

Shalom-Salām

The Pursuit of Peace in the Biblical Heart of the 10/40 Window

Shalom/Salam ... Peace/Peace *The Elusive Pursuit of Peace in the Biblical Heart of the 10/40 Window*

At the heart of the lands we call the Middle East lie the nations of Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority, which together frame the geographical center of God's Biblical revelation. Its history stretches back through the millennia to the dim beginnings of civilization. Today its

agonizing search for "peace with justice" occupies the headlines of newspapers and the lead stories of television around the world.

Two years ago I asked a Jordanian news anchor -- who also is an Arab believer -- what his major news item was. Without hesitation he answered, "The peace process." I recently asked him the same question. His answer was the same, but with a telling addendum: "The peace process... and that it will continue."

The Middle East is rich in history, laden with sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims. Vanished civilizations and modern mechanized armies have waged endless wars across hills, valleys and rivers whose names appear in the oldest written texts and latest electronic headlines:

Jerusalem

One of the world's most famous cities, Jerusalem dates from at least the third millennium BD... and it's been fought over ever since. In this focus of countless wars, Christ gave his disciples the mandate to "tell people about me everywhere: in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8 NLT).

Jordan

The river from which the nation of Jordan derives its name has been a hotly contested natural border ever since Joshua led the Israelites on the dry river bed, between its parted waters, into their Promised Land.

Bethlehem

Today it lies in the area known as the West Bank. The city where Jesus was born, it is mentioned more than 50 times in the Bible. Here a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel to announce, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests" (Luke 2:14). That peace is unknown in Bethlehem at the turn of the new millenium.

Abraham is the father of the approximately 15 million Jews worldwide, of whom about six million live in the United States. Over 800,000 Russian Jews have immigrated to Israel in the 1990s, bringing the total Jewish population in Israel to five million. Susan Perlman of Jews for Jesus, who was raised in the Jewish faith, recently noted: "As we enter the 21st century we are witnessing an emerging Judaism that is radically altered from the century past."

Approximately 300 million Arabs also trace their lineage to Abraham. Arab history encompasses one of the most formidable empires the world has ever known.

Ishmael, the forgotten son of Abraham, was promised to be a recipient of blessing. Isaac, the miracle-born son of Abraham was promised not only to be a recipient of blessing, but would also be a channel of blessing, i.e., through his

seed, the Christ would come. Arabs and Jews need each other to experience the blessing of peace.

The primary issue occupying modern Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority is their fitful pursuit of a lasting peace. The slogans are many: "Choose peace!" "Fight for Peace!" "Struggle for Peace!" "Talk Peace!" "Wage Peace!" But progress is slow and erratic. The complex and difficult issue was summed up with wry and insightful humor by one observer: "We are, after all, the sons and daughters of Abraham."

Peace... My Peace

From nearly every viewpoint the primary issue at the heart of the 10/40 Window is the pursuit of peace. While governments debate the issues and argue over the details, evangelical believers worldwide debate God's end-time prophetic agenda, especially as it relates to the place of Israel. Some believe that the signing of a peace pact will launch a series of end-times events that will lead to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

In the midst of the uncertainty, Messianic Jewish and Christian Arab leaders are quietly joining in prayer for the lasting inner peace that comes only through Jesus/Yeshua/Yasua. They pray for a spiritual unity among their people while maintaining their distinct Jewish and Arab identities.

That's a difficult and elusive goal. But it can become reality, for peace is the heart of the Master, the Prince of Peace. "Peace I leave with you," he said, "My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives" (John 14:27). Peace has already come into the world through Christ (Luke 1:79; 2:14; 29-32). By Jesus peace is bestowed (Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50; John 20:19, 21, 26). We, his followers, are to be messengers of that peace (Luke 10:5-6; Acts 10:36). Shortly before his return to the Father he told his disciples: "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

Lasting peace -- the kind that can be found only in and through Jesus/Yeshua/Yasua -- is spreading throughout the land of his birth. Pray that God's peace will prevail, both in that ancient land and in the hearts of its people.

"The Arab-Israeli conflict has indeed been one of the more complex and difficult problems of the second half of the twentieth century. The first step to understanding its complexity is a recognition that there is no single Arab-Israeli dispute, but a cluster of distinct, interrelated conflicts. This is a classic dispute between two national movements claiming title to and vying for possession of the same land; the broader political, cultural, and increasingly religious conflict between Israel and Arab nationalism -- the bilateral disagreements between Israel and each of its Arab neighbors; and the international structure, in which colonial and postcolonial power rivalries, geopolitical factors, and talk about the 'Holy Land' all play a part."

- From *Waging Peace: Israel and the Arabs at the End of the Century*, by Itamar Rabinovich
Israeli Scholar-Diplomat



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Shalom Salām

A Letter from Luis Bush

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:27)

We prayed in a garden on Jerusalem's Mount of Olives, very near the spot where Jesus and his disciples came to pray the night of his betrayal. We prayed for peace... for reconciliation... for oneness among Arab Christians and Messianic Jews.

My wife, Doris, and I were in a meeting with a group of believers: Arab ministers of the Gospel, Jordanian and Palistinian Christian leaders, and Messianic Jews. Bishara Awad, founder and president of Bethlehem Bible College in Bethlehem, had convened the conference in July 1997. Nearly 50 years before, Bishara and his Palestinian family had become refugees after loosing their father to a stray bullet during Israel's fight for statehood.

