

The Chosen People



December 2016
Volume XXII, Issue 8

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS FIND THE TRUE *Light* OF HANUKKAH

INSIDE: Celebrating Our Deliverance in the Messiah • An Interview with Esfir • A Problem of Spiritual Maturity: Hebrews 5

CELEBRATING *Our* DELIVERANCE IN THE MESSIAH

Shalom from the busy and beautifully decorated heart of New York City! The lights are twinkling along Park Avenue, the tree is standing tall in Rockefeller Center and bright Hanukkah menorahs are shining their lights throughout this city of more than two million Jewish people!

This is one of my favorite seasons of the year. Like Christmas, when we celebrate the birth of the One who brings deliverance and freedom, Hanukkah emphasizes this same theme. As a Messianic Jew—a Jew who believes in Jesus—I have the joy of celebrating both holidays, rejoicing in my own personal salvation as well as the deliverance of my Jewish people from centuries of attempts to destroy us.

The ongoing existence of the Jewish people and the nation of Israel are still the most powerful arguments for the existence of God and the truth of the Bible. What greater proof can there be than the ways in which God has preserved the Jewish people against all enemies and brought His chosen people back to the land of promise? The holiday, Hanukkah, reminds us of His faithfulness and power.

Holocaust Survivors in Israel

As you will see in this newsletter, we are also celebrating the restoration of a very special community of Jewish people who live in Israel and understand the meaning of deliverance in ways that you and I will never be able to comprehend. I am referring to the community of Jewish Holocaust survivors who endured the horrifying efforts of Hitler's henchmen to destroy the Jewish people of Europe.

This group of elderly Jewish people, averaging about 85 years old, is about 200,000 strong and by one means or another these brave souls made their way to Israel over the last 68 years. Many of them immigrated to the Holy Land during the last two decades from various parts of the former Soviet Union. These Holocaust survivors are now passing away at the rate of about 30,000 per year and we cannot wait one more moment to present the Good News of eternal deliverance to these precious people.

Your Mission to the Jewish People, Chosen People Ministries, lovingly serves this community of Holocaust survivors in Israel in a variety of ways. First of all, we try to help them with practical

concerns: food, clothing, repairing and cleaning their apartments, and much more. We spend time with them—taking them on trips so they can get out of the house, helping them celebrate the Jewish holidays, including Hanukkah, of course! Most of all we try to counter their loneliness by investing our time to sit by their side, to listen to them reminisce, and enjoy wonderful moments of conversation about the deeper matters of life.

These dear people are so grateful for the hours our Chosen People Ministries Israel staff spends with them. I also must admit that our mostly younger staff enjoys their time with the survivors because they are pampered by them, like Jewish grandparents!

Of course, in the midst of developing these wonderful relationships, the conversations naturally lead to discussions about God, everlasting life, and ultimate deliverance as each one of these elderly Holocaust survivors are watching their friends pass away each and every week. They are grappling with the meaning of their own lives and even at this late age are more open than they ever were before to the message of the Gospel. And the conversations about the Messiah Jesus happen so naturally—flowing from the loving relationships our staff have developed over the years between themselves and these dear people.

Incredible Stories of Deliverance

I have had many conversations myself over the years with the Holocaust survivors about the ways in which God delivered them from certain death at the hands of the Nazis. Some fled just moments before they were going to be taken away and sent to a concentration camp and, still today, cannot figure out how their timing was so perfect. Others, were about to be shot and guards were distracted and somehow they ran into the woods and were saved by Gentile families who took them in and hid them from the Nazis.

As I have listened to story after story—it is so clear to me and to the survivors, that God reached down from heaven and saved them from death. Naturally, recognizing this leads to the question, “Why do you believe God saved you?” Many, of course, even feel guilty about being saved, but understand, as they face the end of their lives, that God must have had a plan for them and that their deliverance was no coincidence.

It took several years of investment in their lives before the doors were open to having deeper spiritual conversations and before some of these precious Holocaust survivors began giving their lives to the Lord—but it is happening. Chosen People Ministries' staff have prayed with over a dozen Holocaust survivors to receive Jesus as their Savior in the land of Israel! In addition, our sister ministries are having similar experiences as we see a small movement among these beautiful souls who are embracing their ultimate Deliverer and Messiah—Jesus.

It is impossible not to be moved by the stories of these Holocaust survivors! I hope that you will appreciate the incredible testimony in this newsletter.

Holocaust Survivors Are Seeking the Lord

Many of these special people are in process — they were raised as atheists in Eastern Europe, but are now in Israel, and as they get older and older, they are ready to begin seeking and talking about faith and what their future holds!

