

Nail clippers, oil bottles and other personal items are among the artifacts on display at the ancient public baths in Beit She'an national park

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A Bit of Heaven on Earth

By Shani Sorko-Ram Ferguson

It was Israel's 71st Independence Day 2019 and I was reveling in the annual celebration.

In Israel the day before Independence Day is Memorial Day. "Days" in Israel begin in the evening just like the days of creation. (So the evening and the morning were the first day. Genesis 1:5) This means Israelis spend the morning of Memorial Day grieving as virtually everyone in Israel knows a family who has lost

a loved one to war or terrorism. And when the sun sets, the mood in the air shifts tangibly and the nation breaks out in celebration.



I have always enjoyed this transition because it gives both value to the lives lost by connecting their sacrifice with the reward of a thriving independent nation, and it demonstrates the Jewish spirit that remembers its painful past while fully expecting a bright future.

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“Outsiders need to experience this,” I thought. It felt more like a gut punch than a moment of inspiration. So many tours come here and visit ancient sites and entirely overlook the people of destiny living here today. Tourists come and leave, never realizing the ancient story they have come to experience of the children of Israel and their Messiah—didn’t stop 2000 years ago! It continues today in the lives of their descendants who have returned (as promised) to live in the very same cities of their ancestors. This is as powerful a testimony to God’s greatness as are the miracles of the Bible! His original plan never failed.

Now, if you’ve ever had the chance to come see the *Maoz* team at work in Israel, you know we no lack of exploits. We focus efforts on local Israelis and so usually when people ask us about a tour, we refer them to a few unique tours we would recommend (and there are some really great ones!). But a significant part of *Maoz*’ vision is to offer Christians around the world unique insight from an Israeli perspective. Every

month we attempt to do just that with the *Weekly Prayer Letter* and monthly *Maoz Israel Report*. But when I considered it, I didn’t know of any tours where the modern Israeli experience was as prominent as the ancient experience for visitors—and this was something we could offer.

And so the Maoz Independence Tour was born! And then COVID hit.

Just this spring everything finally opened up again. Our guests landed the day after Passover ended and left the day after Independence Day. The experience was so special, complete with a night of worship and cookout in our backyard as is tradition for the morning after Independence Day. The transformations in the lives of people was so significant that we just had to share the experience with you!



