



Amir Tsarfati

Let's Connect: Pastor Samuel Smadja

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVhKY9TGoVY>



AMIR: Hey, Shalom everyone and welcome to "Let's Connect." Today I have the privilege of hosting one of the most significant people in my life, someone who for more than 30 years has been there for me as a friend, an older brother, a mentor,

and a boss. But above all, as someone who truly knows me and has stood by me through thick and thin. A man who embodies vision, courage, a reverence for God, sharp business sense, and a huge heart through which the light of the Messiah shines brightly. A man who can walk into a room full of doctors and professors and still outsmart them all. He began as a young man right after his military service in the military police with big dreams, working tirelessly as a tour operator in a small company in Jerusalem. And yet today, he oversees an empire, a network of tourism, hospitality, real estate, and media, employing hundreds in Israel and providing a livelihood to tens of thousands of families, becoming a source of work and blessing to so many local believers.

When I once asked him what he loves to do most,



his answer was simple: to study and to teach the Word of God. He is a man whose very heartbeat carries the passion to share the good news of the Messiah of Israel with the people of Israel everywhere and at every opportunity. Please join me in welcoming Pastor Samuel Smadja or as we call him, Shmulik. Hi, Shmulik.

SAMUEL: Amir, [Gesture: shake hands] wow, I stand speechless, and you exaggerate.

AMIR: No, no, no, this is who you are for me, and I think for a lot of people. But ...

SAMUEL: Thank you.

AMIR: ...for so many years, you are actually the one who sits on this chair, talking to people, asking them questions, hosting them, and interviewing them. But very few people know who you are and what this man behind the microphone is actually all about. And I think that we will sin to this whole program if we don't start even earlier than your military service, with your parents. By the way, your parents were like my parents. When I came to faith, they were my family. Your father married me and Miriam exactly 30 years ago. And tell me a little bit about your background because so many people do not make the connection between Eastern European Holocaust and Jews who actually lived in Northern Africa. So tell me about it.

SAMUEL: So first of all, Shalom. It's a great honor to be here. I mean, your studio is unbelievable. My parents both came from Tunisia, North Africa. They grew up in the Jewish communities. And my father, as a young man, lost his father. My grandfather was doing import and export into Tunisia. My father was captured in south of France. He missed the last ferry going into Tunisia. And he was taken to a concentration camp in south of Paris from there all the way to Auschwitz.

AMIR: Your grandfather.

SAMUEL: My grandfather and he never came back home. My grandmother was left with five kids. And my father had a lot of questions.

AMIR: So he grew up fatherless, basically.

SAMUEL: He grew up from the age of 16, fatherless. And he was looking for answers. And he bumped into a person that felt that he was called to bring the gospel to the Jewish people.

AMIR: Where was he from?

SAMUEL: From England.

AMIR: Okay.

SAMUEL: But a French-speaking guy.

AMIR: So in Northern Africa, you spoke French.

SAMUEL: French and Arabic.

AMIR: And Arabic.

SAMUEL: But in Tunisia, the Jews spoke mainly French. And my father started reading the Bible, all the New Testament for two years, and one day he came to his mom and he said, "Mom, I believe that Yeshua, Jesus is ..."

AMIR: ...The Messiah.

SAMUEL: The Messiah. For my grandmother, that was not good news. You have to understand, Amir, and I'm sure you do, that for the Jewish people, the whole Holocaust and the whole persecution of Jews around Europe was done by Christians. And they couldn't understand that they couldn't see the difference between Christians and Christians. And that's why...

AMIR: ...Especially when she lost her husband.

SAMUEL: Exactly. And for her, it was Christians who killed her husband. And let's be honest, the only reason that my grandfather was captured was that because he was a Jew. He was not captured for crossing the street in a wrong way, or doing a bad business deal, or something. The only thing that they accused him was for being a born to a Jewish mother and Jewish father. And that's why he never came back home. And so my father, for my father, it was so real and so true that he decided to follow Yeshua. And you have to understand, at that time, he was probably the only Jewish person in Tunisia...

AMIR: ...Who believes in Yeshua...

SAMUEL: ...who believes in Yeshua. Parallel to that, my mother became a believer.

AMIR: Also in Tunisia, as a Jewish woman.

SAMUEL: ... as a Jewish girl. And that was even harder because you have to understand the culture and the family. It's a huge rebellion for a Jewish girl to accept Yeshua as the Messiah. And somebody...

AMIR: ...A big no-no.

SAMUEL: Sorry?

AMIR: It's a big no-no.

SAMUEL: It's a big, it's a huge no-no, especially for a girl. And somebody introduced them.

AMIR: ... to each other, yeah.

SAMUEL: And my father says, "Listen, I believe that God showed me that we need to get married." And my mother said, "If you can convince my father, I'll marry you, but that will never happen. Because my father had already..." He "managed" to get a bad reputation because of his faith. And my father went to my grandfather on my mother's side. And he convinced them to... he convinced him that they should get married. And three days after, they were on a boat coming to Haifa at that time. They immigrated in 1956. It was like eight years after the establishment of the State of Israel. There was not much in Israel. They were sent to a moshav. A moshav is a kind of a kibbutz. They were given a horse and a...

AMIR: ...Plow?

SAMUEL: Plow and a gun. The moshav was close to Netanya. And my father had to be on guard on a watch at night and work the fields in the morning. But he never knew anything. And that's how they started here. But for my father, it was very, very, very clear that he came for Israel for two reasons. First of all, to make sure that what he believed was true. Because one of the rabbis

told him that “You believe what you believe because you read the Bible in French. If you would read the Bible in Hebrew, in the original language...”

