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for Biblical and Jewish Studies

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Clippings covering 23.11. - 7.1 (95-96)

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23.11 Mishpachah (weekly, Jerusalem)

A SEVEN-BRANCHED CANDELABRA INSTEAD OF A CROSS

By Yechi'el Avramson

A long article about a French Protestant Pastor, Jean Marc Tubois and about his love for Israel.

"An exceptional pastor in a small French church wants to return to the roots of the ancient religion concealed in the Bible [*Old Testament*]. He speaks fluent Hebrew, and reads the Bible only in the original language, as only in that language does one feel the "Shechinah" [*Divine Presence*] in the Bible. He teaches his gentiles "the weekly portion" [*the traditional Old Testament text of the week*]. He publishes articles in defense of the People of Israel and the Land of Israel. A strange bird, a historical wonder, who is most fascinating to meet..."

"He is a gentile, he is a priest and he loves the People of Israel as many Jews love it... And not only that, he also suffers for that love. He identifies with us painfully, he suffers when we Jews suffer..."

Tubois' faith in the fulfillment of prophecies in the State of Israel especially impressed the reporter.

A very exceptional article: Mishpachah is a religious Jewish newspaper and generally very opposed to Christianity.

24.11 The Jerusalem Post (daily, Jerusalem, in English)

GLORIOUS SHAPES OF SILENCE

By Sue Fishkoff

15.12 Kol ha-'Ir (weekly, Jerusalem)

THE ORDER WILL PASS TO SILENCE

By Vered Kellner

The articles describe the life of the over twenty cloistered Sisters of Bethlehem and the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in a monastery at Beit Jamal, near Beit Shemesh. Their life is strictly contemplative, spent in silence and solitude. They support themselves financially by selling exquisite icons, ceramics and religious statuary, decorated with local motifs.

The monastery also contains a prayer room for visitors, open to all the religions of the area. The sisters' relationship to Jews is warm and honoring. "We get many Jewish visitors, including Orthodox, who say prayers here, and we want them to feel comfortable," says one of them. "We feel very close to the Jewish people and want to emphasize this friendship."

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Both The Jerusalem Post, which is the country's main English-language newspaper, and Kol ha-'Ir are politically and religiously relatively neutral.

7.12 Mishpachah (weekly, Jerusalem)

HATE WITHOUT REASON AND THE... MISSION

By Shlomo Tzor

Like flies are attracted to a dirty sink, so also the Missionary factors try to use the delicate situation created by the murder of Yitzhak Rabin for the purpose of distributing their ideas among the People of Israel.

Among the rest, the well-known missionary Ya'akov Damkani from Yaffo has published paid advertisements in a newspaper, under the innocent title "Hate without reason", appearing near the pictures of Shimon Peres and Binyamin Netanyahu.

Whoever opposes hate without reason, is invited to write to Damkani and to get... missionary propoganda literature.

[Photo: Picture of the advertisement and Damkani's address and telephone number.]

The complete unedited text. Mishpachah is a religious newspaper and generally very much opposed to Messianic Jews and Christians. The title "missionary" is used in this newspaper as in many other similar publications to designate anyone sharing the Gospel regardless of if he/she is Israeli or foreign, and usually the connotations of the word in this context are negative.

8.12 Yated Ne'eman (weekly, Jerusalem)

"THE STUDIES OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL HISTADRUT (Federation of Labor in Israel) STYLE - ALL ABOUT CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM"

By Sh. Israeli

The program for the "Studies of the Land of Israel" in the Histadrut for the academic year 95-96 includes a series of lectures about Christianity, reviewing its whole history, its founders and rituals, and an additional series on the history of Islam, including the study of Islamic beliefs and the Koran, and additional subjects connected with that religion ('The holiness of Jerusalem in Islam' etc.)

The courses, held in Beit Berl, include excursions to Christian and Moslem sites, to places of non-Jewish worship etc.

A member of "Lev L'Achim" who turned to the school and asked if the "Studies of the Land of Israel" in this framework do not include Judaic studies was answered negatively.

Yated Ne'eman is a religious newspaper and generally very much opposed to Messianic Jews and Christians.

8.12 Kan darom (weekly, Ashdod)

"MY WIFE TURNED OUR HOME INTO A CHURCH"

By Gad Manor

A resident of Ashkelon claims in a court of law that his wife acts violently towards him, and has turned their home into a church.

After long discussions, the judge decided that the two should continue to live together, ceasing from mutual violence. The complainant agreed to that but requested that the woman stop her religious activities in their home and "that she will not turn the place to a prayer house for believers in Jesus."

The woman explained to the judge: "I came from a Christian country, and I have Christian friends from Russia. I keep the Sabbath. The meeting that we organized was just once, and intended for praying to God to help me."

10.12 Yedi'ot Acharonot

**IMMIGRANTS WHO BELIEVE IN JESUS PETITIONED THE COURT-
WITH A REQUEST FOR CITIZENSHIP**

By Michal Goldberg

The High Court of Justice ordered the Minister of the Interior to explain in detail in 45 days why he did not grant Israeli identity cards to a new immigrant and her two children who believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

The order was given as a result of the petition by the mother, Natalia Molitivin, who immigrated to Israel with her husband and her children five years ago. According to her claim, her children and she were Jews when they came to Israel, but three years after they came, they accepted faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

The father of the family received an Israeli identity card 5 months ago, but the rest of the family are not yet recognized by the State.

Yedi'ot Acharonot is one of the most widely distributed Hebrew newspapers, politically and religiously relatively neutral.

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13.12 Inyan Meqomi (Mevasseret Tzion)

LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

By Tal Ami

Jonathan Miles, a young Christian, came from the USA to Israel as a journalist. He established an association called "Light to the Nations", the purpose of which is "to support the Nation of Israel in keeping its Biblical task to be a light to the nations; to collect donations to make it possible for children who are not citizens of the State of Israel to get medical treatment in the health institutes in Israel."

Jonathan tells about Andrei, 13 years old, who was ill with a malignant disease and came to Israel for treatment. They did not have money, and the price of a bone-marrow transplant from his brother, with all the treatment involved, was \$63,000.

The time ran short, and Andrei's illness became more severe. Jonathan turned to Jews and Christians in Israel and in the world to get enough money to save the boy's life. The reactions were positive. The amount collected rose to \$40,000, but it was not enough, and Andrei's chances to recover through the transplant got smaller. Finally Hadassah Hospital decided to accept the challenge with the sum collected, thus making the transplant possible.

The doctors gave him a 5% chance of success, but, according to Jonathan, the prayers of Jews and Christians brought about a miracle (also according to the definition of the doctors), and Andrei is at the moment in the process of recovery. Since then, Jonathan has been trying to mobilize donations for ill children from Gaza, Judaea, and Samaria, who do not have the right to receive treatment in Israel. But as his appeals increase, the answers decrease.

14.12 Mishpachah (weekly, Jerusalem)

THEY MOCK THE LAW OF THE MISSION

By Tzvi Ya'akovzon

According to a local Jerusalem newspaper, the Christian Church offered financial assistance to a Jewish woman, who threatened to convert if she did not receive financial assistance from other sources, thus transgressing the law prohibiting persuasion by gift for conversion. Father Marcel Dubois told that they do not accept conversions for financial reasons. On the other hand, "in a case in which the applicant really is interested in the Christian religion, he becomes automatically a part of the Christian congregation and enjoys its services".

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According to the opinion of the complainant, the church and Dubois transgressed the above-mentioned law. This is perhaps a precedent-setting complaint. It was lodged officially on 27.9.94, more than a year ago.

Member of Knesset Rabbi Arye Gamaliel from Shas lodged an inquiry about the results of the complaint. The answer of the Chief of Police Moshe Shachal was given in 14.12.94: "...The subject is still in the stages of investigation, and at this stage it is not possible to give any more details."

After a little more than three months an additional inquiry was lodged on the subject by Member of Knesset Rabbi Moshe Mayah.

About 2 months after this, 22.5.95, the Chief of the Police answered: "All the [persons] involved in the case have been investigated. The investigation showed that the woman did not intend to convert, but intended to use pressure on the Ministry of Housing in order to get a flat..." So, does the law prohibiting persuasion to convert prohibit it only when the persuaded one is really and seriously ready to convert to Christianity?

In the continuation of the above quote, the case was referred to the Ministry of Justice. Member of Knesset Arye Deri sent a question to the Minister of Justice, Prof. David Liba'i, asking what the recommendation of the police and the position of the Ministry of Justice were.

Prof. Liba'i, the Minister of Justice, answered on 2.8.95: "The transgression for which the complaint was lodged is the type of transgression handled by the police. The answer to this question is in the realm of the authority of the Minister of the Police."

Thus, Shachal and Liba'i contradict each other.

Now new inquiries have been lodged, both about the investigation itself and about the mutually contradictory answers. If the complaint is not finally taken seriously, the subject will be brought to the Attorney-General of the government.

Mishpachah is a religious newspaper and generally very much opposed to Messianic Jews and Christians.

14.12 Mishpachah (weekly, Jerusalem)

THE "FALASHMURA" STREAM TO CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

By Eliezer Schulman

Many of the members of the Falashmura [an Ethiopian Jewish group converted to Christianity] who immigrated to Israel and "returned" to Judaism lead a Christian way of life. The Falashmura are now coming to

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Israel at the rate of about 100 persons a week.

The government of Ethiopia opposes their immigration, and thus it prevents the greatest scandal of the "Law of Return": the immigration of tens of thousands of believing Christians to Israel, for whom returning to Judaism is only a pretext for fleeing poverty stricken Ethiopia and emigrating to Israel.

In Acco, Nazareth and Jerusalem, members of the Falashmura flock to the churches. They go to Sunday prayers, are considered Christians in every respect, and are now preparing for the celebrations of the end of the civil year.

All the factors involved in this want to suppress the truth about the situation. Those taking care of the Falashmura say that those in question are relatively few, and that this is the price to be paid for the saving of many others who return to Judaism and keep the commandments.

