



# Caspari Center NEWS

June 2010



## Jews and Gentiles United in Messiah

Ever since the Caspari Center was founded in 1982, one of the main goals of the center has been for Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus the Messiah, Yeshua haMashiach, to work together in strengthening the local body of believers in Israel. Today the ministry is led by Alec Goldberg (Israel Director), a local Israeli Jewish believer, who like so many in Israel has immigrated from Russia, and Knut Høyland (International Director), a Gentile Norwegian who has spent about half his life in Israel.

In many ways both Jewish and Gentile believers face opposition from parts of the Jewish society in Israel. Many Jewish believers will experience being labeled as converts and traitors, especially by religious Jews. And although Christian visitors to Israel will be received with open arms as tourists and pilgrims, Gentile Christians living in Israel do not always feel welcome in the land, especially if they are involved in ministry among local people.

**We are  
united for  
a purpose**

As believers we are all united in Christ. As Paul puts it, "There is neither Jew, nor Greek . . . for all are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

We are children of one Father. At the same time we carry with us a cultural, national, historical, even denominational identity which we cannot and should not do away with. In Israel, an important challenge has been to strengthen and give a genuine expression of a Jewish, Israeli faith in Jesus as the Messiah for the Jews and the world. At the same time there is a need for awareness that the roots and current influences of the Messianic movement lie, not only in Jewish tradition and history, but also in the history of the church and the practices of modern, primarily Protestant, evangelical Christian denominations.

For the Caspari Center it has been important to stress both these aspects, the Jewish/Israeli identity of the movement and the connection to the worldwide church. We believe that this will be mutually beneficial, not just for believers in this land, but for Jewish and Gentile believers around the world.

For a Messianic Jew, there are two main benefits: a connection with the larger "household of faith," i.e. a fellowship that, among other blessings, helps overcome the feeling of isolation hovering over many Israeli Messianics; and an opportunity for dialogue that opens the vast spiritual "riches of the Gentiles," which have been invested into the church over nearly 2,000 years. Along with both comes a sharper perception of our own calling to and place in the universal church – that of the first-born son, who is uniquely privileged, and because of this also uniquely accountable to both the Father and the rest of the family.

Equipping  
the next generation  
of Jewish believers  
in Jesus



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For a Gentile Christian, there is the benefit of discovering one's own spiritual roots in the Jewish faith and understanding Jesus as a Jewish Messiah. If one wishes to understand the Bible, the history of the church, the liturgy or other Christian practice, it is essential to understand the Jewish setting that formed them. It is not only essential, it is also enriching in so many ways. In addition, the understanding of the relationship between God and the Jewish people is crucial in understanding God's plan to "bless all the peoples of the earth."

The challenges of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ remains. Hopefully we can challenge each other and learn from each other. After all, we are united for a purpose: to know and to follow our Lord and Savior who unites us, and to share the Good News with the world.

For the Caspari Center, this unity is expressed in our staff and in our ministry. We wish serve as a bridge between the Messianic movement and the Gentile church for the benefit of both, and for the building of God's kingdom in this land and around the world.

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## Fellowship, Exploration, and Camels

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These are three words that pop into my mind as I look back at the five intense days of the BridgeBuilders conference during Easter. Again a group of young Israeli Messianic Jews, Christian Palestinians, and Norwegians met, this time in the beautiful Jordanian Wadi Rum desert.

It is difficult to summarize the experience in a few words. That it had a very significant impact on all of us who had the privilege of taking part, there can be no doubt. We were all left with many lasting impressions. It was no easy task to get the smell of camel out of our clothes, and the spectacular red sand desert is something I will not easily forget. Still, there is no doubt that what left the strongest mark on all of us was the wonderful time of fellowship we experienced. With the conflict in the region looming in the background, it was amazing to experience true unity in Christ among Israelis and Palestinians. In a reality where hope for a better future is something less and less people believe in, we saw a glimpse of the unity and fellowship that God wants for his children and for all mankind.

