



Caspari Center NEWS

December 2011

Equipping
the next generation
of Jewish believers
in Jesus

Yes to Tourists! No to Missionaries!

This was the headline in a ¾ page ad posted by Yad L'Achim in the Jerusalem Post this past October. Mission is a bad word in Israel and missionaries are labeled as a danger to the existence of the Jewish people. Despite of all this, we have chosen to focus this issue of our newsletter on this very controversial subject: Mission. As followers of Yeshua, we cannot agree to the Orthodox Jewish definition of the word. Mission, in its biblical sense, is not manipulating others into betraying their faith and people, it is taking part in God's plan for the salvation of the Jewish people and all mankind. This is about living out the incarnation, which Christians around the world celebrate at Christmas, and proclaiming Yeshua as the light of the world, which Messianic Jew celebrate at Chanukah. As such it is the calling of every believer.

So, what does a Messianic missiology look like? In the following article Dr. Richard Harvey gives a brief answer to this question. The article – a shortened version of a more comprehensive article on the subject to appear in an upcoming Caspari publication in 2012 – appears here without footnotes.

Messianic Jews and Mission – To Israel and All Nations!

Mission, as Christopher Wright defines it, is "Our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation." The "Mission of Israel" is a key component of the calling and identity of the Jewish people. For the modern Messianic movement, "Mission" has yet to be defined, but there are encouraging signs of growth in its missiological theory and practice, and not a few challenges. How do we as Messianic Jews understand our mission today?

Of course, the term "Mission" is unhelpful, to say the least. Images of the Crusades, Inquisition, forced conversions, and insensitive evangelism create fear, distrust and opposition from the Jewish community. Many Messianics do not use the word because of its many negative overtones. One Messianic leader says all Christian missionaries should leave Israel (whilst leaving their buildings and financial resources to the indigenous church). Few are willing to engage in the disciplined reflection needed to develop a Messianic Jewish missiology. But beneath the rhetoric and reaction, there are promising new developments.

Mark Kinzer uses the concept of "bilateral ecclesiology" to discuss the mission of Israel and of Messianic Jews. Just as the Father sends the Son by the Spirit to enter, redeem, and renew all creation, so Messianic Jews are to live out, in word and deed, their missionary calling. Messianic Jews, as part of Israel, are a sacramental sign and witness to the mission of God in creation, the ongoing election of Israel as a means of blessing to the nations, the renewal of all creation through the death and resurrection of the Messiah Yeshua, and the future hope of the restoration of all things.



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For Kinzer, Messianic Jews belong to the Jewish community, and their primary identity should be within Jewish “social space” rather than in a gentilized and predominantly supersessionist church context. How and to what extent does this create barriers to the effective proclamation of the Good News of the Messiah’s coming? Kinzer has yet to make this clear, but sees the need for covenanted communities of disciples within the Jewish people (“modalities”), and special types of communities such as parachurch organizations or monastic bands (“sodalities”) to function alongside each other.

Kaye Silberling and Tzvi Sadan argue for a similar non-confrontational approach to *kiruv* – a “drawing in,” an “in-reach” within the Jewish people to the Messiah. Stuart Dauermann also proposes that the message we share must be truly *good news*.

Dauermann’s seven-fold “eschatologically driven” approach reframes the gospel message in a “new Messianic Jewish agenda” that is an example of “affirmative evangelism,” focusing on elements from Ezekiel 37–39:

- God will gather Israel to the land.
- God will unify the Jewish people.
- God will bring this people to repentance and spiritual renewal.
- God will cause them to serve the Son of David, their Messianic King.
- God will cause them to walk in his statutes and ordinances – Torah living.
- God will cause this people to communally experience the Divine Presence.
- God will thus vindicate himself as their God and them as his people.

Dauermann’s reframing of the gospel message helpfully emphasizes the “goodness” of the “newness” for our “Jewishness.” However, more needs to be said about the significance of Yeshua, particularly his Incarnation, death, resurrection, and return, and how this brings true renewal.

What about the mission of Messianic Jews to the nations? Gavriel Geffen advocates outreach to indigenous peoples of all nations. Building on the work of Jewish thinker Jon D. Levenson, Geffen engages in mission to the nations, seeing his calling as a Jewish believer in Yeshua to be a vital contribution to world evangelization.

Just as Messianic Jews understand differently the meaning of mission, the same breadth is found in the methods employed. Twenty years ago a survey of styles and strategies in Jewish evangelism viewed five approaches as standard:

- “High Profile” – the visible, public proclamation of the gospel through media, street evangelism, etc.
- “Low profile” – a less visible approach emphasizing “friendship evangelism.”
- “Out-rabbi-ing the rabbis” – apologetics and debate.
- “Preaching the wrong mountain” – an overemphasis on prophetic teaching and political support for Israel, downplaying the presentation of the Good News of Yeshua.
- “Loving people into the kingdom” – acts of loving kindness not necessarily accompanied by proclamation by word.

