

Messianic Outreach in Israel Thrives With Help From International Visitors

Avi Mizrachi says a community of Jews who believe in Jesus as the Messiah is growing throughout the Holy Land

A congregation of Messianic Jews and a ministry center directly

associated with the church are reaching the Holy Land with the gospel from a base in Tel Aviv, a city known more for its night life and New Age influences than for traditional religious foundations.

Adonai Roi Messianic Congregation is pastored by Avi Mizrachi, who also leads the nearby Dugit Center—a Messianic outreach base located in the heart of Tel Aviv on Frishman Street.

Adonai Roi means “The Lord is my shepherd” and dugit in Hebrew is a small fishing boat. The Dugit staff boldly takes the gospel to the streets of Tel Aviv to win souls to Christ, and many of their “catches” attend services at Adonai Roi, where an average of 80 to 100 Jews from Israel, Russia, Ukraine, South Africa, the United States, Cyprus and the Philippines worship Jesus as Messiah.

“Tel Aviv is the place where people from all over the country really come for pleasure,” said Mizrachi, a Messianic Jew. “People are just searching, looking for all kinds of things—yoga, meditation, the occult. We see how people are so hungry.”

Dugit and Adonai Roi have reached thousands of Jews with the salvation message. Today there are approximately 5,000 Jews now living in Israel who accept Jesus as Messiah, Mizrachi said. Just 25 years ago, Messianic Jews were hiding to avoid deportation. Today, in almost every city in Israel, one can find a Messianic congregation. "That is a miracle that God has done in two decades," Mizrachi told Charisma. "It is the work of God."

Sitting inside the Dugit Center, Mizrachi and his American-born wife, Chaya, told how God has blessed and protected them in a sometimes volatile environment of persecution.

Eight years ago, a Christian Baptist bookstore closed. Mizrachi, who graduated from Bible school in the United States at Christ for the Nations in Dallas, reopened the bookstore on lease as the Dugit Center. Mizrachi keeps office space there and utilizes the remaining space for evangelism and a coffee shop, where he entertains religious and secular Jews as well as Arab Muslims.

Dugit staffers are joined by other Messianic believers and volunteers from around the world to launch bold street outreach efforts that include music, drama, dance and testimonies about Jesus.

Not everyone is happy about Mizrachi's work. The Yad Le-Achim is an anti-missionary organization made up of Orthodox Jews who believe that Jews who believe in Jesus are no longer Jews. They say Dugit's evangelism activities are an abomination to Jehovah because they destroy the Jewish race and prevent the coming of the "true" Messiah.

The Yad Le-Achim often target Dugit street outreaches for protest. They try to shout down Messianic speakers and singing by yelling loudly and ordering them to stop their “blasphemy.”

“In spite of all this, we see that the typical secular Israeli is open to hear what we have to say and we are able to share the Good News of the Messiah,” Mizrachi said.

The Dugit Center provides written materials and Hebrew Bibles as well as Bible studies for its visitors. But the center is targeted by the Orthodox.

The center’s walls have been defaced with swastikas. Its computers were attacked by viruses. Complaints to local police fall on deaf ears.

Still, Mizrachi refuses to retaliate. He noted that the Apostle Paul was brainwashed against believers in Jesus—until he met Jesus himself.

“The Yad Le-Achim believe what they are doing is for God—just like Paul did as Saul [when he persecuted Christians],” Mizrachi said. “We don’t respond in kind. We try to show everyone the love of Jesus for them. We pray for their salvation.”

God’s favor continues to rest on Adonai Roi, Mizrachi said. When the congregation outgrew its meeting place at Dugit, God again provided. Property in Tel Aviv is rare and expensive, and hard for Messianic Jews to obtain. But the Jewish owner of a former discotheque offered to lease the building to Adonai Roi.

“It was a discotheque, but it is redeemed today, and we are dancing for the Lord there,” Mizrachi said.

Despite forewarnings of potential legislation geared to stop evangelism in Israel, Mizrachi claimed: “The harvest is ripe, people are coming to know Yeshua, and absolutely nothing will stop the gospel from going forth.”