

Damascus *through* Jerusalem

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I relay my journey of faith in reverse although the line is dimensional not linear, and every place leads to and leads from my calling. Culturally and genetically I am Jewish; *and* I am also Christian—a friend's unique appellation for me is *ChristJew*. But labels matter less than living a passionate, faithful life in God.





Liturgical season of Advent, 2007

I'm crammed into Santa Fe's Cathedral Basilica of Saint Francis with everyone else in the city. In some quintessential way owing to Santa Fe's rich and diverse multi-denominational demographic, Christmas Eve midnight Mass becomes an interfaith service. In one of the oldest, historically significant, beautiful Catholic churches in the country, Archbishop Michael Sheehan attends as our primary celebrant; alongside him Monsignor Jerome Martinez y Alire. Rabbi *emeritus* Leonard Hellman occupies a reserved seat on the Chancel. For over twenty years he's attended midnight Mass and gives a short sermon accompanying the Archbishop's homily. Politely navigating the dense crowd I find an available seat and gather myself into the pew directly below the tenth station of the Cross. *Jesus is stripped of his garments.* I contemplate the traditional Spanish wood and tinwork, wondering into the humility and humanness this station speaks to, as we prepare to welcome the incarnation

into the world—*light in the life of humankind* and the *word becoming flesh to dwell among us*. Midnight Mass begins directly at *midnight* in Santa Fe—a loud rapping on the massive Cathedral Basilica doors begins the service with *Las Posadas*, a reenactment of the Holy Family's search for a place the Saviour will be born. '*Do you have lodging for Mary, the Mother of the Divine word*'? All night the Holy Spirit is at work. I record events and carols of this night to video, wanting to share Santa Fe's Old Spain and European Christmas season with friends and family. It looks like a typical Christmas Eve Mass in Santa Fe, an ethnically diverse mix of folks—privileged and poor, world class artists, professionals and tradespeople next to bodega owners and farmers.

But it is not a typical midnight Mass for me. The service ends past 1:00am and I stay rooted to the pew. And compelled beyond the Baptismal fountain I'm drawn toward the steps of the sanctuary. Although I'm acutely aware of what is happening in me I've never experienced this before. Everything is quiet except for the voice that doesn't speak aloud— but starts forming into language as I walk through the nave. Sound so clear, it is everything I hear.



Stepping into the icicled, star-filled night I leave the Cathedral where the city is filled with flickering lights of *farolitos*. Permeating thin altitude air, piñon-scented smoke lingers from *luminarias* in our hispanic traditions of Christmas-Eve bonfires keeping carolers warm. As I turn from the Basilica, at the edge of the Church grounds, clearly, startlingly I hear God's voice forming in me through the words: *It is time finally. You are coming back to Me.*

In the duration it takes to drive the short distance home it is nearly 2:00am and I have been returned to the path begun in me at age 19. A path from which I've been derailed by life's extreme exigencies. But God's callings don't end. A plan to return (not to *Yeshiva*) but to Divinity School begins to manifest...*Within ten years I tell myself, I'll be there. I'll continue to work and save and engage in preliminary Divinity studies, slowly, deliberately, steadfastly back to God.*

The next morning, by now Christmas Day—my memory travels back thirty-four years. Moved by God's voice in me at midnight

Mass I am intent on reconnecting to the person who has cultivated spiritual formation in my formative years, my school Chaplain, John Heidel. Finding him still in Hawai'i, I telephone him Christmas day, and within ten minutes it's as if no time has passed over the last forty-plus years. We talk about my involvement at Punahou, in the ecumenical, spiritual and religious life of Chapel. Of the seeds planted there in soil and spring of God. And we reminisce on how I've always considered the Chapel my home and true North. I tell Chaplain Heidel about *The Search for God at Harvard*, a book by Ari Goldman, an Orthodox Jew and religion reporter for the New York Times, author and professor at Columbia University. Goldman's story details his experiences at Harvard Divinity School and it sets my own course in motion more than eighteen years ago. By the end of the conversation with Chaplain John, my calling and pastoral intention, timing and first concrete directions to Divinity school are confirmed in me.

