

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 of the reports abstracted below.

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"THE MISSION"

MOSCOW CONFRONTATION: The ultra-orthodox press reported "unceasing confrontation" between anti-missionary activists and missionaries outside the Israeli embassy in Moscow. The missionaries (disguising themselves as Jews) provocatively encounter Jews who go to the embassy to obtain entry visas to Israel. They openly offer missionary literature and confuse the potential immigrants with disinformation, giving the impression that all Jews want to become Christians, and that Christianity is an acceptable Jewish faith. Almost daily, the anti-mission activists work to warn the Jews of the false claims of the missionaries.

Until recently, the missionaries had the field to themselves. They sent massive mailings of New Testaments to USSR synagogues, and the Jews there innocently think they are receiving Jewish books. The anti-mission group YAD L'AHIM in Moscow is working to purge the synagogues of the New Testaments. They are also distributing suitable Jewish literature to Soviet Jews in Russian in order to quench the spiritual thirst for Jewish information among Soviet Jews, and they also counsel Jews who come to the anti-mission office in Moscow. (HAMODIYA/YATAID NE'EMAN - 17-18.11.91)

NEW IMMIGRANTS: The MABAT journal for economics and society published a critical "exposure" by Hayim Nahtomi about "the missionaries who are expanding their activities among new immigrants... The missionaries in the Land of Israel are not resting for a moment. All their desire is concentrated on converting Jews, doing their work by means of enticements, financial pressures and plain incitements against Jewish values. They lack no financial means and also exploit 'Christians loyal to Israel' and groups of pilgrims in order to assist them in their labours. Interestingly, public figures inadvertently cooperate with the Mission (for example, the Tel-Aviv Municipality, which includes in its sponsorship of musical events the Immanuel Church in Jaffa, where open missionary activity goes on), and more than one naive Jew falls into the trap the missionaries have set. The massive missionary penetration goes on and even expands despite the warnings and conclusions of various public commissions, while the 'Messianic congregations' and the other 'sects' of the believers brainwash Jewish minds, and especially teen-agers and young people... There are rumours the missionaries are also helped by drug distribution in order to attract foolish young people."

The missionaries now have a new target, the new immigrants from the USSR and Ethiopia. The fact that many of these immigrants once identified themselves as Christians, and there are serious religious questions about their true identity, enables missionaries to pull them back into their framework. They also exploit the widespread ignorance of Jewish roots, especially among Soviet immigrants, to attract them - as well as by means of financial, occupational and housing assistance. It is also rumoured that some have been helped to pay off debts to the

Jewish Agency and Absorption Ministry, and then to emigrate and left to their fate. Yet no one seems concerned about the fate of the immigrants, although the anti-missionary activists "have been breathing hard down their necks" and more than one missionary has gone underground. (MABAT 13.12.91)

"MESSIANIC MISSIONARIES": The weekly JERUSALEM POST supplement IN JERUSALEM (13.12.91) published a report by Joanna Samuels about "hundreds of Soviet immigrant teen-agers allegedly being illegally proselytized daily by thousands of Messianic missionary workers", according to psychologist Rabbi Avraham Feld, director of Mossad Maccabee, an Israeli anti-cult, anti-missionary organization. Feld accuses Messianic missionaries of infiltrating homes, absorption centres and hotels inhabited by immigrants to exchange material aid - candy, mittens, blankets, cash, meals - for conversion. He also accuses three Finnish mission groups of the unlimited funding of Messianic missionary churches, including "Netivya" and the Messianic Assembly in Jerusalem.

Mossad Maccabee field worker Alan Klein, a social worker and archaeologist by profession, charges that "the most successful candidate" for conversion is the Russian teen-ager. He claims there are "plenty of missionaries giving out gospel tracts in Russian and inviting immigrants to their programs through bribing with material aid" at "any absorption centre", any day. Judy Pearlman, YAD L'AHIM director, is lobbying the Knesset for changing the existing law to protect Jews from missionaries and cult workers in Israel. She says: "Missionaries have complete free access to every place where the Russians are."

Religious Affairs Ministry spokesman Y. Ben-Ari states that the law forbids influencing people by offering material goods, but handing out literature is not illegal. Legal action can only be taken where there is a specific complaint that the law is being violated. Jewish Agency spokesman Y. Weintraub denied any awareness of mission activity in any Agency facility. Most Soviet immigrants, in any case, do not reside in their absorption centres, he said.

The Messianic leaders J. Shulam (Netivya) and V. Smadja (Messianic Assembly) also denied the charges that new immigrants are being illegally proselytized. Smadja: "We have the right to speak about our faith to anyone we want. We are Jews who believe in Jesus, and we're not involved in preaching, proselytizing, bribing or converting anybody. We are a legitimate foundation recognized by the Interior Ministry for over 20 years."

Shulam: "Nobody from Netivya has ever set foot in an absorption centre. The Russian members of our church were already believers when they came to Israel. Many are not Jews at all." Former refusenik Yosef Mendelevitch is very active in combatting Russian missionaries through articles, lectures and advertising in the Russian-language media.

Accompanying the article were two photographs: one of a march by Messianic Jews in Jerusalem last year, who are seen wearing T-shirts inscribed "Yeshua is the Messiah"; the other of a group of Soviet teen-agers "hanging out at a local absorption centre", with a comment by Alan Klein about mission groups who are "most successful in converting the teen-agers".

