

# ENCOURAGERS JOURNAL

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## Jan and Mies Barendse 'locked up' ?



### *Dear friends, there are great Corona-challenges for Israeli believers!*

In the nearly thirty years that my wife and I have visited Israel, it never has been so quiet in the land. You'll find no boat on the Sea of Galilee, the streets are empty and when the Jewish Nation these days celebrate the Exodus out of Egypt, one can only come together with their direct family to eat the Passover meal.

For the believers the consequences of this crisis are devastating. The buildings and sanctuaries of the congregations are tightly closed, but the (very high) rent of these places continue. Most believers are at home now and their income has dropped dramatically.

The Messianic Congregations do what they can to stay in contact with the believers and help to

### **THE ALMOND TREE IS BLOSSOMING!**

The Almond tree is in the Bible associated with watchfulness. The prophecy in Jeremiah 1:11-12 uses a play on words that carries a vital truth for Israel as well as for us. The Hebrew word for almond, 'shaked', is also translated with 'to watch'. By seeing the almond branch, God assured Jeremiah that He is watching over His Word, to bring it to pass, no matter the passage of time! God is watching over Israel and over His Church in these perilous times! Be encouraged!

relieve the need of there neighbors. Last week I went on my own to the town of Karmiel to record a sermon for 8 Messianic congregations in Northern-Galilee. These are Russian speaking congregations. This message is now shared with many other Russian-speaking congregations in Israel.

The Messianic Congregation in the Southern coast town of Ashdod enjoy a positive side of the corona restrictions. For them it meant a break in the weekly harassing of sometimes 100 Haredi's (Ultra-orthodox) who week after week blocked the entrance of the building when believers wanted to go to their worship service. Just on time before traveling was restricted, I could give a special leadership-training for the staff of this congregation and some pastors in the area.

The Arab believers face also big challenges. Men and women can't work unless they are building houses or farming. No work means no income! When the crisis will continue even longer social upheaval is not unthinkable.

But on the spiritual side there is good news. Pastors witness a greater openness for the Gospel. Luke-warm believers are coming back to God. A pastor in Nazareth said to me that teenage children of believers are starting to think about eternity and are committing their lives to the Lord. These young people are sensing the severity of the crisis.



There is a stronger sense among believers that this may be the beginning of the final days before the Second Coming.

It is a privilege for us to be right now in Israel as ambassadors of the hope that is within us.

## *A crisis which offers new chances*

### Spontaneous relief action for poor Jewish families in Northern Galilee

***This crisis gives us chances that we never even dreamed about! My wife and I cannot go back to Holland, because all airplanes are grounded at the Ben Gurion Airport. We don't know when we can go back. Are we now 'stranded' here? No, God has a purpose with this!***

The Israelis prepare themselves for the greatest of all yearly festivals, Pesach - Passover - the celebration of Gods mighty salvation and deliverance of His people from the bondage of Egypt. It is a feast that the Jews celebrate with their extended family of three generations. The more, the better. Not this year. Grandfather and grandmother are not present. No uncles or aunties, nephews and nieces. The famous Pesach question that is each year repeated: "Why is this evening different than all other evenings", has now a double meaning. Only direct family members are present at the Passover meal. A tragedy for thousands of families, and especially for the elderly. The schools and daycare centers are closed, so are all the parks and beaches. Many parents lost their jobs.

Pastor Israel Iluz called me last week. The mayor's office of the border city Kirjath Shmonah called him and asked for help. (An unusual move in the country of Israel to ask a Messianic pastor for help, but we live in unusual times!).



In the front: Pastor Irina Friedman from Karmiel



A request was made to CGI (a Dutch organization that support Messianic Congregations in Israel) gave 4.000 euros to buy special kosher relief packages for two cities in Northern Israel, Karmiel and Kirjath Shmonah. Just before the festival of Pesach 160 families received a special food package.

The mayor was clearly moved by it. 'Because of the corona crisis everybody is suffering. But especially the needy families. You responded right away to our cry for help. May God bless the people of Holland for this'.

More than ever we have a sense of belonging and know that we needed to be here "for such a time as this". We live as Jews among the Jews, but we don't forget our Arab brothers and sisters. Every day I am in contact with pastors.

Pastor Ehab said to me that in the Golan heights Druse families that came to the Lord many years ago, renewed their

commitment to Christ. Miracles are happening among the Arab believers and lukewarm believers come back to the Lord!

With a little creativity I can still preach here and encourage Gods people with the Word.

***We are not 'stuck' in Israel, we are precisely where we need to be, in Gods' place, in His time***



*We want to thank you very much for the prayers for the health of Mies, my precious wife!*

*It's almost one year ago that we found out that she had a tumor in her breast. A long process of chemo treatments, an operation and radiation therapy followed. Mid-January all treatments were completed. She is doing much better and stands side by side with me! Of course Mies has to rest regularly and she has not regained her strength yet, but she is getting stronger each day. We give God all the glory!*

*Jan&Mies Barendse, Encouragers Unlimited*

**Bringing Encouragement and Comfort to Israel (Isaiah 40:1)  
Connecting the believers of the nations  
with the followers of the Jewish Messiah in Israel  
Training workers and leaders**



**The water is rising at the Sea of Galilee so is our faith and expectation**



The Lord Jesus promised to build HIS church upon the Rock. We have no reason to fear in this time of trial.

Two years ago some scientists claimed that the all-time low of the water level of the Sea of Galilee was a consequence of the global climate change. Believers in Israel have been praying fervently for the last twenty years

after the water level started to drop dramatically. The existence of Israel depends for a large part on this large sweet water reservoir. One year ago the rainy season finally brought a significant rise to the Kinnereth, the Israeli name for the Sea of Galilee. Since the beginning of this rainy season last November, the amount of water to the lake increased with 400 million cubic meters, almost double the amount of a normal season.

What is happening in the natural also is happening in the spiritual world. *It looks like the long period of spiritual drought for Israel and the Western world is coming to an end.* Like the waters of the Sea of Galilee have been rising this rainy season faith and expectation is rising. A Jewish man, not very religious, said recently to me: 'Hashem (God) uses this corona-crisis to give His people a second chance get serious with Him'. I believe he is right. Suddenly people are more open

to hear about the gospel. I believe that a Holy Spirit directed movement of repentance is coming to Israel. It will first start among lukewarm Jewish and Arab believers in Jesus the Messiah.

Not everything about this crisis is bad. While some of the party lovers are still 'dancing on the edge of the volcano' many families of believers decided to dedicate their lives anew to the Lord and seek His face more than ever.

We want to be there for the hungry and the lost. To feed them, not only with the temporary bread, but with Jesus, the Bread from Heaven!



This picture was taken one month ago; right now only 11 inches to go and the lake is full!

**Thank you for praying for us  
and for your financial support!**

Your ambassadors in Israel  
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Consider prayerfully to support us!

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**Retreat Center Beth HaKerem in Migdal, Galilee**

These days are very trying for the Retreat Center in Migdal. Many groups from churches and Christian institutions in the USA and Europe have canceled their stay in this beautiful place because of the lockdown. Please pray for Bina Richardson as she directs this ministry. Another prayer request is that Bina's application for a visa as a religious minister is now in a decisive phase. For Mies and I it is a joy to be co-workers with Bina and help her where we can. We have daily joint devotions on the patio and keep of course the demanded distance the government requires from us!