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YOUR March 2023 Apple of His Eye Mission Society Newsletter is here.

PO Box 1649 Brentwood, TN 37024



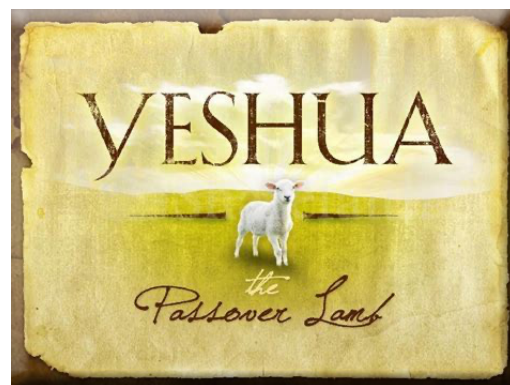
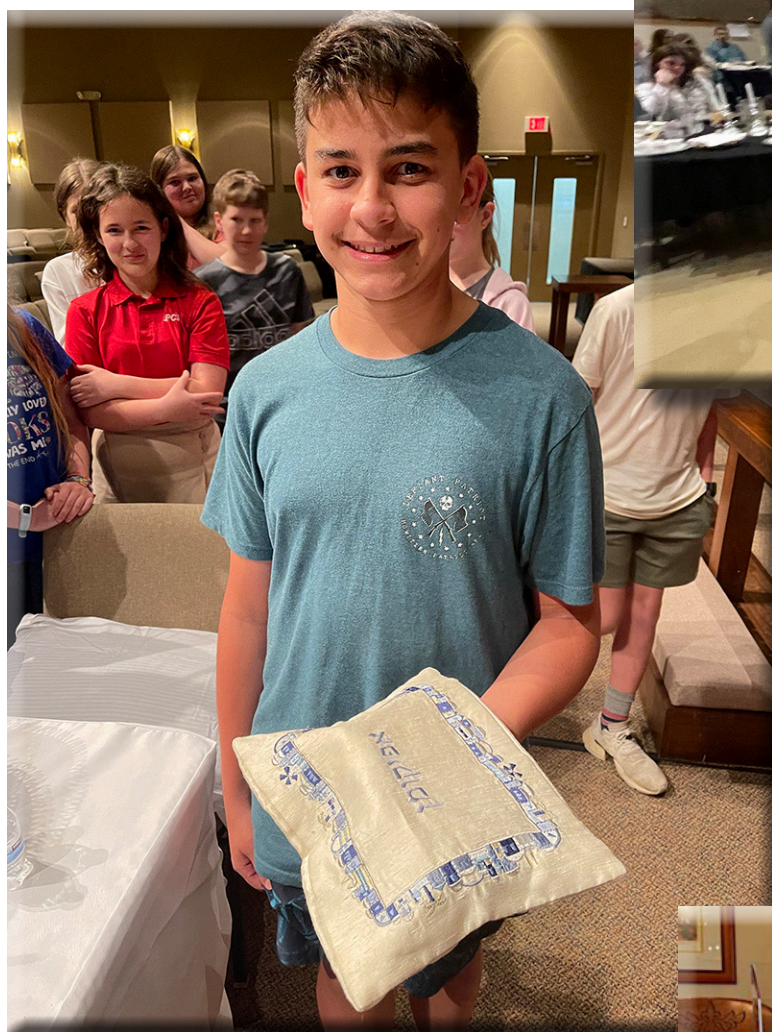
Passover this year begins at sundown on the evening of April 5th. *This is a great time to send best wishes to your Jewish friends* who will most likely sit down for their Passover Seder that evening. They will be recalling how God delivered our people from bondage and slavery in Egypt.

We can also pray that they will come to know that Jesus is indeed the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

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Thank you to **St. Paul Lutheran Church** in Ft. Worth and **St. John Lutheran Church** in Mansfield, Texas for hosting us to teach on the Passover. These were precious events allowing us to share our passion for reaching the Lost Sheep of Israel.

Thank you to all who helped in hosting us!



