



Caspari Center NEWS

March 2013

For the Sake of Our Children

For many years Caspari Center has been involved in the important task of training Shabbat school teachers for congregations across the country. Shabbat school consists of a few crucial hours during which children can learn Bible stories and fundamental biblical themes. Unfortunately, this time is not sufficient to meet all the children's needs for spiritual teaching, nor is it enough to meet their personal needs. Every child encounters difficulties in daily life; some even face traumatic experiences which necessitate spiritual healing. There is also a need to address some profound biblical principles relating to the realities of life in Israel, such as unity and reconciliation. In this article we wish to present a broader view of the work among children in the Messianic movement by giving a glimpse into the work of two children- and family-oriented ministries in Israel that are working to meet these needs.

**God works
in the hearts
of our youth.**

One of these ministries is King's Kids Jerusalem. Ruut, who has been in charge of King's Kids for the 10 years of its existence, describes the work as essentially "breaking the walls." King's Kids gathers children and youth from different ethnic (Jewish, Arabic, etc.), cultural, linguistic, and denominational backgrounds. The languages in use are Hebrew and English. "We aim to cross borders and give children the possibility of meeting with others from different backgrounds, to help them experience unity in faith," says Ruut of the ministry's vision. Both Christian and Jewish festivals are celebrated with respect. Children are brought together to sing, dance, study the Word, and have fun, and they make friends with believing children from other peer groups. Through positive experiences, Ruut and the King's Kids staff have seen prejudices and negative attitudes soften.

This change of attitude is expressed in openness and acceptance towards others. "With the youth, we meet regularly with the Arabic-speaking King's Kids. We have traveled together abroad and it is tremendously encouraging to see how God works in the hearts of our youth when they serve together. Also, for us as leaders, forgiveness and reconciliation are no longer something we teach to kids and speak in theory, but something we need to implement in our own lives as well."

Integrity in life and faith is pivotal for all believers in Jesus – children as well as adults. Aside from the need for unity and reconciliation, the Israeli reality includes other traumatizing phenomena such as divorce and domestic violence. Unfortunately, these problems are not unheard of, even among believing families.

"Children are vulnerable and they can be traumatized by divorce, by witnessing or being targets of violence at home. Kids who have suffered traumatic experiences are in great need of hearing the truth about life and faith. In many cases, difficult family situations aren't related to in congregations and the

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

Ephesians 4:12



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problems are not addressed. Children of single mothers, especially, need to hear that God is the Father of the fatherless. Abused children are in need of a solid base of God's love and grace in their faith. When problems and difficulties are openly discussed and God is brought into their real life experiences, healing is possible and their faith can grow and mature," says Hege from Machaseh. Machaseh ("Shelter" in Hebrew) ministers to Messianic families and children in distress, supporting them with material aid and professional counseling.

We need to recognize that these complex issues exist and continually pray for our children. Even more so, we need to realize the importance of working together to address them and to effect change. Our children are worth every possible effort.

Being a Shabbat School Teacher – Is It That Easy?

Culture shock was a natural thing to experience seven years ago, when I moved to Israel. Visiting a Shabbat school lesson in one of the Israeli congregations was a part of this shock. By then I had worked in children's ministry for ten years, but had never seen children behave in such a way during a lesson. There and then I decided that this ministry was no longer for me – but "the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29), so here I am, serving children in my new country.

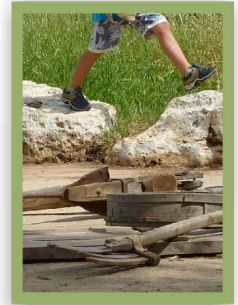
Shabbat school teachers discussing the ministry's joys and challenges speak of almost the same things. Among the blessings, we hear about the Lord speaking to them during their preparation time and the joy of lively fellowship with the children. This is precisely what I say to every new volunteer teacher who comes to our congregation: "Don't worry about missing the sermon and being left with no spiritual food. The Lord himself will be preaching to you as you prepare the lesson. And then you will see and hear the children, their eager interest and questions, and all of this will move you deeply."

