

Question Authority Part 2

by Moishe Rosen,
founder of Jews for Jesus

In the last issue of *Havurah* we talked about questioning authority, particularly where the Jewish religion is concerned. We observed a shift in authority following the destruction of the Temple. That shift occurred at the council of Yavneh, where the rabbis appointed themselves as the leaders of Judaism in place of the priestly system established by God.

Few Jewish people realize how radical that shift was. Since the Bible makes no mention of rabbinical authority, it was essential for the rabbis to find justification for taking that mantle upon themselves.

Defilement was a constant concern in Jewish jurisprudence. Certain things would be defiled if handled by anyone other than the priests. Certain acts, such as cutting or tattooing the body, were defilement. The book of Leviticus is filled with regulations concerning what is clean and unclean, permitted and not permitted.

Before the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. the priests, or *cohenim*, taught the ways of worship and living; it was their responsibility to keep people from defilement and desecration. But when the Temple was destroyed, the priests were dispersed or killed, creating a power vacuum. The rabbis, in an attempt to keep the people united, presented themselves as religious authorities to fill that vacuum. Without the priests to interpret Torah, they became the sole interpreters of the Scriptures.

It was not as though the rabbis wrested control away from anyone. The priesthood had been in disarray even before the destruction of the Temple. Nevertheless, when the rabbis became the authorities it was difficult to appeal to the Scriptures. The Law had been written to be observed by a certain people at a certain time in a certain place and *within a certain structure set forth by revelation*.

The question of rabbinical authority comes into relief when we go back and explore the God-given authority of those who preceded them: namely those who filled the offices of prophet, priest and king. As mentioned in part one of this article, those were God's appointed offices. God gave a sign or symbol to show that He had bestowed His authority on these people. That sign was a public anointing, that is, the smearing of ointment on a person's head.

The word "anoint" first appears in reference to Aaron and his family. God commanded Moses: "So you shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him. You shall anoint them, consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as priests" (Exodus 28:41).

But the priests were not the only ones appointed and anointed by God to positions of authority. In 1 Kings 19:16 we see that God commanded Elijah to anoint Jehu king, that is *melech*, over Israel, and in the same verse Elijah was also to anoint Elisha to be



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a prophet in his stead. So those whom God chose to be priests, prophets and kings were given the same symbol of anointing at God's direction.

It is interesting to go back a little further to see how God first worked in the matter of the king and the kingdom. After Moses and Joshua, our people were ruled for a time by chieftain-judges—sometimes for better and sometimes for worse. As this era drew to a close, Israel demanded a king, "like the other nations." And God established a monarchy.

Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying, "Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to me." So when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, "There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people" (1 Samuel 9:15-17).

It is interesting that Saul was to be anointed a commander, or *nagid*, which is different from the usual word for king: "Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said: 'Is it not because the LORD has anointed you commander over his inheritance?'" (1 Samuel 10:1).

The people petitioned God for a king (*melech*) (1 Samuel 8:6). They did not petition him for a

commander (1 Samuel 10:1). In the case of Saul, the prophet anointed him a commander and the people made Saul king before the Lord (1 Samuel 11:15).

The king was to be a steward over God's inheritance. All God-given authority is a matter of stewardship, since God is creator of all and Lord over all. But the people had asked for a king to be like the other nations, and that is what they got.

While King Saul did receive the Lord's anointing and began his reign in the power of the Holy Spirit, it quickly became apparent that Saul was not the king that God envisioned for His people. Arguably, God gave the people what they wanted in order to prepare them to receive what He wanted—David, the man after God's heart. And even David was just a forerunner of the perfect King who was yet to come.

The authority that people choose for themselves is vastly different from the authority God would place over us. Few people desire authority in their lives, but most will give someone authority over them in exchange for protection.

And when the rabbis took the mantle of authority upon themselves, it was for the sake of protecting the Jewish people. The

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protection was not so much in regard to a military threat, but rather the threat that we would lose our peoplehood without the Temple, that we would succumb to the temptations of assimilation and be lost in a sea of *goyim*. So the rabbis became the interpreters of the Jewish religion and thus the protectors of our people's survival.