The article produced two sharp published responses. The first from Rabbi Chaim Pearl of Jerusalem, who charged the paper with "a flagrant journalistic offense" by creating the impression that the two photos

were linked, and that the Soviet teen-agers were victims of the Messianic marchers in the upper photograph, which was not true. While agreeing that mission efforts to convert young immigrants have to be resisted, "I believe the problem in Israel is greatly exaggerated by anti-mission personnel." He suggests that "at times the anti-mission rumpus in Israel is merely an expression of anti-Gentilism, and also a business". (IN JERUSALEM 27.12.91)

Arthur W. Goldberg, in his response, asked: "How do you allow people like Feld and Klein to run a forum in which to express blatant lies about a very Zionistic and dedicated minority of the Israeli population?" (3 Jan. 92)

"MISSION TO THE SOVIET JEWS": The JERUSALEM REPORT (19.12.91) published a two-page Special Report under this heading by Tom Sawicki. He found "signs of an informal but wide-spread network of individuals and groups proselytizing among new immigrants, but there is no evidence that the groups have violated Israeli law, which forbids material inducement to convert". Baruch Maoz, pastor of a Hebrew Messianic congregation in Rishon Letzion, states that "we do what we believe in", including mission work among Soviet immigrants. Along with other Christian groups, Maoz advertises in the Russian-language press. Street posters offer New Testaments and other Russian literature about Yeshua the Messiah, the Messianic Jewish name for Jesus. The Justice & Interior Ministries agree that it is not illegal for Israeli citizens to distribute missionary books, and no one has been prosecuted under provisions of the 1977 law that makes it a criminal offense to offer or receive an "inducement" to change a person's religion.

KNESSET QUERY: Rabbi Feldman of the ultra-orthodox Agudat Yisrael, in a parliamentary query to the Minister of Religious Affairs, asked whether the Ministry was aware of the activities of a missionary network among Ethiopian Jewish immigrants; was it true that ten young immigrants have been sent to mission institutions in Canada; has the claim been investigated of an Ethiopian Jewish leader that the missionaries, in violation of the law, are enticing Jewish youth by means of money to convert; are such missionary networks operating among Soviet immigrants; and what does the Minister of Religious Affairs intend to do in the wake of these reports? (HAMODIYA 31.12.91; see also MAARIV, 10 Dec. 91)

"WHO WILL STOP THE SOUL-HUNTERS?": Under a screaming headline, the ultra-orthodox journal SHEARIM (23.12.91) described a variety of "soul-hunters", but especially those working among Soviet Jewish immigrants. The writer quoted the pleas of an elderly Soviet Jew for more intensive rabbinic teaching among Soviet immigrants, to counteract the missionaries and the massive ignorance of Judaism among the immigrants. "They haven't the faintest idea about separating meat and dairy, and it's better not to see what goes on in the immigrant kitchens!" he complained. The journalist comments ironically: "Go and explain to him what an uproar would be caused if the rabbis began to lecture about Judaism inside the absorption centres!"

CHRISTIAN IMMIGRANTS: The Trofimov family numbering 19 Christians arrived in Israel two years ago. At first given Jewish Agency assistance under the Israeli Law of Return, it was later discovered that they had no Jewish family connection - which they did not deny. All their benefits under the Law were cancelled and their Israeli

documents reclaimed, but they were given temporary work permits to the end of 1991. Meanwhile, the adult family members have all found work and have repaid all their debts to the Jewish Agency. They have, however, been unable to find suitable housing and are cramped into a small space. Attempts to obtain visas to the U.S. have failed. Piotr Trofimov, 64, stated: "It is good for us in Israel, we're hard workers, we're not problematic people." (KOL-BO HAIFA 27.12.91)

GAL GROUP: "Missionary Center an Approved Enterprise." Under this heading, S. Kaufman of the ultra-orthodox YATAID NE'EMAN (22.11.91) published a two-page "exposure" of the Gal Group following the granting of approved status to the "Galilee Experience", a tourist enterprise in Tiberias beside the Sea of Galilee. Kaufman, an anti-mission "specialist", expressed outrage at the events leading up to the opening ceremonies of the enterprise two weeks earlier in the presence of Tiberias Mayor Yossi Peretz, who had originally contested its licensing but was convinced to do so by a court order; and following a viewing of the audio-visual show being presented at the site, testified to its acceptability as a tourist attraction.

The writer terms the "Galilee Experience" an "additional phase in the grave escalation of the massive Christian mission campaign to Christianize - Heaven forbid! - the Jewish citizens of Israel... It is based on a world-wide Christian master-plan conceived by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (or Christianization), which in June 1980 assembled in Thailand, with the main issue discussed being how to work toward the conversion of the Jewish people to Christianity. The conclusions were summarized in the document No. 7 entitled 'Christian Witness to the Jewish People'... because of their vain belief that converting Israel's Jews is a necessary step toward Christian domination of the world. A clear expression of this may be found in the invitation to a conference, held at Kibbutz Maale Hahamisha in January 1985, of the 'United Council of Christian Churches in Israel': 'We believe that the Church is called to take part in the greatest event in history - seizing control of the world... in which Israel and Jerusalem play a decisive role'."

Kaufman describes the funding of the Gal Group - including Galtronics, Galadon, "Galilee Experience" - and the obtaining of support and approval from Israeli authorities, such as the Ministries of Tourism and Industry. The latter, by granting subsidies and export privileges, is actually using the Israeli taxpayer's money to advance the mission cause. He then quotes the Gal Group's Christian promotion literature to supporters in order to underscore their missionary aims, to promote a belief among Jews in "that man - may his name and memory be blotted out." (Editor's note: Kaufman uses this malediction in abbreviated form when referring to Jesus), and also refers to the Messianic Jewish links of Eric & Terry Morey, other staff and employees of the Gal Group and the Tiberias Messianic congregation. "Eric Morey himself is one of the leaders of the Messianics in Israel, an organizer of conferences in which Messianic Jews from all over Israel and abroad gather, such as Shavuot '88," Kaufman writes.

He also intimates that Israeli government officials have personally benefited materially from the Gal Group, and that Morey allegedly lied in claiming that "Galilee Experience" was only aimed at tourists in their languages and not at Israelis or in Hebrew. After citing the High Court ruling that the municipality, in discussing ways to prevent the enterprise from being licensed, had acted improperly, and had penalized the municipality by imposing trials costs on it in the amount

of NIS 30,000, he concludes: "The High Court, in other words, punished the municipality because the public's elected representatives in a closed session had 'dared' to oppose the ruinous influence of the mission on the youth." "Galilee Experience" manager Eric Morey has refused to comment on what is written in the article. Three days later (25.11.91) the same paper published a report that MK Rabbi Yair Levy has appealed to the Knesset Speaker, in an urgent motion, for the Knesset to discuss the assistance "this missionary enterprise receives from government agencies" - in the light of the newspaper article above mentioned.

