



# Christmas

THROUGH JEWISH EYES

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REFLECTIONS ON THE SEASON

Dr. Mitch Glaser



## A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE HOLIDAYS

I became a believer in Jesus in 1970, a few days before Thanksgiving. Within a month, I was faced with my first major challenge as a Jewish follower of Jesus. **My new Christian friends invited me to join them in celebrating Christmas.** Their invitation produced one of the toughest hurdles I had to overcome in my new walk with the Lord because I had been raised to believe that the idea of God becoming man was so very “un-Jewish!”

Many things have changed since then, and now I have come to appreciate Christmas as a Jewish believer in Jesus in profound new ways. There are many theological subjects and aspects of Christmas that make it unique to Jewish eyes, therefore this booklet is divided by topics for the sake of clarity. We will cover historical connections between Christians and the Jewish people, the incarnation, the virgin birth, and of course the place Hanukkah has in the discussion.

One of the things that is most difficult for Jewish people to understand is the idea of the incarnation—that Jesus is both fully man and fully God. So how did I come to believe that Jesus is God in the flesh?

## THE INCARNATION AND VIRGIN BIRTH—TRUTH OR HERESY?

I was raised in a traditional Jewish home. I was trained for my *Bar Mitzvah* at a modern Orthodox synagogue. My family celebrated all of the Jewish holidays and lifecycle events. We participated in the Jewish community and in its religious life, as the neighborhood where I grew up in New York City was almost entirely Jewish.

Additionally, we internally embraced the ill feelings most Jewish people feel toward “Christianity.” Most of the negative ideas

we had toward Christianity resulted from the standard Jewish conviction that Christians persecuted the Jews—during the Crusades, the *pogroms* in Russia, and ultimately during the Holocaust. Yet, the distance between Judaism and Christianity goes beyond an unfortunate, and sometimes bloody history. There are some deep theological divides as well.

For example, Jewish people pride themselves in believing that God is one—singular and not three! One of the core prayers of Judaism is what we call the Shema, which is based on Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” This is often viewed as the religious rallying cry for the Jewish community and is recited almost every time Jewish people gather for prayer.

So, you can see that the belief that God is triune would have been an anathema to me as a Jewish person. The idea that God is three-in-one is viewed as non-Jewish by almost every Jewish person in world. This is a well-known Jewish distinction!

Second, Jewish people do not believe that God would become a man. Jewish people are generally taught that worshiping God in any form—be it flesh, wood, or stone—is idolatry. Therefore, to believe that God became a man and to then worship this individual would be something a Jewish person would avoid at all costs. You cannot imagine how deeply this resistance to the idea that God could take on human flesh and become a man (incarnation) is woven into the Jewish soul.

Even today, debates over the incarnation and deity of Jesus continue to be one of the hottest issues in Jewish evangelism. It is the line in the sand which, when crossed over, is seen as the point of no return. As we continue with our Isaiah 53 campaigns throughout the United States, Israel, Argentina, and a number of other countries, we have also established forum discussion opportunities. At these forums, we see clearly that the issue of

the deity of Jesus and the nature of the Trinity are at the heart of the theological objections Jewish people have toward Jesus being the Messiah.

All of this to say, the incarnation—the real reason for the season—flows directly from the covenant made by God with Abram in Genesis 12:1-3. In this great passage, God promises to bless Abram in many ways, one of which is to make his seed a great nation and to use this nation, Abram’s seed, to bless the nations of the world.

A nation and a people needed to exist and be preserved through time to bring these promised blessings to the world. God has and always will be faithful to His covenant promises. We see this clearly in the way His powerful hand has preserved the Jewish people throughout the ages. He rescued the Jewish people from the threat of extinction and sheltered them until that appointed day in history when the Savior of the world was born. For it is in Yeshua—God Himself in the flesh—that the promises of God to bless the world through Abram are fulfilled.

But, there is more! For during this season of Christmas and Hanukkah, we are reminded of the great hope that the One who was faithful in the past will be faithful in the future. His promise to the Jewish people did not cease with the incarnation or at Golgotha, since His promise to *complete* redemption at His second coming is not finished. And His chosen people still have a vital role to play in the future. The festival of Hanukkah and the reality of the incarnation remind me that God will keep His hand on His chosen people; sheltering, rescuing, and preserving the Jewish people until the last day when He comes to reign over His recaptured earth.

### ***God’s Gift Wrapped in Human Flesh***

We think about gifts at this time of year. Whether we celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah, we cannot help but be influenced by our

culture and spend much of our time and money considering what gifts we will give to whom! I, for one, do not think it is all that bad to think about giving and being generous at this time of the year. I, like you, do not enjoy the rampant materialism of our day or support those who use the birth of the Savior for profit. Some of what goes on is distasteful. However, it is always good to be generous. It is always better to give than to receive.

And most importantly for me, this is a season of the year when I am reminded that God gave the Light of the World, our Messiah Jesus as His greatest gift to mankind. He was wrapped in flesh, as foretold by the prophets of Israel (Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7) and sent to earth to pay for our redemption with the price of His life. This is God's greatest gift!

But, He also gave many other gifts. For example, I view His giving the land of Israel to the Jewish people as a gift. This gift was given in much the same way as He gave us the Savior. He promised this gift of the Messiah and of the land of Israel in His Word. And today we see the fulfillment of both of these promises.

The Jewish people now dwell in the land of Israel because God is powerful and faithful, not because of the might of our armies. The land of Israel, despite continually defending its borders and its inhabitants lives continually disrupted by war, is still a gift from God. The fact that Jewish people from all across the globe have immigrated to Israel—and it has more than 5 million people according to the latest statistics—is a modern-day miracle.

But, as wonderful as it is to see the Jewish people back in the land of promise, we know that this is only part of God's plan for the Jewish people. One day, Israel will dwell in the land in peace and security. The other part of His plan is that His chosen people will come to know the One who chose them from all the nations of the earth. This can only happen when Israel comes to know her Messiah. We expect this will happen to a greater extent before the Lord returns (Romans 11:11-15).

## ***The Virgin Birth***

*So what happened to me and how was I persuaded to believe that Jesus was God in the flesh?*

I have to admit the answer is simple. As I began to read the Bible, I noticed many different verses in the Hebrew Scriptures that made it clear to me that the Messiah was to be more than a man and was actually predicted to be God in the flesh. Let me share a couple of these passages so that, if you have the opportunity, you might share them with a Jewish friend who is struggling with the idea of believing in Jesus. Remember, they struggle because they do not want to break with the Jewish community by believing that God became a human being.