Religion requires revelation and regulation; the first needs to be authoritatively interpreted and the second needs to be authoritatively enforced. However, without the sacrificial system, much of the Law seemed empty. Much of the Torah was no longer relevant once the Temple was destroyed and the people dispersed. And with the diminishing of the priests came the disappearance of prophets. Thus the rabbis could not base their authority on revelation.

But that problem was solved through an idea which pervades Orthodox Judaism to this day. It is difficult to determine if the idea originated at Yavneh, but a particular idea or device gave authority to the rabbis apart from actual anointing and to some extent, apart from the Scriptures. That device is the oral law. Supposedly, Moses not only brought the written law, and dictated the Torah, but according to tradition he received an oral law. This law was passed down orally to select disciples until the Talmud was written. The Talmud is said to contain that oral law—and the Talmud gives prominence to the rabbis.

The rabbis' final appeal was to tradition and so it is to this day. "Judaism teaches" became the foundation to uphold the Jewish religion, and the building material for that foundation was the consensus of the rabbis. The one thing that the rabbis seemed to agree on was that Jesus could not be the Messiah, and any Jew who said that He was must be made an outcast.

Whereas the original people, items and place for worship were all selected by God and anointed of God, the rabbinate became a self-appointing, self-perpetuating and self-authenticating group. That is not to say that God did not use the rabbis, that their intentions were bad or all their efforts in vain. But unlike the priests and Levites, the rabbis were not worship leaders. In a sense, they were spiritual watchdogs to bark warnings against idolatry and law-breaking. Later, the rabbis turned from warning of what was unlawful *within* Judaism to decrying what was harmful to the Jews from the outside. They became captains in the fight against anti-Semitism and assimilation. However, worship continued to be largely a matter of the heart and more often than not, the rabbis instructed the heads rather than the hearts.

Jewish people today continue looking to the rabbis as authorities, not so much for the rabbis to tell them how to know God, or even necessarily how to live their daily lives, but for a feeling of security. The point of security is that there is such a thing as cohesive Judaism that enables the Jewish people to survive as a distinct people—whether or not they choose to practice the religion. The main power and authority of the rabbis resides in the willingness of the Jewish community to allow them to define what is or isn't Jewish. People find security in boundaries, and a definition is a boundary. While the rabbis are able to provide fewer and fewer definitions or boundaries in today's pluralistic society, there is at least one non-negotiable: Jesus cannot be the Messiah. Today's rabbis use that boundary, which is viewed as necessary to the survival of the Jewish people.

But those of us who do believe that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah see the struggle for survival in a different light. That light is

God's ultimate promise was that He would send an anointed

the brilliance of God's sovereignty and the glorious continuity of His redemptive plan.

The repository of God's authority for the governance and spiritual welfare of Israel was in the prophets, priest and kings, which three comprised a check and balance of powers. The prophets could accuse the kings of not fulfilling the law, the priests could deny the king the right to come to the altar, and a king could likewise punish prophets or priests for civil disobedience. *But God's ultimate promise was that He would send an anointed one who would not need to have an outside balance—because the inner person would be completely balanced. (continued on p. 6)*

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Statistically Speaking

What's new in Jewish community demographics

By Susan Perlman

It's been said that, "Statistics are like witnesses—they will testify for either side." Of course, if one conducts a statistical study with a pre-conceived conclusion, that adage is appropriate. However, statistics, properly gathered and interpreted, can be very helpful. Those of us in the messianic community who are interested in understanding trends in the Jewish community at large have several studies that can instruct us.

