

MISHKAN

A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE



Jerusalem

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A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People

“MESSIANIC JEWISH WORSHIP”

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Kol HaYeshua and Other Voices

Editorial

In this issue of *Mishkan* we continue our focus on the Messianic movement in Israel in the years 1948-1998 in order to commemorate the state of Israel's 50 year jubilee. As the story is being told it does indeed give reasons to celebrate.

But there is another event worthy of note. Since the last issue of *Mishkan* the Hebrew Messianic Jewish radio program Kol HaYeshua has been launched in Israel. We want to welcome this initiative to reach even farther with the gospel to Jewish Israelis. In an article published in LCJE Bulletin (November 1998) Joan Cooper from Trans World Radio, which is behind the project, says about the new radio program:

The piercing sound of the shofar introduces a unique radio program with a fascinating history. Kol HaYeshua-Voice of Salvation- launched on 1 August 1998, is a joint effort of Messianic Jews in Israel and European and North American Gentile Christians. Produced in Israel, the daily 30-minute Hebrew program is aired by missionary broadcaster Trans World Radio from a powerful medium wave (AM) transmitter in Central Asia. The signal from this transmitter covers the entire nation of Israel, as well as surrounding areas.

It is the responsibility of Messianic Jewish leaders in Israel to find speakers and others who can follow up on the work in Israel and be advisers and councilors for the listeners who respond to the programs aired. Trans World Radio is responsible for the technical part of the transmissions and will also find sponsors for this new project.

Regarding the history of the project, Cooper explains:

TWR has a rich history of broadcasting to the complex, volatile, yet intriguing, Middle East. The first Hebrew broadcasts went on the air in 1966. There were other efforts on and off through the years, most of them broadcast by shortwave and with little or no response from Israel itself. The last Hebrew shortwave transmissions to Israel were discontinued in March 1996 because independent research had shown a sharply declining use of shortwave receivers, except by Russian — and English-speaking immigrants. Additional research, on the other hand, had revealed that a significant number of Israelis tune in daily to medium wave (AM) radio.

Thus, a year before the shortwave broadcasts would end, Trans World Radio and Messianic groups began exploring ways to work together to produce and air a nightly program on an AM band that would cover the whole country of Israel with a strong signal.

While the Messianic Jews in Israel looked for speakers and follow-up personnel, TWR began modifying the transmitter in Central Asia to reach and cover Israel, and sought sponsorship for the new Hebrew ministry. Three years later — on August 1, 1998 — the result of this joint effort, Kol HaYeshua, broadcasted onto the airwaves. It can be heard across Israel nightly at 10 p.m. (Israeli time) on the frequency 1350 kHz.

Netivyah Bible Instruction Ministry, a Messianic organization in Jerusalem directed by Joseph Shulam, oversees the production of Kol HaYeshua. Speakers for this unique initiative are Messianic Jewish leaders who display a passion to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to fellow Israelis in

a culturally relevant and engaging manner. Various Israeli Messianic Jewish leaders and artists contribute messages and music. Scripts radiate Israeli Jewish culture.

Since the last issue of *Mishkan*, several articles have been printed in Israeli newspapers and magazines both about and against the Messianic believers in the country. Much has changed in Israel in the last 25 years, but the rhetoric of the antimission organizations remains static. Jesus-believing Jews are still being described as “desecrators of the covenant” who “stop at nothing in order to trap innocent Jews in the missions net.” “The method they use to missionize is the distribution of missionary books, journals and articles that are clearly anti-Semitic in content, and that slander religious and Orthodox Jews unceasingly.”¹

One wishes that these voices would prove their accusations. Presently, these accusations are made — especially in parts of the orthodox press — but the accused have no means to defend themselves. However, readers who wish to stay informed but do not have easy access to the Israeli Hebrew press can do so by subscribing to Caspari Center Media Review. It is mailed out regularly and contains — in English translation — the important news clippings from the Israeli press about the Messianic movement and how it is perceived by others, especially in orthodox Israeli society. This media coverage is part of the history of the Jesus-believing community in Israel and has (for better or worse) helped shape its identity and influence its activities.

And here we return to this issue of *Mishkan* and our desire to tell the story of the ups and downs of the Messianic movement in Israel over the last 50 years. “Hope is best made real when the facts are considered fairly and squarely,” Baruch Maoz concludes in his introductory article on “Jewish Christian Paradigms in Israel.” In an open and honest article Baruch Moaz considers the scene of the Messianic (or the Jewish-Christian as he prefers) movement in Israel under different headings, such as paradigms of Christ and the Trinity, doctrine of salvation, the local church and the Church, Israel and eschatology. Sound theological and biblical foundations are required to find a balance between negativism on the one side and unrealistic idealism on the other regarding the young movement in Israel. Maoz’ article aids in the search for that balance.

The two articles by Torleif Elgvin and Torkild Masvie both take a look at worship within the Hebrew-speaking congregations. Masvie addresses the question of the place of liturgy whereas Elgvin’s article analyzes more closely the theology of worship and the songs used by the congregations. Elgvin challenges the Messianic movement by saying: “Messianic worship as well as Messianic theology in general must navigate between the dangers of the Scylla and Charybdis of respectively Jewish and Christian tradition.” In another article Lisa Loden brings an overview of “the new song” intoned by believers in Israel — a song that both she and her husband have vocalized and been instrumental in creating.

Bible translation and distribution are essential parts of mission and congregation building. This has been true also for the work in Israel and this story is told in an article by Ray Pritz. Gershon Nerel concludes his contribution from last issue on “Attempts to Establish a ‘Messianic Jewish Church’ in Israel.” As the article shows, several attempts have been made in our century. The future will record if mere attempts continue or if these come to fruition with leaders and groups forming a Messianic Jewish Church in Israel — with the accompanying advantages and

¹ Ha’Modia, 26 August 1998.

disadvantages.

Lisa Loden has also contributed an article on “The Catholic Jewish Community in Israel.” The story of Jewish believers in the country would be incomplete without this group. Much more could be said about this sizable movement in Israel but if nothing more the article gives an introductory look at Jews who have become Catholics and who continue to value their Jewish heritage and identify themselves as Jews. David Smith, linguistic editor at *Mishkan*, wrote an article outlining 50 years of missionary-national relations. Through a series of quotes from both missionaries and nationals he details the trials and resolutions of that 50-year history and concludes by suggesting several areas in which cooperation needs to increase.

We hope that these articles will clarify our understanding of where the Messianic movement is at right now. Hopefully, they can also initiate critical reflection. Self-contentment does not often create anything new. But self-reflection can help the Messianic movement develop and progress. We are convinced that healthy dialogue and expression of differing opinions within and about the Messianic movement will only increase this reflection.

On 16 August 1998, *Rosh Ecah*, printed a extensive article on “The Jesus cult” — whatever that is. The author of the article, S. Shakhak says, “We are not talking about a passing fad. The first congregations of the Jesus cult in Israel began about 15 years ago and today they are found throughout the country, about 60 congregations of Jesus Believers with approximately 25,000 followers.”

Shakhak is incorrect when he says that the first congregation began about 15 years ago. But he is accurate when proclaiming that it is not a passing fad. And it would be great if he were also right when he postulates that the movement has about 25,000 followers.

In the upcoming issue of *Mishkan* we hope to publish a survey based on interviews with leaders of all the Messianic congregations and house groups known to us. Based on that we will also be in a position to address more precisely the question of numbers. But even now, when more than 25 percent of the groups have been interviewed, it can be said with certainty that it is a myth that the Messianic community includes “approximately 25,000 followers.” Another figure often seen quoted is 6000-7000. Another myth? The survey and the adjoining article on “Facts and Myths about Congregations in Israel” to be published in the last of these three issues of *Mishkan* dedicated to Israel will answer that and related questions.

Kai Kjær-Hansen

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Jewish Christian Paradigms in Israel

Baruch Maoz²

This review of Jewish Christian paradigms in Israel is given against the background of historic Reformed and Protestant assumptions. Value judgments are not so much made as implied by that background. The Jewish Christian movement in Israel and abroad may be fairly characterized by the prevailing consensus. But the reader must take into account that there are radical trends on either side of the consensus, and that the present state of the Israeli Jewish Christian movement is such that radical minorities have a larger than expected influence. Only as the movement matures will the consensus become broad enough to include the majority of Jews who call upon the name of the Lord in spirit and in truth.

Most Jewish Christians in Israel and abroad prefer to be described as “Messianic Jews.” A discussion of this title will be found below. This paper prefers the term “Jewish Christian” for two reasons: 1) the paper is designed to address the assumptions on which the consultation that commissioned this discussion is based, and 2) more importantly, because its author believes it to be more in line with the biblical standards that should govern our terminology much as they should govern anything else we do.

At least this much should be said: the re-emergence of what can become a viable Jewish Christianity astride both the church and the Jewish people may be one of the most important developments in the history of the relations between the two. It may also be a harbinger of the promised saving act of God on behalf of the Jewish people.

It is important to recognize that realities, however stark they may be, are but opportunities for improvement. Under God, they are invitations to work for something better. That is certainly called for by the realities described below. The Jewish Christian movement is very young. Many of its present weaknesses bear the hallmark of its youth and should be seen in that light. Movements for Christ in other nations did not at first evidence any more substantial a standard than does the young Jewish Christian movement. There is room to hope for a great deal more than what follows below.

It would be helpful to place our survey of paradigms in the context of a few cold facts: The number of Jewish Christians, their spouses and children is somewhere between 5000 and 6000, who gather in slightly more than 50 Hebrew-speaking congregations of various descriptions and about 50 house groups. In addition there are 23 Russian-speaking Jewish congregations and seven Amharic-speaking congregations. The latter have a national association and cooperate extensively but the others relate to each other meaningfully only from time to time and by the means of no formal organ. A National Intercongregational Fellowship serves as a context in which some 20

² Baruch Maoz is Pastor of Grace and Truth Christian Assembly, Rishon Letzion. He has written a number of books and historical and theological papers related to the Messianic movement in Israel and elsewhere.

congregations meet from time to time for conversation.

There is also a small community of Jewish Catholics, who have little contact with other Jewish Christians. Their theology is neo-evangelical and moderately Catholic; although most are very committed to their church they are somewhat outside the church's consensus because of their effort to maintain a distinctly Jewish identity (almost exclusively on a personal basis, with few if any significant communal characteristics). The Jewish Christians who form the body of this study are generally very reticent in their relationship to the Catholic Jews on a number of grounds. 1) The issues of the Reformation — soteriology, the canon, the worship of Mary and the use of icons. 2) The issue of communal identity, on which Jewish Christians of all viewpoints, save those of the Catholic, insist. The liturgy, use of monks and priests, icons and the such like all smack of an overtly non-Jewish culture which most Jewish Christians reject. 3) The issue of divided loyalties between the church and the Jewish State. In this respect the guarded attitude of the Catholic Church to the State of Israel has secured the opposition of the majority of Jewish Christians.

There are two Bible colleges, two publishing houses, two conference centers which compete with one another and a nationally-recognized youth work run under the auspices of a congregation in Jerusalem.

Israeli and Diaspora Jewish Christianity — a Brief Comparison

The Israeli Jewish Christian scene differs from that of Jewish Christian believers in the Diaspora on a number of important accounts. Among these are the following:

In spite of exceptions, Israeli Jewish Christianity is relatively confident about its Jewish identity by virtue of the active part it plays in the national life of the Jewish State: serving in the army, sharing in the national struggles, hopes and experiences. The formal organs of Jewish communal life in the Diaspora are generally closed to Jewish Christians, which means that Diaspora Jewish Christianity is relatively less able to participate in national Jewish life, is less secure about its Jewish identity and therefore more aggressive and more radical in its efforts to maintain it.

Israeli Jewish Christians are the majority in the believing community, whereas Diaspora Jewish Christianity has to conduct itself in the context of a gentile-believing majority fortified with historic Christian cultures, established institutions and commonly-accepted mores.

Israeli Jewish Christians have been influenced by the conceptual assertiveness of Diaspora Jewish Christianity while contributing very little in return in terms of theology or methodology. Diaspora Jewish Christians have organized themselves into national entities, established national institutions and engaged in theological and methodological disputes both among themselves and in relation to the larger body of Christ. Israeli Jewish Christians remain divided over organization and have never been able to present a coherent unity. There is among Israeli Jewish Christians an underlying fear of establishment, which has contributed further to the practical fragmentation of the Israeli Jewish Christian community. Efforts to create a meaningful cooperative framework have failed consistently.

Diaspora Jewish Christianity has taken advantage of the opportunities for theological education which the universal church has created, whereas Israeli Jewish Christian churches have

very few ministers who are theologically trained and even fewer who are theologically competent. Consequently, Israeli Jewish Christian churches engage in very little theological reflection, whereas Jewish Christians in the Diaspora have been involved in some such over the years. The paucity of a substantial spiritual literature in Hebrew and a widespread suspicion of spiritual intellectual enterprise have made it even less likely that Israeli Jewish Christians will seek to train themselves. Some improvement in this area has been evidenced in the existence of three centers for theological learning, but native Israeli participation in the curricula is still very low.

A significant Israeli Jewish Christian ecclesiology does not exist, nor do distinct but separate ecclesiologies. Apart from the (increasingly weaker) Lutheran churches and the three Plymouth Brethren congregations, no congregation is like the other.

Israeli Jewish Christians tend to be on the lower end of the economic scale relative to their counterparts in the Diaspora. Their resources are fewer, their monetary independence restricted and their active contribution to society reduced. Part of this is due to the fact that a large majority of Israeli Jewish Christians are immigrants.

Diaspora Jewish Christians in the West exist in free societies where Christianity is respected, whereas Israeli Jewish Christians have to cope with a society that is adverse to the church, and which looks upon Christianity with repugnance. Israeli Christians therefore find themselves without significant social allies while Diaspora Jewish Christians enjoy the active support of various Christian organizations that are motivated either by eschatological expectations, by a sincere love for the Jewish people or by a sense of guilt due to the historical realities just mentioned.

One important feature shared by both Jewish Christianities is that they are in a state of flux. Theological and methodological evolution, consciously premeditated or otherwise, is still taking place. The ultimate character of Jewish Christianity in Israel and abroad has not yet been determined. What is true today may be subject to revision tomorrow and rejected on the following day. Present positions may be modified or radicalized. Void of a sound theological mooring and of solid biblical foundations, both Jewish Christianities could become theological idiosyncrasies, momentary blips on the screen of church history.

Another important feature that most Israeli and Diaspora Jewish Christians share is their adherence to the consensus of Evangelical Protestant doctrinal opinion. It still holds true that where one can find two Jews one can generally find three opinions, but generalizations are the only means by which we are able to survey any scene, including the one before us.

This paper discusses only those paradigms that are pertinent to Israeli Jewish Christianity. No attempt is made beyond the above to compare them with Jewish Christianity as it has been formulated in the Diaspora. Nor does the following survey presume to be exhaustive. These are preliminary findings, based on over 30 years of acquaintance with the Israeli Jewish Christian scene, conversations with leading Jewish and gentile Christians in Israel, and some theological reflection. A more scientific survey of theological and social positions should be undertaken at a later date.

Israeli Jewish Christian Paradigms of Christ and of the Trinity

The Natures of Messiah

The greater majority of Jewish Christians in Israel hold to an orthodox Protestant view of Jesus in terms of both his humanity and his deity. However, it is important to recognize that such a view is generally void of a biblical and theological basis and is not the product of mature, well-informed reflection. Most Jewish Christians were converted through the witness of others who held to orthodox views, and they have imbibed these by way osmosis rather than by a conscious process of reflection. This is also true of many leaders of the churches and house groups, the greater majority of which have had little or no theological education.

In consequence, both the humanity and deity of Christ are poorly defined. In daily life, Jesus' deity tends to be thought of as in some way modified (tending toward a form of Ebionism; lesser than that of the Father although in some sense divine). His humanity is also semi-consciously perceived as dissimilar to that of all mankind, as somehow modified by his deity. In other words, an ill-informed laity instructed by a partially-informed leadership has attained a clear perception of neither the deity nor the humanity of Christ. Israeli Jewish Christians tend to think of Jesus in conflicting terms as wholly and truly both God and man, yet not God in the full sense which the Father enjoys and as more like a super-Man than one of mankind. When pressed, most will affirm an orthodox view which has had little substantial effect on their lives and which has not been thought out theologically.

There is, however, a significant movement within Israeli Jewish Christianity that is more overtly Arian. This group holds to the view that Jesus is more divine than any other of God's creatures, but in no way to be considered "very God of very God," one in essence and equal in glory with the Father. Most of the members of this group have been driven to equivocate on the deity of Christ by their desire to be recognized as Jewish by those in the nation who today hold sway over the definition of who is a Jew — the rabbis.

In the mid-80s a theological discussion was held in connection with the views of a pastor of one of the congregations in Israel. Participants were all theologically trained, at least to some extent. All fully understood the issues at hand: the pastor's reputation on the one hand and a clear statement for the divinity of Christ on the other. Following strenuous maneuvering, a joint statement was issued in which the deity of Christ was unequivocally declared — and then promptly ignored in the everyday life of the congregation in question.

All Jewish Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah promised Israel in the Old Testament, the eschatological figure through whom God is yet to establish his kingdom on earth.

The Trinity

As stated above, the doctrine of the Trinity is maintained by most Israeli Jewish Christians in spite of the modified view of the deity of Christ that is prevalent among the majority. Arguments from the Old Testament in defence of the Trinity are often to be heard from evangelists on the streets. Literature defining and defending the doctrine is used for evangelistic purposes. However, few sermons are heard on the topic from Israeli Jewish Christian pulpits and few prayers are offered in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The doctrine is held in limbo, with little

reflection on its implications for the doctrine of salvation, for worship or for Christian living. All that needs to be said is that there is a Trinity. No more apparently can be said. Having stated the bare fact, most Israeli Jewish Christians seem to be satisfied. Worship is seldom trinitarian; the Father is almost wholly eclipsed in salvation, and the Son in daily practice.

A certain segment within the Israeli church holds to the doctrine of the Trinity but is embarrassed by it and never teaches the doctrine in its congregations. Another part of the church prefers to be perceived by overseas Christians as maintaining the doctrine of the Trinity but surreptitiously holds to a thoroughly Arian view. Because doctrinal issues tend to be thought of as minor matters for the academically-inclined, few maintain a clear stand on the doctrinal issues which distinguish — or unite — them.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is recognized by most Israeli Jewish Christians as one of the three persons of the Trinity. The so-called “Jesus Only” group has made inroads into Israel and some modern Charismatic influences have tended to blur perception of the personality of the Spirit, according to which he is often spoken of in impersonal terms. But few in Israel would consciously deny his personality.

The greater majority of Israeli Jewish Christians operate on consistently Charismatic assumptions. Guidance is a mystical experience, frequent public prayer is made for the sick and the miraculous is expected at every turn. Tongues speaking is common in many congregations, and prophetic utterances are often alleged.

The work of the Holy Spirit is separated from salvation to the extent that few accord him any special role in the application of the saving work of Christ to the elect. Faith is intellectual and volitional assent, following which one is regenerated. Obedience means following the movings of one’s spirit in one’s heart rather than in subservience to a written code — not even that code found in the Bible. The work of the Spirit is thought to supplement where the Bible has completed its task.

Israeli Jewish Christian Paradigms of the Doctrine of Salvation

Sin and the Corruption of Sin

Most Israeli Jewish Christians adhere to an outline of the doctrine of sin and salvation which maintains that man was created without sin but with the ability to sin. God unilaterally granted man both liberties and limitations. Mankind disobeyed by eating the forbidden fruit and thereby incurred God’s just anger. God sent Adam and Eve out of the garden, cursed the material world because of him and made them subject to illness and death. Due to the sin of Adam all mankind is constituted guilty, of which guilt man may be relieved only through faith in the sacrifice of Christ.

Sin is perceived of primarily in terms of deeds done rather than as a state of nature. It seems to have effected primarily man’s intellectual capacities and his inclination to evil, leaving most of his emotional capacities intact. His will to do good has been weakened, but man is thought of as truly free to choose between good and evil, God and Satan, heaven and hell.

Faith

Faith is the exercise of man's free will in relation to God and to the Gospel. It is the product of religious, moral, intellectual or emotional persuasion and is man's sole necessary act of obedience — he must believe to be saved. It is the fruit of man's decision to believe. All humans are negatively influenced by the sinful environment in which they are born and by a tendency to sin which has been inherited from Adam. Both this influence and this tendency may be overcome by man's free will when he chooses to believe, and are sometimes (but very seldom) overcome by God in the case of chosen individuals. Regeneration strengthens man's will toward the good and toward God, but it cannot affect a man's nature so as to ensure that he will not eventually fall away. Only continued faith as primarily expressed in terms of an intellectual assent can secure man's salvation.

Salvation

Salvation is relief from guilt before God and enjoyment of the consequent promise of eternal life, including joy and good health on earth.

In other words, salvation is perceived of in Arminian, even Pelagian, terms. There is little consideration of the corruption of man's nature by sin and of his bondage to sin. Sin is believed to have created a surmountable tendency, no more, and to have affected man's intellect more than his emotions. His free will has been left intact. Salvation is perceived of as the product of God's gracious response to a human choice. The implications of the new birth in relation to the power of sin in man's life are seldom considered.

The justice of God's anger toward sin is sparsely considered, as is man's obligation toward God. More often than not, all that is considered necessary for salvation is a recognition of the Messiahship of Jesus or a willingness to "ask Jesus into one's heart." There is scant emphasis on a recognition of sin or repentance. The motivation for recognizing Jesus' Messiahship is often a desire to fill a sense of void in one's life. Jesus is portrayed as the Great Satisfier whose main purpose is to make men and women happy, at peace with themselves and the world.

God's Role in Man's Salvation

In other words, the Gospel presented is essentially anthropocentric. It has the presumed welfare of man closer to heart than the glory of God. While God plays an important part in such a salvation by providing the necessary atoning sacrifice, man alone determines whether or not he will be saved. God is thought of as very much hoping for the salvation of all, or at least as many as possible. Indeed, he is believed to have provided means intended for the salvation of all, but those means' effectiveness is restricted by the (self-imposed?) limitations spelled out by the free will of man.

Salvation itself is therefore not thought of as an act of God, only the provision for it. Grace is described as the kind act through which God made that provision available to all who will choose to believe. The radical transformation of human nature, the release from the power of sin no less than from its guilt, are not substantially considered, nor are their implications for Christian living worked out.

The death of Christ is considered as having achieved no more than the establishing of the

grounds for the possible salvation of as many as will choose to believe. God's sovereign grace and his immutability are not seen as relevant to the issue of the intended goal of Christ's death.

Israeli Jewish Christian Paradigms of the Doctrine of Scripture

Jewish Christians are evangelical, almost fundamentalist, in their theoretical view of the Bible. They assent to the doctrines that teach that the Bible is God's word written, and that it has a full and exclusive authority over their faith and practice. They affirm that the Bible should be preached in their congregations and that no other source of truth may be accepted as equally or semi-equally authoritative. The Church's creeds and historic documents are, at best, seen to be no more than faithful expressions of the way the (gentile) church defined its faith.

The Bible is professedly the supreme authority, but this verbal profession receives little practical recognition in the lives of most Israeli Jewish Christians. The Bible is read erratically, with little systematic attention. Scriptural texts are quoted out of context, a practice which substantially negates the objective authority of the Bible and transforms the scriptures into a fluid proclamation which may be fitted to any preference. The Bible's objective authority is only partially recognized in practical terms.

Issues of conduct and relationships are largely directed by psychological insights or what is known as the leading of the Spirit. Fundamental scriptural doctrine is seldom if ever a matter for discussion, let alone discipline. Issues such as when a congregation should meet and what it should do in the course of its services are decided by consensus rather by an investigation of the scriptures or other objective grounds. The Bible is avidly read and sincerely loved, but seldom studied systematically. The preferred type of literature is such that describes experiences of the divine rather than expounds doctrine or exegetes scripture. Theology is viewed as an empty intellectual exercise which the truly spiritual avoid. Preaching necessarily partakes of the same nature. It is hortatory, exhortative but only meagrely instructive. There is little of what the Puritans used to call "a searching ministry" and the desired result is a sense of exultant peace rather than a sense of sin and of the wonder of God's loving sinners.

Israeli Jewish Christian Paradigms of the Doctrine of the Christian Life

From the above description of the average Israeli Jewish-Christian's practical view of sin, salvation and the scriptures, it is obvious that Mr. Average Israeli Jewish Christian's view of the Christian life is subjective and, as we have said, anthropocentric, orientated to felt needs more than to any standards which stand over him.

