

For the Christian who wants to learn about Jews and Evangelism

Catastrophe and communion

Next month many Jewish people will join in mourning over an especially tragic date. According to Jewish tradition, Tisha b'Av—or the ninth day of the month of Av—is the date of destruction for both the first and second Temples in Jerusalem. Religious Jews fast for the entire day or, in some traditions, eat only a hard-boiled egg sprinkled with ashes. No leather clothing or footwear is worn.

We are to be filled with optimism, to pull together with patience and faith, because we believe and trust that God is in the midst of us. He will bring about the very best, not for our sakes, but for His glory.

The ground where the Temple once stood, now controlled by Muslims, remains the most provocative piece of real estate in the world. Extremists spread false rumors about Israeli intentions to occupy the Temple Mount, continually inciting young people to prove their loyalty to Allah by stabbing Jewish civilians. The ninth of Av therefore marks inexorable and ongoing Temple-related tragedies for the Jewish people.

This is not how it was supposed to be. The Temple was to be a symbol of hope for the Jewish people, carrying with it a promise of communion with God our Creator, as voiced by Moses in his prophetic prayer:

“You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made for Your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established.” (Exodus 15:17)

It was hundreds of years before this vision was fulfilled. King David longed to build the Temple. He even bought the property on Mount Moriah—the very place where Abraham offered up Isaac—from a man named Ornan. But God would not allow David to build His house. Instead he appointed Solomon, David's son, to build it. As the Temple was dedicated and the people's voices were lifted in praises to God, Moses' prophecy was gloriously fulfilled. God came to dwell in His sanctuary.

“And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the





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cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.”

(1 Kings 8:10,11)

What a powerful moment! The Temple became the center of Israel's worship, the anchor of her religious sensibility, the certainty of her communion with God.

That Temple stood for nearly 400 years. But over time, the people began to put their confidence in the structure rather than in the sovereign God. It was as though they thought they had His power magically harnessed within the building—even after they had turned to worshiping idols. God warned that judgment was coming and so it did, in 586 B.C., in the form of the Babylonian conquerors. Jerusalem was overrun by foes and the Temple in all of its beauty was destroyed. Just as the building had been a symbol of spiritual communion with God, so its destruction was a physical reminder of the spiritual catastrophe of Israel's idolatry.

Words can't describe the agony of that destruction. Israel's kishkes (guts) were ripped out. Her awareness of calling and purpose was rooted in that Temple, and in the knowledge that God was in her midst. With no Temple, there was no assurance of God's presence or His provision of forgiveness. What was once a place of communion with God had been struck by catastrophe. The destruction of the Temple and the corresponding exile were the most devastating judgments imaginable—but just as God predicted the judgment, so He planned the restoration.

In 538 B.C., Zerubbabel and a host of Israelites returned to Jerusalem, freed from captivity by decree of King Cyrus

of Persia. The book of Ezra describes the building of the second Temple. It took 23 years to complete yet it hardly compared to the elaborate beauty of the first. Herod attempted to restore the Temple to some of its former glory.

Many of Jesus' activities and some of His most controversial comments were witnessed in and around that restored Temple. For example, “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ Then the Jews said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the Temple of His body” (John 2:19–21).

Can you see what it meant for Jesus to identify Himself as the Temple? In one brief statement He claimed to represent the very presence of God once so evident in the holy sanctuary. But Jesus also made an ominous prediction concerning that second Temple that would authenticate what He had said about His own life and work.

“Then Jesus went out and departed from the Temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the Temple. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’” (Matthew 24:1,2)

Titus and his Roman legions fulfilled Jesus' prediction as they marched into Jerusalem, destroyed the city and decimated the Temple. Thousands of Jews had already placed their faith in Yeshua.

But when this national tragedy pointed back to the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, thousands more realized He had spoken truly and trusted Him. For them, the catastrophe led to communion. Yet most of my Jewish

people did not understand. And so it remains to this day.

The Temple was never intended to be a permanent fixture. It was a symbol of hope for those who longed for the presence of God, yet only one person, the High Priest, was allowed to actually enter the Holy of Holies. Jesus, holiness incarnate, made that presence accessible to ordinary folks when He walked on the earth—and He made an astounding promise to His disciples before He left. The Father would send the Spirit to dwell with them and in them (see John 14:15–18). And to this day, He dwells in you and in me and in all who have been reconciled to Him through Jesus. But God's ultimate promise to “tabernacle in our midst” is still to come!

