

Oasis

During a recent stretch of emotional stress, overwhelmed by the demands, opportunities, and life assignments too big for me, I cried out to the Lord. Searching for a way to cope with/get out of that trapped, stuck feeling—a word came to me from an unlikely source. I remembered the technique Connie and I studied in preparation for the birth of our first child.

We were living in the foothills of a New Mexico mountain range, planning to deliver the babe at home, in our rustic adobe hut. Diligently we read about the Lamaze method of childbirth. The key word of the entire method, and what the husband is to repeatedly encourage his wife to do while she passes through the stages of labor and finally pushes out the infant, is—BREATHE! The Lord had my attention, but how was I to apply this one word to my struggle?

“This is beyond me!”

First, I realized that I’m in a birthing process. Like a woman ready to give birth, I am pregnant with the future and its being born—whether I like the timing or not. A birthing mom is subject to a force outside her control. She may suddenly feel, “I can’t do this! What was I thinking?” She knows intellectually what’s taking place and may have even trained for it. But the experiential reality calls for additional reserves of courage, patience, surrender, and faith.

Hmmmm. That description pretty well matches my situation. Not by chance, breath is that which brings life. **“And the Lord God...breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7). “Come from the four winds, O breath and breathe on these slain that they may live” (Ezekiel 37:9). “And...He [Yeshua] breathed on them and said to them ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (John 20:21).**

So easily I get caught up in the “labor pains” and forget to “breathe,” by praying, worshipping, turning my attention to the Author of the story I’m living. Yet the new life God intends to bring through us is so worth it. Which brings me to the second priority of being the channel for what God wants to birth in the earth. BELIEVE!

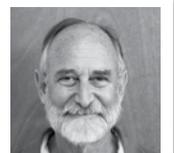
Zechariah didn’t believe

Not long after hearing the word BREATHE, I was reading the conversation in Luke between elderly Zechariah, a godly priest whose wife was barren, and the angel Gabriel. I found the angel’s words speaking to me! **“Don’t be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son” (Luke 1:13).** For me this was the equivalent of “Don’t worry, Eitan. God has heard your prayers. What you have yearned for in Israel will be born.” After the angel’s riveting description of all that this miracle son will

be and do, Zechariah asks a question. **“How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years” (Luke 1:18).** In other words, “There ain’t no way we’re gonna have a baby at this stage of our lives. You gotta be kiddin.”

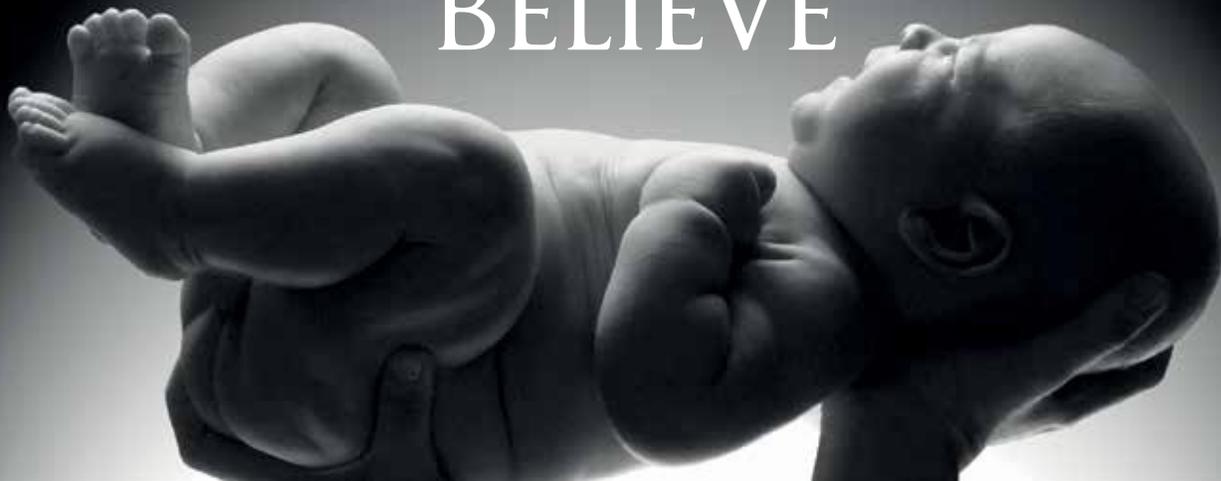
At this point, the angel rebukes the servant of God and declares him mute **“because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time” (Luke 1:20).** What Zechariah did not do was BELIEVE. I understood in that moment that, in addition to the instruction to BREATHE, I was also being told to BELIEVE. The birth of the miraculous is the stuff of which our lives are to be made. Yet this impossible outcome defies our natural capabilities and comprehension. That leaves us with the necessity of believing—wholly embracing God’s incredible promises and knowing that **“faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).**

