



Oasis

A Publication of Tents of Mercy Congregation (Ohalei Rachamim) - Volume 7, Issue 10

By Leora Mazurovsky with Marc & Leah Chopinsky

BACK TO THE FUTURE

In the early days when Tents of Mercy first began, Eitan and those working with him were inspired by the vision of assisting new immigrants through creating jobs. As part of this a small sewing factory was established by Leon and Nina Mazin. Over time a space was set aside at the ministry center for the purpose of selling books, Judaica and items produced in the factory. As Leor became more involved in the two congregations that he had planted, it became clear that the factory and the store needed to change hands. The factory was sold and the store was incorporated into Marc Chopinsky's business, "Future Vision."

Marc is openly enthusiastic about the little gift shop situated next to the reception office in our fellowship hall. Most days he can be seen taking some time from his other daily tasks* to work on the computer, arrange items on the shelves or pack up an order. So how does a store tie into our vision for assisting economically struggling Israelis? I went to Marc and Leah's home one evening to find out.

Marc: At one of our elders' meetings Eitan informed us that Leon was going to close the store. He asked us to pray for leading to use the space. I had the sudden thought that this was an avenue of ministry I should pursue.

Leah: I was in retail as a potter for 20 years and the idea of taking on a store wasn't exciting to me. But what does excite me is helping people that make things and have no way to sell



them. For example, we just received some olive wood items that were made by a family that runs an orphanage in Beit Jalla. Selling these would give them exposure and bring in some needed revenue.

Marc: The former emphasis of the store was Judaica, but I want to focus on items created mainly by Israeli believers and products that will bless believers. I feel that God is pleased that we are helping local believers by bringing their works to others. Visitors who love Israel and come to our congregation have the opportunity to bless Israel by blessing believers living in the land. Another important facet of the store is our website. Its creation has been a fun adventure for me and provides a way for people from other countries who cannot visit us in person, to bless the artisans we represent.

Leah: When we came to Israel I brought all that I needed to continue working as a potter. However since we have been here, I have focused my energies on my family, intercessory prayer and most recently, intensive Bible study. Now that Marc is managing the store I have a place to market the pottery that I might create. I've been questioning whether I should take some time and really begin working with clay again...maybe when it gets cooler (smile).

Marc: It's risky and a bit scary to step out in a new direction. We have to spend in order to make money, but we are praying that gradually our reputation will spread. I ask God daily to lead us and help us walk out that leading.

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Leah: *God is bringing me to a new level of dependence upon Him. As we take risks with this new project I am aware even more of my need to trust Him. It doesn't happen automatically, but present in a deepening relationship with God is the understanding that He will come through for us and for others because He is faithful. He has proved this over many years.*

Marc: *As we considered moving to Israel I was encouraged by a word in which the Lord told us that He was making a place for us. I believe that this addition to Future Vision is part of what He prepared in advance for me to do here in Israel (Ephes. 2:10). ☆*

To see Marc & Leah's new project in color you are invited to visit FUTURE VISION GIFTS at <http://fvgifts.com>.

*Marc runs an audio services business and is the worship leader for Tents of Mercy. Leah is primarily responsible for intercessory prayer at the congregation.

Leonid is a soft-spoken man of 58 years, with a gift from God. The gift is music and it is woven into the very fiber of his being. He plays keyboard and accordion in the Tents of Mercy worship team, but his musical contribution goes far beyond that. He works with the singers on the team to arrange their vocal parts and steers, prods and pleads with the musicians to play in synch. The worship team affectionately calls him Maestro. Leonid often leads worship during prayer times and works closely with Marc Chopinsky our senior worship leader. Leonid's accordion playing of traditional Yiddish melodies, popular Russian sing-a-longs, or American pop music, is a delightful addition to fun congregational gatherings, parties, picnics, and a great attraction to guests.

Music and especially the piano have been a key part of Leonid's life since he was ten years old. At the age of 28, he married Sveta, also an accomplished piano player. The two of them came to faith 15 years later. Living in Kiev, he became the musical director of a 3,000 member congregation, arranging and leading everything having to do with their musical service to the Lord.

Leonid and Sveta made aliyah in May of 1997 on their wedding anniversary. They have now been married 30 years. Sveta runs our pro-life ministry, the humanitarian aid distribution center and is Katya Morrison's main assistant in the Shabbat school. Leonid and Sveta's two



Leonid and Sveta

sons Oleg and Andrey also live in Israel. Andrey is the dynamic young leader of our youth ministry and was featured in a previous issue of Oasis.

