



Caspari Center NEWS



From the CEO

Elisabeth E Levy

Dear Partners and Supporters of the Caspari Center

The days are getting longer and warmer, and the almond trees in Israel are in bloom. The almond tree blossoms very early in the year, and the flowers appear on bare twigs. The Hebrew name for the tree could also be translated "the tree of watching"—in Hebrew *etz haShaked* (Jer 1:11). It is a play on words, with the next verse, Jeremiah 1:12, saying, "I am watching (*shoked*) over my word and I will put it into action."

We at the Caspari Center are waiting and working to see the Word of God give new life to many people in the land.

Budding trees and blooming flowers speak of new life. They are signs of resurrection. With this March newsletter, we thank you, our readers, for all your support and wish you all a blessed Easter and/or Passover, each according to his or her preference and tradition.

May the God of Israel give you life.



Developing a Messianic Liturgy

Ingjerd Våge
Volunteer



The directors of Caspari Center, Elisabeth Levy and Alec Goldberg, are involved in creating a Messianic liturgy. Here, Alec answers some questions about this project.

Why does the Messianic movement need a liturgy?

Most of the Israeli Messianic congregations are very similar to "free" evangelical and charismatic churches, with unstructured prayers and contemporary worship. This, too, is a kind of liturgy, but over the years more and more believers have begun to see the value of a more traditional worship service, with a fixed order and prayer texts.

Why is this so?

One reason could be the Israeli *balagan* (lack of order and stability) that is characteristic of many areas of our culture. With the widespread *balagan*, it is understandable that some people who are tired of it don't want anything that even remotely resembles it in their place of worship. Another possible reason is a longing for deeper roots. Both Judaism and traditional Christianity are liturgical, and since the Messianic movement claims a unique connection to the early Jewish movement of Yeshua-believers, it would be very natural to see Messianic Jews restore the kind of liturgical service and lifestyle that characterized the first generations of Yeshua's followers.



What will be important in such a liturgy?

The first important thing to say is that we are not creating *the* liturgy, but a liturgy. We are not a rabbinical council or a collegium of cardinals or another authoritative body, but a working group that is trying to stimulate theological thinking and offer an option which can be rejected altogether or accepted and developed further. We would like the liturgy to

reflect the Jewishness of faith in Yeshua by drawing from the riches of the traditional Jewish prayers. At the same time, certain elements of Messianic worship are not present—or at least not evident—in a typical Shabbat synagogue service, and this fact will necessitate borrowing from Christian sources.

Who will develop the liturgy? What kind of theological qualifications do the people involved have?

The group consists of Rev. David Pileggi, the rector of Christ Church in the Old City of Jerusalem; Boaz Michael, director of First Fruits of Zion;



Yoel Ben David, who serves with Jews for Jesus; Mrs. Elisabeth Levy, Caspari Center's CEO; and myself. When Elisabeth and I discussed the candidates, Ben David was a natural candidate because Immanuel Church, which he attends, had previously expressed interest in having this kind of liturgy. Michael and Pileggi represent the Jewish and Christian traditions respectively. With this wonderful team, we hope that the resulting liturgy will adequately reflect the best of both.

Where are you now in the process?

We are just in the beginning stage and have met a couple of times.

What role does Caspari Center play in this endeavor?

We are facilitators who are actively involved at every stage. We hope to publish the liturgy as a brochure and to make it available to Messianic congregations worldwide.



Anne-Mette Ladegaard
Volunteer



Messianic Jews Searching for Identity

Throughout history, the church and the synagogue have agreed that one could not be both a believer in Jesus and Jewish at the same time. Alexander Goldberg, Israel Director of the Caspari Center, talks about the joys and challenges of the Messianic movement in Israel.

Greatest Joys

"The main joy is the growing openness of Israeli society to the gospel. It is growing very slowly, but steadily. Even in the 12 years that I have lived in Israel, one can see a difference," says Goldberg.

