

*Planting  
the Word*

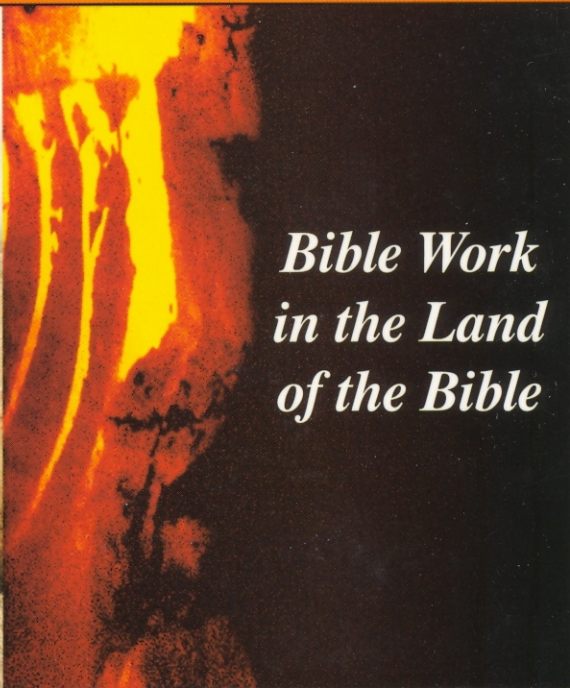
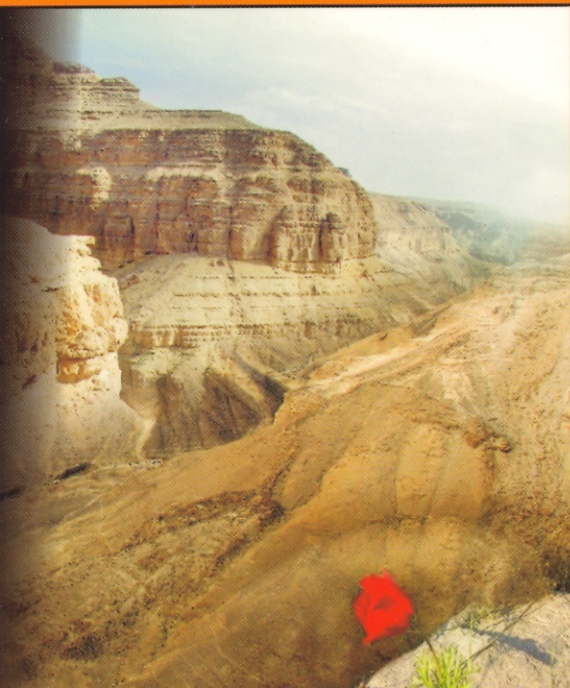


# MISHKAN

A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Issue 41 / 2004

JERUSALEM



*Bible Work  
in the Land  
of the Bible*

# MISHKAN

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

ISSUE 41 / 2004

**General Editor: Kai Kjær-Hansen**

**Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies · Jerusalem**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial Kai Kjaer-Hansen	3
Urgent Issues Most Relevant to World Evangelization Kai Kjaer-Hansen	4
Bible Distribution and the British and Foreign Bible Society in Eretz Israel Kelvin Crombie	6
First "Organized" Bible Work in 19th Century Jerusalem (1816-1831) Kai Kjaer-Hansen	21
Magne Solheim and Bible Work in Israel Terje Hartberg	31
Eli and Karen Bøgh - Bible Missionaries in Israel Bodil F. Skjøtt	38
The "Flagship" of Hebrew New Testaments: A Recent Revision Gershon Nerel	49
Reports from the Israeli and the Palestinian Bible Societies Doron Even Ari & Simon Azazian	57
Eighty Years of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Israel Heikki Nurminen	63
The Rise and Fall of Hermann Warszawiak Richard A. Robinson	72
Book Review: <i>Salvation Is from the Jews</i> (Roy H. Schoeman) Kai Kjaer-Hansen	80
Book Review: <i>In the Shadow of the Temple</i> (Oskar Skarsaune) Richard Bauckham	82
Book Review: <i>Understanding the Arab-Israeli Conflict</i> (Michael Rydelnik) Justin Kron	83
News from the Israeli Scene David A. Smith	84

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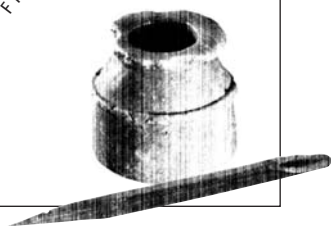
**Mishkan's** editorial policy is openly evangelical, committed to the New Testament proclamation that the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus (Yeshua) the Messiah is "to the Jew first."

**Mishkan** is a forum for discussion, and articles included do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors.

# Bible and Mission and Bible-men

By Kai Kjær-Hansen

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR



*The British and Foreign Bible Society* (BFBS) was established in 1804 and celebrates its 200-year jubilee this year. In this issue of *Mishkan* we mark the jubilee by bringing articles related to Bible work in Israel/Palestine – both then and now.

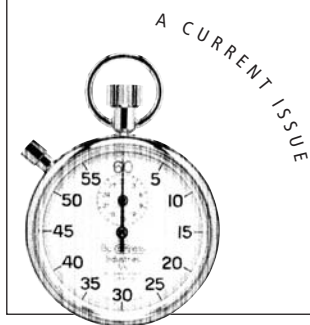
The establishment of BFBS and of a number of mission organizations at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century resulted from the revival which had taken place in England and North America. The same is true of the establishment of the Jewish mission, the *London Jews Society* in 1809.

Revival, mission and Bible belong together. This truth can be seen by reading the source material from that time of mission societies and Bible societies in counties bordering the Mediterranean. It is often difficult to discover for whom the persons mentioned are working or which society has employed them. This can be our problem today when we want to look at it historically. For people then this was not a problem. An impressive cooperation between Bible societies and mission societies took place. They needed one another in order to accomplish what each of them had set out to do.

Were the Bible societies to succeed they needed the mission societies and the missionaries. If the missions and their missionaries were to succeed they needed the Bibles – Bibles in a language understood by the people in the areas where they were working. Similarly, without missionaries – "Bible-men" – the Bible societies were ineffective.

Today, revival still is dependent on Bibles and Bible-men – and Bible-women.





# Urgent Issues Most Relevant to World Evangelization

By Kai Kjær-Hansen

"'A new vision, a new heart and a renewed call' was the theme of the Lausanne 2004 Forum for World Evangelization, held in Pattaya, Thailand from September 29 to October 5, 2004. More than 1500 participants from 130 countries attended the 31 simultaneous consultations of the Forum on urgent issues most relevant to world evangelization."

Those words are taken from *The Lausanne 2004 Forum Summary Affirmations*, which was distributed to all the participants at Forum 2004's concluding service in Pattaya. The topic for Issue Group #31 was *Reaching Jews with the Gospel*. The team working on the topic referred to itself as the *Jewish Evangelism Working Session* (JEWS).

As new groups were added to the initial 22 groups to take part in the Forum, the JEWS group was the very last to be part of the program. It was also the smallest of the 31 issue groups, with only seven members.

First or last, big or small, Jewish evangelism was part of the program at Forum 2004 and was therefore one of the (in the words of the leadership of Forum 2004) "urgent issues most relevant to world evangelization." Thus there is reason to rejoice. Where else is there today an international Christian network, which will include Jewish evangelism as one of the 31 "urgent issues most relevant to world evangelization"?

Although the work of the different Issue Groups occupied many hours at Forum 2004, the conference also provided an opportunity through its plenary sessions to hear from other groups and to learn of their agenda. Reports from the persecuted church made an impression, and need to be remembered when we in Jewish evangelism talk about the opposition Jewish believers in Jesus experience from their Jewish community. The conference program also included synergy groups providing members from different groups an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas and experiences. The following are two examples:

The JEWS group met with representatives from the group *Discipling Oral Learners*. Initially it seemed these two groups had very little in common. Jews all read and write whereas much of the world is made up of oral learners who understand best when information comes to them by means of stories. But as the conversation progressed we realized that to



share "Good News" in story form and parables is a means that certainly can be used also in Jewish work.

Similarly the meeting with representatives from the Issue Group *Understanding Muslims* was very fruitful. Jewish evangelism and Muslim evangelism face a lot of similar challenges. The Jewish-Christian dialogue questions the legitimacy and necessity of Jewish evangelism. This is also true of Christian-Muslim dialogue when commonalities between the two religions are emphasized and differences toned down. Just like some Jewish believers in Jesus are ostracized from the Jewish community, the same thing happens – perhaps to an even larger extent – to believers in Jesus from a Muslim background. Like Jewish believers struggle to express their faith in a Jewish way and in Jewish terms so believers from a Muslim background ask how they can do it in their context without compromising the gospel. Finally, just like there is a danger that Jewish believers (and those of us involved in Jewish evangelism) become anti-Arab, so believers in Jesus from a Muslim background stand in danger of becoming anti-Jewish in an attempt to gain sympathy within their own Muslim community. These examples suffice to show that those involved in Jewish evangelism stand to gain if this conversation could proceed in one way or another.

The JEWS group and the other 30 Issue Groups were challenged to write a report of their work. The reports will be published in the beginning of 2005. Next issue of *Mishkan* will take a closer look at the topics dealt with at Forum 2004.

The report from the JEWS group will have the title *Jewish Evangelism – A Call to the Church*. The introduction closes with the following words (taken from the not yet final edited document):

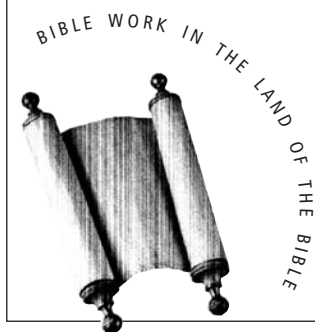
### A Renewed Call

When we maintain that the gospel of Jesus is the gospel of salvation for Jews as well as for Gentiles, we realize that we also make ourselves vulnerable to accusations of spiritual arrogance, religious imperialism and supersessionism vis-à-vis the synagogue.

We therefore affirm that neither Jewish evangelism nor world evangelism needs manmade triumphalism. Genuine evangelization to Jews as well as non-Jews is carried out only by the victory of God raising Jesus from the dead, calling all men to himself through faith in the crucified and resurrected Jesus. Evangelism is credible when it is clear that the one who brings the Good News to others needs the gospel as much for himself or herself ...

For much is at stake for the church if it denounces Jewish evangelism. Many within the church today do so without realizing the theological and missiological implications ...

What is at stake can simply be expressed in these words: *If Jesus is not the Messiah for the Jewish people he is not Christ for the nations.*



# Bible Distribution and the British and Foreign Bible Society in Eretz Israel

By **Kelvin Crombie**

The British and Foreign Bible Society (henceforth Bible Society or Society) was possibly the first Protestant organization to send a worker to "spy out the land." This is usual thought to have happened in 1816.<sup>1</sup> It was only in 1833 however that evangelical Christianity established a permanent base in the Land of Israel (Turkish *Palestine*), when the Danish pastor John Nicolayson, representing the London Jews Society, settled in Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter there was a close working relationship between the Bible Society and the other evangelical ministries which in time opened bases in the Land.

This article will endeavor to provide a glimpse of the activities of the Bible Society in particular and Bible distribution in Palestine since the initial visit around 1816.

## Beginning of Work in the Turkish Empire

The Bible Society was founded in Britain in 1804. Around 1812 the Society entered the Eastern Mediterranean (Levant). Some time later a base was established at Constantinople. In 1820 Rev. James Connor, the Bible Society agent in Constantinople, visited both Jerusalem and Damascus, where he distributed Scriptures.

In Jerusalem Connor met with Procopius, "the chief agent of the [Greek Orthodox] Patriarch of Jerusalem." Connor wrote that Procopius seemed sympathetic to the objectives of the Bible Society.<sup>3</sup> He wrote again several days later of his visit to the Armenian Patriarch, with whom he spoke about the Bible Society, and the object of his visit to Jerusalem. "Both

1 Kate Hobson, *Bible Work in the Bible Lands – Historical Notes*; 5 September 1995. Hobson, the Project Administrator of the united Bible Societies, Crawley, England states the Annual Report of 1816 as her source, and unfortunately I was unable to verify this information from the original.

2 The London Jews Society (LJS and today CMJ or ITAC in Israel) was formed in 1809, and like the Bible Society was a product of the strong interest in world-wide missions then occurring in Britain.

3 *The Bible Society Seventeenth Report*, 1821 (henceforth '... Report'), p. 60.



pleased him," wrote Connor, "and he immediately requested me to send him sixty-six of the Armenian Testaments I had brought with me."<sup>4</sup>

These meetings seemed to offer hope for the future work of the Bible Society in the *Holy City*. In reality though the chances were slim – the Muslim Turkish authorities would not permit foreigners to reside in Jerusalem. In view of this prohibition it was important for the Bible Society, and the various missionary societies now endeavoring to enter the Turkish Empire, to receive protection from the British consul where they were located.

Often the British consul was in fact a Bible Society agent. While in Malta in 1820 the Rev. William Jowett of the CMS<sup>5</sup>, (who visited Jerusalem in 1823 – with Scriptures supplied by the Bible Society), and Claudio Naudi, a native of Malta, instructed the initial LJS missionary, Melchior Tschoudy, that the first person he was to seek out was his Consul. They wrote:

The office of the Consul is to give protection to person and property. Make friends with him on that footing. He is not bound by the nature of his office to give assistance or encouragement to the plans of Religious Societies or their agents. Happily, in point of fact, the British Consuls in the Levant, are all, more or less, attached to the Bible Society ...<sup>6</sup>

## Consolidation of Mission Work

The next step in the development of the Bible Society was the establishment of the Levant Agency at Smyrna, in 1820, under Mr. Benjamin Barker. This move coincided with a spate of visits by missionaries to the Land of Israel.

Levi Parsons of the American Mission<sup>7</sup> visited Jerusalem in 1821 and spent several months there distributing Christian literature. During that time Tschoudy also visited the city. Also in 1821 the eccentric pioneer missionary, Joseph Wolff, an LJS associate and Jewish believer in Jesus entered the Land. He was accompanied by 20 Bible laden camels (many of those Bibles courtesy of the Bible Society), and prayed that he could share the Gospel "without hurting the feelings of persons who are of a different opinion."<sup>8</sup>

Wolff returned to Jerusalem at Easter in 1823, accompanied by the Americans Pliny Fisk and Jonah King. They then traveled to Lebanon and met with CMS, LJS and American Mission personnel, to devise a strategy

4 *Seventeenth Report*, 1821, p. 60.

5 CMS: Church Missionary Society. An evangelical Anglican society formed in 1799.

6 *The Jewish Expositor* 1821, p. 21.

7 The Boston based American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (established in 1808).

8 H.E. Hopkins, *Sublime Vagabond*, Worthing, 1984, 53.



for future mission work in the Levant. This meeting was convened by Lewis Way<sup>9</sup> (LJS) who had come from London, and brought with him 10,000 copies of the Scriptures. Later in the year Jowett, Rev. W.B. Lewis, (LJS) King and Bird again visited Jerusalem.

Lewis remained alone, but due to the less than positive attitude of the religious hierarchies, he had to leave after some time. In fact, in January, 1824 the Roman Catholic Church issued a Papal Bull against all Protestant literature, and the Sultan followed by issuing a *Firman*, or Imperial Edict against the same. Jerusalem did not readily welcome the evangelical faith – the Americans were even temporarily imprisoned for distributing Protestant literature.

Despite these setbacks Barker, in 1824, set up a Bible Society branch at Beirut. He wrote from there on June 20, 1824:

... have sent the Holy Scriptures to Jerusalem, Tyre, Sidon, Tripoli, Aleppo ... To Acre and other places the Holy Scriptures have been sent by the English and American missionaries. I was agreeably surprised to find at Beyrout three respectable missionaries. These gentlemen, who have been residing in Syria for several months, have, by their united exertions, distributed a considerable number of the Holy Scriptures, for account of the Bible Society at Malta.<sup>10</sup>

The three missionaries referred to were Bird, King and Lewis. Later Barker visited Palestine. In Jerusalem he found lodgings at the Greek Convent of Mar Michael, concerning which he wrote:

I found that there is always a good supply of the Sacred Scriptures, under the care of the missionaries, who have the key of the room they are placed in, and when they quit Jerusalem, after Easter, they leave with the Superior of the convent a certain number to dispose of during their absence.<sup>11</sup>

During a visit to the Armenian Patriarch, Barker was told by the Patriarch that his "good intentions would meet with no encouragement at this season of the year, for other Englishmen had supplied the Armenians residing here." It could be more encouraging he was informed if he came at another time of the year.

The reason why this was not an opportune time of the year, was that despite the problems of 1824, the American and British (LJS) missionaries had again visited Jerusalem during the Easter season of 1825. As it was

9 Lewis Way had been dispatched to the East to open a permanent LJS mission station in Jerusalem. He became sick and had to return to Britain.

10 *Twenty First Report*, 1825, p. 66.

11 Extracts from the Journal of Mr. Barker's Tour from Aleppo to Jerusalem. *Twenty Second Report* 1826, p. 111.

forbidden to foreigners to reside in Jerusalem, the missionaries made the most of the opportunity given them by the Easter pilgrimage.

On his homeward leg Barker stopped at Ramle, where he noticed a Bible at the convent where he stayed. The local Bishop informed him that "many Bibles and Testaments had been distributed here by the American and English missionaries." The Bishop, obviously a well-informed man, also stated that "the best thing the English ever did was the institution of the Bible Society, for the country was ever before destitute of the Sacred Scriptures."<sup>12</sup> In many cases the missionaries were distributing Scriptures obtained from the Bible Society!

At the conclusion of his journey, Barker observed, "As I entered the coast of Syria, I found that all my work was already done by the Missionaries, especially in Palestine, where those worthy fellow-labourers have so often travelled."<sup>13</sup>

In the following years the British and American missionaries continued their efforts to establish permanency in Jerusalem. It was not until 1833 however, that Nicolayson was permitted by the less despotic rule of Mehmet Ali of Egypt, to reside in Jerusalem.

### The Protestant Bishopric

Following the establishment of the British Consulate in Jerusalem in 1838 and the war between Egypt and Turkey in 1840, conditions for Protestants in Palestine improved considerably. In 1841 the controversial Protestant Bishopric between Britain and Prussia was established. The arrival of the Jewish Bishop, Michael Solomon Alexander provided Protestant Christianity with a higher profile in Jerusalem.

Another Jewish believer and LJS worker, Frederick Christian Ewald, accompanied Alexander. The Bible Society "adopted" Ewald, whose work was primarily amongst the Jewish population. Their Report for 1843 stated: "Your Committee have had sincere pleasure in making a grant to the Rev. F.C. Ewald, a missionary of the Jews' Society, who wrote from Jerusalem:

The result of my enquiries is, that there are channels open for the dissemination of Arabic, Greek, Syriac, Russian, Armenian, German, French, Italian, and Hebrew Scriptures. If, therefore, the Bible Society should have the goodness to forward to me ten or more copies of the Scriptures in each of the languages just mentioned, I will make it a point to get them into circulation.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Twenty Second Report*, 1826, p. 112.

<sup>13</sup> *Twenty Second Report*, 1826, p. 112.

<sup>14</sup> *Thirty Ninth Report*, 1843, p. lxxxv.



There were several exiting developments in 1844: the opening of LJS Book Shops in Jerusalem and Jaffa. Ewald wrote in May, 1844 "We have already sold about 30 pounds worth of Bibles ..." He continued:

many copies have been given away gratis to the poor ... and I have had many opportunities of telling the Jews, who come to the depot to purchase Scriptures, of the way of salvation. The opening of the depot caused quite a stir among the Jews in the Holy City ... The chief rabbis ... pronounced excommunication on every Jew who should ever visit it again ...<sup>15</sup>

## The Era of Bishop Gobat

Bishop Alexander died in 1845 and was succeeded by Samuel Gobat who served until his death in 1879. Gobat was a firm supporter of the Bible Society. In fact he became the Vice-President of the Bible Society at the time of his departure to Palestine, and stated his intentions:

What I shall be enabled to do in the East for the dissemination of the word of God I am unable to say; but, among other means, I intend to engage some colporteurs to carry it to the Jews, to the Greeks, the Arabs &c. I hope your Committee will furnish me with a small but continued supply of Amharic Bibles, that no Abyssinian pilgrim may be allowed to return home without carrying with him the word of life. Of course such Bibles must be given gratis, since the Abyssinians have nothing at all.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile the Bible Society continued its close working relationship with the LJS. The LJS Report for 1848 stated that they "thankfully acknowledge the kind assistance they have received from the British and Foreign Bible Society, who have, during the year, supplied your agents with 1198 copies of the Bible, in whole or in part, in the English and other languages."<sup>17</sup>

As in other locations within the Levant, the British consular representative in Jaffa, Dr. Assad Kayat, also helped distribute Bibles on behalf of the Bible Society. He wrote in 1848 that he would like to receive a grant to supply the schools in the land with copies of the Bible.<sup>18</sup>

The British Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews<sup>19</sup> (henceforth *British Society*) sent William Manning to begin a low-key work in

<sup>15</sup> *Jewish Intelligence*, 1844, p. 233.

<sup>16</sup> *Forty Third Report*, 1847, p. lxxxvi. Gobat was particularly concerned about Abyssinia as he had previously served there as a CMS missionary.

<sup>17</sup> *Jewish Intelligence*, 1848, p. 186/187. The same Report stated that the LJS had established a depository in Safed under the supervision of Mr. Cohen.

<sup>18</sup> *Forty-Fifth Report*, 1849, p. cv.

<sup>19</sup> Established in 1842 by non-Anglican evangelicals in England.

Jaffa in 1847. The British Society wrote, "A supply of Hebrew Bibles and Testaments has also been confided to him for distribution by the British and Foreign Bible Society."<sup>20</sup> These Bibles and materials Manning was to distribute among pilgrims heading to Jerusalem.<sup>21</sup> The following year Manning made his base in Beirut, and periodically visited Jaffa.<sup>22</sup>

Bishop Gobat strongly supported Christian education, and established schools at Jerusalem, Jaffa, Nazareth, Nablus and Es Salt. Often he requested help from the Bible Society for the distribution of Bibles in these schools. Gobat also employed colporteurs, who distributed Scriptures amongst the populace. Concerning the Bible Society's assistance, he stated in 1851: "I feel more and more that if it were not for the liberality of the Bible Society, I could scarcely do anything in this country."<sup>23</sup>

Gobat encouraged the CMS to begin working in *Eretz* Israel. In 1851 Rev. F.A. Klein and Dr. Charles Sandrecski arrived in Jerusalem. Within a few years the CMS had established centers at Jerusalem, Nazareth, Jaffa, Haifa and Nablus; the CMS workers became the main Bible Society collaborators.<sup>24</sup>

Sandrecski, acting on behalf of the Bible Society in Jerusalem, wrote in 1857 of the difficulty of a missionary selling Scriptures, except in the Book Shop, "where," he said, "people do not expect to get things gratis."<sup>25</sup> His observation concerning sale and *gratis*, was confirmed by the Rev. Dr. Koelle, CMS representative at Haifa. Koelle noted, "During my endeavors to circulate the Bible, I have been afresh impressed with the wisdom of the Bible Society's principle of selling the Scriptures. To give the Bible away promiscuously would probably lower it in the people's estimation. It would be a good point to observe uniformity on this point, as well as regard to the price..."<sup>26</sup>

There was however no uniformity on this issue. A number of the organizations, primarily the LJS, had felt it necessary to give the Scriptures away, due to the poverty of the Jewish community.

Sandrecski saw great doors of opportunity opening in Jerusalem, and in 1860 requested from the Bible Society copies of the Bible in Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish, Turkish, English, Arabic, Russian and Armenian. He drew attention to the recently established Russian Church presence in Jerusalem (a by-product of the Crimean War) and realized that Russian pilgrims would soon be coming in large numbers.<sup>27</sup>

The Secretary of the Bible Society, Rev. S. B. Berge visited Jerusalem in 1860, and later reported how he was invited by Bishop Gobat to speak

20 John Dunlop, *Memories of Gospel Triumphs among the Jews during the Victorian Era*, London 1894, 286

21 *Forty Fifth Report*, 1849, p. cv.

22 *Forty Fifth Report*, 1849, p. cv.

