



Jerusalem Cornerstone Foundation 2006/2007:
THE PEOPLE, THE PROJECTS, THE HORIZONS



JCF

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Tom and Sandy*

This is the story of a disadvantaged minority couple that managed to use their own misfortune to be a light to the helpless and needy communities around them. Their openness to and acceptance of their neighbors – from single-parent families of former South Lebanese Army (SLA) refugees to elderly Russian Jews – is not only an inspiration to anyone who hears their story, but is also a unique example of how the most unlikely relationships can be built through common hardship and sustained by compassion.

Allow us to introduce you to Tom and Sandy, Lebanese Christians now living in Nahariya, home to the largest community of former SLA refugees in Israel. Though they are a part of this community now, it is interesting that Tom was never actually in the SLA when he lived in Lebanon. Rather, he owned a successful restaurant where he sometimes allowed UN officials to meet with Israeli army representatives – a generosity that led to his downfall when Hezbollah eventually marked him as an informer. The militant Muslim group threatened to kill him on account of these charges and gave him only a few hours' notice before blowing up his restaurant (together with all of his life savings).

In the wake of the bombing, Tom and Sandy fled across the border into Israel with only \$127 to their name. They settled in Nahariya, together with about 200 other former SLA refugee families, and somehow managed to buy a small, run-down, fruit and vegetable stall as a means to survive. But they knew they were not the only ones struggling, and on Sandy's initiative, the couple began a pickling business in an effort to help some 48 single-parent SLA families living in Nahariya make ends meet. These women would pickle the vegetables for Tom and Sandy to sell at their stall, and the money earned was then divided between all 48 families. Naturally, the pickling business was not enough to sustain so many families, and JCF has been able to step in and distribute some food vouchers to help with their immediate needs.

During the recent war, Tom and Sandy, along with the other residents of the north, spent many of their days living in a bomb shelter. Tom tells how at one low point they had been living underground with 45 other people for three days straight and had eaten nothing but cornflakes, had no soap, and were using pages from books as toilet paper. In addition, Tom and Sandy had taken it upon themselves to look after two more bomb shelters, all of which were full of elderly Russian Jews. They were broken, helpless, and at a complete loss of how to cope with so many needy people, all of whom were now looking to Tom and Sandy for comfort and encouragement. In his despair, Tom turned to the Bible and began reading the Psalms. Not wanting to exclude the people around him, he decided to read these out loud in Arabic while another person read the Russian translation. One night, as he was reading, Tom felt the unmistakable presence of God in the room, and it gave him hope. He says that at that moment he knew what was his new calling in life: to be a light to the elderly Russian Jewish community in his neighborhood.

Since his revelation, Tom and Sandy have whole-heartedly stepped into this role: in addition to cleaning out the many war-damaged houses of elderly Russian Jews, they have started a Russian Bible Study in their home. They have also asked to be disciplined by a few local Christian leaders in order to challenge and grow in their own personal faith. It is our privilege at JCF to help Tom and Sandy in their various endeavors. And in turn, we at JCF are indebted to you for your generosity which enables us to help people like Tom and Sandy and, through them, many more.

* Names have been changed for the sake of anonymity.



BETHLEHEM FAMILY

We at Jerusalem Cornerstone Foundation were recently introduced to a Christian family in Bethlehem struggling not only with the usual day-to-day difficulties faced by people living in poverty, but also with the lack of appropriate medical care for one of their children. The father was once a salesman for cleaning materials, but his work was cut short when he was forced to sell the family car in order to make ends meet. He has not been able to find any other work since. The mother never finished high school and has always had a hard time finding work as a result. They have three children to care for (ages thirteen, eleven, and three).

The youngest of the three children, though not officially diagnosed, is most likely autistic. There is no system in place in Bethlehem for children with special needs of this kind. It is therefore usually up to family members to find a way to raise the child according to their own limited knowledge, without the support of a specialized system. This

couple turned to the local hospital for advice, and was told that the best thing would be to put the child into a "normal" environment with other children his age where he might be drawn out of himself into the world around him. The family was hesitant to send him to kindergarten since he has not yet learned to talk, was still in diapers, and would need a lot of one-on-one assistance, which the kindergarten was unable to provide. But with no other hope in sight they were ready to give it a try. A specialist at the hospital was willing to do speech therapy with the child, but even with this offer, the cost of sending him to kindergarten was more than the family could afford. In the midst of this difficulty, through the Children's Fund, we decided to pay the child's kindergarten tuition for one year, giving the family hope for his possible recovery in time.