My favorite passage indicating this marvelous truth of the incarnation is found in Isaiah 9:6-7, where the great prophet writes,

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God, Eternal Father**, Prince of Peace. There will be **no end to the increase of His government** or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness **from then on and forevermore**. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

In this passage, the prophet Isaiah uses four different names for the coming Messiah, two of which indicate that this future son of David would be God in the flesh. Names in the Hebrew Bible often indicate character, and I believe these names (especially when the two verses are taken as one unit) speak to the very nature of the Davidic King. I believe Isaiah spoke these words about Jesus the Messiah who is God in the flesh. As a Jewish person, I simply had to bow my heart and will to the teaching of Scripture.



A second passage that I also believe speaks clearly of the Messiah as being God in the flesh was penned by a contemporary of Isaiah, the prophet Micah. In Micah 5:2, the prophet describes the coming Messiah, the ruler in Israel, as follows: “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago from the days of eternity.”

There is no need to belabor an explanation of this passage. The ruler in Israel would be born in Bethlehem, which is further defined by the word *Ephrathah* as referring to the Bethlehem located a few miles from Jerusalem. This was the ancestral home of David and the birthplace of Jesus the Messiah. This ruler is described as being eternal in nature. We understand the passage in this way because the two Hebrew phrases translated *from long ago* and *from the days of eternity*, when used elsewhere in the Old Testament, always refer to God.

There are other passages in the Hebrew Scriptures, which I also believe clearly indicate that the Messiah would be God. You will find a list of these Scriptures and further information in the back pages of this booklet that I know will bless you and strengthen your faith.

Ultimately, the Word of God convinced me that Jesus is the Messiah and God in the flesh. This makes the holiday season a very special time of joy for me as I am surrounded by reminders that, in the words of C.S. Lewis, “the Son of God became a man to enable men to become the sons of God.”

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO HANUKKAH

I remember the first time I read the New Testament like it was yesterday. I was attracted to the book, especially to the words of Jesus, but had sweaty palms as I turned each page. Everything I knew about Judaism was Orthodox and nobody needed to tell me

that I should not read the New Testament. I cannot even begin to describe the guilt I felt in reading and enjoying the New Testament.

May I step back for a moment? I probably never would have read the New Testament if it weren't for the transformation I was seeing in the lives of my two best Jewish friends after they believed in Jesus.

They witnessed to me, but I resisted and tried to talk them out of it. I was trying to get them out of what I felt was probably some kind of weird cult. Instead they kept encouraging me to read my Bible—what is commonly called the Old Testament in Christian circles. As you probably know, Jewish people do not call the Bible the Old Testament because, in the Jewish mind, there is no New Testament! That's the book that Christians read and not the one that Jewish people follow.

I loved what I was reading in the Old Testament and found myself wanting a relationship with God that was personal, intimate, and even supernatural, just like Abraham, Moses, and King David. I had never noticed that what made these forefathers of mine so great was their relationship with God.

Weeks and months passed and I became more and more interested in knowing more about the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I just did not want to believe in Jesus like my friends because I would have to tell my family, and I knew that I would be rejected. One day, I just could not take it anymore and I prayed my first spontaneous prayer (Jewish people usually pray in Hebrew and follow written prayers). I asked God, "If you are real, please show me and show me how to get you."

That night, believe it or not, a miracle occurred! I found a copy of *Good News for Modern Man*, a modern English version of the New Testament, in a phone booth in the middle of the campground of the California redwood forest where I was working at the time! I

began reading the New Testament and fell in love with Jesus. He was the smartest person I had ever met. He knew how to answer people and was nobody's fool. What really struck me was how Jewish He was!

I soon found myself wrestling with Jesus the Jew rather than Jesus the Gentile, and I began to be attracted to the very person that the Jewish people mistakenly thought had inspired antisemitism and hatred of the Jewish people. I just could not figure out how a Jewish person would have inspired antisemitism. Of course He hadn't, but like most Jewish people I really didn't know a lot about Jesus.

The more I read the New Testament the more I understood that He was Jewish, celebrated the Jewish holidays, and He held the answers I was seeking. I finally came to the point where His words brought peace to my heart. Finally, I accepted Jesus as my Messiah and Lord in November 1970. The first holiday I celebrated was Thanksgiving and that was really wonderful.

Soon, I was faced with a dilemma because both Hanukkah and Christmas were approaching. Some of my new Christian friends thought that I would really enjoy celebrating Christmas but, of course, I was raised in Jewish New York and we celebrated Hanukkah almost as a protest holiday to the majority who celebrated Christmas. I loved Jesus, but I was not yet comfortable with the holidays usually associated with Him.

Someone pointed out to me that Jesus celebrated Hanukkah. I think I was still trying to figure out when and how Jesus celebrated Christmas (I was a little slow and it took me awhile to get the point!). But I was very intrigued by His celebration of Hanukkah.

In fact, the only time Hanukkah is mentioned in the Bible is in the New Testament. It is not mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures. After reading John chapter 10 and studying the passage, I finally

understood that the gospel and Hanukkah were intertwined. It was really the gospel according to Hanukkah.

One of the greatest statements Jesus ever made about Himself was during the feast of Hanukkah. Hanukkah is a post-Old Testament holiday that developed during the centuries immediately prior to Jesus' birth. I believe that Hanukkah is all about the gospel.

At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. (John 10:22-29)

The above statement is simply incredible! To think that the Messiah said this during the great festival of Hanukkah (the Feast of Dedication) is astounding to me, having grown up in a Jewish home. But Yeshua did not stop there. He continued to infuse new meaning to the Feast of Dedication and redemption by showing the link between Himself and the Father.

The Apostle John records Jesus saying, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Believe me, the Jewish people of the day knew exactly what he was saying and His statement was not well received!

Look at what happens next: "The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him" (John 10:31). The idea that a man would claim to

be God is understandably offensive to the Jewish people who are taught that God cannot take on human form. I was taught this as well growing up in Jewish home. And ordinarily this would be true.

This is the gospel according to Hanukkah: God sent His only Son as His greatest gift to you and me, which is better than any Christmas or Hanukkah present by far! And through this divine Messiah we have true spiritual freedom that will endure forever.

As the Jewish apostle Paul writes,

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.” This is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins. (Romans 11:25-27)

## **WITHOUT HANUKKAH THERE WOULD BE NO CHRISTMAS**

The Hebrew word Hanukkah, means *dedication*. The festival of Hanukkah reminds us of the heroism of a small band of Jewish patriots who overthrew the harsh and unjust rule of Antiochus Epiphanes and his Syrian Greek followers. The festival developed during the intertestamental period and was described in the Apocryphal books of First and Second Maccabees, and, of course, further developed during the years of wonderful Jewish tradition.

Though the observance of the holiday is not a biblical directive, and believers in Jesus, Jewish or Gentile, are not under obligation to observe the festival, Hanukkah has been a great inspiration to Jewish people throughout the ages. The holiday also contains some lessons that can encourage those who do follow the Messiah Jesus.

