

The Risk of Rejection

BY DAVID BRICKNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The pastor of a large Midwest church once told me that he appreciated the ministry of Jews for Jesus but could not invite us to speak in his pulpit. He had what he felt was a good relationship with the rabbi across the street, with an annual pulpit exchange, no less. "I have an opportunity to be a witness through this pulpit exchange," he explained. "By inviting Jews for Jesus, I would be forfeiting that opportunity." I could only point out that his opportunity was only an opportunity if he could say something that would truly challenge his Jewish friends to consider Christ. Further, if anything he said or did ever resulted in a synagogue member coming to faith in Jesus, those pulpit exchanges would probably come to a screeching halt. I don't think that pastor was willing to give up the notion that friendship with the rabbi was somehow a prerequisite to evangelism and the fulfillment of his Christian duty.

Many Christians today seem to think that gaining the acceptance of unbelieving Jewish people is the way to gain a platform for the gospel. Unfortunately, things usually do not work out that way. More often than not, the goal of gaining acceptance subsumes the goal of proclaiming the gospel.

Making acceptance a prerequisite to evangelism undermines the church's witness to all kinds of people, not just Jewish people. Some people speak about "gaining the right" to witness. Because it sounds like a humble thing to say, many people fail to see how that statement contradicts Scripture. The Bible teaches that proclaiming the gospel is an obligation to be fulfilled, not a right to be earned. The

idea that people must accept us before they can accept Y'shua (Jesus) is misguided at best, and at worst, it can be a subtle kind of pride that we fail to recognize in ourselves and our fellow believers.

We hear much about friendship evangelism, but the Bible says "know ye not that the friendship of the world is **enmity** with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4)

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I'm not saying we should treat unbelievers like enemies, nor should we be unfriendly or rude! Nevertheless, when we make friendship with unbelievers our first priority, Jesus gets short shrift. Few Christians intend to shunt Jesus off to the side. Most who never quite get around to giving a clear cut gospel message don't even

realize they are sacrificing their gospel witness on the altar of human acceptance.

Once, when I was speaking at a church, a woman approached me after the service. She was pleased to inform me that her roommate and best friend in college was Jewish, and that she had maintained their friendship over many years. When I asked if she ever talked to her friend about Jesus, she responded, "Oh no, I'd be too afraid of offending her." I suggested, "Perhaps what you fear even more than offending her is the possibility that she might reject you." I'm afraid that woman took offense at my suggestion but I had to do what she was not willing to do: risk being rejected for the sake of an important truth—a truth more important than my being liked or accepted.

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It is easy to fool ourselves into believing that our silence is out of respect for those who might disagree with us. It is easy to see our motivation as noble, especially when we see our ultimate intention as positioning ourselves to be a better witness. But too often those intentions come to nothing, and we need to face the truth that sometimes our tact and our long-term goals are merely masks. They cover our fear of rejection and our unwillingness to position ourselves where God really wants us: in a place of vulnerability.

We need to be honest about our own hesitation to witness, but we also need to be realistic about this matter of offending others. God wants us to be loving and humble when we tell others about Him. Yet even the most inoffensive manner cannot guarantee that people will not take offense at what we have to say. Ultimately, people decide the basis on which they will or will not be offended.

There is much talk today about our pluralistic society. From a worldly perspective, tolerance is the greatest good. But today's society has twisted the meaning of tolerance, making it practically synonymous with relativism. True tolerance is treating people decently regardless of how they may differ from you. The false tolerance demanded by today's society requires that you accept all beliefs as equally true, or if you can't do that, you keep quiet about it. To suggest that someone else's religious belief might not be true is wrongly labeled as intolerance. If someone believed she could take a street that only runs east and west to go north, would it be intolerant for someone else in the car to suggest a turn? No. Somehow, when it comes to spiritual matters, the world insists on a degree of relativism that would spell disaster were we to apply it to the physical realm.

Therefore, the Christian belief that Jesus is the only way of salvation is perceived as intolerance, even bigotry by the world's standards. So the pressure is on us to compromise our strong stance and conviction in order to gain acceptance, in order to avoid being marginalized by the unbelieving world. Yes, we live in a pluralistic society, but pluralism means that everyone has a right to his or her own opinion. It doesn't mean that everyone's or no one's opinion is true.

