



# FINDING HOPE

  
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International Headquarters:  
241 East 51st Street  
New York, NY 10022  
212-223-2252  
[www.chosenpeople.com](http://www.chosenpeople.com)

In Australia: Celebrate Messiah  
P.O. Box 304  
Caulfield South, VIC 3162  
61-03-9563-5544  
[www.celebratemessiah.com.au](http://www.celebratemessiah.com.au)

In Canada:  
Dufferin-Lawrence PO, Box 58103  
Toronto, Ontario M6A 3C8  
416-250-0177  
[www.chosenpeople.ca](http://www.chosenpeople.ca)

In the United Kingdom:  
P.O. Box 47871  
Golders Green, London NW11 1AL  
020-8455-7911  
[www.chosenpeople.org.uk](http://www.chosenpeople.org.uk)



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# Shalom,

Maybe, like me, your sense of hope is running thin as we begin this eighth month of the pandemic. You are not alone. Optimism and hope may well be the most sought after, invaluable, and yet intangible life quality people are seeking today. We are all longing for hope—the belief that the future will be better and brighter than today!

We were entirely unprepared for the impact COVID-19 would have on our everyday lives. Most of us know very little about the Spanish flu of 1918 and how it ravaged American life and killed 675,000 Americans.<sup>1</sup> Some of what happened at that time would seem familiar today, including people wearing masks and socially distancing!

We remember more modern-day plagues like Ebola, AIDS, Legionnaires' disease, polio, measles, mumps, and many others. Today, thank God, we have vaccines and treatments for most of these scourges.

Few of us remember World War II. However, many of us remember and maybe even served in more recent wars in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq, in which we lost a combined total of more than 100,000 beloved American heroes.<sup>2</sup>

I remember the Cold War tensions, the Cuban missile crisis, and the atomic threat that drove school children to hide under their desks periodically (as if this would provide safety from a nuclear attack)!

We endured 9/11, Hurricane Sandy, and massive storms in Florida, Louisiana, and Texas that wreaked terrible devastation and death upon people we love and care about, not to mention costing hundreds of billions of dollars in damage. We can now add the devastating West Coast wildfires to this list.

In some ways, COVID-19 is a crisis unlike any other as we face a deadly enemy we cannot see. Now, it seems that this dreaded disease will impact almost every area of our country, and, at the moment, we are hovering around 200,000 deaths. If we add the economic struggles and social unrest we are experiencing, who could blame someone for succumbing to the temptation of hopelessness? How do we cope and find hope during these dark and difficult days? Ignoring what we are facing today is not going to work.

I especially appreciate those around me who are more upbeat and hopeful! May their tribe increase! I am grateful for every pair of smiling eyes peering above a mask, trying to help me look toward the brighter side and face the future in hope. I pray you have a few family and friends who bring you this kind of joy and inspiration, but even these wonderful people cannot always be by our side. So, how can we find hope in a seemingly hopeless situation? Is it possible? I believe it is!

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Hope comes from connecting with someone or something that is above and beyond the shifting circumstances of our day. We need to fix our hope on what is unchanging and eternal if we are going to find security and peace today. I believe we can find the hope we long for so desperately in a personal relationship with the God who made and loves us.

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### ***A God Who Keeps His Promises?***

I find this hope in the story of the Bible. The Bible teaches us that God created a perfect world, but then something went wrong. Though He placed our first parents in an exquisite garden, they veered off the path He wanted them to follow. We followed suit, and every generation since then has suffered the

results of these bad decisions. But, according to the Bible, God will reclaim and recreate the world He made.

God has not abandoned us and will one day heal our broken world.

In Judaism, this idea is called “tikkun olam,” the healing of the world, and it is vital to the Jewish view of life, as men and women may partner with God in the healing of the world. Jewish tradition understands that something is fundamentally wrong!

How do we know what is written in the Bible is true?

So often we need something we can see to help us believe. I did! Let me tell you what convinced me. Briefly, here are three reasons.

### ***The Hope of Israel Fulfilled***

God has kept His promises to Israel and the Jewish people. Despite the devastation of the Holocaust, the Jewish people—after multiple millennia and against incredible odds—have returned to the land of promise. This was predicted by the Jewish prophets, like the well-known Ezekiel who wrote thousands of years ago, “*For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land*” (Ezekiel 36:24).