During the conference, Ilan Zamir, President of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel, had openly shared his struggle to find identity as a Messianic Jew in Israel. Moved by what he had heard, a Jordanian Christian brother called a few of us aside to pray that the peace that can come only through Jesus would rule over this, the biblical heartland of the 10/40 Window.

Out of that conference, and the evening of fervent prayer that ensued, this booklet was born. It is a call to God's people throughout the world to pray with and for their brothers and sisters who live in the heartland of biblical faith. They fervently plead for believers everywhere to join them in praying that Almighty God will bless their homeland with peace; not the politicians' kind of temporary "absense of hostilities," but the true peace that only Jesus Christ can bring.

Luis Bush
International Director
AD2000 & Beyond Movement



The 10/40 Window

The 10/40 Window is the region between 10 and 40 degrees north latitude, extending from North Africa through East Asia. It encompasses nearly four billion people, including most of the world's Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists.

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The Pursuit of Peace

Peace with God

While the politicians pursue their definition of peace, among some there is a growing realization throughout the region that lasting peace can be found only in a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

A pastor in Israel for twenty-five years believes that Year 2000 millennial hype, talk of the return of Christ, and the future uncertainty of the region all contribute to this recognition that lasting peace must begin with God. Another long-term worker in the region adds that international movements like Praying Through the 10/40 Window, which focus prayer on the region, have made a significant difference. Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Jordan and other Middle Eastern countries all have felt the impact of these prayers. (Ray Register, in soon-to-be-published book titled: *Back to Jerusalem*.)

"There is more response to the gospel than ever before in the land of Israel," a pastor reports. "Today you can talk about Yeshua openly." Arab Christian leaders in the region say that for maybe the first time in memory, many people from various backgrounds are beginning to accept the gospel and experience the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit. They seek fellowship with Christians to learn how to pray and worship God in new ways.

"For he himself is our peace,
who has made the two one and
has destroyed the dividing wall
of hostility."

- Ephesians 2:14 NIV

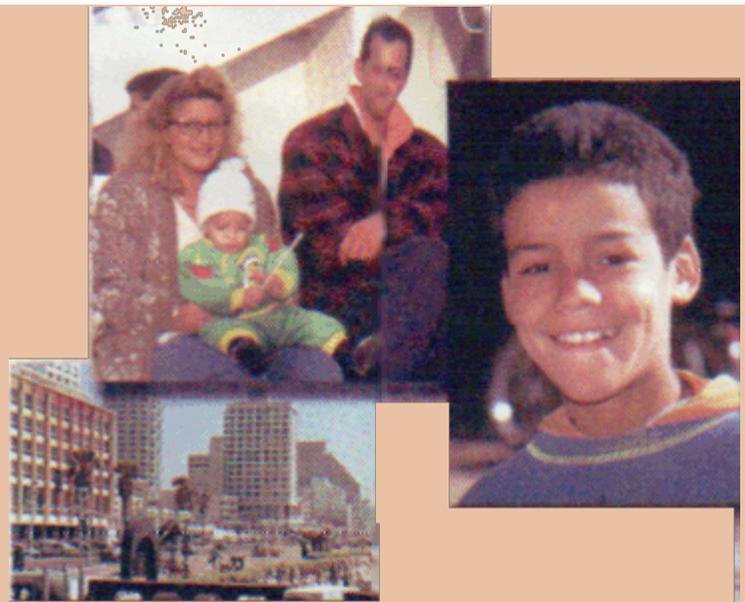
Some Messianic Jewish fellowships are opening their doors to Muslims seeking to be followers of Jesus/Yeshua/Yasua. Christian Arabs are beginning for the first time to recognize the ripe harvest field surrounding them, and to overcome their fear of witnessing to both Muslims and Jews. Persecution and opposition continue and many still suffer for their faith, but believers survive and their fellowships grow by pulling together.

Throughout the region men and women, Arabs and Jews, are finding peace with God in ever-increasing numbers.

Peace with One Another

Paul wrote of the Lord's desire to reconcile sinful man to himself and one another in him through his Son. Believers from all backgrounds are coming together in their common faith in Jesus/Yeshua/Uasua/Isa/Christ/Messiah. They are also trying to maintain their cultural distinctives so they can maintain links and build bridges back into their own communities -- unity without uniformity!

For the past eighteen years most of the congregations of Galilee, including Israeli, Arabic, Ethiopian and Russian immigrant believers, have gathered each August for a unity meeting of up to 600 believers. In Karmiel, an Arab believer participates in leadership in an Israeli congregation. There are regular prayer fellowships between the leaders of both the Messianic and Arab congregations.



After more than three years of retracing the trail of the crusaders from Germany through Turkey, Syria and Lebanon in "The Reconciliation Walk," more than 400 mainly western Christians walked into Jerusalem on July 15, 1999 to ask forgiveness for the historical bloodshed and for a lingering "crusader mentality" in the church today. They walked around the Old City and prayed for the peace of Jerusalem. They they delivered an apology, as descendants of the crusaders, to Chief Rabbi Yisrael Lau, Greek Orthodox Patriarch Diodoros, and Muslim Mufti Ekrem Sabi.

