

GOD, IF YOU'RE REAL
I WANT TO KNOW

by Avram Yehoshua
<http://SeedofAbraham.net>

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GOD, IF YOU'RE REAL I WANT TO KNOW

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I remember a time when my younger brother, my mother and I, were at my grandparent's apartment in Brooklyn. I was about nine. We had stayed overnight and Nana (my grandmother), was asking what we wanted for breakfast as we sat down to the kitchen table.

I told her bacon and eggs and received a swift kick in my leg from my mother who was sitting near me. 'Not here!' she told me. My mother had rebelled against her parents' Orthodox lifestyle. Even though I was raised 'Jewish' we never observed Shabat and we ate bacon. Something Nana and Gramps wouldn't approve of.

I was born in Brooklyn, New York on May 24th, 1951. I would learn about pain at a very early age. My parents divorced when I was five and I grew up thinking that I was the only kid who didn't have his father living at home. I was confused and felt ashamed, even though my father loved me with all his heart. Every week he would pick up my younger brother and me, and take us out for the day. He devoted his life to his 'two boys.' I thank the Lord for the father that He gave me.

I had an Orthodox bar-mitzva in Newton, New Jersey in May, 1964. Why did I have it? Because my grandparents wanted me to, and my mother wanted to honor them. My formal Jewish training, which started in the third grade in the Bronx, quickly came to an end when my mother remarried and we moved to Jersey, while I was still in the third grade.

We lived too far away from the synagogue to continue my Hebrew School education, but one day when I was 12, my mother turned to me and said, 'Oh my God!, you're almost 13!' And so my Jewish training for bar-mitzva resumed six months before my 13th birthday.

I thank the rabbi for getting me through what would have been a very embarrassing situation. When I was called to the bima to read the haftara portion (the portion of Scripture from the Prophets that the bar Mitzva boy reads), I chanted it melodically and without mistake. The only problem was that I had no idea what the Hebrew words meant or what I was doing, except that today I would 'become a man.' A few months before my bar-mitzva, the rabbi, sensing that I could not be ready in time, made a recording for me to play over and over again so I could memorize the haftara portion.

After the service, the men of the Synagogue came to me and congratulated me. I felt ashamed, for I had deceived them. They heard me chant the words, but they meant nothing to me. I couldn't understand the Hebrew and my heart was far from walking in the ways of the God of Israel, *the very meaning of bar-mitzva*. But what a party we had. I received a gold watch from my Nana and Gramps and cash and gifts from all the other people.

After we got home, I went upstairs to my bedroom to count how much money I had received. One of my cousins told my mother. She shouted from downstairs, where all the people were, 'André!!!' (my American name), 'You better not be counting that money!' *Nothing like Jewish guilt*.

The next day, I assumed my assimilated American lifestyle, which had nothing to do with being Jewish. You already know that we didn't observe Shabat and we ate things forbidden to us Jews by the Lord in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. My life was caught up in playing baseball and basketball and my hero was Mickey Mantle. I loved the Yankees. I could tell you at any given moment what Mick's batting average was, how many home runs he had hit, etc. Left on my own, with no real religious training, I had fallen in line with how most American boys grow up.

THE JOURNEY

At 20, I was attending Bergen Community College in Paramus, New Jersey. I remember turning onto Rt. 17 from Rt. 4, to go to the pool hall where I made my living shooting pool. I would eventually graduate from Ramapo State College in Mahwah, N.J. with a B.A. in Political Science, with no distinctions. My heart was into shooting pool and my real education would come from the pool hall where I got an M.A. in 'Banking' and a Ph.D. in 'English.' :)

My life was one where I did whatever I wanted to do. Leaving home at 18, I made the pool hall my new home, where I could be found 70 hours a week. I smoked grass, did hash and some LSD too. I learned what sex was about and saw that I was not as ethical as I had imagined myself to be. But something was stirring inside me. As I entered the ramp to come onto Rt. 17 to play pool that day, I looked up to the sky and said:

'God, if you're real, I want to know. If You're not, then Heaven and Hell don't really mean anything. But if You are, then You are wise enough and strong enough to get in onto a fellow like me.'

That began my spiritual journey. Oh, I 'knew' that God existed. I had heard about Him in one way or another all my life. But God meant no more to me than Abraham Lincoln. I knew he existed too, but Mr. Lincoln didn't effect my life, as I could see it, in 1971. And neither did the God of my Fathers. Where was LIFE? And where was true integrity?

I was hungry for Reality. I searched for God in Transcendental Meditation. I found something there, but it was not the God of Israel. I looked into Zen. I loved it. I thought that it was the perfect answer to reality. But I would come to see that God was not there either, just "self" at a heightened level of awareness. I would wander down that spiritual lane for the next four years. And then I moved to Tampa, Florida.

I had played pool for five years and could have turned professional, but my heart was not into hustling people. I had come to see that to get better at the game, I would have to become insensitive to people and to any morals that I still had left. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life, but I knew that I didn't want to shoot pool for the rest of my life. For I could see that to be the best, you had to give your soul to the game. But the game did not reward me with something that satisfied my soul. It just took my soul and left me empty.

I left Jersey and would have gone to California, but I didn't think that my '67 Buick Skylark would make it. Tommy Vince, a friend of mine, and I decided to head to Florida. It was September, 1975. I only brought a few books with me but one of them would radically change my life. I had heard many good things about this book a few years earlier. When I began to read it in October, 1975, I thought it was going to be like a number of books that I had read before on self-help. I was into the 'pull myself up by my own belt loops' philosophy, and so I thought that, *The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale would be similar. It wasn't.

The God of Israel spoke to me through the book. It had true, short stories about people who were searching for Reality, searching for hope, for real peace with God, and many had other needs as well. Each one found their answer in the Jewish Messiah. I was deeply impressed. *I had never read anything like that before.*

Growing up with my limited Jewish understanding, I knew nothing of the terrible things that the Church had done to the Jewish people over the last 1900 years in the Name of the Jewish Messiah. My grandparents and parents had never mentioned that Name, and so I was not turned off by His Name when I read the book, as many Jewish people are.

By the time I had gotten half-way through the book, *I could see that He was everything that I had always wanted and could never put my finger on.* I gave myself to Jesus right then and there and the most wonderful thing happened.

As I asked Him into my heart, I felt an indescribable peace come over me.

I knew that I had made the right decision. The God of Israel was affirming it. I now had an experiential awareness of God. He had manifested Himself to me as He had done in the past to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It would be the first of many such experiences. One journey came to an end while another began.

THE WAY OF BROKEN DREAMS

For the next eight years I would walk in Christianity. I prayed much and devoured the Bible. Feeling called by the Lord into the ministry, I applied for seminary at Oral Roberts University and was accepted. I entered the Master of Divinity program in August, 1979 and left in March, 1983. I did not graduate. I had a conflict with the Dean of Theology over theology, and I was suspended.

It was shattering. Four years of my life. I had a 3.57 grade point average (an A-) with 87.5 credits, more than enough to graduate. As one professor sympathetically told me, 'You got quite a seminary education.' What he meant was that I not only got an academic education, but also a strong taste of perverse Christian ethics. It was a shocking eye opener for me.

I remember a year before the suspension though, one of my fellow students, a man by the name of Mark Wexler, another friend of mine, came into a class. He told everyone that he would like to be called by another name; 'Mosheh.' It was his Jewish name. I didn't like that he was parading his Jewishness around. I felt uncomfortable. And yet, God would lead me down a similar path.