AMIR: ...You would change your mind.

SAMUEL: You would change your mind. So for my father learning Hebrew and understanding and seeing the Jewish Messiah in the Bible was a very, very important thing. And second of all, for my father it was very clear that he needed to present the idea that you can be a Jew, stay a Jew, and believe in the Messiah. That was unheard of. And let's be honest, Amir, even the different Christian organizations, at that time there were different Christian organizations that were here even before the establishment of the State of Israel. After the establishment of the State of Israel, many of them left because they didn't know the Jewish people are coming, how they'll receive...

AMIR: how will they accept them ...

SAMUEL: ... how they'll accept us and so on and so on and so on. And when my father approached a different Christian organization and he came with their idea, with his idea, with another brother who became a believer in Africa, a Jewish believer by the name of Kofzman. And they approached a different congregation and the different churches in order to start a messianic congregation in their...

AMIR: ...I see.

SAMUEL: The churches at that time said, “No, you need to be a Christian, Hebrew Christian or Jewish Christian.” Whatever. They didn't like the term messianic Jew. They didn't support the idea of a messianic congregation. But for my father, it was very, very clear that he needs to start. He didn't know that it would be a movement. He didn't know that anything would come out of it. It was not that he had a vision and... But he knew that he needed to start a congregation led by

local Israelis and presenting a Jewish Messiah, celebrating the Jewish festivals, doing it on Saturday and so on. And they called it the Messianic Assembly.

AMIR: Yeah, that's it. You don't have any bombastic name.

SAMUEL: Because it was the only one.

AMIR: Exactly. The Messianic...

SAMUEL: ...Assembly of Jerusalem.

AMIR: ... Assembly in Jerusalem. That's it. And that's the one I joined shortly after I got saved in 1990. And your father is the one who kind of mentored me at the time. And I do remember that—I mean, he taught me many things, but one of the things he taught me is that you can stay a Jew; you can be in Israel, but be an Israeli. Teach your hands a trade.

SAMUEL: I think when you talk about Jewish evangelism and about staying a Jew and not staying a Jew, if you ask me, the biggest mistake that the church did throughout the centuries, they wanted to convert Jews into Christianity. And let's be honest. When we read the writings of Paul and when Paul is talking about conversion, he's usually talking to the Gentiles. When he talks to the Jews, he's talking about *teshuva*, about repentance and return and so on. You see, we don't need as Jews to convert to another religion.

AMIR: Yeah, I always tell people that in those days, 2,000 years ago, Gentiles were predominantly pagans. They believed in many gods.

SAMUEL: Exactly.

AMIR: So for many to believe in one, you need a converter.

SAMUEL: Exactly.

AMIR: But the one who believes in one and went the wrong way, all he needs to do is to come back to the right way. He doesn't need a converter.

SAMUEL: And he needs to come back to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

AMIR: Exactly.

SAMUEL: And to discover who Messiah is.

AMIR: Yes.

SAMUEL: But we don't need to convert into Christianity. And sad to say, till today, when Gentiles are talking to Jews about Messiah...

AMIR: ... You need to convert.

SAMUEL: The vocabulary is very, very important. And that's where we miss. So for my father, for both my parents, this starting something that Jews can feel Jews led by Jewish people and so on, they didn't really understand where this movement will go. And let's be honest, and you know, Amir, what really, you know... if you ask three different messianic Jews, what does it mean to be a messianic Jews?

AMIR: You'll get three different answers.

SAMUEL: Five different answers! So, but at least it was a start.

AMIR: So he was a pioneer on all levels. Pioneer when it comes to coming to Israel, pioneer when it comes to being one of the only Jewish believers in Tunisia, but also pioneer in becoming a leader in a very young body of Messiah here in Israel. It must have affected you also as his son.

SAMUEL: First of all, let's talk about the word pioneer.

AMIR: Pioneer, okay.

SAMUEL: Pioneers are people that when there is a wall and there's a door on the side, they choose to go headfirst through the wall. They don't see the door on the side. So my father was a tough guy. And I believe God for certain ages is choosing, is electing people who have the spirit

of pioneering. He was willing to pay the price, and you know, as a family, we paid a huge, huge price.

AMIR: Give me an example of a price that you as a family paid.

SAMUEL: I mean, they burned his car. They put us a small bomb in the door and we were threatened. He receives death threats all the time. You have to understand, Amir.

AMIR: But yet...

SAMUEL: ...I don't blame the Jewish people.

AMIR: Exactly. That's what I was about to say. You don't have any resentment.

SAMUEL: No, no, I don't. On the contrary, you have to understand the Jews left Europe, came to Israel. Christianity in Europe tried to convert them into Christianity.

AMIR: Or kill them.

SAMUEL: Or kill them. Now they come to Israel. There is a state, there is the establishment of the State of Israel. We're celebrating this Zionist idea. And here comes a man.

AMIR: I know.

SAMUEL: And comes and tells them, guys, guys, everything is great, but you need to believe in the Man of Nazareth.

AMIR: Yeshua is the Messiah.

SAMUEL: Yesua from Nazareth. Wait, didn't we suffer from this Man? Didn't we suffer from the people who believe in Him? So the conflict was huge. And that's why, let me... let's be honest, he didn't see too many people coming to know the Messiah. But he paid the price that today people in the Israeli society can... they know that there are Jews who believe in the Messiah. They consider themselves Jews. They like it, they don't like it. That's another subject.

AMIR: It reminds me of the Apostle Paul in the very last chapter of the book of Acts, summoned all the Jewish leaders to his house arrest in Rome. And he said, “Not that I have anything by which I can accuse my brethren, my nation.” He was suffering so much persecution and yet he knew they’re as blind as he was.

