

From
The Guttermost
To
The Uttermost

By
Messianic Rabbi Ed Rothman

The Testimony of My Adventure to Discovering Faith
In Y'shua (Jesus) The Messiah &
The Journey of My Call to Messianic Ministry

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Foreword

By Dr. Alan Langstaff

From the time I first met Rabbi Ed some 20 years ago, I always saw him as a kind and gentle servant of G-d. I jokingly referred to him as a “good little Jewish boy” who, along the way, found Y’shua. It was only later I discovered that he wasn’t always like that.

Here in this book he has bared it all and shared his past with transparent honesty. Consequently, he doesn’t spare himself nor hide his failures. In a day when we have “reality shows” on television, here we have a “reality book” that tells it all. All of this eventually led him to discover faith in Y’shua, and this book tells of this adventure in an engaging, fast-moving way.

Over the years, Rabbi Ed has faithfully led the Seed of Abraham congregation and during that time has become a respected spiritual leader in the Twin Cities. He has a love, not only for the Jewish people, but for the whole Body of Christ. I am delighted to commend this book and believe it will achieve what Rabbi Ed desires when he writes, “I pray these pages will inspire you to know G-d in a much more personal and intimate way through the gift of His Son, Y’shua (Jesus) the Messiah.”

Alan Langstaff, Doctor Alan Langstaff, is currently the Senior Pastor of New Life Assembly of God Church in Chaska, MN. He is the Apostolic Overseer of Omega Team, an international Association of pastors, churches and ministries based in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN. He is also the president of Kairos Ministries, Inc, and has a vision for releasing people in ministry and training Christian leaders.

Previously, he was the Apostolic Overseer of the Harvest Network International. For a number of years he co-hosted a weekly television program called 'Crossroads', a ministry of the Lakeland Leadership League. He was a member of the General Committee that sponsored the 1996 Billy Graham Crusade in Minneapolis, MN.

Born in Sydney, Australia, where he trained and worked as an architect, he was originally ordained by the Methodist church of Australia. In 1973 he founded The Temple Trust, later named Vision Ministries. His ministry in Australia found him holding large conferences and sponsoring crusades featuring world-renowned leaders in the charismatic renewal. He also edited a national charismatic magazine called Vision Magazine, established a Bible College, and hosted the Australian PTL Club television program. In 1980, after he turned over the leadership of Vision Ministries/Australia to another leader, he moved to the USA to develop an international base for his ministry.

From 1986 to 2000 he was the Senior Pastor of Antioch Christian Fellowship. The ministry of Antioch Christian Fellowship included ACTS International (Antioch Christian Training School), plus many specialized ministries reaching out to the community and the world, including church planting both locally and overseas.

Dr. Alan Langstaff is a member of the Board of Directors for Church Growth International, directed by Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho, who pastors the world's largest congregation in Seoul, Korea. He is also a member of the International Coalition of Apostles (ICA/Dr. Peter Wagner).

Dr. Alan Langstaff also traveled extensively throughout the United States and overseas in 35 countries speaking in churches & conferences of different denominations. He has written a book called 'Hedges.'

Introduction

In over 30 years of Messianic Ministry, I have been asked many times by those that have heard me share my testimony, to write it down. This way, they insisted, my testimony could be heard by many more people; who just might be searching for the same Messiah that I have found. On the other hand, to more accurately describe it, the Messiah who found me, saved, healed, and delivered me too!

My testimony is not shared to glorify my sinful past, for in that sense it is not significant by any means, but to testify to the extraordinary life changing power of my L-RD Y'shua (Jesus) the Messiah. He has taken my life from ***the guttermost to the uttermost*** through His unending grace, abundant mercy and the influence of His Spirit, His Word and His Body (the family of faith that's loved and nurtured me to this very day). I do not want to encourage anyone to sin so that G-d's grace may abound, but rather encourage you to avoid the same mistakes that I made. You can have a much better testimony, one that demonstrates G-d's power keeping you from all the pain and misery that I lived through as the result of my stubborn rebellion against Him. I rebelled against my parents, my teachers, and all authority in general. Believe me when I say, "*G-d's way is always the best. There is no short cut to His blessing.*" May you be moved to choose to yield to the work of His Spirit in your life. May you trust in His ability to finish the good work He has begun in you and rest in the finished work of redemption that Y'shua wrought for us upon Calvary's cruel, yet ultimately sin conquering cross.

"He has showed you, O man what is good. And what does the L-RD require of you? But to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your G-d." Micah 6:8

"...He lifted me up out of the slimy pit, out of the muck and mire; He set my feet on a Rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our G-d. Many will see it and fear and put their trust in the L-RD." Psalm 40:2-3

**SHALOM B' Y'SHUA . . .
PEACE IN JESUS**

**IN THE HUMBLE SERVICE
OF
OUR AWESOME G-D,**

Messianic Rabbi Ed Rothman

Dedication

I dedicate these pages to my majestic L-RD and spectacular Savior,
Y'shua (Jesus) the Messiah: my G-d, my King and my Everything!
Thank you for seeking and saving me, choosing to give your most excellent life
for such a schlep (imperfect man) like me!
Todah Rabbah (Thank you Very much), for being my Heavenly Abba (Daddy)!

I lovingly dedicate these pages to my earthly father, Daniel L. Rothman,
who left us February 12, 2004, to receive his eternal reward from his Heavenly Father.
Heavenly Abba, please give a humongous hug from me to my earthly dad,
who is forever living in Your glorious Presence.

*“...in Your Presence is fullness of joy,
at Your Right Hand (where Y'shua sits) there are pleasures for ever more.”
Psalm 16:11b*

I also highly honor my mother, Ruth S. Rothman, who sacrificially gave of herself to
make sure that I was always loved and cared for. May G-d bless her for her unselfish
commitment to bless me, my family and my ministry; supporting my calling, even to her
own hurt. May the L-RD touch her heart & mind with His agape' Love & eternal Life.

*“Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the
LORD thy God giveth thee.”
Exodus 20:12*

Last, but not least I dedicate this memoir to my beloved bride, Alberta,
Who is my good thing, my obtainment of favor from the L-RD, & the fruitful vine in my
life (Proverbs 18:22 & Psalm 128:3a),
& not to be forgotten, my two sons, Shane Benjamin & Justin Josiah,
who have taught me how much my Abba in Heaven loves me.
They are the arrows in my quiver & the olive plants around my table.
(Psalms 127:4-5 & 128:3b)

Part 1– Discovering my G-d & Finding Myself

Chapter 1 – In the Beginning, . . . there was 2 Boys & Bagels

I was born on July 1, 1952, in Van Nuys, California. I was the second son born to my parents, Dan and Ruth Rothman, who were living in a small post-war home in Encino, a suburb on the southern foothills of the San Fernando Valley. This cosmopolitan *shtetl*¹ that has become known for the movie *Encino Man* (a movie about teenagers who discover a frozen caveman). It is also home to *Valley Girls* (a euphemism for teenage girls whose main purpose in life is to hang out in malls, shopping, flirting & giggling), as well as many of Hollywood's elite.

My mom & dad were post-war parents who were busy juggling a career, raising kids and trying to pioneer a synagogue in this new outpost of the growing community of young Jewish families. Everybody Jewish who was anybody in southern California was moving to Encino to enjoy their piece of the American dream. So a new congregation was needed to accommodate this burgeoning clientele of conservative Jewry.

My parents were among the inner circle of influence in the new congregation and my father was elected the founding president. I remember spending my childhood playing on the synagogue property while my mother worked tirelessly in the office to get this new *shul*² running smoothly. When my parents were ready to build their own home, they purchased a lot at the end of the very same street that our congregation was built on. This meant that we could spend even more time at the synagogue. It afforded me the privilege to be called on by the altar kockers³ every evening in the middle of my favorite TV show to complete their *minyan*.⁴

I began to attend Hebrew school regularly after I finished my day at public school. At that time, I was too young and immature to appreciate the rich opportunity to learn more about my Jewish faith and heritage. I just wanted to be free to run around and play with my Gentile *Christian* friends who did not have religious classes after the secular school day was over. I remember trying to play hooky from Hebrew school to hang out with my Gentile friends but was quickly caught and properly disciplined for my transgression.

From my earliest remembrance, I was a very bright young child with an insatiable thirst for knowledge. My father reminded me that as soon as I was able to, I began memorizing all the states and their capitals. When that was accomplished, I proceeded to start memorizing the counties and their seats in the state of California. Although I was intellectually motivated, my emotions were not at the same level of maturity. I was usually the first in my class to finish my assignments. As I had nothing to do, I would start to kid around with the other students who were seated close to me. The teacher would intervene and invariably send me to the Principal's office for discipline. That is where I encountered the worst troublemakers in the school.

¹ shtetl - Yiddish = A small village, any small Jewish community in eastern Europe

² shul (shool) - Yiddish = Congregation / Synagogue

³ alter kockers – Yiddish = Fussy old Jewish men who spend their time daily praying at the synagogue.

⁴ minyan - Hebrew = A religious meeting with at least ten Jewish men present. This concept is taken from Genesis 18:23-32 where G-d agreed to spare Sodom & Gommorah if there were at least 10 righteous men.

I made fast friends with all the wrong kids. Those who found delight in upsetting the apple cart of normalcy in a public school classroom were the role models for my life. I was transfixed by their ability to become the center of attention in class and the most popular kids in the school. All of the kids knew who they were and paid them what I thought was the appropriate homage and respect. I longed for this kind of status. I was starved for it. It became my daily bread to seek the approval of the class clowns and villains. I stayed close to them all the way through High school and much to my parent's chagrin they helped me to reach my personal goal of popularity through hilarity, but alas, little to none of my academic potential was tapped at all.

Chapter 2 – The Bar Mitzvah Boy Blues

As I grew older my father became engrossed in building his law practice and servicing the ever growing list of celebrity clients. My mother spent most of her free time in the synagogue office as a volunteer. My brother was busy with his studies and athletic pursuits, so I was left to fend for myself with the free time that I had and would usually be running to the houses of one of my trouble making friends. Together we all got into enough trouble to make the Little Rascals look like Sunday School saints. We took great pleasure in doing the most crazy, outlandish and foolish pranks imaginable to our fantasy frenzied minds. Quite often we took great relish in just barely escaping arrest by the local police.

Just before my Bar Mitzvah⁵, my father moved out of our house and my mother broke the news to me. I went into an almost catatonic state for quite a long time. I could not function at all. I was so emotionally distraught and could only cry myself to sleep at night for losing my last vestige of security and sanity in my own private insecure, out-of-control world. I kept begging my father to move back home and he kept telling me that it was not going to happen. I tried to black mail him into coming home by threatening to cancel my Bar Mitzvah. His response was that I was going to have a Bar Mitzvah whether I wanted to or not, and if I didn't study and prepare for it, I would bring more shame and embarrassment on myself, than on my family. His strategy worked, and I did cram to complete my studies for my Bar Mitzvah in record time (just two months). I actually did quite an acceptable job, considering the kind of voice that a 13-year-old can be especially blessed with.

