

# Some Lessons from a Year with FOI

By PAUL J. SCHARF

“So, when are you moving to Israel?”

That is definitely the most frequently asked question we have encountered in our year-and-a-quarter of service with The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry.

And we have encountered lots of questions!

I have spoken in more than 50 different churches in four states during this time, and I have discovered that when people know you're from The Friends of Israel—whether they understand what that means or not—they presume that you will be an expert on some things.

Those would include things such as: the value of Israeli currency; the population centers of Jewish people in the United States; the meaning of the passage of Scripture they have been pondering recently; the credibility of another group they saw on TV that supports Israel; the history of someone who worked for The Friends of Israel in years past; the status of Israeli politics; and the list goes on.

Some of the questions are trite, some are profound, and some are unanswerable. All of them cause my wife (who usually oversees our display table, and gets lots of them herself) and me to realize the expectations that people have for someone in the position I hold with The Friends of Israel, and move me to want to study further and be better prepared for anything that I might encounter.

There have been lots of surprises on our journey as well—many of them being wonderful blessings from the Lord.

There was the Sunday that began with me speaking to no more than five other people, which, for various reasons, turned into one of the most exciting days of ministry that we've had. There was the lady who pulled my wife out of a service and told her she wanted to make a significant gift to our ministry. There was the elderly gentleman who said that the day he receives *Israel My Glory* in the mail he sits down and reads it from cover to cover. There was the young girl bound for college who wants to become a medical doctor and also serve God, perhaps in Israel. There was the gentleman who encouraged me by saying that, of the various things I could be doing in life, serving the Lord with The Friends of Israel was the most valuable.

This is not to give the impression that we are always living on the mountaintop. We have faced plenty of disappointments and difficulties, though I won't trouble you by listing any of them. And, like you, we somehow always have a Monday morning after every Sunday. Yet, no matter what, there is usually always something to encourage us as we go on another weekend trip to a church to speak and present our ministry.

And I should explain again what that ministry is, and answer the question with which I began. I was appointed by the board of The Friends of Israel in November of 2018 to serve as a church ministries representative in the Midwest—teaching and preaching and serving in churches, promoting The Friends of Israel and all that it stands for, and ministering to the Jewish community. For this position, I must raise my own prayer and financial support, and we are currently in the process of doing so, even while we begin the work to which we are called.

We knew that this work would not always be easy, which was, quite frankly, part of its appeal. But we committed to do it—with God’s help—for the years ahead that He gives us in which to labor. It is a great honor, privilege and joy to do so.

Would you please pray for us specifically, that we might “take heed to the ministry which (we) have received in the Lord, that (we) may fulfill it” (Col. 4:16)?

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