



Caspari Center NEWS

December 2013



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

“To the Jew First” – Amen, But Tell Me How

That the Jewish people need to hear the Good News is, thankfully, clear to many supporters of Israel. The question, then, is how they will hear. Or, rather: How do we present the gospel in such a way that our audience will actually take it to heart?



The above question is important for any communicator, but when it comes to sharing Yeshua with my people, it becomes more than just another good one. How do you speak about God to Holocaust survivors, their children and grandchildren? What do you say if they ask you where this good and all-powerful God was when men, women, and children, old and young, were gassed in Auschwitz *en masse* just for being Jewish? How do you talk about the loving Messiah with those whose genetic memory carries the pain of the murderous Crusades and the Inquisition, of forced conversions and blood libels? How do you communicate a religious message to people allergic to preaching in general, and religious preaching in particular?

**“Sharing the gospel
with the Jewish people
is still like fallow ground.”**

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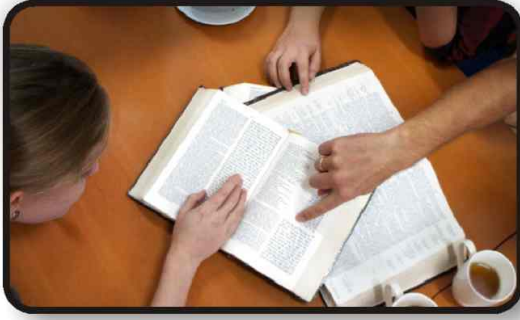
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In search of answers I have to start with the negative – things I won't do. I won't attempt to buy souls, giving humanitarian

aid with one hand and a gospel tract with the other. Instead, I will simply care and love regardless of what comes out of it. I won't preach – I'd rather invite to talk and discuss. I won't justify the church – instead, I will admit its guilt, face and feel the pain, and cry with those who are crying. But what do you call this approach? Is it unheard of? Am I about to invent a wheel?

In a way, sharing the gospel with the Jewish people is still like fallow ground. Over the last 200 years there have been many sincere attempts, some more successful than others. The last 130 years have seen the emergence and steady growth of the Messianic movement – another exciting development. But on the whole, the Jewish people are still largely unreached. So yes, we do need to keep asking, seeking, and knocking in search of God's way – or ways – to share the faith with Jews.

But the idea of abandoning authoritative preaching in favor of conversations with plenty of room for objections and difficult questions is not really new.



One appealing way of doing this is the well-known Alpha course, originally started in the late 1970s by an Anglican parish in London (Holy Trinity Brompton, to be precise). Alpha is now successfully used in over 160 nations by many different denominations, from Orthodox and Roman Catholic to Baptist and Pentecostal. The fact that the Alpha approach seems to work in so many different cultures challenged me to think about whether Israel was still too different for it to take root here as well. Years ago, when I asked a couple of Jerusalem pastors about it, their answer was negative. Why? Israelis don't want to discuss Yeshua in public, was the explanation. It was somewhat discouraging, but later, when pastor

Christian Rasmussen from Immanuel Church in Tel-Aviv called me and suggested I check out Alpha for myself – something I'd never really done properly – I happily agreed. And in about a year I got a phone call from another pastor.

Michael Beener from Sderot asked Caspari to introduce the faith to a group of his fellow Russian-speaking Israelis. The rest of our story is told by him in the interview below, but the net result is this: We know that Alpha does work, even in Israel. For the moment, it's being used with Russian immigrants, who are more open to Yeshua and don't mind discussing him in a group. True, native Israelis still prefer one-on-one conversations, but it's okay: God is in charge of timing, so we are not in a hurry. Where a net isn't needed yet, let's keep fishing with an ordinary rod! In the meantime, Caspari is planning to process our experience of adapting Alpha to the Jewish context and to share it with all who are willing to learn. After all, we are a teaching ministry, aren't we?

