

December 2017



Caspari Center
for Biblical and Jewish Studies

NEWS



From the CEO

Elisabeth E. Levy

Dear Partners and Supporters of the Caspari Center

The month of December will bring with it two important holidays, Hanukkah and Christmas. Both holidays are celebrations of light. We pray to the God of Israel that he would shine his light through us, illuminating the troubled world in which we live. Please join us in prayer that the darkness will be chased away and that his light will prevail.

In this newsletter, you will read about the miracle of the deliverance of Jerusalem (coinciding with Hanukkah), the upcoming "Alef" project, our Open Lectures, and why you should support the Caspari Center. Thank you for your prayers and support of this ministry during 2017. We could not do the work we do among the Messianic body without you. We are looking forward to 2018 with confidence in God to provide for this ministry, and to your continued partnership.

We at the Caspari Center want to wish you all a happy holiday celebration, and a light-filled, God-honoring 2018.

Your prayers and donations are, as always, heartily appreciated.



"As Birds Flying..."

Standing back to get a bird's eye view of history through the lens of bible believers, we find many important landmarks in the calendar year of 2017. These notable points in history, spanning four hundred years from 1517 to 1917, involve both Christians and Jews, and all point to the centrality of Israel in God's plan of redemption. The Lord's incredible faithfulness to his covenant promises can clearly be seen in the restoration of the land of Israel to the Jewish people, who have been returning in increasing measure during the past hundred years. Some of these have also made the 'ultimate return', that of turning to Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah.

In order to bring his people back from exile, God has been meticulously executing his master plan for generations. One of his instruments was Martin Luther, who challenged the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church and initiated the Protestant Reformation five hundred years ago by nailing his 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg Castle church on October 31, 1517. Consequently, the bible was made available to all believers, who could then read for themselves about God's promised restoration of the Jewish people to their land and to their Messiah - and pray for this to happen. In Britain, such a movement was led by the Puritans and from the 1790s, by the Evangelicals.

Among the Evangelical Christians was a British foreign secretary, Lord Balfour, who was convinced that modern Israel would be a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. He was the key person in the British Government's decision of October 31, 1917 to reestablish a Jewish national homeland in Palestine, as it was called then. The decision, later known as the Balfour Declaration, would have been meaningless without the capture of Beersheba on the very same day, October 31, 1917. This victory opened the door to the conquest of the whole of Palestine, and to the subsequent rebirth of Israel as a nation, thirty years later.

The Ottoman Turks had controlled Jerusalem since 1517. The British sought to regain control of the holy city after the Balfour Declaration was signed. British General Edmund Allenby captured Jerusalem on December 9, 1917, the eve of Hanukkah. Allenby, a devout Christian, felt that no violence should be used in taking Jerusalem, and he prayed to God for advice. The



*As birds flying, so will
the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem*

instruction he received was from Isaiah 31:5 “As birds flying, so will the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it.” Allenby understood the prophecy as a reference to aircraft, not yet common at the time, and ordered his men to fly a number of sorties over Jerusalem at a low altitude. The effect utterly demoralized the Turks, who fled the City without awaiting orders. As a result, Jerusalem was taken without a single shot.

This Hanukkah, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the deliverance of Old Jerusalem, the mother of all cities – interestingly, also celebrating the 50th anniversary of her reunification. “The restoration of all things” is happening in front of our very eyes (Acts 3:21). The Way has been prepared for his people to walk in. Many more will yet see that “It is the Lord” (John 21:7), the Redeemer and Deliverer of Jews and non-Jews alike.



Marja-Liisa Söderqvist

CC staff member

Why Support the Caspari Center?



Hiromi Kawabata

volunteer

When I walk the streets of Jerusalem, I feel the deep desire for religion in the city. There are many faiths and streams here: Ultra-Orthodox Jews, Muslims, Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Armenians, Copts, Evangelicals, and many more small groups and seekers. Most of the people in the city are serious about their beliefs. This isn't the easiest place to live. The cost of living is high, there is tension everywhere, and things almost never go as planned. If you weren't serious, why would you choose to live here?

