

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE



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IS JERUSALEM THE CAPITAL OF *Israel?*

PALESTINIANS WHO LOVE
ISRAEL | HEBREWS 9 BIBLE
STUDY | MINISTRY NEWS



FROM THE PRESIDENT



IS JERUSALEM THE CAPITAL OF ISRAEL?

The U.S. Embassy's
move to Jerusalem
will infuriate Israel's
neighbors

Shalom and greetings in our Messiah,

I hope this special newsletter, focusing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, will fuel your prayer life and help you fulfill the mandate in Psalm 122:6 to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem.”

The recent announcement by the president of the United States recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel—a signal to start the process of moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem—has caused us all to ponder the question of Jerusalem more carefully. The response of the United Nations further complicated the issue when 128 member nations voted against the decision and only nine voted in favor of it. Those against the decision claim that the *unity of Jerusalem* can only be settled once a peace agreement is decided upon and implemented. The countries that stood with the United States and Israel were Togo, Honduras, Nauru, Palau, Micronesia, Guatemala, and Marshall Islands.

On a side note, it is amazing to see what a small country can do to impact the flow of history. In a visit to Israel in 2016, Guatemalan president, Jimmy Morales, was honored by the Knesset for the role Guatemala played in the formation of the State of Israel.

A news brief by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency describes the Knesset president’s statement:

Knesset President Yuli Edelstein said the ties between Israel and Guatemala “are deep and historic.”

“Before Israel’s establishment, on the eve of the U.N. decision on November 29 [in 1947], we still remember and appreciate the actions of Guatemala’s ambassador to the U.N., Dr. Jorge Garcia Granados, who enlisted Latin American states to vote in favor of the partition plan,” Edelstein said Tuesday.

“It could be that without Guatemala, the resolution on that fateful day would not have passed, and history would be very different.”¹

Granados also cast the first vote for the creation of the State of Israel.

The fate of Jerusalem is a controversial political issue, and Israel’s neighbors and their supporters around the globe vehemently disagree with the recent decision. Yet, as important and symbolic as it is, the Jerusalem decision is just one of the challenges we face in a complex and conflicted region.

The alignment of nations in the Middle East is a web of tensions that is difficult for Westerners to fully understand. Most disciples of Jesus are not experts on Middle Eastern politics! But this region is the focus of the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments and the nation of Israel, in particular, is the subject of many biblical promises. However, Israel’s neighbors also have a historical and even a prophetic role in the future of the region (Isaiah 19). Therefore, Christians are very concerned about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and hungry for more information about the situation.

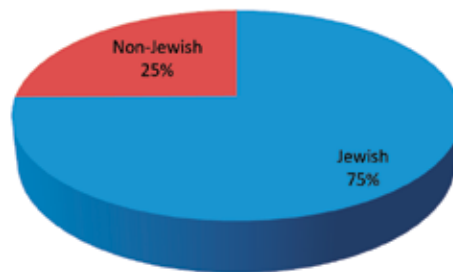
I hope this newsletter will give you a more balanced perspective on the conflict as you are introduced to Palestinians and former Muslims who love the Lord Jesus and the Jewish people!

Don’t you agree that we need to see all of life’s issues through the lens of the Bible and our relationship with God through the Messiah Jesus? It is critical for us to make sure that we square our perspective on controversial issues such as the conflict in the Middle East with our understanding of Scripture.

The Apostle Paul writes,

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

Believers will not agree on every issue, but we must make sure that Scripture informs our views on significant topics so that



Ethnic Breakdown

we, as brothers and sisters in Jesus, will be able to have peaceful and productive discussions about our differences.

The Bible must impact and help shape our views on contemporary issues, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

So, perhaps a better way to ask the Jerusalem question might be, **“Does the Bible teach that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel?”**

According to leading evangelical Christian archeologist and author, Dr. Randall Price, Jerusalem is mentioned 800 times in the Bible. Jerusalem, or a variation on its name, is in about two thirds of the books of the Old Testament and one half of the books of the New Testament. Researchers have found 660 verses in the Old Testament and 142 in the New Testament that speak of Jerusalem. Price adds that there are 465 references to Jerusalem in the Old Testament and 24 references in the New Testament that are prophetic in context.²

However, not every Christian believes that when the Bible speaks about Jerusalem that a literal Jerusalem is what the biblical author had in mind. Gary Burge, an outspoken evangelical on this issue, writes in a recent article in *The Atlantic*,

