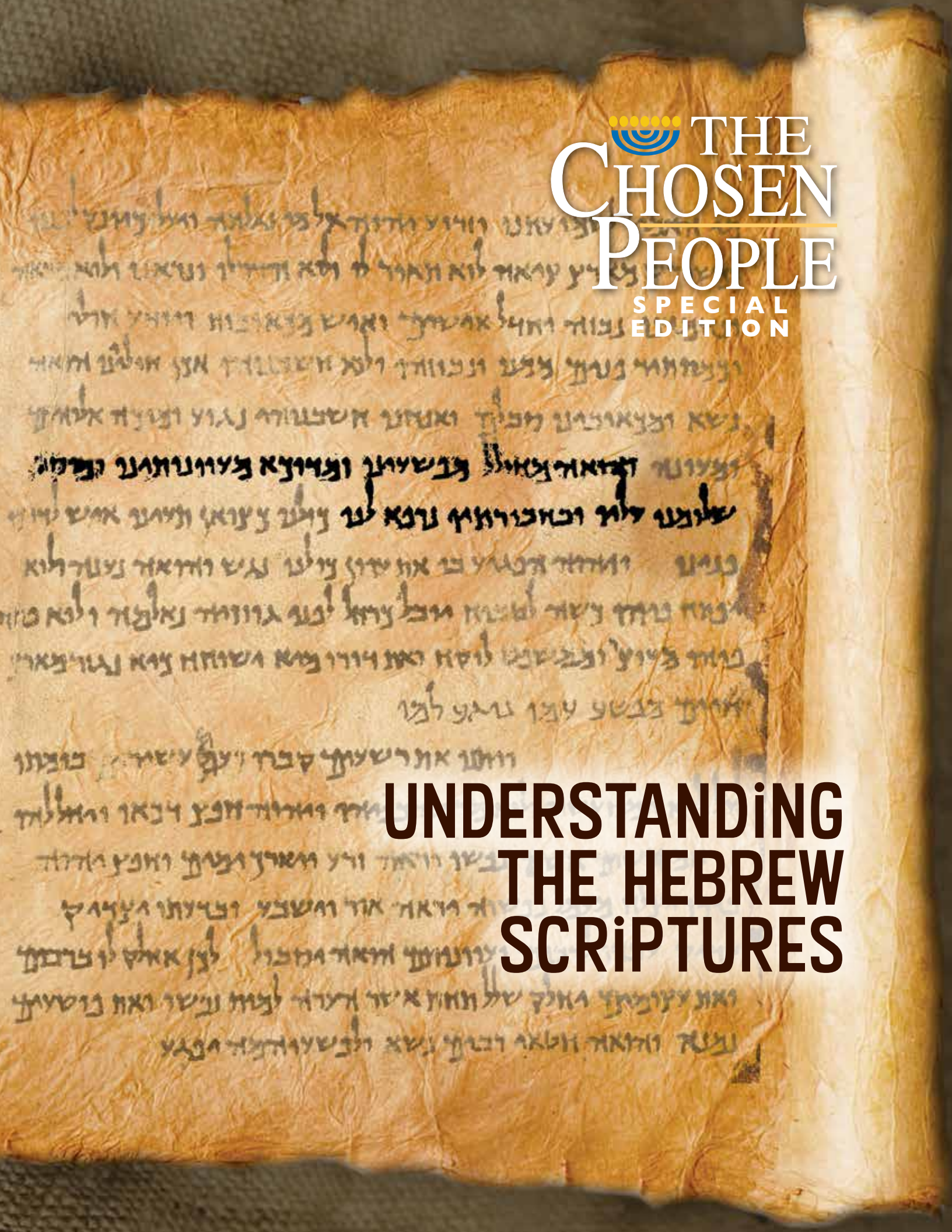

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

SPECIAL EDITION

UNDERSTANDING THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

SPECIAL EDITION
Volume XXV, Issue 8

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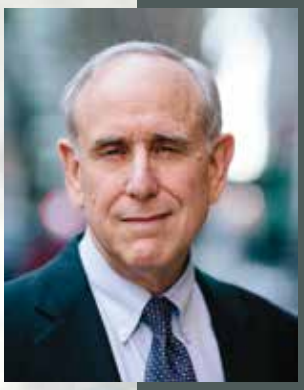
Shalom, I am so glad that you are reading this month's issue of *The Chosen People* newsletter. For decades we have dedicated the October edition of our newsletter to addressing both those who already believe in Jesus and those who are seeking the Lord. If you are one of those curious and brave individuals who is pursuing a relationship with the living God, let me especially thank you for taking the time to read the newsletter. This month, we are focusing on the Hebrew Scriptures, or as it is known to many, the Old Testament. Of course, if you are Jewish and do not accept the New Testament as holy Scripture, then there really is no such thing as an Old Testament! The Hebrew Scriptures is simply known as the Jewish Bible, with the first five books being referred to as the Torah.

We will discuss the impact and importance of the Hebrew Scriptures in Western society and in the hearts of those who believe these words were spoken by God Himself at Mount Sinai and through the mouths of prophets.

ON THE COVER: Isaiah 53 from the Great Isaiah Scroll found with the Dead Sea Scrolls. The highlighted verse is Isaiah 53:5—"But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed."



DR. MITCH GLASER
PRESIDENT *of*
CHOSEN PEOPLE
MINISTRIES

The Hebrew Scriptures impact every area of life: from issues of the heart, to practical wisdom, amazing prophetic predictions of the age to come, and of course our moral code and behavior. The older testament—if you can appreciate this new terminology—has been extremely influential in our lives, personally and corporately, even when we did not realize it! In fact, as the article will suggest, the Hebrew Scriptures have helped shape our culture and society more than the Constitution and Bill of Rights combined. Additionally, a good argument can be made to demonstrate that these documents that were so foundational in the formation of our country were based upon the words of the Hebrew Scriptures.

