



CELEBRATE
MESSIAH

February 2014

Volume 20, Issue 1

*In Partnership with Chosen
People Global Ministries*

TO THE JEW FIRST

INSIDE:

Russian Hearts Touched by
Their Jewish Messiah Yeshua

Ministry Makes a Difference in
New Zealand

Jew and Gentile join in joyous
occasion at Simcha



TO THE JEW FIRST in 2014



It is in this critical passage of Romans that we see God's plan for world evangelism. The Gentile world is not to be ignored, but the first step in reaching the world with the Gospel is to reach the Jewish People.

As the leader of a messianic mission to the Jewish people, I believe that Jewish people need to accept Yeshua in order to have a place in the age to come (John 14:6, Acts 4:12, John 3:16-17).

This might sound simplistic but this is my clear understanding of Scripture. It is the very basis for Missions and for our particular mission – Celebrate Messiah, and this has not changed since we established the work in 1995.

I do not believe that a Jewish person is capable of keeping the Law to the extent that their human efforts would in some way satisfy God's demands for righteousness, enabling the individual Jewish person to enter heaven on their own merit (Gal. 2:15-16, 3:23-25, Romans 10:2-4 ff.). Jewish people are saved by grace through faith (cf. Eph. 2:8-9).

This is of course also true of non-Jews, who are judged on a different basis than the Jewish people according to the argument of the Apostle Paul in the early chapters of Romans (Romans 2:12-16, 3:9-20), but accepted by the same act of conscious faith in the Son of God who died and rose for our sins (Romans 10:9-12).

The Present Tense

Romans 1:16 is written in the present tense. Follow the logic of the text: If the Gospel is *still* the power of God "for" salvation and is *still* for "everyone who believes," then the Gospel is *still* "to the Jew first."

The Greek word used by Paul and translated, as *first* is *prōton*.¹ The term implies a priority,² rather than a sequential order of events.³

So, what does the Apostle have in mind in suggesting that the Gospel is *for the Jewish people first*?

Let me first say what he is not suggesting: that the Roman believers withhold the Gospel from the Gentiles until every Jewish person in the world is reached. Neither is the Apostle implying that the Gospel has already come to the Jewish people first and therefore preaching the Gospel to the "Jew first" is no longer necessary.

Rabbi Sha'ul's Modus Operandi

Perhaps the best way to understand what the Apostle intended in Romans 1:16 is to see his strategy worked out in his ministry recorded in the Book of Acts?

Dear friend,

Shalom and blessings to you for a healthy and spiritually prosperous 2014. I hope you managed to have a restful and refreshing holiday period and you are now ready for a new year.

Your mission to the Jewish people held several events and outreaches running during this period starting off with our biggest National Messianic Conference ever – 450 people joined us at Simcha 2013 for a bonanza of messianic teaching and fellowship with several messianic Jewish guest speakers from various countries (recordings of the messages can be ordered through our office).

I also hope you will enjoy reading about our outreach in New Zealand amongst Israeli backpackers as well as our ongoing ministry to Russian speaking Jews in Australia and in the Far East of Russia.

To the Jew First in 2014

It has been our tradition, at Celebrate Messiah, to begin the New Year with an article that reflects one of the core beliefs of our mission – *to the Jew first and also to the Gentile* based on Rabbi Sha'ul's (the Apostle Paul's) key text in Romans 1:16:

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." (Romans 1:16, NIV)

Franz Delitzsch, the well-known Old Testament scholar wrote, "For the church to evangelise the world without thinking of the Jews, is like a bird trying to fly with one broken wing."

This special mandate for Jewish evangelism which Paul gives the Gentiles in the Body of Messiah is based upon many different passages from the New Testament, but Romans 1:16 seems to be the most prominent.

Even though he was the apostle to the Gentiles, this did not lessen his concern for the salvation of the Jewish people. Wherever Paul went in his ministry among the Gentiles, he also preached the Gospel to the Jewish people living in that area (Acts 13:13-52; 14:1-5; 18:7-11; 19:8-10).

