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Lasting Fleeting Relationships

How to build intentional faith communities and lasting relationships



By Dan Juster

Already in the late 1960s, sociologists and cultural analysts predicted the outcome of our individualistic, corporately driven modern society: *fleeting relationships*. People would be more and more lonely as they aged, leading to “future shock.”

Students in my graduate seminary wanted to counter this and to build “**intentional community**” where people pledged to live out a biblical community together in a long-term way unless genuinely called away by the Spirit. Acts 2:42 was the ideal, that followers of Yeshua shared life, resources, and support at the highest level; plus mutual accountability for growth in righteousness and holiness.

Personal experiences in those days reinforced my concerns. After leaving a charismatic church that went heretical, Patty and I sought a vibrant church community during our year of engagement. Most places we visited were a disappointment, but we finally found one with good worship. I was in my last year of graduate school and would travel every weekend to see Patty. We were *hoping to build relationships* there, but it was very hard. One day, the announcement bulletin in the church noted that we would be meeting in small groups. As we left the sanctuary, I told the pastor I was excited about this, but he said it was not for long-term relationship-building but to discuss a building project!

One of the reasons I went into the ministry, instead of becoming a professor, was that I wanted to *build the kind of community that I was NOT finding*. In my first pastorate in Chicago, 1972-1977, we helped build such a community. Afterward, when Patty and I were called to leave, it was painful. People had identified with the message of covenant community! *Forty-five of them lived within walking distance of one another and the fellowship was wonderful.*

However, Yeshua promises that if we leave our close relationships for the sake of the Kingdom, we will indeed be given more. When we were called to move to the Washington DC area, we prayed God would bring fellow leaders who would build their lives together in Kingdom work and that these relationships would last a lifetime, with open sharing, mutual support, and accountability.

Would God answer this prayer? He did. We soon found a contingent of leaders who committed to one another and the Kingdom in a deep and long-term way. People explicitly came and said they wanted to build this way, the first being Asher Intrater (before he was even married) and Jerry and Jo Miller. Four decades later (!), a significant core of leaders going back to those days are still in committed relationships and serve together in Tikkun expressions. Asher wrote about how this works in his book *Covenant Relationships*. It has been amazing. And, of course, many dear, newer friends have joined in covenant with us - some 30 years ago, some 15 years ago, and some recently.

The goal of covenant relationships is supporting each other. It's about shared accountability teamwork in mutual submission. At times, the covenant will be tested. Sometimes the disagreements are intense, but we work things out, as in a marriage, and we do not flee. We are committed to seeing love triumph.

We have been blessed to walk out an example of relational continuity in a world of fleeting relationships. Many of our younger leaders are walking in the same covenant relationships.

By God's grace, it can be done.

A Diaper Bag for the End-Times?!



By Hannah Tekle

“I charge you therefore before God and Messiah Yeshua, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word!

Be ready in season and out of season.” (2 Timothy 4:1-2)

Our firstborn daughter is about to be inducted into the Israeli army.

It is surreal to think that we have come so quickly to this stage of her life - of our lives. It feels like just yesterday that I myself was anxiously, even ignorantly, joining the IDF as a fresh immigrant. Granted, things were done quite differently then. Today, many of her interactions in the induction process have been digital. There is an app. There is a website. She has had online forms to fill out and Zoom interviews to hurdle. In my day, we had snail mail and huge paper forms to fill out. And a lot of other unknown things. The process has become more streamlined in the almost 30 years since I served in the army. Regardless, the core experience is the same.

While she knows so much more than I did, and has the advantages of being fluent and native, there is *still no way for her to be completely **ready** for everything she will face in this new season* of her life. In the next few weeks, we will buy supplies and prepare her “duffle bag” for basic training. Somehow that meagre bag will attempt to hold all she will need for those auspicious first days and weeks. It reminds me of the first important bag we used to prepare for her...a diaper bag.

As first-time parents, we wanted to feel confident, wanted to cover all our bases and BE READY for every possible scenario. Hence, every time we went anywhere, we took this huge, fully equipped diaper bag with us. It had about a million pockets, and it held EVERYTHING. Yet, even with our good intentions, there were still many times when we somehow didn't

have what we needed. Sometimes we had used the last diaper or she had already dirtied all three changes of clothes we had brought that day. **We became more flexible and less “panicky” about expecting the unexpected.**

As we matured and had more children, that huge diaper bag shrank dramatically. When our last baby came along, we would often take just one or two diapers and a small pack of wipes. With time, and even with fewer supplies, we felt *more ready* and did not need the backup safety of an every-eventuality diaper bag.

