

אלהי מעוזי Maoz Israel REPORT



August 2011 Av 5771

Summer Edition

Since 1976

Founded by Ari & Shira Sorko-Ram



SHOULD SUNDAY BECOME A DAY OF REST FOR ISRAELIS?

By Shira Sorko-Ram

You probably know that Israel's workweek begins Sunday and ends Thursday. Adjusting to this unusual work schedule (compared to the rest of the world) is probably one of the more disorienting changes immigrants face when moving to Israel. Here in the Holy Land, Friday becomes a sort of Saturday and Saturday becomes a Sunday – maybe in theory but not in reality.

Off hand, it might seem that Israelis have

a five-day workday like most of the world – just on different days. But Israel's Friday is hard to explain. It fits into no particular category. While most offices and services are closed, post offices and banks are open until around 12:30-1:00p.m. Grocery stores and malls close somewhere between 2:00-4:00p.m., depending on the business and the time of year – according to when the sun sets.

So Friday is not a half day and not a whole day.

Friday *is* a regular school day; kids go to school six days a week in Israel – but have a shorter school day than children in other

western countries.

On Friday, Erev Shabbat, (Sabbath evening) special meals are prepared by most Israelis for their family gatherings – whether religious or secular. Much grocery shopping and cooking occupies the average Israeli family on an average Friday.

Saturday of course is different in Israel than in any other country in the world. Religious Jews spend a great deal of time in the synagogue – morning and afternoon until dark – with a festive meal (and perhaps a short nap) in between.

For secular Israelis, it is the one day of the week that they as a family can visit



ISRAELI ORTHODOX JEWS IN THE SYNAGOGUE ON A FRIDAY NIGHT

friends or go on a little trip or outing. But only if they own a car.

From sundown Friday evening to sundown Saturday there is virtually no public transportation in Israel. So unless a family has a car (and many do not) or can afford a taxi, they are stuck at home.

Israelis often feel claustrophobic in this tiny nation surrounded by enemy states, and yet many are prevented from even visiting Israel's nature sites and parks because on their one day off there is no way to travel.

WORKING IN DIFFERENT TIME ZONES

There is one other issue related to the Sunday-Thursday workweek with which Israelis must cope. If a company in Israel is doing business with a U.S. company, the Israelis have to contend with a seven to ten hour time difference.

In other words, 9:00 a.m. in New York is 4:00p.m. in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem – manageable but not optimum for personnel to connect by phone or email. But in California, 9:00a.m. is 7:00p.m. in Israel – too late for normal business hours in Israel.

But it gets worse. If we at Maoz in

Tel Aviv wish to contact our Maoz Texas office, we send an email. But if it happens to be a Thursday, then our staff goes home at the regular time – 5:30p.m. – just as our Texas colleagues are arriving at work. No chance to receive an answer. The next day – Friday – we Israelis do not work at the office – so we still cannot conclude the business that we sent by email on Thursday. On Sunday we go back to work, but our Texas colleagues don't return until Monday – which is Monday evening for us in Israel.

In summary, the email that we send on Thursday from Israel will not have a reply

For secular Israelis, the Sabbath is the one day of the week that they as a family can visit friends or go on a little trip or outing. But only if they own a car.

until Tuesday morning Israel time – five days later. Of course we at Maoz work around these hour differences and do a lot of communication by Skype or phone, but it does mean that we often work many hours into the night or call our Texas colleagues just as they are getting out of bed in the morning in order to connect.

Even staying in contact with our British Maoz administrators means that we often ignore official office days and hours.

ISRAEL LOOKS FOR A SOLUTION

All Israeli businesses with international dealings have the exact same situation. A dramatic example is the world's stock markets and financial institutions which conduct business on Fridays while Israel's stock market is closed. Then on Sunday, when Israel is in full swing, most of the world is shut down.

The Israeli parliament is very aware of the problem and a movement within the Knesset is growing to legislate Sunday as a day of rest in Israel. Friday would become a workday for everybody, but would be slightly shorter than other days,

still giving time for Israelis to get home before the Sabbath begins.

Kids would have a slightly longer school day, but would attend for only five days. Sunday would become a true rest day for frazzled Israelis.

Pundits and politicians claim that such an arrangement would bring extra benefits to the whole country. On Sunday, all of Israel's citizens could rest or shop or attend cultural or sports events – with transportation operating throughout the country.

Orthodox citizens would have opportunity for outings or to participate in cultural events on Sundays – which until now they cannot, because of their observance of the Sabbath, the only complete day that Israelis do not presently work. Even Israel's holidays are nearly all Biblical holidays, meaning that strict rabbinical observance prohibits religious Jews from traveling on those days, and secular Jews are prevented from using public transportation.

