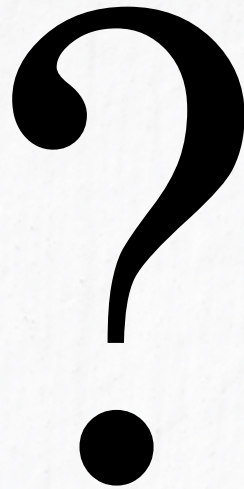


THE MOST
INFLUENTIAL
JEWISH PERSON **EVER**



The
Chosen
People 



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“I am arguing that the portrait of Jesus we find in the Gospels (especially in Mark) is one that could completely fit into the context of Second-Temple Judaism in which a Messiah who would be divine and human at the same time is not a foreign notion...So it's not only Jesus who was a Jew but the Christ (and Christ is not Jesus's last name but his title!).” - Daniel Boyarin, Orthodox Jewish Scholar



A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT Dr. Mitch Glaser President Chosen People Ministries

I was raised in a traditional Jewish home in New York City. I heard very little about Jesus while growing up. As I got older, I made no effort to learn anything about Jesus. This is because, in my mind, Jesus was linked to Christianity and both

Jesus and Christianity were about as non-Jewish as you could get!

I am not really being negative when I say that—it is just that every Jewish person I knew believed that there was an ocean of difference between Jews and Christians and for Jews there were no boats available! Not that we thought much about it, but deep inside we knew if, perchance, anyone converted to Christianity, they would no longer be considered Jewish.

Religion was neatly compartmentalized from my perch—you were either Jewish or Christian or something else. I did not distinguish between Catholicism or Protestantism or any other religion! In my mind, if you were not Jewish or Christian, you were probably from another part of the world and therefore may practice Buddhism or Hinduism, etc. There was no merging of faiths and “normal” people remained part of the religion they were born into. Now, whether or not they believed or followed their own faith was another matter...but switching was not a possibility in my mind.

Though I attended a modern Orthodox synagogue as a kid, spent two months a year at Jewish summer camps, and became bar mitzvah at 13 years of age, still, I was not all that interested in religion. I loved being Jewish, I even enjoyed studying the Bible—mostly to learn more about my own history, but I simply was not trying to discover some type of religious truth.

Did I believe in God? I was probably some kind of agnostic without seriously thinking it through. Simply put, I knew I was Jewish and identified with the Jewish community. Furthermore, I understood that

I was not a Christian and these clear lines were very comfortable for me and for most people I knew.

However, some things began to change rapidly when I left the East Coast to seek my destiny in San Francisco in 1970, the year after Woodstock! I joined some of my Jewish friends from New York City and lived what could only be described as some type of middle-class Jewish hippie lifestyle. In other words, I grew my hair long, participated in most hippie activities, but always knew that one day I had to go back to normal life: cut my hair, go to college, get a good job, get married, have children and probably move to the suburbs!

At times I thought that maybe there was more to life than what I believed was my ultimate fate but I did not really give it much thought. And if I did, I can assure you that believing in Jesus or Christianity did not even enter my mind. It had no reason to do so...I was Jewish.

However, my two best friends became believers in Jesus through a number of circumstances that I thought at the time were really wild. They tried to convince me but I thought they were crazy — *misheggah* (Yiddish for pleasantly bonkers!). I remember yelling at one of my friends telling him that Jewish people do not believe in Jesus (as if I was such a religious Jewish person at the time)! I barely knew what I really believed — but since I was raised more religious than he, I felt that I had the higher moral ground to try and dissuade him from what

similar. They recommended I begin reading the New Testament and I resisted until one day I actually found a New Testament in a phone booth late at night in the middle of a campground in Northern California. So, I began reading. I had no idea who the Gospel writers were: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John seemed like very strange names for chapters in a book. But I knew it was a best-seller and so, out of intrigue...I kept reading.

