

Arab-05 Art Katz Testimony

by Art Katz

Art Katz shares his profound journey from atheism to faith in Jesus, highlighting the struggles and revelations that led to his conversion.

Duration: 1:04:09

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 8:1-11, John 10:30, Acts 4:12, Romans 10:17, Ephesians 2:12, Hebrews 10:19-22

Topics: "Arabic"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal testimony of how he was uprooted from his place of security and knowledge in his 34th year. Despite achieving success as a professional teacher and being married, everything came undone for him. He explains that his search for truth led him to a life-changing encounter with a man in Switzerland who showed him kindness and prayed for him. This encounter led to a transformation in his perspective and a newfound compassion and concern for others. As a result, he gave up his teaching career and embarked on a journey through Europe and the Middle East in search of philosophical answers.

Transcript

Well, I don't have a message tonight so much as a testimony. But I think that my testimony is a kind of message. Because although it's the conversion of a single Jewish man, it describes, I believe, what will be God's dealing with his people in much the same way in the soon time.

I myself had to be uprooted out of my place of security and knowledge. And that happened in my 34th year. I was a teacher in California.

By every human standard, I had achieved success. I was a professional, a teacher. I was well established in my profession.

I married. And just when I had achieved all that I had thought that I had desired, everything came undone. You mustn't think that I was a man seeking only for success in the conventional sense of that word.

I was a teacher, not because I wanted to be a professional, but because I was a seeker after truth. My whole adult life had been a search for truth. And I thought that I had found it as a Marxist.

And then I experienced the disillusionment and disappointment that others have had with that ideology. And so I turned to other philosophies, other ideologies. There was only one thing of which I was totally

assured, and that is that there's no God.

There was only one thing of which I was totally assured, and that is that there's no God. I wasn't a casual atheist. I was a fierce and angry atheist.

My early manhood, my youth, was at the time of the Nazis of World War II and the destruction of 6 million Jews. My early manhood, my youth, was at the time of the Nazis of World War II and the destruction of 6 million Jews. This was the single great fact of my life.

And I was stupefied and broken over it. And I was stupefied and broken over it. I could understand that the systematic annihilation of Jews had taken place in some dark, uncivilized part of the world.

I could understand that the systematic annihilation of Jews had taken place in some dark, uncivilized part of the world. But how could it be the land of Beethoven and Brahms and Schopenhauer and Fichte and Nietzsche and so on? But how could it be the land of Beethoven and Brahms and Schopenhauer and Fichte and Nietzsche and Nietzsche and Schopenhauer and Fichte and Nietzsche and Schopenhauer and Fichte and Karl Marx and Fichte and Karl Marx and Breite and■■■■■ This was an ultimate paradox. An ultimate paradox, an enigma, an unanswerable question.

An ultimate paradox, an enigma, an unanswerable question. I could draw my students in with me to examine the root questions of life. What is the purpose of our being? What is truth and what is righteousness? To add to my perplexity, I was married to a German woman, and love did not conquer all.

Love did not conquer all. That wife was herself, as a girl, a member of the Hitler Youth. She was an emotionally deeply distressed woman.

She was a victim herself of the recent war, and lived on the other side of the moon. The dark side, the side that I could not understand as a rational and analytical Jew. It was a formula for disaster.

And I don't want to weary you with the painful details, only to say this. We Jews are a profoundly optimistic people. We give very great emphasis on reason and the use of the mind.

We naively think that good will can solve every problem. It could not solve this problem. And there came a time in my life when everything collapsed.

My confidence in reason, my human good will, could not resolve the differences in this unhappy marriage. And I found myself unable to give my students answers. I could raise the great questions, but I could not answer them.

And I could not go on in that condition to be a teacher. I gave it up, and I took a year's leave of absence, and I put a pack on my back, and I began to travel through Europe and the Middle East. I was looking for philosophical answers.

For what else shall a modern, secular Jew seek? I had been in synagogues, and I had been in churches, and I was not impressed by either. Where was God? And my trip was on an Israeli liner, and I got off at Gibraltar, by Spain, a city in Spain, the Mediterranean. And I crossed over and began my travels in Morocco, and back again to Spain, and then up through Central Europe, and Scandinavia, and through England where I had myself family, and back again through Italy.

And I kept a journal, and some strange things were beginning to happen to me. I realized that no matter where I was, whether I was in Spain or London or France or Germany, that no matter the difference in the language or the culture, there was a universal sameness for life everywhere. And I realized that no matter where I was, whether I was in Spain or London or France or Germany, there was a universal sameness for life everywhere.

