

## JCF Study Tours

March 2-14, 2008

"The Exodus and the Great Wilderness"

Egypt/Israel  
Ross

Mar 24-Apr, 2008

"Backgrounds to Jesus World"

Finch

For information and prices, contact:  
info@jerusalemcornerstone.org

## Good News from the Middle East: Never a Dull Moment

By Liz Kopp

My husband Chuck and I loaded our van for the third time this month with practical supplies for the Sudanese refugees temporarily living in Eilat. The goods were donated by three Christian charities, Jerusalem Cornerstone Foundation, Shalom Shalom Jerusalem, and Narkis Street Congregation. Gnor, Arope, and Gabriel, three refugees living in Jerusalem had the day off from their hotel duties, and helped cram the supplies into every nook and cranny of the vehicle leaving barely enough room for us to crawl in.

We were rolling alongside the Dead Sea pointing out the local sites: the Qumran caves, En Gedi, Masada, when we had a blow out. The back left tire was shredded. Down near the Dead Sea (the lowest place on earth) the heat is intense at over 100 degrees F during much of the summer. Gnor, Arope, and Gabriel took control of changing the tire and turned out to be very gifted handy men, but not until we had unloaded all the supplies from the back to alleviate strain on the jack. After the tire change we repacked and hit the road again. Only a little later Arope yelled, "Fire!"

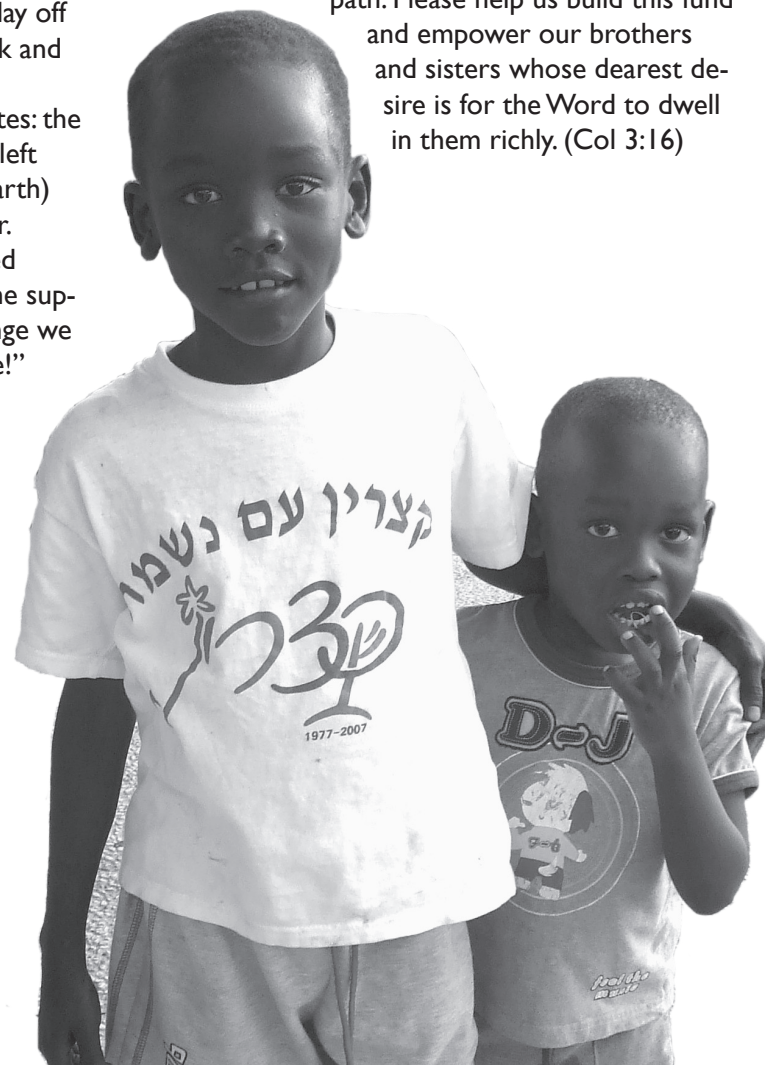
Chuck, Gabriel and I turned around to see smoke billowing from behind our front seat! We quickly pulled over and doused the fire with every water bottle we could get our hands on. The culprit turned out to be a piece of cloth lying atop a metal music stand that was touching the battery. The once black stand was now red hot and had ignited the cloth. Crises over and back in the air-conditioned van, we couldn't help but make meager comparisons to the harrowing escape from Egypt which our Sudanese brothers and sisters have made in the past few months.

