

K-518 Tv Show Part 2 Testimony

by Art Katz

Art Katz shares his profound journey from skepticism to faith, highlighting the transformative power of encountering Jesus as the Messiah.

Duration: 25:58

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-2, Matthew 5:17, Matthew 22:37-39, John 8:7, Acts 9:2, Romans 3:23, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Interview"

Description

In this video, two Jewish men, Art Katz and Paul Gordon, share their personal experiences with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They express their dissatisfaction with life and their search for something missing. They describe how they encountered the word of God, which had a profound impact on them, cutting through their souls and spirits. They also discuss the concept of sin and how Jesus' statement about casting the first stone applies to everyone, highlighting the need for self-reflection and humility.

Transcript

Ben Israel with Art Katz and Paul Gordon. Welcome to Ben Israel. My name is Art Katz.

And I'm Paul Gordon. We are delighted to have you with us today to share with us a rather unusual type of telecast, we think. Two Jewish men who have had an extraordinary experience in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Our lives have been transformed, we've been deeply touched of God, and he's given us this opportunity to share with you and to bring you into some awareness of what's happening with Jewish men like ourselves across the land and in the world. Paul, why don't you tell us a little bit about your experience in Israel's God? Well, I came from a normal Jewish home, Hebrew school, bar mitzvah at the age of 13, and I went into the army and I was looking for reality. I saw a number of different things going on in the world about me, but I knew one thing.

I knew that I was very unsatisfied with life. There was just something that was lacking, something that was missing. And I would look for reality here and I would look for it there.

And I guess that it was when I first was found, or was found of, by the God of Israel and had a living reality with the God of Israel, that life took on meaning for me. Knowing God in reality is really the whole thing. Of course, my life is different than yours in many respects, and yet very much the same.

We came from different parts of the country. I'm a Brooklyn boy, you're from California. My background was in left-wing politics and radical causes, you were a conservative.

And yet we were both embarked on a kind of a search and a quest for reality and for truth. And as far as I was concerned, of course, I knew nothing of such a God. You know, I was reading through your book.

Incidentally, my brother Art has written a book called, Art, called Ben Israel, an Odyssey of a Modern Man. And Art, when I was going through this, you tell us that it was on the deck of a tramp steamer that you first realized that Jesus was the Messiah. And as a Jewish lad, this must have come as quite a shock to you.

Well, of course it is a shock because that name has been associated with so many bitter things in our life and history, forced conversions and exiles and many things which we've had to suffer through the centuries. And I have to confess that it had a bitter distaste for me. And yet, God had prepared me in the course of months of travel as a disillusioned man in my 34th year, traveling about Europe seeking for philosophical answers to my life, having unusual encounters with people of a kind that I had not met before in America, real believers, and they had a kind of a peace and a calm, a joy that they exuded that frankly made me jealous.

And they spoke to me about the reality of a God that I had not thought possible. And on a trip to Greece, from Italy to Greece, I think it's rather significant that I was going to a place that was, for me, a kind of spiritual homeland because my values were really more centered in Greece than they were in Israel. I exalted all things that were human and intellectual.

This is kind of the way it is today too. Isn't that typical? And aboard the deck of that ship, the cheapest way to go, I found a fellow Jewish passenger who had a copy of the New Testament. Of course, I didn't have a very high regard for any kind of scripture.

I believed in a collection of fables and myths. And I felt especially that the New Testament was a Gentile book, not one fit for a Jew to read. But you know that as I began the reading of that book, a strange power began to affect my life.

There was a certain authority that came from these pages that I could not easily put aside. And the personality of Jesus was stunning. I'd had a certain kind of stereotyped notion of him in the pictures and the renderings of him that I had seen through the course of my earlier years as a kind of a blonde Jesus with milky blue eyes and aquila nose.

But the Jesus who came out of the pages of this book was quite a recognizable Jew. In fact, he spoke with such power and with such authority that I was compelled to read on. He made statements that I knew would not be befitting a spiritual man.

