

The Assembly, in Kofsman's opinion, was made in order to serve as a spiritual home for all the Messianic Jews so that they would not need to wander any more (in a spiritual sense) from place to place. Actually, the Assembly was supposed to be a framework and magnet for all the Jewish disciples of Yeshua in Eretz Israel and who were still scattered among the many kinds of historical churches. The main editor of the last two issues of "HaLapid" was Moshe Ben-Meir, who lived during those years in Haifa, and who listed the journal's address as No. 4, Gershon Agron Street, Jerusalem. Staff members of the journal's third issue were Ze'ev Shlomo Kofsman, Victor Smadja, and Rina Price from Jerusalem, and Professor Shlomo Birnbaum from Haifa. For the journal's fourth issue two new persons were elected to the editorial staff: Ya'akov Yaffe and Haim Fastman. Among the various articles that appeared in "HaLapid", it is interesting to note, besides other things, the following examples:

"Two letters to the Chief Rabbinate in Jerusalem"; "An Ongoing Series on the 'Names of Messiah the King'" and "Not a Converted Jew but a Saved Jew".

It is also interesting to pay attention to the announcement that appeared on the last page of the second issue:

"Welcome! On every Sabbath morning at 10:00, a public prayer meeting will take place (prayer and sermon) at the following locations: Y.M.C.A. building, room no. 110, in Jerusalem and No. 40, HaGefen Street, ground floor, in Haifa."

From this announcement, the meeting places of two of the smaller congregations in the year 1960 are deduced; one

under the leadership of Kofsman in Jerusalem and the other under the leadership of Ben-Meir in Haifa. About a year later, "Kofsman's Congregation" moved to No. 4 Gershon Agron Street, Jerusalem (today it is a Conservative Synagogue), and there the congregation's library was opened. In this library, that was open to the public only for a few hours three days a week, there were books in Hebrew, English and French, and a few other books in different languages. On the top of "HaLapid's" pages, an invitation was given to the readers to visit the library in order to get better acquainted with its books and also to check-out books for reading at home.

Throughout the three years that "HaLapid" was in existence, it was distributed free without charge. In the end, the publication of "HaLapid" was discontinued, and this was mainly because of differences in opinion among members of the journal's staff whose differing exegetical approaches eventually caused them to separate. The middle of the 1960's decade found each of the journal's editors in a different place and position - with some of them receiving help (be it theological or material) from supporters located outside of Israel. Only towards the year 1969 did some of them (among them the families of Ze'ev Kofsman, Victor Smadja, and Haim Fastman) manage to gather together again in Jerusalem. As for Moshe Ben-Meir, he continued to make his living as a postman in Haifa and also to give lectures on Messianic Jews outside the country, primarily in Scandinavia. In conjunction with this, Ben-Meir worked independently to publish another new Messianic magazine; but that is a different story entirely.

*Gershon Nerel*

# Zot Habrit

## This is the Covenant

A Journal of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel



Translated by Karen Mizrahi

spring 2000

bulletin no. 2

### Changes in the Alliance

With the appearance of this second English edition of "Zot Habrit" (This is the Covenant), we would like to update our friends and supporters in Israel and abroad in some changes that have occurred during the past year at the Alliance.

About half a year ago, Ilan Zamir announced his decision to resign from the position of President of the M.J.A.I. Ilan's resignation, after serving for close to seven years, was based on personal and health reasons. In early April of this year, we mourned the passing of Ilan Zamir after a long and complicated illness. At this time, we wish to thank all of you who have sent letters of condolence in regards to Ilan's death. We join you in extending our love and prayers to Ilan's wife Shir-El and to their two young children, as well as to his other family members and friends.

