



# MISHKAN

■ A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE ■ *Issue 61/ 2009*



*Operation  
Mercy  
and Jewish Believers  
in 1948*

# MISHKAN

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

ISSUE 61 / 2009

**General Editor: Kai Kjær-Hansen**

**Pasche Institute of Jewish Studies · A Ministry of Criswell College**

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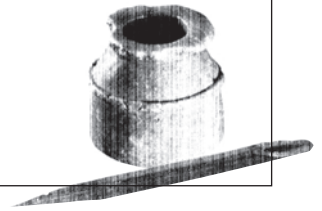
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**Mishkan** is the Hebrew word for *tabernacle* or *dwelling place* (John 1:14).

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

# Operation Mercy 1948

By Kai Kjær-Hansen



The term "Operation Mercy" or "Operation Grace" is used for the evacuation of Hebrew Christians in April and May 1948, when one hundred or more individuals left Palestine at the termination of the British Mandate.

Those who organized this operation, Christians as well as Hebrew Christians (not least those affiliated with the International Hebrew Christian Alliance), believed that through the grace of God they had "saved" these persons from imminent danger.

Others who remained in Israel, both Hebrew Christians and Christians, believed that the evacuation was not only unnecessary but constituted treason against the grace of God that came to expression in the establishment of the State of Israel; not only did the evacuated Hebrew Christians show cowardice, they were also "unfaithful."

In this issue of *Mishkan*, we let some of those involved in Operation Mercy share their perspective, so that we might understand them. And just as there was much disagreement in 1948, when the events surrounding Operation Mercy are *interpreted* today there are still different views, which will be clear from the articles.

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With this issue of *Mishkan*, we hand the batons of editorial secretary and general editor to others. Bodil F. Skjøtt has served as editorial secretary since 1991, and I as general editor since 1995. Without being credited for his work, Birger Petterson has translated all my contributions into English. Seen in the rear-view mirror, it is clear that some things could have been done better. We take comfort in the belief that perfection belongs to the world to come. We are thankful for the "mercy" which authors of articles, successive linguistic editors, and layout designers have shown to us through the years, and for the editorial freedom given to us by the publishers.



# Operation Mercy According to Hugh R. A. Jones

- Described in Two Letters from Jerusalem,  
June 4 and 5, 1948

## Introduction

by Kai Kjær-Hansen

We have chosen to allow Rev. Hugh R. A. Jones, then Head of Church Missions to Jews (CMJ) in Israel, to speak in this first article. And we do it without explanatory footnotes so that the readers may form their own impression of how a person who played no insignificant part in Operation Mercy feels and thinks a few weeks after the operation has been carried out. He is filled with gratitude to God that it was possible to save lives.

So what we have is a subjective account from an eyewitness. Whether Jones' assessment is objectively correct and provides an adequate picture of the situation – did he, for example, exaggerate the danger for Hebrew Christians in Palestine/Israel in the spring of 1948? – is a different but nevertheless important question. Jones actually dealt with that issue in April 1949, in a letter to the Archbishop of York, which Gershon Nerel includes in his article and on which I also comment in "The Organizers behind Operation Mercy" in this issue of *Mishkan*.

The individuals mentioned in these two letters by Jones appear in other articles and will be identified there. Roger Allison was in charge of CMJ's work in Jaffa. (As to the Hebrew Christians Weinstock and Oko, see my article on Weinstock.)

Miss Hannah Hurnard played a major role in Jerusalem in the first stage of Operation Mercy. She was in CMJ's employ and remained in Jerusalem in 1948 together with other Protestant missionaries. She has provided an eyewitness account about the time before and after May 15, 1948, which we shall return to in the next article. There we shall also meet some people who, to put it mildly, had quite a different view of Operation Mercy than Jones had.

In the reproduction of Jones' letters, the headings and indentation are mine; a few obvious misprints have been corrected and a few explanatory words have been inserted in brackets

The letter concludes with eighteen hand-written lines, in which Jones mentions that the Bishop in Jerusalem has asked if Allison could be transferred to Haifa for some time, as Reverend Moxon wishes to return home.

I.Z.L. stands for Irgun Zvai Leumi = National Military Organization, usually referred to as the Irgun.

### **Letter of June 4, 1948<sup>1</sup>**

by **Hugh R.A. Jones**

Rev. C.H. Gill, M.A.,  
16, Lincoln's Inn Fields,  
London, W.C.2.

Christ Church,  
Jerusalem,  
June 4th, 1948

Dear Mr. Gill,

I would like to try and give you some idea of the position of the Hebrew Christian as it has been crystalising in Palestine during the last six months. First let me quote from a recent Evangelical Christian Magazine, an American publication, which I think states the position pretty accurately:

The lot of the Hebrew Christian in Palestine today is deplorable. It will be more so tomorrow; and when the British depart is likely to be unbearable. Zionism is not a religious movement basically, but a political one. It is only religious in the sense that most of its leaders and its adherents hate like poison those Jews who have embraced Christianity . . . It is confirmed by a writer in the current issue of "World Dominion" who says in an article on "A Christian View of Palestine": 'There are Hebrew Christians whose fate is pitiable; they hardly dare to be mentioned, such is the hatred of their Zionist brethren. A Christian Jew may not be admitted to Palestine on a Jewish immigration quota: Jews who are atheists or communists, or who reject the fundamentals of Judaism, are freely admitted as Jews. The Jewish Agency has ruled that Judaism is a purely racial concept, with one exception – no Christian, whatever his ancestry, may belong to the Jewish race.'

We have made the prediction that Christian work amongst Jews in Palestine will largely cease when the British depart, and the fate of those who love the Lord Jesus Christ and are left behind may yet shock the moral conscience of the world . . . The Jew of Palestine knows no tolerance for the Christian of his own race, however much he may talk about religious freedom and liberty of conscience in New York or Toronto.

#### *Hebrew Christians Subjected to Thorough Cross-examination*

I think the experience of a number of our own converts which I have described to you during the past few months adequately bear out this point of view.

<sup>1</sup> Hugh R. A. Jones to CMJ's General Secretary G. H. Gill in London, June 4, 1948, The Jerusalem and the East Mission Archives 18/5, Middle East Centre, Oxford. Hereafter abbreviated as MEC J&EM.



The Hebrew Christian who escaped wounded into Christ Church compound from an Arab mob in December; the Okos who were bottled up in Christ Church for several months; the experiences of Mr. J. at the hands of Stern Gang, all go to show that the lot of the Hebrew Christian in Palestine, at any rate for the present, is an extremely difficult one. More recently I have heard from Roger Allison that Weinstock has not been allowed to live in his flat on the Jaffo Tel Aviv border and spent seven days wandering the streets of T.A. with his family before he could find a temporary abode.

Of the twenty or so Hebrew Christian members of our congregation who were living in the Hospital compound, several were taken on a number of occasions and subjected to a pretty thorough cross-examination, either by the Haganah or the I.Z.L. It became clear that three at least of them were in very real danger from the I.Z.L. and in the end we managed to move them from the Jewish area and to put them in a neutral area – Zone B. – where we had to keep them for about three weeks, incidentally costing us LP [Palestinian Pounds] 80 for hotel bill, until we could get them moved to St. George's on May 1st. As time went on it became clear that the most satisfactory thing to do was to try and evacuate the bulk of the remaining Hebrew Christian members of our congregation, totalling about thirty. The bulk of them were living in the Jewish area and had no prospects of work after the end of the Mandate.

#### *Problems Getting Enough Visas*

Together with other Missionary Societies we brought the fate of these people to the notice of our Home Committees and eventually the Home Office granted fourteen visas for Hebrew Christians in Palestine considered to be in difficulty or danger. I managed to obtain five of these visas for members of our Hebrew Christian staff and one for a member of the congregation. Fourteen visas, however, were wholly inadequate to meet the problem and a meeting was held on April 12th in the Secretariat in the office of the Chief Secretary, who was present with his Under-Secretary, together with the Bishop, Canon Witton-Davies, Rev. Clark Kerr of the Church of Scotland and myself. The Bishop explained to the Chief Secretary that many more than fourteen visas were needed and said that at least fifty, probably more, Hebrew Christians throughout Palestine were in need of being evacuated. As the Government had received from the Foreign Office no permission to grant an unlimited number of visas, the C.S. [Chief Secretary] agreed to wire the Home Office and explain the situation.

About a fortnight later we were informed that any Hebrew Christian considered to be in danger could be granted a temporary visa for the United Kingdom. We felt that the majority of the Hebrew Christians of our congregation should be granted visas and as time was getting very short it meant that we had to get moving pretty quickly; however, with the invaluable help of Ronald Adeney, we gradually got all their papers straightened out and necessary *laisser-passers*, etcetera, issued and visa-ed.



### *Problems Getting People Transported from Jerusalem to Haifa*

The main problem, however, was to get them to Haifa. The Army and the Police having taken up a neutral attitude, said that they could not begin escorting such parties through "enemy territory." An effort we made through the Red Cross to see if they could take such a convoy under their wing, but they felt that this risk was too great. After negotiations and plans had been going on for about a week and got no-where we were beginning to despair.

If it had not been for the trouble taken by the Under-Secretary, we should never have got these people away. He eventually devised a plan whereby, if we could assemble all the Hebrew Christians at St. George's, he could arrange for them to be taken to Kalandia aerodrome, ten kilometres north of Jerusalem, and flown to Haifa port. The Police would be prepared to escort the party from St. George's to Kalandia aerodrome as in this stretch there were no Arab road checks. There was still, however, one snag, namely getting them to St. George's from the various parts of Jerusalem, especially past Arab road checks in the neighbourhood of the Damascus Gate and through the no-man's-land which stretched between Zone B. down Julian's Way, up St. Louis' Way and past Barclay's Bank. The Police were not prepared to escort the party through this area. However, God had His own plan, which was brought about by quite an amazing train of events.

### *April 29 – An Anonymous Phone Call*

On Thursday, April 29th, I had an anonymous phone call from someone who said that he was anxious about the safety of one of our Hebrew Christians whom we had evacuated from the Jewish area into a hotel in Zone B. He said that he had been speaking to this person a day or two ago and told me that he thought it would be a good thing for him if he could be got to St. George's, and seemed to be under the impression that he was at present in Christ Church. I was rather suspicious and rang up the hotel and reported this conversation to the Hebrew Christian in question who thought that it might be someone who was trying to find out where he was and knew of only one person with whom he has been in contact a few days previously who had expressed himself interested in his safety.

It happened that this person was a Britisher of considerable influence who had taken S., the Hebrew Christian in question, to repair a wireless set a week previously and had at the time asked him how it was with him. S. said that things were very sticky so the Britisher replied; "If things get worse, ring me up and use the expression, 'It is the person who invites you to a cup of coffee,' and I shall know it is you who are in difficulties." After my telephone conversation with S. he immediately rang this individual and said, "This is the person who invites you to a cup of coffee." A., the individual in question, came immediately to the hotel and S. told him of this new turn of events, so A. rang me and asked what I thought had better be done. I said that there were nearly thirty others more or less in the same



situation as S. and that we were anxious to get them all to St. George's from where Government had plans to take them to Haifa. A. rang off, saying that he would see what he could do. He got in touch with an army officer and they put their heads together and devised the following plans: If we could assemble all the Hebrew Christians in Zone B. they would convey them in a covered three-tonner to St. George's, explaining to the Arab road checks at the Damascus Gate what was the nature of their journey and cargo. Saturday, May 1st at 3 p.m. was the time fixed for one of the vital stages of what we now call "Operation Mercy."

#### *May 1 – The First Stage of Operation Mercy*

During the morning Miss Hurnard, with her Morris 8 van, collected ten Hebrew Christians from our Hospital compound and deposited them at one of the two assembly points on Zone B. Normally there would have been difficulty in taking people out of the Jewish area past the Haganah road check, as no-one was allowed to enter or leave the Jewish area without official Jewish sanction. It happened that the man in charge of the road check on this morning had his mother, a Hebrew Christian, amongst the party of the ten evacuees so he winked an eye at all that was going on!

Miss Hurnard completed her good work by conveying, the three Hebrew Christians from the hotel in Zone B., which was in rather an exposed situation, to the same rendez-vous where the others had been assembled from the Jewish area. Altogether seventeen persons, twelve of them of our own congregation, were collected at this spot. The second group were assembled in a hotel in Talbia ("Stag" Zone); a total of nine were picked up at this point. At about half-past three a three-tonner appeared, coming from the German Colony, where the first Hebrew Christian, a Roman Catholic, had been collected. The first group was then loaded and I followed behind in the station wagon with A. and the Gentile wife of one Hebrew Christian with an infant-in-arms.

We then proceeded through Zone B to assembly point number 2, where the rest were put in the army vehicle apart from one mother and small son who were taken into my station wagon. We then proceeded to the exit of Zone B in Julian's Way where we linked up with the army officer who preceded us in another station wagon; then we proceeded down Julian's Way, past the Mamilla crossroads and up St. Louis' Way, past Barclay's Bank, a station wagon before and behind the three-tonner. Words of amazement came from the two mothers in my station wagon who had not been through this desolate part of Jerusalem since the beginning of the trouble in December. All went past Barclay's Bank and down the hill past Notre Dame towards the Damascus Gate. We were waved past the road checks and so to St. George's without incident. Here we met one snag; the three-tonner was too big to drive in through the narrow entrance into the courtyard, and so, after much manoeuvring, the lorry was backed into the entrance and the Hebrew Christians hustled out as quickly as possible, as we did not wish this operation to be viewed by any stray Arabs in the vicinity. While this operation was going on, Miss Hurnard turned up with one

of the Hebrew Christian women who, in the flurry of loading at one of the assembly points, had got left behind in a room upstairs!

This operation was completed by Canon Witton-Davies and myself signing a receipt for the safe delivery of twenty-seven Hebrew Christians at St. George's on route for England. This receipt was delivered by the army officer to the Arab Higher Committee, who wished to have a Gate guarantee that they had got safely past the road checks at the Damascus Gate and that nothing untoward had happened to them during their short but pregnant journey.

The same evening that the Hebrew Christians were taken to St. George's a house curfew was placed on the whole of the Jewish area and a search was made to check up on those who had not registered for national service! There are no mistakes in God's time table.

#### *May 7 – The Second Stage of Operation Mercy*

The party was kept at St. George's until the following Friday when they were escorted by police armoured cars in two pick-ups to Kalandia aerodrome. Again nothing untoward happened on the way, though a group of Arabs had assembled at one point of the journey where the road runs through a small Arab village. They seemed to have got wind that something unusual was going to pass through that morning, but they took no more than a quizzical notice of the convoy. We did have to wait long on the air-field before a couple of Dakotas came down. The party, which now totalled forty – thirty-five Hebrew Christians and five English nuns – were taken on board and were soon speeding on their way to Haifa, marking the end of stage 1 of Operation Mercy, through all of which, I think, the good Hand of our God had been evident, undertaking and guiding in a very wonderful way.

I am afraid this evacuation has meant a lot of extra work for you and I realise that the planning for the future of these people will be no easy business. We feel that this has been for us a kind of spiritual Dunkirk. Since the beginning of the troubles last December, no fewer than forty-three Hebrew Christians, including eight children, belonging to Christ Church congregation, have left the country. Temporarily, at any rate, it marks a considerable retreat in our work, but it has been quite clear to us that there was no alternative course, though I realise that we cannot sit down and accept this as a permanent defeat. God must have a plan and a purpose for the future of work amongst Jews in this country, though, until this present chaos sorts itself out it may not be clear to us just what are the next steps to be taken. We can only wait patiently in prayer and expectancy for His guidance and leading.

#### *Classification of the Evacuees*

I have classified below, the various denominations to which the Hebrew Christians evacuated on the "Georgic" belong.



Church of Scotland:	2
Plymouth Brethren	4
Roman Catholic	1
Pentecostal (American)	4
Church of England	20 adults, 4 children and 1 infant (2 adults from St. George's congregation and the rest from Christ Church).

### **Letter of June 5, 1948<sup>2</sup>**

Rev. C.H. Gill, M.A.,  
16, Lincoln's Inn Fields,  
London, W.C.2.

Christ Church,  
Jerusalem,  
5th June, 1948

Dear Mr. Gill,

Thank you very much for your letter dated 11/6/48.

In giving you the account of "Operation Mercy" I omitted the following, which reveals a further wonderful over-ruling of God in connection with this operation. On the day before we brought the refugees to St. George's there had been a tremendous amount of widespread shooting all over Jerusalem throughout the day. Hannah and I had to run the gauntlet in her van in making a double journey between Christ Church and the English Mission Hospital; passing along Mamilla Road and through Zone B. was particularly hazardous, with bullets whistling in all directions. The cause of this widespread shooting turned out to be the result of a coup by the Haganah who were driving the Arabs out of Katamon. With the situation threatening to deteriorate rapidly, the Army authorities became alarmed and rushed considerable reinforcements of troops and armoured vehicles to Jerusalem, which had the effect of checking the Jewish advance through Katamon and generally quietening the situation. From this time on until the end of the Mandate the military authorities took strong measures to hold the situation in check in Jerusalem until their forces were evacuated. The result was that the following day was the quietest we had had in Jerusalem for many weeks, with hardly the sound of a shot being fired.

Without the cessation of the shooting it is difficult to see how the first stage of Operation Mercy could have been carried out, as Miss Hurnard had to make about ten journeys to and from the Jewish area conveying the refugees and luggage to Zone B. over a very exposed stretch of road and the route taken by the refugees in the afternoon from the Zone to St. George's ran through an area which was always dangerous when widespread shooting developed.

Another point I should have mentioned in the description of this operation was the peculiarly difficult position in which Hebrew Christians were finding themselves in the Jewish area. Everyone under forty was required

<sup>2</sup> Jones to Gill, June 5, 1948, MEC J&EM 18/5.

to register for national service and those who had registered were given cards to this effect. Anyone found in the street without such registration card was liable to "arrest" and was forbidden to feed in cafes or restaurants. Hebrew Christians who offered for national service were turned down and therefore possessed no registration card and so their position was made intolerable.





# Ben-Meir and Poljak about Operation Mercy

by Kai Kjær-Hansen

Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir and Abram Poljak both followed Operation Mercy at close quarters in May 1948 from Haifa, where they both lived and where the shipment of various groups of Hebrew Christians from Palestine to England took place.

After he had come to faith in Jesus, *Ben-Meir*, who was born in Palestine, had studied at Moody Bible School in Chicago in the late 1920s. Back in Palestine, he became involved in the Palestine Hebrew Christian Alliance and was until 1944 in the mission's employ. Several incidents in this period contributed to his resignation from service with the British Jews Society; after that time he worked as a postman.<sup>1</sup> As Gershon Nerel says: "Ben-Meir even considered the traditional missionaries his 'enemies.'"<sup>2</sup>

Ben-Meir struggled for a national Messianic community in Palestine/Israel. Below I am going to enter into critical interaction with Ben-Meir, which is why I want to emphasize that on some points he was ahead of his time – for example, in his struggle for Jewish identity for Jesus-believing Jews. He has also put his fingerprints on the development of the Messianic movement in Israel – perhaps in a more moderate version than he would have wished himself, but nonetheless.<sup>3</sup> He deserves credit for that, but this is outside the scope of this article. And one more thing—in my criticism of Ben-Meir, I am *not* questioning his standing with God. That I stress this from the very beginning will be evident from the following.

*Abram Poljak*, born in Russia and raised in Germany, married an "Aryan Christian" in 1924, and was imprisoned by the Nazis in the spring of 1933.

1 Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir, *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem: Autobiographical Sketches by Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir* (Hebrew ms 1977; published in English, Jerusalem: Netivya Bible Instruction Ministry: n.d. [2007]), 103–06. The book contains quite a few slips of the memory and some historical lapses. It is sad that Ben-Meir in his old age harboured much bitterness and contempt for the missions, of which there are many examples in his autobiography.

2 Cf. Gershon Nerel, "A 'Messianic Jewish Church' in Eretz-Israel," *Mishkan* 29 (1998): 53.

3 "He may be called the 'father of Messianic Judaism' in its strictest sense of linking faith in Yeshua to a living community within Judaism." Cf. Menahem Benhayim, "The Messianic Movement in Israel – A Personal Perspective (1963–1998)," *Mishkan* 28 (1998): 7.

Here he experienced a spiritual breakthrough: "So far my Christianity had been a Tolstoian experience; now it became a Jewish one," even of a pacifist nature. "I differentiated between a Jewish and a non-Jewish Christianity, and started to hope and work for a Jewish Church." Some time after his release, he arrived, in the beginning of 1935, in Palestine, where he attended the third annual conference of the Hebrew Christian Alliance of Palestine and met Ben-Meir.<sup>4</sup> In London in 1937, he formed the Jewish Christian Community with three others.<sup>5</sup> After some years of internment in Canada in the early 1940s, a reunion took place in London on June 16, 1944, between these four and some Christian friends: "For the first time the Sabbath light was 'kindled in honour of Jesus the Messiah, the Lord of the Sabbath' – a light never to extinguished."<sup>6</sup>

On June 22, 1946, Pauline Rose was able to kindle "the Sabbath Light of the Messiah for the first time in Jerusalem. This date marks the foundation of the Synagogue of the Messiah in the Holy City," she writes.<sup>7</sup> In 1947, Poljak spends approximately five months in Palestine. On February 10, 1948, he is back living in a monastery on Mount Carmel, from where he can watch the course of events in Palestine before the expiration of the British Mandate. Already on February 21, 1948, Ben-Meir and Poljak founded a small Messianic congregation in Haifa.<sup>8</sup>

How did these two Messianic Jews respond to Operation Mercy?

### **Ben-Meir's Sharp Criticism of the Evacuation and of the Missions**

Moshe Ben-Meir leveled a sharp criticism against the people behind the evacuation and against the evacuees. Here are some extracts from an article with the title "The Liberation of Israel – a Time of Grace for Zion."<sup>9</sup>

*Did the Holy Spirit Withdraw His Calling?*

On the situation in May 1948, Ben-Meir writes, among other things:

A sudden fear befell missionaries, hospitals, schools and mission cen-

4 Abram Poljak, *The Cross in the Star of David* (London: The Jewish Christian Community Press, 1938), 7, 15–16, 21, 35–40.

5 These were Pauline Rose, Agnes Waldstein, and Albert Springer, who all were to become active in the Poljak group's work in Palestine/Israel; see my article "Numbers Connected with Operation Mercy" in this issue of *Mishkan*, in which their whereabouts in the years 1946–1950 are described.

6 Pauline Rose, "The Light of the Messiah," *Jerusalem* 50/51 (1950): 4–5.

7 *Ibid.*, 6.

8 Cf. *Die Judenchristliche Gemeinde* 137 (1948): 1–2.

9 Moshe Ben-Meir, "Israels befrielse – Sions nådetid," *Karmel* (1949): 80–83. The article I refer to is from a Norwegian journal published by Per Faye Hansen. In the following years, he and Ben-Meir worked closely together in Haifa. The issue in which the article appears celebrates the one-year anniversary of the State of Israel's establishment. I concede that some details may be inaccurate as I am referring to a text that was translated from Hebrew or English into Norwegian and then translated back into English. However, I do not think this influences the main point.



tres. Those who had come from America returned there, those who had come from England returned there. Why? Did the Holy Spirit withdraw his calling? Do the Jews in the State of Israel not need the gospel? Was their return a consequence of fear? What had happened to the faith and the courage and the sacrificial spirit that they so often sang about? Can the Lord not keep them safe and sound also in the State of Israel?<sup>10</sup>

It is true that Ben-Meir's tone is ironic, but he does indeed have an important point. Surely, it is not unproblematic when mission societies withdraw their workers in the hour of peril. I, for one, try to understand the disappointment behind his words.

But what a relief if Ben-Meir had said: I do know that several Hebrew Christians connected with the mission remained in the Land in 1948. What a relief if he had said: I do know that during the siege of Jerusalem at least a dozen foreign missionaries remained in Jerusalem and others in other parts of Palestine/Israel<sup>11</sup> – and then added: But I am, nonetheless, disappointed.

He does not do that. Nor is he able to do so. He is filled with aversion to the missions. But Ben-Meir's aversion to Christian mission does *not* begin with Operation Mercy. It may have been increased by it, but his aversion goes further back.<sup>12</sup>

In his criticism of the missionaries, it is a simplification to reduce the problem to "fear." Money and stewardship of money also need to be mentioned. It is as if Ben-Meir supposes that a missionary society always has money enough.

In short, *Church Missions to Jews* (CMJ) had big financial problems. By accident, a child had been badly scalded at CMJ's hospital in Jerusalem in 1947, with the result that it was crippled for life. Action was brought against CMJ, which was ordered to pay damages to the parents that amounted to the enormous sum of 15,000 English pounds.<sup>13</sup> The costs were all in all approximately 17,000 pounds. Four mission bodies came to CMJ's rescue, each providing an interest-free loan of 3,000 pounds over three years.<sup>14</sup>

10 Ibid., 82.

11 See Hannah Hurnard, *Watchmen on the Walls* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 74–75. She writes: "When the mandate ended, about twelve Protestant missionaries and a handful of baptized Christians remained in the Jewish area" in Jerusalem. As to CMJ alone, three missionaries stayed in the Christ Church Compound in the Old City, Jerusalem, and six in Rehovot and Jaffa. Even though the Church of Scotland withdrew its missionaries, some local workers remained. See my article "Numbers Connected with Operation Mercy."

12 See notes 1 and 2 above and my article "Numbers Connected with Operation Mercy," note 11. The president of the Hebrew Christian Alliance in Palestine, Fritz Plotke, is seen as the big villain by both Ben-Meir and Poljak.

13 *Jewish Missionary News* 8 (1947): 8–10.

14 *Jewish Missionary News* 9 (1947): 5; 11 (1947): 4–6. The aid came from the British Jews Society, the Hebrew Christian Alliance, the Church of Scotland Jewish Committee, and the Mildmay Mission to the Jews.



At the beginning of 1948, fewer and fewer students were coming to CMJ's mission schools, which were partly maintained by the fees of the students. Such fees fail to come when the students cannot attend due to violence in the area.<sup>15</sup> Something similar can be said about the hospital. Few patients come in and the workers have difficulty getting to the hospital. As a consequence, CMJ hands over the hospital to the Jewish authorities – free of charge. But CMJ still has to pay pensions to senior workers and compensate others for the loss of employment.<sup>16</sup>

It is against this background that a large part of the staff at the school and the hospital in Jerusalem are called back to England, where some undergo further education for their future work as missionaries. These matters need to be taken into consideration in a fair historical evaluation of CMJ's decision to recall most of its school and hospital staff. CMJ's General Secretary, C. H. Gill, did actually try, early in 1948, to persuade the three British nurses to remain at the hospital.<sup>17</sup> To this may be added what Gill writes immediately after the completion of Operation Mercy: "A very large proportion of our missionary staff are staying in Palestine, and bravely facing the dangers."<sup>18</sup>

### *The Missions in Palestine Have Been a Plague*

Ben-Meir continues:

For many years the missions in Palestine have been a plague. Their working methods and their message were not right. Their work was often destructive. They had lost sight of the goal. They lead Jews to the baptismal font but not to Jesus Messiah. The missions were centres for assimilation and de-Judaization but not for salvation. During the painful birth of the State of Israel they realized their hypocrisy – that they could not perpetuate their play when they no longer had the English rifles to rely on. So they closed down and fled.

And these missionaries were followed by most of their converts, Jews that they had de-Judaized and deprived of the last particles of Jewish feeling and propriety.<sup>19</sup>

**They lead Jews to the baptismal font but not to Jesus Messiah. The missions were centres for assimilation and de-Judaization but not for salvation.**

Again, Ben-Meir does have a point when he speaks about assimilation and de-Judaization of Jews who have come to faith through missionary societ-

15 *Jewish Missionary News* 8 (1948): 111–12.

16 *Ibid.*, 23–24; 75–76.

17 See my article "The Organizers behind Operation Mercy" in this issue of *Mishkan*.

18 Cf. C. H. Gill to the Director of the Swedish Israel Mission, Birger Pernow, May 20, 1948, E I:56; 1, Church of Sweden Archives, Uppsala.

