

# **Outreach in Israel**

**By Dan Sered**

I wish that I could be with you all in person. I applaud and appreciate the invitation of LCJE Europe to us in Israel to come and take part in the conference. Thank you for your willingness to open up LCJE Europe to the body of Messiah in Israel. At the start of this paper I do want to mention David Tsadok and the great work that he is doing as the coordinator of LCJE Israel. Earlier this year, we had an intriguing, interesting and stimulating LCJE Israel conference at the Baptist Village. It was a great success and many people who were not aware of the LCJE network were in attendance. David did an excellent job planning, executing and leading the conference. We have much to build on for the future of LCJE Israel.

In this paper I want to discuss the current state of outreach in Israel; highlighting three areas: an overview of the state of outreach in Israel, obstacles to Jewish evangelism that exist in the land and the opportunities that are set before us.

## **Overview**

Knowing and appreciating the past is important for us as we look into the future. Being a young leader, I believe it is important to show appreciation for all the people that have gone before us. There are many that I know and many more that I do not. I imagine Kai can probably fill this entire conference with papers about the history of outreach in Israel. That is not my purpose here, but I do want to acknowledge those who have gone before us and have paved the way leading us to the current state that the body in Israel is in. Many of these people have paid a huge price for their faith and for their stand for the Gospel.

Most of the outreach that we see in Israel now and in the past has been a congregational oriented approach. Ralph Winter in his article “Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission” speaks of the sodality structure and the modality structure. The modality structure being a local church oriented outreach and the sodality structure being the apostolic band. Much of the outreach that has gone on in Israel over the years has been that of a modality structure; local congregations having a presence in a community with the members of the congregation doing personal evangelism by sharing their faith and inviting friends to services. Similarly in his book, “The Missionary Nature of the Church”, Johannes Blauw differentiates between centripetal and centrifugal mission. Mission in the Old Testament was largely centripetal; inviting the nations to come up to Jerusalem to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Mission in the New Testament is centrifugal; going out to the nations and inviting them to come to believe in the Jewish Messiah Jesus. In Israel most of the outreach has been centripetal, inviting people to come in. What is increasingly needed in Israel is the centrifugal mission approach – going out and evangelizing through proclamation and outreach in multiple forms.

The National Evangelism Committee over the years has organized occasional outreach and even more during a season when new age festivals really presented great opportunity for evangelism. The National Evangelism Committee, Operation Mobilization, The Bible Society and Jews for Jesus all took advantage of these New

age festivals when they were particularly fruitful. As these festivals have died down and as a much younger crowd have shown up these have been less fruitful. However, other opportunities have been arising. John Pex has been consistently involved in beach evangelism and outreach in Eilat, though now his ministry is more focused on Sudanese refugees. As the church in Israel grows in strength and vision for outreach there are going to be more and more opportunities to take advantage of.

One of the other developments has been reaching out to the Israeli backpacking scene in the Far East. This type of outreach helps to cultivate the mindset among young adult Israeli believers of outreach proving that it is possible outside the land and hopefully impacting the willingness to reach out back in the land as well. Israel College of the Bible, Chosen People ministries and Jews for Jesus as well as in years gone by the Danish Israel Mission and the Norwegian Church Ministry in Israel have sent teams to the far east to try and reach out to Israelis as they travel after the military.

Moving into more current history, 2009 and 2010 were a great years of outreach for the body of Messiah in the land. It is hard for me to give you an overview of all that has happened mainly because I am sure that there are outreaches and ministries that I am not aware of that have done some great work in this past year. What follows does not mean to be an all-inclusive list but rather I want to report on two main outreaches, especially because they both involved the media.

### **IRRTV (International Russian Radio and TV) – Changed life outreach**

I wonder how many of you heard of a ministry called IRRTV? I would imagine that most have not. IRRTV is a ministry that is based in Finland. For many years they have had tremendous impact in Russia and the Ukraine reaching people for Christ. They first used radio broadcasting into the USSR to preach the Gospel. Later using TV and Christian children shows like "Super Book" to bring Jesus to children. And today by producing changed life testimonies to show the power of the Gospel to change one's life.