Ilan Zamir was indeed an inspiration to us for his clear vision for the Alliance, its purpose in serving the local congregations in the Land and for his leadership of the Alliance despite the difficulties. On 28<sup>th</sup> December 1999, three days before Ilan's official resignation and before the end of the millennium, we organized a small surprise party for him in the Alliance's downtown Jerusalem office. Members of the Alliance's Executive Committee were in attendance as well as one of our co-founders with Ilan of the M.J.A.I. and its first secretary, Menahem Ben-Hayim. The party was very emotional and the Lord's grace was felt. It was a blessing and an encouragement to hear Ilan's parting words about the Alliance's future and the road that lies ahead of us. We thank the Lord for giving us the opportunity, before Ilan passed away, to honor him and express our appreciation for the many contributions that he made to M.J.A.I. during his tenure as President.

There have been other changes in the Alliance that we would like to mention:

- Asher Intrater, who was the Alliance's General Secretary for five years, resigned from his post in March 1999. Asher filled the role as General Secretary with diligence and much ability. Asher remains with the Alliance as a member of the Executive Committee where he continues to contribute his experience and knowledge.

- Boaz Fastman, a native born Israeli whose parents are also believers, was elected by the committee to replace Asher. Boaz served faithfully on the Alliance committee for many years as a board member, and was elected to this demanding and responsible job. He has been serving as the General Secretary of the M.J.A.I. since August 1999.

- Hanan Lukatz, a member of the Executive Committee for the past four years, was elected by the board in November 1999 to replace Ilan Zamir as Chairman of the Board effective 1.1.2000.

- Finally, in March of this year, the Alliance welcomed well-known Messianic composer, David Loden, to the Executive Committee. David is an elder at Beit Assaf congregation in Netanya, and brings with him much expertise and talent. We are happy to have David on the Alliance board where his gifts will certainly be appreciated and utilized.

We are grateful to the Lord for all those who have served him in the Alliance in the past, and we ask for God's blessing and support on those who are continuing to serve the Alliance. We see it as a

privilege to serve the Lord's Body here in the Land in every area where He leads us.

In conclusion, after many years of wandering, the M.J.A.I. has finally settled in a pleasant, well-organized, two-room office located in the center of Jerusalem (close to the Ben Yehuda pedestrian mall). God willing, we hope to stay there for a long period of time. If you happen to be in Jerusalem, you are cordially invited to stop by the office in order to refresh yourselves, and to get to know the Alliance better. We will be there to welcome you with a smile and a warm greeting.

On behalf of the Executive Committee I would like to take this opportunity to bless you and to thank you for your love, prayers, and support of the M.J.A.I. We are confident that the work of the Israeli Alliance and your participation with us are very close to the Lord's heart.

\* Details for contacting M.J.A.I. are noted on the back page.

*Hanan Lukatz – Chairman of the Executive Committee*



The Executive committee and Ilan Zamir at his Farewell meeting, 28 Dec '99. Top left to right: Boaz Fastman, Menahem Ben-Hayim, Brele Balai, Asher Intrater, Gershon Nerel, Victor Blum, Arthur Goldberg. Bottom left to right: Karen Mizrahi, Ilan Zamir, Hanan Lukatz.

## The Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel

P.O.Box 46181

Jerusalem 91460

Tel: 972-2-6246140 Fax: 972-2-6246893

e-mail: [mjai@netvision.net.il](mailto:mjai@netvision.net.il)

<http://www.mjai.org>

### Contributions welcome!

Please make checks payable to "Hadadit Fund"

Bank Hapoalim

Account 100173

Branch no. 212

25 Ramban Street

Jerusalem, Israel

## Music Conference at Yad-Hashmona

*“Sing to the Lord a new song for He has done marvelous things”*

The above verse from Psalm 98 came to life as Messianic composers, worship teams, and faithful supporters gathered together at the Messianic moshav (village), Yad-Hashmona, located in the Judean hills for the annual music conference.

This year's conference, entitled *Zimrat 2000*, took place on 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> February, 2000, and was sponsored by the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel. Musical supervision of the conference was provided by the National Music Committee.

Over twenty-two Messianic composers and worship teams from congregations all over the Land participated in the two day event in which close to eighty new Messianic songs were presented. This fact points to the progress being made in the development of Messianic music within the Israeli believing community.

