



SOME OF THE MESSIANIC JEWISH SOLDIERS WHO ATTENDED A CONFERENCE FOR MESSIANIC MILITARY PERSONNEL. EVEN THOUGH THEY HAVE LIMITED FREE TIME FROM THEIR UNITS, OVER 100 BELIEVING SOLDIERS WERE IN ATTENDANCE.

CELEBRATING
ISRAEL'S 68TH
BIRTHDAY



Messianic Soldiers in the Israeli Army:

BOLDER THAN EVER ABOUT THEIR FAITH

(Kehila News Israel) All Israelis, men aged 18 to 21 and women aged 18 to 20, are required to do some form of military or community service. This means that thousands of Messianic Israelis – Jewish and non-Jewish, men and women – have shared in the Israeli army experience at one time or another. We are especially proud of

our soldiers facing the challenges of today, which are more complex than ever before.

From survey results, it is clear that openness about Yeshua (Jesus) in the Israeli army is indeed the new “norm.” Of those Messianic soldiers polled by KNI, a remarkable 96% say fellow soldiers know of their belief in Yeshua as the Messiah.

Possibly even more remarkable is that 78% of their commanders and/or officers know of their belief in Yeshua. This is certainly a generation that is bolder than ever in sharing and living out their faith!

Equally encouraging feedback from the survey results is a largely supportive and pluralistic reaction from their fellow

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soldiers and officers, with 64% of them having a positive response, 22% having an indifferent response and only 14% expressing a negative response upon hearing about their faith in Yeshua.

Contrary to what older Israeli believers remember of their army experience, very few Messianic soldiers today face significant discrimination or persecution. Furthermore, a relatively high percentage (30%) responded that they have a fellow believer in their unit. As recently as fifteen to twenty years ago, it was a rarity for any two Messianic soldiers to be found serving together.

A statistic that has not changed over the years is the high percentage of Messianic IDF soldiers serving in combat. A vast majority of 57% responded that they are serving in combat units, with many serving in volatile areas, such as the Gaza border, Lebanon border, and Judea and Samaria. The believing community in Israel, both young and old, is known to be very Zionist, nationalist and law abiding, with a high motivation to serve God and Israel.

There is a long history, albeit unknown to many, of Messianic believers serving in combat units and elite special forces including Sayeret Matkal (General Staff

Reconnaissance Unit) and Shayetet 13 (Navy Seals). Today's Messianic IDF soldiers are no exception.

In reading this encouraging information about Messianic soldiers, it is important to remember that over the past six months Israel has been facing a new type of terror in which lone attackers suddenly try to stab, shoot or run over unsuspecting Israeli citizens going about their everyday lives. However, their preferred targets are IDF soldiers.

In the midst of these terror attacks are hundreds of Messianic IDF soldiers, serving the State of Israel, defending its citizens, and most of all, being a tremendous blessing and testimony to their fellow soldiers.

Another aspect of understanding the significance of the boldness and openness of Messianic soldiers today is the effect they have on the way Israeli society views believers in general, but particularly relating to immigration or aliyah.

Those who are already Israeli citizens are not questioned about their faith by the IDF. Like all other Israeli recruits they are drafted and evaluated for their potential skill.

However, Messianic Jews wanting to immigrate to Israel can face difficulties because of their faith. It is noteworthy that

even during the years when Messianic soldiers were still fighting for equal opportunities, a 1988 poll published in the *Jerusalem Post* found that 78% of Israelis were in favor of Messianic Jews immigrating to Israel under the Law of Return, as long as they could prove Jewish lineage – and were willing to serve in the IDF.