They were, in the slightest, the least, to say, presumptuous. He said that he had come not to destroy the law but to fulfill it, that if we saw him, we saw the Father, and that he and the Father are one. On one occasion, a woman said that when the Messiah comes, he will teach us all things.

And he answered, he who speaketh unto thee am he. I was shocked by these acute, startling, and unequivocal statements. And I knew that I was being forced into a kind of corner, that there'd be no neutral ground in the reckoning with the Jesus that came out of these pages, that either I would have to find him condemned as a gross blasphemer or truly fall at his feet, as other Jews did, and acknowledge him as Messiah, Lord, and God.

You know, Paul, I came to one passage in the reading of that New Testament that I'll never forget. Jesus had made the startling claim that he'd come not to destroy the law but to fulfill it, and the woman had been taken in the act of adultery with which so many of us are familiar. She was caught in the act, guilty, as we all are in God's sight, for the Scriptures say that we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, that there's no man good, no not one.

And I sort of burned with her in her predicament, knowing in a sense that I too, in God's sight, had been found guilty, caught in the act, and that I deserved the full penalty of the law. And yet there was something in my heart that I couldn't identify that was a cry for something beyond the things which are legal. And I just couldn't understand how Jesus could answer the predicament which he was in.

Frankly, I feared for him. I didn't want to see my new hero demolished, and I felt that I had come to a hero at last, not another culture hero who would fail me, as they call Marxists in the Eric Fromms of the past. But how could he possibly answer to this predicament? So I closed the book, trembling, with my heart pounding, trying to think of some answer that I myself would give for that predicament.

The law demanded death by stoning, and yet the cry was something greater than the law's just requirements. And I knew that the men who were circled about Jesus were men who were highly indignant about him, not because they were Jews so much as that they were men, and religious men. I think there's a special quality in Jesus which unmask the pretension and the fraud of the lives of men.

Have you sensed that? Have you seen that? Maybe you can say a word as you've acknowledged that in your own experience. Well, I was thinking of Jewish men and women who, when they come to the realization that Jesus is a Messiah, and they go home to break this to their families, it's like the house falls down on their heads. Just the name of Jesus, just that name, which for so many years has been serious or trouble to our Jewish people, brings on all kinds of reactions.

And I imagine you experienced the same thing, didn't you? I experienced it in that confrontation that was described, and I was experiencing it in my own personality. You were probably even thinking about that, weren't you, also, when you came to the realization that the New Testament was the Word of God and Jesus was a Messiah? Didn't you kind of have thoughts of what might happen if you received Him and then broke the news later on? Well, I know that my first reaction upon the realization was, what will my mother say? Right. And, of course, those of us, those who are watching us today will know that that's no light question, and that we've suffered so in that name that my mother would automatically assume that I had joined the enemy's camp.

She wouldn't understand. I knew that, that this would cause her a portion of grief and consternation. And my second question was, what would my intellectual colleagues say at the faculty in California that I had just left, where I'd been a leading radical? They would mock me as insane.

Naïve. Naïve, which is, in fact, what happened subsequently. But you know that when I read on, it pictured Jesus bent over the earth, poking his finger in the dirt.

And he looked up finally, I pictured the face of him who had never sinned, confronted by men who, in a sense, were anguished with him and aggravated by him and wanted him out of the way, and had him in such a predicament as no human wisdom could answer. And he spoke that one line with which many of us are familiar, maybe we're too familiar, and the explosive power of it has not registered upon our hearts. And that was, let him who is without sin cast the first stone.

And Paul, I can't describe what the reaction was in the reading of that line, as if it lifted up off the pages and penetrated my eyes and my brain and didn't stop there. To my amazement, my mind was everything. Everything was centered in intellect.

It was my God. But something began to press downward and inward in the depths of my being, in my heart, and rend me and cut me through. For the word of God, as the scripture says, is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged saw to the cutting asunder of the soul and the spirit.

