

RON CANTOR

**YOU'VE
GOT MAIL...
FROM
ODESSA**



[Read More](#)

**The Gripping, Yet Hilarious, Email Diary
of Messianic Jewish Family's Year of
Ministry in the Former Soviet Union**

You've Got Mail...from Odessa

*The Gripping, yet Hilarious Email Diary
of a Messianic Jewish Family's
Year of Ministry in the Former Soviet Union*

You've Got Mail...From Odessa

Ron Cantor

by Ron S. Cantor

Publisher: Messiah's Mandate Publishing (January 1, 2000)

Language: English

Paperback: 211 pages

ISBN-10: 0967381614

ISBN-13: 978-0967381619

You've Got Mail...From Odessa

Ron Cantor

Special Re-release as ePub—March 1, 2022

Introduction

It was June of 1997. I was in an Elders' meeting, as I had been serving as the Associate Messianic Rabbi for almost four years at Beth Messiah Congregation. My wife, Elana, and I had enjoyed our time at Beth Messiah, but over the past few months, we had both grown restless and felt that a new challenge and direction were just ahead. In addition, I had allowed my heart to grow cold in regards to the lost; and as someone whose primary call is outreach, this was of great concern.

From my heart, I began to share my concern with the brothers present, men I have grown to love and trust. They had walked me through my beginning years in ministry. They had been patient with my weaknesses while giving me the freedom to exert my strengths. The unity we had was something I greatly valued.

Shifting gears, I told them of an invitation I had received to come to Odessa, Ukraine, to teach at the Messianic Jewish Bible Institute (MJBI) for a week. One of the gentlemen present asked me what I would be teaching. "Outreach," I

replied. I knew how ridiculous that sounded. Here I was, a defeated evangelist, sharing with the other leaders that my heart for the lost *had been lost!* And now I was proposing to journey halfway across the globe to teach others on that very subject?

My friend then asked the inevitable question: “How are *you* going to teach on evangelism?”

“If I lived in Odessa, I would evangelize!” I replied, startled a bit by the boldness of my response because I had no intentions of moving to Odessa. Sure, I had some birth pangs concerning living in the Former Soviet Union. Each time I was there, I would come home ready to pack my bags and return. But it is one thing to speak about doing something, and another thing to do it.

David, the man who had asked the original question, also seemed shocked by my answer. “What did you say?” he asked. I repeated to him, “If I lived in Odessa, I would evangelize.”

After hesitating, this dear brother revealed that during a time of prayer a few months ago, he suddenly heard these words: THE CANTOR'S ARE MOVING TO ODESSA FOR A

YEAR. As David told us this, the Holy Spirit jumped inside me, bearing witness to his words, and I jumped from my chair.

“This is God!” I exclaimed, “This is God!”

However, by the end of the evening, I realized the absurdity of his words. “I’m not going to Odessa,” I thought. Elana confirmed this thought when I arrived home.

“The funniest happened tonight, sweetheart...” I told of the events at the Elders’ meeting.

“We are *not* moving to Odessa,” my precious wife proclaimed with certain conviction. I agreed.

I imagine that at that moment, God said, “We’ll see about that!”

Several weeks later, during a time of prayer, the Lord brought this subject back to my mind. It was after midnight, and for some reason, I was still up and praying—praying about our future. During that time of prayer, it became very clear to me that we would indeed be living in Ukraine.

I accepted the invitation to teach for a week, and Elana joined me on the trip. As the plane was landing, the Lord spoke to Elana (who is far more prophetic than me). He told

her that we would be moving to this place. As Elana looked out the window, she saw rusty planes that had been grounded for at least twenty years, grass that needed to be cut, and an airport that, for all intents and purposes, should not be operating. She replied, “No, Lord, we are not moving *here*.”

Now, before you judge her, keep in mind that most of you reading this have never even visited a place like Odessa, much less lived there. In addition, as a mother, she was terrified of raising three children in the midst of an extremely unsanitary culture.

A Change of Heart

Over the next month, her heart changed dramatically. One day, in late October of 1997, Elana walked into a department store and began to cry suddenly as the weight of moving to Odessa came crashing down upon her. The thought of her three babies in Ukraine just broke her heart. A clerk, an older woman, approached her and asked if everything was okay. Elana told her that she would not understand, but the clerk persisted. Finally, once Elana realized that this lady

would not go away, she blurted out, “My husband wants to move our family to Ukraine to live as missionaries, and frankly, it is overwhelming me!”

The woman responded calmly, “Oh no, you should not be sad about this. My husband and I spent twenty-five years on the mission field, and it was the greatest time of my life.”

What a confirmation! And how prophetic—Elana would say to me towards the end of our year in Odessa, “**This has been the greatest year of my life!**” Not more than a week after that incident, Elana became the primary force in preparing us for our move.

“What about the kids?” You may wonder. “How did they respond?” Well, depending on what day it was, they had different opinions, although Yael, who was six years old at the time, assured us that she was not going but would move in with my parents. All in all, they were excited about the new adventure. Looking back, they are so glad we lived there.

So...on August 13th, 1998, all of us, *including Yael*, boarded a 747 headed for Odessa, Ukraine. The next day at 4:30 PM, we landed. We were met at the airport by the

Messianic Jewish Bible Institute staff, and we were immediately driven by van to our new home.

Here our story begins. What you are about to read is a compilation of emails that I wrote from Odessa over the next year. I certainly never dreamed that they would become the basis for a book, but a story unfolded very naturally. Life, from day one, was so different and so exciting that I began to report to my friends back home. Suddenly, I started getting emails for other people asking to be added to our list (which really wasn't a list at that point), which grew to over three hundred names in just a few months. In the spring of 1999, I began to regularly get responses from people asking if we thought about compiling the emails into a book. I hope you will enjoy the story but first are just a few more comments.

While Reading, Keep in Mind...

Please keep a few things in mind as you read. First and foremost is that we published this book of emails to birth a burden for world outreach (especially for the Jewish people in Israel and scattered throughout the nations). Whether you

express that burden through giving, praying, and/or going, is between you and God—but all believers are called to play a role in world outreach. We know that Yeshua will not return until the Good News is proclaimed in every nation (Matt 24:14). I mention this later in the book but receive this challenge now—before you begin.

It is important to understand that this is a look at our *one year* on the field. I do not consider ourselves experienced missionaries by any means. There are hundreds, even thousands, of other true missionary families who have spent ten or twenty years on the mission field and never wrote a book. These people are worthy of double honor.

Also, as you read about some of the *light and momentary* trials we walked through, it is possible that you may think that you could never embrace such a life. In truth, if we had known what we would battle before we left the U.S., we probably would have never left. But looking back—from *the other side*—it really was not that difficult, and the rewards far outweighed any difficulties.

Let me make a few points on suffering and hardships:

1. Underestimating the Grace of God

We tend to look at hardships without taking into consideration *the grace of God*. We underestimate His power and ability to strengthen us in the time of trouble. The Bible says, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in *our time of need*” (Hebrews 4:16, italics mine).

We must understand that there is a tangible place called the *throne of grace*. We go there in prayer to obtain strength *to help us in our time of need*. My point is simple: There is grace for every trial. Whether it is battling fleas in Odessa or being tortured for your faith, God’s grace is sufficient to bring you through. The problem is that we look from our present position, with the grace that we *presently* have, and assume such a sacrifice would be too much for us to bear. In fact, the grace that we are walking through today is sufficient *for what we are walking through today*. If God calls you to suffer for His kingdom, then He will give you the grace needed to bring you through in victory. “*Fear not*,” dear friends, for the day may soon come when believers in every country could suffer for

their faith. Now is the time to build faith for such a scenario, and let not that day catch us unprepared.

I do not consider what we went through in Odessa worthy of comparing to what other missionaries have gone through. Our suffering was minor in contrast. Certainly, for us, it was stretching, but we were not stretched beyond the reach of God's grace. God met us in our inabilities and strengthened us in our time of need.

2. Embracing death, so others can receive life

Read this passage:

⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of Yeshua so that the life of Yeshua may also be revealed in our body. ¹¹For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Yeshua's sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. ¹²So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. (2 Corinthians 4:8-12)

This is one passage that I never fully understood before moving to Odessa. It sounded like gibberish to me. Death is life; life is death, etc.? But during the coldest days in Odessa, driving through ice and snow to minister the word of God, I suddenly had a glimpse into what Paul was saying. Let me say *again*—I would never begin to compare our sufferings with Paul's. For, that is like comparing an insect to an elephant. The fact that I would even call what we went through *suffering* only goes to show how weak we really are compared to our persevering predecessors.

What Paul was referring to when he speaks of carrying in our bodies the death of Yeshua is: *The suffering one goes through in order to get the good news to others.* That death embraced by Paul and his companions produced life in the people they reached. They joyfully embraced that death, knowing that their **“present sufferings [were] not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in [them]” (Rom 8:18).** Embracing the call to reach the lost is a death embrace. But this dancing with death is the only way to real life. Paul says that the two end results are this; *life in us*, the

missionaries, and *life in you* Corinthians, the people we reach with the Good News.

If we love people—if we desire to save them from the judgment to come, then suffering on earth for a few years is a small price to pay for their souls. And this is how we enter into Yeshua's death. Though ultimately He paid the price through His death, we enter into His death by embracing suffering in our efforts to get the Good News to others.

This is what Paul meant when he said:

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Messiah's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. (Colossians 1:24, italics mine)

The suffering endured to get the Good News to others fills up that which is lacking in the sufferings of Yeshua. One might wonder, *what could be lacking in Yeshua's suffering?* In terms of redemption, nothing—but in terms of getting the message to the lost, we may enter into Yeshua's suffering and “fill up that which is still lacking” through the persecution and trials we go through to reach them. Yeshua paid the price,

but it is our job to get the message out. “[H]ow can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? (Romans 10:14).

In addition—in the same way that Yeshua’s suffering brought life to the world, our suffering for Him releases the power of God in a greater way as we minister. Therefore we can rejoice in the midst of hardship for the Kingdom.

If we, the recipients of His love, are not willing to suffer with Him for the sake of sharing the Good News, we limit the reward Yeshua will have. Remember that it was the *joy set before Him* that gave Him the ability to *endure the cross*. That joy was the hope of hundreds of millions of people praising Him and loving Him in this life and the life to come.

Let death be at work in us so that life may be at work in the lost we reach with the Good News. We can rest on the other side!

3. Finding Yeshua in the Midst of Suffering

Paul the Jewish Rabbi from Tarsus, who penned half the New Covenant, including the passages we just quoted, found himself in a Roman jail. From there, he wrote several of these inspired letters, revealing the most intimate details of his relationship with God. And what were his petitions? *“Get me out of here, God! I have served you all this time, and what do I have to show for it? Nothing! And what about reward? All I have is this prison cell with rats running past me. It reeks of human excrement....”*

Well, if Paul *did* respond like this, surely it would have been understandable. But instead, Paul speaks to God in a way that is *beyond* understanding. Instead of lashing out at God because of his suffering, he cries out for more of God in the midst of his suffering while never complaining about his afflictions.

⁷But whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Messiah. ⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Messiah Yeshua my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Messiah...¹⁰I want to know Messiah and the power of his

resurrection and *the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,* ¹¹and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead...⁴**Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (Philippians 3:7-11; 4:4, italics mine)**

This man is not at the Hyatt Regency, Club Med, or lounging in the Virgin Islands. No, these are thoughts of a man in prison! Could anyone read this passage and realize that an incarcerated man wrote it? Compare his passion with that of your typical Westerner.

The point is simple! Paul is in the midst of suffering, well beyond anything this author or most of the readers of this book will ever go through, yet he has more joy, more passion, and more zeal for the Kingdom than any of us. We tend to think that the key to more peace and joy is to escape suffering, but Paul's declaration, "**I want to know Messiah and the fellowship of sharing in His *sufferings*, becoming like Him in His death,**" rails against such unbiblical thinking. Yeshua said that the key to finding your life is to lose it for His sake.

Paul understood something that very few Westerners do: That suffering for Yeshua leads to a deeper, more intimate

knowledge of Him. Paul connects knowing Yeshua with sharing in His sufferings. I am not recommending suffering just for the sake of suffering. But rather, embracing a lifestyle that is willing to suffer for the sake of the Good News.

I have heard Richard Wurmbrand, the Jewish pastor from Romania, refer to his fourteen years in prison as “*glorious*.” When threatened with death on the cross, the apostle Andrew said, “If I were afraid of the death of the cross, I would not have preached of the majesty, honor, and glory of the cross.” Upon seeing the cross, he said, “The nearer I come to the cross, the nearer I come to God. And the farther I am from the cross, the farther I remain from God.”¹

Friends, this is my point exactly, that when we embrace the cross, we find resurrection; when we lose our life for the Good News, we find life. Do not be afraid to suffer, for this could be the very thing you have been looking for. In your efforts to experience more of God, embracing suffering for the Kingdom may be just the key!

I am convinced that suffering brings a deep, intimate revelation of Yeshua, which cannot be gained without it. The

one thing we see in all these men, Paul, Wurmbrand, and Andrew, is a passionate love for Yeshua. We, too, will love him like that if we do not shrink back from suffering.

Suffering moves us to trust God and depend on Him in a deeper way:

⁸We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered...We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. ⁹Indeed, in our hearts, we felt the sentence of death. *But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.* (2 Cor 1:8-9, italics mine)

The fact is, anyone who wants to be effective for the kingdom will endure suffering to some degree:

In fact, *everyone* who wants to live a godly life in Messiah Yeshua will be persecuted... (2 Tim 3:12, italics mine)

You say, “Yea, but that was Paul. After all, he visited the third heavens. Who wouldn’t be willing to suffer after such visitations?”

Keep in mind that it was *after* Paul's visitations that he cried out to know more of God, and in all likelihood, Paul's journey to the other side happened in Acts 14. He was preaching in Lystra when the crowd turned against him and stoned him. It says that **“[t]hey stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.” (Acts 14:19)** It is this writer's belief that they thought he was dead because HE WAS DEAD! Then the disciples gathered around him, and he got up. In other words, they raised him from the dead. It is my belief that it was during that time that he visited the other side.

My point is that it was in the midst of intense suffering (being stoned for his faith) that he had this great experience with God.

Only three verses later, we see Paul **“strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith.”** He says that **“[w]e must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God...” (Acts 14:22).** The scars and scabs on his body from the stoning probably stood as a powerful visual aid to get the point across.

Other Important Notes:

You will notice that some emails seem to start on a certain day of the week, and then halfway through the message, I will say, "It is Saturday." This is simply because I would sometimes write an email over several days.

In addition, there are several times when I say, "We are going to do such and such..." We did not do everything we hoped to do. When I was editing these emails for the book, I considered deleting items like this because I didn't want to be misleading. However, I concluded that the purpose of the book demanded that these statements stay in the book because the book is a picture of a family's year in Ukraine and what we were thinking and experiencing at any given moment.

One last thing: You will notice that I end my emails with the phrase, "Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos." I don't need to explain the first part—it is our passion. The reason I asked people to ignore the typos was because my emails were usually full of them. Hopefully, you will not find any in this book because people, more attentive than myself,

have gone through it many times searching for typos. We kept the phrase because it became a signature mark of the emails—both the ending and the typos themselves.

May God use this book to ignite a passion in you to carry the Good News forth into all the world.

Ron Cantor, March 2, 2000

PS. The original had some photos. We were not able to import them. If there are references to photos, it is referring to those.

Thursday, August 13, 1998 7:18 AM

Subject: SHALOM FRIENDS

Well, this is it! The day has finally come that we embark on a year-long (or longer) adventure in the Former Soviet Union (FSU). We have longed for this—to see the other side of the world, where life is so different. But now that it is finally happening, I am in shock. Am I really getting on the plane today? Has Elana really agreed to this?

I remember almost seven years ago, before my first trip to Russia, I begged God to let us move there. He said, “No.” I recall leaving Tolgatti that summer. I got a little taste of what a mother goes through who gives up her baby for adoption. We had birthed this baby, a new congregation, and now we had to leave her. I wept with all my heart as the bus pulled away. I could not be consoled. As the bus pulled away, I still remember Irina (the prostitute who became the secretary of the new congregation), Sara (our interpreter who left Islam to embrace Yeshua), and Andre (yet another interpreter who

accepted Yeshua during the festival). They were all there waving goodbye. And all I could do was weep.

If Elana and the kids were with me on that day many summers ago, I think I would have jumped off the bus and rented an apartment. But it wasn't time. Now, after six years serving Beth Messiah Congregation as a Youth leader, College and Career leader, and Associate Messianic Rabbi, I finally get to go.

Today at 4:55 PM, we head north to JFK in New York. At 10:15 PM, we fly east to Austria. And at noon tomorrow, we take off for Odessa, arriving at 4:30 PM Odessa time (9:30 AM EST).

So many of you who will receive this have walked with us these past ten months as we have prepared to go. *Thank you.* Your prayers and support have made a huge difference.

I also want to say thank you to several men. The Lord did not allow me to go six years ago because I was not ready. I was too immature. Dan Juster has taught me the importance of government, leadership, living by godly principles, and what it means to be a Messianic Jew. He has pounded these

principles into my spirit, and now they are a part of me. Dan, although you gave up a son to heaven, you still have many more on earth who are indebted to you. I am privileged to be one.

David Rudolph prophesied that we would go to Odessa. At the moment, it seemed surreal. But the more we prayed, the more it became clear that this was the will of God. David, you and Emma have been the single greatest influence in getting us ready for life on the field. We love you and your family dearly.

Jerry Miller has been the enforcer in my life these past few years. He has put up with a lot from me, but I am so grateful that he has had the *chutzpah* to hold me accountable and reign me in when needed.

Michael Brown rescued me years ago from overanxious anti-missionaries with whom I was meeting. His confidence and scholarship helped build my faith in the fact that Yeshua is the One the prophets spoke about. Above all, he has been a friend.

Eitan Shishkoff has been like a father to both Elana and me. He married us, counseled us, and has always been there for us. By God's grace, we will one day join him in the *Eretz Yisrael*—The Land of Israel.

Asher Intrater taught me how to take hold of God and not let go. He has been a constant example to me in perseverance and loyalty. **“If you falter in times of trouble, how small is your strength!”** (Prov 24:10).

And of course, we are grateful to my parents, Phil and Susie Cantor, who are worthy of honor (to put up with me during my childhood was no small accomplishment).

Please pray for our travel plans. We leave the house at 2 PM today. And if you feel like responding to this email, we would love to hear from you. Every word of encouragement adds strength to our faith.

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Monday, August 17, 1998 5:33 PM

Subject: SHALOM FROM ODESSA

Dear Friends,

Well, we made it. Today I was having chai (tea) with a young man at the Schneiers' house. When he found out that I was 33 years old, he said to me in his broken English, "JESUS CHRIST!" eluding to the fact that Yeshua was 33 when he was killed. And there was the irony; I had come to Odessa to be crucified. We all had a good laugh. But what truth! Since we arrived on Friday, we have battled jet lag, a lost bag (which was never recovered), blackouts, a killer dog as our neighbor, toxic gas fumes, and our latest foe, *plochi*—fleas.

We thought that being across from the huge outdoor market, Novo Bazaar (or Price Club as we call it), would be an advantage. But at 5:30 AM the next morning, we awoke to horns, traffic, and the nauseating aroma of diesel fuel.

All this was difficult but tolerable. But then, on our third night came the *visitors*. My daughter Yael woke up at about 2:30 AM. "Daddy, I can't sleep because of these mosquito

bites.” I took her in the kitchen to put some lotion on her. When I sat down, I noticed there were several black dots on my own leg—and they were jumping! So at 2:35 AM, I realized that we were not battling mere mosquitoes but that our home was being invaded by an army of fleas.

What do you do when you find out that your house is infested with fleas and it is 2:30 AM? You don't know who to call, and if you did, it wouldn't matter because you don't speak their language. I put her back in bed, curled up in a sheet, and simply went to sleep, thinking to myself, “This was not in the brochure!” The next morning, I went to Wayne Wilks' flat and told him about the problem. Dr. Wilks is the director of the Bible college with which we are working. I didn't know how he would react. I thought that maybe he might say, “Hey Ron, this is Odessa. We all deal with fleas. Welcome to reality. You just have to be tough!”

Fortunately, he didn't think we were being wimpy and helped us get out of that apartment immediately. Thank goodness there was an available apartment that was

temporarily vacant while some fellow workers were in the States.

The plane trip over was relatively smooth. However, one of our boxes is missing. Please pray that Austrian Air is able to recover it. We were greeted at the airport by three of the couples that work with the school. They took us to our apartment, which by Ukrainian standards is luxury; by American standards, it is like something you would find in the slums. Let's just say that it did not exactly fit the description in the brochure.

On our first night here, we had a little adventure. As we were sitting with our friends, Valentine and Tatiana, the lights went out. It was pitch black. The kids were terrified. We tried to make a little adventure out of it for the kids' sake. I began to search the boxes by match light, looking for a candle. Wouldn't you know it, the candle was in box #5, the one that is lost.

Then, Valentine took the stuffing from one of the boxes and put it in the fireplace. We lit a small fire and kept adding paper as needed. Then (on my first night in Odessa, jet-lagged

and exhausted), I walked Val and Tatiana to the gate of our courtyard so they could leave. I locked it and then had to walk back through the pitch black, rocky courtyard by the light of a match.

I kept adding paper to the fire. I told the kids that once the paper was done burning, that would be it, and we would just go to sleep. However, in a few minutes, the lights came on.

Danielle came up to us yesterday and said, "I can't believe we live in a mansion!" We laughed but did not tell her that this was far from a mansion. Please pray for the girls that they will make a quick transition. Our ten-year-old neighbor, Oxana, escorted Elana and the girls on a little tour last night through the market. She speaks no English but is overjoyed to have three American girls living next to her.

Personally, I am doing okay. Yet, if I did not know that God had called us here, I would be very nervous. It is the peace that comes from the confidence that we are in His will and that He will sustain us.

Despite the fact that Danielle thinks we live in a mansion, we will be looking for another apartment. This is our biggest prayer request. Our landlady is looking to sell our present apartment and has already asked if we would be willing to move. We are happy to do so because we desire a better location and neighborhood—without fleas. Our dear friends Valentine and Tatiana have worked hard finding another one for us, and we are so grateful.

AGAIN PLEASE PRAY THAT WE FIND GOD'S PERFECT WILL FOR AN APARTMENT. And pray that our present landlady, a new Believer, will refund our money.

From Elana: Well, I am ready to come back home. Just kidding. Ron says I have a good attitude, but it has been difficult. Especially seeing the kids suffer in little ways. Sharon is really missing her friends and “Grandma.” She was crying the other night, saying she was missing my friend Katherine. But this morning, she woke up, and as we left the apartment, she said, “I’m really getting used to this.” Their attitudes change hour by hour.

Sharon and I had a date this morning. We went to the market and bought some vegetables. This is a huge outdoor market. Bees, dogs, and cats roam freely. Sharon was helping me to pick out fruits and veggies. Despite the decor, it is well worth it. The fruits and veggies here are so delicious. They taste like they are supposed to. We had the most delicious watermelon the other day.

We love you and miss you greatly.

Ron again: Please continue to send emails to us. They are very encouraging.

Thanks for your prayers.

Tell someone about Yeshua today, and please ignore the typos.

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Thursday, August 20, 1998 7:20 AM

Subject: SHALOM #2

Dear Friends,

Good news! We saw a really nice apartment today right in the center of the city. However, none of us (the real estate agent, the brother-in-law of the owner, nor myself) could locate any heating unit. This is a must for wintry Odessa. They told me that the owner will be here on Saturday and will show us the heating unit.

Even if we do not rent this, Elana and I were greatly encouraged simply to see a clean apartment at a reasonable price. Tonight we will look at more.

This one is on the "walking street" right above the Reebok store. The walking street is a tourist trap. People from all over the Former Soviet Union (FSU) come here to vacation because of its vicinity to the Black Sea. Every time you walk down the street, there are men who give you their alligator to hold, then they take a picture of you and their baby alligator, snake, or lizard for \$6 U.S.

It is actually quite beautiful. Cobblestone streets, open-air cafes, and live music on every corner. AND a McDonald's coming soon right next to the apartment we may rent. Yesterday, I was encouraged when I saw two guys from *Jews for Jesus* handing out tracts on the walking street.

Last night, Wednesday, after I was taken on a 3-mile apartment search marathon by foot, Elana and the kids met me at the walking street. There was a benefit concert for an orphanage. All of Odessa's top entertainers performed, including a children's dance troop that was unbelievable. They danced to a medley of *Lion King* songs, a song from *Beauty and the Beast*, and, would you believe, *GHOSTBUSTERS!*

The children here perfect their talents while they are young. Everyone plays at least one instrument and speaks at least two or three languages.

One act was really bizarre. An overweight woman in a belly dancer's outfit came out with three snakes and a baby alligator. The third of her snakes must have been 20 feet long and 8 inches in diameter. She laid him down, and 25 children

stormed the stage to touch it. It is times like this when you wonder where you are and to what century you have traveled in time.

Tonight Elana and I will look at several more apartments. ****PLEASE PRAY THAT WE FIND THE RIGHT ONE**** We really must leave the place where we have been staying by Monday.

The children are learning to walk long distances. Without a car, we must walk everywhere. We are all getting in shape.

Lastly, thank you for your notes. They keep us encouraged. And please pray that we enjoy, more than anything else during this time, a cutting-edge relationship with God. We love Him deeply. Be blessed.

Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos.

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Monday, August 24, 1998 11:19 AM

Subject: FROM FLEAS TO FABULOUS

Dear Friends,

Odessa is a city of contradictions. On the one hand, the young women in public dress in a way that most would be ashamed to dress in private. On the other hand, they would not be able to sleep at night if they thought they cheated you out of one *kopeka* (1/2 penny). On more than one occasion, Elana and I have been called back to the market as we have walked away. The problem: We did not receive all of our change. You would think these poor people would just keep it. This is an even greater shock to Elana, being Israeli.

Each day brings deeper encouragement, although we all have our moments of frustration. However, news that Mark McGuire hit homers number 50 and 51 last night brings enough excitement that I should be okay for at least several hours!

Testimony of God's Favor: From Fleas to Fabulous

One morning last week I had the type of prayer time that I would call “breakthrough.” The Lord touched me deeply. Up until then, I felt like my main calling in life was to simply survive: kill fleas, find an apartment and buy veggies at the market. But that morning the Lord reaffirmed our call to the Ukrainian Jews, to preach the Good News.

In addition, I felt that the apartment issue was now completely in God's hands and He would act soon. Within hours we were in the apartment God would give us, looking it over. As we began our apartment search, we were told not to expect too much too soon, because it can take up to a month to find the right apartment.

The next morning I was praying, and I asked the Lord where we were supposed to live. Although we liked this one apartment, we were seeing many and wanted the one God had picked out. In my spirit I clearly heard the word *malaco*. This is a Russian word and I knew I had heard it before but could not remember what it meant. I thought maybe there is a *Malaco* Street.

Later that day I remembered what *malaco* means: MILK. I thought, "Well I did not hear God on that." But that evening I understood what God was saying. The apartment we like is on *Derebosovskaya* Street, which is pronounced DAIRYbosovskaya. *Malaco*--Milk--Dairy. Of course, at that time we did not know if we would get the apartment.

