



for the Christian who wants to know more about Jews and evangelism

JEWES FOR JESUS®

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

Making God smile *by David Brickner, executive director*

I recently enjoyed some quality time with my granddaughter at an ice cream shop. She wanted a vanilla cone and when I went to pay, the lady behind the counter said, "If it's for her, it's free." After Norah had eaten most of it, we went back to the counter and she said, "Thank you for my ice cream cone." The lady was so happy to receive those sweet words that she almost started to cry.

That got me thinking about how much the Lord appreciates our "thank yous." Remember the story of the ten lepers in Luke 17? We want to be like the one (a Samaritan) who made sure to come back and give thanks to Jesus. So what are you most thankful to the Lord for today?

Among so many other things—such as life and health and salvation in Christ—I am thankful to God for you, and every single dear Jew for Jesus friend who has stood with us, prayed for us and supported our efforts to proclaim the gospel around the world.

Thankfulness is a recurring theme throughout God's Word. Central to our heritage of faith—and certainly

to my Jewish background—are the regular and genuine expressions of thanks to God for His blessings.

It's only human to focus on our



An attitude of gratitude should be our goal every day.

problems, of course. But no matter what problems we may be facing, we still have so many reasons to thank God. Doing so can turn our hearts from trusting in ourselves to relying on His promises.

Thankfulness to God not only blesses Him, it blesses us. So an attitude of gratitude should be our goal every day, don't you think?

With Thanksgiving coming soon, the best advice I can give to you and other brothers and sisters in Messiah is the same advice I give to myself—

and I take no credit for it: "Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples!" (1 Chronicles 16:8).

In ancient Israel, giving thanks went far beyond mere words. Genuine thanksgiving was most sincerely expressed through special offerings to God as described in Leviticus 7:12–13. The Israelites presented thick loaves of leavened bread as well as unleavened bread made with the finest flour and olive oil.

In Deuteronomy 16 we find that freewill offerings were offered in proportion to the Lord's blessings. Those thank offerings were not necessarily given *(Continued on page 2)*

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(Continued from page 1) out of an overabundance of resources, but often out of need in sincere recognition of God's gracious provision, especially in troubled times.

The psalmist is surrounded by the threat of death and the pain of all sorts of trouble and sorrow when he asks the Lord for deliverance and declares, "I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, And will call upon the name of the LORD" (Psalm 116:17).

So it's not just when all is well that we need to thank God. It's when we recognize our need for Him and for His intervention in our lives that it's most appropriate to offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

Think about Leah, the wife of Jacob. Jacob didn't love Leah, which caused her great pain. She tried to gain Jacob's love through giving birth and said as much when she named their first three children Reuben, Simeon and Levi.

Reuben means "Behold, a son" or according to some, "Behold, my affliction." And the reason she gave him that name? ". . . for she said, 'The LORD has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me'" (Genesis 29:32).

Then came Simeon, which means "heard," and Leah said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also" (Genesis 29:33).

Next came Levi, which means "attached" because Leah thought, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons" (Genesis 29:34).

Leah was hoping to triumph over rejection and gain the love of her husband through her children. But it didn't work. It was only after she had her fourth child, that she decided to put aside her disappointment and instead give thanks and praise the LORD. So she named the child Judah,

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meaning "praise." And that was the child God chose as He narrowed down the line through whom Messiah would be born. What an amazing gift!

Leah is a picture of all of us who struggle to find love and acceptance in the midst of painful circumstances. With our eyes only on our predicament, we convince ourselves there are solutions to our problems within our grasp, if only we can change our circumstances. Leah's circumstance didn't change, but her heart did. The choice to thank and praise God is one we often make in spite of, not in light of, our circumstances. But praise and thanksgiving are powerful and transformative. Giving glory to God

calms our fears and opens our lives to new things.

Yes, it's clear from even the most cursory reading of Scripture that deep, authentic appreciation is pleasing to God, central to our faith and good for the soul. I'm going to make the extra effort at this season to be thankful, to heed the admonition of Scripture and to make known God's deeds to you and to all the people. I hope you'll join me, and maybe even drop us a line to let us know how you and your loved ones are focusing on thanksgiving.

All around the world, our Jews for Jesus missionaries and volunteers are out and about. Whether we're proclaiming Christ at a Thanksgiving Day parade or witnessing among the throngs of early holiday shoppers, we have a message of hope for a lost world. Those who hope in the Lord have great reason to give thanks, regardless of their circumstances. Please join us in giving thanks to Him in making known His deeds among the people. Like Norah, let's make a specific effort to return to Him and give thanks. I don't expect the Lord to shed tears of joy, but I believe our gratitude will certainly cause Him to smile.