The amazing description of the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation includes all kinds of lavish imagery, including jewels and crystals and various symbolic structures—yet John did not see a Temple in the city, “for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its Temple” (Revelation 21:22). His presence will be there—the Shekinah glory—without any of the surrounding barriers that the Temple symbolizes.

Next month, as many Jewish people mourn the catastrophe of the Temple's destruction, we who know Messiah Jesus long to share our Great Hope with them. The day is coming when we will be gathered around the throne, worshiping the One who is Himself the holy Temple. That will be a day of unimaginable joy for all who have been reconciled to God and to one another through Jesus—the day when we will finally and fully know true, unbroken and everlasting communion.

Find out more about David Brickner, his writings at jewsforjesus.org/david-brickner.

FYJI

(for Your Jewish Information) a Little Q and A

Q: I've heard Jewish houses of worship referred to in three different ways: *synagogue*, *Temple* and *shul*. How do I know which word to use?

A: Orthodox and Conservative Jews would talk about their *synagogue*, which is, oddly, a

Greek term that means "house of assembly" (in Hebrew, *beit kneset*). "Shul" is the Yiddish word for *synagogue*.

Reform Jews (less conservative) often refer to their *synagogue* attendance as "going to Temple." This can be off-putting to more traditional Jewish people because, at its root, it implies that *synagogues* have replaced the Temple.

However, many who use the word "Temple" do so merely because it's what they were taught to say growing up.

If you want to ask a Jewish person about their house of worship and you don't know much about their particular Jewish affiliation, it's probably best to use the broadest, most overarching term, which is *synagogue*.



Prayer Prompters

Please pray for:

- fruitful follow-up from this month's campaigns in Budapest and Berlin
- final preparations and God's blessing on September's New York City outreach, as well as our campaign in London/Paris, and our campaign in Moscow
- good health and good testimony for our Massah team as they wrap up their time in India, and that many Israelis they've met this summer will be open to hearing more about Jesus
- God to supply more workers who are passionate about Him, the gospel, and reaching Jewish people for Jesus

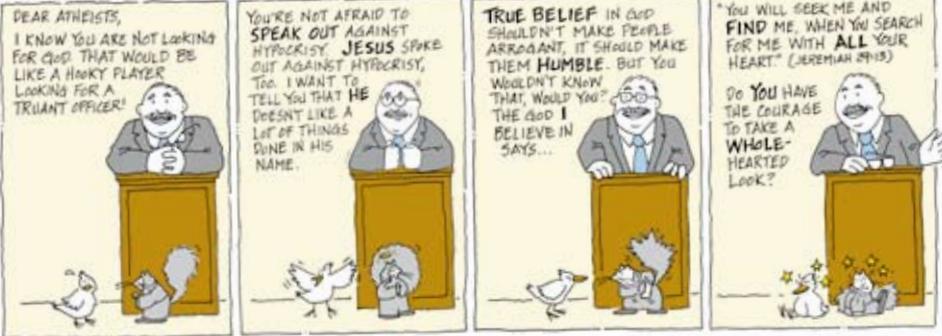
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BITS from the BRANCHES



NEW YORK CITY I

Shoshannah Weinisch reports from New York City, “Pam* is a Jewish woman that my husband Stewart and I have been ministering to since Hurricane Sandy (2012). We also have gotten to know her husband, and the four of us spend evenings filled with Bible conversation. Pam thinks ‘people’ need Jesus, but she doesn’t realize SHE needs Him. Recently, Leah,* a close friend of Pam’s (also Jewish), was in crisis. Pam told her, ‘You must meet Shoshannah. She can help you.’ We scheduled the visit, and it was a great two hours filled with questions about the Bible, Jesus and why the rabbis don’t accept Jesus. At one point Pam jumped in and said, ‘If the rabbis would read Isaiah 53 they would see who Jesus is.’ Then she was silent. Later I asked her, ‘What is stopping you from receiving Jesus?’ Pam answered, ‘I don’t know, I just love the learning.’ I reminded Pam of a verse we had read from Jeremiah 29:13: ‘You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.’ I challenged Pam to seek God with all her heart. She said she would, and that she would ask God to reveal Himself to her.”

SINGAPORE....SINGAPORE....SINGAPORE....

