



# Caspari Center NEWS



September 2009

## Back to School!

Equipping  
the next generation  
of Jewish believers  
in Jesus

Hunger  
to serve  
the Lord  
better



We are excited about the approaching new academic year. For us it means, among other things, that our Hearts to Serve leadership training program will soon be launched again! It was first started in 2004, and we are now looking forward to receiving a new group of students who are hungry to learn how to serve the Lord better.

By the grace of God, the Caspari Center from its very start has had the privilege of taking an active role in equipping Israeli believers in Jesus for the work of ministry. During the past six years one of our vehicles for fulfilling this commission has been the Hearts to Serve course.

Looking back, students reflect on what they received during their studies. Baruch Lieberman is now serving as the administrator of a thriving Jerusalem congregation, Shemen Sasson ("Oil of Joy"). In a short testimony, he says that he appreciated "the sound, balanced, and practical approach" of the teachers, as well as "the opportunities to ask questions and receive printed study materials." Another graduate, Maxim Katz (*pictured*), who is now working at the Jerusalem office of Chosen People Ministries, is especially grateful for the lectures on teamwork and organizational development. Both testify to the essence of Hearts to Serve: providing biblically-based and practical non-academic training to local believers who want to serve in the local congregations or other ministry work.

In our choice of subjects we are guided by two main concerns. First and foremost, the Bible challenges God's servants to lead exemplary personal lives (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9; 2:7-8). Therefore, in all of our teaching we emphasize the importance of a holistic approach to life and ministry, as opposed to separating the two. And secondly, we want our students, some of whom may still be unsure about the particular area they are called to, to get "the big picture" along with learning about specific areas of ministry and the tools required to be effective in them. Accordingly, this year's lecture titles are, for example, "The Biblical View of Servanthood-type Leadership"; "Understanding Oneself and Others"; "Marriage and Family Relationships"; "Children's and Youth Ministry"; "Conflict Resolution"; and "Financial Accountability."

Israel is a country where much is happening all the time, and the only constant in life is change. It is therefore difficult to ask for a commitment to a non-accredited study program that lasts for longer than one year. Hearts to Serve runs, therefore, from October to June, at the facilities of the Beit Asaph congregation in Netanya. Most Israelis work hard, and the only day when one can devote five consecutive hours to teaching is Friday. We have our lectures one Friday a month, and the students also meet one evening a month in small groups to discuss and digest the material.

I am writing this article on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September, when Israeli children go back to school after their summer vacation. Back to school – these words are like music to my ears. At Caspari the 1<sup>st</sup> of September is actually on October 30<sup>th</sup> – that's when we start this year's Hearts to Serve course. I am looking forward to this date. What a privilege – to be a part of equipping God's servants for the work of ministry!

– Alec Goldberg

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## Partnering with Caspari: A Life Changing Experience

### Getting Acquainted with Board Chairman Jim Galvin

“For some believers, interest in Israel begins and ends with a Holy Land tour,” says Jim Galvin, the chairman of Caspari Center’s international board. “And that’s a shame – because, even though it’s a life-changing experience to walk where Jesus walked and see this amazing place, there’s so much more.”

“All across Israel,” Jim says with a smile, “we have thousands of brothers and sisters, Jewish believers in Jesus, who need our love and support. They’re so often forgotten, but I’ve discovered that it’s a joy to know them!”

Jim, who has been involved with Caspari Center as a financial partner, then a board member, and now as chairman of the board, credits this ministry with deepening his understanding of and passion to help the growing congregations in Israel.

A busy consultant in organizational development for non-profit ministries, Jim recalls that he was “not looking for another thing to do in life” when he first learned about Caspari in 2003. As a donor, he remembers, he first became acquainted with Caspari’s staff in the Chicago area.

“I was impressed with Caspari’s team here in the States, and it wasn’t long before I decided to go on a Caspari tour in Israel to learn more about this intriguing work,” he says. “When I met the staff on the ground in Jerusalem and saw their dedication and the quality of their work throughout Israel, for me, this became a very easy ministry to support.”

Asked how his involvement with Caspari has changed him, Jim identified four key areas.

#### **The Bible Has Come Alive**

“First,” Jim says, “any believer who goes to Israel – including me – will spend some time reflecting on the sites where the Bible says Jesus walked on this earth. And, like me, they’ll see the actual places where our beloved Bible stories actually happened – and the Bible will come alive to them in some fresh ways. Since visiting Israel, I’ll never read my Bible the same way again!”

#### **Knowing Believers in Israel**

A second life-changing experience Jim notes is the privilege of getting personally acquainted with Jewish believers in Jesus across Israel. “Seeing their joy in knowing their Messiah, their incredibly deep dedication to loving and serving Him, and their exuberance in doing so – even at the risk of being persecuted or marginalized in their society – that has changed me.”

