




The Gospel and
**JEWISH-GENTILE
COUPLES**





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*"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory,
glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."
(John 1:14)*

Yad Hashmona: The Messianic Village Near Emmaus

THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENT IN ISRAEL



By Gershon Nerel

The Finnish-Israeli cooperative *moshav* (village) Yad Hashmona is located in the Judean Hills, near biblical Emmaus, between Neve Ilan and Abu Ghosh, 15 km west of Jerusalem and about 30 km from Ben-Gurion Airport.

The Founders

The founders of Yad Hashmona were Protestant pioneers from Finland, who in 1974 moved to the site to begin building the barren area. During the 1960s they had worked as volunteers in different Israeli kibbutzim, where they learned about the communal lifestyle that they adapted to Yad Hashmona. As believers in the fulfillment of biblical prophecies, the Finnish pioneers desired to contribute their share to the Zionist movement in the land of Israel.

The Name

"Yad Hashmona" means Memorial to the Eight. The name was given by the founding settlers in memory of eight Jewish refugees who escaped in 1938 from Austria to Finland, and who were surrendered by the Finns to the Gestapo in November 1942. It was a time when the Finnish government collaborated with Nazi Germany in opposition to the Soviet Union, in an attempt to recover the Karelia region which Stalin had "stolen" from the Finns in the Winter War of 1939–40.

The eight refugees were taken to Auschwitz, where seven of them were murdered. The lone survivor, Dr. Georg Kolman, made *aliya* to Eretz Israel. The founders viewed their contribution to the land of Israel as a public request for forgiveness. In Helsinki, the Finnish government and church leaders dedicated a memorial to the eight only in November 2000. On that occasion a monument was erected opposite Helsinki's harbor from whence the refugees embarked on the death ship S/S Hohenhorn.

Population

There are about 150 residents currently living in Yad Hashmona, made up of families, singles, children, volunteers, and students in the IBEX project. Some of the elderly founders still live here. The volunteers, who rotate constantly, come from all over the world. They are accepted after careful consideration and are a unique blessing to Yad Hashmona. In their homelands, these volunteers become goodwill ambassadors for Israel.

Messianic Jews

The Finnish founders realized that they could not progress and develop as a settlement of only Scandinavians. They therefore sought to absorb Israelis and become a regular Israeli village that would also include Finns.

The first Israeli volunteer to arrive in Yad Hashmona was Eli Bar-David, in 1978. He was followed by the families of his two brothers and sister. Other Israeli families joined later. It was they who actually determined the present character of the village as a center of Jewish Yeshua-believers.

Jewish Lifestyle

Moshav members observe the Hebraic calendar and accept the validity of the Old Testament because Yeshua himself declared that he did not come to abolish it or the Prophets, but rather to fulfill the Torah and the Prophets. Thus, a qualified *mohel* (circumciser) performs the male children's circumcisions, and all on the moshav keep *Shabbat* (seventh-day Sabbath) as a day of rest and worship. Additionally, only kosher food is served in the guest house facilities.

The festivals of the *Tanach* are observed in light of the New Testament, according to the teaching of Yeshua. At Passover the moshav members celebrate the *Pesach* (Passover) meal, focusing on the Messiah as the Paschal lamb and in connection with the Lord's Supper. Throughout the feast only *matza* (unleavened bread) is served in the dining room. People fast on *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement) as an act of solidarity with Israel. For *Sukkoth* (Tabernacles) a central *sukka* is built near the restaurant along with those in the residential yards of the members.

Parents & Children

Some Jewish members of the moshav are married to women from Finland who have cast their lot with the Jewish people living in Israel, like Ruth the Moabitess. The common colloquial language is Hebrew. No private school is used. The children study at the Ein-Harrim regional elementary school in Ein Kerem near Jerusalem. High school studies take place at the neighboring village of Mevasseret Yerushalayim.