After a few days of reading the New Testament, I was thunderstruck by what I was learning about Jesus. I recognized that He was Jewish, celebrated the Jewish holidays and everything about Him seemed to be in one accord with what I understood to be Jewish. I had always presumed that Jesus created another non-Jewish religion. However, upon reading the New Testament scriptures for myself, I came upon the discovery that Jesus was born a Jew and remained a Jew. He did not start a new religion and did not “assimilate.” My original presumption was proven to be unfounded. And I began considering the possibility that perhaps both of my friends who now believed in Him were still Jewish, too.

Once I recognized that Jesus was Jewish, I felt more comfortable researching the New Testament and trying to figure out if He was the Messiah or not. Eventually I did believe that Yeshua (His Hebrew name) was the promised Messiah, as His claims were built upon the promises of the Old Testament — which I knew for certain was a Jewish book!

“The preservation of Israel and the Nazarene (Jesus) are one phenomenon...The two are one. And notwithstanding the heritage of blood and fire which passionate enmity has brought between them, they are two parts of a single whole, two poles of the world which are always drawn to each other, and no deliverance, no peace, and no salvation can come until the two halves are joined together and become one part of God.”

- Sholem Asch, *One Destiny: An Epistle to the Christians* (1945)

I believed was a heinous act of community disloyalty or assimilation amongst the gentiles.

Christianity was not for the Jews — Jesus was not for Jews — and I never even considered the possibility that Jesus was Jewish.

My friends were smart and did not argue — they just encouraged me to read the Bible, the Hebrew Scriptures known as the Old Testament. I really loved the Old Testament as a kid and enjoyed it even more as a 19-year-old because the story was exciting and connected me to my ancestors and my heritage. But as I began reading the Bible I noticed something that I had never understood before. The reason why so many of my ancestors, like Abraham, Moses and King David, were great in my eyes was because of their relationship with God.

I began to compare the relationship with God my friends had with what I was reading in the Bible and the two looked quite

Now I was faced with a real challenge! If Jesus fit the qualifications for the Messiah predicted in the Hebrew Scriptures, then a nice Jewish boy from New York City like me should believe it was true. The whole process took many months, but eventually I understood that Jesus was the Messiah and I became one of His modern day disciples.

But, I always remember, my first step in becoming a follower of Yeshua was to recognize He was Jewish — just like me.

I hope you enjoy the rest of this publication where we will explain more about Jesus and the reasons why a Jewish person can and should believe He is the Messiah. It is my hope, and the hope of our editorial team, that you will learn a lot from this volume and allow it to be one step along the journey for you.

Enjoy the publication and feel free to pass it along to others.

WHO IS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL JEWISH PERSON WHO EVER LIVED?

“When asked why he had “given up the synagogue for the church,” Zolli replied, “I have not given it up. Christianity is the completion of the synagogue, for the synagogue was a promise, and Christianity is the fulfillment of that promise. Once a Jew always a Jew.”

- Israel Zolli, Chief
Rabbi of Rome

Who do you think is the most influential Jewish person who ever lived? Moses, Freud, Jonas Salk, Barbara Streisand... Woody Allen? There have been many influential Jewish people throughout the centuries who have not only impacted the Jewish community, but also the world in general. We all have our favorites and heroes, but let's face it, the Jewish person who has certainly influenced more people than anyone else is none other than Jesus of Nazareth! In fact, it is possible that the area of His least influence would be among His own people — the Jewish people. He has often been misunderstood and marginalized. Most Jewish people I know are raised with virtually no knowledge of what Jesus said or did. Many of us might not even know He was Jewish!

Jesus might not be a major part of our corporate Jewish consciousness, but there are many Jewish people today who are curious about Jesus and are at least beginning to think about Him as a long-lost brother. As Jewish people, we really cannot afford to ignore Him.

