



# MISHKAN

■ A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE ■ *Issue 58/ 2009*

***Messianic Jews  
in Germany***



# MISHKAN

**A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People**

ISSUE 58 / 2009

**General Editor: Kai Kjær-Hansen**

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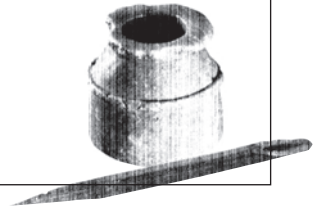
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**Mishkan** is the Hebrew word for *tabernacle* or *dwelling place* (John 1:14).

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

# Who Would Have Believed It?

By Kai Kjær-Hansen



In 1885, the Jew Ben Israel Jakob Haisraeli, alias Jakob Wechsler, from Kishinev, translated two of Joseph Rabinowitz' sermons from Yiddish into Hebrew. In the preface Wechsler wrote, "A few months ago who would have believed that the Messianic movement which is emerging among us would have assumed larger dimensions from day to day?" Wechsler adds that some may say, "This movement has no viability, it will soon be blown out and extinguished."

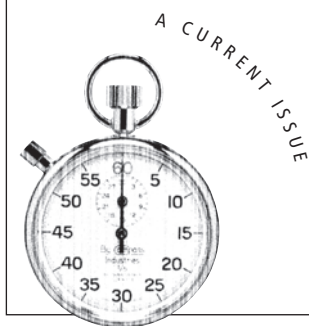
Editing this issue of *Mishkan*, which focuses on the Messianic movement in Germany today, I recall Jakob Wechsler's words. There are several similarities between the past and the present.

After the Holocaust, who would have believed that Jews would once again become an important minority in Germany – today the third largest Jewish population in Western Europe?

And who would have believed that once again there would be groups of Jesus-believing Jews in Germany? The fact that they are few compared to the Jewish population in Germany as such is not important in this context. They are there – and in such an emphatic way that it is possible to write a doctoral dissertation about Messianic Jews in Germany. Who would have believed that following the Holocaust?

German academic Stefanie Pfister did this in 2008, with a dissertation about Messianic Jews in Germany. She is presenting her research in this issue of *Mishkan*, followed by articles by people who are involved in Jewish evangelism in Germany today, namely Avi Snyder and Vladimir Pikman.

And as usual, this issue includes other articles about Messianic theology and history.



## Congratulations to a Two-hundred-year-old

By Kai Kjær-Hansen

What could be more “current” here at the beginning of 2009 than to congratulate CMJ on its bicentenary? CMJ stands for “The Church’s Ministry among Jewish People.” The society was founded on February 15, 1809, under the name “The London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews,” popularly called the “London Jews Society” (LJS).

There is cause for congratulations – and that for several reasons:

First, because it was the first Jewish mission society to be founded in modern times.

Second, because the establishment of LJS inspired the establishment of a number of similar Jewish mission societies in continental Europe over the following decades.

Third, because over these 200 years the gospel of Jesus has been proclaimed to Jews in many places, not just in Britain and Ireland, not just in continental Europe – west as well as east, Russia included – nor even just in Palestine/Israel, but also, for example, in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Abyssinia/Ethiopia, Argentina, the United States, South Africa, and Australia.

Fourth, and not least, because CMJ stands by its commitment to share the gospel with Jews. This is no matter of course. It goes without saying that there have been ups and downs for LJS/CMJ. Has any society been without them? Even societies with a far shorter history have experienced that! But a number of the Jewish mission societies which came into being in the nineteenth century thanks to inspiration from LJS, societies which also stood by the commitment to evangelize among Jews after the Holocaust, have now reformulated their former vision, and some even dissociate themselves from mission among Jewish people.

From the very beginning the London Jews Society had to face allegations that they were “influenced by foolish and Utopian expectations,” as is noted in the Second Report from 1810. The Committee countered such allegations in the following way:

They [the Committee] wish to distinguish between the restoration of Israel to their own country, and the conversion of Israel to Christianity. If nothing peculiar appeared in the aspect of the times – if neither

Jews nor Christians believed the future restoration of Israel – if no exposition of prophecy had awakened attention or excited expectation in men's mind – if it were possible to place things as they stood many centuries ago – still your Committee would urge the importance and propriety of establishing a Jewish Mission. They cannot conceive any just reason why the Jews should be wholly neglected, and no means employed for their conversion.

The issue here is very clear, even if most of those who today are involved in missions to the Jews would use a different terminology: The Jews must not be neglected. They also need Jesus for salvation. Therefore, the society wants to work for the salvation of Israel.

What about today?

Robin Aldridge, Chairman of CMJ International and CEO of CMJ U.K., gives a clear answer to that question at the end of Kelvin Crombie's recent book, *Restoring Israel: 200 Years of the CMJ Story* (2008) – which will be reviewed in the next issue of *Mishkan*. Aldridge writes:

... the work of CMJ continues true to the original vision of its forefathers proclaiming that there is no way to salvation and eternal life except through the spilled blood of Jesus the Jewish Messiah and Saviour of the world. Jew and Gentile have the same need, same hope and the same Lord. The sensitive sharing of the gospel with the Jewish people remains central and will continue to be central to the future. As more Jewish people make *aliyah* to Israel the work of CMJ will be increasingly focused on Israel. But wherever CMJ is at work it remains the ministry among Jewish people. We look forward with confidence in God to the future. Those of us who now hold the baton are determined to hand it on to the next generation, looking forward to the day "all Israel will be saved" and Jesus can return to claim His bride, Jew and Gentile one in Him.

In the bicentenary for its foundation, CMJ defined its mission succinctly on its homepage:

To encourage Jewish people to come to faith in Yeshua (Jesus) as their Messiah, to support them in serving him as Lord in the light of God's purpose for them, and to equip the church to be involved in this mission.

*Mazal tov!*





# The Present Messianic Jewish Movement in Germany\*

by **Stefanie Pfister**

That Messianic Jews have organized themselves worldwide is known. It is mostly still unknown that since 1995, they have organized as a movement in Germany. They meet in just 40 congregations and groups with about 1,000 regular visitors, so that Hans Hermann Henrix speaks in 2007 of a "surprising reality of current Messianic Judaism."<sup>1</sup>

Besides a short historical overview, I would like to show the specific features of Messianic Judaism in Germany, its origin, articles of faith, local forms, and areas of service.

## Historical Overview

The first Jewish Christians in Jerusalem thought that Jesus was the promised Messiah of Israel. They did this as a Jewish group, and lived in a Jewish religious context. With the admission of Gentile Christians there originated a mixed congregation. Different factors, like the admission of the (uncircumcised) Gentile Christians, new religious rites, the distance of the Jewish Christians from the Jewish struggles for freedom, etc., led to separation between the Jewish Christians and the Jewish community. Because the Gentile Christian church considered itself from the early second century on as the true Israel on account of replacement theology, it did not hold on to Jewish Christian members or their Jewish inheritance. This led to the fact that Jewish Christians "disappeared" as a distinct group. Still, until the fifth century, they left in some churches religious "tracks," such as customs or symbols. During the later centuries, the Gentile Christian church forced Jews to be baptized, and Jews suffered under pursuit and pogroms, and therefore there was no longer a Jewish Christian movement.

Only the Puritans and the Pietists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were interested in Judaism and a dialogue with Jews. The revivalist movements ("Great Awakenings") of the nineteenth century animated

\* A similar article appears in shorter form: Stefanie Pfister, "Messianische Juden in Deutschland. Ein Überblick über die gegenwärtige messianisch-jüdische Bewegung in Deutschland," *Materialdienst* 2/09 (2009).

<sup>1</sup> Hans Hermann Henrix, *Schweigen im Angesicht Israels? Zum Ort des Jüdischen in der ökumenischen Theologie* (Salzburger Ringvorlesung, Salzburg, 2007).



the Pentecostal, charismatic, and evangelical movements. The revivalist movements promoted Jewish missionary work, and that is why, for the first time in centuries, many Jews voluntarily accepted faith in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. Most remained, however, in the existing churches. A few Jewish Christian groups had only a short duration. Only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were Jews who believed in Jesus Christ called "Hebrew Christians" and organized themselves in congregations. The most important alliances were, for example, the Hebrew Christian Union (HCU) in 1865, the Hebrew Christian Alliance of America (HCAA) in 1915, and in particular, the International Hebrew Christian Alliance (IHCA) in 1925.

Within the Hebrew Christian movement, single groups which integrated many Jewish elements into their services met at the beginning of the 1970s. Then, stimulated by the American evangelical and charismatic movements and a new consciousness of Jewish identity, the movement of Messianic Jews originated in 1975, at a Hebrew Christian conference in America. From then on, the alliances were called Messianic Jewish alliances.<sup>2</sup>

## Messianic Jews Worldwide

Meanwhile, Messianic Judaism has spread worldwide in a very divergent movement, estimated to include from 50,000 to 332,000 Messianic Jews in 165–400 congregations.<sup>3</sup> The largest number of Messianic Jews is in the United States, estimated at 40,000 to 60,000.<sup>4</sup>

The liturgical forms, especially in American Messianic congregations, contain many Jewish elements, although about half the visitors are non-Jews.<sup>5</sup>

For Israel, Bodil Skjøtt and Kai Kjær-Hansen give a total number of just 5,000 Messianic Jews in 1999. Here, the Messianic community is marked by an extraordinary linguistic and cultural variety.<sup>6</sup>

The Messianic Jewish movement in the former Soviet Union (CIS) is still very young, because it originated from the work of different missionary organizations after the breakdown of communism. The theology of the



2 Detailed historical backgrounds in David Rausch, *Messianic Judaism: Its History, Theology, and Polity* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982); Robert I. Winer, *The Calling: The History of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America 1915–1990* (Wynnewood, PA: Messianic Jewish Alliance of America, 1990); Robert I. Winer, "The Messianic Jewish Alliance of America 1901–1939," *Mishkan* 15 (1991): 48–56; Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrew Christianity: Its Theology, History and Philosophy* (Tustin: Ariel Ministries Press, 1992); Carol Harris-Shapiro, *Messianic Judaism: A Rabbi's Journey through Religious Change in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999); Kai Kjær-Hansen and Bodil Skjøtt, ed., "Facts & Myths about the Messianic Congregations in Israel," *Mishkan* 30/31 (1999); Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism* (New York: Continuum Press, 2000).

3 The different estimates are summarized in Stefanie Pfister, *Messianische Juden. Eine historische und religionssoziologische Untersuchung* (Münster: LIT-Verlag, 2008), 93.

4 Vgl. Tuvya Zaretsky, *Das Evangelium – auch für Juden. Impulse aus der messianischen Bewegung* (Basel/Gießen: Brunnen-Verlag, 2006), 41.

5 See Pfister, *Messianische Juden*, 78.

6 See Kjær-Hansen and Skjøtt, 18, 70, 72.

congregations in Israel, the USA, and the CIS is evangelical.<sup>7</sup>

The Second World War led to a complete demolition of the Jewish Christian movement in Germany, so that there were no Hebrew Christians or Messianic Jews here until the middle of the 1990s.

## The Situation of Jews in Germany after the Second World War

The Jews in Germany were a community of survivors of the Holocaust, and the Jewish congregations were viewed as being temporary.<sup>8</sup> During the following years, their memberships were marked by strong fluctuations. On the one hand, seven times as many Jews died as were born; in addition, about 400 Jews emigrated from Germany, and about 1,000 Jews immigrated to Germany yearly. At the end of the 1980s, congregational membership in West Germany was estimated at 27,000–28,000 in about 65 congregations.<sup>9</sup>

**Without the immigration of Russian Jews . . . there would have been neither a revival of Jewish congregations in Germany nor the development of an active Messianic Jewish movement.**

Without the immigration of Russian Jews from the former Soviet Union, there would have been neither a revival of Jewish congregations in Germany nor the development of an active Messianic Jewish movement. The German Bundestag underlines the importance of the immigration of Jews. It had a historical-moral dimension: "The immigration of the emigrants and the Russian Jews is formed by the historical German responsibility. This historical-ethical dimension varies substantially in the acceptance of both groups compared to other forms of immigration."<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, the Prime Minister's conference decided in Bonn on September 1, 1991, that people who are of Jewish nationality ("according to the

7 See Kai Kjær-Hansen and Ole Chr. M. Kvarme, *Messianische Juden. Judenchristen in Israel* (Erlangen: Verlag der Ev. Luth. Mission, 1983); Kjær-Hansen and Skjøtt; Cohn-Sherbok; summarized in Pfister, *Messianische Juden*, 76–97.

8 See Julius Hans Schoeps, Willi Jasper, and Bernhard Vogt, *Ein neues Judentum in Deutschland. Fremd- und Eigenbilder der russisch-jüdischen Einwanderer. Neue Beiträge zur Geistesgeschichte* (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1999), 97; Monika Richarz, "Juden in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik seit 1945," in *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland seit 1945*, ed. Micha Brumlik (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1988), 16.

9 See Michael Brenner, *Nach dem Holocaust. Juden in Deutschland 1945–1950* (München: Beck, 1995); Julius Hans Schoeps, Willi Jasper, and Bernhard Vogt, *Russische Juden in Deutschland. Integration und Selbstbehauptung in einem fremden Land* (Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1996), 17; Rainer Hess and Jarden Kranz, *Jüdische Existenz in Europa heute. Probleme des Wandels der jüdischen Gemeinden in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland infolge der Zuwanderung russischer Juden nach 1989* (Berlin: Logos, 2000), 98–99. Summarized in Pfister, *Messianische Juden*, 100.

10 Paul Harris, "Russische Juden und Aussiedler. Integrationspolitik und lokale Verantwortung," in *Aussiedler. Deutsche Einwanderer aus Osteuropa*, ed. Klaus J. Bade and Jochen Oltmer (Osnabrück: Universitätsverlag Rasch, 1999), 263.

governmental, civil status certificates of Jewish nationality issued before 1990, and in line with the previous Soviet instructions"<sup>11</sup>) or descended from at least one Jewish parent are (along with members of their family) within the scope of the refugee law (HumHAG) and can attain permanent residence.<sup>12</sup> According to the Federal Offices for Migration and Refugees, a total of 198,189 Jewish immigrants who descended from at least one Jewish parent (along with their family members) immigrated between 1993 and 2006 (with admission permits from 1991 and 1992: at most 226,651 Jewish immigrants).<sup>13</sup>

In the Soviet Union, "Jewish" was a valid nationality (Russ. *nationalnost*), and one was registered in Soviet passports as *Jewrej* (Jew) beside the Soviet citizenship. Either the father or the mother could transmit Jewish identity, and the children could take the other parent's nationality after turning sixteen. Even a grandparent's share could serve for the derivation of Jewish descent.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, applicants presented their personal documents in which patrilineal or matrilineal descent was documented for the German admission authorities.<sup>15</sup>

However, Jewish congregations in Germany do not recognize patrilineal descent of Jewish identity, because according to the traditional halakhic definition, only one who was born to a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism is a Jew. Congregational membership is thereby complicated for many immigrants. In addition, linguistic and cultural differences, as well as the religious unawareness of the immigrants, often lead to integration difficulties in the Jewish congregations.<sup>16</sup> Till the end of 2006, only half of the immigrants have become members in a Jewish congregation (99,671 of a total of 107,794 members).<sup>17</sup>

11 Sonja Haug, *Soziodemographische Merkmale, Berufsstruktur und Verwandtschaftsnetzwerke jüdischer Zuwanderer. Working Papers 8 der Forschungsgruppe des Bundesamtes* (Nürnberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2007), 7.

12 The new immigration law which became effective in 2005 tightens the restrictions: now immigrants must produce proof of being in a Jewish congregation in the federal territory before being admitted.

13 See Bundesministerium des Innern and Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, ed., "Jüdische Zuwanderer aus der ehemaligen Sowjetunion," *Migrationsbericht des Bundesamtes für Migration und Flüchtlinge* (2007): 83–87.

14 Hess and Kranz, 41, 114.

15 However, there were also several documents in which the Jewish affiliation was registered without official confirmation (e.g., before application position) again, after it had been erased consciously in the Soviet Union in order to escape discriminations. Those persecuted for purely political reasons lacked original documents to be able to make their identity plausible. See Franziska Becker and Karen Körber, "Juden, Russen, Flüchtlinge. Die jüdisch-russische Einwanderung nach Deutschland und ihre Repräsentation in den Medien," in *Das Flüstern eines leisen Wehens, Beiträge zu Kultur und Lebenswelt europäischer Juden*, ed. Freddy Raphaël (Konstanz: UVK, 2001), 435; Karen Körber, *Juden, Russen, Emigranten. Identitätskonflikte jüdischer Einwanderer in einer ostdeutschen Stadt* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag GmbH, 2005), 17.

16 See Körber, *Juden, Russen, Emigranten*; Judith Kessler, "Jüdische Migranten aus der ehemaligen Sowjetunion seit 1990," <http://www.berlin-judentum.de/gemeinde/migration.html>, article 4.2.2 [accessed December 30, 2008].

17 See Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland, ed., *Mitgliederstatistik der jüdischen Gemeinden und Landesverbände in Deutschland für das Jahr 2007, Auszug* (2008): 2.



## Messianic Jews in Germany

A specific feature in Germany is the relation between Jews and Christians, which is marked by Christian-Jewish dialogue. After the Second World War, the second Vatican council, the Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands (EKD), and other churches, among others, acknowledged responsibility in the Holocaust, denounced anti-Semitism, and underlined with a look at Romans 9–11, the remaining election of Israel. Therefore, for historical and theological reasons, most churches and Jewish communities reject mission to the Jews.<sup>18</sup>

However, against this stand many evangelical organizations like Evangeliumsdiens für Israel (EDI, founded in 1971), Arbeitsgemeinschaft für das messianische Zeugnis an Israel (AMZI, in Germany since 1985), and Beit Sar Shalom Evangeliumsdiens (BSSE, founded in 1996), a German branch of Chosen People Ministries (CPM), which work in evangelism among Jews.

Though evangelical Christians and Jesus believing Jews support the consensus of Christian-Jewish dialogue (refusal of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism, remaining election of Israel, etc.), they provide the remaining election of Israel with another theological meaning: Evangelical believers underline that God's alliance with Israel continues, therefore "all Israel" can be saved at the return of Jesus when they accept him as Messiah. That is why evangelical believers do not denounce Jewish mission. Besides, they will not deny the order of Jesus to announce the Christian faith to all people.<sup>19</sup>

**Evangelical believers do not denounce Jewish mission. Besides, they will not deny the order of Jesus to announce the Christian faith to all people.**

Some Messianic Jews, who have established Messianic congregations in Germany, were converted in the beginning of the 1990s by their contact with evangelical believers in the Soviet Union. Sixteen of the thirty-two Messianic Jewish leaders of congregations in Germany interviewed said they came to faith in Jesus as the Messiah between 1990 and 2000 in the former Soviet Union; others converted after entering Germany.

Some of these pioneers of the Messianic Jewish movement (A. Uschomirski, B. Galinker, A. Ignatenko, V. Pikman, and J. Schechtmann) attended the same congregation, Beit El Gibor, in Kiev, but not at the same time. In a conference in Mosbach, Germany (1995), they became partially acquainted for the first time, shared their experiences, and planned evangelism in different German towns.

The contacts of these first Messianic Jews are closest with evangelical organizations like BSSE, EDI, AMZI, etc. Many missionary activities originated

18 See statements and documents in Rolf Rendtorff and Hans Hermann Henrix, ed., *Die Kirchen und das Judentum. Dokumente von 1945–1985, Bd. 1.*, 2nd ed. (Paderborn/München: Verlag Bonifatius-Druckerei/Chr. Kaiser, 1989); Hans Hermann Henrix and Wolfgang Kraus, ed., *Die Kirchen und das Judentum. Dokumente von 1986–2000, Bd. 2* (Paderborn: Verlag Bonifatius, 2001).

19 See Zaretsky, 19–30.

in Berlin, and one of the pioneers, V. Pikman, founded the first Messianic Jewish congregation in Germany, Beit Shomer Israel ("House of the Keeper of Israel"), at a Jewish Shavuot party in Berlin.

Other congregations originated in Düsseldorf (1996), Hamburg (1996), Stuttgart (1996), Mülheim/Ruhr (1998), a second congregation in Berlin (1998), Hannover (1999), Munich (2000), Heidelberg (2000), a second and third congregation in Stuttgart (2000, 2001), Bremen (2000/2001), Aachen (2001), Chemnitz (2001), Koblenz (2001), Augsburg (2002), Wuppertal (2003), etc. At this time there are 20 congregations and 19 Messianic Jewish groups in Germany. In total, 29 congregations and groups are, at the time of the research, under Jewish management. The theological background or local origin of the leaders is largely evangelical. Nine leaders have received an evangelical theological education, and two other leaders finished accredited university studies at the time of the research.

The Messianic Jewish congregations are led by monarchic structures, that is, a leader takes over the main functions of the management and "represents (until the establishment of a council of elders) the management of the congregation and looks after the spiritual condition of the members of the congregation."<sup>20</sup> At the time of the research there is only one woman in a leadership position, in Chemnitz.

The membership and visitors figures in the congregations are rather low. At the time of the research by Pfister (2004–2005),<sup>21</sup> there were 914–1042 members and regular visitors in the congregations (Messianic Jews and non-Jews); of these about 577–687 are Messianic Jews (55%–75%). There are 59% women in the case study and 41% men.

The percentage of non-Jewish visitors in the different congregations is between 25% and 45%. Almost one-third are German-born (27%), over one-third are immigrant Russian non-Jews (38%), and a little less than one-third are "ethnic German immigrants" (28%).

An extremely homogeneous membership structure is noteworthy. Thus 95% of the interviewed Messianic Jews entered Germany from the former Soviet Union. And also the time of their conversion, which is called by them "decision for the faith/acceptance of faith in Yeshua the Messiah," occurred for the majority (82%) in the years 1991 to 2005.<sup>22</sup> Most Messianic Jews (59%) joined a Messianic Jewish congregation between 2001 and

20 Anatoli Uschomirski, et al, *Satzung der Gemeinde Schma Israel. Kurzfassung* (Stuttgart), translation from the Russian by A. Dyskine (November 28, 1998), reworks from Hartmut Renz (December 23, 1998), printed in Pfister, *Messianische Juden*, 397.

21 The empiric investigation in 2004–2005 enclosed 14 participant observations in 11 different congregations/groups, 211 valid questionnaires from 16 different congregations and groups, and 3 analyzed (from 12 controlled) "Narrative Konversionserzählungen" ("narrative conversion stories"). There are 36 conducted expert's interviews with local leaders and people responsible in the movement, in Pfister, *Messianische Juden*, 163–213.

22 A total of 18.3% of the Messianic Jews questioned stated that they converted before 1990; 23.8% in 1991–1995; 34.4% in 1996–2000; and 23.8% during 2001–2005 (Pfister, *Messianische Juden*, 232–33).



2005, and since 2001, more non-Jews than Jews have joined the congregations.<sup>23</sup>

### **Messianic-Jewish Articles of Faith<sup>24</sup>**

In March 1998, a three-day Messianic Jewish conference with about 100 participants took place in Pracht/Westerwald; it was organized by EDI and BSSE. The participants and local leaders Pikman, Swiderski, Uschomirksi, and Braker formulated and confessed the first Messianic Jewish articles of faith, which are recognized by most present congregations.

Messianic Jews view the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament as an inseparable unit, which God inspired verbally and which is, therefore, the highest authority for life and action. They confess the Trinitarian faith that Yeshua is the promised Messiah of Israel and true God, and his soteriological function.

Nevertheless, if these Messianic Jewish articles are reminiscent of evangelical Christian religious faith, note that Messianic Jews emphasize along with their affiliation to the congregation from the nations, their continuing Jewish identity: "Jews who believe in Jesus continue to be Israel, the chosen people of God."<sup>25</sup> They think highly of "biblical-Jewish heritage," confess their support of Zionism, and confess their "commitment to share the truth of Yeshua to the Jew first and to all people."<sup>26</sup>

### **Messianic-Jewish Services and Congregational Life**

The Hebrew names of the congregations draw attention: Shma Israel ("Hear O Israel") in Stuttgart, Bnei ha'Or ("Sons of the Light") in Munich, Beit Chesed ("House of Mercy") in Dusseldorf, Adon Yeshua ("Lord Jesus") in Stuttgart-Feuerbach, Kalat Yeshua ("Bride of Jesus") in Köln, and Adat Adonai ("Congregation of Adonai") in Heidelberg, to name only some.