Some of the members of the Ethiopian Jewish community in Israel warn that if a way cannot be found to deport the Christian Falashmura, and if an attempt is not made to block the phenomenon in Ethiopia, a deep spiritual crisis will affect the Ethiopian Jews who have already immigrated to Israel.

Mishpachah is a religious newspaper and generally very much opposed to Messianic Jews and Christians.

15.12 Kan Darom (weekly, Ashdod)

THE MISSIONARIES ALSO VISITED RABBI YOSEF ZINI'S HOME

By Dani'el Aviv

Ashdod continues to attract missionaries from the Jehovah's Witnesses sect. Residents of the town reported that during recent days pairs of missionaries visited them and offered them Christian books.

The missionaries even visited the home of Rabbi Yosef Zini. He wants to hold a discussion with the heads of the Municipality and the Religious Council about this serious subject. According to him, missionaries' visits have turned into a plague in Ashdod. In addition, they want to connect their teaching to the peace developments and the political situation.

In religious circles in Ashdod it is claimed that in recent years the town has turned into one of the most prominent focuses of missionary activity, because many new immigrants live in Ashdod, a fact which attracts missionaries.

18.12 Ha-Aretz

PEACE, SECURITY AND FEELINGS OF GUILT

By Amnon Barzili

[The main points of the article are concerned with the generals in the Peace and Security Council, who will meet in order to determine a position concerning the discussions with Syria and the permanent arrangements with the Palestinians.]

Nabil Hazn accuses the Labor Party of discrimination against the Christian community.

In Israel there are approximately 135 thousand Christians, of which only 67 thousand have the right to vote. The Christian community is much bigger than the Druze community, but if Hazn's forecast is true, there will be two Muslim representatives and one Druze representative in the Labor Party's list for the Knesset. The Christian representative, today Member of Knesset Channa Chadar, would be pushed outside the real list of the Labor Party in the Knesset.

The Christians have turned into the scapegoat in the struggle between Vice Minister Nawwaf Musalachah and the Mayor of Taybah, Rafiq Hagg Yahya, who established two coalitions competing for the two places promised to the Arab faction in the Knesset list. Hazn supposes that Musalachah and Hagg Yahya will eventually make a deal, so both will be elected to the Knesset at the expense of the minorities, the Beduins and the Christians.

Ha-Aretz is one of the main Israeli dailies, politically and religiously relatively neutral.

18.12 Ha-Aretz

THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE VATICAN: THE POPE WILL COME TO ISRAEL AS A PILGRIM, NOT AS A STATESMAN

By Shachar Ilan and Nadav Shargai

18.12 Ha-Aretz

JERUSALEM IN THE STATORE MEANING

By Yosi Millman

18.12 Davar Rishon

THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE VATICAN MET WITH CHIEF RABBIS IN ISRAEL

By Uri Rodriguez-Garcia

18.12 Davar Rishon

THE VATICAN: ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS MUST DETERMINE THE STATUS OF JERUSALEM

By Arye Dayyan

18.12 The Jerusalem Post (daily, Jerusalem, in English)

VATICAN ENVOY: POPE HAS NOT CONFIRMED JERUSALEM AS ISRAEL'S CAPITAL

By Haim Shapiro and news agencies

18.12 Yedi'ot Acharonot

THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE VATICAN: WE DID NOT CHANGE OUR POSITION CONCERNING JERUSALEM

By Ilanah Baum and Ittamar Eichner, reporters of Yedi'ot Acharonot

18.12 Ha-Tzofeh

"THE POPE WILL COME TO ISRAEL AS A PILGRIM AND NOT AS A STATESMAN"

19.12 Davar Rishon

VATICAN IS INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE STATUS OF THE HOLY PLACES IN JERUSALEM

By Arye Dayyan

19.12 The Jerusalem Post (daily, Jerusalem, in English)

VATICAN OFFICIAL: NOBODY CAN CLAIM EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS TO HOLY PLACES

By Itim

22.12 Ha-Kol Bi (weekly, Jerusalem)

THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE VATICAN MET WITH THE CHIEF RABBIS AND REQUESTED: "INCREASE THE STUDIES OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE JEWISH SCHOOLS IN ISRAEL"

3.1 Yedi'ot Acharonot

ISRAEL AND THE VATICAN ESTABLISH A COMMITTEE TO ATTEND TO THE PILGRIMS

By Yosi Barr

The Foreign Minister of the Vatican, Jean-Louis Tauran, met last night (17.12) with the chief Rabbis of Israel, Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron and Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, in Jerusalem. This was the first meeting between the Vatican's senior representative and Israel's Rabbinical authority.

2 years ago, in December 93, the Vatican and Israel decided to establish diplomatic relations and to exchange Ambassadors.

Tauran came to Israel in order to prepare for the visit of the Pope, for which the official date has not yet been determined. This visit will supposedly be held next year or in the year 2000. He said that the Pope does not want to come to Israel for a official visit, but as a pilgrim, and to visit the holy places.