Spirituality is described by the use of biblical terminology in terms of "knowing" and "loving" God. But the semantics have been emptied of their biblical content and are perceived largely in terms of a general feeling of well-being ("peace," or "peace in one's spirit"). Knowing and loving truths about God, worshiping, loving and obeying the God who is both present and active by his Spirit through those truths, is looked upon as vacuous. Studying the Bible in an effort to discover its objective content is described as focusing on "the letter" of the scripture instead of its "spirit." Hearing the voice of God in the scriptures has little to do with biblical semantics, historical context and literary genre. It is more a matter of what a text seems to be

“saying” to the reader at any given moment. Guidance, a prominent goal of Bible study among many Israeli Jewish Christians, is not an effort to discover in the scriptures moral and ethical principles but an experience in which one “hears” the voice of the Spirit and thereby gains access to direct revelation as to the course he or she should take.

Holiness, in terms of the moral attributes of humility, kindness, goodness, patience, day-to-day honesty, self discipline and the such like, is supplanted by a mystical form of devotedness to God. In such a context, prayer becomes a means by which man can move God, exercise spiritual power, engage and overcome evil spirits, rather than an act of humble love and submission to the Creator.

Courage — social, moral and physical — is neither sought nor cultivated. Instead, many Israeli Jewish congregations are taken up with the pursuit of emotional healing, physical well-being and numerical success, or of a form of bravado. Self-examination is perceived as a morbid form of introversion. Self-denial has more to do with fasting or not watching television than with spiritually-motivated moral sacrifice or a struggle with the inherent spiritual indolence that sin has implanted in the human nature. Fiscal responsibility, familial generosity and societal rectitude are considered to be side-issues from which the truly spiritual may even be excused. Individuals neglect these things “in order to serve the Lord” and political involvement is often spoken of in terms of “the arm of flesh.”

Evangelism is considered to be the duty of every Christian and is actively undertaken by most within their circle of friends and casual acquaintances. Jewish Christians in Israel are not ashamed to be known as such and are eager to use every opportunity to tell others of their faith. But they participate only in a limited degree in the evangelistic outreaches organized, for example, by the National Evangelistic Committee.

There are at least two important and welcome expressions of social responsibility: 1) the Ba’ad Chaim pro-life association in which many Israeli Jewish Christians are involved both as employed and on a volunteer basis; 2) the Beit Nitsachon Drug Abusers’ center, where drug abusers are helped through the various stages of release from their addictions and rehabilitated.

Another area in which political interest is to be found has to do with the current internal controversy of land versus peace. The political views of a majority of Jewish Christians in Israel are informed by eschatological expectations. These lead to the conclusion that all of the land now under Israeli control and a great deal more, which is yet to come under such, is a gift of God. Territorial concessions would therefore be a violation of God’s will and purposes. In most cases, this firm view does not lead to political activism, and is mellowed by a desire to relate to the perceived plight of the Palestinians. Fewer Israeli Jewish Christians belong to the more extreme right than to the left of the political map in the country.

Israeli Jewish Christian Paradigms of the Doctrine of the Local Church

Structure

There is no consensus among Israeli Jewish Christian congregations as to what should be the proper structure or structures of the local church. Apart from the three evangelical Lutheran congregations in the country, all Israeli Jewish Christian congregations practice adult baptism by immersion. All outside the Lutheran connection practice a form of local church autonomy in

which there is no room for formal, binding connections between churches. Each congregation is deemed to have both the right and the duty to maintain its autonomy. The unity of the Body is warmly affirmed on many occasions. But little practical expression is given to that unity in the day-to-day life of the congregations.

Congregations are generally not established on confessional grounds. They are the product of one or two individuals' initiative, who later become by default the congregation's leadership. The success of the initiative often depends on the character of the initiator(s) and is largely determined and dependent upon it. I know of but one case in which a church was founded following confessional discussion or on a confessional basis (again, excepting the Lutherans).

But confessional grounds — often assumed, unwritten and unacknowledged — of necessity soon become the basis for congregational existence and function. This confessional basis is provided by the consensus of opinion among the leadership, usually in matters relating to one's view of the Charismata or the measure of Jewish practice (or Rabbinical authority) to which the congregations should adhere. Not a few of the congregations were founded following a schism between leaders in matters of personality or secondary praxis and their sole point of existence has to do with that (sometimes long-forgotten) personal conflict.

Services are held in most cases on Saturday, in some cases on Friday evening. A number of congregations have but one major meeting on a weekday. Services are held at regular hours and in regular locations, with worship in song and prayer, followed by preaching.

Few are registered as legal entities and in many cases the congregational accounts are run through private bank accounts, with no audit, no receipting and only superficial accounting. Many are now meeting in their own properties or in locations rented or otherwise made available to them.

Leadership

Leadership is charismatic in the sense that the leaders speak in some way for God by means other than the doctrinal and exegetical exposition of scripture. Its decisions are therefore not transparent and only in a limited sense subject to the scrutiny of the congregation. As we have seen, the leaders in fact form the practical confessional basis of the congregations. They speak for God. For these reasons, many Israeli Jewish Christian churches are, in every practical sense, composed of the leadership and those closest to them, while the rest of the congregation are adherents and supporters. By way of contrast, most congregational participants do not relate to congregational leaders in fear but with real affection.

Many of those who exert congregational oversight among Jewish Christians in Israel prefer to be described as "leaders." They eschew terms such as "Pastor" and "Elder" — even "Deacon" — because these have been traditionally used by the church, although there is a recent but growing tendency to adopt at least the latter two of these terms. In the larger congregations, there is often a plurality of leadership — in effect, an Eldership — led by one prominent member of the leadership — in effect, the Pastor — in which all Elders have the same formal authority but the moral authority of one exceeds that of the others.

In some prominent cases there is a strong tendency toward autocratic leadership. In others, the lack of a strong leader and the inability of equals to work together meaningfully has left

congregations rudderless, void of a sense of direction and of purpose. And yet, a new style of leadership is emerging, in which men called to their tasks are allowed to remain in them by virtue of their leadership qualities and the willing assent of the congregation. It remains to be seen whether this will become the norm, and whether the qualities sought in potential leaders will be of the kind which the Bible calls for: humility, spirituality, devotion to the people, proven ability in the Bible, kindness, patience and an ability to sacrifice.

Church Life

Most matters of church life are referred to the Elders, who collect the contributions and make use of the finances as best they see fit. The Elders decide who will preach, what shall be preached, who is to be disciplined and how, who shall teach the young, if the church should hold a picnic or an excursion. Congregational business meetings, when held, have nothing to do with preparing a budget, for example. They are largely an opportunity for the leadership to explain their plans and for the congregation to ratify the leadership's recommendations.

While few, still a growing number of congregational leaders have had the benefit of theological education or of a solid church background upon which to draw. Many are relatively new Christians. They lead congregations or house fellowships composed of individuals who themselves have had no previous church background. This is why very little attention is given to the systematic or historical teaching of scripture, even less to its historical, literary and grammatical nature. The leaders are ill-equipped to treat scripture in that way and are forced to establish their leadership on the subjective grounds of human personality rather than their prowess with the word of God. By way of compensation, alongside the authority of Bible another authority is recognized — that of the Spirit.

Doctrinal and expository preaching is rare in Israeli Jewish Christian congregations, as is also any systematic instruction (except that of children). Much preaching is based on choices "given by the Spirit" and with no apparent relation to sermons that precede or follow. Preferred private reading focuses on the experiences of other Christians rather than issues of doctrine, biblical backgrounds, biblical semantics, theology, ethics, philosophy or history. The discipleship of the mind is neglected while emotional and subjective experiences are considered paramount measures of the reality and warmth of an individual's spirituality (see the paragraph on the Christian Life).

Churches function with little regard to the scriptures in terms of how they should be structured or administered and what role they should play in the lives of individual believers. Doctrinal positions are maintained or modified solely on the basis of how true they "ring" or on the witness of the Spirit. Little thought is given to the preparation of the next generation of leaders. Talented, perhaps educated, young men either become wholly subservient to the existing leadership of their congregations or are forced out to form their own.

Smaller congregations are structured ad hoc. They tend to meet in homes and their services tend to be less structured than those of the larger bodies. As much is true of their corporate lives. There is no accepted practical or formal standard by which to distinguish between churches and proto-churches or house-groups.

The level of involvement in the life of the congregations and of personal commitment to evangelism and to the furthering of the congregations' interests is high. Although seldom

translated into financial sacrifice, there is a great deal of involvement in congregational activities and in the labors of the congregations.

The Sacraments

In the majority of Israeli Jewish Christian congregations, baptism is administered, as indicated previously, by immersion to consenting adults upon a credible profession of faith. Communion is practiced once a month in most congregations. (The Brethren practice a weekly communion. A number of other churches have begun experimenting with a weekly communion, but most of these tend to replace preaching with a form of sacramentalism.) In a manner that is common in the free churches of the West, generally there is no “hedging” of the table. All who consider themselves converted and who have been baptized may partake.

Congregational membership is a matter of attendance. If one puts in a regular attendance, sooner or later one is treated as a member. Individuals disappear from one congregation and appear in another with practically no communication between the leaderships involved. Nor must attendance be frequent. Some do not attend the churches to which they “belong” for weeks or even months on end. Seldom is any sense of obligation and meaningful concern evident on the part of the churches to which they now belong, or belonged in the past.

Discipline

Congregational discipline is generally left in the hands the leadership. Discipline is rarely exercised and then only in the face of flagrant moral aberrations. Doctrinal issues have never been the cause of discipline in a modern Israeli congregation. When an individual is disciplined in one congregation, he can always find another that will be glad to have him, thus rendering congregational discipline largely ineffective. I am not aware of any disciplinary measures taken in Israeli congregations short of excommunication, and only of four cases of the latter measure being applied over the last 25 years.

Evangelism

Evangelism is considered to be a congregational duty. But most of it is conducted within the congregation itself, when services are attended by non-Christians, who are thereby exposed to the life of the congregations and to their witness.

Israeli Jewish Christian Paradigms of how They View Themselves

The History

The extent to which most Jewish Christians anywhere view themselves as both Jews and Christians has been influenced by historical realities. Probably the only sphere in which there has been historic agreement between church and synagogue apart from their shared theism, has to do with Jewish Christians. Normative Judaism has insisted for almost 2000 years that Jews who believe in Jesus are no longer Jewish. The church has reinforced this view by its insistence that Jews who profess faith in Christ renounce their Jewishness, eschew Jewish custom and seek non-Jewish spouses, eating pork in public, feasting on the day of Atonement and so on.

In the early beginnings, all the followers of Jesus were Jewish. The spread of the faith concerning Jesus among gentiles took them by surprise (Acts 11:18) and, in its first stages, unprepared (Acts 11:1-3). Strong views were put forward, demanding that all such gentiles convert to Judaism (Acts 15:5) and become part of the Jewish nation. Otherwise, their participation in the benefits of Christ's work was open to question (Acts 15:1). It was inconceivable that non-Jews should have a living faith in the Jewish Messiah without joining the covenant people of God. Gentiles tended to view faith in Jesus in the same light. Believers in Jesus were simply adherents of a sect within Judaism (Acts 18:15).

Within a short space of time, the world was turned on its head and the faith of Jesus became a predominantly gentile phenomenon. Every possible means was used to make the difference between the faith of the church and Judaism as obvious as possible. For example, it became a crucial point of doctrine not to celebrate the resurrection of Christ according to the lunar (i.e. Jewish) calendar. In the course of time, Jews who believed in Jesus had to prove the sincerity of their faith by rejecting everything that Jews hold dear and assuming much that they abhor.

The Present Scene

The modern Messianic Movement among contemporary Jewish followers of Jesus is a reactionary position. It is a radical attempt to set back the clock and to make it as clear as possible that faith in Jesus does not involve a rejection of one's Jewish identity, but is an embrace thereof. To that end, Jewish Christians have sought to create a new terminology, untainted by the non-Jewish characteristics which the church had created over the years: "Yeshua" instead of "Jesus," "completed" instead of "converted," "leader" instead of "pastor" and so on. Most prominent of these is the preferred term "Messianic" instead of "Christian." Elements of Jewish liturgy have been incorporated to varying degrees into the worship of Messianic congregations. The traditional Christian calendar has been replaced by the Jewish and Christian "holy days" have been replaced by biblical and traditionally Jewish festivals. An extreme example of this is the "Jewish New Testament" published by David Stern, which seeks to translate the New Testament in light of early and late traditional Judaism.

There have been more radical attempts to make visible the Jewish nationality of local congregations by playing down or by an outright denial of the doctrine of the Trinity, especially the deity of Christ, wearing traditional Jewish skull caps and assuming other external trappings of normative Judaism.

There had been similar phenomena, particularly in eastern Europe just prior to the Second World War. But the Messianic Movement really came to the fore in the USA during the 60's and 70's of the present century. The results are most obvious in the second generation of Messianic Jews in the USA who have grown up in these "synagogues." Some of the more radical approaches have been abandoned. Still, many second generation Messianic Jews have little practical commitment to the larger body of Christ. They are largely ignorant of its history of struggles, achievements and aspirations (though not of its failures), do not know its hymnody, are divorced from its missionary aspirations, share little if anything in its present labors, are uncomfortable with its language and share little in its activities — many are even organized in separate denominations. Support, moral and financial, from "the gentile church" is welcomed and

even expected but this is largely a unidirectional relationship.

There are exceptional cases and the trend back toward the universal Church is slowly gaining momentum, but the general rule is described above.

Efforts are made by most Israeli Jewish Christians to find acceptance with their own (Jewish) people. Some of their efforts betray an underlying insecurity that does little to commend them to the general Jewish populace or help their promoters find acceptance. In many cases — especially in the Diaspora — those most active in the Messianic movement were born in mixed Jewish-gentile families or whose Jewishness is otherwise open to question, or who have married non-Jewish spouses. Jewish practices are often contorted by those who labor to prove their Jewishness due to an ignorance of their meaning or traditional observance. For example, some Messianic synagogues hold a Friday evening service where Sabbath candles are lit by one or another of the female members of the congregation. Nothing could be less Jewish! The lighting of the candles takes place in homes, not in synagogues, and women are never allowed to officiate in traditional Jewish public ceremonies.

Israeli Jewish Christian attitudes toward their Jewish identity have been influenced by those of the Jewish Christians in the North American Diaspora more than by any other factor. They are only the result of an interchange with their own environment, which has served to modify certain trends without creating new ones.

Israeli Jewish Christian Paradigms of the Church, of Israel and of Eschatology

The Universal Church

While there is little practical commitment to the larger Body of Christ, there is a sincere recognition of the unity of that Body and a general awareness of belonging to it. Theologically, all Messianic Jews recognize that they belong to the Body of Christ universal and that their fate is intimately bound up with it. But there is among Israeli Jewish Christians an almost total rejection of its history, of its denominations and of its creeds, even as merely formal documents which have secondary authority.

Cooperation among Messianic Congregations in Israel

Few Israeli Jewish Christian congregations are members of the United Christian Council in Israel, which is perceived by most local believers as representing the interests and concerns of expatriot evangelical bodies in the country. The UCCI is trying to rid itself of that image but has so far not won over the hearts and confidence of most local believers. While there are clusters of churches that cooperate in certain areas with one another (the Brethren, the Reformed, the Charismatic), none but the Lutheran have created formal contexts for that cooperation. The widest national gathering is that organized under the National Intercongregational Fellowship of Hebrew Speaking Congregations. This loose fellowship convenes 2-4 times a year for worship, study and conversation. It has no authority beyond the organization of conferences. Through this fellowship, a National Evangelistic Committee was set up with limited authority in order to promote evangelism. The Committee has since become a practically autonomous body. It appoints its own membership, elects its own leadership, decides upon its own activity and renders but scant

account to the National Conference.

A necessary qualification for participation in the conferences is that one is sent by a local Hebrew-speaking congregation, effectively ruling out the Arab, Russian and English-speaking congregations in the country. Thus, while the conference serves as a means of expressing some measure of unity among Hebrew-speaking Christians, it also serves as a de facto partition between Jewish and non-Jewish congregations. It also unintentionally serves to isolate the Amharic- and Russian-speaking congregations — although there has recently been some attendance on the part of Amharic-speaking Jewish Christians (contrary to the Conference's original stance and with no public discussion or approval of this change).

Gentile Christians are welcomed into Jewish Christian congregations and more often than not treated as equals. In some cases they will be forbidden leadership or denied translation of the services. (Translation is a common feature of Israeli congregational life.) In extreme cases they may be encouraged to convert to Judaism in order to become Jewish Christians.

Non-Jewish Christians in Israel who worship in Messianic Congregations tend to assume Jewish cultural patterns and to become critical of "Christianity." Few (four, by my count) Israeli Jewish Christians have taken an active role in the church's world-wide missionary task. None have done so as emissaries of Israeli congregations. In one case, a church resisted one of its members' intentions to engage in overseas missionary work with such conviction that his family felt obliged to worship elsewhere. I know of only one congregation in Israel that habitually prays for churches overseas and for the world-wide spread of the gospel, and which contributes to that endeavor financially.

The Israeli Jewish Christian church is insular and introspective. Its imagination has not yet been fired by the greater scope of Messiah's kingdom. It is probably also impacted to no small extent by the chiliastic assumptions which inform it and which place Israel at the center of world events and in which other nations fade into insignificance. Taken up with the problems of its own existence, the challenges of internal growth and the need to develop local gifts, the church has not yet taken note of the many fields, white and ready for the harvest.

On the other hand, there is frequent and active Israeli Jewish Christian participation in various international conferences. Many speakers from overseas are invited to address the congregations and most of the local congregations exist only with significant financial aid from non-Jewish Christians and denominations outside the country. With the growing willingness of foreign missionary societies and denominations in Israel to work alongside local congregations, there is a concurrent growing appreciation for such bodies and a willingness to cooperate with them — but not to be influenced by them.

Eschatology

In the absence of reasoned theologizing, Jewish Christian views of Israel may be fairly assumed to be the product of the sensitivities described in the preceding sections. They may be briefly described in terms of modern-day premillennial dispensationalism such as is common in the English-speaking world and among the free churches of the West and the former USSR.

To be specific, the nation of Israel is seen as God's people in the past, the present and the future. The church is either an interregnum or an addition, with little importance in the

eschatological future. God's real purposes until the eternal state (to which little thought is devoted) have to do with the people of Israel. It is generally assumed that God will establish an earthly kingdom in the land of Israel and with Jerusalem as its capital. The Jewish people will be restored to a position of supremacy that all nations will acknowledge. A lengthy (1000 year) but temporary state of blessedness will be established, in which the Jewish people will serve God and the nations as priests and messengers of the truth. The temple will be re-established and God will be worshiped there in spirit and in truth.

During the Millennium, the church disappears from view.

As the millennial reign draws to a close, a general rebellion against God and his Anointed One will result in a cataclysmic battle which will be followed by an equally cataclysmic divine intervention which will vanquish the forces of evil forever and bring in a new heaven and a new earth. Thus begins the eternal state.

There is little heavenly-mindedness among Jewish Christians in Israel. Hopes are directed toward this world as it is to be during the Millennium. There is no hope for this present world. The need to cope with the pressing realities of the here and now drive out any serious preoccupation with the eternal state, the beautiful vision or related objects of traditional Christian expectation.

In Conclusion

Radical positions are most likely to be found among those who, having rejected the consensus of opinion that binds society together, are more susceptible to radically different viewpoints. Individuals or groups who have chosen to live on the periphery of their society rather than within its consensus are thereby rendered more likely to accept innovations and to adopt extreme opinions. If it were not for such radicals, new viewpoints would never be broached. Society would remain stagnant, all of its members will seek security in an adherence to the traditional views, however archaic they may have become, however much error might be mixed with truth. Thank God for radicals and extremists! The Jewish Christian movement has arisen at the periphery of Israeli Jewish society. Those who have joined it have been forced to join that social periphery and, in many cases, have inevitably developed peripheral characteristics.

Young movements tend to harbor radicals and to give rise to extreme positions that taint the way outsiders view those movements, even if the majority is moderate. The Jewish Christian movement has its full share of radicals.

It would be unwise and unfair to expect the movement to achieve the levels of maturity that may be expected of a body that has had time to reflect upon its challenges and resources. Comprehension is normally the consequence of reflection. It requires a process which the pressures of the Israeli scene and the present early stage of the Jewish Christian movement in Israel have not made likely. Only time can tell whether it will mature into a full-fledged and biblically-legitimate expression of the gospel among the Jews. For the moment, it continues to raise many an informed eyebrow no less than it inspires hope.

Hope is always to be preferred. Hope, however, may blur one's vision of the present by flying in the face of reality, thereby rendering its realization less likely. Hope is best made real when the facts are considered fairly and squarely.

There has been too much obscurantist negativism in the attitude of some toward the fledging

Jewish Christian movement — and too much unrealistic idealism. Prominent and worthy Christians have looked askance at the renewed movement among the Jews which has brought many to the obedience of Christ Others, no less prominent and worthy, have enthused over this phenomenon in such a way that they have been unable to recognize its noteworthy flaws.

The present writer believes that idealism should be combined with hard-nosed realism. He believes that realities should be faced, understood and challenged by an idealism that does not despair but, moved by a firm confidence in God and informed by the biblical message, keeps reaching out for the future. The paper before you seeks to look at the realities. It is for the reader to decide if he will combine his idealistic hope with action and join the writer in aspiring to the very best for the Israeli Jewish Christian movement.

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The Theology of Messianic Jewish Worship

Torleif Elgvin³

This paper offers some reflections from an observer of the Messianic Jewish scene in Israel, not the international nor American one. It is built upon observations from the mid-70s to the present, including eight years (from the mid-80s) when the author lived in Jerusalem and worshiped with Hebrew congregations. It focuses on the last 20 years of the movement. Words of admonition, at times critical, are offered, out of care and in gratitude for a long time fellowship with brethren in Israel. If some inaccuracies have crept into the descriptions, I extend my apologies.

The story is told that a Lutheran and a Greek Orthodox met in a ecumenical discussion. The Greek asked to see the Lutheran's confession. The Lutheran brought forward his somewhat dry 16th century *Confessio Augustana*. His brother read it, nodded positively, and said, "This is a nicely worded document, but where is your confession? Here is mine!" And then the Greek gave his liturgy to the Lutheran. *Worship is theology, worship is confession*. Therefore the worship of the Messianic Jewish movement betrays a lot about its theology. Some elements of this theology may be carefully considered, while others are less purposefully examined.

The last 30-40 years one may observe three substantial theological trends in the Hebrew Messianic movement. First was an influx of Evangelical American theology and a decline in sectarian Jewish positions, which on some issues were close to the old Ebionite ones.⁴ Second, the charismatic movement impacted the majority of the congregations; on this point American influence was especially important. Third, some congregations renewed their quest for Jewish roots and use traditional Jewish liturgy in some form. Spokesmen of this trend (such as Joseph Shulam, Arie Sorkoram and Dudu Telzur) have challenged the churchy, evangelical majority in the land. This third trend has twofold roots: national believers with orthodox Jewish background, and influence from the American Messianic movement. We will try to review the traces these movements have left in Messianic worship in Israel.

Liturgy and Structure of the Service

With a few exceptions, Messianic services in Israel are non-liturgical: i.e., there is not a formal liturgy like that of the synagogue or the traditional churches.⁵ A new spectator would perhaps have expected a more liturgical setting in the midst of a nation of synagogues. One explanation

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⁴ See e.g. O.C. Kvarme, "The Development of Hebrew Christianity: Credal and Ecclesiological Questions - the Problem of Contextualisation", *Tantur Papers of Christianity in the Holy Land*, Jerusalem 1981, 315-42, in part reprinted in *Mishkan* 1/1998, 55-7

⁵ "The Use of the Siddur by Messianic Jews", *Mishkan* 2/1966, 43-9.

holds that believers are fed up with the stiff liturgy of the synagogue — one has been redeemed from serving the letter and can now enjoy freedom of the spirit.

Menahem Benhayim sees the secular background of most Israeli believers as a reason for the prevailing scepticism towards utilizing Jewish liturgical traditions. In my opinion, the main reason for the lack of a formal liturgy is gentile theological influence. Today's congregations in Israel have their main roots in reformed traditions of various kinds, channeled primarily through American mediators. Most reformed churches oppose the formal structured liturgy one finds in churches of Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican or Lutheran observance. Again, one might note an American slant here.

The first Messianic congregation in Israel of modern times, that of Michael Solomon Alexander and his co-workers in Christ Church of last century, used liturgies with both synagogal and Anglican roots. A couple of decades later Joseph Rabinowitz in Kischinev initiated services with similar twofold roots. Both synagogue and church were “kosher” sources from which one could draw inspiration and prayers.