The conference got off to a start Friday evening with a festive Sabbath meal and reception. Afterwards, David Loden, as the Master of Ceremonies, opened the conference, and the first session for the presentation of new Messianic songs officially began. Included in the two and a half hour program were a wide range of songs that reflected the diverse cultural backgrounds of the musicians. On Saturday morning, the composers continued to dedicate their songs to the Lord during two additional song presentation sessions that lasted approximately four and half hours. Each performance captivated the audience members who were greatly



Worship team at “Zimrat 2000”

impressed by the wide range, quality, and artistic style of the new songs. In light of the quantity of songs presented and the large number of participants in this year's conference, a consensus was formed that we are witnessing a great revival in the area of Messianic music and worship in the country.

The main purpose of the Music Conference is to introduce new Messianic songs into the local congregations in order to enrich and enhance praise and worship of the Lord. To further this goal, each composer was asked in advance to prepare copies of his/her new songs in order to encourage distribution of the songs among the congregations. Throughout the conference, the rear of the auditorium where the copies were laid out, somewhat resembled the popular Jerusalem markets on a busy day, as people eagerly rushed to gather the new songs for themselves and for their congregations. The great enthusiasm during the “song-gathering” reminds us of the importance of presenting our spiritual “first fruits” as offerings to the Lord.

The “Succat David” worship team ended the *Zimrat 2000* Music Conference with the song, *Kama Tov Atah* (“How good You are”) that prompted the audience to stand up together in spontaneous praise and thanksgiving. It revealed a tremendous spirit of unity in faith and worship that is only achieved when our Lord and Messiah Yeshua is in our midst.

*Karen Mizrahi*

## Israeli Press Publishes Articles on Yeshua

The Israeli press has been publishing numerous articles recently on the subject of Yeshua the Messiah and have been frequently referring to him in the local electronic media. This can be attributed to the beginning into the new millennium, the special importance that different Christian groups in the world have placed on this event, as well as on the recent visit of Pope John Paul II to Israel and the thousands of Christian pilgrims that accompanied him to the Holy Land. Among the voices that were heard in the Israeli media, the most distinct were those who called for

a renewed and more moderate approach to the historical figure of Yeshua, a native-born son of the Jewish people. In these articles, the writers came out against the ignorance of most Jews concerning the Jewish roots of Yeshua and his disciples, and in regards to his commandments as they appear in the Gospels. Furthermore, the writers acknowledged that throughout the years the Israeli Ministry of Education has prevented almost all teaching on this subject in the Israeli school system.

## Roots

*“HaLapid “(The Torch): The Second Journal of Messianic Jews in the State of Israel*

In the months of January and July of 1960 two of the first issues of *HaLapid – Biton HaKehila HaMeshihit HaIsraelit* (“The Torch – Journal of the Israeli Messianic Assembly”) were published in Jerusalem.

The initiators and journal staff members of the first edition were three men: “Rabbi Ze’ev Shlomo Kofsman, Rabbi Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir and Rabbi I. Goldin”. Along side of them stood one woman, Rina Price. Out of all the above, only Rina, who has lately taken a renewed interest in Jewish people who are disciples of Yeshua, is still living and now belongs to the German group, *Beit El*, which was founded by Emma Berger in Zichron-Ya’akov. Two of the last issues of “HaLapid” were published in August 1961 and April 1962.

From the State of Israel’s viewpoint, “HaKehila HaMeshihit HaIsraelit” (The Israeli Messianic Assembly) during those years was nothing but an autonomous organization that was founded in 1957 under the name *Kehila Meshihit Israelit – Kehilat Yerushalayim* (“The Israeli Messianic Assembly – Jerusalem Assembly”) and that was formally recognized when it was publicized in the *Davar* newspaper about a year afterwards. Among the central founders of this organization that also continued to be active later on, were Ze’ev Shlomo Kofsman and his wife Yvette, Hava Kronhaus, Rina Price, and Rahel Greenberg. The main aspiration of Ze’ev Kofsman was that the Israeli Messianic Assembly would be a spiritual center for all Messianic Jews in Eretz Israel who were born here and those who were ingathered here from all parts of the world.

