



# Oasis

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**T**here is an old joke Messianic Jewish preachers sometimes use to break the ice with Gentile audiences. It goes something like this: “look, God doesn’t like Jews more than Gentiles. No, God must love the Gentiles very much...after all, He made so many of you!”

I think we sometimes employ this gag because underneath the humor it sends an important message, “Please don’t misunderstand our focus on Israel and the Jewish people as an attempt to elevate ourselves above you. We know you are as important and beloved as we are.” Addressing issues of distinction and particularity can be a delicate matter. Attention to uniqueness can easily move from a

celebration of diversity to a qualitative comparison, especially when there is a history of wrong doings and misunderstandings.

Messianic Jews can become insecure about our acceptance among Gentile Christians because for so long we heard a message that we no longer matter, that we have been replaced by those who are more worthy of the Kingdom. Gentile Christians can also become insecure when they reflect on their own failings against the Jewish people and embrace the shame of that tragic history. Insecurity often leads to a sense of inferiority but it can swing the other way, towards embracing a proud superiority as a way to compensate for a sense of inadequacy. Yes, distinction can be a delicate matter and some have sought to resolve it

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by focusing on the message of sameness. **“There is no distinction”** is an important principle repeated several times in the New Covenant scriptures and if heeded properly, puts an end to all debate about status and worth.

Consider Galatians 3:28, **“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”** This is an important statement relating to our equality and unity but it does not cancel out particularity. New believers do not suddenly morph into androgynous beings. The Jewish people still retain their irrevocable calling. There is no distinction as to our worth and status, but because our God loves diversity and unity together, our particularity remains. But particularity must be held with great humility towards the other and great appreciation to God for making us who we are - whether we be Jew or Gentile. As Jews we honor God by being true to our Jewish call, but we know full well that our security finds its source in the same Heavenly Father who loves our Gentile brothers and sisters equally as much as He loves us.

Here is our great example to emulate: **“You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had, who though He existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature. He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross!”** (Phil. 2:5–8 NET) Much has been made of the theology of Yeshua’s divine/human nature inherent in this passage but Paul’s message here is not so much about explaining Christology as it is about holding up Yeshua’s example as the pattern to follow: **“complete my joy by having a common purpose and a common love, by being one in heart and mind. Do nothing out of rivalry or vanity; but, in humility, regard each other as better than yourselves — look out for each other’s interests and not just for your own”** (Phil. 2:2-4). If The Lord took on the **“form of a slave”** for our sakes, how much more should

we be willing to serve and honor others?

The root of replacement theology can be traced back to a failure to follow this example. Paul was emphatic that the proper attitude for Gentile believers towards the Jewish people was **“do not boast”** (Rom. 11:18); instead regard your Jewish brethren with proper humility and avoid any notions of proud rivalry. Similarly, the Book of Hebrews reminds us Messianic Jews that we have nothing to boast about either; by way of introduction, the writer explains that it is because the Lord **“found fault”** with us, that through the prophet Jeremiah He proclaimed a New Covenant (Heb. 8:8,9).

The prophet Ezekiel describes this same New Covenant as returning us to the land, pouring clean water on us, removing our hard hearts and filling us with the Holy Spirit (See, Ezek. 36:24-26). The passage is emphatic that God is not doing this because of any faithfulness on our part: **“Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went.’”** (Ezek. 36:22) It is for His **“name’s sake”** that He will do this - boasting is excluded entirely. What is the outcome of this transformation process: **“Then the nations shall know that I am the Lord.”** (Ezek. 36:23) The process of our transformation is for God’s honor and the nations’ instruction. Similarly, with respect to the Gentiles, Paul makes an incredible statement, that salvation has come to them **“to provoke Israel to jealousy.”** (Rom. 11:11) Mercy has come to the Gentiles in order that Israel **“may obtain mercy.”** (Rom. 11:31) How amazing is this? In a sense, the purpose of salvation of both the Jews and the Gentiles is for the sake of the other! Our only proper response to this is humility and deep esteem for each other, just like the example Yeshua left us.