He asked the chief Rabbis to work for wider studies on Christianity in the Jewish schools in Israel, in the same way that the church increased the study of Judaism in its educational institutions, and suggested contacts between the priesthood and the Rabbinate in Israel.

The Rabbis also discussed with him the role of religion in the struggle for peace and tolerance, and asked the Vatican to criticize the antisemitism re-emerging in Eastern and Western Europe.

Israel and the Vatican established a joint committee to attend to the tens of thousands of pilgrims who come each year to the holy places in Israel. The purpose of the committee is to prepare the ground for the year 2,000, and to prepare the visit of Pope John Paul II in Israel.

The number of pilgrims to Israel is increasing continuously. This year about 50 thousand pilgrims came to Israel, and next year an increase of more than 20% is anticipated. Most of them come to Israel on El Al.

In Tauran's discussions with the Israeli political leadership, an important subject was Jerusalem, especially as Leah Rabin met the Pope last week in the Vatican City, and said after the meeting that she heard in his words the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, that is: "Jerusalem has a double meaning, a double task. It is the capital of Israel, and the capital of the three monotheistic religions."

Tauran denied the claim: "...the discussion between them was only of spiritual character. The Pope said that Jerusalem has a political dimension and a spiritual dimension, and that the two peoples living in it must determine its status. The Vatican is interested in guarantees that the Old City of Jerusalem will preserve its status."

His words were nearly identical to the official statement from the Vatican after the Embassy of the PLO turned to it, and asked clarification about her words.

Monsignor Tauran said that Jerusalem "must be the junction of peace," and that there must be found for her a "solution acceptable to all the sides." "An international judicial instrument is to be established," he added, "which would guarantee real freedom of religion, freedom of access to the holy places and complete freedom of ritual."

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"According to the opinion of the Vatican, the two peoples living in the city, the Israelis and the Palestinians, have to settle the question of the status of the city between themselves," he said.

The Vatican will not interfere in any political agreement reached on Jerusalem, but reiterates its stand that no one can claim exclusive jurisdiction over the holy places, Tauran said.

"The religious aspect of Jerusalem must be discussed in a multilateral forum, and we want to be involved in it," he said to Foreign Minister Ehud Barak. Barak replied that Israel wants to settle the religious issues relating to Jerusalem as well as the political ones.

Tauran also made requests concerning various Christian properties, and asked for assurances that religious officials living in the territories would have free access to Jerusalem.

According to Dr. Yoel Bar-Romi from the Foreign Ministry: "The Vatican speaks of an international status for Jerusalem... Jerusalem can be the capital of Israel on condition that it would also be the capital of the Palestinians, provided that the special privileges of the Church will be preserved in it... These rights include, of course, not only the freedom of ritual but also the freedom of religious teaching in their institutes and privileges like those given to diplomats." Thus, there is a change in the Vatican's position towards Israel and Jerusalem, expressing itself in the wish that Israel and the Palestinians would reach an arrangement between themselves which would also solve the problem of Jerusalem. Therefore they support the peace process and the negotiations between Israel and the PLO, and decided to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

Tauran met also the President of the State, Ezer Weizman, the Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, and the Mayor of Jerusalem, Ehud Olmert. He also visited Yad Vashem.

The Minister planned also to visit Bethlehem, Gaza and East Jerusalem, including the Orient House.

All the articles, regardless of which newspaper they were in, were very neutral. It seems that even the religious newspapers saw the visit as a political more than a religious event.

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20.12 The Jerusalem Post (daily, Jerusalem, in English)

CHRISTIAN GROUPS WANT BOYCOTT OF BETHLEHEM AT CHRISTMAS

By Haim Shapiro

21.12 The Jerusalem Post (daily, Jerusalem, in English)

LATIN PATRIARCH REJECTS CALL FOR CHRISTMAS BOYCOTT

By Haim Shapiro

22.12 Itton Yerushalayim (weekly, Jerusalem)

CHRISTIAN BOYCOTT OF BETHLEHEM

By Khalid Abu-Tu'mah

24.12 Davar Rishon

THE CHRISTIAN EMBASSY TO PILGRIMS: DO NOT VISIT BETHLEHEM AT CHRISTMAS

Uri Rodrigez-Garcia

29.12 Ha-Kol Bi (weekly, Jerusalem)

HUNDREDS OF CHRISTIANS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD MAY BE FLOODING TO EFRAT INSTEAD OF BETHLEHEM NEXT WEEK

Nine Christian organizations, headed by the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, which represents millions of Christians all over the world, issued a call for Christians not to visit Bethlehem on Christmas to protest Moslem oppression of Christians in the Middle East.

The call was signed by the Christian Embassy, Bridges for Peace, and seven US-based organizations: the World Lebanese Organization, the American Coptic Association, the South Sudan Movement, the Christian Israel PAC, the Middle East Christian Committee, the Assyrian American Committee and the Coalition for the Defence of Human Rights under Islamization.

"We cannot ignore the terrible atrocities committed by the PLO against Lebanese Christians during their reign of terror in Lebanon, as well as general Muslim oppression of Christian minorities in the Middle East," the groups said.

