

The Chosen People



Volume VIII, Issue 10 SPECIAL EDITION

Is Jesus? the Messiah?



WHO NEEDS THE MESSIAH CHAI?!



We build our lives with such care. Hard work, rewarding interests, careers, families and friends—all these good things add up to what we dream about—the good life; a life to be savored, cherished and protected, for it is precious indeed.

But in the midst of it all, just loud enough to intrude, is what the poet W. H. Auden called “the sound of distant thunder at a picnic.” As life unfolds, that sound can only become louder and closer. It takes the form of illness and death—and whatever our own follies add to the grim challenges that certainly await us all at some time or another. Make no mistake, our carefully ordered world will one day descend into chaos. It is inevitable. And it is at that moment—the moment of our undoing—when we discover what we are made of and who we truly are.

The Fear of Failure

Who are the pariahs of this shiny world? We all know—they are the failures and losers from whom we avert our eyes. Our culture of success abhors failure in all forms. The cult of strength that we have created has no room for weakness. We instinctively know who is rising and who is falling and we make it our business to align ourselves with the former and distance ourselves from the others.

Even those who become weak through no fault of their own, the ill and the unfortunate, create feelings of guilt and shame in us, because in our heart of hearts, we wish they would just go away. We smell their loneliness and it frightens us.

It frightens us because we know that someday we may wear their anguished expression and see in others the loathing we ourselves feel.

An Unlikely Figure

According to contemporary standards, the Jewish Messiah is an unlikely source of comfort, for one of the most profound aspects of His nature is the prominent role that suffering and humiliation play in His story. The things we all dread most seem to be the very things He goes out of his way to embrace. *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).*

The public execution of the Messiah, as it is portrayed in the Hebrew Scriptures, is shameful in every sense of the word. It depicts a powerless, humiliated figure we find far more disconcerting than we'd care to admit.

If anything, the Hebrew Scriptures seem to affirm our collective discomfort at this embarrassing spectacle. They capture not only his suffering, but the uneasiness of those who witness it—

He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him (Isaiah 53:2-3).

Yet, far from shrinking away from such images, the Hebrew Scriptures display them proudly. They are, in some deep and penetrating way, a gateway to triumph and vindication. Why? Because with God, suffering need not be the defining reality of existence. With God, suffering becomes the door through which we enter true freedom.

The Secret of Suffering

The suffering of the Jewish people that forms such an integral part of who we are is a vivid affirmation of the presence of evil in the world. Yet, even our suffering—unjust and wicked as its causes have been—is a reminder of God's presence to us.

How can this be? It is because the suffering of Messiah has become our liberation. As we accept him and learn to



IF GOD EXISTS!?

by Olivier Melnick



the Bible and Yeshua's claim to be the Messiah of Israel. Of course, I knew nothing about the Bible except that Yeshua (Jesus) was not for the Jewish people.

Ellen challenged me to read the prophecies in the Hebrew

Scriptures concerning Messiah. As I learned more, I realized that Yeshua had fulfilled these prophecies concerning his birth, his suffering and his identity as the Messiah. I also began to consider the message of the New Testament. As I pictured myself, an unbeliever, separated from Ellen, I became terrified.

One day, in the summer of 1983, after Ellen patiently explained to me one more time about our need for reconciliation with God through Yeshua's death and resurrection, I came to the unavoidable conclusion that He was the long awaited Messiah of the Scriptures. It was then that I received Him as my Lord and Savior.

Not long after, Ellen and I were married and moved to the U.S. in 1985. We presently live in Southern California and have two beautiful children—a boy and a girl.

My old assumptions about God have been transformed. I know today that God DOES exist and that I need Him. Even though HE DOES NOT need me, He loves me—even in spite of my imperfections. Through Yeshua, my secular outlook has been remolded from skepticism to faith, for I have found in the message of Messiah the most essential, most Jewish story of all.

"If God exists, He doesn't need me for anything, and I sure don't need HIM."

These were my comments when asked about God as I grew up in Paris, France. As many European, secular Jews born after World War II and raised in the aftermath of the Holocaust, I was not interested in God at all. After all, maybe my mother was right when she claimed that God died in Auschwitz with the six million—including her father.

So, as a result, I grew up culturally Jewish but very secular.

Being French, I am two parts romantic and one part curious. These personality traits found a major focus in 1981, when I met Ellen. My romantic interest in her took on an additional dimension as I embarked on a spiritual quest that was wholly unanticipated.