New Year approaches; people plug-in to watch the ball drop in Times Square, but I am almost solely focused in the echoing words *You are coming back to Me*. Christmas evening descends in Santa Fe and I decide to explore theology sources and re-obtain Ari Goldman's book. I'm curious to know if in this interim time Goldman has written a sequel to his bestseller, and Google performs my search appropriately bringing up the title, *Finding God at Harvard*. I believe I'm tracking the next part of Goldman's journey when I notice the book's author is not Goldman, but Kelly Monroe. In momentary confusion and strange prescience, I order the book; because in some unexplained way I'm compelled and because it is by a Harvard Chaplain. But it's a long time before I even open the book. Months pass.

After re-reading Ari Goldman's *The Search for God at Harvard*, in April, at a friend's repeated insistence, I finally open Kelly Monroe's *Finding God at Harvard*, only getting as far as the preface

and introduction. Suddenly, inexplicably I'm in tears, feeling a simultaneous upwelling and epiphany. I sense, and know a kinship and resounding echo in this author of entirely different background than mine, but whose voice and love for God are crystalline and passionate, in common ground of God. I know absolutely nothing about her, her faith or the nature of her witness. But I know with solid certainty she is the next person in my journey, as God continues manifestly opening doors successively and decisively in grace. Uncertain, and apprehensive but convinced of my direction, I initiate an email exchange with Kelly, hoping and also somehow certain through her fierce passion for God and specific experiences as a chaplain, my nascent travels will be further informed.

April 2008

Over the past year a soured, defiled, declining economy has loomed, based largely in real estate's greed and avarice. My business is built primarily of real estate clients and is dramatically, consistently falling off. At any other time of life this would be severe discouragement. Now, it confirms in me intention in God's insistent words. *The time for returning to God is now. Not five or ten years from now. Now.* I've been planning in two dimensions but God is speaking into my heart in three dimensions, in *Kairos*. Commercial work is not manifesting, less because of the economy but because God is working diligently in me and I'm trying to listen well, to discern humbly, what and where I'm supposed to be placing myself.

As Spring soundlessly becomes Summer I find Kelly's return email and am grateful for the proposed twenty-minutes of time she offers. Gleaning her temperamental schedule by the number of email volleys trying to find a mutually available time for our discussion, I've decided to prepare a succinct list of specific questions about Harvard's Divinity School, believing at very least

we'll get partially through the list in twenty minutes. So as July 14th settles warming and beautiful over the City of the Holy Faith, half the country away and between us Kelly and I introduce ourselves to each other by voice. Interested, gracious and considered in her responses to my queries, in mutual regard and an instant hand-clasp twenty minutes becomes a 2 ½ hour conversation. Over the Summer and into Fall sporadic dialogs become further and longer...of faith, and Christianity, and Judaism. We laugh at the term *ChristJew*, but it seems apt, and we speak of how the early years of my history are at work into this calling. Now I know Issaiah's words, *Do not despise the day of small things*. Each small thing has added up to this place, these conversations. As Jew and Christian in one heart, I know I am called to interfaith ministry and pastoral work. I also know something more lies ahead, and I wait restlessly. I'm immersed in books on theology, continuing to have conversations with Chaplain John and Kelly. She encourages me to spend focused, concerted time in Scripture, and I set to the serious task of re-reading the New Testament, immersing myself in the Gospels, sharing mutually in dialogs from the foundational roots of source Judaism. And I encourage her to think in new ways about Christianity, about ecumenism, and to attend to her devotional life. We gain in each other mutual mentors and dedicated friends.

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My life suddenly becomes populated by chaplains and theological conversations, discernment and decisions. Alongside these is a feeling of unease and restlessness and I continue long, difficult and needed conversations with Chaplain Heidel whose pastoral care is munificently tangible, right next to me as the same loving source it's been from my beginnings at Punahou School.