How will such a change affect Messianic Jews? It is my opinion that almost every Israeli leader would testify that having a two-day weekend will make it much easier for congregational members to come to their Sabbath services on a regular basis.

The members of Knesset who have introduced the bill to make Sunday a day off expect it will take some time to get a consensus as the ultra-Orthodox fear that an added rest day might somehow interfere with the closed world they prefer. But Ze'ev Elkin, one of the MK's who introduced the bill, said having Sundays off is inevitable for Israel. Demographic and economic realities make the change unavoidable.

How will such a change affect Messianic Jews? It is my opinion that almost every Israeli leader would testify that having Sundays off will make it much easier for congregational members to come to their Sabbath services *on a regular basis*.

Indeed a large number of Messianic Jews throughout the country do not attend their congregations faithfully the same way that believers do in the rest of the world. Being that presently Saturday is the only day when the family can spend a day together, even the most devout Israeli believers often take time off from their congregations to make a day-long outing, or to have extended family events such as birthdays, anniversaries – or just a day off to stay at home and rest.

Having a two-day weekend would give believers another day of rest, which in my opinion would give the Messianic congregations an extra boost in faithfulness and expanded active service to the Body of Messiah in Israel. May God grant us this extra day of rest! ■

Pastor, do you wish to highlight what your congregation is doing to bless Israel?

Because you partner with us, everything we do in the Land, is also what YOU are doing in the Land.



So, call us, and let us know what you need (videos, pictures, Maoz Israel Report, speaker) and we will assist you with resources to share with your congregation—and inspire them to continue to BLESS ISRAEL and bring the Good News of the Gospel to every Israeli!

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.





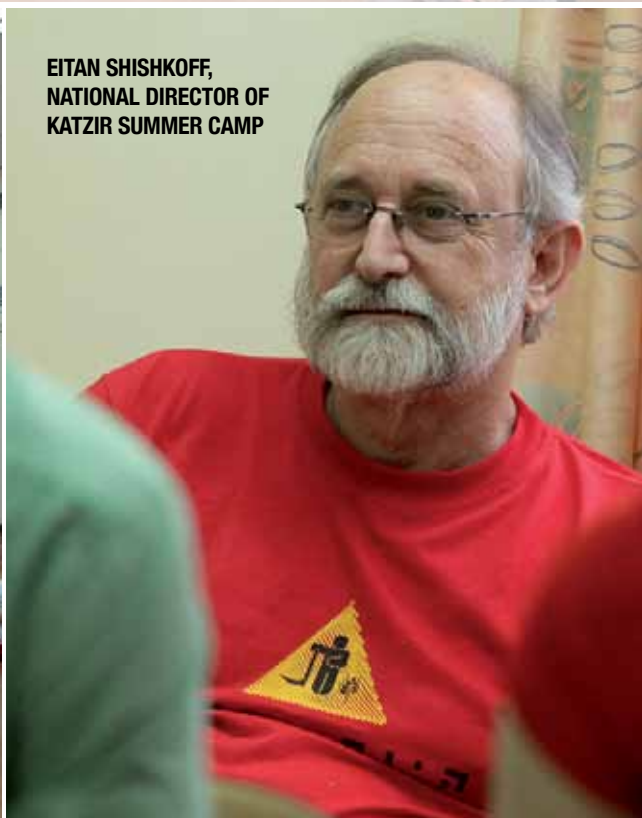
KATZIR SUMMMER CAMP **B**





BESIDE THE SEA OF GALILEE

EITAN SHISHKOFF,
NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF
KATZIR SUMMER CAMP



One of the greatest ways to minister to the youth of Israel is to help them attend various camps and conferences throughout the year. In all of these events kids come from around the country. At the same time, there are many who would not be able to attend if they and their families had to pay for transportation and food and lodging.

At the Katzir conferences, the teens receive teaching and a call to commitment and holiness – without which, these children will not be able to develop into mature, fruitful believers.

Equally important for the youth is their opportunity to see old friends and make new ones. Without a doubt, there is strength in numbers. Young people are strengthened when they see they are NOT the only believer in the country!

The volunteer staff for these events – including from our congregation – have themselves seen their lives changed in these conferences when they were teens.

Israel's Standard of Living Compared to Europe and the U.S.

Despite the world's financial slump, Israel has fared fairly well. The shekel is strong. The unemployment rate is about 6% and is expected to fall to 5.8% this year – an all-time low. Growth rate for this year is expected to be about 4.5%.

All this, with boycotts in Europe against Israeli products, almost no commercial interchange with the surrounding Muslim countries and the need for continuous massive upgrading of Israel's military for survival. Israel's economy is amazing.

Yet, for the individual average Israeli, life is far from easy.