It was a life without purpose or meaningless sense. And I was traveling by ship from Italy to Greece. I was very much interested in Greece because that was the origin of philosophy and humanism.

The fact of the matter is, I was more Greek than I was a Jew. In my mindset, in my mentality, in my spirit. In fact, I didn't know what it meant to be a Jew.

It was an accident of birth. It had no special meaning for me. I had grown up in New York City and in the streets and with the brick and with the asphalt.

I didn't know what a people, what was that people that lived somewhere way back in the time of Abraham in desert places. I was a man without God and without hope in the world. But on that ship on the way from Italy to Greece, I met a Jewish fellow passenger.

He was an intellectual. And someone had given him a little pocket New Testament when he got on ship in New York. He was reading it as literature.

I myself had never read either the Old or the New Testaments. We Jews are notorious biblical illiterates. Jews as a people.

We are called the people of the book, but we know little about it. But this time I was curious to read this book. Because I had been meeting some strange people along the way.

They picked me up off the street. I remember in Locarno, Switzerland, a couple took me in. A poor couple in a very small apartment.

And in order that my sleep should not be disturbed, they took apart the baby's bed to take it out of the room, that I might have that room quiet and peace. They talked to me about God, but I was cynical and resistant. But I was impressed with their kindness and with their love.

That they would inconvenience themselves for a stranger. And it was more than once that such things were happening to me. And so it made me curious to open their book.

We Jews have our book and the Christians have their book. We have our God, they have their God. And so I began to open this new Testament.

I was a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, called the Harvard of the West. I was a teacher of history. And I had been trained in the analysis of documents.

And I had read many books of many kinds. But I was struck from the very beginning, this is another kind of book. I could not say how it was different.

There was an equality and authority in that book. There was a strange tug on my heart. And I was surprised at how Jewish the book was.

We don't call our children Peter and John and James. These are not Jewish names today. And yet I learned that they were deeply Jewish.

Recognizably Jewish. This was a Jewish book. And none more than this figure, Jesus.

And no one more than this man, Jesus. I had never heard anyone. There was no one more Jewish than Jesus.

That's right. This was a surprise for me. Because he's usually depicted for us in ways that we cannot recognize him Jewishly.

The Catholics put him on a cross with flowers and roses and he looks like a ballet dancer. The name Jesus Christ is not Jewish or Hebrew. I never knew a Jew by the name Christ.

But I did not know that it's from the Greek word Christos. Which is the translation of Christos. Which is the translation of the Hebrew word Mashiach.

Jesus the Messiah. Nobody had ever told me that. I was 34 years old.

A university graduate. And a sophisticated, traveled, worldly man. And I thought that Christ was his last name.

Rather than his title. And I was astonished at the way that this Jesus was speaking. I could say, from where did he get this authority? To forgive men their sins.

To say, if you see me, you see the father. I and the father are one. I didn't know there was a father.

But because he said so, I could believe it. Faith comes by hearing. Faith comes by hearing.

And hearing by the word of God. Faith was growing in my heart to believe. And I came to a crisis in the gospel of John.

A crisis. A crisis. It was the woman taken in the act of adultery.

And they said, you've come to fulfill the law. The law says death by stoning. What do you say? I said, what could he say? He's finished.

He's trapped. And I have to think of an answer for him. My heart was really beating.

And the sweat was coming out of my hands. Because I saw that I was in the same condition as that woman. I was also an adulterer.

And I also deserved the judgment of the law. But my heart was crying for something more and I couldn't say what. And I racked my brain trying to think of what answer he could possibly make.

I didn't want to see my new hero destroyed. And I finally came to this place. Where there's no human answer possible at all.

And that's where we need to come. And that's where we will come. And we come to the end of our human answers.

We'll find that there's a God there. So I opened the book with trembling. I described Jesus' hands over the earth poking his finger in the dirt.

The men who were circled around him waiting for his destruction. Not because they were Jews but because they were religious. What they represented was something in humanity.

In his own righteousness. As against what he represented. Who had not a place to lay his head.

So I read to see what he would say. Let him who is without sin cast the first stone. And that line came up off the page.

Went right in through my eyes into my brain. And went down like a sword through my heart. I was cut asunder.

I can't describe what a revelation of God is. But it came powerfully in that moment. A moment before I was a lifelong atheist.

And an enemy of the church. And now I could believe that Jesus is the Holy One of Israel. And that this is God's book.

And my first thought was what will my mother say about this. This will kill her. There's no way I can explain it.

