

1897



# ISRAEL

## A Modern Miracle

HERZL'S LETTER  
November 29th, 1897.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of the Zionist Congress, the following declaration of principle which has been unanimously adopted since it has been presented to and approved by the Congress.

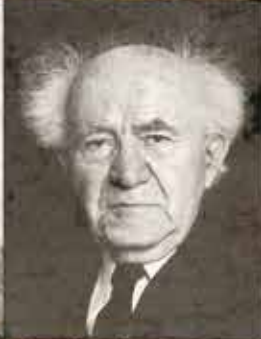
The Jewish people, who have been dispersed over the whole world, desire to reconstitute their national life in their own country, and to secure for them the right of self-determination in Palestine. For this end, they have endeavored to rally the sympathies of Jews abroad, to bring about a Jewish settlement that should be based upon the principle of the free and voluntary transfer of Jewish immigrants to Palestine, and to secure the necessary cooperation in Palestine of the Jewish people.

I am glad to inform you that the Zionist Congress has decided to be held in the city of Basel.

Yours sincerely,  
Theodor Herzl

1918

1922



1948



# The Chosen People



IT IS A MIRACLE! WE SEE THE HAND OF THE INVISIBLE GOD  
AT WORK IN THE FORMATION OF ISRAEL.

## Faith and the Modern State of Israel

Dear friend,

The nation of Israel has survived...again! Since 1948, this tiny bastion of hope and democracy has endured two full-scale wars with surrounding Arab states, incessant terrorist attacks, two wars on her northern borders and most recently, the conflict with Gaza. What is the key to Israel's survival?

Perhaps the first question we should ask is how did the Jewish people—scattered throughout the globe and almost destroyed in the Holocaust—survive long enough to return to the ancient Jewish homeland and become a nation once again? Let's face it...it is a miracle! And even if you do not believe in the God of Israel or biblical prophecy, or if you believe that the rise of the modern state of Israel is politically questionable—you must admit that the odds of a Jewish nation emerging from the ashes of the Holocaust is startling.

I understand that not every reader of this issue sees the hand of the invisible God at work in the formation of Israel. Even though I am Jewish, there was a time when I did not recognize this fact either.

I was born in Brooklyn, New York. My grandparents were immigrants to the United States from Eastern Europe during the early 20th century. So if you do the math you can probably figure out that I am a typical Jewish baby boomer, born a few years after these two major events affecting Jewish life in the 20th century: the Holocaust and the formation of modern Israel.

My grandparents were religious, but my parents less so. I was expected to be a good Jewish boy, go to Hebrew school, become *bar mitzvah* and to be at least as observant (or more so!) than my parents. But, like most *Jewish Boomers*—I did not meet their expectations.

I was raised in a generation that received so much of this world's abundance. My grandparents were poor immigrants and my parents were raised to become less poor. Neither of my parents went to college, and both worked hard throughout their lives to provide for their kids. But, as was typical of my generation, I did not appreciate their sacrifices, nor those of my grandparents, who had moved to a new country to make a better life for their children and eventually, their ungrateful grandchildren such as myself.

I was also raised with the cynicism of the 60s and 70s. For many reasons, my generation had lost trust in almost everything and everyone. There were wars raging that we did not understand, and between protests, race riots and political scandals, it just seemed that our whole society was about to explode.

This drove my friends and me to seek answers outside of our parents' expectations. I was searching for truth I could rely upon as a foundation for my life, but I did not know where to look! If there is any trait that characterizes my generation, it is that we were exploring and searching for something to believe in. I see this same drive in many young adults today.

Israel began to play a very significant role in what became a spiritual journey that changed the course of my life.

The founders of the modern state of Israel were my heroes. Everyone was a Zionist in the New York Jewish neighborhoods where I grew up. We believed in the importance of Israel, and most of us had relatives who lived there or moved there to become citizens. This was not something my family wanted to do, but we always admired those who did take this courageous step.