**I.D.F. & MISSION:** Missionaries, members of the Israeli congregations of "Messianics", have recently begun to distribute missionary propaganda to soldiers of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) serving in the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff in Tel-Aviv. The material consists of four glossy brochures "innocently" edited to penetrate the soldiers' consciousness. They distribute the material in the morning and afternoons, when hundreds of soldiers and officers come to work and later when they are on their way home. The anti-mission group YAD L'AHIM last year warned the Defence Minister and the Chief of Staff of the intention of the "Messianics" to organize concerts "for lost brethren" among IDF soldiers. At that time Defence Minister Moshe Arens responded that "we faithfully promise that no permission will be granted for any missionary activity among IDF personnel". (EREV SHABBAT 1 Nov. 91)

The Bnei Brak weekly HASHAVUA SHE'L MISHPAHA (Issue No. 32 - 1991) reported that the Air Force organized a tour of Jerusalem which ignored the many Jewish holy sites and even those of Israeli interest, such as the Knesset, focusing instead on Christian churches. In one church the clergyman preached to Air Force officers missionary notions and tried to persuade them to convert to Christianity! Most of the participants were stunned by the tour program and the conversionist attempt of the clergyman.

**CIRCUMCISION SCANDALS:** In the same issue of HASHAVUA, under the heading, "DON'T UNDERGO PAINFUL CIRCUMCISION," the writer accuses the Messianic sect "Netivya" of enticing young Russian new immigrants at absorption centers with material and cultural benefits. In a recent interview given to the media by the organization's director, he explained: "Russian youth are raw material; whereas among some of their parents there is still a spark of Jewishness, the teen-age youth have none of this, and they even hate Jews. They have no ideals yet, and we try to introduce them to our religion. We explain to them that with us they need not undergo the humiliating and painful circumcision covenant in order to be a Jew."

Under the byline of M. Halevy, the ultra-orthodox weekly YATAID NE'EMAN (29.11.91) reported a "difficult experience" of a member of a rabbinical court investigating claims of Jewishness. He came to a circumcision for several Russian immigrants whose Jewish credentials had been ascertained, when suddenly he saw a missionary booklet in the pocket of one of the immigrants! The man explained to the rabbi that en route to the circumcision he was offered an attractive booklet, and he decided to take one and read it at home after his circumcision! The rabbi was furious as he thought of the craftiness of the Christian missionaries hunting for souls even among Russian immigrants about to enter the covenant of our father Abraham - and the indifference of people to this phenomenon.

"A LITTLE YIDDISHKEIT": Zippy Lider of Jerusalem, in response to an article about the Habad movement in the Jerusalem weekly KAWL HA'IR (6 Dec. 91), draws a comparison between this hassidic movement - "which seeks to introduce a little yiddishkeit (Jewish culture) into IDF bases" - and the Reform and Conservative movements, "which in the guise of modernity, openness and liberality seek to sever the people from every spark of Jewish tradition". These movements, which are close in character to Christianity, are no less missionary and even more dangerous. Their entrance to IDF camps should be prohibited. It is a fact that the children of these movements are already assimilated or completely Christianized, and the IDF certainly doesn't want such fruit. (13.12.91)

BREAK-IN: The "Moledet" (extreme right-wing political party) branch in Jerusalem was broken into at the end of the Sabbath. It is believed that this is not the work of fanatical leftists but of the ultra-orthodox. The reason for this assumption is that the "Moledet" office in Jerusalem is a pipeline through which funds from the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem are funneled to help Soviet immigrants. This is done so as not to provoke the ultra-orthodox who are waging war against "the Mission". The Jerusalem office is closed throughout the week, but one day a month it is opened for the purpose of distributing funds to the new immigrants. (DAVAR 18.11.91)

XMAS CONCERN: With the approach of the Christian festival, there has been increased missionary activity to trap Jewish youth into the Christian net. The most prominent group appears under the title "Jews for the Nazarene" (sic), who teach Jews that even non-Christians may celebrate the Christian festival. They even publish giant ads in the NEW YORK TIMES to this effect. Jewish religious leaders, concerned about the missionary propoganda, have taken appropriate steps to counteract it by stressing the incompatibility of Judaism and Christianity. Dr. Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, has been prominent in asserting that the time has come for Christians to recognize the uniqueness of the Jewish people, which cannot accept any other religion besides Judaism. (HATZOFEH 25.12.91)

#### MESSIANIC JEWS/HEBREW CHRISTIANS

U.S. CONVERTS: About four percent of U.S. Jewry (210,000) have changed their religion from Judaism, according to a Jewish population survey in 1990. (The number exceeds the figure of 190,000 who converted to Judaism.) Many of the converts from Judaism stated that their parents were non-religious, and there was no "yiddishkeit" (Jewish customs) in their home. Nevertheless, about 35% did receive some Jewish education. About 90% gave marriage to a Gentile as the reason for conversion, and the same percentage had one non-Jewish parent (48% Gentile fathers, 42% Gentile mothers), while 60% of the converts were female.

Prof. Egon Mayer, an expert in this field, states that many of the converts feel a strong Jewish ethnic tie which is stronger than any religious bond. According to the professor, religion is losing its significance when a million Jews identify themselves as such ethnically but not religiously. Steven Beim of the American Jewish Committee believes that conversion is a testimony to the failure of Jewish identity in America. Many U.S. Jews lack a spiritual and intellectual reason for clinging to Judaism. (HATZOFEH 27.11.91)

TIBERTIAS: Under the heading "MESSIANIC JEWS OF TIBERTIAS SEEK OWNERSHIP OF VACATION RESORT IN AMNUN BAY, "the Galilee weekly KAWL HA'EMEK

V'HAGALIL-Upper Nazareth (13.12.91 - or 22.12.91 - not clear) reported that the Gal-Group, owners of Gallronics, were ready to offer 5.5 million dollars - the highest bid received by the Jewish Agency - for ownership of the vacation resort in the north section of the Sea of Galilee. The owners of Gal-Group identify themselves as Messianic Jews. Meanwhile, another bidder has petitioned the High Court. Because the matter is sub-judice, the Jewish Agency spokesman refused to comment.