If God can orchestrate Israel’s regathering and return to the land, He can be trusted to fulfill His other promises in the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) and New Covenant Scriptures. This is undeniable. If the Bible was correct in predicting the unlikely restoration of Israel, then what else in the Bible is true?

### ***The Hope of Messiah Fulfilled***

I also believe God demonstrated His trustworthiness by sending the Messiah. His name is Yeshua, or Jesus in English, and there are hundreds of prophecies detailing His identity and mission penned by Israel’s prophets over multiple centuries. If what the Bible promised about His first coming has come to pass, then what is predicted about His second coming should be true as well.

The prophets of old prophesied His place of birth (Bethlehem) (Micah 5:2), His death for our sins (Isaiah 53:1–12; Psalm 2), His resurrection from the grave (Psalm 16), and so much more! He will return as judge and king to: restore our planet; remove sin, death, and disease; and, according to the Bible, He will wipe every tear from our eyes. Isaiah promised, “*He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken*” (Isaiah 25:8; cf. Revelation 21:4).

This is a foundation for hope that will never disappoint.

### ***Personal Experience***

Finally, without being unrealistic about the level of tragedy we have experienced, I am convinced that God is trustworthy. When I accepted Yeshua as my Messiah, He filled my heart with hope. I cannot easily explain it or prove

it logically. When you have a personal relationship with God and believe the promises in the Bible, hope invades your soul and enables you to face the future with confidence.

You will be able to read about the experience of others in this newsletter who had similar experiences to mine.

So, how should we respond to the hope God offers to humanity? We could just give up or become cynical about life in general. We could also choose to put our hope in our fellow human beings working hard to find a vaccine and a cure for COVID-19. Or, we could trust in the God who created us! Maybe a combination of the last two?

I can tell you that, even if we find a cure, we will still experience ongoing tragedies and challenges in this life, and only our relationship with our loving and immovable Creator will shelter us against the storms of life.

### ***One More Thought***

It is a mystery as to why God allows His beloved creation to endure difficult times: the loss of loved ones, jobs, educational opportunities, the separation from friends and family, and more that you and I have faced recently. It might be tempting at times to question if God is even good, whether or not you are a person of faith.

Right now, it might be a difficult season for some to keep the faith! It is understandable—times are tough! Maybe you would like to know and trust God but have a hard time believing what the Bible says about His unchanging character.

I wish I could give you an easy answer. I believe God is good by nature. He is Lord of all creation and mysteriously uses life’s most profound disappointments to shape us and make us strong.

I encourage you to hope in God! Even though the road may be dark, He is the Guide we need who lights our path and leads us through the valley of the shadow of death to green pastures.

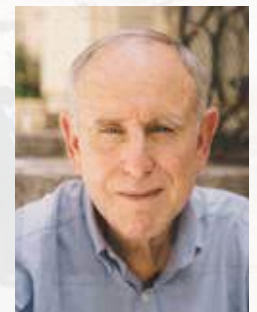
You might have an unshakable faith in God, secured by the Messiah Jesus, or perhaps you are seeking hope that has been elusive so far. I wish you blessings on the journey, whatever your starting point might be, and thanks again for taking your precious time to read.

I hope you will enjoy the rest of the newsletter!

Sincerely,



Dr. Mitch Glaser  
President  
Chosen People Ministries



1 Nina Storchlic, “U.S. Coronavirus Deaths Now Surpass Fatalities in the Vietnam War,” *National Geographic*, April 28, 2020, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/04/coronavirus-death-toll-vietnam-war-cvd/#close>.  
2 Ibid.

# The Soul-Killing Plague of Hopelessness

So many of both the big and little things we took for granted are—at least for the time being—gone.

Trying times remind us that *our mortal lives are temporary*. The security we crave eludes us. Many of us have lost family members or friends to this invisible killer, or know someone who has. Masks and social distancing are signs of a new and unwanted etiquette, and that is just the beginning. While we know that COVID-19 can certainly kill the body, we are also beginning to realize there is another invisible plague that is taking a terrible toll: The soul-killing plague of hopelessness.

