

CANADIAN *Communiqué*

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A NOTE FROM STEVE

Remembering is so important. The Jewish people remember God's special dealing with them, celebrating days like Passover and Purim. Christians remember the price paid for their salvation by taking communion regularly. Most of us make sure we remember the birthday of our loved ones and hopefully, for those of us who are married, our anniversary.

The writer of the book of Hebrews also thought remembering was important. In chapter 13 he reminds believers that the basis for fellowship is brotherly love. "Let brotherly love continue," he says (v. 1). That kind of love was needed because many of their fellow believers were being imprisoned for their faith. He then asks them to "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them." The

persecution of believers is not limited to the early church; it happens today.

The Friends of Israel shines a light on these brothers and sisters in every issue of our magazine, *Israel My Glory*. Our hope is to make our readers and supporters aware of the plight of persecuted believers. In the January/February 2004 issue of *Israel My Glory* we highlighted the need to remember the persecuted saying, "When we read of the terrible abuse and brutality our Christian brothers and sisters endure, the critical question remains: Are we listening?" At that time, we issued **Remember** pins. These pins provided a way and means for believers to help raise awareness of the plight of persecuted believers worldwide.



In this issue of the *Canadian Communiqué*, we highlight remembering. Larry Mitchell's article helps us remember the persecuted church. John Plantz and John McKim help us understand Shavuot (Pentecost), a Jewish holiday of celebrating and remembering. (Observed May 19–21 this year.) John Plantz's article tells us how it is celebrated biblically while John McKim shares how it is celebrated today, providing fond memories from his Jewish friends. We are reminded of God's faithfulness through Richard Toviah. And, as always, we spend another glorious "Minute with Meno."

At The Friends of Israel we believe

remembering is still important. That is why we are bringing back the **Remember** pins to our *Canadian Communiqué* readers. You can acquire your free pin by following the instructions on the insert. We hope you will take advantage of our offer and wear your pin in public. Doing so will, at least in a small way, create conversation about the terrible plight of many suffering Christians today.

Steve Herzig is the
director of FOI Gospel
Ministry, Inc.



REMEMBERING

the persecuted

For the third year in a row Christian persecution around the world hit record highs. According to opendoorsusa.org, of the top 10 nations most difficult and dangerous to practice the Christian faith, not one was in the Western World. If you are a believer in Jesus living in a country like Yemen, Sudan, Syria, or Iraq, chances are you are or know someone who is being persecuted. Yet today's believers living in the West have not experienced real persecution for decades. For the most part we have been sheltered from the forewarnings of trials spoken by our Lord.

Jesus speaks of how His

followers will face persecution throughout the Gospels:

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33).

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Mt. 5:10-12).

Although there have been isolated church shootings and Christians being harassed, it's easy to see that we have not experienced the kind of persecution Christians living in Communist and Islamic countries face every day. But our golden age of religious liberty may be coming to an end. It soon may be a crime to call homosexuality a sin, or to publicly expose heretical teachings of false cults such as Islam. The Judeo-Christian society has been replaced by a postmodern society, and this politically correct culture does not look favourably upon Bible-believing Christians who dare to preach the truth



in love (Eph. 4:15).

Romans 13:1–7 teaches that those in authority have been appointed by God. We are warned, “For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.” Here is a frightening thought: Is it possible God is using our government as His agent for divine judgment and wrath? He used Assyria and Babylon to judge the Jewish people, His Chosen People, so it should not surprise us if He chooses to use governments to judge our nation. If God’s judgment

is poured out upon our land, it may begin with the church.

1 Peter 4:17–18 says, “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now ‘If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?’”

Let us continue to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters in other lands. They are praying for us. One of the leaders of the underground church in China was asked how we could pray for them. His reply, “Stop praying for persecution

in China to end, for it is through persecution that the church has grown.” Then he continued, “We, in fact, are praying that the American church might taste the same persecution, so revival would come to the American church like we have seen in China” (Dan Wooding, Founder of ASSIST Ministries, <http://across.co.nz/PrayingforPersecution>).

Let us pray that we will remain faithful if God chooses to terminate our religious liberties and freedoms.

Larry Mitchell is the Calgary, Alberta, field representative for FOI Gospel Ministry, Inc.



REMEMBERING

pentecost/the birth of the church

The church, almost 2,000 years from its inception, is made up of Jews (Acts 2:1–47) and Gentiles (Acts 10:34–48) and started on the Lord’s feast of Pentecost (Shavuot in Hebrew).

