



RABBI HERBERT A. OPALEK
1944-2011

Rabbi Herbert A. Opalek was ordained as an Orthodox Rabbi at the age of 18. He earned his Ph.D. in Religion in Late Antiquity (Judaism & Christianity).

In 1998, Rabbi Herb had flown into Boston for a speaking engagement...but his luggage never arrived. All he had with him was his prayer book, a tallit, his skull cap on his head, and one volume of Oral Law.

It was 1:00 in the morning and he couldn't sleep. TV was boring. Looking for something to read, he opened a drawer in the nightstand, and found 2 books: a Gideon Bible and the Book of Mormon. And because, as he would say, "I'm not a fiction reader," he took out the Gideon Bible and opened it to the Gospel of John.

Before this, he had studied the Bible – Genesis through Revelation – in the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. "But something was different", Rabbi Herb would say. "On that night and in that room, for the very first time in my life, I encountered the Holy Spirit and allowed God to permeate my being."

After his conversion, he became an ordained Pastor.

In his prior life, he was a pulpit rabbi, ecclesiastical judge on the largest ecclesiastical court in the United States, Exec. V.P. & Professor of Jewish Law and Lore of a noted rabbinical seminary in New York city, visiting Professor at various Ivy League Universities, and Dean of a Graduate Research Institute.

At the age of 34, Rabbi Herb served a two-year term as Spiritual consultant to the U.S. House of Representative's Select Committee on Drug and Alcohol abuse.

During his lifetime, he had over 20 articles published in Hebrew, French and English in major periodicals and signed the ordination of at least 300 other rabbis.

At his death, he was serving on the Merced County Rescue Mission as Chief Executive Officer; plus he was active as a consultant to various Messianic Congregations. Rabbi Herb was also a Senior Research Associate at the Institute for the Study of Jewish Backgrounds of Early Christian Literature.

He was born in Brooklyn, NY October 1, 1944 and died suddenly in Fresno, CA on April 10, 2011 as he was returning home from a teaching session at Congregation Lion of Judah in Tumwater, WA.

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This cartoon, which Rabbi Herb used at Congregation Lion of Judah, shows his unique sense of humor:

