



JUNE 2021 | SIVAN-TAMUZ 5781

# PRAYWISELY

By Shani Sorko-Ram Ferguson

Our world is moving much faster than it did when my mother began writing the *Maoz Israel Report* some 45 years ago. At that time, news from Israel was virtually impossible to get, and so monthly updates were invaluable to our readers. Today the news changes not only daily but sometimes hourly. More than once we've written about a topic, only to have to edit it significantly just before it went to print because the reality on the ground had changed.

To resolve this, we have shifted breaking news and prayer updates to weekly emails while the monthly *Maoz Israel Report*—which goes out both in print and online—addresses deeper,

longer-lasting issues and showcases what the Maoz team is doing on the ground in Israel.

Though the term “prayer letter” may bring a certain image to mind, we get a lot of comments on the uniqueness of our prayer letter. Why do we cover the topics we cover? How do we come at things from such a different angle? The simple answer is things look different when you're an Israeli living in Israel. And while I don't get to personally thank every person who gives and prays for our work here, I can offer a gift in return—a window into our daily lives as Israelis, as believers, as a family, as a ministry team—as pioneers.

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Sometimes we cover local news updates and other times we address challenging issues for the local body of believers. But rather than just communicate what is happening, we address why we believe it is happening and how we can pray through the root issues. While the topics we address are often time-sensitive, some of them really strike a chord with our readers. If we have any complaints, it is that we don't advertise the

availability of the letter enough so more people know about it. And so, without further ado—here are some of the prayer topics we've addressed recently that have struck a chord with many of our readers. **If these prayer points strike a chord with you, please pray along with us.** We also love your feedback, so feel free to email us or sign up to receive the Weekly News and Prayer Letter directly at [maozisrael.org/pray](https://maozisrael.org/pray). ●

## Concerning the God of Israel:

**As we pursue understanding God and His ways, it's worth asking, "What did God see in Jacob that made Him change Jacob's name to Israel as well as solidify that name with His own?"** Of all the people God could've chosen to name Himself after, He chose a guy named Israel. Sure, he was the grandson of the beloved Abraham, but if you read the story of his life, he wasn't necessarily what one would look for if you were to, for example, handpick a guy to represent a holy God.

**Israel is not just a people—it is a *character trait* of a people.** While believing culture has historically idealized gentleness and agreeableness in the pursuit of life and their faith, **God made a clear statement about how He values someone who—with the right heart attitude—will wrestle like a maniac.**

It's hard to explain to those who don't live here, but Israel regularly wrestles with significant dynamics that other nations and societies don't even know exist. So, while it's easy to look on from the outside and try to superimpose what may work in another country on Israel, it's worth noting that while the ride may be bumpy, somehow, Israel—the wrestler—(eventually) always ends up on top.

**After all, Israelis are the descendants of Jacob, who wouldn't stop wrestling until he got the blessing.**

So, while I often disagree with decisions our government makes, **at no point is there a feeling that any power-hungry Israeli is**

**looking to use the pandemic to recreate a Nazi Germany-type discriminating culture or dictatorship.** Whether any of us agree with the vaccinations or not, this is a nation that exists only by the supernatural intervention of God. Much of this supernatural intervention was done through unbelieving Israelis who couldn't help but fulfill God's will. And while Israel has not yet been fully restored to God, **there are decent people in our government who are wrestling through a way to balance the medical limitations of this nation with its financial, emotional, and security needs.**

The Green Passport is one example (which in principle I personally don't care for) of trying to avoid the only other alternative of everyone sitting at home in lockdown. This document that would allow Israelis to avoid quarantines and give them access to things like crowded events was at first only going to be available to the vaccinated and COVID-recovered population. Now, after more wrestling of how to include as many people as possible, the government will be permitting people who test positive for antibodies or provide a recent negative Covid test result to be included as well. Meanwhile



the conversation is still on the table and court cases are being filed to work through the details of this new world we live in. **This is what a wrestling nation looks like.**

**Israel may not be making all the right decisions, but it is trying,** and being a small nation, can adjust quickly when better options are on the table. We believers would do well to cover our decision-makers in prayer for wisdom rather than evoking lines about Hitler or the Mark of the Beast being around the corner.