Today things are different. Apart from Hesed veEmet (Grace and Truth congregation), that professes calvinist theology, and the Lutherans, congregations in the land consciously differentiate themselves from the traditional denominations: “We are neither a church nor Christians, we are Messianic believers with congregations,” is a common refrain. The scepticism regarding traditional churches includes their formal liturgy. I have the feeling that the few new believers who have some kind of synagogue background quickly are taught that they need to distance themselves from the liturgy and enter the realm of the spirit. Reformed theology, charismatic or non-charismatic, has set its stamp.

We need to review the exceptions from this anti-liturgical trend — the Lutherans and those few congregations with Jewish flavor who openly use synagogal liturgy.

A couple of congregations (Roeh Yisrael in Jerusalem and Hefziba in Maaleh Adumim) use excerpts of the synagogue sabbath liturgy in their sabbath services. The weekly portion from the Torah and the Haftarah are read. In this setting, the only place in which a reference to Jesus the Messiah or the New Testament may be heard, would be the sermon. What kind of “theology of worship” is presupposed here? First, a strong confidence that the Messiah is found in the Torah and the Prophets, so proclamation of the New Testamental fulfilment in every service is unnecessary. Second, they hold that the Holy Spirit has inspired the prayers of the Siddur, or at least may use them in today's fellowship of Messianic believers. It must be added that a congregation such as Roeh Yisrael has other gatherings with less synagogal flavor and a more professed Messianic (Christian) profile.

The Messianic-Anglican version of last century's Christ Church did not survive the first world war. Today's Hebrew-speaking congregation of Christ Church is neither Anglican nor denominational, although it benefits from the hospitality of the Israel Trust of the Anglican Church. The only traditional church that still tries to walk the Messianic-Jewish road, is the Lutheran.⁶ The Lutheran congregations have roots in Norwegian and Finnish missionary work and have struggled to be recognized as really local/national congregations. Only one of these

⁶ I have chosen not to deal with the Hebrew Catholics in this paper.

three congregations (Bet Eliyahu in Haifa, Immanuel in Yafo and Shalhevetyah in Jerusalem) has national leadership. While Shalhevetyah was one of the first Hebrew-language congregations in Israel (since the 1930s), the other two worshiped in Romanian and German until the early 1970s.

In 1981-82 a committee led by Ole Kvarme developed a Hebrew liturgy for use in all three congregations. Most liturgical items had parallels in the formal liturgy of traditional churches, but were formulated to be as Hebrew and Jewish as possible. In principle it did not borrow complete prayers from the Siddur, stemming from a wish not to offend Jewish sentiments; (however, “Avinu Malkenu” was included). Further, they wanted a professed trinitarian and christological framework for the liturgy. Prayers from the early church were used as sources of inspiration. The most non-Jewish part of this liturgy was the prelude and postlude played on organ or piano. I guess that many congregational members were so accustomed to this “churchy” music, that it would have been impossible to present a sabbath service without it. (One might add that also many non-liturgical congregations open their services with a similar prelude.)

The congregations in Yafo and Haifa continue to use this liturgy (the latter in a more free manner than the former). After a few years Shalhevetyah carried out a liturgy revision, led by its pastor Yoseph Ben Zvi and the musicians Esther and Yaakov Choresch. They wanted more Israeli flavor to the service. Some of Esther Choresch’s Hebrew choruses from this liturgy have become commonly used in the land (Esa Panai, Kol Matanah Tovah, Uri haRuach). Lately the reorganized Shalhevetyah congregation has revised once more its liturgy.

The Lutherans have kept to their vision of the third way, between church and synagogue. Their Hebrew version is one of the more “churchy” in the land (again, apart from the Hebrew Catholics). The difficulties the Lutherans have encountered in their endeavors to change from “mission stations” to “national congregations” have hindered those behind this vision from influencing many Israelis beyond their own flock.

Creeds

It must be added that many non-liturgical congregations do include in their service a liturgical item, i.e. a creed. The “Jewish Shema” is sung in many congregations, but only the Lutherans proclaim a trinitarian creed (i.e. the Apostolic Creed) as part of the liturgy. Shaul Zuella’s song “HaB’sorah” (“The Gospel”) may be seen as a creed, but is hardly used consciously as such. Zuella’s song “Shema Yisrael” combines the traditional “Shema” with a confession that “Yeshua is my king, my Lord and my God.” The Nicene Creed, the only creed that unites the universal church, is never proclaimed, although at least one congregation (Brit Olam) has it in its written confession.

Seder, Sabbath and the Lord’s Supper

There are occasions in which non-liturgical congregations do use liturgy. We are primarily talking about sabbath and Pesach. In the early 1960s, Moshe ben Meir put together a supplementary liturgy for Pesach Eve.⁷ A lot of scepticism ensued: such a venture smacked too much of

⁷ See G. Nerel, “Messianic Jews” in *Eretz-Israel (1917–1967). Trends and Changes in Shaping Selv-Identity* (Ph.D. diss [Hebrew], The Hebrew University of Jerusalem) 1996, 227-32.

synagogue and legalism, and was not recommended for a “biblical” Messianic congregation. Against the opposition Meir and his fellowship conducted its seder.

Presently, Messianic congregations all over the world maintain a Pesach seder in some form. The Jewish Haggada forms the backbone, while some additions provide a little New Testament flavor. One may certainly ask whether present Messianic seders express a consistent theological view and the confession to a triune God, or only represent a patchwork where conflicting theologies stand side by side.⁸ But within today’s Messianic Jewish family no one questions his brother’s right to celebrate Pesach by following an order of worship. Also gentile churches have been inspired by Messianic Jewish passover meals, which may have enriched understanding both of the Lord’s Supper and the Jewish roots of the church among many gentile believers.

Sabbath Eve seems to be another “kosher” time for liturgy, even among members of non-liturgical congregations. In the family, as well as congregational gatherings (e.g. weekend conferences) candles are lit and Kiddush said. Candles may be lit after Sabbath has begun. The blessings said may be the traditional ones or rephrased in Christological light.

When other Jewish festivals are celebrated in non-liturgical congregations, a few traditional blessings may be said. But if you want a festival liturgy you have to go to a liturgical fellowship with Jewish flavor (e.g. Roeh Yisrael).

The Lord’s Supper is celebrated in the congregations from once a week to once a month. Ben Meir’s position, that it should only be celebrated once a year at Pesach eve, no longer has any supporters. Various protestant theological positions are represented regarding the interpretation of communion — from the symbolic to the literal. When in the early 1990s the Forum of Messianic Elders tried to word a confession as basis for a planned midrasha (college), spokesmen of the more Jewish-oriented congregations expressed more literal views about the body and blood of Jesus in communion than their more evangelical, reformed-influenced brethren.⁹

As to the liturgical implementation of the Lord’s supper, there is no uniformity. I have been present at celebrations of communion where Jesus’ words of institution have not been read — which would have made communion invalid in the eyes of many churches. Further, I have been present at Sabbath eves when I wonder whether we “celebrate” kiddush or the Lord’s supper, and I am not sure the host knew what he was doing either. There are congregations in which unbaptized children partake of communion — something unheard of both in traditional churches and in the fellowship of the Israeli pioneer H.J. Haimoff.¹⁰ Thus, there is great need for some theological reflection about basic elements in the celebration of the Lord’s supper.

The Messianic songs

Singing constitutes an important part of worship in the congregations, sometimes the only ingredient of the service in addition to the sermon and Scripture readings. From 1976 to the early 1980s, most Israeli congregations used a songbook (*Hallel-ve-zimrat-Yah*) which contained

⁸ So does O.C. Kvarme: “The Development of Hebrew Christianity”, *Mishkan* 2/1986, 64-5.

⁹ In contrast to the pioneers M. ben Meir and H.J. Haimoff, who had a reformed, symbolic understanding of the Lord’s supper. See Nerel, 233-6.

¹⁰ Nerel, 236.

Hebrew translations of gentile hymns, with a few additions like “Adon Olam.” Most of the hymns were translated by Moshe ben Meir¹¹ and Amikam Tavor. The level of Hebrew was good and the language easy-flowing, usually better than the average of what was written in the 1980s and 1990s

Some translations represented efforts at contextualization. As an example, “Onwards Christian soldiers” presents Yeshua as “our Chief of General Staff” (*haramatkal shelanu*). Verse 2 of Luther’s “A Mighty fortress is our God” comes dramatically short in its rendering of the high Christology of the original. “Christ Jesus it is he, Lord Sebaoth his Name, From age to age the same” has become “Yeshua the redeemer, the King of Israel.” In general this hymnal presented a wide range of Christian texts that gave expression to most sides of Christian life and worship. But singing from *Hallel-ve-zimrat-Yah* would convey to native Israeli visitors a very “churchy” impression. This element is probably the main factor behind the silent burial the hymnal has more recently received in most congregations. Those who have not put away *Hallel-ve-zimrat-Yah* draw only a minor part of the songs they use from it. (I would guess we speak about the Lutherans, Yad Hashmonah, Chesed ve’Emet and perhaps a few others.)

Today all congregations use collections of songs composed within the Messianic movement over the last 20 years. Most observers agree that these songs give a more Jewish and Israeli flavor to the congregations. But one has to ask to what extent these songs express the different aspects of Christian/Messianic faith and life? More than 90 percent of the songs consist of verses from the Old Testament, and can hardly give expression to the incarnation, death or resurrection of Jesus. A small number consist of New Testament verses, and a similar number are written by authors residing in Israel (but not necessarily Jewish). The majority of the writers are not Israeli-born, a fact sometimes reflected in the Hebrew style of the songs. There is a dire need for hymn writers with sabra background.

The majority of the songs convey praise and adoration, but the complaint and despair of the believer before the Lord, an important theme in the biblical Psalter, is only scarcely represented. An exception is “Koli el Adonai” (Ps 142:1-2, 103:1), but in this case the upbeat melody hardly underlines the lament of the biblical text. It seems that the “theology of praise” is far more developed in the congregations than the theology of repentance and conviction.

Some of the recently written non-biblical songs are masterpieces that beautifully express the believer’s dependence upon Jesus. Among these would be Elisheva Shomron’s “B’mayim zakim” and Tavor’s “Eved nirtsa” (“Pierced slave,” see Exod 21:5-6). The latter merges traditional biblical and Jewish terminology to express Christian faith, but to my chagrin it is not included in Peniel’s comprehensive songbook for Messianic Worship since 1997.

What Christology is expressed in modern Messianic songs? An observer may be astonished by the high Christology occasionally found, more probably deriving from gentile church influence upon the authors than theological reflection in the land. One song concludes with addressing Jesus “Adonay El chay, Yeshua” (cf. John 20:28), another “Yeshua Adonay,” and a third “Adonay veElohay.” If I remember correctly, a certain congregation changed the text of one of these verses in its hymnal (and does not include it in its present hymnal). It is hard to escape

¹¹ On M. ben Meir as hymnist and translator, see Nerel, 254-66.

the conclusion that the high Christology of text would have been provocative for some of the worshippers, Philippians 2:9-11 notwithstanding.

Most congregations regularly sing songs with a clear Christological profile. Jesus is often addressed as “Adon” (Lord), “Messiah,” and “moshia” (saviour). “Son of God” also occurs (e.g. Berger: “Seh haElohim” — “The lamb of God”). David Loden’s “Ram veNisa haMashiach” worships the Redeemer before whom every knee shall bow. There are songs which seem to address God and Yeshua at the same time, without clearly differentiating between them (e.g. “Kamocho Adonai”), but similar patterns are found also in the New Testament. Some songs follow a New Testament example when Jesus is attributed roles belonging to God in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. “Mi Hu Zeh”).

The Holy Spirit does not figure prominently in these songs — a somewhat surprising fact in light of the charismatic flavor and influence one can easily perceive in many congregations. A couple of songs proclaim that “Yeshua gave me his spirit.” To my knowledge, none of the recent songs contains a direct address to the Holy Spirit. In contrast, *Hallel-ve-zimrat-Yah* included a translation of “Spirit of the Living God.” So one may ask whether the worship really is trinitarian, or if one only pays lip service to a triune God

There are congregational leaders in the land who don’t address the Son in their (free) public prayers, but only the Father “in the name of Jesus the Messiah.” Such a pattern falls short of the New Testament models,¹² and betrays either a distancing from the tradition of the church or a lack of thorough thinking with regard to Christology and trinity.

Concluding Comments

Contextualization in mission is difficult. Using terminology and customs from other faiths may be dangerous. Messianic worship today is no easy “return to the first Jewish congregation.” We have seen 1500 years with a self-defining rabbinic synagogue which excluded faith in Jesus. Also, on the Messianic street we are trying the difficult way of contextualisation, expressing the Christian faith in a Jewish context, and borrowing terms which have their original setting in worship that deny the Messiahship and divinity of Jesus.

We have brethren who advocate a slight reworking of liturgies from the Siddur and Machzor. The few prayers which are opposed to belief in Jesus may be omitted, others may be slightly changed.¹³ On this we have commented that rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament have much in common, but do represent contrasting, often conflicting views of God, man and the ways of salvation. Further we must note that the Siddur is by and large a product of post-mishnaic rabbinic Judaism.¹⁴ A number of the Jewish prayers are rooted in the second temple period,¹⁵

¹² See e.g. Acts 7:59; 9:10-17; Rev 5.

¹³ See D. Stern and E. Brandt, “The Use of Liturgy in Messianic Jewish Worship”, *Mishkan* 2/1996, 15-27; T. Sadan, “The Place of the Siddur in the Messianic Community”, *ibid*, 28-37.

¹⁴ T. Elgvin, “Editorial”, *Mishkan* 2/1996, 1-4.

¹⁵ Liturgical material in the Dead Sea Scrolls have made this clear. As one example, 1Q/4QMysteries and 4QInstruction from Qumran demonstrate that Rosh Hashanah prayers have roots in the 2nd century BCE: T. Elgvin, *An Analysis of 4QInstruction* (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997).

but they are now embedded in a rabbinic framework. One must ask whether the theological framework of the Siddur is compatible with a new testamental faith¹⁶ Can one only omit a few prayers here, add some others there, and produce a Messianic Siddur which expresses biblical faith in Jesus the Messiah? The Siddur presupposes a view of man which does not recognize original sin, and a concept of the one God that excludes a trinitarian faith Consequently, one would have to rewrite the Siddur instead of adapting it. What kind of systematic theology is presupposed when one wants to modify the Siddur without transforming it into another book?¹⁷ E. Brandt and D. Stern are confident that the Holy Spirit can inspire unbelieving rabbis to compose prayers fit for use by Jewish followers of Jesus.¹⁸ One needs to give thorough systematic reasons for such confidence.

I have asserted that worship is theology. Confessing a creed in the service is theology. Not doing so is also theology. Many congregations use the Shema but understand the unity of God differently from the synagogue. We defend ourselves: the Shema is biblical, we understand “echad” (“one”) in a biblical way, not in Maimonides’ more narrow sense. But what do we communicate when we only profess the Shema, and do not continue proclaiming our faith in the Son and the Spirit?

The messianic scepticism towards the creeds of the church needs scrutiny. Messianic thinkers must ask (or define) how they can belong to the universal Church if they cannot partake of the one world-wide ecumenical creed from Nicene. Should one view the creeds of the early church, including Nicaea, only as endeavors toward contextualisation that should not be binding for us today? But how can one systematically define Christianity and a universal Church (to which the Messianic congregations do belong, according to most spokesmen) without reference to the early ecumenical creeds?¹⁹ The “Bible alone” option is hermeneutically naive and systematically impossible to defend.

Messianic worship, as well as Messianic theology in general, must navigate between the dangers of the Scylla and Charybdis of respectively Jewish and Christian traditions. Kj̄r-Hansen has shown that Joseph Rabinowitz provides one of best models for the modern Messianic movement as it struggles (or ought to struggle) to express Christian faith, creed and tradition relevant for today's Jews.²⁰ Despite the scepticism in the Messianic movement towards gentile church traditions, one must search the liturgies of the early church for inspiration and material.²¹ Treasures, many with Jewish roots, are therein. In this process it would be unwise not to interact with the liturgical word carried out by the Hebrew Catholics.²²

¹⁶ Cf. A. Boskey, “The Messianic Use of Rabbinic Literature”, *Mishkan* 1-2/1988, 25-64

¹⁷ Sadan, *Mishkan* 2/1996.

¹⁸ D. Stern, E. Brandt, *Mishkan* 2/1996.

¹⁹ In the mid-80s a forum of Messianic leaders sat together to judge whether another leader had departed from the true confession to Jesus as divine. In the proceedings the early ecumenical creeds were not allowed as “test material”.

²⁰ K. Kj̄r-Hansen, *Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement*, Edinburgh/Grand Rapids 1995; idem, “Two Nineteenth Century Hebrew ‘Siddurim’”, *Mishkan* 2/1996, 50-59.

²¹ For a minor contribution on the topic, see my article “Pesach and Easter” in *Meet leet* (Hebrew) 2/1991.

²² I would like at this point to express a word of honour to Daniel Rufeisen who recently died. Brother

If the “Evangelical” congregations continue to evade a deep encounter with Jewish liturgy and theology, they will continue as a shallow copy of American protestantism with a little Hebrew spice on top. On the other side, the congregations with a more Jewish orientation need to weigh the theology, liturgy and creeds of the early church if they want to elude the Ebionite fallacy and stay in communion with the Church universal.

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Daniel’s deep understanding of early Jewish liturgies and traditions penetrated his theology and practice. In his ministry he demonstrated an ecumenical spirit and a pastoral heart rarely seen in the Messianic movement. May his memory be blessed!

Worship in Israeli Messianic Congregations

Torkild Masvie²³

As a result of cultural and historical factors, as well as hermeneutic differences, there are a variety of worship forms in the Messianic congregations today. The following is a short presentation of the different styles of worship found among Israeli Hebrew-speaking congregations. In it we will only comment on their characteristics in comparison to those of other styles of worship, and we will point to some developmental trends characteristic of the Messianic movement.

Today one can distinguish four different stylistic categories of worship, knowing that no one congregation would fit exclusively into a single category. These categories are: evangelical non-charismatic; evangelical charismatic; evangelical liturgical; and synagogue liturgical.

Evangelical and Non-Charismatic

The first generation of independent Messianic congregations belong to this category. The Messianic Assembly in Jerusalem, Beit Hesda in Haifa, and later Hesed V'Emet in Rishon LeZion are examples of this major group of congregations. The focal point of the worship service is teaching which is cognitive, rather than emotional, in nature. There might be some flexibility in the service but the worship pattern is predictable and usually agreed upon by the elders of the congregation. Along with the preaching, the songs and prayers are more cognitive in style. The latter are almost exclusively in the form of free prayers by the worship leader, and to some extent also congregational members. Liturgical elements from the church or synagogue are generally not incorporated into the worship. A substantial number of Israeli Messianic congregations belong in this category, and a significant percentage fit somewhere between this group and the next.

Evangelical and Charismatic

Evangelical charismatic congregations have grown to become a major component in the Messianic movement since the charismatic wave started in the 1970s. Here we include congregations who do not use fixed liturgies and who range from being open to charismatic expressions to those with a strong charismatic emphasis. The worship (singing) plays an important part in the service, in order to build up the congregation emotionally and spiritually. The free prayers from both the congregational leader and the members in this category are usually more spiritually/emotionally expressive than those of the non-charismatics. The expression of extraordinary charismatic gifts is seen as the climax of the service among the strongly

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charismatic, while the “mildly” charismatic have a stronger emphasis on the preaching. Many of the leaders will admit that their meetings follow a pattern or format, but indicate that they try to avoid rigid patterns as they consider them a hindrance to the work of the Holy Spirit in the congregation. Liturgical elements from the church and synagogue traditions are generally not incorporated into the worship service.

Evangelical and Liturgical

There are only three congregations in this category, whose main representative is the Beit Eliahu congregation in Haifa. These congregations have a Lutheran background and have, since the late 1970s, used a fixed Hebrew liturgy. This liturgy is based on early liturgies of the Church, with a focus on the Jewish and Hebrew roots of these liturgies. The desire was to restore the Jewishness of early liturgies, to make use of the rich Jewish prayer language found in the Bible and Jewish tradition, and to be relevant to modern Israeli culture. Another distinguishing feature of this group is that the focal point is a table which functions as an altar for holy communion. The pulpit is always to one side of the altar. In Beit Eliahu the use of liturgy is usually modified by the worship leader, who brings in elements closer to the evangelical non-charismatic style. Apart from Jewish Christians in the Catholic church, there is no other Hebrew-language evangelical liturgical worship.

Synagogal Liturgical

This is also a small group of congregations. There are two-four congregations in Israel who use the synagogue tradition and the Siddur in their service. No one uses the whole Orthodox Siddur, but in Ro'eh Israel (Netivyah) in Jerusalem, the pioneer congregation in this field in Israel, sections of the Siddur are the basis for the Sabbath worship service. They consider the Siddur to be in accordance with the faith of the first-century congregation in Jerusalem, and as such feel that it contains Jewish elements from the time of Jesus. There are, however, later developments in the Siddur, and therefore, as a whole, it needs to be filtered through the New Testament in order to avoid using elements which conflict with our faith in Jesus as Messiah. The result is a worship service which contains similarities to a regular synagogue service, but which is conducted at a slower pace. When you enter you receive a regular Siddur, together with a sheet of paper with an overview of the pages being used. Most of the singing is from the Siddur. In addition, there are songs, free prayers, New Testament reading and in the teaching there is a compensation for the Messianic focus missing in the Siddur.

The Present Situation

How has Israeli Messianic worship developed? Twenty years ago, in 1979, Ole Chr. M. Kvarme, then director of Caspari Center, presented the following picture in his lecture “The development of Hebrew Christianity: creedal and ecclesiological questions — the problem of contextualization”:

We can easily distinguish between three categories of congregations, or groups, into which the small community of Hebrew Christians is divided: a considerable number belong to the historical and

denominational churches; a second category is represented by the so-called 'Messianic Assemblies,' and thirdly there are numerous 'private' and 'semi-official' groups and circles, where a congregational structure is either lacking or else is very loose.

Looking to the future he predicted:

There is reason to believe that Hebrew Christianity in Israel will continue to develop through denominational congregations, interdenominational assemblies and various groups. Probably the smaller groups, if they do not fade away, will in due time develop into interdenominational assemblies or denominational congregations.

The past 20 years have seen a somewhat different development than that which Kvarme predicted. The new congregations almost always define themselves as interdenominational. The denominational congregations, including the group of liturgical congregations, are now very few. In the three liturgical "Lutheran" congregations, no in-depth liturgical work has been done since the late 1970s, although some liturgical adjustments have been made. Representatives of other Messianic congregations, inspired by meetings with the historic churches, have expressed a desire to develop more liturgical patterns, but it is too early to detect any general movement in this direction. The most commonly used liturgical element is the Aaronite blessing, which is used by a third of the congregations.

What has become a stronger force than predicted is the synagogue liturgical group. The Ro'eh Israel (Netivyah) congregation in Jerusalem is drawing visitors from other Messianic congregations on the Jewish High Holidays. At the same time, a number of charismatic and non-charismatic evangelical congregations are adopting elements from Jewish tradition into their worship. For example, reading and preaching from the weekly Torah portion was rare 20 years ago, but today is all the more common. Another element being incorporated by a growing number of congregations is the celebration of Jewish holidays, often including elements from the synagogue. This development must not be isolated from what happened years ago with the establishment of the Messianic Passover meal.

Passover Haggada

A few congregations do not celebrate the Passover meal as a Messianic congregation but rather prefer to let their members join their families for a regular Jewish Seder. Congregations which organize congregational celebrations belong to all the four categories mentioned above. The celebration of a Jewish Passover Seder according to the traditional Haggada, with a Christological interpretation of the elements of the meal and additional New Testament readings, became a custom many years ago. This development resulted in two publications: in 1977 the Messianic Assembly in Jerusalem published the "Passover Hagada to the Glory of our Lord Yeshua ha-Mashiach." Most of the traditional Haggada was kept, and where possible the ritual and text were interpreted in relation to Jesus. Four years later the Messianic Lutheran congregations published a "Haggada shel Pesach," a Haggada for a Christian Seder with holy communion, which left out the post-biblical and medieval elements of the traditional Haggada. Since these two publications there has been little change. The congregations which now hold a Seder usually follow a pattern similar to that of the Messianic Assembly.

Ethiopian and Russian Congregations

When we speak of non-Hebrew-speaking Messianic congregations we are referring to Russian and Ethiopian groups. If we generalize that in their theology and worship the Hebrew-speaking Messianic Congregations are influenced by Western/North American Evangelical trends, then the Russian immigrant congregations reflect trends in the Baptist churches in the former USSR, and the Ethiopian immigrant congregations reflect Ethiopian Pentecostal trends.

