Agreeable Disagreement by David Brickner, Executive Director

The political season is now in full swing here in the United States, and “civil discourse” is fast becoming an oxymoron. I suppose it is human nature to view disagreement as a zero-sum game. There are winners and losers; everything else is just spin.

This attitude even finds its way into the church, and often characterizes the manner in which believers handle disagreements with one another. In fact, I have sometimes written articles in this very newsletter expressing a less than charitable attitude toward those with whom I disagree.

It is always easier to be an “againster” than it is to be a booster, easier to point out errors than to affirm what is good. Tearing things down can be very energizing, and it’s easy to gather a following of equally energized people out to right what is wrong. The problem is, it’s easy to become self-righteous (which is itself a wrong) and overstate our case, tearing down people in the process. It’s easy to censure those who dissent from our views and discredit those with whom we disagree. This pattern demonstrates insecurity and immaturity in the faith.

Certainly, we need to be courageous and stand up for the truth without compromise. But we need to do so charitably, in ways that honor the Lord. It can be challenging to do so, as we’ve found in the context of our Jews for Jesus witness. Our faith in Christ is roundly rejected by a majority within the Jewish community and we are often treated with contempt by those who oppose our efforts. It would be easy to take those reactions personally. Sometimes I find my own responses getting a bit caustic, in contrast to the Scripture that advises, “A soft answer turns away wrath. . . .” (Proverbs 15:12).

It is human nature to respond “in kind”: to meet wrath with wrath, and sarcasm with more of the same. In the early days of Jews for Jesus people on the streets often asked, “How much do they pay you for this?” As a question, it was less than sincere; as a statement, it was definitely barbed. I remember being encouraged to reply with a smile, “I get one thousand dollars a convert; if you convert I’ll split it with you.” This reply was meant to demonstrate our understanding that the question was insincere, and to deflect the antagonism with a bit of a good-natured goofiness. In most cases, I don’t think it worked.

Recently, I was talking things over with Moishe Rosen and he was concerned that one of our staff members had told a person who was cursing at him, “God bless you. Jesus loves you.” Moishe thought maybe this was a new technique we were teaching our staff. While it is not, that doesn’t mean that some of our people won’t respond to personal hostility that way. What is wrong with saying such a thing to an angry person? It depends on one’s tone and demeanor. Whereas a rare person might be able to deliver such a statement in a truly disarming manner, for most of us it would more likely come across as a little game of holy

(continued on page 2)
flourishes to win the day. People may disagree with the truth, and they may even find the truth disagreeable, as it sometimes exposes sinful attitudes and actions. But we should guard against making the truth unnecessarily disagreeable by tainting it with a prideful, callous or defensive delivery.

When it comes to disagreements with a brother or sister in Christ, Paul encourages us to be cheated rather than go to court against a brother (1 Corinthians 6:7). Most of us are prepared to follow that admonition. But are we prepared to lose an argument rather than lose a brother or a sister?

I receive enough complaints and criticism concerning our ministry to provide a veritable garden of opportunities for me to grow in this area. I don’t want to be defensive and I don’t want our Jews for Jesus missionaries to be defensive either.

Recently, I saw a trailer for a new movie, the title of which combines the words “religion” and “ridiculous.” The movie, “Religulous,” is obviously intended to mock religion in general and people of faith in particular.

I discovered that among those interviewed was a man who described himself as an ex-Jew for Jesus. At first I was angry and defensive. But when I prayed about it, I found my anger turning to sorrow—sorrow that this man’s life and legacy had taken such a turn, and sorrow for the truth, which, based on the nature of the movie (I have not seen it as of this writing), was almost certainly misrepresented and mocked. No doubt some will fume and fuss about this cynical film when it reaches the theaters, but I wonder if we, as people of faith, can disagree agreeably?