The Question of Jewish Identity

Frequently, as I have had the opportunity to minister in various congregations, I have asked people, ‘What do you think it means to be Jewish?’ People tell me that being Jewish is being part of the chosen people. Or it is a person who has the Jewish religion. Or it is a person who does not believe in Jesus. People also respond in other ways. Even Jewish people have difficulty defining ‘What does it mean to be Jewish?’

In the field of Jewish evangelism, definitions and terminologies seem to facilitate an understanding of how we might effectively communicate the message of Messiah. Jewish people are referred to as: Jews, Jewish people, Hebrews, Israelites, descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the Chosen people. Some Christians even seek to boast that they have become the true Jews because of their circumcision of the heart through faith in Jesus. Yet it would be the height of insensitivity for a Gentile Christian to approach an orthodox Jewish person and say to him or her, ‘I am a true Jew, because I believe in Jesus, and really you are not so Jewish.’ That would not open communication or build bridges for a clear hearing of the Gospel.

So the question we must focus on is, “Who is a Jew?” For centuries, rabbis and Jewish scholars have wrestled with this question. Debates have raged and court cases have occurred. If you were to ask three different Jewish leaders, “Who is a Jew?” you would likely end up with three answers.

THE ORIGIN OF THE TERM “JEW”

What is the origin of the term “Jew”? The original Hebrew word is Yehudi. It survived through the Greek and Latin and found its way into early English about 1000 CE. The term Yehudi originally applied to members of the tribe of Judah, who was the fourth son of the patriarch Jacob. As time passed, that definition expanded to include the people who lived within the kingdom of Judah. These peoples came to be known as “Judeans.” Later, as the southern kingdom was formed, both the tribes of Benjamin and Judah came to be recognized together as Yehudi or Judah.

Eventually the term Yehudi was applied to all residents of the southern kingdom irrespective of their tribe. After the destruction of the northern kingdom, with only people in the southern kingdom remaining, the term took on a different focus for the people who were outside the land or in exile. They were referred to as Yehudi even though they came from different tribes. An example is found in the book of Esther, where we find Mordecai, from the tribe of Benjamin, referred to as Yehudi or “Jew” even though he is not physically present in the southern kingdom of Judah.



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THE HISTORIC DEFINITIONS

During that time period and up to modern times, the term “Jew” came to encompass not merely tribal identity, but took on nationalistic, political, religious, and even ethnic or cultural points of identity. However this identifying word seems to only apply to those who were in exile. The Jewish people residing within the land of Israel chose to identify themselves by the title “Israelite” and called themselves “Israelites.” Much of the literature until the time of the destruction of Israel seems to verify this. Paul demonstrates this in Romans 10:1: “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.”



In the New Testament are about 55 references to the people as “Israel.” Within the synoptic gospels, the term “Jews” is used 17 times. Eleven of those 17 refer to Jesus as “The King of the Jews.” The word “Jews” within the Gospel of John speaks in a different light. It does not refer to all the people from a national, political, religious or ethnic orientation, or from the land of Israel outside, but rather to the political and religious leaders who sought to mount opposition against Jesus. It is essential to understand, when reading John, that not all the “Jews” sought to rebel against Jesus.

The term Jewess for a female Jewish person is found only twice in the Bible – Acts 16:1 and Acts 16:24.

The historic term “Jew” brings some negative connotations to modern times. Some suggest the roots of this negativity go back to the person of Judas Iscariot. There were some early Christians who took the term “Judas” (which was the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew Yehudi) and equated that with the Gospel account of Judas Iscariot.

The term “Jew” was used so negatively that some early dictionaries define it as someone who deals in monetary means through usury, for high gain for the individual. Used as a verb, “jew” unfavorably referred to business practices of trying to drive down a price through negotiation.

Unfortunately, today we find people continuing to believe these negative connotations through stereotyping and ignorance. This directly contradicts the original intent and purpose of the word “Jew” which means “to be a praise” or “to worship.”