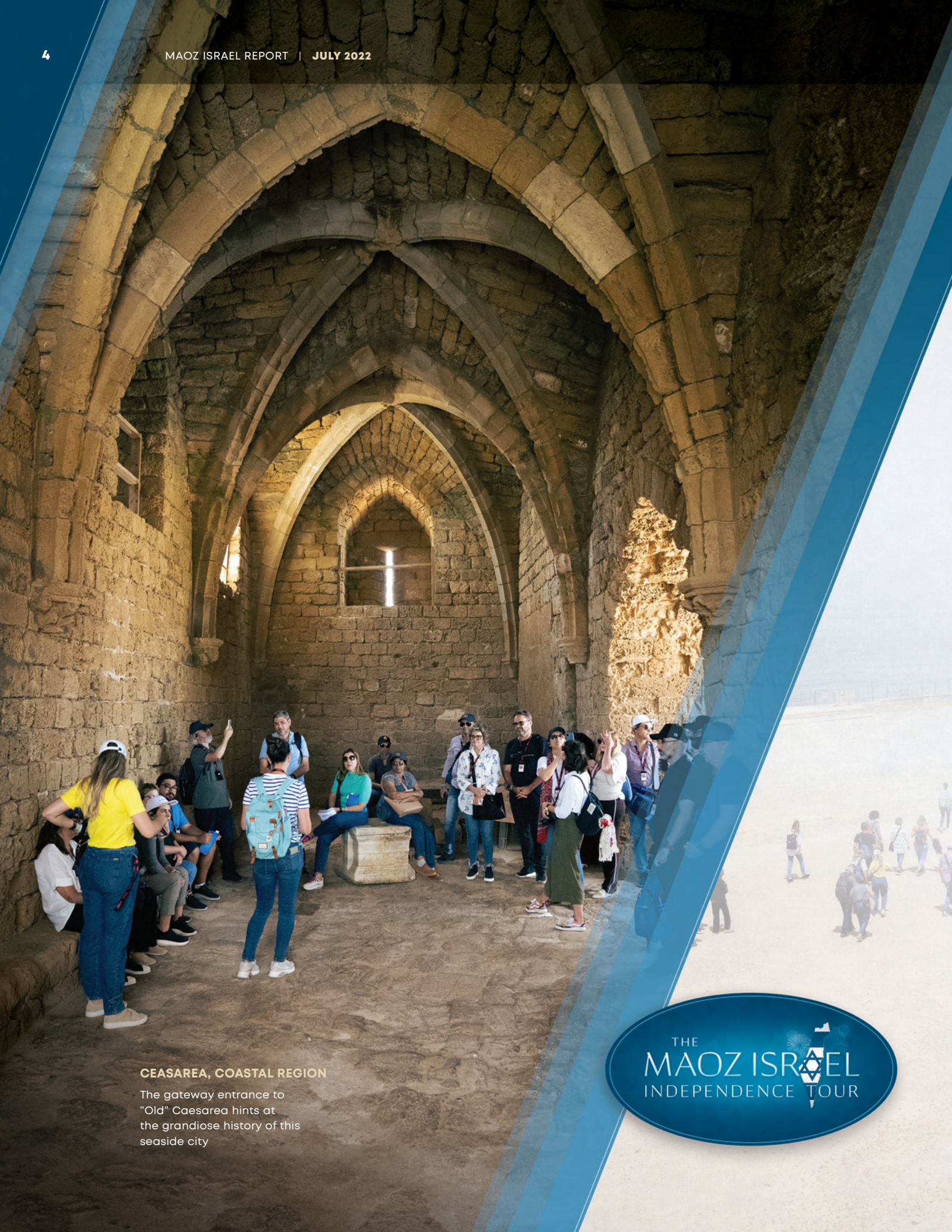
CAPERNAEUM, NORTHERN ISRAEL

Under the shade of the trees, we were given a detailed explanation of how archeologists identified this location as the synagogue across the street from the home of Peter’s mother-in-law

TEL DAN, UPPER GALILEE

Near the headwaters of the Jordan River, Tel Dan is both stunning in its natural beauty and abundance of water in an otherwise desert land





CEASAREA, COASTAL REGION

The gateway entrance to "Old" Caesarea hints at the grandiose history of this seaside city

THE
MAOZ ISRAEL
INDEPENDENCE TOUR

Pastor Ricardo & Aline

Pastor Ricardo

I brought some pastors with me from my church. The days we spent here together were days of expanding our vision, and understanding better what the Lord has said in His Word. It really opened our biblical vision. We understand more about the culture, geography, and the move of God with the nation of Israel, that has a parallel with our reality today. *Maoz* did an incredible job. The atmosphere was so pleasing and peaceful. Everything went smoothly; hotels were great; food was amazing. Everything *Maoz* did was amazing, and we are definitely coming back. I truly recommend the experience to everyone.

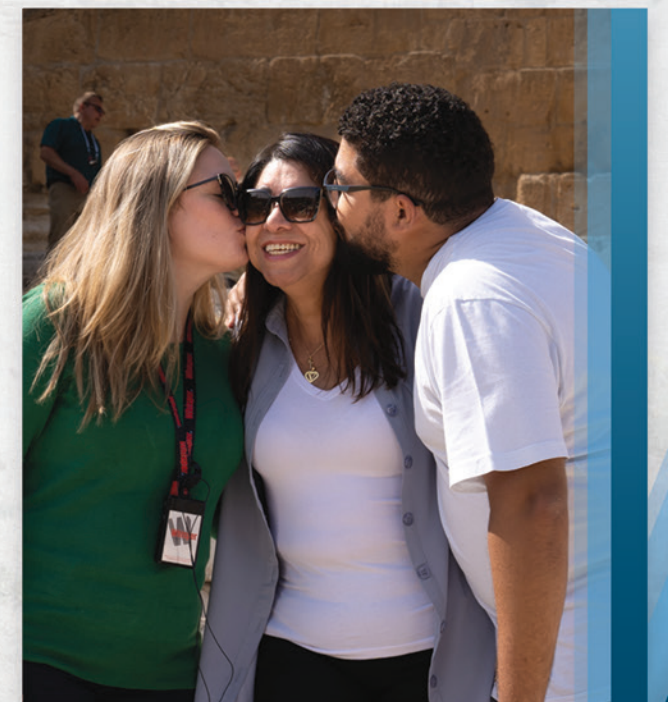
Aline

The tour for me was an unveiling. I always dreamed of being here. I love history and I dreamed with great expectation of going to the places and finding out what happened and why things happened the way they did. The Bible says that the Lord's thoughts are bigger than ours and that is what this trip was for me—bigger than I dreamed.

