

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE



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FOR A CHILD AND HIS NAME
WILL BE BORN TO US WONDERFUL
A SON OF MIGHTY
WILL BE GIVEN TO US; GOD
AND THE ETERNAL
GOVERNMENT OF FATHER
WILL REST ON HIS SHOULDERS; PRINCE OF
PEACE



FROM THE PRESIDENT



CHRISTMAS THROUGH JEWISH EYES

Christmas is the drama of redemption fulfilled through the Jewish Messiah.

Dear friend,

Shalom and a Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah to you!

We celebrate two great festivals of deliverance and joy during December. One of the holidays is observed by Christians and the other by Jewish people. There is some cross over today as, once in awhile, I find a Christmas tree capped with a Jewish star or see a Jewish person with a *Hanukkah bush* in their home!

Sometimes this is done to ease the tension of a mixed marriage by bringing the holidays together for the sake of the children. Rarely is there recognition that, at its root, *Christmas is a Jewish holiday and Hanukkah finds its ultimate fulfillment in Yeshua*, the Messiah and Light of the world.

Believe me, it is not easy to persuade the most ardent adherents that the above is true, but when recognized, it brings a greater delight and joy to each of the holidays. Let me explain by reminding us of the story of both holidays, beginning with Christmas.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY BEGINS IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Where does the Christmas story begin? Most people would answer correctly—in the Bible. However, they would begin the story with the wrong Testament by jumping right in with the birth of the Messiah! The story in fact

begins much earlier. The story of Christmas begins in the Old Testament as far back as the book of Genesis. The first promise of a redeemer is found in Genesis 3:15:

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”

Moses tells us that God would one day deliver mankind from sin and death, from disobedience, and from all the evil and human hardship that came about as a result of the fall of Adam and Eve. This deliverance would come through the *seed of the woman* who, in the process of destroying the serpent, would bruise his heel—not with a mortal wound but painful nonetheless.

The wounding of this son of Eve points to Jesus who bore our sin. He was born of a woman, innocent, perfect, and without sin. His death may be viewed like the bruising of the heel, painful but not fatal since He rose from the dead. In Yeshua’s rising from the dead, He proved that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had accepted His sacrifice for sin. Later on, in Isaiah 53, we read these words,

“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.”

We are all sinful and we all need a Savior. We are unable to save ourselves because we have inherited the disobedient nature of our “parents,” Adam and Eve. All praise be to God who sent His Son to die as the solution for our sins—for both forgiveness and transformation!

This glorious story of redemption begins with the first sin because God’s grace has been available from the very start to all those who would receive it! The drama of redemption unfolds throughout the Old Testament Scriptures.

In Genesis 12, we discover that God calls an elderly couple, Abraham and Sarah, to be His bridge of grace to a broken and sinful world. Their descendants, the Jewish people, were chosen for the sake of those who were not part of their own community and who ultimately would be used by God to bless the world: *“And 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”* (Genesis 12:1-3).

Eventually these blessings to the world would come through one descendant of Abraham, the Messiah Jesus, and through Him the world would receive the blessings of redemption.

But, how would the one promised in Genesis 3:15 be recognized? The Scriptures begin filling in His qualifications.



Bethlehem today

The first one is that He would come from one particular tribe of Israel. He would be from the tribe of Judah, the fourth-born son of Jacob. As Moses describes, *“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples”* (Genesis 49:10).

Even the rabbis of old recognized that the name Shiloh was a reference to the Messiah and redeemer promised to Israel and the nations. These promises shaped the expectations of the Jewish people so that when the Messiah came He would be recognized by His people.

The qualifications for the Messiah continue as the Bible tells us that He would also be a Son of David. This was promised through the prophecy of Nathan to King David:

“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever... Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:12-13, 16).

David thought he would build a house for God—the Temple—but instead God created a house for the king assuring him that one of his descendants would sit on his throne forever.

