Yochanon because this is his voice.” But Alahayam was with him, and he delivered him from their hands. ⁶ When she learned this, she could not find any rest in what she was doing. The wicked one then said to her, “If

we hear this voice again, I will summon the magicians and order them to capture and kill him in secret.” But the voice did not stop.

⁷ The wicked Herodias said to Herod, “Who is this Yochanon who wanders around in the wilderness and the desert and whose body is not worthy of wearing the clothes of people, but has to dress in camel’s hair? Who is he to chide the king of a province and the ruler of a region?” ⁸ Herodias then pressed on and said to Herod, “Whatever you want to do, do it openly and do not think anyone in this province will blame you if you do it except for Yochanon. And if we find an opportunity, we will get rid of him.” This is how this adulteress wooed the heart of Herod to commit this sin and seduced him until he sent his brother to his death and married her openly. ⁹ And Yochanon remained in the desert and continued to rebuke Herod until he was thirty years old.

Yahusha is baptized.

9 *As for Yahusha, He grew in wisdom, stature and grace with Alahayam and people.* He did not show any signs of his divine nature, but acted humbly towards all. ² When he reached the age of twelve, he began to rebuke the Yehudim and the teachers who led people astray.

³ In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius who ruled after Augustus, when Herod was the tetrarch of Galiyl and Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, in that year, the word of Alahayam came down to Yochanon, son of Zakaryahu, in the wilderness. He came to the lands around the river Jordan, preaching, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” ⁴ People from all over Yehuda and Yerushalayim came to him and let themselves be baptized by him, confessing their sins.

⁵ At that time, the Savior came down from Galiyl to the river Jordan to see him and said to him, “Baptize me.” When Yochanon saw Alahayam standing before him asking to be baptized, he became very afraid and said to him, “He who led the children of Yashar’el through the Red Sea and gave them sweet water to drink from solid rock, he is now standing before his servant who himself needs to be baptized by his divine hand and says to him, ‘Baptize me.’” ⁶ And with this, Yochanon began to turn away from him. But Yahusha said to him, “Stay, this is how we must finish it now.”

⁷ The two of them went down into the water and holy Yochanon baptized him with these words, “I baptize the one who was sent by the Father to fulfill a great mystery.” At that moment, the heavens opened and the Ruach HaQodesh descended upon him in the form of a dove which came

face to face with Yochanon. Then the voice of the Father rang, “This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased, obey him.”

⁸ The Savior climbed out of the water and went straight to the desert. Holy Yochanon stayed near the river Jordan and continued to baptize everyone who came to him.

Yochanon rebukes Herod and is imprisoned.

10 At that time, Herod rebelled against Philip his brother and slandered him with the king emperor saying to him, “My king, the one whom you appointed over the province of Trachonitis, that is Philip, plundered your province and said, ‘I will not pay tribute to the king ever again because I am a king as well.’” ² The emperor was filled with rage and ordered Herod to take Philip’s province and all his property and his house from him without any pity, even for his soul. ³ Herod did as the king ordered and stole the province that belonged to his brother Philip, as well as his house and everything that he had, and assumed power over all that Philip had ruled.

⁴ Philip had a wife whose name was Herodias, and she had a daughter with Philip whose name was Arcostariana. Only the mother was more perverted than the daughter. ⁵ When Philip became more poor than anybody else, Herodias hated him very much and she said to him, “I will not stay with you anymore. I will be with Herod the king, your master who does not lack in security, because he is better than you.” ⁶ And she immediately wrote a letter to Herod: “Herodias writes to Herod. Now you rule over all of Syria and all the inhabited world, yet you still have not taken me for your wife, even though I am very beautiful and better than all the women of Yehuda. ⁷ I also have a daughter whose beauty and stature cannot be matched in all of the inhabited world. I wish to be your wife because I have come to hate your brother very much and because I am loyal to your kingdom.”

⁸ When these crafty words reached the ear of the wicked king, he liked what he had heard and arranged for her and her daughter to be taken from Philip’s house. ⁹ When Philip saw his wife taken from him by force, he said to his daughter, “Stay with your father, even though your mother is taken from me.” The little whore said to him, “I will not stay with you, but I will accompany my mother wherever she goes.” ¹⁰ So they both were taken and brought to Herod who was greatly pleased with them because he was a whoremonger. And they performed deeds of Satanic trickery and

the perverted Herod whored with both of them day after day.¹¹ News of this reached holy Yochanon the Baptist from Philip her husband. People considered Yochanon a prophet and he was greatly respected by everyone because he preached to people proclaiming, “Bear fruit worthy of repentance, for every tree that does not bear fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”¹² When Yochanon heard this from Philip, he was saddened by their damnation—that is, of Herod and Herodias—and he immediately wrote to them the following: “Yochanon the son of Zakaryahu, called the Baptist, says to you: Herod, you may not marry the wife of your brother while he is still alive.”

