

The Chosen People



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The Hidden Hero of Purim

Shalom from New York City!

Jewish people around the world are celebrating the Festival of Purim this month. This event falls on the 28th and 29th days of the Hebrew month Adar (March 21st and 22nd). I hope you will enjoy learning more about this great Festival.

A History Lesson

Recently a friend asked me if I could summarize Jewish history in three simple statements. Wary of the trick question, I gave up...and he answered, "We suffered, God delivered us and we ate." I laughed, because it is true!

The Jewish people throughout history have been oppressed. God in His mercy delivered us from our enemies and then, to commemorate the victory, we create and eat a type of food as part of our celebration.

On Purim, we celebrate Haman's failure and eat hamantaschen...pastries made in the shape of Haman's hat. These cookies are wonderful and Zhava has even agreed to share her secret recipe for hamantaschen!

But, there is more to learn from Purim than how to enjoy hamantaschen!

For example, have you ever wondered who was really the true hero of Purim? Was it Esther, Mordecai, or even King Ahasuerus? The story does not make this easy to discover. But if you read through the Book of Esther—especially in one sitting—you might just discover who the hidden hero is!

The Story of Purim

The story of Purim (the Hebrew word for "lots") is filled with plots, subplots, twists and turns that would easily make it a best seller, if it was not already included in the best selling book of all time! Let me retell the story, very simply, and then we can eat...if you use Zhava's recipe!

From the Assyrians to the Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Greeks, Romans, Ottomans and British, the Jewish people, and the land of Israel in particular, endured persecution, domination and oppression. It was during one of these periods, the Medo-Persian domination, that the events of Purim took place.

The story began with a "wild party" held by King Ahasuerus. After dismissing Queen Vashti for rebelliousness, he sought a new Queen. Through a series of divinely appointed events, Esther, a beautiful Jewish woman, was chosen as the king's new bride.

And then, as they say, the plot thickened! Haman, the chief advisor to the king, had a "run-in" with Mordecai, Esther's uncle. Not known for having a

controlled temper, Haman then decided to destroy all the Jews of the realm.

Through some extraordinary circumstances, and Esther's intercession, Haman was hung on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai (7:10). The decree issued by Haman to destroy the Jews was countermanded (8:9-14) and the Jewish people were saved!

And afterwards, we threw a party (8:17)! In fact, it was commanded that the Jewish people living throughout the Empire celebrate this event every year (9:26-28). Purim would be a reminder to future generations of how close the Jewish people came to extinction (9:28).

It also serves as a reminder that the "hidden hero" of Purim continues to watch over His people.

Who is the True Hero of Purim?

Who is the true hero of Purim? Was it Esther? After all, as Mordecai said to her, "*And who knows whether you have attained royalty for such a time as this?*" (4:14). Or, perhaps it was Mordecai himself, who just happened to stumble upon the two officials as they were plotting to kill the King? Mordecai was in the right place at the right time... and heard the wrong thing from the right people (2:21-23)!

Could Hegai, the king's servant in charge of the women, be the hidden hero of Purim? It was Hegai who "took a shine" to Esther and promoted her as the principal candidate for Queen.

According to the Scriptures, Esther "...pleased him and found favor with him" (2:9) and he became her advisor (2:15). Hegai

championed Esther and was then able to help Mordecai foil Haman's wicked plot.

The true hero of Purim is hidden, operating behind the scenes to deliver the Jewish people from certain destruction. His name is not mentioned, but His divine presence is felt through every word of the scroll.

God Himself is the hidden hero of Purim. His mighty acts of deliverance on behalf of His people are hidden from view, as His name is never even mentioned in the story. He is both the author and navigator of providence, placing Mordecai, Esther, Hegai and even Haman in the right place at just the right time. It is God Himself, though hidden from view, who worked through His servants to deliver His people from the evil plan of Haman.

Secret Wars

In almost every age, a Haman of one type or another has arisen to try to destroy the Jewish people. Why? Because the Jewish people are pivotal to God's plan. And there is a silent enemy who, since the choosing of Abraham, has tried to destroy the Jewish people.