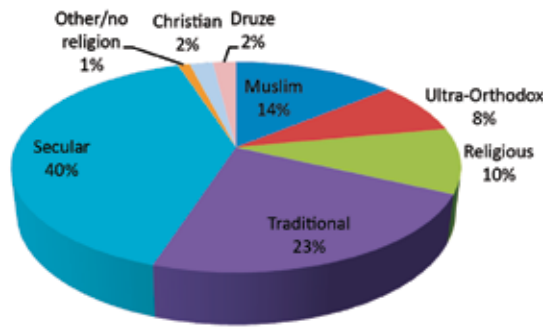
*... We do not promote what we call the “territorialism” of the Bible. We anchor our thinking not in the Old Testament’s land-based promises, but in the Gospel, where the tribal or local theologies about Israel become global and universal, welcoming all people from every tribe and every land into a divine promise of blessing.*³

Dr. Burge views the Bible and its history through the lens of supersessionism or “replacement theology.” Burge is stating that the land promises to the Jewish people should not be taken literally and certainly do not apply to literal Israel—ever!

If a more literal view of Jerusalem is understood and the history of Jerusalem in the Bible is examined, however, it becomes clear that the City has been the capital of Israel since the time of King David. The majority of Jesus’ ministry took place in Jerusalem, which was recognized as a Jewish city, and the Savior wept over this city that He loved (Luke 19:41-44).

According to the recent LifeWay Research survey sponsored by Chosen People Ministries and author Joel C. Rosenberg, **80 percent of the Christians surveyed said that they believe the promises God made to Abraham in the book of Genesis endure until this very day.** These promises, of course, include the land promises with the boundaries spelled out in Genesis 17.

Yet, the survey also showed that Christians have a heart for Palestinians as well. Scott McConnell and Bob Smietana of LifeWay Research reflect upon the findings of the survey in a recent commentary for Religion News Service:



Religious Breakdown of Israeli Adults

While two-thirds of evangelicals want Israel to thrive, only 24 percent support that nation no matter what it does.

Just under half (42 percent) support Israel’s existence, security, and prosperity but don’t feel obligated to support everything Israel does.

And they haven’t ruled out making peace with Palestinians. Only a third reject the idea of signing a treaty making room for a sovereign Palestinian state, while nearly half say they aren’t sure.

In fact, many evangelicals are concerned about the future of Palestinians. Fifty-nine percent say Christians should do more to care

*for Palestinians.*⁴

PRAYING FOR THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM

McConnell and Smietana’s conclusion is eloquent and I could not agree more:

In a world where promises are easily cast aside by loved ones, employers, business associates and politicians, evangelicals believe God has consistently kept his promises—including God’s promises to Israel.

In the end, evangelicals see Israel like family. Although they may disagree with some of its policies, they still want it to prosper.

But they don’t hate Palestinians or hope the world will end in fire.

*Instead, they pray for peace in the Holy Land. And like most of the world, they are not sure how to get there.*⁵

I know you will enjoy the remainder of this newsletter that contains stories from our good friend Tom Doyle, a co-laborer among both Jews and Palestinians in Israel, as well as the testimony of a Muslim woman who became a believer and a friend of Israel. Thank you for your faithful prayers and financial support!

Blessings in Yeshua our Messiah,

Mitch

- <https://www.jta.org/2016/11/30/news-opinion/israel-middle-east/israel-thanks-guatemala-for-pivotal-role-in-creation-of-the-jewish-state>
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- Gary M. Burge, “You can be an Evangelical and Reject Trump’s Jerusalem Decision.” *The Atlantic*, Dec. 6, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/12/evangelical-trump-jerusalem-embassy/547643/>
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- IBID. Scott McConnell and Bob Smietana, “Not all evangelicals are seeking Armageddon,” Religion News Service.

PALESTINIANS WHO LOVE ISRAEL : BY TOM DOYLE

BELIEVERS LIVING IN THE MIDDLE EAST FEAR GOD MORE THAN TERRORIST

GROUPS LIKE THE ISLAMIC STATE. THEY STAND STRONG FOR CHRIST AND

DO NOT RUN AWAY IN THE FACE OF OVERWHELMING DANGER.



