

# **Leave Me Alone: I'M JEWISH!**

**My Head-On Collision with  
Jesus, Judaism and Life after Death**



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DESTINY IMAGE® PUBLISHERS, INC.  
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ISBN 10: 0-7684-0374-X  
ISBN 13 TP: 978-0-7684-0374-9  
ISBN 13 EBook: 978-0-7684-8446-5

For Worldwide Distribution, Printed in the U.S.A.  
2 3 4 5 6 / 16 15 14 13

# DEDICATION

*To Bryan. Thank you for being persistent.*



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As with my previous book, *Identity Theft*, there are two people who have worked hard to make this book as mistake-free as possible, in proper English. Both Susette McLachlan and Wende Beer have sacrificed many hours editing and proofreading *Leave Me Alone: I'm Jewish*. Thank you both.

I want to thank my family for putting up with me as I worked on this book. My office is in our living room and I work out of my apartment most of the time. Without the patience of my precious family, I could not have focused, as I needed.

The Maoz Israel office staff in the U.S. has served me tremendously. They work hard to make sure orders are fulfilled, never complain and always encourage me. Thank you Christy, Katy, Betty and Michelle.

Also, I want to thank our shipping manager, who prefers to go unnamed. He not only gets the job done, he is one of my dearest friends.

And of course, most of all I want to thank Yeshua, my Messiah and King. My story, after all, is only a testimony of His goodness. Thank You for being patient with me, having mercy on me and never giving up on me. I love You most.

*Notes:* Most of the names, except key characters, have been changed in this book, as many of the stories are not flattering. I have done my best to accurately represent conversations, but of course, as these conversations took place over decades, they are not word for word. I believe, however, that I have preserved the

integrity.

It is rare to find a perfect book, but in this day of digital books, we can correct mistakes quickly. If you find a typo in this book we would be grateful if you would drop us an email to let us know. Send it to: [partners@cantorlink.com](mailto:partners@cantorlink.com)

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## FOREWORD

I remember the night well. We were having a special, student-faculty dinner at a Bible college on Long Island where I served as Academic Dean. For the fun of it, the students were asked to bring in baby pictures of themselves, and we would all have to match the picture with the student. It was next to impossible! People change a lot in twenty years, especially from infancy to adulthood. But there was one picture that fooled no one: we all recognized Ron Cantor! He stood out, even as a baby. The infectious smile was there. The boundless enthusiasm was there. Even that mischievous twinkle in his eye was there. It seems like Ron was always special!

Out of the many students I have had through the years, only a few of them have become spiritual sons and daughters to me, and Ron was one of them. I love him like a son, and I am proud of him beyond words. He has been called by God to be a world-changer; and I believe, with God's help, he will fulfill his divinely appointed mission. You are about to get a glimpse into this young man's heart—a heart ablaze with love for God, love for Jesus the Messiah, and love for his Jewish people.

But don't worry about a heavy, boring read. You will enjoy every page that follows, and if you are Jewish, especially an American Jew, you will relate to many of the people, places, and events. The names may be different, but his grandparents, parents, and sister, could be your grandparents, parents, and siblings. And many of the struggles he went through will resemble the struggles of your past—or even present. I think immediately of Ron in his teen years, falling into sin and living a reckless and worthless life.

Yet even as a sinner, he was a *Jewish* sinner, and so one night, after having too much to drink at a party, it was *his mom* that he called, asking her to pick him up and bring him home. (Can you imagine this?) And he was a sinner with a sensitive conscience, stealing things as a boy, only to become guilt ridden and confess. He was a conniver too, making a way where there was no way, using his gifts, his charm, his personality to open doors that by all rights should have been closed—until God brought him to the end of himself. And then he met the Messiah!

It was the shock of Ron's life to learn that his Messiah was Jesus! In Ron's eyes, this Jesus had been the leader of an alien religion, a god worshiped by the Gentiles, a religious figure followed by the *goyim*. How could Jesus (Yeshua) be the Savior of the Jewish people and the hope of the world? Ron's life was literally turned upside down (really, right side up). And he has never been the same!

