

Art Katz Testimony by Ark Katz

by Art Katz

Art Katz shares his journey from atheism to faith, highlighting the transformative power of humility and personal encounters with God's love.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Ezekiel 20:35-37, John 8:1-11, John 13:14-17, Romans 11:11-12

Topics: "Personal Testimony", "Faith Redemption"

Description

This sermon recounts the personal journey of a Jewish atheist who, through a series of profound encounters and revelations, comes to a life-changing realization of God's existence and the transformative power of humility and faith in Jesus Christ. It emphasizes the role of prayer, the impact of genuine kindness and love, and the ultimate redemption of Israel and the nations through a deep relationship with God.

Transcript

not because it's of particular value to myself, but I think it's so descriptive of modern American Jews, and so much the statement of contemporary Jewish life, born in New York and Brooklyn in the Depression years, and having been a lifelong atheist. My earliest impression in my adolescence was the rejection of God as being a fable, and that men needed to have the courage to face the realities of life without any kind of dependency of a imagined kind. And so I drifted, as so many Jews of my kind, into socialism, Marxist Institute, and was a merchant seaman at the age of 17, looking for adventure, for meaning.

Growing up in the city of New York, the city of eight million compounds, every question, and coming to adolescence during the World War II time, and the statistics of the six million of my kind who were annihilated by that civilization that we most admired, intensified every question of my life and my existence. My whole conscious young Jewish life was with the question, why? How am I to understand human existence itself? If you could picture me as a young kid going to high school in Manhattan, traveling on the subways every day with heavy tomes of philosophy, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, trying to find some kind of an answer in a crowded subway car, you have a picture of Jewish perplexity seeking for answers. And coming out of the dark tunnel of that underground subway onto the Brooklyn Bridge into Manhattan, and looking at the skyline, I always saw a blinking neon light below, Jesus saves.

I couldn't think of anything more humorous. Someone has joked, Jesus saves, but Moses invests, and that's as much understanding as that phrase meant for me at that time. And so the Lord allowed such a life to have its logic, and I was in the army in the early 1950s, in the Korean wartime.

I should have gone to Korea, but by the accident of having a last name Katz beginning with a K, I was taken out from that segment of the middle of the alphabet and sent to Germany rather than to Korea, the nation which I despised, above all nations, because of the Holocaust and what we suffered at German hands in our strange love-hate relationship with that people. Strange to say in my almost two years in that nation, in the nation yet broken after the war, the heaps and mounds of ruins yet remained in the city of Munich and in other places, I was strangely drawn to this Germany and felt myself more at home in its streets and cobblestone lanes than ever I had felt in Brooklyn. And so the whole sweep of our German existence, my own name, had a haunting effect upon me to continue to deepen these very questions.

The first thing I did that the earliest Yom Kippur of my time in Germany was not to go to a synagogue, an atheist does not attend the synagogue, I went to Dachau. So the first chapter of my book is my experience at Dachau as a Jew who came armed for bear, working with great indignation upon the Germans. They were the culprits, we were the good guys, we were the victims at their hands.

But it took something of the enormity of the concentration camp itself, the barbed wires, the barracks that yet remained that have since been removed, and the place of annihilation, the place of cremation, the ovens, to break something. I can remember leaning my hand on the smokestack and something broke as the magnitude of what I was touching was greater than my categories, and somehow I realized that what I was touching obliterated my simplistic view of good guys and bad guys. To top it off, the Lord had me to sit in a train compartment on my way back to Munich, thinking myself alone, only to look up at a blond-haired and blue-eyed man sharing the compartment with me without arms and without legs, a multiple amputee, and I looked upon that piece of broken humanity, a victim of the recent war, and I didn't know whether to have contempt, hatred, or pity.

The poor man was writhing in pain, trying to adjust his artificial limb with his hooks, till finally I couldn't bear to see him squirm, and something that was of my better nature took hold of me. I got out of my seat, put my hands on his limb as he directed me to adjust it to ease his discomfort, and then had me to sit down and offer me a cigarette, and we were just the classic German and Jew, side by side, victims of the recent tragedy, and just speaking in a broken German-English conversation, trying to touch spirit, and I realized as I looked at that man, I'm looking for the telltale signs of barbarism and cruelty that I could see my enemy, but all I saw was a man's face and the thought that their cats, but for the grace of God, go you. You're only a Jew by circumstance.