David Brickner is also an author, public speaker and avid hiker. Find out more about David, his writings, speaking schedule and possible availability to speak at your church at jewsforjesus.org/david-brickner.

We exist to make the messiahship of Jesus an unavoidable issue to our Jewish people worldwide.

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You won't believe how one reader is praying for us . . .

We've learned so much by reading comments that nearly 3,000 of you wrote when returning your newsletter surveys. We found out that many of you pray through the newsletter while waiting in your doctor's office, and many more keep the newsletter on your night table to pray over during your devotions. But one of you, who shall remain nameless, astounded us by revealing that you keep issues of our newsletter in the passenger seat of your car . . . and pray for us during red lights! Thanks for praying and be careful out there!

Speaking of thanks . . .

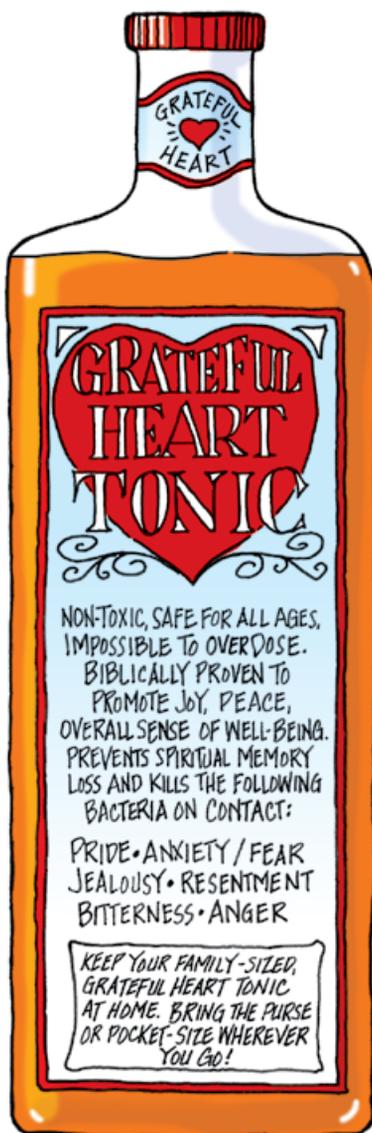
We're all grateful to have Laura Barron guest-editing our newsletter in December, January and February. Our usual editor, Ruth Rosen, will be on sabbatical while those editions are being prepared.



Laura has been a missionary with Jews for Jesus since 1989 when she and her husband Andrew married and then pioneered our work in South Africa. Laura instituted our South Africa newsletter and she still maintains oversight. She's also been editing our Canadian newsletter since 1996. In her spare time, Laura joins our outreaches in Israel, New York, Berlin and any place else that will stamp her passport! This woman is amazing—she does all this while keeping up her full-time ministry as wife (Andrew leads our Toronto branch) and mom of three children and a dog. Andrew doesn't know how she does it all. Nobody does, except the Lord, and so we thank Him for strengthening her. So, starting next month, enjoy Laura's special touch with your monthly newsletter!

For your convenience

If you'd like to give to Jews for Jesus but prefer using the Internet, we have a secure link for you: j4j.co/nl1611.



prayer prompters

Please pray for:



Salvation for Ron in Berlin, Vasily's wife in Israel, and the many summer campaign contacts to whom our teams in Odessa, Budapest and around the world are continuing to reach out



Grace and strength for new believers Raya, Grigory and Vasily in Israel; Fred in New York; all the new believers who prayed to receive the Lord during our summer outreaches, especially in Odessa and Budapest



An attitude of gratitude and unity throughout our ministry and the whole body of Messiah



Plans for our next Behold Your God Israel campaign to align with God's direction



God's continued blessing and leading for the next generation of Jews for Jesus

Get online news of Jews for Jesus around the world!

Check out this month's **RealTime** for timely prayer requests and stories from the field at: jewsforjesus.org/publications/realttime. Or **subscribe to RealTime** and receive great content directly: j4j.co/subemail.

This month's banner photo features Chantale Mandras (a missionary from our Paris branch) engaged in a gospel conversation. (Photo by Karl deSouza.)

His grace on our Odessa Jubilee Campaign

It was one of those Holy Spirit moments—our leadership council had no idea what God had in mind, or how long the door would be open for ministry, but outreach worker Elizabeth Terini (born and raised in the Former Soviet Union) and Avi Snyder (one of our U.S. branch leaders) sensed an urgent call to bring the gospel to Odessa. It seemed clear that God was calling the shots so we sent the Snyder family and Elizabeth off with much prayer. That was 25 years ago.