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THE HALACHIC DEFINITION

So, “Who is Jewish?” Halachah is the rabbinic legal system that considers 1) the writings of the sacred Scriptures, 2) the Talmud, or the oral law, 3) at times the mystical revelations known as Kabbalah, and 4) the writings of the scribes, through which Jewish customs have evolved. The Halachic definition of a Jewish person is a child born of Jewish parents, or a convert to Judaism, who possesses both the sanctity of the Jewish people and the obligation to observe the commandments given by God.

This definition seems a bit circular, because it presumes an understanding of what it means to have Jewish parents. Today, rabbis contend that being Jewish is a matter of having a mother who is Jewish; or a mother and a father who are Jewish. Others claim it means practicing the Jewish religion, Judaism. Jewish people who are more orthodox in their religious practice would say that those who are less orthodox, i.e. those who might be Conservative or Reform, or even atheistic or agnostic, are Jewish, but not as good a Jewish person as one who is more orthodox in religious practice.

As an example of the confusion, a public opinion poll was taken of 1,500 Jewish families. The results were recorded in The Jerusalem Post in 1968. When asked “Who is Jewish?”

As an example of the confusion, a public opinion poll was taken of 1,500 Jewish families. The results were recorded in The Jerusalem Post in 1968. When asked “Who is Jewish?”

- 12% declared that a Jewish person is one whose father or mother is Jewish, or who had a Jewish spouse
- 23% said a Jewish person is one who considers himself to be Jewish
- 19% held that a man born of a Jewish mother, or a convert to Judaism, is Jewish. 13% said that a Jewish person is one who lives in Israel, or who identifies with the Jewish state
- 13% said that a Jewish person is one who observes Jewish religious practices, and 11% said that a Jewish person is one who is raised and educated as a Jew
- 9% said they just could not define it!

So, the Halachic definition, public opinion, and rabbinic opinion identify Jewish people as based on their birth or lineage through the mother.

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THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION

Let us see what the Word of God says about being Jewish, beginning with the Abrahamic covenant found in Genesis:

The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.' (Gen. 12:1-3).

The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, 'Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.' (Gen. 13:14- 17).

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.' But Abram said, 'O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.' Then the word of the LORD came to him: 'This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.' He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the heavens and count the stars — if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. (Gen. 15:1-6).

The Bible tells us that Abraham himself tried to bring forth the heir the Lord had promised. Because Sarah, his wife, was childless, Abraham conceived Ishmael through Sarah's handmaiden, Hagar. But God had chosen to fulfill his covenant through the descendant of Abraham and Sarah. When Abraham was 100 and Sarah 90, Isaac, whose name means "laughter," the son of promise, was born. The Lord kept His promise. God's covenant was confirmed to Isaac in Genesis 26:1-5. Eventually, the covenant given to Isaac was passed down to Jacob in Gen. 28:10-15.

The promise and the covenant initially given to our father Abraham and passed down to Isaac, Jacob, and his descendants is still in effect today. Probably the best and broadest definition we can find from a Biblical standpoint is that the Jewish people are— just that! A people. Jewish people are found on nearly every continent, in various cultural settings, with different racial features and cultural traditions. Those people may be religious or non-religious, they may be in the land of Israel today, or in the exile. But they are inextricably bound together by a covenant that God established thousands of years ago.

*Excerpted from **Beginning from Jerusalem** by Steve Cohen*



Thoughts from Jordan Peiser serving in New Jersey...

John 11:21 Martha said to Jesus, “Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died. **22** But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” **23** Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” **24** Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” **25** Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, **26** and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:21-26 ESV)

Martha has come to Jesus to grieve the death of her brother Lazarus — whose name means the Lord is my helper — Martha proclaims that Jesus could have kept her brother from dying if Jesus had only been there.

And Jesus feels compassion and grief over the death of Lazarus. A few verses later, we read in John 11:33-35 that when Jesus saw the tomb of Lazarus and the people weeping, He was moved and wept. I have always been struck by that passage where Jesus wept because as we keep reading, we see that Jesus knew not only that Lazarus would be raised on the last day but also that Jesus would raise Lazarus later that day! The Lord of life, the one who proclaims Himself to be the “**resurrection and the life**” (Jn 11:25 ESV), weeps at the sight of Lazarus’ tomb as he grieves with those who mourn (Romans 12:15 ESV). Even Jesus wept! What do we learn from that?