You're only born in Brooklyn, New York, and you're wearing an American uniform. Had you been born in Germany, you would have been the one putting the bodies into the ovens, and that truth never left me. I set in motion the circumstances by which ten years from that time the Lord saved and brought to the knowledge of himself this consulate Jew, ever seeking after truth and never finding it, but set in motion for salvation by the recognition of a verse in Scripture that I did not know, not knowing any Scripture, being the biblical illiterate that we modern Jews essentially are, that there's no man good, no knock one, that if God were to mark iniquity, who can stand? And so with the return from the army and the G.I. Bill and becoming a teacher, the high school dropout makes good.

My mother began to quell to enjoy her son attaining his success, but the remarkable thing is that success became bitter ashes in my mouth. I was not your ordinary history teacher. I chose history because it was the closest vehicle toward philosophy and ethics and morality.

I could raise great and ultimate questions for my students, but I found myself incapable of answering them. My gods had failed. Marxism had failed.

The revelation of the Stalinist period and the disillusionment that had come to many socialist Marxist idealists of my kind collapsed as we saw the reality of what that system had in fact produced. On top of that, I had married a German girl that I had met in Germany who was herself schizophrenic, a former member of the Hitler Youth, and ventilating upon me and her psychic and emotional condition the anti-Semitic hatred that had just been enacted to the tune of six million. And the remarkable thing was that my humanistic faith in my good reason and solid compassion and well-meaning intentions utterly failed in the confrontation that came through with this German woman in that condition.

I realized I had no answer at all, and in that condition I took a year's leave of absence from the teaching profession. I could not go on, put a pack on my back, and I traveled for 14 months through western Europe and the Middle East looking for philosophical answers for what else shall a Jewish atheist seek. And in the course of those 14 months, the Lord, whom I did not know, was in pursuit of me as the hound of heaven, picking me up off the side of the road by a strange new quality of human beings who were not Jews nor Gentiles, and yet I could not quite locate them, for they had a dimension of something that I had never seen in either Jews or Gentiles, being themselves born-again Christians, which was a phrase that later came into my vocabulary.

But it was this love, it was God, that prompted them to pick up this dangerous-looking man off the side of the road, angry and bitter and vexed, and take him into their cars, take him into their homes, and extend to me mercy and kindness and love and open to me the Scriptures and begin to speaking to me in biblical terms, which was a dimension wholly outside of my secular and atheistic understanding. And so that I reached the point of some attempt to communicate to me, there's no way to describe what I was as a Jewish atheist and radical. I was not just mildly contemptuous of religion, I was an avid and vehement opponent, and of all faiths, Christianity was for me the most apparent, because I equated Christianity with the Holocaust.

It came out, it issued out of a Christian nation. So any attempt to communicate to me was met by the most vehement refusal. I think there was a, if I remember correctly, one or two Christian teachers on my faculty who sought to share with me, but only in the most limited way, because I would cut them off in a preemptory way, not being able to hear.

It took a crisis of my life being broken at its foundations to make me to be void of my own clutter, my own vocabulary, my own convictions, my own categories, my own petty gods, to put me in a place to hear for the first time the still small voice. And that's why I believe that we Jewish people need to anticipate, according to Scripture, a last day's shaking of an ultimate kind, the time of Jacob's trouble, where we will be rendered null and void from our categories. We're too full of our own clatter to hear the still small voice of God.

He's got to break us down and reduce us to bring us to a place of disposition where we can hear him. That's what I required 37 years ago, because my testimony is archetypical. It's not just a testimony of a Jew being saved.

The whole framework of it, the whole failing in my success, the whole being rooted up and out from California, the place of that success, and put into the path of nations, and receiving the testimony of many in the variety of nations, and then the final consummation in Jerusalem, as I think is a picture of the pattern

to which Jews of the last days will be brought, that might obtain the same salvation that has come to me, when we'll be in a place where our mouths will be stopped from our own presumption and clatter, and know-it-all conviction where we can hear him for the first time, who has been long seeking us, but we've been too filled with ourselves to consider. He's a still small voice waiting to be heard, and the moment that our own stops, we'll hear him, and we'll hear him unto salvation. Yes, my Brooklyn origins are so typical of the experience of hundreds of thousands of millions of contemporary Jews.

We were poor. I grew up without a father. My mother labored in the garment trade, but she was insistent that I would have a Jewish education.