BARUCH MAOZ: The weekly Rishon LeZion "BAMAKOM" (27.12.91) published a feature article about Baruch Maoz and other Messianic Jewish missionaries. Under the headline "NEXT WEEK SEVEN MORE NEW IMMIGRANTS WILL BE BAPTIZED," reporter Oren Mayers describes the work of Maoz, his background, and the public storm he has been involved in as a result of his Messianic activities.

The writer notes that Maoz is an "open person who doesn't try to evade issues, answers fully all questions". Maoz explains that the Messianic community believes in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, "and we believe in the Messiahship of Yeshua and in the Holy Trinity, the destiny of Israel to be God's priestly nation... What distinguishes us from orthodox Jews is our belief in Yeshua and our non-acceptance of rabbinic tradition, the so-called Oral Law... The fact that I'm a Jew is hard to dispute, but of course the orthodox Jew will not accept me as a believer and will regard me as a 'meshumad' (apostate)".

Maoz openly admits to being a missionary, and that their aim is "to spread the Messianic faith among all the people of Israel". The reporter describes a worship service, where some 70 persons were gathered, with over 50% new immigrants who received simultaneous translation into Russian and English. Several Russian immigrants were also interviewed, and affirmed their faith openly. The rest of the article dealt with accusations by anti-mission personnel against the Messianics, including an ex-YAD L'AHIM staff woman named Sylvia Suster, who had felt "restricted" in her work there. She pinpointed the "Christian Embassy" in Jerusalem as the "centre" of the Messianic conspiracy in Israel.

EFRAIM TOREN: A feature article appeared about Efraim Toren, the perennial hiker & drummer-boy, who at age 62 has literally walked 11,000 km., this year alone 1,500 km. He is married to a Swiss Christian friend of Israel. (DAVAR 20.11.91) The German-language ISRAEL NACHRICHTEN (13.12.91) also published a short feature article about Efraim.

OSWALD RUFEISEN (BRO. DANIEL): The Haifa supplement of YEDIOT AHRONOT published a three-page interview/feature article by Suzy Rush-Ostrov about the Hebrew Carmelite monk at Stella Maris monastery in Haifa (KOL HAIFA 29.11.91). Rufeisen described his background in pre-war Poland, his Zionist activity, his escape from the Nazis in 1941, his disguise as a Gentile and subsequent rescue of 300 Jews from the Mir Ghetto, his imprisonment and escape to a convent where he first read the New Testament and converted to Roman Catholicism, his time with the anti-German partisans, his entry into the Carmelite order and later departure for Israel where he applied for citizenship as a Jew under the Law of Return, but was refused and alternatively granted naturalization. He also described his unorthodox views of Christianity and Judaism, which he claimed he explained to the Polish Pope John Paul, who did not find any fault in them. He believes in a pluralistic

approach to faith. His relations with his family in Israel are excellent and he takes part in Jewish observances, including the Yom Kippur fast.

THE ETHIOPIAN "CHRISTIANIZERS": December 1991 produced a flurry of conflicting news reports about the so-called Farash Moura, sometime called "Christianized" Ethiopian Jews - some who formally converted to Christianity, others being merely assimilated into non-Jewish Ethiopian society, but mostly recognized as Jews by other Ethiopians, Jewish and Gentile. Pressure from Ethiopian Jewish relatives in Israel, as well as from orthodox Jews, to bring them to Israel has had mixed results. For one, Ethiopian government officials have warned Israel that the issue "threatens" relations between the two countries. "Every Ethiopian from Addis Ababa northward can claim that he's a Jew who converted to Christianity," one official stated. They see it as a threat to their Ethiopian identity. In Israel there is also some concern lest born Ethiopian Christians without Jewish antecedents claim Jewish identity in order to escape Ethiopian hardships - but the JERUSALEM POST (20.12.91), which supports the immigration of the Farash Moura, argued that "the vast majority of Ethiopian Jews and Farash Moura live in close-knit communities, and it would be difficult to perpetrate many frauds of identity".

RUSSIAN "CHRISTIANIZERS": "The number of new immigrants from the USSR who had converted to Christianity in the USSR is much greater than Israeli authorities believe, but the immigrants conceal their religious faith for fear of being discriminated against." This report comes from a French news agency with close ties to the Russian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem. Since coming to Israel, many Soviet Jews have also been baptized or attend church services without baptism. A new immigrant called Vladimir stated: "I live in Israel like the first Christians lived, disguising my faith." A Russian Jewish writer and essayist, in Israel since the 1970s, commented: "These people immigrated to Israel under illusions that this is a democratic state with freedom of religion and belief. The Israeli authorities don't understand that very many Jewish intellectuals converted to Christianity in the 1970s and '80s, not so much because of faith in Jesus Christ as out of protest against the Communist authorities, and to express their solidarity with the great Russian cultural tradition. Men like the poet Ossip Mandelstam (who died in Stalin's gulag) and Joseph Brodsky, the Nobel Prize winner several years ago, were Jewish converts to Christianity." (YEDIOT AHRONOT 24.12.91)

#### CHRISTIANS AND JEWS IN ISRAEL

ROYAL VISIT FROM TONGA: The 73-year-old king of Tonga, the island kingdom in the South Pacific with a population of 100,000, arrived in Israel on a private visit & pilgrimage to the Christian holy sites, accompanied by the Tongan queen. Upon their arrival, the royal couple proclaimed their friendship for Israel and the Arabs. A U.S. Methodist clergyman will baptize the king in the Jordan, and they will also be guests of Israeli President Herzog. Israel has sent agricultural experts to Tonga in the past. (DAVAR/AL HANTSHMAR 11.11.91; YEDIOT AHRONOT 14.11.91)

PAT ROONE: "I fell in love with Israel when I visited the troops during the Yom Kippur War," Pat Boone told an Israeli afternoon paper.