19 Ben-Meir, "Israels befrielse – Sions nådetid," 82.



ies. It was a problem then, and no one can deny that it still exists.

But Ben-Meir's statement is not just a criticism of the Christian mission. It is a devastating criticism of the Jews who had a connection to the mission. Here I must raise an objection, not so much for the sake of the mission as for the sake of the Jewish believers. If I were a baptized Jew in 1948–1949, who had heard the gospel through the missions and in childlike simplicity believed that I was a child of God for Jesus' sake, then it would be difficult to listen to this: the missionaries had led me to the baptismal font but not to Jesus Messiah, not to salvation!

I dare not question an assimilated Jew's standing with God if he or she lives in a faith relationship with the crucified and risen Lord.

And I dare not question a person's standing with God because that person left the Land before or in connection with Operation Mercy. It will have to be a matter between that person and God. Salvation does not depend on one's attitude to Zionism but on one's attitude to Jesus.

A good example is the Zeidan family, an Arab-Jewish couple who, with their children, were away from the country for some time but returned to Israel.<sup>20</sup> Salim, the Arab Christian husband and father, died in 1949. But Freda,<sup>21</sup> the wife and mother, "succeeded in rearing her family faithful to the Lord and devoted to all of Israel's people."<sup>22</sup> According to Menahem Benhayim, the family subsequently contributed to the promotion of a Hebrew-speaking milieu for local believers.<sup>23</sup>

Who are we to sit in judgment over the family because they had been "out of Israel during the critical time in 1947/48"?

### *The Days of the Gentiles Are Over*

Ben-Meir next mentions how the running away has cleared the way for the Jewish Messianic congregation's work. He accentuates the "mystical unity of Jews and non-Jews in the body of Christ, but we do not believe in assimilation." He and like-minded believers serve in the Israeli security forces. And, "If our faith that Jesus is the Messiah is regarded as criminal for a Jew in the State of Israel, then we are prepared to suffer for our faith . . . a confirmed Christian will be persecuted everywhere – even in the Chris-

**"If our faith that Jesus is the Messiah is regarded as criminal for a Jew in the State of Israel, then we are prepared to suffer for our faith."**

20 In a mail of May 15, 2008, David Zeidan notes: "Also we were out of Israel during the critical time in 1947/48." Apart from this I have no details about the Zeidan family's whereabouts in 1947–1948.

21 Cf. M. Benhayim, 9. According to Benhayim, "Freda had left Germany before the war [WW II] with the help of Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir, a native Jerusalemite believer who obtained an immigrant certificate for her to keep house for him and his family. The Zeidans were then [1963] living in a British Mission Compound in Haifa. They spoke fluent Hebrew, English, Arabic and German"; *ibid.*, 5.

22 Haya Benhayim with Menahem Benhayim, *Bound to the Promised Land* (Jerusalem: Jewish New Testament Publication, 2003), 65.

23 Cf. M. Benhayim, 9.

tian countries.”<sup>24</sup>

Ben-Meir concludes his article in this way:

God himself put an end to the British rule in Palestine – and to the work of several missions there. God let the unfaithful Hebrew Christians leave. Now Israel has been given a new beginning and new possibilities. God gave the Jews freedom in the State of Israel. And he has let the Jewish Messianic community bring the testimony about Jesus our Messiah out in the State of Israel. The days of the gentiles are over. Jesus Messiah will soon come again and sit on David’s throne. We are living in the beginning of the end. May we be ready!

“You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favour to her; the appointed time has come” (Psalm 103:13).<sup>25</sup>

So according to Ben-Meir, something good did come out of the evacuation. “God let the unfaithful Hebrew Christians leave.” From what he has said, “unfaithful” means unfaithful to both God and the Messianic cause. Consequently, these Hebrew Christians do not become unfaithful by leaving the country. They are that already.

According to Ben-Meir, the “unfaithfulness” of these believers has resulted in the possibility of a new beginning for the proclamation of Jesus in Israel – without interference from foreign mission societies. “The days of the gentiles are over.”

It was not to be like that. The mission societies returned to Israel. Already on April 26, 1949, a conference is held in Haifa with participation from eleven societies.<sup>26</sup> And among the many immigrants who came to Israel over the following years, there were also Jesus-believing Jews who continued joining the denominations through which they had come to faith in the diaspora and who could not go along with Ben-Meir’s radical criticism of the Christian church and its mission among Jews in Israel – as well as parts of his theology.

### **Abram Poljak’s Appeal and Stance on the Evacuation**

In mid-March 1948, Poljak writes about the recently founded congregation in Haifa (cf. above). He is afraid that they cannot expect support from anybody: “We have *all* against us: Jew and Arabs; churches and missions and also the Hebrew Christian Alliance. Alone we stand – with God!”<sup>27</sup> This is followed by some strong words under the heading: “Unsere Parole.”

24 Ben-Meir, “Israels befrielse – Sions nådetid,” 82.

25 *Ibid.*, 83.

26 A few of these eleven were not involved in direct Jewish mission. Cf. A. Scott Morrison, “Eine Reise nach Israel – 21. Februar bis 11. Maj 1949,” *Judaica* (1949): 196–97. Morrison had worked for the Scottish Church in Jaffa, left Palestine in May 1948, and after his visit in the spring of 1949, he returned to work in Israel in the autumn of 1949.

27 *Die Judenchristliche Gemeinde* 138 (1948): 5.



Come what may – we shall never say: “Let him who can save himself do so! Abandon the sinking ship! Flee Palestine!” Our appeal are Jeremiah’s words: “He who believes does not flee!”<sup>28</sup> Stay in the Land! Close ranks! Let us serve one another! If we must go hungry, let us be hungry together, and if we must die, we will die together. There is no fairer death than that on the way of faith in the Holy Land. Let us give thanks to God that he has given us an opportunity to prove our faith, our sincerity and faithfulness and to glorify the name of Christ in Israel – in the hour of need!

We say with Paul that also we “have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men” (1 Cor 4:9). And with him may we also expect that when we have fought the good fight, have finished the race, have kept the faith. Now there is in store for us the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to us on that day – and not only to us, but also to all who have longed for his appearing (2 Tim 4,7–9).<sup>29</sup>

#### *The Jewish “Quislings” Leave Haifa*

Not without journalistic flair does Poljak tell how Hebrew Christians and others leave Haifa on board the *Empress of Australia* on May 18, 1948.<sup>30</sup> People from Jerusalem, Jaffa, Tel-Aviv, and Tiberias had come to Haifa a few days before. Three military vehicles pick them up at the various places in the town where they were accommodated. The meeting point is the Windsor Hotel in the German Colony. Included in the group are “gentile Christian and Hebrew Christian pastors and missionaries,” among them the president of the Hebrew Christian Alliance in Palestine.<sup>31</sup> These missionaries had, writes Poljak, for decades preached the gospel in the Holy Land, resided in beautiful houses, received a considerable salary, and at the services and meetings they had said: “Sei getreu bis an den Tod” [“Be faithful unto death”]. But now they leave their congregation in the lurch, among them “the greatest mission preacher in Jerusalem” who had an American passport and, therefore, was the first person who could get on board an American ship.<sup>32</sup>

Poljak is aware of what has been written in the English press about oth-

28 “Wer glaubt, der flieht nicht” is found in German translations of Isaiah 28:16.

29 Ibid., 5–6.

30 *Die Judenchristliche Gemeinde* 140/141 (1948): 5–9. As to the date, May 18, see my article “Numbers Connected with Operation Mercy.”

31 Fritz Plotke is not mentioned by name.

32 *Die Judenchristliche Gemeinde* 140/141, 6. I cannot with certainty decide who is meant. Is it the Baptist minister Robert L. Lindsey? The answer may probably be found in the Southern Baptists’ Archives. With his family, Lindsey had come to Jerusalem in November 1945 to serve in Narkis Street (cf. Robert L. Lindsey, *Jesus, Rabbi and Lord* [Oak Creek, WI: Cornerstone Publishing 1990], 14). But in his book *Israel in Christendom: The Problem of Jewish Identity* (S.I.: s.n., n.d.), 1), he writes about an unusual personal experience he had “in the

er refugees who had been evacuated earlier, for example, that they, to the very end, baptized Jews. "This is true," writes Poljak, adding, "On the morning before his departure, the pastor of the Scottish Church in Haifa had baptized a Jewess."<sup>33</sup>

According to Poljak, the English need Jewish quislings, Jews who are prepared to defame the Jewish people. In the British press, these refugees are "good Jews"; the "bad Jews" are the Zionists. Reuters, the news agency, reports that the Stern group has blacklisted some of these Hebrew Christians with the intention of killing them.

Poljak says about these refugees:

None want to be traitors. They are not bad people, just cowardly. Therefore they flee. By doing so they have to play, although unwillingly, the traitor's part. Those who go over to the enemy have to pay the price for it. England is Israel's enemy, and the renegades have already been caught in the wheels of their propaganda machine, as proved by the Reuter report.<sup>34</sup>

#### *Poljak's Farewell to Refugees at the Windsor Hotel*

Before the group is driven to the harbor in the three military vehicles, the first with luggage, the other two with the refugees, they are met at the entrance to the hotel by Poljak. Some recognized him and asked when he was going to leave. When they heard that he had arrived in February from Switzerland "and intended to stay here," they burst out: "From Switzerland you have come to Palestine – into the witches' cauldron?!"

About his farewell to Fritz Plotke, Poljak writes:

The president of the Alliance lifted up his voice: "I hope that nothing will happen to you. I commend you to God's protection!"

"I thank you and wish you all a safe journey. What has become of the Alliance? Are you taking it with you?"

"It must rest till I return."

"When will you return?"

"When it has become calmer – in six months' time perhaps."

From his room in a monastery on Mount Carmel, Poljak can follow the ship with these Hebrew Christians on board. He ends by writing: "As the day was waning, the *Empress of Australia* left the harbour heading west – where the sun sets."<sup>35</sup>

On board were these "cowardly" Hebrew Christians and their leaders, who would not give their lives for the Zionist cause.

It was quite a different matter for Poljak. What happened in Palestine/

spring of 1949" and continues: "I had returned from the United States with my family to my post as a Baptist pastor in Jerusalem. . . ."

<sup>33</sup> *Die Judenchristliche Gemeinde* 140/141, 7.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.



Israel in the middle of May 1948 was God's cause. Therefore, he who believes does not flee!

### **Poljak, Ben-Meir, and "Mercy"**

To cut a long story short, on December 13, 1950, Poljak left Israel, to return only on short visits before he died in 1963. He was buried in the "Jerusalem" he did *not* manage to

build in Israel but in Möttlingen, Germany. His appeal from 1948 returns to him like a boomerang: "Stay in the Land! . . . There is no fairer death than that on the way of faith in the Holy Land."

What is Ben-Meir's reaction to Poljak leaving the Land? In his autobiography from 1977, Ben-Meir writes: "The Lord had a different calling with him, however."<sup>36</sup>

This may be so! And of course it is a matter between Poljak and God. But the "mercy" that Ben-Meir, as late as in 1977, showed to Poljak, who left the Land in 1950, is not shown to the Hebrew Christians who left the Land during Operation Mercy in 1948.

Did God also have "a different calling" for the evacuees? This is not for me to decide. It is a matter between them and God – the God of mercy.

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<sup>36</sup> Ben-Meir, *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem*, 129.

# Operation Mercy on the Eve of the Establishment of the State of Israel

– The “Exodus” of Jewish Disciples of Yeshua from the Land of Israel in 1948\*



by **Gershon Nerel**

The code names “Operation Grace” and “Operation Mercy” were assigned by several British organizations to a series of clandestine activities that led to the evacuation of most of the Jewish believers in Yeshua from the Land of Israel in the spring of 1948.<sup>1</sup> During this period, it was clear that the British Mandate over Palestine/Eretz Israel had come to an end after about thirty years, and the Jewish state was about to be established. In those days, there were approximately one hundred fifty Messianic Jews in the Land who openly identified themselves as Hebrew/Jewish followers of Yeshua and were known primarily as “Hebrew Christians.” In this article I am using both designations – *Hebrew Christians* and *Messianic Jews* – according to the context.

## The Unique Position of Jewish Believers in Yeshua in 1946–1948

In contrast to the situation in the twenty-first century, on the eve of the establishment of the state in 1948, the vast majority of Messianic Jews were in some way affiliated with the Protestant establishment in the Land: churches, denominations, and missionary organizations – mainly British,

\* I am thankful to Dr. Keri Zelson Warshawsky for her kind help with some of the English translation. I am also grateful to Ahuva Ben-Meir, Rachel (Shelly) Bar-David, the late Solomon Ostrovsky, and the late Ronald Adeney for providing authentic documents. My special thanks to Dr. Walter Riggans, former Director General of the Church Ministry [formerly Missions] to the Jews (CMJ), for allowing me to read and to publish materials from the Bodleian Library (Western MSS) in Oxford and from the CMJ-ITAC (Israel Trust of the Anglican Church) archives in Jerusalem.

<sup>1</sup> This article is a general summary of my Hebrew article titled “‘Operation Mercy’: The Evacuation of Messianic Jews from Eretz Israel in 1948,” published recently in *Iggud – Selected Essays in Jewish Studies, Vol. 2 – History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Jewish Society*, ed. Gershon Bacon, Albert Baumgarten, Jacob Barnai, Chaim Waxman, and Israel J. Yuval (Jerusalem: The World Union of Jewish Studies, 2009), 83–109 (with photographs and with comprehensive bibliography and references). See also my articles on this topic (Hebrew) published in *Zot Habrit* (Organ of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel – MJAI, <http://www.mjai.org>), vol. 20 (Oct 2004): 11–12; vol. 21 (May 2007): 11–12; and vol. 23 (Jan 2009): 11–12.

American, Finnish, Swiss, and Swedish. Whereas nowadays Messianic Jews are found chiefly in independent congregations of their own, and even organized as independent non-profit associations (*Amutoi*), in those years most were under the “structural wings” of the historic churches. However, one should note that a minority was already then significantly independent from the definite influence of Protestant Christianity, particularly in the small group under the leadership of Abram Poljak, Albert Springer, Agnes Waldstein, and Pauline Rose. In those days, the majority of Messianic Jews supported themselves through church-generated work, mostly through the institutions of the British “Church Missions to Jews” (CMJ), whose center was located in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, in actuality, tens of the Hebrew Christians were still wary of publicly identifying themselves as disciples of Yeshua, and behaved as “Nicodemians” – according to the example of Nicodemus, the ruler who visited Yeshua secretly, only under the cover of night (John 3:1–2). Normally those crypto-Yeshua-believers hardly spoke Hebrew.

The situation of the Hebrew Christians worsened in light of the security, political, and economic problems in the Land around 1946–1948. Most of the “Yishuv,” i.e. the Jewish population, saw them as “converts and apostates (*meshumadim*)” worthy of absolute excommunication, while the churches and missions were not capable of helping all of them. In addition, there were a few Hebrew Christians who were arrested and interrogated by the so-called “Stern Gang” (known in Hebrew as *LEHI*, an acronym for Israel Freedom Fighters), the most militant of the pre-state underground groups, who suspected that as Christian agents they were spies and collaborators with the British enemy. Some of the *LEHI* members suspected that the regular religious association of “the baptized Jews” with the English in joint meetings in their churches was nothing more than a guise for an espionage organization. However, such suspicions and suppositions actually ignored the historical fact that Jewish Yeshua-believers were also connected to the Anglican churches in the country as far back as the late Ottoman period. In other words, the Hebrew Christians under the British Mandate not only worked in British institutions, but also prayed, married, and were buried in the Anglican Church in light of a spiritual, faith-based common denominator.

Officially, on the eve of the establishment of the state, Jewish believers found themselves *outside* the Hebrew national camp as a result, as previously mentioned, of their very close religious and social affiliation with English-speakers in the Land, mainly the British. All of this took place in the context of a long territorial struggle in the region based entirely on conflicting nationalist interests – between the Zionists on the one hand, and the Arabs on the other.

During the Mandate period, few of the Yeshua-believers identified entirely with the Zionist movement. Some, for example, volunteered to carry weapons and guard in the *Hagana* (the main Jewish underground military organization prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, which was the foundation of *Zahal* – the Israel Defense Forces) and the *Etzel*



(an acronym standing for “National Military Organization,” also called *Ir-gun* – another underground organization which fought against the British). Other Hebrew Christians volunteered for medical units and served as volunteer kitchen labor. A few joined the military engineering forces and participated in fortifying walls alongside earthworks. However, they were not thought of as insiders to the Jewish national establishment. Although certain Jewish disciples of Yeshua openly declared that the Jewish return to Zion was a wondrous fulfillment of the Old Covenant prophecies – and understood that they themselves were part of this – they were in a complex and complicated “trap” between two groups of brethren: the British Christians on the one hand and their Jewish compatriots on the other.

### **The Churches and the “Christian Jews”**

At a time when growing numbers of Jewish Yeshua-believers in Eretz Israel saw themselves as ethnically and nationally inseparable from the people of Israel, many leaders of churches in the Land, as well as in their headquarters overseas, claimed that “Hebrew Christians” were essentially only “former Jews.” In other words, following faith in Yeshua, the Jews should assimilate into the universal body of believers without preserving Jewish uniqueness, a doctrine which they based on a distorted interpretation of the words of the apostle Paul that in the Messiah “there is neither Jew nor Greek” (Gal 3:28). Namely, most of the Gentile church and mission leaders that were serving at that time in the Land did not see any particular significance in Jewish believers in Yeshua remaining in the forthcoming Jewish state and independently developing into congregations that would be effectively disconnected from the customs and traditions of historical Christianity.

**At a time when growing numbers of Jewish Yeshua-believers in Eretz Israel saw themselves as ethnically and nationally inseparable from the people of Israel, many leaders of churches in the Land . . . claimed that “Hebrew Christians” were essentially only “former Jews.”**

Thus, with such a theological understanding in the background, between the years 1946–1948, all kinds of rumors began to gradually spread through the missionary organizations and churches in the Land concerning a great persecution of “believers of Jewish descent,” expected to take place as it were in the new Jewish state that was about to be established. To say it differently, the representatives of the churches that saw a future for these “Jewish believing” Messianics only as Christians and “former Jews” stirred up the rumors that these people could expect terrible persecutions in the new state, and even physical extermination at the hands of the normative Jewish society. Alongside these rumors, a historical comparison with the New Testament narrative was advanced in those same circles, implying that the situation was similar, so to speak, to the persecution of Yeshua’s Jewish disciples in the Land during the Second Temple period. However, it should be emphasized that apart from a few anomalies, not a single Messianic



Jew at the end of the Mandate period was systematically persecuted or killed merely due to his faith in Yeshua.

In any case, it should also be mentioned that among the church people there were some other Gentile theologians who received the Messianic Jews in the Land as Jews in the full sense of the word, and were honestly concerned for their future, without prejudices against the People of Israel. Accordingly, some people from CMJ even suggested that a neutral body should care for the needs of the Jewish believers in Yeshua in the Land. It was, therefore, suggested to turn to the United Nations or the International

Red Cross, in order to appoint a particular authority to provide for their needs. However, this idea never came to fruition. In contrast, the leaders of the British CMJ, and primarily the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, Weston Henry Stewart, cooperated with other organizations and carried out another plan – the organized evacuation of Hebrew Christians from the Land.

**. . . among church people there were some other Gentile theologians who received the Messianic Jews in the Land as Jews in the full sense of the word . . .**

### **Who Organized Operation Mercy?**

The major initiators, supporters, and executors of the operation's logistics were six bodies:

1. The Anglican Bishopric in Jerusalem, together with the Jerusalem and East Mission (J&EM), headed by bishop Weston H. Stewart;
2. CMJ leaders in Jerusalem and their superiors in the mission's headquarters in London;
3. The International Hebrew Christian Alliance (IHCA), with its center in those years in London;
4. The Hebrew Christian Alliance of Palestine and the Near East, with its center in Haifa;
5. The Church of Scotland, with its center in Edinburgh; and
6. The British High Commissioner and the Government of Mandatory Palestine with the British army in the country.

These six entities were behind the "wheels" of the operation, including the supply of finances and subsidies for some of the evacuees. Interestingly, although the operation was an integral part of the general British disengagement from the Land, the evacuation of the small group of Jewish Christians was considered by some as an exceptional "smuggling out."

### **The Evacuation from Jerusalem**

During the month of April 1948, twenty Hebrew Christians that belonged to the CMJ congregation near Jaffa Gate were evacuated from Jerusalem. Some of them were flown directly to London, and others traveled to Eng-

land via Cairo in Egypt, after the mission's leaders obtained the necessary entrance visas with promises that they would be able to prolong their stay in Britain. Actually, they were accompanying the British staff (government officials, army personnel, and missionaries) that was gradually being evacuated from the country since mid-February 1948. Some of the Hebrew Christians had Mandatory passports, and others possessed passports of other countries.

A further stage in the evacuation started on Shabbat, May 1, 1948, when an additional group of twenty-seven Jewish believers in Yeshua were gathered in the Anglican compound at St. George's Cathedral in East Jerusalem. Because of the hostilities between Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem, the group of "Messianic refugees" had to remain almost a week in the compound. From there, on Friday, May 7, they were transported by car to the *Kalandia* airport in North Jerusalem. Then, in two small Dakota airplanes, brought in especially from Cyprus, the party – which now numbered forty persons (with an additional eight Hebrew Christians alongside five English nurses from the English Hospital in Prophets Street that joined them) – was flown to Haifa, since Jerusalem was under siege and land transport was rendered impossible.

In Haifa, the evacuees from Jerusalem were joined by a few more Hebrew Christians who arrived from Jaffa/Tel-Aviv, Tiberias, and Haifa. On May 7, 1948, all of them boarded the *Georgic*, a ship anchored in the Haifa port, and so, just a week before the declaration of the Jewish state, they set sail for Liverpool, England. In England, forty-two Palestinian Hebrew Christians were officially recognized as refugees, and benefited from state and other organization-sponsored aid, including from the International Red Cross and the International Hebrew Christian Alliance.<sup>2</sup>

### The Evacuation of Another Group

On May 13, 1948, about a week after the Hebrew Christians on board the *Georgic* set sail, another group of thirty-two Hebrew Christians was brought from Jaffa/Tel-Aviv to the Haifa port, most of them from a Brethren background. They sailed to England on board another ship, the *Empress of Australia*. Among the evacuees/runaways from Haifa in this second party was Fritz Plotke, one of the leaders of the Haifa congregation.<sup>3</sup> However, it should be noted that the widow of Shabbetai Benjamin Rohold, Bella Dean Rohold, who belonged to this congregation for many years, preferred to remain on Mt. Carmel.

2 The International Hebrew Christian Alliance officially promised support up to four thousand Sterling pounds. See: Nahum Levison, "Editorial – Israel," *The Hebrew Christian* (Quarterly Magazine of the IHCA), vol. 21 (July 1948): 27.

3 Fritz J. Plotke was also the President of the Hebrew-Christian Alliance of Palestine and the Near East (Histadrut Hayehudim Hamshih'i'im be'Eretz Israel Ve'Hamizrah Hakarov). I thank Mr. Heikki Nurminen for providing materials from the Ali Havas files in the archives of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) in Helsinki, Finland.



## The Number of Evacuees in 1948: Reality and Fiction

According to the available archival documents, later compared with certain verbal testimonies, the total number of evacuated Hebrew Christians from the Land on the eve of the establishment of the state was ninety-four: in April, 20; on May 7, 42; and on May 13, 32. Among the evacuees were not only Hebrew Christians belonging to the Anglican Church (35), but also American Pentecostals (4), Plymouth Brethren (4), Church of Scotland (2), Roman Catholic (1), and others. Partial lists of names were found only in the CMJ archives.

However, it is also significant to say that beyond the precise facts and the exact numbers connected to Operation Mercy, one should note the special symbolic importance which was attached to the operation itself and to the interpretation of the circumstances, both in Britain and in Israel. In fact, for decades such interpretations have affected the shaping of identity among Messianic Jewish congregations in the Land.

Interestingly, already in July 1948, peculiar reports were spread in England concerning “many hundreds” of Jewish Christians that were evacuated from the Land as refugees. Such stories intensified because they appeared within a formal pastoral letter of Bishop Stewart, and also from another source. According to the estimation of Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir, one of the veteran Messianic Jews in the Land who remained with his family and refused to be evacuated, all of the various “missions” were responsible for the exodus of about three hundred fifty persons – men, women and children. Probably this estimation was based on rumors concerning the evacuation of many who were considered “Nicodemians,” namely clandestine believers, and not merely those aboard the *Georgic* and the *Empress of Australia*. However, according to a testimony of another Messianic Jew, Solomon Ostrovsky, who also remained in the Land (although he sent both his sons abroad), only seventy persons were evacuated from Eretz Israel. According to sources of the International Hebrew Christian Alliance, “between seventy and eighty have come in this way to our shores.”<sup>4</sup>

## What Happened to the Evacuees in England?

To the best of our knowledge, most of those evacuated to Liverpool aboard the *Georgic* remained in England. They settled there and never returned to live in Eretz Israel. In fact, some of them made it clear from the outset that it was their intention to immigrate to other places, such as Australia, Germany, and the United States. In other words, they de facto closed a circle in their attempts to assimilate within the churches of the nations. On the other hand, however, we do know about a few widows and single people who returned, but we don’t know about any such families. One of the singles who returned was Rina Price. She came back in 1952 – first to join

4 Harcourt Samuel, “News and Notes - Palestine,” *The Hebrew Christian*, vol. 21 (July 1948): 30.

the congregation of Ze'ev Shlomo Kofsman in Jerusalem, and later to join the group of Emma Berger in Zichron Ya'akov. Another person, Fritz Plotke from Haifa who departed in the second group, also returned to Israel in 1951, and stayed in Haifa.

### Reactions to the Evacuation in the House of Lords

Operation Mercy, which was considered by CMJ missionaries as a "spiritual Dunkirk," had also stimulated widespread public feedback in Britain. On March 29, 1949, for example, the issue of this operation was officially placed on the agenda of the House of Lords in the Parliament in London. During a debate on "the problem of refugees from Palestine," the Archbishop of York demanded that the Government of His Majesty should no less also help the Arab refugees and support their needs, at least as the British had supported Jewish Christians who were "smuggled out" of the country by underground methods in order to save their lives. Hugh Jones, the CMJ Field Director and a central figure in carrying out Operation Mercy, responded separately to the words of the Archbishop of York, claiming that according to the circumstances in 1948, all who were involved in the operation were under heavy stress, yet retrospectively the fears which were understood *then* were proven to be exaggerated, and that the evidence for that was that those Hebrew Christians who remained were not harmed at all. These words of Jones, less than a year after the evacuation, manifest indeed that the British had misestimated the reality in which the Hebrew Christians were found. De facto, the British were motivated to a great extent by their theological views concerning the religious status of Jewish followers of Yeshua.

**De facto, the British were motivated to a great extent by their theological views concerning the religious status of Jewish followers of Yeshua.**

### The Archbishop of York against the Jewish State

In fact it was already on November 3, 1948, that the *Palestine Post* published the tough words of the Archbishop of York against the "Jewish rule" in the new State of Israel, namely that "there would be no toleration for Christian or Muslim, and long-established Christian institutions and work would be in danger of suppression or destruction."

Rev. Roger Allison, the CMJ representative in Jaffa, responded immediately to these unfounded words, and in a personal letter to the Archbishop he explained that generally, in the new Jewish state both Christian and Muslim administrations and religious services were treated with full respect.

From such kind of British accusations against "Jewish authority" in the Land coming from the highest Anglican circles, one can learn that there had been already deep superstitious views against the Jews alongside exaggerated fears from Jewish control. People like the Archbishop of York



even disseminated rumors and charges only upon some exceptional cases, wrongly claiming that they were the norm. In fact this way of thinking had created the general background for the organizers of Operation Mercy.

