

# The Chosen People



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# BEING JEWISH IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY!

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# BEING JEWISH IN THE 21ST CENTURY!

Dear friend,

Shalom from New York City. Thanks for your prayers and support for our ministry among the Jewish people. We are in the midst of an intensive summer of outreach in New York City, Israel and around the globe—so please pray for the harvest!

## **A Ministry Flyover**

Recently, I had the joy of ministering in Argentina. We had a number of public lectures on Isaiah 53 where Jewish people who are not yet believers, as well as Christians, came to hear the message of the suffering Messiah. The time was fruitful and I deeply appreciate your continued prayers for the follow-up with the Jewish seekers who attended.

I also traveled to Israel last month to encourage our active and growing Israeli staff. I had quite a few opportunities to share the Gospel with Israelis, and I'm so glad God gave me a wife who speaks Hebrew; she was a great help!

Our Isaiah 53 campaign is off and running in Israel and Argentina, in addition to the United States. In fact, our Spanish Isaiah 53 website is drawing quite a bit of attention not only in Latin America, but also in Spain, Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries. We are thrilled with the response! Thankfully, God has given us a number of Spanish-speaking staff members who are able to engage in an ongoing dialogue with both Spanish-speaking Christians who love the Jewish people, and with Jewish people from these countries who are seeking the Lord.

We are now serving the Lord among the Jewish people in fifteen countries outside of the United States. Our staff proclaims the Gospel day in and day out, in at least a dozen different languages, to Jewish people in countries encompassing 96% of the worldwide Jewish population.

We could not continue without your prayers and faithful financial support—thank you!

## Reaching Secular Jewish People

*We are deeply burdened for Orthodox Jewish people.*

This is one of the reasons I am so excited about our new Brooklyn Center, where God is giving us many unique and wonderful opportunities to reach out through this new center in the heart of Orthodox Jewish Brooklyn.

But the fact is that the majority of Jewish people today are secular.

According to the recent Pew survey of the Jewish community, the Orthodox religious community continues to grow! However, it represents only about 10–15% of the nearly fifteen million Jewish people in the world. Although it may be disturbing, the majority of Jewish people nowadays are not particularly religious. Many do not believe in God or accept the authority of the Bible.

*This does not mean that they do not identify as Jews—they do.* It also does not mean that secular Jewish people do not have strong values. Their values are often compatible with a positive, biblical worldview; they care deeply about their families, can be profoundly philanthropic and try to do as much as they can to make the world a better place for their children and grandchildren.

But when faced with religious or spiritual choices, this group does not feel limited to the answers provided by traditional Jewish religion. This became very evident to me in Israel last month, as I talked to many Israelis who are looking for spiritual answers, but simply do not want to become religious Jews.

Secular Jewish people in Israel and elsewhere may still be very spiritually minded...and many are searching! A number are attracted to Eastern religions or New Age spirituality.

## Secular Jewish People Identify as Jews

Although someone might not participate in the everyday expressions of religious Judaism, they probably do celebrate Passover, Hanukkah and other Jewish holidays. However, the thinking of secular Jews has also been shaped by many centuries of Jewish *antipathy* towards Jesus and Christianity. Just because a person is a secular or non-religious Jew does not mean they are open to the Gospel! I wish this were true.

The opinions of Christianity formed by Jewish people, whether religious or secular, are often based on the way Jewish people were historically treated by nominal “Christians” in Europe. Remember that Jewish people may place the blame for the horrific persecutions that took place during the Crusades, the *pogroms* (persecution of Russian Jews in the nineteenth century) and most of the Holocaust at the feet of these “Christians.”

In fact, the objections that both secular and religious Jewish people have about Jesus are founded mainly upon a history of Christian persecution rather than theology.