As Yale historian Jaroslav Pelikan once wrote,

*Regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of Western culture for almost twenty centuries. If it were possible, with some sort of super-magnet, to pull up out of that history every scrap of metal bearing at least a trace of his name, how much would be left?*¹

Jesus has achieved a profound and incalculable influence on ethics, law, family life, theology, piety, education, philosophy, and anthropology, to name a few. But even though Jesus is a major figure in world history, we tend to keep Him and His teachings at arm's length. He may have been a Jewish man...and even the Messiah for the gentiles, but in our everyday Jewish opinion, He is nothing more than an average first century rabbi who thought He had some unique insights into the Torah, or at best was some type of Galilean mystic, but certainly not the promised Jewish Messiah.


The Jewish Reclamation of the Jesus Movement

At least this has been the usual view within the Jewish community. However, that is starting to change on multiple fronts. In the 1920s, Hebrew University began developing courses in New Testament Studies. Outstanding and brilliant scholars like Joseph Klausner, who edited the monumental *Encyclopedia Hebraica*, and David Flusser, as well as other mainstream Jewish scholars, taught these courses, wrote books, and presented scholarly papers about the Jewishness of Jesus. Partly due to their influence, Jesus began to have a renaissance in Jewish life and thought.

During the last two decades, Jewish scholars have taken part in the “Jewish Reclamation of the Jesus Movement.” Some of these scholars worked together to produce the thorough and lengthy *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, published in 2011. “Jesus reclamation” Jewish scholars have broken new ground and argue that Jesus was a Torah-observant, Middle Eastern, Shema-reciting rabbi (Deuteronomy 6:4, Mark 12:28-31).

These Jewish scholars want to help the Jewish and Christian communities appreciate the Jewishness of Jesus. Consider, for instance, the parallels between Jesus' teachings and the rabbis of the Mishna, presented on page six.

In these three pairs of quotations, we find parallels of thought, vocabulary, ethics, and theology. Jesus is anything but gentile. His Hebrew name is Yeshua, and He is a *sabra* (native-born Israeli) who attended synagogue, observed the Jewish holidays and



the Sabbath, and had a deep love for His fellow Jewish people. If He were alive today, we would say in Yiddish that Yeshua was a *mensh* (a person of integrity)!

The goal of the Jewish Jesus Reclamation movement is to help those within the Jewish community who have neglected Jesus to see Him as a Jew who had great wisdom to share with His people. This seeming neglect or unawareness of the Jewishness of Jesus is not only a problem within the Jewish community but also among Christians. Historically, Christianity has minimized the Jewishness of the One so many believe to be the Savior of the world.

We are glad the Reclamation movement understands that you cannot understand Jesus and His teachings without viewing Jesus through a Jewish lens! His historical and religious context underlies all that He said and did during His three years of ministry and teaching. Without seeing Jesus as a Jew, it would be difficult to understand Jesus in any significant depth.

The Modern Messianic Jewish Movement

However, there is another movement within the Jewish world that is now taking place as well. Some Jewish people are reading

“From my youth onwards I have found in Jesus my great brother. That Christianity has regarded and does regard him as God and Savior has appeared to me as a fact of the highest importance which, for his sake and my own, I must endeavor to understand...My own fraternally open relationship to him has grown stronger and clearer, and to-day I see him more strongly and clearly than ever before. - Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith* (1951)”

the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament and discovering a rabbi who not only impacts billions of people in our world, but also transforms the lives of His true followers on a deep personal level that goes far beyond religious ritual. In Jesus they recognize a man who gives hope to the hopeless, answers to the puzzled, and encouragement to those downtrodden by the challenges of life.

It is almost impossible to read the words of Jesus in such comforting passages as *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28) and align them with the actions of those who persecuted the Jewish people. Jewish believers in Yeshua separate themselves from those who perpetrated evil in His name and falsely claimed to be His followers.

