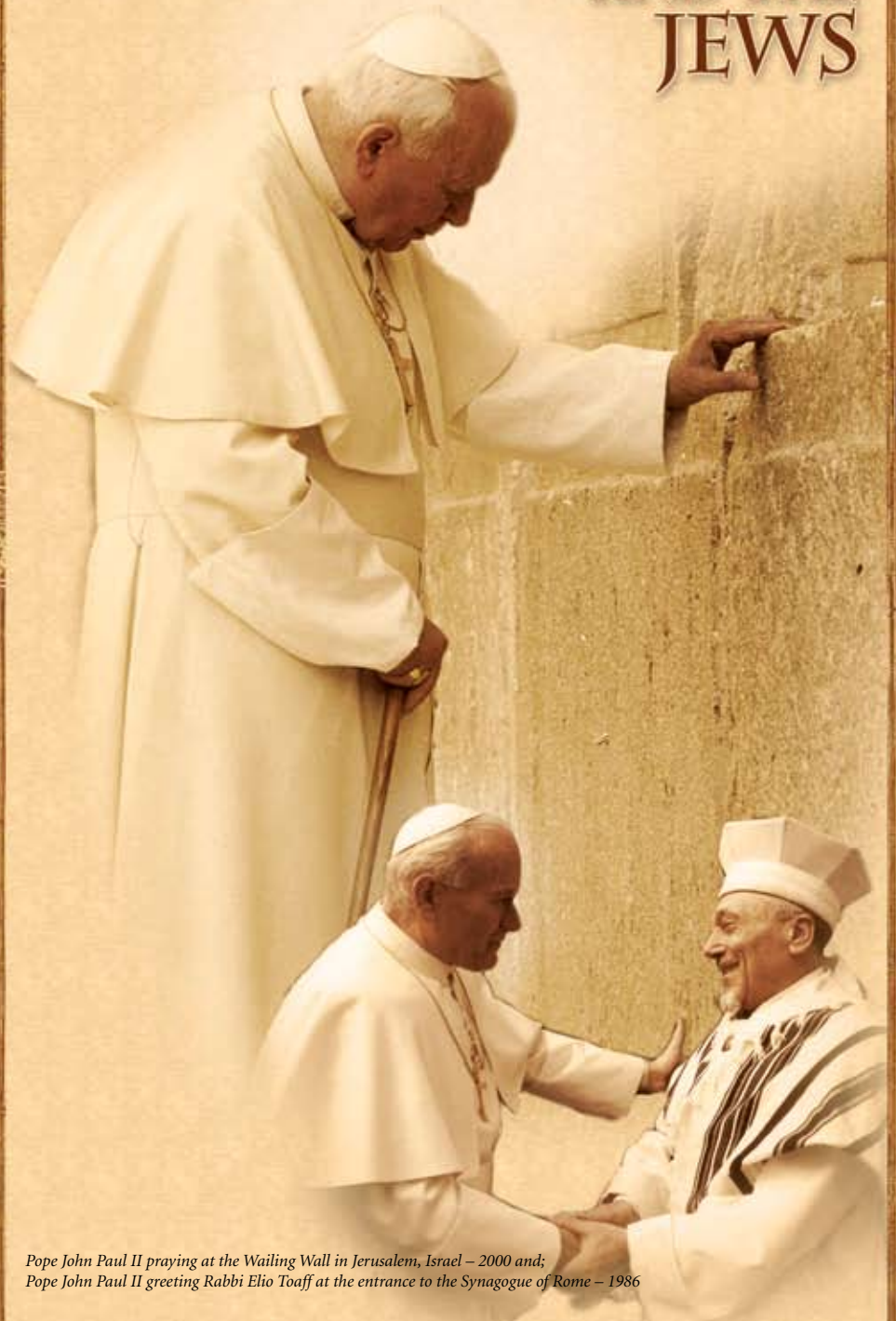




# JOHN PAUL II AND THE JEWS



*Pope John Paul II praying at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, Israel – 2000 and;  
Pope John Paul II greeting Rabbi Elio Toaff at the entrance to the Synagogue of Rome – 1986*