It has been through good times and days of peace as well as hard times and sometimes years of struggles. Through these times people have responded differently to the gospel message.

Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 that He would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. He says this because He is the King of Israel, the Head of the church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23), and the Saviour of the body (the church).

Pentecost is known as Feast of Weeks (Ex. 34:22, 23; Dt. 16:16), the Feast of Harvest “the firstfruits of thy labours” (Ex. 23:16)

Leviticus 23:15–21 says that from firstfruits they were to count seven Sabbaths from the day after the Sabbath (50 days) and to bake two wave loaves with leaven. Why do they do this? It was for remembrance and thanksgiving for the firstfruits of their labour and recalling the story of Passover and the sacrificial lamb.

The priest was also to take a sheaf of barley and on the third day wave it

before the Lord, making it appear to be alive (Lev. 23:10). This is known as *bikkurim*, the firstfruits.

Reflecting on Pentecost in the Gospels, Jesus, the Lamb of God, was taken on the night of Passover and crucified (Ps. 22; Isa. 53:1–12); pierced (Zech. 12:10); buried (Isa. 53:9); and on the third day, resurrected (Mt. 20:19) as the firstfruits from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20).

Fifty days later the Holy Spirit came down, about 3,000 souls came to the saving knowledge of Jesus (Acts 2:41).

This reminds us that salvation is of the Jews (Jn. 4:42) but is also for the world (Jn. 3:16). God’s plan for the church is pictured by the two wave loaves in Leviticus 23: The

Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ (Eph. 2:11–17). It concludes with the ascension of Jesus and His promise to return (Acts 1:9–10). This is the Good News of the true church. It was that all shall be blessed. The gospel message given to Abraham (Gen. 22:18) was fulfilled in JESUS the Messiah (Gal. 3:8, 14).



John Plantz is the Winnipeg, Manitoba, Church Ministries representative for FOI Gospel Ministry, Inc.



REMEMBERING

shavuot

I sat down with two of my Jewish friends and talked through some of the memories they have of Shavuot. My hope is that it will give a glimpse into the lives of our Jewish friends.

M.D.: “Shavuot is one of three festivals to be observed according to Deuteronomy 16:16. It can be called the Feast of Harvest (Ex. 23:16), or the Feast of Weeks (Ex. 34:22), because we count 50 days (7 weeks) from firstfruits (Num. 28:26). Our sages compared it to a wedding between God and His people and this is meaningful to me personally, as I met my husband on that day. It is customary to eat dairy foods because Jewish tradition compares the words of the Torah to the sweetness of milk and honey: blintzes, cheesecake, creamed potatoes, homemade breads, salads etc. This is one of my favourite holidays because all the family would come together and unite around the festive table.”

A.Y.: “Shavuot is an agricultural holiday but it has no memorial significance such as Passover or Tabernacles.

Since there was no historical event to look back upon, the rabbis thought it would lose all religious meaning and importance, especially to the Jewish people living outside the land of Israel. So they chose the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai which fell 50 days after the Exodus from Egypt. That is very meaningful to us because the Torah must be given from generation to generation or we would not remain an eternal nation. Since there is no Temple today, various customs and traditions have been added. In Israel, the *moshavim* (farms) and *kibbitzum* (communities) conduct ceremonies for bringing the firstfruits to celebrate the harvest. They sing, dance, and have a procession of decorated agricultural tools. Synagogues are also decorated with fruit for the occasion.”

John McKim
is the Saint
John, New
Brunswick, field
representative
for FOI Gospel
Ministry, Inc.



REMEMBERING

god's faithfulness to israel

A few months ago my wife, Gabriela, and I returned home from our FOI Canada Tour in Israel. What a blessing! We will never look at the Bible the same way again. During the tour I had the privilege to teach at Tel Megiddo. Thirty-six people from our bus overlooked the valley. It was green and you could see the beautiful trees at the end of lush fields for miles. It was hard to imagine this place being the very location of a battle that will end all battles, the battle of Armageddon.

Revelation 16:12–16 tells us,

Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

Zechariah 12:1–14 foretells that all the armies of the world will one day come against Jerusalem. That this place will become “a cup of trembling” to all the nations (v. 2). When they are attacked they will look up and see the One they have pierced, and “will mourn for Him as one that mourns for his only son” (v. 10). They will look and see Jesus, the only begotten Son of God (Jn 3:16).

