

A believer's testimony from Israel

By Michael Zinn

I was born in town of Lvov, Ukraine in 1956 to the Jewish family of Holocaust survivors.

My father is from Poland that eventually was captured by Russians and then by Germans. In 1941 the parents of my father were killed in their home and next day my father was taken to the concentration camp. His parents were killed by Christians, observing Catholics that were very active in their church. One may argue that they were just nominal Christians and this is probably true. But for 18 years old boy they represented real and only Christianity. So my father buried his parents and next 2,5 years he spent in the concentration camp where he witnessed terrible atrocities.

Germans used to kill Jews on Saturdays. On Sunday they used to go to the church that was built right next to the place where Jews were executed day before. And during the week the prisoners suffered from heavy work, hunger, beating, humiliation etc. Even almost 70 years after my father has nightmares screaming "Please do not kill me, do not beat me"...

He managed to escape from the camp one day prior to its termination and spent next half a year hiding in the forest. When finally Russians came to liberate him and three of his friends left a life, the Russian officer upon learning they are Jews expressed his sorry that Germans did not kill them all.

The same fate was with my mother family when six out of seven her uncles and aunts were just crushed by German tank in the presence of her mom.

Needless to say that in the eyes of my parents Christians represented the evil of this world and in our home we did not talk about God in general and about Jesus in particular.

I graduated from University with Master degree in engineering and read a lot of books. It became my hobby. I was very curious about things that were not allowed and managed to get the Bible. I read both Old and New Testaments. The person of Jesus really impressed me but I considered Him to be another smart Jew that managed to cheat Gentiles forcing them to believe that He is God. Of course, I thought, Jews cannot believe in these tales and I felt in a sense revenged for these hostile and anti-Semitic Christians did every evil toward my people.

Then I married the girl who was an artist. I did not believe in anything. But she believed in everything including Buddha, Krishna, Jesus, Zen etc. We were quite eclectic couple but God has sense of humor. And in 1989 we arrived in Israel.

The biggest problem was the language. We never studied Hebrew and now in age of 33 we had to start our daily classes.

In our class we had very strange couple. Despite all the problems new immigrants and visitors usually face they were always positive and optimistic. Everything we complained about was always confronted with open smile and the phrase; "Praise the Lord". I did not understand how you could praise non-existing God especially for the bad things happening in our life. That is why we decided that those people have sort of "mental disorder" and treated them in a very "special" way.

But from another hand their life was so attractive that we decided to get closer with them and one day came to visit. We were fully amazed by the loving atmosphere at their home. Mutual love and respect between husband and wife, and their children were absolutely different from what we've seen ever before. Being intrigued we asked what makes them so different and their answer was "Jesus". Of course we did not believe and we left their home convinced that those people thou very attractive have a "problem".

We even tried to avoid them but it is very difficult to do when you see them almost every day. After some time we started to visit them again and read Bible together. It was time of questions and answers. Not all the answers were satisfactory. Not that all Christian theology sounded (and even now sounds!) kosher to me. But frankly I was much more interested in observing their life than memorizing Scripture and praying. One thing that eventually happened I started to compare their life with the text of the Bible and became very surprised to learn that pure theoretical (I considered Bible to be nice philosophical and not relevant) text can be applied into life of people. More than that I learned that Jesus' maxims are possible to implementation... and became jealous.

One day we (me and my wife same time) we invited Jesus into our life since we understood that He only can be the answer to all our needs in this life and in the life to come.

Now, these people were not Jews. And though they tried very much to be sensitive to our ethnic belonging this did not impress us at all. The only thing that we were attracted by was their life revealed. Yes we considered them to be idealistic and thought about ourselves as pragmatic and experienced. But effectively they were pragmatic with all their idealism for it made them happy. Opposite to them we were absolutely idealistic and non-realistic with our pragmatism since it always kept us critical and unhappy.

Many year after I ask my self why I did not become believer many years before since I read Bible many times before I cam to the Lord in Jerusalem in 1990? The answer is simple: you can not-to-not respond when you see somebody's life. It is easy to talk about Jesus. And it is much more difficult to live the life worth of Jesus.

Since that time my slogan in bringing people to faith became: "Show me our life and make me jealous". And just than you have the right (not just responsibility) to tell to the others "That is because of Him"

Of course our God is sovereign God and he can perform miracles (even bringing us to faith) despite what we do and what we say. That is why we have to

continue to share Jesus in every possible way including street evangelism and similar methodic. But I believe the fundamental modus operandi should be just living Yeshua (not missiologically tricked and shaped) and if we have such opportunity to explain why is our life so different from the life of others, may all Glory will be to Him.