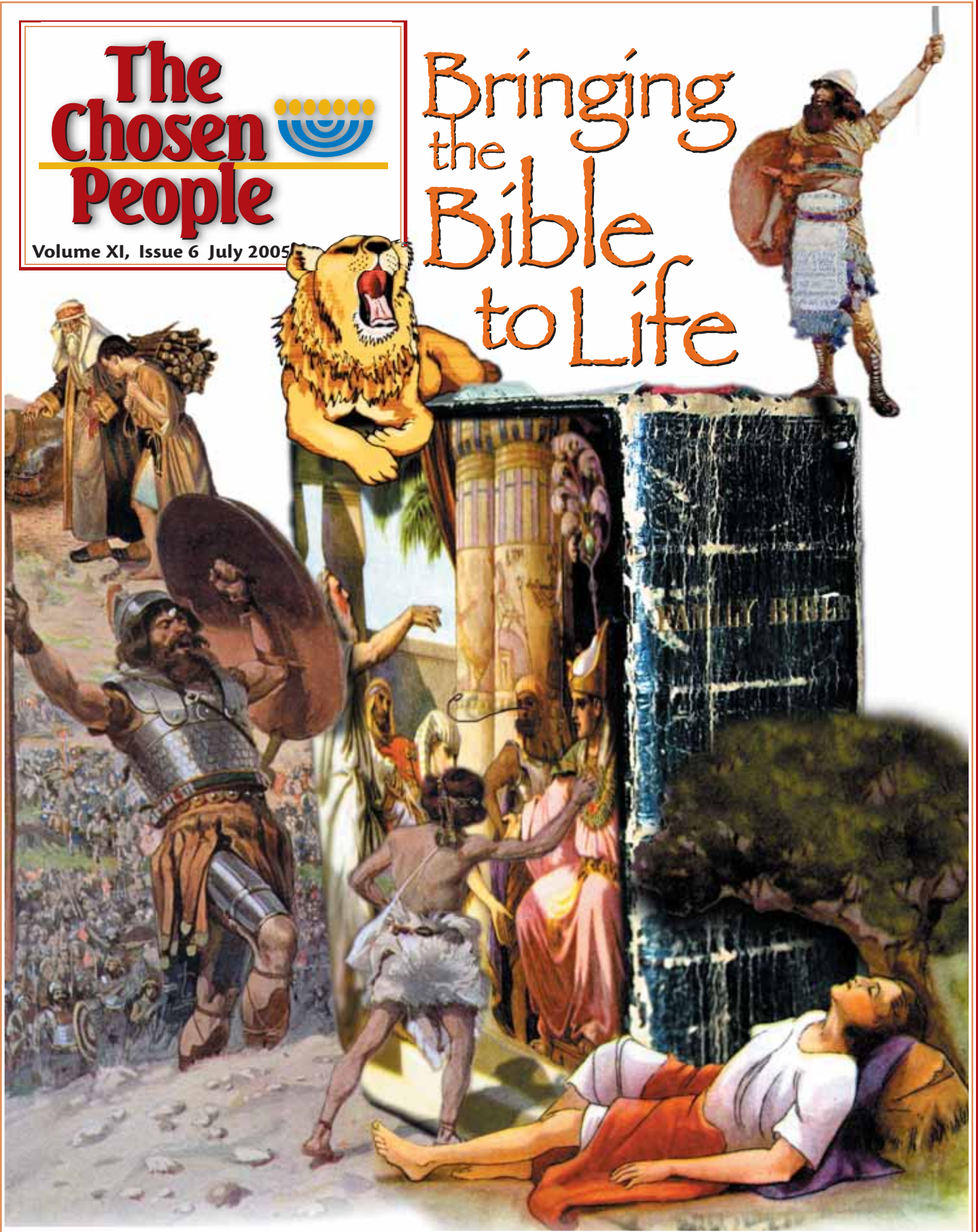


# The Chosen People



Volume XI, Issue 6 July 2005

# Bringing the Bible to Life



**INSIDE  
THIS  
ISSUE:**

The New Testament through Jewish Eyes • The Oral Law—  
Judaism's Roadmap for Righteousness • Revelation Bible Study



# The New Testament through Jewish Eyes

*Shalom from New York City!*

I continue to be excited about our new Messianic Center in Jerusalem. Even now, we have a team of 15 young people using the building as a base of operations as they travel about, witnessing at New Age gatherings, rock festivals and on the streets of Jerusalem. To tell you the truth, I wish I could be there with them!

