

Jiu-Jitsu for Jesus: Messianic Jewish believer wins Jiu-Jitsu World Championship

Adding to the great successes Israel has had in the Olympic Games, Israeli believer Haniel Schucman just won a gold medal in the Jiu-Jitsu World Championship in Greece.

During the playing of the Israeli national anthem, “HaTikvah,” Schucman gave glory to Jesus, with “Yeshua” – the Hebrew name for Jesus – emblazoned across the back of his kimono as he accepted his prize.

Schucman (20) from Mevasseret Zion, competed against 3,000 contestants from 60 countries to win the gold.

“I am full of gratitude to God for this day! This is such a special and important day for me, but the thing that is more important to me than any podium achievement or medal in the world is to glorify the name of Jesus and carry the name of God in honor!”

Schucman took the top spot in his weight category (up to 77 kg) after beating two Canadian contestants – first in the semi-finals and then in the final.

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He has been competing for more than four years with the Israeli Jiu-Jitsu national team and won the under-21 world champion competition in Abu Dhabi two years ago. He has now qualified to represent Israel in the World Games in China 2025.

Schucman was aware that in addition to representing Jesus on the podium, he was also representing Israel.

With the recent surge of antisemitism worldwide since the Oct. 7 terror attack last year, Israelis have often felt hatred from other nations. He said this has been the experience of the Israeli Jiu-Jitsu team competing overseas.

Schucman explained how he wanted to be an encouragement and comfort to Israel, and how he had put a verse on his kimono along with the name "Yeshua."

"In addition to the name Jesus on my back, I asked them to print the verse, "For the LORD will plead their cause, And plunder the soul of those who plunder them" (Proverbs 22:23), especially for the world championship. I read this verse recently and it felt so true to the situation we are in as a country and I hope it can strengthen our people by remembering that it is God who fights for us and in whom we have hope and comfort."

Jiu-Jitsu, known as the "gentle art," originated in Japan and emphasizes defense over attack. Rather than relying on striking or kicking, it employs principles of leverage, angles, pressure, and timing, along with an understanding of human anatomy, to achieve a non-violent submission of an opponent, according to Essential Jiu Jitsu.

Israel has had a number of significant wins in recent international Jiu-Jitsu competitions, taking the gold at the Paris Jiu-Jitsu 2024 Grand Prix in April and in November 2023 in Croatia.

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The Jerusalem Post reported that in April, Yarin Shriki, the champion of the adult male under-69 kg Gi category, was a

survivor of the Oct. 7 Nova Music Festival last year. He dedicated his win to his best friend, Yohai Ben Zechariah, who was among those murdered in the massacre.

Like Schucman, Shriki also felt the significance of his achievements in the light of global anger towards Israel, saying, "I am very proud to represent our country, especially in places where the majority isn't supporting us, and there is a lot of hate towards our people. It gives me great satisfaction to make those people stand for the Israel national anthem."

Haniel's father, Fabio Schucman, is the founder and head professor of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Academy, ATOS Jerusalem in Mevasseret Tzion, based near Jerusalem. A third-degree Black Belt with over 32 years of training and competition experience, Fabio has coached numerous Israelis in martial arts.

The organization's website reads: "At ATOS Israel, everyone is welcome. Whether you're looking to compete at the highest level, learn self-defense, or simply improve your fitness, we offer tailored programs to meet your needs. Our classes build both physical and mental strength, emphasizing discipline, focus, and personal growth on and off the mats."

Prof. Schucman told ALL ISRAEL NEWS: "I have been saying to my athletes, including those at my school and my son Haniel, that these days, as Jewish people, our dreams and freedom are built and conquered with blood spilled by our brothers on the battlefield. It's a huge responsibility and privilege to represent Israel and the Jewish people around the world."

Haniel said he is "looking forward to returning to Israel and celebrating this victory with everyone."

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