The inevitable result of hanging out with kids who were bored with life and were on the cutting edge of every latest craze, was to experiment with the new psychedelic plants and potions that our rock star super heroes were pushing through their drug drenched musical fantasies. At the all-too-early age of 12, I became familiar with Marijuana and Hashish. At age 13, after my Bar Mitzvah, I proceeded to experiment with every illegal drug available, short of mainlining heroin. My life became a blur of hanging out with my friends, going to rock band practices, parties, and concerts. School and chores were just necessary intermissions between my drug-induced reveries. Obviously, my grades fell dramatically in school as I no longer cared for academics, but craved hallucinogenics. My lofty goal in life was to become the greatest electric bass soloist in the world. My hobbies were watching W.C. Fields movies and memorizing every line from the entire collection of Mothers' of Invention and Bonzo Dog albums. At

⁵ Bar / Bat Mitzvah – Hebrew = Son / Daughter of the Commandment. The rite-of-passage for 13 year old Jewish boys and girls. It marks the beginning of adolescence and the ascent to social maturity and spiritual responsibility in the Jewish community.

home, I pretty much lived in my room with my stereo headphones on, perpetually listening to latest psychedelic sounds of the 60's, cranked up as loud as I could without causing physical pain. I am amazed that I have still have my hearing. Thank you G-d, for your mercy endures forever.

Chapter 3 – High School High

My mother did not know that I was taking drugs. It was too new of a phenomenon and there was very little information available to educate parents at that time. She would walk into my room when I would have my friends over for a *Pot-party-sleep-over* and when she asked what the funny smell was, we all smiled at her and said in unison, “Incense from India.” She would give us our snacks and politely excuse herself, totally oblivious to our intent to keep getting high in her house, right under her nose, so to speak.

At this time of my life, I thought I was very altruistic, while in reality I was very narcissistic⁶. I was deeply influenced by the prevailing mood of the Hippie movement and the teachings of Dr. Timothy Leary, *Turn On, Tune In, and Drop Out*. I was for all intents and purposes, a dropout from society. I had moved out of my mother's home and into my father's Hollywood Hill's bachelor pad and was rolling through High school on cruise control. I would party all night and nap through my classes during the day.

My dad rented a house that was a former property of Judy Garland. Some friends who were drug dealers moved in with me upstairs and we proceeded to party at home or in the high desert where we rode dirt bikes until I went over a jump that turned out to be a cliff and nearly killed myself. You would think that a near brush with death would cause me to sober up and slow down. But no, I just learned to enjoy a new kind of very powerful pain reliever, with enjoyable side effects. It seems like everything in life somehow revolved around getting high and listening to loud music, with as many friends as we could squeeze into a house, a car, or a garage.

Even though I claimed to be an atheist, since I was 12, every time I would take the name of G-d in vain, if I was alone, I would turn around, look up into the heavens and say, “I'm sorry”, just in case there was a G-d. Sort of hedging my bets, just in case there was a G-d. I find it so interesting that from my earliest years, G-d was very real to me as a child. When I would say the *Shema*⁷ at night before going to bed, I could feel G-d's presence hovering over me in the room. It was when I grew old enough to see through the religious façade of the nominal Judaism and Christianity of my community that I no longer said my prayers or felt G-d's presence and I decided that religion and G-d and all it's prohibitions were not my cup of tea. I was put on this earth to party hardy. To taste of all the delicious nectars of pleasure that life could possibly offer me. I had developed into a full-fledged Hedonist⁸. My god was pleasure and the reckless pursuit of it was how I practiced my religion. However, G-d had other plans for me and I was soon to be made shockingly aware of them.

⁶ Narcissistic = Selfishly obsessed with loving one self.

⁷ Shema – Hebrew = Hear (Listen). The Hebrew prayer most central to the Jewish faith, declaring that there is but One G-d, found in Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel, the L-RD our G-d (Elohenu = Gods), is one (echad = a unity, or united one).”

⁸ Hedonist – One who believes that seeking pleasure and personal happiness should be our ultimate goal in life.

I had just barely eked my way through my senior year at Fairfax High and would no longer see the Jackson 5's van pull up in front of school, and Gino and Tito bopping past me with their afro's bobbing up and down as they bounded into school. I was a free man with nothing to hold me down. My friends and I were considering moving to Australia and setting up a hippie commune there, as their government was giving away large tracts of land in an effort to populate the Outback. One friend encouraged me to join him on a tramp steamer to work our way around the world until we got to Israel. Stopping throughout Africa and the Middle East to oblige our omnivorous obsession of opiates. My dad responded as emphatically as possible without pushing me into doing it out of pure teen-age rebellion. "Not on your life," he said with the perfect mix of fatherly concern and legal acumen that is the result of years of experience as a dad and an attorney! As I was still a minor, he had me dead to rights, and that was the end of that discussion.

Chapter 4 – Who's That Knocking At The Door (Of My Heart)?

High School was now over and I had just squeaked through on the condition that I would take a summer school class to make up the necessary credits for graduation. It was a pleasant summer evening and I was home alone in our drug den of iniquity, staring at a wall of over 100 red cellophane bricks full of *Acapulco Gold*, the finest pot available in Southern California in the late 60's. Grown men had just spilled their blood and lost their lives to smuggle this contraband across the border into California. Somehow, that did not phase me in the least as I sat in stupefied awe and wonder to behold a vision that I would never have dreamed of in my wildest teen-age fantasies. I couldn't wait for my friends, *the drug dealers* to return so I could try out our new stash, so I opened up just one red cellophane brick to roll myself a joint (a hand rolled cigarette filled with marijuana).

I had turned the lights down low, lit candles and put on my favorite album, setting just the right mood to get wasted and zone out to LaLa land, my favorite destination of choice at that stage of my life. All of the sudden I began to feel like I was on the most powerful LSD trip that I had ever been on. I felt like I was flying while standing still, and every sense was quickened to heights I had never known or imagined possible. Had I attained Nirvana?⁹ Was this an acid trip flashback? Wow, I had not even lit or inhaled the grass (shades of President Clinton) and yet I was higher than Ben Franklin's kite!

Then it happened. A voice spoke, audibly, out loud, so I could hear Him with my natural, physical ears. He called me by my name, "Ed." But I didn't know that it was G-d. I thought my friends were trying to trick me and freak me out (a hippie term for scaring someone out of their skin). That was one of our newest developing past times, finding ways to tease, surprise and shock each other to the most disturbing, outlandish extremes. So I sat there and waited for them. A few moments later I heard *the voice* call me by my name again, ..."Ed". So I got up and stumbled around the apartment trying to find my hidden tormentors. No one was there, what was going on? Before I had a chance to figure it out, I heard *the voice* call me by my name a third time, "Ed". But this time *it* tacked on a question. "What are you doing with your life?" I had just graduated from Fairfax High School; it was summertime, I was going to summer school, what a dumb question to ask the *Party Animal of the LaBrea Tar Pits*.

⁹ Nirvana = A state of perfect blessedness and complete bliss to be attained through Transcendental Meditation.

“Not a whole lot”, was my answer. I was talking to nobody. I was hearing a voice and talking to it, but nobody seemed to be there, even though I could sense an overwhelming presence. That’s where I was confused. G-d was there in His *sheckinah*¹⁰ glory and I did not know or understand it. Immediately a video screen dropped out of nowhere right in front of my face, revealing to me the secrets sins and hidden hurts that I had bottled up in my heart and covered up by taking drugs, pseudo¹¹ successfully avoiding reality for 5 long years.

The voice said, “You thought drugs were the answer, didn’t you?” My answer was short, honest and to the point, “Yes”. Was I crazy, was I losing my mind, had I taken too many drugs? *The voice’s* response was, “But they aren’t, are they?” I was able to look honestly into my heart for the first time since I was a little boy who believed in G-d and I saw that *this voice* was right. I had been preaching a false Gospel of, “Get high, forget your problems and they will magically just vanish away”. It had seemed to be working for me, or had it? I had to admit to *this voice* that it was 100% right and I was 100% wrong.

All this time, G-d had never revealed Himself to me or spoke of His Son Jesus or His death on the cross for my sins. All G-d did was challenge me to face reality for the first time in my life. That was all that I could emotionally and intellectually handle at that moment. That was enough revelation for one night! I began to cry out to the G-d who I said that I didn’t believe in, as I often did when I had taken a bit too much of the psychedelics to know what was reality and what was a hallucination.

Many a time I had cried out to this supposedly non-existent deity and asked Him for a big favor. “If you will bring me down from these drugs and not let me lose my mind and wind up in a funny farm, I will never take drugs again, I promise.” And time after time after time, He would allow me to negotiate this deal, knowing full well that there was a snow balls’ chance in *Gehenna*¹² I would not keep it. Once again I approached this G-d of my childhood to barter for my soul in exchange for my sanity.

“Just let me get out of this with my head screwed on straight and this will be the last time I ever touch drugs again, honest.” So once again, G-d in His mercy answered the insincere prayer of a wandering Jew, looking for the easy way out of a perpetual problem for which only He was the ultimate answer. As I look back on this perplexing moment in my life, I realize that G-d in His sovereign wisdom was dealing with the root issues of my life that prevented me from seeking and believing in G-d. He must have had to do this before He bridged the issue of my eternal soul. Without breaking me free of my innate fear of facing reality, how could I ever be ready to become a true disciple of Y’shua the Messiah, Who is Absolute Truth, . . . the Ultimate Reality.

As G-d lifted His presence in answer to my urgent plea, He never mentioned that, “By the way, I AM G-d, or you are a sinner bound for eternal damnation or you must believe on My Son, Jesus to be saved.” G-d was so amazing in His sensitivity to my human limitations and my emotional roadblocks. He knew I had been attacked as a child by so-called Christians and called a *Christ Killer* by them too many times to

¹⁰ Sheckinah = The tangible (to the physical senses) manifestation of the presence / glory of G-d.

¹¹ Pseudo = False, a sham, pretended.

¹² Gehenna - Hebrew = Hell / the Grave

number. He knew of the cultic Jesus freaks that would always accost me with anger and verbally attack me saying, “G-d hated me because I was a sinner and that I must repent or I was surely destined for Hell.” Needless to say, I was not the least bit open to any dialogue about Biblical truth or Christianity. I was so offended by those folks that when someone actually demonstrated G-d’s love by picking me up hitchhiking and sharing the Gospel in a gentle and kind manner, I just figured it was just a subtle new strategy for the same emotionally disturbing, mentally distressing, and spiritually abusive message.

My response to the supernatural experience that I had just had was to attribute it to drugs. I said to myself, “I’ve been taking way too many drugs, for way too long, I had better quit and detoxify myself, NOW! Before it’s too late.” Well, the best-laid plans fall short because of our out-of-control human addictions. I was so emotionally and psychologically addicted to the experience of getting high, to escape the pain of living a normal, humdrum, everyday life in the work-a-day world. I had become addicted to adrenaline, to the high. I had to make every moment an exciting adventure and could not tolerate boredom. How was I going to survive my life without using mind-altering chemicals?

As you could probably guess, I was right back to that wall of red cellophane bricks and forgot all about my little encounter with a power greater than myself. So as I proceeded to light up my next joint of *Acapulco Gold*, I was again confronted with the presence of G-d and brought face-to-face with the sins and fears I had been hiding from for 5 years. What was happening with me? Couldn’t I get high anymore? Couldn’t I escape the maddening pressures of normalcy? Afraid not! G-d had other plans for me.

Chapter 5 – Reality Revisited

This experience repeated itself everyday for about 2 weeks. I was so used to coping with life by getting high everyday that G-d had to take me through His very own private detox program. Each time I tried to escape reality, He would put reality right in front of my face. He was not going to allow me to escape it anymore, not even one more time. I was going to learn how to live without using chemicals to mask my insecurities and inadequacies. By the end of that 2-week period, the message finally got through to me, “I cannot take drugs, touch drugs, even be near drugs anymore, never-no-never-again.” G-d had sufficiently put the ‘*fear of drugs*’ so deeply in my heart that I was completely cured from substance abuse. I can’t remember how it happened, but at the exact same time, my drug-dealing roommates moved out, took their dope with them and stopped having anything to do with me at all¹³. So I moved downstairs with my dad and began to try and make sense of my life without using drugs to escape reality.