Our headquarters in New York is also humming with another great group of volunteer evangelists (STEP-in-a-Week) who are here to do outreach in parks, subways and bustling city neighborhoods. It is a wonderful thing to see Jewish people realize that the message of Messiah is also for them! And why shouldn't it be?

## **The Hebrew Scriptures and Jesus the Messiah**

Like many of my Jewish brothers and sisters in the Lord, I once thought that the New Testament was the “Christian” Bible and had nothing to do with the Scriptures of my Jewish people. I still remember my surprise and shock when I first opened the New Testament and discovered how “Jewish” it is.

Without the prophecies and promises of our own Hebrew Scriptures, there would be no Messiah to hope for or expect. The early Church understood this relationship, although it was often uncomfortable with—and even ashamed of—the “Jewish connection.” Still, from its earliest existence, the Church considered the Hebrew Bible to be the indispensable foundation of the Gospel—which, of course, it is!

However, we sometimes forget how important knowledge of the New Testament's Jewish background is to our understanding of Jesus' own teaching.

## **The Jewish World and the New Testament**

Let me show you an example, taken from a book that Zhava and I wrote titled *The Fall Feasts of Israel* (see back page).

In John 7, Jesus makes a curious statement:

*On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as*



the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive... (John 7:37-39).

We know from John 7:2 that the feast to which these verses are referring is *Sukkot* (Booths), the Feast of Tabernacles. A little digging with a concordance leads us to Leviticus 23. There, we find that this seven-day harvest feast features the commandment to live in “booths” as a reminder of the children of Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt.

### Digging Deeper for Scripture’s Meaning

Look a little further and you will find that, along with the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Weeks, Tabernacles is one of the three “appointed yearly feasts” during which sacrifice must be offered in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 16:16, 2 Chronicles 8:13).

All of this is certainly helpful, but it does not give us insight into Jesus’ dramatic “living water” invitation. For that we must turn to the Oral Law (see the article on page 4) with which Jesus would certainly have been familiar—and without which we would have no clue about what He meant.

The *Mishnah*, which is part of the Oral Law, describes a Temple ceremony called “*Nissuch Ha Mayim*” (Drawing of the Water). This ceremony was a reminder of the agricultural roots of *Sukkot*, for then, as now, water was quite literally the life of the Land. So, at this high point on the last, “great day” of the feast, a specially appointed Levitical priest, accompanied by a throng of musicians and other worshippers, went to the Pool of Siloam to draw water with a special golden pitcher.

Returning to the Temple, the priest then poured the water into one of two silver basins located on the southwestern corner of the great

altar. All of this was done with great ceremony, for the pouring of the water was also said to symbolize the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Now the meaning of the Scripture begins to emerge in its fullness. We find that Jesus is calling the worshippers in the Temple on the Feast of Tabernacles to hearken to Him. He is saying, in effect, “I am the reality that the water in this ceremony symbolizes—the true Life Giver, through whom the Holy Spirit is also given.”

Another potential Tabernacles connection may be found in John 8:12:

*Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”*

This saying is quite possibly linked to another Tabernacles ceremony referred to in the *Mishnah*, the “Illumination of the Temple,” in which four enormous golden vessels were each filled with ten gallons of pure oil and then lit. The light was said to illuminate every courtyard in Jerusalem. In the days before electricity, it must have been utterly dazzling. No wonder controversy ensued when Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the Light of Jerusalem—and also the Light of the World!

