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HOPE FOR THE LAND OF ISRAEL?

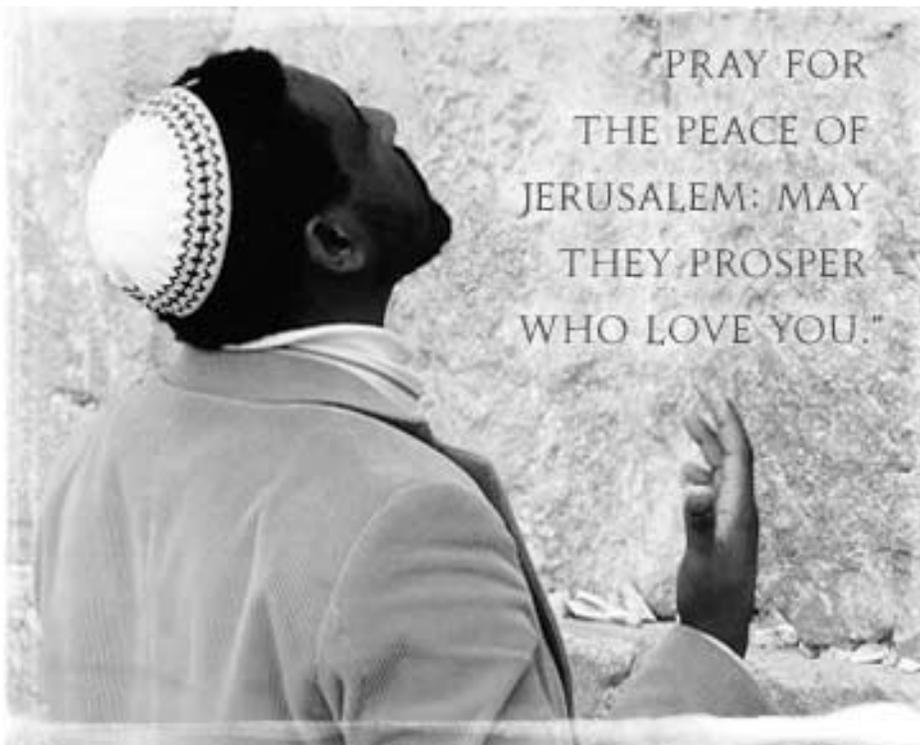
By David Brickner, Executive Director

Newspaper headlines continue to scream out stories of violence in the Middle East. Television news reports flash images of bloodshed that stains the Holy Land. Israel is a womb of disharmony wherein borders and nationalities seem to cause battle after battle. And yet the ultimate conflict in the Middle East is religious. The Jewish and Muslim disputes over holy sites are merely one chapter in a very ancient book. Into the midst of this age-old discord, the voice of Christianity speaks—sometimes muffled and indistinct, other times shrill and piercing.

Unfortunately, the latter voice has had quite an effect in Israel. The tragic and often violent history of the triumphalist church of the Middle Ages is indelibly fixed in the minds of the people there. Ancient Crusader fortresses dot the land, memorializing that history.

And what can be heard when contemporary Christians raise their voices in the Land? To many Israelis, “official” Christianity sounds like so much squabbling over rights to dubious holy sites around the Land.

Evangelical Christians raise their voices over more pressing issues. Some ardent Christian Zionists show



blind allegiance to the most extreme right-wing political positions, to the point of unChrist-like attitudes towards Arabs. On the other hand, some pro-Palestinian evangelicals feel politically and religiously correct in siding with the Palestinians because they view them as the underdog who, without Christian sympathies, will remain poor and oppressed. Their left-leaning theological convictions preclude any place for a Jewish Israel in God’s future plan. Consequently, they confer an

illegitimacy on the current government and accept Palestinian propaganda as gospel truth.

Yet despite the discord, I am hopeful for what can happen in Israel—because despite the current conflict, God has declared a bright future for the nation.

The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will

be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens shall ever pass through her again (Joel 3:16-17).

What a day that will be! In the meantime, we can sow the gospel of peace in the hearts of Jews and Arabs alike, knowing that some will receive the life-giving message. When the Prince of Peace rules in the hearts of Arabs and Jews, there will be a lasting peace from God. It will never come through politics. We know that true peace will only come to the city of peace when the Prince of Peace comes in power and glory.

We need evangelical Christians to commit to this task of proclamation in Israel. Not the triumphant proclamation of a crusader, but the humble voices of sinners saved by grace. Only when Christians agree that all people need the gospel will the church sow enough gospel seed to yield a good harvest.