My new challenge was to try and make it in the world without my old security blanket of daily drug usage. I had grown my hair past my shoulders and wore it in a ponytail. My beard had grown down to the middle of my chest and I liked to wear long, flowing white muslin robes. Somehow I had the presence of mind to know that I could never get a serious job looking like a guru with no *ashram*¹⁴ to guide. So I cut off my beard and my long hair and got a job in a factory that made sample books of fabric. It

¹³ I did see one of those friends, Bob came back into my life about a year later, at Thanksgiving and he had tracked me down, traveling 900 miles from L.A. to Grants Pass, Oregon, where he accepted Jesus as L-RD.

¹⁴ Ashram – A secluded community of Buddhist/Hindu students devoted to simplicity, meditation & the teachings of their Guru (Master / Teacher).

was a pretty simple job. You just laid out the bolt of fabric requested by the customer and used a ruler to draw a straight line on the fabric. Then you would take an electric powered knife and cut along the straight line. My only problem was that I couldn't draw or cut a straight line. After a couple days of this they fired me and I was humiliated, to say the least.

It seemed as though every job I applied for, I was too burned-out from 5 years of mind-bending drug use to be able to meet their minimum requirements. I became very depressed and did not know what I was going to do to make it in the world. My father's housekeeper saw my wretched condition and took pity on me. Her name was Pearl and may G-d bless her, she came to my rescue. Pearl took me under her wing and like a mother hen she began to nurture me back to reality. It's not that my parents didn't love me enough to do this, they had incredible love and patience with me during the most tumultuous years of my life. I believe they just didn't understand how messed up I really was, because I learned how to fool them pretty well over my 5 years of drug usage. But Pearl on the other hand, had grown up in a much tougher part of town and was very street savvy. So she hired me to work part-time for her at the bargain basement price of \$10.00 a day, just enough for me to survive on, but a huge sacrifice for her tight budget.

I began to join Pearl each day for 4 hours. I would vacuum, dust, and wash floors and windows. Somehow G-d graced me with enough ability to function without destroying the houses I was helping Pearl to clean. This was a time of searching for truth and trying to find what life was all about. So I started studying Eastern religions and occult philosophies. I tried meditation, and Tarot card reading, health food diets and fasting. If it was strange and different, I was willing to check it out, with the only exception being good old-fashioned Judaism or Jesus freak Christianity.

For 6 months I looked for the meaning of life and it was eluding me. My last attempt at spiritual self-discovery was with a book called *Be Here Now* by Baba Ram-Dass, formerly known as Richard Alpert, a Jewish professor who was a contemporary of Dr. Timothy Leary of LSD¹⁵ fame. I remember one example from that book to this day. He was trying to make a point about the illusory (fleeting) nature of pleasure. How it only lasts for a moment and then your attention must turn to something else, so we must learn to treasure each moment for the vibrancy of life that is to be found within it. He used eating an ice cream cone as an example of this concept, because after we finish enjoying the ice cream cone, all of the sudden we have an insatiable desire to drink some water and the luscious taste of the ice cream cone is gone. Boy, I was sure getting deep, but into what I don't know?

Chapter 6 – The Kinetic¹⁶ Kathryn Kuhlman

At this juncture in my life, the mother of my best friend stepped into my life out of nowhere. I get a call from my friend Greg (who happened to be Bob's brother-in-law), and he says that his mother is in town and wants to meet me. An unusual request for me, since I had become a bit of an anti-social loner and I was just getting over a severe cold, so I tried to talk my way out of it, but she insisted on just coming by for a short

¹⁵ LSD – The initials that stand for Lysergic Acid Diethylamide – a potent mind-altering hallucinogenic that became the 2nd most popular drug of choice during the late 60's through the early 70's, the 1st being Marijuana, because it was cheaper, more readily available, and the mind-altering effects were not as scary.

¹⁶ Kinetic = Energetic or dynamic

visit. I did not know what I was in for. It is so wonderful to experience how one divine encounter can completely change the course of your entire life, forever.

Greg and his parents came by on a pleasant spring day in mid-April of 1971. I was so taken back when I opened the door and his mom entered my house. It was like the sun had come out of the sky and walked right into my living room. The *sheckinah* glory of G-d was all over this woman and I did not know what it was, but I was sure interested in anything that she had to say to me. We sat down and had small talk. I kept sampling different styles of music for her that I liked and she was very complimentary and showed what seemed to be genuine interest in whatever interested me. This just drew me in deeper to listen to whatever she had to say, I had become so introverted that it was hard for most people to find a way to relate to me, if they even cared to, and she really did seem to care. I've heard it said, "*People really don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care.*" This proved to be very true in this circumstance.

After about an hour she brought the conversation around to religion, Christianity to be specific. "Oh no," I thought, I should have known this was too good to be true. I was open to just about anything and everything, except Christianity. As I mentioned earlier, my experience with that subject had been nothing less than a bummer. I was steeling myself to ward off the ghastly specter of religion. Yet there was something so kind and gracious about Greg's mom that kept my heart open just a crack.

She proceeded to invite me to join them all in attending a Kathryn Kuhlman crusade. What! Wait just a minute. Did she say *CRUSADE!* Jews and crusades¹⁷ don't mix well, if you are at all familiar with history of the Church in the Middle Ages. Vast armies raped, looted and burned villages to the ground. The main victims were the Jewish and Muslim peoples. Basically, anyone who was not a white Anglo-Saxon Christian fell victim to them. They were headed for Jerusalem to liberate the Holy Land from the pagans, all under the banner of the Cross. So the word *Crusade* did not bode well with my psyche¹⁸, to say the least.

And then there was this woman, Kathryn Kuhlman. You have got to be kidding me. Ruth Buzzi, one of the comediennes on Rowan & Martin's *Laugh In* used to imitate Miss Kuhlman in short sketches that made her look rather bazaar. I was trying to excuse myself from this family outing by reminding Greg's mom that I was recovering from a bad cold and she trumped me by describing the healing miracles that are common place at these events. I was speechless until the L-RD reminded me of a popular Cat Stevens' song that spoke about being *On The Road to Find Out*. I believe it was G-d, who whispered in my ear, "Well, you're *On The Road To Find Out*, so why don't you check this off your list of things to investigate, in your search for truth and reality." Wouldn't you know, that made perfect sense to me and suddenly the event that I was dreading and desperately trying to avoid, had become an exciting adventure in my search for reality through true spirituality!

¹⁷ Crusades – The Church's of England, France, & Rome each officially endorsed their own crusade to liberate the Holy Land (Jerusalem & Israel) from what they considered were the heathen followers of Islam. The Crusades began around 1000 AD and each one brought unimaginable grief and carnage to anyone who stood in their path, especially Jews & Muslims.

¹⁸ Psyche = Inner self

The next day we made our way through the sea of buses that were parked outside of the Shrine Auditorium in downtown Los Angeles. When we finally were able to find some seats, I had to sit separately from the others amidst a whiny, *kvetching*¹⁹ bunch of Christian wanna-be's. They were arguing with a nasty attitude about who sat where on the bus on the way to the meeting, who was sitting where during the meeting, and who would be sitting where on the bus on the way home from the meeting. All I wanted was for them to be quiet and enjoy the meeting! It was like *HaSatan*²⁰ had hand picked the perfect, less-than-perfect people to expose me to religiosity and churchianity at it's worst. I was so glad when Miss Kuhlman finally came out and the meeting began, because these unhappy people were finally happy and were not shouting at one another anymore. Thank G-d, say, "Amen"²¹ somebody.

I was immediately overwhelmed by the presence of G-d that saturated the atmosphere of the auditorium. I was transfixed by Miss Kuhlman's personal presence on the stage. It seemed as though there was a luminescent glow all around her. She was dressed in a flowing white gown and spoke with a gentle, yet authoritative voice. People were getting out of wheel chairs, throwing down their crutches, abandoning their walkers. All this was happening right in front of my eyes. I had mocked these things when I saw Oral Roberts on black and white television. Yet seeing it happen right before me, I could observe the transformation of the people as they changed from being wracked with pain to rejoicing with exultant, jubilant joy. Somehow I knew in my *kishkas*²² that this was not a show, that these were real people experiencing genuine miracles. *Oy-yoy-yoy!*²³ What is a not-so-nice Jewish boy like me doing in the midst of all this *mishegas*.²⁴

The thing that just sent me over the top, was when a middle-aged woman came onto the stage with her doctor, who brought her x-rays with him to prove that she once was riddled with inoperable cancer, but was now miraculously cancer free! It made a believer out of both of us, the Doctor and myself. The icing on the cake was a woman from Liberia, named Lucy, who came up for prayer from Miss Kuhlman. When Lucy was still several feet away from Miss Kuhlman, Kathryn lifted up her hands to bless her and Lucy flew through the air across the entire stage, with her feet completely off the ground! That was a manifestation of a power greater than anything I had ever seen, G-d definitely had my attention now.

I was thoroughly convinced that there was a G-d who really wanted to know me, but I was not yet ready to surrender my life to Him and really know Him. My ears were still ringing from all the mean-spirited *kvetching* that I had experienced from those angry Christian wanna-be's that surrounded me before the service began. I did not want to be with people like that, I had too much living to do and I wanted to enjoy my life, not complain about everything I couldn't control. So just like the founding father of the Hebrew people, Abraham, I made another bargain with G-d. Is this story Jewish or what?

¹⁹ Kvetching - Yiddish = obnoxious continuous complaining

²⁰ HaSatan – Hebrew = The Adversary, The Devil

²¹ Amen – (Ah-Mayn) Hebrew = So be it, make it so!

²² kishkas – Yiddish = (Literally) Chicken gizzards (Figuratively) Our guts, our innermost being, our heart, or spirit

²³ Oy-yoy-yoy! – Yiddish = An exclamation made when encountering an overwhelming state of affairs that defies explanation.

²⁴ Mishegas – Yiddish = Crazy, madness, insanity.

I told G-d that I did not want to spend my life with the kind of obnoxious people I just endured before the meeting started. I would be happy to discuss serving Him when I was old and gray, ready for retirement, no longer needing to be in control of my life. I was still a wild, free spirit and couldn't imagine spending my days trying to cope with such *meshugena's*.²⁵ I thought our deal was good and fully expected G-d to smile or at least nod in approval. Okay, that is taken care of, now I know there is a G-d, but I can't stand the people He hangs out with, so I will wait most of my life to have a relationship with the Creator of the Universe. I guess I wasn't operating with a full deck of cards yet. The light was finally on, but was there anybody home?

Greg's mom was anxious to find out what I thought of the service. I told her about my brilliant plan and she was wise enough not to argue with me, but to just insert a crafty little zinger like, "Oh, that's okay. G-d is just courting your soul. I will keep you in prayer and everything will work out in His perfect timing." "That's nice," was my reply. Thinking, "That's weird," to myself. I figured I would just forget about what happened until I was around 65 or 70 years old and just go about my life as I had before. But G-d had other plans in mind for me and I was going to watch them play out over the next several days.

Much to my surprise, everywhere I went I told everyone I talked to about Kathryn Kuhlman, Jesus, and all the miracles that I had witnessed. I was already learning to be a Jewish evangelist, and yet I didn't believe in Jesus myself! This was intriguing to most of my friends who were always looking for a new spiritual joyride and some of my friends genuinely needed small miracles of their own, so we all planned to go see Miss Kuhlman together the next time she came to town. What a hoot that was going to be!

Chapter 7 – Kathryn Kuhlman & the King of Glory

This was exciting for me. I was really psyched to be doing something good for a change. It felt really good to be thinking of others rather than myself. Up to this time, I had been the center of all my thoughts and desires. Talking about G-d with my friends gave me a new focus in life. It was spring and I felt like something new was ready to bloom for me very soon.