It would be virtually impossible for me, as a Messianic Jew, to believe in Jesus if I did not believe that the Hebrew Scriptures referred to Jesus in the promises and prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah. This rationale for faith in *Yeshua* (His Hebrew name) is critical for a Jewish follower of the Messiah and also for those who are not Jewish. When more than a thousand years of biblical prophecy are so remarkably fulfilled in this one person, it gives us tremendous confidence in Him and also in the Old Testament where He is described. So much of what we understand about salvation, the nature of God, and His plan for each of us is firmly rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures. As King Solomon wrote so beautifully,

> *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.* (Proverbs 3:5–6)

Admittedly, at times, the Hebrew Bible is not the easiest to understand, especially in light of today's cultural trends and ideas about morality. Frankly, the Hebrew Bible might seem out of sync with our modern world upon a first, surface-level glance. But, consider that the voice of the Hebrew Scriptures, though contrary to many of our current cultural values, might very well be a voice worth listening to. It has led so many of us to a fulfilling and meaningful life. The Psalmist David wrote about those who read, meditate, and obey what is written in the Hebrew Scriptures:

> *How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.* (Psalm 1:1–2)

I hope that you will enjoy the rest of the newsletter. My prayer is that it will motivate you to study the Hebrew Scriptures, to learn more about God's plan for you, and that the very specific predictions about the coming of the Messiah will become personally meaningful to you. There is so much in these 39 books of the Old Testament to understand, and I hope you will take the time to read through the entirety of the Hebrew Scriptures to try and better understand one of the world's great works of literature. You might not take my position in believing that the Old Testament is the inspired Word of God, but I think, if you have an open heart, you will find so many of the statements in these ancient pages to be comforting, relevant, and life-changing.

SO MUCH OF WHAT WE UNDERSTAND ABOUT SALVATION, THE NATURE OF GOD, AND HIS PLAN FOR EACH OF US IS FIRMLY ROOTED IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES.