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"Sing unto the Lord a New Song"

The Development of Songs and Music within the Messianic Community in Israel

Lisa Loden²⁴

Music is inherent in the life and tradition of the people of Israel. The roots of Israel's musical heritage are biblical. The earliest differentiation of human activity included music (Gen 4:21). It is considered one of the major branches of human endeavor. Prior to mankind's occupation with music, the book of Job shows that from creation, music was present and expressed a joyous response to God's creative activity (Job 38:2).

The past 50 years have seen the growing development of a body of music which has been written by the local members of the Israeli Messianic community. As the community has grown, so has the musical expression increased and developed to become a vibrant representation of the varied face of the community of faith in Israel. This article will trace that development and will highlight the expanding role of music in the life of Israel's Messianic community and beyond.

Jewish-born believers in Jesus have lived in the land of Israel since before the foundation of the state but during the war, many of them were evacuated by the Anglican mission. It took a number of years for the community to again become viable in the years following this mass exodus.

By 1956, it was felt that the groups and congregations which worshiped in Hebrew needed to have a collection of songs and hymns in Hebrew. In that year a compilation of 209 songs was published under the title of *Shir Hadash* (A New Song). This was a joint effort of a number of people, with as many as 15 listed as having translated these songs from various languages. Some of those who translated the songs are familiar to the body of believers today. They include Elisheva Graham, Robert Lindsey, and Moshe Emanuel Ben Meier, to name a few. Bernice Gibson, who was with the Southern Baptists, was the editor of this collection. There were no songs included in this collection that were originally written in Hebrew. All of them were translated from other languages and five songbooks are listed as the sources of most of the songs. The contents are arranged according to themes: praise, prayer, divine watchfulness, our savior, our redemption, exhortation, the life of the Messiah, our hope, sanctification, evangelism and songs for youth. This was the definitive collection for the next 20 years.

In 1976, Yanetz Press published an expanded hymnal, *Hallel v'Zimrat Yah*, (Praise and Singing to the Lord), which included almost two thirds of the songs from *Shir Hadash*, with the addition of more than 250 other songs. The additions included a selection of Negro spirituals and

²⁴ Lisa Loden and her husband, David Loden, are involved in work among Messianic believers in Israel in many capacities; of note has been their contributions in creating indigenous music and songs. She is the chairperson of Caspari Center Local Board.

33 songs written to passages from the scriptures by M. Chavez and Peter Van Woerden (a Dutch believer who had come to Israel with his family and studied Hebrew). The songs written to verses from the scriptures were an innovation. With these 33 songs, for the first time the Hebrew-speaking body of Messiah was singing songs written especially for it with the effort having been made for cultural as well as spiritual relevance. The process of indigenization had begun.

The year 1977 was also pivotal in the history of Hebrew Messianic music. It was in this year that David and Lisa Loden published the song book *Roni, Bat Zion*, (Rejoice Daughter of Zion) in Jerusalem. This songbook contained 15 original songs. Some were written to biblical texts while others were of the chorus type, with simple words and melodies in a Hebraic musical idiom. This was the first songbook published which contained entirely original music written expressly for the growing body of believers that worshipped in Hebrew.

In 1980 a British volunteer working at Beit Emanuel in Jaffa approached David Loden and Arieh Bar David (who had worked extensively on *Hallel v'Zimrat Yah*, affectionately known as the "brown book") with a proposal that they conduct a music conference around the subject of Hebrew worship music. The proposal was for a five-day conference which would include workshops aimed at encouraging aspiring composers, helping them with the crafting of music, acquainting them with the proper pronunciation of Hebrew texts and sensitizing them to the sound of middle eastern and Jewish music.

This first music conference was attended by under 15 people but it proved seminal in the development of Messianic music in Israel. Following this initial conference, interest was aroused and for the next six years weekend music conferences were held on a regular basis. These conferences grew rapidly and by the late 1980s the list of composers had grown from two or three to more than 30. Some of the composers contributed only one song to the growing collection, but several (namely David Loden, Elisheva Shomron, Batya Segal and Zipporah Bennet) developed skills which have insured their songs a permanent place in the repertoire of the worshipping body of Messiah in Israel.

After the first year, a music conference committee was formed with the mandate to evaluate, collect and make available the best songs from the conferences. This resulted in concerts which presented the best songs and in the production of four songbooks over the period from 1980 to 1986: *Bou Lifinav* in 1980, *Sos Asis* in 1981, *Halleluhu* in 1982, and *B'libi Tzafanti* from 1983-1986. The Lodens, together with Ann Hilsden, recorded all of the songs on teaching tapes which were distributed widely. The song books and cassettes were distributed under the auspices of Hagefen Publishing, where they remain available until today.

During this period Arieh Bar David, the Lodens and the Shomrons were called upon to present and teach the new songs in a growing number of congregations throughout Israel. Thus the new music spread to virtually every congregation. A new and indigenous Hebrew hymnology had been birthed.

As it became unwieldy to use five songbooks consisting of 15 to 30 songs each, Peniel congregation in Tiberias saw the need to produce one comprehensive songbook that would include all the songs from these small song books. In 1991 the first *Peniel* song book was published. This went into two editions, totaling some 3000 copies. Recently, in 1997, Peniel congregation revised and edited the songbook with the inclusion of almost 100 new songs written

in the years 1986-1996.

Much interest in Hebrew Messianic music has been generated internationally, as visitors from abroad come regularly to Israel and visit the congregations. This has resulted in the translation of many of the Messianic songs into a number of languages including English, Finnish, Norwegian, Spanish, Italian, German, Russian, Dutch and Chinese.

Within the body of believers, music is not only used in worship, it can provide spiritual encouragement and listening enjoyment. This has meant that some of the composers who are also singers have recorded their music for listening. In 1988, David and Lisa Loden recorded an album, "Boi Ruach," in which the music was performance oriented rather than congregational in scope. This was the first of its genre and many have followed in succeeding years. Elisheva Shomron, Batya and Barry Segal, Karen Davis, Vivian Harveson, Zipporah Bennet, Arie Klein and Shmulik Nissim are only a few who have made recordings of their music which is intended for listening rather than for congregational worship. Shmulik Nissim's music is unique in that it is a conscious and successful attempt to put the message of the Messiah into a contemporary and relevant Israeli musical idiom.

In the area of recording, two recent developments are worthy of note. One is the release of recordings made by congregations of songs which have been composed by members of their specific congregation. HaMaayan in Kfar Saba, Hephtzibah in Maale Adumim, and Peniel in Tiberias have all recorded in this fashion. King of Kings in Jerusalem has recorded their worship team singing songs which they use in worship. The other development is the production of cassettes for children, some which tell a story in the fashion of a musical and others that are simply songs written especially for children. The Shomrons, with Miriam Givoni, have put together several children's tapes, as have both Michaela Lazarus and the Peniel Congregation.

Music has many faces. In the life of an active community of faith, music is an expression of the culture of that community. It is therefore not only utilitarian, but as the community develops, music begins to assume other roles. In many ways, the music of a community provides an interface with the surrounding culture and as such opens a window into the world of the believing community. This is certainly true in Israel for the Messianic community as it interacts with the surrounding nonbelieving culture, whether secular or religious. It was with this understanding that David Loden's opera "David and Batsheva" was composed and produced in 1996. This was a fully staged production, lasting 90 minutes, and was presented in secular theatres throughout Israel in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and Netanya. The production employed both Messianic believers and nonbelieving Israelis and reached a wide and varied Israeli audience.

The recent cooperation between Elisheva Shomron and a secular Israeli recording company shares this same intention — to interface with the secular society through the music of the Messianic community. A project is currently underway in which this Israeli company has commissioned the Shomrons to put together two music recordings representative of the music of the Messianic community.

New music continues to be written as a growing number of songwriters are joining the ranks of the more established composers. The music conference committee which first came together in 1981 has had several permutations and is currently functioning again. A music conference was held in December 1997, which was followed in February 1998 by a public concert of the best of

the songs from that conference. These songs were then made immediately available for the use of the congregations and as the concert was recorded this music is soon to be released. Plans are being made to once again institute workshops for the new generation of budding composers.

Much of the music continues to use scripture texts as lyrics and to this point music has been composed to approximately ten complete psalms. Recurring themes of the songs which are not scripture texts include praise to God the Father and to Yeshua, songs of adoration, repentance, encouragement, exhortation and a recent focus on spiritual warfare.

The music of the Hebrew-speaking believer has moved beyond the confines of the local congregation into the marketplace and has begun to make an impact for the gospel in society. The history of revival teaches us that when the Spirit of God moves, the people who come to faith begin to sing a new song. It is natural that this song be heard not only in the gatherings of believers but also in the surrounding society. One of the tasks of believers in the society is to be a transforming influence. This is done by many means — music is but one. The potential for the Word of God in music to touch lives cannot be underestimated in a society like Israel. This is one of the challenges for the future. It remains to be seen if the composers and musicians will rise to meet it. May his Word be heard to the ends of the earth.

"Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise from the ends of the earth." Isaiah 42:10

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Bible Translation and Publication

Ray Pritz²⁵

The first books of the Bible, the Torah, were written outside the land, according to the traditional attribution of all of them to Moses. Likewise, other parts of the Old Testament were written outside the land, for example, Ezekiel, parts of Jeremiah, Lamentations, Daniel, and some of the Psalms.

Many of the New Testament books were also written outside Israel, from places like Ephesus, Rome, Corinth, and the small island of Patmos. It is likely that some of Paul's letters were written during his imprisonment in Caesarea. The actual location of the writing of the synoptic gospels and Acts is uncertain. Similarly, it would seem that parts of the synoptic gospels, or at least some of their sources, were written in Hebrew.

Background: Early New Testament Translations

It is ironic, then, that during the centuries when Hebrew lay dormant as a spoken language, so too the New Testament was unknown in Hebrew. Translation into the language in which many of its original events took place began to happen about 1300 years after those events. One scholar, Jean Carmignac, has collected extensive information regarding Hebrew translations of the New Testament.²⁶ Carmignac lists over 100 different Hebrew translations of all or part of the New Testament, dating back as early as 1360, and he claims that his list is incomplete. Since Hebrew was not spoken during these centuries, the Hebrew in them is ancient, usually that of the Old Testament. Most of these translations were done by individual scholars, although several were the joint effort of two or more. Until this generation, all such translations were done outside of Israel.

In the mid-1850s there appeared a translation of Romans, done by Isaac Salkinson. Like most of his predecessors, Salkinson limited himself to biblical Hebrew. The entire New Testament was printed in 1885 and was published again the following year with a thorough revision by Christian Ginsburg. It was published by the Trinitarian Bible Society (an organization unrelated to modern national Bible Societies) in London. This translation continues to be reprinted in the diglot Hebrew-Spanish and Hebrew-Dutch New Testaments.

²⁵ Ray Pritz received his Ph.D. on Nazarene Jewish Christianity from the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Presently he is working at the Caspari Center for Jewish and Biblical Studies, where he is responsible for teaching programs in Hebrew.

²⁶ *Traductions h'braïques des Evangiles rassemblees par Jean Carmignac*, Vol. 1, Brepols, 1982-1985.

Delitzsch

The well-known translation of Franz Delitzsch was preceded by no less than 42 previous translations.²⁷ The entire New Testament first appeared in 1877 and had an interesting history. Delitzsch did not set out to preserve biblical Hebrew in his translation. He attempted rather to render according to the Hebrew which might have been spoken at Jesus' time. This meant using many words which are found in the Mishnah and other post-biblical documents. In fact, his translation of Romans alone contains over 100 words which are not found in the Old Testament.

Also, Delitzsch wanted to take advantage of the latest advances in textual criticism in his translation. As a result his first edition omitted a number of passages which had been shown to be later additions to the text. However, most projects as large as a New Testament translation are dependent on outside financial support. Delitzsch was no exception. His sponsor was the British and Foreign Bible Society. While they helped with a limited (2500 copies) first "experimental" edition, the BFBS refused to finance it further unless he made two fundamental changes.

Since their founding in 1804, their policy had been to publish Bible editions based on the so-called Majority Text or Textus Receptus (received text), which had been established back in 1550. The innovations desired by Delitzsch were rejected, and he reverted to the Majority Text, introducing a system of brackets and parentheses to indicate where scholarship felt the old text to be inferior. The second change had to do with how Old Testament passages were quoted. Delitzsch had been in the habit of taking the Masoretic text directly from the Old Testament without regard to the differences in the New Testament Greek. BFBS insisted that the translation reflect the Greek, even where it contradicted the Masoretic text.

During Delitzsch's lifetime his translation underwent ten editions. After his death in 1890 another four editions were done, although the last two were little more than reprints of the 12th edition of 1901. All fourteen editions were printed in Germany. There were later printings, based on the 8th edition, in London in 1937 and 1954 and in other countries, especially Sweden. These were imported into Israel by various agencies, including the Bible Society and Kaarlo Syvanto. It was only in 1959 that the first Hebrew Bibles with the Delitzsch New Testament were printed in Israel.

Modern Hebrew Translations

Translation of the New Testament into modern Hebrew only began about twenty years after the foundation of the state. Naturally, but significantly, such translations were the first to have been done in the land.²⁸ In 1967 there appeared a Gospel of John, produced anonymously by two Hebrew Catholic scholars, Yochanan Elichai and Yehoshua Blum. They followed this in 1970 with Matthew, in 1972 with Luke, and in 1974 with the entire New Testament.

In 1970 the Baptist missionary Robert Lindsey published his translation of Mark, including a

²⁷ Carmignac, pp. VII-X. Most of the information in this section is taken from vol. 4 of this series, pp. xi-xxvii. On the life and works of Delitzsch, see also the article of Wagner and Baumann in *Mishkan* 14/1 (1991), 46-55.

²⁸ It may be mentioned that the Jewish believer, Yehiel Lichtenstein, made a translation of Matthew in the land in 1913. This was not, of course, in "modern Hebrew."

long introduction propounding the theory that the Gospel of Luke probably represents the earliest of the synoptic gospels.

Another full New Testament in modern Hebrew was produced in 1975 by two other Catholic scholars, Jean-Marie Bauchet and David Kinneret. Bauchet had earlier (1948-50) done a revision of the Matthew and Mark of Delitzsch. This translation, published in Rome, lacked vowel pointing. It never received wide circulation in Israel.

In 1973 the Bible Society in Israel, then based in Haifa, began a translation of the New Testament into modern Hebrew. From the outset it was envisioned that this would be published together with the Old Testament and would eventually be fully annotated. The translation process was somewhat complex. In the first stage, a Hebrew language expert, Mr. Joseph Atzmon, made a translation from English. In so doing, he also routinely consulted existing translations by Delitzsch, Salkinson, and many others in several languages. These, of course, had been translated directly from Greek. At the same time he made use of special tools developed by the United Bible Societies for the use of Bible translators. These books, written in English, relate back to the Greek text phrase by phrase, guiding the translator who does not know Greek to understand the meaning of the original language.

For three years Atzmon worked hand in hand with Yochanan Elichai, an expert in the Greek New Testament who repeatedly checked the translation against the original. In addition, Atzmon met twice a year with a team of eight experts in biblical languages. These included Robert Lindsey and Elichai, both of whom had already worked at translating parts of the New Testament, and Dr. Jan de Waard, a United Bible Societies translation consultant and world renowned expert in both Hebrew and Greek. In these sessions as well, the translation was judged against the Greek.

The book of Romans was completed first, printed, and samples sent to pastors and other interested persons around the country for their reactions. Then in 1976 the first modern Hebrew New Testaments were printed by the Yanetz Press in Jerusalem. This translation was fully vowel-pointed. The level of Hebrew was to be that of a high school graduate, although there were occasional variations from that mean in both directions.

Another modern Hebrew translation made its appearance a year later. This was produced for Living Bible International and also printed by Yanetz Press. Like the original Living Bible in English, it was not a translation from Greek but rather from English, presumably with an eye on older existing translations such as Delitzsch. This book was printed three times by Yanetz, first under the title, "The Man from Bethlehem," then (1979) as "I have loved you with an eternal love," and also as "The Way." These books were, for the most part, distributed free. The translation itself never really caught on within the Hebrew-speaking Messianic community, and it is doubtful that there could be found today anyone who considers it his Bible of daily use.

Complications of Bible Production

While Hebrew Bibles including the New Testament had been imported in relatively small quantities since the foundation of the State, import laws made it difficult to bring in the numbers to meet increasing demands. Like any enlightened state, Israel wanted to protect its own industries. The law stated that any book containing more than 15% Hebrew needed special permission for import.

Some distribution organizations tried to get around this by mailing many small packages of Bibles or by having groups of tourists bring them in. The Bible Society was prevented by its own constitution from operating in any way which could be construed as contrary to the law, and so the only alternative was to print in Israel. While this looked idealistically like a step in keeping with good Zionism, it also brought serious drawbacks. For one thing, the whole process was considerably more expensive than printing, say, in the Far East and importing.

But there were more serious problems. The Bible is a large book, often reaching 1500 pages or more. To keep a book of that length to one volume, it is necessary to print it on special paper, paper which is very thin but of a quality high enough to prevent the text on one side of the page showing through to the other side. The average printing equipment cannot handle such thin paper. In Israel in the early years the only printers working with such paper were those who printed religious books such as the Hebrew Old Testament or the Talmud. While the printers themselves may not have been orthodox, their customers were. To agree to print the New Testament in Hebrew could lose a printer a lot of business, and it was a risk that almost no one was ready to take.²⁹

The Bible Society located a secular printer with offices in Tel Aviv and its print operation in Nazareth. This was a company which specialized in coloring books and other things for children. Precision was not a major consideration in their operation. Several editions of scriptures in Hebrew were printed by them, but the quality was always marginal.

The special Bible paper is not produced in Israel and had to be imported. It was subject to customs duties, which made each Bible just that much more expensive. However, government office responsible for fixing customs payments operated under a guideline which said that paper used for printing the Tanach (Hebrew Old Testament) was exempt from payment. Because part of the books being produced was the New Testament, it could not be determined until after printing how much of the paper had been used for the Tanach. This resulted in the following scene: After a printing of 5000 Bibles, one copy was taken to the customs office. There an official physically separated the New Testament and weighed it. The amount of paper in the New Testament was then multiplied by 5000, and customs duties were fixed based on this figure.

The Bible Society decided to challenge this discrimination, and a lawyer was engaged. As often happens in such cases, a letter from a lawyer threatening to take the matter to court was sufficient to bring about a change of practice (and a refund). It seems that the law itself had only said something about exempting "holy scriptures," and internal interpretations in the customs office had applied that exclusively to kosher books.

At about the same time the Bible Society got tired of printing sub-standard Bibles and began a campaign to receive permits to import books. This meant convincing a certain official in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry that reasonable quality Bibles could not be printed in the land. Mr. Biala was an old-school sort of individual. He grew mint for his tea in a window box, and he was quite familiar with the New Testament. But he saw it as his duty (which it was) to

²⁹ By way of example, the Jerusalem Post has a large rotary press, which is ideal for printing on Bible paper. At first they agreed to print a Bible, but then they remembered that the editor of the orthodox newspaper HaModia, which they print, has his office in their building and would surely object. They then declined with apologies.

prevent people importing things which they should be getting in Israel. The director of the Bible Society met with him several times, showed him the low quality of recently printed Bibles, and submitted letters from several big print houses stating that they were not ready to print Bibles with the New Testament. The campaign was successful and resulted in a renewable permit to import attractive Bibles which, unlike the old ones, did not resemble building blocks in both shape and weight. And they were less expensive.

On another occasion, involving the annotated Hebrew New Testament, a printer was found in Jerusalem. He himself did not bind books but sent them out. After many false starts, a binder was found in a religious neighborhood of Jerusalem. The man said that he was opposed to religious coercion and had no problem with binding the New Testament or anything else. However, most of his customers were orthodox Jews, and he would have to do the work after hours. In the end, he could not even use his regular workers, and so three Bible Society staff members worked late into the night and helped him bind books.

Overall, it has become far easier in recent years to find professionals in all areas of publishing (typesetting, printing, and binding) ready to work with the New Testament.

New Hebrew Bible

For several decades Hebrew Bibles were composed of a strange mixture of typefaces and styles. No new typesetting had been done for perhaps thirty years, and Hebrew Bibles distributed before 1991 had different typefaces and page layouts in the Old and New Testaments. The Hebrew Bible published by the Bible Society in 1991 was completely new. It was laid out in two columns, saving space and making reading easier. It also included subject headings and running titles at the top of the page so you could find your way around more easily. *Qere* readings were clearly listed at the bottom of the page. And for the first time the Israeli user could read all of the Aramaic sections of Daniel and Ezra in Hebrew translation. Because of the new layout, the book only had about 1200 pages and for the first time looked like a book you can carry rather than like a brick.

Other Scripture Publications

Since the early 1980's a number of other scripture editions have been published in Israel. We can only make brief mention of them, most of which were intended for a specific segment of the believing community in the country.

The Holy Land Bible: In 1985 appeared the first ever English Bible to be printed in Israel. This rather strange project was sponsored by an organization from South Africa, who used the agencies of the Bible Society in Israel. They insisted on using the King James translation, which would effectively render it unintelligible to most Israeli readers. However, the book was intended for tourists, and it included as an addition a "Holy Land Concordance," a listing of significant Bible sites with the places where they are mentioned in scripture.

Aramaic Peshitta New Testament with Hebrew translation: This was another special order from the Bible Society. The sponsors were a group of German scholars who had, for the sole purpose of this book, formed the Aramaic Scriptures Research Society. On the belief (not held by

many serious scholars) that the Peshitta version of the New Testament represents an original Hebrew level of the New Testament textual tradition, they wanted the Aramaic printed in parallel columns with a Hebrew translation. It was printed in 1986.

Hebrew-Romanian New Testament: The Society for the Distribution of Hebrew Scriptures (SDHS) in England has produced a series of diglot New Testaments in Hebrew and other European languages. With one exception these were all published in England. That exception is the Hebrew-Romanian New Testament, published in 1987 through the offices of the Bible Society in Israel. This book was typeset by an Israeli company and printed and bound by the Franciscan Printing Press in the Old City of Jerusalem.

“The Messiah of Israel” in Amharic: The following year SDHS initiated what was probably the first scripture publication in Israel in the Amharic language. This was soon after Operation Moses, bringing Ethiopian Jews to Israel, had been widely publicized. The publication was a small booklet called “The Messiah of Israel,” which had already been printed in several other languages. It was a collection of Old Testament messianic scriptures together with their fulfillment in the New Testament. Fortunately it consisted almost entirely of scripture texts, which could be reproduced directly from an Amharic Bible. Typesetting Amharic is a particular challenge, as the language contains no less than 267 distinct letters. The Bible Society was embarrassed when the booklet was printed with one page upside down, even though they had engaged expert help in its preparation.

Hebrew-Russian and Hebrew-English Bibles: In the late 1980’s the Israeli representatives to SDHS split from the English organization and formed the Israel Association for the Dissemination of Biblical Writings (IADBW). They had as their first goal the production of a full diglot Bible in Hebrew and English. The Bible Society agreed to work on it and preparations were begun. However, it was just at that time that Russian Jews began to emigrate in large numbers to Israel, and it was decided to give priority to the production of a Bible in Hebrew and Russian. Any book which tries to place two languages side by side so that they line up is a major undertaking full of technical difficulties, and this book was no exception. Nevertheless, it was completed in 1991, printed and bound by Yanetz Press.

With the completion of the Hebrew-Russian Bible, work soon began on the English counterpart. It was completed in 1997. Several difficult questions had to be solved before this book could be produced. The Hebrew-Russian Bible had used the Delitzsch translation of the New Testament, making it difficult for new immigrants to understand. In this edition IADBW decided to make use of the Bible Society’s modern Hebrew translation.

The choice of the English version was a particularly complicated process. Several translations were eliminated because agreement could not be reached with the owners. In the case of the NIV the negotiations broke down when their translation committee could not agree to forego the poetic format in certain parts of the Old Testament text. In the end the choice fell to the New King James Version. This caused trouble in the New Testament because the NKJV and the Bible Society’s translation are based on two Greek texts with significant differences between them. The 1550 text on which the NKJV is based contains many verses which scholars have decided are later additions, and these do not appear in the 1968/1983 edition on which the modern translation is

based. This has led to confusion among readers who find a verse on the English side but find it missing in Hebrew.

Other scripture projects

Annotated New Testament: Soon after the Bible Society's modern translation was completed, it was decided that an edition should be produced with notes and helps for the reader. This was begun in the early 1980's and was assigned to a group of local scholars who knew Hebrew, Greek, and New Testament studies. The result was the 1991 publication of an edition which included introductions to the individual books of the New Testament as well as to the New Testament itself. There were also articles dealing with background subjects, extensive footnotes, a glossary of important terms and concepts, a full set of cross references, and color maps.

