

The Chosen People



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JEWISH EVANGELISM AND THE HOLOCAUST

**INSIDE
THIS
ISSUE:**

The Impact of the Holocaust on Jewish Evangelism • Reports from Finland, the Baltic States, and Poland • Matthew Bible Study

THE IMPACT OF THE HOLOCAUST ON JEWISH EVANGELISM

The following is an excerpt from Mitch Glaser's recent presentation entitled, "Heroes of the Holocaust: Poland, the Warsaw Ghetto and Yeshua," given at a gathering of leaders in Jewish missions.



The Holocaust was the most significant challenge to the survival of the Jewish people since the Babylonian Captivity. Over the centuries, many threats reshaped the Jewish community, including the Crusades, expulsions, *pogroms* and the ongoing conflicts related to the modern state of Israel. Yet no other modern trauma brought upon the Jewish people is comparable to the reduction of the Jewish population and destruction of Jewish life engendered by the Holocaust.

The impact of this tragedy on the general Jewish population was massive, as was its impact on Jewish followers of Jesus. Jewish believers living in Europe prior to the Holocaust numbered in the hundreds of thousands. Most were either killed or moved to other parts of the globe. Even after almost seventy years, we still live in the shadow of the Holocaust, and the experiences of our spiritual forefathers during the Holocaust continue to shape Jewish missions.

We stand on the shoulders of these heroes of the Holocaust, particularly the Jewish believers of the Warsaw Ghetto, although their achievements and witness remain largely unknown. Their story—as much or as little as we know—must be told.

The Nazi Invasion and the Construction of the Warsaw Ghetto

The Nazis invaded Poland in 1939 and anti-Jewish regulations were soon implemented, leading to the construction of the *Warsaw Ghetto*. The Nazis also built ghettos in other Polish and Lithuanian cities with large Jewish populations, such as Lodz and Vilna.

The Nazis established the Warsaw Ghetto in November 1940. They placed nearly 500,000 Jewish people within the Ghetto and imprisoned them with a wall. In 1941, about 45,000 Jewish residents died due to overcrowding, forced labor, poor sanitation, scarce food, and disease. In 1942, the Nazis deported most of the Ghetto's population to *Treblinka*, one of six death camps, leaving only 60,000 residents. The following year, in April 1943, the Germans attempted to raze the Ghetto and deport the remaining population to Treblinka, initiating an uprising, led by Mordecai Anielewicz. The bitter fighting lasted twenty-eight days, ending with the Ghetto's destruction.¹

An Overview of Pre-War Jewish Missions in Poland

Martin Parsons, a missionary to the Jewish people with *The Church's Ministry among Jewish People* (established in 1809) gives a sketch of Jewish missions in Warsaw in a statement prior to the Nazi invasion:

*The American Board of Missions to the Jews [Chosen People Ministries today] has a center in Warsaw on the east of the river. They have room for some inquirers, in addition to general evangelistic work. The Mildmay Mission (Messianic Testimony today) has a hall in the Jewish quarter in Warsaw and their work mainly touches poorer Jews. The American European Fellowship is in Warsaw and works particularly among children. They have a villa at Radoso, which is used in the summer for children's work. The Bethel Mission in Lodz has an evangelistic center and a colony. In addition, in Poland there is one Pentecostal evangelist, one member of the Open Brethren, one member of the Closed Brethren and a few private evangelists living by faith. The four missions in Warsaw work together in close cooperation.*²

Parsons' organization, CMJ, built Emmanuel Hall in 1927, a showcase for Messianic believers in Warsaw. Three Jewish believers provided significant leadership in Poland: H. C. Carpenter, Paul Levertoff, and J. I. Landsmann. Martin Parsons took the helm in 1927 and led the work until the Nazi invasion. Many effective missionaries served with CMJ, such as Bazyli Jocz, father of Messianic scholar Jakób Jocz.

Jewish Believers in the Warsaw Ghetto

When the Nazis invaded Poland, conditions among the Jews were already terrible, but the Final Solution arrived in Poland like a raging storm from hell. Jews and missionaries to the Jews were rounded up and taken to concentration camps, or else killed outright. Chaos was everywhere, and the work of the missions ground to a complete halt from which it would never recover.

Missions to the Jews died in Poland along with approximately 3,000,000 Jewish people. The largest of the open and active fields of labor among the Jewish people for the Gospel was destroyed; the war marked the end of a people and the end of an era.