Rather than visit Bethlehem, the organizations' Christian supporters should visit the Jewish community of Efrat, near Bethlehem, or other nearby Jewish communities. This step is intended to express the discontent of Christians with of the transfer of Bethlehem to the hands of the PLO.

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Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah rejected the call, calling its organizers unChristian, and saying that the makers of the call were Christians from abroad who ignored the local population's needs. "This land needs more prayer and reconciliation between Christians and Jews, not people coming from outside and telling us this and that. This is not Christian," he said.

Sabbah said that Yasser Arafat would attend the Roman Catholic midnight Mass in Bethlehem, but denied the suggestion that the Palestinians would be transforming a religious holiday into a political spectacle. Arafat's desire to attend the mass shows a respect for religion, he said.

Elias Freij, who is responsible for Tourism in the Palestinian Authority, refused to react to the Christian Embassy's declaration.

22.12 Itton Tel Aviv (weekly, Tel Aviv)

IN THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN WEIZMANN SCHOOL CHRISTMAS IS IGNORED

By Tomar Zarchin

29.12.95 City Lights, The Jerusalem Post Weekly Supp. (Tel Aviv)

NO XMAS TREE

By R.H.

Pupils of the Weizman elementary school in Yaffo, the only mixed Arab-Jewish school in the Tel Aviv area, celebrated Hanukka and Christmas last week - but without a Christmas tree.

Hanukka was celebrated in the traditional way. To celebrate Christmas, Christian-Arab pupils gave sweets to all the pupils and received Christmas cards from Jewish pupils.

In the school's Board of Parents there are 15 parents, of whom 2 are Christians, and the decision to omit the Christmas tree was accepted unanimously [*acc. to City Lights, with majority*]. This was because of the fear that Christian elements would get a foothold in the school.

The decision raised opposition from some of the Christian parents. According to one of the Christian mothers, the suppression of the Christian religion in Weizman is racism.

"The Jewish parents' committee acts as if the school belongs to Jews only and that Moslems and Christians have no place."

Avi Levi, the chairman of the Board, confirms: "As a Board of Parents we oppose the introduction of any non-Jewish element to the school. Weizman is a Jewish school in which [also] Arabs study."

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22.12 The Jerusalem Post (daily, Jerusalem, in English)

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

By E.H.

A long article about the birthplace of John the Baptist in Ein Kerem, which is attracting both Christian - Catholic and Protestant -tourists and Israeli visitors.

22.12 The Jerusalem Post (daily, Jerusalem, in English)

THANKS TO HANUKKA

By Moshe Kohn

An article about Hanukka, the Jewish martyrs and the Maccabees in the Christian tradition, especially during the Crusades.

25.12 The Jerusalem Post (daily, Jerusalem, in English)

ARAFAT AND THE CHURCH

5.1 The Jerusalem Post (daily, Jerusalem, in English)

MOCKING JESUS AND THE JEWS

Guest Columnist Andrea Levin

Around 15 years ago, when Yasser Arafat first described Jesus as a Palestinian, even some of his supporters mocked him.

But his deriders were wrong. When Arafat arrived in Bethlehem on Saturday and said "This is the birthplace of our Lord the Messiah, the Palestinian, the Palestinian," the media simply reported this as a statement of fact. Even before this, NBC-TV announced that Arafat would greet the people not far from where another Palestinian was born almost 2,000 years ago.

Ignoring the tensions between Christians and Moslems in Bethlehem, the *Times* reporter declared that Arafat tried to "reach out" to both Christians and Jews.

Only a few media outlets, among them Reuters, reported that Arafat's statements about Jesus were not acceptable to the Christian community. Dominic Evans noted that in addition to the concerns of the Christians over the Moslem Palestinian political takeover of Bethlehem, "eyebrows were also raised when Arafat claimed Jesus as a Palestinian."

Only a few reporters devoted serious attention to the concerns of the Christian Arabs about the diminishing of their numbers relative to Mos-

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lems. Andrew Meisels in *The Boston Herald* reported that many Christians were concerned about rising Islamic fundamentalism. He recounted threatening events, including desecration of a Christian cemetery.

The Church did not protest either, excepting some protests from Rome about turning Christmas festivities into a celebration of Arafat, and the dismissal of the suggestion by the Palestinian Authority to show a laser beam display of Arafat and Jesus walking together in the Bethlehem sky during the Christmas celebrations.

In general, though, local clergymen toady to the PLO. The Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah told the Catholic Church in Lebanon that the Church in Jerusalem was worried about "the new reality" in the Holy Land - the Jewish factor. Neither he nor anybody else has protested either in Jerusalem or in Rome against Arafat's distortion of Christian history and belief.

The Church should remind its Arab flocks that Jesus was a Jew who lived in Judaea, as the New Testament testifies, and explain that the name Palestine, never mentioned in the New Testament, is a distortion of "Philistine," a derisive appellation coined by the Romans.

"Having subscribed to some murderous Big Lies in the past, the Church may want to throw a few words of truth in the direction of the Holy Land. In this day of much-trumpeted conciliation, such words should prove a most salutary contribution indeed." (JP 25.12)

The Jerusalem Post is Israel's main English-language newspaper, politically and religiously relatively neutral. Interesting here is the strong indignation which the undermining of Jesus' Jewish identity arouses.