Our hope at JCF is that children like him will one day have the professional and specialized help they so desperately need. In the meantime, we are committed to keeping in touch with this family in an effort to follow the child's progress and possible future needs.



Brandon

JCF and the staff at the Biblical Hebrew Ulpan (BHU) believe that learning biblical Hebrew can be fun and what's more can be for everyone. It is stories like Brandon Beebe's below that keep us committed to the BHU vision of reconnecting the church to the biblical languages.

Having been a Classical Languages major in college and studied both Latin and Greek in a Roman Catholic monastery for more than seven years, I met my match in biblical Hebrew. Actually, I was a failed Hebrew student in the classical method. After struggling through a year of Hebrew in a seminary course, I was ready to give up on engaging the Scripture in its original language.

I had the blessing of attending the 2006 Summer Biblical Hebrew Ulpan (language school) in Israel with Dr. Randall Butch. Along with a small team from my seminary, including two Hebrew professors, I began a dynamic encounter with a truly living biblical language. Not only did my grasp and command of the Hebrew language increase by leaps and bounds, the Old Testament texts I was engaging with blossomed into spiritually nourishing fruit. Their unique method transformed my ability to encounter Hebrew scripture. So drastic was my transformation over the course of the six-week Summer Ulpan that I went from struggling Hebrew student to teaching assistant in the seminary Hebrew program. The method was so revolutionary that the seminary adopted Randall Butch's curriculum as the basis for its Hebrew program. Now, I intend to pursue a career teaching biblical languages. The Summer Biblical Hebrew Ulpan has changed my life.

Our Classroom

Biblical Hebrew Ulpan (BHU)
a six-week intensive biblical Hebrew course taught 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 Work

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
for further details on our projects, programs and the communities we live and work in, visit our world on our website

This issue is dedicated to the people of Jerusalem Cornerstone Foundation, first and foremost to you our readers, supporters and friends. This year has been full of challenges and we are grateful for your support which has allowed us to rise to each occasion. As a token of appreciation we share with you here a sampling of the spectrum of those who have been part of JCF during 2006 - from those who have studied in our programs, to those who have received our help, as well as to those who have been instrumental in connecting us to the needs around us. In these pages you will read stories of people whose lives have been helped and changed because of your generosity and support. We also offer you a glimpse into next year by highlighting a few of the projects and peoples on our horizon.

We are honored to be partners with you in an outflow of blessing as we set about the work of furthering God's kingdom to a needy world around us. We say thank you and look forward to partnering with you again in the coming year.



Natan & Liat,

a married couple in their early thirties, live on the only Messianic moshav* in the country. They were both born in Israel, raised in believing families, and currently participate in the local Messianic Jewish community. Natan is in training to be a confectioner, and Liat has a full time job keeping an eye on the couple's four young boys.



Though on the surface they seem like any other young family, Natan and Liat have led anything but a normal life over the past few years. Theirs is a story of heartbreak, endurance, and hope. Nearly three years ago, Natan and Liat's oldest son, Aviad, was diagnosed with cancer. He was just two years old. Aviad's treatment began immediately, establishing a pattern that would define the family's life for the next two years: at least one hospital visit a week (for the lighter treatments), actual hospitalization once a month (for the more aggressive treatments), and random emergency hospital runs at the slightest hint of illness (since Aviad's immune system was basically out of commission).

While still adjusting to this new lifestyle, Liat gave birth to the couple's second son, Adir. The newborn baby had to be kept at some distance from his older brother to ensure that no germs and viruses were passed between them. It was a difficult time for all of them. Liat was exhausted from having to divide her time between the two boys while constantly traveling to the hospital and back in an old and unreliable car. Natan had the added burden of providing for his family, and worked for various periods at the *moshav's* carpentry workshop, finance office, reception desk, and kitchen. Aviad was coping with the physical and emotional effects of his treatment – a heavy load for any adult to carry, let alone a child so young. But with much encouragement and support from the local believing community, the family finally came through the worst of the experience. Aviad completed his two-year long intensive treatment in February of this year (although he remains under surveillance for the next five years before he will be given the final "all clear").

