MJAA Since 1927
Messianic Jewish Alliance of Australia

Newsletter
9 May 2024

From the President's Pen
by David Isaacson

Shalom! We have recently passed through the seasons of Pesach and Purim, both festivals commemorating the deliverance of the Jewish people from destruction. This year these holidays were made all the more sombre as they fell in the shadow of the atrocities committed against Israel on 7 October 2023. The dramatic event of Iran's attack on Israel on 13 April was yet another reminder of the murderous intent of the extremist Islamic regime against God's chosen people in the land He gave to Israel, but also of God's protection and deliverance.

Yom Ha'Shoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, which occurred just a few days ago, also brought home the intensity of the hatred against Israel that reached a boiling point in Europe in the 1930s-40s with the destruction of 6 million Jews. Has this hatred ever gone away, or has it only been suppressed for periods of time, or diluted in nations that have democratic laws? A more important question is will it ever go away?

We are pleased to include two articles in this edition. Terry Brooks, the President of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of New Zealand, who is a descendant of a Latvian rabbi, writes poignantly about his visit "home" to Latvia, which also happens to be where my grandfather came from.

Annemarie Ball also writes beautifully about a sunset vigil held in Melbourne for the Hamas hostages, which she and her husband Damien attended last month. Annemarie and Damien are both passionate about Israel and have had longstanding involvement in the Messianic movement.

I am also reminded at Yom Ha'Shoah of my own family history. As a child in South Africa, I met a great uncle who had moved to the US after WW2 and was visiting our family. He lost his wife and two children in the Holocaust. When I asked my father about them, the only answer I received was "they perished". Knowing the history of Lativia during the Second World War with the Nazi occupation, horrific images come to mind with those two words.

We welcome the news that the Never Again is Now rally will take place in Melbourne on the 19th of May. Please contact us if you would like to participate or find out more information.

Let us keep on praying and interceding for Israel for the hostages to be set free and for all people, whether Jewish or gentile, to come to a knowledge and experience of salvation through Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah.

From New Zealand to The Baltics

I am the descendant of a rabbi who lived in a city called Liepaja located on the Baltic sea in Latvia. Some Jewish family members from the Baltic region and Prussia migrated to Melbourne, Australia and then on to New Zealand.

Websites provide a wealth of information of the history of the Second World War in the Baltic region. Actual footage of Nazi killing squads on YouTube reveals the fate of thousands of Jewish people at Skede beach near Liepaja. Out of approximately 7,000 Jews in that city, only 30 of the community survived the killings.

Over a period of time and after considerable research and learning much about recent history, I began to experience a desire to travel to the area. Many years ago, through some amazing experiences, the Lord drew me back to my Jewish heritage. This resulted in an overwhelming sense of His great love for His Jewish people. I had a strong sense of His grief over the countless atrocities performed against them. My wife, Lyn, and I made contact through Chosen People Ministries in the region who arranged speaking engagements in churches, a Messianic congregation in Riga, and for an interpreter. They also had a relationship with the Jewish community in Liepaja where some family members originated. This Jewish community would have been Orthodox many years ago, but are now Lubavitch Chabad. Our daughter gave me a plaque displaying a Scripture of encouragement, found in 1 Cor. 15: 58. The heading read: DAD… “Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord. Because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain”. We were stepping very much into the unknown.

Arriving in Finland for the initial part of the journey we were made very welcome by a church pastor and his wife. After a few days we flew to Latvia. We experienced quite a culture shock as we were driven to our apartment that was to be our temporary home for the next few weeks. The buildings would have been there for many years, some appearing rather ancient. The scene was reminiscent of streets and buildings portrayed in films of Second World War era Europe. Some streets were cobbled and I couldn’t help thinking Nazi soldiers’ boots would have marched on the very cobblestones we were being driven on.

We also visited Lithuania and Estonia. My parents befriended a family from Estonia who had moved to New Zealand after the war. The wife of the couple had witnessed her father being shot outside their home on the street by the Nazis. The Baltics have a rather sinister history of antisemitism.

In some towns, locals, including the police, had participated in the rounding up of Jews for execution. We met a man in a Riga Messianic congregation who is a Holocaust survivor. As a very young child he and his mother had been placed on a train with other Jews with the intention to exterminate them. Some sort of explosion occurred that stopped the train, thereby damaging it. The mother and child escaped from the train and hid in the forest.

When speaking in churches I endeavoured to emphasise that the church is part of Israel and the Lord has a plan for both. The language spoken in churches and Jewish congregations was either Russian or Latvian. Our main interpreter spoke Russian, and on occasion we needed translation into Latvian. Tensions exist between Latvian and Russian populations.