The process of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles also displays this

same interdependence. The release of all the riches stored up for the Gentiles as an inheritance is dependent on us Jews coming into our fullness (Rom. 11:12). Our national illumination, eyes to finally see clearly that Yeshua is our long awaited hope is dependent on the Gentiles entering into their fullness (Rom. 11:25). Yeshua does not return until both Israel acknowledges His Lordship (Matt. 23:39) and the Gospel is preached to every nation (Matt. 24:14). As Ezekiel 36 teaches us, our spiritual restoration is dependent on our physical returning to the land, but it is the Gentiles who carry our sons and daughters back to Israel **“in their arms”** and **“on their shoulders.”** (Isa. 49:22) This is all God’s choosing; we need each other to be made complete. **“Do not boast”** cuts both ways.

This helps us as Jews and Gentiles to appreciate who God made us to be and to relate to one another with mutual respect and admiration. Neither Jewish identity nor Gentile identity is any more or less holy, important or admirable than the other. If we Jews would so honor our Gentile brothers and sisters as per Philippians 2, and recognize our own need of their part in God’s plan, then jealousy would have no room to grow in their hearts and any subtle boasting would be excluded on our part. Likewise, as Gentile believers also take up Yeshua’s example and take to heart their need for Israel’s part in releasing their inheritance, they will recognize the need for our particularity and not boast against the root that sustains their grafted in branches. How wonderful is God’s plan to have us cross the finish line together, honoring each other as the one who saw us through to our completion and fullness. No wonder Paul concludes his explanation of Jews and Gentiles together in God’s salvation purposes with praise and wonder:

*“Oh, the depth of the riches  
both of the wisdom  
and knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable are His judgments  
and His ways past finding out!*

(Romans 11:33) ✨

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**Our Vision:**

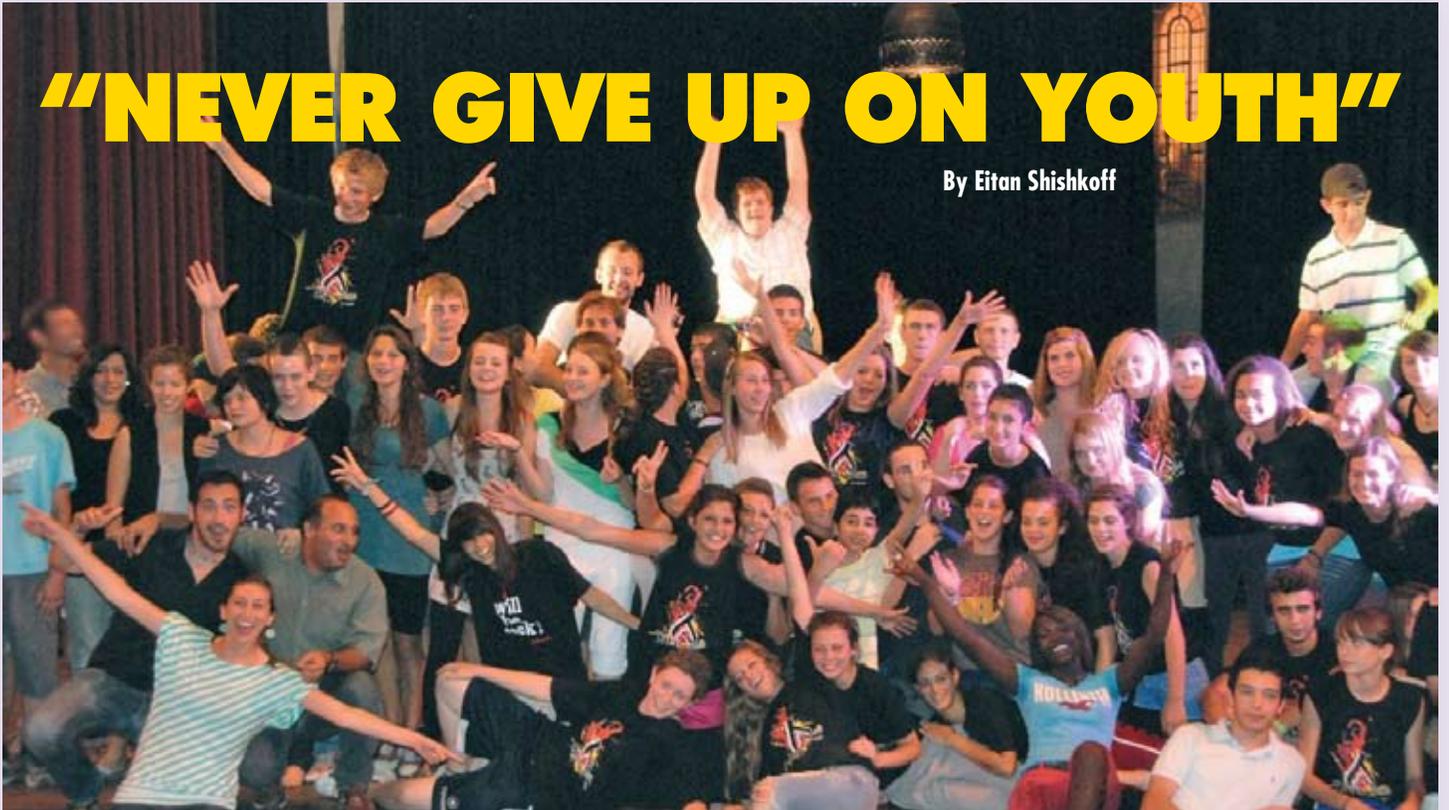
**Tents of Mercy** - to participate in today’s historic exodus by assisting Israel’s returning exiles.

