CHOSEN PEOPLE



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THE PASSOVER PLAGUES | GOD'S PURPOSES FOR PLAGUES AND PANDEMICS | MICAH AND THE RE-GATHERING OF ISRAEL BY GOD

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Shalom and Happy Passover!

I hope you receive this newsletter before Passover begins on the evening of April 15. However, as we have found out recently, the US mail is very slow these days! It is more likely you are reading this during the biblical festival.

I love Passover. It is my favorite Jewish holiday and by far the most delicious. The array of traditional Passover dishes is magnificent. I wish you could have tasted my grandmother's chicken and matzah ball soup—not to mention her homemade *gefilte* (stuffed) fish. (By the way, do not ever ask a Jewish person what parts of the fish they used! That would be a big mistake.)

As a Messianic Jew, I have found Passover more meaningful now than I did before coming to know the Lord. As you know, the Lord's Supper—one of our most cherished spiritual ceremonies—grew out of the Passover Seder. You can find all the intricate details by going to our website and reading further or buying one of our Passover books listed on the back of this newsletter. Each book includes a Messianic Passover *Haggadah* (Passover guide) with Jesus at the center of the service—and some wonderful recipes.

If you want to observe the Passover as fulfilled in Jesus, the Lamb of God, you can this year! Passover lasts an entire week. Though we usually celebrate the Seder on the first two nights, any night during that week will do. I know it would be a wonderful experience for you, your children, Sunday school class, or small group.

It will also further prepare your hearts for Good Friday and Resurrection Day, especially since the first night of Passover and Good Friday coincide this year!

Each year at this time, I try to address a Passover-related topic in detail. This year, it will not surprise you that I would like to help us better understand the role that plagues play in the plan of God, especially during Passover.

THE TEN PASSOVER PLAGUES

The recitation of the ten plagues is a central part of the Passover Seder and one of the most memorable moments during the Seder for Jewish children. Traditionally, we dip our little finger or a spoon into a glass of red wine and put the drop of liquid onto our plates while loudly reciting the name of each plague. We call out the plagues in English and Hebrew: blood (dam), frogs (ts'fardei'a), vermin (kinim), flies (arov), pestilence (dever), boils, (sh'chin),

hail (barad), locusts (arbe), darkness (choshech), and death of the firstborn (makat bechorot).

The recitation of the plagues is not an isolated moment in the Seder. It is part of the overall recounting of the story of God's deliverance of the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage. There are two reasons why we drop the wine on our plates. One reason is that it more dramatically portrays the plagues as judgments falling upon the Egyptian slavemasters. The other is because Jewish tradition tells us to reduce our joy (symbolized by the sweet wine) by one drop for each plague that fell upon the Egyptians.

The lesson here is clear: even though the Egyptians enslaved us, we recognize they are fellow human beings and God's creation. Therefore, our rabbis teach us we should not rejoice in their judgment but rather remember God's love for all peoples and nations.

We will now look briefly at the three primary purposes for the plagues. First, God uses plagues to bring judgment upon the ungodly. Through the plagues, He also reveals His power and character. Lastly, they fulfill prophetic events.

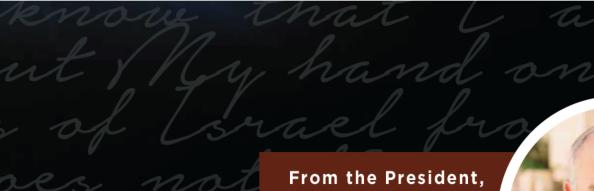
JUDGMENT

The great German theologians and early twentieth-century biblical scholars Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch coined the term "penal miracles" in their well-read commentary on the Hebrew Scriptures.² In other words, there were plagues, or miracles, that also served as judgments and punishments upon the disobedient.

Each plague brought judgment upon the Egyptians, who were otherwise unwilling to allow the Jewish people to leave Egypt and worship the one true God. This chastisement is an excellent reminder that God is loving but also righteous and holy and takes offense at human sin. At times, He brings about temporal judgment upon humanity. He did so with the flood, the plagues, and even the captivity of the Jewish people by pagan nations.

