

JEW[★]S FOR JESUS[®]

established 32 A.D. , give or take a year

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First and Also *by David Brickner, Executive Director*

Usually we quote Bible verses in their entirety, but I've noticed an exception: Romans 1:16. You've heard the words: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes." But how often do you hear the last nine words of this strong biblical admonition: "for the Jew first and also for the Greek [Gentile]"?

When we omit part of any Bible verse, we are in danger of forgetting it and impoverishing our understanding of God's Word and His plans. As we begin this new year, I want to underscore those often omitted words from Romans 1:16, because I believe they illuminate God's ongoing plan for evangelism.

I recently returned from the most amazing missions conference I have ever attended. It was the third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, held in Cape Town, South Africa. Four thousand Christian leaders from 198 countries met to discuss global challenges facing the church's mission to evangelize in the 21st century. Only ten percent of those attending were from the U.S., so it was a truly international gathering—including simultaneous translation into eight different languages.

I was especially heartened to see the continuing need for Jewish evangelism recognized; that's something you don't always see at today's missions conferences, especially those as diverse as this one. Even so, on two occasions I heard Romans 1:16 only partially quoted from the platform.

For example, some people suppose that "to the Jew first," refers to a kind of ethnic preference by God, suggesting that He favors Jewish people over all the other people of the earth. They rightly reason that to imply ethnic favoritism on God's part would be very wrong indeed. But if ethnic favoritism is not congruent

with God's character today, it would have been just as incongruent in Paul's day. And yet he said, "to the Jew first." Therefore, it must mean something other than ethnic favoritism.

Nevertheless, a group of theologians submitted this mistaken reasoning to the organizers of the recent Lausanne Congress in the form of a paper that included the following statement: "The one Church that God has called into being in Christ is

drawn from every nation, tribe, people and language, with the result that no single ethnic identity can claim to be 'God's chosen people.'"

This statement that "no single ethnic identity can claim to be God's chosen people" is a shot at the Jewish people, who frankly never asked to be chosen. It is also an unwitting shot at God, who did the choosing. Nor did His choice begin with the Jewish people. He first chose Abraham, then Isaac, and then Jacob. God preserves the



*God's intention (and His priority)
was to bring the good news to all the nations.*

Sometimes people leave out those last nine words for convenience sake. But I think, more often than not, it happens when people choose to interpret the last phrase as a past event—not part of the present or future plan of God—and therefore, not important.

Most likely, this interpretation reflects the discomfort many people would feel if the priority "to the Jew first" were still in effect today. I can understand the discomfort, but I believe it stems from misunderstanding.

(continued on page 2)

Bits from the Branches

Odessa

Gena Gelman reports, “We conducted a visiting campaign recently, knocking on doors of people we have not otherwise been able to see. At the end of one day, Galya (my partner for the day) and I returned to an address where no one had answered previously. Unfortunately, there was still no answer. I asked one of the neighbors about the woman we were looking for, and was sad to hear that she had died. However, the neighbor told us she had a son named Jacob. She described him as a vagabond, and said it was practically impossible to find him. Galya and I left, and on the way to the car we prayed. Within five minutes we saw a man coming toward us. He was very dirty and covered with sores. His face seemed familiar. I asked, ‘Are you Jacob?’

“God had brought Jacob straight to us! Not only that, I had spoken to him many times during sorties (tract-passing expeditions). Many times I had invited him to our Shabbat meeting but, until that day, he was never interested. I told him the gospel and offered to pray for him. He consented. After the prayer, Jacob said he would come to our Shabbat service—he said that he wanted God to change his life! Praise God, Jacob did come to the service. He needed treatment for a skin condition, so I sent him to the doctor for an examination and prescription. One of the believers gave him money for medicine. I gave him bed linen. I have been conducting short visits with him, about fifteen minutes long, before Shabbat services. Please pray with me for Jacob’s salvation and healing.”

San Francisco

Rob Wertheim reports: “Recently, while handing out broadsides at San Francisco State University, a young man named Jesse approached and asked if I remembered him. Apparently, he had given me a hard time last year at City College (where I also hand out our broadsides). I didn’t remember, but Jesse, who is Jewish, had some questions and we arranged to talk further the following week.