Yeshua lived in a time of brutal, evil rulers, yet His commentary about them was along the lines of, **“Give to Caesar what is his, and if you’re forced to carry a soldier’s tunic, carry it an extra mile.”** When Pilate told Yeshua he had the power to crucify or set Yeshua free, Yeshua explained he would have no power if it wasn’t first given to him by God. **He told us to be alert and pray earnestly for godly leaders, as that is His will. But even without godly rulers God is still able to advance His Kingdom on the earth.**



*F*ather, we thank You for choosing a man who became a family, who then became a nation **to represent You on earth.**

- **We have confidence in Your unshakable plan for the ages.**
- At no point did You instruct us to be afraid of things happening on earth. **We thank You that You have the whole world in Your hands.**
- We ask, first and foremost, that Israel become known as a place where **Your presence and favor dwells.**
- Give grace to this nation, made of frail humans whom **You created and then chose.**
- It is Your desire that Israel be a light set on a hill for the nations **to see and know the truth.**
  - **We recognize that many decisions made by Israeli leaders are not simple,** and often involve choosing the best option rather than a good option.
  - **Show Your people what they need to know** about their earthly governments—and how to identify the things that will matter eternally.
  - **Give us leaders who will protect the family unit** and the rights of parents to make decisions on behalf of their children. When the families are in order, our society will thrive.
  - Surround the leaders of the new government **with capable and wise counsel.**
  - At every step of the way, let Israel know they exist not because of their gifts and achievements, **but only because You said it would be so.**
  - Give believers around the world **a deep understanding of Israel that goes beyond the sensational.**
  - **Let Your Body worldwide see the armies of the hosts of heaven** above the activities of the kingdoms of men.



## Concerning the Fellowship of Artists:

Everything the world knows about worshipping the one true God originated in Israel—and Israel had much more to offer in that arena. So, when we first had the vision to see the restoration of modern-day Levites, we thought of all the practical things we needed in order to bring the vision to pass.

We needed a place where musicians could create, discover, and record fresh sounds of worship. We wanted a place where many projects could be produced simultaneously. We wanted to train kids from a young age in their craft so that when the time came to record the music or lead worship before a congregation, it would be done in the

most excellent manner.

We wanted musicians to

see other musicians as their partners—not their rivals—and thus the “fellowship” part of the vision was just as important as the “artists” part.

We also knew we were taking on a sect of society that is inherently delicate and moody. What we didn’t expect was that in the process of working on worship projects, musicians would experience deep emotional healing. It’s happening so much now, we’ve affectionately dubbed the FoA studio the *Rehabilitation Center for Emotionally Damaged Worshipers*. It makes sense, since we know how sensitive creative people can be, and we know how hard it is to live in Israel. And **still, it caught us by surprise that God is taking an active role in healing His people, so that they can truly be a light to the nations from a place of strength.**



Father, You made Your people beautifully, and You made them to be whole.



- Knowing the power that can be released from an army of broken worshippers who have been made whole, **we stand before You to cover the FoA with our prayers.**
- **Cover their families** under the shadow of Your wing.
- You promised blessings on the children of the righteous. **Forbid the wrath of the enemy be released** upon the most vulnerable in each family unit.
- **Bless all interactions between members of the FoA.** Let words and meanings be clear and leave no room for miscommunication or offense.
- Let the camaraderie in the studio **be a light to all who come.**
- We know past hurts can make it hard for people to see and hear things without a filter of their fear and pain—**we ask for You to remove this barrier, and instill the ability to receive love from others.**
- In Exodus 31 You anointed people to create beautiful things for Your glory. The calling on Your people to glorify Your name remains—**pour out gifts and skills to make Your name great among the nations.**

## Concerning **IDF Soldiers:**

They are our pride and joy. We post their smiling faces on our social media—we know they are the descendants of the Israelite army that—time and again—defeated the enemies of God. Whole TV shows are written about the excellence in which they are able to accomplish seemingly impossible missions.