But even now the family has had no time to sit back and recuperate since Aviad's final treatment coincided with Liat's next pregnancy – this time with twin boys. Shalev and Ya'ir were welcomed into the family in September and were circumcised eight days later, as is the Jewish custom. But the celebration was short lived. Within days of the event, Ya'ir, who is the smaller of the two, was rushed to hospital where he was diagnosed with Herpes, which he contracted during the circumcision. The infection quickly spread to his liver and spinal fluid, and put his life in critical danger. The family was once again facing the possibility of losing a child – the second such threat in just two years. Despite the blow, Natan and Liat adjusted their lifestyle to include daily (and even nightly) trips to the hospital, where Ya'ir remained for several weeks. He was finally released at the end of October, having recovered from the immediate threat to his life. It will be several years before doctors will be able to determine if Ya'ir has suffered any permanent damage to the brain.

The family is now together again, and all the children seem to be in good health. Though Natan and Liat have been through some harrowing experiences, they are quick to point out that these have only strengthened their faith in God, enabling them to be a source of comfort to others around them who are also suffering. They do not take the small mercies of life for granted.

Though Israel offers socialized healthcare, not all of Aviad and Ya'ir's medical costs were covered by the system. In addition to medical expenses, the family has had to pay out large sums of money each month to cover their travel expenses to and from the hospital. Natan and Liat have struggled to find the necessary funds to cover these costs and have been forced to go into debt on several occasions. To this end, Jerusalem Cornerstone Foundation has been able to help them several times over the years and today we rejoice with them that they face the coming next year debt free.

* A *moshav* is a cooperative community that pools labor and resources.

Erin

For a group of 20 high-school students from Tulsa Oklahoma, a JCF study tour to Israel this past April became much more than just a fun senior class trip. Like the Children of Israel, they started their journey in the desert wilderness and from there continued throughout the land visiting biblical landmarks and vistas as they made their way to Zion. Minds and bodies were challenged as they scaled both mountain and valley, traveling the sites that brought to life the time and places Jesus knew on earth. It didn't take the whole 12 day tour to convince them that this was to be a life changing experience. Here, one of the students, Erin Casey, shares part of her transforming journey with us.



We were in the middle of the wilderness, and I could not help but feel that the inside of my soul was much like the wilderness I was sleeping in that night. For a while before the trip I had really been seeking God. I felt dry, wasted, like God had abandoned me. That night in the tent, I started to talk to God about the way I felt. I sought Him earnestly telling Him that I did not know why He had left me. He put a song in my heart. The song is called "All I Can Say." It starts off with the words, "Lord I'm tired, so tired of walking and I'm so alone. The dark is creeping in to follow me." That is exactly how I felt that night. The next verse though is the one that really hit me. It says, "Didn't know that you were standing here. Didn't know that you were holding me, didn't know you were crying too."

I woke up to what Yoni, our tour guide, said that morning. He said that it is in the wilderness where you seek God. Without the wilderness you would never need help, therefore you would never seek it. It is in the wilderness that you find inspiration. The wilderness seems the least likely place to find hope, but there I found hope that night. I sang the song as a prayer through the night. I no longer felt abandoned by God, and a huge weight was lifted from me. God was with me the whole time; I just needed to seek Him. Even though I did not sleep a wink that night I felt refreshed and energized. God had given me hope. I had found my way to an oasis in the midst of the wilderness. The next few days we visited waterfalls, and beautiful rivers. I know that was God reaffirming, for me, that there is water even in the midst of a desert.



Jetta

Jetta turned 83 this May. She lives alone and her only 'family' is her little pincher called Mammie ('sweetie' in English). Jetta is the only surviving member of her family. She was born in Romania and came to Israel in 1950.

At the age of 12 she was sent to a forced labor camp in Transnistria*, set up by the Nazi regime, and worked there until shortly before the World War II ended. To this day, the leaders of the Romanian Government refuse to acknowledge their role in the persecution and destruction of the Jewish community in their country. No compensation has ever been paid to any of the Romanian Jews who survived the labor camps. Out of a population of almost 800,000 Romanian Jews before the war, 350,000 survived. Jetta considers herself "lucky."