My conclusion? By remembering to BREATHE and BELIEVE, we will see Israel’s revival—the rebirth of a people long separated from our God, unaware of the true Messiah. That will be a miracle worth any intensity of birth pangs. ✡



**EITAN
SHISHKOFF**

BREATHE & BELIEVE



The Flow

How do we teach a generation of children to go against the flow? How do we as believers, raise them to be at peace with their apparently conflicting identities: both “in the world” and also “not of it?” In our case they must learn to be both Jewish and also followers of Yeshua. This means **going against the flow** of their peers all the way from nursery school through army service and into college and the work force. We see many who complete their army service and leave the faith, stolen in their prime.

As I look at Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles, I can’t help but notice that the closer he gets to Jerusalem, the more he is confronted with a similar *Jewish vs. Yeshua conflict*. And when I return to Israel from teaching in different nations, I also feel like Paul getting “closer to Jerusalem” (Acts 20 & 21). I am once again face to face with the religious Jewish community and its approach to Torah. These were part of my upbringing and identity as a Jew, and by God’s grace I am able to stand in the midst of both camps - maintaining my identity both as a Jew *and* as a follower of Yeshua.

In Paul’s time there were two camps: the Jews and the Gentiles. Through Paul, God chose that the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel and believe (Acts 15:7). To accomplish this Paul had to cross geographical borders as well as borders of tradition and custom. He entered the homes of Gentiles and helped awaken them to faith. Even as he traveled, preached and visited congregations, he remained a Jew in the way he worshiped God. Only by God’s grace was Paul able to carry out this stereotype-breaking lifestyle.

Gentile believers came from a background of idol worship. Their “worship culture” was not the same as that of the Jews. Jewish believers looked at the Gentile believers from a Jewish perspective and were put off by what they saw as pagan Greek or Hellenistic influences in their faith. There was a big argument among the apostles concerning which of the commandments the Gentiles should be required to follow (Acts 15:19-21).

Paul knew how to stand in the midst of both camps while maintaining the integrity of his identity. Acts 21:20 describes that in addition to him, there were *tens of thousands of Jews who believed in Yeshua and remained “zealous for the law.”* I look at all of the above and consider it in the light of modern Israeli life. I find myself considering

Paul’s thoughts in Galatians 2:1-5. Like him, I want to be sure not to “run my race in vain.” What do I mean by that? I want to see the next generation able to live boldly as Israeli Jews and as followers of Yeshua.

We are raising our children to believe in Yeshua yet they are living in a Jewish society which identifies Him with a religion that has persecuted and killed them throughout history. Our children, youth and young adults do not want to lose their Jewish identity and connectivity, but our faith can put a distance between us and the rest of our society. Many in the Jewish community still perceive accepting Yeshua as worshipping “another God” and betraying our people. There is little to no understanding of Yeshua and Messianic Judaism, particularly among school age children, which makes it particularly difficult for our kids to express their faith among their peers.

This generation is encountering the same challenges that Paul, the apostles and the first century believers in Yeshua faced. May God give us the wisdom to do all we can so they will not feel alone, so that they will feel loved and accepted while maintaining their Jewish identity and growing in understanding and acceptance of Yeshua.

And may we, around the world, all join together standing in faith intercession *for the water of God’s Spirit to flow* in accordance with *generational promises* applicable to all of us:

**“...Fear not, O Jacob My servant
...whom I have chosen.**

**For I will pour water on him who is thirsty,
And floods on the dry ground;
I will pour My Spirit on your descendants,
And My blessing on your offspring.”**

(Isaiah 44:2-3) 





CHOOSING To Answer His Call

The Bible shows heroes of faith in whom we can see the prototype of our Savior Messiah. Through a Jewish woman named Hadassah (Queen Esther) He brought salvation to the Jewish people. All things are possible to God.

