

Caspari Center

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Supporting Jewish Believers in Jesus through Education and Research

The Fall Feasts

Fall 2007

Those of you who attend liturgical congregations, such as Lutheran or Anglican, no doubt value the liturgical calendar. You understand the power that telling the Gospel story in worship has upon your spiritual life. The celebration of God's acts in history, especially through Jesus, attunes us to His activity today.

Stories have the power to grip our imagination. They lift us beyond the confines of our narrow experience and help us envision new possibilities. When Jesus asked us to celebrate His supper "in remembrance of me," He was not worried that we might forget Him. Rather, He wanted our imaginations to be gripped by the reality of His broken body, and to be changed in the process. Reenacting leads to experiencing.

And so it will not be difficult to comprehend the influence of Biblical feasts upon Jewish people. The liturgical storytelling of God's acts in Jewish history has a profound impact on Jewish identity.

In the fall, Jewish people celebrate several significant feasts: Rosh HaShanah (the New Year), Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), and Succoth (Tabernacles). This year, these holidays start in September and end in October.

Succoth, one of my favorite Jewish holidays, starts September 27th this year. In Leviticus 23:42-43, God instructs the Israelites to "dwell in booths for seven days ... that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt."

During Succoth, Jewish families construct makeshift shelters on their balconies, patios, or yards in commemoration of Israel's ancient desert sojourn. In echoes of harvest gratitude, they decorate their booths with certain fruits and branches according to Leviticus 23:40. In the evenings, families and friends gather in the booths, sing songs, share festive meals, and remember how God provided for their needs.

In Old Testament exilic and post-exilic times, the prophets began emphasizing eschatological elements in Succoth. Since the feast celebrates Israel's redemption from Egypt and God's provision on the journey toward the homeland, the prophets began to use the feast as a metaphor for God's redemption in the age to come.

For example, Zechariah is read in synagogues during Succoth. Note the connection between the coming Day of the Lord and Succoth: "And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light. On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem ... And the Lord will be king over all the earth ... All the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths" (Zech. 14:6-9, 16).

Notably, John's Gospel depicts Jesus drawing from these light and water metaphors during Succoth, when Jewish people would have been especially aware of these themes (see John 7-8).

I encourage you to spend time in God's Word this month, and to ponder Leviticus 23, Zechariah 14, John 7, and Revelation 21-22. Succoth celebrates God's provision in this life, and points to that day when Messiah shall return and make all things new. We are pilgrims here, and Jesus Himself is our shelter as we journey to a new world.

And I ask you especially to pray for the Jewish people who will be celebrating Succoth. Ask God to open their eyes to the true meaning of Succoth, to Jesus who is the source of living water and the light of the world.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Steve Engstrom". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Steve Engstrom, International Director

Caspari Center

Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE) Eighth International Conference

by Kathi Graham, North American Director

How can I describe an international conference on Jewish mission that meets every four years? Do I begin by saying the theme of the conference was "Jewish Evangelism: Telling the Story"? Should I tell you that my plane was late and I arrived just moments prior to presenting my report on North America to the Caspari Center International Board? And that my luggage was missing? Instead, I will give you some of the highlights of 6 days of intense networking, worship, and powerful papers, shared by 160 participants from 18 nations.

Jews in Hungary?

The meeting was held at Lake Balaton, Hungary, about 2½ hours from Budapest. There have been Jewish communities in Hungary since the time of the Roman Empire. In the early years of the 20th century the Hungarian Jewish population numbered almost 1,000,000. The Nazi and Communist eras brought death and suffering. Since 1990, new opportunities have opened for Jewish people – they are able to live openly and confess their identity. Today the old Jewish district is being reclaimed as a center of Jewish activity; it is home to about 100,000 Jewish people, with 12,900 claiming to practice the Jewish religion. Small pockets of anti-Semitism are vocal, and their activities are growing more intense.

Historic Jewish Believers in Jesus

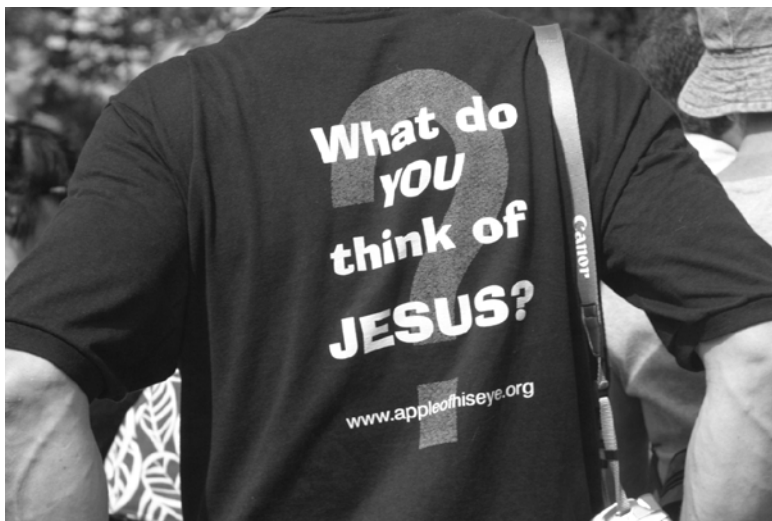
Each evening we were treated to a historical biography of a hero in Jewish mission from past centuries. These stories are available online at www.lcje.net. Check the LCJE website for a real treat!

