

Worship Strategy Breaks Strongholds, Opens Heavens in Israel

How do you spread the gospel in the very place it was first preached 2,000 years ago? Where do you even begin when two millennia of confusion, misunderstandings and violence stand between you and the people you are trying to reach?

For Gersham*, an Operation Mobilization Israel team member serving in this biblical land, it all begins with worship. For more than seven years, Gersham has pursued a specific vision of worshipping God in public places in Israel. But this strategy was not birthed overnight.

“It was born out of frustration,” explains Gersham. “We had been with OM already for about two years and had tried lots of different things, but we hadn’t yet found our groove.”

Gersham and his wife did evangelism in the street, distributed literature to households, hosted evangelistic parties in their home and attempted to reach out to the attendees of local New Age festivals. Despite all their labor, they still felt like they were missing something.

“We were overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenge to somehow bring the gospel to the half million people of [this region],” he admits.

Our Eyes Are on You

During this time of uncertainty, a guest speaker at their local congregation preached a message on 2 Chronicles 20, a chapter in which three powerful armies simultaneously attack the kingdom of Judah.

King Jehoshaphat gathers the people of Judah together and

publicly prays, admitting to God that he has no power to defeat his enemies. He finishes his prayer by telling the Lord, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you" (2 Chronicles 20:12, ESV).

"From that I realized that it is okay to admit that you don't know what you are doing," explains Gersham. "In fact, it's a good place to start. The key is to keep your eyes on God, and He will show you what to do."

As he studied 2 Chronicles 20, Gersham noticed another startling fact: "The whole rest of that account is all about worship, and it really took me by storm because I'm not a musician, I'm not a worship leader, and I don't know much about this category of activity in the believer's life."

Despite his lack of expertise, Gersham gathered help from his local congregation and began intentionally circling the region with praise and worship. As they neared the completion of their first circle, God showed Gersham that a major city nearby was to become their real focus.

Circling the Stronghold

"I've been here for about 20 years, and when we get close to this city, that's when the hair on the back of my neck starts to stand up," admits Gersham. "There's something very intense about that place."

Teams are often confronted by a spirit of fear when they do literature distribution and outreach in the city, and throughout the years several people have received threats while working there. According to Gersham, "It is serious work and the opposition is very serious, both in the physical realm and in the spiritual realm."

"We came to realize that [this city] is a very important, strategic city in Judaism," explains Gersham. "In fact, it is the heart of Rabbinic Judaism."

It was in this city that the Sanhedrin, or Jewish Council, was re-established after the destruction of the temple. The oral law of Judaism was written down for the first time there. This body of literature, the Talmud, is held by many Jews to be equal in authority with the written Word of God.

With this in mind, Gersham began to center the circle of worship on a tower near the center of the city, visible from a distance in every direction. At a distance of about 15 kilometers (about 10 miles) from the tower, he drew a circle on his map, and then looked for prominent or historical places at which they could worship.

“For the last seven years we have been trying to complete this work, though not completely understanding it, and in the summer of 2012 we had release from the Lord that we had, in fact, completed the outer circle of worship and praise around the city,” says Gersham.

But God is not finished with this project.

“Almost immediately we felt the impression that we should move in closer to the city and continue with the same thing,” explains Gersham. In obedience to the Lord’s leading, Gersham drew another circle and began the process again.

By People of Strange Lips

In the last few years, Gersham has used more short-term teams from abroad to accomplish the vision for circling the city with praise and worship.

“All these groups the Lord is bringing from overseas are part of his strategy for reaching people, specifically through strangers,” says Gersham. He sees these foreign teams as a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy that “by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the Lord will speak to this people” (Isaiah 28:11, ESV).

“It seems to be picking up in intensity,” says Gersham. “In

the last three or four years, the amount of groups coming to work with us has tripled. We don't look for them. We don't recruit. They just find us."

With the help of short-term teams, Gersham has almost completed the inner circle of worship, which is located only a few kilometers from the city center.

"Of course, I can't tell you what's after that," he says, "but I think the Lord is going to give us release to engage in open public worship inside the city."

In fact, a team from Hawaii actually did some worship in the city just a few weeks ago. According to Gersham, "There was no opposition and people were actually quite curious why these people were singing on the streets."

*Name changed