### **What Happened to the Messianic Jews Who Remained in the Jewish State?**

After the organized evacuation of the majority of Hebrew Christians to England, only a small remnant of about two dozen remained; they strongly believed that Zionism was a tool in God's plan toward Israel's spiritual redemption. They chose to stay and participate in the national effort to establish the state and to fully integrate themselves in it. Among them were members of the congregation of Abram Poljak in Haifa and in Jerusalem, and other Hebrew Christians scattered throughout the Land, such as Solomon Ostrovsky, Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir, and Haim Joseph Haimoff (Bar-David) with their families. According to their belief, the return of the Jews to Zion was no less than the fulfillment of eschatological prophecies and the realization of Ezekiel's vision about the "dry bones" in the historic "valley" – Eretz Israel (Ezek 37:1–14). In other words, although Israel's material/territorial restoration took place still in unbelief in Yeshua, it merely preceded the future Jewish acceptance of their promised Messiah.

Here it should also be noted that already during the months of February and March 1948, the above-mentioned individuals rejected the overemphasized warnings and repeated invitations of the British organizations that prepared the evacuation from the Land, stating clearly that they had no plans at all to leave. For many years after the establishment of the state, they firmly criticized the physical and mental displacement of those evacuated through Operation Mercy, and even argued that the church encouraged cowardice and suspicion among them.

Thus, following the declaration of the State of Israel on May 15, 1948, the community of Jewish Yeshua-believers underwent a substantial metamorphosis. On the one hand, the old nucleus of assimilating Hebrew Christians, completely subordinate to the ecclesiastical establishment since the times of the Ottoman regime and during the British Mandate, became void and irrelevant. On the other hand, the developing circumstances created new vistas for those with a Zionist-messianic vision who remained in the Land. This Zionist remnant that rejected the evacuation felt strengthened after overcoming a period of spiritual testing, both personally and nationally, and could de facto demonstrate their belonging to the people of Israel. Therefore, in their eyes it was totally inapplicable to compare their situation in the Land in the twentieth century with the situation of the primitive *kehila* (congregation) that "escaped" from Jerusalem to Pella, east of the Jordan River, on the eve of the destruction of the Second Temple by the Roman Titus in the year 70 CE.

However, at the same time it should also be noted that even the Zionist remnant of Messianic Jews who refused to be assimilated within the churches, and strongly highlighted their national Jewish identity, was

essentially divided into two groups. First, one could find those who had entirely disassociated themselves from any connection with the establishment of Protestant Christendom, such as the “Jewish Christian Community and the Jerusalem Fellowship” under the leadership of Abram Poljak, Albert Springer, Agnes Waldstein, and Pauline Rose. Second, there were those who still maintained some minimal contacts with Protestant circles while stressing their Jewish identity and developing a Hebrew liturgy. In this group, again, one could find believers such as Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir in Haifa, Solomon Ostrovsky in Jaffa, and Haim Joseph Haimoff in Jerusalem and later in Ramat Gan.

The small Zionist remnant of Messianic Jews in the new state was consolidated and reinforced by the fresh waves of *aliya* (immigration) which also included Jewish believers in Yeshua from many countries. Among those who came after 1948 were Shlomo Ze’ev Kofsman and his wife, Yvette, Ya’akov and Leah Goren, Victor and Suzy Smadja, Zvi and Neomi Kalisher, Sami Herscu, Izi Ball, Peter Guttkind, and their families. Most of the veterans and these newcomers joined together and established their own congregations without being dependent on the historic churches. So, in those early years of the young state, the Hebrew language was often not dominant in the small congregations, since the first generation of *olim* (immigrants) still used and understood only their mother tongue. Thus, for example, sometimes the translations of sermons were into at least two or three languages, mostly Eastern European. Gradually those local congregations were legally incorporated as Ottoman charitable societies (*Agudot Ottomaniot*) and later as registered *Amutot* with institutions and rules of their own.

### A Watershed in Modern Messianic Jewish History

Operation Mercy was a major turning point in the history of modern Jewish believers in Yeshua in Eretz Israel. Until then, most of them were heavily subject to various churches and missionary organizations from among the nations – not only administratively and materially, but also theologically. This reality was highlighted, for example, by a certain CMJ leader who had stated, “The Hebrew Christian Alliance is also performing a very useful role in encouraging its members to identify themselves wholeheartedly with the Churches in which they have been baptized.” But after Operation Mercy, one observes a new tendency developing: growing numbers of Messianic Jews endeavored to establish themselves as autonomous entities. They formed their own agendas in the field of organization and management as well as in the area of shaping their distinctive biblical exegesis and interpretations.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, however, most of them still benefited

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Richard Harvey, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology: A Constructive Approach* (London: Paternoster, 2009); Gershon Nerel, “Christological Observations within Yeshua Judaism,” *Mishkan* 59 (2009): 51–62.



substantially from “Gentile” financial support, often because of the following principle: “The cow wants to suckle more than the calf to nuzzle.”

Additionally, while in Mandate times Hebrew Christians had only few daily contacts with mainstream Jewry, particularly due to their close relationships with the English speaking foreigners in the country, in the State of Israel the Yeshua-believers, now called mainly Messianic Jews, have thoroughly integrated themselves within the majority society of normative Hebrew speaking Jewry. In contrast to this situation, interestingly, one also observes another aspect: The gap between the strong biblical Zionism of Messianic Jews on the one hand, and the anti-Zionist theology of Palestinian Arab Christians on the other, has increased slowly but surely. This phenomenon of national polarization actually undermined the openly expressed expectations raised by some missionaries during the early years of statehood, that a common theological basis is more than able to bridge the misunderstandings between Jewish Christians and Arab Palestinian Christians.

### Summary

All of the evacuation stages of Operation Mercy were organized as military movements under the public cover of humanitarian actions. From the logistical planning phase until its full implementation, the operation lasted about six months – from November 1947 until May 1948.

Throughout the stages of this operation, it was impossible to hide the competitive differences between two opposing views among the historic churches and their attitudes towards Jewish Yeshua-believers. On the one hand, there were those who focused on the assimilation of the Jews among the nations and the churches, and on the other hand those who supported the shaping of a fresh national and sovereign Messianic Jewish identity. The evacuation of those Jewish Christians who had already tended to be assimilated from Eretz Israel to England, and from there their scattering in other countries, has de facto served the interests of those who carried the flag of assimilation of the Jews. The evacuation, or the “smuggling out,” was in reality just in one direction, as people were provided with a one-way ticket only. The documents do not reveal any attempts to consider in advance the possibility that the evacuees would be reorganized and return to the Land. Such a plan, for a future collective comeback of the community when the winds calmed down, was not found.

However, after the evacuees arrived in England, there were indeed some talks about their “re-immigration,” but no clear destination was mentioned, so the immigration could have been to any other place in the world. Therefore, the impression one gets from the authentic documents is that the personal intention of most of the evacuees – to immigrate and to assimilate – was to a great extent synchronized with the intention of the evacuators to take the congregations out of the Land and scatter them in different directions. In other words, by no means was Operation Mercy an act imposed by force.



To the heads of the Anglican Church, it was clear that the Jews in Eretz Israel would eventually achieve their political independence and sovereignty. Simultaneously, those Anglicans also felt that the national Messianic Yeshua-believers would finally reach religious sovereignty and theological hegemony. In both cases, the secular and the religious, the British refrained from smoothly transferring the authority upon a silver plate. Yet, while in the secular case of the establishment of a Jewish state, the British had no choice but to leave the governing control in the hands of the then existing institutions of the state "on the way," in the case of the Hebrew Christians, the British had initiated a quite unilateral action of their own. De facto, they did not enable the continuous survival of the local congregation which was under their influence. And anyway, since most of this congregation did not hold Jewish national or Zionist theological aspirations, the church clergy itself had fixed the facts on the ground. All this was most probably because of one central point: The higher clergy maintained a fundamental theological position that there is no doctrinal justification for the existence of a *distinct* Messianic Jewish entity. Obviously, this issue had then, and has nowadays, many historical implications, particularly vis-à-vis the position and the role of Jews and Gentiles within the ongoing process of self-identification inside the universal church.

**The higher clergy maintained a fundamental theological position that there is no doctrinal justification for the existence of a *distinct* Messianic Jewish entity.**

Ultimately, the official church people did not leave a total vacuum behind them in the Land. The small remnant of about two dozen who preferred to stay was reinforced by Zionist Messianic Jews who made *aliya* to Israel. They together have established new congregations independent of the historic churches, and in spite of the fact that they did not hide their linkage to two worlds, both Jewry and Christendom, by their own self-determination they created a new group identity which stands for itself. Thus, for example, this grouping is now openly mentioned among the entries of the renowned *Hebrew Dictionary* of Avraham Even-Shoshan, under the title "Messianic"/"Messianic Jews."

According to the reminiscences of Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir and others who refused to be evacuated through Operation Mercy, this event in 1948, sometimes called "evacuation"/"smuggling out"/"runaway"/"escaping," was nothing but a black spot of an "infamous fleeing caravan." In the eyes of these critics, this move was simply an expression of lack of faith and lack of patriotism.

All in all, it is very likely that Operation Mercy was the factual background for the spreading of the ongoing hearsay around the country over many years, both among new immigrants and veterans, that "the mission" – referring to the entire body of "dangerous missionaries" in the Land – functioned as a tempting "channel" to provide free travel overseas, and in this way to allegedly allow the solving of personal and economic problems for people. One example, which occasionally appeared in some headlines



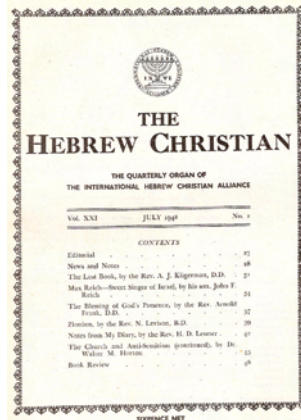
of local newspapers, was the following mind-set: "Get baptism, join the mission and receive an exempt from military service in *Zahal* (IDF)." Thus, during the 1950s, the 1960s, and even till the late 1970s, the two terms of "mission" and "deserting the Land" (*yerida* in Hebrew) were closely interlinked, especially among the lower classes in Israel. But this and other aspects of the social and theological life of Jewish Yeshua-believers in Israel certainly need further discussion.

#### Author info:

Gershon Nerel (Ph.D., Hebrew University), along with his wife, Sara, revised the Delitzsch Hebrew translation of the New Testament (Negev Version, Beer Sheva, 2003).



"OPERATION MERCY"—Rev. R. E. Adeney (above arrow) seeing off refugees, among a party about to leave Jerusalem by convoy, May, 1948  
By courtesy of Associated Press Ltd. and Illustrated Newspapers Ltd.



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# Numbers Connected with Operation Mercy

by Kai Kjær-Hansen

Gershon Nerel's article on Operation Mercy in this issue has been written under time pressure.<sup>1</sup> The article attracts attention, but also contradiction. In my next article, I will try to identify the organizers behind Operation Mercy and to understand what motivated them. The picture I get is quite a different one from Nerel's. In the present article, I am going to deal with Nerel's opinion of the number of Hebrew Christians who remained in the Land and the number of those who left.

But Nerel is challenging on other points, which in a different context could be interesting to discuss, namely the significance Poljak and the group around him have had for the Messianic movement today in terms of theology, missiology, and eschatology.

In another context, Nerel expressed his reservations about the group around Poljak, a criticism which I welcome.<sup>2</sup> In Israel, the Poljak group virtually killed itself – although it consisted of *pacifists!* – and died away in the 1980s. The difference between what the Poljak group stood for in 1948 and what the majority of the Messianic movement stands for *today* is very big. Poljak's greatest affinity is presumably with the Beth-El Community, often called the Emma Berger sect, which today has no contact with the Messianic movement in Israel.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 The arrangement that Gershon Nerel should provide an article for this issue of *Mishkan* was made with him in Yad Hashmona, Israel, as late as August 23 this year. We had learned that he had just had a major article on Operation Mercy published in Hebrew (cf. note 1 in his article). Due to the time pressure, Nerel has chosen to include just a few notes, for which he should not be criticized. In my interaction with him, I have made sure that practically all my critical points are directed toward opinions which also appear in his article in *Iggud*. If Gershon Nerel should wish to respond to the criticism in general, space for this will be reserved in the next issue of *Mishkan*.
- 2 See Gershon Nerel, "A 'Messianic Jewish Church' in Eretz-Israel?" *Mishkan* 29 (1998): 54–56. A few corrections are necessary. Nerel writes in this article that Poljak left Israel "in the mid-1950's." He did so in December 1950 (see below). It is also not correct when Nerel says that Poljak had no children. He had a son, Leo, who sometimes published articles in *Die Judenchristliche Gemeinde*, e.g. 136 (1948): 5–8. Poljak's wife, Elisabeth, lived in Switzerland and worked in the movement's office and publishing house; 139 (1948): 22.
- 3 See Kai Kjær-Hansen and Bodil F. Skjøtt, "Facts & Myths About the Messianic Congregations in Israel," *Mishkan* 30–31 (1999): 296–98.

But now to the number of Hebrew Christians/Messianic Jews who remained in Israel in mid-May 1948.

### Counting, Consistence, and Inconsistence

Who should be counted as belonging to the Messianic movement in Israel in 1948? And how many of the leaders enumerated by Nerel who remained in the Land in 1948 also died in the Land later on? The individuals that I focus on have been singled out by Nerel, and they make up a small key group of leaders who remained in Israel and play a significant role in Nerel's conception of history (see below).

They are:

*Haim Joseph and Rachel Haimoff (Bar-David)* and their three children, who were "evacuated" to the Christian and Missionary Alliance's compound in Prophets Street in Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> Other Hebrew Christians – I do not know the exact number – and non-Messianic Jewish neighbors found shelter in the basement there.<sup>5</sup>

*Solomon and Regina Ostrovsky* lived in Jaffa but, according to Nerel, sent their "two sons abroad."<sup>6</sup> I wonder if there were people from Ostrovsky's congregation who were evacuated and, if so, what he thought about it?<sup>7</sup>

*Moshe and Batya Ben-Meir*.<sup>8</sup> Moshe Ben-Meir worked as a postman in Haifa in 1948, and took an active part in building "fortifications on

- 4 Concerning Haimoff, see Gershon Nerel, "Haim (Haimoff) Bar-David: Apostolic Authority among Jewish Yeshua-Believers," *Mishkan* 37 (2002): 59–78; cf. Kjær-Hansen and Skjøtt, 242–45. I have no clear picture of whether and how Haimoff may have been active in the struggle for the establishment of the State of Israel during the siege of Jerusalem.
- 5 So even if Mrs. Bernice C. Gibson was the only C&MA missionary to remain in Palestine – the others were "evacuated" to other places already in January 1948 – the C&MA building was used to protect lives, including the lives of non-Messianic Jews during the troubles in Jerusalem in 1948. Cf. *The Alliance Weekly* (1948): 41–42, 456.
- 6 Concerning Ostrovsky, see Gershon Nerel, "Solomon Ostrovsky: A Pioneer and 'Watchman' in Eretz-Israel," *The Messianic Jew and Hebrew Christian* 1 (1996): 5–8; cf. Kjær-Hansen and Skjøtt, 237–39.
- 7 Nerel writes in his article that among those who were evacuated on May 13 there was a group of thirty-two Hebrew Christians from Jaffa, "most of them from a Brethren background." Quite apart from the question of when they departed and whether the mentioned Brethren all belonged to the Jaffa congregation (see below), it is reasonable to assume, from Nerel's statement, that some of these Brethren belonged to Ostrovsky's congregation in Jaffa; therefore, it would be interesting to find out what Ostrovsky's attitude to this was. Solomon and Regina Ostrovsky themselves left Israel "in the late 1980's to emigrate from Israel to Toronto, Canada, mainly to join their children and grandchildren who were already there" (Nerel, "Solomon Ostrovsky," 5).
- 8 Concerning Ben-Meir, see his *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem: Autobiographical Sketches by Moshe Imanuel Ben-Meir* (1977; repr. Jerusalem: Netivya Bible Instruction Ministry: n.d. [2007]). See also my interaction with Ben-Meir and Poljak in this issue of *Mishkan*.

the borders.”<sup>9</sup> Shortly after his first wife died in April 1946, he married Batya, who promised “to mother my three children.”<sup>10</sup> These, however, were “evacuated” to three different children’s homes as the marriage to Batya, according to Ben-Meir’s own words, was “a failure,” since she was not a believer. “Yet I lived in that hell for twenty-three years, and two daughters were born to us.”<sup>11</sup>

And finally, there are four leaders in the group around Poljak, whom Nerel claims were in Palestine when the Mandate period expired:

*Abram Poljak* is in Haifa.<sup>12</sup> Together with Ben-Meir he sets up a congregation in Haifa.<sup>13</sup> He is of the opinion that God has “evacuated” him to a monastery on Mount Carmel.<sup>14</sup>

*Pauline Rose* is in the Land in 1948.<sup>15</sup> She wrote a book about the

- 9 Ben-Meir, 117; “When the Post Office changed hands, I was called to build fortifications on the borders.”
- 10 Ibid., 107. According to Ben-Meir, a Christian (!) is partly to blame for this “failure.” “When at M.B.I. [Moody Bible Institute] in Chicago [1927–1929], I was determined to avoid a non-Jewish wife, and then, while mourning the passing away of my wife [Rachel Rose] a non-Jewish female was after me. To block her way, I married the first Jewish female who agreed and promised to mother my three children. The marriage was a failure, and home was not home.” But there seems to be little existential consistence in Ben-Meir concerning marriage, for although he was strongly against a Jewish believer marrying a non-Jewish believer, he himself married a Finnish Christian woman in 1977; *ibid.*, 2.
- 11 Ibid., 107. According to his own words, Ben-Meir had yet another “hell” to live in (p. 105). In 1935, Fritz Plotke had been appointed secretary for the Hebrew Christian Alliance of Palestine, a post that Ben-Meir had been rejected for (p. 115). When Ben-Meir chose to have his first son circumcised, Plotke had been much against it and had criticized him (p. 105). According to Ben-Meir, Plotke Germanized and de-Judaized the Messianic movement and did not mind if Hebrew Christians who had come to Palestine as refugees returned to Germany. “The tragedy was that most of these refugees did not plan to settle in Palestine. Those who did not die left as soon as they were able, and like a dog returns to its vomit, a good number returned to Germany. Hitler taught them nothing” (p. 115–16).
- 12 Poljak had been in Palestine in 1935, and had taken part in the third annual conference of the Hebrew Christian Alliance of Palestine; cf. Abram Poljak, *The Cross in the Star of David* ([London]: The Jewish Christian Community Press: 1938), 35–40. Before the establishment of the State of Israel, he was in Palestine from April 7 to September 18, 1947; cf. *Die Judenchristliche Gemeinde* 125 (1947): 1; 132 (1947): 1. He arrived back in Palestine on February 10, 1948; 136 (1948): 1. He left Israel on December 13, 1950; 171 (1950): 2. Before his death in 1963, he paid short visits to Israel in order to attend to the congregation, but had no intention of settling there.
- 13 When the congregation was established in February 1948 by Ben-Meir and Poljak, there were nine persons present; *Die Judenchristliche Gemeinde* 137 (1948): 1.
- 14 Poljak believed that in 1948, God had let him live in peace and quiet in a monastery on Mount Carmel so that he might have an opportunity to reflect on topical events in a biblical light; *Die Judenchristliche Gemeinde* 144 (1949): 9.
- 15 Pauline Rose visited Palestine for about three months in 1946, and went back to England in June; cf. *Die Judenchristliche Gemeinde* 118 (1946): 4–7. She was back in February 1948, and left Israel in August 1949; 157 (1949): 2. She visited



events she had taken part in from 1946 to 1949.<sup>16</sup> If you did not already know it, you could not deduce from the book that she was a Christian. The name of "Jesus" is not mentioned once in the book.

*Agnes Waldstein*, the third individual mentioned by Nerel, was *not* in Palestine at the establishment of the State of Israel.<sup>17</sup>

*Albert Springer*, the fourth individual mentioned by Nerel, was also *not*.<sup>18</sup>

As is apparent from this example, it is difficult to determine how many from this small group should be included as members of the Messianic movement in Israel in mid-May 1948. Certain details which I have mentioned affect the result. Without knowledge of this, a different number would have resulted.

Of the leaders mentioned, it is only Ben-Meir who makes a living through ordinary work in society.

And finally, if you look at these individual leaders as a *group* – and leave out the fact that Waldstein and Springer were not in Palestine in May 1948 – it appears that *five* (maybe six) leave the Land and are buried abroad, and only *three* (maybe four) die and are buried in Israel. The reason for the "maybe" is that I do not know when and where Pauline Rose died, and I have no information about Springer's wife's life or death, so she does not count here. It is not a problem for me that so many leaders left the country. It is more problematic that this is not included in the discussion and evaluation of those who stayed behind in the Land in the middle of May 1948, and who were critical of Operation Mercy.

## Numbers of Those Who Remained in Israel

Gershon Nerel maintains in his article in this *Mishkan*: "After the organized evacuation of the majority of Hebrew Christians to England, only a small remnant of about two dozen remained; they strongly believed that Zion-

Israel a few times to fulfill a special mission, but it is not until 1959 that she immigrated to Israel; *Jerusalem* 162/163 (1960): 20.

16 Pauline Rose, *The Siege of Jerusalem* (London: Patmos Publishers, n.d. [Introduction notes June, 1949; repr. Jerusalem: Old City Press, 1972]). The closest Pauline Rose came to the New Testament is to identify Ein Karem as "the birthplace of John the Baptist" (p. 98). Not with one word does she reveal to her readers that the imprisonment and interrogation which she and others were subjected to in August 1948 have anything to do with their Christian faith; see the article on Sitt Elsie and Gerius Hishmeh in this issue of *Mishkan*, note 3. But in the movement's magazine, Poljak told how Pauline Rose, "eine Frau!" unlike the mission's "men who fled from Jerusalem and the Holy Land" raised "die Fahne Christi" ["Christ's standard"] and suffered together with Jews in the besieged Jerusalem; cf. *Die Judenchristliche Gemeinde* 140/141 (1948): 7.

17 Agnes Waldstein came to Israel as an immigrant in May 1949; *Die Judenchristliche Gemeinde* 157 (1949): 2.

18 Albert Springer came to Israel for a short visit in April 1949; *ibid.*; he returned in May 1950 to take over the leadership of the work, 163 (1950): 8–9.

ism was a tool in God's plan towards Israel's spiritual redemption."<sup>19</sup>

This surprisingly small number of Hebrew Christians who, according to Nerel, remained in Israel in 1948 is not the result of new facts that have come to light. The same view can be found in Nerel's writings up through the 1990s<sup>20</sup> and is maintained in 2009.<sup>21</sup> It is essential for his conception of history and his theology.

The importance of these few Messianic Jews in 1948 appears from the term Nerel uses about them – “the remnant” – with all the biblical connotations of this term. The coupling between “the remnant” then and the Messianic movement today is clearly expressed in an article written in 1998 in connection with the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel. Nerel writes, to begin with:

We “guesstimate” the overall number of Messianic Jews (Yehudim Meshihiim) in Israel to be about 5,000, scattered in cities, villages and kibbutzim, from Eilat in the south to Naharia in the north. Numbers have especially risen during the last decade, when Israel absorbed about a million new immigrants (olim) – among them were several hundred Russian and Amharic (Ethiopian) speaking Messianic Jews. Altogether there are about fifty groups of Jewish believers in Israel today.<sup>22</sup>

In his conclusion to the article, he writes:

In 1948 there were only about 20 Messianic Jews in the State of Israel, whereas today we speak of a dynamic and growing Messianic movement of thousands.<sup>23</sup>

In other words, the large Messianic movement in Israel today had its beginning in “the remnant,” “about 20 Messianic Jews,” who remained in Israel in 1948.

In “Facts & Myths” from 1999, I expressed a different view concerning the number of Jesus-believing Jews in Israel in 1948. I wrote: “The present survey bases itself on an estimate of some 100 persons (adults and children) at the time of the foundation of the State of Israel in May 1948.”<sup>24</sup> I admitted then that it was “an estimate.” I can now see that Nerel has not been challenged by my “estimate.”

The crucial question is now: Does Nerel's assertion of “about two dozen”

19 Gershon Nerel, “Operation Mercy on the Eve of the Establishment of the State of Israel: The ‘Exodus’ of Jewish Disciples of Yeshua from the Land of Israel in 1948,” *Mishkan* 61 (2009): 28.

20 See Kjær-Hansen and Skjøtt, 62–63, where Nerel's slightly different figures are summed up.

21 Cf. Nerel's recently published article in *Iggud*; see note 1 in his article in this issue of *Mishkan*.

22 Gershon Nerel, “Messianic Jews in the Land,” *Shalom Magazine* 1 (1998): 10.

23 *Ibid.*, 11.

24 Kjær-Hansen and Skjøtt, 63.



hold good?

*Searching for Hebrew Christians/Messianic Jews Who Remained in Israel in May 1948*

For several years, I have been doubtful of Nerel's repeated assertion of this small number. Therefore, I started my search about a year ago for Hebrew Christians/Messianic Jews who remained in Israel in 1948. My objective was to ascertain if there were only "about two dozen." If Nerel is right, I shall have to adapt and make the necessary corrections in my research.

At that time I also started looking for Protestant missionaries and other Christians who remained in the Land and were connected with the Messianic cause at that time. A survey like this would also make it possible for us to compare the Messianic movement in 1948 with the Messianic movement today – composed of Messianic Jews and people from the nations – as was done in "Facts & Myths" in 1999.

I had hoped that I would be able to present the result of this survey in this issue of *Mishkan*. I cannot do that; other urgent tasks and lack of time have prevented me. I can, however, say that so far I have found "about four dozen" – twice as many as Nerel says. And I have sources that I have not yet analyzed, but which will doubtless provide more names. Add to this number individuals whose presence in the Land may be deduced from notes of *participation* in services *before, during, and after* May 15, etc., and I would not be surprised if the end result were double the "four dozen" whom I have already identified.

Some of those identified left Israel already in 1948, for example, Pauline Rose; others left Israel later, for example, Abram Poljak in December 1950 (cf. above). They were "replaced" by new Jesus-believing Jews who immigrated to Israel. Among those were some who became attached to the missions – a matter that we cannot pursue here.

### **The Number of Evacuees**

Gershon Nerel's enumeration of evacuees in connection with Operation Mercy is:

April	20
May 7	42 (the <i>Georgic</i> )
May 13	32 (the <i>Empress of Australia</i> )
Total	94

Nerel claims that he has found "the exact numbers connected to Operation Mercy." In such matters it is bold to use the word "exact." When you compare the different pieces of information about the individuals involved – and not least when you compare the different passenger lists – it becomes clear that these do not completely match. Sometimes children are included in the number, sometimes they are not – and "infants" constitute a group of their own. In addition, there are examples of individuals who were not



on board the ships that transported *large* groups of Hebrew Christians to England, but who should nevertheless be included. The question of *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* for the operation depends on a choice. I do not mind including evacuees beginning in April, but when do we end? As late as October 1948, there is an example of the evacuation of persons to England based on the same criteria as those who applied in April and May (see the example of the Martin family below).

But first we have to find out when the *Empress of Australia* left Palestine.

### **The *Empress of Australia* – Departure May 13 or 18, 1948?**

According to Poljak, the *Empress of Australia* left Haifa on May 18, 1948 – a date I have followed till now.<sup>25</sup> Gershon Nerel maintains that the ship departed on May 13, 1948. Many readers may think that I am now being too pedantic. Is this question really important? I now have to show that determining the *exact* date is important for the matter we are dealing with. Before the completion of this article, Nerel and I attempted, unsuccessfully, to reach an agreement about the date.<sup>26</sup>

For quite some time, I have had a feeling that there was something wrong with the jigsaw puzzle. I have been puzzled by a remark in Poljak's description. He writes that in May 1948, "mehrere Gruppen" left for England.<sup>27</sup> It would be unnatural to use the word "mehrere" ("several") if there were only two departures. I have also been puzzled by a remark in the description given by W. H. Stewart, the Anglican bishop in Jerusalem. He writes under the date of May 27, 1948, that they have been able "to extricate some hundred of these courageous unfortunates and get them away before or very shortly after the end of the Mandate."<sup>28</sup> So I had to go through the sources once more.

