



# Oasis

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## From the Middle East to the Far East and Back Again

By Avi T.

**“Let them give glory and give Him praise in the Islands...”**

Isaiah 42:12

### Taipei Tea Plantation

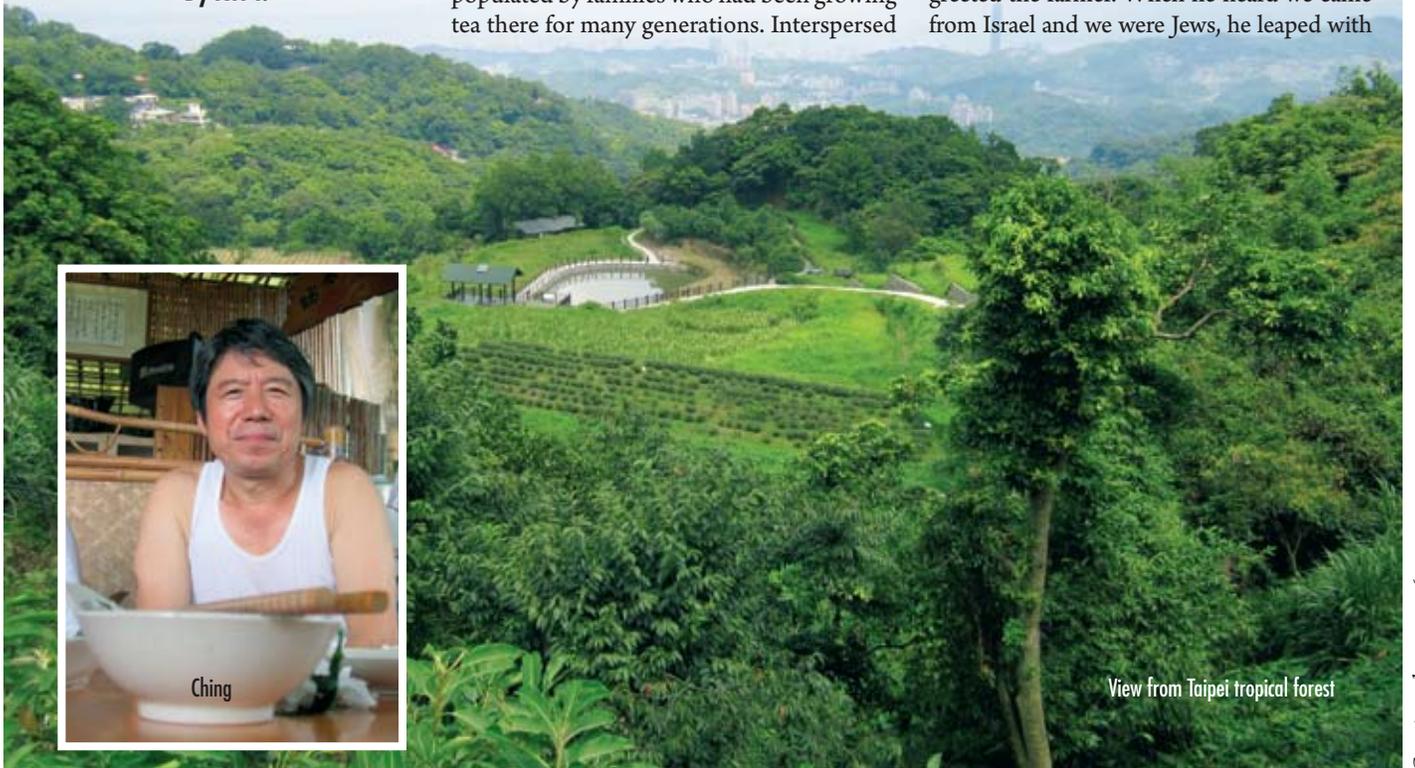
Walking through the tropical forest in Taipei, my senses were flooded with vibrant sensations. Various shades of bright green stretched out as far as I could see. Light rain sprinkled off and on, feeding the already thick humidity. Exotic birds called to one another through the thick foliage above in a language even more foreign to me than the Mandarin spoken by my friends and hosts.

We (David and I) were visiting the tea region in the North of Taiwan, an area populated by families who had been growing tea there for many generations. Interspersed

through the tea tree orchards we could see temples erected to honor Buddhist idols. Local residents, as well as visitors from other towns and countries, make pilgrimages to these temples to bring incense and seek spiritual guidance from their gods.

Coming from the desert land of Israel, where everything but the sea seems to be in shades of light brown, the scene was refreshing to my eyes. It was beautiful, exotic, foreign - a totally different world than any that I was familiar with.

And then we arrived at a gate. Our kind host Pastor Joseph and dear friends showed us the Chinese writing at the gate. It read something like “tea harvesting six times a year.” We went in through the gate up the stairs and greeted the farmer. When he heard we came from Israel and we were Jews, he leaped with



View from Taipei tropical forest

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joy and could not contain his emotions of deep love and bewilderment...then he quickly sat us down and told us his story.

