

JEW S F ⚡ R JESUS

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ESTABLISHED 32 A.D., GIVE OR TAKE A YEAR

NOVEMBER 2004

Arrogant Toward the Branches *by David Brickner, Executive Director*

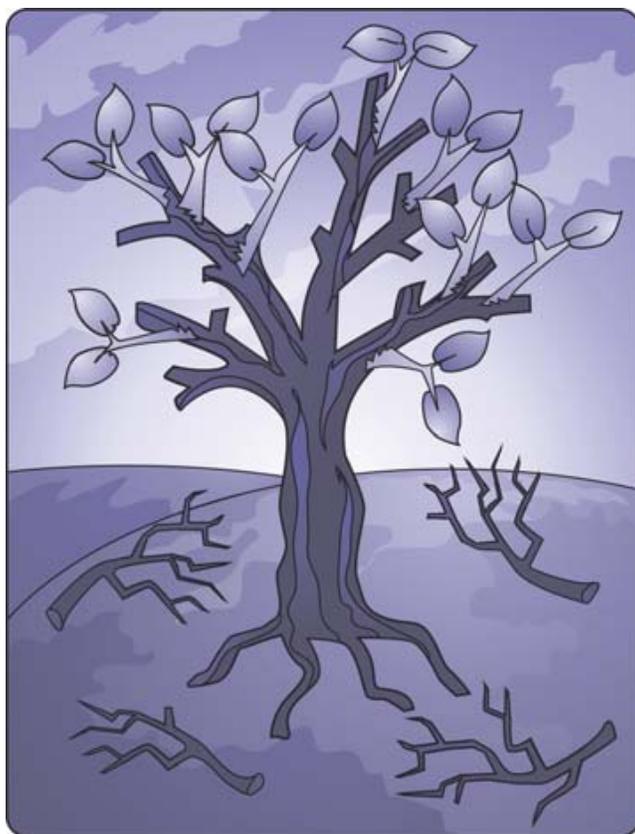
Newspapers this past August were filled with stories concerning a decision by the United Presbyterian Church USA to divest of selected companies doing business in Israel. They will make their final decision in March 2005. The divestment is in protest of Israeli government policy towards Palestinians, and effectively accuses Israel of racism akin to apartheid in South Africa.

Not all Presbyterian leaders agreed with the decision of their denomination. In speaking to writer Gaby Wenig of the *Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles* (July 30, 2004 "Presbyterians Ignite Divestment Uproar"), Mark Brewer, pastor of Bel Air Presbyterian Church in Southern California, remarked concerning those who made this decision, "It seems that they fell out of the stupid tree and hit every branch going down."¹

Another Presbyterian pastor confided, "With all of the human rights violations going on in the world today, I don't understand why our denomination needed to single out Israel. The decision was very one-sided and imbalanced." Thank God for those dissenting voices.

It should be understood that no government can be exempt from criticism. Israel is certainly worthy

of scrutiny and, as in the United States, there is deep disagreement among Israeli citizens regarding the crisis between Israelis and Palestinians. The *Jews for Jesus*



Newsletter is not the proper forum to try to resolve political issues and please be assured that we do not intend to do so. But there is a deeper issue at stake.

The aforementioned news item illustrates a growing problem in many churches. The very assembly that approved divestment also made a declaration that illustrates the root of the problem: "Christian Zionism is

not consistent with the basic values of Reformed theology because it makes use of idiosyncratic interpretations of Scripture to undergird a certain reading of current events, and to generate support for specific political goals that do not bolster work toward peace and potentially endanger Palestinian and Israeli people."²

First, the authors of that statement have painted Christian supporters of Israel with a broad brush, perpetuating unhelpful stereotypes. It is true that *some* Christian supporters of Israel are extreme and uncritical in their views, but certainly they do not speak for all so-called "Christian Zionists." Even worse, those who wrote the statement have taken upon themselves the role of theological spokespersons, claiming a superior understanding of Scripture and current events, and claiming that this superior vantage

comes from Reformed theology. It is questionable if their interpretation is representative of true Reformed theology, and their attitude certainly is not.

Our founder, Moishe Rosen, used to joke, "Here's an old tradition that I just made up." Unfortunately, there are many people who don't seem to realize how much "tradition" they are making up—and in the process they

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become arrogant toward those who are not quite part of their “tradition.”