REVELATION

Jewish people understand that God brought the plagues upon the Egyptians as divine judgments designed to move both the Egyptians and Jewish people into action. Biblical plagues are purposeful. While they bring terrible consequences upon the disobedient and rebellious, God often mysteriously uses them for purposes beyond punishment.



MITCH GLASER

Take note of Uzziah, Naaman, and even Miriam, Moses' sister. God struck each of them with leprosy to accomplish His divine purposes. Like the healing of the blind man in John chapter nine, plagues fell upon individuals for the glory of God and the good of mankind. "Jesus answered, 'It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9:3).

God used the plagues to judge the Egyptians and reveal His power, holiness, and presence in human history. Still, God's will and works are always for repentance and a turning away from sin to the one true God.

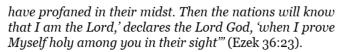
Exodus 7:1–7 shows Moses speaking of plagues as signs and wonders. Throughout the Scriptures, signs and wonders usually describe the miraculous, but in Exodus 7, the words are interchangeable with the word for judgment:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst." So Moses and Aaron did it; as the Lord commanded them, thus they did. Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh. (Exod 7:1-7, emphasis added)

FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

God sometimes uses plagues to fulfill prophecy, as when He promised to deliver the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and return them to their land of promise. "The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst" (Exodus 7:5, emphasis added).

Ezekiel 36:23 parallels Exodus 7:5 and refers to another day of deliverance and restoration for Israel and the Jewish people: "I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you



Both passages show that one of God's great purposes in bringing the Jewish people out of captivity and back to the land of promise was for them to be a sign to the nations testifying that the God of Israel is true and all-powerful. In effect, the Jewish people's deliverance through the ten plagues and their return to the land of Israel reveals the prophetic fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant found in Genesis 12:1–3. Moses predicted this result in chapter six of the book of Exodus:

Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, "I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the Lord." (Exodus 6:6–8)

We must view the exodus, including the plagues, as one means by which God fulfilled His promises to Israel and, as we later see in the book of Revelation, His future judgment upon mankind.

WHERE DOES THE PANDEMIC FIT IN GOD'S PLAN?

It would be appropriate at this moment to compare COVID-19 to the plagues and try to understand where this pandemic might fit in with the purposes of God. I am not suggesting that God directly imposed COVID-19. There have been many terrible plagues throughout history that have devastated humanity. Although the coronavirus was exceptionally destructive, we have no reason to believe that the spread of this virus is the result of God's direct judgment.

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We must tether our understanding of the divine purpose of plagues, world wars, and the greatest tragedies of human history to Scripture. But, of course, the Bible does not speak about the coronavirus, the Black Plague, or the Spanish Flu. Therefore, the adage, "Where the Bible is silent, so am I," is appropriate here. We must avoid conjecture and not speak for God before He has spoken to us.

On the other hand, we cannot deny that God used plagues as judgments and will do so again in the future. COVID-19 has awakened us to the possibility that plagues, along with other signs, will take place in the end times before the second coming of the Messiah. This view of plagues is also traditional Jewish teaching. Bible-believing Christians, Messianic Jews, and religious Jewish people would agree that "pestilence" or plagues are signs of the coming of the Messiah and will take place in the "last days." The Messiah Himself declared this to be true during the Olivet Discourse (Luke 21:10-11): "Then He continued by saying to them, 'Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven."

Hopefully, one day, we will look back and see the good our heavenly Father accomplished through this global trial. We pray that somehow blessings will come for all through this time of pain and suffering (Romans 8:28). We also pray that we will remember in the light the lessons we learned in the darkness. Perhaps these lessons will even prepare us in some way for the future.

Let us pray the Lord will use the experiences and losses of the last few years to shape our character, reorder our priorities, and draw us closer to Him. May the pandemic remind us all that the Lord is coming soon and that we need to prepare. And what better way to get ready for His return than to continue doing what He told us to do by committing ourselves to evangelism, discipleship, and training a new generation of disciples until He returns! (Matthew 28:19-20).