What the Apostle did in Iconium is a good example of his strategy:

“At Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders. The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. There was a plot afoot among the Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, where they continued to preach the good news.” (Acts 14:1-7, NIV)

The salvation of the Jewish people was an ever present concern for Paul, and his actions in the Book of Acts reveal his understanding of what he wrote in Romans 1:16.⁴

A Priority Concern

The word “first” suggests that the Jewish people are to be viewed as a priority in evangelism, so what does it mean for the Gospel to be preached to the Jewish people first?

The word is also used in Matthew 6:33 where the Lord Jesus reminds us to “... seek first his kingdom....”

The Kingdom of God should always be sought as a priority in our lives, even as we seek other things. In a similar way, reaching Jewish people with the Gospel must be a priority concern for all who know the Lord Yeshua as their Saviour.

It is a priority founded upon God’s heart and plan for the Jewish people and the world He loves and sent His Son to die for!

A Priority Based Upon God’s Promise

This is consistent with God’s promise to father Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 and especially in verse 3:

“I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:3, NIV)

A Priority Based Upon God’s Future Plan

Paul describes the future salvation of the Jewish people and the impact this will have on the rest of the world. I can only imagine that this is what he had in mind when he





penned Romans 1:16. Knowing the future plan of God, His people should prioritise Jewish evangelism, especially as we see the day of His second coming drawing near as the salvation of the Jewish people seems to be the lynchpin in fulfilling God's ultimate purposes for the world.

"But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!" (Romans 11:12, NIV)

"For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" (Romans 11:15, NIV)

Bringing the Gospel to the Jewish people first should not be viewed as a *priority of privilege*, but better viewed as a *priority founded on the Lord's strategy to heal a world broken by sin*.

It is also important to carefully note that if the Jewish people are to be evangelised first – then by implication there are others who are supposed to be evangelized as well!

The Lord chose the Jewish people to reach the Gentiles, but my people failed and so He sent His Son, the greatest Jewish person who ever lived, to complete the task. And now He calls upon Gentiles who believed the Gospel through a remnant of Jewish people to bring the message back to the original messengers!

A Present Day Priority

So how do we apply Romans 1:16 and the priority God gives to Jewish evangelism to our present day? He makes this clear in Romans 11:11:

"Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious." (Romans 11:11, NIV)

God has placed a calling upon Gentile believers in Jesus. Gentile believers are called to provoke Jewish people to want Yeshua who is within them. This is a clear biblical mandate for Gentiles in the Body of Messiah to reach Jewish people with the Gospel message – provoking the Jewish people to spiritual jealousy.

My Personal Experience

I came to faith through the witness of my own brother, Alan Hirsch. Interesting though, in fulfilment of Romans 11:11, Alan came to faith through the witness of Murray, a good Gentile friend of his while he was serving in the South African Defence Force. Murray's life had changed so radically through being

"born-again" that my brother could not help but notice. Murray challenged Alan by his lifestyle and encouraged him to read the New Testament. Through Murray's witness my brother came to faith in Yeshua and he in turn led me to faith in Messiah.

I have to say that I am rather proud of my brother who has continued to serve the Lord in a mighty way these past 30 years. Alan has written numerous books and has been used of the Lord to inspire and motivate mission in a post-modern context. This is all because God used a humble, loving Gentile friend to lead him to faith in Jesus.

Putting First Things First

There is a wonderful story about the relationship between John Wilkinson, a Gentile missionary who founded the Mildmay Mission to the Jews, and J. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission (now OMF). Every January, Taylor would send Wilkinson a check for a sum of money with a note attached, "To the Jew first." Wilkinson would then send the amount back to Taylor with a note that read, "And also to the Gentiles."