The Devil does not readily reveal himself for who he is, and almost always uses others to do his evil work. Haman, like Hitler and so many other enemies of the Jewish people, was merely one more tool in the Devil's hand.

After all, if Haman had been successful, there would have been no Miriam (Mary) to become the mother of the Messiah. The enemy of our souls believed the plan of redemption could be stopped and the Jewish people destroyed.

But the Lord put the right people in the right places at just the right

times to prevent the destruction of His chosen people, as He promised a future for Israel (Jeremiah 31:35-37). And He never breaks His word.

He is Your Hidden Defender Too!

The hidden hero of Purim not only saves us from our sins and seals our eternal destiny through the Messiah Jesus, but also delivers us from spiritual danger. He allows us to experience temptation and suffering but does not ask us to endure more than we are able (1 Corinthians 10:13). He is working behind the scenes (Romans 8:28) to bring good out of evil, peace out of pain and holiness out of hurt.

He is your hidden defender and the Savior of Israel too. And though His hand cannot always be seen, He is always with you, often behind the scenes, orchestrating the events of your life into a glorious symphony of grace.

The real spiritual conflict should more often be fought in secret. This is why prayer is so strategic in reaching Jewish people for Jesus. What could the evil one hate more than bringing the message of Jesus to the Jewish people, as the salvation of the end time remnant will bring "life from dead" (Romans 11:15)?

Have a happy holiday—and don't forget to try the hamantaschen! May this great festival be a reminder to you that the Lord is always working on behalf of His chosen ones.

Thanks for partnering in prayer, behind the scenes, for the welfare of our staff and the salvation of the Jewish people (Romans 10:1).

Your brother,

Mitch
Mitch



"Hadassah, who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

"...for such a time as this?" Mordecai, my cousin, what are you saying? The royal decree has been given. All the Jews in the kingdom must be destroyed. I am as terrified as you about this hateful command. What am I to do? Are you saying that I have a part to play? No! I don't want to believe it! Yet, your words somehow stir my heart. Why?

And why did you call me "Hadassah?" My Persian name is Esther, after the goddess Ishtar. Esther is my name in this land of our people's exile, just as you are Mordecai, named after the Babylonian god Marduke. Why remind me of my Hebrew name? What good will it do us here? Our captors do not fear the LORD; they have no love for the Jewish people.

What are you saying? No, I do not want to be assimilated. I wish to remain Jewish.

I am aware that captivity can lead to compromise. There is a process.

First we hate their gods, then we tolerate them, and in the end, we worship them. To many of us, exile is no longer seen as bondage. Our prison has become a home to us. I, however, am not one of these, for I have not given up. It saddens me, and I know you grieve about it as well. Yet you told me to hide my Hebrew identity when I was brought to the King's palace. Why?

And then you refused to bow before the King's counselor, Haman. If that wasn't an act of rebellion, I don't know what is. Your actions confuse me, Mordecai!

"...for such a time as this..." Do you have some special insight about this royal decree? Mordecai, what are we meant to be and do at this time, when so much hinges on our decision?

"...for such a time as this..." Why

did I, from all the young virgins among the kingdom's provinces, obtain favor?

When I arranged for you to serve the King, you discovered the evil plot of the doorkeepers against him. You received much praise for that. Was it all part of a predetermined plan?

Now, our old enemies come against us once again, Amalekite against Israelite. King Agag against King Saul. Agag's descendant, Haman, against Saul's descendant, Mordecai. The enemies of the LORD seek to destroy the seed of Abraham. The battle rages.

Yes, indeed, we have been brought to this place "...for such a time as this..."

Mordecai, it has been thirty days since the king last summoned me. What should I do? If I ask for mercy for our people and the king does not extend the golden scepter, I shall perish. It is the law...but this you know.

And you know, too, of a higher Law. Is that what you are trying to tell me?

I know now what I must do. I will go, believing I was brought to this place "...for such a time as this..."

