

The Chosen People

Volume XV, Issue 7 July 2009



TODAY'S MOSCOW

**INSIDE
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GOD IS ALIVE IN RUSSIA TODAY

Jewish synagogue in St. Petersburg, Russia

Shalom in His grace!

When I consider the truly amazing movement of the Spirit that has taken place among the Jewish people of the former Soviet Union who are now living in other countries, I am overwhelmed by the Lord's goodness! I love to share the many encouraging reports of God's work with our friends and ministry partners.

Yet there is another part of the picture: What about the Jewish people in Russia who did not leave? Who is bringing the Gospel to these people, who almost seem to have been forgotten? These are the people I want to tell you about this month.

A Troubled Past and a Trying Present

The Jewish people have had a turbulent history in Russia. Under Czarist rule, Jewish people had an up-and-down (mainly down) existence depending on where and under whose authority they lived. Communist rule virtually crushed religious life, and the repression of Jewish emigration became an international issue in the 1980s.

With the fall of Communist rule, the floodgates finally burst. Over two

million Jewish people emigrated and found new homes, mainly in Israel, the United States and Germany. These have proven to be some of the most fruitful fields of ministry for Messiah in recent times. But the question remains: What about those who stayed?

I want to write to you about our ministry in Russia—about our hopes and about some of the obstacles we encounter. I hope this will give you a better idea of how to pray for us and for our staff members who are working in challenging conditions overseas.

Inside Report from Avi Y.

Avi Y. is a Russian Chosen People Ministries staff member who has served as the leader of a Messianic congregation in Moscow. He recently gave me a fairly sobering assessment of what is happening with our work in that city:

Part of the difficulty of helping this ministry to thrive is that the Jewish people in Russia are not a high priority for Jewish evangelism. People just do not seem to be excited about reaching



Avi Y. is a faithful staff member from Moscow

the Russian Jews. There are an estimated 225,000 or more Jewish people living here in Moscow; it is still a very important center for Jewish life. And now we are starting to see something strange—Russian Israelis are

starting to return. For some, life in Israel is just not working out.

The most active Jewish group here is Chabad [a world-wide ultra-Orthodox organization]. They are very strong and well funded. They have a beautiful school and synagogue, and they are making significant inroads into the community. We, by contrast, are in humble circumstances.

Another factor is growing antisemitism, which is increasing as the economy weakens. There is a lot of resentment toward foreign workers and it spills over onto the Jewish people.

This hostile environment is not the only force to contend with. Life in Russia is changing, and the eagerness with which the Russian Jewish people once heard the Gospel only a few short years ago has markedly

decreased. Also, the political situation makes me nervous. I receive reports from Moscow and other regions that in addition to the growing antisemitism, racism and religious intolerance, the Russian Orthodox “State Church” is increasing efforts to consolidate its authority and influence. This does not bode well for our freedom to minister openly.

Life and ministry in Russia is also becoming increasingly expensive. Inflation is high and prices are rising, particularly in Moscow and other urban areas where we must have a vital presence. Renting premises, traveling in the city, and just about everything else related to ministry is getting more and more costly.

Facing New Challenges

As you can see, there are significant obstacles to overcome. But as the Apostle Paul writes, “... if God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). Although we have a long road ahead of us, we have already taken some essential first steps.



A Chosen People Ministries Advancement Campaign

Kirill P. is a staff member who has worked in Jewish ministry in Russia for the past fifteen years. Kirill is a native of Moscow, raised in a Soviet atheist family. While in school to become a veterinarian, he met a believer who led him to the Lord.

Kirill now leads a Messianic congregation. Both he and Avi are in touch with other Messianic groups who are attempting to coordinate their ministries. The soil has been turned, and experienced workers are

cultivating it—but they need our help to continue. Russia still represents an immense harvest field. While it is impossible to give exact numbers, it is thought that the Jewish population of Russia still exceeds one million.

Russia and Our “To the Jew First” Advancement Campaign

As we seek to bring the Gospel to Jewish people in Russia, it is easy to see that what worked effectively yesterday is not necessarily what will work tomorrow. However, one thing that would give an enormous boost

We want to advance with new people, new facilities and new projects!

to our efforts in Moscow is a community center for Bible studies, fellowship and special events. These ministry needs—in Moscow as well as in other major Jewish population centers—are the reason we have initiated a “To the Jew First” Advancement Campaign to widen our evangelistic outreach and reach as many Jewish people as we can.

