

SINCE 1976

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REPORT



Scene from the film
The Courageous Heart of Irena Sendler

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How Gentiles Saved the World

By Shani Sorko-Ram Ferguson

gen·tile [jen-tahyl] Of or pertaining to any people not Jewish.

Being a “Gentile” often seems so unappealing when you look at the Scriptures. Numerous verses warn the Jews not to “pray like the Gentiles” (Matt. 6:7) or not to “treat each other like the Gentiles do.” (Matt. 5:47) And yet, since the early days of the Hebrew race, strategically-placed Gentiles have been the difference between life and death for some of our most revered Bible heroes. Had it not been for these

individuals’ often split-second decisions to protect the lives of an Israelite, who is to say Israel’s history would’ve been the same?

In ancient times, these unsung heroes were known as “God-fearing Goyim.” In modern times, we call them “Righteous Gentiles.” These were people who used their status as non-Jews to save the lives of many Jewish

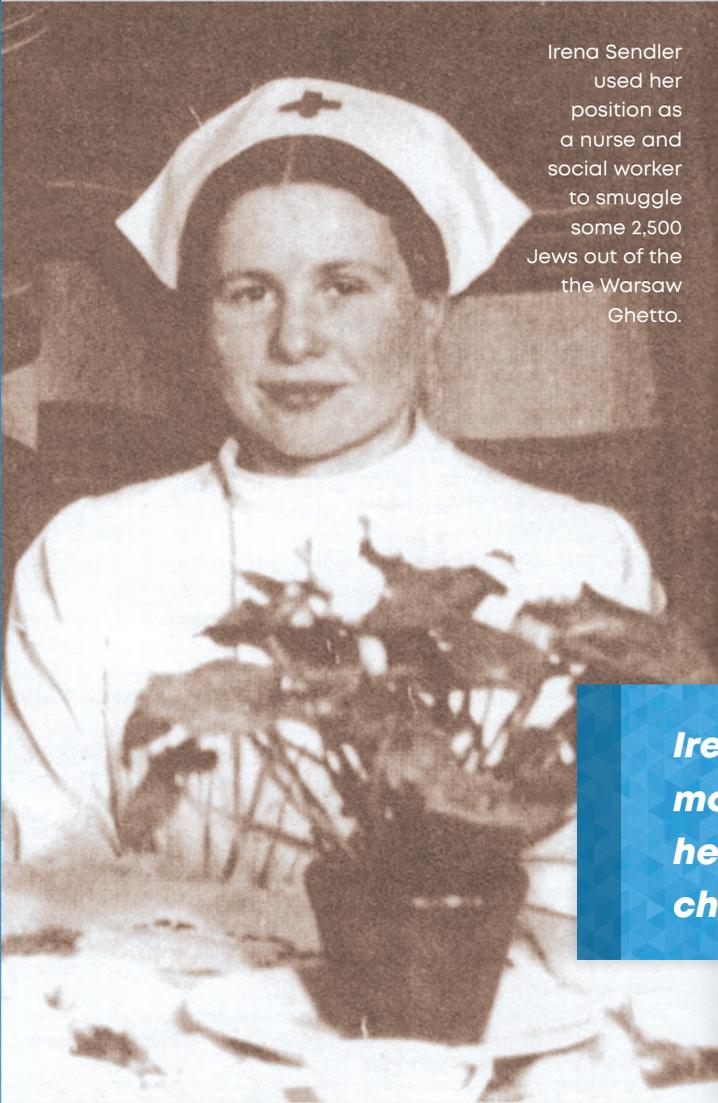
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Irena Sendler used her position as a nurse and social worker to smuggle some 2,500 Jews out of the the Warsaw Ghetto.

stories are both heartwarming and heart wrenching.

Some stories have been immortalized in movies like *Schindler's List* and *The Hiding Place*. Other stories have become famous for the lack of recognition granted to the heroes—like in the case of Irena Sendler.

became part of an underground movement and even recruited many of her friends to help save Jewish children from the Nazis. Since social workers were not allowed in the ghettos, Irena obtained fake documents and passed herself off as a nurse.

