

# BUT I'M JEWISH!

A Jew for Jesus  
tells his story

Richard Harvey

Richard Harvey was the improbable source of all the fuss. But there he was on BBC, in the Times and at Speaker's Corner. There he was debating rabbis, bishops and what seemed like everyone else who passed by. There he was driving all over the country in a van with "Jews for Jesus" emblazoned on each side.

Harvey retraces the steps that took him from quiet and uneventful beginnings in Kent to a messianic mission for all of England.



What triggered the spiritual quest of this nice Jewish boy? Why didn't he follow his forbears into the successful family business? What stirred him to consider Y'shua (Jesus)?

The Richard Harvey story twists through the halls of England's finest academic institutions, turns with the author as he pursues nearly every religion under the sun and dramatically takes off as he discovers the great transforming truth! There is only one problem: That truth and his Jewish roots seem to stand in conflict with one another.

*But I'm Jewish!* is the unlikely adventure of one of England's newest and most fascinating mission leaders. As Richard Harvey's story unfolds you will see how he and his wife, Monica, became Jews for Jesus and why today he is resolute in telling his Jewish people that

they too can be both Jewish and Christian!

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## But I'm Jewish!

*A Jew for Jesus Tells His Story* By Richard Harvey



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But I'm Jewish by Richard Harvey © 1996 by Jews for Jesus

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A gold Mercedes pulled alongside our van late one Sunday night as we drove from Baker Street to St. John's Wood in Central London. Then it swung across us by the traffic lights at Lord's Cricket Ground, slowed down and stopped a few yards in front of us, making me halt the van abruptly. Keeping the engine running, I lowered the window

and waited. A man got out of the Mercedes and walked briskly toward us. As he came into view under the light of a lamppost, I saw him more clearly. His face was contorted with anger, and he was clenching and unclenching his fist. He was going to take a swing at me!

Mesmerised by that angry face and clenched fist, I couldn't move. I heard, but did not register, the whispered advice of my boss, Moishe Rosen: "Put up the window and drive on!" I just sat there as the man came up to us, placed one hand on the door of the van to steady himself and—*Here it comes!* I thought. In a mixture of fear and faith, I silently prayed, *Oh, God, help me!* all the while thinking, *Why on earth did I ever get into all this?*

As I waited for the punch that was about to land on my jaw, I little expected what happened next. From out of nowhere came a large police van, sirens blaring and lights flashing. Out jumped four armed policemen wearing bulletproof vests. They grabbed hold of the man, dragged him away from our van and pinned him against the wall. One of them came up to me and said, "You can move along now, sir. Thank you!" We drove off.

Why was I there in a van emblazoned with a Jews for Jesus logo, about to be punched in the jaw simply because I was Jewish and believed in Jesus? Let me explain.

### **Beginnings**

I was born in 1956 in Ashford, Kent, a small rural town in the South East of England. Dr. Stein, a family friend, performed my circumcision. According to my parents, the only notable incident of my earliest years occurred when I fell out of my pram and was left dangling from the safety straps until someone spotted my plight. That may explain my tendency to take risks! When I was two, my family left Ashford, but I still remember the golden cornfields and the neighbour's friendly St. Bernard dog, Bruno.

We moved to Walton-on-Thames, a suburb of London in the

affluent "stockbroker belt." I was one of four boys, and my mother employed Cindy, a distant relative, as our nanny. Cindy encouraged our regular attendance at synagogue and the observance of Jewish traditions in our home.

My parents, though Jewish, were not particularly religious. They came from German families that had made their homes in England well before the Second World War. My grandparents had abandoned what they saw as the narrowness of Orthodox Judaism and were involved in the newer Reform and Liberal synagogues. We had relatives in Ireland, Israel, America and South Africa; some of them practiced various forms of Judaism, while others practiced none at all.

In Ireland our family had risen to prominence in the city of Belfast. Several public buildings, statues and fountains had inscriptions on them in memory of my great-great-grandfather, Daniel Joseph Jaffe, who had been mayor of Belfast at the end of the nineteenth century. He and his family had emigrated from Germany and were responsible for the growth of the linen trade in Northern Ireland.

In Germany, my family traced itself back to the seventeenth century, when a Jewish doctor, Salomon Hirschland, settled in Essen. He became the personal physician to Alfred Krupp, a founder of modern German industry and his relatives established themselves as prosperous businessmen. His name, Hirschland ("land of the hart"), became synonymous with civic responsibility and respectability. His grandson, Richard, after whom I was named, was my great-grandfather. Richard and his sons were cloth manufacturers, and my grandfather's earliest job was as a commercial traveler.

With the rise of Nazism, many of my family fled Germany. The story goes that one of them was so reluctant to part with his car, a luxurious Daimler, that he hid it in a haystack and came back after the Second World War to recover it. Others were not so fortunate. The official history of the Jewish community of Essen contains a long list of Hirschlands who died in the concentration camps. My

grandparents, however, were protected by the twenty-two miles of water between England and the Continent, and after the war they chose to make England their permanent home.

My father recalls the day when, at the age of six, the headmaster at his school told him, "Hirschland, in the future you will be known as Harvey." The story goes that my grandfather recognised that a name like Hirschland that sounded German would not be helpful for his work on the London Stock Exchange. He decided to change the family name, a frequent practice for our people. The name originally proposed was Harley, but the week that change was due, the papers were full of a scandal about a doctor named Harley. My grandmother protested, "You can't possibly call us that!" So our name became Harvey.

My father was born in Hampstead, a Jewish area in North London. At the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 my grandparents sent him and his sister to safety in South Africa. My grandfather specialised in gold and diamond mining shares and was friendly with Sir Ernest Oppenheimer of the De Beers mining company. My father and aunt became their wards, and my father was sent to the prestigious St. John's College in Johannesburg.

My mother was also born in Hampstead. Her father had seen distinguished service in the First World War and had gone on to become the chairman of the family electrical firm, which at one time rivalled Phillips, a major manufacturer of gas and electrical appliances in the United Kingdom. My grandfather courted my grandmother in one of the first cars to drive round Regent's Park.

My parents met at a wedding where my mother's sister married my father's cousin. Their romance blossomed into matrimony, creating another link between the families. My first cousins are at the same time my second cousins. The ramifications of our intertwined family trees continue to fascinate me!

My father had farmed in South Africa, and when my parents

married, he planned to continue farming in England.

But their farm in Cumberland was not very successful, so he returned south to work in imports and exports.

### **Childhood**

I grew up in Walton-on-Thames within easy reach of our wider family in North London. At St. John's Wood, we attended the largest Liberal Synagogue in the country, and celebrated the Jewish festivals and family occasions together. I remember my mother busily preparing the special recipes and foods for our Passover seder. From the kitchen emanated all the fragrances of the ritual Passover foods—chopped apples and ground almonds, pungent horseradish and bitter herbs. All was laid out on our table in the dining room, and we held a special service that recounted in Hebrew and English how our ancestors had miraculously escaped from slavery in Egypt and crossed the waters of the Red Sea to eventual freedom in the Promised Land. I do not know how much of the account my parents believed, and we stumbled through the Hebrew, relying more on the English translation. Nevertheless, the memory of those seders serve as reminders of special occasions in which I was proud to take part.

In 1962, my parents became founding members of the new Liberal Jewish Synagogue in nearby Kingston. They enrolled my brothers and me in the *cheder* (religion school). I remember the synagogue's first High Holiday services held in a borrowed Quaker meeting hall, and the *cheder* classes every Saturday morning. The venue for these classes changed regularly, as our synagogue had no premises of its own. One time we would be at a school in Kingston, then at Richmond, then in a dance studio in Wimbledon. These classes were fun because we got to know the children of other Liberal Jews "in exile" from the larger Jewish community north of the River Thames. Rosalyn Landau went on to become an established TV actress. John Bluthal, the comedy actor, was a regular at the synagogue, as was the writer Pam Fletcher Jones.

All the parents helped with the children's classes. I was in the top class, and my favourite teacher was Mrs. Harris. When the religion school had nowhere to meet, my parents would drive me over to her house in nearby Molesey where her two sons and I would have a class. We covered the basics of Hebrew and some of the main prayers and learned about the festivals and services in Jewish life.