This Advancement Campaign has three parts:

New People

First of all, we want to advance with *New People*—missionaries as well as administrative help. Despite the recession, we simply must continue to send more workers into the field.

New Facilities

Secondly, we want to advance with *New Facilities*. As the ministry in Moscow and in so many other places expands, we must keep pace with facilities that will meet their needs.

New Outreach Projects

Finally, we want to advance with *New Outreach Projects!* There are so

many creative minds and hearts at work in this mission—and through the Lord’s guidance, and your prayers and partnership, we plan to increase evangelistic work among the Jewish people in every way that He enables us.

We cannot reach the Jewish people of Russia, Israel or the United States without you. Would you consider making a “faith investment” in the work of advancing the Gospel among God’s chosen people?

If you have not yet given a gift of \$116 or more, please consider this as we begin our 116th year of ministry, and consider Paul’s words in Romans 1:16: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

I know the Lord will bless you for blessing His people with God’s greatest blessing—Jesus the Messiah!

I will be reporting more on our “To the Jew First” Advancement Campaign—designed to move Your Mission to the Jewish People ahead in our 116th year of bringing the Gospel to the Jew first!

Thanks so much for partnering with our worldwide staff as we share the Good News among our Jewish people.

In Him,

Mitch



Dr. Mitch Glaser
President

P.S. I was recently in Israel and decided—by faith—to take on a new Russian Jewish worker in Israel, who will also help us in Moscow. I could not pass up this opportunity! I promised that we would send funds for his support. Would you help make this possible by sending a gift of \$116 or more towards our “To the Jew First” Advancement Campaign today?

TESTIMONIES OF RUSSIAN JEWS

Chosen People Ministries has several staff members who come from the former Soviet Union. Although these men and women have faced significant hardships, God's transforming grace has changed their lives. Today, they are dedicated followers of Messiah, committed to reaching Russian Jewish people with the Gospel. Here are three of their stories:

Kirill P.

Staff member Kirill P. was born in Moscow to a Soviet atheist family. Because it was not easy to be Jewish under Soviet rule, his parents tried to hide their Jewish identity. During Stalin's rule, Kirill's grandfather was shot and killed while imprisoned, and other members of his family were persecuted as well.



Kirill (right) recently went to Far East Russia with a team of Chosen People Ministries staff that included Lawrence Hirsch (left) and Vladimir Pikman (center).

While studying to become a veterinarian, Kirill met a student who was a believer in Jesus. He told Kirill that there was only one way to know God—through Jesus the Messiah. Kirill received Jesus as his Messiah and was given his first Bible.

Kirill began attending a large church in Moscow that had 50 Jewish believing members. Kirill and the other Jewish believers soon began organizing small outreaches during the Jewish festivals, inviting their Jewish relatives and friends.

In 1992, Kirill participated in a Jewish outreach campaign in New York City, where he received valuable training that would help him with his Jewish ministry in Moscow. Two years later, he was invited to start a new Messianic congregation for Russian Jewish believers in Moscow.

A friend from Belarus then invited Kirill to begin a new Jewish outreach ministry in Moscow in cooperation with the Christian Jew Foundation. The ministry held fruitful outreach concerts and Bible studies, and gave humanitarian aid to more than 800 Jewish people in the Moscow area.

Today, Kirill leads a new Messianic congregation in Moscow, which has grown and given rise to yet another congregation in the south of Moscow. Kirill also helps Messianic ministries in Russia coordinate their efforts so that more Jewish people will hear the life-giving message of Jesus.

Julia B.

Julia B. was born into a Jewish family in Kiev, Ukraine. When she was seventeen years old, she fled from the antisemitism in her hometown and came to Tartu, Estonia, where she met her future husband, Victor. After graduating from Tartu University, Victor and Julia both started a Ph.D. program in philosophy. But it was not philosophy they were searching for. They were seeking God—and He found them.

In Numbers 22:26, we read that "...the Angel of the LORD stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left." The very first believer in Yeshua (Jesus) that Julia met was like that Angel of the Lord, standing before her and offering her a little booklet with the Hebrew title *Chayim* ("Life"). In the summer of 1991, Victor and Julia became followers of Yeshua, leaving behind family, friends and successful careers to serve the Lord in Israel. They began ministering to immigrants, and many Russian Jewish people came to know Messiah through their outreach.