“When we got together, he explained that much had changed since our encounters at City College. He had read

the New Testament and even visited a church with a friend. I asked him if he had ever read Isaiah 53 and he hadn’t, so I asked him to do so. He read the chapter, and as soon as he finished he said, ‘It’s talking about Jesus!’ As we concluded our visit, Jesse told me he wanted to meet up again. Please pray that Jesse will open his heart completely to the Lord.”

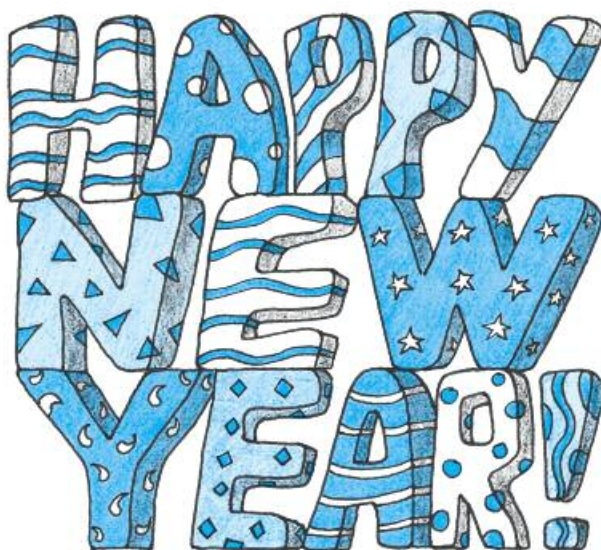
Israel

Oded Cohen reports: “I continue to have regular Bible studies with a bright young Israeli named Ami [mentioned in November “Bits”], who is very diligent to search the Scriptures and who asks many excellent questions. He works with Christians who have stirred his curiosity. At times it seems like he is defending the faith

to others, even though he does not yet fully believe. Ami was interested in attending a congregation of believers, so we took him last weekend. He enjoyed it very much. After the service, Ami went to a young adult fellowship and decided to stay, rather than get a ride home with us when we finally left at 10 pm. A couple days later, when we met for our next Bible study, he told me he had a great time and had stayed until about midnight. He also made two new believing friends, and he’d shared with everyone that he definitely believes in God, and that he is still seeking to understand who

Jesus is. He told me that he no longer enjoys drinking and smoking with his old friends. He feels more commonality with these believers. They understood what he was talking about when he expressed his desire and need to thank God for the way God is becoming more and more evident in his life, helping him with small, everyday needs.”

Note: In areas of great opportunity where Jewish people are open to the gospel, there is more opposition as well. Recently, Vlad Mitnitsky was handing out broadsides in front of Tel Aviv University when some Orthodox men attacked him, breaking his nose. Pray that those who saw this incident will see the difference between religion and redemption, and be drawn to Jesus.



from JEWS FOR JESUS

That evening, Sam the Hasid shared with me his desire to share the gospel message with others in his community. While his desire to tell others is strong, he's concerned about losing everything he know his family, job—his entire community. Moreover, he fears that his faith is not strong enough to endure the overpowering resistance he would face. Sam was asking me to disciple him! I thought back to those days when, as a little boy, face pressed against the chain-link fence, I'd watch those Hasidic boys walking to yeshiva, envious of their faith and dedication . . . and now I was being asked to teach one of them about Christ.

Sam and I have gotten together three times so far to study the *Gospel of John*. Please pray that God will use me in a powerful way to help Sam understand the wonderful truths of the Gospels. Over the years, we at Jews for Jesus have had some ministry to those in the Hasidic community, and have even seen a handful of Hasidic people come to believe in Jesus. But, so far, we have not seen any of them declare their faith to others in their community, including their own families. Please pray that God strengthens their faith and works a powerful miracle amongst the Hasidim, and that He will give us wisdom and grace as to our part.