SAMUEL: I’ll tell you, every time we had problems, the police came and say...

AMIR: “Do you want to press charges?”

SAMUEL: My father says, “No, no, guys, it’s a family dispute. We don’t press charges. I will never press charges against my brothers. That’s not why I’m here.”

AMIR: And that’s important because in recent times I noticed there’s a lot of Messianic Jews in Israel that do have resentment towards ultra-Orthodox Jews. They failed to understand that it is a family dispute that we should not...

SAMUEL: ...Guys, it’s a family dispute. We love them and it reminds us of the words of Yeshua.

AMIR: Yeah.

SAMUEL: On the cross. “Father forgive them because they don’t know what they’re doing.”

AMIR: Exactly. Yeah, I totally agree. So you grew up...

SAMUEL: By the way, that brings us to the prophecy of Isaiah. When Isaiah talks about the atonement of sin that Yeshua will be atonement of sin in the Hebrew, it says that He will be *asham l’nafsheinu*. He specifies which atonement, which sacrifice is going to be for them. And it’s very interesting that in rabbinical Judaism, *asham* is the sacrifice for the sin that people don’t know they did. That’s beautiful. It’s really tied to what we see Yeshua saying on the cross. Sorry, a side note.

AMIR: That’s beautiful. And so I’m sure it also somehow turned you into who you became. Someone with a lot of ambition, someone who wants to succeed, someone who maybe even wants to prove to the world and yourself, that there is no glass ceiling for a messianic Jew in Israel.

SAMUEL: First of all, I believe that Israel is a land of opportunity, opportunities. And growing up, I was dyslexic. I didn't do well in school. You know, we went to the army. After the army, my father also had the printing press and so on. And he said, after a week, my father was a tough guy.

AMIR: I know.

SAMUEL: And so I would party at night, sleep till late. After a week, seven o'clock in the morning, he comes, he wakes me up. He says, "Get up." I said, "What happened? There's a war?" He said, "No, there's no war. You get up, go look for a job." I said, "Dad, you go to the printing press. I'll come. I'll join you at around 11." He says, "Son, you're not going to work for me till you're going to work for somebody else for five years. And only if you succeed..."

AMIR: ...You will work for me.

SAMUEL: ...you can come and try to work for me." And I said, "Dad, if I succeed, why should I come and work for you?" He said, "We'll see that." And my father pushed me. I was very upset because my brother worked for him. But he did me the biggest favor.

AMIR: Yeah, he basically pushed...

SAMUEL: ...Amir, I didn't succeed. I believe my story is the story of the grace of God and the favor of God.

AMIR: And I can attest that because I was in many of those crucial cross points. I was there with you so I could see how you rely on Him.

SAMUEL: And it's really—And I want to tell if people are watching us now and you think you're not capable, you don't have what it takes to do this and that and that. I always believe that God is calling us to a much higher calling than we're capable. Because if we are called to something we're capable—Look at you, Amir, let's be honest, we know one another. Look where God brought you.

We're always, in the kingdom of God, we're always called to something to a calling which is way, way bigger than we are. Because if we're called to a calling that we are capable to do...

AMIR: ...Then that's not a calling.

SAMUEL: We're getting the glory, "We did that." But if Amir is called to something which is way bigger and he succeeds...

AMIR: ...It's not our...

SAMUEL: I know Amir. It's a miracle. Amir got wherever he got because of the favor of God and God gets the glory. If it's me, if Samuel got wherever he got because he was talented, gifted and so on, God doesn't get the glory, and that's the beauty of the kingdom of God. That's the beauty of God's economy. So I really want to encourage people, young people who are watching us, don't put God in a box and don't limit what God can do in your life.

AMIR: Yeah. So, we move on to you starting your own business. And that's when we got to know each other. I remember you started Sar-El. But at the same time, you also kept being active in the different activities of the messianic movement. Both of us were counselors for the youth in youth conferences. I would push you to wake up early in the morning.

SAMUEL: Which I still do, by the way.

AMIR: And I remember that it was important to you not to only look for the business side of your life, but to also be very involved. And then you were somehow drawn to the world of tourism. Why? Why tourism and not something else?

SAMUEL: So that again is because in Israel, in high school, you learn a profession. So when I went to high school, there was a profession for guys, mechanic, different boys' profession. And they called my parents into school and they told them, "Your son is not good in this and he's not

good in this and not good in this.” But we have a class for girls for tourism. And I said, “Ah, that’s great. Great idea.” And in high school, I studied tourism.

AMIR: Wow. And you liked it.

SAMUEL: And I loved it. And I saw the potential. And when I graduated, when I finished the army, nobody hired me because I had a lot of spelling in English. My English was not great and so on. So I went to work for somebody, Arch Tours, you remember?

AMIR: Yes, I remember.

SAMUEL: And I worked for him and I said, “Listen, don’t pay me a salary. I work for free. And if I’ll be able to bring business, we’ll share the commission.” And after seven years, my department, by the grace of God, became bigger than the office itself. And the owner of the company says, “Listen, you need to move on because my son...”

AMIR: ...He was very good.

SAMUEL: He was very good to me, and he helped me to open Sar-El Tours.

AMIR: And I remember that day. I remember those days. I remember your first office.

SAMUEL: And you remember,

AMIR: Yes.

SAMUEL: Suddenly, you know, the first—After one week I got on *Iton Hamodia*, one of the Israeli newspapers, they said, “Be careful, a missionary travel agency.” It was funny. I didn’t have work, but I had only already headaches.

AMIR: Yes, headaches and advertisement.