But behind those smiling faces are kids who grew up loving their country, and knowing that if someone didn't stand in the gap—there would be no country. **At 19 and 20, when most young people in western countries are struggling to choose between doing their college homework and partying, IDF soldiers are standing at a guard post or sitting in camouflaged mud waiting for instructions as to how they will risk their lives that day.**

Right before Memorial Day this year, when Israel commemorates fallen soldiers and victims of terror, a 26-year-old army vet of the elite Golani Brigade named Itzik Saidian—who began suffering from PTSD after fighting in the 2014 war in Gaza—

**set himself on fire in front of the Ministry of Defense.**

According to reports, his commander was brutally killed just feet from him and he has not been able to escape from that moment since.

For sure, no Israeli wants to see their wounded soldiers abandoned after the fact—**but the bureaucracy that one is required to go through to get help in this country is intense**, and there is more than one clerk assigned to the task who knows nothing about tact and delicacy. Israelis took the event hard and military leaders took it on themselves to not only visit the family, but to immediately change some of the standard procedures that were particularly difficult for trauma victims.

In the meantime, we're entering a new round of fighting, and it seems inevitable that numbers of those suffering from PTSD—both soldiers and civilians—will increase.



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**F**ather, You are the Lord—the healer of our bodies, souls, and minds.

- You gave Israel this land; it is up to You to sustain them there.
- **You see the damage the enemies** of Israel are doing to Your people beyond the battlefield. Protect their hearts and minds, as well as their bodies.
- **You see the difficulty**—especially without a government in place to handle internal processes.
- **Resolve the government gridlock** so people who need care can receive it.
- Some of the difficulty in the process is an attempt to weed out people who try to abuse the system. **Grant supernatural wisdom for those in charge** to identify those who truly need help.
- **Bring to the attention of those in charge** when someone is not receiving the care they need.
- **Guide those in charge of the care to know** how to bring these damaged people to a place of wholeness again.
- You are ultimately the best help these soldiers will get. **Show Yourself to them. Heal them in ways no man can.**
- Itzik is currently in critical condition in the burn unit. **Restore him and restore his life.**
- Let neighboring enemy nations **know there is a God in Israel who heals the wounds they cause—inside and out.**



# The Major and

HOW IT ALL B

By Shira S

I knew George Otis when he was a Christian millionaire, of which there were not too many in the 1970's. The former general manager of Learjet Corp., he had left that career and was ministering to the poor around the world.

He had an especially deep compassion for the Arab people. So when he lead a tour to Israel, he traveled to Metulla, an Israeli village bordering Lebanon where terrorists were attacking both sides of the border. He wanted to get a firsthand look at this beleaguered nation. There he met

Lebanese military commander, Major Saad Haddad.

As destiny would have it, in 1979, the two became friends and George began to encourage him in the Word of God. Shortly after this, Haddad committed his life to Yesua (Arabic for Jesus).



Ari and Shira with their two children visiting with M

Red roof houses in Metulla, Israel, overlook the beautiful land of Lebanon.



## Israel's First Arab Ally

Haddad's spokesman, Francis Resik, recently told us the whole story of how the union of Major Haddad and the IDF began. The beautiful land of Lebanon had been a fragile mix of Christian and Islamic Arabs with much of its leadership being traditional Christians. But the rising Palestinian Liberation Organization had other plans. In 1964, the PLO's founder, Yasser Arafat, born in Egypt, reshaped the Arab refugees into a new people group whom he called Palestinians. He and his newly-classified Palestinian terrorist forces created a mini-state within Jordan and caused such chaos

that finally in "Black September" 1970, King Hussein of Jordan fought the PLO and threw them out of his country.

Arafat and his Palestinian troops headed for Lebanon, bringing with them jihadist-minded forces from many different Arab countries. There he set up another mini-state and eventually took over all of Lebanon including Beirut, once called the Paris of the Middle East. His chief goal was to destroy Israel. But at the same time, he was bent on crushing Lebanon's Christian population wherever he found them.

