Oasis
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There is a question hanging in the steamy summer air of Israel. It is a question from God Himself and, as a nation; we are going to have to deal with it. The question is, "Who is He? Who is this man, Yeshua?"

This year, the question has come to the attention of the Israeli public with unprecedented frequency. Here are some examples:

MESSIANIC TEEN VICTIM OF BOMB ATTACK

Ami Ortiz, 15, was nearly murdered when a bomb disguised as a Purim holiday package was set outside the doorstep of his home. His parents, David and Leah, leaders of a Messianic congregation in Ariel were not at home. Ami decided to open the package and as he did so it blew up in his face. The blast should have taken his life. His neck was cut open from one side to the other. The shrapnel that shredded his limbs and lodged in his eyes should have removed his limbs and stolen his sight. He walks and sees today only because of the intervention of God. The well-disguised bomb was a lethal weapon of terror designed to destroy the family.

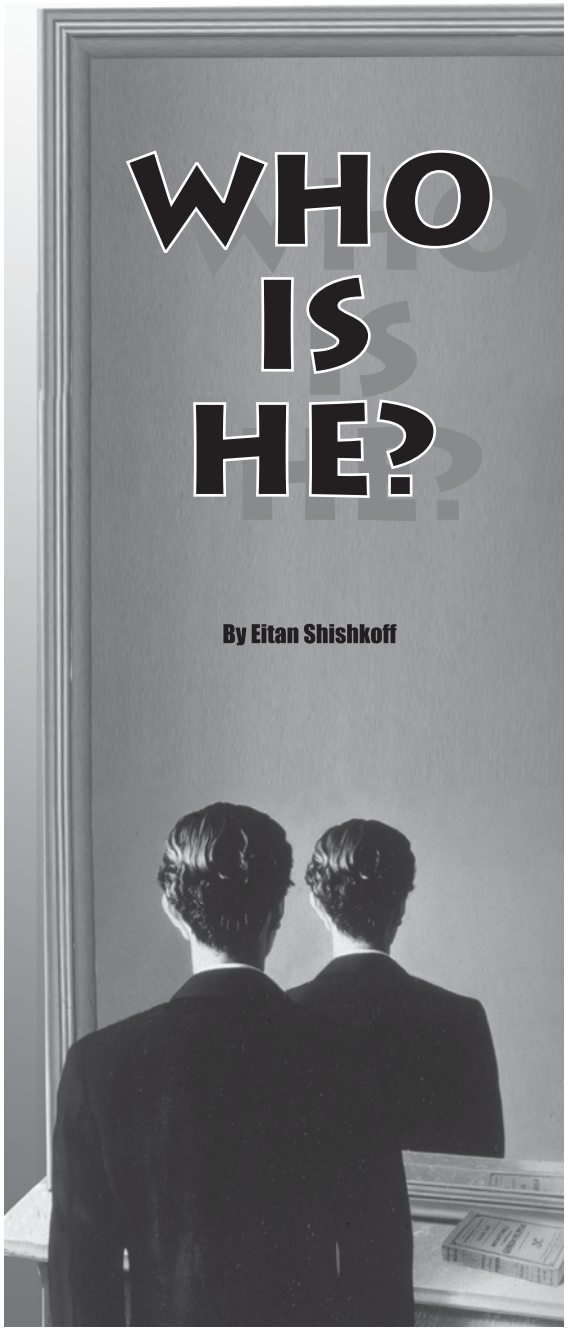
A lawyer representing the family said that he was very concerned that no suspect had been arrested. The Ortiz family is asking themselves how can there be no arrests in light of the very clear evidence found by the police. A May TV documentary highlighted the lack of police investigation and apparent cover-up. Law enforcement officials have ruled out a Palestinian terrorist attack and confirm that the hate crime came from fellow Jews, almost certainly religious zealots. Meanwhile, through national media, the attention of Israeli society is being drawn to the question: Why this attempt to murder an innocent young man; who are the people that are the target of such persecution and what do they believe?