NEW YEAR'S IN NEW YORK



PRAYER PROMPTERS

Please pray for:



those who attended the Lausanne Congress (p. 1) to continue to inspire others and be inspired to bring the reconciling power of the gospel to the world



churches to stand firm on the issue of Jewish evangelism, and, as Moishe once said, "To preach the gospel to the Jews, so the Jews can preach the gospel to the world"



a new generation of Jewish believers in Jesus to be courageous, creative and committed to bringing the gospel "to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile"



God to bring Moishe's biography to fruition in a way that will speak to many people, both believers and unbelievers, and magnify Jesus (p. 3)



"Sam" (p. 6, 7) and other Hasidim who are coming to faith and not sure "where to go from here"; wisdom for Shaun and other Jews for Jesus staff as we minister to people like Sam and others who know no life outside of the community in which they were raised, and from which they would probably be ejected for believing in Jesus



our staff in Israel, who are doing a great work and facing some stiff opposition, that God would continue to give them courage, protect them, and that we may continue to see fruit from their labor; pray for them especially as they continue following up on 8,700 Jewish seekers we've met during the BYG Israel campaigns thus far



salvation for Jacob in Odessa, for Jesse in San Francisco, and Ami in Tel Aviv (p. 8)

(continued from page 1)

“choseness” of the Jewish people not because of any superiority to other people, but because He chooses to remain true to His promises (Deuteronomy 7:7-8).

God’s priority “to the Jew first” remains intact because His faithfulness doesn’t waver. He keeps His promises despite the failings of those to whom He makes those promises. That is very good news for everyone in the church because just as He keeps His promises to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, so He will also remain faithful to all the promises He’s made to every person who is a child of Abraham by faith in Messiah Jesus. None of us is saved because we are superior people, yet God has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Hallelujah!

This leads to the second reason some might be uncomfortable with the final phrase in Romans 1:16: “and also to the Gentile.” To some that sounds as if the Gentiles were some kind of an afterthought in God’s plan. Yet nothing could be further from the truth! When God first chose Abraham, the climax of the promises God made to Him was that, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). All along, God’s intention (and His priority) was to bring the good news to all the nations.

In choosing Abraham and his physical descendants, God was selecting Jewish people, not to be superior but to be servants of His purposes and servants of the good news to the nations. After all, that is exactly what

that Hebrew word “Gentiles” means: *nations*. One might say, “For God so loved the world that He first chose Abraham and his descendants.” And of course the ultimate fulfillment of that choice and that love was in Jesus, the Jew from Nazareth (John 3:16).

“And also” is no afterthought. Paul is saying the gospel is to the Jew first *so that it might be* for all the people. God chose the Jews because He loves you and everyone else and wants us all to be reconciled to Himself. What amazing love it is!

That missions conference provided real demonstrations of His reconciling love. Here were believers in the Messiah of Israel from 198 different nations, all praising God together in different languages! People who might otherwise be natural enemies were united in love and the desire to see the gospel proclaimed around the world. It was thrilling!

One morning the program featured a Palestinian Arab woman named Shaadia who serves with a ministry called *Musalaha* (Reconciliation). Standing side by side to share the platform with Shaadia was Dan Sered, an Israeli Jew who leads our Jews for Jesus work in Israel. (See photo above.) It was a powerful moment and a beautiful image for all the 4,000 people who witnessed it. I will never forget one statement Dan shared: “When

Arabs and Jews can say to one another, ‘I love you in Jesus’ name,’ the whole world will see the power of the gospel to bring about reconciliation.”

These were not merely words spoken from the platform. Each night after the main session, rooms were reserved for people who wanted to pray for specific nations and people groups. On the night some of us were going to pray especially for Israel, we



Palestinian Arab, Shaadia, and Dan Sered share the platform at the Lausanne Congress.

