

SUBJECT NUMBER ONE: "THE MISSION" (AND THE FALSE PROPHET)

DATE: 26.3.79 JOURNAL: "MAARIV" (HEBREW P.M. INDEPENDENT) NEWS ITEM

HEADING: "THE PROPHET" AHARON LEVY AND HIS WIFE HELEN ARRESTED"
(Suspected of "Judaizing" Christians and Exploiting their Status as New Immigrants)

BYLINE: Nurith Dovrat

QUOTE: Aharon and Helen Levy, owners of "Bethel Zion" in Azur, were arrested this morning by the Frauds Division of the Police on suspicion of making false declarations in the Rabbinic Court, for aiding and abetting the acquisition of Identity Certificates and New Immigrant Certificates illegally, and as suspects in the commission of offenses against the Customs Regulations by exploiting New Immigrant Rights to avoid payment of taxes. An investigating team has been set up for the affair, at whose head is Officer Baruch Gavrieli, Deputy Chief of the Frauds Division, and Sgr Michael Horowitz. This morning at 6.00 the investigators raided the house on Rehov Moshe Sparat, 29, in Azur.

Legal immunity has been promised to the young couple, Bill and Lunda Hicks, who have been living until recently at "Bethel." It has been decided not to put them on trial as partners in a fraudulent act inasmuch as they are cooperating with the police and giving all the information known to them about the matter to the police concerning the affair which was exposed by the MAARIV reporter.

Lunda and Bill Hicks, Christians reared in the bosom of the church, were wed by the Rabbinate in July 1975 after a hearing conducted in the Rabbinic Court in which a decision was reached by the Chief Rabbi of Tel-Aviv, Rabbi Hayim David Halevy, concerning the Jewishness of the two. The court relied upon the testimony of Aharon Levy who claims that he is "a prophet and messenger of God," and of Brad Romans, a Christian who was then living at "Bethel," and declared that he was Jewish. On the basis of false declarations of the young couple and of Aharon Levy, they were given Identity Certificates and New Immigrant Certificates, and received the rights of new immigrants, which they used to purchase many items, some of which are found in "Bethel", and some have been sold by Aharon Levy without payment of the tax, as required.

Bill Hicks who left "Bethel" a year ago succeeded in freeing himself from the influence of "the Prophet" and returned to Israel in order to rescue his wife and free her from this negative influence. On Wednesday evening he succeeded in getting the young woman out of "Bethel" with the help of Attorney Silvio Nahum and the assistance of the police. Out of fear of the vengeance of "the prophet" she was concealed by religious elements in "Meah Shearim" in the capital, and was given psychological treatment which released her from her dependence upon Aharon Levy. (SEE ADDITIONAL DETAILED STORY)

DATE: 26.3.79 JOURNAL: "MAARIV" (HEB PM IND) DETAILED NEWS STORY (EXPOSÉ)

HEADING: "MY HUSBAND IS SATAN", THE YOUNG WOMAN CRIED, UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE
FALSE PROPHET LEVY OF AZUR" (PHOTOS: Aharon & Helen Levy, Bill Hicks, Lunda H.)

BYLINE: Nurith Dovrat

EXCERPTS: "I am the prophet. I am a messenger of God. This is the House of God (Bethel)," Aharon Levy screamed angrily, leader of the sect "Beth-el Zion" when the police of the Holon Station ordered him on last Wednesday to honour the Rabbinical court order ruling that Lunda Hicks, age 24, who had been staying at his home for four years, must leave and return to her husband. Lunda resisted all the efforts of her husband Bill to convince her to free herself from the influence of "the prophet" who sought to divide them. Under the influence of Aharon Levy she claimed that her husband was "Satan", and that she must obey the instructions of the sect leader Aharon Levy.

Husband Bill lived with his wife at Bethel for three years, and left a year ago after a Maariv reporter exposed the true nature of Aharon Levy in a report published in July '77. Bill Hicks had returned to Israel to work for the return of his wife to him.... One of the heads of the Activists against the Mission, a representative of "Yad L'Akchim", who has been working to stop the activity of Aharon Levy, was secretly introduced to the affair and helped to conceal the couple out of fear of the possible vengeance of "the prophet." The couple were concealed for three days in Meah Shearim, the ultra-orthodox neighbourhood in Jerusalem, and the psychologist David Miller, who was brought specially from the U.S.A. by the husband, treated the woman in order to release the woman from the influence and dependence upon her of Levy. She recovered and began to cooperate, and she and her husband were willing to tell all that was known to them about the activities of Aharon & Helen Levy, in order to bring them to justice.....

It was the MAARIV investigation which exposed the affair, with Bill & Lunda Hicks relating the background of the events as they developed.

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"My wife and I were married in the Tel Aviv Rabbinate ^(in a Jewish ceremony) after we had declared before the Rabbinical Court that we were both Jews as well as our mothers. We did this under the direction of Aharon Levy who represented himself as a "prophet and messenger of God," and said that we must submit to him. Both of us were raised as Christians, and there is not in our families a drop of Jewish blood. We attended church regularly and we believe in Jesus. In 1973 we were married in a church, a fact well-known to Levy. He knew that we were lonely, far from our families, seeking a new and better way of life, and he understood that he could influence us by means of religious belief."

Bill Hicks, a 25-year old American, was a member of the "Bethel Zion" sect for three years, and lived under the influence of Aharon Levy in Azur. He told the MAARIV Correspondent how he had met the son-in-law of Aharon Levy in Dallas, Texas, where he first heard of "Bethel", which was, according to him, supposed to enable him and his wife to live in Israel under conditions resembling a kibbutz. The two of them arrived in Israel and were housed by Aharon Levy and his wife Helen in their home.

"It was then that the brainwashing began which gradually made us totally dependent on Levy. As hard as it is to understand, we were completely in bondage to him. We gave him all our savings, even the \$5,000 that my wife Lunda inherited from her mother. We worked for him and helped him to recruit other believers. He used the system of 'divide and rule', even cut us off from the little contact we still had with our families, and ruled over us. He forbade us to have any free contact with the outside world, forbade us to use the telephone, and read the letters that we received. We hardly ever left the house, and whenever we did so, it was only in the company of Levy or his wife. He used fear and verbal persuasion as well as illustrations from the New Testament in order to convince us."

Bill Hicks admits that "today he himself is shocked to think that for three years (he) was under this kind of influence. We believed in him, and really thought he was a prophet, a messenger of God, and that we had to submit to him," he relates. And for three years another couple also lived at "Bethel" with their two small children. It was in July 1977 that the MAARIV Correspondent exposed this affair which resulted in the flight of Kayle and Brad Romans with their children from "Bethel" and their return to their family in the USA. The Romans couple also had a "treatment" similar (to Hickses) from Aharon Levy. "He declared in the Min. of Int. that Brad is Jewish despite the fact that he is Christian. In that way he could use his immigrant rights," Bill relates. "Levy told us that we must become citizens of Israel, gave us documents to sign, and since we don't know Hebrew, attended to the whole process by himself."

"According to him, whoever believes in the Messiah is a true Jew, and we had nothing to fear in testifying that we are Jewish. My application to the Min. of Int. aroused a certain amount of suspicion, but Lunda had a reply that it was in order and that she is Jewish. Levy had a plan that if he succeeded in getting us married, the Min. of Int. would also believe that we are Jewish and would give us (Israeli) documents."

"...We gave fictitious names for our parents, and no one asked us for verifications. Concerning circumcision: I had this done in the USA for health reasons, but no one asked me for formal verification that this had been done according to Jewish law," Bill relates, ^{notified} "I enjoyed the ^(Jewish wedding) ceremony very much which was very simple. The "huppa" (canopy) was spread out, the Rabbi read the "ketuba" (marriage contract) and I gave Lunda ^{the} wedding band." Bill Hicks adds that "it seems that Levy was right, for from that moment on we had no further problems. When they expressed astonishment in the Min. Int., Levy said to them: 'Are you doubting a decision of the Rabbinate?' So they decided to grant us citizenship...."

When the ceremonial part of the young couple's conversion to citizenship of the State of Israel was completed, the practical part commenced. The two used their immigrant privileges to purchase goods without payment of customs. "Levy bought a Ford Transit automobile, which he sold when I left him. He kept the money for himself, of course. He bought an organ, a giant fridge, a laundromat, a sewing machine, and other electrical appliances, and then put them in his own house."

