

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

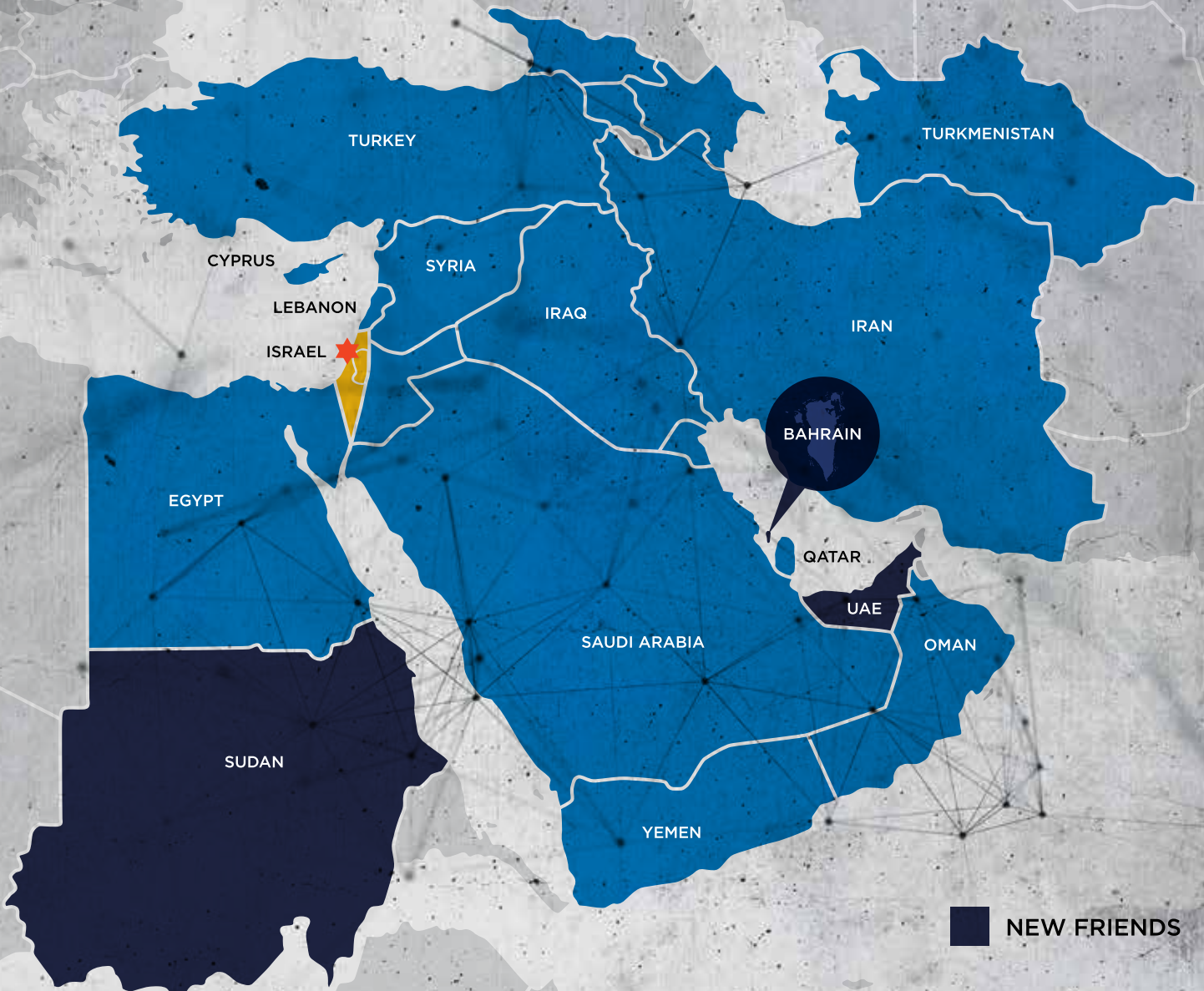



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WHAT IS NEXT FOR ISRAEL?