23 Letters from Bishop Gobat, *Forty-Seventh Report* 1851, p. lxxv.

24 Meanwhile the American Bible Society was actively assisting Dr. Smith, the senior missionary of the American Mission in Beirut, to translate some of the Scriptures into Arabic.

25 *Fifty Third Report*, 1857, p. cxxv.

26 *Fifty Fifth Report*, 1859, p. 130.

27 *Fifty Fifth Report*, 1859, p. 131.



at the monthly missionary prayer meeting. This was, he reported, “perhaps the first real Bible Society speech ever made within the walls of Jerusalem.” Of the meeting Berge commented that “the Bishop did not fail to remind the hearers, how greatly they were all indebted to the liberality of the Society.” Berge continued:

The means adopted for putting the Scriptures into circulation in Jerusalem are various. There are several schools here, both for the children of proselytes and others; the Scriptures are freely used, and each child is furnished with a Bible. There is a bookshop, opened for the sale of Scriptures, with a small apartment marked off for the accommodation of those who dare not possess a Bible, but are desirous of reading it in private. The sales here are not very great. Then the Missionaries, Scripture readers, and helpers, take the Scriptures with them through the city, and endeavour to dispose of copies. These are the chief means employed.<sup>28</sup>

In 1872 the CMS set up its own Bible Shop and worked closely thereafter with the Bible Society. The colporteur made Jerusalem his base, and from there journeyed extensively into the surrounding areas. A sub-branch of the Jerusalem work was carried out at Bethlehem from the mid-1860's by Rev. S. Muller from the Berlin German Mission who distributed materials on behalf of the Bible Society. Later, under the direction of Rev. L. Schneller, there was a closer connection with the Bible Society.

In 1871 the Bible Society set up a small book depot in Nazareth, under the supervision of Dr. P.K. Vartan, supervisor of the recently established Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society (EMMS)<sup>29</sup>. The Bible Society's work was also assisted by the CMS representative, Rev. J. Zeller (son-in-law of Bishop Gobat). The opening of a medical work in Nazareth, it was hoped, would enable Muslim patients to receive copies of the Scriptures. Dr. Vartan took most responsibility for the Bible Society interests in the Nazareth region. He also supervised a colporteur, who covered the Jezreel Valley region as far south as Nablus.

### After Gobat

Bishop Gobat died in 1879 and was replaced as bishop by Joseph Barclay, who died soon afterwards in 1881. The joint Protestant Bishopric then ceased in 1887. Following a visit by a Bible Society delegation in 1883, a new district was established at Alexandria which covered Palestine. The new supervisor, Rev. R.H. Weakley, wrote that “The whole land is mapped out from Achzib to El Arish between five labourers, whose centres are at Acre, Nazareth, Jerusalem (two), and Ramleh”<sup>30</sup> This development came

<sup>28</sup> *Fifty Sixth Report*, 1860, p. 75.

<sup>29</sup> This ministry is still continuing through the Hospital in Nazareth.

<sup>30</sup> *Eighty First Report*, 1885, p. 145.



as a result of the new political reality – Britain had taken control of Egypt in 1882.

Other changes included the setting up of a united depot at Haifa, with the CMS. The CMS continued to operate the depot at Jaffa, under Mr. Longley Hall, and from there Scriptures were taken by the colporteur to Gaza. The Rev. T.F. Wolters supervised the CMS bookshop in Jaffa from 1894.

Political activities in the region, including the British takeover of Egypt in 1882, and immigration of large numbers of Jewish people to the Land of Israel in the same year, saw the Turkish Government take a harder line against western activity. Consequently, the Bible Society Report stated in 1887, "Every branch of Mission work has suffered."<sup>31</sup>

Yet despite opposition, there were some interesting new openings. In 1887–88 the CMS opened a small depot in Gaza, located at the entrance to a small khan. The Bible Society contributed half of the rent of the depot, and paid half of the stipend of the depot keeper, Mr. Huber.<sup>32</sup> The Bible Society ceased its involvement with the Gaza book depot in 1890.

The nature of the Bible Society operations in the area is explained in its Report of 1889:

The Bible Society's work in the whole of the region is, with the exception of the Nazareth Depot and the colporteur there, associated with the different British Missions, and is left for its practical conduct to the superintendence of the missionaries." The Report continued that in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Gaza the Bible Society's Scriptures are placed, 'by mutual arrangement' in the CMS book shops, the work, including that of the colporteurs, is done by the CMS workers, the Bible Society sharing in the expenses.<sup>33</sup>

The Society made another change in 1896, by transferring its operations in Nazareth to the CMS, under the direction of the Rev. Henry Sykes. Thus ended a warm and healthy relationship with Dr. Vartan which stretched back to 1871.

It appears that from 1897 the Bible Society began to establish links with the Free Church of Scotland Mission to the Jews at Tiberius. "The Scottish Mission" stated the Bible Society Report, "purchases Scriptures of our Agency for its book-shop here."<sup>34</sup> Rev. John Soutar, a Hebrew Christian, supervised the work of the Scottish Mission book depot. The Scots set up

<sup>31</sup> *Eighty Third Report*, 1887, p. 192.

<sup>32</sup> CMS had begun their work in Gaza in 1878, when some schools which were begun by Mr. Pritchett, were handed over to the CMS. The first worker there was a Hebrew Christian, Rev. A.W.Shapira.

<sup>33</sup> *Eighty Fifth Report*, 1889, p. 171.

<sup>34</sup> *Bible Society Report*, 1898. Foreign Transactions, Egyptian Agency. p. 151.



another book depot at Safed in 1901.<sup>35</sup> Another fresh beginning was at Haifa where Sykes set up a small shop near the main street in 1899.

## 1905 – The Bible Society Goes it Alone

Up till now most of the Bible Society operations had been carried on in cooperation with the major missionary societies. The steady development within the land since the 1880's however compelled the Bible Society to step out on her own in certain directions. They reported in 1906:

After full and friendly consultation with the C.M.S. an important step was taken last autumn with the utmost harmony and good feeling. The depots at Jaffa and Nazareth, hitherto supported conjointly by the C.M.S. and the B.F.B.S., have been closed. The depot at Jerusalem has ceased to be a joint undertaking, and was opened early last September as the Bible Society's central depot for the supply of Scriptures in Palestine. We earnestly pray for God's blessing on this new enterprise, whereby the Bible Society essays directly to supply the ancient Eastern and Western Churches and the modern Christian missions, as well as the Hebrews and Moslems, with the Holy Scriptures.<sup>36</sup>

Mr. Alexander Hope, a Bible Society representative who remained in Jerusalem to help the depot, wrote:

The depot stands in an excellent position near the Jaffa Gate, a short distance outside the walls. On its shutters the Society's name is painted in English, French, and German, so that when the depot is closed no one who passes can fail to learn where he may obtain a Bible. On two of the windows the name is inscribed in eight different languages, whilst in a third window copies of the Scriptures are shown in sixteen languages. Gospels in the six languages most widely known in Jerusalem are so placed in this window that they can be read by passers by ...<sup>37</sup>

This Book Depot, under the supervision of Musa Chaim, a Hebrew Christian, in time serviced the other Bible Society related book depots and the other missionary societies with most of their Scriptures. "The Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem has promised to observe a "Bible Sunday" in the Collegiate Church of St. George," the Report in 1907 states, "and to devote the entire offertories to our Society."<sup>38</sup> In 1908 a specialized

35 The LJS had re-opened their station in Safed following the first *aliyah*. Two British missionary societies now worked in this City, sometimes, unfortunately, in competition.

36 *Bible Society Annual Report*, Foreign Transaction Egyptian Agency, 1906.

37 *Bible Society Annual Report*, Foreign Transaction Egyptian Agency, 1906, p. 147.

38 *Bible Society Report*, 1907, p. 155. This was the fourth Bishop, Rev. William Blyth.

colporteur, Mr. S. Segal, was employed specifically to work amongst the pilgrims who came during the Easter season.

The Bible Society was optimistic of further openings among the Muslim population following the issuing of a new Constitution by the Turkish Government in 1908, stating "marvelous changes have come about within a very short space of time, and have caused great rejoicings amongst all classes of the population."<sup>39</sup> Within only a year however that rejoicing of the populace had changed. For the first time Jews and Christians were eligible for military conscription. Many young Jewish and Christian men left the Land, depriving the Bible Society of several of its colporteurs.

The Society reported other significant changes. In their 1910 Report, they mention the large number of Jewish immigrants entering the Land.<sup>40</sup> Most of these Jewish colonists came from Russia, and therefore were exempt from conscription into the Turkish Army. At this time they employed Joseph Manasseh, a Hebrew Christian originally from Persia, as colporteur.

Some of these new Jewish immigrants were open to receiving the Scriptures, while others, for either religious or nationalist reasons, were strongly opposed. Manasseh recalls numerous occasions when he faced opposition during this period. The Zionist organization strongly emphasized Jewish nationalism. The New Testament teachings of Jesus were construed to be non-nationalist and universal in perspective, and were thus disdained. Manasseh wrote in 1913:

During the past two months there has been much persecution for me from my own nation. Many of them agreed together to prevent me passing through their quarter or near to their schools. Some days ago they wrote a note and fastened it on the Jaffa Gate, that they must kill me and all the Hebrew Christians.<sup>41</sup>

## The First World War

The people of the land, was seriously affected during the First World War. Many of the Jewish residents of Palestine were Russian Jews, the majority of whom had not adopted Turkish citizenship. Then beginning in December 1914, Turkish soldiers began rounding up Russian Jews in Jaffa, and deported them forcibly, to Alexandria. The Bible Society in their 1915 Report stated:

While the sign-boards, &c., were removed from our depot at Jerusalem, it was bravely kept open each day by Colporteur Moses Haim, who had registered himself as a Spanish subject. Colporteur

<sup>39</sup> *Bible Society Report*, 1919, p. 184.

<sup>40</sup> *Bible Society Report*, 1910, p. 162.

<sup>41</sup> *Bible Society Report*, 1914, p. 155.



Joseph, who had done faithful work among the Jews and suffered much persecution, took refuge in Egypt to be employed at Alexandria; he was the better able to be away from Palestine because, though a Jew, he is of Persian nationality.<sup>42</sup>

Due to Turkish pressure Haim was forced to close the shop in 1915, and left for Alexandria. Following his departure an American, Mr. Whelan, took possession of the Shop, even sleeping there during the night. Against all obstacles he remained there until the British/Anzac (Australian and New Zealand) troops entered the land in early 1917 and finally Jerusalem in December. A British official later wrote to Mr. Hooper, the Bible Society representative in Port Said, saying:

It may interest you to know that as I entered Jerusalem with the first troops, I was met by a quaint old man of seventy years, who, telling me he represented the Bible Society, presented me with a beautiful copy of the Scriptures.<sup>43</sup>

Mr. Whelan had managed to stow away some 30,000 volumes of Scriptures, in 50 languages, in the basement, and all the English copies were brought up thereafter by the soldiers. Mr. Whelan later told an official of the Egypt General Mission who visited Jerusalem, that he felt that a vacant block of land, close to where the Bible Society had its rented premises, would one day be the Bible Society Depot. The 1918 Report concluded "The Committee of the Society are making plans and preparations to erect a new Bible depot in Jerusalem which shall not be unworthy of its object."

### **The Mandate Period.**

From December, 1917 Jerusalem and the south were part of Occupied Enemy Territory. Mr. Whelan remained in his self-appointed post during 1918, and was then replaced by Mr. Amin Nusr. In 1919 Mr. T.P. Bevan took charge. During this period business returned to normal, and there were many sales of Scriptures. Following the completion of the War the British/Anzac troops were repatriated as early as possible, many not having been home for three to four years. By late 1919 most of the Occupation force were Indian soldiers. The Bible Society wrote how:

<sup>42</sup> *Bible Society Report*, 1915, p. 153.

<sup>43</sup> *Bible Society Report*, 1918, p. 66. For most of this period America was neutral, thus enabling Whelan to remain in his post.

One of the depot windows was filled with open copies of versions in various Indian languages, and it was most interesting to watch the Indian soldiers, as they recognized their own tongues. At the door a notice in Urdu, Hindi, and Marathi told what was to be found within.<sup>44</sup>

The League of Nations offered Britain a Mandate for Palestine in 1920. Britain accepted and the military government was replaced with a civilian government, led by a High Commissioner. The land was in the process of far reaching changes. The Mandate called for implementing the promises of the Balfour declaration with the intention of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

During the early Mandate period the book depot was directed by Mr. A.O. Neve.<sup>45</sup> The Society meanwhile continued its search for suitable property to purchase to establish a more permanent building, but were hindered by "political and legal difficulties."

In 1921 Mr. T.E. Bugby took over the depot, located opposite the General Post Office, near the Old City walls. The sales were now continually increasing. But colportage was down a little over the previous year, "due mainly," they wrote, "to unavoidable changes in the staff and to the fact that 'Anzac,' the Society's horse, was stolen from its stable at night by Arabs."<sup>46</sup> Bugby was replaced in 1922 by Mr. M Siraganian.

Simultaneously the Bible Society entered into co-operation with the LJS Book Shop in Jaffa, under the leadership of Rev. A.C. Martin. The Rev. Peter Nyland replaced Martin in 1922. From 1928 the Rev. Forrest of the Scottish Mission also helped, primarily by carrying on the work of colportage, and receiving financial assistance from the Bible Society.

A similar arrangement was made at Haifa with Rev. S.B. Rohold, a Hebrew Christian, from the British Jews Society. Mr. Rohold often visited the work camps where new Jewish immigrants were located, speaking to them about the Messiah Jesus. Of these visits it was stated that though he went "with two large bags filled with literature, he never once came back with any books."<sup>47</sup> He wrote in 1923, "God is working and we praise Him, and we should like at the same time to say what a debt of gratitude we owe to the British & Foreign Bible Society for enabling us to disseminate the knowledge of God as revealed in the Book of God."<sup>48</sup>

Finally in 1923 the Bible Society was able to purchase property for a new Bible House in Jerusalem, located on Tancred Street.<sup>49</sup> It was a prime location. Field Marshall Lord Plumer, the High Commissioner, assisted by the Anglican Bishop, Rennie MacInnes, laid the foundation stone on

44 *Bible Society Report*, 1920, p. 74.

45 There is a picture of the Bible Depot during this period covered in snow on page 53 of *Jerusalem : The New City of David*.

46 *Bible Society Report*, 1922, p. 110.

47 *Bible Society Report*, 1922 p. 111.

48 *Bible Society Report*, 1924, p. 120.

49 Lane presently part of the Municipality buildings behind the former Municipal Offices.



December 22, 1926. Many other church, missionary society, government and municipal representatives also attended. A lead box "containing Bibles in English, Arabic, and Hebrew, and Testaments in Greek and Armenian, also current literature of the Society, was placed in the wall behind the stone."<sup>50</sup>

For the duration of the building the Society moved from their premises and rented a shop inside Jaffa Gate close to the LJS Book Shop opposite the Citadel at Christ Church. The Bible House (also named Connaught House) was officially opened April 10, 1928 by Lady Plumer.

### Later Mandate Period

The Land of Israel was beset in August, 1929 by serious riots throughout the Land, when many Arab people attacked some isolated Jewish communities. Order was quite quickly restored, much assisted by the Bible-believing commander, Brigadier-General William Dobbie.

The Mission to the Mediterranean Garrisons was granted 325 English Pocket Testaments for distribution among the troops. Dobbie "in an appropriate 'Foreword,' commended the reading of the book to the men under his command, and it has been delightful to find soldiers here and there, returning from duty in Palestine, whose faith has been quickened and strengthened by their closer contact with 'The Land and the Book.'"<sup>51</sup>

After peace was restored life returned to some normalcy. This period is noted by the death of Mr. Rohold in 1931. He was ably replaced in the work by his wife. Nyland and Forrest continued their work in Jaffa.

The relative peace was broken when in April, 1936 riots broke out in the Jaffa/Tel Aviv area between the Jewish and Arab peoples. The spread of the riots caused the British Government to send more troops and enlarge their garrison. Thereafter the British progressively became the enemy of both the Jewish and Arab communities. A colporteur in Transjordan was roughly handled for selling what the Arabs termed "the Englishman's religious book." It became progressively more difficult to retain a neutral position – especially when you were known as the *British* and Foreign Bible Society.

The troubles were temporarily stopped with the outbreak of the Second World War in September, 1939. During the period of the War the Bible Society's operations, like that of all missionary societies, were toned down. The 1942/43 Bible Society Report sums up the situation:

The situation in Palestine has been dominated by the fluctuations of the fortunes of war. When the 8th Army was being driven back across the frontiers of Egypt, there was a good deal of nervousness,

<sup>50</sup> *Bible Society Report*, 1927, p. 123.

<sup>51</sup> *Bible Society Report*, 1930, p. 94.



and a large number of refugees poured into Palestine. With the subsequent happier turn of events, optimism returned and confidence was restored. The news of the slaughter of Jews and of the threat of their extermination in the Nazi-occupied countries of Europe cast a cloud of gloom over the Jewish community, and three days were set apart as days of national mourning. The difficulty of supplies of the Scriptures is causing some anxiety, but nevertheless the work of distribution has been maintained with gratifying results.<sup>52</sup>

Immediately after the cessation of hostilities, the internal political struggle resumed. This situation, wrote the Society, "has shown a lack of appreciation of spiritual things."<sup>53</sup> Finally in 1947 Britain surrendered the Mandate to the United Nations, which in turn suggested the partition of Palestine into a Jewish State and an Arab State. In November 1947 the U.N. voted to partition the Land of Israel.

The Arab leadership rejected the UN decision. Several days afterwards rioting began in the Mamilla district of Jerusalem – very close to Connaught House. From December, 1947 onwards Jerusalem became a battle zone and a divided city.

## Israel & Jordan

After the State of Israel was proclaimed in May, 1948, fighting within Jerusalem intensified. The Bible House was caught in the middle, and reports circulated that it had been blown up. In fact it received damage to the front doors and first floor only, but was not destroyed. The fighting caused the Bible House to close, and Mr. Siraganian left Jerusalem. The Bible House was ransacked and looted, but most of the Society's stock was removed by the Israeli Custodian of Abandoned Property.

The four colporteurs employed by the Society left, one moving to Beirut, another to Amman, one to Cairo, while Mr. Siraganian, moved to Ramallah and there set up a sub-branch. In 1950 this small sub-branch moved to the Arab side of Jerusalem.

Shortly after the cessation of hostilities, in 1949, the Hebrew University approached the Bible Society with a request to rent their building. The Hebrew University buildings were located within the Jordanian side of Jerusalem and were inaccessible. Rev. Ronald Adeney of the Church Mission to the Jews (formerly LJS), who had arrived in 1947, assisted with the business affairs of the transfer, and acted for a time as the Bible Society agent.

In 1950 the Rev. Magne Solheim of Norway, offered his services as Honorary Assistant Secretary. Soon afterwards the British Jews Society (later Christian Witness to Israel) offered their Book Shop in Haifa to the

<sup>52</sup> *Bible Society Report*, 1942/43, p. 35.

<sup>53</sup> *Bible Society Report*, 1946/47, p. 44.



Bible Society. From the end of 1950 the Bible Society was again operating, albeit with a different staff, and in a new location.

## Conclusion

The story of the Bible Society following the establishment of the State of Israel, is to be told by others. There is absolutely no doubt though that the Bible Society has played a crucial role in disseminating the Word of God in the Land of Israel in the period leading up to 1948. This Society has invested much by way of finances, resources, personnel and prayer in the extension of the Kingdom of God in the modern period.

Let's pray together that they will continue with their good work – even for another 200 years.

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# First "Organized" Bible-work in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Jerusalem (1816-1831)

## ***Part I: Is the Year 1816 the Beginning of Organized Bible Work in Israel?***

By Kai Kjær-Hansen



In this article I intend to deal with the question of the beginning of organized Bible work in Israel. However, a lot depends on the definitions that are used and on the questions that are asked.

Can it, for example, be considered a "beginning" if some people in a given place receive a box of Bibles from abroad? Or if an itinerant missionary distributes and sells Bibles a few days or weeks in one place and then leaves without having set up some permanent contacts? Or can we only speak of "organized work" if a depot has been established? If the answer is yes, then what about the consul who was often in charge of such a depot but was not active himself? Furthermore, the fact that a depot is established does not mean that a Bible Society has been founded. And consistent with this, what were the plans for the establishment of a Jerusalem Bible Society in the period we are going to deal with? How do people coming from abroad and local people interact in an "organized work?" Even if a "beginning" can be dated historically, might the work come to an end (even very soon) so that a "new beginning" would have to be made?

These and similar questions need to be asked if we want to get a better picture of the Bible work in 19<sup>th</sup> century Palestine. In the next issues of *Mishkan* I shall attempt to give some glimpses of this, focusing on the Bible work in *Jerusalem* in the period 1816–1831. Why 1831? Because in that year the "Bible Room" in Jerusalem was closed down!

In another article in this issue of *Mishkan* Kelvin Crombie has given a historical cross section of the Bible work from its beginning until 1948.

The year I suggest for the beginning of organised Bible-work in Jerusalem will appear in part II in a later article. However, in order to understand the complex of problems presented in this article it should be mentioned that the missionary Christoph Burckhardt paid a short visit to Jerusalem in May 1818 (at Whitsun and no more than 10 days) when he distributed and sold Bibles. James Connor visited Jerusalem in the spring of 1820 (at Easter and upwards of six weeks). Apart from distributing and selling Bibles Connor also organized a Bible work in Jerusalem.

## The Problematic Year “1816”

In this article I am going to focus on the year 1816, which means that I shall be complicating the time-honored opinion that 1816 should be the year of the “Beginning of organized work” in Jerusalem. It is my hope that I may substantiate that this assumption is mistaken. This means that I am exposing myself to (subsequent) criticism.

My *first* point is an *argumentum e silentio*. There are so many sources that it is easy to overlook something. Should someone succeed in localizing the source that we are looking for, much will have been achieved.

*Secondly* I am going to take on the source upon which the time-honored opinion is based. Is it reliable?

Henry Lindsay is, as we shall see below, the person who was mentioned. It has been assumed that he visited Jerusalem in 1816, which means that he would be the person who constitutes the “Beginning of organised work” there. The *question* is if it is possible to find reliable historical sources that can substantiate this. The *problem* is, in my view, that advocates for “1816” and “Lindsay” have uncritically used some *Historical Notes* from 1995.<sup>1</sup> The *challenge* is to find out how historical these *Historical Notes* really are.

## The assertion: “The Bible Society in Israel since 1816”

On the front page of *Word from Zion*, the newsletter which is published by The Bible Society in Israel, it says, “The Bible Society in Israel since 1816,” and on its website, “Beginning of organised work: 1816.” The last sentence appears under the heading “Bible Society Data.” Clicks on the websites for other Bible Societies in the world show that the United Bible Society (UBS) apparently has asked the various societies to fill in the space “Beginning of organized work” with a year. I assume that UBS has laid down some criteria for this – though I admit that I do not know this for sure. The observation that UBS societies in the Middle East use *different* criteria is a byproduct of this study.

The term “in Israel” used about the Bible Society in Israel is in itself problematic. It goes without saying that the Bible Society in Israel today can write “in Israel” – what else? Modern readers understand this as the *State of Israel* (1948). But which area are we talking about when we are dealing with the 19<sup>th</sup> century? The answer could be the Palestine of that time or *Eretz Israel*. But what does that mean? At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “Palestine” was the name of a vast area extending from the Lebanon Mountains to the Sinai desert.<sup>2</sup> If this is not kept in mind, there

1 *Bible Work in the Bible Lands – Historical Notes*, compiled by Kate Hobson, dated 5<sup>th</sup> September 1995, not published. Submitted to me August 2004 by Terje Hartberg. Subsequently referred to as *Historical Notes*.

2 Sherman Lieber states concerning “Palestine” at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the following, among other things: “A geographically undefined area,

is a great danger that we may today draw some historically false conclusions concerning the Bible work in the Palestine and *Jerusalem* of that time.

### Why is Lindsay not Mentioned if He Was in Jerusalem?

*Plans* of an "organized" Bible-work in Jerusalem existed *prior* to 1816. I presume (without documenting the statement here) that such plans may be traced in sources even before 1815. But it is certain that such plans are part of the "Instructions" William Jowett received from his employer, the Church Missionary Society (CMS), before he set out for Malta in 1815. Through these "Instructions" he was, as he paraphrased, requested to make an "enquiry on the spot, whether a Bible Society could not be formed at Jerusalem."<sup>3</sup> As regards the time, Jowett could be the one who visited Jerusalem in 1816. This view can, however, be dismissed out of hand. Jowett's first visit to Jerusalem took place in 1823.

