

The Chosen People



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Purim

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Dear friend in the Messiah,

Shalom from New York City! I hope you enjoy this new issue of *The Chosen People* newsletter, with teaching on the Festival of Purim and the new rise of antisemitism. More than ever before, we need to pray that the same God who delivered the Jewish people from destruction in the past might do so again today—both nationally and spiritually. It is my prayer that my Jewish people will hear the Good News and be saved.

After all, this is what your Mission to the Jewish people is all about. Our deepest passion is to proclaim the unchanging Gospel message. This is the ministry our workers focus on day in and day out.

The Unseen Hand of God

Who is the hidden hero of Purim? God Himself! Though His name is not mentioned, we sense His invisible presence throughout the Book of Esther as the writer describes the deliverance of the Jewish people.

The story of Purim has a special place in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is

one of five *megillot* (scrolls)—along with Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Ruth and Song of Songs—that are publicly read at various Jewish festivals and observances throughout the year. The Scroll of Esther is read at Purim, when the name of the villain Haman is drowned out with shouts and jeers every time it is mentioned.

Purim means “Lots,” a reference to the method through which the wicked Haman determined the date on which the Jewish people would be destroyed: “...*Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus....In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month...*” (Esther 3:6-7).

As students of the Scripture know, however, his plan was thwarted by the bravery of Queen Esther, who was encouraged by her older cousin Mordecai. The celebration of Purim features special foods, such as a tasty pastry called *hamantaschen* (Haman’s pockets, or Haman’s ears) and hilarious skits called *purimshpiel*.

Purim is the liveliest celebration on the Jewish calendar. It contains some of the most memorable characters in all of Scripture—the beautiful and courageous Esther, the vain and scheming Haman, the wise and faithful Mordecai, and Ahasuerus, the not-quite-up-to-speed but ultimately fair-minded Persian king. However, one presence we might expect to have “top billing” is not even mentioned by name: God is not there!

Or is He?

God’s Work Behind the Scenes

One of the most important reasons the events recorded in the Book of Esther resonate so deeply with Jewish people is that the danger of destruction has surfaced repeatedly over the centuries in our troubled history (see the informative article by Olivier Melnick on the following pages).

For men and women of faith, Purim reminds us to bear witness to

The Hidden Hero of Purim!

Jewish children dress up on Purim



a God who may at times seem hidden but who nonetheless acts behind the scenes of history. This is true not only for nations on the broad canvas of history, but also for individual lives. God's presence may be known through the testimonies of faithful men and women who began in ignorance of Him and were brought step by step by that unseen hand to their moment of truth.

God works in many ways to draw us into His kingdom. Sometimes, what seems like a mere coincidence turns out to be a truly "divine appointment." For Chosen People Ministries, perhaps the most important example of this is the experience of our own founder, Rabbi Leopold Cohn, more than a hundred years ago. His story is an example of how the Lord will both prepare the heart and arrange just the right circumstances to meet that heart's longing. For years in his home country of Hungary, Rabbi Cohn's desire was to know the Messiah. Yet it took a transatlantic journey to bring him to a church where the Gospel was being preached in his native Yiddish language. The rest, as they say, is history.

Guided Toward the Truth

Over the years, Chosen People Ministries staff members have given dozens of accounts of how a restless search and a chance meeting have combined to produce a new life that truly fulfills Scripture's promise to multiply itself "a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:23).

One such instance occurred in New York City, directly outside the Mission's international headquarters. One evening, Steve Fenchel, who leads Chosen People Ministries' Messianic congregation in Manhattan, returned to our office to take care of some detail he had

forgotten about earlier.

As he approached the building, which by this time was closed for the day, he saw a man standing out front, examining the plaque that commemorates Rabbi Cohn and describes his search for the Messiah.

Steve asked politely, "Are you here to see someone?"

The man, who was in his mid-twenties, seemed uncertain. As Steve engaged him in conversation, he discovered that Ira (name changed) was Jewish and had been grappling with spiritual questions relating to the Gospel for some time. He was also emotionally troubled with many other struggles, and seemed reluctant to talk about himself.

Here is one way the unseen hand of God is revealed: not only did the Lord bring Ira to our office, but He also brought the one staff member perhaps best qualified to speak with him. Steve had known such troubles himself as a young man, and the Lord achieved a great victory in his life. As Steve briefly described his experiences, Ira began to open up.

As this intense conversation developed, Steve sensed that Ira was becoming increasingly receptive to the Gospel. Continuing the conversation in a small park just down the street from our office, Steve finally asked Ira if he wanted to pray to receive the Messiah. Then, to their great joy, they prayed together.

