

----- Forwarded Message: -----

From: Jason Olson <jama2003@yahoo.com>

To: B'nai Shalom

Subject: Hello from a fairly new LDS Jewish convert

Date: Wed, 9 Aug 2006 02:19:25 +0000

My name is Jason Olson. I actually just recently got done with my mission to the New Jersey Morristown Mission. I will be heading to BYU-Provo this fall. I am enclosing my conversion story. I look forward to meeting everyone in B'Nai Shalom.

The Conversion of Jason Olson to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

My name is Jason Olson. August 16, 2003 was my baptism date.

It is a day that I will cherish forever. This is the story of my conversion and how I came to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I was born and raised a Jew. I practiced the religion of Judaism; in New Testament terms, I was a Pharisee.

In Jewish tradition, the mother passes down the religion. If the mother is Jewish then the child will also be raised Jewish. My father is Lutheran and before I was born, they decided that they were going to raise me Jewish. My father agreed to let my mother raise the rest of the kids Jewish as well. I was the firstborn. I have a younger sister who is 17 and a younger brother who is 13. They are both still Jewish but I hope they will come to know the truth, too, like I did. So, through my youth, I went to a Jewish preschool and then I went to Sunday school at a reformed synagogue.

There are three sects of Judaism: Reformed, Conservative, Orthodox. These are basically degrees of how strictly they keep the Law of Moses. Orthodox Jews keep it the most strictly and Conservatives are in the middle. Reformed Judaism is, you would say, the most liberal in how they interpret keeping the Law of Moses. That what I was raised as, a Reformed Jew. By way of background of Reformed Judaism, the official stance is that they don't really believe in a single man as the Messiah. They believe in more of a messianic age and of course, they don't believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. This is what I was taught from my youth, going to temple, what we called temple.

The synagogue I went to was called Temple Chai, which kind of means life in Hebrew. It also means 18. From the day I started going to synagogue and Sunday school, I learned Hebrew. I was also taught some of the basic doctrines of Judaism. I always remember being taught that we did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah-that instead he was a false Messiah and that we were to wait for another Messiah to come. It was always hard for me growing up because my father was a Christian and it caused a lot of confusion. In my youth, I didn't understand the difference between Christianity and Judaism, and I really didn't question it too much either. I just accepted that I was raised Jewish and that's what I was. I would go through times of persecution at school.

Some kids would come up to me, the Bible bashers, and tell me that I was going to hell because I didn't believe in Jesus and these kinds of things. I just kind of brushed it off and said this is what my mom taught me to believe, I don't know any better.

I became a Bar Mitzvah at the age of 13. I had to go through a preparation period for about six months prior to my Bar Mitzvah. It started at about age 12½. The "Bar" in Bar Mitzvah means "son" in Hebrew and "Mitzvah" means "of the commandments." So at the age of 13 boys will become Bar Mitzvahs and girls will become Bat Mitzvahs, which is a child of the commandments. It's basically where Jewish youth become an adult member of the congregation. It's like a reaffirmation of the covenants in their eyes that you are now responsible for obeying the commandments. With Reform Judaism, they didn't believe and accept all the commandments anyway, like the kosher laws, which are the dietary laws in Judaism. Most Reform people didn't keep it anyway. It was just kind of an

honorary thing, a tradition. I went through that and I basically had to memorize a short Torah portion in Hebrew.

What we had was a big scroll that you rolled up. It would be all Hebrew with no vowels. You had to memorize the incantation because you'd have to sing it and you had to memorize the vowels. That was part of my preparation. I read from, I recall, the Book of Numbers, Chapter 16 with the story of Korah and the rebellion against Moses. I just read it to the congregation. I learned from early on in life that the best course is to follow the prophet.

It was a very great time in my family. Somehow the Christian side of my family on my dad's side had accepted it and supported it even though they always wanted all the kids to be baptized as Lutherans. There was always controversy in my family regarding religion. I just never questioned any of it. I was just taught to be proud of being Jewish all through my life and to regard myself as part of the chosen people. It was between 7th and 8th grade when I had my Bar Mitzvah. In 7th grade, I also met my best friend, Shea Owens. He is a Latter-day Saint. He's on a mission in San Antonio, Texas. We were kind of enemies at first. He was an annoying kid. He would poke me in the back of the neck with a pencil. One day I got angry at him and then we both got detention. We ended up being in detention together and actually we talked. It was then we realized that we had a lot in common. Right there we became best friends. He was also a good influence on me.