The Savior would be a Jewish man, a true prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15) who dies for the sins of both Jews and Gentiles (Isaiah 53, Psalm 22) and rises from the grave as the all-powerful Son of God *“...who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 1:4).

Christmas is the drama of redemption fulfilled through the Jewish Messiah, and the story does not begin in the New Testament but is rooted and grounded in the Hebrew Scriptures. This is why I believe Christmas is a Jewish holiday!

SALVATION IS OF THE JEWS

Jesus made a profound comment in the Gospel of John when speaking to the well-known Samaritan woman: *“You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews”* (John 4:22).

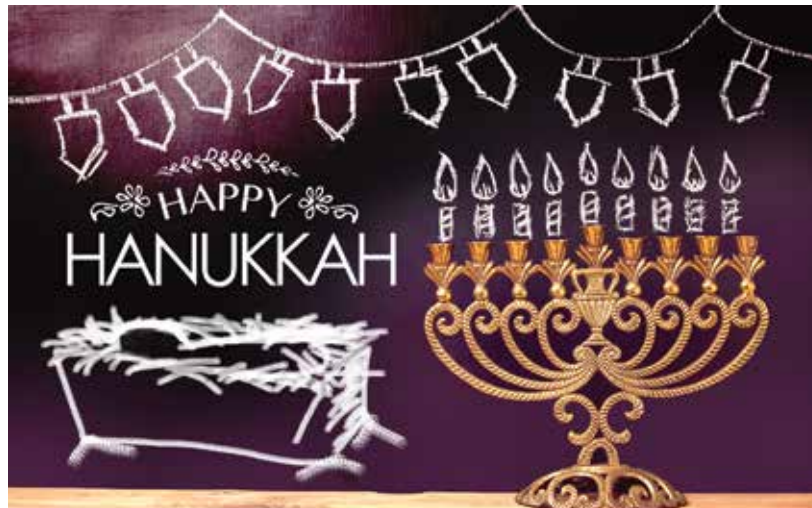
What did He mean? The answer is simple. Jesus let the Samaritan woman know that salvation has its origins in God’s promises to the Jewish people, but the blessings that come through the Jewish Messiah would extend to all who want to

have a personal relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This salvation has “Jewish origins” but is available to all who believe!

In a similar way, Hanukkah, the Jewish holiday celebrating the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrian Greeks and their wicked king, Antiochus Epiphanes, also points to this same Savior. Did you know that the observance of Hanukkah is mentioned in the Bible? In John 10, the Apostle writes,

At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me.” (John 10:22-25)

The Messiah took this occasion to reveal Himself to His people and, in so doing, He was telling the Jewish hearers that there is a salvation coming that is far greater than the one won by the Maccabees on that first Hanukkah. In fact, the lights lit for this holiday are



designed by our tradition to remind us of the miracle that kept aflame the eternal light in the Temple. There was only enough oil to last for a day, but it lasted for eight days. The story may or may not be true, but when a Jewish person sees the glow of the Hanukkah candles, they are reminded of His power to deliver His chosen people from destruction!

As a Jewish follower of Jesus, when I see the beautifully lit Hanukkah menorah, I am reminded of the One who claimed to be the Light of the world (John 8:12) and through whom we all have redemption from sin and the hope of everlasting life.

I hope you will enjoy the brief Bible studies on various Messianic prophecies and that they will encourage your heart. I also pray that you might share some of these prophecies with your Jewish friends who look forward to the great deliverance to come but who do not yet know that the Messiah, predicted in the Hebrew Scriptures, has come and His name is Yeshua—the Savior of the world.

Have a great holiday season and remember to pray for Your Mission to the Jewish People as we reach His chosen people in dozens of cities across the Americas and in seventeen other countries around the globe! Thank you for your faithful prayers and generous support.

Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah,


Mitch

Messiah in Prophecy

BY ROBERT WALTER

JEREMIAH 23:5-6

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely, and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The Lord our righteousness.’”