Our ten hour round trip journey with minor scrapes was more than generously rewarded. In Eilat the dispersal of all the contents brought excitement and great joy. There were shoes and children's clothing, blankets and canned food, school packs and bicycles. The Sudanese were visibly moved at the site of these gifts from believers all around Israel and many other places in the world. After feeling neglect, resentment and hate for so many years, they were quick to respond in kind to our small act of love.

## Sudanese Relief: Report and Plan for the Future

Over the last two months \$500 came in marked for the needs of Sudanese Refugees here in Israel, though since the beginning of the crisis situation last summer JCF has been able to direct over \$7000 towards their assistance. The most recent donation was well timed to cover housing costs for four young men who arrived in Jerusalem only a few short months ago. Other groups have also stepped up to help, most recently the Anglican School in Jerusalem, a highly respected English speaking International School, has given full scholarships to the two children of the Christian family mentioned in the Sept-Oct newsletter. The Anglican School is a great place for them to acquire English skills and be cared for by the warm Christian environment. It is very important for these children to study in English, because we have great hopes that the two families may some day settle for good near their cousins in Australia.

JCF's future plan for Sudanese assistance now includes a fund for adult education that will focus on literacy programs and the Bible. Many of the refugees have a deep thirst for education and the ability to read the Word of God. After their harrowing experiences in Sudan, Egypt and the Sinai their most pressing desire is to learn to read the Bible. Wherever they will go we want to send them on with the gift of God's Word to light their path. Please help us build this fund and empower our brothers and sisters whose dearest desire is for the Word to dwell in them richly. (Col 3:16)



God expresses his mercy in tangible ways: healing for the sick, food for the hungry, cloths for the naked, friendship for the rejected, rest for the weary, protection for the exploited, love for the abandoned.

-Father R. Thomas

## Greek: The New Frontier for Biblical Language Learning

By Gary Alley

Randall Buth and his staff, completed another successful summer of initiating beginners into the thrill of reading the Bible in its original language—Hebrew. Yet, this was a summer of firsts for the ten year old program. For the first time, classes were held at Kibbutz Tzuba, where students were housed in air-conditioned accommodations with swimming pool access and a scenic setting that only enhanced their study environment. Buth's program also broke ground with the first summer course for Koine Greek.

Just like the established Hebrew curriculum, these initial Greek classes were conducted in an immersion setting. Teachers called out commands and students responded by jumping, standing, sitting, or walking. Studies have shown that these types of physical interactions allow students to quickly internalize and begin mastering a language. Randall Buth, a Bible translator, scholar, and linguist, began experimenting with and innovating biblical language acquisition methods back in the early 90's, towards the end of his twenty year translation ministry in Africa. After moving to Israel in 1996, he implemented these new teaching techniques in Hebrew classes. Now, more than ten years later, a new door has opened for those who desire to read their Greek New Testaments.

Nearly 50 students from around the world—Australia, England, Canada, United States, Taiwan, Costa Rica, and Czech Republic—explored Israel while learning to read the Bible in its ancient languages. If you would like to deepen your biblical study by learning the languages of the Old and New Testaments, please visit [www.biblicalulpan.org](http://www.biblicalulpan.org) for more information.

### 2008 Biblical Language Ulpan Dates at Kibbutz Tzuba, Israel

Beginning Hebrew: June 22 - August 1

Beginning Greek: June 22 - August 1

Intermediate Hebrew Level 1: June 22 - July 11

Intermediate Hebrew Level 2: July 14 - August 1



## Our Classroom

**Biblical Language Center (BLC)** teaches intensive biblical Greek & Hebrew courses during the summer. A unique teaching method that makes learning fun, effective and for everyone.

**Biblical Studies in Israel (BSI)** an accredited one-year Undergraduate program of Land, Language and Literature of the Bible at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**Study Tours** bringing the Bible to life through in-depth thematic tours. Tours are customized to suit the specific needs of groups for any size and age

## Our Outreach

**Israel Relief** Providing financial assistance for urgent situations to those in the Land needing help. A portion of this fund is also set aside for educational scholarships for the needy.