We can prioritise reaching Jewish people because of God's choice of Abraham's seed according to the flesh, and still reach the world as commanded by our Messiah prior to His ascension.

It begins with you! Through your prayers, giving and witnessing to your Jewish friends – making them jealous – the plan of God will go forth in power!

We cannot allow Jewish evangelism to become the Great Omission of the Great Commission. This is beginning to change and some church bodies are taking Jewish evangelism more seriously than ever before. It is my hope that this will continue.

Yours for the Salvation of Israel,

Lawrence Hirsch
Executive Director of Celebrate
Messiah Australia

Executive Director of
Celebrate Messiah Australia



- 1 Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, second rev. F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 726; Wilhelm Michaelis, "proton," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:869.
- 2 C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 1:90 – 91; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 28; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 69; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1 – 8*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1988), 40; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 62.
- 3 See Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 23; William R. Newell, *Romans Verse by Verse* (Chicago: Moody, 1938), 22.
- 4 For a helpful discussion of this subject, see the essay by Wayne A. Brindle, "To The Jew First: Rhetoric, Strategy, History, or Theology?" *BSac* 159 (2002): 221 – 33.

RUSSIAN HEARTS TOUCHED BY THEIR JEWISH MESSIAH YESHUA

Breakthroughs continue in Celebrate Messiah's Russian speaking ministry in Melbourne with many lives impacted by Messiah Yeshua in a most supernatural way.

At a monthly lunch attended by around about 70 people, a video about the life of Yeshua was being shown, which included his immaculate birth and then his ministry on earth during his life time. Ministry leader Rita reported that the expressions on people's faces were of astonishment and amazement.

"They were really touched by what they were seeing.

"I saw one elderly man so moved that his eyes were full of tears. One lady who came for the very first time was the first person who wanted to receive a Russian bible when I was distributing them.

"I distributed 7 bibles and 10 Jesus videos. Some asked to receive a Hebrew and Russian bible all in one."

Rita said that the following week at the monthly Russian Shabbat Service there was an amazingly positive reaction after reading from the weekly Torah portion, which was titled Chayei Sarah, and was about the lives of Abraham and Sarah.

"Many people told me afterwards that it finally all made sense and they understood what the Torah was talking about."

A few days later Rita and four volunteers went on their regular weekly outreach visits and called in on Fred and Raia who recently lost their only son Arkadi.

Rita had the privilege of being with Arkadi when he received Yeshua as his Lord and Saviour shortly before he passed away.

"Fred (Arkadi's father) had been very reluctant to accept Yeshua. But when five of us went to comfort them in their sorrow, and we talked about having a personal relationship with God, he felt that he too would like to experience that relationship with God.

"He opened both of his hands and asked to receive from the Lord the Holy Spirit. That experience left us spellbound and without words.

"God also had compassion upon his wife Raia as she was comforted in her grief."

Rita said the team was able to reach out with their prayers and presence which was like a sweet aroma in the house after all that sadness they had endured.

Rita prepares for Messianic family camps in Russia

Our Russian worker Rita will travel to Far East Russia later this month to follow up on last year's ministry visit and to plan for two Messianic family camps in July.

Rita will scout for campsites and encourage fellow workers Nicolai and Natasha and their fellowship, as well as speak in churches. She'll also visit Birobidzhan in Artyom to encourage Genya and Irina who have started a new work there, and to visit Jewish families in the area. Also to Khabarovsk to speak at a church focussed on Jewish people.

"On the last trip we were thinking about how to reach out to Jewish people in Artyom and Birobidzhan. We went to a big children's camp in Vladivostok, organised by the local church, and it inspired us to do a Messianic camp."

As Yeshua lamented over Jerusalem, and his Jewish people, in Matthew 23:37, so Rita has a heart to bring her Jewish brethren in Russia under the loving wings of Messiah Yeshua.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"

Many of the families who will come to the camp will be poverty stricken and be hearing of Yeshua for the first time.