But what names *does* Jowett mention of people who visited Jerusalem before 1820–21? This is an interesting question. For *if* a source is found which unambiguously states that Lindsay was in Jerusalem in 1816, then it would seem that his contemporaries did not attach any real significance to it. A few examples will substantiate this.

Jowett made a journey from Malta December 10, 1818, and returned to Malta October 4, 1819. During this journey it was his intention to visit Syria and Jerusalem. The first plan failed. While in Alexandria Jowett "found himself obliged to give up the hope which he had cherished, of reaching Jerusalem by the time of Passover." Instead he goes to Cairo.

The second plan also fails. "At Caïro he resumed his intention of visiting Jerusalem; and set forward on the journey, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June" [1819]. But in the desert the traveling companions were robbed; the trunk of one of his fellow travelers is stolen. It contained \$1000 besides clothes. Jowett and his fellow travelers return to Cairo, and the investigation into the case "occupied so much time, that Mr. Jowett was again obliged to defer his visit to the Holy City."<sup>4</sup>

Palestine lay between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, and extended from the Lebanon Mountain to the Sinai desert ... Palestine was split between the two administrative provinces of Damascus and Sidon. The province of Damascus consisted of a small part of the eastern-upper Galilee, the mountain range in central Palestine from Jenin south through Nablus and Jerusalem to just beyond Hebron. The Sidon province included the Galilee and the swampy maritime plain, from its capital in Acre south past Jaffa to Khan Yunis, bordering on the Sinai desert." Sherman Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries – The Jews in Palestine 1799–1840* (Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 1992), 19.

3 William Jowett, *Christian Researches in Syria and the Holy Land* (London: 1825), 411. The book covers Jowett's researches in the period 1823–1824.

4 *Missionary Register* (CMS) 1820, 28; cf. also William Jowett, *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean* (London: second edition, 1822), 213. The book covers Jowett's researches in the period 1815–1820 and includes an Appendix (pp. 413–454) by James Connor about the latter's travels 1819–1820. I take this opportunity to thank Donald M. Vorp, Speer Library, Princeton Theological Seminary, for having sent me a copy of this book which is not readily accessible.



The fact that Jowett did not reach Jerusalem during his travels in the years 1815–1820 did not prevent him from giving his opinion about the situation in Jerusalem, which he does in the book *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean*. In the chapter “New Stations Suggested” he writes, among other things:

The Holy City should be ever kept in view: and, till it may be found expedient to establish a Station there, or in its immediate vicinity, visits, such as those of Mr. Burckhardt, Mr. Connor, and Mr. Parsons (the associate of Mr. Fisk, two Missionaries from the American Board of Missions), should be made to this ever-interesting spot ...<sup>5</sup>

Why does Jowett, who at that time was *the* expert on the history of the Protestant mission in the Levant, not mention Lindsay’s visit to Jerusalem? And similarly, in *The Missionary Herald* in 1819, which under the heading “Mediterranean” describes the situation there 1815–1819,<sup>6</sup> Lindsay is not mentioned, but Burckhardt and Connor are.

In the five-volume work on BFBS history (1904) Lindsay is mentioned. He is described as one who has assisted the society and who has, among other things, “obtained the Armenian Patriarch’s approval of the circulation of the Scriptures...” Lindsay’s journey to the Seven Apocalyptic Churches in Asia Minor in 1816 is mentioned (perhaps it was 1815; see note 12 below).<sup>7</sup> But why is there no mention of Lindsay’s journey to Jerusalem?

I admit that these are *argumenta e silentio*, from which nothing can be deduced with historical certainty. So far nothing has been substantiated and everything is still open. And yet, the suspicion remains that Lindsay did *not* visit Jerusalem in 1816.

## Henry Lindsay in the Years 1815–1816

From 1815 to 1816 Henry Lindsay is Chaplain to the Embassy at Constantinople,<sup>8</sup> and consequently not “employed” by the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), but he works for the Bible cause and conducts negotiations on behalf of BFBS. In 1815 it is announced that Lindsay has obtained an official “Declaration from the Oecumenical Patriarch of the Greek Church, in favor of the accuracy of the Modern Greek Testament, printed by this Society, and authorizing the free sale and perusal of it.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Jowett 1822, 367.

<sup>6</sup> *Missionary Herald*, 1819, pp. 127–129. (American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.)

<sup>7</sup> William Canton, *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: John Murray, vol. I, 1904), 140–141.

<sup>8</sup> Canton 1904, vol. I, 140; thus also in the two letters from Lindsay which are referred to below. When exactly Lindsay began and ended his ministry as chaplain in Constantinople is in this connection of minor importance.

<sup>9</sup> BFBS *Eleventh Report*, 1815, p. 29.



Two letters from Lindsay from the beginning of 1815 and the beginning of 1816 respectively, published in BFBS Reports, may be relevant.

(1) In a letter dated Constantinople, January 25, 1815, Lindsay mentions an interview he has had with some

Greek Priests of Syria, by desire of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, who is at present at Constantinople ... with a view to procure some copies of the Arabic Bible, printed by the Society ... The Priests informed me, that such is the want of the Bible in Arabic, throughout Syria, that only a few old copies are to be found, and these seldom entire: they therefore begged me to request from the Society a speedy supply; as they are confident the sale of them would be very rapid, were the price much more considerable than it is.<sup>10</sup>

When one reads the quotation above, it is necessary to be very careful. There is no explicit mention of sending Bibles to *Jerusalem*. Secondly, the Patriarch of *Jerusalem* had *not* come from Jerusalem to Constantinople. The Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem *resides* at that time in Constantinople – even if Lindsay's words "who is at present at Constantinople" is open to a different understanding. In James Connor's words, "The Patriarch of Jerusalem always resides in Constantinople."<sup>11</sup> If this is not kept in view, one misunderstands the above passage, as far as I can see.

Whether or not the inquiry from the "Greek Priests of Syria" was honored, I dare not say. *If* it were, it would be an argument for 1815 as the "Beginning of organized work" in Syria. It is here worth noting that the Syrian Bible Society on its website writes 1820 in the space "Beginning of organized work" (as does the Bible Society in Lebanon). Further, there is positive evidence that Christoph Burckhardt was in the region already in 1818 and distributed and sold Bibles, as he had also done previously in Jerusalem during the same journey.

(2) In a letter dated Constantinople, January 10, 1816, Lindsay writes about "a short excursion into Asia Minor," where he distributed "at least,

<sup>10</sup> BFBS *Eleventh Report*, 1815, p.164.

<sup>11</sup> James Connor in Jowett 1822: 431. The same statement is found in BFBS *Seventeenth Report*, 1821, p. 60. Cf. Saul P. Colb: "After the death of Athanas, the Brotherhood elected Cyril II (1845–1872), who was the first Greek Patriarch to establish his residence in Jerusalem." In *Christianity in the Holy Land* (Tel Aviv: Am Hassefer, 1969), 78. and also: "Permanent residence in Jerusalem by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch was not reestablished until 1845," cf. Yishai Eldar: "The Christian Communities of Israel", in *Focus on Israel – The Christian Communities of Israel*, 30 March 2003, published by Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



one copy of the unadulterated word of God, at each of the seven Asiatic Churches of the Apocalypse.”<sup>12</sup>

From this description it appears clearly that in 1815–1816 Lindsay lives in Constantinople, and *visits* Smyrna. Since Lindsay takes time to give an account of a short trip to the towns of the seven churches in the Apocalypse, and BFBS devotes three pages to inform its readers of this, it seems strange that nothing is published about Lindsay’s visit to Jerusalem *if* he had been there. So the suspicion that Lindsay did not go to Jerusalem in 1816 has been reinforced.

It’s time to consider the modern source which advocates of 1816 refer to as sole documentation for the “Beginning of organized work” in Israel.

### Source Criticism of Bible Work in the Bible Lands

According to a mail correspondence in August 2004 with the United Bible Society, the year 1816 first appears in a report from the UBS from 1976<sup>13</sup> – and the name Henry Lindsay appears in the above-mentioned *Historical Notes* from 1995 (cf. note 1 above). It might be worthwhile to make a source critical analysis of *Historical Notes* – and try to establish if they are reliable in matters that do *not* concern the year 1816 and Lindsay. If they are, this could be an argument for the validity of 1816. I shall restrict myself to an analysis of the lines with which these *Historical Notes* are introduced. (The numbers in the square brackets are mine and refer to my subsequent comments.)

The Annual Reports of the British and Foreign Bible Society first mention the Bible Lands in 1816, [1] when Mr Henry Lindsay, based at Smyrna [2] in the then Ottoman Empire, was sent by his superior, Mr Pinkerton, [3] to visit Jerusalem. [4] Mr Pinkerton subsequently [5] meets the Patriarch of Jerusalem in Constantinople, which appears to have been a fruitful encounter. The Patriarch was glad to receive Scriptures to distribute to the pilgrims who visited the Holy City: he estimated that an average of 2,000 visitors from the Greek communion visited the city annually. A further attempt to arrange a meeting with the Syrian Archbishop of Jerusalem is unsuccessful, [6] but Mr Connor, the BFBS agent [7] at Constantinople, visits Damascus and Jerusalem [8] with a stock of Scriptures in 1819. [9] In 1820 work begins in earnest with the establishment of the Levant Agency under Mr Leeves. [10] The Bible Lands come under the Smyrna sub- agency, where Mr Benjamin Barker has replaced Mr Lindsay. [11]

12 BFBS *Twelfth Report*, 1816, pp. 132–135. Canton 1904, vol. I, 140–141 dates this journey to 1816, but it may be an inaccuracy since the letter that mentions this matter is dated 1816. Others have 1815 as the date, e.g. Isaac Bird, (although he calls Henry Lindsay “David”), *Bible Work in Bible Lands* (Philadelphia, Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1872), 22.

13 “World Annual Report 1976”, pp. 114–115. In *Bulletin, United Bible Societies*, Number 106/107 - First/Second Quarter 1977. Published by the UBS, Stuttgart, Germany.

Our challenge is to verify the sources (if possible) on which these *Historical Notes* might be based. But it can already now be revealed that what comes after the word "subsequently" can be dated to circumstances in or after the year 1819!

**Ad 1.** As noted above, Henry Lindsay mentions, in a letter of January 25, 1815, negotiations with "Greek Priests of Syria" who ask for Bibles. Since Syria in the consciousness of missionaries at that time is included in the term "Bible Lands,"<sup>14</sup> it is not correct to maintain that BFBS Reports first mention "the Bible Lands in 1816."

**Ad 2.** In 1816 Lindsay was not "based at Smyrna"; he was based at Constantinople, which has been documented above.

**Ad 3.** Readers are given the erroneous impression that Robert Pinkerton *lives* in Constantinople; however, he is there on a visit as BFBS' representative; it is therefore imprecise and misleading to call Pinkerton Lindsay's "superior." In the following paragraph further light will be thrown on the relationship between Lindsay and Pinkerton.

**Ad 4.** My point of departure was that the author of the *Historical Notes* must have had one source that links Lindsay with Pinkerton. As my investigation has progressed, my doubts about this have increased.

**Ad 5.** When was "subsequently" for Pinkerton's interview with the Patriarch of Jerusalem (who still resides in Constantinople)? On the assumption that Pinkerton *lived* in Constantinople, it was theoretically possible for Pinkerton to have had several interviews with the Patriarch of Jerusalem. But this assumption is wrong, for the source on which the *Historical Notes* are based can be positively identified.

First: The BFBS Committee inform in 1820 the following: "... and it is with much pleasure your Committee learn, that the Patriarch of Jerusalem (with whom Dr. Pinkerton had an interesting interview at Constantinople,) has received the 1000 Testaments in Modern Greek, 500 in Ancient and Modern, and 500 Arabic Psalters, which the Patriarch proposes to distribute among the pilgrims who annually visit the Holy Sepulchre."<sup>15</sup>

Second: The information from BFBS's Committee is based on a letter from Pinkerton, dated Constantinople, October 20, 1819, in which he mentions his negotiations with the Patriarch of Jerusalem in Constantinople.<sup>16</sup> It is beyond doubt that the *Historical Notes* base their information on this. The mention of "2000 visitors" both in Pinkerton's letter and in the *Historical Notes* makes this certain.

**Ad 6.** The information of an attempt to set up a meeting (which never took place) with "the Syrian Archbishop of Jerusalem" is not in itself particularly relevant, when we consider the other things Pinkerton refers to in his letters. But the source of this can also be verified. It is a letter

14 Cf. the title of Isaac Bird's book mentioned in note 12.

15 BFBS *Sixteenth Report*, 1820, pp. lxx-lxx.

16 BFBS *Sixteenth Report*, 1820, pp. 20-22.



from Pinkerton, dated October 22, 1819, which opens with the following words: "I AM happy to inform you that although I was not able during my stay at Malta, to make arrangements for having the Syrian Archbishop of Jerusalem visited at Mount Lebanon, according to your request, yet this important point is likely to be attained from another quarter." This letter is published in the BFBS Report immediately after the letter mentioned in Ad 5.<sup>17</sup> What is Pinkerton alluding to? He is explicitly referring to *James Connor* as the one who can make this contact (see next paragraph).

**Ad 7.** Even though Connor did work for BFBS's *cause*, he was not a "BFBS agent in Constantinople." In Jowett's words, "The residence, at Constantinople, of the Rev. Henry Leeves on the part of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and of the Rev. James Connor on that of the Church Missionary Society, sufficiently prove the advantage with which this Station may be resumed, whenever circumstances shall be more favourable."<sup>18</sup> Oddly enough a few travel letters from Connor are published anonymously in a BFBS Report under the heading: "From a Clergyman travelling in Syria."<sup>19</sup>

**Ad 8.** Connor had *plans* to visit Damascus *before* Jerusalem, but due to his late arrival in Beirut he changes his plans and visits Damascus *after* Jerusalem in order to be there during Passover.<sup>20</sup>

**Ad 9.** Connor did visit Jerusalem, not in 1819, but in May 1820. He left Constantinople October 31, 1819.<sup>21</sup>

**Ad 10.** Henry Leeves was appointed in 1820, but did not arrive in Constantinople till January 9, 1821.<sup>22</sup>

**Ad 11.** Benjamin Barker cannot have replaced Lindsay in Smyrna, as Lindsay did not work there, which has been documented above. The Smyrna Bible Society was founded in 1818 during Jowett's visit there.<sup>23</sup> The leadership was entrusted to, among others, the British chaplain in Smyrna, Williamson, who (presumably) died in 1820.<sup>24</sup> Strictly speaking it was not a replacement, since Williamson was not employed by BFBS, while Barker was.

We all make mistakes – this article is no exception. But in these *Historical Notes* there are so many errors that one's skepticism about the "1816" information and Lindsay's alleged visit to Jerusalem is strengthened. But perhaps we are close to solving the mystery.

17 BFBS *Sixteenth Report*, 1820, p. 22.

18 Jowett 1822, 365.

19 BFBS *Seventeenth Report*, 1821, p. 60; p. 64.

20 Connor in Jowett 1822, 420.

21 Connor in Jowett 1822, 413.

22 BFBS *Seventeenth Report*, 1821, p. lv.

23 Canton 1904, vol. II, 2. On Jowett's two visits to Smyrna, see Jowett 1822, 53–58, where the British Chaplain, Rev. Charles Williamson, is mentioned.

24 Williamson (in Smyrna) probably dies in 1820, shortly before the arrival of Leeves in Constantinople; cf. Canton 1904, vol. II, 5. See also BFBS *Seventeenth Report* 1821, p. lv.

## Did Lindsay and Pinkerton Meet in 1816?

It has been documented above that in 1816 Lindsay was in Constantinople. What was Pinkerton doing and where was he? Did the two meet in 1816? Can anything be said with any degree of certainty? I think so.

1) In a large number of letters published in a BFBS Report, Pinkerton relates – as it is said in the heading “On his late Tour in Russia, Poland, and Germany.”<sup>25</sup> From the letters it appears that he left St. Petersburg March 22, 1816, and in a letter dated St. Petersburg, December 2, 1816, he informs the readers about his “safe return.”<sup>26</sup> This “Tour” did *not* include a visit to Smyrna nor to Constantinople. From this we may conclude with almost complete certainty that Pinkerton did not meet Lindsay in Constantinople in 1816, as maintained in *Historical Notes*. If he had done so, he would have mentioned it.

2) Pinkerton does make a journey to Constantinople, but in 1819.<sup>27</sup> The point of departure was London. In the first travel letter, dated March 10, 1819, and sent from Paris, he mentions some difficulties in connection with “the voyage between Dover and Calais on the 23rd ult.” (i.e. February 23, 1819); In a letter of January 14, 1820, he relates that he “happily reached my home yesterday.”<sup>28</sup>

From Constantinople Pinkerton sends a number of letters to BFBS’ Committee. His letter of October 22, 1819 (referred to under Ad 6 above) is printed in its entirety below, as it was published in a BFBS Report. This is the closest I can come to explaining the puzzling words in *Historical Notes*. (The italics are mine.)

I AM happy to inform you that although I was not able during my stay at Malta, to make arrangements for having the Syrian Archbishop of Jerusalem visited at Mount Lebanon, according to your request, yet this important point is likely to be attained from another quarter. Though deprived of the pleasure of making the personal acquaintance of the Rev. Mr. Jowett, I have still had the good fortune to fall in with his fellow-labourer, the Rev. *Mr. Connor*, who, during my residence in this place, has shewn me many kind services. He was contemplating a tour among the Greek islands during the winter months, but *my suggestions have led him to adopt a more extensive sphere of operations*; and he is now in complete readiness to sail for Smyrna with the first vessel. *From Smyrna* he will proceed to Rhodos, Candia, and Cyprus; then visit the coast of Caramania; and proceed by way of Tarsus, Antioch, Aleppo, Damascus, and Mount Lebanon, to *Jerusalem*.

25 BFBS *Thirteenth Report*, 1817, pp. 57–118.

26 BFBS *Thirteenth Report*, 1817, p. 57; p.118.

27 BFBS *Sixteenth Report*, 1820, pp. 1–42.

28 BFBS *Sixteenth Report*, 1820, p. 1; p. 40.



He took along with him 384 ancient and modern Greek Testaments, and a number of Bibles and Testaments in different languages. He will increase his stock at Smyrna, and by further supplies from the Malta Depôt, to be sent to different places in Syria, to wait his arrival. I trust much good will come of this journey: it is chiefly in parts which have not yet been visited.

May the God of Israel go with him, and make his way and his work to prosper!<sup>29</sup>

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I wonder if this has solved the puzzle of "1816?" The information in *Historical Notes* that Pinkerton played an active role in sending a person to Jerusalem is correct. However, this person was *not* Henry Lindsay, but James Connor. And the journey in question did *not* take place in 1816. Connor left Constantinople on October 31, 1819, and arrived in Jerusalem on March 6, 1820.<sup>30</sup>

Still it is a mystery how Lindsay's name could crop up in *Historical Notes*.

## Concluding Remarks

By way of introduction I wrote that in this article I wanted to complicate the year 1816. In my analysis I worked with the hypothesis that there were *plans* to send Lindsay to Jerusalem, plans which never were realized. By way of conclusion I have to say that I doubt that there ever were such plans. Lindsay did *not* visit Jerusalem in 1816.

In order to preserve the year 1816 as the year of the "Beginning of organised work"... "in Israel" it is not enough to refer to the *Historical Notes* from 1995. Historically speaking they are inadequate. It is necessary to have other sources.

Whether or not the Bible Society in Israel should replace the year 1816 with 1818 or 1820 under the heading "Beginning of organised work" is a question that I will discuss in Part II in a later article in this series.

<sup>29</sup> BFBS *Sixteenth Report*, 1820, p. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Connor in Jowett 1822, 413; 427

# Magne Solheim and Bible Work in Israel

By **Terje Hartberg**



Magne Solheim viewed the coast of Israel for the first time, from the ship "Bosphorus" on November 20th, 1949. Having served as a missionary pastor among Jewish-Christian congregations in Romania since 1938, then being forced by circumstances to leave Romania in November 1948, Solheim now saw the newly created Jewish state as a natural second stage in his ministry.

## Early Contact with the Bible Society

Colporteurs, or Bible salesmen, from the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) sent their first reports back to London in 1806, only two years after the formation of the Society in London. By the time of the British Mandate in Palestine, the BFBS had agencies in most of the Middle East, often in partnership with the American Bible Society (ABS). On the BFBS map, British Palestine was part of what they called "Bible Lands Agency, South" which encompassed Egypt, Palestine, Transjordan, Cyprus, The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, the Red Sea Coast of Arabia, Aden, The Somali lands, Eritrea and Ethiopia. After the establishment of the State of Israel, work initially remained under the same administrative region of BFBS, but gradually emerged as a separate entity. In 1965, under an agreement between the BFBS and the ABS, the Norwegian Bible Society was asked to take over the administrative and financial responsibility for the old BFBS/ABS Agency in the country.

But back in 1949, even though Solheim's prime reason for travelling to Israel was to continue the pastoral work his mission began in Eastern Europe, he soon came in contact with the Bible Society. Disembarking from the "Bosphorus" at Jaffa, he was "a man of no fixed abode." After touring the country with a press card, he ended up in Haifa, taking lodging with an Anglican minister, Ronald Adeney, whose father had served 40 years in the Anglican mission in Romania.

Solheim decided to set up his camp in Haifa, partly because there he found some members of his former Romanian congregation, but also because he was now approached by the British and Foreign Bible Society and asked if he would be willing to re-start Bible work in Israel. The BFBS



head office in Jerusalem had been damaged during the war of independence and the building was then taken over by the Hebrew University. Since books could no longer flow east from Jerusalem, it had effectively become a “dead end” on Israel’s transport routes. A more convenient location for a Bible Society depot was Haifa, with Israel’s main port and easy access to imported books.

### **“Widest Possible Circulation”**

The first outlet for the Bible Society in Israel was opened on Hehalutz Street in the center of Haifa in July 1951. It was functional, but, like most things in Israel in those days, primitive. Just buying an extra plank of wood required skilled negotiation at a time when everything was rationed. Following a visit from the BFBS General Secretary to Israel in 1963, permission was given to renovate the Haifa Bible Shop with a new display window and quality interior furnishing. (Dependence on overseas assistance with Bible work was key then, and remains a factor even today.) I can still remember from my first visit in 1972 the polished wooden plaque at the back of the shop with an inscription in gold, representing the aim of all Bible Societies: “Our task is to seek the widest possible circulation of the Holy Scripture.” By this time, Solheim had been joined in the Bible work by an assistant, Milan Heimovici. He was a Jewish-Christian refugee from Romania who, after torture and imprisonment because of his Christian activities, was unexpectedly allowed to immigrate to Israel.

The confusion of languages in Israel at that time (less than half of the Jewish population in 1951 spoke Hebrew) had its impact on the Bible work. Soon after the Haifa Shop was opened they received a letter from Beersheva, asking for 24 Bibles in Marathi. In the Bible Society they had no idea what kind of language this was, and had to ask around until they learned it was an Indian language. Solheim wrote to BFBS in London, but they had none in stock, so from London, they wrote to India from whence the 24 Bibles eventually arrived in Haifa and could be delivered to Beersheva. An Israeli immigrant from Turkey had seen an article in the New York Times about the American Bible Society who distributed Bibles in over 100 languages. He boldly wrote to the ABS asking if he could buy a Turkish Bible. His letter was passed on to the Bible Society in Haifa, and great was the surprise when the immigrant from Turkey received a card from Haifa telling him there were Turkish Bibles almost around the corner. In its first few months of operation, the Bible Shop in Haifa sold Scriptures in over 30 languages. And in Solheim’s first full year as “Assistant Secretary to the Bible Society in Israel” as stated in the BFBS annual report of 1951, the total distribution of “Holy Scriptures” was 19,014 (including 7,400 Bibles). This compares with 8,776 Scriptures in 1950, and 2,696 in 1949. This increase would excite the dullest marketing director; yet, in a letter from December 1951, Solheim complains that due to shortage of Bibles, especially Hebrew Bibles, they could not meet the demand.

It took 10 years before the next Bible Shop was opened, this time in Tel Aviv's busy Ben Yehuda Street. Solheim's Church in Haifa had storage space which became the central depot for onward shipping to all corners of the land. In Tel Aviv, the basement of the Anglican Beit Immanuel also served as a BS storage facility. Children of families living there remember how they, for the princely sum of ten Israeli Lira (about \$3 in those days) helped carry a truckload of Bibles in boxes color-coded by language, placing each language in its rightful place.

