



# Caspari Center NEWS

June 2011



Equipping  
the next generation  
of Jewish believers  
in Jesus

## The Future of the Messianic Movement in Israel

"I hope to see a change of attitude in the society towards Yeshua. I would like to see the name Yeshua, and not Yeshu, used in all the school books and all the subtitles for TV and movies produced in Israel." (Dan Sered, director of Jews for Jesus in Israel)

"My hope is that in 2025 the believers in the country will play a more prominent role in society, even take part in decision making processes of our country. So, we need to encourage our children, the next generation, to engage fully in society at all levels." (Michael Decker, lawyer and senior legal activist at the Jerusalem Institute of Justice, Jerusalem)

"Sixty years ago there was a very small number of Hebrew speaking congregations in the country. Today there is a congregation in almost every city and town across the country. This is not the case in many Arab villages and towns. I would like to see more congregations led by Muslim background believers being planted in areas where today there are no believers, and I believe the Messianic believers can play an important role in making this happen." (Raja Gires)

These were three of the responses to the question: "What are your hopes and dreams for the Messianic movement in Israel in 2025?" The question was asked of eight young leaders in the Messianic movement who spoke about the challenges and opportunities for believers in Israel today and in the future as part of the Caspari Center Open Day, May 13.

The Caspari Center Open Day marked the opening of the center's new location. Although the center and library have been open since February, the Open Day gave us an opportunity to invite friends and partners of our ministry to celebrate the move together with us. It was therefore also natural that the focus of the day was on a subject that has been central in Caspari's vision and work for many years: the next generation of Jewish believers in Yeshua.

The young speakers, all in their twenties and thirties, shared from their experiences in various fields of ministry, from children's and youth work to evangelism, systematic theology, reconciliation, and legal advocacy. The picture that was drawn for the more than 80 local and international guests was of great variety; it included many opportunities, but also many challenges.

Dan Sered pointed out the importance of seizing opportunities for evangelism. There is a growing openness and curiosity concerning the gospel and Yeshua among many Israelis. As an example, poster campaigns with the slogan *Yeshu=Yeshua=Yeshuah* (Jesus=Yeshua=Salvation) at intersections around the country resulted in hundreds of calls from interested passersby. The greatest challenge for evangelism is recruiting enough "workers for the harvest."

Barukh C., in his contribution on developing a Messianic theology, encouraged the younger generation to study and express an authentic Messianic Jewish theology and way of life. This can only be done as a community with a commitment to community life, be that in small groups, congregations, or in the body as a whole. It is important that more people give expression to their theological thinking and practice and provide enough space for an open discussion of the central issues, despite the differences of opinion that may and do exist. He points out that, in developing a Messianic theology, the focus needs to be on a practical theology which relates to the understanding of God, the people of God, the land of Israel, and the Torah as central elements in a Messianic theology.

**What are your  
hopes and dreams  
for the Messianic  
movement in Israel  
in 2025?**



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Ilya Lizorkin, from the Haifa Theological Institute, pointed out the imbalance between the number of immigrant believers in the body of Messiah in the country, and their representation in leadership forums and the resources invested in them by local and international bodies. For this reason they feel less inclined to use their gifts in strengthening the wider body of believers. This is something we cannot afford as a movement. This challenges the body to invest more in building relationships across cultural and language barriers, to prevent groups from isolating themselves and to encourage unity among the various groups, both among Jewish believers and among Jewish and Arab believers.

There is no doubt that many challenges face the body of believers in the years to come. Ilya Lizorkin's response to the question about the future was: Either we lose the next generation or we don't! This was said in reference primarily to immigrant believers, but this is a real danger that the whole movement faces. We cannot afford to lose the next generation. Miri Bulet, who spoke on work among children and youth, pointed out the challenge of engaging the children and youth in the Word of God in a situation where the Internet, TV, and mobile phones fill the majority of their time.