The most extensive and most costly study of the American Jewish community, called the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) of 2000-01, reported a U.S. Jewish population estimate of 5.2 million, down slightly from the 5.5 million figure they came up with in a similar study ten years ago. This figure is based on the NJPS definition of who is a Jew—people who identified themselves as Jewish, were born to a Jewish parent or were raised Jewish and who didn't convert to another religion. The NJPS researchers pointed out that if they broadened their definition to include anyone from a Jewish background, the number would go up to 6.9 million.

Another study, the American Jewish Identity Survey (AJIS) 2001, sponsored by the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, was released in February of 2002. Barry Kosmin, who also conducted the NJPS study of 1990, headed this up.

AJIS broke down Jewish identity by religion, parentage, upbringing and self-definition and came up with a 5.5 million figure. However, when they added in Jews who follow other religions but are still regarded as Jews in some sense and their children, as well as Jews with no religion, their figure increased to 7.7 million. Kosmin criticized the methodology in the 2000-2001 NJPS survey, saying they failed to "adequately count 'fringe' or 'marginal' Jews—the intermarried, the secular, the unaffiliated and those living outside the large metropolitan areas."

In still another survey conducted by Gary Tobin's Institute for Jewish and Community Research, it was maintained that the Jewish population stands at 6.7 million using a similarly restrictive definition as NJPS. However, if broadened to include people who practice Judaism in addition to another religion, who were raised Jewish but now practice another religion, or have a Jewish partner or spouse, the figure goes up to 9.2 million. Then if you add those with a Jewish grandparent or beyond, the number of Jews in the U.S. becomes 13.3 million. Says Tobin, "Jews are not disappearing, they are transforming."

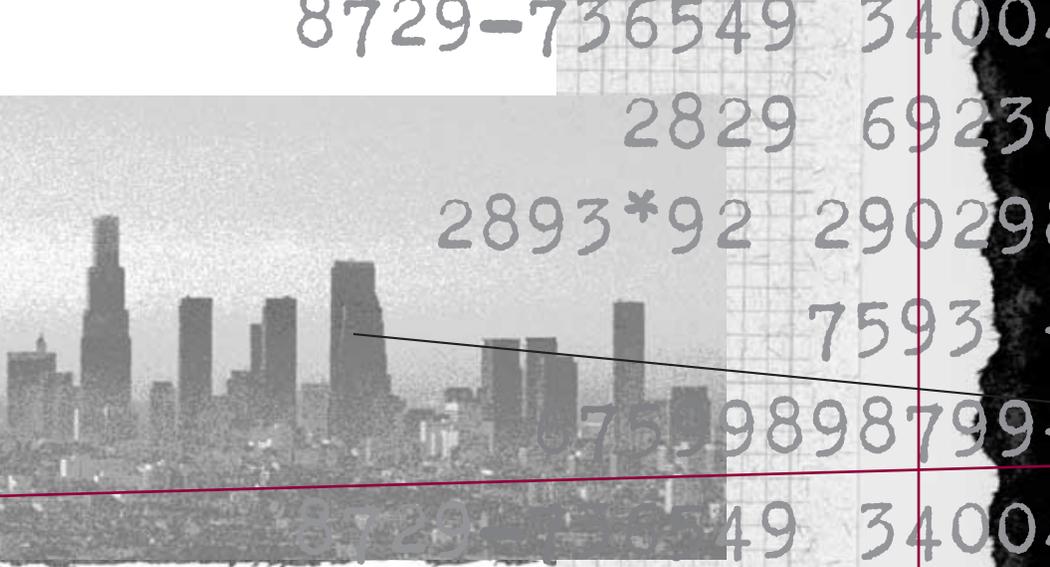
Do these three survey results sound contradictory or at least a little confusing?

Ironically, when, as a movement, we are asked how many Jewish believers in Jesus there are, we seem to have as many answers as the mainstream Jewish community.

Our detractors, like Jews for Judaism cite figures such as a quarter of a million, however they haven't even conducted a statistical survey. And if the figure is truly that high, where are all these Jewish believers? Groups like the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC) point to 150 messianic Jewish congregations, but do not offer a number of Jews who believe. Other groups have been quoted in reputable publications as saying that there are more Jews who believe in Jesus today than in any other time in history. What are they basing such statements on?