For three decades and more, Messianic Israelis have demonstrated that they can and do serve their country, not *in spite of* but *because of* their faith in Yeshua. This has resulted not only in more openness to accepting our service, but also more willingness to hear our testimony about Israel's Messiah. ■

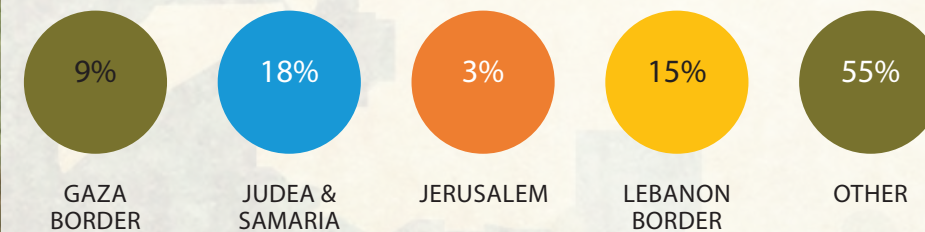
Kehila News Israel (KNI) brings you the first published survey online of Messianic Jews serving in the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces). KNI conducted the survey in cooperation with several local ministries that organize conferences and Bible studies on weekends for hundreds of Messianic soldiers currently serving in the IDF. There were 69 respondents to this survey by active duty IDF soldiers from a total population of several hundred Messianic soldiers. For more stories from Israel, check out www.kehilanews.com.

MESSIANIC SOLDIERS

SERVING IN THE IDF

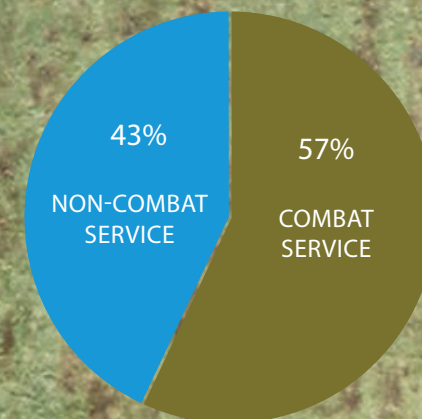


WHERE ARE THE MESSIANIC SOLDIERS STATIONED?

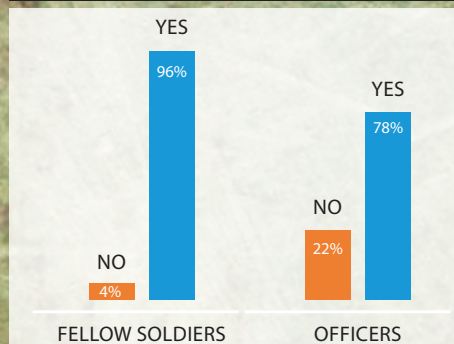


30%

OF THE MESSIANIC SOLDIERS HAVE A FELLOW MESSIANIC SOLDIER IN THEIR UNIT



DO FELLOW SOLDIERS AND OFFICERS KNOW ABOUT THEIR FAITH IN YESHUA?



RESPONSES TO THEIR FAITH IN YESHUA

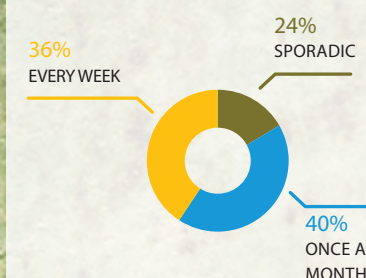
FELLOW SOLDIERS

64% POSITIVE
22% INDIFFERENT
14% NEGATIVE

OFFICERS

65% POSITIVE
31% INDIFFERENT
4% NEGATIVE

HOW OFTEN DO MESSIANIC SOLDIERS ATTEND A LOCAL CONGREGATION?



"Most of the soldiers have never heard about Messianic Jews and want to hear more about Yeshua..."

"Unfortunately, when I talk about my faith, most of the soldiers in my unit don't really care..."

"My officer was surprised and asked a lot of questions..."

DISCLAIMER: The statistics represent Messianic Soldiers serving in the IDF in February 2016.

ISRAEL THE 11TH HAPPIEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD!

By Shira Sorko-Ram

Israelis live in a country that much of the world says doesn't belong to them. The United Nations spends hundreds of millions of dollars on hundreds of branch offices and organizations that work to delegitimize, demonize, boycott, sanction and strangle Israel economically. Muslims, numbering 1.6 billion spend enormous treasure and blood planning Israel's demise.