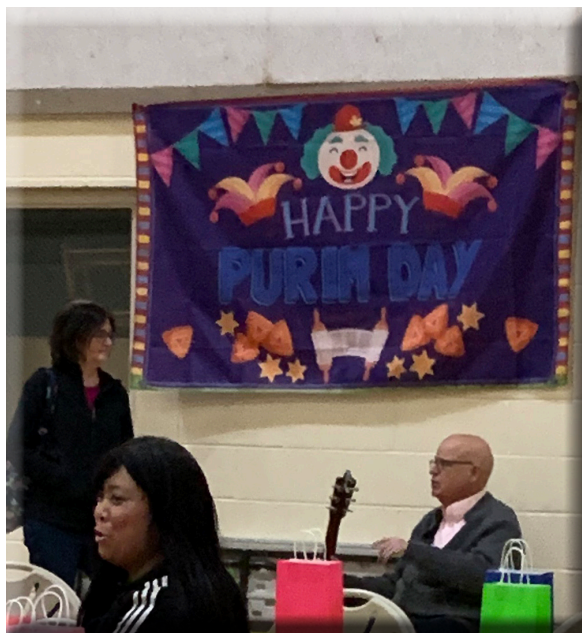
First, we learn that death was not part of God’s initial creation. Death is the result of sin. Sin and death deeply grieve our Lord as He mourns with us.

Secondly, we learn that it is okay to mourn the death of loved ones. It is true that all who believe in Jesus will not die eternally (Jn 11:26 ESV). But in the meantime, we miss them because we love them. Jesus wept over death, so it is natural for us to grieve too.

Finally, we grieve with hope because, for Christians, death is not the final word. As Christians, we boldly declare, “**55 O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?**” **56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**” (1 Corinthians 15:55-57 ESV).

Jesus’ victory over death and the grave is what our Churches and Messianic Synagogues will celebrate on Easter Sunday. We will celebrate that those who have died are now with their Lord (Philippians 1:21-23 ESV) and will be raised bodily and without pain. And we celebrate that we, too, will be raised (if we die before Christ comes back) when Christ returns. Jesus has conquered death and opened the way to eternal life for all who believe in Him.