I received a call from Greg that his Mom was coming into town to attend a special service with Kathryn Kuhlman on April 14. She would meet us at the Assembly of G-d church in North Hollywood where Miss Kuhlman was to be speaking. I was elated, now I could bring all my friends to witness the exciting sideshow of miracles that I had just recently been a part of. I could not wait to tell them. Unfortunately though, one-by-one they all told me that they were busy with something else that night and could not attend the service. I was heartbroken, particularly because a former girlfriend of mine was suffering from a minor malady that her doctor could not help her with. I had imagined her being one of the many who might receive a miraculous touch from G-d that evening.

I went to the service grudgingly, because we had arranged to meet Greg's mom at the service and give her a ride to her daughter's home afterward. When we arrived, I was not in the mood to be there and it showed. Some well meaning people who were seated in front of us began to share their faith with me in a kind, but very assertive manner. This just served to fuel the frustration that I was already feeling. I discouraged

²⁵ meshuganah's – Yiddish = Crazy people

them from talking to me any longer by sharing with them my rehearsed response from the Sunset Strip, "Praise the L-RD, I already dig it, so don't hassle me dudes." They got the message and I just sat there quietly fuming inside myself until the service began.

As Miss Kuhlman stepped onto the platform at the front of the church, the organ music started to play softly and she gave her characteristic greeting of, "liieee bee-leev-ah innnnn meer-ah-cles,²⁶" said very slowly, drawn out for dramatic effect. It felt like fingernails on a blackboard to my already frayed emotions. I later learned that Miss Kuhlman had grown up in the Ozark Mountains and did not want the gospel message to be ignored by sophisticated city folks because of her hillbilly twang. So she worked at speaking slowly, carefully enunciating each syllable so that she sounded more refined and educated, with the sound of a refined New England sophisticate. I just grumbled to myself, "Lenin was right, religion is the opiate of the masses. I may have been wrong in taking drugs, but at least I was honest about it. These people think they're seeking truth, but they're really just getting emotionally high on religion." I smugly sat there with my arms folded and a self-righteous scowl of indignation on my face. I couldn't wait until the service was over so we could get out of there. I wanted to get as far away from these Bible thumping hypocrites as I could. The age of 65 years old was looking like it would be too soon for me to have anything to do with this type of people and this kind of faith.

Before I knew it, G-d was on the scene again. The first thing that happened was He calmed my agitated spirit and then He put a quiet hunger in my heart to listen to Miss Kuhlman with rapt attention. It's like I suddenly changed from a roaring lion to a cuddly little lamb. I sat on the edge of my seat, drinking in every word, watching every movement. She began to talk about the love of G-d saying, "G-d is love. Jesus is G-d's love in action. Love isn't just the words that we speak, but the attitude of our heart and the actions of our lives. If you want to see G-d's love in action, look at Jesus in the Bible and you will find Him there." G-d took His cue from there and encompassed me in a bubble of His presence. I was now alone with G-d, in a room filled with over 1000 people. He was now speaking in a still, small voice inside my heart, rather than the audible, attention-grabbing voice I had heard outside my head, 6 months earlier.

G-d asked me these penetrating questions, "Isn't that what you've been searching for all your life? ...Wouldn't that make your life worth living, if you had unconditional love in your heart for all of mankind? I realized that the love I had was very conditional. I loved someone **if** they were nice to me, **if** they gave me something, but **if** they were mean to me or stole something from me, I no longer liked them. I called the police *Pigs*, the government was *the Establishment* and my parents were *my Old man* and *my Old lady*. I didn't trust anyone over 30. I had flashed the peace sign at anti-war protests, I didn't want to fight in Vietnam, but there was no real peace or lasting love within me, my heart was morally and spiritually bankrupt.

So when G-d said, "If you want this love, just open up your heart, surrender your life to Jesus, He'll come into your life, and you'll find the love you been searching for," I did and He did, and Wow! I did indeed find His love. Buckets and buckets of it poured into me, from G-d's heart to mine.

²⁶ "I believe in miracles", was Miss Kuhlman's signature statement that she used at the opening of every healing crusade as well as her radio and television programs. It was also the title of a book that she wrote about the many miracles that took place through her ministry.

I felt as though I was flying through the universe at the speed of light, like I was basking under a Niagara of liquid love, yet I was just sitting quietly in my seat. I felt like jumping up and screaming, "I can't believe it, but I love Jesus!" But by G-d's grace I came to my senses and regained my composure. I sat through the rest of the meeting elated at the eternal supernatural encounter that had just taken place, basking in the glorious glow of His awesome love. At the end of the meeting my friend Greg wanted to go forward so he pushed me into the aisle to join him at the front of the church. We all prayed the sinners' prayer of repentance and confession of faith in Jesus as Savior²⁷.

As we finished praying, people ran forward and started to hug us and welcome us into the family of G-d. It was a very memorable manner in which to begin my spiritual life. I was so high on G-d's love that I wanted to hug everyone I met and tell them, "Jesus loves me and He loves you too!" I shouted, "I love Jesus," to everyone I saw. I knew in that moment of time that my life's calling was to be a minister of the Gospel. It was difficult to keep my mouth shut about what had happened to me and it was a bit uncomfortable for the rest of my family, to put it mildly. I told my father he was going to Hell and my mother that I was now a child of G-d and my *real* family was G-d's family. They hoped that I was just going through another temporary phase of teenage insanity, like some of the ones I had been through before, such as rock bands, surfboards, dirt bikes, health foods, eastern religions, the occult, cross-country hitchhiking, remote wilderness camping (yada, yada, yada). Oh, the nightmares that I made my poor parents endure! My kids are angels compared to what I had been like as a teenager!

Chapter 8 – Follow-up or Fall Away / Fellowship & Fruitfulness

Unfortunately, back in the early 70's things like follow-up had not been highly developed or widely understood. So people just accepted Jesus, got a hug and a Bible and you were on your own. I started to read the Gospel of Matthew and I got to chapter 5 and it said, "If you have been angry with your brother without just cause or have had lustful thoughts, you are guilty in your heart and have already committed murder and adultery." I thought, "I'm already dead in the water, I might as well give up." I thought I had lost my salvation, so I decided I would go to a monthly meeting for the youth of the Jesus movement that Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel had at the Hollywood Palladium in cooperation with Kathryn Kuhlman and became born again, again. And that's what I would do each month. Backslide, go to the monthly meeting, get saved all over again and then backslide the next day and pray I didn't die till I could get to next month's meeting. I did this for 3 months and was getting frustrated with my inability to stay saved for more than a day at a time. I heard Chuck Smith mention the need to be baptized, so I decided to dive into my friends' pool seven times in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit and that did not bring the life changing results that I longed for.

²⁷ Prayer of Repentance & Faith in Y'shua (Jesus) as L-RD & Savior – G-d of Abraham, Isaac, & Israel, I am SORRY for my sins and turn away from them, and return to You. THANK YOU for sending Y'shua The Messiah to die in my place, to suffer for my sins. PLEASE come into my heart, wash away my sins, and fill me with Your Holy Spirit, Your Love, Your Joy, & Your Peace! Help me to find some solid born-again believers to fellowship with and to hunger for Your Holy Word (The Bible). I ask this in the all-powerful name of Your only begotten Son, My Savior & L-RD, Jesus The Messiah, Amen! If you prayed this prayer, contact us & let us assist you in your new life in Messiah: www.seedofabraham.org, write us at Seed of Abraham, 7515 Wayzata Blvd, #224, St. Louis Park, MN 55426, or call us at 952-926-6226. Shalom Aleichem (Peace be with you)!

At the very next meeting Pastor Smith mentioned that they were having an open baptism in the Pacific Ocean, at a place called Corona Del Mar. I drove down there with Sonny & Leah, some friends that I had brought to the monthly meetings. They had also accepted Jesus as their Savior and we all went to get baptized in the ocean by Pastor Chuck Smith.

The day of our baptism was sunny and warm with a gentle breeze, a perfect day to be at the beach in Southern California. We weren't there to get a sun tan, or to surf, or girl watch, but to give our lives to G-d in a deeper, more meaningful way. There were at least 500 people there that day and we all gathered in a large group and sang songs of praise for a few minutes. Then there was a short teaching and instructions on how they were going to baptize 500 people in a safe and orderly manner. When it was my turn, I came out of the water knowing that I now had truly surrendered my life to G-d. Jesus was not only my Savior, but now He was my L-RD as well!

That day I did feel a very strong sense of ownership by G-d, yet by the next day all the feelings had vanished and once again I was struggling to stay spiritually minded and to not slide back into my old sinful ways. I now knew that something was needed for me to stay as spiritually strong as I felt on the day of my baptism. I cried out to G-d in desperation for what my next step of obedience would be if I was ever going to succeed in following Him. He answered me with three simple words; "You need fellowship." I replied, "Fellowship, what is that?" and G-d didn't say another word to me all day. When I got home that night, what should I find in the center of my father's coffee table, but a copy of the Full Gospel Businessmen's **FELLOWSHIP** Voice? That special word stood out in bold letters and once again G-d had my full attention.

I immediately began to devour the magazine and the lead article was about how G-d was moving by His Spirit throughout America. Ordinary, everyday people were starting home **fellowships** that would worship, pray and study the Bible together every week. They began to see all kinds of modern day miracles that seemed to be right out of the pages of the Book of Acts in the New Covenant. They wondered if the 29th chapter of Acts was being written by what G-d was doing in these home **fellowships**.

The phone rang just as I was finishing with this soul stirring article and it was Sonny calling from Oregon. He was one of the Jewish friends that I had dragged to the monthly Kathryn Kuhlman meetings where he had become a believer also. He had recently move to Oregon to get away from the hustle and bustle of big city life and settled in the small town of Grants' Pass. Sonny had called to ask how I was doing and to see if I wanted to move to Oregon with him and the rest of our friends who had also become believers. I was trying to keep an open mind when he mentioned that they had just started a home **fellowship** up there and G-d was really moving powerfully, blessing people with miraculous answers to prayer. Hadn't G-d just told me today that I needed "**fellowship**" and didn't I just find this **Fellowship** magazine on my dad's coffee table and wasn't I just finishing an article about G-d using home **fellowships** to touch people lives with the supernatural reality of His love? I didn't hesitate to answer him with a resounding, "YES!" This was typical of the kind of coincidence, no I mean *G-d incidence* that was becoming a part of my daily walk with G-d. Being a disciple of Jesus the Messiah was far more exciting than any wild adventure that I'd ever had previously. I was discovering that G-d was THE ONE who knew what was really cool!

So Sonny came down at the end of the month to gather up our other friends who had become like 'family' and the rest of his belongings. We all piled into an old panel truck that was surviving by prayer, faith and the kindness of passers-by that would help us with minor repairs as the truck broke down every few hours. It almost seemed like we were a modern day version of the ancient Israelites trying to cross the Red Sea. In our financial condition only the miraculous grace of G-d was getting us to Grants' Pass anytime soon. G-d came through for us each and every time we broke down and would pray, we were able to safely make it all of the 900+ miles to Grants' Pass, Oregon by the very next day, with a complimentary overnight in San Francisco. G-d is so good.

We discovered a little country Pentecostal church on the edge of town called, "The Redemption Tabernacle." These folks were seasoned prayer warriors, former disciples of William Branham²⁸, who had accepted us even though we were former Hippie's. All the guys among us had long hair and beards and usually just wore bib-overalls and the gals wore billowing flower-child sun-dresses, yet they treated us like we were their very own children. We spent four months in Grants' Pass and attended services every time the doors were open. We learned some good foundational truths of scripture and how to spend lots of time in prayer. G-d was using this as a basic-training boot camp for the challenges of life that lay ahead for us.