About the sect's activities Bill relates: "Levy represented himself with forceful persuasion as Elijah the Prophet, and claimed that we had to bring in others into the sect. He sent messages, published a journal in the USA, and also tried to influence Jews in Azur settlement besides many others during his many trips to America...." The president of the Rabbinical Court in Tel Aviv, Rabbi Haym David Halevy was very concerned about the whole affair. By means of an activist in "Yad L'akhim" he stated that he would investigate the matter. According to him, it is already clear that an error had been made when the Jewishness of the

witness Brad Romans, who is ~~not~~ actually a Christian, was not checked. The "Yad L'Akhir" organization has submitted to the Rabbinical Court a comprehensive memorandum concerning the missionary activity of Aharon Levy, and informed the MAARIV reporter that it intends to be aided by the Hicks couple in order to prevent a repetition of such grave incidents.

Bill and Lunda, who have received from the Rabbinate Jewish names (Joseph & Esther) said this week that they intend to return to Israel and to do everything in order to pass through the process of conversion to Judaism according to halacha. "We hope that now that we have learned who Aharon Levy really is, and after everything is known to the police and the authorities, we will be free of all contact with him, and will be able to live as free people. We are certain that we will not be seeking any more prophets and Messiahs in order to build our lives. We hope that our story of the years we wasted on a false faith will serve as a lesson to other young people," Lunda and Bill Hicks said.... END

DATE : 27.3.79 JOURNAL: "MAARIV" NEWS STORY
 HEADING: "MIN. RELIG.AFFAIRS: THE AFFAIR OF THE CHRISTIAN COUPLE WED AS JEWS--A VERY GRAVE MATTER." (Police have promised protection to Maariv reporter whom anonymous persons have threatened in the wake of her exposure of the missionary sect "Bethel")

BYLINE : Nurith Povrat

QUOTE : The Min. of Religious Affairs, Aharon Abuhatseira, defined as "a very grave matter" the affair of the Christian couple who had been wed at the Rabbinate and recognized as Jewish in the wake of false testimonies by "the Prophet" of the sect "Bethel," Aharon Levy and his wife Helen. The Minister invigiled the heads of the Rabbinical Courts, Rabbi Simha Miron, to examine the file of Lunda and Bill Hicks, who in the wake of a rabbinical wedding received the full rights of new immigrants. It has also been learned from the Min. of Relig. Affa. that "the court did not check the matter thoroughly and therefore mistakes were made." The Ministry also acknowledged that "it was a great error" not to discover that a Christian was among the witnesses who appeared before the Rabbinical Court.

Lunda and Bill Hicks, the young couple which stayed a number of years at the home of the religious sect "Bethel," under the influence of the leader, have received a promise of immunity from the police and are cooperating and giving evidence about all the missionary activities of the sect in Azur. The matter has been transferred to the District Attorney who will fix the time of trial for the purpose of giving ^{by-trial} evidence until the trial date is set, inasmuch as the couple want to return to the United States.

Yesterday afternoon anonymous persons threatened the life of the MAARIV reporter who had exposed the affair and also the lives of her family...An anonymous person telephoned the MAARIV report involved in the affair from its beginning. "We will not forgive you for helping to remove the young woman Lunda Hicks from Bethel and returning her to her husband. It is your fault that Levy and his wife have been arrested, and you will be punished severely for this." The speaker also threatened the life of Rabbi Kolitz of the Tel-aviv Rabbinate who issued the order removing Lunda Hicks from "Bethel." A complaint about the threats was made yesterday to the police in Holon. Deputy Cdr Judah Parsi, Station Commander, and Officer Rafael Turjaman, Deputy Chief of the Investigations Division, are personally dealing with the matter. They have promised police protection to the MAARIV reporter against any possible attack or threat to her life.

"The prophet" Aharon Levy and his wife Helen spent the night in the detention cell at Ab u-Cabir after they were investigated for several long hours by investigators of the Frauds Division in the Israeli Plice. The two heads of the "Bethel" sect were arrested, as will be recalled, yesterday in the morning.... During the course of their investigation which was conducted separately, the couple succeeded in meeting for a few minutes, during which they exchanged words in Bulgarian. Immediately afterwards the two of them collapsed. The police suspect that the "collapse" was staged and coordinated. Mrs. Levy fainted and then Aharon Levy lay down on the floor as if he were unconscious. After a while Mrs. Levy recovered, and the investigation continued. Aharon Levy was taken to the Donolo Hospital and after it became clear that he was in good health, he was transferred to the prison. It is reported that the two are not cooperating with their investigators.

In the meantime, it appears that Lunda and Bill Hicks will remain Jews despite the fact that they were never converted to Judaism. This is so because it is not possible to annul a decision of the Rabbinical Court, and it is prevented from dealing with the matter. In order to annul the recognition of the couple as Jews, the Min. of Int. which granted them an Identity Certificate must appeal to the a Civil Court with the consent of the Attorney General. END ITEM.

DATE : 28.3.79 JOURNAL: "MAARIV" NEWS ARTICLE

HEADING: "RELATIVES OF "THE PROPHET" LEADING SECT BRANCH IN TEXAS"

BYLINE : Nurith Dovrat

QUOTE : The affair of the "prophet" Aharon Levy, owner of the "Bethel" in Azur, and his wife Helen, is branching out. This morning the two will be brought to the Court in Tel-Aviv for extension of their arrest. The team of investigators headed by Michael Horowitz of the Frauds Division in the Police Dept is checking out the abundant material which has been gathered in connection with the affair. From the initial investigation it appears that Aharon Levy, who had claimed in the presence of his followers that he was "Elijah the Prophet, the Messenger of the Lord," and founded the sect of Christian-Jews who believe in Jesus, had been receiving much money from many believers in Israel and abroad.

Large sums of money, some of it in dollars, were found in his home while a search was carried on by the police. The police are investigating additional suspects of ties with the activities of the Levy couple. The possibility of investigating the activities of the "Bethel" branch in Dallas, Texas in the United States, which is directed by relatives of the "prophet" is being considered.

Yesterday there were a number of local Jews familiar with the activities who contacted MAARIV, and promised to convey material they had gathered to the police. The disclosure of the fraud whereby the couple, as is suspected, succeeded in enlisting contributions by means of false representations, has aroused many reactions. The Officer Director of "Mad L'Akhir" (an activist organization against the Mission) in the United States, yesterday ~~mentioned~~ related that the sect leader of "Bethel Zion" in Azur had collected money by declaring that the place was a haven for problem families.

The Rabbinical Court and the Tel-Aviv Rabbinat which permitted the marriage of the couple according to the religion of Moses and Israel of the Christian couple, Lunda and Bill Hicks, who lived at "Bethel," are hanging the blame on one another. The Hicks couple are continuing to cooperate with the police. Meanwhile, residents of Azur have organized a public committee whose purpose is to prevent the return of the Levy family to the place and the continuation of missionary activity by them.

In the wake of the threats on the life of the MAARIV correspondent who exposed the affair, the police yesterday investigated various persons belonging to the sect in Azur and worked with the Levys. Yesterday there were also threats of revenge against the office of "Yad L'Akhir" in Bnei Brak which aided (in the exposure of) the affair. END ARTICLE

DATE: 29.3.79 JOURNAL: "MAARIV" ARTICLE

HEADING: "MEMBERS OF 'BETHEL' WERE MADE TO SIGN DOCUMENT FORBIDDING THEM OUTSIDE CONTACTS (All their property and their earnings were required, according to the document to be transferred to the religious sect and its "prophet". Lunda Hicks freely transferred inheritance she received after mother's death. The defence: "It was like a kibbutz."

BYLINE : Nurith Dovrat

QUOTE : "The Prophet," Aharon Levy, and his wife Helen were arrested yesterday for 10 days on order of Justice Miriam Porat at the conclusion of a lengthy hearing conducted in the Tel-Aviv Court. Sgt. Michael Horowitz from the Frauds Division of the Police Dept presented to the Justice a series of documents and testimonies which link the directors of "Bethel Zion" in Azur in a complicated act of fraud, during the course of which the two exploited the naivete of the believers who adhered to the sect they had founded. The police presented to the court lists of persons in Israel and in the U.S.A., which were found in the Levy home, copies of letters which the couple were accustomed to send out, among them appeals for contributions, as well as photographs taken in the course of Jewish and Christian ceremonies conducted by the "prophet", and newspapers that were printed in Dallas, Texas (where a branch of "Bethel" operates) and which relates the praises of Jesus and the Messiah. Sgt. Horowitz presented the testimonies of Bill & Lunda Hicks, who had stayed at Bethel several years. It was alleged that the two were under the psychological influence of the Levy couple and because of this bound to them, and took part in part of the offences committed by which are ~~attributed~~ attributed to Aharon and Helen Levy, such as giving false testimony in the Rabbinical Court, obtaining certificates by fraud, customs violations, etc.

