



Caspari Center NEWS

November 2008

Equipping
the next generation
of Jewish believers
in Jesus



**"I have gotten
to know believers
from all over
the country and
the world...!"**

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"Caspari Center is not just a workplace, but a school of life!"

Messele Mamo worked as Program Coordinator for the Caspari Center for four years. In October, he left the Caspari staff to pursue medical studies in Romania. We asked Messele to share a little bit about his life and work at Caspari.

"For me, working at Caspari Center has not only been a way to make a living. It has been a place to serve the Lord. Personally, these years have also been a school of life for me! I've changed and learned a lot!" says Messele.

Messele is an Ethiopian Jewish believer. He immigrated to Israel with his family in 1992, at the age of 25. A few years later, while he was working as a car park attendant, two elderly foreigners engaged him in conversation about the faith and gave him a Bible in Amharic. Messele had heard about Yeshua (Jesus) in Ethiopia, but now, as he opened and read from the Bible, the Word of God penetrated his heart for the first time. He came to faith and joined an Ethiopian Messianic congregation, and by the time he was asked to join Caspari Center's staff he was already a regular user of the Caspari library.

"I have learned a lot about inter-cultural communication and co-operation while working at Caspari Center. One of my tasks has been coordinating the 'Hearts to Serve' leadership program. Preparing the material for the participants and listening to the teaching has been enriching for me as well. Even after living in Israel for over 10 years, my main contact had been with the Ethiopian community. Now, through the program as well as everyday interaction with Caspari's international staff and students from different backgrounds, I have gotten to know believers from all over the country and the world – and I have especially learned to understand Israelis and their way of communicating much better," Messele says.

Messele is married and a father of four. He is an active teacher in his Messianic congregation and also in a fellowship of Ethiopian Messianic believers. "I can see that my understanding and teaching of the Word of God have developed over the years through my work and the multi-cultural staff fellowship at Caspari. I have been impressed by the devoutness of volunteers at Caspari to serve despite the circumstances. The difficulties, especially those caused by the challenging visa situation, have made people reliant on prayer and determined to continue serving without giving up."

As a father, Messele also benefited greatly from his other area of responsibility, the Shabbat School teachers' seminars. "I learned principles and got many ideas about how to relate to my own children and raise them in the faith. And it works! I teach my children to stand up for themselves and especially for their faith in Yeshua in a firm, and at the same time polite, way."



For Caspari Center, Messele has been a valuable contact with the Ethiopian believing community, and he has brought unique insight into Ethiopian culture. Through him Caspari has been able to support the Ethiopian community by making more of our study resources available in Amharic, and quite a few Ethiopian students have taken part in Caspari's leadership training courses. Messele is encouraged to see the community valuing Messianic (Christian) education more and more, and he believes this is a crucial development for the next generation of Ethiopian believers.

Messele continues: "Through my work at Caspari I have learned that I have a lot to give to the Body of Messiah. I want to encourage all of my brothers and sisters in the faith to be active and to get involved in the work of God, thus enabling God to bring the best out of us!"

One of Messele's best attributes is his continuing willingness to learn. This desire is now leading him to follow his dream: to study medicine. Messele concludes: "I'm curious to see what God wants to teach me through this opportunity. I'm looking forward to an unforgettable time in Romania!"

We thank Messele for his dedicated work and contribution to the ministry of Caspari Center. We ask that you keep him and his family in your prayers, and we wish them God's blessing in the time ahead.

Ethiopian Jewish Believers in Israel

According to the most widely accepted tradition, the origin of Ethiopian Jewry is to be found in the tribe of Dan. The tradition is that in the 9th century BCE, members of the tribe of Dan, who were fleeing war, settled in the highlands of Ethiopia. Today's Ethiopian Jews are held to be descendents of this group. This community lived in isolation from the rest of world Jewry until 1860, when a Christian missionary, himself a converted Jew, visited the Jewish enclave in Ethiopia. Through him, contacts were established with the Jewish world.



Although this community is highly observant of Jewish tradition, their traditions are pre-talmudic. For example, the community does not celebrate Hanukkah. They were officially recognized as Jews by Israel's chief rabbi, Ovadia Yosef, in 1975, although they had been unofficially accepted as Jews by rabbis from 44 countries since the 1940s.

Due to political instability in Ethiopia, the situation for this minority community became increasingly difficult. By the 1980s, the Ethiopian government forbade the practice of Judaism and the teaching of Hebrew. Since the community had been recognized as Jewish, they could legally immigrate to Israel.

There have been two major waves of immigration to Israel of Ethiopian Jews. Operation Moses took place from November 1984 to January 1985, and brought 8,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel. The second wave was Operation Solomon, in May 1991, during which 14,300 were brought to Israel. It is estimated that about 100,000 Ethiopian Jews now live in Israel, with approximately 15,000 still in Ethiopia.