Canon C. Witton-Davies, who followed events at close quarters in Jerusalem, made a list of people from Jerusalem who were to depart on the *Georgic* on May 7. At last he writes:

These are all from Jerusalem. In addition on the same ship, I believe, will be Rev. Scott Morrison and two Hollanders and two Geliebters

25 Abram Poljak, "Der Lastwagen," *Die Judenchristliche Gemeinde* 140/141 (1948): 5. The article ends on page 9, and is Poljak's eyewitness account of what happened at the *Empress of Australia's* departure, which is given as May 18, 1948.

26 On October 8, 2009, I mailed Gershon Nerel referring to Poljak's date (May 18), and asked if we could agree on the *Empress of Australia* departing on either May 13 or 18, since "there are other items that are more important" to discuss. Nerel insisted in a mail on October 12, 2009, on his date – May 13, 1948 – and suggested a footnote saying "that there is a mistake in the date provided in Poljak's article (probably in the ms. 13 looked like 18, or during the printing 13 became 18)." To this I replied, "I am not convinced, but have difficulties explaining it."

27 Poljak, "Der Lastwagen," 5.

28 What does "or very shortly after the end of the Mandate" mean?



from Jaffa. The rest of the Jaffa folk (15 or 20), and the Haifa people (another 15 or 20) will come on a ship leaving Haifa on May 13th or 16th. I will try to let you know more exactly later.<sup>29</sup>

As this note speaks about a departure on May 13, it would seem to support Nerel's date, and the ship could be the *Empress of Australia*.

Before I had concentrated on dates of *departure* from Palestine/Israel, but this did not produce any clarity. Now I went through the sources once more in an attempt to find the dates of *arrival* at Liverpool. As to the *Georgic*, there is no problem: The ship left on May 7, with an expected arrival on May 17–18.<sup>30</sup> The fact that a ship like this needed about ten days for the voyage from Haifa to Liverpool, inclusive of calling at ports in Cyprus and Malta, is a significant piece of information.<sup>31</sup>

The investigation produced this result:

On May 23, Nahum Levison writes: "The Palestinian brethren are still coming in, today 34 more are arriving."<sup>32</sup> The port of arrival is Liverpool. They could be on board the *Empress of Australia*. If the ship made the voyage in ten days, it would have left Haifa on May 13.

But is it the *Empress of Australia*? I have my doubts, for if this is the case, it becomes difficult to explain what Levison writes on June 2: "Another lot of Hebrew Christians arrived from Palestine last Friday. The majority of them were taken to London, seven and a baby came here, and we have cared for them."<sup>33</sup> When is last Friday? That is May 28. Subtract ten days, and the ship must have left Haifa on May 18, the very date that Poljak says that the *Empress of Australia* left with "the Jewish Quislings."

Under all circumstances, we have to reckon with at least *three* shipments of *three* major groups – not just the two that Nerel counts. Based on Levison's information, I assume that the departures were as follows: May 7, the *Georgic*; May 13, a ship whose name we do not (yet) know; and May 18, 1948, the *Empress of Australia*.

What implications does this have for Nerel's enumeration? And how many traveled on the *three* major shipments? My estimate is roughly the same number as Nerel mentions (ninety-four, i.e. "about" one hundred),

29 Canon C. Witton-Davies to R. Clephane Macanna, May 3, 1948, The Jerusalem and the East Mission Archives 72/5, Middle East Centre, Oxford. Hereafter abbreviated to MEC J&EM.

30 Cf. R. Clephane Macanna to Harcourt Samuel, May 12, 1948, MEC J&EM 72/5: "As the 'Georgic' sailed on the 7th, it should probably arrive at Liverpool on the 17th or 18th of this month."

31 A search on the Internet shows that the *Empress of Australia* used to call at Cyprus and Malta in 1948; therefore, twelve-year-old "Master" John P. Loebel, who was on board the *Georgic*, was able to send a letter to his parents in Jerusalem from Malta; cf. Jones to Gill, "Events from Wednesday, May 12th [1948], onwards," dep. CMJ c .219, Bodleian Library, Oxford. References in the notes below to CMJ's archive omit "Bodleian Library, Oxford."

32 Nahum Levison to Birger Pernow, May 23, 1948, E 56: 2, Church of Sweden Archives, Uppsala.

33 Nahum Levison to Birger Pernow, June 2, 1948, E 56: 2, Church of Sweden Archives, Uppsala.

but then Nerel includes twenty persons from April who were not on board any of the three departures. In other words, I say "about," Nerel says "exactly":

The *Georgic*, May 7: about forty-two; cf. Nerel's statement.

Ship X, May 13: about thirty-four; cf. Levison's statement.

The *Empress of Australia*, May 18: so far the number is unknown, but the way Poljak describes the situation, it is quite a big group so it is not a problem for me to arrive at the ninety-four which Nerel has mentioned. Added to this may be people from other shipments of which we have no knowledge.

But what then about the twenty persons that Nerel claims were evacuated in April? They must naturally be included in a total estimate of Hebrew Christians who left Palestine in the spring of 1948. And I believe that there were more than twenty. It depends on how you define the criteria for being an evacuee during Operation Mercy. In the total sum should also be included some individuals who left in May and later. It is noteworthy what R. Clephane Macanne writes on May 24: "We are now responsible for something of a hundred who have been brought to Britain."<sup>34</sup> If Macanne's figure is approximately exact, and if I am right when saying that the *Empress of Australia* did not arrive at Liverpool until May 28, you end with a number that could be rather larger.

I dare not give an exact number of those evacuated. Personally, I consider it probable that the number is bigger than the one Nerel mentions. This is a matter for further research to confirm or disprove.

And lastly, two case studies about two families from Jerusalem.

## Case Studies: About Lists Vis-à-vis Other Information

### *Mr. and Mrs. Lazar Fermo*

Under the date March 26, 1948, the Chief Secretary's Office in Jerusalem draws up a list of passengers to travel on board the *Franconia* from Haifa on April 2.<sup>35</sup> The list is sent to, among others, St. George's in Jerusalem. But scheduled departure is not the same as actual departure. The ship did not leave until April 4, which appears from a handwritten note on the paper.

The passenger list mentions "Mr. L. Fermo & wife," who were Hebrew Christians and members of Christ Church in Jerusalem. Under the heading "Department" is stated "Social Welfare." This indicates that the couple do not travel on a visa issued in connection with Operation Mercy, although they should be included in the number of those who left Palestine in April. Another source announces that they leave before "Operation Mercy visas" are given to people in Jerusalem.<sup>36</sup>

Being entered on a list of departures proves nothing in itself; a list of ar-

34 R. Clephane Macanna to Birger Pernow, May 24, 1948, E VIIa: 2, Church of Sweden Archives, Uppsala.

35 Chief Secretary's Office, Jerusalem, March 26, 1948: "List of passengers embarking in S/S Franconia Haifa on the 2nd April, 1948," MEC J&EM 70/4.

36 Jones to Gill, October 22, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219.



rivals or letters by or about the people in question does. In the case of the Fermos, there is no doubt. In CMJ's magazine, there is even an obituary of him in 1958.<sup>37</sup>

In the same passenger list appears one "Miss E. Marston." Who is she? If I had not known anything about her beforehand and had only had a pristine list at my disposal, I would have presumed that she came on board. But on the list in my possession the name has been crossed out. Why? Hannah Hurnard has an explanation (although she refers to Miss E. Marston as *Mildred* Marston). Miss Marston had been a teacher at the Jerusalem Girls' College. When it was closed down due to the troubles, she had decided to return to England on her British passport. On her way to a service in St. George's on Easter Day, March 28, she was shot and killed, and was buried the next day. As Hannah Hurnard so beautifully writes: "Amid this sorrow there was comfort in the thought that she began Easter Day in the earthly Jerusalem and finished it in the heavenly one."<sup>38</sup> When the *Franconia* sailed, Miss Marston did not lie down to rest in a cabin. Her earthly remains were in a grave in the Protestant cemetery on Mount Zion.

#### *The Martin Family*<sup>39</sup>

The family consisted of *Joseph*, husband/father, a Hebrew Christian, and *Elisabeth C.*, wife/mother; I have been unable to determine whether she is a Hebrew Christian. (There is a hint that among those who were evacuated during Operation Mercy, there might be [a few] spouses who were not Hebrew Christians.) There were two sons, *Leslie John* and *George*, and a daughter, *Magdelene Ruth*. All the family took an active part in church life in Christ Church; Joseph had been one of the managers of CMJ's Industrial Home, which in 1948 did not function any more.

None of them are on the list which Witton-Davies drew up on *May 3* (cf. above). Joseph and Leslie John, the eldest son, are also not on Witton-Davies' list of *May 7*, even though he wrote the letter immediately after the Operation Mercy people left Jerusalem.<sup>40</sup> But father and son do appear on a later list, which accounts for those who were on the *Georgic*.<sup>41</sup>

We know for a fact that they came to England, which is confirmed by letters about and from them, and it is probable that they came on board the *Georgic*. But what about the wife and daughter? Only with the help of other sources is it possible to reconstruct the course of events.

When the financial account was later to be settled, it appears from a note

37 *Jewish Missionary News* (1958): 60.

38 Hannah Hurnard, *Watchmen on the Walls* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 56–57.

39 Information about the family can be found in the following letters: E. Mill to H. W. L. Martin, July 20, 1948; Martin to Mill, July 22; Witton-Davies to Mill, October 27, 1948; all in MEC J&EM 72/5.

40 A letter dated May 7, 1948, probably sent to various individuals/organizations, gives the names of the Jerusalem party, "which has just left us"; MEC J&EM 72/5.

41 Sponsored civilians who embarked on the *S. S. Georgic* at Haifa, May 7, 1948.

that father and son stayed at Christ Church's Hostel on the days May 1–6.<sup>42</sup> On May 7, father and son may very well, without danger, have walked through the Old City and joined those who had been brought to St. George's Close on May 1.<sup>43</sup> Others may also have done so, which would explain the discrepancy between the number of persons who came to St. George's on May 1 and the larger number that left St. George's on May 7.

So the wife and daughter were left behind in Jerusalem for some unknown reason. Here, they stayed at Christ Church's Hostel from May until September, which appears from the above mentioned note about accounts. On October 27, 1948, they leave for England in order to join Joseph and Lesley John; the Hebrew Christian Alliance pays the fare.

Finally, what about the son George? He managed to go to Cyprus (I do not know when), where he was at the end of July and found some temporary work, hoping his visa would be extended. It is fair to assume that George Martin was not the only one who managed to go to Cyprus. I suppose George must also be included in the number of evacuees during Operation Mercy.

### Concluding Remarks

Whichever way you look at things in connection with Operation Mercy – and I pass no judgment on either the evacuees' or the evacuators' attitude to God – it is beyond doubt that a considerable number of individuals attached to the Hebrew Christian/Messianic movement in Palestine/Israel at that time left the Land. How big a percentage cannot be stated until it has been established how many Hebrew Christians/Messianic Jews remained in the Land – a survey that has not yet been conducted.

In the next article, I will try to show who was responsible for Operation Mercy, and also what their motives were.

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42 Jones to Gill, October 22, 1948; dep. CMJ c. 219.

43 Cf. the description of the first stage in Jerusalem of Operation Mercy in Jones' letter of June 4, 1948, printed as the first article in this issue of *Mishkan*.



# The Organizers behind Operation Mercy

– Reading the Sources about the Organizers’  
Thoughts and Plans

by **Kai Kjær-Hansen**

In his article on Operation Mercy, Gershon Nerel gives expression to some extremely radical views, namely that Hebrew Christians in Palestine were the object of a conspiracy from the Christian church’s side. The *intention of the evacutors* is to “save” the already assimilated Hebrew Christians in the Land and scatter them in other countries, which appears from the following quotation:

Therefore, the impression one gets from the authentic documents is that the personal intention of most of the evacuees – to immigrate and assimilate – was to a great extent synchronized with the intention of the evacutors to take the congregations out of the land and scatter them in different directions.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, Nerel alleges that prior to the implementation of Operation Mercy is a *logistical planning phase* of six months, beginning in November 1947, as evidenced by this quotation:

All of the evacuation stages of Operation Mercy were organized as military movements under the public cover of humanitarian actions. From the logistical planning phase until its full implementation, the operation lasted about six months – from November 1947 until May 1948.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, Nerel alleges that the church leaders in Palestine, not least personified by Bishop Weston H. Stewart of the Anglican Church, “stirred up the rumors that these people [the Hebrew Christians] could expect terrible persecutions in the new state, and even physical extermination at the hands of the normative Jewish society.” Yet Nerel claims that some people from CMJ in Palestine suggested “that a neutral body should care for the needs of

1 Gershon Nerel, “Operation Mercy on the Eve of the Establishment of the State of Israel: The ‘Exodus’ of Jewish Disciples of Yeshua from the Land of Israel in 1948,” *Mishkan* 61 (2009): 30.

2 Ibid.

the Jewish believers in Yeshua in the Land.” Following this Nerel says:

It was, therefore, suggested to turn to the United Nations or the International Red Cross, in order to appoint a particular authority to provide for their needs. However, this idea never came to fruition. In contrast, the leaders of the British CMJ, and primarily the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, Weston Henry Stewart, cooperated with other organizations and carried out another plan – the organized evacuation of Hebrew Christians from the Land.<sup>3</sup>

I find it difficult to accept Nerel’s description of the organizers and their intentions. The only solution is, as far as I can see, to go back to the sources and once more examine them and analyze their data in as unbiased a way as possible. As will appear, the organizers do not from the beginning have a ready-made plan. They seem, on the contrary, fumbling and insecure about how they can best help the distressed Hebrew Christians in Palestine. And Hebrew Christians abroad have influence on the developments.

### **Bishop Stewart in Jerusalem – the Villain?**

Let us begin with Bishop Stewart and the group around him in Jerusalem. He did not see the State of Israel as a fulfillment of prophecy.<sup>4</sup> In the present discussion, his stance on Zionism is only relevant insofar as it can be shown that there is a clear connection between this and Nerel’s claim that Stewart wanted and actively sought to promote Hebrew Christians’ departure from Palestine. Nerel has not historically validated this connection.

#### *A Memorandum on Palestine*

On July 11, 1947, Bishop Stewart and other church dignitaries<sup>5</sup> obtain an audience with the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine at its meeting in Jerusalem. A memorandum, delivered beforehand, opens with the words: “The Christian case in Palestine is constantly in danger of being forgotten or understated.” Although the future in the region is uncertain, it is hoped “that the constitution will include a clause guaranteeing religious liberty to all.”

We speak from long experience of many individual cases when we say that in spite of theoretical religious liberty, converts to Christianity in Palestine are liable to be, and frequently are, deprived of their

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 24

<sup>4</sup> “W. H. Stewart . . . strongly criticising anti-Semitism in the Church, yet equally strongly opposing any connection between the proposed state of Israel and a fulfillment of prophecy,” cf. Kelvin Crombie, *For the Love of Zion* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), 207.

<sup>5</sup> Apart from Bishop Weston H. Stewart, participants were W. Clark-Kerr, Moderator of the Church of Scotland, Archdeacon A. C. MacInnes, Rev. Dr. W. C. Klein, and the head of CMJ in Palestine, Hugh R. A. Jones.



inheritance, boycotted in or even dismissed from their employment, turned out of their houses, pilloried in the press, “framed” in their law-courts, and threatened with, and often subjected to, personal violence. It is simply an unreality to speak of freedom of religion when converts to Christianity, whether from Islam or Judaism, have neither freedom from fear nor often freedom from want.<sup>6</sup>

It is possible that Nerel considers this stirring up rumours; to me it seems that the Bishop shows concern for people in the region. He gives expression to sympathy for “the Jew in his suffering and in his passionate desire for refuge and renewal” as well as for “the Arab in his passionate fear of being decimated in the land which for a thousand years he has felt his own.”<sup>7</sup>

In other words, the Bishop fights for religious freedom for all parties in Palestine – also for Hebrew Christians, the “converts.”

*Bishop Stewart's Article in "The Sunday Times"*

In an article in *The Sunday Times* – presumably from the beginning of 1948<sup>8</sup> – Bishop Stewart returns to the subject of “religious freedom” and of whether such freedom includes freedom of conversion in Palestine and the future Israel. The Christian Arab, as well as the Christian Jew, “is faced with a very difficult future.” He criticizes the United Nations for letting down Christians. But, “the Church, which was here long before the Mandatory Government, and will remain after the Mandatory Government has withdrawn, has rather to consider setting her own house in order.” The church is still committed “to missionary work among non-Christians, whether Muslim or Jew.”<sup>9</sup>

Regarding the prospective new states, Bishop Stewart sees no major problems for Arab believers in an Arab state. The situation is different for Hebrew Christians in a Jewish state:

On the Jewish side, the position will inevitably be more difficult. For while of late years the number of converts has been steadily growing, there are as yet no regular Jewish congregations, and the converts tend (for reasons that are quite understandable) to leave the country as soon as they can and to be regarded, by themselves as well as by their fellow-Jews, as no longer Jews at all.<sup>10</sup>

It is interesting that Bishop Stewart says that “there are as yet no regular

6 “A Memorandum to the United Nations Organization Special Committee on Palestine, Submitted by . . . W. H. Stewart . . . and W. Clark-Kerr . . .,” *Bible Lands* (1947):148–51.

7 *Ibid.*, 150.

8 Weston H. Stuart, “Freedom of Conversion,” *Jewish Missionary News* (1948): 25–27. Originally printed in *The Sunday Times*; no date is given.

9 *Ibid.*, 26.

10 *Ibid.*, 27.



Jewish congregations.” This could be taken to mean that *if* there were, the situation for Hebrew Christians in Palestine would have been much easier. For our present purposes, it is enough to remember that the Bishop *states* that Hebrew Christians are leaving the Land – a fact that cannot be denied, and was also confirmed by, among others, Moshe Ben-Meir<sup>11</sup>; the Bishop also *states* that he understands these Hebrew Christians. Whether he is mistaken in his assessment of the situation for Arab Christians in an Arab state and for Hebrew Christians in the future State of Israel is a question that is open for discussion. One thing is clear, however: The Bishop does *not* express a wish that Hebrew Christians should leave the Land. He is *not*, in the beginning of 1948, in “a logistical planning phase” with a view to evacuating Hebrew Christians, as alleged by Nerel.

### CMJ’s Perspective – in Jerusalem and London

In a letter of June 4, 1948, Hugh Jones has given a description of the situation in Jerusalem at the end of 1947 and beginning of 1948 (reproduced as the first article in this issue of *Mishkan*).

On *February 20*, three English nurses at the hospital which CMJ runs in Jerusalem send a letter to CMJ’s General Secretary in London. They ask him to advise them “now that the hospital is being handed over to a Jewish Body,” and continue, “It has been suggested that we work under the Jewish management, but that is impossible, as it defeats the purpose to which we are called.”<sup>12</sup>

Gill’s answer is not without interest for the matter which we pursue:

I am sorry that you do not feel that by helping the Jewish staff you could give such a witness by your lives and in private conversation that you might be doing an even more effective piece of missionary work than was possible under the old system. I pray that you may all be guided aright.<sup>13</sup>

The three nurses chose to leave the Land, which they did at the end of March – with their British passports in hand. Their General Secretary would have preferred that they stay.

During the first months of 1948, quite a few Hebrew Christians had to leave their homes – some in Arab areas, others in Jewish areas – and found shelter in the compounds of CMJ’s hospital or Christ Church. For security reasons some are, in April, even placed in hotels in the zone controlled by the British.

In the course of March, five Hebrew Christian families affiliated with

11 See my article “Numbers Connected with Operation Mercy,” note 11, in this issue of *Mishkan*.

12 C. M. Borland, D. L. Curson, and M. Newman to Gill, February 20, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219, Bodleian Library, Oxford. References in the notes below omit “Bodleian Library, Oxford.”

13 Gill to Borland, Curson, and Newman, February 26, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219.



Christ Church leave the Land. It is not quite clear to me what role Jones played in connection with getting visas for these.<sup>14</sup>

There is no doubt, however, that Jones fights actively for the Okos and Peter Newman, who had been exposed to some unpleasant things, to be able to leave the Land.

On *March 8*, Jones writes to D. C. Butcher, CMJ's Head of Mission in Egypt, presenting the matter of Mr. and Mrs. Oko to him. For two months Jones has tried, unsuccessfully, to get visas for them so they could leave the country. "Neither of them have been able to go outside this compound for many weeks and the position will become critical for them with the withdrawal of the British Forces and when, one presumes, disturbances will begin in earnest," Jones writes. Therefore, he asks Butcher to give them "temporary shelter say for a few months as I believe, once they get to Cairo, they would have good chance of obtaining visas for England. Both of them have good records of War Service in the British Forces."<sup>15</sup>

On *March 19*, Jones writes to Butcher again<sup>16</sup> and makes a similar request for Peter Newman<sup>17</sup> and Edith Smil.<sup>18</sup> But Jones does *not* have a general evacuation of all Hebrew Christians in Palestine in mind. As late as April 16, he warns against "generalizations" of the situation and distinguishes between the prevailing circumstances in Jerusalem and in Jaffa.<sup>19</sup>

But a couple of days before the dispatch of the last letter to Butcher, Jones took part in a meeting in the Bishop's house in Jerusalem. Which plans were then made?

14 Cf. Jones to Gill, April 16, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219. In parentheses, Jones gives the size of the families: "including the Corn's (2) Fermo (2) De Mayo (3) Powitzer (7) and Segl." Can Jones possibly have forgotten a bracket in connection with Segl, e.g. (2)? If so, it would fit with his information in the same letter that eight visas have been granted before those that are granted early in April. Anyway, according to the obituary of Hyman Corn, who for many years had been in CMJ's service, he was "a British Subject" and did not need a special visa; cf. *Jewish Missionary News* (1962): 29. Whether Jones actively helped to get visas for the others, I dare not say. Cf. what he writes about Powitzer: "I have been approached by Powitzer, a member of Christ Church congregation, who is hoping to leave for England very soon with his family. He is a Government employee." Jones to Gill, March 2, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219.

15 Jones to Butcher, March 8, 1948, Conrad Schick Library, Christ Church, Jerusalem.

16 Jones to Butcher, March 19, 1948, Conrad Schick Library, Christ Church, Jerusalem.

17 About Newman, see my article on Weinstock, note 14.

18 About Edith Smil, Jones writes: ". . . a Hebrew Christian from Berlin and a teacher in Christ Church Girls' School. Mr Martin [in London] is in the process of getting her fired up for training at the Mount Hermon School," cf. Jones to Butcher, March 19, 1948. The first five – if you will – "genuine" Operation Mercy visas are given in April to the Okos, Newman, Miss Smil, and Ursula Nehab/Jones; cf. Hugh R. A. Jones to CMJ's General Secretary G. H. Gill in London, June 4, 1948, The Jerusalem and the East Mission Archives 18/5 at Middle East Centre, Oxford.

19 Concerning details in that situation, see my article about Weinstock.

## March 16 – Meeting in the Bishop’s House in Jerusalem

In Jerusalem there are deliberations in mid-March 1948 about how best to help the Hebrew Christians *in Palestine* against the troubles they will face when the British leave the Land.

Canon C. Witton-Davies took these minutes from the meeting in Jerusalem on March 16:

There are a number of Hebrew Christians, probably 50 to 75 or more who are not going to be able to survive the coming months unless we do something for them. At a meeting just held in the Bishop’s house we came to the conclusion that it would probably be necessary to arrange small concentrations of such people in Jerusalem, Jaffa-Tel Aviv, and Haifa. We have not yet got as far as deciding exactly where, or when, or by whom, but it will all have to be decided fairly soon, and it is going to cost some money, for many of these people have no private means and will inevitably be cut off from the possibility of work for some time. Are there any funds at your disposal or that you can command for this purpose? Would you bring the matter to the notice of societies and bodies represented on the International Committee or likely to be interested? I will keep you informed about further decisions. Meanwhile I know we can count on your prayers that we may be able to do the right thing in this matter and not fail our distressed brethren.<sup>20</sup>

In order to understand how things hang together and how they think “in the Bishop’s house” in Jerusalem two months before the expiration of the British Mandate, this passage is crucial. In the Bishop’s house, they show concern for the Hebrew Christians’ future in the Land and ask for financial support from abroad for the implementation of the planned relief work. Nerel turns this upside down when he accuses Bishop Stewart and others of carrying out “another plan – the organized evacuation of Hebrew Christians from the Land” (see above).

The fact of the matter is that Bishop Stewart and others in Jerusalem take the initiative and make themselves available for a future relief work *in Palestine*, since they do not, in the middle of March, imagine that a general evacuation of Hebrew Christians would become relevant. The fact that they barely one month later become active in this connection does *not* mean that Stewart and likeminded people “carried out another plan.” This was done by others in Sweden, England, Scotland, etc. From the beginning of April, Stewart and his people are requested to *implement* in Palestine what others abroad had decided. Among these “others” were not least

20 Canon Witton-Davies sends this decision to Conrad Hoffman, who in turn sends it on to Pernow; Hoffmann to Pernow, March 23, 1948, E VIIa: 2, Church of Sweden Archives, Uppsala. (Hereafter in notes shortened to CSA.) In a paraphrased form, Pernow sends it to Levison, March 30, 1948, CSA E56: 2. See below.



people with a central position in the International Hebrew Christian Alliance.

We shall return to that. But first we are going back in time a little in order to see how things had developed abroad.

### **The Situation Viewed from a Swedish Perspective**

Early in January 1948, Nahum Levison, one of the two vice-presidents of the International Hebrew Christian Alliance (IHCA) and chairman of the Jewish Committee of the Church of Scotland, is on a visit to Sweden.

On *January 9*, he has conversations with Birger Pernow, the director of the Swedish Israel Mission and also director of the International Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews (ICCAJ).<sup>21</sup>

In their conversation, Levison made it clear that the Scottish missionaries in Palestine “are planning to stay as long as possible since they fear that if they give up the work or if some go back home, it will be difficult for

them to return even if permission to do this is granted after the partition has been performed.” Levison is well aware that there may be unfortunate consequences if the missionaries leave the country in the hour of peril.<sup>22</sup>

Pernow mentions this in a letter to the Swedish emissary Dr. Harald Sahlin in Jerusalem in an attempt to persuade him to remain at his post, but without success.<sup>23</sup> In

**The Scottish missionaries in Palestine “are planning to stay as long as possible since they fear that if they give up the work or if some go back home, it will be difficult for them to return. . . .”**

the conversations between Levison and Pernow, an evacuation of Hebrew Christians is not mentioned.

But Greta Andrén in Jerusalem is concerned. Sister Greta was also in Swedish service and had a small group of “friends” in Jerusalem – some baptized, some preparing for baptism, people for which she felt a special responsibility. We need not at this point decide if her input was to her credit or not, but it cannot be ignored in an overall account of the circumstances which led to Operation Mercy. Her appeal was to influence Pernow and his stance over the following months.

On *February 12*, Sister Greta describes her friends’ situation in Jerusalem to Pernow. She claims that they will be in an extremely difficult situation when the British leave the country; they will lose their jobs and have difficulty keeping a roof over their heads. She continues: “I wonder if the Hebrew Christian Alliance could do something for them.” She explicitly mentions Alfred Nussbaum, who works for the British. What is to become

21 In Gershon Nerel’s list “Who Organized Operation Mercy” (page 24 of this issue), there is no reference to ICCAJ; cf. also the societies which are behind the decision that is taken on April 5, 1945, in London; see Memorandum below.