SAMUEL: Headaches and advertising. But like two weeks after I opened, I got a phone call from Chuck Smith. I didn’t know who he was. I had no clue who he was. And he invited me to come to a pastors’ conference. So I asked one of the ex-patriots here in the Galilee if he knows who Chuck

Smith is and so on. He said, “Listen, if he invites you, you have to go.” And usually, you know, when you start a business, you start from the bottom. And I got Chuck Smith and went to the pastors’ conference, and I came back with groups.

AMIR: Yeah.

SAMUEL: And he hired me to be...

AMIR: Basically, you were the Israeli operator for his son-in-law who had the US-based travel agency, Inspired Travel at that time.

SAMUEL: And two weeks after I’m here, I got a phone call from Paul Crouch. And he said, “Do you know me?” I said, “No, I never heard about you.” He said, “Christian television.” I said, “What’s Christian television?” Amir, at that time in Israel, we never heard about...

AMIR: ...TBN and all that.

SAMUEL: TBN and all that. And it was funny. He asked me, “Can somebody recommend you?” I said, “Listen, the only American that can recommend me was Chuck Smith, but...”

AMIR: ...And you only met him two weeks earlier.

SAMUEL: And I only met him, so I didn’t do any tours. So I called Chuck and I said, “Pastor Chuck, can you recommend me to Paul Crouch?” And there was a silent—[Both: Laughter] a cold silence on the phone. And he recommended me. And then I received—Then if you were on TBN, it’s like you had to work with Sar-El tours in Israel. It was funny. And that’s the favor of God because it’s a miracle. It’s not something that I did.

AMIR: And it’s interesting because indirectly, because you worked with Chuck Smith, I got to know him.

SAMUEL: Yes.

AMIR: I got to know him; I got to know Calvary Chapel and I got to know good friends such as Jack Hibbs. And the rest is history. So God works in mysterious ways. And so you started— it's funny, you started speaking about the Holocaust and speaking about the background of your family. Actually, it wasn't the American market you started with. It was the German one.

SAMUEL: You remember Amir?

AMIR: I do remember that.

SAMUEL: I said, "Amir, you need to learn German." Because we didn't have—I didn't know that there will have any American business.

AMIR: I know. So you sent me to study German.

SAMUEL: After me.

AMIR: Exactly. Yeah. So I did study the German language at the time. But I remember it was very interesting to me that of all nations and of all languages, two grandchildren of Holocaust survivors are studying in Germany, the German language. It was a very interesting...

SAMUEL: ...And I think we saw, sadly to say, a huge change in the German market. The love for Israel when we started, Amir...

AMIR: ...It was amazing...

SAMUEL: ...from Germany was amazing.

AMIR: Yes.

SAMUEL: Sad to say.

AMIR: Not as much anymore.

SAMUEL: Far away from where... Germany was the second largest tours, quantity of people coming to Israel were from Germany. Today, they're not number five even. Sad, sad.

AMIR: But so, you started with the German market, the American market, and then you were exposed to more and more markets such as in Asia and also in South America. The company grew bigger. You moved to a bigger office. And then you found out that you were very good in real estate.

SAMUEL: [Laughter] You know, tourism is ups and downs.

AMIR: Exactly.

SAMUEL: ...and during the ups and downs, I believe in a biblical principle of the storehouses, Joseph storehouses. I mean, if you're watching us and you're a businessman, the Bible gives us plenty, plenty of instructions of—I call it God's principle in the marketplace. And one of them is the Joseph thing. And I think when you're making money, you have to store it for bad days. And we are now sitting here after two years...

AMIR: Yes, very bad days.

SAMUEL: ...of war. And real estate in Israel is a huge market.

AMIR: And it has never been affected by the wars. It's amazing.

SAMUEL: It's never been affected. Listen, we're a small country. We're a country of immigration. Listen, we, Amir, are a part of fulfillment of prophecies. The Jews are coming back. When we talk about return, you know, Aliyah return to Israel. They're coming back of Jews to Israel. Even during the war, it was funny to say, they kept coming.

AMIR: And so they kept coming.

SAMUEL: Who immigrates to a country in the midst of war? That's fulfillment of prophecy. So Jews are coming back to Israel. The families are growing. So real estate is a great thing in Israel. It's a needed industry in Israel. And yeah, by the grace of God, again, I went to...

AMIR: ...So by the grace of God, you realize that, you know, you can also expand to the real estate. But then you combine the real estate with tourism, and you entered into the hospitality. And you just recently opened a brand-new hotel right by the Sea of Galilee. Tell us about it.

SAMUEL: Yeah, again, that was...

AMIR: ...Five-star hotel by Sea of Galilee.

SAMUEL: And Capernaum. Again, that's...



AMIR: ...The grace of God.

SAMUEL: The grace of God, because I got a phone call from Gateway [Church]. They owned the land. By the way...

AMIR: ...The Gateway Church in Texas, in Dallas.

SAMUEL: Gateway Church in 2016. But if we're going backwards, 2006, I was asked by the minister of tourism and minister of finance; Benjamin Netanyahu was the minister of finance, and he understood that the evangelical world is the Christian friends of Israel. And he said the Catholic have lands in Israel, the Catholic have centers and so on. The evangelical...

AMIR: ...They have nothing.

SAMUEL: They have nothing. So he took the map of Israel, he saw Capernaum, and he drew a triangle. And he says, "Let's assign this land to the evangelical."

AMIR: Wow, I did not know that.

SAMUEL: He brought, in 2006, he brought 15 leaders, Paul Crouch, Pat Robertson, Jay Sekulow, and others to Israel. And he said, he put them in a room and he says, "Let's develop that piece of land and make it a center to the evangelical world." The only mistake Benjamin Netanyahu did, he says, "You need to do it together."