I grew up in a home where there was a lot of swearing and cussing. I kind of grew accustomed to that. I thought it was okay. I just kind of followed a pattern after my parents. But Shea wouldn't allow that when I hung out with him. So, I really developed a clean mouth being around him and he really strengthened me to use good language. Also, I learned some of his standards like the Word of Wisdom and things like this. But we never really ever got into a religious discussion. We just were best buddies. He knew I was Jewish and I knew he was Mormon and we just kind of coexisted for a while. I never really had a strong interest in learning about other religions. So, in 8th grade, our friendship strengthened and he was a great example to me.

When I came into high school into the 9th grade as a freshman, everything changed. Continuing Jewish education was provided to Jewish high school students at my synagogue, Temple Chai. They would have what they called Hebrew High, which was a twice-a-week religious class. Most all the Jewish teenagers would go. They would go and learn from the rabbis or different teachers. My mom sent me to go to that my freshman year.

One day they had a special speaker come into the synagogue. He came in and said his name was Mitch. He was wearing a "Jews for Jesus" tee-shirt to a synagogue full of Jewish teenagers. You have to remember, not a single one of us believed in Jesus. So, here we have a "Jews for Jesus" missionary coming into the synagogue for Jewish youth. He came in to the front. Everybody whispered, "What are the rabbi's doing here? I can't believe that the rabbi is letting this guy in. What does he think he's doing?" The rabbi just responded with, "Shhhh," trying to calm down the crowd.

Everyone was getting angry and there was it was getting worse. He went up to the front of the synagogue and preached about Jesus for half an hour. He went through all these different scriptures of the Old Testament. He would go through and say Jesus is the Messiah and go through different scriptures like Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 7:14. He would say things like, "See Jesus fulfilled these prophecies. He really is the Messiah." Everyone was just getting so angry at him.

There were some older guys next to me and they were saying, "Come on Jason, let's go and beat him up. You know, let's go throw him out of the synagogue." I said, "No, guys, you know my dad's a Christian. I wouldn't do that to my dad." "Well, he's trying to convert us," they said. I wondered what to do? I was really confused. The things that he was saying were really kind of making sense to me. I never really learned why Christians believed in Jesus and Jews don't. I didn't really know; I just accepted it. I blindly accepted it my whole life that that was how it was. But I kind of started thinking that maybe He is the Messiah. Maybe He is coming. It ended up that the guy, Mitch, the Jews for

Jesus missionary, said at the end of his talk, "The Holy Spirit is telling me that three of you out there have today accepted Jesus as your Messiah." I began to wonder to myself, "Am I one of them? I don't know. Maybe I have accepted Him. Maybe He was giving me a revelation, I don't know." I felt that maybe I had accepted Jesus as the Messiah that day. I was just really confused.

He then turned around and walked off. Everyone was so angry. "Just get him out of here," we thought. He left the synagogue. The female rabbi came up and people were asking her questions, "Why don't we believe in Jesus? What do we say to this guy?" She said, "Don't worry. We are going to talk about that later."

Then all of a sudden, the same guy came back in. But this time he introduced himself as Rabbi Tovia Singer. He was an Orthodox rabbi who worked for the organization called Outreach Judaism-a counter-missionary organization. His whole facade was to come in and pretend to be a Jew for Jesus missionary and to show the Jewish youth the deceptive techniques that missionaries use to try to convert people.

When he came in he went through every doctrine that he taught as "Mitch the missionary." He then went through and refuted each and every argument he made. He said, "This is why what I was saying as Mitch was wrong." This is the tactic. He went through all the different techniques that missionaries would try to use to convert Jews. Now I was really confused. I thought I was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah but then I realized that this guy that didn't even believe in Jesus, he was just pretending.

Afterwards I went up and said, "Rabbi, I don't know how to defend myself against missionaries. What am I going to do? I thought I had just gotten converted but it was false." Roughly, he said, "Well, that's the exact reaction that we were trying to get out of you; that you should be on your toes and see the actual techniques that missionaries use to try to convert people."

