

# YESHUA IS MY SAVIOR

By Abe Sandler

A Jewish  
man finds  
Jesus—  
and a call



# “Mom, Dad, I found the Messiah! It’s Jesus!”

I excitedly shared those words with my Orthodox Jewish parents when I had just turned 16 years old. Four months earlier I had come to faith in Yeshua (Jesus’ name in Hebrew) as my Messiah, Savior and Lord. But that is getting ahead of my story.

## Witnesses of Evil

My parents, born in Russia, told me horror stories of going through the pogroms (Russian for “devastation”). During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, mob attacks against Jews were



often approved or condoned by authorities. In some pogroms, Jews were rounded up and locked in the village synagogue. The building would then be set ablaze, burning the captives alive while gang members outside sang hymns. Years before Hitler annihilated six million of our people, my mother’s and father’s families immigrated to North America.

My family attended synagogue regularly, kept a kosher diet and observed the Sabbath. I attended Hebrew school. The day after my thirteenth birthday I stood at the *bema* (podium) of our synagogue and chanted my bar mitzvah passage in Hebrew. I

had become a “son of the Law.” In our faith, I was now spiritually a man.

We lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the city of “brotherly love.” However, by the time I was 14, I had been beaten up by “Christian” young people who called me a “Christ killer.” One day I was playing in the park when a 16-year-old “Christian” boy from the neighborhood pulled out a knife and said, “I’m going to kill you, you dirty Jew!” I ran into the hills, but he trapped me on a ledge about 30 feet high. Brandishing the weapon, he cursed me for being Jewish. I jumped off and hit an outcropping about halfway down. I broke my leg but got away.



Convinced that Christians hated Jews, I wanted nothing to do with them.

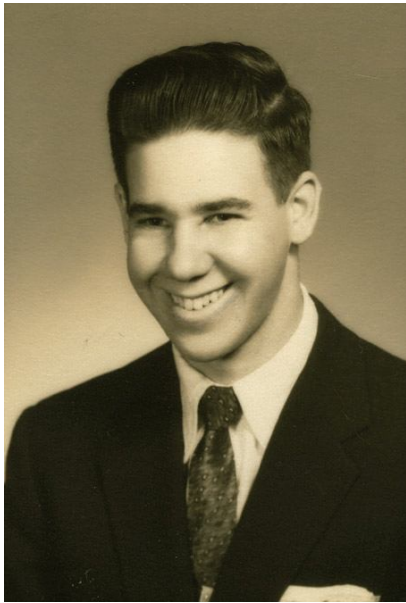
## Joining Up

When I was 15 a friend invited me to join a basketball team. What he didn’t tell me was that the coach, Rev. George Gruen (a C&MA missionary), required players to come to a Bible study after games. To play ball, I went, along with about 10 Jewish teammates. During the studies I cut up and made fun. George told me that if I was not quiet, I could not stay. The next week I continued my disruptions, and George asked me to leave. I ignored him. He then grabbed me by the back of the neck and escorted me through the door.

I waited outside until the meeting was over because George was our ride home. Angry that he had embarrassed me in front of my friends, I said, “I’m never coming back here again!” I went back the next week. If you asked me why, I couldn’t have told you. (Later, I learned that George had written to hundreds of Christians for prayer that I would come back, that I would be quiet—and that I would be saved.)

One night, he read a passage of Scripture—Isaiah 53—but did not tell us where it was found. “Who do you think it’s talking about?” he asked. “It’s about Jesus,” I immediately said, “but I don’t believe in the New Testament!”

George then handed me the Bible. I was shocked to see that the passage was in the Tanakh, the Hebrew Old Testament. "It must mean something else," I responded. And then it hit me! He had a fake Bible; it really wasn't in there. I went home and checked my Jewish Bible, and there it was.



In class, George clearly outlined on a chalk board the messianic prophecies found in the Tanakh: Micah 5:2 (Messiah would come from Bethlehem); Isaiah 7:14 (He would be born of a virgin); Isaiah 53 (He would suffer and die for our sins); Psalm 22 (He would be crucified); Psalm 16:10 (He would rise from the dead). Then George explained the prophecy of the 70 weeks in Daniel 9:24–26. This says that the Messiah would come before the destruction of the Second Temple, which took place in 70 A.D. That nailed it for me; I knew who fulfilled these prophecies.