AMIR: He didn't understand the dynamics.

SAMUEL: And every person in the room says, "Listen..." It was a \$50 million at that time. And every one of them said, "Listen, we'll do it by myself." Everyone said. And this thing froze. And in 2016, I never heard about this again.

AMIR: So 10 years passed.

SAMUEL: ... 10 years passed.

AMIR: It's a white elephant.

SAMUEL: It's a white elephant. I get a phone call from Gateway, from their lawyer here in Israel. I go to Gateway. We sit in a meeting room. We don't agree on the price. I said, "Thank you." I go back home. Three months later, I get a phone call from Gateway. They say, "We agree to your price. We believe you should have it." Amir, I got the land. You know, sometimes you say, "Okay, now what do I do?"

AMIR: Yeah.

SAMUEL: But again, by the grace of God...

AMIR: And it wasn't easy. It wasn't easy. Because I walked through this whole thing with you as a friend. I wasn't involved, but I could see the frustrations with the local authorities. And sometimes you agree on one thing with one local municipality. And then there were elections and there's a new leader. And he doesn't want to honor the decisions.

SAMUEL: So the planning took me 6 to 7 years.

AMIR: Just planning.

SAMUEL: Planning and getting all the papers. And in the last Passover by the grace of God, we opened a beautiful 5-star hotel with an outdoor amphitheater, with a studio facility together, we did it together with TBN.

AMIR: So it's a partnership.

SAMUEL: It's a partnership. TBN came as a partner, as a financial partner. And it's a studio plus a hotel. It's a beautiful place overlooking the Sea of Galilee.

AMIR: And a lot of Israelis, by the way, have good reviews.

SAMUEL: Yes. I really believe, Amir, that tourism to Israel is not like tourism to anywhere else in the world. I believe to come to Israel is more for you, I mean, whoever comes, than for us here.

AMIR: Correct.

SAMUEL: There is a mutual benefit. And I believe that, let's be honest, you and me know that when we hear a preacher preach, we can immediately know if he's been to Israel or not been to Israel.

AMIR: Absolutely.

SAMUEL: You immediately understand, especially when he talks about the parables or whatever, you immediately understand it: Does he understand the Jewish culture? Was he in Israel or not?

AMIR: Even the geography, does he understand it? Yes. And I remember that brings me to what Pastor Chuck Smith said, that the tour to Israel worth a whole year in a Bible school. So, okay, so now we're coming to the point where you grew up in a pioneer's house. You became an entrepreneur and built a very significant business in Israel, honored and recognized by the top financial institutions in Israel. And you never ever was ashamed of the gospel. Everywhere you go, everyone knows who you are. It's not something you hide. And you said to me one time, as I started this program with, you said to me one time that your biggest joy is to study and to teach the Word. Of all things, business is not your biggest joy, this is it. Your father passed away a few years ago, and that led you to step into the position of pastor of...

SAMUEL: I have to correct you.

AMIR: Okay.

SAMUEL: My father passed away and the congregation continued with the board. And we saw the decline; the congregation was going down and down. And we sat together, all the elders, and we said that one of us should be the leader. And I really believe that one of the elders should have been, Victor Kalisher was gifted and so on. And the end of the evening, I don't know, I became. I don't know how I became.

AMIR: But it's nothing you opposed or...

SAMUEL: No, no, no, I really love it. I have to say the truth; I really love it. I really love studying the Word. But when I say studying the Word, my heart is to bring the Jewish background...

AMIR: And so that's where I want to take this conversation right now. So, you became now above all the other titles that are mostly business related, you're now one of the leaders in the body of Messiah.

SAMUEL: Senior pastor.

AMIR: Senior pastor, but one of the leaders in the whole body of the Messiah in Israel. And obviously that emphasized more that side in you that wants to share the good news of the Messiah with the Jewish people in Israel. And I remember a few years ago, I heard a message that you gave, I think in the US, on the principles of how to share the gospel with Jewish people. And maybe you can give us one or two things to cause people to understand. It's a very big difference between sharing with the Jew in Israel and sharing with anyone else elsewhere.

SAMUEL: Definitely. I think when we're talking about Jewish evangelism, when we're talking about sharing the love of God. And I believe sharing is sharing the love of God. There's nothing better that you can do for a Jew than sharing with him the Word of God. I mean, people are, there're Christians who are donating for so many things. And let's me use this opportunity to thank the

church for bringing a new Christianity to the Jewish people. And in loving, now the Jews know that the best friends that they have in the world are the Christians, especially the evangelical churches. But I believe that the best thing that we have for the Jewish people is their Messiah. You know, when we hear again and again, "Comfort, comfort My people," you know, the very famous verse that they...

AMIR: Isaiah 40.

SAMUEL: Isaiah 40, that everybody's quoting. But then Isaiah, in the second verses, He's telling the people, first of all, He's talking to who? He's talking to...

AMIR: ...To a different group.

SAMUEL: He's talking to a different...

AMIR: ...To comfort His people.

SAMUEL: To comfort His people. And what's the comfort? He says, "Tell her that her sin was forgiven."

AMIR: Exactly.

SAMUEL: And somebody has paid double for all her iniquity. What does it mean? Tell her that there is a forgiveness of sin and the forgiveness of sin is through the suffering of the Messiah. When we talk about Jewish evangelism, Amir, we have to understand, first of all, what's the obstacles of the Jewish people to see Yeshua as Messiah?

AMIR: What are they?

