

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE



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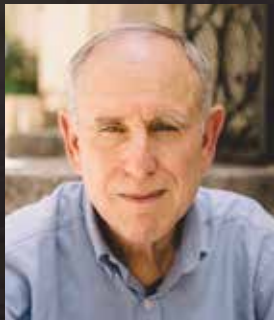
HAMAN, HITLER, HAMAS

ISRAEL'S ENEMIES WILL FAIL

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Dear friend in the Messiah,

This month, we celebrate one of our most joyous Jewish holidays—Purim, the Festival of Lots. Every Jewish holiday has its unique traditions, and Purim is no different! One of the central customs of Purim is dressing up in costumes, which the children especially love! We also read the book of Esther and put on plays retelling the story. Purim is a family holiday viewed as a grand celebration of God's goodness toward Jewish people.



FROM THE PRESIDENT,
MITCH GLASER

The origin of Purim is found in the book of Esther, which recounts the story of how God worked behind the scenes to deliver His people from annihilation. This story focuses on Haman, a powerful Persian government official who convinced the Persian King Ahasuerus (possibly also called King Xerxes I, 486–465 BCE) **to exterminate all**

Jewish people. But God intervened through Esther and Mordecai. They turned the tables on Haman, and in the end, he and his co-conspirators were put to death while the Jewish community survived and prospered.

Haman was one of the most influential people in the empire. The king placed him *“over all the princes who were with him”* (Esth 3:1). His evil plot garnered support from the king himself. From a human standpoint, going against Haman was foolish and risky. Yet his position did not shield him from God's justice. His plan fell back on his own head, and the king ordered Haman hanged on the very same gallows he had built for Mordecai (Esth 7:9–10).

Most importantly, Purim reminds us of God's faithful love for Jewish people based upon His everlasting covenant with Abraham. The story of Esther is the perfect object lesson for understanding the Abrahamic Covenant. God told Abraham in Genesis 12:3: *“I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”* God pledged blessing for those who bless His people—the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob—and curses upon those, like Haman, who seek the destruction of His chosen people.

There are many lessons we learn from the book of Esther. Allow me to discuss three of them: God's faithfulness to His promises, His power to orchestrate life's events, and His love for Jewish people.

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO HIS PROMISES

One of God's most important—and encouraging—attributes depicted in the Bible is His faithfulness. People, even those closest to us, can sometimes let us down. God, however, is always true to His Word. The promises God made to Abraham were without conditions and founded upon His faithfulness, not Abraham's obedience or ability.

The book of Esther tells the story of the survival of Jewish people—a story told repeatedly in Scripture. However, God pledged the nation of Israel would never be destroyed (Jeremiah 31:36). Haman's plan was not only wicked but—even without his knowing—a threat to God's plan for all humanity. Think about it. Suppose Haman had succeeded and destroyed all Jewish people. How could Jesus fulfill the promise of a Savior born to a Jewish virgin (Isaiah 7:14)? Thankfully, as the story of Esther teaches us, *no human plot can jeopardize the plan of God.* Though this book does not mention God by name, we can easily see His holy handprint in every detail of this grand story of Israel's redemption. The evidence of His powerful presence seen in the lives of Esther and Mordecai brings us to the next major lesson found in the book of Esther.

HIS POWER TO ORCHESTRATE LIFE'S EVENTS

God's choice of Esther is the first piece of the puzzle—of all the women, why her? The Lord often puts people in the right place to accomplish His plan at the right moment. Mordecai saved the king's life by being in a timely place to hear the plot of the two guards (Esth 2:21–23). Of course, Esther was appropriately positioned to receive the information from Mordecai to save the king's life. Even King Ahasuerus was the right leader for the right moment—another Persian monarch might not have listened to the impassioned pleas of his wife! This incredible story reveals a powerful and comforting spiritual principle: God positions the right people in the right place at the right time to ensure the fulfillment of His plans.

Many of us have stories about how the Lord put us in the right time and place for His service. Understanding and accepting His sovereignty in every detail of our lives helps us accept our circumstances! When we are tempted to say, “Lord, why am I here . . . why this place, why this job . . . why this challenge, opportunity, or hardship?” we can say *with a full heart: He has situated us for “such a time as this”* (Esth 4:14).