Whenever we proclaim that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, the inference is that all other ways are false, and therefore those who trust anyone or anything other than Jesus for salvation are mistaken. You don't have to tell people they are wrong; the message itself pronounces them wrong. This will always be viewed as intolerance by those who don't believe. And those who are considered intolerant can expect to be rejected. That is why the idea that we must be accepted by those whom we wish to evangelize doesn't work; it requires a twisted notion of tolerance that is incompatible with the message we are duty-bound to proclaim.

Many Jews have risked alienation from family and friends to follow Jesus. We have been ostracized by the wider Jewish community because we have embraced the One who was despised and rejected of men. But we have discovered that He is worth it! "Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20).

Perhaps you see why we are so disheartened by Christians who seek acceptance within the Jewish community at the expense of a forthright testimony. It's as though the very people who should stand with us and encourage us that we are right to suffer rejection for Christ's sake are telling

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**WE EXIST TO MAKE THE MESSIAHSHIP OF JESUS
AN UNAVOIDABLE ISSUE TO OUR JEWISH PEOPLE WORLDWIDE.**

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The Risk of Rejection *continued*

us just the opposite by their actions. They want to stand apart from us to avoid being rejected by association and sadly, many don't want to stand up for the gospel for the same reason. More and more organizations represent themselves as gospel ministries to the Jewish people and receive funding from evangelical Christians—yet they are busily building friendships, not proclaiming the gospel. Are they true friends of my Jewish people? Not if they don't tell them how to be saved. They have gained acceptance at the expense of Christ and at the expense of people who are perishing without Christ.

As a Jew for Jesus, I know that I will be treated as He was treated—accepted by those who accept Him and rejected by those who do not. While it is natural to desire acceptance, there is a sweet fellowship in risking rejection for Y'shua's sake. He understands rejection firsthand and His comfort comes from experience.

The author of Hebrews was writing to a group of first century Jewish believers in Jesus who stood at a crossroads. They had suffered rejection and persecution to the point where they were tempted to turn their backs on the Lord. They needed to be encouraged and

challenged to endure and be faithful. They needed to hear, “. . . Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach” (Hebrews 13:12-13).

That call is as real today as it was in the first century—and it speaks to all Christians, not only to those of us who are Jewish. Yet many believers are trying to point to Christ, who is outside the camp, without having to leave the camp (be rejected) themselves. We must not be ashamed to beckon to unbelievers—friends and family, neighbors and business associates—from outside the camp, inviting them to forsake the world for the priceless gift of salvation.

If we belong to Jesus, we must bear His reproach. We can choose to bear it as a burden or as a badge of honor. Pray with us that more Christians will be ready to risk the rejection of Jewish people here and now in order to forge friendships that will last an eternity. And thank you for being among those who are willing to stand with us and bear the reproach of Christ as a badge of honor. ✧

A Day in the Life of Jews for Jesus



Blessings

Everyone wants blessings. We ask God to grant them to us and to our loved ones. “God bless Mom and Dad, uncle Steve and aunt Laura.” In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word for “blessings” (*ashrei*) literally means “happy.” The New Testament Greek word *makarios* conveys the same meaning, and adds to it “prosperous.” Who wouldn’t want such blessings?

Yet we can miss out on certain blessings because they come with a price we might not wish to pay. Aaron, a Christian grad student studying marriage and family counseling, understood that. As a seminary student, one of his requirements was to face something he feared. He had the courage to admit he was afraid of the rejection and ridicule that comes with being a witness for Jesus and he determined to overcome that fear.

Aaron contacted our office because of our commitment to bold evangelism. I met with him for a brief training session on street evangelism. Then we went out on the streets to distribute broadsides (gospel tracts).

For some of us, the very thought of sharing the gospel with our friends, co-workers, or neighbors may cause us to break out in a cold sweat. Perhaps our hands begin to shake, and our knees feel like they’ll buckle under us. I was never more intimidated to share my faith than on the streets of Jerusalem several years ago. I had all the symptoms of an anxiety attack at the very thought of standing on Ben Yehuda Street, handing out gospel tracts.