The name “HaLapid” (The Torch) was chosen based on two verses of God’s Word to the prophet Isaiah:

**“For Zion’s sake I will not hold My peace, and for**

**Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a torch that burns” (Isaiah 62:1).**

**“Arise, shine; for your light has come!” (Isaiah 60:1)**

Beneath the main headline of “HaLapid” a sub-headline was attached that read: “The Israeli Messianic Assembly symbolizes the resurrection of the ancient Messianic congregation in its original form.”

In the explanation given underneath the above sub-headline, it was written that the modern Messianic congregation in Israel is the direct and natural continuation of the first Israelite Messianic congregation that was also the most ancient congregation founded in Jerusalem by Jewish people in the first century. Further to this, the following comparison was made: Just as the Jewish people in Israel today are a direct and natural continuation of the ancient Jewish people who were residents of this country 2000 years ago, one can see that exactly as then, the Israeli Messianic Assembly of today is an inseparable part of the people. In other words, “Just as

the Jewish people have begun to re-build their national life on the ancient, desecrated ruins, so also can it be applied to the spiritual life; hence the Messianic Assembly has started to re-build its spiritual dwelling place in its renewed country”.

In connection with the return to Zion, Kofsman emphasized that just as the Jews “do not come home to this country as immigrants or squatters but to receive their fathers’ estate as an inheritance; likewise, we do not come to the Israeli Messianic Assembly as converts (proselytes), but rather as the redeemed who are returning to our spiritual inheritance.”



## Shalom from “HaDerech” (The Way) Congregation in Carmiel

Carmiel, located in upper Galilee, is a development town containing forty-three thousand people who are actively involved in accelerating the rate of immigration and absorbing new immigrants into the city. Likewise, we at **HaDerech** (“The Way”) congregation are also engaged in immigrant absorption at a fast rate.

Our congregation was founded a little more than ten years ago and currently has around sixty members who come from four different continents and from more than ten countries and who speak in six different languages while the common language is Hebrew. In other words, quite a mixed salad!

A congregation located in the periphery has to deal with many pressures, difficulties, and needs (and I’m not referring only to financial needs).

There are shortages of people for key positions in the congregation such

as pastors, teachers, worship leaders, musicians, intercessors, translators, and people who can provide many other services as well. There is also a need for people with vision who can lead the congregation forward, godly people who desire and are ready to do His will, and “ordinary” people who put the Lord in the center of their daily lives.

The Zionist vision for the year 2000 is to keep the Israelis in this country, to inhabit the barren and remote places, to drive in the “tent-pegs”, and to start something new and challenging even if there is not much money or comfort involved.

As Messianic believers we also need to adhere to this attitude and to help build and strengthen the peripheral congregations. We need to be ready to serve the Lord in the places where it is less comfortable, where there is less income and less youth, and where there is more loneliness, stress and fear of failure. Besides all these things there is a rare beauty in the fact that you are helping to build something new, in being someone who is useful to the congregation, and, of course, the beautiful views that one encounters...

During the past few months we have been busy distributing the video movie “*Yeshua*”. For this campaign we joined together with another congregation in Carmiel and were given help in organizing things from several other congregations outside the city. As a result of the campaign,

we received around 600 requests for the video movie. Some of the people who received the movie were very open to the Gospel while others were less so. Thanks be to God, there were some people that we reached that actually prayed to receive the Lord. There were also those that previously had not known about the existence of our congregation and who joined us. The campaign was a great source of encouragement for us all and showed us that it is also fun to work with others in the local Body.

In addition, the video campaign provided the unique opportunity for many congregation members to be involved in wide scale evangelistic activity which built up confidence and assurance in those who were beforehand more hesitant when speaking about their faith. The campaign resulted in many other blessed side effects as well. For instance, in the case of a couple from the congregation who decided to give their testimony in front of a group of close family members and friends.

