

JEWES FOR JESUS™

AustralAsian Newsletter / March 2020

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For the Christian who wants to learn about Jews and Evangelism

Thanks for Being Part of

Dean's Journey!

Massah is Hebrew for “journey,” but it can also mean “testing,” “arguing,” and even “rebellious,” as when the Israelites complained to Moses of their thirst in the wilderness.

But testing and arguing can actually be a time of seeking answers. That is especially true for Israelis, who often choose to travel following their mandatory army service. South America and India are two favorite destinations for Israelis who want to decompress and process their experiences.

That's why Jews for Jesus designed Massah, a ten-week summer program to help young Jewish believers in Jesus grow in their faith and in their ability to share Yeshua (Jesus) with others. We lead one group of young adults through Peru, and another through “the Hummus Trail” in India.

We'd like you to meet Dean, one of

our Israeli interns. Dean was raised as an Orthodox Jew, and your partnership with Jews for Jesus helped us reach out to him before he knew the Lord—and now he serves with us. Enjoy his story!

In Israel, you go into the army when you are 18 years old. When you finish your service, you need time off to travel, de-stress, and think about life. I chose South America for my “big trip” after the army. My soul was heavy, and I was confused and angry. During one hike, I told my friend to go on without me because I needed time alone. I found myself talking to—actually yelling at—God. “Why are You putting me through this?” “Why do I need You?” “Maybe You don't even exist!” Even as I challenged God's existence, I demand-

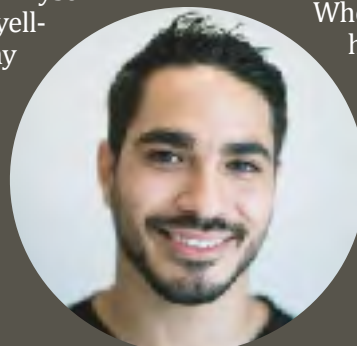
ed answers and explanations from Him.

Suddenly, a strange feeling—almost like a vibration—came over me. Then words that were not mine came into my mind. And I knew it was God.

“Dean, why are you blaming me? The things you are angry about are not from Me.”

I was confused and scared, but then I felt like someone was hugging me. Calmness enveloped me. Then He said, “Don't worry, I'm coming to you.”

When I returned to the hostel, my friend asked where I'd been. I tried to answer, but I couldn't say anything! The words just would not come out of my mouth. I thought, If I can't speak about what



happened, I'll write it out. So I tried, but the only word I could write was "yeshua" (in Hebrew), but I didn't know what "yeshua" meant. Neither did my friend.

A couple of months after I'd returned to Israel, I was looking on Facebook, and came across a video. I heard the word "yeshua," so I clicked on the video. I quickly discovered that Yeshua is a person. The video said that Yeshua was the promised Messiah, the one who Christians call Jesus. Then there was a book offer (the New Testament) from Jews for Jesus!

I was angry! I ordered the book for one reason: to prove that they were wrong!

But as soon as I began reading the Gospel of Matthew, I felt the presence of God. He was with me as I read, telling me that it was true! He promised that He would come to me, and He did! I knew Yeshua was my Messiah, so I began attending a congregation of believers. And when someone from that congregation told me that because of Jesus, God had forgiven me for my past life, I felt yet again His presence and Him asking me, "Now do you get it?"

And I did. I surrendered my life to Yeshua

When I learned about the Massah program, it made so much sense to me because of my own journey. To tell you the truth, I was nervous that my theological and apologetic understanding were not sufficient. But at the training, I was surrounded with support and encouragement, and the lessons quickly gave me the tools I needed for the trip.

When we arrived in India, I found it easy to share the gospel. Also, God showed me through the fellowship with other participants how important it is to be part of a believing community. When I returned to Israel, I became more active in my congregation.

Last year I participated in Massah again, but as a leader. Instead of going to India, I went to Peru, where it

wasn't as easy to start gospel conversations as it had been in India. I learned how important it is to listen to people—it's a great way to care for people, and when they know you care, they ask really deep questions.

Please pray for Dean as he continues his journey with the Lord and with us.



HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR "SUCH A TIME AS THIS"?

David Brickner's article about Purim reminds us that the Book of Esther has plenty to say about our lives as believers today.

When Mordecai "happened" to hear people plotting against the king, he did the right thing because his godly character had been formed long before this incident. The same could be said of Esther when a series of strange circumstances put her in a place where doing the right thing meant risking her life. Her courage wasn't formed in a vacuum. Little daily decisions to honor God prepare people's hearts to respond when something bigger, something out of the ordinary, comes along.

Mostly God asks us to be faithful in little things—especially in relationships. Small expressions of negativity can quickly add up and disrupt our relationships without us even realizing it. It takes vigilance in the small things to

fulfill God's plan for us: "to be the look on His face, the tone of His voice, and the touch of His hand. You are to represent His presence and His love. You are placed where you are to make His mercy and faithfulness visible and concrete."*

That might sound awfully grandiose for us mere mortals, but we shouldn't underestimate God's promises or His power to change us and make us agents of change. He said He's given us everything we need to live the life He's called us to (2 Peter 1:2–9).