For days just prior to our arrival in Jerusalem, God had been speaking to my heart about my fears. He reminded me of the time I was afraid to drive on a busy freeway in Los Angeles. My hands shook, and I felt sick to my stomach. I gripped the wheel of the car and recited over and over with full assurance, “The Lord hasn’t given me a spirit of fear, but a sound mind.” Sure enough, my fears were replaced with a peaceful calm. After that day, I was never afraid to drive even the busiest of highways. The Lord reminded me that just as He had calmed my heart then, He would not fail me on the streets of Jerusalem.



Tuvya Zaretsky

I took Aaron to a farmers’ market where many Jewish people shop. At first, Aaron simply watched as I handed out tracts. Then he saw an Israeli, Sara, stop to talk with me. It was such a natural encounter; Sara had met Christians before and was searching for God. Aaron watched as she and I chatted for a few minutes. Then I asked her for an address and phone number so we

could continue our discussion at a more convenient time. Aaron’s excitement over meeting a serious inquirer made him forget his fears. He was ready to join in the adventure.

I watched as he reached out to people with the broadsides. He seemed to enjoy the opportunities to speak, however briefly, with those who stopped to talk. Towards the end of our time I asked if he had been “persecuted” yet. He had forgotten all about that aspect of the work! To his surprise, he

saw the work can be just as boring and uneventful at some times as it is exciting at other times.

Nothing To Fear

Seven of us had come to distribute our literature. Our t-shirts proclaimed in Hebrew that Jesus is the Messiah, and within minutes I began to hear the word “missionary” whispered throughout the crowd that gathered. The whispers escalated to yells, and several people began screaming insults in Hebrew and Yiddish.

In less than five minutes, the crowd became hostile enough to tear the tract bags from our shoulders, scattering our tracts everywhere. Two of the men with us were surrounded by an angry mob who began to pull at them and to hit them with their fists. One person in our group lost his glasses, but a man standing and watching was kind enough to pick them up and hand them to one of the women.

I was shoved to the ground, and an Orthodox man threatened to kick me. But a woman standing outside of the mob yelled at him and he hurled insults at me instead. The woman began to cry, trying to make sense of the chaos. I got up and she asked me in broken English why the people were so upset. I explained that we believe Y’shua is the promised Messiah, and that they disagree.

Blessings *continued from page 4*

Just to make sure he was prepared for the possibility of persecution, I described a woman I often see in the market. She usually rides a bicycle, and wears a yellow wind breaker with a green visor. Whenever she sees me, she stops and spits at me! I told Aaron that I had already encountered her in the market that day, and I would point her out to him should she pass our way again. Less than ten minutes later I spotted her walking through the aisles toward Aaron. I called out to warn him. He turned only to see that she had passed him by without notice. He looked over at me and let me know, with a smile, that this time he had missed his chance to be persecuted for Jesus’ sake.

I guess it helped Aaron to know that every time I go out, I have the same fears that he does. I would prefer to have people’s approval rather than their disdain. Like most people, I want to be liked and appreciated. I just want to tell people about Y’shua more than I want those things. If doing that means risking disapproval, I have to push my desire for acceptance aside and choose to do the right thing. It’s wonderful when we can say “good-bye” to our fears and “hello” to His blessings. There truly is fullness of blessing all the days of our lives.

Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. (Matthew 5:11)

—Tuvya Zaretsky, chief of station
Los Angeles



Lynn Wein

Nothing to Fear *continued from page 4*

“How can you do this?” she asked, “Why aren’t you afraid?” I realized then that I wasn’t afraid. All my fear and anxiety had subsided and was replaced with an amazing sense of peace—peace that nothing would separate me from God, nothing. I couldn’t speak Hebrew, but somehow I communicated to this Israeli woman that believing in Jesus was so important that it was worth the risk to tell others.

You might never have to face an angry mob like the one we encountered on Ben Yehuda Street. You may never be threatened by a kick or the swing of a fist. But if you’re like most people, perhaps you will feel threatened by the possible rejection of friends or acquaintances when you share your faith. That fear is just as real as any other, and it matters to God. If God cared about my fear of driving on a roadway, how much more will He remove any anxiety we may have that keeps us from sharing the most important thing in our lives, the Gospel.

Sharing our faith is not an option, it is a command. Chances are we will be rejected by some, but remember that it is not we who are rejected, it is Jesus. I think of that young Israeli woman who was touched by the peace she saw in our faces. In the midst of the hostility and the anger of today’s world, we must always be mindful that people are watching us, and that we may be the only Christian they ever get to see.

