

The Chosen People



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CELEBRATING ISRAEL'S 68TH BIRTHDAY



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CELEBRATING ISRAEL'S 68TH BIRTHDAY

Dear friend in the Messiah,

Happy 68th birthday to Israel!

It is hard to believe that modern Israel was established such a short time ago. The modern state of Israel is an answer to the prayers of Jews and Christians and is a signpost of God's faithfulness to His covenants and promises.

The survival of the Jewish people and their return to the Promised Land of Israel is a clear testimony of God's faithfulness to His word! The miracle of Israel is a joy to behold, but the glorious future promised by God has not fully arrived yet. There is more to come as so many prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures are still to be fulfilled—and we look forward to that day when the nation of Israel will *“look to Him whom they have pierced and mourn as one mourns for an only begotten son...”* (Zech. 12:10).

As you know, we are living in difficult days for the nation of Israel as Hamas is still firing missiles into the border towns and personal terrorists are murdering innocent Israelis each week. We are hoping and praying for peace!

Meanwhile, there are millions of Jewish people and Arabs in Israel that we must reach with the Good News of the Gospel. In order to do this we must have a better understanding of modern Israel so that we can be most effective in our ministries.

The Pew Foundation Report *on the Jewish Religion in Israel*

Recently, the Pew Foundation, which has done such an excellent job analyzing the Jewish community and many other faith communities, produced a report on Jewish religious life within Israel. The full report is over 200 pages and is the result of surveys taken between late 2014 and early 2015. You can read it by going to the Chosen People Ministries Facebook page (facebook.com/chosenpeople) or website (chosenpeople.com) where we have posted the full report.

The report did discover seven key findings, and I will note and comment on them here in relationship to how each might impact our bringing the Gospel to the Jewish people in the Holy Land. The first paragraph of the report is a good introduction as to why the foundation felt it was important to do this study:

For a small country, Israel holds a place of great importance for three of the world's major religious groups. The modern Jewish state is not only the “Promised Land” for Jews, but the only country in the world where they form a majority of the population. For Christians, Israel is the “Holy Land,” because it is the place where Jesus’ life and death unfolded. And, for Muslims, Jerusalem is the place where the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven.

Here are the points, followed by my comments:

1. Israeli Jews are largely united on the need for their nation to be a homeland for Jews, regardless of their origins.

One would expect Israelis to affirm the need for the nation of Israel. Remember, the modern state of Israel grew out of the ashes of the Holocaust. Also, antisemitism is on the rise around the world and perhaps the number one reason why Jewish people from across the globe move to Israel is because they feel unsafe in their current locale. This is clear from the following response to the survey,

Three-quarters of Israeli Jews (76%) see antisemitism as common and increasing around the world.

This sense of threat which Jewish people feel because of growing antisemitism also gives us opportunities as followers of Jesus to help the Jewish people better understand the promises of God so that they can depend upon Him for safety and security. It also provides us with a great opportunity to show God's kindness to the Jewish people so that they understand that "true Christians" love the Jewish people because they love the Jewish Bible and the Jewish Messiah. Remember, aside from Islamic extremism, most Jewish people generally believe that Christianity is the source of antisemitism. We would like to change that understanding through our love and actions as believers in Jesus.

2. Virtually all Jews in Israel identify with one of four major religious subgroups:

**Hiloni ("secular"),
Masorti ("traditional"),
Dati ("religious") and
Haredi ("ultra-Orthodox").**

This part of the report was very helpful in understanding the religious divisions among Israelis. The report indicates that about 50% of the Israelis surveyed are secular and the other 50% are religious in one way or another. Therefore, it is actually wrong to think

of Israel as a secular country. Other reports and surveys in recent years have indicated a growth in Orthodox Judaism, not only because they seem to have more children than other types of Jewish people, but because they are also making converts from among more secular Jewish people.

This means that our efforts to reach Jewish people for the Messiah in Israel cannot simply be limited to those who are more secular. Certainly, at times it seems easier to reach secular Israelis with the Gospel, but we must remember that there is a substantial group of religious Jewish people, the Orthodox, that we must pray for and give the message of Jesus.

