

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE



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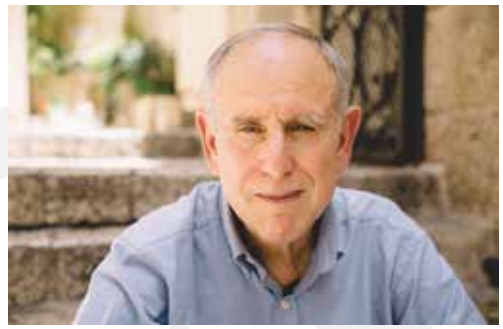
MARCH 2021

HOPE IN THE MIDST OF PLAGUES

SEEING GOD IN THE DARKNESS OF PLAGUES • PSALM 23 STUDY

FROM THE PRESIDENT DR. MITCH GLASER

Seeing God in the Darkness of Plagues



Shalom and greetings in the Messiah.

I pray this newsletter finds you hopeful in the Lord. Although the coronavirus still plagues us, we patiently await God's help and healing.

I asked Neal, our newsletter editor, to outline on pages four and five all the blessings in ministry we have enjoyed throughout 2020, *despite* the hardships. When you see what God has done, I am sure you will marvel and rejoice with us.

In the darkness, the Light of the World continues to shine brightly. As David wrote in Psalm 23:4, *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me."* I cannot imagine a more comforting word in the entire Bible for these days.

I hope you have sensed the Lord's presence with you even amid profound difficulties and loss. I have been reading the Sermon on the Mount in my quiet time, and the second beatitude has impacted me significantly, *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted"* (Matthew 5:4). If you are mourning, may the Lord comfort you. If you want prayer, we have created some space on the enclosed card to list a prayer request so that it can be sent back to us.

Passover Is Around the Corner

We will be observing Passover at the end of this month. Since plagues will be on the minds of Jewish people and Christians who study the Hebrew Scriptures, I thought I would share some thoughts about the ten plagues.

There are many sparkling gems of truth to be found in studying the plagues. Even the Hebrew terms for the various plagues are meaningful. Although the actual Hebrew word for "plague" is only found once in the book of Exodus, the variety of terms used helps us understand their nature.

A Brief Summary of the Terms for Plagues and their Meaning

The plagues narrative begins in Exodus 7:1–5. There are five different references to the coming plagues in this passage.

*Then the Lord said to Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My **signs** and My **wonders** in the land of Egypt. When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will **lay My hand on Egypt** and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by **great judgments**. The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, **when I stretch out My hand** on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst."*

The Bible refers to the miraculous and revelatory nature of the plagues along with their punitive purposes. Through the plagues, God revealed both His power and character to the Egyptians and the Hebrews.

Some of the terms, such as "signs" and "wonders," are almost always associated in the Hebrew Bible with the release of God's power designed to turn unbelievers toward Him in repentance and faith. Similarly, God used the plagues to reveal His holiness, justice, and love, especially toward His chosen people. Have you ever thought of the plagues themselves as evangelistic in nature?

Ezekiel 36, a prophecy we see partially fulfilled today as the Jewish people are back in the Land in unbelief, parallels Exodus 7:5. Moses predicts a future day of deliverance and restoration for Israel and the Jewish people: *"I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, 'when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. For I will take you from the*

nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land” (Ezekiel 36:23–24).

Both passages make it clear that one of God’s purposes in bringing the Jewish people out of captivity to the Promised Land was to be a miraculous sign of God’s faithfulness. The regathering of the Jewish people to the Holy Land is an obvious miracle that should help the Gentile nations see what God has done and turn in faith to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Ten Big Ones!

The recitation of the ten plagues is an integral part of the Passover Seder and one of the most memorable moments of the meal. As a child, I always looked forward to reciting the plagues. Traditionally, Jewish people dip their pinky finger into a glass of sweet red wine and place a drop of it onto their plates as they shout the name of each of the ten plagues.

The recalling of the plagues is a way to remember the story of God’s deliverance of the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage. One traditional reason for why we drop the wine on our plates is that the drops represent the reduction of our joy, symbolized by the sweet wine—one drop for each plague that fell upon the Egyptians. Therefore, we do not rejoice in the judgment of the Egyptians, as Jewish tradition teaches mercy, but rather we should reduce our joy because of their suffering.

This unique part of the Seder reminds the Jewish people that God brought plagues upon others in mysterious harmony with His will. He used plagues to move both the Egyptians and Jewish people to action. Biblical plagues are purposeful, and, while causing terrible suffering, they are used by God for His divine purposes.