Please note in your diaries that our international director Bob Mendelsohn will be coming to Singapore the final weekend of August (25-28) 2016 to preach and to meet up with our many friends who have supported us over the years. The entire itinerary is available online here: bit.ly/JFJSpeakers

He will speak at the Singapore Bible College, Prayer for Israel, Bethesda Katong Church, St Andrews Cathedral, and the Church of Singapore. Please try to join us for any of those services. Bob anticipates bringing in some good messianic books, CDs and other products and receiving offerings for the continued ministry worldwide. Thank you!

Some Singapore supporters have let us know they had trouble donating online so we created a PayPal donation button for SINGAPORE people only.

JFJSing@jewsforjesus.org.au is the address to put into your computer to pay on PayPal there in Singapore. That will send money to us directly without going to Australia first. Thanks so much for helping us in this simple method. Of course, the cheapest and most efficient method of support for any of our work worldwide is to deposit bank to bank into our OCBC account. See the masthead for details.



WASHINGTON DC

From Washington DC, **Larry Dubin** reports, “During the summer of 2015, I received a phone call from Lynn,* a Jewish believer in Jesus and one of our Co-Laborers in Messiah in Chicago. Ever since Lynn has known the Lord (about three years) she has been praying for her brother Solomon* to know Him, too. Like many American Jewish people, Solomon walked away from his religious upbringing once he became a teenager. Upon graduating from a university, he married the woman of his dreams. Solomon lived life well. He traveled around the world. He loved his wife. They raised two children. He worked to help people live harmoniously in this broken world.

“Solomon was not a religious man; he was not interested in God. His annual religious experience consisted of celebrating Hanukkah and Christmas. And then something happened, which was why Lynn called.

“Lung cancer had invaded Solomon’s life. He sought a medical remedy for this physical challenge; he sought a spiritual remedy for his soul, too. Lynn was coming to town and she wanted to introduce me to her brother.

“The three of us spent an hour and a half together. I had the opportunity to share my testimony and Solomon had the opportunity to hear the gospel. He was willing to take a few minutes to read several Messianic passages from the Hebrew testament that prophesied the birth, life and death of the Messiah of Israel. But Solomon was not interested in speaking with me or with Lynn about Yeshua and the Messianic claims from the Scripture.

“Early in 2016 I got another call from Lynn. Solomon’s cancer had metastasized. He told Lynn that he was willing to discuss the biblical story with me. This was an answered prayer! Within the hour I was with Solomon at the nursing home. One conversation led to another. Over a two-week period, Solomon and I had several opportunities to discuss the Messianic claims of Yeshua, the gospel and the biblical story. Solomon stated that he simply did not believe the message.

“The third week, Solomon informed me that he was going to get up, walk into my office and discuss the gospel story—as soon as he was healed. I responded, ‘What happens if you do not get well?’ Silence. A minute passed. Two minutes. Three minutes. It seemed like an eternity. Finally, he extended his hand and announced that he wanted to receive God’s gift of salvation. I was shocked! Stunned! I said, ‘What?!’ He told me that he wanted to follow Yeshua. Once again, I said ‘What?!’ Solomon repeated himself. I clasped Solomon’s outstretched hand; he professed Yeshua as his Saviour.

“I asked the Lord God to confirm Solomon’s prayer the following day. Solomon assured me, and I heard him inform his wife, that he was a follower of Jesus.

Two weeks later, Solomon entered the presence of Yeshua. Keep planting gospel seeds. Keep watering them. Keep trusting the Holy Spirit to bring the increase.”

**not their real names*

ISRAEL

Misha Vayshengolts reports from Israel, “Irina was born in Ukraine, with a mixed (Jewish and Gentile) parentage. During childhood, she attended churches. Later on, she led a secular lifestyle and eventually she came under an occult influence. “Irina now lives in Israel and met with me at her mother’s suggestion. As we talked, she explained that she prays regularly to Jesus, but it became clear that Jesus is a guest rather than master of her life. Irina felt emptiness within. She wanted to take Jesus and His gift of salvation seriously. After she prayed a sinner’s prayer, she felt sorry for her previous sinful life and she also experienced a brief but intense demonic attack, as though someone were physically throttling her. Mainly she felt great joy that she wasn’t lonely any more, but she had Jesus with her. Irina is reading the New Testament daily. Please pray for her to continue growing in her faith.”

NEW YORK CITY II

Karol Joseph (who recently moved from Brooklyn to Manhattan) reports from New York City, “After an afternoon of packing for my move, Shoshannah and I saw an Orthodox man in his 30s looking through the CDs I’d left on my stoop for anyone to take. I was surprised to hear him say that there were some good CDs there—since most of them were clearly Christian. After Shoshannah left, the young man said to me, ‘You are really into the Jews for Jesus thing, aren’t you?’ I told him yes, and that, in fact, I work with Jews for Jesus.

