



Caspari Center NEWS



September 2013

I Have a Dream . . .

“The French philosopher and writer Blaise Pascal once said, ‘A servant can do two things: He can go behind, carrying the suitcases, or he can go in front, carrying the lamp.’ My hope and dream is that the Caspari Center will do both. We are in the land to serve the Messianic communities and the Jewish believers in Jesus, according to their needs,” says Elisabeth Eriksen Levy, the new Caspari Center CEO from Norway, of her vision for the ministry.

“I have always been very interested in Judaism and the Jewish people, in their history and traditions,” says Elisabeth, who entered her new role in August.

Elisabeth’s history with Israel and also with the Caspari Center began a long time ago. As a young adult in Norway, Elisabeth became acquainted with the Norwegian Church Ministry to Israel, the organization under which Caspari Center was established. As a student at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, she took part in a study group led by Caspari Center’s first director, Ole Christian Kvarme. Elisabeth also worked for the Bible Society in Jerusalem for six years. And now, having just moved back to Israel from Norway, Elisabeth, her Israeli husband, and their two teenage daughters feel that they have returned home.

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



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Elisabeth’s vision for Caspari Center is twofold. “We will keep on serving Messianic congregations as we have always done. I would like to help the Messianic movement to become even more united and to help build strong relationships with both church and synagogue.” When asked to formulate her hopes for the ministry she has taken over, Elisabeth continues: “I dream about a ‘change of paradigm’ – that one day it will be totally acceptable in Israel to say, ‘I am a Jew, I believe in Jesus, and I am proud to say so!’ I dream that the Jewish people would discover Jesus as their greatest

rabbi and that they would discover the New Testament as the Jewish book that it is. I dream that we will see more Jews in the land finding their Messiah, and that Caspari Center will have a role in all this.”

**Messianic believers
are the “missing link”
in church history.**

Elisabeth’s dreams and visions resonate strongly with the other key area of Caspari Center’s calling. “I’d like to see Caspari Center play a vital role in helping Christian communities and churches find their Jewish roots. I would like Caspari Center to grow to become a platform and a meeting place for Christians and Messianic Jews, and even for secular and observant Jews! I hope to see our library filled with students from the land and from abroad, all of them eager to study more about Jesus and the Jewish background of the New Testament.”



Elisabeth continues: “I see that Christian churches have a lot to learn from the Messianic movement. Messianic believers are the ‘missing link’ in church history, as too often the church has forgotten her roots. In order for the body of Messiah to be whole, Messianic believers need to find their own place in the body of believers.”

Elisabeth concludes, “In the past 30 years, Caspari Center has done a lot of excellent work toward fulfilling these hopes and dreams. With the grace of God, I hope that what is already good can become even better.”

Hanna Lindberg

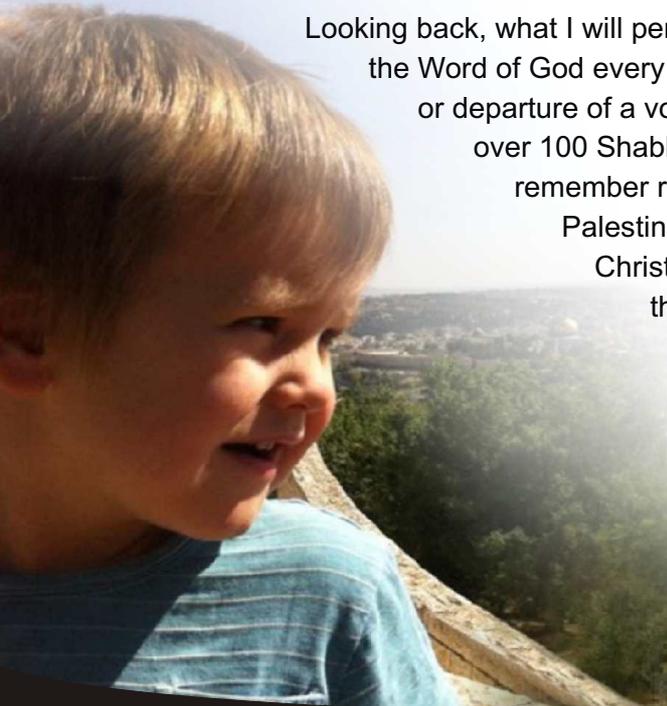
Moving “Home”??

In June Hege and I and our two boys, Jonatan and Joel, packed our things, left Jerusalem behind, and moved back “home” to Norway. After six and a half years in Israel, during which time both our boys were born, it was sad to have to say goodbye (lehitra’ot) to friends, colleagues, and a land and a city we dearly love.

Back “home” in Norway our family has been looking forward to our arrival, and we are very glad to be closer to them. At the same time, when someone asks me, “Isn’t it good to be home?” I find myself asking where “home” is.

We now live in Grimstad, a small town in the southern part of Norway, where I have been called to serve as a pastor in the Lutheran Free Church. We have been very warmly welcomed in the church and in our new town, and we are slowly but surely finding our place here. At the same time, we still feel that “home” is in Jerusalem.

It has been an amazing experience to spend these past years in the Holy City. We arrived in Jerusalem in 2007, and I immediately started serving at Caspari Center. At first, I was supposed to work on developing international study programs, but very soon I was asked to take on the role of director. It has truly been a privilege to serve at Caspari Center. During my years as director, we saw a lot of change: new staff, a move to the new ministry center on HaNevi'im Street, and the development of new teaching programs and literature. You can read about all of this elsewhere on the Caspari website or in previous newsletters.