Chapter 9 – 'Tis The Season To Get Married?

The Chanukah/Christmas season was drawing near and everyone in our band of out-of-place Jewish believers wanted to go home and spend time with families for the holidays. So we all piled in our latest vehicle, a World War II vintage Jeep Willys station wagon. We had another one of those faith-filled adventures that were fueled by prayer just as much as by gasoline. One-by-one the critical systems that enable you to travel at night gave out. First it was the windshield wipers and wouldn't you know, it was raining? Then the defroster, so we kept wiping the windows to prevent fogging up. Then just as we were heading downhill into the San Fernando Valley the headlights went out and then the brakes went out as we were careening down the hills that led into the Valley. Thank G-d for street lamps! And finally, just as we were getting near the Ventura freeway, within spitting distance of Sonny & his sister Bonnie's home, the engine went kaput! But praise the L-RD, we all got home safely and help was just a phone call and a few minutes away. Somehow adventure and adversity was never too far from this group of mismatched wanderers drawn together by a common bond of radical love for Jesus and a sense of covenant community towards one another.

During this holiday hiatus from Oregon we all spent quality time with our families. But wanderlust was still in our bones and being unable to sit still for very long we started looking for something to do that would be both exciting and acceptable to the L-RD. As we scouted out the spiritual activity on Hollywood Blvd. We stumbled onto an unusual Christian hangout called the Hollywood Free Paper ran by a young Christian man from Souls Harbor in Minneapolis, Minnesota named Duane Pederson. He handed out free papers that talked about Jesus and the Kingdom of G-d. It was a 70's style hip publication that would be of interest to the kind of people that hung out on the Sunset Strip. Duane also hosted Bible studies and prayer meetings, so this became our home

²⁸ William Branham = A controversial evangelist in the mid-20th century who was reported to have outstanding miracles and incredibly accurate Words-of-Knowledge through the anointing upon his life & ministry.

away from home. We spent all of our free time at the Free paper helping out anyway we could.

One of the highlights of this new place to hang out was that we got to meet Ruth Graham and Corrie Ten Boom who were the honored guests at the Bible study one night. What a special privilege it was to meet such seasoned saints of G-d that were humble, yet powerful in the Holy Spirit. Listening to Corrie speak was the closest thing I could imagine to sitting at the feet of Jesus. She spoke with such great passion and conviction. There was an authority that her age and the experience of living through the concentration camps of the Nazi Holocaust gave to validate her simple message of, "there is no pit so dark and so deep that Jesus' love is not brighter yet and deeper still." She was so gentle, kind and gracious that you could tell that G-d had long ago dealt a deathblow to pride and ego in her life. Ruth Graham was much the same in her demeanor, but she deferred most of the speaking time to Corrie as she was the obvious elder in the group that was gathered that evening.

During one of the days that we were hanging out at the Free Paper we ran into some young girls from Minnesota as we were walking down Hollywood Blvd. They were the same age as we were and their names were Geri and Laurie. They had hitchhiked from St. Paul to Hollywood in the midst of Winter. Uffdah!²⁹ It takes a hearty teenage Minnesotan to even consider such a daring feat. Geri was a Gentile Christian and Laurie was a Jewish believer like Sonny, Bonnie & myself. They were looking for a place to crash³⁰ and I offered my father's living room floor and couches in the hope that he wouldn't mind. We became fast friends through that day and when my dad heard that they would just be staying for a few days; he graciously gave his permission for them to stay.

It didn't take long for Geri and I to be coupled up and we quickly became totally infatuated with each other. So much so, that when it was time for the girls to go back to Minnesota, Geri talked Laurie into continuing their winter vacation by following us back to Oregon. This was no easy task because we now lacked a working vehicle. So we had to split our group up and hitchhike all the way there. The others' in our group suggested that Geri and I be on separate teams to give us a cooling off period because we had already become thick as thieves. In G-d's gracious mercy we all made it back to Grants' Pass safely with great stories to tell each other of our adventures in hitchhiking up California Highways 101 & 5.

Once we were reunited in Grants Pass, Oregon, Geri and I put a long string of fleeces before the L-RD to determine if we should be married at that time. Within two days all of the fleeces were met and we thought that was G-d's green light to go ahead with one of the most important decisions that a person makes in their entire life. When I look back on this chapter of my life, I have to remember that we were only 19 and both of us had a very drug impaired adolescence. We were just high on each other's and Jesus' love. Seeing this from the distance of time elapsed memory, I realize that we both made a serious mistake, but try and tell that to two kids' head-over-heels in lust. Good Luck! I would encourage anyone reading this to not use fleeces to determine G-d's will, you just might get fleeced by another spirit, HaSatan, the Angel of Light who tries to masquerade as the one true G-d. When making decisions of this magnitude take

²⁹ Uffdah= A Scandinavian exclamation of amazement.

³⁰ A Place to crash = Hippie slang for a place to sleep.

your time. G-d never begins something so late that He is in a big hurry to finish it in time. You will never regret taking it slow, you will probably regret being in a rush. There is no substitute for patience and for mature, godly, objective counsel from parents, Pastors, Priest's or Rabbi's.

Geri & I went ahead with our wedding plans even though it meant her family could not attend and a few objective voices pleaded with us to wait and seek pre-marital counseling. We could not wait, we were in true lust (we thought it was love) with each other and we thought we had heard from G-d via our fleeces. In a very caring show of support for us, my parents flew up to Grants' Pass to be there for our big day.

I was tastefully attired in a full-length light blue Herringbone Levi's workingman's jumpsuit and my cleaned & shined hiking boots. One of the local gals loaned Geri a dress to wear and we looked like a couple of humble mountain folk getting ready to get hitched. The ceremony was short and sweet and my parents treated us to dinner at a local restaurant. We spent our honeymoon in the local turn-of-the-century hotel and the next morning we were ready to hit the road.

Chapter 10 – Hitchhiking Honeymooners / Minnesota or Freeze?

Here we were on the 1st day of our new life together, hitchhiking back to Los Angeles so I could introduce Geri to the rest of my family. Laurie was trying to make the best of a very awkward situation, and G-d bless her, she was a real trooper for the L-RD. We got back to L.A. without any traumatic incidents and my family welcomed Geri to the Rothman clan in grand style. We enjoyed a few more days of nice Southern California weather and then started our trip back to Minnesota where I would meet Geri's family.

Only teenager's high on Jesus could be either dumb or courageous enough to hitchhike across America in February, in the dead of winter. We fancied ourselves as traveling evangelists and eagerly tried to witness to anyone who picked us up. We made pretty good time until we got to Tulsa, Oklahoma. We were stuck there for several hours, then traveled swiftly through St. Louis to find ourselves severely stranded on the north side of Chicago, the Windy City. Oh my, did it live up to it's name! I was given my first introduction to upper mid-western wind-chill and I was not adequately dressed for it.

A kindly Illinois Highway patrolman pulled up and gave each of us a short respite from the cold in his heated cruiser. I thought at first he was going to arrest us, but he turned out to be a really nice guy and took some time to help some wayfaring strangers. Was it another angel unawares? We were all crying out to G-d in our own way and I don't know who got the idea, but one of us suggested that we hitch a ride back into Chicago. We would look for a ride home on one of the ride boards that they post at the college and in the free paper. We all nodded in frozen agreement.

As we were changing our sign from Minneapolis to Chicago a car that had already passed us, backed up the on ramp to where we were standing and thank G-d the patrolman had just taken off. The girl said, "I don't know why I am doing this, your sign had Minneapolis on it. But I felt an overwhelming urge to back up and ask you to come to my place in Chicago. Then I can take you to the University and show you where to look on the ride board and the free paper. Does that sound good to you guys?"

Did it ever? We all shouted, "Yes," with a quick explanation that we had just changed our minds to do the very same thing and that it must have been G-d who touched her heart. We then proceeded to bombard her with the Gospel and she probably had second thoughts about picking up three frozen Jesus freaks.

We were so assertive in our witness to her that by the time we got to her place she wanted us gone as soon as possible. So she just took us to the school and we couldn't find anything on the ride board, but we did find out about a Pat Boone rally that night and we all felt a strong impression that we would find a place to stay at the rally. So she dropped us off there and bid us good riddance. We settled in to enjoy the rally and G-d showed up and blessed us with a sweet sense of His presence.

As goofy as we were, G-d never abandoned us, in fact He was watching over us like a Mother hen over her newborn chicks. Every step of the way He had the perfect provision for our every need. During the rally there was a greeting time and we hooked up with a business man who was a brand new believer fresh out of a 12 step program and ready to serve G-d with holy abandon. We hooked up after the rally and he offered us a place to stay until we could figure out a way to get back to Maplewood, a suburb north of St. Paul, Minnesota where the girls lived with their moms.

In desperation, we finally called Laurie's brother Elliot to drive down to Chicago (an eight-hour drive), pick us up and bring us back to the Twin Cities. Elliot loved to cruise in his mom's car, so it was no problem for him. When we finally got to Maplewood I was introduced to her family and we moved into the apartment Laurie shared with her mother, Marian, who owned and operated Mama Lu's Barbecue. I then proceeded to look for employment, but was unsuccessful dressed in bib-overalls with shoulder length hair and a beard down to my chest.

So I bit the bullet and went to a barber and cut it all off. Then we went shopping for an outfit to go job hunting. After I cut my hair, shaved off my beard and dressed like a nerd, I no longer looked like some macho biker out of 'Easy Rider' (a 60's biker flick). I now looked like a 19-year old geek who barely knew where he was or how to get there. The one bright note was that I had been able to get myself a job with St. Paul Wall-Master, a company that cleaned up fire damaged homes & businesses. This was of little comfort to Geri when she caught a glimpse of her new, improved husband.

You can imagine the shock that my bride of two weeks felt when she saw her knight in shining armor (bib-overalls?) dressed in polyester with my hair now cut above my ears and wearing my book-worm glasses again. She did everything she could to hide her disappointment, but it eventually came out and we ultimately separated before we had been married a month. She had morning sickness that could kill a horse and realized that she was pregnant at 19, married to a different man (visually) than the one she'd said her vows to. The reality of what she had done came crashing in on her emotionally and she sank into a deep depression. She moved in with her aunt who was a flight attendant on North-West Airlines and saw the glamorous life she had given up for a teenaged geek and motherhood. She would not talk to me or have anything to do with me anymore.

At first I panicked. I called everyone I knew and asked for prayer. I sent flowers and candy and cards and gifts and she would not respond to me at all. I called again

and again and she would answer the phone and hang up when she realized it was me. I wrote long letters trying to guilt her into repentant submission with hand written bible verses and they came back stamped "Return to Sender," just like the old Elvis Presley song. I fasted and prayed for days on end, her believing friends would try and talk sense into her and nothing worked to change her heart. It was over. But I couldn't accept it.

Chapter 11 – Solitude, Suicide & the Savior

I realize now that I had taken my love for Jesus and focused it on Geri. She became my all-in-all, my everything. Her love and acceptance had become my reason to live and what brought joy to my heart. I idolized her, I worshiped the ground she walked on. The problem was, now that she rejected me, I had lost my reason for living and with it my joy. I too became depressed and sullen. I could barely go to work and when I would get home, I would just lay on my bed and weep all night. I began to avoid our mutual friends and was living in silent solitude. Every time I saw a pregnant woman or a couple holding hands I would break down emotionally. I was a total wreck, on the verge of a nervous breakdown. One day I couldn't bear the sorrow and the pain of her rejection any longer and I went out walking, weeping and praying, as I often did. When I got to the Summit Ave. Bridge that ran over railroad tracks, I decided that I was going to jump. To put an end to all the pain and agony I was experiencing, that seemed as though it would never come to an end.