I'm not only stuck with God I'm stuck with Christ. And in that condition I came to Egypt. And I was here four months.

Both in Cairo and Alexandria. Representing a Jewish museum from California. And seeking to connect with the Jewish community in both Cairo and Alexandria.

To save the religious and the art objects. And my first day upon arrival I lost my wallet. I was pickpocketed on the bus.

Within the first week I was in the hospital. Within the first week I had hepatitis and was in the hospital. And I had no sooner partially recovered from that than I got an ear infection.

Where my ear was swollen like a balloon. And I would cry out from the pain at night. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? The Jewish community of Cairo paid my medical bills.

And while I was in the hospital with hepatitis I read the five books of Moses for the first time. Struggling over the issue of how God could ask a Jew to be a Christian. While I was in Egypt.

And I made a trip to Upper Egypt with these new Jewish friends by train. And the train was remarkably crowded. I'd never seen trains more crowded with people, with ducks, with geese, with vegetables, with much.

There was no place to sit, hardly a place to stand. Finally so many hours later there was some room and that we could sit down. And we came to the next station and there was a big crowd ready to flood the train again.

So this Jewish brother who was a leader in the Jewish community said, Now don't make any room. He said we had to stand, now let them stand. And this thought came to me.

It must have been from God. What the world needs is not just to move over to make room. What the world needs is for men to get up and give up their seat.

That's how God was dealing with me in Egypt. Showing me the inadequacy of Judaism. Which is to say the inadequacy of any religion.

And my cry was for that something more. And in that condition I finally came to Israel. Thinking somehow there I would find a final resolution.

Still haunted by the Jesus who had revealed himself in the New Testament. And in the street of Jerusalem I met a Jewish man who was on the ship from the very beginning. He was training to be a rabbi.

I told him what was happening to me. Jesus was breathing down my neck. He said, I'm sorry.

Where are we? He said, what's a rabbi? Some said a Jewish preacher. Yeah, well, a Jewish teacher of the law. And when he learned that Jesus was breathing down my neck, He was going to save me to be a Jew.

When he felt that Jesus' breath was starting to overwhelm me, he started to try to save me as a Jew. He found me a place at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. And I should read books that he would select, which I did.

And I should talk to certain professors, which I did. But it only deepened my problem. And the last thing was to visit an Orthodox Jewish community.

And I was willing to leave no stone unturned. So he put me on a bus, and I found myself lost. It was the wrong bus.

And I was traveling in circles around Jerusalem and getting nowhere. So I got out and I walked into the first store that I could find to ask for instructions. It was a bookstore.

And the lady was clearly Jewish. Very kind, she made me a little map. As I was about to leave, I took a closer look at the books.

And I stopped short. Christian commentaries and New Testaments and Christian literature. I said, what is this place? Oh, she said, it's our bookstore adjoining our chapel.

We are a congregation of Jewish believers in the Messiah Jesus. I almost fell over. I didn't know there was such a thing.

When she said that, something snapped in my heart. And I heard a voice. And it called me by name.

And it commanded me to remain. I had never submitted to any authority on earth. I was a rebel for 35 years.

But I heard the voice of him with whom I have to do. And I obeyed. I obeyed.

And I stayed four days and nights with these saints. They were Pentecostals. I couldn't have told you a Pentecostal from a Seventh-day Adventist.

It all was confusing to me. But I saw men and women for the first time with their hands above their heads praising God. I had never seen that anywhere.

It wasn't a religious expression. It was the spontaneous overflow of hearts that knew God and loved him. And some were Jews and some were not Jews.

And they were worshipping God together. And some who were Jews, when they stretched their arms, they showed tattooed numbers from concentration camps. And some Jews, when they stretched their arms, they showed tattooed numbers from concentration camps.

They were praising God in the name of Jesus. I was shattered. I couldn't understand.

And these people tried to explain to me the Gospel. And they prayed over me for three days and nights. And I could not understand.

For the natural man cannot perceive the things of God for they are spiritual. For the natural man cannot perceive the things of God for they are spiritual. And the last night of this period, I went to sleep and I was completely confused and in a state of despair.

I could not, by the power of my mind, understand the Gospel. I could not, by the power of my mind, save myself. We modern men need to be brought to that place.

For if a Jew is anything, he is a modern man. I went to sleep in that condition. And in my sleep something happened.

God bypassed my mind and put answers directly in my heart by His Spirit. God bypassed my mind and put answers directly in my heart by His Spirit. I woke up the next morning with a peace unlike any I had ever known in my entire life.