Today a plethora of strategies and methodologies exists, some of them in conflict, many having relevance to one context but ineffective in another. Joshua Brumbach argues for “multiple entry points” into the increasingly diverse world Jewish communities. There is still heated debate about the relevance and effectiveness of “Jews for Jesus” style street evangelism, as there is about the mercy missions and *aliyah* support given by philo-Semitic organizations.

These offer an interesting application of *Integral Mission*, and are well received in Israel, where poverty and deprivation affect an estimated 20% of the population, both Jew and Arab. The MJAA Joshua Project led by Joel Chernoff exemplifies holistic mission which overcomes obstacles normally raised by Orthodox Judaism and prejudice against Messianics through focused aid and development work in Israel. Chernoff states: “In 2006 alone we have shipped over \$70 million of goods that were distributed via our 30 humanitarian aid centers, as well as over 100 Israeli government centers.” Michael Schiffman’s ministry pioneers aid and relief to Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union. Messianic Jews engage in social issues such as pro-life activities and crisis pregnancy centers. Others develop the use of the arts, sharing the message of the gospel in contemporary music, drama, and the visual arts.

Even more controversial are the engagement of Messianic Jews in reconciliation ministries, justice issues, and secular peace organizations. To some these are vital ways of living out the gospel message of God’s reconciliation of all humanity to himself through the Messiah, to others a sop to political liberalism and naive thinking. Environmental mission is a concern of many younger Messianic Jews, but a theology of environmental mission along the lines of *tikkun olam* has yet to be articulated.

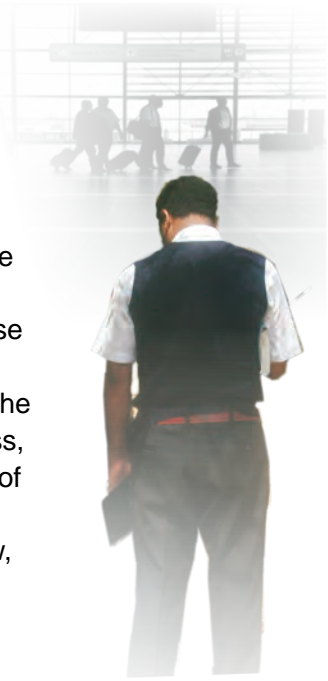
Messianic Jews have yet to agree on the theory and practice of mission. Missiology itself is a young science, combining theology, anthropology, mission history, communication theory, and other disciplines. If mission can be broadly defined as “finding out what God is doing and joining in” (Rowan Williams), may the Messianic movement have the courage to find out and join in the call to “make disciples of all nations,” beginning with the house of Israel.

Dr. Richard Harvey

Director of Training and Post Graduate Program leader at the All Nations Christian College in London, England

Not allowed to enter!

A month ago the Caspari Center was to host a three week individual study course for an Ethiopian Lutheran pastor who wanted to visit Israel, preparing to fulfill his calling to reach the Jewish people with the gospel. From a global perspective this course, despite the fact that it was only for one individual, was quite promising. It was to be the first step for the Caspari Center toward raising awareness about Jewish mission in the churches in the global South and East. But yes, we say “it was to be” because the pastor only got as far as Ben Gurion Airport, where he was greeted with the message: “You are not allowed to enter.” Even though he had applied and received a visa at the embassy in Ethiopia, he was denied entry because of the suspicion that he was entering under false pretenses. His motivation for coming to Israel was to study the Jewish culture and New Testament backgrounds at the Caspari Center. Of course he was also hoping that the Lord would one day in the future also open a door for him to come to Israel to be a witness to the Jewish people. Nevertheless, the result was the same as for so many other hopeful emigrants from the less privileged countries of the world hoping to create a better life for themselves in the West. And this is a real challenge for those of us involved in mission to the Jewish people. How can we encourage and facilitate the new, growing churches in the South and the East to get involved in God’s mission to reach his chosen people?



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/signup.html.

*One of the main areas of interest for the Media Review is Jewish–Christian relations. In many of the articles we receive, the Jewish attitude toward Christianity and especially Messianic Judaism is very hostile. The following excerpt is from an article by Rabbi Eliezer Melamed, dean of Yeshiva Har Bracha, titled “**Make known his deeds among the nations**” (BeSheva - Mitchalef Yerushalayim, November 3), which examines Jewish attitudes toward Christianity in a somewhat different, one might even say “missionary,” tone.*

