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The Path of Truth

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Featured Article:

Dennis Finds Meaning and Messiah Through Passover

A confrontation at
a seder leads to
unexpected peace. p.2

The Rabbi Who Believed

Rabbi Isaac Lichtenstein came to believe in Jesus as
Messiah and led his congregation to do the same. p.4

The Story of the Jewish Paul

Paul the Apostle remained Jewish throughout his life.
p.6

Ronit's Story: It's Worth It

What if you find something of great worth, but you
know it will cost you everything? p.8

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This chapter could change your life

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Welcome to
Netiv HaEmet

Chag Pesach sameach! We hope that you have a meaningful time of celebrating the Passover with your family. With a rising tide of antisemitism around the world, there are fewer spaces and opportunities for Jewish people to live and exist without fear. May your seder table be a place of peace and togetherness this year.

For this issue of *Netiv HaEmet*, we are focusing on the stories of Jewish people who encountered Yeshua (Jesus) for the first time and came away changed.

In Dennis's case, he attended a presentation on Jesus and Passover at a church in anger, hoping to disprove the message he was hearing from the Jewish preacher. How could he say that Jesus was Jewish, and that Jewish people can believe in Jesus as the Messiah?

Rabbi Lichtenstein confiscated a New Testament from a fellow Jewish man and kept it in a corner for years. Then one day, he started to read it, and his life was never the same.

Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee and expert in the Torah, hated Jesus and his followers. He set out on the road to Damascus to arrest Jewish followers of Jesus, but by the time he arrived, he had accepted Jesus as the Messiah himself. Many people misunderstand what happened next.

Ronit wanted a deeper relationship with Hashem but found herself empty. After searching for answers, she found the Prophet that Moses had prophesied about.

Be inspired and encouraged as you read these stories of Jewish encounters with Messiah.

Brian J. Crawford, DMin
Netiv HaEmet General Editor

April 2025

DENNIS FINDS MEANING AND MESSIAH THROUGH PASSOVER

As we approach Passover, a season steeped in tradition and remembrance, many of us will gather with family to retell the story of our liberation from Egypt. We'll ask the four questions, dip parsley in salt water, and savor matzah—all symbolic acts that connect us to generations past, and our redemption in the future. But what if the redemption promised by the Passover can be experienced today?

Dennis's Early Years

Dennis grew up immersed in Jewish life. Raised in the Washington D.C. area, his childhood revolved around synagogue attendance—Friday nights and Saturday mornings filled with liturgy, and summers spent at Jewish camp. Yet he remembers a certain empty quality to it all, a feeling of going through the motions within an “upper middle class country club” where faith felt distant.

“God was not there,” he recalls, describing the disconnect he experienced despite faithfully participating in religious rituals. This emptiness led him on a decades-long search for meaning after leaving home for college. He majored in philosophy, exploring Eastern religions and worldly pleasures—as he puts it: “bongs, beer, blacklights, yoga, transcendental meditation.” But each venture left him feeling unfulfilled, echoing the question posed by Dionne Warwick’s song that became his theme: “What’s it all about, Alfie?”

A Confrontation at a Church

Years later, married life brought its own challenges. In April 1992, a business associate, Woody, invited Dennis to attend a church service where a Jewish man would be speaking on the connection between Jesus and Passover. Dennis agreed, initially with the intention of disproving what he expected to be misguided claims. He was skeptical—deeply so. The idea of Jesus being Jewish, let alone



the Messiah, felt fundamentally wrong.

That morning began in turmoil. Dennis had a heated argument with his wife that left him questioning whether to even go to the service. As they fought in the car in the church parking lot, Woody waved from the entrance—a silent signal that Dennis felt compelled to acknowledge. He waved back. “Well,” Dennis wryly remembers thinking, “I guess we can’t leave now.”

Little did he know this reluctant attendance would become a turning point. The speaker began unraveling a truth Dennis hadn’t considered: Jesus as the fulfillment of Passover. Having led countless seders himself, Dennis was profoundly unsettled. This wasn’t merely another theological debate; it felt like a challenge to the very foundation of his identity.