At Jewish festival times, my family would go to local services in Kingston or to the much larger services in Central London. In particular, I remember what seemed like the many occasions during my childhood when my October birthday fell on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Rather than enjoy my birthday receiving presents, I would have to dress up in formal clothes and spend the whole day in a series of long services. Only on the following day would I enjoy my presents!

The religion school had its own special children's service, with the teachers leading us in a simplified liturgy in English and Hebrew. I remember Mrs. Harris reciting the Aaronic benediction over us. She would smile at us as her soft, sweet voice intoned: "May the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you his peace" (Numbers 6:25).

This made an impression on me. I wondered if there really was a God. Mrs. Harris seemed to believe there was—I could tell from the tone of her voice and the look on her face that she meant the words she spoke to us.

I also remember the Six Day War in 1967, in which Israel not only survived the attacks of her Arab neighbours but emerged victorious, recapturing Jerusalem and occupying the territories in Gaza and the West Bank. We were all very excited at what was happening, and my aunt rushed down to the Israeli Embassy to volunteer as a nurse.

I was proud of Israel's achievements and at the age of eleven, I became a Zionist. Then, in 1972, I visited Israel for the first time. I

thought, *If Israel were to go to war with Britain, whose side would I be on?* Impressed by the young country and her victories despite heavy opposition, I decided I would side with Israel.

Milbourne Lodge, the school I attended, had high academic standards. The headmaster, Norman Hale, held one of the top records for students winning scholarships to Public Schools. At the age of eleven, I began preparing for the scholarship examination for Winchester College, also a school with very high academic standards.

That meant extra classes for me on Saturday mornings, and it meant I could not attend religion school so often. This did not displease me, as I had begun to find the classes boring, and with the burden of extra homework, I had trouble finding the time to carry out the Hebrew assignments. Anyway, I reasoned, who really believed in this God business? I had to study hard for the scholarship exams.

I chose to focus on Latin and Greek and came top of the class in them, winning the school prizes for Latin,

Greek and Latin verse composition. Norman Hale would use any opportunity to give us practice in Latin and Greek. During our religious education lessons, he would have us read and translate passages from the relatively simple Greek of the New Testament. So, at the age of eleven, although I had never read the New Testament in English, I was studying it in Greek!

### **Winchester 1970-1974**

I won a "Headmaster's nomination" to Winchester, which meant I was assured of a place at one of Britain's oldest schools. In 1390, William of Wykeham, the Bishop of Winchester, established a school near the grounds of Winchester Cathedral and set up a charitable foundation to provide an education for some fifty boys. They were to be brought up "in the study of godliness and good learning." The school developed into one of England's finest educational establishments whose alumni have achieved prestige in military, academic and commercial fields around the world. One of the top

public schools, Winchester bred an educational elite. Its students were sometimes rebels, sometimes "establishment," but they always made a significant contribution to society. It was said, "You can always tell a Wykehamist, but you can't tell him much."

On arrival at Winchester at the age of thirteen, I was surprised to find myself no longer top of the class, but somewhere near the bottom. In general subjects I did well, but on the narrow classics ladder I was up against younger and brighter boys. I was one of the dimmest students in one of the brightest classes in the country! I would stay up late into the night preparing to translate fifty lines of the difficult Greek of Homer's *Iliad* while others seemed to have it ready in no time at all!

Although when I stepped outside the classics stream I was a high achiever, coming fourth in the school in a prize English competition. Outwardly I was successful, but inwardly I felt a failure.

Public school is both a hothouse and an isolation ward. It was not an easy place for me to make friends, although I fully involved myself in its social and sporting activities. I learned the flute and played in the orchestra. I sang in Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *B Minor Mass*, and other major choral works. I joined various clubs—among them archaeology, film, birdwatching and rowing. Participating in the cadet force was mandatory, and I became a lance corporal and practiced shooting at the rifle ranges. Despite all these activities, I became introverted and depressed. As J. B. Priestly said, "Public school is an experience it takes the rest of your life to grow out of."

### **Looking for Something**

I did not know how to accept myself or the situation in which I found myself, and I started asking questions about the point of life. What was it all for? Where would I find truth, love and meaning in life? I did not believe in God— or rather I did not know if there was a God. Around this time my cousin Alex was preparing to be confirmed in the Liberal synagogue. I remember arguing with her that it was

hypocritical for her to go through with such a service (the Liberal equivalent of a bar mitzvah) if she herself did not have a strong belief. In her case, my criticism was not justified. Alex went on to become a very effective rabbi and feminist theologian of the Liberal Jewish movement. My grandmother still cannot fathom how she came to have two such religious grandchildren, albeit with very different beliefs!

The answer to my feelings of loneliness, insecurity and lack of love was to come through a long process of searching. First I discovered the house library. From an early age, I had been an avid reader, hiding books under the bedclothes so I could read by the light of a torch after my parents had put me to bed. But now I began to discover the treasures of literature, and whenever I had a spare moment I would go to the library. Books became my friends. I scanned the pages of novels, short stories, plays, escaping from the realities of my school life into the worlds of the imagination conjured up by great writers.

In addition to the English classics of Charles Dickens, Jane Austen and George Eliot, I read the works of the Russian masters—Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and Turgenev. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Aldous Huxley and George Orwell also stretched my thinking. I entered their worlds, enjoying the constant interplay of ideas and personalities that emerged in the plots of their great novels. Orwell and Huxley provided futuristic forecasts of what the world might become. The Russian writers plumbed the depths of character and the meaning of history.

But what did it all add up to? I was still no wiser. I was fifteen and I needed to decide what subjects to specialise in for "A levels" and what eventual career to pursue. I went to a career advisory service, answered a questionnaire and took an intelligence test. The evaluation suggested that I was well suited for a career in law, civil service or some other field where I could use my well-developed verbal reasoning. None of those fields particularly appealed to me, however,

since I was something of a dreamer. I remember the consultant asking me what really mattered to me and what were the big questions in my life. I replied that I wondered what life was all about and where I would end up in ten years' time.

He did not give me any answers, but he recommended that I read a book by Hermann Hesse called *Demian*.

I got hold of it, but did not understand it. I tried another Hesse book, *Steppenwolf*. Again I did not understand it. Only when I got into *The Glass Bead Game* did Hesse's psychedelic, multilayered and philosophical novels come into focus. *Narziss and Goldmund*, *Siddhartha* and other works followed. I saw that for Hesse, personal exploration and self-discovery were all important; there were no right or wrong answers. I thought perhaps that that was where the search for meaning in my life would end up—with no right answers.

### **The Search for Truth**

In the late sixties and early seventies sex, drugs and rock and roll were sweeping across the youth culture. I had bought the Beatles' first records, and I followed them into their psychedelic phase. Even though the boys at Winchester were all from good families, the influence of the new trends was strong. The music we listened to in addition to the classics of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven was that of Jimmy Hendrix, Pink Floyd and Deep Purple.

Smoking cigarettes was forbidden but took place after lunch every day in the games yard. Despite the headmaster's annual warning to the whole school not to experiment with drugs, a number of my classmates did. We read Timothy Leary, who advocated the use of mind-expanding drugs. Sometimes the police were called in to make a search of various boys' belongings. Those caught using or supplying drugs did not remain at the school. The euphemism was that they had "left of their own accord." This meant that rather than suffer the embarrassment of expulsion, they had chosen to leave.

Some students experimented with sex. They struck up

relationships with girls in the local girls' school. I desperately wanted a girlfriend, but short of some brief encounters at the annual disco-dances, I did not meet with success. Theoretically I knew the facts of life, but coming from a family of four boys, I had little firsthand knowledge about the ways of females. But I had learned all the obscene expressions in the vulgar Greek comedies of Aristophanes and the bitter Latin satires of Juvenal and could readily provide translations!

Where did I fit into all of this? I had decided not to smoke, because I wanted to collect the hundred pounds my father had promised me if I reached the age of twenty-one without having had a cigarette. That meant I also did not try the cannabis or other drugs some of my friends were smoking. Nevertheless, I did latch on to alcohol. I found myself getting quite drunk on a number of occasions

when we had wild after-hours parties, but I'm glad to say I did not make this a habit. I did not like the throwing up afterward!

