

The Chosen People



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IRAN

A Modern-Day
Menace to the
Jewish People

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IRAN

A Modern-Day Menace to the Jewish People



Tehran, capital of Iran

Shalom in the Messiah. Thank you for your prayers and support—they mean so much to the Chosen People Ministries staff.

I am sure that I do not need to persuade you that we live in perilous times. Current events in the Mideast certainly bear this out, and the fierce anti-Jewish rhetoric of the president

of Iran is a growing concern for worldwide Jewry and the few friends of Israel.

Iran's President Ahmadinejad made his position clear last fall at a conference titled "The World Without Zionism." There he said, "Israel must be wiped off the map." Only recently he emphasized his

position, proclaiming, "We say that this fake regime [Israel] cannot . . . logically continue to live."

Reuters news service carried Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz's response, which was made at a conference on Iran at Tel Aviv University. He said, "Of all the threats we face, Iran is the biggest. The world must not wait. It must do everything necessary on a diplomatic level in order to stop its nuclear activity. . . . Since Hitler we have not faced such a threat."

In this nuclear age, we must take Iran's threats seriously.

This newsletter is devoted to the relationship of Iran to the Jewish people. I hope the following articles will help you better understand the gravity of the situation and enable you to pray more effectively for the Jewish people and for the nation of Israel in particular.

Iran and the Jewish People: Ancient Cultures with a Shared History

Recent developments in Iran may remind us of ancient Persia and of the hatred held by Haman toward the Jewish people as told in the magnificent Book of Esther. But this is far from the whole story. Although never completely at home there, the Jews of Iran have a long and varied history dating from the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the 8th century BC.

Throughout the centuries, the fortunes of the Iranian Jews have largely been determined by how tolerant or intolerant the ruling powers have been. At first, after the Islamic conquest of the region in the 7th century AD, the Jews freely carried out their pursuits as merchants, scientists, engineers, and even served in the government. But history tells us that, except for brief periods of respite, the Jews suffered increasing persecution and repression.

When the Ayatollah Khoumeini seized power in 1979, there were roughly 85,000 Jews in Iran. Any semblance of religious toleration disappeared, and about 75% of them departed for the United States, Israel absorbed most of the rest. Prominent Israelis who were born in Iran include Israel's President Moshe Katzav and the above-mentioned Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz.

As things stand now, the virulent attacks against **both** Israel and the Jewish people have risen to new and dangerous heights with the election of President Ahmadinejad.

We Need Your Signature

I am convinced that there are good spiritual reasons for Christians to stand with the Jewish people by encouraging our government's leadership to oppose the anti-Jewish policies of the present Iranian regime. This is why I am asking you to sign the enclosed petition.

We have already collected thousands of petitions, and we hope to receive thousands more so that our elected officials will see that believers in Jesus care about the well being of Israel and the Jewish people.

When it becomes known that Christians are supporting the Jewish people in this way, I believe the Jewish community will begin to see that those who follow Jesus have a deep concern for the Jewish people. This will enhance our corporate testimony to His chosen people. By doing so, we will make the Jewish people jealous as they see the love of Jesus in action—especially through Gentile believers. As Paul writes in Romans 11:11:

I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

We need to stand up for what is right and true. We cannot allow our

nation to compromise by keeping silent when the leader of another nation attacks the Jewish people. As you will notice, the attacks of President Ahmadinejad are not only political. They are also racial.

So, dear friend, please fill out the petition if you have not already. And please send us the names of other Christians who might be willing to join with us in this sacred effort on behalf of His chosen people. We will be delivering these signed petitions sometime within the next month, and we want to have as many as possible.

Iranian Jewish Believers in Jesus

There is quite a history of Jewish believers in Jesus in Iran. Some of the most gifted Jewish believers of the past have been Iranian Jews.

In fact, a short time ago, I was speaking at a seminary and the missions professor evidenced a broken heart for the Jewish people. I asked him afterwards why he was so concerned for Jewish people—aside from what is written in Scripture. He answered by sharing his testimony. He told me about his college roommate, an Iranian Jew who was a believer in Jesus. About midway through the semester, this dear brother became a believer—through the faithful witness of his Iranian Jewish roommate!

Missionaries to the Jews established ministries in Tehran, Isfahan and many other cities. They established Christian schools and hospitals as ways to reach the Jewish community. There were also a number of uniquely Iranian Jewish congregations that were established by these missions as well. Through the years, many missionaries to Iran—when it was an open country for Christian workers—learned Farsi from Iranian Jewish believers in Jesus.