—Lynn Wein, missionary
Washington, D.C.

Prayer Prompters

Please pray for

- ✦ more Christians to be willing to risk rejection for the sake of the gospel (see David Brickner’s article)
- ✦ more volunteers like Aaron who will be willing to stand with us and hand out gospel tracts (pp. 4-5)
- ✦ many Israelis to question the intolerance shown toward the gospel, and that many will turn to the Messiah (pp. 4-5)
- ✦ follow-up from our Summer Witnessing Campaigns; that as we contact those who gave their names, addresses and phone numbers for further information, many will be ready to receive the gospel
- ✦ grace and strength for new Jewish believers Vera, Nancy and Joyce in New York, Los Angeles and Italy (p. 8)
- ✦ salvation for Andrew, a Polish Jew living in Northern Ireland (p. 8)
- ✦ salvation for a Jewish doctor named Jean-Jacques in Paris (p. 8)
- ✦ boldness for a new Jewish believer named Francine, in Paris (p.8)
- ✦ new outreach worker Etienne Levi in Paris, as he makes the transition into full-time ministry (p.8)
- ✦ Kate Fryer to know God’s leading for her life as she explores ministry to the Jewish people of Paris (p.8)

Last month we began a series on the history of Jewish missions. Part One described the motivation and practice of the early Jewish missions. This month, we would like to introduce you to mid-century men and women of mission in:

In the mid 1950s, a group of Dallas Theological Seminary students undertook a survey of missions to the Jews to ascertain who was employed in the field, where they were employed and the nature and character of their work. They surveyed North American missions and evangelistic agencies in the United States and Canada, and also listed missionaries sent by the North American agencies from foreign countries, mostly Israel and South America.

I have forgotten much of what was recorded in that survey, but I remember that the total number of missionaries was 365. It should be noted that most mission boards in this survey counted a husband and a wife each as missionaries, even if the wife was not formally employed. This was not true of the American Board of Missions to the Jews, also known as Beth Sar Shalom and now known as Chosen People Ministries. In the mid-1950s they were, by far, the largest of the Jewish mission organizations and listed some 65 staff.

New York City had by far the most people employed in Jewish evangelism but Chicago came in a strong second. Curiously, there were also workers in places like Des Moines, Iowa; Portland, Oregon, and many other cities with lesser Jewish populations. Some of these cities had more personnel than the larger Jewish centers.

The DTS survey did not include certain key factors such as where each missionary had been born. The European-born missionaries to the Jews generally had more by way of language skills and a better education than those born in America. With the rise of Hitler, certain missionaries to the Jews throughout Europe moved to Great Britain and the United States; these were the more experienced, better educated missionaries. There also was a big difference between the younger staff and the older staff in shaping the character of missions.

In those days there was a strong tension between Jewish and Gentile types of missions. Believe it or not, some mission organizations actually boasted that they had no Jews on staff! Harry Bucalstein, a dear friend, brother and fellow minister, told me that he had been employed as a secretary by Nathaniel House in Chicago. In the course of typing the resolutions of their Board of Directors, Harry was stunned to discover that the board had resolved never to have a Jewish Christian as their director! Harry was a student at Moody Bible Institute at the time. He

Jewish Missions Then AND Now

PART TWO

by Moishe Rosen, Jews for Jesus Founder



really needed that job, but as soon as he finished typing the resolution, he also typed his resignation.

I am pleased to say that most of the tension between Jewish and Gentile missions no longer exists.

Missionary Minds

Most of the older missionaries were fluent in Yiddish, even though some who lacked a Jewish background learned the language after they became missionaries. Most Jewish missionaries had a working knowledge of Hebrew from being raised in the Jewish religion, and they made use of it to tell of the gospel.

The missionary ranks of that generation included numerous scholars of Hebrew and Scripture. Two of the many who deserve mention are A.J. Kligerman and his illustrious son-in-law, Arthur Kac. Together, they contributed numerous scholarly articles and very effective books. Many Christians know the name Jacob Jocz, but comparatively few know of his brother, Paul Yates. Paul Yates was a student of rabbinics and Scripture, but most of all he was a superb general missionary in the San Francisco Bay Area for some 40 years. Then there were Morris Zutrau, Moses Gitlin and dozens, if not hundreds, of others who could be mentioned. But the last in that line of rabbinical scholars who were effective for the gospel was the beloved Rachmiel Frydland. He was a brilliant *yeshiva* (school of higher Jewish education) student who came to faith just before the Germans marched into Poland. These European-born Jews argued effectively from Scripture, as well as from Jewish sources such as the *Talmud* and *Responsa*, to make the case for Jesus.