At the age of thirteen, inasmuch as I did not believe in God, I chose not to have a bar mitzvah. Still, I was curious about all things spiritual and supernatural. When the astronomer Patrick Moore came to speak at our school, I asked him about the possibility of life on other planets. I had read Erik von Danniken's book *Chariots of the Gods* which promoted the ingenious but far-fetched theory that our ideas about God were really based on the appearances of aliens from outer space. Today *The X-files* has continued the tradition. Many people find it easier to believe that aliens from outer space came to earth than that God Himself came to earth in the form of a man!

I was also interested in other religions. In our divinity class we had a crash course on the major world religions. In addition to Christianity and Judaism, we covered Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. I went on to read a book on Zen Buddhism written by a judge with the unusual name of Christmas Humphreys. It did not make much sense to me.

Still searching, I tried other approaches. Some of my friends were

experimenting with occult practices, like the use of Ouija boards and table tapping. I participated once, saw nothing happening and gave it up. Fascinated by the designs on Tarot cards, I bought a set, which I began to use. They frightened me and I set them aside.

I investigated Transcendental Meditation (TM). I went through the initiation process, was given a mantra to chant, and began to read the Bhagavad-Gita. But I was concerned about the zombie-like appearance of one of the other boys in my school who had taken up TM. After a while my interest in it waned and I gave that up too.

Later, upon becoming a believer in Jesus, I realised that I had been dabbling in things that I should not have been. I formally renounced all those occult and non-Christian practices and threw away everything connected with them. Even my Grateful Dead records had to go. A friend of the Devil was no friend of mine!

### **God in Focus**

Various factors brought me closer to God. My school was nominally Christian, and the normal requirement was that students attend school chapel services on a regular basis. Those who were Jewish did not have to attend, and some of the other Jewish boys would use the time to go off to the cinema. I went to chapel because I enjoyed the music and wanted to hear what the various guest speakers had to say.

I particularly enjoyed the atmosphere at the choral Evensong Service on Saturdays. A chant that appealed to me was the *Nunc Dimittis*, the Song of Simeon, in the Gospel of Luke (2:29-32). The aged Simeon, a devout Jew, had been told by God that before he died, he would see the Messiah. When the baby Jesus was brought to the Temple, Simeon declared:

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word.

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

To be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

The melody of the chant is warm, wistful and evocative of an old man's satisfaction at holding in his arms "the consolation of Israel." I used to wonder if I would ever find that same sense of peace. I attended the talks of visiting speakers to see if they had answers to my questions about God, truth and love.

One guest speaker invited us to a discussion after the service at the home of one of our teachers. I was of two minds as to whether to go. I stood wavering outside the chapel entrance. Should I turn left, to the discussion, or right, back to my house? Two voices were arguing inside my head. One said: "You do want to know the Truth, don't you? Go on. This is the right thing to do. You'll find what you're looking for." Another part of me replied:

"No! This is for weak, emotional people who need a psychological crutch. Stay in control of your own life. You want to be in charge." With such a confusion of ideas and feelings, I decided not to pursue my inquiries—but that was not to be the end of the matter.

I noticed that two of my classmates, Simon and Michael, were unlike the rest of us. They called themselves Christians, and they actually believed something! We would mercilessly make fun of them. I thought them ridiculously misguided and not prepared to face up to reality, and I used to argue with them. I wanted to prove them wrong.

The more I talked to Simon and Michael, the more I became aware that I posed no threat to their beliefs— but they were beginning to challenge mine! One time, when we were all eating the delicious chocolate cake that Simon's mother often sent him, we were discussing the evidence that Jesus rose from the dead. Since I was specialising in Latin, Greek and ancient history, I knew I could not quickly discount the source of the evidence. I was studying Greek histories written hundreds of years before the Gospels were written and Julius Caesar's accounts of the war he fought in Gaul dated from

roughly the same time as the life of Jesus. But even if I could accept the Gospels as history, how could I accept the evidence of the Gospel writers that Jesus had risen from the dead?

My classmate Simon had asked me, "What do you think happened? Did Jesus rise from the dead? What is your explanation?" Simon himself was studying science and went on to become an engineer. He was one of the most down-to-earth people I knew and hardly likely to dream something up.

As I sat there, something strange happened to me. I "saw" an empty tomb. I knew that Jesus was not there— that He had in fact risen from the dead. Call it a dream or a vision or just my imagination running riot, but for me there was a ring of truth to it. I was looking back two thousand years and seeing what had taken place on the first Easter. Not only did Jesus rising from the dead make sense, but I could no longer evade the fact.

I was not going to admit this to Simon and Michael there and then. That would be giving in too easily. I replied, "Well, perhaps you're right and Jesus did rise from the dead. But anyway, I'm Jewish, and we're not supposed to believe that."

But as time went on I became more open to what Simon and Michael believed. I liked the idea of knowing there was a God and having a personal relationship with Him.

### **The Man Who Wasn't There**

In 1973, Keith de Berry came to the school to give a series of talks on Christianity. He was a distinguished Anglican minister at St. Aldate's in Oxford, with a widely-known ministry in England as an evangelist. You would not think so to look at that wizened, shortsighted, little man. Yet thousands of people could trace the start of their Christian commitment to hearing him preach. He had an amazing gift for opening the door of faith to those for whom God had previously been distant.

The first talk Keith gave was before the whole school in the

assembly hall as part of our compulsory religious education. His other talks were to be optional. The small, bespectacled man stood alone on the stage and immediately communicated by saying that, as a boy at school, he too had hated compulsory religion and that it had put him off from considering the real thing. I don't remember much of what he said that day, apart from one short poem he recited:

As I was going down the stair  
I met a man who wasn't there.  
He wasn't there again today  
I wish that man would go away!

Keith explained that for many of us God was like the man who was not there. Although we liked to think that God did not exist, we still had a sneaking suspicion that He did. His said his aim over the next few days would be to show us how we could know God for ourselves.

I went along to the meetings to hear what Keith had to say and to argue back, but there was not much with which to argue. Keith was speaking about faith. He explained that having faith was like learning to swim. You could see others doing it. You could read a book on the subject. You could even get into the water and hold on to the side of the pool or stand and make the movements with your arms. But until you let go and took your feet off the bottom, you would never begin to swim. Faith, he explained, was a matter of relying on God and His word, not on ourselves.

Keith introduced the historical evidence—the life, death and resurrection of Jesus—and showed how it would take more faith *not* to believe. He presented the promises Jesus made about Himself and those who trusted in Him and invited us to try them out for ourselves. He spoke on these words of Jesus: "Whoever comes to me I will not cast out" (John 6:37). And in three words— Repent, Receive, Rely, he spelled out what one had to do to become a Christian.

He explained that we were all sinners who fell short of God's

standard for us and that we could not find or reach God without His help. God had sent Jesus to die for us, to take away our sins and offer us a new life that we could live in relationship with Him as we received Him into our lives. We just had to trust Him and rely on Him to lead us and teach us to live for Him—and our faith would grow.

I found all this difficult to understand, but I recognised a truth in it that I could not ignore. I did not directly respond to the invitation to ask Jesus into my life at any of these meetings, but a few days later I went back in order to talk with Keith. I was unsure and did not want to commit myself—although in my heart I was very much attracted to the "free offer" of really knowing God—so when I talked to Keith privately, I voiced my main doubt, an argument that I thought no one could possibly refute.

"How can I possibly put my faith in something I have not already proved true for myself? That would be compromising my intellectual integrity," I said confidently.

"Are you sure that it's not just your pride that is speaking?" Keith replied.

I was floored by Keith's answer, because I had to admit it was true: I was too proud to be open to God. I felt an utter fool. It pierced me like an arrow shot deep into my heart.

That night I got down on my knees by my bed and in tears asked Jesus to come into my life and forgive my sin. As I did so I felt for the first time in my life that I was letting go of myself and reaching out to someone or something outside of me. I thought, *This really isn't me that is doing this. If God really is there, He will have to help me now.* Somehow, I knew that He would.

I read the verses Keith had suggested. Among them was Matthew 11:28, in which Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." That really meant

something to me. I knew I could trust God, although I did not understand how or why. For the rest of that term, I called myself a Christian and went along to other meetings and discussions. Slowly I began to see that a difference had been made in my life, and my behaviour changed.