At the same time, both Miri and Shachar Chalamish, who works with the Lech Lecha discipleship ministry, stressed that there is today a wonderful generation of children and youth who love the Lord and are a great witness among their friends in school and the army. We need to stand with them, engage in their lives, pray for them and with them, and trust that the Lord will provide fruit in abundance.

The Open Day was in itself an encouraging display of the fact that there are many gifted young leaders with a heart and a calling to serve in this land. We can only continue to pray that the Lord will strengthen them and raise up more new leaders to build his body in Israel.

*Knut Høyland*



## Where Did Jesus Go to School? Jewish education in the time of Jesus

The New Testament gives us several hints of how a young Jewish child was educated. Paul tried to gain the confidence of an angry crowd in Jerusalem by telling them that he studied at the feet of Gamaliel, strictly according to "the law of our fathers" (Acts 22:3). He later wrote to Timothy, "From childhood you have known the sacred writings" (2 Tim. 3:15). Since Timothy's father was not Jewish, we can assume that Timothy's mother and grandmother, who were devout women (2 Tim. 1:5), either educated him in the Scriptures themselves or hired someone to do it.

We know almost nothing about Jesus' actual education. We do know that he could read the Scriptures (Luke 4:16), and perhaps he also knew how to write (see John 8:6, 8), although writing was not part of the standard program. However, we do know enough about Jewish education at that time to paint a fairly full picture of the kind of training that Jesus must have received.

Responsibility for the first level of formal education belonged to the father. As soon as the child was able to speak, he was to be taught some Bible verses. The learning of the Hebrew *alef-bet* began at about age three. The focus at the start was to train the memory, and the letters were learned both forwards and backwards. Since written documents were rare and accessible to only a few, memory was in many ways more important than the ability to read. The ideal student was compared to a cistern which does not lose a drop, and of one who forgot something he had learned it was said that he was like one who had forfeited his life (Avot 3.10). The student was to repeat what he heard, using the same words as his teacher. It should be no surprise, then, that some of Jesus' sayings sound very much like sayings of other teachers around that time. This method of learning also helps us to understand why Jesus sometimes quoted only part of a Scripture: he knew that his audience would fill in the rest in their minds.

Only at about age five did the child begin to learn to read the letters so that he could study the Torah. It is possible that girls were also given some rudimentary education in the Scriptures. However, generally it was ruled that girls were not to continue with such study, for several reasons: their duties were said to lie elsewhere; some subjects were considered unsuitable for females; if the girls studied, it could cause too much mixing with the boys and consequent familiarity; and, finally, it was claimed that a woman's mind was not really adaptable to study.

In the generation before the destruction of the Second Temple, Joshua ben Gamliel instituted rules regulating schools. It is probable that much of what he formalized was already in existence in Jesus' generation. At age 6 or 7 all boys were to go to school, which was attached to the local synagogue. The teacher, who was usually the *chazzan* of the synagogue, taught reading by drawing letters on a board. When Jesus referred to the tittle (*kotz*, Matt. 5:18), it is clear that he meant the newer square script, not the ancient script, which did not contain the little pointed addition on some of the letters.

A child's first reading was done in the book of Leviticus, because it contained some of the rules which were necessary for daily living. Besides, the stories which comprise most of the first two books of the Torah would already be familiar to the child. During the course of study, all of the books of the Torah and the Prophets were studied, including even those passages (like the story of Amnon and Tamar) which were not given a public Aramaic translation (*targum*) during the reading of Scripture in the synagogue. Naturally enough, the teaching of the Scripture was interspersed with many of the traditions of the Jewish people, and the children learned to recite the *Shema*, the grace after meals, and other traditional blessings. Reading and recitation of prayers was done aloud.

It was the responsibility of the teacher to train the children also in areas of behavior and values. Thus, for example, they should learn to avoid having dealings with violent people, to suppress all feelings of bitterness, and to avoid favoritism. All wrong-doing was to be punished, but the teacher should first of all convey the idea that sin is repulsive, rather than just emphasize its punishment.

There was, of course, also physical punishment in the school, but it should never be too severe. The preferred instrument of punishment was a strap, never a rod.

