

Update from Israel
July-August 2008

Shalom and warm greetings from Jerusalem!



It's that time again! May you encouraged and blessed as you read about all the Lord has been doing over the last couple months. To Him be all the glory!

Terror attacks in Jerusalem

Terror returned to the streets of Jerusalem twice in July as a new form of assault was launched on Israelis. The first attack was on July 2. We were sitting down to lunch at the CFI Office when we heard the terrible sound of sirens and helicopters. There is always a lot of noise in Jerusalem, but you know when something has happened. We all knew something was wrong and immediately calls started coming in and it became clear what had happened. One of our staff members missed the attack by minutes. Three people were killed in the first attack and dozens injured. One of the people who died was a mother who managed to pass her baby out the window of her car seconds before the bulldozer came crashing down upon her. She was killed as a stranger stodd holding her baby. The second attack took place on July 22 and was a copycat attack of the first. Again, dozens of people were wounded but, thank G-d, none were killed.

Devastation from bulldozer attack on July 2, Jaffa Road



In light of these attacks and surrounding threats Defense Minister Ehud Barak said, "The attack is a reminder of our complicated reality in Jerusalem, in the Gaza Strip with Hamas, in Lebanon with Hizbullah and even with Iran. This is a complicated reality but we are a strong nation."

Yes, Israel is a strong nation – thanks to G-d, but what she is lacking is strong leadership. It is my prayer that after Olmert resigns (yay!) G-d will bless this nation with a leader who fears Him and will do what it takes to maintain security and stability withing Israel's borders, irrespective of multiple international pressures and opinions.

Ehud and Eldad come home, in coffins



On 16 July Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev were returned home, in coffins. I already sent out a long email on this matter so will not repeat it all here. However, I will reiterate that swapping living terrorists for dead soldiers is not the best move. The message it sends out is dangerous and I believe that it has made Israel's young soldiers even more vulnerable. The day was full of conflicting emotions – we were horrified at the 'exchange' but so relieved to have the boys home.

We are still waiting for Gilad Shalit who was kidnapped over 2 years ago. Please G-d, may he come home.

Ministering to the poor and elderly

As always, it is my privilege to reach out to the needy and hurting here in Israel. During July and August I had a number of Israelis coming to me for help and assistance. There are so many faces, so many stories, so many precious souls. G-d gives me the opportunity to comfort and love, to speak hope and to meet practical needs. I am blessed!

Visits with War Veterans and Holocaust Survivors are always special and emotional, and I always learn a lot. Hearing their stories and knowing of all they endured has deeply affected me and changed the way I approach many things in life. We have a lot to learn from the elderly

Galya with War Veterans, Alexander and Rachel



An Israeli woman named Yasmin who recently lost her twins. She has carried them almost fullterm and it was devastating for her. On top of this she has serious problems with her eyesight and various financial strains. We were blessed to help her get the correct treatment she needs for her eyes, and also to be there for her – as friends.

Another lady named Ronit was in desperate need of a bed and cupboard for her child. When I went to home I was shocked to see the conditions they are living in. Ronit was in tears of joy as we provided the funds she needed to purchase furniture for her home!

I could write forever about the people I have met, the ways we have helped and the stories I have heard. Perhaps one day I will write a book... !!!

Day trip to Sderot

In August I went down to Sderot with a group from CFI to support the people there and show our solidarity. I also had 2 home visits to make to people in need. One of the people I met, Luba, has suffered terribly from the ongoing qassam rocket attacks. Her home has been damaged 4 times and she is basically a nervous wreck. It was eye-opening for me to actually be there and hear it all first-hand. Whilst walking around Sderot you feel like you are always waiting to hear the siren which tells of an incoming rocket. You hear the words 'tzeva adom' (colour red) and then you have 15 seconds to get to a bomb shelter or safe room – portable bomb shelters have been placed all over Sderot.

STATISTIC

Kfar Rafael – Beer Sheva

During August I also made a trip down to Beersheva. Sharon Sanders and I went to a kibbutz called Kfar Rafael to learn about their community and see how we could support them. An Israeli remedial community set against the backdrop of the Negev Desert in southern Israel, Kfar Rafael is a center committed to helping those with special needs to live independent and significant lives. In the words of one handicapped resident, called "Big Oded" as he is the oldest villager at 70 years old, he describes the progression of the village's conception in 1979 until now: "20 years ago, Kfar Rafael was a desert; now, it is an oasis." In Kfar Rafael, instead of being simply caretakers for the mentally and physically handicapped villagers, foster families and volunteers enable the villagers to lead full and fulfilling lives in which they provide service and food for their community as well as beautiful products sold abroad.

One of the residents of Kfar Rafael



Refugee Youth Conference – Tel Aviv

On 15 August I had the privilege to address a church full of young refugees from different African countries. I was asked to be a speaker at a Youth Conference that was hosted by a church in south Tel Aviv. What a great evening we had! The topic the Lord gave me was 'redeeming the time'. It was a challenging message but from the feedback it seems that the youth were encouraged and challenged and appreciated the word.

Mini-Israel Outing for 200 children

Galya with children at Mini-Israel



On a hot August day 200 African children gathered for a day out at Mini-Israel. All these children were born in Israel and are legal citizens. Their trip to Mini-Israel served to educate them in the cultural and historical heritage of the nation in which they were born. For many of the children it was also one of the first times they were able to go out and enjoy a special trip. I was at Mini-Israel to meet the children as they started their outing and CFI was happy to contribute financially in order to make their day possible. It is so important to help these children integrate into Israel society and we were excited to be able to invest into their lives.

Armenian Community

Something very interesting for me has been getting more and more acquainted with the Armenian community here in Israel. I live in the Armenian quarter of the Old City and have got to know many of the residents. The Archbishop of the Armenian Patriarchate has taken me under his wing and taught me a lot about Armenian history and belief. They are a special and fascinating people.

I have started learning the language and spend a few hours each week in the Armenian library (1minute from my house!) battling through it! We can never stop learning!!!

Fun times in Israel – Qumran,Dead Sea,Galilee,Golan Heights,Bethlehem

i never get tired of travelling around Israel, even in the heat of the summer! A good friend from Norway was visiting this summer and so we jumped in the car and made our way down to the Dead Sea and Qumran for the day. I have been there so many times but it never ceases to amaze me – to actually be at the lowest point on earth(!),and to be at the place where the Scrolls were found – incredible! This summer we also spent some time up north – in the Galilee and Golan Heights. We visited ruins of different Crusader castles and also went to Rosh HaNikrah-border with Lebanon. We stayed in a Druze village called Peki'in which was delightful. Another highlight was staying overnight in Bethlehem and interacting with the Christian Arabs there. I love this country!!!

Me at Qumran



With friends at Rosh HaNikra – border with Lebanon



Again, I thank everybody for the different ways in which you offer support and encouragement to me. May the Lord bless you from Zion.

Shalom!
Galya-Jane