



PURIM: *the Divine Script*

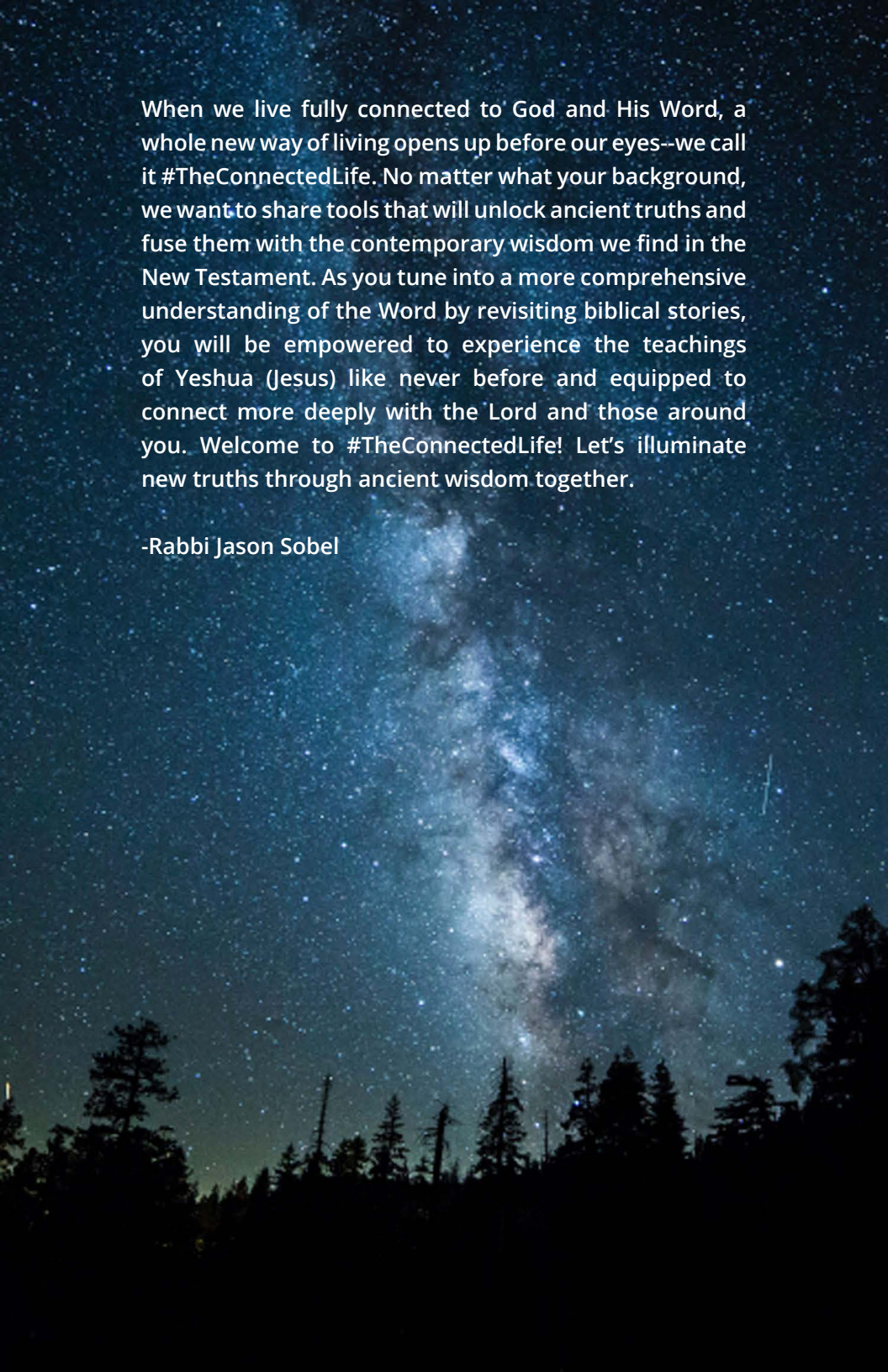
AN EXPLORATION OF
THE BOOK OF ESTHER

FUSION 
WITH RABBI JASON

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When we live fully connected to God and His Word, a whole new way of living opens up before our eyes--we call it #TheConnectedLife. No matter what your background, we want to share tools that will unlock ancient truths and fuse them with the contemporary wisdom we find in the New Testament. As you tune into a more comprehensive understanding of the Word by revisiting biblical stories, you will be empowered to experience the teachings of Yeshua (Jesus) like never before and equipped to connect more deeply with the Lord and those around you. Welcome to #TheConnectedLife! Let's illuminate new truths through ancient wisdom together.