IS THE MODERN STATE OF ISRAEL THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY?
WHAT IS NEXT FOR MINISTRY IN ISRAEL? • PSALM 23 STUDY



 NEW FRIENDS

FROM THE PRESIDENT, DR. MITCH GLASER

Dear friend of God's chosen people,

It is my joy to introduce you to Dr. Michael Rydelnik, the director of Jewish Studies at Moody Bible Institute and the radio host for *Open Line* on Moody Radio, which airs every Saturday at 9:00 AM. Chosen People Ministries has enjoyed the service of dozens of Moody Jewish Studies graduates working on our staff in the United States, Israel, and worldwide!

Michael is a dear friend of mine who came to know the Lord through Chosen People Ministries. His wife, Eva, has served on the Chosen People Ministries staff for multiple decades.

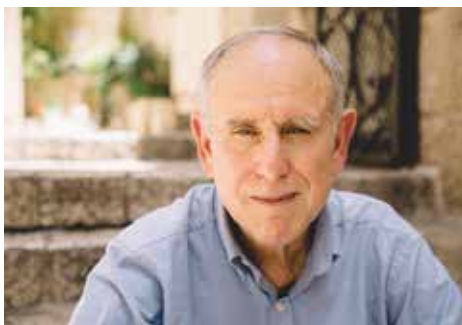
I asked Michael if we could share his article, which focuses on why Israel is evidence of the reality of God and the truth of the Scriptures! Scripture often calls Israel a "witness" or a "light to the nations." These names capture Israel's fundamental calling to bring blessings to the world. This call is clearly depicted in Genesis 12:1-3 when God told Abraham that it would be through Israel that all the world's nations would be blessed. Jesus relayed something similar to the woman at the well when He said, "*Salvation is from the Jews*" (John 4:22).

Today, Israel is blessing others as the "vaccine nation," leading the world in the percentage of citizens vaccinated against COVID-19 and providing invaluable information about the vaccine. Israel is often a shining example in some unexpected ways!

I know Dr. Rydelnik's teaching will spiritually enrich you! And as always, thank you for your faithful prayers, love, and support for YOUR Mission to the Jewish People.

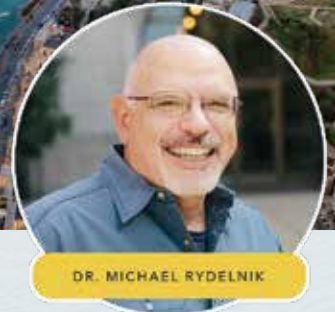
Your brother in Messiah,


Mitch



Is the Modern State of Israel the Fulfillment of Prophecy?

By Dr. Michael Rydelnik



DR. MICHAEL RYDELNIK

Even if we concede for the moment that the Jewish people's continuing presence is evidence for the reliability of the Bible, we are well within our rights to raise other concerns. What, for example, is the connection between the Jewish people and the highly contested real estate in the Middle East that makes up modern-day Israel? For some, the relationship between God's covenant promise to preserve the Jewish people and the equally emphasized "Promised Land" is highly problematic. Today even some committed Jews and Christians may wonder what relationship the present-day State of Israel has with the land it sits on. In 1948, varying numbers of Orthodox Jews were horrified that anyone could even consider a Jewish state based upon modern notions of nationality in place of a kingdom under the Messiah's reign. This sentiment persists today.

Yet, politics aside, it cannot be denied that not only have the children of Israel endured despite the harsh treatment they have received, but against all odds, after 2,000 years of exile, the Jewish people have once again returned to the Land of Israel as the biblical prophets promised they would. The Hebrew prophets foretold a day when God would draw His people back to Israel. Although centuries of dispersion caused this aspiration to retreat into the far background of Jewish life, it never fully disappeared. If nothing else, the hope that is voiced every year during Passover—"Next year in Jerusalem!"—serves as an annual reminder of the Jewish people's lost heritage.