At Messianic Jewish services, which take place mostly on Sabbath and in Russian, many Jewish symbols are seen, like a menorah, an Israeli flag, a shofar, a kippah, and a tallit, and the liturgy is very Jewish.<sup>27</sup> Participants light Sabbath candles, recite the Shema (mostly in shortened form), sing Hebrew songs, and hold the Sabbath Kiddush or Havdalah ceremony. A minister reads from the Torah, and the local leader speaks the priestly blessing and the blessing over the children: "May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh," or, "May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah." Some congregations recite prayers from the Siddur, and the exclamation *Amen. Baruch atta* ("Amen. Blessed are you") often resounds at

23 Ibid., 232–35.

24 Evangeliumsdienst für Israel, ed., "Eine messianische Gemeinde stellt sich vor, 'Schma Israel,'" (Leinfelden-Echterdingen, 2000), also in Pfister, *Messianische Juden*, 380–81.

25 Ibid., article 8.

26 Ibid., article 13.

27 Up to now only two congregations have a *Sefer Torah* (Hannover and Berlin).

the end of the service. After the service all participants have a common meal lasting one or two hours.

However, many Jewish rituals are also absent (e.g., Amida, Kaddish, Adon Olam, the prayer Aleynu), or are interpreted "Messianic-Jewishly": In lighting the Sabbath candles, a reference is made to Yeshua as the light of the world and lord of the Sabbath. Thus is the blessing: "Blessed are you, our eternal God, King of the world, who has healed us through the belief in Yeshua the Messiah, the light of the world, in whose name we light the Shabbat candles." The recitation of the Shema also covers faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. The interpretation of Torah always refers to the New Testament.

But there are also original symbols, formulations, or rituals: Often the inserted short confession "Yeshua haMashiach" is found in prayers, songs, and interpretations. The lighted menorah, as a symbol of Messianic hope, is found in many congregations. Also the symbol of the Star of David connected with a menorah and a fish exists in the congregations, expressing the wish for unity of Jewish and non-Jewish believers as it was in the early church.

Characteristics common to a Christian evangelical service are the open, direct, often-simplified sermon form; the freely-formulated, spontaneous prayers; praise songs with catchy melodies, short texts, and many repetitions; personal contacts before and after the service; and active participation in the services by parishioners. Christian religious content – such as faith in the Trinity, faith in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, and his soteriological function – predominates in the religious statements of the rituals, songs, prayers, and Bible interpretations.

All congregations take Jewish life-cycle events seriously, and conduct many ceremonies like weddings, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, etc., according to Jewish tradition.

The celebration of the Passover is especially interesting. Messianic Jews follow a Jewish Passover Haggadah and include many biblical-Jewish thoughts like sacrifice and freedom, which are connected with Messianic Jewish faith: Jesus is seen as the Passover lamb who can release the people from sin, and the afikoman, a broken matzah which is hidden and then found again later, is here a reference to Jesus' death on the cross (division), his burial (hiding), and his resurrection (found again). Many congregations hold communion with the taking of the afikoman and the third cup of Passover wine, and indicate that Jesus spoke the suitable installation words during the Passover. As they integrate communion into Passover, Messianic Jews implicitly connect the traditional Jewish celebration with the new covenant. By this interpretation of the Jewish celebration, they take elements of rabbinical Judaism (the Haggadah), maintain biblical-Jewish concepts (sacrifice, release), and also continue, at the same time, elements of the Jewish Chris-

**As they integrate communion into Passover, Messianic Jews implicitly connect the traditional Jewish celebration with the new covenant.**





tian movement ("Herrenmahl," new covenant).

All together, there are three different local forms which can be distinguished in particular in the services: 1) In some congregations, the trend is toward more Christian content (Lord's Prayer, communion) and symbols (cross), and less Jewish rituals and symbols. 2) At most congregations, many symbols from Judaism are taken, interpreted Messianic-Jewishly, and new liturgical expressions, prayers, etc. are found. 3) Some other congregations try to express their Jewish identity even more. Here prayers from the *Siddur* are used, the *Shema* is recited in full, other Jewish liturgical elements are incorporated, and many members show their Jewish identity by carrying a kippah or tallit.

### Conversion to the Messianic-Jewish Faith

The conversion event holds a high value for Messianic Jews. Thus they can report in detail about their "decision." Of the Messianic Jews interviewed, 81.9% converted between 1991 and 2005; 23.8% between 1991 and 1995; 34.3% between 1996 and 2000; and 23.8% between 2000 and 2005. About half of the interviewees (51.7% in total) converted while still in the former Soviet Union.

The converts describe communism, and the atheism following from it, as an everyday component of their life before their conversion, as with 48-year-old Vladimir from the Ukraine:

Well, this is not hard to say, I am . . . I am born in the former Soviet Union and the country was very, how do you say, very atheistic. . . . The Bible was forbidden and also the Word of God was forbidden and the believers were . . . as I said before, the enemies of the people. This term and everything that was connected to the term God, was forbidden. And we were born and grew up in a normal atheistic family, and at around age 30 I asked myself, "Why do I live? Why do I even live?"

And then the so-called Perestroika began and I . . . understood, that communism is not the right road for a human.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, they lacked a consciousness of Jewish identity before conversion. The conversion becomes a function of the economic situation and a new life phase, picked out as a central theme of their entry to Germany. Every conversion event remains individual. However, the consensus is a total of one "passive-active-passive-active conversion scheme": The potential converts describe a "God experience" experienced passively, or a "knowledge of the existence of God," long before their conversion. They report that they considered themselves religious searchers looking actively for God, reading the Bible or visiting services. Afterward, everyone describes a

28 Excerpt from narrative interview 10, p. 1, line 11–21, controlled on June 13, 2008, in Pfister, *Messianische Juden*, 106.



passive “experience” which triggered the conversion (intervention of God, healing, sudden knowledge, an unusual event), and an active decision (prayer, confession) which concluded it.

Other factors in conversion were friends or other persons who believe in the Messiah Jesus. Of the Messianic Jews interviewed, 34.5% said that a non-Jew showed them the faith; 38% stated that they were accompanied by another Messianic Jew; 18.2% said they found the faith without human mediation; and 37.6% stated that a heavy stroke of fate or a tragic life change was responsible for their conversion. In total, 72.5% had been “led” or accompanied to conversion by another Jesus believer.

Although 85% of the Messianic Jews interviewed for the empiric study agreed that their Jewish origins had become “more important” after conversion, the converts reported difficulties in dealing with their Jewish identity. Problems originate if, on account of patrilineal descent, they cannot join themselves unambiguously to the Jewish people, or if their faith in Messiah Jesus cannot be integrated with their Jewish identity. Thus three different “types” of Messianic Jews reveal themselves here:

Type A: Here the Jewish identity is subordinated, has no meaning, and the converts consider themselves “Christians” rather than Jews. An example is Pawel (28 years), who defines himself as patrilineally Jewish:

For me this is difficult – according to Jewish law, I am not a Jew. Because my mother is a Russian, even worse: She is half Russian and half Kazakh. And my father is a Jew according to Jewish law. . . . The Jewish people in Germany take me as Jewish, they accept me, but still I am different. . . . That – the question of my identity – is a difficult question for me personally. . . . Where I come from it was a sign in the passport, because both the citizenship and the nationality were mentioned in the passport. Of course being Jewish was a nationality.<sup>29</sup>

He is recognized within the Messianic Jewish congregations as a Jew, and also feels his Jewish descent: “That is quite strong – the arch-generation me.”<sup>30</sup> Still, he calls himself unambiguously a Christian: “because I believe in God – and I believe that Yeshua was the Messiah.”<sup>31</sup>

Type B: The Messianic Jew feels connected by his new faith to the congregation from the nations. On the other hand, the convert identifies with the people of Israel, because he considers himself a physical descendant of Abraham and because for him faith in Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, absolutely belongs to

**The Messianic Jewish congregation holds the optimum possibility for these converts to maintain their Jewish identity further.**

29 Excerpt from narrative interview 7, pp. 13–14, controlled on June 13, 2008, in Pfister, *Messianische Juden*, 106.

30 Ibid., narrative interview 7, pp. 15–16.

31 Ibid., narrative interview 7, pp. 29–30.



the Jewish chosen people. The Messianic Jewish congregation holds the optimum possibility for these converts to maintain their Jewish identity further. The convert considers himself and other Messianic Jews, according to Romans 9 and 11, the present "remnant" of Israel. However, also for the Jew who does not believe in Jesus, a conversion is conceded on account of Israel's election with the return of Jesus.

Type C: The third type devote themselves increasingly to Jewish identity. They use Jewish prayer forms, learn Hebrew, study the Torah thoroughly, and read prayers from the Siddur. A 72-year-old doctor from St. Petersburg, Galja describes her initial prayer as "awkard," "naïve," and "childish." These have been solely easy invocations. But as she learned the Siddur, she has included "doxologies/the praise of God" and "Prayers for the People" in her personal prayer. She says that thereby her prayers would get "somehow sorted" and "more precise with a greater depth."<sup>32</sup>

This type of education is also reflected in people's self-descriptions. Of the interviewed persons, 10.6% call themselves "Christians," and 11.4% "Hebrew Christians" (type A). The Jewish labels are clearly in the majority, with "Messianic Jew" (42.3%) or "Jesus-religious Jew" (24.4%) used by types B and C.

Baptism belongs indispensably with conversion here. After conversion, 79.4% of the interviewees were baptized into the Messianic Jewish confession, but they emphasize no conversion to the Christian faith. Nevertheless, the step of baptism is not dependent on an emotional decision and implies no other "revelation." But baptism is a symbol of the "God sonship" and an "avowed sign for both the invisible and the visible world." The interview partners pick out as a central theme that something new begins, and that they would like to become a part of the community of people believing in Jesus and confess this publicly. Therefore, baptism can be also called the "crown" of the religious life.

## Concluding Remarks

The churches in Germany have offered until now few connecting factors for Messianic Jews. One is quiet about the new congregations or looks at them as a religious fringe group. Often, this happens because one would not want to hinder Jewish-Christian dialogue, which holds to a consensus that rejects Jewish mission.

In the evangelical congregations, there are controversial voices. Opponents of the present Messianic Jewish movement accuse Messianic Jews of overemphasizing their Jewish identity. Within the Jewish community, recognition is even more difficult; at the moment, even the pluralistic model which Cohn-Sherbok suggests for America<sup>33</sup> seems to me unrealistic for Germany.

Messianic Jews would like to be noticed. With their consciousness of Jew-

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 342.

<sup>33</sup> Cohn-Sherbok, 212.

ish identity, evangelical Christian religious content, and independent Messianic Jewish rituals, the movement is extremely dynamic and active, and the visitors' figures are growing steadily.

For Germany, the question is whether Messianic Jews should be "recognized" as part of the evangelical sphere or another sphere. Messianic Jews have all aspects of individual confession and an organized movement (congregations, organized national and international structures, and distinctive vitality). Messianic Jews have combined elements of the Christian and Jewish systems, so that new liturgical elements, celebrations, and ceremonies have emerged. In addition, they have also developed their own symbols, Messianic Jewish rituals, interpretations, and liturgical elements. A religious confession with which visitors can agree on account of their own experience has also originated.

The Christian-Jewish dialogue should not ignore the fact that an independent religious movement, which also has international contacts, has developed in between Judaism and Christianity. Even if Messianic Jews will not stop their evangelism efforts on account of their confession, they are ready for conversation, and for them cooperation with churches and Jewish congregations is important. Therefore, it would be a pity if Messianic Jews are excluded from clerical and Jewish conversations. Meanwhile, Messianic Judaism is a religious movement with a typically Messianic Jewish repertoire, though with few conformities to the evangelical Christians and the Jews, and will develop even without recognition.

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OVERVIEW OF CONGREGATIONS IN GERMANY (2005)

MISSION ORGANIZAION	CONGREGATION	FOUNDED	VISITORS	MEMBERS	MESSIANIC JEWS
<b>BSSE e.V.</b>					
<i>CONGREGATIONS</i>					
Berlin	Beit Shomer	1995	approx. 100	40	ca. 80
Düsseldorf	Beit Chesed	1996	approx. 150	80	ca. 120
München	Bnei ha'Or	2000	20–25	no specification	18–22
Heidelberg	Adat Adonai	2000	20	12	at least 12
Aachen	mess. Gemeinde	2001	approx. 20	no specification	16
<i>GROUPS</i>					
Potsdam		2001/2002	approx. 15	no specification	at least 10
Erfurt	mess. Gruppe	2003	approx. 12–15	no specification	at least 7–8
Würzburg		2003	10	no specification	8
Bamberg	mess. Gruppe	2005	4–6	no specification	4–6
Osnabrück	mess. Gruppe	2005	10	no specification	no specification
<b>EDI</b>					
<i>CONGREGATIONS</i>					
Stuttg.-Vaihingen	Shma Israel	1996	35–40	23	at least 23–32
Hamburg	Adonai Zidkenu	1996	25–30	10	at least 10–20
new: Essen	Shalom	2006	?	?	?
Bonn (Swisttal-Heimerzheim)	Beit Rachamin	2005	approx. 15	no members' admission	no specification
<i>GROUPS</i>					
Karlsruhe	mess. Bibelkreis	1999	approx. 10	no members' admission	3–5
Chemnitz	mess. Gruppe	2001/2002	no specification	no members' admission	no specification
Schwerin	mess. Bibelgruppe	2004/2005	10–20	no members' admission	3–5

## OVERVIEW OF CONGREGATIONS IN GERMANY (2005)

MISSION ORGANIZATION	CONGREGATION	FOUNDED	VISITORS	MEMBERS	MESSIANIC JEWS
<b>AMZI</b>					
CONGREGATION					
Hannover	Shofar Chesed Yeshua	1999	25-30	no specification	25-30
<b>INDEPENDENT (NOT CHARISMATIC)</b>					
CONGREGATIONS					
St-Feuerbach	Adon Yeshua	2000	30	no specification	at least 27
Mülheim/Ruhr	Attend Shalom (ED) in Essen (since 2006)	1998	30-40	no specification	24-32
Berlin	Freude am Baum d. Lebens	1998	ca. 20	no specification	approx. 5
Bremen	mess. Gemeinde	2000/2001	no specification	no specification	no specification
Koblenz	mess. Versammlung	2001	40	12	20
Augsburg	Kinder Israels	2002	30-40	22	at least 20-36
Potsdam	messianische Gemeinde	2005	20-30	no specification	
<b>GROUPS</b>					
Frankfurt	Bibelkreis messianischer Juden	2001	10-15	no specification	6
Essen	Bible studie group	2001/2002	20-30	no members' admission	16-24
Wismar	messianische Gruppe	2003 (?)	14-15	no members' admission	7
Köln	Hauskreis/Gruppe	2004	approx. 7-10	no members' admission	3-5
Gießen	Hauskreis/Gruppe	2004	6-7	no members' admission	6-7
Köln	"Club"	2005	15	no members' admission	15
Duisburg		2004/2005	no specification	no members' admission	no specification
Solingen		2004/2005	no specification	no members' admission	no specification
Bad Pyrmont		2005	approx. 20	no members' admission	at least 10



OVERVIEW OF CONGREGATIONS IN GERMANY (2005)

MISSION ORGANIZATION	CONGREGATION	FOUNDED	VISITORS	MEMBERS	MESSIANIC JEWS
CHARISMATIC					
CONGREGATIONS					
Chemnitz	Jajin Chadasch	2001	15-30	no specification	15-30
Stuttgart-Feuerbach	messianische jüdische Gemeinde	2001	70-80	20-30	10-12
Köln-Kornweiler	Kalat Yeshua	2005	20	8	8
INDEPENDENT					
CONGREGATION					
Bund Frei-kirchlicher Pfingstgemeinden (BFP): Wuppertal	Zion	2003	30-40	25	21-28
NO ASSIGNMENT (POSSIBLY)					
CONGREGATION					
Nürnberg					
GROUP					
Nürnberg					
TOTALS			878-998 (+ respected 36-44) = <b>914-1042</b>	252-262 (+ respected 50-100) = <b>302-362</b>	552-646 (+ respected 25-41) = <b>577-687</b>

# Messianische Juden in Deutschland

– Eine historische und religionssoziologische  
Untersuchung

reviewed by **Berthold Schwarz**



Stephanie Pfister's doctoral dissertation, presented to the University of Dortmund (Germany) in 2007, on "Messianic Jews in Germany," is the first empirical research done on this particular religious group in Germany. Although there exist already several similar studies on Messianic Judaism in the USA or Israel, Pfister recalls the fact that such studies are still missing in Germany about the German Messianic Jewish movement (p. 19–24).

In her chapter 1 "Introduction," Pfister defines right at the beginning the main result of her research as follows: "Messianic Jews are Jews who believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Since about ten years ago this movement has been established within the German area" (p. 15).<sup>1</sup> Regarding this phenomenon called Messianic Judaism, she recognizes an uncertainty both among representatives of today's German Judaism and of the traditional German churches (Protestants and Roman Catholics alike). The judgments span between "sect," on the one hand, and a soon-to-end religious phenomenon without any further significance on the other (p. 15–18).<sup>2</sup>

Pfister's leading questions for the research, named in the beginning, are (a) What does it mean sociologically and politically that the majority of the Messianic Jews in Germany are mainly recruited among immigrants from the former Soviet Union (CIS) and Eastern Europe? (b) Are Messianic Jews a kind of new confession between already-existing Jewish and Christian congregations? (c) Are Messianic Jews in Germany on their way to articulating their own beliefs and ethos? and (d) What kind of reasons and convictions lead to the result that people convert to the Messianic Jewish faith? (p. 24–25).

In her critical empiric study, the author uses different methods to evaluate the results: On the one side, she uses the "Grounded Theory Methodology" (GTM) by Strauss/Corbin, on the other, the principles of the so called "Systemtheorie" (theory of religious communication) by N. Luhmann (p. 26–33). Pfister sticks not to these methods alone, but combines such scien-

1 "Messianische Juden sind Juden, die an Jesus als den Messias glauben. Sie haben sich seit etwa zehn Jahren als feste Bewegung im gesamtdeutschen Raum etabliert."

2 "Aber es [= das messianische Judentum] wird keine breite Bewegung werden. Deutschland ist nicht der richtige Ort dafür."

tific means with practical-theological components, in other words named as “empirisch-theologischer Bezug” (p. 33–36).

Chapter 2 deals with some selected aspects of the historical development of Christian Jews (“Judenchristentum”) since New Testament times. Unfortunately, the description of this development from the first to the fifth century is fairly short, and should be evaluated by the readers somehow as a general overview only, not delving into details very much (p. 39–51). Though further historical events from the Protestant-Pietistic times in the seventeenth to twentieth century are presented in the form of a sketch only, some interesting Hebrew-Christian relations from the nineteenth century up to the year 1970 are discovered, in which the specific Jewish identity of Christian Jews (Jesus believing Jews) was then highly respected and accepted (p. 61–67).

The author correctly sees a new beginning of a growing genuine Jewish identity among Jesus believing Jews in the sixties and seventies, e.g. in the “Jews for Jesus” movement. The result of this kind of “awakening” was many local communities and churches with more or less Messianic Jewish character and identity, mostly evangelical in doctrine, spiritual life, and ethos (p. 67–97). Pfister relates to statistics from several research papers, and says that in the USA there are about 40,000 to 100,000 Messianic Jewish believers, while it is estimated that in Israel there are now about 5,000 Messianic Jewish believers. Very helpful for further detailed research are the used and covered resources which were offered in this historical part (see footnotes).

In chapter 3, Pfister introduces the “Messianic Jews in Germany” empiric results mainly based on the author’s own exhaustive research. The readers learn, among other things, that the work of the German wing of the “Jewish Christian Alliance” was practically erased with the beginning of World War II, and was destroyed in the catastrophe of the Shoah (p. 99). In Germany since the 1990s, it is correct to talk about a Messianic Jewish movement again, initiated and coined mainly through Jewish immigrants from CIS nations. While in 1933 about 1,600 Jewish congregations existed in Germany, in 1950 only about 50 to 70 still existed or were established somehow anew (p. 100). Meanwhile, more than 200,000 Jews

**In Germany since the 1990s, it is correct to talk about a Messianic Jewish movement again, initiated and coined mainly through Jewish immigrants from CIS nations.**

live in Germany today, of whom around only fifty percent join a Jewish community. Often it is difficult for the Russian immigrants to prove their Jewish heritage according to the traditional halachic definition of a Jew (p. 105f.).

While the traditional churches in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland [EKD] and the Roman Catholic Church) and some of their institutions involved in Jewish-Christian dialogue in the decades after the war more or less rejected any mission work among Jews, or conversions from Judaism to Christianity, several evangelical institutions listed by Pfis-



ter actively support the Messianic Jewish movement and mission work among Jews (p. 115–28).

As the author proves via supporting interviews, the major shaping of the Messianic Jewish movement in Germany is not done by those supporting non-Jewish evangelical churches or institutions as such, but by individual Messianic Jewish leaders themselves, who were already a part of the Messianic Jewish movement even before they arrived in Germany.

Pfister describes the process of Messianic Jewish church planting between 1990 and 2005 (p. 137–62). In the year 1995, about 50 to 100 Messianic Jewish-believers in Germany were gathered in about 10 home Bible study groups (p. 146). In 1999, it is estimated that about 200 Messianic Jewish believers were gathered in 8 congregations, and in 2001, about 400 believers in 20 Messianic Jewish groups. In 2007, about 700 believers in 20 Messianic Jewish congregations, and about 19 Messianic Jewish groups existed in German cities, and some first contacts to Jews in several others were established.

Pfister's chapter 4 deals extensively with the method of empiric research ("Methodik der empirischen Erhebung") used in evaluating the data collected in "narrative interviews" and in similar empiric studies. Such methods (observation and interrogation without set presuppositions) as used in the sociology of religion ("Religionssoziologie") are helpful in understanding the Messianic Jewish movement in Germany.

Based on the methodology of chapter 4, chapter 5 describes some of the organized collective structures and contents of the Messianic Jewish faith, e.g., the leadership, the visitors, the personality of the believers, services, liturgy, confessions, customs, rituals, etc. This important chapter is one of the parts which offer a deeper understanding of what is going on in Messianic Jewish circles. The comparison of Messianic Jewish confessions with classic, traditional Christian confessions and with the thirteen articles of Maimonides is especially insightful and interesting, although the comparison sometimes could have been more exact and detailed. Theological depth is missing at times. Anyway, it can be seen clearly that the Messianic Jewish faith in Germany holds to, e.g., the leading authority of the inspired and faithful Word of God in the Tanach (OT), and at the same time equally in the New Testament. It holds also to the worldwide confessed Christian truth of the Trinity of God (although some confess a "reduced deity" of Jesus only), to the understanding of salvation taught as justification by faith alone in the tradition of the Reformation, and to the soon to come *parusia Christi* (p. 268–74). Interestingly, it is mentioned that Messianic Jews count themselves as still belonging to the chosen nation of Israel (p. 275f.), because in their judgment conversion to Jesus Christ does not mean a change in nationality. The relationship of this somehow irritating understanding in comparison to the genuine Pauline teaching of 1 Corinthians 12 or Ephe-

**Messianic Jews count themselves as still belonging to the chosen nation of Israel, because in their judgment conversion to Jesus Christ does not mean a change in nationality.**



sians 2–3 (ecclesiology), might be a necessary evaluation not to be overlooked, yet not reflected on in the thesis.