Alec Goldberg

A phone interview with Michael Beener

[Sderot, Israel]

How did you get the idea of having an Alpha course?

Our congregation runs evangelistic projects in our city.

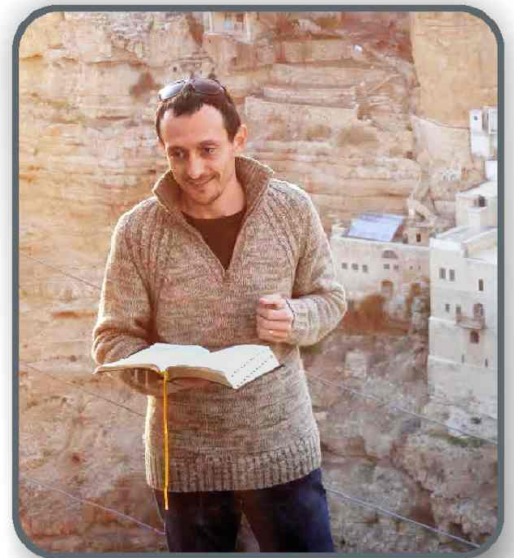
One project is organizing bus tours to various Jewish and Christian holy sites. We have them once or twice a month, and make them affordable. Our identity is no secret from the outset – we state very clearly who we are and what we believe. As we come to the sites, we read the relevant Scriptures and explain them. We have seen that this is a great way to present the gospel to Israelis in Israel. And over the course of several bus tours, some people become open enough to the gospel to ask Jesus into their hearts. So we began to search for a way to follow up on our work with them.

And you contacted a teaching ministry like Caspari Center?

We realized we need to teach these people the foundations of the faith. But many of them have a higher education, and they either were or are still working as teachers, engineers, etc. So we felt we should find professional teachers, and one of my friends referred me to Caspari. My wife Dina and I met with Alec Goldberg, and together we decided that this should be given a fair try.

How did your partnership develop?

With neither Alec nor us having any prior experience, we were a little cautious at the beginning, and therefore planned for only six meetings. The first afternoon, we had 15 people, and it soon became obvious that their interest was very real. In the format we use, they are given freedom to ask all kinds of questions, disagree, and argue, and this is one of the reasons that they like to come. We then decided to continue the meetings, without knowing what this would lead to. Today (a year later), out of those 15 people, 4 have joined the congregation. Two of them are definitely born again. Those who have not joined yet are asking to continue the meetings.





So what are your plans?

We shall go on with the gatherings, because the interest is not waning, and a few new people have joined – the participants are bringing their friends, and we also advertise the course on our tours. We have now had lectures on many different topics, so I am going to start a new round soon, beginning all over again. We hope to have some new people after the next several tours.

Thank you, Michael, and God bless you and your work!

Thank you, too!

Alec Goldberg

mediareview



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 on our website at www.caspari.com.

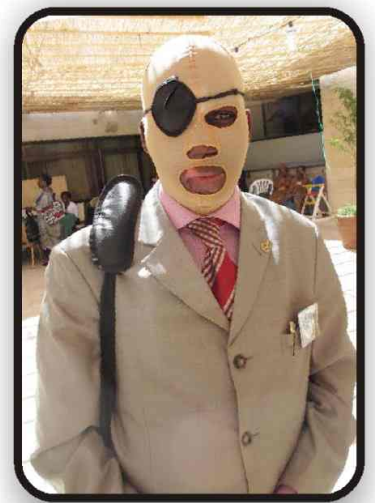
Conversion to Christianity

Yisrael HaYom, October 25, 2013

This two-page article focuses on Umar Mulinde, a Muslim convert to Christianity.