When confronted by the probing questions of Orthodox rabbis, Ron sought the God of his fathers more earnestly than ever—studying, praying, seeking *truth*. And the more he sought God and asked questions, and studied and prayed, the stronger his faith became. It is because his faith was founded on the truth!

And so Ron Cantor, together with his wonderful Israeli wife Elana and their three beautiful—and very smart!—daughters, has given his entire life to making the Messiah of Israel known, first to his own Jewish people, and then to the world. I have watched him cry out in desperate prayer, asking that God would use him to the full. I have seen him labor with zeal and perseverance, determined to overcome every obstacle and share his faith with all who will listen. And I have wept with him as we have agonized over our own kinsman after the flesh—our people Israel, our families, our



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FOREWORD

childhood friends—who do not yet know the infinite love of God expressed through Yeshua our Savior and King.



Moved by divine love, Ron and Elana have given up the comforts of America and left friends and family behind to pour themselves out for Jewish men and women in the Ukraine, in Hungary, and for the past decade, Israel. And it was out of love that Ron wrote this book. May that divine love touch you and transform you, just as it has transformed Ron, just as it has transformed me, and just as it has transformed millions of others around the world who have put their trust in the living God.

I pray that as you read this book you too will come to know Ron Cantor's Lord in the same intimate and passionate way that Ron knows Him. The Messiah's yoke is easy and His burden light. Would you open your heart to Him today?

DR. MICHAEL L. BROWN

Host, *Line of Fire* nationally syndicated radio show

Author, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, Volumes I-V





# CHAPTER ONE

## I AM ADDICTED TO...

**D**riving to my Hebrew class at the Jewish Community Center in Rockville, Maryland, one warm April evening, I sensed the Lord say, “Son, you have been ashamed of Me in your Hebrew class.”

“No, Lord! I am not ashamed of You,” I protested vehemently. I knew it was silly to argue with the Almighty, but I truly didn’t understand. I had always been up front and forthright about my relationship with Yeshua (Jesus). Nobody could ever have accused *me* of being embarrassed or ashamed of Him.

“Then why do you keep avoiding the subject of your faith?” I sensed Him reply.

*Ouch!* He was right. Whenever I got into conversations with my classmates, I would steer the conversation clear of religion. I guess I had become a little tired of being stereotyped as a *brainwashed-fanatic* by my Jewish friends and family. I loved my people and my culture and truly wanted them to understand why I believed in Yeshua, but the rejection had begun to wear on me.

Nevertheless, above all, I wanted to please Yeshua. I told the Lord that He was right and I was sorry, and that I wouldn’t be ashamed of Him in class anymore. At that moment, I had no idea what He had in store for me that evening.

Upon my arrival at class I made a point of putting my *Jewish Prophecy Edition New Covenant* right on top of my books

for everyone to see. About midway through the class, my teacher caught sight of the Hebrew title.

“Shelcha?” she asked, which means, “Yours?”

“Ken, Sheli!” I responded, “Yes, it’s mine!”

Clearly confused, she continued to teach.

Not long after that she decided to teach us a new word: *machur*, which means *addicted to* or *sold out to*. Then it came time for each student to use *machur* in a sentence.

*No way! I thought. I am not going to do it. You set me up, Lord! That’s asking too much.* If I’d been the first person called upon to use the word in a sentence, I would definitely have chickened out, but because I was sitting in the last seat of a semi-circle there was plenty of time for me to really think about my response. In the end, I thought, *What do I have to lose? Who do I really want to please—this class or God?* Finally, it was my turn.

“Ani machur l’Yeshua!” I AM SOLD OUT TO YESHUA!

The class was stunned! They broke into a corporate uproar. “Are you for real?” “Is that the truth?!” Suddenly, questions started flying my way: “If Jesus is the Messiah then...?” One woman ran out to the car to get a Bible. I showed them prophecies concerning the Messiah and fielded a string of questions from the class.

Finally, a frustrated student who had actually come to class to study Hebrew, shouted, “Can we PLEASE stop talking about religion, and get back to Hebrew?” And we did.

Now you may be wondering, “Oy vey—why in the world is a young Jewish man addicted, or sold out, to Yeshua?” For me to fully answer that, we need to go back to 1983.