Steve and Ira kept in touch, and Steve was able to put Ira on the road of discipleship. They still keep in touch, and Ira and his wife now attend a good congregation near their home in the Bronx.



The Mystery of Faith and Faithfulness

The unseen hand of God placed the maiden Esther in the position of Queen at just the right moment to bring about the rescue of the Jewish people. His hand is still at work behind the scenes of our lives, creating opportunities for us to share the Good News and to bring people to Himself. It may be said of us some day, as it was of Queen Esther, "For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place.... Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

One thing we may know is that as we grow in faithfulness and yield ourselves to the Lord's will, that same hand, so often unseen, is there to guide us—as it always has.

Your brother in the Messiah,


Mitch



Dr. Mitch Glaser
President

Antisemitism throughout History— *God's Response and Ours*

Enmity against the Jewish people is nothing new, and it should come as no surprise that the Bible equates it to enmity toward the Lord Himself.

Psalm 83:1-5 says in part:

O God!...Your enemies make a tumult....They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more".... For they have consulted together with one consent; they form a confederacy against You...

Thus, the Bible draws an unmistakable parallel between hatred of Israel and hatred of the God of Israel.

In the Scroll of Esther, we find the most detailed, dramatic picture of an antisemitic attack in all of Scripture. The villain Haman hated the Jewish people because they were different—an example of ludicrous antisemitism that would be repeated endless times in history:

When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath.... Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.... Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people's, and they do not keep the king's laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain" (Esther 3:5-8).

Today, Jewish people celebrate the Feast of Lots or *Purim* to remember how God preserved us and helped us survive yet another attempt to destroy us. Many through the ages will try to ostracize, demonize and even annihilate Jewish people because they appear to be different! But God has a different agenda. We clearly see God's providence in connection with the Jewish people and those who bless them—as well as His promised retribution toward their enemies promised in Genesis 12:3—I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

The Council of Nicæa: A Great Divide

Although we know that Jesus and the first disciples were Jewish, few Christians are aware of how quickly the early Church turned its back on the Jewish people. As decades turned into centuries, Church leaders at the Council of Nicæa in 325 AD, who could not or did not wish to relate to the Jewish traditions of the early Messianic believers, deliberately distanced the celebration of the Resurrection from that of Passover.

More decisions at many other Church Councils followed as the chasm between Christians and Jews was constantly and deliberately widened. In addition to this, the Church's anti-Jewish bias in the interpretation of Scripture led to many unjust laws to "protect" people from this "insufferable devilish burden—the Jews," in the words of Martin Luther.

Medieval Madness and Murder

As the Jewishness of the New Testament and the Jewish identity of Yeshua (Jesus) were forgotten or brushed aside, antisemitism spread throughout the "Christian" world. The Crusades legitimized the killing of Jews, who were labeled "Christ killers," an epithet still used today. The slogan arose: "Kill a Jew and save your soul."

Those Jewish people who fled the antisemitic reaches of the Crusades and later the Spanish Inquisition found some measure of safety in Eastern Europe. Alas, their security was short-lived, for antisemitism found them again as anti-Jewish forces gained power in the lands where they had previously found a respite from persecution.

The "Pale of Settlement" and the Pogroms

In 1791, a decree was promulgated that allowed the Jews to populate a specific area of Eastern Europe later known as the "Pale of Settlement." This vast geographical area (one million square miles) was in fact a very large ghetto where the safety of the Jewish settlers was soon no longer guaranteed. The Jewish people were once again cast as the scapegoats of humanity as *pogroms* (ethnic cleansing massacres) broke out against them. This led to a massive exodus of Jewish people to Western Europe and even America in the late 1800s. The Jewish people had no idea what awaited them around the corner of history: the worst chapter had yet to be written.

The Catastrophe

During the 1930s and 40s, there was no longer a place for Jewish people to be safe. Six million Jewish souls perished in the Holocaust as the culmination of antisemitism found its most systematic and powerful outlet. The Jewish community finally realized that they would only be safe in a Land of their own.

God had never given up on “the Apple of His Eye,” and the modern State of Israel was miraculously and prophetically reborn in 1948. “NEVER AGAIN” became the motto of the worldwide Jewish community.

The Status of Antisemitism Today

Unfortunately, antisemitism is alive and well today. We must not ignore the red flags of hatred that are rapidly surfacing all over the globe. Holocaust denial, anti-Israel rhetoric, and rabid antisemitic sentiments abound in many parts of the world. Jewish people are currently suffering greatly in Europe at levels nearing those of pre-Holocaust years. Jews have been killed in France in the last few years just because they were Jews. This same hatred is also spreading to America.