Attempts to Disprove

After the service, Dennis challenged the Jewish preacher, Scott, to meet with him so he could disprove what he said. They ended up having a rigorous seven-week series of one-on-one meetings. Dennis bombarded Scott with questions—the virgin birth, the need for blood

sacrifice in Scripture, the concept of sin within a Jewish framework. Each time, Scott responded not with dogma, but with Scripture itself, patiently guiding Dennis through the Tanakh.

The final conversation centered on a critical question: if Jesus is the Messiah, why hadn't He ushered in an era of peace and perfection? The answer lay in Daniel 9, a prophetic passage detailing the precise timing of the Messiah's arrival and sacrifice before the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. For Dennis, it was a revelation. The prophecy aligned perfectly with historical events he already knew.

The Day Everything Changed

The culmination of Dennis's journey arrived unexpectedly during a Shabbat service shortly thereafter. As it was close to May 14, the congregation celebrated the re-establishment of the State of Israel by singing Hatikvah, Israel's national anthem. As he sang, Dennis found himself overwhelmed by emotion. Holding his young daughter in his arms, he wept uncontrollably.

"At that moment," Dennis recalls, "I understood that

Jesus was the Messiah of Israel. He was not just a national Messiah, but He was a personal Messiah. He was my Messiah."

This heartfelt acknowledgement led Dennis into a new life of walking with Jesus as his Messiah and Lord. As he read through the New Testament, he recognized the Jewishness of his Messiah and how he is the fulfillment of the redemption promised by the Passover.

Redemption in the Fulfillment of Passover

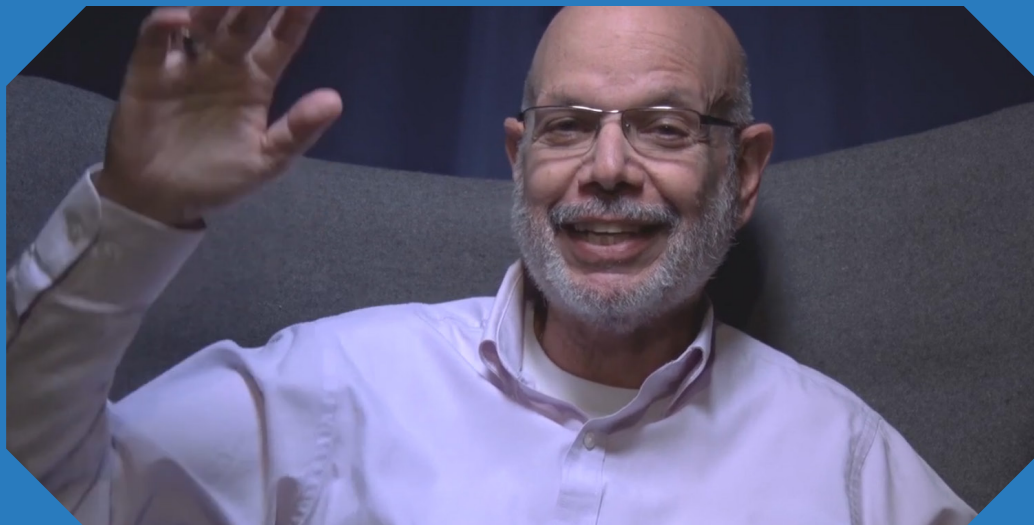
This Passover, as you retell the story of liberation, consider this: The exodus wasn't simply about escaping physical slavery; it pointed to a deeper longing for spiritual redemption. Perhaps the ultimate fulfillment of Passover isn't just remembering what happened then, but recognizing the One who promised to bring a deeper redemption to pass today.

Like Dennis, you may have questions, doubts, or even resistance. But we invite you to explore the Scriptural evidence for yourself. ♦

To listen to Dennis's story in his own words, go to:

<https://ifoundshalom.com/dennis-karp>

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THE RABBI WHO BELIEVED

If Yeshua (Jesus) is the Messiah, why don't our rabbis believe in Him? This is a thought-provoking question, but it begins with a faulty assumption. I want to share with you the story of an Orthodox rabbi who initially rejected the New Testament entirely but later came to embrace its core message—that Yeshua is indeed the Jewish Messiah. This is the story of Rabbi Isaac Lichtenstein.