"We want to comfort them and pray for them and touch their hearts with the Holy Spirit, ministering to them to show Yeshua's love."

The camp in Artyom is scheduled for 17-20 July, and just before that a camp in Birobidzhan, located next to an orphanage of handicapped children where Rita and her team have ministered in the past.



MINISTRY MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN NEW ZEALAND



The Gospel-oriented social events hosted by

Celebrate Messiah New Zealand staff are a real draw for Israeli backpackers. Robin B., who led a short-term US evangelistic team to assist in the New Zealand ministry, reports how a young Israeli traveller named Effie (name changed) became so seriously ill that her father had to fly to New Zealand to be with her.

As Robin spoke with Effie's father, she shared about her own observant Jewish upbringing and how the Lord had healed her of the same affliction Effie had (she has since returned to Israel and is doing better now). As Robin and Effie's father spoke further, they realized that Robin had also met his son in New Zealand and had shared the Gospel with him as well. Effie's father, who questioned Robin thoughtfully about her belief in Messiah, realised that these things were no mere coincidence.

Robin writes, "I also got to share with Effie about God's love and healing. It is clear God is doing something in their lives." Robin also reports that about 25 Israelis attended a Christmas Party where the host clearly shared the Gospel.

Amidst the food, the spirited live music and games, discussions about Yeshua (Jesus) sprang up in small groups. One young Israeli lit up when Robin told her in Hebrew that she was a Jewish believer. She said she'd heard of such people, but had never met one.

They went on to have a great discussion about prophecy and the Lord's ability to transform our lives. The Lord is touching hearts in New Zealand!

Opportunities Galore for Israeli Travellers

Celebrate Messiah New Zealand workers in New Zealand are excited about all the wonderful outreach opportunities to Israeli travellers during the holiday season.

Zohar reports that ministry opportunities have arisen one after another.

"I receive phone calls from traveling Israelis left, right, and centre.

"Three Israelis Yossi, Shiran, and Aviv heard about our faith. During our time together they gladly received a Hebrew New Testament, saying that they had really wanted to know 'what it's all about.' Yossi asked how the Faith has personally affected me, and I was able to testify of how Yeshua changed my life.

"Another three travelers Avishai, Anat and Noam, came to celebrate Chanukah at our place. They took some evangelistic literature as well when they left. Avishai and Anat came again for Shabbat dinner and we continued to go deeper into the Messiahship of Yeshua. Then another couple Ronen and Shimrit came over and we had a great Gospel centred conversation after dinner. They, too, took a Hebrew New Testament with them. Please keep all these precious souls in your prayers."

In Queenstown, Zohar attended a Shabbat evening with 34 Israelis present (an all time record), organized by the Lewis family - local believers who host Israelis in their home. It was so wonderful to see Avishai, Anat, Ronen, and Shimrit again. Anat said that she loves our family, and seemed to be the most open to the Gospel from among her peers.

Zohar organised a 'Hummus Night' and 15 Israelis showed up, hungry for physical and spiritual food.

"After we all ate the Israeli dishes we miss so much, I officially introduced ourselves and read from the New Testament.

"While Tehila (my beloved) and I were serving dessert, Israeli coffee, and tea, Alma approached me saying she feels so good about being there with us. She also asked me why she couldn't combine religious Judaism with the New Testament teachings. I explained extensively, proclaiming the Gospel of grace, as others listened in too.

"Just before I finished speaking with Alma, Segev approached us and said, 'Listen, I know this stuff very well. I was a Talmid Yeshiva (a student of Rabbinical studies). I'm an atheist now, but if there is one true religion, it is what you just heard from Zohar.'"



NEWS BRIEFS



Chosen People UK director Daniel Nessim addresses the conference on the Jewish Gospel in the 1st Century



Phil Plotnek and the band leading worship

JEW AND GENTILE JOIN IN JOYOUS OCCASION AT SIMCHA

It was by far the biggest Messianic conference ever held in Australia as 450 people gathered on Phillip Island in early December to hear the most exciting range of international speakers ever to assemble on our shores.

