

American Pentecostal Harley Riders Tour Holy Land

Contrary to the ordinary scene at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, a few dozen American bikers roared up to Israel's Temple Mount and joined Orthodox Jews in prayer Sunday night.

Believe it or not, the tattooed, leather-wearing motorcyclists are actually Pentecostal preachers. The group of more than 70 Harley Davidson enthusiasts is part of Mission:M25, an Amarillo, Texas-based motorcycle ministry that "provides identity and connectivity for ministers and ministries of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church," according to Gary Burd, director of Mission:M25.

Although Burd says the organization typically focuses on U.S. military veterans, prison convicts and the homeless, a group of members felt called to go stand in solidarity with Israel after riding to the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C.

The bikers shipped their Harley Davidsons in ocean-going containers from Texas to Israel. Burd said the Israel Tourism Ministry helped everything go smoothly.

The Tourism Ministry's commissioner for North and South America, Haim Gutin, said the ministry assisted the bikers in the months-long process of shipping their bikes to Israel and helped them work out the details of the journey.

Gutin said the trip is part of the Tourism Ministry's efforts to bring every North American Christian to Israel at least once in their lives, The Jerusalem Post reports. He said such a trip "changes their lives [because] they see the Bible come to life before their very eyes."

The group's mission is to honor the armed forces, fallen soldiers and those missing in action. The trip to Israel is

the first time they have taken an honoring ride, called "Run for the Wall," outside of the United States. Their goal of this trip is to honor the Israel Defense Forces.

Burd said the group chose Israel as its first venture outside of the U.S. because, "We believe it's God's favored nation. It's his chosen people."

He told Travelujah: "We came to be a blessing. Our whole emphasis was to honor the IDF and all of the armed forces in Israel. As Christians we can come here and freely walk where our Lord walked. We know it takes the sacrifice of men and women to keep a country free."

The bikers were joined Sunday by more than 100 Israeli motorcyclists, and the entourage rode from the military memorial at Latrun to the Western Wall with the help of a police escort. Burd said Latrun, a site of pivotal battles during the 1948 and 1967 wars, had a special meaning to the group.

"We chose Latrun because of the military importance," he explained. "We came over here to make a statement that we appreciate the IDF and all the armed forces. We're just some patriots from America and some military people. We wanted to come over as Christians to say thanks to the IDF because they have been so good about keeping this land free so we can come and visit it."

Israel's TV Channel 7 Arutz Sheva reported that the members "prayed for the safety of the Jewish people and Israel, while holding a moment of silence for Israel and America's fallen soldiers" at the Western Wall.

The bikers are on a 10-day tour of the country. By the time they are done on Thursday, they will have ridden across the country to Caesarea, Nazareth, Mount Carmel, the Kinneret, the Golan Heights and down to Masada, Ein Gedi and elsewhere in the Negev.

The pilgrims gave soldiers they met along the way copies of Psalm 91 printed in Hebrew and English. The ministry also brought \$620,000 worth of medical supplies to be distributed by an Israeli NGO, Travelujah reports.

In addition to the group's purpose to stand for Israel, Burd said the sights were awe-inspiring to the bikers.

"As we were riding down the Megiddo Valley, I thought of all the history and the future prophecies regarding this land—and there I am riding through on a motorcycle," Burd said. "I teared up riding into the Old City. This is where King David and all the greats—the prophets and kings—walked."