For the last three years Leonid has been developing and leading a unique Messianic music orchestra, Kol L'Simcha (Sound of Joy). Their signature is big band music but Leonid likes to throw some jazz, blues, gospel, and even a little Mizrahi (middle-eastern) into the mix. Their inspiration comes from Amos 9:11, which speaks of restoring the fallen tabernacle of David. David's tabernacle was a place of much joyful praise and worship of the God of Israel by singers and instrumentalists. (1 Chronicles 15:16)

trumpets, 1 clarinet, 1 violin and 5 in the rhythm section. The orchestra is an eclectic group of students, teenagers and retired people - professional, as well as amateur musicians. Leonid is orchestra leader, conductor, arranger and also a composer.

Kol L'Simcha has performed at various congregations around the country. They've played for weddings and Bar Mitzvahs, nursing homes, and on the beach in Tel Aviv dur-

ing the second Lebanon War. Leonid says they are not a worship team, but an orchestra that worships. He desires people to receive their music as an offering unto God. Aside from the naturally compelling aspect of the music itself, the fact that it is offered to the Lord creates a supernatural drawing in the hearts of those who are not yet believers.

Going hand in hand with the orchestra is Leonid's vision for a Messianic Music Center for music education. Leonid envisions a place where through music, both believers and non-believers will also be exposed to the Message of Yeshua; a place where young people will learn what it means to worship God and to utilize music to come into His presence. Leonid dreams of a music center



Leonid and orchestra

The orchestra consists of 18 musicians; 5 saxophones, 3 trombones, 3

but has already begun to implement the vision. Currently, 32 students, ages 7 – 16 from various places in northern Israel, study guitar, bass, piano, drums, saxophone and voice at our Tents of Mercy facility. Leonid teaches piano and voice and fellow music teacher, Andrey Levin helps out with guitar, bass, drums and saxophone. Part of the learning process is teaching the students to play in the orchestra.

Leonid's dream is to have their own facility in which they might grow and expand their opportunities to reach out to Israel with this unique and vital ministry. ☆

Editor in Chief: *Eitan Shishkoff*
 Managing Editor: *Martin Shoub*
 Graphic Design: *David Coddington*
 P.O.Box 1018 Kiryat Yam 29109, Israel
 Tel: +972 (4) 877-7921, Fax: +972 (4) 875-7792
 E-mail: ohalei@netvision.net.il
 Stateside: c/o Tikkun Ministries
 P.O.Box 2997 Gaithersburg, MD 20886-2997
www.tents-of-mercy.org



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.

Deut. 8: 2 “Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert...”

A young Ethiopian Israeli soldier caught Webigig’s attention as she got on the bus. It was a regular day for her with no exceptional events. She was tired and burdened with the weight of modern life in Israel as a single parent of 3 Israeli-born children. Drawn to the young soldier, she sat down beside him and appraised him with a mother’s eye. Her own firstborn son would be going into the army soon, and she wondered if others would be encouraged by the sight of him as she was by this Ethio-Israeli soldier. Although young, he exuded bravery, dignity and resolve.

In the traditional Ethiopian way Webigig asked the soldier “What family do you belong to?” The soldier answered respectfully, and she smiled, knowing the family and what they had been through together. “Son, where were you born?” He hesitated and then said simply “I was born in the wilderness of Sudan on the way to Jerusalem.” Webigig’s heart leapt into her throat and her thoughts flew back to her own fateful journey from Ethiopia to the Promised Land.

The journey began at night. The elders of the Jewish Council had given each family notice when to depart. On the appointed night 27 year old Webigig, her father and three of her 7 siblings set out to meet the guide whom they had hired at the price of one cow and a 50 Birr (\$5) wristwatch to lead them through the desert. They were filled with excitement. The dream and the longing for Jerusalem that had been passed down through the generations were finally coming to pass.

Leaving the familiar outskirts of the village in the darkness, barefoot Webigig stumbled and fell. Her little four year old sister whom she had been carrying in a sling flew off her back and landed in the bushes. Webigig searched frantically but couldn’t find her until she cried out. It was only after Webigig drew her close to her chest to quiet her, that she noticed the large and bleeding gash in her leg. Fearful of the desperate, barbaric night thieves, she carried her sister in her arms for some time so that the thieves wouldn’t hear the child’s cry and come after them.

The excitement and novelty of the journey carried them swiftly along the path that first night. As the light of the sun began to appear, Webigig could see hundreds of clustered families from her village and other surrounding villages trudging along deter-

minedly. Looking back, the homey familiar village already seemed a lifetime away. The sun shone brightly and was already hot at seven in the morning as they all stopped to get some much needed rest and to hide from the bandits. Webigig helped her brother and sister find a secluded corner in the wilderness to rest their heads and they fell into a restless sleep as the sun rose higher.

After a fitful sleep, they woke and prepared for the night’s walk, eating a small meal from the dried meat, dabo kolo (cracker-like snack), honey and water Webigig had prepared before the trip. When they had eaten and finished the last of the coffee from the clay coffee pot, they tied the food bags back onto the donkey. For an extra measure of protection in the night, they wiped the char-

coaled bottom of the coffee pot and spread dark streaks on their faces. This homemade camouflage blended their faces into the darkness and also distorted any physical beauty or pleasantness that could appeal to the desperate appetites of the night thieves. When everything was ready Webigig lifted her six year old brother onto the family horse and hoisted her little sister back up into the sling on her back.

For six weeks Webigig and her family followed this same routine, night after grueling night, day after blistering day. When they walked at night, the sound of snakes, lions, hyenas and other wild beasts sapped their courage. In the day when they slept the sun beat down, drying out their exhausted bodies and baking the earth they slept on. Day and night the bandits besieged them, stealing, assaulting and even killing.

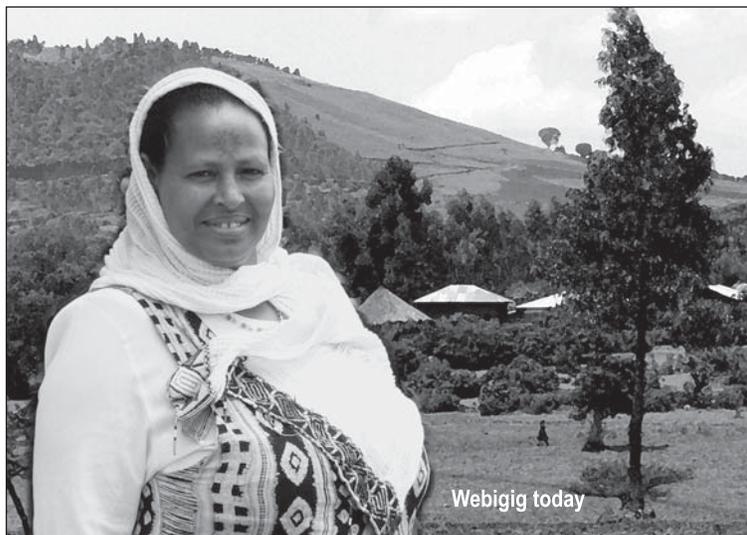
The more they walked the farther the travelers got one from another.

One evening Webigig sat with her aunt as they ate the evening meal and then they set out on their way. After walking a short distance, Webigig noticed that her aunt was no longer beside her. She went back and saw to her grief that her aunt had collapsed dead on the path. The family wept and stood in reverence for a moment. As they walked on, they saw other grieving families. At that same time they also heard the cries of a woman in labor walking with a family beside them. The family cried out in joy at the birth of a sweet new son, and Webigig was awed at the cradling of death and life together on the path to Jerusalem.

The physical adversity of the journey did not weaken their deep faith and desire to reach the Promised Land. ***This will all be worth it, Webigig thought, because when we arrive at Jerusalem the Promised Land we will wipe our feet with oil and draw milk and***

The Trek to the Promised Land

A memoir of one Ethiopian Jew’s journey from Gonder to Haifa



By Avi & Hannah Tekle

honey out of the earth. Webigig and her family envisioned a land of righteousness, and she and all the other journeyers determined that ***even if our hands and legs are cut off and our eyes cease to see, we will be content to reach the Promised Land!***

In the middle of their journey, right before they reached the Sudanese border, the robbers took the donkey and horse and all the food they had. Webigig was separated from her father and brothers and the guide. She was alone with her little sister. Her shoulders and stomach were chafed and bleeding from the rope and leather sling. Her feet were raw from walking on the sun beaten ground. Sometimes, to give her sore feet a rest, she would crawl with her sister riding on her back.

Standing in the wilderness, for the first time Webigig began to regret the decision to leave. She asked bitterly *“God, where have you brought us?”* and then she collapsed. She lay on the ground holding her sister, both of them unconscious. Providentially, her eighteen year old brother found them lying in the path. He thought they were dead and wept over their bodies. He walked away in grief, but after a few miles his heart was filled with regret. Wondering if they could be alive, he returned with a gourd full of water from some fellow travelers. They were alive! He put water on Webigig’s tongue and gave water to their baby sister. They rose, saved from the brink of death.

As soon as Webigig was revived enough to go on, they found merchants who could lead them to the city of Doka on the Sudanese border. By God’s grace and with the heroic help of Webigig’s brother, they made it. In Doka they met up with the guide, her father and younger brother, whom they had thought were lost and dead in the wilderness. There they were given food and lodging and then the Sudanese took them with the guide to the refugee camps in the city of Qadaref.

Although the perils of the journey by foot were passed, Webigig and her family experienced new dangers in Sudan. Any hint of their intended destination was reason for imprisonment, torture and even death by Sudanese officials. Conditions in the refugee camp were much worse in many ways than the challenges faced on the way. The refugees received both lentils and flour. The flour smelled so bad that her brother refused to let them eat it. Many, ignoring the stench, ate the rotten flour and died. More people died from food poisoning in Sudan than on the way, approximately 200-300 people. Starvation and corruption was rampant.