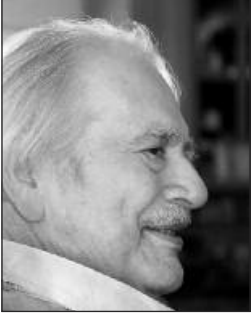
noticed the room next door was assigned for people gathering to pray for Palestine. After a brief discussion, we combined our two prayer meetings. Israeli and Palestinian delegates crowded into one room to pray together and to pray for one another. Only in Christ could such a thing happen. And it is continuing to happen as we remember it is God’s priority to reconcile Jews and Gentiles together through the gospel. You see, God’s priorities in saving people are never either/or, they are always both/and; or as the Apostle Paul put it: “for the Jew **first and also** for the Gentile.” J☆



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

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SNEAK PREVIEW

from the pre-published
biography of Moishe Rosen

It was still foggy, but Moishe could see the halo of lights on the bridge, forming a graceful outline of the suspension cables. *I'll get to see the bridge itself on the way back*, he thought, *but for now I better concentrate on getting to the seminary.*

The commute [went] much more quickly than he'd expected—it wasn't even 6:30 [when] he headed up the steep road to Strawberry Point, where the seminary nestled on a hill high above the [San Francisco] Bay.

At last the road leveled out into a parking lot. Moishe eased himself out of the rental car to search for signs of campus life, but there was no one in sight. . . . He could go back and wait in the car, but it was a bit cramped for someone his size, and besides, the outdoor air was pleasant. It smelled of wood and leaves and damp soil . . . and it wasn't cold, not for someone accustomed to New York winters.

Spotting a bench under a streetlamp he sat down and, Bible, in hand, began to pray—not about what he would say or do for the chapel—he was all set for that. No, as he stared out into darkness he was seeking God's direction about [his] situation in New York.

Around 7:00 A.M. the pre-dawn darkness began fading to grey, and

before long it melted away entirely before the rising sun. As Moishe continued to pray and watch, he had one of those rare experiences he would never forget. In the darkness, he'd been completely unaware that he was facing The City. Now, as the light struck San Francisco, the low-lying fog obscured only the bottom half of The City while the skyline remained, so it looked like The City was floating on an enormous cloud. The fog also reflected the bright morning sun, lighting up the buildings like nothing Moishe had ever seen. He gazed in wonder at the gloriously golden city floating before him.

Had God arranged for him to see this amazing sight as an answer to prayer? After all, [his boss] had agreed he could take the post in Northern California if things did not

He gazed in wonder at the gloriously golden city floating before him.

work out in New York. . . . The idea that this was a sign from heaven seemed too easy. Nevertheless, Moishe had been deeply moved by what he saw, and the timing seemed anything but coincidental.

Soon the fog burned off and the skyline, while still beautiful, was simply a skyline. . . . Moishe gave a last lingering look at The City and headed off to meet Francis Dubois, the seminary's head of missions, who was to introduce him as the guest speaker for chapel.

It wasn't difficult to find Dr. Dubois. . . . After exchanging a few pleasantries, Moishe began to tell the professor some of what he'd been discovering in New York—that many hippies were open to discussing spiritual things, and that people who were protesting the war in Vietnam seemed ready to hear about

the peace that Jesus could bring. Dr. Dubois nodded his head in agreement, as though he already knew what Moishe was talking about.

Dr. Dubois looked at the literature with interest. "Well, these are unique," he said, ". . . I'm going to introduce you to some people who've been involved in outreach to people immersed in counterculture. You'll see that what God is doing in New York, He's also doing here in the Bay Area."

. . . After chapel, Moishe was eager to hear more about "the Jesus Revolution." "You gotta go to Berkeley," Paul [one of the men Dr. Dubois introduced to Moishe] announced. ". . . These pamphlets of yours would go over great there!"

. . . [In Berkeley] Paul introduced Moishe to Jack Sparks, who introduced him to the Christian World Liberation Front (CWLF). *Wow, these guys really are radical*, Moishe thought, as he heard about ministry communes, demonstrations and more. *Nothing I'm doing would seem strange or off the wall to them.* . . . [I]f he did take the transfer back to California, there'd be people he could learn from, and who could learn from him. Not only that, but Jack also introduced him to a couple of Jewish Christians.

To Moishe, all this was absolutely wonderful. . . . The "happening" was even greater on the West Coast than it was back east . . . [and] he couldn't help wondering if [the entire day] was a confirmation of what God might have been revealing through that amazing sunrise. ✨

*Moishe tried on three separate occasions to repeat that experience, driving up to Strawberry Point to see a sunrise, but though he did see the sun come up, he never again saw anything as spectacular as he saw that morning.