The state of Israel was a comfort to me. Just knowing that Israel existed and was equipped with a modern and effective army gave me hope that if antisemitism broke out somewhere in the world, the Jewish people now had a place to go where we could defend ourselves. Remember, my grandparents were persecuted in war-torn Europe and the Jewish people narrowly escaped full-scale destruction at the hands of Hitler.

The 1967 war took place just two years after my *bar mitzvah*, and I remember hearing the incredible news that Israel had retaken Jerusalem. This was just about the time I was becoming less religious and more detached from the synagogue. But I hope you do not get the wrong impression—even though I was not practicing the Jewish religion daily, I still strongly identified as Jewish, and I never questioned the right of the nation of Israel to exist.

Like so many of my peers, I left the East Coast and moved to San Francisco, California. During those days, a few of my friends became believers in Jesus. I tried to talk them out of it and so they suggested that rather than fighting with them that I should read the Jewish Bible—the Old Testament. I said okay and read the Old Testament with the intent of showing my friends they were wrong. I loved the Bible, its stories, and so much else about it, but I still did not fully understand God's plan for the Jewish people.

At that time there was a book that had become very popular entitled *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsay, who claimed that what was happening in

Photo by Carly Hennigen



The articles found on pages 4, 5, 6 and 7 are excerpts from the chapter entitled "Practical Theology" from the book *The People, the Land and the Future of Israel* recently released by Kregel Publications and Chosen People Ministries. This chapter was written by Dr. Michael Rydelnik, Professor of Jewish Studies at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, IL.

To order your copy of *The People, the Land and the Future of Israel*, visit: [www.chosenpeople.com/store](http://www.chosenpeople.com/store) or call 800-333-4936.

modern Israel was fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Since I was now reading the Bible, I decided to read this book as well—and was startled by what I read.

I did not really understand everything, but it became clear to me that Lindsay believed the reason Jewish people had not been destroyed and had survived long enough to return to the Land of Israel was because of God. I realized that the prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures I had heard and read all my life in synagogue had predicted that the Jewish people would survive and be given the Land of Israel. But until that time, I had simply failed to connect the Jewish people and the Land of Israel with the God of Israel!

As I closely read the Bible and *The Late Great Planet Earth*, I began to reason that if the ancient prophecies of the Hebrew Bible about Israel were reliable, and I could see this with my own eyes, then what the rest of the Bible said might be true as well. It was the realization that the prophecies about Israel were coming true that caused me to have more faith in the Bible as a whole.

This also helped me understand what my friends were trying to tell me. They said they believed in Yeshua (Jesus) because of the prophecies in the Old Testament about the Messiah. So I started reading the Bible passages they suggested, such as Isaiah 53 and many others. Before long, my life's journey took a remarkable turn. I too became a follower of Yeshua the Messiah.

I trust you will enjoy the remainder of this newsletter. I hope that you will find your ideas challenged and that you will gain new insights into God's purposes for Israel and the Jewish people. Most of all, I urge you to carefully consider where these claims lead in terms of your own relationship with the God of Israel, who is our Creator and Redeemer.

  
Mitch



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## Does the Existence of Israel Prove God Moves in History?

**W**hat is Israel? A people? A promise? A secular political state? A godly kingdom in the making? Or is it all of these at once—and if so, what, if anything, does God have to do with it?

The contents of this newsletter are an exploration of the nature of Israel, how it has been perceived by others, and how it has sought to explain itself through the lens of its own sacred literature. Although many seek to prove the existence of God by pointing here or there, our goal is both more modest and more ambitious. We invite the reader to consider the possibility of God's presence in history, specifically through the history of the Jewish people. In other words, we invite you to think with us along these lines—and then draw your own conclusions.

The first question is how we are to understand the continuing existence of the Jewish people. In the 1930s, historian Arnold Toynbee maintained that the Jewish people did not fit any definition of nation, race, or religion. According to Toynbee, Jewish people are not a nation in the modern meaning of the word because they have lived in dispersion for centuries without a land. Neither could they be considered a race because they are composed of members of many races. Additionally, he argued, they do not constitute a religion because some do not believe in God. However, given their continued existence over 3,000 years, Toynbee classified the Jewish people as “fossils” of history, unaccountable, irrelevant, yet somehow still present.<sup>1</sup> Although Toynbee's characterization seems unfair to some, his assessment does serve to highlight a mysterious dimension of the Jewish people's continued existence.