The father was responsible to see that his son received such formal education until the age of 13. From that point onward, the boy no longer went to the *bet sefer* but was responsible to study on his own with other adults. However, the responsibility of the father did not stop there. He was required to teach his son a trade, usually the same one he himself had. It was said that "if you do not teach your son a trade, you make him a robber."

*by Ray Pritz (the article is a reprint of an article that appeared in the Caspari Newsletter in 1997)*

## His Mysterious Ways

Some have said that God speaks to us in mysterious ways. His ways are certainly not our ways, but the good news is that he is always communicating with each one of us, if only we'll listen. Sometimes, he will speak using an unexpected source, a "mysterious way" of gaining our undivided attention: a donkey who served as his mouthpiece (Num. 22:21–38), a blazing summer sun and a night sky full of stars (Ps. 19:1–6), an instantly withered fig tree (Matt. 21:18–22).

Recently, he used the unlikely source of a wiry old merchant during my visit to Jerusalem in order to communicate with me.

I had a lot on my mind as I walked through the *shuk* (market) in Jerusalem's Old City in search of a couple of small gifts. I was worrying about my children and ruminating about some work-related projects with tight deadlines waiting for me when I returned to the U.S. And I was pondering the latest news headlines that were just another chapter in the long story of always-escalating strife in the Middle East. I was especially aware of the headlines that day as I wandered through the very city that lies at the core of many of those tensions.

I wandered into the stall of an ancient vendor. He was drinking a cup of tea, but set it down as soon as he saw me absently touch a shawl he had on display.

"They sell these shawls everywhere," I thought. "I might as well just buy it from here and get this shopping trip done." My heart just wasn't in it, but I gamely engaged in the bargaining ritual so I could make my purchase and get out of the tiny shop. I knew I could never beat these vendors at their own game. I was both an amateur and a tourist, and the men in the market did this sort of haggling all day long in order to support their families.

After the man and I threw some figures back and forth, we arrived at a price that seemed fair. I fished out my wallet and pressed the shekels into his hand. He took the money from me, took a step toward his cash box, and then paused to look at me for a long moment.

He then handed me almost all of my money back. I was confused. This is not how business is typically done in the Old City – or most anywhere else, for that matter.

Confused, I started to recount the coins.

He shook his head and said quietly, "I want to see you smile. You look sad."

Then he smiled at me, and repeated his words.

I nearly burst into tears right on the spot, but I gave the merchant a smile instead and thanked him profusely as he bagged my purchase.

As I walked away, I thanked God that he used an unlikely messenger to get my attention and communicate his care. The weight in my soul shifted onto his burden-bearing shoulders.

Jesus' first century audiences were weighted by the same sorts of relational, vocational, and political concerns I was dealing with. Two questions lie buried at the heart of those worries: *God, are you there?*

*Do you care?*

Yeshua answered those questions with this invitation: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28–30).

Yes, he is there. Yes, he cares even more than we do! He promises to teach and guide those who've yoked themselves to him. A yoke is an instrument of work for a beast of burden; yet Yeshua turns the image inside out and tells us that his yoke brings us rest. The word used for rest in this passage means more than just a cessation from physical work. Rest also means to possess a calm and patient expectation of the kind described in this biblical song of worship:

***My heart is not proud, LORD, my eyes are not haughty;  
I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me.  
But I have calmed and quieted myself,  
I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.  
Israel, put your hope in the LORD both now and forevermore. (Ps. 131)***

Yeshua didn't come to heap more worry, duty, and law-driven ritual onto the weary shoulders of his followers. He was giving them rest by giving them himself.

I smiled again as I walked out of the *shuk*, this time as a sign of surrender to the One who cared enough to remind me of his care by using an unexpected voice in a crowded and noisy market.

His ways are not our ways, indeed. And for that, I am grateful.