By 1965, the Bible Society was supplying Scriptures to shops in Jerusalem, Holon, Beersheva, and Tel Aviv; many of these shops were run by various churches. In addition, Scripture portions were provided to organizations such as "The Million Testaments Campaign."

The third Bible Shop was bought in the new port town of Ashdod in 1969. At that time Ashdod, which was established near the biblical site of the same name in 1956, was home to only 30,000. But the location was a strategic one as plans called for the town to expand to a population of 350,000. (Today the population is just over 200,000.)

### **Bible Production and Supply**

During the early years of Bible Society work in Israel, all the Scriptures were obtained from overseas, mainly from the BFBS in London. But in the mid 1950s, the Ministry of Finance issued a ruling that all books in Hebrew, and this of course included the Hebrew Bible, had to be printed in Israel. Such a regulation would not work in most free-trade nations today, but it was a common protection of domestic industry at the time, and was not aimed at Bible printing. However, the consequences for the Bible Society were arguably more severe than for most Israeli publishers. Bibles are printed on thin "bible paper" – a term employed generally by those who use the same thin paper for encyclopaedias, dictionaries and other publications with many pages. But no printer in Israel had experience in printing on thin paper. And most printers approached by the Bible Society refused to cooperate for fear of losing status with the Orthodox Jewish publishers.

After many laborious hours of negotiations with every possible printer in Israel, Solheim was finally able to sign a contract in 1959 with an Israeli printer in Bat Yam, just south of Tel Aviv, to produce Hebrew Bibles. The BFBS had just re-edited an edition of the Hebrew Bible based on the latest available manuscripts, and this was the edition which would become the first full Hebrew Bible, including a New Testament, to be produced in the State of Israel, running to 1850 pages. The Bible Society was fortunate to draw on the expertise of a Bulgarian Jewish immigrant, Joseph Isakoff from Jaffa, who had spent his whole professional life in Bulgaria in the publishing business. The Old and New Testaments were initially printed separately, and then bound according to need, either as complete Bibles, or as separate Old or New Testament volumes. The first printing of this edition numbered 12,000 complete Bibles and 2000 books each of Old



and new Testaments. (An edition of the *Tanach* [Old Testament] was produced in Israel in 1953; ironically the Israeli press criticised this so called "Jerusalem Bible" as being nothing other than a "photocopy" of the Ginsburg Old Testament. Ginsburg was a Christian Jew who had worked for the BFBS producing the latest Hebrew Old Testament edition for the London Society.)

As was the custom, Solheim visited the Israeli President in a New Year reception at the end of 1959. This time he brought special gifts: one copy each of the *Tanach* and of the full Bible, with each book in a special leather binding, representing the first such printings ever in the Bible Lands. Copies of the same volumes were also sent to the Israeli Prime Minister, Ben Gurion. A few weeks later, Ben Gurion sent a personal letter thanking the Bible Society, expressing his pleasure that "we can now print the Bible in the Land of the Bible." As expected, there was a forceful reaction against this printing from strongly Orthodox Jewish groups who petitioned against such use of Israeli resources. It was even alleged that the printer had received favorable exchange rates for the dollars used to pay for the printing. However, the same printing house had been printing Israel's postage stamps on the same terms and the immediate political uproar over the Bible printing subsided. The printer in question, however, let the Bible Society know that he was not willing to risk another re-print.

Even so, when a re-print was required two years later, Magne Solheim went back to the same printer. He showed him the letter of thanks from the Prime Minister together with copies of positive press comments made after the first printing and the printer agreed to continue the work on the Hebrew Bible. This time thinner paper was obtained, and the second printing of 30,000 Bibles was better than the first.

Local printing of Hebrew Bibles became an ongoing battle between officialdom, willing professionals and anti-Christian pressure groups among the ultra-Orthodox.

### **Bible at the Jerusalem International Book Fair**

Since April 1963, an International Book fair has been held in Jerusalem every two years. The Bible Society in Israel was always invited to participate – but there was only one book to put on show: The Bible. Magne Solheim, in his autobiography, wonders what the Old Testament writer of Ecclesiastes would make of such a book fair as he wrote: *"Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body."* (Eccl 12:12)

Here in the Holy City was a book fair with participants from 25 countries and 1000 publishers filling 10 km worth of shelf space. The BS used the invitation to show the way the Word of God has gone out from Zion to all corners of the world. They had a world map under the quote from Isaiah 2:3 noting that the Word was then (1963) available in 1232 lan-

guages, and arrows pointed from Jerusalem to the location in the world where each of these languages were spoken.

The second Book Fair was even more successful. The same theme was used in 1965, with the map showing all the languages in which the Bible had been translated, and one press report gave a glowing report of the Bible Society stand, stating that "the eternal book" stands naturally in the center of some 30,000 more or less perishable books. The Bible Society assistant, who did not complain about having to stand on his feet for 12 hours each day, recounted numerous occasions when visitors wondered at the extent of the languages into which the Bible – their Bible – had been translated. One Orthodox Jew, at first showing reluctance when confronted with a "Christian" Bible display, soon got absorbed in the amazing way the "Word from Zion" had indeed reached the ends of the earth, and nearly jumped with joy as he studied the details of the way the Bible had been spread around the world. The first three Book Fairs each had over 50,000 visitors.

(By the end of 2003 the number of languages into which at least one book of the Bible has been published is 2355, but the Jerusalem Book Fair has suffered from recent turmoil in the region and saw only 600 publishers attending the last event in 2003.)

## Bible Translation

Solheim's legacy to the Bible Society was immeasurable, but above all, he will be remembered for the modern Hebrew New Testament translation. The idea was introduced to a meeting of 18 representatives from Christian and Messianic congregations in Israel in 1969. After debating the advantages as well as the difficulties and the likely opposition to this idea, the real work commenced in October, 1970 with a translation seminar led by two translation consultants from the United Bible Societies. Solheim recalls the difficulties of putting together a translation committee which could work together. "It was often those with least knowledge who spoke the loudest" he said. They ended up with a small working group of five, two of whom were Israeli Catholic scholars – a cooperation that today is widespread and natural throughout the work of Bible Societies, but which in 1970 was a novelty. With an intense schedule, interrupted only by the Yom Kippur war, the work progressed with an occasional helping hand from the renowned Hebrew scholar, Professor Chaim Rabin. In a 1998 paper dedicated to Rabin, 1915–1996, Hanna Amit-Kochavi referred to him as "a pioneer of Israeli translator training, a great Hebrew scholar and a wonderful person. Solheim felt privileged to have benefited from the advice of this wonderful person who was reputed to have known 70 languages!

One of the last acts Solheim did for the Bible Society in Israel, before retiring in Norway, was to sign the first printing order for the new translation of the New Testament with the Yanezt printing press in Jerusalem. On April 16, 1977, a few months after I arrived as new Manager of the



Bible Society in Israel, Solheim returned as guest of the Bible Society for the dedication service of the new New Testament in Christ Church in Jerusalem. He spoke in Hebrew to a packed church and recalled how the new translation moved many Hebrew speakers. A librarian from a kibbutz wrote of the translation, "This work will be remembered and bear fruit long after we who live today will be forgotten." Another man commented, "Had Jesus and the apostles lived today, this is just the language they would have spoken."

The renowned and sometimes controversial scholar Shalom Ben Chorin (1913–1999) was a fan of the new translation. Through his interfaith dialogue and lectures about Jesus and the Torah, he knew the New Testament well. Writing to Solheim after Christmas 1977, he explained how he was hospitalised for an eye operation that Christmas, but insisted that they find him someone who could read the Christmas story to him from the new translation.

## Not without Struggle

In isolation, the account so far may seem like a Bible Society full of achievement but no difficulties other than those faced by the country at large. However, formal and informal opposition to Bible Society work in Israel (BSI) has always been part of its ministry.

After the establishment of the State of Israel, had it not been for the maintenance of many British laws and regulations, including the company registrations from pre-independence times, the Bible Society may have had serious difficulties even getting registered. Fortunately, the BFBS registration was maintained and still forms the legal basis for the Bible Society works in the land. Bible Society policy is quite strict about observing the law of the land and it would have been inconsistent with Bible Society practice to operate without full recognition by the authorities.

Rather than official limits on Bible work, the Bible Society experienced numerous attacks by fanatic groups of Orthodox Jews who were ready to break the law to stop the form of witness represented by the BSI. The most blatant attack came in January 1974, when the Bible shop in Ashdod was burnt to the ground by deliberate arson attack. A 15-year-old boy was eventually apprehended and admitted to being incited to set the shop on fire. This came at a time when several other bookshops and institutions affiliated with Christian work were similarly attacked. The main culprits were those fanatics who incited the youngsters to commit arson, but only the young offenders were ever caught.

Increasingly through the 1970s and 1980s, other Bible Shops and Christian property suffered. Windows were broken, and anti-Christian graffiti painted on the walls. The Bible Shop in Tel Aviv was mainly left undisturbed, but one night not long after its opening in 1961, a window was broken. Some years later, a postcard was placed in the shop's mailbox. It contained a confession in Hebrew from the person who broke the windowpane four years earlier. The writer explained that he did it

impulsively, as he had believed that this was the right thing for an Orthodox Jew to do, since the shop sold New Testaments. Now he had changed his view, asked for forgiveness and offered to pay the full cost of the repair.

Local printing remained a problem since most printers refused to deal with the Bible Society, either out of conviction, or from fear of losing business from Orthodox Jewish clients. Most newspapers would not accept Bible Society adverts. For every word of public praise for the Bible Society, whether from the State President or regular Bible Society customers, there was a threatening letter or an insult. In 1977 the Bible Society pavilion at the Jerusalem Book Fair came under serious attack by a large group of Orthodox Jewish students. It required a police escort for the Bible Society staff to reach their cars unhurt at the close of the day.

Nevertheless, during the 25 first years of Bible Society work in Israel, under the leadership of a visionary Magne Solheim, hundreds of thousands of Israelis encountered the Holy Scripture. Between 1950 and 1975, Solheim witnessed a distribution of 745,000 Bibles, New Testaments and Scripture portions through Bible Society channels in some 80 languages. Today his work continues to bear fruit through what he achieved, and through the foundations laid for those who followed him in Bible Society work in Israel.

In his first annual report on Bible Society work in Israel, Solheim concludes: "We pray that in the coming year, we will receive sufficient number of Bibles, and that God may send His Holy Spirit with Life and Healing, so that what is sown in Israel may bear fruit to His glory" – a prayer which he repeated many times in the following 25 years.

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 Personal conversations and memories.





# Eli and Karen Bøgh — Bible Missionaries in Israel

By **Bodil F. Skjøtt**

A few years ago I had a conversation with a former missionary to India. Many in his family had been missionaries, some in India and others in Africa. He also had an uncle who had lived the better part of his life in what was first Palestine and later became the State of Israel. He and his wife were missionaries – Bible missionaries – although they weren't sent by any mission organisation. They had left Denmark in 1938 with faith in God's provision and the support and prayers of a small group of friends.

My friend also told me that he had a copy of all the letters his uncle and aunt had sent home to their group of friends who had supported them during the almost 35 years they lived in Israel. The following story about Eli and Karen Bøgh and their 35-year adventure as Bible missionaries in Israel is based on the letters they faithfully send home to friends throughout all those years. The story is therefore seen through their eyes, and most of the information is based on what can be gleaned from the letters.

The letters were sent to Eli's brother, Svend Bøgh, who was a pastor in Denmark. He edited the letters and typed them up before sending them out to the addresses on the mailing list. He has made my job much easier – as anyone who has tried to read old letters, handwritten with blue ink on thin paper will know.

Eli Bøgh was born on January 7, 1893. He was trained as a civil engineer and served as a missionary in India where he worked on building a leper colony. Karen was born on March 25, 1904 in Bergen, Norway. She was trained as a nurse and a teacher. In 1930 she came to India to work in the same leper colony. They met and were married in India in 1932<sup>1</sup>, and worked together until they left for Denmark in 1933. On their way to Denmark they stopped in Palestine, and it was here they first felt a call from God to work among the Jewish people.

They tried to find a mission organization that would send them, but no doctor would take the responsibility – Eli had suffered from malaria and had had heart trouble – and no mission organization would send them.

1 According to the date on the back of a wedding picture taken of them in India.

However, with the spiritual and financial support of a group of personal friends, they left Denmark for Palestine in 1938.

### On board the last Youth Train from Munich

The first letter<sup>2</sup> is the story of their departure from Denmark until they reached the port of Jaffa, weeks later. On October 25, 1938 they boarded the last youth train from Munich, which was carrying young German Jews who had just said good-bye to the parents they would never see again. Eli and Karen were strangers to these young people, and could have been their parents, but they managed to bond with them during the weeks-long trip which took them first to Trieste in Italy and then by boat to Palestine, where they arrived in early November. Before giving their new address (c/o Mrs. Rohold, Box 206, Haifa, Palestine) Eli reflects in his letter on the time they spent with these young Jewish people on the way, and the years Jews have lived among Christians in Europe:

“What have they gained, these young Jewish people, who now return to their land after these many years living among us in the Christian world? Did they meet Christ in our lives or are they returning as empty handed as they came?”

This question resonates with Eli and Karen’s prayer throughout their time in the land: May they see Christ in our lives and may they meet their Messiah and embrace him as their saviour.

Although they used Mrs. Rohold’s address, they rented a room from a Jewish family on Mt. Carmel. It was a Russian family who had arrived in the country 14 years earlier. From there they set out to explore their new home country and decide what and where their part of God’s mission work should be.

The English and Scottish missionaries they met first in Haifa and later in Tiberias were tied down with work in the hospitals and clinics they themselves had established. They had little or no time to reach out beyond the confines of their own compounds. Certainly the Bøghs would not be duplicating anyone’s work by visiting the newly established kibbutzim and moshavim, talking to people there and giving out Bibles or Scripture portions to all who cared to receive them. This was what they set out to do.

They were also encouraged to do so after a conversation with a certain Plotke. They had met him in the Anglican Church in Haifa together with the English missionaries. His mother was German and his father Jewish,

**Did they meet Christ in our lives or are they returning as empty handed as they came?**

2 The first letter is dated Palestine, November 1938. After a short introduction the letter quotes from the diary the Bøghs kept during their trip. The first entry is “München, 25. Okt. 1938.”





and he worked for an English mission society.<sup>3</sup> Plotke assured Eli and Karen that they had an advantage over him: "It is easier for you than for me. I am considered a traitor and one who was baptized only because it was financially feasible for me to do so."<sup>4</sup>

It was not yet clear to them how they were to proceed, but these initial meetings confirmed their call. They were strangers and gentiles and on their own, but it could be an advantage *not* to be Jewish and *not* to be linked too closely with British missionaries and the established church. Not long after their arrival they had another conversation, which confirmed their call. It was with an old pious Jew in Tiberias who sighed: "What shall become of us Jews. After 2000 years in dispersion we have still not learned to call upon God. The young people come but with no yearning for God. They build houses but no synagogues."<sup>5</sup>

Their meeting with these different people – the established missionary, a Jewish believer, and a traditional Jew – reflected very well how they saw the situation and the challenge ahead of them.

## During the War

The Bøghs had the names of Jewish people who had spent time in Denmark before moving to Israel. During their first years in the country the Bøghs would walk from village to village, from settlement to settlement, taking with them as many Bibles as they could carry. They looked for people whose names they knew and when they were lucky enough to find them they tried to continue the conversations other Christians had had with these Jewish people before they left for Israel.

Their hope was to be able to live on a kibbutz and for a short while they seemed to succeed. But after being invited to stay<sup>6</sup> – and spending less than a month in March 1939 at the Degania Colony – the leadership told them they had to leave for, as one old man told them, "Judaism and Christianity cannot unite under the same roof."<sup>7</sup>

During the years of the war from 1940–1945 they rented two small rooms in Afula and made a living by picking fruit in season, and Eli worked together with others building roads in the Jezreel valley. Letters from the period of the war are few and short. Mail was censored and most letters had to be short and written in English. They were able to send messages through the Red Cross, and each time the wording was almost identical: "Greetings to you all. Think of us always happily in the hands of the Lord, we are so grateful in the work."<sup>8</sup>

3 The name of the society is not given, but it is described as "a society which has work both in Poland, Vienna, and here in Palestine. They also have missionaries among the thousand of Jews in Baghdad." Letter dated Palestine, ultimo November 1938.

4 Letter dated Palestine, ultimo November 1938.

5 Letter dated Kinereth, December 1938.

6 Letter dated February 1939

7 Letter dated March 1939.

## Departure in 1947 and Division between Believers

Their letters often reflected sadness over divisions in the Church. The reality was that there were Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches. But the problem was much more the different factions among the Protestant mission organizations, and the division among all the different representatives working in the land.

In their first long letter after the war, they update their friends after the long silence and write with joy about God's provision during the years of the war, and all the open doors and possibilities they see ahead of them. But they also have to mention the darker sides of their ministry. One such dark side is the divided church. They see a sincere desire among many Jews to seek God but to whom should they turn? The church is divided; which faction has the right answer? The Bøghs were convinced that "it is Christ himself the young Israelite is seeking. Perhaps those among the people who have been met by Christ should remain within the people in a much deeper sense than we have previously understood."<sup>9</sup>

**those among the people  
who have been met by Christ  
should remain within the  
people in a much deeper sense**

In 1946 they travelled to Denmark for a visit. On their return early in 1947 they learned about the departure of many of their British missionary friends. Only some of the men were permitted to stay. While they themselves waited for their visas they used the time to visit many of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. It was a time of trial and uncertainty for them as well.

After two weeks in Jerusalem the door opened for them and they were granted "permanent immigrant visas to Palestine." They saw this as no less than a miracle. They travelled to Haifa where "only three of the Jewish Christian workers are left ... Old Mrs. Rohold (the widow of the former leader of the mission) had to leave with only one day's warning. The only ones left are Dr. Churcher and his wife from the clinic ... together with Dr. Torrance from Tiberias."<sup>10</sup>

They tried to find a place to stay in Afula, where they lived during the war, but without success. Instead they were given permission to stay as caretakers in the house belonging to the YMCA on the shore of the Galilee until further plans for the house could be made. They end this letter with two prayer requests: one that they will learn the language, for whereas they could get by with German, English and Yiddish before the war, Hebrew was now what they needed. The other prayer request is

<sup>8</sup> This note is written on British Red Cross paper dated Afula, Palestine, 10-3-42. It is one of several notes, some in English, some in Danish.

<sup>9</sup> Letter, dated Haifa, 31 July 1945.

<sup>10</sup> Letter, dated Tiberias, 19 February 1947, 2-3.



that friends won't send any more money until they have used what they had already received.<sup>11</sup>

A few months later – by Passover 1947 – they moved to Haifa. All the British missionaries had left and they saw it as God's plan to have them there to comfort the few Jewish believers who remained. Their situation was difficult. They were only few but still divided, because of their connection to different mission organizations. Most of them also had their documents through a mission organization and not through the Jewish Agency. Several of them considered leaving and moving to another country. Eli found this very disturbing. How can it be that Jews who have found their faith in the Messiah now want to leave, if God is finally gathering his people in the land? And he continues: "This should lead all of us who continue to serve here to stop and seriously consider not tearing anybody from his people by tying them to the work of the mission societies."<sup>12</sup>

The problem of the divided church and the divided body is taken up in a later letter that same year. New missionaries have come. This time they come from the United States and not Britain. However, they all settle in Jerusalem and bring with them more internal competition. The Jewish Christians could be divided into two groups. There were only a few from orthodox circles, but they were strong in their conviction that Jewish Christians should remain within the Jewish people. They circumcised their children, lit Sabbath candles and kept the Sabbath, and replaced Christian worship with the service of the synagogue. The others, who were the majority, would have nothing to do with the Jewish traditions and considered them to be non-Christian. Baptism was, for them, part of their assimilation. Eli admits that he himself feels closer to the first group. The Jewish Christians "should be permitted to have the entire old covenant, strong and rich, as long as the Law does not replace but prepares for the Gospel."<sup>13</sup>

In spring of 1948 they had to move to a new location. The political and security situation made it too dangerous for Jewish people to come to their house in Haifa, located in an Arab neighbourhood. They moved to a house in the Jewish quarter, which had just been vacated by an Arab Christian family who had moved to Lebanon, "like so many others of the Christians."<sup>14</sup> In the middle of all this they continued to feel safe and to find many open doors for distributing Hebrew New Testaments and Bibles.

One thing saddened them: that Jewish Christians, because they were baptized, were granted British citizenship and given permission to leave for England – with the encouragement of the missionaries. Most of the Jewish Christians they were in touch with in the Haifa area had left by 14

11 Letter, dated Tiberias, 24 February 1947, p. 4

12 Letter, dated Palestine, June 1947.

13 Letter, dated Haifa, October 1947.

14 Letter, dated Palestine, March 1948, p. 2.

May 1948.<sup>15</sup> They were not at all convinced that it was dangerous for any baptized Jew to stay after the British left the area but did not want to be judgmental. The really sad thing was that those Jewish Christians who stayed lost the confidence of their own people, and baptism was once more seen as a means for personal gain.

The security situation made it almost impossible for them to get New Testaments and Bibles. But when they had distributed what copies the Bible Society had, the last Jewish convoy to come through brought a consignment from Jerusalem. A Jewish Christian worker in Jerusalem had been able to get the Bibles to the convoy before the borders closed and the new state was established.<sup>16</sup>

## Developments in the 1950s

During the early 1950s Eli and Karen continued to travel and visit as many villages and settlements in the Galilee as possible, everywhere finding open doors for conversation and Scripture distribution. They met more and more believers, especially among the immigrants from countries in Eastern Europe, people who before the war had heard the gospel and come to faith. These people now formed new fellowships around the country.

In their letters to friends in Denmark Eli and Karen confirm the rumours about Daniel Zion, the rabbi from Bulgaria who publicly declared his faith in Jesus as the Messiah. But they also ask that this good news not be blown out of proportion and the truth distorted. "Daniel Zion does not have thousands of people in his congregation in Jerusalem."<sup>17</sup> In a similar way they deny that a "Hebrew Church should have been established" and want to emphasize that any talk about something big – a revival – does not reflect the reality they see.<sup>18</sup>

In their own work they continued to focus on Bible distribution and neither of them ever held any position within any of the congregations. Most likely Eli never preached or taught.<sup>19</sup> Still, they were very much aware of what was happening within the community of believers and concerned about some of the developments they noticed. What in Denmark became the news of the formation of a Hebrew Church was – according to Eli – the conference held in December of 1950 by two groups who called themselves "Messianic Jews."<sup>20</sup> One of the issues dealt with at the

15 Letter, dated Carmel, June 1948, p. 2.

16 Letter, dated Carmel June 1948, p. 5.

17 In a note added to a letter dated Israel, December 1950, p. 5. For more information on Daniel Zion, see the article by Joseph Shulam, "Rabbi Daniel Zion: Chief Rabbi of Bulgarian Jews During World War II" in *Mishkan* 15, 1991, 53–57.

18 Letter, dated Israel, April 1951.

19 In an article in *Misjonsblad for Israel* entitled "A life for Israel," written on the occasion of the Bøghs departure from Israel in 1972, Magne Solheim says: "They never held meetings, nor spoke in public, but worked quietly and had many conversations with people." *Misjonsblad for Israel*, 1972, 180–184.

20 This is the first time this designation is used by the Bøghs.



conference was the official recognition of a Hebrew church within the new state. According to the Bøghs Daniel Zion played an important role in bridging the gap between those who stressed the national dimension of their identity and those who took a less critical stand towards the gentile church and wanted to emphasize the spiritual fellowship between Jewish and gentile believers.

Eli in particular was very sympathetic towards and supportive of a "Hebrew Church." But he noticed that this group had less support from the younger generation and was worried that their national pride would overshadow the significance of the cross.

One year later<sup>21</sup> they wrote that the group behind the Hebrew Church had been dissolved. Again they give credit to Daniel Zion for his role in making this decision. They were sad, for they believed and had prayed for an independent Hebrew Church. However, reality had shown it to be too early. Again they expressed their worries that gentile believers would burden the church among the Jews with Western tradition, but also that too much emphasis on the national identity would hinder the growth of faith among new believers.