The story of Purim is an excellent example of the apostle Paul's message centuries later: *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love*

God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

In this case, the plan is the deliverance of Jewish people. Haman had no idea, when he touched the children of Israel, he was, in reality, poking the apple of God’s eye (Deuteronomy 32:10; Psalm 17:8)!

HIS LOVE FOR JEWISH PEOPLE

In Esther’s day, Jewish people were in exile. God allowed Assyria and Babylon to take His people captive for a time because of Israel’s disobedience to the Mosaic Law. *Sin stirred God to discipline—but never to reject—His people.* Even in this time of exile, God was watching over His chosen people. He rescued Jewish people from Haman’s intended genocide. As a result, the community also prospered, rising from near destruction to a position of honor in Persia, as shown in the elevation of Mordecai to Persian greatness in the book of Esther:

For Mordecai the Jew was second only to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews and in favor with his many kinsmen, one who sought the good of his people and one who spoke for the welfare of his whole nation. (Esth 10:3)

God’s faithful love for Jewish people endures, even when some are unfaithful (Romans 3:3). This truth is good news for us all, as no person can earn His love. *This theme from Esther is so important today when most of the Jewish community has not yet trusted in Yeshua (Jesus). God remains as committed to His people as ever.* Those who hate Israel, including Hamas and all who seek the destruction of Jewish people, will fail—just like their predecessors.

The following statistics tell us we are facing a new Haman in the form of Hamas, Hezbollah, and those in both Europe and North America who are perpetrating or supporting hate crimes toward Jewish people:

In the United States, 2,031 antisemitic incidents were reported between

October 7 and December 7, 2023. This figure is the highest number ever reported (by far) in a two-month period since the Anti-Defamation League began measuring in 1979!¹

In Canada, antisemitic crimes have increased 52 percent since 2020. Jewish Canadians make up about 1 percent of the country’s population but are the target of 67 percent of religiously motivated hate.²

In the United Kingdom, London police reported a 1,353 percent increase in antisemitic offenses from October 7 through October 20 compared to the same period the previous year.³

WHAT CAN WE DO TO BLESS JEWISH PEOPLE?

It is obvious October 7, 2023, was the beginning of a new wave of growing antisemitism. As followers of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, we need to pray and do what we can to bless and protect His people, as this pleases the heart of God, who promised to bless those who bless the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. I hope and pray this will be your commitment in these difficult and dark days for Israel.

Remember to pray for the safety and salvation of the Jewish community. What could be more important today than doing all we can to tell God’s chosen people about the Prince of Peace, Jesus the Messiah? Chosen People Ministries is actively reaching Jewish people for Messiah throughout North America and in twenty countries around the globe. Pray especially for our dozens of staff in Israel, who are faithfully serving the Lord among the largest Jewish population in the world.

Happy Purim, and remember, if God keeps His promises to Jewish people, then He will, of course, keep His promises to you!

Your brother in the Messiah,


Mitch

¹ “ADL Reports Unprecedented Rise in Antisemitic Incidents Post-Oct. 7,” Anti-Defamation League, December 11, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/adl-reports-unprecedented-rise-antisemitic-incidents-post-oct-7>.

² “Jews Remain Most Targeted Religious Group for Hate Crime in Canada, Second Overall,” CIJA, August 2, 2023, https://www.cija.ca/jews_remain_most_targeted_religious_group_for_hate_crime_in_canada_second_overall.

³ “Antisemitic, Islamophobic Offenses Soar in London after Israel Attacks,” Reuters, October 20, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/antisemitic-islamophobic-offences-soar-london-after-israel-attacks-2023-10-20/>.



WHO ARE ISRAEL'S ENEMIES TODAY?

As we pray for the peace of Jerusalem, it is good to understand who we are praying for! Therefore, we need to recognize Israel's key enemies and adversaries today and what they are doing to harm Israel and Jewish people. Though some of these opponents are individuals, we will focus on the movements and organizations dedicated to Israel's destruction.



HAMAS

The massacre of October 7 was by far Hamas' bloodiest strike, though the group has a long track record of terrorist activities against Israel.