**No spectators in the Kingdom** - to be a worshiping, sharing community based in homes, equipping each one for service.

**Come back Yeshua** - to welcome Yeshua home to Israel, by restoring the Jewish roots of New Covenant faith.

# "NEVER GIVE UP ON YOUTH"

By Eitan Shishkoff



**A papa to our national youth ministry Katzir, we asked editor-in-chief, Eitan Shishkoff, to pull double duty as a reporter to interview Katzir's incredible Creative Director, at their annual summer camp (for security reasons we cannot divulge the director's name). Through his energetic and persistent efforts, this year's summer camp consisted of six creative workshops. These facets of expression combined to create an inspiring "end of the camp" production that played in Jerusalem.**

***This is quite a complex production involving music, dance, acting, photography, writing and art. How long before the camp did you begin preparing the script?***

Eight weeks before the camp I had absolutely no idea of what I was going to do, until I went to a car wash. While waiting for my car I prayed and received a download from the Lord. The script for the drama came to me, including music and dances to go with it. That's what makes every year so special and different.

***What have you seen happen in this camp?***

The most relevant thing I've seen...which deeply touches my heart every time - is to see kids coming alive. Maybe I can summarize with one example. During this summer's camp I was on my way to the main meeting, and just by chance I saw a guy turning back his script with a sad face. He said, "I give up." So I left the meeting, took him to a quiet place and asked, "What happened? I don't care about the workshop, I just want to know how you feel and what happened." "I don't think I'm good enough and I don't want to act anymore." He was the drummer/actor—a large part. So we talked for a little bit. I said, "It doesn't matter if you failed. There's a gift, given to you by God. He will never take it back and you must never give up. Tomorrow I want to spend the day with you." So neither of us went to the activities. After that he took the script and learned everything. At one point he told me, "I'm not playing the drums anymore." I said, "Every time I see you playing the drums it gives me joy." Every day I saw him playing I couldn't watch because it filled my eyes with tears. The main problem was, he was discouraged because he felt he failed. The amazing thing is that it's OK to fail with God, because in failure we actually find the victory of grace that takes us through anything.

***What is the message of the musical?***

The main message is "Don't give up." Never give up no matter what. Don't look at your own achievements but look up to the Lord - that should be what drives you. We live in a society that tells us that our success takes us forward. Rather it's the Lord that enables us to excel. We should base our success on His strength. By the way, I like the saying "We preach best when we preach what we need the most." This is the message I need so often: I fail and get up and keep going.

***The core subject of the camp has been the Life of Shimon Kefa (Peter), Yeshua's fisherman disciple and how he overcame his struggles and failures to become a man mightily used of God here in Israel. How does the production, set in a modern day high school, parallel his life?***

I think that in high school a young person is faced with a huge number of personality/identity issues. They rarely find answers, and only in exceptional cases do they receive anything on that level from a teacher. In our play this weird substitute teacher comes along with an unusual way of talking that grabs the main student's attention. Indeed there's a parallel of Yeshua coming to Peter with a very challenging and yet loving message that totally grabbed his attention.