3. Jewish groups consistently disagree on a range of specific public policy issues.

It is clear that there is a great divide between Orthodox, traditionalists and secular Jews in their vision for the state of Israel. The secular would like to have complete freedom of movement on the Sabbath as Israel for the most part does not allow public transportation to run on Friday night and Saturday. There are a host of other issues as well, including military service, as in years past Orthodox or traditional Jewish people were not required to serve.

In light of the above, it is important to note that most Jewish people and those thinking about becoming religious believe they are faithful to God and have a certain idea of what that means. Paul understood this in Romans 10:2. I believe that this divide between religious and nonreligious Jews in Israel provides an opportunity for the Gospel, as long as we continue to show His love to both secular and Orthodox Jews. Remember, we want to reach all Israelis with the Gospel.

4. About eight-in-ten (81%) Israeli adults are Jewish...

It is important to note the religious diversity within Israel, not simply among Jewish Israelis but among all Israelis. According to the survey the non-Jewish population of Israel is divided in the following manner,

...the remainder are mostly ethnically



Arab and religiously Muslim (14%), Christian (2%) or Druze (2%). Overall, the Arab religious minorities in Israel are more religiously observant than Jews.

As the figures indicate, Christians in Israel are a very small minority, something American evangelicals are not used to at all. Israel cherishes religious freedom and people of all faiths are able to worship as they wish, build houses of worship, print books that reflect their religious traditions, etc.

In effect, there is great freedom to proclaim the Gospel within Israel; however, individualized opposition or opposition coming from smaller groups of more religious Jews and Muslims will always be a challenge. In fact, this is one of the reasons that the Christian population in a town like Bethlehem has been reduced by almost 50% over the last few years. The problem is not the Israelis, but the more religious Muslims who are intolerant of Christians.

5. Half of Israeli Jews (48%) say Arabs should be transferred or

expelled from Israel while a similar share (46%) disagree with this.

This is a large and disturbing number and inconsistent with previous surveys. The reason might lie with Pew's use of Hebrew. It is technical but important. The Pew study used the word for Arab without the Hebrew definite article. This would cause the respondents to be unsure about what the researcher intended. The London-based *Jewish Chronicle* describes the problem in this way,

Every respondent will have interpreted the question in their own way, which is bad planning by Pew because it needed just one more letter to make this aspect of



the question clearer. The definite article is extremely important in Hebrew, and if Pew was interested in what Israeli Jews think about the presence of Arabs, it should have asked about "the Arabs" not "Arabs"—which would have required one extra letter, a hey.

The language in this question seemed to be confusing and should become the subject of vigorous discussion in the days ahead. However, this question did show the lack of good faith between Israelis and Arabs.

This is simply a reminder for us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem as only the Lord can break through so many seemingly insurmountable challenges to peace.

6. Together, Israel and the U.S. are home to about 80% of Jews globally, and there are strong bonds between the world's two largest Jewish populations.

The ties that bind the United States Jewish population to Israel are strong. The author of the summary further writes,

Most Israeli Jews feel they share a common destiny with U.S. Jews and think U.S. Jews have a good influence on Israeli affairs. American Jews also harbor warm feelings about Israel. Our 2013 survey of U.S. Jews (<http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>) found that most say they are either "very"

(30%) or "somewhat" (39%) emotionally attached to Israel, and that caring about Israel is either essential or important to what being Jewish means to them.

This is another reminder of how important it is for evangelical Christians to support the modern state of Israel, not because

modern Israel is perfect, but because the Jewish people have come back to the Land promised to them by God. And the relationship between our two great democratic nations needs to be strengthened so that we can show a common front in facing our common enemy—radical Islam, especially as seen in the actions of ISIS, Iran and Hamas.

7. Israeli Jews overall are more religious than U.S. Jews, partly because Orthodox Jews make up a greater share of their population.

