Avi Snyder

Chosen to Proclaim

The Irrevocable Call of the Jewish People to World Mission



Foreword by Susan Perlman

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Part 1

From Patriarchs to Present Times



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Chosen



In the 1960s, Max Dimont published a popular history of the Jewish people that quickly became a contemporary classic—*Jews, God and History*. It's a secular book, but God used it to help me find my way back to him. After finishing it, I realized that no naturalistic approach to history could account for the absurd, almost ridiculous fact that we Jews are still here. Could there be a subtext to our survival? Some kind of reason, or purpose, or—to use another dangerous word—*call?* Could we be *chosen* for something?

Chosen Is Not "Better"

In the beginning of his book, Dimont makes a riveting statement. He says, "No less than 12 per cent of all the Nobel Prizes in physics, chemistry, and medicine have gone to Jews."[1] In 2023 the number had risen to 22 percent of all the Nobel Laureates, though we Jews make up only about two-tenths of 1 percent of the world's population. Those numbers are either captivating or irritating, depending on whether you like us Jews.

As far as I know, Mr. Dimont wasn't an observant man, and the tone of his words suggests that maybe he thought we possessed some unique inbred quality that put us "above" all the other nations of the world. Is this what *chosen* means?

1 Max I. Dimont, *Jews, God and History* (New American Library, 1962), 14.

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We have to be careful. Not only is that idea biblically false; it's also as dangerous and as odious as the antisemitic trope that declares, "All Jews are good with money." *Chosen* doesn't mean we're superior, like a master race. More than anyone else, we Jews should understand the monstrous consequences that fall upon both the alleged *superiors* and the accused *inferiors* from that line of thinking. We're chosen, yes, but we're not injected with superhuman genes.

At the same time, sufficient evidence shows that we Jews do have a habit of excelling across a wide field of endeavors. This evidence has even stumped Richard Dawkins, probably the world's most famous atheist. "The number of Jews who have won Nobel Prizes is phenomenally high," Dawkins said. "I don't have the answer to it."[2]

So, if we Jews don't possess a supernatural DNA, may we say that we do enjoy some kind of supernatural equipping or favor? My friend Jim Melnick has written a book about that favor: *Jewish Giftedness and World Redemption: The Calling of Israel.* Jim, who isn't Jewish, writes that because of the calling we Jews possess, the world has often "looked on with envy, hatred, ignorance, and suspicion."[3] Even so, Jim concludes, "It is *this calling* that will determine the future of the world. Only the Jewish people can fulfill it. Everything else is building up to it."[4]

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2 Isaac Chotiner, "Interview: Richard Dawkins Keeps Making New Enemies," *The New Republic*, October 28, 2013, https://newrepublic.com/article/115339/richard-dawkins-interview-archbishop-atheism.

3 Jim Melnick, *Jewish Giftedness and World Redemption: The Calling of Israel* (Messianic Jewish Publishers, 2017), xi.

4 Melnick, 192.

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Weighty words! Frightening words! But what *is* that calling? *Why* are we chosen? I'm coming to that. But first, let me get another false notion about *chosen* out of the way.

Chosen Is Not "Saved"

When the Hebrew Scriptures speak of us Jews as chosen, the Bible isn't saying that we automatically possess a correct relationship with our God. We're chosen as a people, but we're not individually forgiven and rescued from the judgment that all people deserve and that each of us will face unless we've entered into a personal relationship with the Savior—the Jewish Messiah, Jesus. I'll talk more about the false notion that *chosen* means "saved" in chapter 12. Or, if the topic intrigues you, let me invite you to read an earlier book that I wrote on the matter: *Jews Don't Need Jesus—and Other Misconceptions*.[5]

So, if *chosen* doesn't mean that we're superior, and if it doesn't mean that we're saved, what *does* it mean?

When God speaks of us Jews in the Hebrew Scriptures as chosen, he's referring to the fact that he selected us to serve a specific purpose and perform a particular task. We're undeservedly blessed with a unique, irrevocable calling. Sadly, throughout our history, our track record for fulfilling that task has been less than stellar. But because of the Chooser's grace and mercy, he's neither rejected the people he chose nor has he reassigned the national task to others. We're still chosen, and God still waits for us to do what he called us to do. But what's the task? Why did God choose us? What's the call—in fact, the *only* call—

5 Avi Snyder, *Jews Don't Need Jesus—and Other Misconceptions: Reflections of a Jewish Believer* (Moody, 2017).

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that the people of Israel have ever received? And how can the church—God's collective people of individually saved persons from every nation, both Jews and gentiles—bless the chosen and pray so that we'll pick up the task and carry it out?

Let me begin to answer these questions by taking you back to one of the most important moments in our national history as Jews—the moment when God clearly stated our call and revealed in a single phrase our entire reason for existing as a people. Let me take you back to Sinai.

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