### **First Steps**

About that time, something of a religious revival was going on at the school. Winchester College, although founded for the "study of godliness and good learning," did not live up to its name. It was a godless and atheistic place. Young boys received a good intellectual education, but were generally deprived of the emotional and spiritual input they needed.

But now things were changing. John Woolmer, a teacher of mathematics, had become a believer in Jesus while at Oxford. He taught at Winchester for a couple of years, then left to be trained for Anglican ordination. He returned determined to pray for God's moving at Winchester. Despite a lack of support from the chaplains, and under the cautious and watchful eye of the headmaster, Woolmer and another teacher, Peter Krackenburger, encouraged a few boys to meet regularly for prayer and Bible study. That small group was eventually to become the Christian Forum, which grew so that some seventy boys came to attend its meetings. At Winchester, a small school of six hundred boys, that was a significant proportion, and people started noticing!

Simon and Michael were among the first students to start attending the Christian Forum. As well as having small meetings in their study, they began inviting others to go with them to meetings in Peter Krackenburger's house.

I too started to attend the Christian Forum meetings, and it was there that I experienced one of my first answers to prayer. I was on my way to sing in Verdi's *Requiem*. It was a public performance in Winchester Cathedral, and I needed to arrive in good time before the

performance in order to take my seat in the choir section of that great medieval cathedral with the longest aisle in Europe. Typically for me, I was running late, but I also very much wanted to attend the prayer meeting. So I went. We studied Psalm 1 which likens us to a tree planted by a river whose roots are nourished by the water. I saw that if I were to grow spiritually, I needed to be rooted in God's Word.

I prayed, "God, if you are there, and I'm not quite sure if you are, I want to know you and have you in my life. Please show me that you are there, and get me to the cathedral on time." It was first time I prayed out loud in public. Wisely John Woolmer brought the meeting to a close and dismissed us in good time. I made it to the concert with time to spare and sang the *Requiem*. God had answered my prayer!

### **A New Believer**

Around July of 1973, I started calling myself a Christian. I attended the Christian Forum the following term as I prepared for entrance exams to Oxford and Cambridge. I was applying to study politics and economics and taking papers in Latin and Greek. I was not that interested in the subjects, and the competition was tough.

I missed a place at Oxford, but was awarded places at Bristol and York. Knowing of the massacre of Jews in Clifford's Tower at York in 1170, and that very few Jews lived in York, I decided on Bristol.

I had just become a Christian, but I had very little understanding of what it meant. In one of my discussions with John Woolmer I said, "By the way, I'm Jewish. What does it mean?"

He replied, "That's a great gift which God has given you. You will discover more about your heritage as you grow in your faith." His statement made little sense to me at the time. I did not know any other Jewish people who believed in Jesus, and I was apprehensive about the potential reaction from my parents.

At the end of term, my father drove down from Surrey to collect me from school. I said to him very sheepishly, "Dad, I was thinking of going to church this holiday." "That's funny," he replied, "so was I."

He too had been searching for spiritual reality and was being drawn to Christianity. We spent the rest of the journey talking about God, and I shared my new-found faith. We both started attending the local Anglican church, and my father has now been an active member for some twenty years.

My mother was not so enthusiastic. While studying sociology at the London School of Economics after the war, she had become a humanist. For her, all religions added up to the same thing: you should be good to people. She thought that Judaism and Christianity were more or less the same—the same wine with different labels on the bottle. She did not believe in either, although her loyalty to the family prompted her to attend communal and family religious events. She had reservations about my newfound faith and thought it was just a passing phase. Now, twenty years later, she has come to admit that it is taking a long time to pass!

Other family members have regarded my belief as a joke or something to be ashamed of. Yet only one has refused to speak to me. I thank God that not only my father but also one of my brothers has become a believer in Jesus. But that is jumping ahead in the story.

I left Winchester in 1974. The chaplain gave me a letter of commendation to take to the vicar of our local Anglican church. The vicar, Tony Carter, would not have called himself an evangelical, but he was a kindly man. As my father and I had just started attending his church, he came to visit us and tried to calm my mother's concerns that her husband and son had become religious fanatics.

He also invited me to join the church youth club. I was taking a "gap year" before going to University. During this time I found new friends. Most of them came from families in the church. I remember discussing with Tim, the vicar's son, why I was there. "You're not like us," he said. "We're here because our parents go to the church, and we all know each other. You're here because you have the zeal of a new convert." I was not sure what that meant, but true enough, I noticed

that many in the group did not seem to know what they believed about Jesus, and some said they did not believe in Him at all.

I was invited to go on the youth club retreat, and there it was suggested that I be baptised. So in February 1975, at the St. Mary's Church Youth Club Retreat, I made a formal act of commitment to faith in Jesus. The nuns at the retreat house gave me a small Iona cross, which I began to wear. Although I did not understand the full implications of what I was doing, and doubt if anyone else at the retreat could have explained it to me, I knew it was the right thing to do at the time. I went on later to be confirmed by the bishop of Winchester, and a few years later I was baptised by full immersion.

During the "gap year" between school and university, I had nine months' free time on my hands. I arranged to work on building sites for a few months to earn some money. Then I skied and hitchhiked in Europe. I had one summer job in the south of France and another in a hotel in Cornwall, where I spent my spare time surfing. During that time of traveling, I had little contact with other Christians, but I read as many Christian books as I could find. I read a whole series of books by David Watson on what it meant to believe in Jesus, and a book for new Christians by Michael Green called *New Life, New Lifestyle*. Another book I read was called *The Holy Spirit and You* by Dennis Bennett about the growing charismatic movement in the United States. I did not know what it was all about, but I prayed the prayer at the end of the book, asking to be filled with the Holy Spirit in a new way. Nothing spectacular happened, but my assurance that God was with me continued to grow.

During that time I also read John Robinson's *Honest to God*. When the book came out, it caused many people to question their faith. Robinson wrote, "Our image of God must go," but did not say what should replace the "old-fashioned" view of God; he raised more questions than he



*The Harvey family: Pictured here are Monica, Rebekah and Richard.*



*People take notice: The Jews for Jesus shop and office on Finchley Road catches the eye as you pass by.*



*The youngest Harvey, Joshua.*



*Joshua's big sister Rebekah.*

*Heard in Hyde Park: Richard declares the message of the Messiah (right).*



*Seen everywhere: Even when Richard is on the road the message is proclaimed.*

gave answers. For me, a new believer in Jesus, this was confusing. I had only just come to realise that there was a God. Now I was being advised to replace Him with something more modern. I began to ask more questions about what I believed and how I could be sure. Thankfully, there were answers to be found.

I spent part of my nine months at Lee Abbey, a Christian community in Devon. Students there worked on the estate during the day and spent the evenings learning about their faith. I met Christians who encouraged me, and I picked up a book by C. H. Dodd, *The Meaning of St. Paul for Today*. It helped me understand better what some of the New Testament was about. I saw how Paul, a Jew from an Orthodox background, realised that Jesus was not only the Messiah awaited by our people, but also the fulfillment of the Law (the Torah) and the basis of unity between Jews and Gentiles.

As part of my break, I also went to Switzerland to join a school-friend who ran a hostel for migrant workers during the ski season. The hostel was in a chalet in the town of Champéry. Its previous occupants had been Francis and Edith Schaeffer, who had gone on to found the Christian community of l'Abri. When I heard about them, I obtained a copy of the book they had written about l'Abri. The idea of a thoughtful Christian community was most interesting. I began reading Schaeffer's writings about philosophy and the Christian faith. These, in giving me much-needed confidence, also gave me the intellectual basis for what I believed. I seemed to be the only Christian around and was often trying to defend my faith against those who had none.

During this time, when I was on my own, God became very real to me. As I rode the skilift up to the slopes and came out of the shadows of trees into the brilliant sunshine and blue skies against a backdrop of snow-capped mountains, I was aware not just of the wonders of creation, but that God the Creator was behind it all. As I went into the hills in the south of France, surfed the waves off the Cornish coast and

followed the ancient pilgrimage route to Santiago di Compostella in northern Spain, I sensed the hand of God in my life. I wondered what lay in store for me. For the first time I read the Bible seriously, underlining whole sections of my battered copy. I met Christians on my travels and found it a great encouragement to talk and pray with them.