Then just as I was mustering up the courage to climb over the rail, I saw a vision of Jesus. He was standing in Heaven, coming to me on clouds of glory. His eyes were full of compassion and understanding and He quoted the verses from Matthew 11:28-30, speaking them to my heart.

"Come unto Me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and humble in heart: and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

As soon as I heard those words I ran all the way back to my apartment crying myself dry with tears of quiet, joyful relief. G-d still loved me, even though I had failed. Even though I had made a fool out of myself and I was afraid that I had made a fool out of G-d. But guess what, everyone who believes in G-d has failed. Anyone who tries to obey G-d will eventually make a mistake that embarrasses them. G-d is used to it. It comes with the territory of working with imperfect sin-scarred human beings. He already knows we are going to blow it and has loved us from our conception. Your birth was no accident. Even if your parents tell you it was. G-d has always had you in mind and doesn't regret having created you. Your life is His gift to you, savor it and celebrate it!

Chapter 12 – Reach Out & Recover

Romans 5:8 says, "G-d demonstrated His own love for us in this; that while we were yet sinners, Messiah died for us." The issue was not my failure, but my hurt feelings and my misplaced devotion. This was the beginning of my healing and my way back to sanity, but it took many more deep lessons and a couple more years of recovery before losing my wife did not conjure up negative feelings. Within a few months Geri miscarried our baby and again I wept for hours. Then she filed for divorce, but I contested it and it took another year before she could dissolve our marriage.

While I was going through the emotional recovery from my failed marriage I began to work with a telephone Counseling ministry called Love Lines, founded by Dan & Diane Morstad, with the help of their friends, Herb Pfeffner and Dean & Dolly Danielson. They could see that although I was still struggling emotionally, that it would do me good to share my faith with others and they were right. Each time I was able to comfort someone else, I received comfort from G-d. I worked with Love Lines for a couple years and G-d used that time of ministering to others to aid in my healing process. It is amazing what G-d can do for us if we can just get our eyes off ourselves, onto Him, and the others that are hurting around us.

My counseling ministry with Love Lines was flourishing. I was able to lead people to the L-RD every time I was on the phones and gave encouragement and comfort to many more. I don't quite remember how the idea came up, but I volunteered to leave the Twin Cities, travel to Ithaca, New York where Scott Ross was headquartered at Love Inn (a Christian commune) and train to become *Love Lines* national phone bank coordinator. Which meant I would travel to major metropolitan areas around the country that wanted to establish 24-hour telephone counseling centers under the auspices of Love Lines & the Scott Ross show.

Scott Ross was formerly a very successful top 40 DJ from New York City who had previously hobnobbed with the Beatles & the Rolling Stones and was now a born-again rock & roll radio evangelist. Every Sunday night he would have a 3-hour show where he would take the popular music of the day and use it to share the gospel in a youth oriented manner. It was an idea whose time had come. Each Sunday night while the show was broadcast on the radio we would take the phone calls from a number that was advertised every 10-15 minutes. The phones were busy all night with hungry hearts wanting to find peace with G-d. I had been with Love Lines long enough to become somewhat of a maven³¹ on telephone counseling ministry.

So I had quit my job and moved out of my apartment, purchased a one-way bus ticket to Ithaca and stayed with the Danielson family over the New Year's weekend of '72-'73. I was unable to enter into the spirit of that weekend though. G-d was really dealing with me in the depths of my soul and once again I clearly heard from the L-RD about a major decision concerning His direction for my life. He told me to cancel the bus ticket and the trip to Ithaca. That I was to stay in the Twin Cities because He had a purpose for me here to fulfil that I would understand later, when the timing was right.

Thank G-d I listened, because Scott Ross was going to put me back on the bus and send me right back to the Twin Cities. He had heard the same thing from the L-RD and my obedience to G-d's voice saved me a long, lonely mid-winter bus ride. G-d's will for our lives does not always appeal to us or make sense at the time, but I have known Him long enough to confidently say, "G-d's will is good, acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2b) You can't improve on G-d!

So I decided to stay in the Twin Cities but had no where to live. The Danielson's, who were hosting me for the weekend allowed me to stay with them until I got on my feet again. I found a job at a local nursing home as the Morning Chef and prepared breakfast and lunch for 150 elderly folks and employees. I always had a love for

³¹ Maven – Yiddish = an expert, someone who is knowledgeable on a given subject

cooking, as a teen-ager I made Eddie's Meshugge burgers for my dad and his friends and they were so impressed that they offered to start me up in my own burger stand. I would have taken them up on it except that I was too laid-back and spaced-out back then to comfortably consider the complexities of running a counter-culture kiosk.

My talent for cooking though, was now serving me very well, but unfortunately, it was not paying me very well. I was getting up at 3 AM, working 10-12 hour days and cleaning my own pots and pans. After 6 months of this I asked for a raise and they laughed at me. I could see that I did not want to make a career of being a chef in this nursing home and suddenly cooking didn't seem to be the brightest future for me.

During this time as the Morning Chef, I became so wrapped up in my work that I began to get too busy to make time for G-d. I found that each week I had to work overtime or fill in for someone else and before I knew it I had not been in any real, meaningful fellowship or worship for several weeks. This was a recipe for spiritual disaster.

One day, after many weeks without fellowship or worship, I felt something change between me and a cute young nurse's aid that liked to kibbitz³² with me in the kitchen when she came to pick up meals for the patients. We had always had a congenial light banter going on between us that seemed to be harmless, but somehow, in that moment, we both knew that we were suddenly, uncontrollably, physically attracted to each other in a biblically inappropriate way, and we acted on those feelings.

I believe that a spirit of lust caught us with our guard down. We knew it was wrong, because we were not married, but we continued with the affair anyway, and we couldn't seem to stop it, even though a part of us wanted to. After too many mistakes we realized the only way this was going to stop was if one of us got out of there, so I did. Unfortunately that did not solve the root problem, which was a spirit of lust and sexual addiction which had caught me in their trap years earlier, when I first exposed to pornography. Less than a year later, I found myself in a similar situation and I was once again in the midst of another full blown affair. As with the previous indiscretion I struggled to let go of the person that I lusted after. It took her moving out of town to break free from that relationship.

Why am I sharing all of these intimate insights into the dark side of my past? Is it to glory in how naughty I was? Not on your life! I am being transparent about these bad choices so those who may be trapped in the same kind of web can possibly find encouragement to break out of the destructive patterns before it is too late. The reoccurring weak link in my life was that I would allow myself to fall out of close fellowship and was not in a meaningful, accountable relationship with another person that I could trust with anything and everything that was going on in my heart. Somebody who loved me enough to get in my face and stay there until I got the message, doing all of it with tenderness and grace, as the scriptures command us to (Galatians 6:1-2).

1 John 1:7 is a real eye opener for keeping us from subtly sliding into darkness and sin. HaSatan, the Adversary, wants to get us out of the light and keep us in the dark so that his schemes can succeed. "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we

³² Kibbitz – Yiddish = Make small talk, joke around.

will have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus The Messiah, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.”

It’s so simple, that far too many of us miss it far too often. The key is whether we will humble ourselves to stay in an accountable relationship with at least one other human being. When we choose to allow someone lower than G-d, but higher than ourselves to have a voice of authority that we will respect in our lives, then we can break the serpent’s fangs before they can bite us. Remember to walk in the light, that is where the fellowship is, that is where Y’shua is, and that is where the cleansing power of the blood is!

Well thank G-d, I learned that lesson and I never again strayed from the straight and narrow path chosen for me by our Heavenly Abba. By G-d’s grace and the support of my spiritual family and friends, G-d enabled me to keep from falling into that trap again and I kept myself chaste until the time He appointed for me to be married again.

Part II – Discovering My Calling & Finding My Mate

Chapter 13 – Jesus, Jews & Joy

As I was riding the bus one-day in 1973, I saw an advertisement for the Twin Cities Opportunities Industrialization Center. It was an Inner-city technical college that trained people of low income. Oh, that was me, for sure! If I were any lower income, I’d be homeless. So I applied for the Graphic Arts course and I qualified because of my very low income. I was completely trained in every aspect of the Lithographic process and really enjoyed working in that occupation with all of its creativity and variety.

At one of my Graphic Arts jobs, I met a Christian artist / designer named Linda. I called her at home one day to inquire about a job we were collaborating on and her roommate answered the phone. The woman who answered was Alberta Boznu and happened to also be a Jewish believer in Jesus. She had heard about me and wanted to invite me to a very special 4th of July picnic for Jews who believed in Jesus. I met her at the picnic and was attracted by both her beautiful spirit and appearance.

On Independence Day 1974, about 50 of us Jews who loved Jesus came together and as a result Shalom Fellowship was born and started at the home of Mike and Cheryl Natt. They lived in St. Louis Park, a suburb with a large Jewish population just west of Minneapolis. Shalom Fellowship was a Bible study / prayer meeting for Israel and the Jewish people that met every Saturday evening. We began studying the Jewish roots of Christianity before it became the popular thing to do. This was the same time that Hebrew Christianity was immersing into Messianic Judaism. This was the new term to describe Jews who believe in Jesus and actually continued to live and worship as Jews in Messianic Synagogues, not in the Churches as converts to Christianity.

Every Saturday night became the high point of my week. Shalom Fellowship became the center of my spiritual life and the Jewish heart within me kept growing from the nourishment of spiritually kosher yiddishkeit.³³ During this time we had become acquainted with a fiery Jewish-Christian prophet / teacher named Art Katz. He began to

³³ Yiddishkeit = Knowledge of Judaism & Jewish culture

minister at New Testament Church and Shalom Fellowship and was having a profound effect on my life. He had just purchase a Bible camp in Northern Minnesota called Ben Israel³⁴ and he needed help to refurbish it. We were definitely drawn to Ben Israel, Art's ministry and started to take long weekends up there to help out and spend more time with Art and soak in his anointed teaching.

There was one trip to his camp that stands out in particular. We had driven up to Ben Israel's Camp Dominion for the weekend and on the way back my car broke down about ½ an hour from there. Someone from the Camp came and picked me up and my car was towed to a repair facility. They had it running by the next morning and I again was homeward bound. About halfway home, just outside of Brainerd my car broke down again. Fortunately both times the car stalled I was right across the highway from a home with a telephone, even though both areas were sparsely populated. That was a miracle in-and-of-itself. While I waited for the tow truck I tried to use my time to pray and praise the L-RD as He was teaching me to do and He began speaking to me in that life changing tone of voice again. He said that I needed to cancel my vacation plans of spending 2 weeks in California with my parents and instead spend my vacation here at home in prayer and fasting, because I was going to be making a decision that would change the course of my life. Oh, was that ever an understatement.

When I got back to the Twin Cities I immediately called my parents, canceled my plane tickets and prepared myself for a 14 day fast. One the first day of the fast I was asked by another Jewish believer named Jan Markell to be at the Jews for Jesus booth she had set-up at the Minnesota state fair. A Christian minister was there, named Norm Nelson, who had spoken to us at Shalom Fellowship a couple of weeks earlier and he asked me if I would consider helping him to start a Messianic Jewish Congregation in the Twin Cities. I mentioned that I was just starting a fast to pray for a very important life-changing decision that I was to make and I sensed that this was it. So I asked him to wait for my answer, that I would get back to him by the end of the 2 weeks.

During that time of solitude with the L-RD He assured me that although I was young, that He had put much truth into my life and that I would rise to meet each challenge by His grace within my life. He encouraged me to join forces with Norm in starting the 1st Messianic Synagogue in the Twin Cities and He also showed me the revelation of the ONE NEW MAN³⁵ in a teaching He gave me called The Mystery Revealed. We began the Messianic Jewish Congregation in September of 1976. There was only 5 other Messianic congregations that we knew about at that time in the world.