After the suspension, my wife Robin (who would later take the Hebrew name Rivka), and I began holding worship services at our apartment complex on Saturdays, as our Sundays were filled with church. I was proceeding on with ordination in the United Methodist Church when the Lord brought a Gentile couple into our little congregation.

They spoke to me about Messianic Judaism. A Judaism that believed in Yeshua (the Hebrew Name for Jesus) and upheld the Torah. It is a biblical Judaism verses a rabbinic Judaism. I had never heard of this. They told me that there were more than 150 such congregations in the United States, 40 in Israel and that they were springing up every place on earth where God had dispersed us Jews.

As I prayed during the summer of 1983, I came to see that the Lord was leading us to establish a Messianic Synagogue in Tulsa. In September I sensed the Lord leading me to sever my official relationship with the Methodist Church, for they were going one way and the Lord was leading me another. And so, we embarked on a journey into unknown territory. It was at this time that I sensed from God that *I was to begin using my Hebrew name*, the name given to me at my circumcision when I was eight days old, and so, André gave way to Avram (Hebrew for Abram). That year God would cause to come alive a love for my Jewish people that I had never known before.

In September, 1984, the Synagogue confirmed me as their rabbi, God having ordained me for this purpose. I know that this is cause for much misunderstanding in the traditional Jewish Community, but which of the branches of Judaism has a patent on the title? Because if one did, the others would not be able to use it! And besides, 'rabbi' is a much used title in the Messianic Community around the world.

The title of rabbi is one of honor among the people in their respective branches of Judaism for their own rabbis. But who in the traditional Jewish Community (those who do not yet believe in Yeshua as the Messiah of Israel), would give me honor because of the title? None that I know of.

And the title of rabbi in the Christian community is totally foreign. Both camps tell me I am wrong for having it. But I have come to see that God has given it to me as a badge of humiliation. I am following in the way of my Rabbi, Yeshua.

I would carry the title of 'rabbi' for 16 years. When I came to Israel I saw that when I would share it with Israelis, many would be turned off to any further conversation about Messiah as their idea of what a rabbi was, was influenced by the rabbis in Israel. Some of the rabbis are unscrupulous and dishonest and have been exposed as such. Also, the ultra-Orthodox look down upon the common Israelis

as ‘sinners’ and so don’t associate with them, causing much strife and contention among the people. In the year 2000, I was led of the Lord to drop the title, sensing both that it was counter-productive to reaching out to both the religious and the secular Israeli and a friend in Florida had challenged me over the use of the title (Mt. 23:8). In prayer I sensed that he was right.

Israel became so strong in my heart that I thought the Lord was sending us over to Israel to live. Robin was pregnant with our first child and I believed that he would be born there.

We got our passports in order and waited for our piano to sell to give us airfare to Israel and some cash to start a new life there. My son was born on the third night of Sukote (Tabernacles), October 1984 (the 17th of Tishri, 5745), in Tulsa, Oklahoma and I thought that I had missed the Lord on the ‘call to Israel.’

One day in January, 1985, in prayer I spoke to God and said, ‘I guess I missed You on Israel.’ The Lord Yeshua spoke to me and said, ‘The Israel that I have called you to are the Jewish People of Tulsa.’ With that I knew that God was planting me in Tulsa, to reach out to my Jewish brethren with the Great News of God’s LIFE for us in His Messiah, Yeshua.

We named our first son *Zavdi*, the name the Lord had given to Robin before she conceived him. *Zavdi* means, ‘My gift’ to you. He certainly was. What a joy to my soul that I had never known before. And I am the oldest of six, having raised the last four from diapers. My mother would go to work when I got home from school (my step-father already working the evening shift), and my younger brother, Noel, and I were left to feed, bathe, nurture and put to bed our three youngest brothers and sister (David, Sarah, Matthew and Joseph). I would not think that the love that I had for my brothers and sister would ever be exceeded. But *Zavdi* took a place in the deepest part of my heart. There was such an intense oneness. I had never experienced anything like *Zavdi*.

It was a busy time for me. Rabbi of Zhera Avraham Synagogue (The Seed of Abraham), substitute teacher for Tulsa Public Schools, and a full time graduate student at Oklahoma State University.

I had gone back to school because I loved counseling people, that being one of my strong points at ORU. And also because I saw the need for finances to support my family. There was very little money as a Messianic Rabbi. I enrolled for a Master of Science in Community Counseling and would switch to Marriage and Family Therapy by the end of the year. But the Lord had other plans.

THE WAY OF HOLINESS

We lived on the east end of Tulsa now and there was a QT on the corner where I liked to play a game called *Ms PacMan*. It’s an electronic game that you place a quarter into and try to run up your score before being ‘eaten up.’ I spent too much time and money there. I was hooked, and I knew it wasn’t right. I should have been devoting more of my time to the Lord; studying, witnessing for Him, etc., but I found I had to have my daily fix of *Ms PacMan*.

One day, after playing for a couple of hours, I said, ‘That’s it! Lord, I’m not going to play again.’ And I meant it. The very next day I was playing. After I got done, I walked back to my apartment and went into the bedroom and started to cry. I found myself on the floor, feeling condemned for telling the Lord just the day before, that I’d never play again. I had broken my word to Him. I didn’t ask for forgiveness because I couldn’t forgive myself and thought that He never would either. As I lay there in a heap, feeling the weight of my guilt and condemnation, the Holy Spirit came upon me and the guilt vanished immediately. I felt clean. I was forgiven. The Lord had also delivered me. I had no need or desire to play *Ms PacMan* anymore. I was free. Glory to His Name!

Now I was ready to go on with the Lord. He brought a black man across my path who would whet my appetite for holiness, a deeper relationship with Yeshua. I had met many good men and some righteous men, but never a holy man. He was an African Methodist Episcopal Zion minister from North Carolina who, for 18 years, preached about Jesus, but did not know Him.

Then one day, the Lord Jesus became real to him and he began to preach the Lord like he had never done before. Some elders in his church became upset with this new change and in time, would discharge him. But before they did that, the Lord would change his heart toward the Jewish people.

It was after he had really come to know Jesus, that his 12 year old son ran away from home. He looked all over the neighborhood and came back to his home totally depressed. As he sat there on his couch, he looked up to the Lord and cried out in his anguish, 'You don't know how I feel! This has never happened to You!

The Lord spoke to him saying, 'Yes I do. *My Son Israel has run away from Me.*' And with that a seed of deep compassion was planted within his heart for the Jewish people.

In April and May of 1985, this man lived with us. I was finishing my first year at Oklahoma State University where I had a 3.5 (A-) average. But this man's walk with God caught my attention. I saw the *Life, Joy and Love of God* overflow from him as he related to people. My heart burned for a deeper relationship with Yeshua, as he had.

I got out of O.S.U. for the summer break and I set my sights on seeking Yeshua. I began to fast and pray and on the eighth day the Lord Yeshua spoke to me and said, '*You will learn to trust Me. I will meet your needs.*' And with that, I knew in my heart that I was not to go back to finish my M.S. at O.S.U. or continue to substitute teach in the Tulsa Public Schools in the fall.

I would learn to trust Yeshua for my very food, clothing and shelter. For myself and my family. It was the end of May and we were being evicted out of our apartment for failure to pay for two months back rent. The telephone had been cut off and the electric was about to go. A woman in the Synagogue told me, 'You need to get a job and go to work until the congregation can support you and your family. You need to be responsible.'

