A Blast Of The Ram’s Horn! by Ralph LaFlamme

We feel so privileged to be able to see God touch lives in so many meaningful ways. And, it’s always exciting to see God’s hand move in particularly difficult situations! This newsletter is meant to be a ‘blast on the ram’s horn’ giving God glory by announcing these many ways He demonstrates His love.

When this ministry was first established, it primarily served incarcerated youths and their families, especially painful circumstances that can easily lead to despair. The Miller family has been with us in this ministry from the beginning. While prison ministry continues to be an important focus, our other outreaches are also touching lives in significant ways. For example, more couples and singles have been coming to us for pastoral counseling and deliverance.

This has been a busy time of the year with Seders, Shabbats and presentations on the Jewish Roots of Christianity. We are already getting churches scheduling us for Seders next year. Diane is preparing to give a presentation on anti-Semitism that is both fascinating and comprehensive. This is especially timely considering the dramatic rise in such hate crimes.

This year started off with a bang! On New Year’s Day, Diane dislocated her right shoulder. It has been a painful recovery for her. Near the end of January, I had a rather frightening attack of shingles to the right side of my face and head. Fortunately, my sight was not affected even though the area around my eye, including my eyelid, was involved. Thank you for your prayers and the Lord for His protection and healing!

Last year I was able to put our ministry online. You can also find all issues of our newsletter there at our website: www.zechmin.org

Bless Me, Father! by ‘Sister Jenny’

A few years ago, a particular prayer became very popular among Christians and even found its way into the secular world. This prayer, called the Prayer of Jabez, asked for God’s blessings, which of course included financial rewards, something that very much appealed to the materialistic world.

Although this is a wonderful prayer and God does want to bless us in all areas of our lives, there is another prayer that is equally powerful but is seldom used, especially by parents. Observant Jewish families are quite familiar with this Aaronic Blessing since it is very common for the father to lay his hands on the head of his children to bless them.

Children derive enormous benefits from this powerful prayer.

So, what is the origin of this blessing? The answer is found in Numbers 6:24-26. We are told that God directed Moses to instruct Aaron, the high priest, on how to pray over the children of Israel. Throughout the Old Testament we find the patriarchs fulfilling this directive by praying over their children. Since a father is the priest of his home, he is likewise encouraged to bless his children and his

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S halom from the three or us here in Jerusalem. That still is amazing to say! It is Shabbat evening, rainy cold and everything is super quiet outside. Nothing is moving. I hardly hear a car drive by. We have noticed that on Saturday the birds are much less active and spend much of the day resting on their roosts—the pigeons in particular.

It is a sweet time. I shopped in the Jewish market yesterday morning—it is my favorite time to go. Even though it is much more crowded, there is always a festive, upbeat, happy atmosphere. It reminds me of how it is at Christmas but friendlier. There surely is a uniqueness among God’s chosen ones. We love living here and will miss the “old neighborhood.”

We have been praying and fasting as a community over the past weeks and everyone senses that the Lord is going to do great things here. The enemy is working hard to keep it from happening.

We feel blessed in what we are doing and definitely where God has called us. We don’t get out much, but we are here to serve not sightsee. Thanks so much for all your support and prayers. (http://volunteer-israel.itac-israel.org)

Editor’s Note: Last Fall, Donna returned to Atlanta to sell their home and most of their belongings. Please keep them in your prayers.

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Seder Celebration by Ralph LaFlamme

Zechariah Ministries was asked again to give a presentation of the Seder at Liberty Church in Marietta, Georgia. We are grateful to Pastor John Fichtner, pastors George and Helen Delaney and Paul and Jane Myers for their wonderful support in bringing this sacred reminder of God’s faithfulness to the 10:00 congregation.

Wonderfully celebratory music was provided by Pastor Pendelton Brown. Richard Grosse of His Rest Fellowship, a Messianic Jewish fellowship, invoked the Aaronic priestly blessing in Hebrew over the children. Afterwards, most of the people in attendance circled the room dancing to the festive and lively Jewish music.
In 1998, when my son Jonathan was 15, he accidentally killed a schoolmate with a punch to the head. He was convicted of murder and is serving a life sentence. We have sought all avenues to have this conviction overturned, but to no avail.

