

Examples of Cruciformity in Israel:

4. Bassem Adranly

Bassem was born in the Old City of Jerusalem in 1966 into a Greek Orthodox family. Bassem "came to faith" in 1995, surprisingly through a Messianic congregation, the King of Kings, which met in the YMCA in West Jerusalem.

Following is a condensation of his story in his own words as told to Julia Fisher and as recorded in her book *Israel: The Mystery of Peace*.¹ Bassem and I had a good visit in Jerusalem, January 2010.

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'I was hanging around the YMCA and I saw nice girls going in, so I went in. But when I saw the way they worshipped in Hebrew and prayed for Israel, I was so angry and disgusted, I left immediately. For me, as a Palestinian, it was very hard to understand how Christians could pray for Israel and for the Israeli Defence Forces; to me it seemed very Zionist. However, the next week I went back and I kept going although I hated it so much.

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'From the start, I noticed how many division there were in the church between the different denominations and between Jewish and Arab believers, and I had so many questions as to why this should be. The Lord gave me special grace to try to understand people, to try to have a more godly perspective about how the Lord look at things.

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'I had been a nationalist all my life up to then. I had studied the history of this land and Zionism and I found it very hard to combine Christianity and Zionism, especially as I couldn't find a foundation for Zionism in the Old Testament. When a Palestinian hears the term 'Biblical Zionism', it provokes a reaction because for us, as a nation, it was this movement that destroyed us. It scattered us. We have refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan. Seventy-five per cent of the nation became refugees. And every family here has houses that were taken. So it's very hard for me to understand it.

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'When I became a Christian I started to read the New Testament and it challenged me. I came to the' passage that says, "Love your enemy". The Lord was speaking to my

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<sup>1</sup> Julia Fisher, *Israel: The Mystery of Peace -- True Stories Demonstrating God's Road Map for Peace in Israel Today* (Bucks, UK: Authentic Lifestyle, 2004) 84-93.

heart: "Bassem, you hate the Jewish people." "But Lord, they do this, they do that." "Bassem, I'm not talking about them, I'm talking about you." The next week I didn't go to church (I was still going to the King of Kings congregation at the YMCA). The week after that I went and I couldn't stand it. And then I was convinced I would never go there again. I tried to go somewhere else but either I went on the wrong day or I went at the wrong time. It never worked out.

'So I found myself back at the King of Kings. There was something pulling me. That week it was a good message and the Lord worked on my heart, and from that day I started to have love for the Jewish people. A few weeks later I met a group of charismatic Catholic people from America. They prayed for me to be baptised in the Holy Spirit and they prophesied to me that the Lord would use me to restore his church in the land. Since then God has helped me to understand the controversies and the lack of communication and understanding between Jewish and Arab believers.

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'We meet with Benjamin Berger<sup>2</sup> and Christa Behr<sup>3</sup> every other week. We asked Benjamin to teach us what the Messianic Jews believe, because we really didn't know what they believe, and it was really a blessing. It has made it so much easier to relate more.

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'I believe there is something deeper that the Lord wants us to understand and this is what makes the journey more interesting. Already we see Jewish congregations starting to mix and meet with Arabic churches. We had an interesting experience just a month ago between our church, which is Arabic, and the minister of the Alliance Church in Beer Sheva, a Messianic congregation. The meeting didn't work as we expected because the atmosphere was tense. We came to the conclusion that it was because we hadn't prepared the people properly; we never really talk about what they (the Jews) believe because in the Arabic churches we are afraid to touch on the subject of politics. The interpretation of end-time prophecies in the Old Testament regarding the future of Israel can be challenging for the Arab churches. It is important for us to understand that it is God who brought the Jewish people here and we have to pray that God will bring us together. Our destiny is tied together because the Lord put us together.'

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'In our church most of my preaching is prophetic. I preach about why I believe we are called the 'Alliance' Church: in Arabic it means the 'unity' church and I believe names have meanings for the Lord, they are not a coincidence. I believe the Lord will use our church to really play a role in bringing unity. . . .

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2 His stories are posted on the "Jewish List".

3 A German/Austrian Christian involved in reconciliation and repentance of Germans and Austrians toward Jews.