AKKO LEADER SLANDERED

The second incident involves our daughter congregation in Akko. We have had superb relationships with the city government as a result of humanitarian aid. This April a letter was distributed to all of the synagogues in Akko. It contained lies about Guy Cohen, the young leader of Akko's Messianic congregation, warning the town to stay away from him. Guy explained: "I was accused of converting Jews into Christians and of building a facility that would lead youth to doom. Over the past month, religious Jews have many times stood outside our new facility and cursed us, even attempting to enter the building by force…My heart goes out to them since I was once one of them, zealous for God and with a strong love for this land." I love Guy's heart. This must be our attitude too.

MESSIANIC BIBLE CONTESTANT CONTESTED

During Israel's Independence Day celebration there is an annual international Bible quiz. Bat El Levy is an exceptionally knowledgeable 17-year-old who happens to believe in Jesus. Yad L'Achim, an Israeli "anti-missionary" group, saw her participation in the Bible contest as a threat to Judaism. Pressure was put on the Education Ministry to disqualify Bat



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problems contributed to learning difficulties as well. How would this young girl manage in a foreign culture? Would God take care of her special needs? Esther's heart was troubled. She wanted to support her husband's passion but how could she take her daughter so far from home? Esther struggled through her feelings until she received an answer from God: "I know how your heart hurts for Gloria. My heart also hurts for my children; they too have been burdened with disabilities but I will heal My people and I will heal Gloria."

Both Esther and Joseph studied at the University of Haifa. Learning the language and culture were a big challenge but they discovered that Israel had excellent health care facilities to attend to Gloria's special needs. After three years of study Joseph and Esther went back to the States. They had gained so much but their time to leave had come.

The Kims received a new opportunity to return to Israel when the Korean Christian Broadcasting Service approached Joseph to be their Middle-East correspondent. They had heard of Joseph's experience in Israel and considered him an ideal candidate for the job. They wanted a correspondent who could inform their audience of one and a half million Koreans (living in the U.S.) of both the politics and spiritual realities in Israel. The Kims gladly took advantage of this opportunity to return to the land they loved.

Joseph covered political events in the nation and then sent back twice weekly audio reports that aired on KCBC radio. After five years on the job Joseph has emerged as a veteran in the press corps and a number of large news agencies have asked him to provide orientation and advice to new journalists in the field. Many politicians and Israeli leaders have been surprised to be asked a question from this Korean correspondent in Hebrew!

Gloria

Esther receiving a parting bouquet as Gloria looks on

The Kim family settled in Akko to take advantage of the city's excellent school for special needs children. Gloria's experience in the Akko special needs school dramatically broadened the Kim family's understanding of God's purposes for Israel. Like many Christian people, the Kims have a deep love for Israel and long to serve her people. What they had not anticipated was seeing how Israel's people came to love them. Joseph explained, "Gloria is the only foreign student in her school but that has not mattered at all. Gloria's teachers and the school staff have been so loving. ***We came here because we love Israel but we have also received so much love back from Israelis."*** Joseph sees this special relationship between his daughter and her teachers as the key to their integration into Israeli life. Joseph explained, "I see many foreign journalists here who never integrate into Israeli society. They are only here on business. Because of Gloria's situation we have been welcomed into Israeli society.

Joseph encourages people from all around the world to come and taste just how sweet the "Sabra" fruit is. The trick is to stay long enough to get past the thorns. Joseph believes the often "prickly" dimension of Israeli character is a by-product of the wounds Israelis have suffered at the hands of the nations over the millennia. Esther added, "I think our stay in Israel is like the story of Ruth and Naomi. Both these women were wounded and grieving and this brought them together in love. This love bore fruit as Ruth became the mother of a new family in Israel. So we too have wounds and we too have given our love to Israel and received Israel's love back to us. This has also born fruit in relationships between us and our Israeli neighbors."