## NORTH CAROLINA, 1983

*I have got to know the truth; I have got to understand; how can I find out?* These were the thoughts running through my mind

that dark October night in North Carolina, somewhere between Durham and Louisburg—in other words—in *the middle of nowhere*. There I was, eighteen years old, in college, and on my way back from a movie with my friend, Dean. Nothing unusual in that, except for the fact that the movie we'd just seen was about *Jesus*—and I am *Jewish!* For months, I had been longing to understand the eternal. *Just what lies beyond this life, beyond humanity?* As I was about to enter adulthood, I wanted to know if God was real, and if so, what He required of me, personally. My search was about to come to an abrupt end, as I sat in the passenger's seat of that yellow Dodge Colt with all these thoughts going through my mind.

*God, I believe You are real. I didn't believe this nine months ago but I do now. You must show me the truth. I've got to know... Is Jesus the Messiah?*

After many months of wondering, I had finally come to the conclusion that the God of Abraham was real. Yet, I could not find a relationship with God in traditional Judaism. Even fasting on Yom Kippur didn't seem to bring me any closer.

I wanted more than a religion. I wanted God—I wanted to know Him. My best friend, Bryan, had had a radical transformation in his life midway through our senior year of high school and claimed to *know* God. Even my rabbi didn't claim to *know* God—in fact, a conversation years later left me thinking he didn't *even believe in God*—yet a redhead of no consequence from Richmond, Virginia, exuded a relationship with the Almighty that I had never seen in anyone before. And he claimed it was through Jesus the Messiah! Hence my prayer, *Is Jesus the Messiah?*

Although within me there was a deep desire to know God, it was more the fear of a lost eternity that drove me to this prayer: *I've got to know the truth!* If Heaven *was real*, then more than likely,

Hell was too. Therefore, I couldn't continue to simply live my life to have fun as if there was no Day of Judgment and no one to answer to in the afterlife. Furthermore, if Heaven was real, I definitely wanted to end up there! I had to know the truth.

People spend a good portion of their lives preparing for a relatively short period of time, in the light of eternity, called *retirement*. Of course, I am not against that. However, if we are prepared to expend so much energy and forethought on our retirement, should we not invest at least as much effort in preparing ourselves for eternity? Do we not owe it to ourselves to find out:

...*If there is a God?*  
...*And if so, what is He like?*  
...*Is there a Heaven... or Hell?*  
...*And, who goes where?*

*"God, I need to know... aaaahhh!!"* Suddenly the car began to swerve from side to side. We were out of control on a two-lane country road. *Am I going to die?* I wondered. "No, you will not die," came a confident response that arose from somewhere within me. Next, as the car continued to swerve, it began to spin around and round, and finally flipped over one and a half times, leaving us upside down in a ditch.

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*"What happened next?"* you ask.

Well, clearly, I didn't die...or I wouldn't be writing this book, now would I? Before I answer, let's go back a bit further... to the sixties.



## CHAPTER TWO

### IN THE BEGINNING...

The year was 1965. I was born into a fast-changing world. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. led his famous march from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery. The Vietnam War showed no signs of abating. Malcolm X was killed. The Voting Rights Act, guaranteeing voting rights to African Americans, was passed. In pop culture, *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music* were released on the silver screen at the same time that the Beatles and the Rolling Stones were making rock-n-roll history.

In 1965 the average house in the United States cost \$13,600, the average yearly income was around \$6,450, gas was 31 cents a gallon and you could easily own a new car for under \$3,000. And I was born into a family that fit pretty comfortably into these averages.

I was born into a lower-middle-class family in Virginia Beach, Virginia. My father, a native of Richmond, was a quiet, reserved man, while my mother, a native of Norfolk, was outgoing and vivacious. In this case opposites did attract...and they are still together! We lived in a one-story house with a few bedrooms and a den. I remember our TV was built into the wood-paneled wall in the den. These were definitely modest surroundings.

### SOL AND DOROTHY

I loved going to my grandparents' apartment on Granby Street to spend the night. They were great! Sol was as cheerful and

as loving as they come. He treated his wife, Dorothy, like a queen, though many a waitress would have said she didn't deserve it, as she had very little patience with bad service and made no effort at all to hide the fact. My grandmother still retained much of the beauty she portrayed in the photographs from her youth. It was easy to see why Sol fell for her.