Like Toynbee, Mark Twain also sensed the enigmatic nature of the Jewish people when he wrote,

*If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race... Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of.... His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also very out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in the world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him.... The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone.... The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was.... All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?<sup>2</sup>*

Twain was an agnostic and a skeptic. Although he could recognize the amazing, seemingly miraculous preservation and influence of the Jewish people, he could not answer his own question. He had no explanation for “the secret of his (the Jew's) immortality.” Is it because the answer is related to God and His Word? That is the question we are here to explore—and we begin by examining the sacred writings of the Jewish people themselves. ♦



Photo by Carly Hennigen

1. Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 12 Volumes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934–61), Vol 1, Section VII, 135–39.

2. Mark Twain, “Concerning the Jews,” *The Complete Essays of Mark Twain*, Charles Neider, Ed. (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2000), 249–50.

THIS CENTRAL CONCEPT—THE GUARANTEE THAT GOD WOULD KEEP FAITH WITH AND PRESERVE ISRAEL—IS A CORNERSTONE OF THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT OF HISTORY.

## The Bible and the Preservation of the Jewish People

Does the preservation of the Jewish people demonstrate the truth of Scripture? And if so, what are the implications of this? The Hebrew Bible emphasizes God's promise to make a covenant with Abraham: "I will keep My covenant between Me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, as an everlasting covenant to be your God and the God of your offspring after you" (Gen. 17:7). This verse emphasizes the eternal nature of the Abrahamic Covenant by repeating the word "everlasting." Furthermore, God not only initiates this eternal covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but also with all their descendants, marking the Jewish people forever distinctively related to God as His everlasting people. The everlasting God makes an everlasting covenant with His everlasting people. This central concept—the guarantee that God would keep faith with and somehow preserve the descendents of the patriarchs and matriarchs of Israel is a cornerstone of the biblical account of history. It is confirmed over and over, and along with it, the goal toward which history presses.

Nearly one thousand years after the writing of the Torah, the prophet Jeremiah also guarantees the preservation of the Jewish people. This promise was especially significant because Jeremiah predicted God's judgment of Israel through the Babylonians (Jer. 25:8–14)—yet He assured Israel that their defeat would not mean destruction. "For I will be with you—this is the Lord's declaration—to save you! I will bring destruction on all the nations where I have scattered you; however, I will not bring destruction on you. I will discipline you justly, but I will by no means leave you unpunished" (Jer. 30:11).

The verse reminds Israel of God's presence with the nation, thereby providing assurance to the people. Even though God will discipline Israel, they will not be destroyed. Other nations will experience destruction from God's hand, but not His people Israel.

Through Jeremiah, God promises Israel He will give the nation a New Covenant, which will last forever (Jer. 31:31–34). Not only is the covenant eternal, but also the parties to the covenant (Israel and Judah) are eternal. For this reason, the Lord gives Israel a promise through His prophet, found in Jeremiah 31:35–37,

*This is what the Lord says:  
The One who gives the sun for light by day,  
the fixed order of moon and stars for light by night,  
who stirs up the sea and makes its waves roar—  
the Lord of Hosts is His name:  
If this fixed order departs from My presence—*



*this is the Lord's declaration—  
then also Israel's descendants will cease  
to be a nation before Me forever.  
This is what the Lord says:  
If the heavens above can be measured  
and the foundations of the earth below explored,  
I will reject all of Israel's descendants  
because of all they have done—  
this is the Lord's declaration.*

These verses demonstrate the eternal nature of the Jewish people in two ways. First, God assures Israel's preservation by pointing to the fixed order of nature. Just as God ordained the sun, moon, and stars, as well as the ocean waves, so He established the permanence of Israel. Only if the natural order can be overturned, "then... Israel's descendants will cease to be a nation before me forever" (Jer. 31:35–36).