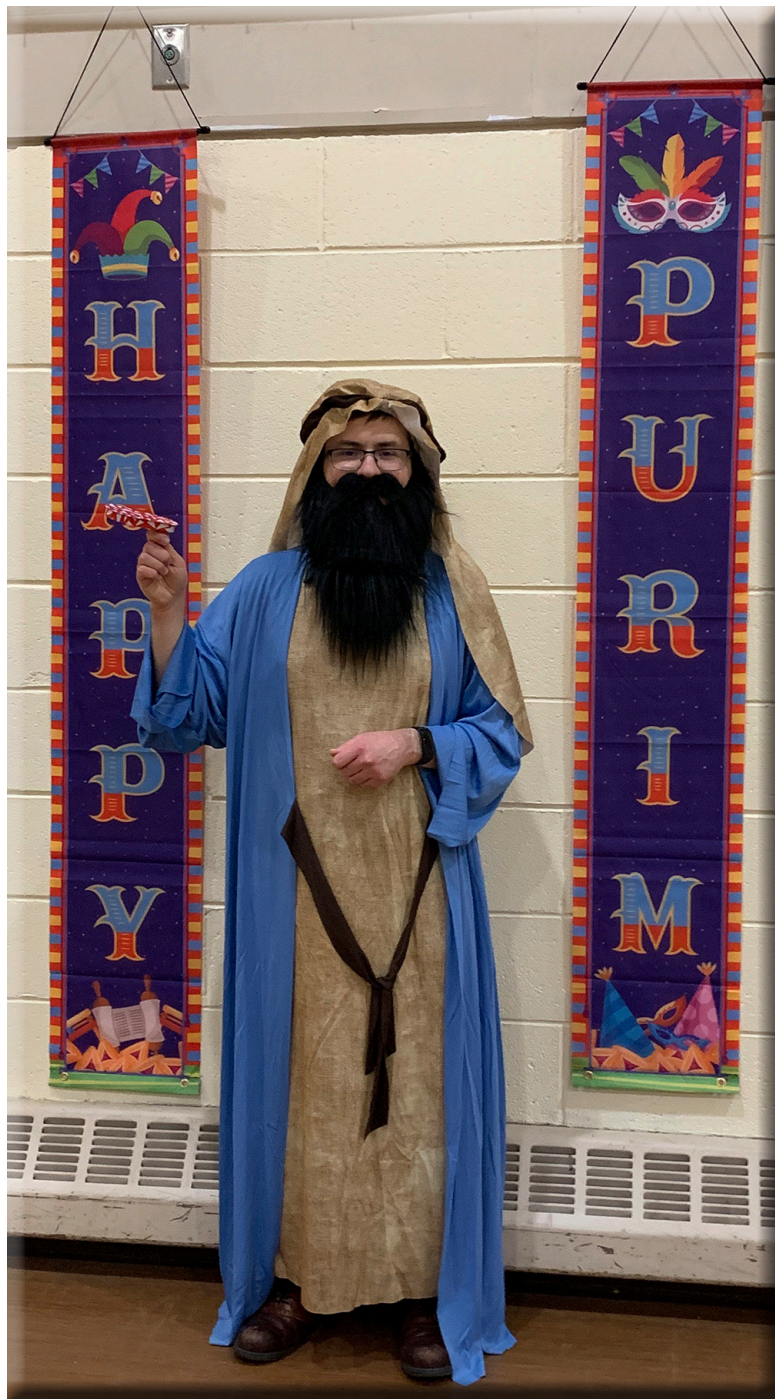
Prayer: Almighty God the Father, through Your only-begotten Son, Yeshua, You have overcome death and opened the gate of everlasting life to us. Grant that we who celebrate with joy the day of our Lord’s resurrection may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving spirit. For you have promised: “Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live” (Jn 11:25 ESV). We pray these things in the holy name of Yeshua Hamashiach Amen! (Adapted from the Treasury of Daily Prayer, 185).



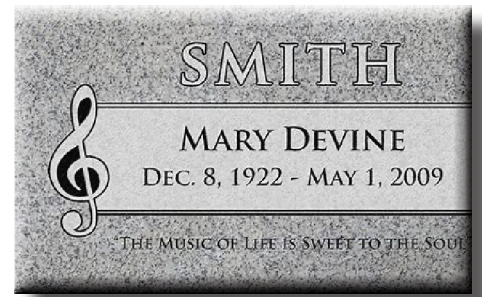
Photos from the first Purim Party from Jordan Peiser in New Jersey. Purim is the festival in which we retell of God's using Esther to help save our people from destruction by wicked Haman.

Haters are still trying to destroy the Jewish people so your prayers even as we near Passover and Easter do count for much.

Thank you - sc



Live the Dash by Nancy Cohen



**“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”
Ephesians 2:13esv**

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” Ephesians 2:10 ESV

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” James 2:26 KJV

When I lived in Paris, I was in the 14th arrondissement (division) of the city. I lived approximately four city blocks from the Montparnasse cemetery. This cemetery is the second largest in Paris and consists of 47 acres. That means I walked through it regularly. It almost had park-like atmosphere and hundreds of people walked through the cemetery daily. The pathway through the middle took me close to my apartment from a metro station I used. Of course, I noticed the many headstones and they were incredibly interesting. Also interesting, and irritating, was the fact that all the Jewish people were buried on the outer edges of the cemetery - typical European.

Headstones around the world always give the name of the deceased, as well as the date of birth and death of the departed, separated by a dash. A man wrote a poem about that dash, and it really moved me. He asked: How are you living the dash? After all, the substance of each person while alive is contained in that dash! That dash represents our quality of life, our interactions, and decisions (right or wrong), our joys, sadness, anger, disappointments, employment, schooling, etc. You get the picture.