22 In May 1948, the Scottish Church, however, withdrew their workers from the country.

23 Pernow to Sahlin, January 10, 1948, CSA E VIe: 1.

of him and his wife and three small children when the British leave? "Do you think," she writes to Pernow, "that the Alliance could do something for these people? I think we have a tremendously big responsibility for them. And I cannot see how they should be able to live here."<sup>24</sup>

Sister Greta's enquiry is not about all Hebrew Christians in Palestine, only the few individuals that she has a special concern about. Pernow received Sister Greta's letter immediately before he left for a conference in Paris. It made an impression on him and he took it with him.<sup>25</sup>

### WCC's Refugee Commission Meeting in Paris

On *February 26–29*, the World Council of Churches (WCC) Refugee Commission is in session in Paris.<sup>26</sup> Birger Pernow participates as a member of the commission.<sup>27</sup> The topic for discussion is refugees as such in post-war Europe; the Hebrew Christians are not forgotten here. It is even said that "they should be given some preferential treatment over a period," among other things as an "atonement for their sufferings" under the Nazi regime.<sup>28</sup> It is further recommended that the WCC deal with "the questions of religious liberty for Hebrew Christians in Palestine in the uncertainties of the situation in that country."<sup>29</sup> According to his own words, Pernow managed to put his fingerprints on this. He also mentioned Sister Greta's letter of February 12 to the Refugee Commission and the present representatives of IHCA.<sup>30</sup> But Pernow did *not* ask the Commission to consider a general evacuation of Hebrew Christians from Palestine. He cares for Sister Greta's little group and contacts IHCA, which subsequently promises to do what it can to get these people out of the Land.<sup>31</sup>

### Developments from March 19 to April 5

On *March 19*, CMJ in London has a meeting about the situation in Palestine "without making any decision."<sup>32</sup> They have, however, some ideas about how to proceed with the matter *in* Palestine, which they ask Pernow to implement (see below under March 22).

24 Greta Andrén to Pernow, February 12, 1948, CSA E VIe: 1. See also my article on Weinstock (note 11), when Jones in mid-April expresses the hope that Nussbaum can remain in the Land.

25 Pernow to Andrén, March 8, 1948, CSA E VIe: 1.

26 World Council of Churches Refugee Commission, *Minutes of the Annual Meeting*, Paris, February 26–29, 1948, CSA D IV: 1.

27 Conrad Hoffmann (ICCAJ) and H. Leuner and Harcourt Samuel (IHCA) were present as observers.

28 *Minutes*, Appendix VI, p. 45.

29 *Ibid.*, 46.

30 Cf. Pernow to Andrén, March 8, 1948, CSA E VIe: 1.

31 Cf. Harcourt Samuel to Pernow, April 1, 1948, CSA E56: 2, where Samuel writes: "We shall do what we can to bring the Nussbaum family and Mr. Katscher out of Palestine." Together with other friends of Sister Andrén, the family left on board the *Georgic* on May 7, 1948.

32 Cf. Pernow to Levison, March 30, 1948, CSA E56: 2.



On *March 20*, Sister Greta arrives in Sweden from Jerusalem. She continues her struggle for her friends and informs Pernow orally about their situation.<sup>33</sup>

On *March 22*, Pernow approaches Elfan Rees, Executive Secretary of the Ecumenical Refugee Commission (WCC) in Geneva; he reminds him of the dangerous situation which Hebrew Christians in Palestine find themselves in and which he called into attention at the Paris meeting. About Sister Greta he writes: "She has stated that the Hebrew Christians really are in impending danger and must be saved out of the country soonest possible. That is the matter specially with the people you find in the enclosed curriculum."<sup>34</sup> One cannot help wondering at Pernow's choice of words. *Perhaps* the explanation is that Sister Greta, now back in Sweden, has pleaded for a *general* evacuation of Hebrew Christians from Palestine, a matter which he as director of ICCAJ does not really have a mandate to plead. But he has no problems pleading Sister Greta's "friends'" cause.

On *March 22*, Gill sends CMJ's proposal from the meeting on March 19 to Pernow. It is proposed that he, on behalf of ICCAJ, should approach "the Jewish Religious Authorities re this matter pointing out that the Jewry would be blamed the world over," if the Hebrew Christians in Palestine are discriminated against.<sup>35</sup> The statement is essential for it shows that the CMJ leadership in London has not given up hope that the Hebrew Christians can remain *in* the Land and that they will make another attempt to ensure this.

On *March 23*, in connection with the submission of Witton-Davies' minutes from the meeting in the Bishop's house on March 16, Hoffmann writes to Pernow: "I am wondering if you could do anything in this situation. We are appealing to the International Christian Alliance as well as to the North American Alliance, hoping that they will respond."<sup>36</sup>

On *March 25*, under the impression of what Pernow reported to him on March 22 about Sister Greta's information, Levison writes: "On receipt of your letter I phoned to Samuel to call a special meeting of our Committee, and the Abraham's Vineyard Board, and we shall of course do everything possible to rescue our brethren."<sup>37</sup> With this, IHCA is really getting involved. What is done by Levison and IHCA in the following days will have decisive influence on the implementation of Operation Mercy and the evaluation of it. IHCA now takes responsibility.

*At the end of March*, the meeting mentioned by Levison is held. He writes: "We agreed to set aside five thousand pounds for helping bring

33 Pernow furthers information about this to Levison on March 22, 1948; cf. Levison to Pernow, March 25, 1928, CSA E56: 2. Levison comments: "What Sister Greta says is very perturbing."

34 Pernow to Rees, March 22, 1948, E I 56: 1. Curriculum for Alfred Nussbaum, Emil Lev Katcher, and Brigitte Goldschmidt, some of Sister Greta's "friends" who were evacuated on board the *Georgic* on May 7, has been preserved, CSA E I 56: 1.

35 Cf. summary of this in Pernow to Levison, March 30, 1948, CSA E 56: 2.

36 Hoffmann to Pernow, March 23, 1948, CSA E VIIa: 2.

37 Levison to Pernow, March 25, 1948, CSA E 56: 2.

out from Palestine, or in Palestine our Hebrew Christians there." It was furthermore decided that they should contact some named individuals in Palestine who could draw up lists of Hebrew Christians (see below).

In connection with the mention of this meeting, Levison gives the following important announcement:

I was at the Home Office and asked for the permission to bring fifty to sixty Hebrew Christians to this country, this matter is under consideration by our Government.<sup>38</sup>

On *March 30*, Pernow maintains towards Gill<sup>39</sup> and Levison that he has no faith in Gill's proposal that they should approach "the Jewish Religious Authorities." To Levison he writes:

Such a step seems to me absolutely useless and of three reasons. Firstly because the Jewish Religious Authorities in the present situation have no power at all to influence the fighting Jewish organisations in Palestine. Secondly because they can reply that the whole Palestinian Jewry now is fighting for its life and existence and the Church is doing nothing in order to assist them in this fight and not even doing anything to protect the Holy Places from destruction. Furtherly the only result would be that we would make the Hebrew Christians still more suspected.<sup>40</sup>

Instead Pernow suggests that Levison contact Gill and that these two approach the Archbishop of Canterbury, "that he, using his personal authority or in the name of the Anglican Church, may submit to the British government for evacuation of this small group of Hebrew Christians. Truly it is a small group and must be regarded as a small affair for the government of Great Britain."<sup>41</sup>

On *April 2*, Levison is back in Edinburgh, where he has a meeting in the Church Office with Mr. Urie Baird and Macanna, with Pernow's letter of March 30 before them. Levison has, as just mentioned, already been to the Home Office in London. In Edinburgh it is now decided, under the impression of what Pernow has had to say and the information received from Palestine from the Scottish Church's missionaries, that the Tiberias Hospital should be put under the Red Cross "and should be made a center to house

38 Levison to Pernow, April 2, 1948, CSA E 56: 2. Pernow says on April 20, that *he* wrote to Levison and Gill to make them request of the Home Office that "50-60 persons should be included in the English evacuation plan." Cf. Pernow to Göte Hedenquist, April 20, 1948, CSA E I 56: 1.

39 Pernow to Gill, March 30, 1948, CSA E I 56: 1.

40 Pernow to Levison, March 30, 1948, CSA E 56: 2. On Gill's proposal Hoffmann writes to Pernow on April 6, 1948 (CSA E VIIa: 2): "I agree with your reaction, namely that it would be absolutely useless to attempt anything of the kind that Gill suggests along this line."

41 When Pernow writes this, he does not know that Levison has already initiated negotiations with the Home Office about visas.



all Hebrew Christians needing protection and home, and that the I.H.C.A. should be responsible for the expenditure. (I said we would go to the extent of two thousand pounds if required, subject to my committee agreeing, and the Bank of England given the permission for the expenditure.)” The following is furthermore decided:

That Macanna and I go down to London next week, and arrange with the Colonial Office and the Home Office, that the Hebrew Christians who want to leave Palestine should be received in this country, and that the I.H.C.A. should make itself responsible for their support till they get work or leave this country.

Levison concludes his letter to Pernow:

I think we have taken every possible step to meet the situation, and I should be glad to hear from you if you can make some contribution towards this scheme, for the carrying out of the scheme will fall on the I.H.C.A.'s shoulders. All I will add is, that you can rest assured that we will do all in our power to deal with the matter.<sup>42</sup>

IHCA's Vice-President Nahum Levison now shows himself as a man of strong character. At a meeting a few days later, on April 5, the significant decisions are made together with the other mission societies. The minutes from this meeting are reproduced *in toto* below.

On the morning of *April 5* in London – before the meeting in CMJ's headquarters – Nahum Levison and Harcourt Samuel negotiate with representatives of the Colonial Office about “what they would do to help.” This is what Levison writes to Pernow a couple of days later; the matter itself has naturally been communicated to the participants at the meeting that same day.

We found that the High Commissioner for Palestine had communicated with the Colonial Office, and the Colonial Office consulted the Home Office, and they agreed to permit any Hebrew Christian who is in danger to be evacuated to this country [UK]. My heart sung with Joy on hearing this, for it will save us so much trouble with individuals, and it will all be done in Palestine.<sup>43</sup>

“My heart sung with Joy.” These words were not uttered by the Bishop in Jerusalem but by a leading figure in the International Hebrew Christian Alliance. And he has backing from other “heavyweights” within IHCA.

What happened later on that day, April 5, at the negotiations in CMJ's

42 Levison to Pernow, April 2, 1948, CSA E 56: 2. Pernow thanks Levison in a letter, April 8, 1948, for this with the words: “I can hardly express the great joy Sister Greta and I felt by reading about all you have done to rescue our Hebrew Christian friends,” cf. Pernow to Levinson, April 8, 1948, CSA E 56: 2.

43 Levison to Pernow, April 7, 1948, CSA E 56: 2.



## Memorandum of Meeting<sup>44</sup>

1. At the suggestion of Rev. R. Clephane Macanna (Scotland), an unofficial meeting of representatives of Jewish Mission Societies interested in Palestine was hurriedly convened at 16 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, on Monday, 5th April, at 2.30 p.m.  
Present: Rev. H. Samuel and Rev. N. Levison (I.H.C.A.), Rev. A.G. Parry (B.J.S.),<sup>45</sup> Rev. C.H. Gill and Rev. H.W.L. Martin (C.M.J.), Representative of Mildmay Mission, Rev. Dr. D. MacDougall and Rev. R. Clephane Macanna (C. of S.).<sup>46</sup> Mr. Macanna was asked to take the chair and constituted the meeting with prayer.
2. The Chairman stated that Rev. N Levison had been in correspondence with Pastor B Pernow, Sweden, Chairman of the I.M.C. Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews concerning the position of Hebrew Christians in Palestine. A letter had been received by Mr. Levison from Mr. Pernow on which he passed on a quotation from a letter of the Rev. Canon Witton-Davies, Jerusalem, to Dr. C. Hoffmann. Mr. Witton-Davies reported that, at a meeting on the Bishop's House, Jerusalem, the safety of Hebrew Christians in Palestine had been considered, and the suggestion made that small concentrations of Hebrew Christians should be made at Jaffa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa. An immediate decision would require to be made soon, but the question of funds arose, as most of the Hebrew Christians were without money of their own and would be out of work. Canon Davies wished to have the matter brought before the notice of Societies represented on the I.M.C. Committee. Dr. Hoffmann in his letter to Mr. Pernow stated he had appealed to the I.H.C.A on the matter.
3. The representatives of the I.H.C.A. stated that the question had been considered by that body and that a sum of £5000 would be available to assist Hebrew Christians. It was also intimated that negotiations had begun for the permission of the Bank of England being given to transfer money to Palestine on account of Hebrew Christians, and that there was every likelihood that such permission would be granted. It was further reported that the Colonial Office had stated that the High Commissioner for Palestine had cabled asking permission to issue visas to Hebrew Christians to Palestine who were in danger. The matter had been discussed with the Home Office and agreement reached that if the High Commissioner for Palestine was satisfied that there was danger to a Hebrew Christian a British visa should be granted and transport made available.

44 Sent by R. Clephane Macanna to Conrad Hoffmann, April 6, 1948, copy in CSA E VII: 2.

45 British Jews Society.

46 Church of Scotland.



4. Discussion followed and it was clear that not all Hebrew Christians wished to be evacuated from Palestine.
  - (a) Those who were found eligible for evacuation and came to Great Britain should be the responsibility of the I.H.C.A., or of the Society with which they had been connected in Palestine, or of such other Society or group in Britain as would accept responsibility for them if they had not already been attached to any particular Society or church.
  - (b) Those Hebrew Christians remaining in Palestine should be concentrated in the various areas named in paragraph 2, and the Church of Scotland intimated that the Tiberias Hospital might also be considered as a concentration centre. It was pointed out that, although funds might be made available, the purchase of food would be a difficulty. It was suggested that the International Red Cross might take responsibility for seeing that food reached the groups, provided that funds were made available. It was also suggested, that if the International Red Cross could not accept responsibility the Hebrew Christians should be evacuated, but on this it was emphasized that the decision lay with the High Commissioner through the Director of Migration, Jerusalem.
5. It was finally agreed:-
  - (a) That intimation be made to Rev. Scott Morrison (Jaffa), Rev. H.R.A Jones (Jerusalem), Dr. H.W Torrance (Tiberias), and Mrs. Rohold (Haifa) that they should list the Hebrew Christians in their area who should be evacuated from Palestine on account of danger, and transmit these lists to Canon Witton-Davies (Jerusalem) for appropriate action with the Direction of Migration. It was expected that Canon Witton-Davies would keep the Societies informed of the number of Hebrew Christians being evacuated, and the Rev. H. Clephane Macanna was to inform Mr. Witton-Davies of the decision and to request co-operation.
  - (b) That Rev. H. Samuel and Rev. R. Clephane Macanna should interview the Bank of England re transfer of funds for Hebrew Christians in Palestine.
  - (c) That Rev. R. Clephane Macanna inform the Very Rev. Dr. J. Hutchison Cockburn, head of the World Council of Churches Department of Reconstruction at Geneva, of the scheme proposed for feeding and housing Hebrew Christians in Palestine, and invoke his aid in approaching the International Red Cross Geneva. It is understood that Dr. Cockburn be authorized to offer funds for the purpose of sending food to Hebrew Christians in Palestine provided the International Red Cross would guarantee that the food would reach the groups concerned.
  - (d) That copies of the Memorandum of meeting be issued to all those taking part in the meeting that the various Societies represented might be fully informed of the steps taken and decide what measure of support could be given to the scheme.

- (e) That Rev. B. Pernow and Dr. C. Hoffmann be fully informed of the meeting and of the action taken, and invited to give whatever aid was possible from Sweden and the U.S.A.

Closed with the Benediction.

R. Clephane Macanna  
Chairman  
5th April, 1948

### Developments after April 5, 1948

On *April 6*, Macanna sends the Memorandum to, among others, Hoffmann, and writes:

I am enclosing a memorandum of a meeting, which explains itself, and follows your letter to Pernow, quoting Canon Davies. You will see that action has been fully taken.

To-day I confirmed the remittance of money to Palestine at the Bank of England, and this afternoon, in discussion at the Home Office, discovered that the number who will be allowed to come to Britain under the evacuation scheme will be strictly limited. In addition, Societies will be held responsible for the upkeep of these people while they are here, and that will probably limit further the enthusiasm of some of the groups for general evacuation. The key scheme is that suggested by Canon Davies of concentrations in Palestine, and, as noted above, the Bank of England and the Treasury take a very favourable view and will agree to the transmission of funds. I think that this is all that can be done in the meantime. If there is anything further, I will notify you.

Macanna's words that the financial aspect of the matter "will probably limit further the enthusiasm of some of the groups for general evacuation" are remarkable. The aim is to help Hebrew Christians *in* Palestine. "The key scheme is that suggested by Canon Witton-Davies of concentrations in Palestine."<sup>47</sup> (Cf. March 16; see above.)

At the same time, Levison's negotiations with the Home Office in London have had the result that visas may be obtained for Hebrew Christians "who were in danger." And on behalf of IHCA, Levison has declared that they will guarantee the project financially.

Lists are made in Palestine of individuals who are "in danger." At first only fourteen visas are granted, which induces Bishop Stewart, Witton-Davis, Clark-Kerre, and Jones to appear before the Chief Secretary in Jerusalem on April 12. Here the Bishop called attention to the fact "that many more than fourteen visas were needed and said that at least fifty,

47 Macanna to Hoffmann, April 6, 1948, CSA E VIIa: 2.



probable more, Hebrew Christians throughout Palestine were in need of being evacuated."<sup>48</sup> It would seem that the Chief Secretary had not been informed by the Colonial Office in London "that all Hebrew Christians nominated by Witton-Davies should be given visas for the U.K. and facilities provided for travel."<sup>49</sup> Only about a fortnight later were we "informed that any Hebrew Christian considered to be in danger could be granted a temporary visa for the United Kingdom," writes Jones.<sup>50</sup> That this was made possible was due to the fact that Gill and Samuel in London had been to the Colonial Office "to again make representations on behalf of the Hebrew Christians," Levison writes. This happened as late as about April 26.<sup>51</sup>

In Palestine they follow the criteria that Levison in particular has devised. Not least Pernow, influenced by Sister Greta, has urged him to this. But without IHCA's financial backing, that which became Operation Mercy would not have been feasible. Neither the Bishop in Jerusalem nor ICCAJ had the financial resources for this. IHCA had. More than others, they bear the moral responsibility for this.

The "small concentrations of Hebrew Christians" around Palestine that the Bishop and his collaborators had suggested on March 16 (see above) – and that were underlined by Macanna after the meeting in London on April 5 with the words: "The key scheme is that suggested by Canon Witton-Davies" – were never made. The reason is probably that the organizers in Palestine were convinced that all who were "in danger" had been entered in the list.

It is difficult to determine whether the criteria for being "in danger" were followed exactly. I dare not say that they, in all cases, were applied with the same rigor; I rather suspect that some of the evacuees got through the needle's eye fairly easily.

After Operation Mercy has been carried out, its organizers rejoice that they have "saved" human lives. And even after the operation, Levison can write the following at the beginning of June:

The number of Hebrew Christians still left in Palestine must be considerable, I know personally a good few who have stayed, the majority of them are very strong Zionists, and Jewish nationalists, but there are some who do not belong to this group, but cannot get out because they have no passports, or for some technical reasons. I am doing my best to get them out.<sup>52</sup>

48 See Jones' letter of June 4, 1948, printed as the first article in this issue of *Mishkan*.

49 Jones to Gill, April 16, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219.

50 Cf. Jones' letter of June 4.

51 Levison to Pernow, May 1, 1948, CSA E 56: 2. It is said that Macanna asked the two persons to go to the Colonial Office "at the beginning of the week." The week began on Monday, April 26. Levison does not know the result of this meeting when he writes. On May 1, the first stage of Operation Mercy is initiated in Jerusalem.

52 Levison to Pernow, June 2, 1948, CSA E 56: 2.

Again, this is not the Bishop in Jerusalem speaking!

But there is also some self-reflection. Already in October, CMJ missionary Miss Brooke writes the following from Jaffa: "It now seems that the discrimination shown against Hebrew Christians in recent months was political rather than religious, and they were suspect not so much because of their faith, but their being connected with the British."<sup>53</sup>

And as Gershon Nerel correctly says, in April 1949 Jones sends a letter to the Archbishop of York in which he says that in "the present much calmer and more settled atmosphere that now prevails here," it is "possible to see things that happened a year ago in a truer perspective." After having mentioned some examples of interrogation of Hebrew Christians and the ensuing fear, he comments that "these fears, understandable at that time, have proved to have been exaggerated," which is shown by the fact that "Christian Jews" who did remain in the Land were unmolested.<sup>54</sup>

However, this does not mean that Jones regretted what he was involved in. At CMJ's Anniversary Meeting in May 1950, he said the following:

It is enough to recall but one incident – that which is known as "Operation Mercy," in which many Hebrew Christians were evacuated from Palestine at the eleventh hour just before the end of the Mandate – from a position in which they seemed to be "between the devil and the blue sea" – acceptable to neither Jew nor Arab. No one who witnessed the unfolding of the long chain of events which comprised this whole operation could doubt that the hand of God was guiding throughout.<sup>55</sup>

**"It now seems that the discrimination shown against Hebrew Christians in recent months was political rather than religious. . . ."**

## When Lives Are at Stake

Having presented and interpreted some of the documents which the organizers behind Operation Mercy have left, I see a quite different picture than the one Gershon Nerel has presented. But I am not done with the adverse effects that Operation Mercy also had on the Messianic movement and its reputation in Israel. It leads to existential questions such as: What do you do when lives are at stake? And: How do you judge a person who, in a given situation, acted on the conviction that lives were at stake (although subsequent historical research may be able to show that this hardly was the case)? I hope others will take up these subjects.

In conclusion just this: The fact that Sister Greta and Birger Pernow are so

53 Cf. *Jewish Missionary News* (1948): 183.

54 Jones to His Grace, the Lord Archbishop of York, April 4, 1949, Conrad Schick Library, Christ Church, Jerusalem.

55 Cf. *Jewish Missionary News* (1950): 103.



concerned for their “friends” in Palestine, believing that their lives are at stake and taking action at an early stage, may be explained by what they experienced some years earlier. In the years around 1940, Sister Greta helped to save 3,000 Jews out of Vienna. As director of the Swedish Israel Mission, Birger Pernow was responsible for this.<sup>56</sup>

It is easy to imagine that even if you had done absolutely all that you could to save lives in Vienna, and even risked your own life, you might later have to live with self-accusations: If only I had done this or that, if I had acted differently, if I had seen the signals a little earlier, then that child, that mother, that family would have been saved.

Such observations must also be taken into account when the story of Operation Mercy is assessed.

In any case, Gershon Nerel’s theory – that the Hebrew Christians in Palestine were the object of a conspiracy from the church’s side – is to my mind, and with reference to the “authentic documents” that I have presented, a construction which lacks historical foundation.

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<sup>56</sup> See Birger Pernow, *Sjuttio år för Israel. Svenska Israelsmissionen 1875–1945* (Stockholm: Svenska Israelsmissionens Andelsförenings Bokförlag, 1945), 30–51.

# Sitt Elsie of Tiberias and Gerius Hishmeh of Jaffa

- Two Obituaries



## Sitt Elsie of Tiberias\*

by R. Clephane Macanna (1958)<sup>1</sup>

The death was reported at Leeds, on 18th November, 1957, of Miss Elsie Nasrallah, better known to all friends and patients of the Tiberias Hospital as "Sitt Elsie." She was of Syrian nationality and went to Tiberias Hospital in 1925 as masseuse and "Bible-woman evangelist."

Dr. H.W. Torrance tells of how he came to meet and select Miss Nasrallah for work in his hospital.

I required a Masseuse and Bible-woman evangelist. I knew of a saintly English lady in Jerusalem – Miss Lovell – who had spent over 40 years in the Herculean task of translating the whole of the Bible, single-handed, into Arabic Braille. In a Christlike manner, she decided to choose 12 blind girls, and 12 only, and give them a thorough training. My journey to Miss Lovell's home in Jerusalem, resulted in my choosing Elsie, while Dr. Orr Ewing picked another girl, Mathilde, for his hospital. Sitt Elsie was given a course in massage at Jerusalem, and qualified.

I have never regretted my choice because one might almost say Elsie became the Helen Keller of Galilee. True, she had been blind from birth but, in another sense, she had the most seeing eyes of anybody I have met. Like the "electric eye doors" in modern hospitals which

\* **General Editor's note:** Rev. R. Clephane Macanna played a not unusual role in connection with Operation Mercy. (See my article "The Organizers behind Operation Mercy" in this issue of *Mishkan*.) But this is not the reason we print his moving obituary of Sitt Elsie of Tiberias. We publish it because it shows that a local person "of Syrian nationality," like Sitt Elsie, remained in Palestine in May 1948 – and who, while working in Tiberias, even sometimes held services in Hebrew!

I wonder if there were more of her kind?

There certainly were in the years before, e.g. Gerius Hishmeh, a Christian Arab who after twenty years' service for CMJ among Jews in Jaffa died in 1946. Therefore, we reprint this obituary which was written then.

<sup>1</sup> R.C.M. [R. Clephane Macanna], "Sitt Elsie of Tiberias," *Church of Scotland Jewish Mission Quarterly* 134 (1958): 4.

open of themselves as they are approached by a person or a wheeled trolley, Elsie's anticipatory nerve of sensation tunnelled a way into her imprisoned spirit and made *her see everything*.

"Who is that coming up the stairs?"

"It's the doctor!"

"Why is No. 4 bed apparently so ill today and weeping her heart out, when yesterday she was so well?" Again Sitt Elsie has the answer. "The woman had buried her money before coming into hospital in case she should be robbed there – and now the patient knows we are not robbers and wishes to get out before the rains come to retrieve her money."

On taking up work at Tiberias Sitt Elsie rapidly made a place for herself in the hospital wards, and endeared herself to the patients, the staff and the Tiberias community. Daily ward services, visits in town to sick people, to former patients and to the poor – all these tasks were cheerfully undertaken in addition to her hospital work as masseuse. She could even keep a watchful "eye" on hospital property. Dr Torrance says of this,

She had some Scottish "genes" in her body. In institutions – even missionary – all over the world there can be leakages. After the Arab-Israel war, when rationing was producing a "big squeeze," my suspicions were aroused. Sitt Elsie was acting as temporary housekeeper of the hospital and I questioned her. "Yes, doctor, you had 88 patients yesterday, but somehow" – then followed an amused smile – "97 eggs disappeared for breakfast from our egg bank." I crowed, and she would emit a knowing laugh, and chuckle.

Sitt Elsie's work was summed up in "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do" – and she did it with all her might. She would do anything to help. When the Tiberias Hospital was closed down, as being in the fighting area, during the Arab-Israel war of 1948–49, her work as masseuse and Bible-Teacher seemed finished. Sitt Elsie and Miss Pearson (now Mrs. Allanson) remained in Israel throughout the war and worked at Nazareth. In that period Sitt Elsie's hand found much work waiting to be done. She visited refugees, cared for wounded soldiers, helped to trace relatives and, when Miss Pearson established a small hospital at Nazareth, Sitt Elsie took over the house-keeping side of the work.

When the Tiberias work was resumed after hostilities ceased, Sitt Elsie helped to organise the Kosher Kitchen and canteen, and with her knowledge of Hebrew was an invaluable liaison between the Home staff and the Jewish staff in the hospital. Later, when the Bible Shop was established and taken over by Miss Pearson and Sitt Elsie, she was tireless in the work undertaken. Whether talking to children, giving English lessons, discussing Christianity with enquirers, or preparing for the Hebrew services (which she regarded as supremely important) Sitt Elsie gave all she had to the task in hand at the moment.



Her knowledge of the Bible was amazing and she could quote accurately from it in English, Arabic or Hebrew. During the period when there was no minister at Tiberias, it was Sitt Elsie who carried on the services – in English or in Hebrew – when no visiting clergyman was available. Without her initiative and work the Hebrew services at Tiberias could not have been maintained.

The work she loved best, however, was visiting. If domestic duties in the hospital had kept her too busy to go visiting during the day, she would go out in the evening so as to keep in touch. She was indefatigable. On these occasions, or at the Bible Shop, she favoured the story method – beloved in the near East – for giving information and instruction. Sitt Elsie was a born story-teller – like many Arabs – and young and old were eager to listen to her tales.