Jewish festivals (Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot, etc.) and Jewish ceremonies (circumcision, Bar/Bat Mizvah, marriage, baptism/*mikveh*, etc.) show a realistic picture of the richness of faith and life in German Messianic Judaism, insightful both from a sociological and a theological point of view (p. 282–314). It is noted that in most of the Messianic Jewish congregations the practice of Jewish customs and forms of spiritual life is widely accepted and in favor, so long as they don't disturb or jeopardize christological and soteriological truths. Nevertheless, it must be seriously asked whether some of the Jewish elements in Messianic Jewish services and liturgy (e.g., a certain type of Torah-obedience, Jewishness in clothing, eating habits, holy days, the meaning of circumcision, rituals and customs, etc.) are already a step too far across the line of truth and of the freedom of the gospel (cf. Galatians, Romans, Colossians, etc.). Pfister does not offer much in commenting on or at least in discussing the correctness or reliability of such habits, neither sociologically nor theologically/biblically.

Some individual structures of the Messianic Jewish faith in chapter 6 correspond to the results of the former chapters 4 and 5. Three selected and exemplary narratives of conversion experiences (case studies of two men and one woman) build the basis of this chapter, each one described in three phases: a pre-conversion phase, the conversion itself, and the post-conversion phase.<sup>3</sup> Each example demonstrates one specific type of conversion typical for the CIS-German context: people (a) with no experienced Jewish identity at all; (b) who somehow discovered their Jewish identity during the conversion process; and (c) who wish to deepen and develop their own Jewish identity through faith in Jesus. These patterns also describe three types of Messianic Jewish congregations in Germany today, demonstrating the fact that the movement itself is anything but homogenous. There exist congregations with a strong Christian influence

(type A), others with a specific emphasis on faith in Jesus as the Messiah as an entry to their Jewish identity (type B), and still others with a strong Jewish influence on teaching and habits with – at the same time – a focus on faith in Jesus (type C). Pfister clearly demonstrates how in each case faith in Jesus as Messiah led the converted person to a growing interest in

**Pfister clearly demonstrates how in each case faith in Jesus as Messiah led the converted person to a growing interest in their own Jewish heritage and customs.**

their own Jewish heritage and customs.

In the final chapter (chap. 7), Pfister reflects on the possible classification of Messianic Judaism between traditional Judaism and Christian confessions. The suggested answer or outlook by the author lacks somehow in discussing biblical-theological reflections, although several important

<sup>3</sup> All together twelve sensitive structured interviews were done (five men and two women) in the original dissertation.

and instructive pieces of information were presented, e.g., Pfister's discussed model of a "pluralistic Judaism" after Dan Cohn-Sherbok's concept (p. 373–74). Between ultra-orthodox Hassidism and a radically secular Jewish reconstructionism, the Messianic Jewish movement could possibly take a middle position within the range of Jewish confessions today.

While the Central Consistory of Jews in Germany ("Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland") expects no further success in the Messianic Jewish movement and a soon-to-come decline, representatives of the movement itself expect a growing number of genuine Jewish believers. Pfister estimates up to 2,000–3,000 believers by 2010, leading into stagnation in growth (p. 376). She also advises that all Christian churches in Germany should begin an earnest Christian-Jewish dialogue with the Messianic Jewish leaders and congregations, even if the movement in Germany is comparatively weak and small. The dissertation presents helpful appendices and a fine selected bibliography for information or further studies.

The good and carefully done dissertation, with its important data on Messianic Judaism in Germany, will for years be a ground laying and pioneering work, a starting point for any further research in this field of study.

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#### ***Messianische Juden in Deutschland. Eine historische und religionssoziologische Untersuchung***

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# A Landscape of Changes

– Jewish Evangelism in Germany

by **Avi Snyder**

**“How unsearchable are his judgments and unfathomable his ways!” (Rom 11:33)**

I suppose that if any of us had been asked in 1988 whether we thought Germany might become a major Jewish mission field before the end of the century, most of us would have shrugged in bewilderment at the question. Then, we might have replied, “Only if God does something really unexpected and unimaginable.” Twenty-one years ago, the Jewish community of Germany was a relatively small enclave, overshadowed by the Jewish populations of France and the United Kingdom to the west, and dwarfed by the Jewish population of the Soviet Union to the east. Then the “unexpected and unimaginable” actually did occur. The Berlin Wall came down, the Soviet Union fell apart, and our Jewish people flooded back into Germany.

In this article, I’d like to present my observations not about the *accomplishments* in the field of Jewish evangelism in recent years. Rather, I’d like to offer my thoughts about the *changes* that have occurred in the evangelistic landscape, and about the changes that may take place in the future. For it is a changing field. Let me begin by looking at the recent past.

**“And I shall bring you into the wilderness of the peoples . . . and I shall bring you into the bond of covenant.” (Ezek 20:35, 37)**

In 1990, the Jewish population of Germany numbered approximately 30,000 people. These “German” Jews were – and still are – socially “private” to a large extent, keeping a low profile in society. Many are old enough to remember the cultural stigma that was attached to them by other Jews for choosing to remain in Germany rather than immigrate to Israel after the Second World War.

## *The Changing Field*

Then, in 1991, as the collapsing Soviet Union relaxed her restrictions on Jews who wished to leave, Germany officially opened her doors to any

Jewish people from the former USSR who wished to come in. Germany adopted this policy for at least two reasons: to make amends for the Holocaust and to change her image from being a country that hated Jews to a country that harbored Jews against a hostile world.

Thanks to the new immigration policy, the Jewish population in Germany mushroomed to over 230,000 by 2006. In just fifteen years, Germany became the third largest Jewish population center in western and central Europe (following France and the United Kingdom). Germany also became the fastest growing Jewish mission field throughout Europe, with an average of 15,000 Jewish people coming into the country each year between 1995 and 2005.

### *The Missionaries*

A number of missionary societies quickly recognized and responded to the opportunity, including Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Messianische Zeugnis an Israel (AMZI), Chosen People Ministries, Christian Witness to Israel, Evangeliumsdienst für Israel (EDI), Jews for Jesus, Licht im Osten, and Operation Mobilization. However, “professional missionaries” and mission societies were not alone in reaching out to the Jewish immigrants coming to Germany during these years. Individual German Christians with a love for our people overcame cultural, social, and linguistic barriers in order to combine practical assistance with proclaiming the good news. Ultimately, fellow Jewish immigrants carried out the major portion of the evangelistic work. Some of these workers had come to faith in the former USSR, while others were the first fruits from the field that the Lord was ripening in Germany.

### *The Methodology*

Because of the population shift resulting from immigration, the field of Jewish evangelism in Germany became, properly speaking, a predominantly Russian field and a Russian-speaking work. Common methodologies and strategies included one-on-one witnessing in immigration reception centers such as Una Mason; door-to-door visitation among the immigrants living in the Wohnheime (dormitory-like residences for immigrants); street evangelism; conferences and camps; and evangelistic Shabbat meetings. New arrivals did not have to be persuaded to receive and read literature in Russian about the Lord; new information about any topic – even about Jesus – was quite welcome. Nor was it an uphill struggle to find immigrants who were ready to attend a meeting with other immigrants in order to study the Bible, sing Jewish songs, and discuss the messianic claims of Y’shua. As people came to faith, it wasn’t long before a number of these Shabbat group meetings formed themselves into the nuclei of Messianic congregations.

Under the provocation of the Spirit of God, many Jewish immigrants showed a genuine openness to the gospel message for a variety of “natural” reasons.



- In the first place, the religion of atheism that undergirded the Soviet worldview had been discredited with the fall of the Soviet empire, creating a vacuum that needed to be filled by some form of belief.
- While the Soviet Union stood, her blackout of everything “spiritual” had bred a backlash of curiosity about anything that had been branded “forbidden.”
- That same Soviet blackout had, oddly enough, blocked out many of the biases against Jesus with which we Jews from the West had been raised.
- Another reason, *not* unique to this situation: Jewish immigrants shared the natural openness to new ideas and information that’s common among many immigrants and refugees, regardless of their culture or place of origin.
- The opportunity to attend a meeting and hear about Jesus from fellow Jews, while experiencing a taste of Jewish life and culture, was very compelling, to say the least.
- And finally, we can credit much of the openness to the simple fact that there wasn’t much else to compete with the message of the gospel, especially in the early nineties, when the wave of immigration really began to swell.

### *Obstacles and Opposition*

Polarization is one of the fruits of effective proclamation, and opposition always occurs. So naturally, the Jewish agencies under the umbrella of the Zentralrat der Juden (Central Council of Jews) in Germany sought to discourage our people from coming to faith, and opposition continues to the present time. But to be frank, that opposition is not severe. There are no well organized anti-missionary organizations working in any consistent manner. Opposition mostly takes the form of warnings and false accusations, regularly found in German and Russian-language Jewish newspapers and appearing on Jewish Web sites. Messianic Jews and Jewish mission groups are branded as un-Jewish, anti-Jewish, deceptive, deceitful, and anything else that might frighten a Jewish person away from considering

**The false and cruel claim that Jewish evangelism is a continuation of the Holocaust carries an especially potent sting in Germany, probably more so than in other countries.**

the gospel with an open mind. For example, speaking against Jewish evangelism in an article in *Der Tagesspiegel* on December 7, 2007, the Berliner Rabbi Andreas Nachama declared: “This is classical anti-Judaism.”

The verbal opposition of the Jewish leadership in Germany can produce a “chilling” effect on people’s interest. Just as the parents of the blind man in John 9 were afraid to identify Jesus as the one who had healed

their son for fear of being put out of the synagogue, so Jewish immigrants today fear “biting the hand” of the Jewish organizations that help them.

German Christians are prey to intimidation as well. The false and cruel claim that Jewish evangelism is a continuation of the Holocaust carries

an especially potent sting in Germany, probably more so than in other countries. The last accusation that a German Christian wants to face is the charge of being anti-Semitic. Over the years, segments of the State and Free Church have distanced themselves from Jewish evangelism, thinking that this is a way of atoning for the church's silence during the years of the Third Reich. Sadly, some Christians who are conservative in their theology and quite vocal about their love for our people are at the same time very glad to embrace a dual covenant position, because it allows them to stand up for the Jewish people while standing away from bringing the gospel to us Jews.

Sometimes this "love-the-Jews-and-keep-quiet-about-Jesus" mentality leads to statements that cross the border from the ironic to the absurd. For example, the Evangelischen Kirchenverbandes Köln und Region advertised a special Pentecost service in 2006 by distributing flyers that declared: "Go into all the world –'Learn from Israel, teach the world.' Our biblically based No to Jewish Missions."

### **"Behold, I will do something new. . . ." (Isa 43:19)**

Once again, the missionary landscape is about to change. In 2005, the German government passed new legislation concerning Jewish immigration from the former USSR. However, this new legislation doesn't open the doors wider for Jewish immigration; rather, on the surface, it seems to close the doors that have been open so wide for the past fifteen years. I say, "on the surface," because the new legislation shouldn't bring about a slowing of Jewish evangelism; just a re-focusing, if those of us in the field understand the changes that are about to take place and the challenges and opportunities that these changes will present.

In essence, the new legislation restricts Jewish immigration from the former USSR by requiring candidates to meet a set of stringent qualifications: those wishing to immigrate must be forty-five years old or *younger*; adults must demonstrate at least a functional ability to speak German; they must possess some genuine prospects for employment in Germany; and they must be sponsored by a German synagogue. Champions of the new legislation came not only from Germany, but from Israel, especially when it became apparent that more Jewish people were choosing to immigrate to Germany than to make *aliyah*. The tipping point came in 2004, when 20,000 Jewish people moved to Germany as opposed to 11,000 who returned to the land. How then might this new legislation impact the landscape of Jewish evangelism?

#### *A New Field*

In the first place, the demographics of the Jewish population will ultimately undergo a change. Though some immigrants will continue to arrive, the "field" will no longer consist predominantly of recent arrivals from the former USSR. Rather, as the "immigrant generation" continues to age, the new field will consist more and more of the new generation of Jewish men



and women who immigrated to Germany in the nineties as children or who were born in Germany to Russian-speaking Jewish parents. In essence, we will in time have before us a whole new indigenous or near-indigenous post-Holocaust *German* Jewish population. Their citizenship will be German. Their education will be German. Many of their friends, from grade school through university, will be German. They will compete for and hold jobs in the German marketplace. And though many of them will retain Russian as their first and heart-felt language, they will nevertheless be fluent in and comfortable with German. (But it would be a mistake to think that this new generation will be “German Jews.” They will be something unique, as every first generation always is. Precisely what they will be, however, remains to be seen.)

### *New Missionaries*

A new generation is likely to respond largely (though not exclusively) to a new generation of missionary workers. It ought to include a good number of Messianic Jews of the same generation and from the same cultural experience as the Jewish people who will need to be reached. But whether young Messianic Jews embrace the task of reaching out to their fellow Jews depends in large measure on the degree to which present leaders seek to inculcate these young believers with a burden for the lost (more on this below).

The next missionary force might also include a significant number of *German* believers in Jesus who are the generational peers of the young Jewish

**We need to remember that the new German generation is separated by seventy years from the atrocities committed by their ancestors.**

people, and who possess an evangelistic love for their Jewish friends, classmates, and professional colleagues. Some of us may wonder whether or how German Christians could ever reach out effectively to our Jewish people in light of the Holocaust. But we need to remember that the new German generation is separated by

seventy years from the atrocities committed by their ancestors. Most of these younger Christians rightly disown and condemn those crimes against our people. If these German Christians can therefore disencumber themselves from the silence about the gospel that accompanies their grandparents’ and great-grandparents’ guilt, then they might become a very effective ally in bringing the good news of the Jewish Messiah to the new generation of Jewish people in Germany.

Seen in this light, the recent “Berlin Declaration,” brought forth by the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance, takes on added importance. Not only is this document a needed affirmation of Jewish evangelism; it also constitutes a call to the German church. The linguistic and cultural divides that have separated Jewish immigrants from German Christians are now ready to be bridged and crossed by Germans with a biblical, evangelistic love for our people. But that bridge will not be crossed unless German Christians understand, as the Berlin Declaration states, that



"Love in action compels all Christians to share the gospel with people everywhere, including the Jewish people of Europe."

### *A New Methodology*

There is no reason to believe that the methods we've used to reach our people up to this point will suddenly become entirely irrelevant and ineffective. However, it would be a mistake to assume that the worldview and values of the maturing Jewish generation will be the same as those of their parents. In the same way, it would be a mistake to think that the factors that contributed to the immigrant generation's receptivity to the gospel in the nineties will automatically apply to that generation's grown children now and in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Our methodologies must take into account the fact that the members of this new generation are *not* immigrants. They are not milling about the quads of reception centers, looking for answers. They do not live in Wohnheime. They are not hungry to talk to anyone who crosses their threshold with a piece of news. They are not eager to receive and read a nicely printed book unless it's a subject they feel they have a reason to explore. They are not looking so much for material, spiritual, and emotional help, but for opportunity. And if they feel a longing for a deeper Jewish experience, why wouldn't they first explore their Jewish roots through traditional non-Messianic Jewish agencies and congregations? One might say that the "easy days" of Jewish evangelism in Germany are over. Jewish evangelists will need to be bolder, more persistent, sensitive to spiritual needs lying beneath material comfort, and indifferent to any increased resistance that may occur.

And where might the gospel be offered? Where is the field? Not in the immigration centers or refugee dormitories. Rather, the fields are now, and will increasingly be found on university campuses, on street corners, in the "marketplaces," on the Internet, and in any other social arena that exists.

Whatever methodologies we employ, we should be careful to avoid certain mistakes:

- The mistake of choosing introversion over evangelism. If present leaders fail to give evangelism an on-going priority, if young Messianic believers aren't instilled with a passion for the lost, then growth may continue to come from births and from "transfers," but not from breaking up new ground.
- The mistake of choosing attraction over penetration. We must resist the temptation to rely upon methods and programs that are designed only to induce people to come to us, rather than heeding the Messiah's exhortation to go out to them.
- The mistake of ministering exclusively or primarily in Russian. We must use Russian *and* German in the services that we conduct, in the songs

**The "easy days" of  
Jewish evangelism in  
Germany are over.**



that we sing, and in the materials that we produce.

- German believers must avoid the mistake of confusing penance with proclamation.

And though I'm speaking mainly about reaching that generation of young men and women who were born to Russian-speaking immigrants, it would be a great pity and mistake if we failed to consider how we might reach the 30,000 *non-Russian* speaking "German" Jews who still need to hear about Y'shua's love.

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**"And [I] will send survivors from them to the nations . . . they will declare my glory among the nations." (Isa 66:19)**

I've been writing about evangelism *of* our Jewish people in Germany. But I'd like to end with thoughts about evangelism *by* our Jewish people in Germany – of Jews, of Germans, and of everyone else. Today, we labor so that our people may hear the gospel and be saved. But the day must come when Jewish missionaries labor to bring the gospel to Germany, and the day must come when Jewish and German missionaries labor together to bring the gospel to a Europe that has forgotten the good news. When that day comes, what a vindication that will be of the history between Germans and Jews. What a testimony that will be of the reconciling power of the cross. What a step that will be toward the fulfillment of our national call.

# The Future of Messianic Congregations in Germany

– *Challenges, Obstacles, and Possibilities*

by **Vladimir Pikman**



## After “The Wave”

Although I have been involved in the contemporary Messianic movement in Germany since almost the beginning of its existence, it still seems unbelievable to me that since 1991, the Jewish community in Germany has been (in percentage) the fastest growing Jewish community in Jewish history, and since 1994, the number of Jewish believers in Yeshua (Jesus) has been growing faster than anywhere else. All this is due to the massive Jewish immigration of so-called “Russian Jews” from the former Soviet Union.

Since 1991, the Jewish population in Germany has grown from a maximum of 30,000 to ca. 300,000 in 2008. At the same time, the number of identified Jewish believers in Yeshua grew from a maximum of 100 in 1994, to at least 5,000 in 2008. From no Messianic congregations in 1994, we have today more than 40 Messianic congregations and groups in Germany, which were established over just a few years.

Thus, there has been a powerful and evident revival among the Russian Jews in Germany, a revival that is impossible to systemize and that seemed to grow “by itself.” But the situation has changed, and the wave of revival has probably been over for a couple of years. And Jewish life is also very different in Germany today than it was a decade ago, when the revival began. For example, the Messianic movement is established and known among the Jewish people, who are primarily negatively informed about it by various Jewish organizations; immigration has slowed down; the majority of Russian Jews are well established and used to their new country and its culture; the youth and children speak better German than Russian; Jewish communities are run primarily by Russian Jews due to their overwhelming majority, which leads to more comfortable fellowship and abundant services to the Russian Jews in those communities; Russian Jews either became much more assimilated into a comfortable German lifestyle without any desire to hear about God, or became more conscious about being Jewish while following the common misconception that Jesus is not for the Jews; and the Messianic movement and the Russian Jewish outreach experienced a stabilization phase, coming to a new level of leadership and structural and spiritual maturity.

This new situation has had a dramatic impact on the existing Messianic congregations and the movement in general, bringing new challenges, obstacles, and possibilities, some of which will be discussed below.

## Challenges

### *Disappointment and Discouragement among Many Messianic Leaders*

Ministry during a revival, while not easy, is definitely very exciting, e.g. the leaders can see the fruits of their ministry; people are coming to Yeshua in significant numbers; groups and congregations are dynamic, with new people coming and getting involved; new believers are quickly maturing and becoming reliable; and people are showing their initiative and willingness to serve. Almost everything seems to work. Such a time is always the desire of every minister.

However, revival as a great blessing often remains unappreciated by those who came to ministry during it – they simply do not know anything else but revival. It is easy to get used to the time of blessing, thinking that it is normal and will last forever. But it usually takes much longer to adjust to life when the revival is not there anymore. And this has been exactly the case in Germany in recent years.

Especially hard hit were the Messianic leaders in Germany. Many of them came to faith in Yeshua during the revival among Russian Jews, either in the countries of the former Soviet Union or in Germany. They began their ministry during this revival. They neither had time nor felt the need for any formal theological or ministerial education.<sup>1</sup> Most of them were not able to learn from the Messianic movements in other countries or to get access to international Messianic communities other than the Russian-speaking ones.

The Messianic movement in Germany remained largely isolated from the international Messianic community and from German Christianity. Messianic congregations in Germany copied the congregations in which their leaders became believers. If a leader became a believer in a church, he tried to unite his church experience with what he saw in a Messianic congregation that he respected. Because everything went well for a number of years, unconsciously, it seemed that everything would always work the same way. But the ministry was slowly becoming more difficult and the circumstances were changing. However, this remained unnoticed with the hope that everything would come back to “normal.”

The pressure was growing and the leaders were more and more discouraged. Finally, some leaders became sick, left the ministry, or dramatically changed their theological and ministerial positions. In the last few years, we have seen several leaders leaving their ministry. Without a solid theological basis, without strong mentors standing by, without lessons learned from the Messianic movements in other countries, and

1 As far as I know, I am the only Messianic leader in Germany to hold a theological degree; another leader is working toward a degree.

without the practical skills to stay firm without revival, the leaders became discouraged, which significantly contributed to the weakening of the Messianic movement and congregations in Germany. There is no Messianic congregation in Germany that can testify to significant growth in the last few years. But there are always opportunities in every crisis.

Therefore, the challenge for the Messianic leaders in Germany is to overcome their discouragement and appreciate their new circumstances, learning to persevere in this situation, waiting for a new revival "wave" to come. Training, mentoring, educating, and networking with the broader Messianic and church body in Germany and in other countries would probably be very helpful.

### *Hard Work with Less Excitement*

After the exciting years, it is challenging to learn that it is normal at this stage to see less fruit and experience less exciting things, while working hard and standing firm for our faith. Many changes in methodology of outreach and congregational life have to be made. This requires overcoming normal human conservatism, and hard work.

### *Disappointment among Members of the Messianic Congregations*

Disappointment among Messianic leaders unavoidably leads to disappointment among congregation members. Sensing the frustration of the leaders, people, who naturally want to follow those with passion and excitement, are starting to look for other congregations, groups, or leaders. The Messianic movement in Germany is currently struggling, and it is natural for people to seek a fellowship without such struggle. Therefore, many former members of Messianic congregations and groups left, primarily going to new and emerging Christian churches that grant them more exciting "life" but lack Jewish sensitivity or even tolerate anti-Semitism. Other former members of Messianic communities became disappointed with the movement, and decided to personally "believe in Yeshua" while moving away from any fellowship. And many even left the Messianic faith, primarily going back to their secular life<sup>2</sup> or, more seldom, to Judaism. The number of Jewish participants in Messianic services declined noticeably.

Here the challenge is for Messianic believers to re-appreciate their faith and calling. Such appreciation, while being communicated through their lifestyle, can easily provoke jealousy among others, and even in those who for whatever reason left the Messianic movement.

### *Identity Challenge*

The German Messianic movement, while not paying attention to this issue at the beginning of its existence due to the revival, recently entered the phase of its identity struggle. The question "Who are we?" became

2 They simply lost their interest in the Messianic life and faith in Yeshua. They say that they still believe, but the "fire" is not there any more.



controversial. In a certain sense, it is indeed not easy to balance between belonging to the Jewish people and to the church at the same time.

Some congregations decided to keep their “Christian” identity, while having some Jewish elements in their lifestyle. However, such congregations find it difficult to justify their existence. The evangelistic reason<sup>3</sup> does not work, because the Jewish people in Germany are not attracted to the “Jewish” elements in Messianic congregations any more than they were before.

The majority of congregations and groups in Germany understand the distinctive nature of the Jewish calling, and are willing to adopt more of the Jewish lifestyle and worship to take better care of this calling. However, they lack knowledge and experience in this regard.

Therefore, the challenge is to come up with a clear, biblically-founded, historically and culturally proper Messianic identity for Germany, and to live accordingly.

### *Cultural Challenge*

Because the majority of the Messianic believers in Germany are originally Russian-speaking, the Russian culture and language have dominated the movement for a number of years. However, today the Messianic children and youth speak better German than Russian, being primarily exposed to the German culture in their schools. Many young adults and middle-aged immigrants were also well exposed to the German culture, and have ceased being proper “Russians.” Thus, proper Russian language and culture were retained only by the elderly people, who will dominate the Messianic movement if nothing is changed.