For Such a Time as This

by
Cathy Wilson



Hamantaschen

Recipe Your Mother Wouldn't Make

This is a variation (or violation) of a traditional recipe, which involved hours of slaving over a hot stove. This one only involves a few minutes of slaving!

- 1 pkg. Duncan Hines Deluxe Yellow Cake Mix
- 1 cup flour
- 2 eggs
- 2 tbsp. water

Filling: apricot, or raspberry jam, or Solo prune or poppy seed filling, if you can find it in your supermarket!

Combine mix, flour, eggs and water with mixer until well blended. Roll out some dough onto a lightly floured surface to 1/8" thickness. Cut into 3" circles. Place one teaspoon of filling in center, drawing up three sides to form a triangle. Pinch edges together, lightly moistening them with water if necessary.

Place on lightly greased cookie sheet. Bake at 375° for 6-8 min. or until golden—and enjoy!

— Zhava

Our newest staff member: Cathy Wilson

Cathy Wilson, one of our newest missionaries, lives in the fast-growing Jewish community of Scottsdale, Arizona. Cathy is happy to come to your church and present various plays/monologues of Biblical and not-so-Biblical characters. Call 1-800-413-5797.



Have you ever wanted to know how Isaiah may have felt when he said to the Lord, "Here am I, send me" (Isaiah 6:8)? If so, you might consider joining Chosen People Ministries for a short-term Gospel outreach to the Jewish people of New York City.

The Jewish population of New York City is so varied that one cannot help but think of Scripture's description of Jerusalem during the Feast of Weeks in Acts 2:5: "Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven." Except that not all of the Jewish people in New York City are devout, by any stretch of the imagination.

Yet, despite the enormous differences of outlook and background, Jewish people are all bound together with the common heritage of God's covenants and the urgent need to receive Jesus, their Messiah.

Doug: One Who Said "Yes"

Although no volunteer experience in Jewish missions is exactly like another, Doug from California's recent ten-day outreach with Chosen People Ministries is a fair glimpse into the challenging and intriguing world of the largest center of Jewish population on earth. Doug is a Gentile believer who has had a burden for Jewish people all his life. He came to New York to spend some time sharing the Good News of the Messiah with us.

As soon as Doug arrived in New York, he hit the ground running and got in sync with Chosen People Ministries full-time workers.

"We had so many divine appointments," he recalls with excitement, "especially with Israelis." On the first day, he met five Israelis in the course of an afternoon of street evangelism. Each one accepted a book of testimonies written in

Send Me, Lord, to New York City



Please contact us about serving as a volunteer with Chosen People Ministries. We have both short-term and ongoing opportunities available. Please call Dr. Ben Alpert at 800-413-5797 for more information.

Hebrew. Two of them were almost literally on the way to the airport to return to their homeland.

Campus Ministry: Another Kind of Challenge

Did we say that New York is a little like Jerusalem? It's also a lot like Athens, as Luke describes it in Acts 17:21, "For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent all of their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing."

This verse came strikingly alive on the college campuses. Doug helped set up literature tables at Brooklyn College, Columbia, and New York University. So many kinds of Jewish students came by to talk—from the skeptics and the secular, to the earnest Orthodox students with their side-curls and black coats.

There was opposition in some cases, but there was also genuine interest, and the rush of conversation in the give-and-take of real discussion was so rewarding!

More than once, Chosen People Ministries Russian-born staff member Tanya Schlessinger gave an effective testimony of her journey from atheism to faith.

Among the Jewish students from Israel who stopped by the table, one particularly stands out. Responding to Doug's request that he read Isaiah 53, he looked up after completing the passage and said softly, "I hate to say it, but it sounds like Jesus to me."

The Fruit of Obedient Service

As believers, we are all called to obedience and service. You may not be another Isaiah. But are you, perhaps, another Doug? Are you someone who is willing to say, "Here am I, send me. Send me to New York City to minister to the Jewish people—at least for a little while"?

