

NOTE TO READERS: The material in NEWS CLIPS is abstracted from mainly Israeli media sources relating to news and comments of interest to Evangelicals. Some of these sources are extremely hostile to mission work, to Messianic Jews and to the New Testament. The editor requests that readers take this into consideration when reading NEWS CLIPS, nor does he vouch for the accuracy or for the views reproduced herein.

"THE MISSION" The secularist weekly magazine, "HA'OLAM HAZEH", published an exposé of Natan Scharansky's alleged ties to Christian missionaries. In a lead article covering four full pages, with a cover photograph of Natan Scharansky beside a montage of churches and crosses, the magazine's front page headlined: SCHARANSKY RECEIVED A MILLION DOLLARS FROM THE MISSION. The editors claimed to have "documents testifying that the aim of the donors is to convert USSR Jewish immigrants in Israel to Christianity".

The article linked Galtronics, the Christian-owned enterprise in Tiberias, a Dutch group called CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL, the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism and the handbook CHRISTIAN WITNESS TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE, (produced in a consultation on Jewish evangelism at a 1980 conference in Thailand), the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, a new Messianic Jewish publication in Canada (THE MESSIANIC TIMES), the theological journal MISHKAN published in Jerusalem, the Messianic Jewish movement, Kerem Akhva Meshihit, the Voice of Hope radio station, and assorted "fundamentalists", of a well-organized international conspiracy to "convert" the entire Jewish people to Christianity, and especially Soviet Jewish immigrants to Israel. (12/12/90; OLAM HAZEH)

In response to the article, Scharansky held a press conference in which he demanded that the journal issue an apology to him within seven days and to the ZIONIST FORUM which he heads, (and which it was alleged was the channel for the missionary donation). If it failed to do so, a libel suit in the amount of one million dollars would be filed against the magazine. The editor, Rafi Ginat, has confirmed that Scharansky's attorneys have demanded a retraction, insisting that no contributions had been received from any missionary organization, but Ginat has stated: "I have no problem to prove the link between the donation and missionary activity." (DAVAN 28.12.90)

The ultra-orthodox YATED NE'EMAN has charged that "a massive missionary attack in North America has been mounted against Soviet Jews, which reached its peak with the appearance of the missionary paper MESSIANIC TIMES published in Toronto, Canada". The main focus at present is the large Soviet Jewish influx, which has rallied the Jewish community leaders to combat this phenomenon. (10.12.90) The same paper published an item concerning "tens of children of Soviet Jewish immigrants who attended an Xmas party in Haifa". An anti-mission activist who penetrated the event was told by one of the participants that "we are Messianic Jews". The activist, Bezalel Ben-Pinhas, later returned with a photographer who acted as if he were a parent photographing the event, and the photographs were turned over to the anti-mission organization YAD L'AHIM. (28/12/90)

SOVIET JEWS MENACED BY MISSION: Menahem Rahat of MA'ARIV charged that the Russian-language Israeli daily NASHA STRANA (linked to the Labour

Party) carried an advert which appealed to Russian new immigrants to convert to Christianity and to receive absorption aid from the Mission. Sponsored by (KEREN) ANVA MESHITIT, the notice, first of its kind, directed immigrants to 30 Messianic "clubs" throughout Israel for receiving material and spiritual aid, and offered free Russian-Hebrew Bibles containing the Old and New Testaments. The Likud subsequently attacked the Labour Alignment for inciting immigrants "against their people, their religion and their nationality", Rahat reported. (18/12/90) The article was cited in the organ of the National Religious Party (NRP), with a call for banning all missionary activity in Israel (HATZOFEH 19/12/90).

The day following the MA'ARIV item, the paper published a denial of the Rahat charge that the NASHA STRANA advert had appealed to Russian Jews to convert, and the paper apologised for its inaccurate report (MA'ARIV 19/12/90). A week later, Shaul Schiff of HATZOFEH reported that Shalom Pitchhadza, chairman of the Soviet-Jewish Immigrant Association, in an appearance before the Knesset Interior Committee, had quoted Russian-language adverts inviting new immigrants to join Messianic congregations in Israel. He called for tightening the law against so-called mission bribery. (26.12.90) The same day, MA'ARIV mentioned this appearance, adding that the Christian Embassy (ICEJ) was also cited by MK Shlomo Dayan of the Shas Party as "a most dangerous body for encouraging conversion to Christianity".