Ching is the fourth generation working his family's plantation. Though their farm is not large, they have always maintained a high level of quality tea making. His heritage is not just tea making but also a deep seated faith in God and His son Yeshua with a passionate and devoted love for Israel. He told us how he wakes up early before sunrise and goes out to his tea field to meet the Lord in prayer for Israel. According to Ching, it is these prayers in the field that have made his plantation fruitful enough to harvest six times a year (usually a good harvest would be three to four times year).

To hear this man's heart, even with translation, transported us to God's throne and we marveled at His faithfulness. This experience will remain in our hearts for a long time. Here was a man of faith, who prayed for Israel, meeting 'Israel redeemed' as it were, in David and me, continuing in faith and hope renewed. That was the purpose of our trip. Our hope was renewed that even in the remote hills of Taiwan, God had raised faithful watchmen to stand guard over Zion.

## Bread of Life

Shortly after this encounter we were blessed to attend an important meeting for the community of believers from the Bread of Life Church in Taipei. This mega gathering was to honor the senior pastor as he entered into a new season of ministry.

Touring their facility, we were inspired to see two large prayer halls in which the community devotes time to prayer. On a regular basis they pray with a focus on Israel and her salvation. Pastor Chou, the father of this ministry is handing over the baton. In our brief time with him, we could see the mark of humility coupled together with a bold faith like David - able to conquer the Goliaths confronting Taiwan.

We went there to represent Israel and took part in praying over the leaders. Standing before thousands of believers we prayed the Aaronic Benediction over the community. Standing in this prophetic, priestly role moved us to tears.



Sign at entrance to Ching's tea plantation: 'Tea harvested here six times a year'

## Tokyo "Love March"

In the wake of the natural disasters that have literally washed over Japan, we had been invited by our dear friends in Tokyo to march with them in a "Love March" for Japan. Almost 1,000 people strong, we walked in the streets of Tokyo, local believers together with other foreigners, Taiwanese, Brazilian, and we two Israelis, declaring in the spirit the love of God for Japan. More than anything else, what was evident to us during the march was the stark contrast between the mute desperation for change and the explosive joy of redemption available in Yeshua. Revival has been slow to come to Japan, and as our brothers and sisters there believe, when the Japanese open their heart to receive the love of the Father in the "land of the rising Sun," the movement of salvation to the Gentiles will have come full circle; and then this wave of salvation will flood back towards Israel.

Discovering over and over again the love and devotion of beloved friends in the nations, who pour out themselves in prayer for Israel was an awesome and humbling thing. We were immeasurably blessed to extend a declaration of blessing over Japan and a prayer that indeed revival will come to her.

While history tells the stories of trade and exchange from the Middle East to the Far East, we are on the verge of a new era. I believe the Lord will trumpet a move that will provoke Israel to zeal for Him. Both Taiwanese and Japanese culture place high regard on honor and respect for ancestors. How fitting that believers in these two nations are being connected together through their mutual honor and respect for the patriarchs of Israel, the ancestors and fathers of their faith.



Aviv and David in Tokyo



Marching in Tokyo

In this priestly pilgrimage we saw these two island nations, Japan and Taiwan, interlinked with a common destiny. My travelling companion, David, received this verse from Isaiah 42:4 just a few hours before we received the invitation to go: **"and the islands shall long for His instruction."** This trip was a reminder to these two islands to long for His Torah that comes out of Zion. We add our prayers that He would meet their cries and fill the Islands with His Glory. ✨

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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.

# Soul Food

By Moshe Morrison

Leon Mazin has been a part of Tents of Mercy from its inception. He served as an elder and is now the leader of two of our daughter congregations, Shavei Tzion (Those who Return to Zion) in Haifa and Netzer Hagalil (Branch in the Galilee) in Upper Nazareth. I have known Leon for more than 15 years and I greatly admire him. He is a dedicated, conscientious and highly motivated servant of the Lord. We sat together in my home to do the interview for this article and I asked Leon lightheartedly what he would like to do with his life. With a smile he responded, "I would like to open a very nice restaurant and serve gourmet food." From my perspective that is what Leon is doing already.

It's no coincidence that Leon's last name is Mazin. While there is no etymological connection between his Russian family name and the Hebrew word that sounds like it, I still find it very interesting that "mazin" is the same as the Hebrew adjective "nutritious" (referring to food). Leon and his congregations are providing both physical and spiritual nourishment for God's people. In Haifa and in Nazareth his congregations each operate a soup kitchen to feed the hungry. The center in Haifa is open 4 days a week and feeds approximately 400 - 500 people per week. In Nazareth they distribute weekly 35 - 40 packages of food to families.

The members of Leon's congregations have access to the spiritual food of the scriptures on a regular basis during Shabbat services. In addition, part of the ministry of Shavei Tzion is the Haifa Theological Institute that Leon started two years ago. Its goal is to provide a solid foundation for Russian speakers in learning the Word of God. It all sounds very nutritious to me.