The signs of hopelessness are everywhere. Medical professionals cite social isolation, fear of contagion, uncertainty, chronic stress, and economic difficulties as contributing factors to self-destructive behavior. The Mayo Clinic's website warns, "During the...pandemic you may experience anxiety, fear, frustration, sadness and loneliness—to the point that those feelings become constant and overwhelming.... If you're feeling hopeless and having thoughts about suicide, or you're concerned about someone else, learn how to find help and restore hope."<sup>3</sup> They offer good advice, but where does one turn?

Where is hope to be found and what is it in the first place? **Hope** is orientation toward what we believe to be a welcoming and desirable future. It is a belief that a better day will triumph over whatever our present dark and difficult circumstances may be.

Hope is *an act of will* that embraces a future not yet realized. Hope tempers our present experience with faith in such a future.

The persistence of hope is central to the sacred writings of Judaism. Nowhere is this summed up better than in the words of the prophet Jeremiah, "*The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I have hope in Him'*" (Lamentations 3:22–24).

This heartening message finds further reinforcement in the simple but reassuring words of Jesus, "*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light*" (Matthew 11:29–30).

We trust that science will soon develop a vaccine that will tame the virus. There is no vaccine coming for the hopelessness deeply embedded in our culture. Nothing in the world can assuage it. But Jesus brought a "peace that passes all understanding."

These difficult times offer us a choice. One direction leads us toward fear, loneliness, and despair. The alternative offers a reliable hope that anchors us in the present and beckons us toward the joyful future guaranteed to us through Jesus the Messiah.

May these words of Jesus comfort you and give you hope!

*"Shalom I leave with you; My shalom I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:27).*

## Hope and the Jewish High Holidays

The high holidays bring a feeling of belonging with family and community, but also a time of introspection and reckoning that can bring one to examine and consider his or her life and actions. There is a richness in the traditions associated with the high holidays. There is a pattern in the observance of these special days; the feasting to fasting cycle is like taking a journey filled with great joy and intense trials that force you to grow!

These celebrations are not just the product of Jewish culture. The structure of the holidays comes from the God of Israel Himself. He gave Israel these special times as a gift thousands of years ago and has embedded deep spiritual significance in each of them. Themes of repentance and atonement, in which we humbly acknowledge our shortcomings before God and find forgiveness through the substitutionary death of an innocent being, permeate the biblical descriptions of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

On Yom Kippur in Temple times, all Israel would wait with fearful expectation for the high priest to come out of the Temple after his service in the Holy of Holies. The people hoped that he would return from his duties, having paid the price and atoned for their sins. When he would emerge, the Israelites—filled with reverence, awe, and gratitude—would bow down and

worship God,  
praising  
Him  
for the  
forgiveness  
they now enjoyed.

God has made it possible for us to be forgiven through Jesus the Messiah. The New Testament presents Jesus, whose Hebrew name

is Yeshua, as the high priest—the Cohen HaGadol—and the offering.

*“But when Messiah appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption”* (Hebrews 9:11–12).

He was set apart to serve and bless us and lay down His life for us. We no longer have to wonder if God has forgiven us. Instead, by believing in the One whom God sent as a substitutionary offering, we can be filled with joy, hope, and assurance that we are forgiven. In this forgiveness we find the deeper significance of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Repentance and atonement, the primary themes of the high holidays, characterize Jesus’ message. *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matthew 4:17). His undeserved suffering and death have provided the means for men and women, Israel and the nations, to be forgiven for all of their failings. Just as Isaiah described nearly 750 years before Jesus walked the earth:

*But He was pierced through for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.* (Isaiah 53:5–6)

Forgiveness is the key to hope. When we know we are forgiven and accepted by the God of the universe, we have confidence to face whatever hardships come our way. We know in the depth of our souls that we will live with God forever. If this is true, then what can man, virus, or any other circumstance do to harm us? We have a hope that is literally “out of this world.”

## Messianic Hope Fulfilled

A better world is everybody’s dream—a paradise without disease, war, or injustice. This utopia is the Hebrew Bible’s vision and carried forward into the New Testament. In God’s kingdom, hatred is replaced with kindness, greed with generosity, and worry with confidence. This imagery has sustained the hope of the Jewish people and many others throughout the centuries.

