

Highway Report

NEAR EAST MINISTRY
NEWSLETTER

March 2012



Resident of the care home

■ BY JEDIDJA FIJENBERG

What's in my heart

An interview with a NEM worker

Fifteen years ago Natalie was sent out through NEM to the Arab world, where she founded a care home together with a local doctor. 25 people have found a home and the care they wouldn't be able to get with their families.

Natalie, what does this place mean to you?

'It's a place I'm very grateful for. I enjoy coming to work every day. This is because I see how elderly people, who wouldn't receive care otherwise, are being cared for. There are people who have no one left and many don't get visitors anymore. It feels good to be able to offer these people a home.'

What is your job at the home?

'I'm the head nurse. I train young people to become carers. I'm also responsible for the kitchen, the cleaning and for ordering food and drink.'

How did you come to this place?

'I founded this place. This happened after I saw elderly people in living conditions that made me think: These people can't live at home anymore. People with Alzheimer's or people who were so old that they couldn't move anymore and just stayed in bed with no one to look after them.'

I had already set up another project together with a Christian organisation. They had a vision to start a nursing home. And that's what I did together with an Arab Christian doctor. We started with nothing. The floor given to us was filled with refuse. Someone offered to clear it away, but he wanted us to pay him. We had no money. Now, eleven years later, we've even built an extra story on top. I can truly say that God has provided all our needs.

Why is the Arab world important to you?

'Because I'm passionate to see people here ▶

■ PETER & SUE WESTWORTH

A night to honour God

In November 2011 there were two special nights: on the 23rd in Dudley and on the 24th in Cardiff. Both had a shared theme: 'A night to honour Israel'. During those nights we, as NEM representatives, had the opportunity to talk about reconciliation as seen through the ministry of NEM.

Each gathering gave us an opportunity to share with Jews and Gentiles about how God has led NEM in the work that it undertakes in the Middle East and NEM's vision taken from Isaiah 19:23-25. On both occasions both groups were happy to see that NEM works with Jews and Arabs.

The highlight for us came from the keynote speaker, Josh Reinstein (Director of the Knesset Christian Allies Caucus), who commented that these nights should have been called 'Nights to Honour God' rather than 'Nights to Honour Israel'. He said he found it sad that churches were unable to see the miracles of God's prophecies unfolding before their eyes. He encouraged us to continue to pray, but also to speak out against false reporting and replacement theology.





Thank you for your prayers!

'All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And shall glorify Your name.'

Psalm 86v9

- Give thanks for the recent heavy rain throughout the Middle East
- Pray for great wisdom for the Israeli [and Western] governments in dealing with the nuclear threat from Iran.
- Pray for our new group of short term volunteers that started last month; that they will settle in quickly and grow spiritually as well as being a blessing in their work places. Pray for more short-termers to go from the UK.
- Pray for our bi-annual fieldworkers conference in May. Pray for Gijs and Christel as this is the first conference they are responsible for organising. Pray for deep fellowship between our workers from the Jewish and Arab communities and a time of real refreshment.
- Pray for a blessing on the celebrations of Passover and Easter, a very busy time for tourism. Pray for peace and security during this period-also for the Christians in the Arab countries. Pray for many Israelis to see Jesus as the Passover lamb.
- Continue to pray that God will use the unrest in the Arab nations to cause many to seek Him, and for His will to be done regarding political solutions.
- Pray that we may know how to make NEM better known in the UK. Give thanks for the events that we have been able to attend in Wales, Norwich and Nottinghamshire.
- Pray for Sarah as she prepares for long term service

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come to know Jesus. And because I love Israel. I would want the people here to start loving Israel too, but that's impossible if they don't know the Lord. If they encounter Jesus they should come to love Israel as well. In addition, I've always had a desire to reach out to the poor. That's why I'm glad to do this work.'

If you could change one thing for the people here, which change would you make and why?

'People here aren't respected or loved. I would want them to feel loved and respected and for there to be an end to poverty.'

What would you like to share with the readers of Highway Report?

'Don't be afraid if the Lord calls you to serve Him overseas. He will take care of you. He knows exactly what you need. Dare to take the risk with Him.'

■ BY SARAH

To God be the glory

In the 2010 autumn edition of Highway Report I shared a vision that the Lord had laid on my heart at the start of that year: to go out to the Middle East and serve God by serving my Arab brothers and sisters in the ministry of reconciliation. Humanly speaking the project seemed impossible for a young, single woman with little experience and no funds. I had only just moved to the UK and didn't even belong to a church! How could God possibly bring this about? But He promised me that He would carry me to the Middle East and sustain me. That was good enough for me.