Now sitting in the camps, physical pain from the journey overwhelmed Webigig. Every bruise and wound sustained on the way was felt twice over. Death was very close, all around. Every little

pain made Webigig sure that it was now their turn to die. Jerusalem and the Promised Land felt far and unreachable. The dream had faded.

A neighbor family in the camps became sick with food poisoning. One morning they went to visit them and found all of them dead – with the littlest baby dead at its mother’s breast. When Webigig saw the tragic sight, she vowed to God. ***If You bring me to the Promised Land, I will spend the rest of my life worshipping You.***

After 9 months in the refugee camps, Webigig and her family, were secretly air lifted along with hundreds of other Ethiopian Jews. Right before they boarded the plane many pregnant women went into labor. Babies had been born on the way, in the camps, on the “runway” and finally on the very plane that carried them to Jerusalem.

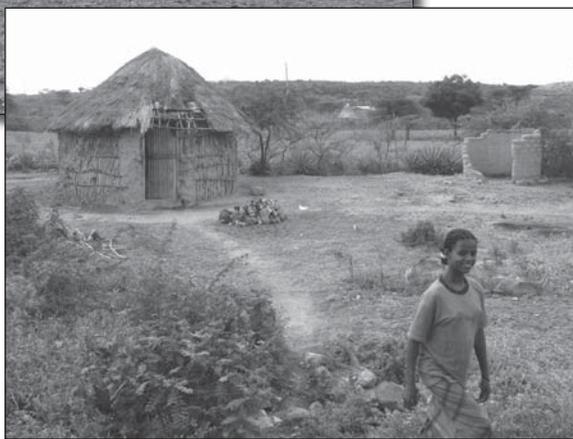
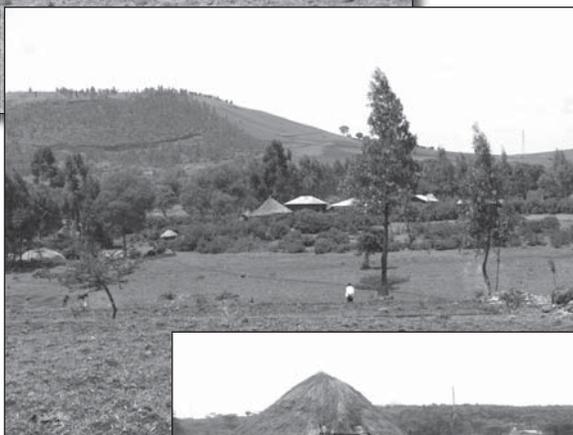
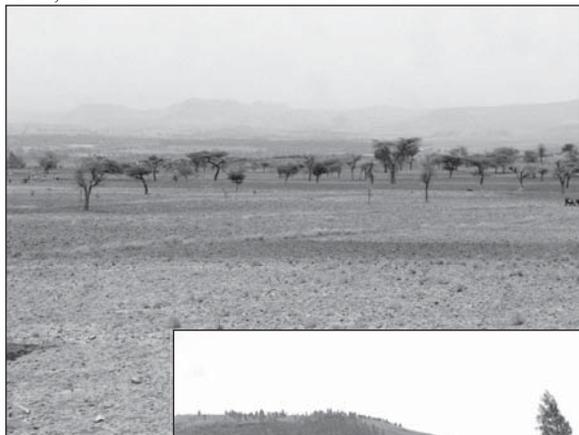
“Auntie, are you Ok?” The soldier’s question broke into her reverie. Webigig smiled warmly at the young man. “I too came through the wilderness of Sudan; my family walked together with your family.” As he spoke she realized that he was the baby born just moments after her aunt’s death. Webigig’s eyes filled with tears at the thought that so many of these brave families were now filled with unrest and despair in the “Promised Land.” New resolve flooded her heart to pray for her people, that they too would meet Yeshua, their Messiah who would beckon them into the eternal Promised Land, the New Jerusalem, a city of righteousness indeed.

Webigig came to faith in the Messiah 3 years after her arrival in Israel. She is a faithful member of Tents of Mercy congregation, a vibrant wor-

shipper, a loving mother, and a devoted and humble woman who rejoices and takes pride in the opportunity to work cleaning the house of God (congregational building). ☆

* In the late 70’s and early 80’s, approximately 12,000 Ethiopian Jews walked through Sudan to reach to their divine destination - Israel. This was called “Operation Moses” and was a prophetic fulfillment. This journey claimed some 4000 lives.

* Webigig is our relative. Like her, many of our other relatives made the same journey. She completed her fateful journey in receiving God’s gift of Redemption through His Son as promised for the returnees of Zion. She is an integral part of the ministry for Ethiopian Jews that we are establishing at Tents of Mercy.



Views of Ethiopia