**Only one life, twill soon be past.
Only what's done for Christ will last.**

I've used that little ditty before, but it's appropriate. The above shared verses are just a few of the many verses God has given us to follow Him in good works. Yeshua himself was an example of works and kindness. James 2: 26 KJV is an especially favorite one of mine: “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” James is so practical in his teachings. When I read this verse, it is really obvious that faith without works is dead. It is like a woman who has had a child and then neglects it. She is still a mother, but she has not taken the responsibility of caring, nurturing, teaching, etc. It is as if she were dead. Yeshua tells us “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”. Matthew 5:16 KJV In an angry, dark world, be the light. You may be the only gospel people ever see or know.

It is not enough that we share our faith, we need to live our faith. A Christian leader, when he found out I had worked as a reporter in Israel, called me a puke! He later apologized, but his quick words revealed his heart. If he treated me like that, how does he daily regard the world and represent the one who died for him? Once Steve and I were inviting the neighborhood to visit the local church, going door to door, and witnessing as opportunity arose. We went with a group and had a driver. On our return to the church, the driver began to gossip about a lady in the congregation who was also out with us, but in another car. He totally quenched the Holy Spirit in my heart and broke the sweet atmosphere with the rest of us. I was saddened to think that he represented so many in the church body today who that represent Yeshua on part-time basis. We are not to be Sunday only believers. Those of us who are believers are implored by God almighty to represent Him daily, hour by hour, minute by minute.

Invent ways to share the Word through your example. Pay for someone's groceries anonymously. I often see shoppers who seem to be financially in need. You do not need to get attention and embarrass the recipient by being obvious. Rake your neighbors' leaves or mow their lawn when they are unable. Visit neighbors who are shut in. There is a plethora of ideas in which you can engage. Serve in the nursery even if you do not have children there. You get the idea. Your children and grandchildren need to see your light also. I have had a zoom Bible study with two of my granddaughters, and Steve had a monthly lunch date with one our grandsons when he lived near. These are spiritual growth times you will never regret nor have another opportunity for. We make it a habit to over tip our servers (when we are able), and we almost always ask how we can pray for them. We treat them with dignity and kindness. One of my sons, when he was in college, worked at a Cracker Barrel. He told me that his worse customers were preachers and church people on Sundays. They never tipped and were consistently rude or demanding. The other servers knew my son was a believer and studying for the pastorate, so they would beg him to take those tables. What a horrible example to a lost and dying world.

James 4:17 KJV tells us "To him who knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is a sin"

Yeshua is coming soon. We, who are believers, are God's tool to reach the lost. Easter is coming. Invite your neighbors to church. Take advantage of every situation to be a light.

I would love to hear of some of your experiences as you have shared the love of Yeshua either in word or lifestyle. God's Blessings at this precious time of the year. We are counting the days to Passover 😊 Wish you could join us!

love, from my heart, nanC

(If this article has blessed you – share it)

Do you have a prayer request? Share them with us. nancy.cohen@appleofhiseye.org We would love to hear from you and how God is blessing your life.



To go to our secure
donation page on
our web site

Your prayers sustain us!

Please pray for full health and recovery for Steve & Nancy as they recoup from recent surgeries

Please pray for Jordan Peiser as He goes and grows in his ministry to our Jewish people

Please pray for Debby Wilson as she continues to care for our supporters through
her personal correspondence

Please pray for Micha Cohen, our son, who is in hospice care in Chicagoland
battling Huntington's Disease

Please pray for those who suffer greatly due to wars, famines and earthquakes - each a harbinger of
nearing the end of the age and the return of Jesus

Please pray for the family of Bob & Kristi Roegner

Please pray for the peace of Jerusalem and a cessation of hostilities in Israel

Please pray for those who are anti-Semitic that they might repent of this sin and turn back
to the living God

YOUR DONATION NOW ENABLES US TO GO AND GROW WITH THE GOSPEL.

PLEASE PRAERFULLY CONSIDER A LEGACY GIFT IN YOUR ESTATE PLANNING.