**Funds needed:** food vouchers, housewares & clothing vouchers, emergency medical & dental assistance, general needs

**Children's Fund** Helping children caught in great need due to the ongoing conflicts.

**Funds needed:** orphanages, school supplies, holiday gifts, general assistance for children

## Our World

[www.jerusalemcornerstone.org](http://www.jerusalemcornerstone.org) for further details on our projects, programs and the communities we live and work in, visit our world on our website

JCF

Jerusalem Cornerstone Foundation, P.O. Box 54331 Tel-Aviv, 74155 (918) 622-9573  
Chairman: Charles M. Kopp, P.O. Box 546, Jerusalem, 91004, Israel, Tel: 972-2-671-4351, chuck@jerusalemcornerstone.org  
Israel Director: Jon (Yoni) Gerrish, P.O. Box 546, Jerusalem, 91004, Israel, Tel/Fax: 972-2-673-1096, yoni@jerusalemcornerstone.org  
US Director: Larry J. Ehlrich, P.O. Box 54331 Tulsa, OK, 74155, Tel: 918-622-9573, larry@jerusalemcornerstone.org



אבן פינה

Jerusalem Cornerstone Foundation

November - December 2007

## Rachel is Weeping for Her Children

By Bethany Slater (adapted from an article by Jim Gerrish)

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times" (Micah 5:2)

The little town of Bethlehem doesn't seem like much of a town these days, with multi-story houses stretching up to the checkpoint and several of the outlying Jerusalem neighborhoods growing closer, it looks like a suburb of Jerusalem. In the 1950's there was only a winding dirt track between the two cities of David, Bethlehem and Jerusalem, that took over half an hour to traverse. Today one can drive along Hebron road which covers the five mile distance in ten minutes. Bethlehem could easily be overshadowed by the presence of Jerusalem on its doorstep, but Bethlehem's varied and tumultuous history is always briefly considered during the Christmas season.

Every year we all rejoice remembering that Jesus was born in the little Judean town of Bethlehem. "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11) Yet this town is home to sorrow as well as joy. Bethlehem suffered tragically after Jesus was born. In his mad attempt to kill the baby Jesus, King Herod had all the young male children of the area murdered (Matt. 2:16). We hear the gospel writer eulogize this massacre with the words of Jeremiah, "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more" (31:15; Matt 2:18). Bethlehem's sorrow and weeping has not ended; neither has her honor and joy for accepting Jesus into this world been forgotten.

Bethlehem's biblical and historical heritage includes many other memorable persons and events, times of weeping and rejoicing, war and peace. *To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die;... A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance...*" (Ecc. 3:1-8) We read in Genesis 35:15-20 of Jacob's sorrow when he lost his beloved wife, Rachel, giving birth to Benjamin, on the outskirts of Bethlehem. Her tomb has stood beside the Bethlehem Road for many centuries and is a favorite place of prayer to this day for the women of this land. King David's grandparents, Boaz and Ruth, must have fallen in love in one of the fields surrounding Bethlehem. David grew up there, and was anointed there by Samuel. Two of his mighty men, Elhanan and Asahel, were fellows from his home town, doubtless young men who grew up with him (2 Sam. 23:24; 2:32). David's interest in Jerusalem could have begun at a very young age. Jerusalem or Jebus was an unconquered Canaanite city in his neighborhood and perhaps he saw an advantage to ruling the country from what could be considered as a neutral place, not previously controlled by any Israelite tribe.

Ancient tradition, stretching all the way back to the second century, has it that the manger where Jesus was born was actually situated in a cave,

Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem

## Poverty and Depression

*Isaiah 61:3 ...to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair...*

**Dweitt and Talesh**\* are Ethiopian believers from the Beth-El congregation in Jerusalem. Andrew is a registered nurse and works at a local hospital. He and Annabelle have three children and are expecting twins. But she was hospitalized for psychiatric care mainly due to depression, while their eldest son recently tried to commit suicide. Andrew is desperately trying to make ends meet and brings home food from the hospital to feed his children. JCF has given this family funds to alleviate some of the financial pressure.

**Laila** is an elderly Jewish lady from Tiberius who recently lost her husband. She is in poor physical and mental condition and is struggling to pay her bills. She lives with her mentally ill son who can't help her financially. JCF helped her with a one time financial gift.

## Abandoned Mothers

*Ps 71:21 Thou wilt increase my honor, and comfort me again.*

**Olive** is an Arab Israeli single mother of four (ages 6-11), who recently left a shelter for abused woman in order to rebuild her life. She works part time and receives a small amount of alimony from her ex-husband and some government assistance, but this is not enough to cover all her bills. During the summer months it is impossible to keep her job while her children are not in school. She sent her children to summer camps, but could not afford it on her own. JCF helped with half the cost.