**“Praise the Lord! Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can declare all His praise?” (Psalm 106:1-2).**

To summarize, God’s Word teaches us, **“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalm 127:1).**

His Word also teaches us that He is looking for workers and builders to serve Him with gladness and a joyous heart.

It is a big challenge to establish a new congregation. An additional challenge of no less importance, is to protect and to strengthen the existing congregation. I am pleased to take advantage of this platform and to call all those who are grounded in their walk of faith, who have the energy and readiness to serve and to change things in their lives, who are ready to deal with challenges, changes, difficulties and frustrations, and who are willing to be instruments in the hand of the Lord, to come and help in the building up the peripheral Body of Messiah.

**Yossi Ovadia – Kehilat “HaDerech”**

*...to be ready to serve the Lord  
in the places where it is less comfortable,  
where there is less income and less youth,  
and where there is more loneliness,  
stress and fear of failure*

The English version of the newspaper *Ha’aretz* in its December 23, 1999 edition (written by Orna Kazin), came out with this bold headline: “It’s time for Israelis to learn that Jesus was Jewish”. In the Hebrew version of *Ha’aretz* of the same day under the headline, “A prophet is never honored in his own town”, Kazin writes: “Students in the ninth grade at Bat Yam high school were asked...what do you know about “Yeshu” [Jesus]?... most of them knew absolutely nothing, not even basic details. Some thought that he was born a Christian and died in his old age. They did not know that “Yeshu” was a believing Jew...”. Further along in the article, the Ministry of Education was criticized for its attempts to almost completely eliminate Yeshua from the public school curriculum. “It’s hard not to be surprised by the high school students’ ignorance. In accordance with the official school curriculum, students in the public school system hear about “Yeshu”, in the best case scenario, only once during their 12 years in school - and only superficially - during the students’ history lessons that are normally conducted in the sixth grade.”



Further on in the article the writer is concerned to prove the importance of studying the teachings of Yshua and extols its high ethical character, and cites a number of scholars to prove her point. Following are two examples:

In his book, “The Jewish Roots of Christianity”, Professor David Flusser writes much about the importance of the Sermon on the Mount and the rest of Yeshua’s teachings for understanding the Jewish traditions of his day. Flusser writes, “In the Sermon on the Mount, Yeshu [Jesus] interprets the teachings of the Torah in the strictest ethical sense.” According to Flusser, Yeshua follows a trend of wise Jewish thinkers of his time that concentrated more on ethics and love of neighbor and less on external ceremonies.

Professor Michael Harsgor, who has spoken about Yeshua recently on his radio program “The History Hour”, broadcast by the Israeli Armed Forces radio station, said that “Yeshu [Jesus] is the most famous Jew in the world, and students need to realize why he is famous and why he is a Jew.”

On December 24<sup>th</sup> 1999, the *Yediot Achronot* newspaper published an interview with Professor Avigdor Shanan,

editor of a new book that has appeared in bookstores recently, called “That Man – Jews Talk About Jesus”. This book is a collection of thirty-five chapters written by mainstream Jews about the figure Jesus, from the first century until now. In this interview the editor (who happens to be orthodox) also comes out against the fear of dealing with Yeshua. Professor Shanan declares: “It’s a shame that we have not been released yet from the Diaspora complex, and have not arrived at the point of spiritual independence. We still are not sure about ourselves and we are not able to stand straight confronting others and viewing them without feeling threatened or inferior.” This conclusion came after the interviewer asked Professor Shanan to discuss his feelings about the fact that it is impossible to obtain a copy of the New Testament in Hebrew from local bookstores. The following remarks were also made in the interview: “It is impossible to cancel or avoid a figure that has left such an indelible impression on the world’s events during the last two thousand years. It is hard to imagine the course of world history without him.”