Ellen, a deeply committed believer in Messiah, started to challenge me with

follow Him, we find the hold that the world has placed upon us no longer applies. The anxiety and fear we live with and the frustration we encounter through our inability to love and trust start to fall away. As we realize that His suffering was a necessary act of love, we begin to grasp one of the most profound truths of all. It is that God can be present with us in our

suffering, because in Messiah, God has known suffering first hand.

Everyone suffers. But there is a tremendous difference between those who suffer with faith in God and those who suffer without. With faith, our suffering becomes meaningful because we can interpret it in light of God's promise of healing and restoration. We become able to

look beyond to the peace He extends to us.

No one wants to suffer. But we need not allow our pain to be the isolating, discouraging experience the world portrays it to be. With faith in Messiah pain can become, in a very real sense, the glue that binds us to God's comfort.

Who needs the Messiah? Everyone who must suffer—and that means everyone!

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CHOSEN PEOPLE MINISTRIES

International Headquarters

241 East 51st Street
New York, NY 10022
212-223-2252

In Canada

Box 897 Station B
North York, ON M2K 2R1
416-250-0177

Visit us on the web at:

www.chosenpeople.com

Our Spanish website is
www.pueblolegido.com

The Chosen People newsletter is published monthly by Chosen People Ministries. For more information, or to receive *The Chosen People* newsletter, write to Chosen People Ministries. Editor: Zhava Glaser; Staff Writer: Alan Shore; Design: Lois Gable; Art Director: Olivier Melnick; Photos ©2002 Photodisc, Inc. Photos are representative only and are not the people mentioned in this newsletter or affiliated with Chosen People Ministries.

PRINTED IN THE USA

THE SUFFERING MESSIAH



WHAT THE RABBIS SAY



Do the rabbinic writings speak of a "Suffering Messiah?" The answer to this question is a resounding—"Yes!" Where do the early rabbis draw their material from?

From the Jewish Scriptures! Two primary Scriptures that the rabbis draw upon in their writings on the Suffering Messiah are Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53.

Pesikta Rabbati, which Jewish scholars date to the sixth or seventh century C.E., is a rabbinic document on the festivals of Israel. It speaks of a suffering Messiah in this way:

[When He created the Messiah,] the Holy One, blessed be He, began to tell him the conditions [of his future mission], and said to him: 'Those who are hidden with you [your generation], their sins will in the future force you into an iron yoke...and because of their sin your tongue will cleave to the roof of your mouth.' [Psalm 22:25] Do you accept this?

*The Messiah said... 'Master of the worlds! With gladness in my soul and with joy in my heart I accept it, so that not a single one of Israel should perish; and not only those who will be alive should be saved in my days, but even the dead who have died from the days of Adam the first man until now.'*¹

The **Midrash Aseret Memrot** states that Messiah will be made a trespass offering:

The Messiah, in order to atone for them both [for Adam and David], will make his soul a trespass

*offering, [Isaiah 53:10,] as it is written next to this in the Parashah 'Behold my servant.' [Isaiah 52:13]² In the **Midrash Konen** (110-1100 C.E.) We find: *Messiah Son of David who loveth Jerusalem...Elijah takes him by his head...and says, 'Bear thou the sufferings and wounds wherewith the Almighty doth chastise thee for Israel's sins;' and so it is written, He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. [Isaiah 53:5]³**

The **Zohar**, a cabalistic work which the reference work *Everyman's Judaica* says was written in the 13th century but contains earlier material, is considered "one of the three 'Holy Books' of Judaism after the Bible and the Talmud."⁴ Two quotes from the Zohar go hand in hand in a startling announcement about atonement and Messiah:

The children of the world are members one of another. When the Holy One desires to give healing to the world, he smites one just man amongst them, and for his sake heals all the rest. Whence do we learn this? From the saying 'He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities,' [Isaiah 53:5], i.e. by the letting of his blood—as when a man bleeds his arm—there was healing for all of us—for all members of the body.⁵

As long as Israel dwelt in the Holy Land, the rituals and the Sacrifices they performed [in the Temple] removed all those diseases from the world; now the Messiah removes them from the children of the world.... (Zohar 2:12a)⁶

Something to Think About

Is the concept of a suffering Messiah something foreign to Jewish thinking? Evidently not! Yet, how often Jewish people have been taught that the idea of Messiah's suffering is foreign to Judaism. Why not take the following challenge? Read Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 for yourself. See if you come up with the idea of a suffering Messiah, as the early rabbis did.