Another great joy is seeing the growth of the movement. According to a 1999 Caspari Center survey, Israeli Messianic congregations comprised about 5,000 members at that time. Though there hasn't been an official survey since, Goldberg estimates that the number is at least 10,000 today.

"New congregations are being established, and existing congregations are constantly growing; pastors and ministers are undergoing theological training; new ministries are being created to help the movement mature," says Goldberg.

Identity Problems

One of the many challenges the Messianic movement faces today is the problem of identity. For almost 2,000 years, it has not been possible to be a Jew and believe in Jesus.

"Today Messianic Jews challenge this millennia-old consensus between church and synagogue by pointing back to the earliest Jewish followers of Jesus," says Goldberg.

How does one live out one's faith in Jesus in a Jewish context after 2,000 years of difficult Jewish-Christian relations? "It is a big and complicated question, which many Messianic Jews struggle with," he says.

Money from Abroad

Another challenge, according to Goldberg, is that financial support from foreign sources can cause problems in local congregations. He believes that in their eagerness to bless the Jewish people, many foreign individuals, churches, and mission organizations unintentionally encourage the financial dependence of local Messianic congregations. He explains, "Although their help relieves some financial burdens, it has also been known to create unhealthy alliances and relationships that weaken us spiritually."

"There is nothing wrong in supporting a good cause, of course, and we should all be looking for divine guidance and opportunities to do that. There are also different stages in congregational development. Sometimes external financial support is warranted, especially at the planting phase, when the congregation is being birthed. But in the long-term, the health of a local congregation depends to a significant degree on its ability to sustain at least the larger part of its activities from the pockets of its own members," says Goldberg. "These good-hearted friends may sometimes need more wisdom and discernment in their stewardship of resources: in some cases, the hungry do better with a fishing rod than with a fish."

Opposition from Judaism

A third challenge the Messianic movement is facing today is the resistance that Messianic Jews encounter from Judaism. "Although Israel is a democracy, it is a very imperfect one," Goldberg says. "Therefore Messianic Jews experience discrimination in various forms, and occasionally our leaders encounter real persecution." How can this challenge be addressed? "Do we fearfully hide our light and lose our saltiness, or do we stand tall? Do we compromise our convictions, hoping to be accepted and enjoy peace and tranquility, or do we stand our ground, pay the price, and endure hardship when necessary? These questions are challenging, but they need to be answered," explains Goldberg.

"The position of Jewish believers is unique both in Jewish society and in the universal church. Therefore who in today's church can serve as a role model that can inspire us and lead the way through opposition and persecution?" Goldberg asks.

Course for Danish Theological Students

Ministry Update

David Serner

Director of International Studies



In January we had the pleasure of being involved in a 10-day trip for theological students from MF-Aarhus in Denmark that included intensive studying and sightseeing in the land of the Bible. The two main guides were former Caspari director of international studies and current general secretary of the Danish Israel Mission, Bodil Skjøtt, and a New Testament professor, Morten Hørning, who took his students down a mental ladder to the depths and wonders of the New and Old Testaments. The history of Israel, the geography of the land, and the peoples of Israel together form an incredible prism into all the disciplines of theology, including mission and interreligious interaction. All lectures were held "on location" and expanded into discussion and reflection about the issues of the gospel, the Crucifixion, righteousness, and much, much more. One student said. "This course has opened my understanding of the Bible—I have been challenged in regards to the contextualization of the gospel . . . in the present day." We at the Caspari Center were delighted to assist in a course that motivates contextualization of the gospel and enhances people's view of what that might mean. We hope our Lord will continue revealing himself both to them and to us.



media review ✂

Caspari Center publishes a weekly review of material from the Israeli press documenting attitudes toward Messianic Jews, the mission, and the Christian faith. To receive the Media Review free of charge by email, sign up at our website, www.caspari.com.