Amidst these conversations, falling almost asleep over theology books stacked around me, and the worries of work drying up into intermittent fragments and potshards, I am particularly unrestful, feeling something churning, some further discernment I cannot quite make sense of, but something I feel God will give in his good time to my vision and hearing. Something to be revealed.

We enter the uncomfortably hot month of August, close to the ninth, my mother's birthday. The Gulf of Mexico pours its moisture down on Santa Fe's desert becoming flooding rains and sultry, humid night. Anxious and not sleeping well, I am laying on the couch in semi-wakefulness, exhausted but unable to sleep except fitfully. And I enter into a dream. In the vision I'm witnessing Paul's conversion on the Damascus road. Every hoofbeat, the blinding light, the dust, the awe, the fear, the awakening and trembling meeting with the Lord. All night I toss, wrestling, sweating and laboring alongside Paul. I feel as if my entire being is in *"a sense of*

crisis and dislocation [in which] Christ disrupts the mundane world.¹
Disheveled and exhausted and in a lucid-dream state, I finally wake into the sun-filled moment Paul responds to Jesus saying, 'What shall I do, Lord?' he [Saul] asked. 'Get up' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.' (NIV)

Acutely experiencing Paul's conversion throughout the night, and coming into the City of Damascus in my reverie, I barely manage to re-enter the day's *Chronos*. But instantaneously I realize I know exactly "what I have been assigned to do." Thirty years of expertise as a designer, and twenty years in Santa Fe, *the City of Holy Faith* where my spiritual life has been incubating renew my passion for God, converging in a desire to integrate contemporary design with Scripture, and giving way to a new company in and of God's holy Word, LOGOSdivinity.



¹ Helen Langdon, Caravaggio's *Conversion of Saul/Paul*

I wake that morning not only in and of my calling, but also to the clear path of new work forming *within my calling*. I have come to Damascus through Jerusalem. From Judaism, to common intertestamental ground into Christianity. The language and articulation of *LOGOSdivinity* continue to develop, but essentially remain exactly the work and image of this revelation: A contemporary design company with Scripture in typographically sculpted layers. This will be my life's work, supporting me during seminary and beyond. Foundationally of Scripture, forged in design and liturgical artworks that have formed my spiritual and religious essence, it's clear I'm moving forward even as I feel myself returning to God.

From revelatory dream and having expended all financial resources to fall back on, I make a leap of faith and set aside the impelling desire and demand for commercial work. Frameworks dissolve. New models of Scripture, pastoral care, invitation to and dialog with those of Abrahamic faiths begin to emerge and solidify in me. In *LOGOSdivinity* each artwork fuses into modern design and Scripture; melded typography and liturgy become part of God's pastoral invitation. And my heart and soul are revitalized in deep devotional life, contemplative order and artistic faith, both Jewish and Christian.

In due course, after spending four months unceasingly writing Divinity School essays, fifteen hours a day coalesce through the wisdom and care of priests and chaplains. I'm accepted to seminary in California, at Congregationalist Pacific School of Religion, part of the seminary consortium on Holy Hill in Berkeley. I begin to understand theologies in larger context, and start forming a new paradigm for intertestamental, interfaith ministry. Artworks. Typography. Ministry. And building another business from scratch entailing combined fine art production, sales, distribution, and above all pastoral presence in bringing the Word of God to dwell.

Commercial design gives way to a new company in and of God's making. I am in a new place of calling. I am working, driven, as the Apostle Paul says in Colossians 1: *For this I labor [unto weariness], striving with all the superhuman energy which He so mightily enkindles and works within me. (Amplified Version)*. Vacations and days-off merge instead into the beauties of both God's Sabbaths. No waiting. Website and artwork online in February 2010, and into seminary by August 2010.



1980–2007 Honolulu to San Francisco

Every narrative has the story that precedes it. Jewish mysticism holds that Creation itself contained a Void before it, out of which God formed the vessel to hold all the Divine Sparks of our souls.

