

## Vered Hillel by Nicole Schoen

While being born a woman is not a choice, dealing with challenges stemming from the reality can be. Women's reactions to a male-favored world range from anger and discontent, to sadness and despondency. Then there are women like Vered Hillel who analyzes challenges at face-value and determines to take the high road by blazing trails in her career and education making women in the Messianic community proud.

Academic dean, teacher, adjunct faculty, published author, conference presenter, editor and deaf interpreter are all part of what Hillel does, but does not define who she is as a woman. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Bible and Theology from ICI University in Dallas, Texas; a Master of Arts in Messianic Jewish Theology from Messianic Jewish Theological Institute USA; Master of Arts in New Testament and the Backgrounds to Early Christianity from University of the Holy Land in Jerusalem, Israel; a Master of Arts in Comparative Religions as well as a Ph.D. in Second Temple Judaism with a focus in Second Temple Literature from Hebrew University, Mt. Scopus in Jerusalem, Israel. While her education is important, she said her identity in Messiah as a friend of the one true King is how she identifies herself.

"I want my legacy to be, 'She was loved by Adonai.' My motivation used to be to hear the words, 'Well done my good and faithful servant.' But now I want to be known as His friend, one whom He loves, as this represents relationship, and not just service," notes Hillel. "I still strive to serve and to do everything well and to a high standard, but with the goal of being and not simply doing."

Hillel draws from this motivation to continue to follow God's path for her life as He uses difficult situations to guide her along. Not being allowed to teach Bible or theology, not being able to hold a position of leadership, being confined to teaching women and children, enduring public ridicule and criticism as a woman academic and teacher are among some circumstances Hillel has experienced.



Vered Hillel addresses a group last spring at the launch of the Tree of Life version of the Bible

"In my younger years, I submitted (to this teaching) because this is what I had been taught, and what I thought to be correct. As my knowledge of Scripture, self-image and understanding of who I am as God's creation grew, my views began to change," states Hillel. "As I continued to study, I came to hold a totally different theological position than I had been taught. Now my position is based on my own dealing and struggling with the issues and not simply others' views."

Despite difficult circumstances, Hillel considers the source and continues along the path God trail-blazes for her. Always studying, Hillel loves to dig into God's Word to make it understandable for others.

"Teaching and mentoring hungry people excites me, fuels me, encourages me and helps me grow in my own faith and relationship with God," says Hillel. "I thrive on making the Word of God, God and theology understandable and vibrant to others. My goal is to make the Scripture digestible and applicable so they can know and trust their Creator more, and become the men and women of God they were created to be."

This love of teaching the Word is evident in her role as Academic Dean at the Messianic Jewish Theological Institute (MJTI) where she is responsible for overseeing academic programs. She also teaches, serving as an adjunct faculty member at CPM's Feinberg Center for Jewish Studies, NY-CA; The Kings University Jewish Studies Program in Texas; University of the Holy Land and Jerusalem University College, both in Jerusalem, Israel. She helped establish Israel College of the Bible, starting as administrator and working her way up to Associate Academic Dean. While working in this capacity, she developed the MA program, revamped the BA program, designed the beginning stages of their online program, and aided in the development and continuation of the Year in Israel program for international students, teaching classes in Hebrew and English.

Colleague and friend, Mark Kinzer was president of MJTI when he met Hillel in Israel around 10 years ago. She was a student at the time, even though her credentials would have easily allowed her to serve as a teacher.

"Vered is a person of impeccable integrity. She is extremely hard working. She is thorough in every-

thing that she does; she will do it with excellence. Even though she has all of these credentials and accomplishments, there is nothing pretentious about her," said Kinzer. "She's been in many situations in the Messianic Jewish movement where people were not willing to take her seriously because she was a woman. She handles those situations with grace. She neither yields to anger or frustration, nor does she yield to discouragement and despair. She simply perseveres if she thinks she's doing something she's supposed to do, and I think the end result is, she bears fruit. Of course, it helps when you're enormously talented."

Continuing to serve God in every aspect of her life, in a non-academic setting Hillel also teaches at conferences across the United States, Israel, even having presented in the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany and Switzerland in the past. She has worked as a certified interpreter for the deaf and worked in deaf ministry in the past, noting learning to sign was a childhood dream come true. Hillel has been published multiple times and was also the editor of the Ketuvim, all except for the Psalms, of the Tree of Live Bible. She sits on the editorial board of *Journal of the Jesus Movement in Its Jewish Setting*, the national and international Board of Directors of Bridges for Peace in Jerusalem, and is involved with the Enoch Seminar and the Messianic Jewish/Catholic Theological Dialogue.

When not traveling, Hillel calls Israel her home base where she has lived with her husband of 44 years, Mike. Born in California, Vered and Mike immigrated to Israel in 1988 with their three preteen and teenage children. Her children have given her seven grandchildren, whom she loves to spend time with, especially if baseball is involved, specifically the LA Dodgers and Detroit Tigers.

Desiring others to know Yeshua as Messiah and feel the peace He continues to provide her amidst every trial, Vered and Mike began a ministry called Aleinu three years ago, named after the closing benediction in Jewish prayer services. Along with spreading the knowledge of Yeshua as King and Messiah, its purpose is to cultivate Messianic Judaism from within the Jewish people in respectful conversation with Christianity, establish the ecclesia consisting of Jewish and non-Jewish Yeshua believers as a tangible prolepsis of the eschaton, and bridge the gap between American and Israeli Messianic Jewish communities. This is done by speaking engagements, outreach programs and more throughout Israel and across the world. The Hillels are also active in helping establish a Havurah in the Sharon area of Israel, which they are praying will grow into a Messianic Jewish Synagogue.

Friend of seven years, Lisa Loden describes Hillel as a compassionate woman of integrity. "Vered is a woman of valor. She is courageous and one who is both consistent and persistent in her work and her life," she said. "She is dedicated, conscientious and has passion for what she does. This communicates to others. She combines her extensive knowledge and ability to articulate truth for others in a skilled and winning manner."

Despite dealing with hardships specific to women, Hillel has preserved and managed to overcome and accomplish more than most dream about, through the grace of God alone. Her humble servant's heart, coupled with a hunger for knowledge of God's Word, has allowed Hillel to be successful in the work of her hands. **MT**



Vered enjoys an afternoon at the ball park with her grandchildren