Full Circle

by Shaun Buchhalter

Growing up in Ocean Parkway, Brooklyn, I had tremendous respect for the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community known as the *Hasidim*. Though they lived in a world apart from the rest of us, they had a tremendous impact on my early desire to know more about the God I prayed to every night, and even—indirectly—on my calling to be a missionary.

Ocean Parkway's substantial Hasidic community is separated from the area's more secular/cultural Jewish community by six lanes of traffic. As a child I hung out with my friends in the playground that was, ironically, on the Hasidic side of the dividing line, while the Hasidic kids walked to the *yeshiva* (religious school) that was, also ironically, on the secular side of the street. While I don't recall any interaction between the two groups as we passed each other on the street, I grew impressed with, then respectful and appreciative, of these religious boys who studied the Bible rather than going out to play. I thought that they must be very close to God and I secretly longed to be more like them—I wanted to know God the way I imagined they did.

It was that same longing, that desire to know God personally, that eventually led me to interact with Christians years later when I was a college student—and that's when I came to believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

In a way, it was the Hasidim who eventually led me to Jews for Jesus! It was only a year after I'd come to Jesus, and I found myself back in the center of one of the largest Hasidic communities in Brooklyn, perhaps one of the largest in the world. One day I struck up a conversation with a Hasidic man sitting next to me. We talked

about the Bible, the traditions of the Jewish people, the nuances of the Talmud. Then, this Hasid turned to me and asked a very typical question: "Are you Jewish?" Without hesitation I replied that I was, but added that I also believed Jesus is the Messiah.

The friendly conversation immediately soured. His voice rising in horror, the Hasid told me that I should be ashamed of myself, that I had disgraced my family and that if I'd had a proper religious upbringing then I'd never believe such nonsense. Because I'd grown up with such admiration for the Hasidim as "people of the Book," his words hit hard and caused me to question my beliefs. Fortunately, in God's providence, that same week I met, for the first time, another Jewish believer in Jesus. After hearing my story, she introduced me to a member of her family who was a staff member at Jews for Jesus. Through my contact with them, I came to understand how I could be confident that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel.

Through my interactions with Jews for Jesus, God placed a burden on my heart to take the gospel message that transformed my life back to the Jewish people. I began volunteering with Jews for Jesus, then joined the staff upon graduation. Over the last ten years, I've served in Chicago, San Francisco and New York City. It was great to be back in New York where I met with numerous Jesus-seeking Jews as part of our Manhattan branch. I'd take them through the Bible and show them how they could believe in Y'shua Ha Mashiach and still be Jews.

Then my wife Crystal and I had a great opportunity to tour with the Liberated Wailing Wall, so we were



Shaun on a sortie (tract passing expedition)

away from New York for a year and a half. Having recently completed our tour, I decided to look up some of my old contacts, to renew our conversations and reconnect.

I came across Sam the Hasid (not his real name) in my files. He had received a copy of Campus Crusade's "Jesus" film in Yiddish, during our 2006 Behold Your God-focused outreach to the Hasidic community (our first ever). As a result, Sam contacted our office seeking more information. Like most Hasidic people to whom we minister, Sam was cautious in talking to me, fearing what would happen if someone in his community found out. Numerous times I tried to arrange a face-to-face meeting, but it never happened. That's where we'd left off before I departed for the Liberated Wailing Wall, and I was curious to find out what had happened to him. "Why not?" I figured.

To my surprise, Sam was overjoyed to hear from me, and we set up a time to meet. In a procedure that seemed more like a CIA operation than a missionary visit, we met a week later in a discrete neighborhood in Manhattan, in his car, to discuss Jesus. To my utter amazement, Sam was absolutely convinced that Jesus is the Messiah! In the two years since we'd last spoken, he had gotten his hands on a Yiddish translation of the New Testament and read it thoroughly; in fact, he makes sure to read something from the New Testament every day.