Let me ask you a question. Do you think it might be that you realize that when Jesus said that, he was identifying every one of us, and you and I included, that we also were with sin, and that if we were to pick up a rock and throw that thing, that we would be just double condemning ourselves? Well, I think the reaction of his adversaries answers that question. I think the scriptures describe that one by one, they turned and walked away.

Let him who is without sin cast the first stone. And of course, who is there who is without sin? You know, I had come to realization something like that some years before when I was in the service. I had gone on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, not to a synagogue, but to Dachau, the concentration camp.

I wanted to see for myself something of a horror with which I thought I was already well acquainted. But you know what our human problem is that we don't know as we ought to know. I remember spending that day walking through those barracks because everything has been preserved as it was in that horrible time of the Holocaust.

I walked into the barracks. I actually ran my hand over those wooden bunks. I pictured the bodies of my people at one time herded together there.

I walked down the company streets. I saw the whipping post in their place. I walked into the commandant's office and saw the exhibition tables of photographs of mounds of hair and teeth and bodies and tattered uniforms and fragments of letters.

I walked into the gas room and saw the inscription in German on the wall about the strobing for a shower. I saw the jets in the ceiling. I went into the gas room.

I saw the ovens with bones and ashes still in their places and went outside and actually touched the smokestack. And when I did, something just snapped in my heart and consciousness. I'd seen more than I was able to receive.

And I left that day so numb and so in shock. Found myself on a train being taken back to Munich, although I hardly cared where. And I had a most unusual experience in that railroad compartment that day.

I thought myself alone, but I sensed that there was someone else in there with me. And I turned and I saw a blur of a blonde head and blue eyes, a typical Aryan, the symbol of the master race, our enemy and our persecutor. I tell you, Paul, it's such a great anger and hatred and bitterness welled up in my heart.

I wanted to turn and rend that man. When I looked upon him, I saw that this poor wretch himself was a victim of that most recent war. He had neither arms, no legs, a multiple amputee.

He had hooks for arms and artificial limbs for legs. And he was writhing in pain, trying to adjust his limbs with his hooks, and he couldn't do it. I had my arms folded over my chest, wearing the and thinking to

myself, suffer you dog.

That's only a small measure of the kind of pain that you inflicted upon my people. And yet, as he continued to writhe, I grew so uncomfortable that finally in disgust, I got out of my seat and I walked over without saying a word. And I laid my hands upon his artificial limb to straighten it.

And the moment I touched it, I could taste the nausea in my mouth. And he beckoned by signs and gestures what I should do until he achieved his comfort. We sat down and we attempted a conversation in my broken G.I. Deutsch.

And I was intently studying this man's face, looking for the telltale signs of barbarism and cruelty, and I saw none. All I saw was the face of a man, a representative man. And I heard a kind of an inward voice say, there but for the grace of God go you.

And I thought to myself, if I had not been born in Brooklyn, if I were not Jewish, if I were not American, if I were not wearing this uniform, I myself am capable of atrocity. I sense in my heart that I was already a murderer. Not that I had ever committed the act, but I know that I had given looks that could kill.

I had maimed and crippled with my mouth, and that therefore I could not point a finger of accusation at any man. I did not know the Scripture that there's no man good, no not one, that we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But I was introduced to the reality of which that Scripture speaks.

You know, the same thing when I was over in Japan, part of the occupation forces of 1950 and 1951. I took a trip to Hiroshima where the first atomic bomb was dropped, and I remember going to a bridge right near the train station that was the center of the blast. And I stood on that bridge, and as I looked down, I saw two shadows, my own and somebody else's.

And I turned, and there was nobody next to me. And it was a shadow of a man who had been standing on that bridge when the bomb went off, and it just indelibly etched his shadow into the bridge. And I thought the same thing.

There but for the grace of God, go I. You know, I thought exactly the same thing. I looked around me, and Japanese people were all over the place, and here I was, an American GI. I was the victor, and they were the vanquished.

And when I looked at them, I thought, it's really just a quirk of fate. Or I used to think that way. Now I know that it's God's planning and everything.