One Jewish writer of the first century, Yohanan, records the rapturous exclamation of a fellow Israelite concerning the one described in the above two chapters: "We have found the Messiah of whom Moses and the Prophets did write!" This same Jewish writer said, "But to as many as received Him, to them he gave the power to become the sons of God" (John 1:45,12). What a wonderful invitation to us!

Footnotes:

1. Raphael Patai. *The Messiah Texts* (Detroit, Michigan:Wayne State University Press,1949), p. 112.
2. S.R. Driver and Adolf Neubauer. *The Suffering Servant of Isaiah according to the Jewish Interpreters* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1969), p. 394.
3. Patai, p. 115.
4. Abraham Cohen. *Everyman's Talmud* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1949).
5. Driver and Neubauer, p. 14.
6. Patai, p. 116.

FIT FOR LIFE?



by Mark Surey

I'm British, and although Oscar Wilde once described the British and the Americans as "two peoples separated by a common language," I dare say that in this age of the global village, our cultures are not so different as Oscar might have thought. In fact, keeping track of modern trends is a special interest of mine. Over the last five years, I have been an associate of a top social research institute based at the London School of Economics. In this connection, I remember hearing a lecture delivered by our Director, Dr. Anthony Giddens. In it, he challenged us to name the fastest growing career within Britain. To my surprise, it was not law or accounting, which had long been the established professions that headed the per annum growth rates in the 70s and 80s. It was not even careers in Information Technology, which came second. What was it? The category "Physical Fitness Instructors and Life-Coaches."

A Modern Industry Based on Stress

Why the sudden shift? Contemporary capitalism is producing an environment where "twenty-somethings" are faced with some unpleasant life-style choices. They are forced to choose between either having money and no time, or having time and no money should they decide to exclude themselves from the corporate culture they inhabit.

The stress and pace of professional and business life, combined with an increased awareness of the health hazards of the "rat race," has produced nothing

less than a modern health club industry to service the mainly young professionals who are in such distress.

Sometimes it seems to me that there is a gym or health club opening on every street corner within the prime business and professional districts of London. And this phenomenon is not by any means restricted to England. On a recent my walk in mid-town Manhattan, I encountered two in only nine blocks.

My young executive friends work twelve-hour days and try to cram in a visit to the gym. They pay excessive amounts for their health club membership and routinely miss attendance at least once a week due to late-planned or over-extended meetings. When they actually manage to get to the gym, they arrive so exhausted and stressed that they can't, actually, do that much exercise!

I suspect that if they had the time to think about it, many of my young friends would question the value they are getting for money they pay. Although, no doubt, some see the gym more in terms of being the place to be seen rather than to sweat. Nevertheless, the irony is there to be relished. Brilliant people, join a gym to stay fit and reduce stress—only to find themselves totally stressed about fitting it into a schedule and fighting through crowded streets to even get there!

The sad fact seems to be that even when they want to, people seem unable to succeed in managing their stressful lives. They need more than good intentions—they require guidance.

Enter the "Life Coach."

If there is a single credo in free enterprise, it is "Find a Need and Fill It." This explains the platoon of personal

trainers and life coaches standing at the ready to service the stressed out infantry of young, urban professionals fighting the good fight in the canyons of finance throughout the world.

Now, I can see the advantages of hiring a "Life-Coach"—provided it is the right one. However, most "Life-Coaches"—in London, at least—are self-appointed gurus with either a New Age or psychotherapy slant. To be honest, I suspect many of them may be at least as concerned with parting their clients from their money as from their problems. Whom can I trust to be a mentor for my career, relationships, character, finances, lifestyle, attitudes, self-image, diet and exercise—not to mention the spiritual concerns which affect young professionals? What qualities should I be looking for?

I would seek someone with a vast experience of life and expertise in the key areas that matter most to me. It would have to be someone who could see farther than I can—someone I could trust to lead me on a true path precisely when I am in greatest need. It must be someone to get me through a life crisis, show me how to build my character and cultivate behavior that wins friends and influences people. It must be someone who could teach me to maximize my personal growth and social impact in both work and play. Above all, it would have to be someone with a genuine love for the pupil.

The Ultimate Life Coach

I have had the blessing of a number of excellent Life Coaches. They have helped with the "nitty-gritty" of what job I should do, what house I should buy and more recently—and most joyously—finding a wife.

