



# Caspari Center NEWS

December 2009



Equipping  
the next generation  
of Jewish believers  
in Jesus

## Some Thoughts on the Road Ahead

In Israel we have a saying: "We made it past Pharaoh, so we'll make it through this as well." This can apply to any big or small challenge that may come up. Living in Israel, and doing ministry in Israel, is always an exciting undertaking. We live in a country and a society in constant change. We cannot predict what the social, political, or religious landscape will look like tomorrow. At the same time we trust that the future, however unstable or promising, whether it is filled with challenges or opportunities (most likely a little bit of both), is in God's hands. We are ultimately His servants and stand together in the calling He has given us all, to share the good news of the gospel and build up the body of believers in Israel.

How can  
Caspari Center  
serve the Messianic  
community best  
in the decade  
to come?

As we look forward to a new decade and try to envision where we are headed as a ministry, we want to keep our eyes on the people we serve, the Messianic community in Israel. In the past few years we have seen the number of believers grow more than ever before (at least in modern times). New congregations are forming. New opportunities are opening up for ministry and outreach all over Israel. At the same time, the body of believers is still a tiny minority in Israeli society, facing discrimination and opposition on a daily basis.

How can Caspari Center serve the Messianic community best in the decade to come?

As the body of believers in Israel grows and develops we need to continue adapting to the changing needs. Today we see a growing new generation of children and youth who are being raised in believing homes and are challenged daily in school, among friends, and in the army to stand up for their beliefs. For this reason we want to find new ways of continuing our support for children's and youth ministry in the congregations, through teaching and training workers for this important task.

In the multi-lingual, multi-cultural setting we have in Israel it is important to serve the different communities of believers in their own languages. Currently we are blessed to have Russian speaking staff members who will enable us to better serve the Russian speaking believing community with both materials and teaching. The Russian speakers are estimated to comprise as many as 50-60% of the body of believers in Israel.

We believe that Jewish believers in Israel are an important part of the larger body of Christ in the world. Through our study and research programs we wish to facilitate stronger interaction between Israeli believers and believers from around the world. The local community of believers is still in need of the support of our brothers and sisters abroad, but we believe that we have an important contribution to offer in teaching the Jewish background of the Christian faith and connecting the world wide church to the people and land of the Bible.



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To achieve these goals we have worked hard over the past couple of years to build up a strong and stable staff, combining expatriate workers and local Israelis. We aim to further develop our information work in the coming year and present a new website and informational material in 2010. With the help of our many supporters and prayer partners around the world I am convinced that we are prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead. Without you, none of this would be possible!

When the people of Israel had made it past Pharaoh they were on their way to “the promised land.” As followers of Jesus we also have a direction and a purpose in all we do. We ask you to join us in praying that as a ministry we will continue to follow the Master wherever He leads. We ask you to stand with us in our work, so that together we may be faithful servants and see God bring forth the fruit of His labor.

“... prepared to  
meet the  
challenges!”

*Knut Hoyland  
Caspari Center  
International Director*

## **Christmas in Jerusalem**

Christmas is not a very Israeli holiday. There are Christians in Israel – mainly Arabs, as well as some other resident nationalities and a number of expatriates – who do celebrate it, which is the reason that after December 20 one can usually buy a Christmas tree in the very heart of Jerusalem, i.e. in the Old City. And of course Hebron Road, leading to Bethlehem, is illuminated brightly and colorfully, to ensure that tourists who want to visit the Church of the Nativity will enjoy the short ride from downtown to the check-point. But the average Israeli does not care much for Christmas. And why would he, indeed? The Jews, by default, do not believe in Jesus.

At least that is what conventional wisdom has been. But in recent years, a new trend has appeared: Israelis visiting Christian places of worship at Christmas time.

Last year, on Christmas Eve, a few friends from my congregation and I witnessed something very interesting in the Old City.

The Church of the Redeemer, Christ Church, and the Dormition Abbey were full of Israelis who came specifically with the purpose of experiencing the Christmas liturgy in these places. Literally hundreds of secular Jews, of all ages, filled the sanctuaries and listened to the worship, the Old and New Testament texts that speak about the Messiah's birth, and the messages that were preached, in some cases in Hebrew.

My friends and I were able to distribute dozens of free New Testaments that night. Some did, of course, politely decline the offer, but many gladly took the book. Those who have lived in Israel longer than I say that this is a rather new phenomenon. It is a truly interesting time that we are living in!



*Alec Goldberg  
Caspari Center  
Local Director*

## A Reason for Some Healthy Excitement

I am writing this in a hotel room in Columbus, Ohio, on my first visit to the USA. Observing cultural differences is always fun. For example, an Israeli or a Russian way to inquire about news, when meeting a friend, is usually to ask simply, "What's new?" An American, however, will often phrase this question a bit differently: "What's new *and exciting*?"

We at Caspari have something to share with you which is both. On October 23, we had our first event ever in the city of Beer-Sheva, which is sometimes called the capital of the Negev. This was a seminar for Shabbat school teachers, primarily for this area of the country.

"Another Shabbat school seminar? What's so exciting about that?" Thank you for your interest and question; I am glad you asked. Let me first of all give you a little background.

The opposition to the Messianic movement is all over the country, but if I were to point to one place where it is strongest at the moment, it would definitely be Beer-Sheva. As we spoke with a group of local Shabbat school teachers, they said they feel isolated from the rest of the community. And while two or three do go to our biannual Netanya seminar for Shabbat school teachers, for the majority getting there has always been a challenge – as is making it back home on Friday afternoon before the Sabbath.