27.12 The Jerusalem Post (daily, Jerusalem, in English)

CATHOLIC SCHOLARS QUESTION WHETHER JESUS WAS AN ONLY CHILD

(Los Angeles Times)

A calm, interested discussion about the subject, quoting several Catholic scholars.

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29.12. The Jerusalem Post (daily, Jerusalem, in English)

PATRIARCH WANTS AGREEMENT BETWEEN NON-CATHOLIC CHURCH AND ISRAEL

By Haim Shapiro

Greek orthodox Patriarch Diodoros I yesterday issued, during his traditional response to President Ezer Weizman and religious Affairs Minister Shimon Sheetrit at the President's annual New Year's reception for the heads of Christian communities, an open call for a legally binding agreement with Israel.

This call is the first by a non-Catholic church. After the signing of the agreement between Israel and the Vatican in December 1993, it was assumed that other churches would negotiate similar agreements. However, the Vatican is the only world church having the kind of sovereignty necessary for entering into treaty agreements.

Diodoros praised the positive results of the peace process, and encouraged continued cooperation with the Palestinians, hoping, however, that the resulting agreements would not compromise the existing status quo concerning holy places, nor harm the rights and privileges of the religious communities.

Any change in these, or their reaffirmation, "should constitute the topic of future agreements between the historical communities and the State of Israel."

29.12 Itton Tel Aviv (weekly, Tel Aviv)

THERE IS PROOF THAT GOD VISITED YAFFO

Christmas was celebrated this week in St. Anthony's Church in Yaffo.

In May this year the soldier Chani'el Koren burst into the church and shot 220 bullets from his Uzi submachine gun, in an attempt to destroy the Christian holy place. Miraculously no one was hurt, but there was severe damage to the church. Statues were destroyed, the altar was broken and the statue of St. Anthony was decapitated. The Minister of Religious Affairs, Shimon Sheetrit, visited the site and promised to transfer funds to the church for the repair of the damages.

More than half a year has passed, and the head of the church, Abd al-Masi, says that the money has not yet been transferred.

The Christian congregation in Yaffo could finance the repairs itself. But they have a good reason not to do so. A folk tale is being weaved in Yaffo: Koren shot hundreds of bullets in all directions, but none of the bullets harmed the icons which hang along the walls of the church. They

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hit only around them. The congregation sees this as a great miracle, evidence of the presence of God in the church. "What can be considered as simple probability, is considered in the eyes of the believers in Yaffo as a miracle and a revelation."

29.12 Kol ha-'Emeq ve-ha-Galil (weekly, Natzrat 'Illit/Upper Nazareth)

FIR TREES IN THE HOMES OF IMMIGRANTS, AND CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS FOR SALE IN THE MALLS

By Chanan Ziso

In Har Yonah in Natzrat 'Illit [*Upper Nazareth*] it was possible this week to see decorated fir trees and flickering lights in the homes of many new immigrants, mainly from the CIS.

Some of the Jewish residents of the quarter were angered by the fact that these immigrants, who claim to be Jewish, adopt the customs of Christians, as they did in the countries of their origin. During the week one could see new immigrants from Russia shopping for the holiday, principally in the Lev ha-'Ir Mall which had Christmas decorations for sale.

Tens of new immigrants from Natzrat 'Illit were seen at the Christmas Mass in the Church of Annunciation in Nazareth, which was broadcast live by television's Channel 1.

30.12. Shishah Yamim (weekly, Bnei Brak)

THEY WERE INVITED TO THE MONASTERY...

A Monastery near Beit Jamal and Ramat Beit Shemesh has turned, shamefully, into an attraction for inhabitants of Beit Shemesh. Not long ago there was a special event organized for them, and during the last few days signs were seen on the wayside, announcing that fir trees would be distributed for the Christian festival, of course to the inhabitants of Beit Shemesh.

Shishah Yamim is a new religious newspaper, very opposed to Christianity.

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30.12. Shishah Yamim (weekly, Bnei Braq)

THE BOY WAS RESCUED FROM THE HANDS OF HIS BAPTIST MOTHER DIRECTLY TO A YESHIVA

By Yochanan Schreiber

About a year ago, a Russian family, with a Christian father and a Jewish mother, immigrated to Israel. They settled in northern Israel, and sent their 14-year-old son to study in the settlement's school. The mother started organizing "Torah lessons", persuading the listeners to believe in Jesus, and because of this over 40 of the residents of the settlement belong today to the Baptist sect. During the last half a year, the son suffered shocking maltreatment at home, the worst of which was an attempt to force him to join the Baptist sect. The mother sent the son to a yeshiva so that he would get a bad impression - so she hoped - of Judaism, and would return to the sect. But the son became very interested in the Torah and succeeded in his studies in the yeshiva.