## ***The Story of Hanukkah***

Let me tell you the story of Hanukkah. Antiochus, one of Alexander the Great's generals who was given a portion of the Greek Empire after the conqueror's death, attempted to Hellenize the Hebrews. Our story focuses on one of his delegations which entered the Israeli town of Moadin. They set up a statue of Antiochus in the middle of the village and demanded that the Jewish people worship the ruler (called the Madman by the Jewish people) as a god.

The men and women of that small town refused and killed the members of the delegation, destroyed the statue, and fled to the surrounding hills to wage guerrilla warfare against the Syrian Greeks. This continued from 168 through 165 BC and eventually the Jewish people prevailed. Soon thereafter, the leaders of the guerrilla's family, called the Maccabees, established what came to be known as the Hasmonean dynasty, a Levitical rather than Davidic dynasty.

The story of Hanukkah, however, zeroes in on one significant event that took place after the Maccabean victory. It seems that Antiochus was so enraged by the Jewish refusal to become Hellenized and worship him as a god that he sacrificed a pig on the Temple altar in Jerusalem. Since there was no way for this altar to be cleansed, the Maccabees tore it down and made a pile of the "unclean" stones, which would have to wait for the coming of the Messiah who, according to tradition, would cleanse them.

The story continues that the *eternal light* in the Temple had gone out and the Maccabees only had enough olive oil to keep the eternal light lit for one day. Eight days were needed to make more oil as it took that long to cure. But, according to tradition, a miracle happened! The oil lasted for eight days and the light continued to burn without ever running out of oil.

The Maccabees rededicated the Temple and re-established sacrifice and worship in this holy place chosen by God through David and built by his son Solomon.

Many people try and find the links between Hanukkah and Christmas. Not an easy task! In actuality there are few links! Sorry, but it is true. The general viewpoint is that Hanukkah belongs to the Jews and Christmas to the Gentiles. The Jewish people light candles on menorahs and Gentiles plug in lights and hang ornaments on trees! In my mind, the only link between the holidays was that each called for the sharing of presents. And Hanukkah had Christmas beat because Jewish people received presents every night for eight nights! From my childlike perspective, Hanukkah was far superior.

In fact, the sharp differences between Hanukkah and Christmas were symbols of the impassable chasm between Judaism and Christianity.

As a believer in Yeshua the Messiah, I do see a few parallels; one of which is very significant as there would be no Christmas without Hanukkah. The Feast of Dedication is when we as Jews celebrate the fact that we were delivered, or saved, from extinction. This was Antiochus' goal: He tried to destroy the Jewish people and eradicate the uniqueness of our identity.

He failed, and the Jewish people – our culture, hopes, dreams, and faith – were not destroyed. If we had been, then what would have happened to Mary and Joseph? Would they have known that they were Jewish? Would they have married one another? If the Jewish people and Jewish identity had been destroyed then there would have not been any Jewish people and no Jewish family to receive the Messiah!

God used the Maccabees to destroy the Syrian Greeks to prepare the way for the birth of the Jewish Messiah. Without Hanukkah there would be no Christmas. I am not referring to the traditional

trappings of our current Christmas celebrations, but the heart of it all: the incarnation of our Messiah and Lord, Jesus the Messiah

The festival of Hanukkah and the reality of the incarnation remind me that God will keep His hand on His chosen people. He will shelter, rescue, and preserve the Jewish people until the last day when He comes to reign over His recaptured earth.

## **THE MESSAGE OF THE SEASON: GOD KEEPS HIS WORD**

I am reminded of a verse in Joshua 21:45, immediately after Joshua settled the tribes on the Western side of the Jordan: “Not one of all the Lord’s good promises to the house of Israel failed; everyone was fulfilled.” This comment refers directly to God’s faithfulness in helping the Israelites conquer the land promised to them by God. However, this verse can easily be applied to all the promises of Scripture—some already fulfilled and some to be fulfilled in the future.

The real message of this holiday season is that God keeps His promises!

Christmas is all about God’s fulfilling the prophecy made through Isaiah to the Jewish people: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). He fulfilled His promises and sent His Son to be the Savior for both Jews and Gentiles. But, He is not finished yet! There is more to come, more to be fulfilled. Both Christmas and Hanukkah point us forward to what God will do in the future.

### ***The Promise of a King***

One of my favorite hymns at this time or any time of the year is “Joy to the World” by Isaac Watts. What is so amazing is that even though his father was twice imprisoned for his religious



views, Isaac could still write and sing about JOY! In 1718, Isaac Watts looked at Psalm 98 and recognized that true and ultimate joy would come with the arrival of the Lord. His lyrics speak far more of the Second Coming than the first.

And though I love cute babies as much as the next person, we must never forget that the cute baby Jesus in the manger is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. One of the great passages of Scripture that puts this all together is found in Isaiah 9:6-7. The baby that would be born of the virgin is now described by a number of different names. He is called the *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace*. And this divine child will sit on the throne of David forever!

The infant, whose birth we celebrate, is coming again soon as our all-powerful King. In that day, there will be no doubt about the relationship between Hanukkah and Christmas. When He comes, He will deliver His people and rule over all those who embrace Him as their Sovereign Lord.

### ***The Promise of a People***

God chose Abraham and promised to create a nation that would *bless* the nations of the world (Genesis 12:1-3). He made the same promise to Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. And in order for that nation to fulfill this divine destiny, it would need to be protected and preserved by the mighty hand of God. The prophet Jeremiah affirms this same promise when he writes in Jeremiah 31:35-36,

Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The Lord of hosts is His name: "If this fixed order departs from before Me," declares the Lord, "then the offspring of Israel also will cease, from being a nation before Me forever."

Hanukkah reminds us that God will perform what He has promised. Every nation that has tried to destroy the Jewish people has either been defeated or destroyed. This includes Antiochus Epiphanies whom Judas Maccabee and his fellow Israelites conquered in 165 BC.

God's plan and purposes for Israel did not end at the cross. He will be faithful to protect and preserve His ancient people until *every promise is fulfilled*. His ancient people still have a role to play in the drama of world redemption. What else could the Apostle Paul mean in the following two verses except that God is not finished with the Jewish people? "Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" (Romans 11:12, 15).

### ***The Great Hallelujah***

I am sure that Handel understood these promises of God as well. The reason "The Messiah" concludes with the "Hallelujah Chorus" is because the birth of the Messiah cannot be separated from His Second Coming. He was born to die and He will come again to rule. His work is not finished yet and neither is His plan and purposes for the Jewish people.

As the Jewish people were central to His first coming, so the Jewish people will be important to His Second Coming. He cannot allow the Jewish people to be destroyed.