When Jesus says to the multitude of Jewish people seeking food for the body and nourishment for the soul, *“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to*

me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (John 6:35), they recognize that Yeshua is offering far more than mere food and drink. These Jewish people come to Jesus not to find fodder for pilpul (like argumentation), but to find Sabbath rest for their souls. He is the one who calmed the stormy seas of the Sea of Galilee and is able to soothe the tumultuous waves of angst that confront everyday men and women—Jews and gentiles.

Over the past two centuries, more and more Jewish people have come to believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel. Today in the United States, there are tens of thousands of Messianic Jews—Jewish men and women who believe that Jesus is the Messiah. This would probably have been unheard of in years past, though according to some historians there was a burst of belief in Jesus in Europe immediately preceding the devastating years of the Holocaust. Today, we also see a growing number of Israeli believers in Jesus. There are a multitude of voices declaring that Jewishness and belief in Jesus is kosher.

What would lead these Messianic Jews to ignore centuries of crusades, inquisitions, expulsions and pogroms to now believe in Jesus?

You can find out for yourself by viewing the dozens of video stories of Messianic Jews who now believe in Yeshua by going to

the website www.ifoundshalom.com. But what if you're looking for more than the personal stories of Messianic Jews? The following will provide some additional reasons as to why many Jewish people today believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

Reasons to Believe

First of all, there is the recognition that Jesus is one of us. He is Jewish!

The Jewish Jesus Reclamation movement has demonstrated that Jesus was Jewish. This is a tremendous first step in eventually determining the “Messiah question” as Jewish people understand the Messiah must be Jewish. He was to be a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah and a true son of King David. We see this to be true about Jesus from the very first verse of the New Testament where Matthew, one of Jesus’ disciples, writes, *“The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham...”* (Matthew 1:1).

Believing in Jesus is deeply personal and spiritual and at the heart of our relationship to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

This is not merely an academic exercise. If Jesus is the Messiah

and our path to God, then this question of who He is touches our soul far beyond issues of identity and even community. This is why faith in Jesus inspires Messianic Jews to risk all and, when necessary, to bear the misunderstanding and anger of friends and family for the sake of following the One they now believe is the Messiah.

Another common thread found among Jewish people who believe in Jesus is that there is a new willingness to change and behave differently towards God and one's neighbor.

By believing in Jesus we not only encounter God but also come to grips with some very difficult truths about ourselves. All the

holy God that we would otherwise be unable to achieve. We are forgiven through His sacrifice and made clean on the inside, in perpetuity, not only during Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement! Jesus atoned for all our sins, once and for all and though we might fast and beat our breast, mourning over our sins will achieve little, because He has done for us what we could never do for ourselves through dying for our sins. We are capable of repenting, but this can never fully cleanse our soul. We need more than repentance—we need atonement and Yeshua has made this possible through His sacrifice.

“As a child I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud. I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene...No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life. Jesus is too colossal for the pen of phrase-mongers, however artful. – Albert Einstein, taken from “What Life Means to Einstein,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, October 26, 1929”

pain, loneliness, confusion and emptiness that so often plagues our souls come from the same root problem—sin. We are unable to behave as God wants us to behave and because of this we suffer the consequences. He wants us to have peace—shalom! God created us to enjoy Him and to love others. After all, God placed the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden. It was God's plan for humankind to live in a perfect relationship with Him and others. But, we have made similar choices as our ancient forefathers and turned to our own way (Isaiah 53:6) rather than God's and seeking our own benefit above that of others.

Jewish people who have put their trust in Jesus experience the rebirth of spiritual life as He is the One that *Hashem* (“the name,” literally, a term used for God by many Jewish people) sent to die for our sins and turn us towards Himself. Jesus, as the mediator between God and man, enables us to enjoy a relationship with a

He is the everyday answer to everyday questions and problems. By following Yeshua we encounter God in ways we never thought possible. And this encounter transforms us from the inside out. When we turn to God, through Yeshua the Messiah, and trust in His sacrifice for our sin, we are forgiven and renewed forever!