And I came running to the breakfast table and I said to this Jewish woman, with whom I am still in correspondence, I came running to the breakfast table and I said to this Jewish woman, with whom I am still in correspondence, Rina, I believe I understand. And she heard that and fell right out of her seat on the floor. She was shuddering and weeping before God.

She was shuddering and weeping before God. Because I found out that her last prayer at the final night was, Lord, You do something for this stubborn man and make him to understand. Because I found out that her last prayer at the final night was, Lord, You do something for this stubborn man and make him to understand.

I did not understand everything but I understood enough. Enough to be able to call upon the name of the Lord. For the same Lord over Jew and Gentile is rich unto all who call upon Him.

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. It was the most difficult call I had ever made.

My first prayer in 35 years. For me to get the name of Jesus out of my mouth, after what we Jews had suffered in that name for 2,000 years, and I'm hearing voices saying, you're betraying your people. You're joining the enemy.

But I heard another voice, a quiet voice, Allah no wise cast out any man who comes unto me. So the Lord gave me the grace to get the name of Jesus out of my mouth. And I was instantly born of God by the Spirit.

Darkness went out and the Ruach HaKodesh came in. The Ruach HaKodesh came. I came back to California to be a teacher again in the same school system.

My friends made me a homecoming party. And it was a noisy party with much discussion. I was the only one sitting quietly through the whole evening.

And a Jewish woman turned to me, a French, and said, why are you like this? This is so strange for you. You're usually in the thick of such conversations. Oh, I said, I find your conversation completely irrelevant to life.

Everyone stopped their talking and looked. They knew something was coming. And she said, well, what do you think is relevant to life? I was only weeks old in the Lord.

But I began to think, I began my ministry that night. And lost all my friends at the same time. They loved me as a Marxist.

They loved me as a seducer. As a man of the world. But they hated me as a believer.

I was astonished at the angry, fierce vile response against me. The talk, what do you call that? Obscene language against me. I knew from that reaction I had entered another kingdom.

And I was determined now to be another kind of teacher. Now I had something really to tell my students. I had been so inspirational as an atheist.

And what should I be now then as a believer? A terrible failure and disappointment. Where was my power of personality? Where was my command of speech? All of my natural gifts had been stripped away. I could have no confidence in the future.

I had no confidence in the flesh. And I was seeking the fullness of the Holy Spirit. And not finding it in my own Pentecostal church.

Too many differences and resentments and jealousies to grieve the Spirit of God away. But I was invited to... I was invited to visit some friends up in Northern California who were farmers. I had met these people because of their love for the Jews.

They were studying Hebrew. And I said, but why should you have this interest and this love and this concern? And I'll always remember their answer. To the degree that we love your God, we have His love for your people.

And in that atmosphere, every obstruction to the fullness of the Spirit had been taken away. We had a lovely evening together and someone turned to me and said, now Art, why don't you pray to conclude? But I was too self-conscious to pray. But I could sense the deepening presence of God in that room.

And one brother, led by the Holy Spirit, pointed to a young girl who was half my age who had just received the baptism and said, Art, I think she should pray for you. What, that little girl is going to pray for me? I went down on my hands and knees on the floor. And she laid hands on me.

I was desperate. And something immediately broke. All of my insides were crumbling and coming apart.

All of the hardness of my heart over the years from human disappointment was crumbling and fleshing out. All of that was breaking. And then I began to sense something filling up that space.

And when it reached my mouth, something burst out. That was another language from Heaven. Everything changed from that night.

The way I saw the Bible. The way I saw men in the world. A new compassion, a new concern.

And not long after my return to California, I was invited to give my testimony for the first time. I didn't know that I had a testimony. I just shared what happened.

And when it was over, a woman came up to me. A woman about the age of some of the ladies here tonight. And she said, You don't know me, Brother Katz.

But you had my daughter in your history class. And my daughter came home from school in the afternoon weeping over you. Because she knew that you were both a radical and an atheist.

Since that day, she said, Both my daughter and I have been praying for you. The factual, fervent prayer of righteous men and women avails much. And the Lord said, She's the one.

I had never seen her before. So I said to her, You're the one whose prayers have entered me into the kingdom of God. And I've never seen that woman again since.

But I've been in many places since. Indonesia and Singapore and Japan. Egypt many times.

And Israel and East Germany and West Germany and Czechoslovakia and Romania and Russia and many places. My third book is coming out in a few months. The other two have blessed many.

The Lord has established us in the community up in northern Minnesota. We just had a prophetic school this summer where men came to us from New Zealand and Australia Germany, Switzerland, England. It's just to say that a woman's prayer has set in motion the works of God.

