

Hananiel's Quest

By Greg Wilson

Chapter 1: Hananiel & The Sobering Night

The sun had set about twenty minutes ago, and a peaceful dusk was setting in on Israel and the ancient stones of Jerusalem, bringing in another precious Shabbat, or Sabbath, which traditionally, and arguably Biblically, starts at sundown of Friday evening. The stores and shops and marketplace of the old city were all shut down, and the Jews of modern Israel ceased from their labors and were finding their ways home to the Shabbat candles, evening meals, and precious family members.

For Hananiel, this “Erev Shabbat” (Sabbath Evening) was a bit different from the traditional time spent with family. He had picked up challah bread, hummus, and olives before sunset and was headed to a time of fellowship, food, and worship at a friend’s house who he knew through his Messianic congregation called Beit Chesed (House of Lovingkindness). His friend, Uri, had invited the members of the congregation to his house that evening for a special time, as described above.

So Hananiel walked the streets of old Jerusalem, carrying a bag with the food and shouldering his backpack, containing his Bible, a Messianic siddur (prayer book), a journal, and some writing utensils. He also carried his guitar case in the other hand. As he walked the streets with the remaining light of the sun, he began to let the shalom, the peace of God, envelop him as he breathed out strongly, allowing the Shabbat to take hold of his soul and letting the cares of the week slip away.

Shabbat (Sabbath) was indeed a special gift from the Most High to His people Israel, and any who would embrace the righteous Torah (law or instruction) that He set forth. It had come to be a time of warmth, fellowship, and food, and of course, rest, and also of delighting in the Scriptures of God – a special time of ceasing from ordinary activity and drawing near to Yod Hey Vav Hey (the 4-letter revered Hebrew name of God) and to other loved ones.

This was indeed what Hananiel was doing on this Erev Shabbat, as he got steadily nearer to Uri’s house. As he walked, he heard singing inside one house, and saw people laughing and talking in another house through a window. He would get a chance to draw near to Adonai (the LORD, or literally – “My Lords” – reflecting the Father, Son, and Ruach HaKodesh [Holy Spirit]). He would also get to draw near to other loved ones on this special evening.

Hananiel was a 27-year-old believer in Yeshua (Jesus’ Hebrew name), the Jewish Messiah, and he came from a believing family as well, though he had not always “owned” his faith as he did now. Though modern Jews as a whole do not believe in Yeshua, Hananiel’s family featured some of the growing number of Jews who *did* receive Him as the Messiah, as did many thousands of Jews when the church was first born in the book of Acts. Yeshua’s fulfillment of Isaiah 53 and Zechariah 9:9, to name a few prophecies, was undeniable, and the Katan’s (Hananiel’s last name) had come to see this. They had not always seen this, but through certain friends’ faithful sharing, they had come

to believe and inherit eternal life, as the LORD had indeed chosen them from the beginning to walk in the light.

By the time Hananiel was born, his parents had already received the Messiah, so he grew up learning of Yeshua. Yet unfortunately, through certain undesirable events, he was drawn into the lusts of the flesh, which came between him and the LORD, even as he bitterly wept over his sin, yet could not master it. It was of the sexual sort, thanks to the internet, for one. He had kept it a secret for a long time and had great fear of his parents finding out. At last though, in high school, he was pushed by God to confess his sin to his parents and walk in the light, so as to live righteously from then on.

Then Hananiel went off to college and was hit with many intellectual questions regarding how one could trust the Bible and about the other religions. It was nothing short of a supernatural intervention from God that confirmed to him the validity of Scripture and secured his knowledge that he was indeed in right relationship with his creator. Through an email from his dad, God had seemingly manifested spiritually, and it was like God was right in front of him, and he felt he could weep literally forever because of the fatherly love he felt from Him. Thus, Hananiel was secured in his faith and after some years graduated college with a business degree and moved back home with his parents for a time. Thus, we come to the present Erev Shabbat, a warm summer night in late July 2025.

Ah! Hananiel has reached his destination! Uri's house was a stucko, adobe-type house situated amidst a hilly part of Jerusalem, towards the northern part of the city. It had a second story but was not super huge or massive. A cozy abode where Uri, his wife, and baby girl lived.

Hananiel walked up the cobblestone path to the front wooden door and gave it a few knocks. He could see friends in the window and at his knock Uri himself came bustling to the door, opening it with a huge smile on his face! Uri was 35, a young dad, and the two friends embraced with peace and joy, and Hananiel was ushered in to partake of the warm fellowship and food.

He walked into the kitchen and unloaded the challah bread, hummus, and olives, setting them out with the other food already there for the people to enjoy. Sarah, a good friend, jogged into the kitchen laughing and asked, "Hanani, how are you?!"

Hananiel, or "Hanani", turned and smiled broadly saying, "Ani tov me-ohd!" (I am very good.)

"Tov, tov," (good, good) Sarah replied. Hanani had met Sarah at the Hebrew University where they had both graduated from in the past year or two. Sarah had dark brown hair, light olive colored skin, and greenish-blue eyes – quite the sight for Hanani to take in. They proceeded to catch up about what the two had been up to that week. Sarah had a photoshoot she did for two friends getting engaged, and Hanani had just been busy making hummus and latkes at the restaurant he worked at called "Pita Gadol" (Big Pita). Of course, they shared some other things too, as Hanani found her eyes drawing his soul to her, inevitably.

Just then, a call came from the living room – "Chaverim, chaverim! Please come to the living room so we can begin our time of worship!" (Chaverim means friends in Hebrew, with the "Ch" pronounced like Bach – gutturally.) So Hanani and Sarah would have to talk later. They, with the

others, made their way into the living room and took seats either on the floor cushions or one of two couches present.

To bring in the Sabbath Uri quieted everyone, saying, “Ok, ok, let’s get started.” He then proceeded to chant, with hands lifted, palms facing up, “Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh Ha'Olam ...” (Blessed are you, LORD our God, King of the Universe...) He proceeded to thank YHVH (English transliteration for the Hebrew letters Yod Hey Vav Hey - the letters of God’s name) for giving the Shabbat and then prayed from his heart that everyone would be able to draw near to Elohim (God) for a special time of devotion. May it be noted, the Hebrew word for God used in the creation account of Genesis is “Elohim”, which literally is plural – “Gods” – thus the plurality to God is established – including the Father and the Son and the Spirit, as the New Covenant Scriptures reveal, although they are One entity in essence.

Proceeding on at Uri’s house, Hananiel had his guitar and David, an older dad, played djembe drum for some songs of praise, starting with Shabbat Shalom (Sabbath Peace). Everyone joined in singing enthusiastically as the night settled in. The next song was “We Delight in Your Shabbat”, and so on and so on, the group of believers praised their God and King, and His only begotten son, Yeshua HaMashiach (the Messiah). At last the singing died down, and Uri began to address the group, beginning to share a little devotion he had prepared from the Torah portion that week - (the weekly reading from the first five books of the Bible traditionally read by Jews).

As he began to talk however, about the opening portion of Deuteronomy, suddenly there was an intense knocking at the door – five quick times in a row. Uri paused, and the group grew silent, becoming a bit apprehensive as Uri went to the door and peered through the peephole. Ah, it was a member from Beit Chesed – Ashley, a mom of two young children. Uri opened the door hurriedly and invited Ashley in, but she, being very troubled, declared to everyone, “Guys, listen! I just drove past the Beit Chesed building, and there was an explosion, and some of the church has been destroyed! Thankfully, no cars were there because the meeting was cancelled tonight because of this meeting! But I fear that whoever did this might be after us personally as well, to harm us!” The group reacted with gasps and “oh no’s”, stirring the house considerably. Uri, always the strong, shepherding type, took the lead – “Let us pray, brothers and sisters!” He then proceeded to thank God for no loss of life and asked for protection in the coming days and weeks. After Uri, another man, Chaim, jumped in and agreed in prayer, expounding on Uri’s request. Then others prayed as well. At last, a peaceful quiet descended on the group, and Uri said, “Well guys, let’s trust in Eloheinu (our God) and not cease to do the LORD’s will, wherever He may lead us. The early church faced persecution, and if we are living righteously, we should not expect different. Indeed, in Acts chapter 4, Peter and John were arrested for healing a man and preaching to the people, and after they were released the believers prayed, as we have, and said in verse 29, “And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Yeshua. Indeed, Lord, we ask the same today, that the members of Beit Chesed may do your will and that you would continue to work wonders, healing, and signs in this city Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) where so long ago your early church was born!” Everyone said “Amein, amein” (amen) and then Uri said to the people, “I think I will hold off on giving my devotion tonight. Instead, maybe a few of you would like to share how God has been working, to encourage us after hearing this tragic news.” There were sounds of assent as the group agreed with the plan. A few people took the liberty to head in the kitchen and grab some more to eat, as there was a

transition time in which people thought of what to share. Eventually, Hananiel himself stood and volunteered to share Elohim's work in his own life.

"I can share," he said. "I had been desiring to share the Good News with co-workers at Pita Gadol and was seeking an opportunity to do so. Then, a co-worker name Steven approached *me* and began asking about the Messiah, because he had a dream in which Yeshua told him to 'seek the truth about Me, and you will find.' He knew me to be a believer, so he thought asking me would be a good place to start. So I was able to share with him prophecies of Yeshua's coming, how Yeshua fulfilled them, as well as some of the powerful things Yeshua said and did from the gospels. He is considering all of it! So I feel Elohim opened this door, as He had also placed in my heart the burden to share Yeshua."

Everyone responded positively with words of delight and affirmation. Others stood up to share as well, declaring that God had indeed been active – in a man supernaturally healed from cancer when prayed for in Yeshua's name, in various signs from God – through seeing the same verse that kept popping up in various places, or through different unrelated friends telling them the same thing. It was indeed wonderful for everyone to hear of God's working in the community of Beit Chesed!