There is no doubt that the Orthodox Jewish population of both Israel and the United States is growing in number and influence. This growth has an impact on

Jewish community life, politics and of course, faith. We experience this already in reaching the almost one million Jewish people of Brooklyn as the ratio of Orthodox to non-Orthodox Jews is quite different than in most cities within the United States. Brooklyn has a high percentage of Orthodox, or otherwise religious Jewish people, which shapes our community.

We might be entering a season when more traditional Jews become the Jewish religious norm in Israel and the United States. I believe we will continue to see many Jewish people rejecting religion and faith and others becoming more traditional.

This is all the more reason for Christians to pray for and support ministries like Chosen People Ministries. Reaching religious Jewish people is better accomplished by Jewish ministries like ours as traditional Jewish people do not often know evangelical Christians. Perhaps this can change as Christians begin to find new ways to love and pray for their Jewish friends, both secular and religious.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter and please pray for our work within Israel and around the globe as we reach Jewish people for our Messiah Jesus! As always, I want to thank you for your generous prayers and support without which we could not continue this great work that began in 1894!

Yours in our Messiah,

Mitch
Mitch



Dr. Mitch Glaser
President

- 1 <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/08/key-findings-religion-politics-israel/>
- 2 Michael Lipka (<http://www.Pewresearch.Org/Author/Mlipka/>)
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 <http://www.thejc.com/comment-and-debate/analysis/154329/do-israeli-jews-really-want-expel-arabs-the-huge-holes-pew-survey>
- 5 Ibid.

MINISTRY REPORT

It is exciting to share the following reports from our remarkable Israel staff. Here, Rachel G. gives an exciting overview of the work there:

Our work in Israel is dynamic and creative! It reaches so many segments of Israel's population and it makes me excited to try to keep up with all the news that flows in from our workers. It is only by God's grace that we are able to serve the poor and needy in a number of cities, with the blessing of local government officials. We are humbled when we can walk inside a Holocaust survivor's home and pray with them—their journey has been long and difficult, so for them to be open to understand God's love is amazing. You never know when, sitting at a bustling Tel Aviv café, your neighbor might lean over to start a conversation and that conversation quickly turns to Jesus! It seems like our workers' motto in Israel is to "always be ready to give an account for the hope that is within." It's simply within the everyday life that we can so easily and excitedly share about Jesus with Israelis who want to listen and engage the conversation.

Personal ministry takes place in a variety of ways. The following are just a small sampling of the work that happens every day in Israel:

One of our dedicated staff members in Israel has befriended an Orthodox young man through a mutual interest in sports. Over the last few years, they have become very close. He shares this touching story:

A wise man once said, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." This was proven to me during the last two visits with a good friend of mine (who is Orthodox). He is going through some very difficult times, and as we visited together he listened patiently as I pleaded with him to draw near to the word of God. As I spoke about my faith in Yeshua, a sarcastic smile appeared on his face and he said, "You know...the only reason I'm sitting here and listening to this stuff is because I know that you care about me." In the end, he even let me pray for him in Yeshua's name. Many times in life, we need to earn the right to be heard. There is no simple solution except to invest time and sincere love into people. Sometimes it can take years or even a lifetime before someone trusts you enough to let you challenge their belief system. The reason for this is because after such a deep investment, our friends can know for sure that our motivation is sincere love and not a motivation of trying to prove "who is right and who is wrong." My friend has still not given his life to

Yeshua, but I know without a doubt that he has felt Yeshua loving him through me. My challenge to us all is to keep cultivating our relationships with patience and sincere love, waiting on the Lord for the time when the heart's soil will be ready to receive the seed of life. Please keep my friend in your prayers asking the Father to reveal Himself in his life.