The name "Hamas" is an acronym for *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya* (Arabic for "Islamic Resistance Movement"). Although the word "resistance" might make it sound like they are merely a political movement, Hamas was responsible for numerous suicide bombings across Israel in the late 1990s and early 2000s. It emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood in 1987, receives the majority of its funding from Iran, and operates out of Gaza, which it has controlled since 2007.¹

Hamas' goal is to destroy the State of Israel and **Jewish people everywhere**. Its 1988 charter calls for a holy war between Islam and Jewish people:

Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it. (*Preamble*)

The Day of Judgment will not come about until Moslems fight Jews and kill them. Then, the Jews will hide behind rocks and trees, and the rocks and trees will cry out: 'O Moslem, there is a Jew hiding behind me, come and kill him.'+ (*Article 7*)²

Hamas blames "the Zionists" for global conflict, concluding "there is no war going on anywhere, without having their finger in it."³

Based upon Hamas' charter, its leaders openly call for the extermination of Jewish people.⁴ This demonic hatred led to the slaughter of more than 1,200 civilians in Israel on and following October 7. Hamas' sympathizers around the world claim they are fighting for freedom for the Palestinians. The group's own words, however, reveal hate and murder are its motivations.



HEZBOLLAH

Hezbollah arose as a Shiite Muslim militia during Lebanon's fifteen-year civil war (1975–1990) and has since become part of the Lebanese

government. Iran helped fund and train this group, which took the name Hezbollah, meaning "Party of God." Its 1985 manifesto calls for the destruction of Israel and swears allegiance to Iran. Hezbollah is the most heavily armed non-state entity in the world. Its arsenal has grown exponentially since 2006, when it only had around 15,000 missiles. By 2018, Hezbollah accumulated an estimated 130,000 rockets and missiles.⁵

Since the 1983 bombing of the American embassy in Beirut, Hezbollah has instigated numerous attacks against Israelis and Americans.⁶ Hezbollah has fired rockets at Israel intermittently for several years, killing hundreds of Israelis. Following the October 7 massacre, the terrorist organization has intensified attacks along Israel's northern border.



IRAN

Iran covers much of the Persian empire mentioned in the Bible. It has been a polarizing Islamic state since 1979.⁷ By the 2000s, Iran became a major enemy of Israel,⁸ and Iranian leaders have consistently denied Israel's right to exist. Some of the most dangerous remarks came from Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005–2013). He called Israel a "tumor" to be "eliminated" and denied the Holocaust.⁹ Though some still debate Iran's role in the October 7 massacre, the nation has backed and funded Hamas for years.

In the last several years, both Israel and the United States have been concerned about Iran developing nuclear weapons, which could be used to threaten Israel. Under the Iran nuclear deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) in 2015, Iran agreed to limit its stockpile of uranium. Though Iran claims the nuclear program is peaceful, as of October 2023 its uranium supply is eighteen times the permitted level.¹⁰



THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

The Palestinian Authority emerged as the local administrative body of the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1994 during the Oslo Accords peace process. According to the agreement, the Palestinian Authority would govern part of the West Bank and Gaza pending a long-term solution. Negotiations broke down, but the Palestinian Authority still oversees much of the West Bank.¹¹ Its present leader is Mahmoud Abbas who has been in his position since he was elected in 2005. Abbas has long minimized the Holocaust and blamed Jewish people for bringing persecution upon themselves.¹²

The Palestinian Authority officially supports terrorism against Israelis. It regularly pays stipends to terrorists and the families of so-called "martyrs"—terrorists who died while slaughtering innocent Israelis. Payments like these totaled \$300 million in





2016.¹³ Media from the Palestinian Authority, including children’s programs, encourage violence against Israel. Children are indoctrinated to pursue “martyrdom.” Parents are taught to celebrate the deaths of their own children if they perish while attacking Israelis.¹⁴

WESTERN ANTISEMITES

Antisemitism has a long history in the West. In the past few years, and especially since October 7, antisemitism has grown more overt and vicious, unlike anything seen since the 1930s. It continues to take many forms in the West, arising from both the far right and far left of the political spectrum. While both ends accuse Jewish people of being the source of all problems, each side does have some distinct motives for its hate. On one extreme, some sympathize with Nazism, feeding on old antisemitic tropes to attack Jewish people based on racial and socioeconomic factors. On the other, antisemitism often arises in the context of sympathy for Islamic extremism and for the Palestinian cause. This support is especially dramatic among young adults. According to one US poll, more than half (51 percent) of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds say Hamas’ attacks on October 7 “can be justified by the grievance of Palestinians.”¹⁵ But, there is no excuse for massacring defenseless Israeli civilians in the most brutal ways.