What is in a name? In the context of Scripture, quite a bit! The biblical authors, the ancient Jewish people, and many in the ancient Near East placed a high value on one’s name. A person’s character, reputation, occupation, and family connection would all be encapsulated in their name. We can relate with this in our day. When a person has worked hard to earn a good reputation, we might say, “He has really made a name for himself.” The ancients would often take it a step further and attribute great religious or even prophetic significance to one’s name.¹ Understanding this helps us grasp the significance of not only the names of individuals within Scripture, but especially the many names and titles attributed to God and the Messiah throughout the Bible.

The text in Jeremiah 23 is a prime example. The broader context of Jeremiah’s prophecy has him warning of Jerusalem’s coming destruction at the hands of Babylon and specifically rebuking David’s descendants, Judah’s failed kings. The lack of godly leadership, leading to national sin, had created a void and left Judah and Jerusalem susceptible to the impending judgment. Amazingly, in the midst of the bleak and dire warnings, God gave a promise of hope. He would raise up a unique individual to fill Israel’s leadership void. From the names attributed to him, we learn of his two-fold identity. As the “righteous Branch” descended from David, he would be Israel’s long-awaited, righteous human King (2 Samuel 7:12-16). Not only that, this King would bear the holy name of God, “The Lord our righteousness.” This is the only place in the Old Testament where the full name of the Lord (the *Tetragrammaton*) is used for a human being, and it is utterly profound. This passage speaks to both the humanity and the deity of the coming King.

There has been only one person in history who has embodied this identity and bore these

names—Jesus of Nazareth. Indeed, He is the promised Son of David,² and the Lord our righteousness.³

1. See Genesis 29:32-30:24 and the naming of Jacob’s sons for example.
2. See Matthew 1:1, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15.
3. See John 1:1, 14, 18; 14:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:15-23; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31

BY DR. MITCH GLASER

MICAH 5:2

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”

A Ruler from the Tribe of Judah Born in Bethlehem

There were two Bethlehems, one in the south of Israel and one in the north. The adding of *Ephrathah* indicates that this is the Bethlehem that is approximately five miles south of Jerusalem and is the ancestral home of Ruth and King David (Ruth 1:1-2; 4:11). The word Bethlehem literally means the “house of bread,” and it is possible that the city was some how linked to the baking of bread. Bethlehem was known as a city close to Jerusalem where animals for sacrifice were raised.

Micah alludes to the passage in Genesis 49:10 where Jacob predicts that the ruler of Israel would come from the tribe of Judah: *“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”* Judah was the fourth son of Jacob, not the first. So God is apparently upsetting the usual order of inheritance by telling the Jewish people that their ultimate ruler would come from the descendants of the fourth son of Israel.

Although the Hebrew Bible uses two different terms which are translated as “ruler” in Genesis 49:10 and in Micah 5:2, the point is clear. Whoever this ruler is would profoundly impact the Jewish people since he would be the predicted ruler of Jacob’s prophecy and the royal son who would rule the Jewish people forever (2 Samuel 7:13ff). The first word, “mikedem” may be translated, “from ancient times”, and the second term, “olam”, as “eternal”, which often describes the everlasting character of the God of Israel (Psalm 25:5, 90:2, Habakkuk 1:12). The use of the term in Micah 5:2 speaks of the eternity of the coming ruler which was fulfilled in the person of the Messiah Jesus, the eternal Son of David, spoken of in the New Testament.

The New Testament Fulfillment

They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, Land of Judah, Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’” (Matthew 2:5-6)

The Gospel writer indicates that Jesus is the promised ruler. He is the son of David from the tribe of Judah who was born in the traditional Davidic homeland, and He will prove Himself to be the eternal Son of God and Messianic King through His perfect character and miracles. The “bread of life” would be born in Bethlehem as He would be both the bread of life and ultimate sacrifice for our sin—born to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

BY DR. GREGORY HAGG

ISAIAH 7:14

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."

