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"THE MESSIANICS"
PASSOVER FLOOD:

The Messianics are flooding Jewish centres in the USSR, and are intensifying their activities at Passover time. YAD L'AHIM have issued a warning that an extensive project has been organized for Messianic Passover seders in the U.S. as well as promoting attendance at the seder in the Great Synagogue of Moscow and other events designed to trap unwary Soviet Jews with what appears to be Jewish events but are really disguised Christian missionary affairs.

Jewish Agency emissaries in the USSR have also reported a flood of free Bibles with "corrections" to suit the beliefs of the Messianic Jews. "I try to explain to my friends that this is part of the missionary movement, but they simply don't understand what I'm talking about," one commented. The Messianics organize tour packages to celebrate Passover and the Christian festival in the USSR, Holland and Israel. These tours are disguised as expressions of love to Russia and to Israel. (YOM HASHISHI 30.3.90)

HOUSTON "APOSTATES": S. Singer of the YIDDISCHE ZEITUNG (Tel-Aviv 30.3.90) reported on a "provocative" article which was published in the HOUSTON CHRONICLE about "Beth Messiah," a congregation of 75 Christian families and 25 families of Jewish "apostates." The Jewish community, which numbers about 42,000 souls, protested strongly the publication of the article about "a few dozen Jewish renegades propagating a Christian religious cult."

"STRANGE DESERT VOICE": The JERUSALEM POST Weekend supplement (23.3.90) published a four-page feature about Simha Pearlmutter, the eccentric leader of a Messianic sect in the Negev desert. Most of his original followers have left him, including seven of nine children that he fathered with two wives. Meanwhile, his settlement has been officially dissolved, and various authorities (Arava Regional Council, Israel Lands Authority, the Jewish Agency and the Water Commission) want him out of the area. He is represented by attorney Joseph Ben-Menashe for two decades. He continues to live an ultra-orthodox life style, wearing beard and sidecurls.

"THE MISSION"

"FIVE THOUSAND MISSIONARIES IN ISRAEL": In an interview published in the weekly organ of Agudat Habad (the ultra-orthodox Lubavovitch hassidic sect), the Yad L'Ahim chairman, Shalom Lipschitz, charged that 5,000 missionaries are at work now throughout Israel. He also disputed the claim of Zevulun Orleb, managing director of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, that only five Jews per year change their religion. "Those are only official conversions of those who wish to be registered as non-Jews, but most of the converts are not at all interested in being registered as non-Jews," Rabbi Lipschitz remarked.

The anti-mission organization submitted a detailed document about missionary activity in Israel to a Knesset committee investigating the subject, which included the "Lausanne Document" ("CHRISTIAN WITNESS TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE"), "a frightful secret document of worldwide missionary organizations, which deals with the sensitive issue of the spiritual destruction of the Jewish people." According to Lipschutz, "the strongest, most dominant, and most destructive group is the one called the Messianic Jews." In Israel they number about 3,000, come from all layers of society, "even the most well-established," and are active in the Israel Defence Force and in West Bank settlements as well as in 15 areas in Israel proper. He advocates that a new anti-mission law be enacted which would prohibit propagating any religion among members of another religion, and applicable to Jews, Christians and Muslims. (21.12.89)

"JESUS IN HOLON": Last Friday afternoon a young curly-haired Yemenite Jewish missionary stood on Sokolow Street in Holon, fighting off angry religious believers. They were incensed at the "pornographic material" he was distributing, tracts which stated that Hanukah is the Feast of Light, and the Light is the Messiah Jesus. Mattatyahu Zacarish, Habad director in Holon, who had been called to the area, was screaming at the slender lad, who did not seem particularly overwrought by the excitement. "This is deceit," Zacarish shouted; "they're placing Jesus beside the Hanukah candle, may their names be blotted out." Turning to the crowd, he cried: "Good Jews, this is missionary pornography, don't pay it any mind." Turning to the Yemenite, he screamed: "You are corrupting the youth." Without batting an eyelash, the missionary returned the menacing look of his opponent like one accustomed to extreme reactions.

Meanwhile, others had joined the fray, shouting accusations at the missionary. "Who has brainwashed you that you recite verses of Scripture like an idiot; are you a robot?" "How much are you paid for each tract?" "Who appointed you to be an apostle?" "Does he arrive on a white horse?" Suddenly one bully grabbed his shirt: "Don't distribute missionary material to me on this street!" Slowly the crowd closed in on the missionary, and only the arrival of the police prevented a lynching. Beside the above article an extract from the tract was reproduced: YESHUA SAID: "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. EVERYONE WHO FOLLOWS ME WILL NOT WALK IN DARKNESS, FOR HE WILL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE. WHILE YOU HAVE THE LIGHT, BELIEVE IN THE LIGHT IN ORDER THAT YOU MAY BE CHILDREN OF LIGHT. THE LIGHT CAME INTO THE WORLD, AND MEN LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT, FOR THEIR DEEDS WERE EVIL." On this Festival of Light let us look to him who is the Light. He is the Light that we rejected 2,000 years ago and the night of the Exile descended upon us... (TWO-CITIES HOLON/BAT YAM 29.12.89)

MISSIONARY SHOP NEAR JAFFA GATE: A demonstration was held on the Sabbath with the permission of Jerusalem Chief Rabbi Kowitz, to protest the Anglican mission near Jaffa Gate. It operates a mission book shop managed by a Jew, as well as a hospice which offers Jews free lodging, while Christians have to pay in full. "This is a real mission," says Rabbi Kowitz, "and the time has come to act against it." (YOM WASHISHI 9 Mar 90)
In a feature article headed "SOUL HUNTERS ON THE WAY TO THE (WESTERN) WALL by Y. Gorodetzky, the ultra-orthodox weekly EREV SHABAT (9 Mar 90) carried the reporter's "exposé" of the Anglican mission. In a personal encounter with one of the staff who tried to evangelize him and a young American Jewish couple who had "mistakenly" entered the area on their way to the Western Wall, he described how he had bested the Christian missionary in a polemic over biblical texts, which the missionary "declaimed and declaimed and shamelessly distorted."

