

14 May 2025 will mark the day of Israel's 77th year of independence after being re-established in its ancient homeland. "Am Yisrael Chai!"



From the President's Pen by David Isaacson

Shalom and welcome, especially to our new members and friends.

We've had a busy couple of months, first with the Towards Jerusalem Council 2 conference in Sydney from 5-7 March (see article on page 2), followed by Purim, then the Passover holiday season, which contains 3 festivals: Unleavened Bread (chag ha'matzot), Passover and First Fruits (yom ha'bikkurim), each one with Messianic significance.

It is always a joy to celebrate the the Biblical feasts and reflect on God's eternal covenant with Israel. This includes His protection of His people, and His provision of a Messiah and Saviour for the world through Yeshua, who paid the price with His own blood for us to obtain righteousness before God.

Our weekly study and fellowship meeting continues on Tuesdays from 5.00-6.00pm (Syd/Mel) with a Hebrew class, Torah study led mostly by Dr Ashley Crane, and our prayer and intercession meeting. Do consider joining for a time of connection and fellowship, as well as a deep dive into Ashley's insightful and inspiring teaching.

Much prayer is needed with the relatively comfortable lifestyle enjoyed in Australia being dismantled as Islamic extremism takes root. Is Australia's democracy strong enough to withstand this rising tide? So far, there are not many hopeful indicators that this is the case.

The eyes of the world remain fixed on Israel and the Middle East, with the impasse in hostage negotiations causing much distress and concern. The IDF's battle to dislodge Hamas from Gaza continues, with ongoing, fierce fighting and destruction of the terrorist organisation's infrastructure, materiel and ordnance.

Here in Australia a mighty battle of

Newsletter

2 May 2025

narratives continues in the political sphere, on social media platforms and at street level, with Iranian-funded Islamist extremists spewing out hatred and denying Israel's right to its God-given ancient homeland.

Anti-Israel protests and chants continue on a weekly basis, with Zionist supporters accused of being terrorists and absurd accusations of Jews being a "death cult". Sadly, many believe these slogans and even Christians entertain doubts about Israel's rights to its own land. Some sit on the political fence, but others swallow the poisonous antisemitic narratives. The reality is that every accusation directed towards Israel and the Jewish people applies to the extremists themselves, including genocidal intent towards Israel and murder of their own people through using them as human shields.

In Africa, Islamists are slaughtering Christians regularly, yet the world, and for the most part even the church, remains silent as this continues. Almost 200 Christians were murdered over the past two months. The pattern shows a trend that the world and the church would do well to wake up to. It is that Israel's war is really against Iran's mastermind plan to establish a worldwide Islamic caliphate, which will not stop with Israel, but extend to Christians and the rest of the world.

Are we reading the times correctly? How long will life in Australia be sustainable for Jews and Christians? Or is it just alarmist to think that there could be a repeat of the *kristallnacht* event, marking a point of no return for the Jewish community's survival here? With the global shift in negative attitudes towards Israel, one may justifiably feel that it is the end of a "golden era" for the Jewish people worldwide.

As believers in Yeshua we can take courage as we fix our eyes on Him as our hope, awaiting His promised return. Yet we also keep our eyes on the prophecies of God's calling Israel back to the land, knowing that there are three things Israel will never have: abandonment by God, a fear of enemies and another place to go.



Report on Towards Jerusalem Council 2 Conference: 5-7 March 2025

TJC2 is a worldwide movement of reconciliation between Jewish and Gentile believers. It was started by Texan Messianic Rabbi Marty Waldman and has gained considerable traction in Christian communities globally with the recognition that Jewish and Gentile believers in Yeshua have both been grafted back into the olive tree root of God's covenants with Israel, as plainly stated (but mostly ignored by churches) in the book of Romans chapters 9-11.

The TJC2 movement is open to all Christians who acknowledge that Jews who believe in Jesus don't have to become "gentilised" in the church or "sanitised" of their Jewish identity to believe in Jesus. This is in contrast with the first Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, where the question of the conditions under which gentiles would be allowed to believe in the Jewish Messiah was debated. It is called "Towards" Jerusalem Council 2 because much work needs to be done to prepare the church for embracing its Jewish brothers and sisters in Yeshua based on a return to the Biblical mandate of unity, or being "one new man" in Messiah. Effectively, the movement represents an attempt to set the record straight about this relationship and the hope is that it will culminate in Jerusalem Council 2.