Through teaching and activities we got not only to explore the desert, but also to explore issues of identity, belonging, trust, and fear. The participants were challenged to step out of their comfort zone, to make a connection with "the enemy," to look at their own identity – what it consists of and how to relate to it – and perhaps most importantly, they were challenged on what it really means to be *one* in Christ. One of the Jewish participants said, "God did beautiful things in my life during BridgeBuilders. My heart was shaken, broken, and then renewed. God has built strong and great relationships here." A Palestinian participant commented, "BridgeBuilders brought me closer to my Jewish brothers and sisters in Christ, and it gave me a desire to know them more. Bridgebuilders gave me a unique possibility to experience real unity in Christ. It also changed the way I think of the conflict; [I now want] to influence people around me so that they also see that we can do something and that Christ is the salvation."

The goal of the BridgeBuilders conference is to challenge young believers in the midst of the difficult reality of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict to be a voice for unity and reconciliation, especially among the believing communities. The challenge for all the participants is now to take this experience into the everyday reality they live in, to live out God's calling to reconciliation despite all the challenges. We ask that you continue to pray for the participants who have gone through the BridgeBuilders program, and to pray for us and our partner organizations as we evaluate this conference and start planning for future ones.



## Updates on Caspari Courses

In March Caspari Center hosted a leadership training course for a local Russian speaking Messianic congregation in Ashkelon. The course consisted of four weekly sessions. In the first three sessions about 20 leaders from the congregation participated, receiving teaching on the biblical servant attitude of a leader, forming a vision, team building, and discipleship. The last session was open to a wider audience from the Ashkelon area and focused on spiritual growth and preparing for service.

Here are some responses from the participants:

***“For me this seminar was a confirmation of the fact that God has not forgotten me and remembers our congregation. Brothers from Jerusalem were willing to leave their schedule behind and come to Ashkelon for our sakes! I can see how this seminar ignited and inspired the leaders to serve God. I also came to a realization of the importance of clearly formulating the goals of our congregation and effectively communicating them to the people.”***

– Pastor Vladimir Syromyatnikov

***“I was very blessed by this seminar, learned many new things and was strengthened by it. Thank God for seminars like that!”***

– David

A similar leadership training course is planned for June in Beersheva.

Our Shabbat school teachers seminar took place at the end of April in Netanya. Under the title *Being Built Up In Order to Build*, about 80 teachers and children’s workers gathered together for lectures, workshops, and fellowship. One of the few male participants shared his thoughts on the topic and about the seminar.



***“For me this was the first time I was able to attend Caspari’s Shabbat school teachers seminar. I am involved mostly with youth and young adult ministry in our congregation, but I also substitute teach in the children’s ministry. I see this ministry as one of the most important. I was saved at the age 7, and the teaching and the visible living faith of my parents made a huge impact on my life as a kid. At this age it is important to put the seeds of God’s word into their life. It is important to work with them and make a good foundation of faith in their life already at this age, so later when they grow up they can face the challenges with more confidence.***

***I think that the topics of the seminar in general and the speakers both were good. Lectures were a good reminder of things that we know quite well, but we use or put in practice much less. I think that such seminars can be very beneficial for Shabbat school teachers and for parents as well.”***

## 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, send a request to [subscriptions@caspari.com](mailto:subscriptions@caspari.com) or sign up on our website: [http://www.caspari.com/media\\_review/](http://www.caspari.com/media_review/).***

*In this extract from the Media Review we can see an example of how the Orthodox press relates to public appearances of Messianic leaders in the secular Israeli media.*

According to reports in ***HaShavua BiYerushalayim*** and ***Sha’ah Tova (April 29)***, “Asher Intrater [the pastor of Ahavat Yeshua congregation in Jerusalem] was given unlawful sanction to engage in blatant missionizing on Israel TV recently: For 25 minutes, Intrater – a top-ranking missionary and leader of a missionary sect in the Jerusalem area – was hosted on the program [“Chotze Israel,” aired February 22, 2010] and preached his missionary propaganda to the viewers and listeners.” As soon as Yad L’Achim got wind of the upcoming interview, the organization began applying pressure on the TV channel’s administration to block the program, simultaneously sending letters to the PM’s office and the Education, Public Relations, and Communications Ministers, requesting that the program either be stopped or given the proper balance. Possibly in reaction, the broadcasters insisted on being allowed to produce the original show. Following a protest to the channel’s legal representative, the latter informed Yad L’Achim that “No missionary activity took place during the program.” In response, Yad L’Achim’s lawyer issued a letter “in which he listed the misdemeanors committed by the interviewer and missionary alike, the most prominent being the praise and laudation bestowed upon ‘that man’ pronounced throughout the show” – as well as an exposure of the “lies,” foremost of which being that “eternal deception with which every missionary commences when he comes to preach to innocent Jews: ‘We are not Christians, we are Jewish.’”