The young couple have filed a complaint with the police against the Levy couple, and the Court heard the substance of the complaints yesterday, according to which they were persuaded by means of verbal intimidation and deep religious faith to execute the plans of the prophet and his wife. In order to obtain the benefits of new immigrants a false declaration concerning the Jewishness of Bill and Lunda Hicks was submitted, and they were ~~red~~

the Rabbinate in the presence of Aharon and Helen Levy. At Bethel there were photographs of a previous wedding ceremony of the young couple conducted in a church. There was also found in the possession of the Levy couple, photographs of U.S. Population Registry certificates containing the names of the parents of Lunda and Bill. At the Rabbinic Court Levy presented false names. The police submitted additional testimony in writing (which was conveyed ~~xxxxxxxx~~ to the MAARIV reporter) in which another believer of the "Bethel" sect, Brad Romans, admitted that he was a Christian despite the fact that he was registered with the Min. of Interior, on the recommendation of Levy, as a Jew. Brad Romans worked at Tadiran, and delivered all his wages to "Bethel." His wage slips were among the documents that the police discovered at the place.

An unusual document presented yesterday in court was signed by Lunda Hicks, in which she undertook to obey "the laws of Bethel" which had been established by the Levy couple. The document was found after a search made by the police at the site. The laws forbade, among other things, contact by members with the outside world, including telephone conversations and the receipt of mail. All their savings, property, wages, possessions, including any inheritance they might receive, were demanded of them. Absolute obedience to the demands of the sect leaders was required. In obedience to these instructions, Lunda Hicks conveyed her inheritance received after the death of her mother (amounting to 100,000 I.L.) to "Bethel."

Attorney Moshe Tench, who is representing the suspects, argued in court that this amount was designated, as it were, for payment of rent and household expenses for their four-year stay in the place. The police representative refuted this claim when he related that the young people living in Bethel worked hard in construction and in all kinds of household tasks for which they received no payment.

The police conveyed to the court a list of goods found in the Levy home which had been bought without payment of customs duties. ^{two} organs, electrical implements, and an authorization for the purchase of a Ford Transit car in accordance with the immigrant rights of Bill Hicks. The car was sold after he left the place, and the money received for the sale was turned over to Aharon Levy. The police reported yesterday that it is making a full-fledged investigation of the activities of the Ottoman Society "Bethel," and of the many funds and assets it received in the form of contributions. At the same time, the police intend to investigate the status of the sect, and the purposes of its activities, for which purpose many persons connected with the sect will be investigated.

Justice Porat was told by the police of the threats uttered against the MAARIV reporter in recent days and against the "Yad L'Akhirim" organization and Rabbi Kolitz. The police investigator ~~xxxxxxxx~~ stated that the release of the Levy couple before those making the threats are apprehended will add to the danger in which those involved in the affair find themselves.

Attorney Tench argued that "this is a routine matter of false declarations in the Rabbinate and customs offences, and the matter ~~in~~ runs over into the field of faith and religious philosophy." According to him, "the place has the character of a commune, and people live there as in a kibbutz." Justice Miriam Porat did not accept his arguments and detained the couple for ten days inasmuch as, in her view, "the offences involved are most serious." END ARTICLE

DATE: 29.3.79 JOURNAL: "YEDIOT AKHRONOT" (HEB PM IND) NEWS ARTICLE
 HEADING: "THE PROPHET AND HIS WIFE SUSPECTED OF FRAUD AND MISLEADING HIS FOLLOWERS TO GIVE FALSE TESTIMONY: THE POLICE--AHARON LEVY AND HIS WIFE HAVE NOT WORKED ONE DAY SINCE THEY CAME TO ISRAEL IN 1945; COMPELLED AN AMERICAN COUPLE TO "CONTRIBUTE" FUNDS AND EXPLOITED THEIR IMMIGRANT RIGHTS."

BYLINE : Moshe Ronen, Yediot Akhronot Correspondent.

QUOTE : The "prophet", Aharon Levy, age 67, and his wife Helena, age 61, leaders of a religious sect called "Bethel Zion", which operated for many years in the town of Azur, were arrested yesterday for ten days on order of the Tel-Aviv court, on suspicion of fraud violations, extortion, false testimony, and customs and income tax offences. According to the police, Aharon Levy was accustomed to draw young Christians from the U.S. to his sect, which he managed in Israel. He claimed that he was "Elijah the Prophet." With the help of relatives who manage a "branch" of the sect in Dallas, Texas, he brought many young people to Israel, who lived at "Bethel" in Azur, and who were subject to his complete control.

Michael Horowitz, representing the police, claimed in court that since their arrival in Israel in the year 1945, the Levy couple have not worked a single day, and subsisted on the ^{financial} contributions which they received from the U.S.A. For this purpose they set up an Ottoman Society, which has many assets, and among them 20 dunams of land. The police suspect that Helena and Aharon Levy, for four years, exploited the young couple William and Linda Hicks who arrived in Israel in 1975, and were bound to them. The Hicks couple lived under a

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strict regimen, and developed absolute emotional dependence on the Levy couple. They turned over to them all their assets and papers and became something like robots. Among other things, they were asked to request of their parents in the U.S. to contribute 10 percent of their wages to the religious sect in Israel. Linda Hicks was compelled to contribute her portion of her ^{late} mother's inheritance in the sum of 5,000 dollars as well.

The investigator also added that William and Linda Hicks arrived in Israel in 1975 after they had been married in a church ceremony in California in 1973. Nevertheless, the Levys persuaded them to give false testimony at the Rabbinate and at other agencies in order to prove they were Jews and to benefit from the rights of new immigrants. When they obtained these rights, the Hickses purchased valuable goods which were registered on their Immigrant Certificates, but were then transferred to the possession of the Levys. Among the items were a Ford Transit car and a church organ. According to the police, the Levys violated customs and fraud regulations.

At the end of 1977 William Hicks was sent out on a missionary journey to the U.S.A., which led to his realization of the fraudulent scheme. When he returned to Israel, he turned to a reporter, Nurith Dovrat, who investigated the affair. On the 21st of March William Hicks, armed with a Rabbinical court order and with the aid of the police, succeeded in getting his wife out of "Bethel." The young woman was obliged to have psychiatric treatment to release her from her dependence upon Aharon Levy. The police also discovered documents verifying the complaint of William Hicks, and among them a document in which Linda Hicks had yielded her private rights and appointed Aharon Levy as her ~~representative~~ representative, empowered to act in her name.

On the day of the arrest of the suspects, the police charge that ^{THAT WERE} threats against the lives of members of a Jewish religious organization that had provided shelter for the young couple and against the rabbi and reporter involved in the affair. The attorney for the defence, Moshe Teneh, argued in court that the police are giving the matter exaggerated prominence, and requested the release of the suspects, but the judge rejected the ~~request~~ request and, as noted, ordered the detention of Helena and Aharon Levy for ten days. END ARTICLE

DATE: 29.3.79 JOURNAL: "MAARIV" NEWS FEATURE

HEADING: "DISCOVERY OF ELIJAH IN AZUR...THE ISRAELI JONES PROPHECIES THE END TIME AND

DECEIVES THE INNOCENTS" (PHOTOS: (1) "The Prophet takes part in a circumcision of
 BY LINE : Nurith Dovrat (of the son of one of the believers. (2) The Hickses

QUOTE : In "Bethel Zion" there lives "Elijah the Prophet" who preaches faith in ~~Jesus~~ Jesus, in the Messianic Days, and in the New World which will be established after the ruin (of the old) by his followers, who are the chosen race of God. For some ten years Aharon Levy and his wife Helena operated as "messengers of God" and promoted their teachings in Israel and overseas, reaching to Dallas, Texas (USA), and set up a branch there of "Bethel." This week the two were arrested by the Division of Frauds of the Israeli Police Force, as suspects....(details as in previous accounts above)....