I'll never forget the night of December 21, 1956. Alone in my room, I knelt and prayed: "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, I know that I have sinned and broken your commandments, and I deserve your punishment. But I believe that Jesus is the Messiah and that He came to take my punishment. Messiah Jesus, come into my heart, cleanse me with your blood and make me your child. Help me to read the Bible every day, to pray and tell others about you. Amen."

### 'All My Heart'

You might think I had peace, but I didn't. The first Hebrew Scripture I learned was the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4): "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." Now I came face to face with the Trinity. *What did I do?* I thought. *Now I have three gods!* I was afraid I had become an idolater.

When I told George, he gave me a New Testament. "Just read it," he said. This also was a struggle because I had been taught it was a sin to *touch* a New Testament, let alone *read* it. I snuck the book into my room.

"Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, help me to know the truth," I prayed. Then, I began in Matthew and read through to Revelation three times in four months, and the Lord took the veil off my eyes. I knelt again. "Lord, I don't care what happens; I'm going to follow Jesus with all of my heart!" That's when peace flooded my soul, and I knew my name was written in God's Book of Life.

I was so filled with joy that I went to my parents and blurted, "Mom, Dad, I found the Messiah. It's Jesus!"

### Dead or Alive

At first my parents thought that if they humored me, it would pass. However, after a few months they realized I was serious. Then they threatened to hold my funeral. Some Jewish families actually bury some belongings of those who become Christians, throw the believers out of the house and consider them dead. My grandparents, uncles and aunts told me not to visit them anymore.

When I witnessed to my brother Jack, two years my senior, he grabbed his shotgun and put it against my head. "If you don't stop talking about Jesus, I'm going to blow your brains out," he yelled. Thankfully, he never pulled the trigger, and I didn't stop talking.

My parents didn't throw me out, but for six years they did not acknowledge me as their son. After I graduated from high school, the Lord called me to Canadian Bible College, where I prepared for the ministry. There, my classmates and professors prayed for my family's salvation. My mother wrote to me

twice during my freshman year. The first letter told me to never come home again unless I gave up Jesus. Before summer break she wrote: "You can come home but don't talk about Jesus."

## Answered Prayers

For many years my mother cared for my father, who had Parkinson's disease. Finally, physically and emotionally broken, she was hospitalized for months. It fell to me to care for Dad. I was annoyed; I had just completed my first year of Bible college and wanted a job to earn tuition money. After two weeks, the Lord convicted me, and I asked both God and my father to forgive me. I then cared for Dad with love, getting his meals, helping him dress and shaving him. He listened as I shared why I believed Yeshua was our Jewish Messiah. Later that year, shortly before he died, Dad came to faith in Jesus.

After graduating from college, I married Janet Ronson. Mom lived with us for the last 16 years of her life. She had always kept a very strict kosher home, so we installed a separate kitchen for her. When she joined us on Jewish holidays, we always made sure her meal was kosher. After eight years of observing us, she said, "You're still Jewish, aren't you?" "Yes," I said. "The only difference is that I believe our Messiah has come, and you believe He has not come yet." Shortly before she died, she received the truth that our Messiah has indeed come.

My brother Jack and I eventually renewed our relationship. "I can see that you really have something," he said, "but I'm not ready to accept Jesus. Maybe God just has to hit me over the head." I began to pray that God would "hit" Jack over the head. And He did. Sometime later Jack's apartment house burned. Trapped on the second floor, his only way out was to jump. He shattered a leg and lost a tremendous amount of blood. To complicate the situation, Jack had leukemia and could not reproduce the platelets his body needed to heal. The doctors were not sure he would survive. I grabbed my brother's hand and prayed in Jesus' Name that God would bring him through. I then asked many friends to pray.

After three days Jack's bone marrow started producing platelets. The doctor said, "This is amazing." By the end of the week, Jack's blood count was absolutely normal, and the doctor said, "This is a miracle!" Jack said, "I know I'm getting well because you prayed to Messiah Jesus." It took a few more years, but one day Jack confessed faith in Yeshua as his Savior.