The recent appalling surge in antisemitic incidents proves how quickly hatred of Israel boils over into hatred of Jewish people.¹⁶

Globally, it has grown increasingly acceptable not only to place full blame on Israel for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also to present the Jewish community as a powerful, malevolent force in the world. These lies have consequences. Threats, intimidation, and violence toward Jewish people will grow ever more serious if present trends remain unchecked.

PRAYING FOR YOUR ENEMIES

“Love your enemies” is among Jesus’ most challenging teachings. It is especially difficult when one’s enemies pose a lethal threat to Israel’s existence, like Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah. Loving Israel’s enemies does not mean supporting their vile goals for Israel’s destruction. We should pray for people involved with or who are sympathetic to these groups and countries’ leaders. May God convict them of this poisonous hatred and change their hearts.

We should act kindly toward those who spread misguided lies about Israel, even as we strongly denounce their words. We must proactively oppose antisemitism and support the Jewish community. We must educate ourselves, and especially this young generation, who is growing alarmingly more and more anti-Israel, about the deadly dangers of antisemitism.

Israel has many enemies, and as followers of the Jewish Messiah, we must stand with Israel as we pray Israel’s enemies will renounce their demonic hate for both the political entity—modern Israel—and Jewish people around the globe. Pray those who hate and defame Israel will repent and turn to the Messiah of Israel so they can understand the promises God made to Abraham about Israel and Jewish people.

FATHER, WE KNOW EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE WITH YOU (MATTHEW 19:26). WE KNOW YOU CAN TAKE THE MOST HARDENED HEART OF STONE AND REPLACE IT WITH A HEART OF FLESH (EZEKIEL 36:26). LORD, WE ASK YOU TO TRANSFORM THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO SEEK TO DESTROY YOUR PEOPLE. BRING MISSIONARIES, PASTORS, AND STRONG BELIEVERS IN THEIR PATH WHO WILL PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL TO THEM. CONVICT THEM THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT TO REPENT FROM THEIR HATRED. TRANSFORM THEM BY THE RENEWING OF THEIR MINDS (ROMANS 12:2). WASH AWAY THE PROPAGANDA EMBEDDED IN THEIR SOULS, AND REPLACE IT WITH THE PEACE AND LOVE OF OUR MESSIAH. IN HIS NAME, WE PRAY. AMEN.

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Micah 7:1-6

Micah's Lament over His Corrupt Society

The beginning of Micah chapter 7 is a lamentation about the prophet's disappointment with Israel's ungodliness: *"Woe is me! For I am like the fruit pickers, like the grape gatherers. There is not a cluster of grapes to eat, or a first-ripe fig which I crave"* (Mic 7:1). Micah compared himself to Israel's fruit pickers and grape gatherers, who felt great discouragement over their poor harvests. In presenting this comparison, he intimated Israel lacked righteous deeds in the same way an orchard or vineyard appears barren after the fruit has been gathered. Spiritually, Israel should have produced more fruit, but she clearly did not.

Using hyperbolic language, Micah said he could not find any faithful or morally upright person in the land: *"The godly person has perished from the land, and there is no upright person among men. All of them lie in wait for bloodshed; each of them hunts the other with a net"* (Mic 7:2). Micah was undoubtedly exaggerating, as there were some righteous in Israel, including Micah's contemporary, Isaiah. However, by overstating his case, he underscored the rarity of those who follow God. As the saying goes, "The exception proves the rule." Most of the people seemed to wait for an opportunity to advance their own interests, even resorting to violence and bloodshed to do so. They are described as hunters waiting to trap unsuspecting prey in their nets.