Christmas gives me the faith to look forward in hope, knowing that He will be as faithful in fulfilling the promises tied to His Second Coming.

That day will be the **ultimate Hanukkah**, the final day of deliverance and dedication for the Jewish people. For in that day, an end-time

remnant of Jewish people will cry out to God and receive Yeshua as their true King according the words of the prophet. The babe from Bethlehem will one day stand on the Mount of Olives in all His glory and majesty. At that time, the enemies of God and of Israel will be destroyed and the Messiah will rule.

I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. (Zechariah 12:10)

### ***Yeshua is the Messiah for All***

I cannot tell you how beautiful Manhattan looks at Christmastime. The enormous Christmas tree that lights up Rockefeller Center, Radio City Music Hall features its annual Christmas show, and holiday lights shine like jewels throughout the city, but especially along Park Avenue. Salvation Army Santas are ringing their bells on almost every corner of the city, quietly murmuring “Ho! Ho! Ho!” and collecting money in their bright red kettles. Fifth Avenue is packed with tourists and Macy’s is filled with shoppers!

I am sure you will agree that many of those celebrating the *birth of the Savior* have little understanding that the babe of Bethlehem grew up, died a gruesome death on a cross, rose triumphantly from the dead, reigns at this very moment at the right hand of God the Father, and is waiting to return from heaven with His saints to establish His kingdom on planet earth. I would imagine most people who do not know Jesus as their personal Savior are more comfortable thinking of Him as a harmless, innocent baby than as a returning judge and reigning king.

In general, those who are captivated by the excessive material trappings of this wonderful season of the year simply do not

understand God's true purposes for the incarnation. The devil has twisted the message of an all-powerful God, who *set aside* His power and humbled Himself by becoming a servant, so much so that this time of year has instead become the key event to lift the bottom line of corporations and to improve the economy. How far we have drifted from worshipping the One who was humbly born to die so that sinners like you and me will have the opportunity to be made alive. There is much to straighten out about the Christmas holiday!

May I suggest another misunderstanding that directly impacts the cause of Jewish evangelism? Most nominal Christians and most Jewish people do not realize that Christmas celebrates the birthday of the greatest Jew who ever lived! Many people do not really understand the fact that Jesus is Jewish and most Jewish people, religious or secular, do not understand this either.

Let me put it this way: Christmas, the ultimate Christian holiday (from a Jewish perspective at least) is all about the birth of a *sabra* (native-born Israeli)! Now, this is not something that gets a lot of "airplay" in modern society, but, it is true.

May I take this link a little further? Unquestionably, most Jewish people, nominal Christians, and perhaps even some true born-again believers not only do not grasp the relationship between the Jewish people and Christmas, but also they miss the strong link between Christmas and Hanukkah.

I am not sure I understood the link myself for many years. Yet, there is quite a profound way in which these two great holidays are "joined at the hip" and the linkage goes much further than the giving of presents, the lighting of candles, and even the wonderful times of family togetherness we enjoy during this season.

*You see, without Hanukkah, there would be no Christmas.*

But the real miracle of Hanukkah was not the miracle of the lights, but the fact that God had once again preserved His chosen people against all odds! The Lord kept His promise to Israel that they would not be destroyed (Jeremiah 31:35 -37, Romans 11:29). The Lord preserved His people because He had chosen them for a glorious purpose, yet to be fulfilled! In fact, the best was yet to come as almost 200 years later God sent His *final Word* and ultimate deliverer, Jesus the Messiah, to purchase the salvation of Jews and Gentiles with His own life.

Think about it this way: If God did not enable the Maccabees to overthrow Antiochus, the Jewish people may very well been destroyed. And if the Jewish people had been destroyed then the birth of the Savior could never have taken place! As the Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 4:4-7, “In the fullness of time God poured forth his son, born of a virgin.”

If the Jewish people had been destroyed during that first Hanukkah, there would have been no Christmas as the Messiah could never have been born. The true link between Hanukkah and Christmas is very simple: **God is faithful and always keeps His promises.**

This same God continues to keep His promises to the Jewish people and one day an even greater deliverance than Hanukkah will take place as the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 11 predicts, in the power of the Holy Spirit, “all Israel will be saved.” The day is coming when Jewish people will turn with great fervor to Jesus the Messiah. I look forward to that great day of redemption.





## **“UNTIL SHILOH COME”**

By Joseph Hoffman Cohn

Twenty-three years before the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on Calvary’s tree, the Sanhedrin had lost the power of passing the death sentence. This is that power which was envisaged in the prophecy of Gen. 49:10, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come.” So, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Shiloh of Genesis 49:10, was already born, and was a boy nine or ten years of age, when this great calamity came upon the Jewish nation – Israel had lost the scepter and the law-giving power. Josephus in his Antiquities, Book XVII, Chapter 13, 1-5, tells how that Judea had become a Roman Province, and how the procurators who had administered justice in the name of Augustus Caesar had now deprived the Sanhedrin of its supreme power in order that they themselves might exercise the *jus gladii*, the right of the sword, that is, the sovereign right over life and death. Every province annexed to the Roman Empire had to submit to his stripping of power. Tacitus says, “The Romans reserved to themselves the rights of the Sword, and neglected all else.”

### ***“WOE UNTO US!”***

Rabbi Rachman says, “When the members of the Sanhedrin found themselves deprived of their right over life and death, a general consternation took possession of them; they covered their heads with ashes, and their bodies with sackcloth, exclaiming, ‘Woe unto us, for the scepter has departed from Judah and the Messiah has not come!’” Furthermore, Josephus in his Antiquities, Book XX, Chapter 9,1, says:

“Festus was now dead and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the Sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ, whose name was James, and some others, and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered



them to be stoned; but as for those who seemed to be the most equitable of the citizens and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they sent to the King Agrippa desiring to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified; nay some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a Sanhedrin without his consent.”

### ***THE SCEPTER DEPARTED***

And so we have undisputed proof that the scepter had actually departed from Judah just at the time when the Lord Jesus Christ was already upon the earth in the form of human flesh: and so Judah had actually lost the power over life and death. Of course the implications of this is far reaching, but we will not digress along such lines in this present discussion beyond calling attention to the fact that the Sanhedrin had no legal power to pass sentence of death over the Lord Jesus Christ twenty-three years later.

So politically, the Jewish nation had now lost its existence, and the Jews had a right to weep and mourn and bemoan their sad plight. A right only, however, so long as they knew not that the compensating Ruler of Gen. 49:10, “until Shiloh come,” was already discernible on the horizon of God’s program so long as they knew not that the blessed infant of Bethlehem had already come into the world, and soon was to appear before the nation as the Messianic Shiloh of Israel’s hopes. So it has been promised in Micah 5:2.