So unlikely did a realistic restoration of the Jews to their Land seem that throughout church history, Christians, for the most part, could not conceive of a literal fulfillment of this promise. Therefore, many believers in Jesus interpreted these prophecies figuratively or historically—if they thought of them at all. However, some believers in the nineteenth century did indeed take the promise of a return literally and began to anticipate a Jewish return to the Land of Israel. Thus, you could say that what has become known as Christian or biblical Zionism was birthed at the same time or even earlier than rising Jewish aspirations for modern statehood promoted by Theodore Herzl.

Statehood and the Promise of the Bible

Is the existence of the modern State of Israel a further validation of Scripture's reliability along the same lines as that of the Jewish



people's continuing presence in the world? Consider the following conditions set out in the scriptural record.

First of all, a national spiritual regeneration by turning to Jesus is not a biblical prerequisite for a major movement of Jewish people returning to and possessing the Land of Israel. In fact, the prophet Zechariah indicated the Jewish people would turn to God, through the Messiah, only after returning to Israel (Zech.12:10; 13:1). Likewise, the prophet Ezekiel stated God's promise, *"For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land"* (Ezek. 36:24). The passage continues, *"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean.... Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh"* (Ezek. 36:25–26). Note that the spiritual regeneration of Israel follows the restoration of the Jewish people to the Land. Thus regathered, Israel will, as a nation, turn in faith toward the promised Messiah.

Second, the Bible predicts Israel would return to the Land in stages. Ezekiel 37 contains the stark and unforgettable vision of a valley of dry bones. The bones come to life in stages: first sinews on the bones, then flesh, then skin, and finally, the breath of life (Ezek. 37:6–10). Then God tells Ezekiel, *"Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel"* (Ezek. 37:11). This vivid depiction of the Jewish people's restoration to their Promised Land is well in keeping with what is actually occurring. The regathering does not occur instantaneously; rather, it is a process culminating when the nation as a whole receives the Messiah according to Jewish expectation.

The dry bones represent Israel in exile, without hope. The process of the bones coming together with sinew, flesh, and skin refers to the successive waves of returning Jews before Israel's rebirth. This is, in fact, how the Jewish people have returned to the Land. There were five separate *aliyot* (immigration waves) from 1881 to 1939, returning Jewish people from Europe to the Promised Land. After Israel's birth in 1948, an estimated one million European Jewish survivors of the Holocaust came to Israel, followed by a majority of the 800,000 Jewish people driven from their homes in Arab countries. More recently, 1.5 million Jewish people fled the Former Soviet Union and immigrated to Israel. These immigration waves show how the Jewish people have returned in stages. The body without breath represents unbelieving Israel, restored but not yet regenerated. Finally, according to this passage, God

breathes life into these bodies, representing the day when all Israel turns to the Messiah.

Third, the Bible predicts Israel would return to her Land through persecution. The Hebrew Scripture says of Israel, *"For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers"* (Jer. 16:15). God will use "fishermen" and "hunters" to pursue His people back to Israel (Jer. 16:16). This metaphor for persecution has been literally fulfilled in Israel's rebirth. Since the birth of modern Zionism, the primary motivation for return to the Land of Israel has been anti-Jewish persecution. In the last hundred years, Czarist pogroms, Polish economic discrimination, Nazi genocide, Arab hatred, Soviet repression, and more recently, an alarming rise in European and North American antisemitism have driven Jewish people back to their homeland.

Fourth, the Bible predicts that, after a period of exile, the children of Israel would return to reestablish national identity, thus setting the stage for the arrival of the Messiah and the consummation of history as we know it. At that time, the Messiah will deliver Israel from her enemies (Zech. 14:3).

