



Caspari
Center

for Biblical and
Jewish Studies

ISRAEL - USA



REPORTER

TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF JEWISH BELIEVERS IN JESUS

November 2005

Caspari Center: Building on Common Ground

By Steve Engstrom

“So, what do you do?”

It's the most common question I get asked on airplanes. And when I am sitting next to an Israeli, I always wonder what to say.

I want to say something that builds common ground. Maybe I should say, “I work in Christian education.” But that puts me off at a distance. In another category. On the “other team.” Not much connection there.

What I often say is something like, “I work with a Christian organization that provides educational resources for Jewish believers in Jesus.” That's a mouthful. And it is such a new and strange idea to my new friend that it usually leaves them a bit speechless. “Oh.” Christians, Jews, Jesus, education ... what?

Is there common ground? Is there a connection between Christians, Jews, and Jesus? Well, we know there is! But when you bring it all together, you confront a big challenge.

The challenge is that, in the minds of many Jewish people, *Jews cannot believe in Jesus*. It just plays automatically whenever the topic comes up.

And that false assumption gets to the heart of what Caspari is all about. We want to change that way of thinking. We want Jews to know that a Jew *can* believe in Jesus, and, for that matter, we want Christians to believe it, too!

There have always been Jews who believed in Jesus. In fact, Christian theology would not even exist if it were not for the early Jewish theologians who expressed their faith in “Y'shua” in ways that were biblically faithful.

Well, this sounds pretty simple, but it's not that easy to change people's minds. The invisible wall separating Christians and Jews has developed over a long and difficult history, and it will take time to deconstruct it.

But that's our mission. And I invite you to join me in changing the way people think.

Caspari Center will continue to play a significant role in providing Jewish missionaries, Israeli congregations, and the global Body of Messiah with cutting edge resources for research, evangelism and discipleship. 2006 will be a significant year for us as we publish the first volume of our *Jewish Believers in Jesus* history project, launch related documentary film projects, and develop our teacher and leadership training seminars for congregations in Israel.

So what is the common ground? It's the Gospel. As Paul writes, it's “the power of God, the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” Jews *can* believe in Jesus. They can, and they do. Let's work together to make it known.





Carl Paul Caspari
1814 - 1892

The Strategic Plan of the Caspari International Board

OUR VISION is to see a strong and growing presence of Jewish believers in Jesus in the midst of the Jewish people, and to see a strong and growing presence of Jewish believers in the midst of the Church.

OUR MISSION as an educational center is to strengthen the movement of Jewish believers in Jesus - in particular in Israel - and to influence the churches to help strengthen the movement of Jewish believers in Jesus through education, research and publications.

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS are that:

1. A growing number of children and youth/young adults in the Messianic movement in Israel remain in the faith and be equipped for ministry;
2. A growing number of churches in the diaspora increase their support for the growth of the movement of Jewish believers in Jesus;
3. A growing number of academic programs and publications become available in our five focus areas: (a) the Jewish Roots of Christianity, (b) the History of Jewish Believers in Jesus, (c) the Present Situation of the JBJ Movement, (d) Jewish Evangelism and its Biblical Basis, and (e) the Relationship Between Jewish Believers in Jesus and Gentile Christians.

OUR OBJECTIVES are to be:

- A leading educational center for the Messianic movement in Israel.
- A significant educational center for churches in the diaspora.
- A leading network center for academic study and research in our focus areas.

Coins, Coins and More Coins: A California Bible Study Group's Special Gift

This week we received a tender letter from the leader of a group studying the book of Romans. She is a Jewish believer who found the Caspari Center website. She writes, "When I was teaching Romans last spring, and we got to Romans 9-11, and then also Paul's collection from the Gentile churches to the Jerusalem saints - I mentioned the Caspari Center as something that Paul would be happy to see exists today - the concern of Gentile churches for the Jerusalem saints, and the collaboration of Gentile and Jewish believers in Jerusalem for God's kingdom." The group saved their coins all summer and is sending a generous donation along with individual notes for the Caspari staff in Jerusalem.