The Georgia Department of Correction continues to maintain Jonathan on ‘close security’ status. This status is based on a mathematical equation determined by the type of conviction and the age when a crime is committed. The younger you are, when you commit a crime, the higher the security threat level you are given. Jon will be due for a security status review in a few weeks. This will be his first chance to receive a reduced security level. We understand that this is rarely given on the first state review but we are hopeful, since his record is clear of any violations.

On May 2nd Jonathan completed five and one half years in custody. Without a miracle, he must complete eight and one half more years of incarceration before he can be reviewed for parole. Jonathan, the person, is doing well. He has made a home for himself. He doesn’t remember what it was like being free. Since he was only fifteen when incarcerated, Jonathan has never known what it is like to be a free adult. This leaves him very little with which to compare in his current surroundings. I believe this helps him to accept his situation and really try to make the best of every day. He is currently housed at Phillips State Prison in Buford, Georgia.

Trying to help Jonathan educate and train himself has been problematic since the state of Georgia offers no courses or training at his current facility. We discovered “Professional Career Development Institute” in Norcross, Georgia which appears to be the only one offering courses that can be completed without a computer or telephone. We purchased the materials for a Diploma in Small Business Management. This is expected to take Jon six to nine months to complete. He has done very well on his first three tests. We are considering additional diploma courses and possibly an Associate Degree in Business Management for him.

In our last update, we were waiting for the United States Supreme Court to review Jonathan’s case. Unfortunately, they declined to review it. The Court seemed reluctant to get involved in a juvenile murder case since the D.C. sniper juvenile case was about to go to trial and did not want do anything that might taint that trial. By that denial, however, we are allowed one year to file a Federal Habeas Corpus. Attorneys L. David Wolfe and Mark Yurachek have worked hard to file the best possible appeal within the given deadline. So, now we wait and pray.

We don’t know where this will lead or how long before we receive an answer. In the meantime, Jonathan tries to make every day count. We should too!

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wife. (Moms can also invoke God’s blessings on her children as well.)

Children derive enormous benefits from this powerful prayer. This is an awesome way for a child to feel God’s love, security and protection through his parents. It is a way for parents to demonstrate their love, and confidence in a child. In other words they know the child will succeed because they have spoken a Godly promise over him or her. This is a wonderful booster to their self-esteem!

Small children grow up with an image of their heavenly Father blessing them, by watching the way their parents have blessed them. Unfortunately, all too often we hear just the opposite, even in Christian homes. Psychologists tell us that human touch can be very healing. Therefore, it is very beneficial for the father to place his hands on the head of the child as he invokes God’s blessings. What better way to demonstrate your love?

(See page 8 for the Aaronic Blessing.)
Joshua’s Turn Around by Alan Miller

Joshua is his name. We had met him through our son, Jonathan, about two years ago. He is a jovial person and Jonathan told us stories of how they laughed daily together. He has no close family. What family he remembered was closely tied to drugs and the deeds needed to acquire them. Joshua has a profound belief in God. “No prison can take that belief away and no prison can take away who you are!” he would say.

Joshua had written to us and we responded to his letters along with jokes and legal information that he needed. I was also able to locate his daughter for him. He felt a deep need to find her so as to support her when able to do so. He recently finished his sentence and was released but he had no money and only the one set of poorly fitting, well-used clothing.

Over the years we had helped Joshua find God, find his daughter, and keep his identity. This time, he needed clothing because he had an interview for a job coming up! Zechariah Ministries got him some shirts and pants. Robin and I bought shoes, socks, a belt, pens and paper.

We received a letter from him this week. In Joshua’s own words, “for the clothes, with a clean cut and my perfect respect, I was hired by Kroger’s.” He is so excited. Soon he will be able to send support to his daughter and fully support himself. With respectable work, his head held high, he is truly on the right road. God bless him!

St. Michael’s Generous Heart

Again this past Christmas, St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church outdid itself with its generosity. Fifteen hundred tags were put on their Christmas Giving Tree listing items needed by poor families, seniors and inmates. Almost every last one of them was returned with gifts attached. Zechariah Ministries was able to bless so many people with a joyous Christmas made possible by the many kind people who went out of their way to think of others first! Thanks again!

