


The Chosen People



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Let Me Tell
You Why...

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CHOSEN PEOPLE MINISTRIES

International
Headquarters
241 East 51st Street
New York, NY 10022
212-223-2252

In Canada
Box 897 Station B
North York, ON M2K 2R1
416-250-0177

Celebrate Messiah
(Australia)
PO Box 5006
Glenferrie South VIC 3122
03-9898-6578
www.celebratemessiah.com.au

Visit us on the web at:
chosenpeople.com
Our Spanish website is
www.puebloelegido.com

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Shalom!

Stories can stir us. Stories can transform us. Stories can change our minds.

The stories inside these pages are about critical circumstances and decisive moments. The thread that binds them together is that the people who are telling about their lives are all Jewish. Each of them found his or her way to an unlikely destination—belief in Yeshua (Jesus) as the Messiah of Israel.

Jesus and Jewishness

Whatever the size of the gulf of unbelief that had to be crossed, each person will tell you that on the other side they found something they were afraid they might have left behind: their Jewishness. Each of them discovered that Jesus and Jewishness are not only compatible—they are somehow essential to each other.

How can this be? For almost twenty centuries, the representatives of Jesus and of the Jewish people have been on opposite sides of the fence. As Jews, the one thing we've asked is to be left to live in peace. As one writer has put it, "Don't kiss us, don't kill us."

But along come some Jewish people whose background and way of life cannot be denied. Yet they come to us with the wild tale that their search for the key to Jewish identity has led to them to the unlikely place of all.

The Real Question

What is the relationship between the message of Jesus and the Jewish people? To put it bluntly, is belief in Jesus of Nazareth the goal toward which the *Torah* propels us as Jews? Does Jewishness find its fulfillment in connection with Jesus?

If we say yes, we are saying a great deal. We are saying that there is a God after all—and that God has entered history. We are saying the Hebrew Bible must be reckoned with as a compelling force in connection with the writings of the New Testament. And we are saying that people everywhere, in some fashion, are accountable to their relationship to this reality.

Jesus, the Jewish Messiah – and You

There are many expressions of Jewish life and thought. One is found in the attempt to leave God behind, and to seek a twilight world in which the comforts of Jewish culture are there when we want them, without any reckoning with the One who made us Jews. But as one wit observed, "If you are living as though there is no God, you'd better hope you're right."

If there is such a thing as a blessing that is joyful and exasperating at the same time, it is this: it is impossible for any Jew to become truly free of God—for if we were to become thus free, we would cease to be Jews.

Likewise, it is impossible for us to become free of Jesus the Jewish Messiah. For we argue that the key to our Jewishness resides in the calling that God has placed upon him, and through him, upon us.

We encourage you to read these stories and to probe more deeply. You may be surprised by what you find.

I thought I'd put to rest questions about "The Meaning of Life" during my hippy days growing up around Washington, DC. After trying out a lot of schools in the area, I buckled down at American University. When I finished, I launched out into the business world. By then, I had decided that the meaning of life was that life had no meaning.

I became quite successful, if by success you mean a lovely wife and family, lots of money to spend on toys and a comfortable retirement to look forward to. The only trouble was that by 1992, at the age of 41, I was not happy. I needed a new definition of success. So, you might say I was open to exploring new avenues.

Messiah in the Passover

A business associate invited me to a presentation of "Messiah in the Passover" at his church. Scott Brown, the man doing the teaching, was Jewish. For some reason I said yes and brought my wife, Tina, and our children.

Now, growing up in a Conservative household, I'd been to plenty of Seders, but I'd never heard anything like Scott's message. He drew out the symbolism of the Passover and made a connection between the distant past in Egypt and what made it meaningful today. As Scott taught about the Messiah's fulfillment of the sacrificial Passover Lamb, he struck a chord. Something that I had thought was without meaning suddenly had meaning. Scott showed that Judaism was alive, but alive in connection with Yeshua, Jesus.

Right after the service, I made a beeline to Scott. I wanted to meet with him, and he agreed. For about two months we met every week, and during those meetings, I tried every argument I had against the idea that Jesus could be the Messiah. Over and over Scott would say, "Let's see what the Hebrew Scriptures say." And over and over, my arguments would fall.

Success at Last

Finally, the moment came when I ran out of arguments. During this time, I was also attending the Son of David Congregation in Rockville, Maryland, which was under Scott's leadership. That May, the Sabbath after *Yom HaAtzmaut* (Israel Independence Day), in the middle of the service, I finally made my decision. I became a believer in Messiah. And I will never forget the feeling of independence I experienced that day from the jaded view of life I'd cultivated up until then.