There are many biblical examples of plagues besides the ten in Exodus. God heaped affliction upon Job, the prophets, and many others. Sometimes, God *caused* the plagues, and other times He allowed them to happen for His divine purposes. For example, Naaman and Miriam (Moses’ sister) were both plagued with leprosy for God’s holy purposes and His glory.

Plagues, however, are not always punitive. *“Jesus answered, ‘It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him’”* (John 9:3). Like the healing of the blind man in John chapter nine, plagues and disease afford God opportunities to reveal His glory, goodness, and redemptive power.

COVID-19 and the Ten Plagues

Now, let us explore some ways we might better understand the role of the current COVID-19 pandemic in the plan

of God. I am not suggesting that this virus was imposed directly by God as were the plagues in Exodus. Pharaoh hardened his heart, and God brought the ten plagues upon the Egyptians because of their leader’s misconduct. However, there is no reason to believe that the spread of the coronavirus is a divine punishment. The Bible never mentions the coronavirus, the Black Plague, or the Spanish Flu. Therefore, I believe the adage, “Where the Bible is silent, so am I.”

On the other hand, we cannot deny that God used plagues in biblical history as judgments and promises to do so in the future. Most believers would agree that plagues are signs of Jesus’ Second Coming. Luke wrote, *“Then [Jesus] continued by saying to them, ‘Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven’”* (Luke 21:10–11).

COVID-19 awakens us to the real possibility that plagues, along with other signs, will be part of a future season of end-time judgment before Jesus’ return. Plagues upon humanity are also part of the traditional Jewish view of the end times. This shared belief has caused some openness to Jesus on the part of ultra-religious Jewish people around the globe.

We can only hope and pray that our broken and sinful world might look beyond the suffering of today to see and believe that God longs to redeem us from the plagues of life. He is gracious and keeps His promises but is also serious about the judgment to come. While we need to proclaim the good news, we should not forget that there is also bad news for those who do not turn to the Messiah. Many Jewish people recognize this reality today, and we have, by His grace, seen quite a few Jewish people turn to Jesus during the pandemic.

Hopefully, we will look back one day and see more clearly the greater good our heavenly Father accomplished through this epidemiological trial. We pray that blessings will come for everyone throughout this time of pain and suffering (Romans 8:28) and that we will remember lessons learned in darkness when we return to the light.

I pray that the Lord will use this experience to shape our character, reorder our priorities, and draw us closer to Him.

Thank you for your love and prayers. I know you will enjoy reading about all the good the Lord has done in our midst during this difficult time. His miracles shine even brighter in dark times!

Blessings and Happy Passover,


Mitch

“The Lord your God is the one who goes with you.”

Deuteronomy 31:6

God Is Blessing Our Personal Ministry in Israel

◆ Chosen People Ministries has been working diligently to meet Jewish people’s spiritual hunger and needs in the midst of the pandemic. Restrictions on meeting seekers in person caused our staff to become more creative in order to fulfill their ministry.

For instance, our staff member, Robin, has been organizing short-term mission trips to reach “wandering Israelis” in popular tourist destinations, such as New Zealand and India. This ministry became impossible as Israelis were



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unable to travel and countries like New Zealand were closed to visitors. So, Robin hosted an online event for the Jewish new year and decided to expand it into a Facebook watch party. Many of her Facebook friends are non-believing Israelis she met on backpacker outreaches around the world. After the event, she heard from Orit* and Dan* who were interested in knowing more about Jesus. Orit began to read her Bible

again, and Robin is following up with her about what she is reading. Dan is also in touch for prayer and further dialogue. These two Israelis are seeking the Lord because of Robin’s persistence through the pandemic.

Ayelet, one of our newer Israeli staff members, is leading Zoom Bible studies in Hebrew and English, and often receives emails from those who wish to meet more often. Many of the ladies offer appreciation for the in-depth studies. One woman, Rivkah,* who was in low spirit at the beginning of one Bible study, stopped everybody from getting off the Zoom meeting because she wanted to share how important and life-giving the weekly Bible study has been for her. Since she has been unable to enjoy in-person fellowship with her congregation, she shared what a blessing it has been for her to have an online community to meet with and study God’s word together.

Israeli staff members Randall and Luda continue to make follow-up phone calls with people who ordered the *Isaiah 53 Explained* evangelistic book. Many of these phone calls turn into lengthy conversations, and some people even want to meet regularly through Zoom. Levi* met with them several times via video during the Passover season, and he was amazed to discover that having a relationship with Jesus is not like joining another religion but about connecting to Jesus personally and relationally. It was the first time he had seen how Jesus is pictured so clearly in

the Passover Seder. After a few weeks of Zoom meetings, he prayed to receive Jesus! Since then, apart from one in-person meeting to give him a Bible, the entire ministry has been through Zoom calls! Personal outreach is still possible!