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We find an unexpected, startling and sublime Godliness around all the corners of the rooms in our souls, no matter how dank, dark, musty or in disuse. God is often finally found in those wretched, wrested times. And God accompanied my soul as it was forged and re-wrought by those darkening days and years of fractured tumult.

From 1981, age 19 until God returns me to my calling at age 46, twenty-six years elapse with my life largely logistically, physically and emotionally derailed. Inside a relatively short period of time my parents divorce, my own relationship breaks apart, I vacillate unsteadily in constant worry for my brother's well-being, and am bent with anxiety of carrying several times a normal undergraduate course-load while trying to maintain attendance on the Dean's list. Ultimately, I'm advised by empathetic deans and advisors to take provisional leave from college.

Through these years I cross the tracks from my privileged upbringing. From financial-district lawyers to south-of-market gangers in *the life*, addicts, transients—everyone and every part of society, every part of the pain of this world touches me. I become homeless, taken care of daily by different people, strangers who turn out to be angels behind tawdry makeup and coffee-stained clothes. Subsequent years are marginal and rough, breaking me further through loss and unstable relationships, hammering me into maturity that comes when you lose everything. And then, when you lose more than everything.

Eventually these years bring me to Santa Fe, New Mexico. After a short span of respite, completely unexpectedly my brother and I lose our much loved Mother to cancer, enduring and living in grief that continues rippling outward in our lives while collapsing in on itself, deconstructing everything in its wake. Unable to deal adequately with my Mother's unanticipated death, in a nose-dive of lost altitude I crash a second essential relationship in my life. I am 28 years old. Physically and spiritually destitute. Emotionally bankrupt.

Broken and circumstance-tossed. Slowly, I insist on finding purpose again as an artist and reclaim the pieces of my life, taking measured, insistent steps toward building a niche-market boutique

design company. With this new trade, I pour my pain into steadying and unremitting days of work until methodically I reach the apex of my profession in Santa Fe. I develop and manage the business into an established firm based in advertising, marketing, design, typographic articulation, printing and a love and understanding of modern, contemporary artwork.

Coinciding years are shaped by loss in various places and relationships, and in losing sight of my calling to pastoral work even as every rough edge is being carved in me of God. But these years also allow regaining my ground through building a life in business and additionally fomenting, percolating and maturing a deep spirituality hewn of compassion and inclusiveness, humility in Christ and love of God. This is the forming middle; it is of a time from earlier, broad strokes of chisel, hammer and die, and welding torch in a Christian, Jewish artist's workshop.

1976–1980 Academy

Summer 1976; experiencing the excitement of anticipating Punahou's academy Freshman year, we (my Jewish schoolmates) complete our confirmation class in synagogue. We're all attending camp this summer in the San Francisco Bay Area. I am introduced to Helen Burke in *Haggigah*, a session for the arts. She is the Artist in Residence at *Union of American Hebrew Congregations Camp Swig for Living Judaism*. Like several others, I begin as Helen's student and in following years, turn journeyman, then apprentice—deferring college for a year-and-a-half to continue ongoing tutelage as we move toward completing work for the Jo Naymark Memorial Chapel.



Among the first things I discover in working with Helen is a love for materials: traditional mideast mosaic tile and also sheet copper and copper wire, welded with oxyacetylene torch. Copper stretched and hammered and reshaped using oxygen. O² our most basic element of breath, God, Creation, Life. Under Helen's mentorship and mastery, apprentices and students weld copper into artworks for the Chapel, for the *ne'er tamid* (eternal light) and *aron ha-kodesh*, (the dome of the ark of the covenant), and for the Chapel gates; each structural and liturgical piece singing with Helen's signature seed forms.



As Helen's students, we watch and participate in a divine language that becomes articulated in multi-layered, strong, solid welds and flux-braided letters. Elemental as DNA, these primordial beads of copper-seed-forms dance. From Helen I learn sculpture's additive and subtractive criteria, principles I apply many years later to letter-forms, layering language so sculpturally its essence becomes dimensional. I learn, too, that form and substance, content and context are all sown as seeds in God's fertile ground. And, ultimately, I learn art as *work of human hands* reflects and can become some of God's fluid motion in the world, and the kingdom of Heaven on earth.