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”

But Israel had no hope. Generations had come and gone, centuries of anguish had rolled on their way, prophet upon prophet had given forth God's revelations, each had buoyed up the hope of the children of Judah with the electrifying message "the Prince of peace is soon to come!" Ever and anon a charlatan would spring up from some wilderness and announce to the waiting throngs, "I am the Messiah!" Each in his turn would gain a following, and the poor misled mobs, gullible and ignorant, would flock like sheep, and rally about each false Messiah, thinking, "Now, at last has come deliverance for our people!" Altogether, some seventy such false Messiahs inflicted themselves upon the Jewish nation, until the very word Messiah came to be despised and feared. Always there was disaster in the end, always the gullible remained fooled.

### ***SAVAGERIES OF ANTIOCHUS***

The heroic age of the Maccabees adds an illustrious chapter to the annals of Jewish warfare. Antiochus had wreaked havoc upon Jerusalem. The record is "Her sanctuary was laid waste like the wilderness; her feasts were turned into mourning, her Sabbaths into reproach, her honor into contempt." Dr. Harry Ironside, in describing those tragic days, says:

"Antiochus and his minions knew no mercy. They spared neither age, sex, nor condition. Young and old, men and women, priest and people, rich and poor, suffered alike in those fearful days of vengeance. Women who attempted to keep the law and circumcise their sons, were led publicly through the city with their babes at their breasts and flung bodily from the city walls, thus being literally broken to pieces. Any who were discovered observing the Sabbath day were apprehended and burnt alive.

Josephus' account of those dire and sorrowful times remarkably coincides with the epistle to the Hebrews'

account of former saints' sufferings. Says the Jewish historian: 'They were whipped with rods, and their bodies were torn to pieces, and they were crucified while they were still alive and breathed!' The apostle wrote of the same heroes of faith: 'They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy); they wandered in deserts and mountains, and dens and caves of the earth' (Hebrews 11:35-38)."

### ***JUDAS THE HAMMER***

And then followed the spectacular ride of the five sons of that devout priest Matthias, of the house of Hsmonaeus, and so his family were called Hasmonaeans. This faithful priest has five sons, of whom perhaps the most picturesque was Judas. So powerful and so persistent were the exploits of this Judas, that they gave him the name of Judas the Maccabean, which means, "Judas the hammer." Upon these Maccabeans centered and concentrated the most fiendish darts of satanic fury; it would appear as though hell itself was to be overturned in the devil's desperate determination to destroy the Jews. The deliverance of God came finally when under the consummate skill of Maccabean leadership the great battle against the forces of Lysias ended in a wonderful victory for the Jews. The camp of the Jews was pitched at Mizpeh. With ashes on their heads and sackcloth on their bodies, they fell down before God in prayer and in confession. Eleazer, the brother of Judas the Hammer, read from the Holy Scriptures as they fasted and humbled themselves before the mighty One who had been their help in ages past. He was their reliance in the hour of trial now approaching. For their battle cry they took the words, "The help of God" and so it was that God gave them victory.

## ***WAITING FOR THE CONSOLATION***

And now the little boy was born in Bethlehem. Weary, sick, hopeless enslaved under insufferable bondage to Rome, Israel had now lost all hope of a Messiah. The Scepter had gone, and no Messiah had come. True it was that a few, a very few, still held on, with a hope born of sheer indomitable faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These were the faithful remnant, only a handful it is true; among them, as typifying the character of these faithful few, was a man, “just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel.” That man’s name was Simeon. To him it had been revealed by the Holy Ghost that he was not to see death before he had seen the Lord Jesus Christ. And then we may imagine how the tears flowed down his cheeks, as the joy burst out of his ears, when he said, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou has prepared before the face of all people.”

Others there were who likewise were looking forward day by day to the long hoped for coming of the Messiah, Luke tells us, “The people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John whether he were the Christ or not.” In their eagerness and great anxiety of soul, they grasped at every faintest possibility of finding the Messiah, must as a drowning man will grasp at a straw; and here was John the Baptist, and perhaps he might be the One!

## ***LEAPING THE CHASM OF TWO MELLENNIUMS***

But now we take a far jump, swiftly and rather abruptly. We are in the twentieth century, in the year 1939. What consternation strikes our souls as we gaze upon the world today! What havoc, what confusion, what perplexity, and what pitiful hopelessness. Once more Satan’s hand is raised in the most desperate effort of fully a thousand years to destroy the Jews from the face of the earth. Disenfranchisement and savage cruelties in Germany,

banishment in Poland, exterminations in Roumania, massacres, beatings, shameful abuses, these are the things which the Jew is today facing under whatever the sky he happens to be. Again the heart of the Jew cries out, "How long O Lord, how long?"

Dear Jewish reader, the Messiah who came 1,900 years ago to this earth to die on Calvary's cross for your sins and my sins, this same Messiah is soon coming a second time; but when He come this second time, it will be for judgment, and with power, and with glory. At that time then will be great trouble for our Jewish people. God tells us in Micah 6:2,

"For the Lord hath a controversy with His people, and He will plead with Israel."

Another prophecy given by God through Ezekiel, must strike terror to the heart of every earnest and right-thinking Jew who believes the Word of God; for it reads as follows:

"I will bring you out from the nations, and will gather you out of the countries wherin ye are scattered, with a might hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. " Ezekiel 20:34, 35, 36, 37.

"I will cause you to pass under the rod!" What a terrible thing to contemplate! When you read such words as these coming from God Himself, can you really make yourself believe that Zionism of itself will bring the answer to the Jewish problem? Certainly no man in his right mind could believe that.

There is a way whereby you may escape this terrible controversy which the Lord has yet to wage through with His people Israel.

God has promised that anyone who will now, in the present hour of grace, turn to His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive through Him forgiveness of sins and everlasting life, such a one will never have to go through the controversy and the rod.

If you are a true Jew, will you not now examine afresh the unimpeachable evidences that the Lord Jesus Christ is the true Messiah of Israel? And will you not accept Him now before it is too late, and before our people are plunged into that most terrible time of punishment called by Jeremiah, the time of Jacob's trouble? Why wait for God to force us by suffering to accept His only begotten Son? Why not do it now, and have immediate joy and peace?

### ***THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE***

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

Brother, receive it, and believe it; and then you will indeed have a Merry Christmas.

# MESSIAH IN PROPHECY

## **MICAH 5:2**

*“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”*

There were two Bethlehems, one in the south of Israel and one in the north. The adding of Ephrathah indicates that this is the Bethlehem that is approximately five miles south of Jerusalem and is the ancestral home of Ruth and King David (Ruth 1:1-2; 4:11). The word Bethlehem literally means the “house of bread,” and it is possible that the city was somehow linked to the baking of bread. Bethlehem was known as a city close to Jerusalem where animals for sacrifice were raised.