-Rabbi Jason Sobel



Introduction to Purim:

Every year on the fourteenth day of the biblical month of Adar (late winter or early spring), Jewish people around the world celebrate the biblical holiday of Purim, a day of feasting and rejoicing in God's deliverance of Israel through Queen Esther and Mordecai from the genocidal plans of Haman. Journey with me as we explore the joy, courage, and trust that this special season and day are meant to evoke.





What's in the Name?

Purim is an odd name choice for the celebration commemorating the Jewish people's great salvation from annihilation that we read about in the book of Esther. The word "purim" means "lots" and refers to the lots that Haman cast to decide the month and day on which he was going to choose for the genocide of the Jewish people.

Why would God want this holiday named after the intended means of His people's demise? To understand the answer to this question, we must understand Haman's spiritual and biological ancestry. Haman was a descendant of Amalek, who was one the greatest enemies of Israel and the first atheist mentioned in the Torah, which states, "he did not fear God" (Deut. 25:18). In Jewish thought, this phrase means that Amalek was an atheist and as such believed that the world, like all of life, was the result of chance. Consequently, he chose "lots/purim," a game of chance, as the means of determining the destiny of Israel, ultimately declaring that there is no God who controls or guides. For this reason, the Book of Esther does not even mention the name of God even once.

Unseen BEHIND THE SCENES

A director friend of mine named Bobby directed a compelling film about a father's sacrificial love for his son. Now, Bobby never appears once in the film, but if you know him, his fingerprints are all over this modern-day parable. It is the same with God in the Book of Esther. God is never seen or mentioned, but He is orchestrating the events in the story, calling the shots behind the lens, so to speak, like an adept director.

Let's re-visit specific plot points to magnify His divine fingerprints:

A good Jewish girl, Esther, becomes queen of the Gentile superpower of the day. Her cousin, Mordecai, overhears a plot to kill the king and saves his life, which gets recorded in the chronicles of the king, while Haman, an enemy of the Jews and the right-hand man to the king, plots to kill Mordecai and all the Jews in the empire's provinces.

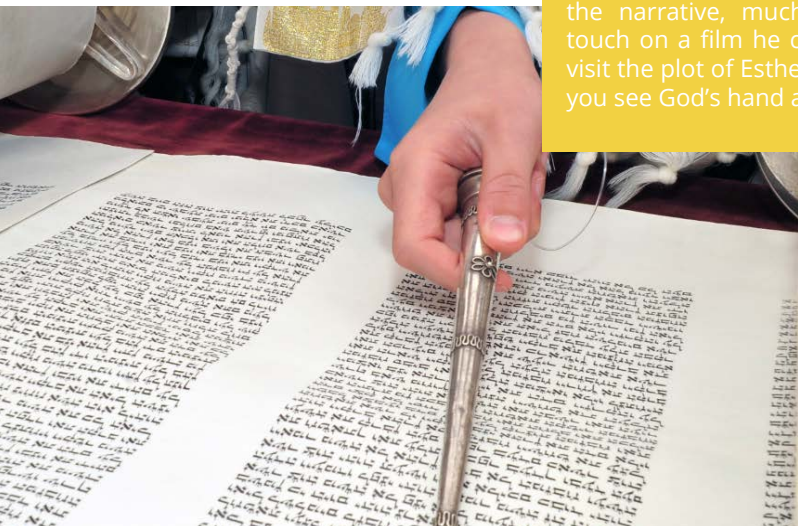
One night the king, Xerxes, can't sleep. So, an assistant reads from the royal records

to quell his insomnia. They choose the story of Mordecai's foiling the murderous plot to kill the king, prompting Xerxes to ask Haman to honor Mordecai in a royal procession through town. Meanwhile, Mordecai urges Esther to take a stand against Haman and let his heinous plan against the Jews, her people, be known to the king. She finds faith enough to risk death to save her people and inform the king of Haman's wicked wile.