You can be involved with these dear survivors through your prayers! *But, time is running out!* Clearly, in less than a decade most of the Holocaust survivors will no longer be with us.

So please pray for us and as God enables you, please continue to support the work of Chosen People Ministries as so many of our missionaries in Israel, and around the world serving in difficult places, depend upon your generosity to make ends meet so they can serve the people God has entrusted to them for ministry.

During this wonderful season of the year — all I can really think about is deliverance, redemption and the joy that comes from knowing the One whom to know is life eternal (John 17:3).

He is our joy, our hope, our comfort, our message and reason for the delight we take in celebrating this season of the year!

Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas and Thank You!

Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas, and thank you so much for your prayers and support and for being part of our Chosen People Ministries family! Without you we could not be used by God to touch the lives of Holocaust survivors, religious Jewish people in Brooklyn and Jerusalem, and the secular Jewish people in New York City, Los Angeles, Toronto, Chicago, and all across the globe.

On behalf of the Chosen People Ministries staff, I want to thank you for standing with us in the great work of reaching His chosen people for the Messiah throughout 2016.

We believe the best is yet to come, as Jewish people are becoming more open to the Lord and as we draw closer to that great day when the Jewish people as a nation will turn to the Messiah and embrace Him as Lord.

As the Jewish apostle writes,

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.” This is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins. (Romans 11:25-27)

Your brother in the Messiah,


Mitch



Dr. Mitch Glaser
President



AN INTERVIEW
with
ESFIR

Tell us a little about yourself. Where did you come from and what have you gone through?

My name is Esfir Gershman. I came from the town Artemovsk in the Donetsk region. I was born there and lived there for some time before the War. When the War began, some of my relatives fled. Some were evacuated and my mother stayed behind with my father's parents. They were very old, and my mother could not leave them. They did not have anybody else since my father was shot to death in 1939 when I was only 6 months old.

On the first day when the Germans came, they shot my grandpa and grandma to death and took my mother to a work camp. Mom was taking me with her everywhere all the time as I was only 4 and a half years old. It happened that my mom and I were in the ghetto all of that time when she was taken. She was sent to work in Kostantinovsk in Donetsk region. After the work camp, she was buried alive in the alabaster quarry in Artemovsk.

I was brought to the Gestapo office. We all were lined up and marched to a forest. Only later did we understand that they brought us there because there was already a pit with dead people in it. It was still some 200 or 300 meters to the pit when the firing started. Because the road was in the forest, the firing was both from the forest and the air. We all panicked. Then some strange old lady grabbed my arm and we fled through the forest. Not only did we, but others also, those who had managed to flee. Others were shot to death. We spent some days in the forest; I was scared, cold, and hungry. We came to some village, and we were given food there. Tell me, what kind of food do you think you could get in a village in 1942? A piece of a potato and wheat bread was a luxury. From there we went to Artemovsk again.

I could not walk the streets so I was put in the basement. I would go for a walk in the night and during the day I would sit in the basement, because if I had walked openly I would have certainly been taken. But the old lady to whom I was brought was obviously a wise woman. I had dark curly hair when I was little, so she took me to the church, baptized me and told me that I was Armenian, and she gave me her last name.



The house where I lived was bombed and everything was burned. I was left with nothing. Then, three women, our neighbors, came to the city council to witness whose child I was. I got a birth certificate and learned who I was. I went to work in 1955, I graduated in 1956, then I moved to Konstantinovka which is close to Artemovsk. I am an obstetrician and went to work at the maternity hospital. After I had worked there for 15 years I became in charge of the first-aid post in the village. I got married, moved to Konstantinovka and stayed there. I have two children, a son and a daughter. My husband died of a stroke in 1985. It is a long and scary story. We were half starving, so we decided to pack up and move to Israel in 1996.



And you came to Sderot?

No, first I came to Holon, Israel. I lived there two weeks, but the apartment there cost 500 shekels. I could not afford that. I had a friend here in Sderot from Konstantinovka so I called her and asked her what I should do, that I cannot pay 500 shekels. She said, "Do you want to come to Sderot?" I said I want to go anywhere. So here I am now.

Tell us about Sderot.

I have been leading the Club of Holocaust and Ghetto Survivors here in Sderot for 16 years already. We have mostly younger ones, the 80 to 90 year olds. A 92, 93, and 98 year old have died recently. These are my people, very old and sick, but whenever we have some events I say do not give up, cheer up! In spite of it all!