In 1994, God led Victor and Julia to start a Russian-speaking Messianic congregation in Jerusalem. In 2008, after many prayers, Victor and Julia came to New York City, where Victor is completing his theological education at our Charles Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies in order to be better equipped for ministry in Israel. They plan to return to Jerusalem after Victor finishes his studies.

Julia has written three books about Messianic faith and translated several others. Her books are published not only in Russian, but also in English, German, Italian and Finnish. Julia has appeared as a speaker at international Messianic conferences. She is also a regular contributor to the Russian-language Messianic magazine *My Jerusalem* published by Chosen People Ministries in Israel. Her ministries have touched the lives of thousands with the Good News of Messiah.

Victor and Julia B. and their family are currently in New York City training at the Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies.



The Chosen People

The Swiderskis are currently living and ministering in Chicago.



Kirill Swiderski

Kirill Swiderski, born in Moscow, had to come to terms with antisemitism since his early childhood. He found it astonishing that seemingly normal people blamed the Jews for all of life's problems. This was a common topic of conversation on the streets, in the media, in academic institutions and in places of employment. When people started handing out antisemitic flyers in Kirill's neighborhood, his family began to consider emigrating.

Around that time, some family friends visited Kirill's home. The visitors were a young missionary family with two children, and in the evenings they talked about the Bible and prayed together. Kirill and his family experienced an overwhelming desire to have the kind of love that their visitors exhibited. Later, another missionary visited them, and they prayed with him to receive Yeshua (Jesus) as their Messiah. It was the beginning of new life—not a life free from troubles, but a life filled with God's love!

When Kirill's family emigrated to Germany in 1991, they began reading the Scriptures earnestly. Finally, Kirill came to understand the reason behind antisemitism: a person who does not love the God of Israel cannot love His people—and a true believer cannot be an antisemite.

God impressed upon Kirill that loving Him means serving Him. In response, he and his wife Elena began sharing the Gospel with people in their heavily Jewish-populated apartment complex. Since then, serving the Lord has become a life goal for Kirill and his family, giving their lives true meaning.

Kirill joined the staff of Chosen People Ministries in Germany in 1998 and led their congregation for ten years. Today, Kirill is working to establish two new Messianic congregations in the Chicago area, as well as training Russian believers to bring the Gospel to Jewish people.

Kirill and Elena are very thankful to the Lord for His mercy and goodness through which He provides salvation and allows us to be part of His work. 🌈

July 2009

- In 1871, the year that the first synagogue was built in Moscow, the city's Jewish community numbered 8,000. In 1889, the Jewish population was 26,000, and grew to 60,000 in 1917.
- In a 2003 study, Russia was found to have a network of Jewish schools, which included 17 day schools, 11 preschools, and 81 supplementary schools with a total of 7,000 students. There are also four Jewish universities.
- Today, about 225,000 Jews live in Moscow.
- From 1990 to 2000, 1.4 million Jewish people as defined by the Israeli "Law of Return" emigrated from the former Soviet Union.
- Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia still houses the world's fourth-largest Jewish community, after the United States, Israel, and France.

Sources:

www.jewishagency.org

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsources/vjw/russia.html

www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/world-jewish-population.htm

MISSION PRAYER POINTS

Here are some highlights from Chosen People Ministries' global outreach. Please pray that the Lord will build upon what He has already established!

- Pray for Kirill P. and other Messianic leaders in Moscow. Pray that our work there will grow as Jewish people seek to connect with their spiritual roots after so many years of repression under Communism.
- Pray for Kirill Swiderski and his family as they minister to the Jewish people of the former Soviet Union who are in the Chicago area.
- Pray that the work of the Brooklyn Messianic Center will continue to bear fruit through its worship services and special outreach programs to Russian Jews.
- Pray for Victor and Julia B. as they receive further training at the Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies and prepare to return to Israel to resume their ministry.
- Pray that the "To the Jew First" Advancement Campaign will enable us to expand staff, facilities and ministries around the world as we seek to bring the Good News to even more Jewish people.

SEE THE BIBLE THROUGH JEWISH EYES

BY DANIEL GOLDBERG, TH.D., D.D.



Dr. Goldberg serves as International Ministries Representative for Chosen People Ministries and lives in Pineville, North Carolina with his wife, Madeline.