Ironically, mainline churches have had a large uptake in TJC2, including Catholics and Lutherans, who admit that their treatment of Jews through the ages has not been based on a Scriptural understanding. Much repentance has followed for the terrible acts committed against the Jewish people by churches throughout history. While this positive move towards reconciliation prevails in mainline churches, other protestant and evangelical denominations often draw a blank when the issue of the church's relationship with Israel and Messianic believers in Yeshua is raised. Sadly, history tells the story not only of the world's nations rejecting the Jews, but of their expulsion from the Christian pulpit via the insidious doctrine of replacement theology, which is strongly renounced by the TJC2 movement.

Ashley and I represented the MJAA and were honoured to be able to lead the worship music for the event, which was the launching the TJC2 in Australia. The conference consisted of three days of intensive presentations, discussions and praying together for reconciliation. It ended with Ashley presenting a "taste of Passover" teaching on the fulfilment of the Messianic promise of redemption through Yeshua as reflected in the seder, which is the origin of the Eucharist, Communion, or the Lord's Supper as it is variously called.

Johannes Fichtenbauer (Vienna) was the main speaker, with Benny Friedman (Jerusalem) and Pavol Strezo (Slovakia) sharing about their experiences and work in advancing the movement in Israel and Europe respectively. TJC2 founder Rabbi Marty Waldman and also Dan Juster shared messages of encouragement via video. All of the recordings of presentations will be available on video shortly and are highly recommended.

Johannes spoke openly and powerfully of his "second conversion" to a love for Israel and the Jewish people. He tells of how he was saved in an evangelical church, yet sensed God's call back into the Catholic Church. Even after being active in Christian ministry for over 20 years, he realised that he was still possessed by a deep hatred for the Jews, an inheritance from his grandfather who was largely instrumental in raising him. His father, too, had been a Nazi, and was offered the role of administering the finances for the Final Solution in his area of Austria. Johannes's mother, a Catholic, threatened to divorce his father if he took the role. His father rejected the "offer" and paid the price by being sent to the Russian front lines.

It was when Johannes visited a concentration camp, well after the war, that God moved in his heart to deliver him of the demonic hatred, as he expresses it, he had carried for so long. Johannes's book, "The Mystery of the Olive Tree" tells the story of both his testimony of God's work in his heart to take away hatred for Israel, as well as his tireless work to bring an awakening to the Catholic church about God's plan for the unity of Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus.

It was a blessing to meet Johannes, Beni and Pavol and we look forward to remaining in contact. The conference was a great point of contact for learning about TJC2, as well as connecting with other church leaders and Messianic ministries.

The Deeper Message of Passover: "Don't Let

The Haggadah is the retelling of the ancient story of God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The sacrificial lamb is central to the narrative, where its blood was applied to the lintel and doorpost of the Israelites' houses. The angel of death, on seeing the blood, would "pass over" and death would not enter the house. The sacrificial lamb paid the redemption price for the family to avoid death.

The blood was the only way of deliverance from death. By implication, any Israelite household that did not apply the blood to the door according to instructions would not have this protection. For that family, the lamb's death would have been in vain and they would have suffered the tragedy of loss of firstborn males, whether children or animals.

Ashley brought this narrative to life through recounting a powerful testimony that he heard personally from a Holocaust survivor whom he had met in the USA and who had come to faith in Jesus as her Messiah.

Rose was a 14 year old child when she was transported to a Nazi concentration camp with her family. On arrival at the camp, the Nazi soldiers were sorting people into groups. Rose was placed in a group to one side and noticed an altercation between an elderly woman who she didn't know and a guard in another group. The argument went on heatedly for some time, during which the woman pointed directly at Rose. Eventually the guard and the elderly came over to Rose. The guard said, "This woman has agreed to take your place. You are free to go!" Rose could not believe it and said, "Why would you do this for me." The woman replied, "I have lived my life, but you are starting yours."

Rose, still dumbfounded by this remarkable offer of sacrifice, said, "I can't let you suffer and die while I go free." The woman said, "If you do not take this offer, my death will be in vain. Go!"