God's people are working to reconcile Arab and Jewish believers. Tom Hess, International Director of All Nations Convocations and the Jerusalem House of Prayer for All Nations, has been enabling reconciliation between Jewish and Arab leaders. They meet regularly to pray together for the peace of Jerusalem and all nations. A 24-hour Worship Watch has been launched on the 12 Gates of Jerusalem and 24-hour Prayer on the Mount of Olives. They also hold an All Nations Convocation in Jerusalem every two years.

Salim Munayer, founder of the Musalaha ministry, also works to reconcile Jews and Arabs. An Israeli Arab, he grew up in the mixed Arab-Jewish community in Lod (biblical Lydda). Shortly after he became a believer in Jesus in 1977, Salim realized that the conflict between Jews and Arabs was rooted in sin and separation from God. Musalaha (Arabic for "reconciliation"), the only ministry of it's kind in the country of Israel, emphasizes Christ's atonement on the cross and his resurrection at the only hope through which true reconciliation can be achieved. The ministry conducts trips into the desert, where Jewish and Arab youth unite in the hardships of the desert and in their common faith. (See sidebar on Peace in the Desert.) The ministry also encourages reconciliation among the Palestinian Arab and Israeli communities.

Around the world believers are praying for the peace of Jerusalem, that Arabs and Jews will increasingly be reconciled in the Messiah and that the Middle East will again become a blessing in the midst of the earth.

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The Pursuit of Peace, *Continued*

Personal Peace

Believers who live in Israel, Jordan and the region of the Palestinian Authority struggle with their ethnic, political and spiritual identity. In a land where Arab is synonymous with Muslim and Jew with Judaism, the dilemma for believers from these two communities can be overwhelming.



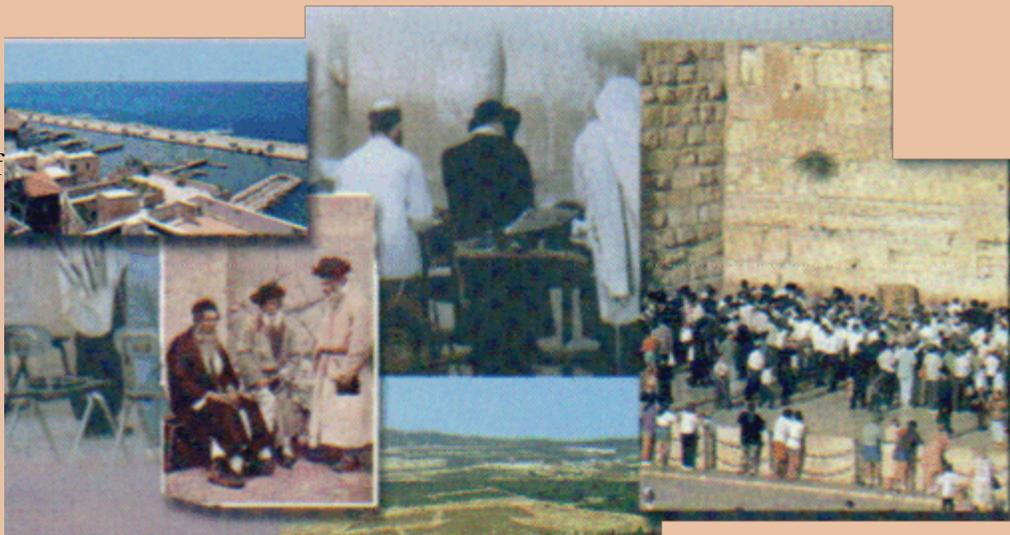
Most western believers having come from generations of the Christian faith, don't understand the problem. Messianic Jews are a tiny minority within the Jewish community, which itself is a minority in the predominately Muslim Arab region. Christian Arabs are also a minority within the vast regional majority of Islam, and for those who live in the Palestinian Authority Territory the situation is even more complex. Conversion to Jesus Christ from the historic churches is viewed by many as a betrayal of their long heritage, a forsaking of their traditions to join a "heretical western sect." The situation is perhaps hardest of all for believers from a Muslim background. There is the smallest community of believers from the three faiths -- but it is growing.



Messianic Jews face an especially perplexing situation. Being an Israeli means more than simply being Jewish, and being Jewish involves more than mere family lineage. Messianic Jews are a remnant who believe in the Messiah, Yeshua, in the midst of Jewish population that is modernistic, indifferent or radically Orthodox. They find themselves caught in the middle: harassed by the Orthodox Jews, disliked by Arabs and misunderstood or ignored by Christians whose church history is filled with atrocities toward their Jewish ancestors. Often these Messianic Jews are being pressured to integrate into "imported"

denominational structures. If they succumb, they lose their effectiveness to witness back into their own communities.