If ever there was a role model for this type of disagreement, I think it would be Dr. John Piper in his book titled, The Future of Justification. In it, Dr. Piper critiques the writings of British theologian N.T. Wright. Dr. Piper disagreed most emphatically with Wright’s teaching, but he did so in an exemplary way. He affirmed Rev. Wright personally for the good things that show through his life and his writings. What is more, he took time to send his manuscript to Rev. Wright in advance, just to make sure he was not misrepresenting his position. When N.T. Wright responded with ten pages of notes and clarifications, Dr. Piper edited his own manuscript to reflect those clarifications.

I find this to be a remarkable example of careful and Christlike disagreement. Here is a man who not only demonstrated that he had no personal animus toward the man with whom he disagreed, but he also demonstrated that his primary concern was getting at the truth. He critiqued the position and not the person, but not before taking pains to make sure he understood that position. I am convinced that is what the Lord would have us to do in our witness to unbelievers, as well as in our relationships with one another.

Lord Jesus, give us the grace to care more about people than polemics, and to love truth more than we love winning arguments. Amen!
Happy New Year! The Jewish New Year, that is. It’s September, the end of summer, the beginning of school, and—according to the Jewish calendar—the 5769th year since God created the heavens and the earth. On the Gregorian calendar, Rosh Hashanah (literally “head of the year”) spans 24 hours, commencing at sunset on September 29. It is the first of the “High Holy days” with Yom Kippur following ten days later.

It is customary to eat apples or a special, round challah (egg bread) dipped in honey on Rosh Hashanah, wishing others “L’shana tovah tikatevu.” (May your name be inscribed in the Book of Life). The challah symbolizes the cycle of life.

As with Messianic prophecy, Jesus fulfills each Jewish festival. Leviticus 23:23-25 refers to Rosh Hashanah as “the day of the sounding of the shofar.” God commanded the people to sound a ram’s horn and to gather for a great convocation. This foreshadows 1 Corinthians 15:52. When Messiah returns, “the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible.” Jesus will fulfill Rosh Hashanah upon His second coming.

Yom Kippur—a day of intensive fasting and prayer—begins at sundown on October 8 this year. It is the holiest day of the Jewish year. For most secular Jews, Yom Kippur is one of the few days a year they attend Temple. The ten-day period between Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah is known as “the Ten Days of Awe.” During this time of reflection, Jewish people think about sin and hope for forgiveness, praying to have their names written in God’s Book of Life. Yet, there is no assurance.

The word “kippur” means “atonement”; it stems from the Jewish word for “covering.” In Bible times, the High Priest would thoroughly cleanse himself, go once a year into the holy of holies and offer God a burnt offering. The priest sprinkled animal blood on and before the Ark of the Covenant. Additionally, the priest laid hands on a “scapegoat” and recited the sins of the people, symbolizing a transference of sins. The goat was sent into the desert, never to return (Leviticus 16:2-24). Jesus filled the role of both those sacrifices; His shed blood atones for our sin and He has carried our sin “as far as the east is from the west” (Psalm 103:12).

Please pray for our branches around the world as we hold Messiah-centered High Holiday services, that many will attend and turn to Jesus to receive the assurance of forgiveness that comes only through Him.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

EDITOR’S NOTE:
special thanks to Arielle Rothbard for her help editing this edition of our newsletter.

Prayer Prompters

Please pray for:

- us to be humble and put God and His interests first when people treat us disagreeably (p. 1, 2)
- the staff and volunteers we need to make the Messiahship of Jesus an unavoidable issue to our Jewish people worldwide (p. 4, 5)
- the next Behold Your God Israel campaign
- successful outreach to college-age people on campuses, through the Internet, and however else God chooses to allow us to minister
- salvation for L and S in Essen, David in Toronto and Shura in Dnepropetrovsk (p. 8)
- grace and strength for new believer Ganna in Dnepropetrovsk (p. 8)

THAT’S JUST MOISHE

“DEAR MOISHE - I NEVER TALK ABOUT SIN WHEN I WITNESS. AFTER ALL, YOU CAN CATCH MORE FLIES WITH HONEY THAN VINEGAR SIGNED, A SWEETIE FOR JESUS.”