THE KEY PARABLE OF THE KING MATTHEW 13:4-23

Jesus stated that the parable of the sower was the key to understanding all His parables. He informed His disciples, “*Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?*” (Mk. 4:13). This key parable is recorded in all three synoptic Gospels (Mt. 13, Mk. 4, Lk. 8).

The King Himself ordained His disciples to sow the seed of the Word of God wherever they went, and stressed the Great Commission to all believers before He ascended to heaven. “*You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem...and to the end of the earth*” (Acts 1:8). Sending out His disciples to sow the seed of the Word of God is reminiscent of the commissioning of Isaiah in Old Testament times. God informed the prophet that his message would be refused by his own people for a long period of time (Mt. 13:14,15; Is. 6:9,10). Isaiah himself cried out, “*Who has believed our report?*” (Is. 53:1).

This key parable of the King explains the four soils in which the Word of God is sown. The seed represents God’s Word falling upon different kinds of hearts, with differing results.

FALLOW GROUND (Mt. 13:4, 19)

Fallow ground is the farmer’s hardened footpath that is so trodden down that no seed may penetrate. A “fallow ground” hearer does not understand the Word of God, nor does he realize that like “the birds,” his enemy, the Devil, “*snatches away what was sown in his heart*” (Mt. 13:4,19). Fallow ground never can produce fruit. Many an unbeliever’s mind and heart has been hardened by worldly philosophy and unbelief.

SHALLOW GROUND (Mt. 13:5, 6, 20, 21)

The “shallow ground” heart is represented by stony ground with a superficial level of earth that gives initial promise. Such a person may receive the Word with joy and endure for a little while (Mt. 13:20, 21), but eventually the noonday sun, representing some tribulation or trial (Mt. 13:5, 6, 20, 21), scorches the superficial plant and it withers away. Such an individual has some emotional religious experience that sustains him or her only for a short period of time—but where there is no root, there can be no fruit.

THORNY GROUND (Mt. 13:7, 22)

“Thorny ground” initially came as a curse for sin (Gen. 3:18a). Jesus described three types of thorns that destroy seed, namely, “*the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in . . .*” (Mk. 4:19). One or more of such lusts will choke the Word so that no fruit will result. Obviously, such a person is permeated with worldliness, the results of which are tragic (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

GOOD GROUND (Mt. 13:8, 9, 23)

Seed falling upon tender hearts (good ground) takes root and produces fruit, which is the true test of the knowledge of God (Mt. 7:16). The secret of productivity is shared by Jesus Himself, who stated, “*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing*” (Jn. 15:5).

Good fruit includes a holy life (Rom. 6:22), good works (Col. 1:10), the praise of God (Heb. 13:15) and the winning of souls (Rom. 1:13). What kind of soil are you? 🌈

A SEASON OF FRUITFULNESS IN BERLIN

Chosen People Ministries' congregation in Berlin is experiencing a season of fruitfulness for Messiah. Vladimir Pikman, the director of our work in Germany, writes: "A Jewish woman prayed to receive the Lord as the Spirit of God touched her, and she suddenly became convicted of her sins. She could not stop crying from the joy of being forgiven and the overwhelming emotion as she entered new life. After observing the changes in her life, her son came to our congregation the very next week. Please pray also for his salvation."

FRIENDSHIP LEADS TO FAITH

A young Israeli that New York City staff member Ryan K. met at a Hanukkah outreach in 2008 has come to faith in Messiah. He and Ryan became friends, and then he began inquiring about Ryan's faith as a Jewish person who believes in Jesus. It intrigued him, and he began reading the Hebrew Bible that Ryan gave him, including the New Testament. He loved what he read about Jesus, but still resisted until Ryan encouraged him simply to pray and ask God to reveal the truth to him—and his eyes were opened. Please pray for this young man as Ryan helps him become Messiah's disciple.

NO, I'M NOT JEWISH

When New York City staff member Doug P. was putting up *GotMessiah.com* flyers (check out our evangelistic website!), he stopped at a kosher donut shop to get a cup of coffee. Doug noticed the Israeli shop owner staring at his baseball cap, which read "Jesus is the Messiah" in Hebrew. "Are you one of those Jews who believes in Jesus?" the shop owner asked. "No, I'm not Jewish," Doug answered. They began a wonderful dialog, the Israeli owner asking sincere questions and Doug answering from the Scriptures! Please pray that this contact will result in another decision for the Lord.