She had an obligation to see that her sons were bar mitzvahed, and so indeed I went to Hebrew school for a number of years after my public school sessions were concluded, and I was bar mitzvahed, but I would say that the birthing of my personhood in my adolescence was with the conviction that there is no God. Nothing in my synagogue experience or preparation for bar mitzvah in any way revealed that there was a God. I don't think there was any reference or allusion to God through all that time, more the insistence on learning that section of the haftorah that I would have to chant on the day of my bar mitzvah.

There was no atmosphere or environment of belief or faith, and so my first heady discovery was that the belief in God is some kind of a myth that sustains the weak, and of course I was not going to be weak. I was heady, high-minded, strong, independent, intellectual, a seeker after truth, so one of the first things of which I divested myself was the noxious and vacuous belief that there's a God. I had never seen any evidence.

Remember also that I'm coming to a place of early maturity as a young man at the very end of World War II when the revelation of the factor, the six million Jews annihilated by that nation that we so... who sort of... the nation we so celebrated was the final spike in the tomb or the casket of any possible belief in God. Where could there be a God in such a horror as just has been historically demonstrated? So everything was conducive not to belief or to faith, but to unbelief and to rejection of God. I saw nothing in Gentiles who crossed my path any more than I saw in Jews, and for me whether it was a synagogue or a church were just cultural institutions not deserving of my interest.

But socialism, Marxism, that was viable. Here was a way, here was something, dialectical materialism, a powerful framework of understanding of philosophy to which I could give myself because it had hope of changing the world. I'm asked to consider what one thing would I single out in this whole remarkable experience with God resulting in my salvation that I would commend to a Jewish inquirer.

It's hard to single out. I would have to say the totality of witness that came from the variety of souls that picked me up off the side of the road, sometimes standing in the drizzling rain for hours and watching cars go by as if I didn't exist. Anyone who would see me and stop would have to be extraordinary, and so in fact they were.

One man picked me up in a new car and didn't just give me a, come on, I'm doing you a favor. He got out of the car and greeted me by the side of the road as if I were doing him the favor. My suspicions were immediately aroused.

What's in it for him? I may have been angry, but I was still attractive, and he had me to sit down on the front seat having thrown my rucksack in the back of his car, a soggy mess, without even a moment's concern about how it affected his upholstery. I thought, what manner of man is this? And off we drove and

he turned and he looked at me and he said to me in German, why are you traveling this way? It was past the tour season. I was not a kid out on a lark.

I was in my 34th year. So well as I could, I tried to explain I'm a modern man whose life has been broken at its foundations. I'm seeking for the deepest answers of life, and before I could finish, I said, and I'm a Jew, and the moment that came out of my mouth, I said, Katz, you fool, why did you have to tell him that? Now you've lost everything, and I turned cautiously to see the reaction, and when I turned, the man was beaming as if learning that I was a Jew was something for him especially significant, and he insisted that we stop for refreshments at his expense.

I'll never forget that golden moment because he had nothing more to say but to ask me and draw out from my heart the statement of my own frustration and perplexity that seemed unanswerable and hopeless about the modern world. I was a man without hope. I saw the coming moral breakdown of the world, the prospect of atomic annihilation, blood in the streets, racial warfare, and without answer.

I was a teacher in a school of a racially composite kind, and my weak and vain attempts to somehow reconcile race were just a vanity, and so I had no answer, and I spit out all of that frustration, things that I'd never shared with anyone, marveling that I'm speaking this to a Gentile whom I had never before seen, wondering what is it about this man that draws my heart out, because his hearing of me was an act of love. It wasn't the man impatient, waiting for me to finish that he could jump upon me with John 3.16, and finally when I finished I looked at him and he said to me in German, Artie said, do you know what it is that the world needs? I thought to myself, this man really knows how to ask the questions. Give me one good question for a hundred shallow answers.

Yes, I want to know what the world needs. I double dare you to tell me, because I'm a university graduate, I've gone through Marxist institutes, I'm a seeker after truth, and I can't find an answer to what the world needs. I'm dying for what the world needs.

I'm a piece of that world. We Jews have created that world through our Karl Marx, through our Sigmund Freud, and through all of the other Jewish geniuses that have shaped and influenced the thought and conduct of the world. Yes, you tell me what the world needs.

I had my arms folded over my chest, thinking there's nothing new under the sun. What is he going to tell me? With a quiet and assured voice, this man changed my life in one fell swoop and said, Art, what the world needs is for men to wash one another's feet. And when I heard that statement, again, it was as impactful as that revelation that came in the reading of the New Testament for the first time some months later, something broke in me.