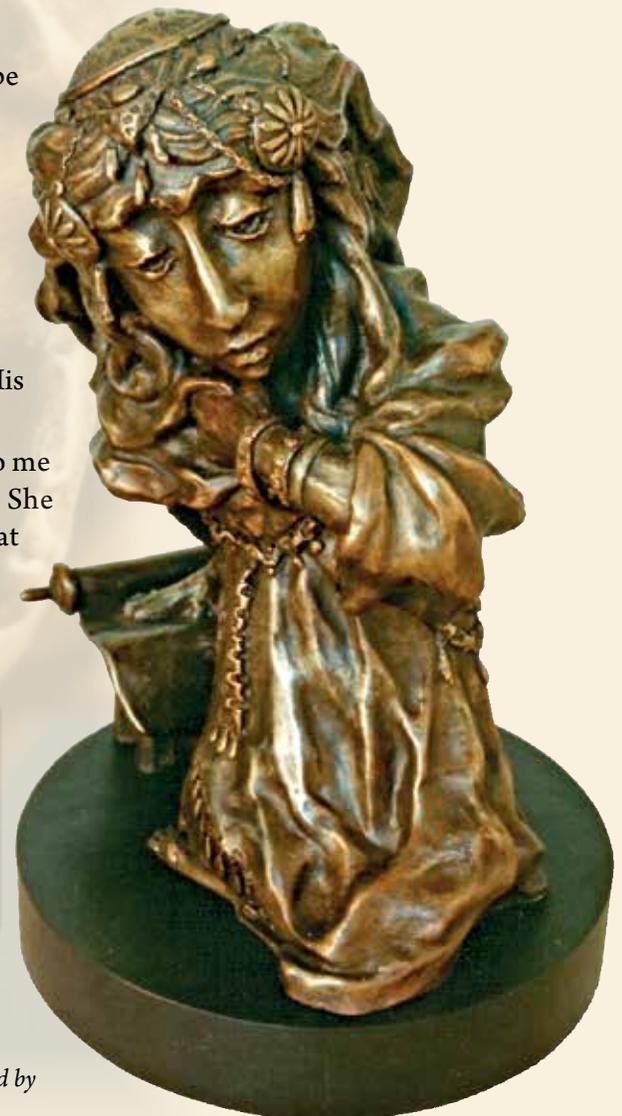
For me, the story told in the book of Esther is a call to every believer who trusts in God and His Son Yeshua. God brings each of us to this world and He raises us to the heights, so that we may say “yes” to Him, and seek His will, not our own. Then He will be able to bring great things to pass through us - small and weak though we are. It is His challenge to us - to *hear Him calling and to obey Him*.

The image of Queen Esther, embodied in this sculpture, is dear to me because she is shown here at the most critical moment of her life. She had attained royalty and then her uncle Mordechai requested that she make use of that high position. His request could ultimately endanger her very life. Yet by putting her life on the line Esther could save her people.

You can see how Esther is at that very moment choosing to say to Mordechai: **“Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish”** (Esther 4:16). ☆



EPHRAIM
KALISH



Editor's note:

“**Queen Esther Making a Hard Choice**” is part of a series of biblical sculptures created by Israeli Messianic artist Ephraim Kalish. www.torah-art.net torahart7@gmail.com

Date Night

“If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.” (1 John 4:12)

“A Date Night? Just the two of us?” How are we going to manage THIS right now?”

I’m sure these questions sound familiar to most couples, especially those with young children. When my husband and I moved to Israel years ago (independently), we anticipated certain challenges like learning a new language, taking on new cultural norms and cultivating new friendships; however, we did not think through the challenges of starting a family in a country so far from our own relatives. Now, with a toddler and baby in hand, we sometimes catch ourselves comparing our difficulties to those with the support of grandparents and other extended family members so locally at their disposal. I admit, it’s really hard sometimes, but this is where the power of God’s love has shined through our local community to exemplify the meaning of “loving your neighbor as yourself.”