God continues to bless the work of Chosen People Ministries, and Jewish people are being reached with the gospel every day—especially in Israel!

God Is Blessing Our Digital Outreach

◆ The Lord is prospering and multiplying our ministry in new and innovative ways we would never have imagined before quarantine life. Our online outreach, Bible conferences, and holiday celebrations enable us to meet a completely different audience than we did in person. We look forward to going back to in-person events but will continue doing virtual ministry as well. The pandemic has opened doors of ministry that were not open to us before, and we thank God for these new opportunities.

- Our online Bible seminar, “A Keener Understanding of the Bible,” saw 5,000 attendees, while our in-person Bible seminars in the past averaged around 50 people.
- Our single virtual presentation of Messiah in the Passover drew almost 7,100 viewers, while our yearly Passover banquets in New York City, Chicago, Boston, and Florida drew 368 registrants combined in 2019.
- We had a unique *Pandemics, Prophecy, and the Middle East* webcast that drew an astounding 21,000 attendants with more than 1,160 requests for our free book, *The People, the Land, and the Future of Israel*.
- We held high holiday virtual services, which had a combined total of more than 27,200 viewers.
- Our new podcast, *Our Hope*, which began on July 1, has been downloaded almost 21,200 times.
- Our first-ever virtual Hanukkah children’s program, “Yeshua: Light of the World,” reached almost 4,000 households. It was so successful, our second virtual children’s event, “A Purim Pajama Party,” was held at the end of last month.
- Our Messianic testimonies of Jewish believers on the I Found Shalom website now number more than 100 stories of faith and continue to attract thousands of viewers!

We praise God that our online events are drawing so many participants, including Jewish seekers looking for hope during the pandemic.

He will not fail you or forsake you.”

We are so encouraged how God has used the creativity and technical capabilities of our global staff to proclaim the gospel in new and creative ways that will certainly become a regular part of our ministry tool chest for the foreseeable future.



*Names changed

God Is Blessing Our Online Evangelism and Discipleship

Quarantines and lockdowns cannot stop online ministry! The pandemic gives us the opportunity to expand our online presence and reach even more Jewish people with the gospel. Over the past year, we officially launched three new innovative websites. Two of them focus on evangelism and the other on discipleship.

Chosen People Answers

In December 2014, Chosen People Ministries' president, Mitch Glaser, challenged one of our missionaries to dream up the ultimate Messianic apologetics website to reach Jewish people with the gospel. For the past five years, a team has been working tirelessly to make *Chosen People Answers* a reality. Finally, in December 2020, we officially launched the beta version of the long-awaited project.

Chosen People Answers contains a massive library of both Jewish and Christian texts, a growing collection of apologetics content, and an interactive design to allow user participation. The site's social media design enables users to like and dislike paragraphs, post comments, and earn achievements. Each engagement requires digital "shekels," which are earned weekly, and every shekel spent will earn experience points that are required to unlock additional features, like in a video game. The more one reads the more one can engage on the site.

The site contains two types of apologetics compositions: long- and short-form articles. The long-form pieces consist of in-depth arguments making a case for belief in Jesus. Examples include "The Historical Reliability of the New Testament," "An Introduction to the Incarnation and Jewish Theology," and "How Can Jesus Be Messiah if There is No Peace on Earth?" The latter is one of the major Jewish

objections to Jesus as it presumes a second coming, and Judaism generally teaches that the Messiah will only come once. Although we are still testing all of the features, you can still visit the site now at chosenpeopleanswers.com.

About Messiah

The idea for and the execution of *About Messiah* began with the pandemic. It is a digital evangelism site geared toward a secular Jewish audience with little knowledge of Judaism or Christianity. A team of our missionaries and summer interns joined forces to write evangelistic content with this audience in mind.

The site consists of brief articles that respond to some of the questions Jewish people might have about belief in Jesus. For example, some titles include questions such as "What Does It Mean to Have a Relationship with God?" "Is Jesus the Messiah of Israel?" and "Can I Be Jewish and Believe in Jesus?" A live chat box allows Jewish seekers to interact in real-time with one of our missionaries. You can go to AboutMessiah.com to check it out. Please share it with a Jewish friend!