One could argue that basic Reformed theology does indeed recognize a future for the Jewish people and calls on Christians to play a supportive role concerning the land of Israel and the promised salvation of her people. Jonathan Edwards, whom many consider the father of Reformed Christianity in America, wrote, “It is the more evident, that the Jews will return to their own land again, because they have never yet possessed one quarter of that land which was so often promised them.”³ He also wrote, “Nothing is more certainly foretold than this national conversion of the Jews.”⁴

Likewise, John Calvin wrote, “. . . as Jews are the firstborn, what the Prophet declares must be fulfilled, especially in them: for that scripture calls all the people of God Israelites, it is to be ascribed to the pre-eminence of that nation, who God had preferred to all other nations.”⁵

We are not trying to boast about God’s promises to Israel, but to point out that key Reformed theologians recognize them. So perhaps it is those who deny a future divine purpose and plan for the Jewish people who are out of step with the basic values of the Reformed theology they claim to represent.

The real problem in some of our churches today is not differing views of eschatology or even disagreements about economics and social justice in the Middle East. There is room in the Body of Christ

for differing opinions. The real problem is deeper.

Paul put his finger on that problem when he said to the church in Rome, “Do not be arrogant toward the branches . . .” (Romans 11:18) The “branches” Paul is speaking of are Jewish people who have yet to believe in Jesus. Paul knew that it would be tempting for the new (Gentile) believers in Jesus to adopt a

It is part of human nature to forget or dismiss what came before us and to see ourselves as the measure of how things are

dismissive attitude towards Jewish unbelievers. It would be easy to conclude that they were no longer God’s chosen, but were altogether replaced by those who believe and follow Christ. Paul labels this conclusion as arrogant and he warns against it. Yet Paul’s warning seems to go unheeded by many.

Arrogance does not begin with the church’s attitude toward Israel. It is part of human nature to forget or dismiss what came before us and to see ourselves as the measure of how things are. Arrogance, or pride, is dangerous; it comes before a fall. It is particularly disturbing when people institutionalize

their arrogance as though it is part of their theological distinction.

We Jews for Jesus understand and expect this from those whom we are called to evangelize. Leaders in the Jewish community continually pronounce: “Judaism teaches . . .” or, “In our tradition . . .” and what follows are all the reasons why Jews cannot believe in Jesus. The implication is, “This is who we are and this is what you can or can’t believe to be one of us.” Tragically, many Jewish leaders have elevated human traditions to the point where the ancient traditions of the prophets who predicted the Messiah became obscured, distorted or simply deemed irrelevant. It is arrogance and our people have suffered for it.

The Apostle Paul knew that the Church would be tempted to practice this kind of arrogance. Paul warns the Church against jumping to wrong conclusions about Israel. A reading of Romans 11 ought to result in an attitude of humility.

Humility does not require Christians to say, “God’s promises to Israel mean that all her policies are correct and justified.” But it does require Christians to realize that God has called, loved and made certain promises to Israel. Humility requires Christians to see Israel the way the Scriptures say God sees her.

For those Christians in Rome who were tempted to be arrogant toward the Jews, Paul reminded them, “I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.” (Romans 11:11)

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



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It is humbling to read that your very salvation is due to someone else's fall, and part of God's plan to make that someone else (the Jews) jealous, so that ultimately they would also turn to Jesus (Romans 11:26). If it was not in the Holy Scriptures, it would be unconscionable arrogance to even suggest such a thing. But there it is, in God's Word.

The great Reformed theologian Charles Hodge humbly commented on this reality, saying, "The future restoration of the Jews is, in itself, a more probable event than the introduction of the Gentiles into the church of God. . . . God refers to this fact to make us sensible that he still retains purposes of peculiar mercy towards his ancient people." 6

One of the greatest examples of humility—the opposite of arrogance—can be seen in Paul's own passionate evangelistic fervor. It took humility for him to be God's Apostle to the Gentiles rather than to his own people. He might have pronounced, "It goes against the basic values of Judaism to involve myself with these uncircumcised people." But speaking of his service to those who were not his own, he said, ". . . I magnify my ministry if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them" (Romans 11:13-14).

