



Caspari Center NEWS



December 2014

Shining the Light

“Equipping His people
for works of service,
so that the body of
Messiah may be built up”

Ephesians 4:12

When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.” (Luke 2:22–24)

At this time of year, the religious Christian community celebrates the birth of Jesus, the Messiah. My family and I have always participated in these celebrations, though as Jewish believers in Jesus, we’ve adopted a more restrained level of holiday cultural activity (decorating, shopping, party-attending) than many around us. We’ve also always observed Chanukah, which begins this year on the evening of Tuesday, December 16, and concludes eight days later at sundown on December 24.



Though Chanukah, also known as the Feast of Dedication or Festival of Lights, is a minor feast in the yearly Jewish ritual cycle, our family always lit the candles in our menorah. As we did, we revisited the exciting account of the Maccabean victory over Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 164 BC, and thanked God for the story of the cleansed, rededicated temple and the sacred oil lamp that burned for eight miraculous days when it only had enough oil for a single day. In the spiritual darkness of those days, seeing the light burn once again in the holy place after years of darkness and idol worship must have been pure joy for the Maccabees.

**My eyes
have seen
your
salvation**

As we celebrate the holidays this year, I see the effect of the historical events of Chanukah reflected in the first days of the life of Jesus. When Joseph and Mary brought their newly circumcised newborn son to the temple in Jerusalem to consecrate him to the Lord (Exod 13:2, 12), it is powerful to remember that the temple was there in those days because of the events that took place a century and a half earlier.

Chanukah is a wonderful celebration as it stands, on its own. But during the Christmas season, I am grateful for the role the events it commemorates played in anchoring the incarnation of my Jewish Savior, the Light of the world, in history. On the day Mary and Joseph came to the temple with the infant Jesus, a faith-filled man named Simeon took the baby into his arms and prayed these unexpected, unscripted words over him: “For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel” (Luke 2:30–32).

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Not even death could extinguish the light of Jesus. His empty tomb is not very far at all from the site of his dedication in the temple that was reclaimed for the Jews by Judah Maccabee and his band of worshipers. May our worship this season carry a measure of their courage as we shine the light and glory of Jesus to a world living in darkness without him.

Michelle Van Loon
US Coordinator

What Language Did Jesus Speak?

The Bible was written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Hebrew and Aramaic were the languages used for the Old Testament or Tanakh, and Greek for the New Testament.

But what language did Jesus speak? Did he use Aramaic, as has been claimed by most scholars, or did he speak Hebrew? The question is whether Hebrew was still a spoken language in the time of Jesus. In Acts 21, it is written about Paul, “He spoke to them in the Hebrew language.” And on his way to Damascus, Paul says, Jesus spoke to him in Hebrew: “I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’” (Acts 26).

The earliest history of the Hebrew language is shrouded in mystery. But when Abraham settled in Canaan, he and his family evidently picked up the “language of Canaan.” After the exile in Babylon (587–539 BC), it seems that many Jews in the land were bilingual. But after the destruction of the temple in AD 70 and the Bar-Kochba uprising in AD 135, most of the Jewish population in the land was forced into exile, and Hebrew slowly ceased to be a spoken language.

Whether Jesus spoke Hebrew or Aramaic was, and still is, a subject of debate. Aramaic was the lingua franca in the Middle East in the time of Jesus. But discoveries like the Dead Sea Scrolls in Qumran show us that Hebrew was still in use. Hebrew, and not only Aramaic, was probably a spoken language at that time. And while the Talmud was written in Aramaic, the Mishna was written in Hebrew. The Hebrew of the Mishna is not an artificial language which would have been used only by a scholarly elite; it is a kind of colloquial Hebrew.

In the Greek New Testament text, we find both Hebrew and Aramaic words and phrases:

Aramaic	Hebrew
<i>Abba (Rom 8:15)</i>	<i>Amen (Matt 6:13)</i>
<i>Ephphatha (Mark 7:34)</i>	<i>Corban (Mark 7:11)</i>
<i>Marana tha (1 Cor 16:22)</i>	<i>Hallelujah (Rev 19:1)</i>
<i>Mammon (Matt 6:24)</i>	<i>Sabbath (Acts 13:14)</i>
<i>Talitha qumi (Mark 5:41)</i>	

Today, one of the main features of the Messianic movement in Israel is that believers speak modern Hebrew and use Hebrew in prayer and worship. The movement is becoming more and more native. We cannot be sure what language Jesus spoke; perhaps he spoke both Aramaic and Hebrew. But we do know that most of the followers of Jesus in Israel today speak Hebrew.