Enjoy the journey, and, if you are seeking the Lord, may I encourage you to take a look at followmessiah.com, which is a 16-part video study of the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, which will help guide you towards a deeply personal relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

A belated Happy Jewish High Holidays!

Mitch

Dr. Dru Johnson, August 1, 2019

The following is an edited transcript of the lecture by Dr. Dru Johnson of Kings College, New York City on the importance and impact of the Hebrew Scriptures. The article is therefore written in the first person and will become the focus of a longer and expanded booklet to be produced in the near future.

Many people do not appreciate the depth of the contribution made by the Jewish people in providing the world with the Hebrew Scriptures and the ways in which these Scriptures have shaped our global civilization—especially the culture and values of Western nations. Additionally, the Jewish people further impacted civilization by giving the New Testament to the world. What other group of people has contributed so much through the literature they produced?

I categorize the shaping of our society through the impact of the Jewish Scriptures in at least four critical areas. First is a general concern for others. Second is the idea of repentance and forgiveness. Third is the equality of all human beings. Fourth is the rule of law.

General Concern for Others

Leviticus is my favorite book of the Bible. Most of my students have heard me ask, "Have you ever heard somebody say, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'?" Of course, they have heard of it, and I will ask, "Who said it?"

Many will answer, "Jesus," but Jesus actually quoted Leviticus 19:18 when He said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus said, *"For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?"* (Matthew 5:46). I think He had Leviticus 19 in mind here.

As you keep plowing through this instruction of Leviticus, just a few sentences later you arrive at, *"and you shall love the stranger as yourself."* Why? *"For you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God"* (Leviticus 19:34). We have a fear of foreigners in America today—what we call *xenophobia*. In the Hebrew Bible, you do not have xeno*phobia*, you have xeno*philia*, love of the foreigner. You treat them equally. Paul repeated this rhetoric in Romans 5:8 (*"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"*) and 1 Corinthians 6:11 (*"Such were some of you"*). Thus, both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament teach us to extend the same love toward others that we ourselves received from God.

Repentance and Forgiveness

The #MeToo movement really brought to the surface our deep societal and personal need to forgive and to be forgiven. And further, to be released from the guilt that stems from a lack of forgiveness. If you ask people, "What would you want from this person—this man or woman who exploited people for decades?" Most of us would say something like, "I want them to publicly admit that they were wrong."

Think about the 2015 massacre in Charleston, South Carolina, and how powerful it was when those people from the church stood in the courtroom and forgave that young man who killed their loved ones in their Bible study.

We desperately long for repentance and forgiveness when something is wrong. That is a very difficult concept to find in the ancient world. Try reflecting on the events which took place on Sinai in the book of Exodus and were implemented by the one true God who redeemed Israel. He gave the law to give His people ethical and moral limits that reflect His holiness and divine character. His code of law defines sin. We can now understand when we have done something wrong, through what has been revealed in the Bible. Recognizing

THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES EXPRESS THE PURPOSES OF GOD—THE KIND OF PEOPLE HE WAS CREATING AND THE WAY HE WANTED THEM TO SEE REALITY—THESE HAVE SHAPED OUR CIVILIZATION.

sin through the lens of the morals and values given to us in the Hebrew Scriptures is the beginning of our personal path towards a relationship with God.

Without the Hebrew Scriptures, we would not know where to begin our spiritual journey. Imagine a society without redemption, forgiveness, reconciliation, and the promotion of *tikkun olam* by extending kindness and benevolence to the poor and needy? A world devoid of these factors would be barely human! The quality of our personal lives and civil society is vastly improved by the truths encapsulated in the Jewish Scriptures.