Upon completion of their schooling, the youngsters join the IDF (the

Israeli army), motivated to be an example to the soldiers around them in any needed role. Nowadays, part of the second generation of moshav members are returning to Yad Hashmona, setting up their homes at the moshav and continuing with their parents' biblical faith.

Guest House

Following the footsteps of the Finnish founders, the guest house is the largest economic enterprise at Yad Hashmona. The first tourist houses were simple hostel-type structures, and are still in use mainly for students, campers, and the yearly Messianic children's camps that are held at the moshav.

At a later stage, new higher-standard guest rooms were constructed of Finnish pine. Israeli guests and their families often visit the moshav, in pursuit of mountain air and the village atmosphere, and to enjoy the Judean landscape. Yad Hashmona hosts most of the Messianic conferences in Israel: families, music, youth and golden-age, and local congregations. On Fridays only, dairy brunch meals are served.

Carpentry

The carpentry at Yad Hashmona is a high-quality furniture factory. It has gained a reputation for producing high-quality pine furniture in the rural Scandinavian style. Various wooden products are displayed in the gallery. Customers are both individuals from the local area and representatives of institutions around the country who are interested in well-made furniture.

The carpentry also functions as the moshav's builder, providing furniture for local homes and the guest house. Additionally, workers from the carpentry provide skilled maintenance and other services to the guest house and other moshav facilities.

Biblical Park

The biblical park was dedicated in the year 2000, in collaboration with the Swiss Beit Shalom Society and the Israel Antiquities Authority. Stone terraces were built on the hill's northwestern slope in order to collect soil and water. With these terraces, agriculture is possible even in a rocky and sloping area. The trees planted on the site are mentioned in the Bible: olives, vines, figs, pomegranates, date palms and almonds. Some of these trees carry a symbolic meaning, such as the olive, the fig, and the vine that often represent Israel.

Arched Gates

Two white stone arches, facing the eastern and western slopes of the hill, stand as twin gates leading into the biblical park. Both arched entrances form the shape of a half-circle symbolizing the rainbow, which is



mentioned in the first and last books of the Bible. According to Genesis 9:16, when the rainbow appears in the sky it is a sign that brings to memory the everlasting covenant established between God and every living creature on the earth. In Revelation 4:3, a rainbow is depicted around the heavenly throne of the Holy One, like a precious emerald in appearance.

Inside the western arch one can see the central capstone with its outstanding form. This chief stone is instrumental in holding together all the other stones of the arch, so that if it is removed, the entire arch will collapse immediately. This is a figurative symbol of Yeshua. Spiritually, in the faith and life of his followers, Yeshua is the keystone (Luke 20:17).

Wine Press

Alongside an area planted with vines, two wine presses demonstrate wine production in antiquity, first for domestic use and secondly for industrial purposes. Near the treading surface one can see both collecting and fermentation vats, a screw press made of an oak tree, and pottery jars. In the Old Testament, the vineyard and the grapes represent the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah, as well as all those who know the God of Israel.

According to this imagery, the master and judge of the universe – i.e. “the owner of the vineyard” – is disappointed when, instead of good grapes, he gets wild and sour grapes, finding oppression instead of righteousness (Isa 5).

The vine and its fruit also convey a variety of symbolic messages in the New Testament. Yeshua employed vine imagery to explain that “as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me” (John 15:4). He also warned not to put new wine into old wineskins, which break and spill the wine, but rather to put new wine into new wineskins, preserving both (Matt 9:17).

Olive Press

At the olive press one can visually learn about the two basic stages in olive oil production. The first involves crushing the olives into a paste, both pit and soft fruit, with a large round millstone. The second stage is the placing of the pulp into flat round baskets which are piled under a massive wooden beam. The further pressing of the paste is implemented by the power of hanging weights. Heavy stone blocks are attached to the other side of the beam, expressing from the paste a substance containing the oil and vegetable liquid, which flow into a collecting vat under the baskets.