In his monumental book, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, Peter F. Dembowski calculates that there were 5,000 to 6,000 Jewish believers living in the Ghetto at its height.³

Rachmiel Frydland speaks of his own interaction with the remaining believers in the Ghetto:

In late 1944, by hiding in cemeteries, deserted churches, and the homes of fearful friends, I was one of the few surviving Jews in Warsaw outside the ghetto. In that enclosure were 5,000 Jews, the last of Warsaw's original 500,000. By God's enabling, I secretly slipped into the

*ghetto and was able to speak comfort to a few of the Jewish believers still alive. Other Jewish brethren heard the message and believed in Messiah Jesus.*⁴

Frydland was one of the most well-known Messianic Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. His first-hand testimony provided information about the life of the Jewish believers in Warsaw before and, to some degree, during the war.

One of the most significant Jewish believing voices was that of Dr. Ludwick Hirszfeld, author of the book *The Story of a Life*. Dembowski says, "Herszfeld (sic) is the most knowledgeable informant about the Ghetto and many aspects of the daily life of the Ghetto dwellers."⁵

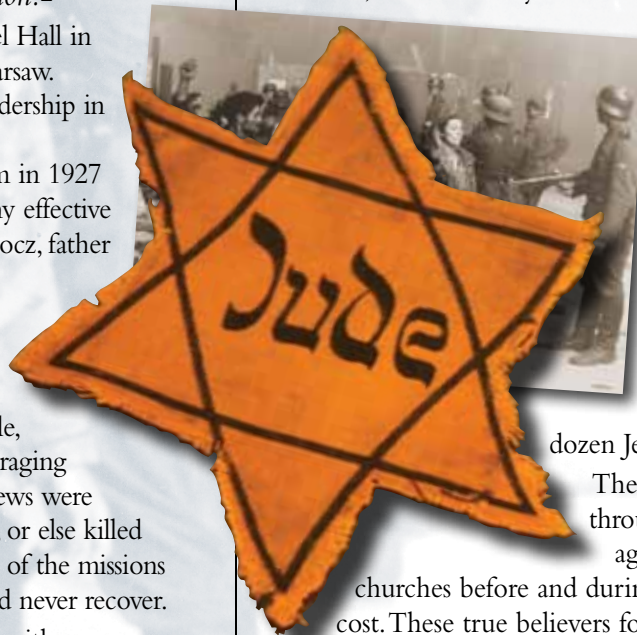
Dr. Hirszfeld's autobiography, written soon after his escape from the Ghetto, gives a detailed description of his life and that of others, as well as providing testimony of his faith. He was a well-respected scientist who had served as a medical doctor in the Polish army in Yugoslavia. There, he began his lifetime work of developing methodology to identify blood types, which scientists still use today. Hirszfeld became a believer in his twenties, and the vitality of his faith comes through in both his writings and actions.

According to the records of various Jewish missions and churches, there were many conversions preceding the Holocaust. These continued all the way until the destruction of the Ghetto. Warsaw, a hotbed of Messianic activity, was home to more than a dozen Jewish missions.

The believers who came to faith through the Jewish mission agencies and Evangelical churches before and during the Ghetto counted the cost. These true believers found comfort in their dire straits through the Messiah.

While we do not have many records of their voices, one day we will hear their stories of martyrdom and suffering. In the eternal kingdom, their voices will be lifted with ours in praise and worship to the One who suffered on our behalf and was raised in triumph, conquering death, evil and every enemy of God and His chosen people. The grace of our Messiah and Lord will wipe away the horror of the Ghetto.

- 1 The Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust: <http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/timeline/ghettos.htm>
- 2 IMCCAJ Vienna Conference 1937
- 3 Peter Dembowski, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto: An Epitaph for the Unremembered*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005) 68.
- 4 <http://www.messianicassociation.org/bio-frydland.htm>
- 5 Dembowski, 114.





The Makis on Holocaust Memorial Day (in Latvia) and (bottom) with the memorial stone provided by Via Baltica Ministry to the community.



Reflections on Returning from Poland

Just a few days ago, I returned from Poland, where I spent eleven days with a group of Holocaust survivors now living in Israel. We began the trip with two days in Warsaw, the capital, where a visit to the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial was a must.

We then traveled to the north of Poland. On the way, we visited the town of Plonsk, the birthplace of David Ben-Gurion, the first Israeli Prime Minister. We also stopped in Olshetin, home of astronomer and scholar Nicolaus Copernicus, and Gdansk, which is said to be the most beautiful city in the country. The European Soccer Cup took place while we were in Poland, so of course we had to add some sports to

Toivo Maki and the Work in Finland and the Baltic States

Toivo Maki and his wife, Malla, enjoy ministering among the small community of 2,000 Jewish people that reside in Finland. Toivo had an established career as an architect when he received a calling to ministry. The Makis have also branched out to the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, where there are still 5,000-10,000 Jewish people, mainly elderly survivors of the Holocaust and oppressive Communism. Before World War II, the Baltic States had a large (250,000) and established Jewish community with many famous Jewish sages and rabbis. Today, there are opportunities to minister in unique and practical ways to this much-diminished group.