With this newly-found access, Irena smuggled in clothes, food, and medicine to the children. Upon finding out that many of the children she was caring for had death sentences, she knew she had to smuggle the children out of the camps.

Irena became a part of an underground movement and even recruited many of her friends to work toward saving Jewish children from the Nazis.

In 2007, Irena was said to have been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in

honor of her courageous work that saved thousands of Jews from the “Final Solution” of the mighty Third Reich. She lost the nomination to Al Gore, who received the prize for making a movie about the weather. Irena died the following year at the ripe old age of 98. In the end, it was the loss of the Nobel Peace Prize that sparked outrage and caused her story to earn its rightful place in commonly learned history.

Irena

Irena Sendler was a Polish Christian who studied to become a social worker at the Warsaw University. When the Germans occupied Poland in 1939, she

people from Nazis and other arch-enemies. And while WWII is more commonly known for its tragedy and the silence of the Church, there were many Gentiles behind the scenes risking their lives to save Jews.

Some of these heroes hid Jews in their secret rooms and provided them with food and basic needs. Others hired them for “special skilled jobs” they insisted only Jews could do. And still others slipped into the ghettos themselves to rescue as many Jews as they could. It is sobering to consider the life of stability and security these Gentiles gave up to save the lives of strangers of a different race. The

Irena would hide children in bags and even coffins in the back of her vehicle. The babies she would fit into the bottom of her toolbox. She would often sedate the babies to keep them from crying and had a vicious dog who was trained to bark at Nazi guards when they would come up to inspect the vehicle.

Her underground network also smuggled children through secret underground passages. Escapes were often planned down to the second. One of the boys Irena helped rescue recounted how he hid beside a gate one night. When a Nazi guard passed by, he counted to 30 and made a run for a manhole in the middle of the street. The manhole opened exactly as the boy reached it, and strong hands emerged to help him down into the sewer. From

there, he was taken through a network of pipelines to a safe place.

When the children were rescued, Irena had the children



Because of the risks Irena took, thousands of Jewish souls slipped through the fingers of their would-be murderers.

memorize new non-Jewish identities and placed them in monasteries or adoptive families. She kept a record of all the children and their true identities and hid the record in a jar under a tree in her friend's yard. Her hope was to reunite them with their families after the war, or at the very least, find them and restore them to their true Jewish identities. Sadly, most of the children's families did not survive the concentration camps. Irena and her friends rescued over 2,500 children and 500 adults.

Irena was eventually caught by the Gestapo. The Nazis ruthlessly tried to get information from her about the underground movement and the whereabouts of the children she had freed. After much torture, including the breaking of her legs and feet, the Nazis realized she would not speak and sentenced her to death. Miraculously, just before her execution, a Gestapo officer entered her cell and told her he had accepted a bribe from her comrades. He explained he would list her as executed and that she was free to go. Upon

These children rescued by Sendler were given new identities and placed in homes or Catholic nun convents. The lucky few whose parents survived the camps were reunited when the war was over.

her release, she went into hiding since her cover was blown. However, she continued to work with the movement until the end of the war.

Because of the risks Irena took, thousands of Jewish souls slipped through the fingers of their would-be murderers. Of course, Irena was not the first Gentile to play a role in the fight for the survival of the Jewish people.

Chosen to Help the Chosen

When you consider the history of Gentiles who gave succor and protection to the children of Israel, sometimes they seemed to walk boldly into this role; other times they seemed completely unaware of the importance of their actions. Quite often, their act of kindness also proved to be a significant turning point in their own lives.