"Now I serve as good-will ambassador among the Christian churches in America on behalf of the Israeli Tourism Ministry." Arriving in Israel at the head of a 450-strong pilgrim group, Boone works to promote Christian pilgrimage to Israel. (MA'ARIV 12 Nov. 91) A short photo story about the Boone visit at a concert with Israeli singer Gaby Berlin was carried by AL HAMISHMAR (20.11.91). The JERUSALEM POST Magazine carried a two-page feature/interview article about encounters between Boone and Debbie Berman, a South African Jewish immigrant to Israel who has been photographed with Boone from childhood in publicity events. In the interview, Boone stated: "Anything truly Christian has come right out of historic Judaism, so I've always had a sense of Jewishness." (27.12.91)

**BENNY HINN ARRIVES WITH LARGE CHRISTIAN PILGRIM GROUP:** The first direct flight from Orlando, Florida in four El-Al jumbo planes brought some 1,600 pilgrims to Israel in one day, the largest single-day arrival of Christian pilgrims. Led by healing evangelist Benny Hinn, a Christian Arab born in Jaffa and now living in the U.S., the group planned to spend a week touring Israel. Benny Hinn, who still speaks fluent Hebrew, sponsors a TV program seen by millions in North America. A direct telecast from Tiberias to the U.S. was arranged during a tour of Galilee, which also included a successful tour of kibbutzim in the area. Hinn and his followers are strong supporters of Israel and pious Christians. At the Sea of Galilee the evangelist conducted a healing service, in which Christian singer Pat Boone took part. (Compiled from various Israeli papers between 4 and 13 Nov. 91)

**CHRISTIAN ORGAN DONOR:** A 35-year-old Vietnamese Christian pilgrim in the Benny Hinn pilgrimage group died of a stroke while in Israel. His widow agreed to donate several organs (heart, liver, kidneys) to Israelis awaiting transplants - following prayer and consultations among Israeli hospital staff, the family of the deceased and Christian clergy. (DAVAR/HADASHOT 13.11.91; AL HAMISHMAR 15.11.91)

**CAR-RENTING CHRISTIAN TOURISTS:** Jules Pollak, managing director of Avis Rent-a-Car, states that intifada-related safety concerns are responsible for the sharp fall in car rentals among U.S. Christian tourists over the last three years - but the Jewish market hasn't been similarly affected. (JERUSALEM POST 31.12.91)

**WORLD FRIENDSHIP ARMY:** 85 members of the World Friendship Army from Atlanta, Georgia visited Haifa this week in a U.S.-Israel exchange visit. The organization, which includes Jews, Christians and Muslims, promotes "friendship & understanding" between people and nations, without religious or political involvement. The visitors are hosted in Israeli homes, and will tour the country during their two-week stay. Haifa Mayor Arye Gurel welcomed the group at a reception, and pointed to the city as an example of co-existence between Jews and Arabs. (HATZOFEH 14.11.91)

**GERMAN PRESIDENT IN ISRAEL:** German President Richard von Weizaecker, in an interview published in the local press prior to a short visit to Israel, told Israeli editor Hannah Zemer that he had consulted with leaders of the Evangelical Church - for years he himself was the lay leader of the German Evangelical Church - on activities that would enhance awareness of the Holocaust among East Germans. (JERUSALEM POST 10 Dec. 91)

ISRAEL'S CHRISTIAN MINORITY: The JERUSALEM REPORT weekly (26.12.91) carried a Christmas feature about Israel's Christian minority "caught in an ambivalent relationship" with the Jewish majority. The six-page cover story by Yossi Klein Halevy surveyed the "ambivalence" in relation to military occupation, the intifada, expatriate Christians and the traditional Christian communities. "Christian Arabs have figured prominently in Palestinian extremist politics. Habash and Hawatmeh, leaders of PLO extreme factions, are both Christians; so were some of the founders of the Israel Communist Party. Some Israeli Arab clergymen have formulated a 'Palestinian Liberation Theology' (which is) the mirror image of the pro-Zionist evangelical position, namely, that God favors the Palestinians rather than the Jews."

Rev. Ake Skoog, director of the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem, comments: "Only here can a Christian truly understand how central Judaism is to his identity. "Halevy also quotes Daniel Rossing, former head of the Christian desk of the Religious Affairs Ministry: "Jews may be the majority, but the local churches are very conscious of their ability to affect our image in the West. Both sides lead a double life of powerlessness & power."

Suspicion of Christian motives is also found among Jews enmeshed in historic prejudices, memories of persecution in Christian countries, as well as Christian clergy involvement with PLO activities, and no less the suspicion of "soul snatching" by missionaries. "We have no strong laws against missionizing," Judy Zeevi of the ultra-orthodox anti-mission group YAD L'AHIM complains. "There's no missionizing from the recognized churches," says Uri Mor, head of the Christian desk at the Religious Affairs Ministry. Others say that, "aside from the determined activity of Hebrew Christians - whose total number here is perhaps 2,000 - proselytizing is a thing of the past".

The report also notes "growing anxiety about fundamentalist Islamic pressure" on West Bank and Israeli Christians, despite the apparent prominence of Palestinian Christians like Hanan Ashrawi, who attends Ramallah's Anglican church "and frequently invokes her Christian faith when addressing Western audiences, challenging the Jewish claim to the Holy Land". There has been increased violence directed against Christian institutions and cemeteries, which goes unreported because "the churches suppress the news out of fear", according to Uri Mor. A Nazareth Christian leader said: "A Christian can no longer be elected mayor of Nazareth, because the Muslims won't vote for any Christian. Right now we have a Muslim who is a Communist and leaves us alone. What happens if the next mayor is a fundamentalist?"

