



# Oasis

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## THE END IS NEAR!

# SO WHAT?

By EITAN SHISHKOFF



"The Harvest is the end of the age." Mark 13:39

***"Work while it is yet day, for the night is coming when no man can work."*** My dear friend and Tents of Mercy teammate, Marty Shoub, recently heard these words in a dream. You've likely heard them too, because Yeshua made this statement about Himself, in John 9:4. He was anticipating the "night" of His vicious execution on our behalf. But, along with many others, I've always applied this verse to our generation, hearing in "night" a reference to the end times.

At a January Bible conference on last days' prophecy, we spent long and fascinating hours poring over numerous passages to discern the signs. What must happen before Yeshua comes back? How does today's geo-political landscape compare with Ezekiel 38 and 39? I liked what the study leader, popular author Joel Rosenberg, said. Rosenberg has sold 1.5 million thriller novels, all set in the end times and interwoven with biblical prophetic elements. At the end of all the discussions (filed as 25 pages of notes in my laptop!), he said "So what?" If we are nearing the end of this world's systems, what should we do about it, personally? With all due respect to the scholars and experts, that was exactly what preoccupied my thoughts during the sessions: **"How then shall we live?"** That's the question Peter asks in his second epistle, referring to the fact that **"all these things will be dissolved."** (II Peter 3:11)

What should be my priorities, if indeed the end is near? And even if end time pundits are off a bit and Yeshua does not return

for another hundred years, my biological clock is running. I just turned 60. I know, it's hard to believe, but *tempus fugit* (time flies). So, I'm facing the "m" word...mortality. It's gone by so fast; I hope to have another 25, 30 years but I just heard about a childhood friend that passed away in his 50's. None of us knows our own day or hour of departure. **"So teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom."** (Psalm 90:12) What am I doing with the limited days allotted me to do good on the earth?

## HE WHO REAPS GATHERS FOR ETERNAL LIFE

Yeshua's conversation with the woman at the well comes to mind. **"Look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest. And he who reaps receives wages and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together."** (John 4:35,36) These verses have gripped me ever since I was a brand new believer, still doing the hippie farming thing in the mountains of New Mexico. We worked hard from the spring thaw on through until the ground itself began absorbing the frost. First, we cleared the fields of rock and scrub oak, then plowed, disced, and harrowed the earth. Seed planting was followed by months of irrigating, mulching, weeding and cultivating. Finally, as long as a freak hail storm or some weird bug infestation hadn't destroyed our crops first, there came the long awaited harvest. Experiencing a harvest after all that, helps me grasp God's picturing the end of the age as a final harvest.

Continued on page 6

**“Gathering fruit for eternal life.” “Rescue those who are perishing.” “Those who turn many to righteousness (will shine) like the stars forever and ever.” “At the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”** All of these Scriptures point to the everlasting reward and satisfaction of having used our time here on earth to bring people to a saving knowledge of Yeshua. So why don't I spend more time doing it?

I'm busy. I'm “putting out fires.” I'm trying to catch up on undone tasks. People are not always receptive. It's an entirely new concept for Israeli Jews, so it's awkward to engage. Momentum carries me away from sharing my faith with new people, not toward it. These factors are all true, but they do not justify my neglect of the harvest, especially when there is “ripe fruit” all around me, dropping to the ground—about to spoil.

## HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR THE HARVEST?

So, what can we do to smash the idol of indifference and re-orient for harvest? We need much transformation in order to fully enter the fields which God is already ripening. A great harvest is foretold by Israel's prophets, timed to occur following our return from exile in the latter days. These are those days, but that harvest has barely begun. That is why I believe God's focus for the duration of 2008 is **“Preparation for the Harvest.”** Here are four keys to that preparation, as I understand their importance.

