

Testimony of Antony Simon

I was born in Manchester, England of Jewish parents and so attended Jewish schools where I learnt about God from an early age. I was taught that He was omnipresent (present everywhere). Jonah thought he could escape from God but found that it was impossible.

The Psalmist declared, *If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there -- Psalm 139:8.*

I sensed God's presence everywhere I went but I was not taught about a Holy God who hated sin.

We celebrated all the festivals, such as Passover, the Day of Atonement, etc. We went along with all the traditions but I did not see God as the prophet who said, *...this people draw near with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men -- Isaiah 29:13.*

Why would David say in Psalm 23:6, *I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever?*

Once I asked my father what happens after death and he said that we all go to heaven. This satisfied my curiosity about life after death but in my Jewish schools I was never confronted with; *your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you (Isaiah 59:2)*, all my righteousness were *...as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6)* and *there is no man which sinneth not (2 Chronicles 6:36)*.

I was lost and did not know God's forgiveness.

God said that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness, *it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul -- Leviticus 17:11.*

Rabbis contradicted God's Word by substituting mitzvahs (or good works) such as repentance, giving to charity and saying prayers. Even at the Great Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) a tradition developed (after the destruction of the second temple) of offering special prayers that equalled sacrifices. Little did I then realise that all my good works could never measure up to God's requirements for atonement.

During my youth I also had ingrained in me a contempt for all non-Jews who I believed to be Christians. Eventually this attitude got me in trouble when at age 18 I went to work for a month in a kibbutz. There I met a Christian named Terry. I mockingly nicknamed him "John the Baptist" which he did not appreciate. He even complained to the director who reprimanded me for it. I complied but my attitude did not change.

Providentially God had arranged a Jew who believed that Jesus was Messiah to be my roommate at the kibbutz. For some reason he never spoke to me about his faith during my first stay in Israel. God was to use him later.

I returned to Israel, after a few months in England, to live in another kibbutz. There I met a girl I knew in Manchester and she told me there was a Christian on the kibbutz whose name was Charley. She said, "be careful because he might try and convert you."

I replied, "not me, I'm not interested."

God had other plans, however. My roommate it turned out had a terrible problem with snoring and agreed to move out. While I looked for volunteers to change rooms with him my former roommate from the first kibbutz came to visit. When I learned that he was a believer I introduced him to Charley. God used this acquaintance to move Charley into my room.

We started discussing prophecy and the Scriptures together. Through this time I had not read the Bible apart from the book of Esther. Charley did not tell me about Jesus until one day he referred to a chapter which read like this;

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? ...I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death ... they pierced my hands and feet ... all they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him: and none can keep alive his own soul ... They shall come and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

After hearing this I said, "I am Jewish, I don't want to know about Jesus." I had a big shock when I found out it was not in the New Testament but was written by David 1 000 years before Jesus came (Psalm 22:1, 14-16, 29). These and other prophecies such as Zechariah 12:10, Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 7:14 led me to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

I got so excited about these new discoveries that in my exuberance I went around the streets telling everybody. I also went to see a Rabbi in a place called Kfar Habad to discuss Daniel 9:24, 27 that the Messiah needed to come and die before the Second Temple was destroyed. This Rabbi told me that it was King Agrippas that had fulfilled this prophecy. His answers from a commentary were so absurd that I was convinced even more that Jesus was the Messiah. Yet I did not believe in Him at this time. I only knew about Him.

Another believer at the Kibbutz named James often took me to Christian meetings in Haifa. One day he asked me, "Who do you believe Jesus to be?" My answer was an emphatic, "the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel!" On this day, December 24 1982, at the age of 18, I found peace with God. I was born again. I repented of my sins and trusted Christ as my Saviour.

Now I can say like David, *I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Psalm 23:6)*. My prayer today is that other Jewish people will also come to believe and trust for Salvation the Messiah of Israel, Jesus Christ.