To the Bible Shop came many Jewish enquirers, and with them Sitt Elsie discussed and expounded the Christian Faith, for she had a great love for the Jewish people. From the Bible Shop, and accompanied by Miss Pearson, she went into Tiberias and the Jewish colonies around, to visit enquirers and former patients of the hospital, ever carrying with her the Gospel message, and allowing no opportunity to pass without commending Christ. Her witness was positive and fearless. She had a deep love of God, a zeal for His Word, and a simple faith in the power of prayer. One Jew – an avowed atheist who sought to discuss religion with her at the Bible Shop – said “She is quite right – she really believes what she says – she’s absolutely right.”

Sitt Elsie’s success owed much – as she gladly admitted – to the unparalleled patience and help given by two former members of the Tiberias Hospital staff. Miss Isabella Dow, a former pharmacist, and Miss Edith Pearson (now Mrs Allanson) were devoted, unselfish guides and tutors to her and enabled her to enter spheres and to make contacts which would otherwise have been impossible. In 1955 Sitt Elsie asked permission to retire. She was then 54 years of age, but her blindness did impose a strain and her health was failing in the trying climate of Tiberias. Miss Pearson was, moreover, resigning on her marriage and this would have raised a serious problem for Sitt Elsie and the Committee had she continued alone at Tiberias. In 1956 she was permitted by the British authorities to retire in Great Britain. Since October, 1956, she has been under the care of Mrs. Allanson (Miss E. Pearson) at Leeds. Steadily her health declined after lengthy treatment in and out of hospital, and after much pain, borne with fortitude and cheerfulness, she died at Mrs. Allanson’s house in Leeds. Miss Dow had gone from Glasgow to visit her a few days before her death. Mr. G.A. Henderson represented the Jewish Mission Committee at the funeral and conducted the service at the Crematorium. The Church of Scotland offers its humble thanks to Almighty God for its missionary, Miss Elsie Nasrallah and for all that He enabled her to do in the service of the Kingdom.

*R.C.M.*



## Gerius Hishmeh of Jaffa\*

by H.W.L. Martin (1946)<sup>2</sup>

By the death on 2nd October last [1946] of Mr. G.H. Hishmeh, the Church in Palestine has lost one of the veteran Arab members, and C.M.J. a devoted and stalwart evangelist.

Mr. Hishmeh heard the call as a young man to serve God in the ranks of the Salvation Army, and could tell of many a perilous adventure for Christ in India and England, in the days when General Booth's men were often the victims of hooliganism. These experiences were doubtless equipping him for his later work for the Society. Soon after the 1914–18 war when he had returned to Palestine, he was invited by the late Rev. A.C. Martin to join the staff as Colporteur-Evangelist at Jaffa, and there, through the many contacts with Jews coming to the Book Depot and by visits to Jewish homes and colonies, he carried on a devoted, tenacious work for twenty years. While in charge of the Book Depot he acted also as the local agent for the British Foreign Bible Society.

His position as a Christian Arab working among Jews in a predominantly Moslem town was delicate and sometimes dangerous, but he was never one to hide his light under a bushel. The writer will never forget his completely forgiving spirit when during the height of the pre-war Arab rebellion his first wife was shot dead by a Jewish counter-terrorist,<sup>3</sup> nor the profound effect of this steadfast attitude upon the Christian community of his home town. His health gradually failing, he retired from active missionary service in 1941.

\* **General Editor's note:** I have only recently become acquainted with persons like Sitt Elsie and Gerius Hishmeh, but more can be added. A Swedish missionary, Greta Andrén, came to Palestine in May 1946. At that time Fritz Plotke had a co-worker, Friedrich Neumann, whom she knew from Vienna, where they had worked together as missionaries. On May 14, 1946, Neumann had invited Sister Greta to a meeting for a small mothers' group where she told about her time as a missionary in Vienna: "It was translated into Arabic since they were Arabic-speaking Jewesses" (*Missionstidning för Israel* [1946]: 260). This is interesting! Who are they? Are they indigenous or are they immigrants? And are they – or perhaps just some of them – members of the congregation? Where are they in May 1948? Should they be included in the number of those who stayed behind in Israel in 1948? (Cf. my article "Numbers Connected with Operation Mercy," in this issue of *Mishkan*.)

Which leads to another point: Christian Arabs' involvement in Jewish mission, in the nineteenth as well as the twentieth centuries, is an interesting topic that needs to be examined.

2 H.W.L.M. [H.W.L. Martin] "Obituary, Gerius Hishmeh," *Jewish Missionary Intelligence* 12 (1946): 11–12. Martin was CMJ Home Secretary in London.

3 Some may feel offended at Martin's use of the word "terrorist" about Jewish resistance groups in Palestine. But it is the exact same term which the Zionists group around Poljak used. Pauline Rose writes about the imprisonment and interrogation of a group of members in Jerusalem as late as August 1948 under the headline "Terrorists," cf. Pauline Rose, *The Siege of Jerusalem* (London: Patmos Publishers, n.d. [Introduction notes June, 1949; repr., Jerusalem: Old City Press, 1972]), 74–85. Poljak writes about the same incident in *Die Judenchristliche Gemeinde* 140/141 (1949): 8, where the following words occur: "die Sternisten (eine jüdische Terroristgruppe)."

We extend our affectionate sympathy to his widow and his family, especially his children and grandchildren; and we give praise with them for a doughty Christian warrior.

*H.W.L.M*





# An Interview with Ursula Jones

by **Bodil F. Skjøtt**

Mrs. Ursula Jones is one of the many people who left Palestine in the spring of 1948. She is also among those who later returned to what then became the State of Israel. I had briefly heard about Ursula, but had not met her in person before June 2008, when together with Kai Kjær-Hansen, I had the privilege of visiting her in her small but very beautiful flat in the Capel Court retirement home, in Prestbury, Cheltenham, where she had moved from London a few years before.

Ursula knew we were coming to visit and had, therefore, asked her older sister, Ruth, who also lives in Cheltenham, to join us. In a letter we had let Ursula know that we were curious about her life story. We especially wanted her to tell us how it had been for her and her family to live in Jerusalem in the spring of 1948, up to the time of the establishment of the State of Israel. Over a cup of tea, and helped by her sister Ruth, Ursula shared her story and told us what she remembers from those very special days in Jerusalem in 1948.

## **Ursula Jones' Arrival in Palestine**

Ursula first arrived in Palestine from Germany with her family in 1936. Her father was a liberal German Jew and her mother a nominal Christian; both Ruth and Ursula were baptized in 1936. The family lived in Berlin until 1933, when they moved to Wiesbaden, away from the political situation in Berlin, hoping that there they would be safe and able to see the storm out. It was very difficult for her father, an assimilated German Jew, to even consider that he would be in danger and unable to remain in Germany. But in 1935, when the situation had deteriorated rather than improved, he decided it was time to move his family out of what he had considered his home. Because of his profession as an architect and engineer, he was able to get a visa for Palestine. He left Germany in 1935, and the family followed the year after. This was also a very turbulent time in Palestine, with riots and the Arab uprising, but it was a different kind of danger than the one they had fled. The family stayed in Tel Aviv for a short while before moving to Jerusalem.

However, in 1938, Ursula's maternal grandfather in Germany died, and

in spite of the situation, Ursula's mother wanted to go back and see the family during that difficult time. Since she was not Jewish, she thought it safe to do so and took her two daughters with her. Ursula, therefore, remembers Kristallnacht, as she experienced it in Königsberg. In 1939, her father insisted that her mother leave Germany and return to Palestine with the girls.

Back in Jerusalem, Ursula attended the girls' college run by three mission societies for three years, until she turned fifteen. Because of the financial situation, the older sister, Ruth, was homeschooled by the mother.

Ursula remembers her father being very connected to his Jewish people, but he never went to synagogue and her mother never attended church, though the girls had been baptized before leaving Germany in 1936. But when, at the invitation of a friend of Ruth's, the two sisters began attending services and meetings at Christ Church in 1946, the parents did not object. Attending church had a profound impact on Ursula's life and changed her lifestyle radically. Both girls were confirmed at Christ Church the following year, in 1947. Their parents did not object to this either, but neither did they attend the confirmation service at Christ Church. Her father's only comment was that he hoped it did not become too public.

### Spring 1948 in Jerusalem

Both Ursula and Ruth used the expression "It was a very dicey time" to describe life in Jerusalem. Ursula said,

I left the country at the end of April 1948, just before the declaration of the Jewish state. It was difficult to get out, as only a limited number of visas were issued for people like us. But I managed to get one of them, thanks to Hugh Jones, who was head of CMJ at that time. I remember that I had been booked on a plane that was to leave a few days earlier than I actually left, but had given up my seat to a British soldier whose mother had died. He was eager to get back to be with his family and attend the funeral. Therefore I had my departure delayed a few days. It was only later that I learned that I actually left on the last British Airways flight to fly out of Palestine before the war. The only other British Airways plane to leave Palestine before May 14, and before the fighting broke out, was the one that carried the last British Airways staff members.

Ronald Adeney, who was on staff with CMJ in Jerusalem at that time, took me to the airport in a car that belonged to the mission. What I didn't know at that time was that the little bridge we had to cross in order to get to the airport was blown up just a few days later. Had we come later, we would not have been able to make it all the way to the airport.

When I look back at this time, I see that things were very chaotic, very dicey, in Jerusalem. They had been so especially since 1947, when the UN Partition Plan had been rejected by the Arabs. Still, I don't re-



member my own departure being very dramatic. I wasn't fleeing the country or leaving in order to get away, but in order to get to England in time to start my nursing course. I had been accepted to the nursing school at Bromley Hospital, and that is why I was leaving. I was not fleeing a difficult situation. I remember that when I got to England I was met by a good friend at the terminal, and from there I continued my journey by coach to the hospital.

But things soon got worse in Jerusalem, and only a short time later Ruth, together with their mother, had to leave the city in a much more dramatic way. They did not leave to study in England or with any other plans. They were leaving because of a very difficult situation. Ruth and their mother left the family house in Jerusalem in a taxi, which took them to the small Kalandia airport north of Jerusalem. Here they boarded a small plane with seats for only eight people. The other six passengers were all Arabs who also wanted to get out of the city, which at that time had become a very dangerous place; the future was unpredictable. The small plane took them from Kalandia to Cairo, where Ruth and their mother stayed at the English mission until they were able to board a boat from Alexandria to Liverpool. The family all had British Mandate passports, and both women had managed to get permission to travel to England.

In Jerusalem, Ruth had worked for the British army as a telephone operator. The fact that she worked not just for the British but for the British army once brought her into a difficult situation, which testifies to the city becoming a more and more difficult place in which to live in the spring of 1948.<sup>1</sup> After 1947, the city was divided into three zones: the Jewish zone, the Arab Zone, and a neutral zone manned by the British to keep the two sides apart. One time Ruth was in the Jewish zone of the city in order to see her dentist. Here she was stopped and taken by the Hagana to their office for interrogation. They accused her of being a spy for the British. Their mother, who had come to meet her, was also taken in for questioning, but fortunately the dentist spoke up for them and assured the Hagana that they were not spies, and both were later released.

### **From Jerusalem to England and Back Again**

Upon her arrival in England, Ursula began her nursing course at Bromley Hospital. However, she completed only one year. She had begun her nursing studies as a response to God's call, which she had felt already in 1947

<sup>1</sup> In an article in *Jewish Missionary News* (1949): 173, Ursula tells of an incident that also testifies to the tense atmosphere in Jerusalem at that time: "It was at this time [after her confirmation at Christ Church in February 1947] I was taken one day by an armed escort before the Arab Higher Committee in the Old City, but I was not afraid because I knew that Jesus Christ was with me. I was questioned for a long time, as they thought I was a Jewess, and I told them I had come to love the Lord Jesus. At last the questioning was over, the Arabs released me and gave me a permit to pass in and out of the Old City."

while walking in the Judean Hills near Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> It was her desire to follow the call and become a nurse at the CMJ hospital in Jerusalem. When she learned that CMJ had decided not to continue their medical work in the city, she changed her plans and spent two years at Bible school at St. Michaels' House in Oxford while waiting to see what the future would hold. At one time it looked like she was going to be stationed in Tunis and be on staff with CMJ there, but in the end that did not work out. God had other plans for her, and in February 1952, she was back in Jerusalem, in the part of the city that had now become Israel. She was employed as the secretary for the head of CMJ, Canon Hugh Jones. In an article in *Jewish Missionary Journal* from 1952, she still wrote under her maiden name, Ursula Nehab. The following year, the same journal announced "the good news of the engagement of Canon Jones to Miss Ursula Nehab."<sup>3</sup> The two got married later that year.

Hugh Jones had come to Palestine in 1937 to work first in Tel Aviv and then at Christ Church. He had remained there during the war and also throughout the worst fighting in the city. He was among the very few people who had permission to cross between the different zones in Jerusalem. After the establishment of the State of Israel, he was responsible for the CMJ work on both sides of the city. He and Ursula lived in the Jewish part of the city, where their two daughters were born: Anne in 1954 and Rhoda in 1956.

In 1962, Hugh Jones fell ill and at the request of CMJ to give him the best medical treatment both Hugh and Ursula left for England, leaving the children with a teacher friend in Jerusalem. It turned out to be eight long months. After Hugh Jones' death in England, Ursula returned to Jerusalem, not sure if she would stay with the children and continue her life there. She did so for a year, then in 1965, she and her two daughters left for England, where she was offered a job at CMJ headquarters. She worked here until she retired in 1992, bringing the total number of years for which she worked for CMJ to forty.

### What Happened to the Family of Four?

Ursula and Ruth's father ended up being the only one of the family to stay in Jerusalem after 1948. He continued to live in the new Jewish state, his new homeland, but he never really felt at home. After a few years, he, therefore, returned to Europe, first to Switzerland hoping to publish a book he had written, and later he settled in Wiesbaden again and worked for the U.S. army. He was joined by his wife and later Ruth, their older daughter.

In Germany, Ruth worked for the U.S. air force, using the skills she had

<sup>2</sup> "One day I went alone for a long walk in the Judean Hills near Jerusalem and during that walk I felt God's 'still small Voice' speaking to me and my soul responded" (*Jewish Missionary News* [1949]: 173).

<sup>3</sup> *Jewish Missionary News* (1953): 265.



learned from her work for the British army in Jerusalem. She remained in contact with CMJ, as shown by a short note in the magazine in 1950. Under the heading "Honorary member from Germany," it reads,

We have an honorary member in Norway, now we have much joy in welcoming Miss Ruth Nehab from Wiesbaden. She has been sending us the most lovely postcards for sale. We are hoping to frame these for the Summer School Stall.<sup>4</sup>

While in Germany, Ruth married a Greek; they had met in Jerusalem, where he worked for an oil company. The couple lived shortly in Egypt and from there they moved to the U.S., where they lived in several places before ending up in Canada. After her husband died, Ruth moved to England to be close to her sister.

Of the family of four, Ursula was the only one who returned to live in Israel. She came back to join the work of the organization through which she had met her Messiah. In a short piece in the *Jewish Missionary News*, she writes:

We were very much encouraged when last Sunday we had every seat occupied in our small chapel for the evening service. The attendance at the weekly Bible classes, too, has been very good lately and there are some newcomers. I had the privilege of taking the English Bible Study Group myself last Thursday and we had a very profitable time, notwithstanding the fact that one learns so much oneself in preparing for it.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Jewish Missionary News* (1950): 111.

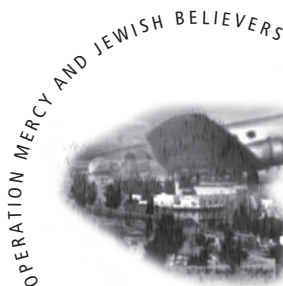
<sup>5</sup> *Jewish Missionary News* (1952): 202.



# H. Z. Weinstock

- An Ardent Zionist Who Left Palestine in May 1948

by Kai Kjær-Hansen



Among the Hebrew Christians who left Palestine in 1948, I have only seen the designation “ardent Zionist” used about H. Z. Weinstock.<sup>1</sup> Whether or not there were more of his kind among the evacuees – even if we omit “ardent” – I dare not say. But I am open to the possibility that *some* of these left the Land with a Zionist point of view.<sup>2</sup>

In this article, I shall give an outline of Weinstock’s life in Palestine up to the middle of May 1948, and an outline of what became of him in England.<sup>3</sup> The main purpose of this article is different, namely to find out why Weinstock, the “ardent Zionist,” left the Land, and also to ascertain if he, due to the troubles he experienced in Palestine, later gave up his Zionist views.<sup>4</sup> It will also be shown how the CMJ representatives changed their view of whether or not the Weinstock family should be evacuated.

But first: Who are we talking about?

## Who Was Weinstock?

There are some brief biographical notes from 1957, in connection with an announcement that Weinstock had resigned from his work as a CMJ missionary in Hull, as he had been accepted as a candidate for ordination and begun his training for this.

1 Used by the Rev. Roger Allison, leader of CMJ in Jaffa in a letter to CMJ’s General Secretary, Rev. C. H. Gill, in London, May 4, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Below in the notes just referred to as “Allison” and “Gill” and correspondingly “Jones” about Rev. Hugh R. A. Jones, the Head of the Mission, residing in Jerusalem. References in the notes below to CMJ’s archive omit “Bodleian Library, Oxford.”

2 I am *not* pleading for a view that the *majority* of the evacuees had a Zionist point of view – including a belief that the establishment of the State of Israel was a fulfilment of prophecies in the Scriptures – but only pointing out that one should not criticize their attitudes without a prior investigation of each individual’s personal conviction, an investigation which has not yet been undertaken, and which is not easy today.

3 Altogether it would be interesting to get an overview of what happened to the other Hebrew Christians who were evacuated. See, e.g., Bodil F. Skjøtt’s article about Ursula Jones in this issue of *Mishkan*.

4 To a large extent, I shall let Weinstock and Roger Allison, the CMJ representative in Jaffa in 1948, speak for themselves.

Mr. Weinstock was brought up a strict Orthodox Jew and first heard of Jesus when a boy in an Orthodox School by secretly reading Klausner's "Jesus of Nazareth." This was regarded a pernicious literature and when discovered the boys who had been reading it were severely punished and the book publicly burnt. At the age of 15, while attending the Orthodox Training College for teachers, he passed a Jerusalem book shop and was attracted by the portions of the New Testament displayed in the window. Eventually he obtained a New Testament which he read for himself although not without some sense of guilt. Ten years later after some distressing personal experience and a miraculous escape from being shot during the "troubles" in Palestine he was brought to faith in Christ, and subsequently joined our mission staff. On coming to this country [= UK] in 1948 he became our missionary in Hull.<sup>5</sup>

More exact information about Weinstock is available in the book that was kept in Christ Church, Jerusalem, listing those who applied for a post with the mission.

Under February 1942, there is a sheet saying that "Haim Zebulon Weinstock" has applied for the job of depot-keeper and evangelist in the Jaffa area, and that he lives in Jerusalem. He has a Palestinian passport, was born on February 27, 1912, baptized on November 26, 1940, in Christ Church, Jerusalem, by the Rev. H. W. L. Martin, and confirmed in CMJ's Jaffa Chapel on April 1, 1941, by the Bishop in Jerusalem. He is married with two daughters, ages four and two – and his application has been approved locally from October 1, 1941.<sup>6</sup>

A later addition in the same book states that Weinstock was granted British naturalization in 1951. In other words, Weinstock was in CMJ's employ from 1941 till sometime in 1957. And in 1948, he was not "new" in the faith.

### **Weinstock in Jaffa 1948**

I am not going to give a proper description of Weinstock as a CMJ missionary in Jaffa from 1941 to 1948; I will just mention that he was first assistant to Hugh Jones until 1946, and when the latter moved to Jerusalem to become Head of the Mission, Weinstock worked together with Roger Allison. About his work as an evangelist and colporteur in 1947, it is said in a report that he has visited thirty colonies.<sup>7</sup> In between there is also time to teach Hebrew at a language school in Jerusalem, in the autumn of

5 "Mr. H. Z. Weinstock," *Jewish Missionary News* (1957): 59–60. The mentioned "troubles" refer to events in the late 1930s. It is interesting that Weinstock's way to faith in Jesus begins with his reading of Klausner's book about Jesus of Nazareth.

6 Cf. *Applications F*, entry F 206, Conrad Schick Library, Christ Church, Jerusalem.

7 Cf. a 1947 report from the work in Jaffa entitled "Changing Scenes," dep. CMJ c. 100.

1947, for example, to the Swedish missionary Greta Andrén, who gives him fine marks: "He is an excellent teacher and, besides, I am pleased with the contact to him."<sup>8</sup>

About the missionary work in Jaffa in the spring of 1948, it is reported in the May issue of CMJ's magazine that Weinstock and the other workers "have been able to carry on the evangelistic work in conditions of a little more freedom and security than previously. They are able to minister to, worship with and visit the Hebrew Christian community and make contact with enquirers."<sup>9</sup>

Nothing in the article indicates that they are planning to evacuate Weinstock; they were not! The sources are crystal clear.

First, as late as April 16, Jones warns against generalizations when it comes to "the present position of the Hebrew-Christian in Palestine and also what his position is likely to be in the future." He writes, "First of all one cannot generalize and at present at any rate the Hebrew-Christian in Jerusalem is in a much more difficult position to say a Hebrew-Christian on the coastal plain." While Jerusalem "is surrounded and besieged" and has problems "of food shortage," this is not the case on the coastal plain, according to Jones.<sup>10</sup>

It should also be noted that when Jones tries to help Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem, whom he does not consider to be in danger, it is not evacuation he has in mind. In the same letter, he writes: ". . . and if I can get a job for Mr. Nussbaum with the International Red Cross who have their Jewish branch in the Hospital [in Jerusalem] they may also remain."<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, in the same letter of April 16, Jones mentions where the CMJ missionaries who have chosen to remain in the country are going to live. That there are no plans of evacuating Weinstock appears from the following:

The Allisons, Miss Brooke and Mr. Weinstock and family will be remaining in Tel-Aviv probably going to live in a house in Sarona<sup>12</sup> as the two flats that we occupy on the border between Jaffa – Tel-Aviv may become too unhealthy, though we shall not abandon these flats unless we can [read: cannot] help it.<sup>13</sup>

8 Greta Andrén to Birger Pernow, Director of the Swedish Israel Mission and Chairman of the International Missionary Council's Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews, August 23, 1947, E Vle: 1, Church of Sweden Archives, Uppsala. The Swedish Sister Greta came to Palestine in May 1946, left the country in March 1948, and returned to Israel in November 1949; cf. *Missionstidning för Israel* (1946): 260; (1948): 134; and (1950): 18–21. Sister Greta was an eager advocate for the "rescue" of her Hebrew Christian friends; *Missionstidning för Israel* (1948): 134–35.

9 *Jewish Missionary News* (1948): 75.

10 Jones to Gill, April 16, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219.

11 This seems to have failed. At any rate, Nussbaum, with his wife and three children, one an infant, appear from available lists to be among those who left the Land on board the *Georgic*.

12 CMJ's Mission House was on the border between Jaffa and the new Tel Aviv. They also had flats in Abu Khadra House in Sarona, then part of northern Tel Aviv, today in central Tel Aviv.

13 Jones to Gill, April 16, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219.



In the same letter, Jones says that “Mr. Weinstock has become a member of the Mishmar,” i.e. the Jewish guard. So as late as mid-April, Jones is aware that the situation in Jerusalem is different from the one on the coastal plain, which raises hopes that Hebrew Christians on the coastal plain may remain in the Land:

We are, therefore, beginning to feel already that the Hebrew-Christians in the Jewish area of Jerusalem are becoming more and more under suspicion. The following illustration I think tends to show the difference in attitude between the attitude on the coastal plain and that in Jerusalem. Early in the present trouble Mr. Newman<sup>14</sup> was asked to help in the Jewish Agency in translating Arabic newspaper as

his contribution to the national service.

Down in Tel-Aviv Mr. Weinstock has become a member of the Mishmar. Quite recently Mr. Newman’s services have been dispensed with on the grounds, we presume, that he is a Christian, whereas Mr. Weinstock is still unmolested. One cannot tell how long the Hebrew-Christian on the coastal plain will not be dis-

criminated against but since there is no food blockade there and the Jews are not in any immediate precarious position it seems that the lot of Hebrew-Christian there may not be difficult provided that he is not regarded with suspicion on some special grounds.<sup>15</sup>

**We are, therefore, beginning to feel already that the Hebrew-Christians in the Jewish area of Jerusalem are becoming more and more under suspicion.**

On April 21, Jones goes to Jaffa in his station car, expecting this to be the last time he can go there before the anticipated troubles between Jews and Arabs break out.<sup>16</sup> In the car are Miss Brooke, who had come up from Jaffa for the weekend, Miss Boyd, who is being transferred from Jerusalem to Rehovot and is to stay with Dr. Lili Simon,<sup>17</sup> and Aviva, Weinstock’s

14 Peter Jacob Emmanuel, who changed his name to Peter Newman, was a Jew from Baghdad, baptized in Jerusalem in 1938, and employed by CMJ; in 1947, he married Miss M. Murphy, a nurse at the Jerusalem Hospital; cf *Application F*, entry F 163 (see note 6 above). Together with two other English nurses, Mrs. Newman left the Land in April 1948. Peter Newman followed them shortly thereafter. In May 1947, he had been kidnapped and interrogated by Jewish extremists; see Kelvin Crombie, *For the Love of Zion* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), 210. Peter Newman’s view of Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel is an obvious topic for further study.

15 Jones to Gill, April 16, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219.

16 Jones to Gill, April 27, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219.

17 Dr. Lili Simon, a Hebrew Christian, had worked as a missionary in Bucharest until 1941, when due to political circumstances she was “evacuated” and moved to Palestine, cf. J. H. Adeney, *The History of CMJ 1908–1958*, unpublished copy in the Conrad Schick Library, Christ Church, Jerusalem, 164–65. Adeney writes: “Dr. Lili Simon took a post in a Jewish School in Rehovot at the invitation of the Jewish Headmaster although he knew she was connected with the Mission. She continued there all through the war years, and made many contacts.” She taught in Hebrew. Dr. Simon is an example that a person



daughter “who had been at Christ Church School in the Hospital premises since January.” Jones arrives at Tel Aviv without the requisite permit to get into town. “So I had to talk at the barrier with Mr. Weinstock and Doctor Simon,” he writes in the same letter.

This conversation changed Jones’ attitude as to whether or not the Weinstock family should be evacuated, which appears from the following words by Jones:

Unfortunately it seems that now in Tel Aviv, as in Jerusalem, the lot of the Hebrew Christian is going to become, at any rate for the immediate future, extremely difficult. Mr. Weinstock was feeling very unhappy about his position vis-a-vis Jewish people, which has changed very much for the worse within the last few weeks and he is getting black looks on every hand. I feel myself that the only thing to do is to get him out of Palestine if possible.<sup>18</sup>

Jones’ letter is dated April 27, and is about his visit to Jaffa on April 21. After April 22, he and the Jaffa staff have no contact with each other,<sup>19</sup> and Jones is ignorant of what has passed in Jaffa. What happened on April 21 before Jones’ arrival, and what happened in the following days?

### **Weinstock in Jaffa – Events from April 21 till mid-May**

Late in the afternoon of April 21, before Jones had arrived in Jaffa, some Jewish “extremists” force their way into the Mission House and “dashed to any windows which overlooked the street,” expecting an Arab taxi filled with explosives. After the actual shooting, Allison recovered, as he writes, “two unexpended rounds of tommy-gun ammunition on my desk, with the Church Cross lying very near, which they had carried with them from the Chapel into the Study.”<sup>20</sup>

On April 23, Weinstock and Allison note “a gang of labourers moving our school furniture from the Cafe opposite our house; we had it stored there since Operation Polly.” In Allison’s words:

We decided to intervene, though (on my part at least) with some trepidation, not knowing to what body these young men might belong! Weinstock and I were met with some surprise, but not without courtesy. But by the time I had fetched an inventory of our stuff from the house, the first load was just about to drive off. We were put to the

connected to the mission could make herself useful for children in the new Zionist state. I have no knowledge of her attitude to Zionism as such.