For a long period the sect leaders worked to bring many followers to Israel, for whom they built tens of rooms and a large prayer hall. For the purpose of realizing their plans to settle tens of thousands of followers, they purchased 20 dunams of land near Ramle. They fixed the number at 144,000 believers during their campaigns to raise money in the U.S.A. and Israel, the number being taken from "the New Testament" in the place where it is spoken of the number of endtime survivors. Levy even appointed a leader of the sect, naming him "Joshua," and instilled in him the sense of his importance, Bill Hicks (even the one called "Joshua"), who was designated to be the leader of the sect of "Bethel" at the side of "the prophet." The believers planned to penetrate all areas of life in Israel and to get a foothold in Govt offices, universities, etc. But Bill was ejected from his post and called "Satan," after an article was published in MAARIV which opened his eyes. He traveled to the U.S.A. and underwent special psychological treatment to release him from his absolute dependence on his leader. When he returned to Israel to release his wife Linda, 24, from her sectarian captivity, he learned that the struggle demanded for this was long and violent since the Levys refused to release her. Bill was therefore compelled to turn to the courts, to attorneys and to the police and thus he removed the mask from the face of the prophet.

The Levy family arrived in Israel from Bulgaria in 1945, and after awhile settled in Azur. Their two daughters and a son studied at Catholic schools and at present are living (one son and one daughter) in Dallas (Texas) and one daughter in Azur. Their son Yitzhak manages the branch of "Bethel" in Dallas and collects funds, organizes religious conferences, at which Levy preaches with his wife translating, distributes the sect newspaper, and in the despatch of letters to persons in Israel and abroad. Dallas was not chosen by chance, but as a place of strange religious ceremonies, whose residents enjoy watching radio & TV programs which deal with religion.

A few years ago after the Min. of Welfare stopped ^(as a result of complaints) sending them unmarried pregnant women, and their source of income stopped, the Levys decided to set up an Ottoman Society, "Bethel Zion," which was designed, so they declared, to gather money for providing aid and philanthropic works. The police ^{are} of a different opinion, after uncovering large sums of money in the Levy home in dollars, various bank accounts in Israel and abroad, and many assets including organs, deep freeze refrigerator, regular fridges, laundromat, sewing machine, etc. This property was for the most part obtained on the basis of the immigrant rights of Lunda and Bill Hicks who, inspired by Levy, obtained Identity and Immigrant Certificates.

"The prophet" spent his time spinning fanciful tales about his visions and dreams with the aid of "the New Testament" in order to substantiate by the examples cited therein the fact that he is "the apostle," and "the prophet bearing the word of God." With flashing eyes and a deep voice, in broken Hebrew and in English full of errors, he related his fanciful tales which, according to him, directed his path. His wife ~~supported~~ upheld him and related how much admiration her husband received in the wide world, the truth of his visions, and the depth of his faith in Jesus, in Messiah, in God, and... in Aharon Levy. The young people staying in his house worked hard building many things, and the women worked in the household and taking care of all the affairs of "Bethel", all for nothing in return.

It was not only in America that Levy had a following of believers. He also won recognition from lost souls in Israel. Lunda, young and pretty, clear-eyed, presentable, and Bill, tall, blue eyes, likeable, are witnesses that the phenomenon of false ^{new} gods is possible in our era also. Jim Jones did it with hundreds of followers in Jonestown, Guiana, and Aharon Levy did it in a more modest manner in Azur, Israel. There is an astonishing resemblance among the various "Messiahs," a widespread phenomenon in the U.S.A. "Hare Krishna" and "Sun-yan Moon", and many others, reach their followers in many and diverse ways. Their apostles work in the universities, in youth clubs, even on the streets. They employ systems like giving flowers, pocket money or faith "in a new way to the light of life." Most of the believers are young people, insecure, who have experienced many crises. They lean on the "prophets", the "Messiahs," and the idols, and their end is disillusionment. END ARTICLE

DATE: 29.3.79 JOURNAL: "HATSOFEH" (HEB AM NRP) NEWS ITEM

HEADING: "HEADS OF MISSIONARY SECT ARE ARRESTED AS FRAUD SUSPECTS"

QUOTE : The heads of a missionary sect in Azur, Aharon Levy, age 67, and his wife Helena, age 61, were yesterday arrested in the Tel-Aviv Court on suspicion of obtaining assets by fraudulent means from innocent persons that followed them. They are also suspected of giving false testimony and of tax violations. The police representative claimed that the two have been leading for years a religious sect named "Bethel Zion". The leader, Levy, believed that he is Elijah the Prophet, according to the investigator, and for years has attracted young Christians from the U.S.A. to ~~his~~ the sect centre in Azur near Holon. With the help of his son, who manages a branch of the sect in Dallas, Texas, he has brought many young people to Israel who ~~have~~ lived at Bethel and were under the complete influence of the suspects.

The Levys came to Israel in 1945, from which time he has not worked but subsisted on contributions which were sent him from the U.S.A. For this purpose he set up an Ottoman Society, the investigator said. Among the assets of the society were also 20 dunams land. The investigator claimed that for a period of four years the suspects exploited young couples from the USA, William and Lona Hicks, who joined the sect and were completely bound to them. They lived ~~in~~ under a strict regimen... (the balance as in above previous accounts.)

DATE: 4.4.79 JOURNAL: "HATSOFEH" (HEB AM NRP) NEWS ARTICLE

HEADING: "HEADS OF MISSIONARY COMMUNITY SUSPECTED OF PERJURY AND FRAUDULENT ACTS"

QUOTE : Pre-trial testimony in the trial of the couple Aharon and Helena Levy, heads of the religious community "Bethel" in Azur, suspected of fraud, was heard yesterday in the District Court of Tel Aviv. Testimony was heard from Linda Hicks, age 24, who lived for four years in the community of the Levys. The witness said that at first she had the impression that the Levys aspired to gain followers for their community, but now she felt they only wanted to get rich.

The prosecution is charging the two with fraudulent acts, perjury and instigation to perjury. There has as yet not been submitted to the court a formal accusation, but the court was asked to hear the testimonies separately of three persons about to leave the country, and one of the three is the witness Hicks. She told at length of the background of herself and her family, about the struggles of faith and opinions which she went through, until she ^{and her husband} came in contact with the Bethel community in Azur. This was followed eventually with a family breakup, and then her decision to return to him and to leave "Bethel" and to return to the U.S.A.

MORE

After replying to the questions of the prosecutor's representative, Attorney A. Landstein, the witness was cross-examined by the attorney for the defence, Attorney Zvi Lidsky and Attorney Moshe Teneh. According to Linda Hicks, she had a very strong desire to live in the Land of the Bible, and she found happiness in the community of the Levys. But after a time various problems arose, and she was finally convinced that she must return to her husband and to the land of her birth. In response to the questions of the defence attorneys she denied that she had been kidnapped or had been removed from the community by force, and said that she would have left even without the police or a court order. But in reply to other questions she confirmed that she at first had refused to leave the place, and that the Holon Police had presented her with an order of the court which required her to leave "Bethel Zion". She also confirmed her testimony that following her departure from the place she had spent the night in the Meah Shearim neighbourhood, and there she was spoken to at length by her husband William Hicks, his escort, Steven Hiller, and others.

During the course of her examination she confirmed that she had greeted her husband when he came to remove her from "Bethel" with expressions such as "Swine," and "Satan," and explained that she had learned to use such expressions in the framework of the community with which she was linked and ~~from~~ which her husband had left. However, now she sees that her obligation is to be loyal to her husband, and also his escort, the psychologist Hiller had exposed to her things that were hidden in her subconscious.

Attorney Lidsky pressed the witness with such questions: "Is it not so that you have been brainwashed in recent weeks?" The witness denied it, and explained that during these weeks she had matured, and those who had helped her to mature had been her husband, the one who accompanied him, and the people of Meah Shearim to whom she had been brought. She added with emphasis that she was leaving the community, not because of a court order, but of her own free will.

Concerning the experiences she went through at "Bethel" she remarked that at first she had believed in the way of life of the commune, and she was happy in that path, "but there were problems which sprang up." According to her, contributions and gifts were received from abroad, and were for the use of everybody. END ARTICLE

DATE: 4.4.79 JOURNAL: "YEDIOT AKHRONOT" (HEB PM IND) NEWS ARTICLE

HEADING: "HEADS OF SECT 'BETHEL ZION' PERSUADED ME THAT MY HUSBAND IS SATAN:" - TESTIMONY YESTERDAY OF LONDA HICKS AGAINST AHARON & HELEN LEVY, FRAUD SUSPECTS"

BYLINE: Moshe Ronen, "Yediot Akhronot" Correspondent.

QUOTE: "They persuaded me that my husband Bill is Satan, and that if I return with him to the United States he would kill me," Londa Hicks, the young good-looking blonde testified yesterday in the District Court of Tel Aviv.