Rose took the offer and while her whole family perished, she went free and later escaped to America. She carried much bitterness in her heart towards the Nazis and the suffering they had caused, so felt very estranged from God.

It was only when Rose heard the gospel message of how Jesus had paid the price for sin by dying in her place that the voice of the woman who'd saved her life echoed back to her, saying, "Don't let my death be in vain."



"Passover to Freedom: Seder at Tikvat Shalom Messianic Congregation led by Dr Ashley Crane

ABOUT THE MJAA

The Messianic Jewish Alliance of Australia (MJAA) is an individual membership association, run by volunteers. We are part of the International Messianic Jewish Alliance (IMJA) that has chapters in 16 countries.

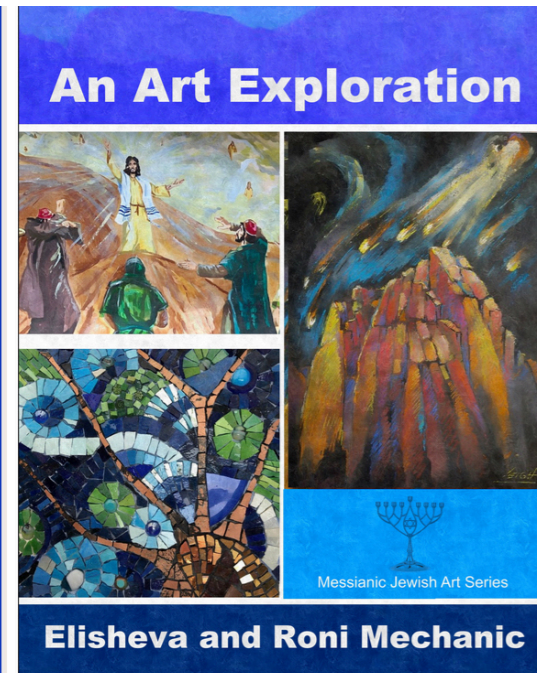
We welcome applications for membership from Messianic Jewish and Gentile believers in Yeshua who have a vision for connecting, supporting one another and being a witness of salvation through Yeshua's atoning sacrifice to the Jewish community.

We also welcome applications from ministries for the purposes of mutual promotion via each other's website, newsletter and other social media channels: mjaa.org.au/resources

The MJAA Annual Conference will be held in Melbourne on 29 Nov. 2025 - more information to follow via future newsletters and email messages.

New Books by Elisheva and F

Elisheva and Roni are prolific Christian and Messianic writers. You may be familiar with some of their books from previous promotions we have done. In particular, her beautifully written and presented book "Messianic Jewish Art: A New Perspective" makes a significant contribution to the Messianic Movement by beginning the process of defining Messianic Jewish Art as a genre in its own right. Elisheva and Roni serve with the British Messianic Jewish Alliance.



This book is the second in the Messianic Jewish Art Series by Elisheva and Roni Mechanic. It is, as the title suggests, a further exploration in the arena of Messianic Jewish Art. It presents the works of Messianic Jewish artists done in various media including paintings, pastel drawings, and mosaics and covering a range of themes. It is a colour illustrated book with commentary on the artwork.

This work includes artists from various parts of the world. The environment in which an artist lives shapes their approach to art and influences their colour palette, subject matter and artistic vision. Their art emerges from the intersection of faith, heritage and artistic discipline and often includes Scriptural references as an inspiration for their work.

Available on Amazon in kindle format, paperback and hardcover.

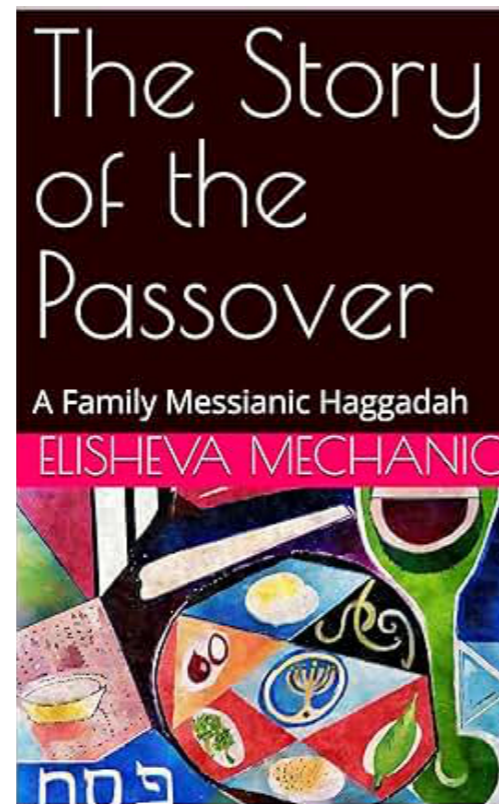
This delightful book is a family Messianic Haggadah that is designed to be used with children and adults.

