

# The Bible Society in Israel



Standing in the gap

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## **Dear Friends and Partners in the Lord,**

The Word of God challenges us to be the ones who stand in the gap. Standing in the gap, however, is not a passive but rather an active responsibility. It requires being active in prayer and intercession with obedience and diligence to do the will of God. It is about putting our faith into action and calling upon the Lord to extend His mercy and grace upon the land, fully trusting that He will fulfill all His promises, according to His eternal Word. Like Calev Ben Yefuneh and Joshua Bin-Noon, **through faith, we too can look at what seems impossible to us as victories in the Lord.**

This is what the leaders of The Bible Society in Israel, The Palestinian Bible Society and the Arab Israeli Bible Society – Jews and Arabs, experienced during the last war between Gaza and the South of Israel. We knew that although our peoples were at war, we were at peace as brothers and sisters united through Christ. We needed and wanted to stand in the gap! We met and prayed, asking the Lord to guide and show us how together we could be His witnesses and testimony and how to share the power of Christ that unites us – even during a time of war. Being few, we knew that it was not about what we could do but what the Lord can do through us. We would like to share some of the activities and engagements that the Lord guided us to do together.

Precious and powerful was a joint visit by Jewish and Arab believers to wounded Israeli soldiers. How powerful it was when a Palestinian brother, as the war was raging, gave flowers to the family of a critically injured soldier and shared his love for the Jewish and Palestinian nations and prayed for them to find the Messiah through whom there is true peace. This was continued by the Jewish Christian brother whose son was positioned in Gaza at the time. He shared his prayers for both peoples and explained how we - Arabs and Jews – can be united in Christ. The medical staff, family and friends of the wounded soldier were in tears. His father said to the Palestinian Christian brother – “Son, this is the way we should all live.”



*Palestinian member of Bible Society leadership team shares with Israeli class in Southern Israel*

Some of our activities in the South of Israel are ongoing. In this sadly continuous conflict and hostile situation, there are many traumatized children, elderly people and needy families. We work with other organizations and institutions in trauma and humanitarian relief activities. Our work together is a testimony by itself – that cannot be ignored. It is a joy to see the smiles on the faces of kids and the elderly, and we pray for their full healing – body, soul and spirit – through our standing in the gap – because the Lord can do it.

## Standing in the Gap – Outreach in South of Israel with...the Messiah in Psalms

Another initiative of the **standing in the gap** was the production and distribution of a messianic edition of the book of Psalms (“Messianic Psalms”). In this edition, selected verses that are pointing to and fulfilled in the Messiah are marked red.

It is amazing to see how many bold prophecies about the Messiah are in the book of Psalms. And since the book of Psalms is beloved by Jews overall, especially the Orthodox, we wanted to let the Lord open their eyes and heart through these beautiful Messianic verses, to find the true source of peace, hope and salvation.



We traveled to the South of Israel for outreach. Most of the people we encountered were receptive. In one instance, an Orthodox man who had received the book ten minutes earlier, approached us and said, “You must be talking about Yeshua.” We told him, “Yes, many of the Psalms speak about the Messiah and we believe that Yeshua is the Messiah of the Bible, the Messiah about whom the book of Psalms and the rest of the Bible points to.” His reaction was: “Don’t you think you have gone too far? How can you use this sacred Jewish book to point to Yeshua?.” We showed him more verses from the Old Testament about the Messiah – all fulfilled in Yeshua, and told him that his reaction was right in line with what is written in Isaiah 53: “Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”. He was so surprised about all the prophecies in the Psalms and in the Old Testament and how they fit perfectly with the story of Yeshua. After ten minutes of talking he said, “It’s taken us generations to reach the wrong understanding, it will probably take us generations to get back to the right understanding.” Our answer was: “It took you only ten minutes to realize and understand, God can do that for anyone.”



At another point, we placed a stack of books on a bench so that people could help themselves to them. Within minutes, all the books had been taken and some people who didn’t get one came up to ask for a copy.

To date, thousands of copies have been distributed – mainly in the South of Israel. Please pray that the Lord will use this edition of the Messianic Psalms to open the eyes and the hearts of those who receive them. You are also welcome to order them from us and share with others.

Another initiative of the Standing in the Gap is the formation of a media centre in the book store and Bible exhibition in Jerusalem as well as parallel ones in West Bank areas populated with Palestinians. In this media centre we plan to show movies about our faith and about the Word of God as well as short movies of testimonies – of both Jews and Arabs who found their savior and peace in the Messiah. We trust it can be a strong tool in the hands of the Lord. **Please pray for this project which is in progress.**

## Loud and Clear - taking IN the Word of God

### *Dramatized audio of the Hebrew New Testament*

If a photograph of our spiritual body could be taken, what would it look like? a strong, healthy and upright or a weak, sick and bent body?

“The Bread of Life” is indeed a good way to illustrate the crucial nature of the Word of God for our spiritual body. We must get food INTO our body and digest it so it can provide us with nourishment and energy, whether we are children, youth, adults or elderly people. However, un-like with the physical bread, it is a challenge for many of us to continually nurture and maintain our spiritual body with a substantial and sufficient supply of the “bread of life” the Word of God. For some, especially the elderly, it could be due to visual impairment. For parents during the busy years of raising a family the



challenge can be great. All of us also were (recently) children and know that reading and especially understanding the Word of God can be a hard task at a young age.