### **An Anglican Messianic Jew**

In the autumn of 1975, I returned to England to study politics and economics at Bristol University. But I was more interested in what it meant to believe in Jesus, so I changed my course to study theology. I joined the Christian Union, the Anglican Society and the Jewish Society and tried to piece them all together. On a form that asked new students' religious beliefs I wrote "Anglican Messianic Jew." This met with the response, "We've never had one of those before!"

I tried unsuccessfully to arrange a joint meeting between the Christian Union and the Jewish Society. The Christian Union had a reputation for being very evangelistic, and the Jewish Society president was reluctant to engage in such an encounter. I was, however, more successful in bringing together the Anglican Society and the Jewish Society.

The Anglican Society's chaplain was of the opinion that truth was like light shining on a many-faceted diamond.

Each religion cast a different reflection, but all were trying to reflect the same truth. He was happy to encourage dialogue with everybody, so a meeting took place. I designed the poster with what I thought was an original logo (a cross inside a star of David), and the meeting was well attended. For me it was significant. Not only did I have the opportunity to share my faith in Jesus with my Jewish and Christian friends, but I met another Jewish believer in Jesus at the meeting. His name was Anthony Bash, and he was a law student.

Anthony worked with the Navigators, a group that encourages systematic study and application of the Bible.

In the two years I had been a believer in Jesus, Anthony was the only Jewish believer in Jesus I had met apart from my father. It was good to be encouraged by him. He came from an Orthodox Jewish background and when he became a believer in Jesus, he had been thrown out of his parents' home.

Anthony had been contacted by David Harley, a missionary to the Jews who had recently returned from Ethiopia. David and his wife, Rosemary, were now leading the London outreach of the Church's Ministry Among the Jewish People (CMJ), an Anglican organisation that shares the Good News of Jesus with Jewish people. They were conducting a survey of Jewish believers in Jesus in the United Kingdom. Through Anthony, I received a survey form to complete and was listed as one of the hundred or so known Jewish believers. There are a lot more now!

The Harleys invited me to a meeting in their home, where I met other Jewish believers. Gordon Jessup gave a fascinating Bible study on Jewishness and the Trinity, and I took copious notes. It was the first time I realised that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity made sense. Gordon showed how, in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Semitic concept of the plural nature of God's unity extended to the Holy Spirit, the Angel of the Lord and other appearances of God to man. Though the doctrine of the Trinity may have developed historically in a Hellenistic philosophical framework, it still fitted well with the composite unity of God expressed in the Old Testament. There the Bible uses functional rather than ontological language and shows how God acts in space and time. It was left for later church councils to debate God's nature in the language of ontology.<sup>1</sup>

I wanted to understand what it meant to be Jewish and at the same time believe in Jesus. My Jewish friends at university were saying, "Come back to the synagogue; be a nice Jewish boy," and my Christian friends seemed to be saying, "Now that you have become a Christian,

you are no longer a Jew. The old has passed away, the new has come." That was how I heard it, anyway, and it was enough to give me an identity crisis and a theological headache.

As I studied the history of the early church, I found myself asking, "Whatever happened to the first Jewish Christians? Why did they disappear, and how can they reappear today?" I did not know that God would call me to be part of the answer to my own question.

At university, some of my Jewish friends became Christians. One of them, Keith, lived on my floor in the dormitory. Keith's parents asked him to see the rabbi about his new faith and he asked me to come along. The two of us sat down with two prominent Liberal rabbis, John Rayner and Julia Neuberger, who, in the politest possible way, told us that we were both crazy and should see a psychiatrist. As I was to discover with my friend Fred Morgan (a Jewish exhippie who taught Indian religions until he went on to become a rabbi), that was a typical rabbinic response. It was more than a rabbi's job and credibility were worth even to admit the possibility that Jesus was who He said He was, and that you really could be Jewish and believe in Him.

The Harleys kept in touch. In 1976 they invited me to a conference at London Bible College for about twenty young Jewish believers, many of whom would go on to full-time ministry. The conference received a special visit from Moishe Rosen, director of the newly-formed Jews for Jesus organisation in the United States. He and the music group, The Liberated Wailing Wall, had been invited to Northern Ireland to encourage reconciliation among Protestants and Catholics during "the Troubles." Moishe had then gone to England. In his message at the conference he told us, "You may only be a small number here today, but God can use you to do a lot if you let Him." I did not know what God might do through me, but I prayed it might be something useful. I received a speedy answer: Moishe asked if some of us would be willing to have our stories on tape. I had never

"given my testimony" before and felt very nervous, but I prayed about it and went ahead.

<sup>1</sup> See "A Look at the Trinity From A Messianic Jewish Perspective," by Richard Harvey, Issues 10:8, 1996.

In 1978, the Harleys invited me to participate with a dozen others in an evangelistic campaign in the North London suburb of Edgware, where many orthodox Jews live. I had joined a good Anglican church in Bristol (Christchurch, Clifton), where I was involved in various forms of evangelism. Yet I had never been directly involved with witness to the Jewish community. With fear and trepidation I participated. Going door-to-door was nerve-wracking, until I realised that some people were actually willing to talk.

When it came to handing out tracts in the streets, I was all set to join in, until I realised that we would be going to Golders Green. Many of my relatives lived there, and I was so afraid of meeting one of them that I just could not muster the courage to go. It would take a few more years before I was ready to do that! The following term I returned to Bristol to live in a hostel for foreign students where I concentrated my activities on witness to Muslims and students of other faiths.

I became more involved in debate with Jewish students and more confident in the Gospel. My friend Keith and I decided to enter the university debating competition, and we got through to the final. Every time we spoke, we asked to be introduced as "Jewish Christians," and we used these opportunities not just to argue the motions before us but to witness to the teams and audiences. There were many other Jewish debaters.

In a "balloon debate" organised by the Jewish Society, we had to choose a Jewish character and argue why the individual should be allowed to remain in an imaginary balloon that was losing altitude and would crash unless its passenger load was lightened. I chose to argue the case for Jesus against a Marxist friend representing the State of

Israel. In a flash of inspiration, I realised that Jesus would have given up His life for His people. Rather against the conventions, Jesus "jumped out of the balloon" first!

In another meeting at the Jewish Society, the antimissionary Hyam Maccoby came to speak. I went to hear him and was challenged to go back to my books with renewed vigour in order to answer some of his points. It was the first time I had come across someone whose mandate it was to discredit the case for Jesus and prevent Jewish people from believing in Him.

### **Life After University**

I graduated from Bristol University in the summer of 1978, but remained in Bristol to be part of Christchurch. I held a succession of part-time jobs—packing butter in a factory, teaching English to foreign students and working at a hostel for alcoholics. I did not know what I should be doing. I hoped eventually to go into the Anglican ministry, so I decided to train and work as a teacher for a year or two. I returned to Bristol the following academic year to take a one-year postgraduate teaching diploma. Among the high points of that course were our visits to the places of worship of various religions. One time we visited a synagogue and the rabbi asked each of us our religious background. We gave a variety of answers. When I said that I was a Jewish Christian, I was told, "I'm sorry, you don't exist." I found that most amusing because my existence was one thing I could not deny!

I finished the course in the summer of 1980 and I started applying for teaching jobs. Then, in a change of direction that I can only believe was another of God's interventions, I did not follow through. Instead I went to America.

The previous summer I had gone to Greenbelt, a Christian music festival. One of the groups, Lamb, from the United States, was advertised as a messianic Jewish group. As well as singing messianic music, which was new to me, the people in Lamb talked about the growing number of messianic Jews in the United States. I enjoyed the

group's music and bought one of their albums, but thought little more about it. Then, three months later, I received a phone call from John Clark, a man I did not know. He said, "I've been praying about whom I should invite to come to America, and your name came up."

John had been the driver for Lamb during their visit to Greenbelt. He had made a note of my name and address.

I could not remember meeting him at all, so I was very surprised to have him call me like that, out of the blue. I had no inclination to go to America, but I prayed about it and realised that it might be something God wanted me to do.

