Revealing hidden treasures
Jewish Jewels
Teaching God's love

**December 2013**

*Thank you Jewish Jewels Family for the $96,600 in donations and Love Baskets that went to Israel this year!*

*Deut. 20:3-4 on back*

Shalom Shalom in the Prince of Peace!

## Geshem B'rakhot: Showers of Blessing

As all Israel awaited the fall rains to begin, a sign of God's blessing and gracious provision, our 2013 Jewish Jewels Mercy Mission team brought showers of another kind to God's land—spiritual and material blessings—from YOU, our Jewish Jewels partners and Lovers of Zion.

The Lord impressed Gal. 6:10 on our hearts as we began our journey: *"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."* It was appropriate, therefore, that Guy Cohen, Messianic rabbi of Acco, joined us for dinner shortly after our arrival in Israel. Guy shared his incredible testimony with us, blessed us with the Priestly Blessing as we began our Mercy Mission, and left with a suitcase of socks for the boys and girls in their congregation and after-school program. We also gave him Love Baskets for needy families in His congregation, plus personal gifts for his family.

## Walk the Land!

There was a lot of emphasis on "feet" this year. Most of you know that we asked for donations of socks for the Children's Home in Netanya. YOU sent in socks for most of the children in Israel! We even had a very special "sock box" arrive at Jewish Jewels with socks inside. Everywhere we went, we handed out socks. Socks and more socks. They seemed to multiply! We packed six fifty-pound duffle bags of socks. 300 lbs!—not counting the socks that our group of twenty-four brought. Literally, thousands of pairs of socks went to Israelis this year, just when they are starting to switch from wearing sandals to wearing shoes.

A prayer group in Gainesville, FL received the following word for our Mercy Mission group: "Where every toe of the group walks, the curse of the land will be broken. You will bless the land by walking on it." On the first day of the tour, Jamie received a word from Genesis 13:17, "Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you." And we did walk—a lot. Our son Jonathan even walked with a torn ACL and meniscus. Richard, age 84, was a real trooper, walking throughout Israel with our group. April walked valiantly after twisting an ankle. Orva did the same, after injuring her ankle on the final day. We were a band of overcomers, determined to bless Israel. Our excellent guide, Hanna Ben Haim, taught us that a "walk" or "day's journey" in Bible times, was twenty miles.

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## Avodat Kodesh

*Avodat Kodesh*, literally means "holy work." That phrase was used more than once, referring to our Mercy Mission. The first time was in reference to our mission on Sunday, Oct. 13 to the Bet Elazraki Home for children. We arrived at 4:30 PM and were warmly greeted by Ari, assistant to Yehuda Cohn, the Director of the Home. Our group enjoyed participating in a craft activity with the children, had dinner with them, and presented them with four huge duffle bags of socks plus 250 hand-made birthday cards by inmates from the Lakeland, Florida Correctional Facility (to be given to the children individually on their special day).

After dinner, we returned to our hotel on the Mediterranean to assemble the baby gift bags for the next day. The room assigned to us to assemble our gifts was the hotel synagogue! (The right place for a holy work.) We had anticipated the usual 40+ babies as we prepared for our trip. The Lord surprised us with 26 preemies, in addition to the usual 40. There were 66 babies in all. God provided, through YOU, and our Mercy Mission team. Every mother and baby got a bag of gifts. The mothers were thrilled and in awe. They marvelled at the hand made blankets, hats, booties and dresses - all labors of love, and received as such.

Our team had lots of interaction with the new mothers. Our son Jonathan and his wife Nancy bonded quickly with a precious Israeli couple who were first time parents. Rhonda became an honorary grandmother to the newborn of a special-ed teacher of blind children, who was used to giving rather than receiving, and was overjoyed with her gifts. Anna and Candy connected deeply with some Orthodox mothers who hugged them and even agreed to have their pictures taken. Love overcame tradition. We even had pregnant women receiving gifts—unheard of because of superstition. A real breakthrough was made by love.