Stay faithful, vigilant, and filled with His Spirit. The Lord is coming soon-Maranatha!

Your brother.

Mitch

God's Purposes for Plagues and Pandemics

There are purposes for plagues and pandemics, and the coronavirus pandemic is no exception. Though we stop short at claiming God sent the disease, the apostle Paul once told the congregation in Rome, "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God" (Rom 8:28). COVID-19 has been used to open the hearts and minds of Jewish people to the Messiah!

One of our missionaries writes:

Before the Jewish high holy days in 2020, God placed on my heart a unique venue for sharing Him with many Jewish nonbelievers. This vision grew into Feasting, a Jewish cooking show based on Leviticus 23. The first episode aired via YouTube in September 2020. God provided a professional film crew, and we filmed seven episodes highlighting individual Jewish feasts. Each included a food demonstration, a short Bible study, testimonies, and music. After viewing the Sabbath segment, a Jewish non-believer contacted me: "I watched you share your story," she blurted out. "I'm from the Bronx too." A friendship began! An excited believer offered her heartfelt thanks after viewing the first four episodes. She said, "I have a close Jewish friend. Feasting has been so beneficial in knowing how to speak with Jewish people."

As we spread the word that we needed cooks for upcoming Feasting videos, a kosher chef working under the supervision of an ultra-Orthodox rabbi contacted me. Another kosher cook working with the Hasidic community expressed interest. Both knew of my belief in Jesus. A friendly relationship developed with the management of a popular Jewish delicatessen. They have offered to assist with food demonstrations and display advertisements for our celebrations surrounding the Jewish feasts. It was then God's time for me to meet an Israeli Jewish woman. Simcha* was our cook for the episode on the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot or Pentecost). We bonded during the filming—and beyond! Following our time together on Feasting, when antisemitic individuals physically attacked Jewish people in the streets across our country, I asked Simcha if a couple of us could pray for her and her family. She shared that she was touched and warmly welcomed us into her home to visit and pray!

Harold A. Sevener, ed., Messianic Passover Haggadah (New York, N.Y.: Chosen People

Ministries, Inc., 2000), 18-19.

C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub, 2006), 295.

In March 2021, our Passover Seder was filmed and went global. An Arizona Jewish woman received the link for the Seder from two friends. She shared that she was fascinated and learned much: "When Cathy spoke of Jesus, it was over-the-top. Jesus tied up many loose ends for me." Miriam,* her two friends, and I met for tea. I asked what in the Seder impacted her most. Her response: "Jesus!" Miriam and I are meeting regularly.

What of the film crew? The first episode excited the audio/filming expert. "Why are you connecting the Hebrew Scriptures with Jesus?" he asked. His questions continued throughout the filming of each episode. He is now attending an evangelical church and participating in their worship band!

A staff member with Chosen People Ministries—Israel also told us:

The pandemic caused many challenges in life and ministry for everyone. In Israel, many restrictions limited what we could do. We had to be creative in doing activities online or outside. Our team hosted events on Zoom, picnics, outdoor day trips and gatherings, young adult hikes, and worship under the stars. People brought friends who did not know Jesus, and many great spiritual conversations took place. We also created and are currently developing a new website for Israeli seekers that addresses life's difficult questions. Please pray this website leads many to connect with us and come to know Yeshua.

Over the past two years, our staff have not merely continued their ministry. They have also opened new opportunities for which we give thanks. During the first year of the pandemic, Israel experienced lockdowns most of the time with heavy restrictions. One law, for instance, barred people from going more than 100 meters (a couple of blocks) from one's home. Through it all, however, God remained faithful. He created opportunities to reach people right in their homes. Allow me to share about Anat.*