Yesterday, we met the owner and after some anointed haggling, we agreed on a price--the price that Elana and I said we would pay and no more. Plus, the owner is leaving us all her appliances: microwave, washing machine, TV, VCR and more. She will leave these items until our container arrives. The price we agreed upon is clearly \$350 a month below market value. Also, to further confirm the MILK word, she is throwing in the family cow! JUST KIDDING, but we do get to keep all the roaches we find!

She even left little things like a coffee bean grinder, dishes, silverware and a very modern Panasonic telephone (not too different from the one in our container). If Elana and I knew we would be so blessed, we would not have bought some things we did. But this is very uncommon here.

We are so blessed. Everyone who comes into the apartment loves it and feels the peace of God. We are moving in this morning (Sunday). We think we will call it REEBOK HOUSE, because we are on top of the Reebok store. In Hebrew, *reba* means *gem*. We could also call it LEVI HOUSE, because it is also on top of the Levi's store. That would be even more Biblical!

Derebosovskaya is the main tourist street in Odessa. About 300 yards long, it is filled with cafes, entertainment and a very pleasant environment--extremely safe for children to play. There is no traffic, either. The street is also called the walking street because vehicles are not allowed on it.

Please pray for the soon and safe delivery of our container. Elana and I are so excited about setting up our home base today.

Job Description

Yesterday, I met with Dr. Wayne Wilks. Wayne is the director of the Bible school. He shared with me his expectations. I will be teaching two or three courses this year:

Evangelism, The History of Zionism and maybe *Authority and the Kingdom of God*.

In addition, I will serve as the Student Ministries Director. I will act as a liaison between the congregation, Gateway to Zion, and the MJB (Bible school), seeing that each student has a function within the congregation.

There will also be opportunities (once I feel our family is firmly established here) to take students out into some of the hundreds of villages in Ukraine where there are Jews and non-Jews who have not heard the Good News. It is a dream for me.

Other Items...

Yesterday, I walked into the *Londonskaya* hotel and asked if there was a public restroom. The lady told me that there was not. As I was leaving, she said, "There is one, but there is only a toilet." I thought, "Did she think I was looking for a shower?" I love Odessa--it is so exciting and challenging.

I understand Mark McGuire hit another homer last night—52—ten to go. The Internet has been our link to the world. With email and the WWW we do not feel so far from all

of you. Hudson Taylor never had such helps as he made his way into the interior of China. David Livingstone could have used a satellite hookup as he mapped out the jungles of Africa. Until next time, we love you and pray God's favor on your life.

Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos!
For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,
Ron & Elana Cantor

Wednesday, August 26, 1998 3:03 PM

Subject: THE CIRCUS

Dear Friends,

We took the kids to the circus on Sunday evening. Incredible! They had a blast. Although, Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey, this ain't. Only one ring and a crowd of about 200. Any American fire chief would shut it down. You can get very claustrophobic when you begin to look around for balcony exits. But it was great. No lions, but there were two llamas! There was one father-son team where the dad walked out with his son's head on his head. Get the picture, they were both vertical and the son was upside down—when I say son, I mean a 180-pound man!

The children all said tonight that they like it here. Actually, Yael said she is “starting” to like it here (but she was smiling). This is a big breakthrough. Today was one of our best days. We finished getting our apartment set up. Last night, Elana dumped an entire bottle of bleach on the bathroom floor and left it there overnight. The bathroom has

smelled of urine since we moved in. There isn't any ventilation in the bathroom and so the smell has a tendency to drift--get my drift? Of course we had a different challenge during the night; we had to keep the children from walking into the bleach-filled bathroom if they woke up in the middle of the night. No details, but we dealt with it. Hey folks, this ain't the US. Well, we woke up this morning to a different smell--our bathroom smelled like a thousand swimming pools from the chlorine. But after we watered down the bathroom floor, we had a new, sweet-smelling bathroom (for a little while at least).

Yesterday, I went to Home Depot and today Danielle and I took a cab to Price Club. What I call "Home Depot" is actually a massive open-air hardware market. It is so big you can get lost. I was able to get some supplies for our house including some white spray paint for the rusting pipes in the bathroom. "Price Club" is the other market. The New Bazaar (they should call it *bizarre!*) is its name. It is a place where you can get all sorts of foods, perishable and non-perishable, as well as light hardware, health and beauty aids and more. As

Danielle and I walked through the fruit and vegetable area today I thought, "What a great experience this is for her." I turned to her and said, "Honey, this isn't GIANT (food chain in Maryland) is it?"

The meat market is a sight to behold at the New Bazaar. Not air-conditioned, it is filled with every type and part of meat you can imagine. Tongue, liver, heart, legs and heads, no part of the precious pig or cow is wasted. The most unsettling sight is the pig's head. I saw about five of them today. They look very peaceful, eyes closed—probably didn't feel a thing. I am still trying to figure out what you do with it once you buy it—hang it on your wall? Hood ornament? Who knows?

Also at the New Bazaar, different ladies will walk around the market with a tray, like you would use at McDonald's. On the tray could be hors d'oeuvres or a full meal. You simply stop her and buy something. Then there is the cappuccino lady. She escorts a large thermos on wheels. You just stop her and for about twenty cents, you can enjoy a cappuccino as you shop.

Tomorrow Elana and I celebrate our 10th anniversary. God has blessed me with a wonderful helpmate, one who would follow me halfway around the world. We plan to spend most of the day together.

Another breakthrough was when I was able to witness to two people on Monday—back to back—in English. I go days without hearing English, and here I met two English speakers in a row. Neither were very fruitful conversations; nevertheless, I was encouraged.

Well, it is almost 10 PM here and I am going to attempt to go to bed early. Although in the States, I would usually go to bed at 10:30 or so, here I have only been in bed before 1 AM once or twice.

Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Monday, August 31, 1998 3:30 PM

Subject: ODESSA'S GROUCHO MARKS

Dear Friends,

Shalom again from ODESSA, one of the most interesting cities in the world. Great service yesterday! David and Leslye Schneier were back in town to lead the service. It is a little frustrating not understanding the worship songs, but the sense of God's presence is wonderful. David is a unique pastor. When everything is flowing right during worship he just smiles like a proud papa. If you do not know David, just think of a Spirit-filled Groucho Marks. David keeps us laughing here.

At the end of the service, David gave an altar call and ten people came forward, several in tears. It was powerful. And I said to myself, "This is why we came!"

David tells a funny story. When you buy something here, if they do not have the exact change, they will offer you something cheap around the register; a pack of matches, etc. This happened to David. He got a pack of matches instead of

a couple of *kopekas* (pennies). So a few days later, David was buying something and HE didn't have exact change, so thinking quick, he pulled out of his pocket the pack of matches that the same lady gave him the other day and offered it to her. She didn't find it as amusing as he did.

We have been very careful about what we eat here, as many Ukrainian products are suspect. (*Remember the pig's heads?*) Elana and I went to eat at one of the nicest restaurants in Odessa for our anniversary. Everything is imported. The chef is American and he will not use *anything* from Ukraine. Wouldn't you know it, after our meal I was sick for 24 hours! Maybe this was God's little rebuke to me not to despise this nation. Now the girls have what I had. Sharon threw up three times last night. This becomes an even bigger deal when you barely have enough sheets for everyone. Each time she got sick, it was one less set of sheets because our stuff is still in the container.

Speaking of the container, it is in Odessa. It got here on the 23rd, but because the company in America has failed to get the paperwork here we have had to wait. The paperwork

should be here in the morning (Monday). Please pray about this today. Pray that the papers get here ASAP! Thank you.

(It is Monday now and I have the papers!! Praise the Lord!)

When does it help to read Russian? When the sign says WET PAINT!! Fortunately, Elana and I were able to figure it out before the children grabbed the freshly painted railings. Life is never boring here.

The temperature has dropped quickly. It is currently in the high 40s or low 50s and it is still August!

Prayer Requests:

1. Souls, lots of 'em
2. That we find a solution to our plumbing problem.

Our drain in the bathroom continues to overflow with sewage. It is quite disgusting. There must be a clog. I bought some kind of liquid plumber this morning at the market, but I can't read the directions. Pray!

We love you, be blessed and tell someone about Yeshua today!

P.S. Yael just asked me to turn on the AIR CONDITIONER. HAHAHA What “air conditioner?” I asked. We opened the window; that is our air conditioner.

Wait, There's More!!

I could not send this on Sunday morning because the phone was not working—so I thought I would add this typical day in Odessa:

(This is my Sunday) I woke and made coffee. Today I became real creative. At first I was drinking instant. But when my desire for filtered coffee became too strong, I merely poured hot water into a cup with the coffee and then skimmed the grinds off the top. However today I cut off the top 4 inches of a 1-liter plastic water bottle. I turned it upside down over the cup like a funnel and put three napkins inside; then the coffee. Next, I poured hot water over it and just like that—my own manual, non-electric Mr. Coffee.

Earlier this morning (as in 4 AM) I walked into the bathroom and noticed that the drain in the middle of the floor had overflowed with raw sewage. Yuck! This normally only

happens when we drain the bathtub. (Our drain is apparently not fully working, so when it is given too much water to deal with, that which went in the toilet comes out of the drain in the bathroom floor. Then it recedes leaving...well, you'll figure it out. I know it's gross, but it's the truth.) I had to do something. So this morning I put some clothes on and walked a mile or so to the kitchen supply store to buy some Drano or the Ukrainian equivalent. They were closed. By the way, did I mention it was about 45 degrees and rainy and August 30th?

Okay, let's try the market. By walking at a fast pace you can get a good workout—seriously. You do not see any young overweight people here because they walk everywhere. Once I made it to the market I did find some Mr. Muscle powdered drain cleaner. Then I walked home, another mile or so. I had breakfast and wrote the above letter and then the phone stopped working. Why? I did not know. So I went to the congregational prayer meeting. While I was leaving the prayer meeting, Yura offered to help me find a plumber. We went to my house to use the phone, but then remembered—

the phone is not working. So—we went to the MJBFI office and called from there. The plumber said he would come at 4:15.

After we got home Natasha showed me some unpaid phone bills from the landlord. This must be why the phone was not working. So I gave her some money and she went to pay it. She came back with the receipts and said I would have to take the receipts tomorrow to what David Schneier affectionately calls the “*phone prison*.” In the phone prison you stand in a big line to either pay your bill or prove you paid your bill. Then they look your phone number up in these huge monster notebooks. Once they find you, they give you a piece of paper which you then take into a room that looks like the most disorganized disaster. You give them your paper and then they tell you when your phone will (might) be turned back on. Of course, looking at the disaster they call an office you wonder if they even know what a phone is.

At this point it was about three o'clock and I took the two older children to the port to see the beautiful Italian ship that has docked there for a few days. We arrived at the port only

to find a line at least an hour long. So we returned to our stinky apartment.

I collapsed and woke up right at 4:15, and to my shock the plumber showed up. Just when you are sure that nothing can be counted on in this country the plumbers are on time. Yura talked to them. Yura did not want them to know that we were Americans because they would charge us more. They informed us that the lady above us is a little *meshugge* (Yiddish: crazy) and that she will sometimes flush shirts down the toilet and that they were just here two weeks ago (before we moved in). After half an hour it appeared that the plumbers were having trouble figuring out the problem and we began to pray. Can you imagine this in the states; praying that the plumber would be able to fix your drains!! In America we pray that he will fix it quickly and he won't leave us penniless! Well, they fixed it and it cost a whopping *eight dollars!* (We found out later that they only thought they fixed it.)

Yura and his pregnant wife Katya stayed for pizza. Then Peter and Ginny Van Der Steer and their son Joshua came over

and also had some pizza. After they left, we put the kids to sleep and then Elana and I crawled into bed. Just as I was almost asleep, Elana got sick. So the day was not over—and after the previous night we could not afford to get any sheets dirty.

She felt much better afterwards and we really went to sleep. That, my friends, is a day in Odessa.

Oh, did I mention that the plumbers don't clean up when they leave? Oy, what a mess. Our dear sister Nellie (without anyone asking) simply cleaned it up for us. What servant's hearts these dear people have. Daily I am humbled by the respect I receive. Sometimes I feel guilty recognizing that the only difference between us is that we lived in affluent America. But on the day of Judgement, it will be I who am honoring them.

It is now Monday and I went to the phone prison and found out the problem was *not* with the bill, but simply that the phone was not properly plugged in. AHHHHH! This morning was the first day of the Messianic Jewish Bible Institute. Sharon and I went and I took about ten minutes and

gave an introduction, along with the rest of the staff, to the students.

Container

God is good. Our container arrived, and tomorrow I go to clear it through customs. Please pray concerning this. Pray that it will go smoothly, without a hitch, through customs and that on Wednesday, it will be unloaded here.

Once again, May He bless you and use you in a mighty way to touch someone.

Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

P.S. Notice the different addresses now. We can receive mail at the Odessa P.O. BOX.

P.S.S. I know parts of this letter are a little redundant. It is because I wrote it over two days.

Monday, September 07, 1998 3:56 AM

Subject: TWO FOR TWO

In two days of having my car and driving in Odessa, I have ONLY received two tickets! The fact that I have my car should indicate to you that we did receive our container. After our third day of standing around waiting in a shipyard, Valerie (man) finally flew into the *cafe* (not what you think, this is Odessa) and said the container would be unloaded in ten minutes. I didn't know if I believed him or not. Nothing is ever sure over here and this was our third day of waiting.

Well, in ten minutes it was opened and a bunch of workers were pulling everything out. Then we rolled the car out and it would not start. However, after reconnecting the battery cables, it cranked right up, thank God. But what a smell! All of our stuff had been locked up in an airtight container for a month. The gas smell from the car was in everything. Nevertheless, I was thrilled. The customs guy did his inspection. No problems. Then the car customs guy had to come. Finally we were ready to go. In order to get out you

must pass through three or four different gates and pray there are no problems. At the first gate, the old fellow at the booth said there was a problem. It had to do with something someone scratched off on the documents. I walked up to him, as Tatiana and the driver were explaining to him the situation and said in English “this container is going through!” three times. The third time he looked at me and then in about 15 seconds he let us through. As we were walking away he said, “a drink, a drink.” He wanted me to buy him a drink. The corruption over here is so bad on every level. Even low level gatekeepers will try and stall you in hopes of gaining a dollar or glass of vodka. I almost did give him a drink—the Black Sea was only about twenty feet away! (I was going to treat him to a drink *and* a swim).

Finally, with Valerie's relationships and charisma we got through the other two gates. At home, several students were waiting to help unload. We did it quickly.

The next day I drove to school. Driving in Odessa resembles an amusement park ride more than an American

highway or side street. OFFENSIVE driving is the name of the game.

I was driving home from the school when a militia (police) guy pulled me over. The best thing to do is play happy, dumb American. This worked as he did not even ask for ID, and just sent me on my way once he heard English. An hour later I was giving Elana and the girls a ride to Wayne Wilk's house when I went through the same intersection and was pulled over again, but this time by his partner. These guys will just hang out at certain places for hours pulling over anyone who looks suspicious or breaks the law. Because I do not yet have a front license plate I am always a perfect target.

I turned to Elana, feeling a bit emboldened by the fact that it was no big deal the first time, and said, "These guys are my friends, as soon as they see I am an American they will let us go. It is nothing." Well, *nothing* took about an hour. My huge mistake was driving without my papers—something you never do in Odessa. This guy spoke no English and we argued back and forth and then we both would laugh knowing that neither of us understood anything the other was saying.

Finally, a gentleman who spoke English walked by. He told me that the militia guy (MG) had called his commander and I could not leave until he got there. I asked the English speaker to please walk Elana and the kids to where they were going and he did. Turns out, he is a big time surgeon and extremely nice. He came back to the spot to let me know that they arrived safely.

First the MG told me, through the interpreter, that he was going to impound my car, because I did not have the proper document with me. I told him, "NO YOU WILL NOT DO THIS." Despite the confusion, and the seriousness of the situation, I was filled with joy and excitement. There was no fear at all. I knew God would work it out, and was actually enjoying the whole situation, realizing that every experience only helps you to deal with the city better.

Finally, the commander showed up and we found a lady who spoke perfect French and Russian and a little English. He let me run home and get my papers. I came back and was fined 17 *hrevna's* (\$7.00). By this time I was joking with the MG and

telling him that his partner was good, but he was mean because he gave me all this trouble.

On my second day driving, we had a caravan going from Odessa to Nicolaev for a wedding. Nastia, a former MJI student whom Elana and I met a year ago when we were here, was getting married. They were the most attractive bride and groom! They were radiant with God's glory. It was a simple wedding. The ceremony did not last more than a few minutes. We sat down and ate. It was the first wedding I ever attended where we actually ate before everyone was cranky and agitated.

On the way I did something illegal (I still am not sure what) and three out of the four of us in the caravan were pulled over and fined. Never a dull moment.

Today I was driving to the Jewish cultural center to get info on Hebrew courses and the same MG from the other day pulled me over. This time, he laughed, and knowing what a nightmare it would be for him to communicate with me, he just motioned for me to keep going.

It Is Monday:

I was pulled over again. This time I was able to convince the MG that the fact that I do not have a front license plate is really OK. I was taking the girls to school for their first day. When I arrived home this morning, I noticed that the drain in the bathroom floor was overflowing with sewage again. I had bought a Russian formula of Drano the other day so I was prepared. However, once I poured a little bit down the drain, I wondered if this was the wisest decision. I am not kidding when I say *smoke* began to come back up through the drain. And the smell—well, it didn't smell like Drano—but one of the foulest odors I have ever endured. I felt like Robin Williams in *Flubber*. I hoped Elana wouldn't come home soon! Just another day in the FSU.

You may pray for us. All of us had sour stomachs this morning—probably last night's dinner. Thanks for your friendship and prayer.

P.S. My neighbor just rang the bell. She told me there was a problem in her apartment. I knew immediately what it was. Her apartment smelled of ultra powerful disgusting Russian

Drano. I explained it was OK (I think) and what I did. She was relieved, but her apartment still stunk. Gaithersburg would be nice right about now.

P.S.S. Elana just came home with Tatiana and wanted to know what the smell was. I gave Tatiana the bottle and asked her if I did it right (the directions were in Russian.). She said I used four doses. Oops!

Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Thursday, September 10, 1998 4:03 PM

Subject: WORST DAY YET

Dear Friends,

What a day yesterday was. Probably my worst yet. This is the second time I have been sick since arriving. I feel much better today, but not 100%. Each day brings new challenges and frustrations. The biggest frustration I am experiencing is finding the time to do the things I came here to do. I was warned before I came to be patient in this area, but it is difficult. Each time I sit down to study or write—someone knocks at the door, the phone rings, it is time to pick up the girls at school or I need to give Elana a ride somewhere.

The dust here is unbearable. If I get up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom, by the time I return to bed I am sneezing and blowing my nose. Each time this happens I am dealing with it for an hour or more. Fortunately, I have begun taking Claritin, and the allergies have been reduced drastically. In America you can get an air purifier and you really don't need it, whereas here, they are desperately

needed and they have never heard of such a thing. For the past two days I have been fighting off a strong cold. In the States I was rarely sick; here, I have been sick twice already.

When I am feeling well, few things bother me; when I am not, everything bothers me. The enemy knows this as well. Please pray for my health.

The morning sun here is blinding. This is OK because it is better than clouds, but it is also dangerous. Sometimes I cannot tell if someone is crossing the street or the color of the traffic light. I have to watch the other cars to see when they stop. The traffic lights are not above your head like in America, but off to the side and sometimes they do not even directly face you so you have no idea where they are located.

The other day I experienced something particularly troubling. I was driving to school to pick up the girls and I noticed a man in the middle of the intersection on the ground! My first thought was that a car had hit him. One sandal was on the ground. He did not look injured, but each time he tried to get up he fell down again. My heart was breaking as cars merely drove around him RIGHT IN THE

MIDDLE OF A BUSY INTERSECTION. My frustration deepened because I felt helpless. I can't speak the language, I can't call 911, I can't do anything. Later I found out that he most likely was not hit by a car, but drunk. Even still it was very unsettling.

This morning we woke up late and got the girls to school late. When I got home I came right to my computer. Just as I began to write the doorbell rang. It was Serge the Landlord. He had come to ground my washing machine. Then Nellie (our friend, and on this occasion our interpreter) came over, then Serge the Electrician. As things settled down I thought, "Maybe I can work now," but Elana needed a ride to the Bible school. She begins teaching Hebrew today.

Now Danielle and I are home and everything is quiet. Finally!

Last night Elana and I had had it. She was in tears and I wanted to be. Just then David Schneier came over. David reminded us that we needed to laugh more. And in a few minutes we were in stitches. A merry heart doeth good like a medicine—and it was just the medicine we needed.

I have told you about Oksana our neighbor. She is a prostitute and needs Yeshua. Last night at 3:30 AM the doorbell rang. I looked through the peephole and saw that it was Oksana. I got Elana, feeling that it would be better for her to answer the door. Oksana was very upset and Elana and she went to her apartment. She said to Elana, “You are good and I am very bad.” They both burst into tears, weeping uncontrollably. She needs love. I believe she will be in the Kingdom soon. And then all this *meshuggot* will be worth it. Souls, Yeshua loves souls. People—he died for people—for prostitutes and alcoholics.

God, break our hearts for the people you died for. For the Oksanas of this world. Let us not become cold and religious, but fresh, hot and on fire with a passion for the things that move you—the souls of men.

Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Sunday, September 13, 1998 6:41 AM

Subject: GAITHERSBURG IN ODESSA NEWSPAPER!

Dear Friends,

The good news is that our dishwasher can clean dishes more effectively and in far less time than most modern American dishwashers. Ours requires no electricity, but you must feed it at least three times a day for quality purposes. Ours will even put the dishes away for us and we never have spots!

The bad news is that it takes around nine months to produce just one Ukrainian dishwasher. And then, several years before it can perform.

Serge the Electrician... (No one in Ukraine goes by their last names, but by some description of their function: Sasha Piano, Tall Sasha, Serge the Landlord, Dance Lena, Victor Driver. Actually, they do have last names, but it seems like they are all three blocks long. You need to take a course in Slavic customs and culture just to be allowed to try and pronounce them. *Nicolievrotenskinymovich* for instance. What

is worse is that they name the streets after these people. It took me three days to be able to say *Derebosovskaya* Street [where we live] without help.)

Anyway, as I was saying, Serge the Electrician came over and spent the day installing a new outlet for our washing machine. He did a great job, but I was concerned that he ran the ground wire under the bathtub. I felt that it was a little dangerous. So I tried to explain to him—he speaks almost no English—about my concern. “Isn’t this dangerous?” I questioned. Serge replied with a sheepish grin, “50/50.” Well, I like to live on the edge, but I wasn’t too thrilled about those odds. Anyway—we will move the ground wire.

Life is never dull here, living on *Derebosovskaya* Street (the main walking street). It gives us much to laugh about. Every night from 8 PM to 11 PM, we are treated to the worst in karaoke. The same songs come blaring through our window every night. There is one guy who comes regularly and sings *My Way* by Frank Sinatra, and then does several Elvis tunes in a row.

This we can handle, but the mandolin lady across the street is another story. (If I had brought a BB gun to Odessa...). She comes to the same area—which happens to be outside our window—around 4 PM and plays the same song for hours and hours, in hope of receiving small donations. I have thought about giving her a significant sum and asking her to disappear or at least go to the other end of the street—permanently.

Last night at 2 AM there was loud yelling outside my window. Because *Derebosovskaya* Street is the main drag, bar hoppers don't realize that people live here. Then I heard the unmistakable sound of punches landing. I sprang to my feet to check out the action. Two young men, surrounded by a group of their friends, were slugging it out. Then, about ten others ran up to them. I was peeking through the window, hoping not to be seen. The fight was broken up, but the situation remained tense. I knew the militia would be here in a few minutes. Two militia guys finally came and tried to figure out what happened. Then suddenly three vehicles sped

to the scene, and about eight more MGs got out. That was the end. Never a dull moment.

Tyson Puts *Gaithersburg* On Global Map

I was reading the Odessa Post yesterday and came across an article about Mike Tyson and his uncontrollable temper. The Odessa Post is the only English paper in the city. The article read:

Tyson attacks driver after fender bender

GAITHERSBURG, MD -- Mike Tyson was involved...

Can you believe it: My hometown, Gaithersburg, in the Odessa Post. How cool is that?

What Do We Miss?

What do we miss? Personally, I miss the feeling of eating food without fear of food poisoning. I also miss Pat Summerall and John Madden. I do not miss Al, Frank and Dan, but would love to see the Skins play the 49ers on Monday night. (Hey, who is Trent Green? I think we should bring back Heath! HAHA.) I would have liked to have seen McGuire's 61st and 62nd.

Elana misses the ability to cook a gourmet meal in an hour or less. Over here it takes triple the time to prepare food.

We both miss our friends and our home congregation, Beth Messiah.

We love the Bible school students. Elana began teaching her Hebrew class on Thursday and the students loved it. She had them in tears as she shared her testimony. I am so grateful that she is connected to the ministry here. Actually, she has spent more time teaching than I have! She has really won the hearts of some of the girls here. Elana is so endearing and people here are starving for love. Just this morning, two of the girls dropped by to give us some food. It took them two hours to make it.

Recent Email

Thank you all for praying for me. I am feeling much better. But don't stop praying, as this is clearly a spiritual attack. Some of you may have been surprised at the tone of my last letter. Not much humor, just the heart cry of a frustrated new missionary. As you read the psalms of King David, one thing that is obvious is his honesty concerning his

emotions: *Why have you forsaken me; smash the teeth of my enemies; I love you O Lord my strength; my soul is full of trouble and my life draws near the grave...*

I felt it was important for you to see that it is not all fun and games here; there are times that you feel despair and darkness. God has not called us to despair, but to abundant life. Yet, abundant life is perfected as we embrace the cross even in the furnace of affliction. Personally, I do not enjoy suffering, but I recognize that suffering brings maturity and a deeper joy. How else could Paul cry out from his prison cell: *“Rejoice in the Lord always!”* I say “deeper” because most of us experience joy as an emotion, but the one who suffers and finds Yeshua in the fiery furnace will experience JOY INDESCRIBABLE. Am I there? NO! But I am on the road. I am beginning to see the form of One, in the midst of the fire, who looks like the Son of God. Oh Lord, I am desperate to know you deeper!

Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Thursday, September 17, 1998 8:07 AM

**Subject: OUTREACH, OVERFLOWING DRAINS AND
HEBREW**

Dear Friends,

The past few days have been crazy. Monday was perhaps my best day here. I started Hebrew classes at the Jewish cultural center. That was difficult because I don't speak Russian and the class is taught in Russian. But I was able to figure out what she was teaching because the subject matter is Hebrew. This is an intermediate class focusing on tenses. By the end of class I was greatly encouraged. A Hebrew teacher who speaks English is supposed to call me tonight. His name is Zev and he spent six years in Israel. Please pray that he can tutor me one on one.

Monday night a lady came to our door yelling at me about something. Fortunately, Nellie was here to interpret. Apparently, we share our phone line with this lady and she was angry that we are always on the phone. The Bible says that a gentle answer turns away wrath. After she calmed

down, she explained that her son uses the phone for his business until nine each night. (Imagine this scene in the States.) I suggested that if he needs the phone so badly that they might invest in a separate line.

(Excuse me, I had to stop writing to answer the door. The owner of Reebok showed up to fix the drain, so human waste does not continue to flood our bathroom—more on that later.)

Anyway, she said the phone line would cost about \$1,000! I was thinking about putting in a second line in our house. I guess I will forget that! Now I am down to half a line.

