

Mishkan is a quarterly journal dedicated to biblical and theological thinking on issues related to Jewish Evangelism, Hebrew-Christian/Messianic-Jewish identity, and Jewish-Christian relations.

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Mishkan's editorial policy is openly evangelical, committed to the New Testament proclamation that the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus (Yeshua) the Messiah is "to the Jew first."

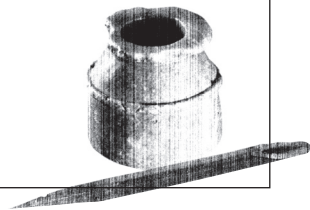
Mishkan is a forum for discussion, and articles included do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors.

Mishkan is the Hebrew word for *tabernacle* or *dwelling place* (John 1:14).

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Why, God?

By Kai Kjær-Hansen



Acts chapter 12 briefly mentions the execution of the apostle James, the brother of John. It goes on to describe the miraculous deliverance of Peter from prison in Jerusalem, in the early 40s. Before he suffered a martyr's death in Rome sometime in the 60s, Peter was given over 20 more years to work for the gospel than James was.

Two apostles with very different lots – and yet with the same Lord. Why did James not experience a miraculous deliverance? Was he expendable? Why should he be lying in a grave in Jerusalem when the Jesus movement so desperately needed witnesses to tell about Jesus' empty grave? No answer is given. It is hidden in God's secret council. The stories of James and Peter are told in a way that breathes trust in God. No attempt is made to explain God's course of action. But God makes no mistakes. The apostles do not have God in their hands, he has them in his hands. In spite of martyrdom, the first church goes on witnessing about the death, the empty grave, and the resurrection of Jesus.

This issue of *Mishkan* is not about stories of martyrdom but about stories of disease and death. However, the underlying question remains the same: *Why, God?* When Jews as well as non-Jews need the gospel, why do you reduce the number of those that you yourself have called?

These stories are told by some of the first Protestant missionaries in Jerusalem and Beirut, in the period 1818–1840, about the way they experienced disease and death. They are stories of pain and hope. Sometimes the individuals involved felt that God was asleep, and they struggled to find God's will in the death and reflected on the possibility that they may be the next person to be laid in the grave.

Some of these stories about death are so moving, so existential, that they are still challenging for us today.