Christians in Israel

Yediot Ahronot; Israel Hayom; Haaretz (English and Hebrew); HaModia; Globes; The Jerusalem Post, January 18; The Jerusalem Post, January 21; Yediot Yerushalayim, January 22, 2016

Graffiti reading "Death to the heretic Christians enemies of Israel," "Christians to hell," and other hate speech statements was sprayed on the walls of the Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem's Old City. The Latin Patriarchate has issued a statement, saying, "The graffiti is not only against Jesus Christ, but calls for slaughter of Christians. . . . How long will this vandalism go on?"

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, referring to the act in the weekly cabinet meeting, said: "This is an action deserving of every condemnation. . . . Israel is a place where Christians and all other religions enjoy freedom of worship."

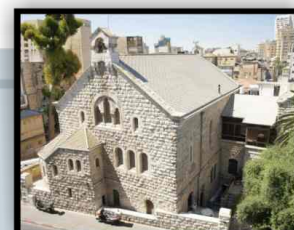
The Pope and the Vatican

Maariv, January 17; Yediot Ahronot; Israel Hayom; Haaretz (English and Hebrew), January 18, 2016

On Sunday, January 17, Pope Francis visited the Great Synagogue in Rome. During his visit the pope denounced all forms of religious violence, and particularly all forms of anti-Semitism. He called Jews "Christians' elder brothers" and joined a standing ovation to honor Holocaust survivors in the audience.

Prayer Requests Please pray for . . .

- "Jesus the Jew" course in April.
- Upcoming Shabbat school seminars in Haifa and Netanya.
- The process of choosing new volunteers for next year.
- New staff members who are joining us during the spring and summer.





Devotional thoughts

Michelle Van Loon
US Administrator

Looking for Loopholes

"But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'"
– Luke 10:29

According to one tradition, four hundred or so years before Jesus was born, a Jewish priest decided he wanted a pagan wife. When he lost his position over this choice, he did what any self-respecting religious expert would do. He started his own cult-like religion.

His group of followers—the Samaritans—lived at the ragged edges of the Jewish world in Israel. There had been some bloody religious battles between the two groups, and the Samaritans had at one point even desecrated the temple in Jerusalem. The Samaritans were rabid in their devotion to their outsider status. For their part, the Jews knew the safest, simplest, holiest way to handle them was to stay miles away from them.

So when Jesus was quizzed by a Jewish religious professional looking for a loophole in his teaching, he couldn't have picked a more shocking character to demonstrate the radical life of his kingdom to which he was calling them.

"Who am I really required to care for?" a religious man inquired of Jesus. "What is the least I can do and still be OK before God?" Luke 10:25-37 carries the full account of the conversation.

Jesus responded to the man by taking him to the most dangerous terrain he knew. The steep, inhospitable stretch of road to Jericho was a home to ruthless criminals. The man in Jesus' story was robbed, beaten to a pulp, and left to die. Jesus grounded the story in his hearers' real-life experience.

Jesus then describes the response of the two religious Jews who discovered this bleeding, naked, dying victim. Jesus' listeners knew that these men would only maintain their ritual purity if they didn't touch the man. It's worth noting that God's Torah rules about purity had provision built in to them for those who failed to keep them. If these two religious men had really wanted to stop, they could have. They could have then dealt with the spiritual consequences of touching this near-corpse.

But they didn't want to stop.

When Jesus introduces an unclean, unholy Samaritan to the story to do what the religious professionals wouldn't do, it must have shocked his hearers. The Samaritan showed the wounded man care in actions that cost him in terms of his finances, plans, and likely even his own religious position in the Samaritan community.

Most of us think of the Samaritan as a Boy Scout type who was simply doing his good deed for the day. In reality, when the Samaritan cleaned the stranger, bandaged him with strips of his own clothing, transported him to a place he could heal, and then paid the bill, he wasn't trying to earn a good guy merit badge.

Jesus wanted his hearers to know that this was what God's love looked like. May it be said of each of us that we are Good Samaritans, characterized by self-giving love for those who don't always fit neatly into our theological camps, comfort zones, and congregations.



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"Equipping His people for works of service, so that the body of Messiah may be built up" Ephesians 4:12

If you would like to know more about the Caspari Center and its activities, write to 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.