Rabbi Isaac Lichtenstein's early life

Born on April 9, 1825, in Nikolsburg, Austrian Silesia, Rabbi Lichtenstein was raised in an Orthodox Jewish family. Growing up, he experienced bullying by Christian children. He recalled,

I remember still the stones which were thrown at us as we left the synagogue, and how, when bathing in the river, and powerless to prevent, we saw our clothes cast, with laughter and insult, into the water (A Jewish Mirror, 4).

In the mid-1850s, Lichtenstein became a rabbi in Tápiószéle, Hungary. Early in his tenure, a local Jewish teacher showed him a New Testament that he was given. In response, Rabbi Lichtenstein rebuked the teacher for having such a book and confiscated it.

Blood Libel in Tiszaeszlár, Hungary

Lichtenstein's experience of Christian antisemitism did not end in his youth. On April 1, 1882, a fourteen-year-old girl named Eszter Solymosi disappeared just days before Passover in Tiszaeszlár, Hungary. During the investigation, the Jewish community was falsely accused of blood libel—kidnapping the girl and murdering her in their synagogue to use her blood for their preparation of matzah. As the investigation unfolded, antisemitic propaganda spread



Rabbi Isaac Lichtenstein (1825-1908)

across Hungary, inciting violence against Jewish people. In 1883, the court cleared the Jewish community of any wrongdoing when Eszter's body was found, revealing no evidence of murder.

During this turbulent time, Professor Franz Delitzsch took a stand against the hatred by publishing a pamphlet using the words of Yeshua to demonstrate that no Christian should harbor animosity toward Jewish people. Rabbi Lichtenstein read the pamphlet, and in *A Jewish Mirror*, he wrote about how it impacted him:

Strangely enough, it was the horrible Tisza-Eszlar blood accusation which first drew me to read the New Testament. This trial brought from their lurking-places all the enemies of the Jews. . . . The frenzy was excessive, and among the ringleaders were many who used the name of Christ and His doctrine, as a cloak to cover their abominable doings. These wicked practices of men, wearing the name of Christ only to further their evil designs, aroused the indignation of true Christians, who with pen on fire, and warning voices, denounced the lying rage of the Anti-Semites. In articles written by the latter in defence of the Jews, I often met with passages where Christ was spoken of as He who brings joy to man, the Prince of Peace and the Redeemer; and His gospel was extolled as a message of love and life to all people. I was surprised, and scarcely trusting my eyes, I took a New Testament out of its

hidden corner: a book which some forty years before I had in vexation taken from a Jewish teacher, and I began to turn over its leaves and to read (A Jewish Mirror, 4–5).

Finding the Messiah

When Rabbi Lichtenstein first read the New Testament, the words captivated him in a way he never expected. He wrote:

A sudden clearness, a light flashed through my soul; my eyes gazed astonished into the distance, as when through an electric shock the scales fall from the eyes of a blind man. It was to me as encouraging as health to one in sore sickness, as freedom to a prisoner in fetters; for I looked for thorns and gathered roses, I discovered pearls instead of pebbles—heavenly treasure; instead of hate, love; instead of vengeance, forgiveness; instead of bondage, freedom; instead of pride, humility; instead of enmity, reconciliation; instead of death, life—salvation, resurrection (Judaism and Christianity, 21–22).

Reading the New Testament was a transformative experience for Rabbi Lichtenstein, one that led him to see the text and its theology as Jewish, ultimately recognizing Yeshua as the Messiah. As a result, he immersed himself in a mikveh to signify his commitment to follow Yeshua.