Haman dies by the method he designed for Mordecai, and all the enemies of the Jews who attack them while carrying out Haman's plan are killed themselves, totaling in the tens of thousands. Mordecai is bestowed Haman's royal title and his fortune is divided between Mordecai and Esther.

Connection Point

Even though we don't read the name of God in the book of Esther, we can see His fingerprints and His heart all over the narrative, much like a director's touch on a film he created. As you re-visit the plot of Esther, reflect on where you see God's hand at work.





Doubt as a Door

**WHEN YOU CANNOT SEE THE HAND OF GOD,
YOU CAN STILL TO TRUST HIS HEART.**

Even in the times of significant testing and utter tragedy, we are called to trust the Lord, for even when you cannot see the hand of God, you can still to trust His heart. The book of Esther and the holiday of Purim is meant to teach us trust: when we can't see God; we have to believe He is still there looking out for us and "working all things for the good of those who belong to Him" (Romans 8:28). I liken God to oxygen--we can't see it, but it is there, or we're not breathing.

Trust is the deadbolt on the door that keeps the negative, destructive influence of the enemy out. Without the lock, the door of doubt opens us up to the attack of the evil one. Did you ever wonder why Haman hates the Jews so much that he wanted to destroy an entire people instead of Mordecai, the one who defied

him by not bowing down and paying homage? His response seems to be over the top and disproportional until you understand his biological and spiritual ancestry.

Remember, Haman was a descendant of Amalek, the leader of the Amalekites, the tribe of people who were the first nation to attack Israel upon their exodus from Egypt (Exodus 17:8-15). In Jewish thought, Haman and Amalek are not just historical persons but a spirit of evil, degradation, doubt, and destruction, preying upon the weak and vulnerable in every season and in every generation. The name of "Amalek" in Hebrew has the numerical value of 240, which is the same numerical value as the Hebrew word for doubt. Doubt is insidious and sly, snaking its way into us without us being aware.

How exactly does doubt operate? It makes us question the goodness and the faithfulness of God. The only reason Israel was vulnerable to the attack of Amalek was because of its doubt in the Lord. In the verse preceding the attack by Amalek, the ancestor of Haman, we read, "And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the Lord saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'" (Exodus 17:7).

When we seriously call into question the kindness and benevolence of the Lord, we open the door of doubt that inevitably leads to disaster if not quickly closed. Let's go back to the beginning in the

Garden when the serpent tempted Eve in the form of a question, asking "Did God really say..." (Genesis 3:3). The evil one makes us question our spiritual identity, God's promises, and even the existence of the Lord altogether. Why did Esther hesitate to go before Xerxes? True, it was the protocol that the king request your presence or death loomed. However, if she didn't doubt his affection and favor for her, she wouldn't need to generate the courage to seek his audience. Let's take a closer look at courage, our next focus word.

Connection Point

From creation to the death and resurrection of Yeshua in the Gospels, God's people have had plenty of opportunities to doubt. What are some of the fruits of both doubt and faith you see throughout the narrative of scripture?





Courage

DOES NOT COMPROMISE

"COURAGE IS NOT SIMPLY JUST ONE OF THE VIRTUES, BUT THE FORM OF EVERY VIRTUE AT THE POINT OF TESTING." -C.S. LEWIS

Mordecai epitomized courage. He took a stand against Haman, the Prime Minister to the king, and said, "I am a Jew, unwilling to bow before anyone or anything." His actions reflect how Nelson Mandela described courage when he said "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it." The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.

In Messianic Jewish thought, Mordecai can be seen as a type of Yeshua (Jesus). Yeshua would not bow down to the king of this world and give in to temptation. Mordecai and Yeshua were both falsely accused, and lots were cast in both their cases. Both were sentenced to death on a tree, one on the cross and another on a pole. Both had royal garments put upon them and were paraded through the streets. Both had betrayers, and Judas himself met death on a tree just like Haman.