The second refers to the measuring of the heavens and searching the foundations of the earth—both impossibilities. If these impossible conditions occur, only then will God "reject all of Israel's descendants as His people" (Jer. 31:37). In other words, it is as unthinkable that the Jewish people will cease to exist as it is impossible for someone to stop the sun, moon, and stars from shining or measure the heavens or explore the core of the earth. These vivid images only serve to reemphasize God's promise of the preservation of His people.

What, then, of the cold facts of history and the repeated, intentional and determined efforts throughout history to destroy the Jewish people? Do they not discredit the biblical promises of protection and deliverance? There are many who make the case that they do. But there is another way to view this formidable challenge to the claims of faith and which make the Jews' preservation an even more remarkable validation of God's Word.

In biblical history, Pharaoh attempted to commit genocide by murdering Israelite male babies (Ex. 1:15–16); Balak

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

IN CONCLUSION, HISTORY HAS SHOWN THAT DESPITE PERSECUTION, POGROMS AND GENOCIDE, THE BIBLICAL PROMISE OF GOD TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE CONTINUES TO BE VALIDATED.

## God's Promise and the Restoration to the Land of Israel

Even if we concede for the moment that the continuing presence of Jewish people is evidence for the reliability of the Bible, we are well within our rights to raise other concerns. What, for example, is the connection between the Jewish people and the highly-contested real estate of the Middle East? For some, the relationship of God's covenant promise to preserve the Jewish people and the equally-emphasized "Promised Land" is highly problematic. Today, even committed Jews and Christians may wonder what, if any, relationship the present-day State of Israel has to with it. Although it is not often remembered, in 1948 many Orthodox Jews were horrified that a Jewish state based upon modern notions of nationality could even be contemplated in place of a kingdom under the reign of Messiah.

Yet, politics aside, it cannot be denied that not only have the children of Israel endured despite the harsh treatment they have received, but against all likelihood, after 2,000 years of exile, the Jewish people have once again returned to the Land of Israel just as the biblical prophets promised they would. The Hebrew prophets foretold a day when God would draw His people back to Israel. Although centuries of dispersion caused this aspiration to retreat into the far background of Jewish life, it never fully disappeared. If nothing else, the hope that was voiced every year at the Passover—"Next Year in Jerusalem"—would serve as an annual reminder of their lost heritage.

So unlikely did a realistic restoration of the Jews to their land seem, that throughout church history, Christians for the most part could not conceive of a literal fulfillment of this promise. Most, therefore, interpreted these prophecies figuratively or historically—if they thought of them at all. However, some believers in the nineteenth century did indeed take the promise of a return literally and, therefore, began to anticipate a Jewish return to the Land of Israel. Thus it may be said that Christian Zionism was birthed at the same time, or even earlier than the Jewish aspiration for modern statehood.<sup>4</sup>

Is the existence of the modern State of Israel a further validation of Scripture's reliability, along the same lines as that of the continuing presence of the Jewish people in the world? Consider the following conditions set out in the scriptural record.

First, contrary to the views of some, a national spiritual regeneration occurring prior to the Jewish return to the Land is not a biblical prerequisite. In fact, the prophet

Zechariah indicates the Jewish people will turn to God only **after** returning to Israel (Zech. 12:10; 13:1). Likewise, the prophet Ezekiel states God's promises, "I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land" (Ezk. 36:24). However, he continues, "**Then** I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean...Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezk. 36:25-26).

Note that the spiritual regeneration of Israel follows the restoration of the Jewish people to the Land. Thus reborn, Israel will, as a nation, turn in faith to the promised Messiah.

Second, the Bible predicts Israel would return to the Land in stages. Ezekiel 37 contains the stark and unforgettable vision of a valley of dry bones. The bones come to life in stages: first sinews on the bones, then flesh, then skin and finally, the breath of life (Ezk. 37:6-10). Then God tells Ezekiel, "*These bones are the whole house of Israel*" (Ezk. 37:11). This vivid depiction of the restoration of the Jewish people to their Promised Land is well in keeping with what is actually occurring. The re-gathering does not occur instantaneously; rather, it is a process culminating when the nation as a whole receives the Messiah according to Jewish expectation.