“DEAR SWEETIE - MAYBE YOU HAVE A DIFFERENT BIBLE TRANSLATION. MINE DOESN’T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT JESUS MAKING US FISHERS OF FLIES. SINCERELY, MOISHE.”

3
As a Messianic believer at Manhattan’s Fashion Institute of Technology, I sometimes struggle with tensions that arise between my love of fashion and my faith. A summer internship with Jews for Jesus gave me an opportunity to reflect on this (among other things) and to share my thoughts with you.

Fashion reflects the times. It reflects the political, economic, socio-cultural, and even technological matters of a given age. Wars begin, then cease. Stock markets plummet, then boom. Synthetic fibers are invented. Women’s rights increase. These issues affect what designers create.

New trends are old ideas reinvented. Color, line and texture change with each season. This fall, high-waisted skirts and pants replace low-rise, lighter-weight dresses substitute heavier ones, fall florals make an entrance, and quirky feather-accented hats, rather than plain, stride from the runway into stores, whetting the consumer’s appetite for change.

“Fashion is evolutionary, not revolutionary.” Fashion adapts. People long to be beautiful, and fashion perpetuates itself by recreating our perceptions of what beauty is.

So where does that craving for beauty originate? With God, the source and embodiment of beauty. He instilled in us a desire for beauty so we would seek Him, and our ability to create beauty is a way to bring Him glory.

Unlike fashion, God is immutable (James 1:17). He is revolutionary, not evolutionary. He dramatically changes us, making us more like Him, yet He remains unchanged.

Faith is embracing God as He reveals Himself to us through the Bible, through His creation, and through personal encounter (Ephesians 4:4-5). Faith—always cutting-edge—challenges the lost, both in the fashion industry and out, to serve our Maker. It inspires self-expression and variety in creative projects. And, like a classic style, faith stands the test of time.

Faith is a “faux pas” in the fashion industry. It unabashedly calls us to whole-heartedly serve God rather than self. Our God dictates modesty, sobriety and humility. In an industry geared toward success, extremes, and appearance, faith is tougher to embrace than denim overalls with stiletto heels.

Purveyors of fashion seek to capitalize on our longing for beauty by satisfying it temporarily; they provide an onslaught of pricey clothing that falls out of fashion before you can even launder it. People offer products for prices. God gives Himself: a constant, fulfilling, priceless gift.

We can always learn new things about God, not because He changes, but because our capacity to understand Him grows as we exercise our faith.

Once we see that God fills us, that His beauty is matchless and eternal and far weightier than any earthly pleasure, then fashion can find a healthy place in the lives of those of us who enjoy it. When we center on God, our hobbies become just that: an activity engaged in for pleasure and relaxation during spare time.

Faith is not a fad. It’s timeless. Our unchanging God is in control of politics, the economy, society, technology and culture. You don’t need to read the color-forecasting catalogs to know that His every design will reach fruition in His perfect time. [Χ]

(continued on page 5)
Jews for Jesus began with Moishe Rosen and a handful of creative college-age Jews who wanted to make a difference for the Lord. Many of our activities took place on, or close to, college campuses, like UC Berkeley and UCLA. These were areas where Jews in their late teens and early twenties were desperately searching for truth and purpose.

Thirty-five years later, many of our staff now have sons and daughters the same age their parents were when this ministry began. Campus evangelism continues to be crucial to our ministry. Many college communities are the size of small towns; often the percentage of Jewish students is quite high, given the ratio of Jewish people to the general population.

In the past we’ve mentioned some of our outreach programs for this age group: we’ve told about Massah, a summer program that brings young Jewish believers to Israel where they form a community geared to discipleship as well as evangelism, and then go on to witness to Israeli trekkers in countries like India and Thailand.

We also have staff who specialize in year-round college outreach.

Currently, three of our branches are home to Jews for Jesus missionaries who spearhead ministry to college-age people. They lead our efforts to reach Jewish students who don’t yet know the Lord, and invest in those who do, encouraging them to share their faith with others.