Also, many German Jews and Jewish people from other countries are getting interested in the Messianic movement. And the interest among Germans is also growing. Previously, these groups were unfortunately “left behind.”

Therefore, the challenge is to culturally adjust the Messianic movement to the new circumstances.

## **Obstacles**

### *Liberalism of German Society*

The liberalism of German society makes it more difficult to keep any Messianic identity. Preaching Yeshua is not popular, and any evangelistic attempt is considered “fundamentalism.” It is difficult to enjoy sharing the gospel in such an atmosphere, and it motivates people to keep their faith a “personal” matter, which hinders appreciation and healthy “pride” concerning our faith. It hinders encouragement in the Messianic movement.

3 E.g. “a Jewish person can come to such a congregation and feel at home, while a church is something foreign to them.”

*Eagerness of Churches to "Steal" Believers*

Some Russian-speaking churches, being under the strong influence of replacement theology, talk Messianic believers out of Messianic congregations and groups. They diminish the significance of Jewish identity, and encourage Messianic believers to be more "spiritual" by completely assimilating into Gentile Christianity. In the given situation of the Messianic movement today, this takes some potential leaders away from the Messianic movement and weakens it.

*Absence of Available Messianic Educational Institutions and Materials*

While Messianic leaders in Germany urgently need education and training, there is as yet no educational or training institution in Germany that is proper for this. Although a few Messianic leaders attended, or are attending, Christian educational institutions due to the absence of Messianic ones, the existing Bible schools in Germany are not designed to respond to the needs of the Messianic movement. This hinders spiritual and ministerial development of Messianic leaders.

*Difficulties of Getting Help from Other Countries*

Although there are many Messianic human resources and materials in the world, the language barrier is an obstacle to using them in Germany. Most of the available Messianic scholars speak neither Russian nor German. The same is true for the materials. At the same time, only a limited number of the Messianic leaders and believers in Germany speak English well enough to use these resources.

*Financial Limitations*

An obstacle that the Messianic movement in Germany has in common with the movement in many other countries is financial limitations. The Messianic leaders in Germany have very limited access to financial support from other countries, and it is not easy to raise support in Germany itself.

**Possibilities***Education for Leaders*

There is great interest among the Messianic leaders at this time to be trained and educated. Many of them are willing to be trained, taught, and mentored. To provide theological and ministerial training for the leaders of the Messianic movement in Germany is absolutely necessary at this stage. We need to use the pause after the past revival to prepare leaders for the next one.

*Stabilization and Structuring*

Instead of considering the current situation as stagnation, it would be good to use it to stabilize the Messianic movement through developing structures for future growth. What was not possible during the revival is



possible in more quiet circumstances. And first attempts are being made to do this.

### *Spiritual Maturity Based on Faith*

As we have discussed before, it is hard to have much excitement in the German Messianic movement today. This creates a great opportunity for maturing in faith, without this faith being based on pure excitement or enjoyment of the fruits of revival.

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### *Messianic Materials*

The felt need for printed and other types of materials creates a market for such materials. This would be a good time to start various Messianic publications in German and Russian (together with those in other Russian-speaking countries). These can include books, magazines, periodicals, journals, recordings, and Internet sites.

### *Bridges to Other Messianic and Christian Groups*

The current situation motivates the Messianic movement to seek the support of other like-minded believers. It drives various Messianic groups to each other, and helps them to appreciate Christianity and the Messianic movement worldwide. Therefore, it would be wise for Messianic congregations and groups to develop good contacts not only with each other, but also with churches and Christian organizations in Germany and worldwide. This will create a healthy, biblical sense of unity and fellowship while providing opportunities for joint outreach, learning from the experience of others, prayer support, and even financial help.

The Messianic movement in Germany will hopefully also develop relationships with Messianic movements, congregations, and organizations in other countries. While doing this, it is important to be careful to choose the biblically healthy ones. The theological education and training discussed above can help in this regard. Developing relationships does not mean coming under the authority of someone else; the Messianic movement in Germany has to develop in an appropriate way for Germany, complementing the Messianic movement and Christianity worldwide by its uniqueness.

### **Before "The Wave"**

There is a growing expectation among Messianic leaders in Germany of a new revival among Jewish people. We hope that by using the opportunities that the challenges are giving us, and wisely dealing with the obstacles, we will be ready for the new revival. And we pray that this will be the case.



# A Hebrew Christian of Hebrew Christians?

- Views of the Apostle Paul by Three Jewish Believers in Jesus: Paul Levertoff, Sanford Mills, and Joseph Baruch Shulam

by Daniel R. Langton

THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENT



Jewish attitudes towards the Apostle to the Gentiles have been the subject of a number of studies in recent years.<sup>1</sup> These have tended to focus on New Testament or Pauline studies, on theologians and religious leaders. Those conducting the surveys have been interested primarily in interfaith relations, and yet little or no interest has been paid to Jewish believers in Jesus (the only exception being an edition of *Mishkan* published in 1994<sup>2</sup>). The obvious explanation for this absence has to do with the controversial nature of socio-religious debate surrounding the Jewish legitimacy of such individuals in the wider Jewish community. But the fact that, along with so many other Jews in the modern world, Jewish believers in Jesus cannot easily be fitted into neat theological pigeon-holes is precisely what makes them so interesting when studying their empathetic interpretations of the similarly complex character of Paul. For such writers as Paul Levertoff, Sanford Mills, and Joseph Shulam, the Apostle Paul – who described himself as a “Hebrew of Hebrews” (Phil 3:5) – facilitated their own idiosyncratic presentations of Jewish legitimacy within the modern cultural debate as to what constitutes an authentic Hebrew.

1 For example, Daniel R. Langton, “Modern Jewish Identity and the Apostle Paul: Pauline Studies as an Intra-Jewish Ideological Battleground,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28, no. 2 (2005): 217–58; Daniel R. Langton, “The Myth of the ‘Traditional Jewish View of Paul’ and the Role of the Apostle in Modern Jewish-Christian Polemics,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28, no.1 (2005): 69–104; Pamela Eisenbaum, “Following in the Footnotes of the Apostle Paul,” in *Identity and the Politics of Scholarship in the Study of Religion*, ed. Jose Ignacio Cabezo’n, and Sheila Greeve Davaney, (London: Routledge, 2004), 77–97; Stefan Meissner, *Die Heimholung des Ketzers: Studien zur jüdischen Auseinandersetzung mit Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996); Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer, “The Essential Heresy; Paul’s View of the Law According to Jewish Writers, 1886–1886,” Ph.D. diss., Temple University (1990); Donald A. Hagner, “Paul in Modern Jewish Thought,” in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce*, ed. Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1980), 143–65; Halvor Ronning, *Jewish Literary Treatments of the Apostle Paul 17: “Some Jewish Views of Paul as Basis of a Consideration of Jewish-Christian Relations,”* *Judaica* 24 (1968): 82–97.

2 The twentieth issue of *Mishkan* (1994) was entitled “Apostle Paul / Rav Sha’ul.”

## Paul Levertoff

Paul Levertoff (1878–1954) was born Feivel Levertoff to a Hassidic family in Belarus, where he received a traditional Jewish education.<sup>3</sup> Following talmudic studies at the Volozhin yeshiva, he went on to the University of Königsberg in Prussia, where he converted to Christianity in 1895. He became a missionary, working for various societies throughout Europe,<sup>4</sup> and demonstrated a flair for translation and scholarship. After a stint as a lecturer in rabbinics in Leipzig,<sup>5</sup> he moved to Wales, where he was ordained as an Anglican minister, and then on to East London, where he established an independent Messianic Jewish congregation, although for a time he was closely associated with the International Hebrew Christian Alliance. A particular interest in his theology was the attempt to reconcile the teachings of the New Testament to Hassidic thought, and he is best remembered for his partial translation of the Zohar for Soncino Press.<sup>6</sup> His *Ben ha-Adam*<sup>7</sup> was the first treatment of Jesus in modern Hebrew.

Levertoff's interest in Paul came to the fore early with his study entitled *St. Paul: His Life, Works and Travels*,<sup>8</sup> when he was working for the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews.<sup>9</sup> There is little in this short work that would have raised an eyebrow among a Christian readership, but Levertoff intended it for a Jewish audience and wrote his treatment of Paul in modern Hebrew, the first author to do so.<sup>10</sup> In his introduction, he laments the fact that every time he writes about "Messianism" (as he calls Christianity), it is necessary for him to justify his reasons. He argued that there should be no more need to explain a book on Paul than there was a book on Maimonides, since the essential character of Messianism "is so *Hebrew* and [. . .] ought to be common to the lips of every child of

3 For a useful overview of Levertoff's life and writings, see Jorge Quiñónez, "Paul Phillip Levertoff: Pioneering Hebrew-Christian Scholar and Leader," *Mishkan* 37 (2002): 21–34.

4 He worked for the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews (1896–1910), and for the United Free Church of Scotland Jewish Committee as their evangelist in Constantinople (1910–11). He was director of the East London Fund for the Jews, also known as London Diocesan Council for Work Among the Jews (1923–54).

5 He taught at the Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum (1912–18), although he was held under house arrest as a Russian citizen from 1914 to 1916. In addition to rabbinics, he also taught Yiddish and a variety of courses in Jewish studies and the New Testament.

6 Harry Sperling, Maurice Simon, and Paul Phillip Levertoff, trans., *Zohar*, vol. 3 (London: Soncino Press, 1933); and Maurice Simon and Paul Phillip Levertoff, trans., *Zohar*, vol. 4 (London: Soncino Press, 1933).

7 Paul Levertoff, *Ben ha-Adam: Chayey Yeshua ha-Mashiach upealeav* (London: 1904), the English title given as *Son of Man: A Survey of the Life and Deeds of Jesus Christ*. The author of the second Hebrew attempt, Joseph Klausner, is dismissive of Levertoff's study, complaining that "the plain purpose of the writer in spite of what he says to the contrary in his Preface is to win adherents to Christianity from among Russian Jews who read Hebrew" (Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth* [New York: MacMillan, 1925], 124).

8 Paul Levertoff, *Polus ha-Shaliach o Sha'ul ish Tarsus: Chayav, po'alav u-nesi'otav* (London: Y. Neroditski, 1907), the English title given as *St. Paul: His Life, Works, and Travels*.

9 Also of interest is his series of three lectures: Paul P. Levertoff, "St. Paul in Jewish Thought: Three Lectures" (London: Diocesan House, 1928). In addition, Levertoff translated Franz Werfel, *Paulus unter den Juden* (Berlin: Zsolnay, 1926), as Franz Werfel, *Paul Among the Jews: A Tragedy*, trans. Paul Levertoff (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1928).

10 Levertoff, *Polus ha-Shaliach*, iv.

Israel."<sup>11</sup> In offering a full picture of the life of Paul the apostle in a concise and popular manner,<sup>12</sup> Levertoff is clear that his aim is a missionary one.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, he regarded himself as Jewish,<sup>14</sup> and his vision was of a profoundly Hebraic interpretation of what it meant to be a follower of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. For example, he sprinkles the text with Hebrew and Aramaic phrases that are laden with Jewish religious meaning.<sup>15</sup>

According to Levertoff, Paul's work was a continuation of the life and mission of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>16</sup> While Jesus had not been able to reveal the full significance of his appearance in the world ("The generation was not yet worthy of it"), and his disciples had failed to comprehend it, yet Paul was able to articulate the essence of Jesus' messianic title – "Son of man" – and to develop his ideas. In contrast to the other disciples, who were simple and unlearned men, Paul was a scholar whose writings represent "the most complete interpretation of Messianism there is in the world."<sup>17</sup> In particular, since Jesus could not explain the meaning of his own death, Paul had done so, and his (thirteen) letters reveal a progressive realization of the sacrificial significance of the Messiah's death<sup>18</sup> and God's plan "to demolish the iron wall that had been put between Jew and Gentile," a task

11 Ibid., ii.

12 Ibid., iii.

13 He hopes to "awaken such a desire in the hearts of those who stand apart from Messianism, and to strengthen the impression in those who have already been bestowed with a little of Messianism – that is our aim in our literary work in general and in writing this book in particular" (ibid., iii). He also writes of his hope that it will "produce beneficial fruit for our people, the People of Israel, and will show a way and an opening to salvation, this being our prayer rising from the depths of the heart which is hurting and concerned for its people" (ibid., iv).

14 Levertoff's daughter recalls his mantra: "Christianity is Judaism with its hopes fulfilled" (Olga Levertoff, "Paul Levertoff and the Jewish-Christian Problem," in *Judaism and Christianity: Essays Presented to the Rev. Paul P. Levertoff*, ed. Lev Gillet [London: JB Shears and Sons, 1939], 97). As Levertoff saw it, "The 'New Testament' was founded and built upon the foundation of the 'Old Testament'; the latter signifies the age of prophecies and aspirations, the former – the age of realisation and fulfilment" (Levertoff, *Polus ha-Shaliach*, 18).

15 He describes Paul as one of "the great men" (*eshlae ravvevei*), or attributes the root of Messianism in terms of "a secret and hidden force" (where *tamir v'nelam* refers to God). He is also careful to explain the Christian religion (*ha-dat ha-Nozrit*), a label with very negative connotations, in terms of the exalted founder-figure of Jesus of Nazareth (*Nazrat*), and generally prefers to write of the Messianic religion (*ha-dat ha-mashichit*). The stoning of Stephen is described in the traditional language of martyrdom as "sanctifying the Name" (*kiddush ha-shem*) (Levertoff, *Polus ha-Shaliach*, 2, 20–21, 23).

16 Ibid., ii, 5.

17 Ibid., 5. He went on, "The most sound way to understand Paul's writings is to look at them as the continuation of the teachings of Jesus himself. They contain many of those ideas that Jesus took with him and never uttered in words. [...] Of course, if Jesus had expressed them himself, then the explanation would have been different. But although Paul's ideas always bear the stamp of his rational personality, yet their essence is without doubt the essence of the ideas of Jesus himself" (ibid., 5–6).

18 "[T]o Paul it was given to discover and reveal the full height and depth of the work of 'the Son of God' as a saviour for humankind. He very seldom speaks of the Messiah's life on earth, though we know from several hints in his writings that he knew it well. For him, the messiah was always – that sublime, glorious creature whose head was crowned with the splendour of the heavenly rays, who appeared to him on the road to Damascus, who held his hand and brought him to the foundations of heavenly peace and the joy of the new life" (ibid., 41).



which could not have been given to Jesus who had been “plucked away while in the prime of his youth.”<sup>19</sup> Thus Paul could take his place alongside Moses, David, Isaiah, and other great Jewish personalities and heroes who, during the weightier periods of world history, had been drawn to the stage by the invisible hand of providence and who had “forced the current of history to direct itself to a particular goal.”<sup>20</sup>

Although mainly adhering to the traditional Christian account, Levertoff occasionally fills in gaps in the apostle’s biographical record, such as the family decision to send the precocious Saul to yeshiva to prepare to be a rabbi (rather than to be a merchant), wondering whether he attended university in Tarsus where he would have become familiar with Greek thought and methods of debate,<sup>21</sup> and suggesting that his mentor, Gamaliel the Great, was tolerant of Greek wisdom.<sup>22</sup> While Levertoff spends considerable time praising the benefits of a rabbinic education for a missionary who would always gravitate toward the local synagogue in his travels,<sup>23</sup> he also notes that Saul would have been taught that peace of mind and God’s reward could only be obtained by observance of the commandments.<sup>24</sup> He believes that Saul went through severe spiritual sufferings in that the more he tried to observe the law, the more powerful grew “the evil inclination.”<sup>25</sup> Saul’s increasingly desperate, guilt-ridden zeal for the law led him to persecute early Messianism, and Levertoff writes sympathetically of Saul’s shock at their account of a crucified Messiah, “a terrible desecration of the Name and a betrayal of all that makes Israel holy.”<sup>26</sup> Only during the tranquility and quietness of his journey on the road to Damascus did Saul’s personal sense of guilt, and the powerful impression made by Messianics such as Stephen and their teachings of a suffering Messiah, bring about the famous vision and blindness, and “the total shattering of the previous system of his life.”<sup>27</sup> In the period that followed, Levertoff suggested, Paul, “an ardent nationalist,” came to realize that his hope for a Jewish Messiah who would save the world was realized in Jesus. Writing about his self-imposed exile in the Arabian desert near Mount Sinai, Levertoff once again emphasizes Paul’s place in authentic Jewish tradition.

Exalted memories hovered over that place and the shadows of great men went about it. There Moses saw the burning bush and listened to the voice of Jehovah from the top of the mountain; there Elijah se-

19 Ibid., 6–7.

20 Ibid., 1, 2.

21 Ibid., 15–16. “Did he draw water from the springs of science descending from Mount Helicon before going to sit by the water flowing down from Mount Zion? . . . The speech he made in Athens [in Acts] shows us how he could, if he only wished, employ a style superior in splendour to that of his letters” (ibid).

22 Ibid., 17.

23 Ibid., 18.

24 Ibid., 19.

25 Ibid., 20–21.

26 Ibid., 23.

27 Ibid., 26–29.

cluded himself in his wanderings, full of zeal for Jehovah and there he drank from the fountains of salvation. What place was better suited than this place for the thoughts of the man following them?<sup>28</sup>

In his solitude, Paul's meditations led him to conclude that neither Gentiles, who were immersed in idolatry, nor the Jews, who knew the Torah but did not do it,<sup>29</sup> could achieve righteousness. In the case of the Jews,

their knowledge made the weight of their guilt all the greater, because they sinned while facing the light. While the Gentiles went in darkness and to a certain extent only sinned without evil intent, the Children of Israel sinned willfully and intentionally. Their being chosen was their disgrace! They aroused Jehovah's wrath more than the Gentiles whom they hated and despised, and Jehovah's judgement was harsher upon them.<sup>30</sup>

This was all part of God's plan: like "an expert doctor who sometimes strives to bring about a headache by artificial means prior to a cure," God allowed the Gentiles to follow their desires and the Jews Torah, "so that man's nature, evil from his youth, would be fully revealed in all its distressing character."<sup>31</sup> Levertoff's Paul is an abrogator of the law, and even a Lutheran in that he believed that faith alone was necessary for salvation,<sup>32</sup> although this is presented as an idea foreshadowed in the Old Testament.<sup>33</sup> Echoing Christian church fathers,<sup>34</sup> Levertoff's Paul believed that Adam's descendents were burdened both by a state of sin from which they were unable to free themselves and by a physical nature incapable of righteousness.<sup>35</sup>

In a chapter entitled "His Great Dispute," Levertoff discusses the key question of the relationship between Messianism and Judaism. He argues that while many of the Children of Israel had regarded the law as a heavy burden that was necessary if God was to create a unique people (for this required "a furnace and a trial for the spirit of the Israelite People"<sup>36</sup>), yet

28 Ibid., 33.

29 Levertoff cites *Avot* 1:17, "It is the deeds that count and not the study" (ibid., 35).

30 Ibid., 35–36.

31 Ibid., 36.

32 "The Torah had never been the definite way to salvation. [...] It only served as a negative means by which to demonstrate the necessity of salvation" (ibid., 36). "The one human condition for receiving God's righteousness is – faith; and this is as possible for a gentile as for a Jew" (ibid., 38).

33 "In truth, the secret had already been known in the past, too. It was heralded by the Prophets and also hinted at in the Torah. The Torah gave testimony for it only negatively; the Prophets grasped it more positively. Abraham, too, had already glanced into that secret: he became righteous through God not by action but by faith. [...] But the patriarchs and the prophets saw only the first rays of sunrise; daylight in its full force burst through only in Paul's day" (ibid., 38–39).

34 Interestingly, Levertoff translated some of Augustine into Hebrew. Paul Levertoff, *The Confessions of St. Augustine* (London: Luzac & Co., 1908).

35 Levertoff, *Polus ha-Shaliach*, 39.

36 Ibid., 80.



others who were proud and arrogant saw it as evidence that they were a superior nation and even added new laws to separate themselves further from the surrounding peoples.<sup>37</sup> This “national arrogance” led them to an expectation that the kingdom of the Messiah would in fact be the kingdom of Israel.<sup>38</sup> “National arrogance and ancient traditions” also meant that even after Peter’s dream, which had demonstrated that both the circumcised and the uncircumcised were acceptable to God, the question of whether Gentiles should be included without conversion to Judaism remained contentious.<sup>39</sup> Paul had come to a similar conclusion independently of Peter. Partly this was because “he was a man of the world and understood better than his fellows and compatriots in Jerusalem how dangerous were the conditions which they imposed, for the spreading of Messianism outside Palestine,” bearing in mind that neither the “haughty Romans” nor “the high-minded Greeks” would have agreed to undergo circumcision and “generally to imprison their lives within the narrow confines of the national traditions of the People of Israel.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, Paul was an opportunist of sorts, for “a religion entailing such heavy burdens could not possibly become a world religion.”<sup>41</sup> Partly, the opposition which Paul faced was due to the self-interest of the Messianic Jews, who did not want to be ostracized from their fellow Jews and who were therefore determined to avoid the complications of socializing with Gentiles with their different modes of behavior and customs. There would also have been religious jealousy regarding Gentile inclusion.<sup>42</sup> Paul’s success in defeating these Judaizers was highly significant: “If the outcome had been reversed, Messianism would now be a forgotten Jewish sect, not the faith of most enlightened peoples.”<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps Levertoff’s most interesting comments lie in his speculations regarding the attitude of pro-Pauline Jewish Messianics towards the law. Admitting that it was possible that they believed themselves to be free from the burden of the law along with their Gentile brothers in Christ, yet Levertoff points out that Paul never explicitly argued against circumcision in particular, nor observance of the law in general, for Jews by birth. Thus,

we see clearly that he did not see it as part of his work to interfere with the Jews holding on to their national customs. [. . .] [I]f any man of Israel held on to Israelite customs as a mark of his nationality, Paul was very far from reproachful; on the contrary, he himself had a certain fondness for those customs.<sup>44</sup>

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., 81.

39 Ibid., 82.

40 Ibid., 83.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., 84.

43 Ibid., 86.

44 Ibid., 88.

Effusive in his admiration for Paul, Levertoff regarded him as a Jewish hero who took Jesus' true Judaism or "Messianism" to the Gentile world. The apostle's letters, especially Romans, Galatians, and 2 Corinthians, were "one of the most sublime resources of human thought and whose influence is still spreading to this very day."<sup>45</sup> They revealed Paul's originality, which "gave the human race a new world of thoughts and ideas [. . . and] all progress and renewal that has ever taken place within Messianism took its cue from these writings."<sup>46</sup> Paul's innovations, although strictly limited to working out the teachings implicit in Jesus' ministry, lay in his genius for understanding the non-Jewish world and articulating to them the nature of true Judaism. While Levertoff spoke about Paul in general historical terms, his fellow Hebrew Christian missionary, Sanford Mills, and the Israeli Messianic Jew Joseph Shulam, would reach similar conclusions in their commentaries on the apostle's epistle to the Romans, specifically.

### Sanford C. Mills

Sanford C. Mills was born in Poland to an Orthodox Jewish family, and was given a traditional Jewish education before he moved with his parents to the U.S. in 1921. He converted to Christianity as a young man and dedicated his career to the mission field, mostly among Gentiles, although he was also associated with the American Board of Missions to the Jews.<sup>47</sup> He regarded himself as "a Hebrew Christian" and "Jewish,"<sup>48</sup> although he was also happy to be described as "a Christian gentleman" and a Baptist who firmly believed in the pre-millennial, pre-tribulation rapture.<sup>49</sup> His commentary, *A Hebrew Christian Looks at Romans*, is written primarily with a Gentile audience in mind, although it was also regarded by supporters as "a valuable contribution to Jewish evangelism."<sup>50</sup> For the former, Mills offered correctives to Christian doctrine arrived at from his knowledge of Talmud, Targum, and Tanakh<sup>51</sup>; for the latter he offered a strange mix of empathy and Baptist fire-and-brimstone invective in response to their stubbornness of heart.