Lite Site

Nothing ruins the truth like stretching it!

Skill is successfully walking a tightrope over Niagara Falls

Wisdom is not trying!
Help For Hurting Children by Suzanne Spruill

It is with pleasure that I express the enormous impact Zechariah Ministries has had on the youth of Inner Harbour Ltd. Inner Harbour is a not for profit residential facility for youth and adolescents. Most of the youth are wards of the state, meaning that these children are without parents and the state has custodial guardianship.

Our children have dealt with the most devastating abuse imaginable. That abuse includes the emotional, psychological, physical and sexual. Understandably, these children don’t have a positive outlook on the world. They view humanity as continually wanting something from them, whether that be drugs, alcohol, sex or money.

When an organization such as yours, gives to our children in the form of time, money or gifts, it is a powerful component of their therapy and subsequent recovery. They’re able to know that there are kind people in the world who want to give because they are inspired by God’s love and nothing else. It truly fosters a sense of hope in their lives and inspiration to go on. The gifts your organization has given are powerful; the children will be influenced for many years to come.

Finally, never underestimate the power of God’s love through your thoughts, deeds and time. It is through His love and compassion that you can reach children who have never experienced it before and inspire hope in their hearts. Thank you and God bless you for all the wonderful things you do!

Summer Fun! by Rose Robbins

In September Zechariah Ministries held a great end of summer picnic for many of its supporters. Robin and Alan Miller kept us in stitches with the games played and the fellowship shared. We even had prizes!

Everyone brought a covered dish. The food was wonderful! If anyone went home hungry it was their own fault!

Community seems to be a buzz word for me but that is exactly what happens at our picnics and other gatherings. It’s great to be able to come together and feel so accepted by everyone!

We are all grateful to Ralph and Diane for opening up their home to such a great time for all of us. We thank you!!!
The Lord is in the process of renewing and restoring His church. Part of that restoration concerns bringing the church back to its Hebraic Roots.

We were honored to be asked to give a presentation on the Jewish Roots of Christianity at Liberty Church. This included sharing the significance of certain Hebrew prayers, along with the meaning of several Jewish symbols such as the Shofar and tallit. We thank Pastors George and Helen Delaney for this invitation.

(A copy of this presentation is available for $6, including shipping and handling.)

Letters From Our ‘Boys’

We are always uplifted by lives touched in significant ways by the Lord. Here are letters from a couple of ‘our boys’ in prison.

Dear Sister Jenny,
How are you and Bro. Ralph doing? I’ve been praying that he gets well soon. I hope he has. I’ve been doing alright. I’m supposed to get out in June, the time is getting so close. I’m so happy because I’ve been locked up five years and [am ready for] some change now... When I get out I’m going to write you to let you know where I’m at so we can keep in touch. I will never forget you because you have been like a mother to me ever since I’ve been locked up. I commend you for that and I also thank you for that. Thank you for always being at my side when I need you... Sister Jenny I love you with all my heart. That’s the truth too. I love you very much.
Much love, Gary G.

Sis Jenny,
How are you and Bro. Ralph doing? Good, I hope. Well, I’m doing fine, a lot has changed since the last time I wrote you. As you know, I got transferred to ... Prison. I’m doing good down here. I’ve started getting back into the Bible and am on the right track.

I miss you so much and think about you all the time. I’m going to send visitation forms with this letter so you and Bro. Ralph can come see me... I hope to hear from you soon.

Much love, Richard M.

New Blessings!

It is with great joy that we announce the birth of our fourth and fifth grandsons. Brent Garrett Bruner was born December 12th, 2003 in Oklahoma. His cousin, Jacob Sean Buckner was born May 16th, 2004 in Georgia. Both are precious additions to our growing family.

Grandpa Joseph (Ralph) is relishing his new role as coach of a new burgeoning baseball team!
How do you deal with the depression, fear and pain when seemingly hopeless tragedy strikes you, especially when there is no one to help you? There is only one answer, go to God and let go. That means giving up worrying about it, because God is handling it.

Three years ago, my son, Anthony, called me from California to say that he was in jail, being held on $50,000 bond and charged with rape. He had gone to help housesit with a friend for six weeks. After two days he called pleading for help. He was confused as to how this was happening to him, saying he was innocent. I was devastated!