In time spent with the Lord Yeshua, I knew that He wanted me on my face before Him though. We had less than \$100. In sharing this with another woman we knew, she said that she had the answer. She had left her husband two months earlier and had leased an apartment for six months, and now she was ready to go back to her husband. If we could come in under her lease we wouldn't have to pay all those charges for entering an apartment and she wouldn't have to pay for the four months left on her lease. We went to the apartment manager and she approved it.

The day before we were to move in, I went to the manager to see if all was still in order. The assistant manager met me and told me the manager was on vacation, and that she didn't know anything about our arrangement. It would have to be cleared with the regional manager!

We met with the regional manager who told us that she would need to contact the manager of the apartment complex where we were living. I was now in my 11th day of fasting and you might think that I would have had all the faith that I would have needed to handle this situation. My reaction? 'We're sunk!'

The Lord Yeshua would use this situation to show me that even though my faith was non-existent, He would not let me drown. The regional manager got on the phone and called the manager of our apartment complex and asked about us. When she got off the phone she was all smiles. She said that the manager told her that we were fine people and that she was sorry to see us leave.

I could hardly believe it! Here we were being evicted and the manager who was doing it was giving a glowing report about us!

I returned to the manager the following day and asked her why she said what she did about us. She told me that she just 'wanted to do something nice' for us and that if it were up to her, we could have stayed.

That day we moved from a one bedroom, one bathroom apartment, into a two bedroom, two bathroom apartment, with no money being exchanged. The Lord Yeshua had made a way for us where no way seemed to be! The Red Sea had parted for us. He would do that over and over again as we learned to really trust in Him for our needs.

We were in our apartment for a few days, it was June, 1985, and we still didn't have any money for the new rent. I said, 'Lord, you didn't bring us in here to get us evicted from here, did You?' I asked, 'Is there anything that I need to do that I'm not doing?' And the Lord spoke to me and said, 'That which I have given you, that you have shared with the Synagogue, you are to share with the churches.' It was 10:00 PM and I was in bed, but when I heard that I got out of bed and began to go through my files.

For over a year, the Holy Spirit had been teaching me about the Tabernacle of Moses, the Sacrifices, the Feast Days of Israel, etc. I would finish up with a teaching and the Lord by His Spirit would lead me to the next one, week after week. It was a wonderful time of learning. And then I would share it with the Synagogue.

At my file cabinet I began to pull these teaching out and assemble them. I made up a list and would send it to 20 churches at a time. I would call them a week later, and find out if they were interested in having me come in and share on a topic. By the time we left for Israel in January, 1999, I had spoken in more than 250 different churches, over 500 times. And the Lord would minister so beautifully through me, not only academically, teaching the people about their Hebraic heritage, but also by His Spirit, as souls were touched by Him. It was a joy to behold.

THE WAY OF LOVE

It was an evening in June, a day or two after the Lord had told me to go out to the churches. I was sitting at my desk in our new two bedroom apartment. I was alone in the room and all of a sudden I sensed another presence. It startled me. It was as if the room had a slight mist in it. And what I sensed was that this presence desired me, as a man desires his wife! I was shocked.

I realized in that split second that the Presence was the Spirit of the Holy One, Yeshua. Understanding this, I yielded myself up to Him. With a heart full of devotion and submission I said, 'I am Yours.' And as soon as I said that, His Presence enveloped me with His most precious Peace.

It was still June, 1985, and we hadn't paid our rent yet. I wouldn't start going out to churches till August and here we were behind on our rent, which we hadn't paid since we moved in 10 days earlier. We had run up late charges at our new place, and our furniture payment had come to its end, with the standard balloon payment. Between rent and furniture we owed about \$550. If we didn't pay the furniture fee, about \$150, they would come and take it away the next day. Not that we had that much.

A friend of mine had gotten me a speaking engagement with a group of Christians for that evening. It was out of town and on our way out, I wrote a check for the furniture thinking that if we didn't get the money to cover it, they could come and take it. I got to the speaking engagement and shared my testimony, asked if anyone wanted prayer, and a few people came up. There were only about 18 people there. I had determined within my heart that I would not push for my needs (rent and furniture), but if I got a chance I would share it with the people. As I finished praying for the last person, the man in charge came up. I asked him if he wanted prayer also, or if he were coming to take over. He told me that he didn't want prayer but that if I had anything else that I wanted to do, to feel free to do it. I told him that I had some needs and would it be alright to share them. He emphatically said, 'Yes, go ahead.'

They placed a small basket in the back so that those who wanted to, could financially help me. The people gave over \$600. On the way back to Tulsa I just melted. The Lord was truly providing. This would be the first of many such times. And I would come to see that when one is trusting in Yeshua, that He doesn't part the Red Sea until our backs are up against it. Why? So that there can be no doubt as to Who has helped us. We had a congregation then too, but it was small and made up of people that were not much better off financially than we were. We told no one in the congregation about our needs. We just turned them over to Yeshua.

We paid our rent and late charges for June, and the check for the furniture was covered. We sailed into July and didn't have any money for rent again. I don't recall if this happened after the 5th or before it (for after the 5th is when late charges are tacked on). It was a Sunday, and Zavdi and I went for a walk around the apartment complex, with me carrying him. It was about 8:00 AM. I went to the complex office building where they had a swinging bench on the porch. I sat down and swung and Zavdi fell asleep in my arms.

I sat there and noticed the tree in front of me. I noticed that there wasn't a leaf stirring. No breeze. Totally calm. And then, a slight breeze began to go through the tree and I could see the leaves moving, and the wind got stronger and the leaves began to dance. The Lord Yeshua spoke to me and said, 'Just as you didn't know when the wind would come upon the tree, so you don't know when My Spirit will move upon someone's heart to help you.'

I was excited. I went back to the apartment and said to Robin that I wasn't 100% sure, but it's just possible that the Lord will bring in the money we need for rent today. It was Sunday so there wasn't any possibility of the mailman 'helping' us. And our congregation met the day before for worship, so we weren't getting any tithe money from them either.

About 4:00 PM, a man came to our place whom we had known for about a year. We talked about the Lord and the ministry for about two hours and as he was getting ready to leave he handed me a check for \$700. Isn't God good? It's a common cliché but when His Goodness breaks in unto our souls, we are overwhelmed. It's no cliché then. We can truly trust in Yeshua with our very need for food, clothes, shelter and Eternal Life.

I asked Bill why he was doing this. He told me that in prayer that morning, about 8:30 AM, the time the Lord spoke to me, He felt impressed upon his heart to help me.

'Trust in Yahveh with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your rocky paths smooth.' (Proverbs 3:5-6 from the Hebrew)

I believe it was a few days later in July, I was again holding Zavdi and he fell asleep on my shoulder. He was nine months old. Robin was out and it was time for him to go to bed so I placed him in our bed. He slept with us. I thought that it would be a good time to pray and I knelt down by the bed and began to speak to the Lord Yeshua. Almost immediately He said to me, 'I want you to look upon the boy.'

Zavdi was on his belly with his face turned toward me. As I began to gaze upon his face, a powerful feeling began to well up inside of me. As it literally rose from my belly to my throat, I gave verbal expression to this feeling and exclaimed, 'Oh God!, He's so precious to me!'