Dear Friends of Caspari Center,

As the new CEO, I want to thank you for your faithful support. Caspari Center is just three years old in America, and we are poised to have a strong impact on Jewish ministry and evangelism.

As you will note from this newsletter, we are set to launch the first volume of our "Jewish Believers in Jesus" history project.

This groundbreaking effort is significant for us because it is the start of a multi-volume, multi-year scholarly project that will radically change the way Jews and Christians think about Jews who believe in Jesus.

We will show that Jewish believers in Jesus have always played a significant role in the life of Messiah's Body, and still do today. Jewish believers in Jesus have an authentic history of their own.

2006 is also the year that we will launch the development of our documentary film project that will make our academic work available to the mainstream public, not only in America, but all over the world.

Our documentary films will tell the story in a compelling way, and will reach the masses. We will be excited to share more about this with you early in 2006.

I just want you to know how much I value your contribution to the mission of Caspari Center. Your participation allows us to accomplish the awesome task God has given us to do for the growth of His Body and His Kingdom. Thank you.

*Shalom in Yeshua,
Steve*

The long awaited *History of Jewish Believers in Jesus* has arrived!

Caspari Center is launching the publication of its groundbreaking research on Jewish believers in Jesus with the publication of *We Have Found the Messiah: Jewish Believers in Jesus in Antiquity*.

Led by chief editor Dr. Oskar Skarsaune, our history project will have a significant impact on Jewish ministry and evangelism. This project will show that Jewish believers in Jesus participated in the theological development of the Body of Messiah through its most important stages. It will show that Jews have always believed in Jesus, and have their own authentic history to celebrate and promote.

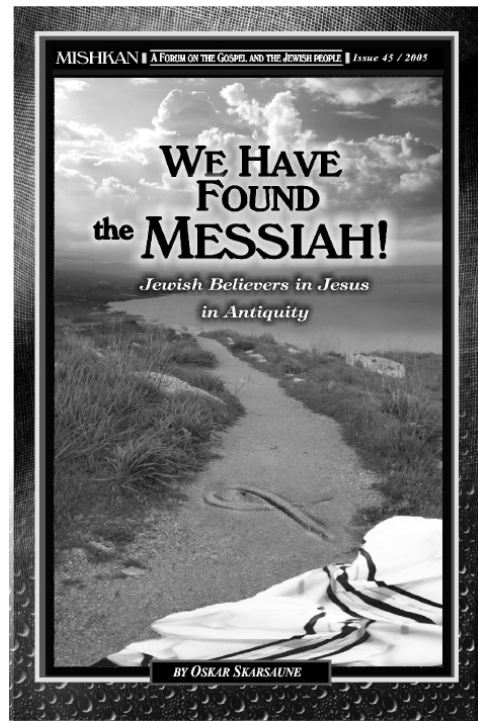
Professor Dr. Oskar Skarsaune writes, "I have not always held the views propounded in this book. As a young student of church history, I adopted the picture of Jewish Christianity presented in the textbook: the first community of Jewish believers in Jerusalem came to a tragic end during the Jewish War against Rome, 66–70 CE."

He continues, "I will conclude by emphasizing one point. Most Jewish believers were part of mixed communities, made up of a minority of Jewish and a majority of gentile believers. But though they were a minority, the Jewish believers were a very significant minority. They were significant not least because they were the theological mentors of early gentile Christians. Because of them, mainstream gentile Christianity never completely abandoned its Jewish roots, and for this, and much else, later generations of Christians owe them great gratitude."

This will be an important addition to your library and will make a meaningful Christmas gift for anyone interested in exploring our Judeo-Christian heritage.

You can share in this exciting research project by ordering your copy of *We Have Found the Messiah*, a condensed version of the full scholarly work published by Hendrickson Publishers and available in 2006.

This condensed version is written by Dr. Skarsaune, and is free with a \$36 annual subscription to our journal *Mishkan*. Non-subscribers can purchase a copy for just \$19.



