



maoz-israel

REPORT



50 YEARS

1976-2026

of MAOZ ISRAEL

JANUARY 2026 | TEVET - SHEVAT 5786



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What is a JUBILEE Year?

By **Shani Sorko-Ram Ferguson**

You've probably heard the word *Jubilee* before. A word that conjures up images of joyful celebration and festive fanfare. The Jubilee (*Yovel* in Hebrew) is a year of release and relief.

Every 50th year, God instructed His people to **pause their normal rhythms** and embrace a supernatural reset of society. **Debts were forgiven. Land was restored** to its rightful owners. Prisoners and **captives were set free**. The poor were given new opportunity. **Families were reunited**. The land itself was allowed to rest and breathe again.

Jubilee was God's radical declaration that **no story is ever too broken to be redeemed**, no loss too deep to be restored, and no captivity too long for freedom to burst through.

No one really knows when the cycle of 50 years is supposed to happen. Most scholars agree that Israel never properly practiced or fully experienced it. But as a ministry planted in the soil of Israel and spread throughout the nations, Maoz Israel has always believed in the God who rewrites stories. And so for us, **this is our year of Jubilee, and we are already watching how God is doing just that.**

Maoz Israel's Jubilee didn't only arrive on our timeline. It arrived on *His*. There are moments when history feels choreographed by heaven, and this was one of them. According to the Bible, **the year of Jubilee is ushered in during the high holidays.**

1970s Messianic Worship

In the laid back fellowship style of the 1970s, David (and Lisa) Loden would write the earliest songs of modern Hebrew Messianic worship and then sing them in Ari and Shira's congregation



1970s Near Tel Aviv

This is the building Ari and Shira built that would become the birthing place of several congregations and home base for the Maoz offices and printing press for the next 45 years



Surrounded by masses of Israelis, former hostage Yosef-Chaim Ohana returns home from the hospital and blows the shofar in victory



Credit: Flash90

Miraculous Timing

Call it a coincidence or providence, but the very week our Jubilee began—early October 2025—the world witnessed a moment we had prayed, wept, fasted, and interceded for: **the final living hostages were returned home from Gaza after nearly two years in captivity.**

To say that the release of captives is a theme of Jubilee is an understatement. It is its heartbeat. It is the promise God spoke thousands of years ago, fulfilled

again before our very eyes. For the families who had suffered unimaginable anguish, for a nation still tender and traumatized, and for a world watching for signs of hope—**this was the moment we began breathing again.**

And for Maoz Israel, stepping into our 50th year just as captives were being released felt like God was saying:

"This is not only a year to remember what I've done—this is a season to watch what I will do next."

1980s

Early Beginnings

In this local Israeli book fare, Maoz Publishing showcased its Encyclopedia of Bible characters and other Hebrew books about the Messiah



1980s

Messianic Conference at Diplomat Hotel

30 years later to the month, the U.S. would recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moves its Embassy to that exact location





The Backstory

I wish I could just sit across from you in your living room and tell you story after crazy story. This seems like the only way I could do justice to the incredible backstory about Ari & Shira, the young couple with a tiny, scrappy little ministry and a dream to do something big in Israel.

Since then, Maoz's pioneering efforts have left a mark on virtually every major aspect of the Body in Israel today.

Since coffee with everyone is not an option, you can find some of this journey at maozisrael.org under our *"How it All Began"* series. In the meantime, I'll just share a few of the highlights.

Why Hebrew?

When Ari and Shira founded their first congregation in the 1970s, there were very few Jewish believers in Israel. Congregations were made up primarily of volunteers and tourists who only planned to spend a short time in the Promised Land. But Ari and Shira wanted a community of Jewish believers with deep roots who planned to have children and grandchildren in Israel.

Hebrew is a frustratingly difficult language to learn, and only people who were committed would put in the effort to learn it. So, **having services in Hebrew was a great way to separate the long-termers from the short-termers.**

At the time, preaching and worship in Hebrew and even celebration of Jewish holidays were not the norm amongst believers. After all, though they were Jewish, many had come to the Lord in a Gentile church culture.