## How to Share the Gospel with Secular Jewish People

Secular Jewish people do not have the array of theological arguments against the Gospel that more religious Jews have cultivated, but this does not mean they are more open to the Lord. They have other types of objections, such as a deeply-seated suspicion of religious authority and a fierce sense of independence. Secular Jewish people might not believe in God, the Bible and have little understanding of religion or theology. They probably do not have a concept of sin, atonement or

redemption. All of these basics need to be explained to a secular Jewish person, whether they live in New York, Dallas, Los Angeles, Israel or Argentina!

Begin by *building a relationship* that helps your Jewish friend see the difference between the “Christianity” they were taught to avoid and dislike, and the true Gospel that has transformed your life. Just be yourself, and your Jewish friend will come to see an entirely new view of Jesus—living in you! This is what made the difference for me and for so many of my Messianic Jewish friends in our faith decisions.

Try to demonstrate the practicality of faith by showing how believing in Jesus impacts your life. Be quick to pray for and with your secular Jewish friend, and let them see the comfort and power you receive through your relationship with the Lord. They might have rational arguments against the existence of God, but seeing leads to believing! Show your secular friend how Jesus makes all the difference to you.

Finally, show an appreciation for Jewish culture. Let your Jewish friend know that you are grateful to the Jewish people for the foundations of your faith. Allow your secular Jewish friend to see that their heritage has great value...this is a great ministry to a secular Jewish person. By affirming the Jewish identity of your Jewish friend, he or she might see that their Jewish identity is not a mere accident of history, but instead a divine choice and destiny.

We have a wonderful little book on how to share your faith with your Jewish friends, and I would love to send you a copy for a gift of \$50.00 or more. Just fill out the enclosed card and I will send it to you.

Thanks for your prayers. However we can help you witness to your Jewish friends—secular or religious—please let us know.

Your brother in the Messiah,

Mitch



Dr. Mitch Glaser  
President



3% having an antagonistic view of religion.

Despite an even representation between religious and secular, most Israelis maintain some type of traditional observance, with 40% of the nation having a rigorous or very extensive religious practice. Only 16% of the Jewish population does not observe any religious tradition whatsoever. Even 62% of the secular population continues some traditional observances. The major practices during the Jewish lifecycle, which include circumcision, bar mitzvah, being married by a rabbi and burial traditions, are important to at least 80% of the nation.

Other research indicates a slight increase in both religious beliefs and observance within Israel over the last twenty years. Research has also shown that religious belief is not directly connected to religious practice, since a significant percentage of the secular community still believes that at least some form of traditional Jewish observance is important. In the context of sharing the Gospel, such surveys remind us that both belief and religious observance are important to many Israelis—even those who appear to be quite secular.

## What Is the Relationship Between Religious Israelis and Secular Israelis?

Although Israel is one country, there is still a massive cultural divide between the secular Israelis and the very religious community. This group, often termed “ultra-Orthodox,” gravitates

## Tourists to Israel: Three Strategies for Reaching Secular Jewish People

As a tourist, the vast majority of people you will encounter in Israel will be secular. They are not hard to approach. They love practicing their English and even want to hear your story. Here are three ways you can engage secular Israelis.

First, if you express your genuine love for Israel, you will win favor in their eyes. With this comes open ears and maybe a willing heart to listen to you.

Next, when your journey ends, you can tell the Israelis that you will be encouraging others to come to Israel. Israel needs spokesmen and advocates, so this will be appreciated. Also remember to pray for peace and divine protection in Israel.

Finally, if you want to take your witness one step further, seek out volunteering opportunities with local ministries in Israel—especially Chosen People Ministries! Nothing will surprise an Israeli more than to hear that you, as a visitor, are using your own time and resources to give back to the people of Israel. This will open up many doors of conversation to explain why you, a Christian believer in Jesus, have come all this way to help the ones He dearly loves.