Their own closest co-workers were the other missionaries, and they rejoiced that both the Scottish and the British missionaries returned in the early 1950s. They were especially glad when the work of the Bible Society began again. It had closed down when the British Mandate ended, but started now with the help of workers from the Norwegian Lutheran Mission.<sup>22</sup>

### **From Haifa and Mt. Carmel to Jaffa and Tel Aviv**

During the 1950s the Bøghs travelled to Denmark no less than four times. This was partly due to Eli's deteriorating health. It must be remembered that the reason they ended up in Israel/Palestine in 1938, and that they came on their own and not through a mission organization, was that nobody would take responsibility for sending them to India nor Palestine due to Eli's health. Five years' hard labour on the roads during the war and many miles travelled by foot across the Jezreel Valley in the hot sun had also taken their toll. Over and over friends and Eli's brother in Denmark encouraged them to spend more money (not what missionaries normally are told) on food and travel, but to little avail.

They realized that the time had come to find a different way of working, and saw it as God's provision when the possibility of becoming managers of a Bible shop in Tel Aviv opened up. In the last letter before they left for Denmark in 1960, they wrote about Bible work now being established in Beersheba and the Negev, in Tiberias and the Northern part of

21 Letter, dated Israel, April 1952.

22 Letter, dated Israel, December 1950, p. 5. The Norwegian Lutheran Mission (today called Norwegian Church Ministry to Israel, NCMI) began its work in Israel in 1950.

the country, and in Haifa. With good conscience they moved to Tel Aviv.<sup>23</sup> The Bible Society in London had promised to help get the work started, but the place and other means still needed to be provided.

Soon after their return to Israel they were able to rent a small apartment, with two rooms and a balcony, overlooking the sea.<sup>24</sup> Magne Solheim had worked hard to find a place for a Bible shop in Tel Aviv, but so far without success. But in June 1961 he, as the secretary of the Bible Society in Israel, was able to open the new book shop on Ben Yehuda Street in Tel Aviv.<sup>25</sup> This became Eli and Karen's new workplace. In the beginning of their work in the land they had carried with them Bibles in many languages. Later they had to limit themselves to only Hebrew. Now that they no longer had to carry the Bibles but had them on shelves, they again offered Bibles in many languages and had the joy of seeing older Jews come and ask for one in their mother tongue. The Bible shop provided a great opportunity for what was on their heart all the time: conversations with people about God, Israel's future, and faith in Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. In the corner of the shop – away from the window – were two chairs and a small table, and Karen shared in her letters about the many conversations about God and faith they had with people who came to the shop.<sup>26</sup>

In the beginning the Bøghs managed the bookshop together with two other people, Sister Emmy from the Norwegian mission and a Jewish believer, a certain "brother Moscovici" who had arrived in Jaffa "as the leader of a group from Romania." Another Jewish Christian brother was also involved, "Isakoff from the Bulgarian group in Jaffa." On behalf of the Bible Society he handled the contact with the printer, and was in charge distribution from the main Bible depot.<sup>27</sup> This situation lasted only a short while. Six months later they were already looking for new co-workers. Sister Emmy had returned to Norway and Moscovici had moved on. About a year later another Norwegian came to help, and others connected to English and Norwegian missions in Jaffa assisted them in the shop. It was important for Eli and Karen to continue their work as Bible colporteurs. They did so by spending mornings visiting the many new workplaces in the industrial area of Tel Aviv, offering Bibles to the workers.<sup>28</sup>

23 Letter, dated Israel, January 1960.

24 Letter, dated Israel, November 1960.

25 Today the Israeli Bible Society still runs a Bible shop in the same place; see article in this issue of *Mishkan* by Doron Even Ari.

26 See for example Karen's part of the letter, dated Tel Aviv, December 1961. Denne ref. hjælper ingen, giv hellere ex på indhold af samtaler

27 Letter, dated Tel Aviv, December 1961.

28 During the day they couldn't visit people in their homes as wives would be afraid of letting them in, neither can they talk to the children, but through the fathers they reach the homes and the families; letter, dated Israel, January 1963.



## Progress in Spite of Limitations

It was far from the Bøghs to complain. They longed for a Hebrew Church to be established and for the people to recognize their Messiah and redeemer. They longed for more visible results of their own work. But they never complained about their own personal situation. Nevertheless, they realized that they no longer had the same strength to do as much as they used to.<sup>29</sup> But they also mentioned other limitations and difficulties throughout the 1960s. There was an increase of anti-missionary work<sup>30</sup> and they were concerned that missionaries would no longer be able to get visas. Missionary work involving any kind of charity work was labelled bribery, and illegal, and it became increasingly difficult to run mission schools.<sup>31</sup> In their own work they were very careful not to approach children or young people and careful about how they talked to high school students who came to the Bible shop.<sup>32</sup>

The Bøghs were very saddened by the Supreme Court's ruling in the case of Brother Daniel,<sup>33</sup> a case, which they – and many others – saw as a test case for how the new state viewed Jewish Jesus-believers – as non-Jews. They realized that this ruling of the court was made under the influence of the rabbis, and that it did not express the views of most people. It still intimidated new believers and underscored their sense of being cut off from their people.<sup>34</sup>

In spite of this and other difficulties that the community of believers had to face, the work of the Bible Society and Bible work in general expanded. A place had been found for a new Bible shop in another part of Tel Aviv, and it was run by a Jewish believer.<sup>35</sup> Later a third shop opened in Ramle, run by a worker connected to the English work in Jaffa.<sup>36</sup> They also mention a shop in Beersheba and one in Ashdod. Another very posi-

29 During the 1960s they spent the hot summer months in Ein Kerem at the convent of the Sisters of Zion. Here they enjoyed not only the tranquillity of the place but also the fellowship of the Catholic sisters who run the guest house. In August 1964 Eli had to under go an operation at Hadassah Hospital in Ein Kerem, which is mentioned not in his own letter but in a postscript by his brother in Denmark. From 1968 they travelled to Denmark each summer during the hot summer months because of Eli's weak heart.

30 Letter, dated Tel Aviv, December 1963. They quote the accusation that "what our enemies did not complete through extermination of our people, the mission is trying to do through mission work."

31 Letter, dated Tel Aviv, December 1963. The same would be the case for missionary hospitals, but all hospitals are now run by the state.

32 Letter, dated Israel, October 1965.

33 The court ruled that Brother Daniel, a Jew and a Carmelite monk, could not be given citizenship as a Jew because he had joined the Catholic Church. Because of what he did to save Jews during World War II he was granted citizenship nonetheless, but not as a Jew. See also Nechama Tec's biography of Brother Daniel/Oswald Rufeisen: *In the Lion's Den: The Life of Oswald Rufeisen*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

34 Letter, dated Israel, January 1963.

35 Letter, dated Tel Aviv, Israel, August 1964.

36 Letter, dated Israel, May 1965.

tive development was that some regular bookshops had begun to sell Bibles that included the New Testament.<sup>37</sup>

Anti-missionary activities and public warnings of the danger from “more and more Nicodemus-Christians, who believe in the Nazarene” did not stop the positive development among groups of local believers, especially in the Galilee. The Bøghs also mentioned new groups being formed in Nazareth, along the coast in Ashdod and Ashkelon, and in Beersheba. There were also new groups in Jerusalem, but here the divisions between the groups continued to be an obstacle to positive growth.

**warnings of the danger from  
“more and more Nicodemus-  
Christians, who believe in the  
Nazarene” did not stop the  
positive development**

These groups had in common their struggle to find their own identity as believers in Jesus, separate from the traditional churches but also separate from the many Protestant churches represented by the different mission organizations. This meant that they often renounced their relationship to and unity with the rest of the Church, with the result that those who could have given them support and strengthened them in their difficulties were perceived as an obstacle. They wanted to “get back to the New Testament” and inherit neither the splits of the gentile church nor its dogmatic statements and traditions. The Bøghs were very understanding of the young “Israel-believers” and their need to distance themselves from the gentile church in order to find their own identity. They saw this as a stage the Messianic movement in the land had to go through, but they were also aware of the dangers that too strong a separation from the rest of the body of Christ could lead to.<sup>38</sup>

## Coming to an End

From the letters after 1967 and the Six-Day war it becomes clear that Eli and Karen’s strength is limited. In his part of the letters Eli comments on the political and spiritual situation in the years following the war. After the quick and convincing victory, people recognized that “there is a God after all” – contrary to what many had said after Hitler’s killing of the six million – but it did not lead to the hoped-for revival. To Eli and Karen the spiritual return of the people was still to come, although they rejoiced in much of what they saw both in the nation and within the body of believers.

In the last letter sent from Israel, dated Israel, March 1972, Eli writes that this will be their last spring in the country. Had they followed

37 This happens in spite of the fact that rumours – circulated in the press – have it that Christians have changed the Jewish Bible to make it fit their Messianic interpretations. ee Cf, letter dated, Israel, January 1963 and letter dated Israel, November 1966.

38 Letter, dated Israel, January 1965.





their own desire they would have stayed. So much tied them to the land and the people. But for two reasons they would not return after the summer: (1) They no longer have the strength – neither Eli nor Karen – and (2) it is time for local believers to take over. The many recent attacks in the press against missionaries mean that “we should all be aware not to continue over and above the hour of God, and by doing so make it more difficult for the Jewish Christians to be part of their people and separate themselves from the divisions of the Church.”<sup>39</sup>

Although this comment should be seen in the light of their own limited strength, it nevertheless reflects the dream which the Bøghs had the whole time: seeing an independent Hebrew Church develop in the land of Israel with a Jewish expression of their faith, which would grant them a place within their own people and thus be a testimony of Him of whom the prophets had spoken and who had now been revealed through the New Testament.

When they returned to Denmark, Eli had turned 79 and Karen was 68. Eli died in March 1981 at the age of 88. Karen died in October 1989. She lived to be 85.

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39 Letter, dated Israel, March 1972.

# The "Flagship" of Hebrew New Testaments:

## ***A Recent Revision by Israeli Messianic Jews***

By **Gershon NereI**



A new revision of the Hebrew New Testament, originally translated from the Greek by the German Lutheran Hebraist Franz Julius Delitzsch (1813–1890),<sup>1</sup> was released December 2003, under the auspices of the Israeli association "Streams in the Negev," Beer-Sheva.<sup>2</sup> This is, so far, the sixteenth edition of the Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament. For practical purposes, we shall name it briefly the "Negev Delitzsch Version" or just *Negev Version*.

The first complete edition of the Franz Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament was printed in Leipzig in 1877, and he revised his own text up to the 10<sup>th</sup> edition, printed in Berlin in 1889. On his sickbed Delitzsch approved small parts of the 11<sup>th</sup> edition that was prepared by Gustav Hermann Dalman, his student, colleague and friend (1855–1941).<sup>3</sup> It was published in Leipzig in 1892.<sup>4</sup> The 12<sup>th</sup> edition, revised by Dalman, was published in Berlin in 1901.<sup>5</sup> The 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the Delitzsch-Dalman text also served for the preparation of the first *Hebrew Concordance* to the New Testament, a project which started in Israel in 1966 with J. Goldin, and was accomplished by P. Re'emi in 1974.<sup>6</sup>

1 "Dr. Franz Delitzsch," *The Jewish Intelligence*, n.s., 6 (1890), 50–51; "Delitzsch, Franz Julius," *Encyclopaedia Hebraica*, 12 (1969) 646–648 (Hebrew).

2 Registered *Amuta* (Charity) no. 58-036-183-0, P.O.Box 118, Beer-Sheva 84100, Israel (ISBN 965-7254-00-0). See Zvi Sadan, "New Edition of the Delitzsch Translation," *Kivun*, 37, Jan.-Feb. 2004, 12 (Hebrew); "New Hebrew Bible," *Israel Today*, 65, June 2004, 23 (with some inaccurate data).

3 Julia Männchen, "Gustav Dalman and Jewish Missions," *Mishkan*, 14 (1991), 64–73.

4 Jean Carmignac, *Traductions hébraïques des Evangiles*, vol. 4, *Die vier Evangelien von Franz Delitzsch (1877–1890–1902)*, Introduction par Jean Carmignac, *Kritischer Apparat der zwölf Auflagen von Hubert Klein, Brépols, Turnhout (Belgique) 1984*, x; xxvii.

5 Jean Carmignac, *List*, xxvii.

6 *Analytical Concordance to the Delitzsch Hebrew Translation of the New Testament*, Compiled by Samuel Paul Re'emi, Nur Press, Jerusalem 1973–1974, 3 vols. See Jean Carmignac, p. xxx; See also Paul Re'emi, "Book Survey," *UCCI News* (Bulletin of The United Christian Council in Israel), vol.1, no. 3, Fall 1970, pp. 15–16; "Samuel Paul Re'emi: a Tribute," as told to Lo Kaye-Wilson by Clärli Re'emi, *The Messianic Jew and Hebrew Christian*, vol. 69, no. 4, Dec. 1996 - Feb. 1997, pp. 91–94; Gabriel Grossmann, op, "A Hebrew Concordance to the New Testament", Book Review, *Immanuel*, 4 (1974): 65. From time to time Re'emi used the pseudonym of P. Shafer, an anagram of his initials.

Two other editions of the Delitzsch translation, numbers 13 and 14, were actually based on the revised 12<sup>th</sup> edition by Dalman.<sup>7</sup> The 14th edition was also reprinted in Tel Aviv in 1962, and is, de facto, the single “key” which is available today for accessing specific words in the concordance of P. Re’emi.<sup>8</sup> The 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament was published in Jerusalem by *Keren Ahvah Meshihit* (managed by Victor Smadja) in 2000. This project of *Keren ahvah Meshihit* started in 1998. The relatively few linguistic corrections were introduced by Mordechai Chen of Haifa, and according to the publisher, it is based on the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of 1889.<sup>9</sup> Edition 15 also contains, among other additions, a Hebrew Glossary of difficult words, (*Milon L’Brit Ha’Hadasha*) and various maps.<sup>10</sup>

### “Ancient” Hebrew Relevant for Today

Current readers of the Hebrew Bible have at their disposal two alternate versions of the New Testament – in modern and in “archaic” Hebrew. When we talk about “archaic” Hebrew, we mean *both* biblical and Mishnaic (post-biblical) Hebrew – two styles that Delitzsch skillfully combined in his text. Those who prefer today the “ancient” style over the contemporary colloquial Hebrew, point to the contribution of the “classical” style to the idiomatic uniformity with the Old Testament. This is enabled through the close syntax and even lexicography that promotes associative connections between Old and New Testaments.

Among the ongoing reprints of the New Testament in “classical” style one also finds today the translation begun in 1877 by the Jewish scholar Isaac Edward Salkinson (1820–1883), and published posthumously in 1885.<sup>11</sup> It was completed and revised after his death by Christian David Ginsburg.<sup>12</sup> This version of the Salkinson-Ginsburg Hebrew New Testament has been completed and edited to correspond to the Greek *Textus Receptus* (received text) by Eric (Aharon) Selig Gabe of London.<sup>13</sup> This text is widely distributed within a bi-lingual format.<sup>14</sup> In general, of

7 See Jean Carmignac, xxvii.

8 See Pinchas E. Lapide, *Hebrew in the Church* (The Foundations of Jewish-Christian Dialogue), Translated from German by E. F. Rhodes, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1984, 89–91.

9 *Habrit Hahadasha, Keren Ahvah Meshihit* (Messianic Brotherhood-Fund), Yanetz, P.O. Box 10382, Jerusalem 91103, Israel, October 2000; June 2003, 323.

10 See Victor Smadja, “Making Hebrew New Testaments...”, *Report from Jerusalem*, December 2000, 3.

11 See Hanna Scolnicov, “The Hebrew who Turned Christian: The First Translator of Shakespeare into the Holy Tongue,” in *Shakespeare Survey*, vol. 54: *Shakespeare and Religions*, Holland, Peter (ed.), Nov. 2001, 182–183. My thanks to Jorge Quinonez for showing me this reference.

12 Pinchas E. Lapide, 92.

13 The first revised edition was published in 1996, and the third edition appeared in 2000.

14 See D.B. Gwilym-Jones, “The Salkinson-Ginsburg Hebrew New Testament,” *The Lamp and the Light*, vol. 6, no. 2, April-June 1984, p. 14, published by the *Society for Distributing Hebrew Scriptures*, directed by Eric R. Browning.

these two "classical" translations of Delitzsch on one hand and Salkinson-Ginsburg on the other, the better text, in my estimation, is the one produced by Delitzsch. This was also the opinion of the late Prof. Joseph Klausner.<sup>15</sup>

### The Need for a Focused Revision

It is a fact that in the Land of Israel, where the revived Hebrew language is a daily living tongue, that many words have gradually adopted divided meanings. Nuances have changed. In a salient case, for example, the Mishnaic term *Sarsor*, i.e. mediator, (Gal 3:19-20; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24) actually became blasphemous within the biblical context. Presently it most often designates the middleman between a prostitute and her client. Obviously, therefore, it is more than misleading with regard to Messiah's role as intermediary between God and man. Consequently, although the original Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament contained no mistranslations, the reality of semantic dynamism of the last decades demands a careful amendment of the text. While focused obsolescence in the "Negev Delitzsch Version" was updated, the grammar and vocabulary rooted in the Old Testament was retained.

### A "Hebraic New King James"

The authoritative status of the Franz Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament can be compared to the English Authorized Version, known popularly as the King James Bible. Precisely as with the authors of the New King James Version, the initiators of the "Negev Delitzsch Version" stated from the outset that it was not their purpose "to make a new translation ... but to make a good one better."<sup>16</sup>

Even today, 99% of Jewry finds no substantial justification for translating the Old Testament (*Tanach*) into modern Hebrew. It is accepted as *the* authentic and trustworthy text, and as such it is taught even to small children in elementary schools. Although with the New Testament the situation is different, because the original manuscripts exist only in Greek, still the adapted style and phraseology of classical Hebrew is most important for many Jews. This can be compared to the King James Bible, respected for being the *Textus Receptus* with regard to accuracy and authority. At the same time, it is well known that many regard the King James Version as an extremely literal translation. However, there is verity in the words of Jerusalemite Malcolm Lowe that "despite its antiquated vocabulary, it

15 See Reuven Lod (Robert Lisle Lindsey), "The Delitzsch and Salkinson Translations," *Hayahad*, May 1961 (no. 3), 7 (Hebrew). Cf. Idem, "The Delitzsch, Dalman and Salkinson Translations," *Hayahad*, April 1961 (no. 2), 7 (Hebrew).

16 *Holy Bible, The New King James Version*, Containing the Old and New Testaments, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, Tennessee 1982, iii.



can often speak to us more directly than many a modern translation."<sup>17</sup> The same principle, actually, applies even more so to the Hebrew of the Delitzsch New Testament.

The current revision of the Delitzsch text made no attempt to revolutionize it, only to replace individual words or phrases which were considered as most problematic because they became unquestionably anachronistic. In other words, instead of terms that with the time became misleading or even defamatory, other appropriate terms were introduced. The first and leading choice for selecting a potential exchange was from the Old Testament. Only when a proper equivalent was not found, then Mishnaic Hebrew was employed.

## History of the Project

Altogether, the revision project lasted about 10 years, from 1993 to 2003, with some intervals in the middle. Following the appearance of the *Annotated New Testament* in modern Hebrew,<sup>18</sup> I suggested that a basic revision of the Delitzsch text is greatly needed.<sup>19</sup> In order to implement this, practical steps began in 1993, when I approached Miriam Ronning/Ronen (formerly Syväntö) to work jointly on the project.<sup>20</sup> Two decades earlier Miriam (Mirja) contributed to the translation of the New Testament into modern Hebrew.<sup>21</sup> For several years she also lectured on Bible Translation at the American Institute of Holy Land Studies on Mt. Zion. Additionally, she was also experienced in translating parts of the Bible into Finnish. Currently she and her husband Halvor run the "Home for Bible Translators" in Mevaseret-Zion near Jerusalem. At her home in Motza, Miriam and I scrutinized the Gospels and the Epistle to the Romans for almost two years, until 1995, in order to map the major corrections we considered most necessary. Then our common work came to an end. Between 1995–1998 my wife Sara and I occasionally consulted several experts about the continuation of the project, among them Yohanan Elihai (Jean Leroy) from Jerusalem, and Miriam Zeidan of the Beth-Hesda Messianic Congregation in Haifa. For many years Zeidan edited and revised numerous Hebrew books within academic settings.

The project restarted September 1998 in Moshav Yad Hashmona near Jerusalem, as Sara and I began anew the scanning process of the whole

17 Malcolm F. Lowe, "Modern Bible Translations – Blessing or Bane?", *Life and Work*, November 1988, 22.

18 *Habrit Hahadasha B'Ivrit Bat Zmanenu Im Hearot Vetziun Mekorot Yehudiim V'aherim* (The New Testament in Contemporary Hebrew with Annotations and References to Jewish and Other Sources), based on the 1976 translation into modern Hebrew, The Bible Society in Israel, Jerusalem 1991.

19 Gershon Nerel, "An Old Book in New Garb: The New Testament with Introductions," Book Review in *Zot Habrit*, vol. 3, Winter 1991–1992, 32–34 (Hebrew).

20 See Gershon Nerel, "The New Testament in Biblical Style – Comments and Update," *Zot Habrit*, vol. 4, Dec. 1993, 20–23 (Hebrew).

21 Under the directorship of Yoseph Atzmon, and was first printed at *Yanetz* in Jerusalem (1976).

New Testament, redefining the areas of linguistic difficulties. Our work on the text lasted for three years, until the end of 2001. During this time Sara typed the corrected text on computer, so the entire "Negev Delitzsch Version," including the amended punctuation, was computerized. Members of the Messianic Home Assembly at Yad Hashmona, among them David and Eli Bar David, contributed helpful observations. Miriam Zeidan carefully assisted with several proofreadings. The preparations for the printing and binding of this version continued in 2002–2003, as did the photocopying in Finland of the Hebrew Old Testament.

## Methodology

The current revision is based on the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament,<sup>22</sup> which is still the most popular among Israelis who read the Delitzsch text. In addition to the Received Text of the Greek New Testament,<sup>23</sup> the revisers made use of several texts and translations when selecting a specific word in Hebrew, from a possibility of many synonyms, as follows: The Peshitta;<sup>24</sup> the *Berit Hadasha Al-pi HaMashiah* (Hebrew New Testament according to the Messiah);<sup>25</sup> *Habrit HaHadasha Al-pi HaMashiah Im Nekudot Uteamim* (The New Testament according to the Messiah with Punctuation – Hebrew vowels - and Accentuations);<sup>26</sup> The Hebrew New Testament of Isaac Salkinson and David Ginzburg;<sup>27</sup> and the *Sefer Habritot* (Book of the Covenants – Tanach and the New Testament).<sup>28</sup>

The main principles for preparing the "Negev Revision" focused on the following points: First, top priority is given to vocabulary *terms* which need immediate replacement; second, modification of syntax structures in verses which are highly problematic; third, high sensitivity with regard to concepts with special theological implications.

22 For a "know-how" to recognize the 8<sup>th</sup> edition see Jean Carmignac, p. xxvii. Another method to easily distinguish between the 8<sup>th</sup> edition and the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> editions is based on the Hebrew translation of Luke 11:21 – see Zvi Sadan and Hadas Keren (Hilary Le Cornu), *The Complete Hebrew Dictionary to the Greek of the New Testament*, Experimental Edition (א – י), Jerusalem 1999 (Hebrew Introduction), 4.

23 *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, Third Edition, Edited by Jay P. Green, Sr., Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1998. I owe special thanks to Mary Little for her assistance.

24 *The New Covenant Aramaic Peshitta Text* (K'yama Hadta/Diyateke Hadata), With a Hebrew Translation, Edited by the Aramaic Scriptures Research Society in Israel, The Bible Society, Jerusalem 1986.

25 Published in London in 1838 by the London Jews Society (LJS), translated by Alexander McCaul, Reichardt and Michael Solomon Alexander, who became the first Anglican Jewish Bishop in Jerusalem, (1841–1845).

26 Published in London in 1886 at the Operative Institution, Palestine Place, by the London Jews Society (LJS).

27 Printed for the Trinitarian Bible Society at the Cambridge University Press and promoted today by the Society for Distributing the Holy Scriptures to the Jews, London.

