



Caspari Center
for Biblical and Jewish Studies

NEWS

September 2017



From the CEO

Elisabeth E. Levy

Dear Partners and Supporters of the Caspari Center

Happy 5778 from Jerusalem! According to the Jewish calendar, the new year of 5778 will start on the eve of September 20th. Though we cannot know what a new year will bring, we do rest in God's unchanging love, and remain deeply committed to honor God's plan for his people. We pray and hope for a revival of Jewish people discovering their Jewish Messiah.

Here at the Caspari Center, we are planning for a new year. One of the projects we will undertake during the coming year is a revision of our 1999 book *Facts & Myths About the Messianic Congregations in Israel*. The book is a survey of the Messianic congregations in Israel and answers questions about the nature, number, and theology of these congregations.

This book desperately requires an update. Many things have happened in the Messianic movement in Israel since the book was first published, and we are excited to tell that story.

Prayerfully consider how you might partner with us to bring this project to fruition in 5778.

Shana Tova from Jerusalem!



The 17th World Congress of Jewish Studies took place at the Hebrew University's Mount Scopus campus in Jerusalem on August 6th–10th. I heard an interesting variety of lectures during the conference, but none was more compelling than the one entitled "Christians, Missions and Messianic Jews in Controversy in Eretz Israel".



Though the title of the lecture surprised me, I learned that this was the second time this lecture was offered. As the public showed interest in this topic at the previous World Congress, it was included in the program again.

Four speakers presented during the two-hour lecture, three in Hebrew and one in English. Two of the four were Messianic Jews. One of them spoke about the religious and ultra-orthodox public responses towards Christian missionary activity in the State of Israel since 1948.

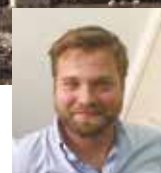
The audience was invited to ask questions after each lecture. One person asked how many Messianic Jews lived in Israel today. No one could give a good answer, but an estimate of 6,000 – 20,000 was offered. Caspari Center's publication *Facts & Myths About the Messianic Congregations in Israel* was referenced during this discussion, as it is the only existing study on the topic. However, this book was published in 1999, and 18 years later, we don't have any reliable data regarding the number of Messianic Jews in Israel.

How many Messianic Jews are living in Israel today? We usually estimate that there are approximately 15,000, but no one knows if this number is accurate. We hope that our next edition of *Facts & Myths* will provide a more reliable answer.

I was honored to be able to attend the Congress, and interested to learn that the body of believers in Yeshua is on the map. It was also a confirmation that a new and updated version of *Facts & Myths* is long overdue.

Elisabeth E. Levy

Facts and Myths



David Serner

/ Director of International Studies

Nearly twenty years ago, the Caspari Center began an empirical endeavor to gather specific information regarding Messianic believers in Israel. Where did they gather? What did they believe? How big were their congregations? How were these congregations structured? How many Jewish believers were there in the Land? The Caspari Center survey entitled *Facts & Myths About the Messianic Congregations in Israel* was the first book of its kind to be published in Israel.

Since that time, several theological books about the Messianic movement and about various Jewish believers have been released, but no new data has been published regarding the number of believers or the structure and theology of the various congregations. We at the Caspari Center believe that it is time to tackle these questions once again.

Twenty years ago, *Facts & Myths* received a great deal of attention, both positive and negative. Controversy arose primarily from the fact that some people felt exposed by the publication of the book, as they would have preferred to have remained under the radar. There were other people, however, who found the detailed research helpful, and expressed gratitude for it.

The world is a different place today from what it was twenty years ago. Many congregations now have their own websites. Information about the Messianic body is much more public and widespread. There is also a new openness among the body of believers in Israel, a natural consequence of demographic growth. We believe the number of congregations has increased during the last two decades, but without doing formal research, we cannot know to what extent, nor can we provide the kind of data that will assist the body in continuing its work in disciple-making.

We approach this new edition with greater awareness. Conscious of the previous backlash, we wish to be considerate of local sensitivities before embarking upon this project. We reached out to a number of local congregations, Messianic organizations, and local leaders, and secured their support. In addition to compiling all the congregations' information, we will also survey as many local Jewish believers as possible. We hope to provide solid demographic data about the nature of the body of believers in Israel. We will also gather anecdotal data from local congregational leaders about the structure, history, and key theological beliefs of their gatherings. We plan to gather the data over the next six months, after which we will prepare the data for publication. Our hope is to be able to publish those findings near the twenty-year anniversary of the release of the first *Facts & Myths*. We aim to present an accurate picture about believers in the Holy Land, and to provide accurate empirical data so we don't succumb to wishful thinking or pessimistic views of what is going on in this part of the world. This new study will allow us to reflect on what has worked in the last twenty years, and give us information many can use to prayerfully discern how to move forward in serving our Messiah.