When believers accept rejection as an ordinary part of following Y’shua, the church will move as one to reach out to those who desperately need the Messiah.

I only wish more Christians were aware of the opportunities for witness in Israel right now. Because despite the conflict in the Land, or perhaps in some ways because of it, many Israelis are open to the gospel. We see some come to faith in Jesus each month!

Contemporary mission strategy makes much of the 10/40 window, but few who speak of that window mention that Israel is smack dab in the middle of it. No strategy for world evangelization is complete unless it includes cogent thinking on Jewish missions and specific plans to reach Israel with the good news of Messiah.

The Holy Land, said to be so because it is the place from which the gospel first emanated, desperately needs the attention and focus of the Church. One need not have a political agenda to fulfill the mandate of Psalm 122:6, “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: may they prosper who love you.”

Some point out that Jesus never limited his ministry to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. The Great Commission is to go into all the world. Yet Jesus started out “to the Jew first” knowing that His impact in Judea would be felt in Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth. Paul used the same strategy.

Both kept a sharp, narrow focus. The Great Commission was first given to Jewish believers

in Jesus. Those first Jews for Jesus did a pretty good job making that message known beyond the confines of Jerusalem and Judea.

Now, as we face the 21st century since that Great Commission was first given, we too need to sharpen our focus. We need to renew our commitment to bring the message back to the land where that command was first uttered.

Many Christians don’t realize that it is possible to share the gospel in Israel in much the same way as it is in other democracies of the world. Our Israeli staff is doing this every single day. In fact, Jews for Jesus is recognized by the government of Israel as a not-for-profit organization. Our missionaries go out onto the streets of Tel Aviv or onto the college campuses to hand out our gospel tracts. We meet with Israelis, young and old alike, to share the good news of Messiah. God gives opportunities to lead Jews as well as Arabs to faith in Christ!

I am thankful that God has given us the opportunity to stand for Him in Israel. I am grateful to you for standing with us through your prayers and support. Thank you for enabling us to be your hands and feet to give that message of hope to the people and place known as Israel. Please continue to pray for our missionaries in Israel. Pray for their protection. Pray that God will grant them continuing courage and anoint them with wisdom and power to proclaim His gospel. Please pray that they will continue seeing much fruit for the glory of God.

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

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THE BYG PIC*



Irina Volodarskaya is a young Jewish believer from Kiev who has helped out as both a literary and oral translator from English into Russian. A few of the recent “Davar” publications were her handiwork, and she most recently served as one of the translators at the School of the Messengers in Germany. I’ve hoped that she would come on board full-time in some capacity for the past year, and that hope has finally

become a reality. Irina is leaving her post as translator for the Interfax News Agency in Kiev so that she can serve full-time on the development of our Russian-language publications. Please pray for her as she begins her services with us this month.

*The Behold Your God Picture



THE SILVERMANS ABROAD



PRAYER PROMPTERS

Please pray for:

♥ protection for our missionaries in Israel, and for many Israelis to hear and respond to their message of hope and peace in Y’shua (p. 1, 4)

♥ Daniel Goldstein, that God would continue to use him in making the messiahship of Y’shua an unavoidable issue to the Jewish people in Israel (p. 5)

♥ Irina Volodarskaya as she begins working with us in developing our Russian-language publications for BYG (p. 3)

♥ Max in Israel, who prayed with Shlomy to receive the Lord and is now considering volunteering with us (p. 8)

♥ salvation for Emma (CIS), Alla (CIS), Rose (Australia), Linda and her Buddhist husband (South Africa) (p. 8)

♥ continued growth for new Jewish believers Frank (South Africa) and Moshe (New York) as well as for Cheryl (New York) (p. 8)



FOR SUCH A TIME . . .

By Miriam Abramov

“For I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes” (Matthew 10:23b).

I used to wonder about Matthew 10:23. How could it be we would not reach all of Israel before the Son of Man comes? Now, as one of the Jews for Jesus in Israel, I see what is happening on our borders and in our little state. This verse now seems very reasonable.

Not long ago my husband and I went to distribute gospel literature in an area that is now being overseen by dual security (Palestinian and Israeli). Our car was pelted with rocks—not because we believe in Jesus, but because we are Israelis.

In this country we walk by faith, as you do. God’s Word is so comforting when the borders of Jerusalem just up the street are being shot at, don’t you agree?

