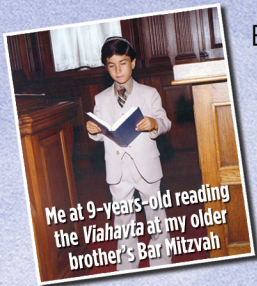


A  
*Jew*



And His  
*God*



Me at 9-years-old reading the *Viahayta* at my older brother's Bar Mitzvah

Even as a small child, I knew Hitler wanted to kill every Jew. I knew that my duty was to always remain a Jew. I was also taught about Gentiles. Actually, they were called *Goyim*, and it was quite clear that I was NOT one of them.

## A Privilege

Being Jewish has always been a privilege and a joy for me. Even as a 6-year-old in Synagogue, I loved memorizing

Hebrew prayers and reciting them to my parents. They

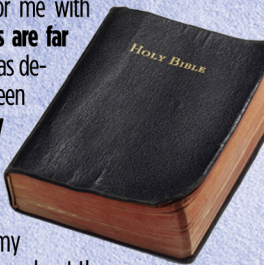
told me that I filled them

with so much *nachas*. I had a Bar Mitzvah. I prayed. I went to *Shul*. But G-d was very distant from me. I dared not even write his name without substituting the 'o' with a hyphen. "I don't know" characterized my relationship with G-d. Is there a G-d? I don't know. What does G-d expect of me? I don't know. I did know a lot

about Rosh Hashanah and the Day of Atonement. I certainly knew about the Holocaust. I knew a lot about my religious rituals, but I didn't know who G-d was personally.

## A Relationship?

Though I was very “religious,” I had no relationship with G-d. The *Tanach* (Jewish Bible) says, “this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while **their hearts are far from me**” (Isaiah 29:13). This was describing me! I may have been outwardly “religious,” **but my heart was far from G-d.**



Like most people, I spent more time planning my weekends than I did thinking about the Creator of the universe! When I made day-to-day decisions, I didn't factor in what G-d wanted.

## NOT for Jews!

I had never read any of the New Testament because “that's NOT for Jews to read!” But I decided I wanted to read it to expose how false it must be. I expected to find anti-Semitism. I expected the stuff that inspired Hitler! I found neither.

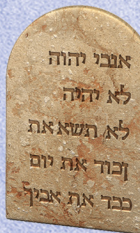
Instead, I found Jesus: humble, loving, and fulfilling the Law of Moses. He quoted Hebrew Scripture and said, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24).

I had assumed that Jesus was just for Gentiles! But just about everyone who believed in him at first were Jews. I learned that Jesus is Jewish, and most importantly, I learned that Jesus is our Messiah!

“I don’t know” will never again be a part of my relationship with G-d. You see, “G-d” became “God!” God became personal. **I now had a relationship with God.**

## All of Us...

Solomon, King David’s son, was the wisest man who ever lived, and he taught, “Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins” (Ecclesiastes 7:20). The Hebrew Bible is clear: **all of us are sinners:** you, me, everyone.



The bedrock of Judaism is found in the 20th chapter of Exodus. There Moses records the Ten Commandments. "You shall have no other gods before me." Had I always put God first in my life? Of course not.

"You shall not steal." Had I ever taken anything that didn't belong to me? A pen? A paperclip? Downloaded a song or movie that I didn't pay for from the Internet? Guilty.

"You shall not lie." Of course I had lied.

"You shall not commit adultery." The Bible says that if you think lustful thoughts, then God sees you as guilty of adultery. Who of us has never had lustful thoughts?

The Jewish Bible was right: our hearts are very far from God. We are not as good as we think we are!

The Ten Commandments are summed up in the *Sh'ma* and *Viahavta*, two of the holiest of all Hebrew prayers: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5).


I realized that since I am guilty of breaking God's laws, I have not loved God with all my heart, soul, and might. We have all broken God's law, and there is coming a day when God will judge us. We are all guilty; none of us even comes close to the standard that God demands.

## There is HOPE!

But our loving God is about hope, so just as he provided a sacrifice for Abraham in Isaac's place, so he provided a sacrifice for us in our place. Atonement means that God will pass over our sins and punish someone else in our place. That someone else is our Messiah. More amazing is that this sacrifice would be God himself in human form! In case that sounds non-Jewish, 800 years before Jesus was born, the Hebrew Bible taught that the Messiah would be "**Mighty God**" (Isaiah 9:6).

Growing up in *Shul*, I never understood the purpose of the Messiah, but now I did. The *Tanach*, (the Hebrew Bible), teaches that the Messiah "was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities... and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Our only hope is to **repent and believe in Jesus the Messiah**, and then Jesus will pay for our sins in our place.

## Still Jewish!



When I believed that Jesus is our Messiah, I didn't become a Gentile. **What could be more Jewish than believing in the Jewish Messiah?** The truth is that many Jews and many Gentiles have received Jesus as Messiah. Jesus offers us atonement so that we can return to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. When we do, he will give us a new heart, and we become Born Again.



If you're Jewish, then know that God provided Messiah Jesus as an offering for you. If you're a Gentile, then you're invited too, because God promised Abraham that through his seed he'd bless "all the nations of the earth" (Genesis 22:18). The Old and New Testaments agree that both Jews and Gentiles need Jesus. We have all broken the Ten Commandments. We all need our sins forgiven. Only the Messiah can do that!

## Simple. Jewish.

The message is this: God sent Messiah to atone for our sins, and that's great news for us because we never

could have atoned for ourselves. Jesus took the wrath of God on the cross for those who **repent and believe**, as taught in the Hebrew Scriptures, and three days later he rose from the dead, as taught in the Hebrew Scriptures! **Repent and believe, and all of God's wrath for you will be placed on Jesus instead of you, and you will be forgiven.** You won't become a Gentile. You will become a Jew who believes in the Jewish Messiah!

Please find out more about Jesus' claims and what our Hebrew Bible says about him. It may surprise you as much as it surprised me. Read Isaiah chapter 53 as a good start. Then read the book of John in the New Testament (*written by a Jew*). I have written an essay called *Are Christian Beliefs Anti-Jewish?* which you can download for free from my website. And please feel free to contact me anytime!

**Mark Sohmer • [mark@great-news.org](mailto:mark@great-news.org)  
[www.great-news.org](http://www.great-news.org) • 603-244-6292**

By the way, the reason the photo on the front of this booklet is of me as a child is because it reminds me that our Messiah has said, "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Luke 18:17). Please receive the kingdom of God as a child, with joy in your heart, and hope for your future. Shalom.