

IMPORTANT NOTE TO READERS: The material in NEWS CLIPS is abstracted from Israeli media and relates to news and comments of interest to Evangelicals. It is NOT necessarily unbiased, nor does the UCCI endorse the accuracy or the views reproduced in this abstract. (EDITOR)

"THE MISSION"

JERUSALEM: In a Jerusalem religious seminary (yeshiva) blatant missionary material of the Messianic sect was discovered this week. A large quantity of orange-colored tracts entitled "The Ancient Holy Scriptures for Contemporary Jews" was discovered last Thursday at dawn at the "Heichal Torah Me'tzion." When one of the students came to take his phylacteries, he sighted the strange tracts. An investigation is being conducted to discover who brought the material in. (EREV SHABAT 22.6.90)

TEL-AVIV: A distribution of literature on behalf of Jesus the Nazarene is being conducted on Tel-Aviv streets by Gentiles from the U.S. and Norway who have even dared to do so next to the Great Synagogue. In my opinion, this is an offense to Jewish honor and pride, even though I don't fear that Jews will be taken in. As a native of the U.S., I know that in the Jewish quarter of Brooklyn no missionaries would dare operate for they would be beaten up; only here in the Jewish state do they operate. What would happen to me if I should distribute anti-Christian literature in democracies like Greece, Italy, Spain? Moshe Ben-Hod, Tel-Aviv. (Moledet, Dec. 1989)

HAIFA: "They're exploiting the naivete of the new immigrants, helping them with furniture and electrical appliances, dragging them off to prayers at the "Hesda" (sic.) Church and telling them fairy tales about the Messianic Jews," the director of the anti-mission department of "Yad L'Ahim" in Haifa told the press in mid-June 1990.

Dagmar Bar, a Lutheran Protestant woman, is particularly active among new immigrant concentrations in Haifa, Carmiel, Acre, in a transparent attempt, with other operatives she directs, to recruit members for the Messianic Jewish community. "Yad L'Ahim" has published warning notices among the new immigrants against cooperation with the "Messianic Jews," and practical steps have been taken to restrict the "Messianics."

Recently the Messianic Jews have been distributing Russian-language literature as well as a simplified Russian New Testament. "The Messianics have at their disposal vast sums and among them are "think teams" who know the mentality of the Soviet immigrants," Bezalel Steigeles of the Haifa anti-mission branch, stated.

In response to updated reports of the situation, heads of the Absorption Ministry have complained that the missionaries are exploiting the lack of a basic Jewish background among the new immigrants in order to attract them. Absorption Minister Rabbi Yitzhak

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Peretz has stated that if this is true, he regards the matter very gravely and will check to see how such activity can be prevented within the framework of the law. (VARIOUS PAPERS: 13-6-/18-6)

KNESSET: The M.K. Rabbi S. Halpert has appealed to the Kneset Chairman with an urgent motion for the agenda in connection with the missionary activities of the "Messianic Jews" among the Soviet immigrants. (HAMODIYA 19.6.90) M.K. Yigal Bibi has appealed to the Absorption Minister to act immediately to thwart missionary activity among Soviet Jewish new immigrants. He cited reports about missionary activity in Haifa at a place called "Bethesda", which is exploiting their economic and social distress to entice them under the guise of religious instruction and by means of literature and various material benefits. He also disclosed that in a Hebrew-language seminar in Tiberias, the Ginsburg Centre, a Messianic Christian couple in attendance is preaching to the new immigrants and trying to convert them to Christianity. (HATSOFEH 18.7.90)

ROSH HA'AYIN: The housing plight of young couples demonstrating around the country with tents in public parks is being exploited by the missionaries, according to a report in MAARIV yesterday. Residents of Rosh Ha'ayin without housing have registered with missionaries who are offering them a flat and every good thing if they will convert to Christianity, move to Rome and live within the framework of the Christian community there.

