

RETURNING REMNANT

For Zion's Sake reaches Russian-speaking immigrants

story and photos by Tom Price



Pastor Bradley Antolovich, For Zion's Sake (FZS) director, is hugged by Yeugeny Garifulan, a Jew from the former Soviet province of Uzbekistan. He received aid from the humanitarian organization and now attends CC Jerusalem.

God's chosen people began returning to their biblical homeland after six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust of WWII. In 1948, Israel became the first nation ever to be reborn. Over one million Jews from the former Soviet Union have returned to Israel since 1988, 1/6th of the country's population. It is to this returning remnant that For Zion's Sake feels called to minister.

"The Lord desires for us to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with these returning Russian-speaking Jews," commented Pastor Bradley Antolovich, CC Jerusalem and director of For Zion's Sake Ministries. "Of all Jewish people groups, they are the most open to the Gospel. They typically arrive in Israel with just a suitcase of belongings. I feel we Christians are called to show them the love of Jesus."

After beginning CC Jerusalem in 1995, Bradley witnessed the immigrants struggling with this new country, language, and culture. They had been discriminated against in the Soviet Union, and now they feel disenfranchised as Russian immigrants. Starting over in Israel is physically, emotionally, and economically overwhelming. Twelve percent of new immigrants leave Israel and return to their place of origin.

Even if a new arrival acquires living quarters, paying for any sort of furnishings is a major obstacle. Bradley was able to



Jason Catizone, a volunteer at FZS, checks on humanitarian aid and recently donated pianos from Switzerland.



Marianna Antolovich guides Anya Chepovetski, a Jew from the Ukraine, from her apartment. She lost her eyesight after immigrating to Israel and attends CC Jerusalem.

"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" says your God.

Isaiah 40:1

provide some immigrants with work, picking up donated items to share with other immigrants. Former furniture makers refurbished the discarded items. In this way, For Zion's Sake was born, first, to meet the immigrants' physical needs, and then to minister to their spiritual needs.

"Very few of them know how to deal with the complexities of living in a Western culture," added Bradley. "At CC Jerusalem we have believers that speak both Hebrew and Russian fluently, so we can help guide the new arrivals through the maze of legal and medical obstacles. Our warehouse distributes furniture, medicine, food coupons, and clothing. One of the programs offers

the immigrants financial assistance while another helps them find employment that meets their level of expertise." ❧

Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

Ezekiel 37:12 (KJV)

For Zion's Sake is a Jerusalem-based nonprofit, humanitarian aid organization, which assists newly arriving immigrants.

www.forzion.com
1-800-334-2033



Russian-speaking workers send out "Jerusalem Miniatures," small hand-painted renderings of Jewish life.



Maria Kukui kisses Bradley good-bye while holding Marianna's hand. Born a Jew in Siberia in 1910, she still embraces her Communist indoctrination. Once upset that her daughter, Luda, became a Christian, she is now open to the Gospel but has not yet accepted it.

CALVARY CHAPEL IN THE HOLY LAND

Israel

CC JERUSALEM

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 12:3 (KJV)

"The apostle Paul spoke of a remnant of the Jewish nation open to the Gospel," said Pastor Bradley Antolovich, CC Jerusalem. "We are trying to reach them with the Good News of Christ." Pastor Bradley and his family have been ministering to the Russian-speaking remnant of Jewish people that have immigrated to Israel since the fall of Communism. Bradley had first gone to Israel as a missionary from CC Costa Mesa during the first Gulf War. He endured, wearing a protective gas mask because of the incoming scud missiles.

After moving to Russia in 1992, Bradley served at the first CC church plant in Moscow. He met and married his wife, Marianna, who is Jewish, and who had come to Christ after hearing the Gospel presented by the CC missionaries. That union helped produce a desire to reach the remnant returning to the Promised Land.

"In Moscow we would go to Jewish centers and invite people to church. We would have a Shabbat celebration on Saturdays. In Minsk, we began a Calvary Chapel and reached out to the 300 Holocaust survivors living there, presenting each with a Bible."

Returning to Israel in 1995, Bradley and Marianna began a Calvary Chapel. "This is the land the Lord has given to the Jews and He promised to bless them. God loves them, so we need to be part of that encouragement and point them to a relationship with Jesus."

Yeugeny Garifulan, from the former Soviet satellite of Uzbekistan, immigrated to Israel, bringing his five children with him. He came in contact with CC Jerusalem while seeking the humanitarian aid provided by For Zion's Sake. Curious why a Christian group



Pastor Bradley teaches the Friday evening service.

would help, he attended a service and saw the *Jesus Film*.

"I experienced a peace that I had never felt before," Yeugeny commented. "I was drawn back again and again until I accepted Christ." Having worked as a mechanical repairman, Yeugeny later endured medical setbacks that doctors diagnosed as epilepsy. For Zion's Sake helps support him with food coupons and humanitarian aid.