In each place we visited, Kobi explained the culture and the reason for things. It was as if he expanded the texts we had read before with a magnifying glass. In many moments I had tears of joy as I experienced new measures of the Lord. It was as if God was presenting Himself in greater portions and whole other dimensions to us. By the end of the trip there was an incredible unity in the group from people who came from different churches and backgrounds.

Edna

This trip for me was about joy. Four years ago I lost my son and in my heart I thought it was no longer possible for me to be happy. Then I saw here in Israel how despite all the pain Jews have gone through it is possible to be reborn and flourish. I received the anointing of joy here in Israel and I pray this joy that was poured on me will last for the rest of my life. I just have to thank God and *Maoz* for bringing us these moments of great joy, great happiness.



JERUSALEM, CENTRAL ISRAEL

The Shabbat meal! Kobi and Shani sing songs together and lay hands on their children to bless them as is tradition on the eve of each Sabbath



Matheus & Bianca

We called this trip “the beginning of the new.” Bianca and I have been serving with *Maoz Israel* in Brazil for 2 years. Leading up to this trip Bianca was pregnant with twin girls who would make us parents for the first time. 40 days before the trip we lost one of our girls in

the womb and our second daughter only survived a few days after she was born. Knowing we were in a broken place, Kobi and Shani invited us to come together on the tour. “It will be a healing experience,” they told us.

We went to many different types of places and in each place we understood better the history of the people of God, how He kept His promises and how He led them from sadness to joy over and over. At the Garden Tomb, we had a powerful moment of worship and communion. When everybody left to get on the bus, Bianca and I stayed a little longer. We were in the place where our Messiah died and after three days was resurrected and we started crying and prayed: “God, in this place there was death, but You were able to bring life.” At that moment we felt God so close to us, close to our pain, to our feelings and prayer. On this tour God really started something new in us. It was a baptism of revelation, love, understanding, joy and healing.