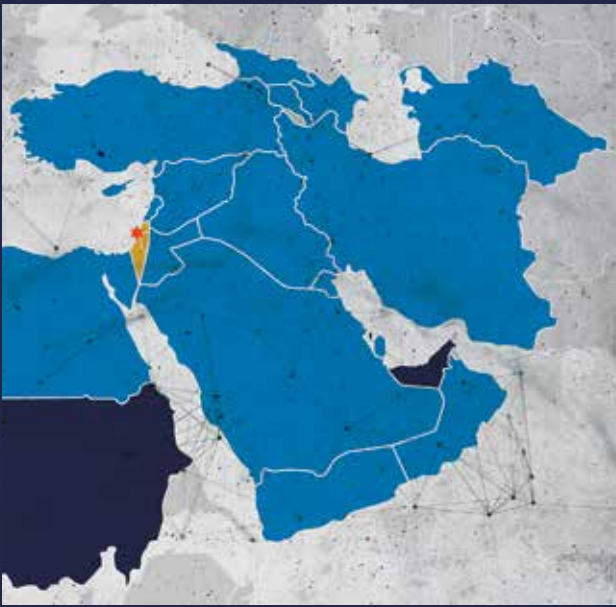
Ask yourself, do the facts of history—particularly the emergence of a Jewish homeland in the Middle East—line up sufficiently with the predictions of the Hebrew Bible to form a credible connection? Since Israel has returned in unbelief, in stages, through persecution, the establishment of the modern State of Israel likely fulfills the predictions of the ancient Hebrew prophets and sets the stage for events yet to come.

The return to Zion is powerful evidence of the truth of Scripture. It is beyond remarkable that God would restore a dispersed and persecuted people to their Land after two thousand years of exile. Given the relationship between these events and the predictions of the Bible, would you say it is more or less likely that this has truly come about by the hand of God?

And if the above is true—what impact should this have on our lives? Certainly, we should pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6)! Also, if the return of Jesus is linked to the Jewish people turning to Him, then how should we view Jewish evangelism today? This question is answered by the Apostle Paul in Romans 11:11–29! As God's people, we must do all we can to reach Jewish people with the message of the gospel!

If you or someone you know would like to study Jewish Studies from a Messianic Jewish perspective [at the undergraduate level](https://www.moody.edu/undergrad/chicago/programs/jewish-studies/), please contact Moody Bible Institute by visiting <https://www.moody.edu/undergrad/chicago/programs/jewish-studies/>. You can also call the Admissions Office at 1-800-967-4624.

The Moody Bible Institute Jewish Studies Program: Since 1923, the Moody Bible Institute Jewish Studies Major has equipped believers to serve effectively among Jewish people. The well-rounded curriculum, taught by Messianic Jewish scholars, includes Jewish history, modern Israel, the Holocaust, rabbinic literature, contemporary Jewish literature and culture, Hebrew language, and Bible, including Torah and Messianic Prophecy. Learn more about the Bible, the Jewish people, and how to better understand the Jewishness of Jesus and earn a bachelor's degree at the same time!



The Abraham Accords—a normalization of ties agreement signed in September 2020 between Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrain—have already brought dramatic changes to the region’s political climate. More changes are expected in the future. The agreement made history as it was the first time an Arab country established diplomatic relations with Israel since Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994. The purpose of the agreement was to foster development and cooperation in the fields of health, agriculture, tourism, energy, and the environment¹ and to join forces against the threat of Iran.

Since the signing of the Abraham Accords, many positive results have followed. Sudan and Morocco likewise signed normalization agreements with Israel. Travel between the UAE and Israel has taken off, with more than 130,000 Israeli tourists visiting the nation since October 2020.² Saudi Arabia opened its airspace for Israel’s El Al Airlines to fly between Israel and the UAE. In the United Arab Emirates, kosher restaurants are opening, and many of its citizens are taking Hebrew-language classes in order to do business with Israel.³

