

Israel: From Apathy to Admiration

Sad to say, but a little more than two years ago my interest in the State of Israel could be described as apathetic at best.

Because I believe the Bible is the uncompromised Word of God—and I have ever since I got saved more than 25 years ago—I have recognized the Jews as God's chosen people as in 2 Samuel 7:24: "You established Your people Israel as your own people forever, and You, Lord, became their God" (MEV). There are many other Scriptures to confirm this, including Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 7:6-8, 1 Kings 10:9 and Psalms 105:8-15.

It was only when I came to work for Charisma Media, however, that my eyes—and my heart—were truly opened to how special Israel really is. I began to oversee the production of our Standing With Israel section on . It has expanded my horizons beyond my comprehension.

Prior to coming here, I had never, in my 46 years, been acquainted with an Orthodox Jew much less befriended one. That has changed, and I now count Jonathan Feldstein, who lives in Effrat, as one of my closest friends despite the physical distance between us and the vast differences in our backgrounds and beliefs.

Jonathan and I pray for and encourage each other constantly. Lord knows he and his family have needed it this past summer during the Gazan conflict with Hamas.

This summer, I attended a service at the Jewish Center in Maitland, Florida, to pray for the Israeli teens who were kidnapped by Hamas. Tragically, the youth were killed shortly thereafter, but, gratefully, it allowed me to connect with the local Jewish community. They are wonderful people.

Charisma also has afforded me the opportunity to learn about and appreciate the many wonderful Messianic Jewish ministries that make an impact on Israel every day and to forge relationships with the pertinent people involved. That includes many of the 12 ministries that we honored in our special November/December issue of *Ministry Today*.

Earlier this year on their trip to Orlando, I had the privilege of meeting Wayne Hilsden and his wife, Ann, of King of Kings Community Jerusalem. The Hilsdens have been spreading the gospel of Christ in Israel for over 31 years. It began as a Bible study/fellowship in a living room and is now a thriving ministry committed to proclaiming the Good News of Yeshua, expressing the heart of the Messiah toward hurting people through deeds of compassion and apostolic ministry.

Many other Jewish and Messianic ministry leaders have graced us with their presence in our offices, including Barry and Batya Segal of Vision for Israel; Mel Hoelzle, Gary Cristofaro and Craig Shrum of Ezra International; and Rabbi Shmuel Bowman of Operation Lifeshield. Each of these ministries is unique in its impact on Israel, and you can read about them in full in the . issue of *Ministry Today*.

Also in that issue are stories from Hilsden about passing down the vision of Israel to the next generation; a piece from Dr. Michael Brown on why we as believers should care about Israel today; and a piece from Jonathan Bernis of Jewish Voice Ministries International as to how we can reach out to the Jews in love and friendship.

We at Charisma Media believe it is crucial for believers to stand with Israel, especially in the perilous times in which we live. As you know, the early church was composed almost entirely of Jews, and for three years, the gospel went through Jerusalem and Judea before it went out to the Gentiles.

For those who aren't already, I would encourage you, as

ministerial leaders, to educate your congregations on Israel's crucial role in the End Times. Preach a sermon—or a series of sermons—on it. Create a small-group Bible study on the subject. “Surely the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah ... I will put My laws into their minds and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Heb. 8:8-10, MEV).

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