The dry bones represent Israel in exile, without hope. The process of the bones coming together with sinew, flesh and skin refers to the successive waves of returning Jews before Israel's rebirth. This is, in fact, how the Jewish people have returned to the Land. There were the five separate *aliyot* (immigration waves) from 1881 to 1939, returning Jewish people from Europe to the Promised Land. Then, after the birth of Israel in 1948, some one million European Jewish survivors came to Israel, followed by 800,000 Jewish people, driven from their homes in Arab countries. More recently, 1.5 million Jewish people fled the Former Soviet Union and immigrated to Israel. These immigration waves show how the Jewish people have returned in stages. The body without breath represents unbelieving Israel, restored but not yet regenerated. Finally, according to this passage, God breathes life into these bodies, representing the day when all Israel turns to the Messiah.

Third, the Bible predicts Israel would return to her Land through persecution. The Hebrew Scripture says of Israel, "I will return them to their land that I gave to their ancestors" (Jer. 16:15). God will use "fishermen" and "hunters" to pursue His people back to Israel (Jer. 16:16). This metaphor for



## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

attempted to curse the Jewish people through Balaam (Num. 22:4–8); and Haman formulated plans for the genocide of all the Jewish people in the known world (Est. 3:8–10). Later on, the Jewish people faced the destructive power of Babylon, a defeat from which it seemed there could be no recovery. After their return from exile (539 BCE), Jewish people experienced two horrific defeats at the hands of the Romans (CE 70 and 135) in which nearly two million Jewish residents in Israel died. From the Middle Ages to the modern period, the Jewish people endured murders at the hands of Crusaders and Cossacks. They suffered *pogroms* and persecution and, ultimately, the Nazi Holocaust, when Adolf Hitler attempted to destroy all of Jewry. Yet despite the horrific murder of the six million individuals and all that went before, Jewish people continue, either willingly or unwillingly, to bear witness to the preservation of a transcendent identity that is with us to this day, even in the face of unthinkable suffering and loss. The liturgy of the Passover Haggadah recognizes this with the song, *V'Hee Sh'amdab* (This Promise):

*This promise made to our fathers holds true also for us. For more than once they have risen up against us in their attempts to destroy us; throughout all generations they rise against us and seek our destruction. But the Holy One, Blessed be He, always delivers us from their hands.*<sup>3</sup>

persecution has been literally fulfilled in Israel's rebirth. Since the birth of modern Zionism, the primary motivation for return to the Land of Israel has been anti-Jewish persecution. In the last hundred years, God has used Czarist *pogroms*, Polish economic discrimination, Nazi genocide, Arab hatred, Soviet repression and now an alarming rise in European antisemitism to drive Jewish people back to their homeland.

Fourth, the Bible predicts that after a period of exile, the children of Israel would return to reestablish national identity, thus setting the stage for the arrival of Messiah and the consummation of history as we know it. At that time, the Messiah will deliver Israel from her enemies (Zech. 14:3).

Ask yourself, do the facts of history—particularly the emergence of modern Jewish nationality—line up sufficiently with the predictions of the Hebrew Bible to form a credible connection? Since Israel has returned in unbelief, in stages, through persecution, it is likely that the modern State of Israel fulfills the predictions of the ancient Hebrew prophets, setting the stage for events yet to come.

The return to Zion is powerful evidence of the truth of Scripture. Would you not agree that it is beyond remarkable that a dispersed and despised people have been restored to their Land after two thousand years of exile? Given the relationship between these events and the predictions of the Bible, would you say it is more or less likely that this has truly come about by the hand of God?

And if the above is true—what impact might this have on our lives? It is a good question to ponder. ♦

The late Israeli Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, made a similar point, speaking at the Western Wall in Jerusalem as part of the closing ceremonies of the first World Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors on June 18, 1981. Specifically addressing the question of faith in God in light of the Holocaust, Begin reminded his audience how close Hitler and Nazi Germany came to winning World War II. Had Hitler been successful, it would have meant the murder of not only six million European Jewish people, but could likely have led to the murder of virtually all the Jewish people around the globe. Although the question of why God did not act to save the victims of the Holocaust still looms large in Jewish life, Begin nonetheless passionately begged his audience of Holocaust survivors to believe in the God of Israel, who “always delivers us from their hands.”