And I continued to remain unchanged in my outward and external form, but my human spirit had fallen out of my body, so to speak, and was whimpering on the floor. For with that statement, I experienced a revelation of such power that I saw that by a spirit of humility, the world could be changed without a single drop of blood being shed. We didn't need socialistic programs.

We didn't need Marxist clichés. We don't need the kinds of things that have resulted in rivers of blood. What we need is a spirit of humility.

But the word spirit was totally alien to my secular modern mindset and the humility equally alien. And I saw men like myself, arrogant, presuming hotshots, saving the world, incapable of living with their wives,

opposed to their administrators, and full of tension, incapable of anything in their own relational life. And what an act of humility to wash another one's feet would mean for Palestinians with Jews, black with white, male with female, children with their parents, it would change the world.

And before I could recover, I was overwhelmed. This man went on to tell me the Gospel of Jesus Christ in German, and I wanted to complain and say, hey, that's not for me. Don't you know I'm a Jew? That's for the goyim.

I'm Jewish. You have your God, your book. But I had no voice.

My voice was completely diminished by the power of that one statement. And when that man finished sharing with me, had you seen me that evening, you would have said, this man's drunk. I didn't walk away from that table.

I lurched. I staggered under the impact of that confrontation coming out of a man whose face gave no evidence of anything more significant than an ordinary Gentile. It was an encounter with God.

And I've tried to find that man for many years, and I've been back in Switzerland in that same area, and have been unable to do so. Everything that I knew about him, he was a bookkeeper. He worked for an automobile agency.

He sang in the choir. He knew about philosophy and architecture and art. He was abroad.

I can't find the man that I have to consider 37 years later. Was it a man? Or was it an angel? And I think that when the church will be of such a stature and kind, led by the Spirit, as this man was, that we Jews will have to say, was it a man? Was it an angel? Because if this man had said, are you saved, brother? Do you know Jesus? I'd be dead today. All I needed was one more cliché, whether it's religious or secular, I would have been dead.

But he didn't speak to me in any clichéd way. He didn't even use John 3.16 in a clichéd way. He spoke to me that one statement, calculated to break my heart, that only God alone knew, art that the world needs, what you've been questing for all these years from your adolescence on, from your merchant seaman days, from your Marxist institutes, from all of your readings, is answered in this, a spirit of humility.

And so, I would say that that was the most memorable and significant experience, and that it came through a Gentile, made it all the more powerful. Because if he was not an angel, he was a man who was led by the Spirit of God, not to speak a convenient cliché, but that one word calculated to pierce my heart. And so, my prayer for those who believe in the Lord and love the people Israel is to know him and to have a walk in a relationship with him of such a sensitive kind that they can speak themselves, that one word that issues from the throne of heaven to pierce the heart of that unbelieving and resisting Jew.

Because when he hears it, he knows that he knows, man did not conceive this. This is the very heart of God that knows me. So, I bumped into this young American girl on vacation, having graduated high school, who was the epitome of what we Jews dismiss as a WASP, white Anglo-Saxon Protestant.

And yet, instead of being repelled, I was strangely drawn to the innocency of this girl and her transparency, willing to walk with me around the woods surrounding the city. And as we're walking, I'm probing her motives. How come that you're not afraid of me? Oh, she would answer, it's the love of God.

How come you're being kind to me? It's the love of God. You see, I had embraced radical ideologies, but I had never seen kindness. Isn't that a remarkable paradox? Even among those who purported to be concerned for the underprivilege of the world and the working classes, between ourselves, we're incapable of kindness.

Here was a girl demonstrating very clearly a very real kindness that was unfeigned. And so, I'm probing her motives. And she was answering me every question, it's the love of God, it's the love of God.

And with that answer, my exasperation would grow. I thought, if this girl mentions God one more time, she's finished. I can't stand this God talk.

And I'm sorry, but I'll just have to lower the boom. My favorite hobby was engaging Christians in debate and wiping them out. So what's this little girl to me? Sure enough, she mentioned God.

I stopped, I said, look, you're a sweet girl and all that, but I can't stand this God talk. Can you answer for me one question that no Christian has ever successfully been able to answer? She said, what's that, Art? I said, you've been talking about God. How do you know that he is? I said, I gotta know.