How sad to see what has transpired in recent days because of

the extreme anti-Jewish policies of the nation's new president.

Let's Take Action Now

Jesus loves Iranians! And so do we. Jesus died for Iranians, and it is our hope that all Iranians—Jews and non-Jews—will hear the Gospel and come to faith in the Messiah. We pray for this!

But now is the time to act. Some Israelis are beginning to link the current president of Iran with Hitler. That might seem rather strong, but President Ahmadinejad is the first national leader that has so clearly expanded his attacks against the Jewish people from the political realm to the ethnic and social arena.

I know you will appreciate the remainder of this newsletter—which includes more information about Iran (Persia) in biblical history as well as some additional information regarding why we should be concerned about this new surge in Iranian anti-Semitism.

In the end, we know that Jesus (Yeshua), the true King of Israel, will reign and that all the promises of God to the Jewish people will come to pass (Jeremiah 31:35-37). He will preserve His chosen people with or without our help—yet it will be to our blessing if we join the Lord in His work! As He promised, *"I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Genesis 12:3).

In Him,



Mitch



Dr. Mitch Glaser
President

Sources consulted:

http://www.cultureofiran.com/iranian_jews.php

<http://www.kosherdelight.com/iranleaders.htm>

Heeding the Warning of a Worldwide Threat

Those who are old enough to remember the Cold War may recall the civil defense sirens that used to go off at noon each day to test the alarm system. The good news was that it worked wonderfully. The bad news was that, after a while, no one paid the slightest attention to it.

This just goes to show that an alarm can only be as effective as the human response that accompanies it. Today, there is an alarm emanating from Iran that is threatening Israel and the world in a way that must not be underrated or wished away. What should be the response of God's people to this ticking time bomb?

Who Is Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and What Does He Want?

Iranian politics are far from simple, and have changed drastically since the relatively Western-friendly reign of the Shah. In those days, we considered Iran to be an emerging modern society on the road to better things. But a backlash was in the making, and it came to full effect in 1979 when the Shah was deposed and replaced by the Ayatollah Khoumeni. From that point on, although moderates may have influenced matters at different times to some degree, Islamic ideology has been a powerful social and political force.

As we shall see, the political and social goals of Iran's new president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, may be traced directly back to Khoumeni. When Ahmadinejad recently declared, "Israel must be wiped off the map," he was quoting Khoumeni directly.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's rise from relative obscurity to the world stage is something of a mystery. The son of an ironworker, he was born in 1956 and raised in Tehran. An excellent student, he earned a doctorate at the University of Science and Technology in 1987. Active in the Islamic revolution that brought Khoumeni to power, he served in the intelligence and security department of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and rose rapidly through its ranks.

Over the years, he has held a



number of political offices in various Iranian cities and also worked with *Ansar-I Hezbollah* (Followers of the Party of God), a violent Islamic militia group. In April 2003, he was

appointed mayor of Tehran, where he implemented hard-line Islamic policies.

The Rise to Power

As mayor of Tehran, Ahmadinejad came to national attention and was one of the seven candidates for president in 2005. He ran on the promise to roll back hard-won reforms, proclaiming that Iran "did not have a revolution in order to have democracy, but to have an Islamic government."

Moreover, he portrayed himself as a populist with an appeal to the disadvantaged. His electoral victory came as something of a surprise because some of the candidates he defeated were more experienced, better funded and better positioned.

Like many others before him, he focused upon the long-standing hatred Islamic fundamentalists have cherished

against the West—the United States and Israel in particular. Ahmadinejad seems to relish the image of an Iranian David pitting himself against the giant Goliath of the West, and has so far skillfully directed his people's gaze away from his own shortcomings by whipping up a frenzy of hatred against Israel and its allies.

The Issues at Hand

There are two issues at hand—intertwined with one another—that together create a volatile mix. They are nuclear weapons and anti-Semitism.

On Tuesday, April 11, the stakes got even higher. On that day, President Ahmadinejad gave an address from the northeastern city of Mashhad in which he declared, "I am officially announcing that Iran has joined the group of those countries which have nuclear technology."

Although he disavows any intention of developing nuclear weapons, his disclaimers are far from convincing. The world powers and the United Nations are alarmed—but have not yet formulated a coherent response.