In antiquity olive oil was a desired commodity in the lives of people, both for daily use and for special occasions. It was used not only for food, illumination (torches and lamps), hygiene (soap), medicine, cosmetics, and lubrication, but also for anointing the priest, prophet, and king. Messiah, in Hebrew *Mashiah*, means (the) “anointed one.” In his parable about the ten maidens, five wise and five foolish, Yeshua focuses on the symbolism of the olive oil (Matt 25:1–13).

Watchtower

A spiral stairway leads to the top of the round watchtower, built of bright local fieldstone. This is a two-story building with a small guard area under a roof of palm branches. The watchtower is functionally situated in a higher place, good for keeping an eye on the surrounding area. During the vintage season and harvest time, the watchman watches over the surrounding fields against thieves and animals.

Biblically, if the watchman sees invaders coming upon the land and does not blow the trumpet, he bears the responsibility for people's death. Likewise it is with the prophet, appointed by God to be a spiritual watchman, who is responsible to hear the divine word and proclaim it to the people. The Lord says that if the prophet remains silent and the unwarned wicked shall die in his iniquity, "his blood I will require at your hand" (Ezek 33:2-8).

Threshing Floor

A flat bedrock platform is at the center of the round threshing floor (*goren* in Hebrew), illustrating where the threshing of the ripe wheat and barley took place. This area is surrounded by a small amphitheater. Two heavy wooden sleds, one with small stones and the other with iron teeth, were placed on the grain in order to separate the kernels from the straw. The sleds were pulled by a donkey or ox, which was free to eat as it worked.

A wooden pitchfork was used in the winnowing process that followed the threshing. Usually the afternoon breeze carried the chaff and straw away, leaving the heavier grain to fall to the floor. Also displayed are various millstones that were used for manually grinding wheat kernels.

Burial Cave

The burial cave is a recent replica of ancient models. Displayed inside are authentic Second Temple-era sarcophagi, of both stone and metal, received from the Israel Antiquities Authority. Authentic stone ossuaries are also exhibited. A heavy, moveable rolling stone is located by the entrance to the cave.

In the first centuries BC and AD, second burials in ossuaries became the common practice in Jerusalem and around Judea. In this custom, the body was first placed in the tomb, wrapped with strips of linen and with spices, as was the case with Yeshua (John 19:40). Then, after a year, the family would gather the deceased's bones and transfer them to the ossuary, a small stone coffin. This was placed in a niche carved into the stone wall or on a shelf inside the burial cave.

Mikveh (Ritual Bath)

In Hebrew, *Mikveh* means the gathering of water. It refers to public ritual baths for the purposes of purification and cleansing of the body. Traditionally, the *Mikveh* must be filled with running water, but the local *Mikveh* is filled only occasionally with water brought by a plastic pipe.



The entry into the *Mikveh* is on the right side, with seven stairs, while another stairway exits on the left.

The *kohanim* (priests) that slaughtered and sacrificed animals at the bronze altar of the Jerusalem temples were required by Jewish law to bathe in the *Mikveh*. Lepers were required to immerse upon healing. Today, pious Jewish men and women immerse their bodies in the *Mikveh* in connection with special events, such as in preparation for holy days and before the rabbinical blessing at wedding ceremonies.

Goat-Hair Tent

Around its four sides the tent is enclosed with curtains of woven black and gray goat hair, pieced together. On top it is covered with palm branches. Inside the tent is a plain replica of the ark of the covenant, as an ornamental piece. During the summer most of the tent flaps are rolled up to let in the refreshing breeze.

As seen from the inside, the tent's exit faces the east, called *Kedem* in biblical Hebrew, as the warmth of the early morning sun comes from the east after the cold night. It means both east and "in front of you" (*Kadima*). Therefore "behind you" (*Ahora*) means west, while "on the left hand" is north, and "on the right hand" is south. The tent at the moshav is used for quiet time and prayer, meditation, study, singing, and Communion.