One of the homeless, married and the father of two, told the reporter: "I have decided to convert to Christianity and to live like a normal human being with a home and furnishings." He claims many families have registered for conversion, "of their own free will and without pressure..." This report should flash a red light to all government and public representatives to work to prevent the missionaries from doing their dirty work. At the same time, practical steps must be taken to heed the cries of those homeless tent-dwellers and to find a swift solution to their plight. The movement of apostasy must be halted! (HATSOFEH 20.7.90)

U.S.A.: M.K. Rabbi S. Halpert has submitted a parliamentary query to the Minister of Education about the missionary activity of a U.S.A. Messianic group. Based on the report that the large Messianic community in the U.S.A. has begun a campaign in Israel which includes missionary material and attracting members to the Messianic movement, he asks if the Messianic visit to Israel was coordinated with the government or the Jerusalem municipality. In view of their intention to visit the ultra-orthodox quarter (Meah Shearim) in Jerusalem, has the ministry issued instructions to prevent this in order to avoid demonstrations and commotions in the area? What is the minister doing to prevent the distribution of missionary material by the group during its stay in Israel? (NEW FACES, N.Y. 29.5.90)

NEW YORK: The ultra-orthodox weekly SHEARIM (8 Apr 90) carried a full-page feature article about "EMES", an American anti-mission organization headed by Rabbi Yaakov Spivak, who engages in

"confrontation" tactics in public areas against "Jews for J-s-s" and the Messianic Jews. The writer, Y. Daum, warns that when the year 2,000 passes without the expected return of J-s-s, the fury and frustration of the Christians (including those supposedly pro-Jewish and pro-Israel Christians) will turn upon the Jews in a manner reminiscent of the Spanish Inquisition updated to 2000.

MESSIANIC JEWS

BERESFORD CASE: The overseas edition of the JERUSALEM POST (5.5.90) published a full-page paid advertisement sponsored by the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America protesting the High Court decision of 25.12.89 which rejected the petition of South African Messianic Jews Gary and Shirley Beresford to settle in Israel under the Law of Return. In response, Joseph Margulies of Montreal, Canada, and president of the Jerusalem Institute of Biblical Polemics (Shmuel Golding), submitted a full-page virulent article entitled "A Jew Salutes The Supreme Court of Israel." (JLM POST 22.6.90)

VOLUNTEERS: "IN JERUSALEM" (20.7.90), in the Personals column published a request for volunteer typists "to type book debunking Hebrew-Christian-Messianic missionaries." The same column, under an item marked "ALIYA WOMEN", appealed to "Christians, Jews and converts with interesting experiences for interviews by women about living in Israel."

MESSIANIC ADVERTS: The local Rehovot-Rishon-New Ziona area weekly "ARIM" (6 Apr 90) published a Messianic Jewish ad headed by a biblical quotation ("AND THE WOLF SHALL DWELL WITH THE LAMB..."), against the background of the Knesset and the Messianic Jewish logo with the subheadings: "AND THE HAWK WITH THE DOVE... MESSIAH NOW". Free pamphlets about the Messianic Jew were offered, with address and phone supplied. The local Holon-Bat Yam area weekly "TWO CITIES" (25.5.90) published the Messianic Jewish ad of Yaakov Damkani headed "WHO IS THE SACRIFICE?", an exposition of the Gospel of the atonement from Hebrew Scriptural sources, with an offer of free literature.

CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

BAPTIST PROPERTY NEAR MEAH SHEARIM: The Jerusalem subcommittee for planning and construction decided to postpone the discussion of the request by the Baptist Church in Jerusalem to build on a plot of land it owns in the vicinity of the ultra-orthodox quarter "Meah Shearim", which faces the former "no man's land" and the old Mandelbaum Gate (pre-1967 border between East and West Jerusalem). Fears were expressed that the development of the plot might lead to "confrontation" between the ultra-orthodox and Christians.

Agudat Yisrael Deputy Mayor Meir Porush was concerned lest the matter develop into another edition of the Mormon institute on Mt. Scopus, which began innocently. Sarah Kaminker of the Civil Rights Movement stated that the Baptist presence in Jerusalem disturbs no one. The committee chairman Avraham Kahilla concluded that, without further details about the nature of the development of the Baptist plot, it could not be approved. (KOL HA'IR 15.6.90)

CONVERTS IN ACRE: A number of young Jewish Israelis have recently

converted to Christianity in the Greek Orthodox church in Acre, among them an entire Nahariya family. Recently, the suspicion that several Israelis have converted in order to be discharged from reserve duty with the I.D.F. has been under investigation. It was noted that standing orders relating to reserve duty remain in effect for Jewish converts to Christianity as well. (YEDIOT AKHRONOT 6 Jul 90)