Umar Mulinde is a Ugandan pastor who has been receiving treatment in Israel for the past two years after his face was burned in an acid attack outside his church in Uganda. The reason for the attack was Mulinde's "apostasy" – he was born into a Muslim family (the 52nd of 54 children), but converted to Christianity at the age of 18 when someone presented him with a Christian New Testament. Mulinde converted in secret, but it wasn't long before his Muslim community got wind of his conversion and began persecuting him. His family disowned him, and years of abuse culminated in the acid attack that nearly killed him. The attackers left a note for Mulinde, explaining why they want to kill him: "1. Umar converted to Christianity. 2. He promotes love for Israel. 3. He preaches against Islam. 4. He dared to disagree with Shari'ah law."

Even after the attack, Mulinde was not safe in Uganda – someone tried to inject him with poison as he lay helpless in his hospital bed. He was flown to India, where a large Muslim community threatened to kill him. Some of his Christian and Jewish friends banded together and managed to fly him to Israel for treatment. He arrived here in January 2012. It was in Israel that his life was saved. Says Mulinde: "I came to Israel in bad shape. I couldn't swallow, I couldn't speak, I couldn't move my head and neck. My body was rotting. I lost my nose and my mouth dropped downwards." The Israeli medical system did wonders for Mulinde, and doctors here have restored his face in remarkable ways. "My soul has been spiritually bound to this place for decades," says Mulinde, "and now also my body."



Umar Mulinde, 2012

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.

What I Needed Most

"Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11)

God's provision comes to us in many different shapes and sizes. And sometimes, he uses us as provision in the life of another person.

"Our driver is running a few minutes late. Is that OK?" The voice on the other end of the phone waited for my answer.

What was I supposed to say? I'd been sitting in an office with nothing much to do and a stack of worries and tasks on my mind. I couldn't leave to go tackle some of the items in that stack until the guy came to pick up his equipment. "Sure. I'll be here."

I watched the minutes tick by like migrating geese. At last, there was a knock on the door. "Sorry about the delay." A man in his early forties wiped a bead of sweat from his forehead. "Hot one out there, eh?"

We talked through the logistics of how he'd get the aging copier out of the office building and into his truck, and discovered we had an acquaintance in common. He busied himself unplugging cables and readying the machine for transport. He asked me about my work.

"My primary job is writing," I told him. I explained that in addition to that work, I did a variety of other jobs on a part-time basis, including serving as the U.S. administrator for the Caspari Center.

He knew of Caspari's work, he said. Then he asked me what kind of writing I did.

When I tell people I've written two books about the parables of Yeshua, the conversation usually goes in one of two directions. Either they smile at me like I am a little nuts and change the subject, or they begin to tell me a little about their own faith story.

Our ensuing conversation was in the latter camp, but with a confessional twist. For a moment, he looked like he was about to break down, then the words poured out of him like a river. "This economy has been brutal on my business. I'm the owner, but can't afford to pay a delivery driver right now. I am a person of faith and love to share it, but the first and fifteenth of each month, when I have to pay bills, I take my eyes off of Jesus. I'm scared." He paused, an attempt to dam the river. His face reddened a bit. "I don't know why I'm telling you this . . ."

I nodded. Maybe he thought that because I wrote a book, I'd have a solution for his fear. Honestly, I'm a little scared these days, too, in several different areas of my life. I shared briefly about one of my own current struggles, and referenced the words of Scripture we pray expressing trust in the one who gives us our daily bread.

Our conversation came to a resting place. "I better get going," he said. "But before I do, I was wondering if you'd think it was weird if we prayed together."

Weird? It was the only logical place this conversation could go. We bowed our heads and prayed for one another. After we said our amens, he turned to leave.

"Hey, thanks," he said. "By the way, my name is John."

"Nice to meet you, John. I'm Michelle."

As the door closed behind him, God provided exactly what I needed that day – a transcendent moment in him that reminded me that he knows exactly what I need most.

Michelle Van Loon

Prayer Requests

Please pray for

- *December 27 Shabbat school seminar in Netanya*
- *Promoting the Alpha course in Israel*
- *New teachers to partner with*
- *New congregations to serve*