And they're not over yet. So that's a little picture of a whole nation that is going to be uprooted, loose and cast out from the world. They're every hope lost.

Without God and without hope in the world. As you once were before you were brought nigh by the blood of Messiah Jesus. Their whole world will collapse.

Their values and their confidence. And they'll be cast out in places they had never thought to be. Open and prepared for another answer.

For a witness that will come to them at that time as it came to me. For a witness that will come to them at that time as it came to me. As it came to me when a man picked me up in Switzerland I was standing three hours in the rain.

Who's going to stop for something like me? Because this guy as if they did not see me This man stopped with a new car. And he got out of the car to greet me at the side of the road as if I were doing him a favor. I thought what kind of a man is this? And took my wet backpack and threw it in the back of his car and ruined his upholstery.

He didn't even notice. When I sat down on the front seat and closed the door I felt as if I were a special guest. Why are you traveling like this? he asked me in German.

It was well past the tourist season. I said I'm a modern man whose life is broken at its foundations. I'm looking for the deepest answers to life.

And I said I'm a Jew. I said why did you have to say that? That was stupid to say that. And I said that to myself.

And I looked to see how it would affect him. Would he grow cold and stiff? And he was radiating like that neon light. Glowing.

It was more special for him than it was for me. And he insisted that we stop at a Swiss coffee house for refreshments. And how that man could draw my heart out.

He wasn't jumping on me with John 3.16. He didn't say are you saved brother? His hearing of the anguish of my life was an act of love. I shared with him all of my hopelessness. All of my despair.

I thought what is this man going to tell me? I'm an ex-Marxist. Existentialist. I'm a philosopher.

There's nothing in my life There's nothing new under this other. I had my arms like this over my chest. Doubled dare you to tell me something new.

I had come to the other end of myself. I had nothing more to say. What could he tell me? My life was hanging by a very thin strand over the abyss of eternity.

One wrong word could snap it and break it. I was sick of words and sick of talk and sick of slogans. So he said to me Art he said Do you know what it is that the world needs? I leaned forward because I was dying for what the world needs.

I was a piece of the dying world. I said what? He said in a very quiet way. He said Art what the world needs is for men to wash one another's feet.

And down I went. Never to recover again. I was pierced through by the Holy Spirit.

A silent cry went out of my mouth. This is it. We don't need ideologies and human programs.

We need a spirit of humility and love. And I had a vision on the spot of the angry self-righteous Art Katz's washing the feet of the lowly and the despised. What would it be today? What would that be today? Israelis washing the feet of Palestinians.

Egyptians washing the feet of Jews. White South Africans washing the feet of black South Africans. God struck me right in the heart and before I could recover he was speaking to me the gospel in German.

I wanted to complain and say that's not for me. I'm Jewish. But I had no voice.

I was so impacted. So did God meet me on the way by people who have picked me up along the way. And I tried again and again to find the same man.

He gave me his address but I lost it when I was pickpocketed in Cairo. But I've been back to that area many times in Switzerland. Nobody seems to know who Edwin is.

I've never been able to find him. So I have to ask 28 years later was that a man? Or an angel? You remember this testimony. When God sends some odd cats into your midst.

Whose eternal destiny rests on your word. Your face. Your love.

Your extending of yourself. Your prayer. So I want to pray for that.

God says I loved Israel as a child but I have brought my son out of Egypt. We may stumble into this land as lost children. Desperately lost children.

But because of you we will return to our land as sons. And all the world will rejoice for that. I want to pray for that mystery of which my own conversion is a fragment.

Thank you Lord. For your great, great, great, great grace. Thank you for your mercy that will not let us go.

Thank you for being a hound of heaven that pursues us over the face of the earth and through all nations. Thank you for your faithfulness to answer the prayers of your saints. And seek us in a way that you will not let us go.

Thank you for so great salvation. Thank you for your that has been made available to me through your Gentile children who can speak your words by your spirit. Thank you for the mystery of that salvation that is soon to take place in the earth.

Bless these children in this room and those who will hear this tape to encourage their hearts that they have a part to play in the future salvation of the lost sheep of the house of Israel. You shall bring them again into this land that they might find you here and return to you as saved sons and serve the purposes of God for which they were born to the blessing of all nations. Thank you for this great mystery and our privileged part in it.

Sink this deep into our hearts and release our prayers for those upon whom we have never laid eyes that will affect their salvation. We thank you for that even as you wait for that in Jesus' name.

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