Yet I recognize that no matter how intense the expression of faith by the people living here, if the faith isn't in the God revealed in the person and work of Yeshua and described in the Bible, that faith has no eternal value. Seeing serious worshippers attempt to find God while missing the point has left my heart aching during my stay here.

There is no place where a visitor can experience the liveliness of the Bible more than Israel. On the other hand, there is also no better place to start a heresy. For instance, many recognize that Biblical prophecies are being fulfilled in our day. There have been attempts of all kinds to interpret contemporary events in light of the Scriptures. Some of these attempts have led to some serious error and wrong assumptions. I recognize more than ever the importance of understanding the Creator's master plan of history. Without a solid grounding in the Bible, it could be easy to wander from the truth and fall into error.

When I've visited Jewish synagogues, I see members' passion for God. I respect their strong lifestyle of faith and disciplined worship. Yet I sorrow that they do not know their Messiah. As a result of my experiences here in Israel, my appreciation for sound theology has grown so much. The Caspari Center's efforts to train believers in the Holy Land is important work.

Before coming to serve in Israel, I expected my faith would grow simply by seeing the actual places where Abraham, David and Yeshua walked, and breathing in the air of this ancient and holy land. But I discovered being here has helped me to recognize how important it is to study the Bible. We all need help to do this well! The Caspari Center is committed to this work.



I have discovered while here in Israel that the Messianic community has its own deep context and history. It is encouraging to see that the Messianic community, although still relatively few in number, is alive and well. It has been an honor to serve with one of the first organizations to provide discipleship tools for Jewish believers in Israel. Caspari has an important role in the greater Christian community, helping to teach about the Jewish foundations of faith in our risen Savior. I pray Caspari's work will continue for many years to come.

Anti-Semitism

Haaretz **November 10, 2017**

This article surveys anti-Semitism in France, noting that anti-Semitic incidents appear to be decreasing in the country. However, 5,000 French Jews immigrated to Israel in 2016, and an additional 4,000 are expected to follow suit this year. The government is carrying out a campaign against anti-Semitism in schools in suburbs of Paris, but many Jews are leaving these areas, and these schools are almost entirely non-Jewish. This demographic means that children in these schools have a preconceived notion of the Israeli-Arab conflict, but also “tend to consider Jews exotic.” The article concludes that the pressing issue is “...preventing silent acquiescence between the old anti-Semitism and the new.”

The Online 'Alef' Project

Alec Goldberg

Israel Director



As an educational ministry, the Caspari Center is a perfect ministry match for someone with a passion for teaching, and a gift for it. However, teaching is only a part of the Great Commission. And if teaching is all you do day by day, week by week, and year by year, burn out becomes a very real possibility. I am a teacher, but I also appreciate the opportunity to minister in other ways, and I am especially grateful for occasions to share the Gospel with my fellow Jews.

In the 21st century, cyberspace comes to mind as a primary venue for finding an audience. Of course, “one holy online church” is not the ultimate destination. No matter how high the quality of the online content, it can never be a substitute for rubbing shoulders in a real community, as opposed to ‘likes’, ‘comments’ and ‘shares’ in a virtual one. Still, as a platform for spreading any message, the medium of the internet enables us to reach people we would never be able to otherwise reach. To that end, I have been interviewing a number of very interesting individuals whose personal stories will soon become available online.

The men and women I’ve been interviewing come from different backgrounds: some grew up in the city, others on a kibbutz; some in a religious home, and others in a secular one. The commonality between them is that they are all native Israeli Jews and first-generation believers in Yeshua. In other words, they are neither immigrants like myself, nor expatriates like some of my Caspari Center colleagues, nor are they the children of believers. None of these individuals was in any way pre-disposed or pre-conditioned to believe in ‘that Man’. On the contrary, they grew up in a culture which, despite the complexity of its texture and tremendous adaptability to change, has shown great consistency in its refusal to consider Yeshua as Israel’s Messiah.