Simcha 2013, themed The Gospel, the People, the Land and the Future of Israel, lived up to all the pre-conference expectations, as leaders from Chosen People Global Ministries shared about what was happening in their countries as well as bringing first rate teaching to an appreciative audience from all corners of our vast country, from Tassie to Perth to Far North Queensland.

Speakers included Chosen People USA president Mitch Glaser, UK director Daniel Nessim, Germany's Vladimir Pikman, and South African Manfred Nochomowitz, and our own Lawrence Hirsch. There were also representatives from Chosen People Global Ministries in France, Hong Kong and, New Zealand.

Israeli dancing led by Louise Hirsch, and music by Phil Plotnek and the Beit HaMashiach Worship band lifted the atmosphere to praise our Most High God mightily in Yeshua's name.

Rabbi Lawrence said there was, more than ever, an urgent mandate to proclaim the Good News of Messiah to all people.

"I've really loved the mission emphasis of this conference, encouraging everyone to go out to proclaim the Gospel to all people."

He concluded the conference by reading from Romans 11:25-29.

BLESSINGS FLOW FROM ISRAEL TOUR

After returning from leading a tour through Turkey and Israel, Celebrate Messiah missionary Barry reported that the whole group received so much blessing in doing ministry in Israel and seeing the incredible places of biblical history, and enjoying the sounds and smells of these places. A reflection from a member of the group: "Seeing the accomplishments of the Israelis, makes you wonder why the world is so rabid in their condemnation of the resettlement of the Israeli people. The desert has become alive with bustling cities, and a thriving economy. Visiting Israel now becomes an important statement of support for Israel, and a denial of the philosophy that "fear" will make the Israelis leave."

Lawrence and Louise Hirsch will lead a tour to Israel in May.



Invite a Speaker

Have a Celebrate Messiah representative come make a presentation on the Jewish roots of Christianity at your church, home group or fellowship. For more information please contact our Church Ministries department at +61 03 9563 5544.



Celebrate Messiah is establishing a new *Chavurah** (friendship) group network this year and would like to hear from people interested in leading a group in your home or being part of a group wherever you are in Australia.

The groups will be a way of connecting with others who have an interest in Israel and the Jewish people, to fellowship, pray and follow a structured, endorsed Messianic teaching plan.

Please email enquiries@celebratemessiah.com.au or phone 03 9563 5544.

(*The word Chavurah comes from the Hebrew word Chaver, which means friend.)



Put this date in your calendar now:

Simcha 2014 Messianic Conference will be held at Phillip Island Adventure Resort on 5-7 December.



Celebrate Messiah is looking for a person with high level IT and administrative skills to be employed in our Melbourne office. The person may also be required to do reception work as well as church calling to make meetings for our missionaries.

If you have these skills, and a strong heart for the Jewish people, please send your resume and a cover letter to enquiries@celebratemessiah.com.au.

"See Israel through Jewish Eyes" TOUR



15 - 30 May 2014

with Lawrence & Louise Hirsch, Celebrate Messiah Australia

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JERUSALEM, GALILEE, NAZARETH, DEAD SEA, MASADA & BEERSHEBA plus PETRA IN JORDAN
for details visit www.celebratemessiah.com.au/events



EXPERIENCE A

Messianic Jewish Passover Banquet

SATURDAY 12 APRIL 2014 AT 6.00 PM
BURWOOD FUNCTION CENTRE • BURWOOD SYDNEY NSW

SUNDAY 13 APRIL AT 6.00 PM
HEADLAND PARK GOLF CLUB, GOLF LINKS RD, BUDERIM

TUESDAY 15 APRIL 2014 AT 6.30 PM
MELBOURNE • ST KILDA TOWN HALL

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