### More Resources to Explore

I hope this little excursion into the Jewish world of the New Testament has whetted your appetite for deeper study. Please let me recommend three books I have found to be fascinating and informative. They are written by Alfred Edersheim, a nineteenth-century Jewish believer who devoted his life to demonstrating the bond between the Jewishness of Jesus and

the message of the Gospel. These books can be found through links at our website, [www.chosenpeople.com](http://www.chosenpeople.com). They are: *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*; *The Temple—Its Ministry and Service*; and *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*.

Alfred Edersheim came to faith in Jesus through the witness of Gentile missionaries to the Jewish people in his native Hungary. After becoming a believer, Edersheim was able to bless his Gentile brothers and sisters by applying his Jewish learning to the New Testament Scriptures and



opening God’s Word to those who brought him the message of salvation.

Dear friend, we cannot continue our ministry without you! We are partners together in reaching Jewish people for Jesus. Thank you again for your support and prayers. I hope that Chosen People Ministries will be a blessing to you as well!

Your brother in the Messiah,

*Mitch*  
Mitch



Dr. Mitch Glaser,  
President

PS. Our new calendar will soon be available and it is just beautiful. Keep reading to find out how you can order one—or more!—especially as gifts for your Jewish friends.

# The Oral Law – Judaism’s Roadmap FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS



Anyone who has ever traveled knows how confusing it can be to get around. It’s not enough to say, “I want to get from point A to point B.” You’ll need directions, landmarks, warnings about treacherous terrain. And you’ll want to know the rules of the road, so that you’ll be able to avoid those costly traffic tickets.

In fact, a travel guide is what you’re looking for—a compilation of everything you’ll need to get where you’re going. According to traditional Judaism, the Oral Law and its later written form, known as the *Talmud*, does precisely this. It is Judaism’s travel guide through



life—a roadmap for righteousness designed to show the observant Jewish person how to follow the written *Torah* (Law) and the Hebrew Bible.



## The Oral Law and the Sinai Revelations

To understand this, one must first know about the traditional Jewish belief that there were two revelations at Mt. Sinai, the Written Law and the Oral Law.

According to Orthodox Jewish belief, the Written Law that Moses received from the Lord is only part of God’s revelation. Another Law was revealed as well, and handed down orally through generations. This Oral Law is said to be the necessary accompaniment that makes the commandments of the Written Law intelligible.

For example, the Written Law tells us “...*you may slaughter from your herd and from your flock...just as I have commanded you*” (Deuteronomy 12:21). But when you search the Scriptures for specific instructions about slaughtering, you will search in vain. From these and many such instances in the Bible, the Jewish sages have posited an Oral Law that completes the written letter of the Lord’s commands.<sup>1</sup>

So, if the Written Law is the “point A to point B” of the Lord’s roadmap, the Oral Law is the indispensable “travel guide” that will get you there.



## The Talmud – The Oral Law and Commentary

For centuries, the Oral Law was just that—a tradition passed down by “word of mouth” by the great teachers of Israel. However, the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 and the devastation of Jerusalem in A.D. 135 created a national and religious emergency. Religious leaders were scattered and scarce. For this reason, in about the year 200, the great Jewish sage, Rabbi Yehudah ha Nasi (Judah the Prince), did what no one had ever done before—he began to write down the Oral Law.

Known as the *Mishnah* (learning through repetition), Rabbi Yehudah’s work systematically documented six major “orders” of the Oral Law, each of which dealt

with some important aspect of Jewish life. They are *Zera'im* (Seeds), encompassing agricultural laws; *Mo'ed* (Festival), dealing with holy days; *Nashim* (Women), about marriage, divorce and other family matters; *Nezikin* (Damages), which comes to grips with legal and financial issues; *Kodashim* (Holy Things), about the Temple and its sacrifice; and *Toharot* (Purities), the application of the laws of ritual purity and impurity. These orders are divided into 63 subsections (called “tractates”).<sup>2</sup>

The Mishnah also contains the weighty opinions of teachers called *Tanna'im* (repeaters). Over the following centuries, the Mishnah was extensively analyzed and debated by later generations of Jewish religious leaders who became known as the *Amora'im* (teachers). Their added commentary, known as the *Gemara*, was written in Aramaic, including their paraphrases of the Hebrew Scriptures.