We were privileged to have Rachmiel Frydland on our staff from 1979 until 1985 when he went home to be with the Lord.

Others were not *yeshiva* trained but still embodied Jewish spirit,

such as Fred Kendal and Immanuel Gittell. The archetype of the scholar/missionary would be David Braunstein Sr. of Chicago. He conducted two divergent missions and pastored what would now be called a messianic congregation.

These were the nobility of Jewish missions, God's captains, but He also had His privates, corporals and a few sergeants.



Fred Kendal is also the grandfather of David Brickner, Jews for Jesus' executive director.

Women in the Missionary Ranks

At any given time, there were probably more single women missionaries in Jewish Evangelism than there were men. The female missionaries of that generation did not fit the stereotypical caricature of stern prudishness. They generally wore nice clothes and their hairdos were not especially severe; they went about their work looking like business people. It was just about 1955 when the American Board of Missions to the Jews decided to furnish automobiles to all of its missionaries. Some of the single women did not know how to drive and it was up to the brothers like myself, who had the

time, to teach them and take them for their driver's license examinations.

Nevertheless, if women were partners in mission, in those days they were treated like junior partners. For example, Hilda Koser built a work in Coney Island that had 200 people, almost all Jewish, worshiping with her on Sunday mornings. Yet this body couldn't be called a congregation or its worship a church service. Instead, it was called a Sunday school. And though Miss Koser was quite a capable teacher and a rousing preacher, she was not the principal teacher at the Sunday service which she had built. The service featured Dr. Henry Heydt, a Gentile scholar and the former president of Lancaster School of the Bible.

The attitude of the mission leaders of that day seemed to be, "Women can do work of which they're capable in the mission, as long as they know their place."

Stay tuned for more on the changing world of Jewish evangelism as we continue our series, Jewish Evangelism—Then and Now.



Test Your Yiddishkeit*



maven (pronounced **may-vin**):

- a. a talking scavenger bird that is a cross between a myna bird and a raven
- b. a special grape beverage that is best enjoyed in the month of May
- c. an expert, an aficionado in a certain field



handler (rhymes with wander)

- a. someone who designs various types of handles
- b. a singer of Handel's Messiah
- c. a wheeler-dealer who knows the ins and outs of striking a bargain

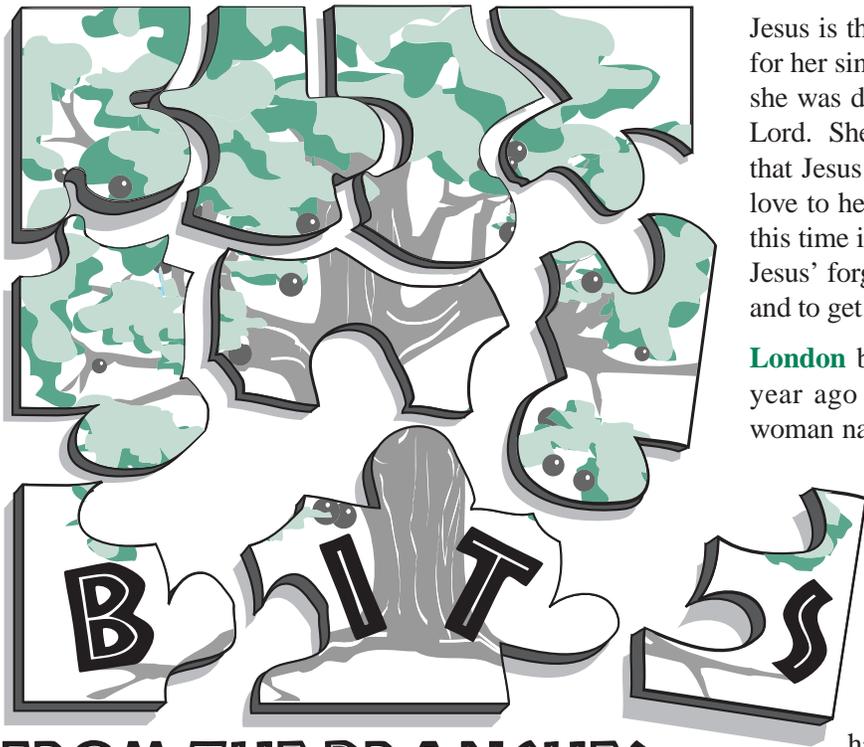


macher (pronounced **mah-kher**, try saying the "kh" simultaneously)

- a. driver of a Jewish race car
- b. someone who makes fun of other people
- c. a big shot

*Jewishness

If you answered, "c" to all three, you are a Yiddish maven for sure!