The Jewish people hope for the Messiah to bring His kingdom of *shalom* in a world desperate for peace. Isaiah said of the Messiah, *“There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this”* (Isaiah 9:7).

One day, He will turn hopelessness into hope!

However, because of the Almighty’s great compassion, He allows humanity, which is the pinnacle of His creation, time to change and thereby dwell with the Messiah in eternal peace. God has already enacted part one of His majestic and everlasting plan through Jesus.

Jesus is the one who fulfills the “messianic” requirements outlined in the Jewish Bible. He was a faithful, Torah-observant man who taught people the ways of God according to the Law of Moses. He said, *“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill”* (Matthew 5:17). His goal was to draw men and women to God.

The prophet also said of Him, *“He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due”* (Isaiah 53:8), and *“He would render Himself as a guilt offering”* (Isaiah 53:10). He fulfilled every detail of this ancient prophecy and willingly died so that God would forgive our sins.

Jesus offers you, me, and all people on the planet the gift of eternal life in His glorious kingdom of peace and joy, *“For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day”* (John 6:40).

Humanity seems to be suffering on every front. The Bible teaches that we have drifted far from God. We are separated from our Creator and do not know why. Isaiah tells us, *“But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God...”* (Isaiah 59:2). The Scriptures also teach that the pathway back to God’s presence and His kingdom of peace and joy is receiving the gift of forgiveness for our sins. But how do we find this depth of forgiveness today?

As the New Testament describes Yeshua, He is *“the way, and the truth, and the life”* (John 14:6). He also refers to Himself as “the door,” and He invites us to knock and enter His gracious presence forevermore (Revelation 3:20). He opens the door to a blissful paradise beyond imagination!

He awaits your knocking on His door. He stands ready to give you entrance to His kingdom.

It is time for you to make the most important decision of your life. If you have never received Yeshua the Messiah as Lord of your life, stop and do it now. If you know He is who He says He is, the one who the Bible promised would come, then do not hesitate and invite Him into your life. You will never be the same!

3 “Covid-19 and the Risk of Suicide,” Mayo Clinic, August 6, 2020, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/covid-19-suicide-risk/art-20490350>

## A Psalm of Hope and Recognition

Psalm 130 was written during a time of great anguish for God's people, and the psalmist reflected on why God would allow their situation to be what it was.

We also find ourselves in unprecedented times. We are in the midst of a global COVID-19 pandemic, our country seems to be hopelessly divided politically, there is violence in the streets, and there seems to be no end in sight. What do God's people do in a time like this? Hopefully, we turn to God and pray! The psalmist felt that he was at the very end of his rope when he said, *"Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications"* (Psalm 130:1–2). Can you relate to these verses? In the situation in which we find ourselves, now is the time to cry out to God for help. If you are struggling with anxiety and fear, you can also look to Psalm 23:4, *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for you are with me."* God's presence should always encourage us.

Next, the psalmist wrote, *"If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared"* (Psalm 130:3–4). The psalmist realized that if God gave people what they deserve, not one of us would survive. To mark iniquities means to keep a record and hold each sinner accountable for every sin committed. But this psalm is about hope and forgiveness for God's people, and because of that forgiveness, God is to be feared. The Hebrew word for fear has more to do with reverence, worship, and obedience than it has to do with being afraid.

The psalmist then wrote about one of the most difficult things we have to do—wait on the Lord. *"I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than the watchmen for the morning; indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning"* (Psalm 130:5–6). The psalmist testified that he was patiently waiting for the Lord and hoping in the promises of His Word—the promises of forgiveness and redemption for His people. He compared his wait to that of one of the city's watchmen looking for the first rays of the sunrise, a time when he would be relieved of his duties by another guard and when darkness would become light. It reminds me of the words of the famous hymn, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," taken from Lamentations 3:22–23, *"The Lord's lovingkindness indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."*

Finally, the psalm closes with encouragement to trust in the Lord: *"O Israel, hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is lovingkindness, and with Him is abundant redemption. And He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities"* (Psalm 130:7–8). For the psalmist, hope and redemption are connected. Even now, some Jews recognize Yeshua (Jesus) as the hope of Israel and as the one who brings redemption to this world (Isaiah 53). Because of that hope, we can call to Him out of the depths of our affliction, even in the midst of this pandemic. We can find ultimate encouragement in the fact that God has forgiven all our sins—past, present, and future—when we seek that forgiveness in the Messiah who was "bruised for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53). We can look to the future fulfillment of this psalm when the people of Israel will one day again go up to Jerusalem—perhaps while reciting Psalm 130—to greet Yeshua upon his return, welcome Him as their redeemer, and recognize Him as king of kings and Lord of Lords.



