



Caspari Center NEWS

December 2015



From the CEO

Elisabeth E. Levy

Dear Partners and Donors of the Caspari Center in Jerusalem!

We at the Caspari Center want to wish all of you a Happy Hanukah, Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year 2016, each according to his or her choice and tradition.

Thank you for all your prayers and support during 2015. The Caspari Center is entering 2016 full of confidence in God, who is entering the new year with us. For our ongoing work among the Jewish people, your donations are, as always, heartily appreciated.

God bless you and give you light to chase away the darkness!



Thoughts from the Staff

Alec Goldberg

Flying Upside Down

In the rare moments we are quite honest with ourselves, we followers of Jesus sometimes admit that many of our Master's statements don't actually make any sense. I am referring to sayings like "man's life does not depend on the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15), "everything is possible for one who believes" (Mark 9:23), "whoever obeys my word will never see death" (John 8:51), and the like. They sound completely detached from our daily experience, which teaches us quite the contrary. Namely, that so-called "quality of life" is in direct proportion to the availability of material and financial means; that faith in Christ may take us to heaven but is all too often powerless to change our earthly circumstances; and that the most devout Jesus-believers die at the same 100% rate as Muslims, Buddhists, and atheists.

"His goal was, and is, to reveal to us another reality."

To resolve the discrepancy between the plain meaning of the texts and our experience of reality, we usually come up with sophisticated hermeneutical tricks. We believe in Jesus, alright, but to make any sense of his teaching one has to be a trained theologian, like our priests, pastors, or Messianic rabbis. Of course, it was with trained theologians that Jesus clashed the most, and it was simple men that he addressed most of the time; but these facts are, again, too inconvenient, so let's just leave them aside, goes our reasoning.

How about another solution to the problem? What if Jesus' understanding of life, death, and reality itself is radically different from our own? And what if adopting his worldview is an indispensable prerequisite for making sense of his teaching?

Consider the story of the widow whom Jesus singled out as the most generous giver to the temple treasury (Luke 21:1-4). In his opinion, she gave more than all the rich people who passed by the treasury before her. Yet she gave only two small copper coins! In fact, we would say she gave very little—perhaps less than anyone. But in Jesus' view, she gave more than anyone, and he chose to tell his followers about it. Why? To startle them again with his knowledge—in that case, knowledge of the fact that those two coins was all the poor widow had?

Certainly not! His goal was, and is, to reveal to us another reality—that of God and his rule, or kingdom.

It is a spiritual reality, which, while unseen, is the ultimate one, because it is not temporal but eternal. Given the fact that the time we have left to “hang around” is not a few decades, but uncountable millions of years, don't you think it's wise to consider it?

In that ultimate reality, little is much when God is in it; the first are finding themselves to be last, and the last first; the sorrowful keep rejoicing; the poor make many rich; and those who have nothing possess everything. It is an inverted reality, from our point of view: its laws

run contrary to all we know from our senses and learn in school. But that simply means that, in the words of Dallas Willard, “humanity is routinely flying upside down” (see his Divine Conspiracy).

That's bad news. But we need to hear and absorb it if we are to receive the good news. And the good news is that God is more than willing to correct our thinking. The Cross made it possible. The question is, will we let him do so?

New Dean at Bible School for Ex-Drug Addicts

Alexander Goldberg, Israel Director at the Caspari Center, is the new Dean of Beit HaYeshua's Bible school.

Last year, Beit HaYeshua congregation in Jerusalem established a Bible school for ex-drug addicts, where Goldberg taught. This year, he will play a much more significant role at the school.

- I'm responsible for the curriculum and I also teach. I give the students homework, which I check. At the conclusion of every topic, the students are tested on the material, says Goldberg.

The Bible school also employs other teachers, both locals and from abroad.

Many drug addicts

According to Beit HaYeshua's web page, it's estimated that there are over 20,000 hardcore drug addicts and many more alcoholics in Israel today. Beit HaYeshua, which runs the Bible school and also a rehab center, helps as many of them as possible.

- We have approximately 25 students enrolled this year, says Goldberg.

The students gather once a week for evening lectures.

Ministry Update

Ingjerd Våge



- We cover the different aspects of who God is and who man is. Our students are not yet ready to contemplate heavy theological issues, so we teach them the basics: about God, the Maker of heaven and earth, about sin and how to overcome temptation. They also learn how to pray and read the Bible. The teaching is very practical, says Goldberg.

Transformation

- Are all believers before they start?

- Yes, at least to a certain degree. Not all of them have been baptized, however. Last year, some were baptized during the school year. Some students have only recently left their lives on the streets.

- Why is this school important?

- Unless they are firmly grounded in the word of God, these new believers will not be able to change their thinking and to stand strong spiritually. They would be destined to fall back into their old lifestyles. Only by studying the Scriptures and by being in communion with other believers can God change their lives in a substantial way. I don't mean just staying clean; I'm referring to a total transformation of character, says Goldberg.

“It's really a miracle to see these people and what God is doing in their lives.”



Positive response

Last year the students' responses were very positive.

- They realize that the Bible is a book for life. It's not just a book for theologians, it's a book for life. Although it's also a book for theologians, because theologians need life, too, says Goldberg laughing.

- The Bible speaks to them about real-life situations and how to bring God into their daily reality. You can commune with God while you're cooking, or while you're chatting with your friends about football. It can be pure, holy and healthy at the same time, Goldberg continues.

- Does it work?

- It does. That's the good thing about it. It's really a miracle to see these people transform and to see what God is doing in their lives.