It is also interesting to read in the interview about Shanan’s first encounter with the New Testament and the relation of Jewish religious intellectuals to it:

“Professor Shanan recalls that he read the New Testament for the first time in his life while in his father’s house - his father was a principal of a Jewish religious school. “The book was lying down on a book shelf. I was young, but the discovery of the New Testament did not shock me as my father had never treated it as a forbidden book; he read it from the point of view of intellectual curiosity. The only thing my father made sure of was to lay the New Testament on the bookshelf separately, underneath the other stacks of books, so that it would never be laid against another book. Today, when I visit the homes of religious scholars, I find the New Testament but it is always the book that is located at the bottom of the book stack covered by all the other books.”

In the areas of radio, television, and newspapers, where Yeshua has been mentioned lately, there has been a strong tendency to separate between Yeshua the Jew, who should be respected as a Jew, and between Christianity, which is viewed by most Israelis as foreign. Getting closer to Yeshua and knowing Him better, as well as the realization by the Jewish people here that Yeshua was a Jew are all positive signs that reveal God’s activity among his people, and are an encouragement to us, the sheep of his flock.

**Boaz Fastman**

## “Succat David” (Tabernacle of David) Congregation: Vision and History

“Succat David” is a Hebrew-speaking Messianic congregation located in Jerusalem. The congregation has been in existence for close to seven years.

It all began about eight years ago when “King of Kings” congregation started a Hebrew-speaking home group fellowship in order to serve the needs of the Hebrew-speaking community.

The home group steadily grew and developed, and eventually we started to feel that the Lord was calling us to build something beyond the home group. From the very beginning God gave us a vision:

***We discovered that our vision to conduct our fellowship only in Hebrew has allowed us to build closer relationships with each other***

1. To establish a Hebrew-speaking congregation without translation that would provide an atmosphere where Israelis would feel comfortable.

2. To be open to the activity of the Holy Spirit and to the gifts of the Holy Spirit based on the faith we have that God equips his disciples with the power of the Spirit and with supernatural gifts in order that we may serve Him more effectively.

3. To examine the Holy Scriptures for “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

4. To raise up a spiritual family. The challenge is to build up a congregation where everyone feels loved and accepted. Likewise, everyone should learn to love others as Yeshua commanded.

5. To spread the Good News about Yeshua the Messiah.

6. To help every person to reach his/her maturity in the Messiah and to help fulfill their calling in the Lord.

After nearly a year and a half of preparations, “Succat David” congregation was “born” and officially got off to its start in May 1993. During the first few years, “Succat David” had its “growing pains” as usually happens in every young

congregation, but, praise God, it continued to grow and develop. Today the congregation is comprised of faithful brothers and sisters that love the Lord. We discovered that our vision to conduct our fellowship only in Hebrew has allowed us to build closer relationships with each other as there is not a great demand to invest in developing relationships with believers that are in the country for only a short period of time.

One of the things we emphasize at “Succat David” is “service”. We try to involve every member of the congregation in some kind of activity that will allow him/her the privilege to serve. Some of the areas in which we encourage service are as follows: teaching the children, arranging the meeting hall, participating in the worship team, and serving refreshments after the meetings.

As we have no permanent meeting place of our own, the “Succat David” congregation meets once a week on Shabbat afternoons in the Anglican School Building on Rehov HaNevi'im (Prophets street) located in downtown Jerusalem. In the middle of the week congregation members split up into several different home groups where we study God's Word and fellowship together on a more personal basis. We also have a prayer intercessory group that meets once a week on Monday evenings in the congregation's office. At the beginning of each month, we hold a buffet style dinner after the service that helps us to feel like a real

family and that allows us to deepen our relationships with other members of the congregation. The congregation is also very active in teaching our youth. At the moment we have 4 different classrooms where we conduct Shabbat school for our many children who range from nursery school age to teenagers.

One of our main purposes at “Succat David” is to provide a proper spiritual basis for new believers who have just come to faith in Yeshua. In order to accomplish this, we offer special classes to teach them about the foundations of our faith. Some of the subjects that are covered include Yeshua in the Old Testament, repentance, faith, understanding God's Word, baptism, the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom of God, and Yeshua's second coming.