I don't for one minute believe that Christians of good will and genuine faith will ever fully agree on all issues of scriptural interpretation,

eschatology, politics and social justice in the Middle East. But I hope we can all agree that it is important to understand and appreciate what came before us, whether it regards our various church traditions, or whether it regards "the branches." That is one way to guard ourselves against arrogance. If we can all agree to that much, maybe there is hope for God's people, the Church, to experience renewed passion, such as Paul expressed, to see Israel saved. And the salvation of Israel will bring blessing to the whole world, in ways we cannot yet imagine:

"Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!" (Romans 11:12)

1. July 30, 2004 *The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles* "Presbyterians Ignite Divestment Uproar," by Gaby Wenig.
2. <http://www.pcusa.org/oga/newsstories/israel.htm>
3. Stephen J. Stein, ed. *Jonathan Edwards, Works, Apocalyptic Writings* vol.8, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977 p. 133-134.
4. Stephen J. Stein, ed. *Jonathan Edwards, Works A History of the Work of Redemption* vol.9, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977 p. 469-70.
5. Calvin, John, *Calvin's Commentaries*, Vol. XIX, Epistle to the Romans, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981, p. 434-440.
6. Hodge, Charles, *Systematic Theology* V.3, James Clark & Co. 1960, p. 805. and *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Greenville, SC: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1836, p. 270-285.

Prayer Prompters

Please pray for:



the peace of Jerusalem



Christian wisdom and perspective that is both compassionate and humble towards all concerned in the Middle East (p. 1,2)



effective follow-up for the seekers and new believers we met and are continuing to meet through the many witnessing campaigns over the summer and through the fall



the beginning of a heavy season of reaching out to holiday shoppers between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day at our U.S. branches, including the outreach at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City



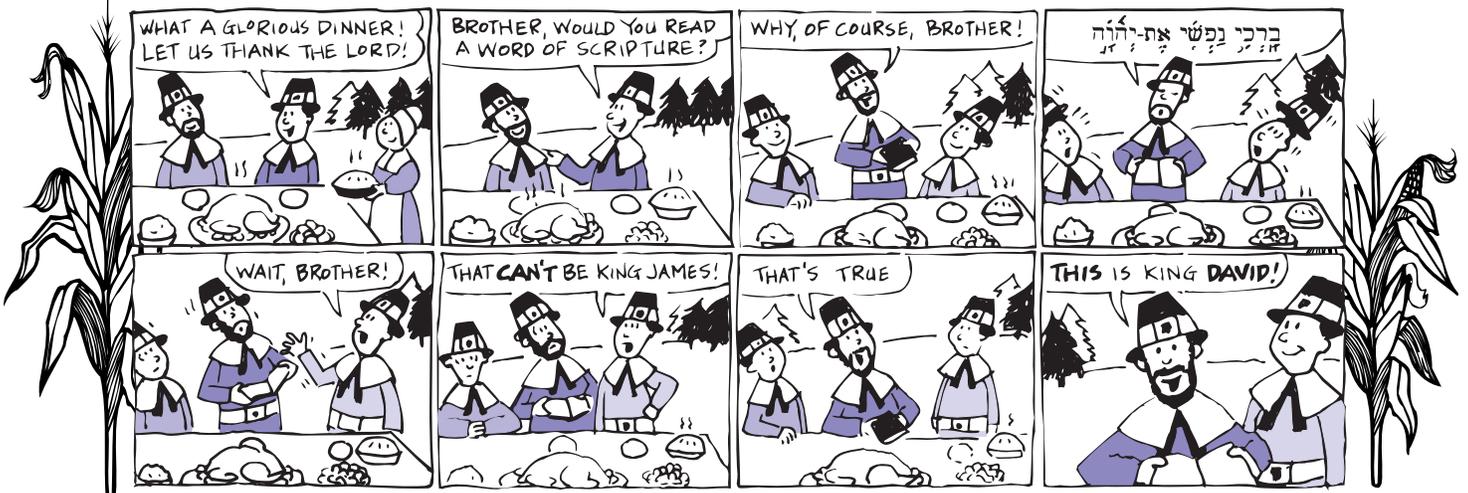
Behold Your God Sao Paulo (p. 7)



salvation for Philippe, Uriel and Pinhas (p. 8)



grace and strength for new Jewish believers Sarah (p. 6,7), Judith, Donna and Ken (p. 8)





What I Did on My Thanksgiving Vacation

by Lauri Gruen

The next time you hear that scathingly original comeback: “Jews for Jesus is like vegetarians for meat,”

REMEMBER THIS:

Once upon a time about some 20+ years ago a nice Jewish girl from upstate New York daily trekked the streets of dog-eat-dog Manhattan to and from work. One day, upon returning to her office from lunch in the neighborhood of 54th Street and Lexington Ave., someone handed her a bright yellow flyer. On the way up the elevator she opened the brochure and began to read. As the elevator rose, so did her blood pressure. By the time the 11th floor door opened, she was in an outrage over the blasphemy she had just read! Imagine the absolute audacity for someone to claim that Jesus was a Jew and that Jews should actually believe He is the Messiah!!! Well, it was a good thing that the person who shared this pack of lies with her was out of sight; otherwise she just might have had the urge to spit in their face!! (That is, if she was a spitting-in-the-face type of person.)

OK, so obviously you’ve figured out the girl in the story was me. Some from my past can not only vividly picture this event (spitting debatable), but can also recollect many conversations of the same nature over this last decade or two. The organization who planted that very first seed was Jews for Jesus. And I am notoriously remembered for saying

some seven years ago, with quite a bit of indignation, “Jews for Jesus is like giving meat to a vegetarian!”

So, many seeds later and a life surrendered to the King, where do you think God’s sense of humor would lead me? Where else but passing out tracts, proclaiming Jesus is Lord on the crowded streets of New York City,

*In the morning
sow your seed,
and in the evening do
not withhold your hand;
for you do not know
which will prosper . . .*

wearing a Jews for Jesus jacket. Yes, that’s where He put me the Friday after Thanksgiving, under quite remarkable circumstances. Not only was this Black Friday, the busiest shopping day of the year, but I stood in the rain in front of the largest, busiest shopping store, none other than Macy’s of 34th Street.

The awesome combination of prayer (my own and others covering me), the Word of God and fasting released God’s working and protective shield over me. His protection was strong enough to break through my own insecurities, as well as guard against the enemy’s tactics.

My fingers were challenged enough to keep up with efficiently distributing the tracts in rapid succession to the masses of shoppers, so there wasn’t a lot of opportunity for one-on-one witnessing. The only drama I experienced was when two young Orthodox Jewish girls tricked me into giving them a handful of tracts so they could promptly toss them in the closest garbage. After recovering from the brief discouragement of being duped, I realized that God was much more powerful than I and could redeem that situation as He did with me more than 20 years ago.

Throughout the day and subsequent reflections on the day, I keep returning back to the Scripture that was read at the beginning of the day during the training: “In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; for you do not know which will prosper, either this or that, or whether both alike will be good” (Ecclesiastes 11:6).

Regardless of how God uses each person to get the Good News out—whether it be as bold as street evangelism or another valuable behind-the-scenes service—we are still called to do the same thing: spread seeds and trust God to water them with His grace and mercy. How I praise Him for His hand over that seed planted in me two decades ago!

Lauri Gruen is a Jewish believer who still lives in upstate New York with her husband and 2 children.

Thanksgiving Praise Report

by Lyn Bond

It has been two years since my Dad (Moishe Rosen) wrote a Thanksgiving article for this newsletter. He wrote it shortly after I was hit by a car while on an evening walk with my husband Alan.

I've been thinking about that article because he wrote it when things still looked pretty bleak and yet he was able to say:

"Can you believe that as I prayed thanksgiving for God's blessing in sparing my daughter's life, I could also thank Him for the benefit He would bring out of the anguish? That is right. In the midst of this adversity I had to reach for thanksgiving as the door that would open a Romans 8:28 experience."

Maybe some of you even prayed for me when you read that article so I just wanted to offer a postscript and a praise

to God. I am thankful for the three different surgeons who were God's agents in my healing. I am thankful for the nurses and physical therapists who worked on and with me during and after my four hospitalizations. I am thankful

I am thankful for what the Lord taught me and how He brought me through this

for the many prayers (some from people I have yet to meet) that went up on my behalf. I am thankful for God's gracious answer to those prayers.

God has been with my family and me through this whole experience. I am thankful for so many brothers and sisters in Messiah that came alongside our family

with meals, fruit, flowers and cards. I am thankful for what the Lord taught me and how He brought me through this ordeal to a place where I can walk on my own, even though the bones in my leg were crushed into several pieces.

I am thankful that last October I was able to participate in Behold Your God, Dallas as the Chaplain while I was in a wheel chair. On June 1, 2004, I resumed my work here at the Chicago branch and on August 18 the physical therapist discharged me. Praise God; He is the God of restoration and healing. And He really does work all things for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.



