

NEWS BRIEFS

A JEWISH PRAYER FOR SALVATION

Celebrate Messiah Sydney staff shared Messiah in the Passover in a number of NSW & ACT churches in March & April. Christians brought their Jewish and Gentile friends to attend. In one meeting a Jewish guest prayed for salvation and in other meetings several Iranians also met Messiah. Please pray for these new believers as they share with their family and friends.

MESSIAH'S CREDENTIALS MADE CLEAR

During our busy Passover season, Barry had the privilege of speaking with several unsaved Jewish people. At one of the Passover Seders, Barry was asked to meet and speak with a Jewish couple who had been invited by their Christian friend. During the course of the conversation they asked a question: "Why don't the Rabbis tell us about these things?" They were referring to Yeshua's Messianic credentials. The conversation was very fruitful, and they were invited to meet for further discussion.

FROM THE MISSION FIELDS OF NEW ZEALAND...

Fourteen Israelis showed up at the latest Hummus Night run by Celebrate Messiah New Zealand missionary Zohar. He's found that Facebook works really well to advertise these events, as well as inviting Israelis the old-fashioned way, by posting on a notice board in town. Food is always a good platform to bring meaningful conversation to the table. Three of the Israelis had recently been involved in a car accident. They spoke about God's protection over them. The girl driving had lost control on a gravel road and the car rolled twice until it finally came to a stop. While the car was completely ruined, no other car was involved, and no one was physically hurt. The Israelis recognized that God was the one protecting them.

A group of bible school students came to Zohar's region, near Dunedin, for a seminar on Jewish evangelism. After they finished the course, he arranged for them to meet Israelis and to practice what they learnt. Some of the students were able to share their testimony. Eran asked, "What is The Holy Spirit?" And so began a fruitful discussion.

A couple of days later Matan, a formerly religious Israeli, came over for a Shabbat dinner. During the evening it was discovered he'd already read the New Testament and was actually eager to talk about spiritual themes. Zohar delved deeply into God's plan of redemption through the Messiah, spoke much about the Old Testament, the animal sacrifices and how it's possible to be reconciled to God today through the precious blood of Messiah. Matan had been entangled by the idea that God is far removed from His creation, and we can't possibly reach him through our ideas. He even considered the bible to be a man-made idea.

Zohar and his family celebrated Passover with another local Israeli family at home. They began with the traditional Seder, and as the ceremony progressed he was able to share more and more insights revealing the hidden Messiah as the centre of the whole feast. After the evening was over, the Israeli family said it was the most enjoyable and informative Passover they'd ever had.



MESSIAH IN THE PASSOVER 'MAKES SENSE NOW'

Blessings abounded when 450 people packed into St Kilda Town hall for our annual Messianic Passover Seder. The service was conducted by Lawrence Hirsch and ably assisted by Celebrate Messiah missionary Jay. The effort that went into organising the event became clearly worthwhile when such positive comments were received by the many unsaved Jewish people who attended. Our Russian speaking congregation, Dom Missi'ee, celebrated at a Seder of around 100 people. One lady said she had no idea about God's divine deliverance before she heard the story of the Passover told from the Messianic Passover Hagaddah. Afterwards she said: "It all now fits into place; the relationship between God, the Jewish people and Yeshua all makes sense to me now." Celebrate Messiah also hosted Passover Seders in Sydney and on the Sunshine Coast that were well attended and enjoyed by all.



*Simcha is a Hebrew word meaning "a joyous occasion".

Simcha 2014



Celebrate Messiah New Zealand director Scott Brown will be our key speaker at Simcha 2014 to be held at the Phillip Island Adventure Resort on the weekend of 5-7 December.

Other speakers will include Celebrate Messiah Australia Executive Director Lawrence Hirsch and Celebrate Messiah board member and principal of Harvest West Bible College Dr Ashley Crane.

The conference theme will be: "Under His Wings" with the main text being "Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings..." (Mat 23:37).

With music by worship leader Phil Plotnek, dance group led by Louise Hirsch, children's and youth programs.

Scott Brown has been with Chosen People Ministries for 25 years as pastor of a Messianic congregation in the US, and now as director of Celebrate Messiah NZ. He is a gifted communicator of God's Word and will encourage us to enter into a deeper and more intimate relationship with God through Yeshua our Messiah.



Registration will be available later in the year. Watch our website for details. www.celebratemessiah.com.au



CELEBRATE MESSIAH

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CELEBRATE MESSIAH

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FULFILLED

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SHAVUOT FULFILLED



Shavuot was the day Israel offered God the first fruits of their wheat harvest (Num. 28:26). Since Shavuot is the celebration

of Israel's first fruits, Luke uses this relationship to show how the Spirit begins God's work of redemption (R. Rom. 8:23).