In response to a parliamentary query by Yair Levy of Shas, the Minister of Religious Affairs, Prof. Avner Shaki, noted that it is a felony to conduct missionary activity by means of offers of material benefit in exchange for conversion. The Minister of Justice is responsible for enforcing the law, and a special committee headed by Prof. Nahum Rakover, Deputy Attorney General, is presently studying the matter. Regarding charges of increased mission activity among new immigrants, Shaki stated that no action can be taken without thorough examination of the factuality of the charges. (HATZOFEH 6 Dec. 90) For the past twelve years, the Israel police have not charged violators of the anti-mission law against enticement to conversion. When a complaint is received, it is investigated and the material filed away, on the basis of instructions from the Attorney General not to prosecute without his approval. This fact was revealed by the testimony of a police representative at a hearing of the Knesset Interior Committee. The ultra-orthodox Agudat Yisrael party has demanded that this procedure be cancelled. (MA'ARIV 28/12; also HANODIA 28/12)

ICEJ-HISSION FOCUS: In a two-page spread headed "THEY DON'T WANT TO SEE," S. Kaufman, anti-mission "expert" of the ultra-orthodox paper YATED NE'EMAN, presented a list of 57 varieties of missionary ties linking the Christian Embassy (ICEJ) as kingpin in a world-embracing conspiracy to convert Israel to Christianity. In response to the paper's charges, Mr. Pazner, the Prime Minister's media adviser, stated that "the Christian Embassy does not engage in missionary activity and is a faithful friend of Israel". This statement was reaffirmed by Pazner's office in response to the 57 "proofs" submitted in the article cited. Among the items was a bank statement of Beit Asuf congregation in Netanya, a photocopy of which was reproduced dated 8/8/88, indicating contributions from PRAYER FOR ISRAEL to the congregation. (Both groups are said to be linked to the ICEJ.) (7 Dec)

"MEANINGFUL LEGISLATION" : In an appeal to orthodox Jewish political parties in the Knesset, the anti-mission group YAD L'AHIM called upon them to work for "the enactment of meaningful legislation which will curb the activities of the soul hunters, prohibiting all activity, direct and indirect, in writing or orally, which is designed to influence, to preach and to assist a member of one religion to convert to another religion". (YATED NE'EMAN 17/12/90)

ARIEL: MK Rabbi Feldman informed the Minister of Religious Affairs that a group of missionaries led by the Kendal family was engaging in unlawful missionary activity by offering assistance to young people and adults in exchange for conversion. He asked the Minister whether he had instructed the authorities to investigate mission activities in Ariel, to place the family under surveillance, and to advise the steps being taken to prevent Jews from being enticed into Christianity. (HAMODIA 5 Dec. 90)

BEERSHEBA: Moshe Ninio, an activist in the Jehovah Witness sect, was quoted in a Beersheba weekly as planning a mission campaign among Soviet Jewish immigrants in that area. Ninio told the weekly that they do not regard themselves as part of Christianity, nor do they have any ties with the Christian mission in Israel. The writer also noted that there is an active mission body in Beersheba, including a mission shop on Rambam Street. (YATED NE'EMAN 23/12/90)

RISHON LEZION: Residents of this town have been receiving mail notices of packages to be claimed at the local post office. Upon opening the packages, they were astonished to find Hebrew New Testaments, sent by a London missionary society. (REHUVOT-LUAM + 3, 25/10/90)

LONDON: Jewish residents of the Bushey neighbourhood in London are furious over the distribution of Jews-for-Jesus literature in their mail boxes during the High Holydays, inviting them to a concert by the "Liberated Wailing Wall", which is linked to the American Messianic Jewish movement. The local Baptist minister joined the local rabbi in condemning this, and apologized to the Jewish community for such activity. (HAMODIA 16/10/90) Shmayah Kedar, reporting from London for MA'ARIV (19/11/90), noted increased activity by Christian evangelists in Britain, and the employment of one Robert Weitzman, "a so-called Hebrew Christian, who testifies that the ultra-orthodox Jews use methods of intimidation against us". Weitzman is part of the "Campaign of the Decade" headed by Rev. Joseph Drummond.