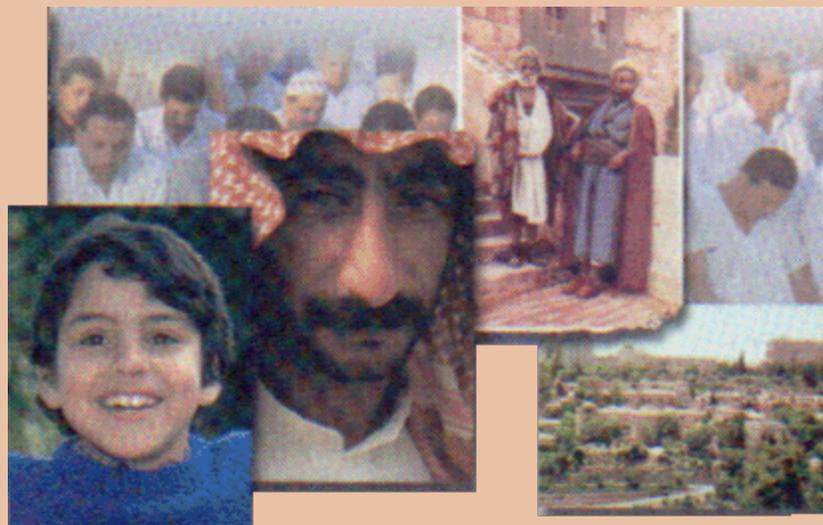
Jews have viewed Christians as their primary persecutors for centuries. Christian history is littered with the debris of anti-Semitism. The relationship between Jewish followers of Christ and the non-Jewish followers of Christ deteriorated rapidly in the first century. The Council of Nicea, convened by Constantine in AD325, asserted that the church did not want to have anything to do with the Jewish roots of the faith. The Council decreed that Messianic Jewish believers of that day could no longer be Jewish -- either ethnically or spiritually -- and still be part of the body of believers. By the second century, the Church chose to regard Jews as a lost, cursed, apostate people without hope. The Inquisition, the Crusades, and the Holocaust all were waged in the name of Christianity. The Nazis



even hung signs in their gas chambers that read, "You are being killed in the name of Jesus Christ."

Ilan Zamir, author of the soon-to-be-published book *Understanding Messianic Jews*, explained to me the dilemma of the Messianic Jew. "The Jewishness of the early Church has been nearly forgotten," he said. "For the first Messianic Jewish body of believers the issue was: How does the non-Jewish believer fit in? Does he have to become a Jew and follow all the biblical Jewish customs and practices? As the Church grew and became predominantly non-Jewish, the question reversed. Now in the twentieth century, Christians are asking the question: Where do Jewish people fit in?"

The situation is no easier for Christian Arabs. In most of the Middle East, they are a minority of faith in a culture dominated by the religiosity of Islam. Arab believers recognize the historical fact that their region was Christian before it was Muslim, with a rich tradition of Christian faith and culture. They live in the geographical wellspring of Christianity, home to the most ancient Christian communities in the world. From the very beginnings of the Church, these communities have been attacked and persecuted, yet have carried on the traditions of their faith. Living as a Christian in an Islamic society today is difficult.



Arab culture and the Arabic language have played an important role in Christianity. After the armies of Caliph Umar defeated the Byzantines at the battle of Yarmouk in 638, Arab Islamic culture moved from its birthplace on the Arabian Peninsula into the area now divided between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. Early Islam tolerated a limited expression of Christianity and Judaism with the subjugated *dhimmi* status of Islamic law. Arab culture, which prized scholarship, influenced the early Christian communities, and, by the second half of the eighth century, Christian theological literature was being written in Arabic. By the ninth century, Arabic had become the *lingua franca* for hundreds of monks who came from all over the world to live and study at the

major monasteries in the region. Today those communities are predominately Orthodox Christian, and renewal is happening. Orthodox Christians and Muslim Arabs alike are coming to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

In the nearly five decades of Israeli statehood, the socio-economic condition of the Palestinian Arab Christian population has changed considerably. A survey of 500 high school students in Israel found that Arab believers are suffering from significant emotional stress. They have a deep sense of being rejected by both the Jews and the Muslims around them. Many are emigrating.

Messianic Jew and Arab Christian alike share this need for identity, this paradox of faith and culture. The need for a sense of who they are -- both in Jesus/Yeshua/Yasua, Christ/Messiah. Together they are experiencing his peace that passes all understanding.

Conclusion

I join with many who sense that "a new day dawned" in the biblical heartland of the 10/40 Window. The moving of God's Spirit is seen in the stories and hearts of people with whom I met; some of them appear in this report.

Yet troubles and great uncertainties remain. The deep-seated hatred and bitterness of many years is being exposed to the light of the love of Jesus. Many precious people -- Jews and Arabs, from both Christian and Muslim communities, are searching for personal identity and a new peace within. In that search, many are opening themselves to the peace and healing that await them in Jesus.

Regional historians and leaders cause me to believe there is a great hope in this new searching. I pray that the worldwide Body of Christ will know this rising tide of Shalom/Salam, and that the Christians everywhere will join in

spirited, prevailing prayer for this region as the threshold of a new millenium passes under our feet.

An Arab Christian leader living in Jerusalem has said: "God's people in the region have suffered and experienced the cross for so long. It's time they begin to experience the crown." Whether is it a cross or a crown, one truth remains; the pursuit of peace is not sufficient to arrive at peace. Any person, family, city, nation, people or region will find lasting peace only as they follow the Author of Peace -- the Source of Peace -- the Prince of Peace.