SAMUEL: Let's be honest. He grew, what, less than 10 miles from here. Okay? He changed history. Every Jew heard about Yeshua, but 95% of the Jewish people won't read His stuff. Why? So I believe there are four major obstacles, many more, but the major obstacle, we talked about, the first one is the history between the church and the Jewish people, sorry, and so on. The second

obstacle is the claim what Yeshua said. Yeshua says, “Me and My Father are one. Nobody goes to the Father but through Me.” John, he opens his gospel with the first 13 verses of John, he says, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was...” And he says, “Everything was created by Him, for Him,” and so on. John starts and he takes this young man from Nazareth, and he elevates Him to the Creator.

AMIR: Exactly.

SAMUEL: Which means we are claiming, if we believe in the New Testament, we’re claiming the deity of the Messiah. We say the Messiah was not just a great teacher, like we see in Jewish rabbinical understanding....

AMIR: Not just a man.

SAMUEL: He was not just a man. We say that He was fully man, fully God, you know? He was like John says, He was God in flesh and blood. He was the Word of God. Did John stand too much in the sun and came up with this idea, or is it really an Old Testament idea? So, when you talk about Messiah to a Jewish person, the first obstacle you have is His deity.

AMIR: Exactly. I always tell people they never rejected Him as Messiah. They rejected Him as God. That was the blasphemy they accused Him of.

SAMUEL: Yeah, why was He crucified? He was not crucified because of His teaching. When we read Matthew 5 to 7, it’s a beautiful teaching and we can find in the Mishnah similar teachings. So, His teachings are not contradicting. What He claims...

AMIR: ...Proclaims being equal to God.

SAMUEL: Exactly. So, this whole idea, the Son of God. This whole idea...

AMIR: ...Which is in Proverbs.

SAMUEL: Which is in Proverbs, which is in the first word of Genesis. The first word in Genesis, *Bereshit*, “in the beginning” in Hebrew is a combination of two words. *Ber*, my son, *eshit*, put forth. So, I believe that we have to use the Old Testament to show that the Messiah is a divine person. We have to show this whole—When we read it through the Old Testament, the Angel of the Lord. Every time we see the Angel of the Lord, we have to understand it’s the Messiah. We have to show that even in rabbinical, early rabbinical literature...

AMIR: ... in the earlier ones...

SAMUEL: Yeah, not Rashi and Rambam.

AMIR: They believed in it.

SAMUEL: They saw that the Messiah had to be divine. They saw, you know—Let us make a man in Our image. There is piles and piles of books and debate in rabbinical literature on who did God talk to.

AMIR: Yeah. Who is we? Who is us?

SAMUEL: Exactly. Who is us?

AMIR: Why Elohim is in plural?

SAMUEL: And today rabbinical Judaism is based on Rashi, one major commentary. And Rambam, who in the 13 pillars of Judaism, two pillars say one that Elohim is a singular; we also believe that God is one.

AMIR: ... and it’s a complex unity.

SAMUEL: We call it a complex unity. Rambam comes and says, “No, no, there is no such a thing.” Although if you look in the Zohar, the Kabbalah and all that, always talking about the complex unity. Rambam came and said, and I think it’s because of the fear he had from Christianity, he says, “It’s a single unity.” It’s not a complex unity. It’s *Yahid* and not *Echad*. And then he says

in the second, another one of the 13 pillars of Judaism, he says that He has no flesh and body, which means God cannot appear as flesh and blood. So we have to show that this whole idea of appearing that God wears flesh and blood...

AMIR: ...is Biblical.

SAMUEL: ... is not an idea of John. It's throughout the Old Testament. And a...

AMIR: ...And by the way, one of the things I love the most about your father's print house was that he started the ministry within that. That was called "Keren Achva Meshichit," the Messianic Jewish Brotherhood Foundation. And then there he printed books of believers, Jewish believers from the 1800s. And that could already then see that and prove it through those teachings. So we're talking about those things.

SAMUEL: So those are the second—The third obstacle is the whole concept of the suffering Messiah. You know, Amir, a long time ago when you were guiding, tell me if I'm correct, nobody—and you were walking in the Via De La Rosa in Jerusalem—nobody stopped you and said, "Amir, Amir, why did He have to suffer and die?" It was a given, the Messiah had to suffer and die. But is it really? Let's be honest when we look about the disciples. None of them understood the whole concept of the suffering Messiah.

AMIR: All the way to the end, they didn't understand.

SAMUEL: They didn't understand. We all remember that here not far away, we were sitting in the Galilee in a beautiful studio, all the way in Caesarea Philippi, Yeshua prophesied about His suffering and death in Jerusalem.

AMIR: And Peter rebuked Him for that.

SAMUEL: Now let's think, who was worse? Peter or Judas? What does He say to Peter?

AMIR: "Get behind Me, Satan!"

SAMUEL: Satan. He calls Peter Satan; He doesn't call Judas Satan. Why? Because Peter did not understand the plan of salvation. Peter wanted to come between Yeshua and the plan of salvation.

AMIR: Which has to include death and suffering.

SAMUEL: Exactly.

AMIR: The atoning death.

SAMUEL: That's why Yeshua was so strong in that moment. The whole concept—Now think about it. We all remember the story of James and John, the two disciples going to Jerusalem with their mother. And at that time, we were not sitting on an air-conditioned bus, it took three days. And when the Jewish mother sees on the hills, she sees already the temple and she sees Jerusalem, she comes to Yeshua and she says, "Listen, when You get there, take good care of my two sons. I cooked for You; I took care of You. Put one on the right side and one on the left side." She didn't say one on the right side on the cross and one on the left side. In her mind, He's the Messiah, He needs to come and sit in Jerusalem.