28 The Bible Society in Israel, Jerusalem 1991.



Major Setup Alterations

In order to enable unbroken reading of the text, and to avoid possible confusion, the different kinds of brackets (single or double) in the 8<sup>th</sup> edition were deleted in the *Negev Version*. In other words, the wording within the brackets were retained, while the signs of the parentheses – square and round brackets - were removed. Thus, for example, in order to bypass the fragmented format of the *Lord’s Prayer* in the Gospel of Luke (11:2-4) the words “in heaven,” “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” and “but deliver us from the evil one” are left within the text without brackets. The same is done with the sentence “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, amen” (Matt 6:13). Because the words do appear in the text anyway, the absence of the various brackets provides the text with a sense of completion rather than obscurity.<sup>29</sup> However, in one exceptional place the brackets were still left in place, because of unclear identification of Emmaus and her distance from Jerusalem (Luke 24:13).

Additionally, instead of the old format of having two textual possibilities for using a certain word, marked by adding an asterisk, as for example in Matthew 23:35 and in Acts 27:2,19, we left only one word which made scriptural and logical sense. However, in the difficult case of “wisdom is justified by her children” (Matt 11:19), the other possible wording of “by her acts” was mentioned in the bottom of the page. In other words, the fluency of the text itself is kept intact. In other cases, also marked by an asterisk, when the meaning of the two optional wordings looked reasonable, they were *both* kept in place, for completing each other, as for example “the fruit of the spirit and light” (Eph 5:9), and “washed and redeemed us” (Rev 1:5).

Technically, also punctuation inaccuracies were amended, as for example, *Garger* (seed) instead of *Gargar* (Matt 13:31) and *Haavir* (air) instead of *Haaver* (Eph 2:2). Also, in all places where the text contains quotations from the Old Testament, on the bottom of each page references were added to easily find the original quote.

Major Terminological Alterations

Altogether, more than 300 terminological and punctuation corrections were made. The broad subdivision of the alterations is as follows:

Matt: 52	Mark: 39	Luke: 43	John: 31
Acts: 57	Rom: 22	I Cor: 27	II Cor: 16
Gal: 9	Eph: 8	Rev: 24	

29 See also, for example, Matt 6:13 in the *Holy Bible – The New King James Version*, where note no. 26 is added instead of the bracket, explaining that certain words are omitted in other versions.

An additional major modification relates to the sign that denotes the name of God. Within all the first 10 editions of the Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament, the word God (in Hebrew *Adonai*) is represented symbolically by two Hebrew letters יי (double Yod).<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, the figurative substitute of יי for יהוה (YHWH) already appeared in Jewish medieval manuscripts from the Cairo Geniza. As a matter of fact, Delitzsch placed יי in most verses where the Greek *Lord* or *Master* (Κύριος) is mentioned.

Obviously, in the Hebrew language, unlike any other tongue, it does make a difference whether in the text appears "merely" *Lord* or YHWH, especially because this immediately refers to Divinity. Retrospectively, it would be contrary to all reasonable expectations that Delitzsch was unaware of this point. This can be easily proven by Delitzsch's first translation of a New Testament book – the Epistle to the Romans (1870).<sup>31</sup> Thus, within his pilot translation of Romans, only יהוה is used. De facto, in his initial translation to Romans, Delitzsch followed the former LJS model of the 1836 and 1886 translations, where יהוה is used. However, Jean Carmignac ignores this fact in his Introduction, so the question remains open as to why in all first 10 editions of Delitzsch there is a systematic insistence on יי. Nonetheless, within the entire text of the *Negev Revision* instead of the two Hebrew letters יי, which do not appear in the Old Testament, the biblical Tetragrammaton יהוה (YHWH) was introduced. This is another linguistic way to emphasize the dynamic and organic unity between Old and New Testaments. It is the same God of both covenants.

## Typing and Printing

When the entire *Negev Revision* was computerized, the same pagination of the 8<sup>th</sup> edition was preserved. The idea behind that was to facilitate the use of the text for those who have already memorized various verses in a specific location. The new issue contains 483 pages, as it is in the 8<sup>th</sup> edition, in the format of 20x13 cm., and is printed on ultra-thin paper (Bible paper), bound with dark-blue hard cover.

In order to maintain the unity of the Hebraic Bible from Genesis to Revelation, the *Negev Revision* was attached to the *Snaith Bible*, the 1977 edition of *Torah, Neviim, Ketuvim* (Old Testament) edited by Norman Henry Snaith.<sup>32</sup> This edition of the Bible Society in Israel was photocopied and reprinted with no alterations whatever.

Olavi Syväntö of Omer, near Beer Sheva, and his friends in Finland were the financial sponsors of the entire project. Olavi, son of the late Bible distributor in the land, Kaarlo Syväntö, also coordinated work with the

30 See, for example, Jean Carmignac, the critical apparatus for Matt 1:20; 24, p. 2.

31 Paulus des Apostels *Brief an die Römer*, aus dem Griechischen Urtext auf Grund des Sinai-Codex in das Hebräische Übersetzt und aus Talmud und Midrasch Erläutert, von Franz Delitzsch, Leipzig, Dörffling und Franke, 1870.

32 The Hebrew Bible edited by Norman Henry Snaith was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1958. See <http://www.hebrew-streams.org/works/tapuchim/nhsnaith.html>





printers in Finland, mainly with Pentty Ruohotie. Totally, 10,000 exemplars were printed. Within each and every copy of this edition, on the back of the front cover it is printed "Not for Sale," highlighting the fact that it has no commercial value but is distributed freely.

#### Author info:

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## Summary

Almost a century and a half after its first publication in 1877, the "Flagship Hebrew New Testament" remains the work of Franz Julius Delitzsch. He discovered that he was obliged to use both biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew expressions, and this led him to the further discovery that many passages could only be understood adequately after they had been translated back to a Hebrew – partially related to Old Testament Hebrew and partially to rabbinic Hebrew.

Throughout the whole process of the recent revision, it became absolutely clear that Delitzsch rarely made mistakes with the selection of words from the Old Testament for his translation. The late Professor David Flusser of the Hebrew University highlighted the fact that the discovery of the *Hebraic* Dead Sea Scrolls underlines the high probability that the approach of "the great Delitzsch" was indeed correct – so he was able in many instances to reconstruct the earlier Hebrew, not Aramaic, prototype (Vorlage).<sup>33</sup>

Unlike the Salkinson-Ginsburg version, the Delitzsch mode of expression is not "too poetic" or flowery. However, in its rather prosaic style it sounds more applicable to those who speak fluent Hebrew.

Finally, a distinguishing feature of the *Negev Version* is an updated database, although yet incomplete, of the Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament. It is hoped that the current revision will serve as an improved tool to contextualize the message of the New Testament in our times. Although the *Negev Version* is not the last word in a long line of revisions, it is also hoped that with further updates to the database, the next project will be a new concordance. Thus, as the Delitzsch New Testament uniquely stands the test of time, it will no doubt remain a monumental spiritual legacy.

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33 David Flusser, "Foreword", *Analytical Concordance to the Delitzsch Hebrew Translation of the New Testament*, Compiled by Samuel Paul Re'emi, Nur Press, Jerusalem 1973, vol. 1, n.p.

# From the Israeli and the Palestinian Bible Societies



In this issue of *Mishkan* we have used the 200-year jubilee of the British and Foreign Bible Society to focus on the history of Bible work in the Land of the Bible. The following two small reports from the Bible Society in Israel and the Palestinian Bible Society tell us something of what is happening right now in the place where Bible work dates itself back not quite 200 years, but almost. Bible work in the Land of the Bible is not only history but also present reality.

*Doron Even Ari*, the General Secretary, submits the report on the Bible society in Israel. *Simon Azazian*, who is responsible for PR and communication, submits the report on the Palestinian Bible Society.

## The Bible Society in Israel

The Bible Society in Israel (BSI) became registered as an organization at around the same time as the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. One of the most significant events in the history of BSI was the completion of the translation and publishing of the first edition of the Modern Hebrew New Testament in 1976.

In the given demographic environment in the Land and its relation to Christian history among Jews, the BSI exposure and initiative to become public was minimal. A visible change in Bible Society operation in the Land began over 20 years ago with the growth of Messianic congregations in the Land. The major areas of development were publishing, distribution, and Bible exhibitions.

### *Publishing*

Over the years, the Bible Society in Israel published the following:

- "What the Bible Tells Us" a series of children's Bible stories in Hebrew, published in 1994. The Netherlands Bible Society published the Dutch version in 1967.
- New Covenant Peshitta Aramaic Text with Hebrew translation edited by The Aramaic Scripture Research Society in Israel and published by the Bible Society in 1986. In order to render the Aramaic text legible

to those who do not know the Aramaic script, it was transcribed in Hebrew letters complete with the vowel points.

- Annotated Modern Hebrew New Testament, published by the Bible Society in Israel, printed in 1995. The modern New Testament text is taken from the 1976 Hebrew New Testament and the revised text of 1991 and 1995.
- Hebrew-Russian Bible, published jointly with the Israel Association for the Dissemination of Biblical Writings and the Bible Society in Israel in 1991. Revisions for this edition of the Russian Bible (1991) and typesetting of the Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament (1991).
- Hebrew-English Bible, published jointly with Israel Association for the Dissemination of Biblical Writings and the Bible Society in Israel in 1996. The English New King James version was provided by Thomas Nelson Publishers and the Modern Hebrew New Testament text is taken from the Bible Society in Israel's 1995 revised edition.
- Hebrew Bible published by the Bible Society in Israel in 1991. The 1976 edition of the Modern Hebrew New Testament published by the Bible Society in Israel was used in this Bible.
- Modern Hebrew New Testament published by the Bible Society in 1976. The text was revised in 1991, 1995, and 2000. It is a prophecy edition of the Modern Hebrew New Testament.
- Peace Portion Booklet in Hebrew and Arabic was published by the Bible Society in Israel in 2000. Layout and English text and pictures were provided by Randolph Capp. The New Testament text is taken from the Bible Society in Israel's revised edition of 1976/1995 and the Old Testament text is from the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.
- Concordance for the Modern Hebrew New Testament was published by the Bible Society in Israel in 1999. Elisabeth Levy was editor and the computer programming and typesetting was provided by David Robinson in England.

Currently, the BSI is producing the following:

- New Illustrated Bible storybook for children in Hebrew. Christian Aid Ministries in Berlin, Ohio published the English version in 1994. Ura Miller was part of the editorial committee and Naomi Lapp was the Assistant Editor.
- Revision and reprint of the Aramaic Hebrew New Testament (description above).

### *Distribution*

The distribution of the above mentioned publications produced by BSI, in addition to many more publications in over 50 languages sold through our Bible bookstores, are: a) Bibles, b) New Testaments, c) portions, and d) selections. Distribution figures for BSI for the last 15 years are as follows:

Bibles	156,892
New Testaments	199,394
Portions	225,025
Selections	156,549
Total	<u>737,860</u>

In addition to our main two target audiences of Jews and Arabs in the Land, we serve the traditional churches, as well as the protestant evangelical congregations in their denominational variety.

In recent years, the scholarly community has appreciated the availability of a wide selection of important Biblical scholarly tools found at BSI outlets. Another community we recently added to our distribution programs is migrant workers coming from Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe.

### *Exhibitions*

In Jerusalem, we were able to purchase the space next door to our current facility and renovate both the new and old areas, including our Bible bookstore. In the new space, we built a permanent Bible exhibition telling the story of how the Bible came to us and was conveyed from generation to generation. We have visitors from a full spectrum of Society, among them secular and Orthodox Jews, Arabs, soldiers, students, scholars, tourists, and pilgrims.

Parallel to the construction of the permanent Bible exhibition in Jerusalem, we completed a mobile Bible exhibition in Arabic, which is being circulated in Arabic schools in the Galilee, as part of our operation in the Galilee, based in Nazareth.

An additional outreach publication project launched jointly with the Nazareth Village is the production of an illustrated book of the life and teaching of Yeshua within the cultural traditional context of the first century Nazareth Village and an illustrated booklet introducing the parables of Jesus.

### *Reconciliation Project*

Recently, the Bible Society in Israel and the Palestinian Bible Society worked together to develop a new project to promote the active participation of ordinary people in Israel in grassroots activities designed to transform attitudes of hatred. We intend to organize joint educational programs, discussions groups, and social activities for Jewish-Israelis and Palestinians so that they may be brought together and learn to trust one another. Finally, since the future of our region is dependent upon the attitudes of young people, our activities will have a particular focus on education and reconciliation among Palestinian and Israeli youth. Some of the activities will include summer camps, interfaith programs, seminars on dealing with trauma, land for peace, and women's activities.

The last four years of intifada succeeded, on one hand, in destroying tourism and pilgrimage to Israel and negatively impacted our budget but, on the other hand, has contributed to our day to day dependency



and thankfulness to God for his protection and our heart's openness to his Word.

### **The Palestinian Bible Society**

The Palestinian Bible Society (PBS) is a member of the United Bible Societies. It is committed to making the Word of God available to the Arab communities of the Holy Land. For the Muslim majority, the society aims to help them better understand the Bible and their Christian neighbors, thereby countering any misconceptions they may have. For the Christian minority, the work is done in cooperation with their local churches to bring the Bible into its rightful place – the center of their individual and corporate lives. The PBS has as its main tasks:

- 1) Meeting the needs of churches and Christian groups for Bibles and Biblical literature.
- 2) Making the Bible available to all people and helping them to interact with it through establishing Bible Centers in Palestinian cities.
- 3) Making the Bible available through all possible avenues in society: schools, universities, institutions, public libraries and social clubs, in partnership with private organizations and government offices.
- 4) Showing our historical and cultural heritage from the Bible through the use of different media and art channels.
- 5) Promoting the importance and relevance of the Bible regarding respect of human values, human rights, justice, peace and reconciliation in a conflict stricken country.
- 6) Serving the needs of local communities in a holistic way through partnership with local and international Christian humanitarian organizations.

Reaching many individuals through the daily life and witness of our committed staff.

#### *Offices and Programs*

The PBS has several offices throughout the West Bank, in Gaza and East Jerusalem. The main office is in East Jerusalem on Ibn-Khaldoun Street No.1 and serves as a small bookstore as well. Recently the PBS rented another building in East Jerusalem in order to get more office and storage space. The Jerusalem Old City Media Ministry is located in the Old City in the Fountain Shop and is the only Palestinian Christian Shop to provide videos and Bible chat rooms to the people of Jerusalem. The location of the Fountain Shop is just minutes away from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. In the shop one finds a wide range of Christian audio and videotapes that are heard and viewed by many. The PBS has established a web site under the name Palestinian Bible Society (<http://www.pbsociety.org>) and is planning to develop it to an interactive website.

Through the media center the PBS has almost finished the first dra-

matized audio version of the Joseph story. They hope to air it on radio and distribute it to the locals, the first time Biblical story is broadcast in Palestinian colloquial Arabic.

### *The Gaza Teacher's Bookshop*

The Gaza office is located in the center of Gaza city and is the first center outside of Jerusalem and the only Christian bookshop in the city. Established in March 1998, the Teacher's Bookshop is serving the community of Gaza. During the last two years, the Teacher's Bookshop has expanded its local work to become involved with community programs. A strong well-equipped relief team is on constant move all over the Gaza strip, visiting the needy and providing them with food and essential materials, or organizing community health programs.

With the eruption of violence in the year 2000 and the resulting economic pressures on people in Gaza (who were already suffering poverty and misery), the Bible Society team in Gaza decided to serve the people of Gaza with humanitarian assistance. The PBS therefore have three lines of ministry in Gaza; the first is the Bible Bookshop, the second is concentrating on the relief help, and the third is on the Community Health Education program.

In 2003 the Bible Society's team member, Steve Mashn, started a course teaching English as a second language at El-A'zhar University in Gaza. Around 54 students enrolled, and a successful course was held. By the end of the course, each student received a New Testament written in both English and in Arabic, and two other books from the Bible Society. The achievement was great, as it touched many hearts, and a special graduation took place where the 150 students attended and enjoyed a presentation on what the course was about.

The relief programs require a lot of visits to houses where the workers bring food and medicine but also spend time with the people encouraging them and bringing them hope from the Word of God.

### *Nablus Teacher's Bookshop*

In 2001 the PBS began work in Nablus, a city dominated almost 100 percent by Muslims. The suffering and the ongoing violence created a challenge to bring comfort to the people. Despite the fact that this is one of the toughest areas in a continuous war zone, the Teacher's Bookshop in Nablus managed to open in the heart of the city. However, in February 2004 the shop had to close again. The long and many curfews made it impossible to stay open in a city that has been economically paralyzed.

### *Bir Zeit Living Stones Student Centers*

The Living Stones Center or "Beit Al Hajar" in Arabic is another project of the PBS. At first, the old building was renovated and the PBS planned to use it as a common Christian Bible Shop. However God had a greater plan and in May 2000 the Bible Shop was changed to a Student Center Café.

Because Living Stones is located in the West Bank village of Bir Zeit,



which is the home of Bir Zeit University, there was a great need to provide a comfortable, inexpensive venue for students to study and socialize. Inside, and almost every night, students come to enjoy the warm comfortable atmosphere of this "Christian place" as they know it. They surf the internet, enjoy coffee, tea and other refreshments and use the television-VCR set for free.

The majority of the students who visit the center are Muslims. However, spiritual support for Christian students is offered through weekly Bible discussion groups. The response to the students' community has been very strong. Living Stones has become the most popular gathering place for students in the evening in the Bir Zeit area.

During special nights, the center engages in hosting poetry or drama sketches, and on Muslim and Christian holidays the center has a special program.

As the present conflict has deepened, Living Stones has expanded its outreach to youth from villages around Bir Zeit. Instead of them coming to us, we have decided to go to them and see their needs. The Bir Zeit Region Resources Project is one of the projects that enrich the lives of the young people who are enduring the present conflict.

### *Operation Palestinian Child*

The Child Group is a team that is part of the PBS. It is a non-denominational team that aims at serving children from all religions and backgrounds. The group was first established by the end of the year 2000 as a result of the deteriorating situation in the area and the beginning of the Palestinian uprising. The situation created many obstacles that resulted in closures, curfews, and poverty. Until today, the Child Group has been to over 100 schools and societies and has brought the smile back again to the faces of the children. The program seeks to help children overcome the fears and oppressions they are living and help children positively express themselves. The programs are done in cooperation with the local village councils and seek to develop fun activities for children that will bring back lost joys and smiles to the children of Palestine. Through the program children will also understand that there are Palestinian Christians living in the area as well and they are introduced to Christian ethics.

# Eighty Years of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) in Israel

By Heikki Nurminen

## Aili Havas (1903–1988) – Founder of the Work

The Israeli writer Amos Oz in his book *Sipur al Ahavah vaHosech* dedicates a chapter of six and a half pages to two Finnish missionaries whom he remembers from the Jerusalem of his childhood.<sup>1</sup> They were Miss Aili Havas and Miss Rauha Moisio. The writer exercises his artistic freedom, yet the picture of the two ladies is based on historical facts.

Aili Havas was born in Lempäälä near Tampere, where she is also buried. She studied theology in the University of Helsinki. She also took lessons in Orientalistics and Semitic languages, Hebrew and Arabic. After her graduation she worked two years as a secretary of the Christian Students' Association. During that time she visited several European countries and established relationships that proved to be important for her future.

At the end of the 1920's she struggled with her missionary call. Originally she was interested in working among the Muslims. However, Dr. Matti Tarkkanen, who was then the Director of the FELM,<sup>2</sup> directed her attention to the Jews of Palestine. He had attended the meeting of the International Missionary Council in Jerusalem in 1927 and written a book about his impressions. The book indicates that he had a clear vision about the national renewal of the Jewish people and about their future salvation. He wanted to send his most promising candidate to the Jewish people.

In summer of 1931 Havas was sent to England to study English. There she was hosted by the British Jews' Society, BJS. In England she met Dr. James Churcher, who was on vacation from his clinic in Haifa. When they talked about Aili's future language studies, Dr. Churcher proposed that she should study Hebrew in the Hebrew University instead of the tra-

1 Keter Publishing House, Jerusalem, 2002, pp. 425–431, English translation, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, 2004

2 FELM, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, the name of the organization since 1.1.1985, before that the Finnish Missionary Society, FMS (Suomen Lähetysseura, SLS, in Finnish).



ditional language schools of missions. This way she could avoid the old routines and reach out to a new kind of people.

After a period in England Havas started her way to the Holy Land through Europe and through Leipzig, where she stopped to study Judaica in the Delitzschianum. There she had the privilege of listening to the lectures of Dr. Otto von Harling – just to mention one of the teachers. She arrived in Haifa on February 1, 1932 and was met at the port by Dr. Churcher, who had returned from his furlough in the meantime. He welcomed Aili Havas by explaining that only three things are necessary in Israel to assure everything will go smoothly: first, *savlanut* (patience), second, *savlanut* and third, *savlanut*. At the Haifa clinic Aili Havas got acquainted with Hannah Hurnard, with whom she later shared many experiences and hardships.<sup>3</sup>

As encouraged by Churcher, Aili Havas enrolled at the Hebrew University to study Hebrew literature and Talmud. Her main tutor was Professor Joseph Klausner, whose book *Yeshe HaNotzri* had been published in 1922 in Hebrew and then in English in 1925 by the title *Jesus of Nazareth*. She studied in the Hebrew University for seven years and collected material for her thesis. During those years she had many open and challenging discussions about matters of faith with her fellow students as well as her teachers. Many of the conversations are recorded in her book, sadly available only in Finnish at present.<sup>4</sup>

One of the conversations with Professor Klausner took place at the time of the Hanukkah festival. While lighting a candle the following conversation occurred:

- Jesus observed Hanukkah, too.
- Of course, Aili Havas replied.
- There is one matter, he said, in Christianity that I would never understand, namely the doctrine about Trinity, but I guess it is just theoretical speculation.
- No, it is not, she answered; it is an attempt to find an expression for something that every Christian experiences in his spiritual life.
- What do you mean?
- I could not come into the presence of the Holy God without reconciliation and forgiveness of my sins by Christ.
- But you do not have any sins!
- Yes, I have pride deep in myself.
- That is not true, you are a very humble person.
- You see! This is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in me. Without it I would not realize my sinfulness. The Holy Spirit shows my sins, but also the forgiveness in Christ.

3 Hannah Hurnard, *Watchmen on the Walls*, CMJ, London, 1950.

4 Aili Havas, *Työkenttäni Israel* [My Missionfield Israel], SLS, Helsinki, 1958.

This is how Aili Havas witnessed to the One God in Three Persons – not as a theory but as a living experience.

In addition to her studies she invited her fellow students weekly to her home for Bible studies and took them to different Christian meetings in Jerusalem. The number of those who would come weekly was not large, but quite notable during the course of time.

She was also involved in direct evangelism and Bible distribution. One of her main partners in that activity was Hannah Hurnard, who has written a vivid description about their journeys in her book *Wayfarer in the Land*. I have not seen that book, but Havas translated an extensive passage about their journey in 1938 to the Jordan Valley and to the kibbutzim around Beit Shean. Hurnard uses the code name Hope for Aili. We get a living picture about the attitudes, reactions and conversations between the two missionaries and the people of various settlements. The description of their visit to the religious kibbutz Tirat Tsvi is fascinating; the discussions are as deep as the reactions are sharp.<sup>5</sup>

A very important part of her activities during the university years was her involvement in the Messianic movement. Already in the middle of the 1930's she was an integral part of the body. She had won the trust of the leaders and had been given central tasks in the movement. This is acknowledged for instance by Gershon Nerel in his doctoral thesis about the Messianic movement submitted to the Hebrew University in 1996.<sup>6</sup> Nerel explains that after studying documents in the National Archives and FELM archives in Helsinki, especially from the British mandate time, he could see to what extent Havas was involved in the small community of Jewish believers in Jesus in the country. According to Nerel, she played a central role in their attempt to reach organizational unity. Sometimes they encountered obstacles and could trust in Havas' ability to negotiate and solve problems. She knew well the leading persons of the movement, such as Moshe Immanuel ben Meir, who supported her.<sup>7</sup>

**She had won the trust of the leaders and had been given central tasks in the movement**

The efforts of the Messianic believers in the 1930s to establish an alliance did not bear fruit. On December 8-9, 1950 there was a renewed effort toward that end. In the meeting there were also about 20 gentiles present, among them representatives from the FELM. That could be only Havas.<sup>8</sup> As that effort also was unsuccessful, the Messianic activists wrote a letter of explanation to the respective bodies, sending a copy to Aili Havas.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Havas, 183–192.