For the first few years, Rabbi Lichtenstein kept his newfound faith private. He continued reading the New Testament as a sacred Jewish text. He embraced the teachings of Rabbi Yeshua and shared them with his congregation, though without citing his source. However, a couple of years later, on a Shabbat morning, Rabbi Lichtenstein publicly revealed to his congregation that his rabbinic source was Yeshua of Nazareth and that this rabbi was, in fact, the Messiah. Despite this revelation, many of his congregants continued to respect his authority as their rabbi and even followed his lead in accepting Yeshua as the Messiah.

Refusing to convert

Rabbi Lichtenstein adamantly refused to be baptized in a church, choosing instead to remain within

Judaism and continue his role as a rabbi. Driven by his zeal for the Messiah, he published a pamphlet detailing his life story, which sparked opposition within the Jewish communities of Austria-Hungary. He was subsequently put on trial in Budapest before a rabbinic tribunal, led by the chief rabbi of Budapest, Rabbi Samuel Kohn. The tribunal demanded that Rabbi Lichtenstein retract his writings, and Rabbi Kohn urged him to step down from his position as rabbi and become a Christian, getting baptized in the church. However, Rabbi Lichtenstein firmly responded, “I have no intention of joining any church” (quoted in *The Everlasting Jew*, 18). He remained in his position as rabbi of his local synagogue, as his community refused to force him to step down from his post.

He continued to teach his congregation, and through his written work, he explained why Yeshua is the Messiah to Jewish communities while also defending Judaism to Christian communities. Rabbi Lichtenstein believed that if secular Jews embraced Yeshua as the Messiah, it could bring them closer to Judaism. He wrote:

*From every line of the New Testament, from every word, the Jewish spirit streamed forth. . . . Every noble principle, every pure moral teaching, all the patriarchal virtues with which Israel was adorned in its prime (and is still, to some extent, adorned as the heir of the community of Jacob), I found in this book of books, refined and simplified. I found in it balm for every pain of the soul, comfort for every sorrow, healing for every moral wound—renewal of faith and resurrection to a new life, well-pleasing to God (quoted in *The Everlasting Jew*, 54).*

Rabbi Isaac Lichtenstein is just one example of an influential Jewish rabbi, learned in Torah and Talmud, who embraced Yeshua as the Messiah and continued to live according to the way God calls His people to live—Jewish. In Rabbi Lichtenstein’s words, “Israel found its salvation in God, and the salvation of God is illuminated in the light of Messiah Yeshua. Therefore, Israel will never cease to be God’s people” (quoted in *The Everlasting Jew*, 66). ♦

"By defining Jewish Christians as human beings trying to combine two identities, Jewish and Christian, we take for granted that something existed that in fact did not exist, namely these two identities. Before Constantine [325 CE], Judaism and Christianity were ideological constructions and little more. They were more virtual than real, and by defining a Jewish Christian as a person of double or split identity, we mistake these virtual identities for real ones."

Oskar Skarsaune, in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, p. 747

THE STORY OF THE JEWISH PAUL

Have you heard, “Saul the Jew converted to become Paul the Christian”? This is a common narrative of Paul’s life in Jewish and Christian communities alike.

However, does this characterization of Paul stand up to scrutiny when we read the earliest and best sources by Paul and about Paul? What if Paul always remained Jewish?

Paul’s Life Before Yeshua

Paul, who was also known as Saul (or Sha’ul in his native Hebrew) was born in Tarsus, a city in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), to a wealthy Jewish family who had Roman citizenship (Acts 13:9; 9:11; 16:37). When he got older, he left for Jerusalem to study under the great Rabban Gamliel I (Acts 22:3), where he learned the “strictest” understanding of the Torah and “advanced in Judaism” (Acts 22:3; Gal 1:14).

During Paul’s time in Jerusalem, Yeshua (Jesus) was travelling around Judea, sharing the message of the kingdom of God. Around 30 CE, in Jerusalem, Yeshua was charged with blasphemy by the high priest. Afterward, he was convicted by Pontius Pilate, was crucified, and buried.

Surely, Paul heard the rumors that Yeshua’s tomb was found empty three days later. He would have heard the speculations firsthand. Yet Paul completely rejected the claim that Yeshua rose from the dead. The first time Paul appears in the New Testament is in the Book of Acts, which says he approved of the persecution of Yeshua’s followers (Acts 7:58; 8:1).