JAFFA: Eli Levy, the Givatayim postman whose wife was crippled medically and left with three children, intends to convey them to mission institutions in Jaffa. Levy told DAVAR reporter Natan Ro'i: "I can't hold on to the children. Government institutions can't offer help, so I'm turning them over to the mission. It's a scandal that the Government can't help me in this awful plight." (28/11/90)

JERUSALEM: The police have released two YAD L'AHIM activists after holding them for 48 hours at the Russian Compound police headquarters in connection with the disappearance of a Jewish child of a Soviet Jewish woman. She had sought their assistance in recovering the child from the custody of the child's father. The child was located at the Russian Church in Jerusalem, where the father had found refuge. A spokesman for YAD L'AHIM claimed that the Russian clergy had assisted the Gentile father to conceal the child from his Jewish mother. (YATED NE'EMAN 30/11/90)

MESSIANIC JEWS

BEIT ASAF: Police Minister Ronnie Milo stated in reply to the parliamentary query of Rabbi Feldman, that the Sharon District police continue investigation into the death of the journalist Hanan Peeri. On the basis of material available, there appears to be no link between the journalist's death and his investigation of the Messianic sect BEIT ASAF in Netanya. The most likely cause of death was an accident. The Minister also noted that the police had investigated complaints about mission activity against the sect in the past, but had closed the files for lack of evidence. (AL HAMISHMAR/HAMODIA 13/12/90)

AVNER BOSKEY: Avner Boskey is a Messianic convert. In a document published in the house organ of the Messianic Jews in America, CHOSEN PEOPLE, Boskey exposed for the first time the missionary network of the Messianics in Israel. The article revealed that top priority is being given to missionary work among Soviet Jews in Israel, with a special department set up, headed by Albert Davis, a Russian Jew, and a veteran missionary with a charismatic personality. Vast sums of money are at his disposal. A tear-jerking tale adorns the article, describing a sentimental meeting with a Russian Jewish immigrant only 24 hours in Israel. Boskey also boasts of success "beyond expectation" in missionary activity in Haifa, where 17,000 tracts and thousands of Bibles were distributed. He also described the Haifa campaign of training believers to make four mission sorties per day throughout Haifa, and collecting names and addresses for follow-up. "Many new immigrants have asked to receive atonement for sins," Boskey writes, and he concludes with a request "to pray for the advancement of the Messianic Kingdom among the people in Israel". In response, Rabbi Lipshitz of YAD L'AHIM has protested that it was a "scandal... which again exposes the non-enforcement of the Mission Law, and the extent of Messianic Jewish activity among Soviet Jewish immigrants". (YOM HASHISHI 7 Dec. 90)

JEWISH NEW TESTAMENT: An advert offering books by David H. Stern, (including the Jewish New Testament, the Messianic Jewish Manifesto, and Restoring the Jewishness of the Gospel) for sale at GREETINGS FROM JERUSALEM, P.O.B. 478 JLM, was published in The Jerusalem Post. (10 Dec. 90)

CHRISTIANS IN ISRAEL

CHRISTMAS: In a cynical "exposé" of Christian philanthropy headed "THE STING OF XMAS," Yishai Weiner of the ultra-orthodox weekly YOM HASHISHI (21/12/90) probes the large sums of money donated by Christians for religious and welfare institutions, including ultra-orthodox seminaries (yeshivot). The writer claims that, while some donors are motivated by love of Israel, Holocaust memories and a desire to make compensation for Christian persecution of the Jews, many are donating money for the purpose of gaining a foothold in Israel in order to promote missionary activity or to support missionary groups indirectly.