#### **Evangelism *is* Possible**

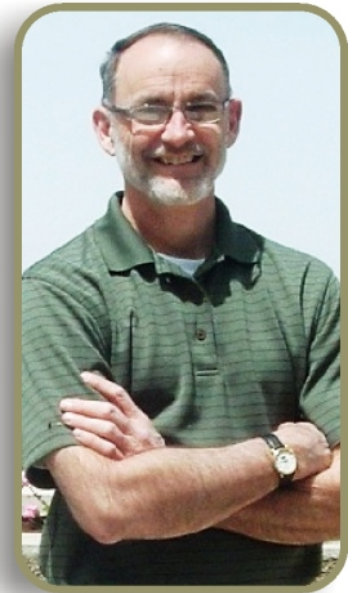
“The third discovery I made through my work with Caspari,” Jim says pensively, “is the fact that evangelism is *very much possible* in Israel. While there’s a large Orthodox community and Israel is very much a secular nation, I have seen with my own eyes that many Israelis and Palestinians are searching for something real, something to help them find meaning in life.

“So many of the people living in Israel simply do not want to become ultra-Orthodox, so they’re turning to New Age spirituality, Buddhism, and Hinduism to try to fill that ‘God-shaped void’ in their lives. Messianic believers and their congregations have a wide-open opportunity to guide them to the Truth of God’s Word – and introduce their people to the Prince of Peace Himself!”

#### **Friendship between Jews and Palestinians**

Lastly, Jim has been awestruck by the kinship he has seen between Jewish believers in Jesus and Arab Christians throughout Israel. “These two groups, united by their faith in Yeshua and filled with love and understanding for each other, are working together to introduce their people to their Savior,” he says. “It’s been exciting to see how God is using Caspari Center – through its local advisory group in Israel, its Hearts to Serve leadership training program, and its Shabbat School seminars – to bring these groups together so they can work shoulder to shoulder for Kingdom purposes!”

“What a unique opportunity we have to make an appreciable difference in Israel,” Jim says. “As thousands emigrate to the Land from places like Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union, God is raising up many Messianic congregations – and through Caspari Center we have the privilege and the responsibility to come alongside them.”



*Jim Galvin, who serves as the president of Caspari Center's international board, lives in Elgin, Illinois.*

## Bridgebuilders – Loving Your Enemy

After months of preparations the day finally arrived. Ten young Israelis, 10 Palestinians, and 10 Norwegians gathered for part one of the Bridgebuilders conference, all motivated by God's call to reconcile to one another. What awaited them was a week in beautiful but rainy Norwegian surroundings: camping, canoeing, teambuilding, cultural exchange, teaching and fellowship, and ever-present in the background the conflict which makes daily headlines across the globe. "Now I know that God is real and cares about me," says Shaden, one of the Palestinian participants. "The love I have experienced from the Israeli participants, who are supposed to be my enemies, was stronger than my doubts in God, and convinced me of his presence."

Israeli Adi shares: "We are building bridges, bridges between us which will be a great testimony for people around us when we return. Before I would say that I had nothing against the Palestinians, but God showed me that I am called, not to tolerate them, but to love them. Through the friendships we build we can show God's love. I believe we can be an example for others. Just like Jesus taught us, 'By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'"

Part one of Bridgebuilders is now over, and the participants have returned home. In six months they will meet again in the desert in Jordan, where they will continue to build on the foundations that have been laid, strengthening their fellowship and friendship and encouraging each other to take further steps toward reconciliation.



Please pray for all the participants as they return home, that they will be strengthened in their calling to the peace and reconciliation which only Christ can give.



### Kathi Graham Retires

*We are grateful for her servant leadership*

**Kathi Graham**, who has given leadership to Caspari Center's North American ministry from early 2003 until this past February, recently announced her retirement, effective August 1. While working to help Michael Chiapperino transition into his leadership role, Kathi agreed to serve as Caspari's director of church development on a part-time basis. Unfortunately, health problems compelled Kathi to step down from this position.

During her years with Caspari, Kathi has been well-known for her passion and joy in supporting the ministry of Jewish believers in Jesus in Israel. As she shared Caspari's mission and vision with congregations across the Midwest, Kathi facilitated dozens of Bible studies and training sessions,

delivered greetings and updates to partner churches, engaged hundreds of prayer partners and donors in Caspari's work, and invested countless hours into this ministry.

For Kathi, a special highlight of her years with Caspari Center has been leading vision trips to Israel to introduce Caspari donors to both the "ancient stones" of historic sites throughout the Land and the "living stones," fellow believers in Jesus who lead and worship in congregations there. During her most recent trip in February, she coordinated and led a memorable tour for 41 people from St. Michael's Church in the Minneapolis area.