**1. PRIESTLY INTERCESSION** – It is one of Heaven's paradoxes that reaching out to the lost begins by reaching in to God. If I am to bring life to others, I need a personal revival, drawing me to the throne of God, where His passionate love for the lost is found. **“Let the priests who minister to the Lord, weep...and let them say ‘Spare your people, O God.’”** (Joel 2:17) **“Those who sow in tears will reap with joy.”** (Psalm 126:5)

**2. RELIEF TO THE POOR & NEEDY** — **“Let your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”** (Matthew 5:16) How can Israeli society, or any society, know that we really “have the goods”? **“By their fruit you shall know them.”** We have got to bring relief to the painful lives of the poor and the outcast. Throughout Israel, wherever Messianic believers (usually with substantial aid from believers in the nations) are assisting those in poverty, prostitution, bondage to drugs and alcohol—hearts are opening and the stigmas about Yeshua are falling away.

**3. RELEASE of the SPIRIT'S GIFTS & POWER** — **“You shall receive power when the Spirit comes upon you and you shall be witnesses.”** (Acts 1:8) This vital dimension—God's Kingdom breaking through—is exactly what He promises Israel at the end of the age. Why? Because history and modern skepticism have erected a thick wall between the Redeemer and His own nation. If the apostles' generation needed signs and wonders to open Israel's eyes to Yeshua's credentials as Messiah, how much more does our generation!

## 4. INVOLVEMENT WITH PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE BELIEVING COMMUNITY -

We need much broader involvement in society, both in Israel and wherever we live. It's time to break down the “Messianic ghetto” walls that separate us from the rest of our people. What will that look like? It will include opening our home to spend time with neighbors, taking time to enjoy conversation with shop-keepers, pausing while walking along the street to ask if someone needs help. It will entail joining clubs or attending school and community functions with a readiness to serve. In this way relationships will unfold, creating a bridge with the community around us. Yeshua described us this way: **“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”** (Matthew 5:14) It's time to shine (editor's note: see, Eddie Santoro's excellent article, 'Sharing the Light', in the Revive Israel section of this magazine).



Eitan back in the day, “Hippie” farming

Marty was fired up to pray, the morning after his “the night is coming” dream. His passion for the harvest was catching. As we cried out to the Lord of the Harvest in early morning prayer, something was happening in our hearts. Our busy-ness, distractions, and preoccupation with inessentials were being washed away in the river of His persistent compassion and unrelenting mercy. I long for this to continue. May the anointing of the Ruach rest upon us, to radiate Yeshua's life and draw people to Him wherever we go. ✨

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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.

# CASTING OUR NET

By Martin Shoub

The Hebrew word for network, *reshet*, is the same word we use for a fisherman's net, a lattice or a screen. What is a net but strands of rope tied in a pattern that holds together with strength and versatility? Cut one of the connecting knots and the strength and integrity of the whole is lost. Casting a ball of string into the water won't catch you much, but tying off that same string into a net can yield a harvest of fish.

When people ask me to define Tents of Mercy, I sometimes hesitate because the name lends its moniker to more than one entity. Tents of Mercy is a Messianic Jewish congregation in Kiryat Yam; it is also a registered Israeli charity delivering humanitarian aid; but first and foremost it is a network—a network of congregations and congregational leaders.

Once a month Eitan convenes a network council of congregational leaders: Moshe Morrison from Tents of Mercy, Leon Mazin from Shavei Tsion and Netzer HaGalil, Guy Cohen from Harvest of Asher and Eric Morey from Kehilat Poriyah. These men come together under Eitan's apostolic leadership to build one another up, share resources, sort through congregational and personal issues and keep one another accountable before God.

The network grew organically as Leon and Guy launched out to plant new congregations, but Eitan has sought to guide the process according to the pattern laid down for us in Acts. Eitan explained, *Our inspiration and model is the Book of Acts. Here is the record of the last time indigenous congregations were planted in Israel. Planting covenant communities was their central activity. It is an awesome and humbling opportunity to take part in the resurrection of apostolic life and faith. In our simple way we are following this path one step at a time.*