Born to Sing!

Order original Caspari-designed Christmas letterhead and matching envelopes to remind everyone you know of the true meaning of Christmas.

Letterhead and envelopes sold separately.
Wrapped in packages of 50.
\$5.00 per package.

Ancient and Living Stones Trips to Israel:

March 2006
Sponsored by Trinity Lutheran Church,
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Call 630-668-3328 for a brochure

Our Jerusalem Office Needs Your Help

The Caspari Center in downtown Jerusalem is in need of a new home. The ceiling of the current rented office is leaking and we have outgrown the available space. Having our own lecture room for the Caspari Leadership Training and Sabbath School Teacher's Training would also lessen program expenses.

Do you know someone who might be interested in helping Caspari pay for a rent-to-own space we have located in Jerusalem, which includes office, lecture room, and dorm space?

Call 630-668-3328 for more information.

Jew or Gentile??

The conflict about what it means to be Jewish, and the tensions between believing Jews and Orthodox Jews that Dr. Skarsaune references in his history (see p. 3), are still very real today.

Caspari Center regularly reviews Israeli newspapers and provides information on the Messianic movement, Hebrew-Christian relations, and government trends in a free *Media Review*. Sign up at www.caspari.com. This can serve as a great prayer guide for your congregation or your daily devotions.

Today, I am in prayer over the following situations and the people's reactions. Their courage and faith sustain me and teach valuable lessons. I would like to share their statements of faith.

Arad

Perhaps you are following the events taking place in Arad. Arad is located in the Judean desert, west of the Dead Sea, near Masada. The *Media Review* reports that members of the Orthodox (Haredi) community have been seriously harassing the small Messianic community in Arad. The Haredim have staged protests on believer's lawns, threatened women and children, taken photographs to distribute in the community, and set property on fire. Congregation members have filed police reports.

One member claims, "there is a real threat to our lives." The article goes on to say, "We get on with our business quietly and do not harass someone to believe (as we do)." The article ends by quoting the "congregation" as saying that "we will not get desperate or give up," and "let no one delude himself into thinking that we will leave town ... this act (of arson) only strengthens our faith in Yeshua the Messiah who will bring justice to the light."

Shmaya Tennenbaum, a "protestor" and member of the town council, says, "We are not against these people living in Arad, it is open to all people." He says "we are going to Holy War because, in our understanding, these people are not Jews but Christians ... who want to convert Jews."

Ariel

In a meeting between Ronen Nachman, the Mayor of Ariel, and representatives of the former Gaza settlement Netzarim, who will make their temporary home in Ariel, Nachman said that he hopes that such a move will "restore the balance of his town" whose population includes "many Christians."



He expresses his hopes that "this will curb rumors of missionary activity in town." Ariel is described as a town that has "about one hundred Messianic Jews." One Russian Messianic Jewish immigrant says, "We believe in Yeshua but see ourselves as entirely Jewish." She also says, "In our view Christianity is a continuation of Judaism and 'Yeshu' is the Messiah, we keep both the Jewish and Christian festivals."

The Knesset

In a report dated Sept. 1, Knesset member Shlomo Benizri has proposed a bill that demands that "anyone preaching or carrying out any kind of missionary activity – either to an individual or publicly – that causes a Jew to convert to Christianity must face three years in prison." Benizri says, "it is mostly Christians from America and Europe as well as Jews who have converted to Christianity that have one objective: the extinction and the obliteration of the memory of the remnant of the people of Israel."

The Messianic congregations in Israel are growing – slowly, but they are growing. Interestingly, 42% of congregation members are Russian speaking, as Jews from all over the world are making their home in Israel. For the first time since before Jesus walked this earth, the majority of the world's Jews under the age of 17 are living in Israel.

Caspari Center needs and greatly appreciates your prayers and financial assistance as we continue to do the ministry we were entrusted with in God's Great Commission: to "go and make disciples."

Kathi Graham

North American Director



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