Kathi's excellent organizational and administrative skills have been invaluable in leading Caspari's North American work – and in volunteering as North America secretary of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE), a network of individuals and ministries active in Jewish evangelism.

As we bid farewell to Kathi, we offer thanksgiving to our heavenly Father for her dedication and selfless service to Caspari, and in one voice we extend this blessing: "The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26 NKJV).

## 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/).

In July, Israeli newspapers focused their attention on a Messianic Jewish bakery owner who had her kashrut license revoked by the rabbinical courts because of her belief in Jesus. As a Messianic Jew, it was claimed, she could not be trusted to ensure that the food produced was properly kosher. The decision was then appealed to the Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of the baker.

"A Jew for Jesus [Messianic Jew] who demanded kashrut supervision from the Chief Rabbinate won a Supreme Court decision on Monday likely to spark another confrontation between the nation's highest legal arbiter and the Orthodox rabbinical establishment. In its verdict, based on a precedent that found belly-dancing to be unrelated to kosher food, the court ruled that an Ashdod baker's belief that Jesus was the messiah did not make baked goods unkosher." (*Jerusalem Post*, July 1, 2009)

This issue has sparked a larger debate in the media regarding the role of the courts in determining religious practice.

## The Rhythm Of Grace

The rhythms of Jewish life were imprinted on me in equal measure by both my family and the suburban Chicago Jewish community in which I spent the first 13 years of my life.

All the neighborhood kids attended the same Jewish Community Center camps and listened in on the same Yiddish-laced conversations and debates at their family gatherings that I heard at mine. The elementary school I attended closed during the major Jewish holy days; administrators knew that the classrooms would be empty as families headed to one of several local synagogues. My childhood was shaped by the beautiful cadences of work, rest, celebration, mourning, and worship that mark the ancient cycle of the Hebrew calendar.

When I was a teen, my family relocated to a predominately Gentile town. I was one of a handful of Jewish kids in my new school. When I returned to school after a two-day absence for Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) that fall, a classmate asked me if I'd been ill. I explained that I was gone for our high holy days. She had no idea what I was talking about. The rhythms of her Gentile world – weekly church services on Sunday and a year shaped by celebrations of Christmas and Ash Wednesday and Easter – were completely different than the ones I'd always known.

After I came to faith in Christ a few years later through the patient witness of a friend, I wanted to learn how to follow the steps of my Savior, and began living the rhythms of church life. After a brief stint at a struggling Messianic congregation, my husband and I settled into lay leadership roles at a series of churches. Though we're members of a liturgical church whose worship follows the church calendar, the internal metronome of my Jewish heritage often left me feeling a bit like a ballerina in tap shoes, never quite in sync with the Gentile worshippers around me.

I learned to ignore the sound of that metronome until I visited Israel in February for the first time in my life. I'd heard that much of the country's business comes to a halt from mid-afternoon Friday until after sunset on Saturday in observance of Shabbat. But as I walked through the streets of Jerusalem the first Friday afternoon after we landed in Israel, I didn't hear the sounds of businesses closing or people hurrying home to prepare for the Sabbath. Instead, I heard a rhythm as familiar to me as my own heartbeat. My soul's klutzy tap dance stilled to listen.

A Jewish believer who has lived in Israel for many years told me, "Life here in the Land is ordered around the times and seasons God gave our people. Living in this place among so many who observe the same holidays I do has changed me in ways I can't fully explain. Though life here is very challenging, at least in part because of my faith in Yeshua, I can't imagine being anywhere else on earth." She is not observing days and months and seasons and years in order to earn God's favor. Her worship is animated solely by her faith in Christ, but it is shaped by ancient patterns that are as much a part of who she is as the color of her eyes.

Author Eugene Peterson has a wonderful paraphrase of Jesus' invitation to each one of us: "Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly" (Matt 11:29-30, The Message).

Though the words were spoken to a Galilean crowd weighed down by religious performance, they framed the joy I discovered in Israel – where I could lean into the Hebrew rhythm of time and worship while simultaneously reveling in the "unforced rhythms of grace" that only come from walking with Jesus.

– Michelle Van Loon

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

## Prayer Requests

Please pray for ...

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- The right students to apply for the Hearts to Serve course beginning on October 30<sup>th</sup>.
  - The right participants and blessed fellowship for our upcoming Bridgebuilders project.
  - The first regional Shabbat school seminar in Beer-Sheva on October 23<sup>rd</sup>.
  - Thanks for our new staff members: Jakob, Rita and Jennifer, and prayer for a smooth transition as they start working in September.
  - Wisdom for the whole staff with all their projects.

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*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.*