Equality

We have problems treating people fairly. Even if we accept the fundamental biblical concept that all humanity is created in the image of God, we are still capable of perpetrating great evil upon our fellow image-bearers. This is why the Hebrew Bible tells us how we should treat one another. The code of conduct revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures is designed by God to protect the dignity of all persons and to outline the consequences for mistreating our fellow man. These consequences are severe and can eat away at the soul of civil society. This is the message of Moses and the Hebrew prophets as well. We are instructed by the Scriptures to treat one with kindness, fairness, and respect. These values are now part of the fabric of our culture and formulate our most noble behavior towards one another.

If you want a strong view of the equality of humanity, you do not have to go beyond the creation of the Sabbath. The Sabbath equalizes everybody one day a week. It does not matter whether you are rich, or you are the servant. It does not matter whether you are male or female, whether you are a donkey or a child–everybody rests on the Sabbath.

Nobles and poor people, foreigners and native-born, children and older people, mothers and fathers, men and women–together, we all rest. That creates the context in which we can now view others as equal to ourselves. That child there is equal to me; that foreigner there is equal to me. Combine that with the image of God, and I think you have something very powerful there.

The Rule of Law

Deuteronomy 17:18 instructs kings to handwrite a copy of the Torah for themselves, showing they are subject to the instruction of God. In one sense, even potentates and captains of industry do not rule over others as subjects, but rather are co-subjects as described by the Hebrew Scriptures. They are

After a season of thinking about *Yeshua* (Jesus), you might be ready for the next step—to acknowledge Him 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! Call 212-223-2252 or email ask@chosenpeople.com.

under God's instruction, the same instruction given to every man and woman. Everybody sits under God's instruction because He is the kind of God who does not hide in the heavens but dwells with His people and teaches them. That creates the conditions for what we now call the rule of law.

SO MUCH OF WHAT WE UNDERSTAND ABOUT SALVATION, THE NATURE OF GOD, AND HIS PLAN FOR EACH OF US IS FIRMLY ROOTED IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES.

When you look at the Torah, most of it is not law. The Torah is story, poetry, and legal codes. When we hear the word "law," we bring a modern idea of European law to the table. We see it as a list of rules—you either keep them or you break them. But this statutory approach to law is fairly new.

For example, I have four teenagers, and if you had written down everything I said to them in a day when they were younger, it would give you a very distorted perspective of my view of fatherhood. You would think I see it as a bunch of "dos" and "do nots." That is the statutory view. But the truth is I was trying to keep them from killing themselves, or each other, or burning down our house. It was out of a deep and profound love that I was willing to patiently guide them over the years.

That is the rule of law in the Hebrew Bible. God was trying to keep Israel from burning the house down. The roots of western civilization are probably less traceable to the Greco-Roman culture and more traceable to the Hebrew Bible than we suspected. If you appreciate living in a country ruled by law and not by the whims of a human king, then thank the Jewish people and God Himself who gave us the Hebrew Scriptures. These expressions of God's character and purposes for mankind stand the test of time

Viewing the Hebrew Bible in its context safeguards civil society. Do not reduce it to commands, or to cute poems—inner spirituality, me and Jesus, me and God—but actually think about the kind of people God was creating and the way He wanted them to see reality. It is a difficult task, but it begins with understanding what Scripture says, why it says it, and how it might speak to our context today. I do not think there is a single thing we are facing today—from transhumanism, to smart phones, to sexuality, to end-of-life decisions—that the Jewish Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, do not speak to powerfully.

The teachings of Jesus in the New Testament are consistent with the Torah, the Writings, and Prophets, and even magnify them. The four categories that are mentioned above illustrate not only how we are to relate to one another, but also how we are to relate to God. To say that the greatest commandments are related to love, as Jesus did, is to make the Torah, the entire Old Testament, Jesus, the entire New Testament, and God, personal.