I said, "Okay, so what do I do now?" He said, "Well, that's why we set up this whole web site for you, Outreach Judaism. Go and study the whole thing and it will teach you every single point that you can use to defend yourself against Christian missionaries."

I said, "Oh, okay, great. I'm going to go study the whole thing."

He gave me his email address and said that if I had any questions to go ahead and email him. I told him I would. I was determined to be able to defend Judaism. So I went and studied the whole web site-I mean every single argument on everything that a Jewish person could say to argue with a Christian missionary and defend their belief that Jesus is not the Messiah. I went through the whole thing. I felt really confident in myself that I could defend myself against missionaries. I thought that I had the knowledge to do that. I proclaimed myself to be the "counter-missionary missionary." I felt like I was going to go out to the world and convince the world that Jesus really wasn't the Messiah, that they were deceived, and that the Jews had it right all the time, and that everyone should wait for the real Messiah to come.

I approached various Christian groups at my high school (Horizon) and began talking to everyone, engaging them arguments. I would bash them and say why they were wrong and then use the scriptures to show them where they were wrong. Most of them would just argue against me and kind of condemn me. I sat at lunch every day with my best friend, Shea Owens, just like we did together every day during my freshman year.

One day, he and another of my best LDS friends, Dave Thaxton, sat at lunch with another friend, Matt, who was a Catholic. They were discussing the LDS view and the Catholic view of religion. I was just sitting there. They were going at it and discussing each other's points of view. I said to myself, "Well, here's a perfect opportunity for me to stop all these missionaries from converting this poor Catholic boy. I'm going to convert them all to Judaism." That was my goal. I jumped in there and said, "What about this scripture? How can you say Jesus is the Messiah"?

Hearing this, my two LDS friends just completely tore apart all my arguments. Not in a contentious way, but they had five other scriptures to back up what they had already said. I knew that they went to seminary and that's where they learned all those scriptures. Every single thing I said, they had about five scriptures to back up their point of view. I was blown away. I still wasn't convinced at all. I just thought that the reason why they could blow me away was because they had studied the scriptures longer than me so I thought I needed to study the scriptures more so I could convince them that they were wrong.

So I studied more counter-missionary web sites, talked with the rabbi and emailed the rabbi. This went on for months. Day after day, we would go into the library after we ate lunch and I would print out a lot of pages and would show them all the different counter-missionary arguments. They continued to not only back up their beliefs with scripture, but also with personal testimony. They would say, "Look, we know this is true, Jason. You can bring all this stuff up to us, but we know that this is true."

It was just so powerful to me that they believed in that and they knew it. This went on for months. Eventually after one of our discussions in the library, my friend David, I think he was the one there, said, "You know, Jason, we have been arguing with you for months and months and we don't want you to just believe us, we just want to be your friend. You have been asking us a lot of questions about our church and we wanted to offer you a Book of Mormon." I said, "I don't want that book. I'm Jewish. I don't believe in Jesus. This is all about Jesus and I don't believe in Him."

They said, "Well, this will answer your questions about the Church. If you want to learn more, then please read the book. Go to the book because you're kind of offending us with your attacks."

I said, "I really don't want to read this book, guys."

They responded, "Just please take it."

So I did. They were my friends and I just decided to take it. I didn't know what I was going to do with it. I took The Book of Mormon and put it in my backpack. I hid it in there-in the very recesses of my backpack, and just went around school with that Book of Mormon inside there. I didn't know what to do with it. I didn't want to keep it in my dresser because I was afraid my mom would find it and freak out-that she would tell our family that I had a Book of Mormon and she would tell the rabbis and they would get angry with me. Everyone would just go crazy. I didn't know where to keep it. I thought maybe I could hide it under my bed, I didn't know what to do with it. It was just laying in my backpack for many months and I didn't want to read the book at all. I had no desire.

I decided that I needed to do something about the book and I came up with two ideas. I could throw the book away and wouldn't have to read it. I would just tell my friends that I threw the book away. But I thought there was a better option. I decided that I would burn it. I made up my mind that this was the best way because there was a slight chance that my mom could find it in the garbage. I didn't want to put it in there because she could still find it. So I decided to just burn the book.