I am grateful. I used to think life was meaningless. Then I found out that with faith in Messiah, it is more meaningful than I and my family could possibly imagine. In the time that has passed, I've lost a lot of the "toys" that I thought were so important to me. But in the end, that's all they were—toys. In their place, I have received something far greater than diversion—real love. That, in my view, is worth more than any of the world's success. ☆

A New Definition of Success



Dennis Karp

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Jewish Roots and the Fruits of Faith

Justin Kron



I realized that the Jewish part and the Christian part were not separate compartments, but were actually part of the same thing.



I think that sometimes people expect a certain plot line for stories like this. How some crisis precipitated a low point that led to a sudden, transforming decision. But the story of my decision to believe that Jesus is the Messiah came in stages; in different ways at different times in my life.

It began in childhood with my parents' messy divorce. My mother lost custody, although we had regular visits—but the results of the legal battle left her badly depressed. Then one day, while she was riding on a city train in Chicago, she was befriended by someone who would have a profound impact on our lives. Josh Wiggins was an African-American believer and, as he tells it, the Spirit of God simply directed him to speak with the obviously unhappy woman sitting across from him.

Unexpected Friendship

My mom and Josh became friends and would meet at De Paul University every week; and every week, Josh would gently unfold the message of the Messiah to her. Sensitive to her Jewish background, he often used the Hebrew Scriptures to make his case. And I think that the Scriptures that address the suffering of the Messiah, such as Isaiah 53, really touched her. These things, combined with the love and compassion of Josh, led her to make the decision to believe.

It was a costly choice. Her parents, with whom she was living in Skokie, were furious and tossed her out. So she and Josh, Josh's wife, Liz, and their three daughters, decided to share a home.

Meanwhile, I was living with my father, which was all right. But from then on, for about the next three years, every other weekend when I would visit my mom, I would go to worship services and Bible studies. Then, on Mother's Day in 1979, with as much understanding as I could find in my eight-year-old life, I accepted the Messiah.

Now, I benefited from two things. The first was that my father did not try to undermine my decision. The second thing is that my Jewish relatives blamed my mother and not me for what I had done. So, I continued to have the benefits of an extended Jewish family while the "Christian" part of me was also being nourished.

Only when I became older did I realize that the Jewish part and the Christian part were not separate compartments, but were actually part of the same thing.

Thinking It Through

This coincided with the second stage of my growth. For although I had believed as a child, I was beginning to think like an adult. In high school, I started to ask questions. Is the Bible reliable? Can I really trust that Jesus is the Messiah? And after what I believe was a thorough examination of the facts, I found that the answer was, "Yes."

There is nothing contradictory about maintaining a Jewish heritage and embracing faith in Jesus as Messiah. And the memories I carry from my tangled childhood and the mixture of Jewish tradition and Messianic faith have proven to be a soil in which I am able to thrive. ☆

My story would not be complete without including my mother's story. She had a difficult childhood and as an adult she sometimes found it hard to cope. My father had been raised as an observant Jew and was encouraged to get an education. But the more educated he became, the more he drifted from any sort of anchoring religious belief.

Childhood Troubles

During my childhood, my mother began a search for God. I remember her reading the book, *The Nazarene*, by Sholem Asch, which was sort of on the "forbidden list" for good Jews. Then, a non-Jewish neighbor invited her to hear a rabbi who had come to faith in Messiah. She was attracted to the message, and shortly after, she began attending a Chosen People Ministries Messianic Jewish ladies' Bible study in Levittown, New York. After being shown many Messianic prophecies in her Jewish Bible, my mom came to faith in Messiah. She also met several other Jewish women there who encouraged her.

When my mother attended classes, my brother, sister and I also went along. I grew very close to Ruth Wardell, the woman who worked with the children. But as my mother became more committed, my father raised objections. He was concerned about the effect this was having on us children, and by now his side of the family had ostracized my mother. Meanwhile, I had a burning desire to know who the Messiah was.

A Haven of Love

When I was almost twelve years old, my father permitted us to attend Camp Sar Shalom, the Messianic summer camp that Chosen People Ministries sponsored. There were two things that God impressed upon my heart at camp. The first was that my struggles to "be good" and my failure to "measure up" were not just my own problem, but everyone's problem. As the prophet Isaiah said, "*all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags*" (Isaiah 64:6). I knew from my Jewish upbringing that the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, and there was no longer a sacrifice to cover our sins.

The second thing I learned was what God had done to remedy the situation. When I read Isaiah chapter 53, I could not believe how well it was describing Jesus the Messiah: "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all*" (Isaiah 53:6)

Another thing that affected me was the love and kindness shown to me by these believers. So, at the end of one of the camp meetings, I knew I had to make a choice, and I chose Messiah!

Both my parents are gone now. As an adult woman, I have a greater appreciation for the degree of courage it took for my mother to choose as she did. I wish I could say "thank you" to her—and to my father also, because even though he did not approve, in his own way, he supported my decision.