Yet neither Mordecai nor Yeshua backed down from their convictions. They chose to employ their trust in God with courage, even if it meant inevitable suffering and even death. As we connect the stories of Mordecai and Yeshua, we see the fruit of courage that does not compromise: transforming victory--and in this case, the salvation of God's people.



Connection Point

How does seeing the connection between Mordecai and Yeshua's courage deepen your understanding of our salvation?



From Doubt to Destiny

**EVERY ONE OF US IS GRANTED BY GOD A
“FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS” MOMENT WHEN OUR
DESTINY IS WITHIN REACH.**

Purim is a time of great simcha, a time of great joy and celebration. It is one of the happiest seasons of the entire Jewish year. Esther 9:22 states, “The month which was transformed from sorrow to joy.” Joy is to abound during this holiday. Purim is a season through which God wants to turn our sadness into gladness, our darkness to light, our heaviness to lightness, our destruction to salvation.

Esther’s victory over doubt illustrates the path to real joy: partnering with God’s design for our lives. When she transitioned from questioning her worthiness into God’s design for her life, courage was the bridge she had to walk upon to get to the other side. Once there, she found joy – the joy of realizing the king’s favor upon her, the joy of saving herself and her people, the joy of seeing Mordecai replace Haman, the joy of receiving the

spoils from Haman’s estate. Every one of us is granted by God a “for such a time as this” moment when our destiny is within reach. We can decide if we are going to walk into it or walk away from it. Each of us is designed for our God-ordained purpose, and if we say yes to His plan, we will encounter great joy.

Connection Point

Like Esther, Yeshua had to use courage to fulfill God’s call for Him. Because of His amazing obedience to the Father, He overcame death for anyone who would trust in Him. Reflect on the connection between Yeshua’s obedience and the destiny He offers each one of us.

Joy:

THE FRUIT OF PURIM



When my sons were very young, their favorite cartoon was Winnie the Pooh. I observed the characters quite often and discovered what I call the Eeyore Syndrome: "Good morning Pooh Bear," said Eeyore gloomily. "If it is a good morning, which I doubt." Sadness typifies the Eeyore syndrome. Some people experience depression, a hopeless, faithless, anxious, emotional pattern of sadness. Though there are times for joy and times for grieving, the posture of sadness is rooted in the spirit of Amalek and must be rooted out.

In Jewish thought, depression is one of the most dangerous and destructive forces to our spiritual life, a curse that cripples us and robs us of our ability to love and serve God and others. In some ways, depression can be a defense mechanism or a way to numb ourselves. If we don't become too excited about anything,

we can't be disappointed. In protecting ourselves from pain, though, we also numb our ability to experience joy.

Joy is the opposite of depression and a pivotal antidote to overcoming it. It's an abiding sense of wonder that is beyond happiness; it is an optimistic sunshine-filled emotional pattern that we can refer to as the Tigger syndrome. "The most wonderful thing about Tigger is Tiggers are wonderful things." Tigger is always joyous no matter what is happening. He reflects the true biblical joy, which is not rooted in situations and circumstances. True joy has no connection to happiness, which is shallower than joy. The root word "happy" comes from the word "happenstance," which is based on circumstance. Happiness is from the outside in. Joy is transcendent--it starts on the inside and flows outward.

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So many days, I come home exhausted and walk through the front door only to be greeted by pure joy in the form of my two boys. "Daddy! Daddy!" They jump on me and hug me, and my exhaustion shifts into exhilaration. Joy is contagious! As our sages say, *"simcha poritz geder"* — joy breaks all barriers. Joy empowers us; it gives us encouragement, zeal, enthusiasm, optimism, and it allows us to transcend all obstacles—even the fear of death itself.

The Hebrew word *poritz*, or "to break," is one of the names of the Messiah in Jewish thought. Micah 2:13 says, *"The poritz/ breaker (meaning Messiah) will go before them. He will break through, passing through the gate and go out through it."* It should be no surprise that the Messiah is the descendant of Peretz from the tribe of Judah. Peretz means the one who breaks forth from his mother's womb. Joy is the key to breaking the evil one's yoke and receiving a greater anointing in our lives. While depression robs us of our ability to serve God and others, joy loosens us and sets us free to be whom God intended us to be.

