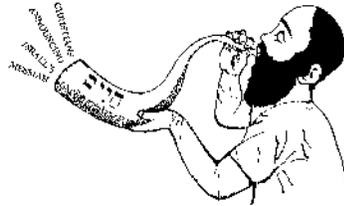


CHAIM TIMES

The Newsletter of CHAIM, "CHRistians Announcing Israel's Messiah"

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Spring 2004
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Who Killed Jesus?

A couple of years ago my brother's boss woke up to a rather startling Easter greeting from his "Christian" neighbors. His driveway was spray painted by vandals. Writ large was the phrase: "You Jews Killed Christ."

A while back I spoke at an adult day-care center. Some of the clients had minds that wandered more than a bit, but one elderly Jewish woman, Rose, was riveted to my presentation. Afterward we spoke, and she said I brought tears to her eyes because I reminded her of her father and the songs he sang at her family Seder. I said it was ironic that a Presbyterian minister brought back those memories. She then shared with me an incident from her youth. At six Rose had a dear Christian playmate. One day, out of the blue, her friend slapped her. When Rose asked why, the playmate responded: "Because you Jews killed Christ!" Eighty years later Rose's cheek still stung.

When we began our Russian immigrant ministry, we were invited to the home of a prominent Jewish woman. She invited many of her friends and introduced us as Christians who have a great love for the Jewish people. One of the first things we were asked was: "What do you think of the charge that the Jews killed Christ?" One Russian Jewish lady related a story of attending church with a Christian friend. While listening intently to the priest, he suddenly stopped his sermon and pointed a finger at her. "Jew?", he asked. She said yes and he shouted: "Out!"

For centuries Jewish people were slapped in the face or hit with wooden mallets on Good Friday and called "Christ Killers." Does this help you understand the nervousness in the Jewish community generated by the Mel Gibson Film *The Passion of the Christ*?

How do we respond to their concerns? With the gospel. Don't see Jewish concerns about anti-Semitism surrounding *The Passion* as an obstacle —see it as an opportunity. When I was asked by my Russian Jewish friends about the charge that the Jews killed Christ, it

Rev. Fred Klett, PCA Evangelist, Executive Director
Rev. Richard Anderson, OPC Evangelist, Senior Missionary

Rev. Bruce Howes, Heritage PCA Presbytery, Chairman
Todd and Sandi York, Bi-Vocational Missionaries, Alabama

resulted in a wonderful opening to share God's love. Tell Jewish friends that, if one understands the Bible, it is ridiculous to be angry at the Jewish people for Jesus' death. God himself planned the suffering and death of Jesus. It was his design to provide payment for sin. Without the death of Jesus, there would be no payment available for our sins. God did this to save his people from eternal separation from him in Hell. The Jewish prophet Isaiah spoke of the sacrificial death and resurrection of Messiah 700 years before Jesus was born. It is recorded in Isaiah chapter 53.

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Jesus himself said: "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father." (John 10:17-18) Jesus offered himself up willingly saying "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:24). He rose again from the grave.

And, hey, why doesn't anyone ever get mad at the *Italians*? Romans were the ones who actually killed Christ! The truth is, people try to justify hatred in many ways, but Jesus said you will know his true disciples by their love.

When I gave these responses to those Russian Jewish friends, the lady who asked the question exclaimed: "I've waited my whole life to hear that answer!"

This Easter-Passover season look for opportunities to speak the message of God's love with others. We have materials available online and by mail that you can share with friends. Pray that God gives you, and us as we bring Jewish people the good news, many chances to communicate the true meaning and purpose of the passion of
o f M e s s i a h .

**Be a Part of the Second International Jewish
Evangelical Fellowship Conference!
May 13-15 in Fredericksburg, VA**

The cost of the conference is \$115, \$95 for spouse.
To register send a non-refundable registration fee of
\$25 payable to IJEF to:

IJEF
c/o Fred Klett
P O Box 133
Glenside, PA 19038



Passover Season has begun! Rev. Klett did a Seder for Trinity Fellowship Church in Tom's River NJ, held at America's Keswick. Pastor Tim and family enjoy the festivities. Seders help equip Christians for witness and sometimes Jewish friends also attend. Pray for upcoming Seders and those who come.

CHAIM Ministry Updates

Rick Anderson's Russian Immigrant Group in NJ

Cherry Hill, NJ is a large heavily-Jewish town. We advertised a "sit-down" meal with "a discussion on philosophy, God, and the existence of evil in the world." Several Russian Jewish guests came. I had spoken with Leah by phone and we had a nice rapport. She agreed to come. There was also Yakov and his wife Nellie, Alex and his cousin Lena, and Mikhail.

Our guests came "primed" to discuss matters of faith. Mikhail made it clear that he did not believe in God per se, but in a cosmic force, and certainly not in a God who punishes sin. He stated he was convinced there was no such thing as miracles. Teachings of socialist dialectical materialism and of scientific measurement had weaned him away from such views. "So it's the way you were raised?" I suggested. "Yes, that's right," was the answer. They asked me how I left the teachings of the rabbis and came to believe the New Testament. I told them it was through reading the Jewish Bible, specifically, Isaiah 53. "Have you ever read Isaiah 53? This changed my views entirely," I said. Mikhail was amazed that my simple reading of this passage could effect such a profound change. In fact, he asked me three or four times if he had heard me correctly. All the immigrants got into an intense religious discussion among themselves. Their speech was so rapid and animated that my fiancé Linda (who was translating) could not

keep up with the conversations, except for bits and pieces. The ensuing freewheeling discussion among the Russians was impossible for me to direct because of the language problem, but finally I was able to redirect their attention to Isaiah 53. Mikhail said he was very suspicious of any church or religion trying to interpret for him what the text meant and resisted reading it, but I repeatedly challenged him to read it for himself with an open mind. I reminded the group that it had been written long before Jesus was born. I asked Leah to read the passage to everyone; and when she did, there was absolute silence. When she finished reading, she looked at me, deeply moved, and said. "This is amazing! It showed exactly what happened!" Someone else asked "That's in the Torah?" I said that it was in the Prophets, part of the Jewish Bible. "And there are many other prophetic passages, like this" I added.

Leah asked me: "What did your rabbi say when you showed him this?" I explained that I had spoken to several rabbis about Isaiah 53. "One told me: 'We don't believe this speaks of Jesus because our faith teaches us that it cannot be;' another rabbi said: 'this can't be Jesus because the chapter speaks only figuratively —of the nation of Israel and the Jewish People collectively;' and another rabbi stated: 'So what if it is Jesus? So what? After all this time, what difference does it make, really?'"

Mikhail said the passage could be interpreted any way you want —perhaps as talking about Abraham, or Moses, or anybody. Leah confided to me: "He doesn't know their history." "Sure you could," I said, "if you have an active imagination. But, honestly, none of those things ever happened to Abraham and Moses."

The hour was late and I gave each of them copies of John Blanchard's booklet *Ultimate Questions* in Russian. Everyone seemed to have an engaging time, we made some friends, and it's likely they'll be back for the next meeting. Please remember to pray for this group to continue, to grow, and for many to come to faith.



Russian immigrant friends from Rock of Israel PCA came for New Year's Eve.. CHAIM partners with PCA Mission to North America church planter Rev. Ilya Lizorkin (center). Jean Klett is on the right.