See the Through Jewish Eyes Bible

by Dr. Daniel Goldberg



FAITH X-RAYED Hebrews, Chapter 11

Hebrews 11 is the great faith chapter in the Bible. The major purpose of this magnificent passage of Scripture is to encourage the Jewish believers being addressed to hold steadfastly to their Messiah in unwavering faith. In so doing, it has blessed all of God's people throughout the generations. This 11th chapter of Hebrews "x-rays" faith in all of its three dimensions:

I. FAITH INITIALLY TRUSTS (v. 1)

Faith is the assurance of unseen spiritual realities. Faith receives what God sends—whether it be God's account of creation (Heb. 11:3), or God's revelation of future judgment. Faith believes God's disclosure regarding atonement through the blood of the sacrificial lamb. This is exemplified by

Moses, who kept the Passover (Heb. 11:28).

All the Old Testament saints believed that God existed and that He would reward their seeking after Him, "...for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). What an encouraging promise for us today as well! The saints who qualified to be mentioned in Hebrews 11 all "died in faith," embracing a trustworthy God. Faith fitted them with a pair of spiritual glasses and 20-20 vision, to see and believe the promises that were "afar off" (Heb. 11:13).

II. FAITH CONTINUALLY ACTS (v. 5)

These heroes for God carried out God's will for their lives. Their commitment

to God and His promises was total, often in the face of death. True faith not only responds to what God asks, but also risks everything to obey Him. Noah risked his reputation to obey God (Heb. 11:7). Abraham risked his life and family to obey God (Heb. 11:8). Moses risked his life and family when "... he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king ..." (Heb. 11:27). Another who risked her life was Rahab (Heb. 11:31). Each case illustrates the principle of faith in God, despite danger and sacrifice.

III. FAITH ULTIMATELY TRIUMPHS (vv. 33-40)

The roster of men and women in Hebrews 11 are Scripture's great "overcomers." The Apostle John describes the triumph of faith in 1 John 5:4, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith."

Faith prevailed regardless of whether or not these saints were delivered from their severe trials in this life (Heb. 11:35). Those who were martyred will obtain "a better resurrection." Like the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace, they cry out "... our God whom we serve is able to deliver us... But if not... we do not serve your gods..." (Dan. 3:17, 18; Heb. 11:34).

Basing his hymn on this "faith chapter," John H. Yates wrote:

*His banner over us is love,
Our sword the Word of God;
We tread the road the saints above
With shouts of triumph trod.
By faith they, like a whirlwind's
breath,
Swept on o'er every field;
The faith by which they conquered
death,
Is still our shining shield. ✨*

NEWS BRIEFS

Uproar in Argentina

The Chosen People Ministries branch in Argentina was recently invited to publicize its activities in a magazine published by the only Jewish radio station in Argentina.

Several days after the distribution of this publication, Jewish people began calling the station to protest the decision to publicize our activities along with other Jewish organizations.

However, the leadership of the station stood by its decision, and issued a statement that Chosen People Ministries is made up of "Jewish people who believe in Jesus the Messiah."

Listeners began to express their opinions—for and against—on the air. As a consequence, our Buenos Aires office has been flooded with phone calls from people asking for more information.

SIMCHA:

Sharing the Joy of the Lord

Beautiful Schroon Lake, New York will once again be the setting for SIMCHA, Chosen People Ministries' Messianic gathering on Memorial Day Weekend, May 25-28. This year, the featured speakers will be Scott Brown, leader of Son of David Messianic Congregation in Maryland; Larry Rich, Chosen People Ministries' Vice President for North American Ministries; and David Sedaca, a second-generation Jewish believer from Buenos Aires, Argentina and Executive Secretary of the International Messianic Jewish Alliance.

The accommodations are ideal, the food is great, and there are programs for kids of all ages. For more information about this joyful and enriching time of fellowship with God's people, call 1-888-2-YESHUA. This event is designed for Jewish and Gentile believers, but seekers and doubters are welcome!