Plaques with Psalm 139 in Hebrew were given to the mothers, emphasizing that God knew their babies even before they were born. Finally, our group was escorted into the Neonatal ward where we delivered gift bags for each tiny baby. This year, we were asked by the hospital staff to pray over the babies, some fighting for their lives. It was a very moving experience. Before we left the hospital at about noon, we gave Dr. Rofe, Director General and dear friend, ten Love Baskets for needy families, and a donation for the maternity unit.

## Dancing Feet!

We arrived at the Organization of Victims of Terror in Afula at about 12:30 PM on Monday. We were immediately swept into a circle of dancing and rejoicing. Music was provided by professional Russian Jewish musicians. Our dear friends and lovers of Yeshua, Michel and Yaffa, always welcome us with unbridled joy, banners, flags, singing and praising Yeshua.

There were gifts given to us and to Jonathan and Nancy (in honor of their marriage). There was lunch, and then a time of hearing the heart-wrenching story of their daughter's murder at the hands of terrorists. Gifts were given to our group. We prayed for Yaffa. Michel asked for prayer for himself, then said he wanted prayer for Jonathan and Nancy. Before we left Afula, we gave Michel and Yaffa Love Baskets for the families of the victims of terror as well as the local IDF Kfir Brigade.

## Mercy Mission Fruit

After Afula, we went to Tiberias and stopped at the Jesus Boat Gift Shop before going to our hotel. Neil met Alex, the owner of the shop, who shared a moving story with him concerning the Love Baskets that we gave Alex last year for needy families in the Galilee. Alex gave some of them to his daughter, who was working with foster children in the city of Acco. Many lives were touched by the Love Baskets, including the life of Alex's daughter. As a result of this, Alex's life was changed forever. He decided to dedicate the rest of his life to helping others. Your 2012 Love Baskets were the seed that blossomed into great fruit!

We saw more fruit from former Mercy Missions when we arrived at our hotel in Tiberias. Tal, who owns the gift shop at the Caesar Hotel, showed us the two key rings from former Mercy Missions that he keeps by his cash register. We gave him a third one, with this year's verse from Deut. 20:3-4.

Tal also shared with us that the Beanie Babies that we left with him during our last Mercy Mission were offered for a donation to Nitzinim, the school he has started for Autistic children. With the donations, Tal was able to purchase a new air conditioner for the school. We left him a new crop of Beanie Babies.

Our bus driver, Hillel, has been with us on Mercy Missions long enough to know our heart, so he feels free to point out people in need. This was the case with Hannah, a woman in desperate need. Hillel told her to meet us at our bus in the morning at 9 AM on Tuesday, Oct. 15. We gave Hannah two Love Baskets, a seashell message and a key ring. She asked if our group would bless her. Hannah came on the bus with us, and Neil prayed for her as we all agreed.

## Teaching on the Road

Our tour guide, Hanna Ben Haim, has been living in Israel for over thirty years. She is not only a knowledgeable guide, but an excellent teacher, and a very spiritual Jewish believer in Yeshua. We both learn a lot from her, and she is a perfect fit for our Mercy Missions. As we traveled throughout Israel, Hanna shared a wealth of background information as well as nuggets of biblical truth that we so appreciate. We are thrilled to tell you that we brought back a small quantity of Hanna's DVD sets, making it possible for you to go on tour with her in your own home. The set includes eight well produced DVDs containing twelve hours of actual touring and teaching throughout Israel.

Just to give you an idea: We saw a flock of storks as we traveled in the bus. Hanna quoted Jer. 8:7, *"Even the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times..."* She went on to tell us that the storks are migrating birds that leave Europe at the end of August when it starts to get cold. They pass through Israel on their way to their winter homes. They return to Europe in the springtime. Many of the children in Europe were conceived after the harvest was in, so when the storks returned in April, 8-9 months later, babies were being born. That's where the stork bringing babies comes from! ***(WHO KNEW?)***