If there are children present who can read there are sections for them to participate. There are several pictures included in the order of the seder, bringing the traditions to life and making it suitable for all ages.

This book provides a clear explanation of how to plan and prepare for the event as well as an order of service. Even if you've never had a family Passover seder, this book will make the ancient festival accessible and enjoyable.

It is for Christians and Messianic believers in Yeshua (Jesus) who wish to celebrate the Passover with their family and gain deep insights into the Messianic and prophetic connections in the seder.

The story of the Passover is told in a simple and understandable way suitable for children and would make an excellent gift



Thinking of Travelling to Israel or other Bible Lands?

Steven Green is the proud director of Olive Tree Travel.



Traditionally, specialising in faith journeys for Christian Groups of all denominations travelling to Israel and the other Bible Lands, Olive Tree Travel have diversified to offer competitive rates and unparalleled service to individuals, family groups and corporate travellers.

"Booking airfares, accommodation, cruises, conferences and tours is all in a day's work for our experienced team of travel advisers," says Steve.

If you have any travel needs on the horizon, please contact Steven and the team at Olive Tree Travel. <https://www.olivetreetravel.com.au>

Israel My Heart by Annemarie Ball

Annemarie has been drawn to Israel and the Jewish people from as far back as she can remember. Born in Germany after WW2, she later became aware of German history and recognised how the prejudice of antisemitism enabled the Holocaust.

Annemarie says: "It concerns me that many people are either ignorant of this dark period of history or try to ignore it, and live as though the war, and the Holocaust had not happened. But I know that there are many others of German background who, like me, acknowledge the events of the past, and wish to show their love and support for the nation of Israel and the Jewish people."

This book is a response.

Annemarie has a degree in Christian Counselling and has served as a pastor in ministry for many years. She came to Australia with her family in 1960 when she was twelve years old and has visited Israel on two occasions.

<https://www.amazon.com.au/Israel-My-Heart-Annemarie-Ball-ebook/dp/B0DGX4T1M8>





Special Feature Article - The Longest Hatred in Human History

Extracted from a talk given more than 10 years ago titled "What's happening in Israel" By Joel Burman.

I am speaking the truth in Messiah—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Messiah for the sake of my brothers,[a] my kinsmen according to the flesh. 4 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. 5 To them belong the fathers, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Messiah, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

A supernatural love

Paul loved his own people in a supernatural way. He's basically saying the greatest thing he could say to show love for a people who had tried to kill him several times, who given him not stop grief and sorrow, who opposed him and had been enemies of the gospel. For these people he's saying here that, "If I could, I would trade my destiny of living in the glory of God's friendship forever with yours. I would take your place in God's judgement if, only if, it meant that you would take mine in His mercy." What incredible, miraculous, supernatural love that Paul had for the Jewish people.

Renewed love for Israel by the Church

The church is recapturing this. All around the world people are turning to God and when they read His word God gives them a love for Jews. It's unexplainable. It's not rational. Why the Jews? Several people in a local church have already shown me this love that God has put in their hearts. In fact I had the great pleasure just last week to meet a lovely elderly Christian woman of God who explained to me, not even knowing who I was, that when God saved her from the Roman Catholic Church He also told her that she must love the Jews and to pray for Israel not just once a day, but as often as she could.

I don't understand this miracle. And it is a miracle as I will explain later. Why is God developing a supernatural love for the Jewish people in His Church? It defies explanation in so many ways yet it is beautiful. As a Jewish believer, when I went to a Derek Prince conference ago that was about Israel, as I walked through the doors I almost cried. There in that auditorium were people from every nation and background, united by the Jewish Messiah and standing together with a strong and deep love for Israel and the Jewish people. It's happening all around the world.

