



## *A Couple's Journey of Love, Adventure and Salvation*

**Editor's note:** *Sitting in Abebe and Genet's living room, their smiling joy and unity were as perceptible as the delicate, earthy smell of the Ethiopian food I was being served. Here were a husband and wife whose life-long covenant had held fast through several decades and political regimes in two countries. Their marriage is a testimony to God's enduring love and a faithful wife who prayed her husband into the kingdom.*

### Testimony of Husband Abebe

**F**or 40 years I have been married to my beloved wife. We grew up and were married in Ethiopia before immigrating to Israel in the early 1990's. Though my wife belonged to the house of the Lord, for many years I stayed at home without faith. I had known even before our marriage that my wife was a believer. While I did not want to hear about her faith, I was not against it. I was perfectly willing for my wife to attend believers' events without ever joining in myself. At the same time, when I saw her reading the Bible and going to meetings, I felt a twinge of sadness at being separate from each other in this facet of life.

Ironically, as a teacher in Ethiopia I had the task of preaching Communism during the 17 years in which a Soviet-backed regime ruled the country (1974-1991)! It was expected of me to convince others that there was no God. But I did not.

During those years many friends simply disappeared into the jaws of the oppressive Communist regime. The very fact that I am here today is part of God's plan. I was very careful because I saw the many contradictions and problems that arose regarding the Bible faith tradition of much of the population. Some believers were imprisoned and even killed for their faith. At that time, the circumstances were not right for me to receive the Lord. And

lo and behold, 57 years later I am still alive and God has revealed His son to me. My name *Abebe* means a flower that blossoms *in due time*.

### Turning Point

During the summer of 2011 I first came to the house of the Lord. Things were happening in my life that I could not explain. They were clearly the work of God. One time, coming home from working the night shift, I heard a voice calling my name at 5 in the morning. Since I was just outside my house, I assumed it was my wife, but when I came inside, she was sound asleep. After she woke up I asked her:

"Did you call me? I heard someone."

"No, I was asleep," she replied.

I thought, "What can this be?"

Soon afterward, I agreed to go to the yearly Shavuot (Pentecost) national picnic for believers at Yad Hashmona. At the picnic I saw so many people from all over this country, and felt strangely at home among them. They were calling on the name of the Lord, praising and singing with joy. An urgent question filled my heart:

"Where am I in the midst of all this? Where am I in life?"

At the Shavuot event it amazed me that they prayed for the government and the whole country. I was surprised to see the spectrum of things that were in their hearts and prayers. Then for the first time I saw my wife go up onto the stage with her choir to sing songs of praise. When she finished singing I felt something very special and came and hugged her.

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I began to seriously consider my wife's faith and what was happening to me:

- The mysterious voice which was utterly outside of all my frames of reference.
- The wonderment of seeing my wife praising in a choir.

Then came the straw that broke the camel's back. Fifty years before, at the age of 7, I had broken my wrist. I was ashamed to let anyone know and did not get medical treatment. The wrist did not fully heal and remained slightly twisted. One day, 50 years later, as I was trying to arrange some blankets, my weak wrist broke again and I cried out in pain. Then the strangest thing happened. As I held the reinjured wrist with my healthy hand, suddenly it twisted back into the right position!

I ran to my wife and asked her, "What is happening?"



Abebe looking at his healed wrist

In surprise, she got up to take a closer look. I kept on looking at my two hands, not believing I had been healed. I was so overjoyed that a few days later, when an Ethiopian evangelist came to town I agreed to go hear him. At the end of the meeting he asked if there was anyone who wanted to give his life to Yeshua. I got up and walked forward. In a flash I understood that Yeshua is my Lord, and I gave my life to Him. From that moment I have been getting stronger in the Lord and His Word.

When we got back home after the meeting, I opened the door and said to my son:

"Today I gave my life to Yeshua... Why don't you do the same!"

When I see the future, I see a future with the Lord, and this frees me of worry. I look at the things that God did with me. As long as He grants me to live on this earth, I belong to Him. I arrived at Tents of Mercy in my wife's footsteps. Now we are more united than ever as husband and wife.