Having realized all that, we met with Howard Bass, pastor of the Nachalat Yeshua congregation in Beer-Sheva. He seemed to have conceived the same idea independently, and was therefore more than happy to host the first Caspari Shabbat school seminar in the South at their facilities in the Old City of Beer-Sheva. So that's the new thing. But the exciting part is that it went extremely well!

First of all, instead of the expected 35-40 participants, which we thought would be a good turnout, we had 72. But most importantly, it was a privilege to serve these precious brothers and sisters, who are doing such an important and wonderful work for the Lord. Just read for yourself what one of the participants, D. K., says about his involvement with the children:

I love kids. I feel connected to them and I feel comfortable speaking with them. One of the most important things to me is serving in this area, leading children to God. The principle goal is that the children will come to the Lord. I personally want to lead them to the love that I know. . . . I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that it is God's will for me to serve in this ministry, what motivates me is a love for the kids and a recognition of the value of their lives, in Messiah.

He, like so many others, was very satisfied with the whole day: the lecture and two workshops, the food and organization of the seminar, and, last but not least, the opportunity to mingle and mix with their fellow ministers. These people are not at all spoiled with this sort of event in their area, and therefore all expressed a desire to have these seminars occur regularly, as they do Netanya. And indeed, why not?

Alec Goldberg

### MEDIA REVIEW

Caspari Center publishes a weekly review of material from the Israeli press documenting attitudes toward Messianic Jews, the mission, and the Christian faith. To receive the Media Review free of charge by email, send a request to [subscriptions@caspari.com](mailto:subscriptions@caspari.com) or sign up on our website: [http://www.caspari.com/media\\_review](http://www.caspari.com/media_review).

The top story in all the national papers on November 2, 2009, was the arrest of **Ya'akov (Jack) Teitel**, a resident of Shvut Rachel, for the suspected murder of two Arabs and the planting of the explosive devices which injured **Amiel Ortiz, Zev Sternhell** (a well known "Peace Now" activist), and others. Teitel, who was born in Florida, has allegedly confessed to the crimes, claiming that the attack against the Ortizes was motivated by his belief that the family were **"missionaries who intended to entrap weak Jews"** (*Haaretz*, November 2). According to the *Jerusalem Post* (November 2), "Jerusalem Police Chief Cmdr. Aharon Franco said Teitel had confessed to a spate of attacks and reenacted them. Police also displayed photos of a large weapons cache seized at the suspect's home. 'He is like a serial killer. This guy was a Jewish terrorist who targeted different types of people,' police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said. 'He was deeply involved in terrorism on all different levels.' He confessed to planting a bomb on March 20, 2008, at the entrance to the Ortiz family home in Ariel, messianic Jews whom he believed were trying to convert Jews to Christianity."

## The Other December Holiday



"Isn't Chanukah just the Jewish version of Christmas?" a well-meaning friend asked me one December.

I could understand where she might have gotten that notion. The two holidays are observed at approximately the same time of year, and gifts and family gatherings are a part of both celebrations.

But the centerpiece of Chanukah, the eight-branched candelabrum called a *menorah*, tells the story of this other December holiday.

Almost 200 years before Christ was born, the Seleucid emperor Antiochus ruled Israel. His order to sacrifice pigs to Zeus in the temple in Jerusalem sparked a holy revolt led by the God-fearing Jewish priest Mattathias and his five sons. After Mattathias died, his son Yehuda HaMakabi (Judah the Hammer) led an army of worshipping warriors as they regained control of the holy city.

Their first task was to re-consecrate the temple for worship of the one true God. It would take eight days for olive oil to be prepared for the *ner tamid* (eternal light), a light that communicated the everlasting nature of God to those who came to the temple. Once the *ner tamid* was lit, it was never, ever supposed to be extinguished. Judah and his men found only enough oil to light the lamp for a single day. But they chose to light it anyway – and miraculously, it stayed lit for eight days and nights, long enough for a fresh batch of oil to be prepared!

Chanukah is not mentioned in the Old Testament (the final Old Testament prophetic book, Malachi, was written about 200 years prior to the revolt of Mattathias and company), though the apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Maccabees describe the events of the time.

By the time Jesus was born, the Feast of Dedication was observed as a minor holiday – an eight-day celebration of God's miraculous provision. In fact, the feast is mentioned in the New Testament: "Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade" (John 10:22–23).

I told my friend that Chanukah is not the Jewish alternative to Christmas, but a part of the ongoing story of God's relationship with His chosen people, and a powerful testimony of who He is: eternal Holy One; miraculous provider; light of the world. As a Jewish believer, it is a joy for me to connect the Chanukah story with the work and person of Christ. He is the eternal, Holy One (John 8:58), the miraculous provider (Luke 15:29–38), and the light of the world (John 8:12).

And it is my privilege to light the menorah each December, stand in the glow of the flickering candles, and participate in God's story here and now.

Michelle Van Loon

Michelle Van Loon and her husband, Bill, live in suburban Chicago. Bill serves on Caspari's international board.



## Prayer Requests

### We pray for ...

● **The participants in the latest Shabbat school seminars. We pray that they may be inspired and strengthened in their service with the children in their congregations.**

● **Jewish believers in Israel experiencing opposition and persecution.**

● **Final work on our upcoming publications.**

● **Plans for new projects in the coming year.**

### We give thanks for:

● **New staff members and volunteers.**

● **Successful Shabbat school seminars in October and November.**

**If you would like to know more about the Caspari Center and its activities, write to [caspari@caspari.com](mailto:caspari@caspari.com) or visit our website, [www.caspari.com](http://www.caspari.com).**

**You can support our work by prayer, volunteering, or financial gifts to help with individual projects or the general work of the center.**