"MESSIAH IN THE PASSOVER" UPDATES



Chosen People Ministries staff members lead hundreds of "Messiah in the Passover" services throughout the year. These powerful presentations are wonderful opportunities to invite Jewish people to hear the Gospel and make decisions for Messiah. Here are just two reports from our staff members:

"THIS WAS MEANT TO BE!"

Although Edie* had a Jewish parent, she had never celebrated Passover; but that changed when Laura Fels invited her to attend a Chosen People Ministries Passover seder. During a conversation that evening with staff member Ruthann A., Edie said, "I keep hearing about asking Jesus into your life, but I don't understand how to do it." Ruthann and a tablemate were delighted to lead Edie to receive the Lord! At the end of the night Edie said, "This was meant to be!" Edie called Laura the next morning, filled with excitement and questions. Laura says, "Discipling her has been such a joy!"

"WHAT IS NEXT FOR ME?"

Another Passover service brought a faith decision by a Jewish man from Los Angeles. Sol* approached Chosen People Ministries staff member Henry M. privately after the presentation and said, "I grew up Jewish, seeing seders all my life, but today I connected the dots and I can see how Jesus fulfilled each element of the Passover seder. What is next for me?" After Sol understood the need to make a decision of commitment to Jesus, he prayed to receive Messiah.

* indicates name has been changed

Master of Divinity

with a schmear.*

The Master of Divinity in Messianic Jewish Studies at the Feinberg Center is a graduate degree program taught from a Jewish perspective that emphasizes Hebrew and Greek, Jewish studies and the development of practical Jewish ministry skills. The program, co-sponsored by the Talbot School of Theology and Chosen People Ministries, is based in New York City.

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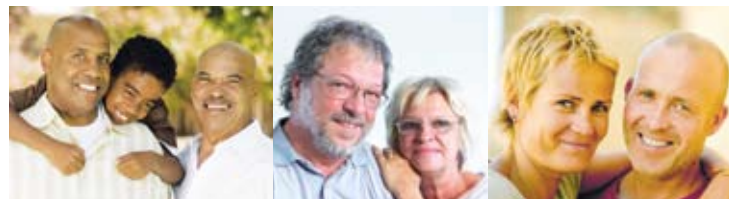
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To the Jew First: The Case for Jewish Evangelism in Scripture and History

is a comprehensive resource that looks at the historical, theological and biblical context for Jewish evangelism and provides encouragement for Christians and Messianic Jews engaged in taking the Gospel "to the Jew first." Contributions by Richard Averbeck, Craig Blaising, Walter Kaiser, Richard Pratt, Jr. and ten other evangelical scholars.

To the Jew First book [3131] • \$21.95^{us}

The piercing notes of the Shofar (ram's horn) have echoed throughout centuries of Jewish High Holy Day observances, calling us to prayer. Now you can treasure a Shofar of your own. They also make wonderful gifts.

Because each Shofar is unique, yours may vary slightly in size and shape from the one shown here. Imported from Israel.

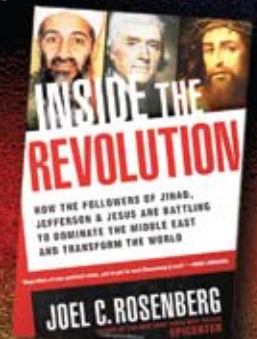
Shofar [5020] • \$40.95^{us}

Order your copy now of our **Messianic Jewish Art Calendar** for September 2009 to December 2010, featuring the tapestries of Israeli artist Bracha Lavee. As the months unfold, your sense of wonder will be renewed as you reflect upon the beauty of the Land and the promises of God that are given through it—promises that are indeed fulfilled in the Messiah He has sent. These calendars make great gifts, especially for Jewish friends who need to hear about the Messiah.

Messianic Jewish Art Calendar [5005] • \$13.95^{us}

Thirty years after the dramatic 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, author Joel Rosenberg explains in his new book, **Inside the Revolution**, how it occurred, how the U.S. missed it, and how Iran could very well bring the world to the brink of nuclear war. Rosenberg argues there are now three revolutions in motion—each of which could change the Middle East and the world forever. The book features interviews with senior military and intelligence officials, as well as exclusive reports from inside Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Inside the Revolution book [3132] • \$23.95^{us}



The Chosen People Newsletter

Chosen People Ministries has been taking the love of the Messiah to Jewish people worldwide since 1894.

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Please remember Chosen People Ministries in your will. "I will bless those who bless you." (Genesis 12:3)



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