## Wife Genet's Side of the Story

Sometimes people would come and pray in our home and even invite my husband to join in, but he would refuse. We received a

prophecy: "Your husband has a strong, hard heart. He will come only by virtue of his wife." This was confirmed several times prophetically. He has done everything in **due time** (Ecclesiastes 3:11, Titus 1:3). When my husband finally came to the Lord, I cried. All those years I had prayed for him. To tell the truth, toward the end I was tired of praying for him by myself. Then God did a miracle.

## Aliya

Our immigration and absorption in Israel were comparatively easy. In prayer a few days before we left Ethiopia, a child had prophesied over us and said:

"There will be a problem with the flight, but God says He will solve the problem."

As we were about to get on the plane the problem appeared; we were missing the papers for one of my sister's children to leave.

I said, "If my sister cannot fly then I will not fly either."

Miraculously the problem was solved within only one hour and we all got on the plane! The prophecy came true.

When we arrived in Israel God had supernaturally prepared people to take care of our needs. In the first weeks, three families we did not know voluntarily offered us help. We were blessed to be able to quickly purchase an apartment.

## Healing

During the first 12 years in Israel, because of persecution against believers, I stayed at home without visiting congregations. At a certain point I fell, and the lower part of my body became partially paralyzed. Suddenly I was handicapped and could not walk. I became discouraged and asked God why he had brought us to this land. I could have still been working as a teacher in Ethiopia like my husband. Eventually I found a job that did not require walking or standing. One day during a year of many terrorist attacks in Israeli cities, I really felt that I must venture out and go to a meeting of believers. On the way there God showed me that my heart had become hard, and He renewed my faith. At the meeting people were called forward for prayer and healing. The speaker and his wife laid hands on my head and then on my injured legs. **Something like smoke left my body, and I knew I was healed.** God's healing gradually manifested in my legs and continues to be played out in others areas of my life as well.

We know God will continue to work in our life. We would appreciate your prayers with us that our wonderful grown children will come back to the Lord as well. God is near to us not far away. **"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you"** (Luke 11:9). ✨

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*The title graphic is a drawing of a traditional Ethiopian tukul dwelling symbolising marriage and family surrounded by the seven species representing the land of Israel. It was created for a wedding invitation by L.M.M., an artist at Tents of Mercy.*

# ETHIOPIAN BIRTHDAY BASH

By Avi and Hannah

**“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...and ate together with glad and sincere hearts” (Acts 2:42, 46).**

It is said that the “family that eats together stays together.” This is true of a spiritual family as well. Just as we at Tents of Mercy devote time to feeding and being fed spiritually from week to week, we also take an occasional break from our weekly service on Saturday and meet on Friday night (*Erev Shabbat*) instead. These evenings are a special opportunity to enjoy an extended time of fellowship and to celebrate community life by sharing an *Erev Shabbat* meal. This quarterly celebration helps us appreciate the weekly service by “breaking the routine” and gives families an opportunity for some much needed rest on our one-day Israeli weekend, which is usually filled with the busyness of getting to and from Shabbat Services.

We are a tapestry community, made up of numerous cultures - Russian, American, native Israeli, Ethiopian and more. This can sometimes create a challenge when planning food for congregational events. Over the years we have employed various food formats - catering, pot lucks, and bring-your-own-picnic. Recently, however, we have come upon an idea which is culinarily and spiritually inspired. Each cultural group takes a turn preparing their native cuisine to serve to the rest of the community. We employed this idea for the second time in early December as we gathered to eat an *Erev Shabbat* meal together and incidentally celebrate the congregation’s 18th birthday.

The special thing about this night was the chosen cuisine ~ Ethiopian food. Although a minority in number,



Injera at Ohalei

the Ethiopian families in the congregation volunteered to prepare the meal. The planning and preparation that went into the evening were considerable - Ethiopians are very serious about their cuisine :-). Large quantities of vegetables and meat were chopped, and the stews were put on the stove to simmer for hours. Batter for the *injera* was painstakingly prepared and set aside to be made just before the meal. (*Injera* is a yeast - risen flatbread that is a national dish and a favorite in Ethiopian cooking.)