Now that I am feeling well, (thank you for praying) I have settled into an early morning routine. I find that the first three hours of the day are the only predictable hours. My new schedule is: 6-7 devotions, 7-8 everyone awake, we eat, pray and I take the girls to school. From 8-8:30 we have staff devotions and then praise and worship with the students from 8:30 to 9. After that I may have plans, but I never know what will happen.

This morning, I asked Sharon to go outside and see if we were blocked in. Every now and then I will go out to the car in our run-down courtyard and find out that I am blocked in. She came back informing me that yes, we were blocked. Some guy parked right in the exit so no one could leave. When I found him, he began to yell at me. I yelled back in English asking him why he blocked everyone. He then used a little bit of sign language to explain that I had parked the night before in a way that kept others from parking their cars behind where mine was. Oops. I apologized and when I returned from school I found a parking space that I felt was kosher and claimed it for my own. When I went back outside several hours later, I heard screaming in the radio. I looked and the radio was not on. Then I looked out the window and some lady was yelling at me. She did not like my new parking space.

I have mentioned before that I have allergies here. Well, Elana had about six Claritin (advanced allergy medicine). I took one and all my allergies went away. Knowing I had only six, I arranged for my mother to send me a full prescription. That is on the way, but I was informed that because it is

medicine, it probably will not make it here. Then in an act of desperation, because I had used all six, I simply walked into a pharmacy and asked them in English for Claritin and believe it or not, the pharmacist said she had it and sold it to me without a prescription.

In Odessa, there are more *antekas* (pharmacies) per square meter than in any city I have ever seen. They are like gas stations—four at an intersection. There are many old and sick people in Odessa.

Today, after exercising, I went to take a shower and found a huge puddle of waste on my bathroom floor *and* in the bathtub. What do you do? You cannot pick up the phone and call the plumber. You do not know the number and if you did, you cannot communicate with him. Fortunately, my neighbor Oksana got the Reebok store owner. All of us were having plumbing problems. So he told me that a plumber would come at 2:00. The plumbers just left, but my water is turned off until the plumbers come tomorrow morning to do more work. The waste remains on the floor.

God has certainly chosen to allow us to be tested here in Odessa. If you had told me a month ago all that would happen, I would have been terrified (fleas, floods, phonelessness and more), but the grace of God is amazing. Certainly, we feel the effects of these trials, but not like I would have expected. We are rejoicing, praying, and even laughing at our trials. We are not in despair, although at times I have been tempted to despair. I think most of my strength comes from the fact that I know that I am in His will. Really, that is all that matters. So I take the trials in stride and keep praying for breakthroughs.

Speaking of breakthroughs, we will have our first outreach Friday. I will be taking the students out on the streets of Odessa on Friday at noon (5 AM-7 AM EST). Many of you will be having your morning devotions at that time. Please lift us up—believe God for souls! Pray that the students will overcome all fear and that God raises them up as mighty soul winners.

Driving in Odessa continues to be a thrill. In Odessa you can deliberately and aggressively cut someone off and no one

thinks twice about it. In America you can get shot for such things. No *road rage* in Odessa. I never thought that people could be so aggressive with their vehicles and not hit each other. The bumper sticker "If you don't like my driving then stay off the sidewalk" has real meaning in Odessa!

Please pray that the drain pipe is fixed speedily. We do need water. I believe this to be an attack from the enemy to keep me preoccupied so we do not have our outreach on Friday. The enemy will do anything to keep you from sharing your faith. His goal is to get you to put it off until...only he knows that UNTIL will never come. It rarely feels like the right time for outreach, but it always is.

Thursday Update

Praise the Lord, my water is working and it appears that my drain will not overflow sewage anymore. I feel like my life has been reduced to fixing toilets, killing fleas and buying vegetables at the market. I pray differently now. In prayer this morning I did not cry out for souls alone, but that my bathroom would function correctly and we would have water

to bathe and wash dishes. There is so much I have taken for granted all my life.

Tatiana came over today because I had to go to Hebrew class. She stayed here in case the plumbers came. When I got home I walked into my kitchen and it was clean. Our kitchen had looked like a nightmare. Without water we could not clean and Tatiana had cleaned it while I was gone. She heated water on the stove for hot water to clean dishes. I guess she got a bucket of water from Oksana our neighbor. I wish you could understand the feeling of elation I had at seeing the kitchen clean. I cannot begin to relate to you how one's emotions change from hour to hour.

Just after she left, the REEBOK guy came up and told me I could turn the water on. Natasha, a friend who helps us clean, is cleaning the sewage off our bathroom floor right now. The nice thing about bathroom floors in Ukraine is that they are mostly tile (easy to clean) with drains in the floor. If there is a flood, it just goes in the drain—of course, that is if your drain works!

I feel like a new man, now that I have water. Now I can focus on the outreach tomorrow. When I told the students this morning about the outreach they lit up with joy. They are so excited. Keep looking up, it should not be long now! (Luke 21:28)

May the Lord bless you--and tell someone about Yeshua today! (And ignore the typos!!) Love to hear from you.

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Monday, September 21, 1998 11:58 AM

Subject: OUTREACH IN ODESSA

Dear Friends,

It is Monday in Odessa and today is Yom Hateruah, what traditionally has been called Rosh Hashanah or Head of the Year. Last night, we had a lively Rosh Hashanah service at Gateway to Zion Messianic Congregation. I was asked to blow the shofar, which I did with great joy. The saints here love the Jewish traditions. In America, there has been much controversy in Messianic Synagogues—"How Jewish should we be?" Over here, with pure hearts for Yeshua, they can not get enough. For seventy years, they were not allowed to be Jewish; now they are playing catch-up. The Jewish believers are especially hungry for Jewish identity. After the service, all who attended, about 200, partook in apples and honey—a Jewish tradition signifying a sweet New year.

But the real highlight of the evening for me was seeing my daughter, Yael, fully enter into worship. With her eyes closed and hands raised, she appeared to really be meeting

with the Lord. Some parents get excited over straight A's and other achievements (and I do too), but a child who knows the Lord is everything! She has been watching this worship video lately. She just received a recorder at school (small flute-type instrument). She plays along, or I should say *blows along* with the music. (She thinks she is really playing with the music). May the Lord give her a heart to worship Him!

To give you an idea of how culturally deprived the Jews of Odessa are, I was in my Hebrew class at the Jewish Cultural Center on Thursday. The teacher, Ola, began to hand out sheets of paper with Hebrew written on them. As she began to read them I realized what it was. She had handed out the words to the songs *Ose Shalom*, *Avenu Shalom Alechem* and *Bashana Haba'a B'Yerushalym*. Most Ashkanazi Jews (Jews with European backgrounds) know these songs from childhood. It was clear that other than the teacher, I was the only one familiar with the songs.

This morning I took Sharon and Yael to the orthodox synagogue for Rosh Hashanah (Elana and Danielle are in Israel). There were mostly children and seniors in attendance.

I saw very few men my age. A little boy named David sat next to me. He spoke about as much Hebrew as I did. He stole my heart. In Hebrew I asked him where his parents were and he said *habyta*, at home. Many of the parents of these Jewish children have no interest in Judaism. Their children attend the Jewish school connected to the synagogue and therefore attend the services. I was glad I went.

Sharon and Yael could not sit with me, as the orthodox tradition separates men and women. As we were waiting for Alisa, a Ukrainian friend who came to sit with the girls, five American Jews walked in. They were on a cruise ship that had docked in Odessa for the day. I talked with them for a bit and it was clear they were amazed that an American Jewish young man would be here in Odessa. I told them about our humanitarian aid work and was looking for the right time to tell them about our more important work—preaching the gospel. In the meantime I took them into the synagogue. As they were leaving one of the young men asked for a card and David Schneier (who was with me) gave him one. The man replied that he was going to send money! At this point I

wanted him to know what we believe, but within seconds they were gone. I hope I bump into them again before they leave. Can you imagine his reaction to a thank you letter – “because of your gift, more Jewish people are coming to the Lord than ever.” *Oy Vey!* I would much rather him understand the full extent of our work here. I think the Lord was chuckling over the whole thing.

Outreach

Friday was a benchmark day for me in Odessa as we took about 30 or so students out into the streets. After prayer, armed with tracts, guitars and bongos, we began the half-hour walk to Privoz, the huge food market. We began to praise and worship in the open air. Open-air worship is like a magnet for the unbeliever here. Joy is a rare commodity for these downtrodden people. Happiness sticks out. Within minutes a crowd of approximately seventy had gathered. I seized the opportunity and introduced our group and preached the simple gospel message proclaiming Yeshua as Lord. You know the demons hate that! They hate to hear someone

boldly proclaim in a public setting YESHUA IS LORD! For them, it is pure torment! For us, the angels, and God Himself, it is a reminder that the day will come when Yeshua will return, at the sound of the shofar and loud shout. He will subdue his enemies and TAKE OVER!

Back to the story... After my short testimony, many of the students were involved in one-on-one conversations.

As I was leaving, a young man said in Russian that he was on drugs and wanted to be free. Because I do not understand the language, I did not know he had said this. It was a minute later, as were walking out, when my interpreter told me this. I sent him back to find the young man, while I grabbed one of the students to minister to him. By God's grace we found him and Yafim preached the gospel to him and prayed with him.

Needless to say, it was a real boost for me. And the students were greatly encouraged. After several weeks of teaching, getting out on the street to share the practice that they have been learning was a great release for them. We will be making these trips to the market weekly, mostly on Fridays.

Drain Update

While we have water now, our drain is backing up about twice daily. However, after having no water, we feel very content at the moment. Much of what we can handle is relative to our experience. A month ago, a bathroom drain that spewed out waste was tragic. But after having no water at all—it feels like things are back to normal. Although our present flat is far from the American norm, we feel like our present place is a palace because we started in a dusty apartment with fleas. Of course, I never thought I could live in such a small apartment. Yet, here we are!

On Friday we sail to Haifa. Our ship, the *Demetri Shastikovich* (SP?), will carry hundreds of *olim hadashim* (new immigrants) on their way to eretz Yisrael to start a new life. Ebenezer Ministries rents out space on this ship each month to transport Jewish people back to Israel. This is a very real fulfillment of Zechariah 8:23, which proclaims:

This is what the LORD Almighty says: “In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one

Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'"

After 2,000 years of anti-Semitism, these precious Gentile believers are fulfilling Paul's words to the Romans by provoking the Jews of the FSU to jealousy. These Jews fall in love with the Ebenezer volunteers. They have never been treated this way by Gentiles!

What an exciting adventure it will be for us to sail back with them. Now Yael and Sharon can reenact what their grandparents did. Elana's parents boarded a ship in the middle of the night in Morocco over thirty-five years ago in 1962, headed for Israel. They never returned to Morocco.

Please pray for Danielle as she is missing me and the girls. I talked to her last night and all she could get out were sobs of "I miss my Daddy." My heart was breaking.

Oksana Update

Many of you have written that you have been praying for Oksana. Elana and I found out that we were slightly misinformed about Oskana's life and profession. She is not a prostitute. However she is having an adulterous affair with a

married man. He is a dentist and he supports her financially. We do know that God is dealing with her, and Elana has encouraged her to end the relationship—telling her that the relationship has no hope because he is married with a daughter. Please keep praying for her.

Pray also for Elana and Danielle in Israel, and for us here in Odessa, that we hang in there a few more days until we are all reunited. The *only* good thing about being separated from your wife is that you are reminded how deeply in love you are!

Be blessed, tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos!

For the Salvation of Israel and Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Friday, September 25, 1998 2:09 PM

Subject: WHEN PEPPER WALKS

Dear Friends,

Bugs are a problem here, but not too bad. After finding a gazillion ants on my first morning in our apartment, I sprayed the entire kitchen with Raid. Since then we have been relatively blessed in this area. However, the other day I took out the bread and noticed that some of the specks on the bread were walking!

In Ukraine you just shake it off. After putting my cheese & tomato on it and topping it off with salt and a hearty dose of pepper, I thought I noticed the pepper walking. False alarm—sometimes here you begin to see bugs when there are none.

Yesterday at the Bible school I taught for two hours on the meaning and power of the shofar. The students ate it up and for dessert we went into a neighboring park and blew the shofar and shouted unto the Lord. To see these young men

and women full of joy in the presence of God is such a privilege.

This morning I told them we would be doing our outreach at the market today instead of tomorrow because I am going to Israel. I thought they would be upset because they work so hard at school and then to have to go on an outreach. However, they lit up at the thought of another opportunity to publicly celebrate our life in Yeshua. I asked a student yesterday if he was tired because of being in class from 8 AM until 2:20 PM. He said, "Oh no. I love it!" The Ukrainian desire to learn is intense. They do not grow weary easily.

McDonald's is almost finished! The kids are excited about the idea of Chicken McNuggets and fries or a Happy Meal. And if I must be honest—I could really go for a Big Mac and double fries. In the States, living next to McDonald's wouldn't even be a temptation, but over here it is like living next to Ruth's Chris steak house.

Economic Earthquake Predicted

The economy in Ukraine is on the verge of collapse. When I came here a year ago the *hrevna* was at 1.80 to the dollar. On August 13th, when we arrived it was at 2.09, showing that for the past year it had been reasonably steady; with only a 15% increase. Since then it has risen to 3.25 and shows no sign of slowing. This means prices have increased by about 50% with salaries staying the same. When I return from Israel on the 13th of October, I have no idea what the economy will be like. These are the words of the President: “Never in the last seven years of independence have we faced such a threat of financial catastrophe as today,” Kuchma said. “Unfortunately, the forecasts for the near future are much worse than we expected before,” he told a meeting of regional newspaper editors in Kiev, the Ukrainian capital.

Many believe that this will bring on the fullness of the exodus from the land of the north that Jeremiah prophesied about.

¹⁴“However, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when men will no longer say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ ¹⁵but

they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' For I will restore them to the land I gave their forefathers." (Jer 16:14-15)

The Fins are preparing to receive thousands of Jews, while Odessa could be inundated with Jewish people wishing to leave the FSU in the near future. As many of you know, Odessa is the closest seaport to Israel in the FSU. What an opportunity this would be to reach Jewish people before they get to the Land.

Tomorrow, the kids and I will have a taste of the EXODUS to come as we board the *Demitri Shastikovitch*, a ship that has taken thousands of Jews back to Israel already. There will be a few hundred new immigrants with us for the three-day journey. The kids are excited.

Prayer Request

Also, we are believing for fully functioning utilities in our apartment when we return. Work needs to be done on the gas, electric and water drainage. And last night there was a

MOUSE IN THE HOUSE. I think I will buy a cat when I return. The children would be overjoyed! I am so grateful for our apartment. Other than the utilities and a mouse (don't tell Elana about the mouse) it really has been a refuge.

All in all, I feel like Odessa is not just "the place we are staying" but each day it feels more and more comfortable.

May the Lord bless you in ways you never imagined! And tell someone about Yeshua today! (And, as always, ignore the typos!!) Love to hear from you.

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,
Ron & Elana Cantor

Monday, October 12, 1998 5:43 AM

Subject: YOM KIPPUR

Dear Friends,

We safely arrived in Israel. We spent the first night with Connie and Andrew Shishkoff, before renting a car and heading south to Ashkelon. Elana's mother had prepared the

most delicious Yom Kippur meal. I ate and ate without any fear of food poisoning. What a relief...and the chicken! She also made Moroccan couscous with all kinds of tasty veggies. It sure beat the PORK FEAST on the ship.

On the eve of Yom Kippur the streets were filled with people as all traffic came to a cease. On Yom Kippur, only the most brazen will use their cars, as most Israelis will spend the day in the synagogue, resting and looking forward to the evening meal. Children fill the empty streets with bicycles and roller-blades having no fear of the banned automobiles. I can only imagine how beautiful Jerusalem must be on this day. I am sure the streets of the Old City are filled with people.

Israel has changed much over the past few years. The top singer in Israel is a transexual (had a sex change) named Donna International. His/her/it's name emphasizes Israelis' age-old passion to be like the nations. Extramarital affairs are common, even accepted, today. Many young and attractive Russian immigrants seeking security have lured away Israeli men from their wives and families. This, among other things, has created a serious rift between native Israelis and the

Russian Jewish community here. Even last night I met with a Russian Jewish Believer who said, "I am not an Israeli and I do not want my children to be Israelis."

And yet, amidst this diverse culture of religious and secular, Russians and native Israelis, little by little the Messianic congregations are growing. Many congregations are seeing people come to Yeshua every week.

Avi Mizrachi, an Israeli evangelist, told us about Hezi, a former ultra-orthodox Jew. He would come to Avi and argue. Little by little the love of God broke through. One night, a Believer said to him, "Hezi, ask Yeshua to answer a prayer for you. This way you can see that He is real." Hezi told them that he needed a job. They prayed and a few minutes later his cell phone rang. He was offered a job! AND, the man who offered him a job was his former employer who had sworn he would never let him work for him again.

Shortly thereafter, Hezi committed his life to Yeshua.

We visited Ha Sharon Congregation near Tel Aviv. We really enjoyed it. Arnie Klein, originally from NY, led worship with such joy and enthusiasm that he could barely contain

himself. Ari Sorka-Ram, the pastor, has created an atmosphere where Israelis are not intimidated. They only speak Hebrew and provide no official interpretation. Because of this, their growth primarily comes through native Israeli's.

Elana's mother and aunt came with us. They both loved it! Ari laid hands on Elana's mother and prayed for her healing. He also had a word of knowledge for her that deeply touched her. She embraced him as he finished praying. Despite the fact that she is older than he is, she embraced him like a daughter would a father. Ari walks in gentle authority that ministers the Father's love.

Elana's Aunt Rachel said to me before it began, "They are so happy!" She saw the joy of the Lord on everyone and was intrigued. She has never seen so many happy people—not in Israel.

More Bathroom Stories

I never realized how much the way people use the bathroom shapes a culture. So much of what we have been through since moving to Odessa centers around the

bathroom. The saga continues. As I arrived last week at the Shishkoff's I was told that their bathroom drain had overflowed in the same way that mine does in Odessa. I told them that it was the devil and connected to my coming. The next day we stopped in Tel Aviv on the way to Elana's house. We went to the new mall to pick up Elana's sister Shulie.

Just because you have a modern mall does not mean that the people have arrived. I saw a woman remove her son's pants so he could relieve himself in the garden in the middle of the mall. A security guard was trying to help her understand that this is not acceptable in the new mall, but she simply proceeded with her son, ignoring the guard.

Just a couple of days ago at the Shishkoff's in Haifa, I was taking a walk with Eitan's older son David. Suddenly a dog escaped from his apartment and three children came running after him. When he got to us, he stopped and began to relieve himself. Just then one of the children arrived and he too, right next to the dog, dropped his pants, and together, boy and dog, did what comes naturally. Oy, I have lived such a sheltered life.

(We interrupt this email to inform you I have just received word from Odessa that the bathroom drain is FINALLY FIXED!! Apparently, the remnants of two plumbing snakes were found in the pipes. Thank you for praying-- REALLY. Experienced plumbers could not figure out the problem.)

Now, back to your regularly scheduled email...

Hiking in the Galilee

Yesterday Elana and I drove to the Galilee to a place called Yehudia. We hiked down a canyon where a waterfall filled a natural pool. What a sight. I climbed up part of the canyon, with other crazies, and then leapt into the pool. It was pretty scary, but what fun! Then we drove to Tiberias for St. Peter's fish and Israeli salad. DELICIOUS. The Galilee is so beautiful and there is so much to do. If you are into hiking or camping it is the place to be. Waterfalls, canyons, mountains, hidden pools and hundreds of hiking trails. It was strange to see a group of hiking school children being led and flanked by

two men carrying rifles. In fact, I don't think there are many field trips in this country without armed escorts.

It is now Sunday the 11th. We have all gained weight. The food has been incredible! We have enjoyed great fellowship with many Believers. I have never seen so many upbeat Believers here. It appears that the Lord is really working in the Land.

Tomorrow night we will go to the Israeli Convention Center where thousands will gather to participate in Paul Wilbur's fourth recording with Hosanna. It should be a rich time of praise and worship.

Wednesday morning at 12:20 AM we will arrive back in Odessa. The next morning I will begin a new class: THE HISTORY OF ZIONISM. This is one of my favorite classes to teach, but I will have ZERO time to prepare. I was supposed to teach on the 19th, which would have given me several days. It should be OK though, as I have over 70 pages of notes already and several books with me now. I could use some prayer for this. Some of the young men and women in the MJB are called to Israel. This class will stir their hunger.

Once again, thanks for your prayers and support. Shalom from Israel, and as always, ignore the typos and tell someone about Yeshua today!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,
Ron & Elana Cantor

Monday, October 19, 1998 8:11 AM

Subject: PUPPY PUSHKIN

Dear Friends,

I had asked you to pray concerning my Hebrew lessons. The man I asked you to pray for did call me. His name is Zev and he is a 24-year-old medical student. He also teaches Hebrew at the University. We had our first lesson yesterday.

When I arrived I noticed a cute little puppy. He told me that I could have him if I wanted him. So I took him home to see if we could handle him. The kids were so excited when I walked in with a puppy. Actually Yael jumped on the couch and I don't think she came down all day. She is not exactly the "born free" type. Sharon however fell in love with the puppy and mothered him all day. We named him Pushkin, after the famous Russian poet. However, after a day of cleaning up after him (there's that bathroom theme again) we took him back. In addition to making a mess, he is teething and not aware that his German Shepherd baby teeth HURT. Sharon and I did have fun going to the "pet booth" at the market with

Pushkin. We bought him a leash and after dragging him down *Derebosovskaya* street, he finally got with the program and began to walk.

Danielle started Russian kindergarten today. She was bored being home so we took her to kindergarten. Please pray for her because she doesn't speak the language. Her friend Joshua is with her. He is bilingual and the son of missionaries here. He will serve as her interpreter. She was a little nervous, but, if I know Danielle, she will be running the place by the time I pick her up. Fortunately, it is right next to the Bible school and Sharon and Yael's school.

Prayer and Fasting

Exciting things are happening at the MJB. We just began forty days of prayer and fasting. Everyone is taking a few days. We felt we needed more of God's anointing and presence to do all that He wants us to do in the city. There is much before us, but the MJB's director, Wayne Wilkes, wants to make sure we are not doing God's work without God! Over the next

month we will have several all night prayer times and 24 hour prayer chains.

Next month, we will open up a soup kitchen. The city government is behind us, and the kindergarten next to our school offered to cook the meals and provide the space. Someone from the States is going to provide money for the food. We have space to feed fifty people—pray for the right fifty; fifty who are ready for salvation.

This weekend the students went to Nicolaev for a Jewish outreach. Hundreds came each night to the festival. David Levine from *Hear O Israel* preached the Gospel, while others sang, danced and served in other ways. When it was over, a new Messianic congregation was birthed. Its' leader is one of our graduates, Yura Korshin. He will make a fine Messianic Rabbi.

Danielle celebrated her fifth birthday yesterday. We invited several people over for a party. Oksana bought Elana a huge bouquet of roses "for the mother," she said. She loves Elana. Every day, while we were in Israel, she would come by

and ask the person staying here when Elana was coming home. We are believing for her salvation—keep praying.

The other day Elana and I decided to buy a movie. It is cheaper to buy a movie here than to rent one in America. You have to really concentrate because it is dubbed over in Russian. However, you can hear the English if you listen carefully. As we were watching this movie a message in English came across the screen: THIS IS A DEMO TAPE. IF YOU HAVE RENTED OR BOUGHT THIS TAPE PLEASE CALL THIS NUMBER 1-800-NOCOPIES. ALL CALLS ARE CONFIDENTIAL. Can you imagine a store right on the main street in any city in America selling bootleg tapes?

The last night we were in Israel we attended an awesome worship concert with Paul Wilbur. On the way home we saw massive fires in the Judean hills. We found out later that Palestinian arsonists lit dozens of fires all over Israel, which will cost her millions in damages. Israel is at a real crossroads and in need of God. With the majority of the population being atheists, and a small minority religious fanatics, and all those

who surround her sworn enemies, she is in desperate need of revival.

This morning Elana came with me to school and the students were overjoyed to see her. They had not seen her since she returned. She really has a *kesher* (spirit connection) with them. When I walked in last week to teach after being gone for two weeks, all the students began to clap. The students are absolutely precious, and serious about their studies. It isn't that I have done anything, but just the affection they feel. Elana and I certainly do not deserve such honor, but these students are so grateful, and understand respect and honor.

While I was teaching last week, I was going a bit fast. Because it is a history class, the students were taking tons of notes. Finally one girl yelled out in frustration "STOP IT!" She did it almost unconsciously, and did not realize how rude this sounds in English. We all laughed and I SLOWED DOWN.

We are on the McDonald's countdown. In six days one opens. Not the one next to us, but one on the other side of town. Ours opens December 1st.

Well, until next time, please pray for us:

- That I will have supernatural ability in Hebrew.
- That our soup kitchen gets off the ground.
- For our Friday outreaches.
- For my class next week, “Authority and the Kingdom of God.” Please keep me in prayer for this as we address very sensitive subjects like the spirit of Jezebel and leadership in the home and congregation—the enemy usually gets riled up over this and our family sometimes comes under attack.
- That we find a good pet for the kids.
- For Danielle in her new kindergarten.
- That Elana and I develop some strong discipleship relationships with the students.

Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Thursday, October 22, 1998 3:05 PM

Subject: PAVEMENT OR POT HOLE??

In Odessa, one must keep their eye on innocent looking puddles. What may look like a puddle can sometimes be a *dangerous to your car* pothole. Some potholes here resemble the type of crater left by a SCUD missile, taking up half or all of the road. Other obstacle courses include roads made of uneven, bumpy cobblestone laced with tram tracks and potholes. All in all, it makes even the shortest trip resemble a modern video game.

God is good. We are blessed. Things are picking up in terms of ministry. Tomorrow (Friday), I will be taking the students to Privoz (open-air market) for street witnessing and open-air testimonies. The first time we did this I mentioned a young Jewish drug addict whom we shared with. I was told that the next time the students went (while I was in Israel) he came back and this time he made a profession of faith in Yeshua! Tomorrow we go out at 3 PM (8 AM EST). Please pray!!!

Today I preached JESUS LOVES ME—THIS I *DONT* KNOW. I talked about how so many of us don't enjoy the pleasure of God and even our acts of devotion can be born out of condemnation, rather than love for God. At the end, half the class stood to be free of condemnation and to experience the love of God. Several were in tears as they discovered the love of ABBA in a new way. Friends, there is nothing like seeing a young Believer melt in the presence of God as they discover Him as Father. I love to see people get free!!

Next week I will be teaching on authority, and on Sunday I am preaching in an Arminian church. In fact, most Sundays now, I will be sharing in local churches—God willing. I believe I am supposed to: 1) share God's plans for the Jewish people, 2) expose the centuries of anti-Semitism in Ukraine, and 3) call the Ukrainian people to express their love to the Jews by actively preaching the Gospel to them, and being ready to rescue them when this country turns against them in the future. Many believe there will be another series of pogroms against the Jewish people before they leave.

We are also beginning to talk as a staff about taking teams of students out into other cities and villages. Many of you know this is my passion. Please pray for us as we seek God's plan.

Lastly, Elana and I feel the need for more prayer covering; especially as we are doing more ministry. We recognize that not everyone who receives these emails is called to be a regular intercessor for this ministry. However, if you feel led to partner with us in prayer, please send me an email in regard to this. We want to be able to send you specific prayer info. Thank you so much, dear friends, for your faithful support and prayers!! We love you!!

Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos.

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Wednesday, October 28, 1998 4:46 PM

Subject: FRUIT FROM MULAN & MCDONALD'S

Dear Friends,

I would have written you sooner but we have had no phone connection for three days; just a typical Ukrainian trial. Finally, I went to my landlord and she made one phone call and it was fixed. Of course, if I knew the number and language I would have taken care of it myself. It can be a very humbling and frustrating experience not to be able to take care of the most minor tasks without help.

Authority Class

Wow!! What an amazing class we had. Today I finished three days of teaching on Jezebel, Ahab, King Saul, Leadership and Family. The Lord really blessed the teaching. These young people soaked it in. Today, as we concluded the class, we had a mass prayer and confession time for the students, setting them free from the influence of Jezebel (spirit that seeks to emasculate authority), Ahab (spirit that

makes one terrified to govern) and Saul (spirit of insecurity and control, that seeks to keep others down, to protect itself). (I recognize that these may or may not be the name of the spirits, but these Bible characters give us a picture of what these spirits seek to do to people.) As we concluded, several were sobbing and many were laughing with joy. Over two-thirds of the class said they had a serious breakthrough.

This is probably one of my favorite subjects to teach because most people have very little idea how these evil spirits work against us. Once people understand, you can see the light go on in their spirits, as they remember particular people and situations in their past. Now they perceive the spiritual dynamic behind them.

Mulan

With all the negative publicity coming from Disney's movies, I thought you might want to hear a testimony. (I AM IN NO WAY DEFENDING DISNEY, WHO HAS TAKEN A CLEAR ANTI-GOD AND ANTI-JUDEO-CHRISTIAN STAND.)

Yesterday my two eldest daughters were playing with their dolls. Before we left for Odessa we saw *Mulan*, a movie about a Chinese heroine. Ancestors from the past came to the aid of the young girl when she took her father's place in the army.

Here was their acted-out conversation:

Sleeping Beauty: Do you believe in Yeshua?

Mulan: What do you mean?

Sleeping Beauty: He died on the cross for your sins.

Mulan: You mean you don't worship your ancestors? Why?

Sleeping Beauty: Because Yeshua is the Messiah. He is a real God. He is not like Hercules.

Then Sleeping Beauty, played by Sharon, began to worship Yeshua!

Danielle chimed in "Yeshua is a God that loves people, not like ancestors." Rather than forbidding our kids to see this movie, we saw it with them. Then we were able to explain to them that which was not biblical. It has seemed to work.

Outreach

The outreach was fantastic. Thanks for your prayers. I know they made a difference. Just after we arrived at Privoz (a large market), a security guard approached me. He did not look like a security guard in his leather jacket with his unshaven beard, but he was. He proceeded to tell me what I needed to do to get permission to be there, when suddenly a Babushka (grandmother) pushed him and began to yell at him. "Why are you giving these people a hard time? You have drug dealers at this market. Why aren't you doing anything about them? Leave these people alone. They want to help us." You don't mess with the Babushkas here. They are the only ones tougher than the Mafia. David Schneier and I joked about hiring them for security at our festivals.

Anyway—Serge is a 38-year-old student. He and his wife both attend the MJBI and they have a son, George, about 12 years old. Serge is a former Soviet Army Intelligence Officer and a real fireball for the Lord. I asked him to preach to the crowd that gathered to hear our music (about 50). Guess who was the first of three people who responded for salvation—the same Babushka who got mad at the security guard.

McDonald's

If I were to tell you that I drove a half hour somewhere—to a place that the family had waited all day to go to—and then, we waited in line for over forty minutes—what would you think? Was it a concert? A big sale at the mall? Maybe a gourmet restaurant? No, it was *McDonald's!* That is right! McDonald's has found Odessa. Actually, this one is a ways from our apartment, but come Dec. 1st, we will have a McDonald's right next door to our apartment. Then you will come and visit I bet! What did I order? Two cheeseburgers, 1 half of a Filet-O-Fish and two large orders of fries. It was INCREDIBLE! The people behind the counter were working like crazy. Hundreds waited outside, while the staff of about 30 bumped and pushed trying to grab a burger, or a drink for their customers. When they found out we were Americans they were so excited to serve us McDonald's food. They asked me if I had a McDonald's near my home in America. HA!

All Night Prayer

As we are in the midst of forty days of prayer and fasting (every day at least two people are fasting) we decided to have some all night watches, at least until 3 AM. This past Saturday, Valentine Sviontek led our first. It was incredible. I was only going to stay until twelve because I was preaching the next morning, but I did not get in bed until 3:30. The presence of God was precious, as many were overcome by the power of God.

Our translator, Stas, who has never fell under the power, was on the floor for at least an hour. He was fully conscious, but could not move his hands and feet. He kept saying, "I don't understand this, but it feels good." Others were laughing uncontrollably (this is Odessa, mind you, these people have never been to Toronto) and one young man was set free from demonic oppression that he has lived with all his life. He was an unwanted child and was given a Muslim name at birth. We prayed for God to give him a new name. When I asked if anybody heard anything in their spirits, at least ten people said "David" almost at the same time!

Weather

It is getting cold here. Last night Elana and I took a walk and it felt like it was just below 40. It is still sunny and nice in the afternoons. The buildings here are ancient. Do you know what it is like to walk on a floor that is uneven? Well, that is most of Odessa. Sometimes they swerve or they can be off center by 15 degrees. You wonder when you are going to fall through! The steps going up to our flat (affectionately nicknamed Mt. STINKMORE for the cat urine that stinks) are like this, too. If you go up to the next floor, it gets worse! Crooked steps that move. Despite it all, we are beginning to love....well, like it here (even Elana). More than anything else, we love the students in the Bible school. It is such a thrill to see them get set free and on fire!!

We love you, please keep praying and WRITE BACK. Elana and I love to sit down at the computer before bedtime and read your emails. And as always, tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Thursday, October 29, 1998 1:01 PM

Subject: PRAYER FOR SARAH WINE

Sarah Wine is our schoolteacher. She teaches our children, as well as the children of three other missionary families. She has been having heart trouble for a week. Today, her left arm has been going numb off and on. Odessa is not a place of great medical care. We need a visit from the Great Physician. I have often felt that the great miracles are often seen when God is not *an* option, but the **ONLY** option. This is the case in Odessa.

This may be nothing at all, or it could be very serious. Please pray now! Pray for healing and peace of mind.

Thank You!!

Ron & Elana Cantor

Thursday, October 29, 1998 4:14 PM

Subject: SARAH WINE UPDATE

Dear Friends,

Already we have a good report. An ambulance was sent to Sarah's house. Two doctors performed an EKG on her and determined that her heart is fine, but that her blood pressure is high. The stress of teaching six kids in five different grades combined with the high blood pressure has been causing the heart trouble and numbness in her arm. She was told to rest for a few days (even still she wanted to teach tomorrow—we told her “no,” of course).

Thank you for praying. Tomorrow we may take her to Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, for further tests.

We had a student break her ankle today, and I believe all this attack is connected to the 40 days of fasting and the time of confession and deliverance we had yesterday. If you have any discernment or wisdom, please pass it along.

Tell someone about Yeshua today and please ignore the typos...

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,
Ron & Elana Cantor

Saturday, October 31, 1998 3:29 PM

**Subject: MANDOLINS, POLISH BABUSHKAS, AND
OUTREACH**

Many of you have asked how Elana's mother is doing. Here is an update. Her mother did not get the surgery we desired when we were in Israel. Instead her doctors are giving her medicine that is supposed to shrink the cysts in her ovaries. So if you pray, pray for the disappearance of these cysts. These are not cancerous thank God! In addition, she is experiencing great pain and some numbness in her left arm. However, our greater concern is her salvation. God clearly touched her while we were in Israel. Pray that she would see her need for salvation and embrace Yeshua. While you're at it—Phil, Susie and Michele Cantor have a similar need. Pray that God will draw them to Yeshua—the only true God, King of Israel and Redeemer of the Nations.

Polish Babushkas

Last night we had Shabbat dinner with our friends, the Svionteks. Visiting was a Polish Babushka who came to Odessa to see our work with the Jewish people. Before dinner she was in tears, as she sat down to her first authentic Shabbat meal with Jewish believers. After dinner she told us how she rescued Jewish people during the Holocaust. She was just a teenager then. Her mother hid many Jewish people in their home. Some Jewish people left their house, saying that they did not want them to get in trouble for hiding Jews. As she began to recount her stories, tears began to flow. She must have gotten married sometime during the Holocaust, because later she explained how her husband would take meat into the Warsaw Ghetto. The Jews would warn him of the trouble he could find himself in if he were caught, but he continued to help. She told us that we could not even imagine what Poland was like at that time.

The Mandolin Lady

Well, I had my chance, but I was overcome with mercy. I have related to you in the past that there is a lady who stands

outside my window and plays her mandolin for donations. She plays the same song over and over and over again. Well, the other day, I was changing some dollars into *hrevnas* at the 7-Eleven (a 24 hour mini-mart near us--we give all the stores American names so we can refer to them) and in walks Sister Mandolin. All bags must be checked with the security guard, who is donned in army fatigues. Rather than give him her mandolin, she placed it in front of his *bag booth*. And there it was, the Mandolin that has annoyed me and my family for three months. All I had to do was grab it and run and my misery would be over. Or, I could simply *accidentally* step on it on my way out. Well, needless to say, the thought of even the Mandolin lady being out of work in this poor country overcame me, and I simply walked out of the 7-Eleven, a little sad, but happy, knowing that Yeshua really has changed my heart.

Outreach!

Yesterday, we had our most exciting outreach yet. Elana and the kids came with us. We walked from our school to the

vaxal, the train station. We set up with guitars, tambourines, and singers. At first no one stopped. Then one of the students, who has done a lot of street outreach in Moscow and Georgia (not Jimmy Carter), suggested that we reposition about 45 degrees. That did it! In a few minutes there were about 30 people surrounding us.

Once the crowd was big enough, I had Yura preach. He finished with an invitation to receive Yeshua. Almost immediately, and I might add to our shock, about ten people came forward! One man, a tall and tough looking gentleman, just stood there through the whole prayer. He was silent, but nodded his head in agreement each time Yura would say a phrase for them to repeat. I was not sure whether he was angry or excited. However, at the end of the prayer, he shot his arm into the air with zeal, symbolizing his excitement at being born again!

Within a few minutes, most of the students were witnessing to people. Of course, this is more exciting than preaching to a crowd. The goal was being accomplished, which is to see all my students involved in sharing the Good

News. It was a good use of our time—90 minutes, 10 souls! Pray that these people would come to the congregation and become disciples.

This is the most exciting part of the week for me. Valentine, the associate director, is eager to see us take students into some of the nearby villages. Please pray that these outreach excursions will come together.

Testimony

One exciting testimony from our class on the 'spirit of Jezebel' came Thursday night. A young lady, Sveeta said that for the first time in her marriage, she can give herself fully to her husband Nicolai. Before, she had despised him in her heart. She said, "When he would testify publicly I would feel anger towards him. Now I feel joy!" This is the fruit of getting free of Jezebel!

(Believe it or not, Sister Mandolin just began her Shabbat morning serenade outside my window.)

It is evening now and I am on my way out the door to our Saturday night watch. We will go 'til 3 AM. In years past, I

would dread such a meeting (I am a morning person), but the presence of God has been so wonderful that I cannot wait to get there! See you soon.

Tell someone about Yeshua TODAY and please ignore the typos.

For the salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Monday, November 09, 1998 4:16 PM

Subject: NICOLAI IN NICOLAIV

There is a man from Ukraine named Chimelnitski. A huge statue of his likeness can be found in the capitol city, Kiev. He is a great Ukrainian hero. One can also find his image on one of the denominations of Ukrainian currency. You probably have never heard of him. I had not until recently. It is amazing that history has not highlighted this man's accomplishments. In addition to unifying Ukraine with mother Russia when Ukraine was in need of an ally, he is also largely responsible for the inhumane murder of 100,000 - 500,000 Jews in the mid 1600s. In fact, his group is responsible for more Jewish deaths than any other group in history, with the exception of the Nazis. Whole Jewish towns were exterminated by this butcher and his followers.

In the early 1900s Ukraine was granted independence because of the Bolshevik (communist) Revolution. During the three years between 1918 and 1921 (when the Soviet Machine

swallowed up Ukraine), 100,000 Jews were murdered in this country.

It is said that during the Holocaust, the Ukrainian Police (who joined the cause) were even more ruthless and heartless than the Nazis when it came to killing Jews.

(Messianic Rabbi Jamie Cowen of Richmond, Va. helped me in gathering these facts.)

All this is said to establish the fact that if the Bible is true, then there is a massive curse on this land. "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you." (Gen 12:2-3). Unlike some other nations, Ukraine has done little (that I know of) to symbolize national repentance for their sins against God's chosen people. (Certainly the statue of Chimelnitski in Kiev demonstrates their ignorance.)

Yesterday, I was in Nicoliav with pastor Nicolai. His daughter Ira and three other members of his church go to our Bible school. I preached a message entitled "A SECOND CHANCE FOR UKRAINE," calling them to repent for the sins of their fathers against the Jewish people. God is going to give these people another chance to stand up for the Jewish

people. Many believe that persecution is coming to this region of the world, as more and more Jews flee to *eretz Yisrael* (The Land of Israel). What will the Ukrainian church do? Stand idly by, singing hymns, while the butchers “butch” and the grave diggers dig? Or will they rise up and do what it takes to help the Jewish people find safe passage to Israel and safe passage to the age to come (by sharing the Gospel with them)? They WILL have a second chance.

This land of Ukraine is rich in natural resources, yet as poor as one can imagine. Truly there is a curse.

At the end, many of the 400 in attendance were in tears, as we led them in a prayer of repentance. Then we broke the curse of anti-Semitism over them. I was told that one woman, who was in great pain from a recent operation, was instantly healed as she confessed her sin.

Towards the end of the message I was wondering what the pastor was thinking. He seemed expressionless. I remembered what God told Jeremiah, “Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command

thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them” (Jer 1:17 KJV).

The pastor stood up as I finished and came to the pulpit. I was relieved to hear him continue the message. He recounted more stories of Ukrainian anti-Semitism. He confirmed that indeed there is a related curse on his homeland. Then he led his congregation in repentance for the sins of their fathers. As he prayed, tears streamed down his face. Afterward, he called forth those who wanted to be born again. Seven people came up, and I believe it was a sign that the curse was broken (seven is a significant biblical number). He told me later that three of the seven were JEWISH!! Yes, yes, yes! THIS IS WHY WE CAME!! And of course, three is also a significant biblical number.

Dear friends, thank you for your prayers. Thank you for partnering with us in this effort. Truly we will share in the rewards. We will be in the U.S. from December 18 until January 18, and we look forward to seeing you.

Please...tell someone about Yeshua today, and as always, ignore the typos.

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,
Ron & Elana Cantor

Wednesday, November 11, 1998 6:15 AM

**Subject: MY FIRST UKRAINIAN HAIRCUT &
OKSANA BREAKTHROUGH!**

Good morning! Daylight has just begun to creep up here in Odessa. It looks like quite a yucky day ahead of us (in terms of the climate). Last week Elana and I sat outside at a local café sipping cappuccino. I was wearing a T-shirt and sweating. However, last night I was donned in full winter apparel, including my chic new head sock. It covers everything but my eyes. Although it keeps me warm, the down side is that Elana almost shot me the other day because she thought I was a thief breaking in. This morning it looks wet outside, although it feels cold enough to snow.

Hair Cut

Yesterday I had my first Ukrainian haircut. It cost all of \$1.20. The lady who cut my hair was a Believer. The clippers looked like they had been a weapon (such as a grenade launcher) during the cold war era that was converted into a

pair of clippers during this time of *peace*. (Doesn't it say somewhere that they will beat their grenade launchers into clippers?) She must have put five or six sheets on me to protect me from my hair. I am told that the hospitals do not have sheets for their patients (you must bring your own). Now I know why; the hairdressers have all the sheets!

After the haircut, she disappeared for a moment and then reappeared with a bucket of water and shampoo. This is not quite like the States, where you are escorted to a comfortable chair and asked if you would like some coffee, tea or even cappuccino. Then you gently lean back while your personal *hair washer* washes your hair with water at just the right temperature, and then massages your scalp as you almost fall asleep. UKRAINE: While still sitting in the barber's chair, she thrust my head forward into a sink and then proceeded to pour scalding hot water from the bucket over my head. I knew that if I did not drown, I would still have to deal with the third-degree burns on my face.

Then it was time to style my hair. I have never liked this. Normally I will just ask for a brush, brush my hair, and leave.

Over here people are serious about their work, and I thought she might pour more hot water on my head if I resisted. After putting some gook in my hair, she proceeded to blow it dry. At one point I looked just like Elvis! By the time she was done, I looked like Donnie Osmond. To top it off, she squirted the back of my neck with perfume. But I have to admit that once I washed my hair, I realized it was one of the best haircuts I have ever had.

Oksana Update

Last night Elana invited several of the female students over for tea. While they were here, Oksana our neighbor stopped by. Elana seized the opportunity and had her come in to meet the students. They witnessed to her for quite a while. Afterwards, Elana had them pray for Oksana. Oksana was visibly moved. I was in the kitchen at the time. As Oksana was leaving (you must go through the kitchen) she tried to tell me in her VERY broken English that she did not know what to do. I had Julia come into the kitchen to interpret for me. I shared with her for about ten minutes about *the new life*, how Yeshua

can take away her sin, and give her a new life. Just then, her boy friend (Sasha, who is married) called her on her cell phone and said he had been waiting for her. He was very mad. She hung up and I said, "Let us pray for you!" I prayed a short, simple prayer, asking God to let her feel His presence. When we were done, her eyes were glassy. I asked her what she was feeling and she tried to talk, but began to cry. At that point, through her tears she made it to our door and left. PRAY FOR HER! She is so close. Ask God to show her the reality of sin and judgment and the joy of serving Yeshua.

Anti-Semitism

In my last letter I reported about preaching on anti-Semitism in Nicolaiav. Please agree with us in prayer that more and more doors will open for this message. Just the other day, Germany opened a beautiful new synagogue in Berlin. The president of Germany spoke and expressed his, and Germany's, great sorrow over the Holocaust. Pray that the leaders of Ukraine will deal with their anti-Semitic past, and that the curse over this land would be broken.

This weekend we will be going to Kiev, the capital. We will see Joan Jacobs, also a Tikkun emissary from Beth Messiah. Elana and I are looking to just get away for a day or two to be together for prayer and fellowship.

Brief

All the students refer to me as Mr. Cantor. Something I am not used to. But if that was not enough to remind me that I am aging—the other day Sharon and I were watching a movie. In the movie the old sixties song *My Girl* began to play. You know...*My girl, my girl, my girl, talkin' 'bout my girl*...Sharon said, “Daddy, is that a song from the early nineties?”

Tell someone about Yeshua today and as always ignore thee tipoz!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Friday, November 20, 1998 5:44 AM

Subject: SNOW, KIEV AND DRUNK PLUMBERS

Dear Friends and Family,

Today I can take a HOT shower. Something I definitely took for granted before August 13th, 1998. On Monday morning our water was turned off. Last night (Wed.) we got it back. Apparently there was a leak and the Reebok Store owner was furious (we live on top of his store). Much or some (facts are cloudy to me in this non-English speaking world) of his merchandise was ruined.

Last night an intoxicated young plumber came to our house. He was very friendly and jovial until he found a problem in our drain. I told him it was not a problem before and that I would not pay him (I did not ask him to come, he was hired by the REEBOK owner). One of the tricks of these guys is to come into your place while working on someone else's plumbing (like the REEBOK guy) and then try and collect money from everyone. When I told him I was not giving him anything, he got angry and left. Then his partner,

who was a cute old fellow, came and fixed everything and we got our water back. You know, you really don't *need* a shower every day!

A Trip to the Capital, Kiev

This past weekend Elana and I went to Kiev. It had snowed 8 inches the day before, so the trip took almost nine hours. On the way up, at one point, Valentine lost control in the snow and our car began to fishtail and then spin out of control. We cried out loud to the Lord as we spun down the highway at 40 or 50 mph. By God's grace Valentine skillfully brought the car to a stop. Fortunately, there were no other cars around us.

Public restrooms on the highway are rare and usually no more than a hole in the floor—literally! Not your average rest stop on interstate I-95.

Kiev is a beautiful city compared to Odessa. One street, *Crishatic*, is really nice. It is completely restored with Western style shops in the streets. We stopped at McDonald's to eat. A young boy, nine years old (Sharon's age), came up to us. He

was dirty and hungry and homeless. I am told there are 20,000 such street children in Kiev alone! Victor (our host in Kiev) bought him a meal. However, the young boy took the meal to an older boy, about 13. The older boys use the younger boys to play on the emotions of potential donors, and then the younger boys take what they get (food, money, etc.) to the older ones. When Victor saw this, he brought both boys to our table and then bought another meal for the older boy. These little boys reeked of glue. To get high, and escape the reality of subfreezing homelessness, they sniff glue. Maybe for the first time I felt Yeshua saying, "I was hungry and you fed me."

Friends, the poverty in this country is astounding. It is very difficult not to become cynical towards the American church when you see the desperation here. Of course, I am the first to blame. Before I came here, how much time, money and energy did I spend on the poor and hurting? Very little, I am sad to admit. But I pray that by God's grace the change in my life will be lasting.

I am not referring to those who suffer because they can't afford a TV or a VCR, or those who must settle for a one

bedroom apartment. (In the states my heart would go out for a family who only had one car.) I am speaking of those who have no shelter, no water, one set of stinking clothes and no food except that which is given to them. Some of them may die this winter. There is very little, if any, government assistance for people like this. They can't even pay the salaries of the government workers, much less feed the poor.

Then there is the middle class here. The average Ukrainian lives on less than fifty dollars a month. I know people who make around \$15 month. For many here, 20 cents will buy them a loaf of bread, and that may be breakfast, lunch and dinner.

There is so much in the Scriptures about assisting the poor:

Blessed is he who considers the poor; the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will preserve him and keep him alive, and he will be blessed on the earth; you will not deliver him to the will of his enemies. The LORD will strengthen him on his bed of illness; You will sustain him on his sickbed. (Ps 41:1-3 NKJ)

He who despises his neighbor sins; But he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he. (Prov 14:21 NKJ)

He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy. (Prov 14:31 NKJ)

Here is a thought: Yeshua's birthday is coming up. For some strange reason we have developed the habit of buying gifts for everyone BUT Yeshua on HIS birthday. I do not know about you, but I would be more than a little put off, if people came to my birthday party and began to exchange presents with each other. Now, it is true that Yeshua does not need a new tie or a key chain, but how can we express our love to Him on His birthday? Very simple. Read Matthew 25, the parable of the sheep and the goats. Yeshua says when you give to the needy, the poor, the hungry, the naked and those who are sick and in prison, you are really giving unto Him.

I encourage you this year to give Yeshua a present and help the hurting. There are many ways to do this. Our family has made a radical decision on how we are going to serve the poor this year.

A friend of mine, went out one year and bought a couple hundred dollars' worth of presents. Then he went to a low-income area and knocked on doors Christmas morning and began to give away the presents. He remarked how rewarding it was to see the faces of these shocked children. Do something for the poor this year.

Tikkun has three ministries that are working directly with the needy. EZRA, here in Ukraine, is trying to establish an orphanage for street children. Gateways Beyond is working with Ethiopian Jews and regularly are bringing financial assistance to them. And in Israel, Tents of Mercy, headed by Eitan Shishkoff, is distributing humanitarian aid to Russian immigrants. Contact TIKKUN INTERNATIONAL for ways that maybe you can help. I am sure that a donation this holiday season would be a blessing. (301-977-0156)

If you decide to do something, would you email us and tell us about it? I would love to hear!

A Trip to McDonald's

On Monday, (I am so excited) I will be taking 10 children who can barely afford a piece of bread to McDonald's. The average Ukrainian does not even know what the inside of a decent restaurant looks like. These kids will be shocked and blessed. And of course, we will do it in the name of Yeshua and have an opportunity to share the Gospel with them.

Very soon we will be opening a soup kitchen in the building next to our offices. For about 30 cents per person we can feed someone a meal. We will start serving fifty and then maybe expand. The Holocaust Survivors Society will be giving us names of Jewish people who are in need. They will be a captive audience to hear the Good News whenever they come.

That is all for now. See you in a few weeks...

May the Lord bless you as you serve Him, by serving the poor...

Tell someone about Yeshua today and please ignore the typos!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Tuesday, November 24, 1998 4:01 PM

Subject: MCDONALD'S II

Dear Friends,

Yesterday we had the privilege of taking ten very poor children to McDonald's. What a joy it was. At first we experienced some problems and almost canceled it. The van that I was to follow to McDonald's did not show up. How do you tell these children that it is canceled? Just as I was about to give up and tell the headmaster of the school that we couldn't do it, Valentine showed up. One thing I have learned over the years is that *resistance should be expected*—and you must not give up easily—even on the simplest ministry endeavors. God will come through if you are patient and persevere. We decided without the van we would take our two cars, and proceeded to pile a total of 16 people in two five-passenger sedans and headed for McDonald's.

On the way, I discovered that not only had none of these children ever been to McDonald's, but that they had *never been to a restaurant!* Can you imagine? What fun they had.

They each had a cheeseburger combo meal, and then I went and got them all chocolate sundaes. You should have seen their faces when I brought the sundaes to them.

Back to Kiev

I really need your prayers tomorrow night at 7 PM (12 Noon Eastern Standard Time). Unexpectedly, the door has opened for me to preach the Gospel at the largest church in Ukraine. The pastor is a missionary from Zimbabwe who goes by Pastor Genry (Henry in English). I talked to him last week and he asked me to preach a gospel message. But he is open for me to come back and preach on anti-Semitism. Both messages are needed in this country. I am told that this congregation has a deep love for Israel.

I truly covet your prayers!

Pastor Valodia

This past Sunday I preached at Pastor Valodia's church. His daughter is a graduate from our Bible School. He is a driven man. He goes out several times a week to preach in the villages surrounding Odessa. He has planted several

congregations. Next week, a few students and I will accompany him to one of his village congregations.

At the end of my message at his church, we prayed for people. All but four or five people came for prayer. As I was about to close and hand the service back to Valodia I realized that I had not given an altar call for salvation. I figured everyone there was a Believer because they almost all came for prayer. When I asked, four people from among those who had come for prayer responded. One girl, a teenager, began to weep as she embraced Yeshua for the first time. Another Babushka was also in tears. I put my arm around her, and despite the fact that I am probably thirty years her younger, she embraced me like I was her senior. These are the best moments in Odessa!

Snow

We are in the midst of a recent snow here. We got about six inches last week. *Derebosovskaya* Street, where we live, is beautiful. Because no cars are allowed on this street, it has remained white and stunning. At night it is all lit up. Driving

in Odessa already resembles bumper cars at an amusement park—now add snow! Please pray for our safety as Sasha and I drive to Kiev tomorrow. I imagine the roads are not great.

The Poor

I received several responses from my last email concerning the poor. All seem to say the same thing: “I know I need to help the poor, and sometimes I get greatly convicted, but I never seem to get around to doing something about it. And then the conviction wears off.” I know this was my testimony as well. This year, *do something* about it! You will be blessed even as I was yesterday at McDonald’s.

Thank you for your prayers tomorrow. Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Friday, November 27, 1998 5:52 AM

Subject: KIEV REPORT

Dear Friends,

Your notes of encouragement bring strength to our spirits; please keep them coming.