Soon, the night began to grow late, and before people started to leave, Uri stood up to say some concluding words: "Thank you all so much for coming, and may you all continue to seek His face and His will. Let us not be dismayed by the attack on the church, but pray for who did it, and continue to seek to share Messiah with Jerusalem! Thank you all, and you are free to go when you want to."

And soon, Hanani was finding his way to the door, after saying goodbye to all his friends, especially Sarah. All his food had been eaten, so he didn't have to take any home. With a final farewell to Uri and his wife Stephanie, he stepped into the night air and walked down the cobblestone path leading to the street.

It was Shabbat, yes, a celebratory time, but the news of the church building being attacked was sobering. Nevertheless, it had been practically a miracle that on this particular Erev Shabbat, instead of meeting at the church, Beit Chesed had met at Uri's house, preserving many lives! Hananiel supposed that the attacker had planned this specific day to do it and went through with his or her plan, though no cars were at the church. Being in Jerusalem, there were of course radical Muslims, and you never knew when an extremist might be lurking. "This was probably who did this," Hananiel thought.

Hananiel let his thoughts drift elsewhere, to dwell on the Lord and His will for Hananiel. Hanani had a burning desire to be close to יהוה (read right to left – the four letters of God's name - Yod Hey Vav Hey). He delighted in the nearness of God and desired to hear His voice spoken to Him, as at the time when he felt he could weep forever. So as he walked down the street, he looked up at the stars and whispered, "Lord, do you have a word for me?" He did not hear any response, but he felt a peace settle inside him, as if God was saying, "Trust me to protect you as you continue to do my will." Hanani was content with this, and soon, he was turning onto his own street, where he had recently moved into his own small apartment. And shortly, he was climbing the stairs to his second story apartment - #203 on Ben-Mikhael Street. As he unlocked the door and stepped inside, his cell phone rang. He shut the door and answered the phone – "Hey, Mom!" It was indeed his mom,

checking in on him, just calling to see how he was doing. He assured her he was well but relayed the info about Beit Chesed to her. She was shocked, but resolved to pray for the one who did it. Thus they finished talking, and Hananiel got ready for bed.

As he laid down, he glanced out his window into the night, and said a final prayer before he drifted off to sleep, pondering what the fall might hold for him, and how God would lead him...

Chapter 2: A New Path

Hananiel slept in the next morning, taking advantage of the Sabbath day of rest. At last he awoke at about 11:15 am. He sauntered into his little kitchen and put on some coffee, then grabbed an apple and began to eat it. Usually, on Sabbath days, Beit Chesed had Bible study at their building, but today, with the tragedy the evening before, everyone planned to not show up for some time, to make sure the threat was gone.

Just then, Hananiel got a text from Sarah – “Hey, want to hang out sometime?” He was delighted to receive the invitation and quickly responded with “Yes! Want to meet at _____ at 2?” [The river was a public place with grass and tables and a river, near shops.] “Yes, and I’ll bring food” was Sarah’s reply.

Hananiel spent the time up until 2 relaxing in his easy chair, reading Scripture, praying, and listening to music. It was good to have the day of rest! Then, he jumped on his bike and headed over to meet Sarah. The sun was shining peacefully on the warm, summer Shabbat, and the sky was clear blue with birds singing in the trees. Hanani biked carefreely over to the _____ area, about 10 minutes away. He spotted Sarah sitting at a bench and biked up, saying, “Hey Sarah!” She smiled and waved. Hananiel dismounted and locked his bike up to a nearby tree. Then he came and joined Sarah at the bench.

“Ah, a beautiful Shabbat!” Hanani said. It was warm, but not too hot, surprisingly.

Sarah replied, “Yes, indeed!” Sarah began setting out some snacks from her backpack as Hanani made himself comfortable at the bench, breathing out a relaxed breath of air. “So Hanani . . .” Sarah said in a sing-song voice as she prepared some pita wraps for the two of them. “You can’t work at Pita Gadol forever. What do you think you want to do with your life, at least for the next season?”

“Ah, good question!” he replied. “Let me think a bit . . .” As he thought, he pulled out his mandolin from his backpack and began strumming laid back chords. “Well, I would like to be serving HaShem (“the Name”, literally, meaning the sacred name of God – Yod, Hey, Vav, Hey) ultimately, in whatever I do, but . . .” He continued to think and strum . . . “And I would enjoy doing music for a living, if that would be possible!”

“Mhmm,” Sarah replied.

“With my business degree,” he continued, “I could seek to be a manager at Pita Gadol, but I don’t think that’s the path for me . . .”

“Yes, I don’t think so either,” Sarah said, with a certain confidence that made Hananiel wonder.

“Do you know something about my future I don’t?” Hanani shot back, quizzically.

“Well . . . sort of. Part of the reason I invited you to hang out was because of this. You see, in my private prayer, your name kept coming to mind, and when I asked God about it, Acts 9:15 flashed in my mind. I couldn’t deny God must have been speaking. So I looked up the verse, and it reads, ‘Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.’ So that really blew me away! God has some kind of plan for you, Hanani, involving you sharing Yeshua before Gentiles, leaders, and of course the children of Israel, this time gathered back to their land a couple thousand years after Paul was chosen to speak with the Jews in the 1st Century in their land!”

“Wow, Sarah, I’m... I’m blown away!”

“Yes, just, just pray about the specifics, and how God wants this to come about via what medium. Perhaps your music will be part of it!”

“Yes, yes! I will indeed pray about it!” Just then, a middle-aged man with a big beard and a kippah approached the two and said, “Shalom (peace)! Are you Sarah and Hanani?” Hanani took the lead, blown away yet again and said, carefully, “Why, uh, why do you ask?” – to avoid any danger if the man meant harm. The man smiled and said, “A wise response! Don’t worry. HaShem told me I would find you two here, and He gave me a specific message for you, Hanani. You are a man greatly loved by Adonai (the LORD / YHVH), and He is sending you to your people Israel, as well as the Gentiles, and to certain leaders, to testify of the authenticity of Yeshua and His message. And as far as your financial provision while you serve the LORD, you and your friends will receive a call from Or Ha’Olam Messianic Record Company to produce a CD that will be distributed widely throughout the Messianic community globally, and will lead to doing tours and performing, and of course, sharing of Yeshua to all who attend. These endeavors will produce income, of course. And until then, Pita Gadol will suffice.”

Hanani’s mind was reeling. This man was telling him a confirmation of the Acts verse and knew his name and where he worked, though he had never met him or seen him before!

“Don’t be alarmed,” the man continued. “Adonai just has a way of speaking to me and sending me to others, and I go on walks on Shabbats to seek to do good to others.”

“Wow!” Hanani exclaimed, “Sarah as well just told me that God directed her to a verse from Acts about sharing with Gentiles, Israel, and leaders! And as Mary, Yeshua’s mother once replied, ‘Here am I, the servant of the LORD!’ I, I will wait for the record people to contact me, I guess!”

“Yes, yes, Hanani,” the man gently agreed. “And while you are waiting, Adonai also has given a task for you to accomplish on this Shabbat that will help you on your quest. He did not reveal everything, but said you are to go to the Wailing Wall, and to look for a man with a blue kippah on (male Jewish head-covering). He will direct you further. And you are to find him there at 9:00 pm, as the new week is coming on at sunset.”

“OK! Um, got it!” Hanani replied, grasping for words. Sarah was very delighted at the man’s presence and was smiling and laughing with joy at this prophetic outpouring from Yehovah regarding Hanani’s future.

“I will go to the wall at 9 pm and look for the man, definitely,” Hanani added, baffled and overwhelmed by God’s working.

“Very good, chaver! (friend)” the man replied pleasantly.

“And for you, Miss Sarah, I have a simple riddle you will come to understand –

‘Where the [water flows], There your heart goes.’” He finished the riddle with a mystical smile, and then added, “Well! I will be on my way, and you two enjoy the Shabbat!”

“Wait, sir, um, wait! What, what was your name?” Hanani sputtered.

“It’s Malachi. And my number is not necessary. The Lord assured me we will meet again at the right time!”

“OK. Thank you, Malachi, and . . . Shabbat Shalom!”

“Shabbat Shalom, chaverim (friends). May His face shine on you even as the sun does this fine Shabbat!” With that, Malachi bowed slightly, and turned his heel to continue walking [along the river, eastward.]

Sarah was the first to talk, “Hanani, how cool is this! God confirmed what I shared and spoke even more! You’ve got a new path to tread, chaver!”

“Yes! Yes, indeed!” Hanani said, still baffled. “I wonder what this man at the Wailing Wall will have to say . . .”

“Who knows, but I’m coming with you tonight!” Sarah chimed with a grin.

“Ok, ok, great!” Hanani replied. He added, “Did you get anything out of that riddle?”

She smiled. “No, I will have to ponder that one!”

Hanani laughed and said, “Yeah, ok!”

Sarah began setting out some more of the snacks she had brought – apples, dried figs, hummus, olives . . . Hanani’s eyes brightened and he said, “Mmm! Looks good!”

“You bet!”

Hanani helped himself, and the two friends snacked, enjoying each other’s company and the sunny, late July Shabbat.

At another part of Jerusalem, a man named Aviad was poring over the Torah portion that week in his home study, as the sun streamed in the window and as he yawned contentedly. He used the interlinear Tanakh, which showed the Hebrew text and the English equivalent for every word underneath the Hebrew, with the Strong’s Concordance number of the word above the Hebrew for doing word study. It was a great tool indeed, put out by Hendrickson Publishers.

With his finger on the text, Aviad read the beginning of Exodus 14, concerning the crossing of the Red Sea – “Va’y’daber Adonai el-Moshe . . .” (Then the LORD said to Moses . . .) Aviad, 45 years old, was a Sephardic Jew – darker complexion, dark hair and beard -- and was an archaeologist in Israel, seeking to uncover ancient remains in the Land. He was a believer in Adonai, the God of Israel, but had yet to place his faith in Yeshua Messiah. Nevertheless, he sought truth honestly and sought to walk uprightly, keeping the Commandments of the Law, and with this the LORD was pleased and would thus soon reveal the Messiah to Aviad in a special way.