Mills was concerned from the outset to demonstrate that Paul was not, "as the Jews say," the one who changed Jesus' message and spread Christianity throughout the world. The gospel preached by Paul was not foreign

45 Ibid., 69–70.

46 Ibid., 70. Admittedly, the letters were often written hurriedly, and were certainly unsystematic in nature (ibid., 71).

47 Daniel Fuchs, introduction to *A Hebrew Christian Looks at Romans*, 2nd ed., by Samuel Mills (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publishing, 1969), 10. Fuchs was Secretary of the Board. Mills writes of himself as one "who has spent decades of time as a field evangelist in the active work of Jewish missions" (Mills, 290).

48 Mills, 167, 173.

49 Noel P. Irwin, foreword to *A Hebrew Christian Looks at Romans*, 2nd ed., by Samuel Mills (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publishing, 1969), 8–9. Irwin was pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, South Bend, Indiana.

50 Ibid., 9.

51 For example, Mills was concerned to correct Catholic conceptions of Mary mothering God, and the proper protocol for "Believer's Baptism" (Mills, 24, 173).



to the preaching of Christ but was one with it; crucially, it was a *Jewish* gospel through and through.<sup>52</sup> Thus "there is no such thing as a Gentile church [. . . for] such an idea is a monstrosity in theology."<sup>53</sup> It followed that a Hebrew Christian was not abandoning his faith. Rather, "a Jew who becomes a Christian, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a *completed Jew*."<sup>54</sup> Despite a general rejection of the gospel among the populace, there had always been a remnant of true Jews who were prepared to accept Christ.<sup>55</sup> Paul himself, of course, is described as a "Hebrew Christian warrior of the cross"<sup>56</sup> who was a highly trained and educated Pharisaic Jew.<sup>57</sup> Many of his teachings that were often regarded as Gentile inventions were no such thing. For example, in a discussion about Christ's redemptive sacrifice he argued that, despite what was often claimed, "substitutionary atonement is not foreign to Judaism" and was an integral component of the Day of Atonement.<sup>58</sup> He was prepared to acknowledge, however, that Paul did deliver "body blows to Judaism,"<sup>59</sup> especially in terms of the apostle's view of the law, which was "to bring Jew and Gentile to the realization that both are sinners. For by the law is knowledge of sin."<sup>60</sup> But Mills was wary of exaggerating Paul's attitude towards the law, cautioning his readers: "We must guard ourselves against antinomianism, a sect which holds that faith alone, not obedience to the moral law, is necessary for salvation."<sup>61</sup>

A constant theme in the book is Mills' call for renewed mission to the Jews. He points to the efforts made to take the gospel to China and Africa, and bewails the lack of interest in the Jews in this context.

We all believe that the Jews are lost, but what are we doing for them today? We talk of the Jews in prophecy. We speak of the Tribulation Period as a time of Jacob's trouble. We elaborate upon the atrocities that the Jews will suffer, and of the handful, the remnant, that will be saved. This is good. But how terrible it is when we realize that we have done and are doing so little for the Jews in the missionary program of many of our churches.<sup>62</sup>

52 "The Gospel is not new. Basically and fundamentally the Gospel is Jewish, Jewish in origin, Jewish in its message, 'for salvation is from the Jews' (John 4:22). It is not from the Gentiles" (ibid., 20–21).

53 Ibid., 103. "The term 'Israelites' [Romans 9:4] applies only to the nation of Israel. . . . It does not and cannot mean the Church of the New Testament, in any sense of the word. To apply the term Israelites to the Church does violence to the Word of God" (ibid., 291).

54 Ibid., 75.

55 For Mills it was "not true to say that the Jews, as a people, rejected Jesus as their messiah. The *Jewish leaders and their politicians* rejected him, but the multitudes, the common people, as recorded in the Gospels and the Book of Acts, followed him" (ibid., 297).

56 Ibid., 492.

57 Ibid., 29, 76.

58 Ibid., 102.

59 Ibid., 77.

60 Ibid., 90.

61 Ibid., 104.

62 Ibid., 106.



While Mills did not underestimate the problem facing missionaries to the Jews in the light of centuries of their maltreatment by Christians,<sup>63</sup> he was frustrated by a lack of Christian commitment to this end. He wrote disparagingly of those Christians who did not take Paul seriously at his word that the gospel was for "the Jew first,"<sup>64</sup> and expressed disappointment in having attended "hundreds of Christian meetings where mission of all kinds, domestic and foreign, have been presented," yet having rarely ever heard "any mention made of the plight of the Jews, and their need of the Gospel." The Jew, he said, is "joked about, and in many cases, slandered when he isn't maligned, and often pointed to as an example of disobedience, but scarcely ever prayed for, and almost never represented as a people needing the Gospel."<sup>65</sup> His passionate plea was to refuse to give up on the Jews.

By what stretch of the imagination can anyone claim that the Jews have had their chance and lost it, and that now they have been set aside in order that the Gentiles may have *their* chance during the present age? How can it be claimed by anyone familiar with the history of Christianity that the Jews have had their chance and lost it, when the Jews, at best, have only heard the Gospel in its entirety for about forty years, from 30 to 70 AD?<sup>66</sup>

Expousing a Baptist ideology, Mills' pronouncements were Bible-based,<sup>67</sup> anti-Catholic,<sup>68</sup> and suspicious of evolution.<sup>69</sup> It is his anti-rabbinic statements that are of most interest here, however. He attacks their rite of cir-

63 "The Gentiles, from the beginning of Jewish history until the present time, have far exceeded the sum total of Israel's transgressions and guilt. The guilt of one Gentile nation, Germany, in just ten years has been a million times greater than the guilt of all the Jews throughout their entire existence. The history of the Roman Empire, the Roman Catholic Church, Spain, Italy, France, England, and Russia, teems with Jewish persecution, murder and exile" (ibid., 365–66). Mills himself writes of having experienced anti-Semitism in his youth: "The writer is a Jewish Christian and he cannot be blind to the Jew-hate of today and the experiences of his people Israel through past and present ages. He knows from childhood what it means to be called 'a dirty Jew.' The memory of this and other painful experiences can never be forgotten. Opprobrious epithets such as 'Christ-killer!' and the haunting words of the Polish people, 'Why can't you go home to your own country?' still ring in his ears. Who can blame the Jews in Israel if they do not want the Gospel preached to them? The terrors of past persecutions, ostracisms and banishments by those who called themselves Christians but never knew the meaning of the word, make it extremely difficult for Jews in Israel, and elsewhere, to tolerate the Gospel" (ibid., 431–32).

64 "Usually, the person who will not accept the fact 'to the Jew first' will not take it [the gospel] to the Jew at all. This has been the experience of this writer for over twenty-five years" (ibid., 106).

65 Ibid., 290. Partly, Mills explained this in terms of "the unscriptural philosophy of the 'Gentile Church,' claiming that we are now in the 'Gentile Church age'" (ibid., 350).

66 Ibid., 389.

67 "The Word of God must always be the final authority. We cannot, we must not, question it" (ibid., 22). It was also progressive revelation, in that it led towards the gospel (ibid., 92). "This writer is not only Jewish, but he is also biblical" (ibid., 173).

68 Ibid., 24, 31, 62.

69 Ibid., 50.



cumcising the dead,<sup>70</sup> the laws of *kashrut*,<sup>71</sup> their Talmudic learning,<sup>72</sup> their prayers,<sup>73</sup> and their refusal to accept traditions that supported Christian teachings.<sup>74</sup> In general, the Jews are condemned for their pride, since they know the truth but do not follow it,<sup>75</sup> and two thousand years of suffering are interpreted as God's punishment for their sins.<sup>76</sup> Even when defending their probity, he cannot help but condemn them for their "works-righteousness."<sup>77</sup> Despite all this, Mills was quick to draw upon stories and sayings from traditional Jewish literature that he believed strengthened his reading of Paul's epistle to the Romans.<sup>78</sup> Most important in this context was the link he frequently made between original sin and the evil inclination (or "evil imagination" as he called it).<sup>79</sup> Like Levertoff before him, the overall impression made by Mills is that of pride in his Jewish heritage and a burning desire to evangelize the Jews. To recover the Jewish roots of the Christian gospel as annunciated by Paul is therefore a means to a very specific end. At the same time, Mills, even more so than Levertoff, uses his treatment of Paul to express his indignation at the indifference of Gentile Christians to the precious Jewish resources and understanding available to

70 Ibid., 60–62.

71 Ibid., 66.

72 Ibid., 68.

73 Ibid., 157, 222.

74 "Modern Judaism does not accept this [idea of Adam's sin bringing death to all (Zohar in Num. 52)]. The Jews, like all religionists, change 'with every wind of doctrine.' Like all the unregenerate theologians, the Jewish rabbis teach that their own works will save them. . . . The Bible teaches contrary" (ibid., 164). "Modern Judaism has changed this idea that God created the evil in man [citing, *inter alia*, Sanhedrin 91b and Tanhumah Beshalla 3]" (ibid., 222).

75 Ibid., 65, 76.

76 Ibid., 67, 70. "Israel as a nation may be wallowing in sin. She may be scattered among the nations and seemingly lost in the maelstrom of iniquity" (ibid., 366).

77 "The problem with Israel is, and has always been, a lack of faith. The Jewish people do not lack morals, or standards, or laws. They boast of having all of these. The divorce rate among Jews is low; dope addiction among Jewish teen-agers is surprisingly low; the number of Jews in penal institutions is insignificant; and alcoholism is rare among Jews. They are a moral people. Works of righteousness supercede faith in the Jewish mind. To a Jew, no matter what a man believes, so long as he is morally upright he is a righteous individual. 'Prayer, charity and fasting overcometh all evil deeds.' This brief prayer summarizes the Jewish concept of righteousness – *works!*" (ibid., 329–30).

78 Parallels offered include "all things work together for the good" (Rom 8:28) with "whatsoever heaven does is for the best" (Berahhot 60b) (ibid., 274); "for there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom 2:11) with the story of Yochannan Ben Van Zakki, who exclaimed, "If I am to come into the presence of this kind of King, should I not weep?" (ibid., 61); Paul's call to live "in diligence not slothful" (Rom 12:11) with "The day is short, the work is much, and the workmen are indolent (slothful), and reward much; and the Master of the house is insistent" (Mishnah 2:15) (ibid., 417); Paul's call to "put ye on of Christ" (Rom 13:14) with the rabbinic "putting on of the cloak of the Shekinah" (ibid., 442); and Paul's claim that "not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of law shall be justified" with Gamaliel's son, "a classmate of Paul's," in Pirque Aboth 1:18 (ibid., 61). The Davidic ancestry of the Messiah (Rom 15:12) is also reinforced by reference to Rabbi David Kimchi, Rabbi Aben Ezra, the Targums of Jonathan, and the Prayer Book (ibid., 471).

79 Ibid., 94, 178, 222, 230, 265–66. He cites in support *inter alia* Midrash Haneelam in Zohar Gen. 68:1; Midrash Kobleth 70:2; Sanhedrin 91b; Tanhumah Beshalla 3; Caphtor 14:2; Bereshita Rabba 12.

them. They share an awareness that both Jewish and Christian audiences were frustratingly ill-disposed toward their message.

## Joseph Shulam

The final example of a Pauline study by a Jewish believer in Jesus is different from the previous examples in that it is by an individual who, as a Messianic Jew, belongs to no Christian congregation. Nevertheless, it follows a similar approach in arguing for Jewish legitimacy, and in fact takes the idea of locating Paul and his ideas within a Jewish context to its logical extreme by attempting a systematic review of relevant Jewish literature from the biblical and post-biblical periods.

Joseph Baruch Shulam (1946–) is a Bulgarian-born Jew whose family immigrated to Israel in 1948. In 1962, he came to believe that Jesus (or Yeshua) was the Messiah and joined the Messianic Jewish community in Jerusalem; he is now an Elder of the Messianic Congregation Roeh Israel.<sup>80</sup> He has taught at Abilene Christian University in Jerusalem and has written *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Romans*,<sup>81</sup> which draws upon parallels in biblical, Qumranic, and rabbinic literature to establish Paul as a profoundly Jewish writer whose authentic Jewish theology is best interpreted in a Jewish literary context.

In the introduction to the commentary, Paul is acknowledged as a Roman citizen, either because his parents had been Roman citizens or because, as a citizen of Tarsus, he was automatically entitled to such status.<sup>82</sup> It is his Jewish credentials which Shulam emphasizes, however. Thus the future apostle was probably educated under the supervision of “Rabban Gamaliel,” or Gamaliel the Elder of the school of Shammai, after his Pharisaic parents had “encouraged him to seek a good rabbinic education in Jerusalem.”<sup>83</sup> As a result of his choice of education, Paul’s main identity lay with rabbinic Judaism, and he became “a master in rabbinic thought and forms.”<sup>84</sup> No mention is made of any conversion. He was known by his Hebrew name, Sha’ul, as well as by the Roman name Paul,<sup>85</sup> and spoke Hebrew as well as Greek.<sup>86</sup> While the letters of this Diaspora Jew were written



80 After attaining an M.A. in the History of Jewish Thought in the Second Temple Period from Hebrew University and three years’ study of Rabbinics and Jewish Thought at Diaspora Yeshiva in Jerusalem, Shulam established the Netivah Bible Instruction Ministry, which aims “to study and teach the Jewish background of the New Testament, providing a bridge between Jews and Christians and Judaism and Christianity, and nurturing the Messianic Jewish community in Israel” (Joseph Shulam and Hillary Le Cornu, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Romans* [Baltimore, MA: Lederer Books, 1997], 529).

81 Shulam’s research assistant, Le Cornu (1959–), studied at Edinburgh and at Hebrew University. A staff member of Netivah Bible Instruction Ministry, she is also committed to Messianic Judaism, having worked at the Messianic Midrasha in Israel.

82 Ibid., 12.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid., 5, 12.

85 Ibid., 23. Shulam cites Acts 7:58; 8:1; 9:1, 11, 17.

86 Ibid. Shulam cites Acts 21:37, 40.

in Greek, they nevertheless reflect his training in a rabbinic tradition and Hebrew linguistic and thought patterns.<sup>87</sup> Shulam has no doubts whatsoever in this regard. As he puts it,

Paul himself, of course, was Jewish, and his language, terminology, methodology, and style all reflect the Jewish education which he received and the Jewish traditions in which he was brought up.<sup>88</sup>

Texts (mainly from the book of Acts) are cited to show how the apostle referred to himself as a Pharisee,<sup>89</sup> lived his life as a Pharisee, and was "Torah-observant, obedient to rabbinic regulations, and proud of his Jewish heritage."<sup>90</sup> At the same time, he is said to have had a close relationship with the Sanhedrin, as indicated by their letters of recommendation permitting him to bring followers of Yeshua to Jerusalem to trial. What little doubt Shulam shows concerning the accuracy of the New Testament evidence about Paul's life tends to be expressed as criticism of occasional lapses of knowledge of Jewish custom or law. For example, the Actian account of the execution of Stephen is censored for having missed the halakhic significance of Paul's role as cloak-holder, which reflected his official capacity as a representative of the priestly authorities.<sup>91</sup>

Shulam is keen to convince the reader that the apostle's key arguments and goals are derived from the prophets, and that his teachings about Israel, the end times, the nature of the Messiah, and God's interest in the Gentiles are well integrated in the theological landscape of Second Temple Judaism. The idea that there is anything new about Paul's conclusions is, he argues, the result of an over-emphasis upon the Hellenistic background of the New Testament and ignorance among Christian scholars regarding its Jewish and rabbinic character.<sup>92</sup> Jewish scholars, too, have been misled by the overwhelming power of the Reformation view of Paul as the champion of a "theology of grace," and later as the main exponent of the gentilization of the Jewish Scriptures and the resultant new Christian faith.<sup>93</sup> It is therefore incumbent upon this Messianic Jew to correct the erroneous view of mainstream Jewish and Christian scholars on the place of Paul in salvation history.

It has become obvious through time that this neglect or contempt for the Jewish character of the New Testament has played a large part in the formation of the claim that Paul was in fact the author of

87 Ibid., 1.

88 Ibid., 3.

89 Shulam cites Acts 23:6; 26:5; and Phil 3:5.

90 Shulam, 12. Shulam cites Acts 22:3; 23:6; 26:4–7; 28:17; Rom 9:3; 2 Cor 11:22; and Phil 3:5–6.

91 Shulam cites Sanhedrin 42b as evidence of the halakhic requirement for an official to stand at the door of the court with a cloak, in order to signal for the accused to be brought back if new witnesses appeared, even four or five times (ibid., 12).

92 Ibid., 3.

93 Ibid., 4.

a new religion (Christianity). We are endeavouring as far as possible to redress this "historical aberration" and to demonstrate that the New Testament is a Jewish book *and that Jews who believe in Yeshua remain Jews*.<sup>94</sup> [italics mine]

Once one has rescued Paul from the charge of inventing Christianity, Shulam suggests, the Jewish authenticity of the first-century apostle's thought can be extrapolated to those who have come to acknowledge his Messiah in the modern era.

The methodology adopted in the book resembles in many respects the methodology of post-modern literary theory and the concept of inter-textuality. While little or no attempt is made to historically situate Paul's letter or to conduct any kind of source criticism,<sup>95</sup> the text is to be interpreted subjectively by the reader in the light of parallel readings from other texts; the commentary simply assists in this process by facilitating the reader's access to a range of potentially relevant texts.<sup>96</sup> The uncritical inclusion of materials found in rabbinic works compiled centuries after Paul wrote Romans, which Shulam acknowledges that some will regard as anachronistic, is justified by the observation that such rabbinic literature contained oral traditions with an ancient pedigree.<sup>97</sup> His treatments of Romans 5 and 12 are illustrative of these issues. In the first case, he purports to demonstrate the apostle's use of rabbinic exegetical principles:

Romans 5 is a masterful illustration of an analogy [*binyan av*] built upon a string of variations of a *fortiori* [*kal ve-chomer*] inferences: "if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God [. . .] how much more we shall be saved by his life" [v. 10]; "if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, how much more those who receive the abundance of grace [. . .] will reign in life through the one, Yeshua the Messiah [v. 17]."<sup>98</sup>

94 Ibid., 4.

95 The one gesture in this direction is made when Shulam argues that Paul's letters are written for the public forum, and therefore, "the genre of rabbinic thought takes precedence over that of private communication." Having said that, he makes it clear that "since Paul is not engaged in talmudic debate with other Rabbis, his letter is not as tightly bound by the constraints of dialectic argument in the Talmud itself." As a source, "Romans could be added to the list of contemporary midrashic compilations of the period" for it (i) is an exposition of scripture, and (ii) employs midrashic principles such as verbal analogy (*gezerah shavah*), analogy (*binyan av*), and a *fortiori* (*kal ve-chomer*) (ibid., 6, 7).

96 Ibid., 9.

97 Shulam cites the Israeli Second Temple specialist, David Flusser: "The entire corpus of rabbinic literature is an expression of a constant stream of oral transmission. . . . Thus the specific character of rabbinic literature not only permits us, but even obligates us to include post-Christian rabbinic sources as an inseparable part of the investigation of the Jewish roots of Christianity" (David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988], iii-xv), as cited in Shulam, 9.

98 Shulam, 17, 191, 199.



In the second case, Shulam defends Romans 12:9–21<sup>99</sup> against those commentators who are uncomfortable with the apparently politically quietist attitude Paul espouses, by pointing to two principles derived respectively from Talmud (relating to conversion) and from the Qumran community (relating to the Day of Judgment). Thus Hillel reportedly said that in order to win converts, “a man should not rejoice when among people who weep or weep when among those who rejoice. [. . .] This is the general rule: A man should not deviate from the custom of his companions or from society.”<sup>100</sup> Likewise, certain Qumran documents suggest that it is correct to submit to evil rulers so that God will punish them in the Day of Judgment.<sup>101</sup> By juxtaposing such parallels, Paul’s apparently *laissez faire* attitude becomes embedded within a Jewish worldview that many within the Messianic community today would recognize as a pragmatic strategy rather than an expression of quietism. And, in fact, much of the *Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Romans* is profoundly shaped by such ideological aims and objectives. As Shulam himself puts it,

We offer this commentary on the book of Romans as a Jewish text in the hope that it will bring to the reader a broader and deeper appreciation of the Jewish nature of the New Testament writings as a whole. [. . . W]e also hope that this volume will go some way in redressing the historical mistake committed by the Church of cutting itself off from its own roots. Our most fervent desire is perhaps that this commentary will also serve to return Yeshua himself to his own people, in demonstrating that the New Testament is not a Christian book representing a different faith but a Jewish text embodying an authentic Jewish interpretation of the Tanakh [Old Testament].<sup>102</sup>

Thus Paul not only embodied Messianic Jewish theology for Shulam, but his writings remain a key resource for modern Messianic Jews who wish to correct Gentile errors of understanding, to reclaim Paul as a Jew and, it is clearly implied, to convince the people of Israel of the good news of their Messiah’s coming.

Historically, the Hebrew Christian community has been notoriously fragmented, something that is perhaps inevitable insofar as it is composed of strong-willed, Jewish individuals who have taken the momentous, socially disastrous decision to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Nevertheless, a few generalizations can be made about the use of the Apostle Paul as a platform from which to articulate their views. Jewish believers in Jesus such as Levertoff, Mills, and Shulam are uncompromising in their insistence

99 “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. . . . If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

100 Shulam, 417. Shulam cites *Derekh Erez Rabbah* 7:7 and *Derekh Erez Zuta* 5:5.

101 *Ibid.*, 411. Shulam cites (Community) Rule 1QS 9:21–23, 10:17–25.

102 *Ibid.*, 17.

that their perspective is not only legitimately Jewish but is, in fact, the most authentic form of Jewishness extant. While they are not slow to criticize the misunderstandings of Gentile Christians, which perhaps explains the medium of commentary, they are quicker still to strike out pre-emptively against the views of other Jews who are opposed to their very *raison d'être*. This is unsurprising, and simply reflects the fact that the issue of Jewish belief in

Jesus is one of the rawest, most bitter ideological disputes within modern Jewry. For the thinkers discussed above, the image of Paul that emerges is that of a Messianic hero who, following the path opened up by his Nazarene master, realized the Jewish dream of bringing all mankind to God, who was profoundly attached to (and not hostile toward) Jewish tradition and custom, and whose ostensibly unfamiliar emphases, such as original sin, are presented as entirely unproblematic from a Jewish perspective. In contrast to other Jewish approaches, such Jewish believers in Jesus offer a caveat-free reclamation of a Jewish Paul.

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# Education in Israel

by **David Zadok**

## Introduction

As I look at the life of believers and the church in Israel and see the growth, maturity, and diversity of ministries in which the church is involved, I realize that there is much to be thankful to the Lord for. Much has been accomplished in the past decade, and for that we ought to be grateful to the Lord of the harvest who has sent laborers into the Promised Land. At the same time, I acknowledge the many challenges that we are facing and the task that lies before us. In the 93rd issue of the *LCJE Bulletin*, Mitch Glaser writes of areas of growth, challenge, and blessing.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the issue of *Mishkan* dedicated to the Messianic movement in Israel provides a comprehensive look at evangelism, theological training, leadership growth, music, and issues of reconciliation in Israel.<sup>2</sup>

The word of God has always influenced society. The gospel has brought light to dark places and has affected people and cultures. This can be seen in many ways and in various areas of life in our fallen world. The gospel has brought about revolutionary changes, transforming the core values of societies. One can look at those countries influenced by Judeo-Christian values and see their advancement in science, breakthroughs in medicine, and technological innovations. It is no surprise to note the high percentage of scientists and Nobel laureates from western cultures, and from among the Jewish people in particular. "Just looking at the period since the mid-nineteenth century we find that some 25 per cent of the world's scientists have been Jews."<sup>3</sup> That is over one hundred times more than the proportion of the Jewish population in the world. "It has also been estimated that in 1978, over half the Nobel Prize winners were Jewish. Over fifty percent of the main contributors to human progress that year came from 0.21 per cent of the population!"<sup>4</sup> These statistics clearly show us the disproportionate positive contribution of the Jewish nation to society at large.