These works, plus additions known as *Tosafot* and *Aggadah* (“additions” and folklore) compose the *Talmud*, which is itself an Aramaic word for “learning” or “study.”

There are actually two Talmuds—the better-known Babylonian Talmud, which was edited in about A.D. 500, and the Jerusalem Talmud, which may have been codified about a hundred years earlier.<sup>3</sup>

The Talmud is encyclopedic in length—about 36 volumes. It is the authoritative teaching of *Halachah*, the rules of Jewish life. Observant Jews return to it again and again as a source of wisdom, inspiration and guidance.

Even in the time of Jesus, the Oral Law was by no means an agreed upon subject within Judaism. But the Pharisees, who became the voice of “normative Judaism,” acknowledged it and, as history shows, it was they who carried the day.



## Jesus, the Pharisees and the Oral Law

Many of the controversies between the Pharisees and Jesus that are recorded in the Scripture have to do with their differing interpretations of the place and purpose of the Oral Law. For example, the written Torah forbids working on the Sabbath. Luke 6:1-2 records:

*Now it happened...that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands. And some of the Pharisees said to them, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?”*

By referring to “plucking” and “rubbing” the grain, Luke is

giving us clues as to exactly what the Pharisees’ objections are. According to the Talmud, the disciples were breaking the Sabbath in quite a number of ways. According to the Mishnah, “He that reapeth corn on the Sabbath...is guilty; and plucking corn is reaping.” Rubbing the grain out was considered to be threshing—another violation. “In case a woman rolls wheat to remove the husks, it is considered sifting; if she rubs the head of wheat, it is regarded as threshing; if she cleans off the side-adherences, it is sifting out fruit; if she throws them up in her hand, it is winnowing” [*Jer. Shabbat* 10a].<sup>4</sup>

Other examples in which the Oral Law sheds light on the respective positions of Jesus and the Pharisees include the washing of hands (Mark 7:1-9), the subject of divorce (Mark 10:1-12) and the instances in the Gospels that deal with the healing miracles on the Sabbath, such as Mark 3:1-6 and John 9.



## The Heart of the Issue

To this day, the various perspectives on the Oral Law within Judaism are still clashing. And scholars—Christian and Jewish—examine the teachings of Jesus in an attempt to place Him either along or outside the spectrum of Jewish thought.

But the heart of the issue is not whether Jesus validated the Oral Law or to what extent He might have done so. What matters more is the Biblical truth that “*man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD*” (Deuteronomy 8:3).

The words that matter most are those of Jesus the Messiah. He is the living Word through Whom everything was created and to Whom everyone must eventually answer.

- 1 [www.beingjewish.com](http://www.beingjewish.com)
- 2 [www.jewfaq.org](http://www.jewfaq.org)
- 3 [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org)
- 4 [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org)

Page from the Talmud



# See the THROUGH JEWISH EYES Bible

by Daniel Goldberg, Th.D., D.D.



## THE SADDEST TEXT IN ALL THE BIBLE

Very few people in this day and age want to hear about hell. Perhaps that is one reason why sermons on this subject are so rare today. Many churches either deny its existence or support a “temporary confinement” theory. Yet Jesus spoke more frequently of hell than of heaven—and for this reason alone we should give heed to Revelation 20:11-15, which may be called “the saddest text in all the Bible.”

*Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it...and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

### The Biblical Meaning of Hell

There are four biblical words that are, unfortunately, often translated by the one word “hell,” thus obscuring some important linguistic distinctions. In the Old Testament, the word “Sheol” may refer to the “grave,” the “pit” or “the abode of the dead.” The Old Testament focus seems to be on the place where dead bodies go—not to the place where their souls exist.

The New Testament term “Hades” is the equivalent of the Old Testament “Sheol.” The term “Tartaroo” is used only in 2 Peter 2:4 and may be associated with the Greek term “Abussos” or “the abyss” or “bottomless pit” as the prison house for demons (see Luke 8:31; Revelation 9:1,2,11). The Greek word “Gehenna,” which occurs twelve

times in the New Testament, is the designation for eternal punishment. It is a word taken from the Hebrew “gehinnom,” and is a place of perpetual fire—the garbage dump in the Valley of Hinnom in Jerusalem (2 Kings 16:3).