I went outside with a lighter into the back yard on the side of the house where there was gravel, so it wouldn't burn grass or anything else. I fully committed myself to burning it. "I am going to burn this book and get rid of it and that will be that," I promised myself. "I will never have to deal with it. It won't be a burden on me and I'll get it over with."

I had the lighter and the book and was totally ready to do it. Yet as soon as I was about to flick the lighter, the Spirit of God spoke to me clearly and calmly and said, "Do not burn My book, it is My Word." It just rang in my ears. I just kind of shook the book. I stood there. I didn't know what to do. I received another impression, saying "go back into your room and read My book." I took the book

and was just kind of thinking in my mind, "What's going on here? I don't know. I've got to read it. Maybe it is the word of God."

I went back in my room and I opened up the scriptures-The Book of Mormon. It was really the first book of scripture that I ever began to read. I had only read a very little part of the five books of Moses of the Old Testament, but this was the first time I really began to read scripture. I read the first page of The Book of Mormon, the title page. It read, "And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations." I read those words and said, "Well, I'm a Jew and this book is going to try to convince me that Jesus is the Christ." I read that and I thought let's see what it's all about and see if it's the word of God. Maybe it is.

I opened the book and I started reading. It was so powerful to me. I felt the power of godliness as I read the book. I read the testimony of Joseph Smith and read what he said. I put it in my mind, "Well, is it possible that a man could write this book or is it really inspired by God?" Those were the kinds of questions in my mind as I read.

My friend Dave had outlined in colored pencil all the important key doctrines of the Church within The Book of Mormon. I went through those that he had underlined for me. There was one scripture which I hadn't found in a long time because my mom later took away the first couple of Books of Mormon from me. I later found this scripture again when I was in the temple doing baptisms for the dead. It is 2 Nephi, Chapter 25.

This is what I call the chapter written for the Jews. You will see why. Verse 13 talks about the Jews. It says, starting in verse 13:

13 Behold, they will crucify him; and after he is laid in a sepulcher for the space of three days he shall rise from the dead, with healing in his wings; and all those who shall believe on his name shall be saved in the kingdom of God. Wherefore, my soul delighteth to prophesy concerning him, for I have seen his day, and my heart doth magnify his holy name.

14 And behold it shall come to pass that after the Messiah hath risen from the dead, and hath manifested himself unto his people, unto as many as will believe on his name, behold, Jerusalem shall be destroyed again; for wo unto them that fight against God and the people of his church.

15 Wherefore, the Jews shall be scattered among all nations; yea, and also Babylon shall be destroyed; wherefore, the Jews shall be scattered by other nations.

16 And after they have been scattered, and the Lord God hath scourged them by other nations for the space of many generations, yea, even down from generation to generation until they shall be persuaded to believe in Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement, which is infinite for all mankind- and when that day shall come that they shall believe in Christ, and worship the Father in his name, with pure hearts and clean hands, and look not forward any more for another Messiah, then, at that time, the day will come that it must needs be expedient that they should believe these things.

17 And the Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men.

18 Wherefore, he shall bring forth his words unto them, which words shall judge them at the last day, for they shall be given them for the purpose of convincing them of the true Messiah, who was rejected by them; and unto the convincing of them that they need not look forward any more for a Messiah to come, for there should not any come, save it should be a false Messiah which should deceive the people; for there is save one Messiah spoken of by the prophets, and that Messiah is he who should be rejected of the Jews.

After I read this scripture, the Spirit filled me full of truth and I was convinced that Jesus was the Christ. I felt His love for me and I felt the Father calling his name. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. This just recounted the history of the Jewish people, what has happened to them, why they didn't accept the Messiah, and how they will when the time comes. When I read these words, I felt in my heart that Jesus was the Messiah and I knew that He was the one who would come again. I knew that I didn't need to wait any longer for another one to come, that he was the true Messiah.

I kept reading through The Book of Mormon. I would stay up hours and hours into the night. I would turn on my lamp and turn off the lights so nobody would know that I was reading it. I would stay up until 2:00 or 3:00am daily just consuming the power of the book. I just couldn't stop reading it. It was just so awesome. I read the book and thought in my mind that there was no way that a man could write this book, there's just no way.