In Isaiah's day, two enemies were conspiring against Judah: Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel (the northern kingdom). Isaiah comforted the terrified people of Judah by going to the king with his aptly named son, Shear-jashub ("a remnant shall return"). God will bring a remnant back to the Land. The terrorists of that day, who were mere men, would be shattered.

Ahaz was challenged to believe this prophecy. In fact, he was to ask God for a confirming sign, something really spectacular — as "...*deep as Sheol or high as heaven*" (Isaiah 7:11). When he refused, God gave him a sign, even though he had exasperated the Lord. What is that sign? It is a son named Immanuel, which means "God with us." God's people needed His very presence when surrounded by the enemy. It was true in Isaiah's time, and it is true today.

The son will be born to a "virgin" says the prophet. Regardless of how one interprets the Hebrew word *almâh*, there would be nothing spectacular about her if she were impregnated normally. Something supernatural attended this birth.

What child in Isaiah's day "fulfills" this prophecy? We do not know. Some say the "young maiden" was Isaiah's wife, but she already had a child, Shear-jashub, and her second child was not named Immanuel but Maher-shalal-hash-baz (Isaiah 8:3). Others say she was a virgin when the prophecy was given, but she then married and had a child whose early life is described by Isaiah to show that the Syria-Israel confederacy would be defeated very soon. Neither view is too remarkable, deep, or high.

It is clear that the supernatural, spectacular component of this birth finds its fulfillment in the Person of the Messiah, born of a virgin, through the work of the Holy Spirit, before Mary and Joseph "came together" (Matthew 1:18-25). Whatever the meaning to Ahaz, which is obscure at best, the meaning to all believers around the world is that the baby who was named Immanuel was supernaturally conceived.

We have been given a sign. We have been given a Son. We know Him as Immanuel. God is always with us in the Messiah Yeshua who indwells every believer and who said "...*And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*" (Matthew 28:20).

BY CHARLOTTE MACHADO

ISAIAH 9:6-7

"For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this."

In this passage, the prophet Isaiah uses four different names for the coming Messiah, two of which indicate that this future son of David would be God in the flesh. Names in the Hebrew Bible often indicate character and these names (especially when the two verses are taken as one unit) speak to the very nature of the Davidic king.

What child in that time could live up to the name "eternal Father," *avi-ad*, not to mention "Mighty God," *El-Gibbor*? How could an earthly King be "Mighty God"? Literal readings of the Hebrew reveal that the titles describe the King Himself.

In Isaiah 10:21, the title "Mighty God" is reserved for God alone. Isaiah 9:6-7 explains that David's descendant would be born of a woman, a real physical offshoot of the Davidic household, yet fully God. A common theme running throughout the Old Testament (and the New Testament) is the eternal reign of King David. In 2 Samuel, God makes His covenant with King David. The Lord says: "*When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom*" (2 Samuel 7:12).

Interestingly, the Hebrew word used here for descendant is *zaraka*, which is from the same root as *zarah* in Isaiah 53:10. Another gem that the Hebrew reveals is that this descendant will be "from out of the bowels" (*mi-mecha*), meaning a literal offspring. Verse 13 continues to describe the eternal kingdom of this descendant, and verse 14 tells us that the Lord himself says, "*I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me.*" There were many Davidic kings in the generations following David's death; however, only Jesus lives up to the names "Everlasting Father" and "Mighty God."

Hebrews 9:6-14 | The Earthly vs. the Heavenly Sanctuary: Part Two



Dr. Rich Freeman, D. Min. serves as the Vice President for Church Ministries and Conferences with Chosen People Ministries and lives in South Florida with his wife, Julia. Dr. Freeman works with churches, throughout the country and abroad, helping to equip God's people to share the Gospel with their Jewish neighbors, friends, and co-workers and grow in their understanding of the Scriptures.