Terrorist organizations and lone wolves spend their days and nights dreaming up new ways to attack and destroy Israel and Israelis, wherever they may be. And the Israeli government spends their days and nights trying to dream up one more way to squeeze taxes out of its citizens to fund its enormous yearly \$15 billion defense bill.

So how can it be that out of 157 countries in the world, Israelis are the 11th happiest people in the world!?! A typical Israeli reaction is that "we must be lying to ourselves!"

But even the most cynical of journalists don't think people are lying to the pollsters.

"It just can't be that the same results in survey after survey among different organizations with different sample groups, time after time, are fraudulent..." We just have to figure out why we are so happy!"

But journalists are truly mystified:

Israel's Neighbors not so Happy

Most of Israel's neighbors ranked low on the index, including the Palestinian territories (108), Egypt (120), Jordan (80), Lebanon (93) and Iraq (112). The five unhappiest countries in the 2015 report were Benin, Afghanistan, Togo, war-torn Syria and Burundi.

www.haaretz.com; link: www.goo.gl/jUNpy1

"How in the world can it be, we ask ourselves, that citizens of a tiny embattled nation, surrounded by enemies, targeted by boycotts, officially and unofficially loathed by a major portion of the world, with compulsory army service, where regularly scheduled wars and "operations" take place at least once every few years, where complaining about the "situation" is a national pastime, can feel so fine and dandy...it makes no sense."²

Dr. Tal Ben Shahar, nicknamed "Professor Happiness," taught a course at Harvard on positive psychology – known as the most popular course on campus. (He has since returned to Israel where, perhaps, he is happier.) Dr. Shahar believes the top predictor of happiness is spending time with people we care about and who care about us. In Israel, Friday night Shabbat dinners with extended family are a matter of course, even for the young and hip. After all, isolation is known to be a leading cause of unhappiness.

"It's because of our focus on relationships," the professor notes. "Friends and family are very high up on our value scale, and quality time with them is given a priority. Time we spend with people we care

about and who care about us is the number one predictor of happiness."³

One Israeli observed: "There's warmth, family, friends, everything you need," says the 42-year-old Jerusalemite. "There's the sea, archaeology, history, good food, a population made up of so many different cultures and communities. It's like a tiny America. There's nothing missing."⁴

Professor Ben Shahar points out that "happiness lies at the intersection between pleasure and meaning." Israelis may run low on pleasure, but they are never short on meaning.

Simply living in the state of Israel and making it through the day, no matter how humdrum, is meaningful, he remarks. For the religious, they believe that living out the Zionist dream is a part of God's plan for the Jewish people.

Blogger Tifannie Wen believes war has quite a bit to do with it. "The fact is that Israel has been in a perpetual state of war – or under threat of war – since David Ben-Gurion declared independence in May 1948 - the only Western country in the world in which this is the case."⁵

Professor Zahava Solomon of Tel Aviv University adds that the culture of conflict has made Israelis constantly aware of their potential demise. On the other hand, it makes them virtually fearless. They have a lot to fear, therefore they fear nothing.

Being raised in Israel, he says, lends a unique mental capacity for overcoming hardship unlike any other Western country in the world. When you're living in a place where people regularly threaten to wipe you off the map, you cultivate a mindset that slugs through lesser difficulties like finding that job or paying your rent.

Wen suggests that even though Israelis are painfully aware of the never-ending threats, they're also braver because of them. By experiencing more anxiety on a daily basis, they've become inoculated against bad things when they do occur, and recover quickly. A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association suggests that Israelis recover from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) more quickly than people of other Western nations.⁶

Trying to track what actually causes happiness, the Organization for Economic

Co-operation and Development (OECD) focused their research on the 34 OECD (mainly wealthier Western democratic) member nations, as well as Brazil and the Russian Federation, on 22 similar variables – including income, education, housing, health, life expectancy, community and life satisfaction.

Least Suicide Rate

Out of the 34 OECD countries, those with the lowest suicide rate – Spain, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Turkey and Greece – all happen to include regions with consistently beautiful sunny weather and gorgeous coastlines.

Blogger Allison Kaplan Sommer

ISRAELIS — NOT SO RICH

Although Israel regularly ranks very high in all "happiness" surveys, the reason is not because Israelis are particularly rich.