Lyn Bond

TEN THINGS

you can't do well while being genuinely thankful to God:

Be afraid	Be depressed	Be self-pitying	Be bored	Be impatient
Be angry	Be jealous	Be judgmental	Be greedy	Be arrogant

Real gratitude to God does not leave room for any of that stuff. So enjoy your Thanksgiving and all the peace, joy, humility and holiness that go hand-in-hand with realizing all that God has done for you!

As we Jews for Jesus enjoy our Thanksgiving, please know that you, our readers, prayer warriors, friends and supporters are among the blessings we will be counting!



God's Timing is Perfect!

by Janie-sue Wertheim

I first met Sarah at a presentation of “Christ in the Feast of Tabernacles” that my husband Steve and I gave at Sunrise Community Church in Vacaville, California last October. We knew that there were Jewish believers in Jesus in the congregation, and that some were hoping to bring family members who didn’t yet know the Lord—so we were especially looking forward to the opportunity.

After the service, an older woman made a beeline for me at the book table. A friend was following close behind her. “My name is Sarah, and I’m 87 years old and I’m afraid to die!” she announced to me, adding, “I have never told anyone outside of my family this before and I don’t know why I’m telling you except that I really like you, and I feel like I can trust you.”

I felt honored that she would trust me with something so personal. I said, “Sarah, God doesn’t want you to be scared about dying—He wants you to be prepared so that when it happens, you will be in His presence forever.” Sarah was willing to meet with me to discuss this further, but her friend Rhea started trying to interfere with our conversation. My daughter Bekah came over and engaged Rhea in conversation so that Sarah and I could continue our talk.

After the service I tried to call Sarah several times, but was never able to connect with her. I finally reached her daughter-in-law, Tracy (Sarah was living with her believing son, Michael, and his wife, Tracy), who said that Sarah was visiting one of her sons in Florida and wouldn’t be back for a few months.

Fast forward to April of 2004. This time I was scheduled to present “Christ in the Passover” at Sunrise. When I confirmed the meeting, I got to speak to Tracy who said that Sarah was excited to see me again. After the service I went to lunch with Sarah and Bekah. Sarah had lots of questions, and Bekah (who is college-aged and has already had lots of training and experience with evangelism) and I took turns responding to her. It felt as if we were playing ping-pong and not missing any balls.

*Sarah told me
that she had the best
night's sleep ever
the night that she prayed
to receive Jesus.*

Sarah and I continued to meet regularly. We were growing closer as friends while she grappled with spiritual truths. She struggled with the problem of personal sin because she was a “good person.” Slowly she began to understand God’s holiness and perfection. When measured against most people Sarah looked pretty good, but when measured against God’s standards, she had to admit that she had fallen short.

Some weeks later, circumstances were abruptly changing. For my part, a foot injury flared up, keeping me from my usual duties at summer camp. I was disappointed and upset at the timing, which was interfering with my plans. But then I found out that

Sarah’s circumstances were changing, too. Her son and daughter-in-law were going off to Bible school. They wanted Sarah to come with them, but she could not stand the idea of a Missouri winter. She decided to live in Las Vegas with her daughter. Our visits took on a new urgency because I knew I’d only have a few more times to meet with her before she moved. I asked a lot of people to pray for Sarah.

When I met with Sarah on Wednesday, July 21, God opened her heart and her understanding and she prayed to receive the Lord! As we went through John 3, she had a lot of questions. It was great to see God work in her heart, helping her see the answers for her sin problem in His Word. Right after she prayed to let Y’shua (Jesus) take charge of her life, we talked about confessing Him before people. I asked her if she had someone she wanted to tell, and she said, “I’m calling Michael!” Michael’s voicemail came up and she left the sweetest message for him, saying that she had asked Jesus to be her Messiah! Just a few minutes later Michael called back, overjoyed at God’s answer to so many prayers. This dear lady has a lot of believing family who have prayed for her for years and friends from Michael and Tracy’s church who have loved and cared for her.

Next, she called her son Alan who said, “Mom, you are 88 years old, and people your age don’t do this kind of thing!” Sarah said, “Well, I guess you underestimated me!”