Micah alludes to the passage in Genesis 49:10 where Jacob predicts that the ruler of Israel would come from the tribe of Judah: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.” Judah was the fourth son of Jacob, not the first. So God is apparently upsetting the usual order of inheritance by telling the Jewish people that their ultimate ruler would come from the descendants of the fourth son of Israel.

Although the Hebrew Bible uses two different terms which are translated as “ruler” in Genesis 49:10 and in Micah 5:2, the point is clear. Whoever this ruler is would profoundly impact the Jewish people since he would be the predicted ruler of Jacob’s prophecy and the royal son who would rule the Jewish people forever (2 Samuel 7:13ff). The first word, “mikedem” may be

translated, “from ancient times”, and the second term, “olam”, as “eternal”, which often describes the everlasting character of the God of Israel (Psalm 25:5, 90:2, Habakkuk 1:12). The use of the term in Micah 5:2 speaks of the eternality of the coming ruler which was fulfilled in the person of the Messiah Jesus, the eternal Son of David, spoken of in the New Testament.

They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, Land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’” (Matthew 2:5-6)

The Gospel writer indicates that Jesus is the promised ruler. He is the son of David from the tribe of Judah who was born in the traditional Davidic homeland, and He will prove Himself to be the eternal Son of God and Messianic King through His perfect character and miracles. The “bread of life” would be born in Bethlehem, as He would be both the bread of life and ultimate sacrifice for our sin—born to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

## **JEREMIAH 23:5-6**

*“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely, and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The Lord our righteousness.’”*

What is in a name? In the context of Scripture, quite a bit! The biblical authors, the ancient Jewish people, and many in the ancient Near East placed a high value on one’s name. A person’s character, reputation, occupation, and family connection would all be encapsulated in their name. We can relate with this in our day.



When a person has worked hard to earn a good reputation, we might say, “He has really made a name for himself.” The ancients would often take it a step further and attribute great religious or even prophetic significance to one’s name.<sup>1</sup> Understanding this helps us grasp the significance of not only the names of individuals within Scripture, but especially the many names and titles attributed to God and the Messiah throughout the Bible.

The text in Jeremiah 23 is a prime example. The broader context of Jeremiah’s prophecy has him warning of Jerusalem’s coming destruction at the hands of Babylon and specifically rebuking David’s descendants, Judah’s failed kings. The lack of godly leadership, leading to national sin, had created a void and left Judah and Jerusalem susceptible to the impending judgment. Amazingly, in the midst of the bleak and dire warnings, God gave a promise of hope. He would raise up a unique individual to fill Israel’s leadership void. From the names attributed to Him, we learn of His two-fold identity. As the “righteous Branch” descended from David, He would be Israel’s long-awaited, righteous human King (2 Samuel 7:12-16). Not only that, this King would bear the holy name of God, “The Lord our righteousness.” This is the only place in the Old Testament where the full name of the Lord (the Tetragrammaton) is used for a human being, and it is utterly profound. This passage speaks to both the humanity and the deity of the coming King. There has been only one person in history who has embodied this identity and bore these names—Jesus of Nazareth. Indeed, He is the promised Son of David,<sup>2</sup> and the Lord our righteousness.<sup>3</sup>

*Written by Robert Walter. Originally published in the December 2017 issue of The Chosen People magazine.*

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<sup>1</sup> See Genesis 29:32-30:24 and the naming of Jacob’s sons, for example.

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew 1:1, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15.

<sup>3</sup> See John 1:1, 14, 18; 14:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:15-23; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31.

## ISAIAH 7:14

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”

In Isaiah’s day, two enemies were conspiring against Judah: Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel (the northern kingdom). Isaiah comforted the terrified people of Judah by going to the king with his aptly named son, Shear-jashub (“a remnant shall return”). God will bring a remnant back to the Land. The terrorists of that day, who were mere men, would be shattered.

Ahaz was challenged to believe this prophecy. In fact, he was to ask God for a confirming sign, something really spectacular—as “...deep as Sheol or high as heaven” (Isaiah 7:11). When he refused, God gave him a sign, even though he had exasperated the Lord. What is that sign? It is a son named Immanuel, which means “God with us.” God’s people needed His very presence when surrounded by the enemy. It was true in Isaiah’s time, and it is true today.

The son will be born to a “virgin” says the prophet. Regardless of how one interprets the Hebrew word *almâh*, there would be nothing spectacular about her if she were impregnated normally. Something supernatural attended this birth.

What child in Isaiah’s day “fulfills” this prophecy? We do not know. Some say the “young maiden” was Isaiah’s wife, but she already had a child, Shear-jashub, and her second child was not named Immanuel but Maher-shalal-hash-baz (Isaiah 8:3). Others say she was a virgin when the prophecy was given, but she then married and had a child whose early life is described by Isaiah to show that the Syria-Israel confederacy would be defeated very soon. Neither view is too remarkable, deep, or high.

It is clear that the supernatural, spectacular component of this birth finds its fulfillment in the Person of the Messiah, born

of a virgin, through the work of the Holy Spirit, before Mary and Joseph “came together” (Matthew 1:18-25). Whatever the meaning to Ahaz, which is obscure at best, the meaning to all believers around the world is that the baby who was named Immanuel was supernaturally conceived.

We have been given a sign. We have been given a Son. We know Him as Immanuel. God is always with us in the Messiah Yeshua who indwells every believer and who said “...And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

*Written by Dr. Gregory Hagg. Originally published in the December 2017 issue of The Chosen People magazine.*

### **ISAIAH 9:6-7**

*“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.”*

In this passage, the prophet Isaiah uses four different names for the coming Messiah, two of which indicate that this future son of David would be God in the flesh. Names in the Hebrew Bible often indicate character and these names (especially when the two verses are taken as one unit) speak to the very nature of the Davidic king.

What child in that time could live up to the name “eternal Father,” *avi-ad*, not to mention “Mighty God,” *El-Gibbor*? How could an earthly King be “Mighty God”? Literal readings of the

Hebrew reveal that the titles describe the King Himself.

In Isaiah 10:21, the title “Mighty God” is reserved for God alone. Isaiah 9:6-7 explains that David’s descendant would be born of a woman, a real physical offshoot of the Davidic household, yet fully God. A common theme running throughout the Old Testament (and the New Testament) is the eternal reign of King David. In 2 Samuel, God makes His covenant with King David. The Lord says: “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom” (2 Samuel 7:12).

Interestingly, the Hebrew word used here for descendant is z’araka, which is from the same root as zerah in Isaiah 53:10. Another gem that the Hebrew reveals is that this descendant will be “from out of the bowels” (mi-mecha), meaning a literal offspring. Verse 13 continues to describe the eternal kingdom of this descendant, and verse 14 tells us that the Lord himself says, “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me.” There were many Davidic kings in the generations following David’s death; however, only Jesus lives up to the names “Everlasting Father” and “Mighty God.”