Of course the Lord needed to help me. I had some humbling work to do. When I got to Mosiah 3:19:

19 For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.

When I read this, I knew that something needed to be done with my attitude towards God. I needed to really become as a little child again. I did that, I humbled myself before the Lord and asked Him to make me full of love. I continued reading The Book of Mormon. Eventually I got to the end, Moroni 10 and the promise of Moroni 10:4-5:

4 And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

5 And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

The Book of Mormon gave me that faith in Christ that I never had-that I was taught not to have. Through The Book of Mormon, I was convinced that Jesus was the Christ and I had faith in Him. I offered up that prayer to my Heavenly Father, desiring to know, with a sincere heart. I really wanted to know the truth. I wanted to know the truth more than anything. I knelt before my Father in Heaven as a child in meekness and asked Him, "Father, if this is your word, please manifest the truth of it unto me. If it is not, then manifest that unto me. For all I desire to know is your truth." I ended the prayer "in the name of Jesus Christ."

The next moment, I was filled from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet with the Spirit of God. I felt full of light. I felt like I was glowing with light. It was obviously a spiritual feeling but I felt my Father's love for me in fullness for the first time in my life. It was the most joyous experience I have ever had in my life up to that point. I felt my Father telling me, "Son, follow these words in The Book of Mormon, that you can receive eternal life." I called up my best friend, Shea Owens, the next day. I was a sophomore and 15 years old. I said, "Shea, I read The Book of Mormon last night and I prayed about it."

He said, "Wait, you've been reading The Book of Mormon?" I said, "Yeah, yeah, I've been reading it and I love it."

He said, "Are you serious? I thought you hated the Church."

"I kind of did. But, I've been reading it and, Shea, I prayed about it last night and I received an answer from my Father in Heaven that it is true. He also told me that I needed to be baptized and I want you to baptize me." He was speechless. "Jason, I would love to baptize you. The only problem is we need to get your parents' permission because you're only 15 years old."

I said, "Well, let me see what I can do. Let's plan on going to the lake or something the day after I turn 18 and then you can baptize me. How's that?"

Shea said, "Okay. We'll do that then."

I didn't know any better. I read in The Book of Mormon and it seemed like all the baptism stories were in a lake. Shea was just excited for me.

8 I went to my parents and I told them that I had been reading The Book of Mormon and that I believed that it was true; that I believed in Jesus. Of course, my mom flipped out and started yelling at me, "We need to take you to see the rabbi. What's gotten into you? What have your friends done to you?"

I said, "Mom, they haven't done anything. They just gave me this book and I read it."

My mom took me to see the rabbi. I told him about my experience that I had with The Book of Mormon and how God told me that it was true. There was not much that he could say to that. Is somebody going to trust the word of God more than the word of man? He knew that and there was no way he could convince me otherwise.

My mom became very frustrated about the whole ordeal. She felt like she had failed as a parent. I told her, "No, no, Mom, you raised me to be an honest and hardworking man. That is just what I have come to as a result of your parenting." For the next three years I went through so many trials, yet each one of them strengthened me in my testimony-some of them even more than I had even imagined they would. I would like to just share with you some of the things that I have since experienced.

Right away, my mom set me up with two Orthodox rabbis that I studied with for two years. At first I would bring up things about Jesus and they would just kind of throw it by the wayside. They said, "No, we don't need to talk about that. Let's talk about the Law of Moses." So we didn't really delve into that. I learned a lot of great things from the rabbis-a lot about the ancient people, their practices, the rituals, and all kinds of things, but I continued to have that burning testimony that The Book of Mormon was the word of God and that Jesus is the Christ. I couldn't deny it because I had heard and felt God's voice telling me that it was true.

It frustrated my mom because I still continued on the path of learning. So she thought there were more things she could do. She eventually took me to the family psychologist. She thought that maybe something was wrong with me. I said, "Mom, of course I'll go." I said, "Yeah, let's go to the psychologist and maybe he can help us both."

At first we went to this one psychologist who was a Reform Jew. She just attacked me and was really angry with me. I showed her respect, but my mom could tell that it wasn't working out-that we weren't making any progress. This woman was just very mean and really anti-Christian.

So she took me to another psychologist. He asked me, "What's the problem, Jason?"

With that, I taught him most of what I later learned was essentially the first missionary discussion. I said, "This is what I believe." After every principle that I taught him, he said, "Amen to that, brother." He loved what I was teaching him. He said, "I don't see anything wrong with the way you believe, Jason."