SAMI ABBASI

Sami Abbasi squinted through the railing of a first-story balcony in an abandoned building on Gaza City's Salah al-Din Road. The IDF Jeep approached like a dog sniffing its environment, looking for trouble. *They are dogs, and if they're looking for trouble, I'll give it to them*, he mused. The thirteen-year-old Palestinian rolled a baseball-sized rock in his right hand, estimating the distance to the approaching Israelis. To bolster his resolve, he counted to three and then heaved the stone. The missile scored a direct hit, smashing the windshield. Sami rewarded himself with a fist pump, launched his body over the railing to the ground several feet below, and dashed toward the outdoor market a block away. *I hate those dirty Jews! I can't wait to kill one someday.*

In January 1988, Sami was well on his way to a life of violence. Prison was virtually certain, and an early death likely, but either would be a small price to pay for doing his part to get back Palestinian land and keep Israelis out of the Gaza settlements for good. Sami dreamed of being a part of the solution that would win for his countrymen the ongoing war with Israel once and for all. They would show the world.

But then, he met Jesus.

"When I came to faith in Christ, I decided that I wanted to be a full disciple. I could not just pick and choose the commands of Christ

that I wanted to obey. If I was to follow Jesus, I wanted to do all that He told His disciples to do. Loving your enemy was by far the biggest challenge for me.

I hadn't been a believer long when I was reading through the Sermon on the Mount and the Spirit of God convicted me. I had heaviness in my heart and it was because of my loathing of the State of Israel and the Jewish people. In my mind, Israel was the reason for everything that was negative in my life.

They certainly qualified as my enemy. I expected Jesus to forgive me for my hatred and to change my heart in the process. He could do that, of course, but I thought I might merely tolerate Jews and that would be the end of that.

I was not prepared for the complete fulfillment of this prayer. Jesus not only took away my hatred for Israel and the Jews, but He replaced it with a love for them. This was unexpected. How could I love Jewish people while living in the Gaza Strip? If anyone found out about my change of heart and told some of the radicals that lived around me, well, this would be my death sentence.

Jesus has called Jews and Arabs in Christ to serve Him together. This is deep within the heart of God—and it is the real Jerusalem Peace Plan. I used to run from Jews. Now I run to them. God has called me, a humble Palestinian, to reach the lost sheep of Israel. What an honor!

Recently, I shared with an Orthodox Jewish man on a bus. I told him that I was from Gaza and I used to hate him and all Jews. But then Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, came into my life and He gave me a deep love and respect for Jewish people.

I think he was in absolute shock. He finally asked me if I would come to his house that night and share my story with his family. I did come, and I was overwhelmed with the opportunity to share Jesus with an Orthodox family at their Sabbath meal. Me, a Palestinian from Gaza in an observant Jewish home in Israel and being invited to tell them about Jesus? Only God could have orchestrated this one!"

Today, Sami lives near Jerusalem and is passionate about reaching Jews. He is learning Hebrew and has a heart to reach out to Orthodox Jewish men.

For Sami's full story read Tom Doyle's new book, *Standing in the Fire: Courageous Christians Living in Frightening Times*. The cover picture is of one of Sami's partners in ministry who is also from Gaza. Jamal, a former Muslim, has the *Shema*, a Jewish prayer, tattooed on his left arm.

UNLIKE THE JEWISH MESSIAH, THE GOD OF ISLAM SCARED HER TO DEATH!

AMINAH

Aminah* was raised in a devout Muslim family and from a very young age she was taught to despise the Jewish people and that Israel belongs to the Palestinians. Just the image of the Star of David and the word Zionist would fill her heart with hate.

At the tender age of 8, Aminah witnessed unspeakable atrocities, such as a public beheading and the stoning of a woman. As she held her father's hand and watched in horror, he told her that this is what would happen if she did not please Allah. So, Aminah certainly feared a God like that and wanted to please him. The God of Islam scared her to death!

Aminah and her family came to the United States for a vacation. During this time, Saddam Hussein invaded and destroyed Kuwait, so they could not return to the home they once knew. Aminah and her family continued to live their lives as devout Muslims in America where everything was foreign to them, especially the religion and the culture.

When Aminah's beloved grandmother died suddenly, a woman at work saw her despair, comforted her, gave her a Bible, and invited her to church. This was the first time anyone had invited her to church in the eight years she lived in the United States. Aminah was so touched by Jesus' message of hope and freedom that from that point on, she went to church and read the Bible in hiding. After two and a half years, Aminah accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior.

As Aminah continued to study the Bible, it became clear to her that the God of the Bible saw the Jewish people far differently than she had been taught. She read about how much He loved the Jewish people, blessed them, and even performed miracles for them throughout history.

When Aminah realized that the Jewish people were God's chosen people and His special possession and that the nation of Israel was His heartbeat, her heart began to break. From then on, each time she read the Scriptures, she wept when she saw how much God loved His people.