It is therefore a joy and a blessing to report that together with FCBH we have finished producing a complete, dramatized audio recording of the New Testament in Modern Hebrew. Much prayer, effort and focus were invested to produce a beautiful, clear and precise reading, combined with background music and sound effects. The background music and effects do not overpower the reading but rather help it come alive. You can hear the joy of Mary praising God, Jesus as a child in the temple, the mocking of Jesus by the Roman soldiers, the pain of Christ on the cross, Paul's heart's desire for his kinsmen and even the rooster's call just after Peter's denial of Christ. Although it is altogether more than twenty hours in length, we produced it on a single CD in high quality MP3 format.

We were glad to already receive strongly positive feedbacks. A most precious one was from a young child who said that he now listens to the Word of God every evening and enjoys it so much. "I already reached the Gospel of ...", "It is beautiful, I can now listen to the Word of God while driving" or "it is a time of praise and worship" are common responses.



A main goal is to use this recording for outreach. We know from experience that many of the young people we offer a Bible to simply say that they hardly read any books (yes, even amongst the people of the book...). We trust the Word of God which says that 'faith comes by hearing' (Rom 10:17). **We prayerfully ask your support and partnership to make this beautiful and inspired recording of the New Testament available for outreach in Israel. Your donation of 10 Euro will subsidize the cost and enable us to bless someone's life with the powerful and penetrating Word of God.**

Another benefit of the audio recording is the option to listen while traveling (by car, bus, train, or walking), making good use of the time. We also recognize its benefits for Bible scholars and those who simply enjoy hearing the Word of God in Hebrew. We welcome you to contact us for orders.

**May the Lord use this beautiful recording of His Word to strengthen, build up and nurture His body, to His glory.**

## **Everyday Miracles – A Testimony from our engagements at the Bookstores**

It seemed like the end of a routine day, when a young Ultra Orthodox Jew entered the shop. I approached him and asked if I could help. He said he was looking for books that defend Christianity and claimed he was searching for the truth. "So far," he said, "both my religion and yours look to me equally false". "How can we rely on the New Testament? Maybe somebody wrote it centuries after the real events took place". At that point the Bible Society's small museum, where we have copies of fragments that were found at Qumran came to my aid. I showed him the ones that contained a text similar to what is also found in the New Testament (Gospel of Mark and Paul's first letter to Timothy) and are dated to even before the destruction of the 2nd temple. I noticed that he was not ready for an open dialogue as he kept saying "Yeah, I know what your answer is going to be for that." It was nearly closing time, so I told him that I had to go. I thought that that was the end of it, but the next morning he came back. This time, one of his first questions was, "How is your faith expressed in daily life? What do you have to do?" He was obviously thinking in terms of works, while the Christian faith is centered on a daily living relationship with the Lord, a point I tried to explain.

"But you don't really believe all that, do you?" he said. We talked about the resurrection of Christ and why I believe it is true and that only through Yeshua can we be saved – regardless of who we are. He found it hard to grasp that according to the Bible, nobody will enter the kingdom of heaven without the blood of the Messiah. "What



about a person who heard the gospel but was not convinced?" he asked. I told him that until one realizes that his works are unable to save him and until he has a personal encounter with God, he will not be convinced. "I had an encounter like that as a young man" I told him. "I don't believe the gospel of Yeshua only because of the proofs, facts and prophecies. I believe because I know him personally in my daily life". "With that," he replied "I cannot argue." **Please pray that the Lord will turn our engagements into miracles in people's lives.**

### **Reaching the World...in South Tel Aviv**

The needs and micro-cultures of migrants and refugees are as complex as the conflicts and situations they are running from. We may be powerless to change the conflicts between Eritrea and Ethiopia, or South Sudan and North Sudan, but when these refugees come to our own towns, we have an opportunity to make a difference. We can share God's love and Word with these people who come from some of the most impossible situations in our world.

The old central bus station is located in one of the spiritually darkest areas of Tel Aviv. On Saturdays it turns into a packed "flea-market" with migrants, refugees and Israelis (Jews and Arabs) who bring a whole range of miscellaneous items to sell. After dark it becomes a red light district and a center for drug dealing.



On a recent Saturday, our team arrived at the bus station to distribute literature and interact with the people. We found a shady spot, set our boxes on the ground and started to build our table. Before we managed to put the books on the table people began snatching them from the boxes. We told them that we had Bibles for everyone. We handed out Bibles in Amharic, Arabic, English, Russian, Hebrew, and Tagalog. Many also received a copy of the Jesus movie in their own language.

A group of Filipinos passed by and we offered them the Daily Bread with a New Testament. They walked away looking angry, thinking we wanted to sell them. A short time later we noticed that the same Filipino group was watching us from afar. One of the girls came up and asked, "Are you really giving out Bibles for free?" "Yes, we are," we told her. She called her friends to come to the table. One of the girls whispered to us that she had never read the Bible before. We were glad to offer her Scriptures in Tagalog. A big smile spread across her face and we told her that her smile paid for the books. The people were open and we had lots of good conversations sharing the Gospel. One person asked if we would come every week, saying, "You are doing a good job, people need to hear your message."

**Testimony of the Love of Christ to the Refugees in Israel:** In addition to giving the Word of God, we are currently also giving food supplements to about 600 families monthly. There are refugees who are seeking food for the soul as well. Recently a Muslim requested the "Injiil" (Arabic term for the gospel). We pray that they will experience God's love and Word and know true and eternal satisfaction.

**May the Lord bless you and use this update to encourage you to pray and support our ministry for His glory. Would you prayerfully consider supporting The Bible Society on a monthly basis?**

***Victor Kalisher and the Staff of The Bible Society in Israel***

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