### A Summons, a Judgment and a Sentence

Revelation 20:11-15 unfolds almost like a legal proceeding. The resurrection of the lost (20:13) is like the summons one receives to appear in court. Then comes the final judgment delivered by the Judge seated on the great white throne (20:12,13). Finally, the sentence is handed down—an eternal and just consignment of the lost to Gehenna (20:14,15).

Yeshua (Jesus) taught the eternity of both heaven and hell in Matthew 25:46, “*And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.*” In the Greek, the words “everlasting” and “eternal” are identical. Thus, if hell is not eternal, neither is heaven.

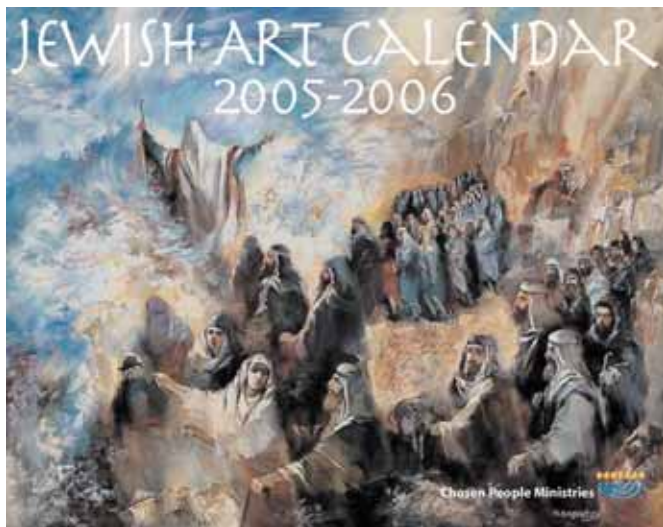
### A Merciful God Provides a Means of Escape

*“...As I live, says the LORD God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked...”* (Ezekiel 33:11).

Our God is a righteous King who hates wickedness. But He has combined mercy with justice by allowing His precious Son to suffer our punishment on Calvary’s tree as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of all mankind.

Our eternal destiny depends upon our response to the greatest question of all time: What will you do with Jesus? We have the assuring promise of the Lord Jesus in John 6:37, “*...the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*” ✡



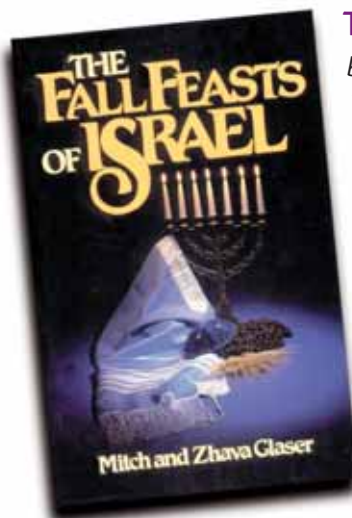


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# Deepen Your Knowledge of Your Jewish Roots



## The Fall Feasts of Israel

by Mitch and Zhava Glaser

*The Fall Feasts of Israel* will help you understand three of Israel's most significant festivals: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot. A complete examination of each feast looks at its biblical institution, its celebration in the time of Jesus, and its observance by Jewish people today.

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shofar 5020

price: \$36.95<sup>us</sup>



Please pray for our summer evangelistic teams as they minister in Israel and New York City

**For orders in the U.S. call 800-333-4936.  
Please allow 3-4 weeks for delivery.**



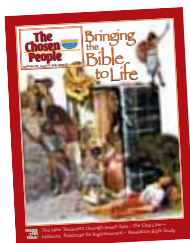
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Chosen People Ministries has been taking the love of the Messiah to Jewish people worldwide since 1894.

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Please remember Chosen People Ministries in your will. "I will bless those who bless you." (Genesis 12:3)