The Network Council: Guy, Moshe, Eitan, Eric and Leon

## THE CHALLENGE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Making disciples incorporates a broad range of activities. There is no simple cookie-cutter formula but discipleship only grows within community and through relationship. To that end, Eitan and the network leadership team have sought to be intentional in working together. Eitan recalled, *I have been so proud of how the guys have launched out on their own, their creativity and entrepreneurial vision have surpassed my abilities but they have been the ones to insist that we stay connected together. Each of us has his own leadership style. We don't do things the same way. But I love that.*

Eitan likens his spiritual "fathering" to his experience as a father both of adult and teenage children. *As a father I have gained insight into the deep need of every person growing up to receive respect and nurturing from their parents without the*

*sort of domination that hinders people from being who God created them to be. These are the qualities that I attempt to instill in our larger spiritual family. It is really like seeing your kids grow up; each of them develops uniquely – yet with portions of your DNA.*

Just as with every network, relationship brings strength but it also brings challenges. Fathering is a balancing act between encouraging, letting go and setting firm boundaries. A spiritual leader seeking to disciple others needs to keep these dynamics in tension without ego or personal preference getting in the way. For disciples, mutual submission and staying under authority requires humility and grace. Daniel Juster connects to our network in another loop of relationship, tying him in with Eitan and Asher Intrater. Indeed, this magazine reflects the interconnectedness of these ministries and the mutual commitment to stay tied together.

## THE ESSENTIALS

Dan has a gift to cut through broad issues to lay hold of what is essential. He has written a brief statement of covenant to help focus our mutual commitment to each other. He divided the key elements into eight points (perhaps we can convince Dan to write an article about this) but is quick to point out that if we can hold to his first point we come a long way towards fulfilling all eight. That is, *We covenant together to build committed relationships and loving mutual support. This includes cultivating the openness and humility that can receive mutual correction.* Dan notes, *You can build an organization without friendship but relational unity is the key to success in congregations. We need to move past business to sharing our lives together.*

This is how the other members of the network council look at this vital connection:

**Moshe Morrison:** My expertise (beyond telling jokes) is to contribute from my years of experience to help the younger guys lead their congregations. Our experiences as shepherds are common to us all.

**Leon Mazin:** There are many important things we must do but first there must be friendship. When we have open and honest friendship together the other tasks fall into place.

**Guy Cohen:** David and Jonathan are my example. They were not in competition – they committed themselves to help each



The larger network meeting for training

other reach their calling. The love of God shall always be between us.

**Eric Morey:** We hadn't expected to plant a congregation but when the Lord led us to move forward we needed to be in relationship with people we could trust and respect, and who could hold us accountable.

Our commitment to relationship extends beyond the apostolic/pastoral connection. Our broader leadership teams from our five congregations also meet together every month for fellowship, mutual encouragement and instruction. Our larger connection is intended to provide ministry tools and inspiration for developing leaders in our congregations. Discipleship means multiplication and new leaders growing in maturity and giftedness.

## THE FUTURE

Relationships also look towards the future. Eitan is passionate about investing himself in young leaders but would like to see us improve our ability to provide intentional and systematic training. *We have been pretty organic in our approach but a growing network needs some sort of training center for all dimensions of spiri-*

*tual service.* New congregations are also on the horizon and Eitan anticipates others will want to join us in working together in God's purposes and plans for Israel.

Looking down the road, Eitan also envisions children's camps and elementary school education; he foresees the growing movement having an impact on the entire nation. *Our young people need to move into the professional streams of Israeli society. I expect them to take up roles in business, education, culture and government. This is vital for the movement. I also see a continued role for teachers and veteran leaders from outside the country helping equip us for what God is doing. I believe this is what Isaiah saw when he said, "Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks." (Isaiah 61:5)*

As we emulate the pattern of the first Messianic Jews recorded in the Book of Acts we look to God to increase His presence and power among us. Eitan concluded: *To be truly apostolic we must see signs and wonders. We have barely begun to see this dimension. I am convinced that an awareness and public response to Yeshua through the Messianic community will increase. I envision the day when tens of thousands of Israelis will embrace Yeshua.*

In preparation for that day God is tying us together into a net that will hold through the strain and haul in an overflowing catch. ✡



Dan teaching at our network meeting