Yeshua spoke to me and said, '*That's exactly how I feel about you.*' I was overwhelmed. I 'knew that God loved me' but I had just felt the most tremendous love that I had ever experienced in my life, for my son. And here was Yeshua telling me that He loved me like that?! *God feels for me, like I feel for my son?!*

I said to Yeshua, 'Why, there isn't anything I wouldn't do for Zavdi. If it meant me going to Hell, in order for him to be with You in Heaven, I wouldn't think twice about it! I love him so.'

And that's when God lowered the boom. He said, '*That's exactly how I feel about everyone you'll ever meet.*' If my jaw wasn't attached to my face, it would have fallen to the floor. 'Ooohhh...' I said. I thought, 'So that's how You could allow Yourself to be pierced to the tree and die for everyone's sin. You love us that much.'

In December, 1986 (on the 17th of Kislev, 5747), my second son, *Yoel*, was born. He took a place in my heart right next to Zavdi's. I would never have thought that anyone could ever come close to the love that I felt for my Zavdi, but Yoel did. He was circumcised on the first day of Hanuka. God was overwhelming me with His Blessings.

Yoel is Hebrew for 'Yahveh is God!' (Yahveh is the Name of the God of Israel used about 7,000 times in the Tanach or Old Testament, that is usually translated by the title, 'the Lord.')

is a declarative statement: in the midst of adverse and diabolical circumstances, the God of Israel is still God!, no matter how bad the situation looks. This would be painfully branded into my soul in the years ahead.

My heart revolved around my sons. There was such joy and love between us. As soon as they were able to understand, they were taught Hebrew, Torah, and the Living Torah (Yeshua). They would be raised as observant Messianic Jews.

One Shabat, on our way to the park, we saw some men working construction. As we passed by, Zavdi said, 'They're not Jews, Abba' (Papa). 'Why not Zavdi?' I asked. 'They're working on Shabat' was his reply. He was three years old.

I don't recall how it got started, but for the preceding three years, the name Yehoshua (Hebrew for Joshua), kept coming to me. It culminated on June 3rd, 1987, when the Lord Yeshua had me to sit down and read Deuteronomy 5-6 in the Hebrew.

The word 'to possess' occurs three times in four verses (Dt. 5:31-6:1), and it impacted me. It spoke of the one who would take the Hebrew people into the Land that the Lord had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

I sensed that the Lord wanted me to take that name for myself. A few days later, on Shavuot (Pentecost), I stood up in the midst of the Synagogue and announced it. Some time later I had our names legally changed.

The name Avram means 'exalted father.' The name Yehoshua means 'Yahveh (the Lord) will save.' The meaning of my name is that I am the father of a people that will be saved (from sin and given Eternal Life), by Yahveh.

'Avram Yehoshua' symbolizes God totally identifying 'André Sestac' with his Jewish People. God was giving me a heart for my own people. *His Heart.* He took a Jew who was only 'Jewish' culturally, and transformed me into a Jew who loves Moses, the Jewish People and the Messiah of Israel. *This is all the Lord's doing and isn't it a most wonderful thing?!*

I look forward to the day when God will cause me to lead the Jewish People of Tulsa (and now Israel), to possess the Promised One, Yeshua our Messiah, just as my namesake, Yehoshua (Joshua), led the Israelites into possessing the Promised Land.

Another lesson on trust came. It was the beginning of winter and we again didn't have money, but this time it was for food, not rent. We were literally down to our last meal, potatoes and beans, and content that we were learning how to trust our God. We were still eating when there was a knock on the door. A woman who had heard me in her church two weeks earlier was standing there. She told us that she had been shopping and she felt impressed to buy us a few groceries. We went to her car with her and she had bought us eight or ten bags of groceries, I don't recall the exact number. We were overwhelmed again with His Love and care for us.

THE WAY OF LIFE—PAIN AND DEATH

Things were beginning to come together. I had been invited to speak in over 100 churches (Christians are hungry for the Jewish roots of Yeshua), the Synagogue was growing and we had begun to reach out to the Jewish Community with the Newsletters. And then my whole world crumbled beneath me.

My wife, Robin, fell in love with Karlman, an elder in our Synagogue. He was a friend of ours. He came and ate at our table three, four times a week. He was an uncle to Zavdi and Yoel.

I knew nothing about it until after she was gone. That was February 28th, 1989. She took Zavdi and Yoel and secretly flew to Pennsylvania, to live with her parents. I would not see Zavdi and Yoel for almost nine years. And then it would only be for a few moments in court. I would begin to learn to trust the Lord Yeshua, at the deepest possible level that any human being can trust God at; with one's

children.

Robin began divorce proceedings against me. In order to cover up her immorality, she accused me of abusing Zavdi and said that she was 'afraid for her life.' There was nothing to support these accusations, but in today's court system, just the mention of it is enough to condemn a man. If one wants custody of the children, then one must accuse the other spouse of abuse of some kind. An all too common legal game.

In court I represented myself. I could have made her out to be the liar that she was, but the Lord stopped me. He did not want me to come against her. *He wanted me to give up my sons.* He would use this situation to crucify me. If I got my sons back, by showing the court that my wife was using the court for her own immoral purpose, I would be disobeying God. If I laid my life down, I would be obeying God, but I would lose my sons. *My soul was being torn apart. How I desperately wanted my sons.* I have never known such terrifying pain. There is no greater terror to a father or a mother, than to lose their child(ren). With the Lord's help, by His real Grace, I chose to obey my God and Savior. I placed Zavdi and Yoel, my heart, on His Altar.

The Synagogue dispersed. The shepherd had been struck. The shock was felt by everyone. I would go through almost three years of lifelessness. The ministry would go on but I felt like I was quasi-existing. I would not actively seek to go out to the churches and with no money from them, funds to send out the Newsletters would dry up. The feelings of extreme loss and helplessness were daily torment and torture.

I would know what Abraham felt when God tested him and said, 'I want you to take your son, your only unique one, Isaac, whom you love, and go...sacrifice him...' (Genesis 22:2). God was making Abraham to chose between Abraham's most precious possession, Isaac, and Him. It would have been 'easier for me' to try and rip my own heart out, than for me to lose the sons I love. God was making me like my namesake: Avram (Abram).

In the painful agony of suffering, I came to know the broken and longing Heart of God, for His Son Israel. As I felt my life-blood slowly trickle away, I also saw how powerless I was to change my stubborn, rebellious and vengeful Jewish heart.

I saw too, that when friends don't understand what the Lord is doing with you, many reject you. There was no hope, only dark despair. Here I came to be on intimate terms with hatred and evil. I grew to know my own perverse heart.

Yeshua says to love your enemies and forgive those who despitefully use you. It was impossible for me to do this with Robin. It was in struggling with this intense feeling that I saw that I was no better than she. I wanted to hurt her as she had hurt me.

Robin intentionally tore Zavdi and Yoel from me, knowing full well that it would destroy me. That's what she wanted. And it did. But I would not give way to those powerful feelings of revenge, and act upon them. I would submit to God by His Spirit and His Word. I believed that what she meant for evil, God would use for His Glory.

It was during this time, that the Lord in His Mercy, sent me a woman whom He had chosen for me. God knew that it would end like this for Robin and me. But in the fullness of time, He sent me Ruth (Ruti).

A perfect wife, who can find one? I have one. Far beyond the price of pearls is she to me. A comfort, a strength, an inspiration, a traveling companion down the Road of Life. One to love and be loved by. She too is on intimate terms with pain. She too has lost her children.