GEORGIAN CHRISTIANS: Many Christians in the Republic of Georgia (USSR) have approached the Jewish Agency office in the new republic with requests to immigrate to Israel along with many of the remaining 28,000 Jews. (DAVAR 17.11.91)

HOLLAND EVICTS PART-JEWS SEEKING TO SETTLE: Some 50 men, women and children who sought to emigrate from Israel to Holland following unsuccessful absorption in Israel were forcibly deported from Holland. "We are Christians, and we can't find work in Israel," one of the women stated. "The ordinary people in Israel and in Holland treated us well, but the officials and the politicians don't let us live." Some of them claimed that their children were maligned as Christians in Israel. Most

are intermarried Jews and Christians. (HATZOFEN 17.12.91) They were offered caravan housing by the Jewish Agency and housed temporarily at a hotel. The returnees expressed disappointment that Christian organizations in Israel have failed to rally to their cause. (JERUSALEM POST 23.12.91) Lilly Galili, in a feature article, described the woes of one of the families - Lydia, Sergei & Boris (she Jewish on her mother's side and he a Russian Orthodox Gentile and an 18-year-old son with a desire to be a Baptist minister). (HA'ARETZ 31.12.91)

EXODUS BY SEA: For the first time in the recent past, some 500 Soviet Jews arrived in Israel by ship, on a voyage financed by a "fundamentalist" Christian group called "Ebenezer" at a cost of \$750,000. They were able to bring all their belongings with them, and the absorption process was begun on board. Rabbi Peretz, Minister of Absorption, who learned of the Christian sponsorship afterwards, was surprised by the information, but ordered the absorption process to continue. He later stated that the Christian group were friends of Israel and are not missionaries. The group, headed by Steve Lightle, has also funded flights to Israel of Soviet Jewish immigrants. When the group first made contact with the Jewish Agency, there were suspicions that it had missionary aims and that the sea operation was unsuitable.

Meir Chetreet, the Agency Treasurer, succeeded in persuading others in the Agency to cooperate with the Christian group, which plans to sponsor additional voyages. Lightle told the press: "We want every Jew in the world to come to Israel, because we believe that the Messiah will only come if we act in accordance with Isaiah 60:8-9, where it says that Gentiles have to help Jews come to Israel on ships." He denied that his organization intends to missionize the newcomers. (Compiled from various papers, 27-29.12.91)

OLAVI SYVANTO - BEERSHEBA: The weekly Beersheba paper KAWL HANECEV ("All the Negev") carried a full-page feature article, with photo of "The Bible House" in the heart of Beersheba, about the "Christian-Messianic" congregation and bookshop and its leader & manager, "Father Ovi Syvanto". (29.11.91) The writer, Iddo Moed, a Dutch orthodox Jew who grew up in Holland, visited the congregation at a Saturday night service, representing himself as a student interested in studying Christians who live as a minority among foreign peoples. He also visited the Catholic congregation in the city. He alleges that the Christians live an underground existence out of fear that they would be viewed as missionaries and subjected to violent reactions by orthodox Jews, although they deny this.

He observed that the "Bible House" congregation was less concerned about strangers visiting their worship service than orthodox Jews in Holland at Christian visitors. He was particularly moved by the period of free spontaneous prayer, but the sermon disappointed him somewhat because, unlike a synagogue sermon, there were no clear interpretations and analogies of Scripture peppered with citations from great rabbinic commentators like Rashi - but the Beersheba congregation "swallowed" every word.

CROSSES AS ORNAMENTS: The Chief Rabbi of the Haifa suburb of Kiryat Motzkin appealed to school principals in the Haifa Bay area to demand that their students remove ear rings with crosses, and to explain to

them that it is an "idolatrous" symbol. "I hope that through the action of the principals and teachers, the students will pay heed to my appeal," he said. (EREV SHABBAT 22.11.91) During December, when "Jewelry Day" is observed in Israel in order to promote Israeli jewelry, the occasion should be employed to combat - by means of an information campaign among Israeli youth - the desire to wear gold & silver crosses. This fashion results from the ignorance of young people of the significance of the cross in the persecution of the Jewish people, especially by the Crusaders. (HATZOFEH 12.12.91)

"THE ASSIMILATED ONE": The ultra-orthodox paper YATAID NE'EMAN, under the heading "ZIONIST ASSIMILATION," berated the "Zionist establishment" for providing an "impressive" state funeral to "the assimilated one from Great Britain" - the late Robert Maxwell - in the presence of Israeli dignitaries and the Anglican Bishop. Maxwell disdained the three cornerstones of Zionism: "aliya", resisting assimilation, and working to create a Hebrew culture. It was only because of his wealth that he received such honors. (13 Nov. 91) The Labour daily DAVAR the following day summarized the article under the heading: "THEY WON'T LET THE DECEASED REST."

CONFRONTATION - ISRAELI TOUR GUIDES & VATICAN: Vatican representatives in Israel have suspended talks with the Union of Tour Guides in Israel in the matter of unauthorized guiding provided by clergy escorting foreign pilgrims. The suspension was based on a ruling by the European Economic Community court affecting countries in the E.E.C. The Israeli guides have rejected the Vatican step as a violation of existing agreements on the basis of a ruling which is irrelevant to their situation, and they intend to meet in order to protest the suspension of negotiations. (HA'ARETZ 14.11.91)

CHRISTMAS & HANUKA: Lyn Adler, of Bat-Yam, a new immigrant from the USA, finds it a pleasure to celebrate Hanuka "without it being overshadowed by Christmas at every turn", but "is filled with disgust to see that ELITE (candy manufacturers) has come out with their Hanuka candy package that includes a chocolate Santa Claus... Until someone can prove that Santa Claus has something to do with Hanuka, he has no place in Hanuka gifts." (JERUSALEM POST 3 Dec. 91) Yaffa Karp of Ramat Hasharon complains that the TV night-time special (HALATLA) featured a choir singing Ave Maria. "There is no justification for playing this song instead of a Hanuka song, and the explanation by Gaby Gazit (the moderator) that it was a good-will gesture for the Christians is unacceptable." (MA'ARIV 10 Dec. 91)