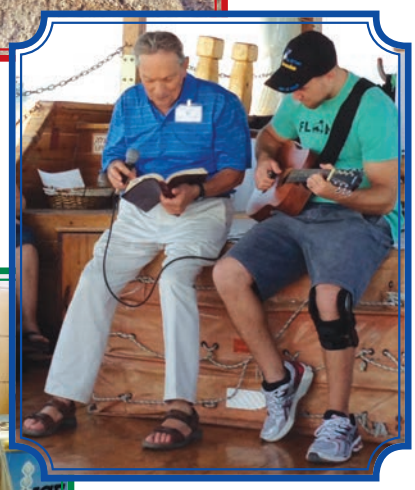
## Mercy Mission by Night

One evening at our hotel in Tiberias, Jamie had an encounter with Malka, a massage therapist. She was delighted to receive a seashell message, and open to hearing the Gospel message. That same evening, our group was blessed by the ministry of Alyosha Rabinov, a professional, classical Russian Messianic Jewish pianist. Alyosha was accompanied by Ann, a professional vocalist from the States. He used a sound system for the first time that evening which YOU purchased for him. This enables Alyosha to do larger concerts when traveling. While Alyosha's hands are greatly gifted, his feet are "beautiful," as God uses him in amazing ways to share Yeshua one on one with Israelis. Alyosha and other local believers left the hotel with Love Baskets for themselves and needy local believers.

## Walking by the Sea

Wednesday, Oct. 16, began with a fascinating visit to a recently excavated synagogue and surrounding village in Migdal, the home of Miriam of Magdala (Mary Magdalene). While in the process of beginning to build a shopping center, a first century synagogue was discovered under just eighteen inches of dirt. Yeshua would surely have taught in this synagogue, based on Matthew 9:35. Perhaps this is where Miriam of Magdala first heard Him.

A stone found on the site has very recognizable symbols on it: a seven branched menorah with two jugs of oil on either side. The surprising symbol above these, especially in a first century Jewish context, is a heart. This shows that the heart was a symbol used at the time of Yeshua. New discoveries are made DAILY in Israel. Archaeology is considered a national pastime.



We walked by the Sea of Galilee on a beautiful, sunny day, in awe that Yeshua had walked on the water here. We sailed on the Sea as well, where Neil taught and Jonathan led worship with his guitar.

We handed out Love Baskets everywhere we went. (Each Mercy Mission member had Love Baskets to give out as the Spirit led.) This barista at *Kibbutz Ein Gev*, our lunch stop, was surprised and pleased with the gift.

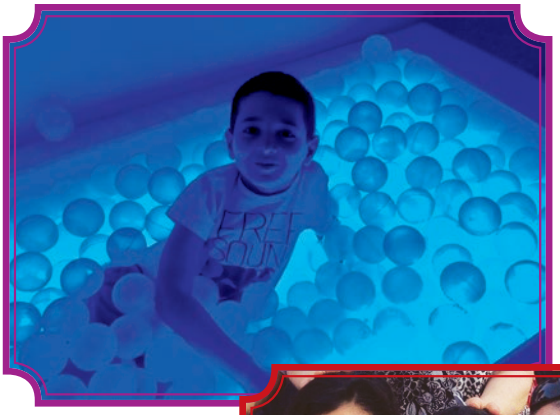
## Autism Center for Children

We arrived at the Autism Center in Tiberias at about 4:00 PM on Wednesday. As always, our group received a very warm reception. We toured the facility, and were impressed once more with the state-of-the-art classrooms and treatment rooms of various types. One room, the "Snoezelen Room" is a room of lights, colors, and music. The children can adjust the colors of the lights and the accompanying music. Our Jewish Jewels family made this room possible. Our group was treated to refreshments on the rooftop, where we met Tal's family, and others who are blessed by this special school.

Wednesday evening at about 7:30 PM, we welcomed Messianic singer Carolyn Hyde and three other local worship leaders to minister to us and to some families of victims of terror, who drove from Afula to Tiberias to join us for the evening. One mother, whose son had been murdered by a terrorist, shared her heart with our group, and welcomed prayer from us in the name of Yeshua. Our spiritual children, Michel and Yaffa, are sharing the Lord with her, her husband and many other families that have lost loved ones through terrorism. Everyone left that evening with Love Baskets to be distributed to needy Israelis, especially believers in local congregations.

