Send the Light

Olive Press Found at Qazrin in the Golan Heights
Qazrin (Qasrin, Katzrin), the “capital” of the Golan Heights, lies in a strategic and sensitive location. There has been at least twenty years of peace on the Israeli-Syrian border, only because Israel has been in control of the Golan Heights. Under Syrian control there were persistent attacks on the northern communities of Israel and attempts to divert the headwaters of the Jordan River.

Today Qazrin is a pleasant suburban town in the central Golan. Unknown to the tourist, however, it is surrounded by barbed wire, and its bomb shelters have been encircled by rose gardens and converted to Hebrew classrooms for new immigrants, music halls, and recreation centers.

Hebrew presence on the Golan as early as the 2nd century has been confirmed by recent excavations at Qazrin (as well as at 27 other Jewish sites—with menorahs carved in stone, inscriptions in Hebrew and Aramaic, and, above all, the ancient synagogues). The Qazrin synagogue, contemporary with the one at Capernaum, is the best preserved synagogue in the Golan, and has two rows of four columns, finely carved ashlar blocks joined without mortar, and a carved lintel decorated with a wreath flanked by two pomegranates and two amphorae.

The homes, excavated in Ancient Qazrin, one mile east of Qazrin, followed the insular style, each extended family unit divided from neighbors by narrow paths. Building a window facing a neighbor’s window was not permitted to avoid intruding on one’s privacy. There was usually a large multi-purpose room, divided from a large storage room by a “windowed wall,” above which stood a sleeping loft. The rooms opened on to the multi-purpose courtyard, where the outdoor cooking and baking were done in the ovens. In the large room inside, oil lamps were placed upon protrusions on the walls.

The picture shows one of two oil presses discovered in Qazrin. Production of olive oil was the major source of income. The olives were first crushed in the basin by the rolling stone. The pulp was then placed into pressing baskets and squeezed under the screw press, until the oil was extracted. There were many uses for the olive oil—as nutrition, as skin lubricant, as medicine, and as lighting fuel.

Each Christian is a light bearer (Re. 1:13,20). He has no light in himself, but he holds forth and diffuses the light of the Spirit—“ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the Word of life” Php. 2:15-16). Where one needs light, there is darkness. How great is the darkness, with all the immorality, selfishness, and vainglory. When God’s messengers came with the light of truth and righteousness, how were they treated? The answer is found in Heb. 11:35-38. Even the Lord of glory was crucified and killed. The candle bearers have not been useless, however, and some hearts, communities, and kingdoms have been attracted by the light to a greater or lesser degree. God make us faithful in waiting and witnessing until the silver note from heaven sounds the signal for our release!