AMIR: And reign.

SAMUEL: He needs to be the King. So if He's going to be the King as a good Jewish mother, "Make my son one minister of finance, and the other one the minister of foreign affairs, and I'm okay and I did my job as a mother." And the worst is John, John the Baptist, who proclaimed, "Here is the Lamb of God."

AMIR: And He said, "A voice calling in the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord."

SAMUEL: And he heard, he saw the dove, he heard the voice of God.

AMIR: And yet...

SAMUEL: ...And yet, he's sitting in the dungeons in Jerusalem, what does he do? He calls his disciples, "Go to my cousin and ask Him, Why?" Because "Yeshua, if You're the One, come to

Jerusalem, and reign and release me, take me out from here.” The whole concept of a suffering Messiah...

AMIR: ...Was foreign to the disciples even.

SAMUEL: ...was foreign to the disciples, is still foreign to the Jewish people today. The concept, and let's be honest, the Bible talks about the suffering Messiah, the Bible talks about the Messiah the King, putting them together, it's not easy. And Isaiah 53...

AMIR: ...That's why it's forbidden.

SAMUEL: But it's not the only verse.

AMIR: Yeah, it's just others. If you go to Isaiah 2 and 3.

SAMUEL: When you tell a Jew, “Isaiah 53 talks about the suffering Messiah,” he'll tell you, “Isaiah 53 doesn't talk about the suffering Messiah, it's talking about the people of Israel, the nation who suffers.” And that's what Rashi pushed and pushed and pushed. And the fourth obstacle, Amir, is the whole idea of salvation by grace.

AMIR: Yes, not by works.

SAMUEL: Yeah, the concept of grace is a very, very hard concept.

AMIR: I think it's hard for everyone.

SAMUEL: But for the Jewish people, more than anybody. And the Jews have 613 commandments. Beyond the commandments, they have the Halacha. I don't know how you translate *Halacha*, it's the Jewish...

AMIR: It's the daily rituals and the daily...

SAMUEL: It's a commentary on the...

AMIR: ... on how to implement everything in the daily life.

SAMUEL: Exactly. So to protect laws, they call it fencing. The Halacha is like a fence to the commandment. So in order that you don't, let's say, fall into sin, let's say, do not work on the Sabbath. The Bible tells us, "Do not work on Sabbath." So in order not to break the law, you have to define what work is.

AMIR: That's the Halacha.

SAMUEL: And that's the Halacha. Now, if we just think about the work on Sabbath, there are piles and piles and piles... for me to take the glass and wash it after being used. Is it work or not work? There are piles of work.

AMIR: Even to tear pieces of the toilet paper. They have to tear it in advance.

SAMUEL: Exactly. What's work, what's not work. So in order to—And now we come with a message.

AMIR: Of it's not about that.

SAMUEL: It's not about that. That was just the shadow. The real thing is Jeremiah 31. God is going to make a new covenant with the people of Israel, a covenant that will be depending on not what we do, but what He did. So what about what we have to do? What about do, do, do? And, Amir, and you know that more than anybody else, even when a Jewish person receives or accepts Yeshua as the Messiah, the first thing he asks, "What do I need to do?" There is always a pull back to the Law. And you know what, Amir, I discover? You know, there is a commandment of *Shatnese* about not mixing the two, linen and cotton.

AMIR: Yes.

SAMUEL: And you ask yourself, "Why? Why does God care?" But because the Torah is a shadow, like Paul says of the things that...

AMIR: Yes, Colossians 2.

SAMUEL: ...that have to come. I believe the Torah is talking not to mix the Old Covenant, the Torah, and the New Covenant. Cotton symbolizes the Law, symbolizes works. Linen symbolizes the garment of the high priest. If you mix those two, you mix between the two things. We have, as Jewish believers especially, understand what happened in the—When Yeshua was hanging on a tree in Jerusalem and He was resurrected...

AMIR: He fulfilled the Law.

SAMUEL: We have to understand what it means. He fulfilled the Law. And we have to understand what it means to live under the New Covenant. And I say, “We” as Jewish. Now, I know there is debate between Christians about law and grace, but when Paul was talking about law and grace, he was talking about the Mosaic Law. When people are debating between law and grace, in order to talk about grace, you have to define the law. And the law is always the Mosaic Law. It’s not a Christian Halacha, a way of life is going back to the Law.

AMIR: Yes. And it’s interesting because even Peter himself in the 15th chapter of Acts, when they had to decide, okay, what is it that the non-Jews are going to live by? He said, “We and our fathers couldn’t bear this heavy burden of the Law. How can we put it on them? We need to believe just like they do.” He said that. I mean, it was very interesting to see that.

SAMUEL: We need to discover what the grace of God, the covenant of God in grace, what the covenant of grace brought to the Jew first and to mankind. And we cannot... and it’s sad to see, we see more and more Christians who come here, and they want to go back to the Law because, let’s be honest, rabbinical Judaism is very deep. There is a lot, a lot—it’s a treasure.

AMIR: It’s deep and it also gives you a sense of belonging.

SAMUEL: And it’s a sense of belonging and people, you know. There were many of them—many of people came from a Catholic background or something like that—they go into the church

and they're looking for the deepness and sad to say they don't always find the deepness in the Word of God in the church. They get experience and so on, which is great. So they're looking for something more and they come here and they see rabbinical Judaism. And they're attached. And sad to say they make a mishmash; they make a mess out of the two covenants.

AMIR: Yeah, very interesting.