Children's Bible: Periodically the idea is raised that Israel needs a translation of the Old Testament in the language that people speak. This is, of course, particularly controversial because the only version which exists in Hebrew is the original Hebrew of Moses and the Prophets. The Bible Society conducted a survey in 1987 to determine public attitudes towards such a modern Hebrew Tanach. Surprisingly, the majority of Israelis responded positively to such an idea, and no less than 30% of those questioned said they would read the Bible more if they had such a translation.

The Bible Society's project never got under way because promised funds were not given. However, Hagefen Publishers began work in about 1994 on a translation of the Tanach for children. Genesis was published in 1997 as a trial project. If experience in other countries is anything to go on, this translation will probably become popular with the parents as much as with the children.

The "Children's Bible" published by Hagefen in 1993 was actually a translation (and adaptation) of the English edition of *Taylor's Bible Story Book* by Kenneth Taylor, the original paraphraser of the Living Bible.

New Testament Concordances: Apart from the Annotated Hebrew New Testament few study tools exist in Hebrew. A concordance to the Delitzsch New Testament was published in Jerusalem in 1973. It was based on the twelfth edition of Delitzsch (the BFBS edition of 1962). Work on it was begun in 1965 by J. Goldin, but he died after a year, and it was taken over by Paul Re'emi.

While it does not fit strictly into the first fifty years of the State, we may mention here also the nearly-completed concordance based on the modern Hebrew New Testament. This study tool, a project of the Bible Society, will be modeled after the popular Even Shoshan concordance of the Tanach.

Finally, it should come as no surprise that Hebrew scripture publication has begun to happen also as electronic media. For several years now the powerful Concordance Bible program for Macintosh has included the modern Hebrew New Testament. The Bible Society has also made this text and the Delitzsch available on computer disks.

What Next?

Bible publication, it would seem, is a never-ending business. What is still needed by the growing community of Hebrew-speaking believers in Israel? Perhaps the first on the list of many would be a full Bible with cross references. As strange as it sounds to those of us for whom a cross reference Bible is standard equipment, no reference edition of the Old Testament exists in Hebrew. Along with this someone will some day have to produce a fully annotated edition of the Tanach to go along with the annotated New Testament. As we have mentioned above, many expect some day to see a modern Hebrew Tanach, while others would like to have a thorough revision of the Delitzsch New Testament or a synopsis of the gospels in Hebrew.

With all that has been said above, it will seem indeed strange to say that one thing still needed is a simple one- or two-word designation for the whole Book. In today's Hebrew if you want to say "Bible," indicating that you do not mean just the Old Testament, you must use a phrase containing at least eight syllables.

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A “Messianic Jewish Church” in Eretz-Israel?

Gershon Nerel³⁰

After *Operation Mercy* in May 1948,³¹ a fresh starting point was possible for Jewish believers in Yeshua (JBY) in the new State of Israel. However, this beginning was neither easy nor simple. Demographically, militarily and economically, the young state still had to struggle for its very survival. Also those few JBY, about three dozen, who did remain in the Land and were scattered in the central cities like Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv-Jaffa and Haifa, were just trying to survive.³² JBY were a tiny group in the Land, and as there were those among them who insisted on keeping their faith secret,³³ only few visionaries within their circles could think about forming a distinctive infrastructure for an indigenous body of JBY.³⁴

Between Two Options: Expatriate Orientation and Indigenization

The newcomers among the multitudes of *Olim* (new immigrants) that poured into the Land in the early 1950's eagerly looked for ways of associating themselves with other individual Hebrew Christians and families. Particularly they sought to join fellowships and congregations of their brethren. However, local independent Messianic Jewish communities did not exist, except for two small assemblies — one in Jerusalem³⁵ and the other in Haifa.³⁶ On the other hand, the various western churches that already labored in the Land still offered an open door as an optional framework to these new immigrants. Among these denominations we should mention especially the major missionary organizations: the British Anglican “Church Mission to Jews” (CMJ),³⁷ the

³⁰ Gershon Nerel is the Israel Secretary for the International Messianic Jewish Alliance. He received his Ph.D. on “Messianic Jewish Self-identity in Eretz-Israel, 1917-1967” from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

³¹ See Gershon Nerel, “Attempts to Establish a ‘Messianic Jewish Church’ in Eretz- Israel,” in *Mishkan*, 28/1998, pp. 34-44.

³² See Gershon Nerel, “Rachel Bar-David: Mother of a Modern Israeli Messianic Jewish ‘Tribe,’” in *The Messianic Jew and Hebrew Christian*, vol. 67, 3, 1994, pp. 66-70.

³³ See Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir, *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem*, Autobiographical Sketches, Jerusalem 1977, p. 101. [unpublished ms.] Ben-Meir also used the pseudonyms *Moshe Tal* and *Moshe Hayerushalmi*.

³⁴ Paul Re’emi, “Challenge and Response,” in *The Hebrew Christian*, vol. 34, 1962, pp. 91-95. See also Gershon Nerel, “Solomon Ostrovsky: A Pioneer and ‘Watchman’ in Eretz-Israel,” in *The Messianic Jew and Hebrew Christian*, vol. 69, 1, 1996, pp. 5-8.

³⁵ Pauline Rose, “Letters From Jerusalem,” in *Jerusalem*, Organ of the Jewish Christian Community and the Jerusalem Fellowship, no. 25, October 1948, pp. 3- 5, and idem, “Letters From Jerusalem,” *ibid.*, no. 26, November 1948, pp. 9-11.

³⁶ Abram Poljak, “Letters from Mt. Carmel,” in *Jerusalem*, no. 20, May 1948, pp. 4-5; Pauline Rose, “The Lights of Haifa,” *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

³⁷ Roger G. Allison, “Marriage and Other Matters,” in *Jewish Missionary News*, vol. 41, issue 10, December

American Pentecostal “Christian and Missionary Alliance” (C&MA),³⁸ and the Lutherans, namely the Finnish “Evangelical Mission” (SLS)³⁹ and the Norwegian “Israel’s Mission.”⁴⁰

In the early 1950’s the expatriate missions were attempting to resume their functions in the Land to full capacity. Most of their staff were evacuated before the heavy atrocities began and later, when the situation calmed down, the missionaries renewed their work among the Jews. In principle, these missionaries wanted to reestablish in Israel the traditional mixed congregations, comprised of a gentile majority and a Jewish minority, under their denominational wings, as they did in Mandatory Palestine. They continued to do their best to attract JBY among the new immigrants and bring their gradual assimilation into their circles.

In light of this situation, Moshe Ben-Meir, for example, one of the central personalities among Israeli Messianic Jews, sharply criticized the churches and the missionaries in the Land and called them “Christian Babylon.” Ben-Meir even considered the traditional missionaries his “enemies” and painfully wrote about them, “Here, in Israel, we have men and women who are useless, have no vision, and have come to convert Jews to their particular branch of Christianity and sabotage all efforts of Messianic Jews to unite and be effective in their witness and ministry.”⁴¹

Thus, much more than in Mandatory Palestine, JBY in Israel had to struggle for their unique emancipation vis-à-vis the influential historical churches that were increasingly functioning in the Land. As Israeli citizens who aimed at expressing their Jewish identity, JBY needed to choose their way. Practically, the issues under consideration were as follows: Should they join the ecclesiastical congregations of the expatriate gentile churches, or should they establish free congregations of their own? Should they shape their theology and liturgy exclusively in Hebrew? How could they achieve legal status and a social recognition for their unique congregations and organizations?

These issues were dealt with through the continuous attempts of individual JBY to collectively shape their own patterns of grouping as well as genuinely define their beliefs and style the forms of their worship. Basically the trend that they followed was towards indigenization, namely to develop and maintain their theological and organizational independence apart from the traditional churches. Yet on the personal level they still kept close contacts with the representatives of the expatriate ecclesiastical organizations in Israel.

1951-January 1952, pp. 146-147. See also idem, “Summer in the Settlements,” *ibid.*, vol. 41, ssue 21, Oct.-Nov. 1953, pp. 331-332 .

³⁸ *Sixty-Fifth Year Annual Report for 1951 and Minutes of the General Council*, held at Atlanta, Georgia, May 1952, The Christian and Missionary Alliance, pp. 125- 127. Cf. Annual Report for 1953, Sixty-Seventh Year, *op.cit.*, pp.128-130.

³⁹ See Raakel Luomanen, *Portinvartijan majasta (Iloa ja arkea Israelissa 1953- 1989)*, Suomen Luthetysseura, Pieksämäki 1991.

⁴⁰ Laszlo G. Terray & ”ystein ”stenstand, *Den Norske Israelsmisjons Historie II (1944-1969)*, Nomi Forlag, Oslo n.d. (?1970), esp. pp. 141-154.

⁴¹ Moshe I. Ben-Meir, *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem*, pp. 47-50.

The “Jerusalem Jewish Christian Fellowship”

A handful of the “Jerusalem Fellowship” remained in the city during the siege and the war of 1948 under the leadership of Pauline Rose. They were most proud that they could continue to hold their services regularly in spite of the battles going on, yet they faced other problems. Several of the members of the community were arrested and interrogated by the Stern Group (*Lohamei Heruth Israel*). The whole Jewish Christian community was accused of spying under a religious cloak. Eventually they were discharged,⁴² but the congregation suffered a serious split.

Those who were released from prison, among them Baruch Karniel, introduced “The New Community,” adopting a liberal doctrinal tendency that refused to accept the accuracy of the Bible. Thus, for example, they also rejected the doctrine concerning Messiah’s return.⁴³ In response to this development, Abram Poljak, their superior leader who then lived on Mount Carmel in Haifa, strongly attacked these “separatists.” He named them “intoxicated souls” and blamed them for doing away with everything that would be a reminder of the Church, especially the image of the cross.

Poljak disapproved of the ex-prisoners’ attempt to remove the official flag of the community, comprised of a blue cloth as background and a white cross in the star of David that became their representative banner.⁴⁴ This flag, as an eye-catching symbol of their faith, regularly hung on the wall of their meeting room located in the center of the New City of Jerusalem.⁴⁵

Furthermore, Poljak also attacked this dissident faction of the original community for deciding to speak only of the “Messiah Jesus,” and thus ignoring and pushing into the background the “divine Sonship” of Yeshua. Consequently Poljak also expressed his dissatisfaction that they “no longer addressed their prayers to Yeshua but merely to God.” In other words, for Poljak “The New Community” lost the significant theological balance between Jewish nationalism and spiritual faith. He phrased this as follows: “Satan wants us to think so much and so long of our national king Jesus, until we forget the Lamb of God.”⁴⁶ Therefore the concrete Cross of Calvary, in the eyes of Poljak, had to retain its visibility in the congregation with no compromise.

However, in retrospect we observe a continuous consensus within Messianic Jewish circles to refrain from the public manifestation of a tangible cross. Currently there is a common view among Messianic Jews that such an act is too sensitive and too provocative for normative Jewish society because historically the cross also became a symbol for antisemites. This is continually remembered in Israel, the Land where the Crusaders held both cross and sword in their hands. Thus out of consideration for the feelings of their neighbors, Messianic Jews no longer exhibit the physical symbol of the cross in their congregation. This became a non-issue for them.

⁴² Pauline Rose, *The Siege of Jerusalem*, Patmos, London 1949, pp. 74-85. As for the later inclination of Rose towards an ecumenical approach of a liberal “Brotherhood of Goodwill,” see Pauline Rose, *Window on Mount Zion*, W.H. Allen, London and New York, 1973, pp. 64-66.

⁴³ Abram Poljak, “Purity of the Teaching,” in *Jerusalem*, no. 29, February 1949, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Since 1959 another emblem of the “Jerusalem Community” was a wooden candelabrum, with a cross inside the Star of David that was placed between the seven-branches.

⁴⁵ Abram Poljak, “The Fall. Letters From Mount Carmel,” in *Jerusalem*, no. 28, January 1949, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Abram Poljak, “The Cross Matters,” in *Jerusalem*, no. 28, January 1949, p. 5.

In this respect we also need to add and clarify that Messianic Jews do not disregard the significant message of the cross in the congregational teaching. The themes of the crucified Messiah, his atoning blood and the humiliation of the way of the cross are central components in their hermeneutics. At the same time, however, we should also note that unlike the Messianic Jews, Hebrew Catholics in Israel, as elsewhere, still use the symbol of the cross in their worship places, at their homes or as a personal ornament.

Another teaching that Poljak denounced in the “Jerusalem Community” was their approach to the Apostle Paul. This attitude, which Poljak defined as “For Yeshua – Against Paul,” was regarded by him as a “semi-Christian” idea. In fact, Poljak claimed that the community tried to follow the worldly footsteps of Israeli leading thinkers like the professors Martin Buber and Joseph Klausner of the Jerusalem Hebrew University. Namely, Poljak believed that it was a mistake to follow those who proclaimed that Jews should accept Yeshua as the “central Jewish figure,” but should reject Paul.⁴⁷

In other words, Poljak stressed that the congregation should be taught the “correct exegesis” that there is no real Yeshua without Paul, and that only through Paul was the highest revelation of the person and meaning of Yeshua given. Thus the functions of the community, according to Poljak, had to be as follows: 1) a pure childlike faith in Yeshua the King of the Jews and the personal Redeemer, and 2) loyalty to the Jewish people – without concessions to mere trends of the time or nationalistic tendencies.⁴⁸

The crisis in the “Jerusalem Fellowship” was solved by exclusions and by making admissions more difficult. As a matter of principle, the leadership under Poljak consented that their task to serve as “watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem” could be carried out by only few, a nucleus specially gifted and trained. Practically, the community did not focus on attempting to find those few. They had to come by themselves, led by God. However, even the few did not come. In fact after Poljak left for Germany in the mid-1950’s and died in Mxttlingen in 1963, other leaders also left the congregation.

Pauline Rose stopped expressing publicly her faith in Yeshua, joined other Jewish circles and finally also left the congregation. In 1965 she started a “Brotherhood of Goodwill” for Jews, Arabs and Christians on Mount Zion.⁴⁹ Albert von Springer, another salient leader of the group, also left the congregation and settled in Switzerland. The Fellowship “naturally dissolved” as it had no second generation or other new members.⁵⁰ Thus towards the early 1970’s the “Jerusalem Fellowship” drastically shrank and simply disappeared.⁵¹ In summary we should remark that the

⁴⁷ Abram Poljak, “The Cross Matters.”

⁴⁸ Abram Poljak, “The Cross Matters”. As for Poljak’s deep appreciation for Paul see also Abram Poljak, “Paul the Jew – And Jewry,” in *Jerusalem*, no. 18, March 1948, pp. 4-7.

⁴⁹ Pauline Rose, *Window on Mount Zion*, esp. pp. 140-141.

⁵⁰ Abram Poljak and Pauline Rose had no children. Albert von Springer remarried and his children who still live today in Israel did not adopt the faith of their father in Yeshua. As a matter of fact, the “Jerusalem Community” paid no attention at all to the issue of gradually raising a young generation and so passing on the faith in Yeshua from within their circles. An exception is the Haimoff (Bar David) family, in which all seven children remained committed JBY.

⁵¹ Today “*Jerusalem*,” the periodical organ of this group, still continues to be printed in England. However,

community members hardly spoke Hebrew. Their Friday and Sabbath liturgies, the highlight of their worship, as well as their prayers, were usually carried out in German or English.

The "Union of Messianic Jews in Israel"

The idea of forming a "*Union of Messianic Jews in Israel*" (*Ichud Yehudim Meshihiim Belsrael*) was crystallized within a steering committee of eight Messianic Jews that gathered for a preliminary meeting in November 1950. The participants were: Moshe Ben-Meir, Martha Baruch, Israel Weber, David Salpeter, Ze'ev Kofsman, Abram Poljak, Menachem Remer and Shmuel Hermann. Their meeting took place in the "Church of the Scandinavian Seamen," led by the Norwegian pastor Per Faye Hansen, on 41 Meir Street in Haifa. Their vision was to revive the "Hebrew Christian Alliance of Palestine" that ended its career shortly before the State of Israel was declared.

Moshe Ben-Meir, in his opening speech, said:

*Here in Eretz-Israel we live within a heavier spiritual war than one finds in the Jewish Dispersion. The forces of Satan and the world of demons work here harder and more diligently than in any other place. Satanic forces are fighting especially against us, the Messianic Jews, the remnant of Israel today. Following the establishment of the State, our spiritual responsibility has doubled and tripled.*⁵²

The purpose of the participants was to unite the Messianic Jews in Israel and to provide encouragement and a guiding hand to the brethren among the new immigrants.

The founding members of the Union were aware of the fact that there was no doctrinal unity among JBY in the Land. One of the main topics that caused many disagreements was whether to observe Saturday or Sunday for worship. Ben-Meir, for example, claimed that the question of observing the Sabbath, especially in the State of Israel, became a non-issue. "Here in this land," he said, "it is natural for Jews to keep the Sabbath. This is now a Law of the State to keep the seventh day and so we do."⁵³

Eventually during the Feast of Hanukkah, December 8-9, 1950, the first general conference of Messianic Jews in the State of Israel solemnly gathered together. In the notes of Moshe Ben-Meir it was mentioned that to the convocation, that met at the YMCA auditorium in Jerusalem, came about 200 Jewish Jesus believers.⁵⁴ A few non-Jewish believers were also present there, representing mainly the Anglicans and the Lutherans. The Israeli Hebrew press showed a special interest in this event.⁵⁵

all the published material is from reprinted articles of 40 and 50 years ago.

⁵² A Hebrew Draft of "*Report of Meeting of Representatives of Messianic Jews in Israel*", held in Haifa on November 1, 1950. Unpublished manuscript.

⁵³ "*Report of Meeting of representatives of Messianic Jews in Israel*," *ibid*.

⁵⁴ Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir, *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem*, p. 115. However, among the personal papers of Ze'ev Kofsman dealing with the same issue it is mentioned that there were about 60 participants only.

⁵⁵ An extensive report appeared in the daily *Yedioth Chadashot* of 21 December 1950: "Ninety persons took part in the convention, among them 10 non-Jews. However voting at the convention was restricted to Jews only. The Shabbat evening service closed with the singing of 'Hatikvah' (Israel's national anthem) to which was added a verse proclaiming Jesus as the King of the Jews."

A committee of 13 was elected, seven for Jerusalem, three for Jaffa-Tel-Aviv and three for Haifa, and charged with the building up of the Union, the drafting of its constitution and its representation to the government. They naively thought that they would easily get an official recognition by the Ministry of Religions. Rabbi Daniel Zion, ex-chief rabbi in Sofia, Bulgaria, was elected as the President. As the committee of the Union was democratically elected, its members believed that they were the only body that had the right to speak, locally and internationally, in the name of all JBY in Israel.

This “monopolistic representative approach,” one sees in retrospect, caused many disputes and in fact repeated itself in the coming years with other attempts to create similar bodies. This centralistic approach prevented the establishment of an enduring national institution of JBY in Israel. Still, through the Union, Abram Poljak and Ben-Meir, two of the leading persons at the convention, moved toward establishing a Messianic Synagogue in Israel.

In this convention Messianic Jews declared that they believe in Yeshua the Messiah as their promised Savior, accept both the Old and New Testaments, but do not believe in all the doctrines which the gentile churches have evolved. Specifically, “their understanding of the person and teaching of the Messiah is purely Jewish.”⁵⁶ This radical theological statement caused much speculation and we shall deal with this issue further on. At the conference, however, JBY also expressed their great need for an independent organization in Israel and that jointly they were committed to a living witness for Yeshua in Israel.⁵⁷

Outside of Israel it was also reported that “Ex-Chief Rabbi becomes Bishop” and that “the elected first Bishop of the Hebrew Christian Church and the Congress called on the Government to recognize the church as a religious community within the Jewish nation.” Interestingly, while JBY felt a need to immediately correct the report that they had a “Bishop,” they made no attempts whatsoever to deny that they did establish a national church.⁵⁸

The request to the authorities for recognition as a “Synagogal Unit” within Jewry was turned down. This rejection, following their high expectations for State recognition, caused strong feelings of disappointment which quickly led to the disintegration of the Union. Another reason offered for the fast breakdown is that the Jerusalemite JBY decided to dissolve the Union as they were totally under the influence of the missionary organizations. Ben Meir wrote: “the Missions are not interested in a Union of Messianic Jews which would be independent of them. In their interests it is more convenient when Messianic Jews are divided.”⁵⁹

Finally the ‘Union’ disbanded after only several months of activity. The President, Daniel Zion, found it impossible to continue and function without having a legal and recognized status in Israel. In addition to that, most of the members of the elected committee decided to resign. Unity was not achieved among them.

⁵⁶ “Convention of Messianic Jews,” in *Jerusalem*, no. 53, February 1951, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁷ Agnes Waldstein, “The Jerusalem Conference of Messianic Jews,” in *Jerusalem*, no. 54, March 1951, pp. 2-4.

⁵⁸ “Conference in Jerusalem,” in *Jerusalem*, no. 54, March 1951, pp. 4-5. See also “Association of Messianic Believers in Israel,” in *Jerusalem*, no. 59, August 1951, pp. 7-8.

⁵⁹ Moshe Ben-Meir, *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem*, p. 118.

The “Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel”

A second national convention of Messianic Jews in the State of Israel was organized in January 1954 by Max Enker, the Secretary for Israel of the International Hebrew Christian Alliance (IHCA).⁶⁰ About 100 JBY met again at the YMCA auditorium in Jerusalem and a constitution was prepared for the “Jewish Christian Alliance of Israel” (*Die Judenchristliche Allianz in Israel*). The constitution was written in German as Enker and his friends did not speak Hebrew. Dr. Otto F. Cahn, from the Scottish Church in Jaffa, was elected President, Rev. Jakob Blum from Jerusalem was the Vice President and Max Enker served as the Secretary.⁶¹ Also within these circles the Hebrew language was usually absent.

Moshe Ben-Meir, Abram Poljak, Daniel Zion and others who initiated the formation of the Union in 1950 were not involved in this new Alliance. In fact Ben-Meir sharply criticized it, as follows:

*The SECOND convocation was called by a Committee of ‘Missionary’ Messianic Jews, that is, by people who are in the employ of Missions. This conference did not permit the attendance of Gentile brethren, excluded unbaptized believers from membership, and emphasized its Protestantism by excluding Messianic Jews of the Roman Catholic persuasion.*⁶²

Thus Ben-Meir also attacked the IHCA for coming from abroad and “imposing” on the locals a branch of its own institution and thus having direct control over Israeli believers.

Strategically, the Alliance leaders intended to establish a “Messianic Church” in Israel. Again, however, the term *church* was not used, especially in Hebrew, because it was felt that emotionally and historically they could not use such a heavily loaded gentile term. “Alliance” could convey a more neutral meaning. Anyhow, the Alliance had three small centers: in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa. Its constitution specified that theologically and practically the single authoritative guideline for members of the Alliance is Scripture, both Old and New Testaments.⁶³

As a matter of fact, the “Max Enker Alliance” in Israel was indeed the ‘baby’ of the International Hebrew Christian Alliance. In 1950, for example, the leadership of the IHCA had already reached the following resolution:

The Executive of the IHCA regards the establishment of an indigenous Church of Christ in the State

⁶⁰ Max Enker came to Israel from Holland in 1952. He replaced the Norwegian Missionary Magne Solheim who represented in Israel the International Hebrew Christian Alliance. Enker never became an Israeli citizen and left the country in 1958.

⁶¹ Heinz David Leuner, “Judenchristliche Allianz in Israel,” in *Der Zeuge*, Organ der Internationalen Judenchristlichen Allianz, no. 12, June 1954, p. 3. According to this source there were 200 participants. Moshe Ben-Meir, however, wrote in his notes that there were only about 100 JBY. The IHCA reported that there were 140 Hebrew Christians “within our Alliance in Israel.” See Harcourt Samuel, “News and Notes,” in *The Hebrew Christian*, vol. 28, #1, 1955, p. 4. Shlomo Ze’ev Kofsman mentioned that there were only 80 JBY.

⁶² Moshe Ben-Meir (signed as ‘Sabra’), *Toward the Messianic Church in Israel*, n.d. (?1955), unpublished manuscript.

⁶³ “Charakter der Organization,” # 2, in: *Verfassung und Regeln der Judenchristlichen Allianz in Israel*. Private archives of ‘Schwester Ida.’