My sister, Michele, and I always called our grandparents by their first names. It was a habit that Michele had formed when she first began to speak. Everyone thought it was so cute that a two-year-old called her grandparents by their first names that they encouraged it. I just copied her and although my parents assumed we would eventually move on to using *Grandma* and *Grandpa*, we never did and it never felt unnatural.

Sol smoked a big smelly cigar all the time. Of course, this was before cigars were in vogue; back when most people still considered them disgusting. There was always a slobbery, half-smoked cigar, as I remember, lying around somewhere in the apartment. I also remember how he loved to tickle me until I laughed so hard my stomach hurt. As a grandfather, he was great. Dorothy was the focal point of his affections, although as earlier intimated Dorothy was *not always* the object of other people's affections. She was very opinionated and had no reservations about sharing her sentiments with others. On the other hand she was full of life and character and being with her was never boring.

From my earliest memory I knew we were Jewish and I knew that Jews were different—although I wasn't sure why. One thing, though, was clear to me—that there were a lot more of *them* (Gentiles), than of *us*. We attended Beth El Synagogue in Norfolk. Norfolk was only a hop, skip, and a jump from Virginia Beach.

Although the synagogue was a place of *Jewish identity*, it lacked the deeper dimensions of true spiritual life for me. I

remember as a youngster attending a religious class on the High Holy Days and being told that we do not clap in a synagogue. “It is irreverent,” we were informed. Even as a child I found this a bit odd. It seemed to me that a house of worship should be full of life and vigor, not solemn and ceremonial.

## FAMILY

I thought we had a great family. My mother was (and is) beautiful. She was always there for me. Despite the fact that she was clearly more *liberal* than *conservative* politically, she always put her children before her career or finances. Even when *Casual Corner*, a local dress shop, begged her to become a manager, she routinely refused for the simple reason that she felt she needed to be home when her children arrived back from school.

My mother was not only beautiful but also affectionate and encouraging. Even when I came home from school with pitiful grades, she always told me, “Ron, you are smart, and you will do well if you apply yourself.” I went through high school making D’s and F’s and still, I thought of myself as smart—*just because Mom said I was*. When I later graduated from college with a 3.85 GPA, I wasn’t surprised. I always knew that if I applied myself, I would do well—*because Mom said so!*

(If you are not from the U.S., the highest GPA [Grade Point Average] is 4.)

My dad was a bit different. He was quiet and mellow. Like many men of his generation, he was a good provider and a loving husband to my mother, but he was not very outgoing as a father when I was younger. Over the years he has changed, and today I consider him one of my best friends. Phil Cantor is a wonderful father *and* grandfather. He is affectionate and giving, and my children adore him.

Then there was my sister, Michele. As children, we fought nonstop. Our fighting was a constant source of stress to my parents. We fought so much that they finally quit taking us out to dinner on Sunday nights, which had been a family tradition.

### HYPERACTIVE? ME?

I take most of the blame for the fighting. I was a hyperactive child and my parents didn't know how to control me—and I had no inclination to control myself. Sitting still, even today, is very difficult for me (I've just noticed that even as I am editing this, I am standing, simply because I couldn't remain sitting any longer.). My wife has long gotten used to me leaving the table at a restaurant if the meal is taking too long to arrive. *I just need to move.* While I was growing up this trait constantly caused me to get into trouble at school and in other places where restrictions were imposed.

Not only was I frequently uncontrollable, I was filled with fears and anxieties. As a boy, I had so much fear that I did not close my eyes when I went to sleep. There were times that I would make my mother sit on the floor in her room, where I could see her from my bed, until I fell asleep.

Death was a major cause of my fears. *What happens to you when you die?* Is that it? You never exist again? The very concept of death was terrifying to me—to be gone forever. As a young child, I did not believe in God or eternal life. Before I was even six, I was convinced that when you die life is over, your body is buried, and you *cease to be* a conscious entity. It simply never dawned on me that there might be more.