So what can we do to stay on track with being faithful in the little things?

While everyone knows how crucial time in prayer and the Bible are, a system that brings us back to God and His Word throughout the day can really help. While I'm not always successful, these steps often work for me:

- Every morning, I ask God to help me

welcome the conviction of the Holy Spirit as an enormous blessing and agent of His transforming power.

- When angry or frustrated, I stop and get very real with myself about exactly what I want in that moment, and then
- I ask God what He wants, both from me and for me in that moment, and finally,
- I ask God to help me let go of what I want in order to make way for what He wants (which is always so much bigger and better than what I wanted!).

I'm not suggesting that you follow these particular steps, but if you aren't already, it can really help to plan out your own personal daily steps. Steps to remind you that being faithful in little things makes God happy . . . and will prepare you for bigger things when it's your turn "for such a time as this."

Ruth Rosen - US Editor

NCAA MARCH MADNESS

By **BOB MENDELSON**
Regional Director
Jews for Jesus AustralAsia

I love American sports. Don't worry; I also love Australian sports. Given time I would probably enjoy Singaporean and New Zealand sports as well. Every sport has its own rhythm, its own season, and its own loyalties.

Today I'm thinking about something that happens in the USA named "March Madness." This is the colloquial term for the annual university basketball tournament. 64 teams play in one month and the hype and celebrations that surround them could only be described as madness. Especially as for the winning team, the rejoicing continues for weeks!

Sports in general has its own spirit of frenzy. Look how many pages are dedicated on the back of any Aussie newspaper. When I visited Argentina some years ago, I wanted to go to a football match in Buenos Aires between the

rivals and great sides, River Plate and Boca Juniors. I was close to buying tickets when I thought about the problems. What if I'm sitting on the wrong side when the team wins? Or when they lose? What if I'm wearing the wrong colors? What if... I'd heard about stampedes at events like this one and didn't want to die in Argentina! The madness of sports has both excitement and danger. But this is true with any madness.

In Mark chapter 5, Yeshua encountered a madman, a demon-possessed Gadarene from the Galilee region. We read, "He had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him." This man could easily have been one of those UFC cage fighters! Yeshua told the demons to leave him and the demoniac said, "What business do we have with each other, Yeshua, Son of the Most High God?" What a scene this must have been, with so much conflict. Boca vs Rio would have

seemed like child's play in comparison. The man was delivered from the evil and we read that the people "observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind." That sounds like total restoration. Hallelujah!

The people of the region saw this and were afraid. They couldn't control Yeshua; they were out of their league. Fear gripped them; what if they were on the wrong side? What if the madman became mad again? What if Yeshua approached them and began to deal with some of their own madness? What if...

When you read about this deliverance, or about any work of the Lord, what is your response? Is it terror, like the people mentioned in Mark? Fear that He will expose you in some way. Or is it cheering, like me as I watch my University of Kansas Jayhawks play well? And even more as they win the basketball championship this year (Maybe!). Is it rejoicing and thankfulness for the Lord who has won great victories?

When God leads His Jewish people to Himself, one by one, and we are part of that through our book shop and personal visitation ministry, through the outreaches at the Mind, Body, Spirit festivals and in public events, we ask you to rejoice with us, and with them. Praise is fitting, even if we know the backstory of the people. Maybe ESPECIALLY because we know the backstory. God is good!



Purim

God's Providence Revealed



This month, Jewish people around the world will celebrate Purim, a fun-filled holiday based on the Book of Esther. Festivities include carnivals, pageants, practical jokes, and dramatic readings of the whole Megillah (the Book of Esther). That last one is marked by exuberant audience participation, as audiences stomp their feet and boo each mention of the villain Haman, while loudly cheering for our heroes, Mordecai and Esther.

“Purim” comes from the word *pur* or “lot” (Esther 3:7 and 9:24–26). This refers to Haman’s decision to cast a lot to determine the best day to destroy the Jewish people. He found out there is no good time to hate what God loves!

Of course, the real hero of Purim is the Lord, the God of Israel who will not allow His people to be destroyed or His purpose to be thwarted. And yet, neither His name nor His words are found anywhere in the book.

I don’t think it was an oversight that God is not mentioned in the Book of Esther. I think it is His sense of humor, as well as a revelation that His providence sometimes works through unexpected circumstances and seeming coincidences.

First, who would imagine God orchestrating the results of a beauty pageant to accomplish His plans? Yet that’s what happened—because God is perfectly capable of using less than perfect situations to accomplish His perfect will.

The king of Persia had been goaded into deposing his queen and sponsoring a beauty contest to find a replacement.



David Brickner
Executive Director,
San Francisco USA

Enter Mordecai, a godly man who had raised his cousin/niece, Esther, to be a godly woman. The strange thing is, he enters Esther into this beauty contest, making her vulnerable to the whims of this temperamental ruler.