If I could sort out the Jewish bit of me once and for all, I would be able to focus on other things. I knew that I would not be going for a holiday, but on a fact-finding mission. I wrote down a list of questions to take with me. I wanted to get to the bottom of the Jewish aspect of being a believer in Jesus, and I thought this trip might answer my questions. In fact, it was to be the first of my many trips across the Atlantic, which have continued until today.

I was amazed to discover the large number of Jewish people who were coming to believe in Jesus. Some of them were forming their own churches—or messianic congregations, as they were called. On our return to England, the five of us who had gone decided to form our own group, and the London Messianic Fellowship began. I left Bristol and returned to London so I could spend all my spare time with the Messianic Fellowship. Rather than teach, I applied for management training opportunities and joined the graduate training programme run by Sainsburys, a large supermarket chain.

In 1977, the Jews for Jesus mobile evangelistic music group, The Liberated Wailing Wall, came to England. It was the first of many visits. I met the team at All Souls Langham Place and was very impressed. They gave a presentation at the local Baptist church I was then attending, and my whole family came along. My mother enjoyed the music, but not the message, but my brother Nick gave his life to

the Lord after speaking to team member Geoff Millenson.

Afterwards I asked Nick why he had taken that step, and he replied: "I saw what the Christians had in their lives, and I wanted it for myself." Nick has grown to be a strong Christian, is now married and has three lovely children.

In 1980, I had another opportunity to give out tracts on the streets. Jews for Jesus invited me to join them on a "probe campaign." Despite waking up with a nightmare the night before we were to hit the streets, I mustered up the courage to do it. I feared the worst, but met with no response more negative than a polite "no, thank you" from those who did not wish to take a tract.

I was leading the London Messianic Fellowship and had been working at Sainsbury's for eighteen months when I applied and was accepted to go to All Nations Christian College, a Bible college specialising in cross-cultural missionary training. David Harley had left CMJ and was now teaching at All Nations. He became my tutor. As I neared the end of the course, I wondered what to do when I finished. David suggested that I apply to work with CMJ in London so I could continue my activities with the London Messianic Fellowship. I could also help to develop a Jews for Jesus style of evangelism in Britain.

So I applied to become an evangelist to my people. After interviews with an Anglican vicar and a high ranking solicitor in Scotland Yard, I was offered the position of missionary with CMJ, the oldest Jewish missionary society. I served with CMJ for nearly ten years, and I am grateful to God for all the opportunities I was given.

During that time, Jewish evangelism became a controversial issue in the church and took on a higher profile in the media. Theological issues were raised about the uniqueness of Jesus and the nature of the gospel in a pluralistic society; ethical questions were asked about the legitimacy and methodology of Jewish evangelism. I had many opportunities to lift up the banner of Jesus the Messiah and declare to

all who would hear that He is the Saviour for Jewish people and everyone else.

On one occasion, I was invited to speak at a Christian Union meeting at Cambridge University. It was part of a week of outreach by the Christians in Cambridge for everyone who might be interested, but the Jewish students thought that the entire event was targeted at them. With the help of an anti-missionary and front page headlines in the Jewish press, they tried to ban me from speaking. Despite my protests about freedom of speech, I was permitted to go to Cambridge only if I gave assurance that I would do nothing other than speak at that one meeting.

On another occasion, the Lubavitch rabbi at Oxford invited me to participate in a debate on "the ethics of evangelism." Also due to participate were a bishop, another rabbi and a well-known religious affairs journalist. I agreed to take part but was disappointed when the rabbi called a few days later to apologise and withdraw the invitation. He said that he had to "disinvite" me because some of the participants were refusing to appear on the same platform with me—and he did not mean the other rabbi!

### **Marriage Matters**

During those years, I wanted to get married. I had become engaged at Bible college, but it had not resulted in marriage. Then, one Friday night in 1984 as I was leading the Sabbath evening service at the London Messianic Fellowship, I walked Monica Shulkind, a stunningly good-looking new Jewish believer. I fell for her immediately. Over the course of some months we got to know each other, and eventually we got married. Our messianic Jewish wedding service was performed by our dear friends Eric and Irene Lipson under the chuppah (the traditional Jewish wedding canopy). Here is Monica's story:

I come from a "traditional Orthodox" Jewish home. My mother kept a kosher kitchen. We observed Shabbat each week by lighting the

candles and saying the prayers over the bread and wine.

I was sent every week to *cheder*, the Jewish equivalent of Sunday school, so I grew up knowing what it meant to be Jewish. I did not have a bat mitzvah, but I could read Hebrew and enjoyed following the services in the siddur.

Nearly all my friends were Jewish, and our family was close. I enjoyed the holidays and traditions we observed—Passover, Hanukkah and the other festivals—but one thing was missing. I had no real sense of God. I believed in Him, but I could not see Him through all the tradition.

As a teenager, I questioned everything: What's going on? Why are we here? What's beyond the universe? What's eternity all about? But I didn't find any answers. When I entered my twenties, I decided to go my own way. My parents had brought me up to stay within the Jewish community, but I wanted to make new friends who were not necessarily Jewish. I moved away from home and rented a flat. I worked in computing during the day and partied at night. I kept up a faithful attendance at family occasions and continued to attend synagogue when I was expected to be there, but I lived a life of my own. This continued throughout the seventies.

Pursuing a successful career in computers, I progressed from data entry to sales. I became a customer support representative for large computer users, selling the services of a bureau that provided insurance, support and backup in the event of breakdowns and emergencies.

I noticed something unusual about a secretary at our office named Jeannie. When Jeannie talked about God, her whole face lit up. She said she had a personal relationship with Him. It reminded me of the questions I had as a teenager, and I wondered whether God might really be there after all.

Although the rest of us gave Jeannie a hard time, she would not give any ground in discussions. She said she knew that when she died

she was going to heaven to be with God! I thought, *Well, you might think you're going to be with God, but nobody can be that sure!*

One day I made some unkind comments about Jeannie's faith to my friend Rita. I was stunned when Rita replied, "Be careful what you say. I've just become a Christian myself." I thought, *Why Rita? She is well-educated, has a good job and is happily married. Why does she need all that?* I could dismiss Jeannie's faith because she had been raised as a Christian, but why did Rita need it?

I could not help but notice the difference in Rita.

She, in turn, was interested in the fact that I was Jewish. We talked about Judaism. She asked lots of questions about the Old Testament, many of which I couldn't answer. She started giving me books such as *The Cross and the Switchblade* by David Wilkerson.

I found them very interesting and was happy to talk about God, until Rita started to push me a bit. One day I turned to her and said in an outburst of temper, "Look, I'm Jewish, and that goes very deep!" Rita backed off.

About that time, I decided I would learn to play the saxophone. I had always loved the sound. I started having lessons with a teacher who lived near me, and it turned out that he was a Christian. He too shared his faith in Jesus with me. When I said, "OK, but I'm Jewish, and that goes very deep," he replied, "That's OK. I'm Jewish too!" I thought, *Oh!?*

I met with him for about a year. During that time, I did not learn very much about the saxophone, but I did learn a lot more about Jesus. It was very hard. The thought kept going through my head, *Is Jesus the Messiah?* Eventually, I went out and bought a Bible that contained both the Old and New Testaments. I didn't read the New, I read Genesis. Still I could not get the question of Jesus out of my head. Religious leaflets would drop through the letter box, and my family started to notice that this Bible was "following me around."

I felt so stressed that finally one day I got down on my knees in

tears and cried out to God, "Look, I think that Jesus is probably the Messiah, but I really can't handle it because I know what it would do to my family. It goes against everything I've been taught." The burden lifted and I felt free. I put the whole thing out of my thoughts, and life went on.

My company sent me off on a training course. On the first day, each of us was paired with someone we had to get to know and then introduce to the group. I was put with Nick, who, it turned out, was a born-again Christian. I said, "Oh, I've got one of those at work." I told him I was Jewish, and he said, "I'd love to spend some time chatting with you." We talked until 2 a.m.! Nick helped me understand how Jewish Jesus Himself was. We talked about the messianic prophecies that Jesus had fulfilled. Nick showed me the prophecy in Isaiah 53 about the suffering servant, which I could not remember ever having read before. It sounded uncannily like Jesus! For the first time, it all made sense—I saw that Jesus had come for Jewish people, too. When we were about to leave the course and go our separate ways, Nick said, "I'll give you my address, and if anything happens, do write and let me know."