The next day I went out to do a new believer’s Bible study with Sarah to

(continued on page 7)

(continued from page 6)

help affirm her faith and deal with any questions. It was a sweet time for us and a little bit sad because she was going to be moving that weekend to Las Vegas. In the meantime, she had called all of her family to tell them that she had “become a Jew for Jesus!” Sarah told me that she had the best night’s sleep ever the night that she prayed to receive Jesus.

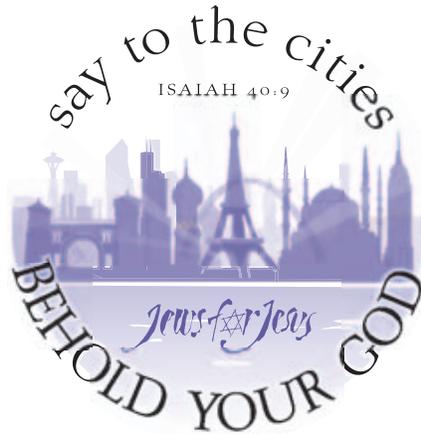
Sarah is now in Las Vegas with her daughter and son-in-law who are not believers in Messiah yet. Our former staff member Shari Greenfield will be contacting Sarah to follow up with her, and will hopefully have a chance to share the gospel with Sarah’s family. Please pray for continued spiritual growth and protection for Sarah, and that she’d find a loving fellowship to make her spiritual home as she learns to walk with her Messiah.

Also, I’d request prayer for Sarah’s friend Rhea, who is Jewish and not a believer. She was the one who tried to interfere with our conversation that first day at church. Now that Sarah has come to Y’shua, Rhea is showing some curiosity. Please pray that she would seek the truth and be willing to meet with me to look into God’s Word.

PS: Now I know why God didn’t heal my foot in time for camp. If I had gone as planned, I never would have been able to meet with Sarah the way I did. God’s timing is perfect!



Janie-sue and Rebekah Wertheim



THE BYG* PIC



Sergio Danon

Oded Cohen

*Behold Your God – the plan to reach, by God’s grace, every city outside of Israel with a Jewish population of 25,000 or more

This month we are saying to the city of Sao Paulo, “Behold Your God!”

Sergio Danon, who heads up our work in Brazil, is leading the campaign and Oded Cohen, from our Boston branch, is assisting him.

There are between 80,000-100,000 Jewish people in the bustling city of Sao Paulo, Brazil. It is a business-oriented city and boasts some of the best restaurants in Brazil, as well as some of the nicest shopping malls. There is a huge subway system, though we are not allowed to hand out our broadsides inside the stations. Traffic jams abound.

The Jewish community in Sao Paulo is more religious than in Rio de Janeiro, at least on the surface. A recent study indicated that while most of the Jewish population there are Orthodox by affiliation, 80% do not go to synagogue.

Challenges:

- We are already facing organized opposition in Sao Paulo.
- The mayor of the city is not fond of Christians.
- The police can create problems.

Opportunities:

- We got a very good price on twelve billboards to advertise the showing of the *Survivor Stories* video.
- There is plenty of foot traffic, making it a great place to hand out tracts.
- We look forward to reaching students at the University of Sao Paulo (USP).

Your prayers will make a difference! Please see the inserted Behold Your God bookmark to remind you to pray for Sao Paulo.



Paris

Stephen Pacht reports, “A pastor friend referred Philippe, a Jewish lawyer, to us. Philippe has been attending our weekly Bible study and was shocked to discover that the French Rabbinate’s translation of the Hebrew Bible seemed to intentionally mistranslate certain key messianic prophecies. Pray for Philippe’s salvation and for that of his Gentile wife. She has been attending Bible studies at the church whose pastor referred Philippe to us.

“Please also pray for Uriel, a former acting rabbi (he was not yet certified but stood in as a rabbi) who also attends our Bible studies and more or less believes in Jesus, but is under pressure as he is without a job and living with his parents. Pray also for Pinhas (whom we met during our telephone survey). Pinhas is now praying that God would show him the truth about Jesus.”

Sydney

From Bob Mendelsohn, “The Apostle Peter writes, ‘As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby’ (1 Peter 2:2). I’ve often seen that verse as an important instruction to give to new believers so that they become enthused about reading the Bible. The Bible also seems to be saying that a longing for the Scriptures is evidence that new birth has occurred. I certainly found this to be the case in a recent discipleship visit with Judith, a 48-year-old Hungarian Jew. Lately, she has really been longing to grapple with biblical texts in light of our discipling classes. She’s doing her homework and this is encouraging.