As you can see, Purim is a time where joy increases as we move toward God

in trust and partner with Him in our destiny. To celebrate, Fusion with Rabbi Jason sponsors Esther's Ball, where we dress up, feast, and party like kings and queens. We re-enact the story of Esther. We ask God to remove every obstacle and barrier to our joy, just as He removed Haman. Just as He removed the doors that separated Esther from the king. And, just as the curtain was torn top to bottom when Yeshua was crucified, no longer separating the people from the Holy of Holies. Joy is transformative. For Esther, faith overcame fear and moved her into her destiny where she found joy.

In the same way, joy awaited Esther, it awaits us. Real joy is our inheritance, and God wants nothing less for us. Joy is one of the key lessons we are able to learn by understanding and celebrating Purim. It means we can increase our joy and the joy of those with whom we celebrate!

Connection Point

Just like Purim, our victory in Yeshua invites us into a new posture of joy. How does your victory through Yeshua impact your joy level, and how is this joy different than temporal moments of happiness?





A Common Destiny

*"Pure and undefiled religion
before our God and Father is this:
to care for orphans and widows
in their distress..." -James 1*

A cartoon portrays joy in the form of a bouncing tiger or a flitting butterfly over a field of flowers. In reality, joy is the three-letter word for power on all levels – it starts with the emotional and spiritual, which then translate into physical. Numbers 8:10 tells us, "...for **the joy of the Lord** is your strength." When we have the joy of the Lord, our priorities shift and produce J.O.Y.

JESUS FIRST, OTHERS SECOND, YOURSELF LAST.

When we put Yeshua first, we will encounter His love in a new way and begin to naturally put others before ourselves as He does. Yeshua said that he came to set the captives free:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me to
proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim
freedom for the prisoners...
to set the oppressed free..."
(Luke 4:18)*

All of us indeed have unique destinies, but as followers of Yeshua, we also have a destiny in common: we are to fight the injustices of our world just like Esther and Mordecai had to fight the injustice of Haman's murderous plot. Today, the spirits of Haman and Amalek still prey on the vulnerable and accessible: the sick, the





**IF WE SAY YES AND
ALIGN WITH HIS WILL,
WE WILL ENCOUNTER**

great joy

impoverished, the lonely, the desperate. Like Esther, we must step out into action and put feet on our faith. Mordecai instructed, inspired, and encouraged her, but it was Esther who risked her life to go before the king. It was Esther who risked death so that her people might live. For this reason, this entire book in the Bible is named after her.

At some point, we all must choose whether we are going to “go before the king” and move into our destiny, or hide in the shadows of the safe zone. The *for such a time as this* verse from Esther 4:14 continues with Mordecai plainly stating,

“If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place.”

In other words, someone else will make the difference you are called to make. God has plans for each one of us, but if we say no to His purposes for our lives, He will find someone who will say yes. If we say yes and align with His will, we will encounter great joy. As the great Rabbi Hillel said, “If I am not for myself, who

will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?” If we don't serve others and fight against injustice, then our lives have no deeper meaning or purpose.

Connection Point

There are many worthy causes to which to devote your life, but all followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, have a responsibility to stand against the anti-semitic spirit of Amalek which still seeks to destroy the Nation of Israel and the Jewish people. Pray and consider how you might emulate Esther and Mordecai and stand with the people of Israel.



Celebrating Purim

LISTEN TO THE MEGILLAH

To relive and capture the miraculous events of Purim, **listen to the reading of the Megillah** (the Scroll of Esther.) It is traditional to listen to the book of Esther twice, once on Purim Eve, and again on Purim day. According to Jewish tradition, to properly fulfill the commandment, it is imperative to hear every single word of the Book of Esther. At specific points in the reading where Haman's name is mentioned, it is customary to twirl *graggers* (Purim noisemakers). Noisemakers are used to blot out the name of the Amalekite, which Haman is, as instructed in the Torah in Exodus 17:14 and Deuteronomy 25:17-19. We are also to stamp one's feet to "eradicate" his evil name. Instruct the children that Purim is the only time when it's a *mitzvah* (command) to make noise!