On Wednesday morning, Sasha and I headed for Kiev. My little Ford Escort has been such a trooper. If it were a dog, I would give it a bone. It trudged 500 kilometers through ice and snow to deliver us safely in Kiev.

Let me give you a little picture of what a drive to Kiev is like in the winter. It is the same distance as driving from Richmond, VA to NYC, minus the rest stops with Roy Rogers, TCBY, Starbucks Coffee, etc. The idea of pulling off the road to get some munchies or a cup of coffee 'to go' is non-existent. There is no such thing as fresh brewed coffee in a *to-go* cup.

You may pull over to go to the bathroom, which consists of a small concrete housing with two holes in the earth. It is more disgusting than any picture that I could try to describe

for you; you may pull off to add water to your windshield wiper fluid tank because you ran out.

With all the snow and dirt and ice, you must constantly fill your wiper fluid tank. Oh, and by the way, I now realize why we use that special blue fluid for this instead of water. I used to think that it was for cleaning the windshield better and maybe it is, but it is also because *water freezes!* Once the water freezes you have a real problem. There are four nozzles that squirt water on your windshield and they freeze up—one at a time. It is not quite as serious as when an airplane goes from four engines to one, but when you can't see driving at 100 kph (60 mph), it can be pretty dangerous. (When this happened on our last trip, I simply filled up a cup of water, while Valentine opened his window and [at 100 kph] poured it on the windshield and turned on the wipers.) Then, your windshield wipers freeze, so even if you can get the car to squirt water, the windshield wipers no longer rub flush against your windshield. By the time we got to Kiev, you could not even see out of my back windshield. My license plates

were covered in brown ice. Sasha, who is such a servant, gladly cleaned them using fresh snow as a cloth.

As you are driving you may pass a prehistoric vehicle that appears to be created to clear snow, or fix electric wires. (Today we saw one that had a plow in the front and a huge circular brush in the middle. As it plows snow, the big brush breaks up the ice. It also had a big yellow tank on top, which means it must have squirted something on the road to melt the ice.) You look at these vehicles and you literally can become depressed wondering how they get anything accomplished with such machines. On the way home we saw several jackknifed tractor-trailers. At times, I felt like I was traveling through a war zone as we saw the havoc that the weather had wreaked upon the vehicles of this country. Once it snows in Kiev, you must simply wait until spring for it to go away.

Only one lane was opened all the way to Kiev, and at times that lane was dangerously filled with ice and slush. In order to pass someone, we had to drive on the other lane which was filled with snow, slush and ice. At 90 – 100 kph,

this is not fun. The fog was so intense that everything ahead was just white. (And they do not turn on their headlights here in such weather.)

On the way home, we stopped for gas. Friends, if I didn't have pictures, you might not believe the condition of this gas station. First of all, the pump itself did not have a typical meter, but some sort of a stop watch or clock dial; it must have been thirty years old. Secondly, it was the first time I used a gas pump that didn't shut off automatically when your tank is full! But that is okay, because you can easily tell that your tank is full when gas begins to come streaming out of your tank all over the place.

Victory Church In Kiev

So why did we make this crazy trip anyway? A few weeks ago, when I was in Kiev, I asked some friends if there was a church where I might preach during my next visit. I figured that if we are going to Kiev, we might as well make the most of it. I had no idea that they contacted the largest church in the country. Although it did not work out for that weekend,

Pastor Genry, who came to Ukraine as a student from Zimbabwe many years ago, called me last week to set up this meeting. I was amazed that he would give me his pulpit, because he did not even know me. And from what I was told by others, this is very unusual.

The church is called Victory Church. It was the first time I had seen a full charismatic style worship band with all the instruments. They meet in a Ukrainian Theatre that seats about 1,500 people. It was full on Wednesday night. Their first song was Paul Wilbur's WHO IS LIKE THE LORD, which seemed to really strengthen my spirit. When they introduced me as a Messianic Rabbi, the place went nuts. By this time my hands were tingling, not from the anointing, but the cold. The temperature in the building could not have been much higher than freezing. I have never been so cold while preaching. I began to laugh as I realized, in the States, we would probably cancel services if it were that cold. For them, this is normal. (In fact, not long after writing this, I heard of a congregation in the States that did cancel a service because they did not

have electricity. They missed a great opportunity to identify with the third world).

These people just put on their fur coats and fur hats and get out their Bibles.

I preached a salvation message, sharing my testimony. Then I encouraged the believers there, that Yeshua came into the world to 1) save sinners (1Tim 1:15) and 2) destroy the work of the devil (1 John 3:8b). He did not come simply to get people into heaven, but to see them live victorious lives on earth and to show forth His glory to a lost and dying world. No matter how hard your life is, *if* you have Yeshua, *then* you have purpose!

When we called forth those who needed salvation, around thirty to thirty-five people responded. We were all overjoyed. Some were very poor, others were donned in expensive fur coats. Yeshua is the Messiah of both the high and the low, the rich and poor alike.

After we prayed with these we called forth those who felt like they were under the attack of the enemy, those who wanted to walk in deeper freedom. They came *running*,

literally! I have never seen anything like it. Within seconds the huge altar area was filled with maybe a thousand people. I shared a few thoughts about the shofar and shouting; how God used it to break down the walls of Jericho and, how it will welcome back Yeshua at His return.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Messiah will rise first. (1Thes 4:16 NKJ).

I then instructed them to shout when they hear the long shofar blast just as Joshua had instructed the Israelites. Friends, the more I see this, the more it amazes me. I have seen so many people get free over the past two years at the blowing of the shofar. In our human minds, it seems so ridiculous; that you can blow a horn, people shout and they walk away different—they walk away free! God also answers the cry of the (spiritually) hungry. It appears that this instrument is truly a weapon in the spirit.

I have often gotten this picture concerning the shofar: Do you remember the cartoon of a cat that was tormented by a little puppy? He would sneak up behind the cat and begin to

bark. The cat would jump so high that her claws would dig into the ceiling. This is what I think happens to the Devil when we blow the shofar unto the Lord. It is tormenting to him.

Well, we blew the shofar and they shouted, and despite the fact that they were packed in like sardines at the altar, they began to jump and dance unto the Lord. By looking into their faces I could see the presence of Yeshua and the joy of the Lord. After a couple songs, I closed the service by asking them if they would pray for the Jewish people and they responded wonderfully.

The associate pastor indicated that they would invite us back to preach on a Sunday—three services. It is my hearts' desire to preach about the spirit of anti-Semitism. Agree with me that, if this is God's will, it will come to pass.

Please don't think that by reporting this I am trying to draw attention to myself. It has never been more real to me than it is now, that anything good that happens through us or our ministry is for Him and from Him and because of Him. He does nothing through us for the purpose of making us look

good, but He gives us His gifts, so that through us His glory may be known to all men. Let me draw attention to Yeshua and what He did for His children in Kiev the other night. More of Him, and less of me!

Baruch HaShem Adonai, Blessed be the name of the Lord!

Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the ever-present typos. And HAPPY THANKSGIVING! We wish we were with you!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Tuesday, December 1, 1998 3:25 PM

**Subject: BODY ODOR, EMOTIONS AND
THANKSGIVING**

Dear Friends,

Happy Belated Thanksgiving! I have to say that I am more thankful for America today than I have ever been. The poverty here is so intense and so hopeless, that I am far more aware of how God has truly blessed America.

It is just after 7:00 AM here and all is quiet. The sun will still not be seen for a half hour or so. In the afternoon it gets dark just after four. The days here are shorter because we are further north and further from the sun in the winter.

On Thanksgiving Day, we opened up the first of two soup kitchens. This was also the last day of our 40 days of corporate prayer and fasting. One of the things we were praying about was the birthing of these soup kitchens, and it just happened to open on the last day of our fast. The food looked delicious, but the whole college chose to fast together on the last day.

All we could do was watch as almost fifty poverty-stricken Odessans came to their Thanksgiving feast.

The other day, Peter Van der Steer, one of our leaders, saw a lady shoveling snow on the street. He began to converse with her and found out that for breaking her back, shoveling snow day after day, she gets a whopping thirty-seven *hrevnas* a month—or eleven dollars! On that salary she tries to support herself and her invalid son.

Sweaty Worship!

Recently, evangelist Jeff Collins from Texas was with us. He was a tremendous encouragement to the students and the congregation. When Elana and I walked into the evening meeting, we were met with an interesting aroma. We entered a small, crowded building that smelled like a gym. If my eyes had been closed, I would have guessed that we were in a locker room, not a congregational building. This was the scent produced from a church full of dancing, shouting, and praising Ukrainian believers. They celebrate and they sweat.

Deodorant is a luxury over here and not an essential element of Eastern European culture.

I don't mention this to make fun of Ukrainians, but to contrast cultures and enlarge our worldview beyond shopping malls, nice perfume, clean streets, and warm clothes. Another attitude that is slowly dying in me is my microwave mentality—the idea that you can have what you want, when you want it. In Odessa fast food is neither *fast*, nor at times *food*. The water is not drinkable, so we must distill several gallons a day. These experiences have really stretched my previously limited point of view on how much of the world lives in poverty in comparison to most Americans.

Thank You!

All this brings me to Thanksgiving. What am I thankful for?

I am thankful for gloves. I saw a man today (it is about 0 degrees F today) who was holding a string of fish without gloves.

I am thankful for a place to live. Many here share apartments with up to four families. Each family gets a room and they share the kitchen.

I am thankful for colors in America. Once it gets cold here, everything becomes gray.

I am thankful for friends who speak English.

I am thankful that Jamie Cowen is coming to Odessa today with Oreos and English videos from my parents.

I am thankful that my bathroom floor does not spew up waste anymore.

I am thankful that fleas don't like Odessa winters.

I am thankful that most manholes have covers in America, and potholes are not the size of Lake Superior.

I am thankful that Yeshua has purchased me and I will reign with Him forever and ever and that any hardship I am asked to endure can never compare with the act of taking my sins in His body, along with nails in His hands and feet.

I am thankful for my wife, my children, and my parents.

Emotions

I never thought, being the emotionally tough minded fellow that I am (thought I was), that I would experience the range of emotions that I have over the past four months. I find myself missing Richmond, where I grew up, more than anything. I can be driving to no place in particular and suddenly out of the blue, I will have a thought come to my mind about something in Richmond from my childhood to which I have not given consideration for over a decade or more.

As far as people go, I miss my father more than anyone. I have a much better appreciation for my wife, who has been geographically separated from her family in Israel since a year before we were married, with the exception of short visits to Israel. At times she has gone a year and half without seeing her mother. I miss my parents deeply. I never imagined that I love them as much as I do. In recent years my father and I have grown much closer. I cannot wait to see him.

Sometimes, a spirit of despair will come upon us. It really is demonic. We might start to feel absolutely hopeless, like we are stuck here. Prayer and keeping busy is the answer. We

have found that if we isolate ourselves, depression comes in. But when we are busy with the students, having guests over and going to different places we are encouraged. One day, when everything was going wrong, this spirit of despair came heavily upon me. I felt trapped, I wanted to go home, and I felt that my time here was useless and could not imagine waiting another month and a half to leave (for a visit). About halfway through the day, I suddenly understood, as if God was speaking to me, that these emotions were not mine, but the enemy was feeding them to me. While walking down the walking street, I simply said, “Devil, I am not going to live my life like this here, get off of me in the name of Yeshua!” From that very moment I changed—I mean, something left!

Elana and I go in and out of such attacks (mostly “out” thank God). I can only imagine what life would be like here without the Internet for news, and email to stay in touch. I think of the first American missionary, Adoniram Judson. When he asked the father of his wife, for her hand in marriage, he made it clear, that her father would never again see her in this life. And although Adoniram did come back a

few times to the States, his wife Anne Hassleton Judson never again saw her family—on earth. I am challenged by his level of commitment. And in light of the commitment that Yeshua, the son of God, made to us, namely dying to rescue us, what sacrifice is too great? We have been bought with a price, our lives no longer belong to us (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

One Scripture that I have meditated on quite a bit is Mark 10:28-30:

²⁸Then Peter began to say to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You.” ²⁹So Yeshua answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left his house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, ³⁰who shall not receive a hundred-fold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.”

I would hardly call myself a missionary. We have been gone four months and have been able to stay in contact with friends and family somewhat regularly. But there have been so many who have gone before us who waited months, maybe years, just for a letter. David Livingston always hoped that

letters from his wife and family might find him in Africa, but they never did. When he got back to Scotland after being absent for several years he tragically found out that his parents and his wife were estranged and that his children were with his parents and his wife nearly destitute.

Serving the Poor

I have been every encouraged by the response of so many of you concerning our challenge to serve the poor. Read this recent email from a dear couple:

“We have decided not to buy Christmas presents for ourselves and send you the money so you can distribute it as you see fit. It is interesting that my wife and I were having the identical thought and I was not sure how I was going to bring up the subject when to my surprise she suggested the very thing that I was thinking. I think this is the Lord as He has worked in our minds before this way.”

The gift they are sending is substantial and we are planning to buy gifts for a local children's hospital with it. We will go and present the gifts and tell them the story of Yeshua and then our children will sing songs that they have been

learning in school. Another family recently wrote and told us how they are going to help with a local DC mission in feeding the poor.

If you are looking for something to do, you can also send finances. If you make a note on your check that is a special gift for the poor (and not support) we will make sure that 100% goes to helping the less fortunate in Odessa. It might be good to drop me an email as well so I can let the folks in the TIKKUN office know that it is a gift for the poor.

In seventeen days we will be reconnected by more than email with so many you. We are looking forward so much to seeing you all. We will come back to Odessa on January 18th. Until then, tell SOMEONE about Yeshua today and ignore the typos.

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Saturday, December 05, 1998 3:06 AM

Subject: ICE, NO LIGHTS AND C-C-c-o-o-o-L-D

Dear Friends,

How wonderful it is to be alive and in God's purposes. On Wednesday I went back in time. Several students, John Wealton from Richmond, VA, and I piled in my car and followed Pastor Valodia three hours to a small village somewhere west of Odessa. Sarah, David, Lena and Dasha were to lead worship and I was to preach.

Pastor Valodia is a driven man. And he drives like a driven man! I had great difficulty keeping up with him through the snow and ice. He has planted five or so small congregations in Ukraine in addition to his own congregation in Odessa. He is raising up young pastors to take over these works. He works tirelessly for the Gospel.

On the way we hit a patch of ice that was at least a mile long. It was the most slippery, bumpiest road I have ever been on. We literally bounced and slid the next mile. God has given my little Ford *Escort* the heart of a Ford *Explorer*. When we

finally arrived at the village it was dark. We walked through the dark courtyard and into a hallway that led to a room where the service would be held. It was pitch black except for two flashlights and a candle. They told me the lights would come on at 6 PM but I had to be done preaching by 8 PM because the lights will automatically go off. I guess they rent the room from 6 PM to 8 PM.

As soon as I got inside I felt warmth, yet I could still see my breath. It was not really warm; it just felt warm compared to the -3° degrees F outside. It was the coldest day so far this year. (It has been unusually cold this winter. Already we have had two good snows.) The students did a wonderful job leading worship. I had John share a greeting from the States, and then I preached a message entitled "Three Things the Gospel Does"

1. It changes our hearts (we love enemies; bless persecutors; etc).
2. It gives us joy and victory and conquers oppression.

3. It gives us purpose (in our new role as ambassadors to the world for Yeshua).

There were only about thirty people there, but the Lord gave me great joy in preaching to them. Just think, it was exactly one week ago in Kiev that I was preaching in the largest church in Ukraine, and now I am in the middle of nowhere preaching in a heat-less room to thirty or so folks. I can honestly say it was as much a privilege to address one group as the other. I thought last week was the coldest place I have ever preached, but this place has moved into first.

At the end of the service we saw one girl confess Yeshua, but she did not receive complete freedom. She responded to our call for salvation. She stood up and said that for three years she had been hearing voices. I asked her if something happened in her life three years ago to set this off. She said no. I asked her again to think hard. Then she “remembered” that she had gotten involved in White Magic at that time. Aha!

She proceeded to share with us that she has cursed a man and two months later he died. She was under a terrible weight of guilt over this. She could not comprehend the fact that Yeshua would completely forgive her and that she did not have to pay for her sins herself. She confessed Yeshua as Lord, but I left feeling that God wanted to do so much more for her. Pray for Luda, that as she continues to come to this fellowship, that she would understand God's love and be set completely free. So many people here see God merely as a spiritual power, rather than a loving father. That is the fruit of spiritism and white magic, which is looking for spiritual power, rather than forgiveness of sins and a pure life.

As the students and I were ministering to people the lights suddenly went out. It was 8:00 PM! We continued to minister by candlelight.

Afterwards, we all put on our winter jackets, hats, scarves and gloves and prepared to go outside. It was beautiful night in this village. There were no lights and the moon was full. On the snow, the moon shined (not moonshine!) and everything had a blue glow to it.

When we got to the car we noticed that Pastor Valodia's car was gone. We waited for about 20 minutes and wondered what happened to him. Just then he arrived back with food. We went back inside and had a candlelight fellowship meal.

At this point it was 9 PM and I had to drive back through the snow and ice to Odessa. Trains are unpredictable in Ukraine. We found ourselves stopped at a railroad crossing. The train was moving at about 1mph. Then it stopped. We waited. Then it began to move the other direction. Finally after nearly 20 minutes we could continue. Shortly afterward Valodia was stopped by the Militia and given a speeding ticket. I hoped he might slow down after this.

Next we came to a checkpoint. A checkpoint in Eastern Europe is everything you have seen in the movies, complete with intimidating Slavic border guards with machine guns. Because it was after eleven we had to go inside and register our vehicles. One militia man, short and stocky, and looking like he was mad because he had not killed anything or anyone all day, kept staring at me, machine gun in hand. I told him if he did not stop staring at me I would make him eat that

machine gun (Just kidding, haha). We left the checkpoint and headed back to Odessa. At this point, I was very tired and everyone in my car was asleep. Oh, how I wanted to stop at Starbucks for a cup of coffee—but alas, there was none. Finally, at close to 1 AM, we arrived back at the school.

We dropped the students off and then headed for my apartment where I would immediately make contact with my bed, which I so desperately longed for. On the way I ended up going the wrong way on a one way street. Because there were no cars on the road and the signs are basically hidden, I did not realize it—until after we were pulled over. And unlike many of the other MG's who let me go as soon as they hear English (not because I have their favor, but because they can't communicate with me) this one wouldn't budge. Finally, after repeated attempts at communication, he released us.

When we were about 200 meters from my home, a pack of street dogs began to chase my car. The street dogs here (and they are everywhere) are extremely mild. I have never seen one attack a human. I figured they would disappear. They followed us, barking all the way, to my apartment and

then just stood outside my car—waiting—maybe for dinner! For five minutes they stayed there. This was so demonic. Finally I backed up and sped around the block. Remarkably they kept up with my car most of the way, literally taking short cuts across sidewalks. Finally I lost them and John and I zoomed back into my driveway, jumped out of the car and ran inside.

JUST ANOTHER EXCITING EVENING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD!

You may be wondering, “Ron how do you deal with it?” Friends, I wouldn't have it any other way. My life has never been so eventful. Besides the fact that God is using us, I can't tell you how exciting it is to live in a culture so foreign to my own. Border guards, wild dogs and candle lit meetings—who wouldn't want this?

Gifts for the Poor

Tomorrow, we are taking all the kids to the seven-kilometer market. This is a massive clothes and toy market. We are going to buy tons of toys that we will take to a local

children's hospital next week. It has been a real eye-opener for my children to see how poor the people are here. They regularly ask for money to give to beggars.

Our first soup kitchen is going well. We are feeding about fifty people a day. Two of our students, David and Eugene, help oversee it. Neither of them can afford food themselves, so this way they too, get a good hot meal each day. Please pray for our second soup kitchen to open soon.

Yesterday, we had a massive impromptu snowball fight with the students. Dr. Wilks, the director, started it all by throwing a snowball at Ira from Nicolaiav. The students were shocked. Dr. Wilks is one of the most gentle and godly men I know. Of all people, the students never expected Dr. Wilks to throw a snowball—but once he did...well, Ira responded and then everyone was involved. We had a blast and it was a good release for the students.

Elana and I will be back in the area in 13 days. We are really looking forward to seeing everyone.

Well, tell someone about Yeshua today, and ignore the typos.

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,
Ron & Elana Cantor

Sunday, December 13, 1998 2:51 PM

Subject: CURIOSITY *ALMOST* KILLED THE CAT

I don't know if I mentioned it, but we got a cat. Her name is Daisy and she belonged to a family of American missionaries. They moved home and gave the cat to our friend Nellie. She in turn has "lent" her to us while we are here.

Last night it was so hot in our apartment that we opened the windows. We have not done this since we have had the cat, as it is quite cold outside. Our apartment doesn't even really need heat. We have two space heaters, but rarely use them. For some reason our apartment holds the heat in. The Ukrainian locals do not understand it. They have never seen a home that can withstand an Odessa winter and still be warm. It is possible that this is supernatural. Anyway, we opened up our window. After being in bed a few minutes I heard a noise over by the window.

The thought crossed my mind that it might be the cat, but I did not seriously think that until Elana screamed. I turned to see Daisy in the windowsill, leaning over the edge.

I shouted, “Daisy!!” and for the first time since we have had this cat, she gave us some indication that she does have a brain. She jumped down—back into the house.

We thought maybe that the torturous, but affectionate routine that the girls (especially Danielle) put her through, finally caused her to crack and she was simply going to end it all. We didn't find any suicide note.

I had one idea if she did jump. Everyone here has these great fur *shopkas* (Russian hat). In fact, I just bought one and they are terrific for winter. I was amazed at how much my hat resembles Daisy, and thought maybe I could save some money if I brought my own fur. Then she would always be in our thoughts.

Anyway, she is still alive and we are happy to have her. She helps the kids deal with life here and is a real source of joy for them.

Orphans

Yesterday we all went to the seven-Kilometer market. This market is absolutely huge. They sell jackets, clothes, fur

coats, hats, toys, and more. We bought three large bags full of toys (backpacks, stuffed animals, dolls, toy cars, bouncing balls and more). We will take it all on Tuesday to a local children's hospital. I am really praying that my children will fully understand how blessed they are as they give to these poor and dying young ones.

New Baby

On Sunday, during a staff fellowship meal, our dear friend Yura Mokart came in glowing. He announced to us that his wife, Katya, just gave birth to a baby girl! It is their first. As excited as he was, it did not erase the horror that one goes through in having a baby here. Once she was admitted Sunday morning, she was undressed in an unheated delivery room. (The temperature here hovers between 10 and 30 degrees.) Then they took a block of ice and placed it on her stomach. This torture method is supposed to cause the patient to have contractions. Maybe it works because in three hours she delivered. Nevertheless, she said she was literally turning purple when she gave birth.

Afterward, she was put in another unheated room for almost a week. Fortunately we were able to bring in heaters for her. However, she is allowed no visitors in her room. She must come down to see her husband. It is Saturday here and her husband just saw the baby yesterday for the first time! They would not allow him to see his daughter while Katya was in the hospital. Elana asked the director to show her the rooms upstairs. She promised to bring baby clothes next week and the director submitted. (Many of the ladies carry their new babies home in their coats, as they have no baby clothes. Tomorrow we are going to the clothes markets to get more toys and some baby clothes.) Elana was taken upstairs. In Katya's room were ten beds, all falling apart. Elana, who had two of her three children at Shady Grove's Maternity suites, complete with Jacuzzi, dim lights, homey atmosphere, nurses to wait on you, etc, was shocked.

Despite all this, mother and baby are doing fine. We will probably go and visit them this afternoon.

Orphanage

On Tuesday, we went to the aforementioned orphanage. Several city officials and a local TV news team were there to greet us. They videotaped the whole thing. This was a special time for me personally because it was the first time that our whole family ministered together as a group. Elana led the children in singing *Hava Nagilla*, the children (with other classmates) sang three songs they have recently learned, and I shared the story of Yeshua's birth and why He came. The director was overjoyed as we presented three large bags containing over 100 gifts. In addition, the city officials were very grateful. The doors are open for us to do this more and more.

On Monday night we will be on Channel Seven, at seven. The TV guys said, "Please tell us when you are going to be doing humanitarian efforts in our city; we want to cover it for the news." Because there is not much GOOD news coming out of this poverty-stricken city, they are eager to do this.

Tomorrow, at the market, we plan to buy lots of mittens and scarves for the orphans and take them next week, before we leave.

Invalids

Presently we have one soup kitchen, with one more to open. However, an equally great need is to feed the thousands of invalids in this city who cannot come to a soup kitchen. We plan to start delivering meals to invalids in the near future. Please pray with us that it all comes together. The devil hates these people and wants them to die, alone and hopeless. Pray with us that along with a meal, they will receive the gift of eternal life and pass from this life to the next, full of hope and joy, eagerly awaiting their appointment with Yeshua the Messiah!

Last week, we visited three Jewish invalids. Rebecca Cowen, Rabbi Jamie Cowen's daughter, came with us. She is preparing for her Bat Mitzvah and accompanied her Dad on his recent ministry trip here. The first lady was overwhelmed. She said she had never had so many visitors. (There were only four of us.) I showed her a picture of my daughters and she began to cry. She said through her tears that it is good to have a large family, "because I lost my only son to cancer many

years ago.” She told me she was born on 1915. I said, “You outlasted communism!” She laughed.

Before we left I asked her if we could take her picture. She paused, and then began to straighten her 83-year-old hair and then said, “Yes, but first can I put my teeth in!” What a sweetheart she was! She has a prescription that needed to be filled, but did not have the money. We were able to take the prescriptions and fill them for her.

We visited three Jewish women that day and all of them said they believed in Yeshua. We prayed for all of them. They are not so far from eternity. What a joy it will be to greet them in the age to come.

One More Week

Well, dear friends, in less than a week we will be home. As rewarding and life-changing as these first four months have been, I can honestly say that I can't wait to get home. We miss you all dearly and it feels as if we have been separated for years. Please pray with us that our visit will be

a fruitful one. Also, please agree with me for my parents' and my sister's salvation. It will be good to be with them.

Beloved, tell someone about Yeshua today. You can't take your car, your laptop or your house to heaven, but you can take PEOPLE with you! Invest in PEOPLE! Until next time, please ignore the typos.

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Friday, December 18, 1998 5:48 AM

Subject: DOSVEDANYA ODESSA

Dear Friends,

Can you believe it? We are going home today! It is just before 6 A.M. here and still *yesterday* for you on the other side of the Atlantic. Our plane leaves at 5:40 P.M. (10:40 A.M. EST) and arrives in Austria about 2 hours later. Please pray for safe travel and little turbulence. We arrive will back in Odessa late January.

What a whirlwind this last week has been. It all started last Saturday:

(Friends, in sharing this, I am neither complaining, nor looking for sympathy, but rather doing my best to give you a real look at life in Odessa. With all the trials, still this has been maybe the most rewarding four months of my life. New Believers, help for the poor, training future ministers and developing strong friendships.---What more could I ask for?)

I was working out around 10 A.M. when there was a knock at my door. As I opened it up a Ukrainian Babushka began to

yell at me in Russian. My answer for this has always been to yell back in English. Well, I have to find a new answer because my "carnal" one did not work this time. "I don't understand you!" Slam! I closed the door. Not thinking too much of it, because this happens all the time over silly things like where I parked the car, or my phone usage. I went back to my weights. Suddenly, another knock. This time as I answered I was staring in the face of one of the toughest looking guys I have ever seen. Not a young fellow, but a businessman who had "MAFIA" written all over him. Next to him was a militiaman.