Only three days later, Ahmadinejad dropped another verbal bombshell when he stated, "The Zionist regime is an injustice and by its very nature a permanent threat. Whether you like it or not, the Zionist regime is heading toward annihilation. The Zionist regime is a rotten, dried tree that will be eliminated by one storm."

In response, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert issued a statement that said, in part, "We need to make sure no one has the capability or the power to commit destruction against us... The Jewish people and the very existence of Israel are Iran's targets, and we don't see enough of a response from the world."

The president of Iran and Israel seem headed toward a collision course. Will the world stand by and watch? How should we respond—particularly those who love the Jewish people and support the right of Israel to have its place among the nations?

Faithful Prayer and Godly Action

Followers of Messiah must understand all historical events, including current events, in light of God's Word. This is what makes our presence in the world such a powerful witness for the Lord's lasting victory. We therefore must not be swept into the world's way of thinking. But neither are we permitted to ignore what is going on around us.

We must make our voices known like the prophets of old, speaking the truth and urging those in power to heed the Word of God. In this case, we must remind our own leaders to look beyond self-interest and shortsighted geopolitical gains to a true national and world interest that is based on obedience to the Lord. In this case, the irony is that support for Israel will, in the end, be a blessing to the Iranians and to all the nations whose blessing flows from our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

The prayers of the Lord's people are able to do much more than we might realize. The Book of James reminds us that "*the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much*" (James 5:16). How much more, then, when men and women of faith join their prayers together for Israel and for all the nations—including Iran!

We must act, pray and remember the words of the Apostle Paul—as true now as they were in the days of the mighty but now-vanished Roman Empire:

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12).

Sources Consulted:

<http://www.adl.org>
<http://www.globalsecurity.org>
<http://english.aljazeera.net>
<http://web.israelinsider.com>

Dariush—An Iranian Jew Meets Jesus the Messiah

I was born in Tehran, Iran, in 1957. I grew up in a Jewish home, but only went to synagogue two or three times a year. At the time, Iran was a secular Muslim nation with a Jewish population of roughly 70,000 centered in Tehran. Though Iran was friendly to Western culture, the nation never embraced the Jewish people. I remember watching my fellow Iranians in the streets chanting "death to the Jews" before a soccer game in which Iran was to compete with Israel. Today, only a few thousand Jews remain.

In 1975, I moved to the United States to attend college. There, I met Eliezer Urbach, then a missionary with Chosen People Ministries. I was intrigued by the idea that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah and even attended a meeting, but left uninterested. Some students followed up with me and showed me unconditional love as they explained the Gospel and Jesus' fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures. Not only did I come to faith in Messiah Jesus, but I became even more interested in my Jewish heritage and continued to celebrate the biblical holy days.

I soon told my parents, who were still living in Iran, of my new faith. Though they initially showed indifference, as I witnessed to them, they became nervous. They spoke with a rabbi in Israel who explained that I had been brainwashed by Christian missionaries. My parents became extremely concerned and demanded I return to Iran. I agreed, but hid my passport and return ticket after I arrived for fear they would take them from me.

Tried and Tested in the Faith

In Tehran, and later in Jerusalem, my parents took me to two rabbis in an attempt to talk me out of my beliefs. Ultimately, they decided to enroll me in a *yeshiva* (a strict Orthodox Jewish school) for troubled youths in New York.

The yeshiva was designed to be totally self-sufficient; students had very few reasons even to go outside, and quitting school was out of the question. Still, despite their efforts to change my mind, I only became more convinced of my faith and resolved to leave the yeshiva.

While in New York, I became friends with Sam Nadler, a Jewish believer who later served with Chosen People Ministries. In order to move out of the yeshiva unnoticed, I began slowly to move my belongings into Sam's home. Finally, one weekend, I left and never went back.

Once back in Colorado, I told my parents what had happened. They cut off my financial support. I kept my address hidden from them and worked my way through college. I eventually moved to Los Angeles, met my wife, and participated in an Iranian church.

After the Iranian Revolution, my parents moved to Los Angeles. Seeing my continued love for my Jewish identity, their hearts softened toward me, my family, and my faith. Today, my family and I participate in outreaches to Iranian Jews and Muslims in the Los Angeles area.