GIVE TO THE NEEDY (MATANOT LAEYONIM)

Awareness and concern for the needy is a year-round responsibility. Still, on Purim, it is especially important, a special mitzvah (good deed and command) to remember the poor. **Give charity (tsedaka) to at least two** (but preferably more) **needy individuals on Purim day.** This is best fulfilled by giving directly to the needy. If, however, you cannot find people in need, place at least two coins into a charity box. As with the other practical aspects of Purim, even the very young should be taught to give to the poor.

SEND FOOD PORTIONS TO FRIENDS (MISHLOACH MANOT)

On Purim, we focus on the importance of unity and friendship by sending gifts of food to friends. **On Purim day, send a gift of at least two kinds of ready-to-eat**

foods (e.g., pastry, fruit, beverage) to at least one favored friend. A third party should deliver the gifts. Children, in addition to sending their unique gifts of food to their friends, make excited messengers.

EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY

Purim should be celebrated with a **special festive feast on Purim day**, at which family and friends gather together to rejoice in the Purim spirit. It is traditional to drink wine.

SPECIAL PRAYERS (AL HANISSIM, TORAH READING)

On Purim, we include the Al HaNissim prayer, which retells the Purim miracle, in the evening, morning and afternoon prayers, as well as in the Grace After Meals. In the morning service, there is a special reading from the Torah scroll in the synagogue (Exodus 17:8–16).

PURIM CUSTOMS: MASQUERADES AND HAMANTASHEN

A time-honored Purim custom is for children as well as adults to **dress up** and disguise themselves behind masks—an allusion to the fact that the miracle of Purim was disguised in natural garments. Dressing up symbolizes that God was hidden in the Book of Esther until the end. Dressing up is also the significance behind a traditional Purim food, the hamantash—a pastry whose filling is hidden within a three-cornered crust.





ABOUT RABBI JASON SOBEL

Raised in a Jewish home in New Jersey, Rabbi Jason Sobel dedicated much of his life in pursuit of a spiritual connection with God. After years of seeking and studying, he encountered God and found his true destiny as a Jewish follower of Yeshua (Jesus). Suddenly, all the traditions Rabbi Jason grew up with took on new depth and meaning as God connected the ancient wisdom of the Torah with the teachings of the Messiah.

He received his Rabbinic ordination from the UMJC (Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations) in 2005. He also has a Bachelor of Arts in Jewish Studies and a Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies and is currently founder and president of Fusion with Rabbi Jason, a resource offering insightful teachings reconnecting modern faith with its rich roots. Rabbi Jason Sobel and his two sons live in Los Angeles, California.

ABOUT FUSION WITH RABBI JASON

"This is what the Lord says: 'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.'"
-Jeremiah 6:16

Do you ever have a feeling something is missing in your life? Have you ever felt bored with the Bible or your faith walk, like you are hear the same messages over and over again? We have. At Fusion with Rabbi Jason, we want to add definition to your faith as we restore the lost connection to our ancient roots and rediscover our forgotten inheritance.

We believe that to move forward in life fully connected to God, His Word, and those around us, we first have a look backward. By expanding our understanding of prayer and scripture to include ancient Hebrew and contemporary wisdom informed by the Spirit, we can enrich our perspective of Yeshua (Jesus), His teachings, and His disciples.

Fusion with Rabbi Jason will show you the world in a way you've never seen it before — illuminated by "a-ha" moments that spark connections between the old and the new, the head and the heart, and the natural and the supernatural. It's all about revolutionizing your life by helping you to live more like Yeshua: rooted, restored, revitalized, revived.

As you journey with Jason through the scriptures and explore Hebrew numbers and words, Jewish holidays, and prophecies fulfilled, you'll start seeing God, the Bible, and the world in High Definition. You'll connect the dots linking the old and the new, and your faith, your relationships, and your life will become more vibrant. Join us as we pursue a more connected life together!

If you would like to read, listen to, or watch more of Rabbi Jason's teachings, please visit fusionglobal.org.

Connect with us on social media @rabbijasonsobel.

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