Follow Messiah

In January of 2018, we recognized the need for a discipleship series to help new Jewish believers in Jesus grow in their faith. In partnership with Digital Harvest and One for Israel, we created the first-ever video-based, online Messianic Jewish discipleship program, *Follow Messiah*. It is a sixteen-unit series consisting of lessons on prayer, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, God's Word, Jewish identity in Jesus, and living the Kingdom life as taught in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. At the end of each lesson, discussion questions appear for further reflection. You can go to FollowMessiah.com to learn more.



Comfort with the Shepherd

In our last study, we saw that even through the darkest of times we should not be afraid. Why? Because Immanuel, God is with us: *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for **You are with me**”* (Psalm 23:4a). The Bible admonishes us not to be afraid more than 300 times, and it is often accompanied by the reminder that God is with us. As long as the sheep keep their eyes on the shepherd, they should not be afraid—no matter how dangerous the situation might be.

Now we move to the next thought in verse 4, *“Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”* The shepherd’s tools of the trade, his rod and staff, give comfort to the sheep. The rod is a piece of wood that fits in the palm of the shepherd’s hand and extends out about two feet. It somewhat resembles a small baseball bat. It is the shepherd’s main line of defense for both himself and for his sheep. It stands as a symbol of the shepherd’s strength, power, and authority in any situation.

The Bible speaks of the fact that God will cause His sheep to pass under the rod. In David’s time, the sheep passed one at a time under the shepherd’s rod upon entering or leaving the fold so that they could be counted. In the evening, the shepherd would bring his sheep from the pastures into the sheepfold where the sheep could rest. The shepherd would lead his flock to the door of the corral, and then, one by one, name by name, he would tap each one of them with his rod and count them off as they entered the enclosure. If there was one sheep missing, the shepherd would become aware of it so that he might go out in search of the wayward sheep immediately.

In the morning, the shepherd would come down to the sheepfold, and the keeper of the pen would open the door for him. The shepherd would then call his sheep by name and tap each one with his rod as they came out to make certain that all of them left the fold. By taking an accurate count every evening and morning, the shepherd could determine when a sheep was missing. Verse 4 should then remind us that if we go astray, our Good Shepherd in heaven will soon be seeking after us. The Good Shepherd takes an individual interest in each of His sheep, and He knows and calls them by name.

The rod was also used by the shepherd for examining the sheep for pests and diseases. He would painstakingly use the rod to look under the heavy coat of wool to see if something was lurking under the surface that might give the sheep a problem.

Now, the shepherd’s staff, on the other hand, is uniquely used for the sheep alone. The staff looks like a huge question mark and stands as high as the shepherd himself. While the rod conveys a sense of authority, power, discipline, and defense, the staff speaks of patience and kindness. In sheep management, the staff is used in three ways:

1. It draws sheep together into an intimate relationship with one another as well as with the shepherd.
2. It catches straying sheep by the crook at the end that pulls them back as they wander away.
3. With gentle prodding, it guides the sheep onto a new path or safely along dangerous and difficult routes.

While the sheep feel free from fear when the shepherd is with them, the rod and the staff are what keep the sheep in the shepherd’s comforting presence. In this difficult and fearful time, I pray you would not only keep your eyes on our Good Shepherd and feel the comfort of His nearness, but also remember that He keeps you in His presence!



Shepherd with sheep in the pasture on a spring day



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.

MINISTRY NEWS



REACHING JEWISH PEOPLE THROUGH THE CREATIVE ARTS

Since classes and church services have been shut down, an associate pastor asked our staff member if she would be interested in teaching a Sunday morning class in the creative arts studio at the church...in front of a camera. For our staff member, cameras were not exactly in her comfort zone. But she prayed, and God immediately directed her to say, "Yes." For twenty weeks, our staff member prepared lessons and spoke to the audience beyond the camera lens. As it turns out, this audience included many Jewish non-believers. The Passover Seder she hosted was virtually attended by people from Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and South America. Since 2005, our staff member has taught Bible studies at a retirement community with an 85 percent Jewish population. Since the pandemic, they have enjoyed teleconferencing Bible studies. Several months ago, Daniel* shared, "I was always intrigued with the Bible, and now I'm really enjoying it. Our Bible study is my most favorite event of the week." Following the study, our staff member called Daniel and asked if he could pray, "Jesus, Messiah, Son of God, Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." He responded with, "Sure, I can say that. I know that I'm a sinner. I believe that Jesus is the Messiah. What are those words?" Daniel prayed and became a new creation in Messiah Jesus.