There'll be a long silence and she'll think of some brittle thing she remembers from Sunday school, and I'll just roll over with my steamroller and crush her. To my astonishment, without a moment's hesitation, she had tilted up that snub-nosed, freckled face, sandy-haired, blue-eyed face at me and said with complete innocence, Art, she said, I know that God lives. I know that God is.

He lives in me. And when she said that, down I went. I was like an ox that had been felled by a blow or a boxer knocked to the deck.

And as I'm trying to recover, I think, what hit me? What was the power of that statement? It wasn't theological. It wasn't even intellectual. What is it? And it finally adorned on me.

What gave that statement its power to bring me down was its truth, and the truth was visible in her face. God indeed lived in her because the radiance of God shone through her. I didn't know the Scripture about the light that lightens the Gentiles is the glory of the people Israel, and there's no more profound demonstration of that reality and that glory than when it shall shine out of a face where we least expect to see it.

I never recovered from that impact, and the remarkable thing is I was made instantly jealous for what this girl had in her transparency and innocence. I'd been to universities, Marxist institutes. I was the intellectual.

I was a world traveler. Here's a kid half my age, but she has something that I knew I would never find in any institution. She had God, and I was jealous for the radiance of the light of it, and never will I forget that remarkable encounter.

When I believe of God's last days dealings with Jews where he says in Ezekiel 20, I will meet with you in the wilderness of the nations face to face. It will be this revelation, this shining forth, this radiance of the glory of God as the light that lightens Gentiles that will reveal to Jews in their ultimate distress in the time of Jacob's trouble the reality of the God that we have too long avoided and whom we shall not be able from that moment again to avoid, for it says, then I will bring you into the bond of my covenant and under the rod of my authority. It's the revelation of our God through the face of Gentiles that will be the turning

point in the redemption of Israel in the ultimate distress for which we are presently heading in these last days.

My testimony and my experience is a foreshadowing of the great saga of the last day's redemption of Israel through the testimony of unfamed witness, unselfconscious, the radiance of the light of God in Gentile faces, which is the clear demonstrations of God that we can no longer avoid. Well, I was traveled second on perhaps not even third class. I was a hitchhiker for 14 months.

It's the only way that I could have economically spent an entire year abroad. And that offers you a vista, a window on the world and on reality that traveling in a more conventional tourist mode would never reveal. It's something to stand by the side of the road and watch cars whiz by and feel like a piece of rejected humanity, which in fact I was.

It offers a whole new way of perceiving reality and meaning. And so I was picked up from place to place and received the testimony of those who did pick me up and be prepared for the revelation that came in the first reading of a New Testament. Strange to say I was a history teacher, a student of history, and yet I had never myself opened the primary source.

But I was content with some secondary hearsay about Jesus, which was easy to discard as being irrelevant to my Jewish life. But on the trip from Italy to Greece, which was a significant trip because as I've tried to express, Greece for me was not just another geographic destination. Athens and Greece for me was homage.

It was the symbol of all that was central to my humanistic assumptions of life with man as its center, man as the measure of all things, know thyself. Now I was going to pay homage to the place from which the life source that had sustained me for so long had issued, and on a Greek ship yet, but as a deck passenger, the cheapest way to go. And on that ship I met a Jewish fellow passenger from New York who had a copy of the pocket edition of the New Testament given him on the waterfront.

The very same book which I had rejected at the age of 16 when I was waiting for my maritime papers to make my first trip as a merchant seaman when someone came up with big sheep eyes to induce me to take a New Testament on whom I radically rejected with contempt and directed him to the Museum of Natural History where he would find all the evidence that he needed to make his belief in God a non-belief. Now for the second time that same book was being offered me through a Jewish fellow passenger, but now I was prepared to read it because this was the source from which those people who had been picking me up off the side of the road were quoting me and was the basis of their conviction and belief of God. And so I was curious to read it, and I'll never forget sitting on that deck below with the well-paying passengers having a bowl, and we poor characters on top living on the surface of the ship, and by the light issuing from their porthole, I began the reading of the New Testament.

And as a student of the Word, trained in the analysis of documents, a history teacher, I realized I'm reading an unusual document. There's something about it that transcends even that which is human. I couldn't quite identify it, and the description of this Jesus was altogether other than the stereotypical Jesus that had been represented to me of non-relevance as a Jew in my earlier years.