The Reason love for Jews is a miracle

There has been a hatred that has existed for over 2000 years. It is the longest hatred that has ever existed in the history of humanity. It has invaded every part of society and for many years even the Church harboured it. It's a hatred of the Jews. Edward Flannery put it this way, "...[it] is the longest and deepest hatred of human history..." then he went on to say, "What other hatred has endured some twenty-three centuries and survived a genocide of 6 million of its people in its twenty-third century of existence only to find itself still intact and rich in potential for many years of life?" You'd think the holocaust would have been enough to satisfy the hatred of the Jews, to end it, but it was not.

If you don't know the history, for the last two thousand years wherever Jews have gone they have been hated, told to get lost, beaten, raped, forced to convert, made into slaves and killed. And it has not been only for a little while, but it seems that in every generation people have risen up to destroy or persecute the Jewish people. From the Crusaders to Martin Luther, from Stalin to Hitler, from the Church – we have a dark history – to the Muslims, from black supremacists to white supremacists, from Biblical times to today people have hated the Jews.



Attempts to analyse the root cause of Jew-hatred

There seems to be no rational explanation for this. When Sigmund Freud tried to understand it, he ended up saying, "With regard to anti-Semitism, I don't really want to search for explanations; I feel a strong inclination to surrender my affects in this matter and find myself confirmed in my wholly nonscientific belief that mankind on the average and taken by and large are a wretched lot."

I have a friend, Dr Michael Brown, who went around to universities with a challenge to students to come up with a rational explanation for Jew hatred. He argued that the only rational explanation of this hatred is supernatural, that the devil hates what God loves, and he would challenge people to come up with a better idea. Apparently, the only idea that came close to being believable was that aliens were responsible for it!

Esther's story still played out 2500 later

If you have read the book of Esther which was written about 2500 years ago, you will see there the first recorded attempt by a powerful leader in a nation to wipe out all the Jews. This book records a time when a great official in Assyria, an evil man named Haman, tried to kill all the Jews. He almost succeeded, but God intervened and stopped him and saved His people.

Dr Michael Brown draws out another link between Haman and the modern-day terrorist organisation Hamas. This is in how Haman in the Ester Story tried to convince the King about how evil the Jews were and how Hamas, the terrorist organisation, is convincing the world that the Jews are evil and cannot be tolerated. Haman convinced the king to allow him to destroy the Jews by saying that they do not obey the king's laws and it is not in the king's best interests to tolerate them. (Esther 3:8). Today Hamas is convincing the world that Israel does not obey international laws – that they are an evil occupier of Palestine – and that it is not in the world's best interests to tolerate them.

Previous supporters of Israel have fallen prey to extremist lies

In Europe, the very countries that perpetrated the holocaust are now holding marches against Israel where they are accusing the Jews of being Nazis and of perpetrating a second holocaust. Hold on a second. These were the Nazi nations and descendants of the Nazis, yet they are now calling Jews Nazis?

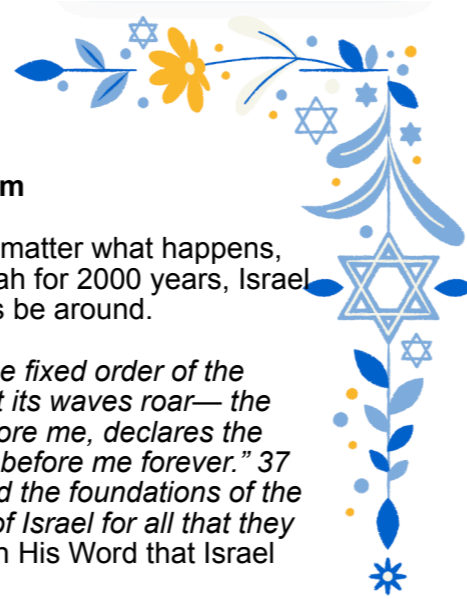
All around the world there is a Boycotting, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel. The Marrickville Council in Australia is an example of this – a local council choosing to boycott Israel and to stop using Israeli products.

For the last decade, universities around the world have held an event called "Israel Apartheid Week." They claim that Arabs are second rate citizens in Israel and that Israel is an Apartheid state. But hold on a second. There are Arabs in the Israeli Parliament. There are Arabs of notable rank in the Israeli army. Arabs are given full voting rights in Israel and are not treated as second class citizens.