**Names changed*

OLD NEIGHBORS RECONNECT FOR BIBLE STUDY

One of our staff members recently had the opportunity to share the gospel with his Orthodox Jewish neighbor. They have spoken over the phone a couple of times, and each time he asked our missionary about his faith. Recently, Shmuel* said he wanted to start studying a book of the Bible with him. When our staff member heard this, he could not believe his ears! The two of them are now studying the Scriptures together in the early morning when nobody is yet awake in Shmuel's house. It is a very big deal that someone from the Orthodox community is speaking to someone outside of the community on matters of the Bible, especially the New Testament. Please continue to pray for Shmuel.*

A GRANDSON'S FAITH

Recently one of our staff members received a phone call from Ira.* Ira is a Holocaust survivor and an important person in his community. Occasionally, Ira calls, especially after he receives a greeting card from our missionary for the Jewish holidays. Ira had a unique question during this phone call. Ira confided that his twenty-nine-year-old grandson recently "converted" to Christianity but told him that he was still Jewish even though he believed that Jesus was the Son of God and the promised Messiah. Our staff member reassured Ira that what his grandson told him is true, just as the identity of an Asian or an African is not altered by their convictions about Jesus. Ira told our staff member that he would love and accept his grandson no matter what he believed. Our staff member was not exactly sure why Ira wanted to share this news about his grandson, but sensed that the Holy Spirit was stirring in his heart and had been for quite some time. Pray for Ira; he is eighty-five now and one of the few Holocaust survivors still alive to share his story. There is still hope!



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“On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the Lord, take no rest for yourselves; and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”

ISAIAH 62:6-7



Never has your support for this outreach been more important, and never has it been easier to give than through our monthly giving program, WATCHMEN FOR JERUSALEM.

Watchmen for Jerusalem is a monthly giving program that provides a simple way to reach Jewish people with the good news of the Messiah. You can send your monthly gift to Chosen People Ministries instantly through electronic funds transfer. This means convenience for you and savings for the ministry, which results in more funds going directly to the mission field.

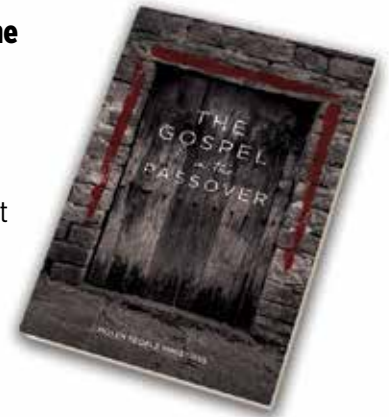
Become one of our Watchmen today, and you will get exclusive updates from Chosen People Ministries President Dr. Mitch Glaser. In these thirty-to-sixty-minute phone calls exclusively for Watchmen participants, Dr. Glaser will provide you with ministry updates, share new projects and initiatives, and give you the opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

Plus, when you become one of the WATCHMEN FOR JERUSALEM, we will send you a beautiful photo book of the Holy Land called *Israel: The Land and the People*. If your monthly gift is at least \$75, you will instead receive our newest book, *A Rabbi's Vision Continues*, which chronicles the history of Chosen People Ministries through the efforts of a Hungarian Orthodox rabbi who came to faith. And if your monthly gift is at least \$150, we will send you an authentic ram's horn shofar from Israel, the same kind that may have been sounded from the walls of Jerusalem!

So, whatever you can give, please consider making it monthly! Become one of the WATCHMEN FOR JERUSALEM today!

The Gospel in the Passover • \$14.95^{US}

The Gospel in the Passover is written for those who want to explore the traditions of the Passover and deepen their understanding of the links between Passover, the Last Supper, and Communion.

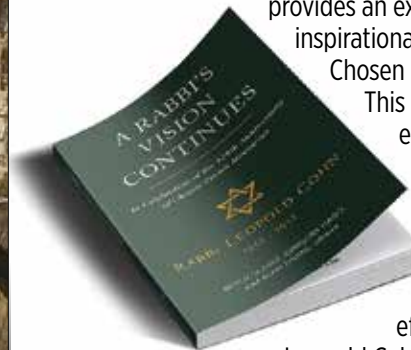


A Rabbi's Vision Continues • \$16.95^{US}

Our brand-new book, *The Rabbi's Vision Continues*, provides an excellent and inspirational history of Chosen People Ministries.

This collection of essays from both Messianic and traditional Jewish scholars highlights the efforts of Rabbi

Leopold Cohn and his son, Joseph, as they launched a turn-of-the-century mission—now known as Chosen People Ministries—to bring the gospel of Jesus to their Jewish people.



Order using the enclosed card or for phone orders call 1-888-2-YESHUA in the U.S. For more resources, visit us online at store.chosenpeople.com.

MESSIANIC RESOURCES



THE CHOSEN PEOPLE



A higher standard.
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