550 BC

Persian Empire established by Cyrus the Great



522 BC

Daniel serves in Persia under Darius the Mede after Jews captured



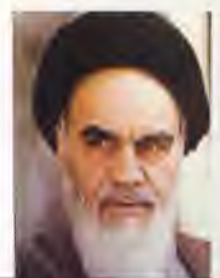
400 BC

Queen Esther reigns; Jews escape annihilation



637 AD

Islamic conquest of Iran; some Jewish contributions but not for long



1979

Ayatollah Khomeini seizes power; many Jews flee

Iran and the Jewish People *A History of Hostility*



by Daniel Goldberg, Th.D., D.D.

Modern-day Iran, which is situated east of Iraq beyond the Tigris River, boasts a long and colorful history. Biblically, it is the same Persian Empire that Cyrus the Great established in 550 BC, after Babylonia surrendered to Cyrus (Ezra 1:3-5) in the time of the exile of the Jewish people in that region. The reign of Darius the Mede (522-468 BC) marked the zenith of the Persian Empire (Daniel 5:31).

How ironic it is that the Persians lent their support to a Jewish return to their homeland in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, given the present animosity between these two ancient peoples.

Iran under Islam

Centuries later, in 637 AD, after the death of Mohammed, the religion of Islam infiltrated Iran, and today Iran is a Muslim country. The present population of Iran is about 70 million people, a majority of them Shia Muslims (89%), with a minority of Sunni Muslims (10%). Although there has been a Jewish presence in Iran since well before the rise of Islam, the Jewish population there now numbers only a few thousand people. By contrast, there are currently 250,000 Iranian-Israelis. These include both those born in Iran and now living in Israel and those born in Israel to one or both Iranian-born parents.

Iran is now a country governed by hardliners who intend to end Western influence in the Muslim world, eradicate Israel, and establish a radical Islamic empire that spans from Spain to Indonesia.

Politics of Hatred

Casting the Jewish people as the scapegoat responsible for all evil is not a new political strategy, but it is one that has certainly worked before. At an anti-Israel conference titled "The World Without Zionism" attended by 4,000 students in Tehran, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said, "Israel is a disgraceful blot that must be wiped off the map." Mr. Ahmadinejad's rhetoric is consistent with that of Iran's political and religious leadership since the founding of the Islamic regime in 1979.

Iran is also working hand-in-glove with Israel's other enemies, and the drumbeat of hatred is becoming more insistent. In a day when Hamas leaders continue to insist that "Israel is a tumor which needs to be removed," the Arab media routinely promotes Holocaust denial and publishes cartoons showing images of rabbis draining the blood of Arab children to bake matzos for Passover. Now that Iran has made it clear that it will pursue its nuclear program, is it any wonder that Israel and its allies are becoming increasingly anxious?

Overcoming Evil through Prayer and the Promises of God's Word

The Jewish people are no strangers to the hatred of the world. Yet the promises of God continue to hold true. Israel is still "the apple of God's eye" (Zechariah 2:8), and God has declared that "No weapon formed against you shall prosper. . . ." (Isaiah 54:17). Therefore, no Haman, Hitler, or Ahmadinejad has ever or will ever succeed in destroying the Jewish people. But God's people must not become complacent. Believers need to "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psalm 122:6) and cling to the promise of 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."

Sources consulted:

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/iranjews.html#1>
The Charlotte, North Carolina, Jewish Community Center Resource Library
Images from <http://en.wikipedia.org>

JEWISH WOMAN RECEIVES MESSIAH'S PEACE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Passover season is often a time for Jewish people to reflect upon spiritual matters. Staff member Michael Cohen recently received a call from a woman who had been in charge of her church's Passover banquet and had met Michael there. She spoke of her Jewish friend, Martha,* to whom she had faithfully been witnessing for many years. Martha is an elderly Jewish woman who has feared death for some time. Now, with increasing health problems, she sensed a need for peace and a desire to know the truth about Jesus. Michael met with her and helped her understand how Jesus overcame death with the promise of eternal life. At the end of their meeting, Martha prayed to receive the Messiah. She now is in touch with Michael regularly for discipleship.

BELIEVER IN ISRAEL FACES POSSIBLE JOB LOSS FOR FAITH

Henry N., who faithfully shepherds the Chosen People Ministries Messianic congregation in the town of Ariel in the West Bank, requests prayer for a troubled member of his flock. Leo* was spotted reading Chosen People Ministries Messianic magazine *My Jerusalem* at his place of work. Now Leo's boss has cut his salary and has threatened to fire him. Although it has not been openly said, Leo is certain that this has happened because of his faith. Leo is almost 70 years old and he needs to work to care for his wife and daughter who are both ill. Please pray for Leo's witness at his job and for healing for his family members.