*of Israel as the goal to be pursued both by the Alliance and the missionary societies — believing that such a Church can best present the Gospel to the people of Israel and shepherd believers in Christ, and it pledges its support to all who pursue this aim.*⁶⁴

Consequently, the inclusive doctrinal basis of the IHCA also served as the theological framework for the Israeli Alliance. This included, for example, public confession of faith in the deity and resurrection of Yeshua, and belief in the vicarious suffering of Yeshua on the Cross of Golgotha.⁶⁵

The clear task of this Association in Israel was grasped by the officers of the IHCA in England as follows:

*To foster the life of the newly formed Israeli Alliance, to strengthen its fellowship and witness, till it becomes, under God, an effective influence for Christ within the Nation; To work out and propagate, both in Israel and among Hebrew Christians generally, a truly Biblical Zionism. To do this is probably more important than to plan for a Hebrew Christian Church, which will almost certainly come into existence by itself. Such a Biblical Zionism rightly understood can contribute much to the shaping of an indigenous church in Israel.*⁶⁶

We should note that Per "sterbye, in his book *The Church in Israel*, wrongly concluded that "in opposition to the policy of the IHCA, the Hebrew Christian Alliance in Israel has attempted to form a Hebrew Christian Church."⁶⁷ This definitely was not in contrast with the policy of the IHCA. Although the IHCA did decide in principle that it was not in favor of forming a Hebrew Christian Church,⁶⁸ it made an exception with regard to Israel. In the State of Israel the IHCA had deliberately chosen to establish a Church for JBY.⁶⁹ Furthermore, "Biblical Zionism" for the IHCA was *not categorically* "more important than planning a Hebrew Christian Church," as "sterbye only partly quotes from the documents. "Biblical Zionism," unlike the mistaken interpretation of "sterbye, was not merely a substitute for a Messianic Jewish Church. In those years, in fact "Biblical Zionism" was rather grasped as a most instrumental tool towards creating a national church in Israel.

However, in 1958 Max Enker returned to Holland with his family and the "Israeli Alliance" disintegrated. No common ground was established between the Jewish and gentile believers and particularly many disputes arose between the Jewish believers themselves. According to Enker

⁶⁴ Harry L. Ellison, Nahum Levison, Harcourt Samuel, "Report on Israel," in *The Hebrew Christian*, vol. 23, 1950, p. 75.

⁶⁵ See Gershon Nerel, *Messianic Jews in Eretz-Israel (1917-1967): Trend and Changes in Shaping Self Identity*, Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem 1996, pp. 149-151. [Hebrew, unpublished].

⁶⁶ "Minutes of the Ninth International Conference of the IHCA, Held at Chicago, 20- 22 September 1955," in *The Hebrew Christian*, vol. 28, 1955, p. 109. We should also mention that the IHCA handled a special fund named "Abraham's Vineyard Ltd." that held a designated sum of £4,590 for the erection of a Hebrew Christian Church in Israel. In this connection there was negotiation for a suitable site. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁶⁷ Per "sterbye, *The Church in Israel*, Glerup, Lund, Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia no. xv, Denmark 1970, p. 170.

⁶⁸ Harcourt Samuel, "The History of the International Hebrew Christian Alliance," in *Mishkan*, 14/1991, p. 79.

⁶⁹ "Minutes of the Eighth International Conference of the International Hebrew Christian Alliance Held at Woudschoten, Holland 18-20 July 1950," in *The Hebrew Christian*, vol. 23, 1950, p. 67.

there were in Israel too many Messianic Jewish “sects.”⁷⁰

“The Israeli Messianic Assembly — Jerusalem Congregation”

Unlike the “Union,” the “Alliance” and the “Fellowship” that formerly dissolved and disappeared, the “Israeli Messianic Assembly – Jerusalem Congregation” (*Kehila Meshihit Israelit – Kehilat Yerushalayim*) still functions today. The initiator of the *Kehila* was Shlomo Ze’ev Kofsman, who nurtured a deep vision for developing an indigenous Israeli congregation. The other founders who joined him were: Eva (Hava) Kronhaus, Rina Preiss, Yvette Kofsman (Shlomo’s wife), Izidor Wolf, Avraham Fried, Avraham Zuhokowitch, Rachel Greenberg, Ruth Appel and Shmuel Ekroth.

In January 1957 Kofsman sent an official letter to the Governor of Jerusalem in the Ministry of Interior Affairs, requesting to formally register the Messianic Assembly as an Ottoman Society.⁷¹ In this letter the founders asked to implement their civilian right for achieving legal recognition for JBY according to the *Declaration of Independence* of the State of Israel. They wrote:

We are an Assembly of Messianic Jews, Jews who believe in Yeshua the Messiah who came in the past and will return in the future as the Almighty promised in the Old Testament. We neither converted our religion nor our faith since the Messiah himself said ‘I did not come to abolish the Torah but to fulfill it.’⁷²

In their letter Kofsman and his friends expressed to the authorities that 2000 years ago Messianic Jews were part and parcel of the Jewish Nation in Jerusalem, and together with their people went to the Diaspora, suffered expulsions and wanderings. Now JBY were returning to the Land with the ingathering of the people according to biblical prophecy. They emphasized that “out of belief in our Messiah, in our thoughts and deeds we share the destiny of our people.”⁷³ In their application they frequently compared the situation of JBY to the model of Abraham who was required by God to follow a unique path.

Only about a year later was the request for legal recognition granted. For the first time in the State of Israel a corporation of JBY received legal approbation.⁷⁴ This unprecedented registration of a Messianic *Kehila* enabled the group to act openly and to fulfill, as a legitimate entity, the declared aims of the congregation: to provide a framework for common worship (*Avodat Adonai*),

⁷⁰ Per “sterbye, *The Church in Israel*, pp. 170-171. Among the Presidents of the Alliance served Hayim Joseph Haimoff and Shlomo Ze’ev Kofsman.

⁷¹ The legal status of an Ottoman Society passed from the Turkish rule in the Land through the Mandatory regime directly to the Israeli statutory system. In 1980 the status of Ottoman Society was cancelled and instead the Israeli Law introduced the Amuta structure that provides a legal framework for non-profit and charitable associations.

⁷² Gershon Nerel, *Messianic Jews in Eretz-Israel*, pp.171-172.

⁷³ Copy of letter dated 23.2.1957, written by Kofsman in response to another letter from the Ministry of Interior, official File no. 11/620, dated 16.1.1957.

⁷⁴ A letter with a positive reply was sent to Kofsman on February 25, 1958. The foundation of the Messianic Assembly as an Ottoman Society was publicized according to the rules in the daily newspaper “Davar” on Friday March 7, 1958, p. 6, under the code number 9960.

for mutual encouragement and for providing spiritual and material assistance to members of the Assembly. The original meeting place of the assembly was on 233 Prophets Street in Jerusalem, the residential apartment of Kofsman.⁷⁵

Interestingly, in the official constitution of the Assembly which was presented to the government, no specific details were given concerning their articles of faith. Probably the reason for that was that they anticipated “too delicate questions” from the Ministry and wished to avoid procedural complications because of theological issues. The formal membership in the Assembly was not stipulated on baptism; however, within their inner circles they made it very clear that they literally believed in Scripture, Old and New Testaments, in miracles, including the virgin birth of Yeshua, in Messiah’s deity and in Israel’s election and end-time role.⁷⁶

In 1961 the Assembly moved from Prophets Street to 4 Gershon Agron Street near Kings Hotel. They moved into a large building that was owned then by the Assemblies of God. Out of his Pentecostal and Charismatic convictions Kofsman developed close contacts with the French and American Assemblies. A detailed list of “Articles of Faith” was published by Kofsman in the French magazine “Shalom” that was edited by the French Pentecostals who supported him financially. In this “creed” it was written:

*The Messianic Assembly of Jerusalem believes in the complete Word of God and does not reject any truth that it reveals. The Assembly believes in: 1) Salvation through the grace of Yeshua, both for Jew and for Gentile; 2) Forgiveness of sins through the blood of Yeshua; 3) Repentance and faith that are instrumental for salvation; 4) Baptism in water by immersion; 5) Baptism of the Holy Spirit accompanied with spiritual manifestations; 6) Spiritual gifts granted for the edification of the Assembly; 7) Miracles of divine healing; 8) The second coming of Yeshua as declared by the Prophets and Apostles; 9) God’s rightful judgement of the living and the dead through Yeshua; 10) All other truths explicitly expressed in Scripture.*⁷⁷

Kofsman did not look at the Assembly merely as a local congregation in Jerusalem. He rather had a national vision that the Assembly should function as an umbrella organization for the whole body of JBY in Israel. This idea was mainly reflected in the new magazine named *Halapid* (The Torch), that became the official organ of the Assembly. This publication, edited by “Rabbi Kofsman, Rabbi Ben-Meir, Rabbi Goldin and Rina Preiss,”⁷⁸ intended to speak for all JBY in Israel and to represent their views in public. The motto of the editors in *Halapid* was to restore the characteristics of the first-century Jerusalem congregation of JBY.

Kofsman and his colleagues wished to bridge a gap of almost 2000 years of history and

⁷⁵ Kofsman immigrated to Israel in 1948 after the State was established. He died in 1976 and was buried in the central Jewish cemetery of Givat-Shaul in Jerusalem. His two daughters and widow eventually left the country.

⁷⁶ In his Shabbat and mid-week sermons Kofsman, like Ben-Meir, Poljak, Ostrovsky and Haimoff, interpreted Old and New Testaments almost verbatim, accepting the infallibility of Scripture. He used to say in French: ‘Parole de Dieu infaillible.’ Namely, the canonical status of Scripture was beyond doubt for them.

⁷⁷ “Confession de foi,” in *Shalom*, Journal d’information de l’oeuvre de Dieu parmi son peuple en Israel, Granville, Manche, # 18, Juin 1961, p. 3.

⁷⁸ *Halapid* appeared irregularly only in Hebrew and had only four issues, between 1960-1962. Its subtitle was: “The Organ of the Israeli Messianic Assembly that is the reestablishment of the early authentic Messianic *Kehila*.”

mentality. As a matter of fact, the Assembly was regarded by these leaders as a direct continuation or revival, both ideologically and actively, of the primitive Jewish church in Jerusalem. They grasped this continuation as a natural spiritual development, precisely parallel to the pattern of the modern Jewish nation that returns to its homeland, reviving its sovereignty and national identity through the Zionist movement. Namely, “exactly as the Jews do not come to this land as foreigners or invaders, but to inherit the patrimony of their fathers, so we do not come to the Israeli Messianic Assembly as proselytes, but rather we who are saved return to our spiritual possession.”⁷⁹

Although the Assembly endeavored since its foundation until the late 1960’s to become *the* general roof organization for all JBY in Israel, as for example its constitution also mentioned the planting of other branches under its auspices, in practice it eventually became merely a local congregation in Jerusalem. The Assembly had no “satellite fellowships” as it originally expected to develop. In fact the various congregations of JBY in Israel that expanded throughout the years preferred to establish independent infrastructures of their own. These other younger congregations were also established only on the local level.

Thus we do not find in Israel the formation of a national Jewish church according to a pyramidal system, as it exists, for example, within the traditional “State Churches” in the Lutheran and Anglican worlds. Similarly, the Messianic Body in Israel did not adopt the structural system of the Jewish Chief Rabbinate that was created by the British in Mandatory Palestine to counterbalance the Moslem and Christian religious institutions in the Land. Furthermore, Kofsman’s vision to establish a “Messianic Jewish Community” (*Eda Meshihit*), expecting to achieve unique rights as given to the other recognized religious communities in Israel like, for example, the Karaites, was not realized.⁸⁰ If, however, such a move had been successful, it probably would have caused the statutory incorporation of JBY as a Christian denomination in Israel, alongside the other churches, and thus would have affected the development of a Jewish identity and witness.

In 1969 the Assembly needed to leave the building it occupied, as the Assemblies of God decided to sell their property in Agron Street on the commercial market. On this occasion the Assembly reshaped its membership and its charismatic focus. A new start began in the life of the Assembly on Shabbat December 6th 1969, when other JBY in Jerusalem chose to join Kofsman’s Assembly. The central persons in the new formation were as follows: Ze’ev and Yvette Kofsman, Yaakov and Leah Goren, Victor and Suzy Smadja, Elias and Ruth Sarikas, Hayim and Elisheva Fastman, Zvi and Neomi Kalisher, Gaston and Suzan Gigi, Amikam Tavor and Rachel Greenberg.⁸¹ Victor Smadyah split from the Finnish Lutheran Shalhevetyah congregation and brought with him many from this congregation into the new merger.

The new meeting place of the Assembly was on 56 Prophets Street, in a building that then

⁷⁹ Ze’ev Kofsman, “Prolegomena,” in *Halapid*, vol. 1, January 1st 1960, pp. 2-4.

⁸⁰ In principle Israel follows the British “Religious Communities Organization Ordinance,” put in practice since 1926. See R.H. Drayton, *The Laws of Palestine*, II, London 1934, pp. 1292-1293.

⁸¹ *Record of Minutes of the Israeli Messianic Assembly*, 6.12. 1969, p. 1. Five members were elected on 14.2.1970 as the “Assembly Committee” (*Vaad Hakehila*): Ze’ev Shlomo Kofsman (Chairman), Victor Smadja (Secretary) and Yaakov Goren (Treasurer). I am indebted to Elias Sarikas for this source.

belonged to the “Christian and Missionary Alliance.” During the British Mandate this building was called “House of Seekers After Truth” (*Beit Dorshei Emet*) and served as a library and reading-room.⁸² After a short negotiation with Warren Graham, the C&MA representative in Israel, on January 27, 1971 the Assembly was notified that the C&MA had received a donation for the property and transferred it to the congregation as a gift, free of charge. We should also point out that since the early 1970’s the Assembly has been responsible for annually arranging summer camps for Messianic children and teenagers. These activities, on a national basis, are open to youngsters from all the congregations in Israel and are supported by volunteers from all over the country.⁸³ We should also add that during the 1990s a joint summer camp venture was developed by the greater Tel Aviv (Gush Dan) congregations at Baptist Village.

The Place of the Historical Creeds

As Messianic Jews in Israel come from differing and even opposing theological backgrounds, like the Anglicans, Lutherans, Baptists, Brethren, Pentecostals and Calvinists, as well as those who call themselves “free thinkers,” they could hardly agree upon a common and official creed. In fact even the term ‘creed’ *per se* sometimes became problematic for them and often it is simply avoided. “Creed” reminds them of the traditional creeds of the historical churches that they refused to accept. The formulas of the various creeds and symbols of the early Church, and many other dogmas that were adopted both within the Catholic and the Protestant worlds, are frequently regarded by them as unbiblical. Thus certain Messianic Jews like Moshe Ben-Meir could not separate the contents of the Nicean Creed from anti-Jewish resolutions of the AD 325 Nicean Council.

For Messianic Jews the Creeds of the traditional Churches are an integral part of the “apostate gentile theologies” that intentionally abandoned the Jewish heritage and instead chose pagan practices like Christmas trees, Santa Clauses and Easter Bunnies. Thus the historical creeds are not viewed by Messianic Jews as binding or as precise and authoritative expressions of faith. For them the creeds represent the churches that dropped the biblical calendar and feasts and aimed at replacing the Jews as *Verus Israel*, the true Israel.

Hayim Haimoff, for example, asked if a creed is necessary, as it might detract basic aspects of the whole truth. Namely, is a creed or a catechism, as a “theological extract,” too minimizing for the biblical faith? In the fellowship that gathered in his home in Ramat-Gan, Haimoff taught that the entire body of verses scattered throughout Scripture should be regarded as a “comprehensive creed.” In fact Haimoff also used to explain that Holy Scripture should be interpreted in its totality, without limiting its message solely to few sentences.⁸⁴

⁸² Also called the “Tin Tabernacle.” See William F. Smalley, ed., *Alliance Missions in Palestine, Arab Lands and Israel, 1890-1970*, A mimeographed compilation of sources, C&MA, New-York, New-York, 1971, pp. 221-222, 501-502. During the 1930’s and 1940’s Haim Haimoff used to work here as a librarian.

⁸³ For more than two decades the youth activities of the Assembly have been carried out under the supervision of Warren and Linda Graham. See also: Jacob Goren, “Summer Camp in Jerusalem,” in *The Chosen People*, November 1972, p. 5.

⁸⁴ Haim Joseph Haimoff, “A Letter from Haifa,” in *Salvation*, American Association for Jewish Evangelism, vol. 10, #3, March 1956, p. 8.

Particularly with regard to Christological definitions, many Messianic Jews deliberately preferred to avoid reference to any traditional ecclesiastical creed. They insisted on using New Testament terminology exclusively, without mentioning, for example, the concept of the "Trinity" in the formal text of an approved creed. In other words, they were convinced that when coming to christological definitions, the use of the Hebrew language would naturally make a substantial difference. Thus, for example, they argued that within a single and simple Hebrew term, the concept of "Messiah," the full divinity as well as the complete humanity of the Savior were reflected. Interestingly, could we today discover some similar patterns with regard to the messianic attributes given to the 'Lubavitcher' Rabbi, Menachem Schneerson, of the 'Chabad' movement?

Some Messianic Jews even refrain from openly mentioning that there are three persons of one identical substance in the godhead. Thus the Christological concepts within their circles are not necessarily reflected within their exegesis through terms like *personae* and *naturae*. When they do refer to Christological issues they prefer phrases taken from the Bible, relying upon the canonical authority of the text. They sense they are expressing themselves in the same way that the first apostles did. They desire to develop nonconformist hermeneutics.

At the same time, however, teachers like Baruch Maoz, the founder and leader of "Grace and Truth Christian Assembly,"⁸⁵ openly publicized a short "credo," saying *inter alia*, that:

*We believe in the unity of the Godhead and in the co-equality of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, sovereign in creation, providence and redemption. That Jesus is Israel's promised Messiah. He came to this world as a real human being, born of a virgin, everlasting and fully both God and man. In the community of believers of all ages, and in the Church.*⁸⁶

Maoz in fact regrets that "great doctrinal statements on the church are often neglected," and that "the most common underlying theology of the Christian faith in Israel is an undefined and unconscious Arminianism."⁸⁷ This view is expressed as contrasted with emphasized Calvinist teachings like predestination.

Jewish believers in Yeshua are very much aware of the fact that sometimes their non-Jewish Christian brothers in faith, both in Israel and abroad, still expect them to automatically adopt the creeds of the traditional churches. While ignoring or bypassing the historical creeds, sometimes Messianic Jews are not really tolerated by certain ecclesiastics who consider them "too Judaistic" and even regard them as "heretical Ebionites."

Per "sterbye and Messianic Jewish Articles of Faith

While examining the "creed" of "The Israeli Messianic Assembly" as it is reflected in *Halapid*, the Danish historian Per "sterbye claims that it has "many omissions" and that JBY, in order to please other Jews, are too apologetic in their theology. Namely that "the creed is made more

⁸⁵ Since 1974 Baruch Maoz has been the editor of *Me'et Le'et* Messianic magazine. "Grace and Truth Christian Assembly" was founded in 1976. This Assembly gathered first in Rehovot and is now located in Rishon Letzion.

⁸⁶ Leaflet *Introducing Grace and Truth Christian Assembly*, POBox 75, Rishon Letzion, n.d.

⁸⁷ Baruch Maoz, *The Gospel Scene in Israel*, Christian Witness to Israel, Chislehurst, Kent n.d., p.7.

indefinite” in comparison to the “Apostolic Creed,” and that JBY intentionally omit the divinity of Yeshua as the Son of God, “a most controversial point for Jews.”⁸⁸

Obviously “sterbye’s starting point for such comparisons is the text of the church creeds. However, “sterbye referred only to the five points of the “creed” and completely ignored other articles in *Halapid* that absolutely relate to the divine character of Yeshua, his virgin birth, etc. Thus, for example, in a long article entitled “The Tasks of King Messiah,” Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir widely presents his “orthodox” christological concepts. It seems, therefore, that a more thorough reading of Messianic Hebrew texts would have prevented “sterbye from reaching hasty conclusions.

Interestingly, Ben-Meir even argued that a “minimalistic creed” of seven words in Hebrew is sufficient to express a serious christological doctrine. JBY, according to him, should rely solely upon the basis of one short statement: *“I believe with a perfect faith in Yeshua the Messiah the Lord.”*⁸⁹ Ben-Meir’s argument is explained as follows:

*We do not seek to escape anything. If our seven-worded creed causes offense, misunderstanding, and suggests some doubts as to our orthodoxy and fundamentalism, it is not our fault. The fault lies at the door of the so-called “Church Fathers.” The creed that we, Messianic Jews, repeat is the rock-bottom foundation of the Church of God. Formulated by St. Peter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it was ratified by our Lord Himself. Turn to Matt. 16:15. The Hebrew concept expressed by the word Hamashiah is the seed-plot of all saving faith and saving truths. This word covers and includes every detail in the divine plan of Redemption, each and every fact and truth that should and must be believed with the heart in order to be eternally saved.*⁹⁰

Clearly both “sterbye and Ben-Meir do not represent merely their private views on these matters. Especially with regard to these issues the linguistic dimension is of utmost importance.

Conclusion

Not each and every believer in Yeshua, Jew or gentile, envisioned the establishment of a Messianic Jewish Church in Eretz-Israel. The opponents of this idea argued that JBY are indeed the stem of a large tree, yet they should not officially separate themselves from the worldwide body of Messiah.

The “Union” in 1951, the “Alliance” in 1958 and the “Fellowship” in 1969 were disbanded mainly because of personal and theological disagreements. A central issue in those conflicts was whether to permit, on the one hand, the involvement of non-Jewish Christians, e.g. from the local missions and churches, and on the other hand, to permit the involvement of representatives from Messianic Jewish organizations abroad like the *IHCA*.

In reaction to attempts to create an independent and genuine corporate entity of JBY, leaders among the missionary organizations in Israel decried them as manifesting renewed “Judaizing” tendencies. However, while the gentile Christians spoke about belonging to the universal body of

⁸⁸ Per “sterbye, *The Church in Israel*, p. 158.

⁸⁹ In Hebrew: “Ani Ma’amin Be-emuna Shelema Be-Yeshua Hamashiach Haadon.”

⁹⁰ Moshe I. Ben-Meir, *The Creed of Messianic Jews in the Land of Israel*, Haifa n.d. (no. 63 in list of articles in Manuscript form). See also Gershon Nerel, *Messianic Jews in Eretz-Israel*, pp. 175-180.

believers in Yeshua, practically they looked after the specific interests of their denominations.⁹¹ Furthermore, fears were also expressed in the same circles in reaction to the possibility of having a modern Jewish-Israeli Protestant “Bishop” in Jerusalem.

Such a development, so non-Jewish Church leaders reasoned, would undermine the traditional authority and prestige of the existing gentile ecclesiastical leadership. An independent and authoritative Jewish bishop, sitting on the See of James (Yaakov), brother of Jesus in Jerusalem, could, so they reasoned, decrease the gentile spiritual prerogatives not only in the Holy Land but in the global Christian milieu as well.⁹²

It seems that the source for tensions within a “Messianic Congregation,” past and present, focuses around the question of which *modus vivendi* to follow within fellowships in which both Jewish and gentile believers worship together. Often the non-Jews wish to retain the church traditions of the past two millennia. The Jews, on the other hand, wish to ignore many of these traditions and restore the Jewishness of the primitive Jerusalem Church. The International Hebrew Christian Alliance, for example, faced this problem when it distinguished between full members (Jews) and associates (non-Jews). This seems to be the real reason behind the policy adopted by the IHCA to drop its original vision to create a unique national Church for JBY.

As a matter of fact, the IHCA set a significant example when it reversed its “Church policy” and decided that by all means JBY should not establish a worldwide exclusive Jewish church. It seems that the same pattern of endorsing the principle of maintaining a free Fellowship of Messianic Jewish congregations was practically followed also in Eretz-Israel. Maintaining a loose fellowship between the various groups was preferred rather than promoting the oversight of a constitutional church headed by a Messianic Bishop or an Archbishop.

However, many leaders of the early and formative decades of the State of Israel, like Abram (“Bram”) Poljak, Moshe Ben-Meir, Hayim Joseph Haimoff (Bar-David), Solomon Ostrovsky and Shlomo Ze’ev Kofsman were expressing a strong and common belief in the fulfillment of biblical prophecies concerning the end-time. Especially they taught that the establishment of the State of Israel marks a prophetic milestone, highlighting the special task of JBY through the variety of their grouping forms. Thus, either through home fellowships, national institutions or an international alliance, JBY realize that they fill a significant part in the historical process that intensively leads toward Yeshua’s soon return.

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⁹¹ See, for example, Max Enker, “Abschied von Israel,” in *Der Zeuge*, No. 20, November 1958, pp. 8-10.

⁹² See, for example, Hubert Panteny, “This Time, and Our Task,” in *Jerusalem*, no 62/63, November/December 1951, pp. 6-8; Moshe I Ben Meir, “Our Mission,” no. 53 in list of manuscripts, Jerusalem, n.d.; cf. David A. Rausch, “Hebrew Christian Renaissance and Early Conflict with Messianic Judaism,” in *Fides et Historia*, vol 15, 1983, pp. 67-79; See also recently: Gershon Nerel, “Primitive Jewish Christians in the Modern Thought of Messianic Jews,” in *Le judéo-christianisme ancien.; Histoire, littérature, archéologie*, Proceedings of International Colloquium at the cole biblique in Jerusalem, ditions du Cerf, Paris 1999 (forthcoming).