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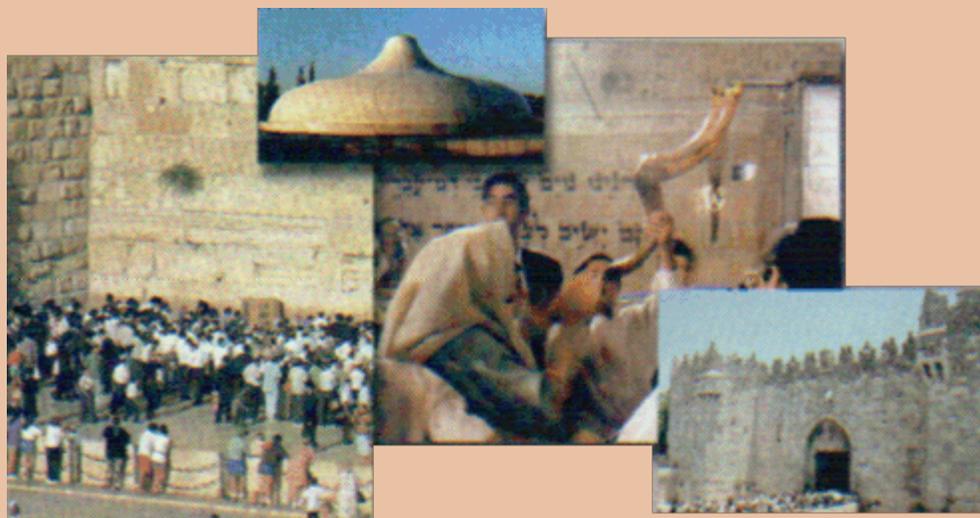
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The Attitude of Believers Worldwide to the People in the Region

One of the most encouraging developments in Christian history this century has been the changing heart of committed Christian believers -- whether mainstream, evangelical, charismatic or whatever -- toward the Jews. After centuries of intolerance flecked with murder and crude social bigotry, increasing numbers of Christians in recent years have been owning up to the church's historical role in anti-Semitism. And they have, quite rightly, been repenting of it.

This change of heart has occurred at least partly because of the sudden re-emergence of Israel on the world scene. Israel became a state in 1948; just 19 years later, Israeli armies took over Arab East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza during the Six Day War.



Many evangelical Christians suddenly renewed their interest in end-time prophecies, eagerly seeking to interpret the signs of the times in the contemporary Middle East as part of God's plan for the ages. The best selling nonfiction book in the United States for the entire decade of the 1970s was Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, a popular exegesis of modern history, particularly in the Middle East, as part of biblical prophecy.

At the same time, enamored with Israel and the possibility that the "last days" might be just around the corner, increasing

numbers of Christians began to see Jews in general -- not just Israelis -- no longer as "Christ-killers" but as a people chosen by God and beloved by Him no less today than in Old Testament times. Not all Jews have been comfortable with this rather striking change in Christian perceptions of them -- from "enemy" to "instrument" of God's purpose, so to speak. After all, some must wonder, if theology was the reason for the original antipathy of Christians toward them, and theology has now given birth to admiration, what happens if theology shifts once again?

The fact is, many Christians have begun to experience a love for the Jewish people that has nothose to do with the way they envision the end times, but which is almost certainly the work of the Holy Spirit Himself. It is thus very important for all Christians, whether they are pre-millennialist, post-millennialist -- or as one church wag once said, "pan-millennialist" ("I believe it will all pan out in the end.") -- to be very respectful of Jewish feelings, particularly in the light of the uglier sides of Christian history.

It may be as insulting to Jews (and particularly Israelis) to romanticize them into larger-than-life cardboard Bible figures as to assume that a newly discovered friendliness toward them justifies God's people; but they are still people. For that matter, so are Palestinians, Arabs in general and Arab Christians in particular.

But neither deep affection for the Jews nor end-times theology nor even the murderousness of some Palestinian groups gives any Christian the right to treat ordinary Arabs, and especially Palestinian Arab Christians under Israeli military and political rule, with anything less than dignity and, indeed, great compassion. One can

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The Pursuit of Peace, *Continued*

Peace in the Desert

Forty teenagers crowded the bus as it sped through the rolling hills toward the Middle Eastern desert. In the center several Palestinian young people gathered around a *durbeke* (drum), some standing in the aisle, others in their seats, all enthusiastically singing choruses. Some Jewish young people and a few other Palestinians tried to join in. Others talked with friends, and a few listened to their own private music.

Few of the kids knew anyone except those from their own youth group, and those who did know each other stuck closely together. All shared a sense of anticipation, with apprehension at the many new faces and sounds. Would the experiment really work? Could they really overcome their many adolescent fears, cultural barriers and language differences?



They were headed to a desert encounter sponsored by a Christian ministry called Musalaha (Arabic for "reconciliation"), which seeks to bring Jews and Arabs to a higher loyalty beyond ethnic and political loyalties. By taking teenagers into the desert, away from the distractions of a turbulent society, bridges are built across the many obstacles that divide the people of the Middle East. Through the shared hardships of the journey young people

The Messianic Jewish Movement

Messianic Judaism is not a new movement but rather a restoration of the ancient community of Jewish believers who followed Jesus/Yeshua in the first and second centuries.

Historically, the first followers of Jesus (Greek) or Yeshua (Hebrew) were Jews -- Messianic Jews. The book of Acts and writings of Jewish historian Josephus both record how the Jews who believed in Yeshua became known as "Followers of The Way."



Messianic Jews believe that the Messiah Yeshua came into the world, shed his blood as a covering for sin, and rose from the dead, all in fulfillment of the Hebrew prophets such as Isaiah: "...he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5). They also believe that Yeshua did not come to establish a new religion, but rather to "fulfill" an ancient one (Matthew 5:17). Messianic Jews uphold the view that the New Testament is a continuation of the Hebrew Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16), and contend that Jewish people who follow Yeshua do not become converts to another religion, but rather remain Jews -- Messianic Jews (Colossians 4:11).