There was one particular church congregation we visited where the people were welcoming, however the pastor asked our interpreter to tell me to remove my kippah. They were very strict with regard to men wearing 'hats' in church. I removed my kippah, but was surprised to learn later that they would like to establish a congregation in Israel to witness to Jewish people. Their hearts were in the right place, but there would have been much to learn about cultural ways. Churches we visited to speak in Finland and Latvia were very warm and welcoming. Their prayer times were amazing. When the announcement was made for people in the congregation to pray, everyone prayed their own prayer with full enthusiasm. One church that we visited for the first time provided a lunch that included bacon or pork, which we discreetly avoided.

However, someone must have noticed. The next time we went back, the meal following the service had no bacon or pork. We were very touched they had gone to so much trouble not to offend us. In that church we met a pastor visiting from Russia who had some amazing accounts of church life in that country. The distance from Riga to Liepaja is about 200kms.

The Jewish community were expecting us and were very keen to meet a descendant of a rabbi from the community. Some of the leaders met with us and showed us their museum which included memories of the Holocaust. I showed them documents of my family who had lived there which they photocopied for their museum records. We were driven out to Skede beach where the killings had occurred during the war. A very large menorah had been constructed out of stones. It was lying prone on the ground.

We went there for a second visit and were invited to their Shabbat service. Lyn sat separately with the women and our lady interpreter sat near me but close to the women's area. The drash (sermon) was based on the Torah.

They do not read from the whole Tanach (Old Testament), but only the Torah contained in the first five books of Moses. It became clear from discussions that fear of antisemitism still exists in their community.

Towards the end of the service a man approached our interpreter and asked if I would like the honor of speaking. I was completely unprepared but decided to speak briefly on the Shema. I recited the Shema in Hebrew and then spoke through the interpreter on the importance of the Word and letting it speak to our hearts. The message was well received with lots of smiles and hugs and followed by a delicious lunch.

I still remember these people in prayer, asking that they will learn of Yeshua and His love for them. Our journey was an incredible experience. The churches we visited seemed supportive of the Jewish people. I enjoyed drawing on Scripture in an endeavour to encourage them to continue in support of the Jewish populations.

Terry Brooks.

Messianic Congregation, Riga

Meeting with Jewish leaders in Leipaja

Riga City

We Carry Their Light - a sunset vigil marking 6 months since October 7
by Annemarie Ball

One of our Jewish friends told us about a sunset vigil that was to be held on Sunday evening 7 April. The event was to mark six months since the massacres in Israel on October 7. Although we are not Jewish, we share in the grief of the Jewish community both here and in Israel. The vigil gave us an opportunity to express our grief and outrage on behalf of the hostages still held in Gaza and to refresh the public awareness of their plight so that we may be a voice for those who are voiceless or whose voices are not being heard.

The vigil, aptly named “We Carry Their Light”, had been organised by a small group of Jewish women who have formed an online organisation and grassroots community called J-United. I discovered that they have also organised other events that raise awareness, such as the Red Cross Protest in the Bourke Street Mall, a Walk For Unity, a Hostage installation and an International Women’s Day protest. They did a wonderful job in organising this peaceful gathering that we attended.

The vigil was held in O’Donnell Gardens, St Kilda, next to Luna Park. It was a beautiful crisp sunny autumn afternoon and as I looked up at the blue sky dotted with a few clouds here and there, amongst tropical palm trees, I was also conscious that only meters away from us families were noisily enjoying themselves on the various rides in the amusement park.

Being aware of why we had come to this vigil for the hostages, I reflected on how we are free to enjoy so many outdoor activities, outings to cafes and restaurants and, most importantly, being with our family and friends. There are so many things in our world to distract us and make it easy for us to forget about the hostages. But my thoughts went back to the darkness of the tunnels in Gaza and the despair the hostages would be experiencing. I also thought about the families of these men, women, and children, who are in torment every day and every night as they long for them to come home. We know that there has been a campaign to tear down posters in support of hostages, but even if every poster with their faces and names is torn down, the world must not be allowed to forget these hostages. And we must remember their families and the unimaginable pain they are going through.

I can’t remember the names of the beautiful people who spoke at the rally, yet I will never forget them: the rabbi who recited Israel’s National Anthem, Hatikvah – the Hope, both in Hebrew and English, the young woman who shared about her recent trip to Israel, and the young survivor of the October 7 massacre who told us that she had survived by praying all the prayers she had learnt by heart and by lying still under a bed for 16 hours, until she was rescued by the IDF!

As I looked at the peaceful crowd that had gathered in this park holding Israeli or Australian flags and many signs demanding “Bring them home”, I thought what a privilege it was to stand on this grassy hill together with Jewish brothers and sisters, holding up a poster of one of a hostages, to show that I care and that it is also important to me that the world is reminded of the hostages held by Hamas terrorists.

As the sun disappeared and the sky grew darker, we held our posters up high together with little battery lights and phone torches against the darkness. And we prayed and sang Am Israel Chai.