¹³ When Herod heard this, he was afraid and disturbed. He went to see Herodias and said to her, “Herodias, what are we going to do? The news of our sin has reached Yochanon and now he has rebuked us. We are doomed, because our sins have increased greatly and reached the ears of the prophets.”¹⁴ The wicked woman said to him, “Calm yourself, my king. Who is this Yochanon, who wears camel’s hair, to contradict a mighty king like you? He surely deserves to have his tongue pulled out.”¹⁵ He said to her, “So what are we going to do? I cannot bear the rebuke of someone as mighty as him.”¹⁶ She answered, “Have him brought here and kill him, then we can continue to give pleasure to each other.” And she did unspeakable things to him and performed acts of devious perversion. So Satan turned his heart against Yochanon and he had him arrested and thrown into a prison.

¹⁷ Herodias then had him brought to her and she said to him, “What is your problem with me, you chaste man? Do you want to keep me and the king apart? I conjure you by the Alahayam of your fathers not to trouble me like this ever again. And I promise you, if you stop talking about me and stop making your accusations, I will release you from this prison right away and shower you with riches and honors.”¹⁸ Holy Yochanon said to her, “I am telling you, Herodias, you should not be with Herod while Philip is alive.”

¹⁹ When the wicked woman heard this, she became angry and said to him, “I will kill you dead. I will put the hair from your head into the pillow I lie on with Herod every night and I will bury your head where I wash myself every time I sleep with him.”²⁰ Yochanon said to her, “You will kill me, since Alahayam wills it, but you will not lay eyes on my head. It will stay with me after my death, and it will proclaim your humiliation and your shame to all the world. You will suffer for my unjust murder because

your ruin is near.”²¹ She said to his guards, “Take him and throw him in prison in chains. And if he escapes, you will pay with your lives.” The guards took him and put him in prison.

The death of Yochanon the Baptist.

11 Herodias tried to get Herod to kill him, but he said to her, “I cannot kill him just like that. The people will rise against me, chase me out and bring accusations against me with the king who will then take my kingdom from me like he did with my brother Philip.” And he said to her, “Show me a better way to kill him.”² She said to him, “I will tell you something and when you hear it, you will find a way to kill him.” He said to her, “Tell me.”

³ She said to him, “Well, king’s envoys are staying with you; so go and prepare a feast for them and invite all the high officials as well, since your birthday is near. Once everybody is happy and they all start getting drunk with wine, I will send in my daughter dressed in her best clothes to dance before you, my king, with her beautiful face.”⁴ When she does that, tell her ‘Ask for whatever you wish’ and you will swear to her by the king’s life, ‘Whatever you wish for, I will give it to you.’ She will then ask for the head of Yochanon, and you will have found a way to take his head.”⁵ This is how Herod was tricked by the reasoning of the adulteress and he began to fulfill her wish because he loved her for her ruthlessness and her devilish cunningness.

⁶ That very day he prepared a feast, and the king’s envoys were sitting right next to him. When they started to get drunk, the cursed Uxatriana entered the room wearing necklaces of gold and silver, perfumes and many jewels and she presented herself to all assembled. She danced in devilish ecstasy and Satan filled their hearts with evil and lust through her evil trickery, so they all were enthralled with her.⁷ Herod was proud of her and said to her, “If you ask for whatever you want, by the life of Emperor Tiberius, I will give it to you, even if it were half of my kingdom and my possessions.” She said to him what her mother had taught her, “What I want here is the head of Yochanon the Baptist on a plate.”⁸ He was greatly saddened because he swore on the king’s life, and it was clear to his dinner companions that he could not break the oath. And so he ordered the executioner to go to the prison and take his head on a plate—this was the second day of the month of Tūt (Elūl) dd—and they brought it to Herod. Herod gave it to the girl and the girl gave it to her mother.

The last words of Yochanon the Baptist.