She, like many Holocaust survivors living in Israel, often feels neglected by the State. Today there are 250,000 Holocaust survivors in Israel and one-third of them live below the poverty line. The majority of them are in their 80s and face more needs than the average elderly person, due to the trauma of being in the camps. Many can't afford medicine, dental work, glasses - let alone small luxuries such as meat or a visit to a coffee shop.

Jetta lives on a small Israeli pension and she often finds herself having to choose between buying food or medication. Purchases that the average person takes for granted when they go shopping, she has to agonize over time and time again. It makes her depressed. At times her depression gets the best of her and she questions the point of her life.



Christine

by Liz Kopp

If anyone has enough material to fill a few volumes it would be my friend from Australia, Christine Sakakibara. Years of residing in Jerusalem has done interesting things to her Aussie accent so you wouldn't be able to immediately detect her origins in a casual conversation. In fact, Australia must seem like a few lifetimes away to Christine after spending a little over three decades in this turbulent "life on the edge" region. Living life on the edge is exactly what she does - not deliberately - but because that's what Providence has dished out to her and it's made her the unique individual she is today.

Being separated from her mother at the tender age of four and consequently placed with a bitter relative along with two younger siblings would have been a sufficient crucible for anyone to last a lifetime. Rather than succumb to defeatism, Christine never allowed her personal tragedy to overcome her. Rather, it created a spunkiness in her that defies difficulties and impossibilities. With these qualities and a hearty sense of adventure Christine embarked on a journey that took her, at twenty, half way around the world to Israel.

As if life in the midst of Middle East complexities isn't arduous enough, Christine's marriage to Bara, Japanese Buddhist-turned-Christian, adds impelling intrigue to the equation, producing five handsome children and enough stories of divine intervention to make one's head spin. For example, Hanna, the couple's middle child and a gifted dancer, happened to be working at the Versailles Wedding Hall the fateful



Christine Sakakibara came into Jetta's life six years ago, and today, a visit to Jetta is part of Christine's morning routine. During a recent visit Christine pulled out an envelope with money from JCF and handed it to Jetta. "This is from caring Christians in the USA" Christine remarked. Jetta opened it and her whole face lit up with joy. "I can buy a six pack of diet coke! No, I can get some bedroom slippers. I can buy all my medication at one time." On and on she went telling of all the ways she could use the money. It's a pity that you, the kind hearted ones who had given this gift, couldn't see the joy that you had given to this old lady. "Christine, it's not the amount of money that is so wonderful to me," explained Jetta, "it's just that now I have the ability to make choices. In fact I don't feel like I want to die anymore." As Christine got up to leave, Jetta kept repeating over and over, "God put you in my life."

* "Transnistria" is an artificial geographic term, created in World War II; it refers to the part of the Ukraine conquered by German and Romanian forces in the summer of 1941, which Hitler handed to Romania as a reward for its participation in the war against the Soviet Union. (2002, 2003 JewishGen, Inc.)



night in May 2001. The building collapsed, plunging wedding party and guests three stories to the ground, instantly killing twenty-three people and injuring hundreds more. Hanna, together with many others, was plucked from the debris and rushed to the hospital with lacerations to her body and severe injuries to her crushed face, requiring extensive plastic surgery. Just two and a half months later, Hanna was one of the first place winners in the International Jazz Competition held in New York.

Divine intervention is the story of Christine's life. Her love for God

and her family spills over to her neighbors whether they are the Holocaust survivor down the hall or the Southern Lebanese Christian refugees now living on Israel's northern border. Christine's definition of neighbor is anyone whose pain has reached her ears. She will defy gravity itself which means getting up at four in the morning to drive a car load of supplies to a family in need; whichever the occasion calls for. Christine has a passion that drives her to let suffering people know, with God's help, there is an answer. In fact, a fitting title to her life story could be "Pain, Passion and People" if she can ever find the time to write the volume. We at Jerusalem Cornerstone Foundation are grateful and honored to partner with Christine in reaching out to a hurting world and offering hope.