Joseph and Esther will be settling on the East Coast with family in New Jersey. Joseph will continue working for KCBC as a radio journalist – this time covering the United Nations beat. But their heart will still be here and Lord willing; they hope to return in some eighteen months time to take up their life in Akko and for Joseph to resume his post at the Middle-East desk. They also have a vision to see a rehabilitation center established in Akko for children with disabilities. "Gloria House" would be a therapy/education center for children with disabilities in Israel's north. Joseph and Esther have already drawn up plans and are working with Israelis to see the center established. Joseph hopes to fund raise for this needed facility while he is in the States.

It is a long way from the North/South Korean border to Akko; Israel and the miles are just a small part of that immense journey. But this Korean family has found a new home in perhaps the unlikeliest of places, all through the agency of one little girl's apparent weakness. The Kim's hearts belong to Israel and their friends and neighbors in Israel wait longingly for them to return. They are strangers no more. ✡

Strangers No More

One Korean Family's Life in Israel

By Marty Shoub

It was a surprise party. We were waiting for Joseph and Esther Kim and their daughter Gloria. The Kims are a Korean family who have been a part of our Tents of Mercy and Akko congregations for some seven years. They are headed back to the U.S. in order for Joseph to renew his green card (Esther and Gloria have U.S. citizenship) and we were gathered to send them off.

In the pregnant silence we waited as the door slowly opened and then of course, the pent up shouts of "surprise!" We all gladly expected the hugs and good natured confessions as the Kims walked in to greet us. But exuberance had to pause. Joseph Kim stood outside the entry way sobbing quietly, trying to compose himself. He was overwhelmed by the love awaiting him in the reception area. Such is the nature of this gentle man who has won the hearts of many Israelis both inside and outside the Messianic community. As the evening progressed, people continued to come forward to give tribute to this special family. The refrain from beginning to end was, "We love you. You are part of us. Please come back."

Joseph and Esther

Joseph's journey to Israel started strangely enough on the DMZ line between North and South Korea. It was 1991 and Joseph was fulfilling his obligatory military service. He received a letter from a friend studying Hebrew in Jerusalem. Joseph was intrigued; his only frame of reference for Israel was stories he had read in the Bible. ***Here was an account of a vibrant land alive with possibility; Israel was more than the events of antiquity. Joseph's heart was moved by the plight of modern Israel and he began to pray.***

Like many Koreans, following army service Joseph moved to the States in order to continue his education. In the States his new found passion for Israel continued unabated. Soon after he arrived Joseph met Esther and their courtship bloomed into marriage. Even so Joseph kept Israel close to his heart. Esther recalled, "He was always talking about Israel; I didn't understand it but I admired his passion."

Esther eventually caught Joseph's vision and they decided to come to Israel for a three year university program. However, by this time they had a three year old daughter who posed considerable challenges. Gloria was born with serious cardio-respiratory defects and underwent two major surgeries before her first birthday. Her physical

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El from the quiz, saying she should not be considered Jewish since she believes Jesus is the Messiah. The Education Ministry rejected Yad L'Achim's demand.

Her attorney Calev Meyers, said "If the participation of a young Messianic Jewish woman is enough to shake up those rabbis' world, it shows the weakness of that world…It is time that they stopped having a monopoly over determining who is a Jew."

BOOK BURNING IN ISRAEL!

A rabbi, who also happens to be the vice mayor of Or Yehuda, initiated a public burning of Hebrew New Testaments and other Messianic literature. As Joseph Shulam, Messianic leader and scholar stated in a radio interview, "The New Testament is the most important Jewish book that has influenced the whole world more than any other Jewish book. Great men in Israel are reading and have read the New Testament. David Ben-Gurion learned Greek specifically so he could read the New Testament in the original." In response to the book burning, many prominent editorialists condemned the act, comparing it to Christian burnings of Jewish literature over the ages. One writer said "I recommend to every Israeli, secular or religious, to read the New Covenant…He is promised a genuine Jewish experience."

CHANGE IN THE WIND

Beloved, there is change in the wind. To say that Yeshua is a stranger in His own land would be an understatement. To say that His Jewish followers in Israel in the year 2008, nearly 2000 years after His life, death and resurrection are misunderstood, regarded as irrelevant and worse in the perception of the average Israeli is also an understatement.