Since then the Lord has truly worked wonders. He firmly planted me in Ruddington Baptist Church, who have welcomed me into their family, affirmed my calling to the Middle East and are sending me with their support and blessing. I was accepted by Near East Ministry and God provided the funds for the initial training. But most importantly He brought the most wonderful people alongside me to explore the calling with me, to encourage and strengthen me in my faith, to be true friends to me in a time of waiting and preparation. A lot has happened in the past eighteen months, and time and again God has opened doors and confirmed that His hand is on this project.

I aim to start my language training in the Middle East in September 2012.



The journey of my calling will take me right into the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But whatever the danger, my commitment to the vision the Lord has given me has only grown in resolve. Oh to see the reconciliation we have in Christ come to Jews and Arabs! To see Christ represented in His Body, one new man, Jew and Gentile, Israeli and Palestinian!

To find out more about Sarah visit: www.sarahinthemiddleeast.com

Join our short-term programme!

Finished your exams? Recently ended a job? Searching for God's will for your life? Or do you just want to break away from everyday life at home and see what God's Spirit is doing in the Middle East? Join our short-term programme on the King's Highway! In September 2012 NEM runs a three month programme in Israel. You will be involved in supporting existing local ministries by assisting in health and social care projects, technical maintenance, repairs, odd jobs etc. During these months you will share an apartment with a group of maximum six people. Together you'll

receive an in-depth introduction to the land and culture of the Bible. Check our website www.neareastministry.com for more information!



■ BY HELEEN MURRE-VAN DEN BERG

Eastern-orthodox Christians and the Bible

A kiss of reverence

For protestants it's sometimes difficult to understand what the Bible means to orthodox Christians, who often don't tend to care much for individual interpretations of Bible studies or long exegetic sermons. 'Ordinary' believers won't usually know many Scriptures by heart and aren't very interested in extensive Bible knowledge.

However, it's a mistake to think that the Bible isn't important to them personally or to the orthodox church tradition. They simply express their commitment in a different way. Firstly, the texts in the liturgy are usually taken straight from the Bible and the structure of the liturgy is often based on the Old Testament temple service.

In addition, many of the Old Testament stories are well known, be it as orally transmitted stories rather than read texts. Stories of saints, taken from the Bible or the apocryphal books, about people in whose lives God's power was made manifest. These stories are shared enthusiastically and in some traditions they are even depicted. This way they become a source of inspiration for many generations of orthodox Christians.

Their deep reverence for the Bible is demonstrated best by the central role of the Gospel



Book. This book contains the Sunday readings from the four Gospels and therefore symbolises the Gospel, the divine message of grace. This book will be brought in and read with great reverence and at the end of the service it's even kissed. Not as a material object, but because of the miracle of the incarnation, of God's coming into the world, expressed in a physical book, the Bible.

Prof. Dr. Heleen Murre van den Berg is professor of History of World Christianity at the faculty of Humanities at the University of Leiden, the Netherlands.

■ BY KEES JAN RODENBURG

Jews and their Bible

70 interpretations

The Jews are the people of the book. For centuries they passed God's word on through the generations. It's interesting to note how important it is to them that no changes are made to the holy scriptures. In the synagogue the reader is supervised in case he makes a mistake. And if the supervisor doesn't correct him, someone else in the room will!

The Jewish Bible looks different from the Christian Old Testament. The Jews distinguish between three parts: the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. The heart of the Bible is the Torah, the part that describes the creation of the world and the birth of the people of Israel, but also includes the commandments to keep all God's requirements and the call to be a holy nation. Children grow up studying the ancient texts and the commentaries of important rabbis. This type of studying or 'lernen' is something the Jews do throughout their entire life. It forms a part of their relationship with the Eternal.



The Jewish Bible can't be seen separately from important rabbinical writings such as the Mishnah and the Talmud. The Jews interpret the Bible through these writings. The guiding question is always: What is God telling us to do or not to do? Many subjects give rise to debate and differences of opinion. But this isn't a problem for the Jews. According to the tradition Scripture can have as many as 70 interpretations. This means that every person is needed to unlock the wealth of Scripture.