One day she got down on her knees and asked the Lord to forgive her for hating His people. From that day on, God began to develop His love for Jewish people in her repentant heart. At first, she didn't know how He wanted her to express this profound love to them. Then, she was given an opportunity to travel to Israel to share her story with some Holocaust survivors. This was a pivotal point in her life because the Holy Spirit gave her the desire to reach out to these precious people who had suffered so greatly. Aminah also

believes that her traumatic experiences as a child helps Holocaust survivors connect with her story, since the ones who are alive now experienced the Holocaust as very young children.

She shared her own story about how Jesus came into her life, took away her hatred for the Jewish people, and then replaced her life-long hatred with His great love. As the Holy Spirit spoke through her, she asked them to forgive her people (Arab Muslims) for their hatred of the Jewish people. She explained that they were so blinded to truth because unlike her, they have not been transformed by the love of Jesus.

As she spoke, the survivors were touched and deeply moved by her powerful message. After Aminah shared her story, many in the audience were weeping. They got up from their seats and, using their canes and walkers, slowly made their way to the front. She met them there and with tears in her eyes, she embraced them all. It was a day of celebration watching the phenomenal God of the universe restore and mend broken hearts as only He can do.

After she returned to America, to her joy, Aminah was told that seven Holocaust survivors had accepted Yeshua as their Messiah that day!

Since then, Aminah has been to Israel several times and has also traveled to Berlin, Germany to visit Holocaust survivors in their homes. Please agree in prayer with Aminah that the God of Israel will open wide many opportunities to share the message of hope and salvation in Yeshua and for many hearts to be receptive! Aminah says "The time is short for them on earth, and I am glad to be chosen by God to go for Him."



Hebrews 9:15-28

The Superior Sacrifice of Messiah



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.

Our study begins in Hebrews 9:15 with the phrase, “For this reason.” This is referring back to the end of the last study, in 9:14, where the writer of Hebrews states that the blood of Jesus “cleansed the conscience from dead works.” Because of His death, certain truths are revealed. First, “He is the mediator of a new covenant” (9:15). As mediator, He enacts and ratifies the New Covenant. This New Covenant is shown to be far superior to the “first covenant,” namely the Mosaic Covenant, which was never able to bring in “the promise of the eternal inheritance.” Second, it is Jesus’ death—His shed blood—that made atonement “...for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant...” (9:15). The Mosaic Covenant could only cover sins—it could never remove them. Ultimately, it was Jesus’ death that brought redemption to Old Testament believers—to “...those who have been called...” (9:15).

The Greek word *dia-the-ke*, can be translated either as “covenant” or “testament,” as in a will. The connection between these two English words is the idea of inheritance. In essence, in Hebrews 9:16-17, the writer is saying that the New Covenant is really like a will. Like a human will, it is not in force until the one who made it dies. That is when it will take effect. It was necessary for Yeshua (Jesus) to die so that the terms of the New Covenant might be enforced. As He said, “...this cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood” (Luke 22:20). In Hebrews 9:18-22, the writer summarizes Exodus 24:3-8, showing that Moses uses blood in inaugurating the Mosaic Covenant, and therefore reminds us that the Old Covenant is also established on the basis of blood. God’s principle is that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin (Leviticus 17:11).

The writer concludes his argument in 9:23:

Hebrews 9:15-17, 27-28 NASB

¹⁵ For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. ¹⁶ For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. ¹⁷ For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. ²⁷ And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

“Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these...” The copies could be cleansed with the blood of animals, but the actual heavenly things require a better sacrifice than animals. Therefore, the death of Yeshua was necessary and clearly superior. Yeshua, as our High Priest, represents sinful people in heaven itself, in the very presence of God. His sacrifice had to be far greater than that which allowed entrance into a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true tabernacle. Additionally, Messiah could not offer repeated sacrifices as in the Levitical priesthood because that would have required Him to die many times, “since the foundation of the world...” (9:26). Instead, the heavenly ministry of Yeshua the Messiah called for a one-time sacrifice—a sacrifice so superior to the Levitical priesthood that it takes care of the sin question. It “...put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (9:26). In 9:26, the writer of Hebrews uses the term “consummation of the ages,” to refer to the conclusion of the Old Testament era as well as to the imminent return of Messiah and ultimately to the climax of all things.