When the children of Israel cried out to God in Egypt for a

deliverer, God sent them Moses. But Moses could not have achieved his destiny were it not for the Pharaoh's daughter, who would use her position in the palace to rescue him from the death sentence her father had handed down to Hebrew boys. Even when Moses was fully grown, his well-intentioned but foolish act would drive him out of Egypt—into the hands of a loving Gentile African family in Midian. Remove any of these important elements, and you would have had God thinking up another plan to get the children of Israel out of Egypt.

When God finally rescued the children of Israel from Egypt, He promised them a land flowing with milk and honey. However, that land was full of idolatrous people. The children of Israel were thus instructed to destroy everything—beginning with the city of Jericho. Enter Rahab the harlot, a godless woman who was given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to side

with the people of Yahweh. Her quick thinking of hiding and getting the spies out of the city was an important part of Israel's conquering of the land God gave them. In protecting the Israelite spies from the King of Jericho, she saved her life and those of her family members. Not only

Later, when Joseph obeys the angel in his dream and flees to Egypt with his family, this Gentile country as a whole plays a role in protecting Israel's Deliverer. Egypt becomes Yeshua's safe haven for several years—just as it had been for Moses.

Sometimes, bringing about God's agenda takes more than one person or entity. Some 100 years ago, the British Empire heard the voice of the Lord and stated in the Balfour Declaration that Jews should return to their homeland. This measure received incredible backlash from surrounding Arab tribes. So for years, the vision sat on the table without action. It would take an additional man of power—United States President Harry Truman—to pick up the baton and push for a UN vote to recognize an independent Jewish state.

Both Messianic Jews and Christians can thank God for the Gentiles who saved the One who would save the world!

Sure, we say, "Well, the Lord protected Yeshua. He had a plan." True. But righteous Gentiles should be given credit for making a

that, the life she would now lead would be one of a hero. Centuries later, she would be immortalized in the Hall of Faith of Hebrews 11, and mentioned in the genealogy of Yeshua.

conscious decision to stand on the side of God's plan.

If you read the background stories of some of the people just mentioned, you will see many of them helped the children of Israel not because they were so impressed by the Israelites themselves, but because they honored the God of Israel.

From the lowest servants of communities to the highest rulers of nations, Gentiles from around the world have played their part in bringing about God's plan through the Jewish people.

God chose the Jewish people to be an example and a model of

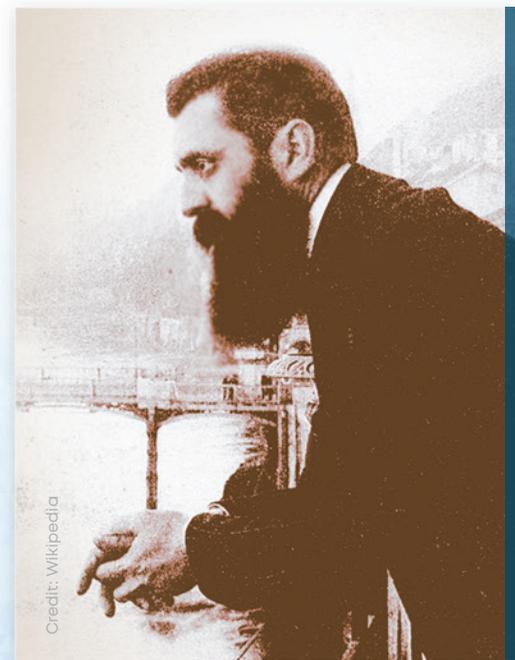
Gentiles Saved the Jewish Messiah

Every year when December rolls around, as Gentiles around the world celebrate Christmas, both Messianic Jews and Christians can thank God for the Gentiles who saved the One who would save the world! How different would the story of Yeshua be if the wise men had given away His location to the jealous King Herod?

It's odd at first when you consider these men are, in essence, praised for their ability to read stars (and their ability to spot a king with nefarious intentions). What else in the Bible epitomizes wisdom like Gentile men who figure out who the King of the Jews is before the Jewish people themselves?

Can You Be a Righteous Gentile?