He began to yell at me and then simply pushed me aside as he walked into my house. For the first time since I have been here I was scared! I knew this was serious, but I did not know what I had done. Finally they realized that I do not speak Russian. After he calmed down, we understood that he owned Reebok underneath us. (The guy I had always dealt with apparently was not the owner, but the deputy director.) He said that water was leaking into his store. I said, "*Pajulsta!*" (*Please!*), meaning, "check around and you will see

that the water is not coming from here.” However, when I opened the bathroom door to show him there was no problem, I was greeted with 2 to 3 inches of soapy water on our bathroom floor.

Now I felt like a real *shmo* (Yiddish for ‘bonehead’). I apologized profusely and began to clean up the water. After that, they turned our water off. He has the power to turn off the water of everyone on top of him. I went later to ask them to turn it back on and they said NO! I was told that on Monday they would turn it on, after the insurance people had assessed the damages.

On Monday I went back. I was taken immediately into the man's office. This man was intimidating to say the least. I have no doubt that he has killed, and would kill. Now that I was in his office, I was really stuck because I had no interpreter. So as they looked for one, he and I just stood there in his office—silent. So I said, “How’s the family? Blow up anyone this week?” I can joke about it now, but at the time it was more than a little uncomfortable.

Finally, I said I would go to find an interpreter. Just as I walked out into the street I saw Elana talking to someone who spoke English. It turns out that a mutual friend had shown this young lady a picture of Elana. She recognized her on the street and said hello. Well I drafted her and she came in to interpret. First the Mafia guy said, "I will NOT turn the water back on, I will sue you. I will have you thrown out of your apartment."

However, after we apologized for closing the door on the lady who worked for him, he softened. I realize now treating the lady unkindly was my big mistake and I have learned from it. The Bible says a gentle answer, not slamming the door, turns away wrath. I told him that I was not a businessman, but there to help the people of Odessa, and showed him my Red Cross badge.

He said, "In America you would be sued." I responded that in America we would settle out of court and I assured him I would pay for any damages. Finally he said that he would not sue us and that he would turn the water back on. But he said that if it happened again, he would send his militia to

throw us out! Please pray that there are no more floods or leaks!

Then after he turned on the water, the city turned off the water! After not having water for two days I was really looking forward to a hot shower, but when I went to turn it on—no water.

Needless to say the meeting with Mr. Mafia left me a little shaken. I felt like the Lord wanted to teach me to not be intimidated. It drove me to prayer. The Lord reminded me of the story of Elisha and his servant. When the enemy's army was coming after just the two of them, God showed them that they were not alone. "There are more with us than against us," the prophet said. God opened the servant's eyes and he saw the whole mountainside with angels on chariots of fire. As believers we are not called to come under the power of the spirit of intimidation, but to rise up against it (even with Mafia guys) and trust the Lord.

(Looking back on this experience a year later, I can see where it has helped in dealing with Hungarian and Ukrainian police, customs officials and more. Now when I feel that wave

of intimidation try to come upon me, I come against it in prayer and declare the authority of Yeshua over the situation, rather than give in to fear.)

On Tuesday morning, while washing my car, Baggio came up and began to talk to me. He is from India and is here studying medicine. He is here for five years and will go home only once. He asked me if he could use my phone to call his family. He ran out of money and needed them to wire him some more. After he hung up the phone, he was almost in tears because he missed them so much. He was so depressed in Odessa.

I began to share the Gospel with him and within a few minutes he asked what he must do. I love those words, "What must I do?" This is a sign of conviction and readiness to repent. We prayed and he confessed his sins and Yeshua as his Messiah. That night I took him to our MJBH Hanukkah party. When we got there, the electricity was out on the entire block. We had to have a Hanukkah party with over 50 people with only four or five candles. After about an hour, the lights came on.

Pray for Baggio, that he will attend the congregation tomorrow and develop friendships with Believers. He came by today (it is now 11:45 A.M.) and seems to be a different person.

Then, on Wednesday, our children preformed a small Hanukkah/Christmas play for the parents of all the children in their school. After a lot of fun at Wayne and Bonnie Wilks' flat I went to start my car—DEAD! Completely without LIFE. Because Wayne and Bonnie's phone was not working, I had walked to Peter and Ginny's flat to call Valentine to come jump my car. However, when I arrived at Peter and Ginny's I remembered that Valentine's phone was also out. AHHHHH! So I called a taxi and walked back to the Wilks' flat, and we left our car there and took a taxi home.

Shortly after we arrived home, there was a massive city-wide power outage. At this point Elana screamed in agony. I chose to laugh. Elana wisely located the emergency candles and I felt my way into the kitchen for a lighter. For the next hour and a half we just sat there. *Derebosovskaya* was pitch black. This is the busiest street in the city. However,

restaurants, clothing boutiques, everything went pitch black. Then Wayne and Bonnie and their daughter Julia came over and we (in the dark) lit the Hanukkah candles together.

Well friends, just another crazy week in Odessa.

Before we leave tonight we are going to drop off some warm hats at the orphanage we went to last week and drop by to visit Yura and Katya's new baby. I will send another email with my speaking itinerary while in the states. We hope to see you all.

In closing, let me say it has been my great privilege and blessing to send out these emails. I imagine many people simply delete them when they see them (I can't blame them.) Yet, I know from many of your responses that they have touched you, they have given you vision, and helped you to see the larger world beyond the 50 States. Although we never planned to do this when we came here, I have felt like God has given me a ministry to you—maybe equal to our ministry here? I know that I would not have had the discipline to write all these memories down, if not for you. I can imagine when

my children are teenagers or even parents, we will find great joy in reading these emails together. THANK YOU!

And thank you for your prayers, without which we may still not have WATER or ELECTRICITY!

Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos!
HAPPY HANUKKAH, MERRY CHRISTMAS and MAY YOU
HAVE A SPIRIT FILLED NEW YEAR!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Thursday, Dec 24 1998 11:56 PM

Subject: THE SNOW, ICE AND COLD FOLLOWS US

Dear Friends,

How could it be? All we heard from the states while in Odessa, was what a mild winter you were all having. We heard of 80-degree days and short sleeve shirts. What a joy it was to take a wilderness hike on Sunday with only a T-shirt.

Yet, as if it sniffed us out from Odessa, the cold soon found out where we were staying and brought with it snow and ice. Who would believe that in a place where it has not snowed for two years, it would snow less than a week after we left Odessa? What has shocked me most is how the entire city of Richmond has reacted to the bad weather. You would think a volcano had erupted. "Stay in your homes! Buy food..." They should spend a few days in the FSU. This is everyday, normal weather for *us* Odessans.

Well, to sum up our first few months in Odessa, I wrote a poem. I am not a poet; I was just so bored on the plane from Austria to New York that I wrote a poem:

The Cantor Family said,
“Lord send us please!”
But they did not know,
They'd be greeted by fleas.

From there they moved,
to the famed “walking street”,
Despite nicer surroundings,
Elana would still not eat the meat

spaseeba, pajulsta,
The language was hard;
Elana was shocked,
That the people ate lard!

No water, no phone,
The trials did test us.
Thank God,
That the militia, did not arrest us.

The night before Israel,
I heard the noise of a mouse.
I spread out rat poison,
For stirring creatures in my house.

Two weeks in the Holy Land,
Come Eitan, come Asher.
Then back to Odessa,
To serve the Master.

When we arrived back in Ukraine
Our drain was no longer broken,
Poop did not spew out,
Like a backed up ocean.

Two classes I taught,
Elana, the Hebrew teacher.
Although they enjoyed mine,
They said it was she, who was the better Preacher.

Two more months,
Seemed like forever.
Would December 18th come,
We thought, maybe never.

He took us to Kiev,
He took us to preach.
Many met Yeshua,
Many, we did reach.

When back in Odessa,
The poor we did feed.
My problems diminished,
in the light of their need.

Sixteen in two cars,
We went to McDonald's.
Ten were children who had never been to a restaurant,
much less dined with Sir Ronald.

God opened our eyes,
Our hearts had been calloused.
There is more to our world,
beyond New York or Dallas.

I remembered my words
I spoke in the States,
“Boring America,
It is you that I hate.”

But lonely in Odessa,
My blessings I counted.
Pay at the pump?
I had taken for granted.

The last week before we left,
our trials increased.
The Mafia was angry
That our water had leaked.

But yesterday came,
The eighteenth of December.
The fleas from the past,
We could hardly remember.

Our hearts leapt with joy,
As we walked on the plane.
Just being in a western jet,
Began to ease the pain.

I write you today,
from high above the clouds.
From Austria to Washington,
I've been thinking out loud.

What will we do,
When we see family and friends.
Will we remember Odessa?
Or will this be the end?

How will we handle,
Hot water, so much.
A microwave oven,
Your dreams with one touch.

Where is the mouse,
the fleas, roaches and water leaks,
Patient in Odessa,
They will greet us in four weeks.

Wayne and Bonnie,
Valentine and Tatiana,
Peter and Ginny,
Ron and Elana.

We served as a team,
Preferring one another.
Wayne as our pastor,
We would have no other.

There is so much to ponder,
Our lives have been changed
But after a month in Virginia,
Will we still be the same?

Our hearts are so wicked,
The Bible says this is so.
Let the change be eternal,
Lord, let it forever show...

Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos!

Happy Holidays!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,
Ron, Elana, Sharon, Yael & Danielle Cantor

Monday, January 25, 1999 5:52 PM

Subject: BACK IN THE USSR

I knew we were back in Odessa when the plane landed. I looked out the window and there was a half-golden retriever, half something else, on the runway. Only in Odessa do you find stray dogs on the runway. After three planes, and some of the most beautiful landscapes I have ever seen over France, Switzerland and Austria (snow-covered mountain peaks, clouds hovering at the bottom of the mountains, etc.), suddenly we descended into thick, dark clouds, and when we came out, instead of the beautiful gingerbread houses of Austria, we saw the results of 70 years of communism: old houses, broken wooden fences, small villages, dark and gray streets. We knew we were home. I literally began to laugh out loud, realizing the absurdity of the fact that we left four weeks of comfort in the US to return to this place—and not because some dictator sentenced us, but of our own free will. However, we have learned that life is not made up of the abundance of possessions, but the quality of relationships.

As we got off the plane onto the gray concrete, we zipped away in a van and sped ahead of everyone to the customs area. This is Odessa's VIP service and worth every penny (not a lot). Coming into Odessa with three restless, somewhat jet-lagged children is no easy task. We had a little snag with the customs fellows. They wanted to know what the electronic gadget in one of our boxes was. I explained that it was a computer printer. They thought I said computer, and they wanted to see it. Then he argued with the VIP services lady, who was no doubt telling him how important we are (haha) and then he just went to the next person. Five minutes later I asked what the problem was and they told me to wait. Finally I got their attention. When I realized they were concerned about the computer, I told them that my computer was a notebook and took it out of my briefcase. Then they rushed me through.

Elana is so cute in these situations. My challenge is to remain in the fruit of the spirit and not say something I would later regret. Hers is that she panics and begins to speak whatever comes to her mind. Something you do not want to do

with customs agents. In any case, after she did this, she took my advice and wisely went to the side.

A great surprise for us came when the girls peeked out of the dimly lit customs area and saw our neighbor Oksana. She found out when we were coming and took a taxi to the airport. What a joy it was for all of us. Elana has completely won her heart. When we left Odessa, she embraced Elana and just wept and asked, "You will come back won't you?"

Ten guys picked up our boxes and suitcases and took them to our car. Then they wanted \$50. This is Odessa, any time you can capitalize on an American you go for it. I explained that even in America you would only tip \$10 or \$15. Of course ten guys were not needed to carry one box each. And for that they wanted \$5 a piece. I gave them \$25, which was still too much. It was at this point that I remembered what I loved so much about being here. Even simple things can become exciting and unpredictable.

Yura and Valentine picked us up. The days preceding our return, I truly wondered why I was returning. Life is so hard here for so many. The poverty just wears on you. However,

when I got into the car with Yura, I was filled with joy and excitement. Suddenly, I was glad to be back and could not wait to see our apartment. (Did I mention that we were pulled over by the militia as soon as we left the airport?) Elana and the kids were in the other car. When we got home, I told Elana how excited I was and she replied, "Me too!" This could only be a result of being in God's will. Since we have been here we have been filled with excitement.

Of course the typical trials were here: Our phone ringer will not work. It took me over a half-hour to change a light bulb. (How many missionaries does it take to change a light bulb?) The light bulb broke off and the end was still in the socket.

Prayer

While our first few months here were largely for getting adjusted, we feel now is the time to go deeper into ministry and Ukrainian culture. Already God has answered our prayers. Yura and I met today and we already have plans for more involvement in our new Jewish soup kitchen. Plus, we are

planning an outreach in Ismail, about three hours away. We will be meeting with 50 Jewish people and giving them assistance, primarily food, and then I will have a good hour to preach the Gospel to them. YES!!!! This is why we came back. I feel like shouting! HALLELUJAH!

(I just received a phone call as I was writing this, telling me that our plans in Ismail are in jeopardy. The man in charge, a Jewish unbeliever, does not want us to share the Gospel. He is afraid he will get in trouble with other Jewish community leaders. However, he said, "I will not tell you that you cannot," meaning he would prefer us not to share, but will not forbid us. Yura will talk to him again on Tuesday. Pray for a more favorable response. This breaks my heart—I love to help people—but there is no better HELP than the Good News of Yeshua the Messiah. Pray that we will have wisdom.)

Street Cleaners

We reported to you not long ago about a woman who breaks her back daily cleaning the streets and shoveling snow off the sidewalks. Many were touched by this story. Several

people gave me money to give to this specific woman. Of course there are hundreds, even thousands like her. Just this morning, without thinking Elana asked me for 10 *hrevnas* (\$3). She walked up to this street worker and gave it to her. She lit up, grabbed Elana and began to kiss her—for \$3! When we walked back to the school, we had a Russian speaker, Tatiana, with us. The same lady saw us and ran up to Elana. This time we were able to witness to her through Tatiana. She grabbed our children and began to kiss them—which was a little overwhelming for them. (Danielle had this look like, “What are you doing lady!?”). What a joy it is to be a blessing to someone in need—give it a try!

Austrian Jews from the Holocaust

While in Austria we met a wonderful woman named Uli Eiwan. She is the wife of Pastor Helmeth Eiwan. A few years ago God put it on their hearts to reach out to the former residents of their city *Weinernuestadt*, who survived the Holocaust and now live in Israel or other nations. Their church invited the Jews from Israel to Austria. They all

declined, saying they would never return to Austria. So members of their congregation went to Israel to seek out the Jews and ask for forgiveness. They met with them and it was very cold and uncomfortable. Finally, one member went to the front and began to share concerning their Holocaust experience. This person had never opened up in over 50 years. And then for some strange reason, in this incredibly tense environment, she felt released to speak about her torment. Through tears she began to recount the horror she endured.

This broke the ice and gave the Austrians a wonderful opportunity to express their repentance. After this time, the Jews, who said they would never come back to Austria, accepted the invitation to return. The Austrian believers paid their way and hosted them. For the past several years the two groups have been enjoying an ever-increasing love for one another.

In Closing

Pray for Odessa. Many believe there is much more to happen here. We need Revival. If you would like to receive our

monthly Newsletter (that comes in an envelope in your mail box, not your computer) please send us your mailing address.

Tell someone about Yeshua today and please ignore the typos...

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Tuesday, February 02, 1999 3:07 PM

Subject: WE FOUND HER!!

Dear Friends,

We found her! As I mentioned in my last email, we wanted to find this woman who our friend Peter talked to not long ago whose son is an invalid. She breaks ice all day long for about \$11 a month. Peter and I drove around this morning, looking for her. Suddenly Peter blurted out, "I think that is her." He wasn't sure until he began to talk to her. She confirmed that indeed her son was an invalid. This woman looks like she is eighty, but is probably only sixty.

She and another lady were on their way to break up ice. She was pulling a sled with a shovel on it. We approached them and told the lady that we shared her story in America and people had wanted to give her money. Her eyes welled up with tears as she told us of her son, whose legs were amputated. We gave both her and her friend 40 *hrevnas* apiece. At this, her co-worker began to cry. What was almost nothing for us, was a month's wages for them.

We told them about Yeshua and they prayed with us, confessing their sins. In Odessa, it is not hard to get someone to pray with you to receive the Lord, but many times it is just a religious exercise. Please pray that these ladies truly understand the Gospel and receive the Lord.

Are Invalids *Invalid*???

It is interesting that the word invalid (bedridden) also means 'null and void'. The implication is that those who are invalids are in-valid to society. They are treated like a bad check. Theoretically it is a check, but it is worthless. There is no place where this feeling is stronger than in the Former Soviet Union, where those who are deformed, bedridden or who have missing limbs are considered defective and useless to the world around them. In the States we have handicapped bathrooms, restaurant booths and parking spaces, but over here there is not even the thought of such things.

We know that God does not view these people as worthless, and that He has a plan for every one of these precious people. Almost every morning, I pass a young man

on the street whose arms have been amputated from the elbow. He stands in the middle of a busy intersection, hoping that people will stop when the light is red and give him something. When you reach out to give him something he simply shoves his breast pocket forward since he has no fingers. Regularly we give him several Hrevnas, but what I really want to give him is *hope*; to let him know that God has not forsaken him and that even with his physical limitations, God can and wants to use him.

We have written a tract that is now being translated into Russian for people just like this. It is called *You Have a Purpose!* We want to hand it out to the street workers with a gift of a few Hrevnas! I will send separately a copy of the tract. As you read it, think of all the people in Odessa who feel useless and pray for them.

Slip Sliding Away

We were hoping for snow last weekend, but instead we got ice. The entire city was a sheet of ice on Sunday morning. Odessa is a city where it is not cold enough to snow and too

cold to rain; so many times we just get ice. For the children it is fun. You could literally wear ice skates around the city. However, for the elderly, and this city is full of elderly people, it can be treacherous trying to get around. For their sake, please pray for a warm day to melt the ice.

Dental Chair

There is a dentist located next to our school. He has told us that if we can provide him with another dental chair he will do dental work on our students for no charge. In addition we can bring many others in the city there—up to five a week! Dental care is a luxury here, and most people need serious work on their teeth by the time they are in their twenties. This could be prevented if teeth could be cleaned and cavities could be filled. This would be a great way for someone in America (or other western country) to make a difference on this side of the world. We need one person (or congregation) to buy a chair and another to pay for the shipping. If you are interested, please let me know.

(Note: Sadly, no one ever responded to this.)

Jewish Children's Club

I took my children to a Jewish Children's Club on Sunday. The leader is one of our students, Serge. He has two unbelieving (soon to be believing!) Jewish young ladies working with him. Because the weather was so bad, our kids were the only children there. They had a great time making crafts. Pray for Lena and Julia to come to Yeshua!

DeDe @ Kindergarten

When we first came to Odessa we enrolled Danielle in Kindergarten. However, she cried so much that we took her out. My heart broke, leaving her with people she did not know, while she was crying. After all, how would you like to be in a class of five-year-olds, where only one child and no teachers speak your language? Well, we felt that she needed to go back. So last Monday we took her. After three days of crying, she now owns the place. Anyone who knows Danielle, knows what I am talking about.

When I pick her up at lunchtime she says to all the children *Dosvedanya* and they all scream to her "Goodbye" in

English. All the children take off their shoes when they get there, and put on their Russian slippers. Today she had all the little girls lined up as she did their hair.

Well, dear friends, please keep us in prayer. We are seeking the Lord for a more open door of evangelism. Also, every Monday night for the next several weeks I will be teaching a class at the local Messianic Jewish Congregation here on Jewish Outreach. I desire this to be more than just 'teaching', but a catalyst to seeing many in the city come to faith in Yeshua. Please agree with us for this.

Odessa, What a City

As I was doing some study of Jewish History, I came upon this description of the Odessa of the early 1900's:

This wealthy grain-exporting port on the Black Sea had a special place in Jewish History. It was to be sure, in Russia, but it had a Mediterranean flavour, a breath of the warm south. By the 1900's there were about 170,000 Jews in Odessa, a third of the city's population, and it was therefore a centre of both Anti-Semitism of the most brutal kind and of Jewish culture. But the

culture was secular. Odessa had the first Jewish community to be run by the maskils. The Orthodox rabbis hated it and warned pious Jews not to set foot in the place, which they said attracted the sweepings of the Pale (large area in Ukraine that the Jews were banished to for many years) and had become another Sodom. It was said: 'The fire of Hell burns in Odessa up to a distance of ten parasangs. Interesting...

It is my sincere belief that every nation and city, just like each individual, had prophetic purpose and plan from God. A city or nation is nothing more than the people who live there. Many believe that God will use Odessa, the closest seaport to Israel in the FSU, to hide Jews and send them to Israel as anti-Semitism grows in the FSU. Pray that Odessa, that is, *the people of Odessa*, rise to the challenge and do not turn their backs on the Jews.

Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Tuesday, February 16th, 1999 8:42 AM

**Subject: BE ALL THAT YOU CAN BE IN *GOD'S*
*ARMY***

Dear Friends,

I know I have not written in a week or two, but it is not because God is not moving in Odessa. In fact, the past few weeks have been the most exciting since we moved to Odessa.

I will be sending another email very shortly, maybe even today, about something very exciting that will be happening in April. Please read it and pray over it—Maybe you are to be a part of it?

Nicoliav

This past weekend, Sasha, my interpreter, and I went to Nicoliav where I was scheduled to preach. On Shabbat I spoke at the new Messianic congregation. I was so blessed to see Yura Kurshin lead with such grace and confidence. Yura is 22 years old and a graduate of the MJBI. When I came a year ago I remember meeting Yura for the first time. He has an

anointing of joy that is contagious. Already the Lord has added 60 people to this baby congregation.

I preached on the fact that the Book of Acts is the prototype for a Messianic Jewish congregation: Fully Jewish and Fully Holy Spirit. We saw two people make professions of faith at the end.

On *Vasresanya* (Sunday—literally means Resurrection day) I spoke at Oleg Sherbakov's congregation. He is a gifted young man, with passion and wisdom. He presently has over 90 cell groups in his church. He has a great love for the Jewish people and has been a big supporter of the MJBI.

I preached on the POWER OF THE GOSPEL TO CHANGE SOMEONE'S LIFE. I shared that this power works both at the time of one's initial confession and throughout the life of every believer. We talked about the strongholds of sin, how they are formed, and how sins are passed down from generation to generation. We shared with the 600 plus in attendance that one of the sins in Ukraine that has been passed down is Anti-Semitism. It must be repented of, if they want the massive curse of poverty broken over this country.

At the end of the service when we prayed for people I asked, “How many need to repent and be set free of Anti-Semitism either in your own life or passed down from your parents?” Fifty percent raised their hands! As we began to lead them in a prayer of repentance, many people began to weep—out loud—in the congregation. Then we blew the Shofar over them and the place erupted in joy!

After this, we gave an altar call for salvation and ten people responded. What a joy it is to be in this country!

As I was leaving, a woman came to me and asked for prayer. She told me that her grandfather had been a Nazi guard during the war. As I prayed for her and her daughter she began to tremble and weep.

I love the Believers here. They are so tender and warm and responsive to the message of the Gospel. They have nothing, but they give everything.

Militia

On the way back to Odessa we had the “joy” of being stopped twice by the Militia. The first time was my fault—I

was speeding. The Militia Officer was so excited about his new radar gun that he had me get out of my car so I could see it. Then he explained to me how the radar gun works and showed me that I was going 69 kph (only about 40 mph). He was really nice! I paid my fine of 20 *hrevnas* (\$5) and was back on the road to Odessa. One of the nice things about Ukraine is that if you receive a traffic citation, you do not have to appear in court, but you pay the Militia officer and he gives you a receipt.

Then, just as we were entering the Odessa region we were pulled over again. I gave them my papers and then Sasha quietly told me what they were saying. They assumed we were both non-Russian speakers. "Oh my goodness, I have finally seen an American," said the one officer. "Do you have an invitation to be here?" he asked me. The other officer said to him, "Do you think he would be here without an invitation?" Then they let us go.

Next Week

Next week Elana and I will be traveling by train to Kiev where I will speak at the Kiev Messianic congregation on Shabbat. Boris Grisenko leads the largest Messianic Congregation in the world (800 members in homegroups plus others). He has about 70 cell groups I think. Then on Sunday I will be speaking twice at Victory Church. You will recall that I spoke there several months ago. It is the largest congregation of believers in the country. PLEASE PRAY, as I will be preaching the same message I preached this weekend and giving them an opportunity to repent of anti-Semitism. If the pastor there receives this message, it could mean great blessing for Ukraine. He could use his influence to persuade other leaders of the need for corporate national repentance.

From there we will fly to Budapest, Hungary, where I will be teaching during the week of February 22nd through 26th at our new Budapest MJBI.

Children Begging at Our Door

Yesterday when we arrived home from school there were two young children at our door. The boy was maybe 11 and

the girl, I would guess, was about 9. They wanted food. Elana had our three children take them an assortment of treats—chips, gushers (kids treats) and more. They were really thankful. What I was thankful for was the response of my own children. Sharon came up to me later and told me that she felt really good that she was able to help those children. Please pray with me that these experiences will reap eternal benefits in the lives of my children. They have sacrificed a lot to come here—believe with me, that in the end, they will not regret it.

One Regret

We have been sending these emails out for many months now. Seeing how it has blessed so many has truly been a joy for Elana and me. However, I have one regret. I regret that someone may read our emails and say, *“I could never do that.”* Well I want to tell you something—neither could we! But, then again, we are not living here in our own strength. Never underestimate the grace of God. The past several months have been easy compared to the first month when we experienced fleas and overflowing sewage (yuck). If I had

known before I came what we would endure in that initial month, I may have not come. But looking back, I realize that it was not that bad.

What's my point? YOU ARE TOUGHER THAN YOU THINK! I would hate to think that the detailed accounts of what we went through might discourage someone from pursuing God's will. If God has called you to international outreach and service, then He will give you the grace for whatever you must endure. Anyone who knows me would agree that I am not exactly a "live off the land" type of guy. I don't like pain and neither does Elana. When she had her babies, we would call in the epidural before we arrived. Whenever I go to the dentist, my first question is always, "Is this going to hurt?" If the dentist says a little, I say, "How much is 'a little'?" But when we arrived in Odessa, we did not have to face a new culture and unknown trials on our own. Yeshua has been with us! Yeshua gave us grace!

So the moral of this story is to be open to anything God calls you to. Don't ever say I COULDN'T DO THAT. Say

instead, I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH MESSIAH WHO STRENGTHENS ME. Can I get an AMEN out there?

I would not trade this year for anything. The initial trials cannot be compared to what we have gained. As a family we are closer. We have seen many people come to faith. We love Yeshua as never before. We have built strong relationships with several young men and women. We have broken through into another culture. We prayed in McDonald's in Odessa (haha). Our worldview has been enlarged. I do not know what the Lord is calling us to do next year, but if He calls us back to America, it will be with sadness that we leave Odessa and these precious people.

My point again—You can do whatever He calls you to. And in the long run, even with trails and tests, you will be glad you obeyed!

Shalom

God is good! Make your life count! Do something radical for the Kingdom. Share the Gospel, help a single mom, reach

out to the fatherless. God will bless it. Once a day is gone, we can never get it back. Now is the time!

Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Wednesday, February 17, 1999 1:06 PM

Subject: MESSIANIC OUTREACH FESTIVAL - 4/20-24

Dear Friends,

Can you say BIRDIE? Can you say JEFF? The names in this country can be hard to remember so one must be creative. This is how I remember the name *Berdichev*, a city right in the middle of Ukraine. What is so special about *Berdichev*? For starters, it has been considered the Jewish cultural capital of Ukraine for many years. Yet, there is no Messianic congregation there nor has there been a Messianic festival there either.

Jonathan Bernis, director of Hear O Israel Ministries (HOIM), was at our flat for dinner not long ago. Many of you know that Jonathan started having Messianic Jewish festivals in Russia and Ukraine in the early nineties. Since then, tens of thousands of Jews have made professions of faith in Yeshua at HOIM's festivals. We were discussing God's plan for Elana and me and what we should be putting our energies into.

“Ron you should spearhead a Messianic festival in Berdichev,” Jonathan told me. He went on to say that Berdichev is one of the cities where HOIM wanted to have a festival, but were not able to do so.

My spirit bore witness that this was of God. As excited as I have been about our work here, I have had this feeling that something has been missing. I love teaching in the school, working with the soup kitchens and helping the down and out, but my heart is evangelism—Jewish evangelism! As we talked about it, I felt something come alive in me.

Immediately I called the director of MJBI, Wayne Wilks, and shared the vision with him. He is thrilled and wants to get the school and the students behind it. Valentine Sviontek, the associate director, was equally excited and has begun to strategize on how to pull it off.

One rule I try to live by is to not speak of things before they happen. However, because of the intensity of warfare here, Elana and I feel the need for a more intense prayer covering as we make preparations for the festival. Will you make this a prayer priority? We really need people in the

States who will fight on their knees as we are moving forward in Jewish outreach. We know that the key to this being successful is intense, fervent, victorious, Spirit-led intercession. “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16).

The Plan

- Messianic Outreach Festival in Berdichev, Ukraine
- Population: over 200,000
- Jewish Cultural Capital of Ukraine
- No Messianic Congregation (yet)
- April 20th – 24th

Prayer Points

- Pray that it HAPPENS! I know the enemy does not want this festival to happen. I also know that Yeshua wants the gospel to go forth to His people. The battle is in the heavens and prayer is the chief weapon.

- Covering for me and my family as I lead this effort. “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” (1 Pet 5:8)
- Favor with Pastors in Berdichev.
- Favor with Government officials in Berdichev.
- Assistance from other Messianic Jews in Ukraine (musicians, interpreters, intercessors, volunteers, etc.).
- The right man to become pastor of the congregation we plant.
- That God will provide \$10,000 in addition to our monthly support to pay for the festival.
- That God will build an executive team with excellence in administration to oversee this project.

This is the most exciting, and I think important, project we have ever undertaken since going into full-time ministry in 1993. We cannot do it alone. We value your help on any level.

Anton of Zhitomer

Often I write these letters over a period of several days. The prayer requests above were written a few days ago. Already God has begun to bless this effort. This morning we met with Anton from Zhitomer. Anton is a brother who has been working in Messianic Judaism for the past year. He is zealous for the Lord and walks with a mantle of authority.

One of his best friends is Leonid, a pastor of a large Spirit-filled church in Berdichev. Leonid said to Anton just this past Sunday, "When are you going to plant a Messianic Congregation in Berdichev?" We called Anton the next day asking for his assistance in planting this congregation. How is that for a confirmation? He will serve as the festival coordinator. Please pray that his pastor friend, Leonid, will let us use the 700-seat auditorium that they rent from the city.

It seems that Berdichev has been on God's heart a lot longer than it has been on ours. One thing about Ukraine is that nothing is simple. They say here, that to buy one stamp, you must buy three—and then find out you didn't need any! And, yet, with this outreach everything is coming together. God loves the Jews of *Berdichev* and in just a few months we

are believing that many of them will give their lives to Yeshua. Believe with us.

Thank You

Once again, Elana and I want to express our sincere thanks for those of you who have stood with us month after month. Now, more than ever, with this festival coming up, we are in need of brothers and sisters who will partner with us for the gospel. Intercession is our greatest need, as we go forth into uncharted territory. Most of the Jews in Berdichev have never heard the gospel.

May we share in the spoils together. Let's believe God for the Jews of *Berdichev*! *Shalom Uvracha*, Peace and Blessing.

Tell someone about Yeshua today and please ignore the typos...

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Friday, February 19th, 1999 3:18 PM

**Subject: BERDICHEV UPDATE, FLU EPIDEMIC AND
LENA & IGOR**

Dear Friends,

God is excited about BERDICHEV!!

Already many of our prayers have been answered—but
DON'T STOP PRAYING.

- Anton our festival coordinator made contact with Leonid, another pastor in Berdichev.
- Leonid is arranging to reserve a hall that seats 1,000 people (not 700 as I previously reported)!
- Pastor Leonid will take care of housing for all the guests.
- And he will provide three meals a day for everyone.
- In addition, he has many Jewish members in his congregation and told Anton that he wants to encourage some of these people to assist Anton in planting the congregation.

- Anton will begin meeting with them and training them in Messianic ministry.

We are still believing God for all the finances for this Festival, estimated at around \$10,000. God will provide! Several people have expressed an interest in coming. At this point I do not think we have the energy and time to arrange a group trip. However, with a Pastor's recommendation and a plane ticket to Kiev, we can meet you at the Airport and get you to Berdichev. If you are interested please email us. In the meantime we will look into the costs of staying here for a week.

Kiev and Budapest

Please pray for our family this week. Elana and I will be leaving tonight by train to Kiev, the capital city. I will be preaching tomorrow at the Messianic Congregation in Kiev and at Victory Church on Sunday. On Sunday we fly to Budapest for a week where I will be teaching on The History of Zionism and Missions/Evangelism. Of course, it will also be a nice vacation for us. We are told Budapest is a lot a fun. Our

friends Jeff and Barbara Serio will host us. Jeff is the Director of the MJB I Budapest. Two dear sisters, Ira and Sarah, will be staying with our daughters. Please pray for them this week.

Flu Epidemic

There is a serious flu epidemic in Odessa. All the schools are closed (except ours) and already 200 people have died in the city. I can't verify that count, but that is what a Ukrainian friend told us today.

Please pray for our protection from this. Also pray for the other missionary families and the students and staff of the MJB I. I believe that we can be like *Goshen* during the 10 plagues. The Israelites were protected from God's wrath. Yeshua is the Lord our Healer. Also pray for this city, that the epidemic will be stopped.

New Friends, Lena and Igor

On Valentine's Day I took Elana to a very nice restaurant in Odessa (which only costs as much as a normal restaurant in the states). We noticed that the people sitting across from us spoke English. I began to talk with them and we ended up

having a wonderful conversation. They invited us for coffee and we continued talking. I could see that Lena was really connecting with Elana and was hungry for friendship.

Igor is Jewish and he worked for a shipping company before the demise of the Soviet Empire. When the Soviet Union fell apart he started his own shipping company. Now he is what is called a “new Russian”, (one of the people from the FSU who capitalized quickly on free enterprise). He has done very well for himself. They also have a son, Victor, who was with them.

Today Elana and Lena went out again for coffee. As we suspected she would, she poured out her heart to Elana. More often than not, wealthy Russian men will have girlfriends on the side. Our neighbor Oksana, who we have written about so many times, is one of them. Lena shared how she and her husband enjoyed such intimacy for so many years. They were best friends—until he became wealthy. Yeshua calls this the “deceitfulness of riches.” Apparently he has begun to cheat on her. Donned in her \$2,000 fur, she said she couldn't care less about the money, she just wanted her husband back.

We believe that God has brought Lena to Elana for one reason—her soul. She is ripe for an encounter with Yeshua. Let us agree together for her salvation. Elana just listened today, but when they meet again she believes she will have an opportunity to share the Good News with her. Please turn up the prayer for Lena and the restoration of her family. Pray for Igor too, that he gives his heart to Yeshua and realizes what a treasure he has in Lena.

(Note: Lena is still not a Believer as of this writing, but Tatiana our co-worker in Odessa continues to meet with her. Pray for her salvation.)

Tell someone about Yeshua today and ignore the typos.
For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,
Ron & Elana Cantor

Friday, March 12th, 1999 1:52 PM

Subject: GOD'S FAVOR IN *BERDICHEV*

Dear Friends,

I just arrived back from *Berdichev* and I wanted to share this GOOD REPORT.

We woke up at 5:30 AM and drove six and one-half hours to *Berdichev*. When we arrived at the thousand-seat auditorium that we will be using, we met with Pastor Leonid. He has five hundred people in his congregation, forty cell groups and a heart for the Jewish people. Pastor Leonid heard our hearts and then pledged his full support. He said, "This whole thing started with the Jewish people and I believe it will end with the Jewish people. God told Abraham that He would bless those who blessed him. I am not so stupid as to refuse God's blessing. If you need sound equipment, we will give you sound equipment. If you need people, we will give you people. If you need finances, we will help with finances."

Pastor Leonid invited Valentine Sviontek (Director of our Bible School) and I to share our vision with his elders. Then

he said to the elders, "I believe this is God, but I cannot move forward without your affirmation. I need to know if the elders of this church believe that this is God." Then he called them all by name and asked if they believed that God was into a Messianic Jewish festival in Berdichev. "*Da! Da! Da! Da!* and *Da!*" It was unanimous. ("*Da*" means "yes").

At one time *Berdichev* had the second largest Jewish community in all of Russia, with some eighty synagogues and *Battei Midrash*. Its cantors were celebrated throughout Ukraine. Pastor Leonid told us a joke. One man asked another, "How many people live in *Berdichev*?"

"One hundred thousand," says another man.

Then he says, "How many Jews live in *Berdichev*?"

"I just told you," the other man replies.

In between meetings we sat down with the small cell group that Anton, our festival coordinator, has started. This is the nucleus of what we hope will become a new Messianic congregation. I told them, "Now that you are part of a Messianic Jewish fellowship you need to keep your spiritual guard up. The Enemy is not happy about this!"

I could see on their faces that they already understood what I was speaking about. Then they told us how God spared their lives only a week ago. They were on their way to Kiev to celebrate Purim with the Messianic congregation there. The car suddenly went out of control. They slammed into an embankment and a large metal piece pierced through the car. Demitri, who was driving, said that the metal piece went through his shoe, ripping his sock, but miraculously did not touch his foot. [Note: You can see how the Enemy wanted to wipe out our entire nucleus of leaders. In fact, the man and his wife who eventually became the pastor couple in *Berdichev* were in the car.]

Anton said that he thought that after the accident they would be discouraged and not want to be a part of the Messianic fellowship. He was delighted when he came to the homegroup to find them more on fire than ever! The next day Valentine and I sat down with Anton and planned out the entire festival. After we said our good-byes, we began the grueling six-and-half-hour journey back to Odessa. What a sight it is to drive through these Ukrainian villages. Broken

fences, unfinished roads, and houses with moss growing on the roofs. Horses are used instead of cars in many cases. You feel like you are visiting Reb Tevye's home, Anatevka, from *Fiddler on the Roof*. At one point we were driving about 55 mph, and suddenly the road ended! I tried to stop, but our inertia threw my car onto an uneven path of large rocks and dirt. My car bounced around until we regained control—but not before the uneven mess below had thoroughly scraped the underside of my car. A few months ago such an event would have rattled me, but after living here almost a year, we simply had good laugh and said, “Only in Ukraine!”

Friends, please continue to pray for *Berdichev*! God's favor is evident, but it would be a mistake to let down our guard. Your intercession is greatly valued.

Tell someone about Yeshua today and please ignore them typos,

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations

Ron & Elana Cantor

Friday, March 19, 1999 6:31 AM

Subject: ODESSAN TAXI SERVICE

I have a witness! Jerry Miller, Messianic Rabbi from Beth Messiah Congregation in Maryland, is here this week teaching at the MJBI. Maybe some people thought I made all these stories up. But now Jerry has seen the Reebok store, the Mandolin Lady, the swimming pool-size potholes, the walking street, my cement bathroom drain, and so much more. For him it was a thrill to see all things he read about. "There's the Mandolin Lady!" he exclaimed with excitement.

(Note: When Jerry's kids read this email they said that he sounded like a goober. And he claimed that he never actually said *with excitement* "There is the Mandolin Lady!" Well, OK—he wasn't *that* excited, but the rest of the story is true...I think.)

Taxi, Taxi

Yesterday morning we went out to the car only to find my right rear tire flat. When this happens in Odessa it is not such

a problem. Well, getting the tire fixed could be a chore, but finding a ride is as simple as sticking out your finger. Every car is a potential taxi. Because the economy is so depressed here, many people, if they have a car, will simply drive around the city looking for customers. I can go anywhere in the city for three *hrevnas* (75¢), although I normally will give five. Of course the cars are less than desirable: ripped seats, gasoline smell, etc.

Whenever I get in the front seat of a taxi I put my seatbelt on. Without exception, the driver always tells me that it is not needed. I used to think that they were simply offended that I could possibly think I needed a seatbelt in *their* car; like I was making a statement about their driving. The truth is I could use a parachute the way they drive! I found out that it was not that they were offended. Actually there is a law here that says if you are riding in a taxi you do not need to wear a seatbelt. In most other cases you do. They think I am putting on my seatbelt because it is the law. It has never dawned upon them that maybe I am putting it on for safety.

When they find out I am from America they usually offers me some words of wisdom in my native tongue by uttering some priceless gem like, “Ah, Monica Lewinsky!” Oh how America has fallen from its former glory.

(And while we are speaking about Monica Lewinsky, why don't you take a moment and pray for her. For all intents and purposes her life is ruined; she is stigmatized for life. If ever there was a Jew who needs Yeshua, she is one. I think our words would be better spent praying for her, rather than telling jokes about her. Think—would Yeshua tell a Monica Lewinsky joke? Would He laugh at one?)

Berdichev

Several people from the cell group that our festival coordinator Anton has started in Berdichev came to MJB I this week to hear Jerry Miller teach Messianic Jewish Theology I. Last night we had the five of them over to our flat for fellowship. Vadim and his wife Fayina (Fayina could not come to Odessa) are a high quality couple. She is Jewish and both of them are convinced that God wants a Messianic Jewish

fellowship in *Berdichev*. Vadim feels that God is calling him to full-time ministry. They both recently lost their jobs (very common over here). Keep them in prayer, interceding for God's provision in their lives, and pray that God's call on their lives would come forth.

We also got to know Dima on a more intimate level. His parents have immigrated to Tiberias, Israel. He has been a Believer for several years, and a cell group leader at Pastor Leonid's congregation, for the past few. His cell group has multiplied four times, and he has personally brought ten other Jewish people to faith. He too wants to be a part of the new Messianic fellowship in *Berdichev*.

Anton continues to press in, making preparations for the festival in April. Pray for him, that he stays encouraged and that the cell group he is leading continues to grow. Currently ten people are coming together weekly.

Prayer Requests

Please keep me in prayer, as I will be teaching Messianic Jewish Theology II next week. Elana and Danielle will travel

to Israel to be with Elana's family during Passover. Sharon, Yael and I will stay here together. Pray for safe travel to and from Israel. Also, pray that Elana will be able to share the good news with her family.

Pray for Sarah Wine, the teacher in our children's school. Basically, she home schools six children; an incredible feat. This past week she really became stressed out after seven months of teaching. She has taken three days off this week. Pray that when she returns Monday she will be full of strength and new vision to finish the year.

Keep lifting up Berdichev. Pray for 100 Jewish people to come to faith and be a part of the new fellowship. We are also believing that God will add numbers of new Gentile believers to Pastor Leonid's existing congregation.

Thank you so much! Tell someone about Yeshua today and please ignore the typos.

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,
Ron & Elana Cantor

Wednesday, March 24, 1999 1:11 PM

Subject: A LETTER FROM SHARON CANTOR

(I thought you might find it interesting to hear an American nine-year-old's reflections on life in a third world country. My daughter, Sharon, accompanied me to Kiev this past weekend where I ministered. Below are her thoughts...Oh, and by the way, today is our middle child's birthday. Yael is 7 and would love to hear from you. It would make this little missionary kid's day to get flooded with email from home. Thank you.)

Dear Friends,

Yesterday I was on the train with Bekka Rudolph, her father and my dad. My dad and I were going to a church in Kiev where my dad would preach the Gospel. I got very dizzy on the train. Bekka and I talked almost all night. It was really fun to be with her. My room on the train had two bunk beds a table and a window. It was very hot on the train, but outside it was snowing. The bathroom on the train was very dirty.

When I got off the train I knew I was going to miss Bekka Rudolph and her family very much. I couldn't stand leaving her, but then I got over it when I heard that we were going to McDonald's for a snack. Two men picked us up and drove us to McDonald's and then to the church. My Dad had to preach three sermons in a day. While he preached, I got to stay in this room. People kept coming in and out. There was this lady that gave me and my dad and the interpreter some cake and tea. After the second service she brought us two meals for my dad and me. They were really good, but I preferred a Big Mac. I read a lot of books. First I read "Little House in the Big Woods," and then I started "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm." There was a beanie baby named "Ants", an anteater, and he kept me company throughout the day.

During the first service sixty people came forward to be saved. In the second almost a hundred came to the Lord. In the third there were only a few, about twenty-five. It made me really excited to see all these people come to the Lord. My dad's interpreter was really funny. He had a ponytail in his hair.

When we left the church we stopped at a park. There was lots of snow. I threw a bunch of snowballs at my dad. They were really big. Then I fell down on the snow and I got really wet; good thing I had extra pants underneath. Then we went across the street to this really big famous church and I threw more snowballs at my dad. They were even bigger than the other ones.

When we were going through the train station, we almost forgot to get my sisters a present. I asked my Dad if we could buy them something and he said "Yes". We found two little toy doll sets for them. Then we bought some cookies for the train ride home. Now we are on the train and my dad is typing this letter for me. I hope his battery does not die soon.

My dad bought me a Big Mac. I am very thankful for it. We are going to eat and then go to sleep. When we wake up, we will be in Odessa.

Sincerely,

Sharon Cantor

Prayer Requests from the Cantors

- Please pray that our house sells in Maryland quickly this spring/summer. This is a big issue as I feel the need to become more mobile, not having to worry about repairs, renting, taxes, etc.
- Pray for success with our Berdichev Messianic Jewish Festival. We continue to see God's hand of provision in every area!
- Elana and Danielle (our youngest) are travelling to Israel this week to visit Elana's family for a couple weeks. Please pray for safety in their travels, as well as their time in the Land.

Monday, March 29, 1999 8:18 AM

Subject: WE ARE MOVING!!

Dear Friends,

First of all, I want to say thank you for all the notes and cards that you sent to my daughter Yael. We must have received close to fifty. She was so excited and could not figure out why all these people she did not know were sending her cards. It really made it a special birthday for her.

New Direction

Can you believe the year is almost over? It seems like just yesterday we were battling the fleas in our first apartment. I can remember that first morning: diesel fumes coming through our window at 5 AM. Our first apartment was right across from the huge food market. No need for an alarm clock—it was impossible to sleep through the horns, which blared early each morning. In addition, there was a killer dog that would make a violent lunge for us every time we left the house. Only a thin chain kept his teeth from our flesh.

The Lord used that difficult beginning to give us a crash course in Ukrainian life and culture. From that time on God began to really put a love for this country and its people in our hearts.

The main reason we moved here, was because of an intense desire to see people come into the kingdom at a higher level than we were currently seeing. Since moving here we have watched as about 250 people have professed to surrender their lives to Yeshua. From street outreaches to congregational meetings, we have seen many completely hopeless people receive the God of all Hope.

In addition to seeing people respond to Gospel, I have been privileged to teach four different courses at the Messianic Jewish Bible Institute (MJBI) to those who will be future leaders in the Messianic Movement. Elana, in her Hebrew class, has helped restore Jewish identity to many of the students. After seventy years of Communism, most of the Jewish people in this country know very little of their biblical heritage. And next month we take all our students to Berdichev for a Messianic Outreach Festival.

In short, Elana and I feel that this has been the GREATEST YEAR OF OUR LIVES!

Hello Hungary!

For the past several months Elana and I have been seeking the Lord as to the next step for our family. Should we stay in Odessa, go back to the U.S. or something else? After a long season of waiting on the Lord, He spoke to us just as we were leaving Budapest last month. We had a great time in Budapest, but had no intentions of moving there. In fact, I told Elana when we arrived not to get any ideas about living in Budapest. Only a few hours before our plane was scheduled to leave did we began to realize that Budapest was the perfect place for the next season of our lives. Elana and I spent the next night on the train from Kiev to Odessa praying, talking and wondering. By the time the train arrived we both had a strong witness in our hearts that this was the will of God. Here are some of the benefits that Budapest will offer our family:

Budapest has a top-notch English speaking school that uses the same curriculum (Abeka) that our children have used

for years. The school, Greater Grace, is operated by seasoned missionaries.

The MJB I Budapest needs a Hebrew teacher and someone to train the students in outreach.

Budapest provides a perfect central location to plan future Messianic Jewish festivals in Ukraine and Europe. It is actually easier for me to get to Kiev, Ukraine's capitol, from Budapest, than from Odessa.

Budapest has one of the largest Jewish populations in Europe including over 50,000 Holocaust survivors. These Holocaust survivors need to hear the healing message of Yeshua. They do not have much more time on earth.

Budapest is full of castles and historic sites. There are many fun and profitable activities that you can do as a family. As much as we love Odessa, there are only so many times you can go to McDonald's!

Once we realized that this was the right fit for us, we shared it with the leadership of TIKKUN and Wayne Wilks, our pastor here in Odessa. Unanimously they confirmed the move. In addition, three different people have had prophetic

words about doors in Europe opening up for us to do Jewish outreach. Before I could give any thought to that, a brother approached me about the possibility of doing Jewish outreach festivals in Germany to reach the 100,000+ Russian Jews that live there. Of course it is premature to focus on such things now, but it is good to dream—and dream big for the glory of God. Not that we are looking for a big ministry, just God's perfect plan for the Cantor household.

We will be relocating to Budapest, Hungary at the beginning of the next school year. Below are prayer requests in regard to our move:

- That we would find a house to rent at a reasonable price.
- That our home in America would sell quickly (by the end of May--and close by the end of June).
- That our daughters would be academically and spiritually prepared for their new school.
- That we would continue to see God's provision. The cost of living in Budapest is about a third higher than in Odessa. In addition, it is our heart's desire to continue to finance Messianic Jewish outreach events.

- That God would continue to open up doors for Messianic Jewish festivals throughout Ukraine and Europe.
- And most of all, that we would fulfill our role in preaching the Gospel to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

My two oldest daughters and I will be taking the train next week to Budapest to meet with the admissions director of their school and to look for an apartment. Please pray for safety and success.

Also, don't forget our Berdichev Messianic Jewish Festival in April. It is only a few weeks away. The Enemy is not sleeping and we can't either. Your prayers can propel people into the kingdom.

Passover Outreach Service

Next week, April 3rd, I will be preaching at the Odessa Messianic Congregation. All the members have been encouraged to bring their unbelieving friends. I am preaching an outreach message tying Yeshua and Passover together. There will be a strong call to salvation. Let's agree together

that there will be many unbelievers present and that the Lord will add to the congregation those who are being saved. (Acts 2:47)

War in The Balkans

Friends, it is one thing to be at home watching the war on TV and another thing to be over here. Do you realize that the distance between Budapest and Belgrade is about the same as from Washington to NY! In our CNN age, I think we sometimes forget to realize that war kills. War is devastating. It makes children fatherless, wives become widows, and war sometimes returns our men to us broken and disillusioned. I am not making a political statement about our policy in Kosovo. Really, I am too ignorant to comment. However, please pray for us and all the Americans in the Former Soviet Union. In Russia, especially, there is a strong anti-American sentiment right now. Just today men tried to fire a grenade launcher at the American Embassy in Moscow. And in Kiev I am told there are demonstrations in front of the U.S.

consulate. We must be on our guard and not even raise our voice in public, lest we give away that we are Americans.

You really have to live outside the States to know how hated we are. We are seen by the former communist countries as imperialistic and arrogant. Personally, I am proud to be an American and feel that our country has done much good to help the free world in spreading the gospel through missions and in the defense of people's basic human rights. But much of the world does not feel this way. I only ask that you remember Americans overseas in your prayers.

Tell someone about Yeshua today and please ignore the typos.

Your Servants,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Friday, April 09, 1999 9:15 AM

Subject: PASSOVER OUTREACH IN ODESSA

Shalom and Hag Sameach (happy holidays) from Odessa!

Passover In Odessa

This past week we celebrated Passover in Odessa. With Elana and Danielle in Israel, the girls and I went to Wayne and Bonnie Wilks' house for the Seder (traditional meal on the first night of Passover). We enjoyed an incredible Passover meal. Inside the Odessa food market you will find several tables in a row offering you the most amazing Korean salads—and so cheap! You can get two pounds for about \$1. How the Koreans got to Odessa and why, I may never know.

I think the highlight of the day was Yael reading the four questions (part of the Passover celebration, traditionally read by the youngest child.). Every Jewish parent experiences the same *nachas* (joy) when their child learns to read in September and is sprinting through the *Haggadah* (Passover Seder guide, literally *the Telling*) by spring.

One of the synagogues here received 8 tons of matzah (unleavened bread) and within a few days it was gone. Can you believe that our outdoor market, novo bazaar, did not have a “Manischewitz section”? We sent someone to the synagogue to buy matzah, but he was only able to apprehend about eight boxes. I had to beg and plead for one.

Passover Outreach Service

Gateway to Zion Messianic Congregation is led by our friends from our home congregation in Maryland, David and Leslye Schneier. They asked me to preach at the Passover Outreach service. A packed auditorium of several hundred, including many Jewish unbelievers, assembled last Shabbat.

As I looked out into the crowd and saw all those Jewish faces, I could not help but think of my grandparents and great-grandparents whose roots were in Eastern Europe. The only difference between them was a long boat ride before the Bolshevik revolution. Of course that boat ride across the Atlantic made the difference between a relatively comfortable life, free from persecution and a devastatingly

poor existence, being hated simply because you were a Jew. As I looked, I made no distinction, these were my brothers and sisters and I was gripped with compassion for them.

In ten years of preaching, I don't think I ever enjoyed preaching the Gospel like I did that day. I felt such a *kesher* (connection) with those people. The title of my message was "Is the Blood of the Lamb on the Door Post of Your Heart?" I told them that the blood of the lamb repelled the Angel of Death who killed the firstborn of Egypt. However, the Angel of Death is still around seeking to pull souls into hell. Only the blood of the true Lamb, "who takes away the sin of the world," (John 1:29) applied to the door post of your heart will protect you from an eternity without God.

We also spoke of God's awesome love for them, which caused Him to allow his Son to die on the cross. When I asked who would like to make Yeshua Lord and receive eternal life, hands shot up all over the auditorium. More than twenty visitors responded to the invitation. Joy erupted as they made their way to the stage. This is what we live for; this is why we

came. I look forward to the day in the age to come when I will meet some of these precious souls.

21-Day Prayer and Fasting Chain

At the MJBI we concluded our 21-day prayer and fasting chain last night on the last day of Passover. We all fasted the last day and concluded with a prayer meeting. Then we walked over to the kindergarten next door and enjoyed an incredible chicken dinner. It is much safer to eat meat in the winter and early spring here because even though it sits out all day, at least it is cold and the insects are dormant. As the weather grows warmer, so does the meat—not to mention the bacteria.