"I was born on 1 January 1955, as a Protestant, in the United States," the witness stated in reply to questions by the prosecutor, Avraham Landstein. "I was married to William Hicks in 1973 in a church. We were very religious, and we wanted to come to Israel. In Dallas, Texas, we met Hava, the daughter of Helen and Aharon Levy, and she proposed that we come to live in the home of her parents in Azur. She told us that her parents believe in ~~xxx~~ a mixture of God and Jesus. I wanted to convert to Judaism in Dallas, but we postponed the conversion. We came to Israel, and we lived at Bethel Zion in Azur. Every evening we had a prayer service in English in which Levy read excerpts from the New Testament and the Old Testament. I worked at cooking and housecleaning, and my husband at construction and plumbing in "Bethel." Whenever we spoke about conversion to Judaism, Aharon Levy would say to me: If you believe within your heart that you are Jewish and that you keep the Sabbath that is enough, and you are reckoned to be a Jew. I thought that this was the acceptable procedure for traditional conversion to Judaism. We went to the Ministry of Interior and signed various documents. Afterwards it was decided that that we should marry again at the Rabbinate. Before this, Aharon Levy said to me that I should say that the name of my mother was Miriam Jacobson and not Mary-Ann Hammond. After we were married at the Rabbinate, they said that we should take Jewish names. My husband was called Yosef and I was named Esther.

Afterward we received a blue book (New Immigrants Certificate) and then when a supporter of the "Bethel" group sent them a fridge from the U.S.A., a laundromat, an organ, an electric oven and stove, they were recorded in the blue book. There was also another couple in the Bethel community in Azur: Fred and Kay Romana. Kay was Jewish and Fred was born a Christian but became a Jew like us."

In reply to the questions of the defence attorneys, Zvi Lidsky and Moshe Teneh, Londa Hicks related that during her 24 years she had been throughout the United States, but when she arrived at "Bethel" she finally found peace of mind. "I thought that according to the

Bible this is the place to be, and that people who believe in God have to live in the Land of Israel," she stated. The prosecutor, Avraham Landstein, presented to the court the testimony of Aharon Levy in the Rabbinical Court, according to which he knew Lunda Hicks for five years, and that she was Jewish. On the basis of this testimony she was granted new immigrant rights, according to the prosecutor, which were exploited by Helen and Aharon Levy.

In addition to Lunda Hicks there arrived in Court the ^{American} psychologist who has been treating her. According to the defence attorneys this psychologist specializes in strange religious phenomena such as that of the minister Jim Jones who brought about the suicide of all his followers.

END ARTICLE

SUBJECT TWO: CHRISTIANS AND ISRAEL

~~DATE~~ DATE: 5 Jan 79 JOURNAL: AMERICAN JEWISH WORLD (MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.) FEATURE ARTICLE
HEADING: "THE CHRISTIANS RIGHT HAND MAN IN ISRAEL" (

BYLINE: ROBT D KAPLAN (PHOTO INSET: THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM)

QUOTE (EXCERPTS) Delicacy is the touchstone of daily Israeli Govt policy towards its Christian minorities in Jerusalem. Officials must maintain a deft juggling act between the various estranged denominations, many of whom command powerful support from outside the Jewish State, yet within the country are as one pundit explained, "minorities three-times over." The dual personality of Jerusalem's Christians forms the basis of how the Govt deals with them on an everyday level. The Holy City is not the world centre for any Christian group. Thus all the sects are representatives of more powerful elements outside Israel. The Latin Patriarch here, to put it mildly as a friend to the Vatican, Jerusalem Anglicans can turn to Canterbury. Rival church hierarchies in N.Y. and Moscow monitor the treatment of their respective Russian Orthodox communities here. And church bureaucracies in Soviet Armenia and Ethiopia keep a watchful eye on the fate of their Jerusalem congregations. So it goes.

On the other hand, the phrase "minorities three times over" is not a mere rhetorical one. First, most of the city's 12,000 Christians are Arabs, a people who are a minority vis-a-vis the Jews. Secondly, because they are Christian, they are a minority within Arab society, which is predominantly Muslim. And thirdly, since there are 35 different Christian groups in Israel, unless they belong to a dominant group like the Greek Orthodox they are also a minority within the Christian ~~and~~ population at large. The conflicting characteristics of the Jerusalem Christians have caused a relationship where the Israeli Govt gives a kind of preferential treatment to its Christian inhabitants as if they were official representatives of foreign states, because in many ways they are. Since the triple minority status makes the sects so sensitive to their already weakened position, a minor crisis in this relationship can revolve around something like failure of the Govt to grant a tax exemption on a clergyman's car or refrigerator. As one official of the Relig Aff Min said: "The Ministry on one hand compensates for their minority status, but at the same time is sort of conducting diplomatic relations with foreign powers."

How does this extra-special relationship work? Very efficiently. The reason is simple. The Min. of Relig. Affairs is, in the words of one expert, the Christians' "right-hand man" in Israel. If a clergyman has trouble with a customs deduction at the Customs House, if he can't get a slip from the Health Ministry, if he has visa problems at the Interior Ministry, he turns to the 8-member dept at the Relig. Affairs Ministry, and then they handle it all, like a private ombudsman. A principle duty of these 8 officials is to dispense privileges to Christian clergymen here. These rights, very generally, are similar to rights given to new Jewish immigrants, except they don't expire after 3 years.

The 40 French and Italian Christian institutions in Jerusalem, such as Ecole Biblique for example, receive the most benefits simply because their rights were negotiated between France, Italy, Turkey in Ottoman times, and all the succeeding govts in this area have kept the status quo in this regard. These mostly include tax exemptions on all imported merchandise, little different than immigrant benefits....also, all Christian community heads are entitled to purchase a new car every 3 years tax free....all these exempted taxes are paid by the Govt with the Relig. Aff. Min. transferring the funds to the appropriate Govt office.the Ministry occasionally gives grants for the purpose of new church bldg or acquisitions. A IL 50,000 gift to the Maronite Christians for their soon-to-be-completed centre in the Old City, and a IL 30,000 gift to the Armenians for book purchases are examples.The Ministry is also in the business of mediation between Christian groups that happen to be at odds, which can sometimes be costly. The Ministry will soon spend IL 23,000 for repairs in the Chapel of St. Helena...both the Copts and Ethiopians claim rights to the roof. Since paying for repairs signifies ownership, the State of Israel will bear the cost.

MORE

Since 1967 the Ministry claims to maintain good relations with all Christian groups in East Jerusalem. Church officials are in daily contact with the Ministry, and the Ministry's Director General Israel Lippel is unusually interested and concerned with the whole area of Jewish-Christian relations in Jerusalem, Christian and Govt officials note.

The Ministry also acts as an information centre for foreign visitors... This information drive is exemplified by CHRISTIAN NEWS FROM ISRAEL, a Quarterly publication in three languages to which many libraries and churches in the West subscribe. Unfortunately, the people of Israel don't receive much applause for their behaviour towards area Christians. This admittedly is partly the Ministry's fault. Though it invests much effort in distributing information about Jerusalem Christians, it invests little effort in distributing information about what it does on their behalf. Its helpful policy towards the various groups is well known within those communities. In fact, rarely does a local Christian newsletter not mention some note of gratitude for aid received from the Min. of Relig. Affairs. But Christian publications from outside Israel rarely mention such things. Perhaps we should be thankful for small mercies: Most Christians in the West do recognize by now the simple fact that the Holy Places are "open" here. END FEATURE

DATE: 15.12.79 JOURNAL: JEWISH NEWS (DETROIT MICH) NEWS ARTICLE

HEADING: "CHRISTIAN PLAN SEEMS TO EDUCATE GENTILES ON ISRAEL"

QUOTE : CHICAGO (JTA)- A massive grass roots effort to reach 45 million Christians with the positive story of Israel and the Jewish people was advocated by a noted Christian clergyman. Dr. G. Douglas Young, founder of the Institute of Holy Land Studies, an Evangelical Christian seminary in Jerusalem, maintained that Jewish groups are only "wasting their time" trying to re-educate top leaders of the Christian church because the "World Council of Churches is a predominantly pro-Arab group that tends to side with PLO terrorists on all issues." Speaking to a group of Jewish leaders, Young said that the average pastor takes his lead from the higher echelons and so the masses of Christianity are being taught a "philosophy of contempt for Jews that fosters antisemitism." Young, who has lived in Jerusalem for the past 8 years said that Jews and Christians have "no problems" in living together in Israel. The Israeli Govt "carefully follows" articles in its Declaration of Independence guaranteeing the rights of all citizens, Young said.

DATE: 15.12.79 JOURNAL: B'NAI BRITH MESSENGER (LOS ANGELES, CALIF) NEWS ITEM

HEADING: "CLERIC URGES ON CHRISTIANS POSITIVE STORY OF ISRAEL"

SUMMARY: This is an abbreviated version of the previous above-quoted article, beginning as above: "A massive grass roots effort to reach 45 million Christians..."