FROM THE BRANCHES

From **New York City**, missionary Kina Forman reports, “Vera has been receiving our Jews for Jesus publication, ISSUES, since 1993. At one point, she was meeting regularly with one of our missionaries in New York, but she never seemed to connect with the gospel message. I have been meeting with Vera two years and each time we met, Vera said ‘no’ to Jesus as the Messiah. Yet, the Lord laid it on my heart to continue visiting her.

“A few weeks ago, I tried explaining atonement to Vera once again. To my surprise, she did not dispute the point. Then suddenly, she came down with a serious cough attack that lasted ten minutes. Gasping for breath, she managed to tell me, ‘I feel like I am going to die.’

“I quickly asked, ‘Are you ready to meet God?’

“‘No.’

“‘Are your sins atoned for, Vera?’

“‘No.’

“‘Are you prepared to accept that Jesus can be your atonement through his death—if you believe?’

“‘Yes.’

“The cough subsided and we prayed together for Jesus to forgive Vera’s sins. A few days later she told me, ‘I am surprised at how Jewish I still am!’ She told me she truly felt at peace. Finally . . . she put her trust in Jesus...and it was not too late!”

From **Los Angeles**, missionary Annette Sofaer reports, “I dropped by to see Nancy, with whom I’ve been meeting for about a year. Nancy has believed for quite some time that

Jesus is the Son of God but she could not see that He died for her sins. I visited her just prior to her back surgery, and she was distressed over her uncertain relationship with the Lord. She said, ‘Okay, show me where in the Bible it says that Jesus died to take away our sins.’ That’s a request we love to hear! We looked at John 3, Isaiah 53 and 59, and this time it finally clicked for Nancy. She prayed to receive Jesus’ forgiveness! Please pray for her to grow in the Lord and to get involved in a good church.”

London branch leader Jonathan Bernd, reports, “About a year ago we did an evangelistic mailing and a Jewish woman named Joyce, who lives in Italy, responded. When

I followed up on her response, she wrote back immediately. So I called her. We spoke for awhile on the telephone and I suggested a congregation she could attend in her area. Since then we have corresponded off and on. A few months ago, Joyce called to say that she is believing more and more that Y’shua (Jesus) is the Messiah and is attending the congregation I had suggested. Later she wrote to me wondering

whether it was Jewish to get baptized. I called to give

her a couple of Scripture passages to read, promising to call back and discuss them with her the following week. Before I hung up she said, ‘Oh just one more thing! I’ve been reborn and it has turned my life upside down. I’ve accepted my situation (multiple sclerosis and a difficult marriage) and it’s just amazing.’ Praise the Lord! She was bubbling with joy. I had been wondering how much of the gospel had really clicked and now I know. Please pray for her continued growth.

“On another note, please pray for Andrew, a Jewish student from Poland whom I met in Northern Ireland! He seemed very open to the gospel when we talked.”

Stephen Pacht reports from **Paris**, “I have been meeting with a Jewish doctor named Jean-Jacques for some time. He recently announced his desire to be baptized, and asked if I would be willing to teach him the prerequisite information. The only problem is, he has not yet been born again! Pray for him to truly understand and accept the gospel. In contrast, we have Francine, who contacted us months ago after finding one of our broadsides (gospel tracts) in a post office. She has been coming to our regular fellowship meetings and has also been attending church services with us. She *has* been born again and also wants to be baptized—but fears her family’s reaction. She too, needs prayer.

“The Paris team is growing! French Jewish believer Etienne Levi has participated in three summer witnessing campaigns (including this summer) and joins us as an outreach worker. Kate Fryer, a young British graduate, is taking a year to test what she feels might be a calling to minister to the French and to Jews. Please pray for us to meld together as a team.”