***Watching you work with young people is an inspiration. Why do you devote time to working with youth?***

One of the main reasons is that I see so much of God's beauty, so much of Himself inside these children. The enemy of our soul is at work to shut down that beauty with messages telling them they're not good enough. It's imperative for us as leaders to unlock the beauty

that's been in storage inside of them, that will display who God is to the world, through these kids' lives. A key message from God is "I have created you in my image." God is the creator of all things. And we have that DNA inside of us. That image has been corrupted by the enemy and so, you know, we have to redeem that.

***What happens inside a young person who enters this creative effort?***

The very first thing is he discovers he has a gift; and he's surprised, sometimes even amazed to discover that he can do what he's doing. The truth is that he's able to do it simply because someone believes in him. The second thing is that his self-esteem starts to grow. That will change his behavior. Third, eventually he will be proud of what he has done. But this pride comes with gratitude to the One who gave him the gift.

***Is the emphasis on performance, or is there another goal?***

Without a doubt the main goal is the process, not the performance. This is what gives us the opportunity to disciple them... giving encouragement, building them up through the process. The final performance is only the result, an outcome. It is really the process that matters more than anything. We're not trying in 9 days to turn them into a musicians, dancers or actors. But we do want to release the joy of creativity and the security to try. For example, I taught a young person who later became a front page photographer for the Jerusalem Post. The fruit of this process can change society.

***What was your career in your native country?***

I always had two parallel, but seemingly opposite paths. I studied building design. Then I worked as a quality control engineer for the U.S. Navy, connected with anti-terrorism protection. At the same time, I had always loved being on stage. I studied classical music, opera and acting. I started directing at 19 and produced my first play in high school. It contained a gospel message for secular students! So for almost 20 years I've been doing productions in all kinds of media, including television.

***Why did you choose to leave that and serve the Lord in Israel?***

Circumstances brought me back to my best friend, a pastor of a church. He asked me to produce a musical. The musical ended up being a tremendous success with a strong anointing; it was performed in secular theater. The night of the last performance, God told me clearly "This is what I want you to do for me." At this

time I was employed by the US Navy and at the top of my career. For six months God spoke to me in a very powerful, supernatural way. I would have dreams, waking up in the middle of the night. God would tell me He wanted me to leave my job without telling me what's next. I just felt I needed to be obedient. Completely blindfolded, having no idea what was waiting for me, I signed my resignation. At that time I had no interest in Israel whatsoever. I thought that Christians who came to Israel were idolaters for calling it a "holy place." That was, until my dearest friend bought me a ticket to Israel without my permission.

So I was forced to come for a five day visit. In Israel, God gave me a simple revelation. He said, "I love this people and I love this land." It was enough for me to leave my life behind. I said if you love these people, I will love these people too.

***You just got married a few months ago to an Israeli woman whose roots are in the Messianic movement here. Are you planning to settle in Israel and learn Hebrew?***

(Laughing) I think I should have learned Hebrew already. It is my strongest desire. And yes, I'm here to stay and raise my family.

***This is your third year participating as Creative Director with Katzir. What attracts you to the work of Katzir among Israeli youth? Do you intend to continue?***

I've studied revival history. People think they've seen revival but they haven't seen anything until they see what God is going to do with the youth of Israel. I have not come across a collection of young people like this anywhere; and I've done youth work in Europe, Italy, England and the USA. I am fascinated and amazed to see so

much quality, so much of God's fingerprint on these youth. So I am ready to invest my life to help them step into the fullness of what God calls them to do. This will bless Israel and the nations. Why Katzir? Behind any ministry there are people. I believe in joining with the people. Behind Katzir I found people of tremendous integrity and passion for God's kingdom. It is a privilege, an honor and a precious opportunity for me to be part of this team.

***What do you see as the future of Messianic youth in Israel?***

I really think that we are on the verge of an outpouring of God's spirit upon Israel's young people. And I am convinced that this generation is going to make history. ✨



He's got the moves



Worship through dance and song