At this time the leadership team at “Succat David” consists of five elders and two deacons. We do not differentiate between elders and pastors in accordance with our understanding of the Bible that the two are one and the same. Our belief at *Succat David* is that there is only one Body of Messiah and that all of us are brothers and sisters in Yeshua. Within this Body there exist many congregations that each have a different vision or emphasis. The key to unity is in understanding this fact (one Body, many parts) and in behaving in a way that promotes mutual understanding and patience towards one another and towards those in different congregations. Of course, we should also strive towards better cooperation and communication with other members of the Body, but in a way that does not deviate from God's Word.

**Zvi Randelman – “Succat David”**

## The Messianic Congregation of Be'ersheva

The Messianic Congregation of Beersheva was founded in 1972 when leaders of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (who also supply us with our “Tabernacle tent”) and three of the past congregational leaders agreed upon the founding of the “Beersheva congregation”.

The early years saw an usually large number of Romanian speakers in the congregation. A few of these families lived in Dimona (about a 1/2 hours drive from Beersheva) and traveled each Shabbat to Beersheva in order to fellowship with other Messianic believers. Today we still have two families in the congregation who are part of the second generation of the above- mentioned families.

In the 1980s there was an influx of English speaking believers who came to live in Beersheva and I happen to be one of them. We, like the others, joined the Body of Messiah here. With the Lord's help, the congregation continued to grow in size and in maturity. Soon elders were appointed to the congregation and God's Word continued to form the basis of our spiritual life and our personal and congregational behavior. Our goal has always been to allow the Holy Spirit to liven and activate God's Word in all things until “we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Messiah” (Ephesians 4:13).

During the 1990s we absorbed many immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Through the Lord's mercy, many of these people came to faith in Yeshua the Messiah right here in the country by means of evangelization.

Today the congregation contains

approximately 120 people who meet together each week in order to praise, worship, and serve our God. Meetings are held in the Hebrew language. In addition to the general meeting on Shabbat, there is also a meeting conducted in Russian, prayer groups for men and women, Bible studies, youth classes, and a meeting held in



**Meeting at Beer-Sheva congregation, 1999**

Romanian for the foreign workers. There are more among us also who express their messianic faith through providing aid to the poor and needy with food and clothing, and participating in Pro-Life campaigns against abortions.

Thanks be to God, another congregation exists today in the northern Negev that was “born” as a result of our evangelism outreach program. Our leadership team is also developing and maturing. For the first time ever, we have a pastor in our congregation who is dedicated solely to this position. We also have three elders and five deacons/deaconesses. We pray that the Lord will prepare other faithful brothers and sisters for service in the heart of his flock. We are also praying that the Lord Yeshua will fulfill our need for a brother to lead us in the area of music, praise and worship.

One of our challenges now is to accept all those that the Lord has accepted

and to “adopt” them into his family within our congregation. In this way, the Lord tests and proves our love for others. As a congregation we wish to be one complete Body united in Spirit and in God's Word for the good of his kingdom. This vision keeps us close to our Lord Yeshua the Messiah's cross and commits us to being dependant

on the guidance of the Holy Spirit for success in our work.

Yeshua is the one who is building his Body according to the will and goals of the Father. Further to this, the Lord is planting different people in the Messianic congregations of the Negev in order to bring honor to his holy name:

“The poor and needy seek water, but there is none; their tongues fail for thirst. I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, the myrtle and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the cypress tree and the pine and the box tree together, that they may see and know, and consider and understand together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it.” (Isaiah 41:17-20)

Only by means of living faith and hope in Yeshua the Messiah will we be able to create rivers of living water in the desert and in the dry lands which will in turn bring forth from us many first fruits to His glory. Our prayer is that it will be as His Word.

**Howard Bass – The Messianic Congregation of Be'ersheva**