In our last study in Hebrews 9:1-5, the writer of Hebrews was continuing to build a case for the superiority of Messiah's priestly ministry over the Levitical priesthood. Beginning in verse six of chapter nine, he concludes this part of his argument by making the statement that the Levitical priests were ministering in the outer tabernacle only and not allowed to go into the inner tabernacle at all. Only the High Priest was allowed to enter the inner tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, and only on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. He concludes this portion by stating that "The Holy Spirit is signifying" that the restricted access into the Holy of Holies was demonstrating that true entrance into God's presence, represented by the Holy of Holies beyond the veil, "had not yet been disclosed." In other words, the Levitical system was intended to show that the true way to God was not accomplished through it. Therefore, it was always intended to be temporary, "until a time of reformation." The Greek word for "reformation" is used only here in the New Testament and means "to make straight, to make right, to rectify a situation." It was pointing to the time that Messiah's sacrifice would make things right between man and God.

That brings us to the conclusion of this argument beginning in verse eleven. "But when Christ, Jesus the Messiah, appeared as a High Priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle." When Jesus died on that Roman cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, He entered the Heavenly Tabernacle, not made with human hands, "not of this creation." He did so "not through the blood of goats and calves," but through His own blood. What that accomplished is what the writer of Hebrews calls "eternal redemption." The intent here is to compare the temporary nature of the Levitical system with the permanent nature of the Messiah's sacrifice, which was "once for all." Unlike the

Levitical sacrifices, even on Yom Kippur, which were temporary and repetitive, Messiah's sacrifice, once for all, accomplished eternal redemption.

The objective of the writer of Hebrews was to show the superiority of Messiah's priestly ministry over the Levitical sacrifices and priesthood. Ultimately, the purpose of the sacrificial system was to point people to the Messiah and what would be the final sacrifice.

Messiah's priesthood was shown to be superior to the Levitical priesthood in three distinct ways:

First, *a superior tabernacle*: Messiah, as our great High Priest, sits at the right hand of God in the Heavenly Tabernacle, not of this creation, superior to the earthly tabernacle made with human hands. The Levitical High Priest could only enter once a year, on Yom Kippur, beyond the veil, into the Holy of Holies. Messiah entered the Heavenly Tabernacle once for all, and in the process, the veil of the earthly tabernacle, representing restriction from God, was torn from top to bottom.

Second, *a superior blood offering*: The Levitical High Priest entered the earthly tabernacle, into the Holy of Holies, once a year with the blood of bulls and goats. Messiah entered the Heavenly Tabernacle, once for all, through, not with, His own shed blood.

Third, *a superior sanctification*: The Levitical sacrifices ceremonially cleansed the external part of the person, the flesh, what people could see, but was never able to cleanse the internal, what people could not see, here referred to as the "conscience."

But the blood of Messiah is able to cleanse a believer's conscience "from dead works to serve the living God." Those "dead works" in this context seem to refer to the Levitical rituals that, in contrast with the work of Christ, can never impart spiritual life. The ultimate goal of Messiah's death is for every believer in Him to serve the living God.

Read Hebrews 9:6-14 NASB

⁹...Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience...

¹¹But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands,...

¹²and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption....

¹⁴How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?



HOSTING ISRAELI TRAVELERS IN BROOKLYN

Staff members, Joseph and Sarah R., recently received their first Israeli visitor through a Christian hosting network. Tali* is a young Israeli from Haifa who traveled to the United States for the summer and ended her trip with a final stop in New York. Over Shabbat dinner, Joseph and Sarah shared their faith. Tali had never heard of Jewish believers in Jesus before, and she jumped at the opportunity to join their worship service the next morning. On the way home, she remarked how much she enjoyed the service, the combination of Jewish and Christian elements, and the freedom in worship. Before leaving, she thanked them for sharing and said her time with them was the highlight of her trip to America. Joseph and Sarah are still in touch with Tali who would like to come back. Pray that God will send believers into her life in Israel and draw her to Himself.