Disagreeing with policies does not deny Israel's right to exist as a sovereign nation

To be clear though, as Christians we do not agree with all the policies and decisions of any nation, and Israel has certainly done things that no one is proud of in the past. But this is not enough to justify all the international criticism against Israel today, nor do a nation's policies deprive it of their sovereign right to exist.

And there is a glaring hypocrisy in all these campaigns as well. Recently the leader of Hamas publically vowed to destroy Israel and what was the world's reaction? Silence. Yet if Israel just builds some houses in Jerusalem the world reacts with outrage and venom. Dr Michael Brown once asked, "Is Jewish blood less valuable than Palestinian blood?" It seems that in a lot of people's eyes the answer is yes.



God's promises: The reason Jew-hatred is a spiritual problem

In Jer. 31:35-37 God made a promise to Israel. Basically that no matter what happens, no matter how bad they get, no matter that they reject the Messiah for 2000 years, Israel will always exist as a nation before God forever. Jews will always be around.

35 Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day, and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the Lord of hosts is his name: 36 "If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the Lord, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever." 37 Thus says the Lord: "If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the Lord." This shows that God has sworn in His Word that Israel will never be destroyed.

Dr. Michael Brown, in his book, *Our Hands are Stained with Blood*, explains it this way: "Don't you see? If the Jewish people ceased to exist, it would mean that God either cannot or does not keep His promises.

[Satan's] effort to annihilate the Jews has a deeper, redemptive significance for the human race. It is an attempt to discredit the Lord and defy His plans to bring a redeemer to the world who would provide a way for mankind to be reconciled with God. This is Jesus, the Jewish Messiah and Saviour. If Israel had ceased to exist as a distinct people, then it would demonstrate that God did not, or could not, keep His promise. That would mean that He was either powerless or that He lied!" Moreover, it would mean that He had abandoned His redemptive plan for the world.

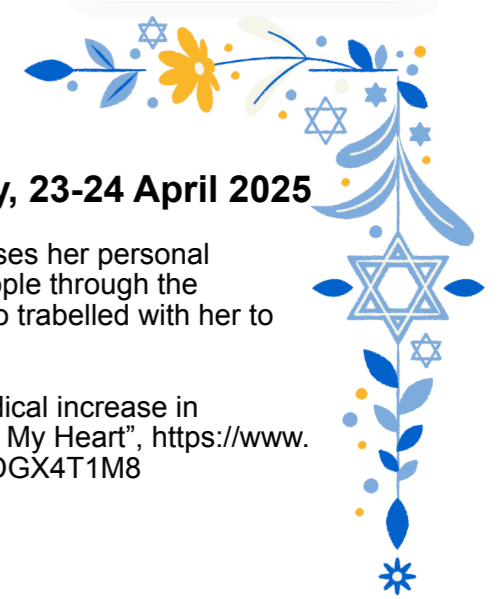
There is a story that is told about a Russian Tsar many years ago. He once asked his adviser, "Give me evidence that God exists." The adviser turned to him and said, "The Jews." The fact that there are still Jews today is an incredible evidence and testimony that God exists and that God keeps his Word.

I was talking to a Jewish atheist once and he asked me for evidence for God and I said that he was. That even though in every generation there has been people who have tried to destroy us or persecute us, the fact that we are still here as Jews is evidence that God exists. I then said to him that, "Your life is evidence for God."

And think about it. If God will still keep promises to a people that for more than 2000 years have rejected their Messiah, Yeshua, can we not trust that he will keep His promises to you and me? Let's continue to trust Him and pray for all Israel to recognise her Messiah, Yeshua. Scripture says, "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit[a] of grace and supplication. They will look on[b] me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son." Zech 12:10



Brad Burman, MJAA past President on the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem in 2023. This lighthearted moment next to a bronze statue of a soldier from an early nation that occupied Jerusalem conveys the message, "You're gone, I'm still here. Am Yisrael Chai!"



Yom HaShoah - Holocaust Remembrance Day, 23-24 April 2025

The following poem by Annemarie Ball, written in 1995, expresses her personal response to the deep sorrow for the suffering of the Jewish people through the Holocaust, written at a time of grief when her first husband, who travelled with her to Israel, had passed away.

