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## Messianic Jew Forms a Bond At Southeastern

By [Robin Williams Adams](#)

The Ledger

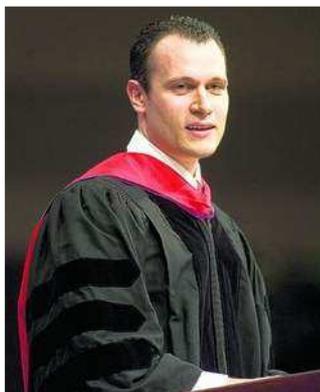
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LAKELAND | Calev Myers battles discrimination against a religious minority in Israel that most people in the United States don't know exists.

Myers belongs to a group of believers who are Jewish and proud of their heritage, but who consider Jesus the Messiah.

That makes some Jewish people here and abroad uncomfortable, even angry, and in Israel has led to confrontations.

Myers, in the forefront of key legal battles for the rights of Messianic Jews, was commencement speaker Saturday for Southeastern University.



DAVID MILLS | THE LEDGER  
CALEV MYERS gives the address to 342 graduating seniors Saturday during Southeastern University's Spring Commencement in Lakeland.

"I was not intending to be the Messianic Jewish Robin Hood ... but God had other plans," he told about 340 students, their families and friends during the ceremony at Church Without Walls in Lakeland.

Those plans, he said, led him into college, then law school, after spending several years working with his hands as a goldsmith and carpenter.

He developed an awareness of social injustice that prompted him to found, and serve as chief counsel of, The Jerusalem Institute of Justice, and has put him before Israel's highest court two times.

Earlier this month, he won a case brought on behalf of 12 Messianic Jews who had been unable to get the citizenship promised Jews born elsewhere who return to Israel to live.

The country's "Law of Return" says people who are born Jewish can come to Israel from any other country and receive citizenship.

Exactly who is a Jew, however, is "at the heart of the debate of the Jewish world," Myers said.

Someone born of a Jewish mother is a Jew, according to the law.

The High Court of Justice said April 16, in a precedent-setting ruling, that being a Messianic Jew can't prevent obtaining Israeli citizenship if the Jewish descent is on the father's side.

Most of the 12 represented in that case had received letters saying they committed "missionary activity," which some government officials said was against the interests of the state and the Jewish people.

In a case 15 years ago, the high court said Messianic Jews had converted and weren't Jewish, according to The Jerusalem Post.

Asked Friday what he means by saying he is a Messianic Jew, the American-born Israeli lawyer said he is "saying that I am biologically from a Jewish background. I identify with the Jewish people. I celebrate the Jewish holidays. I see myself as an integral part of the Jewish culture, but I believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah based on Jewish Scriptures."



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Myers, 34, was in Lakeland as document bearer as well as speaker. He brought with him the lease Southeastern President Mark Rutland signed Friday for a building the university will use for study in Jerusalem.

Rutland, introducing Myers, praised his legal work on discrimination cases.

Myers focused more on the need he sees for further action to spread knowledge of Jesus. Southeastern graduates can help Israeli believers in Jesus by educating their congregations, praying for Israel and aligning themselves with Messianic Jewish congregations.

Rutland, responding, told Southeastern students who plan to study in Jerusalem they will join Jerusalem Institute of Justice volunteers who pick up trash in Jerusalem's poorest neighborhoods to build a platform of caring. They also may visit Myers' congregation.

"We are delighted to enter into a new and loving relationship with this congregation," Rutland said.

Messianic Jews are blamed for many things in Israel, Myers said, but "favor is coming on the Jewish believers in Israel today."

He urged Jewish believers from around the world to relocate to Israel, as his family did when he was 18.

"We believe the day is coming, friends, when Jesus once again will reveal himself to Israel, to the Jewish people," he said.

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