# the Millionaire

EGAN - PART 6

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Major Saad Haddad of the Southern Lebanese Army

By 1975, the Lebanese Army began to disintegrate and Major Saad Haddad, a Greek Catholic, broke away with his brigade of about 2,500 Lebanese soldiers who were Christian, Druze and even a few Muslims. He himself was a citizen of Marjayoun, a village near the border with Israel, and he stationed his troops in southern Lebanon to protect some 150,000 citizens from slaughter.

The price to hold this plot of land was brutal and as the killings continued, Major Haddad and his troops began to bring their wounded

to the Israeli border, begging for help. Israel set up a field medical unit, and so began a tragic flow of wounded Lebanese across the border to Israeli hospitals. This opening of the border became known as “*The Good Fence*.” One report said that at times, one-third of all patients in Israel’s northern hospitals were Lebanese.

By 1978, the Israeli nation had finally had its fill of terrorist attacks from Lebanese soil. In the “Litani Operation” the Israel Defense Forces crossed the border and took over Southern Lebanon up to the Litani River. The result of that operation was a Lebanese buffer zone about 80 miles long and a few miles wide. Israel’s prime minister came to the border and said to Major Haddad, “It’s all yours!” In a short time, Haddad had won the loyal support of all the religious groups in the area, and became the undisputed head of “Free Lebanon.”

With his new-found faith, he even convinced his people to allow 5,000 Muslims, who had fought on the wrong side, to come back to their homes. “We must forgive them,” he told his Christian citizens. The Muslims were grateful and there was strong unity even with the mix of religions in Free Lebanon. And the South Lebanon Army (SLA) became loyal allies, fighting side by side with the IDF against the PLO, (which eventually morphed into today’s Hezbollah).

## “We feel forgotten by the Christians”

As their friendship grew, Otis asked Haddad what American believers could do for him. His answer

The Arazim Hotel in Metulla, Israel; the meeting place where IDF commanders and Major Saad Haddad met for synchronizing actions of their two armies. It was also where the George Otis’ Voice of Hope radio station was born.



was that Free Lebanon needed a radio station. Haddad felt it would be a unifying factor for the 150,000 citizens in the many isolated villages. Furthermore, he began to express the desire to see his people have the opportunity to hear the Good News of the Bible. He also urged George to find Arab-speaking evangelists to teach his people on the radio. (This was a dangerous endeavor as the penalty in many Arab countries for converting a Muslim to Christianity is death.)

Otis saw the wretchedness of the Lebanese people, fighting for their lives. He understood that Haddad was pleading for someone to come in and help his people. Haddad and his people felt abandoned by the rest of the Christian world. He told George,

“It’s as if everyone’s forgotten us over here. It’s like genocide and nobody cares.” Even the Israeli media wondered out loud why Christians were ignoring this genocide. (In all some 90,000 Lebanese were killed.)

George knew he was being commissioned by the Lord to serve the people who were suffering so much in Lebanon. He told everyone who would listen, “Nobody in America can imagine the fear, the pain and the despair that’s felt in Lebanon.”

### What could we do?

We have always been attracted to pioneers. And so when George, a media man, and an old friend of ours from the States, launched this pioneer Christian radio station in war-torn Lebanon, and beamed it

**One day he and his interpret  
their Volkswagen and were  
Suddenly, rockets were  
David cried out to the Lord  
catch one of those rockets**

into Israel, we were thrilled. As we watched him go from victory to victory (i.e., battle to battle) one of the lessons we learned from George was to stop and pray on the spot concerning every detail he was considering, before moving forward.

Our growing congregation in Netanya also saw the importance of what was happening with this opportunity to reach these Lebanese Arabs with the Gospel. We actually had a born-again Israeli Arab in our congregation who was studying at the Hebrew University, and who was willing to share on the station.

We were in constant contact with George, and our members helped by hosting children as young as two years old from different Lebanese families for a few days at a time just to take them out of the war zone—especially those of Haddad’s army. Rezik’s (George’s spokesman) teenage son lived in our home for a year so he could finish high school at the American school.

George was a bundle of energy, with a very humble spirit. His bold acts to help the Lebanese people were recognized throughout all Israel. And Otis was well-known for his commitment to Israel. He was thanked in person by Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin, Menachem Begin and Shimon



Major Saad Haddad and George Otis (right) announce the launching of the Voice of Hope Radio Station in Free Lebanon. Back, second from right, SLA Spokesman Francis Resik.