Through the Bible, God reaches into this world of His own design and shows us how to love each other and love Him. And through this love, the rest of the world will be drawn to God. And the greatest evidence of God's love for us is the sacrifice that He made when He sent His Son to repair the torn relationship between Creator and creation. ✡

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A LEARNED JEW CONVERTED

Among the large, and eager crowds that flock to No. 17 Ewen St., there came a learned Jew. He had been told by some Jews how the missionary proved from the Bible that Jesus, the Crucified One, is the Messiah. As a matter of course, this learned son of Abraham, in his blindness, laughed at the very idea and said, "That missionary must be very ignorant of our Scriptures."

"Well," said the Jews to him, "come Wednesday evening and expose his ignorance, and then the Jews will stop listening to the preaching of one who does not know the Bible."

The first evening, this man acted like a crazy person. He put a question, and before I had finished the answer, he jumped up again to his feet with another query. The New Testament was a book yet unknown to him. We advised him to take a copy and read it carefully. The next Wednesday evening, he came with a sheet of paper full of written questions; their number was legion. The Lord gave us always the right answer.

Satan was defeated and Jesus was victorious.

After a month's wrestling, the scales fell from his eyes, and he came to the Mission a changed man. He told us how he came the first time, what he heard, and what he thought. "Now," said he, "I have no longer questions in my brains, but a heart full of burning love to my Saviour Jesus, who is the Son of God."

The Chosen People

A Change of Heart in Jerusalem Supermarket

Klaudia Z., one of our Russian staff members, was handing out literature on the streets of Jerusalem when she met Ludmila, a Russian Jewish woman. "God sent you to me!" Ludmila exclaimed. "I have been watching Christian shows on television and the messages touch my heart. But on the streets here in Israel, people tell me that Jesus is not for me. God sent you to me to let me know that Jewish people can also believe in Jesus!" Amazed at her openness, Klaudia asked Ludmila if she would like to accept Jesus into her heart right then. "No, I am not ready," answered Ludmila, and she walked away. Half an hour later, Ludmila came out of the market with her groceries and announced, "I am ready now. I will pray with you." Right there on the streets of Jerusalem, she gave her heart to her Messiah.

Making Peace with God through the Messiah

Rich F. is a Jewish man who came to believe that Yeshua is the Messiah. Wally, his father, was vehemently against it, having experienced antisemitism firsthand while in the military service. Still, father and son remained close. Years later, Wally was diagnosed with terminal cancer. He confounded his doctors by outliving their original prognosis, but his condition deteriorated and those close to him knew he was dying.

Toward the end of his life, Wally called Rich with an urgent request for a visit. When Rich arrived at the hospital, Wally said, "I had a dream. I dreamed you were right." "Do you believe it?" Rich asked. Wally nodded his assent. Soon after, he fell into a coma.

As the end drew near, Wally began to struggle. As Rich leaned over him, he whispered, "Dad, Yeshua the Messiah is waiting for you. Rest now." Wally stopped struggling and died a short time later.

JEWISH PEOPLE HAVE BELIEVED IN MESSIAH!

What do the Scriptures say about the Messiah?

According to Genesis 49:10, the Messiah would be a descendant of David––*"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."*

- Jesus is part of Judah's genealogy, as mentioned in Luke 3:33 and Matthew 1:2:

  "…the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah…" (Luke 3:33).

  "Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers" (Matthew 1:2).

Prophecy	Fulfillment
Isaiah 53:5 *"But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed."*	**Hebrews 2:10** *"For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings."* **Hebrews 5:8-9** *"Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation."*
Deuteronomy 18:18 *"I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."*	**Mark 6:1-5** *"Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, 'Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? … 'A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household.'"*
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."*	**John 4:42** *"Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"* • The use of the phrase "from the days of eternity" in Micah 5:2 speaks of the eternality 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.
Zechariah 12:10 *"I will pour out…on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn."*	**Matthew 23:37-39** *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"* **John 19:37** *"And, as another Scripture says: 'They will look on the One they have pierced.'"*

☐ I am Jewish and want to know more about Yeshua (Jesus). Please send me the FREE book, *Isaiah 53 Explained*. 3135UJ

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