Ari and Shira believed that in order to impact Israel, this had to change. Jewish believers needed to maintain their Jewish identity. It took time, and there was plenty of opposition, but today this is the new norm for every new Israeli congregation.

Thankfully, Ari and Shira were not alone. Soon after their arrival, a small wave of pioneer-minded Jews who had found the Lord began returning to the Land. They had come to take part in reestablishing the believing Jewish community in Israel after 2000 years of exile. **These early days in the 1960-70s were not glamorous. But neither were 12 disciples (former fishermen and tax collectors) following a Rabbi around—and they were responsible for turning the world upside down.**

Knowing how difficult and complex it was to immigrate and get settled in Israel, Ari and Shira launched an organization designed to help others through the process. **Helping believing Jews settle in Israel and begin new ministry works was the original reason Maoz Israel was established.**

1990s

Let My People Stay Protest

Israeli believers protest the court case rejecting Messianic Jews' rights to citizenship



1990s

High Holiday Celebration

Ari, Kobi and other leaders blow the shofar during the high holidays at congregation Tiferet Yeshua in its early days



Maoz Israel

THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

Ari and Shira understood that **no one organization could take on the massive task of facilitating the promised coming national revival**. And so, the vision of Maoz was always to find potential leaders, sow into them and watch them bloom. That is why **so many established ministries in Israel today can trace back to a time when Maoz stood with them, offered a helping hand, and cheered when they succeeded**.

Pass It On

If there's one thing Maoz has learned over the years, it's how to try, fail, try again, and **eventually discover what actually works when it comes to building God's Kingdom here in Israel**. We've had our fair share of

experiments—some brilliant, some ...well, let's just say they taught us what doesn't work.

And the truth is, **the things that make the biggest impact aren't usually the flashy ones**. They're not the stories that get headlines or viral videos. In fact, some of the most exciting breakthroughs are the ones we quietly hold onto because they involve real people, and sensitive moments **we can't share publicly**.

But over time, we've noticed four core areas where our efforts consistently bear fruit—fruit we're convinced will be evident even years from now. How do we know? Because **we're more than a generation into this** and the seeds we planted decades ago are evident in the Body of believers across Israel today. □

2000s

Light to the Nations

Taking Israeli believers abroad to minister and be ministered to by the nations



2020s

Kobi & Shani Take the Helm

Kobi and Shani Ferguson anointed to continue the vision of Maoz to the next generation

TODAY



The Maoz Strategy to Impact Israel

When it comes to building a Messianic community from the very beginning, Maoz took a holistic approach. We wanted to cover all the pillars required for a healthy community. This complex approach can be visually summed up as: **up, down, in and out**.





January 2026



Happy Jubilee Year!

Want to hear something fun? When we looked up the nations who have given to Maoz over the past 50 years—we were stunned to realize that a whopping 76 countries had sown into the work of Maoz in Israel. Interestingly enough, Israel, which just turned 77 this year, is the 77th country on that list!

I bet you can look back and easily find **God's fingerprints in your life story**.

But what if you had the opportunity to get **your own fingerprints into the story of Israel's rebirth and spiritual restoration?**

We have an opportunity for you to **solidify your place** in this unfolding story.

For years, leaders in Israel have spoken of the need to **preserve records from the early days of believers in Israel**, because so few were here then—and even fewer are still alive.

Passing on God's wonders to the next generation **is one of the most important aspects of advancing His Kingdom**.

Understanding how the Body in Israel grew and why early believers chose certain paths will help the younger generation understand where it came from, and help today's leaders make wiser decisions for the future.

And so, for our Jubilee year, **Maoz has taken on the weighty task of documenting, as best we can, the early years of the Messianic Body in Israel**. Honestly, if we don't do it now, it will probably never happen.

We are currently interviewing leaders across the country and even abroad, and plan to debut the 90 minute documentary at our 50-year celebration this fall. (If you are in Israel in October, we'd love for you to come join us!)

Our project goal is \$150,000 and **any part you play** in helping us preserve history—will become a part of the story.

Are you ready to leave some fingerprints in Israel's story?

In His service,

Kobi and Shani Ferguson

Kobi & Shani Ferguson

Kobi & Shani Ferguson
and Ari & Shira Sorko-Ram