Gabi G. is another dedicated member of our Israel staff. Part of his ministry is to follow up with those who inquire through our online ministries. Gabi shares this wonderful story:

I logged onto the Isaiah 53 Facebook page in order to respond to the dozen messages left from a wide range of people. When I responded to Ron he answered immediately as he was online. Ron wanted me to know right away that Jesus is not the Messiah. I asked him if he received his copy of Isaiah 53 Explained, and he responded that he had. He had even read it! Ron told me that it was pointless trying to share Jesus with Israelis and that we should just stop so we don't waste anyone's time. I replied that it is important to understand who Messiah is according to the Scriptures and only then should we make a decision about the truth of Jesus. Ron agreed with me! We are now looking through the Scripture to understand the role and purpose of Messiah. Please pray that Ron will continue to have a softened heart and be open to consider that Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel.*

Finally, Robynne B. who ministers in Israel and around the globe through our backpacker ministry, shares this exciting story of a young Israeli girl coming to faith in Messiah! Robynne writes:

Nina is a young Israeli I met through a friend. She comes from a secular Israeli family. She heard about Jesus and was curious to hear more and meet a Jewish person who believes in Jesus. I shared how and why I came to believe in Jesus and the things He did in my life. We met several times, looking at prophecies and things Jesus said in the Gospels.*

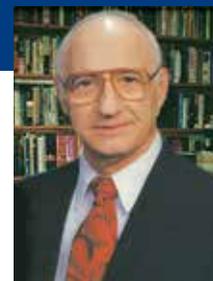
One day Nina looked at me and said, "I don't understand it all yet, but I believe. I love the love Jesus gives, I feel it. I believe I will understand more over time." I could see the joy on her face! Please pray for Nina as her family is very mixed in their reaction to her decision. Some say, "Do what makes you happy," while others are upset with her seeking Jesus. Pray she will continue to grow in Him and her family would want His love too.

*name has been changed



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 with his wife, Madeline.

A SPECIAL EPISTLE OF WARNINGS FOR PROFESSING BELIEVERS

HEBREWS 2:1-11

This letter to professing Hebrew believers in the first century contains five special warning passages as follows:

First Warning: 2:1-4

Second Warning: 3:7-4:13

Third Warning: 5:11-6:20

Fourth Warning: 10:26-31

Fifth Warning: 12:18-29

Each warning passage is pertinent to the author's discussion at that point. Thus the book of Hebrews is extremely practical in terms of application to the readers' lives. It is essential for each of us to pay careful attention to the Divine instructions which makes this Epistle meaningful to professing believers. The warning passages are designed to separate true followers of Messiah from those who are superficial and only make empty professions.

I. **First Warning: Pay Particular Attention to the Eternal Gospel Truths Taught by God's Revelation (Heb. 2:1-4)**

The Greek word *prosecho* in the New Testament is commonly used to bring a ship to land, suggesting the opposite of drifting or slipping away (Heb. 2:1).

It is not that some essential truth might drift away from us, but that we might drift away from the divine message. Not all the seed sown by the sower achieved the full cycle of

maturity. In this first warning passage, men are warned against failure to appropriate the saving message of the Gospel. This warning is the only way out from certain judgment.

In particular, three essentials are mentioned to illustrate the greatness of God's program of salvation:

1. The message was proclaimed by the Messiah Himself (Heb. 2:3).
2. The Gospel message was confirmed by many reliable witnesses (Heb. 2:3).
3. The truth was confirmed by God through various signs (Heb. 2:4).

II. **The Superiority of Messiah to Angels Does Not Conflict with His Attribute of Humanity (Heb. 2:5-9)**

The saving work of Messiah could not possibly have been assigned to Angels. Only Christ could achieve and purchase our salvation. In order to do so, He became a man, like unto His brethren in every aspect, taking on Himself "the seed of Abraham" (Heb. 2:16).

Here, some verses are quoted from Psalm 8:4-6. Psalm 8 teaches that the Messiah would enter fully into our humanity as the ideal man as God intended Him to be. Here, we see Jesus (Heb. 2:9) entering the world to show us what man was intended to be in God's original purpose.

III. **The Sanctification of Believers, Destined to be Conformed to Christ (Heb. 2:8-11)**

Every true believer is moving daily towards his future destiny. We are being changed here and now. The Messiah sanctified us by becoming one of us in His humanity. He also made us one with Him (Heb. 2:11).