[1967-1980 PUNAHOU SCHOOL](#)

My parents sacrifice hard years for their children to receive the best available schooling in Honolulu, Hawai'i. And so my brother Mark and I, two of a handful of Jewish children in a predominantly Protestant milieu have the privilege of attending Punahou School,

founded by Hiram and Sybil Bingham in 1841 as Congregationalist Christian O'ahu College, now Punahou School. *Ka Punahou* means the *Living Spring*. Legend relates the story of an elderly Hawaiian couple who lived on Rocky Hill above the current campus on Punahou's lands. Fresh water was unavailable and they had to travel far, so they prayed for help. God sent an angel to the man in a dream, saying, "Uproot the Hala tree on your land; under the tree you'll find a living spring of fresh water." The couple did as the angel directed them, and a spring of sweet, fresh water flowed up to the surface. They named this source *Ka Punahou*, the *Living Spring*. Spiritual and physical centre of campus, Thurston Memorial Chapel sits serenely suspended over the lillypond's living waters.



Chapel becomes my home. Under Chaplains David Steele and John Heidel I begin to love Christianity's devotional beauty and spirit of unity, and also to hold Judaism in faithful integrity. A diverse and cross-denominational student-body, every Thursday we are brought together in Christian spirit of missional living. Our Chaplains are devoted to bringing the lived word of God into

manifest presence in this simple and beautiful building situated over living waters. Through Christian Ethics class, and Punahou's embrace, I gravitate to deeper understandings of lived faith and social justice, ecumenical and intercultural understandings. Religious diversity, inclusiveness and acceptance are a joyful invitation to my soul, comprising the early spiritual foundational ground of LOGOS*divinity*. Life-learning and my formational thirteen years at Punahou School mature coherently, seamed into apprenticeships and liturgical arts.

Whether seminary or *yeshiva*, this is core *midrash*—listening, interpreting and discerning wisdom. In Christianity, we call this sitting at the feet of Jesus. Looking at the layers of my life, I begin to explore their meaning. And so, deep, darkened passages of loss evolve and emerge into new seasons creating a design company in Santa Fe New Mexico. I'm witness to revelation and lucid dreams of the Damascus Road; Jerusalem's heart of the figure Saul converted through Christ's love into the Apostle Paul. I re-envision design and typography in the Word of scripture. I'm returning to Divinity school and life at seminary. And in God I gain a heart broken-over, so strong and resilient now it may be offered to others in pastoral care engendering the Kotzker Rebbe's Chassidic saying "*there is nothing so whole as a broken heart*".

Embodiment and synthesis of Christianity and Judaism, I hold these both in one devotional heart reflected by my deep comittment and love for the work of LOGOS*divinity*. But bringing modern design and God's word together in a new form is also of familial roots. On my father's side we are Eastern European Jews in generations of printers, typesetters, composers, designers. Faith, life and design work are indigenous to my heart, yes, but also to my blood. On my mother's side, I'm given a love for language held in mystical traditions of Judaism, a love for the word, for meaning, for how words take on flesh and reality, becoming sculptural form.

Chassidic traditions follow that when youngsters enter *yeshiva* to learn the aleph-beis (alphabet), their mothers bake sweetened letters of the Hebrew alphabet bestowed as they read and learn their language. So they will know learning is sweet, that the Word of God is sweet, sustaining to taste and touch. My mother provides these in all the words she's given me; composed, sculpted, savored.

Damascus *through* Jerusalem belongs to all these places. Forged in Judaism's love of words and language, of the *Logos* in Christ, and also the calling of Midnight Mass in Santa Fe, dust and rock of the Damascus road give me back in service to my calling. A path I now discover, I left only in order to return to fully, completely of heart and soul in God. "*It is time, finally. You are coming back to me.*" Behold I make everything new. (REV 21:5)

blessings and faith; b'vrachat shalom (in God's mercies peace); yours also in Christ

Andrach rinae Mre-ty

