

Dear Friends,

Here we are in Zihron Ya'akov, a beautiful and quaint town. Our first two weeks here have been cold and rainy. The rain should stop February 5! :) We have been able to visit Israeli friends, Messianic Jews.

Last Thursday we joined a bus load of folks from a Messianic Congregation outside of Haifa. We traveled to a Jewish Kibbutz (communal settlement) just 4 kilometers north of Gaza. It was not attacked on 7 October, but the people fled. This congregation, Kehilat HaKarmel, and our friends who are members, invited us to join them for a day of picking oranges from the kibbutz orange groves. The congregation had been there several weeks before to pick grapefruit. They are choosing the same kibbutz in order to build a relationship. There was much laughter and banter as we picked, even though the "booms" from Israeli artillery firing into Gaza and machine gun fire in the distance could be heard. The congregation had checked with authorities regarding the safety of the trip. During one alarm, we were told to hit the ground and cover our heads. Most of us laughed and said "This is as far as I can get down and someone may have to help me up!" :) The alarm turned out to be false. This congregation, along with many others, is helping the struggling Israeli farmers, and others in need.

The congregational leadership is making preparations in case the war intensifies in the north of Israel. They are planning a communication system, homes prepared for evacuees, special considerations for the elderly, etc.

Yesterday, we met friends at Caesarea. Yes, we are in a country where you can have coffee amid centuries-old ruins! He is a tour guide, so he doesn't have work during this war. His wife heads a branch of a believing counseling center. Israeli counselors, as well as those coming from other countries, are dealing with types of trauma they have not dealt with before.

We are hearing of believing organizations able to offer preparatory courses for entrance into the Israeli army *with approval by the government*. This is something new to us, and is another indication of Messianic believers being considered mainstream, in addition to providing military instruction by believers. These courses are 9-10 months long. These particular programs

are for the Messianic community, but other high school graduates can enroll. They are an avenue to build up the faith of these students before their army experience, as well as introduce faith to those not yet believers.

Another interesting development is a kibbutz on the border with Gaza is installing huge and powerful speakers in hope that some of the hostages can hear they are not forgotten.

Thank you for your continued prayers. The Israelis we have met are visibly appreciative of the Christian support. Please pray God will make a way for the hostages, as well as Israel, when there seems to be no way. At least, countries are finally believing the evidence proving UNRWA has aided and abetted Hamas in Gaza. Please pray truth about this situation will be advanced.

Above all, we pray that God's Glory in Yeshua will be revealed to repentant hearts and the Body of Messiah will stand humbly before their God for the sake of their brothers and sisters. During this war time, many groups of soldiers and civilians are singing the song, "I Believe."

"I believe with complete faith in the coming of the Messiah.  
And, even though he may tarry, I will wait for him."

We pray the Holy Spirit will answer those with open hearts and reveal the truth of Messiah Yeshua.

Many blessings on you all,

Pat and Judy