

Rabbi Shmuel Wolkenfeld's Testimony

I was born in New York City and grew up in a Conservative Jewish home. I attended a traditional Hebrew School three times per week and was Bar Mitzvahed at age 13. I always took school and learning seriously, but my religious training seemed like an anachronism that nobody really believed in. My home was really a typical dysfunctional, secular, materialistic home, but Jewish in culture and identity.

When I became a teenager I started searching for answers to the pain and problems of my life and the apparent impending doom on the world. Judgement seemed imminent on a society that was steeped in the Cold War, the Vietnam War, racial injustice and ecological travesty. I was part of the youth movements of the 60's and 70's. I toyed with Marxist ideology, Eastern religious ideas, philosophical meditation under the influence of psychedelic drugs, but mostly I envisioned that my answers would come from the study of the physics of the brain. I wanted to figure out the riddle of existence and then rebuild the world. G-d used all that guilt and anxiety over the world's problems to open my heart to the witness of another young person who had received the Lord into her life. I came to Yeshua in April of 1969, although He was "Jesus" back then.

Suffice it to say that in the midst of my quest for reality I was studying modern quantum physics. I was presented with the concept of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, which says that when we interact with matter to measure it, we change it, so it is no longer the same for further measurements. That fact has obliterated the subject/object dichotomy and therefore many scientists were taking a mystical approach to reality. Consciousness merges with objectivity. Many, of course, were going into Eastern religions. To me, this concept was the door that opened my thinking to accept there was a spiritual reality higher than the materialistic world. I had been taught that was the only reality, which was supposed to be following mathematical principles which were the ultimate and self evolving truth. I had actually gotten stoned and "grooved" over the power and majesty of the Schrödinger Wave Equation.

It was at this time that a girl moved to town who had herself gone through a similar pilgrimage as a philosophy major and was now attending the church of one of my dormitory acquaintances. She was the one who actually explained the message of Yeshua to me. The one great argument she presented, that kept returning to my mind to prove that the Bible was the right spiritual answer, was the fact that we Jews had survived, as promised in the scriptures, but in galut (Diaspora), without a homeland for almost nineteen hundred years. This was an historical anomaly. Furthermore, when we were in right relation to G-d we were never defeated. So, the Jewish story must have some supernatural basis to account for our survival. We must not be understanding our purpose perfectly because we were in galut.

Some of my personal sinful living closed in on me to bring me to a point of decision and repentance in 1969 during some of these thought processes.

I was NEVER comfortable with "Jesus Christ" and hymns; Sunday worship and crosses. HaShem knows that I tried to be a Christian, but it never felt right. It was always alien. I met Martin Chernoff in about 1971 and attended Beth Messiah in Cincinnati, Ohio where I was attending Bible school. I knew then that the Messianic synagogue concept was the right way to worship, although they were just inventing it then.

I didn't ally myself with the Messianic movement because the fellowship I was involved in had some lifestyle issues of modesty and separation from the world, such that I thought I would start my own Messianic Hasidic Movement. But apparently HaShem was not in this notion, and by the time my children got to be teenagers I realized that I needed them in a Jewish community. For several reasons I left the church connection in 1994.

I attended God's Bible College in Cincinnati from 1969 to 1974. (That's really the name. The founder deeded the institution to G-d. However, the courts finally ruled that G-d cannot own property in Hamilton County, Ohio.) It was there that I met my lovely wife who had in fact been praying for me (as her unknown future spouse) for about 6 years. I have a Bachelor's in Theology from the Bible College. I studied in Israel for a summer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and have a second bachelor's degree from the University of Cincinnati in Jewish studies.

G-d led us from school in Cincinnati through various ministries. We were college campus missionaries in western PA, Indian missionaries in Winnipeg, Manitoba and church pastor in two places. Since 1990 I have taught science and math at the Overland Christian High School in Overland Park, KS. Or HaOlam Messianic Congregation started in 1995. In 2003 I retired from teaching at Overland Christian High School. At present Or HaOlam's weekly attendance is well over 100 and G-d is blessing us greatly.

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