At present, Aviad gave in to his sleepy body and relaxed, reclining in his armchair. Soon, he had drifted asleep and began having quite a dream. In it, he was lifted up from earth and taken to the throne of God, where the Lord was seated, similar to Isaiah 6:1 (the Lord high and lifted up). Then, the Lord spoke, “Aviad, your prayers have ascended to me, and I am with you to bless you. I am sending you a young man named Hananiel, and he will be your needed helper on your next excavation. He will discover something you must pay heed to.” Stirred, Aviad awoke from the dream, with the words of the LORD still ringing in his head. Amazed, he wrote the words down, just in case he would forget, which he probably would not! Now wide awake, Aviad called his wife from the living room and told her the dream. As she feared God, she declared, “Avi, I can’t wait for you to meet Hananiel. Let’s keep a watch out for him!” Aviad agreed and thanked the Lord for the dream, filled with excitement and gratitude that the Lord had spoken to him.

Later that evening, Aviad set out on his traditional “Havdalah Walk” – (Havdalah is the concluding time of the Shabbat, with various traditions). This evening, he decided to go somewhere special, although just about everywhere in Jerusalem was special! He set out for the Wailing Wall, with his blue kippah on this time.

He arrived at the wall quite late, around 9:00 pm, and stood at a little distance from the wall, being still before the LORD, and, as it’s written, “Knowing that He is indeed God, and does all He pleases.” As Aviad stood in a prayerful daze, he was surprised to feel a tap on his shoulder! As he looked over, it was a young man and a young woman dismounted from their bikes.

“Um, hello sir! This will sound weird, but my name is Hananiel.” Aviad’s eyes got big, and he exclaimed, “So soon! You’ve come so soon!” Hananiel was overjoyed at this, grateful that obviously God had prepared this man as well for this! Aviad quickly explained his dream he had had, and Hananiel, excited, explained the word of the prophet Malachi. The two were both amazed and at a loss for words. Aviad then suggested, “Please, please come to my house for tea, and we will discuss briefly my next archaeological project!”

Aviad gave Hananiel and Sarah directions to his house and told them to just knock and his wife would let them in, as he would walk home quickly, while the other two would bike. He sent a text off to his wife, Rachel - “Found Hananiel! He’s coming for tea with his friend on bikes! I will be there shortly!”

Hanani and Sarah set off with delight after saying “Shalom” to Aviad. They found his house just as he told them, and after locking their bikes to a street lamp, climbed the steps to the door and knocked gently. A woman bustled to the door quickly and flung it open, saying, “Welcome, welcome!” She ushered them into the living room and they took seats on a somewhat smaller couch for about three people - sitting next to each other somewhat close. Sarah and Hanani met at the Hebrew University, as mentioned earlier, and had known each other for roughly a year and a half. They had become good friends, hanging out in the midst of other friends, and alone, as they had this Shabbat. They were just friends, but as they sat, somewhat close to each other on the couch, Hanani turned and flashed a sincere smile at Sarah, as they were both getting to experience the start of an adventure. Sarah returned the smile, looking down bashfully, and reached for Hanani’s hand, giving it a squeeze, as Rachel was in the kitchen preparing the tea and scones. It was just a moment, but it was shared by the two of them and broke down a wall of formality between them, allowing for something more to possibly develop. Then Rachel bustled back into the room with a tray of scones and tea, already sweetened.

“Thank you, thank you!” Hanani said, with Sarah chiming in. Just then, Aviad walked in the front door as well.

“Dodi, dodi (my beloved, my beloved)! Come join us!” Rachel exclaimed to her husband.

Aviad grinned and said, “Yes, yes, my dear!” He took a seat on a couch facing Hanani and Sarah and helped himself to a scone. “So Hanani! Do you have experience doing archaeological excavations?”

“No. No, sir, I don’t, but I am a careful person, and hard-working!”

“That will do, especially because the Most High has sent you to discover something very special, apparently!” (At the wall, Aviad had relayed his dream and all that the Lord said about Hanani finding something.)

“Well, sir, I am excited to help you on this project!” Hanani declared.

“Tov meh-od (very good)!” Aviad exclaimed. He and Rachel were quite the exuberant couple, that is, when Aviad was not feeling sleepy in the afternoon.

Sarah chimed in, “Sir, do you mind if I come along as well?”

“You are very welcome to come along,” Aviad politely said. After chatting more and getting to know one another somewhat, it was time to head home.

“It was so great to meet you guys, and I’m excited for your excavation! May the LORD guide!” Rachel sincerely gushed as Hanani and Sarah made their way to the door.

“Likewise, likewise,” Hanani said cheerfully.

“Well, chaverim,” Aviad said, “we will be in touch as you have my number and know when and where to meet me for the excavation!”

“Yes, yes!” Hanani and Sarah assured him. With that they were out the door and walking towards their bikes.

“What a spirit-led Shabbat this has been!” exclaimed Sarah.

“First Malachi, then Aviad!” Hanani added.

“Indeed!”

“I’ll bike with you to your apartment, then will head to mine,” Hanani said.

“Thanks.”

As they biked next to each other, Hanani began trying to express himself: “Thanks for the hand squeeze.”

“You bet,” Sarah said, knowing he was grateful for more than just a hand squeeze.

Hanani decided he’d just say it: “Would you be my girlfriend, Sarah?”

“Hmm,” Sarah said playfully. “And what all does being a girlfriend entail?” she asked with a smile, though unseen in the night.

Nevertheless, Hanani heard it in her voice, and replied likewise with some humor: “Well, hmmm . . . I suppose it means holding hands and telling a few more secrets?”

“I think I could do that . . .” she replied casually.

“I think I could too,” he replied, a little more seriously.

Just then they arrived at Sarah’s apartment. They dismounted bikes and stood facing one another now. Hanani extended his hands in a gesture, and Sarah held them with her own hands. Hanani said, “Lord, I thank you for Sarah, and pray you lead this relationship, as we commit to a deeper relationship.” Then he said to Sarah, “You are really something else, in a beautiful way, and I’d like to spend more time with you now.” Sarah looked down and squeezed his hands in affirmation. With that, they hugged and said goodbye.

Chapter 3 – The Excavation

Aviad had told Hanani and Sarah that the excavation would be a week and a day from that Shabbat – a Sunday afternoon at 1:30 pm – meet at Aviad’s house. The excavation was a remote part of Capernaum – so they would drive out there. It would be a **hilly area** where there was evidence of some past ancient houses or buildings. Archaeologists had already begun to dig, and Aviad, with Hanani and Sarah, would join in the digging.

The week passed quickly as Hanani was happily busy with various things, including work at Pita Gadol and song-writing with his band (from Beit Chesed). Sarah was happy to have come closer to Hanani and enter a new sort of relationship. She was drawn to Hanani’s love for others and his zeal for God. Hanani was drawn to her inquisitiveness, sincerity, and loyal support, as well as her greenish-blue eyes, long, dark hair, and beautiful form and face. They had a fun relationship, but with the capability for depth and sincerity as well. Sarah passed the week touching up photos on her laptop, dog-walking for neighbors, and working her part-time job as a nurse. She also had a dog named Uzziah, after the king of Judah. He was a loving, loyal black lab, and big!

The Beit Chesed building had been visited by various key members of the congregation, and nothing else tragic transpired the week leading up to the excavation, although the congregation was being “wise as a serpent”, but still “innocent as a dove”. The leadership was puzzled as to whether they should try to repair the building immediately, or meet in homes for a time, for safety. It was decided they would meet in homes and split the congregation into three different home groups, so everyone could fit. As God works all together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purposes, meeting in homes would lead to greater intimacy within the congregation and more visitors coming to meetings. They met every Friday night, Saturday afternoon, and Wednesday evening. Fridays – for food, worship, and a short teaching; Saturdays – for in depth Bible study; and Wednesdays – for prayer, food, and some Scripture.

As far as the attack goes, there has been a history of terrorist activity, of course, in Israel, but mainly the Muslims against the Jews. This attack could have been Jews or Muslims though, because of Messianics being hated by fellow Jews, because of Yeshua. Regardless, the attack brought the issue of persecution home for the Beit Chesed members, and it posed the question, “Will you suffer for the truth, if need be?” It was a humbling thing, yet as Peter once said regarding the Master Yeshua, “To whom else will we go? You have the words of eternal life!” This was the heart-cry of most of the Beit Chesed members. Yeshua fulfilled the prophecies. He spoke with authority and cut to the

heart. He proved Himself with power in His name for healing and casting out demons, in addition to appearing to people in dreams and being seen by people in near-death experiences. He was indeed the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! The King of Kings and Lord of Lords in flesh, the mighty God, Prince of Peace. The only begotten Son of the Father, yet one with the Father. The Word before the world was, and the one whose words will not pass away, though heaven and earth do pass away. The true King of Israel, who will reign forevermore over the house of Jacob, yet who was killed as a criminal outside Jerusalem. The Savior. The Shepherd and Counselor. And the I AM before Abraham was. Amein! So be it! And, as the Jews had been in expectation of Him, He was and is the ultimate Messiah – the anointed one of God. The members of Beit Chesed had come to see this Messiah, yet more than a Messiah – the LORD coming to His temple! The true remover of the sins of the world.