These trends are likely to continue and positively impact Israel’s economy and political relationships with the surrounding Gulf states. Israel’s Economy Ministry estimates that the UAE-Israel deal alone will likely result in millions of dollars of profit in bilateral trade and investments in the coming years. “Exports to the UAE...could jump to an annual \$300–\$500 million. UAE investments in Israel were predicted to amount to up to \$350 million a year,” according to the Economy Ministry’s assessment.⁴

We cannot overestimate the impact if more Arab nations, especially Saudi Arabia, follow the precedent set by the Abraham Accords and normalize relations with Israel. It could signify a possible shift in political focus that involves a greater emphasis on joining forces against Iran and a cooperation toward a better economic future as well as a decreased emphasis on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁵

The Ultra-Orthodox Community in Israel

Throughout the pandemic, the ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities in Israel, known as the *Haredim*, have been disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus. Even though they make up 12.6 percent of Israel’s population, the Haredim represent 28 percent of COVID-19 infections. By January of 2021, they had three times as many cases per capita as the Israeli population at large. While the Haredim are always generally separated from and often in conflict with Israel’s mainstream society—opposing secular employment (in order to pursue religious study) and army service—the pandemic has only enlarged the divide between religious and secular Israelis.

The Haredim in Israel are known for their submission to religious authority and disdain for secular policies, as shown by their frequent protests, blockage of bustling intersections on the Sabbath, and occasional resorting to violence. While this chasm between the religious and the secular is not new, the coronavirus seemed to highlight their differences. A former ambassador to Israel recently wrote about a hope that “somehow, this intractable and growing impasse between societies would resolve organically. It has yet to happen. There is a widespread sense among non-Haredi Israelis that this imbalance simply cannot be sustained.”⁶

Since the beginning of the pandemic, many ultra-Orthodox have relied on the guidance of their religious leadership. Some of these leaders prioritize Torah (Five Books of Moses) study and adherence to Jewish law and will not restrict gathering for prayer in a group, trusting that the Lord will keep them safe. Other Haredi leaders are appealing to Judaism’s emphasis on the importance of saving lives, which entails encouraging social distancing, wearing masks, closing businesses, and taking the vaccine. These differences of opinion foster further tensions within the community. Moving forward out of the pandemic will mean confronting the ever-growing divide between Israel’s religious and secular communities.

Chosen People Ministries hopes that our staff will serve both the religious and secular communities within Israel and bring *shalom*—peace—to the Holy Land through both sides giving their hearts and lives to the One who is the Prince of Peace. The Haredim often oppose our work, but we love them and admire their faith. Please pray that we will find new and creative ways to proclaim the gospel to this group of Israelis and that many would come to know the Lord they so diligently seek.

This calls to mind the heartfelt cry of the Apostle Paul in Romans 10:1–2, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.”

What Is Next for Ministry in Israel?

March marked one year since the beginning of the global lockdown measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The last significant event to be held in Israel—in person at our Ramat Gan Center—was a Purim (Feast of Esther) celebration, with more than 120 children. Our staff member, Maxim, comments, “For a year now, our congregations have not met, children’s camps have not been held, and many of our earlier ministries are no longer possible. Because of the coronavirus, every few days, the government’s instructions change; we cannot plan anything.”

Robin, one of our Tel Aviv staff members, writes, “While this year has been one of challenges, restrictions, and life being different, it has also been one of being creative, consistent, and thinking of new ways to continue to share the gospel and encourage and disciple believers in Israel.” Robin shared that the focus for the last six months was on small group gatherings, personal ministry to individuals, maintaining an online presence, and being creative and relevant to current COVID-19 conditions in Israel.

Chosen People Ministries—Israel is continuing to sponsor online Bible studies, seminars, children’s storytime, ESL classes, women’s ministry, and holiday events, as well as the occasional online concert.

Follow-up of our Isaiah 53 online campaigns, which have been very successful, has continued, and some Israelis have come to faith in the Messiah this way. Our staff members are also in touch with younger Israelis they met through backpacking outreaches abroad, and a few of these “travelers” came to faith and continue to grow in the Lord.