Obviously, by preaching the Gospel in Russia and the Ukraine they have seen Jewish people coming to faith. This has led the founder and the leader of this ministry, Hannu Haukah, to establish a Jewish evangelism department. In 2007 I met Hannu in Israel, for the first time and he shared with me the heart that God has given him to do evangelism in Israel. Hannu had the vision of advertising on billboards, buses, the Internet and in newspapers a testimonial booklet that he would offer to people for free.

In the Spring of 2009, IRRTV in corporation with several local congregations and ministries launched this "changed life" campaign to the Russian and Arabic speaking populations in Israel and then in the fall they did the same in the Hebrew language. While the spring campaign was only in areas where Russian and Arabic speakers live, the fall campaign was national. Call centers were established and believers were recruited to answer the phones to gather names and address of people who were interested in receiving the free booklet. This booklet was produced by HaGefen ministry in all 3 languages.

The Hebrew campaign is the one that we at Jews for Jesus were involved in. The phone center for the Tel Aviv region ads rang in our office. There was another phone center in Jerusalem that was managed by Jerusalem Assembly congregation and the one in Haifa was managed by Carmel Assembly congregation. In total this campaign resulted in over 1,000 book orders.

### **Jews for Jesus – 2010 Behold Your God campaigns**

In 2008 we at Jews for Jesus launched a 6 year outreach called "Behold Your God". This is our commitment to have a saturation evangelistic campaign in every one of the geographic regions in the land of Israel. There are twelve such regions, and therefore we are conducting two campaigns per year; one campaign in the spring and one in the fall.

In 2010 the campaigns were in the Sharon region (covering the cities of Petach Tikva, Ra'anana, Hertzeliya etc...) and in the North Shore region (covering the cities Natanya and Chedera etc...). The slogan of our campaigns is yeshu=yeshua=yeshuah (Jesus=Yeshua=salvation). This is the same slogan that we used in the campaigns in 2008 & 2009. In 2008 media venues for the most part accepted our ads but by the campaigns this year it got more difficult to have our ads accepted.

By the Sharon and North Shore campaign since we could not get hardly any billboard companies to take our ads, we made large banners that we held in busy intersections. This methodology proved to be very effective in both proclaiming the Gospel and in engaging people in conversations. You see, when our teams were out with the banners our phones at the office did not stop ringing. We had thousands of incoming calls. Most were negative and hostile but over 1,000 were from Israelis who had questions. Out of these callers, we got the contact information of over 300 Israelis who wanted us to send them a book about Y'shua.

From both campaigns we received the contact information of over 1,500 Israelis who told us that they want to know more about Jesus. For this year we saw just over 40 decisions for Messiah. Both campaigns also attracted some media attention in the form of newspaper articles, Internet articles and a radio interview.

### **Obstacles**

#### **Opposition**

Opposition to the Gospel message and to evangelism in Israel continues. We know that our opposition is not toward us but toward Jesus. He told us to pray for our enemies. We do not do that enough. Also in the Bible, we read that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities. The first rule of war is to know your enemy. The enemy knows our personal weaknesses. It would benefit us to be aware of them and ask the Lord to give us strength to overcome those weaknesses. Our relationship with the Lord must at every moment of everyday be first in our lives. This is easier said than done. It seems extreme but in our field of Jewish evangelism in the land of Israel I find that it is necessary. The apostle Paul said "pray without ceasing". Even though we fail at this (me probably more than others), it is not an impossible task but hard to be sure. It is very easy to neglect this pivotal aspect of our ministry when we are so busy working for the Lord. When it comes to opposition, our focus needs to be prayer.

### **Anti Missionary activity**

The Israeli activists, Yad La'achim, have been active in opposing Messianic Jews. Their efforts include violent protests such as what occurred in the Beer Sheva or even what we suspect the bombing of the Ortiz family home.

In Be'er Sheva, a few years ago, the local congregation was attacked by an illegal demonstration that was organized by Yad Leachim during a baptism service. Since the crowd turned violent and caused some damage inside the congregation, Pastor Howard Bass in consultation with other believer and lawyers decided to press charges against Yad Leachim and the Chief Rabbi of Be'er Sheva who was also a part of the organizers of the illegal demonstration. To the surprise of us all, the judge ruled in favor of the defendants and even forced the plaintiffs to pay back legal fees for the defendants. That court loss is very discouraging to the believers in Be'er Sheva and to the body in Israel. We need to pray for justice and for favor with the Israeli authorities.