Chapter 14 – Burden or Bondage?

After the divorce in 1973, I waited for another 3 years for Geri to return to the L-RD and to me. I continued to fast and pray and send her love letters and flowers. She finally got tired of this and wrote me a very angry letter. She demanded that I leave her alone and allow her to go on with her life. I was emotionally unable to let her go because I thought it was G-d's will for us to get back together. I did not realize I was chasing an impossible dream. I had been taught from the scriptures that once you were

³⁴ Ben Israel = son of Israel, the title of the spiritual biography of Art Katz & the name of his spiritual retreat in Northern Minnesota.

³⁵ ONE NEW MAN = Jew & Gentiles united through love for & faith in the Messiah Jesus (Ephesians 2:15 & Galatians 3:28-29).

married it was for life. It was not important how mismatched, immature, dysfunctional or abusive a couple might be to each other or their children; they had to stay together, no matter how difficult the circumstances.

That was until G-d stepped in to adjust my theology. By this time I had finished Technical school and was working in the Graphic arts industry. I had a job in downtown Minneapolis and on nice days I would walk home from work. On my way home, G-d audibly blurted out, "Release her to me, let her go." I responded with my usual candor, "What?" He explained further, "Release your ex-wife to me and stop waiting for her to come back to you. That is never going to happen. She is going one way in her life and you are going another and the two of you are never going to be together again." I had heard the audible voice of G-d enough times to know it when I hearing from G-d. As soon as He finished speaking to me I accepted His revelation and I felt like a ton of bricks was lifted off my shoulders that I had been carrying for years. I almost felt like I was walking on air. So this is what it felt like to be yoked with the L-RD. His yoke truly is easy and His burden really is light!

He continued to instruct me that I was to be single unto Him until He showed me otherwise. But I barely noticed anything else as I almost ran home, overwhelmed with my new found freedom. I had been trying to ignore all the beautiful women who I was attracted to, but did not dare to get very close to any of them because I was waiting for my ex-wife to return. Now I could start to date godly young women who had the same kind of love for G-d that I did. I was going to regret that I had not listened carefully when G-d had asked me to remain single unto Him.

Chapter 15 – Your Loving Kindness Is Better Than Life

G-d is love, but He is also jealous for our love. When we lose our first love for Him and place it on another object of affection, we are hurting ourselves more than G-d and He has ways of letting us know that this is happening. G-d had clearly asked me to remain single unto Him, but I did not listen as carefully as I should have because I did not want to hear Him on this subject. Isn't it strange how we can be so desperate to hear G-d when it is of interest to us, but when it doesn't suit us, we become hard of hearing? I was going to learn an important lesson about listening to all that G-d has to say, not just the parts that I like or agree with. I am reminded of another Jewish man who had this problem. Jonah had selective hearing and it got him in deep water, way over his head.

I immediately began a very systematic attempt to spend time with the 3 young ladies who were not only the most attractive to me but also shared a common interest in praying for Israel and the salvation of the Jewish people. I met all of them at Shalom Fellowship. The 1st gal was flattered by my attention, but assured me that I was not someone that she could pursue a deeper relationship with. When I got home that night I sensed a tremendous heaviness over me spiritually. It was easy to detect, because I had just felt such lightness and freedom just a few days before. So I fell to my knees and besought G-d what the reason for this was.

He immediately reminded me of His command for me to remain single unto Him until He said otherwise. I apologized and decided that Father knows best and you would think that that would be the end of this chapter of the story. But not with a red-blooded

American male that has tried to remain celibate for almost 5 years and has smelled the scent of romance for even the briefest moment.

It did not take very long for me to rationalize what G-d had made so clear just a few days earlier. I decided to try #2 on my list of most eligible single women and see how I fared. Looking back I see all too clearly that this was exactly how the serpent tempted Chavah (Eve) to disobey the explicitly clear command to not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good & evil. The serpent questioned, "Has G-d really said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit or you shall die?'" I fell prey to the same foolish tactics and was going to pay a price for it.

My second attempt at romance was just as dismal as the first. G-d had already gotten to both of these women before I did and they both just wanted to be good friends, but no more than that. G-d bless them for their honesty, but it sure hurt when I heard it for the first time. When I got home that night that same heaviness of spirit plagued me. I was too ashamed to go to G-d again with what I already knew was blatant disobedience to His sovereign directive. So I just slid into bed and tried to forget my problem by going to bed early.

This strategy was not effective in the least. I awoke before midnight with the worst asthma attack I had suffered since I was a young child. I had not had problems with asthma for so long that I had failed to keep a bronchial inhaler handy for emergencies such as this one. Obviously G-d knew that, so this was a tailor-made discipline meant to teach an important life lesson that would not soon be forgotten. I threw open the yellow pages to find an emergency room that was not too far away and with great difficulty threw some clothes on and headed for the closest hospital, about 5 minutes from my apartment.

The emergency room was busy that night so I had to wait a while before they could get to me and even longer for them to get back to me after administering an adrenaline shot to relax my bronchial tubes and allow me to breathe easier. The trouble is that an adrenaline shot also hypes you up a bit more than you would like for the middle of the night, so I was pretty shaky for quite some time. While I waited for the doctor to see me and for the shakiness to subside, G-d took advantage of the opportunity to have a teachable moment with me.

He asked me, "Didn't I tell you to remain single unto Me until I say otherwise?" "Yes you did L-RD." "Don't you know that you cannot live in two kingdoms? You will serve one master or the other, but you cannot serve two masters and you cannot have one foot in My kingdom and your other foot in your own kingdom. Do you understand how serious I am about this?" (Matthew 6:24) "Yes L-RD, I understand and I am sorry. I was wrong and I repent for my disobedience to Your very clear command. Will you please forgive me and cleanse me of this desire that I cannot seem to control."

He not only forgave me, but also instantly took away all the effects of the late night asthma attack and the adrenaline shot, and I finally felt normal again. I was able to take this lesson hot off the press, this fresh manna from heaven and share it that night with the brand new Messianic Congregation that I had helped Norm Nelson to start a few weeks earlier. I shared the message with great passion and conviction because I had just lived it and it was indelibly imprinted on my heart and mind for life. All that I

have just gone through had not prepared me for what was about to break in upon my life.

Chapter 16 – To Be Married Or Not To Be In Ministry That Was The Question?

Norm Nelson, the new Messianic Pastor of the Messianic Jewish Congregation calls me into his office and shares some unsettling information with me. The gal I had mentioned earlier, Alberta Boznu, who G-d had used to connect me with the other Jewish believers, was now attending M.J.C. regularly. She had confided in Pastor Norm that she was attracted to me and had prayed a lot about it. She tried giving it to G-d and her feelings for me just were not going away.

Norm believed the same theology about marriage & divorce that I had before that supernatural encounter that released me from my never-to-return ex-wife several months before. So based on his beliefs he encouraged Alberta to forget about me, that I would be unavailable to any girl or I would have to leave the ministry. She did her best to respect Pastor Norm's counsel, but she just could not shake what seemed to be a supernatural attraction to me. If this happened today, someone may have thought she was a stalker, but Alberta was just honestly trying to yield her emotions to G-d through prayer and fasting and yet I was still strongly staying in her thoughts and feelings.

Exasperated with the situation, Norm called me into his office to share with me about his talks with Alberta. I assured him that I would talk to her and that we would quickly bring this matter to an end. I met with Alberta and she explained her unique situation to me. I was now in the opposite position as the 2 young ladies that I had tried to date a few months earlier and did not have the chutzpah³⁶ to tell her that she was #3 on my list of most eligible bachelorettes. After what happened to me in the emergency room, I was staying clear of the feminine gender until G-d said otherwise.

I graciously explained that I thought she was very attractive, but that at this time in my life, G-d had made it abundantly clear that I was to remain single unto Him until He showed me otherwise. She had heard my recent testimony of how G-d had dealt with the issue of dating in my life. So it seemed that we were both on the same page concerning this issue and we got on our knees and surrendered our lives and the idea of our having a relationship with one another to G-d. And I thought it was all over, but Alberta sensed that it was just moving to another level, we had just gotten G-d involved in whether our lives were to be together in the future. As I rode away on the bus, I waved goodbye to Alberta and thought to myself, "Well, thank G-d that situation is taken care of. I don't have to think about that anymore." I was totally unaware of the fact that G-d had other plans in mind, that the Master Matchmaker had made a masterful match!

Chapter 17 – From The Back Burner To My Cup Runneth Over³⁷

As Alberta had faithfully continued to surrender her feelings for me to the L-RD, she was browsing one day in a Christian bookstore, in the Soul's Harbor Ministry Center where she lived and worked and saw a cute little plaque that had a bible verse on it.

³⁶ Chutzpah – Yiddish = Courage, boldness

³⁷ My cup runneth over – An oft quoted portion of the 23rd Psalm written by King David.

The verse was from Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself in the L-RD and He will give you the desires of your heart." She immediately heard G-d's response to that verse, "I have given Ed to you as the desire of your heart." She became filled with joyful expectation at how G-d was going to reveal this to me as clearly as He had to her.

Meanwhile I am trying to figure out what I am going to do for Thanksgiving of 1976. I had always had an invitation to someone's home well in advance of the holiday and it was the day before Thanksgiving and all through the day not a telephone was ringing. I surmised that G-d must be asking me to fast over the holiday and I was psyching myself up for it the best I could, when just before I was getting into bed the phone rang. It was Alberta, who had been struggling all day long on whether to give me a call or not to invite me over to her mother's place for Thanksgiving dinner. She called her spiritual parents Ed & Dorothy and they encouraged her to go for it. Then she kept hearing this verse in the back of her head from James 4:17, "Anyone who knows the good they ought to do and does it not, sins." She kept telling herself that I was already busy and that if she called me at this late date and hour that I would be insulted and she would be embarrassed, ad--nauseam.

So she finally gave in and called me and I explained to her my situation and decided that I would join her, her mom and her mom's boyfriend Han's for dinner. It was a pleasant evening and we all got along famously. We gave Hans a ride home and I gave Alberta a ride home as well. I thought that was all there was to it, but this was another encouragement for Alberta to continue trusting G-d to reel me in.

Our next encounter with each other was at Hannukah. I was going to give her a ride to the Congregations' Hannukah party and found out it was her spiritual birthday as well. On the way home that night as we were dropping her off, a mutual friend of ours asked if we could pray for Alberta on her spiritual birthday. As he prayed, G-d's presence filled the car and the spirit of G-d gave him a prophetic word that spoke right to her heart. He said, "You know that relationship that you've been praying about. Well, don't worry about it, everything is under control and you will see a breakthrough very soon." That was about as good a spiritual birthday gift as the spirit of G-d could have given her at that moment.

The next Shabbat service was Christmas Eve. I had become Alberta's regular ride to any congregational activities, so I called to confirm the time I was to pick her up. Her friend and co-worker asked if I had called to wish her a happy birthday and I thanked her for the inside scoop. The L-RD reminded me that I had just purchased a beautiful silver 'Shalom' pin that would make a perfect birthday gift for Alberta. So when I picked her up that night I presented it to her and she and G-d put one more check mark up on the *Ed is for Alberta* scoreboard in heaven.