Photo © Jews for Jesus/ Leonid Vasserman

Valery (right), a volunteer on the Odessa campaign

We had no idea Odessa would become the launch pad for the gospel to go out to Jews and Gentiles throughout Russia, Ukraine, then Germany and Hungary. The hearts of our Odessa team still beat passionately for the Lord. They have endured through many hardships in a country that is unstable and war-torn. With faith fixed on Jesus, the Rock of Ages, the team purposed to celebrate their 25th year of ministry with a two-week witnessing campaign.

Branch leader Leonid Vasserman assembled a team of about 50

campaigners. A third were staff; the rest were volunteers, mainly from two of the congregations Leonid has established in Odessa. Five volunteers came from a Hebrew/Russian—speaking congregation in Haifa along with their leader, Mark (originally from Tashkent, Uzbekistan). Mark received the Lord along with his whole family when we had a covert outreach in that city—he was only sixteen at the time. Later Mark trained with us in Odessa, then he returned to Tashkent to start his own work until he moved to Israel.

About twenty campaigners formed a special youth team, led by Leonid's son, Sasha, who is one of our outreach workers. (Some of you intercede faithfully for us using our monthly prayer prompters; rejoice in this answer to your prayers and ours for the next generation of Jews for Jesus. Please keep praying—there's so much more ground to cover all over the world!)

The Spirit of God really was upon this campaign. Prior to the final event, 925 Jewish people had given contact information to hear more about Jesus, as well as 1,223 non-Jewish seekers. One hundred fifty-nine people prayed to receive Jesus, of whom 39 are Jewish. The team handed out 336,900 gospel tracts. All within two weeks! And that does not include the final event on the last night of the campaign.

The dramatic conclusion was a concert that featured a variety of

music and folk dances (including a “bottle dance” like the one some of you might recall from *A Fiddler on the Roof*). The room was packed to overflowing, literally! All 1,200 seats were filled and about 300 more occupied the standing room—plus 500 people watched a simultaneous video program of the concert on two large screens in the lobby. Many more remained out on the street.

Besides the music and dance, there was a testimony and a call to repent. So many people raised their hands in response to the invitation that Leonid could only estimate that somewhere between 40 to 70 percent of the people he could see responded and prayed to repent and receive Jesus. We do know that we received contact cards from 314 Jewish people and 571 Gentiles who do not yet know Jesus.

Leonid said, “There were many difficulties just before the concert, but God gave us abundant grace. Thank you, our dear brothers and sisters, for all your prayers!”



Photo © Jews for Jesus/Yekaterina Kanzhina

The evangelistic concert in Odessa

Turning trouble into triumph in Budapest

European director Avi Snyder reports, “Throughout our two-week Budapest campaign we invited people to a presentation of ‘Multitudes,’ the art show that displays the very Jewish nature of the Gospel of Matthew.

“Five hours before the event, we received an urgent call from the administrators of the venue where the event was to take place. They



Photo © Jews for Jesus/Kata Tar

Esther, a Budapest campaign volunteer

were under heavy pressure to cancel, which they knew would put them in legal jeopardy for breach of contract. They implored us to accept a change in location—to the Israel Cultural Center—a five-minute walk away from their own facility. There would be no extra cost to us, and they promised to redirect people to the new venue.

“It was clear that through no fault of their own, they were caught in a no-win situation, and were making every effort to ‘do right’ by us. I agreed to the last-minute change, and I believe God honored the decision. The hall

was packed to overflowing, with over a hundred people attending. At least twenty unbelieving Jewish people came to see the paintings. Many had received an evangelistic tract and invitation on the street from one of the campaigners.

“Excellent gospel-focused conversations followed the presentation for another hour and a half. The paintings were on display at the Center until August 19, which allowed even more people to view the artwork and read the verses and brief commentary accompanying each one.

“Isn’t that just like God? An attempt to thwart the gospel event was turned to victory, thanks to your prayers and His grace!

“The Budapest campaign ended strong. In two weeks, we placed 207,360 evangelistic tracts into people’s hands. Fifty-seven unbelieving Jewish people and 413 unbelieving non-Jews gave us their contact details to learn more about Yeshua (Jesus). And, praise the Lord, two Jewish people and 21 non-Jews prayed to receive Him! Please pray for each one to grow in grace and strength!”

Kata Tar, campaign co-leader, adds: “We tried something new at Széll Kálmán Square—setting up a tent to offer people shade from the heat, a cold drink and prayer. We ran into

unexpected difficulties with set-up, and wondered if the idea had been a mistake. But then a strange and wonderful thing happened—within two hours, four people prayed to surrender their hearts to the Lord! The first one, Attila, in his mid-30s, wanted to talk before we even finished setting up the tent, but we were able to sit in the shade and chat.