It has not been easy for this community to be absorbed into Israeli life. There are many problems as their traditional pre-industrial African lifestyle intersects with modern hi-tech Israeli life. This is particularly felt by the children and young people, who are educationally and economically disadvantaged.

Within the Ethiopian Jewish community, there are a number of Messianic believers. Their number is estimated at 800–1,200. They are organized in about eight congregations in addition to home groups, all of which worship in the Amharic language and preserve an African Christian worship style. There is little tradition of teaching the children in these congregations, and as a result, the children are at great risk of being lost to the community of faith in Messiah Yeshua. Since the children quickly learn Hebrew and assimilate into Israeli life, communication between the generations is greatly complicated.

Caspari Center has had contact with this community of faith for several years, and has organized teaching programs for them, sent teams in to help children's workers in one of the congregations, and translated literature into Amharic for use in the congregations. In addition to this, several Ethiopian believers have been students in Caspari's "Hearts to Serve" leadership training course over the last few years.

The needs of this community are great. We at Caspari Center want to continue to support and strengthen the next generation of believers and congregations in Israel, building a strong Body with members from all over the world.

Book Projects Supporting Ethiopian Believers in Israel



In summer 2007, Caspari Center published *Raising Children in the Fear of the Lord* – a book consisting of articles by local pastors, people in children’s ministry, and parents from the local Body. This book, which addresses different issues relating to raising children in the Messianic faith in the Israeli environment, was published in three languages: Hebrew, English, and Russian. Caspari Center has already distributed about 1,300 free copies to local congregations and believers. We are now nearing the completion of an Amharic translation of the book, and it will soon be available to teachers and parents in the Ethiopian believing community.

Caspari Center has also been supporting another book project initiated and developed by former staff member Messele Mamo. He and a group of young volunteers have been developing a Hebrew-Amharic Bible, with parallel text in Hebrew and Amharic. This bilingual Bible will meet an existing need in the Ethiopian Messianic community in Israel by building bridges between the two languages and cultures of the community. The older generation will be able to read the Bible in the language of their present home while referring to their mother tongue. The younger, Hebrew-speaking generation will be able to keep in touch with their Ethiopian roots. The Bible is to be printed in the coming months and will be distributed free of charge.



MEDIA REVIEW



Caspari center publishes a weekly review of material published in the Israeli press documenting attitudes toward Messianic Jews, the Mission, and the Christian faith. To receive the Media Review free of charge by email, send a request to subscriptions@caspari.com or sign up on our website: http://www.caspari.com/media_review/.

According to the *Jerusalem Post* (October 6), "A wave of irate protest silenced a Jews for Jesus radio campaign last week." The slogan of the radio campaign is "Yeshu [a derogatory form of Jesus] equals Yeshua [accent on penultimate syllable] equals *yeshua* [accent on last syllable]."

The ad is intended to inform listeners that "Jesus is equivalent to redemption" and concludes with the question, "Confused? Call for more information." Contacted for his response, Dan Sered, "head of Jews for Jesus in Israel," said, "All we are trying to do is share our faith. We just want to provide Israelis with an opportunity to know that Jesus died for our sins and rose on the third day. Most Israelis have never gotten the chance to hear about Jesus . . ."

The radio ad was part of a wider publicity campaign which included full-page ads in the daily national papers, while JFJ members also distributed literature in Nahariyah, Kiryat Shmona, and the Haifa area.

Caspari Project Update:



- Lev Lesharet has started up for a new semester with 12 motivated students. This year most of the students are from the north, so we have relocated the course to Haifa.

- Open Lectures have been held once a month at the Caspari Center since September, with the center filled to capacity at every lecture. The next lecture will be held on December 9, at 7 PM. The lecturer will

be Daniel Gruber, who will speak on the topic "God's Law, the New Covenant and the Messianic Age."

- On December 5 we will host the second Shabbat School Seminar of 2008. Registration has started and over 100 teachers have already signed up.



- In connection with the Shabbat School Seminar we are pleased to introduce our new Children's Activity Book: *Simon Peter – Friend of Jesus*. The book is the second in a series of activity books for use in Shabbat schools or at home. The book has been developed by our graphic designer, Heidi Tohmola.



Support Caspari

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Prayer Requests

- Messele, his family, and his studies in Romania

- The Ethiopian believers and congregations in Israel, especially the children and youth

- The upcoming Shabbat School seminar

- The new semester of Hearts to Serve leadership training program

- Our staff, recruitment of new workers in Israel and the U.S., and visas.

If you would like to know more about the Caspari Center and its activities, contact:
e-mail: caspari@caspari.com
or visit our website:
www.caspari.com

You can support our work by prayer, volunteering, or financial gifts to help with individual projects or the general work of the center.