The Catholic Jewish Community in Israel

Lisa Loden

Readers of this publication will be thoroughly familiar with the idea of Messianic Jews. Much of its content has focused on the existence and viability of the community of Jews who believe in Jesus and who choose to continue to identify themselves as Jews. Catholic Jews are a relatively unknown element and for many would seem an anachronism. There is, however, a sizable movement of Jews who have become Catholics and continue, like Messianic Jews, to value their Jewish heritage and identify as Jews. This article will give an introductory look at this phenomena with a particular focus on the presence of this community in Israel today.

It would be an understatement to say that relations between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people have been characterized by difficulty and conflict. The year 1965 saw a monumental change in this regard, as that year the documents of Vatican II were published. Among the 16 theological documents published, the shortest of these was the “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.” The text of this declaration clearly states the theological position of the Catholic Church regarding the Jewish people:

As holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation (cf. Lk. 19:44), nor did the Jews in large number accept the gospel; indeed, not a few opposed the spreading of it (cf. Rom. 11:28). Nevertheless, according to the Apostle, the Jews still remain most dear to God because of their fathers, for he does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues (cf. Rom. 11:28-29)... Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred Synod wishes to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit above all of biblical and theological studies, and of brotherly dialogues.⁹³

Further, Vatican II faced the history between the two peoples with the following statements:

The Church repudiates all persecutions against any man. Moreover, mindful of her common patrimony with the Jews, and motivated by the gospel's spiritual love and by no political considerations, she deplors the hatred, persecutions and displays of anti-Semitism directed against the Jews at any time and from any source.⁹⁴

These statements by the Vatican have done much to warm the climate of the relationship between Jews and Catholics. The improvement in relationship that was begun in Vatican II has continued to this day. In 1995 the Vatican officially recognized Israel and there have been a growing number of official statements and declarations from the highest levels of the Catholic Church expressing repentance and an overhauling of the “theology of contempt.”⁹⁵ For those who identify themselves as both Jews and Catholics, these statements have been long awaited.

⁹³ S.J. Walter M. Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II*, 1966, America Press, pp. 664-665.

⁹⁴ Abbott, 666.

⁹⁵ Yossi Klein Halevi, “The Church Repents,” in *The Jerusalem Report*, Jan. 11, 1996, pp. 34-38.

Jewish Catholics or as they sometimes call themselves, Hebrew Catholics, embrace their identity both as Jews and Catholics:

Thus did I, a Jew, without becoming less a Jew, become a Catholic ... In my childhood I had had the impression that the ancient Jews had God in their midst; in the Catholic Church I found the spiritual descendants of these Jews and that God was still in their midst. It seems to me that by none is the Jewish race so extolled, by none presented as fulfilling so great a mission, as by the Catholic Church.⁹⁶

The Association of Hebrew Catholics (AHC) was founded in 1979 by Elias Friedman, a South African Jew and a holocaust survivor who today is a Carmelite monk at Stella Maris monastery in Haifa. This association intends to end the alienation of Catholics of Jewish origin from their heritage by the “formation of a Hebrew Catholic Community juridically approved by the Holy See.”⁹⁷

The AHC feels it has both a calling to Israel and a prophetic role to fulfill on behalf of the nations. Elias Friedman in his fascinating book, *Jewish Identity*, sets out these roles very clearly.⁹⁸ The Hebrew Catholic's vocation is to preserve the God-given historical identity of Israel within the church. “Hebrew Catholics should see themselves as pioneers in the Divine process of the ingrafting of their people into their own cultivated olive-tree ... and should assume the past of their people and help prepare its future.”⁹⁹ As regards their prophetic role, Friedman envisages the creation of a community within the church that “when it comes into being one day, will be seen for what it is: an eschatological sign of the times, raised up before a church in crisis and for the encouragement of a jaded world.”¹⁰⁰

Today the AHC has branches in Israel, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and has a liaison in Latin America. It boasts a publishing house, The Miriam Press, and puts out a bimonthly journal. The AHC actively works for a development of a Hebrew Catholic identity, cultivates the Hebrew language, researches and networks Hebrew Catholics. Clergy, monks, nuns and priests as well as laity are numbered in their membership. Cardinal Jean Marie Lustiger, Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, himself a holocaust survivor, is a Hebrew Catholic.¹⁰¹

There have been a number of illustrious Jews who have become Catholics throughout history. In this century the numbers seem to have increased. A partial listing of names includes Raissa Maritain, Max Jacob, Gustave Mahler, Rene Schob, Karl Stern, David Goldstein, the recently canonized (October 12, 1998) Edith Stein, as well as the eminent former pro-abortionist Bernard Nathanson, who became a Catholic in 1996.

⁹⁶ Fr. Raphael Simon, “The Glory of Thy People, Remnant of Israel,” 1996, quoted by Robert Moynihan in *Hear O Israel, A Journal of Dialogue for Reconciliation*, Mark Drogin (ed.), (New Hope, Kentucky, Preamble Issue, 1998) p.19.

⁹⁷ Elias Friedman, O.C.D., *Presenting the Association of Hebrew Catholics*, pamphlet, undated, p.1. This statement appears on all the publications of AHC materials.

⁹⁸ Elias Friedman, O.C.D., *Jewish Identity* (The Miriam Press, New York, 1987).

⁹⁹ Elias Friedman, O.C.D., *Presenting the Association of Hebrew Catholics*, p.6.

¹⁰⁰ Friedman, 1987, p.173.

¹⁰¹ Cardinal Lustiger is considered by some to be a serious papal candidate. See: *Ha'arev*, E. Shepter, Jan. 14, 1998.

This list would be incomplete without mention of Brother Daniel, formerly Oswald Rufeisen, the holocaust survivor turned Catholic priest. Brother Daniel is well known in Israel for having unsuccessfully challenged the Supreme Court to accept him as a Jew under the law of return. Brother Daniel was naturalized as an Israeli citizen where he resided until his death earlier this year.

Perhaps the most prestigious of this century's Jewish Catholics was the chief rabbi of Rome, Israel Zolli, who was hidden in the Vatican during World War II and subsequently, in February 1945, became a Catholic. The reports concerning Rabbi Zolli (or Zoller) are conflicting; Jewish attempts to discredit him are evident.¹⁰² He recounts his own story in his autobiography, *Before the Dawn*.¹⁰³ It is clear that his Jewish heritage continued to be meaningful for him after his acceptance of Catholicism.

In addition to the Association of Hebrew Catholics, there is in Israel today a community of Jewish Catholics numbering between 300-400 members who are organized in four congregations or *kehillot*, in Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa and Beersheva.¹⁰⁴ The core of these groups consists of men and women who are in the various Catholic orders as monks, nuns and priests, and are ethnically Jewish. The majority of these came to Israel in the 1950s, seeking their Jewish roots and a structure in which they could express their Jewish identity. In addition to the members of the clergy there is an active laity whose members are in many sectors of the Israeli society working as doctors, teachers, lawyers, etc. A characteristic of this community seems to be their high level of education.

These congregations gather for worship using a Hebrew liturgy which has been specially developed for their use.¹⁰⁵ The use of Hebrew as the language for the liturgy in Israel was given approval by the Pope as early as 1956, eight years before Vatican II.¹⁰⁶ The music of the Hebrew Catholics is interesting in that already by the mid-1950s they had begun to worship using original music set to verses from the scriptures.¹⁰⁷ This preceded by almost 20 years the same development in the Messianic Jewish community of Israel!

The Hebrew Catholic community has dwindled in numbers since the 1970s, when the laity made up the majority of their membership. Due to the emigration of a large number of families, as well as the phenomenon of a significantly large proportion of new believers entering religious orders, the community as a whole is not growing but remaining static. Another factor that contributes to the decline in numbers is that Hebrew Catholics do not actively evangelize. They do, however, welcome any who come to them of their own accord.

¹⁰² *Ha'aretz*, Shabbat Supplement, 10/5/96, p. 22.

¹⁰³ Eugenio Zolli, *Before the Dawn* (Roman Catholic Books, U.S.A., 1997 reprint).

¹⁰⁴ I am indebted to Father Juan Emanuel Moreno of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Jerusalem for much of the information concerning the Hebrew Catholic *kehillot* given in a personal interview, October 21, 1998. Other sources who did not wish to be identified also contributed to this section.

¹⁰⁵ Yochanan Elichai, *History of the Catholic Liturgy in Hebrew*, (unpublished paper in Hebrew, Jerusalem, 1994) pp.2-3. This Hebrew liturgy incorporates elements from the Syrian tradition and attempts to be culturally relevant rather than simply a translated import.

¹⁰⁶ Elichai p. 3

¹⁰⁷ Elichai p. 2.

There is a small but steady stream of Jewish Israelis who are attracted to the Catholic Church. Beyond that which all these seekers have in common, an honest search for truth and meaning, they are motivated by two very different reasons. One is that they are drawn by the “foreign” nature of the institutional Catholic Church in Israel. They find their home in one of the many Catholic churches that serve pilgrims coming to the Holy Land. The second reason young Israelis are drawn to the Catholic Church is that they see in the Hebrew Catholic *kehillot* an expression that is culturally Jewish and therefore attractive to them.¹⁰⁸ One recent new believer (currently undergoing instruction for baptism into Catholicism) left a Messianic Hebrew-speaking congregation because it “wasn't Jewish enough.”¹⁰⁹ None of the Jewish Catholics, however, have made their home in the Arab Catholic Church.

There is in fact a somewhat uneasy relationship between the Hebrew Catholic congregations and the Latin Patriarchate which is Arab. The Hebrew Catholic congregations would like to have their own Jewish bishop who could represent their interests. Father Jean Baptiste Gurion, the Vicar of the Benedictine Community at Abu Gosh and himself a Jew, has been suggested as the most likely candidate. To this date requests along this line have been denied for the reason that the community is too small to justify having their own bishop. It can be only be hoped that this small community will eventually have the recognition and representation it requires within the structure of the church.

The massive influx of immigrants from Russian-speaking countries has impacted the Hebrew Catholic community. There are among these immigrants a considerable number who are non-Jewish. Many of these have had an association with the Orthodox or Catholic churches of their home countries. Together with the non-Jews, there is also a sizable group of Jews who are drawn to the Catholic Church. In practice it is almost impossible to distinguish between the two groups. Many have sought contact with the Catholic Church in Israel through visits to monasteries and convents and have been referred to the Hebrew Catholic congregations and to sympathetic priests. These people tend not to feel comfortable either in the Hebrew Catholic *kehillot* or in the “foreign” Catholic church but nonetheless wish to remain within the Catholic fold and worship in Hebrew. As a result, it appears that a new expression of Catholic Jews is emerging. For lack of better wording, the term “the Israeli congregation” is being used to describe this new phenomenon.

Although there has been little cooperation between Israel's Messianic community and the Hebrew Catholics, there is one area in which the two have worked together. In 1969 a group of Hebrew Catholics, Protestants and a few Messianic Jews met together for the first time to plan a new translation of the New Testament in Hebrew. This was the beginning of a fruitful cooperation on the project of the New Testament in modern Hebrew. The joint effort of Hebrew Catholic, Messianic and Protestant scholars continued into the 1990s and saw the publication of a new translation of the New Testament (1976) and the annotated Hebrew New Testament (1991). This project was undertaken under the auspices of the United Bible Society.¹¹⁰

Earlier this year, the Catholic Charismatics held an international conference in Jerusalem. The

¹⁰⁸ The style of the services resembles synagogue worship and there are no icons in evidence.

¹⁰⁹ Reported by Father Juan Moreno in a personal interview, Oct. 21, 1998.

¹¹⁰ Elichai, pp. 5-6.

leaders of this conference invited a number of Messianic leaders from within Israel to meet them on an informal basis. An encouraging number of leaders accepted the invitation and participated in a constructive time of discussion and prayer. Following this conference, a monthly prayer meeting of Charismatic Catholics and charismatic Messianic Jews has been taking place quietly and without publicity.

For the past approximately 15 years the Messianic community has had a forum in which the leaders of the Hebrew-speaking congregations gather quarterly for fellowship and teaching. One of the criteria for acceptance has been that the congregations meet in Hebrew. Recently, a decision was taken that groups would be accepted whose membership consisted of a majority of Israeli citizens. On each occasion when the question of including the Hebrew Catholic *kehilot* appeared, their participation was summarily rejected. The discussions showed that Messianic Jews are not ready to accept as brothers in the faith those who choose to identify themselves as both Jews and Catholics.

Catholic Jews in Israel have experienced rejection by both their own people and by the Messianic Jews. One member of the community related to me that on several occasions Messianic brothers averted their eyes and crossed the street in order not to meet her. For this woman, a holocaust survivor, this has been a particularly painful experience.

Jews who have accepted Yeshua as their Messiah are a very small minority both in Israel and throughout the world. For a Jew to believe in Jesus and to continue to embrace his Jewishness is a costly and a courageous step. Messianic and Catholic Jews have more in common than they know.

Reading their literature, visiting with Catholic Jews socially and sharing worship with them has shown me that the concerns they struggle with are the very same concerns that trouble the Messianic Jewish community in Israel. Being conversant with the literature of the Messianic Jewish movement in regards to identity and expression, one cannot help but be struck with the similarity of language and terminology that is used by both them and the Hebrew Catholics when dealing with the same issues. The solutions are often almost identical, with the exception that the Hebrew Catholics have opted to remain within the historic Catholic Church while at the same time not compromising their identity as Jews.

This is not an attempt to gloss over the very real theological differences between Catholics and Messianic Jews. On the basic points of doctrine, those things which determine whether we are children of God, there is full agreement between Catholic Jews and Messianic Jews. Although theological differences on other important issues do exist, these differences should not be permitted to negate all fellowship.

The two communities could benefit from mutual recognition. Fruitful discussions could ensue on common issues of Jewish identity and expression. Music could be shared which would be enriching for both communities. Each could profitably gain from the literature of the other. The Hebrew Catholic Community and the Messianic Jewish Community share an earnest desire for the salvation of Israel and both, according to their individual understanding, are working towards that end.

In this day of increased understanding and cooperation, the time has surely come to put an end to claims of exclusivity within the Body of Messiah. The gospel is served when we are able

to lay aside our personal agendas (together with the sin that so easily besets us) and work, if not together then side by side, laboring for the salvation of our people.

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Messianic Jews and Missionaries

David Smith¹¹¹

Recently at a Bible study I heard several participants complain about the way missions use funds intended for Israel. “We are really the last ones (to benefit from the money),” one woman complained. That missionaries live in huge houses, are concerned only for their visa and siphon funds intended for local believers are but a few of the complaints leveled against the foreign workers.

The missionaries in turn direct their own criticisms against locals. “They want the money we can provide but with no accountability toward those providing the money,” is likely the most common accusation. I remember just a few years ago explaining to a national why our mission would not give him a house we owned in Haifa. “Why not?” he demanded and was not satisfied that we needed to sell it to defray the costs of buying another house in Jerusalem. “Why do you need anything in Jerusalem?” he insisted.

Sadly there is some substance to all of these objections. Unquestionably missionaries have misused funds that were intended for mission fields (as have Israelis). Certainly local workers have sought to secure money from foreign donors but resisted all means of accountability - but probably no more than missionaries have done.

An interesting phenomenon complicates these mutual accusations: the line between national and missionary is not that clear. Believers in Israel, rebuffed by missions for funds, often appeal directly to believers in other countries, thereby bypassing mission societies in Israel. Many believers hold Israeli citizenship but are completely dependent on financial support from outside the country. Consequently we must ask, “Who is a missionary?” Some are native Israelis, most are not. Some are Jewish, some not. For the purposes of this paper we will use a Ben Gurionesque definition: One is a missionary if one calls oneself a missionary, an Israeli national if self-declared as such.

Charles Kopp, pastor at the Narkis Street international congregation, has been in the country since 1966. He has served the United Christian Council in Israel both as General Secretary and Chairman and has worked with a variety of missionary groups, notably the Baptists, who own the property at Narkis Street. Kopp says¹¹² he has witnessed a “steady maturing process” in relations between missionaries and nationals during his 32 years in Israel. He concludes that present relations “are somewhere between adolescence and early adulthood.”

¹¹¹ David Smith has worked with the Baptist Convention in Israel since 1983. He has been linguistic editor at *Mishkan* since 1987.

¹¹² Quotes in this article are taken from responses to a questionnaire sent out fall, 1998.

Infancy

A number of voices echo this theme that much maturation in associations between the two groups has occurred. According to Ronald Adeney, an Anglican missionary who assisted at Christ Church in Jerusalem and Immanuel Congregation in Jaffa from 1947-1970, the believers in those early days were few and heavily dependent on the missionary societies for support. "I came into a situation where the relationship of most Hebrew Christians to missionaries was on a paternalistic level," although he acknowledges there were exceptions (for example, the Haimoff or Bar David family). "This continued during the early days of the state," he adds, calling the national-missionary association of those days "an employer-employee relationship."

He attributes this disparity between the two groups to a number of factors but primary among them was imbalance of financial strength. The missions had funds and limited though they might have been, they seemed substantial to the few indigenous believers. "Had there been less dependence of believers on foreign missions in the earlier days the relationship would have been much better," he explains. Still, the concept of "western cultural superiority" further compounded the problem. This conceit, coupled by the disparity in funds, allowed the missions to exercise inappropriate influence upon the Messianic movement.

Menahem Benhayim, who arrived in Israel in March 1963, has served as Israel secretary of the International Messianic Jewish Alliance and secretary of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel. He is currently an elder at the Messianic Assembly in Jerusalem. He writes, "The nationals were often carbon copies of the missionaries, whether consciously or unconsciously adopting the theological and social-cultural patterns of the mission even when this was in conflict with Israeli thinking and patterns." The missions intensified the problem as many of them "worked to transfer their denominational orientation to Israel without a real understanding of the sense of rejection and alienation the nationals had to cope with." Still, Benhayim adds, some missions overreacted to the problem and "were too tolerant of unstable and even unscrupulous individuals and allowed them to cultivate a spirit of the mission owing everything to the nationals."

Adeney humbly admits that he was poorly prepared to do mission work in Israel and "was slow to learn." According to Benhayim this was generally true of missions in Israel. Again the imbalance of funds was at the core of the problem, but short-sightedness exacerbated the situation. "The well-funded missions developed installations that required ever more foreign support and workers and neglected development of mature national congregations which could create installations suitable to their ability and need," Benhayim writes. He adds that several institutional "white elephants" still exist in Israel which have not yet found their place. Kopp reinforces this statement by writing, "Should the mission have a process of 'indigenizing' portions of their vision, work, properties etc., the goals and means for achieving those goals should be laid out clearly and carefully."

Toddling now

Eventually this picture did change, according to Adeney, due to "development of messianic Jewish consciousness, immigration of believers with skills ... and the growing up of young Israeli Jewish believers." These signs of maturation began to occur in the 1960's and have continued.

The “messianic Jewish consciousness” referred to by Adeney caused the Jewish believers in Israel to begin asking the right questions. “How should we as Israeli believers worship here in our country?” It should be noted that some of these questions were certainly posed earlier, but progress toward an Israeli believing movement accelerated during the 1960’s. This was likely due to the other two reasons listed by Adeney: immigration of skillful believers and native-born Messianics.

Often missions reacted to this growing independence by adopting a hands-off attitude. “Missionaries tended to remain aloof in the early 1960s,” according to Baruch Maoz, pastor at Grace and Truth Christian Assembly, although Maoz adds that relations have improved much since then. “The missions did not prepare for local leadership,” he continues, “and showed signs of being threatened when it began to emerge. Nor have they helped the process once it became established.” While partnership was called for, the missions became either haughty or insular. Consequently “there was substantial cleavage between national and mission works for some decades,” Maoz deduces.

During this time, Israeli believers determined they could circumvent the missions for funds and appeal directly to (usually) North American and European Christians for support. According to Benhayim:

Some nationals have made a total break with missions and missionaries and developed their own frameworks with reasonable success. Unfortunately, this has often been accompanied by a domineering and even prideful leadership, lacking in the servant spirit which Yeshua and the apostles preached and demonstrated. One is sometimes reminded of what happened in decolonization when national leaders proved harsher and more difficult than foreigners.

Although this sad event in which “aloof” and “insular” missions were replaced by nationals manifesting the same unchristian characteristics, did not always occur, Benhayim mentions a number of cities in which it did.

Jim and Betty Smith, who worked with the Baptist Convention in Israel from 1955 to 1988 mention several factors that limited the believers' attempts to grow an independent and indigenous work. “Don’t send the missionary; just send the money,” was the attitude of some nationals. But this reliance on foreign funds and the accompanying mentality continued to limit both independence and indigenuity. “The tin box placed in the back of the church had to be replaced with teaching the concept of tithing and self-support. The picture of the missionary providing everything for the national had to be destroyed!” they reason.

The Smiths also mention that the nationals' inability to find a united expression of Israeli Jewish faith in Yeshua was an additional hindrance. They say that there was “reluctance on the part of some Messianic believers to let go any Jewish ritual as opposed to Jewish believers who wanted to rid themselves of all Jewish religious vestiges.” Unity on a middle road between those two extremes remains a challenge today. Further impeding the movement’s progress was the tendency of some of the established congregations “to look with suspicion on the new believers' groups and ... seal off their flock from them.”

The Israeli poet, Haim Bialik, wrote of the envisioned Jewish state that Israel would be a modern state when a purse of money left in Tel Aviv is stolen and Israeli prostitutes walk its streets. At the close of the 20th century there is no question but that Israel has taken its place

among the nations. By similar criteria though one can discern a Jewish Israeli Messianic movement forming and encountering the problems associated with independence. Suddenly there are Israeli Jewish congregations and leadership that are “aloof” and “insular.” Financial corruption occurs that is unrelated to missions. Paternal attitudes are expressed in Sabra Hebrew.

Childhood

By the 1970's one notes a real maturation in the relationships between nationals and missionaries as a few pioneers set aside paternalism and hostility in order to form partnerships to assume the challenge of winning Israel for the Messiah. Pat and Judy Hoaldrige working with local believers in Netanya might be a case in point. They arrived in Israel in 1972 as Baptist missionaries and studied Hebrew in Netanya. The Hoaldriged and David and Lisa Loden founded the Beit Asaph Congregation there in 1975 and Hoaldrige co-pastored the congregation with Loden 1978-1985.

Hoaldrige writes of their call to Israel:

We emphasized relationships in the body of Christ. We knew that in this small country and with such a few believers, we would have to learn to fellowship together in the spirit of the Lord and teach others to do the same. Judy and I decided that we would use the New Testament as our guide to church planting and development. We had a strong belief in the local church as God's way for his people to be built up in the faith and to serve Him. We emphasized the truth that the body of Christ is made up of God called people in whom Jesus placed spiritual gifts and that these gifts were to be used to build up the body/local congregation. This influenced us to focus on relationships. We decided to allow the Israeli believers with whom we lived and worked to determine the framework of the congregation and the style of worship. I still remember one of the new believers in Netanya asking the question about some point having to do with how the congregation should function. He simply asked, "What does the Bible say." One of our greatest challenges was to lead the local Israeli believers into a style and format for congregational life, worship, and service that was new to them and us. When Judy and I asked the BCI [Baptist Convention in Israel] if they had a book of instructions for us, a plan, or a strategy of how to plant a congregation in a Jewish town, they answered, "No, you do it and write a book about it." This somewhat overwhelming statement by the BCI turned out to be a wide door of blessing to us that the Lord used to teach us from His Word and from the local Israeli believers what to do and how to do it. We truly learned from the Holy Spirit and the Bible how to plant and develop a church and its leadership. In a real sense, we partnered together with the local believers to do what the Lord had called us to do ... share the gospel, plant congregations, and develop local leadership/shepherds to shepherd those congregations.

This is not to say that the earlier employer-employee problem disappeared, or even that such condescension is totally absent today. Still the idea of partnering took root, and the Body of Christ in Israel benefited from it. This partnership demands that missionaries work “alongside nationals, with them, or under them in some cases,” writes Maoz, who warns that missions should work solely with churches and church leaders but “not under strong leaders who are not subject to their own churches.”

In order to form honest partnerships the missionaries should strive to serve local needs and refrain from enforcing their denominational stamps. Benhayim writes:

The missionaries must decide whether it is legitimate for them to be in Israel merely to add their denominational bit to the chaos and divisions of contemporary Christianity. Should they not rather take part as servants in the transformation of the Israeli, and especially Jewish believers? We and

they must not help to reinforce the image of the Messianic Jews as an alien imposition from outside the Land and totally irrelevant to Israeli Jews.

