

My Story



My story will begin at “Yad Vashem,” the Jewish Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem. “Yad Vashem” is taken from Isaiah 56:4-5.

“I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off.”

Pictured is the path leading to the entrance of Yad Vashem called **“The Avenue of the Righteous.”** On the “The Avenue of the Righteous” are plaques and trees honoring “Righteous Gentiles” -people who “saved” Jews from the Holocaust. Please stop by each of their memorial plaques and say, “Thank You!” for “saving” even—one Jew.

Two of the most famous “Righteous Gentiles” are Corrie Ten Boon and Oscar Schindler. Corrie was part of the “underground workers” who hid Jews in their homes. Corrie’s story was depicted in the widely distributed film The Hiding Place. If you have never seen the movie, please watch it! It is life-changing!



Oscar Schindler is another “Righteous Gentile.” His story was depicted in the movie “Schindler’s List.” Oscar Schindler is credited with saving over 1,200 Jews, spending millions of his own money, and risking his life many times. “Schindler’s List” won seven Oscars in 1993, including “Best Picture.” If you have not seen the movie or it has been a while since you’ve seen it, please watch it! Also, please stop by Oscar Schindler’s plaque on the “Avenue of the Righteous” and tell him, “Thank You!” Or, you can go to Oscar Schindler’s grave and tell him, “Thank You” there. **In Hebrew tradition, you indicate that you have visited the grave of a loved one by placing a stone on top of the grave.** As you can “see,” Oscar Schindler has had many visitors.



“We Will Never Forget”



Inside Yad Vashem is a series of open doors that wind in and out of the main hallway (pictured). Each entry is a **gallery** that progressively tells the story of the Holocaust through storyboards, pictures, artifacts, and film as you wind in and out of the doors of the Holocaust Museum. There is also a large room with multiple computer monitors where those who lost loved ones can view digital archives of their family who died. Inside Yad Vashem, you will also see IDF soldiers with their commanders. They are required to go to Yad Vashem each year as part of their training. It is so **they** will “**NEVER FORGET**” as a visual reminder of why they serve to protect Israel.

My Family



After viewing the galleries, you will visit a turret called “The Hall of Names.” As you look up, you can see the faces of thousands who perished.

Here is where I’ll begin my story...

My Mother’s Side

My mother was born in Poland in 1939, several days before the Germans invaded Poland to begin their systematic process of exterminating the Jewish people. Thankfully, our family had resources. Before the Nazis came to our home, my mother and her older sister were “given” to two Polish Gentile families (with piles of money) and raised as Gentiles. The two families who “saved” my mother and her sister are “Righteous Gentiles.” “THANK YOU!” I do not know your names, but God does! Our family continued to “pay” these two families until the 1960s.

My grandfather on my **mother’s side** was “Nathaniel Goliger.” **I was given my middle name, “Nathaniel,” in memory of him.** Nathaniel’s family lived in Poland, and he was a Zionist leader. Zionists believe the Jewish People have a right and obligation to return to their ancestral homeland-Israel. Nathaniel’s youngest daughter (my mother) was born several days before the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939 to exterminate the Jewish people systematically.



Nathaniel had a Ph.D. In history, he ran a prosperous business. He loved books and had an enormous book collection of “first” editions. Because Nathaniel was a Zionist leader, he was targeted by the Nazis, who came to his home in Poland.

My grandmother said that when the commander of a Nazi troop came into her home and saw his book collection, he was moved to tears. But right after that, the **Nazi commander shot Nathaniel in the head as my grandmother watched.** My grandmother told us that “Nathaniel’s” rare book collection was burned. This tragic event took place in 1941; therefore, as “Israel” had not yet been “Re-Born,” as a Zionist, Nathaniel had only “seen” Israel in his mind’s eye.



The Nazis did not kill my grandmother. Miraculously, my grandmother survived and spent the war living in the “underground.” However, the Nazis took all of our family’s wealth and resources. Our entire family perished (excluding Nathaniel’s wife, my grandmother, and two daughters, my mother, and my aunt).