This year, the leadership of the rehab center is considering adding another dimension to the Bible school program: some courses on ministry in general, and evangelism in particular. For interested students, there will be training opportunities available for those who want to reach out to other addicts and non-believers in Yeshua.

Jesus the Jew

- a Short Course for Norwegian Mission Leaders

In November, several leaders from Christian organizations in Norway attended a 10-day course at Caspari Center.

The goal was to study *Jesus the Jew*.

"Two of the leaders who participated had contacted me to ask about a study trip to Israel. Several others also joined in. I contacted Caspari Center, which excels at arranging missiology courses, and they were glad to do it," said Rolf Gunnar Heitmann, General Secretary of the Norwegian Church Ministry to Israel.

For the first two days, the group visited Bethlehem, learning about the city in the time of Jesus and today. Later they arrived in Jerusalem, where different themes were covered, including the Messianic movement, early Jewish believers, covenant theology, and the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. They also had excursions to Jericho and Qumran.



The students at the Temple Mount

"We learned about Jewish believers in Jesus and their development of theology. We also had lectures on what it means for the Christian church to have Jewish roots. In addition to this, we heard about the political situation in the Middle East and the different narratives people hold," said Heitmann.

Caspari Center has organized missiology courses for many years. The next course will be held in April 2016. You can read about this upcoming opportunity on our website, www.caspari.com, where you will also find an application form.

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.



Archaeology *Haaretz, November 2, 2015*

A 3,000-year-old seal has been found by ten-year old Matthew Tcepliaev of Russia, during a volunteering session at the Temple Mount Sifting Project (headed by Gabriel Barkay and Tzachi Dvira). The seal, which depicts animals, is unique in that it is made of limestone. Only one other seal of this style has been found in Jerusalem (and only four altogether), in the Ophel, between the City of David and the Temple Mount, by archaeologist Eilat Mazar. This rare seal "adds to finds showing that Jerusalem in the early Iron Age II was an important city and not a mere village," say archaeologists.

Israel Hayom, Maariv; HaMevaser, Yediot Ahronot, Haaretz, November 4, 2015

Archaeologists digging in the Givati parking lot by Jerusalem's City of David are convinced that they have found the Hasmonean-era Acra fortress, built in 167 BCE by Seleucid emperor Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Hanukkah fame, which enabled Greek control of the temple and of the rest of Jerusalem. Among the remains found were a massive wall, the base of a tower, arrowheads, ballista stones, remains of thousands of wine amphorae, and coins dating from the years between Antiochus IV and Antiochus VII Sidetes.



Devotional thoughts

Michelle Van Loon
US Administrator

In the Darkness

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.” (Isaiah 60:1-3)

When I was a child, I loved winter. I couldn't wait for winter's first snowfall, and have lots of treasured memories of building snowmen and having snowball fights. As I've gotten older, however, I've battled mild seasonal depression at this time of year. The cold and darkness seem to amplify the blues for many of us.

I've learned there are some practical things I can do to combat those blues, including prayer, getting outside during daylight hours, staying active, and seeking help from others if the depression deepens. I've also learned to recognize that God is at work, speaking in the darkness - because the darkness is not dark to the One who is the light of the world. A few Bible truths that help me keep perspective on the physical darkness of this time of year include:

- God created both light and the darkness. (Genesis 1:1-5)
- Even the darkness is not dark to God. (Psalm 139:11-12)
- There is no darkness in him. (1 John 1:5)
- Jesus is the light of the world. (John 1:1-4)
- God called his people to reflect his light to the sin-darkened world around them. (Isaiah 49:6)
- Jesus reminded his followers they'd been sent to be the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14-16)
- The new heavens and new earth at the end of days will never have night, as the glory of God will be its everlasting light, and the Lamb of God himself will be its lamp. (Revelation 21:22-25)

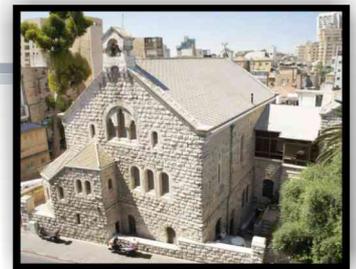
Interestingly, these Scriptures relate to the doom and gloom many of us feel as we read the headlines each day - whether it is troubling news taking place in our hometown or continuing unrest and war taking place across the Middle East. This world can be a very dark place, and there are times when it seems the news is getting darker by the day.

God, who is pure, beautiful, holy light, is at work in this darkness. He is redeeming the world he loves. The darkness will not have the final word in this broken world or in our lives. As we walk through the darkest season of the year, may these short, gloomy days remind us that the Light of the World sustains our hope, shapes our witness, and kindles our courage so we shine with his glory, no matter how dark things may become around us.

Prayer Requests

Please pray for . . .

- *The peace of Jerusalem, Israel and the whole Middle East.*
- *Our national Shabbat School Seminar, which will take place mid-December.*
- *The economic situation of Caspari Center and next year's budget.*
- *All the visa applications for Caspari staff.*



Caspari Center • for Biblical and Jewish Studies • **מרכז קספרי** • ללימודי המקרא והיהדות

Israel Office: 55 HaNevi'im St., PO Box 46, Jerusalem 9100001, Israel, Phone: +972 2-6233926, Fax: +972 2-6251933, email: caspari@caspari.com

U.S. Office: PO Box 147, Wheaton, IL 60187 USA, Phone +1 630-668-3328, Fax: +1 630-580-5757, email: caspariUSA@caspari.com

“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.