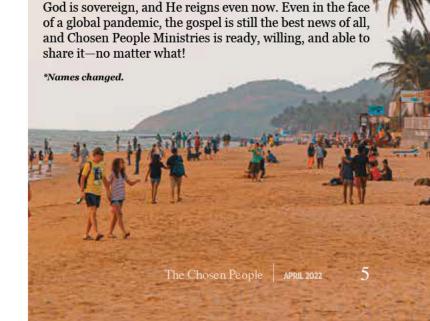
Several years ago, I met Anat in India. She sought spiritual light and truth through meditation and a Buddhist/Hindu blend of eastern ideas. Israelis often travel the world for six to twelve months after completing their army service. There are specific hotspots where thousands of Israelis gather. Goa, India, is one of those places. Imagine a Jewish Israeli going to a foreign land to seek foreign gods. She even asked me who my guru was. Wow! What an opening. I shared about the only true teacher, the only true mediator and connection to God, the true Messiah and God of Israel—Jesus. If one is

She fell in love with a God who loves His people and came to know Jesus—the Way, the Truth, and the Life—as her Messiah.

searching for light, why not go straight to the Light of the world?! We often spoke in India, and when we both returned to Israel, I would follow up with her frequently. While she was always interested, she never had much time as she was busy with work, school, and social life. During the first lockdown, we started having regular Zoom meetings. Now—because of the pandemic—she had plenty of time and decided to spend it pursuing truth again.

We went through the Hebrew Scriptures together, and she asked many questions. She soon came to embrace the Bible as historical and truthful. Then, she fell in love with a God who loves His people and came to know Jesus—the Way, the Truth, and the Life—as her Messiah. Anat continues to meet with me and another young adult, Miri,* whom I also met on a post-army backpacking trip. She, too, came to faith during lockdowns via our studies on Zoom! Both women are back at work and university now, but they always make time to meet, study the Bible, and pray.

Moreover, they are excited about growing in their faith and sharing Jesus with their friends and families. There have been so many young adults whose curiosity and openness toward the gospel have peaked throughout the pandemic. Even during the strictest of lockdowns, nothing can stop God's love and word from touching people's hearts.



MICAH 2:12-13: The Re-Gathering of Israel by God

In our last study, we focused on Israel's acceptance of the message of the false prophets, who refused to prophesy about the consequences of the people's sins. The prophet Micah stated that these false prophets were acting as enemies of the people of Israel by not preaching truth to them. But the message of the false prophets did contain some truth: God indeed promised to regather the remnant of Israel. However, they failed to mention that the idolatrous sins of the children of Israel would incur the wrath of God upon them.

Up until this part of Micah's prophecy, his message to Israel had been extremely negative. He preached that the people needed to repent, or they would experience divine chastening. Now, Micah reminded his hearers about positive blessings ahead for Israel once they repent. This was an abrupt change in Micah's message, which was not an uncommon approach for Hebrew prophets. The prophet's message in the Hebrew Scriptures often included a summary of the sins of the people, the consequences of their actions, and the grace that God will show when they return to Him. Jeremiah—often called the "weeping prophet" for his tearful delivery of bad news to Judah regarding the Babylonian exile—is also the prophet who preached, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness" (Jer 31:3).

In a similar way, Micah predicted—with forceful, emphatic language—the restoration of Israel after her dispersion. He promised that God would assemble and regather all twelve tribes of Israel: "I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel" (Mic 2:12). The restoration from Babylon through Cyrus in 536 BC cannot be all to which the prophet refers, as that was only a partial regathering, and Micah said, "All of you." The Assyrian and Babylonian captivities were only the first of several exiles that the Jewish people have experienced. After that, the Romans destroyed the Second Temple and scattered them in AD 70. Since then, most Jewish people have lived dispersed around the world rather than in a homeland of our own.

The rebirth of the modern State of Israel in 1948 was a crucial step toward fulfilling this prophecy of a total return. In Micah 2:12, the Lord said through the prophet, "I will put them together like sheep in the fold; like a flock in the midst of its pasture they will be noisy with men." When I travel to

Israel and sit in the *cardo*—the main street of the Old City of Jerusalem—and hear the noise of the people talking, I feel like I am living in the midst of the fulfillment of prophecy. The picture of the shepherd watching over his sheep reminds us of the kind of care God will exercise over His people. It reminds us of what Jesus said to the people in John 10:14–15, "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." That is the kind of relationship the Lord will have again in the future with the people of Israel.