*Pope John Paul II in the Synagogue of Rome with Rabbi Elio Toaff – 1986*

CHRISTIANS: BROTHERS AND SISTERS, MANY OF US HAVE BEHAVED SHAMEFULLY. WE HAVE NOT REPLACED THE JEWISH PEOPLE WITH OUR NEW COVENANT. OUR "ELDER BROTHERS AND SISTERS" CONTINUE TO OWN A SPECIAL BOND, A COVENANT WITH THE LORD. THE JEWS HAVE RETURNED TO ISRAEL, THEIR ANCESTRAL HOME. WE HAVE SINNED BY PERSECUTING THEM THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES." THESE PROFOUND WORDS CONSTITUTE ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL LEGACIES OF THIS GREAT SOUL WHO WAS KAROL WOJTYLA, BELOVED POPE JOHN PAUL II.

ON COUNTLESS OCCASIONS HE CONDEMNED ANTI-SEMITISM AND AT A MEETING WITH THE BISHOPS OF LATIN AMERICA HE CALLED ON THEM TO COMBAT WITH VIGOR ANY VESTIGE OF ANTI-SEMITISM. "ANTI-SEMITISM IS A SIN; IT'S ANTI-CHRISTIAN."

THANKS TO HIM TWO GREAT SPIRITUAL FAMILIES HAVE RECONCILED AND JEWS

AND CHRISTIANS MAY WALK CONFIDENTLY TOGETHER ON THE SHINING PATH THAT LEADS US TO GOD, OUR COMMON FATHER. ON JUNE 6, 2005, SPEAKING TO A DELEGATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL JEWISH COMMITTEE FOR INTERRELIGIOUS CONSULTATIONS, POPE BENEDICT XVI CONFIRMED HIS PREDECESSORS' COURSE: "IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING THE COUNCIL, MY PREDECESSORS POPE PAUL VI AND, IN A PARTICULAR WAY, POPE JOHN PAUL II, TOOK SIGNIFICANT STEPS TOWARDS IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE JEWISH PEOPLE. IT IS MY INTENTION TO CONTINUE ON THIS PATH."

MAY JOHN PAUL II REST IN GLORY!

THE FOLLOWING BOOKS ARE RECOMMENDED:

*THE HIDDEN POPE*, DARCY O'BRIEN  
*A LETTER TO A JEWISH FRIEND*, GIAN FRANCO SVIDERCOSHI

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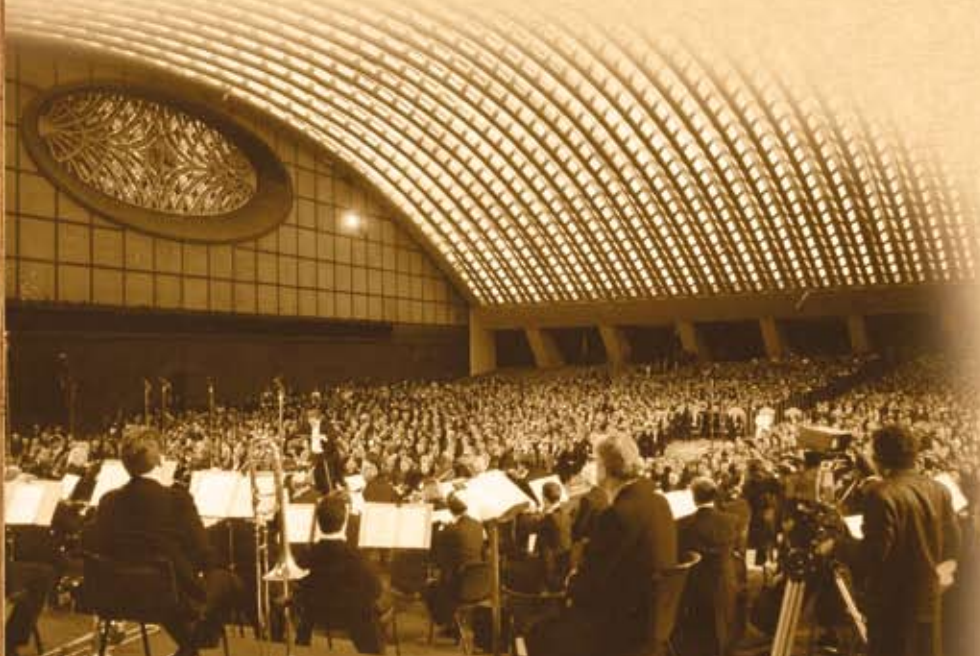