Those of you who receive *Havurah* make up approximately 14,400 Jewish believing households. Couple that fact with anecdotal information about Jewish believers at conferences and in congregations, and we have come up with an educated guess of anywhere from 30,000-75,000 Jewish believers in the U.S. However, we just don't know and neither does anyone else. We'd like to do better.

There have been some surveys done, one conducted by Jews for Jesus in 1982, in



which questionnaires were sent to Jewish believers like you who receive our Jews for Jesus mailings. Sixteen percent of 8,000 Jewish-believing households responded back then. Thousands of surveys continued coming in over the next decade and these were tabulated for a 1992 follow-up survey. The information gathered was helpful to our understanding of our community and to that of the larger Jewish world with whom we look to interact.

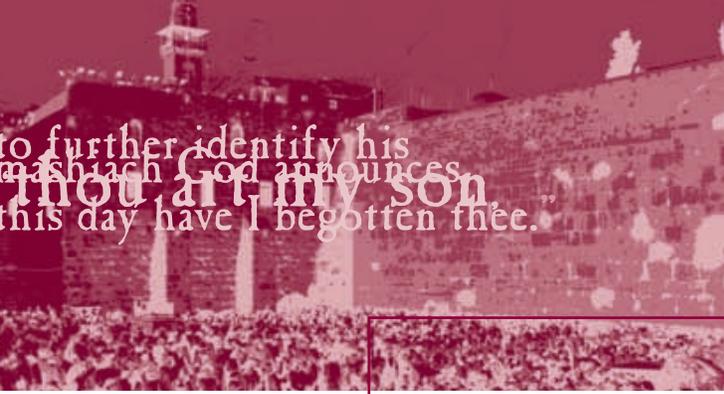
Dr. Philip Abramovitz, head of the Jewish Community Relations Council's Task Force on Missionaries and Jews, understood its value as recently as three years ago. He made an impassioned plea to Jewish leaders to do what they could to motivate "core" Jews to reach out to marginalized Jews on a one-on-one basis. Dr. Abramovitz cited our Jewish Believer Survey as significant in its finding that most Jewish believers come to faith in Jesus through the efforts of individuals, whether they are friends, relatives, neighbors or business associates. If that is still true, then there are implications for us as well in how we motivate, instruct and encourage individual believers in their witness to Jews. Some other results of note included our assessment that the intermarriage rate of Jewish believers was on a par with the rest of the Jewish

community and that education levels and Jewish holiday observance were similar.

Having said this, our data needs to be updated and we'd like to compare current information with current Jewish community surveys now available to us. To do this, we need your help. Enclosed with this edition of *Havurah* is a preliminary survey. Would you consider filling it out? If there is more than one member of your household who should fill out the survey, would you copy it so that there are enough to go around? And if there are others we should mail the survey to, would you give us their names and addresses? We will share the results with all who fill out the survey and hopefully, together we can find out more about our Jewish believing community and how we can be a stronger testimony to other Jews about our Messiah.

One final note. The NJPS results were only published in part. They discovered that most of the computer data was lost and are not publishing the rest, at least for now. Some demographers in the Jewish community have speculated that perhaps the NJPS team just didn't like the results they got. Whatever results we get, we promise to publish the Jews for Jesus study and let the statistics speak for themselves.





to further identify his
Mashiach God announces,
 "Thou art my son,
 this day have I begotten thee."

In verse 6 we see that God has appointed His own ruler. God's true king (*melech*) is set upon the hill of Zion. And to further identify His *Mashiach* God announces, "You are My Son, today have I begotten You."

(continued from p. 3) This anointed one is mentioned throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Many of the messianic prophecies show the anointed one as God's means of survival for the Jewish people, whether spiritually, as in Isaiah 53, or in time of war, as in the book of Zechariah. But nowhere do we see the matter of the Messiah's authority more clearly delineated than in Psalm 2, where the nations gather together and express rage at the Lord, and at His anointed. In other words, Psalm 2 depicts humanity's struggle against God's authority. Psalm 2 also teaches us that the anointed one, or the *Mashiach*, would be the son of God.