The lockdown measures provided unique challenges for the elderly Holocaust survivors we serve since many of them are lonely and isolated during the pandemic.

Maxim again writes, “Since the Holocaust survivors were forced to spend many months at home without fellowship, they now need to return to a more normal life.” Maxim and our Israeli staff organized online music and art classes with a gospel focus to help the survivors connect with one another and find spiritual answers to some of life’s toughest questions.

The economic challenges caused by the pandemic also opened new doors for ministry in Israel. Many Israelis lost their jobs. Unemployment is rampant within Israel, so our staff members organized seminars about finances with a focus on helping Israelis find new jobs and develop new skills.

Our online ministries in Israel are growing. Through these digital events, we are reaching more people than ever before.

Please pray for our future efforts, which will include:

- Establishing smaller home groups throughout Israel, including the Golan Heights and urban Tel Aviv
- Additional humanitarian projects geared to helping the poor and elderly, especially the shrinking number of Holocaust survivors living near the border with Gaza
- Online and media ministries, especially geared for the younger generation, designed to meet their everyday needs for love, acceptance, guidance, and faith

Footnotes

1 Amr Yossef, “The Regional Impact of the Abraham Accords,” *Modern War Institute at West Point*, 2021, no. 2 (March 2021): 3, <https://mwi.usma.edu/after-the-abraham-accords-what-next/>.

2 Thomas L. Friedman, “Jumping Jehoshaphat! Have You Seen How Many Israelis Just Visited the U.A.E.?” *The New York Times*, March 2, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/02/opinion/israel-united-arab-emirates-mideast.html>.

3 Ibid.

4 “Israel said to estimate UAE deal worth hundreds of millions in trade a year,” *The Times of Israel*, August 1, 2020, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-said-to-estimate-uae-deal-worth-hundreds-of-millions-in-trade-a-year/>.

5 Amr Yossef, “The Regional Impact of the Abraham Accords,” 11.

6 Vivian Bercovici, “Coronavirus and the Haredim: By the Numbers,” *Jerusalem Post*, March 11, 2021, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/coronavirus-and-the-haredim-by-the-numbers-661650>.



Blessing in the Midst of Troubles

Following the famous declaration of Psalm 23:4, *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me,”* David discussed how the tools of the shepherd gave him comfort. *“Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me”* (v. 4). In verse five, the scene shifts to a banquet—a feast where a gracious host, the Lord, provides lavish hospitality: *“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.”*

The feast is taking place in the presence of David’s enemies. The Hebrew word he used for “my enemies” is *tsor’rai*. This word’s root is *tzarar*, which is also the basis for a well-known Yiddish word, *tsuris*, which means “deep troubles,” or lots of terrible problems. The word *neged*, translated “in the presence,” literally means “right in front of.” Thus, the Lord provides for us in the midst of the troubles (enemies) we are facing, and our enemies—the deep troubles we are dealing with—are rendered powerless over the Lord’s provision. The blessing of the Lord will not be hindered in any way by negative circumstances. In fact, challenging conditions often enhance the Lord’s blessing.

David’s point was that the Lord floods—indeed *overflows*—our lives with blessings. He prepares a lavish banquet table in the midst of all circumstances. When our eyes are on the Lord instead of on the enemy (our troubles), the circumstances of our lives cannot keep the Lord from blessing us *“far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think,”* as Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:20.

While the world looks at circumstances as the means of blessing, the Lord usually blesses us despite our circumstances. There is a supernatural aspect to being a believer in Yeshua (Jesus) that we sometimes take for granted. The Lord not only helps us through our daily troubles but blesses us despite them by supernaturally empowering us through His peace, comfort, and contentment. The Apostle Paul called this blessing *“the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension”* (Philippians 4:7).