Sunday morning dawned bright and early, and Hanani was up to see the sunrise. It was the first day of the week, and it always felt especially fresh to Hanani for some reason. He didn't have to work at Pita Gadol, so he used the day to get a head start on his weekly endeavors and chores, such as finishing writing a song and doing laundry. This morning he decided to go for a jog. He went into the old city this time, with its narrow streets of stone and stone walls on either side of the street. His Reeboks treaded the stone considerably loudly, and the only other noise was the birds singing here and there. Hanani thought of Sarah as he jogged. What a gift. And this day, they would get to participate in a fateful excavation that the LORD had ordained. God was good. "Hoo tov" (He is good), though Hanani nor any of us deserve His goodness. He is just as well, and thus, for the unrepentant, judgment awaits – weeping, gnashing of teeth, outer darkness, fire. The Righteous Lion will have justice for the sin of the world. And yet, the Lamb of God, who is the Lion, came as a man and was tortured and humiliated and took all the sin on Himself, so there could be a way for a sinner to be cleansed, to become a saint. "He (God) is just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus," as Romans 3:26 says (from the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Roman church), because the justice was done to Yeshua, and somehow, by placing our faith in that sacrifice, we can go free and be forgiven and have eternal life. Hallelu-Yah! "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Nevertheless, the proverb still stands which says, "He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD (יהוה)" (Proverbs 17:15). Thus, it is the contrite, repentant sinner that gets justified, not the sinner who has no care for his sin. Hanani thought of all these things as he jogged. Soon, he was back at his apartment, rinsing off in a shower and enjoying some breakfast.

Soon enough, the time came to head to Aviad's house. Hanani was blessed to have been given a car from an affluent member of Beit Chesed, so after loading up his backpack and putting on sunscreen and a hat, he drove over, first to Sarah's to pick her up, and then to Aviad's. Aviad and his wife Rachel were waiting in the driveway. Hanani got out of his car briefly and touched base with Aviad, and when all was set, Aviad and Rachel pulled out, and Hanani and Sarah began following them to Capernaum.

It wasn't too long before they were pulling up to the excavation site. After everyone got out, they surveyed the workers that were already at work at various tasks, and Aviad gave a run-down to Hanani and Sarah of what was going on. Hanani and Sarah would be assigned, he explained, to digging with shovels in new territory. There were already cavernous sections, but Hanani and Sarah would be digging into an untouched mound. It would require strength, but patience and care, so as not to destroy anything hidden under the dirt. Soon, they began chipping away at the mound with

special shovels. Someone had a radio going, playing authentic Jewish folk music, tastefully ethnic, with heart and soul and a strong chord progression and melody. This provided a nice background to work to -- quite the date for the new couple! They worked tediously for a few hours, with breaks here and there, and so far, they only discovered a few ancient coins and what looked like the remains of cups. It was time to break for a snack and water. Other people on the job discussed some of their findings, which apparently were dating back to the 1st Century. This made Hanani curious, knowing that Christ spent a fair amount of time in Capernaum. Well, it was back to work. Dig, dig, dig . . . rest. Dig, dig, dig. Hanani's shovel tapped something hard! Hanani called a superior over and was instructed to carefully prod around. Soon, it became apparent that they were uncovering a jar of sorts. At last, an intact clay jar was lifted out! Unfortunately, as it was being lifted out it cracked into pieces. Nevertheless, inside were multiple rolled scrolls! When this was known, everyone was alerted and went crazy at this discovery. At that point, professionals were called to put the scrolls in a container to take back to a safe, protected lab. When Aviad discovered Hanani had found the scrolls, he was ecstatic. This was what the LORD had told him to heed!! So the question was, what was on those scrolls?? Time would tell. The time was 5:30, so the crew called it quits for the day, and everyone drove to the lab where the scrolls would be examined.

In the lab, Professor Weissman laid the first rolled up scroll carefully on an examination table. With gloved hands, he then began carefully unrolling the scroll, part by part. It was semi-hardened, however, so as he "unrolled" it, it would crack into pieces, yet he was careful to lay all pieces out in the order they went, quickly making notes about everything, so the order would be preserved. And, as for what was on it . . . the letters were Hebrew, a style of the Babylonian script form of Hebrew. The letters were quite clear, and only a bit faded! As Hanani had discovered the scrolls, he got first dibs on looking at the contents. His eyes scanned the opening words of the scroll. He froze. It was a genealogy. And as he could read the Hebrew, being Jewish, the opening words were clearly the opening words of the gospel of Matthew: The genealogy of **ישוע המשיח** (Yeshua HaMashiach) – Jesus the Messiah!!! This was practically unprecedented – an ancient Hebrew manuscript of the gospel of Matthew? Unheard of! Maybe a Hebrew copy from later, but one from possibly the 1st or 2nd century? Could it at last be proven that Matthew was originally in Hebrew? It would be hard to determine. Nevertheless, once the scroll had been dated, it would help reveal more about the scroll.

Professor Weissman was a secret believer in Yeshua for fear of his fellow Jews, but when he recognized the scroll as the gospel of Matthew, he, in tears, declared, "Ken, ken (Yes, yes)! This is part of our Hebrew heritage – the fulfillment of the Scriptures in Yeshua HaMashiach, anointed to preach good news to the people!" His peers were dumbfounded. Professor Weissman believed in Yeshua? "Yes, I must confess, hoo haMashiach (he is the Messiah)!"

One peer began to get angry. "Weissman, what is this?? Just because some scroll says Yeshua, doesn't mean He's anything."

"No, my friend, no," Weissman said. "Yeshua appeared to me in college, and the prophecies, the prophecies!" He was in tears.

Presently, the "dating" scientist was running some tests on the scroll material. After about a half hour he declared, "This has got to be from at least the 2nd century. Maybe 1st!" This was just more fascinating evidence that among Hebrew-speaking Jews, Yeshua was declared to be the Messiah, as the beginning genealogy of Matthew describes. Weissman released another shout of joy. The next scroll he unrolled he recognized as the book of Acts in Hebrew!! It declared the fulfillment of the

Feast of Weeks (Shavuot) from the Torah, commonly known in Greek as Pentecost, when the Spirit came in power on the followers of Yeshua in Jerusalem! And it documented how so many Jews dwelling in Jerusalem received the word of Yeshua and were baptized. Could this have been the actual original book of Acts? It could be possible, but again, would need to go through some tests. Nevertheless, the Hebrew scroll was evidence of a Jewish following of Yeshua. This is what moved Professor Weissman to tears.

When Aviad heard the news of the Messianic content of the scrolls, he was baffled. “This is what I am to heed?” he thought. If Jews received Yeshua back then, then he reasoned that he could believe in Yeshua now. He had to be obedient to the word from the LORD and the content of the scrolls. “I have much to learn,” he thought, “but I believe that Yeshua is the Messiah!” As he confessed the words out loud, he felt that Hashem came suddenly nearer to him, like a veil had been lifted. And so Aviad entered into salvation, still with much to learn. His wife, Rachel, being very good-natured and humble, said, “Yes, Avi, we must believe!” And so she received salvation as well that day. Sarah was overjoyed at the discovery as well and jumped up and down and hugged Hanani when she heard the news of the content being of Yeshua and the early church! There were multiple Jews at the dig, though, that were not happy about the news. Others found it fascinating and were open to the content of the scrolls.

God had indeed spoken to Malachi the prophet about Aviad (with the blue kippah), for the purpose of Hanani discovering these scrolls at this time. And, because of the rules of the excavation group, whoever found the artifact would have special access to the artifact. Thus, Hanani began pondering, in light of God leading him to these scrolls to “help him on his quest”, how the scrolls would help him to share Yeshua with Israel, specifically. He thought, “If I have special access to these scrolls, maybe I can take them with me to concerts and put them on display and tell the story of how they were found and how they testify to Yeshua being the Messiah, with multiple prophecies being fulfilled in the pages of Matthew, for one.” Indeed, with the coming music ministry he was to have, this would fit in wonderfully.

In the days to follow, Hanani got word of the content of the other scrolls found as well – the books of James, Luke, and John, in Hebrew, fully preserved!! The book of James especially made sense being in Hebrew, because it was addressed to “the twelve tribes in the dispersion” (the twelve tribes of Israel)!

That week, the news of the scrolls had made world news, and many were anxious to come see the scrolls for themselves. Also, they were all dated to be within the 1st or 2nd century, and the font style suggested that as well! It was still to be determined whether these were the original manuscripts – the first copy of the books to have been written or not. That question would perhaps remain unanswered . . . Nevertheless, the scientific, Jewish, Messianic, and Christian communities were stirred world-wide by this news – on the same level as the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery. In addition, the excavation team began scouring the site even more to see if any other related items could be found. Amazingly, yes – another smaller pot containing a few smaller scrolls was found right nearby the first one! These were Hebrew again, yet were not any Scripture from the Bible. They appeared to be a couple of letters. A translation team was assigned to begin translation work on the letters into English. Nevertheless, Hebrew-speaking Jews could understand the letters quite clearly already! Thus, Hanani was invited to come read the letters. The content would blow him away!

It was 3:00 on Friday afternoon, and Hanani and Sarah had driven to the lab, located in Tel Aviv. They parked and got out of the car, walking up to the entrance of the lab, to be greeted by Aviad

and Professor Weissman. They were ushered in and taken to a special room where the non-Biblical letters were spread out under a yellow overhead light, basking in its glow. Aviad invited Hanani to read what he could make out of the first letter. Hanani stepped up to the table and bent over carefully, examining the contents (in Hebrew). Translated into English, this was what he could make out:

Ya'akov [Jacob or James], elder of the church in Jerusalem, to the church in Capernaum.

Greetings, brothers! I have sent to you, under care of our brother Timothy, the scrolls I had promised you – the accounts of our Lord's life and ministry as recorded by Matthew, Luke, and John – though these are copies diligently copied by certain believing scribes in Jerusalem. [There was no mention of the book of Acts, though.] I pray these encourage you, as they contain the words of the Master Himself and lots of the things he did when He walked among us and how He gave His life a ransom for many on the tree. May you all be encouraged by these writings, as they indeed testify to the truth of our Lord, His works, and His words. Shalom (peace) to you all.