DATE: 23.3.79 JOURNAL: "JEWISH CHRONICLE (LONDON ENGLAND) NEWS ARTICLE

HEADING: "AS CHRISTIANS SEE ISRAEL" (PHOTO: Israeli Ambassador Abraham Kidron with participants in lecture series at Westminster Abbey on "Christian debate on Israel" Canon Peter Schneider, Secy Archbishops consultants on interfaith relations, Dr. Edward Carpenter, Dean of Westminster, Canon John Baker, Subdean Westminster.)

BYLINE: JEWISH CHRONICLE REPORTER

QUOTE : "Saying 'Yes' to Israel does not necessarily involve one indetracting from the far genuine communal and ethnic aspirations of Palestinian Arabs, but these cannot be at the expense of Israel," said Canon Peter Schneider in a lecture at Westminster Abbey last week. Canon Schneider, who is secretary of the consultants to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on interfaith relations, was for 11 years Canon of St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem. His talk on the "Christian Debate on Israel," (the first of three) was entitled "An Inquiry into the Churches' Ambivalence on the right to existence of the State of Israel." The Canon, in discussing this ambivalence, stated that, as a Christian theologian, he could appreciate the grounds for recognizing the special relationship and the link between the Jewish people and the land of Israel, and the continuity of the Jewish people since biblical times. END

DATE: 27.3.79 JOURNAL: JERUSALEM POST EXCERPT FROM FEATURE ARTICLE ("CONTEXT")

HEADING: "A MOST UNUSUAL MAN" (PHOTOS: (1) Orde Wingate leading Jewish commando unit (2) Orde Wingate)

BYLINE : Martin Sieff

EXCERPT: "WINGATE--there was a man of genius who might have been a man of destiny," wrote Winston Churchill after the death in a plane crash in Burma of Maj-Gen Orde Charles Wingate on March 24, 1944. Wingate, like that other great 20th Century soldier, George Patton, was an odd man out in modern times. His parents were members of the Plymouth Brethren. His driven personality was directed by a deep belief in a personal God and a literal belief in biblical prophecy that led him to a fanatical commitment to the Zionist cause. When he was posted to Palestine in 1936 in the early stages of the Arab rebellion, the 34-year old Capt. Orde Wingate still briefly shared the fashionable antisemitism of his fellow British officers. He soon came to the conclusion, however, that the Zionist pioneers MORE

SUBJECT NUMBER ONE: "THE MISSION" (AND THE FALSE PROPHET)

DATE : 26.3.79 JOURNAL: "MAARIV" (HEBREW P.M. INDEPENDENT) NEWS ITEM

HEADING: "THE PROPHET" AHARON LEVY AND HIS WIFE HELEN ARRESTED"
(Suspected of "Judaizing" Christians and Exploiting their Status as New Immigrants)

BYLINE : Nurith Dovrat

QUOTE : Aharon and Helen Levy, owners of "Bethel Zion" in Azur, were arrested this morning by the Frauds Division of the Police on suspicion of making false declarations in the Rabbinic Court, for aiding and abetting the acquisition of Identity Certificates and New Immigrant Certificates illegally, and as suspects in the commission of offenses against the Customs Regulations by exploiting New Immigrant Rights to avoid payment of taxes. An investigating team has been set up for the affair, at whose head is Officer Baruch Gavrieli, Deputy Chief of the Frauds Division, and Sgr Michael Horowitz. This morning at 6.00 the investigators raided the house on Rehov Moshe Sparat, 29, in Azur.

Legal immunity has been promised to the young couple, Bill and Lunda Hicks, who have been living until recently at "Bethel." It has been decided not to put them on trial as partners in a fraudulent act inasmuch as they are cooperating with the police and giving all the information known to them about the matter to the police concerning the affair which was exposed by the MAARIV reporter.

Lunda and Bill Hicks, Christians reared in the bosom of the church, were wed by the Rabbinate in July 1975 after a hearing conducted in the Rabbinic Court in which a decision was reached by the Chief Rabbi of Tel-Aviv, Rabbi Hayim David Halevy, concerning the Jewishness of the two. The court relied upon the testimony of Aharon Levy who claims that he is "a prophet and messenger of God," and of Brad Romans, a Christian who was then living at "Bethel," and declared that he was Jewish. On the basis of false declarations of the young couple and of Aharon Levy, they were given Identity Certificates and New Immigrant Certificates, and received the rights of new immigrants, which they used to purchase many items, some of which are found in "Bethel", and some have been sold by Aharon Levy without payment of the tax, as required.

Bill Hicks who left "Bethel" a year ago succeeded in freeing himself from the influence of "the Prophet" and returned to Israel in order to rescue his wife and free her from this negative influence. On Wednesday evening he succeeded in getting the young woman out of "Bethel" with the help of Attorney Silvio Nahum and the assistance of the police. Out of fear of the vengeance of "the prophet" she was concealed by religious elements in "Meah Shearim" in the capital, and was given psychological treatment which released her from her dependence upon Aharon Levy. (SEE ADDITIONAL DETAILED STORY)

DATE: 26.3.79 JOURNAL: "MAARIV" (HEB PM IND) DETAILED NEWS STORY (EXPOSÉ)

HEADING: "MY HUSBAND IS SATAN", THE YOUNG WOMAN CRIED, UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE
FALSE PROPHET LEVY OF AZUR" (PHOTOS: Aharon & Helen Levy, Bill Hicks, Lunda H.)

BYLINE: Nurith Dovrat

EXCERPTS: "I am the prophet. I am a messenger of God. This is the House of God (Bethel)," Aharon Levy screamed angrily, leader of the sect "beth-el Zion" when the police of the Holon Station ordered him on last Wednesday to honour the Rabbinical court order ruling that Lunda Hicks, age 24, who had been staying at his home for four years, must leave and return to her husband. Lunda resisted all the efforts of her husband Bill to convince her to free herself from the influence of "the prophet" who sought to divide them. Under the influence of Aharon Levy she claimed that her husband was "Satan", and that she must obey the instructions of the sect leader Aharon Levy.

Husband Bill lived with his wife at Bethel for three years, and left a year ago after a Maariv reporter exposed the true nature of Aharon Levy in a report published in July '77. Bill Hicks had returned to Israel to work for the return of his wife to him.... One of the heads of the Activists against the Mission, a representative of "Yad L'Akchim", who has been working to stop the activity of Aharon Levy, was secretly introduced to the affair and helped to conceal the couple out of fear of the possible vengeance of "the prophet." The couple were concealed for three days in Meah Shearim, the ultra-orthodox neighbourhood in Jerusalem, and the psychologist David Miller, who was brought specially from the U.S.A. by the husband, treated the woman in order to release the woman from the influence and dependence upon her of Levy. She recovered and began to cooperate, and she and her husband were willing to tell all that was known to them about the activities of Aharon & Helen Levy, in order to bring them to justice.....

It was the MAARIV investigation which exposed the affair, with Bill & Lunda Hicks relating the background of the events as they developed.

MORE

"My wife and I were married in the Tel Aviv Rabbinate ^(in a Jewish ceremony) after we had declared before the Rabbinical Court that we were both Jews as well as our mothers. We did this under the direction of Aharon Levy who represented himself as a "prophet and messenger of God," and said that we must submit to him. Both of us were raised as Christians, and there is not in our families a drop of Jewish blood. We attended church regularly and we believe in Jesus. In 1973 we were married in a church, a fact well-known to Levy. He knew that we were lonely, far from our families, seeking a new and better way of life, and he understood that he could influence us by means of religious belief."

Bill Hicks, a 25-year old American, was a member of the "Bethel Zion" sect for three years, and lived under the influence of Aharon Levy in Azur. He told the MAARIV Correspondent how he had met the son-in-law of Aharon Levy in Dallas, Texas, where he first heard of "Bethel", which was, according to him, supposed to enable him and his wife to live in Israel under conditions resembling a Kibbutz. The two of them arrived in Israel and were housed by Aharon Levy and his wife Helen in their home.

"It was then that the brainwashing began which gradually made us totally dependent on Levy. As hard as it is to understand, we were completely in bondage to him. We gave him all our savings, even the \$5,000 that my wife Lunda inherited from her mother. We worked for him and helped him to recruit other believers. He used the system of 'divide and rule', even cut us off from the little contact we still had with our families, and ruled over us. He forbade us to have any free contact with the outside world, forbade us to use the telephone, and read the letters that we received. We hardly ever left the house, and whenever we did so, it was only in the company of Levy or his wife. He used fear and verbal persuasion as well as illustrations from the New Testament in order to convince us."

