

Arab-05 Art's Testimony - a Wandering Jew

by Art Katz

The speaker shares his testimony of how he came to faith in Jesus Christ, from being a Jewish teacher and atheist to experiencing the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 1:05:20

Scripture: John 8:1, John 10:30, Romans 10:17, Ephesians 2:12

Topics: "Arabic"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal testimony of his own conversion as a Jewish man. He describes how he was uprooted from his place of security and knowledge, leading to a collapse of his confidence in reason and human goodwill. He embarked on a journey through Europe and the Middle East in search of philosophical answers, but found himself unable to understand the gospel through his own reasoning. However, in a moment of divine intervention, God bypassed his mind and directly revealed the answers to him, leading to a profound peace and transformation in his life.

Transcript

Let's pray. Thank you, precious God, for being the great, redemptive God that you are. Redeem also this time by bringing forth exactly what pleases you.

Open our hearts to receive it. Let it be a word that changes and transforms us, even breaks us up in the deeps. Thank you for what you have appointed.

Fulfill it now in the power of your own life. Receive the glory and the honor for it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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 these people in much the same way in a 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. A well-established in my profession.

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 just an ordinary atheist. I was an atheist, angry, full of hatred.

My early manhood, my youth, was at the time of the Nazis of World War II and the destruction of six million Jews. This was the single great fact of my life. 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. 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 Schopenhauer and Fichte and Nietzsche and Schopenhauer and Fichte and Nietzsche? That was an ultimate paradox. An umigma, an unanswerable question.

That is why I wanted to be a teacher. so 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 I 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 the Jewish people I went to the synagogues and I went to the churches but there was nothing to answer the questions where was God? and my trip was on an Israeli liner and I got off at Gibraltar and I was on a ship going to a city in Spain 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 have 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

I realized that regardless of the place I was in regardless of the differences in personalities and languages and all the obvious differences between these countries whether in France or in Europe or in Italy there

was something very similar and 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 I was very much interested in Greece because that was the origin of philosophy in fact I was more Greek than I was a Jew so my mind, my spirit and my thinking used to say that I was more Greek than I was a Jew 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 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 who took 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 what they loved 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 and 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 and I couldn't say how it was different there was a equality and authority in that book it 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 and our book is nothing more than the man Jesus there was no Jew more than Jesus in the book this was a surprise for me because we used to hear about him but we never recognized him as a Jew the Catholics put him on the cross with

flowers and colors and he looked like a ballet dancer the name of Jesus Christ is not Jewish or Hebrew the name of Jesus Christ is not Jewish or Hebrew I never met a Jew by the name Christ but I did not know that it was from the Greek word Christos which is the translation of the Hebrew word Mashiach Yeshua ha Mashiach Yeshua ha Mashiach Mashiach ha Mashiach 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 never knew there was a Father but because he said

so, I could believe it 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 and I came to a crisis in knowing who Jesus Christ was in John, the woman who was taken in the act people came to him and said, you came to continue the stoning the stoning said, death by stoning I thought, 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 Lord 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 I didn't want to see my new hero fall and I finally came to this place where there is 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 will find that there is a God there so I opened the book with trembling I described Jesus crashed over the earth poking his finger in the dirt the men who were circled around him waiting for his destruction 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 he 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 it 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 what will she say about this this will kill her there is no way I can explain it I am not only stuck with God I am stuck with Christ and in that condition I came to Egypt and I was here for four months both in Cairo and Alexandria representing a Jewish museum from California and I was in a Jewish museum in California and I was

in a Jewish museum in California and seeking to connect with the Jewish community in both Cairo and Alexandria to save the religious and the art objects on my first day upon arrival I lost my wallet I was pickpocketed and on the first day I arrived in Egypt my wallet was stolen and 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 and after I got infected 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

