

## Rabbi Gibson's letter from Jerusalem, July 9, 2008

Dear Friends,

The news this week from Jerusalem is about water. It doesn't rain here at all in the summer (I know you could all use a respite!). The winter rains in the Galilee are essential for the well being of the country.

Today it was announced that the water crisis is as bad as it has been in the 80 years of record keeping here. Although there is certainly mismanagement, most of us here come to think of our own practices to save water.

Shorter showers, not letting the kitchen faucet run, doing laundry efficiently - these are essential aspects of living life in Jerusalem.

The good news is that the largest desalination plant in the Middle East on the coast by Ashkelon is now running. Obviously there will have to be more of them to ease the water needs of all the peoples in the region, not just Israel.

Water can be a matter of strife. Think of last week's Torah portion when Miriam dies, the water disappears and Moses blows up before the whole congregation of Israel! Or water can bring us together. That was what Miriam did. She brought us together with her incredible capacity to draw forth water, according to the legends of our Sages.

I hiked in the Judean Desert on Monday for 5 hours in 97 degree heat. I drank four liters of water and could have had more! At the end of our hike, the people around were generous with their water; they knew that we all depend on each other for the basics. It's just that at times, we forget the basics, much less that we all must drink water to survive. By the way, there was plenty of water around. Unfortunately it was the water of the Dead Sea, which is undrinkable and cannot support life!

It was a gritty hike. By the end, I was glad I had done it (I wasn't so sure in the middle of it!). I gave myself one indulgence, a cupful of water over my head. I was glad it didn't boil. The next day it was back to the study table at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem where I get to drink all of the living waters of Torah I want!

L'Shalom,  
Rabbi Jamie Gibson