“Unreal!” Hanani thought. The gospels were sent to Capernaum by James (or Jacob), the commonly known half-brother of Jesus Himself, leader in the church in Jerusalem! The letter revealed that the gospels were not the original copies, but did not reveal what language the originals were in. Nevertheless, these discoveries were profound.

Hananiel stood upright and took a deep breath – “Whee-oo!” What a find! It just testified further to the Jewish witness of Jesus’ coming!

“Yes, indeed!” Professor Weissman said with a smile. It was growing closer to sunset on that Friday, and Hanani wanted to make it back to Jerusalem for the house meeting of Beit Chesed. The other letter would have to wait for later, although Hanani took a quick peek and found it to be written by one “Abiel” to the church at Capernaum as well. If time permitted, he would have read it, but he truly wanted to get back to Jerusalem for the meeting, as did Sarah. Thus, Hanani and Sarah said their goodbyes to Aviad and Professor Weissman and started the drive back.

Ah, the sun was getting lower in the sky and Shabbat approached one more time. As they drove south to Jerusalem, the sun streamed golden light into the right side of the car, from the west. A peace settled over Hanani and Sarah, and the golden light hung still in the air, as time slowly and peacefully transpired, ushering in the Shabbat. As Hanani drove, he mused on these monumental scrolls and sat in awe and wonder, pondering how God might use them to bring people to Himself. Hanani extended his right hand towards Sarah, and she, in the passenger seat, took his hand with her left hand, and the two sat in peaceful quiet as they neared Jerusalem.

Chapter 4: Sing to the Lord

In 15 minutes, Hanani and Sarah were walking up to the house of Jeremiah and Beth Kohen, the hosts for that night. Friday nights were when most everyone showed up, as opposed to Saturdays and Wednesdays, and since the discovery of the scrolls was just the previous Sunday, Hanani had not gotten the chance to share with the group about the discovery. Nevertheless, he had been on the news, and everyone had already been talking about it. So when Hanani entered the house, everyone reacted with enthusiasm and various shouts of affirmation.

“Here’s the scroll-winner!” Uri exclaimed - (the dad who hosted the meeting a few weeks earlier, a good friend of Hanani’s). With his declaration everyone cheered, and Hanani grinned and waved at everyone.

“Why, thank you, thank you, chaverim! But all the glory goes to Hashem!” With that, he took the liberty to explain, beginning with Sarah’s word from God for him (with the Acts verse), how God was speaking to him and leading him, and about the amazing encounter with the modern-day prophet Malachi, and then Aviad, and at last about the excavation itself. He also mentioned Malachi’s word about the record company. At this, everyone was very excited, knowing that Hanani meeting the man with the blue kippah had already been fulfilled, so the music was sure to follow! The evening continued with joy as songs were sung with vigor, a message was delivered on Biblical repentance, and prayers were offered. And of course, food was eaten. A few friends of Beit Chesed members were there as well, ones who were new to Yeshua. One, Daniel by name, was moved by the story shared of the Pharisee versus the publican in the temple – the Pharisee thanking God for his righteousness, yet the publican in woeful repentance before God, begging for mercy. The publican, of course, goes home justified, as opposed to the Pharisee. Daniel knew his life was not pleasing to HaShem, and so he was moved to take a trip to the bathroom, and inside, he got on his knees and begged for mercy, just like the publican. He felt a warmth come over him and a deep comfort, like the embrace of a father, and he knew God had seen his change of heart and justified him, as he had also placed his faith in Yeshua as Savior and Lord, trusting in the price paid at Calvary for sin.

As he came out of the bathroom, he felt like a new man, or more specifically, a new little child. He was a 25-year-old college student having grown up a secular Jew, and now he had become a true son of Abraham, walking in the same faith as Abraham. As Daniel walked into the living room, Franz, the friend who had invited him to come, came over and said, “Daniel, you look different! What happened?” Daniel, at a loss for words, fumbled to explain his change of heart, repentance, and the new life he had received. Franz, a recent college graduate, was overjoyed at the news, and declared, “Daniel, the Bible says the angels are rejoicing because you have turned to Adonai! Welcome home, brother!” Franz didn’t hesitate to embrace Daniel with a hug, and the two rejoiced together with laughter. Then Franz asked if it would be ok if he shared the news with the group. Daniel agreed, bashfully.

“Hey, hey, everyone!” Franz called. The living room grew quiet, and then Franz relayed the good news concerning Daniel’s turning to the LORD. At that, everyone expressed great joy, with outcries of “Praise God!” and “Hallelu-Yah!” Then conversation resumed in the room, yet many individuals trickled over to Daniel to bring him good tidings. Daniel was touched by the kindness of the believers.

The evening was winding down, but at last, Hananiel and Sarah came over to visit with Daniel. After Hananiel expressed joy over Daniel’s conversion, he said, “Now you play the lute, correct?”

Daniel indeed played the lute - a middle-eastern sounding instrument, like an unfretted guitar with a bowl-shaped body.

Daniel answered, "Yes! Why do you ask?"

"Well," Hanani replied, "we have a little band with members from Beit Chesed, and we were looking for a lute player! Would you be interested in joining us?"

Daniel replied immediately with joy, "Yes, of course!"

"Great!" Hanani exclaimed, and continued, "We are meeting tomorrow at a band member's house for practice - at 1 p.m. Can you make it?"

"Yes, I can! Just give me the address!"

Hanani proceeded to share the address with Daniel and it was settled - he would start practicing with the band, called "Shir Chadash" (New Song).

The next morning, Hanani paid a planned visit to his parents' house to catch up with them. Hanani knocked on the front door and his beloved mom Miriam answered it quickly. "BenEE, benEE (my son, my son), come in!" His dad joined them at the kitchen table, and Miriam served breakfast.

Hanani had already shared with them about God's new leading in his life and the scrolls discovery, and his parents were supportive and excited. Today, Hanani shared about Daniel's turning to the LORD and joining the band, and his parents were overjoyed at this news as well.

His mom contributed, "Well Hanani, maybe Daniel can play on this record you will be producing!"

"Yes, Mom, we will be working on songs with him!"

They continued to eat and talk, and then his mom got a concerned look on her face.

"What is it, Mom?" Hanani asked.

"Oh, Hanani, I was reminded of a call I received from your sister in America. Hanani, she's pregnant."

The news would have been good, except Leah, his 21-year-old sister, was not married.

"Oh, wow," Hanani said with concern.

Miriam continued, "She said it was a mistake, but did not seem too interested in following God. We will keep praying."

Leah had grown up believing in God and Yeshua but had seemed to fall away when she was in high school, influenced by friends at the public school. She had thankfully gotten accepted to a college in America - the University of Oklahoma, and her parents sent her off, praying and hoping God would get a hold of her in America. It had not seemed to happen yet. She agreed she would not have an abortion, and in order to raise the child properly, she would be flying back home to Israel, for the guy was not interested in marriage or raising the child.

Hanani was somewhat close to his sister, but not super close. He was excited she would be coming home, and that he would get a chance to love her and spend time with her.

His parents and he retired to the living room and relaxed as Hanani strummed his dad's guitar. Soon, it was time for Hanani to head to band practice. He said his goodbyes and was off, driving to Steven's house - the drummer of Shir Chadash.

As he pulled up, he saw Daniel, the new believer, pulling up as well. "Great," he thought. When the two had made their way inside, Steven was there, as well as Michael Goldstein, the bass guitar player, and Ariel Sharon, a female violinist. Hanani was the lead singer and guitarist. They all tramped down to the basement where the percussion was set up. Steven had a drum-set as well as a large djembe, a high-pitched darbuka - middle-eastern drum, a tambourine, and other accessories. Sometimes, Ariel would also play keyboard on certain songs.

"Well," Hanani said, "let's get started!" They each had their own binder with all the chord sheets in it, but they already knew a good number of songs by heart.

"Daniel, we'll just start playing, and then you can get an idea of the song and jump in, if you'd like!" Hanani said, handing him an extra binder with all the songs in it. "That's yours to keep!" he added.

They started with "Adonai Machaseinu" by David Loden - (The LORD'S our Refuge). It used an e-phrygian scale - minor, but with a special lowered 2nd interval - making a sort of middle-eastern sound. Hanani counted off, and everyone jumped in.

Steven was on drumset, nailing off pulsed sixteenth notes on the snare drum for the intro, and Michael held down the basic rhythm (above) on bass guitar, while Ariel hit the melody on violin, and Hanani strummed chords with syncopation. The band had quite a quality sound. And lo and behold, Daniel jumped right in after a few measures, adding highlights to the melody, plucked out on his beautiful lute. Everyone turned and smiled with admiration!

Then Hanani jumped in singing on the chorus:

*"Adonai Machaseinu, hoo Go-aleinu
Yeshua Meshicheinu, bit-chu bo!
The LORD is our refuge, He's our redeemer,
Yeshua is Messiah, trust in Him!"*

As the band continued to play various songs and discuss creative ways for each member to play certain parts, they all felt a spirit of sincerity, passion, and delight in the music. Daniel turned out to be very skilled on lute, providing tasteful accents to their songs! Soon they were playing the last song of the day, a slow worshipful song called "Ani L'Dodi" (I Am My Beloved's). The violin soared on melodic instrumental parts, and then Hanani and Ariel sung out in harmony,

*"Ani _____ L'Dodi _____
V'Dodi _____ Li _____
I _____ am my beloved's,
And my beloved _____ is mine."*

It was truly beautiful, especially with melodic riffs on lute played by Daniel. The song finished, and there was a brief time of satisfied silence.

Hanani broke the silence: “Well, friends, you heard about the prophecy of the record company contacting us to record an album . . . I suppose we should just keep practicing our music and start picking out favorites that we would want on the album.”