He turned to my mother and said, "Well, Jan, do you believe in everything that your son has just said?" She said, "Yeah, yeah, I do." I just looked at my mom and was like, "What, you believe in this, Mom?"

She said, "Yeah, except when it gets to Jesus though." "Well, He is the central part of the whole plan," I said.

She got even more frustrated because everyone that she would bring me to would end up seeing my side of the view and seeing that I had really investigated everything thoroughly. I had studied with rabbis and had been studying on my own and I was really taking a balanced look. She was very frustrated.

One morning, she just said, "Jason, we're getting on a plane today." I said, "What?"

It was a Saturday morning. The two of us got on a plane and flew to Los Angeles to the world headquarters for Jews for Judaism, which is another counter-missionary organization. I spent the day with two rabbis there.

For one whole day they tried to convince me not to believe in Christ anymore and tried to convince me not to join the Church. We talked for eight hours. Each minute that passed, my testimony grew because I kept seeing the truth of this church and of the truth that Joseph Smith really was a prophet of God. Finally, the rabbis just gave up.

They said, "That's it. We're done for the day." We ended up talking about politics. We were both very conservative. He was an Orthodox Jew. We finally had something to agree on and we became really good friends after that. That obviously further frustrated my mother. I just kept making friends with all these people that she tried to have destroy my faith. They saw that I was an honest boy with a sincere heart really searching after the truth. All of them could see that, but my mom just could not accept it.

I eventually went through my senior year. I told my buddies that I was going to be baptized that summer. One of my other friends, Matthew Nelson, is now on a mission in Scotland. I had hoped to be baptized in June. I was going to have my friend Shea baptize me and him confirm me, but it didn't work out quite that way. There were some complications.

I was only allowed to go to church one time before I was 18 and that was because my parents weren't home. I slept over at my friend Shea's house. They let me stay over at his house and he took me to church with him the next day. It was a testimony meeting. After that, they just forbade me from going to church. I tried going to seminary. I went twice but after that I was forbidden to go to seminary. At first, I was allowed to go to Mutual occasionally, but soon that was prohibited too. I was completely cut off from the Church. Now, in addition to that, copies of The Book of Mormon were taken away from me and other Church books that I had borrowed from my friends.

I would have to ask them for a new one every couple of months. I said, "I need another Book of Mormon. My mom took it away." I kept on reading it though. I studied the Old Testament because I wanted to make sure that The Book of Mormon and the Old Testament were in line and they were always perfectly in line, teaching the same doctrines.

The day after I turned 18, I drove myself to the home of my bishop. "Bishop, I want to be baptized." He said, "Whoa, whoa, hold on. First, you need to go through the missionary discussions and then I want to try to talk to your mom so I know that she is okay with it."

I said, "Okay, I was hoping to do it today but..." I went through the missionary discussions and had a great time with the missionaries. I kind of had to learn on my own through the years. We went through the conversion process very quickly.

We set the date of August 16th for me to be baptized. It was the day that my best friend Shea and I were both in town. About a month before my baptism date, my parents made their last ditch attempt to stop me from joining the church. They hired a scholar named Rick Ross from New Jersey. He is from an anti-cult institute or organization there. They paid him \$5,000 and flew him from New Jersey to Scottsdale to spend three days with me trying to convince me not to join the Church. For three days straight, eight hours a day he came to my home. Each day he would bring documents and all kinds of articles from newspapers- things he had collected about the Church through the years. He presented almost every one to me.

At first, I was determined that I was not going to contend with this man. I am not going to argue with him. I am just going to love him. I am going to try to get him into the spiritual way of thinking and maybe like all the other people I have talked to, he will listen to me and listen to the gospel. But this man was just one of the worldliest people I have ever met in my life. When he first came, I wanted to pray before we began our discussion. Both he and my mom began mocking me as I prayed. That was hard. They just looked at me like I was crazy or something. I prayed to my Father in Heaven just feeling that persecution. It really hurt, but only for the first two days. I just tried to show him brotherly love, but he just wouldn't have it.