This was a compelling figure, and he was allowing Jews to fall at his feet and worship and cry out my Lord and my God and not condemn them, that well either this man is a megalomaniac, he has delusions of grandeur about himself, or what he's saying is true. And so I was caught into a crisis of confrontation with

the Jesus of the book, and I came to a place in that book in the Gospel of John where my new hero was caught in the act to a woman taken in the act of adultery and confronted by his accusers with this woman saying, you have said that you've come to fulfill the law and not to destroy it, but this woman has been taken in the act of adultery and deserves the judgment of the law which is stoning. What do you say? When I read that, my heart sank because I thought, well what could he say? He was caught in a terrible predicament or contradiction for which there's no patent human answer.

I gave it my best shot. I put, I held my finger in the book with my sweaty palm because my heart was pounding. I realized I'm identified with this woman.

I'm just, I deserve what she deserves. I didn't realize that before until I was caught in the framework of that episode. I don't know, something about the setting of being on the deck of a ship as a poor passenger, the reality of that, as a book designed for the poor, for the rejects, for the lost, made that book so commendable, so penetrating.

And so when I finally despaired that there could be any answer, I, with trembling hands, opened the book to read. What can my new hero say? He's finished. Another call marks down the drain, another Sigmund Freud, gone.

And Jesus looked up, having poked in the dirt at his accusers, and said, let him who is without sin cast the first stone. I can't tell you the impact, the effect of that one statement. I had never read the scriptures before, though commending students to go to the source, I had never gone to the source.

When I read that line, it came up off the page. It smoked my eyes. It penetrated my being.

It cleaved me in two. I was trembling like a leaf. It was the power of revelation.

And I knew and I knew in that one moment with that statement that this was not a human statement. This is divine wisdom. This is beyond man.

This is beyond anything that man can say or do. This is God. And I knew therefore there is a God.

I'm reading his book. I don't know how he could preserve the integrity of it in 2,000 years, and therefore the Jesus of that book is who he claims to be. I was astonished, but I did not cry out hallelujah, because as I've shared, I was immediately made to realize this is a costly revelation.

This will cost you everything, cats. Your mother will be killed by this. Your Jewish friends and your intellectual friends will reject you.

Your status, your stature, your recognition will be entirely lost. You'll be a fool of fools to say yes to this revelation, and I could not bring myself to affirm it. I knew it to be true, lover of truth, and yet I could not surrender that truth, because I knew that its cost was too great.

But the God of that revelation patiently pursued me for many months after until he had obtained my confession, having passed through Egypt and come into Israel and finally into that bookstore in which he called me by name and allowed me the grace to call upon him by name and to obtain the salvation that is indescribably glorious and that I've enjoyed now for these past 37 years. And then finally going to Israel where the Lord himself concluded his pursuit of me by allowing me to come lost into a bookstore in Jerusalem on my way to visit some Orthodox Jewish community, and I'm finding myself on the wrong bus,

walking into the first store that I could find and receiving lovely directions by a gracious Jewish woman, and just about to leave I notice I'm in a bookstore, and they're selling Bibles and Christian commentaries, and I looked again at this woman's Yiddish eponym, her Jewish face, and I said, excuse me, what is this place? Oh, she said quite innocently, this is our bookstore adjoining our chapel. We are a congregation of Jewish believers in the Messiah Jesus.

When I heard that, I freaked out. I didn't know there's a congregation. I thought I was the only Jew upon whose neck Jesus had breathed, and the moment that she said that, I heard the voice of the Lord calling me by name and commanding me not to leave.

I stayed. I obeyed the voice of him with whom I have to do, not having submitted to any authority in my then 35 years on earth. I was a rebel from birth, but when I heard the voice of him with whom I have to do, he said, art you are not to leave.

No explanation, just a commandment. I remained four days with these Pentecostal Jews in the assemblies of God work in Jerusalem, and where they were tutoring me in the scriptures and showing me God's plan of salvation and the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in the new, and I, the intellectual and student of history, was unable in the power of my intellect to understand. I went to sleep on the fourth and final night, completely perplexed.

How could God ask me, a Jew, to become a Christian? This will kill my mother, and in my sleep, when my mind was inoperative, which was the obstruction the Lord, by his Spirit, put into my heart an understanding, and I awoke on May 26, 1964, believing. I came to the breakfast table, and I said to this precious Jewish woman with whom I'm still in contact, 38 years later, Rina, I believe, I understand, and the dear soul fell out of her chair on the floor weeping for her prayer the night before I learned was, Lord, we've done everything for this stubborn man. You make him to understand, and so having the measure of understanding that I did, not complete, but sufficient, she encouraged me to call upon the name of the Lord.

