

TBM preparing meals for displaced people in Israel

October 11, 2023

Specially trained Texas Baptist Men disaster relief volunteers are at a secure site in Israel, preparing about 2,000 meals a day for civilians displaced by bombing.

The TBM crew—all of whom trained in Israel to learn how to cook culturally appropriate meals for religiously observant citizens of the region—arrived in two waves.

When the team's initial flight was cancelled, the 19-member TBM crew had to split into two groups. After some circuitous travel, the first group arrived in Jordan on Oct. 10 and walked across the border into Israel. Next, they were transported by bus to the same facility where they had trained with Israel's [Emergency Volunteers Project](#). The second group of TBM volunteers arrived the next day.

"We had to go through multiple military checkpoints at the border," said Gary Finley, Israel volunteer coordinator for TBM.

TBM volunteers are working alongside EVP personnel at their base of operations to cook meals and prepare them for delivery.

"The meals are being distributed by EVP volunteers, who are going into hot spots where there are displaced people," Finley said. "Those are areas where homes have been damaged or destroyed and are prone to missile attacks. No TBM volunteers are placed in harm's way."

Dealing with a 'very fluid' situation

Even so, Finley acknowledged the stress inherent in entering a country at war and dealing with a variety of contingencies.

"It's one thing to sit in a Sunday school class and say, 'I want to be in the center of God's will, and I'm trusting in him.' It's another to make the decision to go into a war zone," he said.

Still, Finley said, he left Texas for Israel with his family's blessings.

"They said, 'We know this is what you've been training for.' My kids and grandkids understand. We're all standing on God's promises," he said.

Finley described the situation as "very fluid," and he said the team is prepared to move to another location where they can serve displaced citizens, particularly if the violence escalates. The volunteer team in place now expects to serve two weeks.

"We're playing it by ear," he said. "Pray for whatever God has in store. ... Pray for patience, because we don't know from one day to the next what that day will bring."

In addition to requesting prayer for peace and for the safety of the TBM team, he also asked Texas Baptists to pray God will grant the volunteers the energy and endurance they need.

"Our cooking capacity is limited here," Finley said. "So, we may end up running 24 hours a day to keep up. Pray that we will be up to the task."

An Oct. 11 email to TBM disaster relief volunteers noted the possible need for a significantly larger number of workers "if the conflict intensifies" in Israel.

“We are making contingency plans to send as many as 150 more volunteers,” the email stated.

Advance completion of training for Israel feeding is not required, but previous disaster relief training and experience is essential. Credentialed disaster relief volunteers in good health who have current passports and are capable of working long hours in challenging conditions can [apply here](#).