# Religious Faith and Observance in Israel

Considering that Israel officially defines itself as “a Jewish and Democratic State,” it is not surprising that religious faith and practice shapes Israeli culture. Recent surveys provide a better picture of the importance of Judaism in Israeli religious life, including some surprising trends. Contrary to popular perceptions, Israeli society has nearly equal representation between the religious and secular. Recent surveys show slightly more than fifty percent of the population identifies as religious, with 7% self-identifying as *Haredi* (ultra-Orthodox), who are most recognizable by their traditional Jewish dress, 15% as Orthodox and 32% as traditional. Slightly less than half of Israel’s Jewish population consider themselves secular, with only

## From Darkness to Light

My name is Henry\* and I was born in 1942 in Plovdiv, the second-largest city in Bulgaria. During World War II, day by day, month by month, we suffered—sick and starving—until the end of the war.

On May 14, 1949, we immigrated to Israel. I served in the army in an elite unit and worked my way up to the rank of major. After I was discharged from the army, I was offered a job in the Prime Minister’s office.

In 1966, I married my wife. We have a son and daughter and today we have six grandchildren. At the age of fifty, I retired from a work life that was active and full of adventure, yet spiritually empty.

Something changed when I went to Poland on a Chosen People Ministries Israel trip for Holocaust survivors. I met a wonderful man called Maxim. I received a Bible from him, which I read day and night while we were in Poland. After we returned to Israel, Maxim put me in touch with a congregation and there the penny dropped! Since then, I have dedicated myself to reading Scripture and studying.

Since Yeshua (Jesus) was a Jew, I as a Jew have a special relationship to Him. Knowing Yeshua gives me peace in my heart, which enables me to trust Him as I go through difficulties and receive the Holy Spirit in order to walk in peace, love, and joy. I was baptized in front of the whole congregation—something that no one can take away from me.

\*name changed

toward distinct neighborhoods and its members have special bus lines, special stores where they shop and special schools for their children.

The very religious have had the rights to study in separate schools (called *yeshivas*) and to be exempt from mandatory army service. However, this privilege may be coming to an end. The current prevailing view among secular Israelis is that it is highly unfair that they have to send their 18–21-year-olds to defend the country, while religious youth are let off. The draft has now come to the religious communities, and they are fighting it.

On the whole, the secular do not have anything against the religious; they just do not share the same lives. Secular Israelis go about their business, and if they have opportunities to work with a religious person, everyone is cordial and respectful. If someone needs help on the street, there is no doubt that help will be received. It's the Israeli way—a small country made up of Jewish people who may not always agree, but generally preserve basic respect for each other and for God.

## Young Secular Israelis – Who Are They?

Young secular Israelis are not their parents' generation and certainly not their grandparents' when it comes to fulfilling traditional Jewish religious obligations.

So who are they? Although they don't all fit one mold, it is not hard to distinguish some of their typical behaviors. Here are some examples:

- They tend to live in Tel Aviv, which is for the most part a secular city, in small (often shared) apartments due to the high cost of living there. They need to work long and hard to keep afloat financially. The partying lifestyle is particularly popular. They are mostly unmarried, with the current statistics showing that 78% of 20–29-year-olds in Tel Aviv are single.
- Since they are not religious, the Sabbath is a time of rest and recreation when they go to the beach and hang out, or go hiking around Israel.
- They are generally very curious about and interested in religion of the far east—mysticism, Buddhism, Hinduism and New Age practices.

## Changed by God's Goodness

My name is Jennifer\* and I am 22 years old. Here is my story: As I was growing up, I did what my peers did. At the age of 14, I started to go to discos, drink alcohol and smoke. I thought it was okay; I didn't know any better.

After completing my military service, one of my acquaintances told me about a youth trip to Poland she had been on (organized by Chosen People Ministries Israel). We had a lot of fun on the trip. But when we talked about God in the evenings, I just whiled away the time thinking about the next day's program, uninterested in the conversation. After I returned home I told myself: "I'll go back next year if I can."

When I was offered the chance to return to Poland, I leapt at it. But when I got there, I felt different—not like the first time. This time it was really nice to be around all the people. I could feel goodness coming from them, and it comforted me.