The first verse asks: "Why do the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing?" So we see a distinction between "the nations" (that is, most of the world) and "the people" who are Israel. The nations boil in heat and anger, and the people, Israel, while cooler, *still have an empty idea of the meaning of authority*. Verse 2 shows us that the kings of the earth dig in and take a stand and the rulers (generally referring to Israel) take council together against Yahweh and His *Mashiach*, and what do they say? They say, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces, and cast away Their cords from us." In other words, all the ties that bind God and His people and God and His creation should be severed. This is the world's plan to reject God's authority.

Verse four gives God's reaction: "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh. . . ." What cosmic amusement. The people do not have the slightest idea of how much they are bound to God, who has set the very boundaries of life. To sever the link with Him would be suicide, for none can exist apart from Him.

Do not worry about the word "begotten." The many "begats" in the King James Bible seem to indicate paternity. This is true, but God did not pass out any cigars to celebrate His begotten Son, because God had always been the Father. Theologians disagree as to the moment of this "begetting," but it was probably either at the Incarnation, or birth of the God-man Messiah, or it was at His resurrection. The begetting is generally seen as the official and legal setting forth of Jesus as the Son of God.

So the psalmist says that the inheritance of the son is to be all the nations, for "all the earth shall belong to the son" (verse 8). This anointed one is given more than any mere prophet, priest or king of Israel could claim. He is not merely the anointed one of Israel, but the appointed leader of the whole world. As proof of this, verse 9 announces that the Messiah has the right to pulverize the nations if He chooses. God has given Him ultimate authority.

In the light of the foregoing, the psalmist says, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling," and the last verse tells us to embrace His Son, the King Messiah. And the word to Israel is, "Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him" (verse 12).

It is neither natural nor ordinary for people to desire authority to guide or direct their lives. Each of us wants to be the captain of our own destiny and the master of our own soul. Each of us wants the right to determine what is right and wrong according to our tastes and what is acceptable to us. Each of us desire sovereignty over our own lives, but alas the wise man knows that he cannot be in charge and so he looks for

the true authority to direct him. What is that true authority? In the Jewish community, the rabbis guide in what might be called the "ultimate right and wrong," but they guide by consensus and their consensus changes with the times. Except when it comes to Jesus.

The rejection of Jesus was not based on a failure to fulfill prophecies. The rejection of Jesus is a reaction against His rejection of the misused authority of the priesthood and the self-righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. He presented Himself as being the authority, as one might expect the Messiah would do. But the stewards of the Jewish religion of the day never considered His messiahship. There has never been an official Jewish response to Jesus; it has always been a reaction, the presumption the He couldn't possibly be the Messiah. Hence, all evidence was considered in that light and still is to this day.

What does that mean for us as Jewish believers in Y'shua? How does it affect our relationship with mainstream Judaism?

One of the components of true authority is power. When people appoint themselves or other people to positions of authority, they can only confer as much power as resides in them or their position. When God anoints someone, He fully empowers that person. Y'shua (Jesus) is His ultimate anointed one and as such He commands all of the Father's power and authority. And God anoints Jesus' disciples—you and me—with His Holy Spirit. The King of the Universe has appointed us to be His children, princes and princesses—not to be trifled with.

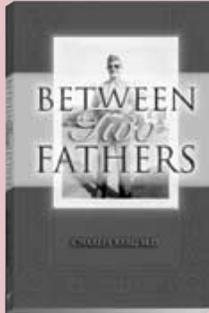
Who then is the authority of our day? The authority of our day continues to be in the Holy Scriptures, as interpreted by Spirit-led, Spirit-filled disciples (students or learners, rather than teachers). The one true authority, Messiah, imparts His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, for the empowerment and understanding of those who are about His Father's business.