Everyone agreed enthusiastically. “And . . . you are all up for doing some travelling for shows?” Hanani probed. Everyone agreed, with the exception of a few having to work around work schedules.

“Ok,” Hanani said, “then we can manage with that!”

They all decided to go eat some ice cream in the park to celebrate the successful practice and the prophecy of the record to come.

Hanani and the band had some recording equipment - not professional - but something, and they had made some recordings already, which were posted online. So Hanani was expecting Or Ha'Olam records to somehow find him online, or whatever other way God would use to bring it about.

At present, the band members enjoyed themselves at the park, eating ice-cream and tossing a frisbee around. It was a special Shabbat, as always, and this was a great way to celebrate.

“Rriiing! Rriiing!” Hanani had left his cell phone on all night, accidentally, and now it was ringing at 8 in the morning! Hanani rolled over, moaning in bed, and at last picked the phone up, just in time.

“Hello?”

“Hellooo, is this Hanani?” a pleasant male voice asked.

“Um, yes, yes it is,” Hanani answered.

“Wonderful! My name is Jacob Kratz and I am with Or Ha'Olam Records . . .” Jacob continued to explain their selection of Shir Chadash for a potential record deal, as Hanani listened patiently with a smile. At last, Jacob finished his shpiel with, “So . . . would you all be interested in making this record?”

“Yes. Yes, indeed, sir! In fact, this will sound crazy, but a believer told me a prophetic word about you guys contacting me, so I've been expecting the call! We have been practicing our songs and can come meet and talk about what the album should be about and what songs to do, if you'd like!” Hanani explained.

There was a pause, and then Jacob's voice sounded again: “Ahhh, incredible, sir! Um, yes, yes, let us meet soon! Can you all come in to our studio tomorrow sometime, by chance?”

“Let me contact the other band members and get back to you!” Hanani replied.

“Very good, Hanani! It was good meeting you, and, and we look forward to meeting you all and chatting more!”

“Yes, indeed. Thank you, Jacob. Thank you so much for this opportunity!”

“Shalom, Hanani.”

“Shalom, sir!”

Well, well! The call had come at last! Hanani rejoiced, praising God, “Lord, I thank you! Thank you for fulfilling your word via Malachi!”

Hanani lost no time sending a group text to everyone in Shir Chadash:

“Or Ha’Olam called!! When can we go to meet them? Tomorrow?”

As the morning unfolded at Hanani’s apartment, he received back texts from everyone in the group within 2 hours. It turned out the next day, Monday, did indeed work for everyone to pay a visit to the Or Ha’Olam Recording Studio in Jerusalem. Hanani called Jacob back and the time was set for 1 pm on Monday. Jacob asked them to bring their instruments as well, and to share some of their favorite original songs.

Monday came soon enough, and everyone carpoled to the studio in Hanani’s car. The studio was located on the outskirts of the city, on a sparse street containing just the studio, a restaurant, and an apartment building. Everyone piled out of the car with their instruments (besides the drumset) and trooped up to the front door. Hanani led the way, and they entered into a foyer type area where Jacob was waiting.

Hanani excitedly introduced himself, and before long, the band was invited into a conference room with other members of the Or Ha’Olam team.

Jacob wasted no time getting down to business.

“Well! Gentlemen and lady (referring to Ariel), I found you all online by chance - well I guess not by chance, since Hanani here shared with me that apparently this connection was ordained by the Most High, Baruch HaShem (Blessed be the Name).” The band smiled and chuckled a little. “But anyway, I found you online and listened to some of your stuff, and although the recording quality was not distinctly professional, the feel and style of your music is exactly what we’re looking for - young voices, rich, heartfelt chords and melody, and of course, some of the minor chords and scales associated with Jewish music. And the lyrics - the lyrics were wonderful - presenting Yeshua in His Jewish context and with fresh, cutting words. You see, we think you all are the perfect band to record an album with us, with the purpose of reaching out to fellow Jews and presenting Yeshua in a Jewish context, in a fresh, moving sort of way. We especially liked your song which shares our name -- Or Ha’Olam -- with its message of Yeshua being the light of the world! With our worldwide following, this album could touch a lot of people and be heard by people hungry for the truth. So! We would like you all to share some of your favorite songs with us, ones that lift up Yeshua and Adonai, of course. And, you are all up for doing this record?”

The band all responded with an overflowing “YES”, in one way or another, and Jacob replied with a smile: “Good! Let’s move to the studio then!” Shir Chadash proceeded to perform 4 or 5 of their favorite original songs, perforated by delighted laughter and remarks from the Or Ha’Olam team. And Daniel, though very new to the band, wonderfully accompanied the others on his lute.

“Yes, yes, this is all wonderful!” Jacob exclaimed - “This will be a fruitful project, Baruch HaShem!”

The meeting finished out, and before long, Hanani and the band were heading home. Hanani asked everyone in the car, “Well, guys, what do you think?”

Steven replied first, “Let’s do this!”, followed by the others’ affirming words.

“Yes, indeed.” Hanani said, “Let’s put all our heart, soul, and strength into this!”

With that, the recording project was underway, and in the weeks to come, Hanani acted as spokesman, corresponding with Or Ha'Olam about what songs would go on the album. Soon, the list was settled, and the band knew what they needed to practice and dress up nicely for the recording sessions at the studio, which were not far off.

The band was so excited and worked extra hard on coming up with tasteful instrumentation for all the songs. So Hanani, the band, and Beit Chesed continued on in the grace of God, seeking His will and His ways, on a quest for Him.

Chapter 5: Father, Forgive

Between all the dealings with Or Ha'Olam, music practice, work, and other to-do items, Hanani had not gotten to talk to Sarah that much lately. So one Wednesday morning, Hanani called and apologized and asked if she'd like to get coffee that evening. Sarah was completely understanding and said she'd love to get coffee. Despite the lack of contact recently, the two had developed a tender, intimate relationship full of smiles, laughter, and shared secrets. Hanani was struck with her beauty, inside and out, and had indeed fallen in love with the girl named Sarah. Sarah was drawn to Hanani's gentle spirit, yet zeal for God. Hanani was just a bit taller than Sarah - 5'10", whereas Sarah was 5'8". And, whereas Hanani was 27, Sarah was 25. She was very mature and sociable, with great wisdom and knowledge, yet she submitted to Hanani's love in humility, receiving it as a precious gift. As the two had drawn closer together, it began to look unthinkable that they would part ways. So Hanani began to think more seriously about marriage. Anyhow, he had to get off to Pita Gadol that Wednesday morning, and so quickly put on his uniform and headed out the door and down the stairs from his apartment. He hopped on his bike and cruised over to the restaurant, located in the old city region.

Hanani arrived, locked his bike, and came in the back entrance. He clocked in and then began attending to his duties, checking in with his manager as well. The morning passed well and turned into afternoon before long.

Hanani slipped into the back room to get some more hummus to put on the self-serve bar, and he heard footsteps behind him, following him in. As Hanani turned to see who it was, the unthinkable happened! It was Mohammed, a Muslim worker, and he suddenly pulled a knife from the shelf and lunged toward Hanani with it! Hanani lifted his arms to cover his body in self-defense, and the knife managed to just cause a few, but deep lacerations on his right arm. Hanani had cried out, and another worker came in to see what was up. She quickly called the police, and Mohammed, knowing he needed to flee, burst out the back door of the restaurant, dropping the knife in the room and running from the police, who were on their way. An ambulance came as well and took Hanani to a hospital, treating his arm on the way over.

Could Mohammed have also been the person who set off the bomb at Beit Chesed? It was possible . . . As Hanani lay on the stretcher, he, being conscious, made the decision to forgive Mohammed. In his heart he said, "Father please forgive him. He doesn't know what he's doing. He thinks Allah wants him to kill me, Lord. He was trying to follow who he thinks is God." On the other hand, Mohammed had not specifically asked God whether or not He wanted him to do this. He was following what he had been brought up to believe. Nevertheless, Hanani still forgave him, as

Yeshua had instructed His followers to do and as He so amazingly demonstrated as He said “Father, forgive them” on the horrid cross. Hanani thought the few stab wounds were nothing compared to what the Master suffered.

At the hospital, they had to numb his arm and stitch it up in the two places, but before that, Hanani passed on his parents’ number and Sarah’s number and had the hospital contact them. Strangely enough though, Sarah was on nurse duty at that very hospital and got to help care for Hanani herself. Hanani was baffled and very pleased at that. His parents were there shortly as well, offering condolences and support.

Within an hour and a half Hanani was all stitched up and did not have to remain at the hospital any longer. Hanani went home with his parents to their house and processed the attack with them there. He knew Mohammed was Muslim, but not that he was the radical type. Surprise, surprise.

Hanani’s mom flipped on the TV, and the news was on. After a few minutes, lo and behold, a reporter began speaking of a knife attack that occurred at Pita Gadol earlier that day - it was about Mohammed. He had been arrested, found running on the street. Just then his mom’s phone rang and it was the police, filling her in on the information they saw on the TV and also on where Mohammed was in jail. She relayed the info on to Hanani, and he thought perhaps he would even visit Mohammed. Perhaps not. He would pray about it.

At present, the time was 5:30, and his home group’s prayer meeting would be starting at 6 pm. So his parents and him prepared to go.

At the prayer meeting, Uri remarked, “So the scroll-finder makes the news again!” He then proceeded to offer words of comfort and sincerity, as did the whole group, which was smaller since it was Wednesday. Hanani said his thank you’s, and the group entered into a time of prayer in which they corporately forgave Mohammed, prayed God would reveal to him the truth of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of His son Yeshua, and for Hanani’s emotional and physical well-being. They proceeded to cover a variety of other topics, including the salvation of Muslims in general. Then they opened up the Word and shared a few Scriptures, including Yeshua’s and Stephen’s words, forgiving their killers. Everyone was deeply moved by this. At last, they shared some snacks in the kitchen before heading home. Hanani’s parents decided to drop Hanani back at his apartment, after making sure he was ok and everything. In light of the events of the day, Hanani and Sarah planned on another time for coffee. Thus, Hanani returned to his daily flow of life, scheduled to work back at Pita Gadol in the morning, which he thought would be fine. God was his protector, and if He willed that he endure persecution, then so be it, although Mohammed was not a threat anymore.