## Come Together!



“You won our first-ever playwriting contest!”

I'd entered a script in a competition held by a local junior college. I listened to the theater professor on the other end of the phone explain that my winning script was going to undergo a metamorphosis over the next couple of months. I would be invited to campus to help cast the play. The actors would read the script to an audience of students, who would then be invited to provide feedback. I would then have a couple of weeks to revise the script. After another reading and revision, the actors would perform the play for the public.

“We'll make sure to do lots of advertising so we pack the house for those final performances,” she said.

I felt a little queasy when I hung up the phone. I didn't fully realize all that would be required of me when I entered the contest. How would I ever be able to take the bare bones of the script I'd submitted and have it ready for a public production?

But what I experienced during the process both shaped my life as a writer and, more importantly, painted an unforgettable image onto my soul of what it looks like when a group is deeply committed to working together toward a common goal. Every single person involved in the production seemed to take ownership of our mission to bring the play's joyous message to the community. I watched in awe as this rag-tag group of community college thespians and staffers went the second, then the third mile to bring those in-process pages to the stage.

By the time the final curtain fell, I no longer thought of *Fairy Tale Academy* as “my” script. After an intensely collaborative effort, it had become “our” play.

This experience shaped my thinking about what it can look like when believers come together to serve Christ. If there is an urgent call to a mission larger than our own individual agendas and each person's gifts are desperately needed in order to complete the mission, our differences become beautiful strengths. His body becomes far more than the sum of its composite parts.

Paul underscores this truth in his letter to his friends at Corinth:

*The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don't need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don't need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*  
(1 Cor. 12:21-27 NIV)

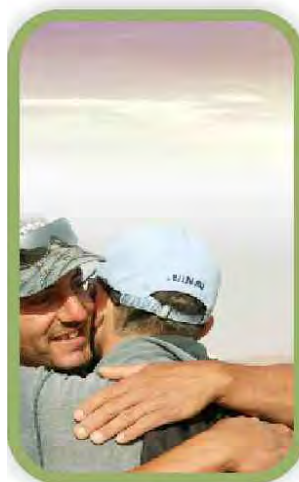
If we are our Messiah's body, disconnecting from one another is not an option. Nor is creating carefully-crafted truces in order to figure out how to coexist.

The interdependence Paul describes is animated by our response to the Father's love for each one of us. The fact that Paul had to address the issue demonstrates that it doesn't come naturally to any of us. Our life together is supernatural, transforming the rag-tag lot of us into a tangible expression of God's character. Each person's gifts are desperately needed by the others; every role must be filled. Our mission is far bigger and more eternal than simply creating a performance. We are invited to follow our Savior into the world.

Together.

Michelle Van Loon

*Michelle Van Loon and her husband, Bill, live in suburban Chicago. Bill serves on Caspari's international board.*



## Prayer Requests

### Give thanks with us for

- two new long-term volunteers coming in August.
- successful Bridgebuilders conference in Jordan, leadership training course in Ashkelon, and Shabbat school seminar in Netanya.
- everything accomplished during the spring.

### Pray with us for

- Caspari staff travelling in and out of Israel during the summer.
- visa applications for volunteers and staff to be processed quickly and be approved.
- the preparations for the leadership training seminars in Beersheva and for the actual seminar days, June 4th and 25th.
- planning and preparing for seminars, lectures, and publications for the coming fall.

*If you would like to know more about the Caspari Center and its activities, write to [caspari@caspari.com](mailto:caspari@caspari.com) or visit our website, [www.caspari.com](http://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.*