In addition to preparing a banquet for us, the Lord also anoints our heads with oil (Psalm 23:5). David is relaying that the Lord treats us as honored guests. In David’s culture, anointing the head with oil was an act of great respect by the host; it refreshed a weary traveler and showed him that his host loved him. But I believe David also remembered something else: his anointing as king. After King Saul disobeyed the Lord and did what was right in his own eyes, God

spoke the following words to the prophet Samuel in 1 Samuel 16:1:

Now the Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons.”

God set David apart as king when Samuel anointed him with oil. Although quite a few years passed before David actually sat on the throne of Israel, the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from the day he was anointed.

Just as God anointed David with oil, God also refreshes us with His Spirit. He exhilarates and invigorates us; the Holy Spirit is a fountain of living water, an unending supply. He empowers us, enabling us to accomplish what we could never do with our own abilities apart from Him. Whatever you are dealing with in your life, remember the reality of Psalm 23:5 and the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit that enables us to deal with whatever God has set before us.



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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.



MARRIAGE LEADS ORTHODOX JEWISH MAN TO HEAR THE GOSPEL

Recently, one of our staff members was in touch with Aaron* and Rebecca,* who sought him out while looking for a rabbi to marry them in a traditional Jewish ceremony. Aaron is a modern Orthodox Jew while Rebecca was raised in a Messianic home. They met more than five years ago, fell in love, and got married in a civil ceremony. Now, Aaron has yet to tell his parents they were married, and that they are now expecting. Aaron believed that, if they had a Jewish ceremony, his parents would be more accepting of their union. Since they were already married and starting their family, our staff member agreed to do marriage counseling with them leading up to the wedding. During these sessions, our staff member had many meaningful conversations with Aaron. Aaron and Rebecca were married (again!) in a traditional Jewish wedding officiated by our staff member. The wedding was attended by two of Aaron's Orthodox Jewish friends. It was a very special moment, and Aaron was so happy! Rebecca approached our staff member privately afterward to share that she has seen Aaron become so open to the gospel through the marriage counseling sessions, and they both want to continue meeting. Please pray for Aaron's salvation and for Aaron and Rebecca's marriage. Pray that the Lord might use this friendship to bring the Jewish gospel to Aaron's Jewish family and friends.

MEETING ISRAELIS IN NEED

Chosen People Ministries—Israel is able to help Jewish families and individuals in need. Our ministry helps with various things—groceries, diapers, heaters, and more. For instance, Andrei* recently came to us for help. He has cerebral palsy and lives with his mother who is 87 years old. His car broke down, and he had no money for repairs. He applied to

various government agencies with a request for help, and the answer was “no” everywhere he asked. Contacting us was his last hope. Miraculously, Chosen People Ministries had the resources to pay for a complete repair of his vehicle! As a result, Andrei can move again freely and take his mother wherever she needs to go; his joy knew no bounds. Our staff member told him that it is always better to turn to God. Our staff member said, “As believers, we must help if and when we can and explain to people that this help comes from the Lord; it is one of the best ways for evangelism. God uses Chosen People Ministries to show them Jesus the Messiah.”

JEWISH WOMEN ARE REACHED WITH THE GOSPEL

Bernice,* a Jewish woman with whom one of our staff members has been meeting, recently came to faith in Jesus! Bernice was attentive during all of the Bible studies in which she participated and absorbed everything. God stirred in her heart to ask for words that she could pray. Our staff member shared, “Jesus, Messiah, Son of God, Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Bernice has since returned to her Jewish family and friends in New York and has been sharing her new relationship with God through Jesus the Jewish Messiah. Another Jewish woman, Beverly,* whom our staff member met a few years ago at a Hanukkah/Christmas celebration, is not yet a believer in Jesus. However, Beverly mentions Jesus in every conversation. After our staff member shared that she believes Jesus is the Promised One of Israel, the Jewish Messiah, Beverly replied, “I believe that too.” Please pray that Beverly realizes her personal need for Jesus. Additional phone chats are scheduled!

**Names changed*



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Thank you! God bless you!



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