“Attila remembered having received a tract from me about a year ago. While he believed Jesus is the Messiah, he was fearful about what he might have to give up to follow Him. When I explained what Jesus promises us in exchange—a new heart and eternal life—he was touched and wanted to pray with me to receive the Lord. What a joy when a sower of gospel seed can later see the ripened fruit and even harvest it! Please pray for Attila to find a strong and healthy church, to grow in the Lord and become a sower of gospel seed himself!”



Photo © Jews for Jesus/Feri Kozma

Zsuzsa, another Budapest campaign volunteer

bits from the **BRANCHES**

From **Berlin, Aaron Lewin** reports, “Ron was one of the first people I made contact with after I arrived in Berlin. We’ve been meeting on a regular basis in order to improve my Hebrew and his German. Of course, we’re always able to talk about Jesus. Ron suggested that we read in Hebrew from a well-known Israeli newspaper, and we ended up choosing an article about Messianic Jews in Israel. I was amazed by how clearly the gospel was presented in this article. It was great to see Leviticus 17:11—which explains the necessity of a blood

the Hollywood blockbuster! Truly God can use anything to make His truth known! Please pray that whether through Batman, Superman or Leviticus, Ron would clearly understand the gospel and its implications on his life and come to know the one who died for him.”

From **Israel, Tatyana Bolotov** reports, “Raya participated in several of our guided tours, yet was reluctant to communicate. I continued to pray for her, and the Holy Spirit encouraged me to be faithful in calling her on the phone. During one of our phone conversations, Raya agreed to meet with me. When my husband and I came, Raya was eagerly anticipating our arrival and even ran out to meet us. She said that she had read the books we had given her. From the moment we entered her house, tears of joy continually streamed from her eyes, and her heart was full of excitement. She gladly accepted the proposal to receive Yeshua the Messiah into her life, and then fell on her knees and started to thank God for her deliverance. Hallelujah! Please pray for her thirst for her God, the God of Israel, to be further multiplied.”

Valery Bolotov reports, “My wife Tatyana spoke with 91-year-

old Grigory during our telephone campaign in Samaria. Grigory fought in World War II and experienced much sorrow, yet he’s remained softhearted and was open to meet with us. We sent him books which he’d said he would read, but he mistakenly gave us the wrong apartment number, so his neighbor Boris received the books. Sometimes God uses mistakes for His purposes. We first spoke with Boris and told him about salvation through the Messiah Yeshua, and then we went on to Grigory. Grigory didn’t know much about God, yet he was open to Him. After we explained the gospel we invited him to pray the sinner’s prayer. He agreed to do so and afterward, he frankly added, ‘This is right. Jesus died for all of us!’ Grigory asked us to continue to visit with him, so that his faith might be strengthened. Thanks be unto God for one more life saved!”

Also from Valery, “I was doing street evangelism when Vasily approached me. He had been seeking God for a long time, but was hesitant to invite Him into his life. Vasily is a smoker, and he thought that he had to be holy and free from addiction in order to approach the Almighty. I cited Yeshua’s words, that ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance’ (Mark 2:17). Vasily was glad to hear this and asked how he should pray in order to have a personal relationship with Jesus. We prayed together right on the street. Vasily isn’t Jewish, but his wife is. She is often sick and has asked him to pray to Jesus for her healing, for she thinks that Jesus isn’t the God of the Jews! Vasily



Photo ©Jews for Jesus/Leonid Dolganovsky

sacrifice—quoted! Ron understood the concept but said he thought it was ‘a bit barbaric.’ His interest piqued as I mentioned the plot of a recent superhero movie in which one person dies for another. Ron listened with interest once I mentioned

with interest once I mentioned

Aaron



Valery and Tatyana

Photo ©Jews for Jesus

Ruth, his message resonated with all—particularly with the Jewish persons in attendance (there were nine of us). In fact, Dr. Hardesty’s teachings were excellent, not only for mature believers but for seekers. You might expect that anyone attending this spiritual retreat would be a Christian, but no. Let me tell you about Fred.

of God and the joy of knowing Him?’ Fred was seeing this in the Christians all around him. He was jealous. Fred wanted to experience God personally. Stewart read Ezekiel 36:26–27 and he explained the difference between intellectual belief and relying on Jesus. Fred understood. Then Stewart led Fred in a salvation prayer.