Bill Hicks admits that "today he himself is shocked to think that for three years (he) was under this kind of influence. We believed in him, and really thought he was a prophet, a messenger of God, and that we had to submit to him," he relates. And for three years another couple also lived at "Bethel" with their two small children. It was in July 1977 that the MAARIV Correspondent exposed this affair which resulted in the flight of Kayle and Brad Romans with their children from "Bethel" and their return to their family in the USA. The Romans couple also had a "treatment" similar (to Hickses) from Aharon Levy. "He declared in the Min. of Int. that Brad is Jewish despite the fact that he is Christian. In that way he could use his immigrant rights," Bill relates. "Levy told us that we must become citizens of Israel, gave us documents to sign, and since we don't know Hebrew, attended to the whole process by himself."

"According to him, whoever believes in the Messiah is a true Jew, and we had nothing to fear in testifying that we are Jewish. My application to the Min. of Int. aroused a certain amount of suspicion, but Lunda had a reply that it was in order and that she is Jewish. Levy had a plan that if he succeeded in getting us married, the Min. of Int. would also believe that we are Jewish and would give us (Israeli) documents."

"...We gave fictitious names for our parents, and no one asked us for verifications. Concerning circumcision: I had this done in the USA for health reasons, but no one asked me for formal verification that this had been done according to Jewish law," Bill relates, ^{noting} "I enjoyed the ^(Jewish wedding) ceremony very much which was very simple. The "huppa" (canopy) was spread out, the Rabbi read the "ketuba" (marriage contract) and I gave Lunda ^{the} wedding band." Bill Hicks adds that "it seems that Levy was right, for from that moment on we had no further problems. When they expressed astonishment in the Min.Int., Levy said to them: 'Are you doubting a decision of the Rabbinate?' So they decided to grant us citizenship...."

When the ceremonial part of the young couple's conversion to citizenship of the State of Israel was completed, the practical part commenced. The two used their immigrant privileges to purchase goods without payment of customs. "Levy bought a Ford Transit automobile, which he sold when I left him. He kept the money for himself, of course. He bought an organ, a giant fridge, a laundromat, a sewing machine, and other electrical appliances, and then put them in his own house."

About the sect's activities Bill relates: "Levy represented himself with forceful persuasion as Elijah the Prophet, and claimed that we had to bring in others into the sect. He sent messages, published a journal in the USA, and also tried to influence Jews in Azur settlement besides many others during his many trips to America...." The president of the Rabbinical Court in Tel Aviv, Rabbi Haym David Halevy was very concerned about the whole affair. By means of an activist in "Yad L'akhim" he stated that he would investigate the matter. According to him, it is already clear that an error had been made when the Jewishness of the

witness Brad Romans, who is ~~not~~ actually a Christian, was not checked. The "Yad L'Akhir" organization has submitted to the Rabbinical Court a comprehensive memorandum concerning the missionary activity of Aharon Levy, and informed the MAARIV reporter that it intends to be aided by the Hicks couple in order to prevent a repetition of such grave incidents.

Bill and Lunda, who have received from the Rabbinate Jewish names (Joseph & Esther) said this week that they intend to return to Israel and to do everything in order to pass through the process of conversion to Judaism according to halacha. "We hope that now that we have learned who Aharon Levy really is, and after everything is known to the police and the authorities, we will be free of all contact with him, and will be able to live as free people. We are certain that we will not be seeking any more prophets and Messiahs in order to build our lives. We hope that our story of the years we wasted on a false faith will serve as a lesson to other young people," Lunda and Bill Hicks said.... END

DATE : 27.3.79 JOURNAL: "MAARIV"

NEWS STORY

HEADING: "MIN. RELIG.AFFAIRS: THE AFFAIR OF THE CHRISTIAN COUPLE WED AS JEWS--A VERY

GRAVE MATTER." (Police have promised protection to Maariv reporter whom anonymous persons have threatened in the wake of her exposure of the missionary sect "Bethel")

BYLINE : Nurith Povrat

QUOTE : The Min. of Religious Affairs, Aharon Abuhateira, defined as "a very grave matter" the affair of the Christian couple who had been wed at the Rabbinate and recognized as Jewish in the wake of false testimonies by "the Prophet" of the sect "Bethel," Aharon Levy and his wife Helen. The Minister invited the heads of the Rabbinical Courts, Rabbi Simha Miron, to examine the file of Lunda and Bill Hicks, who in the wake of a rabbinical wedding received the full rights of new immigrants. It has also been learned from the Min. of Relig. Affa. that "the court did not check the matter thoroughly and therefore mistakes were made." The Ministry also acknowledged that "it was a great error" not to discover that a Christian was among the witnesses who appeared before the Rabbinical Court.

Lunda and Bill Hicks, the young couple which stayed a number of years at the home of the religious sect "Bethel," under the influence of the leader, have received a promise of immunity from the police and are cooperating and giving evidence about all the missionary activities of the sect in Azur. The matter has been transferred to the District Attorney who will fix the time of trial for the purpose of giving ^{pre-trial} evidence until the trial date is set, inasmuch as the couple want to return to the United States.

Yesterday afternoon anonymous persons threatened the life of the MAARIV reporter who had exposed the affair and also the lives of her family... An anonymous person telephoned the MAARIV report involved in the affair from its beginning. "We will not forgive you for helping to remove the young woman Lunda Hicks from Bethel and returning her to her husband. It is your fault that Levy and his wife have been arrested, and you will be punished severely for this." The speaker also threatened the life of Rabbi Kolitz of the Tel-aviv Rabbinate who issued the order removing Lunda Hicks from "Bethel." A complaint about the threats was made yesterday to the police in Holon. Deputy Cdr Judah Parsi, Station Commander, and Officer Rafael Turjaman, Deputy Chief of the Investigations Division, are personally dealing with the matter. They have promised police protection to the MAARIV reporter against any possible attack or threat to her life.

"The prophet" Aharon Levy and his wife Helen spent the night in the detention cell at Abu-Cabir after they were investigated for several long hours by investigators of the Frauds Division in the Israeli Police. The two heads of the "Bethel" sect were arrested, as will be recalled, yesterday in the morning.... During the course of their investigation which was conducted separately, the couple succeeded in meeting for a few minutes, during which they exchanged words in Bulgarian. Immediately afterwards the two of them collapsed. The police suspect that the "collapse" was staged and coordinated. Mrs. Levy fainted and then Aharon Levy lay down on the floor as if he were unconscious. After a while Mrs. Levy recovered, and the investigation continued. Aharon Levy was taken to the Donolo Hospital and after it became clear that he was in good health, he was transferred to the prison. It is reported that the two are not cooperating with their investigators.

In the meantime, it appears that Lunda and Bill Hicks will remain Jews despite the fact that they were never converted to Judaism. This is so because it is not possible to annul a decision of the Rabbinical Court, and it is prevented from dealing with the matter. In order to annul the recognition of the couple as Jews, the Min. of Int. which granted them an Identity Certificate must appeal to the a Civil Court with the consent of the Attorney General. END ITEM.

DATE : 28.3.79 JOURNAL: "MAARIV" NEWS ARTICLE

HEADING: "RELATIVES OF "THE PROPHET" LEADING SECT BRANCH IN TEXAS"

BYLINE : Nurith Dovrat

QUOTE : The affair of the "prophet" Aharon Levy, owner of the "Bethel" in Azur, and his wife Helen, is branching out. This morning the two will be brought to the Court in Tel-Aviv for extension of their arrest. The team of investigators headed by Michael Horowitz of the Frauds Division in the Police Dept is checking out the abundant material which has been gathered in connection with the affair. From the initial investigation it appears that Aharon Levy, who had claimed in the presence of his followers that he was "Elijah the Prophet, the Messenger of the Lord," and founded the sect of Christian-Jews who believe in Jesus, had been receiving much money from many believers in Israel and abroad.

Large sums of money, some of it in dollars, were found in his home while a search was carried on by the police. The police are investigating additional suspects of ties with the activities of the Levy couple. The possibility of investigating the activities of the "Bethel" branch in Dallas, Texas in the United States, which is directed by relatives of the "prophet" is being considered.