*Written by Charlotte Machado. Originally published in the December 2017 issue of The Chosen People magazine.*

## **GENESIS 12:1-3—He will be a Descendant of Abraham**

*The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*

## **GENESIS 49:10—He will be from the Tribe of Judah**

*The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.*

## **2 SAMUEL 7:12-13—He will be from the House of David**

*When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.*

## **DEUTERONOMY 18:15—He will be a Prophet Like Moses**

*The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.*

## **ZECHARIAH 9:9—He will Come Humbly**

*Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

## **PSALM 22:16-18—He will be Crucified**

*For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.*

## **ISAIAH 53:5-6—He will be a Suffering Servant**

*But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

## **ZECHARIAH 12:10—Israel Will Mourn for Him**

*And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.*

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## THE HISTORY OF CHOSEN PEOPLE MINISTRIES

Chosen People Ministries was founded by Rabbi Leopold Cohn in 1894 to bring the gospel of Jesus the Messiah to the Jewish people. In carrying out this purpose, the Mission also seeks to inspire the Church to participate in and support the work of Jewish evangelism, helping fellow believers carry out this vital part of God's divine redemptive plan.

Rabbi Leopold Cohn founded Chosen People Ministries in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, New York, shortly after he received Jesus as his Messiah. In its earliest days, people affectionately referred to the Mission as the Brownsville Mission to the Jews. Rabbi Cohn established an outreach headquartered in a renovated horse stable, where the Mission offered a variety of services and classes for the growing population of Jewish immigrants. His wife, Rose, was instrumental in organizing some of the outreach programs. The Mission published the first issue of its monthly newsletter, *The Chosen People*, in October 1895.

The proclamation of the gospel to the Jewish people encountered resistance from some, but there were many in the Jewish community who welcomed the message that the Jewish people could receive Messiah's gift of eternal life while maintaining a Jewish identity.

After a few years, the Mission moved its headquarters to Williamsburg (Brooklyn), and then to Manhattan. As ministry expanded beyond a regional focus, the Mission changed its name to American Board of Missions to the Jews to reflect the wider scope of the organization. Missionaries began following God's call to reach the Jewish community throughout North and South America, Europe, and Israel. Eventually, the Mission changed its name to Chosen People Ministries, and, after a number of years in Charlotte, North Carolina, the Mission headquarters returned to its birthplace in New York City.



Chosen People Ministries continually seeks to meet the needs of each generation with both spiritual and material assistance.

The Mission has continued to develop a rich tradition throughout its history. Following Rabbi Cohn's death in 1937, Joseph Hoffman Cohn succeeded his father as Mission leader, serving until his death in 1953. A long line of godly men have served Chosen People Ministries as effective leaders. Harold Pretlove, Dr. Daniel Fuchs, Harold Sevens, and Sam Nadler have each left an indelible mark on the character of the century-old Mission. Now under the leadership of Dr. Mitch Glaser, Chosen People Ministries continues to experience an exciting time of renewal and expansion.

Just as it did over one hundred and twenty years ago, Chosen People Ministries still offers English classes and Bible studies to Jewish people. Additionally, the Mission seeks to utilize new means of communication to reach Jewish people in this new millennium with the eternal message of God's love in Jesus the Messiah through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. We have a thriving online Isaiah 53 campaign and we also helped produce online Hebrew-language testimonies of Israelis. These testimonies, which can be viewed at [ifoundshalom.com](http://ifoundshalom.com), have been seen by millions of Jewish and Gentile seekers alike! Praise God, we have seen many Israelis come to the Lord and we are discipling them personally and through our congregations. Chosen People Ministries is eager, with God's help and your prayers and support, to reach the Jewish people of the twenty-first century. Yes, the world and the Jewish community have experienced enormous changes—but humanity's need for reconciliation to God remains the same. Chosen People Ministries continues to follow its calling to proclaim the unchanging message of the gospel to the Lord's chosen people.

## **OUR MINISTRY PROGRAMS**

Chosen People Ministries exists to pray for, evangelize, disciple, and serve Jewish people everywhere and to help fellow believers do the same. We fulfill this mission through many types of ministry programs.

### *Messianic Centers*

One of our most effective ministry strategies is to engage local Jewish communities through our Messianic Centers. Our centers are facilities that we rent or own, located in key Jewish population centers; they serve as the base of our ministry operations in the surrounding community. In addition to supporting our evangelistic and discipleship efforts, they provide a place for worship, Bible studies, spiritual counseling, and practical help ministries like food distribution and addiction recovery programs. Some of our key Messianic Centers are located in New York, Los Angeles, South Florida, London, Berlin, Moscow, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem.

### *Messianic Congregations*

Messianic Congregations are places of worship where both Jewish and Gentile believers can fellowship together in a Jewish context. In addition, they offer Jewish seekers a familiar cultural setting combined with clear gospel teaching, which communicates our commitment that one can be Jewish and believe in Jesus! We have helped launch dozens of Messianic Congregations around the world, and they continue to be an important and viable part of our ministry.

### *Evangelism and Discipleship*

Evangelism has always been the heartbeat of our ministry, and every year we lead outreach programs and events specifically designed for reaching Jewish people with the gospel. Our

traditional outreach programs include tract distribution, open-air concerts, book tables, and surveys. During our Isaiah 53 Evangelistic Campaign, we have incorporated newer outreach methods, by utilizing media and advertising to offer evangelistic literature to Jewish people. We also host seminars and debates where Jewish seekers can learn about Jesus in a neutral setting. Through each of these outreach events, we meet Jewish people who are seeking spiritual answers. Our missionaries connect with these individuals and build authentic relationships with those who are seeking the truth. As previously mentioned, online evangelism has been a turning point in the 21st century. We are able to reach more Jewish people than ever before through these platforms.

Chosen People Ministries now has two major evangelistic websites: [Isaiah53.com](http://Isaiah53.com) and [ifoundshalom.com](http://ifoundshalom.com). The [Isaiah53.com](http://Isaiah53.com) site focuses on offering the evangelistic book *Isaiah 53 Explained*, which is now in eleven languages! [Ifoundshalom.com](http://ifoundshalom.com) has over fifty video testimonies of Jewish believers in Jesus of every age and walk of life. We also have translated the Isaiah 53 website into Hebrew, Russian, Spanish, French, and Chinese. These languages cover more than 90 percent of the Jewish population in today's world.