Through His saving ministry we became His children (Heb. 2:10-13). Now, we belong to the household of God (Heb. 3:6). God has given us to His Son, our Messiah, and we will be His forever.

IV. **Conclusion**

In practical terms, what do these eternal verities mean?

First of all, we who have been set apart for our Messiah must recognize that He has first claim on our lives. Secondly, the gifts of God's grace are granted to us to exercise for God's glory in God's world. Finally, time granted to us must be set apart for the worship and service of our Messiah and Savior, Jesus.

In a practical sense, our labors must reflect devotion to the Savior that is centered and associated with the body and brethren of the assembly (church) that our Messiah planted when coming to the earth (Acts 2). Messiah will soon return for His own (Acts 1:11).

A DIVINE COINCIDENCE?

Our Florida staff member, Greg S., was following up with Jewish people who had ordered our *Isaiah 53 Explained* book. As he was going down the list he saw a unique name; it was also a familiar name. It turned out to be the sister of a man Greg had led to the Lord and whose wedding he officiated. The woman remembered the wedding and Greg. She said she ordered the book for her son. She was thrilled by the connection and saw that it was not mere coincidence. Let's pray for this family. May the God of Israel draw them to Himself through His Son, the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world.

JESUS IS EVERYWHERE

Sometimes ministry moves slowly; other times it is an avalanche. Our volunteer Katie, who works at our guesthouse for traveling Israelis in Brazil, had the opportunity to speak with three Israelis about God's standard for right and wrong. While this was going on Tal*, an Israeli, came outside and pointedly asked our staff member Stephen, "Do you really believe that Jesus is God?"

Stephen stated, "At this point I was amazed at how spiritually hungry all these Israelis are, but this was only the beginning. I answered his question, and Tal had 20 more to follow it. During our discussion I saw Daniel (another volunteer) getting into a spiritual conversation with another Israeli. There were so many Gospel conversations that Shai* (another Israeli traveler) walked outside and exclaimed, 'Jesus is everywhere!'"

Tal and I talked for at least an hour. He identifies as an atheist, but later that day he commented, "This is probably the most important day of my trip. I've been alive for 22 years and I've never heard what people believe about Jesus until now."

JESUS INTRIGUES AN ISRAELI TOW TRUCK DRIVER

Sometimes what seem like frustrating situations to us are actually God at work, putting people in our path. One such situation happened to our staff member, Ryan Karp. Minutes before leaving for an eight-hour road trip, Ryan's car broke down. He called a tow truck, and guess what? The tow truck driver was Israeli! Ryan began talking about Jesus and Oren* was so intrigued that he offered to drive Ryan home after they dropped the car off at the dealership so he could hear more about Jesus. He told Ryan that he is available on Saturdays to discuss Jesus further. Praise God for this "hassle" that put Oren in Ryan's life! Please pray for Oren to come to know the Lord.



JEWISH BROOKLYN HEARS ABOUT THE JEWISH MESSIAH

The director of our Brooklyn Center, Robert, has seen God do some pretty incredible things recently. One day a number of Orthodox Jewish men came to the services, and this was not the first time. Robert writes, "They are coming from different places and for different reasons. I believe God is drawing them by His Spirit." One of these men, Elias*, showed up and began asking very pointed questions about Jesus and how it was possible for the Jewish people to believe in Him. Robert assured him that Jesus was Jewish and that the New Testament is a very Jewish book. This sparked a half hour conversation about the Gospel. Elias admitted that he has not read the New Testament, so Robert challenged him to read it for himself and then make a decision about whether or not Jesus is Messiah. The man agreed that this would be the best thing to do, but still refused to take a copy. He did however take a copy of *Isaiah 53 Explained* in Hebrew and promised to read it and return. Please pray for Elias, that he will read the New Testament, see the Jewish Messiah on its pages and be saved!

*name has been changed



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Outreach Israel - This ministry trip is designed for college students and individuals ages 18-30 who are interested in reaching Israelis for the Messiah.

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