Book Review

**BETWEEN
TWO FATHERS**
by Charles Barg, M.D.

Published in 2002,
Purple Pomegranate
Productions. 180 pgs.
Reviewed by
Jim Stamberg.



Father. The mere word evokes a wide range of passionate responses, from absolute idealism to bitter resentment. It takes a sharp mind and a truthful soul to offer an honest portrayal of one's own father. In his book, *Between Two Fathers*, author Charles Barg achieves this with amazing balance. Dr. Barg portrays his father, with all his strengths and weaknesses, as a hero as well as a foil to his Heavenly Father.

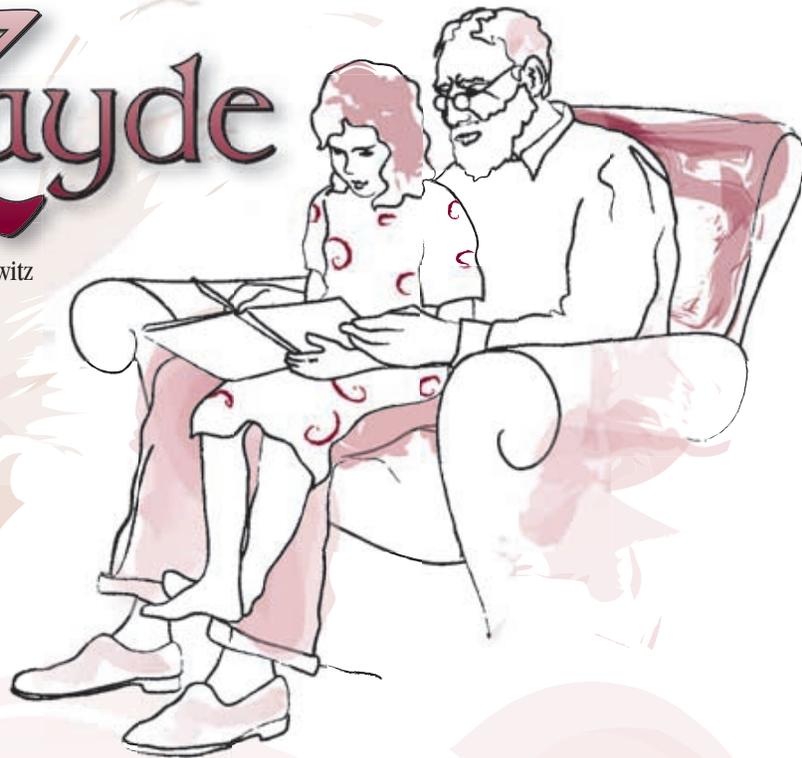
Louis Barg was a Marine, a peacemaker, a pilot and a shrewd businessman. Steeped in Jewish culture, he was a “mover and shaker” in the Jewish community of his day—idolized by his son, Charles. To Barg, “Dad” was synonymous with leadership and respect. Both his family and the townspeople looked to his father for advice, help, money and favors. His word was taken seriously. Barg writes, “His involvement in the lives of others was as predictable as the sunrise” (p. 33).

Eventually, Charles Barg made the decision that, since he was not his father, he was not going to follow in his father's footsteps. This began with his choice of a bride, continued with his professional choices, and culminated with his discovery of Y'shua. As Charles matured, he realized that his father was capable of almost anything except affirming his son. Charles deals honestly with the depth of his disappointment: “. . .it was the anger of feeling that my every thought and feeling was discounted by the person whom I most wanted to think highly of me” (p. 82).

In this journey through anecdotes, adventures and reflections, the author daringly explores his *(continued on page 8)*

Zayde

by Melissa Moskowitz



Zayde

You used to call me
Shayna maidele, your pretty one
As you bounced me on your knee.
Oh, your grey beard scared me so!

Zayde

Did you know I looked
In your dresser drawer
and found the cherry drops.
They were for me, weren't they?