the hospital 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 butter 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 when we came to the next station 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 was teaching the Bible 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 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 and I was in a circle 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 and I was about to leave so 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 and I stayed 4 days and nights with these saints they were Pentecostals I couldn't have told you a Pentecostal from a 7th 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 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 3 days and nights and I could not understand for the natural man cannot perceive the things of God for they are spiritual and my last night I went to bed completely confused and perplexed 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 and 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 I awoke 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 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 her and said 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 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 didn't understand everything but I understood enough enough to be able to call upon the name of the Lord for the same Lord of the Jew and Gentile is rich unto all who call upon Him 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 2000 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 allowing 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 Holy Spirit came in I came back to California to be a teacher again in the same school system my friends made me a homemaker a welcoming 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 she said, why are you like this? this is so strange for you you're usually in the thick of such conversations I said, I find your conversation completely irrelevant to life everyone stopped their talking and looked they knew something was coming and she said, what do you think is relevant to life?

I was only weeks old in the Lord but 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 in 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 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? so I was asking them why do you have this love and this desire to learn Hebrew 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 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 and she was half my age and she was led by the Holy Spirit and said Art, let her pray for you so I said to myself is this little girl going to pray for me?

I knelt down and my hands and my feet were on the floor and she laid her hands on me I was desperate and something immediately broke all of the crumbling and coming apart all of the hardness of my heart over the years from human disappointment was crumbling and flushing out with my great sobs and tears 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 scriptures 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 to give my testimony for the first time in my life 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 gentile 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 since that day she said both my daughter and I have been praying for you the effect of the prayer of the bar has a lot of power and the Lord said to me I had never seen her before so I said you are the one whose prayers have entered me into the kingdom of God and I have never seen that woman again since but I have been in many places since Indonesia, Singapore, 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 are not over yet so that's a little picture of a whole nation that is going to be uprooted, loosed and cast out into the world that is going to be uprooted, loosed and cast out into the world their every hope lost without God and without hope in the world as you once were before you were brought nigh by the blood of the 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 the cars whizzed by as if they did not see me this man stopped with a new car this man stopped with a new car he got out of the car and greeted me in the street as if I was doing his mother a favor I was surprised and said what did this man say he took my bag with my needs and put it on the back seat of the car as if my bag was covered with the car and he didn't notice as if

something had happened when I sat in the front seat and closed the car door I felt like a guest of honor he said to me why are you traveling like this 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 said I'm a modern man whose life is broken at its foundations I'm looking for the deepest truth of life I told him I'm a Jew I said to myself why did I tell him I'm a Jew what is this nonsense then I looked at his face to see the reaction I was afraid that he was going to freeze but when he heard this his face began to glow what I said without meaning he meant to me in a very special way more than he meant to me and he insisted that we stop at a Swiss coffee house for refreshments how

could this man 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 I'm an existentialist I'm a philosopher there is nothing new under the sun I had my arms like this over my chest double dare you to tell me something new I had come to the utter 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 I was sick of words and sick of talk and sick of slogans I want to hear something from you 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? And 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 in 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 of 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.

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? So I have to ask 28 years later, was that a man? Or an angel? You remember this testimony. You remember this testimony.

When God sends some odd cats into your midst. When God sends some odd cats into your midst. Whose eternal destiny rests on your word.

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

Your love. Your love. Your extending of yourself.

Your extending of yourself. Your prayer. Your prayer.

So I want to pray for that. So I want to pray for that. God says I loved Israel as a child.

God says I loved Israel as a child. But I have brought my son out of Egypt. But I have brought my son out of Egypt.

We may stumble into this land as lost children. Desperately lost children. We may stumble into this land as lost children.

But because of you we will return to our land as sons. But because of you we will return to our land as sons. And all the world will rejoice for that.

And all the world will rejoice for that. I want to pray for that mystery. I want to pray for that mystery.

Of which my own conversion is a fragment. Of which my own conversion is a fragment. Thank you Lord.

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

Thank you for your mercy that will not let us go. Thank you for being the 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 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 when 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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