I went back to the office and told Rita what had happened. She was very excited. She sensed that I was getting closer to believing.

In 1984, the Argentinian evangelist Luis Palau came to London. The event, called "Mission to London," was advertised everywhere, on billboards, in buses and in the papers. The ads pictured Palau sitting in an armchair, beckoning and saying, "Bring your questions to me." When I heard him interviewed on the radio, I thought he talked sense and was very down-to-earth. I decided to go and hear him at Queen's Park Ranger's football ground in Shepherd's Bush. I wanted to go on my own. For a Jewish girl to go alone to something like that was a big thing, and I thought, *They'll all know I'm Jewish and wonder what I'm doing there.* I told Rita what I was planning to do, and she had all her Christian friends praying for me.

I went to the football ground on a Sunday, but as it turned out Luis Palau wasn't speaking that day. So I just went for a walk in the park. It was the most beautiful summer's evening. The clear blue sky was gorgeous. I looked up and saw just two sections of an incomplete rainbow, but there was no rain. I thought, *That's really weird*. I walked around

for about twenty minutes more and the rainbow didn't go away. I felt that something strange was going on.

The following Thursday, I went back to hear Luis Palau. Feeling very self-conscious, I thought, *People are going to wonder what I'm doing here*. The singing made a great impression on me. People were praising God in a way that I had never seen before. Then Luis Palau came on stage. It was not so much what he said, but suddenly I became conscious of God's presence in such a powerful way that I could not ignore it. I knew then that it was all true. Whatever it might mean as far as my family and I were concerned, I couldn't deny it. Tears started to stream down my face, and I tried to brush them away.

Then Palau gave an invitation for people to come forward. I thought, *Well, OK, God, I believe it, but I'm not going. It's very public down there and it's a long way to walk. I'm just not doing it*. Palau kept repeating his invitation and I kept saying, *OK, I believe it, but I'm not going down*. Then suddenly I found myself walking down to the centre of the stadium.

A girl came over to talk to me, and I started to tell her what was happening. Then I broke down and just sobbed and sobbed in the middle of Queen's Park. It was just so wonderful to give myself up to God, to stop the fight, to just surrender to Him and acknowledge my need of Him. It was a release of everything. I remember telling the counselor that I was Jewish, and her supervisor commented, "Oh, I've never had one of those before!"

I went home that night with a great burden lifted from my shoulders. It felt like I was walking on air. I floated home. Then came

the hard part— telling my family. It was not an easy moment. My mother took it personally and felt that she had done something terrible to cause this to come upon the family.

My father said he did not believe in God and did not want me to try to convert him! Nevertheless, they tolerated my new-found faith. Since then, God has softened the heart of my family, particularly my mother. She comes along to our activities and has heard the gospel message many times now. She joins in as Richard and I pray for our two children, Rebekah and Joshua, and read them Bible stories at bedtime, and she says "amen" along with us. May she come to know God's love and forgiveness in her own heart!

### **Speaker's Corner**

Monica and I were part of the London Messianic Fellowship, a group that came together in 1980. Each *Erev Shabbat* (Sabbath eve) we would meet for worship, and on Sundays I would lead a team of open-air witness at Speaker's Corner. Wearing Jews for Jesus T-shirts and carrying banners that said "Y'shua, the Messiah," we often attracted a crowd to hear what we had to say.

Speaker's Corner is an open space in one of the royal parks in the centre of London. For hundreds of years, it has been the place where anyone could climb onto a soapbox or stepladder and speak about any subject that took his or her fancy, providing he or she did not utter blasphemy or treason. On any Sunday afternoon, hundreds gather to hear speakers on every subject from atheism to Zen Buddhism. It's a peculiarly British institution that has been called both "the people's university" and "the world's largest open-air lunatic asylum." But provided people have something to say, they are guaranteed a hearing.

You can be sure that there will always be someone there who will disagree, and sometimes the crowd is not too friendly. Heckling has developed into an art form. Hecklers use humour, obscenity or a combination of the two to put a speaker off stride and make fun of his

or her views. I learned to follow the maxim of Proverbs 26:4-5, which says: "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him," and continues, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes."

I developed what I call "dialogical preaching." Rather than simply present a monologue, I use debating techniques to argue my points. Over the years it has worked well, and many who came along to heckle and oppose the gospel have become more friendly. Some have even become believers in Jesus.

One Sunday, I had a crowd around me at Speaker's Corner when an angry Jewish man started shouting and hurling insults. He would not stop to listen to reason or arguments. He just kept pouring out abuse at high volume. I shouted over his taunts, "This man is trying to take away my freedom of speech because I'm Jewish and believe in Jesus. You may not like to hear what I believe, and you may say I should not believe in Him because I'm Jewish, but I've found the Messiah. It's Jesus."

There was no way for me to say anything more until he saw he was getting nowhere and went away. By that time, a larger crowd had gathered to see what the commotion was all about. I did not see the TV cameras at the time, but a few days later, I had a call from Jews for Jesus headquarters in San Francisco saying I had just been on the NBC breakfast news in New York City. As millions of Americans ate their cornflakes, they saw me proclaiming that there were Jewish people who believed in Jesus, even in little old England!

Other media opportunities came along. Karen Armstrong, a former nun who had renounced her faith, did a television series on the life of Paul. I thought her views were a distortion of the New Testament picture of Paul and his views of Jesus. I wrote to complain and received a call from one of the producers. He asked: "Would you like to go on our programme 'Right to Reply' and put your views directly to Miss Armstrong?"

I accepted. This gave me the opportunity to state that not only was Paul a Jewish believer in Jesus in the first century, but many Jewish people today also accepted Jesus as their Messiah. I said that Miss Armstrong had misrepresented Paul by saying that he had distanced himself from the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem in order to make the gospel acceptable to the Gentile world. I argued that Jesus had always stressed the universal implications of His mission and that Paul had taken pains to continue identifying himself as a Jew. Karen Armstrong conceded that I had a point, and it made for excellent television!

In 1991, I left CMJ (the Church's Ministry Among the Jews) to begin working with Jews for Jesus. The announcement that Jews for Jesus was starting in Britain caused some controversy and concern among the Jewish and Christian communities. The "Decade of Evangelism" had barely started when the Archbishop of Canterbury was asked to discontinue his patronage of CMJ. As the Archbishop pondered his decision, another Anglican,

David Shepherd (former England cricketer and bishop of Liverpool) suggested that the Decade of Evangelism should not "target" Jews or other non-Christian ethnic minorities. Instead, it should concentrate on winning nominal Christians back to the fold. He regarded with grave misgivings the establishment of a Jews for Jesus office in London. In March of 1992, a serious documentary on Jews for Jesus was produced by Joan Bakewell for *Heart of the Matter*. It dealt with the whole question of whether anyone could be Jewish and believe in Jesus.

I left for a year of training with Jews for Jesus in the States and returned to establish a base in Britain. Since then, we have seen many Jewish people acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah, and several opportunities have arisen in the local and national press for me to speak out about believing in Jesus.

My first letter in the *Times* was in 1982. It was in response to an editorial on the significance of Easter that had suggested it was no

longer appropriate or necessary for Jewish people to believe in Jesus and that, after centuries of anti-Semitism, the church should no longer be preaching "the conversion of the Jews." "Conversion" is a term I have always found it necessary to unpack. When Jewish people believe in Jesus, they do not "convert" from being Jews to being Gentiles. Far from it, believing in Jesus is the true fulfillment of what it means to be Jewish.

Biblical conversion (expressed by the Hebrew word *teshu-vah*) means turning around inside, or turning back to God. In my letter to the Times, I stated that Easter indeed was a time when Christians needed to remember that Jesus was a Jew, and that anti-Semitism should be eradicated; yet we also needed to remember that the first followers of Jesus were Jewish and that today, too, there were a growing number of Jews who believed in Him.

In 1991, Jews for Jesus placed a full-page ad in the *Times*. The ad was written by Mark Greene, chairman of the Jews for Jesus UK Board and a tutor at London Bible College. In response, Bernard Levin, a sharp-tongued Jewish journalist, wrote an article titled "Clodhoppers on Crusade," in which he accused Mark Greene of showing "all the sensitivity of a Bactrian camel with a compound fracture of the spine."