Yeshua would bless me in the midst of my sorrow. Many times Ruti would come to me and gently tell me that what I was about to do might not be the Lord. After I would hear her out, I would agree and thank the Lord for giving me such a wise, sensitive and compassionate wife. A wife who loves Yeshua with all her heart.

Ruti has also experienced the healing power of Yeshua. Once she had Grave's Disease. The treatment

destroyed her thyroid. Yeshua healed her and gave her a new thyroid. Another time she had a ganglion cyst tumor. One touch from Yeshua and the tumor was gone.

In November, 1991, I felt the Spirit of the Holy One of Israel blow through me and lift me out of the grave. I knew it was the Lord because I was well acquainted with Death. And this was LIFE. Again the next day and the one after that, and I began to rise from the dead.

My brother, my sister, I love you more than I do my own life. I am as one raised from the dead to tell you of the Reality of Messiah Yeshua. Of His deep, unyielding and passionate Love for you.

In all my pain and death, I have found *Life* in Yeshua. I know how Father Abraham felt when he had to choose between God and Isaac. And I know why he chose God. He was overwhelmed by God's *love and His Presence*. I too have known that Love and Reality.

Abraham's choice was the highest application of the Shema (Dt. 6:4-5), to love God with all his heart. Greater even than martyrdom for His Name. Only in this Test could he lay full claim to God, to possess Him and be one with Him.

To know His Reality and Love, isn't that what your soul yearns for?

This is a love that is great enough, to separate a father, from the two sons that he loves.

My ex-wife had cut off all contact with my sons about a year after the divorce, after the courts had ordered her to allow me phone and mail access. (I could have pursued physical visitation, but would have had to fight her every step of the way, in Pennsylvania. As her need to make me out to be the evil one grew with our sons, I knew that every court appearance would be emotionally devastating to our sons, even though they wouldn't be present. And when I would have obtained visitation, the character assassination of me would not cease. For their sakes, and in obedience to the Lord, I didn't pursue it).

On the last phone contact, after talking with Zavdi and Yoel, and them telling me what toys to send them, Robin got on the phone and said, 'The boys and I have talked it over and we don't think you're a good father. They don't want to speak with you anymore, and don't send those cheap toys up here either!'

Helpless was a feeling that I had walked in for over a year now, and as I realized that I could do nothing, the thought came to me from Jude 1:9, where Satan is vying with Michael the archangel about the body of Moses. I said, 'The Lord rebuke you Robin.' She immediately hung up and I never heard from her again. I placed my sons in His Hands, and set about to walk in the Valley of Death for what would be another year and a half. The boys were only five and three years old at that time.

She had put me out of my misery. To talk with my sons over the phone was very painful, that is when I finally got to talk with them. Most of the time they weren't there, even though the court had set aside specific times for me to call, and for Robin to have them ready for me to talk to. Always it was the same attitude on her part; 'Why are you bothering us?!' Can you imagine this kind of evil? I had never known it before. She took her own sons from their father, denigrates him in their eyes, slanders me in court, and then tells me that I shouldn't be bothering her? That's hutzpa.

I doubt whether there is any greater torture than to talk with your sons, and not be in their lives. They were so small, so tender, so innocent, so trusting, and their souls were being torn apart by their mother. The father whom they loved was no more in their lives. And they were being told that he was no good. What kind of a woman could do that to her own sons?

A few weeks before she cut me off, I was speaking with Yoel. He was all of three and a half now. He said to me, 'Abba (Papa), I want to come to your house' in that little voice of his that was now pleading with me. My heart was being crushed. I told him, 'I'd love for you to come to Abba's house Yoel, but only Mommy is able to allow it.' I wasn't prepared for what happened next. As soon as he heard that, he put the phone down and go to his mother. I called out to him over the phone, to try and get him back, but he must not have heard me. I heard him say in the background to his mother, 'Mommy, can I go to Abba's house?' His mother replied, 'No!' and I died again. Yoel was crying, and I couldn't

comfort him. When she told me I couldn't call there anymore, she finally put me out of my misery.

The Lord never left me. Every time I turned to Him, He comforted me and assured me that I would see my sons in the Land of the Living one day. He spoke much to me through the Prophet Isaiah.

About three years after Robin left with our sons, I was reading a book called, *Treblinka*, a very powerful account of the concentration camp by that name. As I got to the end, the Lord used the book to bring me out of the grave that I had been since February 28th, 1989. I could sense the Spirit of the Holy One blowing upon me for life. I knew it was the Holy Spirit, for I had come to know what was not His Spirit. I had come to the place where I was able to forgive Robin for what she had done to the boys and to me. I didn't wish her evil for what she had done. I prayed that God would bless her. God had forgiven me for my evil heart, and I was able to turn around and forgive her.

As God brought me through the Valley of Death, and gave me His Heart for a sick and dying world, the Synagogue began to grow once more. I actively sought to go out to the churches, and we started sending the Newsletters out to my Jewish People. By 1994, five years after I lost my sons, finances had picked up to the point where we were able to pay off the rent debt that we had incurred from 1989 to 1992. Very little money had come in during that period but God was so faithful to provide food, shelter and clothing for us. We were able to stay at a house, even though the rent we owed had accumulated to ten months!. It's not that we didn't pay anything, but what we could pay was not enough each month. And now we were able to pay that off.

Then one day in March, 1995, there was a knock on the door. John came in and told Ruti and me that he was ready to send us to Israel. Really? This was not the first time that someone had said this to us. Being a Messianic Rabbi was not the most lucrative job around, and so we had no money for flights as such, but we believed that one day, the Lord would send us to Israel. Having had our hopes up in times past, only to see them evaporate, we were not as quick to jump this time.

I asked, 'What makes you think that the Lord wants you to do this?' He just laughed. He said that for the past three months, three words kept coming to him over and over again. At first he explained, he thought it was a good idea. But then, he began to realize that it was the Lord. What were the three words? 'Avram to Israel.'

Ruti and I prayed about it and gave him our answer within a week, the Lord confirming it many times over. It was May 31st, 1995, exactly 12 years to the day that I began The Seed of Abraham, that Ruti and I boarded the plane that would take us to the Land that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's Seed. But we still didn't know if it was to be a seven day vacation, or if we were to stay!

The only place that our heart's were drawn to, in all Jerusalem, was the Western or Wailing Wall. Going there, I picked up a Jewish prayer book from the many tables that have them there, and I approached the Wall. I asked the Lord, 'Is this a vacation or are we to stay here?' and as I did I turned the book over and over again in my hands until I didn't know the front from the back of the book. I opened it at random and began to read in Hebrew. It opened to the second blessing said after meals:

'We thank You, Oh Yahveh our God, for giving to our Fathers as a heritage, a desirable Land, good and spacious. You have removed us, Yahveh our God, from the land of Egypt, and You have redeemed us from the House of Slavery...'

And the Holy Spirit began to well up inside of my belly and what came out of my mouth was: 'I want to stay! I don't want to go back.' And I knew that the Lord had answered my question about this being a vacation or not.

We began to look for a place and the Lord led us to live in the middle of Jerusalem; the Heart of Jerusalem, as it is called. And Ruti and I began to see the hardness of their hearts. There is much perversion in Jerusalem, and all of Israel. To walk down the street is to see the lifelessness in the eyes of Israel. They have been brought back from all the nations, but they have not yet been sprinkled with the Water that will cleanse them and give them Life (Ezekiel 36:22ff). Not yet...but It's coming.

