It would be very interesting to do an objective survey on outreach in Israel with all the proper sociological-statistical controls. To my knowledge, there has been no such survey, only a statistical study on Israeli Messianic Jewish congregations by Kai Kjaer-Hansen that is already quite dated. In lieu of such a survey, I will have to depend on personal observations and conversations with leaders and Israelis.

My wife, youngest daughter and I make Israel our primary home, although we also maintain a home in the United States for our work that is based there. Over the course of the last few years we have spoken to many Israeli congregational leaders as well as to many Israelis in the larger society. I will focus on the following aspects of outreach:

- The effect of the Christian Zionist Movement and openness to the good news.
- The effectiveness of street ministry
- The specific situation of Russian Jewry
- The importance of the witness and involvement of a friend
- Youth emphases and the Jam
- The New Age festival
- Anointing to gather those who are not Yeshua-believers
- The power of anointed preaching and zeal to bring guests
- Synagogue integration

One of the most remarkable aspects of Israeli Jews, who are by far mostly secular, is their greater openness to the Gospel when compared to American secular Jews. In our personal
experience, the reaction/rejection response to Yeshua-believers as traitors is the exception in Israel, while more the norm in the United States. Living in the land of Israel, speaking the language, serving in the army and all of the other common experiences and challenges of Israelis are often more important as criteria for acceptance. Among young adults one is more likely to hear the response of, "Did you serve in the army?" as a test of Jewish loyalty. If that service has been done, then one has a right to believe "whatever."

There have been several occasions when secular Israelis have intervened for Messianic Jewish street witnesses when ultra-Orthodox Jews have surrounded them and sought to persecute them. On these occasions, these secular Israelis demanded that the Orthodox leave them alone and respect their freedom to speak. This intervention has sometimes come through a contingent of Israeli soldiers. My daughter, during her time in the Israeli army, did not receive any significant rejection in response to her witness. While secular Israeli attitudes provide their own challenges to outreach, the situation is, in my view, easier than in the United States.

The Effect of the Christian Zionist Movement

One of the factors leading to greater openness in Israeli society is the Christian Zionist Movement. Most Messianic Jews are troubled by the lack of connection they have with the Christian Zionists and their organizations. Christian Zionists perceive the distancing to be an acceptable price for good relationships with the Jewish community. I share these concerns with the Messianic Jewish community. Nevertheless, it does appear that the Christian Zionist movement is having a significant effect on opening Jewish hearts to Messianic Jews. Several times while sharing and presenting ourselves as Messianic Jews, Israelis offer comments such as, "We know the evangelicals are your friends." That they would be familiar with the term "evangelical" is amazing. How can this be? It is due to the common reporting of the media. There is now a Knesset committee that maintains official relationships with the evangelical world. When American Jewish leaders harshly attack evangelicals for seeking a Christian theocracy (which is a misunderstanding by Jewish leaders, as well as caused by some of the ways in which evangelical leaders have spoken), the Israeli press has published articles criticizing American Jewish leaders for attacking Israel's best friends. Evangelicals are progressively becoming the main group that comes to Israeli minds when the topic of Yeshua is raised. Messianic Jews are seeking to see Yeshua presented in a Jewish context, yet Yeshua is associated with Christianity. When one major stream of Christianity is seen in a positive way, it helps there to be a greater general openness to Yeshua.

The Effect of Street Ministry

By street ministry, I include the distribution of literature on the street and at the beaches, as well as public preaching in such places. I believe that this is not as effective as other methods, but it appears to be more effective in Israel than in the United States. In the late 1960s and
early 1970s street ministry was especially effective. Many handed out "broadsides" or special tracts for their causes. "Jesus people" and Jews for Jesus fit into this cultural context with great ease and significant effectiveness. In the United States, this is no longer the case. However, in Israel there is not the same level of negative reaction against such up-front street witnessing. Dialogue often takes place and people do come to know the Messiah. Although, the numbers are not large, such ministry does bring training in boldness and confidence to Yeshua-believers.

The Specific Situation of Russian Jewry

The great influx of Russian Jews, including Yeshua-believers, has swelled congregations in Israel. Congregations of 200 to 400 exist. Inviting friends and relatives to services, picnics and social gatherings where Russian Jews are present in large numbers has been an ongoing pattern. The follow-up from these gatherings has led to commitments to Yeshua.

Some of the Russian congregations participate in humanitarian aid and job counseling. Congregation Ohalei Rachamim under Eitan Shishkoff has seen a remarkable development in regard to its humanitarian work. As it expanded its work in Acco the participants were given an opportunity to refurbish a center for the blind. The leaders of the town were so thankful that they have developed a relationship with Shishkoff and his team. The mayor and vice-mayor have now connected with Ohalei Rachamim asking its leaders to bring business to Acco to revitalize the city for new immigrants and others. When the new congregation in Acco was planted with Guy Cohen, the vice-mayor, attended its inaugural service. There are no religious strings attached for such aid, but such service opens hearts to an appreciation of Yeshua-believers and in some cases to openness to the good news. The sheer numbers of Russian Jewish believers ease the way for others who are more likely to see such faith as an aberration.