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858–1922), the father of the modern Hebrew language, used to say “*rak ivrit*”—only Hebrew. He had a dream for the awakening of the Hebrew language, and his dream came true. The people of Israel have Hebrew, the language of the fathers and the prophets, as their official language. It is the first time in history that a language which ceased to be spoken in ancient times has come back to life.

Elisabeth Levy
CEO, Caspari Center

Latest News from Caspari

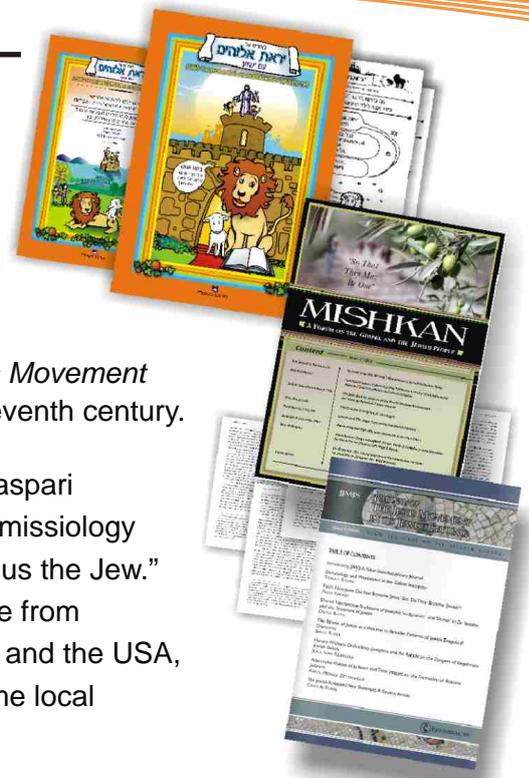
This autumn, Caspari published a new childrens' activity book, *The Fear of the Lord*, to be used in Shabbat schools in Messianic congregations.

On November 1, *Mishkan: A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People* was published online for the first time.

In the middle of October, the first issue of *JJMJS: Journal of the Jesus Movement in Its Jewish Setting* was published. The journal covers the first to the seventh century.



In November, Caspari hosted a 10-day missiology course titled "Jesus the Jew." Participants came from Norway, Finland, and the USA, in addition to some local participants.



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, sign up at our website, www.caspari.com.

Yediot Ahronot, October 21, 2014

In this four-page article, Binyamin Tobias interviews Andrew White, known as the Vicar of Baghdad, who recently left Iraq after 16 years of residence there. White was instructed to leave by the Archbishop of Canterbury due to threats of kidnapping for ransom by the Islamic State (IS).

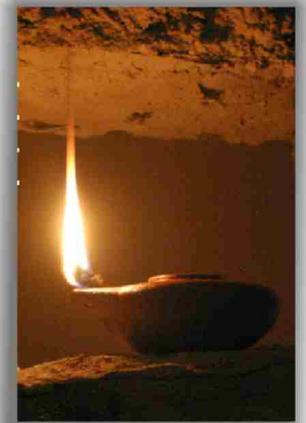
In the article, White speaks bluntly and unequivocally against Western countries' inaction. He mentions parishioners of his who were beheaded near Al-Kush, with no one writing about it, and says as well that what is happening in Iraq is beginning to remind one of the Holocaust. The United States made great mistakes, and Iraq is now reaping their consequences.