Michelle Van Loon



## Updates from the Ministry

Caspari Center hosted a group of 21 seminary students from the Norwegian School of Theology in Oslo for a 4-week study program in biblical studies, geography, and archeology (March 20 – April 17). The Norwegian School of Theology has been a long-time partner of Caspari Center. They are strongly involved in the publication of *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, edited by Dr. Reidar Hvalvik and Dr. Oskar Skarsaune.

Dr. Richard Harvey gave a lecture titled “Current Trends in Messianic Jewish Theology – Yeshua, Torah, and Israel” on April 12 at the Caspari Center. The lecture was part of the monthly Open Lecture series and was open to the public. Richard Harvey is the author of *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology* and teaches at All Nations Christian College in England. The lecture had a record attendance of 110 persons.

**Staff changes in the U.S.:** We are pleased to announce that **Michelle van Loon** has joined our U.S. staff as our new administrative assistant. Michelle will be known to the readers of our newsletter as the author of the devotionals over the past year and a half. In addition to her involvement with Caspari, she continues to work as an author and ministry consultant. Michelle is a Jewish believer in Jesus, lives in Illinois, and is married to Caspari International Board member Bill van Loon. We are delighted to have Michelle as part of our ministry team. She will be replacing Mary Jo Pribble, who has served as administrative assistant for many years. We are extremely grateful for the good and dedicated work Mary Jo has done over the past years, and we pray for all God's blessings on her as she moves on to a different position.



## 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/).

**Following the critical presentation of the anti-missionary organization, Yad L'Achim, in the Channel 1 program Mabat Sheni (A Second Look), Yad L'Achim has spoken out in the media to explain why they consider Messianic Jews such a threat to their understanding of who is a Jew.**

*HaShavua BeAshdod* (April 8) printed a letter from Yad L'Achim stating: “Yad L'Achim espouses freedom of religion, worship, and respect for all religious faiths. ‘Messianic Jews,’ however, are a completely different case: the members of the sect accept all the Christian tenets and endeavor to persuade Jews by deception and draw them into Christianity. They present themselves as Jews (they call their priests ‘pastors’ or ‘rabbis’) and thus influence those who are seeking to draw closer to the Jewish religion to come to their lectures. Their principal hope and vision (frequently expressed in their literature) is the complete obliteration of the Jewish people in general and of the Jewish presence in the Land in particular.”

In an article titled “The Wars of the Jews” (*Index Ha'Emek ve-ha-Galil*, April 29), Fatachiya Nerya, a Yad L'Achim worker, claims that Messianic Jews operate divergently from modern Christianity, which “weaves a web around Jews” in financial or emotional distress. “Messianic Jews . . . blur to a certain extent in their everyday reality their Christian aspects and create the impression that they are in fact Jews – just Jews who believe in ‘that man.’ They pray [in synagogue], they lay phylacteries, they say kiddush, they celebrate the festivals, they sound like national-religious Zionists, they serve in the army, they present themselves as very, very Jewish – everything is thought out down to the last detail. People shouldn't lie to Jews and give the impression that they continue to be Jewish at the very moment they're having them on. There's a law in Israel that says that everyone has to state what the product being sold is. ‘Judaism’ is a very clearly-defined entity, which doesn't include Christianity. In the clearest definitions that exist, Christianity is not Judaism. It's idolatry.”

## Prayer Requests

- **Thank the Lord for young leaders in the Messianic movement. Pray for strength and encouragement when they face difficult challenges and for more young leaders to be called and equipped for service.**
- **Pray about the unstable political situation in the Middle East. Pray for wisdom for leaders and discernment for believers in relating to the political developments.**
- **Pray for unity among Arab and Jewish believers.**
- **Pray for protection for believers who experience harassment and opposition, especially in Arad and Ashdod.**
- **Thank the Lord for providing new facilities for Caspari Center and the new ministry opportunities that this opens up.**
- **Pray for upcoming Caspari events this summer: leadership training seminar in Jerusalem, singles' event in the north, and Bridgebuilders reunion in Beit Jala.**
- **Pray for recruitment of new volunteers for 2011/2012, and for visas for them and for staff members returning from abroad.**

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.