Jesus is not only the most influential Jewish person who has ever lived, but He is the most influential person who ever lived.

We hope you will read the Bible verses and stories of others who believe in Yeshua as the Messiah and experience God's greatest gift to mankind—salvation and everlasting life through the Jewish Messiah—for all!

1 Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 1.

JESUS SAID:

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 6:1

“And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” Matthew 7:26-27

“Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.’” Matthew 6:9-10

THE RABBIS SAID:

Antigonos of Sokho: “Do not be like servants who serve the master on condition of receiving a reward, but [be] like servants who serve the master not on condition of receiving a reward. And let the fear of Heaven be upon you.” Avot 1:3

Rabbi Eleazar b. Azariah: He would say, “Anyone whose wisdom is greater than his deeds— to what is he to be likened? To a tree with abundant foliage, but few roots. When the winds come, they will uproot it and blow it down.” Avot 3:17

Judah b. Tema: “Be strong as a leopard, fast as an eagle, fleet as a gazelle, and brave as a lion, to carry out the will of your Father who is in heaven.” Avot 5:20

Primary and other sources consulted for quotes:

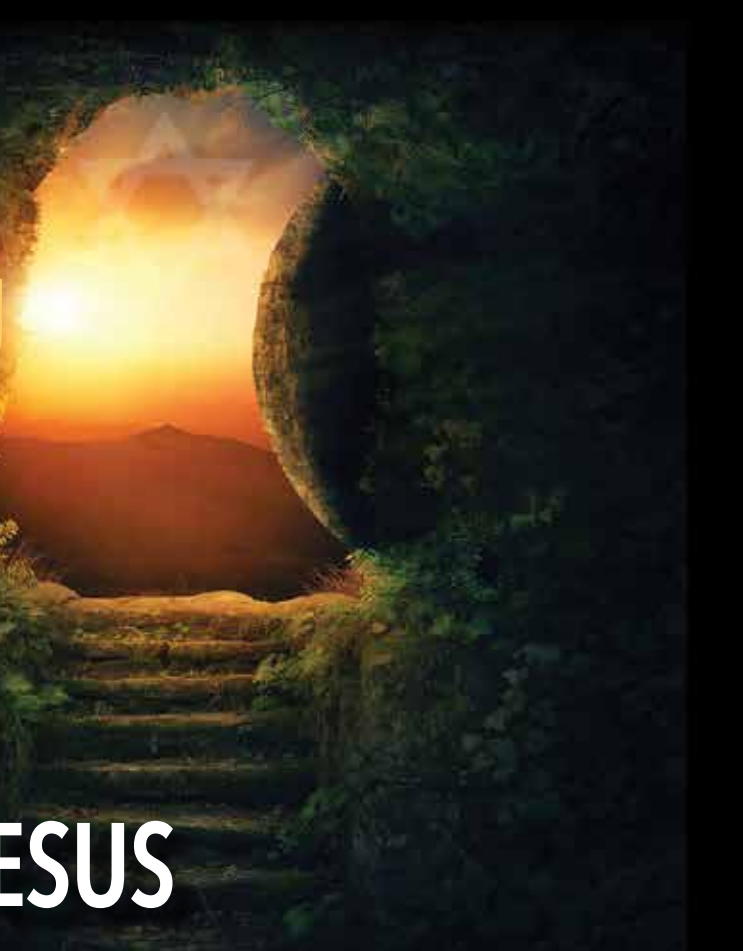
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I accept the resurrection of Easter Sunday not as an invention of the community of disciples, but as a historical event. If the resurrection of Jesus from the dead on that Easter Sunday were a public event which had been made known...not only to the 530 Jewish witnesses but to the entire population, all Jews would have become followers of Jesus. - *Pinchas Lapide, Orthodox Jewish scholar*



THE FACTS OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

The prophet Isaiah predicted the death of the Messiah as a sacrifice for our sins in Isaiah chapter 53, where he wrote,

All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due. (Isaiah 53:6-8)

In this same chapter the prophet also predicts His resurrection from the dead.