In the last verses of this section (9:27-28), the writer of Hebrews points out the principle that judgment will follow death: “And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.” Because Yeshua the Messiah died for our sins, we do not need to fear the judgment that comes after death. His death on that horrible Roman cross has paid the penalty for our sin. “Salvation without reference to sin...” (9:28) refers to the completion of our redemption. When He returns, we will receive new resurrected bodies. The theological term for that is *glorification*. When we are glorified, we can reign with Him in the Millennial Kingdom and ultimately in eternity. His once-for-all perfect sacrifice has made that possible.

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NURSING HOME BLUES

Cathy, our staff member in the Scottsdale, Arizona area, has been holding Bible studies at a local retirement center. Recently, the daughter of a Jewish resident (Nancy*) complained to the executive director that Cathy was using Jewish verbiage to lure people to the Bible study to speak to them about Jesus. The management requested that Cathy stop inviting people to the study or she would be told to leave the retirement center and no longer allowed to return. The good news is that management had no objections if Jewish people decided to attend on their own! Since then, Cathy has ceased offering invitations and yet new Jewish people have gathered weekly at the Bible studies! Each week, Cathy has either overheard Jewish people inviting their Jewish friends to the class, or Jewish people have been asking, "What is today's lesson?" God has a sense of humor, doesn't He? And Nancy has returned to the study of her own accord!

A MISSIONARY AT AN ATHEIST SOCIETY?

"Would you like some tea, young man?" Igor was asked. Igor, our staff member serving in Germany, had been invited to speak at the meeting of an atheist society and was surrounded by twenty highly educated people with rich life experiences and astonishing scientific expertise. In a few minutes, he would have to address a group of Jewish scientists on a topic that, as convinced atheists, they had spent very little time thinking about. Most could not believe he was invited to address them at all since the last presenter was a nominee for the Nobel Prize! God has some sense of humor!

"So, how did you come to faith in Jesus?" someone asked during the question and answer period. There was interest in the room to find out more. In the end, the scientists took all of the Bibles that Igor had brought with him! Igor also promised to introduce

the scientists to a good friend who is a leading bio-chemist in Munich who believes strongly in the Messiah and who can explain God's existence through microbiology. This will be part two for them. Please, pray!

AN UNUSUAL OBJECTION

Staff member Ryan K. recently met with Mordi,* an Orthodox Jewish man who called the Isaiah53.com hotline. Mordi asked, "Let's assume that Isaiah 53 does talk about the Messiah. If he died for our sins and we are already forgiven, then why do we have to believe in him if Isaiah 53 doesn't say we have to?"

This was a new one for Ryan, and he had to think for a while because the question was so simple, but no one had ever asked it before. After further discussion, he realized that this was Mordi's defense—if Isaiah 53 really did talk about the Messiah, then it just might be Jesus, which was a difficult thing for Mordi to resolve.

After more discussion, Ryan posited, "Where in the Bible are we ever blessed



by not having faith in God or in the one He sent? Abraham believed in God and it was accounted to him as righteousness. What happened when Israel didn't accept the prophets? What happened when they gave sacrifices but with the wrong heart? They were not blessed. So if Isaiah 53 is about the Messiah, wouldn't you want to believe in the one who was sent by God?" Mordi did not have an answer for that. Please pray that he will continue to seek the Lord! Ryan and Mordi are still in contact.



AN ATHEIST HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR FINDS PEACE

Recently, Raleigh, one of our staff, met Chaim,* a Holocaust survivor. As a boy, Chaim and his twin sister were both sent to a Nazi concentration camp. Sadly, his sister did not survive. Chaim explained to Raleigh that he was "born a man," meaning that he did not experience a real childhood. After the war, Chaim moved to Israel, and, at the age of seventeen, he joined the Israeli army. He spent more than 40 years in the army and then, at age 65, he was asked to retire, which he did against his will.

Chaim no longer had purpose in his life, and as a lifelong atheist, Chaim became very depressed. Then a miracle occurred. Through a local Jewish believer sharing the truth of the Jewish Messiah with him, Chaim put his trust in Jesus as his Savior and Lord. A short time later, his wife became a believer as well. Praise the Lord!

**names have been changed*

May 25-28, 2018
Bongiorno Conference Center

Simcha

Plan to join us May 25-28 at Chosen People Ministries' annual retreat in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Come to Simcha and let your whole family be renewed by the Holy Spirit as we go deeper into God's word and fellowship with one another! Our special speaker will be Seth Postell, the Academic Dean of Israel College of the Bible and a prolific author. Steve Wiggins, a five-time Grammy award nominee, returns to lead our worship times.

There will be programs for all age groups—plus recreational opportunities and family activities.

Call 212-223-2252 for registration information or visit us online at chosenpeople.com/simcha.



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