Israelis pay close to twice as much on essential products compared to the U.S. and European counterparts when wages are taken into consideration.

The monthly income of the average American is \$3,770 and in large cities around \$4,930. The British average is Sterling £2,700 (\$4,350) (Jerusalem Post, 21June2011)

In contrast, the average Israeli paycheck is \$2,500. It must be kept in mind that because of the extremely successful hi-tech business in Israel producing very high wages for that section of the labor market, the average is somewhat skewed – the actual paycheck for most ordinary citizens is somewhat lower.

Higher prices for essentials include food, transportation, phones and internet connections and just about anything else you can think of. In the U.S., gasoline at this writing is about \$3.60 a gallon while in Israel it is \$8.35. A new vehicle is double that of one in the U.S. (Ibid.)

How does a working couple making \$5,000 before taxes pay \$1,000 to \$1,500 for a three room apartment in Tel Aviv, buy a small car, and feed a couple of kids? They go very light on the bubble gum and ice cream cones!

Even though Israel's debt to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is a comparatively low, 76% to the U.S 93% and Great Britain 81%, Israelis still work almost half a year just to pay their taxes. (ozar.mof.gov.il/debt/about.asp)

HERE'S WHERE IT HURTS!

One of the main reasons for such high taxes is that there are two large communities in Israel who do not work: The ultra-

Orthodox Jews, especially the men, and Israeli Arabs, especially the women.

The haredim (ultra-Orthodox) constitute 8-10% of the population, and are growing very fast. And they don't work or serve in the army.

Realizing the seriousness of this growing phenomenon, the government gave the haredi community \$87 million last year alone for job training and day care subsidies – which did result in a "significant increase" in haredi women entering the workforce.

The haredi men continue to spend their entire lives studying their rabbinical books and expect the taxpayer to fully support them and their families, including providing them with free health care and pensions.

However, there was virtually no increase among the men. (JP 28Mar2011)

The haredi men continue to spend their entire lives studying their rabbinical books and expect the taxpayer to fully support them and their families, including providing them with free health care and pensions.

Today there are some 500,000-700,000 haredim in Israel in a Jewish population of six million. (Wikipedia Haredi Judaism) Their numbers will double in 15-20 years.

Bank of Israel Governor Stanley Fischer, American-born world famous economist says, "Poverty in Israel is very complicated. Outside the haredi (ultra-Orthodox) and Israeli Arab communities, poverty has not grown. [But] part of the population has grown, does not work, and this cannot go on. If we don't change the conduct in the labor market for these two communities, there will be a very big and worrying problem." (Globes, 21Jun2011)

Indeed, a University of Haifa report warns if current demographic trends continue among, haredi Jews and Israeli Arabs, Israel

may cease to exist! Yes, that is what this scientific report says. (JP, 3Apr11)

The report, entitled "Israel 2010-2030, on the Path to a Religious State," concludes that by the year 2030, the majority of Israel's Jewish population will be religious – [ultra-Orthodox, Orthodox and traditional] a reality that could lead to several different results, including an increase in poverty and . . . Israel's deterioration into an anti-democratic country.

The report, compiled by Professor Arnon Soffer, warns that the growing haredi population will place an intolerable economic burden on the rest of the population, even causing secular Jews to leave the country.

Because the haredi population refuses to work, they have created "a situation of total dependence on the income-earning population," causing ever increasing "dissatisfaction, bitterness and feelings of suffocation among taxpayers," according to the report.

The higher haredi birthrate will only increase their voting power in the political arena, enabling them to extract greater and greater benefits for themselves through their political parties, says Prof. Soffer.

Israelis and their (few) global friends usually concentrate on the grave existential dangers coming from every direction outside of Israel's borders.

But this professor is calling for government investment in teaching democratic values in the Israeli education system, because if current demographic and religious trends within the state continue, the future of Israel as a democratic, economically sustainable state is in great danger. (Ibid.)

Certainly, those of us who lead Messianic Jewish congregations are witness to the great difficulties of our members, most of whom are average-income citizens. Many of our believing children do not enjoy even basic necessities or opportunities to develop their God-given gifts – some do not have money to buy school books.

For these reasons, Maoz' humanitarian aid through istandwithisrael.com has been and will continue to be a tremendous service to the Body of Messiah giving critical aid to the believing children and their families throughout the country. ■



Our congregation Tiferet Yeshua and an Ethiopian congregation, Even Ezer,

both in Tel Aviv, enjoyed a joint recital of our children who are learning musical instruments through the aid of istandwithisrael.com.



ARI & ANDARGE, PASTOR OF CONGREGATION EVEN EZER





A RECITAL FOR MESSIANIC CHILDREN STUDYING MUSIC THROUGH THE ISTDWITHISRAEL.COM PROGRAM