But when I looked at one of those people, and I thought, that could be me. I could have been the enemy. And the other guy who was Japanese, he could have been an American soldier.

I just happened to be born American. I think that's the beginning. I think, yeah, I think the main thing there is just that it kind of brings everything down into a common denominator.

That people aren't the enemy just because they belong to a certain race, or because they belong to a certain country. That we could have been anyone, or the other one could have been us. And I think it's so important that we realize that God, as He works in our lives, He brings us together.

He brings us together in unity. And this thing of enemy, and vanquished, and victor, and these things break down. They're gone.

You know, there's a wonderful scripture in Jeremiah. I know that you're familiar with this. It comes in the 17th chapter, in the 9th verse.

It says that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it? I think that the beginning of wisdom is to begin to understand what our own human predicament and condition is, as God Himself sees it and describes it in this book. That until we begin to understand that the enemy is not one outside.

Not the imperialist, or the exploiter, as I was so given to express in my own adolescence and youth. Always thinking that someone other than myself was at the fault for all of the unhappiness and grief that's in the world. Never beginning to understand that I, myself, in my own walk, in my own relationships, was something of an imperialist and an exploiter.

The human heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Truly, there's no man good, nor not one. And until we begin to see that, we're not disposed to receive the mercy and the salvation of a God.

I'm so grateful for that experience that I had aboard that train, the experience in Dachau, the growing understanding that I was being given by a God of whom I knew nothing, that I might be brought to the end of my own human arrogance and presumption. You know, Paul, as we go from campus to campus today, speaking before university audiences and confronting the radicals of this generation, I think the first message that I have for them, even before the consideration of God for His own sake, is for them to begin to perceive their own condition, that we're finite, limited, human, all too human, that our appetites grow by what they feed upon, as Shakespeare said, that despite the kinds of vocabulary we employ, the grand slogans and the phrases and the concern for brotherhood, that we really don't have the capacity until God begins to work something in our lives by His own power, by the transcendent nature which is seeking entry into our own. Yeah, you know, as we go along in these telecasts, it'll be interesting, I think, for our friends to hear some of the different things that we come up against and some of the people we meet as we go out to various places and speak.

I think what I'd like to hear now is, how did you go from when you were on the deck of the steamer to when you really met the Lord? Well, you can imagine what my reaction was when I was pierced through by the Spirit of God in the reading of those scriptures. I knew with great certitude in a single given moment of my life that there's a living God, a moment before I was an atheist, that I was reading His Word. I didn't know how that could be, knowing that this Word had passed through the hands of many translators, and yet it was undeniably the record of God.

And then, as the Word was God's Word, Jesus therefore must be who He claimed to be. It was a triple shock. I was stunned, devastated, and I knew that I had been brought to a great crossroad in my life, that I could not accept this revelation into my life and continue in the same character and the same walk that I had known previously, that my very kingdom was being imperiled and threatened, and I was being invited into the Kingdom of God, but that our cats would no longer be allowed to be the Lord of His own life.

Praise God. Well, that is a shock for any man to consider, and I have to confess that I wasn't eager to receive the import of this revelation into my life. I actually wrestled against God for about six months following that revelation, just as Jacob of old.

I spent four months in Egypt following that, representing a Jewish museum and attempting to salvage their religious and historical and art works before it would suffer devastation in that unhappy land. And then finally, in the four months there, my relationship with the Orthodox community, I came finally to Israel, and God brought my search to its conclusion in Jerusalem, the Holy City. I was met in the street one day by a young Jewish man whom I'd come to know nine months earlier, leaving New York on the same ship.

He was at that time studying at the Hebrew University. He's today a rabbi, an Orthodox young man, and when I told him that the Jesus of the New Testament was breathing down my neck, and of my experience in the revelation, and the way that my heart was being gripped by the things which had been spoken to me, he became alarmed that I might desert my ancestral faith, and had me to stay with him at the university for two weeks. And I read books which he put into my hands, and interviews which he arranged for me with friends and with professors at the school.