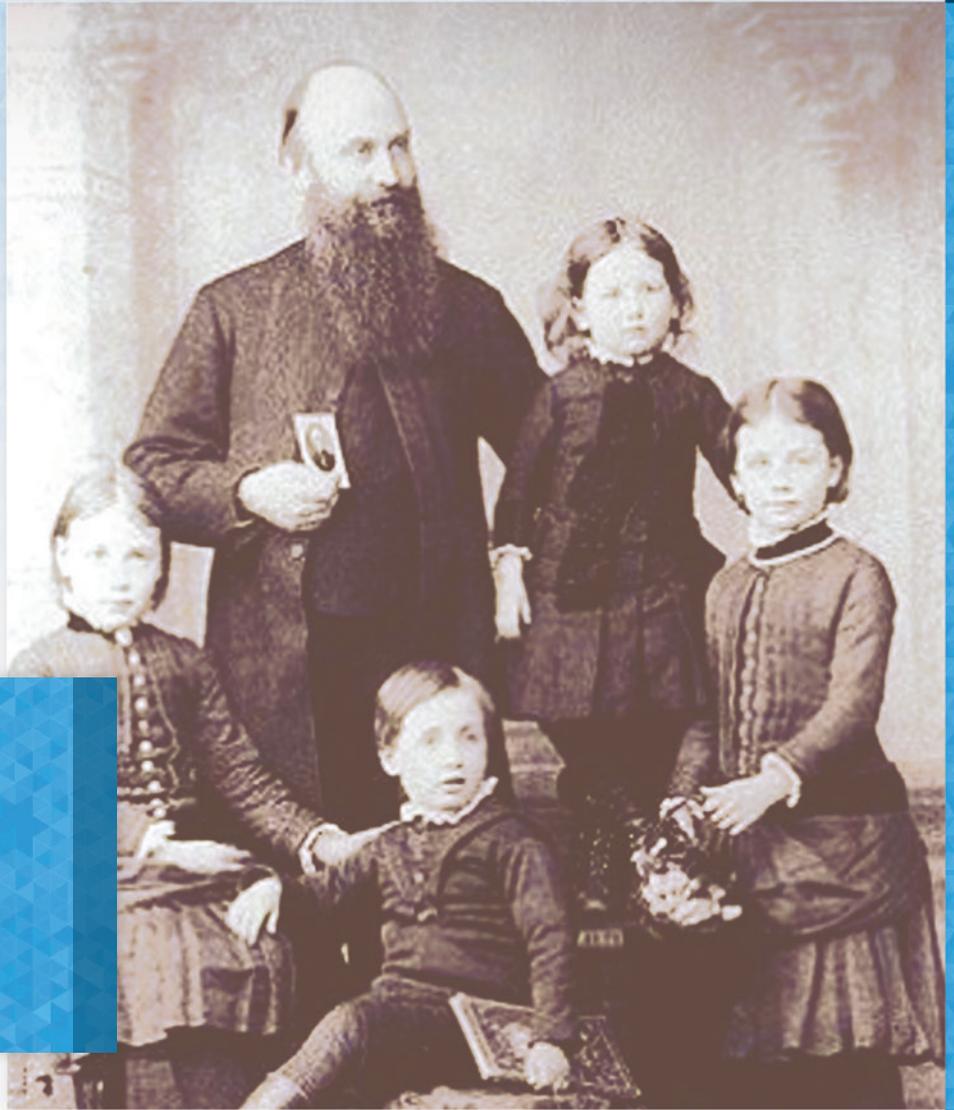
There are key moments in Jewish history where God's plan requires the listening ear of a Gentile. Sometimes, it is a servant like Hegai who, for some reason gave Esther the best resources he could offer as well as tips on how to please the king (Esther 2). Sometimes it is someone in a powerful position like Cyrus, King of Persia, who heard the voice of the Lord instructing him to allow the people of Israel to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple after years of exile (2 Chronicles 36).