The focus is Latvia's capital, Riga, and second-largest city, Daugavpils, where there is a small Messianic congregation. Toivo received a special invitation to participate in a service for a memorial that was to be erected at the site of a mass grave from the Holocaust. He was interviewed by two newspapers, and had the opportunity to speak with the mayor of the city to explain his faith and how he hopes to help and minister to the people.

Finally, there is a ministry called "Bread For Latvia," by which large shipments of bread are distributed throughout the country. In Vilnius, a Jewish city once famous for its impact on Jewish tradition and learning, a small and needy Messianic congregation received word of the shipment and took the bread and distributed it among those in prison.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Please pray for continued open doors for the Makis, that the favor they have received in the Jewish community will increase, and that opportunities to minister through Messianic congregations will expand.

Please pray for the well-being of the Holocaust survivors, the elderly and those in prison whom they often visit.

Please pray for the translation of the book, **Isaiah 53 Explained**, into Finnish—a project that is currently underway—to touch many lives.



European

Jewish people have lived in Europe for more than two thousand years. The Jewish population of Europe in 1933 was about 9.5 million, representing more than 60% of the world's Jewish population at the time. Most European Jews resided in Eastern Europe, with more than 5.7 million Jews living in Poland and the Soviet Union. Before the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, Europe had a dynamic and highly-developed Jewish culture. In little more than a decade, most of Europe would be conquered, occupied or annexed by Nazi Germany, and most European Jews—two out of every three—would be dead.

Today, there are approximately 17,000 Jews living in Poland and the Baltic States; in Russia, there are approximately 200,000. The total European Jewish population is currently 1.5 million, accounting for just 12% of the world's Jewish population.

the list of the group activities! We watched three teams as they competed fiercely for first place in various kinds of games. It was nice to see how these 80+ year olds felt young again.

We also visited one of the local death camps, where we prayed that a horrible event like the Holocaust would never happen again. That same evening, we had time for some people in the group to share their memories about it. One of the men who spoke spent three years in one of the death camps. He said, "I went to the camp as a young boy, when I was only nine years old, but I was an adult by the age of twelve when we were liberated."

On Sunday, we went to a local Evangelical church; the members were so happy to host a group from Israel. The pastor invited me to preach about God's salvation, and a few people from the group shared their testimonies. For most of them, it was the first time they had ever visited a church, and they loved the experience. The most important part of our tour was the spiritual fellowship that we had every morning and evening, when we sang worship songs, exchanged experiences and learned from the Scriptures. I had the

opportunity to teach about Israel as God's chosen nation, His plan of salvation for all people and about the way one should live after accepting the Gospel.