Gail Lichtman of the weekly "IN JERUSALEM" reports that Christmas carols can be heard over the P.A. system of the Nitzanim state-religious school five times daily for 10 months of the year. The songs cited were "JINGLE BELLS" and "WHITE CHRISTMAS," and were part of a recorded package in an imported electronic system provided to many schools in Israel. The local representative stated there had been no previous complaints. Some parents who were interviewed at the school were not upset by it, and the teachers & pupils were aware that the songs were for Christmas, but used them for recesses and dismissal. "The music is relaxing, which is what we need for our children," the school's acting principal commented. (27.12.91)

"OLD COUNTRY" CHRISTMAS: Dozens of Soviet immigrants have been

preparing for Christmas celebrations in Nazareth. A leading member of the town's Catholic community, Abu Sini, a market trader & businessman, remarked that Soviet immigrants told him they had celebrated Christmas in the USSR, and also wanted to attend church services and other festivities. (JERUSALEM POST 18.12.91)

**DUTCH CHRISTIAN DROWNS:** A Dutch Christian volunteer on an Israeli moshav met his death in an attempt to rescue children from a school bus trapped by flood waters. He was swept away by a sudden burst of water, and his body recovered two days later. Friends at the moshav described him as a "Christian friend of Israel, who loved the Israeli mentality, spontaneity and warmth" and was a diligent worker. "He didn't want to return to Holland," it was said. (DAVAR 11 Dec. 91)

**DANISH VOLUNTEERS:** The "IN JERUSALEM" supplement published a feature article by Gail Lichtman about the Danish evangelical organization ORDET OG ISRAEL ("The Word & Israel"), which has brought hundreds of young volunteers to Israel to work with the handicapped and sick in Jerusalem institutions. Founded in 1946 by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, ORDET has 4,000 supporters. It also contributes to Keren Hayesod and to the Sha'arei Zedek hospital to pay for the nursing education of Soviet immigrants. At present there are 40 Danish volunteers working in Jerusalem. (1 Nov. 91)

**TOURIST CENTRE FOUNDED:** U.S. Christians dedicated land for the construction of an international tourist centre in Ma'aleh Adumim (near Jerusalem), which will offer Christian pilgrims lectures and an audio-visual show about Israel. Science Minister Yuval Ne'eman and the town mayor joined some 300 church leaders at the dedication. (IN JERUSALEM 29.11.91)

**BETH SHALOM DONATION:** Members of the pro-Israel Protestant "Beth Shalom" movement, active in the U.S., Europe, the Far East and South America, have recently donated one million Swiss francs to the Asaph Haropheh hospital in Tzrifin. The movement, led by Wim Malgo, has 400,000 members, and has also donated two million dollars to set up a medical department in the same hospital in memory of Aliza Begin. (HATZOFEH 4 Nov. 91)

**SUMRALL DONATION:** Dr. Lester Sumrall, founder & chairman of the U.S.-based Evangelical Association Le SEA for providing global relief, has agreed to donate 20 community-service buildings for both elderly and young immigrants. With a long-time active interest in Israel based on his Biblical beliefs, Sumrall, at 78, owns and operates ten U.S. TV stations, a church, a Bible college & university and the global relief agency. He has visited Israel more than 50 times. (JERUSALEM POST 22.11.91)

**SHAMIR VISIT TO L.A.:** During a busy four-day visit to Los Angeles, Prime Minister Shamir met briefly with ten Christian leaders. (J'LEM POST 17.11.91) During this visit, the P.M. was also scheduled to meet with 30 Protestant clergy with a petition calling on Israel to refuse to return territory and to preserve the unity of Jerusalem. Shimon Aram, a former Israeli who focuses on organizing Evangelical support for Israel on the West Coast, claimed the group represented some 20 million Americans. (HA'ARETZ 17.11.91)

INTERFAITH IN JAPAN: Tel-Aviv Chief Rabbi Lau was the guest-of-honour at the 13th annual Conference of the Interfaith Committee of Japan - which includes Buddhists, Christians, Shinto and other religions. The rabbi was a central figure at the conference, which brought together 350 religious leaders, and the lecture he delivered was greeted with enthusiasm. Lau appealed to religious leaders to preach love and not hatred in the name of religion. (DAVAR 8 Nov. 91)

MAKING A SMALL FORTUNE: Gabriel Kundig, a 46-year-old Swiss Evangelical Christian who came to faith in the Bible in 1974, has invested about a million dollars in an Israeli enterprise, PROCOM-SCHWEIZ-ISRAEL in Ariel, but has little to show for it profitwise. Nevertheless, he has brought his family to live in Ariel in the West Bank, to try to salvage his company. Zvi Givati, of the Christian Embassy, describes Kundig as "a Protestant who believes blindly in Israel and doesn't see any bad Israelis", despite several unhappy Israeli business connections. (MA'ARIV 19.11.91)

"CHRISTIANS & ISRAEL": The Association of Christians & Jews in Israel launched a quarterly publication from Jerusalem in the winter of 1991/92. The premiere issue focuses on pilgrimage to the Holy Land from around the world, as well as the work of various support bodies in Israel, such as the Christian Embassy, Bridges for Peace and interfaith and ecumenical groups.

U.S. TV RELIGIOUS INDUSTRY: The weekend supplement of DAVAR (20.12.91) carried a two-page exposure of "the American religious TV industry", based on a comprehensive TV investigation of three TV preachers "who lead their flocks by deceit, and rake in millions of dollars" - U.R. Grant, Larry Lea, Robert Tilton - whose alleged fakery was exposed before millions of astonished Americans.