The poem is even more poignant since Oct 7, 2023 and the radical increase in antisemitism globally. It is taken from Annemarie's book, "Israel My Heart", <https://www.amazon.com.au/Israel-My-Heart-Annemarie-Ball-ebook/dp/B0D6GX4T1M8>

Lest we Forget

**We must keep alive the memories, no matter how painful they be.
We must keep asking questions, though the reasons we may not see.
I know in your suffering you could also feel the pain of others - it was so real...
The horror, the evil, the injustice, why didn't someone intervene?
How could these things happen? It is hard to comprehend.
We ask the questions - but it's impossible to understand.
When you saw those tormented faces-
Haunting images on the screen
Your eyes were opened to their suffering in a way they had never been.
Your heart breaking from what you had seen.
Crying from the depth of your being, you also asked "Why?"
"Oh, God. For what purpose , what reason
Did your children have to suffer, and die?"
There seems to be no answer to questions so deep -
Yet we look to God for comfort as we wonder and weep.
There was anguish and grief, as you saw their suffering and pain
While feeling for the victims, there was also shame -
To know that this had happened in the land from which you came.
Does it comfort the victims to know that we care?
How can we show them? How can we share? Without sounding presumptuous...
That God who is faithful was surely there,
Sharing the suffering that was impossible to bear.
There's no denying this painful truth, though many would want to try...
No, with brokenness, sorrow, and compassion, you faced it,
And turned to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,
Who showed you with whom to identify.
You have also known suffering - yes, life can be unkind
But as you walked through the valley of the shadow of death,**

Get involved...!

Looking for a Messianic Congregation?

The following congregations have agreed with the MJAA statement of faith and have requested mutual promotion of each other's ministries.

If you would like to add your congregation or organisation, or to find out more, please email secretary@mjaa.org.au or check our website: mjaa.org.au/resources



Contact Greg Whitehead:
newcc@optusnet.com.au
(Shabbat Services, Sydney)

MJAA Weekly Hebrew, Torah and Prayer Meeting

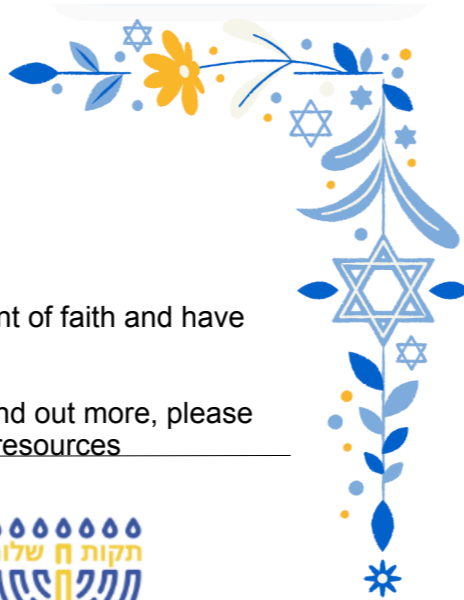
Participants in our weekly Hebrew class are progressing well and it is a joy to see progress week by week. The class is free and the approach is to learn "line upon line, precept upon precept", (Isa. 28:1), in other words one step at a time, with lots of opportunity for review.

Torah studies continue with Dr Ashley Crane packing an amazing amount of teaching and practical application into the 15-minute sessions. Come an be inspired and encouraged! Our prayer and intercession meeting has grown, with participants from across Australia and several different countries joining our

MJAA Annual Conference, Melbourne, 29 November 2025

Our committee has just voted to hold our annual conference in Melbourne again this year, which will also include our AGM.

Watch this space for more information, but please note the date in your calendars and plan to join us for a great time of fellowship, celebration and



Fortnightly Havdalah Service
Melbourne and online

Contact: ashey.crane@gmail.com

Your Messianic Congregation or Community

The MJAA is an individual membership organisation and we also welcome Messianic congregations and ministries to partner with us for mutual promotion.

If you would like to find out more, please go to mjaa.org.au/resources

IMJA International 100th Anniversary Event in Paris, September 2025

We have just had notice of this special event to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the IMJA. We are allowed to send one delegate to this event.