“The great vision of the Jewish people is to add faith and blessing to all the nations of the world ... to sanctify G-d’s name in the eyes of the peoples. ... In reality Israel’s relations with the nations are very charged. ... About two months ago, I related to a question which has recently arisen regarding the proper attitude towards Christian supporters of Israel. In the past, apart from a small minority of righteous among the nations, the Christian attitude towards the Jews was negative. They based their faith on the humiliation of Israel, who served as proof that the Christians were meant to replace Israel as the Chosen People. In recent generations, however, changes have been occurring within segments of Christianity. Some already do not think that Israel must be humiliated and others think that Israel is still the Chosen People, whose destiny is to bring redemption. But they still hold idolatrous views, since they believe that ‘that man’ is G-d and the messiah who will arise from the dead to redeem the world. At the same time, they also acknowledge that he is a Jew. So the question which must be asked is: At any time that we meet Christians who support Israel, must we renounce their faith in ‘that man’? Rabbi Kook wrote in relation to other religions that our intention is never to destroy them but to elevate them so that they can be amended. ... How wonderful it is that precisely these Christians are repenting of the traditional tenets of Christianity in stressing the election of Israel in her land and teaching that the people of Israel will return to observe all the commandments of the Torah. So precisely at the time when we are returning to the land of our life, we can begin to speak about our mission to the whole of the world.”

You can find a longer excerpt from this article in the November 9, 2011, Media Review, which is accessible at www.caspari.com, or read the full article in the Caspari Center library.

In Those Days at This Season

When I was a kid, Chanukah meant eight nights of presents, wrapped in shiny blue and silver paper. It meant treats of Chanukah gelt, foil-wrapped waxy coins of chocolate, and playing the *dreidel* game while each night's candles burned. The game featured a four-sided top (*dreidel*) with Hebrew letters on each side that were meant to remind us of the "reason for our season."

I was told the reason for these December festivities was to celebrate the miraculous story of brave Judah Maccabee, who hid out in the rugged Judean hills with his band of brothers in a revolt against the oppressive Greek ruler Antiochus in 167 B.C. Antiochus was bent on stripping the Jews of their identity, and turned the temple in Jerusalem into an altar to Zeus. When Judah and company vanquished their enemy's army, one of their first tasks was to sanctify and rededicate the temple and themselves to God. The Hebrew word for dedication is *Chanukah*.

The rededication process almost came to a halt when the priests realized that they did not have enough oil to fuel the temple's *menorah* (7-branched candelabrum). They were so full of joy to be in the holy place that they lit the menorah anyway. As if to underscore the great miracles that had already taken place, God caused that tiny amount of oil to burn for 8 nights until more oil could be prepared. The unquenchable light was a visible proclamation of who the God of Israel was, and a reminder of who his children were called to be – a light to the nations.

After I came to faith in Jesus as Messiah, I realized that he who'd healed the sick, walked on water, and been raised from the dead was the only begotten Son of the one true God responsible for the miracles of Chanukah. The story of the holiday became a part of our family's story. Each year, my husband and I lit our *chanukiah* (the nine-branched candelabrum used to celebrate Chanukah), prayed the prayers of thanksgiving and dedication I'd learned as a girl, and told the story of the Chanukah miracles to our children.

We wanted them to know Chanukah had an important role in setting the stage for that other December holiday – Christmas. When *Yosef* and *Miryam* (Joseph and Mary) took their baby to the temple to present him to the Lord as the Law prescribed (Luke 2:22–24), they were able to do so because of the miraculous events that had occurred in Jerusalem more than a century earlier.

Likely he was moving toward the end of his years of earthly ministry when Scripture places Jesus in the temple at Chanukah: "Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's Colonnade" (John 10:22–23). Our Jewish Savior was present with his people and celebrating a holiday not prescribed or described in the Hebrew Scriptures. Chanukah at that time was a new and minor holiday in the Jewish year.

Our children are grown and on their own now, but my husband and I will kindle the candles on our *chanukiah* this year, just as I have done for over five decades. The simple blessing prayed as the candles are lit acknowledges God's holy rule over all of his creation, thanks him for the miracles he did for our ancestors "in those days at this time," and on the first night of the holiday, offers gratitude to him for sustaining and preserving us as a people.

As I watch the 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8 small flames dance in the shadows of winter's early sunsets, I remember the One who told his disciples: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

And I will add my prayers for the people I know who walk in darkness, that they will see and follow the Light of the world – Jesus. Chanukah is all about God's miracles, after all.

Michelle Van Loon

**THEY WILL
SEE AND FOLLOW
THE LIGHT
OF THE WORLD
– JESUS**



Prayer Requests

- We pray that the light of the Messiah, Yeshua, will reach all those among his own people who do not know him.
- We pray that the Lord will raise up new laborers to be witnesses of his love and salvation among the Jewish people and the nations.
- We pray for a clear calling in the Messianic movement for reaching the nations with the gospel.
- We pray for the upcoming Shabbat school seminar and singles' gathering in December.
- We give thanks for obtaining a new visa for one of our staff members after a prolonged struggle.
- We pray for the process of getting our new website ready to launch in 2012.
- We pray for a blessed Christmas and Chanukah celebration for all.

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.