Yeshua’s followers called themselves “The Way,” insisting that Yeshua rose from the dead, thereby proving that he was the Messiah of Israel. Paul was so zealous to stand against this new movement

that he actively threw Jewish followers of Yeshua into prison. Later, he sought approval from the high priest to go to synagogues in Damascus to bring members of “The Way” to Jerusalem for imprisonment (Acts 8:1–3; 9:1–2).

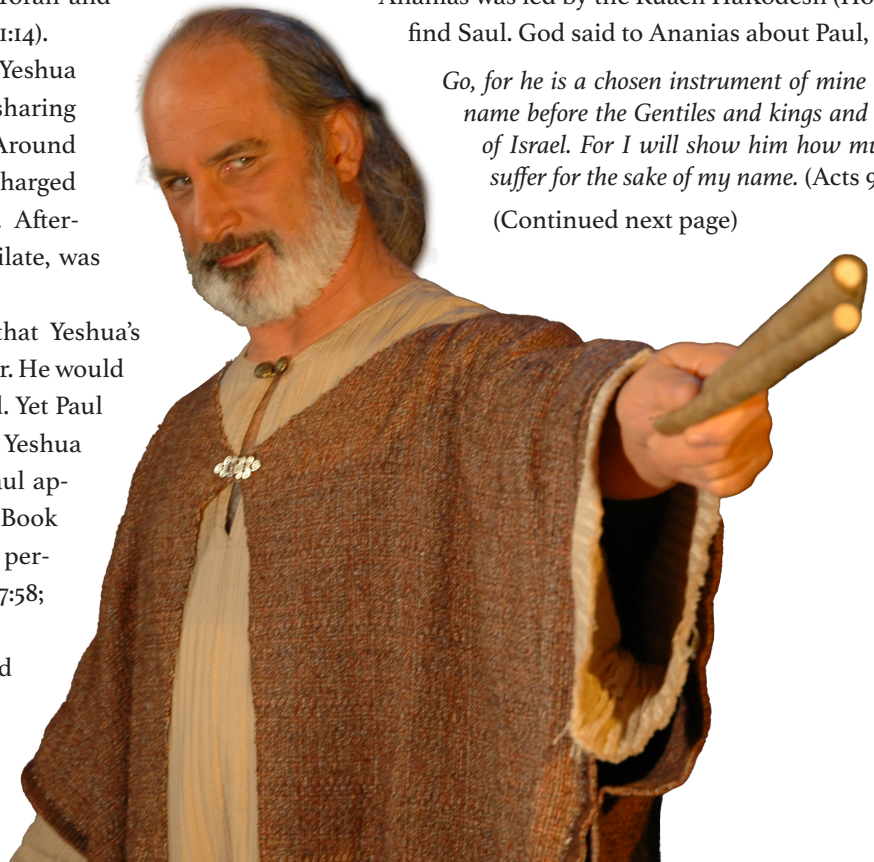
Paul’s Encounter with Yeshua

However, on his way to Damascus, he had a transformative experience. Like Ezekiel before him (Ezek 1:28), Paul fell to the ground as a great light shone all around him, and a voice from heaven called to him saying, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” And he said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said, ‘I am Yeshua, whom you are persecuting.’” After this, Paul was blind for three days, and he did not eat or drink (Acts 9:4–8).

In the meantime, a Jewish follower of Yeshua named Ananias was led by the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) to find Saul. God said to Ananias about Paul,

Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name. (Acts 9:15–16)

(Continued next page)



Ananias found Paul and said to him,

Brother Saul, the Lord Yeshua who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Ruach HaKodesh. (Acts 9:17)

Luke then notes,

Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; and taking food, he was strengthened. (Acts 9:18–19)

Thus, Saul, the persecutor of The Way, became a follower of The Way.