Dr Ashley Crane - Ministry Tour, WA

Dr Ashley Crane has recently completed two ministry tours to WA. Please contact Ashley if you would like him to do a seminar on what is happening in Israel, to preach at your congregation or to lead a Passover Seder (wherever you are located). You are sure to be blessed by Ashley’s scholarship, scriptural and historical insights, and stories about his regular work as a guide at the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem.
ashley.crane@gmail.com

Planned MJAA Conference 2024

We have started planning for the 2024 MJAA conference which will be held toward the end of the year. We are still confirming venues, dates and speakers. This is a heads-up to look forward to a feast of fellowship, teaching, prayer, worship and Israeli dance.

Weekly Prayer Meetings, Tuesdays @5.30pm (Melb. time)

Our weekly online prayer and fellowship meeting continues to thrive and we have been blessed to meet with people from across Australia, Thailand, New Zealand, UK, Israel and Ghana to pray and intercede for Israel and for the needs and growth of the MJAA in Australia.

Over the next few weeks we are planning to expand the prayer meeting by 15 minutes (5.15pm start) to introduce a teaching (drash) on the weekly Torah portion, haftarah (prophets) and Brit Chadashah (New Testament).

This expanded time of fellowship and prayer will enable members and friends of the MJAA who are not close to a Messianic congregation to participate in live teaching and enjoy meeting others from around Australia and the world. We’ll notify you when this begins.

MJAA Academy

Over the next month or two we will be launching the MJAA Academy, which will be a web portal with online teaching and training on Messianic topics of interest. Thanks for your patience as we work to set up policies as well as the technical and administrative aspects of the academy.

Special Online Guests from Israel

It was good to have special guests Igal Abir and Yohanan Stanfield joining our prayer meeting from Israel recently. Let's pray for encouragement, health and blessing for Igal and Yohanan's families and the people of the Modi'in Messianic congregation. Yohanan's daughter has just started service in the IDF, so let's keep her in prayer too.

There are many excellent sources of information about Israel, evangelism and the Jewish people.

Here are some recommendations for staying up to date and increasing your knowledge:

- oneforisrael.org (evangelism)
- https://www.youtube.com/c/TBNIsrael (daily war update by Yair Pinto, TBN)
- timesofisrael.com (news)
- netivyah.org (congregation and humanitarian aid)
- https://jewishassociation.org.au/ (Jewish news)
- https://firmisrael.org/local-partners/reach-initiative-international/

Donate to the MJAA

Thank you to all of you who support the work of the MJAA. We are a volunteer organisation and rely on membership fees and donations to grow.

Will you consider supporting the MJAA so we may expand our ministry?

You can donate via our website at **mjaa.org.au/payments**

New Messianic Fellowship in Melbourne

תקות ח שלום
TIKVAT SHALOM

This group has been meeting in Melbourne for about two years under the temporary name of 'Havdalah', the name of the traditional post-Shabbat service. The leadership team has adopted the official name of **Tikvat Shalom** as they seek to become more permanently established**.** Please pray for the Lord to be "mighty in our midst" (Zeph. 3:17) in fellowship and sharing the gospel with Jewish people.

Tikvat Shalom held a Pesach Seder in Melbourne for about 70 people, most of whom had not attended a Seder before. Ashley Crane led the service, bringing to life the story of redemption of Israel from Egypt as well as the relevance of Passover to believers in Yeshua, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Message from Joseph Shulam, Netivya, Jerusalem

Joseph Shulam's from Netivya International in Jerusalem, writes:

"For us as disciples of Yeshua, the anti-Jewish hate that comes from Christians is a mark of shame and exposition of the bankruptcy of some Christian denominations and institutions. It should be clear ... that you can't say that you love Jesus and hate Jews. Because if you love Jesus, you must also love those whom He loves. He is the King of the Jews! There is no place in the whole of God's creation to hate any race, nation, or person, but how much more to hate the very nation and race of people who give us the Bible, the whole Bible, and our Messiah Yeshua of Nazareth."

Mosaic Urn by Helen Burman.

This art work expresses the core event of our faith in Yeshua the Messiah: His resurrection from the dead. It is represented here by an empty cross and empty grave. The dove represents the Holy Spirit who, as part of the Godhead, writes the New Covenant on our hearts when we come to Yeshua in faith. Looking into the empty space, we see that "He is not here, He is risen" (Matt. 28:6). This was God's promise through Psalm 16:8-11, where He would not "let His holy one (Yeshua) see corruption."

Resurrection is frequently referenced in the Hebrew scriptures. In 1 Kings 17:17-24 Elijah raised the son of the widow of Zarephath. In 2 Kings 4:18-20 Elijah raised the dead son of the Shunamite woman to life. We see from both Hebrew scriptures and their fulfillment in the New Covenant that resurrection is part of our destiny and one day "..many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2-3). Let us turn to Him in faith to receive the promise of salvation and eternal life through Yeshua.