The people were so skillful at doing evil, they could do it equally well with either hand. Micah wrote about them, *"Concerning evil, both hands do it well. The prince asks, also the judge, for a bribe, and a great*

man speaks the desire of his soul; so they weave it together" (Mic 7:3). Growing up in Brooklyn, New York, my favorite baseball player was Mickey Mantle, who could hit home runs either right-handed or left-handed. Those whom Micah was chastising were like Mickey Mantle when it came to sinning—they could hit home runs with either hand. These leaders, who should have set an excellent spiritual example for the people, always had their hands out to receive bribes. The powerful could satisfy their wicked desires because they could pull the right strings. They formed their own networks to entrap the weak.



For Micah, even the best and most upright were prickly and unfruitful: *"The best of them is like a briar, the most upright like a thorn hedge"* (Mic 7:4). Briars and thorn hedges ensnare and hurt anyone who encounters them. So, even relatively good people harmed others. Micah then warned of the consequences of their actions. *"The day when you post your watchmen, your punishment will come. Then their confusion will occur"* (Mic 7:4). Cities would post a watchman to warn of coming danger. In the same way, the prophets, who had the role of God's watchmen, announced the coming punishment from the Lord. But the people refused to heed the prophets' cries of danger. Therefore, they would be confused when captivity came because they did not heed the warnings.

Finally, Micah warned people not to trust those close to them, whether friends or family members: *"Do not trust in a neighbor; do not have confidence in a friend. From her who lies in your bosom guard your lips. For son treats father contemptuously, daughter rises up against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own household"* (Mic 7:5-6). Because of the corrupt world they lived in, Israel could not trust anyone since everyone lied for their own advantage.

Generally, people find security in a close group, among whom they find acceptance and receive moral support. Micah focused on these inner circles of familiarity: friends and family members. Because of all the corruption, the people were forced to go against their natural instincts of trusting those close to them. They had to retreat within themselves and keep their own counsel so as not to face betrayal. In contrast, Micah points them to the only One who is ever faithful and worthy of trust: the Lord (Micah 7:7).



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.

NEWS BRIEFS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

PERSISTENT PRAYER BEARS FRUIT

One of our staff recently received the following note from someone who heard him speak at a church:

I asked you what I could do regarding a good friend of mine who was a Christian recently married to a Jewish man. Your advice was never to stop praying for them. I spoke to her this morning, and she gave me the news. Her husband has become a [Messianic] Jew [one who believes in Jesus] and has even been baptized! I NEVER stopped praying for them. I read all your articles and devotions, watched every video I found, and shared with her what seemed appropriate to give her strength and peace. It was, as you said, nothing I could do but pray. [You said] God [would] work in her husband's heart, and He did. What a glorious day, and I thank you for the advice, for it gave me hope and reminded me to just carry on with consistently putting them in God's hands.

CHRISTIAN SUPPORT OF ISRAEL TOUCHES JEWISH COMMUNITY

"You are spreading so much light and love through this, you don't even know how it impacts us. Thank you." This comment is what a religious Jewish woman told one of our missionaries as she handed her a white rose. She was expressing her heartbreak and solidarity with her people as the Jewish community continues to experience great grief and fear following the horrendous terror attacks in Israel on October 7. Since the massacre and subsequent war, antisemitism has risen in tremendous amounts. Violence, vandalism, and hate speech against Jewish people—simply for being Jewish—have skyrocketed.

Our staff has spoken with Jewish people about the current climate of antisemitism in the United States and around the world, and they have expressed their fears for themselves and their children. They do not feel safe. While attending a solidarity gathering for Israel, many Jewish people thanked our staff for being there, saying, "Last time this happened (referring to the rise of antisemitism leading up to the Holocaust), most Christians did not do anything to stop it." This perception is heartbreaking, and it is not what we want the representation of Jesus to look like to Jewish people. As His followers, Your Mission to the Jewish People strives to help reveal God's heart for His people, and one way to do so is by

*Name changed

participating in His love for Jewish people and His desire to see them find salvation in Jesus.