The conclusion of Micah's message is found in chapter 2:13, "The breaker goes up before them; they break out, pass through the gate and go out by it. So their king goes on before them, and the Lord at their head." As a shepherd, "the breaker" will often have to overcome obstacles and barriers to lead his sheep into the kind of pasture that will allow them to find rest, refreshment, and restoration (Psalm 23). Ultimately, it will be Israel's Good Shepherd, Yeshua, who will clear the way for His sheep to return to the land. Jesus will not only be their Good Shepherd, but also their Davidic King. The fulfillment of this prophecy will ultimately be in His millennial kingdom.

Rich Freeman, DMin, serves as the vice president for Church Ministries and Conferences with Chosen People Ministries and lives in South Florida with his wife, Julia.



MINISTRY NEWS BRIEFS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE



WORKING NONSTOP ON THE FRONTLINE OF UKRAINE TO HELP REFUGEES

One of our Ukrainian-born Jewish missionaries has been working twenty hours a day helping people in Ukraine since the invasion of Russia. You may be not aware, but there were about 15,000 Israelis living in Ukraine before the invasion began. When the sky over Ukraine closed due to the war, it became extremely difficult to evacuate people. They had to stand in line in terrible icy conditions for thirty, forty, or even as many as fifty hours just to cross the border, often with small children in their arms. Millions of Ukrainians have become refugees. In cooperation with Christians in Poland, our missionary was able to evacuate more than one hundred people in the first week of the war. At the same time, he has been in constant connection with The Jewish Agency, who has given him the names and locations of people in need of help. We are assisting them to find lodging in Lviv in western Ukraine. Local churches are partnering with our team there as well. In just the first couple of days, these churches provided places to stay for seventy people. Our staff member receives daily phone calls from Germany, Poland, Slovakia, and West Ukraine—everyday people are ready to provide food, finances, transportation, and legal assistance. He has never seen such unity among Christians of all denominations helping both Jews and Gentiles to escape the atrocities of the war.

- » Please!!! Pray for the end of this war.
- » Pray for the refugees!
- » Pray for us to have strength to help people.
- » Pray for peace in Ukraine and Jerusalem.

FIRST-TIME ORTHODOX JEWISH CAMPERS AT OUR MESSIANIC KID'S CAMP!

We all know camp is unique and special every year. This year, that special uniqueness came in the form of two of the sweetest, coolest, but not-yet-believing Orthodox Jewish kids! This camp was the first time that these young campers had ever studied the words of Jesus with believers. They kept commenting on how Jewish the words of Jesus are. It is a huge step in the right direction! They also heard some compelling messages from the speakers on one's desperate need for Messiah even if you are rich, young, and powerful in the eyes of this world, especially on

social media. Jesus' message resonated with them, spoke to their souls, and challenged them to consider the truth of the gospel. One message also inspired a forty-minute follow-up conversation on salvation between one of the kids and a counselor. Yet another counselor had the opportunity to speak with the other kid who ended up saying, "I have a lot to think about." All the counselors and directors, many of whom are missionaries with Chosen People Ministries, were so proud to see our own Messianic kids warmly welcoming these two campers, initiating conversations, playing with them, and honestly, just treating them like any other camper!

REACHING JEWISH TRAVELERS AND BELIEVERS IN JAPAN

In recent years, God has placed a vision in the heart of one of our staff to establish a branch of our mission in Japan. Today, there is a Jewish community in Japan that numbers a few thousand. Most of them are Israelis or Jewish people from Russia or the United States who are working or studying in Japan. There are also three active Chabad Orthodox houses there. Two of them are active synagogues. Over a period of several years, our missionary has labored to realize this vision of extending Chosen People Ministries' reach to Japan. Just a few days ago, our missionary held the first team meeting consisting of Japanese and Jewish believers to fulfill the vision of bringing the good news of Jesus the Messiah to the Japanese Jewish community. Please keep this new team and their goals in your prayers. Pray that God will not only bring the gospel to Jewish people in Japan, but that our team connects with churches in Japan to equip and enrich them with a deeper understanding of the Bible from a Jewish perspective.