Melissa Moskowitz works at the Brooklyn branch. She mentors student interns, plans college events for east-coasters and has a steady stream of college students passing through her home.

In the Midwest, at the Chicago center, Heather Blecher does evangelism on several campuses as well as working with a large college-age group of Jewish believers called “Mishpochago” (combining the Jewish word for family, “mishpochah,” with Chicago).

On the West coast, Sara Friedman of the Los Angeles branch also reaches out on numerous campuses, with special emphasis on the UCLA area. Our office is just across the street from that campus, and an entire section (affectionately named “The Portico”) is dedicated for use as a student center and music venue.

Please pray for Melissa, Heather and Sara as they witness to young adults who don’t yet know Jesus, and seek to disciple those who do.

Editor’s Note: During the school year, Arielle interns at our New York branch, located just across town from her school. She utilizes her artistic gifts around our center—mainly by designing and building the evanglistic displays for our storefront window. Please pray for God’s continued guidance for Arielle’s life and for her ministry in providing thought-provoking displays for those who pass by our New York center. Please also pray for her testimony at the Fashion Institute of Technology, where many of the students and faculty are Jewish, born-again believers are a minority, and Jews who believe in Jesus are as rare as Chanel suits at Old Navy.
The New Testament quotes, alludes to, and paraphrases many portions of the Old Testament, demonstrating that study of the Hebrew Scriptures was important to Jesus’ followers, and to Jesus Himself.

This chart lists a sampling of references from the Old Testament found on the lips of Jesus in the Gospels. For a more extensive list, please see an expanded version of this chart at: http://www.jewsforjesus.org/ot-references

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<th>Jesus Words . . .</th>
<th>In Reference To . . .</th>
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<td>“But He answered and said, ‘It is written, &quot;Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.&quot;’”</td>
<td>“So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.” (Deuteronomy 8:3)</td>
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<td>“But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”</td>
<td>“For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” (Hosea 6:6)</td>
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<td>“And Jesus said to them, ‘Yes. Have you never read, “Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise?”’”</td>
<td>“Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, Because of Your enemies, That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.” (Psalm 8:2)</td>
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<td>“Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.” This was the Lord’s doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes?’”</td>
<td>“The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.” (Psalm 118:22, 23)</td>
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<td>“But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob!’ God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”</td>
<td>“Moreover He said, ‘I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.” (Exodus 3:6)</td>
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<td>“See! Your house is left to you desolate; ‘for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”’”</td>
<td>“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.” (Psalm 118:26)</td>
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<td>“Then Jesus said to them, ‘All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’”’</td>
<td>“‘Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, Against the Man who is My Companion,’ Says the Lord of hosts. ‘Strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered, Then I will turn My hand against the little ones.’” (Zechariah 13:7)</td>
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<td>“For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: ‘And He was numbered with the transgressors.’ For the things concerning Me have an end.” (Luke 22:37)</td>
<td>“Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.” (Isaiah 53:12)</td>
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To delve further, please see expanded chart on our website as mentioned above. You might also want to read:


Commentaries on the Gospels. Two recommended series are:

Expositor’s Bible Commentary, published by Zondervan (good for pastors and all Bible students; there is a valuable older edition edited by Frank Gaebelein and a partly-completed update edited by Tremper Longman and David Garland).

New International Commentary on the New Testament, published by Eerdmans (for serious research; longer and more in-depth commentaries than Expositor’s).
Have you checked out our Jews for Jesus website at www.jewsforjesus.org? It’s full of resources for believers in Jesus interested in reaching out to Jewish people, but the overarching purpose of our site is to make the Messiahship of Jesus an unavoidable issue to our Jewish people worldwide. In light of this, we are launching several mini-sites to personalize our message for specific audiences.

Our first such mini-site is specifically for college students. GradJEWate.com includes testimonies of how Jewish students met Jesus. Among its interactive elements, GradJEWate.com features polls, e-books, videos, answers to common questions and, most importantly, a clear gospel presentation and an invitation to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.