So where is God in all this?

The great prophet Isaiah tells us that God cares about His people Israel and their suffering:

I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD and the praises of the LORD...and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies....In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old (Isaiah 63:7-9).

The Scroll of Esther teaches us that although God is not mentioned, He was nevertheless behind the scenes and totally in control. Throughout the centuries, He has shared the affliction of His chosen people. As we celebrate Purim, let us remember the real reason for the survival of the Jewish people. It is the will of God Himself: “For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and You, LORD, have become their God” (2 Samuel 7:24).

Olivier Melnick is a Chosen People Ministries staff member based in Southern California and is the author of the recently published book, *They Have Conspired Against You: Responding to the New Antisemitism.*



Psalm 83:
Asaph 10th cent. BC



Esther
Purim:
5th cent. BC



Church Fathers:
200-400 AD



Middle Ages:
5th - 13th cent. AD



Spanish
Inquisition:
1478-1834 AD



Eastern European Pogroms:
19th-20th cent. AD

Holocaust: 1933-1945 AD
Antisemitism today
1945-today

See the THROUGH JEWISH EYES Bible

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



DAVID'S PSALMS OF IMPRECATION (CURSING)

David requests that God's wrath be poured out upon His enemies in no less than ten of his Psalms (3, 5, 7, 10, 35, 36, 52, 58, 64, 109). How may believers understand these prayers, which seem contradictory to the teachings (Mt. 5:43-48) of Jesus?

For example, in Psalm 7:6 David prays, "*Arise, O LORD, in Your anger; lift Yourself up because of the rage of my enemies; rise up for me to the judgment You have commanded!*" In Psalm 10:15 he prays, "*Break the arm of the wicked and the evil man...*"

We remember that David wrote the Psalms under the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

In his last words, David testified, "*The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue*" (2 Sam. 23:2). Three principles will guide us in understanding the imprecatory Psalms.

THE PSALMS PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

In the very first Psalm, a pattern is set for contrasting the righteous with the unrighteous.

David sustains this contrast throughout his imprecatory Psalms. God's righteousness demands moral conformity to His holy nature, and God's holiness demands that His treatment of His creatures conform to the purity of that nature.

David's Psalms teach that God loves the same persons whom He hates. It is not completely accurate to think the Scripture teaches that God hates sin, but loves the sinner. God both hates and loves sinners. No sin is separated from its agent. David wrote, "*... You hate all workers of iniquity*" (Ps. 5:5).

DAVID DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN FRIENDS AND ENEMIES OF GOD

In Psalm 2, David pictures the Messiah taking vengeance on the nations that refuse to worship the Lord. David declares, "*You shall break them with a rod of iron...*" (Ps. 2:9).

In his imprecatory Psalms, David takes a stand with God's friends against His enemies. In essence, David declares that He would identify with the friends of God in opposing His enemies.

God's friends should be our friends and God's enemies our enemies, since we are exhorted, "*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him*" (1 Jn. 2:15).

David himself never executed personal vengeance upon the enemies of God. Rather, he appealed to God for justice (Ps. 3:7-8; Rom. 12:19). David's restraint toward King Saul illustrates this.

DAVID PRAYS FOR THE VINDICATION OF GOD'S PURPOSES

Only the Spirit of God could reveal to David the identity of those obstinate persons and nations who take a stand against the Divine program. Without that insight, as believers we are called to love all persons in hope of their repentance and salvation. However, under Divine inspiration, the imprecatory Psalms pronounce doom upon those nations who are the enemies of Israel.

When Messiah Jesus returns to earth, He will gather together all the foes of God and of Israel and will pronounce the following imprecation: "*... Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*" (Mt. 25:41).

All around the world, nations take their stand against their enemies. As believers, engaged in a spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:12), our identification with the hosts of God helps us to understand the imprecatory Psalms. ✠

PROSTITUTE KNOCKS ON "DOOR OF HOPE"



Mission President Dr. Mitch Glaser recently returned from a whirlwind tour of our rapidly expanding ministry in Israel. While there, he had meaningful encounters with our growing staff and

those to whom they minister. While at "Door of Hope," an outreach to the homeless and addicted in Tel Aviv that our staff member Brian S. helps run, Mitch spoke with one desperate woman. Degraded by a life of prostitution, she confided that she knew that if she did not change, she would die. She also said that through the ministry of Brian and his co-workers, she has come to know that there is a God who has the power to help her. As their discussion ended, she asked Mitch to pray for her.



Editor's note: For more about Mitch's trip to Israel, see his online blog at www.chosenpeople.com/israel.