**er crossed *The Good Fence* in heading to the radio station. flying towards their car. and suddenly saw an angel ts and throw it right back.**

Peres for his contributions to both Arabs and Jews.

## Radio Becomes Enemy Number One

It was 1982. For three years, now, George's radio station, the Voice of Hope, was reaching into most of Galilee. The IDF, suffering many casualties, helped George in every possible way. The preaching in Arabic was also understood by many Sephardic Jews in Israel. And any time when Ari and I were traveling in Galilee, we recognized what a miracle it was to hear Bob Dylan sing across the airways, "You gotta serve somebody," or Andrae Crouch belt out, "Through it all!" And the Lebanese became fans of the Gospel songs of Dolly Parton! We were totally aware that for the first time in history, Gospel music was sweeping over the airways across the Sea of Galilee and surrounding cities and villages.

David, a young, brave American who lived on the Israeli side of the border, hosted radio programming and broadcasted a one-minute Bible reading every 15 minutes. The station became enemy number one to the terrorists attacking Free Lebanon. David told us that one day he and his interpreter crossed *The Good Fence* in their Volkswagen and were heading to the radio station in Marjayoun. Suddenly, rockets were flying towards their car.

One after another, they hit closer each time. David cried out to the Lord and suddenly saw a vision of an enormous angel catch one of those rockets and throw it right back in the direction it came from. Instantly the rockets stopped.

## Not Just Radio

At George's request, we and our two kids traveled up to the border town of Metulla. The town looked a bit like a village in Switzerland; homes were built by South Lebanese carpenters who brought over wood you couldn't get in Israel—Cedars of Lebanon.

We passed through the famous *Good Fence* that allowed Israelis and Lebanese to cross the borders of their countries on our way to visit the radio station. The first thing I noticed was the cars on the road—cars with no license plates were being driven at very high speed by kids who looked like they were in their early teens.

George introduced us to Major Haddad and together, we sat down for a meal. We knew we were sitting in the presence of two men making history. When Haddad authorized George to launch a new project—a Gospel TV station in Lebanon—George asked us if we wanted to take it on. We had both worked in the film world, and so we carefully considered it and prayed earnestly that God's will be done. At the end, we understood the enormity of such an endeavor—



The Palestinian Liberation Organization troops marching after conquering Lebanon's capital, Beirut.

both in technology and finances—and all in the middle of a war zone! Most of all, we felt God had called us to raise up a congregation and ministry in the Tel Aviv area.

At the end, we said no. However, we did want to lend our gifts to the cause and produced a promo video for George to raise awareness and finances for this spectacular opportunity to spread the Gospel in Lebanon, Israel and the Middle East.

## Major Saad Haddad's Legacy

Haddad was a unique leader during a volatile period of Israel and Lebanon's history. He had lived most of his life in relentless peril and rumors began to leak that the constant intensity was taking a toll on his body. Sadly, in 1984, Major Saad Haddad died of cancer, but the fruit of his efforts will surely have eternal consequences.



*The Good Fence displays the Banner of Radio Station, Voice of Hope.*

He and his troops were truly loved by all Israel. Our friend, Francis Rezik, Major Haddad's spokesman, explained to Ari and me why Israel meant so much to them. *"Israel is our double savior. First, she gave us the Messiah who saved us spiritually. Then she saved us from physical destruction. The roots of our Christianity are with the Jews. Why should we not be Israel's ally?"*

At Major Saad Haddad's funeral, Israel's Prime Minister Shamir and his cabinet crossed over to Lebanon to attend the funeral in his village.

## 40 Years and Counting

Major Saad Haddad had a mere five years of his life to bring the Gospel to his Lebanese people. By divine intervention, George Otis met Major Haddad and with George's boldness and entrepreneurship, they planted two powerful spiritual weapons of war, with the full cooperation of the Israeli Defense Forces, that have brought the Gospel to the dry and thirsty lands of the Middle East. He was a light to

***"Israel is our double savior. First, she gave us the Messiah who saved us spiritually. Then she saved us from physical destruction."***

his own people, and to Israel.