On September 15th, 1996, Robin, my ex wife, was murdered. I found out about it a week later. She had left her 2nd husband, Ron, 10 months earlier, begun to live with his best friend, and had begun di-

voiced proceedings against him. Ron murdered Robin and his former best friend, and shot himself. My sons were only 11 and 9 years old, and I think they heard the shots, came running outside, and saw both their mother and her lover dead. Ron screamed at them to go back inside the house. He then dragged his friend's body out of the car, and drove off with Robin dead in the passenger seat. He came to the office of her lawyer, and murdered himself.

I wanted with everything inside me to go back to the States and get them and bring them back to Israel, but we had no money. I prayed that money would come in, oh, I prayed, but it never did, and so I knew that the Lord wanted us to remain in Jerusalem.

My sons had gone to live with Robin's parents in the next town over. They were people who despised me and anything else Jewish. Many times while I was married to Robin, I had tried to reconcile with them, but they would not have that. Now, as I began to pray, I realized that I harbored bitterness toward them, for they had continually told Robin to divorce me, and come back to them in Pennsylvania. They were very controlling, and Robin was their only child.

I want to give you an idea of what life was like for Robin, growing up with her mother. I single out her mother, for her mother dominated the household. Robin told me of many times where her mother would scream at her for hours. Not the loud kind of scream, but the low, tense, angry type. And Robin would be in a chair, and after a while, go to another place in her soul. She told me that she longed for her father to rescue her, but he never came to her aid, even though he witnessed this on a number of occasions. Robin tried to commit suicide a number of times when she lived with them. Robin was a straight A student, but emotionally she was crippled.

Before we married, Robin pursued me. I didn't have the wisdom to tell her no, again and again and again, and so, she wore me out, and I finally consented. In the six years that we were married though, I had come to love her more and more and I saw her grow emotionally to where she could stand on her own two feet. Or so I thought. I remember one time when she finished talking with her mother, whom I had told her not to talk to, for every time she did she came to me crying, and this time she said, 'You know, my mother tells me things about you that I know are not true, but I have this strong pull to believe her.'

Well now, here I was 'face to face' with the Merediths. I saw the problem in my heart and I asked the Lord to take the idol out of my own heart, that I might be able to love them. He did. I couldn't believe it. I actually had a love for them and could pray for them. I reached out to them on numerous occasions, asking them to return my sons to me, but each letter met with silence. (I called, but they told me never to call there again. I wanted to speak with my sons. So, I told them in a letter that I would respect their wishes and not call.) Then, six months after Robin's death, I received a court notice. Since I hadn't shown 'any interest' in the boys for those six months, the Merediths were wanting to strip me of my parental rights and adopt my sons as their own.

I petitioned the court, telling them that I wanted my sons, but wasn't sure if the Lord would have me to come to Pennsylvania in June, 1997, for the hearing. I left it in His Hands.

Five weeks before the hearing, we were supposed to pay our three months rent (that's not unusual to pay three months in advance in Israel). We only had money for two months, and I told the landlord that as soon as we got it in, I'd give it to him. Two weeks went by and we still didn't have the third month. It was as though the well had gone dry. He told us to leave. I thought that was kind of silly, since we had already paid him for two months in advance. But we had caused quite a controversy in the neighborhood, for Yeshua, and I don't think he wanted us to be there. He gave us two weeks to move out and he was going to keep the extra month, 'for utilities.'

Well, that was great. Two weeks to find a new place and no money to do it with! One week went by and as we prayed about a place, where to go, we didn't get anything. And since we didn't have any money to look, it didn't matter. Then a check came for \$2,000 and we breathed a sigh of relief. With this we could get an apartment. We sought the Lord for where he wanted us to move to. With rents running around \$600 a month, \$2,000 would be enough for three months. But the answer we got totally shocked me. We both sensed that the Lord wanted us to return to the States. I didn't think that we

were ever returning to the States. Ruti had said that she was not so sure. And so we purchased our flight tickets, and 10 days later, on June 3rd, we arrived in New York with a \$20 bill and about 12 shekels (\$4.00), to our name.

We stayed at my mother's place and three days later, we were in Pennsylvania at the court hearing. The look on their lawyer's face...oh I wish you could have seen it. Talk about shock mingled with panic. He couldn't believe that we were there. And he wasn't prepared for us to be there either. And in court he acted like he wasn't prepared. I thought, 'How strange.' I know that the Merediths like to have 'the best' but this man was far from being a good lawyer. All I wanted to do was lay my life down, and this man acted like a fish out of water.

Court started and I told the judge that I was representing myself. I knew that I was there to extend to the Merediths what I would want, if I were in their spiritual condition. I would want someone to show me the Love and Forgiveness of Jesus.

In cross examining Mr. Meredith, the only thing I said was that I knew that he had gone through tremendous grief in the death of his daughter, and I did not want to add to that grief. I told the judge that I had 'no further questions.' I did the same with Mrs. Meredith.

As it turned out, the court appointed child advocate was found to be tainted with information that my mother had given him, and the judge closed the proceedings that day. He said that it would continue sometime in the fall, after a new child advocate could be found and a new date set. It was at this proceeding in June, that I found out that because I was representing myself, I would get to see my sons. If I had hired a lawyer, the two lawyers would have convened in the judge's chambers, and my sons would have been brought in, and questioned by both lawyers, but I never would have seen them. When I found this out, my heart couldn't believe my ears. I am going to see my sons? To see my sons, in more than eight years, was impossible for me to comprehend. You see, they were still 'frozen in time' for me. To me, they were still four and two years old, and of course, I knew that they weren't any more, but...

We went back to Tulsa, OK, where the Seed of Abraham was, and found rebellion in the camp. I had left Yakov in charge of the Synagogue, a friend I had known for more than five years. Just a day after we set foot in New York City, he had a terrible accident. He would lose the use of his right leg and would be in the hospital for three months. What met my wife and me after we had taken a 36 hour bus trip from New York to Tulsa, was a man who had come into the congregation three months before Ruti and I left for Israel. Daniel had become an elder and now was telling us that I had no authority in the congregation anymore. I had given the Synagogue to Yakov, and he, Daniel, was watching over it till Yakov got well. This was done with the consent of Yakov.

We couldn't believe this. We had come back expressly to love them and support them, and here Daniel was telling me that because he thought I had 'missed the Lord' when we left for Israel, and had 'missed Him' when we returned, that I no longer had authority in The Seed of Abraham. There were some other accusations too, like, we had come back to destroy the congregation, and he was going to ensure that that wouldn't happen. Daniel told me that if I wanted to help, I could assist him.

Yeah; when it rains it pours. I asked him how he could take my authority away without me being present or given a chance to defend myself. That didn't matter though, that what they were doing was not biblical in the least. They were thoroughly convinced that they were doing God's Will, and if they bypassed some procedural rules from the Bible for removing an elder, God would understand.

Daniel left that night and we didn't want to go back to the congregation. But the pull to see the people was great and we came to a service about 10 days later. I told Daniel that I would submit to his authority in love, and that if I couldn't, that I would pray to Yeshua that I could. (I also told that to Yakov in the hospital, a few days later). We went to every service. It was very hard. Daniel's wife and Yakov's wife disdained us. We couldn't believe it. These were our friends and we had only been in Israel for two years. We had loved them and them us, or so we thought, and now there was this wall of scorn between us.