## Up to Zion

Before we left Tiberias to go up to Jerusalem, we had another early morning encounter on the bus. Larry, a pastor with a big heart for young people, gave a key ring to an Israeli who had been in an elite unit in the Golan. The young man boarded our bus to give Larry a key chain from his Golani unit. That was the start of our mission to the IDF. God surprised us by bringing us to a base that we have been asked not to identify—or even speak about. Let's just say that the Mercy Mission would have been outstanding if this were the only mission involved. Be assured that the 600+ Psalm 91 bandanas could not have gone to a more appropriate place in Israel. God knew! Love Baskets were given, as was a sizeable donation to construct a shelter for families visiting their sons and daughters in the IDF.



## More Socks Find a Home

We arrived at our hotel in Jerusalem with two large space bags filled with socks for babies and toddlers. (We had more than enough for the orphanage and baby shower.) We wondered what we were going to do with the socks. God had a plan. Richard, from *Sar-El Tours*, met us at the hotel, and happened to mention that the congregation he attends in Jerusalem, is 50% children—with lots of toddlers. That took care of the toddler socks. Then, Richard mentioned that he had contact with the head of Israeli Pro Life, Sandy Shoshani, and would gladly deliver the baby socks to her. (We had already sent her two bags of baby gifts—surplus from the baby shower, plus Love Baskets for the mothers who have chosen to keep their babies.)

## To the Wall and Beyond

Our group had a time for individual prayer at the Western Wall (*Kotel*). We prayed for YOU, our Jewish Jewels family. Then we stopped in the Jewish Quarter to deliver some Love Baskets for the needy Orthodox pre-believers, and met a group of IDF soldiers on our way to the Upper Room. They received this year's key rings, as well as special cards made for them by lovers of Israel in Orlando, FL.

That night (Friday) at 5:30, we gathered in our hotel to hear from Seth Ben Haim about Shabbat, from a Messianic Jewish perspective. We prayed for this gifted young husband and father, and sent him home with socks (of course!), other gifts for his family, and Love Baskets for needy Messianic families in the Jerusalem area.

We were joined for Shabbat dinner by the Ohayon family, dear friends who have coordinated many of our Mercy Missions for us. Eitan related a personal miracle which resulted from our previous time with him. More Mercy Mission fruit! We still had an entire duffle bag with socks for teenagers/men. The Ohayon boys had a great time choosing their socks. Their sisters received socks as well. As we said before, the socks kept multiplying!!

## To The Dead Sea

While the group ascended Masada, Jamie stayed below to "go fishing." She gave Love Baskets to new IDF recruits, and to a single mother in the gift shop. Jamie gave Silvia a seashell message first, telling her a few seashell stories—including one about a single woman whose husband had left her. The story had been played out in Silvia's life as well, and she was very grateful for YOUR help.

## Sorting on Saturday Night

We realized that the trip was quickly drawing to an end, and we still had bags of gifts—especially in the luggage

of our Mercy Mission group. So, on Saturday evening, a few of us began to sort the gifts—some for seniors and Holocaust survivors, some for our Orthodox friends, and four huge bags for new Ethiopian immigrants (that were not even on our schedule).

## The Walk of Suffering

Following a morning on the Southern Steps, we arrived at around 1:00 PM at a *simcha* (celebration) for Holocaust survivors and other needy senior Israelis. Barry and Batya Segal of *Vision for Israel* helped arrange this Mercy Mission for us. YOU gave 35 precious elderly Israelis $100 in Love Baskets each. They also received key rings, and were invited to take gifts from a long table with gifts we had sorted the previous night—scarves, toiletries, jewelry, socks, ☺ etc. There was music by Barry and Batya, dancing in a circle, lots of hugs and interaction, and much gratitude. Precious. Our Mercy Mission team visited *Yad Vashem* (the Holocaust Museum) that afternoon, which made the sweetness of the Holocaust survivors even more special.