Emildo & Miriam

Emildo

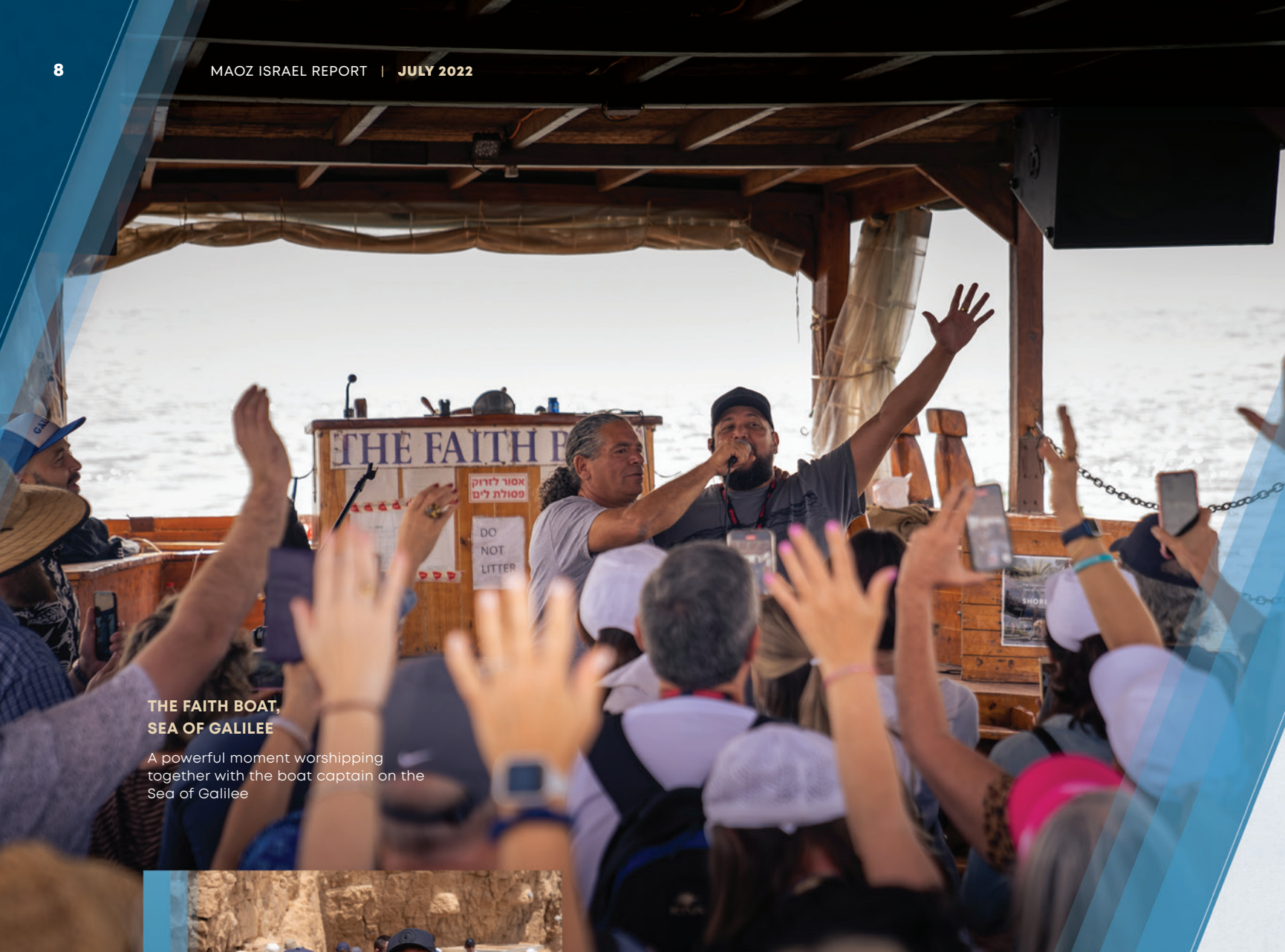
When we got here we truly felt a different atmosphere. It’s such a privilege for us to know Israel. I want to thank Matheus and Bianca for organizing for us to come and serving us here all the time. What I experienced I will never forget. I’m coming back full of gratitude.

Miriam

I really thank the Lord for being here. We often say to the Lord how we want to know Him more, so coming here was special to us. We learned so much about who He is by being where He was. But the whole time I was in Israel I heard God tell me



not to just walk through the different sites but to love this land and love the people living here. I had never thought of Israel in this way before. In just the 10 days I was in Israel, the Lord gave me joy and love for His people here and for the lost. I am leaving here with a burden to pray more and dedicate more of my life to caring for others.



THE FAITH BOAT, SEA OF GALILEE

A powerful moment worshipping together with the boat captain on the Sea of Galilee



Fernandinho & Paula

Fernandinho

This tour was really a joy! We are very impacted by all we saw. Kobi unfolded truth to us all along the way. Seeing Maoz and seeing all the Lord is doing in this land was wonderful. We were truly impacted and we are returning home more edified. If you can come and be part of this, I know you will be blessed!

Paula

This is our first time here, and we were impacted by all we experienced, and by all we heard. Being with Maoz Ministry was incredible because we saw everything with a new perspective. It was a blessing and we look forward to having another opportunity to visit again.

Graciela

A theme that impacted me greatly on this tour was God's faithfulness; how He makes promises and then keeps them. We visited many places that reinforced this truth, though one of the moments that touched me the most was the "Burnt House" in Jerusalem. The Burnt House is believed to have been the home of a wealthy Levite family that was set on fire during the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE.