One evening during these three days, I found his web site that said that "we do not attack a person's beliefs." He just straight-out attacked my beliefs. "The Book of Mormon is a cult and Joseph Smith was a terrible man. Jesus is not the Christ." The very foundation of my faith, he just attacked. My mom was there all three days, just sitting there and observing this. I didn't know what to do. I was 18 years old. They took my cell phone away from me. They took all these things away from me to make sure I focused on this discussion.

I tried to do the best I could. I had to show my mom that I really knew what I was doing, that I had really investigated my decision to be baptized. On the third day I had an answer to every single thing that he said. I just countered everything he said. I used to be in his place. I used to be like what he was trying to do, which was to convince people not to believe in Christ. I used to think the same way that he did. So, I knew where he was coming from and I just countered everything that he would say.

Eventually, he started to become humble. He finally opened up and talked about things of faith and of God. The rest of the time, he just kept talking about history and all these legal documents and other things. "That is not the point; we need to talk about the different doctrines of Mormonism and Judaism." Eventually, we did. I ended up teaching him a few things about the difference between what Judaism believes about the resurrection and LDS theologies about the resurrection. He again, was a Reform Jew who my mother had hired. He ended up not really even knowing what Judaism believed. I said, "Sir, I have been studying with the rabbis for two years now. I know what Judaism believes and I know what Mormonism believes and I have accepted the doctrines of Mormonism and that is what I believe to be true."

I believe he finally grew to respect me through that time and my mom saw that. She began to soften her heart about it and accept that this is what I wanted to do. By the end of our discussions, the guy said, "You know, Jason, I really respect you."

He apologized for attacking my beliefs. He said, "Jason, it is obvious that you are going to join the Church and you are probably going to go on a mission. If you do, you will probably be a pretty good missionary." I said, "Well, thank you, sir."

My mom just said, "Jason, I didn't know you were that smart." I said, "Mom, I know what I am doing." I thought that things were going to be okay and she was going to let me be baptized. But just the opposite happened, things got much, much worse. Every day I was on the receiving end of a lot of anger, swearing and yelling. While meeting with this man, I told him that Judaism believes only the

righteous will be resurrected. All people who are Hindu, Buddhist, or even some Catholics will not be resurrected because they break the laws of God that say not to worship idols. These people, Judaism says, will be cast into hell forever, never to receive an immortal resurrected body of flesh and bone. Now, this sounds like a harsh doctrine. This is what Jewish rabbis teach. Rick Ross, the anti-Mormon scholar, didn't believe me.

So, I called Rabbi Landesman, and said, "Rabbi, Judaism only believes the righteous will be resurrected and Hindus and Buddhists are considered wicked and won't be resurrected?" The Rabbi said, "Yes, that's correct." So I said, "Rick, you see Judaism is a harsh, punishing religion and only has a part of the truth. Mormonism teaches the whole truth. Hindus, Buddhists, Catholics and others will hear the Gospel in the next world and will be given the opportunity to repent and be baptized by Latter-day Saints doing baptisms for the dead in the temple. Further, Mormonism teaches that all will be resurrected, righteous and wicked, as a free gift from Jesus Christ. Rick even said he liked that doctrine more than Judaism's.

My mom eventually had my grandparents, who were Lutheran, over for dinner. I told them that I wanted to formally invite all my family to my baptism. I said, "Grandma and Grandpa, I'm going to be baptized on August 16th. I really want you to come. I want your support." We were eating dinner and everybody dropped their silverware. My grandma said, "Jason, do not do this. If you are baptized, you are going to hell." This is the grandma that I had loved for 18 years of my life. My grandpa looked at me and said, "Jason, the devil has control of you. Shake him off."

I was just looking at my grandparents like they didn't even know me. They were just hurling insults at me and attacking me and saying things that I had done that I had never done and just all kinds of things about my behavior.

I said to Grandma, "Jesus said you shall know them by their fruits."

They just continued to be so angry. That was such a sad experience.

I also had my Jewish grandparents over at that time before I was baptized. My grandma had the same attitude as my mother. She was very, very angry about it. My grandfather, who is Jewish and one of the greatest men I know, came into my room one night. He said, "Jason, your grandmother and your mother are just arguing about you. I wanted to come in here and know your point of view." So I ended up talking to my grandpa for hours and hours about the Gospel. For three days, we just talked about the Gospel and all that I know about it, all these principles.