We utilize Facebook ads to reach the Facebook community with our Messianic Jewish testimonies, Isaiah 53 Evangelistic Campaign offering a free evangelistic book, as well as our advocacy programs which include Israel-related petitions, prayer declaration campaigns, free booklet offers, and free downloads of other materials that advocate for Israel and oppose antisemitism. Since the start of this online campaign in 2014, the Isaiah 53 Evangelistic Campaign has helped Chosen People Ministries gather the names of over 2,000 Jewish seekers and almost 150,000 Jewish and Gentile believers, many of whom indicated that they ordered the book to give to a Jewish friend.

What an exciting time! Why?—because the Internet allows for some anonymity and enables a Jewish person to move at their

own speed in seeking the Lord, it is almost as if the web was built for Jewish evangelism!

### *Equipping the Local Church*

Another key focus of Chosen People Ministries is to engage and train local churches for Jewish evangelism. Throughout our history, we have observed that one of the key factors in Jewish people coming to know the Lord is the positive influence of Gentile Christians. Therefore, we have made it a priority to develop and offer resources for churches to help believers discover the Jewish roots of the Christian faith and understand the need for Jewish evangelism. We continually develop tools and help equip churches with practical ways for congregants to share Jesus with Jewish people in their communities.

### **CHARLES L. FEINBERG CENTER FOR MESSIANIC JEWISH STUDIES: MASTER OF DIVINITY PROGRAM**

Another way we are fulfilling our mission is by identifying and training new leaders in Jewish ministry through our seminary program: The Charles L. Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies. Several years ago, we recognized a tremendous need within Jewish missions for more seminary-trained leadership. Through a partnership with Biola University's Talbot School of Theology, located strategically in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, we were able to develop a cutting-edge new Master of Divinity program with an emphasis on Messianic Jewish Studies. After receiving accreditation through the New York Board of Regents and the Association of Theological Schools, we began classes in the summer of 2007.

The Feinberg Center program awards a Master of Divinity degree in Messianic Jewish Studies from Talbot School of Theology. Few Christian M.Div programs offer biblical Hebrew

and Jewish studies courses in addition to courses in the standard M.Div program. The Feinberg Center is located in the heart of Orthodox Jewish Brooklyn, so there are many opportunities for ministry and for students to apply their education! The Charles L. Feinberg program prepares leaders for Jewish ministry as missionaries, Messianic pastors, non-profit leaders, and educators. Three key components of the program make it unique: the coursework, field ministry, and cost.

### *Coursework*

We have designed the curriculum for the Feinberg Center to incorporate both a typical Jewish studies program and an evangelical seminary program, while also catering each specific class towards the current needs of Jewish ministry. Each of our Jewish studies courses such as Rabbinic Literature and Theology, Theology of the Siddur (Jewish prayer book), and Jewish History, contain practical elements on how a better understanding of Jewish tradition can enhance our work in Jewish missions. Additionally, each of the traditional evangelical seminary courses such as Pastoral Studies, Church History, and Apologetics, provide a unique Jewish perspective for the context of Jewish ministry. Our professors are all excellent scholars with a long history of personal experience in Jewish ministry.

### *Field Ministry*

We placed the Feinberg Center in Brooklyn, New York because it is the center of Jewish life in America. With close to two million Jewish people, New York City provides endless possibilities for students to immerse themselves in Jewish culture and ministry while completing their coursework. In fact, each semester we organize various Jewish-focused field ministry programs to help each student put what they have learned in the classroom into practice.

We have designed the different field ministry opportunities to expose our students to several aspects of Jewish ministry over the course of their studies. These aspects include direct evangelism, discipleship, leading Bible studies, Messianic congregation leadership, and non-profit administrative training. We also provide other unique projects each semester, such as our evangelistic Jewish holiday celebrations, Interfaith benevolence projects, debates, and café-style youth outreaches. These numerous field ministry programs take students into several areas of New York City, including Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn.

### *Cost*

We established the Feinberg Center to provide our students an affordable education and give them the opportunity to graduate debt-free, enabling them to enter vocational ministry without the tremendous burden of student loans. To achieve this affordability, we offer a wide range of scholarships and subsidies to offset student costs. Not only is our tuition a quarter of what it would normally cost, we also provide student housing for single students and offer students with families a housing scholarship to make their rent affordable. The generous and regular support from our ministry partners makes an affordable education possible.

## **HOW YOU CAN HELP**

Chosen People Ministries would not exist without the faithful support of Christians around the world who stand with Israel and the Jewish people. We are grateful for the prayers and sacrificial gifts that enable us to continue to bring the gospel to the Jewish people all around the globe.

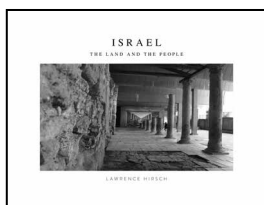
Would you pray about supporting Your Mission to the Jewish People? I am praying that you will give generously and sacrificially as I believe we have a golden moment to join together in reaching Jewish people that may only come once in a lifetime.

There are a number of ways you can give, but the easiest way is to visit our website, [chosenpeople.com/donate](https://chosenpeople.com/donate).

You can also mail your donation to our International Headquarters:  
**Chosen People Ministries . 241 E. 51st St. . New York, NY 10022**

You are always welcome to call us and give your donation with your credit or debit card over the phone. Please call **212-223-2252** Monday through Friday, between 8:30am and 5:00pm, Eastern Time.

## FEATURED RESOURCES



### ISRAEL: THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

Price \$19.95

*Israel: The Land and the People* is filled with some of the best photos of Israel anywhere! Through seventy spectacular photos by Lawrence Hirsch, Director of Celebrate Messiah (Chosen People Ministries' partner in Australia), this coffee table book presents the beauty, history, culture and variety of the land from snow-capped Mt. Hermon to the fortress of Masada, ancient Jerusalem, modern Tel Aviv, and much more. A must before you visit, a reminder afterward, and a perfect gift for anyone who wants to feel as if they've been to Israel.



### ISRAEL, THE CHURCH, AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Price \$24.95

*Israel, the Church, and the Middle East* challenges the supersessionist drift of the modern Church, showing that God retains a plan and purpose for the Jewish people. Edited by Mitch Glaser and Darrell Bock, this volume addresses popular criticisms of Israel held by contemporary authors, as well as those who affirm Israel's right to the land. This book will help anyone—student, lay person, or pastor—understand Israel's place based upon a sound exegesis of the biblical texts, the legal arguments for Israel's right to the land, new information on the Palestinians and Israeli Church, and much more. A must read!

**USE THE FORM ON THE REVERSE SIDE TO ORDER. MANY MORE RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE: [CHOSENPEOPLE.COM/STORE](http://CHOSENPEOPLE.COM/STORE)**





*But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
too little to be among the clans of Judah,  
from you One will go forth for Me to be  
ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from  
long ago, from the days of eternity.*

—MICAH 5:2



CHOSEN PEOPLE MINISTRIES

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