Such a circumstance might not seem like “God’s style,” but is there any doubt that God gave Esther favor in the king’s eyes, and that this favor was critical to the survival of the Jewish people?

Then there’s the interesting “coincidence” where of Mordecai “happens” to overhear two villains plotting to assassinate the king. Mordecai could have told himself, “Not my king, not my problem.” After all, the Jewish people were not exactly privileged citizens of Persia! Yet Mordecai does the honorable thing out of loyalty to God, if not to the king. He informs Esther, who makes sure the king is warned in time. Mordecai’s good deed is duly recorded, if not immediately rewarded.

Like Mordecai, we are called to do what is right despite circumstances. The perils of those around us are not just “someone else’s problem.” And like Mordecai, our good deeds may seem to go unnoticed, but God can and will use them, sometimes even drawing attention to them for His purposes. That’s exactly what happened in the “coincidental” case of insomnia.

One night, the king can’t get to sleep. He “happens” to command that his royal journals be read to him, and “happens” to be reminded that Mordecai saved his life. At which point, Haman just “happens” to walk in. When the king asks for advice on how to honor a man, Haman believes himself to be the man the king wishes to honor, and becomes the divine means of bringing honor to Mordecai, whom he despises. Why does he despise Mordecai? For honoring God by not bowing down to a man! What a divine setup!

Haman grits his teeth and obeys the king’s command to honor Mordecai, but then in a cold rage, he plots to destroy not only Mordecai, but the entire Jewish people.

Which brings us back to Esther. If we didn’t know God, we might think it was some kind of crazy coincidence that she finds herself in a position to speak out against Haman’s evil plot. But Mordecai sees the timing. He understands that she has been brought to this position “for such a time as this.” If she was brought for a purpose, there had to be an all-knowing Bringer—God.

And yet Esther must violate royal protocol and risk her life in order to act on behalf of her God and her people. This had to be terrifying for her, yet she accepts her “lot in life” with remarkable courage. She asks for prayer, then steps out in a combination of faith and resignation saying, “If I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16).

Like Esther, many of us have found ourselves in unpleasant, painful, or difficult circumstances due to events beyond

Don't believe for one minute that the circumstances of your life are mere coincidence . . . God does not approve every situation and circumstance but we know that He can and does use them to bring about His great purposes. ROMANS 8:28

our control. Don't believe for one minute that the circumstances of your life are mere coincidence or that life is just "happening" to you. God does not approve every situation and circumstance, but we know that He can and does use them to bring about His great purposes (Romans 8:28). While we may not always see His hand at work, we have good reason to take courage and to look for Him to accomplish His purposes through us—even when the situations are strange, and yes, somewhat scary.

Whatever you are facing, you can ask in prayer for the courage to trust and obey God. When you do, His sovereignty will eventually become apparent and so will His watch care over you! It might not be anything of epic proportions. But then, most of what we do for God are small acts of obedience that He can use in big ways.

In Jews for Jesus, we talk about divine appointments, and it's amazing how often they pop up when we are facing a difficult task. We go out to do street evangelism, and we just "happen" to meet someone who was thinking about the Lord that

very day. Or we work up courage to call someone we haven't been in touch with for a while because they indicated they were no longer interested in studying the Bible. To our surprise and delight, we discover that something has happened that very week to open their hearts to the truth, and they are eager to visit with us. They see our "out of the blue" call as a sign that God cares for them.

What about the circumstances in your life? Are "coincidences" cropping up? What kinds of things test your courage? Witnessing to a co-worker or a neighbor? Don't dismiss the small things. God is giving you opportunities to accomplish His divine purposes. Whether He uses you to help just one person understand their need for Jesus, or whether He chooses you to change the course of history for a whole group of people, He will bless you for making the most of the opportunities He offers you.

This piece was adapted from David Brickner's original "No Coincidence" article, first published in our newsletter in 1998.

YOU ARE INVITED

Jews for Jesus Charity Luncheon

We want to share with you our 2020 Vision and showcase how God has been working. You will be delighted and challenged!

Pennant Hills Golf Club

Bookings are essential. You may bring as many of your mates and colleagues as you would like. Copeland and Burns Road, Beecroft (Just off M2)

Cost: \$60 per person

We will also be bringing resources to help in your sharing of the Gospel with Jewish people.

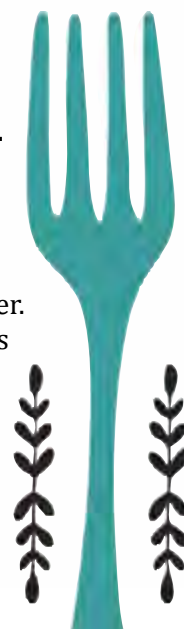
An offering will be received

The cost covers the club's luncheon assessment. The offering will help us launch the next generation into the work of Jewish evangelism.

**Friday 20 March 2020.
12 midday to 1:30 sharp.**

Ring our office: 02.9388.0559 for more information or to register. Booking on Eventbrite is also available.

Jews for Jesus. PO Box 925. Sydney 2001



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VOLUME 24:2, March 2020.

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