But what about the challenges? They are the same as well. Just recently we were planning our next national teachers' seminar. Thinking about the needs of those who work with children in the congregations, we chose the most practical and relevant subject: discipline and boundaries. This subject concerns all teachers because often we don't know which approaches to teaching we can use and which we can't; which requirements of children are legitimate, and which are not. On the one hand, Scripture tells us to raise children in obedience and to discipline them for disobedience; on the other, today's Israeli approach to raising and teaching children often ties the hands of the teacher, obliging him or her to encourage but never pressure. The Almighty both loves and disciplines us, so the children should learn about boundaries that are given to us in love. That is biblical wisdom – teaching discipline with love. In the Israeli Messianic community, most children receive a lot of love and care, but in some cases boundaries and discipline are lacking.

And here we come to a difficult issue on which all teachers would agree: insufficient parental involvement. As teachers, we understand that our calling is not to replace the parents, but rather to help them raise the child in the faith. But the Israeli reality is such that many parents simply cannot spend time with their children.



This is especially obvious in immigrant families, where the parents have to work very hard. And so a Shabbat school teacher in Israel should pay attention to the type of family in which the child is being raised, to their social status and culture. For example, a girl from an Ethiopian family will most likely not attend some youth events, because the culture requires her to be a “second mom,” taking care of her younger siblings. And a new boy in your class from a Russian-speaking family will usually have little knowledge of Jewish tradition, so you will have to patiently explain some basics to him.



The answer to the question “Is it easy to be a Shabbat school teacher in Israel?” is obvious. The first requirement is firm commitment. And what about knowledge and necessary insights? These can be gotten from fellow teachers in other congregations, and of course also at Caspari Center’s seminars.

Caspari Updates



Elisabeth Eriksen Levy

New International Director:

The board of Caspari Center has appointed **Elisabeth Eriksen Levy** to the position of International Director/CEO for Caspari Center. Knut Høyland, who has been serving in the position since 2007, will be ending his service with Caspari in the summer of 2013 and returning with his family to Norway. Elisabeth Levy will assume leadership in August 2013. She will be introduced properly in an upcoming newsletter.



Chosen to Follow – Kindle Edition:

Chosen to Follow, Caspari’s most recent publication, will be made available as a Kindle eBook in the coming weeks on www.amazon.com. Print copies can be ordered through our website, www.caspari.com.

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, www.caspari.com

Messianic Jews

Yisrael HaYom; Haaretz; Makor Rishon; The Jerusalem Post, January 17, 2013

Jack Teitel, also known as the “Jewish terrorist,” has been convicted by the Jerusalem Magistrate’s Court of murdering two Palestinians and attempting to murder Messianic Jew David Ortiz. Teitel was also found guilty of aggravated assault for planting bombs at a number of locations, including the Beit Jamal monastery near Beit Shemesh, “apparently after discovering that the monastery did missionary work. The explosive detonated and injured a tractor driver from Beit Jala who was working nearby,” reports *Yisrael HaYom*.

“Crucially,” says *The Jerusalem Post*, “despite Teitel saying that an ‘angel’ had controlled him, the court found that he was not insane and was ‘responsible for his actions,’ which made it more likely that he will get a maximum life sentence.” *Yisrael HaYom* added that “at one point during the trial, Teitel shouted at the judges, saying, ‘This brothel has no legitimacy to judge me. I only accept the judgment of the Torah. God is king.’”

In March of 2008, Teitel sent a bomb in a Purim gift basket to the home of David Ortiz, whom he believed was the leader of Messianic Jews. Ortiz’s 15-year-old son Amiel opened the gift basket, which subsequently exploded, causing the youth serious injuries.

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.