#### SECTS

DELAY IN BURIAL: The Jewish burial society of Lod delayed the burial of Reuven Eshtivkar (41), who died of burn injuries sustained at work, on the grounds that he had converted from Judaism by joining the "Jehovah Witness" sect. Attorney Shimon Katz demanded that the burial society act to bury the deceased who was never a member of the sect (although his widow was), and also produced an affidavit from the sect that the deceased was not a member of their group. After several days, the Chief Rabbi of Israel intervened and the body was removed from the morgue and interred. (YEDIOT AHRONOT 6 Nov. 91; BROSH EHAD Lod weekly 8 Nov. 91)

The Sabbath supplement of HADASHOT (15.11.91), in the wake of the burial incident, published a three-page feature article with photographs under the heading "WHY ARE THEY AFRAID OF THEM?" by Enat Berkovitz. The sect has aroused the ire of the strong Indian Jewish community in Lod, where it has made significant inroads among Indian Jewish women. Berkovitz interviewed both traditional Indian Jews who wanted the sect expelled ("This is a state of Jews; let them go to a state of Christians!"), and members of the sect in Lod and nationally. They claim 400 members nationwide (40 members in Lod, with half the number Indian Jews). They don't regard themselves as Christians, but others do. They have twice-weekly study meetings based on material received from J.W. headquarters in Brooklyn, N.Y. (U.S.A.). The

article was written without any apparent prejudice, and allowed the parties to speak for themselves with minimal commentary. It closed with a fairly objective appraisal by Israel Lippel, former head of the Christian Affairs Department in the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Lippel characterized them as numerically "a marginal Christian sect", an outgrowth of U.S. Protestant Christianity, "one of many sects and sub-sects who differ from the Christian mainstream in one or another points; they are one of the most aggressive groups in the missionary field". The photographs of three leaders appear: Mark Einstein, Elisha Rogers and Eric Pierce.

EMMA BERGER SECT: Following the death in 1984 of the founder of their sect (which had aroused a storm in the Zichron Yaakov area where they settled in 1963), their intensive buying up of property and land ceased. Now they concentrate on production of filters for air-raided shelters against gas attacks. They do it as a service to the Jewish people, because they foresee a time of great trouble for Israel. The Gulf War and the threat of chemical attacks reinforced their belief. A Haifa company, MAY-AMI, markets the product, which is manufactured exclusively by the sect members. (YEDIOT AHRONOT 10 Dec. 91)

"YAHWEH" SECT: The head of a sect of U.S. black militants called "YAHWEH", who has declared himself the black messiah, has been charged with attempted murder along with several of his followers, who style themselves as "the true Jews" - in Miami, Florida. (HA'ARETZ 31.12.91)

#### SUNDRIES

MESSTIANIC MUSICAL: The Jerusalem weekly YERUSHALAYIM (13 Dec. 91) published a brief review headed "Jesus en route to Broadway: Messianic Jews in a musical play about Jerusalem after Jesus' death - Messiah or not, the main thing is to get to Broadway". Yoav Winograd, the reviewer, describes "ACTS," as an English-language historical musical play based on New Testament material, by Keith Aldrich, who directed the production with 16 actors, Jews and Christians (but mainly Messianic Jews who believe in Jesus).

The JERUSALEM POST (24.12.91) published a half-page review by Dell Griffin under the heading "Catalyst for Reconciliation". "ACTS" offers a unique perspective of the first ten chapters of the New Testament book and the early years of the Church, avoiding Hellenistic views of the Church and portraying it as a Messianic sect of Judaism as a necessary catalyst to extend the covenant of Abraham to Gentiles. It is not an attempt to convert Jews, but to present a gospel that uses the faith of the Hebrews as a springboard from which to turn the Gentiles from idols to serve "the living God of Israel".

The debate between early Church leaders over whether Gentiles may be part of the Messianic sect is the focus of the play's drama, and the Church is seen in its humble Jewish origins before its contamination with non-Jewish dogma. Aldrich says that references to the 4th century doctrines of Trinity, virgin birth and Jesus' resurrection, staples of Christianity today, are absent, but "do not appear in the first ten chapters of the N.T. book". Aldrich added a line in the play (Acts 5:38-39) quoting Rabbi Gamaliel, "directed at the Interior Ministry today to discourage its persecution of Messianic Jews". He already has bookings in Ireland, U.S.A., U.K. and South Africa.

ISRAELI SALMAN RUSHDIE?: Itzik Gilad is a 42-year-old Israeli who lives with a wealthy Italian widow near Bologna, and writes "historical" fiction. He hopes to become the Israeli equivalent of the Anglo-Indian writer who enraged the Muslim world with his novel "Satanic Verses". Gilad hopes to do this to the Jewish & Christian world with a novel about Jesus, the crucifixion and a mysterious book allegedly left by Jesus as a kind of last will & testament. The novel is called "The Scroll of the Cross". (YEDIOT AHRONOT 14.11.91)

BIBLE EXHIBITS: A page from an early Bible in Spanish by Marranos (Spanish crypto-Jews) from the press of pioneer printer J. Gutenberg, and a Hebrew Bible from China, are some of the highlights of the new permanent exhibit "BIBLES IN MANUSCRIPT & PRINTED BOOKS" at the Jewish National & University Library of the Hebrew University. (IN JERUSALEM 27.12.91)

The ultra-orthodox YATAID NE'EMAN (30.12.91) published a brief article by Ben Avraham about a recent Bible & archaeology exhibit in the British Museum which made no mention of Israel, while a nearby exhibit featured, sympathetically, "Palestinian Dress". It was later learned that the exhibit was funded by Arab Muslims. Indeed, exhibits, research, books and lectures are funded by Arab organizations with clear anti-Israel bias, sometimes even anti-Semitic.

ORATORIO RECOMMENDED: Yisrael Daliot, music critic of the Labour daily DAVAR (31.12.91), recommended to readers that they attend the premiere performance in Israel of the oratorio "The Childhood of Christ" by Berlioz. Based on the New Testament accounts of the nativity and childhood of Jesus, and Catholic traditions, it is a work of musical genius and will be presented by the best contemporary musicians.

The first section of the oratorio, the most dramatic, describes Herod's mad fears of the infant Jesus, the second the departure of the magi from Bethlehem and the flight to Egypt with its references to the hospitality of Ishmaelites and cordial relations between the Judean refugees and the Ishmaelites. The third section portrays the return of the Holy Family to Jerusalem while angelic and mortal choirs proclaim a hymn of thanksgiving for the days of the Messiah and the new era. Recommended to all admirers of Berlioz and all those interested in hearing a rare composition from one of the 19th century romantic musical geniuses.

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