

The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry Inc.

GLOBAL REPORT

Fall 2020

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Meet at the Mountain

FOI New Zealand Treks Into the Hearts and Lives of Israeli Backpackers

Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Exodus 19:17

Dear Friend,

Never before has there been a wider door open into the hearts of young Israelis. Seeking to find their purpose in life and the answer to *What next?* these young people have turned to backpacking around the globe to experience freedom and find clarity.

Each year, several thousand young Israelis take a journey into the heart of New Zealand. Known for its incredible scenery, thermal pools and active volcanoes, New Zealand is full of God's beauty and design.

Our FOI-New Zealand office, spearheaded by Simon Lawry, is welcoming the Israeli backpackers by introducing a new ministry



called *Meet at The Mountain (MATM)*. Located in a tranquil setting just 45 minutes from the start of one of the most popular walking tracks, MATM offers a free 3-night stay providing physical and spiritual comfort to backpackers along their way.

I am excited to tell you more about the faithful work our FOI-NZ team, Jo and Simon Lawry, have done to kick-start this incredible opportunity—along with the eager support of FOI ministry representative, Becky Meissner. None of it would have been possible without your

prayerful and financial partnership. Not only is it greatly needed, it is invaluable in sharing the love of Jesus Christ with Israelis who are searching for the truth.



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A WARM WELCOME TO ISRAELI BACKPACKERS

Israeli young people typically take an extended time to travel the globe, especially once they've completed their commitment in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). It's an opportune time to explore, grow, and ponder their lives—making them especially willing to engage in spiritual conversations about God.

In an effort to reach this next generation of Israelis, FOI-NZ team put forth an incredible amount of planning to determine the strengths and weaknesses of *Meet at the Mountain*. Logistically, they determined the best location, accommodations, schedule, house rules, health and safety precautions, transportation safety, and costs. Spiritually, they prayerfully sought, considered, and sensed God's provision and blessing all along the way.

Mindful of the many physical and spiritual needs of every soul that would walk through the doors of the camp, the team showed fervent faith and effort as they prepared.

Over the course of just two weeks, 40 young Israeli backpackers were welcomed to the camp. The FOI-NZ team always greeted them warmly and on Shabbat a special dinner was enjoyed by all. During Purim, Becky baked batches of *Hamentaschen* (Haman's Ears), a symbolic food eaten during this festival which was an extra touch that didn't go unnoticed. A meal around a table is always a special way to connect with people, and where many meaningful conversations about the Messiah began.

**OUR MISSION AT FOI
IS TO REACH THE
JEWISH PEOPLE WITH
THE LOVE OF YESHUA
THROUGH THE GOSPEL.
IT IS CLEAR TO US
THAT THIS LOCATION IS
WHERE TO BEGIN.**

SIMON LAWRY

IN SEARCH OF SOMETHING GREATER

Meet at the Mountain is strategically located in the Central Plateau region where backpackers encounter three of the most significant mountains in the North Island, all of which are active volcanoes. Another popular draw to the area is that Sir Peter Jackson filmed parts of *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* here. Now, almost all come to see the famous mountain known in these movies as *Mt. Doom* and want to walk what is considered one of the best one-day walks in the world.

As travelers arrived at MATM's location at MiCamp—Ruapehu Christian Camp—they were eager and expectant for their upcoming hike. From the start, the travelers were respectful, receptive, and open to conversations about the Lord. One couple asked Becky if she wanted to do the hike with them and she was thrilled





to. In their conversations, she mentioned the gospel and they had to ask her what the gospel was. She had many opportunities to share the message of the Messiah, how He died on a cross to take on the sin of the world, so that those of us who believe in Him can have eternal life.

Over the three days many spiritual discussions took place. Though the conversation was heavy at times with disagreements and concerns, the overall atmosphere at the campground was light. The FOI-NZ team spent time with the backpackers playing games, playing instruments, eating, transporting, and talking.

For certain, the hearts of the young Israelis are open as they search for something greater. Our prayer is that in their discovery they find Yeshua, the Messiah, to be their answer.

EXPERIENCES THAT LEAVE A LASTING IMPACT

For the three days the travelers spent at *Meet at the Mountain*, many had experiences they won't soon forget. I'll begin by asking you: Have you ever seen a glowworm? I have not. But, five minutes from the camp there is a pathway that was cut out of a mountain for what was supposed to be a railroad. It's here that glowworms line both sides of the street. Walking through it under the dark, starry, night sky was described as "magical," and "the best part of their trip." Imagine standing in the middle of hundreds of glowworms shining their light in the darkness. What a powerful image that must be!

The Shabbat dinners were also very well received. Thoughtful and fun discussions took place around the table. Each person brought a dish to share and some said it was the best Shabbat dinner they had had in New Zealand.

Finally, imagine the impact of a hike where you can walk *right beside* an active volcano. To be that close to one of God's most majestic creations would leave a lasting impact for sure.

In just three days, memories were made that won't soon be

forgotten. And as amazing as they are, those memories aren't the most important ones we want them to remember.

AN ETERNAL INVESTMENT INTO GOD'S BELOVED PEOPLE

Simon, Jo, and Becky were faithful to share the love of the Messiah with each and every passerby. In just two short weeks, God sent 40 people through *Meet at the Mountain*. That means 40 people came and not only experienced the love of Jesus Christ, but heard the gospel!

Our prayer is that the gospel is what the young Israeli backpackers remember most. That the lovingkindness of the staff penetrated their hearts as the visitors asked, "*Why would anyone believe like they believe?*" We pray that the young backpackers who are religious, Jewish, non-religious, agnostic, and those still searching, would ultimately find rest in knowing they have an eternal Father in heaven who loves them and has a purpose for their lives.





As Simon pointed out in his reflections after the two-week pilot program concluded, *“The ability to provide a high quality hospitality experience that would see hundreds of young Israeli travelers stop by is made possible by the love and generosity of Bible-believing Christians who have a heart for the Jewish people and their salvation.”*

None of this would be made possible without you.

Today, I would like to ask you to prayerfully consider making a generous donation to this fruitful ministry. We can trust that even in this time of uncertainty, God is still in control and the FOI-NZ team will use this time to create an even better experience for future travelers when the current restrictions loosen again.

We are not giving up hope that this ministry is one that is near to God’s heart. A lot can happen in three days, don’t you think? Imagine what can happen in the hearts of those who walk through

the doors at *Meet at the Mountain* and spend three days there. Once they hear the gospel, as believers, they can trust that God will use all things for His good.

Please show your support for Simon and the entire FOI-NZ team and their incredible efforts. Your financial and prayerful support today is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Mike Stallard



Mike Stallard
Director of International Ministries

If God has spoken to you about providing much-needed support for Meet at the Mountain ministry in New Zealand please send your gift using the enclosed response card to your national FOI office.