1 Mitch Glaser, "Reflections on a Month in Israel," *LCJE Bulletin* 93 (2008): 6–13.

2 Various writers, "The Messianic Movement in Israel Today," *Mishkan* 46 (2006): 4–46.

3 Steve Maltz, *The People of Many Names: Towards a Clearer Understanding of the Jewish People* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2005), 2.

4 *Ibid.*, 2.



One of the fields in which change and progress is evident is education, from grade school to graduate studies. This is the area I wish to discuss in this paper, with emphasis on grade school. I hope you will be encouraged by developments in this field and will support it by prayer and other means as the Lord leads.

## Old Testament Teaching

The Old Testament places great importance on instruction both at home and in the community. From the very beginning of God's revelation to his people, the responsibility of teaching the younger generations was emphasized. God's perspective has always been an eternal one, and he commanded the people of Israel to teach their children God's ways. Moses taught God's commandments and statutes as he received them from the Lord (Deut 6:1). In the Shema passage, we are commanded to teach these precepts diligently to our children (Deut 6:7).

In Deuteronomy 6, God commanded the people of Israel to study and to teach his word to their children and to their children's children. The Shema highlights the principle of parenting that is based on teaching God's law in all circumstances of life. The Jewish father and mother were responsible to teach their children the Scriptures so that they would learn to live by them. However, in order to know and to teach the law, they needed to be able to read the law, and so our forefathers began to teach their children how to read.

In the Old Testament, the root word *lamed* (to teach, to learn) appears no less than eighty-seven times.<sup>5</sup> There are other roots that convey the idea of teaching and instructing, such as *yarah* (Exod 4:12; Lev 10:11).<sup>6</sup> Education was to play an important part in the lives of the people of Israel, and was a means to preserve them and to pass the torch on to coming generations.

The book of Proverbs is associated with such teaching. God's people find there much instruction and exhortation.

This book [Proverbs] has no very obvious order in it, but so far as it has any single theme, that theme is education. This is brought out by the Preface, which introduces the various collections of Proverbs that make it up. The aim of the book, the compiler declares, is "To know wisdom and instruction; To discern the words of understanding. . . . To give subtlety to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion."<sup>7</sup>

5 The word is used eighty-seven times in eighty different verses and in different forms in the Old Testament.

6 It also means to shoot or throw, but it is mainly used to mean instructing. In Hebrew the word for teacher (*moreh*) is based on this root.

7 William Boyd and Edmund J. King, *History of Western Education* (London: A & C, 1972), 57.



Proverbs, more than any other book of the Scriptures, highlights the importance of education and instruction.

### New Testament Teaching

As there is continuity between the Old and New Testaments, we can find similar emphases in the New Testament. The Greek word *didaskow* appears ninety-seven times.<sup>8</sup> A similar emphasis is laid on the subject of teaching and instruction. The followers of Jesus were commanded to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that their Master had commanded them (Matt 28:20). Teaching continues to play an important role in the lives of the followers of Jesus.

### Beyond the New Testament Era

The teachings of both the Old and New Testaments were applied in the life of the church beyond the first century and throughout the centuries, in different parts of the world and with diverse methodologies. Both Jews

**Not long after Gutenberg's machine, two German Jews became the pioneers of Hebrew printing when in 1488 they published the first complete Hebrew Bible.**

and Christians found ways to educate their children and kinsmen, and often others beyond that sphere. For this reason it is not surprising to note that once Gutenberg invented the printing press, the Bible was the first book to be printed. Not long after Gutenberg's machine, two German Jews became the pioneers of Hebrew printing when in 1488 they published the

first complete Hebrew Bible.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the centuries the church was often involved in educating the masses. The concept of Sunday school as we know it today was the fruit of the Christian's desire to educate the children so that they could read the Word of God on their own. This was particularly true following the Reformation, when the Bible was translated into German and later other languages. This enabled the average person, who did not read Latin, to enjoy and to benefit from the written Word of God.

Robert Raikes (1735–1811) of Gloucester, England, is known as the founder of the Sunday School Union in England. Since many children were poor and employed most of the week, they could not attend school. He decided to establish classes for them on Sundays. He began this task in 1780. Within a century almost six million children in England were attending these schools. In the United States, there is evidence that instruction in the Scriptures was given to children on Sundays as early as 1669. But it

<sup>8</sup> The word is used ninety-seven times in ninety-one different verses and in different forms in the New Testament.

<sup>9</sup> Abba Eban, *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews* (New York: Summit Books, 1984), 197.

was not until 1786 that a Sunday school patterned on Raikes' plan was founded in Hanover, Virginia, by the Methodist preacher Francis Asbury.

During the years of the Reformation, various catechisms and confessions were penned in order to instruct in the fundamental teachings of the Scriptures. These documents provide a tool for parents and church leaders to teach their children and their congregations. This is why HaGefen Publishing has recently translated the Heidelberg catechism into Hebrew, and is in the process of publishing a small children's catechism.

The early Christians went out to preach the gospel as commanded by Christ, motivated by love. But they did more than preach the gospel; they revolutionized their society by getting involved in it. As John Stott puts it,

Nothing has such a humanising influence as the gospel. Later they [the early Christians] founded schools, hospitals, and refuges for the outcast. Later still they abolished the slave trade and freed the slaves, and they improved the conditions of workers in mills and mines and of prisoners in gaols. They protected children from commercial exploitation in the factories of the West and from ritual prostitution in the temples of the East. Today they bring leprosy sufferers both the compassion of Jesus and modern methods of reconstructive surgery and rehabilitation. They care for the blind and the deaf, the orphaned and widowed, the sick and the dying. They get alongside junkies, and stay alongside them during the traumatic period of withdrawal. They set themselves against racism and political oppression. . . .<sup>10</sup>

"In England, however, since education was pioneered by the Church, successive Education Acts have required the state schools to provide religious education."<sup>11</sup>

The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments have given us a great legacy to follow. And while much has been done, there is much left to be done. The gospel needs to go forth and bring light to a dark world.

## Israel Today

When we look at the issue of education in Israel, there is much to be thankful for. In the remainder of this paper, I will look at the subject from my personal point of view. The institutions mentioned or initiatives surveyed are not comprehensive, but I hope they will be beneficial for your encouragement, prayers, and support.

Obviously, much can be written about education in Israel both at the grade school and college levels, whether formal or informal. I will focus mainly on grade school, as the issue of higher education has been sur-

10 John Stott, *Involvement: Being a Responsible Christian in a Non-Christian Society* (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1985), 42.

11 Ibid., 83.



veyed in a previous issue of *Mishkan*.<sup>12</sup> As the church in Israel has grown in numbers, the need for Messianic/Christian education has become more pressing. We are only at the beginning of the road, and though much has been done, a greater task lies ahead of us.

The first school was established in 1990, under the Israel Trust of the Anglican Church (ITAC). Back then it commenced as a combined class for the first and second grades. Through many years the school has struggled with gaining recognition, finding qualified teachers, and numerical growth. As in many new ministries, and even in more established ones, finances were often a burden and challenge.

Today the school has grown to 120 students from kindergarten through grade nine. The school staff today consists of twenty-six men and women, some working full-time and others part-time. Most of these are certified teachers and administration staff. The principal of the school is an Israeli who began at the school as a teacher and worked her way up. The school uses the basic curriculum of the Ministry of Education, supplemented with Bible classes.

The second school was established in the north of Israel some years later. Though this school is smaller than the one in Jerusalem, nevertheless it has impacted the believing community. Despite opposition, it has been able to stand on its feet and to provide a Bible-based, quality education for the children.

It is worth mentioning the Arab Christian schools in the land as well. These schools are scattered throughout Israel, though mainly in the North. They have made a great contribution to the students and have been an outstanding example to their local community. A high percentage of their graduates have been accepted into universities in the land.

The educational system in Israel has been going downhill in recent years. Israeli kids have been falling behind in various international tests. Violence, abusive language, and immoral behavior have increased in the schools. The use of drugs and sexual promiscuity have been growing steadily over

the years, presenting parents with yet another challenge. Beyond all these, humanism and New Age material are being taught openly in schools, including evolution and myths about the Old Testament. The belief that David and Jonathan were homosexuals is taught openly in some of the middle schools, ironically in Bible class!

**These facts do not provide a very pleasant picture of our educational system, but unfortunately this is the reality.**

These facts do not provide a very pleasant picture of our educational system, but unfortunately this is the reality. The educational system has been pressured to allow the opening of more private schools, and to permit home schooling. In 2006, there were 160 applications for home schooling,

12 Ray Pritz, "Messianic Institutions for Theological Training in Israel," *Mishkan* 46 (2006): 17–25.

most of which were authorized.<sup>13</sup>

Two years ago, a two-day conference was held in Jerusalem for people with an interest in starting Christian schools. Over thirty people showed up from various parts of Israel. The central message was that it is time to take steps toward establishing Messianic schools in the land.

The consensus was to provide a better educational system for our children. At those meetings an informal national committee was formed in order to pave the way for the various initiatives to move forward. The committee's main role is to gather the information needed for the set-up of schools. Many of the frequently asked questions are to be answered by the committee in order to save time for others. At the moment there are two state-run school systems, the regular and the orthodox. In the long run, the committee hopes to apply for a separate system of education status from the Ministry of Education.

It is encouraging to see the number of qualified Messianic/Christian teachers. While the salaries of teachers in Israel are among the lowest, yet there are those that consider this career to be a calling and are working in the system despite the challenges. I assume that as the idea of such schools grows, there will be more and more believers who will look into the possibility of getting a certificate in teaching.

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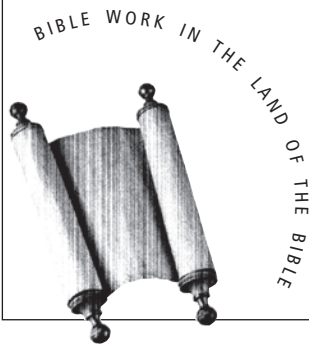
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## Conclusion

While there are only two Messianic schools in Israel, many more are being planned. There are initiatives in the greater Tel-Aviv area, Haifa, Beer-Sheva, and other cities. The need is growing as the number of Messianic families in the land grows, and as the Ministry of Education is perceived to be failing to provide a quality education for the children. More and more people are thinking, praying, and working towards the goal of establishing such schools and obtaining degrees in education. The road ahead is long and steep, and the bureaucratic obstacles are great. The funding of such endeavors is another challenge, but we know that God's work will not lack the means to be accomplished. So we can say with the new president of the United States, *Yes we can, yes we can* – but only by God's grace.

13 Most of the requests came from families involved in the New Age (New Spirituality) movement, which is very strong in Israel. A few of the applicants were from the Messianic community, and were approved.





# First “Organized” Bible-work in 19th Century Jerusalem

Part IX: Joseph Wolff and Lady Georgiana in Jerusalem in 1829

by Kai Kjær-Hansen

**In the eighth article in this series, it was demonstrated that even though, from the summer of 1824 through the spring of 1827, Protestant Bible-men now and then came to stay in Jerusalem, not very much was done in the way of distribution of Scriptures. The cause was not so much the bans and bulls that were issued against their work, as the very troubled political situation. They nonetheless continued the lease of the Bible Society Room at Mar Michael in Jerusalem, probably hoping for better times.**

**In this article, we will follow Joseph Wolff during his third and last visit to Jerusalem in 1829. He was banned, not just by the Jews and the Roman Catholics, but also by the Greek Orthodox, who up until that time had supported the Bible work eagerly. The reason for this will now be investigated.**

At the beginning of January 1829, Joseph Wolff and Lady Georgiana arrive in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> They had been married back in England in February 1827. On their arrival in Beirut in May 1828, the city is without Protestant missionaries. Due to circumstances caused by the Greek Liberation War, the latter have taken refuge in Malta. With ill-concealed criticism of the evacuation of the missionaries, Wolff writes: “Here at Beyrout, we live as quietly and as safely as at London.”<sup>2</sup> Through various channels the couple tries to get a *firman*, a travel permit, so they can proceed to Jerusalem. When this

1 About Wolff's two earlier visits in 1822 and 1823, see *Mishkan* 49 (2006): 42–58; and 54 (2008): 64–79. The sources for the visit in 1829 are partly Wolff's contemporary journals and letters sent to the London Jews Society (LJS), which are published consecutively (in extracts) in the *Jewish Expositor* and the *Monthly Intelligence*; and partly contributions in the form of letters which Wolff in 1839 sent to Sir Thomas Baring, Bart and which were printed in the book *Journal of the Rev. Joseph Wolff . . . Containing an Account of His Missionary Labours From the Years 1827 to 1831; and From the Years 1835 to 1838* (London: James Burns, 1839). As a whole, this book is a curious hodgepodge from a historical and literary point of view, with quite a few lapses, e.g. concerning dates (year, month, day of the month); much of the material is of an anecdotal character and is apt to make the modern reader smile. But if it is read critically together with the original correspondence from 1829, the material from 1839 does fill in some historical gaps.

2 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 33.

fails, they go to Cyprus, and later to Egypt.<sup>3</sup> Here they acquire a passport to Yemen. On January 7, 1829, they nevertheless arrive in Jerusalem.

The day after his arrival in Jerusalem, Wolff, who in November 1826 had been employed as a missionary for the London Jews Society (LJS),<sup>4</sup> writes this to the committee in London:

You will be surprised to find my letter dated from the city of Jerusalem in these troublous times.

After we had taken at Cairo our passports for Yemen, Lady Georgiana said, "Let us go to Jerusalem;" and to Jerusalem we went, and at Jerusalem we are, residing in the convent of Mar Michael, situated upon Mount Calvary; and at Jerusalem we hope to stay."<sup>5</sup>

The couple had left Cairo on December 16, 1828, with as many as seventeen hired camels.<sup>6</sup> Surely some of these must have been loaded with Scriptures; during the visit in 1829 there is no indication that Wolff is short of Scriptures for distribution. Other camels were loaded with gifts that the couple hand out generously, not least to persons in authority; I wonder if one camel carried the pianoforte which Lady Georgiana later on played in Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup> Even more important, they arrive at Jerusalem with high eschatological expectations. Wolff is convinced that the second coming of Christ will take place in Jerusalem in the year 1847, an opinion he does not keep to himself but, in his own words, had maintained strongly in Jerusalem in 1829. He not only sees himself as "Missionary to the Jews in Palestine and Persia"; he is also "Apostle to the Jews."<sup>8</sup>

It is *the apostle* Joseph Wolff who makes his entry to Jerusalem in 1829 – together with his Lady. How did it go?

## Wolff and the Muslim Authorities

It certainly is an audacious mission Wolff and Lady Georgiana are on: as English citizens, they have come to Jerusalem without a *firman*. The na-

3 Ibid., 33; 108–12; 278–80.

4 It would require a separate article to describe the tense relationship between LJS and Wolff, right from the beginning of his employment and to the break between them in 1831. In LJS's official organs this tension finds expression in, among others, *Jewish Expositor* (1830): 166; *Monthly Intelligence* (1830): 111; *Monthly Intelligence* (1831): 47; and *Monthly Intelligence* (1831): 160, where it is said: "The Rev. J. Wolff is not the missionary of our Society." In this rupture – this is the way LJS sees it and the way it is reflected in LJS's minutes (Bodleian Library, Dep. CMJ, for the period 1829–31) – are included Wolff's opaque money transactions, his articles (cf. note 8 below), which were published without LJS's sanction, and his refusal to come to London to explain himself.

5 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 317.

6 Ibid., 317.

7 Wolff, 254.

8 The former term is from a letter from Jerusalem dated April 20, 1829, published in the *Morning Herald*, September 5, 1829; the latter appears in connection with a prophecy dated Limasol, Cyprus, December 21, 1829, and published in the same newspaper on April 5, 1830. Both articles are pasted in to the LJS's minutes from a meeting on June 19, 1830 (Bodleian Library, Dep. CMJ, c.13 #952).



val Battle of Navarino in the autumn of 1827, when the combined British, French, and Russian fleets sank Turkish and Egyptian battleships, has not been forgotten. In 1829, Turkey is at war with Russia. Wolff writes: "We are now at Jerusalem, where at present the English name is as much hated by the Turks as that of the Russians."<sup>9</sup> Against that background it is surprising that Wolff has no difficulty getting residence permits in Jerusalem.

Wolff is not well on his arrival – the first night he has to call for someone to bleed him – and therefore he cannot straightaway go to see the Governor of Jerusalem, who therefore sends some representatives to him.<sup>10</sup> On January 17, Wolff personally goes to see the Governor, and tells him "that I was an Englishman, and had come here with my wife, for the purpose of remaining. That I came, therefore, to ask his Excellency's permission. The Governor immediately granted my request, and told me that I might stay here as long as I liked."<sup>11</sup> This, however, was no guarantee for the future, for at regular intervals one Governor of Jerusalem replaced the other. When the next governor came into office in the middle of April, nothing was changed concerning Wolff's residence permit.

It appears that Wolff, to begin with, mostly distributes Scriptures from his rooms at Mar Michael. Attempts by the Jews to have him expelled from Jerusalem fail; see below. One day in the beginning of April, Wolff's servant, Antonio, sells Scriptures in the market-place, which is followed up by a reprimand from the authorities, but they tell Wolff that he "might sell them at home."<sup>12</sup> On April 27, Wolff is introduced to the newly arrived Governor: "His excellency received me civilly," writes Wolff, "but observed that Jews – *especially Jews*, and likewise Greeks and Catholics, had complained of my circulating books printed in England, which he could not allow. I said that these books were the Bible and the Gospel; and I cannot be contented with this decree, but I shall try to get a *firman* from Constantinople."<sup>13</sup> Yet a few days later he gets permission from the Mufti, Taher Effendi, to "circulate the Bible among Jews and Christians, *privately*, but not *publicly*."<sup>14</sup>

So it follows that these restrictions were not so severe that they made Wolff's work impossible. It should therefore be taken with a pinch of salt when Kelvin Crombie, in 1991, writes this about Wolff's distribution of Scriptures and his witnessing to the Jewish people: "All of this missionary activity was carried out despite direct orders to the contrary from the Turkish governor."<sup>15</sup>

9 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 319.

10 Wolff, 208–09.

11 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 356–57. Cf. Wolff, 214, where the Governor "said no one would interfere with us if we staid ten years."

12 Wolff, 246.

13 *Monthly Intelligence* (1830): 13. He does not get one, of course.

14 Wolff, 252.

15 Kelvin Crombie, *For the Love of Zion: Christian Witness and the Restoration of Israel* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), 21.



## Wolff and the Jews

March 1 is an important date in the description of Wolff's contact with Jews in Jerusalem. From this day the religious leadership forbade dealings with him. According to, for example, W. T. Gidney, this had no real effect, as Jews continued to come "in crowds" to Wolff even after March 1.<sup>16</sup> This is a view I am going to question.

### *From the Arrival on January 7 to March 1, 1829*

From his arrival and until March 1, Wolff has numerous contacts with Jews. By January 17, he has recovered enough from his illness that he is able to go out into the town. But before then, he had received visits from "more than twenty Jews, as well Spanish as Polish, to whom I proclaimed openly salvation by Jesus Christ, without the least preface; yea, even more distinctly, more openly than I ever did before. I have distributed among them Hebrew Bibles and Testaments."<sup>17</sup> Compared to his two earlier visits, he has to some degree changed his strategy: "I do not, however, seek the rabbies [*sic*], but the 'poor', for to the poor the Gospel must be preached."<sup>18</sup> This, however, does not prevent contact with a number of rabbis – sometimes mentioned by name. But it would seem that Wolff no longer believes that the long Talmudic discussions, which he had involved himself in during earlier visits, will lead to a positive result.

But contact is not necessarily the same as responsiveness. After a conversation with Rabbi Abraham Ben Jeremiah, whom he had already met in 1822, Wolff says about him: "I never saw a more decidedly obstinate character, determined to oppose every point, and not yield an inch." Another Jew "called on us, and told us he had found me mentioned in Job i. 7: '*Satan came from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it!*'" On the Sabbath, January 17, he has been invited to come and see the rich Jew Joseph Amzalag; "I never saw a Jew more fond of his money than he is." In Amzalag's house Wolff converses with "a great many Rabbies," but one of them had refused to shake hands with him. When asked why, "He said he was afraid that if I touch him he should become a Christian," Wolff writes.<sup>19</sup>

A few days after this, there is a clash between Wolff and Amzalag.<sup>20</sup> Amzalag had come to see Wolff already the day after his arrival: "We talk-



16 W. T. Gidney, *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews: From 1809 to 1908* (London: LJS, 1908), 122.

17 *Jewish Intelligence* (1829): 319.

18 *Ibid.*, 357.

19 Wolff, 209–10.

20 Wolff had first met Amzalag (Amzalak, Amzalack), a rich English-speaking Jew from Gibraltar, in Acre early in 1822, prior to his first visit to Jerusalem. Amzalag had then introduced him to some Jews and also given him a letter of introduction to a Jew in Jerusalem; cf. *Jewish Expositor* (1822): 300, 348. Amzalag later settled in Jerusalem, where, among others, the English missionaries W. B. Lewis and G. E. Dalton met him in April 1825; cf. *Jewish Expositor* (1826): 134. After the clash with Wolff, Amzalag and John Nicolayson had some contact with each other; see next article in this series.

ed over the circumstances of my former visits to Jerusalem; he begged us to call on him and his wife."<sup>21</sup> During the following two weeks they met several times. Amzalag even asks Wolff to write to Lady Hester Stanhope and ask her to pay back the "money, she had owed him for several years."<sup>22</sup> Wolff describes the clash in the following way:

As I spoke to him always about Christ, and told him distinctly that the Talmud was a lie, and that he would go to hell, if he did not believe, he was very angry, and said that he would forbid the Jews coming to me; however, Jews come to me every day.<sup>23</sup>

Although Wolff, two weeks after his arrival, says that "Jews come to me every day," it does not mean that they are responsive to the gospel, which Wolff also makes clear in the same context:

Several of them, however, display such an obstinacy and wildness in their arguments, that my health is worn out, and my mind grieved; they never were so wild as they are now; but still there are some who give me much hope that they are not far from the kingdom of God, as is the case with Israel and Jacob, both of the Sephardim community; and it is remarkable, that I am mostly visited by the Sephardim, and but rarely by the Ashkenasim Jews.<sup>24</sup>

The break with Amzalag did not stop large numbers of Jews from continuously coming to Wolff. Until March 1, there are a number of examples of this, which there is no reason to question and which can be summed up in Wolff's words: "Jews continued to come in crowds, with whom I conversed whole days, some noisy, some very attentive."<sup>25</sup> At the end of February he writes, among other things: "I had at least forty and fifty Jews at once, disputing in the most noisy manner possible." And: "Forty two Jews came at once one day."<sup>26</sup>

Information about *distribution of Bibles* is, until March 1, conveyed in rather general terms: "We circulated a great many Bibles in Hebrew and

21 Wolff, 208.

22 Ibid., 210, 213. About this eccentric English Lady, who had settled in the mountains of Lebanon, her political power, her eschatological expectations, and her relations with English missionaries, see the summary in Hugh Evan Hopkins, *Sublime Vagabond: The Life of Joseph Wolff – Missionary Extraordinary* (Worthing: Churchman Publishing, 1984), 72–75.

23 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 357–58; cf. Wolff, 214, and under the date January 22, 1829: "The last visit he paid us, he told me he should not come no more, as I told him such humbug about Christianity, and of Jews being converted." Later Wolff is told that Amzalag had come home "quite mad," believing that he had been exposed to witchcraft during his visit at Wolff's; cf. Wolff, 230–31.

24 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 358.

25 Wolff, 221.

26 Ibid., 236–37. Cf. *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 358, with similar high numbers for visitors, even if the precise numbers vary a little.