The story of Jack Litel, the Jewish terrorist who sent the bomb to the Ortiz family also hit the news. We were not surprised when a few months later, Ha'aretz paper published a story that connected Jack Litel to Yad Leachim saying that he volunteered with the organization. The same paper months before had an investigative report on Yad Leachim organization and the illegal tactics that they use in persecuting believers in Israel.

Something less organized but equally as challenging for those who do direct evangelism and proclamation are the religious who are without specifically organizing, willing to whip up sentiment against those like Jews for Jesus who would stand on the street corners and hand out gospel literature. They can gather a crowd and or get young people from a Yeshiva to come quickly through phoning. When the police are called they are more interested in restoring order rather than in protecting the rights of people trying to do outreach.

### **Mobilization of local believers**

Jesus said: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." Matt 9:37b-38

These words of Jesus perfectly describe the field of Jewish evangelism in Israel. Most everyone in Israel is Jewish so there is plenty of fruit to harvest. But one of the major obstacles is the absence of workers willing to make themselves visible, available and vulnerable enough to make Messiah known.

Certainly the struggle in recruitment is also due to the fact that there are so few Jewish believers in the land in comparison to the total number of Jewish people living in the land. The exact number of Jewish believers in Israel is not clear and there are many different estimates. One thing everyone would agree on is that less than 1% of the Jewish population in Israel believes in Jesus.

We have seen the growth of the Messianic body in Israel, but still there are not enough local Israelis who are willing to serve in full time ministry. The body in Israel is in need of more evangelists in the land who are willing to stand firm and preach the Gospel. We need to pray more for the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest in the land of Israel.

### **Opportunities**

The fact that most of the Israeli population has not been reached with the Gospel opens a wide door of opportunities for us as we look into the future. There is a lot of outreach and vision for outreach happening in the land. I chose to mention three opportunities for ministry in the land today. I am sure that there are many more.

### **Mercy Ministry**

Chosen People ministry, Calvary chapel, Christian Friends of Israel, Tents of Mercy and many of the local congregations in Israel are involved in mercy ministry. Soup kitchens, ministry to prostitutes, ministry to drug addicts, ministry to alcoholics, and giving to the poor are among the things that are done. This is a good way of ministry, showing the love of Y'shua. The law in Israel forbids sharing the Gospel while being engaged in this type of ministry and that is definitely a challenge that Mercy Ministry in Israel faces. It is unclear how affective Mercy Ministry has been in preaching the Gospel and in reaching the lost. Having said that, Mercy Ministry is a worthwhile ministry in itself. Mercy Ministry is more attractive to believers in the land and has had more success in mobilizing locals to participate in this sort of ministry.

### **Jews for Jesus – Behold Your God outreach**

Jews for Jesus has six more campaigns to conduct in order to complete the commitment to conduct a saturation evangelistic campaign in every one of the geographic regions in Israel. We hope that we are blazing a trail for many others to follow and do their own kind of intentional and consistent outreach. We have found many methodologies to be affective in proclaiming the Gospel such as phoning people from the phone book and offering them a free copy of the New Testament in Hebrew, standing in busy intersections holding large banners which a slogan that communicates the Gospel, handing out Gospel tracts in busy street corners, using the media etc... We hope to have more cooperation from both outside of Israel and inside of Israel.

### **Ministry to traveling Israelis**

As Israelis continue to travel all over the East and South America this present to us a unique opportunity to meet them where they are and to be able to have meaningful interactions with them. They are traveling and are open to new ideas. Chosen People ministry, Jews for Jesus, Israel College of the Bible and other congregations will continue to send teams to meet these Israelis and to share with them the Gospel. We need more permanent centers where we can host and minister to these travelers, not only outside of Israel but inside of Israel as well. A center where we can do effective young adult ministry is needed.

## **Conclusion**

I am grateful for LCJE Europe and for all that you are doing for Jewish evangelism. In order for us to change the culture in the land and to see more Israelis come to know their Messiah we need to continue to work and network together. In Israel, we need your experience, support and help to continue to advance the cause of Jewish evangelism. The partnership of LCJE Europe and LCJE Israel is key in expanding our affective outreach in Israel. Thanks for the opportunity to present this paper to you.

Dan Sered  
Israel director of Jews for Jesus