There were times when we had up to 60 Qassam rockets fired at our city. We could not go out to buy bread—we were sitting in our apartments. By the way, there is a bomb shelter in every apartment. We were absolutely quiet. We did not leave our houses, but the organization [Chosen People Ministries Israel] that Maxim represents and Michael Zinn, they help us. There are some other guys: Zhenya, Misha, and others. God bless them! Despite everything they brought a huge truck of food. We got scared and told them to leave! You cannot be here! They stopped in our yard. They took food to those who lived closer and brought

by car to those who lived further. We were afraid that they might get into something terrible. It was the most intense, "hot" operation. This organization really helps us a lot.

Not only do they help with the monthly food packages, they help with such things as cleaning my apartment. The people here are very old, sick, people. Just recently we had amazing young people come! They helped to clean! Yet it is not all that this organization does. They organize tours, different events; of course, they are the ones to cover the cost. Thank you very much! Last year we even were at the Dead Sea for the whole week. One can name many things that they do. It is of course an amazing work! I pray that everything goes fine and we continue to partner with them. We have worked with them for many years; they know us all and we know them. All of them are simply wonderful!

What does Chosen People Ministries mean to you spiritually?

I would like to say thank you very much to all of your helpers and volunteers. They do such great things! You know, sometimes you can do it in an ordinary way but sometimes—putting all your soul into it. They really put their soul into it. You see, it is not only about material things. It is also about the conversations that we have during fellowship where I learn more about God.

I can only say Baruch HaShem! Praise the Lord! We say Baruch HaShem in the morning and in the evening: in the morning—for waking up, and in the evening—for having lived another day. Praise the Lord, the fridge is full, I have an apartment. I need to thank many times God and the providence that we are here in our state!

Many people for many centuries wanted to destroy us, the Jewish people, but they did not succeed and they will not succeed. And a thousand thanks to you, **alfei todot, toda raba**, thank you for all your care that you provide for us! Many, many thanks to you.

Our dedicated worker, Maxim, who heads-up the ministry to the Holocaust survivors, met Esfir ten years ago. He shared the Gospel with her, as did many of our volunteers who visited her home and helped her over the years. Each time someone came and visited, a new seed was planted in her heart. Eventually, Esfir began praying and reading her Bible. Gradually she came to see the truth of the Scriptures and now professes faith in Yeshua! The Spirit of God worked through the patient, faithful witness of our staff and volunteers who ministered to Esfir, and by His grace she received the gift of salvation through Jesus, the Jewish Messiah.



SEE THE BIBLE THROUGH JEWISH EYES

BY DR. RICH FREEMAN, D.MIN.



Dr. Rich Freeman serves as the Vice President for Church Ministries and Conferences with Chosen People Ministries and lives in South Florida with his wife, Julia.

A PROBLEM OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY HEBREWS 5:11-14

The writer of Hebrews is about to continue in his discussion of the superior priesthood of Yeshua (Jesus) when he stops and takes a bit of a detour, feeling the need to warn against what he perceives as a serious problem of spiritual immaturity.

Rather than continuing the discussion on the Melchizedekian priesthood, he writes in 5:11 that these Hebrew believers had become “dull of hearing” (the word for *dull* is translated “sluggish” or “slothful” later on in Hebrews 6:12). One of the first symptoms of spiritual regression, immaturity or backsliding is a dullness toward the Bible. When Bible study seems dull, the preaching at church is boring, and anything spiritual seems uninteresting, the problem is usually not with the teacher or the pastor, but with the believer.

Having been in the faith for quite some time, these believers should have taken on the role of teachers, communicating the truths of the faith, but instead the writer of Hebrews finds himself forced to teach them what he calls the “elementary principles of the oracles of God.” It is as though he is having to teach them the basics of the faith once again.

Part of the problem is that these Jewish believers were being drawn back to the traditional Judaism of their day and the writer of Hebrews felt forced to get back to the basics of the faith before dealing with such a heady subject as Melchizedek. He refers to that teaching as solid food and the more basic teaching of the faith as milk.

In the context of Hebrews, the milk of the Word refers to Jesus’ earthly ministry, His birth, life, teaching, death, burial, and resurrection. The solid food of the Word refers to what He is now doing in heaven as our Great High Priest. We begin the Christian life on the basis of His finished work on earth, personally appropriating His salvation to our hearts and to our lives. We grow in our Christian lives on the basis of His unfinished work in heaven, and adopting the Word of Righteousness.

Of course, even the most mature adult never outgrows milk. As believers, we learn much from our Lord’s work on earth. That, however, should never be enough.

We must make spiritual progress, and we can do this only if we learn

about Messiah’s priestly ministry for us in heaven. That is the solid food the writer of Hebrews is talking about. If an adult only eats baby formula (milk) he would be unable to grow and mature since he is not getting the proper nourishment needed. Spiritually, he is unaccustomed, unskilled or inexperienced to the Word of Righteousness. As one grows and matures in his faith, he is supposed to learn to use it in his daily life. Though a spiritual baby lacks information at first, these believers acting like babies have not yet learned to put the Word of Righteousness to effective use in their lives. As James says in James 1:22, they need to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only.”