We have shared the gospel in many places and yet there are so many places we still must go. We are seeing fruit as many Jewish people call us asking for more information about the New Testament and Jesus. We really do feel this is a crucial time to share the gospel, and, well, the Bible is coming alive before our very eyes!

We have so much work here, including keeping our own hearts in check so we can walk worthy of our calling. We sometimes travel further out to visit that one soul who might not otherwise hear the gospel. Perhaps he or she is a religious Jew whose whole family sees his or her every move. Yet that person is drawn to Jesus after receiving our literature, or from a dream or whatever our wonderful God in His marvelous ways has chosen.

So we go to visit, and visit . . . and . . . visit. Then one day—through your

prayers, our perseverance and God’s grace—we see a Jewish person come to faith. All the bullets that were shot on every side and all the persecution and all the sweat and tears (oh, yes) become worth it.

Jesus is not the most favored name in these parts. But He called us to be faithful to Him in this hour. I think of Peter’s words, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). In the same way I too ask, should I run away if rocks and bullets are flying, or trust Him even more now that it is tough, knowing He will protect me?

I love evangelizing and I feel God has called me to this work. Yet recently we had to cancel a few visits in controversial areas because, for our own protection, the military won’t let us go there.

We will continue to evangelize, and continue and continue, God willing. The need for the gospel only grows as the violence continues. The day is getting darker, and we have the knowledge of everlasting life in the midst of it all. *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!* Peter’s words ring in my heart and ears.

Now is the time to put our trust in God and not in the political situation here. So evangelize we will; it’s what we do and who we are.

I’m glad to be part of Jews for Jesus Israel at this time. My question is this however: how many borders will they close this week? Next week? Can we reach all these people before He returns?

Pray for Israel, and pray for us! I promise you we will be every place where God wills and they will let us in! We know He’s the Lord and He has called us for such a time as this.



Miriam Abramov



HALUTZIM REFLECTIONS

By Daniel Goldstein

It was a rainy summer day in Times Square, New York. I’d had a 15-minute conversation/argument with a young Jewish guy named Andy. It left me discouraged, but not hopeless. A few minutes later another Jewish man literally ran into me. I was even more discouraged! But I prayed for strength and kept handing out my broadsides (gospel



Daniel Goldstein

tracts). It was the second year I was participating in Halutzim, a two-week evangelism opportunity for young Jewish believers in New York.

I am 17 years old and live in Israel. I was raised in a believing home and my parents have been part of Jews for Jesus since before I was born. I accepted Y’shua as my Savior at a young age, and growing up I always believed and didn’t really doubt God or Y’shua. A few years ago I even witnessed to my school class in Israel. But I still felt there was something missing. Y’shua wasn’t real to me in my daily life.

When I was old enough to go on Halutzim I wasn’t sure I wanted to. Eventually I decided to go. I was kind of half-hearted, but hoping and believing I would get something out of it and have some fun with other Jewish believers my age.

During my first Halutzim we visited a few Jewish sites in New York City where we learned about our Jewish roots. Then we had a few training sessions to teach us about street evangelism. By the end of the first week we had already been out on a sortie (tract-passing expedition). I found myself eager to get out on the streets and witness. Once I got the chance, I wanted to go out witnessing and stay out longer. As I learned the basics, I discovered that I liked to witness. The Lord was changing me and preparing me for what He wants me to do.

When I went back home I started going out to witness as much as possible with Jews for Jesus here in Israel. Throughout the year I learned more and more about reaching our people in Israel in the 21st century. In a sense, Israeli Jews are more open than American Jews, who seem to need to prove their Jewishness by denying Y’shua.

As the school year ended I began working and was busy with finals in school. I didn’t go on outreaches for the last few months of the school year and I felt my relationship with God suffered as a result. I neglected what the Lord was calling me to do and it wasn’t easy.

So this year, when I received another invitation to go to New York for Halutzim, I went with high expectations knowing that God would do something even more special in my life than last time.

The returning group of Halutzimers have a more intense time of witnessing than the first-timers. Twice a day I went on sorties and I got a better feel for preaching the gospel in New York City. I learned that Y’shua is the most real to me when people I’ve never seen before question my faith in Him. When I need to tell them about the Author and Perfecter of our faith, Y’shua has to be real and true for me. In those difficult times (like that rainy afternoon as I witnessed to Andy in Times Square), I find freedom and strength through Y’shua. And when I met Andy a few days later in Washington Square Park, I could clearly see that he was wrestling with the truth. I saw God’s hand in motion.