I was definitely a problem child. I did not know it at the time but my mother assures me it was so. She claims I absolutely drove her nuts. I remember the day I found out that I was hyperactive.

When I was about eleven, I saw a book in my mother's room entitled, *Your Hyperactive Child*, and thought to myself, *I didn't know Michele was hyperactive*. Then I thought about it some more and realized—she's not! I stormed downstairs, book in hand, and screamed at my mother, "Do you think I am hyperactive? I am NOT hyperactive!"

This revelation hurt me deeply. It came as a complete shock because I'd never thought of myself in this way—different or abnormal. Yet, from that day on I viewed myself with a label. It was as if I now had a new identity—*hyperactive!*

This was fifteen years before anyone ever used the words Attention Deficit Disorder, but it was clear that I had the whole package: ADHD. I couldn't pay attention and I couldn't sit still. This made learning very difficult for me. If I may, let me just add one thing about being ADHD. While I am no doctor, it is my opinion that ADD and Hyperactivity are not *disorders*, but personalities. There was a time when children weren't required to spend seven hours a day learning, but ten hours a day on the family farm or herding cattle. No one ever had to diagnose those kids as being ADD. Not everyone, I'm convinced, was meant to *sit still*. I have learned to love who I am; who God created me to be.

All right, so it gets frustrating when I spend thirty minutes looking for my sunglasses only to realize they are on my head... or that I can get up to do one thing, do three others, sit down and realize I didn't do the thing I originally set out to do. In the end, I get it all done.

But my ADHD, if there is such a thing—might not be negative. It might be the very reason people tell me I'm an effective public speaker or the reason I have the reckless abandon to jump on an airplane to go to the middle of Nigeria. My point here is that we need to stop treating ADHD, ADD or hyperactive

children as if they have a problem. I prefer to tell them that they are different—not better, not worse, just different. Okay, now I'll climb down off my soapbox and get back to the story...

## WILLIAM AND MARGIE

My father's parents lived in Richmond, Virginia, on Monument Avenue no less. Anybody even slightly familiar with Richmond knows Monument Avenue. It is one of the most beautiful stretches of real estate in America. It is a boulevard divided by a grassy tree-lined area for walking and boasts statues memorializing Virginian Confederate heroes of the Civil War like J.E.B. Stuart, Jefferson Davis, Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson and of course Robert E. Lee, whose monument was the first to be erected in 1890.

Saying that my grandfather William, or "Willie" as we called him, was eccentric would be an understatement. There had never been another like him. Well, except that he was very much like me, only fifty years earlier. Willie also had been a hyperactive child, and grew up to be a businessman. And if you're wanting to know what field of business he was in, it would take me less time to tell you the ones he didn't try.

He was into salvage, restaurants, multilevel marketing, and hypnotism among other things. You name it—he'd done it, or at least tried it. He was a lot of fun. I used to enjoy going out to his Lincoln (he always drove a Lincoln.) to see what kind of fun stuff he had stored in the back seat. He was such a pack rat, and his being in the salvage business always made it easy for me to find something of interest in the back seat or trunk of his Lincoln.

His most exciting venture was a restaurant that he opened in the seventies called *The Roaring Twenties*. Waiters and waitresses would perform as they worked. I didn't know it at the time, but

one of the singing waitresses he employed was a part-time bank clerk named Pat Benatar, who would go on to become one of the most famous female rock-n-roll artists in history and the object of my desire in 1982. When she performed at the Richmond Coliseum, I bribed my way, with *grain* alcohol, all the way to the front, wrote my number on a balloon, then pushed it in her direction. I had no idea that all I had to do to get her number was ask my grandfather. To tell you the truth, I don't think he even realized that she had become famous. Anyway...she didn't call.

Willie could hypnotize people. I saw him take people back into what we thought at the time were other lifetimes. In fact, he once took a gentleman back so far that he had great difficulty retrieving him. When the man finally came to himself, he was dazed and confused for quite a while. It was really frightening. My grandfather was truly a *one of a kind* sort of fellow, and everyone who knew him, knew it.

My memories of my grandmother Margie are sketchy at best. Shortly after we moved to Richmond she died of heart disease. I was around six or seven at the time and I only remember that she was very different from Willie. She was reserved and quiet, like my father.