Poverty among families and children in Israel is currently the highest among OECD members (other than Mexico) according to calculations made by the NII (National Insurance Institute of Israel) based on OECD criteria. About one in three Israeli children live in poverty, according to a report released recently by the NII.

Over half of ultra-Orthodox families live below the poverty line because many male breadwinners choose to study Torah and Talmud in *yeshivot* rather than work. About the same percentage of Arab families are in the poverty category because only one in five Arab women work. (Fifty eight percent of Jewish women work.) In all, about 20% of Israelis live in poverty, including 23% of the elderly—not a pretty picture. So Israeli pundits continue to debate, why in the world are Israelis so happy?

ANOTHER REASON FOR HAPPINESS

There is another factor not particularly obvious to the casual viewer, but can be clearly discerned by the observant eye. Take a close look:

Israel ranks 11th out of 157 nations, according to the 2016 UN World Happiness Report. This places Israel above the United States.

The top 10 in the 2016 report were Denmark, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway, Finland, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia and Sweden.

The U.S. came in at 13, Germany 16, the UK at 23, France at 32 and Italy at 50.

In looking at the list of 157 countries, the top 20 happiest countries in the world all come from a heritage of Christianity. *All except one. Israel! The Jewish state of Israel.*

In the top 13 *richest* countries, five Arab nations are listed: Qatar, Kuwait, Brunei, United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. None of these nations are listed in the top 20 *happiest* nations.

The first Islamic nation mentioned in the Happiness List is the United Arab Emirates, number 28. With a population of nine million, the average income is \$40,000 and the gross national product a whopping \$58,000 per capita.

What is so notable of the top 27 happy countries, all are Christian or post-Christian democratic nations – except Israel – and Singapore! Singapore, number 22, is also the third richest country in the world and the first non-Christian/Jewish country on the list. Without doubt, Singapore is a nation unlike any other in the world! In that tiny nation, freedom of religion has seen Christianity grow (now 19%) and Islam decrease (14%).⁷

CHRISTIANITY – A MAJOR REASON FOR HAPPINESS – IS WANING IN THE WEST

In summary, with few exceptions, only nations with a Christian or Jewish heritage are true democracies. Other religions tend to persecute those not like themselves. For instance, India has a democratic government, but Christians are sorely persecuted by local Hindus and Muslims. Even "non-religions" like Communism intensely persecutes Christians, Jews and anyone else except atheists. And dictatorships don't

usually inspire happiness.

The huge story today is that the Christian faith is statistically decreasing in America and even more so in Western Europe. (It is *increasing* in areas such as Africa and China.) The UN survey, observing the decrease in religion in the West, urged that the world try to create “non-religious” organizations that could take the place of Christianity – or as they call it “religion” – in making people happy! How sad. How fruitless.

Most shocking is to find that 52% of American Jews allege they are atheists according to a new survey by Harris Interactive. But in Israel, 80% of Jewish Israelis declare they believe in God.

Observance of the Sabbath and Jewish holidays constantly remind Israelis of the existence of God in their day-to-day activities. On the Sabbath, 84% spend time with their family, 69% have a special Shabbat meal and 60% even say a Kiddush

prayer. Ninety percent celebrate Passover. In fact, since 1999, polls show that Israelis are becoming more traditional!⁹

GARDEN OF EDEN WEATHER

There's one more factor I must mention. The other day in early April, Ari and I went into the kitchen for our morning cup of coffee. We opened the back door to our little garden, and we breathed in the gorgeous air. It was 72 degrees with no wind. There could not have been a more perfect temperature in the Garden of Eden! As the morning turned into afternoon, the temperature rose to 79 degrees with a lovely breeze blowing. Towards sundown, as the temperature began to drop, we took our dog for a walk on a nearby two-mile pedestrian passageway, nestled between flowers and greenery. Yes, Israel is not yet the Garden of Eden, but for a majority of months out of the year, the weather is gorgeous. Especially spring and fall.