It was hard for me to sit in the service, knowing that I should have been leading it, and watching

Daniel do everything from lead praise and worship, to give the message. Very hard. But we continued and finally, when Yakov came out of the hospital in late August, the whole congregation was to convene to discuss their thoughts and feelings as to who should be in charge.

At that meeting, both Yakov and Daniel resigned. I pleaded with them to stay and not rip the congregation apart, but they were both determined to leave. And so by the end of August, the congregation was dumped back into my lap. Ruti and I had thought that when we came back to the States, that we'd only be there for two or three months. Here it was three months already with no sign of returning to Israel.

There were only a handful of people left in the congregation by this time. Many had left while we were still in Israel, not desiring to sit under Yakov and Daniel. And now some others left, not able to believe that my authority was no longer valid. There was not much left to the congregation. And that's why Yakov and Daniel left. They couldn't afford to pay the rent on the building! There wasn't enough money coming in.

October came and we had just enough money to drive to Pennsylvania for the rescheduled court hearing for my sons. We drove in a car that was given to us by the Lord, through Adele, a friend who was getting a new vehicle, and knew we didn't have any transportation. She spoke to the Lord one night and said, 'I feel kind of bad, getting a new vehicle and Avram and Ruti don't have any. Should I give them my old car?' And the Lord literally spoke to her and said, 'Yes.' Adele was obedient to the Lord and that's how we had a car to go up to Pennsylvania.

The court picked up where it had left off. The Meredith's lawyer called a psychologist who swore that reuniting the boys with their father would be more detrimental to them than the death of their mother. I could have questioned her about her reasons for that, but I could tell that she was hostile toward me and I wasn't there to win, but to be a lamb and die.

I got on the stand and told the Merediths that I loved them and that because the Lord Jesus had forgiven me much, that I was able to extend that to them. The look on their faces were of sheer disgust. I told the court that I would not fight or strive against the Merediths for my sons. That if they wouldn't return my sons whom I love to me, then I would not try and take them away from the Merediths.

I didn't know the emotional state of Zavdi and Yoel. They lost their father when they were four and two years old. I'm sure they looked for me to come for them, to rescue them, but that was not to be. They would have felt abandoned by me. And then they would hear all kinds of evil stories about me so that they would be driven away from wanting to know me. And now, they had lost their mother, murdered by their step father only a year earlier. I was not about to try and break in onto their fragile grasp of reality. Doing so could mean harming them more than they might be able to take. They might not have been able to handle my calling their understanding of reality, into question.

What do I mean? If all their life they've been told by the ones that 'loved them' (their mother and her parents), that their father was evil, and I come in and try to change that, at 13 and almost 11 years old now, they might lose the thread of reality that they were hanging on. I would not do that to my sons whom I love. Many would not understand this, but I believe that this is what Yeshua wanted me to do. I would have rather cut off my right arm.

When Zavdi came into the court room, I stood to my feet, and I saw him for the first time in nearly nine years. I almost lost my breath. All the years that I hadn't seen him, he had become 'frozen in time.' He was still only four years old to me. And now, there he was, 13 years old. He wasn't four anymore. That was a hard dose of reality for me.

The lawyer questioned him about some things and he told the court that he'd like to get on with his life and have his grandparents adopt him. My turn came and I asked him if he knew that I loved him. He said he didn't. Try cross examining your son whom you haven't seen in a lifetime of eternities. I wished that I could have spent some time with him, getting to know him and him me. But that wasn't to be. I asked him what he thought of me. He told the court that I had pushed him around, was mean and selfish. I asked him if he could relate an incident for us. He said he couldn't. He didn't even remember me. So how did he come to have this understanding of me? His mother and her parents, the

Merediths.

I asked him again if he knew that I loved him and he told me, 'No' and began to stare at me in hatred. My eyes began to fill with water. I was about seven feet from him. As I finally turned to walk back to the table and chairs, I needed to say, 'No further questions, your honor,' but I couldn't get the words to come out. I was choking up. The judge asked me if I wanted a recess to regain my composure and I shook my head and said, 'No, I want my son to see me!'

Yoel came in next. He was scared. He wouldn't even look at me. To my question about myself, what he thought of me, he said the *exact* same thing that his brother had said. I had pushed him around, was mean and selfish. He had gotten it from his mother and grandparents also. I asked him if he knew that I loved him and he said that if I loved him, I would have at least sent him a birthday card or Christmas gift. How could I tell him that his mother put a stop to that eight years ago? I had been sending them toys two or three times a week.

It was over by noon. The judge took my parental rights away from me, paving the way for my sons to be adopted by the Merediths. The judge, directing this comment to the Merediths, mentioned that if you don't have anything good to say about someone, than you shouldn't say anything, but that didn't outweigh what he saw in that both my sons didn't want any part of me, or the fact that both had said that they had been brainwashed against me by the very people who wanted to take them away from me. And yet, Zavdi hated me and Yoel was afraid of me. Perhaps a righteous judge would have given me time with my sons, to get to know me, but this was not a righteous judge. I have nothing against him personally. I have seen judges like him before. Thinking themselves as wise as King Solomon, they split the baby in half and never realize their folly.

Returning to Tulsa, we stayed there another year, and began to wonder if we were ever returning to Israel. One night, I told Ruti we needed to pray about it. We only prayed for a short while and I didn't get anything, but Ruti said she got three things. One, that we were going back. Two, that we would leave on January 6th, 1999. And three, that we weren't coming back to the States. I said that that was great, but it didn't mean anything to me because I hadn't gotten any witness. I asked the Lord that if that was Him, that He would confirm it in me. It was Saturday night.

On Monday morning I was leafing through different papers some people had given me over the past few months. Papers I hadn't had time to read then, and now was scanning through to see which ones I would toss and which I would read. I came across an article on The Ark of the Covenant and I began to read it. I was into the sixth page or so and I was reading how the author was about to poke his head through an opening he had just made in a cave wall, to view the Ark, when he looked at his watch and it read, Wednesday, Jan. 6th! I was stunned. Jan. 6th! As I read on, he mentioned it again and also the year, which I think was 1982. I went to my calendar and January 6th, 1999 fell on a Wednesday also. I gave the article to Ruti and she felt the impact of January 6th, too.

Later on in the day, we were out running some errands and I told her that at the time that I had read the article on the Ark, I felt sure that it was the Lord confirming the date with me. But now, a few hours later, I wasn't so sure for something that would mean us leaving the States and returning to Israel. I needed another confirmation.

Our next stop was a Kinko's and I made a few copies and went to the counter to pay. I noticed a notebook belonging to the man at the counter and as I read it, 'Chapel in the Woods', I thought, I know that name. I turned to the man, and sure enough, it was Jonathan Wakefield, a pastor friend. 'Jonathan!' I said, 'How are you?' 'Fine,' he replied. 'What's going on, Avram?' 'I'm not sure Jonathan, but I think the Lord is sending Ruti and me back to Israel, on January 6th.' 'January 6th?!' he said to me, 'why that's my 23rd wedding anniversary!' And I knew that the God of Israel was confirming our departure date. I said out loud, 'Thank You Lord!' And Jonathan looked at me with that, 'what's going on?' look, and I told him.

Now we are back in the Land and sharing Yeshua wherever we go. We continue to send out the Newsletters to all the Jewish People of the greater Tulsa metropolitan region, and a smattering into 26 other States and three other countries.