Growing up, I can recall the stories my grandmother told us about the murder of her husband and how she survived. I remember how she repeated the “gesture” of pointing to the ground and cursing the Nazis simultaneously. This gesture was a desire to “leave” life and be buried. I know my grandmother never recovered from her trauma.

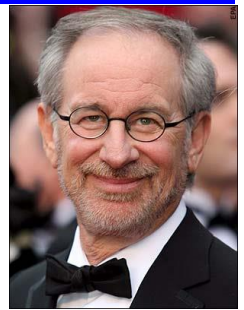
Interestingly, my grandmother told us that her mother was the only other person in our family to survive. Her son was a medical doctor, and he gave members of our family poison to take so they could commit suicide rather than face the Nazi atrocities, which they did. My grandmother told us that her mother took the poison but did not die. She was found on the streets. We were told she was extremely beautiful and had auburn hair and blue eyes. Her hair and eye color are rare for a Jewish person. As she did not “look” Jewish, this is the most likely reason she was taken to a hospital and survived. I cannot imagine the “pain” my grandmother’s mother must have suffered, knowing that many in her family committed suicide, but “fate” allowed her to live.

The **greatest miracle** of our family’s story is how my mother, her sister, and grandmother reunited after the war. France was the “Staging Country” for survivors of the Holocaust. But how do you “reunite” three people out of hundreds of thousands? Where do you find them? Where do you even begin to look? Sam Druck (who would eventually become my step-grandfather) also lived in Poland and knew my grandmother before the war. He was taken to a prison camp in Siberia. After the war, he returned to France. There, he was reunited with my grandmother and was instrumental in helping to find my mother and her sister and to reunite the family. “Everyone,” said this, reuniting was a MIRACLE! My step-grandfather was kind and loved my grandmother but was not “well” either. I can still recall many stories “Sam” told us about how he survived the Siberian “Death” camp for seven years.

As a second-generation survivor of the Holocaust, I have studied Adolf Hitler and the Holocaust. I discovered that Adolf Hitler had a Bible in one hand and a gun in the other. Why? His intent and desire to kill ALL Jews in the world were to disprove the Bible. Therefore, if he was successful and there were no Jews, it would prove that the God of the Bible is dead and that God's "Chosen People" were not chosen at all. And if there were no Jews, that would also mean that Christianity was a big lie, too. Adolf Hitler was just one of MANY dictators who, through the centuries, believed the same thing: kill all the Jews. But why so much hatred towards the Jews since the "beginning." The Jewish people have enriched humanity in every field of endeavor with their incredible God-given gifts. The truth is that in the end, God always prevails. The existence of Israel and the Jews is proof positive that the God of the Bible is "Alive" and well.

Shoah Foundation

Unfortunately, many people still refuse to believe that the Holocaust occurred. Thankfully, God raised (famed film director) Steven Spielberg, who in 1994 formed the Shoah Foundation to record the "testimonies" (video format) of survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust—so that the world will "**Never Forget.**" In 1998, my mother was one of only 1,600 Holocaust survivors chosen to tell their story via Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation so that the world may "Never Forget." A film crew was dispatched to my mother's apartment to record her story. Her story and others like hers are forever immortalized. Thanks, Mom, for the courage to do this!



My Father's Side

My grandfather on my father's side was Meekhael (Michael) Ben Attar. He was a Rabbi of a Jewish community in Morocco, North Africa. **I was given my first name, "Michael," in memory of him.** My father says that my grandfather was a man of the "Torah" and learned in the Scriptures. It is the only photograph we have of my grandfather and grandmother.



Our family name is "Ben Attar." "Ben" means "son of," and "Attar" means "sweet essence" like the sweet essence of a rose." We can trace our "**BenAttar**" family back to the 1700s in Spain, making me a "Sephardic Jew." My father and some family members chose to remove "Ben" and be known as "Attar." They did this because "Ben" clearly identifies us as being Jewish. Other family members kept the "Ben Attar" family surname.

In 1956, Meekhael Ben Attar's entire family (including six children and other families) was one week away from immigrating to Israel when Meekhael Ben Attar died of a stroke. After mourning, the "

Ben Attar" family emigrated from Morocco to Israel, where they lived and raised their families.