<sup>6</sup> Gershon Nerel, *Messianic Jews in Eretz Israel (1917–1967), Trends and Changes in Shaping Self-Identity*, Jerusalem, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Gershon Nerel in the video interview for FELM in Moshav Yad Hashmona, 30.11.2001.

<sup>8</sup> Nerel, 132.

<sup>9</sup> Nerel, 139.

Aili Havas went back to Finland for her first furlough in 1938. There it turned out that she had contracted tuberculosis. In the sanatorium she went through surgery and one of her lungs was removed. While in the sanatorium she received a letter from Professor Klausner, who comforted and encouraged her telling that he prayed for her recovery and return to Jerusalem. From that time there are documents in the above-mentioned archives about their correspondence. In one communication the Professor tells how proud he is for having such an excellent Hebrew student. In another he tries to answer his student's question as to why he writes His name *Yeshu*, although he knows that it is properly written *Yeshua* in Hebrew.

After her recovery she wanted to return to Jerusalem at the end of 1939, but the beginning of World War II prevented her. During the Winter War of 1939–40 she worked among the Jewish refugees that had come to Finland from central Europe. On June 4, 1940 she started her way back to Jerusalem.

At her home Havas found a group of Jewish refugees that had also escaped from Europe. During her absence the home had been taken care of by two Jewish believers, who in the course of time had become mothers to the refugee children. That was the beginning of the Shalhevetyah

**That was the beginning of the Shalhevetyah children's home which was never established, but was born**

children's home<sup>10</sup> which was never established, but was born. The material for the doctoral dissertation that Havas had collected for so many years was all burned in the fire that hit the premises. In 1945 she started schoolwork among the children of the home.

The war between Russia and Finland broke out again in 1941, and Aili's elder brother Väinö was among those who fell. He was a Lutheran minister, poet, army officer and national hero. It was distressing news for the sister, who worked largely isolated from her country in a remote place. It is good to remember that Finland was an enemy country of the Allies in 1941–45, and Havas had to report to the British authorities weekly. At the same time she received a lot of support and aid from the Britons that worked as missionaries there – including monetary support. She learned to trust in the cooperation and fellowship of Christians from different countries and of different denominational backgrounds.

The schoolwork went on and grew until the War of Independence in 1948. Jerusalem was then besieged for several months. Those were the months that Amos Oz describes in the above-mentioned book. He was then nine years old. As to Amos Oz, he is the grandson of Joseph Klausner's brother. His father, Arye Klausner, had become friends with Havas in the university circles. *Doda* (aunt) Aili and *Doda* Rauha visited now and then in his home. During the War of Independence those two

<sup>10</sup> Shalhevetyah, "The very flame of Jehovah," Song of Solomon 8:6, the Living Bible.

ladies remained in the besieged city. Amos Oz tells how they distributed all kinds of goods and aid to the people of the besieged quarters. They also encouraged people by their oral testimony and by Bible verses. Sometimes they volunteered to stand in the queue for the inhabitants of the neighborhood to wait for water that was distributed in limited quantities once a week. Those difficult months are described and Havas is mentioned also by Hannah Hurnard.<sup>11</sup> During the fighting Rauha Moiso and one of the pupils were wounded.

Once little Amos asked Doda Aili who Jesus actually was. "Not that he was," answered Dodah Aili, "but he *is* and he loves all of us and especially those who despise him. And if you open your heart to love, he comes to live into your heart." The answer was totally different from that of Dod (uncle) Joseph – although in his book he expressed high esteem for Jesus – saying that he was maybe the greatest person that ever lived, yet only a human being.<sup>12</sup>

After the war the schoolwork went on and developed. In 1955 Aili Havas was able to purchase larger premises for the school and for the boarding section from CMJ (Christian Mission to the Jews). The new school building was erected and dedicated in 1963. During all those years there were Jewish believers working with Aili Havas as teachers and as boarding section workers. After 1949, when the NCMI<sup>13</sup> started its work in Israel under the leadership of Rev. Magne Solheim, the Norwegian Society also provided the school with teachers. When the United Council in Israel (UCCI) was established in 1956, Havas was among its founders. She was very active especially in the translation and publication work of the council and on its education committee.

In addition to the schoolwork, Hebrew Shabbat meetings were held at the premises – the beginning of the Shalhevetyah congregational work. Havas was an ardent advocate of the Hebrew language when the language question (Hebrew/English) was debated among the foreign missionaries as well as among the Messianic believers.

In the 1960's the school compound was a basis of countrywide youth work and commencing printing and publication work, established and lead by a Messianic worker. From the beginning of the 1970's these activities have continued independently as important factors in the Messianic movement in Israel. The schoolwork was discontinued in 1976, after which the place was called the Shalhevetyah Christian Center. Since then it has been used for conferences and seminaries as well as for youth and children's camps.

Aili Havas retired from her work in Israel in 1969 after 37 years of ser-

**"Not that he was," answered Dodah Aili, "but he *is* and he loves all of us and especially those who despise him"**

11 Hurnard, chapters 7-8.

12 Oz, 428.

13 NCMI, Norwegian Church Ministry to Israel (DNI, Den Norske Israelsmisjon, in Norwegian language).

vice. In 1973 the theological faculty of the University of Helsinki granted her the title of Doctor Honoris Causae for her lifework in Jewish-Christian relations. Until the end of the 1970s she lectured in courses and seminars around Finland. She also translated central passages of Josef Klausner's book *Jesus of Nazareth* in Finnish.

In 1978 Amos Oz met Aili Havas and Rauha Moisio in Helsinki and later described the meeting in his book.<sup>14</sup> On that occasion he presented them with his newly published book in Finnish, *Makom Acher* (Elsewhere, Perhaps). On the opening page of Dodah Aili's book he wrote a sentiment in Hebrew which is translated: "To Aili Havas in the friendship of the youth and in the affection of the youth peace and blessing, Helsinki 26.5.1978, Amos Oz."

What was her motive behind 37 years of missionary work in Israel? The Bible passages that she quoted again and again were Isaiah 55:8-11 and Romans 9-11. And she had also a clear vision about the salvation of Israel and about the future Israeli church:

That church will not be Lutheran, not Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist or Pentecostal or any of the existing forms of churches. It will be the church of Christ, in which the churches of today perhaps are just building material. That church cannot be made, it will be born, when the Spirit comes from the four winds and breathes on the dry bones.<sup>15</sup>

## Before Aili Havas

The first Finnish missionary in Israel, Palestine of that time, was pastor Aapeli Saarisalo (1896–1986). He arrived in Jerusalem with his wife Anna-Maija in 1924. This present year 2004 is thus the 80th anniversary of the FELM work in the Holy Land.

The work of the first missionaries included mostly personal evangelism among Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem and Tiberias. Their partner in the work was a Jewish believer named Aron Pollock. As soon as the Hebrew University started its operation in 1925, Aapeli Saarisalo enrolled himself to study the Hebrew language.

The Saarisalos had to discontinue their term in Palestine after two years, due to the serious illness of their little son and other hardships. They returned to Finland in 1926. Next year Aapeli Saarisalo attended the Budapest-Warsaw conference of Jewish missions.<sup>16</sup> In Finland he became Professor of Oriental languages in Helsinki University. He has been known

<sup>14</sup> Oz, 429–431.

<sup>15</sup> Havas, 332.

<sup>16</sup> The Christian Approach to the Jew, being a report of the conferences on the subject held at Budapest and Warsaw in April 1927, London-Edinburgh Home press 1927, p. 86.

also as a pioneering archaeologist of the Holy Land.<sup>17</sup> In this capacity he visited the country regularly and spent periods there until his death.

He was a dedicated friend of Israel and belonged to the founders of the Finnish Karmel Society in 1949. The Friends of Israel Association, established in 1908, found him to be a very active member and supporter.

Aapeli Saarisalo's career as a missionary in Israel was short. Yet he opened the road and drew some basic lines and principles to be followed by workers after him:

- love for the Land and its peoples,
- importance of knowing the local languages,
- cooperation with the local believers, Messianic Jews and Arab Christians,
- vision about the future renewal and salvation of Israel.

He was in the country when Aili Havas arrived in Palestine in 1932. Laying the baton into her hand, he was her guide and gave her the basic orientation of the Land.

### **After Aili Havas**

In 1976 when the schoolwork in Jerusalem had come to its end, the activities of FELM spread out to a number of other locations. Finnish workers were called to take the leadership of the newly dedicated Ebenezer Retirement Home in Haifa. In the same year FELM placed a missionary couple in Lod, where they were to cooperate with the Evangelical Episcopal Church (Anglican) to strengthen children and youth work among the Arab population. The activities covered the Ramla-Lod area. The Episcopal Church also called Finnish nurses to its St. Luke Hospital in Nablus. After the Six Day War, which opened access to the Old City of Jerusalem and to the Palestinian area, the cooperation was strengthened with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan (ELCJ), which has its Bishop in Jerusalem. The International Coordination Committee (COCOP) was established to support ELCJ in 1977 and FELM joined it as a full member from the beginning. Finnish workers were placed in East Jerusalem, the Palestinian area, and Amman upon the invitation from ELCJ. In the course of time more than 20 FELM missionaries out of the total of 80, have served the Church in the above-mentioned places, mainly in diaconal and education work. The number has included also four theologians. In 2004 five FELM workers serve in Amman and the Palestinian area. A major effort in the framework of COCOP was the construction of a congregational center in Amman. The Good Shepherd Church was dedicated there in

17 From the *Ancient Sites of Israel*, edited by T. Eskola and E. Junkkaala, Theological Institute of Finland, 1998, p. 7.

1987 with a notable contribution from FELM. The present Bishop of the ELCJ, Rt. Rev. Munib Younan was educated in the University of Helsinki.

From the description of the work above one can conclude that FELM is not the kind of organization that is common in Israel, namely the type of organization that concentrates solely on Israel and Jews. FELM is a general mission working in 20 countries all around the world. Thus its work in Israel is but a small part of the operation. This position may have its advantages and disadvantages. It could prevent one-sided attitudes and fanaticism. A worker must try to listen to the plight of both partners in the conflict. This offers opportunities for bridge building. At the same time, a big organization has hardly enough capacity to pay proper attention to the special nature of Jewish mission. In this situation workers must concentrate on the central aspects of the gospel, on reconciliation and forgiveness for everybody.

An unexpected chance for work was offered to this "gentile mission," when hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers from various countries of the world, even from the mainland China, started to flow to Israel in the 1990's. To meet this challenge FELM moved some of its workers from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Thailand to Israel, in order to utilize their knowledge of the respective languages and past experience.

The bulk of the work, however, has been done among the Israelis in Hebrew. FELM has had Finnish personnel working in three Hebrew congregations, in Haifa, Jaffa and Jerusalem, as well as two institutions, the Ebenezer Retirement Home in Haifa and Caspari Center in Jerusalem. In these congregations and institutions the partner is the NCMI, which also carries the main responsibility for the work of the institutions. Literature work, writing, translating and distributing books has always played an important role among the activities. Big quantities of the Bible in several languages have been distributed in cooperation with the Finnish and Israeli Bible Societies.

From the times of Aili Havas there have been a number of Finns, who have written in or translated to Hebrew. I would like to mention Liisu Hannikainen, Juha-Pekka Rissanen, Anita Sarlin and Aarne Tapanainen.

**The work among children and youth has always been the core of the activities – schoolwork, kindergarten and Sunday schoolwork, camps and youth leaders' training**

The most notable contribution in this field has been given by Pastor Risto Santala, whose books have been printed in tens of thousands of copies in several languages. His book "Messiah in the Old Testament in the Light of Jewish Sources" has been translated from Hebrew to Estonian, English,

Finnish, German, Hungarian, Russian and Spanish, and Chinese. Also his book "Messiah in the New Testament in the Light of Jewish Sources" has been translated to most of the above-mentioned languages. So is also his book about Paul. Thus a Messianic and Rabbinical perspective of the Bible exposition is being transferred to new and exotic contexts. The latest book by Risto Santala is his exposition in English of Midrash Ruth,

"The Midrash of the Messiah," Keren Ahvah Meshihit, Jerusalem 2003. This book is highly esteemed by Jorge Quiñónez of San Diego, USA.<sup>18</sup>

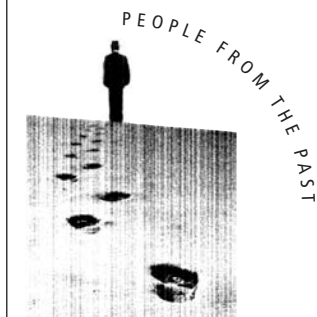
Another field from which FELM can expect results is the work among children and youth – if we trust in a verse which Aili Havas took to heart: "The word of the Lord shall not return to him void," Isaiah 55:11. The work among children and youth has always been the core of the activities – schoolwork, kindergarten and Sunday schoolwork, camps and youth leaders' training. It all has meant a lot of sowing of the Word. And this continues. Three kindergartens established and supported by FELM continue as a part of the local Christian work. The wide schoolwork of the ELCJ is supported by sponsorship programs and by other means. Courses and camps continue to take place at the Shalhevetyah Center. We have God's promise: "A people yet unborn shall praise the Lord." Psalms 102:9.

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18 LCJE Bulletin Issue No. 74 (Nov. 2003), pp. 23–24.





# The Rise and Fall of Hermann Warszawiak

By **Richard A. Robinson**

## Introduction

The story of Hermann Warszawiak – missionary to Jews on Manhattan's Lower East Side in the 1890s and early 1900s – is the stuff of high drama. Theatrical and flamboyant, he burned brightly for a short time, until he became the subject, or victim, of a well-publicized scandal within the Presbyterian Church. His life is from one point of view a tragedy, though Joseph Hoffman Cohn testified of him that, "It is not an exaggeration, also, to say that practically every Jewish mission started in America, owed its existence to this young pioneer and genius."<sup>1</sup>

Warszawiak was born in 1865 in Warsaw, Poland. His father was a well-to-do merchant and the son of "the Lipnoer rabbi," while his mother came from "the rabbinical family of Gurah, said now to be at the head of all the Jews in Europe."<sup>2</sup> Young Hermann at first intended to become a rabbi as his two older brothers were. But however it came about, he found himself in Breslau in 1889, where he heard Daniel Edward, missionary to the Jews from the Free Church of Scotland, preaching on John 10: 16-17. Over a period of three months, Edward led HW to faith in Y'shua. As Hermann was then 24 years old and Edward 74, the latter was a grandfather figure to the young Warszawiak, and the first of several such authority figures in his life.

That same year Warszawiak was baptized in Breslau, and he himself insisted on a big affair: "I want to send out circulars to the thousands of Jews in this district, and I want you to tell them that on Sunday morning of October 6th, Hermann Warszawiak, the great grandson of that and that rabbi, will be baptized into the Christian faith." Cohn – for better or worse, the main source for many details – relates that the circulars were delivered and that thousands of Jews attended the baptism.<sup>3</sup> If so, then early on HW knew how to build a crowd. And to preach, too: he delivered

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Hoffman Cohn, *I Have Fought a Good Fight: The Story of Jewish Mission Pioneering in America* (New York: American Board of Missions to the Jews, Inc. 1953), 163.

<sup>2</sup> "Mrs. Warszawiak Baptized," *New York Times*, April 15, 1895.

<sup>3</sup> Cohn, 155.

a baptismal message in German entitled, "Address to My Own People." It was published in a somewhat abbreviated form, and contains many references to messianic prophecy and exhortations to his fellow Jews.

Warszawiak's family soon came after him with threats, and for safety's sake, Edward sent him to Edinburgh. There, he made the acquaintance of Lady Catherine Douglas, who became a lifelong friend, something of a surrogate mother, and author of a book entitled, *The Little Messianic Prophet*, which contains some of their correspondence and glimpses of HW's New York City ministry in the early 1890s.

After a time of studies at the Free Church College of Edinburgh, HW departed for New York to commence his life work. His career in America falls roughly into three parts: there is first of all the "Golden Years" of ministry in New York City; second, the period of independence and "scandal"; lastly, the period of mystery, which is where it really gets interesting, as we shall see.

## I. The "Golden Years," 1890–1895

For the first five years of his ministry, HW conducted missionary work in New York City under the auspices of several societies. At first he preached a few times in Jacob Freshman's Hebrew-Christian Church. Soon he got use of the De Witt Memorial Hall from the New York City Mission and Tract Society, and became that society's missionary to the Jews. That same year, 1890, he also joined John Hall's Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. Hall had been a pastor in Dublin and became a fast friend to HW.

And he got out the people. Whenever HW's work is mentioned, whether by himself or by the local newspapers, it is always in the context of hundreds and hundreds of Jewish listeners (the *New York Observer* of October 17, 1891 reported crowds of 500–700). By 1892, in fact, he was writing that, "the 'De Witt Memorial Church' can only hold about 900 people, while our audiences of Israelities [sic] at the chief meeting day, every Saturday afternoon, has grown within the last year to about twice that number, we are too often obliged to send away hundreds of people ..." No wonder Cohn's evaluation was that HW's mission was "the first well-organized and effective mission to the Jews in America."<sup>4</sup> To meet the demands of the overflow crowds, HW envisioned building a huge meeting hall:

I am now perfectly aware that it is the will of my Master that I shall earnestly appeal to His stewards to help me to build a Tabernacle, especially for the Jewish work, with a seating capacity for about 3000 people, which we will call "CHRIST'S SYNAGOGUE."<sup>5</sup>

4 Cohn, 159.

5 C. G. Douglas, *Hermann Warszawiak: "The Little Messianic Prophet" or, Two Years' Labour Among the Refugee Jews in New York* (Edinburgh: Andrew Eliot, 1892?), 66–67.



It was to have prayers in Hebrew, preaching in Hebrew, German, English and Yiddish, and a training school for missionaries to the Jews, all to be accomplished for \$100,000.

As soon as one hears the kind of attendance figures being reported, questioned by no one, the natural response is, how did he do it? A.C. Gaebelein provided a partial answer in his 1895 article, "Hermann Warszawiak's Method of Getting 'Crowds to Hear the Gospel': A Protest and an Appeal."<sup>6</sup> What he reports is that cards were distributed containing both standing invitation to the weekly Saturday meetings, and also a blurb: "Whoever comes this Sabbath afternoon to our meeting at No. 19 Market street, will receive a free ticket to a wonderful electric picture exhibition." Gaebelein rather stridently complains that such methods were "shameless," "an insulting appeal to the low passion for getting something free," and "dishonorable."

A free show might well have attracted crowds – is there a congregation today that doesn't draw people by promising a potluck? – but what is notable is that the opposition was coming from another missionary to the Jews who surely felt a sense of rivalry.<sup>7</sup> And class consciousness too: the German Reform Jews and their Christian friends did not look favorably on the Eastern European Jewish culture, and in fact Gaebelein's diatribe was endorsed by "Theo. Leonhard, German Pastor of the New York City Mission." Certainly the anti-missionaries did not seem to complain about HW's card distribution, nor as far as we can tell did the crowds of Jews feel taken in or deceived.

Once in the meeting place, what exactly did the crowds see? Joseph Hoffman Cohn, apparently writing based on his father Leopold's memories, gives this vivid account:

**the anti-missionaries did not seem to complain about HW's card distribution, nor as far as we can tell did the crowds of Jews feel taken in or deceived**

There were some 800 Jews inside that building; every square foot was crowded ... Suddenly out sprang young Hermann. From where, nobody knew. But there he was on the platform and he began preaching about the Messiah. He ran back and forth on the platform, shouting with the force of a political orator, making his points with an assurance that brooked of no controversy. Suddenly he leaped to one side into the wings of the platform, disappeared for a few seconds, and out he came again; and believe it or not, in his arms he brought a little live lamb! The audience gasped. Then he went on with his sermon about the Lamb of God and the Lamb in Isaiah 53. He was unquestionably a born showman and a born orator. Once more he went into the wings, handed the lamb over to somebody, came out again

6 *Our Hope*, Vol. II, No. 1 (July, 1895), 1-5.

7 So Yaakov Ariel regarding Gaebelein's charge against Warszawiak, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 69

and began running up and down the platform, shouting over and over again, "The Messiah has come, the Messiah has come!"<sup>8</sup>

The live lamb seems to have been a staple of his sermons, whether in evangelism or in the churches of New York. The *New York Times* reported a 1893 Passover demonstration given at the Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church with once again, the live lamb, "and there was considerable uneasy shifting about lest it was to be slaughtered in sight of the congregation ..." <sup>9</sup>

The Jewish press also had something to say about the live lamb. Cohn recalls reading this as a child in a Yiddish newspaper:

Aha, little Hermann, you had a big meeting on Saturday afternoon, didn't you? And you brought out that little live lamb, didn't you? And you told how the lamb was going to have his throat slit so that we would have our sins forgiven! Never mind, Hershele, we will soon get hold of your neck, and we will slit that open!<sup>10</sup>

In addition to the over-packed Saturday services, HW set aside Wednesdays evenings for open discussions. In one such open forum, when HW mentioned that he "saw Jesus," a questioner retorted with the Scripture, "No one shall see God and live." Replied HW: "When I saw Jesus I died, but he gave me a new life." Clearly, he was a creative missionary, not just in his open-forum responses but in his use of the lamb, the yellow cards, and we might add, his creation of a "badge," sold for 50 cents to those promising to wear it "conspicuously" and to pray along with other badge-wearers for Israel.<sup>11</sup>

**from HW's early ministry came one of the most significant organizations in American Jewish missions history**

Warszawiak's energetic vision embraced still more. Thanks largely to supporters in Scotland and England, a "Home for Persecuted Christian Jews and Inquirers" was established in 1892 with thirteen rooms, nine beds, and caretakers Mr. and Mrs. Cruickshank, a Scottish couple.

In 1892, HW traveled to London to bring his wife Rachel over, though not yet their two daughters. That year also saw a most providential occasion – the meeting of HW and Leopold Cohn, as a result of which Cohn came to faith and subsequently founded what became the American Board of Missions to the Jews. So from HW's early ministry came one of the most significant organizations in American Jewish missions history. The account of Cohn's coming to faith can be found in both the volumes by Leopold and that by his son Joseph Hoffman.

8 Cohn, 160.

9 "Explained the Passover: The Rev. Mr. Warszawiak's Sermon and Object Lesson," *New York Times*, March 27, 1893.

10 Cohn, 164.

11 Douglas, 70–71.



## II. The Period of Independence and Scandal, 1895–1903

Around 1895 HW went independent from the City Mission and established the American Mission to the Jews. The nature of the break is really unclear. According to John Hall's son Thomas, he was "honorably discharged."<sup>12</sup> The departure has been attributed to his unmanageability, or to City Mission head A. F. Schauffler's alleged overbearing nature.

But having gone independent, he also began a slow road of decline in friends, support, and ultimately effectiveness. Charges relating to HW's character began to circulate and the next years were to see some former friends do a complete about-face in their support of HW. Undoubtedly any number of factors played into it: HW's own unmanageability, naivete, and financial laxness, at least by American standards; a spirit of competition on the part of other Christian workers; the fabrications of the anti-

missionaries; and for all we know, actual ethical lapses.

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he also began a slow road of  
decline in friends, support,  
and ultimately effectiveness**

Some of the accusations may well have stemmed from cultural differences. For instance, take the charges of financial mismanagement or "fraud" that dogged HW's career. It is crucial to note that HW,

and others from Eastern Europe, worked on an entirely different standard of financial accountability than did Americans.

In the shtetlach, Jewish enterprises were often run with no systematic bookkeeping and with no accounting to a governing body or to outside inspectors. The prevailing attitude was that supporters trusted the managers and their deeds; as for outsiders, they did not deserve an accounting. As a matter of fact, keeping outsiders in the dark was considered to be the best policy, so that they would not be able to use the information to undermine the enterprise. Jewish associations in eastern Europe and in the New World at that time were run on a casual basis, as far as bookkeeping was concerned.<sup>13</sup>

From this it is easy to see that American missions like the New York City Mission could well adjudge HW as a mismanager and a fraud, with obvious inferences as to his moral character. Add to that the activity of anti-missionaries, doctored photographs and the like, and the evidence becomes "incontrovertible."

Cohn notes that, naively, HW's donor lists and files were readily available to one and all, including his enemies. "Warszawiak was gullible," writes Cohn. "He trusted everybody, suspected nobody. His subscription lists, his contributors' lists, his office files, all, all, were wide open so that anybody who was evil minded could steal what names they wanted and

12 Thomas C. Hall, *John Hall, Pastor and Preacher: A Biography By His Son* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1901), 311, n. 1.