If you have a website, blog, Facebook, MySpace, or other site where it would be appropriate to promote this website, we welcome your help! If you go to GradJEWate.com/promote you’ll find banners, links and descriptions to post on your site.

Please pray for this venture, that the many online seekers would find the living Truth.
Essen
Yuliya Hennenberg reports, “Lyudmila is a ‘good Jewish girl’ who believes in God but doesn’t recognize Jesus as Messiah. I visit her occasionally and when she invited me to meet her fiancé, who is also Jewish, I gladly agreed.

“Lyudmila described me to her fiancé, Stiven, as being ‘like a rabbi’ to her, which surprised us both. I explained that while Lyudmila and I have different opinions, we both believe in God and read the Jewish Scriptures. When he asked about our differences, it was the perfect opportunity to say that I believe Jesus is the promised Jewish Messiah. It turned out that Stiven is from England and had seen Jews for Jesus there.

“When I asked what he thought about Jesus, he replied, ‘If you believe Jesus was a great rabbi,’ I said, ‘have you read His teachings? Every great rabbi leaves his teachings and disciples to spread his message. Jesus’ teachings are in the New Testament.’ Stiven confessed he hadn’t read the New Testament and though he tried to appear uninterested, he continued to ask questions.

“Please pray for this couple’s salvation. If they stay here, I hope to continue ministering to them. If they move to England, may the Lord send them a patient missionary to bring them the gospel!”

Toronto
Richard Muller reports, “I confess I had low expectations for ministry opportunities as I headed off to a very small, secular retirement home outside of Toronto. I’d been invited to present ‘Christ in the Passover’ there. But as I spoke with the activities director beforehand, David, a Jewish resident, introduced himself to me, commenting that I was nicely attired. I invited him to join us for the presentation, and he replied that he was happy to ‘stay the way he was.’ Nevertheless, he joined us five minutes into the meeting! Afterward, I asked if I could come back to visit and continue our discussion. He agreed, and when I returned we had an excellent conversation! Although David does not want to believe Jesus is the Messiah, he is willing to receive a Bible and meet again.

“Despite my small expectations, God provided a big opportunity to offer living water and the light of life to a fellow Jew. He is an awesome God!”

Dnepropetrovsk
Victoria Negrimovskaya reports, “While I was on a sortie, a Jewish woman stopped and exclaimed, ‘Are you Jews for Jesus? I know you from Odessa, but our rabbi forbids us to talk to you. Still, I’ve received your literature. Do many Jewish people come to your meetings?’ Shura barely paused for breath.

“As she was dictating her address to receive more information, a tea and coffee vendor came to us. Tsitseliya was Jewish, too, and became very interested in what she could receive. She waited patiently as I wrote down Shura’s address. ‘What would happen if our rabbi found out that I gave my address to Jews for Jesus?’ Shura laughed and winked at Tsitseliya, who also gave her address. As we spoke I found out that Tsitseliya already believes that Y’shua is the Messiah of Israel! Please pray for further ministry to her, and for Shura’s salvation.”

Tatyana Bolotova reports, “I was handing out tracts. The sortie passed without any special encounter; I tried engaging passersby, but they ran past me. What could I do? Pray and wait for a miracle.

“An elderly woman, not Jewish, approached and began talking to me. Ganna was in her 80s, and she enjoyed reading our tracts because, she said, they helped her to know about God. She didn’t have a New Testament, so I offered to send her one. Ganna gave me her contact info, including directions in case I should want to visit her. She was about to leave, but the Lord prompted me to ask if she had invited Jesus into her heart. ‘You better not tell me about this,’ she said, ‘because for some reason it makes me want to cry.’ ‘Dear soul,’ I responded, ‘do not leave, but settle this important matter.’

“Between passersby, the sinner’s prayer sounded, along with abundant tears of an aged woman. Praise the Lord! Ganna thanked God and me, rejoicing that she had become His child. Please pray God will watch over Ganna.”