SAMUEL: So I believe that those are the four obstacles. And if we can present a Jewish Messiah, we're not here to convert Jews to Christianity, we are here to present a Jewish Messiah to the Jewish people. And when we do that, we can have a conversation. By the way, evangelism, Jewish evangelism starts by you loving them.

AMIR: Exactly.

SAMUEL: And I believe when you share the gospel to anybody...

AMIR: ...You need to love him first.

SAMUEL: You need to also listen to where he is in his spiritual journey. Sometimes we are like salesmen. We have something to say, and we want to shove it into somebody's throat. And somebody told us something about Isaiah 53 and we're shoving Isaiah 53 and not really understand what we're talking about. We have to study; we have to go back and be scholar of the Book.

AMIR: That's exactly what I was trying to say earlier. Your passion is this. I mean, you could have easily sat here and talked about your business for half an hour, and you didn't. Business is a passion that you have,

SAMUEL: It's a vehicle.

AMIR: A vehicle, exactly, it's a secondary thing to bring actually opportunities for you. And you really share the gospel with some people in high places *because* of your business. Business brought you to those platforms.

SAMUEL: If people are watching you and there are businesspeople and they struggle—And listen, Amir, we're going out from two years of zero tourism as a businessman, a very, very challenging time. But I really believe in the verse, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God. And all the rest should be added unto you.” Now, “Seek ye the kingdom and His righteousness.” His righteousness, not our righteousness; sometimes we forget that. But to seek the kingdom of God, what does it mean? Is it my business or is it His business? You see, if it's my business, when there's a problem, I have to lose sleep because I have a lot of challenges. But if I really dedicated all my businesses to Him and it becomes His businesses, and I'm concerning building His kingdom and not my kingdom, I don't lose sleep because it's His thing. And people are... let's be honest, the hardest thing in the marketplace is there's always crisis in the marketplace. And people are losing sleep, and we as sons and daughters of the King should not lose sleep. We have to learn to enter into the rest-place of God. The question is, which kingdom are we building? Are we building His kingdom or my building? If you build your kingdom, then you worry. So I'm sitting here at the worst time ever in my business but I'm full of joy. And if tomorrow God closes Sar-El and He opens me something else, it's totally fine because...

AMIR: ...Because it's His to begin with.

SAMUEL: It was never mine. And once you experience the real peace and the rest—we are in the marketplace—if there's one thing missing, it's the resting. We're all trying to promote ourselves. We're all trying to—You know, with social media, you get up in the morning and—I'm not talking about you, you're somewhere else. But as a businessman, your marketing team comes and sits with you and says, “We need to do this, and we need to do this.” And you know why it reminds me one time, the parable of Yeshua on the wedding. He says, “When you're invited into a wedding, sit in the back, and wait that the groom comes and invite you to his table.” And let's

be honest, Amir, from all the three years that Yeshua walked here in the Galilee, that's what was chosen to be in the manuscript of the New Testament. Who cares where you sit in a wedding? But again, I believe it's a lecture and I believe it's a lecture for businesspeople. If there are businesspeople watching us...

AMIR: Don't seek that honor.

SAMUEL: You see it and you know, Amir, when you come to a wedding, a Jewish wedding, sitting in the main table, then you're somebody.

AMIR: It's the highest...

SAMUEL: And you're somebody and everybody wants to be seen there, and people will push in order to get there. Sitting in the back, let's be—In the world's economy, they tell you, "No, no, you need to do everything in order to get to that seat." If you have to step on people, if you have to push people...

AMIR: ...As long as you're on camera.

SAMUEL: You need to be there.

AMIR: Yes.

SAMUEL: And Yeshua tells you, "No, no, sit in the back seat and Me as the groom, I'll come and I will invite you." Now, when He invites you, nobody can move you. When He puts you into the front, nobody can take your place. You don't need to defend your position day and night. And that's the rest that we're talking about in the Messiah.

AMIR: And that's the security we also have.

SAMUEL: Amen.

AMIR: Wow, that was an amazing time of getting to know you, getting to know your heart. We hardly got to know your business, but that was not what it was all about. But I think that also, if I

may, ask everyone, you guys, if you want to come to Israel, Sar-El Tours and Conferences is the right way to do that. If you want to stay in a beautiful hotel by the Sea of Galilee, David's Harp is the right place. And if you want to have any media production in Israel, Sar-El Media can give you that as well. It's always good to give business to brothers in the Lord *and* people who are very professional in what they're doing. Because that is also something that when they do, they do it unto the Lord. Shmulik, thank you very much for being here.

SAMUEL: Amir, I don't think I ever officially thanked you for being the general manager of Sar-El Tours.

AMIR: Those were two years, challenging years, but two years that I think God really used in my life. And you were there to be my mentor. I don't know if business is my gift, but I know that I had to go through that to maybe get here now. And it was an amazing experience. And I don't know if you know that, but over the last 30 years, the only salary I ever got from any company in the world is Sar-El Tours. [Laughter] I am—So just so you know, this is part of who I am, part of my life. And I think God put us together for such a time as this. And I want to thank you for being here. This was a...

SAMUEL: ...A great honor.

AMIR: Yeah, and this was an amazing way, I think, to not only get to know you personally, but also to get to know your heart. And to get to understand what it means to live in the land of Israel, even in times of war, and still be very laser focused on the real important things which is sharing the good news about our Messiah. Shmulik, thank you.

SAMUEL: Thank you, Amir.

AMIR: And come again.

SAMUEL: Thank you, great honor.

AMIR: God bless.

SAMUEL: Thank you.

AMIR: Thank you, everyone. Please share this video with as many people as you can. I'm sure so many of you are going to be blessed by this content. And until next time, Shalom and goodbye from Galilee.

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