**Merriam** is trying to hold together a broken home in Jerusalem. Her husband comes and goes as he pleases, and up until recently has paid a type of alimony support of their five children (although they're not actually divorced). Due to a recent conflict, he has stopped paying and has permanently abandoned the home, which has left the family with no means of support. The Israeli social welfare service is looking into their situation but until they decide how to proceed, the family will have had no income for at least a few months. JCF provided enough money to get through this difficult period.

**Yula** is a single mother of three, who fled from her husband after being physically abused by him. She is currently trying to rebuild a life for herself and her three children. She receives the equivalent of \$250 per month from the government and has just started a part-time job but has not received her first paycheck. Her most urgent need was a washing machine. JCF made this purchase.

## Glasses, Food Supplements, and a Washing Machine

*Is 61:1 the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.*

**Jacob** is from Tiberius. He and his wife are now both almost totally blind and have five children. Jacob needed multi-focal glasses which cost \$400. The family could not afford this, so JCF covered this cost.

**Daniel** is an elderly man who lives on less than \$500 a month from government assistance. He is disabled and cannot work. He also has no family to help him. His doctor prescribed a specific food supplement but this costs him close to \$150 each month and he struggles to make this purchase. JCF purchased a short-term supply of this food supplement.

**Dorothy** is almost 80-years-old. She is a widow living in Tiberius, barely making ends meet with the little pension she receives from the government. Dorothy doesn't have a washing machine so she washes all her clothes by hand. JCF decided to help her buy a new one.

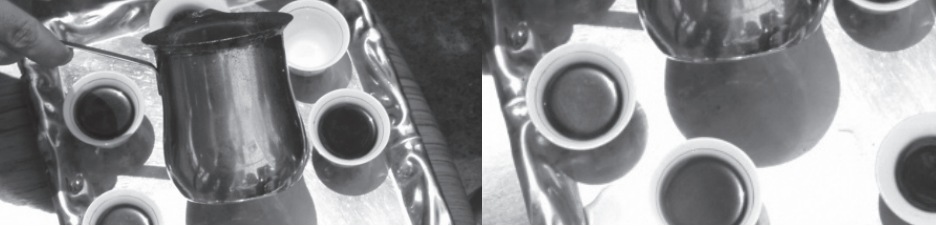
\* All personal names are pseudonyms.

# A Year of Giving

By Dania Minor (JCF Outreach Director)

Charity outreach is a vitally important arm of Jerusalem Cornerstone Foundation. Each year we provide different types of assistance to numerous needy families, children and individuals from around Israel and beyond political boundaries in the West Bank and Gaza. During the year we have assisted over one-hundred families and individuals. The cases include financially and physically distressed, those who have been abandoned by family or society, and those who do not have the capacity to care for themselves. We also assist those who care for others yet now find themselves in desperate circumstances. These gifts come directly from you. We wanted to share with you all a glimpse of the lives you have touched and changed during the past year.

If you don't know where your self interests are getting in the way of God's interests, read Matt 5 and if anything bothers you in the slightest way, than that would be your problem area. – Father Thomas



## Care for the Disabled

*Job 29:15 I was eyes to the blind...*

Blind Folks Club – Tiberius:

This is a venue where approximately 180 blind people, the majority of them elderly, gather to support each other and participate in activities. The social welfare bureau has struggled for years to find enough support to keep this club running. JCF stepped in this year with monthly support to keep this club functioning and allow it to expand its support for the blind.

## Those who help others sometimes need help themselves.

*2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.* **Joseph** hit a major obstacle this year when his car broke down and there was no way he could afford to repair it. This difficulty also affected his fellow Ethiopian believers with whom he always shared the benefits of an auto. His pastor asked JCF to help him get his old car back on the road, and we responded with finances.

**Hannah** is a Palestinian mother of six, and is the only one with an income at home. She works in Jerusalem cleaning homes and cooking. Recently, however, she has had trouble renewing her permit to enter Israel from the West Bank. This has left her and her family with no income or other means of support. JCF contributed towards their basic living expenses so that family could get by while they looked for other employment.

**Frank** is a former Southern Lebanese Army soldier who fled to Tiberius when the Israelis left their positions in Southern Lebanon in 2000. Frank works full time to support his family and his elderly parents. Recently his father underwent open heart-surgery but his condition is still serious. Frank had to miss work to help his family through this emotional and fearful time and consequently he and his family are seriously struggling financially. JCF was able to offer some support to offset his lost income.