Meekhael's youngest son, Marc (my father), served in the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces), met my mother, who was living on a Kibbutz, and then was married. I was born shortly after that in Haifa. (as I was born in Israel, I am also a "Sabra" and an Israeli citizen.) Then, as is the custom for all newborn males, my father arranged for a Mohel (a trained Rabbi) eight days after my birth to come to our apartment in Israel and perform my circumcision. Interestingly, my circumcision occurred on the "Feast of Trumpets," which modern Jews refer to as "Rosh Hashanah," and Israel celebrates as the beginning of the "New Year" and celebrated with the sounding of Trumpets.



Pictured is my father and me the day before my trip to Israel in 2013.

My grandfathers loved "Israel," but neither had the chance to set foot on Israeli soil. Though I never met either grandfather, my family told me many stories about their character and personality, so I grew to love them deeply.

When I was about five, my family emigrated from Israel to New York City. I grew up in a reformed Jewish home, observing the Jewish Feasts occasionally but not faithfully. I attended Synagogue most Saturdays as a young boy and Hebrew School after regular school every day. I was indoctrinated about Zionism and the Jews' responsibility to make "Alijah" (Return to Israel). I participated at the local Ken Jewish community center, and my parents sent me to Zionist camps every summer. I also had my Bar Mitzvah at thirteen.

Because of what the Nazis did to my family, I was indoctrinated to avoid Germans, not to do business with them, and never to buy German products. And even though the German government had taken some measure of responsibility for their actions by paying my grandmother, mother (and other survivors of the Holocaust) a monthly pension, I still hated and blamed the German people for what they did to our family. Therefore, I was indoctrinated to be suspicious of Gentiles, especially Gentile Christians. I was told "stories" about how and why Christians couldn't be trusted and that they were responsible for ALL the hurt and pain "The Jewish People" had endured over many Centuries. I was told repeatedly that a Gentile Christian's "real intent" was to get Jews to convert to Christianity.

Frankly, none of my Jewish pedigree, upbringing, and indoctrinations made sense to me. But something happened to me that changed all of that. Before I explain, let's go to...

The Window Overlooking "ZION" Jerusalem at "Yad Vashem"



Before exiting "Yad Vashem," you will stop to reflect by this huge window.

You can see the "City of Jerusalem" (The City of God) or (ZION) through the window.

On my trip to Israel in 2013, I stopped and reflected.

Continuing to reflect as I looked through the window, **I began to cry uncontrollably.**

Both of my grandfathers had longed to be "in" Israel.

Suddenly, I remembered that I was "named" after each of my grandfathers in their remembrance.

But here I was in Israel again. I was born here.

From Unbelief to Belief

Back to my story...

At 16, I discovered the “Leadership and Motivational” industry. At 18, I flew down to Waco, TX, three times to learn about Success Motivation International (SMI) and Leadership Management International (LMI).” Paul J. Meyer founded these companies. He is the founder and innovator of this business “category.” On my third trip, I met G., who impressed me so much that I said, “He has something I want. I want to be just like him.”

After returning to New York City, a “PULL” began in my heart. That pull was so strong that I could no longer ignore it. So, I got into my car and drove from NYC to Waco. My first stop was Paul J. Meyer’s house. I knocked on his door. His wife, Jane, answered and brought Paul to the door. I told Paul who I was and why I was there. He smiled, took down my name, commented, “You’re just like me,” and closed the door.

My next stop was G.’s house. Again, I knocked on the door. His wife answered, and I told her who I was and wanted to meet G., but she said he was taking a nap. I asked if she could wake him up so I could talk to him. She did; G. invited me in, and he began a relationship with me. I drove back to NYC and spoke with him over the telephone often. He would lead me to a youth pastor, D., at Marsh Lane Baptist Church in North Dallas. Not long after, I got into my car, drove to Dallas to meet D, and moved to Dallas. Little did I know that D and the entire youth department had begun praying for me. Contrary to what I had been led to believe, Gentile Christian friends loved, blessed, and reached out to me for no reason other than I was Jewish. They showed me “God’s Favor,” which was expressed through unconditional love and blessing.

