

Gateway Center for Israel: Revitalizing the Church's Heart for Israel

Israel and the Jewish people are God's center stage in the pages of the Bible. The story of the Jewish people from Abraham to the apostle Paul unfolds God's heart for both Israel and the nations. Sadly, Israel has become a divisive and unhealthy topic among believers today. As a result, many churches don't engage in God's heart for Israel because they don't have a healthy understanding of it.

When Nic Lesmeister moved to Israel in 2014, little did he know that God was preparing him to be part of a movement that would one day serve to revitalize the heart of the church for Israel.

Throughout the time Lesmeister spent living in Jerusalem, God developed a unique connection between him and the Jewish people as he experienced firsthand the ongoing conflicts between Jews and the Arabs. From the constant missile attacks from Gaza to the Palestinian terrorist attacks in the city, these psychological terrors connected Lesmeister to the people in a highly empathic way.

But in the midst of all the disunity, God gave Lesmeister a healthy understanding of what was taking place:

"Israel is a place of alignment. God wants to align Israel and the nations. There is a lot of conflict there because God wants to align something to build unity," he said.

When Lesmeister moved back to the states from Israel, he was given the opportunity to lead the Messianic Jewish Bible Institute (MJBI). MJBI was born in the 1990s out of Shady Grove Church, predated Gateway Church (Southlake, Texas). The

elders received a special revelation that would be used to format the local church's missions' values—"To the Jew First."

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"(Rom. 1:16).

Shortly after taking over the MJB, God gave Lesmeister a vision for reaching pastors. In Romans 11, Paul teaches the responsibility Gentiles have to stir Israel to jealousy. Lesmeister communicated this to Wayne Wilks, leader of Gateway Church's Global Jewish ministry. They then developed a plan to create a "center" where the church could come together to learn about God's heart for Israel and the Jewish people.

In 2019, they brought this idea to life by merging MJB into Gateway to form the Gateway Center for Israel. The vision of Gateway Center is to inspire the global church toward a biblical and sincere love for Israel and the Jewish people. Their mission is to guide pastors to a biblical understanding of Israel, knowing it will bring a dynamic enriching to their churches, as it has at Gateway.

When Israel was formed in 1948, many claim there were only six families in the land who were Jewish followers of Jesus. Today, there are an estimated 20-30,000. This is a miraculous rebirth of the Messianic Jewish community, the remnant that Paul talks about in Romans 11: "the natural branches that embrace Jesus." As the global church stands with the Messianic community, and loves the broader Jewish community, Nic Lesmeister and Gateway believe there will be a "life from the dead" blessing poured out from heaven.

For more on how the Lord is moving in Israel and beyond, listen to the full episode of *Missions in the Modern Day* on the Charisma Podcast Network here. {eo}