

WHAT WILL HAPPEN THIS YEAR?

A New Year's reflection by David Brickner, executive director

When I look ahead to 2019, I get excited about the people whose lives will be touched and changed by the message of the gospel. I get energized by the opportunities we'll have to serve God in the ministry of Jews for Jesus around the world. My schedule is already planned out, so I know all the places where I will be ministering for the next 12 months.

But as eager as I am for all the opportunities, there's another side to looking ahead.

At times, I feel a bit overwhelmed by the prospect of so much travel, not to mention as-yet-unknown problems and challenges that are likely to pop up when I least expect it.

It's a little like "syllabus shock," the way many college students feel at the beginning of a new semester. As they flip through all their syllabi, the lists of materials to be

read, papers to be written, and tests to be taken seem to create an insurmountable mountain. Students wonder, "How will I ever get all of this done?" Ever feel that way about all the "to-do's" in your life?

Most of us like to feel that we are in control; we hope that planning, hard work, and a little luck will cause the things we want to do to turn out all right. Yet God tells His children something that many of us find hard to handle:

"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that'" (James 4:13–15). [\(continued on page 2\)](#)

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*"There are many plans
in a man's heart,
Nevertheless the LORD's
counsel—that will stand."
Proverbs 19:21*



Front cover photo: Gettyimages.com/Allyob

(continued from page 1) Yes, it's wise to plan and prepare and work for what is coming in the days ahead—but in the end, shouldn't we trust God with our future and submit our plans to Him, confessing "if the Lord wills"? To do so acknowledges that God *knows* what is best for us, *wants* what is best for us and *will do* what is best for us. When we stretch ourselves out on the assurance of His sovereign watch care over our lives, we can live with confidence, even when we aren't sure why certain things happen.

I was planning to fly my parents from Israel to the US to join us in celebrating my daughter, Ilana, who is graduating with a master's degree in guidance counseling. Then my mother had a stroke. I am still unsure about her prospects for recovery and whether she will be able to come celebrate with us. Many colleagues in Jews for Jesus face similar challenges as we care for our aging parents. What challenges are you facing in this coming year?

It's good to remember that the Lord wants us to present all our plans, our anticipated joys as well as all of our fears, to Him. Thankfully, when we do that, we find a wondrous source of endless strength.

Recently I have been comforted by this verse: "There are many plans in a man's heart, nevertheless the LORD's counsel—that will stand" (Proverbs 19:21).

Don't you think it is better that God's counsel will stand than that things turn out the way we plan? I am not planning to experience pain and loss this year, but in this fallen world, no doubt I will. I am so glad that God's counsel is to comfort and strengthen me with His promises. And I'm not planning to sin this year, but since I haven't yet graduated from His school of holiness, I know I will. I am so thankful that His counsel is to forgive me of my sins as I confess them to Him.

It's good to remember that the Lord wants us to present all our plans, our anticipated joys as well as all of our fears, to Him.

Whatever your hopes, plans, and even fears may be for this year, be sure that God's ultimate plan is "to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen" (Jude 24–25).

David Brickner is also an author, public speaker, and avid hiker. Find out more about David, his writings, speaking schedule, and possible availability to speak at your church at jewsforjesus.org/david-brickner

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Your missionaries in Moscow and Washington, DC, have news for you!

bits from the BRANCHES



Eduard

Time, teamwork—and God saves another soul

About 20 years ago **Eduard Granovsky**, then part of our **Moscow** team, began regularly visiting a Jewish mother and son, Leah and Yuri. Then in 2002 Eduard was transferred to Ukraine.

Ilya Khaimovich stepped in and has been visiting Leah and Yuri ever since.

Leah eventually opened her heart to the gospel and was baptized in 2011. Ilya has continued visiting them both and, at the request of the pastor where she was baptized, he brings her communion. Meanwhile, Yuri has always been open to talk to Ilya, but has maintained that he does not believe in God.



Ilya

In October the Moscow branch had a special outreach and Ilya invited our new missionary, **Pavel Gorelik**, to come with him to visit Leah and Yuri. While Ilya conducted the communion service for Leah, Pavel and Yuri were talking in another room.

Pavel says, “Yuri told me that he now believes in God, but with his own faith, deep inside of his soul. I argued that you can imagine yourself eating a meal deep inside your soul,



Pavel

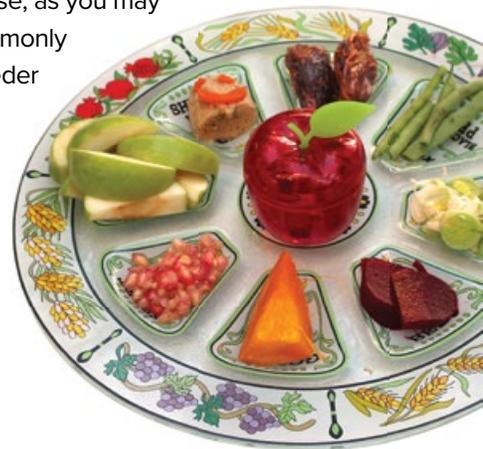
but you will never satisfy your need for food by reaching down into your own soul to find it. In the same way, you will never find a relationship with God by reaching down into your own soul. Yuri found this to be logical and agreed.”