About two weeks ago Rabbi Alex Ortowski, the director of the "Yad L'Achim" branch in Hadera, got a telephone call at 3 a.m. from the boy, who begged for urgent help. At 8 o'clock in the morning "Yad L'Achim" in Hadera had already discussed possibilities for the rescue of the boy from his home. During the morning the organization succeeded in rescuing him and bringing him to Hadera. The boy declared that he was "ready to go into exile to the place of the Torah" in order to learn it. Now the boy is a yeshiva student. Meanwhile, additional details are being clarified concerning this grave case of missionary activity, and "Yad L'Achim" is exposing by means of the boy many details about the missionary activity of the Baptist sect. The boy's parents are keeping completely silent and have not turned to the police to report his disappearance.

Shishah Yamim is a new religious newspaper, very opposed to Christianity.

31.12 The Jerusalem Post (The New York Times, Sunday, December 31, 1995)

PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS FEELING LIKE A MINORITY

By Serge Schmemmann (Bethlehem, West bank)

By going to Church for Christmas mass, Yasser Arafat wanted to announce that his Palestine is open to all those of good will, whatever their religion. Most Palestinian Christians seemed to be encouraged by this.

Palestinian Christians and Muslims on the West Bank have long lived in relative harmony. But now, in the end of the occupation, the Christian minority is worried about its future in an predominantly Muslim Pales-

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tine, especially with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Emigration to the Americas, and a comparatively low birth rate, have reduced the number of Christians among the Palestinians from more than 20 percent in 1948 to less than 3 percent today, or about 50,000.

In the Middle east, religion is a question of identity. Mr. Arafat's marriage to a Christian-born woman, even though she converted to Islam, was in itself seen as a demonstration that the Palestinian nation is one.

He has also tried to reassure the Palestinian Christians. They are the only minority, excepting the Samaritans, which has seats set aside in the Palestinian Council - 5 of the total 88.

Not all Christians are content with this. Some politicians believe that this makes them a separate group, limits their representation, and transforms a religious minority into a political minority.

But Jonathan Kuttab, a lawyer running for one of the Christian seats in East Jerusalem, argues that having guaranteed seats helps to remove religion from the debate by reassuring the Christian minority of representation, and enables its members to run on the issues.

The greater anxieties of the Christians, Mr. Kuttab said, are those shared with moderate Muslims - the rise of fundamentalism, and "whether the Palestinian state will be democratic or not."

5.1 The Jerusalem Post (daily, Jerusalem, in English)

NEW CHRISTIANS FEAR OPPRESSION UNDER PA

By Steve Rodan

The article tells the story of Shaqer Salah as an example.

In 1990, Salah was kidnapped from his village, Sarta, and brought to Nablus, accused of collaboration with Israel. According to his claim, he never collaborated, but the fact that he managed to escape confirmed his guilt.

Today, Salah, 35, sees himself as a possible first victim of a new wave of oppression by the Palestinian authorities. During the last few years, he and more than a dozen other area villagers have quietly converted from Islam to Christianity.

"Something was missing for me", Salah recalls. "I didn't find it in the Koran. I found it in the Bible."

"We're scared," says a colleague of Salah, also converted to Christianity. "We pray secretly. I know that some members of my family want to kidnap my children from me." Sammy Kirreh, a lecturer at Bethlehem University, points to a stream in Palestinian society promoting Islam as

both the dominant culture and religion. "Consequently, the dominant religion becomes the religion of all members of Palestinian society irrespective of their social status, ethnic origin or religious affiliation," Kirreh writes in the Palestinian weekly *Biladi*.

The villagers discovered Christianity through a group of Western Christians living near them. Some learned about the Bible and Christianity through correspondence courses from Germany. Others had long conversations with Christians they worked with. Some learned about Christianity while living abroad, and returned home as practicing Christians.

Salah donated part of his 40 dunams of land for the construction of a school for the area's Christian community. As a result, he was summoned in May to the headquarters of the Palestinian Preventive Security in Jericho and held for 24 days, accused of collaboration with Israel. "They asked me why I was a Christian," Salah recalls. "Then they forced me to sign a paper stating that I am not a Christian."

Salah's case was reported widely and Western diplomats, including former US President Jimmy Carter intervened, leading to his release.

Now he lives in the Tel Aviv area, the Civil Administration having given him permission to stay in Israel for three months at a time, but without the right to work.

According to Salah, the rest of the Christians in Sarta are quietly assured of their safety as long as they maintain a low profile. But for more than a year, the villagers' Western Christian neighbors have not visited them, fearing retaliation by Islamic extremists.

6.1. Shishah Yamim (weekly, Bnei Braq)

"SHISHAH YAMIM" REVEALS SUSPICIONS THAT THE BAPTIST SECT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DESECRATION OF THE SABBATH IN JERUSALEM'S "CAFE PARADISO" AT #4 NARKIS STREET, WHERE PROMINENT ACTIVITY OF THE SECT IS INDICATED.