We would appreciate your prayers and financial assistance for this important project, as we seek to dispel myths and present facts about the body of believers in Israel.



Miscellaneous

Yedioth Ahronoth **August 10, 2017**

Sandra Salomon, the niece of Sakhar Habash, one of the Fatah founders, decided to become a Christian after realizing how Muslim society treats women. Her sister “put her out of the house” when Salomon told her family of her conversion. After her divorce, Salomon moved to Toronto with their son and continues to live there. Salomon became exposed to Jewish history through reading the Bible. “Long before Muhammad and Islam, there were Jews here. The power of the truth changed me,” says Salomon.

She has been spending time in Ramallah recently, cautiously but without fear. Salomon stated she doesn’t believe in the two-state solution, but instead believes that Palestinians should be an equal minority under Israeli sovereignty. She said, “Rather than wanting peace the Palestinian people sanctify the intifada.” Salomon noted that Palestinians youths who carry out terrorist attacks were “...already murdered by their education.”

Four Years at the Caspari Center

==== **Maria** / Librarian =====

I first encountered the Caspari Center in 2004, when I visited Israel with a group of theology students. The Caspari Center was one of the places we visited. I was impressed with the work Caspari was doing. I could affirm Caspari’s work of supporting local congregations and believers in Israel, doing research, and providing tools and resources for study and learning. These were “my thing” and reflected my desire to serve God in the area of disciple-making. At that time, both God and I had different plans for my life. There were other things to be accomplished first.

In 2012, my husband and I moved to Jerusalem. My husband had a clear path for his time in Israel. But I didn’t really have any plans. I knew I would first study Hebrew in an ulpan (intensive Hebrew language school) and then hopefully something would materialize. That “something” turned out to be serving in the Caspari Center library. After a little over a year in Israel, I found myself part of the Caspari team.

I had always wondered where and how I’d be called upon to serve, and suddenly I found myself right there: I was in a place where I could be myself, where I could make use of my gifts and my education, and serve God and the body of believers to the best of my abilities. I am someone who likes to make order out of chaos, who loves to search for information and share it, and spend my life surrounded by books. I am a person who flourishes in service to others through library work, and that is where God took me.



My past four years serving as the librarian at the Caspari Center have been a great blessing for me. I have had the chance to do work I enjoy. Even more than that, I have had the privilege of being a part of a great ministry. The Center is not just a job for me, but a place to serve, equip, and support the body of believers both in Israel and abroad. I’ve also appreciated the opportunity to get to know people from very different cultural and spiritual backgrounds. I’ve appreciated having daily devotions together with the staff, and learning from them.

In fact, most everything about living in Israel has challenged and stretched me. Learning a new language and culture is a part of what has challenged me, of course; but my time here has helped me learn to trust in God more and more every day. I am discovering what it means to trust that He knows my future, and that He has good plans for my life. I’m also learning that He knows my strengths and weaknesses, and can use both for His glory. And I’m trusting that He will continue to lead me to the right place at the right time, just as He has done so far.



Shanah Tovah!

Michelle Van Loon
/ US Administrator



The Feast of Trumpets, also known as Rosh Hashanah (literally, “the head of the year”), is the beginning of the Jewish civil year. This year, Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown on Wednesday, September 20th.

The shofar (ram’s horn) blasts marking this holy day are a call to repentance, and initiate for the Jewish people a sacred ten-day period of introspection and repentance in preparation for the holiest day of the Jewish festival year, Yom Kippur. Part of the traditional synagogue readings on Rosh Hashanah include Genesis 22, the account of Abraham bringing his son Isaac to Mt. Moriah to sacrifice to God. As they approach the altar, father and son have this memorable exchange:

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” (Genesis 22:7-8)

Abraham then obeys the command God had given him, binding his son to the top of the altar and readying to slay him. God halts him, blessing Abraham’s willingness to obey and providing instead the sacrifice of a ram caught in a nearby thicket. The account highlights the holiness and grace of God.

May this Rosh Hashanah find you honoring the Lamb of God, Yeshua, the perfect sacrifice God provided for you (John 1:29, Revelation 12:11). Join us in praying that the Jewish people seeking God in repentance during this season will find mercy in the person and work of Yeshua the Messiah.

Below you’ll find some of our prayer needs. We are grateful for your continued partnership in prayer for Caspari Center.

Shanah Tovah! Happy New Year!



Prayer Requests

Please join us
in praying for:

- all those working on the updated Facts & Myths book.
- Alec’s upcoming bible study video recordings.
- new volunteers skilled in technology, but also willing to do the less glamorous jobs.



 **Caspari Center** • for Biblical and Jewish Studies • ללימודי המקרא והיהדות • מרכז כספרי

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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.