18 Jones to Gill, April 27, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219.

19 Allison writes: “Since April 22nd we have had no communications from Hugh [Jones] but neither has he, I think, from us: such is the situation in this small country, where in two days one could walk from Jaffa to Jerusalem.” Cf. Allison to Gill, May 6, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219.

20 “Postscript,” Allison to Gill, April 29, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219.

side of the road, while a quiet conference was held, and then without any explanation they drove away. We decided that it was wiser, still not knowing who they were, to return to the house.<sup>21</sup> A quarter of an hour later, we were told that we were all under curfew, and we remained thus for 24 hours. Also we have to submit to a cursory search of the house, during which our Church Telephone was wrenched out of its place and carried off. I am sorry to say that there is still a certain misunderstanding about this telephone (apparently), which places poor Weinstock under suspicion; they still have the keys of the book-room and the yale key of his own flat in their possession; and I am finding it difficult to establish contact with the highest authority, with whom to try to put it all right. It is unpleasant, but we hope that the issue of it will be happy.<sup>22</sup>

Allison ends his "Postscript" with the following words: "I think it would be better for us if the above incident were NOT for publication." More than sixty years later, I suppose it is legitimate to publish it!

### **"We have had a trying week in respect of Weinstock"**

Under the date of May 4, 1948, Allison elaborates on these matters and on what happened in the following days. The section of the letter which is relevant for our purposes is quoted here *in toto*.<sup>23</sup>

We have had a trying week in respect of Weinstock. We had hoped that he would escape the discrimination and suspicion which has been against and upon so many other H.Cs. during the past weeks; but ten days ago, almost immediately after he and I had intervened to try to save some of the school furniture from that un-known gang of labourers, all of us came under the special eye of the local Haganah post; the search of the house followed, the telephone of the Church was wrenched away, we were all under house curfew for 24 hours, so could communicate with no one about anything, and the W. family and Miss Brooke and Miss Lawrence for a further 12 hours.

But whereas the rest of us have apparently been freed from undue suspicion, W. himself remains in that uncomfortable and (as we are quite sure) unjustified position. The tragedy in his case is that he has been a most ardent Zionist and one could not hope to find a more sincere patriot; this treatment has consequently shaken him very bad-

21 That the removal of the mission's furniture, stored in the nearby Cafe, generates insecurity on April 23, is understandable. Later, Allison reports that it was all due to a misunderstanding. The owner of the Cafe had asked to have his *own* furniture moved and had "apparently failed to inform them that our furniture was there as well as his own," cf. Allison to Gill, May 18, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219.

22 "Postscript," Allison to Gill, April 29, 1948, dep. CMJ c. 219.

23 The paragraph breaks are mine; a few obvious misprints have been corrected.



ly, though he is now getting over the first shock. There has been no interrogation of him and no arrest, but things have been said about him and to him, which have distressed both him and his wife. All his keys were at first taken away from him, and his flat keys and those of the Book-room have even now not been returned.

The climax of this silent, subtle show of opposition came when, after having slept with a good friend for about a week during the mortar firing on our border and having with his family returned to his own home during the day to eat and rest (as he could not remain in the house of the friend), they were a few days ago refused even admission to their home and thus left on the streets. We have so far been unable to do much practically to help, as we are not permitted to receive them even temporarily into our flat in Sarona. I have however been busy trying to make contact with the highest authority responsible for this treatment. The Assistant D.C. in T.A. and the D.S.P. of Police (both of them Jews) have been unable to do much to put me in touch, but I am thankful to be able to report that I have met with the kindest and most considerate understanding from the Chief Rabbi here, Dr. Untermann, with whom I have been in touch twice before since he arrived here from Liverpool. He accepts the fact of our little community; he shows sympathy with the awkward position of a converted Jew; he expressed the opinion that, if the opening of the Book-room had anything to do with him, he would have it opened again at once, for, he said, if only more people would read religious books including the Bible, the world would be a much better place. Practically, he asked me to put my request to him in writing, which I did in his home, and he said that he would do his best to transmit it to the H.Q. of the Haganah; though this is hard enough even for him – it is an elusive body! – I should add that, on the whole, I have received nothing but courtesy from the members of the Haganah, especially in the matter of the attempted recovery of the furniture, which they (as it turned out) were removing on other instructions from the Cafe, where our stuff was stored.

But patience could not wait when a family with three small girls was deliberately left to wander in the streets, with their own home perfectly accessible. We are trying to find some suitable alternative accommodation for them in some other village, at any rate temporarily; this will mean expending some of the valued reserve which Jones left with me; but it is impossible for the family to be left in this plight any longer, and we all feel that it would not be right to expect them to go back to the border just at this time, with feelings so high; also, the water supply to the house from Jaffa, uncertain for some months past, is now non-existent, and life is distinctly unhealthy. I hope that even to-day W. may have found two rooms in another village where we hope that he may be able to earn enough to pay for his rent, and

be left in peace by those who wish him ill.<sup>24</sup>

The letter shows that on May 4, Allison does have plans of “evacuating” Weinstock, *not* to England, however, but to a village near Jaffa – and temporarily! From a letter of May 18, however, it seems as if the family has spent some days in the mission’s flat in Sarona,<sup>25</sup> where the Allisons and Miss Brooke had moved on May 26.<sup>26</sup>

In other words, while Jones on April 21 has come to the conclusion that Weinstock should be evacuated, Allison, as late as May 4, is endeavouring to keep the Weinstock family in the Land.

### **Weinstock Is Evacuated to England**

In a letter of May 18, Allison gives the following information about the Weinstock family:

Our biggest resent loss has been that of Mr. W. about whom you may be hearing more soon, if you have not already done so. It was with bitter and almost heart-breaking regret that he was so suddenly made to realise that his sincere Christian work was neither understood nor to be tolerated by certain authorities. More than any Hebrew Christian that I know, he has shown himself a Zionist and most loyal patriot; but, like so many who have a higher vision of the true good of their people and country, he has been “cast out.” I believe it is with real sincerity that he says that, were it not for his family of small children, who had already tasted of unnecessary suffering, he would have much preferred to stay and stick it out.<sup>27</sup>

Weinstock and family came to England *before* June 1, 1948.<sup>28</sup>

### **Weinstock in England**

Whether or not it was difficult to find accommodation for Weinstock, CMJ can announce as early as in the December issue that same year that Weinstock “has at last moved to Hull,” where he already “has been able to hold a Committee meeting to plan how to begin his work there, and the

24 Allison to Gill, May 4, 1948; dep. CMJ c. 219.

25 Allison to Gill, May 18, 1948; dep. CMJ c. 219.

26 Allison to Gill, May 6, 1948; dep. CMJ c. 219.

27 Allison to Gill, May 18, 1948; dep. CMJ c. 219.

28 Cf. Gill to Jones, June 1, 1948; dep. CMJ c. 219, where Gill writes: “Now we have the Weinstocks and Mrs. Markuse from Jaffa. The chief problem is to get any place where a family like Weinstock’s can be taken in at any reasonable figure, and we are still struggling to find a home for the Okos.” Mr. Oko had also been exposed to disagreeable experiences, which made it necessary for the family to stay at the hostel in the Christ Church compound; cf. Jones to D. C. Butcher, CMJ’s Head of Mission in Egypt, March 8, 1948, Conrad Schick Library, Christ Church, Jerusalem. Mrs. Markuse can be added to the list of names of evacuees in May 1948.



clergy are hoping to find a suitable room or small hall where he can hold his meetings."<sup>29</sup> I cannot give a detailed description and evaluation of his work here, but it is a fact that up until 1966 he kept in touch with CMJ.

At St. Aidan's College, Weinstock manages to interest a number of his fellow students in the work of CMJ. "He brought a large party of them over to the Palestine Exhibition at Preston," it is said of him in 1958.<sup>30</sup>

In the beginning of 1960, Weinstock reports to CMJ "that his parish work in Hull leaves him little time for maintaining his Jewish contacts, but he was able to invite 23 Jewish people, including whole families, to a Christmas party."<sup>31</sup> In 1966, he is guest speaker at the Summer School.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from this, I want to draw attention to three matters which should be mentioned because some may see this as "evidence" of how thoroughly assimilated and "churched" Weinstock was, or had become, in England.

#### *Weinstock and the Book of Common Prayer*

Together with Miss M. B. Hall, whom he knew from Palestine, Weinstock has been working on a new translation of the Book of Common Prayer into Hebrew.<sup>33</sup> When this project began, I dare not say, maybe in Palestine. Jones tells in the spring of 1951 about an evaluation of the translation:

Miss Havas,<sup>34</sup> whom I have asked to vet the Hebrew translation made by Weinstock and Miss Hall, has at last returned it to me. She quite frankly says that it is not good Hebrew; it has many mistakes and really is not suitable for publication in its present form. I am very sorry and am afraid this will be a disappointment, particularly to May Hall and Mr. Weinstock. The latter has probably forgotten much of his Hebrew by now.<sup>35</sup>

#### *Weinstock as an Ordained Minister*

In the summer of 1957, the following is announced in CMJ's magazine:

We are delighted to report that His Grace the Archbishop of York

29 *Jewish Missionary News* (1948): 225.

30 *Jewish Missionary News* (1958): 26.

31 *Jewish Missionary News* (1960): 25.

32 *CMJ News* (1966): 15.

33 The Book of Common Prayer was first published in Hebrew in 1837, and used by Bishop Alexander in Jerusalem. See Kai Kjær-Hansen, "Hebrew in the Hebrew Congregation in Jerusalem up to Alexander's Death," *LCJE Helsinki 2003* (Århus, Denmark: Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism, 2003), 237–39.

34 The Finnish missionary Aili Havas came to Palestine in 1932, acquired great expertise in Hebrew, and ran a small children's home in Jerusalem, where she remained in May 1948. See Heikki Nurminen, "Eighty Years of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Israel," *Mishkan* 41 (2004): 63–71.

35 Jones to General Secretary W. A. Curtis in London, April 7, 1951, dep. CMJ c. 220. I cannot take Jones' comment seriously that Weinstock, after two and a half or three years in England, should have forgotten his Hebrew. Was this translation project shelved? What became of it? This might be worth looking into.



has accepted Mr. H.Z. Weinstock as a candidate for Ordination. Mr. Weinstock has already begun his training at St. Aidan's College, Birkhead. This means that for the time being he will have to leave the work in Hull but we have every hope that, on completion of his training, he will return to the Society as an Ordained missionary.

This is yet another answer to those who say Jewish missionary work never does any good.<sup>36</sup>

The last sentence supposedly means that Weinstock has become a light to the nations, like many other Hebrew Christians before him. And did Isaiah not say that Israel should be a light to the nations?

### *Weinstock's Garb*

From 1949 up through the 1950s, Weinstock is a frequent participant in CMJ's Summer School. In 1949, there is a photo of him in a suit and tie.<sup>37</sup> In 1958, there is one of him with a suit and clerical collar.

Engaging in a translation of the Book of Common Prayer into Hebrew, being ordained in the Anglican Church, and wearing a clerical collar at a conference on Jewish mission will surely be seen by some as an expression of total assimilation.

This matter may be discussed in a different context, and undoubtedly, there will be many different opinions about it. But if the discussion is to become a serious one, it is necessary to include the first Jewish/Protestant bishop in Jerusalem in modern times, namely Michael Solomon Alexander (1842–1846),<sup>38</sup> as well as the many "famous" Hebrew Christians who in the past served "the nations" with the gospel.

And here we leave Weinstock, without knowing details of his life hereafter. But we still have to find out if the "ardent Zionist" in Palestine remained a Zionist after the "troubles" he went through in Jaffa in the spring of 1948. There is no doubt where he stands in the summer of 1949. On his stance later on, I cannot comment.

By way of conclusion, and without further comment, I step aside and make room for the speech Weinstock gave at CMJ's Summer School in 1949, as it appeared in CMJ's magazine. The two last paragraphs are of special interest.

## **The Jew and Jesus Christ**

### **Mr. Z. Weinstock**

It is a great pleasure to be at a Summer School. In Jerusalem we used to pray year by year for the success of the Summer School and I wished I could attend. Now I am delighted to be here at this, my Summer

36 "Mr. H.Z. Weinstock," *Jewish Missionary News* (1957): 59.

37 *Jewish Missionary News* (1950): 180.

38 On Bishop Alexander, see Kelvin Crombie, *A Jewish Bishop in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Nicolayson's Ltd, Christ Church, 2006).

School Number One.

I have been asked to speak on "The Jew and Jesus Christ," and the words that come to my mind are from the ninth Chapter of Isaiah, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." Before the soul of the Israelite can receive newness of life by the Cross of Christ, he must be enlightened by the Spirit of God to perceive that Jesus is the Messiah.

**Before the soul of the Israelite can receive newness of life by the Cross of Christ, he must be enlightened by the Spirit of God to perceive that Jesus is the Messiah.**

When addressing a Judean Club in Hull, I put the question "Why don't the Jews believe in Jesus Christ?" Before I had finished asking the question replies were coming from all sides which I summed up as follows: The Jew waits for a Messiah who will save the nation from its enemies and establish a Jewish State. Jesus did not save Israel from the Romans, and died because of His failure to do so. The Jews look upon Jesus as a great teacher and reformer, possibly the greatest in the world, but no more. The Jew is still expecting military salvation, he does not see the spiritual redemption, he is still in darkness.

The Jew is in darkness, too, about the Trinity, about the Messianic content of the Old Testament, about the whole of the New Testament, and so very often even about his own religion. He does not realise that his religion is a manufactured man-made religion, for the Jew has strayed from his own Old Testament and had never come in contact with the New.

Here in England, a so-called Christian country, I was amazed to find that though Jews and Christians are together in the same schools, yet the Jews do not know the content of the New Testament. I always thought that it was only in Palestine that the New Testament was unknown to the Jews. Here, when I visit Jewish families, they say to me, "How dare you bring into this house that New Testament, a book which is so full of anti-Semitism?" a remark which showed me they knew nothing about the New Testament and had not read it for themselves. It was a shock to find them so ignorant of what the New Testament really is. Also here in England I meet Jews who do not know their Old Testament. With the Old Testament a sealed book and the New Testament unknown, how shall they hear about Jesus Christ, and how shall they believe on Him of Whom they have not heard? The answer is to bring the Jew back to the Old Testament, to search the Scriptures, as the Jews did in the time of our Lord. We must teach them first to read and study the Old Testament and show how it has been fulfilled in the New.

In the State of Israel to-day the Jews are learning the Old Testament, for almost every boy and girl studies the Bible in school, and then, when some of them have read the New Testament they have accepted Christ. We do not hear of many public conversions and baptisms, but there are many who have found Jesus Christ in the Bible



and believe on Him.

I wish that our Mission were able to provide a place where Hebrew Christians could find employment, or help to form a Hebrew Christian colony, because public confession causes them to lose their living and so many go “underground” to practise their Christianity. I know of a big group of over 200 who gather together from time to time to read the New Testament and search for the truth. Just before I left was asked to speak to this group of intellectual Jews. It was not a missionary meeting, but a meeting of Jewish seekers. I was able to speak to them about the doctrine of the Trinity.

We are living in a time when prophecies about Israel are being fulfilled in front of us, and for those who have eyes to see, God’s purposes are being made plain. As without Zionist propaganda, the establishment of the State of Israel would not have been achieved today, so without Christian propaganda the turning of Israel to Christ will not be achieved. Soon may the eyes of Jewry be enlightened, that the people who walked in darkness may see the light.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Jewish Missionary News* (1949): 170–72.

# A Quarter of a Century of Messianic Judaism

- Lessons to Be Learned and Expectations for the Future

by **David Sedaca**

THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENT



Modern day Messianic Judaism has now been in existence for over a quarter of a century, and today we can look back at the changes that have taken place since it broke into the religious scene. We can also consider where it stands today and how we can look to the future. In order to make an honest analysis, we must consider the events that have shaped it and the concerns of which we should be aware.

The second half of the twentieth century has witnessed the rise of Messianic Judaism, a movement that has finally found its niche in the religious world. Today, Messianic Judaism is rapidly growing in different parts of the world: Israel, North and South America, Europe, Russia and the former Soviet Union, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Because of its history and the impact of such a movement in the light of biblical interpretation, it cannot be dismissed as an experiment to be tested or a fad to be tried out. Any conscious analysis of Messianic Judaism has to be performed against its own historical and biblical backdrop.

## What Is Messianic Judaism?

Messianic Judaism is the term used to define a form of lifestyle and worship that fully identifies with Jewish customs and traditions while believing that Yeshua (Jesus) of Nazareth is the promised Messiah of the Jewish Scriptures. At the same time, Messianic Judaism holds most emphatically that it is part of the universal body of Messiah, the church, but claims the right to express itself, both in its daily life and worship style, in a way that agrees with its Jewish heritage.

Messianic Jews believe in maintaining a Jewish expression of their faith; therefore, they celebrate all biblical holidays (Passover, Succoth, Shavuot, etc.), which the people of Israel were commanded to observe for all generations. Another characteristic of this movement is its love and support for the nation of Israel. Messianic Jews usually establish congregations for their worship, though there are many cases in which Jewish believers in the Messiah adhere to a Messianic Jewish lifestyle while remaining formally affiliated with traditional churches. These Messianic congregations are fashioned after the early church of the *Brit Hadashah* (New Testament). Mes-

sianic Jewish congregations, which are sometimes called Messianic Jewish synagogues, have certain characteristics: worship on the Sabbath, Davidic music and dance, and many other Jewish traditions consistent with biblical Jewish traditions. It should be noted that, in full agreement with New Testament teachings, membership is open to both Jews and Gentiles.

The Messianic Judaism of today did not develop in a vacuum, but is the logical consequence of a process that began two thousand years ago, when

**The Messianic Judaism of today did not develop in a vacuum, but is the logical consequence of a process that began two thousand years ago, when a young Jewish man began to preach that the messianic hopes proclaimed by the prophets of Israel were fulfilled in him.**

a young Jewish man began to preach that the messianic hopes proclaimed by the prophets of Israel were fulfilled in him. Most scholars agree that this man, Yeshua, lived a lifestyle consistent with first century Judaism. From Jewish records and church historians, we know that even after the first century, when Messianic Jews ceased to be the leaders of the church, there were individual Jews who believed in Jesus.

The Messianic Judaism of today is the latest expression of a process that is over

one hundred years old. The resurgence of this movement can be traced to Great Britain around the year 1850. At that time, there were thousands of Jewish people who converted to Christianity, but the end result of most of these conversions was the loss of Jewish identity. By the middle of the nineteenth century, there were many outstanding Jewish believers in Jesus who began questioning the then-prevailing principle that the corollary of accepting Jesus was the forfeiture of one's Jewish heritage. Contacts in England between these Jewish believers ultimately led to the formation, in 1813, of the first body of believers who recognized both their Jewish ancestry and their faith in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. The name of this association was *Beni Abraham* – Children of Abraham. These Jewish believers in Jesus identified themselves as Hebrew Christians, a term that was commonly used from this point on in the formation of loose fellowships of Jewish believers.

Then came the Holocaust and the destruction of European Jewry. After Judaism was back on its feet again, Jewish believers continued developing their own spiritual quest. Now the center of gravity shifted from Europe to the United States. As a consequence of this, the Hebrew Christian movement began slowly to transform itself into Messianic Judaism as we know it today. In some places, there was a sharp break from the Gentile church, while in others, the process was much smoother. Out of the ashes of the Holocaust and with the founding of the modern State of Israel, a new Jewish identity began to develop and the Hebrew Christian movement was not immune to these changes. The term Hebrew Christian no longer properly defined Jewish believers in Yeshua; therefore, a more adequate form of expressing their Jewish identity and beliefs was found in the term Messianic Jew.

Although there had been congregations of Jewish believers in Jesus since 1928, these were mainly the result of Jewish missions working in the United States, Europe, and Argentina. Other than the Jewishness of their members, there was little difference between these Hebrew Christian churches and traditional evangelical churches. By the early 1970s, the Hebrew Christian Alliance of America became the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America. A new Messianic Jewish identity began to emerge, which included the following emphases:

- Strong identification with Jewish traditions and heritage. They did this by maintaining that their belief in Jesus did not contradict common Jewish practices and seeking to maintain their ties with the Jewish community.
- The right to live as Jews who believe in Jesus without forfeiting their Jewish identity. Many of them claimed the right to immigrate to Israel as full Jews under the Law of Return.
- Although acknowledging being part of the body of Christ, they sought to worship in a way that had more elements of traditional Judaism – elements that were not fully adopted by the previous Hebrew Christian churches. These new congregations chose to identify as Messianic Jewish congregations or Messianic Jewish synagogues.
- The spiritual leaders of these new congregations began to adopt the title “rabbi” or “Messianic rabbi.”
- The worship style began to include more prayers and songs from the traditional Jewish Siddur, and Messianic Jewish Siddurim (prayer books) began to be used.
- Traditional Christian terminology was replaced by Hebrew terms with the same meaning. At least three new Messianic Jewish versions of the Bible came into existence.
- A new genre of music was born, and the term “Davidic praise” was coined to define it. This new music style had traditional Jewish and Israeli melodies, to which lyrics based on the Psalms and about Jesus were added. In addition, dance became a common practice as part of Messianic Jewish worship.

All these elements took root and today characterize the Messianic Jewish movement. What had begun in the United States was adopted by Jewish believers worldwide.

### **Looking Back at What Has Been Accomplished**

Because of its own composition, vision, and nature, the modern-day Messianic Jewish movement is uniquely qualified for Jewish evangelism and for maintaining a Jewish lifestyle. Some of the reasons for this can be found in the following:



- It provides a “non-threatening” environment in which to preach the gospel. Indubitably, it is easier to invite a Jewish person to a Shabbat service at the local Messianic congregation than to a Christian church.
- Since the congregation expresses its beliefs within a Jewish context, for a Jewish visitor the fear of “conversion” seems to disappear.
- Since one of the goals of the Messianic movement is to restore the Jewishness of the gospel, it can teach the gospel from a Jewish standpoint. Messianic congregations are uniquely qualified to present Yeshua as the “Jewish” Messiah. A good example of this is the celebration of the Jewish festivals, such as Passover and Yom Kippur, with a Messianic perspective.
- Messianic Judaism encourages Jewish believers to live a Jewish lifestyle – a lifestyle to be lived daily, not just on Shabbat. As long as this lifestyle is genuine, Jewish people will not fear that Messianic Jewish believers are “missionaries.”
- Different from traditional Jewish missions, whose main goal is to preach the gospel to the Jews, and from traditional churches, who present the gospel from a Gentile perspective, the Messianic Jewish congregation can provide not only the gospel but also the environment where a new Jewish believer can grow spiritually and mature.

### **Concerns and Warning Signs as We Look to the Future**

Considering the Messianic Jewish movement’s tremendous potential for growth, outreach, and evangelism, a few conscious decisions might enable it to become more effective in its evangelistic endeavors. Among these we can mention the following:

- Messianic Jewish congregations need to develop a genuine Messianic Jewish identity. A biblically sound Messianic Jewish congregation must be fully aware of its biblical mandate. The congregation needs to be recognized by its beliefs, not by its worship style. What it believes and stands for needs to be more important than how these beliefs are expressed.
- The Messianic congregation of today is the true heir to the early Jewish church, as such; it must look for and put into practice the same things that made the first century church effective in reaching out to the Jewish people with the gospel.
- The Messianic Jewish movement and its congregations need to prioritize the biblical mandate and its commission. A renewed understanding of passages such as Acts 1:8, Romans 1:16, and Romans 10:4 will give a renewed thrust to Jewish outreach. Although no one can deny the value of maintaining Jewish traditions and expressing support for Israel, the New Covenant gives clear indications of what is important and what is secondary. In the Scriptures, acceptance, political restoration, and security are never given priority over witnessing and the proclamation of the gospel. The Messianic Jewish movement must



make Jewish evangelism an integral part of its vision.

Yet, as with any growing movement, there are concerns that must be pointed out. There are some “red flags” that have appeared within Messianic Judaism, and if Messianic Judaism is to fulfill its role in the kingdom of God, it must confront these issues. Among them I submit to you the following:

**The Messianic Jewish movement must make Jewish evangelism an integral part of its vision.**

- There is a group of Messianic Jewish leaders, whom I deeply respect but with whom I have to disagree, who have embraced a belief that has been broadly defined as “The Wider Hope” or “The unconscious mediation of Yeshua.” By this they mean that Jesus died for the sins of Israel, as part of the covenant and promises made to Israel as a people. Thus, when Jesus died on the cross for the sins of Israel, his redemptive work was total and complete, and the “individual Jew” who is unconscious of the fact that Jesus died for him does not have to consciously accept his atoning death. This solves the problem of the millions of innocent Jews who died in the Holocaust solely because they were part of God’s chosen people. This belief is contrary to what the gospels teach about personal acceptance and confession of faith as it was emphatically proclaimed by the early Jewish church.
- The second worrying sign is that in order to be accepted by the larger Jewish community, in many cases, Messianic Jews have accepted traditional beliefs held by modern-day rabbinical Judaism. Messianic Judaism must accept what is biblical Judaism, but must understand that some rabbinical Jewish traditions that are part of our heritage have nothing to do with biblical Judaism, and, therefore, should neither be emphasized nor imposed on individual Messianic Jews.
- Another concern is the fact that it sometimes seems that Messianic Judaism adheres to a form of “dual covenant” theology. It is undeniable that God chose Israel to be the channel through which he is revealed, first by revealing his moral character through the giving of his laws at Sinai, then by providing a Redeemer for all humankind – Jesus, Israel’s Messiah. But the early believers clearly understood that although there is a plan for Israel and promises that are yet to be fulfilled, today all who put their trust in Jesus are part of his body, the church. This issue was clearly dealt with by the early church in Acts 15 and in the Pauline epistles. It seems that in many cases Messianic Judaism sees itself as separate from the church. It must be emphasized that Jew and Gentile are now one in the body of Messiah, and Messianic Judaism is part – albeit a distinctive part – of that body.

Messianic Judaism is not a fad that will fade away, and the Messianic Jewish congregation is not an experiment to be tested. Today’s Messianic Jewish movement and congregations are God’s appointed tools for the salvation



of the lost and for the development of spiritual Jewish lives. As such, they are uniquely qualified to proclaim the gospel of Yeshua to the Jewish people. The Messianic Jewish movement provides a genuine environment where the message of the Jewish Savior can be safely shared with the Jewish people, and gives its people a legitimate voice to proclaim it. The modern day Messianic Jewish movement is the heir to the first century church. As the first century congregations were effective in proclaiming the Good News of the Messiah, so today's congregations can achieve the same level of success by imitating their forebears' commitment to reaching out to the unsaved.

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# A Fresh Perspective on the Messianic Movement in Israel

- *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*

by **Tim M. Sigler**

THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENT



The Messianic movement in Israel has truly flourished since the time of my first visit to Israel twenty years ago when I took a year to study abroad and serve as a kibbutz volunteer. At that time, there were few well-known indigenous evangelical congregations of Jewish believers in the Land. Today, there are over 120 congregations and home fellowships, about one third of which are Russian speaking. Parts of the country where there were no known believers now have growing fellowships. In fact, nearly every city and town has some Messianic presence. Numerous ministry teams from abroad and from within actively participate in outreaches, and Israelis have opportunities to hear the saving message of Messiah Jesus. The Messianic movement is growing in Israel today.

But growth is often painful, maturity doesn't happen overnight, and youth is a time often marked by learning through trial and error. Since our family is living in Israel for fifteen months during my sabbatical from Moody Bible Institute, I've been asked to share my reflections on the Messianic movement in Israel from a newcomer's perspective, or at least from the perspective of one who has not lived in the Land for quite a long time. While I often go to Israel to host biblical studies tours, I haven't lived in the Land for the past twenty years, and much has changed.

