

# The Chosen People

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# Insider's Report on Israel



Dear friend,

Shalom in our Messiah! If there is one subject (besides Jesus) our regular readers of the Chosen People Newsletter are most interested in, it is Israel. This is why—in lieu of the magazine—I am sending you a special “Insider’s Report” on what is now happening in the Holy Land.

I hope you will find some of the details regarding our ministry in Israel helpful as you pray for Chosen People Ministries’ Israel director, Michael Z., and our Israel team.

I am also including some information on the politics of modern Israel so you can better understand what is going on and the potential impact Israeli politics might have on our missionary work.

Finally, I am going to share with you several prayer requests for the work in Israel, and I know that you will make these urgent matters part of your intercessory prayers over the next few months.

I also wanted to let you know that virtually the entire Chosen People Ministries budget in Israel comes from the support given by you, me and other believers in North America. So as you read, I hope you will pray and think about helping us provide for these dedicated workers.

## **Chosen People Ministries in Israel: The Impact of Politics**

Modern Israel has seldom seen such turbulent times in its altogether turbulent history. Now that the war in Iraq has passed its most intense phase, Israel is breathing a collective sigh of relief that there were no missile strikes, as there were in 1991. However, storm clouds continue to gather. We don’t know how much of Iraq’s weaponry and leadership has slipped into Syria. We don’t know what pressure will come from the West to force a peace settlement that does not provide for Israel’s national security. As one writer has wryly observed, “The Arab world can afford to lose any number of wars with Israel, but even one such defeat would be the end of Israel.”



## Who's Who In Israeli Politics?

If it's variety you want, then Israel's political spectrum is for you! Right wing, left wing, religious, secular, communist and environmentalist – they are all active somewhere in the Land. The following chart is restricted to the eleven parties that are represented in the 120-seat *Knesset*.

**Likud** – secular, Zionist, rightist party led by Ariel Sharon. Party principles reject a Palestinian state, although Sharon has made some public statements to the contrary. Would maintain rabbinic authority over marriage and divorce and military deferment for yeshiva students.

**Labor** – the strongest secular, Zionist, leftist party. Supports peace agreement with the Palestinian Authority, or else increased border security. Supports separation of religion and state, mandatory army service for all, including the ultra-Orthodox, and less aid for settlements.

**Shinui (Change)** – fastest rising political power in Israel. Secular, Zionist party fired by opposition to the influence of the ultra-Orthodox parties in government. Favors negotiations with Palestinians if terrorism is brought under control. Flexible on settlement issue. Would curtail authority of the rabbinical courts and religious influence generally in social institutions.

**Shas (Sephardic Torah Guardians)** – this ultra-Orthodox party represents Sephardim, the Jewish people of Spanish extraction who spread to the Mediterranean and North Africa, among other places. This party wants to strengthen the settlements, while keeping the door open to negotiate with the Palestinians. They support expansion of religious influence and legislation in Israel.

**The National Union** – composed of three secular parties. Also opposed to Palestinian state and favors resettlement of Palestinian refugees in Arab countries. Favors separation between religion and state and mandatory army service for all.

**Meretz** (acronym of three smaller parties that form its basis) – leftist, secular, Zionist. Supports establishment of a Palestinian state, the dismantling of most settlements, and a security fence along the "Green Line." Supports complete separation of religion and politics, equality for all streams of Judaism (including recognition of Conservative and Reform conversion) and more social welfare for those in need.

**United Torah Judaism** – ultra-Orthodox and non-Zionist party. Advocates of ultra-Orthodox interests in the land.

**The National Religious Party** – modern Orthodox, Zionist party opposed to a Palestinian state, or any withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, or settlements. Stands pat on domestic religious policies.

**Am Ehad (One People)** – social-democratic party that prioritizes well-being of workers and pensioners. Focuses mainly on economic domestic affairs.

**Yisrael b'Aliyah (Israel on the Rise)** – headed by former Soviet political prisoner Natan Sharansky. Draws support mainly from Russian and other immigrants.

Which Arabs have the greatest political rights in the Middle East? Arab-Israeli citizens! They are represented by a number of parties and presently control nine seats in the Knesset. **United Arab List** is the largest. Generally, the Arab parties support Palestinian statehood and advocate for Arab economic advancement in Israel.

Profiles drawn from "What You Need to Know About Judaism", [www.judaism.about.com](http://www.judaism.about.com)



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. The book includes maps, charts and other helpful reference aids. **Item 3005 - \$10.95**

These tense times have had a profound effect on Israel's political landscape—and its religious atmosphere. As the chart above shows, the only thing more complex than Israeli society is the Israeli political system. Unlike the United States, Israel functions with a Parliament (the *Knesset*), and the political parties are so numerous and fragmented that various unlikely coalitions combine and break apart regularly. It's amazing, actually, that anything at all gets done.

## Elections, the Religious Parties and Jewish Evangelism

Buried beneath the bold headlines monopolized by the Iraq situation is a religious revolution taking place in Israel—or should I say, a non-religious revolution?

Last January's election showed that Ariel Sharon's *Likud* Party handed the more liberal Labor Party its worse defeat ever. Chalk this up to the priority of national security over negotiating with Yasser Arafat, who has lost all credibility with even the most starry-eyed peacenik. The religious parties have fallen from political influence, and the secular party, *Shinui* ("Change"), has risen. *Shas*, the strongest of the religious parties, lost six seats out of the 17 it had held since 1999. By contrast, *Shinui* more than doubled its number from 6 to 15.