“Even more encouraging, Judith’s 27-year-old daughter, Donna, recently prayed with me to accept Jesus as her Messiah and Saviour. In addition to discipleship lessons, I’m reading the Bible with Donna each morning by phone. When I have to travel, mother and daughter read the Bible and pray together. They are not discipling one another, but are both like newborn babies in God’s nursery. How great is our God!”

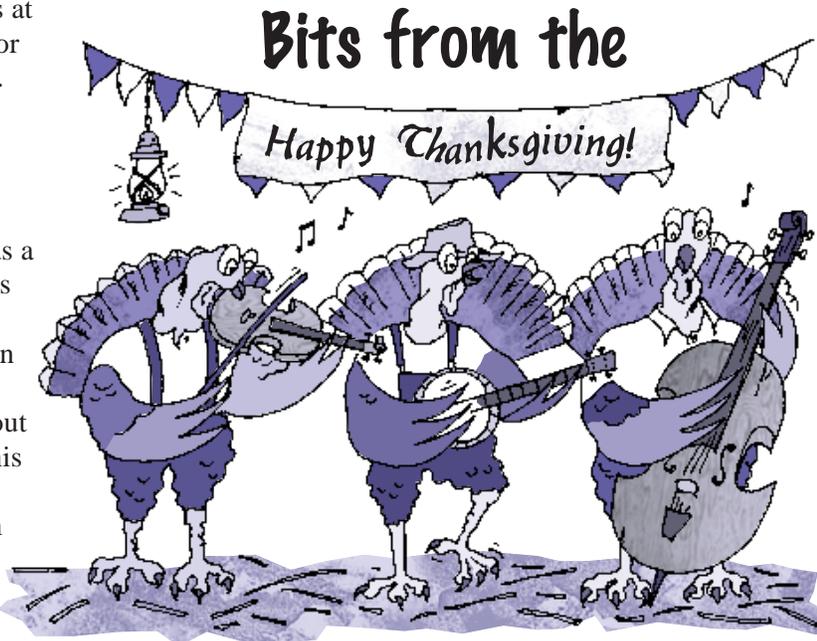
Also from D.C., Deb Dubin reports, “The Washington, D.C. branch spent some time gearing up for our BYG campaign, especially with regards to our exercise regime. Stephen, Lynn McCoy and I joined the gym directly across the street from our office. After seeing us working out in our Jews for Jesus T-shirts over and over again, people at the gym began to ask, ‘Hey, what do you guys do anyway?’ I had dinner with ten of my aerobic classmates last week, and many asked questions. One vegetarian commented, ‘Jews for Jesus; that’s sort of a contradiction of terms.’ My response to her was, ‘Yeah, some people think it’s like vegetarians for meat.’ (ed. See p. 4) We all laughed, and I had an opportunity to share my faith. A healthy branch is also a happy one—and we’ll be even happier if the gospel seeds planted bear fruit!”

Fort Lauderdale

Stan Meyer reports, “I ‘accidentally’ got interviewed on Voice of America (VOA) while my

wife Holly and I toured a radio station during our vacation. Larry London, who hosts the VOA music program, invited our group into his studio and asked, who would like to come to the microphone with me? ‘Holly spoke up: ‘It’s Stan’s birthday today.’ Larry said, ‘Let’s put the birthday boy on.’ Inevitably, he asked, ‘Where are you from and what do you do?’

“‘I am from Fort Lauderdale and we work for Jews for Jesus. We are an organization of Jews who believe Jesus is the promised Messiah.’ He said, ‘Oh, I’ve heard of you guys. Hey, I’m Jewish, too.’ The show was being beamed to the Middle East, including Israel.”



BRANCHES

Washington, D.C.

Stephen Katz reports, “Ken is a Jewish man who emailed McLean Bible Church saying, ‘I have been listening to [Pastor] Lon’s messages at 9:30 on Sunday mornings at Sheetz Church. Actually, Sheetz is a mega gas station as you probably know. Every Sunday morning for the past couple of years I buy my 24 oz. cup of coffee and some small treat and I sit in my truck and listen.’ McLean Bible Church asked us to follow up with Ken, and I began meeting with him. During our first visit, Ken said, ‘I believe that Jesus believed He died for people’s sins.’ By the third visit Ken believed it for himself and prayed to receive Him. Hallelujah!”