## THE SALVAGE BARN

When I was six years old my father, against his will, accepted the position of manager at Willie's new store, The Salvage Barn. In retrospect, we are all glad we made the move to Richmond. I don't think any of us realized that this would be the one business of my grandfather's that would succeed—though this was probably largely due to my father's conservative management style. Within a few years, Willie gave his half of the store to his children. My father then bought out his sisters and became the co-owner and

eventually bought out his partner to become the sole owner of The Salvage Barn, Inc.

Before we moved to Richmond, we had the joy of living right on the beach for two weeks while our townhouse was being completed. One day my father's friend Martin came over with his family. The three of us went fishing. We were going to *catch dinner*. After a few hours of casting we had caught two crabs and no fish! As we were walking home feeling like our very manhood was in question (boyhood for me), we ran into two teenagers who had a bucket full of fish.

"We caught all these but we are not going to eat them. Do you guys want them?" they asked us. *Did we want them?* You'd better believe it, pal! We took the fish and proudly walked home. Back at the beach house, we boasted for hours to the ladies about our great catch, until my young conscience began to bother me. Then secretly, off to the side, I confessed the truth to my mother. Needless to say, that didn't win me any points with Martin or my dad. At six years old, my conscience was very sensitive and it bothered me that we'd lied.

We made the trek to Richmond in 1971 and moved into a small townhouse development called Three Willows Court. I quickly made new friends and one enemy. There was this boy, Bobby, in the neighborhood who enjoyed picking on us. One day while I was eating a banana, Bobby began to chase me. I ran as fast as I could and loving life more than my banana, I decided to part with my snack by throwing it straight up in the air, thinking as I did, *Wouldn't it be great if he slips on the banana just like in the cartoons?* At that same moment I heard one of the most beautiful sounds my young ears had ever heard—*Bobby screaming!* I turned around just in time to see him falling to the pavement out of control, scraping his arm, with blood and everything. In general,



young American Jewish boys don't tend to be blood and guts oriented and I was no different, but this was unbelievable—straight from the script. I just kept on running—no mercy.

## SCHOOL—FIRST GRADE

Soon it was time for school—first grade. I dreaded it. For the first three days I cried all the way to the classroom. My classmates heard me screaming, "But I didn't kiss my mommy good-bye," as she deposited me at Skipwith Elementary School. Try living with that for a year. One kid, who failed first grade the first time around and was a full 17 percent older than me, used to ask me every day, "Did you kiss your mommy this morning?" That would be enough to destroy any kid's self-esteem, but I was so naïve and gullible that I actually thought he was genuinely concerned about me. It wasn't until several years later that I realized he had been mocking me.

I hated school so much that one day I went in the front door and kept walking straight out through the back door. I walked along the main road having no idea where I was going, except that I wasn't going to school! Finally, two safety patrol kids stopped me. Of course when you're six, a 12-year-old safety patrol may as well be a member of the SWAT team or Navy SEAL Team Six. They asked me where I was going. "To school," I replied.

"School is the other way."

"Not my school. My school is down the road."

"What school is that?" they asked.

It was over—I was busted.

I learned to tolerate school as I realized that for twelve more years, at least, I was stuck with it.

## GOD AND JESUS

My first encounter with the idea of Jesus came while looking through a book at school. I remember seeing a sketch of a man hanging on a cross. I went home and asked my mother about it. She explained to me that Christians believed in this man and that we, as Jews, did not. At the age of seven or eight, that was a good enough explanation for me.

Sadly, most non-religious Jews define Judaism the same way—not by what we believe or are supposed to believe, *but by what we don't believe*. That was my understanding of what a Jew was—*someone who didn't believe in Jesus*. I remember one morning at the bus stop all the kids began to talk about religion. That was the first time I had heard the word Catholic. We all raised our hands, identifying ourselves as either Jewish, Christian or Catholic. “What are Catholics?” I asked. The other seven and eight-year-olds explained to me with the depth and precision of a seminary student that *Catholics were also Christians, but different*. I remember being somewhat confused—but it wasn't as important an issue as playing football after school, so I didn't feel the need to pursue it.