As I was teaching I couldn’t keep my eyes dry. I was reminded of an amazing experience in my life more than 30 years ago when I was in my 20s.

My father drove a taxi cab here in Winnipeg for about 23 years. People would forget all kinds of items such as gloves, wallets, and books. One book left in the back seat was *The Late Great Planet Earth*, by Hal Lindsey. No one claimed the book so it was given to me. It spoke about how Jesus fulfilled so many prophecies of His First Coming, and there were many more speaking of His Second Coming. This intrigued me enough that I bought a Bible to try and learn more about these prophecies. I began to see how important and relevant the modern State of Israel was to the return of Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords. In other words, it was the promises about Jesus and the nation of Israel that got my attention. It was these things that led me to read the Bible. It was in the four Gospels that God spoke to my heart which resulted in my salvation.

More than 30 years later I would never have thought I would be standing in Israel teaching on the very Scriptures that led me to my own Jewish Messiah. I was full of gratitude remembering what led me to the Lord. I have never felt so blessed to be part of the Jewish nation as I felt standing there and teaching with Megiddo as my backdrop.

Richard
Toviah is the
Winnipeg,
Manitoba, field
representative
for FOI Gospel
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Join us in Winnipeg for
HONOUR ISRAEL NIGHT

Sponsored by: The Friends of Israel, The Jewish National Fund, and Canadian Magen David Adom

On May 14, Israel celebrated Independence Day, the Jewish state's 70th birthday as a modern nation. In recognition of that day, The Friends of Israel has invited JNF (Jewish National Fund), CMDA (Canada Magen David Adom), and Jewish Foundation of Manitoba, as well as the Winnipeg Jewish community at large to help celebrate this occasion. Genesis 12:3 says "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you." Come to show your support for Israel on this special evening.

Tuesday, September 25
7:00 pm

Victoria Inn Hotel & Convention Centre
1808 Wellington Ave
Winnipeg, MB R3H 0G3

\$30 per person or \$275 for a table of 10 (includes dessert)

Registration (required) opens June 1. Deadline September 14.

foi.org/canadaisraelnight

For questions call 1-888-664-2584

A MINUTE WITH MENO

The Jerusalem municipality is doing its best to create special cultural and social events throughout the year. There is a trend in the younger generations here in Jerusalem: They are moving away from the city because of increasing pressure from the ultra-religious. In order to stop this trend, the majority of Jerusalem is under much pressure to increase the entertainment activities around the city. One of the projects is called Sheon Khoref (Winter Time), and during the summer the same event is called Sheon Kayits (Summer Time).

What is it all about?

During a day in February, specific areas in the city, like the industrial section and downtown plaza, are chosen for theatre shows, special performances, and mobile food courts. All of the businesses are asked to stay open until midnight to allow people to enter and shop. Some of the locations, like our building, have a cinema and a theater. We were asked to hold

special drama shows in our church hall as well as other social activities for these events. However, due to the very worldly style of activities, we cannot allow it inside our assembly.

BUT!

On the opening evening, we had our assembly open until midnight. We put posters to direct people to see our assembly and to ask questions. Tea, coffee, and cookies were free to our visitors.

Some members stayed to talk with those who stop by to see the assembly and to ask about our faith in Jesus. We all were humbled and amazed by the number of people who walked to the fifth floor to see and ask.

We offered a full tour. It gave us an opportunity to explain our life and worship. All the visitors could see our bulletin board with our activities and prayer requests, our books and Christian literature (which are all free to take), and the pictures of our children who are currently serving in the Israeli Defense Forces. Young adults and older

people were asking about the Messiahship of Jesus, the authority of the Bible, and generally about our style of life.

The gospel was presented clearly to anyone who wanted to listen. In some moments, all of the congregants present were busy speaking to different groups or individuals about what we believe.

One of the groups, four young adults from Brazil, came to Israel for a year to study Hebrew and hopefully to stay here. It was the first time for them to hear the gospel. Since I teach in Brazil once a year, we had a common ground to discuss.

So, though we were not a formal part of the municipality activities, some did visit our assembly, and heard a message for eternal life. We thank God for “open minds” and easy-going mentality to use such opportunities for His Kingdom and for His glory.

Meno Kalisher is the pastor of Jerusalem Assembly House of Redemption in Jerusalem, Israel.





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