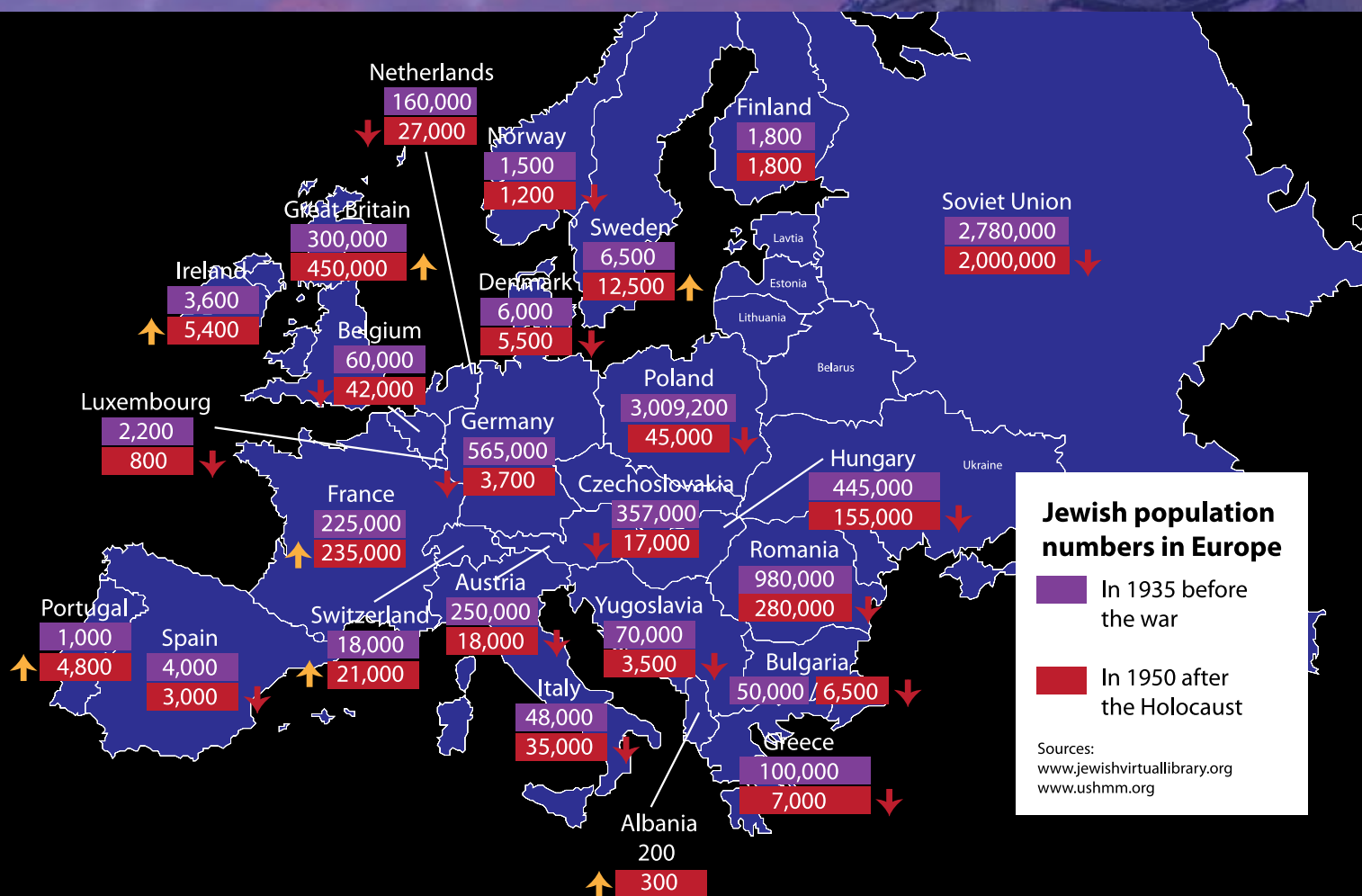
Every evening, different local believers visited us, sharing their testimonies and answering many questions. Many of the people who came on this tour began to read the Bible and pray for the first time in their lives. Once, when we were talking about biblical prophecies and how we are a part of their fulfillment, a lady stood up and said that this tour changed her life. A few others prayed with me, asking God to show Himself to them.

I am thankful to God for the opportunity to serve these Holocaust survivors through organizing and leading this trip to Poland. They were able to meet real believers, and they could feel the love of God. I believe that many of them will come to believe in Yeshua after this trip. Please pray for salvation for these dear people, as well as for the salvation of the whole nation of Israel.

Maxim K. – Israel



Destruction: Jewish population in 1933 compared to 1950



SEE THE BIBLE THROUGH JEWISH EYES

BY DANIEL GOLDBERG, TH.D., D.D.



Dr. Goldberg serves as International Ministries Representative for Chosen People Ministries and lives in Pineville, North Carolina with his wife, Madeline.

THE KING'S SON CRUCIFIED

Matthew 27:27-50

All four Gospels record the abuse Jesus suffered at the hands of the Roman soldiers charged with His crucifixion (Mt. 26:66, 67). For their amusement, He was stripped and on Him was placed a scarlet robe, a king's garment. His crown was thorns; a reed was His scepter, and His tribute was spittle! (Mt. 27:26-31).

THE INSCRIPTION OVER THE CROSS (Mt. 27:37)

Pilate wrote the inscription "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" and had it placed on the cross, above the head of Jesus, which was severely insulting to the Jews over whom Rome ruled. They tried to persuade Pilate to soften the wording (Jn. 19:21), but Pilate refused. The Scriptures teach that the inscription will prove to be correct.

Only Jesus the Lord will be realized as the true "King of the

Jews," as the inscription describes. As David's son by birth and David's heir, Jesus is indeed King of the Jews. As such, the King Messiah will return to rule the world from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-5).

THE SALVATION AT THE CROSS

Matthew indicates that there were two thieves put to death with Jesus (Mt. 27:38). Luke's account expands upon the story. Both thieves were suffering and dying for their ill deeds. One of them made a confession, saying to Jesus, "*Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom*" (Lk. 23:42).