The result of this maturity is the ability to discern good and evil. Infants do not have the ability to discern. Ultimately the writer’s concern was for his Hebrew readers’ ability to reject the false ideas that confronted and enticed them to leave the faith and return to the Judaism of their day. Had they been sufficiently mature they would be able to discern those ideas as evil against the truths of the faith they should have known were good.

NEWS BRIEFS

PREACHING JESUS IN BUENOS AIRES

This month, a guesthouse will be opening up its doors to welcome Israelis and tell them about the Jewish Messiah, Jesus. It will be run by an Argentinian Jewish couple who are followers of Jesus. One of the challenges to starting such a ministry is getting the word out that there is a place for Israelis to stay. This is where our young staff member, Stephen A., comes in. In addition to ministering to Israelis, one of his tasks will be to get the flow of guests started. Once several Israelis come and have a good experience, they will then pass along the word to their friends. He will be visiting some of the key places in Buenos Aires where Israelis gather to invite them to stay at our guesthouse and to share the Gospel with them. Please pray for God's wisdom and providence in bringing Jewish people to the guesthouse, and for safety for all involved.



RENEWED LIVES AND WEDDING VOWS IN BROOKLYN

One of our leaders in Brooklyn, Robert, had the privilege of presiding over the wedding vow-renewal ceremony of a Jewish couple in our congregation. They are both new believers and on their 25th wedding anniversary wanted to rededicate themselves to each other as according to them they are now “new creations in Messiah!” Our sanctuary was packed with their unbelieving Jewish family and friends. During the ceremony, Robert emphasized how the God who created all things has the power to “re-create” as well, and that through the Messiah the couple's marriage had started afresh with Jesus, the Jewish Messiah who was now at the center of it. It was beautiful to see how God used this celebration of life to bring the focus to the new life that is available through our Messiah. Please pray that God will continue to bless this couple as they grow in their faith, and that He will continue to use their walk with Jesus as a testimony to their Jewish family and friends.

IF YOU LOVE THE JEWISH PEOPLE, TELL THEM ABOUT JESUS

One of our dear missionary couples from Indiana recently wrote: “Volunteers that love God, the Jewish people, and Israel are at the heart of our now 123-year-old mission.” He went on to describe weekly requests from believers wanting to assist us in Jewish ministry. “Once they start volunteering a fire is ignited in their hearts for lost people,” he told us. One of the volunteers from New Jersey was equipped by our staff and with prodding of the Holy Spirit was able to share this story about sharing the Gospel with a Jewish business associate:

“I felt strongly that the Lord wanted me to share with him. He is not real religious, but as we spoke he made a comment about how Messianic Jews are not well accepted among his Jewish brethren. After our discussion, I challenged him to look into Jesus for himself and to not believe what he has heard from everyone. I also encouraged him to read Isaiah 53. He said he is always up for a good challenge.”

Please pray for our work in the Midwest and all our faithful staff and volunteers, and, of course, this Jewish businessman.

DIVINE APPOINTMENTS AT 35,000 FEET!

Our president, Dr. Mitch Glaser, travels often, and recently he had an encounter on his way to London. During the flight, he met an ultra-Orthodox Jewish man who was originally from the New York area and they had a great conversation about Jewish life, their families, politics and even sports! Finally, as often happens, the gentleman asked Mitch what he did for a living. Upon hearing that Mitch was the president of a Messianic ministry, the gentleman said that he knew of our congregation in the Golders Green section of London—a very Orthodox Jewish neighborhood.

Over the next half-hour, they spoke about why Jesus is the Messiah of Israel. Praise God with us for allowing Mitch to speak with such an open-hearted religious Jewish man about Jesus.

MESSIANIC RESOURCES



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The Chosen People Newsletter

Chosen People Ministries has been taking the love of the Messiah to Jewish people worldwide since 1894.

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, International Headquarters, 241 East 51st Street, New York, NY 10022. In Canada, write to: Dufferin-Lawrence PO, Box 58103, Toronto, ON M6A 3C8 (www.chosenpeople.ca). In Great Britain, write to: PO. Box 47871, Golders Green, London, NW11 1AL (www.chosenpeople.org.uk). In Australia, write to: Celebrate Messiah Australia, P.O. Box 304, Caulfield, South Vic 3162, Australia (www.celebratemessiah.com.au). Contributing Editors: M. Goldstein, S. Ilchishin, and N. Parramore. Designer: Lois Gable Ruedinger. Cover photo: © Yeko Photo Studio | Bigstockphoto.com

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