12 Before the king's men came with the executioner to take his head, Yochanon said to his disciples, "Look, the king has sent for my head. The king's men went out with unsheathed swords in their hands, carrying lanterns and torches and weapons. What is happening now will also happen on the night the Messiah will be betrayed. ² As for me, they will take my head and present it on a plate. As for the Messiah, he will be nailed to a cross so that he will purify all with his pure blood. ³ As for me, I will go to where I am going; but woe to the king who ordered my head to be cut off, for many calamities will befall him and the people of Yashar'el will be scattered because of him. ⁴ As for you, do not be afraid, for no one will be able to harm you." ⁵ He then opened his mouth and praised Alahayam and glorified him for his incomprehensible gifts, saying, "I bless you and praise you, invisible Father, visible Son and consoling Ruach HaQodesh."

The head of Yochanon the Baptist.

13 Now let us return to the head of the blessed Yochanon. ² When his head was brought to Herodias, the eyes of holy Yochanon were open, and his eyes heard as well as they did when he was still alive. ³ The whore then spoke before the head seething with anger, "Here is the eye that was not ashamed to look into the eyes of the king and answer him. I will pluck you out with my own hand and put you on a plate. I will pull out the tongue that used to say to the king 'You are not permitted to take Herodias, the wife of your brother.' And I will take the hair from your head and your beard and sweep it under the feet of my bed." She said this without any shame or hesitation and with her outstretched hand she tried to grab Yochanon's head and do with it as she said. ⁴ Suddenly the head of the blessed Yochanon let the locks of its hair loose from the plate, spread them, and flew to the center of the room in front of the king and his high officials. At that very moment, the roof of the building opened, and Yochanon's head flew high in the air.

⁵ As for Herodias, her eyes were pulled out from her head and fell on the ground. Her room collapsed on top of her, the ground opened its mouth and its throat swallowed her, and then she sank to the depths of Hell, still alive. ⁶ Herodias's daughter went mad and broke all the vessels that were there at the feast. ⁷ In her madness, she went to a frozen lake and danced on it. Adonai ordered the ice under her to break and the lake swallowed her. ⁸ Soldiers tried to pull her out and could not, because Adonai did not

want her to be rescued. Finally, they cut off her head using the sword with which holy Yochanon was killed. At that very moment, a whale appeared and threw her out of the lake, dead. May Alahayam have no mercy on her!gg 9 Immediately after that, Herod suffered a stroke in front of his dinner companions.

¹⁰ When his aide saw these great miracles, he quickly went to the prison, took the body of Yochanon, and handed it over to his disciples. They took it and buried it in the city of Sebastehh next to the body of the prophet Eliysha.

¹¹ His head, however, flew over Yerushalayim and preached to the city for three years, saying, “Herod, you may not marry the wife of your brother while he is still alive.” ¹² Once three years of preaching over Yerushalayim had passed, it left for the whole world to shout and announce Herod’s scandalous actions, with the words “Herod, you may not marry the wife of your brother while he is still alive” until 15 years since his murder had passed. ¹³ When 15 years had passed, it stopped preaching and came to rest in the city of Homs. The faithful in that city took it and buried it with great ceremony. ¹⁴ Sometime after that, a church was built over it which to this day is still standing in Homs. The head of holy Yochanon the Baptist was buried there 15 years after the resurrection of our Adonai and Savior and it is still there.

The body of Yochanon the Baptist is brought to Alexandria.

14 After four hundred years had passed, during which the body of the saint whose feast we are celebrating today (that is, Yochanon the Baptist) was buried in Sebaste, at that time there was an infidel king by the name of Julian who reigned over Syria. ² He was a Christian at the beginning of his reign, but after some time, Satan filled his heart, and he abandoned the faith of our Adonai and Savior and worshipped fire. At that time, he ordered that pagan temples and sanctuaries where idols would be worshipped should be built everywhere. ³ He also ordered that a pagan temple be built in Sebaste where the body of Yochanon was, but he could not build it or worship idols there because of the bodies. ⁴ They gathered and informed him, that bodies of holy men were buried there and prevented them from building the pagan temple. He said to them, “Go burn them down and build the temple.” So, they set the place on fire, but the fire would not come near the coffins of the prophets. ⁵ Many treasures were found there, including a vessel above the coffins which contained a

leather belt, a garment made of camel's hair, and a scapular with two leather belts.

⁶ The faithful present there immediately understood that these coffins were those of Yochanon the Baptist and Eliysha the prophet. They wanted to take them from that place, but they were not able to do so because they were afraid of the wicked king. ⁷ Then Alahayam brought him down with a death more wretched than anyone had ever endured. ⁸ After his death, righteous men gathered, took the coffins and went with them to the sea, planning to take them to Alexandria to the Holy Father Athanasius, because they said that at that time, there was no one in the whole world who was worthy of taking possession of them except Anba Athanasius, the patriarch in Alexandria.