Though he died before it was established, Theodore Herzl is considered the Father of Modern Day Israel.

His intention to dwell among *all* mankind. God's desire was to demonstrate that His promises and blessings could work for an entire nation that followed Him and thus woo all nations to Himself. **In reality, if not for the Gentile nations, there would be no reason for God to choose Israel.** Israel was chosen to be God's representatives—His showcase prototype.

Historically, God's blessing was manifested in Israel by their possession of a fruitful



When it was time for Israel to return to her homeland after 2000 years of exile, an almost unknown man named William Hechler was a key factor.

homeland and the dwelling place of the presence of God in the Temple. However, when Israel rejected God and was exiled, centuries of Jews would live and die without seeing either. Living away from their land in exile and under pagan rule made it hard for God's people to fulfill their role of advertising God and His blessings. It was during this time of difficulty for Israel that righteous Gentiles took the message of the one true God of Israel to the four corners of the globe.

Then when it was time for Israel to return to her homeland after 2000 years of exile, an almost unknown man named William Hechler was a key

William Hechler (pictured with his family) was a major force behind the legitimization of Theodore Herzl and the Zionist vision to see the Jewish homeland reborn.

factor in helping Theodore Herzl become the Father of Modern Day Israel. (Read more about his fascinating story in the April 2018 Maoz Israel Report.)

God has always counted on Gentiles being a part of His plan for Israel. His plan hasn't changed. He still counts on His redeemed Gentiles to work alongside Him and make Himself shine through Israel. To realize that God has been able to use the Jewish people, a very small, insignificant and often unqualified group of people to show His greatness, only

solidifies that Israel's success is all His doing.

We are in this journey together, Jew and Gentile. As in a marriage, we each have our distinct roles, yet we complete each other in so many ways. So, to all of you Gentiles whose ancient forefathers helped save my people in one way or another, what an awesome heritage you have! And to all of you who have personally accepted the call to help Israel become a praise among the nations in our day, I would like to say, THANK YOU. ●



Leaders begin

By Shani Sorko-Ram Ferguson

If you ever have the chance to sit down for a chat with Shmuel Salway, you're in for a treat. You could say he's forty something going on 20, and that's why young people in their teens and twenties flock to him.

Here is his story:

Shmuel's parents both immigrated from India but had somewhat different backgrounds. Daisy's family were very conservative Jews and arrived in Israel when she was only ten. David whose family was Jewish but not religious at all, arrived in Israel by himself in his 20's. David and Daisy would eventually marry and have four children—three girls, and a boy. Early in their marriage, Daisy discovered a congregation in Jaffa called Beit Immanuel. There she came to know Yeshua, and David joined soon after. Though both came from conservative Jewish families, Daisy's family took this decision the hardest, and never spoke to her again. Even when her father died and she brought her family to the funeral, no one would even look at them.

Shmuel grew up in this believing home, but his teen years brought with them the standard temptations and push back against what he'd always been told about God.

During high school joining the field hockey team may have helped him be less involved in the party scene, but the weekend practices also gave him a good excuse to no longer attend the congregational meetings.

Shmuel did have some believing friends who kept inviting him to a youth group during the week, but even when he found time for that, he went more for the "after-party" experience. On one of those visits he sat in the back, as usual, waiting for the guest speaker to finish so he and his friends could all go out. But as the speaker shared his message, Shmuel had the awkward feeling that the speaker was talking just to him, and that the whole room knew it. Still, Shmuel decided he was stronger than whatever that feeling was and managed to resist the invitation at the end of the service to give his life to the Lord. But when the meeting was over, he told his

friends he wasn't feeling good and went home, crawled in his bed, and wept.