Finding Messiah was like finding a haven of love. And his sheltering love has been there for me throughout my life. ✠

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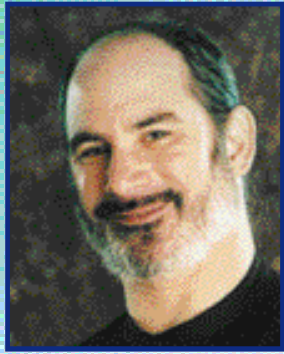
Messiah's Sheltering Love



Emily Seemar



Alan Shore



In Spite of Doubt

I marvel at the Bible. I find it expresses the brokenness of my own nature and its yearning for freedom and wholeness in ways I sometimes feel I have not begun to fathom.



It has been almost thirty years since I accepted the claim that Jesus is the Messiah, according to the Hebrew prophets. When I look back at that callow, unformed youth and ask, “How could you have made such an outrageous decision?” I am amazed not so much that I did it, but that I have stood by that choice in all that has followed.

Although that young man might be horrified to find what has become of his youthful good looks and strong body, there is something he would recognize in the man he would become. It is that he is Jewish—and that it matters to him.

I sometimes ask if the same arguments that persuaded me then to believe would work today. I am not sure that all of them would.

Although my faith has grown, I must confess, I still have times of doubt. But there are two things that I was struck by all those years ago that I still find make a compelling case for the Messianic claims of Jesus.

A Reliable Basis

The first is that the longer I continue, the more I marvel at the Bible. The profound depths of its understanding of human nature never cease to amaze me. In all of the joys and sadness that compose my life, I find the Bible expresses the brokenness of my own nature and its yearning for freedom and wholeness in ways I sometimes feel I have not begun to fathom.

In presenting the Messiah as the human sufferer, vindicated at last by a just and merciful God, the Bible enfolds our own suffering and vindicates us. As we place our faith in the Messiah, our lives become hopeful. And that hope is based upon the idea that we are moving toward a destination—a “final act” in the play of history that will reveal all we need to know. This is what the Bible teaches. The question remains, is this truly the case?

A Life Experience

The second thing is that this spiritual decision has been validated in actual life. In the midst of the turmoil of my early twenties, I was unexpectedly confronted by the idea that the message of reconciliation in the teachings of Jesus was meant especially for Jewish people. The more I delved, the more I had to admit that the powerful story of redemption and forgiveness could only work if Jesus had been a Jew.

If so, then his message was not only also for Jews, but primarily so.

The Psalmist challenges us to “*taste and see that the LORD is good*” (Psalm 34:8). And by taking the “leap of faith” that my reason had led me to, I have lived, despite my imperfections, in the knowledge of God’s love and forgiveness. The promise of peace has been confirmed to me time and again, even in the midst of struggle and uncertainty.

Faith and Doubt

I have also found that faith and doubt are not always mutually exclusive qualities. There is a story in the Gospel of Mark where a man seeks healing from Messiah for his son. In the midst of his misery, the man exclaims, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

This strikes me as not only the most Jewish prayer in the Bible, but in all of Jewish history. ☆

The horrifying reality of the Holocaust was not something I had to learn about in books or in movies. It was the moving force that shaped my family's life.

When my parents and older brother came to America from Europe after World War II, they settled in Cincinnati, Ohio. I was born a year later and my younger brother came along five years after that. Many of our neighbors had the same background, and the Holocaust was something we all were trying to put behind us.

New Influences in a New World

When my older brother turned thirteen, he attended a Bible study in our neighbor's home. He soon came to believe what they taught, that *Yeshua* (Jesus) is the Jewish Messiah. When he shared the news with my parents, you could say they were displeased.

Still, my mother agreed to let my brother attend a Messianic congregation and meet other Jewish believers. In time, she became concerned about allowing her son to attend a place that she knew nothing about. So she visited herself, and before long, came to believe through the Scriptures that Yeshua was her Messiah. The Messianic congregation became a way of life for her and her three children. My dad was not very happy about this, but he permitted us to attend.

My Own Choice

Although I went to this congregation for the next five years, I did not believe what they taught. But I still participated, and in my freshman year of college our congregation sent the college age group to Chicago for a retreat. I looked forward to a chance to travel.

I was with a friend that was very zealous. One day, she began to talk with some people on the street about how she had come to have a personal relationship with God. I chimed in, since I had some knowledge of the Bible at this point. My friend asked these people if they would like to pray with us and ask Yeshua to be their Messiah. They said yes. My friend told me to pray with one of the people and she prayed with the other.

Now, this was really funny, me praying with someone to receive the Messiah when I did not believe in him myself. They were so excited after we finished. But then, when I went back to where I was staying that night, I was troubled. I talked to God for the first time. I did not want to be excluded from the joy and peace that these others so evidently enjoyed.