He saw my faith in Christ and he saw the goodness that flowed through my heart. He said, "Jason, you have my full support with whatever you want to do. If this is what you want to do, I support you fully." He was so supportive. He said, "Jason, if you lived in the ancient days, you would have been one of Jesus' apostles."

I said, "Ahh, that's so nice of you, Grandpa." At the end of his trip, he ended up asking me, "Jason, can I get a copy of The Book of Mormon?"

I said, "Of course, Grandpa." I gave him mine. I wrote my testimony in the front. My Jewish grandfather asked me for The Book of Mormon! I haven't really been able to talk to him about it because he is afraid to talk about it in front of my grandmother you know. Some day I'm going to talk with him and teach him. He was supportive of me going on a mission.

I decided to go on a mission about two months before I was baptized. One of my best friends, Elder Nelson, went on his mission to Scotland. We talked about missions and stuff. He really convinced me that I needed to go on a mission so I decided before I was baptized that I needed to go on a mission. I was hoping to go in August, a year after my baptism. My grandfather has supported me in that. He's said, "You've got to do what you've got to do." He knows that it will be a great experience.

During the month before my baptism things continued to get worse though. I was impressed by the Spirit to leave on a 16-hour bus ride to Provo, Utah. I spent the week before my baptism at Brigham Young University, Temple Square and other Church places. I was infused with the Spirit. I came home the day before my baptism with comfort that I had repented of all my sins, and that I was as worthy as possible to receive the sacred ordinance. I desired to hear my Father's words, "You are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." I was finally baptized by my best friend on August 16, 2003 in Scottsdale, Arizona three years after I had told him I wanted to be baptized. I felt my Heavenly Father's love, and that He was well pleased by my decision. It was the greatest moment of my life up until then, and the only one that will surpass it is someday being sealed in the Holy Temple of our God to my future eternal companion. I bear testimony, that the next day, when I received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, it was real. Even the desire to do any evil was purged out of my whole soul. I felt on fire. I know all my sins were forgiven. The Gift of the Holy Ghost has sustained me and strengthened me to obey all the commandments of God.

Lo, and behold, the Lord called me to the New Jersey Morristown Mission. My second area in Jersey City was where Rick Ross lived. I went to see him on my mission. He got to see my name tag-evidence of his failure to destroy my faith. I bore bold testimony that Jesus is the Christ, that He was resurrected and that Gordon B. Hinckley is a true prophet. All he could say back was that the LDS church is racist because when Jesus visited America He was brilliantly white. I tried not to laugh.

My mission to the New Jersey Morristown area has been the greatest adventure and experience I have had thus far. Not only have I met many Jews on my mission, but people from almost every country. I even baptized a Jewish man named Morgan Demel. I have seen many miracles in this harvest field and have been a tool in the Lord's hands. My testimony of Jesus Christ has grown tremendously, for I have studied and prayed diligently to know that Jesus Christ is the son of God. I bear testimony by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the literal son of God the Eternal Father. This testimony is blasphemous to the Jewish mind, but I know it is true. As you see, it has caused me great afflictions and persecutions, but the Word of the Lord has given me guidance.

Mathew 10:32-39

I love Jesus Christ more than anyone or anything else in the world. I encourage everyone who reads this story to put Jesus Christ first in their life. In doing so, I promise you will receive eternal life. I know the Jews will see Jesus Christ one day and know He is the Messiah, as assuredly as I know now. So, there are a lot of things that I want to leave you with. I leave you with my testimony. I know that Jesus is the Messiah. I know that he is the Only Begotten Son of God. I know that he came of the Jews. He came of the gentiles. He is the King of all. I know that He lives. I know that he truly was resurrected. I know also that the early apostles knew that, too, because they sacrificed their lives for that knowledge of truth and I would too.

I know that His church was lost on the face of the earth. I know that He and Heavenly Father called Joseph Smith, to be a prophet in our day, in these latter days. I know that Joseph Smith stands as the head of this dispensation and that he truly was a prophet of God and he was an oracle who spoke to God. I know that Christ continues to lead our church today-that this is the only church on the face of the planet that Christ leads, that He is truly the King and the leader of this church. He works through President Gordon B. Hinckley who also is a prophet of God. I leave this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Elder Jason Olson
New Jersey Morristown Mission
August 2004 – August 2006 © 2006
Thank you,
Jason Olson