For the last 2000 years, the Jewish people have faithfully repeated to ourselves, to our children and grandchildren, the same old ‘truth’: “A Jew cannot believe in Jesus, and those who dare to do so are the worst traitors to their families and to their people”. Speaking with these sabras (native Israelis) who are now following Yeshua, I ask, “You knew that when you told your family about your faith in Yeshua, they wouldn’t be happy about your decision. How, then, did you tell them? And how did they respond?” I also ask them to describe their faith in God prior to their encounter with Yeshua, as compared to their faith today.

Biblical studies and systematic theology are powerful tools in the service of God’s Kingdom (or at least I happen to think so), but a simple personal story is no less powerful. The word of our testimony is a great spiritual weapon (Rev. 12:11). I hope their testimonies will inspire those who watch them online. We at the Caspari Center are so excited about sharing these stories. May they be used by God’s Spirit to draw many to himself!

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Open Lecture

at Caspari Center

Marja-Liisa Söderqvist

CC staff member



The theme of our most recent Open Lecture, given in mid-November, was “Halakha and Salvation: a Catholic Approach to Post-Postmissionary Messianic Judaism”. (Halakha is the way in which a Jew is supposed to behave. The term encompasses civil, criminal and religious law.) The presentation was given by Father Antoine Levy, who is a French Jew, Dominican priest, theological professor from Finland, and the founder of the Helsinki Consultation (www.helsinkiconsultation.org). Engaging in a critical dialogue with Rabbi Mark Kinzer, a leading Messianic Jewish theologian and the author of Postmissionary Messianic Judaism, Father Antoine argued for a “halakha-in-Yeshua” that lies in the dismissal of the rabbinic concept of mandatory Torah observance. The “Catholic” angle from which Father Antoine spoke referred to a virtual context in which a truly universal Church would give room to a genuinely Jewish expression of faith in Yeshua and simultaneously preserve the communion of Jewish believers with traditional Gentile Christians.

Father Antoine argued for a Messianic ecclesiology, as the Church in her essence is the communion of those called to faith in Yeshua the Messiah, and is comprised of Jews and of those from the nations. However, instead of the bilateral ecclesiology envisaged by Kinzer, Father Antoine pictured a bi-dimensional Church where **the Church finds a way to support Jews in its midst in sustaining a distinct Jewish identity, and where Jewish believers in Yeshua live in visible communion with those from the nations who share their faith. Father Antoine stressed a spiritual life-experience shared between Jews and Gentiles rather than structural distinction.**

Father Antoine noted that Messianic Judaism is often presented as a movement of Jewish believers who want to preserve Jewish identity and tradition. He stated that this view has both positive and negative aspects: “The positive essence of Messianic Judaism is about the so-long-anticipated discovery by Jews of their Messiah and the joy of receiving a teaching that is not simply the product of the Jewish tradition, beautiful and wise as this tradition might be, but the very Word of G-d made flesh.” Father Antoine said that Jewish tradition is not lost or diminished by Jewish believers, but can be embraced by them.



Each month of the academic year, we are blessed to host lectures by a wide variety of speakers. It is one way in which we carry on the ministry of Carl Paul Caspari (1814-1892), in whose honor the Caspari Center was named. Caspari was a Jewish believer and scholar from Germany who went on to become a professor of Old Testament theology at the University of Oslo. He was nicknamed “the Teacher of all Scandinavia” due to his powerful influence among his Norwegian brothers. His sole ambition was to live and die for the Lord. During his lifetime, he clung to the hope of a Jewish national homeland. Today, Carl Caspari’s hope is a reality. Our lecture series acknowledging the inherent Jewishness of God’s Word at the Center in Jerusalem which bears his name is a fitting way to celebrate the work of this faithful Jewish believer.

Prayer Requests

Please pray for...

- **Discovering the Jewishness of Jesus** course, scheduled for April 23 – May 4, 2018
- **the recordings for the new Alef project**
- **the updated edition of Facts & Myths**



 **Caspari Center** • for Biblical and Jewish Studies • ללימודי המקרא והיהדות • תרכז כספרי

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“Equipping His people for works of service, so that the body of Messiah may be built up” Ephesians 4:12

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.