The Gulf crisis and Palestinian unrest have left Bethlehem with one of its smallest Christmas crowds in recent memory, and celebrations were cancelled by the town's officials in solidarity with the intifada. Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij stated: "This is the saddest Christmas of my life," adding that people would be celebrating quietly at home "to avoid conflicts with both sides". (IN JERUSALEM 28/12/90)

Yehuda Koren of HA'ARETZ (28.12.90) described Israelis attending

Christian worship at various churches in Israel. Despite the tension, many filled the churches to capacity, attracted by the "exotic" atmosphere, the music, nostalgic memories of Diaspora Christmases, as well as a long-standing tradition among many Israelis to experience unfamiliar life-styles.

PILGRIMS: The business magazine GLOBUS (19/10/90) published a two-page feature by Eliyahu Yakir about an ambitious programme to promote large-scale Christian pilgrimage to Israel around the site of Jesus' baptism near Jericho. A feasibility study and preliminary surveys have already been made and the site is being prepared for use at an estimated cost of about one million dollars. A major risk involved is the controversial political status of the area in international law and diplomacy, since the area is administered or occupied territory. It has been proposed that the project be coordinated with a major Christian church so that, should the area be conveyed to non-Israeli sovereignty, it could still continue operating.

INTERFAITH RELATIONS

NES AMIN: The winter 1990 issue of the magazine of the Christian moshav in Galilee, Nes Amin, carried a transcript of a lecture given by Dr. Jonathan Livny, an Israeli judge in the West Bank. Starting from the Bible, he told how the conflict between Arabs and Jews is a family conflict because both people are sons of Abraham. The issue also reported the hosting by Nes Amin during the summer of the youth conference of the International Council of Christians and Jews.

"CHRISTIANITY - A JEWISH RELIGION": Schalom Ben-Chorin of the Israeli German-language newspaper ISRAEL NACHRICHTEN (21/12/90) published a book review of David Flusser's work under this heading.

CHRISTMAS IN ITALY 1943: A death-bed testimony by Albert Sharon of Jerusalem in February 1990 described the rescue of a Jewish family by Italian Christians and a village priest on Christmas Eve 1943. Also described were continual acts of mercy to the Sharon family and other Jews by Italian Christians, which enabled them to survive Nazi pursuers. (THE JERUSALEM POST 25/12/90)

"PROTESTANT VIEWS": A series of four articles on "new Protestant views of Jews and Israel" was published in THE JERUSALEM POST during December 1990, authored by Moshe Asmann.

Voluntary activities on behalf of new immigrants by the Protestant Church in Jerusalem has aroused the ire of the anti-mission YAD L'AHIM. A Protestant nun has insisted that only humanitarian aid is involved, and funds from abroad enable the Protestants to fill their warehouses with clothes, furniture and household goods. "We have no interest in missionary work," she stated. The anti-mission activists claim, however, that New Testaments are inserted in the clothes. The Protestants have invited their critics to inspect their work. (HADASHOT 19/12/90)

BELGIAN CHRISTIANS: A hostel has been set up at Kibbutz Maale Bahamisha near Jerusalem, funded by a Belgian Christian church, for rehabilitating alcoholics. Called BETHEL, the Christian group is comprised of "Christian Zionists" living near Brussels. The hostel has already begun functioning. (JERUSALEM weekly 14/12/90)

FATH HEALER IN TEL-AVIV: Miriam Hellman, "the high priestess with a direct line to God and Jesus his Messiah", is in Israel "to heal the lame, cure the sick and especially to earn money". In a sarcastic article, Gil'ad Padva (HA'IR) described a healing campaign by Mrs. Hellman in Tel-Aviv, as well as her mystical experiences which led her into this ministry, which includes the sale of videotapes at \$30 per. (2 Nov. 90)

CHURCHMEN VS. ISRAEL: In an editorial under this heading, the JERUSALEM POST (24.12.90) denounced the U.S. National Council of Churches' "peace pilgrimage", with its linkage of the war against Saddam Hussein to "Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza." The editorial charged that the N.C.C. "has slavishly followed the PLO line on matters relating to the Arab-Israel conflict." The writer also links the NCC with other allegedly anti-Israel Christians (Middle East Council of Churches, the American Friends Service Committee, Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa) in contrast to friendly Christian bodies (the National Conference of Christians & Jews, the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel, Bridges for Peace,) "and large numbers of local, grassroots Christian organizations which present a balanced picture of the Middle East."