Something Changed

"I wake up in the morning and catch a ride to a two day youth camp I'd been invited to attend," Shmuel says. "When I get there one of the youth leaders walks by me and blurts out, 'What happened? You look different?'"

as Disciples

I felt very awkward about what had just happened to me so I pulled him into a side room to tell him everything where no one would overhear us. He was really excited. We prayed together and he helped me understand what the Lord was doing in my heart. For the remainder of my high school career, I wouldn't say I became the model child after that, but I definitely made efforts. In my mind, I had this understanding with God—I wouldn't be too bad, and God would watch over me.

"Then came my army service," Shmuel goes on. "The thing with the army is that even if you really love the Lord going in, your life is entirely run by the military. They schedule your every waking moment and run you ragged to turn you into a single-minded soldier. You may not encounter a believer for weeks or months at a time. You are in close quarters with mixed company 18-year-olds who are away from their parents for the first time ever. You must bond with them because you know you're going to be on the

battlefield together. Let's just say feeding yourself spiritually with Bible reading, prayer and worship music doesn't really happen easily.

"Later during my army service when my schedule freed up a bit, some of my youth leader's friends asked me to join their youth trips because of my field medical training and ability to carry a weapon (a requirement for such field trips in Israel). One of these

trips consisted of a week-long trek of young people backpacking from the Mediterranean Sea to the Sea of Galilee while learning about life and God along the way. I agreed and coordinated with my commanders to go during my days off.

"The funny thing was that I came there to help in case anything went wrong; I was not there to play any kind of spiritual role. Naturally, I befriended the kids because that's just my personality. But as I would crack jokes and share my war stories from my time in Lebanon, the teens began to see me as the cool guy they could go to to ask life's tough questions.



Shmuel during his military service as a field paramedic in Lebanon

"I tried to get them to take their questions to the youth leaders because I didn't care for how much their questions made me think about my own life. The whole trip they drilled me about whether it was ok to have an unbelieving boy/girlfriend and what about their father who died an unbeliever. Some of the answers I had to go study to figure out, but other questions I knew the answers—I just didn't want to address them because I wasn't living that way myself.

"After that trip I had a reckoning with myself. I found I really cared for these kids and wanted to be a good example for them. I studied the Scriptures at length so I would have solid answers for the next time they pelted me with questions. I wanted to be able to tell them what I knew deep down was true, and I couldn't do it if I continued to live the way I was living.

"I've always loved the outdoors and wanted to see the world, so after the army I majored in geography and eventually got a job in security for Israel's largest airline—El Al. This job gave me both free tickets to travel the world (and I did!) and eventually landed me a high-paying security job in New York City. I'm not an American citizen, but I'd always dreamed of living there for a time, so this job opportunity was a dream come true.

Something Eternal

"I was on a plane at JFK airport in New York about to take off to deliver top-secret documents to Israeli embassies in South America, when 9/11 happened. I watched the smoke rise from the towers from the plane window

and I quickly understood we wouldn't be flying anywhere that day. I quickly drove back into Manhattan and I remember the smell of smoke throughout the whole city. But I made my way through the many blockades that had been set up to return the documents to a safe location.

"Three things stuck with me about that day. First, almost immediately after news of the attack spread, my phone began to ring off the hook. All my family and friends from Israel were calling to make sure I was okay, and this made me realize how important my connection with Israel was. Second, I processed how important my job in security was for the protection of people against very real threats like this. I was proud of the role that Israeli security plays in protecting against so many other attacks around the world. And third, I considered how fleeting life was and how quickly it could be taken from you. I realized I wanted my life's work to have some eternal significance and I needed to be in Israel to do that.

"After three years in NYC working with diplomats and other high-level security officials, my contract was up. I knew it was time for me to go back to Israel, and not just to Israel but into ministry work. All this time I knew I was called to ministry, and I knew what kind of not-high-paying-job life that would be. I could only ignore the call for so long. My friends told me I was crazy to turn down another five-year contract in New York. Such an extension was unheard of. But who can put a price on

the satisfaction that comes with following God?