Yet, my Life-Coaches didn't set themselves up as "gurus" to make mega-bucks. In fact, they would consider such an act as theft, since they would claim that all their wisdom came from their relationship with the greatest Life Coach of all—Yeshua, Jesus of Nazareth.



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IS JESUS THE MESSIAH?



by Alan Shore

The Meaning of Messiah

When you hear the word Messiah, what image comes to mind? A bunch of singers in search of an orchestra at Christmas time? Let's face it, most of us do not really know what the word means.

Messiah is the English version of the Hebrew word for "anointed one." The Israelite kings were "anointed." The priesthood was "anointed." The prophets were "anointed" with God's Spirit as they proclaimed their thundering message of righteousness and justice. In short, this "anointing" conveys a special authority given from God.

The Messianic Resumé

How would you recognize the Messiah if you met him one day walking down Fifth Avenue...or in Tel Aviv? What are his credentials?

The Jewish people have been looking for him for centuries. The question is, have we been looking in the right direction?

The writers of the Hebrew Bible gave us a detailed description of what the Messiah would do. It may surprise you:

His Birth

Messiah would be born in Bethlehem—Micah 5:2 (5:1 in Hebrew):

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

His Life

He would be the "Servant of the Lord" described in Isaiah 49:6:

"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

His Death and Resurrection

Isaiah 53:11 describes Messiah's atoning death for the sake of our restoration.

"After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities." (Also see Psalm 16)

His Divine nature

Isaiah 9:6-7 (9:5-6 in Hebrew) portrays the Messianic inheritor of the throne of David as the "Mighty God" and "Everlasting Father."

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this." (Also see Psalm 2:7-8)

What are we to conclude from this Messianic "job description?"

There is only one person who fulfills these Messianic credentials.

It is Jesus, whose Hebrew name is Yeshua. His life was so closely tied to the Hebrew Scriptures that he was able to declare to his Jewish audience,

"If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?" (John 5:46-47).

There is a "Messianic portrait" found in the Hebrew Scriptures and in the teachings of our ancient Jewish sages. It portrays a man who would also embody the nature of God Almighty. This Messiah would serve, suffer and die. He would also rise and will return one day to rule. Only one person resembles this portrait—in every detail. It is Yeshua, Jesus.

A Jewish person who accepts the Messianic claims of Yeshua has simply embraced the Messianic hope penned over thousands of years by the Jewish authors of Scripture.

COMMON QUESTIONS

1 Can God become a man?

The very idea that God would become a man to identify with us and pay the penalty for our sin was God's, not man's. He predicted this in the Hebrew Scriptures and fulfilled His promise in Jesus. In fact, any debate on the subject should be with God and the Hebrew Bible, not with "Christianity."

Judaism has struggled for centuries with the question of how a holy God can relate to humanity. Yet the Hebrew Scriptures hinted at this possibility all along. What does it mean that God "walked in the garden in the cool of the day" (Genesis 3:8) or that Israel's leaders "saw God, and they ate and drank" (Exodus 24:11)? After all, if God could take the form of a burning bush, why not that of a person?

2 Wouldn't it be idolatry to believe in Jesus?

Idolatry is the worship of something false—something made by human beings and worshiped as a god. With respect to the person of the Messiah, there is a difference between the concept of worshipping a mere man—which would be idolatrous—and worshipping the God of Israel Who has taken on the form of a man. If Jesus is God in the flesh then he should be worshiped as God.

3 Then why don't the rabbis believe?

Many rabbis did believe and many came close. References to the "Suffering Messiah" may be found in the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 98b and in the Targum Jonathan). Numerous rabbis, Moses Maimonides among them, also understood that Isaiah 53 referred to the

suffering of a specific person—the Messiah. There are also large groups of Hasidic Jewish people who believe that Rabbi Menachem Schneerson was the Messiah, suffered for his people, and will rise from his grave.

And, there are many rabbis who did believe Jesus was the Messiah. The founder of Chosen People Ministries, Rabbi Leopold Cohn, was one of them. His story is available for the asking! Just call 1-888-2-YESHUA.

Why don't you believe that Jesus is the Messiah? Have you studied the facts for yourself or have you allowed others to make up your mind for you?

What's Next?

If Jesus is the Messiah, what should I do?

There is only one thing to do. Receive the gift of forgiveness He offers by accepting Him as your Lord. You can do this, right now, by praying:

"Messiah Jesus, I receive You now as my Lord and ask You to guide and empower me to become Your true follower. I accept the atonement You made for my sins, and accept Your free gift of forgiveness. Help me turn from my former way of life and follow You."