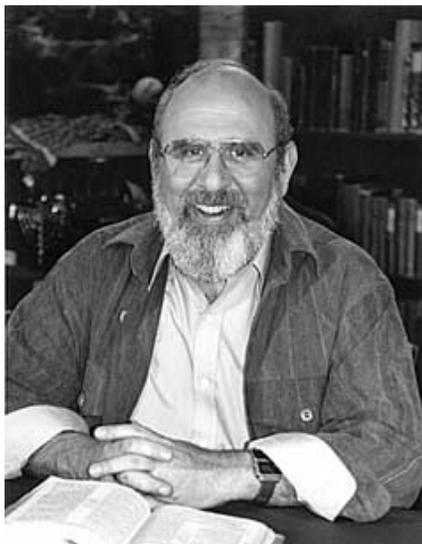
I grew much stronger in Y’shua this past summer. I believe wholeheartedly that God has called me—a sinful, doubtful and unworthy person—to proclaim the wonderful name of the King of Kings, Y’shua. I pray that during my last year of school, and as I prepare with others my age for the Israeli army, God will use me to “make the messiahship of Y’shua an unavoidable issue” to my Jewish people in Israel and wherever else He might send me. Please pray for me to be faithful to that calling.



ISRAEL, MY LOVE

By Zola Levitt

In 1973 I was thunderstruck by my first trip to the Holy Land. What an amazing, edifying and spiritual experience that was! I immediately wrote the book *Israel, My Love* and



When I tell people that Jerusalem has been destroyed to the ground 29 times, they are saddened. But when I stand with them on the Mount of Olives, look over this magnificent rebuilt city and remind them that it will be theirs for all eternity, they are overjoyed. Jerusalem will endure forever, as the Lord promises “a new heaven and a new earth. . . . and a New Jerusalem” (Revelation 21:1,2).

When our pilgrims first arrive at their hotel rooms in Jerusalem, they find a rose with a note from our ministry saying, “The rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley, to welcome you home.” How wonderful it is to know that this is, indeed, our home, and that what has always been called the Promised Land is at this moment biblically promised to us!

THERE’S SOMETHING ABOUT THE HOLY LAND, JERUSALEM, AND ESPECIALLY THAT EMPTY TOMB THAT SHOWS US THAT WE NEED NOT SORROW OVER ANYTHING, EVEN DEATH.

subsequently composed an album by that same title.

In September I took my 66th tour of the Holy Land, if I’m counting right. In any case, it was the best one of them all.

That’s a comment I typically make at our final banquet on each tour and, truly, I always mean it. Each time I see this wonderful land my love for it grows sweeter, and my eagerness to be there grows greater.

We are living through a very difficult time for the Promised Land, perhaps as difficult as any it’s ever endured.

I thank God that I belong to the Christians who pray for Israel, regardless of how many professors, pastors, seminary presidents and the like may turn their backs on the Holy Land. Our television programs, music and printed materials allow us to interact with supportive Christians all over the world. All of that is very inspiring, indeed. But the most inspiring part of all is Israel.

On this trip we had a wedding at that Garden Tomb where the Lord was not present, since He has gone to prepare a place for us. It was certainly a fine moment. Other couples repeated

their marriage vows. There’s something about the Holy Land, Jerusalem, and especially that empty tomb, which shows us that we need not sorrow over anything, even death. And that really gets to people. It brings out their very best.

We had praise and worship services every morning, and we spoke to the Lord exactly in His footsteps as we traveled. We held a service on the Sea of Galilee, on the Mount of the Sermon and in the Upper Room, to mention a few places. Our pilgrims also went to the Western Wall to make their prayers and to place written messages to God in cracks in the wall. Important rabbis in full dress stepped aside for farmers from Iowa who approached those hallowed stones.

At the end of the tour we went around the room asking people to describe their favorite moment. The terrific variety of opinions taught us all a lot about the Holy Land, each other, and ourselves.

I’m in favor of every single Christian visiting the Holy Land, even presidents of seminaries, if they’ll take the time to go. Israel changes people. Israel makes everyday Christians better Christians and ministers better ministers and presidents better presidents. The mighty are humbled by Israel. It is a good place to meet not only God, but also yourself.

After visiting the Promised Land for the first time, a Jewish believer said, “I used to read the Bible in black and white. Now I read it in color!” I’m all in favor of everybody seeing the Land with me or with someone else. Go with anybody’s tour. That’s not the important point. Ultimately, we’ll all go for a 1,000-year tour with our Lord Himself!

“Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

A MESSAGE FROM MOISHE

TRAGEDY: AN OCCASION FOR VICTORY

Various holidays and occasions often sharpen the pain of loss. Yet tragedy can be an occasion for victory. This is a hard word, a difficult message and yet it can bring hope to widows, widowers, those who have recently lost a loved one, or those who are keeping watch over someone who is about to pass out of this world.

magnifying self; promoting Him rather than promoting self. For we are continually reminded . . . ‘All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD endures forever’” (1 Peter 1:24, 25a).

Grieving reminds us of our own mortality, that our days are numbered

. . . GRIEVING IS IMPORTANT. IT DIGS OUT THE CELLAR OF OUR SOULS, MAKING US DEEPER PEOPLE.

God gave us emotions for a reason. Even anger can accomplish good. People who allow themselves to be energized by righteous indignation over the wrongs they see can change the world.

Likewise, while grief and sorrow are potentially destructive, they too have an “up side.” Of course, none of us would ever wish the benefits of grief and sorrow upon our loved ones! Still, grieving is important. It digs out the cellar of our souls, making us deeper people. Grief helps us to appreciate the life of the departed person more fully. Sometimes our deepest regret in grief is that we didn’t show the departed person how very much we loved and appreciated them. That regret can help us express more love and appreciation towards the living.

Grief also teaches us to depend on God as we realize that He alone will always be with us, and that nothing we have on this earth will last, including our own bodies. The only way to preserve whatever has meaning to us is by investing it in Christ: serving Him rather than serving self; magnifying Him rather than

and that we need to accomplish whatever we will for the Lord. It also reminds us that the only lasting things we can offer our loved ones are the eternal things of God. Those who grieve without a knowledge of the Savior will not derive all of these benefits, but still they understand the importance of grief.

Various cultures develop their own grieving rituals. The Jewish form of mourning is called “*sitting Shiva*.” Shiva, a Hebrew word, refers to seven days. Sitting is exactly what it sounds like. For seven days you go to the home of the departed or a near relative. You say the traditional prayers with the family and you just sit with them. It is not a matter of saying the right thing; it is just a matter of being there for them and showing the depth of your own feelings by your faithful presence.

Jesus longed for that kind of faithfulness as He grieved over Calvary. Perhaps the loneliest moment of His life was in the Garden of Gethsemane. As He faced a burden so great that He prayed for the Father to take it away from Him if possible, He looked for



comfort in the presence of His disciples. The suffering to come weighed heavily enough upon Him. How much heavier it became when His closest friends and companions slept through His prayers concerning this ordeal. Y’shua wasn’t looking for answers from His friends. He just wanted them to share some of what He was feeling.

The way to help our friends in their grief is not with platitudes or kind words. We need to sit with them and share their grief and just be there with them, for them. This month many have chosen a day to celebrate romantic love. Let’s remember those who are grieving over a lost loved one, or those who are grieving over a love they never found. Don’t be afraid to share some of what they are feeling, not with your words, but with your presence and a listening ear.

As we allow ourselves to grieve with people, we should also allow ourselves to grieve with God over lost souls who need to know His love and forgiveness. The pain we allow ourselves to feel for the things that are close to God’s heart will always bring us closer to Him.

Israel: Miriam Abramov reports, “Max came to our home to fix our personal computer, but God had another repair in mind. Shlomy [Miriam’s husband] spoke with Max for two hours about Y’shua—and Max prayed to receive salvation. Isn’t God great?! Max is already talking about volunteering to help us.”

CIS: Sergey Kulakov reports, “I tried to visit a Jewish man I’d met during a sortie, only to be greeted by two women who informed me that I’d been given a wrong address. I excused myself, but as I was walking down the stairs one woman began to ask about Jews for Jesus mailings she had received. It turns out that Emma is Jewish, and has been reading our literature very carefully. She seemed open to the gospel. I believe it was no accident that I had this “wrong address.”

Galya Bogomolova reports, “It always inspires me when the Lord lets us see how our broadsides work. I was on a sortie, and as people were rushing by one woman commented, ‘I have so many of these at home!’ I asked, ‘What do you think about the message?’ I was surprised when she stopped, sighed deeply and said: ‘I think that I need to write to Odessa at last to ask for more literature so I can think seriously about it.’ Please pray for Alla.”

Australia: Natalie Sachs reports, “I met Rose, a 74-year-old Holocaust survivor, while I was handing out broadsides at Bondi Junction. She agreed to a visit, and the next day I got to know her better. She is an amazing woman who has been studying to become a judge for the last four years. She also works for

several charitable organizations. Please pray for her to realize that Jesus has real answers to her questions.”