But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. (Isaiah 53:10)

The words of the prophet were fulfilled in the resurrection of Yeshua and there are some good historical reasons for us to believe that Jesus rose from the grave.

Let's look at the basic facts of the matter:

Jesus of Nazareth was a real historical person who was legally executed.

We learn this fact from Syrian, Roman, and Christian sources, as well as Jewish sources such as the Talmud. The New Testament also details Jesus' death and resurrection and is considered one of the best resources for information we have about first century Judaism.

Jesus' tomb was found empty after His death and burial.

We learn this from multiple witnesses within the New Testament, who also record that the High Priest, who opposed Jesus, acknowledged that the tomb was empty. These claims in the New Testament are supported by a lack of counter-narrative saying the body was found, and the lack of archaeological or literary reports about a shrine commemorating Jesus' grave.

Jesus' disciples claimed to see Him alive after His death.

They claimed to see Him, talk with Him, touch Him, and eat with Him over a period of 40 days after His death. He appeared to over 500 people at the same time, which could only have happened in public.

Some of Jesus' opponents claimed to see Him alive after His death.

Rabbi Saul of Tarsus was a bitter opponent of Jesus, and yet he started believing in Jesus and claimed to see Jesus alive. Yaacov (also known as James) was Jesus' brother, yet he did not believe in Jesus before the crucifixion. However, after the resurrection of Jesus, Yaacov believed and claimed to see his brother alive after His death.

Within a generation, these disciples had spread the message of Yeshua's resurrection throughout the world.

Unlike the spread of Islam, which came by the sword, the message of Jesus' resurrection was spread through the disciples, who were willing, in some cases, to lose their lives for the belief that Jesus was Messiah and the belief that He rose from the grave.

**How can we otherwise explain these historical events?
What do you think?**



Watch the testimonies of Jewish believers!

This site contains many video testimonies of Jewish believers in Yeshua. These "storytellers" will invite you into their lives, and you will see for yourself, through their eyes and experiences, why they decided to become followers of Yeshua and the profound impact this had on each of them as individuals. You will smile, laugh and at times be moved to tears by these compelling stories.

I FOUND SHALOM

ifoundshalom.com

You might be ready for the next step—to acknowledge Yeshua (Jesus) as Israel's long-awaited Messiah. Here are some simple steps to take as you continue your journey.

- ☒ Repent – God is holy and we are not! We frequently behave in ways that separate us from Him, and we need His forgiveness. The Hebrew Scriptures say, "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2). Recognizing our sin is the first major step towards an intimate and personal relationship with the Lord.
- ☒ Believe – We cannot earn God's forgiveness through good works or keeping the Mitzvot. The Torah says, "Abraham believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). The New Covenant Scriptures say, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23). Personal salvation is a gift from God that we accept by faith.
- ☒ Accept Yeshua – The great Rabbi Saul, writing in the New Covenant Scriptures, tells us what we should believe to receive the gift of personal salvation, "That Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). If Yeshua is both divine and the rightful king of Israel, then He deserves our full allegiance.
- ☒ Pray – Prayer is a personal conversation with God—heart to heart. You can pray in this way: "God, you are righteous and I am not. I have disobeyed your commandments. I believe Yeshua is my Messiah. His death and resurrection is my only hope. Please forgive me and give me a new life with you." And God will answer, as we read in the New Covenant Scriptures, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." (John 1:12).

We would love to help you discover how Yeshua can transform your life—so please do not hesitate to contact us! Email ask@chosenpeople.com or call 212-223-2252.

- ☐ I am Jewish and want to know more about Yeshua (Jesus). Please send me the FREE book, *Isaiah 53 Explained*. 3135UJ
- ☐ Please send me the FREE book, *A Jewish Look at the Resurrection of Jesus*. 2034F

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