The Bible talks a lot about seasons. It is one of the most obvious elements of nature - the cyclical pattern of the weather and of the year. Watching the seasons and knowing the seasons can bring us a great deal of security. But in Acts 1:7 we read, **“It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.”** It goes without saying that we are now living in times and in a season which is unlike any before it. Life is confusing and complicated and uncertain. Suddenly, we are thrust into new realities that we probably were not prepared for, just like parents having their first baby, or an army inductee just before basic training - realities for which we probably could not have ever fully prepared.

Continued on page 6.



Anonymous female recruit with kitbag looking unenthused (IDF photo)

Bite your Tongue?



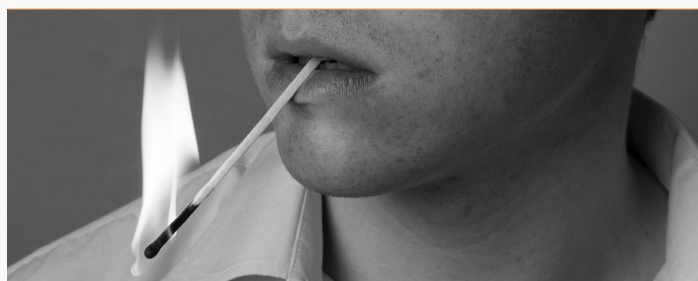
By **Guy Cohen**

There is much in the Word of God relating to the tongue. From James 3:1-12, we see how the tongue, as small as it is, has such a profound effect. It is like a bit in a horse's mouth, like the rudder of a ship and like the flame of a single match that is able to set a forest ablaze.

It is amazing how easily words, which we later regret, tend to come out of our mouths! For that matter, it is not only the spoken but also the written words which fall under this category - particularly in this age of texting and posting. All of these forms of communication, for our purposes, can be considered the tongue.

What is it that controls our tongue? How can it be that, as James writes in verses 9-11,

“From the same mouth come both blessings and curses?”



Are we hearing indications of what is in our heart?

One way to know is to notice what comes out of our mouth when we are under pressure or when we are experiencing inner turmoil.

According to James (Ya'akov), the possibility for total destruction is great. He writes the following in verse six: **“The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the members of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.”**

Once again, *what is it that controls the tongue? If our heart dwells in the peace of God, His favor and wisdom will come out of our mouth. We will not speak words meant to simply please man. We will operate in the times and seasons set before us for God's purposes in our lives and the lives of others!*

If we are in conflict or turmoil, not filled with the Spirit of God, we may find ourselves slowly looking and acting more and more like those in the world. Has the Body of Messiah drifted into this pattern? Are we seeing only defects? Do we only see other people's weaknesses? Do we gather together in fellowship, only for what we will get for ourselves, or are we there to offer worship to the Lord in Spirit, in truth, and in unity? What is the true motivation of our heart?

As James 3:11-12 says, let us be aware of the power of the tongue for evil and for good, so we will not find ourselves becoming a spring that brings forth salt water and not fresh water.

When you are thirsty, do you want someone to give you a cup of salty ocean water? Have you ever accidentally tasted ocean water while swimming in the waves? Only fresh water can satisfy thirst. As God used His words to create new and beautiful things, may we also use our words to bring forth good.

Challenges and Opportunities



By Leon Mazin

Shalom, dear friend of Israel,

I want to thank you for standing with us during 2020 in prayers and donations to support Return to Zion Ministry. Without your help, especially during these difficult times, it would not have been possible to continue carrying out our ministry.

2020 was an unusual year, which not only introduced griefs and fears, but also made it possible to re-evaluate, adjust, take note, strengthen and develop. Someone said: *“Problems in life can open up new opportunities.”*

We can see this in the life of Joseph, the son of Jacob. He is a brilliant example of how difficulties, confusion and betrayal can be turned into purity, revelation, and service with God’s power. The main thing is not to grumble!

Joseph said, **“...But now do not grieve or regret that you sold me here, because God sent me before you to preserve your life”** (Genesis 45: 5-28).

“Moreover, we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to His will” (Romans 8:28).