Traditional Judaism teaches that Yeshua is not the Messiah, that the Tanakh (Hebrew scriptures) and the Talmud (Hebrew laws of religious practice) are the correct and binding interpretation (*halacha*) of God's eternal Word, and that the New Testament lacks this authority. Messianic Judaism, in contrast, teaches that Yeshua is the Messiah, that the entire Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, is the sole authority for faith and practice, and that the Talmud lacks this authority.

A key difference between traditional Christianity and Messianic Judaism is the emphasis on original Hebrew terms in place of traditional Christian terms; as in *Abba* for God the Father, *Yeshua HaMashiach* for Jesus Christ, *Ruach HaKodesh* for the Holy Spirit.

The major groups of the Jewish messianic movement are The

open their lives to the Holy Spirit, who will lead them to encounter one another in peace and unity in Jesus despite their different backgrounds and experiences.

"At first I was worried," admitted one participant later. "So I kind of stayed in my group with my friends. It was hard to talk to the Arabs because not all of them spoke Hebrew or English. But I decided to reach out to those guys, and it worked! We gave each other funny nicknames, and pretty soon we really became friends. At the end of the trip I was sad to see them go."

Traveling by camel across the desert was a new experience for most of the kids, and they were not quite sure what to make of the growls and grunts the beasts emitted. "I was struck that the moments when the group was most united was when we were moving," a counselor commented later. "Most of the kids started out with a partner or in groups of three: one leading the camel, one riding and the other walking alongside. At each rest stop they changed places and before long the partnerships were well mixed." At the end of each day the exhausted teenagers shared a meal of lentil stew, then molded themselves places on the desert floor and slept till daybreak.

It was good for us to be together like this -- Arabs and Jews," one girl observed later. A young man agreed: "We are joined by faith in Jesus our Messiah."

International Alliance, North American Alliances, and the local alliances in each country. Many other groups also are part of the Jewish Messianic movement beyond the alliances.

Joseph Rabinowitz was the first person who dared to call himself a Messianic Jew in modern times. He affirmed that for a Jew to come to the Lord he did not have to convert to Christianity in faith and culture. He established the first Messianic Jewish congregation, called "The Synagogue of the Congregation of Israelites of the New Covenant," in Kishinev, Russia, in 1885.



The number of Messianic Jewish congregations has increased significantly worldwide since 1980. For example, in 1978 there were three Messianic Jewish congregations in the United States. Today there are over 400. There are 37 congregations in the former USSR. Nowhere has the growth been more dramatic

than in Israel itself. In a recent survey, Kai Kjaer-Hansen, International Coordinator of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism, and his team profiled more than 80 Messianic congregations and house groups. The results demonstrate that more than 70 percent of all Messianic Jewish congregations were founded in the 1990s, including 25 Russian-speaking groups. There are many streams in the Jewish Messianic movement today, including the synagogue liturgical, Israeli-charismatic, evangelical non-charismatic and evangelical charismatic. Most have a significant Jewishness in cultural expression, but in different proportions.

Clearly, a significant development has taken place in the last twenty years; small groups of fearful Messianic believers have grown into a community that is beginning to influence the life of Israel society.

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The Pursuit of Peace, *Continued*

Arab Church Movement

The region we now call Palestine and Jordan remained predominately Christian until the beginning of the 12th century and the Crusades. To this day, despite 2,000 years of wars and unrest, the Lord has faithfully kept for himself a living witness in the land of his birth. "We are a forgotten faithful, but we are not forgotten by the Lord" an Arab Christian has said.



Arab Christians in the region comprise a colorful spectrum of churches. Members of the historical churches -

- Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Syrian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Coptic Catholic, Cahldean, Maronite, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Latin Catholic and the Ancient Church of the East (known as Nestorian) -- take pride in tracing their heritage back to the earliest church. Their monasteries, cathedrals and churches stand as a physical timeline of Christian witness in the Middle East.

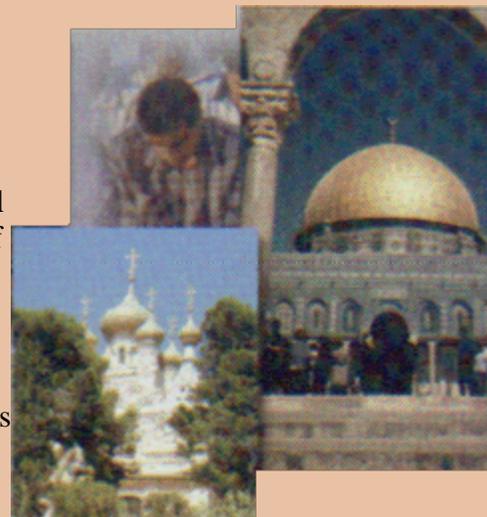
In the eighteenth century, western missionaries founded Protestant and evangelical churches, making thier impact in this land. Today, Baptists, Pentecostals, Nazarenes, Missionary Alliance, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Armenian Congregationalists, Lutherans, Brethren

The Church in Jordan - An Agent of Peace

The Church in Jordan, which might have begun on the day that Jesus Christ was baptized in the Jordan River, provides stability and renewal in the region. About four percent of Jordan's population of approximately five million people is at least nominally Christian.

In 1998, a partnership of two major ministries in Jordan began offering free Bibles through newspaper and magazine ads. More than 65,000 people responded! Through a carefully planned follow-up program many are being integrated into Bible studies and churches.