ISRAELI ARCHAEOLOGIST LOOKS FOR JESUS

A few months ago, our staff member, David S., was asked if he would represent Hebrew University at a conference along with other reputable scholars. On the first day of the conference, one of David's colleagues, who is an archae-

ologist from Israel, came to him during lunch and said, "Professor, can you explain to me how a Jew can believe that Jesus is the Messiah?" For the next half hour, David shared with him what Jesus said and why he believes that His words, His death on the cross, and His resurrection are true. The archaeologist listened intently and afterwards said, "David, we must continue this conversation when we meet next month in Jerusalem." Please pray for David's colleagues at Hebrew University, who, although they have the intellectual knowledge of the person of Jesus, also need to accept Him as their Messiah.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION! SHARING JESUS ON TV

Our staff member, Rich F., who serves in Brooklyn, has been interviewed a number

of times on a local access television show. The producer of the show, Gabriella,* is a believer and first contacted Rich about three years ago. Recently, Gabriella asked Rich if he would come on the show and speak on the topic of depression. A Jewish welfare agency was coming in right after his interview to share on this topic. There were three Jewish ladies from the welfare agency at the television studio. They were very reserved and did not interact with Rich. But after they heard Rich's interview on dealing with depression from a biblical perspective, they became very warm and engaging. They exchanged contact information and invited Rich to join a group of city leaders working to provide social and psychological support for people in the community. Praise God for the opportunities He provides!

SEEDS OF ISRAELI BACKPACKER MINISTRY IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

"Your ministry is *comendo pelas beiradas*," the man said and then explained, "This is a Brazilian idiom that means eating around the edges where no one else is eating.... I'm very excited about



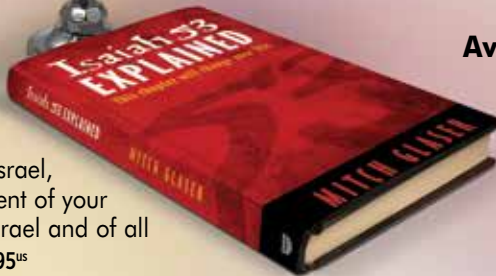
your ministry because it is greatly needed and no one else is doing it." This is what a church planter and missionary mobilizer told our staff members, Stephen and BJ, after they explained to him the vision of reaching Israeli backpackers in Rio de Janeiro. The young men also shared the vision with several pastors who are eager to be a part of reaching Israelis with the Gospel! They offered to help in any way they could. Also, several young Brazilians who speak English very well expressed a desire to volunteer at the guest-house. The pastor of their church wants to connect us with the five largest churches in Rio so that we can train their members in Jewish evangelism and train their youth to volunteer at our guest-house. How encouraging!

HOLIDAY SHOPPING

Messiah in the Passover covers a full range of topics including the biblical foundations for the Passover and the Lord's Supper, the Passover throughout Jewish and Church history, as well as how Jewish people celebrate Passover. [3175] • \$24.95^{us}

Do you have Jewish friends who have questions about the meaning of life and spirituality? Maybe it is time for them to go right to the source and rethink their relationship with the Creator. **Isaiah 53 Explained** will help kick-start your friends' personal pilgrimages and introduce them to a chapter in the Scriptures that has the potential to revolutionize their lives! [3135] • \$12.95^{us}

The flickering lights of the nine-branched **Hanukkah menorah** remind us that God is mighty to save and that Yeshua, Jesus the Messiah, is truly the Light of the World. Hanukkah is a time of celebration, and now you can own this beautifully-crafted Hanukkah menorah from Israel, to place in your home as a statement of your faith and hope in the Messiah of Israel and of all the nations. (8 1/2" tall) [5023] • \$25.95^{us}



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