Whenever I read an opinion piece such as this one, I try to discern something of the author's perspective. Since I am a Bible college professor and an elder in a Messianic congregation, my perspective is sure to differ significantly from that of someone coming to the Land from a dissimilar background. A different writer would have entirely different impressions and notice completely different things. And since this is not a research piece but a reflection article, I'm approaching this assignment like I might speak with a student who is asking for academic advice. What is my frank and honest impression of his strengths and weaknesses? Where is growth most needed? What are the concerns that I believe must be addressed if he is to achieve his goals? If my perspective is to be sincere, I'll have to be honest about the good, the bad, and the ugly. I want to celebrate accomplishments and be truthful and prayerful about where improvement is needed. I have the greatest respect for those who have worked so diligently in the Land over the years, and I want to join them in prayer for the future of

God's work here. As I share my perspective, I would invite those who share points of agreement to join me in prayer for Messiah's body in Israel. "O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; Give ear, O God of Jacob!" (Ps 84:8).

### The Good

Upon our arrival in May, we had the privilege of attending a national Shavuot celebration with believers from all over the country. It was amazing to see the hundreds of people coming to fellowship, worship, and share updates on their ministry activities. There were multiple tables with gospel literature, books, and music in Hebrew, Russian, Arabic, and English. The Bible Society in Israel provided free copies of the New Testament and the Psalms. Students from Israel College of the Bible had a booth and provided information about their academic programs. Music teams from around the country shared their recently written original pieces and led a full afternoon of praise and worship.

Throughout the summer we have heard about ministry to prostitutes and drug addicts on the streets of Tel Aviv, beach evangelism, Messianic summer camps and youth retreats, and a variety of things that give evidence of increasing opportunities for unbelievers to hear the gospel and for believers to find fellowship and encouragement in their walk with the Lord. Members from various congregations form the National Evangelism Committee and provide training and opportunities to help Israeli believers share their faith, and leaders network together through a national fellowship of Hebrew-speaking congregations. The now indigenously-operated Israel College of the Bible offers a variety of B.A. programs in biblical studies and related fields, as well as M.A. degrees in counseling and ministry (see [www.israelcollege.com](http://www.israelcollege.com)). Many young adults have participated in a well-established three-month intensive discipleship program called *Lech Lecha* (based upon the Hebrew phrase in Genesis 12:1, where Abraham was instructed to go where the Lord was leading him). Participants, usually immediately following their time of mandatory military service, live in community as they travel the Land and examine God's personal calling on their lives. The Messianic community in Israel is full of opportunities for growth and service.

### The Bad

However, this growth in Messiah's body in Israel is not without its problems. Just as we can find in any developing ministry field, Israeli congregations have their share of power struggles, unresolved personal relationships resulting in a lack of cooperation, doctrinal and stylistic disputes, and competition for funds from foreign groups. Any of us who are involved in leadership must admit that the responsibility for such problems ultimately lies at our own doorsteps. As the leaders go, so the congregations go. When Yeshua evaluated the seven congregations in Asia Minor in the Book of Revelation, he addressed their leaders. When various epistles were writ-

ten to the early believing communities, their leaders were often instructed, counseled, and implored. So today, leaders need to come to agreement about godly biblical solutions to the problems facing Messiah's body in Israel.

Most congregational leaders in Israel lack formal theological and ministry training beyond basic discipleship. While many are educated in other fields of study, few have the equivalent of a bachelor's degree in biblical studies. And while a number of immigrants and expatriates possess advanced theological degrees, I don't know of any Israeli pastor who holds a Master of Divinity degree – the standard ministry degree for pastors in North America. Further, there is little provided in the way of continuing education for Israeli pastors, and sadly, some simply do not see the need for it when it is provided. Some leaders even feel threatened by the thought of a promising young person from their congregation heading off to a Bible school or pursuing theological training. They may return disenchanted with the pastor's ministry or even critical of established practices. And while this is a risk of educating the next generation, it is not the goal. Knowledge can cause people to become arrogant (1 Cor 8:1), but ignorance of scriptural truth has even greater consequences (2 Pet 3:16). This situation is improving, but it will take time before the majority of Israeli pastors have formal theological and ministry training. Thankfully, this lack of training is less of a problem in the larger, more established congregations. Some even encourage students to attend Bible college and assist with educational scholarships. But not all congregations enjoy the privilege of a trained ministry.

In my opinion, this lack of training has left some leaders susceptible to self-styled solutions to ministry problems. When untrained leaders have no one to whom they answer, no ordaining body, no official counsel from a plurality of godly leaders, there is a temptation to become self-willed, autocratic, and divisive when problems arise. But accountability is good for all of us. While God certainly leads individuals to serve him in uncharted territory, his plan ultimately includes group effort, cooperation, and accountability – after all, he is building his own kingdom, not ours. A lack of accountability is a universal problem in the body of Messiah. It has stunted the growth of his saints and stained the reputation of the gospel in every place where leaders do not insist on making themselves accountable to a plurality of godly counselors. For this reason, ministry organizations in North America have joined groups such as the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, which provides accreditation to believing “nonprofit organizations that faithfully demonstrate compliance with established standards for financial accountability, fund-raising and board governance” (see [www.ecfa.org](http://www.ecfa.org)). I pray that there will be such growth in Messiah-like servant leadership among Israeli congregational leaders that they would individually and collectively see the benefit of mutual accountability and the development of principled standards of ministry conduct.

If such needs exist among the leaders, obviously the average believer has even less exposure to gospel-centered, biblically-based solutions to the practical problems of daily life. Again, this is not just a problem in Israel.



Anywhere that believers do not have the Bible's solutions to everyday life issues spelled out to them clearly and emphasized regularly in our preaching and teaching, they attempt to sort out their problems with fleshly, un-biblical responses. The need for basic, gospel-centered life training shows up first at home. Our approach to marriage, communication, child raising and discipline, finances, conflict resolution, and many other issues in daily life are all affected by our awareness of and submission to biblical truth. Believing Israeli families are under tremendous pressure from the messages of a secular society that is much more open to New Age philosophy than to biblical truth – and the home life of the orthodox is certainly not a model to follow. Children are faced with tremendous challenges to their faith in the public schools, the popular culture, and later in the military. And the temptations to find escape from life's pressures often lead young people to experiment with alternatives to their parents' faith – as Qohelet lamented long ago, "There is nothing new under the sun" (Eccl 1:9). We must pray for the children of Israeli believers, that by God's grace they would be protected from life-destroying temptations and grow strong in a personal faith commitment to Messiah Jesus.

When I think pastorally about the spiritual needs in a congregation and the power of biblical instruction and gospel-centered life training, I am grateful for the many tools that are so readily available in the English-speaking world. While there are some wonderful helps that are increasingly available in Hebrew, I pray for more – and that they would be used! Due to the efforts of various discipleship organizations or radio ministries, many believers in North America are familiar with opportunities to grow in their understanding of the Scriptures. For instance, numerous discipleship materials promote daily Bible study, prayer, Scripture memorization, corporate worship, fellowship, and accountability. Youth ministry organizations encourage those approaching adulthood to stand firm in their faith and join gospel-oriented service projects throughout the world. Many have been exposed to biblical instruction on handling money through Crown Financial Ministries or the like. There are countless efforts to provide biblical instruction on marriage and family issues. And ministries such as Ken Sande (see [www.peacemaker.net](http://www.peacemaker.net)) have benefited believers in areas related to biblical conflict resolution and reconciliation. However, resources such as these are not as readily available in Hebrew for pastors to use in discipling and counseling their flocks in Israel. Thankfully, as the Messianic community continues to grow in Israel, many more indigenously created tools are becoming available.

Certainly North American evangelicalism is not providing a good example on every front, but it is the context from which I am coming and the norm by which I am able to relate to life on the ground here in Israel. Sadly, many things imported from abroad have been a hindrance to the growth of Israeli believers and a distraction from biblical priorities. A number of items that have merely been translated into Hebrew have not been properly contextualized for Israeli cultural realities. Paul's advice seems most appropriate here: "Examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is

good; abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess 5:21–22).

As the body grows in Israel, I pray for committed workers with a solid biblical foundation to provide discipleship and life training for Israeli believers – and for an increased number of printed and online tools that leaders can use in their discipleship efforts as they seek to present every believer complete in Messiah. Paul's ministry strategy summary can serve as a model: "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Messiah" (Col 1:28).

## The Ugly

While some challenges to our faith are common no matter where we live, believers in Israel can experience discrimination, harassment, and persecution that would be more expected in a Muslim country than in the Jewish state. Jewish believers worldwide are well aware of the personal cost of following Yeshua in terms of family disappointment and community disapproval, but in Israel Messianic faith can come with an even higher price tag. Believers in Arad, and now also in Beersheva, have endured weekly harassment while entering their places of worship. Terrible lies have been spread on public signs announcing that believers were secretly baptizing Jewish children. Some have even had open demonstrations with hundreds of Orthodox protesters outside their private homes. When police have been called in, the Orthodox have stood in pairs or small groups and claimed to merely be observers and not part of a mob of protesters. Of course, when the police leave, the public harassment continues. One believer has been placed under house arrest because he allegedly retaliated against one of the persecutors. The Orthodox have such strong political control in some areas that many communities refuse to challenge them.

One such case that has received much publicity, but was only recently resolved, is the physical injury and continued official injustice suffered by the family of Ami Ortiz (the young Messianic believer who opened a Purim gift that arrived at his home, only to have the package explode and leave him critically wounded). While the police had in their possession the surveillance video that captured the perpetrator's face, for some reason they did not release his identity nor show interest in bringing this terrorist to justice until he committed other hateful crimes. Of course, none of these facts are intended to engender anger against the State of Israel or the Jewish community at large, but rather should bring us to our knees to pray that God would cause justice to prevail.

Believers are not alone among those who suffer unjustly in this world. And at times, those who claim to be followers of Messiah have been the persecutors rather than the persecuted. In spite of these tragic injustices in Israel, we can follow the example of many who have come before us – giving thanks to our Lord that we are counted worthy to suffer for him, and that we are not the ones inflicting mistreatment on others.

In many ways, the state of the Messianic community in Israel is very much



like the state of Messiah's body anywhere else in the world. The oft-repeated quip of Heinrich Heine proves to be true again and again: "The Jews are just like everybody else – only more so." There is much for which we can praise God as we think about his work in the Land of Israel. And there is much for which we can pray as we ask God to help us excel still more.

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# Messianic Believers in the Israeli Army

by **Daniel Goldstein**

As a student in high school, I remember reading in front of my school on *Yom HaZikaron* (Memorial Day) about a soldier who died while serving in the army. Every year in Israel on *Yom HaZikaron*, air raid sirens blast throughout the country for one minute, marking a time of silent reflection. Each year as I stood there in silence, I was anticipating the day when I would have the privilege of standing in uniform and observing this day. Near the end of high school, the army frequently required me to come in for medical and psychological exams. Soon enough the day came when I had to report to the reception and classification center and join the army.

Very soon after beginning basic training for the combat unit I was designated to be in, I learned that this "privilege and honor" I had been anticipating for so long was more of an obligation. It was going to demand so much, maybe even more than I was willing to give. As the training intensified, it required all my physical and mental strength in order to push through. In the midst of it all, I grew very close to the small group of people I served with and my whole life, at the time, revolved around the army.

My situation was not much different than that of most other Israelis I served with or who serve in similar situations. The only difference is that I was raised in a Jewish family that accepted Y'shua as their Messiah. I, too, believed in Y'shua, and tried to live my life accordingly. The circumstances into which I was "thrown" during the army made this very difficult, if not impossible. Time went by, and without any interaction with other believers, my faith was put on hold. My friends realized there was something a little different about me, but I rarely shared what made me different.

There are also other aspects that affect most soldiers. During their army service, soldiers are exposed to many situations of pressure and risk while partaking in operational activities and combat. Quite a number of soldiers are injured physically and mentally in these situations.<sup>1</sup> This is also the case for some of the believing soldiers who serve in the army, as they suffer during their army service and for years afterward.

According to the director of the Temmy and Albert Latner Israel Cen-

1 A. Bleich and Y. Mellamed, "Post-traumatic Mental Injury Due to Military Service," *Refu'ah U'Mishpat* ("Medicine and Law") 37 (December 2007): 37-44.

ter for Treatment of Psychotrauma, “When discharged, soldiers get money and advice on job interviews, but nobody asks about their emotional state. From the outside, they all look fine. I’m sure that most really are fine, but some suffer in silence. Most discharged soldiers who have problems don’t go for help even if they have all kinds of symptoms.”<sup>2</sup>

Currently, as the body of believers in Y’shua grows in Israel, there are a lot more believers in the army. They struggle through these traumatic situations and also through day-to-day situations that put a strain on their faith. Even just sharing their faith with the people they serve with can come at an immense personal cost, though in many cases it is a great opportunity to show others what Y’shua can mean in a person’s life.

As the number of Israeli believers serving in the army increases, the awareness of their situation has grown, both in the believing community and in society. A few groups of believers have come together and organized week-long programs to prepare youths before they join the army; others lead conferences every few months which serve as places of fellowship and refreshment for soldiers.

A few years back, a number of people in Tel-Aviv began a Bible study for soldiers on Friday mornings. As they return home from the army, they can come and meet together for fellowship, prayer, and Bible study. Today these Bible studies meet twice a month in a small apartment in Tel Aviv.

Even harder sometimes than army service itself is the initial “fall” back into “normal” life after the army. For many it can take years of searching and traveling around the world before they come to grips with who they are and who God is for them.

All these endeavors for the soldiers are good, but they are not enough. More needs to be done to support soldiers who encounter traumatic and “day-to-day” situations that challenge their faith. Hopefully, all these efforts for believing soldiers will be the foundation for a bigger support network. We need other believers, both in Israel and outside of Israel, to be aware that for believers army service is one of the most trying times of their lives. As they serve in the IDF, they need a lot of support – and to know that they are not alone.

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2 Judy Siegel-Itzkovich, “Taking the war out of the soldier,” *Jerusalem Post*, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FSho wFull&cid=1215330943624> (July 2008) [accessed October 8, 2009].

## Response to Richard A. Robinson's Review of *The Rabbi as a Surrogate Priest*

Many thanks to Dr. Richard Robinson for his detailed review of my dissertation, especially his comment that I need to watch my tone. Here he is right. However, in many areas, he misreads and therefore misrepresents my position.

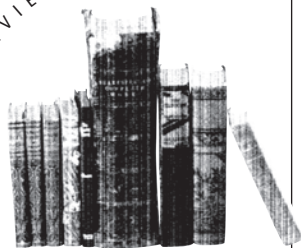
For example, on the question of social location, Robinson states that my Post-Missionary position holds that "[Yeshua-believing] Jews [ought] to find their primary social location among the larger Jewish community rather than in the church,"<sup>1</sup> implying that I advocate distancing from the church. Not so. Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism calls Messianic Jews to recognize their primary social location to be with the Jewish people, both because this is true as a fact of birth and covenantal identity, and also because it is only by embodying this identity that we fulfill our function as a communal link between the church from among the nations and the commonwealth of Israel, honoring our connection to *both*. Similarly, in stating that I distance myself from evangelical exegesis, Robinson wrongly implies that I *repudiate* evangelical exegesis. But as he himself later guesses, this is not so. He states, "I would like to think that his comments are reserved for evangelical theology concerning *Israel*, rather than an overall assessment."<sup>2</sup> Exactly.

I am afraid he draws inaccurate conclusions yet again when he critiques me for not including dispensational commentators among those I examine. This choice was due neither to my disparagement nor neglect of these sources, but rather to the need to select sources relevant to the community where I was doing my dissertation. I chose

1 Richard A. Robinson, "Book Review of *The Rabbi as a Surrogate Priest*," *Mishkan* 60 (2009): 81.

2 *Ibid.*, 83.

BOOK REVIEWS



by **Stuart Dauermann**

precisely those listed in the Fuller Seminary library as faculty-recommended commentaries. Since I was critiquing the kind of evangelicalism epitomized by Fuller Seminary, it was altogether appropriate that I critique commentators the school commends.

Robinson takes issue with my contention (although not original with me, see below) that Messianic Jewish theology begins from a series of presuppositions, including the "affirmation of Israel's enduring covenantal vocation . . . as a central presupposition for all theological reflection."<sup>3</sup> He holds that these presuppositions should rather be termed "principles," because he holds that principles are open to debate, which he applauds, while presuppositions are not. I fail to catch his point: people debate my presuppositions all the time! The very quotation he references, from Mark Kinzer, addresses his objection, stating:

Israel's enduring covenantal vocation and Yeshua's pivotal role in the divine plan are central *presuppositions* of Messianic Jewish theology . . . They function as criteria in assessing the truth-value of other beliefs. Thus, these are beliefs that provide the basic shape of Messianic Jewish theology. If these twin convictions lose their

3 *Ibid.*

centrality and cease to function as presuppositions and criteria of truth-value, the theology in question is no longer *Messianic Jewish* theology.<sup>4</sup>

I recognize that Robinson disagrees with us for holding these to be presuppositions, but is he suggesting that a theology is Messianic Jewish theology simply by being entertained by one or more Messianic Jews?

He also addresses concerns he finds “hidden in a chart in Appendix E,” where I suggest that “just as various evangelical streams tend to focus on different parts of the New Testament canon, so Messianic Jews should focus on Matthew, James, John, Hebrews, Luke and Acts, [while being] ‘sensitive to communal pressures to orient to a Pauline canonical center.’” He suggests that “at an extreme,” this approach leads to “a canon within the canon.”<sup>5</sup> He worries too about my taking issue with commentators who, failing to notice the Jewish communal identity of the recipients of the Letter to the Hebrews, treat them as generic human beings or as Christian individuals of Jewish background.

Robinson worries that I will silence the voice of God in Scripture by neglecting certain books for the Messianic Jewish audience, arguing that regardless of the parties originally addressed, all Scripture is meant to edify all the people of God. I agree. He is worrying about extremes neither characteristic of nor attractive to me. This is his slippery slope, not mine. And, in order for all Scripture to be applied rightly to any segment of the people of God (Robinson’s concern), rightly determining the social location of the original recipients is crucial (my concern), which all the commentators on Hebrews whom I consulted failed to rightly do, with the exception of Charles P. Anderson. Recently, I was pleased as well

4 Page 388, material quoted from unpublished lecture notes by Mark Kinzer.

5 Robinson, 83.

to see that Richard B. Hays concurs, citing Anderson, whose position on these matters caused Hays to reverse his previous supersessionist interpretation of Hebrews.<sup>6</sup>

Hays likewise concurs with Anderson and myself, contra Robinson, that it is solely the cult, rather than Torah *in toto*, which the New Covenant fulfills and replaces. Robinson is right to want to discuss these matters further, but will need to make room at the table for Hays and other authorities cited by him.

On the role of the rabbi as a surrogate priest, and the priesthood of Israel, Robinson complains that in focusing on the rabbi as a priest, I strangely neglect the priestly call of Israel. Aside from the fact that my first three chapters (155 pages) deal with the latter subject, Robinson somehow misses my emphasis that the rabbi is meant to epitomize the priestly call of Israel in microcosm, so that by dealing with the priestly call of the one, one is also dealing with the other. I say this in my first chapter: “As Israel is to the world, so the priests are to Israel: as the priests are to Israel, so Israel is to the world. . . . Seeing matters in this way underscores the importance of priestly leaders (whether priests or rabbis) always being exemplars of the way of life to which the community is called.”<sup>7</sup>

Robinson also misconstrues my position on contextualization. What I critique is not contextualization *per se*, nor the need to take into account the precise nature of the particular Jewish audience being addressed (Robinson’s critique), but rather the naive assumption that the missionary presents “an alleged supracultural pure gospel of a the-

6 See Richard B. Hays, “‘Here We Have No Lasting City’: New Covenantalism in Hebrews” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, Richard Bauckham, et al., ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 151–73, esp. 152.

7 Stuart Dauermann, *The Rabbi as a Surrogate Priest* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 33.



ology of Reformed, or Baptist, or Pentecostal, or Dispensationalist, or other variety . . . repackaged [through contextualization] for Jewish consumption. . . . We view living Jewish lives to be a Divine imperative, not simply a commended lifestyle option or evangelical device” (which is the context from which Robinson drew his objection).<sup>8</sup> Finally, I am dismayed that some might assume I am in agreement with Robinson’s characterization of my account of how the rabbis historically superseded the priesthood, which he terms “power politics and self-arrogation of the roles of the priests” by the rabbis, whom he terms “spin doctors and power politicians who usurped priestly roles.”<sup>9</sup> This is *not* my view. Rather, I see the Pharisees, antecedents of today’s rabbinical establishment, as having spent centuries winning the hearts of Israel through diligent scholarship and service to the community. Like *Chabad* in our day, they won the hearts of Israel by working hard and serving well. We have much to learn from their example.

One of our principles in Hashivenu states, “Maturation requires a humble openness to discovery within the context of firmly held convictions.” Accordingly, I celebrate both the openness and firmness of conviction evident in this interchange of differing views with my good friend, Rich Robinson. Let’s do it again!

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 385.

<sup>9</sup> Robinson, 84.

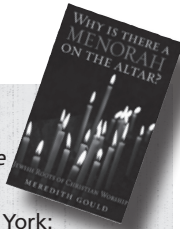
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by **Richard A. Robinson**

Meredith Gould, *Why Is There a Menorah on the Altar? Jewish Roots of Christian Worship*. New York: Seabury Press, 2009, xiii, 162 pp., \$20.00, paper.



An engaging writer and a trained sociologist, Meredith Gould considers herself “a Jew in identity, a Christian in faith, and a Catholic in religious practice” (p. xii). She moves comfortably in both worlds, at home in her Jewishness and, though it came later in life for her, in her Catholicism as well. Two opening chapters on reading Scripture and reading history through Jewish lenses lead into an exploration of worship, baptism, Holy Communion, and confirmation, with Jewish roots and/or parallels explained throughout, as well as her personal experiences.

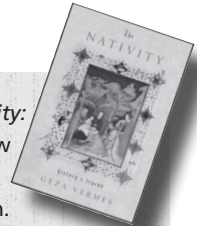
Gould writes with a light and even droll touch. “Reading Genesis,” she advises – with all its messy humanness – “should also help you appreciate the derivative nature of soap operas” (p. 5). Jews are the “People of the Back Story” (p. 19). “I always struggle to resist a powerful urge to kiss the lectionary text [as one kisses the Torah scroll], suspecting that if I did, everyone around me would plotz,” she says (p. 106), not even bothering to define *plotz* for her readers, so easily

does she wear her Jewishness.

Each chapter ends with reflective questions and something called “Try This,” practical suggestions to enhance Christian spiritual life with its Jewish connections (try praying the Liturgy of the Hours or traditional Jewish *berakhot*; why not read the Book of Ruth on Pentecost, as it is read on Shavuot?).

There are some quibbles over Gould’s reading of history, and it is not clear that evangelistic approaches to Jewish people are her cup of tea. But I found the book delightfully written, open, and human. As an entrée into the world of one Jewish Catholic, it will broaden the horizons of any reader.

Geza Vermes, *The Nativity: History and Legend*. New York, Doubleday, 2006, xv, 172 pp., \$17.92, cloth.



Geza Vermes, *The Resurrection: History and Myth*. New York: Doubleday, 2008, xix, 171 pp., \$18.95, cloth.

Geza Vermes is a well-known British Jewish scholar of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and known too for his three volumes on Jesus (*Jesus the Jew; The Religion of Jesus the Jew; Jesus in His Jewish Context*). The present volumes are part of a trilogy that also comprises *The Passion* (not reviewed).

Both volumes are useful primarily to acquaint readers with the views of a leading Jewish scholar. Some would consider the viewpoint of *The Nativity* a bit antiquated by now, as Vermes’ thesis is that Matthew and Luke had theological motives for the gospel infancy narratives and that historicity is *thereby* ruled out. The two gospels stand in contradiction to one another. The book is replete with words like “obviously” (unhistorical, invented). There is no literary



approach offered: the infancy narratives are tacked on, and if they were missing, no one would notice. Arguments for historicity are special pleading.

But Vermes is not only Jewish. To escape anti-Semitism, he was baptized as a non-practicing Catholic with his parents at a young age, subsequently serving as a priest in order to continue his education and finally identifying again as Jewish. A desire to be a freethinker rather than someone who bows to ecclesiastical authority appears to run as a subtext throughout the book. Catholic scholars are in tension between the need to be scholarly and the need to maintain their beliefs. Catholic scholars are forced to equivocate so as to have their cake and eat it too (p. 15), or to abandon certain views in light of Catholic peer pressure (p. 68).

*The Nativity* is nevertheless not polemical in tone. It begins with a personal overview of his and his Catholic wife's experiences, then moves on to the gospels, disposed to see "obvious" contradictions where others do not. There is a great deal of interesting and useful background information (including such matters as the presence of *two* kinds of virginity in ancient Judaism).

*The Resurrection* is not much different. The first section gives a historical overview of the development of the concept of the afterlife and of resurrection from the Old Testament onwards. The second section focuses on the gospels and Acts and particularly on their discrepancies. In the end, Jesus lives on "in the hearts of men" – making Vermes sound very much like a 1960s liberal Protestant pastor!

Skeptics will nod their head in agreement; believers will find alternative explanations. What Vermes brings to the table is the Jewish background and concise summaries of a position held by many, and, of course, a window into his own personal views.

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NEWS FROM THE ISRAELI SCENE



by Knut Høyland

### Riots, Legal Action, and Pie

The continuing struggle for proper recognition of the Messianic movement in Israel is being fought on many fronts: on billboards, in street campaigns, in the media, and also in the legal system. Recent attention given the Messianic community has centered on the courtrooms.

During June 2009, two important court cases involving Messianic believers took place. One was a long awaited trial in Beer Sheva, following the riots at the Nahalat Yeshua congregation on Christmas Eve of 2005. The congregation had planned a special baptismal service on that day. Ultra-orthodox groups in the city had spread a false rumor that busloads of Jewish children were being brought to the congregation to be baptized. Following this, several hundred orthodox rioters gathered around the congregation's building and stormed the premises. Property was destroyed and congregation members were assaulted. Howard Bass, pastor of the congregation, was pushed into the baptismal pool. The violent riot lasted for over three hours, until the police dispersed the crowds. Following this incident, the Beer Sheva congregation filed a lawsuit for damages against the

chief rabbi of Beer Sheva, Yehuda Deri, and the anti-missionary organization Yad L'Achim for instigating the violent riot. Underlying the lawsuit is the struggle that has faced many congregations in Israel, especially in the South in recent years, for the right to gather freely to worship as Jewish believers without being harassed – a right that is already given by law. The case went to court in June, and testimonies were heard by the judge. The case was also brought to public attention through an article in the *Jerusalem Post* and an opinion piece by pastor Howard Bass in the same newspaper, but except for that, the case has received little media attention. The judge in the case acknowledged that a serious incident had occurred, but stated that it was still to be determined whether the defendants had any connection to it. The case was not concluded and is set to continue in November, with a final verdict expected in December.

In another landmark case, the Israeli High Court of Justice ordered the Ashdod Rabbinat to grant *kashrut* certification to a local bakery owned by a Messianic Jew. The bakery, called Pnina Pie, has been run since 2001 by Pnina Comporati. In 2004, the bakery's *kashrut* license was revoked, resulting in a devastating drop in business. After petitioning the Chief Rabbinat Council, she was told she could obtain a *kashrut* certificate only if she hired someone whose *kashrut* could be trusted and who would be on the premises most of the day, and if she handed over the keys to a *kashrut* inspector every night. In 2007, the High Court was petitioned and decided in Comporati's favor, stating, "The only considerations the rabbinat may consider in granting *kashrut* certificates are those directly related to *kashrut*. As long as the applicant's per-





sonal beliefs do not affect the *kashrut* of the food, the rabbinate has no right to discriminate on account of these beliefs.”

Following this decision, according to reports in the orthodox press, Yad L’Achim distributed flyers throughout Ashdod which stated, “The one who guards his soul will refrain from buying any product whatsoever from the place owned by the missionary, whose *kashrut* license was granted as a result of the imposition of a court order on the rabbinate. The *kashrut* in this shop is from the Supreme Court and not from the Chief Rabbinate. . . .” So, despite the legal victory in this case, the struggle continues.

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