In conclusion, history has shown that despite persecution, *pogroms* and genocide, the biblical promise of God to the Jewish people continues to be validated. For evidence to support this case, one needs look no further than the continuing Jewish presence in the world.

If the Bible is found true in predicting the re-gathering of the Jewish people once scattered throughout the world, and if the Jewish prophets were correct in envisioning the restoration of Israel as a modern Jewish nation—then what does that say to you and me? It means we can trust the Bible and believe what it says about life, the future, and even about the Messiah. If the Bible was right about Israel, then we should take what it says about all things more seriously. ♦

3. Randall Price, “Is the Modern State of Israel Prophetically Significant?” Unpublished paper, delivered at the 13th Annual Pre-Trib Research Center Conference in Dallas, TX, December 6–8, 2004.

4. As cited in Halvor Ronning, “The Land of Israel: A Christian Zionist View,” *Immanuel* 22/23 (1989): 132.

MESSIAH, THE MISSING PIECE, BRINGS ALL OF THE THREADS TOGETHER—THE SURVIVAL OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE, THE RETURN TO OUR LAND, HERITAGE AND FULFILLMENT OF OUR UNIQUE ROLE.



## If it Is True, Why Does it Matter?

sacrifice purchases our forgiveness and reconciliation with God forever.

Moreover, the same Hebrew Bible that so credibly underwrites the preservation of the Jewish people and their return to the Promised Land also vouches for the appearance of a Messiah whose resumé suspiciously resembles that of the Messiah of the New Testament.

Isaiah 53 is a classic chapter portraying the life, death and the resurrection of Messiah. He would be despised by many (Is. 53:3), He would give his life for us and take our sins upon himself (Is. 53:7), he would suffer (Is. 53:10) and be resurrected (Is. 53:10-12). Many Jewish people, when reading Isaiah 53 for the first time, have thought that these words must be from the New Testament, since they paint such a clear portrait of Jesus of Nazareth. It is astonishing that these verses are in fact from the Hebrew Bible; they were written by Isaiah over 700 years before Yeshua (Jesus) was born!

Read this powerful passage for yourself. Perhaps you will see, as so many Jewish men and women have seen, a dimension of human experience that enables us to connect with a God who has at times, we must admit, felt distant and inaccessible.

Messiah, the missing piece, brings all of the threads together—the survival of the Jewish people, the return to our Land and heritage, and now, through faith in Messiah, fulfillment of the unique role we have been cast to play in the world drama that is unfolding before our eyes in these troubled times.

All you have to do is to say yes to your part. As Jewish believers have done throughout the centuries, acknowledge your need for forgiveness, be reconciled to God through faith in Yeshua, and begin a new life guided by God's Word and the power of His Spirit. ♦

**A**ll right, you may be saying, *I'll grant that the remarkable, continuing existence of the Jewish people, their ingathering into a modern, reconstituted Jewish homeland, and the promises and prophecies of the Bible are all too closely linked to be mere coincidence. Pardon me for asking, but, so what? Why does it matter?*

Well, there is a final piece of the puzzle that remains to be fully fitted in, without which the rest of the puzzle simply refuses to hang together. It comes to this:

God's preservation of the Jewish people and their restoration to the Land validate the claims of Scripture—and these persuasive signs also pave the way for God's redemptive work for all humanity, which has been the underlying purpose of the Jewish people from the beginning. This purpose is embodied in a single individual, whose life seems to sum up Jewish identity and experience while at the same time taking it that final step forward to complete vindication. That person is the long hoped for and faithfully awaited Messiah.

Who is he? We believe that he is not only the mighty redeemer and world healer that Jewish tradition esteems him to be, but also the one whose obedient life and voluntary

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

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