Please pray about it, that we hear the Lord's voice directing us about who to represent the MJAA.

Israel Trip Report - Philip and Joy

At the end of February, Philip and I had the opportunity to join a tour organised by Lev HaOlam, an organisation based in Israel that supports many small businesses and their families in Israel. The tour was named 'Israel Intense' which it certainly proved to be.

Ten days travelling with likeminded people from around the world with one heart, to bless the people and land of Israel. From the unique character of the kibbutz Neot Smadar in the far south, to being stunned by the Ramon Crater in the Negev and then seeing the stability issues facing the Dead Sea were a thought-provoking introduction to our visit.

Our time in Jerusalem was a joy, as we celebrated shabbat at the Great Synagogue and then at the Western Wall and its tunnels. One of the highlights was the thrill of discovering 2,000-year-old 'finds' at the Temple Mount Sifting Project! Our time in the Galilee felt like a homecoming as we had both lived in the north 40 years ago.

It was good to be around the Kinneret again but sad to know that so many of the communities we had known back then were either still empty, or just beginning to come to life gain, as their residents return to a long road of uncertainty ahead.

It was a sobering time on the Gaza border at Tekuma where piles of abandoned vehicles were gathered after the horrors of October 7th 2023. To read the heroic accounts of so many was truly heartbreaking.

At Sderot, on the northern border of Gaza, we heard about the battles that were fought on that terrible day.

It seemed hard to comprehend, sitting there on a lovely sunny day eating our lunch, what it must have been like on these very streets. However, standing on the site of the police station which had faced such an intense battle, seeing the photos and reading the too many names of those killed, was the sombre reality.

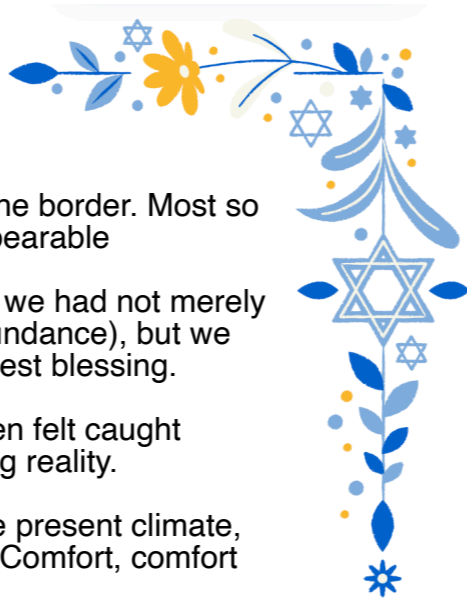
Shalom to our Catholic brothers and sisters in the TCJII team

We wish to express our condolences to you on the death of Pope Francis and the grief you are experiencing.

We pray that God will comfort and strengthen you and lead the conclave in the selection of the new Pope.

We also pray the new Pope will be fully on board with the trajectory of Towards the Jerusalem Council II goals and aspirations, as well as be a strong supporter of Israel as we strive for survival.





What a blessing it was to chat briefly to soldiers serving on the border. Most so young, I thought of our own children having to face such unbearable responsibilities.

We were reminded at the beginning of our time in Israel that we had not merely come to see ancient rocks (of which there are a glorious abundance), but we had come to see 'living stones', and this really was the greatest blessing.

These 'stones' are loudly declaring "Am Israel Chai". We often felt caught between the joy of this truth and the national grief of the living reality.

To be honest, I had been hesitant about going to Israel in the present climate, but the words from Isaiah 40 :1-2 settled the matter for me, "Comfort, comfort my people", says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem.

Now I knew why I was going and what I was to do. We had many opportunities to speak tenderly with words of comfort. What a blessing it was to look people in the face and let them know that they are not alone, that there are people around the world who are praying for Israel and the Jewish people. By the touching reaction of many, I think our being there confirmed the words of hope that we spoke.

Philip continued to generously give of his time and skills as he volunteered among a community up in the north near the Lebanese border for three weeks. He helped to equip a safe room for whenever the need arises, worked on a rural moshav and sought to bless the local messianic community with his many practical skills.

We thank and praise God for the opportunities we had and for His hand in so many details throughout our trip. Our God truly is Jehovah Jireh, the God who sees, intervenes and provides. Let us never grow weary as we seek to support