## JOHN PAUL II AND THE JEWS

THE GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW BEGINS WITH THE FOLLOWING WORDS: "THE BOOK OF THE GENERATION OF JESUS CHRIST, SON OF DAVID, SON OF ABRAHAM." FURTHER ALONG, IN THE SAME TEXT, THE EVANGELIST INFORMS US THAT JESUS WAS A DESCENDANT OF KING DAVID, THE FOREMOST KING OF THE JEWS. STRANGE AS IT MAY SEEM, PROBABLY MILLIONS OF CHRISTIANS AROUND THE WORLD ARE UNAWARE OF THE EXTREMELY CLOSE AND INTIMATE LINK BETWEEN THE HOLY FAMILY AND THE PEOPLE CHOSEN BY GOD TO RECEIVE HIS REVELATIONS THROUGH THE BIBLE.

JESUS' HEBREW NAME WAS "YESHUA," MARY'S WAS "MIRIAM," AND JOSEPH'S WAS "YOSEF." THE BIRTH PLACE, BETHLEHEM, IS CALLED "BET LEHEM" (THE HOUSE OF BREAD) IN HEBREW, AND NAZARETH, WHERE JESUS LIVED MOST OF HIS LIFE, IS IN GALILEE, WHICH IS PART OF THE MODERN JEWISH STATE OF ISRAEL.

*Holocaust Memorial Concert at the Vatican in memory of the 6 million Jews exterminated by the Nazis – 1994*



IF WE TAKE THESE FACTS INTO CONSIDERATION, WE SHOULD ASK OURSELVES: WHY HAS THERE BEEN SUCH A LONG AND BLOODY HISTORY OF CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND JEWS? WHY IS IT THAT SO MANY CHRISTIANS, DRIVEN BY A SERIES OF COMPLEX MOTIVATIONS, ALL TOO OFTEN HAVE PERSECUTED AND MASSACRED A PEOPLE TO WHOM THEY OWE NOT ONLY THEIR HOLY SCRIPTURES BUT THEIR VERY SAVIOR, AND DESPITE THE FACT THAT OFFICIAL CHURCH LAW GAVE PROTECTION TO THE JEWS?

THE SAME YEAR THAT COLUMBUS DISCOVERED AMERICA, 1492, THE KING AND QUEEN OF SPAIN BANISHED MANY THOUSANDS OF JEWS WHO HAD LIVED PEACEFULLY IN SPAIN FOR CENTURIES BEFORE SPAIN ADOPTED THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF JEWS – MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN – WERE MISTREATED OR DIED AS A RESULT OF THE SPANISH INQUISITION. THE ANCIENT CHRISTIAN "TEACHING OF CONTEMPT" AGAINST JEWS AND JUDAISM, JOHN PAUL II SAID, "SO LULLED THE

CONSCIENCES" OF CHRISTIANS THAT ALL TOO MANY FAILED TO ACT AS THEY SHOULD WHEN THEIR JEWISH NEIGHBORS WERE BEING ROUNDED UP BY THE NAZIS TO BE SENT TO THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS DURING WORLD WAR II.