I.C.E.J.- BERLIN: The Int'l Christian Embassy of Jerusalem recently opened an office in West Berlin in the presence of representatives of Israeli, German-Jewish, German government and church bodies. It was noted by the Israeli ambassador that the ICEJ had donated some US\$80,000 for transport of USSR Jews to Israel. Ludwig Schneider, a journalist in Jerusalem, accused the German media of portraying a false image of Israel. Heinz Galinski, chairman of the Central Committee of Jews in Germany also complained about bias in the media and noted that the former East German regime had had a 40-year policy of hostility towards Israel. The deputy chairm of the East German Christian Democratic Union stressed that the new E. German government had, among its first acts, asked Israel for forgiveness. (idea no. 11/90 p. 8-9 20.6.90)

MISHKAN-ICEJ: "MISHKAN," an Israel-based theological journal of Christian evangelism, has charged that the ICEJ "has been diverted from Gospel witness to political and social support of Israel." Several writers in the current issue of "MISHKAN" are cited: Ole Kvarme, the editor; Baruch Maoz, field director of Christian Witness to Israel, who claims that the ICEJ shares the evangelical conviction that the Gospel must be preached to all, including Israel, but keeps it "a well-guarded secret," and is almost totally identified with "right wing Israel politics." In response, Jan W. van der Hoeven, ICEJ spokesman, told the JLM POST that "we are a non-proselytizing organization, but evangelical in our views." He said there was a fine line of distinction between the two. (HAIM SHAPIRO, J. POST 25.7.90)

AMERICAN HOLY LAND STUDIES: The local Jerusalem weekly, IN JERUSALEM (27.7) carried a feature article by Surie Ackerman about a program sponsored by the America-Holy Land Project of the Hebrew University's Institute for Contemporary Jewry. The program is designed to promote research, documentation and publication of material on the cultural, religious, economic and social connections between the two regions between 1620 and 1948. Students are both Jewish and Christian, mostly doing postgraduate work.

CHRISTIAN SUPPORT OF ISRAEL: In response to an article about Protestant growth in Latin America which would "strengthen support for Israel" (Charley Levine, JLM POST, 22.7.90), Rabbi David Rosen, Director, Interfaith Relations of the Anti-Defamation League, B'nai Brith, Israel Office, denounced the article's "dangerously oversimplified" approach, with its seemingly "anti-Catholic, pro-Evangelical axe to grind."

Rabbi Rosen noted the diversity among both Catholics and Protestants, including Evangelicals, in their positions on Israel and Judaism. Latin American Catholics for example, have "produced a set of guidelines regarding Jews and Judaism," which affirms God's covenant

with Jews and their not needing to accept Christian doctrine, while almost all Evangelicals, even the majority supporting Israel, believe that Jews must and will accept Christian doctrine.

Among Evangelical fundamentalists, there are those "who believe that it is God's business when that will take place (I think we can live with that), and those who believe that they have to do the job now and convert Jews (being able to live with that is far more dubious!)" While the Biblical commitment of Evangelicals offers an important bridge for constructive ties, there are dangers. "Life is more complicated" than prejudices and stereotypes will allow, "especially in religion and politics," he concludes.

"POLICE: CULTIVATE LOCAL CHRISTIANS": Jerusalem's police officers should cultivate the Christian community, senior police officers were advised at a conference on the sensitivities of Israel's Christian communities. "Christians in Arab lands may be our only serious opening into the Arab world," a Foreign Ministry representative remarked. Poor treatment of Christians also leads to negative media coverage in the West, especially in the USA. The Jewish settlement in St. John's Hospice in the Christian Quarter was especially damaging, J'im Mayor Kollect noted. (JLM POST 25.7.90)

"THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN ENCOUNTER": "MORESHET DERECH" (Apr 1990), the organ of Israeli tourist guides, published a seven-page article by M. Hefner under this heading. The growing number of Christian pilgrim groups in Israel requires that "the Jewish tourist guide cope with a complex subject with its religious-emotional background, both from a Jewish and Christian perspective." While recognizing the diversity in Christianity, there is the common spiritual ground of the Land of the Bible, which includes for Christians the Tenach (O.T.) and the New Testament. Jewish guides have, however, sometimes reflected the historic and theological tensions between Judaism and Christianity, to their own professional detriment.

Hefner proceeds to analyse Christian origins, reflecting the modern critical approach which distinguishes between the Jew "Yeshua" and the "Christos" of Pauline and medieval dogma and imagery. He nevertheless underscores the Jewishness of terms like "Christ" (Messiah), "Son of Man," "Son of God," and Jesus's words and deeds. He also notes the tension between Judeans and Galileans during the N.T. period, its background in the O.T. tribal divisions and history, and the resistance by corrupt and Hellenized Judean authorities to the simple, straightforward Galileans lead by Jesus. "Combined with social, political and economic" factors. This led to Jesus' death, instigated by a priestly establishment and Pharisaic leaders concerned only about the status quo.