Zayde

I can still feel
Your strong arms
Gathering me to your heart
I thought you'd always be here.

But one night, Mother told me
that some angels came for you
and you flew away
But I didn't believe her.

Zayde

I really tried to believe the rabbi's answers
To my questions
About heaven and angels. . .

But Zayde,
He said we couldn't be certain
If either was real
I didn't believe him.
His uncertainty scared me so.

I set to reading books
About art and life and death
Then I read about Messiah—
And put the Book down.

Zayde

You never said a word about him
—but I read in the Book
how he came to live and die
and take my questions with him.

So one day I took a step toward Life
And as I approached Messiah
I felt strong arms around me
Taking away my fear.

Zayde

You were so proud
Of all your children
You were so proud of me
Would you be proud of me now?

Zayde

someday I will see him,
as he really is,
and for this hope
I am fixed forever
—an angel upon his shoulder.



Bulletin Board

Check out these upcoming events!



Camp Gilgal

WEST

Junior Camp

June 22-July 5 (ages 8-12)
Silver Spur Christian Conference Center
Tuolumne, California (near Sonora)
Cost: \$500.00

Teen Camp

August 17-23 (ages 13-15)
Hume Lake Christian Camp
Hume, California (Sequoia
National Park)
Cost: \$275.00

Adventure Camp

July 20-26 (ages 16-18)
Central coast adventure -
sea kayaking, surfing, rock
climbing and fun
Begins and ends in Los
Angeles
Cost: \$275.00

Camp director: Dave "Moose" Garrett
(415) 864-2600 OR Moose7580@aol.com

MIDWEST

Junior Camp

June 24-July 6 (ages 8-12)
Camp Alexander Mack
Milford, Indiana (between South Bend and
Ft. Wayne)
Cost: \$500.00

Teen Camp

August 3-10 (ages 13-17)
Camp Crosley
North Webster, Indiana (between South
Bend and Ft. Wayne)
Cost: \$275.00

Camp director: Melissa "Bronx" Moskowitz
(847) 679-2680 OR
campgilgalmw@aol.com

EAST

Junior Camp

June 29-July 12 (ages 8-12)
Camp Pinnacle
Voorheesville, New York (near
Albany)
Cost: \$500.00

Teen Camp

July 13-19 (ages 13-15)
Camp Pinnacle
Voorheesville, New York
(near Albany)
Cost: \$275.00

Adventure Camp

August 10-16 (ages 16-18)
Northeast coast adventure - sea kayaking,
surfing and fun
Begins and ends in New York City
Cost: \$275.00

Camp director: Josh "Speedy" Sofaer
(212) 683-7077 OR JASof@aol.com



Halutzim

Dates: July 20-Aug 2
Ages: 16-18
Location: New York City
Contact: Josh Sofaer
109 E. 31st St. NY, NY 10016.
(212) 683-7077,
jasof@aol.com

NYC Summer Witnessing Campaign

Campaign Training Dates - Sunday,
June 15 till Saturday, June 28.
Campaign Dates - Monday, June 30
till Saturday, July 26.
Location - Training takes place in
Chicago at Moody Bible Institute. The
campaign is in New York City.
Who to contact:
Dan Sered, DSered@aol.com
or Ministry at Large office,
(415) 864-2600, MAL60@aol.com



(continued from page 7) response to his father's shortcomings in ways that may prove helpful to others whose fathers were or are "larger than life." Barg recognizes that his father is a human being, someone capable of great success and failure. His father was a real man, full of inescapable paradox. The author's words burrowed deep into the heart of this reader. The story of Charles Barg's remarkable healing gives glorious honor to the hand of our Creator.

In *Between Two Fathers* Charles Barg demonstrates authenticity, adept storytelling and 3-D depth of character. This is a story to captivate the reader, a lesson of forgiveness to heal the wounded, and a path to Y'shua for those still living in a world between two fathers.

Jim Stamberg is the church relations coordinator in the Chicago branch of Jews for Jesus.