⁹ When they came to the seashore and found a ship sailing for Alexandria, they boarded and brought the coffins with them. They sailed the sea until they dropped anchor in the port of Alexandria and when they landed, they could not reveal their purpose to anyone, because time was pressing. ¹⁰ So they went to the patriarch and told him of everything that had happened and how they were moved by the Ruach HaQodesh to bring the coffins to him. ¹¹ The patriarch was overjoyed to have them and venerated them greatly. He went out to the ship with his brother at night and took the remains in a kerchief and brought them to his living quarters in the cathedral in secret. ¹² This Holy Father wished to build a church for them but could not because of the trouble at the time caused by the wicked.

A church is built to house the remains of Yochanon the Baptist.

15 The bodies remained hidden in the well where Anba Athanasius placed them until the day the Holy Father passed away. ² After his death, he was succeeded by Anba Peter who was followed on the patriarchal see by Anba Timothy who appointed me, your unworthy father Serapion, to this office, even though I do not deserve it. When he passed away, he was succeeded by Anba Theophilus who is now sitting on the patriarchal see. ³ During his time, Alahayam's grace and faith manifested themselves and were strengthened by the pious Theodosius, and Alahayam through his love united the king and the patriarch. They opened the doors of pagan temples, which stored many treasures, notably the great pagan temple in Alexandria which opened before them. Inside, they found much gold and great amounts of silver. ⁴ The pious Theodosius honored the patriarch by appointing him to oversee all the treasures and he said to him, "Anba Theophilus, take this and use it to build churches from here to Aswan, for

the greater glory of Alahayam and his saints.” And indeed, the patriarch began to build churches.

⁵ The first one to be built was a church dedicated to Yochanon the Baptist in Alexandria, which he adorned and made a beautiful church because he wished to place the body of Yochanon there. ⁶ When he completed it, he wanted to consecrate it and he wrote to all the bishops who were under his jurisdiction to gather and witness the consecration of the church he had built. I, the unworthy, also received the invitation and went with all the bishops to the Pope, Anba Theophilus. ⁷ When the news reached him that all the bishops had come to the city, Theophilus was pleased with us like someone who has found many riches. He went out to meet us together with many of those who were in the city and led us into the city where we stayed with him for some time. ⁸ After that, he began to consecrate the church and he took us to see it and we found it to be a wonderful building.

⁹ And he said to us, “This is the place where Athanasius wanted to build it, but time was not in his favor.” ¹⁰ Anba Theophilus then said, “I was walking with them when I was just an acolyte and I attended to him. When we came to this place, he said to me ‘My son Theophilus, when you find an opportunity, build here a church dedicated to Yochanon the Baptist and place his bones in it.’ ¹¹ After I had built this place, I remembered the words of this man of Alahayam, Anba Athanasius, especially when I remembered that my father Athanasius was like David the prophet who wanted to build a temple to YAHUAHA, but he was not allowed to because of wars he fought. YAHUAHA said to him, ‘David, you will not be the one who builds my temple, but the one who comes out of your loins will’ and this was Solomon. ¹² Therefore, when I ceased waging wars on idolaters, I became worthy of building this church, which is dedicated to Yochanon the Baptist, the morning star.”

¹³ When the second day of the month Ba’ūna (that is month Ḥeziran) came, he took us to the place where the body was hidden. We did not know exactly where it was, but after a prayer, Alahayam showed it to us. ¹⁴ When he brought it out, he called to him all the inhabitants of the town. They gathered around him with many lanterns and lamps so that the night shone like day. ¹⁵ He let bishops carry the coffins on their heads and the patriarch walked before them with deacons singing hymns until we came with them to the church with great ceremony. ¹⁶ The patriarch took the coffins, embraced them and let all the people be blessed by the holy

bodies. Then he put the coffins in the church on a chair at the side of the altar and prepared the consecration for that very day.¹⁷ He consecrated the church, we said mass, and all of us received communion from the patriarch. This was the second day of the month Ba'ūna.¹⁸ After this, the patriarch said goodbye to us and we left the city, each of us going to his own country in Alahayam's peace, amen.

¹⁹ The body of holy Yochanon the Baptist performed miracles, proofs, and healings among the Christian people, as witnessed by many wondrous stories.

²⁰ Praise and glory and power are due to you, Father, Son and Ruach HaQodesh, one in nature, now, always and forever and ever, amen. Praise to Alahayam always, amen.