Dr. Rich Freeman, D. Min., serves as the vice president for Church Ministries and Conferences with Chosen People Ministries and lives in South Florida with his wife, Julia.

# Three Jewish Hippies Find Unexpected Hope

\*Excerpts from *I Found Shalom* testimonies

## Mike, Ron, and Debra

Mike was raised in a Jewish home, but he said, “I felt that there was so much more there, so much more that I wanted to know about God. There was just this deep longing in my soul that there was more to life.” Ron shared a similar background. “I was born into a Jewish family. My parents decided to send me to a boarding school, which started a journey of adapting to things that I was just not prepared to adapt to.” Debra grew up Jewish, too, but recalled, “I searched out Hinduism, Buddhism, transcendental meditation, chanting. I was disillusioned, just searching to know God.”

## Their Journey Together

Mike and Ron were good friends. Mike would visit Ron from time to time when they were in college. They decided to drop out and go to California and “find themselves,” along with so many other Jewish men their age.

So, they travelled west, where they acquired twenty acres of land in southern Oregon. Mike was living his dream in the Pacific Northwest, but he was not satisfied. “I was more depressed, more discouraged than ever!” As a result, they decided to hitchhike to Mexico.

“Almost every ride we were getting were from these long-haired hippies (remember them?),” Mike said. They shared with the two friends about the Bible and Jesus.

Ron and Mike found themselves in Mendocino, California, standing on the Pacific Coast Highway. As Ron recalled, “A pickup truck pulls up about a hundred feet away from us. A guy gets out of the passenger side, comes right up to me, and says, ‘Do you know that Jesus loves you?’”

This was just the beginning of the road trip to end all road trips!

“On our way back from Mexico, we stopped in San Francisco, where Ron had introduced me to a girl,” Mike said. When Mike met Debra, he opened his heart and started sharing all that he was feeling. Debra believed that everything began with this conversation. “We talked about our hopes, our dreams, our fears,” she said. “We talked about our thoughts about God. We were amazed at how similar we were.” Something happened in Mike’s heart that weekend. “I was in love, and I had never experienced this incredible feeling before,” he said. “I knew that God had brought Debra into my life.”

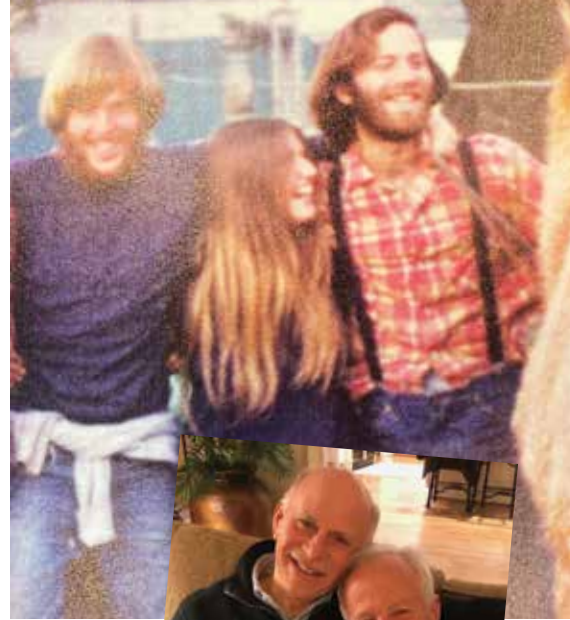
Several months earlier, someone had given Mike a Bible. And as God was working in Mike’s heart, something was stirring in Ron’s soul. Ron bought a Bible from a local drugstore and opened it to the New Testament. Everything he read was very meaningful, and he was attracted to the person of Jesus. Simultaneously, Mike was also reading the New Testament and began feeling close to God. One night, while standing under the stars, Mike said, “God, if you and Jesus are the same, would show me that this is the right thing to do.”

