

Art's Testimony - Part 2

by Art Katz

Art Katz shares his transformative journey from skepticism to faith, emphasizing the importance of listening to God's voice and serving others.

Duration: 8:31

Scripture: Jeremiah 30:7

Topics: "Hearing God", "Humility And Surrender"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the need for individuals, particularly the Jewish people, to anticipate a last-day shaking and a time of deep trouble to break down their self-sufficiency and pride, allowing them to hear the still small voice of God. The speaker shares a personal testimony of being brought to a place of humility and surrender, where the noise of their own convictions and clatter is silenced, enabling them to finally hear God's voice and experience salvation.

Transcript

Still small voice. And that's why I believe that we Jewish people need to anticipate, according to scripture, a last day 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 a 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 noise 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 for 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 Holocaust was being made known, so to factor the six million Jews annihilated by that nation that 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 out of faith, but to unbelief and to the 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. And as 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 look sack 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 tourist 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 without answer.

I was a teacher in a school of a racially composite kind and my weak 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. When I heard that statement, again, it was as impactful in 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 limping on the floor, for with that statement I experienced a revelation of such power.

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