I also began to read the Bible.

I came to understand that the Bible consisted of the Old Testament—a picture book that prophesied and foreshadowed a Jewish Messiah. During Old Testament times, God’s people would come to the Tabernacle (and eventually the Temple) with a spotless, pure sacrifice onto which the individual’s sins are symbolically placed. These sacrifices were repeatedly made to atone for sin and restore the one making the sacrifice to a right fellowship with God—until the next sin. It was never-ending.

I read about how God longed for everyone to humble themselves, confess their sins, and return to Him through the required and appropriate sacrifices. Throughout the Old Testament, God planned to introduce a better and final sacrifice. The Jews knew this person of promise as the “Messiah.” However, whoever eventually came claiming to be the foreshadowed Messiah would have to fulfill one hundred percent of all the Old Testament prophecies. I was fascinated with the prophetic descriptions of where the Messiah would be born and live, how, and why He would have to die. I learned about the prophet Jeremiah’s prophecy concerning the “New Covenant.” God said He was going to send to Israel and the Jewish people to replace the “Old Covenant.”

The “righteousness” (Right Standing with God) that the Jews sought to obtain by obeying the laws of the Old Covenant was unattainable as **no one** could obey all 613 laws, plus the hundreds more that the Jews added. I came to understand that the “New Covenant” promised righteousness with God, which is obtained by believing in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, after reading my Bible, I made a monumental decision to embrace the New Testament’s teaching concerning the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I believe that Jesus (the spotless Passover Lamb) died as a substitute for sins and rose from the dead on the third day. My eyes were finally opened to the reality that Jesus Christ fulfilled all Old Testament prophesies and Jewish things. Jesus Christ was who He said He was— “God—the Messiah.” In believing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I became a “Hebrew Christian.”

EVERYTHING good in my life came about by following the “inner pull” and driving to Waco to meet G., his introduction to D., and Marsh Lane Baptist Church. There, I became a believer, was baptized, met Michelle, was married, played my trumpet in the church orchestra, taught the entire book of Hebrews, served as a deacon, etc. I’ve maintained a lifelong relationship with G.; notably, he was the best man at my wedding.

Forgiving the Germans

Because of what the Germans did to my family, I hated them. I lost the privilege of seeing my grandfather and my family. Interestingly, growing up, I also hated who I was—Jewish. So, one of the things that “stirred my heart” when I moved to Texas was hearing my Gentile friends say, “I was special.” Why? I asked. “Because you are Jewish, the Bible is about the Jewish people. You are His Chosen.” Some friends said, “They wished they had been born Jewish.” This disturbed me. Why would anyone want to be Jewish? I thought to myself. It took a long time to reach the “right” conclusion finally. As I opened my heart and mind to the beauty and richness of my Jewish heritage, I began falling in love with my Jewishness and Jewish background. **It took another 25 years to finally forgive the Germans for what they did to my family.**

Except for the Lord Jesus Christ, no person has impacted me more than the author, businessman, people builder, and philanthropist, the late **Paul J. Meyer**. My love for Paul stems from my becoming a Christian under his ministry.



In the spring of 2007, I read his book “*Forgiveness... the Ultimate Miracle.*” That book changed my life forever. Why? I was confronted with the reality that Paul was German, and his family had immigrated to America from Germany. Until that time, I secretly carried hatred in my heart towards the German people for what they did to our family.

Even though the German government had taken some measure of responsibility for their actions by paying my grandmother and mother (and other survivors of the Holocaust) a monthly pension, I still hated them. Who knows what resources and opportunities we would have had if the Nazis had not stolen everything from us?

As I began reflecting on Paul's impact on my life and my love for him, I was struck with God's sense of humor. It was ironic that I hated Germans but was in love with one. Because of Paul's book, I finally forgave ALL Germans. I also wrote a letter to my friend Paul J. Meyer expressing my love for him and presenting him with a precious gift.