## Father for the Fatherless

*Duet 10:17-18 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality... He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.*

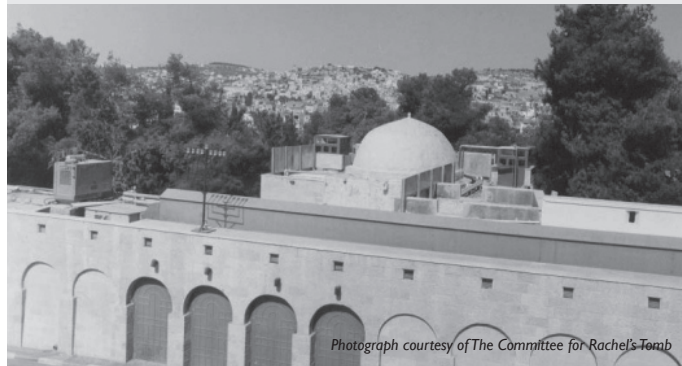
**Rayeed** is a graduate from the S.O.S.Village (orphanage) in Bethlehem who has lived with a deformity in his leg for years. His doctor recommended a leg brace and special orthopedic shoes. JCF helped by purchasing the leg brace. **Anna** is Palestinian and an SOS graduate from Bethlehem. She works full time as a medical technician in a mobile unit. Last month her entire salary was stolen. She turned to us in desperation to help her cover this months rent and utility bills.

**An S.O.S. Village (orphanage) graduate couple from Bethlehem** had their third child recently but were unable to pay the hospital fees. The S.O.S. Graduate Association turned to JCF for help. The husband has a low-paying job and the wife cannot find work. JCF paid the bill and included a little extra money as a gift to help cover some of the expenses with their newborn baby. **Bakr** is a young Muslim Background Believer living in Gaza. He is under the discipleship of a trusted pastor who asked JCF to help this bright and fervent young man get a degree at a local university. JCF agreed to cover his tuition. We are blessed to support the growth of a future church leader who lives a precarious life because of his faith.

What does preaching the good news look like? Jesus said to his listeners, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” (Luke 14:12-14) This verse is not talking about giving food to the poor. We can say, “we worked in the soup kitchen; we fed the prisoners in the jail, distributed holiday baskets.” I’m not talking about that and Jesus isn’t either. Whenever you give a lunch or dinner, do NOT invite your friends, when you have a reception invite beggars, the lame, and the blind. I defy any theologian in the world, any scripture scholar in the world to make this verse unclear. You don’t need a new subcommittee, you don’t need another conference, just do what it says in verses 12 and 13, and you’ve got it done. Give a luncheon and invite the poor, sit down with them as an equal at the table. Talk to them and have a pleasant conversation, interact with them. You do that one time and you will be changed because you will meet Jesus in a way that you have never met him before. – Father R. Thomas



Rachel's Tomb, Bethlehem, 1860 (above) and today (below)



Photograph courtesy of The Committee for Rachel's Tomb

(“Rachel is weeping..” cont.)

and not in the wooden style shed that we all imagine. This also fits with the practice of village herdsmen and Bedouin to this day. Their tents and dwellings are often set up at the entrance of caves while the sheep or other animals will be stabled in the back of the cave. Today under the Church of the Nativity there is a cave that is said to be the place where Jesus was born. In the early fourth century the Roman Empire became officially ‘Christian’ with the conversion of Emperor Constantine. His mother, Helena, came to the Holy Land and began to construct great churches marking major biblical events. In 330 AD she built the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. This site has been a place of pilgrimage for centuries and bares the marks of hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who come to remember the joy of their Lord’s birth and the hope found in him. The church has become a unique meeting place of eastern and western aesthetics. Its stones glisten where they have been rubbed by thousands of hands, its walls are blackened by the smoke of candles, its decorations are a hodgepodge of gifts left by those who wanted to mark their presence in that place.

In 388 AD Bethlehem became home to Jerome a great Bible scholar who translated the scriptures into Latin. Jerome learned Hebrew while in Bethlehem, one of only a handful of church fathers who ever seriously studied the language. He also sought assistance with his translation from local rabbis (an action that brought him scorn from other Christian scholars at that time). After thirty-four years of work he produced the Latin Vulgate Bible, the translation used in Europe throughout the Middle Ages, as well as the basis for the first translations of the bible into English: the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Wycliffe Bible.