Sharon and Yael are glad to be eating bread again now that Passover is over. And tonight we will enjoy two Shabbat Greek pizzas from the local pizza place. Whenever I walk in there I say, “Does anyone speak English?” and they say “*Dva Gretcheskaya pizzas*”—which means two Greek pizzas. They know my order already. On our street, the walking street, Elana and I have become known to most of the local vendors

here considering that we kinda of stick out! And they are so kind to Americans.

Berdichev Update

Please keep praying for Berdichev. Almost everything has come together. We have received most of the finances needed and all permits have been granted to use the cultural center (1,000 seats) and to do street outreach. Leaders from around Ukraine are coming to participate. Regularly I am getting calls from people wanting to come.

What should you pray for now?

1. Souls!!!

2. That there will be no hitches in planting this new fellowship.

3. For the rest of the finances needed to come in.

Well, Shabbat Shalom from Odessa and thank you in advance for praying.

Tell someone about Yeshua this week and please ignore the typos!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

You've Got Mail...From Odessa

Ron Cantor

Ron & Elana Cantor

Wednesday, April 14, 1999 12:48 AM

Subject: SPRING IN ODESSA

Dear Friends,

Spring has finally hit Odessa...and with the coming of spring, the Walking Street, where will live, has come alive. Outdoor cafés, street vendors and obnoxious photographers all beautify one of the most popular travel spots in all of the FSU. *Derebosovskaya* Street is about 300 yards long and is clearly separate from the rest of Odessa. Compared to Paris or Vienna it is nothing to write home about (even though I think that is what I am doing right now), but for the people of Odessa it is a nice break from the daily struggle to survive.

Before I forget, does anyone out there know anyone in Zurich that would host our family for four days? We will be in Switzerland for five days, April 30th – May 4th, before we return to the States for the summer. The hotels are very expensive and we would love to fellowship with some Swiss Believers. If you can help, please email me at roncantor@maranatha.net.

Karaoke

The karaoke bar is back too, but with great joy I want to report that for some reason they have set up on the other side of the corner from where they were last year. What that means is that instead of huge speakers pointed at my window until midnight each night, they point around the corner and they barely bother us. (Although at this minute I can here some woman with a wretched voice screaming out some Russian tune.) Sure I'll miss the Elvis and Frank Sinatra imitations, but the Russian folk music (David Schneier calls it 'prison music') I will not miss at all. Think of Joe Cocker with a bad cold—Russian Folk Music!

Fabric Shortage

I have reported for months of the desperate poverty that reigns in this region. However, only now I have begun to understand how bad it is. It seems that many of the females cannot even afford enough fabric for a full skirt or dress and therefore must resort to skirts that barely cover their thighs! Actually, as much as we have grown to love this city we will

not miss the sensual nature of it. The dress (or lack thereof) is shocking and you cannot believe that people would dress in such a way. As a father of three daughters I wonder what the papas in this city think when their daughters go outside dressed like prostitutes. We are told that Odessa is worse than other cities in the FSU in regard to sensuality.

Of course this is the fruit of seventy years without God. At least communism governed morality to some extent. When the FSU broke up, you were left with a godless society plus freedom. And this freedom has led to all kinds of evil. However, it has also led to one of the greatest revivals the world has known. Now, Russia has the second largest church in the world (China #1).

Chef Ronchic

Maybe I should call myself Chef "Boy R.C." (get it?). With *Elanushka* (Everyone here has a *nushka* or chic nickname. For instance, Dan Juster would be *Danchic* or *Danush* and Patty would be *Patushka*) and *Daneillusshka* returning from Israel tomorrow I have had to prepare a couple meals a day for my

little girls. We have had a great time *surviving* together. Their school feeds them lunch, but I am in charge of breakfasts and dinners. Last night Chef Ronchic prepared a gourmet meal of “*Capellini Ronchic.*” Although Elana is clearly the cook in this family, it is important to note that both my mother and sister were professional caterers and my father is quite the pro in the kitchen himself.

Complete with a Chefs hat, I mixed and cooked Jiffy Corn Muffins and made my own sauce of canned chicken, tomato and basil. It was incredible!

Berdichev

On Sunday I will go to Berdichev for final preparations for our outreach festival. Please pray that all will go well with these last few items. It is often the little details that the enemy will try to use to get our focus off of souls and onto minor things. Please agree with us that we will stay focused on souls and the birthing of a Messianic fellowship.

The dates are April 22nd, 23rd and 24th. Pray:

- For Jewish people to meet Yeshua

- For anointing to preach the gospel
- For continued favor with Pastor Leonid and all the area pastors and leaders
- For all finances to come in and for us to receive them here in Odessa

Communism Alive and Well

Many people think that communism was banished with the breakup of the FSU. Keep in mind that virtually all of the people with power and money at that time were communists. They may go by a different name, but they still think and act like communists. My friend Boris, who leads a large Messianic work in Kiev, just told me of a recent incident. He rents a large hall every week for their services. The director of the hall received a call from the mayor of Kiev. He told her they would need to use the hall on a certain Saturday for a communist meeting. She told him that it was already rented. He informed her that he was not asking, but that it was an order! Fortunately, for some reason the meeting was moved and they were able to have their service.

Coming Home

The next few weeks will be spent packing. The girls will finish school here, we will pack our belongings and ship them to Hungary and of course, we will have the Berdichev Festival. Please pray for us as a family that the stress of these weeks will be overcome by the peace of God. Pray for order in our packing.

We will spend the summer working for TIKKUN ministries, traveling and speaking in churches and Messianic congregations, and spending time with family and friends. We look forward to seeing you while we are in the States.

I canceled my trip to Budapest last week because the administrator of the school that the girls will go to will be in Baltimore in June. We will meet with him then. In July I will go Budapest and find an apartment for our family. Then, towards the end of August, we will all go together and move in.

Family Prayer Requests

We know God is listening to your prayers. We have seen God's favor in so many ways this year. It could only be in answer to your prayers. Please keep praying; it is not in vain.

Pray for:

- Open doors for ministry in churches and Messianic congregations in the States.
- That I will find a suitable and affordable apartment in Budapest.
- That our home in Maryland will sell quickly at a good price.
- That we are a powerful witness to my unsaved parents and sister while we are home.
- For safe travel all summer long.

Once we leave Odessa my paco.net address will no longer work. Starting now you can email me at roncantor@maranatha.net (old address!). I can receive email at this address from anywhere in the world providing I have access to the Internet. Once we know what address we will use in Budapest, we will let you know.

Thank you, and tell someone about Yeshua today and please forgive the typos—they didn't mean it.

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Tuesday, April 20, 1999 9:42 AM

Subject: ARRIVED IN BERDICHEV

Morning 4/19

Dear Friends,

We arrived in Berdichev at 1:00 AM this morning. My daughter Sharon, interpreter Sasha and friend Philip accompanied me on the journey. (One of the joys of ministering in this part of the world is having one of my daughters travel with me. This time it is Sharon. I wonder what goes through the mind of a nine-year-old American little girl when traveling across the depressed Ukrainian landscape on a run-down train. They seem to thrive on the cultural differences. I have heard many people say to me, some in my own living room here in Odessa, with little children running around our home, "I would go to the mission field if I didn't have children." The truth is, it is not the children who have difficulty, but the adults!)

We were met by Fayina and Vadim, a Messianic Jewish couple who will be part of the leadership of the new congregation. Our host then drove us to his home. I was shocked when we pulled up to this nice two story home. I was expecting a small flat. (Keep in mind that *nice* is relative here. For instance, in the run-down yard were two cows, two calves and a watchdog.) For me it was beautiful and I could tell that they went out of their way to have a nice place for us, but to the Western mind it would border on poverty.

Immediately we were served homemade bread and fresh milk. When I say *fresh milk*, I mean as in the cow was milked a few hours before we showed up! It was the best milk I have ever tasted. Unlike Odessa, which is mostly urban, the people here own their own animals: Cows for dairy, chickens for eggs and dogs to protect the investment. It reminds me of *Reb Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof*, who was so concerned over the health of his cow. If the cow dies, there goes your milk and cheese—not to mention the cookies and cream ice cream!

It is morning now and I have formally met the rooster. He is on time—maybe even a little early! We were served the

most delicious cottage cheese with fresh blueberries. I think the first thing I will do when we move to Budapest is buy a cow!

At 2:00 AM tomorrow morning the MJBI students, along with the worship team from Nicoliov will arrive. They will head to their dorms (\$1 per night per student—such a deal!) and at 10:00 AM Tuesday we will have our first street outreach. Three teams will go out armed with invitations and instruments. We will use the music to draw crowds and then invite people to the festival and preach the Good News. In the afternoon, the students will make home visits to Jewish people in the city asking them to come to the festival.

Evening 4/19

The family with whom we are staying have a precious little daughter named Veeka who is nine years old like Sharon. They spent the whole day playing together. Our meetings with Anton, our festival coordinator, Vadim and Fayina (see above) and Pastor Leonid of the church sponsoring our outreach, were *Atlechna* (excellent). We saw

the dorms that will house the students and ate lunch in the cafe where we will eat all our meals. There seems to be great excitement amongst the Believers here.

Morning 4/20

At 2 AM this morning I should have been in bed. After all, I am the leader of this whole expedition and I need my rest in order to be fresh for corporate prayer this morning. But then again, part of leadership is encouraging the troops—and the troops were on their way. Sasha, my interpreter, and I took a taxi to the train station early this morning, where 70 on-fire radicals were coming to Berdichev from all over Ukraine to participate in Berdichev Festival.

One of the exciting aspects of this outreach is seeing the maturity of the Body of Believers here in Ukraine. This a great testimony to the work of God in the Ukrainians. There are only a handful of Americans involved in this effort. Almost everything is being handled by nationals. Just a few years ago, this would have been impossible.

When they arrived, they spilled out of the Ukrainian train into the station. We were taking over the city—at least for a week—for the King. Coming in at that hour only added to feeling that we were on a secret mission—a Spirit-filled *s.w.a.t.* team! Little did that city know what was coming!

“Mr. Cantor, why aren't you in bed. We can't believe you came to meet us,” said Yulia from Nicolaiav. Truthfully it was a small sacrifice. These are my children. What parent wouldn't come to see their children, even in the middle of the night. Despite the hour, they were all upbeat, ready for their assignment. No complaining, no whining—just zeal!

In Ukraine nothing is predictable. In fact the only thing that is a sure bet, is that something will go wrong. God uses this to keep us flexible and teach us to trust Him even when everything appears to be out of whack. This night was no different. The *fleet* of taxis that were supposed to meet us there and take the students to their dorms was two! So...we put all the luggage in the two taxis, and walked for 45 minutes in the dark streets (can't afford to leave lights on all night in small cities in Ukraine) of Berdichev. Because of the recent

downpour only a few hours before, all the streets were muddy. As I was walking along through a small puddle, suddenly my foot dropped 6 inches into the muddy water. In Ukraine, you can never assume a puddle is merely a puddle and not a pothole. We finally arrived at the dorms (which cost us all of \$3 per night per person). It was after 4 AM before I was back in my bed. But I could hardly sleep. My spirit was racing with excitement.

This morning we all met at 8:00 AM for praise and worship and within minutes there was such a strong sense of God's presence. The students were jumping and dancing all around. You would never have guessed that they only enjoyed half a night's sleep. After breakfast, Sasha and I took a taxi to run several errands. The cab driver began to express his excitement over the festival and told us of his Jewish friends and his love for Jewish culture. Of course that is Berdichev; even the gentiles act as if they are Jewish. He went on to say how depressed economically the city is and how the recent factory shutdowns have only heightened the despair and

poverty. All the more reason to believe God for many souls at the festival this week.

The students went throughout the city handing out flyers, inviting people to the festival. They came back glowing, sharing stories of the openness of the people. David met a woman who told stories of hiding Jews from the Nazis during the war.

Tonight more people will arrive and we will continue the outreach in the morning. Please pray:

- That God will MULTIPLY the advertising and Jews and non-Jews from all over would come to the festival and come to Yeshua.
- Good weather!! So far, it has been cold and rainy.
- For my family in Odessa: God's protection and presence over my home; that Elana and the other two children will arrive here safely on Wednesday or Thursday.
- Finances: We have received about 85% of what is needed. Pray that the other 15% will come in this week.
- That I would stay healthy all week. Last week's graduation ceremonies have left me a little drained.

Please pray in faith for renewed energy and good health.

Pray especially that I would not lose my voice.

We covet your prayers and will send you updates throughout the week.

Tell someone about Yeshua today and please ignore the typos.

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Tuesday, April 27, 1999 2:43 AM

Subject: PART 1—STANDING ROOM ONLY

Dear Friends,

Below is a brief synopsis of the Lord's wondrous work these past few days in Berdichev. But first, let me add this: PLEASE DON'T STOP PRAYING! The enemy, I am sure, is planning a counter attack. Many times, the hardest part of a mission trip or outreach is the week after it is over. We tend to relax, forgetting that our enemy is looking for revenge. Please pray for us, our tired bodies, and for God's continued grace and protection. We are only human agents, constantly dependent on God's goodness.

Ochen Managa

“*Ochen Managa! Ochen Managa!*” Anton the festival coordinator began to shout to me. I had my shofar in hand and was about to open the first night of the festival. He was telling me that there were *too many* people. What a great problem to have! When the curtain opened there was

standing room only. Over one thousand people jammed into the Berdichev Cultural Palace.

Just before I sounded the shofar, I began to think of the goodness of God and how He took me, an irresponsible, self-absorbed, rebellious teenager and gave me eternal life. And not only that, He has granted me the privilege of proclaiming His message in foreign lands to my own people. When I accepted Yeshua fifteen years ago, I never dreamed that I would be standing in Berdichev, Ukraine, about to declare the Gospel. I have done *nothing* to deserve this! GOD IS SO GOOD!!

I blew the shofar, Ruslan from Nicolaiav sang the *Shema*, and the festival commenced. A couple of highlights from the first night included my interpreter Lida singing *Jerusalem of Gold* in Russian and then in Hebrew. I could see my wife on the front row in tears. Elana told me that a whole row of Babushkas (Grandmothers) behind her were also in tears. The anointing was so strong. After that, Anton came out and aroused the crowd to their feet with the singing of *Hava Negila* and *Avenu Shalom Alechem*. He invited all the dancers and

pastors to join him on stage to dance with him and the whole place erupted in joy.

After well over an hour of joyful dance and music, I was introduced to preach. I shared my testimony and proclaimed Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah. At the end I asked who wanted this Yeshua and well over 200 hands went in the air! Once again the people began to cheer. However, because of poor administration and confusion with the worship team and sound crew, we only ended up with 45 cards filled out.

Although we were thrilled at the results, we were grieved that we lost “fish” because of technical and administrative confusion. That night I barely slept. I could only think of how we blew it and what must be done differently. The next morning, I swallowed a few cups of coffee and headed back to the cultural palace. After prayer, the leaders met together. I shared my thoughts with them, and they had many recommendations as well. We met with the ushers, the sound team and the worship groups to tell them of the changes. In addition, we challenged our whole team not to relax, but to keep fighting. I felt that the warfare was heightened and that

the enemy had been aroused. I asked for 10 volunteers to spend the morning in intercession. Immediately *exactly 10 hands* shot up into the air. Many also chose to fast.

That night when we arrived I could still feel the intensity; we had not yet broken through. I just knew that enemy still had a foothold in this event. This was our last chance to breakthrough in prayer. We gathered the team for intercession and bound the enemy. Then backstage, we began to release God's Spirit on the worship team and dancers. The Spirit of God began to visibly move upon us. Yet, it wasn't until the shofar sounded to begin the evening that the breakthrough came—and what a breakthrough! From that moment on, everything went like clockwork and we all enjoyed a strong sense of God's peace. Elana came out and lit the Shabbat candles as she sang the traditional Sabbath blessing.

The music and dancing was clearly more anointed than the previous night. It was heightened by the addition of the Kiev Messianic dance group. They were absolutely incredible and stole the show with their creativity and joy. During one

song, the male dancers came out dressed like Hassidic Jews and put on a display of traditional Russian Jewish dance.

My message was much more concise and the interpretation was crisp and clear, as I shared my testimony, I told the people of their precarious position before God without Yeshua, and called them to embrace Him as the Jewish Messiah. Genady, an incredibly gifted musician, accompanied me as I gave the invitation. He plays the sax, clarinet and flute. As I called people to repentance, he played a melody that he had written specifically for altar calls. Friends, you had to be there—it was powerful.

When we asked who would repent of their sins and embrace the Messiah, several hundred people rose to their feet. The audience erupted in joy. We prayed with them to make Yeshua the Lord of their lives. Our strategy for better administration paid off. We received 220 cards!

Please pray for the fellowship we have birthed here in Berdichev—“Berdichev Messianic Fellowship”. Pray for Vadim and Fayina and Serge and his wife as they lead this new fellowship.

The Results

Over 500 people responded to the invitations to embrace Yeshua...We have 265 cards to follow up...and 60 of them are Jewish! I would have to say it was a success—thanks be to God!

Tell someone about Yeshua today and please ignore the typos. There will be no typos in heaven!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

Thursday, April 29, 1999 3:19 AM

**Subject: PART II—TEARS FOR ISRAEL IN
BERDICHEV**

Dear Friends,

Tomorrow we head home. What a year it has been—the greatest of our lives! Please pray for us as we finish packing and taking care of details. Also, we would appreciate your prayers concerning our traveling which will include four wonderful days of rest in Switzerland. God has provided our lodging and our meals. There is a YWAM (Youth with a Mission) base in Wiler, Switzerland. They have a retreat center and will receive our family there. We are so grateful!

Tears for Israel in Berdichev

Before I sign off from Odessa, I want to relate to you one last story. Last Sunday was maybe the most powerful ministry experience I have ever had. I was asked to speak at the church in Berdichev that had sponsored the festival. The pastor and I had become very close.

I woke up early Sunday and began to prepare to teach a standard message I have on Israel and the Nations. It is an overview on Messianic Judaism and the eternal calling on the Jewish people to reach the nations. Just before leaving I went to pray. As I did, a divine unction rose up within me and I began repeating the phrase, "Where are the tears for Israel?" over and over again.

At that point I knew that God had something more for that morning than I had planned. I changed the focus of the message from a teaching to a passionate plea to cry for Israel and weep over the sins of Ukraine against the Jewish people.

Stripped of Our Identity

Halfway through my message I told of how Jewish people who wanted to believe in Yeshua during the Middle Ages were told that they had to reject their Jewish heritage. "They stripped us of our calling and distinctiveness!" I lamented. Without thinking, I ripped off my kippa and tallis to symbolize having our Jewishness stolen from us. Suddenly the reality of my own comments and actions hit me and I

found myself weeping in the pulpit. I regained my composure and began to preach again. However there was no interpretation. I looked to find my Jewish interpreter weeping. Lida could not speak. After a time, she also regained her composure—but not before God had done something powerful in her own heart in regard to her calling as a Jewish woman.

Then we spoke specifically about Ukraine: The Odessa pogroms, the 100,000 plus Jews murdered by Chemilnitsky (most notorious anti-Semite other than Hitler) and the Ukrainian cooperation during the Holocaust.

At the conclusion of the message I asked the Pastor to come forward to lead the congregation in repentance. I did not know what to expect. Maybe he would reject the message, maybe he would tell his people that I was crazy.

He came to the stage and embraced me, weeping on my shoulder. Then he took my hand and *knelt* to the ground. His act of humility broke me and I began to weep. The entire assembly of 400 people simultaneously began to weep. I don't think I have ever seen or experienced anything like this.

As he began to pray through his sobs and lead his congregation in repentance, I realized that he was expecting *me* to express forgiveness to them. I felt very uncomfortable. I thought, "Who am I to represent the persecuted Ukrainian Jews? I have had an easy life compared to them." I felt unworthy indeed. Nevertheless, I knew that God had put me there at that moment to release these people from their guilt and bondage. When Pastor Leonid finished, I did forgive them and asked God to break the awful curse on this nation. After the service, several people came to me to express repentance and thankfulness at being set free.

What an awesome thing it is to see a group of people who previously had never made a connection between the sins of their fathers and themselves, begin to see it. Suddenly this entire congregation took responsibility for the gruesome sins that their city committed against the Jews during the Holocaust. (Thousands of Berdichev Jews were marched through the city to their graves.) I am praying that God will raise up a Gentile Ukrainian pastor to take this message all over Ukraine. I think it may be Pastor Leonid of Berdichev.

I hesitated to include this report because I am sure some will think I am trying to draw attention to myself. Let me simply say that this was the work of God and not man. There is no credit to be taken here by a human other than the Pastor for humbling himself. He will receive his reward. I have included this because I know that many of you will appreciate it.

After the service Sasha and I joined the elders of the congregation and their families for an outdoor *shashlick*. It was one of the first times I have been in a “park” area since being in Ukraine. It was nice to chill out after such an intense week.

After the meal, we called Vadim and Fayina forward and laid hands on them, commissioning them to pastor this new congregation. I stood there in shock. Only a few months ago, I was wondering why the Lord has sent us to Ukraine. And now here I was anointing leadership for a brand new Messianic congregation. God is good.

Signing Off

Well friends, this is it. It has been quite an “online” experience of trans-Atlantic emails. This will be my last email from Odessa as a city resident. What can I say? This email ministry you have allowed me to have has made our time here doubly blessed. You have allowed me to create quite a journal. Let me simply say on behalf of Elana, Sharon, Yael, Dede and myself—Thank you! We love you! Shalom.

How else could I end this: TELL SOMEONE ABOUT YESHUA TODAY AND IGNORE THE TYPOS!

For the Salvation of Israel and the Nations,

Ron & Elana Cantor

EPILOGUE

Shalom Odessa

At about three o'clock on Friday we prepared to leave Odessa. I had held my emotions in check for the most part. For the past three days I had been working non-stop. We had budgeted enough time to pack, but a last minute and quite unexpected trip to Kiev threw us into a frenzy. In order to get my car into Hungary I had to go to the American Embassy in Kiev to have a document signed. By the time I got home I only had a day and a half to get everything packed.

About an hour before we were to leave, we finished. I took a shower and then Elana and I went to say good-bye to Oksana. You'll remember that Oksana is our less-than-moral neighbor. We've been like a mother and father to her this year, and she has been like a rebellious child. She embraced Elana and through her uncontrollable tears she said in English, "I no want you to go."

I had been too busy packing to realize that we were not just leaving Odessa, but we were leaving many of our

children. I thought that saying good-bye would be just another item to check off on my “to do” list. But seeing Oksana in tears and understanding that she has no one in this world, tore our hearts apart. I told her to turn to God, and then I turned to the hallway and began to weep.

I walked out onto the “Walking Street” in front of our house with tears flowing down my cheeks. I thought of all the adventures we had been through during the year. It was the most beautiful day—the sun was out and the wind was blowing and it felt like someone was squeezing my heart. It pained us to leave. There were so many times I wanted to escape this prison of a country, but now I was agonizing, wondering when we would be able to come back and see the precious people.

We went to the airport and made our way through the Ukrainian customs. There are these two rather large gentlemen whose job it is to check luggage. One of them resembles *Jabba the Hut*. However, they are really there to try and get money. We had encountered them before. They are kind of like cartoon characters. We survived them and within

a few hours we were touching down in Switzerland. God blessed us with one of the most economical vacations I think anyone has ever taken in Switzerland. YWAM hosted us for four days and even rented us the base's car.

Switzerland is perhaps the most beautiful place on earth. I told Elana that if heaven looks like Switzerland, I wouldn't be disappointed. One of my daughters actually asked me if heaven looked like Switzerland. I told her it was a million times better. She just looked at me with an expression that said, "How could anything be a million times better than this?" I love my daughters!

Ochen Plagadarne

That means *very grateful* and that is what we are. It is hard to contain my joy. When we came back to Odessa in January we simply planned to finish the year at the Bible School and return home. When I left the U.S. to come back to Odessa, my Pastor Jerry Miller had said to me, "Before you return to the States you must do something highly evangelistic." I agreed, but had no idea even where to begin or what to do. I never

dreamed that we would be involved in a festival/congregational planting effort.

The doors are wide open to continue doing outreach in Ukraine and other parts of Europe. God only knows what the coming years will be like. Pray with us that we will be faithful to God's call and the gifts he has given us to spread the name of Yeshua.

Progress in Berdichev

It has been less than a year since our Berdichev Festival. I was recently in Berdichev to visit with Vadim and Fayina and to minister to the congregation there. Below is my report:

On Thursday morning I arrived in Berdichev. I am happy to report that the congregation is healthier than I ever imagined. I would have to say that Vadim, the leader, is the greatest testimony. You should have seen him run the services. If I hadn't known him, I would have thought that he had been pastoring for 10 years. He was encouraging, fatherly and confident.

It was only six or seven months ago that he was sitting in our living room in Odessa. Elana said to me that she thought he would be the leader of the new work. I agreed.

There's a man in the congregation named Noam. He is a Holocaust survivor and is 86 years old. He shared with me his thoughts on Vadim and the new congregation:

There are many congregations in Berdichev, but this is the best in all Ukraine. When I came here I was weak, but now I am strong. When I came I was 86, but now I am 76! Vadim is the best leader! When I walked in the congregation Fayina (Vadim's wife) and Vadim hugged me and kissed me and told me they loved me. What other pastor does such things?

Noam continued: *After each service, Vadim calls up all those who are sick and he touches them. One week three people fell down—and when they came back to the congregation they were healed. I had a problem with my leg, but after Vadim prayed for me, I was healed and now I can walk [without pain].*

Noam's daughter, also a survivor, is a Messianic Jew and attends the Berdichev Messianic Jewish congregation. And what a fish she made for dinner!

Mass Murder in BERDICHEV...

In 1941 there was a great tragedy in Berdichev. Over a two-week period the Nazis marched 18,648 Jews from their homes to a large field outside of the city. Once there, they were stripped naked and humiliated. But their humiliation did not last long. They were shot and thrown into a mass grave that had been dug. Many were still alive when the dirt began to pile up on top of them. Over the next few days, people testified that the ground literally moved up and down from those who were not dead. Finally the moving stopped and all that was left was a mass grave.

Today there are five memorials to those mass graves. However, they had been given very little attention and upkeep for many years. They were dirty and had weeds growing all around them. Led by Vadim, the Berdichev Messianic Jewish congregation took it upon themselves to clean them and manicure the area around them. The difference was dramatic and this was a great witness to the Jewish people of this city. The local rabbi told his people that

the mayor did it, but the truth got out that it was the Jewish believers in Yeshua.

There is a lady in the congregation. She is now 72. When she was young, exactly 58 years ago, she was one of those marched out to be shot or buried alive. A Ukrainian couple took her in until the war was over. They gave her their own Ukrainian surname to protect her. Now she is born again and knows the Jewish Messiah!

The congregation's weekly attendance is around eighty and sometimes reaches one hundred. They have four cell groups. For a Messianic congregation in a small city, these are very high numbers. Aside from that, the Spirit of God hovers over the congregation. There is such sweet fellowship amongst them.

Recently we raised \$2,000 for them to purchase an apartment to be used for offices, housing guests, prayer meetings and more. I am completely dumbfounded at their maturity and growth. May the Lord give us grace to see many more *Berdichevs* planted in other cities in Ukraine and beyond!

ⁱ Jesus Freaks, pg. 150, Albury Publishing