Jesus' reply verified His heavenly authority. He stated, "*Assuredly, I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise*" (Lk. 23:43). Jesus the Lord and the King of glory would not remain on the cross. His destination was Paradise in heaven with His Father. But He would not depart alone. He

would take the believing thief with Him.

CONCLUSION

The salvation of thieves and sinners occurred when the Messiah died to atone for the sins of mankind. The two thieves who died with Jesus illustrate the way in which people depart this life. Both confessed that they were malefactors. One man believed the claims of Jesus the King Messiah. His sins were forgiven and he received the assurance of salvation and the promise of eternal life with the Savior. The other sinful man refused the claims of Jesus and died eternally separated from Him.

What about you? Where will you spend forever? Will you spend eternity with our wonderful Savior and Messiah in heaven?



NERIYAH A. HEALTH UPDATE

Many friends of Chosen People Ministries and Neriya A., who serves in Israel, have been asking about his health after the failure of the donated kidney he received six years ago. Neriya is receiving dialysis three times a week as he prays for another donor to arise. He has arranged to get treatment while sleeping, so that it will not interfere as much with his ministry and his home life. Currently, he is continuing to lead an active life of service to Messiah, as the Lord enables him to meet his health challenges. Please pray that he will continue in stable condition as he waits for his name to come up in the list of potential kidney recipients—and that the Lord will provide a good match.

MINISTRY OF MERCY IN MESSIAH'S NAME

Eugene L., one of our faithful staff members in Israel, began visiting an elderly Jewish lady. After establishing a trusting relationship, he patiently shared the Gospel with her and finally she accepted the Lord. Eugene writes, “I have no words to express my joy! She asked me to visit her frequently and read the Bible together.” Not long after, the woman passed away. Eugene adds, “I am thankful for this opportunity to have brought the Good News to her shortly before her last breath—the Lord is merciful.”

LUNCH LEADS TO FAITH DECISION IN ARIZONA

After being introduced by her aunt, a Jewish believer, to staff member Cathy Wilson at a Bible study, Stephanie* was open to knowing more. Stephanie's aunt made arrangements for them to meet for lunch, and throughout the meal their conversation revolved around Jesus as they ate and read from the Bible. Cathy writes, “After the lunch plates were cleared, we held hands and prayed. Right there in a booth at a busy lunchtime spot, Stephanie confessed her sins, asking forgiveness and placing her trust in Jesus. Our new sister in the Lord was beaming — her face was radiant!”



CANADIAN CAMPING TRIP BRINGS SALVATION TO RUSSIAN JEWISH WOMAN

Even when on a short vacation from their Toronto ministry, staff member Anna Bortsov and her husband, Vladimir, are ardent witnesses for Messiah. During a weekend camping trip, they encountered a number of Russian Jewish people at the campsite and began to witness to them through Isaiah 53. One man invited Anna and Vladimir to his campfire. He knew Isaiah 53 by heart in Hebrew and Russian, and they sat near the fire talking for a whole evening. His wife was listening, but did not enter the conversation. After about four hours of discussion, the man got up to go to sleep — but his wife came and sat down. She said, “I am ready to repent; help me to do it,” and Vladimir led her to the Lord in prayer.

**name has been changed*



MESSIANIC RESOURCES

for the holidays

The theme of our newest 15-month Messianic Jewish Art Calendar is worship and a healthy relationship with God. Each month features a beautiful original watercolor of Jewish life in Jerusalem. Our calendars make great gifts, so don't forget to order extras! **Messianic Jewish Art Calendar • 5005 • \$13.95us**

Another winner from Marty Goetz. They're all here—traditional Hanukkah tunes for the Festival of Lights as well as favorites celebrating the Light of the World. Hanukkah blessings are sung by Marty's daughter, Misha. **Festivals of Light • OC136 • \$16.99us**

The flickering lights of the Hanukkah menorah remind us that God is mighty to save and that Yeshua is truly the Light of the World. This item is manufactured in Israel. **Hanukkah Menorah • 5023 • \$24.95us**

Tony Pearce has had many opportunities to discuss the issue of the Messiah with Jewish people. "Who do you say that I am?" was the question Jesus asked the disciples. This book looks at some contemporary Jewish answers to that question and more. **The Messiah Factor • 3141 • \$12.95us**

It is never too early to get started preparing for Passover. Our special Passover set from Israel has a Matzah Tash, Seder Plate, Kiddush Cup, Messianic Haggadah and Leader's Manual. Individual pieces can be purchased online. **Passover Set (5 piece) • 5027 • \$64.95us**

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