Paul's Life as a Yeshua-Follower

From this point forward, we see Saul as a committed emissary of Yeshua the Messiah, sharing the good news about the death and resurrection of Yeshua in the synagogues and elsewhere, to Jewish and Gentile people alike. According to the common narrative, we would expect to see that Saul the Jew is renamed to Paul to symbolize his conversion to Christianity and abandonment of Jewish identity and way of life. However, we don't see any sign of this.

Luke notes that Saul "is also called Paul" (Acts 13:9). In other words, he went by multiple names because he was in a multilingual culture. Just as today, where many Jewish people have a Hebrew name and an English name, so too Paul went by his Hebrew and Greek names.

Did Paul convert to another religion? No. Like Jeremiah, Paul says that he was set apart in his mother's womb, called through grace, and called to bring the message of God to the Gentile nations (Jer. 1:5; cf. Gal 1:15–16). This was no conversion; God called him to travel the known world bringing all he spoke to into covenant with the God of Israel. Like the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel before him, this did not constitute a conversion to a new religion or an abandonment of his Jewish way of life, but a call to accomplish a specific task God set before him.

Luke shares that after recognizing Yeshua as the Messiah, Paul continued to go to synagogue on Shabbat because it was "his custom" (Acts 17:2). He affirmed God's covenant with Israel and the authority of the Torah (Rom 9:3–5). He was well-versed in the whole Tanakh. He even took a Nazirite vow, which marked an even higher commitment to observing Torah than was expected of Jewish people (Acts 18:18). He arranged his travel schedule around the Jewish holidays (Acts 20:7; 20:16; 21:19). He said he "follows the customs of our fathers" (Acts 28:17). He always considered the Jewish people to be his people (Rom. 9:3; 11:1).

Resolving the Confusion Over Paul

Early on, a rumor spread around Jerusalem that Paul taught Jews in the diaspora not to circumcise their sons and follow the customs of Moses. Tens of thousands of Jewish people who believed in Yeshua and were "zealous for the Law" heard about this rumor. In the late 50s CE, Paul arrived in Jerusalem. Upon arrival, the leaders of "the Way" in Jerusalem warned him of this growing discontent that has spread around the city because of him (Acts 21:17–22).

They gave Paul careful instructions:

Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law. (Acts 21:23–24)

These leaders knew Paul and the way he lived and what he taught. According to Luke, Paul himself "live[d] in observance of the law" and "there [was] nothing" to the rumor that had spread about him.

The reason this false rumor spread was because Paul taught Gentiles around the Roman empire not to circumcise and take on the whole Torah for themselves. He taught that circumcision and obedience of the whole Torah are responsibilities and callings for Israel alone (Acts 15; Gal 5:3; 1 Cor 7:17–19).

Orthodox Jewish scholar Pinchas Lapide puts it this way,

"Whoever looks at all of Paul's work through Jewish eyes... [and] wants to understand him as a Jew...knows that Paul did not become a Christian, since there were no Christians in those times. Instead Paul remained a Jewish romantic throughout his life; a Jew who believed that by his messianic faith he was deepening and fulfilling his birthright as a Jew" (Paul: Rabbi and Apostle, 47).

Paul himself put it simply, "I am a Jew" (Acts 21:39, 22:3). His belief in Jesus did not change that one bit. ♦

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

— Yeshua, Matthew 13:44

RONIT'S STORY: IT'S WORTH IT

Ronit Shreyberg grew up in a religious Jewish home with an Orthodox Jewish mother and a Reform Jewish father. They liked to describe their home as “conservadox.” Eventually, her mother became less Orthodox and her father became more Orthodox, but they always kept a kosher home and remained proudly and happily Jewish.

Ronit faithfully attended shul. She loved the liturgy, the traditions, and keeping Shabbat. However, she said she felt an emptiness, and when she prayed, she did not hear back from God. She also noticed that while the Tanakh spoke of God in a personal way as having personal relationships with His people, Ronit noticed that in her shul, God was only talked about in a theoretical sense.

Longing for More

Ronit longed for a deeper relationship with God, like what she read about in the Tanakh. For example, the Torah says that God spoke to Moses as one would a friend (Exod 33:11) and describes God’s communion with Abraham (Gen 12:1–3). She knew there had to be something more.