The Jewish People have been taken captive by Satan and been lied to about Papa God. My position with my sons is similar to God's. That's what I've seen for a long time. I know Papa God's feelings for His Flock, Israel. Deep feelings of love and tenderness toward His Son, Israel. Somehow, I believe that the Lord Yeshua will use Ruti and me to display His Love to them. Somehow, I believe that He will cause Avram Yehoshua to rise up and walk out what his name means.

Thank you for your prayers,

Avram

14 March 1999

As I was going over my testimony for it to be placed at another web site, I felt the pain of loss and separation from my sons again, as I read what I had previously written. My eyes began to water. I cried out to Papa God and then I began to praise Him. And as I did, I felt myself being strengthened by His Spirit. And the word that came to me was 'courage.' Immediately I realized that that was Joshua's trademark and I became even stronger. I believe now that the period of being Avram is giving way to Yehoshua; where the Lord Yeshua will use me to lead Israel to Himself.

Avram

12 January 2000

THE WAY OF THE LORD

I've heard that a dream or a vision from the Lord has to die before it can come to fruition. So it is with my sons and with my former congregation. When Ruti and I left the States in January 1999, to return to Israel, our congregation, with less than thirty people, disbanded. The Lord hadn't raised up anyone to take my place. In 2004, I was led me to begin training and ordaining men to raise up *The Seed of Abraham* congregations in their own cities. It looks like *The Seed of Abraham* is beginning to sprout. I praise Your holy name Yeshua!

In Israel, Ruti and I plant much Seed into the hearts of Israelis about Messiah. Most Israelis don't have any idea that there's something more to life than anger, money, sex and eating. The Jewish people have been taken captive by Satan and they have been lied to about Papa God and Messiah Yeshua. Their position with Yeshua is very similar to mine with my sons, Zavdi and Yoel. I know about Papa God's feelings for Israel—feelings of deep love, longing, forgiveness and tenderness toward His first-born Son Israel (Ex. 4:22; Is. 40–48; Hosea 2:21-22; Rom. 9:1-3; Rev. 21–22). God wants His Jewish people to return to Him with all their heart. Ruti and I believe that soon, many of them will see Him whom they have pierced (Zech. 12:10) and come into His Kingdom (Zech. 13:1; Rom. 11:25-29).

The Lord spoke to Ruti one day and said that we had a 'Jeremiah ministry' in Israel. Jeremiah prophesied before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 B.C. He spoke against the gross sins of sacrificial-sexual idolatry, greed, and oppression of one's neighbor. God had determined to severely punish His wayward Jewish people (Is. 1:1f; Jer. 1–25; Ezk. 16), but in the many years before their punishment came, God pleaded with the leaders and the people through Jeremiah, and other prophets, to turn them from their wicked ways back to Him, but few listened.

Not many Israelis have listened to us, either, but we believe that a Harvest is coming soon. This is all His Work. It's not by my might, nor by my power, but by His Spirit (Zech. 4:6) that Israel will come to her Messiah. Ruti and I are part of God's plan for Israel and we want to be faithful to Him.

We are all called to be faithful witnesses wherever God places us. We're called to persevere, to forgive and to love our enemies. 'Success' in God's eyes isn't measured by how many follow us, but by how faithful we are in following Messiah Yeshua.

Financially, we give to whomever we see has a need, as our Lord leads. There are people we help every month, some we help intermittently, and some we only give one time to. We desire to serve people in whatever way we can, and helping with money is one of those ways. The figures below represent all the money that we have received in the past 12 years (2000–2011), and what we have given to Jews (and Gentiles) in need:

Year	\$ Received	\$ Given Out	% of Giving
2000	\$41,326.34	\$4,011.30	9.7%
2001	\$38,434.22	\$5,784.67	15.1%
2002	\$41,132.22	\$11,981.81	29.1%
2003	\$39,281.27	\$13,866.14	35.3%
2004	\$43,876.94	\$14,630.48	33.3%
2005	\$52,491.30	\$12,992.68	24.8%
2006	\$50,560.19	\$17,478.23	34.6%
2007	\$70,591.59	\$29,407.80	41.7%
2008	\$53,795.41	\$13,419.80	25.0%
2009	\$65,633.56	\$15,730.26	24.0%
2010	\$42,635.01	\$6,455.97	15.1%
2011	\$54,463.01	\$12,240.41	21.3%
12 Year Totals	\$594,158.06	\$157,999.55	26.6%
Yearly Average	\$49,513.17	\$13,166.63	26.6%

Ruti and I live by faith in the risen Son of God. We don't have a car or own a home. We don't have anything 'put away for the future.' We live from day to day, trusting in Messiah Yeshua for our daily needs, and the needs of others, through His people who are led to give to this ministry.

'My heart's desire and prayer to God is for Israel to be saved!' (Romans 10:1)

In the Precious Name of Messiah Yeshua,

. Avram Yehoshua

Ramat Gan, Israel

30 June 2012

A sower went out to sow Seed...

Luke 8:5

In prayer one day in January 2008 the Lord impressed me to try and Google search for my younger son, Yoel. I had tried a couple of years earlier with my older son, Zavdi, but the name that his mother had given to him when he was about five years old was too common, so, I never found him, but with Yoel I did. I emailed him and told him that I was his father and that I desired to have a relationship with him, if he was ready. He emailed me back a few days later and said that he did want to have a relationship, but there were many responsibilities that he was coming into in his mid-junior year of college, so he wanted to take it slow.

He gave me the phone number of my older son, Zavdi, and I spoke with him and told him that I wanted to bring them both to Israel in the summer (of 2008). I emailed everyone on my email list and told them that I had made contact with my sons after almost 20 years and was looking to bring them over in the summer. A man in Indonesia, who would become like a son to me, emailed me right back and said that he would pay for the tickets and my time with them. I hadn't asked anyone for money in the email, as the Lord has taught me to take all my financial concerns to Him. In saying that I wanted to bring my sons over to Israel in the summer I was hoping that the Lord would provide as I didn't have any money to bring them over at the time I spoke with Zavdi. It was truly a wonderful miracle that the man in Indonesia responded as he did. Of course, I wanted my sons to stay for the whole summer, but they only stayed for two and three weeks (the older one staying the extra week). I hadn't seen them (outside of those few minutes in the courtroom) since Feb 1989...nineteen and a half years.

The time together with them was good overall, although I made some missteps with them, my heart wanting to connect and bond with them, but it was nowhere enough time for us to really get to know one another. They didn't know me and were reserved. Also, what kept us from a real relationship was that neither one of them was fully walking with Jesus. They had both grown up and been neck deep in what is called fantasy books, games and movies (e.g. Dungeons and Dragons...if you've not heard of it or know about it, it's the 'Father' of the demonic games, books and movies that followed, like Harry Potter).

They both need to dedicate their lives to Yeshua—that's one of my daily prayers. It's been very hard on me these last three years. I had thought that after all those years that we would hit it off right away, and that they would be walking alongside me in the ministry here in the Land, but I've come to see that the Lord knew otherwise and that He will lead them in His time and His way. Today, August 2011, they are 26 and 24 years old and over the last three years I've been emailing them two or three times a week (they want that rather than phone calls). I write to them of my love for them and of Yeshua's love for them and of different things going on here in the ministry, etc., and we've grown a little closer. Thanks for your prayers.¹

¹ This article was revised on 13 November 2012.