The upshot was that I was to be sent to an Orthodox Hasidic community, and I was put on a bus one day and never got there. It's just one of those happenstances where it was a wrong bus, although I had taken that bus downtown many times. I found myself lost, and I walked out of that bus and into the first store that I could find, seeking directions.

And the woman was very gracious at the counter, and I was about to leave, I noticed I was in a bookstore. With my curiosity for books, I took a closer look at the titles and stopped in my tracks when I saw that the store sold Bibles, Christian literature, and New Testaments. Quite a circumstance.

I turned and looked at this woman's Jewish face. I said, what is this place? Oh, she said, we're a congregation of Jewish believers in Messiah Jesus. And Paul, something clicked in my heart in that statement, and I heard a still small voice in that moment that called me by name and said, ought you not to leave.

I suppose that many men will say that to hear voices like that where brand one is insane. I had never before heard such a voice, but I know it was the same voice that Abram heard that called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, away from nation kindred and father's house to follow him in the land that he would show him. I intuitively recognized that this was the voice of him alone who had the right to command my Jewish allegiance.

You know what I did? I obeyed it. I stayed four days and nights with these Jewish believers and saw in that time a quality of life and devotion and spiritual intensity and power and prayer and depth of worship. Jews with their hands above their heads worshipping the God of Israel with tears and with Jewish confidences, which I could not put aside.

Real, real messianic Jews. They were messianic believers, and God was evidently in their lives. You know what I feel like doing? I think it'd be apropos if we just stopped right now and just thank God for what's happened to you and what's happened to me.

Why don't we just tell him we love him right now. People, I hope you'll not find this strange in that week by week as we continue as the Lord leads us in the unfolding of our own experience, the light that he's given us in his word and the various personalities that will bring, that you'll understand that Jews who have come to the knowledge of their God are Jews who call upon him. Prayer is no longer a ceremony.

It's not a ritualistic thing. It's not an aside. It's a deeply felt, real experience in God.

We believe that he's there. He hears us. He answers.

We love to sing before him, to praise him and to worship him. And we invite you, wherever you are spiritually, as you grow in realization, as your heart expands towards God, as it moves Godward, to also raise your voice. The scripture says that God inhabits the praises of his people.

He's not a Jew who is one outwardly, the scripture says, but inwardly, whose circumcision is not of the flesh, but of the heart, who rejoices in the Messiah Jesus and worships God in the spirit. So we're going to invite you to join with us in the spirit. There's a favorite psalm that we sing, the first verse of the 103rd Psalm.

Let's sing it for the people. We ask you not to evaluate our voices, and that's not the point, but just to catch a sense of our joy. Our acknowledgement of a God who saves, a God who is real to us as he was to Abraham, who calls men by a still small voice, out of arrogance, out of contemptuousness, out of self-righteousness, out of looking upon others as the enemy, to see the enemy in his own heart, calls him out of convenience, out of familiarity, and calls him into a land that he will show him, a land of promise and a land of joy.

Let's praise the Lord. Amen. Praise God.

Amen. You know that I heard such prayer, such singing, such devotion from these Jewish people. I went to sleep so perplexed that last night, unable to reconcile all that I'd been told, and that night God ordered the things in my heart, and I understood.

It takes a revelation of God by his spirit to understand, and he'll give it to those who have a contrite and broken spirit. The next morning I acted upon the basis of the things which God had given and called upon his name that first time, my first prayer in 35 years, and instantly something happened. A spirit of anger and rebellion and bitterness went out, and a Ruach HaKodesh, a Holy Spirit of God, came in.

A new life, a life which is available to every man who will recognize and understand the call of God and obey it. Let me ask you a question. Did it take a real understanding of God and how God operated, and how God did all of the things he did before you could call on his name? We have to know that it's his voice, his authority.

We pray you're hearing that voice. You'll tune in with us next week. Allow God to speak to you as he continues as a speaking God to us.

Thank you for joining with us. Appreciate your prayer and your continuation with us as we speak the things which he's made dear to us as Jewish men. God bless you, and see you next week.

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