## To the Rabbi's Home

That evening, Sunday, at about 8:00 PM the four Lashes (Neil, Jamie, Jonathan and Nancy) went to the home of our rabbi friend Yeshayahu. We did not go empty-handed, as you can see from the photo. We fellowshipped, and gave everyone a chance to meet Nancy. (It was her first time in Israel.) We left this special family with ten Love Baskets for needy Ultra-Orthodox families, and a cash gift for them and their nine children.

## Final Day: Final Mission

At 8:30 AM, before we left for the day's touring, Jennifer Kaplan came to our hotel to collect the bags for the Ethiopian immigrants (with socks, of course!). We had a wonderful teaching at the Garden of Gethsemane by our guide, Hanna. In brief: The shoots that spring forth from olive trees, coming out of the root, and often encircling the trees, are called *notzrim*—the same word used by Israelis for "Christian." This is also a word for "watchmen" in Jer. 31:5. Both the trunk and the *notzrim* hold up the ancient olive trees. Without the *notzrim*, the trunk would collapse. The *notzrim* wrap around the trunk of the olive tree the way watchmen would be around the walls of a city. Nazareth is from the same root word as *notzrim*. It was a small city, like a shoot growing out of nowhere. Lots of connections! (It's all on the DVD set by Hanna.)

Our final Love Baskets were given to a new tour guide, a Messianic Jew, who has five teenagers and needed a blessing. He, in turn, blessed our group. At that moment, Lynnette and Jamie smelled the sweet fragrance of the Holy Spirit.

At our farewell dinner, Monday night at 6:00 PM, our group gave gift bags to Hillel, our driver, and Hanna, our guide. Yes, they got socks!

## Post Mercy Mission Missions

We stayed in Jerusalem for an extra week, after taking our group to the airport. We visited Reuven Prager of Beged Ivri, where Jamie tried on the Jerusalem of Gold bridal crown to see if it still fit!

We visited Micaela and Eliyahu (Bride and Groom of 2009) and their children. We showered them with gifts and Love Baskets. Please pray for Ayala, their 3 1/2 year old daughter with special needs.

We "stumbled upon" Edna from Ft. Lauderdale, a sister in the Lord, on her way to believers in Arad. We sent her on her way with three Love Baskets for the needy.

We checked to see if Yosef at #1 Ben Yehuda Street needed a new seashell message. He did!

We shared at length with an Israeli shopkeeper who is wrestling with a decision since he "saw Jesus."

An Israeli by the name of Abraham approached us to debate religion, and ended up seeking Neil out for more information on Jeremiah 31.

A Messianic Jewish woman, living among the Orthodox, saw us on the street, recognized us from TV and shared an amazing story about her mother's final hours, that included listening to Jamie's song, "It is the Lamb."

We had a two hour "chat" with a beautiful Israeli friend who surprised us by confessing, "Well, yes. Yeshua is the Son of God." She had come to pick up Love Baskets for two single mothers whose husbands had left them. She also took the remaining Beanie Babies to deliver to children in the hospital. Our friend insisted that we give a Beanie Baby to a bride in the hotel lobby. She seemed to like it. We visited Makor HaTikvah, the only Messianic Day School in Jerusalem, and presented Cookie, the director, with cosmetic gifts for the female teachers in the school. You also made possible two outdoor play units. Finally, Love Baskets were given for needy teachers. One teacher was thrilled that she would be able to buy sneakers for her teenage son.

A final amazing God-connection. A woman recognized Jamie as we walked down a Jerusalem street. She was with a Messianic Jewish friend who explained who we were (TV, Jewish Jewels), and that we were from Ft. Lauderdale. The friend began to tell us that her mother was in an Independent Living Facility in Ft. Lauderdale. She had not seen her in the 18 years she had been living in Israel. Guess what? Her mother, Frances, is one of the seniors at our weekly Shabbat service. She had mentioned her daughter to Jamie many times. Only God! He knows where we are at all times—and orders our steps.

PLEASE PRAY ABOUT AN END OF THE YEAR GIFT TO HELP US CONTINUE TO REACH OUT WITH LOVE + MERCY TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE.

Love! Neil + Jamie