"The true aims of Christchurch can be found in the article of the church director, Alfred Sawyer, a converted Jew," which was published in the mission organ "Shalom," and was "exposed" by YAD L'AHIM 1½ years ago. (The balance of the article deals with the Messianic Jewish movement in the U.S., especially its Orthodox wing, which follows Jewish traditions closely and is led by one Bronstein in Washington, D.C. They promote evangelism to Jews among Christians, using the New Testament text, "to the Jew first and also the Greek.")

CHRISTIANS AND JEWS:

INTIFADA AND THE CHURCHES: The Middle East Council of Churches will begin an international campaign of prayers on Easter Sunday for an independent Palestinian state. A series of solidarity prayers embracing all streams of Christianity will reach its climax on the Christian Pentecost when the first general conference of the Catholic and Protestant churches of Germany will be held in Jerusalem. The Council has appealed to governments and peoples in the region and worldwide to fight for the achievement of these aims. They will also pray to the Crucified One for the souls of the Israelis. The aggressive campaign has already caused headaches in the Foreign Ministry; and according to sources in the Religious Affairs Ministry, the campaign is proof of PLO pressure on the heads of Christian churches. (KAWL HA'IR 30.3.90)

DIFFERENCES: In a letter to KAWL HA'IR (6 Apr 90), Uri Arbel of Jerusalem denies Orthodox Jewish claims that secular Jews are no different from Christians. Christians believe in Jesus the Messiah, the Holy Trinity, and the New Testament, but secular Jews reject the Christian thesis, and also observe several basic Jewish commandments, such as circumcision, Jewish marriage, divorce and burial laws. Only religious bigots would deny the distinction.

In response to this letter, Iddo Sokolowsky writes (13 Apr), that as a secular Jew (who prefers to be called "free"), he rejects the entire Bible, the "barbaric" rite of circumcision, Jewish marriage, divorce and burial rites. "There are many ways to define who and what is a Jew. I define a Jew as anyone who might have visited Auschwitz in 1941 and been given a yellow patch... Religious Jews sat with folded hands while their sons were slaughtered and their women raped in pogroms, while Jesus the Nazarene said, 'If anyone strikes you, turn the other cheek.' So who is the Jew here and who is the Christian?"

SUNDRIES

"YESHUA": A full-page poster size announcement advertising the film "JESUS" (according to the Gospel of Luke) with Hebrew sound-dubbing appeared in the Jerusalem weekly HATZI SHAVUA (18.4.90). The film is to be screened at the Or Cinema in Jerusalem beginning 19.4.90: "YESHUA: JESUS - GIGANTIC PRODUCTION WHICH TOOK FIVE YEARS ON A BUDGET OF OVER \$6,000,000. THE MOST TRANSLATED FILM IN HISTORY, DUBBED INTO MORE THAN 100 LANGUAGES. AN AMERICAN-ISRAELI CO-PRODUCTION WITH TOP ISRAELI ACTORS. (The names and photos of 16 Israeli actors are provided.) Showings: 16.30-19.00-21.00.

EXCAVATIONS: Recent archaeological digs in the vicinity of the old Mandelbaum Gate have turned up parts of the third Jerusalem wall which encompassed the city in the period of Agrippas as well as relics of a Byzantine church including a floor mosaic of about two square metres. (KAWL HA'IR 30.3.90)

"ROTTEN ROOTS?": The organization called SHORASHIM (ROOTS) set up to spread Judaism (whom I have recommended to friends and students) recently sent me a circular which includes a notice of a seminar on "THAT MAN" - "THE MAN THEY CALL CHRIST": AT THE HOTEL GALEI ZOHAR, DEAD SEA, WEEKEND OF 23-25 Mar 90 (PRICE: NIS 390). Udi, the Director, in response to my phone call, explained that "that man" appears in the Talmud "and that's part of our culture! He was unwilling to listen to my protests. What kind of Judaism are they promoting? Watch out for these rotten roots! (Emuna Schmiät, YOM HASHISHI 22.3.90)

BIBLE VERSIONS: Menahem Bena, in his weekly poetry feature, denounced the Education Ministry edition of a child's Bible (Book of Genesis) for its deletions, its punctuation, its captions and illustrations. "The Book of Genesis, which is divine poetry, is trodden under the coarse feet of bureaucrats. The Bible is the basis of our Hebrew life, and is being presented to our children in a distorted way," he protests. (KAWL HA'IR 6 Apr 90)

HEBREW-JAPANESE BIBLE: The first bi-lingual Bible has been published in Tokyo, with each line in the original Hebrew matched by a line translated into Japanese. The first volume (among 45 due to be published) contains the first 50 psalms. (HAARETZ 12.4.90)

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