WE NEED BEHIND THE SCENES WORKERS

Some people think that in order to be part of STEP, you need to hand out tracts on street corners and spend your days witnessing. That's only partially true. This year, we plan to do a lot of different evangelistic activities during STEP. We will be handing out Gospel tracts on busy New York City street corners, ministering in the Russian neighborhoods of Brooklyn, and sharing the Gospel with people who attend outreach events at our new Manhattan facility.

But there's more . . . we need a few more committed believers who will be happy to stay behind the scenes and support our summer evangelists in very practical ways: helping with meals, organizing tracts and materials, and yes, even doing some laundry! Most important is the ministry of prayer. This, too, takes place behind the scenes.

Whether your place is behind the scenes or on the front lines, don't miss this opportunity to receive short-term training and experience in Jewish evangelism this summer. Contact our STEP team at 1-877-644-STEP to learn more about our Summer Witnessing Opportunities. Who knows—maybe the Lord has called you ". . . for such a time as this . . ."



New Anti-Missionary Bill Proposed in Israel

Late last year, a meeting was held at the Knesset (Israel's governing body) Internal Affairs Committee to discuss new anti-missionary legislation directed against Messianic ministries active in Israel.

Leading the drive for this legislation was Rabbi Meir Porush, a Member of the Knesset. The Chairman of the Internal Affairs Committee, David Azoular, stated that the committee had gathered to deal with the "missionary menace threatening our people." Under this proposed legislation, a penalty of up to ten years in prison could be imposed upon evangelists seeking to share the Gospel with the Jewish people in Israel. Many Israelis do not support this legislation, and voices from around the free world are being raised against this new attempt to silence believers. Please pray that this latest effort will fail to win support within the Israeli government and that new legislation against us will not even be proposed.

STEPping Up the Ministry

It's not too late to get involved with STEP, our Summer Training and Evangelism Program. Step One of this wonderful short-term mission opportunity begins with two weeks of training in Jewish evangelism at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago from June 18-July 1. Then, the program continues with Step Two, from July 2-15, as you put your newly acquired skills to work for the Lord on the streets of New York City, the heart of the American Jewish community. For more information, Call Justin Kron (toll free) at 1-877-644-STEP.

New Believers in Ukraine

Alex Dukhno, Chosen People Ministries missionary in Ukraine, reports continued growth of our Bible study and fellowship groups. Also, two people recently received the Lord in the Chosen People Ministries congregation in Kiev: Ella,* who continues to attend the Saturday meetings and Vlad,* who returned to his home in Russia. Pray especially for Vlad, who recently lost his wife and now cares for his daughter by himself—but with the help of the Lord.

*not their real names

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Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus

Dr. Michael Brown offers well-researched, thoughtful, biblical responses to difficult questions that arise when Christians share Yeshua (Jesus) with Jews. This witnessing tool is written with a perfect blend of passion, wisdom, and revelation. It's ideal for readers wanting to reach Jewish family members, friends, or coworkers. It's also a must-have for anyone interested in understanding Christianity's Jewish roots. Highly recommended.

3070 **US\$15.95** (\$14.35 with the purchase of a Passover item)

Messiah in the Passover Video

Set around a realistic Passover family dinner, the Seder ceremony is reenacted in this video, focusing in detail on the meaning of each of the ancient traditions practiced by Jewish people for over 3,000 years. *Messiah in the Passover* vividly portrays the unique spiritual and symbolic relationship between Passover and Easter.

8006 **US\$14.95**



Messianic Passover Haggadah

This is a must for those who desire to conduct their own Messianic Passover Seder or to gain a deeper understanding of this important event. This *Haggadah* has been prepared to show God's redemptive grace in the Passover through the death, burial, and resurrection of His Messiah, Jesus, and symbolizes God's spiritual redemption of His people.

3008 **US\$4.95**

Messiah in the Passover Kit

This Kit will help churches, classes, or families have a Passover celebration of their own. Guaranteed to make your Passover celebration an unforgettable experience. Includes the video and *Haggadah* (above), and *How to Prepare for a Passover Dinner*, a poster, and bulletin inserts.

5001 **US\$19.95**

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The Chosen People Newsletter

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

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