"When I returned to Israel, I was immediately offered a security job with Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I visited several congregations and felt the most at home in the Hebrew speaking Tel Aviv congregation where Ari Sorko-Ram was pastoring at the time. Begrudgingly, I realized the Lord was calling me to a different congregation where He knew I would be of best service to Him.

"After a few visits to this congregation the pastor told me their youth pastor had just left and he had an opening for a part-time minimum wage (\$4.50/hr at the time) youth pastor. I was simultaneously insulted to be

"After three years in NYC, I knew it was time for me to go back to Israel, and not just to Israel but into ministry work."

offered such a low rate, and yet still felt I was supposed to do it. It came down to a fleece I set before the Lord. I sat next to the phone and told God I had two solid job offers. I would choose whomever called me first.

"Almost instantly, the pastor called. I took the job; luckily, I had savings to live on.

"When I started, our congregation's youth were pretty uninterested in anything spiritual, and really, how fun is it to gather with a handful of kids every week? I knew our youth and the youth from Ari's congregation would benefit from a collective gathering. So we took over a recently abandoned basement, and invited all the believing youth in the city to that neutral location.

It took some work to turn it into a presentable youth hangout on a shoestring budget, but we did it.

"When the place was ready, we announced our first gathering. The first person to walk in was one of the youth leaders from Ari's congregation. Her name was Suzie, and she had come early to help. I was in a very focused spiritual time of my life, so I made a point to be curt with her so there would be no mistaking I was not personally available nor interested in any way. She, in turn, remembers me as being quite a snob.

"As we'd hoped, Tel Aviv's believing youth loved the idea of doing things together, so we as youth leaders from the different

congregations spent time together strengthening our relationships. One of those times several of us were at a coffee shop and at some point, all the

guys got up to leave as they had things they had planned to do and so I was left alone with Suzie. I couldn't come up with an honest reason why I needed to leave, so I stayed. We sat and talked—well, she talked, and I sat there fascinated by her life's story.

"The next day I told my friend about the experience. Everyone knows me as a guy who always has something to say, so he responded, "If you found a girl who can keep you so captivated you were left without words—she's the one!" The next time he saw us at a birthday party talking, he took a picture and gave it to us as a memorabilia for our future family album. At that point I decided I should take this seriously and spend time

praying about my future with her. I expected to spend weeks in prayer about this but within a few hours the answer was so clear that I knew the Lord was in it.

“After we married, Suzie and I continued to serve in my congregation. I became a deacon, and then an associate pastor. We also constantly had teens and young adults over to our home and helped lead various youth and young adult camps throughout the year. Because of the mandatory army service, youth ministry here is very unique. Pre-army, in-service and post-army young people have vastly different spiritual needs and schedules. Therefore, activities must be tailored to them.

Where Needed Most

“After 14 years of service, we were given the opportunity to move from the busy life of Tel Aviv to a quiet believing community about 15 minutes outside of Jerusalem. By this time, we had young kids and the timing seemed right. We not only moved, but also decided to take a sabbatical to strengthen our family and seek the Lord about our next step. I had offers from all over the place, but none of them had that “Yes!” you get when something is from the Lord. I didn’t want to have to travel; I wanted to stay close to my family and invest my time in young people.

“One day I was sitting in our front yard praying and asking God to plug me in “where needed most.” As I was out there a guy walked by wearing a *Lech Lecha* t-shirt. *Lech Lecha* is the phrase God used when He told Abraham

to leave his father’s household and go to a place He would show him. It is also the name of an intensive three-month discipleship program for post-army young Israelis (both Jews and Arabs).

“When he asked what I was up to, I told him I was on sabbatical. He told me he had headed up *Lech Lecha* for 17 years and would soon need a sabbatical. He wanted to train someone to take his place well before he left and wanted to know if I would pray about it. As soon as I began

identifying and working on their strengths and weaknesses. The third month is sort of a *what do you do with what you’ve learned?* We offer them opportunities to practice and develop their spiritual gifts and some local ministries provide opportunities for volunteering.