These numbers indicate an upheaval in Israeli attitudes toward Orthodox Judaism. Long known as mainly secular, the Israeli voters have finally expressed their displeasure at the "special treatment" they perceive is given to the religious sector. What particularly rankles is deferment for religious students from military service and the perception that the Orthodox receive too much social welfare to support their traditionally large families.

The rise of *Shinui* will have far-reaching effects, now that Ariel Sharon has "anointed" them as his chosen partners for his new government. One thing we already know: *Shinui* is no friendlier to Jewish believers in Jesus than the religious parties were. The measure of their hostility is yet to be taken, but it is a factor we are keeping an eye on, even as our Gospel outreach continues to grow.

## Chosen People Ministries: Inside Israel

Chosen People Ministries has long followed the wisdom of the Scripture, "*It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes*" (Psalm 118:9). The plain fact is that our staff throughout the world—and especially in Israel—toils without the expectation of much encouragement from worldly powers. Messiah's words, "*A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master*" (Matthew 10:24) still hold true. Yet there is an undeniable groundswell of growth for Messiah's Kingdom in Israel that no government or party can hold back.

Michael Z., Chosen People Ministries' Israel Director, is my eyes and ears in Israel. And he has seen and heard such things as make my heart leap with joy and expectation. He recently reported to me that *My Jerusalem*, the evangelistic magazine geared mainly for the Russian-speaking Jewish population in Israel, is following the ancient, evangelistic route of Acts 1:8—"*in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" Michael tells me that he has received requests for *My Jerusalem* from numerous congregations not only in Israel, but also as far away as South America.

Jerusalem provides the key to Michael's dreams and aspirations. Having relocated there about two years ago from the suburbs of Tel Aviv, Michael has a large vision for a Messianic Outreach Center that will also equip evangelists to share the Gospel with Israelis all over the country. For now, Michael is rejoicing over the progress that has already been made, such as a Bible study group in Jerusalem of almost a dozen people. He believes this will be the core group for a new congregation.

## New Prayer Initiative

Nothing worthwhile in ministry is accomplished without prayer, and one recent development shows that Chosen People Ministries' priorities are in place in Israel. Our staff has begun to meet monthly on Mt. Zion with a number of other Messianic groups. Moreover, we are now in prayer partnership at the exact hour of the Mt. Zion prayer meeting with churches in Seattle and in New





York City. If you are interested in having your church join in spiritual partnership with Chosen People Ministries in Israel, let me know and I'll put you in touch with Michael so that it can be arranged.

## Tel Aviv

Although Jerusalem is of utmost importance, we have not neglected our other ministry outreach centers in the Land. They too are thriving, even in the present difficult environment. Our Tel Aviv congregation is well established and stable, with 80 to 90 people every week and, as Michael reports, a new decision for Messiah about every other week. Our present meeting place, which we have occupied for about a year, is in a beautiful building with a good location. It is owned by a godly Christian landlord who encourages Jewish outreach ministry.

## The West Bank

Henry N., who is our congregational leader in the West Bank town of Ariel, toils under a different set of challenges. It is hard to describe how isolated and anxious the people in the settlements are feeling right now. Jobs are scarce, and the economic crisis has heightened the residents' sense of depression. Yet despite the stress and pressure, the congregation recently welcomed four new members. Henry counsels his flock and comforts them as God enables him.

I'll let Michael tell you about the next big event in his own words:

*This month, we are going to baptize ten brand new Israeli believers! To give you an idea of the proportions, imagine your church baptizing 500 people (the Israeli population is 50 times smaller than that of the United States). Their walk with God will determine the response of Israelis to the Gospel. I need your prayers for these new believers. Among those who entrusted their lives to God were women, men of all ages and even one 12-year-old boy. All of them are facing different challenges in their lives, but I believe with your prayers and support they can overcome all of them.*

I am especially burdened for one of our younger staff members who is just starting out in ministry. Neriya and Anna A. have been married for a little more than a year and are about to have their first child. These dynamic young people lead our evangelistic teams in Tel Aviv and have a tremendous impact in the lives of young Israelis. Neriya and Anna are both Russian immigrants, and they really know how to reach their own people. I have such hope and expectations for their future ministry!

I feel the same way about some of the other young people in Israel—but knowing the politics in the Land and the prophetic Word—I realize that the days ahead will also be very difficult.

You can make a difference in the lives of these young people and others who are serving the Lord with Chosen People Ministries through your prayers and financial support. Israel, for example, is a mission field and not a place where Neriya can raise his support. He—and I—rely upon the Lord and believe that He will provide through His people.

Thanks for caring. Now—I want to leave you with a few prayer requests. Pray for:

1. Our missionary families
2. The outreach in Jerusalem
3. The defeat of any anti-missionary bills
4. The salvation of Jewish people around the world
5. Neriya and Anna's new baby
6. The congregation in Tel Aviv
7. Safety for Henry & Irina and Michael & Natalie.

I trust I've given you some idea of why I am so excited about what is going on in Israel. I also hope that you will find the chart about the Israeli political parties and the website resources helpful.

God's peace,

  
Mitch Glaser



Dr. Mitch Glaser  
President