As for George, he did launch METV, Middle East Television, the very first believing station ever to reach the Israeli nation, together with the surrounding Arab nations, and eventually turned it over to CBN. The English station aired a blend of family-friendly movies and sports alongside Christian TV shows, music, and Sunday services with Arabic subtitles. Until the early 90's when cable TV was brought to Israel, METV was one of less than a handful of channels available to Israelis.

Today, METV is owned by Messianic Jew Sid Roth; it has amazing coverage to reach 150 million viewers in 25 nations in the Middle East, including Israel, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, Sudan, and more. It continues with the same vision and broadcasts out of Cyprus on an Israeli satellite, and every home in Israel with a TV can watch METV.

The Voice of Hope radio station has played continuously since its founding—excluding two interruptions. One was caused by a suicide bomber in the mid-1980's who killed the Lebanese guards protecting the compound. Within 12 hours, the station was back on the air. The second time was when Israel pulled out of Lebanon in the year 2000. When Israel left, the Voice of Hope went dark. It would, however, be back

on the air within 40 hours—this time airing from inside Israel!

The station wasn't the only thing that crossed over to Israel when Israel pulled out. Several thousand soldiers from the South Lebanese Army and their families were granted citizenship by Israel. Among them were families who were open to the Gospel. Our dear friend, Pastor Joseph Haddad, (no relation to the Major) whose wife is Lebanese, has led a Lebanese congregation, including SLA families who fled to Israel. Maoz supporters contributed a monthly offering to cover rent for them for almost two decades.

Meanwhile, between 1982-2000, the on-again, off-again Lebanese-Israeli war dragged on. In the summer of 1982, following a PLO attack along Israel's coastal road and the attempted assassination of Israel's ambassador to the United Kingdom, Israel once again invaded Lebanon on June 6, 1982, in alliance with Major Saad Haddad's Christian and Druze troops. Because Ari was in his 30's when he immigrated to Israel, he was doing yearly reserve duty in an IDF Information Unit. In 1983, he would venture into Lebanon not just to fight for the freedom of Southern Lebanon against the PLO, but to fight for the freedom of his own people from spiritual bondage. ●

To be continued...

Shalom from Jerusalem!

This past season has been sort of like the **Wild, Wild Middle East!** But do you remember stories of the wild, wild west? Remember what it took to tame the land and make it fruitful and prosperous? **It took PIONEERS!**

The spirit of pioneers! That has been the **impetus and motivating force** since the beginning of my parents' ministry...and that is the driving force that empowers us even today.

Great men like **George Otis** and **Major Haddad** who crossed paths with my parents were pioneers in their day. But there are plenty of **"firsts" yet to be accomplished in this young land and culture.** We are energized by the possibilities that God continues to pour into our spirits.

Some of our team members are on the front lines of ministry—and as I write this some of our team members are **literally serving with the IDF on the front lines** of the current conflict.

We cannot tame this wild and wonderful frontier **without you—with both your prayer and your support!** Help us impact lives and build a strong community of believers here in Israel.

### YOU CAN PIONEER WITH US!

- **Want to pioneer worship music?** Become a **Friend of the FoA** with a monthly gift of any amount.
- **Want to pioneer young leaders?** You can give towards our work with Hebrew speaking congregations.
- **Want to strengthen the pioneering Body of believers in Israel?** Support the I Stand with Israel benevolence fund.
- **Want to cover those pioneering on the ground?** Sign up for our Weekly News and Prayer updates.

**The most successful pioneers had a quality team who came along side them—and you are that team to us.**

We just finished our bi-annual board meetings with our Maoz USA board, and, as one board member put it, "I've never attended a board meeting where every single report presented was so positive!"

It was so positive because **the Maoz base of supporters has proven to be uniquely resilient through thick and thin, pandemic and war, harvest and plenty.**

And thus we march forward with confidence – and hope you come with us.

In His service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kobi and Shani Ferguson".

Kobi and Shani Ferguson





MAOZ ISRAEL WEEKLY

# NEWS & PRAYER LETTER

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the next  
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