“After Fred prayed, Stewart asked Fred if he was willing to tell anyone about his new faith. Fred said, ‘Yes.’ I was on another part of the campus when I heard my phone ring. It was Fred.

gave us his address and asked us to send him our free books. Please pray for him to grow in faith, and that his wife might also receive Yeshua as her Lord and Savior.”

From New York, Shoshannah

Weinisch reports, “My husband Stewart and I were on an annual spiritual retreat, which is graciously provided for our missionary staff.

“We chose America’s Keswick conference center in New Jersey for our retreat. We were not familiar with the keynote speakers of the week, but we knew we could trust Keswick to have biblically-sound teachers. In the sovereignty of God, one of our keynote speakers was Dr. Edgar Hardesty, a professor of Jewish studies and biblical archeology at Cairn University (formerly Philadelphia Biblical University). Dr. Hardesty takes his students on archeological digs in Israel each year, so he has a deep understanding of ancient Jewish culture and a command of biblical Hebrew. His text was the book of Ruth. As Dr. Hardesty explicated the book of

“At the first meal of the week, Fred was sitting to my right. After initial introductions I began to think Fred might be Jewish, so I mentioned to him that I am Jewish. Sure enough, he answered, ‘Me too.’

““So who do you think Jesus is?’ I asked. Fred’s answer showed that he had an academic understanding, but had not yet entrusted himself to Jesus. I leaned over to Stewart, who was sitting on my left, and said, ‘Fred and you should talk later.’

“The discussion began immediately. Fred was relieved to meet Jewish believers and had great questions. Each day Fred, Stewart and I engaged in spiritual conversations.

“One night after the teaching session ended, Stewart met privately with Fred. This was their third focused conversation. By this point Stewart had already answered Fred’s biggest questions, which were: ‘Is Jesus God?’ and ‘How can I experience the presence

“‘Shoshannah, I know Jesus forgave my sin and that He is my Messiah.’ I was so happy!

“The next morning at breakfast Fred told *everyone!* News spread over the campus quickly. So many were encouraged. At our first morning session that day, Fred stood and told the conference about his decision to follow Jesus. What an encouraging, joyful spiritual retreat!”

Names of many people that our staff meet are changed to protect privacy.



Shoshannah and Stewart



Giving thanks . . . for fleas?

by Ruth Rosen

As a little girl, I enjoyed *Pollyanna*, the Walt Disney movie starring Hayley Mills. The lead character seemed to be about my age. But unlike me, she was a great optimist, whose “glad game” consisted of finding reasons to be glad amidst trying or dreary circumstances.

When I got older, I heard (and used) the name Pollyanna somewhat derisively, to describe a sugary-sweet person with an annoying habit of interrupting a good gripe session with reasons to be happy in less-than-joyful circumstances.

Now that I’m older still, I’m entering my second childhood, spiritually that is, or at least I hope I am. Maybe you’d like to join me if you’re not already there. We can play the “glad game,” substituting the word “thankful.” It’s one way to bless the Lord by fulfilling the mandate of 1 Thessalonians 5:18: “in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Do you ever struggle to live out that verse? I was already thinking about it when I saw David’s lead article and what he said about the sacrifice of thanksgiving in hard times. Not that I’m having such big problems, you understand. I’m having small problems. Tiny ones in fact. Fleas.

So this is how God speaks into my life. I have these fleas. I read David’s article. I also have my early morning readings, which lately have included a few pages a day of a book called *Humility: True Greatness* by C.J. Mahaney. It happens I’m toward the end where he talks about facing trials with humility and rejoicing. I know that my trials are miniscule compared to many people’s, but I still have to deal

with them. At the very same time, one of my other devotional books is telling the story of that great theologian and pastor, Matthew Henry, and how he applied 1 Thessalonians 5:18 after being mugged. Henry said, “Let me be thankful first because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, because although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed” (Matthew Henry, born in 1662; biblical expositor and pastor).

*“in everything
give thanks;
for this is the will
of God in Christ
Jesus for you.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:18

How’s that for living out God’s Word? I’m not that great at it but here’s how I’m applying it for my little flea problem:

“Thank You God that in twelve years of living in this house with a dog I never really had a flea problem before; thank You that though I’m itching like crazy, none of my family or friends who visited recently were bitten; thank You that You have blessed me with the resources to buy the necessary products to fight off these fleas; and thank You that by allowing fleas in this house You are helping me see this battle as a spiritual metaphor that I’ll someday be able to include in the devotional book You have put on my heart to write.”

If you’ve never tried this little exercise, I encourage you to give it a whirl. Who knows, maybe you’ll start a new Thanksgiving tradition in your home or circle of friends! Happy Thanksgiving, and have fun thanking Him!