The Hebrew Bible looks forward to the events fulfilled on Shavuot. The Torah anticipated a time when Israel would fail to keep God's commandments—but that is not the end of the story. God also promised to bring His people back to their land and circumcise their hearts (Deut. 10:1-6). The prophet Jeremiah anticipates a "new covenant" between God and Israel, when God would engrave His covenant upon the hearts of His people, unlike the covenant He wrote on tablets of stone (Jer. 31:31-34). The hope for a restored relationship with God is at the heart of Jeremiah's promise of a renewed covenant with Israel, because God would forgive His people and transform their hearts (Jer. 31:33-34).

Luke points to the fulfillment of these promises on Shavuot (Acts 2:1-4, 17-21, 33, 37-39). Thus, the gift of the Spirit on Shavuot was evidence of Messiah's redemptive work and the affirmation of the new covenant. The indwelling of God's Spirit within His people indicates a shift in the way God relates to us, as He transforms the hearts of His people through the Spirit's power.

The Holy Spirit and Evangelism

I am often asked the question, "How can we pray for you and for Celebrate Messiah?" The answer is simple—pray that God fills us with His Holy Spirit and gives us the power to preach the Gospel to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.

The Holy Spirit is the best friend of evangelism! We rely upon His work in the heart and souls of our Jewish loved ones, friends, neighbours and co-workers—to convict them of sin and their need of a Saviour. So please don't be discouraged with your Jewish friends who might be apathetic to the Gospel, or at times even get a little upset—instead, trust that as you pray for them, the Holy Spirit will prepare a place in their hearts for the Gospel.

Thank you so much for your partnership with us in "bringing the Message to the original messengers." We certainly do rely on your prayers and support and appreciate so much your sacrifice for the sake of the Gospel.

Your brother in Messiah,

Lawrence Hirsch
Executive Director of Celebrate Messiah Australia

Shavuot in the New Covenant

Most Christians are familiar with Luke's description of the events on Pentecost in Acts 2 and their significance in the establishment of the early Church. Few, however, are aware of the Jewish backdrop to this day. The Jewish name for this holiday is *Shavuot*, meaning "weeks." Shavuot is a harvest festival, celebrating the end of the barley harvest and the first fruits of the wheat harvest (Ex. 34:22; Num. 28:26; Deut. 16:10). The term *Pentecost* is a Greek word referring to the *fiftieth* day of counting the harvest after Passover (Lev. 23:15-16). It is one of the three pilgrimage festivals when Jewish people travel to Jerusalem (Ex. 23:16-17; 34:22-23; Deut. 16:10, 16).

According to Jewish tradition, Shavuot represents the annual commemoration of the day God gave the Torah to the nation of Israel on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:1-6). *This means that the entire nation was celebrating the anniversary of God's covenant with Israel—on the same day God fulfilled His promise to send the Holy Spirit.* The parallels between the giving of the Torah and God's gift of the Holy Spirit reinforce the significance of the arrival of God's promised Spirit on Pentecost.

Luke's description of the events in Acts 2 shows the close connection between the giving of the Torah on Shavuot and the giving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost in several ways. First, Luke mentions tongues "like fire" descending upon the disciples (Acts 2:3). Similarly, God appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai in the form of fire (Ex. 19:18-19). Second, later Jewish tradition associates multiple tongues (languages) with the events at Sinai: the Talmud says every word proceeding from God's mouth "divided into seventy tongues" (b. Shab 88b). Third, Luke describes a sound like "the blowing of a violent wind" (2:2). Although the account in Exodus does not mention wind, Josephus, the Jewish historian, says there were strong winds that became a mighty tempest on the third day of Israel's stay at Sinai (J. Ant. 3:80). Fourth, Peter's proclamation of the Gospel resulted in 3,000 new believers (Acts 2:41). Luke's reference here suggests the restoration of the 3,000 individuals who died when the nation rebelled against God by worshipping a golden calf at the base of Mount Sinai (Ex. 32:1-29). Finally, the celebration of

Dear friend,
Shalom in the wonderful name of Yeshua our Messiah! It has been a wonderful season of the year for Your Mission to the Jewish People. I am still rejoicing in all that God did a little over a month ago as our staff spoke in dozens of churches across the country and participated in several Passover Seders, where we had the opportunity to speak to hundreds of people about Yeshua, our Passover Lamb.

In Melbourne we had about 450 people who attended our Passover Seder at the St Kilda Town Hall and I was especially blessed at the responses we got from the dozen or so Jewish people who attended for the first time. One Jewish couple, who are not yet believers, said; "We really enjoyed the night so much and we feel so special that you invited us. Next year we would like to buy two tickets for ourselves as well as two more for our friends who would like to come. Also, my brother would like to know if there is a similar Seder like this in Sydney." Another Jewish lady said; "I just feel that there is something very special here tonight... I really would like to meet with you again as I have hundreds of questions."