For me to take the name of Jesus to my lips was, I can't tell you, an ultimate requirement. I had been so poisoned against that name, I could not speak it peaceably, and everything seemed to converge against that name in that moment. You'll be a traitor to your people, this will kill your mother, how can you be one with those who have so long oppressed your own kind? And in the midst of all of that wealth of voices, the one voice that said, I'll in no wise cast out any man who comes unto me, and somehow, by the grace of God, in that moment, I was able to choke and splurt out the name of Jesus.

I wouldn't even call it a prayer. It was a gasp. It was a mercy, it was a grace to get that name out of my mouth, and the moment that it issued out of my lips, something happened.

I felt something go out of me that was dark, the spirit of the world, I was instantly loosed, relieved of the whole inheritance of a life of sin, darkness, and in came the u'chakodesh. I was born again by the spirit in that moment. Something very quietly entered me, and instantly I was changed.

My speech changed. I couldn't curse, I couldn't blaspheme. That was my moment of salvation, and from that time forth, it's been an extraordinary history and walk with the God who saved me 35, 37 years ago, and I'm enormously grateful.

When I came back from Jerusalem as a saved man, I returned to the same teaching district. I, who had been the leading faculty radical, whose last public statement with a fist on the desk at a staff meeting was, we need a revolution, came back with the Bible under my arm, lamb-like, and having and losing all my friends my first night back in a homecoming party made for me, where I found myself having to explain the strange thing to which I had come. So it was quite a revelation that the people who formerly esteemed me so highly now despised me as a believer were indignant at my salvation.

Well, about some months had passed, maybe three, I was invited to share my testimony. I didn't know what a testimony was at one of the local churches of that community, and shared my story, and a woman came up to me at the end of the meeting, a roly-poly, innocuous, gentile woman, nothing special to look at. She said, you don't know me, Brother Katz, but you had my daughter in your history class.

She came home from school in the afternoons, weeping over you, knowing that you were a radical and an atheist. Since that time, she said, both my daughter and I have been praying over you. In that moment, the Lord virtually gave me a poke in the ribs and said, she's the woman whose prayers have entered you into the kingdom of heaven.

So I was astonished that a woman who had never laid eyes on me, but moved by the Spirit, was able in the fervency of her prayer to release the Lord to be the hound of heaven that would pursue me for fourteen months and not let me go until I surrendered to his love. And I think in that we have a paradigm and a statement of God's intention and use of the Church that does not even require a personal contact with Jews, but just the prayer, the heartfelt, fervent, earnest prayer of righteous men and women is heard of God and avails. My mother, who came to the Lord only some months ago and ten days before her own death in her 95th year, was saved, I believe, in exactly that same way because I had been making mention of my mother in my preaching all over the world for the last 37 years and ten days before her death.

After 37 years of resisting the Lord and her stubborn insistence about preserving her Jewishness, she became the Jew of Jews in the twilight of her last days because of the prayer of earnest saints all over the world on her behalf. So I'm grateful for this remarkable mystery of the relationship between a Gentile Church and an unbelieving Jewry, that we would come to the knowledge of Him through their sacrificial prayer, devotion, and witness. I myself am a living statement of that salvation, and what have I been doing for these past 37 years but traveling to the Gentile nations and bringing to them dimensions of blessing, insight and depth, that maybe could only essentially be brought by a Jew, who am I myself a foretaste of what Israel will mean in her own redemption to the nations when she will bless all the families of the earth.

I am blessing all the families of the earth and every place where God brings me, as He has just brought me from Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, and not long before, Russia, Poland, Europe, many nations, in every place bringing a dimension of understanding and power that is ours because we are grafted back into our own root. I've come into a priestly dimension of service for the Lord, and I tell the congregations, if you're blessed by me, what will it mean when a whole nation shall come into its calling as a nation of priests and a light unto the world, for the world is living beneath the intention of God, waiting for us Jews to fulfill our destiny to the nations, so that your prayer, your investment, and your sacrifice will redound to your good when we who are the recipients of the grace extended through you will in turn come and bring a measure of blessing to your nations as a nation of priests and a light unto the world to teach the nations the difference between the profane and the sacred, and so God will have fulfilled the great mystery of the relationship between Israel and the nations of which

Paul himself was a foreshadowing in his apostolate to the Gentiles and in which now I myself am the foreshadowing in my own ministry in the nations.

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