My brother Herman, 18 years older than me, played French horn in the symphony. For years I shared the messianic prophecies and invited him to believe. Each time, he said, "I'm glad for what it did for you, but I just don't need it." One day his wife called and said that Herman, stricken with brain cancer, had just six months to live. I flew to California and shared Yeshua with him. Again he rejected the message. Months later his wife told me Herman had just three weeks to live. She advised me not to come because he had lost the ability to speak and would not recognize me. I felt strongly that I should go anyway. When I walked into Herman's room, he said, "Abe, it's so good to see you. I'm so glad you came." His wife about fell on the floor. The night before I was to leave, I sat in Herman's room, not knowing what to say. For 29 years he had rejected my witness. I began to pray silently, and at that moment, Herman opened his eyes and said, "Abe, ever since you were here last time, I have been thinking about Jesus. I would like to make Him part of my life." I was astonished and led him in a prayer of repentance. "Abe," he said, "I feel great! We have to tell my wife about this." I left the next morning, and three weeks later Herman died. But I know I will see him, Jack and my parents in heaven.



## Israel for the People

For the last six years my wife, Janet, and I have been planting an outreach in New York City, where there are 2 million unreached Jewish people. When I arrived, God directed me to the New York Chinese Alliance Church, where I shared my vision with the pastor and his staff. He assured me that they would pray for me and our Jewish outreach.

Two weeks later the pastor's brother expressed interest in joining us. So now I have a Chinese man named Israel helping me to reach Jewish people with the gospel in New York City. About 30–35 attend our Manhattan services; half are born-again Jews.

Leon was 85 years old when he began coming to our service. He quickly befriended Israel, who began sharing with him. One week Israel led Leon through the major messianic prophecies in the Tanakh and told him that the next week, they would talk about who fulfilled them. Then Israel walked into the men's room. Moments later, Leon entered and shouted, "Israel, these prophecies are about Jesus! Jesus is the promised Messiah!" Right there in the restroom Leon prayed to receive Jesus. Israel and I had the joy of baptizing Leon some months later.

## Bicoastal Vision

In June 2010, the Lord opened a door to begin planting another Alliance outreach in Seattle, Washington, home to 40,000 unsaved Jewish people. I divide my time between New York and Seattle. Every year we invite people to do short-term missions in those cities through our street witnessing campaigns. For three days, I train team members in Jewish evangelism and street ministry, and then we are on the streets for a week, passing out tracts and engaging people on the issue of Jesus the Messiah. We get contacts for follow-up and lead some Jews and Gentiles to the Lord right there on the sidewalk. Of the world's 15–20 million Jewish people, only 0.3 of 1 percent know Jesus as Savior. Jesus wept because His people would not come to Him. Paul wrote, "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved" (Rom. 10:1).

Our greatest needs are more prayer, more workers and more resources. My people are not unreachable; they are just unreached.

## And one more thing: 'The Jewish Pope'

One day someone asked me to visit a Jewish man in the hospital. "I know you!" he said when I entered his room. Sam was an old neighbor I hadn't seen in 20 years. We talked for a few minutes, and then he said, "By the way, Abe, what do you do for a living?" "I'm the leader of a messianic Jewish congregation, and I believe that Jesus is our promised Jewish Messiah," I answered. For two hours Sam questioned me about my faith.

Sam had high blood pressure that could not be relieved through medication or diet, so the doctors discharged him. Though he could have a stroke any time, there was nothing they could do. I visited Sam and his wife, Florence, and showed them that Jesus fulfilled all the messianic prophecies. Both received Jesus as their Messiah and Savior. "Jesus not only died to save you," I said to Sam, "but He died to be your Healer as well. Would you like me to pray for your physical problem?" Sam said yes, so I offered a brief prayer and left.

Three days later Sam came to our service. Right in the middle, without invitation, he stood and said, “Three days ago I found out that Jesus is my Jewish Messiah, and He saved me. And I found out that He is my Healer—my blood pressure is absolutely normal.”

We couldn’t shut this guy up; he just kept on talking. When he left, he began to witness for Jesus to his father, his sisters— anyone he met. “I can’t believe it,” his father said. “My son’s become the Jewish pope.”

Sam finally said to me, “Abe, you have to talk to my dad.” I was really nervous because his father was a member of the Orthodox synagogue I had attended when I was growing up. But Sam and I prayed together before I shared with his dad.

One of the thrills of my life was when that 82-year-old man received Jesus as his Savior.

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