

Shalom News



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Shalom Family & Friends,

Christmas Greetings from Jerusalem!

The United States has finally elected a President and the news channels can now calm down and report on something a little more interesting than politics. Unless politics is your thing and you've really enjoyed the last 9 months of news! The Israelis though, can't get enough of politics. They voted to choose a new mayor of Jerusalem recently, and early next year hold national elections for Prime Minister. **Please pray** for a just government. Many governments in the Middle East are corrupt, this is an opportunity for Israel to lead by example and have a government committed to justice and truth and fairness for all the peoples who live here.

The children (Micah and Atarah) have joined a cooperative home-schooling network. Once a week 9 families, comprising of some 30 children, get together to engage in group learning activities. This is an **answer to prayer** to find new friends for our children in Jerusalem, after their previous friends left when their parents couldn't remain in Israel.

The Rain season has started .. well sort of. The season has started but the rain hasn't. The Rabbis have a proverb that says: 'Which is better, the day of the Messiah or the day of Rain?'. The answer is: 'the day of rain'. Why? Because 'the day of the Messiah' will benefit only the believers, while 'the day of rain' benefits both the righteous and unrighteous. **Pray** that G-d will be merciful and send the rain, even though we don't deserve it.

Christmas is very close. I am sure most of you will have noticed the sales, the tinsel, the lights and carols permeating the stores and shops. Christmas in the Holy Land is a different matter. Many of you will probably say 'thank G-d' at this point. The State of Israel does not recognize Christmas as a national holiday, and the stores do not go in for the holiday specials. However Israelis are intensely curious and so we anticipate being very busy at Christ Church this Christmas. We have planned a special Christmas Eve service. Thousands of Israelis will be busing into Jerusalem on organized tours of the various Church's around the Old City. They will be curious to see how Christianity is celebrated at Christmas time. As such we will prepare Christmas cookies, hot soup and bread, and mulled wine to help fight off the winter chill. We will have carols sung from 6pm until midnight for Israelis to enjoy and have guides (many of them Jewish believers in Jesus) to tell them the Christmas story and share their faith. We will also have available 500 Gospels of Luke in Hebrew for interested people to take as a gift. Last year we gave out the Gospel of Matthew. So we're trying Luke this year. **Pray** for open hearts, willing ears for the visitors and patience for our guides.

Houses from Within

An "Open House" was held this September in Jerusalem. An organization in Israel approached various old historical houses in and around Jerusalem and asked if the owners would be willing to 'open' them to the public. We of course responded enthusiastically. While Christ Church is always open to the Israeli public and has hebrew speaking guides available to the visitor, we had the opportunity to also open the Anglican School to Israeli visitors. Usually special arrangements are made for groups to visit the Anglican School.

The Open House or '**Houses from Within**' took place on Friday September 19 and Shabbat September 20. We were inundated with Israelis. Over 3000 visited both our properties in the two days. The Staff and guides handled themselves professionally and hospitably and gave a good witness of themselves. Twice as many Israelis visited the Anglican School, exploring the prophetic history of the buildings and faith of the founders. For a time the walls of the compound were down and Israelis shared in the past, present and future of the Mission hospital and School.

For many visitors to Christ Church this was the first time they had been inside a Protestant Church. Many Israelis encountered authentic Christianity in our guides and many also spoke to Jewish believers in Jesus for the first time. These moments are priceless, and we have no way to measure the impact of these important encounters. Many of the discussions were frank and to the point. Many questioned the difference between Catholics and Protestants after confronting a Christianity unfamiliar to them. Many asked and heard the gospel from Jewish believers in a relaxed non threatening environment. Many stayed after the tour to sit and drink coffee, contemplating and enjoying the peace of Christ Church.

After one presentation at Christ Church on Friday a Jewish couple approached me to discuss something further. We sat down in the Heritage Centre and the gentleman started by saying he wasn't sure of the right question to ask but that he wanted to talk. I could tell from his body language there was something he wanted to say, perhaps he wasn't sure how to ask or perhaps he wasn't sure he really wanted to know. I responded by saying 'Ask anything you want, I will not be offended.' He began by asking the difference between Protestants and Catholics. Once the couple were more comfortable he then challenged the validity of faith in G-d at all in a world so obviously evil and corrupt. Soon the conversation came down to Jewish Christianity. Logically he understood that Jesus was Jewish and that all the early Christians were themselves Jews. From there on though there was a disconnect. How could we talk about Jews who believe in Jesus today as still being Jews? He talked with passion about the deep sense of betrayal he would feel to believe in Jesus as a Jew, because of the Shoah, the Holocaust. How would he face his family or friends? It was almost as if he was offended by the very offer of Jesus as Messiah to Jewish people. At that moment Avraham joined us. Avraham is one of my volunteer guides at the Heritage Centre from the Hebrew Congregation at Christ Church. He introduced himself as Israeli, Jewish, and a fighter in the wars of Israel. Avraham described his life prior to Faith in Yeshua and the difference he feels now as a believer in Jesus. Avraham has had a colorful life, wars, marriages, alcohol and kids. He could relate to the challenges faced by an Israeli Jew to the message of the Gospel. This was one of the first times this couple had talked at any length with a Jewish believer. As a group we tackled some tough issues like: 'Where was G-d during the Shoah (Holocaust)?' and 'How does a Jew overcome stigma from friends and family about believing in Jesus?' The couple did not take a Bible as some visitors do after leaving the Heritage Centre. However, Avraham offered another book that deals head-on with these tough issues that we had discussed called, 'King of the Jews'. They accepted our gift and left with a 'Shabbat Shalom'. **Pray** that they indeed have a peaceful Sabbath and find the King of the Jews. You all know He stands at the door and knocks.

In His Service,

Aaron, Michelle, Micah & Atarah



Note to Supporters:

We are so thankful to the many people who have supported us financially in the past and for those who have committed to continue supporting us in the next phase of our Mission in Israel.

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