Through all these centuries the residents of Bethlehem have been predominantly orthodox Christian Arabs. In the last century many have made their living in trades related to tourism, like selling olive wood carvings or feeding pilgrims in the many restaurants around Manger Square. Unfortunately Bethlehem is struggling today. Its sorrow is linked to a significant decrease in its Christian population and isolation from the outside world. Midway through this last century 75% of its population was Christian. After 1948, a large number of Muslim Palestinian refugees settled in and around the town drastically changing the demography. Fifty years later, only 33% of Bethlehem’s population was Christian.<sup>1</sup> Between 2000-2004, during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada, more than 350 Christian families (10%) left Bethlehem.<sup>2</sup> Loss of tourism and complications for local residents getting in and out of Bethlehem has enhanced the economic hardship and encouraged emigration. Christian residents also point to aggression and verbal persecution from some of their Muslim neighbors as one of their reasons for leaving the area.<sup>3</sup> Against the wishes of the owners, Christian homes have been used by Muslim Palestinian militants as staging grounds for attacks on Israelis. Many of these homes were severely damaged when the Israeli military responded to the attacks. The Christian Arab population in Bethlehem experiences political harassment from all sides. Families with ties to the Western World leave to find better lives for themselves and their children. Bethlehem’s nativity celebrations are not as grand or joyous as they once were because of this Christian exodus. It appears that the days of Rachel’s sorrow for Bethlehem are not over. Several years ago a number of us from Jerusalem were part of a singing group that held a performance on Christmas Eve in Bethlehem. As a part of the Christmas season the Israeli government encouraged choirs from the area and from other parts of the world to join in the program. These choirs spoke out in hope that this is now a time for love and a time for peace. It was a blessed opportunity for us all. One of our per-

<sup>1</sup> Andrea Pacini, *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East: the Challenge of the Future*, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> *Costs of Conflict: The Changing Face of Bethlehem*, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) & Office of the Special Coordinator for the Peace Process in the Middle East (December 2004). [http://www.miftah.org/Doc/Reports/2004/Beth\\_Rep\\_Dec04\\_En.pdf](http://www.miftah.org/Doc/Reports/2004/Beth_Rep_Dec04_En.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> David Raab, *Beleaguered Christians of the Palestinian Controlled Areas*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2003.

## Eat and Rejoice in the Presence of the Lord

We all look forward to the holidays but there are some who see them looming as a burden. How will they manage to celebrate when their income is too small to feast or to purchase the extras that make the day special for the children? God actually instituted festival days and told the people to celebrate and feast before Him. He says in Exodus “Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to me” (23:14) and in Deuteronomy, God commands His people to “rejoice” during holiday times with “your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, the Levites in your towns, and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows living among you” (16:10-11). Rejoicing and celebrating during the holidays is not just a nicety for those of us with the financial ability, it is in fact a command from the Lord. Our God knows that celebration enlivens the soul and it honors Him when we celebrate with others.

It has become tradition in JCF to help poor families during the holidays so that we can celebrate along with them. Over this last Passover/Easter Season JCF gave food vouchers to fourteen families: some Jewish some Christian. Over the upcoming Hanukah/Christmas season we hope to help the local Tiberius municipality put on an evening of Christmas festivities for South Lebanese Christian Refugees living in their area. Two years ago the Tiberius municipality approached JCF for help in funding this event. What an encouragement to see a Jewish majority municipality willing to help a non-voting minority celebrate Christmas. We also have a tradition of bringing Christmas and Hanukah bundles of school supplies and soccer balls to the Bethlehem Orphans in the SOS village and to a Jewish Orphanage in the Jerusalem area. This year there is a huge additional need for gift bundles for the children amongst the Christian Sudanese Refugees. Please consider making a timely gift to empower us to help these families “eat and rejoice in the presence of the Lord” (Deut 12:7) during this holiday season.

formers was Liz Kopp, who for many years has been the pastor’s wife and pianist at Narkis Street Congregation in Jerusalem. She wrote, arranged, and sang this beautiful, sorrowful, but hopeful song.

O little town of Bethlehem  
How still we see thee lie  
Mid broken dreams and silent screams  
Carried through the night  
Pain shatters your peaceful skies  
Tears fill up your streams  
Love is lost when your heart no longer believes

O little town of Bethlehem  
How still you are tonight  
Behind your walls you bury hope  
And lose site of that star  
That would lighten your darkened path  
And show you the way  
To the One who can set your spirit free

O little town of Bethlehem  
Chosen village foreseen  
O little town of Bethlehem  
City of the King  
We wait for you  
We pray for you  
To let Him in again

This year, when we remember Bethlehem, let us pray that one day Rachel will weep no more.