



**Pastor Hani Sayegh Evangelical Baptist Church of Akko, Israel**

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*Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.*

*Psa 133:1*

It is one thing to read a beautiful verse like this; Ahh... but to experience it is quite another. For many years, Pastor Hani' heart was to have unity between the Messianic, Russian and Arab Christian congregations in Akko. So, he was overjoyed when last year the Lord spoke to the hearts of two church members, H & S to bring the various congregations in Akko together for prayer in one accord. On the appointed day, 35 people (Arab, Jewish, Russian) from the four different congregations assembled at the lighthouse by the sea. At first there was apprehension because of the mixed culture. However, when we all started to worship the Lord in the common language of Hebrew, fire fell and the ice melted. Each of us were crying and hugging one another as the Holy Spirit moved amongst us. It has been a year and a half now as we continue to meet together monthly for prayer in unity, and still the freshness of the Spirit and the success of His power against the enemy has continued to this day.

During this time one of the Pastors from Kiryat Shmona, which is in the far N.E. corner of Israel, attended one of the prayer meetings. He was so excited to see the love between the brethren that the Spirit inspired him to do the same thing. Many of the churches don't even talk with each other so this would truly take the power of God to bring them together. H & S are planning to have a luncheon in Kiryot Shmona for a number of the Pastors in order to bring them together and understand what is on God's heart relating to John 17 and us being one as Jesus and the Father are one.

During this past August, for his first time, Pastor Hani flew to Texas to visit the various congregations that have supported us in prayer. He experienced such a precious unity amongst the believers there that he hopes to see the same as the Lord leads us here in Israel. He shared many of the things that the Lord has been doing here in Akko. He also told the history of the Baptist presence in Akko and how the obedience of 1 missionary from Texas in the early 1900's led to the formation of our Church. Meeting all the believers there very much encouraged him to return in the future.

On October 15<sup>th</sup>, during Succoth, Akko had its annual festival. What the Lord did during this time was simply amazing. At our bookshop, in the Old City of Akko, we had put up a big

sign that said, "Tent of Peace". This was open morning till evening during Succoth, and we invited people in for free coffee and discussion. Many, many Jews from all over Israel came to the Festival. They had the chance to drink coffee, buy books and hear about Jesus.

Three Jewish ladies in particular, from Rishon Litzion, and two from Jerusalem stopped by the shop, saw the sign and asked, "What does that mean, tent of peace?" Pastor Hani spoke about the real peace which starts in your heart. When there is peace between you and God, it will spread to others. He explained to them from the beginning starting with Adam, all about the blood, and who truly is the Prince of Peace, from Isaiah 9:6, finishing off with the salvation message. Upon the conclusion, all of the women prayed with him to receive Jesus. Then one of the women turned and said, "It was worthy that we came from Rishon to hear about Jesus".

Another man from Jerusalem, who had been playing the part of a Pastor in one of the plays, came by one morning. Pastor Hani said to him, "I am a real Pastor". The man said that he had a dream about Jesus as a child and had been looking for him ever since, but had not found him. So Pastor Hani explained to him about Christianity. How it was not a religion, but a way of life, and proceeded to give the salvation message to him. This man, after praying to receive Jesus, was so happy that he bowed his head and started to cry. Then he jumped up and exclaimed; "now I want to be baptized." Pastor Hani explained things to him and they hugged each other (a Jew and an Arab), after which, Pastor Hani followed up a few times with a promise from him to come and visit again.

Every year during Succoth, 2-300,000 people visit Akko for the festival. We open the bookshop to speak and teach about Jesus to all who have an ear to hear. The bookshop is located beside, and rented from, the third largest Mosque in Israel. So please, come visit and see with your own eyes what the Lord is doing here in Akko. Get involved. Help us minister and win people to Christ.

Finally, on November 12<sup>th</sup> we had an opening celebration, dedicating the "Evangelical Baptist Center", a daughter church that we planted in a village called Piqea. It started as a Bible study group and expanded to a full fledged church. The ABC (Association of Baptist Churches) attended. VP of the ABC, Pastor Khaled, from Kfar Yasif shared from Rev 3, about the Church of Philadelphia, and how the Lord opens doors to preach the Gospel. So, "Go", because the time is ripe. Nader shared some history on how Pastor Hani had been teaching the Bible study for the past 4 years, before it grew to become a church. Sousan sang, while Faten played piano, Henry played the guitar and Neimeh played the conga.

Recently, the neighboring mainline churches have joined together to persecute this new church. They sent threatening letters to all their parishioners that call our church names, say lies about us and intimidate their members with strong threats if they even associate with us. Their leaders are afraid that because their members have heard about our love and joyful worship, and are afraid that they will lose them and their money.

## PRAYER POINTS

- ✚ Unity of the Body of Christ in Akko
- ✚ Pray for a move of the Holy Spirit encouraging the Pastors to come to the luncheon in Kiryot Shmona and that God would give them ears to hear.
- ✚ Please keep in prayer those that accepted Jesus at the festival, especially the man that wants to come back to visit.
- ✚ Please pray about the persecution that our new church is enduring. Pray for their safety and that the love that they have will win over the hearts of the mainline church leaders. Pray also for this church to multiply.
- ✚ We ask you to also keep in prayer the Bookshop ministry and Pastor Hani's vision to build a school and kindergarten.
- ✚ We also need prayer for a new project that we are contemplating. This would be to repair and restore the old church of ours, located in the Old City of Akko, turning it into a Guest House. For this we would need money and volunteers.