Let's take a few steps back and look at the history of Leon and his family and then we'll return to the present. Leon is 43 years

old. He and his wife Nina have five children, ages 4 through 17. Leon moved to Israel in 1990, from Belarus. Nina and her family came in 1989, from Ukraine. They were both believers and met each other at a Messianic conference here in Israel and were married in 1993.

Also in 1993, Leon was introduced to Eitan Shishkoff who was serving on the staff at Carmel Assembly. Eitan was starting to feel the call to reach out to the Russian immigrant population in the area between Haifa and Akko known as the Kryot. In 1994, a home group began meeting in the home of a Russian couple in the Kryot and Leon became Eitan's translator during these meetings. This was around the same time that my family and I also moved to Israel. We attended Carmel Assembly for almost 2 years, but in 1996 we moved down to the Kryot because the home groups (now there were two) were expanding into a full-fledged congregation, Tents of Mercy.

After some searching we found a warehouse in Kiryat Yam that had formerly been used to manufacture aluminum windows. We fixed it up as best as we could and began holding services there on Saturday evenings. Leon was hired to work full-time for Tents of Mercy starting up a humanitarian aid distribution center. In 1998, Eitan, Leon and I were ordained as the leadership of the congregation. We also moved out of our old warehouse into our new building just 100 feet away.

Around the year 2000, Leon developed a burden for the city of Haifa. Originally his thoughts were primarily in the realm of outreach rather than starting up a new congregation. God had other ideas and a new congregation was formed in 2001. There was a Russian speaking home group in Haifa that was part of Tents of Mercy and it became the basis for Shavei Tzion. They rented a hall and began meeting. However, after about 6 months, the owners of the building came under pressure by a religious Jewish group to get them out.

Their new meeting place was the Arab/Israel Cultural Center. This is a unique location in Haifa, a place of sharing for Muslims, Christians and Jews. Shavei Tzion was welcomed there and the people who ran the center were not susceptible to Orthodox harassment. In this new home, Leon's congregation truly began to take root and grow.

Leon's vision is to "build a congregation with a faith in Yeshua in Israel today as it was many years ago. Our services and our lives need to truly express the genuine Jewishness of the first believers and naturally connect with our people now." I asked him how it was going and his answer was honest and profound. "It is a big vision and a great challenge," he said, "but we try to do our best. We lay the stones and trust for God to provide the cement to hold





Haifa Soup Kitchen

it all together.” Shavei Tzion in Haifa now has about 140 members which includes the children. 95% are Russian speakers.

The theological institute makes use of local Israeli leaders and foreign visiting teachers to instruct the students. There are about 70 students in various levels of commitment and there are over 1000 people who access teaching material from them online. The material is strongly Messianic in its approach to the scriptures.

Shavei Tzion also has a music school which was originally started as an outreach and now has an enrollment of about 25 students. The five instructors teach drums, clarinet, violin, saxophone and piano.

It is also important to mention that Shavei Tzion is reaching out to 150-200 holocaust survivors. This is a much neglected



Dinner for Holocaust Survivors

yet very needy part of Israeli society. Most are very elderly and their numbers diminish every year. As funds allow, Shavei Tzion provides concerts, shows, meals, and occasional touring trips around the country for these who have suffered so much and have so little.

In 2002, the Lord put it on Leon’s heart to reach out into Nazareth. Lower Nazareth, the older section of the city, is almost entirely Arab with a population of about 60,000. Upper Nazareth is a relatively new development with a Jewish population of 55,000. Their initial efforts were unsuccessful, but in 2004, Congregation Netzer HaGalil was formed in Upper Nazareth. Now, after 7 years, the congregation remains small, only about 30 people. Leon’s associate there is a young Russian man name Vakif, a good and dedicated shepherd. The biggest challenge facing this work is the strong spiritual resistance against the establishment of the Messianic faith in Nazareth. Many centuries of Jewish rejection still influences the spiritual atmosphere of the city. Nazareth is universally known as Yeshua’s “home town” and this is very irksome to the rabbis who have synagogues there. They would much rather eliminate the connection between Yeshua and their town than to see it grow and flourish today in the form of a modern Messianic community.



Shavei Tzion Shabbat Service

Leon is a visionary. He is open to fresh ways to reach our people with the message of Messiah. These projects that we have briefly looked at here are the fruit of the Holy Spirit’s work through him, but there is much more to come. He is one of the pioneers who has returned to Zion to build her up.

Shavei Tzion moved out of the Arab/Jewish center five years ago and has been renting part of a wonderful building in the heart of downtown Haifa. The landlord is willing to sell the building and has offered them an excellent price. They are currently in the process of raising money to purchase it. The facility has great potential and is five stories high with open meeting space on the roof as well. Owning the entire building will enable them to almost double their sanctuary seating space and build offices, classrooms, dormitories for guests and volunteers, and maybe there will even be a little place for a gourmet restaurant. ✨