Arabic among Jews and Christians."<sup>27</sup> And: "A great part of our time at home was taken up with selling Bibles at a low price."<sup>28</sup> The material at our disposal does not allow us to determine the amount of distributed Scriptures. In February, Wolff, on a couple of occasions, expresses his satisfaction with the way these Scriptures were received. "Several other Jews called, with whose zeal, sincerity, and candour, I felt great satisfaction. The eagerness with which all of them read the New Testament is surprising."<sup>29</sup> And: "Rabbi Menahem, the most turbulent of the Jews, came quite calm, and appeared impressed with the New Testament. He gave me proofs that he had attentively read it."<sup>30</sup> These examples seem to be the exception rather than the rule.

*From March 1 to the Departure on June 13, 1829*

March 1, 1829, becomes a turning point in Wolff's contact with Jews. Wolff writes: "On the first of March, Rabenu Zoosi,<sup>31</sup> the Chief Rabbi at Jerusalem, pronounced the sentence of excommunication against all those Jews who should visit me."<sup>32</sup>

This ban seems to have had a real effect. After March 1, it is no longer said that Jews come "in crowds" to Wolff, as claimed by, among others, Gidney.<sup>33</sup> The focus is now on what seem to be the repercussions of the excommunication – the burning and destruction of Hebrew New Testaments, much the same as what happened in 1822.

Wolff writes: "The Jews burnt several of the New Testaments I gave to them."<sup>34</sup> He writes a letter to an influential Jew in Damascus – Raphael Farkhi, "Minister of Finances" for the Pasha of Damascus – and encloses a New Testament. He informs Farkhi that "the Chief Rabbi at Jerusalem has caused many of these books to be torn," and he asks Farkhi "to write to

27 Wolff, 215.

28 Ibid., 216–17.

29 Ibid., 229.

30 Ibid., 232.

31 In the sources his name is also given as Zusi and Zuse; this is the Sephardic leader Rabbi Shlomo Moishe Suzin.

32 Wolff, 237.

33 Gidney writes: "The rabbi issued an excommunication which prevented the Jews from going to him [Wolff] for four days, but afterward they went 'in crowds'" (122). The source for this is doubtless the *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 358, which – admittedly – is tricky. Without giving all the details, under the date of March 4, the editors of the *Jewish Expositor* seem to have referred, and compressed, information about the time both *before* and *after* March 1. Things make sense when we consider the way the introduction begins: "We left Cairo two months last Friday" – the departure from Cairo had taken place on December 16, 1828. This implies that *some* of the information given under March 4, 1829, is about the time *before* March 1, for example: "Forty-six rabbies of the Spanish congregation visited us, to whom I proclaimed the Gospel of Christ." This interpretation is supported by what Wolff himself writes, on April 28, about the lack of contact with Jews after "the excommunication"; see below. Cf. also *Missionary Herald* (1829): 333, where it is said with reference to a letter from Wolff of April 24, 1829, "that crowds of Jews came and argued with him during the first two months of his residence, but that for the last month they had been deterred from coming by the excommunication of the rabbies [*sic*]. The Catholics are said to be quiet."

34 Wolff, 244.



Rabenu Zusi not to do so any more."<sup>35</sup> One thing is the naivety behind this enquiry, another is the way Wolff describes the reply. Instead of openly admitting that he did not get the desired assistance, he seems content that he got a reply at all: "There came also a scribe from Damascus, and his account was confirmed by many others, viz.: When Raphael Farkhi received my letter from Jerusalem, he assembled all the Rabbies and told them that he had received a letter from a great man from England, telling him that the Jews should become Christians. They resolved therefore to write to me a civil answer."<sup>36</sup>

When Jews stop coming to Wolff, he approaches, as a countermove, "a Russian Jew, who received us very kindly, and told me that he would procure me opportunities enough to speak with Jews."<sup>37</sup> But to little avail, which is seen in Wolff's comment on April 28: "The excommunication of the Jewish High Priests, however, is still felt, and scarcely a Jew comes near me, except one who professes himself to be convinced of the truth of the Gospel of Christ, and three Jewish ladies, who called on Lady Georgiana, and who were very inquisitive respecting our belief." In this connection it is amazing that Wolff can write with approval: ". . . the three ladies lamented that Jerusalem is now deprived of those liberally minded Rabbies, Rabbi Mendel, Rabbi Solomon Sapira, Abulafia, Secota, and Meyahez, who flourished six years ago."<sup>38</sup> As if, in 1822 and 1823, these had been on Wolff's side! It seems to have been forgotten that in 1822 Mendel had tried to prevent Jews from meeting Wolff and that Meyahez (Meyahes) had presided over the negotiations which had led to Wolff's promise that from now on he would cease distributing Scriptures among the Jews of Jerusalem.<sup>39</sup>

On May 4, Wolff writes that "the Jews seem to come back again by little and little." He disregards the well-meaning advice from some Jews to give Rabbi Suzin "a present" which might placate him. And further, on May 15: "The excommunication of the rabbies seems to wither away, for the Jews here begin to be very kind again towards me, and two of them have expressed their wish of being baptized. . . . I met with my old Jewish friends, who visited me frequently. . . ."<sup>40</sup> On June 1, he can write: "Joseph Maimoron, a Jew, has expressed his conviction of the truth of the Gospel, and he comes daily to me, and I pray with him to our blessed Saviour."<sup>41</sup> This individual was baptized in Jaffa; see below.

These events do not radically change the picture; Jerusalem is not open to the gospel. In mid-May, a Greek individual attempted to poison Wolff, and as a consequence of this, Wolff's activity was rather limited during the last weeks of his visit in 1829.

35 Ibid., 245.

36 Ibid., 249.

37 Ibid., 241.

38 *Monthly Intelligence* (1830): 13.

39 See *Mishkan* 49 (2006): 48–49, 56–57.

40 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 438–39.

41 Ibid., 440.

## Wolff, the Armenians, and the Roman Catholics

Throughout this period Wolff is on good terms with the Armenians.<sup>42</sup> The Roman Catholics are still dismissive of the idea of distribution of Scriptures in Jerusalem.

### *The Relationship to the Armenians*

The good relationship to the Armenians through this whole period is seen in the fact that Wolff has several meetings with Bogos (Boghos), the Armenian ex-Patriarch of Constantinople, who is now residing in Jerusalem. According to Wolff, Bogos had been forced to abdicate from his office in Constantinople due to an unsuccessful "attempt to reconcile the Armenian, Greek and Roman Catholic Churches with each other." In Jerusalem, where he relocated, he "has improved the Convent, and avowed his disbelief in the miracle of the Holy Fire."<sup>43</sup> Armenian Bibles are sold to Armenians through, among others, "Ahmed, our Muhammedan servant." Wolff maintains that Bogos "took a great interest in the conversion of the Jews; he promised to do all he could for these Jews at Jerusalem who desire baptism." Wolff finds it advisable "that the Missionaries who are in countries where either the Armenians or Syrians are, to have their converts baptized by some of the Bishops of those nations."<sup>44</sup>

### *The Relationship to the Roman Catholics*

The relationship to the Catholics is predominantly negative, which is hardly surprising. "The Romanist Priests have decidedly prohibited their flock from receiving the Bibles from me, though the edition I circulate is the edition of the Propaganda."<sup>45</sup> And: "The Latin monks told their flock that if one person belonging to their convent should take the Bible from us, they would apply to the Turks to have him turned out of the city."<sup>46</sup> This, however, does not stop the above-mentioned Ahmed getting a "Romanist" to purchase a New Testament for his son.<sup>47</sup> A few Jesuits from France receive French Bibles and Testaments from Wolff. Shortly thereafter, he is informed that these Scriptures were torn into pieces.<sup>48</sup>

## Wolff and the Greek Orthodox

The most surprising thing is that the Greeks, according to Wolff, participat-

42 In contrast to the growing tension between the Armenians and the American missionaries, caused by the fact that the earlier Armenian bishop, Carabet, has joined the Americans' work in Beirut; see *Mishkan* 57 (2008): 81.

43 Wolff, 228–29.

44 Ibid., 253–55.

45 Ibid., 218.

46 Ibid., 225.

47 Ibid., 253.

48 *Monthly Intelligence* (1830): 13. It should also be mentioned that Wolff, after he was poisoned, expresses his thanks to a Roman Catholic doctor who attended to him on that occasion; see below.



ed in the complaint made on April 27 to the new Governor about Wolff's *distribution* of Scriptures in Jerusalem; see above. Through the 1820s – and after Procopius' time – the Greeks were keen supporters of the Bible work, a fact which has been established in the earlier articles in this series. Is the Greek leadership now dominated by people who take a different view of the distribution of Scriptures? Or is Wolff's description historically inaccurate? Both explanations are possible. The point I wish to make is that the clash between the Greeks and Wolff, which led to their banning of him, is not *primarily* caused by his distribution of Bibles, but by circumstances related to the two "schools" for children that had been set up at the end of April 1829, and by Wolff's services in Arabic.

On April 28, Wolff writes: "We have now taken the whole upper apartment of the Greek convent of Mar Michael, containing nine rooms, at our private expense; and have already appointed a schoolmaster for children who might be disposed to learn the reading of the Gospel."<sup>49</sup> On May 4, Wolff writes that there are already "eight Arab-Greek boys"; in a letter from May 15, the number has increased to twenty boys. On May 4, it is said that Lady Georgiana "instructs a little girl"; on May 15, her school has grown to "seven girls of the Arab-Greek denomination."<sup>50</sup>

When the *locum tenens* Daniel Nazareth, the "vicar to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, residing at Constantinople,"<sup>51</sup> heard about the opening of the school, he was "much alarmed on account of the Turks, as they might make it a cause of tyranny upon them [the Greeks]. But on my agreeing with him that in case of any inquiry I would answer for it, he was satisfied," Wolff writes.<sup>52</sup>

The first schoolmaster was the son of Papas Ysa (Isa).<sup>53</sup> But soon after, the school was removed to the house of Papas Ysa and, as Wolff writes, "We were obliged to appoint the old schoolmaster, a man of 70 years of age, as teacher of the children. The real English of all this was, that the Greek Bishop did not like the children to be further instructed than just in saying their prayers."<sup>54</sup>

Contemporary with this school project, Wolff conducts services in Arabic on Sunday evenings which attract quite a few Greeks. "I had last Sunday [May 10]<sup>55</sup> fifty persons, who attended me with great attention."<sup>56</sup> Among these are also "boys" from the school; see below.

On May 15–16, Wolff is allegedly met with an attempt to poison him in the coffee-house which he normally uses for his conversations with Jews

49 Ibid., 13.

50 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 438–39.

51 Ibid., 357. In the 1839 material, he is also referred to as "the Bishop" or "the Greek Bishop." On his earlier visits Wolff did not have any disagreement with him.

52 Wolff, 251–52.

53 About Papas Ysa (Isa) Petros see *Mishkan* 49 (2006): 50; and 52 (2007): 30–32.

54 Wolff, 252.

55 The events mentioned in Wolff, 253–54, take place in May, even if April is given as the month; the days of the week and the dates do not correspond either. The most likely dates have been put in square brackets.

56 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 439.

and Christians, the place where he also invites the latter to his services in Arabic:

I went to the coffee-house, to converse as well with Jews as Christians, and drank a cup of coffee . . . in which I perceived a curious taste, I went home and felt unwell. Next morning [May 16] I went again to the coffee-house, to invite Greeks to the Sunday preaching, but as I was drinking another cup of coffee, I was seized with such a sickness, that I was obliged to go out, and in going home, I vomited several times, in such a manner, as left no doubt, either in my mind, or in them that saw me, that poison had been administered to me. My wife gave me castor oil, which removed the immediate symptoms, but I still suffer from the effects. There is no doubt the poison was furnished by Greeks; for, on Sunday, by permission of the Bishop, (after he had given his sanction in writing to our sending the boys to the old school-master,) an excommunication was read in the great church against all who should send either boys or girls to us.<sup>57</sup>

When Wolff looks back on this in 1839, he claims that the Bishop (Daniel Nazareth) had “been assailed by a number of Priests and Scribes, at the head of which was *Papas Isa Keturjee*, representing that we wished to make the children English, &c. and a great deal more such stuff, threatening to go to the Mahkame, a Turkish Tribunal.” Wolff continues:

On Sunday evening [May 17], the Superior of Mar Demetrio, seated himself in Mar Michael, and when the boys came to the preaching drove them away and beat them. When the excommunication was read in the Church, a poor man, the father of one of the scholars, exclaimed, “Why is this? The Englishman has done a good work. He fed our children, and has taught them to read: it is you that are bad;” and left the Church.<sup>58</sup>

The cause of the banning of Wolff seems to have little connection with his distribution of Scriptures. Through his school and preaching activities, he crosses some boundaries, which the Greeks cannot accept, especially since it concerns the church’s “children.” Even if Wolff does not necessarily wish to “make the children English,” i.e. Protestants, he wishes to make them something which they are not. When the children come to school, they receive meals; this could be construed as an attempt to “buy” them or their parents. From the end of the 1820s, there is a tradition among the Greeks that the Protestant missionaries also tried to persuade the children not to



57 Ibid., 439–40.

58 Wolff, 253–54. Cf. *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 440.

honor the icons.<sup>59</sup> In addition, Wolff in his preaching underlined that Jesus died “for poor sinners,” and strongly emphasized that Christ’s Second Coming would take place in the year 1847 – eschatological speculations which the Greek leadership probably did not want their children to be influenced by (see above, note 8).

### Wolff’s Mood on His Departure from Jerusalem

Wolff and Lady Georgiana leave Jerusalem disappointed and somewhat embittered. When he writes about it in 1839, he gives health reasons for this decision: “In the course of nine months I had ten attacks of inflammation in the liver; this induced us to leave Jerusalem and hasten to Alexandria.”<sup>60</sup> But this is not the full explanation. Wolff’s and Lady Georgiana’s mood on their departure is far better reflected in a letter from June 1, 1829, written two weeks before they left Jerusalem:

Our gracious Lord having now saved me from the deadly effect of the poison which had been administered to me by the Greeks, and which almost brought me to the grave, I must here express my public obligation to the Superior of the Catholic Convent, who sent his physician to me immediately, and whose medicine did a great deal of good. . . .

The excommunication pronounced by the Greek Patriarch [*sic*] against all those who would send their children to school, was one of the most treacherous acts that can be imagined, for I had established those schools with his sanction and approbation. The only reason he assigned in justification of his sentence of excommunication, was that several priests were against it. However, some of the Greeks are come back again, and send their children.

The report which the Jew Amzalack [*sic*] is spreading abroad, that I had bewitched several Jews, among whom he was one, whom I had bewitched so that he became quite mad, has had a great effect, so that the Jews scarcely dare to sit near me, or to touch me, fearing least the effect of witchcraft should come over them.

I intend, therefore, to leave Jerusalem after a few weeks, for some time, and go with Lady Georgiana to Alexandria, and perhaps come back to Jerusalem after a year. I never had such a trying time during the whole eight years of my missionary labours, as I have now. Letters

59 Cf. Neophytos’ “Extracts from Annals of Palestine 1821–1841,” in *Kirchengeschichte des Heiligen Landes*, Friedrich Heyer (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1984), 175. Here Neophytos of Cyprus describes how the Protestant missionaries feed the children in school, giving them a morning and a midday meal, and tell the children not to honor the icons. According to Heyer, this should have taken place in 1828 and should apply to the missionaries Jonas King and Pliny Fisk, which is impossible; King left the area in 1825 and Fisk died in 1825. Whether the error is due to Neophytos or Heyer, the matters they refer to might well apply to Wolff in 1829.

60 Wolff, 256.



of Jews come against me from Odessa, London, Persia, Constantinople, and other places.<sup>61</sup>

On June 13, 1829, Wolff and his Lady left Jerusalem. They never returned. Few people said goodbye to them, of the Greeks only the superior of Mar Michael, Yoel, which is in stark contrast to the leave-taking Wolff had in 1822 and 1823.<sup>62</sup>

Over Wolff's departure hovers the allegation that he used money in an attempt to enlist supporters for his cause.

### **After Wolff's Departure from Jerusalem – According to Wolff**

From Jerusalem, Wolff first went to Jaffa. About events related to his stay in Jerusalem, he writes from Cyprus on July 15. While he was in Jaffa, some Jews from Jerusalem came to him, among these Joseph Shuah Maimoron (see above), whom Wolff baptizes "in the house of the British Consul, which was, in ancient time, the house of Simon the tanner."<sup>63</sup> "He will soon follow us here," Wolff adds in his letter from Cyprus. Whether or not Maimoron did so is an open question.

In Jaffa Wolff also met approximately one hundred Jewish men and women from Constantinople; these had come to Palestine "for the purpose of dying at Jerusalem." One of these knows of Jews in Constantinople "who are disciples of Joseph Wolff." This person "promised to come to us to Alexandria, and then he will be baptized by me," Wolff writes. Whether or not he did so is also uncertain.

More important is what Wolff has to say about Papas Ysa:

After our departure from Jerusalem, the Greeks<sup>64</sup> and Jews accused Papas Isa Petrus to the Turkish Government, as one, who had become an English-man [Protestant]. The Governor, in order to press money from him, put him in prison. I heard it eight days after his imprisonment, during my stay at Jaffa.

Wolff intervenes through an express letter to "the great Omar Effendi, and desired Papas Isa's liberation from prison." Wolff continues:

Papas Isa was immediately set free; but as he would have been still in danger after my departure from Jaffa, he came to me to Jaffa with his two sons; and as Mr. Kruse, at Cairo, is greatly in want of a schoolmas-

61 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 440.

62 Wolff, 256.

63 *Monthly Intelligence* (1830): 14.

64 If it is true that the Greeks accused Papas Ysa of having become a Protestant, it is not easy to explain Papas Ysa's friendly relations with the Greek bishops in 1831; see next article in this series.



ter, I sent him to Cairo. I feel nothing more of the poison which was administered unto me.<sup>65</sup>

It is difficult to get to the bottom of what exactly took place between Wolff and Papas Ysa. I shall pass over the question of how long Papas Ysa was in Egypt – and also the question of whether Wolff's words are a declaration of intent rather than a description of what actually happened. In 1831, when the next Protestant Bible-men came to Jerusalem, Papas Ysa was there. John Nicolayson heard his version of these events in 1831.

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### Concluding Remarks

Joseph Wolff's third and last visit to Jerusalem as a Bible-man was no success. It is true that he had contact with some Jews, particularly in the period before March 1, 1829. It is also true that he managed to hand out some Scriptures, but quite a few of the Hebrew New Testaments were burnt, and his work among Jews was limited during the last part of his stay due to the Jewish authorities' ban against him. But it was a cause for joy that the Jerusalem Jew Joseph Shuah Maimoron was baptized in Jaffa after Wolff left Jerusalem. What later became of Maimoron – if he adhered to the faith and stayed in Jerusalem – remains an open question.

Wolff's and Lady Georgiana's school project for Greek Orthodox children failed. He survived an attempt on his life, presumably staged by people with connections to the Greeks. The otherwise good relations that former Bible-men had had with the Greek Orthodox Church suffered because of Wolff's activities.

John Nicolayson would feel this during his time Jerusalem in 1831, which will be treated in the last article in this series.

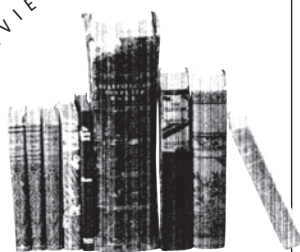
65 *Monthly Intelligence* (1830): 14.

# Ein Leben zwischen Judentum und Christentum

– Moritz Heidenheim 1824–1898

reviewed by **Michael Nausner**

BOOK REVIEWS



Olivia Franz-Klauser's *Ein Leben zwischen Judentum und Christentum* (*Life between Judaism and Christianity*) is a unique book that resists any easy categorization in terms of academic discipline or literary genre. In this respect it entirely does justice to the subject under investigation, the complexities of life and work of the nineteenth century scholar Reverend Moritz Heidenheim, who grew up in a Jewish community in the German city of Worms, was trained in Christian theology in London, and spent the last thirty-four years of his life active as an Anglican chaplain and private lecturer at the University of Zurich.

Originally written as a doctoral dissertation at the philosophical faculty of the University of Zurich, the book mirrors a meticulous research not only into the vast library of Heidenheim, but also into the different political and intellectual contexts which influenced this extraordinary scholar

and minister, as well as into his personal biography. Franz-Klauser, a Hebrew scholar and licensed librarian, undertakes the task of working through Heidenheim's library, a formidable collection of some 3,000 pieces (old prints as well as handwritten manuscripts) that had been stored in a public institution ever since its owner's death in 1898, without being researched. She decides not only to sort and file the books and papers, but to treat them as raw material for a fascinating description of the ideas, life, and library of Moritz Heidenheim and the synergies between them. The result is a well-researched contribution to the historical documentation of Jewish conversions in nineteenth century Germany that does not easily fit into the picture of assimilated and secular Jews enhancing their careers through converting to Christianity. After all, Heidenheim was an Anglican minister the last four decades of his life.

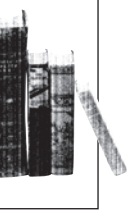
In her methodological introduction, Franz-Klauser engages sociological theory



*Ein Leben zwischen Judentum und Christentum. Moritz Heidenheim 1824–1898*

OLIVIA FRANZ-KLAUSER

ZÜRICH: CHRONOS VERLAG, 2008,  
337 PP., \$19.99, HARDBACK.



and research in literary studies in order to problematize her own attempt at writing a biography of Moritz Heidenheim. She is well aware of the dangers of a linear description of a life, as well as of the observations of post-structural scholars that language not only describes but also risks “inventing” reality. In Heidenheim’s case, she decides that due to his variable *vita* the relation between individual and context is of special relevance, which is mirrored in the detailed contextualizations of the different periods in his life in Germany, England, and Switzerland. (Out of the original ambivalence between Heidenheim’s German name *Moritz* and his Jewish name *Moshe* grows the self-designation *Maurice* upon his arrival to England.) Following the biographical method in literary studies, Franz-Klauser moves within the “biographical triad” of person, society, and work in order to value Heidenheim’s contributions in an appropriate way. Notwithstanding her enormous effort to mine the sources for as much detail as possible, she remains aware of her own task of interpretation, without which – in Robert Blake’s words – one would “kill a biography” (p. 19). One has to say that she lives up to Heinrich Heine’s advice to not even attempt a presentation of history’s “brute facts,” but instead embeds the biographical narrative within its “original poetry.” Her style at times is novel-like indeed, especially when she on several occasions reflects on Moritz Heidenheim’s personality. The introduction ends with a discussion of the very complex issue of Jewish conversions in nineteenth century Germany, and the problem of the terminology for describing a convert. The history of forced conversions is taken into account, along with the unease with which to this day the issue of Jewish Christians is treated, even in encyclopedias. Franz-Klauser laments that in these encyclopedias, the concrete contributions of Jewish Christians to Christianity and their mediating func-

tion between Judaism and Christianity are hinted at but not spelled out in any detail (p. 24f). Her Heidenheim biography, the reader is supposed to assume, elaborates on one such concrete contribution. She ends by confessing that she does not own Heidenheim like a museum piece, and that she sees her work as corresponding to Golo Mann’s definition of historiography: It is true because nothing may be invented, but at the same time it is a novel, because one has to tell a story with gaps, since one does not know everything (p. 27).

The structure of the biography throughout the four first chapters follows the life stations of Moritz Heidenheim: Germany, England, and Switzerland. The scarce data on Heidenheim’s life is embedded in a rich description of life in a nineteenth century Jewish Orthodox community in Germany, of an Anglican environment in mid-century London, and finally of the conditions in the Swiss city of Zurich, which at about this time developed into an urban center. The remainder of the book is structured thematically in accordance with the main focal points of Heidenheim’s intellectual life: his interest in Samaritan literature (chap. 5); his persistent attempt to mediate between rabbinic and Christian theology (chap. 6); his struggle for an adequate academic position at the University of Zurich (chap. 7); and last but not least the ever growing collection of books in his private library (chap. 8). Chapter 10 is a tight and convincing summary of Heidenheim’s identity in-between different cultures, milieus, and theologies, an identity as bridge builder. The book could have ended with this chapter, since chapters 9 (Ancestry and Family) and 11 (Heidenheim’s Collection) in a sense interrupt the flow of the text. These extensive documentations of his correspondence and library strike one who does not share a librarian’s passion for detail as somewhat tedious and out of place in a biography that otherwise is narrated with great



rhythm and keen attention to Heidenheim's life story.