“This whole discipleship program is taking place as we travel to and fro across the land just as Abraham did. Some of the participants have shared how they have been healed from emotional and even mental disorders and



Shmuel and Suzie and their kids

praying about it, I knew the “Yes!” answer was coming.

“*Lech Lecha* is a beautifully well-rounded program. The first month we begin with the foundation and focus on the heart and relationship with the Lord. The second month we have teachers and pastors from all over the country bring in-depth insight to the Scriptures and basic theology. The teachings aren’t just spiritual; we cover practical things such as time management, proper handling of finances, and

look forward to helping others heal as well. Others share how, for the first time, their relationship with God is based on their own faith and not simply an association stemming from their upbringing. The testimonies are as different as the individuals who attend, but by the end of the program, we love to send them out knowing they will be well-rooted in both the land and their calling to be a light to the nations—and to their own people, as well.” ●

October 2020

Shalom,

I (Shani) had known of Orthodox Jews my whole life. They generally didn't care for us Jewish believers, but occasionally my parents would have some over to talk to us about the Jewishness of Yeshua and all that entailed.

But my first up-close and personal friendship with an orthodox girl **left its mark on me to this day**. She grew up ultra-Orthodox in a community so strict, even family members of the opposite sex were **not allowed to be in a room with each other alone once they reached a certain age**. She told me when teens her age rebelled, they would eat pork or look in store windows, which was forbidden. One day, after she herself looked into store windows on her way home, she was **confronted at school by her principal** who held up photos their team had taken of her looking into the store windows.

One day as she lay in bed frustrated, she heard an audible voice tell her, **"Go find the Messianic Jews."** She had no idea what that was, and told herself if that was the Almighty, **she'd give Him one week to show her** who that was or she'd assume she'd imagined it all.

Exactly one week later she was reading an ultra-Orthodox newspaper her family subscribed to and saw an article **warning against Messianic Jews** with a specific address of a ministry center. **She would eventually go there and receive the Lord**. When her family heard what she'd done, they had her beaten. She was beaten so badly her hearing was permanently damaged.

It was during this time I came to know her. She was sincere in her belief, but **years of growing up studying in Orthodox circles** meant there was much to unlearn in terms of **who God was and what He expected from us**. Kobi and I were in the U.S. at the time when she was sent to a Bible school to be disciplined. It was **hard for her to adapt with the language barrier** and American culture, and the people who tried to help her couldn't fathom the religious world she'd come from. **I watched her struggle on so many levels**, theologically, emotionally and also relationally. During her time at the Bible school, **her location was discovered by Orthodox Jews and she was coerced back into the religious community** and was married off before she could change her mind. We lost her.

Occasionally, I have received messages from her telling me **how unhappy and trapped she felt**, and then the line would go silent again.





This is, in part, why **we feel so passionate** about the importance of having **intensive discipleship programs available in Israel**. Israelis coming from both very secular or deeply religious backgrounds have much to unlearn and many family dynamics that come with their decision to follow Yeshua. And when I think of **someone who so genuinely wanted the Lord** but simply could not get past her personal struggles, all I can wonder is **what could have been if she had had access to a program like *Lech Lecha***, in a land and language familiar to her.

The *Lech Lecha* program has several cycles every year with about a dozen participants each cycle. Amazingly **this cycle has almost two dozen applicants!** Somehow the current difficult circumstances have caused **more young people than ever** to want to clear their schedule and go deep with the Lord.

We don't want *Lech Lecha* to have to turn any one down for lack of budget and **you can have a say in the matter!** Our goal is to raise \$20,000 to help with the cost of this next session of training and teaching.

Will you help us? Leaders start out as disciples, and together we can make Israel's future leaders strong today!

For the generations to come,

Ari and Shira Sorko-Ram & Kobi and Shani Ferguson



Ari & Shira Sorko-Ram

Founders - Maoz Israel Ministries

Kobi and Shani Ferguson

Directors - Maoz Israel Ministries....