But he challenges the local believers similarly:

Basically, the same decision faces Israeli Jewish believers, since many, if not most Messianic Jews, while indigenizing organizationally and making some cultural changes (observing Jewish holidays, indigenizing worship music, and introducing traditional Jewish elements into it) remain bound to the theological forms and patterns which they received from various denominational streams.

Benhayim stresses that the challenge before the Messianic movement in Israel is how to present the gospel and its associated life-changes in a biblical context that suits Israel: “This message must be unbound from subservience to received traditional contexts in the light of the unique contemporary situation.” Inasmuch as missions can contribute to that process they should do so.

Youth

The ensuing years witnessed a dramatic acceleration in partnerships between the two parties. Congregations in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa, as well as several smaller cities, benefited from the joint efforts of missionaries and nationals. The Smiths, who lived in Ashkelon 1968-87, establishing a home fellowship there, explain that during those years “several nationals emerged as effective worship leaders and gradually assumed more and more of the congregational responsibilities.” Some of those eventually became pastors of congregations and assumed leadership of institutions (Beit Immanuel, a youth hostel in Jaffa, and Dugith, a bookstore in Tel Aviv). The Assemblies of God’s founding of King of Kings College and that mission’s later aid in securing local leadership for the school is a good example of institutional cooperation.

As result of this changed attitude, missions increased efforts toward language acquisition and cultural adaptation. Among the Baptists, who had the largest number of foreign workers in Israel at that time, this culminated in the adoption of a new language learning system called the “Barefoot” approach. The Baptist mission in Israel invited the creator of this program to come to Israel for a month and teach its implementation. Betty Smith worked closely with this innovation, in which the language student would not learn Hebrew in a formal classroom situation but rather would use a language helper a few hours a day. The learner would utilize that day’s Hebrew in society and then evaluate the day’s mistakes and progress. The cycle would repeat itself the next day as the helper would aid in correction of the previous day’s mistakes and assist in acquiring more Hebrew to be used following the lesson.

The effectiveness of this language-learning system can be (and has been) much debated. But more important than the success of the program is the intent of this change: partnership required missionaries to be versed in Hebrew language and Israeli culture, and a mission group was trying to meet that challenge. The emphasis on learning Hebrew “on the street” was to foster an awareness that the missionary works in society among normal people, as opposed to in a mission office. The program intended also to increase the missionary’s participation in and appreciation of Israeli culture. Missionaries working with the Baptists in recent years have indeed demonstrated increased proficiency in Hebrew (and Arabic), but that is perhaps less important than the fact that

a mission was at least asking the right questions.

It would be inaccurate to describe these partnerships as completely harmonious and trouble-free. Some of the partnerships were more like corporate takeovers, while in others one of the parties was the silent partner. Many obstacles were to be overcome before fair partnerships were struck. Benhayim explains, “Many nationals have nourished an unhealthy resentment toward foreign workers and missions and a lack of appreciation for their contributions in the past as well as the possibility, by dialogue and mutual consent, to find a better *modus vivendi* between the two elements.”

Other national believers would express the impossibility of working fairly with missionaries. Most explicit among those voices is that of Joe Shulam:

Missionaries have stopped evangelizing and have started to sell Israel as a commodity to the Christian World. Those missionaries who are supposed to be interested in evangelism are really interested mainly in finding good reasons to raise funds for their organization. The corruption (moral and financial) among foreign missions and local Israelis supported by foreign mission organizations is a plague. Foreign missionaries have not been helpful in establishing local indigenous congregations. They have for the most part served to divide the Body of the Messiah and splinter it, so that they can continue to have rule. There are some exceptions to this accusation, but they are not many. The missionaries in Israel are not interested in Israel's national agenda — they are basically interested in the agenda of the churches who sent them here to establish a "stronghold" for their views and organizations. I believe in preaching and proclaiming the Good News to Israel for both Jews and Arabs, but I do not believe that it is God's will to bring all these denominations and their peculiarity with them to Israel.

Shulam, a resident of Israel since 1948 and a member of its faith community since 1962, has established congregations in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Zippori as well as a number of home groups. He has been a pastor at Netivvah Congregation since 1982. He expresses a lack of confidence that past mistakes can be rectified:

The only resolution for the mistakes of the missionaries is that they go back home — speak in behalf of the local Messianic Jewish congregations and organizations and help finance the local bodies and give moral and spiritual support to those who are doing the Lord's work in Israel.

Shulam attributes many of the problems of Israel's local congregations to the mission, insisting that “the local believers would become stronger and would unite and would work together if there were no strings pulled and manipulated from foreign organizations that want to have their own little piece of Israel.”

Few believers in Israel express so severe an opinion (although it's hard to know how many hold it), but the dangers expressed by Shulam demand careful consideration. Still, most believers and especially congregational local leadership consider the situation redeemable and equitable partnership possible.

Maoz lists some of the problems and solutions for both parties. “Locals have tended to emphasize their ‘Jewishness’ at the expense of their biblical integrity and their fealty to the wider body of Christ. They have intimidated missionaries and relegated them to a lower stance in their congregations.” In order to resolve the problem, locals need to “moderate the ‘Messianic’ and other fringe characteristics” in their assemblies, and learn “from the missionaries’ own richer Christian culture, from the missionaries’ better training in Bible and theology (where such exists)

and understanding of what churches are and how they should function.”

Maoz goes on to say that the “renewal of evangelical commitment on the part of some missions has helped” but that they need to dedicate themselves further by becoming more “strenuous in their own labors.” He explains “missionaries in Israel are not noted to be hard workers.”

Kopp instructs that “Mission sending agencies should send more balanced long term personnel prepared to work in non-denominational contexts, ready to fit in where most needed.” He adds that, “Vacating families during a crisis tends to confirm the tenuous status and commitment of the missionary,” a circumstance that Benhayim also criticizes.

Kopp continues:

Since it is the Kingdom of God we are all at work in, nationals should realize that through cooperation and acceptance, the interests of both sides are best reached. Foreign agencies and presence are a fact that will continue to be so because of the centrality of Israel in the Bible, therefore nationals should be more accepting of the expatriate role. The all encompassing nature of the Body of Messiah needs to be confirmed. God does not look upon His Body as nationals or foreigners divided by political and other barriers. Neither should we.

Kopp concluded that Israelis should “use more *savlanut* [patience], acceptance and vision to embrace the realities and presence of missionaries and their unique giftings and callings.” In response, missionaries should “empty themselves of solutions learned from other contexts and together with nationals pray for and search for answers in the Israeli setting.”

On to Adulthood

As Kopp suggests, the relations between mission societies and Israeli believers has matured and is nearing adulthood. It is no surprise that problems exist, but most foreign workers and locals believe that with tolerance and understanding that befits all Christians’ mutual calling, issues can be jointly solved and a bond formed between expatriate and national. As kinship between the two has matured and they are ready to assume greater challenges together in the coming millennium, I would like to suggest areas in which both groups could cooperate to benefit each other as well as that of the worldwide body of Christ.

Foreign Missions

“The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3). A number of Israelis have expressed (justifiably) the errors of foreign missionaries in Israel. Having learned from those mistakes, they should assume the call of the Great Commission in “the uttermost parts of the earth.” It’s hard to imagine a country more qualified than Israel to do foreign mission work. Israel’s believing community is largely an immigrant community, speaking dozens of languages and adapting easily to other cultures. Israel has been the recipient of missions’ efforts throughout this century; it should now be a participant in a worldwide evangelistic and church planting effort. Doing evangelism campaigns in New York and Los Angeles is not enough. Sharing with other Israelis in India is inadequate. A lost world needs the gospel, and Israeli believers are in a unique position share it.

Scholarships

Several foreign mission organizations have offered small scholarships that are of no real benefit to college students. These organizations, along with national contributors, should pool their resources to offer several full scholarships. The standards and competition for receiving these should be extremely high and should consider such criteria as congregational participation, high school grades, matriculation exam and recommendations from several believers, especially that of the applicant's pastor. Although there might be an emphasis on theological education, it should not be limited to that but should benefit believing students who seek a career in business, teaching, law, medicine and art, as well as other areas.

Strong national convention

Persecution of believers in Israel continues as does the strength of the orthodox political parties. There's little reason to think that trend will cease. A strong national convention of Jewish believers in Yeshua will: a) provide a voice for Israel's autonomous but largely scattered congregations, b) will be harder for Israeli lawmakers to overlook and c) will provide inspiration for believers. It would be careless to overlook the efforts of the *Kenes Artzi* (National Convention) and especially those of the Messianic Action Committee, but both of these need to be better supported in attendance, finances and administration. Obviously, inasmuch as this is to be a *national* convention, it must be led by local believers. Still, missionaries have much to contribute as many of them are supported by large conventions in their home countries and are familiar with their workings. Again, local Israelis have the opportunity to learn from the mistakes of others. Missionaries gifted in administration can contribute in that area until a local believer could relieve them.

Shabbat School

Almost every congregation in Israel has some form of Shabbat School, but it tends to be an after-thought and is often no more than baby-sitting. Workshops and seminars are held even now by (Lutheran-supported) Caspari Center dealing with topics such as curriculum and children's development, but broader participation is needed. Pastors, youth leaders and children's workers need to participate in this venture to strengthen local congregations through the country.

Youth Work/Sports Evangelism

Many internationally known sports stars and coaches belong to denominations which support missionaries in Israel. Requests could be made through the denominational agencies for these athletes and coaches to contribute some time to a camp, workshop or seminar organized in Israel by local believers. The athletes could then teach the basics of their sport as well as share their Christian testimony. Israeli believers could offer counsel regarding cultural sensitivities and Israeli law against the conversion of minors.

Humanitarian Projects

When hurricane Mitch destroys billions of dollars worth of property in Central America, Israeli believers can do their part. If they only send funds through an international relief agency,

they have accomplished something, but many missionaries are from large denominations that have their own Christian aid and relief facilities. There are Israeli believers from the countries stuck by disaster, and these could serve as emissaries from Israel, providing relief and encouragement from the victims' brothers and sisters in Israel. These caretakers could participate in a broad Christian effort to "carry each other's burdens" and "fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2).

Ronald Adeney, quoted earlier in this article, served in Israel for 45 years. Regarding the relationship between the mission and the local believers he concluded, "Clearly, a greater awareness of the problems created by presuppositions of where the other is, is essential. More listening is vital, both ways. Repentance and openness are always necessary." We must agree with this. Mistakes were made. Travesties occurred. Each side has erred and affirmed its error. But as Israeli nationals and missionaries serving in Israel prepare to take on the challenges of the 21st century, each needs to ask forgiveness both from brothers and sisters as well as from the Lord, then, jointly when possible but independently when necessary, "press on toward the goal." The turmoil of the teenage years must be put behind and the adult responsibility of winning a lost world accepted.

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Book Reviews

Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology, Rainer Riesner. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. Trans. by Doug Stott. xv + 535 pp.

Reviewed by Hilary Le Cornu

Many books have been written devoted to establishing a reliable chronological framework for the early New Testament period. Many others have similarly been produced which deal with New Testament theology. Likewise, many more have examined the “missionary” strategy of the early community. Riesner’s book takes the bold and much-to-be-applauded step of investigating the New Testament writings at the nexus where three disparate disciplines — history, theology, and missiology — may be seen to interweave. It is a carefully-wrought tome, rich in all the perspectives of Pauline scholarship which concern it, opulent in detailed specifics yet full of an enviable analytic acuity. It is, in fact, a feast.

It is also, to be frank, not a book to be read at one sitting. Like a gold mine, it possesses seams which must be painstakingly quarried if their true wealth is to be unearthed. Even among historians chronological studies have not always proved a scintillating subject. It is thus very much to Riesner’s credit that he has found the perspicuity to look for the theological and missiological significance which “dry dates” are otherwise so conspicuously assumed to lack. His arguments here are designed to demonstrate how Paul’s life can be comprehended in the framework of the chronological dates supplied by the biblical and extra-biblical sources (a thesis which, to our deep embarrassment on the one hand and great relief on the other, is now belatedly being addressed by a plethora of studies regarding Paul’s Jewish context). He also reasons that a plausible Pauline chronology serves as a solid base for an accurate representation of early Christian history. In Riesner’s own words:

Outlines that explain the apostle’s theological development in part on the basis of the length of certain time spans show that various chronologies can indeed give rise to various Pauline theologies. Such explanations are especially dependent on a persuasive chronological framework. Because the history of early Christianity and the development of its theological convictions are inseparably connected, Pauline chronology belongs to the prolegomena of New Testament theology. (pp. 1-2)

Riesner engages in wide-ranging discussions around the interrelationship between chronology and “mission strategy” and “doctrine” both, in this respect. Starting with a comprehensive review of the various New Testament chronological problematics (from an accurate dating of Jesus’ crucifixion through to the determinative date of the Gallio inscription for Pauline chronology), the evangelical author presses towards a revision of the dating of the Pauline corpus as a whole. On the way, he also suggests various methods for investigating the influence of geography on Paul’s mission strategy, and the mutual interaction of this combined impact on the development of the apostle’s theology. This latter he examines in depth with reference to the community in

Thessalonika. The work additionally also addresses the implications for the book of Acts as a historical witness.

While the present writer confesses to an intrigue with such forms of multidisciplinary cross-fertilization, it must also be admitted that they are not always to everyone's taste; the nexus does indeed demand a certain analytical dexterity or faculty which not every person is willing — or able — to exercise. Nevertheless, the book remains a very accessible work. Those interested in specific chronological issues will find discrete sections devoted to their particular field of interest — and, simply by osmosis, will also gain additional perspective from the multidisciplinary discussion which is integrally attached. Riesner's familiarity with the relevant literature, in all the fields, is commanding, even if here and there one is perhaps inclined to differ from his conclusions.

If it were not to backhandedly belittle evangelical scholarship, one might be tempted to say that the book's greatest strength lies in Riesner's ability to integrate a good historical and critical grasp with a solid respect for the text. Fortunately, however, the very profundity of his scholarship makes this very issue irrelevant. Perhaps what we could look for as an extension of this important work is a second volume in which the fruits of this one are further examined specifically in the light of their Jewish matrix.

The Semitic Background of the New Testament, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, S. J., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, xxi + 524, + 330 pp.

Reviewed by Akiva Cohen

Under the guidance of the editors of the Biblical Resource Series, Eerdmans Publishing Co. has released several one volume resources useful for the academic community as texts for graduate students, and for the diligent pastor. *The Semitic Background of the New Testament* by Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, S. J., is a combined edition of his *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* and *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays*, originally published respectively in 1971 and 1974.

Drawing from the Semitic world of the eastern Mediterranean, Fitzmeyer's time-tested volumes have proven their worth. In the first volume of collected essays the author seeks to illumine several New Testament problems. Drawing mostly from Qumran literature and other Aramaic texts, Fitzmeyer compares the insights from these texts to various New Testament passages and in so doing helps the reader to draw closer to the linguistic world of the New Testament.

In the second volume, Fitzmeyer's essays offer the reader a detailed examination of the Aramaic language as a background to the New Testament. A variety of topics are covered, such as Aramaic as a language of Jesus, Aramaisms in New Testament Greek, the languages of Palestine in the first century A.D., the various phases of Aramaic, insights from Qumran Aramaic to the study of the New Testament, important word studies such as the Semitic background for the

Greek word *Kyrios* (Lord), as well as the various attempts to translate the original Aramaic phrase, "Son of Man."

Fitzmeyer's impeccable scholarship has well served the academic community, as evidenced by the ongoing relevance of this collection of essays from a period of over a quarter of a century. A brief appendix of further notes at the conclusion of both volumes provides the reader with Fitzmeyer's comments in light of more recent studies and critiques of his work. It also contains some additional bibliographical references such as Fitzmeyer's article "Aramaic" in the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Oxford University Press), which surveys the Qumran texts and those that have been published subsequent to these volumes. This combined volume is heartily recommended for all who are interested in the Semitic background of the New Testament. It will be especially valued by scholars who want a handy republication under one cover as a needed resource to balance the abundance of the New Testament background studies that focus upon the Hellenistic literary backgrounds of the New Testament.

Complete Jewish Bible: An English Version of the Tanakh (Old Testament) and B'rit Hadashah (New Testament), David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., Jerusalem/Clarksville, Maryland USA, 1998. 1626 pp. \$39.99 hb/\$29.99 pb

Randall Price

With this addition of the English translation of the Tanakh (Old Testament) by Dr. David H. Stern to his previous English translation of B'rit Hadashah (New Testament) known as the *Jewish New Testament* (published in 1989), the *Complete Jewish Bible* is now available. This review will concern the translation of the Tanakh. For a review of Stern's previously published translation of B'rit Hadashah see Kai Kjaer-Hansen in *Mishkan* 1:12 (1990): 68-78.

Whereas Stern's purpose with his translation of the *B'rit Hadashah* was to express the essential Jewishness of what has been regarded by the Jewish world as a Christian book, with the *Tanakh*, already universally regarded as a Jewish book, no such demonstration was necessary. For this reason Stern's translation of the Tanakh in the *Complete Jewish Bible* is significantly different from that of his *B'rit Hadashah*. It is not a new translation, but a paraphrase of the 1917 edition of the Jewish Publication Society's (JPS) version of the *Tanakh* with Stern's own translation of the Masoretic Text in places where he questioned that of the JPS. Stern chose to use the Masoretic Text exclusively in his translation to further the distinction from Christian Old Testaments which he noted often incorporate alternative readings based on comparative ancient versions, such as the LXX. While one may argue for the superiority of the MT over the versions, the reader is left to contend with problematic readings such as in 1 Sh'mu'el (Samuel) 6:19 where the MT (and Stern) reads 50,070 for the number of men killed by God at Beit-Shemesh as opposed to LXX's more credible number of 70. Overall, Stern maintains a high view of the integrity and inspiration of Scripture, of traditional authorship and dating of the biblical books, of the historicity of events in both testaments, and advocates an approach to reading the text which

responds in faith and practice.

The Uniqueness of Stern's Approach

Stern is to be commended for producing for a Jewish and non-Jewish audience a unified translation that is Jewish in format and style, yet messianic in interpretation. Following the traditional Jewish order, number, names, and numbering of the books of the Tanakh, the *Complete Jewish Bible* introduces to non-Jewish readers the essential distinctives between the Jewish Tanakh and Christian Old Testaments. The retention of Hebrew names for the books, as well as for principal figures, places, and measurements also provides instruction for non-Jewish readers in terminology familiar to Jewish readers of the Tanakh. Stern's goal in completing his translation of the Tanakh and wedding it to his translation of the *B'rit Hadashah* was to demonstrate the unity and complementary nature of the two parts of the one Bible as the covenants of the Tanakh are followed by the new covenant of the *B'rit Hadashah*. This is a worthy effort since Jews usually stereotype the New Testament as a Christian book and many Christians disregard the Old Testament as more Jewish than Christian and therefore less relevant. For both groups Stern's approach forces a reconsideration of the Jewishness and relevancy of both testaments as one enduring message. Also helpful are Stern's arrangement of large lists of persons or numbers (such as at Ezra 1:9-2:61 and Nechemiah [Nehemiah] 7:8-63) in parallel columns that enable easier reading and comparison of details and his stylistic distinction of poetic sections from narrative in typeset. By this method he has allowed for the expression of the parallelism of Hebrew poetry and a four beat rhythm more familiar to English poetry.

Stern's Paraphrase and Translation

As with his translation of *B'rit Hadashah*, though not to the same degree, Stern tends to overuse transliteration of Hebrew terms in his effort to portray the Jewishness of the text. For example, Stern uses the terms *Ruach Kodesh* (cf. Psa. 51:13) or *Ruach HaKodesh*, yet the standard translation of "Holy Spirit" is regularly used in Jewish theological literature in English such as Ephraim Urbach's, *The Sages*. It is understandable that the need for a unity between texts required Stern to continue in his *Tanakh* translation the terminology he had already developed for his *B'rit Hadashah*, yet, in B'resheet (Genesis) 1:2 Stern has inconsistently retained the translation "the Spirit of God." In some cases Stern's own translation seems superfluous and possibly misleading. One example is his use of "oregano" for "hyssop" (Hebrew *ezov*). Thus he renders the familiar statement in Psalm 51:7: "Purge me with hyssop" (JPS) as "Sprinkle me with oregano" To an English reader this may appear more like a recipe for an Italian dish than an appeal for ceremonial purification. While "hyssop" is no more or less recognized than "oregano," if the purpose is to express the Middle Eastern origin of the text, why not use the more familiar Middle Eastern name of za'ttar? "Oregano" borrows from the scientific Latin (Roman!) classification as *origanum maru*, hardly a proper source for Jewish expression. Another example in this light may be seen in Genesis 43:11 where Ya'acov (Jacob) instructs his sons to take to Yosef (Joseph) some of the Land's best products. In the recorded list that follows Stern renders the Hebrew term *lot*, usually translated "myrrh," as "opium." While the literature on myrrh indicates that it was not indigenous to Israel at the time of Ya'acov, and that perhaps some other

spice is indicated (such as JPS: “ladanum”), Stern’s choice for modern English readers leaves the impression that the sons of Israel were involved in drug trafficking! There are other examples of such excessive paraphrase, but though odd, do not affect the overall understanding of the text. In some cases, however, his paraphrase is used for theological explanation, such as at Sh’mot (Exodus) 3:13; 6:3; 34:6 where he translates the tetragrammaton as “*Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh*,” rather than simply “*Adonai*.”

In debatable messianic texts he usually departs from the JPS in favor of messianic interpretation. For instance, in *Z’kharyah* 12:10 where JPS reads “and they will look unto Me because they have thrust him through” Stern renders “and they will look to me, whom they pierced.” But in *Tehillim* (Psalms) 22:17 he follows the MT and JPS in reading *k’ari* (“like a lion”) rather than emend to *karu* (“they pierced”) with the versions. Stern notes this argument in footnote 70 (xlvii), yet prefers to retain the reading with traditional Judaism. In like fashion, in *Yesha’yahu* (Isaiah) 9:6 where the debate has been over whether the name given to the child/son is a proper name or descriptive attributes, Stern appears to offer both, giving first a transliteration of each term (as JPS and traditional Judaism) followed by a bracketed English translation of the titles (like Christian Old Testaments). In the classic Immanu El text of *Yesha’yahu* 7:14 Stern follows the JPS in translating *ha’almah* as “young woman,” even though he chooses the translation “virgin” in the citation of this text in *Mattityahu* (Matthew) 1:23. To his credit he has provided a note of explanation in his introductory section treating the messianic prophecies and their fulfillments (note 69, xlvii). Stern also opts for the paraphrase of Hebrew *ben adam*, usually translated as with JPS as “Son of man,” as “human being.” While the term does denote humanity, it also designates one sent as a divine messenger or eschatological agent. In *Dani’el* 7:13 where such an agent is indicated by the context, Stern retains the translation of the Aramaic *bar enash* as “a son of man.” Yet, this would have also been appropriate in those texts of *Ezekiel* where the prophet is addressed by God. Here, Stern’s translation as “human being” leaves no room for implication of the prophet’s greater role as God’s divine messenger.

Messianic Judaism and the Complete Jewish Bible

Stern has designed his translation with *parashot* (“portions”) for public reading in the Synagogue on Shabbat. At the end of each *parashah* are its *haftarah* and *B’rit Hadashah* readings. This may be viewed as Stern’s own attempt to influence the ritual development of Messianic Judaism including the suggestion of ritual prayers before and after reading from *B’rit Hadashah* (he recommends the *siddur* for the prescribed blessings to be recited before and after Torah and *haftarah* readings). The Messianic Judaism which Stern addresses in his translation is more likely that outside of Eretz-Yisrael, since it is presumed that the congregations in the Land would use the more modern Hebrew versions of the *Tanakh* and *B’rit Hadashah* rather than an English version. This Messianic Judaism is far from unified in its practice and it remains to be seen whether it will adopt Stern’s translation for congregational use. Nevertheless, Stern has provided the Messianic Community and the Church with a useful tool for education in Jewish outreach as well as private study of the Scriptures. For this we can hope that his work will be used in the fulfillment of Sha’ul’s prayer “to God for Isra’el for their salvation” (Rom 10:1).

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Marshall, I. Howard and Peterson, David

Witness to the Gospel. The Theology of Acts. Grand Rapids, Mn: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998. Pg xvi, 610. \$45.00.

Mendels, Doron

The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism. Jewish and Christian Ethnicity in Ancient Palestine. Grand Rapids, Mn: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997. Pg xiv, 450. \$35.00.

Riesner, Rainer

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Stott, John

Making Christ Known. Historic mission documents from the Lausanne movement, 1974-1989. Grand Rapids, Mn: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997. Pg 288. \$30.00.

Witherington III, Ben

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