While Jerusalem in the Judean Hills is usually glorious all summer long, it is admittedly hot along the coast. But our Mediterranean beaches are glorious. Sitting with your feet in the water on a Tel Aviv beach as the sun goes down with a soft breeze blowing can revive almost any spirit! In fact, I think Ari and I should drive down to the beach right now! It's just 15 minutes away... ■

The World Happiness Report published by the UN grades each nation on real GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perceptions of corruption.

¹⁻² www.haaretz.com; link: www.goo.gl/jUNpy1

³⁻⁴ www.israel21c.org; link: www.goo.gl/TW0QEO

⁵⁻⁶ www.thedailybeast.com; link: www.goo.gl/DL0p3c

⁷ www.worldatlas.co; link: www.goo.gl/XqJ1ig

⁸ www.worldjewishdaily.com;

link: www.goo.gl/H0EAAz



SHUTTERSTOCK



ISRAELI MESSIANIC SINGERS AND MUSICIANS FROM LEFT: JEREMIAH, YARON YERAHMIEL AND SHAI SOL.



30 MORE ISRAELIS WILL BE ATTENDING THE MESSIANIC JEWISH ALLIANCE OF AMERICA 2016! **MJAA**

The MJAA Leadership in the U.S. writes:

"Our young people are always so excited to meet young believers from Israel. The Israelis and their music add a tremendous international presence. They have brought our worship and praise to a new level.

"God's future for Israel is so central to the faith of our Messianic Jews in America and elsewhere. But until Israeli Messianic Jews began to attend the MJAA regularly, most of our believing youth never had an opportunity to meet Israelis, let alone believers! Life-long friendships develop from these conferences as our Jewish believers learn first hand about Israel. Some even become interested in making aliyah (immigration) to Israel!

"Furthermore, it's not just the American Messianic Jews who get the chance to meet and talk with Israelis. Many Christians who love and pray regularly for Israel attend the MJAA and so they too have the opportunity to get acquainted with the Israeli delegation.

"It goes without saying that we know this gathering is equally important to the spiritual growth of the Messianic Jews coming from Israel. They have the opportunity to see and worship with over a thousand Jewish and Christian believers gathered here at Messiah College. Bringing the Body of Jewish believers together strengthens all the members of the Body, and must surely please Yeshua, our King and Lord."

Maoz' participation in the cost of bringing Israelis to the U.S. is \$1,500 (£1,065, €1,300) for each Israeli - for a total of \$45,000 (£32,000, €40,000). Let's invest together for this generation. They are worth it!

HERE ARE 21 OF THE 30 MESSIANIC JEWISH ISRAELIS PLANNING TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL MJAA IN PENNSYLVANIA THIS YEAR.

Prayer Line in the USA:

Email your prayer request to prayer@maozisrael.org from anywhere in the world.

Give a one-time gift or a recurring monthly donation by credit card from almost any country.

Go online to www.maozisrael.org or call our USA office at 800-856-7060

All credit cards accepted.





Children and their parents from Ukraine celebrate their first Purim in Israel

Messianic Pastor Israel Pochtar in Ashdod invited more than 450 children and adults to experience a real Purim Celebration. Having just escaped the tragedy of war and economic collapse in Ukraine, these children and their parents thoroughly understood and absorbed the story of how God saved the Jewish people from extinction through Queen Esther.

Maoz' IstandwithIsrael fund purchased gift packages of Purim sweets for every child and gave every adult a fan and a toaster. All of these new immigrants experienced the warmth and hospitality of the members of Congregation Beit Hallel, who provided them with a wonderful program of Messianic Russian musicians and comedians, together with the wonderful practical gifts from Maoz' generous partners. Pastor Pochtar publicly thanked the partners of Maoz for the gifts - so appreciated by these immigrants who now have to start their lives from scratch.



EVERLASTING COVENANT

And I will give unto thee,
and to thy seed after thee,
the land wherein thou art
a stranger, all the land of Canaan,
for an everlasting possession;
and I will be their God.

GENESIS 17:8

CELEBRATING

ISRAEL'S

INDEPENDENCE


maoz israel

ISRAEL'S 68TH INDEPENDENCE DAY - MAY 12, 2016