Hanani climbed in bed and relaxed, letting his thoughts drift to Sarah. God was so good to have put her working at the hospital right where and when he came! She was so beautiful, and he loved her so.

The next morning, Daniel, the new believer and lute player, set out to his Tanakh (Old Testament) class at the Hebrew University. It was a rainy morning, so Daniel biked on campus with a warm hoody on, with the hood up. He made his way to the “religion” building, dismounted, locked his bike up, and headed into the classroom.

The handout for the lecture was on the book of Isaiah. It was the start of a new unit on the prophets of Israel. Daniel sat down, and in a few minutes, the lecture began. There were helpful facts about the times during which Isaiah lived and what his general messages from the LORD were about. Then, specific passages from the book of Isaiah were looked at. First, Isaiah chapter 1 was covered - the prophet calling Israel out on sin, yet saying her sins could be as white as snow. The lecture continued, and Daniel wondered if Isaiah 53 would be covered, one of the places in the Bible that he as a new believer had studied and really grasped - a chapter that undeniably pointed to what Yeshua did on the tree.

Sure enough, the professor got to Isaiah 53, saying, "And now we come to Isaiah 53, a chapter that Christians seem to think is about Jesus, Yeshua. But let's be honest - we all know better." He proceeded to pridefully explain away all the references to a man carrying our sin, etc., instead claiming that this servant was Israel as a whole. Daniel felt led to raise his hand. The professor answered Daniel, allowing him to speak.

"But sir," Daniel said humbly, "in verse 3 it says He was 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief'. And in verse 5 it says He was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquity! Is this not the message of the Brit Chadashah (New Covenant)?"

The professor fumbled with words for a second and then said, "So you're one of them, too, eh Daniel?" in a mocking tone. The whole class laughed and joined in the ridicule.

"Yes, indeed, I am," Daniel answered calmly yet with confidence. "And He, Yeshua, has changed my life since I have recently put my trust in Him. In Him, my heart is changed, and his law is written on my heart now - I am being changed!"

Some of the students became quiet and were interested, but it was apparent that most of the class and the professor continued to regard him as a dumb heretic, continuing to laugh at his words.

And so Daniel as well felt the attack against Yeshua, just as Hanani had felt the physical attack. But as God's Spirit was in control of Daniel, he bore the shame and silently forgave them, knowing that they had just yet to seek the truth for themselves.

"Father, forgive them," he said in his heart, sitting back down in his chair. Soon, class was over and there was one student who hung around and approached Daniel in the hallway.

"Hey, um, was it Daniel?" the student asked politely.

"Yes, yes, that's me!" Daniel replied cheerfully.

"Well, what you said about Isaiah 53, that really made sense to me. I'm sorry everyone treated you that way."

"Thank you! I appreciate it! Yes, it just makes sense, and if you read the New Testament, you will see lots of passages from the Tanakh fulfilled."

"Really! I didn't know that!"

“Check it out for yourself!” Daniel continued, “What’s more, is people are like, CHANGED by the Messiah, and many have seen Him in dreams and visions, as I’ve learned. I am a new believer myself, but what I’m telling you now, I’ve been able to soak in since becoming a believer about 3 weeks ago.”

“Well thank you, Daniel. I am going to look into this. I guess I’ll see you next class!”

“Yes, indeed! And your name was...?”

“Simeon. It’s Simeon.”

“Well may Hashem lead you, Simeon. Shalom!” As Daniel walked to his bike, he texted Hanani about the experience he had in class. Hanani texted back immediately: “Wow. Way to go ahee (my brother)! Did you hear about me getting attacked for the faith as well?” Daniel had not heard about the knife attack and called Hanani up right there and they discussed it.

“Wow,” Hanani said, “it seems we are in a season of being tested for our faith, suffering in one way or another for it. This is not new you know. In fact, in Revelation 2:10, Yeshua communicated to the primal church in Smyrna that some of them would suffer - be put in prison and some even die for the faith. But he tells them to be faithful unto death, ‘and (He) will give them the crown of life’. We, Daniel, must cling to Yeshua and HaShem through everything and not be afraid to suffer for Him, knowing we have an eternity with Them.”

Daniel agreed with sincerity, and the two finished up their phone call, wishing shalom on one another until they met Friday night.

Hanani had “happened” to be on break at Pita Gadol, so after talking he got back to work. His co-workers were amazed he was back to work so quickly, and with such a peaceful, joyful attitude in spite of the attack that had taken place just yesterday! It was a testimony indeed to the power of Yeshua, and it became clear to his co-workers that this was why he was doing so well.

As Hanani worked, a song started formulating in his head about forgiving those who wrong us. He knew what the title would be: “Father, Forgive”. The intro would begin with a somewhat syncopated strum style on guitar - medium temp, with the following chords:

A/C# 2 3 4 **D** 2 3 4 **Bm7** 2 3 4 **A/C#** 2 3 4

Then the verse 1 lyrics would come in:

*You never said it would be easy
You never promised popularity
But what you offer me and them
Is better than life as we know it*

So I’ll say...

Then the Chorus:

*Father, Father forgive _____
Let your grace touch my heart
And overflow to all around _____*

*Father, Father forgive them,
For they know not what they do
And their hatred is not new;
You offer life to me and them
So who am I to keep it all for myself,
So won't you call them too _____
Father, forgive _____*

As soon as Hanani got off work at 4:30, he went straight home and wrote the song down, with accompanying chords for guitar.

That Shabbat, the band gathered again to practice, and Hanani taught them the new song. They all liked it a lot and expressed delight! The following day Hanani called Or Ha'Olam and reached Jacob and suggested that they add "Father, Forgive" to the record. Jacob suggested he email a rough MP3 of the song so he could listen and decide, which Hanani took care of after getting off the phone. Hanani felt the song would be a powerful testimony to Yeshua's message of loving your enemies, and he would wait for Jacob Kratz to reply.

Well, the past week contained some hard things for Hanani and Daniel to go through, yet as the apostle Paul stated in his inspired letter to the church in Rome, "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!" - Romans 8:38-39.

Chapter 6: Moving Forward

It was Monday morning, September 5th, and the Day of Sounding (or Trumpets) was quickly approaching. This was the first of the fall feasts given to Israel in Leviticus chapter 23. There were 4 spring ones and 3 fall ones, and these feasts provided a yearly rhythm and structure to life. Their significance was not only in regard to the original meaning of the feasts, but also included various fulfillments of the feasts with the coming of the New Covenant. For example, Passover (Pesach in Hebrew), the first of the spring feasts, was gloriously fulfilled by Yeshua becoming the ultimate Passover Lamb, slaughtered so His blood could be put over our lives, so death could pass over us, and we could have eternal life. And, Yeshua died at least at the *general* time when the other lambs were slaughtered. The seven days of Unleavened Bread starting right after Passover correspond with getting rid of the leaven of sin, as the Apostle Paul wonderfully describes in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 - "Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." There you have it! _____. And the last of the spring feasts is Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks,

in which 50 days are counted from the day of First-Fruits, and 2 loaves of *leavened* bread this time are waved before the LORD, along with the other offerings. This feast was marvelously fulfilled with the giving of the Holy Spirit to the disciples, with the tongues of fire resting on each one and the sound of the rushing wind, and Peter preaching a powerful message leading to 3,000 repenting and being baptized in Yeshua's name! It is known as Pentecost, but this is just from a Greek word meaning "50" and is the same thing as the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot), when 50 days are counted.

This brings us to the fall feasts, after a gap of time in the summer. There is no record of the fall feasts being fulfilled in any way yet, and so believers wait for their fulfillment. The three fall feasts occur in the Biblical seventh month: on the 1st of the month – the Day of Sounding or Trumpets (Yom Teruah); on the 10th of the month – the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur); and on the 15th-22nd of the month - the Feast of Booths/Tabernacles (Sukkot).

The Day of Sounding/Trumpets is thought to be fulfilled with Yeshua's second coming at the sound of the trumpet, and for the remaining two feasts - the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles, there is uncertainty in the minds of some regarding their fulfillment, although Tabernacles could be with God coming to "tabernacle"/dwell with us forever in the new earth, as Revelation 21:3 declares: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away'". Yes, some are a bit uncertain how the fall feasts will be fulfilled, yet as the spring ones were fulfilled, it only makes sense that the fall ones will be fulfilled somehow as well.

Anyhow, the Day of Sounding/Trumpets (Yom Teruah) was approaching quickly, as mentioned above, and Beit Chesed would have a hearty get together in which shofars (rams' horns) would be blown, Scripture would be read, and food would be shared.

But this Monday morning, September 5th, neither Hanani nor Sarah had to work, and as the weather was beautiful out, Hanani asked Sarah to go on a jog, with something special in mind, to which she agreed. As they tread the streets of Jerusalem in the morning air - 9am - Hanani posed a question: "Sarah, what are you planning on doing in the coming years?"

"Well . . ." she replied tentatively, "I . . . I don't know, exactly! I guess it might depend . . . depend on what *you* do," she said with a smug smile.

"I see," Hanani replied between breaths. After a few minutes he added, "How do you feel about the thought of starting a family with someone?"

"I have actually prayed about that and feel that being a wife and mother is God's path for me, yes."

