



Caspari Center NEWS

September 2015

תשע"ו

Happy New Year 5776 —Or, Calendars in Conflict

Entering a new year is always special. In a way, it gives us a new start, a feeling that it's possible to leave something behind. According to the Jewish calendar, in the month of September we will enter the year תשע"ו, or 5776.

Almost every date noted in Israel will have two entries, one beside the other: one according to the Jewish calendar (5776), and the other according to the Gregorian calendar (2015–2016). The first calendar counts the years since Adam and the creation of the world, and the second counts the years since the birth of the Messiah, Yeshua/Jesus.

During the first century, in the time of Jesus, another calendar existed as well. The calendar used today in Israel was the most common calendar in the first century, and this calendar follows the cycles of the moon. The other calendar in use was a solar calendar. This means that the Jewish holidays did not fall on the same day of the week on the two calendars. The lunar calendar was used in the temple in Jerusalem. The Essenes, who lived by the northern part of the Dead Sea, in Qumran, distanced themselves from the lunar calendar and instead followed the solar calendar.

According to this old solar calendar, the year numbered 364 full days, and consequently consisted of exactly 52 weeks.

The New Year, like every holiday, would, according to this calendar, always fall on a different day than it did on the lunar calendar, and Passover would always fall on a Wednesday, and thus start on Tuesday night. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, we can read the complaints of the Qumran community about priests from the temple in Jerusalem coming down to Qumran and disturbing the community on their Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), when to the priests following the lunar calendar it was an ordinary day.

It was the lunar calendar which prevailed, and this calendar is still the official calendar of the State of Israel today. But the fact that two different calendars existed in the first century might help us to resolve a discrepancy among the Gospels: Was the Last Supper that Jesus celebrated with his disciples a Pesach/Passover meal or not? For centuries, scholars have disagreed on this issue because of the difference between the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and the Gospel of John. According to John, Jesus died when the Passover lambs were slaughtered in the temple, but according to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus ate a Passover meal with his disciples before he died. Many scholars used to claim that we have to choose between the two possibilities. Maybe the solution to this discrepancy is that the Gospel of John was written based on one calendar (the official lunar calendar

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

Ephesians 4:12



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used in the temple), and the synoptic writers were following the solar calendar.

Those of us living in Israel will celebrate the next New Year in September, according to the official Jewish lunar calendar. The Caspari staff wishes all our readers and supporters a Happy New Year 5776 from Jerusalem.

Elisabeth E. Levy
International Director

Being Prepared for the Frontline

This summer Hamas published some videos from their youth camps in the Middle East. Only 100 kilometers from Jerusalem, they literally trained kids for battle. It was a very different kind of summer camp than people expect in the Western world. The boys were taught to jump through a burning wheel and to reload their little guns in a hurry, and to crawl with those guns through narrow, dusty alleys.

I wondered how Hamas motivates their next generation. Is it that the kids simply were not given another option? I felt sad after seeing those serious small faces, even though some of them seemed to be proud to be given such an “important role” by their most respected leaders.



My point is not about politics, but about being well prepared. How to prepare kids in general? Paul reminds us about knowing the plans of our enemy (2 Cor 2:11). And I am sure we know our enemy better than Hamas or ISIS, since the enemy is not some other nation or human being. The enemy is there even though we are tempted to ignore him or to give him a political name. But how much do we need to tell our young ones about spiritual warfare, or even the ongoing conflict?

Years ago I was at a Messianic congregation's children's camp in the Negev. One night all the kids were woken up in the middle of the night. “The enemy is here, everybody . . . wake up NOW!!!” one of the leaders shouted through the loudspeaker. In minutes everyone was fully awake. The scared kids were gathered in the dark yard. I was in shock. This is causing the kids trauma! I thought—but later I would change my mind completely.

The enemy is not some other nation

Now awake, the scared campers were told that everything was actually fine, but they had an important lesson to learn. The whole episode was to remind them how the Jews felt on that historical Pesach night, when they had to escape quickly from Egypt. After that night the story became real. This became an eye opener for my Western mindset: When I was a child at camp, our preparation for Easter was to draw cute bunnies and colorful eggs. It had nothing to do with reality.

In the end, the campers also had lots of joyful activities before going back to bed. The next morning, they had time to sleep in before Bible lessons. At the end of the camp, many kids rated that night as the best part of the whole week. The same tradition is still going on, and kids wait for that specific night more than anything else in the whole camp. Kids want to be safely prepared for something real.



Many Jewish feasts teach about being prepared spiritually. Rosh Hashanah, the first of the High Holy Days, is coming. Its biblical name is Yom Teruah—the Feast of Trumpets. The feast is not about the kind of trumpet played in a modern orchestra, but rather a shofar—an ancient musical instrument made of a ram's horn, which is still used for Jewish religious purposes. In biblical times the blowing of the trumpets was understood to be a call to repent and prepare oneself to stand before God.

During my summer vacation in Finland, I visited some congregations and told them about Israel and Caspari Center. At one event I taught a hundred kids how to blow a shofar. Kids were queuing up for their turn to try. I remember their happy faces when they made a sound. Boys were excited to blow the very same kind of instrument that Jews played when the walls of Jericho were falling down. They had a chance to touch something very real, something that symbolizes big things spiritually.





I think believers need to prepare children for real life. Not, of course, with the tools of Hamas, but with much better equipment: a strong faith and prayer life. One congregation prepares their own special prayer journals for every child; another teaches their children to memorize practical and powerful Bible verses and to use them in daily life. Kids are also encouraged to give

witness to their non-believing peers despite the possible opposition or even rejection. It is about fearing God, not men, and trusting his love and power, not human wisdom.