After her bat mitzvah, Ronit started asking God why she never heard back from Him. Shortly afterward, her cousin—a new believer in Yeshua—came to visit that summer. Her cousin shared with her about her newfound faith in Yeshua and began telling Ronit that He is the Messiah for whom they’ve been waiting.

Ronit listened to her cousin with an open mind and began entertaining the idea that Yeshua could actually be the Messiah. She even went with her cousin to church one Sunday. While there, she witnessed the way people worshiped God and thought they were insane, but she also felt something very different.

When her father found out where they had been, he was very angry and almost kicked her cousin out of their house. He refused to speak to them for weeks. Her sister and brother were likewise horrified at the fact Ronit was looking into whether Yeshua could be the Messiah. “Go look into our own religion! You don’t know enough to think about this,” her sister told her.

So Ronit decided to embark on the path to becoming Orthodox, but while she did, she also began to study the Tanakh’s prophecies about the Messiah. Who is he? What will he do? What do people say about him?

“A prophet like Moses”

One prophecy stood out to Ronit the most—the Torah’s prophecy that God would raise up a “prophet like Moses” whom the Jewish people must follow and obey (Deut 18:15, 18–20). Ronit wondered, Who was this prophet like Moses? Who performed amazing miracles like Moses, delivered his people Israel from bondage, and gave commandments from God?

Ronit read the passage in Deuteronomy:

Moses told the people, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen.”

The Lord told Moses, “I will raise up for them a prophet like



To listen to Ronit's story in her own words, go to:

<https://ifoundshalom.com/ronit-shreyberg>

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you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him” (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18–20).

Some Jewish commentators claim this prophet was Joshua, but Ronit was not convinced, because directly after the Torah’s description of Joshua, it reads, “And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face” (Deuteronomy 34:9–10). Since Joshua was alive at the time this was written, this passage clearly eliminated Joshua from being the prophet like Moses.

A year later, Ronit’s sister returned home from being away on a journey to “find herself.” In the process, Ronit’s sister found Yeshua. She returned home a follower of Yeshua and told Ronit all about it. Ronit noticed her sister was different. “She had a deep anchor, and I needed that,” Ronit said.

Ronit began asking God for a dream, vision, or lightning-bolt-type experience to confirm to her that Yeshua was indeed the Messiah. Instead, God gently spoke to her heart. “I heard a clear voice in my heart saying, ‘You’ve heard enough, seen enough; it’s time to believe,’” Ronit described.

Ronit concluded Yeshua was indeed the “prophet like Moses” foretold of in the Torah. The Jewish apostle Peter, when speaking to a Jewish crowd at the Temple after Yeshua’s resurrection and ascension to heaven, said,

Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, Yeshua, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. Moses said, “The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people” (Acts 3:19–23).

Worth the Cost

Ronit knew that following Yeshua would come with a cost. *What would her dad think? What would her friends think? Do you go with the truth, or with what’s comfortable?* Ronit thought.

“At the end, I couldn’t say no. I knew Yeshua was real. I knew He was real,” Ronit said. So she decided to believe and follow Yeshua, even though her dad and friends felt betrayed and disappointed.

“Whatever the cost was, I figured it was worth it. I love my family more than anything, and I want them to accept me. But to have a close relationship with God, the truth is worth it. Life with Yeshua would be worth it.” ♦



Quick Takes



Did you know?

Paul received Jewish oral tradition from witnesses who saw Yeshua risen from the dead. This is found in 1 Corinthians 15:3–5, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Messiah died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.” Orthodox Jewish scholar, Dr. Pinchas Lapide calls this tradition, “a statement of eyewitnesses for whom the experience of the resurrection became the turning point of their lives.” (Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*, p. 99)



Strength for Today

“The Sabbath is given unto you, not you unto the Sabbath.’ The ancient rabbis knew that excessive piety may endanger the fulfilment of the essence of the law. ‘There is nothing more important, according to the Torah, than to preserve human life . . . Even when there is the slightest possibility that a life may be at stake one may disregard every prohibition of the law.’ One must sacrifice mitzvot for the sake of man rather than man ‘for the sake of mitzvot.’ The purpose of the Torah is ‘to bring life to Israel, in this world and in the world to come.’”

—Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel
The Sabbath, p. 17



The Bible and History

The first-century CE Jewish historian Josephus narrated the events that took place during Yeshua's lifetime in Judea. In *Jewish Antiquities* 18.63–64, there is a passage called the *Testimonium Flavianum*:

“At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. His conduct was good and (he) was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive; accordingly he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets recounted wonders.”

Scholars debate the authenticity of this passage, as it may be too positive for a man who was not known to be a follower of Jesus. However, the common consensus today is that Josephus did indeed write about Jesus, and the positive slant may have been an embellishment by later unknown copyists.

““”

“From a historical point of view, Jesus was not a good Christian who went to church on Sunday . . . but a Galilean Jew who, of course, attended synagogue on the Sabbath day and never intended to establish a movement outside the parameters of Judaism.”

— Dr. Isaac Oliver
Luke and the “Jews” in Acts, p.1

Messiah in the Passover

“Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the fulfillment of Passover. Like the first Passover lambs sacrificed to redeem Israel from slavery in Egypt, Jesus's death on the cross redeems us from slavery to sin. Reflecting on all of this, the Apostle Paul says, ‘Messiah our Passover also has been sacrificed’ (1 Cor 5:7), and just as the first Passover was very personal and the Israelites personally applied the blood of the lambs to the doors of their houses, we too, by faith, need to personally apply the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, to the doors of our hearts. Have you made Passover personal? If you haven't, I pray that you will — perhaps this Passover.”

Richard Freeman, Messianic Jewish preacher
The Messiah in the Passover, Kregel Publications, p. 216

What if Jesus is the Jewish Messiah?

You might be ready for the next step – to acknowledge Yeshua (Jesus) as Israel's long-awaited Messiah. Here are some simple steps to take as you continue your journey.

REPENT — God is holy and we are not! We frequently behave in ways that separate us from Him, and we need His forgiveness. The Hebrew Scriptures say, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear” (Isaiah 59:1–2). Recognizing our sin is the first major step toward an intimate and personal relationship with the Lord.

BELIEVE — We cannot earn God’s forgiveness through good works or keeping the mitzvot. The Torah says about Abraham, “Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). The New Covenant Scriptures say, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life” (Romans 6:23). Personal salvation is a gift from God that we accept by faith.

ACCEPT YESHUA — The great Rabbi Saul, writing in the New Covenant Scriptures, tells us what we should believe to receive the gift of personal salvation: “That Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). If Yeshua is both divine and the rightful king of Israel, then He deserves our full allegiance.

PRAY — Prayer is a personal conversation with God—heart to heart. You can pray in this way: “God, you are righteous and I am not. I have disobeyed your commandments. I believe Yeshua is my Messiah. His death and resurrection are my only hope. Please forgive me and give me a new life with you.” And God will answer, as we read in the New Covenant Scriptures, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12).

LIVE HOLY — Once you find forgiveness through the gift of salvation through placing your trust in Messiah Yeshua, He calls us to live holy lives according to His word (Ephesians 2:8–10; 1 Peter 1:15–16). We are to put God first in all that we do, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:28–31), we are to flee sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18), we are to be honest in our words and in our business dealings (Ephesians 4:25), we are to avoid unwholesome talk (Ephesians 4:29), we are to control our anger (James 1:19), and we are not to succumb to envy and pride, but to be humble (1 Peter 5:5). While forgiveness is immediate, shedding our lives from sin takes a lifetime of submitting to Messiah and relying on His grace and mercy as we grow in our holiness (2 Corinthians 7:1). The New Testament even calls Jewish followers of Messiah to remain Jewish (1 Corinthians 7:17–18; Acts 21:17–26). Yeshua-followers from any culture are only to transform their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that do not conform to the truth of the gospel and Messiah Yeshua (Romans 8:29).

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The Path of Truth

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