South Africa: Samuel Legesse reports, “I met Frank at a sortie in Yeoville. At first he only wanted to discuss the history of religion and how his father, his brother and he were saved from a German concentration camp. He attended

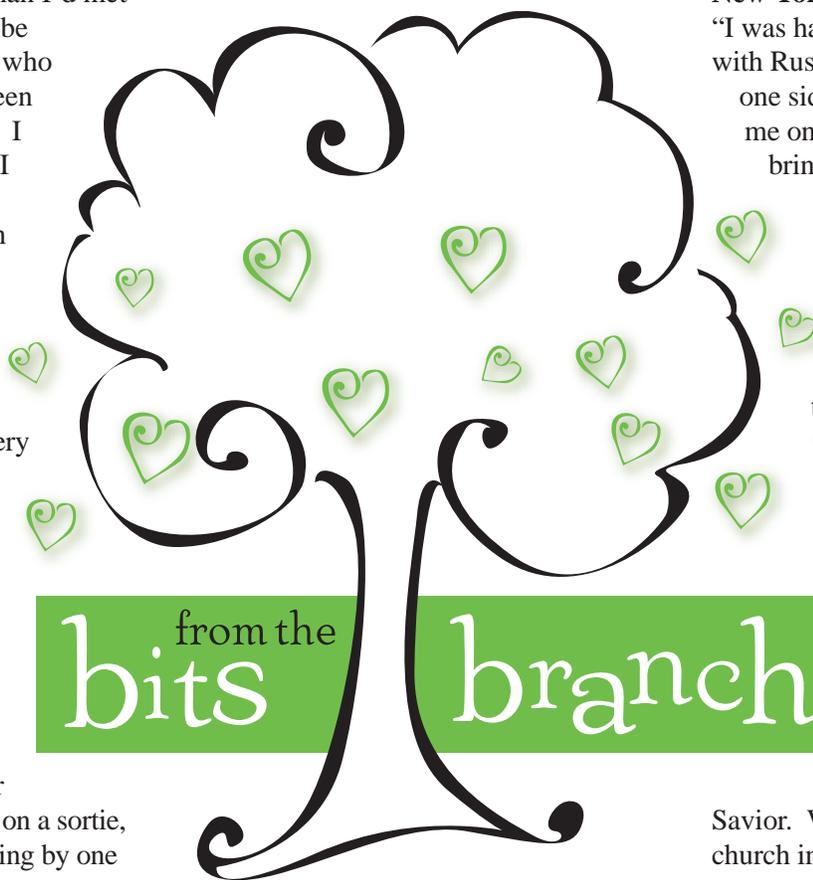
went out to dinner, and Linda and her husband were eating at the same restaurant. On seeing us, and of course the van, they called us over and we had a good discussion with Linda and her husband, who is very involved in Buddhism. We answered some of his questions, and we pray that God will continue to nurture the gospel seeds we sowed.”

New York: Rhonda Gordon reports, “I was handing out tracts in Brooklyn, with Russian Jews yelling at me on one side and Palestinians yelling at me on the other. I asked God to bring along someone who really wanted to know Him. Then I met Cheryl. She had also been praying—that God would help her meet people who could help her get closer to Jesus and teach her about the Bible. Cheryl had a nominal Christian background, and someone had given her a

Mormon book, which had confused her. I explained the gospel to her and she prayed to receive Jesus as her Lord and

Savior. We will help her find a church in her neighborhood so she can grow in her faith. Praise God for answered prayer!”

Cyril Gordon reports, “I was covering the phones at our office when a 24-year-old Orthodox Jewish man named Moshe called. He had met one of our missionaries on the streets, but did not want to give his phone number because of how his family might respond. Moshe and I talked at length on the phone, and he prayed with me to receive Jesus as his Lord and Savior! Please pray for Moshe, as he’s the first one in his family ever to believe in Jesus and he’s cautious about his new faith.



church—but only because he liked the music and because his Christian wife goes. As we studied the Bible together, I began to see Frank’s attitude change. Then my colleagues, Michael Sischy and Eliyah Gould came with me to visit Frank, and their input was helpful. Frank, who seemed so disinterested at the start, is now a believer in Jesus!”

Teresa Sischy reports, “We frequently take our son Eliyah to pre-school in the Jews for Jesus van. This has raised a lot of interest from his pottery teacher, Linda, whose husband is Jewish. One evening we