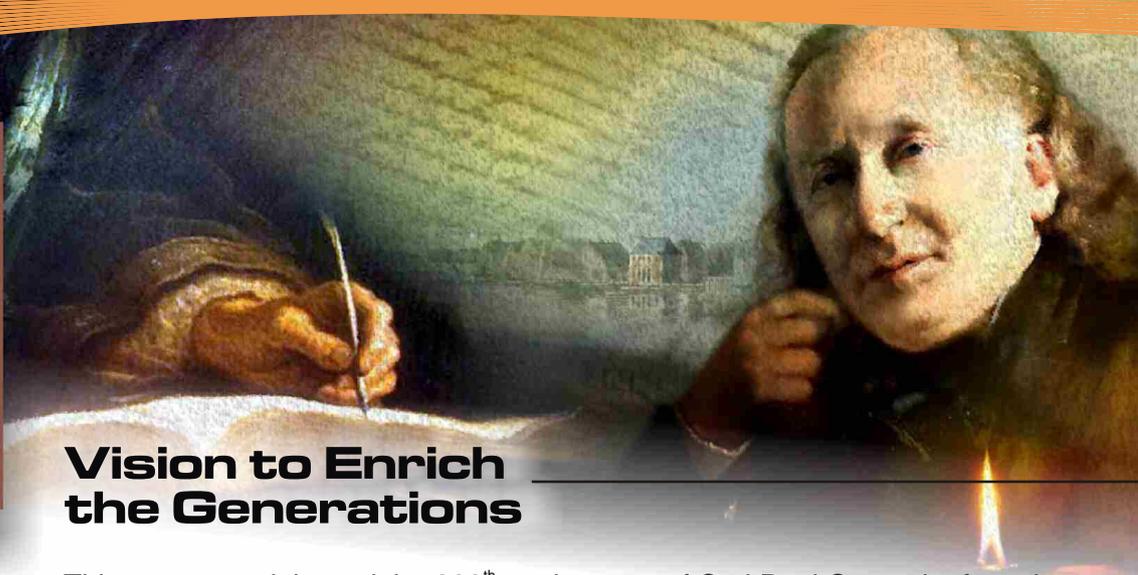
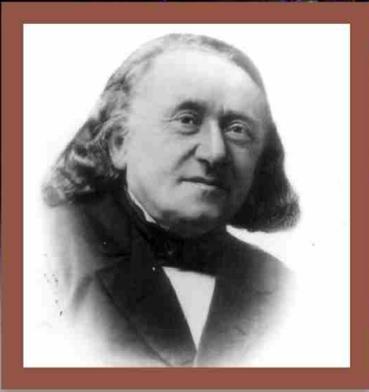
White adds that the first support Christians in Iraq received was from Jews and from the Israeli Foreign Ministry. He supports Operation Protective Edge and is convinced that anti-Semitism is still a major factor in world dialogue.

Prayer Requests

Please pray for...

- the upcoming national Shabbat school seminar in January
- new partner possibilities and new partner churches for Caspari
- the planning of our next course for Norwegian students of theology, coming up in March 2015
- the peace of Jerusalem and Israel





Vision to Enrich the Generations

C. P. Caspari (1814–1892)

This year we celebrated the 200th anniversary of Carl Paul Caspari, after whom the Caspari Center was named. So who was Carl Paul Caspari?

Carl Paul Caspari was born into a devout Jewish family in Dassau, Germany, in 1814. His father was a merchant. Caspari received a good education, first in a Jewish school and later in a secular school. He left home in 1834 to study Hebrew and Arabic at the University of Leipzig, where he composed an Arabic grammar book that was, for many years, the standard work in its field.

While at the university, Caspari was confronted with the claims of Jesus as both Lord and Messiah. His Christian schoolmate, Granel, managed to persuade Caspari to read the New Testament. Thus began a time of spiritual struggle. Franz Delitzsch, who translated the New Testament into Hebrew, counseled him during this time, along with Granel. The story of Paul, especially, made a great impression on Caspari. He found the evidence irrefutable, and during Pentecost of 1838 he was baptized, taking on the baptismal name Paul.

Caspari completed further studies and research on Old Testament theology in Berlin in 1847. He was then urged by Gisle Johnson, a visiting young scholar from Norway, to apply for the position of lecturer at the University of Christiania in Norway. He was appointed, and spent the rest of his life as a lecturer and professor of the Old Testament.

Caspari's linguistic ability enabled him to speedily master the Norwegian language, so that he was able to begin lecturing in under a year. He was made full professor in 1857. His lectures were inspiring, thorough, earnest, and bore the evidence of a Christian life. Caspari's work as a scholar and a believing Jew served to enrich three generations of Norwegian pastors, bringing the Psalms and the Prophets to light in a fresh and dynamic way. Under the auspices of the Norwegian Bible Society, he assisted in making a new translation of the Old Testament, which was completed in 1891. At the time of his death in 1892, he was working on a translation of the New Testament.

**A man who
truly loved
his God,
his Bible, and
his people.**

Although Caspari had officially changed his religion from Judaism to Christianity, he never forgot that he was Jewish, nor did he forget his own people. In 1861, Carl Paul Caspari became the first chairman of the Committee for the Mission among the Jews, which had been established in Oslo that year. The committee later became known as the Norwegian Church Ministry to Israel. Caspari served as a chairman of the committee until his death. His last public speech outside the university was at the instalment of Rev. Ragnvald Gjessing, the first Norwegian missionary among the Jews, on October 13, 1891.

Carl Paul Caspari died on April 18, 1892. He is remembered as an outstanding scholar, a tireless defender of the Scriptures, an advocate for the Jewish mission, and a strong believer in Jesus. The Caspari Center was named in his honor, and we hope that our ongoing work will be a fitting tribute to a man who truly loved his God, his Bible, and his people.

Maria, Caspari Center librarian

*If you would like to know more about the Caspari Center and its activities, write to caspari@caspari.com or visit our website, 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.*