13 Ariel, 72.

use them to their own advantage."<sup>14</sup> Three members of HW's own paid staff are supposed to have sent a letter to his donors announcing him to be a fraud and a gambler. And once the various charges circulated to the donors, donations stopped coming in. One personal visit to a Mrs. Sarah Beck, one of his larger donors, was met with a slamming of the door.

Around 1896–97, charges and counter-charges appeared in a variety of pro-and-con booklets, including one authored by his former employer, the New York City Mission. The writers name names, the tone often gets ugly, and it all seems to come down to a game of "you said-I said." No longer did the charges involve only his donors; a jury trial was now being conducted in public view. It all makes for fascinating reading today, but it was devastating to HW's reputation.

Warszawiak felt compelled to speak up in his own defense. In February, 1896, he wrote a letter to the *New York Tribune* responding to a particularly horrendous statement by City Mission head Schauffler, in which Schauffler had said that "I have a letter from the man who baptized him" – i.e. Daniel Edward, HW's father in the faith – "saying that he is a liar and would lie at any time about anything." HW's letter then provides quotes from Edward's expressing love, support, and confidence.

And then there was a real trial, namely, formal proceedings held within the various bodies of the Presbyterian Church which were noted in detail in the *New York Times*, and are preserved in some 1200 pages archived at the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia. In 1896, HW applied for ordination by the New York Presbytery and was refused on the grounds of a split in the committee as to HW's moral character. In 1897 he was found guilty of visiting the gambling hall in New Jersey referred to above and was dismissed from the Fifth Avenue church. On appeal, he was reinstated in 1899. There was finally a wholesale dismissal of the case by the General Assembly in 1900. But the exoneration was too late and HW's life was not to be the same again. His pastor, John Hall, was one particularly steadfast friend whose loyalty ultimately led to his own troubles and a split in his church. Some say the whole affair impacted Hall's health for the worse, and he died in the fall of 1898.<sup>15</sup>

In 1903, the owner of 424 Grand Street – where HW had conducted meetings since 1897 – refused to renew the lease, and the mission station closed up, effectively ending HW's time as an independent missionary.

### III. The Period of Mystery, 1904–1915+

From 1904 on, HW's life becomes rather unusual and even weird

In April 1904, a peculiar article appeared in the *New York Times* reporting that HW had joined the "Dowieites." John Alexander Dowie was the founder of Zion, Illinois, and by 1904 had proclaimed himself as the

<sup>14</sup> Cohn, 165.

<sup>15</sup> See the accounts in Cohn and Eichhorn, and especially in Hall.



"Third Elijah." The strange movement, which caught by storm in the mid-west, did not take root very much in New York, despite a huge rally and publicity blitz. Yet somehow, HW ended up in their employ. Was HW just using the Dowieites as a vehicle from which to continue his usual missionary work? Was he theologically naive, or financially desperate? Was he in need of some older authority figure in his life, whether Daniel Edward, John Hall, William Cowper Conant, or now John Alexander Dowie?

A short seven months later, a follow-up article appeared: "Herman Warszawiak, after a brief career as an apostle for Dowie, has been expelled from the ranks of Zion."<sup>16</sup> Whether this had again to do with unmanageability, finance, cultural conflict or what, we do not know.

Charges of breaches of financial ethics still hung around HW: a court "declined to accede to Warszawiak's discharge in bankruptcy on the ground that fraud had been committed."<sup>17</sup>

To protect his children and family, HW changed the family name and was no longer listed in the phone directories. Cohn writes that "in his great depth of sorrow, anguish and physical wreckage" – for he was dirt poor in his last years, with Leopold Cohn helping him out as he could – "he went to downtown New York and called on a famous coterie of five millionaire Jewish brothers." Cohn does not name them, but Eichhorn identifies them as the Guggenheim family. They sent HW – using his new name – to Colorado to help his tuberculosis, put him in charge of one of their mining operations, and gave him a generous salary.

Cohn reports that when he was 20 – so about 1906 – HW visited his father Leopold. HW appears in this account to be financially on a sound footing, and regretful if not bitter that non-believing Jews helped him out when he could not find help from Christians. In an obvious reference to the Dreyfus case of recent years, he is said to have wanted to write a book entitled, "J'Accuse!"

If HW was employed by the Guggenheims in 1906, by 1910 he appears to be engaged in yet another new venture, or was it just moonlighting? *The New York Times* reported in 1910 that HW was a London agent for W. T. Wintemute, who was accused of using the mails for a fraudulent scheme involving mining stocks.

In 1915, when HW was 50 years old – fully nine years after the visit with Cohn – there is a ship's record of arrival in New York from Liverpool, with a street address given of 1760 Jerome Avenue, New York, which today is in the Bronx. The name given is, interestingly enough, his original surname of Warszawiak. And that is the last that I know of Hermann Warszawiak. The date and circumstances of his death is unknown.

16 "Warszawiak Out of Zion," *New York Times*, November 22, 1904.

17 "Warszawiak a Dowieite," *New York Times*, April 11, 1904.

## Conclusion

In evaluating HW's life and work – and the full story has yet to be told – we have to keep in mind any number of factors: there were cultural differences, particularly regarding finances. There were character weaknesses of naivete and an overly trusting nature. There was the competition between the Jewish missions. There was anti-Semitism: Cohn reports that a certain German Methodist pastor, who was part of the anti-HW party, wrote to HW's mailing list, denounced HW as a fraud, and announced his own mission to the Jews at which "No Jewish apostate will preach here!" and refused to preach in Yiddish but only in German. Cohn recounts that Louis Meyer, a Jewish Christian pastor, personally visited this German pastor's "mission" at East 2nd Street and discovered no meetings for Jewish inquirers actually took place.

But if we remember HW as the creative, energetic, charismatic preacher he was in his early years, we can well understand Cohn's statement: "It is not an exaggeration, also, to say that practically every Jewish mission started in America, owed its existence to this young pioneer and genius."

This article is adapted from a longer version available at:

<http://www.lcje.net/papers/2003/robinson.doc>

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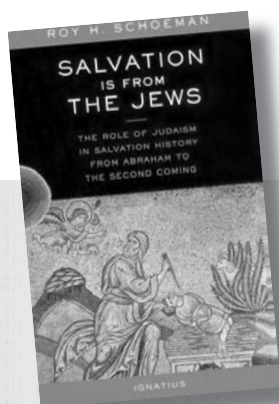


## BOOK REVIEWS



### Salvation is from the Jews

The author of the book, Roy H. Schoeman, was born 1951 in North America to Jewish parents who were Holocaust refugees. During the summer between high school and college he visited Israel. There he traveled with the "charismatic" Hasidic Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach and flirted with the thought of remaining in Israel to study Judaism in a yeshiva. However, things worked out differently. Years later, he received revelations and dreams which led him to say, as he does in his conversion story: "I was hopelessly in love with the Blessed Virgin Mary and wanted nothing more than to become as totally a Christian as I could." The conversion story is printed in the postscript of the book.



Had it not been for the reference to the Virgin Mary his conversion story could have been printed in any book about (non-Catholic) Messianic Jews – as could many other things in this book. To me this makes this book even more interesting. It questions my presupposed opinions about what can be said and found within the Catholic Church. If for no other reason it makes the book worth reading.

Schoeman was later baptized, but like other Jewish-born believers within the Catholic Church he insists he does not see his entry into the Church as a conversion away from Judaism, but rather as its completion. The Jew remains a Jew, whether he is Christian or not, he maintains. A Jew in becoming a Catholic does not change his religion, but fulfills his religion, completes it, crowns it. Throughout the book he sees it as his challenge to remind his church of the continued role of Israel in the salvation history. He accepts neither Christian "supersessionism" – "that the Old Covenant had been entirely replaced ... made null and void, by the New" nor the thought that "the Old and New Covenant are two 'separate but equal' parallel paths to salvation, the one intended for Jews, the other for Gentiles." In the author's own words:

*This book proposes a third alternative – that as the Old Covenant was brought to fruition by the New at the first coming, so will the New Covenant be brought to fruition by the Old, by the return of the Jews at the Second Coming. Thus, the current*

### Salvation is from the Jews

**The Role of Judaism in Salvation History from Abraham to the Second Coming**

ROY H. SCHOEMAN  
392 PAGES  
IGNATIUS PRESS, 2003  
WWW.IGNATIUS.COM

*wave of Jewish entry into the Church may be among the most important things going on today, or indeed, in the history of the world.*

It is interesting to see that even though the Catholic Church is the Church for Schoeman, he has no problem including Messianic Jews outside the Catholic Church into "the current wave of Jewish entry into the Church." Similarly, and without hesitation, mention is made of Jewish converts in the 19th century who worked within the Protestant Church. Among these are people like Joseph Frey, Joseph Wolff, Michael Alexander, the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem (who is inaccurately reported as bishop in 1824; he was ordained in 1841 and arrived in Jerusalem in 1842), David Baron, Leon Levinson and others. The author's inclusion of biographical material on Jewish converts from within the Catholic Church makes for some interesting reading, for example the twin brothers Augustin and Joseph Lemann, Alphonse Ratisbonne, Israel Zolli, Edith Stein and others.

The chapter on *The Jews and the Second Coming* is of special interest. Read in isolation and without reference to the author's identity, one finds here an understanding of Biblical texts which corresponds to what one can find in (many) Messianic Jewish and Christian writings on the last days and on Israel. Even though Schoeman doesn't think that he can "prove" that we are in the last days, he still believes that contemporary events point in that direction. "Jerusalem will return again to Jewish hands shortly before the Second Coming" (Luke 21:24) – which happened during the Six Day War. "Sometime before the Second Coming, two-thirds of the Jews in 'the whole land' will be exterminated" (Zechariah 13:8-9) – which according to the author was fulfilled through the Holocaust. "The Jewish nation will be reborn in a single day" (Isaiah 66:5-8) – which "was quite

literally fulfilled when on May 14, 1948, the modern State of Israel was born in a single day" and Jeremiah 16:14-15 is seen as "a reference to the current immigration to Israel of Jews from Russia." As if this were not enough, the temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt – something which is possible now after Israel regained possession of the Temple Mount in 1967, the author claims.

This is not the place to discuss the principles behind such a use of Scripture and the theological implications of a rebuilding of the temple. However, it is worth noting that such thoughts can be found within the Catholic Church. That Schoeman finds a *theologically* defined role for the State of Israel will no doubt be met with negative reactions from many Catholic Christians and especially Arab Christians. Schoeman sees a direct connection between Hitler and Arab Anti-Semitism today. One could have wished that he had analyzed anti-Semitism within the Church throughout history with the same acuity which he uses when he talks about anti-Semitism and the Arab world today.

Although I disagree with the author on several items I welcome his thoughts on the question of Israel's role within the history of salvation and the way this is presented to a Catholic readership. When it comes to the question of whether or not Jews need Jesus for salvation there is no doubt which these clear words reveal:

*If Jesus was the Jewish Messiah – the Messiah long prophesied, expected, and prayed for by the Jews – then a Jew can either be right and accept that He was the Messiah or be wrong and maintain that He was not. If Jesus was the Messiah, then Jews who reject Christianity (or Messianic Judaism) are wrong; if Jesus was not the Messiah, then Christians, however well meaning, are wrong. There is not necessarily any moral shame or culpability in being wrong, but it is nonsense to maintain that*



*somehow Judaism is right for Jews, and Christianity is right for Christians, and that the truth is dependent on what group one belongs to ...*

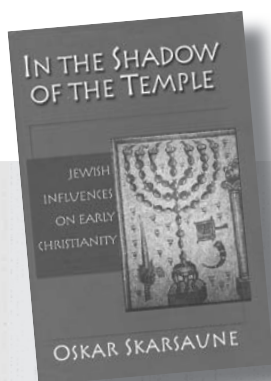
*Kai Kjær-Hansen*

## **In The Shadow of the Temple**

The contents of this book are not what many people would suppose from its title. Chronologically it begins in the second century BCE and ends in the third century CE, with glimpses into even later periods. This reflects Skarsaune's well-substantiated claim that "Jewish influences" on Christianity were not confined to Christian origins but continued throughout the patristic period. The chronological starting-point enables Skarsaune to devote the first part (more than a quarter) of the book to a comprehensive sketch of late Second Temple Judaism, doing full justice to the wide-ranging changes that occurred in this period. The rest of the book is almost a history of early Christianity written from the perspective of its relationship with Judaism, a fact that makes good sense in the light of the importance of that relationship. Of course, this history has to be covered quite rapidly, but there is something on most topics one would expect to find in a history

of early Christianity. Skarsaune opts, very sensibly, to focus in some detail on selected themes and events, which makes for a much more interesting book than one that covered everything very briefly. The book is written for the general reader, though it would also be very helpful to beginning students studying New Testament or early Christianity. The style and character of the book are just right to be accessible to a wide readership, and the suggestions for further reading are excellent.

This is the kind of wide-ranging book for the general reader that can only be written by a mature scholar with a high level of expertise and familiarity with everything he writes about. He is also not afraid of presenting his own view of topics when this is not shared by the majority of scholars (while always alerting the reader to the fact that it is not). As it happens, on such controversial topics (e.g. Hebrews and Hellenists in Acts 6-7, the nature of Jewish Christianity and the relation of the Ebionites to it, the Jewish rather than hellenistic roots of patristic Christology), I find myself usually in agreement with him. His treatments of some of these issues are themselves valuable contributions to debate. Of course, there are some weaknesses. I was disappointed, for example, to find that his treatment of "the Zealot movement" (as though there were such a thing) ignores the work of Richard Horsley and others who have argued that there was no such movement and that not even Josephus pretends that there was. Also



## **In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity**

OSKAR SKARSAUNE

455 PAGES

DOWNERS GROVE, ILLINOIS:  
INTERVARSITY PRESS, 2002

disappointing is the fact that, despite two chapters on Christology, in which the early creeds feature, and one chapter on the Spirit, nothing is said about the Trinity as such (the word is not in the subject index, and nor could I find it in the text). The omission looks as though it is deliberate, but in that case readers might surely expect an explanation of the omission.

As a contribution to the rediscovery, not merely to the Jewish roots of Christianity, but of the Jewish character of Christianity, this is a significant book.

*Richard Bauckham*  
*University of St Andrews, Scotland.*

## Understanding the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Who has the right to the land? What can the Bible tell us? What is fueling the Arab-Israeli conflict? Will the "road map" lead to peace? Or are we just wasting our time trying to sort things out?

Michael Rydelnik's new book, *Understanding The Arab-Israeli Conflict*, may not have all of the answers, but it will certainly help you find your way through the myriad of facts and fables that have been filtered through the various media outlets. In this well documented book, Rydelnik, the professor of Jewish Studies at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, helps his readers sort through the various

players, events, and worldviews that have fueled the on-going crisis between Israel and her neighbors.

One of strengths of this book is its systematic analysis of events past, present and future. For those who want to a good overview on events leading up to and following the re-birth of the state of Israel, read this book. For those who want a concise explanation of the current crisis, read this book. For those who want to know what God's plan is for the future of Israel, read this book.

In fact, before I lead my next tour to Israel, I'm going to make this book required reading for all my participants. That's how helpful this book is in bringing clarity to an otherwise foggy and befuddled situation in the Middle East.

Some people will certainly attempt to discredit this book because of Rydelnik's Jewish bias, but it's this reviewer's opinion that the book does a fair job at laying out the facts and allowing the reader to draw his or her own conclusions. This characteristic of the book is especially captured in the chapters "The Case For Israel" and "The Case For Palestine." Most books that address this subject do very little to present both sides of the conflict. This book is not one of them.

So if you're looking for a road map to figure out what's going on in the Middle East, then let me encourage you to get on the road and buy yourself a copy of this book. It is definitely a book worth having at your fingertips.

*Justin M. Kron*



## Understanding the Arab-Israeli Conflict – What the Headlines Haven't Told You

MICHAEL RYDELNIK  
224 PAGES  
MOODY PUBLISHERS, 2004



Reported by **David A. Smith**

### **Christian Allies in Knesset**

In January the first meeting of the Knesset Christian Allies Caucus (CAC) occurred. Petra Heldt, executive secretary of the Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel is working closely with the CAC. Heldt said, "Members of the Caucus pledged to assist Christian organizations operating in Israel with bureaucratic red tape, acquaint Knesset members with the specifics of the Christian organization's programs in Israel, and work together on joint projects."

Yuri Stern of the National Union Party and Yair Peretz, Chairman of the Ultra-Orthodox Shas party, co-chair the CAC. They reported an "overwhelming" response to the CAC. "We can see that we are filling a real need with this new forum. Many important issues were raised at the meeting on both sides of the table."

The first project of the CAC was to distribute matzah, wine, sugar and other necessities for Passover dinners (Pesach Seders) to 6000 underprivileged families in Israel. Christian organizations contributing to the "Flour for Pesach" project included Bridges for Peace, Christian Friends of Israel, the International Christian Embassy, All Nations Convocation Jerusalem and the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews.

The CAC hopes to help Christians in Israel with their ongoing visa problems,

but Heldt said progress has been impeded by security considerations. "Visa concerns of our constituencies are brought forward to the Christian Caucus where the designated people are working on it. It seems to be clear by now that the visa problem is part of a broader issue of security not only in this country but worldwide. However, details cannot be worked out on the grassroots level but with the governmental policy-making bodies."

Heldt said about half of the one-year visas issued to Christian volunteers have expired, in spite of the fact that in the past they were automatically renewed. Stern said the Interior Ministry is exhibiting "total paranoia" and promised the Knesset would address the issue.

### **Continuing Visa Problems**

Harm Tees, chairman of the United Christian Council in Israel, is alarmed, reporting that the International Christian Embassy has lost 12 members of its staff due to expired visas. He has been informed that a "legal proposal from within the Ministry of Justice is aiming for a future regulation that will grant clergy visas only to pastors of congregations with more than 250 members." He warns this would mean the loss of clergy visas to most evangelical ministers in the country, citing that two people – the head of a literature distribution ministry and the business manager of the Baptist Convention in Israel – have already lost their clergy visa.

"The same would be true for workers of charities, relief agencies, and teachers at Christian schools as well as leaders and staff members of mission organizations and church planting ministries," he concludes.

### **Citizenship Threatened**

The Interior Ministry has threatened to revoke the citizenship of Seth Ben-Haim,



executive pastor of Kings of Kings Congregation in Jerusalem. The problems began in 2002 (when Ben-Haim had been a citizen 18 years) when his wife, Christina, applied for citizenship. She was told there was a problem with her application, then was informed the problem was with her husband's status. The source of the problem seemed to be a letter from the anti-missionary organization Yad l'Achim stating that the Ben-Haims were involved in missionary work. "They based it on who I am, what I believe and what I do."

Ben-Haim said in October that the ministry has a continual investigation into believers to try to get information on them. "We had a congregant go into the Ministry of Interior to try to get a visa renewed. She was told, 'We'll renew your visa only if you write down the names of all Messianic Jews in your congregation.' He adds the Ben Haims have been told by the top people in the ministry there is no problem with their citizen status, "but the people carrying out policy, do so according to their own volition – much as previous (ultra-orthodox) governments did."

### **New Facility for King of Kings, Other Believers**

Kings of Kings Assembly plans to begin meeting in the new Pavilion facility in downtown Jerusalem in October. Senior Pastor Wayne Hilsden stresses the facility will serve the needs of believers throughout Israel as other congregations have already requested to use the facility. The Pavilion will be the largest evangelical worship/conference center in Israel with an auditorium and overflow room seating about 1000. The Pavilion is an independent entity, according to Ben-Haim, offering classes, conferences, movies, etc. Ben-Haim says they hope to "bring hope and the light of God to the downtown area of Jerusalem."

### **Post Reports on JAMM Ministry**

The Jerusalem Post published a feature article July 29 on the JAMM (Jerusalem Artists, Musicians and Media), a Messianic coffee house and music ministry, and its alleged evangelistic efforts. The article focused on the story of Daniel Cohen (not real name), a teenager misled by the "open mike nights on Wednesdays and Punk concerts on Thursdays, including free coffee, chai tea and snacks..." adding, "the non-smoking, alcohol-free Jamm provides a clean and tempting atmosphere for Jerusalem youth."

Richard Ayal Freidan, owner of the JAMM, denies anything illegal occurs there. [It is illegal to evangelize anyone under age 18 in Israel.] The Post reports he said JAMM "is a non-profit organization that exists to promote local arts and to encourage youth and young adults in their respective musical talents. There is nothing illegal going on at The JAMM. We are not actively proselytizing young people."

Freidan explained to the Post that there is just one "faith-based meeting" each week and that all under-age 18 participants must bring documented parental permission. The Post reporter said that had not been the case with Daniel, even though Jerusalem police said they have investigated reports in the past only to find parental permission had been secured.

### **Tourism Rebounds**

The ministry of tourism has published that tourism increased 82 percent in the first three months of 2004 as compared to that same period last year. Tourism from England, France and Germany has doubled, while American tourism lags slightly. The ministry recently reported the arrival 700 tourists from the United Kingdom – its largest single group ever to Israel.

Swedish Pastor Ulf Eckman recently led



an international group of 11,000 to Israel who claim to have set the record for "the largest floating worship service" on a boat on the Sea of Galilee. Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski cancelled an address to the group when Eckman refused to sign a pledge to restrain from actively sharing their witness. "I gave Mr. Lupolianski a letter describing our work and our group and I'm not inclined to say anything more."

## Emigration of Bethlehem Christians

Last June Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, expressed concern for the exodus of Christians from the Holy Land in general and Bethlehem in particular. Kasper, meeting with Israeli President Moshe Katsav, spoke of the centuries old cultural contribution of Christian pilgrims and residents, concluding, "We don't want dead stones; we want living communities."

Bethlehem might represent the most extreme case in which the continuation of the Christian community is threatened. In the 1960's, Christians represented a majority in the city, but they are now no more than 20 percent of the population. Some reports maintain that there are now more Bethlehem Christians in Sydney, Australia than in Bethlehem and that three out of four Christians born in Bethlehem no longer live there.

Father Peter Vasko, president of the Holy Land Foundation, a Christian organization dedicated to halting the exodus of Christians from the Holy Land, says this problem should concern Christians worldwide. "This is a problem that we all face because if we do not stem this exodus, Christianity will basically disappear from the very place where Christ founded the church. All the holy sites will simply be empty religious monuments and museums. And we know that the church is the worshipping, living

Body of Christ; it's not the structure, it's the people. And if the people go, there is no church."

## Vanunu Finds Sanctuary

All of Israel's mainline media reported in the spring on the release from prison of Mordechai Vanunu who exposed secrets of Israel's nuclear program in 1986. Upon his release in April, Vanunu immediately sought refuge in St. George's Anglican Church in east Jerusalem. Vanunu attributed his punishment to his conversion (from Judaism) to Christianity, saying, "I suffered for 18 years because I'm a Christian, because I was baptized."

In a May 3 letter to the editor of Jerusalem Post, Tony Higdon, director of the Israel Trust of the Anglican Church, expressed his "wish to distance our organization from the opinions attributed to Mordechai Vanunu." Higdon stressed that his organization is independent, but "seeks to have a fraternal relationship with St. George's." Higdon affirmed Israel's right to punish violators of security laws, but also expressed awareness of the "debate about the nature of that punishment and of the current restrictions placed upon (Vanunu)."

## Arad Believers Persecuted

Haredim have been picketing a believers' chess club in the Arad market for several months carrying signs saying "Stop Converting Jews," and "Missionaries are Hunters of souls," etc. Ultra Orthodox have demonstrated similarly outside homes of several believers in Arad as well.

Eddie Beckford, director of the chess club said, "They also pray curses against us, call us names, harass the chess players while they are playing outside and have done quite a bit of vandalism against the property (broken windows, glue or metal or wood stuffed in the locks, graffiti). Plus,



we have had the tires cut on both our vehicles, as well as dirty words spray-painted on both. Someone threw white lacquer over our van this summer."

The city's Ashkenazi chief rabbi, Harav Lipsker, addressed the believers, saying from the picket line, "You are no less dangerous to us than the terrorists who seek to destroy us. They come with weapons and mines and you come with smiles and gifts in order to destroy the Jewish people."

Beckford says the police have done nothing to stop the harassment. "They write reports and dismiss them. Most of the time they don't even come when we call."

*If you would like to contribute items to this column, please send them to israelnewsmishkan@hotmail.com for consideration.*