Asya Shiffer was eight when the Nazis murdered her Orthodox parents as the family fled Poland. Besides her sister, extreme hunger became her only companion. Decimated, they tried to kill themselves. Partisan fighters found them, and the sisters were raised in a Russian orphanage.



CC Jerusalem's sanctuary in the FZS warehouse.

They immigrated to Israel in 1997 with a daughter and granddaughter who became believers through For Zion's Sake. At first, both older women felt becoming a Christian was a betrayal of their murdered parents' memory. Asya and her sister visited Bradley and Marianna and were won over by the love they witnessed in their home. All of the treasured Jewish traditions they remembered from childhood were observed while loving a Savior of whom the sacred Scriptures testified. Later, both sisters received Christ and were baptized.

During the Friday evening service at CC Jerusalem, Russian speakers like Asya and Yeugeny don headsets as Marianna simultaneously translates the teaching into their language. Previously a violinist with the Moscow conservatory, Marianna plays violin and piano with the worship team.

Bradley has recently returned from his third missionary journey to Russia, where terrorists murdered and held school children hostage last year. The small church in Jerusalem understands the trauma caused by terrorism. Many in the Beslan area have come to Christ and others are looking for answers in their mourning. CC Beslan has been planted and others have been assisted through the generosity of American believers. The house rented for meetings is less than a block away from Beslan School #1. Many of those attending are survivors of the tragedy and listen intently to the Gospel message.

Russian artists at CC Jerusalem handpaint "Jerusalem Miniatures," small renditions of Jewish life in the Holy Land. This and many other programs are in place to help the returning Jews. However, Bradley's desire is simply "that God will be glorified and that the blindness covering the eyes of the Jewish people will be removed." ❧

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel

until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Romans 11:25

CC TEL AVIV

The Palestinian uprising, or *Infitada*, began in 2000. Before then, Israel categorized all Christians together as either conservatives, Catholics, crusaders, or cults. Though tourism declined, evangelicals continued to visit Israel throughout the crisis. Israeli politicians now note that the evangelicals are the only true friends that Israel has.

“Israelis express their appreciation for the evangelical Christians’ support,” commented Pastor Stephen Apple, CC Tel Aviv. “Some are in tears as they speak.”

This recent attitude shift has helped open doors previously closed to the Gospel. Calvary Chapel tour groups help by bringing humanitarian aid, which is distributed

“I sense that God is beginning to open the eyes of His chosen people.”

Pastor Stephen Apple

during outreaches hosted by CC Tel Aviv and CC Bible College in Jerusalem. The outreaches confound the Israeli belief that “nothing is free in Israel.” Several residents come to the church out of curiosity.

Thirty-one years ago, Stephen told his wife-to-be, Pat, that he felt called to minister to the Jews in Israel someday. A few years ago he sensed the Lord saying that the time had come, so he began to study Hebrew. In January 2004, the Apples sold everything and moved to Israel to begin CC Tel Aviv. Pastor Ralph Wood, of their home church at CC Oceanside, suggested they attend the CC Missions Conference before moving. The Apples heard how Nick Long had prayed over Siegen, Germany, before beginning the church there, and expressed what a great inspiration it was to them.

Stephen and Pat walked around Tel Aviv praying for the city and the people of Israel. As an added benefit, they became acquainted with the city as they let their light shine before men.

“The locals began to notice us,” said Stephen. “They observed joy and peace in our lives. Throughout history, the Jews have been persecuted and surrounded by many people who hate them. Peace is the one thing the Jewish people truly desire. And here we are with what they seek. I think this is what the apostle Paul meant when he spoke of provoking the Jews to jealousy. We are to show them our relationship with God.”

Stephen grew up in a Christian environment, but his family was Jewish. He stated, “I sense that God is beginning to open the eyes of His chosen people. In Israel, Jerusalem is called the City of Prayer while Tel Aviv is called the City of Sin. The bad news is that



Berglioth Avila, left, on an outreach from the CC Bible College Jerusalem, witnesses to a Jewish man at the beach in Tel Aviv. He has come to CC Tel Aviv several times since the encounter.



Pat Apple, right, wife of Pastor Stephen, welcomes believers at CC Tel Aviv, many of whom she and her husband met while out walking and praying.



Pastor Stephen Apple teaches each Saturday morning at CC Tel Aviv.



Asya Shiffer, CC Jerusalem, uses headphones for Russian translation. She is a Holocaust survivor.



Pastor Bradley and Jason pray with a man after Friday night service at CC Jerusalem.



Students from CCBC Jerusalem attend the Friday night service at CC Jerusalem.



Pastor Mike Harrington, director of CC Bible College Jerusalem, teaches biblical studies.



Pastors Stephen Apple, left, and Mike Harrington fellowship at an outreach in Tel Aviv.