Basalt Synagogue

Uniquely sited in the park is a reconstructed Byzantine-era Galilean synagogue. It was brought to the moshav from the northern region of the *Kinneret*, the Sea of Galilee. The basalt stones stand out against the background of the bright Jerusalem stone.

In his time, Yeshua often taught and healed sick people in the synagogues. On Shabbat he went to the synagogue, as in *Kfar Nahum* (Capernaum) and in Nazareth, where he read portions from the Torah and the Prophets and explained the messianic passages.

Ancient Craftsmanship

There is a center for ancient craftsmanship in the park. There are rooms for workshops for clay and pottery, brass-working, and coin-stamping. Among these occupations there is also a hand (mechanical) loom for preparing colorful carpets.

Four Room House

A model of a four-room house will be built on the slope below the goat-hair tent. It is characteristic of an Israelite house from the 10th to the 6th centuries BC. It has three parallel rectangular rooms, with the fourth room attached in the opposite direction.

Heritage and Restoration Center

On the western slopes of the Biblical Park a Roman villa is planned, pat-

tered according to unearthed remains found in Eretz Israel that date to the 1st century AD. The massive building will contain a two-story house, with a large central *atrium* (courtyard/hall) and a tiled roof. Southwards, an outer garden (*peristylum*) will be attached to the building. Typical colonnades (pillars) will be placed inside and outside, for both functional and decorative purposes.

A Roman house in Eretz Israel makes one think of the place where Jews and gentiles reconciled according to God's commandment. It was at Caesarea, in the house of Cornelius, a devout Roman centurion, where Peter, the leading Jewish apostle, was told to associate with a formerly pagan family (Acts 10). This was the first time that Jews were divinely authorized to eat together with non-Jews and not to disassociate from them.

This "Roman compound" is designated for a museum, a library, an archive, and an auditorium, focusing on the heritage of Jewish believers in Yeshua in Eretz Israel as well as on their prophetic restoration in modern times. This study/research center will function for documentation, seminars, lectures, conferences, and presentations via the internet.

Open Air Theater

About 400 seats are available at the open air stone theater which is situated on the lower level of the western slopes of the park. In front of this theater there is a large area of green grass, and it faces the range of hills called *Har Haruach* (Wind Mountain). An additional 400 people can sit on the grass. The theater can host public concerts, plays, and special receptions in a peaceful and quiet atmosphere.

Tour Center

Several members at Yad Hashmona are professional tour guides. They specialize in the roots of the faith in the land of the Bible. The Finnish founders worked as guides for Scandinavian tourists and laid the foundation for a reliable guiding tradition at the moshav.

Today, the new Tour Center offers tailor-made travels, tours, and study programs, both short and long term. Special courses are organized and taught by moshav members on site, such as the modern history of the Messianic Jewish movement and Messianic music. Field trips throughout the country, as well as in Sinai and in Jordan, are also conducted.

Management

The moshav is run by two committees: a five member secretarial committee and a seven member business committee. Committee members are elected for two years, and they meet to discuss issues of daily life. Major issues are brought to the general assembly of the moshav members for a vote. Prayers are always said at the beginning and at the end of meetings.



Currently new ideas are being considered regarding structural changes for the future.

Spiritual Vision

Moshav Yad Hashmona was established, and still exists, around a spiritual vision. The principal common denominator for the members lies in a combination of personal faith and communal activity, with roots in the Tanach and the New Testament. In daily life, the people continue to apply the founders' motto: "We came not only to receive, but also to give."

Communism is not a visionary ideal in itself for the members of Yad Hashmona. Community life attempts to focus on biblical principles. However, communal life among believers is not easy. In fact it is a miracle that strong individualists can share a communal system. Much grace and prayer are needed to follow God's will. His faithfulness and blessings never fail.

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For more information see the website www.yad8.com and also G. Nerel, A. Suomela, A. Ronen, I. Nerel, *Yad Hashmona: Far and Near in the Wooden House – An Encounter between Finns and Israelis in the Judean Hills* (Jerusalem: Academ, 2004; Hebrew).