Return to Zion Ministry is more active than ever with humanitarian projects, the extent of which has increased significantly. We are privileged to serve the poor as well as the new immigrants returning from the Diaspora to the Promised Land. Helping the needy is one of the most important commandments of the Scriptures. Praise the Lord, through this ministry we are able to reach out to the heart of man with the Light of God and renew their faith in the GOOD.



The Music School is also active. The number of lessons has doubled, even as lessons in groups have been postponed due to COVID-19. The goal is to encourage the students who study with us, along with their parents, to overcome fear.

The home groups of our congregation are meeting in person when we are not in lockdown, and we see new people opening their hearts to Yeshua the Messiah. Only my home group is online, with more than 100 participants attending every Wednesday.

My heart is filled with gratitude to the Lord our God for His faithfulness and guidance! I thank God for you, for your families and for your desire to stand with Israel! We pray that 2021 would be a year of restoration and a time of intimacy with the Creator. We pray revelation of the essence of Messiah for you and your loved ones, and a year of knowing His will and His ways in serving Him!

I ask you to stand with us in 2021. Your prayers and your contributions strengthen our hands and help us to shine the Light of Yeshua to Israel!

Yours faithfully,
Leon and Nina Mazin





***“But as for me, I trust in You,
O LORD; I say, ‘You are my God.’
My times are in Your hand;”***

(Psalm 31:14-15)

Today we held a very intimate funeral for an elderly woman from our congregation. We have not had a corporate congregational meeting for almost a year, and we are currently in another national lockdown. These two circumstances created an unusual atmosphere for a funeral – joy and excitement to see one another – and emphasized to all of us the sweetness of face-to-face fellowship.

Sophia was 94 when she died. Orphaned at age 14, she was a Polish-born Holocaust survivor who had guarded belief in God in the depths of her heart for decades as she served in professional capacities in the Soviet Union as a loyal Communist. Nine years ago she prayed a salvation prayer with her daughter, a long-time member of our congregation.

Sophia made Aliyah to her Israeli “homeland” where she was blessed to live out her final years – until a few days ago when she told her daughter, grandson and son-in-law that she was “going to sleep, not to wake her!” And indeed she fell asleep and passed into the arms of her Heavenly Father. Her grand

son testified at the funeral that despite her life circumstances, she always held on to optimism and did her best to meet evil with good all the days of her life.

We will not soon forget Sofia Bleicher, who met her Maker gladly with no suitcase, no duffel bag, no kit bag, and no diaper bag. We, on the other hand, can learn from her example. She literally took a train into the unknown and met seasons in her life that could never have been anticipated.

None of us can fully know the season we are stepping into. From day to day, we walk into the unknown. BUT – today is the day. Now is the time. *The hour is upon us.* I believe that we need not be surprised by anything. That we need to have our spiritual “diaper bags” ready and our spiritual “new-recruit-duffle-bags” packed. What must be in those bags? Character traits and spiritual tools that will enable us to get through the unknown challenges that await us. Some of those tools must be: humility, forgiveness, long-suffering, a heart of service, and of course – faith, hope, and love.

Tents of Mercy Network of Congregations and Humanitarian Aid

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Tents of Mercy ONLINE!

In the months that Israel has been locked down, we have moved our weekly Shabbat services online. Join us for Hebrew Messianic worship and English messages from Avi, Eitan and others.

Take a look and subscribe to the Tents of Mercy YouTube channel.

 [YouTube /Tents of Mercy](https://www.youtube.com/TentsofMercy)