Throughout its long history in Jordan the Church has reached out with the compassionate love of Christ. Throughout the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as during and after the Gulf War, the willingness to continue to do so has certainly challenged the Church. What do you do when hundreds of thousands of desperate people are forced to leave their homes and start living in your



country, which certainly is not very rich? This is what happened in 1948 and 1967, when waves of Palestinians moved eastwards and at time even outnumbered the local population. But the Church did it's best. This was repeated after the Gulf War, and close to half a million Iraqis are now living in Jordan. The local churches have played an important part in helping them out.

Not all is well, however. Opposition has come from some Christian communities themselves who recently prevented the opening of a Christian bookshop in the region.

The characteristics that make the church in Jordan a significant

Churches and other indigenous evangelical churches work together in remarkable unity. Their small numbers and the great challenges facing them draw them to each other as they serve their one Lord.

In keeping with the example set before them by the first church, Arab Christians generously provide charitable relief to the needy. Arab Christians, in cooperation with the church worldwide, have been working for several decades to alleviate the suffering of the dispossessed in their midst.

The church's influence is also felt through the spiritual encouragement it brings to the surrounding communities. An important Muslim head of state once put it this way: "It is important to keep the Arab Christians in the Middle East; they are the glue that holds our community together."

Presently, under the Palestinian National Authority, the church has many opportunities to present the Good News to the lost. Arab Christians distribute literature, hold Bible studies, distribute correspondence courses, and advertise in the local papers. On several occasions, the Jesus Film has been broadcast in prime time on Palestinian public television.

agent of God's peace are reflected in the lives of Arab believers:

- **Leadership Development:** Imad provides leadership in seminary education. His call to equip spiritual leaders for planting and strengthening churches in the Arab World has been increasingly fulfilled in recent years. Students planted ten new churches in the last three years in Jordan (four Iraqi congregations, five Jordanian, and one Sudanese). Graduates serve in church planting in eleven countries.

Dikran is preparing a cross-cultural outreach training facility for Christians throughout the region. A Jordanian Christian couple leads a camping ministry outside Amman where many of today's leaders made decisions for Christ in their younger years.

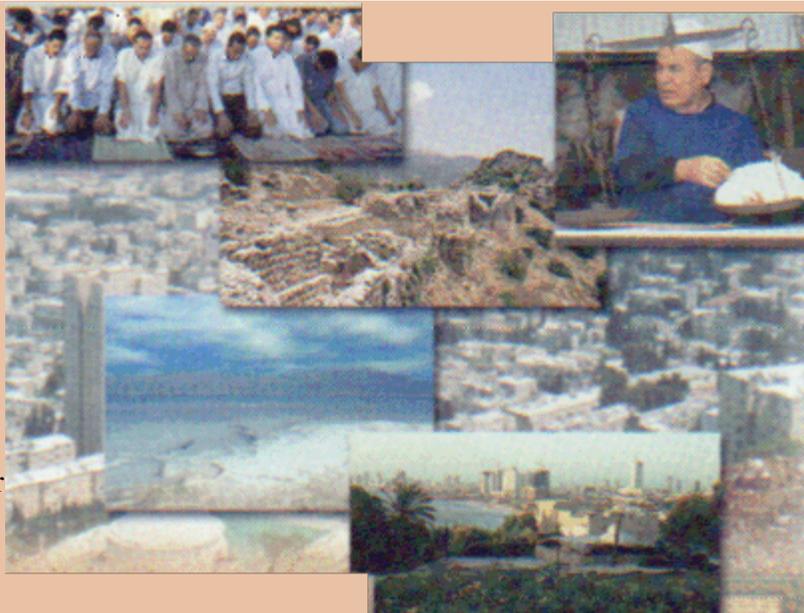
- **Ambassadors for Christ:** Pastor and ministry leader Youssef provides a home for Iraqi believers and compassionate outreach to the growing Iraqi population in Jordan. Dikran seeks to provide a haven for Syrian believers and a training ground for Armenian believers in his new church facility. Victor travels extensively as an Ambassador for the Prince of Peace, sharing the peace that passes all understanding.
- **Emerging Leaders:** Two young Arab leaders promote the need for Christian entrepreneurs, godly men and women who will help raise up a new generation of leaders with creativity and energy to strategically envision new frontiers for the gospel in the new millennium.

One Person's Journey: Mina's Story

Mina was born into a religious Jewish family in Israel. Her parents never allowed the name of Jesus to be spoken in her home, and she was taught that Arabs want to hurt Jews and cannot be trusted.

In her 20s, Mina spent a year traveling in South Africa. Near the end of her journey she surrendered her life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Upon returning home to Haifa, she was led to join Carmel Assembly, where she grew in the Lord.

Eight years later she took a job marketing cosmetics door to door, including many Arab homes. To her surprise, many Arabs welcomed her and she even made new friends. But not so with Muslims who were militant



about their faith. The mutual distrust and clashing of spirits made her very uncomfortable. One day while in prayer, she told the Lord, "I hate the Muslims, and I don't want to go see them again." The Lord made it clear to her that she should love everyone. "If you want me to love everyone," she replied, "I pray that you will do that by the power of the Holy Spirit, because I cannot do this myself."