The Witness of A Friend

Similar to the conclusion of studies in the United States, the most significant factor in outreach in Israel is the friendship of committed Yeshua-believers. Commitment to maintaining old friendships where possible, maintaining family relationships, and befriending new acquaintances are most important. Every society of Yeshua-believers can become a ghetto and this must be countered with continual exhortation to outreach and the example of leaders. It is friends who bring their friends to Sabbath dinners, Seders, worship and teaching services, social events, and more. Friends are the most likely to be attracted to the faith by the life of their friends. Most Israelis who have come to faith in Yeshua have come through the relationship of a friend. In addition, I've perceived that Israeli believers attend Seders and events of their families and friends in larger numbers than in the United States. My wife and I were guests of friends at a family Seder where we were the only Yeshua-believers among
approximately 25 in attendance. The whole Seder was in Hebrew and it was our privilege to participate with our broken language skills.

Reaching Youth

As in many cultures, young people are the more open group with regard to response to the good news. They are in a season of greater questioning, less set in particular beliefs and patterns and more rebellious to handed-down norms of wisdom. The music group The Jam, under Ayal Friedan, provided several years of events with the youthful rock and rap music. Youth of all kinds attended: Yeshua-believers, secular Jews and "rebelling" Orthodox Jews. However, reaching younger people is a very delicate issue because it is forbidden by law to engage in direct efforts to convince those under 18 to believe in Yeshua. There have been some responses to the good news, but I do not know of any statistical evidence of effectiveness.

A few years back Betty Intrater started a fellowship for Yeshua-believers in the Israeli Defense Forces. Several attendees over the years have not been Yeshua-believers. One army woman who I personally know, connected to this through a friend and made a profession of faith in Yeshua. Young adults who are presently serving in the army lead this group. There is mostly an emphasis on mutual encouragement, but there is an outreach dimension as well.

The New Age Festivals

Israel is an amazing marketplace of ideas. People are continually vying for their fellow Israelis to buy into their slant on life. Tens of thousands attend New Age festivals. Generally, New Agers accept Yeshua as a legitimate guru. While we might decry such a misunderstanding where Yeshua is one guru among others, we should acknowledge these festivals as helpful to our outreach. Several congregations join in outreaches at such festivals with tables for literature distribution among the many other table displays. The atmosphere is one where conversations about Yeshua and the New Covenant easily take place. Again, we do not have statistics about numbers who have actually come to the Messiah through such efforts. However, consciousness is raised on the subject of Yeshua and the Messianic Jewish community in a very positive way. This is being perceived as an important opportunity in Israel.

The Anointing to Gather the Non-Yeshua-Believer Jews In Israel

One woman I know has an unusual calling to gather people to her home for parties, discussion, and fellowship. Her faith is well known, but something about her natural ability to relate to secular Israelis draws them to her. Twenty to forty people might gather. They willingly
accept hearing a presentation of the good news at such gatherings and lively discussion usually follows. Israelis have embraced Yeshua because of anointed presentations by leaders at these gatherings. They could be a model for others.

### The Anointing Of Gospel Preaching and the Zeal to Bring Guests

Tiferet Israel, in Tel Aviv led by Ari and Shira Sorkoram, has had an unusual level of successful outreach with quite a few decisions for the Messiah during the last five years. This is now the largest gathering of Sabras (native-born Israelis) in one congregation. Serious decisions for Yeshua have led to a significant number of Messianic water immersions—my estimate would be about 50. There are several factors in this effectiveness: the service is a vibrant experience of modern-style praise and worship music that appeals to secular Israelis. The service is conducted entirely in Hebrew, without translation.

This says to Hebrew-speaking Jews and especially to native Israelis that this is a place for them. In this context, Tiferet Israel has provided a very powerful preaching rotation that presents the good news in ways to which Israelis can relate. Asher Intrater has been a model for this level of preaching. There were significant seasons when Israelis prayed to commit their lives to Yeshua on a weekly basis. Because members of the congregation are excited about the preaching and its effect on visitors, they are zealous to bring visitors.

### Synagogue Integration

There is a group of seasoned Yeshua-believers that has found connection to local synagogues. These people are integrating while maintaining strong connection to Messianic Jewish fellowship. It is not a matter of being drawn away from Yeshua, but a focus also on being part of the Jewish community. A few have found acceptance even though it is known that they are Yeshua-believers. There is similar a phenomenon occurring in the United States. My wife and I have been led to such a synagogue connection in a very supernatural way, but we are still in the early stages of involvement and do not have much to report yet.

### Summary

It should be noted that outreach leading to commitment to Yeshua requires the work of the Spirit. There is some effectiveness in all kinds of efforts, but without supernatural anointing, little can be expected. This is my experience in the two ministries to which I am most connected: Revive Israel under Asher Intrater in the Jerusalem area, and with Eitan Shishkoff at Ohalei Rachamim in the Haifa area. The Israeli movement is a much younger movement than is the case in the United States. I think the prospects for growth are very good.
Outreach In Israel

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Notes:

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