"I see!" Hanani exclaimed. They had just arrived at a beautiful park - grass sloping downwards to a playground, with flourishing trees and flowers all around. They at last decided to finish jogging and both slowed to a walk, going down the slope of grass. As they neared the playground, Hanani placed his hands on the outside of Sarah's arms and turned her towards himself. "Sarah," he said with depth, "I love you with all my heart – would you marry me?" It was a simple statement, but with a child-like innocence and sincerity - Hanani bearing a deep part of his heart to his beloved, Sarah. She gazed deep in his eyes, at a loss for words for a moment. Hanani filled the gap - "I, I've

talked to your father and mother and they are supportive, as are my parents!” he gushed with a rush of longing.

Sarah continued looking in his eyes and fumbled for words, “I, I . . .” she searched her heart for any reason why she should wait or say no, but she could find none. So she continued with new passion. “Yes, Hanani! Yes, of course!” If there had been a soundtrack, the orchestra would have exploded at that point as the two embraced tightly, beginning the transition of leaving their father and mother, so to speak, and clinging to one another instead, as Genesis 2:24 declared would happen in the human race.

After a long, full moment of moments, they dis-embraced and Hanani produced a silver ring-case from his zippered pocket, opening it to reveal a lovely silver ring with a diamond rock on it.

“Oh Hanani!” Sarah exhaled, “Thank you!” There was a coffee shop nearby, and the two headed over to it, and Hanani bought frappuccinos for them to celebrate! As they had walked over, Hanani stole a kiss from Sarah, gently touching her cheek. She kissed him back on the cheek with sincerity. After the coffee shop, they took a picture together and posted it to Facebook on Sarah’s iPhone, announcing the news! At last, they leisurely jogged back to Hanani’s apartment, where Hanani drove Sarah home to her apartment. In the car, they discussed when they would want the wedding to be. Both of them wanted sooner rather than later, and then Hanani suggested a special Sukkot outdoor wedding - early October, about a month and a half away. (Sukkot was the feast discussed earlier, where everyone dwells in temporary dwellings - tents or the like - for a week, to remember the temporary dwellings in the wilderness of the children of Israel after they came out of Egypt.) Beit Chesed would be going to a nature area and setting up tents for a week, celebrating and cooking food from tent to tent, with music, preaching, and teaching as well. Sukkot is notable for its joy, as the Scripture indicates in Leviticus 23:40, and thus, what a time to have a wedding! Sarah agreed that would be fantastic, and so the two would speak with the leaders of Beit Chesed about it. For now they had to part ways, as Hanani had to run some errands, but that afternoon, Sarah would be accompanying Shir Chadash to the Or Ha’Olam Studio to sing on their first official recording session!

So Sarah waved goodbye as Hanani drove away, and she went to her apartment overflowing with joy! She was about to embark on a new journey with Hanani, the one whom the LORD had so specifically spoken to her about what his quest was to involve - sharing with fellow Jews, Gentiles, and leaders about Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah. Just as the set-apart ones, Messiah’s bride, were to assist Messiah in making disciples of the nations, so Sarah committed herself, before the LORD, to assist in helping Hanani complete the ministry God was giving him to do. In her apartment, she began journaling about Hanani’s proposal, her acceptance, and what the future might hold. She was overflowing with joy.

As Hanani did his errands, similar thoughts were running through his mind, with the exception of *leading* in the relationship, instead of helping. He was overjoyed as well at Sarah’s acceptance of his humble request of spending their lives together. He knew Elohim (God) was calling him to a ministry of sharing Yeshua with Jews, Gentiles, and leaders, yet in prayer God had communicated to him that Sarah and little ones would be a part of the plan as well.

So Hanani finished up the errands, and then all the band members of Shir Chadash, plus Sarah, met at Cafe Gabriel, an authentic Israeli cafe, for lunch. This time, the whole band celebrated Hanani

and Sarah's engagement, getting wine in addition to falafel, pita bread, hummus, and the like. Hanani and Sarah sat together, and as they ate, Steven the drummer, quite the gregarious one, loudly suggested that they all sing Havah Nagilah. So they sang joyfully, lifting their drinks - "to Hanani and Sarah!"

Soon it was time to head to the Or Ha'Olam Recording Studio. It wasn't far, so each drove there in their own car, with their respective instruments.

Jacob Kratz was waiting at the door and welcomed them all in with joy! They unloaded their instruments, with the exception of the drum-set that was already at the studio, and they got all set up in the studio recording room. They were going to try to get the first 3 songs of the album recorded during this session, so Jacob took the lead and said, "Ok guys, so the first song, "Iniquity-Bearer", has the intro recitation of Isaiah 53, with an orchestral background, and then it will fade into the musical intro for the song. So we will start recording with the musical intro and go through the whole song. And, if a spot is off, we can punch you in and out for that section, letting you re-record just that section! But first, let's listen to the intro recitation that Hanani has already put together, to get into the mood of the song." The group agreed good-naturedly, and Jacob lowered the lights and hit play from the desktop computer console where the tracks were mixed. Deep, dark-sounding strings faded in to begin with, and an epic, anthem-like melody emerged in the strings. Then Hanani's voice, a baritone, rang out with reverb, reciting the Hebrew words of Isaiah 53, speaking of Yeshua, the suffering servant: "Who has believed **what we have heard?** And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?" The Hebrew equivalent of those words rang out with conviction, and the band members grew even more quiet and sober. Hanani's voice continued: "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . He was pierced for our transgressions . . . upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace . . . the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so He opened not his mouth . . . yet it was the will of the LORD to crush Him . . . when His soul makes an offering for guilt, He shall see His offspring; He shall prolong His days . . . He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the many, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors . . ."

The orchestral parts finished with a flourish and soon faded to nothing. There was silence in the studio for a few seconds, everyone taking in what they had heard, moved by the suffering of Messiah. Jacob slowly raised the lights back up, and everyone went to their instruments - Steven to the drumset, Michael to his bass guitar, Ariel to her violin, Daniel to his lute, Hanani to his guitar and microphone for singing, and Sarah to a microphone for singing as well.

Jacob took the lead again, "Ok, let's get a sound check on all you guys. I need each of you to play your loudest so we can set the recording level right. Steven, could we start with your drums?" Soon, everyone had warmed up and got their recording level set right, and they went ahead and did a test run of the song "Iniquity-Bearer" before recording. Then, they began recording at last, with 4 clicks to bring them in for the introduction chords. Everyone was relaxed yet focused, and soon, beautiful music was ringing in the studio, all being recorded by the top-notch microphones. Hanani's voice, with Michael's in harmony, rang out on the chorus -

"Iniquity-Bearer _____
Roman cross carrier _____

Pierced for our transgressions,
Crushed for our sins . . .”

Amazingly, no mistakes were made the whole song through - a sign of Yah’s presence. Jacob in the sound booth hit stop to end the recording, shouted “Bravo!”, and the group listened to it played back. Coming out of the top-notch large speakers, the sound was wonderful. Now it was just Boaz’s job - another worker at the studio, to adjust volume levels throughout the song to get the perfect mix, as well as add reverb when appropriate. First song down, two to go! The remaining two went well also, with a few mistakes they patched up. They were called “Adon Hashabbat” (Lord of the Sabbath), declaring Yeshua’s rightful title as Lord of the Sabbath, and “Rejoice, All Ye Righteous”, a psalm-like praise song with upbeat minor chords, the accent on the upbeat, as is traditional with some Jewish music.

Soon it was time for the band to pack up for the day, but the songs recorded were spectacularly done, and Jacob Kratz was very delighted and pleased. The bass and drums provided the beefy backbone of the songs, the guitar chords filled in the middle, and the lute and violin ornamented and embellished everything, with higher notes waxing and waning. The band was truly blessed to have each other to make music with.

The band said their goodbyes to Jacob and the rest of the Or Ha’Olam team and looked forward to returning in a few days to tackle the next three songs.

Everyone drove off in their own cars with their instruments, with the exception of Hanani and Sarah riding together. It was 6 pm and the sun was getting lower in the sky as Hanani drove back towards the heart of Jerusalem. Hanani held out his right hand as they drove, and Sarah placed her left hand in his right, and the two sat in peaceful loving silence, besides the rumbling of the car.

That evening, Hanani and Sarah had dinner at the Katan’s house, and Hanani’s parents got to congratulate the two on their engagement and offer them some tasty lasagna and Caesar salad, plus sides and dessert.

What a full day it had been! The run, the proposal, lunch with the band, the recording session, and dinner with Hananiel’s parents. “Baruch Hashem!” Hanani exclaimed as he sat back in his chair with his arm extended around Sarah.

“Baruch HaShem, indeed!” his parents and Sarah echoed.

Everyone rested well that night, but the next day had more in store for everyone as well! You see, Beit Chesed had finally decided it was safe to have people at the building, and so the leadership had arranged for lots of members to come and help repair the building, including a few skilled construction workers.

So the next morning, by around 9:30 am, a decent group of folks had shown up to help repair the building. The construction workers took the lead, directing others on what to do and where to go. The front entrance area was damaged the most, with a gaping hole that had blown the front doors and the surrounding walls to pieces. So skilled workers were required to replace the damaged wooden beams for starters, and then drywall, etc., to reconstruct the walls, in the spirit of Nehemiah and the Jews of long ago who set out to rebuild the walls of the holy city, for the glory of HaShem.

Others soon got to help with painting the new walls or fetching wood and tools for the more skilled workers.

The team attitude was very positive and celebratory, as someone had plugged in a CD player and was playing worship music. The group delighted in being a part of restoring the church building and providing a place where seekers of truth could come and learn about the “Elohei Emet” - “God of truth”.

Thus, among Hananiel, Sarah, Shir Chadash, and the Beit Chesed community, new ground was tread upon, whether it was opening the door for spending life together with a beloved, opening the door to Or Ha'Olam Studio to lay down tracks for the album, or opening the new doors to the Beit Chesed Church building! Things were coming together, as Hananiel neared the first-fruits of his ministry -- soon to come in the future, now with a wife-to-be waiting to join him.