



Photos by Pieter Marais

**Israel is in the midst of another long hot summer.**

It is a land of perpetual sunshine from March till November. There is no need to check the weather forecast because every day is the same—hot and sunny. It simply does not rain. When school lets out at the end of June, the sound of children’s voices fill the air. In Jerusalem, most homes are not air-conditioned, so we hear their voices clearly through our open windows.

In Israel, most families find it necessary for both parents to work in order to support the family, as the cost of living is so high. With the children out of school, the summer months of July and August present a challenge. A tradition has formed that July is summer camp month, while August is family vacation time. Personally, I have wonderful memories of going to summer camp as a child. It was a nice extra, but not a necessity for my family, as my mother did not work. Not so in Israel.

Although camp is expensive, families send their children because they do not want them unsupervised at home. But, what happens to those children whose parents cannot afford camp? Unfortunately, their children fend for themselves. They sit in small stuffy apartments or worse, wander the streets unsupervised. Educators and social workers have told

us that these bored children often make poor decisions, which can endanger themselves and others. As they get older, these children are tempted by juvenile delinquency.

**Sponsoring Summer Camp**

The children we sponsor in our Feed a Child Program are blessed. Not only do they receive new school books, a backpack and school supplies, and a hot lunch every day during the school year, but they are also sponsored to go to a special summer camp paid for by Bridges for Peace. This week, I had the privilege of visiting that camp. The theme was “Around the World in 15 Days.” The children (6–11) were learning about countries and cultures in many ways: arts and crafts, movies, music, dance, etc. Special activities, including swimming and planning a show for the end of camp, all add to the excitement. Each day, the children are given breakfast and a hot lunch.

Laughing, running, and posing for pictures, the children welcomed us to their camp. Each child had been given a T-shirt by our partners, the Beit Shemesh Foundation. The T-shirts had



**The CHILDREN  
sponsored in  
our FEED A  
CHILD Program  
ARE BLESSED.**



Photo by Ai Yamamoto



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the name of the camp, its theme, and the logos of sponsors. So, everywhere I turned, children were wearing the Bridges for Peace logo! At the entrance, a large 15-foot long (4.5-meter) banner was displayed, telling about the special camp and its sponsors. Imagine, the whole town of Beit Shemesh knows that Christians are providing this summer camp! Thirty trained professionals were working with the children including teachers, administrators, counselors, security personnel, medics, and special education teachers.

Most of the children were running, learning, dancing and playing happily, but a couple of children were sad. I watched as the caring staff reached out to the hurting. One, I discovered, had recently lost her father, who simply did not wake up one morning. An excellent teacher had four little boys gathered around her, encouraging them to read. Each word they sounded out was a triumph. They were all six-year-olds who had been through first grade but had not learned to read. With tears in my eyes, I watched them being given a chance to succeed. I am praying that reading will become a friend for these boys.

Every child involved in the camp represents a home and a family who need help. Thirty-five percent of the children are of Ethiopian Jewish heritage. This sub-group in Israel struggles as they come to terms with a society light years removed from their Ethiopian life. In Ethiopia, they lived in one-room homes with dirt floors and no running water or electricity and survived on subsistence farming. In Israel, they must adjust to a modern world where they are exposed to modern technology and computers. When they go home, their parents often cannot help them because their Hebrew skills are not advanced enough, and they simply have no educational background to draw on. Others we assist are grandchildren and great grandchildren of immigrants who came from Middle Eastern countries in the early days of the State of Israel. Struggling to survive, the third and fourth generations are still living in poverty. Our hope is that we can break the cycle of poverty by helping these children gain a good education.

## EXPANDING to Karmiel

This year, the Feed a Child Program will be starting in Karmiel in northern Israel where 50% of the population are immigrants. Our staff is working with the mayor's office and school officials

to sponsor new children this coming school year. We dream of expanding this program to cities and towns across Israel. In a recent board meeting, we set this as a prayer point. To provide for a child, we need four or five sponsors who will commit to give US \$60 per month for one year. To date, we have enough sponsors for only 220 children, so we are expanding to Karmiel by faith, believing more sponsors will sign up.

## Will You SPONSOR a Child?

With 25% of the population living in poverty, hundreds of thousands of children exist far below their potential. As Christians who love the Lord and recognize God is at work bringing the Jewish people to Israel, we have an opportunity to impact the future of Israel, one child at a time. As you prepare your children for school, please consider providing hope for needy children in Israel. Yes, your US \$60 per month sponsorship (one-year commitment) does make a difference! We are astonished at the progress the children are making now that they have food to eat and books to read. The principals tell us that the scholastic level of the entire school has risen markedly since this program was started.

When you make a year's commitment, a picture and information about your assigned child will be sent to you. Perhaps you can't commit to a monthly gift, but still want to make a difference in the life of Israeli children; we greatly appreciate one-time gifts as well. They enable us to provide other needs in the schools including computers, playground equipment, books for the library, etc. Thank you for joining with us to show God's love to Israeli children, their families, and their communities.

*"He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor" (Psalm 72:4).*

Blessings from Jerusalem,

*Rebecca J. Brimmer*

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