Very soon after I returned from Poland I saw that something in me had changed. I constantly felt someone's strong presence, even when I was alone. Despite my fears, I decided to pray. After I began to pray, everything started to change very quickly. God gave me everything I asked for—and more. He gave me love, changing me and delivering me from the desire to go to discos and from smoking. I feel His presence near me and His comfort every day. God's love and care are very precious to me.

*\*name changed*



- They do not generally keep a kosher diet, although many of them avoid eating forbidden foods such as seafood and pork.
- They often travel abroad upon completion of their national military service. Popular countries to visit include India, Thailand, New Zealand and Argentina. Chosen People Ministries has an established and active hostel ministry to Israeli backpackers in New Zealand and has also sent teams to Goa, India and Buenos Aires, Argentina—popular destinations for young, secular Israelis in their quest to see the world and experience new things.

# SEE THE BIBLE THROUGH JEWISH EYES

BY DANIEL GOLDBERG, TH.D., D.D.



Dr. Goldberg serves as  
International Ministries  
Representative for  
Chosen People  
Ministries and lives in  
Pineville, North Carolina  
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## AN HISTORICAL INTERLUDE Jerusalem Threatened, King Hezekiah's Crisis and Isaiah's Ministry ISAIAH 36-39

### THE HISTORICAL SITUATION

To fully appreciate the situation reflected in these chapters, one should read the account found in 2 Kings 18:13-16. After King Sennacherib of Assyria had overrun the land of Judah, King Hezekiah robbed the Temple of its gold as well as the King's treasury in order to raise money to pay off Sennacherib. This "tribute money" was a guarantee that the Assyrian invaders would leave the country in peace.

Now comes a delegation from the king of Assyria, led by the proud and scornful emissary Rabshakeh. Claiming the support of the Lord, the proud Assyrian general berated the messengers of Judah and hurled an insulting message to the people of Jerusalem who sat upon the city wall.

What was King Hezekiah to do? Although he was deeply flawed, Hezekiah was nonetheless a man of faith. Therefore, he summoned the prophet Isaiah as a spokesman for God. For all his faults, Hezekiah proved himself a godly man and sought the Lord in prayer. For this reason, the Lord gave Hezekiah favor, although it

was not because of Hezekiah's fine points. God declared His word to the king through the prophet Isaiah, "*For I will defend this city, to save it for my own sake; and for my servant David's sake*" (Isa. 37:35).

### AN IMMEDIATE ANSWER TO PRAYER - ISAIAH 37:33-38

The prophet Isaiah's message to King Hezekiah is summarized in a few words; namely, God would defend the city, Jerusalem, not only to protect His reputation, but also to secure the promise He had made to David (2 Sam. 2:7).

God personally defended the Holy City as the "Angel of the Lord" struck down 185,000 Assyrians, who were unable to survive the attack (Isa. 37:36).

Twenty years later, in 681 BC, King Sennacherib died in a political revolt. Assyrian annals report that the king's head was smashed with the images of protective heathen deities; an irony illustrating how idols are not only powerless, but also likely to betray their own adherents.

### DIVINE HEALING - ISAIAH 38

This chapter describes the grave illness of Hezekiah, his prayer for

recovery, and God's answer through Isaiah. The prophet informed the king that he would die, but the king's request must evidently have been for longer life.

God instructed Isaiah to inform the king that the Lord would add 15 years to his life (Isa. 38:5). A miracle, perhaps a refraction of the sun's rays (38:7-8), substantiated God's mercy. But the Lord's mercy to Hezekiah had a downside. As we see in chapter 39, in his foolish pride, Hezekiah displayed the riches of his kingdom to Babylonian emissaries, who coveted and eventually carried them away—along with the nation, just as Isaiah foretold.

### CONCLUSION

Even godly men can make serious mistakes, and Hezekiah, despite all his faith and prayer, seems to have given way to pride (2 Chron. 32:31). Are we any better than he? Let us consider the Apostle Paul's words, "*Therefore let anyone who thinks they stand take heed lest they fall*" (1 Cor. 10:12).