SOWING KINGDOM SEEDS IN A RUSSIAN-SPEAKING SUPPORT GROUP

For some time, one of our Russian-Jewish missionaries has been leading and sowing kingdom seeds in a Russianspeaking support group for parents whose children are drug-dependent. Many of these parents are Jewish. Recently, the addicts have begun to attend the sessions with their parents! Praise the Lord! As you can imagine, this is a special and major leap forward in their rehabilitation. It is so rewarding to see how Yeshua the Messiah is breaking down strongholds and bringing immense change into people's lives as our staff member is faithfully cultivating the Lord's harvest. What a mighty witness to the name of Yeshua. Additionally, our missionary was given her own program on a secular Russian-American television show, where she recently had the opportunity to speak openly about the Messiah. People call after each program desperate for a word of encouragement or good news. Pray that these programs can continue!

Now, there is a way to make an even bigger impact as you share Messiah with Jewish people!

As a partner with Chosen People Ministries, you are already making a tremendous difference. You help evangelize, disciple, and serve God's chosen people here in the United States, in Israel, and in seventeen other countries around the world.

Thank you!

Because you have such a passion for reaching Jewish people, you may want to be aware of a great way you can increase your support to the ministry through the donation of appreciated assets like stocks or property.

Just look at the advantages of donating appreciated assets:

- » You receive a charitable giving deduction for the fair market value of the asset (up to 30% of your adjusted gross income) if you have owned the asset more than 12 months.
- you will most likely avoid capital gains tax that you would pay on the appreciation if you sold the asset.
- » By donating the appreciated assets directly to Chosen People Ministries—rather than selling them outright then donating the proceeds—you will make a greater impact for the kingdom of God. The following chart shows you how:

Example: Stock purchased at \$2,000

Valued today at \$20,000 — Taxable Gain: \$18,000



Donate stock through Chosen People Ministries = **\$20,000 for ministry** (No capital gains tax on charitable donation of stock.)



Sell stock and donate proceeds = \$17,300 for ministry (\$20.000 minus \$2,700 in capital gains tax.*)

VERSUS

You also are eligible to receive a charitable giving tax deduction for the **full value** of the appreciated stock!

*If stock is held for more than one year and donor is in the 15% capital gains tax bracket

For answers to questions regarding donating non-cash assets, or any other estate planning options, please feel free to contact Cindy Forbes at 212-223-2252, ext. 1208 or cforbes@chosenpeople.com today!

Messianic Resources to Encourage You Today



The coronavirus pandemic took the whole world by surprise. However, it did not take the Lord by surprise, nor was it the first time that plagues were used to change the world. In this timely and relevant Bible study, New York Times bestselling author, Joel C. Rosenberg, looks at the long and varied history of plagues in the Scripture. *Pestilence*, *Plagues*, *and Pandemics* will enlighten

and encourage as it reveals these challenges to be tools that the Lord uses to draw people to Himself.

Pestilence, Plagues, and Pandemics • PRICE: \$8.95^{us}



Messiah in the Passover is for everyone. This Passover reference book discusses biblical and theological issues, Jewish and church history, and rabbinic traditions. It also includes a Messianic Family Haggadah (Passover guidebook) as well as Passover recipes and lessons for your children. Plus you will find many more helps in the back of

the book. *Messiah in the Passover* will give you a deeper appreciation for the Passover celebration within the Jewish community and enable you to share the message of the Lamb of God through the Passover with your Jewish friends.

Messiah in the Passover • PRICE: \$16.95^{us}

The Gospel in the Passover is a condensed version of Messiah in the Passover written for those who want to explore the traditions of the Passover and deepen their understanding of the links between Passover, the Last Supper, and Communion.



The Gospel in the Passover • PRICE: \$14.95^{us}

Order using the enclosed card or call 1-888-2-YESHUA in the US. For more resources, visit us online at store.chosenpeople.com.



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