By Shmuel Perlman

According to information received by "Shishah Yamim", there is a connection between the headquarters of the Baptist sect at #4 Narkis Street in Jerusalem and Cafe Paradiso at the same address. The cafe opened approximately half a year ago, with tens of activists from the Meretz movement in Jerusalem coming there every Sabbath to "fill" it with people and to prove that the secular residents of Jerusalem want it to be open on Sabbath. Ultra-Orthodox residents of the near-by Sha'arei Chesed neighborhood started to picket the cafe every Sabbath. It was also reported that many missionaries visit this cafe. There is also a possibility that #4 Narkis Street is the center of the missionary activity of the

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Baptist sect. Thus the suspicions about the connection between the missionaries and the cafe got stronger, and serious discoveries were made, according to which the Mission people are taking an active part in the struggle against the sanctification of the Sabbath in Jerusalem. Next Sabbath we anticipate a demonstration of thousands of ultra-Orthodox at 3 p.m., as a result of the discovery that the cafe is actually operated by the people of the Mission. The Rabbis of the neighborhood say that not only must the cafe be removed, but also, and principally, the center of the missionary sect which distributes missionary material all over the Rehavia and Sha'arei Chesed neighborhoods. The different activist organizations have been working for a long time to burn the plague of the Mission from the neighborhood, but until now it was not known who was responsible for the missionary activity. Now, it seems, a complaint will be lodged with the police for attempted conversion. The neighborhood workers exposed not long ago an additional sect - the "Kings of Kings" sect, working from 24 Ben Maimon Street in the city. This sect has a shop for "souvenirs and holy articles," named "Berachot mi-Yerushalayim" ("Blessings from Jerusalem"), where missionary material is distributed. The owners of the shop claim that they do not belong to the "Kings of Kings" sect, but to the "Messianic Assembly". It is reported that they have tried to persuade many Jews to convert.

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The Cafe Paradiso is not in the same building as the Baptist Church, and according to the Pastor of the Hebrew-speaking congregation there claims of a connection between the coffee shop and the Baptist congregation are untrue.

The expression "burning the plague of the Mission" is slightly ominous, as the Baptist Church was burned down in 1982, and has since been rebuilt.

6.1. Shishah Yamim (weekly, Bnei Braq)

"BEZEK" TELEPHONE CARDS PERPETUATE BAPTISM

By Shmuel Perlman

The 'Bezek' company is currently distributing telephone cards, on one side of which is a picture of Christian pastors at a Christian site by the Jordan river. Rabbis who turned to the editorial board protesting the phenomenon said that "they hope that the card in question is only a mistake of the 'Bezek' company and not a deliberate deed".

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7.1. The Jerusalem Post (daily, Jerusalem, in English)

Letters to the Editor

JEWISH ROOTS OF CHRISTIANITY

Sir, - We take this collective opportunity to respond to your December 25 editorial "Arafat and the Church." Israel as referred to in the New Testament literally means the Land and/or People of Israel. In the Gospel of Matthew for instance, Joseph was told to "take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel." Anyone who reads the Bible recognizes that the Land was called Israel and not Palestine.

Sadly, too many Christians have remained silent in the face of Arafat's "big lie" fabrication that Jesus was a Palestinian. Perhaps this is because they subscribe to "replacement theology" which teaches that the Church has replaced Israel in the plans and purposes of God. Nevertheless, there are countless evangelical Christians living throughout the world who reject this doctrine while affirming that Bethlehem is the birthplace of Jesus, who was and will always remain Jewish.

Was Jesus a Galilean? Certainly! He spent much of his life in Nazareth and ministered in the region of the Kinneret. Was he a Judaeen? Yes! He was born in Bethlehem. Jesus, a member of the nation of Israel? Yes. But Palestinian? No. Palestine was the name for Eretz Yisrael coined by the Romans following the Bar Kochba revolt more than 100 years after Jesus lived.

As an international Christian ministry, for 10 years we have sent our literature to over 70 nations in order to educate and enlarge Christian understanding of Israel and our Jewish roots. We unreservedly reject Arafat's or any other claim that Jesus was a Palestinian not only for the reasons already given, but also because by implication it diminishes his Jewishness.

Roy Sanders, Director
The Israel Executive Council of Christian Friends of Israel
Jerusalem

Complete, unedited text.

7.1. Ha-Aretz

ARAFAT MEETS IN BETHLEHEM WITH HEADS OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

By Uri Nir

The chairman of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, went last night to Bethlehem to participate in the Christmas events of the "Eastern" churches, who celebrate Christmas two weeks later than the Western churches.

First Arafat held a meeting with the heads of the Christian congregations in the area, and then received the peace prize of the Greek Orthodox church from Patriarch Diodoros the First.

The late Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, and the present Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, who was then Foreign Minister, received the prize from Diodoros in Jerusalem a few months ago, in a ritual which angered the leadership of the Palestinian Authority because it was organized in "occupied Jerusalem".

In this month's articles, two new trends can be seen: there are several articles discussing Arab Christians and several articles about various Christian topics, some of them not "hard news," but more for general interest (see, for ex., p. 1, 13, 14), which are written in a very positive style.

All the articles, except those specially mentioned, have been edited in order to avoid any copyright problems. We are extremely sorry for the fact that we are still awaiting more detailed information about the newspapers.