“As we talked further, Sammy* told me that he secretly attends church on Sundays! He told me some of his story, saying that God had called him [to receive Jesus] three times, but

his fear held him back each time—especially fear of losing his family. I shared some of my story, focusing on how God had delivered me from fear many years ago, and Sammy let me pray for him, that God would take away his fear and help him say yes to Jesus. Clearly it was no coincidence that we met! I asked if I could bring him something to read and found our Questions and Answers booklet (everything else was packed!). He appreciated the booklet, and we exchanged phone numbers and email addresses. I offered to introduce him to some of our staff closer to his age, and he was excited about that. Pray that Sammy will connect and come to faith.”

JEWISH EVANGELISM IN INDIA

The journey

by David Liebman

Would it surprise you to hear that of all the places in the world, India is one of the best to speak with Israelis about the good news of Messiah? Every year thousands and thousands of young Israelis travel all over India after completing their military service. They spend anywhere from a few months to an entire year traveling throughout India and other parts of East Asia. It is a time to get away from some of the pressures of life in Israel. Entire villages now cater to Israeli travelers—take a casual stroll down one of these villages and you will see sign after sign, not in Hindi, but in Hebrew. You'll see restaurants that serve Israeli food like hummus and falafel, and you'll hear the occasional Indian merchant speaking Hebrew.

The relaxed environment, the openness to new ideas and experiences, and the free time to think about and discuss those ideas and experiences add up to amazing opportunities to develop friendships and discuss spiritual matters. That's why Jews for Jesus sends teams of Jewish young adults to an area in India called Himachal Pradesh that fills with Israeli trekkers every summer. We call this short-term program Massah (journey). Each year our teams are blessed with opportunities to reach out and share the hope we have in Yeshua (Jesus).

However, we wanted to explore parts of India where Israeli backpackers travel during other parts of the year. So last January, a team of four of us traveled to the little state of Goa, which is southwest of Mumbai, off the Arabian Coast. We were encouraged to find that, just as in the North, we were blessed with opportunities to kindle friendships and share our faith in Yeshua with many Israelis.

I want to ask you to pray specifically for just one of the many people we were able to share with during our time in Goa. While in a small hippie village named Arambol we met a woman, Elinor.* Elinor was an art history major in college and for her final project she studied a painting of the parable of Lazarus. Through the project she learned a good deal about Jesus, and was very attracted to the message of Christianity. Yet it didn't occur to her that she could follow Him, since she had never really met Jews who believed in Him before. After talking for a little while, to my surprise she turned and said, "You know I think this might actually be my way." Of course I agreed with her! Please pray for Elinor, that God would continue to reveal to her THE way, and that someday soon she would come to know Jesus as Messiah! (John 14:6)

Please also be praying for the final weeks of this year's Massah team, who are winding up their time in Northern India.

**not her real name*

The journey continues

by Liz Goldstein

I arrived in Israel a little more than three weeks before the beginning of Massah 2016, hoping to connect with the friends/acquaintances that I made since last summer. This includes people I met on Massah 2015 in the north of India, people I met on vacation afterwards in Vietnam and Thailand, and people our team met in Goa, India in January 2016. As I write I've already connected with seven people who I met in each of those areas of travel. It's pretty cool.

We met Keren* in Goa. She interacted with all four of our team members and hung out with us for several days. Keren grew up in the West Bank, where she and her parents experienced a lot of hardship. She has a tough exterior and whenever a spiritual conversation came up, she would shut it down or turn it into a conversation about something else.

On our last day together in Goa, our team was debriefing the ministry trip together, when Keren walked into the same restaurant and sat down with us. It stopped our debrief, but turned into one of the more fruitful conversations with her. Keren stayed with us as we went back to our guesthouse. We had not finished our debrief so we decided to do our Bible study, and either Keren would feel it was time to leave, or she would hear from the Gospels herself! She stayed!

Keren was one of the people I wanted to connect with back in Israel and when I arrived in Tel Aviv, she was eager to get together. We met in Jerusalem, and she quickly brought up spiritual issues, first God in general, then Jesus specifically. We went out to eat (at a restaurant run by the husband of a woman we also met in Goa) and the conversation continued. I was truly taken aback by her interest.