A few weeks ago, the leadership of our congregation arranged a beautiful evening for young married couples, which included an exquisite Ethiopian dinner, popcorn and

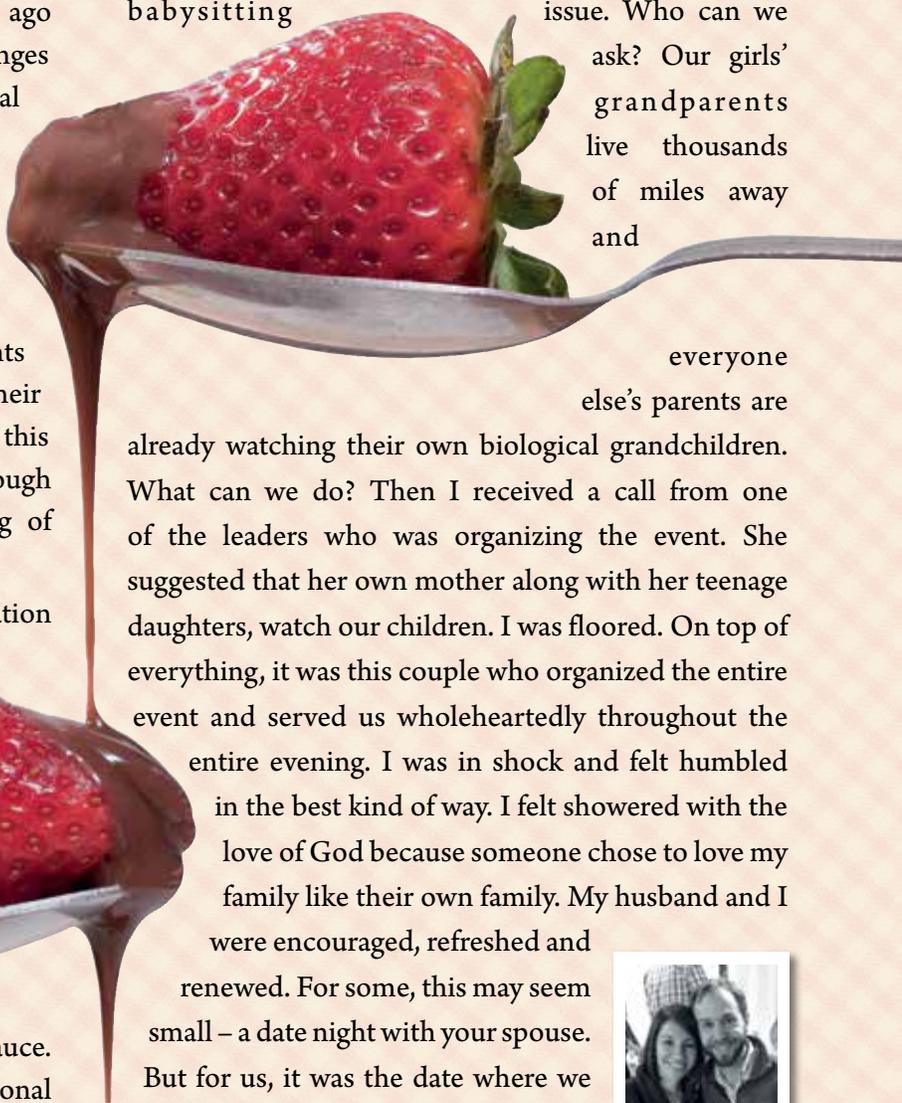
a movie plus a divine dessert of strawberries with chocolate dipping sauce. Moreover, they transformed our local congregational coffee shop into an intimate movie theatre with flowers and candles at each table for the couples to enjoy.

Romantic background music set the mood, and each of the young couples were beaming from ear to ear. For me, well, I felt like a queen, but there’s more to the story...

Days before the event, my husband and I were at a loss about how we could attend due to the usual babysitting

issue. Who can we ask? Our girls’ grandparents live thousands of miles away and

everyone else’s parents are already watching their own biological grandchildren. What can we do? Then I received a call from one of the leaders who was organizing the event. She suggested that her own mother along with her teenage daughters, watch our children. I was floored. On top of everything, it was this couple who organized the entire event and served us wholeheartedly throughout the entire evening. I was in shock and felt humbled in the best kind of way. I felt showered with the love of God because someone chose to love my family like their own family. My husband and I were encouraged, refreshed and renewed. For some, this may seem small – a date night with your spouse. But for us, it was the date where we felt honored by the power of genuine, God-centered, community love. ✨



BLAIR & YONI



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