Looking back, what I will perhaps remember most is the fellowship of our staff as we shared from the Word of God every day at our morning devotions, or as we ate cake to mark the arrival or departure of a volunteer or staff member. I will remember the buzz of excitement as over 100 Shabbat school teachers gathered for a seminar at Beit Asaf. I will remember riding camels in the Jordanian desert with Messianic and Christian Palestinian youth, who gathered in order to live out our reconciliation in Christ. I will remember leading pastors and theology students through the narrow streets of the Old City, following in the footsteps of Jesus. I will remember the mix of Hebrew, Amharic, Russian, and English as young leaders came to our courses eager to be equipped for service in the Body of Messiah. And so much more . . .



It has been a great pleasure to serve at Caspari Center and to be part of what God is doing among his people in Israel. I am especially grateful to all my co-workers at Caspari who have shared this calling over the past years. I trust that God will continue to equip and lead the work now that I am no longer part of it, and that we will see continued growth and strengthening in the body of Messiah in the land.

There is no doubt that Caspari Center and Jerusalem will be home for me and my family for a long time. And at the same time, we trust that God calls us to serve wherever he needs us. After all, it is in him that we always have our true home.

*Knut Høyland
Former International Director of Caspari Center*

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 on our website at www.caspari.com.

Maronite Christians in Israel

Yisrael HaYom, August 9, 2013

In this five-page article, Emily Amrosi writes a detailed account of the Maronite Christians living in northern Israel who are trying to preserve their Aramean culture and heritage in spite of the fact that the State of Israel does not recognize them as an official ethnic group. There are about 10,000 Maronites living in Israel today. Though the Arameans have their own distinct history and culture that goes back 3,000 years, the Ministry of Interior does not recognize them as a distinct ethnic group and has them listed simply as "Arab." The community has been trying to gain official recognition from the state since 1948, but so far all their requests have been denied.

The Arameans have had a very extensive influence on the different empires and people groups of the ancient Middle East. The Hebrew alphabet, for example, originates from Aramaic, and parts of the Hebrew Bible as well as the Talmud were written in Aramaic. Aramaic was actually the lingua franca up until the Arab takeover in the 7th century, when it was replaced by Arabic. Today there are still about half a million people across the Middle East who speak Aramaic, and this includes the Maronite community in Israel.

"We didn't fight against the IDF in 1948," one Maronite tells Amrosi, "but we helped the Jews. They are our brothers and not our enemies. Don't link us to the Palestinian struggle. We are friends of Israel in the same way the Druze people are." This is why the Aramean community living in Israel can't understand why the state consistently refuses to recognize their ethnicity. "It infuriates me that I am listed as an Arab," says another, "because I am not Arab." He adds: "We identify with the state and most of us are drafted into the IDF or national service of our own free will. This is because we are loyal citizens who love Israel and want to be part of it because we don't have another country that protects us and lets us live freely and with dignity within its borders."

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.

Into the Future

At the height of a famine, Naomi left her Bethlehem home with her husband and two sons and headed to the nearby region of Moab, on the eastern side of the Dead Sea. What may have been intended as a temporary sojourn for the family stretched on for years. Moab became their home.

While they lived there, Elimelek passed away. Naomi's sons married two local women, Orpah and Ruth. A decade passed, and the family continued to live their lives in Moab. But when both of her sons died, Naomi was forced to uproot from the place she'd learned to call home. There was no place in Moabite society for a childless widow from an Israelite tribe. Scripture tells us that Naomi heard through the grapevine that things had changed back in Bethlehem:

When Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. (Ruth 1:6-7)

The Book of Ruth details what happens in the wake of Naomi's decision to return to Bethlehem. As we trace their journey in the book's four chapters, it is easy to celebrate the faith and loving loyalty of the young widow Ruth, who left the comfort of her own people so she could accompany her grieving mother-in-law to a place she'd never been. We honor Naomi's Bethlehem relative, Boaz, who cares for the two women, eventually becoming Ruth's husband and the father of a child she probably thought she'd never bear after her first husband died. That child, Obed, would become King David's grandfather (Ruth 4:18-22), and is in the direct line (Matt. 1:5) of the family into which Jesus would be born a millennium later. I used to read the Book of Ruth and see Naomi as a tragic figure in the story. While she rallies to coach her daughter-in-law toward a new beginning, her sorrow is what always stood out to me in the biblical account.

Recently, I've been contemplating how God is at work in the transitions taking place in my own life. I now recognize how much courage Naomi must have needed to take those first uncertain steps on the road back to Bethlehem. It had been years since she'd last lived there, so there was hope – but no certain guarantee – that she'd find sanctuary there. Her losses and circumstances propelled her from Moab toward her old hometown. We can read the end of her story in Ruth 4, where we find her cradling her daughter-in-law's miracle baby. Naomi's redemption and ours would not have been possible if she had not taken those first steps toward Bethlehem.

Most of us do not choose change unless we are compelled by circumstances to do so. Naomi's story reminds us all that God is at work in every transition we experience in our lives, even when – and perhaps especially when – the circumstances that bring them seem bitter, confusing, or painful. May God give us the faith of Naomi in our own times of transition so that we'll be able to take one step, then another, following God into the future.

Michelle Van Loon

Prayer Requests

- Give thanks for Elisabeth and her family, and that they are beginning to feel at home in Jerusalem. Pray for their daily settling in to the Israeli way of life.
- Pray for God's abundant provision for Elisabeth as she becomes acquainted with the numerous tasks of the ministry of Caspari Center.
- Pray for the Caspari staff in the midst of transition and changes.
- Pray for the preparations for the upcoming Shabbat school seminars. Pray for fresh ideas, so we might serve the teachers in their important work even better.
- Pray fervently for peace and stability in Egypt and Syria. Intercede especially for Egyptian and Syrian Christians and their safety.