FAITH DECISIONS FOR OLD AND YOUNG IN GERMANY

Vladimir Pikman, who directs Chosen People Ministries' work in Germany, reports two faith decisions that reflect the wide spectrum of people our ministry attracts. One is an 84-year old Jewish woman who fled Nazi Germany and then returned about 30 years ago. She heard about the congregation through a media report and came to the service. The second time she visited, she confessed her faith and asked to be baptized. Another is a fifteen-year-old Jewish girl who accompanied her grandmother to a service. A peer who is strong in the faith befriended her and as their friendship blossomed, she too became a believer. Now she is witnessing to her huge family, and her father is so impressed by the changes he has seen in her that he and other family members are coming to the services also.



JEWISH MAN FINDS MESSIAH THROUGH JEWISH MESSENGER



After giving his testimony at a church in Washington State, staff member Al Reichman responded to a man at the service who had questions. This man, who was visiting from Delaware to see his aunt, had been raised by Jewish foster parents. He challenged Al's claim that the Gospel is for the Jewish people. Al invited him to return that evening for a presentation of "Messiah in the Passover." He did come and during the invitation, he came forward and received the Lord. After the service he gave Al a huge hug and told him how important it had been to hear this message from another Jewish person.

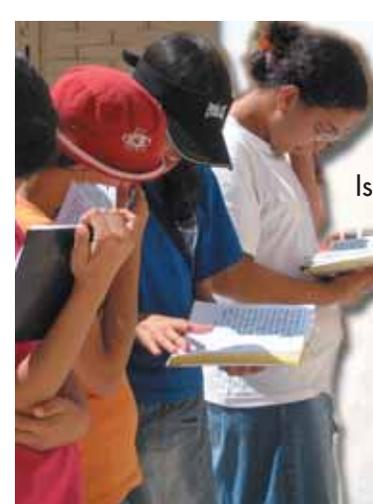
BAD WEATHER LEADS TO GOOD TESTIMONY

Falling snow and a potential traffic violation combined for a good witnessing opportunity for Igor and Vita S., student staff members at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. An elderly Jewish woman's car got badly stuck in the snow in front of their apartment. Finding her quite upset, Vita invited her inside for a warming cup of tea, and had a chance to witness to her. When a policeman arrived, he decided at first to give the woman a ticket for blocking other cars, but Vita persuaded the officer (who turned out to be a believer) to change his mind. When the woman was finally able to leave, Vita got her phone number and she and Igor are planning to invite her back for dinner.



JEWISH COUPLE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COMES TO FAITH

Larry Feldman stays busy leading two congregations in Southern California. His congregation in Orange County is just finishing a series on Jewish evangelism —with visible results! A Jewish couple in their 60s who were not yet believers recently visited the service with friends and were touched by Larry's message. They joked to him after the service, "You could sell me anything!" That evening, they prayed to receive the Lord with the couple who brought them.



Come **See Israel through Jewish Eyes!**
Tour the Holy Land in April 2008.

If you are interested in reaching Israelis for the Messiah, ministry trips to Israel are planned for this summer: **eXperience Israel** for young people ages 18-35 and **Outreach Israel** for college students.

For more on any of these trips, visit www.chosenpeople.com, email opportunities@chosenpeople.com or call 888-2-YESHUA.

Israel is a place where the past meets the present and the words of Scripture come alive to embrace them both. A tour with Chosen People Ministries will draw you closer to the Lord and give you a whole new perspective on your walk with God.



Simcha 2008

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Work from Home with Chosen People Ministries

Chosen People Ministries now has positions available as Church Callers for those who are able to work 20-24 hours per week from home, scheduling Chosen People Ministries workers in churches across the country.

A love for the Lord, the Jewish people and the local church are necessities for this position. You must also have a computer and computer experience, the ability to type at least 40 words per minute, and enjoy talking on the telephone! Your mission to the Jewish people speaks in more than a thousand churches each year and we hope to increase this number in the future, so please pray about this wonderful opportunity. If you are interested please e-mail Julia Freeman at julia@chosenpeople.com or call 1-888-405-5874 for more information.



Antisemitism Revealed

A new trend of antisemitism is surfacing worldwide with the advent of the Intifada in the fall of 2000. Jewish people, especially European Jews, are again the target of antisemitism around the world. This chilling reality is recounted in this new book by Chosen People Ministries staff member Olivier Melnick, which will expose, educate and call to action. [3119] PRICE: \$20.95^{US}



For phone orders in the US call 800-333-4936

For a larger selection of resources, visit www.chosenpeople.com
Please allow 3-4 weeks for delivery.



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



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