ANSWERING JEWISH OBJECTIONS TO JESUS STIRS INTEREST IN JEWISH BOOKSTORE

Chosen People Ministries in South America recently received permission to publish a Spanish translation of the first volume of *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus* by Michael Brown. One of the members of the Messianic congregation led by Ricardo Chemi, the Mission's South America director, was shopping at a large Jewish bookstore in Buenos Aires when one of the store's employees noticed that he was holding Dr. Brown's book and asked to look at it. Soon, the store owner (an Orthodox Jew) asked to see it too. Shortly, a fruitful and respectful conversation about Jesus was under way. The believer left Dr. Brown's book with the two men and returned the following week with Ricardo's book on Jesus and the Jewish festivals, which was received with respect. Please pray that those touched may come to know their Messiah.

CONGRATULATIONS TO VLADIMIR AND INNA PIKMAN!

After four years of study and hard work, Vladimir Pikman, Chosen People Ministries Germany director, has received a Master of Theology degree from Dallas Theological Seminary. But he is not the only scholar in the family: his wife Inna has also earned a Master of Arts in Bible Exegesis and Linguistics—all this while raising two daughters (ages seven and four), and handling long-distance pastoral responsibilities in Germany and other ministry duties! Vladimir writes, "It is such a great feeling to be done with four years of studies! The emotions of joy and thankfulness overflow us. We want to shout, 'Praise the Lord!' over and over again." The Pikmans depart for Germany at the end of the month, where they will resume their duties in the Mission's growing work there.



CELEBRATE MESSIAH'S NEXT GENERATION CONTINUES MINISTRY TO JEWS IN RUSSIA

Continuing a 4-year-old work into Far Eastern Russia's Jewish Autonomous Region, Birobidzhan, Chosen People Ministries' Australian partner, "Celebrate Messiah," recently sponsored a benefit concert for the work there. The pioneering work in Birobidzhan uses personal visitation, Bible studies, and worship services to encourage evangelism. The son of Director Lawrence Hirsch leads the congregation's Messianic youth band called "Lion of Judah" and helped organize the benefit concert, which raised \$2,000 for the Jews of Birobidzhan. This will help fund the missionaries' efforts there as they put together and distribute hampers each filled with groceries and a Bible to give to needy Jewish families.

*Names changed

Current Events

FAST FACTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

Randall Price, the well-known author on Middle East current events and Biblical prophecy, tackles tough questions about Israel and the Arab world. In *Fast Facts on the Middle East Conflict*, he offers a comprehensive overview of the situation and explores such issues as America's involvement and the role of the media. This book serves as a great introduction to the issue for those who are newly interested in the Middle East because of current events.

Fast Facts on the Middle East Conflict
[3005] \$16.95^{US}

For those looking for a more in-depth take on the issues in the Middle East, *Unholy War* offers three perspectives: American, Muslim, and Israeli.

Randall Price's exceptional expertise on the Middle East and his intimate knowledge of Judaism, Islam, and the modern-day controversies make this an ideal reference for understanding the complex issues behind today's news headlines.

Unholy War
[3101] \$16.95^{US}

For orders in the U.S. call 800-333-4936

Please allow 3-4 weeks for delivery.

Jesus & the Jews, & the Last Days

"Jesus, the Jews, and the Last Days" is a conference that will discuss the relationship of Yeshua (Jesus) to Jewish people and how both relate to fulfillment of biblical prophecy in the last days. Join Paige Patterson, Mark Bailey, Darrell Bock, Mitch Glaser, and others for this great event. Registration for the conference (held at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas) is only \$40, which includes a banquet. Affordable housing is available for out-of-town guests.

For complete conference details, visit chosenpeople.com/conference or call 1-888-405-5874 for more information.



Dr. Paige Patterson
President of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary



Dr. Mark Bailey
President of Dallas Theological Seminary



Dr. Darrell Bock
New Testament Scholar
Ligonier Seminary



Dr. Mitch Glaser
President of Chosen People Ministries

Israel eXperience

A MINISTRY TOUR FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

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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)