Walking Toward Jesus

Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matt. 19:13–14)

I attended a couple of years of religious education at my local synagogue when I was a girl. They offered two distinctly different learning tracks. The kids who were slated to become Bar or Bat Mitzvah (literally, "son (or daughter) of the commandment," a celebration of a young person stepping into their adult role in the Jewish community at age 13, able to read from the Torah) attended Hebrew school. My parents couldn't afford the expensive Hebrew school track for my sister and me, so they enrolled us in the other learning track at our synagogue, once-a-week general religious education. These classes were offered on Sunday mornings at our synagogue.

I wanted to know God. I read through a Jewish Bible storybook we had in our home, and prayed the kind of unscripted prayers a child might pray, telling God that I wanted to love him and be a good girl. Those prayers had the unintended effect of making synagogue Sunday school a disappointing experience for me.

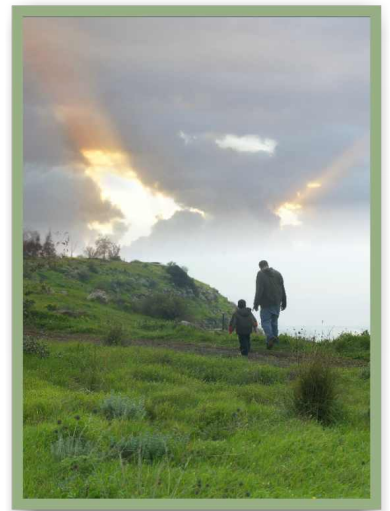
I attended classes in the late 1960s, in the wake of the map-changing Six Day War. My teacher focused on the sophisticated exploits of modern Jewish military and political heroes like David ben Gurion and Golda Meir. I understood that these contemporary stories of bravery were meant to shape my sense of Jewish identity, and to some degree, they did. However, they didn't point me to the One who was the Author of those stories, the One who was at work in history and headlines and in my own suburban world. As a nine-year-old girl, I wished that the adults in my life would simply teach me about God. It is a lesson I've never forgotten.

When I became a parent, I recognized the same spiritually-hungry inquisitiveness about the things of God in my own children. At every age and stage, they bubbled over with questions. I tried to remember the lessons of my childhood, and endeavored to point them to God without allowing secondary stories and issues to sidetrack our conversations and prayers. Their hunger to connect with God reminded me of my own.

Nowadays, I often hear the kinds of questions I once had from my oldest grandson: What is God like? Why can't I see him? How far away is forever? His questions remind me that the older we get, the better we become at burying our childlike curiosity under the oh-so-sophisticated veneer of our life experience.

Jesus knew that this veneer is an impediment that keeps us from coming to him and receiving from him. When parents were bringing their children to Jesus so he could pray for them, it was not only the children who received his blessing. I believe the parents who came to Jesus demonstrated the simple faith of a child as they carried their little ones to him.

His words in Matthew 19:14 ("... for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these") are a wonderful encouragement to each one of us who lays aside adult concerns and experience, and simply walks with a child toward the outstretched, welcoming hands of Jesus.



Michelle Van Loon

Prayer Requests

- *Pray for all the children who grow up in Messianic families in Israel, that they may grow up in a secure faith in the Lord Jesus the Messiah. Pray especially for the immigrant children and others who struggle with difficulties in their past and in their families.*
- *Pray for everyone involved in children's ministry in Israel. Pray that they may have the wisdom, love, and compassion to care for the children and teach them to follow Jesus.*
- *Pray for the upcoming Shabbat school seminars planned for this spring.*
- *Pray for the lecture series which will be held in Sderot in the coming months.*
- *Pray for the upcoming BridgeBuilders program during Easter and the theological course we are hosting in April.*
- *Give thanks for the appointment of Elisabeth Eriksen Levy as the new International Director/CEO for Caspari Center from the summer of 2013. Pray for her and her family as they prepare to resettle in Israel and as she takes on the responsibilities of leading the ministry in the coming years.*