Tamar* is another Israeli we met in Goa. She was traveling with a handful of other women, and was the quietest of the group—very serious and reflective. She knew that we work with Jews for Jesus, but didn't engage at all in spiritual conversations. Shortly after we began the friendship, she left Goa to take part in Vipassana (a multi-day silent meditation retreat). I was curious about what she hoped to gain/learn from this, but she just seemed like a private person and didn't say much.

In reconnecting with Tamar, I was surprised to find that she lives just two blocks from our Moische Rosen Center! I've hung out with her a couple of times already. She's new to the neighborhood, so it's been fun to explore with her and trade notes on what we know and like. It's interesting to me that she was far more open here to talk in Israel than she was in India. And we've had some spiritual conversations, including ones prompted by "Multitudes" (because I had helped with the set up of the show). I'm hoping to be able to spend time with her, even after the Massah team arrives, and see what comes of this.

By the time you read this, Liz will be in India with the rest of this year's Massah team. Please pray they will meet many more Israelis who will want to reconnect back in Israel—as Keren and Tamar did—and that their journeys will lead them to faith in Yeshua.

**not their real names*



by Rich Robinson
Senior Researcher



What we can learn *from atheist* Christopher Hitchens?

Evangelical Christian Larry Alex Taunton's book, *The Faith of Christopher Hitchens: The Restless Soul of the World's Most Notorious Atheist*, is a personal, sensitively written memoir of an unlikely friendship. You may recognize Hitchens as one of the so-called "New Atheists" (Richard Dawkins is another).

Hitchens (whose mother, by the way, was Jewish) was the atheist on the attack, the debater who could prevail through personality, if not content—in public. In private, by his own admission he was far more ambivalent about matters of faith.

This kind of ambivalence or disconnect between public statements and private conversations is not unusual, and can be helpful in considering Jewish evangelism. Hitchens had a vested interest in not believing in God; he had an identity and a social network based on disbelief. Jewish people also have a vested interest in not believing in Jesus. For the religious, He is still a threat to the status quo, and for the secular who often have a hard time defining their Jewish identity in terms of what to do, Jesus is still the big "No"—which helps them define/protect their Jewish identity by what (or whom) not to believe.

People may seem to wear their identity like an impenetrable suit of armor. However, many people may have cracks in their armor that are revealed only in the course of genuine friendship. Hitchens was apparently surprised, when he began debating evangelical Christians, that they did not match his expectations. In his own words:

I have been all over the South, in front of capacity and overflow crowds, exchanging views with Protestants most of the time . . . [and] I have discovered that the so-called Christian right is much less monolithic, and very much more polite and hospitable, than I would once have thought, or than most liberals believe.²

There is an obvious takeaway that applies to Jewish evangelism. People often regard the messenger as the message, and may have a poor view of the messengers that is subject to change. They may come to see that

their view of Christians and Christianity is not what they thought it was. Friendships like this can only be forged, not forced. Hitchens and Taunton discovered that they liked one another personally; and given Hitchens' public writings and debates against Christianity, the conversation about the gospel came naturally. For others, the friendship and ensuing conversation may have to come by a different route. But it can come.

Views on the gospel may change, not only through the clarity that comes out of a true friendship, but also from life-altering circumstances. We are told that Hitchens was quite different after the events of 9/11, at least privately. He came to see the reality of evil in a new, chilling light. Likewise, some Jewish people alter their views because of personal tragedies. Of course, those circumstances are no guarantee that they will become more open to the gospel; some people close up even further in the face of adversity. But that is where the friendship factor can enter the picture.

I was fascinated to read Taunton's account of a road trip during which he led Hitchens through a study in the Gospel of John. Who would have ever thought? Many of Hitchens' atheist friends and hangers-on were dismayed by his friendship with Taunton—but he insistently defended that friend. Who knows whether Hitchens embraced faith or not at the end of his life, cut short in 2011 by esophageal cancer. That must be left to God.

Meanwhile, may He give you significant friendships that lovingly challenge the disbelief of Jewish (and other) people that He places in your life.

And do pick up a copy of the book. It's a great read, and has much to encourage you.

1. Larry Alex Taunton, *The Faith of Christopher Hitchens: The Restless Soul of the World's Most Notorious Atheist* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2016).

2. Christopher Hitchens, "Faith No More: What I've learned from debating religious people around the world," j.mp/hitchfm. Cited in Taunton, p. 85.