Ron kept his Bible studies secret from Mike. Ron was also becoming increasingly overwhelmed with the good news of Messiah and could not stop reading about it! He walked up the hill behind their house, closed his eyes, and said, “‘God, if you’re there, if you’re real, I want to know.’ I opened my eyes and I just knew. I knew God was real.”

Mike told Ron what happened, and Ron could not believe it! “All this time, the truth was right in front of our noses,” Ron exclaimed. The next day, Mike told Ron that he had asked Jesus into his life, and then Ron told Mike that he had done the same.

“Jesus was the Messiah,” Mike said. “That prayer that I had asked God, ‘God show me that this is the right decision,’ I felt so secure and so satisfied,” he recalled. Ron was sensing God’s work in his life as well. “I was falling in love with Jesus who had every answer for every question that I had,” Ron confessed. “Jesus has become everything to me.”

A month later, Mike told Debra that he believed in Jesus. She was devastated!



Mike, Ron, and Debra back in the day and Mike with Ron now.



Mike started reading Scripture to her and she eventually believed too. “Here I was, twenty years old, raised in New York City and never once had I heard or read anything from the New Testament,” Debra said. “I had no idea that Jesus was Jewish. I had no idea He claimed to be the Messiah my Jewish people were waiting for all of these years. I couldn’t deny the change I saw in Michael’s life.”

A few months later, Mike and Debra were married.

“God had a big cleanup job to do with us, being two drug-using hippies,” Debra said. “But He did an amazing job. He taught us how to be responsible, which was no easy task for two very irresponsible hippies. And over the years, we had two children and raised them to know the Lord. Everything I always wanted as a little girl in my home, God has blessed me with in my own family.”

Ron got married, too, and he and Roxanne had four boys! Then Mike and Ron started a lighting company together. The two Jewish men from Queens, New York, are best friends to this day. Yeshua brought them together but deepened their friendship when they accepted Him as their Messiah. Ron, Debra, and Mike became examples of hope and peace for their families, hundreds of employees, and many others whose lives they touched together and as individuals throughout the years.

You can watch their full stories and many others at [ifoundshalom.com](http://ifoundshalom.com).

# Would you like the hope that Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, offers?

You might be ready for the next step—to acknowledge Yeshua (Jesus) as Israel’s long-awaited Messiah. Here are some simple steps to take as you continue your journey.

✓ **REPENT**—God is holy and we are not! We frequently behave in ways that separate us from Him, and we need His forgiveness. The Hebrew Scriptures say, *“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and you sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear”* (Isaiah 59:1-2). Recognizing our sin is the first major step towards an intimate and personal relationship with the Lord.

✓ **BELIEVE**—We cannot earn God’s forgiveness through good works or keeping the *mitzvot*. The Torah says, *“Then he [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness”* (Genesis 15:6). The New Covenant Scriptures say, *“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life”* (Romans 6:23). Personal salvation is a gift from God that we accept by faith.

✓ **ACCEPT YESHUA**—The great Rabbi Saul, writing in the New Covenant Scriptures, told us what we should believe to receive the gift of personal salvation: *“That Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). If Yeshua is both divine and the rightful king of Israel, then He deserves our full allegiance.

✓ **PRAY**—Prayer is a personal conversation with God—heart to heart. You can pray in this way: *“God, you are righteous and I am not. I have disobeyed your commandments. I believe Yeshua is my Messiah. His death and resurrection are my only hope. Please forgive me and give me a new life with you.”* And God will answer, as we read in the New Covenant Scriptures, *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name”* (John 1:12).

We would love to help you discover how Yeshua can transform your life—so please do not hesitate to contact us! Email [ask@chosenpeople.com](mailto:ask@chosenpeople.com) or call 212-223-2252.

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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241 East 51st Street, New York, NY 10022 • OR IN CANADA: Dufferin-Lawrence PO Box 58103, Toronto, ON M6A 3C8

[www.chosenpeople.com](http://www.chosenpeople.com)