Levin continued with a challenge to Christians: "I of all people should not bandy Scripture with experts, but in these ecumenical days it is surely reasonable to ask Christianity what its founder meant when he said, 'None shall come to the Father but by me.'" He concluded with the wry observation, "It would be a strange effect if, in the end, such slop as Jews for Jesus were to achieve the stiffening of Christian conviction."

Mark never defended himself. In a gracious response to Levin's diatribe, he merely stated that even someone as "insensitive" as he had discovered such a wonderful truth in Jesus that he just had to tell others about it.

Levin's remarks, however, touched a chord in many people. At the

time the ad came out, George Carey, archbishop of Canterbury, publicly disassociated himself from CMJ by declining to become their patron. In turn, CMJ disassociated itself from the ad.

In 1994, we placed another ad, in the *Independent*. It contained Passover greetings from hundreds of Jewish believers in Jesus and some questions to consider based on the traditional "four questions" of the Passover seder. This produced considerable reactions in the Jewish community, an editorial in the *Independent* itself and a condemnation by the Rev. Richard Harries, bishop of Oxford.

Alison Hilliard of the BBC interviewed Bishop Harries and me on Easter Sunday morning, for the religious affairs programme *Sunday* on Radio 4. This interview, presented below, shows the lengths to which some Christians are prepared to go to avoid giving offense. Sadly, comments like these do not help the cause of the gospel.

**Allison Hilliard:** "Misconceived and harmful" is how the bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries, this week described the current campaign of Jews for Jesus—the organisation that targets Jews as potential converts to the Christian faith. During Passover, which ends today, Jews for Jesus has placed Passover seasonal greetings in newspapers throughout the world from the British *Independent* to the New York Times. In the first ads of their kind in this country, the greetings suggest that Jesus is the Messiah for the Jewish people too.

Well, earlier this morning I spoke to the bishop of Oxford, who is also chairman of the Executive Committee of the Council of Christians and Jews.

But first, Richard Harvey, UK director of Jews for Jesus, told me about its latest campaign.

Richard Harvey: This is really a traditional greeting such as Jewish people would send to their friends and family at Passover time. Some several hundred of us who are Jewish and believe that Jesus is the Messiah decided to send a Passover greeting to our friends and families. As well as wishing one another a joyful Passover, we said

that we had discovered that the true meaning of the Passover is fulfilled in Jesus. He is the Passover Lamb that takes away our sin.

**Allison Hilliard:** But at the end of the day are you hoping that the Jews who will read it will become Christians?

**Richard Harvey:** Well, we want to say to our friends and families that we are Jews who have discovered that Jesus is the Messiah. The ad concluded with a traditional question at Passover. At Passover time there are traditionally four questions asked, and we asked a fifth question, "Why is it that Y'shua (Jesus in Hebrew) is different from others who have claimed to be the Messiah?" And we were inviting everybody to write in for a free booklet which looks at the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah.

**Allison Hilliard:** Now, Bishop Richard Harries, why do you call that "misconceived and harmful," damaging to both the Christian faith and to Judaism?

**Bishop Harries:** Well, first of all I would want to emphasise that people of a Jewish background who have become Christians are most warmly welcome and are fully members of the Christian church. But I object to Jews for Jesus targeting Jewish people for conversion, because I think that at this stage of the twentieth century, after the Holocaust, we ought to be having a very different set of priorities as Christians. We are all aware now of the tragic history—a tragic history which has been caused by the teaching of contempt by Christians about Judaism—a long history of harassment, persecution and so on. And the overriding priority for the Christian church is to establish a new relationship with Judaism.

**Allison Hilliard:** But surely, your primary obligation as a Christian bishop should be to tell the Good News of the Easter resurrection to everyone, whether they are Jewish or not.

**Bishop Harries:** I tell the Good News of Jesus' resurrection to everyone, but I also want to serve Jesus, and I have to ask myself, What is it to serve Jesus today? Particularly, what is it to serve Jesus in

relation to the Jewish people? And in the light of that tragic history, we can't say that the prime obligation is simply to convert Jews to Christianity. The prime obligation is to say, "What went wrong in the past? Why did it go wrong? How can we put it right today?"

**Allison Hilliard:** Now, Richard Harvey, can I bring you in there? Are you insensitive and ignoring history therefore?

**Richard Harvey:** No, I think the bishop is really misrepresenting our position, because he is working with the assumption that you cannot be truly Jewish and truly Christian, in the sense of being a follower of Jesus as the Messiah. And I find it extraordinary that the bishop of Oxford, who believes in the resurrection of Jesus, and wishes those of us who are Jewish welcome in the church, should want us to keep quiet about this wonderful thing that we have discovered, that Jesus is truly the Messiah, risen from the grave.

**Allison Hilliard:** Bishop?

**Bishop Harries:** I have absolutely no objection to people of a Jewish background emphasising the Jewish aspects of Christianity. Indeed, we all ought to be doing that. Christianity is a religion which is rooted in Judaism. Jesus was a Jew. We all need to be much more aware of the Jewish roots of Christianity, but it is Christianity which we are talking about. We are not talking about a form of Judaism, and, as I say in relation to people of a Jewish background, particularly people who are trying to be observant Jews, the prime obligation is to respect Judaism and its integrity as a living religion.

**Richard Harvey:** Bishop, I was brought up in Judaism, my family are Jewish, we worshipped in synagogue all our lives, but even though it may be a living religion in the sense that it has continued to the present day in the purposes of God, the only living Messiah that I have discovered is Jesus, who rose again from the dead, and it would seem to me that if you would have been there at the first Easter event and were saying the same sort of thing to the disciples—"Hold on, chaps, you must respect the integrity of Judaism as a living reli-

gion"—then the church would never have got started in the first place.

**Bishop Harries:** I agree that it would never have got started, but quite honestly, you're being a bit unhistorical. We are not talking about what happened in the first days of Christianity. We are talking about what it . . . what it . . . what it . . . what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus in 1994 in relation to Judaism, given the tragic history.

**Allison Hilliard:** Thank you, Bishop Richard Harries and Richard Harvey of Jews for Jesus.

### **Up to date**

Much more could be written here about the struggles, blessings and victories I have experienced as a Jewish believer in Jesus. Suffice it to say that in the years I have known Him, God has been good to me and has taught me much about faith.

It's twenty years since I became a believer in Jesus. In 1974, David Harley could only find a hundred Jewish believers in England to include in his survey. Our latest survey will cover a thousand. In 1974, there were no messianic fellowships in Britain. Today there are many. It's not that it's become any easier for a Jewish person to take those first steps of faith and become a disciple of Jesus.

The reactions of Jewish friends and families may not always be as sympathetic as those I received, but many more are choosing this path.

It may be that as you have read my story, you have found yourself wondering about—or even in agreement with—the main point, which is that Jesus is who He said He was. The reason that my life took the direction it did was the realisation of the simple truth that Jesus is the Messiah. It makes as much sense for Jewish people to believe in Him as for anyone else. God will come to us "out of nowhere" if we are willing to receive Him.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and

where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3: 8). If you have not yet taken the step of asking Jesus into your life, perhaps the three words "repent, receive and rely" that made sense for me will also make sense for you. If so, there's a card on the inside of this booklet that may help. If you have already become a believer in Jesus and would like to find encouragement in meeting others and discussing some of the issues that I have mentioned, please call or write to us at the address and number below. There's an e-mail number too.

If you are still not convinced, then let me say to you what I would say to some of my own family who, after seeing my life change and knowing of the faith of my brother and father as well, have not yet accepted Jesus for herself. I would say this:

Dear Family,

Thank you for so patiently bearing with Richard, the "Jew for Jesus." Thank you for understanding that I still consider myself Jewish, albeit a different kind of Jew, with the Messiah Jesus as my Lord.

This path is not something I have entered upon lightly, and I know that neither would it would be an easy thing for you to accept Jesus. Nevertheless, please be willing to seriously consider the evidence and claims of Jesus who said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). He also said, "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also" (John 8:19b). Only through knowing the Son can we know God.

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