There is an astonishing task before us - to make Him known. But we know this task is now at the top of God's agenda. Who is He? That is the question that is before all Israel. Yeshua's fellow Jews asked "Who are you?" We want every person of this nation to be asking that same question. But as they ask that question we don't want to give an answer that amounts to a foreign message and a foreign way of life. What steps can we take to respond to the central question: "Who is He?"

1. SAY IT LOUD AND CLEAR "THIS IS NOT A FOREIGN MESSAGE & WE ARE NOT MISSIONARIES"

The accusation in Akko that Guy Cohen has converted to Christianity and that he is converting other Jews to Christianity is 100% wrong! That is not what we are about, even though both the Jewish community and most of the world Christian community understand it that way. The New Covenant is first and foremost a Jewish document.

We must establish ourselves in this nation not as foreign missionaries but as Israelis - like the first believers! The question is not only "Who is He" but "Who are we?" The nation around us does not know who we are. Our daily life style needs to reflect the biblical Jewish foundation God gave to Israel. Just like the 1st century disciples, we are called to worship in the language and flavor of our people. We are also called to enter Israel's national institutions, like the army.

2. PARTICIPATE IN ISRAELI SOCIETY

A prime example is a young man who is an officer in the IDF and the son of a Messianic Jewish leader. He is serving on one of our borders, in a strategic position, with tremendous influence over his men. There are young people entering into the universities. One young man in our congregation is now studying music composition and production at Haifa University. There is a financial company/ real estate brokerage in Tel Aviv that is owned and run by Messianic Jews. Our young people are entering the corridors of society. This generation has to understand itself as Jewish Israelis.

3. PRESENT EVIDENCE IN SCRIPTURE, TRADITION & JEWISH WRITINGS

The prophet Hosea encourages us that **"the children of Israel shall return (from exile) and seek the Lord their God and David their king…*in the latter days.*"** (Hosea 3:5) This verse is about the Messiah. It is a prophecy about our days. We are back in the land and Israel is beginning to seek God and ask questions about Messiah.

Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel all speak of the Davidic Messiah coming to Israel after Israel returns to the land: **"David My servant shall be king over them and they shall have one shepherd… David shall be their prince forever and I will make a covenant of peace with them and it will be an everlasting covenant."** (Ezekiel 37:24-26) Biblical evidence is abundant for a suffering Messiah who will bring the knowledge of Israel's God to the nations. It's time to be easily conversant with these passages in Hebrew, in context.

Pinchas Lapide, a scholar and Israeli ambassador, wrote a book about the resurrection of Yeshua - *The Resurrection of Jesus, a Jewish Perspective.* He insists on the complete Jewishness of Christianity in its earliest form. He emphasizes that the witnesses to Yeshua's resurrection were all Jews and calls it a Jewish faith experience. "As a faithful Jew I cannot explain (away) the historical development that despite many errors and much confusion has carried the central message of Israel from Jerusalem to the nations of the world. The experience of the resurrection…to carry the God of Israel to the…world must belong to God's plan for salvation." An unbiased Jewish scholar wrote that. Such sources buttress our testimony. We have the goods.

APOSTOLIC EXAMPLE

Our "field manual" is the Book of Acts. The apostles were crystal clear in their description and proclamation of Yeshua as Messiah and His relevance in Israel. **"Men of Israel, hear these words, Yeshua of Nazareth…(was) attested…by miracles, wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst."** (Acts 2:14, 22) **"Therefore let all the house of Israel know surely that God has made this Yeshua whom you crucified both Lord and Messiah."** (Acts 2:36) The nation had asked, "Who is this Man?" The apostles made Him known. So must we. ✡

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Our Vision:

Tents of Mercy - to participate in today's historic exodus by assisting Israel's returning exiles.

No spectators in the Kingdom - to be a worshiping, sharing community based in homes, equipping each one for service.

Come back Yeshua - to welcome Yeshua home to Israel, by restoring the Jewish roots of New Covenant faith.