A year later, the Lord led her to attend the Israel College of the Bible in Jerusalem. One day while she was touring the Old City an amazing thing happened. She overheard a Muslim merchant arguing with another man, and she went up to him and asked why he was yelling. He replied, "Because they don't want to buy from me!" She asked again and the merchant glared at her in speechless anger. She saw in his eyes all the cultural and religious hatred that tears apart their homeland. He spun around and stormed away shouting; "We will get your country one day!"

Mina's Israeli side recoiled in fear, but to her great amazement she was filled for compassion and the love of the Lord for the angry merchant. Catching up with him she said, "I don't hate you. Why did you speak to me like that? You really hurt me." When the merchant saw the kindness in her eyes his anger faded. "I am sorry I hurt you. My name is Ibrahim." She introduced herself and offered to come visit him some day.

On that day the Lord had answered her prayer for love. His love had cut through generations of pent-up hatred and mistrust. Ibrahim's eyes were opened to the light of Christ's love shining through the eyes of an Israeli woman. And Mina's heart had been filled with godly love for Arabs, including Muslims.

Through that encounter Mina also saw the answer to the troubles infesting her homeland -- the great power of God's love. As Mina herself says, "The only way Arab and Jew can be united is through belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. We can only pray that more and more Muslims and Jews will come to know Him."

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The Pursuit of Peace, *Continued*

What You Can Do

The opportunities to become a partner in the biblical heart of the 10/40 Window for Christ are limitless. The following is a limited selection of the many and vast possibilities for:

Partner by Giving generously to projects and programs in the region, such as indigenous workers in outreaches, training, reconciliation initiatives, fostering unity, satellite TV, radio programs, media, literature distribution, Bibles and other projects.

- *Manara Ministries*, email: mbm@nets.com.jo
- *IAM Partners*, email: 104276.1403@compuserve.com
- *Jerusalem House of Prayer for All Nations*, email: jhopfan@compuserve.com

Partner in Interest by becoming aware of what God is doing in this region today. Some excellent resources include:

- *Caspari Center*, Jerusalem, email: caspari@caspari.com
- *Jews for Jesus*, website: www.jewsforjesus.org

Websites presenting their own viewpoints on:

- *Israel*: www.israel.org
- *Jordan*: www.nic.gov.jo
- *Palestinian National Authority*: www.pcbs.org

Partner in Training with the:

- *Bethlehem Bible College*, email: bethbc@planet.edu
- *Israel College of the Bible*, email: icob@netvision.net.il
- *Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary*, email: jets@nets.com.jo
- *AOG Training Center*, Amman, Jordan, Fax: [962] (6) 463-2786
- *National Leaders Fellowship / National Evangelism Committee*, email: dew@netvision.net.il

Partner in Reconciliation and fostering unity initiatives through:

- *Musalaha*, email: musalaha@netvision.net.il

Partner in Business Ventures

How You Can Pray

Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6)

Pray for the National Leaders

Pray God's blessings on the heads of government, other ministers and officials and their efforts in the pursuit of peace.

Pray that family members of the leaders will hear the gospel on the radio, for the leaders to meet genuine believers in their travels, and for God to move the right person to share the gospel with them.

Pray that God will give the leaders wisdom to rule their countries with justice, righteousness and mercy, creating policies that would allow the gospel to go forward in their land.

The heads of the nations in the biblical heart of the 10/40 Window are:

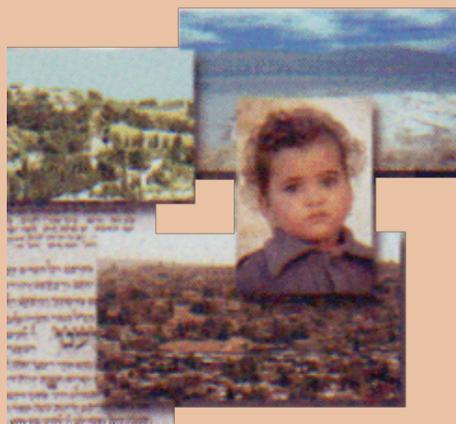
- **Israel:** President Moshe Katsav and Prime Minister Ehud Barak
- **Palestinian Authority:** leader, Yasser Arafat
- **Jordan:** King Abdullah the II bin al-Hussein

Pray for God's People in the Region

- Pray for courage -- that they will overcome intimidation and fear.
- Pray that they would have a solid revelation of God's love and be strengthened to persevere and be faithful to the Lord.
- Pray for maturity in their faith and appropriate teaching to build them up.
- Pray as well for the effective ministries of radio, TV and literature.
- Pray for encouragement for those who live outside the main cities with limited contact with other Christians.
- Pray for creative opportunities for tentmaking workers to gain access, and for more long-term workers.

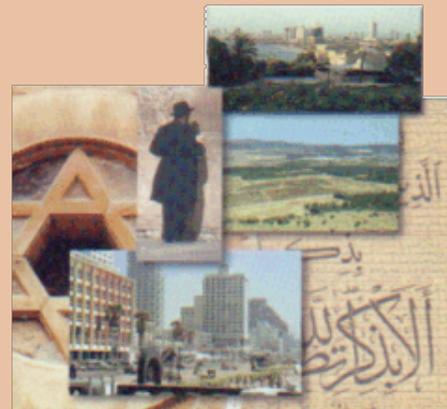
- *The Business Professional Network (BPN)*, John Warton, International Coordinator, email: info@bpn.org
- *The Shepherd Society* (c/o Bethlehem Bible College), email: bethbc@planet.edu

Pray for continued, strengthened unity in working together.



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