FORECAST OF CHRISTIAN PRESENCE IN ISRAEL: The French paper LE MONDE, in a lead article before Christmas, has predicted that, "if the present rate of emigration of Christians continues, there will not remain a single Christian in Jerusalem in another 25 years." Long lines of Christians are regularly found outside various consulates in Jerusalem seeking to emigrate. They claim to be victims of discriminatory Israeli policies, but other sources charge that fear of extremist Arab organizations who continue to assassinate suspected collaborators with the Israeli authorities is behind the emigration. Meanwhile, anti-mission activists claim that the pessimistic forecast of Christian emigration is exaggerated because of large-scale Christian church holdings and Christian desire to have a strong foothold in the Land of Israel which existed long before massive Jewish immigration began. The missionary drive is also still strong among the churches. (HAMODIYA 28.12.90)

SCROLLS EDITOR FIRED: British-born scholar John Strugnell of Harvard Divinity School, editor of the Dead Sea Scrolls project, has been removed from his post in the wake of remarks attributed to him in a newspaper interview extremely hostile to Judaism. He was quoted as saying that Judaism was a racist and primitive religion, and recommended mass conversion by Jews to Christianity. Local scholars, responding to the affair, have noted that Strugnell was in ill health and upset over the appointment of an Israeli co-editor on the scrolls translation project. (JERUSALEM POST 13.12.90)

CHRISTIAN GLENGYMAN NAMED COHEN: The women's monthly magazine "AT" (Nov. 90) published a two-page feature article by Eli Zaccai about the Cohen-Stuart family in Jerusalem. Rev. Geert Cohen-Stuart, his wife and two daughters have integrated into the life of Jerusalem, although born in Holland and raised as Christians. (The first-born son is studying in Holland, but the daughters are studying in Israeli schools in Jerusalem.) The name Cohen derives from a great-great grandfather who in the early 19th century converted to Christianity in Holland and retained the name COHEN and added the name of the minister STUART, who baptized him (and whose daughter he married). In 1964 Geert came to Israel and studied at the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem,

met his wife here, and spent the first years of married life in Holland, but returned as a representative of the Dutch Baptist Church in 1982. The family have been living here ever since.

SUNDRIES

THIRD TEMPLE : Writing in the Tel-Aviv weekly HA'IR, Nadav Haetzni provides an update on "fundamentalist Christians in the U.S. waiting for Israel to finally build the Third Temple." Meanwhile, they are sponsoring various scientific surveys and sophisticated electronic investigations in the vicinity of the Temple Mount, galvanizing public support among the estimated 30 million Evangelical "true Christians" in the U.S., applying political pressure, and cooperating with right-wing Israeli militants like the "Temple Mount Faithful" and the Int'l Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, seeking to create a "unification of Jewish and Christian Messianism."

CROSSES IN ZION : While the wearing of crosses in Israeli Hebrew schools has been fashionable for several years, it is only this year that local educators have declared war on the phenomenon. "It's a calamity," declares a Ministry of Education spokeswoman. "It's the end of the Jewish people," a schoolteacher protests. "Who am I to tell the pupils what to wear?" a high school principal retorts. Some Orthodox Jewish educators regard it as a "missionary act", but even some secular educators have been revolted by it. Nevertheless, few are able to give a rational explanation to those of their charges whom they rebuke and sometimes even order to remove the crosses. The fad appears to be imported from European youth and reflects an anti-Establishment gesture; the more it is resisted, the more it attracts some of the young people. (HAARETZ 20.12.90) Two local weeklies carried brief news items on the subject also. (GAL CEPEN, RISHON LE'ZION 22.11.90; LUAKH 3+ RHOVOT 25.10)

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