# NEWS BRIEFS

## FIFTEEN JEWISH FAITH DECISIONS IN MOSCOW

Mira G., our gifted evangelist serving in Moscow, was conducting a special outreach service that was attended by about fifty people, most of whom were Jewish. Finding herself quite tired at the conclusion of the evening, she prayed for the spiritual and physical strength to present the Gospel clearly and invite those present to receive the Lord. The Lord answered her prayer in a mighty way. She writes, "I found myself standing in the center of the hall and praying with almost all of the guests together with me opening their hearts to the Messiah Yeshua (Jesus). Fifteen Jewish people made a faith decision for the first time! Praise the Lord, who is never too tired to save!"

## JEWISH SEEKER IN TORONTO FINDS GOD ANSWERS PRAYERS



A young Jewish man stepped into our headquarters in Toronto seeking guidance and help. Jorge Sedaca, our Canadian director, sat with him as he shared about his life, his lack of a job and his family needs (he has a wife and two children). Jorge prayed for him and then asked him to return in two days' time. Two days later, the young man returned in excitement. He said, "Rabbi, I have great news. The same night after I came to see you, my cousin called offering me a job for the next six months! That is an answer to your prayer!" As they rejoiced together, Jorge shared the Gospel with him. He is open and has promised to attend our Messianic congregation. Pray that this young seeker and his family will meet Jesus soon!

## GOSPEL OF PEACE PROCLAIMED IN UKRAINIAN TURMOIL

Michael Z., who directs our Israel ministries, traveled to Ukraine in response to an invitation extended some months ago to lead a conference on Jewish evangelism. Who knew then that Donetsk, the city where Michael was invited to teach, would be one of the most violent locations in the recent turmoil? When he arrived in Donetsk, barricades covered a good half of the city. Even in the midst of the violence, almost 700 people came to the conference to hear the Word of God. Michael writes, "It was absolutely astonishing to see how the people in the middle of a war were listening to the need to pray for Israel and the Jewish people. Some among those who came received Jesus right there."



## IN MEMORIAM – RUTH WARDELL

Ruth Wardell, a retired Chosen People Ministries missionary (who never really retired), peacefully passed away on May 16 at the age of 90. Following Bible college and other ministry training, Ruth went to New York City in 1946 to work with the American Board of Missions to the Jews (now Chosen People Ministries) where God used her background and education to reach out to children and adults alike. There she began a missionary calling which lasted over fifty years. Ruth had a tremendous impact on many young people in New York as she led Bible studies and ran camps and outreach meetings. In 1973, God took Ruth's ministry to Los Angeles, where she trained and ministered to many senior adults and children. In 1993, Ruth settled in Plano, Texas, where she continued to minister until almost 90 years of age! Ruth was affectionately known as "Miss Wardell" and then later as "Ruth with the Truth" by all who knew and loved her.



# MESSIANIC RESOURCES



Announcing our newest 15-month Messianic Jewish Art Calendar just in time for the Jewish New Year! This year's theme is "Pray for the

Peace of Jerusalem." You will be inspired by Carly Hennigan's photographs of Jerusalem and its environs, and be blessed by the Scriptures and the brief devotionals that accompany them. The Jewish Calendar is not designed merely to mark the passage of time; in fact, it has a story of its own to tell—the history of redemption as recorded in the Scriptures.

Our calendars make great gifts, so don't forget to order extras!

**Messianic Jewish Art Calendar • 5005 • \$13.95<sup>US</sup>**

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### How can I get more information?

Please contact our Planned Giving department via email at [plannedgiving@chosenpeople.com](mailto:plannedgiving@chosenpeople.com), or by calling 212-223-2252, or writing to us at Chosen People Ministries, 241 East 51st Street, New York, NY 10022



## The Chosen People Newsletter

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

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