Ultimately, however, this book brings to life for the first time an almost entirely forgotten but fascinating intellectual of the nineteenth century, and the reader is left without a doubt that this rediscovery is of great value for historical, philosophical, theological, and inter-religious scholarship, as well as for research in cultural heritage as documented in archives and libraries. The amount of documented biographical detail is astonishing given the restraint with which Heidenheim himself commented on his personal life (p. 240), and it testifies of Franz-Klauser's tireless work gathering, evaluating, and combining the sources into a cohesive narrative. Ninety pages, more than a fourth of the entire book, are devoted to the thorough documentation of the sources. More than a thousand footnotes are followed by a glossary of terms in more than half a dozen languages, the genealogy of Moritz Heidenheim from the eighteenth and into the twentieth century, a documentation of Heidenheim's frequent real estate dealings (!) during his years in Zurich, a table of the forty-two images included in the book, a table of abbreviations, and last but not least a very detailed bibliography that includes the numerous consulted archives and institutions as well as printed and published sources of different kinds (pp. 247–337).

Heidenheim appears as a Jewish Christian, who until his death understood himself more as a *mediating theologian* (p. 153) than as a Christian systematic or apologetic theologian who condemned his old religion, as many of his contemporary converts had done. Already his early and unusual treatment of Baruch Spinoza reveals that he was inclined to see Christianity not so much in contradiction to Judaism but rather as its perfection (p. 201). According to Heidenheim, Spinoza was not banned from the synagogue for

his pantheism, but rather for his sympathy for Christianity (p. 62). Heidenheim started to write a Spinoza biography, but unfortunately never finished it (p. 63). Franz-Klauser sees Heidenheim's never-ending interest in Samaritan literature and theology as an expression of his identity as a bridge-builder between the traditions, inasmuch as for him Samaritan theology was a bridge between Jewish and Christian theology (p. 235). Heidenheim started his own edition of Samaritan texts (the *Bibliotheca Samaritana*), collected manuscripts all over Europe, and edited before his death six of the planned twelve editions (p. 140f). In his estimation of Samaritan literature, he proved to be way ahead of his time, but he never received explicit credit for his tireless work of digging out and interpreting Samaritan texts. Instead, James A. Montgomery's *The Samaritans* became the groundbreaking work to which Samaritan research in the twentieth century refers, although it relies heavily on Heidenheim's editions and commentaries without acknowledging this (p. 233). But also in another aspect Heidenheim was ahead of his time, namely in his declared sympathy for Christian socialism that is mirrored in a published funeral eulogy from the 1880s. In it he relates Christianity and social justice to each other in a way that did not reach continental theology before Leonhard Ragaz and Paul Tillich made these connections in the twentieth century (p. 167).

Reverend Moritz Heidenheim emerges before the reader's inner eye as a tirelessly searching (and collecting!) intellectual, whose influence remained limited because of his continuous cultural and religious marginality. He never entirely belonged to one particular group (p. 228), but Franz-Klauser has a lot to say about the reasons for this self-conscious minority identity, and she is careful not to blame it too quickly on the growing anti-Semitism (p. 232), although this most certainly played a role in

a time of increasing influence for cultural Protestantism in central Europe. To consistently live at the boundary between Judaism and Christianity (his entire library, a collection of predominantly rabbinic literature gathered by a Jewish Christian minister, is a witness to such a life) was both his strength and his weakness. This boundary identity certainly was an obstacle in his attempt to convince his contemporaries of the value of Samaritan and rabbinic literature for Christian theology (p. 239).

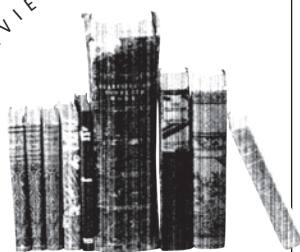
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# Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged

reviewed by **Craig Blaising**

BOOK REVIEWS

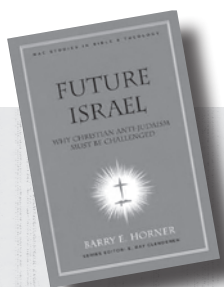


In his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul warned Gentile believers not to be arrogant toward Israel, which was becoming hardened by unbelief and was soon to experience national judgment. For the most part, the history of Gentile Christian thought has failed to heed that warning. Instead, many have dismissed Israel from having any future place in the plan of God. Oftentimes, this is done by re-conceptualizing the meaning of Israel and reinterpreting its place in the biblical text. The end result is the same; Israel has been excluded from the plan of God in any real, national sense.

Challenging this mindset, which has fixed itself in the traditions of Christian thought over twenty centuries, is the aim and purpose of Barry Horner's book *Future Israel*. Of particular concern for Horner is the oftentimes strident supersessionism, or replacement theology,

that characterizes much of Reformed thought, Horner's own tradition. After setting the historical context, Horner profiles contemporary manifestations of Reformed supersessionism both in their actual claims and in their hermeneutical operations. He then counters them with biblical arguments for the future of a national Israel in the plan of God, focusing particularly, but not exclusively, on Paul's argument in Romans 11.

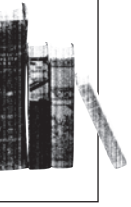
The issue, Horner says, is not anti-Semitism per se, but "classic anti-Judaism, which involves opposition to the biblical legacy of Torah mediated through Abraham and Moses." It is this classic anti-Judaism which denies that "Israel, incorporating individuality, nationality, and territory, has a future according to the mind of Abraham's God" (p. xx). Nevertheless, in spite of the prevalence of anti-Judaism, there have been dissenters, and one of the virtues of Horner's work is the profile he gives to this dissent along with the exposé of key supersessionists.



## *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged*

**BARRY E. HORNER**

**NASHVILLE: B&H ACADEMIC, 2007,  
XXI+394 PP., \$19.99, HARDBACK.**



The first chapter sets forth the paradigmatic anti-Judaism of Augustine and Calvin, along with the equally paradigmatic dissent of Horatius Bonar and Charles Haddon Spurgeon. The second chapter consequently contextualizes the Augustinian paradigm and then traces its history to the early twentieth century. The third and fourth chapters provide exposés of American and British Reformed writers hostile to the notion of a national future for Israel. These include Albertus Pieters and Loraine Boettner, but extensive attention is given to Gary Burge, O. Palmer Robertson, the 2002 “Open Letter to Evangelicals and Other Interested Parties: The People of God, the Land of Israel, and the Impartiality of the Gospel” (signed by several Reformed scholars and posted on the website of Knox Theological Seminary), and the Anglican Colin Chapman. The treatment of Chapman includes comments on the views of Stephen Sizer, N. T. Wright, and others.

The fifth chapter sets in contrast to this history of anti-Judaic theological thought the rise of Jewish and Christian Zionism in the context of political and military opposition. The chapter includes a poignant extract from the diary of Theodore Herzl, recounting his meeting with Pope Pius X.

The sixth and seventh chapters present another historical survey, this time focusing on supersessionist hermeneutics. Horner begins by focusing on individuals such as Patrick Fairbairn, Gerhardus Vos, and George Eldon Ladd, but particularly valuable is the extended attention, critique, and reformulation he gives in chapter seven to the Reformed notion of a “Christocentric hermeneutic.”

The eighth and ninth chapters challenge supersessionist reinterpretation of the land promise, both in its presuppositions about the nature of the eternal state and in its treatment of the land promise in the

biblical covenants. Chapters 10–12 follow this up with an extended consideration of Romans 11, both in terms of its own teaching and as a hermeneutical reference point for several other contested New Testament texts. There are a number of excellent studies on the exegesis of Romans 11, and Horner is clearly dependent on them. However, where Horner goes beyond most of them, in my opinion, is in his development of the implications of Romans 11:28, the notion of unbelieving Israel as *God’s beloved enemy*. This conception of the covenant status of unbelieving Israel is crucial for understanding God’s treatment of Israel and Gentile nations even in Old Testament history. Paul’s statement indicates that the covenantal status remains through the dispensation of Israel’s hardening, to the coming of Messiah, and beyond. It is the framework in which to understand everything that has happened to Jews in this dispensation, and to Gentiles in relation to Jews, even up to the founding of the modern state of Israel and beyond that point to the present day. But most importantly, this covenant relationship is the evangelical basis for contemporary missions to the Jews, and focuses and enriches the understanding of that mission even as it helps to sweeten the tone.

Horner’s own tone throughout the book is sobering. The reader may find his style – survey punctuated with frequent criticisms – bracing, although never, in the opinion of this reviewer, inappropriate. In actual fact, the book is compelling, engaging the reader’s interest. The exposés of contemporary Reformed authors are enlightening, but the book is especially valuable for reminding readers today of key nineteenth century Reformed theologians who did affirm the future of Israel, including Spurgeon, J. C. Ryle, and especially Horatius Bonar.

At times, Horner’s need to confront



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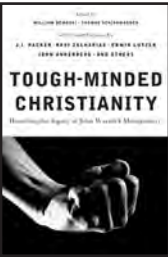


**FUTURE ISRAEL**  
by Barry Horner  
9780805446272 – 400 pp. - \$19.99

"This is by far the best treatment of Israel's future I have found. It's a welcome antidote to the widespread apathy and confusion that have clouded this vital prophetic question. Future Israel should be required reading for every pastor, seminarian, and student of Bible prophecy."

— Dr. John MacArthur, president, The Master's College and Seminary

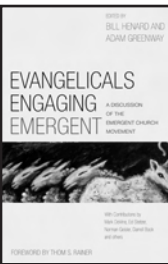
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**Tough-Minded Christianity**  
Edited by William Dembski and Thomas Schirrmacher  
9780805447835 – 800 pp. - \$31.99

A collection of essays about the great work of John Warwick Montgomery (b. 1931), a living legend of Christian apologetics. Contributors to this volume include J. I. Packer, Ravi Zacharias, John Ankerberg, Erwin Lutzer, Vernon Grounds, Gary Habermas, and others.

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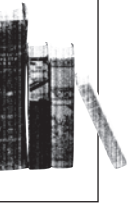
**EVANGELICALS ENGAGING EMERGENT**  
Edited by William Henard and Adam Greenway  
9780805447392 – 352 pp. - \$24.99

*Evangelicals Engaging Emergent* draws from a broad spectrum of conservative evangelicalism to serve as a clear, informative, fair, and respectful guide for those desiring to know what "emergent" means, why it originated, where the movement is going, what issues concern emergent believers, and where they sometimes go wrong theologically.

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and oppose supersessionist slogans forces him into some unnecessary dichotomies – for example, Judeo-centric versus Christocentric – or simplistic criticisms such as: “The hermeneutical principle that imposes the NT revelation of Jesus Christ on the OT in such a way that the new covenant (upper layer) has become the controlling hermeneutic whereby the old covenant (lower layer) is Christologically reinterpreted” (p. 179). The issue is not Christocentricity per se, or the interpretation of the old covenant by the new covenant per se, but the supersessionist manner in which these are done and the way the terms are used as slogans for a supersessionist agenda. In actual fact, Horner himself recognizes the inadequacies of these labels, and the reader will not have gone far before Horner nuances them.

Horner’s reference to premillennialism, however, could be further differentiated. While all premillennialists envision a future earthly kingdom during the millennium, not all have fully appreciated the spiritual materialism of the eternal state. Seventeenth and nineteenth century premillennialists can generally be distinguished on this issue, and it is the unique position of classical dispensationalism to have embraced both views at the same time!

Overall, *Future Israel* is a significant work, and this reviewer hopes that it receives the attention it deserves. Horner not only explains why Christian anti-Judaism must be challenged (as his subtitle reads), but he has in fact challenged it, and in the opinion of this reviewer, effectively so.

The significance, however, should not be limited to eschatology alone, if one considers eschatology as simply one area of theological thought – the last, coming at the end, after all other theological considerations have been finished. Actually, to see eschatology this way is,

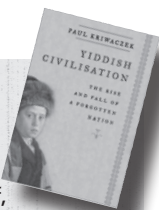
in my opinion, to misunderstand it and to impoverish theological thought generally. The significance of Horner’s work lies in its challenge to the generally held overall understanding of the story of the Bible, a challenge to the entire structure of biblical theology as it is understood by many today. Recognition that Israel has a future in the plan of God is the first step. Tracing out the ramifications for the scope and structure of that plan must follow.

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Paul Kriwaczek, *Yiddish Civilization: The Rise and Fall of a Forgotten Nation*.

New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005, 384 pp., \$27.50, hardback.

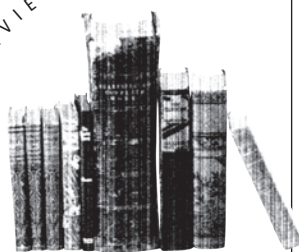


It's not quite hot off the press, but 2005's *Yiddish Civilization: The Rise and Fall of a Forgotten Nation* is a great read. It may even be a necessary one. Author Paul Kriwaczek, born in Vienna, worked as producer/filmmaker for the BBC for many years. He disavows being a historian, but it is a passionate history that he gives us.

The essential thesis is that the Yiddish-speaking world actually constituted a nation, certainly a civilization, and that today's Yiddish memories, so to speak, only go back (and sentimentally at that) to the nineteenth century shtetls, so that Yiddish history becomes one of persecutions, expulsions, and migrations – Salo Baron's "lachrymose interpretation" of Jewish history (p. 25). There is, Kriwaczek maintains, a much longer and much richer history of the Yiddish-speaking world, including times when Jews exercised much influence and power. It's not exactly a revisionist history, but surely Kriwaczek is right when he speaks of a kind of Jewish historical memory in which there is "a huge gulf of amnesia separating the ancient Middle East from the modern West" (p. 16) – a gulf that encompasses well-nigh a full millennium.

So, largely distancing himself from the pogroms and the persecutions, Kriwaczek chooses to focus on the "success and even occasional splendour" (p. 25) of Yiddish civilization. He takes us as far back as Rome, tracing various movements of the Jewish people, including those who ultimately gathered as the Yiddish-speakers of Eastern Europe. Along the way, we encounter quite a number of instances – sometimes almost mere hints – of Gentiles embracing Judaism or a Jewish way of life as proselytes or

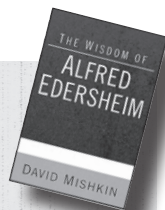
BOOK REVIEWS



by **Richard A. Robinson**

sympathizers. Perhaps the modern phenomenon of Gentiles worshipping at Messianic congregations or embracing (some) Jewish ways will look different considered through the lens of a longer Jewish history. This book is highly recommended as a wonderful history excursion that spotlights aspects of Jewish history not often remembered or understood.

David Mishkin, *The Wisdom of Alfred Edersheim: Gleanings from a 19th Century Jewish Christian Scholar*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008, 198 pp., \$23.00, paper.



David Mishkin has a new book on *The Wisdom of Alfred Edersheim: Gleanings from a 19th Century Jewish Christian Scholar*. Most Mishkan readers and much of the Christian public will be familiar with Edersheim as the author of *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* as well as other books, some of which remain in print to this day. The bulk of the book consists of quotes from Edersheim's various writings – much more than the few publications still available – arranged alphabetically by subject matter. In this way, it

forms a sort of “treasury of Jewish quotes” on topics as diverse as “The Crusades,” “Free Will,” “Masada,” and “Superstition.”

The quotation section is sandwiched between other valuable materials which greatly add to the book’s value. There is a short biography, with footnotes, followed by a nine-page bibliography – how many knew Edersheim was also a novelist? There then comes an appreciation (“His Legacy”) and an extended note about “His Magnum Opus,” namely, his *Life and Times*. It is noteworthy that Solomon Schechter, closely associated with Conservative Judaism, interacted with that work in a 1924 volume. Following the quote section come several appendices giving a sermon of Edersheim’s (“Whose Is Thine Heart?”); a précis of his fictional work *From Grey to Dawn: A Tale of Jewish Life in the Time of Christ*; a list of books that he reviewed in print; and extracts from a eulogy for him given by William Sanday in 1889.

All in all, despite its rather steep price of \$23.00 (but try wipfandstock.com for a special web deal), this is a book of great value and an entrée into the little-known aspects of Edersheim’s writings.

Mark Kinzer and  
Matthew Levering,  
“Messianic Gentiles &  
Messianic Jews,” *First Things*  
(Jan 2009): 43-49.



In periodicals, of note is a piece appearing in the January 2009 *First Things*. The article “Messianic Gentiles & Messianic Jews” presents an essay by Mark Kinzer followed by a response by Matthew Levering. Kinzer, author of the controversial *PostMessianic Jewish Judaism*, adapts the essay from a 2008 “Messianic Jewish–Roman

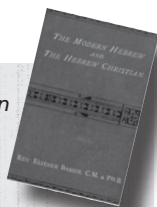
Catholic Dialogue Group in Vienna,” and his respondent Levering teaches theology at Ave Maria University. Kinzer, whose influences include Catholic theology, addresses the Catholic statement *Lumen Gentium*, which originated at the Second Vatican Council, and so dates from the early 1960s. It is found by Kinzer to be deficient in its statements regarding the Jewish people in contrast with the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which is much improved; but work still needs to be done. Levering’s response is almost entirely negative. He criticizes Kinzer for misunderstanding Catholic teaching, especially its understanding of history, remarking that besides Kinzer’s two poles of continuity and discontinuity, there is the position of eschatological fulfillment. This “mistake” by Kinzer carries over into his critique of both the Catholic documents. Levering furthermore maintains that Kinzer’s ecclesiology (see his *PostMessianic Jewish Judaism* for a full discussion of “bilateral ecclesiology”) creates “two classes” of Christians – “The relation of Jews to Jesus would, in this view [i.e. Kinzer’s], be intrinsically better than the relationship that a gentile could have.” Levering finally addresses Kinzer’s views of Torah observance, and his final paragraph is worth quoting:

“The question posed by Kinzer, however, is whether Christians, including Jewish Christians, should agree that Jews who believe in Jesus betray their Jewish identity by fulfilling the Torah eucharistically apart from rabbinic Jewish practice. To accept Kinzer’s claim would be tantamount to affirming that Torah cannot be adequately fulfilled eucharistically. And if this is so, then gentiles are excluded from Christ’s own fulfillment of the Torah and Temple. Were this the case, gentiles should simply become Torah-observant Jews rather than Christians” (pg. 49).

Whatever merits Kinzer’s postmissionary theology may or may not have, the reaction

from a Catholic theologian is instructive and raises important discussion points. And Kinzer's contribution is a good introduction to two key Catholic statements that touch on the Jewish people and Jesus. Keep your eye open at [firstthings.com](http://firstthings.com): in a few months it will probably be available free; currently free to print subscribers only.

Elieser Bassin, *The Modern Hebrew and the Hebrew Christian*. London: Nisbet, 1882, 275 pp., hardback.



According to Matthew 13:52, "every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old." An old treasure is from 1882, Elieser Bassin's *The Modern Hebrew and the Hebrew Christian*. Bassin, who served as a missionary with the Church of Scotland in Romania, gives us more than the run-of-the-mill missionary autobiography. The first section of the book was written to help Christians understand Jewish beliefs and practices, but what marks it out from similar works is the author's background in Polish Hasidism, which lends a certain cast to his descriptions. "Every woman," he says, "must light at least one [Sabbath] candle to atone for the crime of their mother Eve, who, by eating of the forbidden fruit, first extinguished the light of the world" (p. 85). One reason the last Sabbath service is drawn out is "to extend the respite enjoyed on the Sabbath by the wicked in hell, whose punishment is, according to Jewish tradition, suspended immediately on the chanting of the hymn for receiving the Sabbath, on Friday evening, until the evening prayers on Saturday are finished" (p. 90). And on and on go the colorful descriptions, including material

on Chabad. The world of Eastern European Jewry was suffused in folklore and even superstition unknown to, or not taken seriously by, the more rational minds of Western Europe.

The second half of the book is less consistently engaging; the author's journey to faith is too often described in the semi-hagiographical, even florid, style typical of such writings – betraying little about him but much about his ensuing trials and tribulations. That his family tried and eventually succeeded in having him conscripted into the Russian army does, however, throw a clear light on the nature of those times. Much other material in this second part consists of letters and extracts from the *Free Church Record*. Suffice it to say that the book throws more light on Bassin's Judaism than on him as a person – though we get the distinct impression that he was something of an entrepreneur and an idealist. Thanks to Google Books, you can visit [books.google.com](http://books.google.com) and in Advanced Search, look for the title *The Modern Hebrew and the Hebrew Christian*. You may find two copies; pick the one with a capital M in "Modern," as the other copy has at least one page badly scanned. (Google Books is an enormously useful service, but their scans often miss pages, cut off margins, etc.)

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by **Knut Høyland**

In recent months a debate on the authority of the rabbinical tradition for Messianic believers has been raging among Messianic leaders and believers in Israel. This debate is by no means new, but has over the last few months received a lot of attention and aroused strong emotional responses on both sides of the argument.

In response to this debate, the National Conference of Messianic Leaders in Israel invited congregational leaders and elders from all over Israel to meet outside of Jerusalem during the last weekend in January. On the agenda was a discussion of this topic and a suggestion to reconfirm the first paragraph of the conference's statement of faith regarding the authority of the Scriptures. On the following day, an open seminar was held in cooperation with the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel, where some of the different views were presented and the public was given an opportunity to ask questions and comment.

The most significant occurrence at this meeting was that at the end of a long debate the majority of the participating pastors and elders wished to sign the complete Messianic declaration of faith. This declaration was formed and accepted by the National Leaders' Conference in 1990. This is only the second time the conference felt it necessary to strongly advise congregational leaders not only to acknowledge the dec-

laration, but also to sign it (after signing the part of the statement concerning the deity and humanity of Jesus in 2002) – and over thirty-five congregational leaders and elders did so.

In the open seminar, Noam Hendren and Asher Intrater presented different views on the subject. Although they clearly had different approaches, it was very apparent that both were in full agreement on the basic understanding that the only true authority for any believer is the Holy Scriptures of the Tanach and the New Testament.

Noam Hendren stressed the importance of an Israeli Jewish expression of faith which communicates with, and is not considered foreign by, non-believing Israelis. At the same time, he questioned the assumption that Jesus acknowledged the "tradition," i.e. the pharisaic teaching, which was to a large extent the foundation of the later rabbinic tradition. Jesus did not consider the tradition (or the Oral Torah) as authoritative, as he came to fulfill the Scriptures. Jesus' accusation against the Pharisees was that they distorted the Torah. Consequently, rabbinic tradition cannot be seen as authoritative, not then and not today. However, this does not mean that Messianic Jews should not strive to find an authentically Jewish expression of faith in Yeshua.

Asher Intrater also stressed that rabbinic tradition could not be seen as authoritative. However, he pointed out that in communicating with Jews, although the message we communicate needs to be Jesus and the Scriptures, it is important to be aware of the package the message is presented in. Rabbinic tradition can be part of this package. The Torah should not be a negative word. A positive attitude to the Torah is vital in reaching Jews, however one must be careful not to be so focused on the rabbinic or Jewish package that one loses focus on the message, the grace of



Yeshua. He then stressed the importance of unity in the body of believers among those who hold to rabbinic tradition and those who do not.

In the following discussion, several representatives from different congregations raised questions and comments on the presentations and the ongoing debate. Some warned against the danger of accepting rabbinic authority or tradition, not because it was biblical, but primarily in order to be accepted by fellow Jews, concluding that faith in Yeshua may cause rejection among Jews and that this is a price we must be willing to pay. Others reemphasized the need for unity in the body locally, but also with the body of believers worldwide.

It is unlikely that this debate will be laid completely to rest after this gathering. There is a continuing challenge for the Messianic community to find authentic Jewish and Israeli expressions of faith in Yeshua and good ways of communicating that faith to non-believing Jews. In time, other theologically challenging issues will most likely arise, but this conference gives an indication of how the body of believers in Israel can deal with such issues, and how the unity of the diverse Messianic body can be strengthened through such a process.

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