Citing the Gospels, Hefner finds nothing in Jesus' sayings contrary to Judaism; only "a less conventional interpretation (of Torah) in a God-fearing Jewish spirit." It was only after the failure of the Jewish anti-Roman revolts and the spread of Gentile Christianity that an anti-Jewish spirit was introduced into the Gospels, Hefner claims, in order to distance the new faith from the rebellious Jews.

In the closing section of the article, Hefner deals with Paul, "the most interesting and complex figure in the Christian Scriptures, and the first to promulgate the monotheistic concept outside of Israel, founding the universal Christian movement."

Citing Acts and the Pauline epistles, Hefner concludes that Paul saw himself as the embodiment of the risen Christ charged with the continuation of Jesus' teaching. Yet the Gentile "deification" of Jesus was not the work of Paul, he argues, but of the later church, and Paul himself remained a self-identifying Jew believing in his people's future destiny (citing from Romans 11). Hefner concludes that "the Jewish guide must remember that many clergy are committed irrevocably to faith dogmas which must be respected, according to the rule, The righteous man lives by his faith," whether he is Jewish or Christian.

RAMALLAH: CHRISTIAN GRAVES DESECRATED: The West Bank Ramallah municipality is rebuilding the fence around the Christian cemetery in town, following repeated desecrations of graves, apparently the work of Muslims, with tombstones covered with "intifada" graffiti. Muslims have protested the work of raising the fence with barbed wire because it will prevent masked militants from finding refuge in the cemetery when fleeing Israeli soldiers. It was noted, however, that even before the intifada the cemetery was subject to vandalism and desecration. (KOL HA'IR 27.7.90)

SUNDRIES

MAIL PRIVACY: An amendment proposed to the postal authority law would grant postal officials the right to delay or open mail which contains items forbidden to send through the mails or which are a means for committing a crime. The Association of Civil Rights in Israel (A.C.R.I.) opposes the amendment on the principle of the confidentiality and privacy of the mail. The Knesset committee dealing with the proposed amendment agreed to changes which would require clearly stated standards for opening mail. The A.C.R.I. would be invited to appear before the postal authorities for consultation when such standards were recommended. (A.C.R.I. Report 89-90)

TRACT DISTRIBUTION: The A.C.R.I. has appealed to the Jerusalem municipality to cease from enforcing a municipal ordinance which restricts the free distribution of tracts in public places. The A.C.R.I. pointed out that the ordinance had been ruled a violation of free expression, in a local court, and this decision had never been appealed to a higher court. The A.C.R.I. on the same grounds is also representing two tract distributors in Tel-Aviv on the basis of a similar local ordinance. (ACRI 89-90)

DANISH CONNECTION: Sven Rybord, a member of the non-Jewish organization ORDET OG ISRAEL supporting the Shaare Zedek Jerusalem hospital, and a member of its board of governors, chose an unusual venue to celebrate his 80th birthday, the hospital's pediatric ward. (IN JERUSALEM 21-7-90)

"FROM BEIRUT TO JERUSALEM" BY THOMAS FRIEDMAN: In a book review by Joshua Porat, (HAARETZ 15.6.90) the reviewer notes: "The author

analyzes in great depth the reasons for the huge place that Israel takes in the Western media. The importance of Israel, its people and land, in Western Christian culture is the main factor, and not some antisemitic trickery. This is of course the other inevitable side of Western support for Zionism, the return of the Jews to their land despite the wishes of the original Arab settlers. These two elements are the two sides of the same coin."

"THE PASSION" In a TV review column, Hedda Boshes (HAARETZ 29.6.90) comments on antisemitism and the Christian connection; this against the background of telecasts relating to the Passion play of Oberammergau and a British film dealing with the subject of Church-related anti-Jewish traditions. She concludes that "Christianity continues to face Judaism as its enemy and bears the main responsibility for antisemitism, even if its imitators and heirs have exceeded her beyond measure."

"WHO CREATED GOD?" In a poetry feature, Menahem Ben of the Jerusalem weekly KOL HA'IR (21.7.90) deals with the philosophical question of origins, "as one who believes in the divine character of the Hebrew Bible, the words of the living God." Before the creation described in Genesis 1, there was neither time nor matter. The concept of creation is material, but God is abstract, non-matter, anti-matter, who has neither beginning nor end nor corporal image.

*** END ***

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