Just then, Ilya finished his visit with Leah and returned to Pavel and Yuri. Ilya surprised himself as well as Yuri by rejoining the conversation with a question to Yuri: “Do you want to receive Jesus into your heart?” Ilya believes it must have been God Himself who led him to ask after all these years because Yuri said “Yes” and prayed to receive Christ! God gets the glory, but how wonderful that He used the teamwork of Eduard, Ilya, and Pavel. Hallelujah!

A different kind of New Year celebration

From **Washington, DC**, **Lynn McCoy** reports, “Maybe you know that the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, is in the fall. This past September we had our second Rosh Hashanah ‘seder’ which my husband Wayman and I hosted at our home.

I put ‘seder’ in quotes because, as you may know, the seder is most commonly associated with Passover. Seder means ‘order’ and usually refers to a celebratory holiday dinner with traditional foods to help tell a story. Rosh Hashanah seders are less common than Passover seders, but they include a plate (as pictured) of traditional foods.



“Among the 14 of us around the dinner table were five Jewish guests who don’t yet know Jesus and had an opportunity to hear the gospel message in a very Jewish way. All five are friends we’ve met through different activities in the Jewish community, including a Hebrew class. Our Hebrew teacher sees how important our faith in Yeshua is to us and how we love the Hebrew language. We hope next year she will join us! Please pray that God will bless these and other opportunities we have to share about Jesus in the context of hospitality and celebration.”



Lynn

PRAYER PROMPTERS

Please stand with us in prayer for:



grace for us to balance our plans with prayerful day-by-day dependence on God



new Jewish believer Yuri to grow in his faith (p.3)



God's favor on our ministry of hospitality in Washington, DC, and around the world; that as we invite people to celebrate with us, many will be drawn to Jesus



God's protection on Jewish communities as anti-Semitism continues to rear its ugly head



many Christians to prayerfully uphold and encourage Jewish people, showing love in these days when hate seems to be springing up everywhere



more laborers for the field



God's continued wisdom and grace for transitions as several people take on new leadership roles in Jews for Jesus this year

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT ANTI-SEMITISM

Thanks to the many friends who are asking how to stand with the Jewish people against the scourge of anti-Semitism. Here are some suggestions:

Unleash the power of prayer

When promises of “thoughts and prayers” in the wake of tragedy are merely a social ritual, they are useless. But real prayer is the most powerful thing a believer can offer. Please remember to pray for the “peace of Jerusalem” (Psalm 122:6).

“Jerusalem” stands, not just for the nation of Israel, but for all the Jewish people. Pray for the well-being of the Jewish people, for protection from enemies, and ultimately for salvation in Yeshua. It would be wonderful if you would invite other believers from your congregation to join you in prayer.

Discover the power of knowledge

Knowledge helps to tear down walls of prejudice. The more you learn about Jewish people, their culture and history, the better prepared you will be to speak up when you hear falsehoods. Invite like-minded Christian friends to learn along with you, so they too will be equipped to stand against ignorance and hate.

Holocaust museums have helped numerous Christians understand the horrific nature of anti-Semitism and what Jewish people have experienced historically.

If there is a Jewish Community Center (JCC) close by, avail yourself of the variety of lectures and courses offered. If you are not near any of these resources, consider forming a book club at your church. You could read such classics together as Chaim Potok's *The Chosen* and develop a greater appreciation for Jewish culture in its manifold varieties.

If your church invites someone from Jews for Jesus, see if your pastor will be willing to have him or her speak during Sunday School and introduce the congregation to the history and culture of the Jewish people.

Share the power of love through serving

An important response to anti-Semitism is to show that Christians stand in solidarity with the Jewish community. This kind of supportive friendship can take many forms:

- When anti-Semitic incidents occur, write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, or even an op-ed article. Affirm Christian care, prayers, and solidarity for the Jewish people.
- Similarly, in the aftermath of such incidents, write a letter to the rabbi of a local synagogue expressing your Christian affirmation of the Jewish people. You might ask if you could bring a small group to a Sabbath service to learn about Judaism and to show solidarity. Most Reform and Conservative synagogues will welcome visitors.
- Consider asking a local Jewish charity, nursing home, or cemetery if they would welcome volunteer help. (Note: pebbles left on the top of headstones should not be removed; they are markers indicating a visitor has come.)

If you choose to do any of the above, remember, your help should not be a veiled attempt to evangelize. Evangelism normally happens when you develop relationships with individuals to the point where you are both comfortable sharing at a more intimate level. Standing with Jewish people can lead to those kinds of relationships. And if it doesn't—you've still done your part in showing God's love.