The next tightening of the noose was between Christmas & New Years. I had planned to have the Saturday night Shalom Fellowship prayer meeting at my apartment because the Natt's were unable to accommodate it that night. In addition, wouldn't you know, Alberta was the only person to show up that night. We decided to go over to the nursing home that Han's was now in and pray for him. After that I gave Alberta a ride home and found myself drawn to her with an overwhelming desire to hug her. I remembered what happened when I had tried to hug the last two women I dated and started to shake like a leaf. Alberta asked, "What's the matter?" I explained to her what I

had just been through a few weeks before. She prayed for me and I began to feel the peace of G-d all over us. I said, "We are going to submit this relationship to every spiritual leader in our lives and make sure that G-d is in this, because I do not want to make another trip to the emergency room. Therefore, we went about the business of contacting the four different spiritual authorities that had input into our lives at that time.

The first was Alberta's spiritual parents, who after hearing our whole story with all of my marital background felt great peace about our being joined together in service to the L-RD. The next was my Elder at New Testament Church and Shalom Fellowship, Mike Natt. He also felt a witness that G-d had forgiven me for my previous marriage failure and was giving me a second chance to experience the blessings of godly marriage. Larry Ballard, the pastor at Daystar Ministries was Alberta's pastor and he too gave us the green light to move forward in our commitment to one another. The only dissenting vote was our pastor at M.J.C., Norm Nelson. He was totally opposed to our marriage based on his theology from Bible school and encouraged us to slow down and reconsider having a relationship and to seriously consider the ramifications it might have on any future ministry opportunities for me.

We respected Norm and his rights to his opinion, but after having 3 other spiritual authorities affirm us, we were able to discern that it was only Norm's Bible school theology that stood in the way of his blessing us and not hearing a, "No" from G-d. We did want to honor him though, so we were careful not to show any public display of affection beyond sitting together and holding hands during services. After several weeks, as Norm beheld the grace of G-d on our relationship, G-d softened Norm's heart and he gave us his blessing as well. We immediately went out and I bought Alberta the cheapest diamond-chip friendship ring to substitute as an engagement ring because I was on an extremely tight budget. Alberta was thrilled to have any ring, but the unfortunate result of the mixture of alloys in the very inexpensive ring was that she contracted a raging case of Eczema that took a long time and a lot of money to completely eradicate from that finger.

I was not in any hurry to get married, so I told Alberta and everyone else that our engagement would last at least 3 years because I wanted to be sure to not make another mistake in marriage. What a joke! A few months later I was asking people how long does it take to plan a wedding without losing your sanity? The answer that we kept getting was at least 3 months. We checked our calendars and 3 months to the day was Thanksgiving. We tried to get married on Thanksgiving but the ministers we were working with would not have it, so we planned for the weekend after Thanksgiving, November twenty-sixth, 1977. This turned out to be one year from our first date, which was last Thanksgiving, when we had first spent some quality time together, getting to know her family and each other a little better. In the final analysis, G-d will always work all things together for our good and for His glory!

Chapter 18 – Wedding Bell Blues For Two Messianic Jews

My Father and his new wife were unable to attend, but my Mom came and so did Alberta's older brother, Joe. Some how we were able to gather almost all of Alberta's family without experiencing *Star Wars*, as her brother used to call it. I actually built our own Chuppah (Hebrew = wedding canopy) and Michael Natt, the Elder who started the Shalom Fellowship in his home, performed the ceremony. Everything was going perfect

until our pianist kept playing the theme from Exodus repeatedly for over 20 minutes, thinking it was supposed to be our wedding march. I was on just the other side of the door from her, but the door was locked, so all I could do was pray for help! Joe was nervous and suggested to Alberta that I may have skipped out.

Finally someone came to check and see what was going on and I was able to get everything back on the right track until Mike Natt asked Joe, who was giving Alberta away, "Who gives this woman to be this man's husband?" Fortunately, no one caught it at that moment and the wedding went without another hitch. Almost 300 people came to celebrate this milestone in our lives and we took off for our honeymoon in below zero wind-chill wedded bliss!

Alberta and I were still on a very tight budget and that is putting it mildly. We had to sit in the lobby of our hotel to patiently open all the wedding cards (we felt that we had to read them to honor those who blessed us before we took the money out) to see if there was funds sufficient for us to use for the costs of our honeymoon. Well, thank G-d, that there was just enough for us to pay for our hotel rooms with little left over for our meals. By the time we got to our final destination we had just enough money for the cheapest appetizer on the menu at this very posh French restaurant, Escargot!³⁸ We initially thought that was very romantic, but Alberta's stomach thought otherwise.

By the time we got to our room, she was nauseous. I took the pittance that we had and ran to the nearest convenience store to get her some Pepto-Bismol, or to better describe what she was feeling, peptic abysmal. Maybe G-d was giving us a heads up, showing us that our lives were never going to be quite normal by any sense of the word.

We survived the honeymoon hurling and returned to our domicile, a Messianic commune comprised of members of our congregation. This included another family (with two children) and a single guy living upstairs (the adults were all members of our worship team). This was not the best place to begin a new life together, particularly since it was an old farmhouse that was really cold, in the middle of the below-zero winter with field mice everywhere.

To overcome the lack of heat in our room I had the not-so-brilliant idea of painting it bright psychedelic orange to give it the ambiance of warmth. The floor was covered with worn slate tiles and was freezing cold, so I covered every square inch of floor with a menagerie of throw rugs, which was less than pleasing to my queasy new bride.

To top this off, we found a mouse in our room and my wife ran into the bathroom and locked the door, only to find that the mouse ran in there after her. She ran back into our room and jumped into bed. I then grabbed the covers and flipped them into the air to straighten them and a mouse flew through the air along with a collection of tiny little mouse droppings! You did not have to be a Rocket Scientist to guess that we did not sleep down there until we were able to find a cat that was a very good mouser.

Alberta not so subtly made it clear that our days in this crazy charismatic commune were definitely numbered. She wanted to get out of there as soon as possible and we were able to move into an upstairs apartment in the Parsonage next-store to the

³⁸ Escargot = French for steamed snails!

congregation. This afforded much nicer and much more private accommodations and we finally had some much-needed peace on the home front. Now we were ready to focus our energies together into serving the Messianic Jewish Congregation.

We labored with Norm Nelson and a fabulous team of very talented people for five more years. Yet as we all learn in life, excepting G-d's everlasting love for us, nothing lasts forever and G-d uses some experiences to be laboratories of learning or launching pads for our destiny. Messianic Jewish Congregation proved to be both of these for Alberta and I. The summer before our 7th year with the Messianic Jewish Congregation, G-d spoke to me to begin another Messianic work on the other side of the Twin Cities that would not be in competition with the M.J.C. I shared the idea with Norm and he fully supported it, helping me to find a place to begin the new work. It actually turned out to be the same storefront that we started the M.J.C. in 6 years earlier, on the corner of 43rd St. & Minnehaha Ave., on the eastern edge of South Minneapolis.

Chapter 19 – Perceiving the Need & Planting the Seed

On September 9, 1982, we began the Seed of Abraham Messianic Congregation with the 10 people from our Home Fellowship group. Our first service packed the place out and began an adventure in Messianic Jewish ministry that has continued to this day. We have been blessed to see a few dozen Jews and Gentiles give their hearts to Y'shua, trusting Him as their L-RD & Savior. We have had to move a few times, but have been able to be at our present location for many years. Two of our continuous prayers have been for a Book of Acts Messianic revival in our local Jewish community and to have a building of our own as a place to call home for this ministry. We have been *wondering* Jews for too long! *Wondering* where our ministry home is going to be?

For over 20 years I served in ministry as an ordained Messianic Pastor and was very comfortable with that title. However, an unusual phenomenon began to happen in 1994. More and more people began to call me Rabbi. No matter how many people I asked not to do that, there would be that many more that would, until it almost became a joke for me to resist it any more. So I did what I always do, when I do not know what to do, I asked G-d what was happening. He immediately replied, "People are calling you a Rabbi because you are one, so don't be afraid to take on the title, for the mantle is already upon you." I argued at first, not wanting to violate Y'shua's words in Matthew 23: 5-12 where He says, "Call no man Rabbi," so I asked G-d to please give me understanding of that passage of Scripture. As usual, He asked me to look at the context, and immediately I saw that Y'shua was rebuking the Scribes and Pharisees for their need of public affirmation. G-d asked me, "Is that what you are looking for?" I answered, "Of course not." He replied, "Case closed." Therefore, in obedience I changed my ordination with the IAMCS³⁹ to a Messianic Rabbi in January of 1995.

We have seen the Churches in the Minneapolis & St. Paul area begin to be open to the Jewish / Hebraic roots of the Christian faith. We have also been blessed to participate in the establishing of an annual cycle of citywide celebrations of the three major biblical feasts of the L-RD found in Exodus 23:14–17. These feasts are Passover, Shavuot (Pentecost) and Succot (Tabernacles). We have had the privilege of opening Promise Keepers (at the Metro Dome and the Target Center) and on many occasions

³⁹ IAMCS – International Alliance of Messianic Congregations & Synagogues

the National Day of Prayer with the blowing of a Shofar.⁴⁰ We have been asked to appear on local and national Christian / Messianic cable television and to be a guest on local and national Christian / Messianic radio programs to share about Messianic Judaism. It has been my honor to serve on several local and national ministry boards. My heart aches for the body of Messiah to come into mature unity, to see His Kingdom come and His will be done, here in earth (in me His earthen vessel) as it is in Heaven!

I have been blessed to participate in several groups of ministers / ministries that give me the privilege of receiving continuing education and mentoring, as well as having many men and women of G-d who can hold me accountable for the way I walk before G-d and man. I thank G-d for the opportunity to have so many precious and meaningful relationships with men and women of G-d who provoke me unto love and good works.

I thank G-d for connecting us with C.L.I.M.B. (Christian Leadership Institute of Minnesota & Beyond), where I have been able to earn an Associate of Biblical Studies degree and serve as an Instructor. I am also grateful for RMU Theological Institute, where I have been privileged to serve as an Adjunct Professor and was able to earn a Bachelor of Messianic Studies degree and am currently working on my Master's Thesis.

As has been said of me by those who knew me when, I have come a long way since my earlier days of selfish, self-centered drug use and debauchery. At one of our son's Bar Mitzvah's, my Mother said, "If you only knew how far Ed has come since he was a teen-ager. His faith in Jesus as the Messiah is the best thing that ever happened to him. He is not the person he used to be. He has become a real mensh."⁴¹

Thanks to the goodness and kindness of G-d, I am still serving Him and His saints at the Seed of Abraham and the local Body of Messiah. L-RD willing, I hope to be doing so until Y'shua (Jesus) returns to take all of the born-again believers in the Body of Messiah, His beloved Bride, to the most glorious event in all of eternity, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb!⁴²

I pray that these pages will inspire you to seek to know G-d in a much more personal and intimate way through the gift of His Son, Y'shua (Jesus) the Messiah. I hope that you have seen in and through my life that G-d desires to be active in our lives. He not only listens to our prayers, but also answers them by talking to us as well. Please contact me at the Seed of Abraham if you want to learn more about knowing and serving G-d. May He bless and keep you in all your ways to bring honor and glory to Him through His Son, Y'shua the Messiah, our L-RD & Savior forever. Amen!

Please visit us at:

**Seed of Abraham Messianic Congregation Meets at Calvary Worship Center,
@ the NE Corner of Hwy. 169 & 9500 Minnetonka Blvd., St. Louis Park, MN 55426
Shabbat Service - 10 AM Saturday**

Or contact us at:

**Office: 7515 Wayzata Blvd., #224
St. Louis Park, MN 55426
952-926-6226**

email: seed@seedofabraham.org / Website: www.seedofabraham.org

⁴⁰ Shofar = Ancient Hebrew trumpet taken from either a Ram or an Antelope (the Israeli Ibek or African Kudu).

⁴¹ Mensh – Yiddish = A decent, honorable, upright person of good & noble character.

⁴² The Marriage Supper of the Lamb – Revelation 19:6-9