I had never hired a lawyer before but knew that they are expensive and we could not afford it on my husband’s retirement. My husband was already dealing with bad health and depression. I was in shock!

I did the only thing I knew, I turned to our Heavenly Father and started to pray. He is so good! He always leads me where I need to be. I was able to bond my son out of jail for $5,000, and the other boy’s father arranged for me to hire a lawyer for much less than any other lawyer had quoted me. The lawyer was willing to work with us for what we could afford. The bank rushed through a home equity loan for us.

My husband was devastated by what was happening. But, he told me that his cousin had just called to invite him to a Spirit-filled retreat, all expenses paid (isn’t God awesome?). He needed this desperately and God had provided this for both of us; I needed him whole again!

My husband returned from the retreat with a newfound faith in God. Slowly, he regained his life back from depression by spending time praising and worshiping God in a new way. He had given his life to Christ and was being faithful praying and reading his bible, and God was blessing him in so many ways! Our daughter also became more involved in the youth group at church.

When my son was bonded out of jail, he related what caused his arrest. We believed him, and felt he was being wrongly accused, along with the other boy. He could not leave California until his arraignment in 30 days. We felt everything would be all right, but Satan had other plans!

The D.A. was a young feminist out to make a name for herself. At the arraignment, she convinced the judge to raise the bond to $2,000,000 each, because they were ‘violent criminals’ and a ‘danger to society.’ He sided with her, despite our lawyer’s pleas, and the boys were thrown back into jail, with no possibility of being bonded out! My world started to crumble. I cried out to God all the more. The pain was unbearable!

The D.A. continued to add charges each time the boys went to court causing our lawyers to continue to postpone the preliminary hearing. This was our only hope for lowering the bond so as to get the boys released. They were moved to a large cell with over eighty others where they were bullied and beaten. I was beside myself with fear for my son’s life! There wasn’t anything I could do, but pray and trust God. I had to let go and give it to God!

Despite the circumstances, I praised God and continued imploring Him for my son’s protection. Each morning, I searched the Scriptures for comfort and consciously began to push all thoughts of my son’s circumstances out of my mind. Whenever I caught myself thinking about what might happen, I would turn my thoughts to praising and worshipping God or reading Scriptures. The Psalms especially brought me peace. I focused on just getting through right now. The more I practiced, the easier it became. I started to understand what it really meant to “trust” God.

After four months, Anthony was finally bonded out of jail. We are still waiting for a trial later this year, but we have learned to give our son to God. We are deeply in debt but are taking it one day at a time trusting our faithful God for all our needs. He has never let us down. I still catch myself worrying about tomorrow, but I quickly remind myself that it is all in God’s hands, and He is more than enough. (Matthew 6: 25 – 34)

May you find the peace and joy you yearn for through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! God bless you.

(Zechariah Ministries was able to assist the D’Amicos with some of their expenses.)
A nonprofit organization such as ours always appreciates new ways of funding the ministry it does. We were recently introduced to an unusual and interesting twist of support for charities that can even be fun.

MissionFish.org allows eBay sellers to pick a nonprofit to support with a percentage share of each sale. The seller gets paid by the buyer, same as always. MissionFish then collects the donation, pays the nonprofit and provides a tax receipt.

Sellers are assured as to the authenticity of the nonprofits they are supporting because MissionFish checks them out before accepting them for listing on their site. We are happy to have been accepted by this nonprofit service. If you feel led to, give them a try.

May the Lord continue to bless all who have given to this ministry. We extend special thanks to the following for their generous support:

- Richard & Sabrina Grosse
- Sharon Penquite
- Mrs. Irene Riebe
- Alan & Robin Miller
- Charles & Linda Landry
- Tony & Lynette D’Amico
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- Kent & Elizabeth Woods
- Lonnie & Christine Shor
- Ned & Betty Brueckner
- Robert & Diane McKay
- Mark & Angela Bruner
- Timothy & Gina Borbas
- Our intercessors, volunteers, financial supporters, Board of Directors, families, and ministries that have helped prepare us for service.

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I will bless you and make your name great,
And you will be a blessing.

*Genesis 12:2*