Table Conversations

Telling the story of Jewish mission takes place on a personal level when folk from around the world share their lives in ministry. Conversations at breakfast, lunch, and dinner blended and flowed into each other at tables filled with people sharing the same love for Jesus and His people. Some of the stories came from:

- A church planter who has spent the past four years in Russia building relationships and teaching English, and is beginning a Bible study.

- A congregation leader from Cape Town, South Africa who invited all of us to the LCWE meetings in Cape Town in 2010.
- Jews for Jesus leaders who just completed an outreach in Lyon, France.
- A Japanese Lutheran pastor who is raising awareness among his congregation for worldwide Jewish mission, in a nation with very few Jews.
- Two Chinese young men working with Chosen People Ministries in Hong Kong, raising funds and awareness for work in Israel.
- Leaders of long-established mission societies from Norway, Finland, Denmark, and Germany, who are finding new and creative ways of serving Jewish believers in Israel.



The Next Generation

Looking around the room, it was evident that many were faithful, long-time leaders in the various areas of Jewish mission. But it was just as clear that strong, younger leaders are answering God's call and are taking significant roles

in bringing the Good News to teens and young adults around the world. May God bless their efforts and bring a bountiful harvest into the Kingdom.

Music

A significant part of any LCJE conference is praise and worship. This year was no exception. We sang His praises in Hebrew, English, and Arabic. Talented young leaders showed us new musical styles in the Messianic movement. We were also delighted by the joyous sounds of a modern Klezmer band from Poland. Klezmer is a musical tradition which parallels Hasidic and Ashkenazi Judaism and draws on devotional traditions extending back to biblical times.

The LCJE conference is a time of networking, meeting new people, and renewing established relationships. It is a time to address trends and stimulate theological and missiological thinking on issues related to Jewish mission. It is an opportunity to hear reports from a variety of nations and to explore age-old topics. Conference papers and reports are posted at www.lcje.net; I believe you will find them enlightening.

Ministry News

In the opening article, we noted how Jewish identity is shaped by the Biblical festivals commemorating God's acts in history. Identity formation continues to be an essential and challenging task for Messianic congregations today. It is a challenge that we take very seriously at Caspari Center.

Recently, we have taken two large steps forward in our quest to support the Messianic movement.

Groundbreaking Research Published by Hendrickson

In August, our long anticipated first volume of historical research – *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* – was published by Hendrickson Publishers. Edited by our internationally known academic directors, Dr. Reidar Hvalvik (also the chairman of our Board) and Dr. Oskar Skarsaune, this volume challenges the commonly held misperception that Jewish believers in Jesus faded away in the early stages of church history. The first of three volumes, this comprehensive survey will help project the voices of Jewish believers in Jesus who have often been silenced at the margins of history. And as they are heard, they will transform the nature of Jewish-Christian dialogue, Jewish evangelism, and Messianic Jewish ministry.



Innovative Parenting Book for Every Messianic Family

This month, we will publish *Raising Children in the Fear of the Lord* for Israeli believers in English, Hebrew, and Russian. We will distribute 2,000 copies of this book free of charge, to virtually every Messianic family in Israel that wants it. Underwritten by generous donors and a grant from Tyndale Publishers, this book is a collaborative effort by 16 parents and leaders from around Israel who share their testimonies, Bible teaching, experiences of success and failure, and wisdom on parenting.



Many of Israel's adult Messianic believers are young in faith. They were not raised in believing homes, and do not have mentors in their parents and grandparents for biblical childrearing. *Raising Children* helps meet that need by providing candid and practical advice.

In the concluding chapter, respected veteran Messianic leader Baruch Maoz says, "It's a great pity that [my wife] and I didn't have anyone to guide or to provide a model for us so that we wouldn't have to learn by ourselves. My hope and prayer is that this book will help you avoid repeating some of the mistakes we made, and that the coming generations will be built on the foundation of the previous generation until we have a mature Messianic community in the Land which arouses respect for its way of life, courage, and humility, and whose members will be exemplary citizens of God's kingdom and the State of Israel."

Please pray with us . . .

- That these new books will truly serve the Messianic community in their spiritual growth and ministry.
- For the new class of leadership training students enrolled in our "Hearts to Serve" program starting in October.
- For our new interim Israel Director, Knut Hoyland, who will be leading the team as we begin our search for a long-term candidate.
- That we will have strong end-of-year giving so that we can head into 2008 with a good ministry plan.

L'chah Dodi

Come My Beloved

A Musical Tale of Jesus and His bride, the Church



A drama of the Feast of Tabernacles and its prophetic relationship to Jesus and the Church.

Told through a Jewish style wedding, this unique educational presentation will leave you singing, dancing and renewed!

Written and directed by Kai Simone-Issa, a celebrated Chicago playwright.

So, come my beloved; come to the wedding!

Date: Saturday, October 27

Location: Trinity Lutheran Church,
Hwy 53 & Kimberly Way, Lisle, IL

Time: 7:30 PM

Date: Sunday, October 28

Location: St. Peter Lutheran Church,
111 W. Olive St., Arlington Heights, IL

Time: 4:00 PM

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Walking with Jesus through the Jewish Calendar

Walking with Jesus through the Jewish Calendar allows you to see Jesus in His Jewish context as it guides you from the Fall feasts through Pentecost. This discussion-based study for adult Bible classes and small groups is designed to further your biblical understanding as well as introduce you to modern-day Jewish believers in Jesus.

The study can be used in a variety of formats and by various denominations. The comprehensive leader's manual enables groups and individuals to use the material without any special training, and we provide a number of support tools, such as CDs, DVDs and online assistance.

Available at www.caspari.com/jewishcalendar