■ COLUMN

Join us in prayer

For our new year's reception in January, our director, Kees Jan Rodenburg had asked each of us at the NEM office to choose one word that we briefly wanted to share something about on the evening. Something that related to our own work or the work of NEM in general. I only sat down to think about what I wanted to contribute the evening before. Initially I wanted to say something about PR: so many ideas, but we have to make due with what we have. No, two other colleagues were already going to say something to that effect.

Then it hit me: PRAYER! How silly of me not to have thought of it sooner. Surely every Christian knows how important prayer is?

Our ministry is founded on prayer. Every day at the office starts with a time of prayer during which we commit all our work to the Lord. Not just our work, but our worries and problems as well, and above all, the workers in the field who do such amazing jobs. And yet as soon as we've said 'amen' we tend to jump behind our computers 'because there is so much to do!'

But all our work would be in vain if the Lord didn't bless it. An example: three years ago we weren't able to find enough children- and youth workers for our Awakening Camps. We put out an appeal to our supporters to fast and pray about this issue. Then one Monday morning a young man called. During his holiday, while he was in the mountains, the Lord had 'suddenly' put it on his heart to

call NEM upon his return to see if they needed any help... Need I say more? This is why my word was: PRAYER. Will you join us?



Heidi van de Brandt – NEM Staff

CD Hope

Available for £7,-

Flautist Esther, a NEM worker in Israel, has produced a beautiful CD together with cellist Katharina Abrahams and pianist Ira Eretsky. There is hope for Israel! That's why the first piece on the CD is HaTikva, the national anthem of Israel. The last piece on the CD is a beautifully performed version of 'Ose Shalom Bimromav'. A Trio by Bohuslav Martinu and two pieces by Johann Sebastian Bach complete this special CD. You can order the CD by filling out the response slip

Near East Ministry, founded in 1963, is a Christian organisation serving Jew and Arab through sending practical workers to the Middle East and promoting intercessory prayer for reconciliation. The ministry is inspired by the words of Isaiah 19:23-25 where a highway of peace is predicted between Egypt, Assyria and Israel.



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Donations:

Please send cheques to our UK representative Ruth Youngman, made out to 'Ruth Youngman – NEM account'.

A double-edged sword

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.
Hebrew 4:12

As long as I can remember, I have never liked surgery or anything connected to it. Heart-surgery, eye-surgery, caesareans. I have no problem hearing how people have been helped through it, but please, spare me the details of what the surgeon actually did. That people watch medical documents

for entertainment is inconceivable to me. Even hearing about it, it's almost like I can feel the blade cutting into my own



skin. I can't bear it. The above-mentioned Bible verse used to make me think of physical cuttings and stabbings.

However it's clear that this verse isn't about wounding or cutting bodies with God's word. It's a picture. But why is the word of God compared to a double-edged sword in the letter? Why use such a painful, bloody image? Like a double-edged sword God's word has the power to touch us deeply. In fact, there is nothing on earth that can touch us more profoundly. It touches us in the very core of our being, 'dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow'. God's word shows us who we are; who we truly are inside. This has always been known to the Lord (Hebrews 4:13). He uses His word to reveal it to us as well. His word 'judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart'.

Whether this concerns our thoughts regarding a family member or a colleague, our thoughts about what kind of behaviour we tolerate or about the hope of Israel, God's word can show us which of these thoughts are in line with His character and which aren't.

The picture of the double-edged sword illustrates how powerfully God's word is meant to work in us. This can seem quite scary. You could choose to keep your distance. For you can't really listen to the word of God and stay unchanged. His word is 'living and active'. The Lord Himself said concerning His word: 'so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it' (Isaiah 55:11). Listening to God's word is challenging, but it's not supposed to make us anxious. In the letter to the Hebrews this verse about the double-edged sword

comes straight after a passage about finding rest, Shabbat-rest; finding rest in God. Apparently God's ultimate goal in piercing us with His word, is that we find rest in Him. That we find rest in His purposes for this world and for our lives.

Study Questions

- Do you remember a time when reading the word of God was a painful confrontation for you?
What was the fruit of this painful confrontation?
- How important is God's word in your thinking about Israel and the Middle East?
- In what way has God's word given you discernment in your thoughts about Israel and the Middle East?

R E S P O N S E S L I P

- Please put me on the mailinglist for HIGHWAY REPORT
- Send me more information about: Short term / Long term service in the Middle East
- Please send me the following CD's:
- | | |
|---|--|
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Postal address: _____

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Send this response slip to: NEM UK, 3 Stonegate Green, Leeds LS7 2TQ