That night, at 19 years of age, I came to believe that Yeshua is the Messiah. I found that from then on, I loved reading about Yeshua and getting to know him. It has always been important to me to maintain my Jewishness. This is who I am and I would never think to distance myself from my history and my heritage.

There's one more thing. After many years of watching us, my dad also became a believer. He once told me that he never understood why he survived such a terrible time in Europe, until he realized that he had to come to America so that he could meet the Messiah. ✠

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Fran Feldman

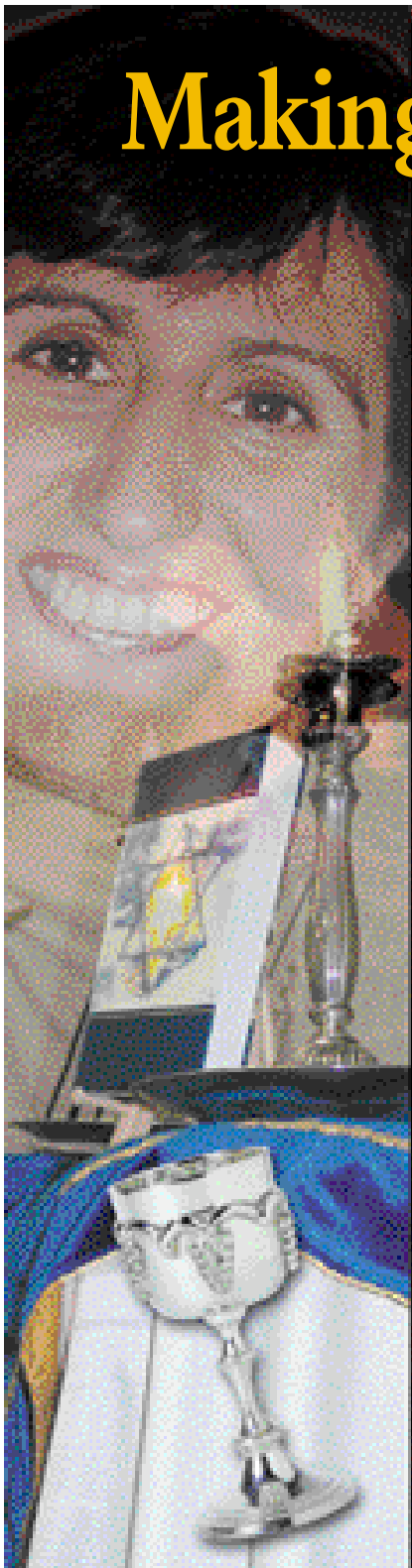
A Whole Family, One Decision at a Time



Want to know more?

The Jewish people you have met in this newsletter are only a small fraction of those who have explored the truth of the claims of Jesus and have found them credible and transforming. If you are Jewish and would like to explore Yeshua's claims to be the Jewish Messiah, write or call for a free gift. Use the coupon on the back, or call 212-223-2252 and ask for free gift #8032F.

Making the Case for Messiah



But maybe, just maybe, it is true.

There has been an unmistakable revival of interest in ancient texts. The phenomenal success of *The DaVinci Code* and the astonishing number of *Kabbalah* centers springing up like mushrooms is ample proof that there is a yearning for life's meaning that no amount of modern knowledge can satisfy. And there is a disquieting suspicion afoot that the ancients had something we may have overlooked.

Perhaps it's time to take a look into a collection of ancient texts from which many—including those whose stories are told here—have drawn priceless knowledge. It's called the Bible.

The meaning toward which we strive, whether we are aware of it or not, is built into the fabric of the universe. But how are we to discern it?

Rather than decipher some code or puzzle, our Creator has given us a plainly marked path to follow and someone dependable to show it to us. It is none other than the Messiah of Israel. He has a name—it is Yeshua—Jesus—whom the Hebrew Scriptures foretold and the New Testament revealed.

Look Before You Leap

It is said that faith requires a leap. But it's always good to scope out the terrain first. The Bible has some signposts to look for:

- 1) Everyone needs God's forgiveness.
"For in Your sight no one living is righteous" (Psalm 143:2).
- 2) God has provided a means through which we may be reconciled to him.
"Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, You will provide atonement for them" (Psalm 65:3)
- 3) The Messiah is God's provision for our forgiveness.
"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

What Should I Do About It?

There is only one thing to do. Receive the gift of forgiveness he offers by accepting him as your Lord. You can do this, right now, by praying: "Messiah Jesus, I receive You now as my Lord and ask You to guide and empower me to become Your true follower. I accept the atonement You made for my sins, and Your free gift of forgiveness. Help me turn from falsehood and follow You in truth."

"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

I am Jewish and want to know more about Jesus. Please send me a free gift. 8032F

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