Feed Tel Aviv On New Year's Eve



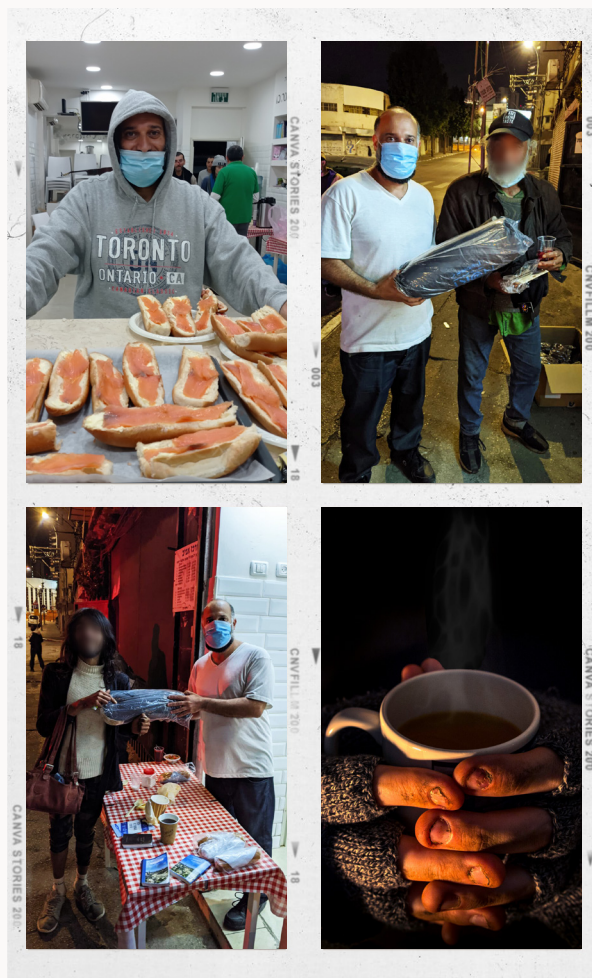
By Moti Cohen

Dear friends, I would like to share an update with you about our weekly outreach, *Feed Tel Aviv*. Because my wife has a Russian background, I know that the Gregorian calendar New Year's Eve holiday (called Novy Gode) is an especially festive and nostalgic time for the many Israeli citizens who come from Russia and the former Soviet Union. Russian Jewish immigrants in Israel celebrate this holiday with traditional dishes. So I decided that our weekly meal distribution would include one of these celebratory food items that every Russian associates with the holiday: smoked salmon served on white bread with lots of butter. *The Russian speakers in the area of our Tel Aviv outreach (drug addicts and women enslaved in the sex industry) were excited and moved by the special holiday food.*

Some of them, with tears in their eyes, said that it was the loveliest surprise they could have had. They were touched that I, with my Moroccan Jewish background, would care enough to do something special for them. This very simple dish that we served created a special atmosphere, smiles and even laughter - which is extremely rare for people who live a daily existence of so much suffering. Praise God!

This year our congregation received a generous donation from believers in South Korea, which enabled us, among other things, to purchase winter gear for the homeless, which arrived at the end of December. So, on New Year's Eve, we were able to hand out blankets, sleeping bags, warm socks, hats and gloves to the people living on the street who suffer greatly during the winter months. We give all the glory to the Lord, and we would like to thank our friends for their generosity. Your support is enabling us to continue serving in our calling as a congregation to shine the light of Yeshua here in His homeland Israel!

We pray that God would bless you abundantly in 2021 with the blessing He has promised for those who love and stand with His people Israel!



**To support this project go to:
tikkun.tv/project-feed-tel-aviv**

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Training Troubled Recruits in the IDF

And Training Discipleship Students at Revive Israel



By Tal Haroni

IDF photo

Today I help lead discipleship programs at the *Revive Israel Community Farm Discipleship Center in the Judean Hills*, but this is not my first time training and instructing people. Several years back, during my IDF (Israel Defense Forces) compulsory service, I served as a drill sergeant for new recruits at *Havat Hashomer (Farm of the Guard)* – a basic training base in the Galilee, especially for problematic and underprivileged young men. In a regular army, these challenged young men might not even have been deemed fit to serve. However, since Israel has a “people’s army,” they are given a chance to join and thus be integrated into Israeli society. Many of them do succeed and gain access to future opportunities after their military service.

In my role as commander, I received four groups of trainees (each made up of 15 soldiers) from different backgrounds, with all kinds of challenges. During the three months of basic training, I taught them to shoot rifles, administer first aid, operate communications equipment and adapt themselves to army life.

I think there is something in Israeli society, even among the secular Israelis, that is motivated by the Bible and encourages us to reach out those who are weak. Thus, the IDF is willing to ‘waste’ precious resources on these challenged young men. The army is investing in them in order to strengthen their character. This is not something to take for granted. I think it stems from belief in God and not just humane humanity. Another element that contributes to this policy is the importance of Jews banding together after having been persecuted elsewhere.