ANSWER TO PRAYER TRANSFORMS LIVES OF ISRAELI EVACUEES

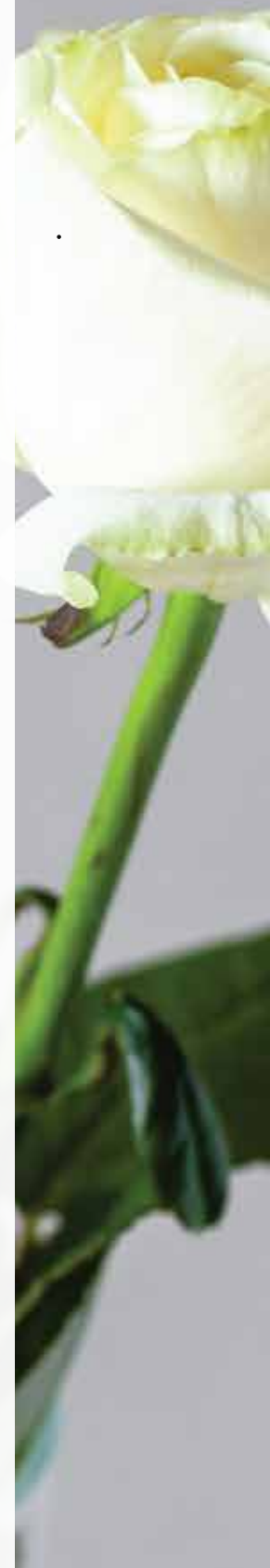
The Lord is opening doors in Israel and sending people ready to see the light. After the war began, one of our staff met Abigail* and her daughter. Abigail's husband died tragically six months prior, and they were going through difficult times. Then the war started. When their city began to be heavily shelled, they lost all hope. By chance, they ended up in the group our staff was transporting from the south. Abigail kept saying she was not religious. She was wary of our staff and closed to faith in Jesus. However, since we have provided temporary lodging to Israeli evacuees at our Jerusalem center, our staff invited them to live with other families there, and they came.

The Lord began to work in their hearts. Abigail started to ask questions, communicate more, smile, laugh, and open up more and more. One day, her twelve-year-old daughter said: "I prayed to God, and He answered." Before then, she had not used the word "prayer" at all. It became a turning point. They began praying and discussing their experiences with God daily. Their lives changed. Abigail said when she met our staff, she realized there was something different in their lives and they had become God's light for her. They have now returned home and started going to the local congregation.

RUSSIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADER OPEN TO JESUS

In November, one of our missionaries visited the Russian Far East, home to one of our ministry's fraternal Messianic Jewish congregations. The leader of this congregation invited our staff to conduct a small series of seminars for the people of the congregation. It was a week full of meetings and connecting with people.

After participating in a Sabbath service, an elderly man approached our staff. The man turned out to be one of the leaders of the local Jewish community. Our staff was extremely surprised how he so easily visited the Messianic congregation. He confessed he is very sympathetic to the ideas of Jesus the Messiah and is always happy to come to this Messianic congregation.



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It is a GREAT time to invest for today and eternity . . .

We know you have a great passion for bringing the gospel to Jewish people by the way you support Chosen People Ministries worldwide.

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| Age | 65 | 70 | 75 | 80 | 85 | 90+ |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
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Current rates for individuals as of January 1, 2024. These rates apply to a one-life annuity and are based upon information provided from the American Council of Gift Annuities.

We would be happy to help you set up your Charitable Gift Annuity or answer other questions about strategic giving or estate planning. Contact Cindy Forbes at 212-223-2252, ext. 1208 or cforbes@chosenpeople.com today!

MESSIANIC RESOURCES

Pursued recounts one woman's journey from the horror of the Holocaust to a life of peace and joy. This book tells the poignant story of one woman's striving to be a better Jewish woman. Here is the record of her earnest search and God's patient pursuit. PRICE: \$6.95^{us}



Every order will come with a FREE Oppose Antisemitism wristband.



Going beyond media images for an in-depth look at the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, this book places the “crisis that never ends” in its scriptural, historical, and prophetic contexts.

Understanding the Arab-Israeli Conflict

challenges the reader to think biblically as we stand with Israel in “praying for the peace of Jerusalem.” By Dr. Michael Rydelnik, vice president and dean of the undergraduate school at Moody Bible Institute. PRICE: \$14.95^{us}



For nearly 2,000 years, the church and Jewish people have had a history of conflict, pain, antisemitism and hatred. Tragically, few Christians know about it. In *Our Hands Are Stained with Blood*, by Jewish believer Michael Brown, the tragic story of the ‘church’ and Jewish people is laid out for all to see. PRICE: \$17.95^{us}



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