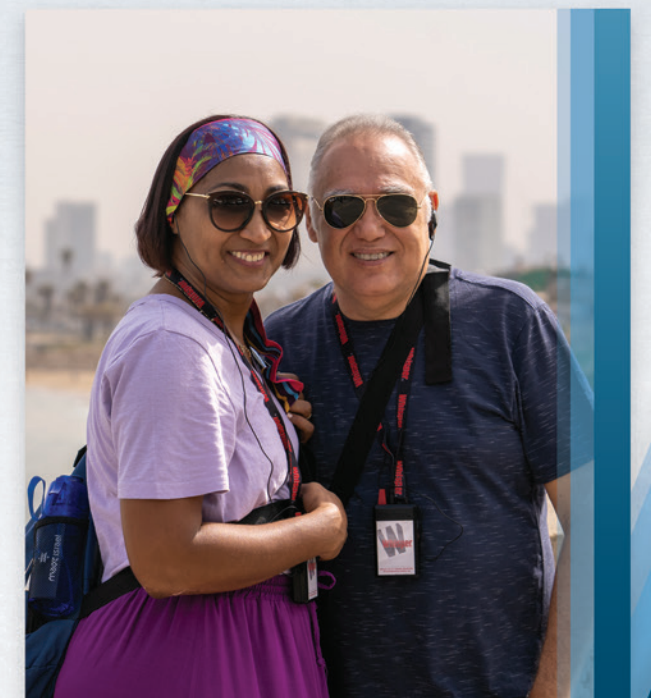
We sat in front of the remains of the home and watched a short film re-enactment of how they believe it happened. In the end, the only survivor of the fire in that home sat down despondent. He spoke of the hopelessness he felt about Jerusalem at that moment, but that he had hope one day her streets would again be filled with life and people. Then, the screen went black for a second before modern footage of Jerusalem showing a multitude of people, old and young.

It made Zechariah 8:4-5 come alive: *"Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each of them with cane in hand because of their age. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there."*



Anselmo & Selma

From the moment we arrived we had special and unexpected things happen. The first day we got to meet the founders of Maoz Israel, Ari and Shira —an incredible couple with so much experience. They planted seeds long ago and now we are seeing the seeds growing and producing much fruit here in Israel. I want to thank the Lord for this opportunity to come to Israel with Maoz Israel. I really thank God for Kobi who was with us the whole time. For me personally, this tour was a time of deep healing, a lot of learning and many experiences with the Holy Spirit. We visited many places where other groups don't go. I hope many others will choose to come experience Israel like I did. God bless you Kobi and your family! May the Lord always honor your family. For us, this was such an incredible experience!





JERUSALEM, CENTRAL ISRAEL

TOP:
A night of worship with the
Maoz team together with
Bianca and Fernandinho

MIDDLE:
A visit to the Maoz studio and
ministry center headquarters

BOTTOM:
Independence Day cookout
and fellowship just before
everyone headed back home



July 2022



Shalom from Jerusalem!

Don't these testimonials just **make you want to hop on a plane** and come to Israel!?!?

Well, **COME ON OVER!**

Next year is the **75th Anniversary of Israel as a nation!** This milestone would be the **perfect time** for you to come see our Land and experience all of the celebrations planned! **It will truly be a spectacular time to visit Israel!**

So **now is the time** to make your plans. Our tour dates for next year are **April 16–26, 2023.** You can explore the details at www.maozinsrael.org/tour for more information.

There is no other trip on the planet that will **impact your life as much as visiting Israel**—the Land where the Infinite stepped into the finite and walked among His creation. It was here that He made us able to refresh our own story.

When you come here on the **Independence Tour** you will be our personal guest. Simply put, **we love our land and we want to share it with you.**

The food, the culture, the Land, the celebrations! **It is ALL waiting for you!** And you'll get to visit the Maoz Ministry Center headquarters in Jerusalem and **meet the team** of Israelis that is behind our mission of **making believers strong in Israel.**

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM!

Kobi and Shani Ferguson

Kobi and Shani Ferguson

THE DEAD SEA, JUDAEAN DESERT

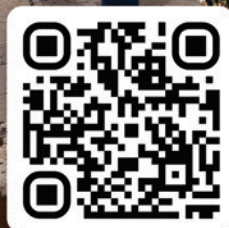
A well-deserved refresher after
climbing Masada and visiting the
fountains of Ein Gedi



The only thing missing
last time was you!



APRIL 16-26, 2023



maozisrael.org/tour