My army service was hard, but it also gave me a great sense of satisfaction. I had some soldiers who wrote me letters at the end of their training. They shared that I was like a second mother to them, despite the toughness I had to convey as a

commander. No one had ever demanded real results from these young men before. We had the slogan, “*Demand equals confidence.*” So every time I ordered them to do something, it was actually imparting the message that “*I believe you can succeed.*”

Now at Revive Israel

This is also what we see in Revive Israel discipleship students. Part of what we do is help instill, and even require, various disciplines and habits, such as daily reading of the Scriptures, practical field work cultivating vegetables, etc. The disciples need to be accountable for what they do. In both kinds of training or formation, we are actually imparting good habits for life. In the IDF, it was to be punctual and obey the commanders. Part of both military and spiritual discipleship is also to learn that our actions have consequences. Most of my IDF soldiers did not know what consequences were. They had grown up with no rules and no boundaries. This is what brought many of them to personal crisis. In spiritual discipleship we also impart additional disciplines such as daily scripture meditation.

At the Revive Israel Discipleship Center, we explore how to practically live for God and listen to God. We provide tools for a healthy life routine. Of course, we do not do it with “military” rigidity, but our students are accountable to their supervisors and are expected to be open and transparent with them.

The main springtime session of the *Revive Israel Community Farm Discipleship Center* is underway, training Israeli young adult interns during the months of February and March. We invite you to partner with us in funding and interceding for it. Good things are happening in the Judean Hills. Praise God!

REVIVEISRAEL

Connect with us at www.reviveisrael.org and on Facebook | To donate go to: reviveisraeldiscipleship.org





#IAMWITH ISRAEL



Shalom Tikkun Partners,

May I invite you into a special Passover celebration opportunity?

Holidays and food go hand in hand in every culture. Some celebrations feature decorated cakes and sweets, or certain kinds of meats. So it is with Passover. On the night He brought us out of Egypt, some 3400 years ago, God Himself gave us the beginnings of a holiday menu - with unleavened bread and the sacrificed Passover lamb (Exodus 12:8, 14). Since then, the ceremonial "Seder" meal has been prepared down through the generations. In every corner of the globe around the Passover table, the story of the Exodus is retold - commemorating God setting His people free from slavery.

The Backstory

There is a God-driven story behind the Tents of Mercy seasonal holiday food distributions as well. Some 25 years ago, they were a small congregation of new immigrants who started distributing clothes and bags of non-perishable foods from a small space in an old warehouse. The local Haifa Bay municipality didn't know them. The local Israeli Orthodox community didn't want them there. The antagonism became violent, and Tents of Mercy was firebombed in 1997. In response, through the generosity of the worldwide body of believers, God made a way for them to move into a larger facility with a sanctuary and ample space to store provisions, greatly expanding capacity to distribute to the needy. Since those early days, each year the work has expanded; and they have increased the number of Passover food baskets they distribute. Wonderfully, God has enabled them to build a positive working connection with the same local city government welfare services that ignored them in 1997.

COVID-19 Repercussions

This year the night of the traditional Passover meal falls on March 27th. Tents of Mercy has already begun **gathering supplies to give Passover food items to 900 families!** Many in their area have been hit hard by COVID's economic repercussions. The very people that their ministry was established to reach - new immigrants, the elderly, the unemployed - are the ones who are struggling. We can help make Passover brighter by providing holiday food, and even more than that, by adding the flavor of hope to the Passover meal. Let's let them know that there are believers in the God of Israel who care enough to lend a helping hand.

What We Can Do Together

In a crisis people band together to help one another. As the need and challenges have grown, Tents of Mercy has seen God create unlikely partners to bring His mercy to their town - municipality workers and army soldiers alongside Messianic Jews...and YOU. We know that, as much as you would like to, you cannot physically pack bags and put them in the hands of those who need them. **However, you can empower Tents of Mercy to do so. Your gifts and prayers can make this happen.**

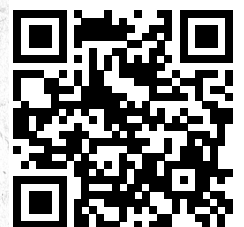
Passover is a celebration of God's miraculous provision. To fill 900 Passover packages that will bring provision into Israeli homes, we need to raise \$77,000.

For \$85 you can place that provision in the hands of a needy family, still recovering from the impact of a pandemic that has shut down our country now for the third time. We invite you to join in this act of kindness that will express the love of Yeshua to His people.

Thank You!
Ron Cantor

PS To be in touch with
Tents of Mercy directly, write to
admin@tentsofmercy.org

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