KAROL WOJTYLA, LATER ELECTED TO BECOME POPE JOHN PAUL II, KNEW THAT ENTIRE BLOODY AND SORROWFUL STORY PERSONALLY BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN BORN AND RAISED IN THE CITY OF WADOWICE, POLAND, A COUNTRY THAT HAD THE WORLD'S LARGEST JEWISH POPULATION UNTIL WORLD WAR II. HIS CLOSEST CHILDHOOD FRIEND WAS A JEWISH BOY, A NEIGHBOR OF THE YOUNG KAROL, WITH WHOM THE FUTURE POPE PLAYED SOCCER IN THE COBBLED STREETS OF HIS HOMETOWN.

THE FUTURE POPE WAS AN EYEWITNESS TO THE HORRORS OF THE WAR, OF THE PERSECUTIONS AND MASSACRES. HIS CHRISTIAN SOUL WAS DEEPLY MOVED AND SHAKEN BY THE HORRORS HE LIVED. HE WAS AMONG THE BISHOPS OF THE WORLD WHO VOTED IN FAVOR OF NOSTRA AETATE, THE HISTORIC DECLARATION ON THE JEWS FROM THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, NOSTRA AETATE. THE DEATH OF JOHN PAUL II WAS A GREAT LOSS, NOT ONLY FOR CHRISTIANITY BUT FOR ALL HUMANITY. JOHN PAUL WAS AN EXCEPTIONAL MAN: AN ACTOR, WRITER, ATHLETE, PHILOSOPHER, POLITICIAN, MORALIST, ECUMENICAL, AND MUCH MORE. EVERY HUMAN BEING, REGARDLESS OF RELIGION, WHO HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF ENCOUNTERING JOHN PAUL, WAS AWARE THAT HE OR SHE WAS IN THE PRESENCE OF A MAN OF GOD.

ONE OF THE POPE'S TITLES IS "SUPREME PONTIFF." PONTIFF MEANS "HE WHO BUILDS BRIDGES," AND JOHN PAUL

BUILT BEAUTIFUL BRIDGES BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND THEIR SPIRITUAL ANCESTORS, THE JEWISH PEOPLE. JOHN PAUL WAS THE FIRST POPE SINCE ST. PETER – WHO WAS OF COURSE JEWISH – TO VISIT A SYNAGOGUE DURING A RELIGIOUS SERVICE. DURING HIS VISIT, JOHN PAUL TREATED THE CHIEF RABBI OF ROME AS AN EQUAL. JOHN PAUL ESTABLISHED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE HOLY SEE AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL, WHICH HE PERSONALLY VISITED AS A PILGRIM. DURING THAT MOVING VISIT, THE POPE VISITED YAD VASHEM, THE MONUMENT TO THE SIX MILLION JEWISH MARTYRS OF WORLD WAR II, AND PRAYED AT THE WESTERN WALL – THE LAST REMAINS OF THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON – A SACRED PLACE FOR BOTH JEWS AND CHRISTIANS. THE POPE HUMBLY ASKED FOR FORGIVENESS FOR THE HORRORS WHICH CHRISTIANS HAD INFLICTED ON THOSE HE CALLED "OUR ELDER BROTHERS IN THE FAITH."

HE ALSO HELD A CONCERT AT THE VATICAN IN MEMORY OF THE SIX MILLION JEWS WHO WERE VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST, AND VISITED THE CONCENTRATION CAMP AT AUSCHWITZ, POLAND.

IN HIS PRAYER, JOHN PAUL SAID:

*"God of our fathers, You chose Abraham and his descendants to bring the name of God to all the nations. We are profoundly saddened by the behavior of those who, in the course of history, have caused suffering to these, your children, and for this we ask Your forgiveness; we wish to commit ourselves to a genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant (the Jewish people)."*

THE IMPACT OF THESE WORDS, THE BRIDGE THEY BUILD BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND JEWS, IS IMMENSE. THIS MESSAGE IS ADDRESSED TO ALL