As word went out what menu had been chosen for the evening, excitement spread. Some had eaten Ethiopian food before. Some even loved it already, but most of our members had never tasted it. That Friday night, families began to arrive at the fellowship hall - salads, desserts and kids in tow. The deep

and distinctive aromas of hot red pepper, garlic, ginger and loving service wafted from the kitchen. Anticipation was tangible in the air.

Blessings were said over the wine and the delicious homemade Ethiopian *dabo* bread. As people ate the beautiful meal prepared with so much love, it was as if all of us were Ethiopian for the night ~ guests in King Solomon’s court when the Queen of Sheba came from Ethiopia. And what was said with humor that evening felt true: while Russians and Americans were busy racing each other to land on the moon, Ethiopians were busy perfecting the art of blending spices into the deep red and yellow stews that delight the tongue and join hearts in fellowship.

What an appropriate way to commemorate the 18th birthday of the congregation ~ **Happy Birthday Tents of Mercy!!** ✨





# Return to Zion Messianic Congregation and Ministry Center

## Restoring faith in Yeshua in Israel in our days

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Tents of Mercy Network

## Nina's Heart for the Hungry



**"N**ina, this soup is delicious!" I exclaimed while sitting in her kitchen tasting her spicy borsch. The family recipe has slowly evolved over the decades from a smooth Ukrainian soup to a hot Mediterranean meal. The new flavor is well suited to the ethnic diversity of Middle Eastern cuisine.

Nina Mazin is no stranger to hosting guests and feeding people beyond her core family. She is a true example of someone practicing biblical hospitality. In addition to caring for her immediate family, Nina also oversees Return to Zion's two non-profit soup kitchens in Haifa and Upper Nazareth. The kitchens provide both hot meals and dry food packages, and often receive referrals from the local municipal social services.

One would imagine that Nina, a mother of six, would be busy enough taking care of her own home. But that is not the case. Her heart "compels" her to practically embrace the vision she shares with her husband Leon. They both see the acute need to reach out to residents of impoverished neighborhoods. So began the soup kitchen ministry of Return to Zion Congregation; first in Upper Nazareth (in 2004) and later in downtown Haifa (in the spring of 2008).

### Q: Nina, what gave you this heart for others?

A: My mother taught us as children not to ignore the plight of the needy, if it was in our power to help them.

### Q: How is a busy pastor's wife like you able to manage her time between domestic duties and those of a ministry?

A: I don't serve alone. I am blessed with practical help from my children and from our extended family. We believe that ministry is a natural part of family life in which everyone serves each other and the Lord. God calls us, as individuals, as families and as a congregation, to be a testimony to the world around us.

Even in addition to the other secular and Orthodox aid agencies in the area, it is quite evident that the task of feeding all the poor in Haifa, as well as in Upper Nazareth, is too big for Leon and Nina, or for Return to Zion Congregation, to accomplish on its own. If you would like to increase the Messianic testimony in Haifa and share Nina's and Leon's vision for reaching the needy, you are welcome to participate! For further details please contact [info@shaveitzion.org](mailto:info@shaveitzion.org) or visit our website at [www.shaveitzion.org](http://www.shaveitzion.org). ✨

## Spicy Borsch (Beet Soup)

8-10 servings

- 3 fresh beets
- 1/2 head of cabbage
- 4 carrots
- 1 large onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 - 2 sticks of celery
- 1 hot pepper
- 8 cups of water
- 3-4 bouillon cubes\*
- 2 bay leaves
- 3-4 tbsp. tomato puree
- Lemon juice (about 1 tbsp.)
- Salt and Pepper to taste



Wash and cook the beets in boiling water (with skin) for 15-20 minutes. Let the beets cool; remove the skins, grate and put aside for later.

Grate the cabbage, carrots, large onion, garlic cloves, hot pepper and celery in food processor. Bring the water to a boil and stir in the bouillon cubes until dissolved.

Add the grated vegetables (except for the beets) and cook for about 1/2 hour. Then add the beets, bay leaves, tomato puree, lemon juice salt and pepper and simmer for another 1/2 hour. May be served with a dollop of sour cream. Enjoy!

\*The bouillon flavored water can be replaced with homemade chicken or beef broth.

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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.