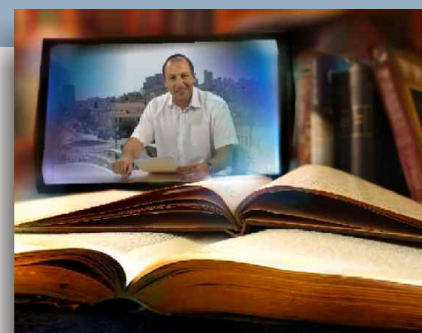
Everything Caspari Center does also prepares believers for the future in some way. Sometimes it is in very practical things, sometimes it is by delving deeper into theological issues or history. All the work being done in the Messianic movement is preparing believers and equipping them with “real stuff”: the full armor of God and spiritual shofars tuned and ready!

Heidi Tohmola
Graphic Designer

Ministry Update

An Oasis in Cyberspace

When the apostle Paul arrived in Athens with the hope of preaching the gospel there, “he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there” (Acts 17:17). Some were interested in his message and brought him to yet another place, which was probably *the* place in Athens for discussing ideas: the Areopagus. In other words, it seems that Paul was using every opportunity to reach people with the Good News.



In the 21st century, that means the gospel should also be in cyberspace. A new opportunity presented itself to Caspari Center this year when we started a new partnership with the Sansa Media Mission in Finland (www.sansa.fi). Thanks to this cooperation we are able to produce Internet TV programs that are available to viewers and listeners at www.oasis-media.tv. Oasis is reaching out with the gospel message to the Russian-speaking world—an audience of about 17,000—and a year and a half ago Caspari’s Israel Director, Alec Goldberg, was asked to join the staff of regular speakers who are featured weekly. We are creating Scripture-based, Jesus-centered programs to share the gospel with Jews and also edify Christians, helping them to read the Bible in its original Jewish context. The number of viewers and their feedback is encouraging, and we are very grateful to the Lord for this new partnership with Finnish Christians.

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.

Political Issues

Yediot Ahronot, August 8, 2015

In a rare decision, Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon instructed that Mordechai Meyer of Ma’ale Adumim (18) be held in administrative detention on suspicion of involvement in the arson at the Church of the Loaves and Fishes on the Sea of Galilee, the arson at Jerusalem’s Dormition Abbey in February 2014, and arson against Palestinian property.

This decision comes as a result of the government’s determination to “fulfill its promises” following the arson at Kfar Duma and the murder of the baby Ali Dawabsheh, and act uncompromisingly against “the danger of Jewish terror.”

Religious Freedom and Rights

Israel Hayom, Maariv, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, August 6, 2015

Rabbi Bentzi Gopstein, head of radical anti-assimilation and anti-missionary organization Lehava, has allegedly stated openly that he supports burning churches in Israel. Gopstein, speaking to a summer camp of the Wolfson yeshiva, stated this opinion as part of a panel dealing with the question of eradicating idol worship. The other two panel members stated their shock concerning Gopstein’s statement, but he remained adamant. Gopstein did state later that “the panel was closed,” that the question before the panel had been a question of theoretical Jewish law (“whether or not people today are obliged to follow Maimonides’ instruction and eliminate idol worship”), that he “was not calling for operative steps,” and that “sermon givers in mosques should be investigated before him.”



What Kind of Fruit Are We Producing?

Matthew 12:22 describes how Jesus healed a blind, mute man, freeing him from the captivity of demonic bondage. In the wake of this miracle, the buzz about who Jesus was began to increase. Could this son of blue-collar tradesman Joseph be the Messiah? Was he the one who would set his people free and lead them into heaven-on-earth?

The religious elites, intimidated by Jesus' popularity at the time, decided to wage a war against him using psychological tactics: they sowed seeds of doubt about Jesus in the people they'd trained to fear and follow them. Only a demon can cast out another demon, they said.

Though they'd talked about him (a habit we call gossip!), Jesus chose to confront them directly: "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand" (Matt 12:25). He went on to ask them a series of rhetorical questions designed to unmask their warped, self-serving behavior. He wanted them to ponder the illogic behind their accusations. Why would the enemy of their souls choose to cooperate with the healing and wholeness that marked the kingdom of God?

In this context, he splashes an impossible image, of a sick tree bearing healthy fruit, onto his listeners' imaginations:

Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. (Matt 12:33–35)

These words served as an important hinge in Jesus' conversation with these religious leaders. Where was the fruit of their ministry? Could they truly see themselves as representatives of the living God when they were consumed with poisoning their hearers with condemnation, suspicion, and impossible standards of behavior?

Jesus knew well they'd prayed the words of Deuteronomy 6:4–9 each day. Loving God completely meant his commandments would be on their hearts. This kind of devotion to God couldn't help but flow from them like living water into each moment of their day. Jesus' questions to them highlighted how their own bitter, vindictive actions reflected the state of their own barren souls.

We at Caspari are committed to helping believers grow in the knowledge of God. But our goal isn't simply to give people information about God. As Jesus' opponents proved again and again throughout his ministry, a well-informed person with a rock-hard heart can only produce rotten fruit. Good fruit is cultivated by the work of the Spirit and reflects the beauty of our risen Messiah, to the praise and glory of the Father. Our prayer is that we will continue to be used of God to help others bear good fruit in their lives. Won't you join us in that prayer?

*Michelle Van Loon
US Administrator*

Prayer Requests

Please pray for . . .

- our new volunteers, Ingjerd and Anne-Mette, and their time in Israel.
- our library system and our new programmer, Yousef.
- those who work to share the gospel with the Jews all over the world.



*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.*