August 28, 2007

"Dear Paul J. Meyer,

I have always known that someday I would give you the following present—a Star of David that was given to me shortly after my birth in Israel. This Star of David is the MOST precious material possession that I own. My father kept it for me, and I began wearing it shortly after I accepted Christ as my Savior. I have worn it for over 25 years, but I am certain you should be its new owner. Several years ago, I promised to give you this pendant because I love you. Anyway, I rehearsed this event over and over in my mind during the last few years. Each time, it led me to tears. But now there are no more tears, only joy, which brings me to the point of this letter. A few months ago, I read "Forgiveness—the Ultimate Miracle." The same whispering voice of the Holy Spirit who has guided my life and choices inspired me to finally forgive ALL Germans for what they did to my family in Poland. However, I did not recall that you came from a German background. Interestingly, the Germans invaded Poland this same week in August of 1939, killing and plundering many Jewish families. Therefore, please accept this most precious gift as a memorial of God's Ultimate Miracle—reconciling ALL people to Himself—including Jews and Germans. I have included the chain I wore in case you want to wear it. I pray you will treasure this Star of David as much as I have."

With much love,
Michael Attar

As God's grace would have it, Paul J. Meyer printed 10,000 copies of my first book in 2007 as a gift to "our" ministry and wrote the foreword. ***"My Pursuit of a Good Mood"*** is in its seventh printing.

Continuing...

When a Jewish person believes in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, their Jewish family will often shame, disinherit, and disown them. That's what happened. My father was livid, and things were not "good" between us.

Several years later, things gradually improved when I brought Michelle to meet my parents. I met my wife, Michelle, in church orchestra at twenty-three. Michelle plays the cello, and I play the trumpet. Maybe I was "destined" to play the trumpet because from the age of eleven until 17, I had a weekly lesson with a teacher who became the principal trumpet player of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. I played the trumpet weekly in the church orchestra or worship band for 25 years. But how I courted Michelle is a story of its own. My friends said Michelle was "way over my head," so what did I do? After our first date, I told Michelle we would be married. She laughed! However, after two years of dating, she said, "I do!" My family gladly "welcomed" a Gentile into our Jewish family. Likewise,

Michelle's family welcomed me, a Jew, into their home. My life would be impossible without God's providence and my "helpmate," Michelle.

I measure success not by what I have accomplished but by what I do to enable Michelle to achieve all that God has for her. My primary ministry is creating the right environment and providing financial and emotional resources so Michelle can minister—well! For example, my love and support for Michelle helped her complete her seminary degree while she worked full-time. We have been active servants in only two churches. The first was for 12 years, and our second home church was for 30 years, where Michelle was on Church Staff in various roles for over 24 years. Michelle recently retired, and we moved to Alabama in the same neighborhood as Michelle's two sisters and family.



Admittedly, I dove into God's Word in an unorthodox manner. Everyone told me to begin reading the Bible from the "beginning" (Book of Genesis), but that did not work. So, instead, I bought a "Topical Bible" and began looking up many of my "personal issues and struggles." This way, Bible reading and study was fun, exhilarating, and meaningful because I discovered God's WORD in the context of my issues. With Bible study, church attendance, and ministry, my spiritual life grew, and I was asked to teach Bible studies and "filled in" for the Sunday School teacher. Then, at thirty, the Senior Pastor gave me a Sunday School class, which eventually became the "Auditorium Class."

I chose to teach the most challenging book in the Bible, the book of Hebrews (verse by verse), for two years. But understanding Hebrews necessitates understanding the people and events of the Old Testament. So, many of the lessons were from the "Old Testament."

I also spent many hours each week studying, viewing, and reading materials compiled by the late Zola Levitt, who was fond of saying, "One trip to Israel is worth ten years of Sunday school." So, we visited Israel on a "Pastor's Tour" of the Biblical sites in 2013. After returning, I read my Bible by "**relating**" the Scriptures with the Biblical sites I had seen.

No one has any "say so" regarding their family background, but everyone has a choice as to whether they will accept it. When I believed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I did not turn away from my Jewish background. **Instead, "Everything Jewish" began to make sense for the first time in my life.** I am honored and privileged to have a Jewish pedigree.