"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

Where can I find out more?

We can put you in touch with other Jewish people who believe that Jesus is the Messiah. We can give you resources to help you in your search for truth. Read the Bible, starting with the story of Messiah's life in the first four books of the New Testament...and keep reading!

Call 1-888-2-YESHUA or visit our website at: www.chosenpeople.com.

Lord of Life knows our condition and loves us better than we do ourselves. By the Messiah *"all things were created: things in heaven and on earth... He is before all things, and in him all things hold together"* (Colossians 1:16-17).

The writer of the Book of Proverbs asserts that acknowledgement of God is the beginning of all wisdom. The application of such wisdom in every aspect of life is available to the believer through Yeshua, the Life Coach who brings us life everlasting (John 3:16).

Mommy,
what are we?



Mommy, what are we?

Are we Jewish or Christian?
Should we celebrate
Hanukkah or Christmas?

Explore answers to these and other pressing questions if you are in an interfaith relationship. *Joined Together?* is a new documentary featuring four interfaith married couples who share their discovery that faith in the Jewish Messiah can bring a dynamic and joy-filled basis to their marriage. Hearing them relate their struggles and successes is sure to touch and move you.

You can order copies of *Joined Together?* for a suggested donation of \$20^{us} plus shipping (ask for item #8025). Just call 1-800-333-4936, visit www.chosenpeople.com/joinedtogether, or write to Chosen

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We have a saying in England: "Always follow the maker's instructions." Messianic Jews believe that the Messiah is the embodiment of the *hochma* (wisdom) through which the universe is created (Proverbs 8). Some rabbis also believe this. I and other Messianic Jews have met this Messiah and have found Him to be the Lord of Life itself. He is called Yeshua.

Yeshua, our Jewish Messiah, is the author of life, the sustainer of life and the saver of lives. He is our ultimate Life-Coach. The

FROM YESHUA TO YESHUA

by Irving Salzman



Unlike many of my Jewish brothers and sisters, belief in a Messiah was not something foreign to my upbringing or education. On the contrary! From the earliest days of my childhood, my dear father instilled in me the hope that one day the Messiah would surely come. His faith was all the more impressive, because at the age of 14, together with his mother and two sisters, he was forced into hiding to flee from the Nazis. During that time, two hundred of his relatives were put to death.

Because his own formal Jewish education had been so cruelly cut short, my father made doubly sure that I had the opportunities he had been deprived of. My parents were committed to raising us in an Orthodox Jewish home. Their belief in God and the Messiah were the cornerstones of our upbringing. Once, when as a small boy I told my father I was afraid of the finality of death, he reassured me, "Don't worry, son. One day, the Messiah will come and raise our people from the dead!" I never forgot that promise.

I was especially eager to please my parents through my studies and attended a Yeshiva run by the Lubavitcher Hasidim, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish sect. I loved the ordered, disciplined Jewish lifestyle they espoused. I also prepared for the difficult task of becoming a Torah reader. I became something of a "child wonder" and read the Torah in several synagogues throughout the community for fifteen years.

I also had other interests. For a brief time in my early twenties, I enjoyed calling "party lines." These were special phone lines where you could meet other people via the telephone—sort of an early version of chat rooms. One day I met Peter, who called in regularly to talk about his faith in Jesus. I was fascinated. He was the first person who had ever spoken to me about Christianity.

Peter suffered from Albinism and was also legally blind. Even so, he had a vibrant faith that he enjoyed sharing with me. I would give him standard Jewish objections to the claims of Jesus as Messiah, and Peter would spend hours in the Jewish Public Library researching the answers. This went on for some time, until Peter finally shyly asked if he could read something from the New Testament to me. Sure, I thought, why not? I was well grounded in my Judaism and I wasn't afraid. Peter read the "Sermon on the Mount." It was as though someone had dropped a ton of bricks on me! Never before had I heard words so filled with authority, wisdom and compassion. Could Jesus really have been the Messiah of Israel after all? Could the rabbis have been wrong?

Over the next few months, I studied the Messianic prophecies from the Hebrew Bible. I tried to read them without presuppositions—pro or con. In the end, I became convinced that only one man in Israel's history could have been that Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth!

Now, there is a beautiful marriage between my faith in Yeshua the Messiah and my Orthodox Jewish heritage. It is as though my scholarship is being lit with a light from within—a light that comes from a relationship with the true Messiah, the "Light of the World."

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