If you have never had a Messiah in the Passover demonstration at your church—you should! It is a tremendous blessing for believers to make the connection between the Last Supper and the Jewish Passover Seder. Please get in touch with us now and start scheduling your Messiah in the Passover presentation for next year. Our schedules fill up very quickly and we would love to visit your congregation—

so please call or ask your pastor or Bible study leader to contact our Church Relations department to get the process started for next year! You can e-mail churchrelations@celebratemesiah.com.au or call 03 9563 5544 for more information.

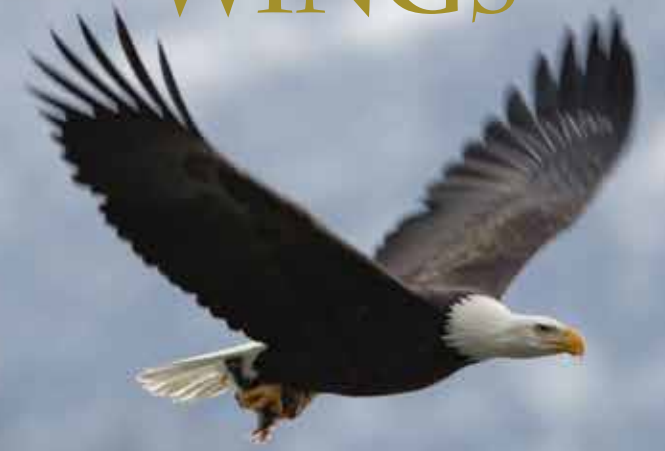
The Feast of Weeks

We are just entering into the season of the Jewish Feast of Weeks, called Shavuot. You know this festival in English—it is usually called the day of Pentecost. We learn all about this in Leviticus 23:15-21 and Acts 2:1-13.

This is the only major holiday that both Jewish people and Christians share. In Jewish tradition, this day is understood as the day when God gave the *Torah* (Law) through Moses to the Jewish people. According to the second chapter of Acts, the day of Pentecost was also the moment when God sent His Holy Spirit to the early Jewish believers who were gathered together, waiting for the promise of the Father that was given in the Old Testament (Joel 2:28-32) and by Jesus in Luke 24:49.

SHALOM RUSSIA 2014

UNDER HIS WINGS



"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings..."

(Matt 23:37)



Outreach to the "Forgotten Jews of Far East Russia"

Prior to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Josef Stalin created his own Communist version of "Zion." His solution to the "Jewish problem" was to give the Jewish people a homeland—a barren stretch of mosquito-ridden swampland in the Far East of Russia, just north of the Chinese border, farther east than Siberia and Mongolia. This region was designated the *Jewish Autonomous Region* and the main city is called *Birobidzhan*.

This is where, in September 2004, Celebrate Messiah pioneered a work to reach out to these "forgotten Jews of Far East Russia. Since then, Celebrate Messiah has done outreaches and encouraged ministry to Jewish people throughout the Far East and Siberia and today we have a growing congregation in both Birobidzhan, in the Jewish Autonomous Region, and in the town of Artum, on the outskirts of Vladivostok. We estimate that the combined Jewish population of the Far East cities of Vladivostok, Khabarovsk and Birobidzhan together totals over 70,000. There are also smaller numbers of Jewish people scattered across the region in Magadan, Kamchatka and the Sakhalin Island. Over the past ten years, we've been to all these places, sharing the Gospel, leading Jewish people to faith in Yeshua and establishing groups of believers who will continue to reach out to Jewish people in these isolated places.



Two Historic Messianic Family Camps in July

Rita Ivenskis, our intrepid Russian Jewish missionary will travel back to the Far East Russia in July this year to fulfill a vision she has had to gather believing Jewish families together for a conference similar to our annual Simcha Conference here in Australia. Rita already travelled to the region earlier this year to

plan and prepare for these camps. Celebrate Messiah will host two camps, one in Artum and the other in Birobidzhan. This is a first for this region – and already there is much excitement and anticipation.

We invite you to please pray for this pioneering work. We are expecting that many unsaved family members would also attend and enjoy fellowship with believers, hear the Word of God preached, and be touched by the Holy Spirit. The theme of the conferences will be "Under His Wings." There will be ministry for children as well as for adults. Rita will be joined by, Nicolai and Genya and their wives, who are our Russian missionaries from Artum and Birobidzhan respectively.

We also invite you to please prayerfully consider being a financial partner with this Shalom Russia Mission Project. The total budget for the two camps is only \$6,000 (\$3,000 each) and we need to raise a further \$4,000 for Rita and the team's travel expenses. That is a total of \$10,000 that will impact many Russian Jewish families. Please can you help!

Your partnership is much appreciated as we reach out to our "Forgotten Jews" of Far East Russia. Ministry across Russia represents an extraordinary opportunity to reach Jewish people with the Gospel message. We ask you to please pray for the ongoing ministry in Birobidzhan, Artum and the rest of the region."

- Lawrence Hirsch