Yesterday there were a number of local Jews familiar with the activities who contacted MAARIV, and promised to convey material they had gathered to the police. The disclosure of the fraud whereby the couple, as is suspected, succeeded in enlisting contributions by means of false representations, has aroused many reactions. The Officer Director of "Yad L'Akhir" (an activist organization against the Mission) in the United States, yesterday ~~mentioned~~ related that the sect leader of "Bethel Zion" in Azur had collected money by declaring that the place was a haven for problem families.

The Rabbinical Court and the Tel-aviv Rabbinat which permitted the marriage of the couple according to the religion of Moses and Israel of the Christian couple, Lunda and Bill Hicks, who lived at "Bethel," are hanging the blame on one another. The Hicks couple are continuing to cooperate with the police. Meanwhile, residents of Azur have organized a public committee whose purpose is to prevent the return of the Levy family to the place and the continuation of missionary activity by them.

In the wake of the threats on the life of the MAARIV correspondent who exposed the affair, the police yesterday investigated various persons belonging to the sect in Azur and worked with the Levys. Yesterday there were also threats of revenge against the office of "Yad L'Akhir" in Bnei Brak which aided (in the exposure of) the affair. END ARTICLE

DATE: 29.3.79 JOURNAL: "MAARIV" ARTICLE

HEADING: "MEMBERS OF 'BETHEL' WERE MADE TO SIGN DOCUMENT FORBIDDING THEM OUTSIDE CONTACTS (All their property and their earnings were required, according to the document to be transferred to the religious sect and its "prophet". Lunda Hicks freely transferred inheritance she received after mother's death. The defence: "It was like a kibbutz."

BYLINE : Nurith Dovrat

QUOTE : "The Prophet," Aharon Levy, and his wife Helen were arrested yesterday for 10 days on order of Justice Miriam Porat at the conclusion of a lengthy hearing conducted in the Tel-Aviv Court. Sgt. Michael Horowitz from the Frauds Division of the Police Dept presented to the Justice a series of documents and testimonies which link the directors of "Bethel Zion" in Azur in a complicated act of fraud, during the course of which the two exploited the naivete of the believers who adhered to the sect they had founded. The police presented to the court lists of persons in Israel and in the U.S.A., which were found in the Levy home, copies of letters which the couple were accustomed to send out, among them appeals for contributions, as well as photographs taken in the course of Jewish and Christian ceremonies conducted by the "prophet", and newspapers that were printed in Dallas, Texas (where a branch of "Bethel" operates) and which relates the praises of Jesus and the Messiah. Sgt. Horowitz presented the testimonies of Bill & Lunda Hicks, who had stayed at Bethel several years. It was alleged that the two were under the psychological influence of the Levy couple and because of this bound to them, and took part in part of the offences committed by which are ~~attributed~~ attributed to Aharon and Helen Levy, such as giving false testimony in the Rabbinical Court, obtaining certificates by fraud, customs violations, etc.

The young couple have filed a complaint with the police against the Levy couple, and the Court heard the substance of the complaints yesterday, according to which they were persuaded by means of verbal intimidation and deep religious faith to execute the plans of the prophet and his wife. In order to obtain the benefits of new immigrants a false declaration concerning the Jewishness of Bill and Lunda Hicks was submitted, and they were ~~red~~

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the Rabbinate in the presence of Aharon and Helen Levy. At Bethel there were photographs of a previous wedding ceremony of the young couple conducted in a church. There was also found in the possession of the Levy couple, photographs of U.S. Population Registry certificates containing the names of the parents of Lunda and Bill. At the Rabbinic Court Levy presented false names. The police submitted additional testimony in writing (which was conveyed ~~conveyed~~ to the MAARIV reporter) in which another believer of the "Bethel" sect, Brad Romans, admitted that he was a Christian despite the fact that he was registered with the Min. of Interior, on the recommendation of Levy, as a Jew. Brad Romans worked at Tadiran, and delivered all his wages to "Bethel." His wage slips were among the documents that the police discovered at the place.

An unusual document presented yesterday in court was signed by Lunda Hicks, in which she undertook to obey "the laws of Bethel" which had been established by the Levy couple. The document was found after a search made by the police at the site. The laws forbade, among other things, contact by members with the outside world, including telephone conversations and the receipt of mail. All their savings, property, wages, possessions, including any inheritance they might receive, were demanded of them. Absolute obedience to the demands of the sect leaders was required. In obedience to these instructions, Lunda Hicks conveyed her inheritance received after the death of her mother (amounting to 100,000 I.L.) to "Bethel."

Attorney Moshe Teneh, who is representing the suspects, argued in court that this amount was designated, as it were, for payment of rent and household expenses for their four-year stay in the place. The police representative refuted this claim when he related that the young people living in Bethel worked hard in construction and in all kinds of household tasks for which they received no payment.

The police conveyed to the court a list of goods found in the Levy home which had been bought without payment of customs duties. ^{Two} organs, electrical implements, and an authorization for the purchase of a Ford Transit car in accordance with the immigrant rights of Bill Hicks. The car was sold after he left the place, and the money received for the sale was turned over to Aharon Levy. The police reported yesterday that it is making a full-fledged investigation of the activities of the Ottoman Society "Bethel," and of the many funds and assets it received in the form of contributions. At the same time, the police intend to investigate the status of the sect, and the purposes of its activities, for which purpose many persons connected with the sect will be investigated.

Justice Porat was told by the police of the threats uttered against the MAARIV reporter in recent days and against the "Yad L'Akhnin" organization and Rabbi Kolitz. The police investigator ~~reported~~ stated that the release of the Levy couple before those making the threats are apprehended will add to the danger in which those involved in the affair find themselves.

Attorney Teneh argued that "this is a routine matter of false declarations in the Rabbinate and customs offences, and the matter ~~is~~ runs over into the field of faith and religious philosophy." According to him, "the place has the character of a commune, and people live there as in a kibbutz." Justice Miriam Porat did not accept his arguments and detained the couple for ten days inasmuch as, in her view, "the offences involved are most serious." END ARTICLE

DATE: 29.3.79 JOURNAL: "YEDIOT AKHRONOT" (HEB PM IND) NEWS ARTICLE

HEADING: "THE PROPHET AND HIS WIFE SUSPECTED OF FRAUD AND MISLEADING HIS FOLLOWERS TO GIVE FALSE TESTIMONY: THE POLICE--AHARON LEVY AND HIS WIFE HAVE NOT WORKED ONE DAY SINCE THEY CAME TO ISRAEL IN 1945; COMPELLED AN AMERICAN COUPLE TO "CONTRIBUTE" FUNDS AND EXPLOITED THEIR IMMIGRANT RIGHTS."

BYLINE : Moshe Ronen, Yediot Akhronot Correspondent.

QUOTE : The "prophet", Aharon Levy, age 67, and his wife Helena, age 61, leaders of a religious sect called "Bethel Zion", which operated for many years in the town of Azur, were arrested yesterday for ten days on order of the Tel-Aviv court, on suspicion of fraud violations, extortion, false testimony, and customs and income tax offences. According to the police, Aharon Levy was accustomed to draw young Christians from the U.S. to his sect, which he managed in Israel. He claimed that he was "Elijah the Prophet." With the help of relatives who manage a "branch" of the sect in Dallas, Texas, he brought many young people to Israel, who lived at "Bethel" in Azur, and who were subject to his complete control.

Michael Horowitz, representing the police, claimed in court that since their arrival in Israel in the year 1945, the Levy couple have not worked a single day, and subsisted on the ^{financial} contributions which they received from the U.S.A. For this purpose they set up an Ottoman Society, which has many assets, and among them 20 dunams of land. The police suspect that Helena and Aharon Levy, for four years, exploited the young couple William and Linda Hicks who arrived in Israel in 1975, and were bound to them. The Hicks couple lived under a

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strict regimen, and developed absolute emotional dependence on the Levy couple. They turned over to them all their assets and papers and became something like robots. Among other things, they were asked to request of their parents in the U.S. to contribute 10 percent of their wages to the religious sect in Israel. Linda Hicks was compelled to contribute her portion of her ^{late} mother's inheritance in the sum of 5,000 dollars as well.

The investigator also added that William and Linda Hicks arrived in Israel in 1975 after they had been married in a church ceremony in California in 1973. Nevertheless, the Levys persuaded them to give false testimony at the Rabbinate and at other agencies in order to prove they were Jews and to benefit from the rights of new immigrants. When they obtained these rights, the Hickses purchased valuable goods which were registered on their Immigrant Certificates, but were then transferred to the possession of the Levys. Among the items were a Ford Transit car and a church organ. According to the police, the Levys violated customs and fraud regulations.

At the end of 1977 William Hicks was sent out on a missionary journey to the U.S.A., which led to his realization of the fraudulent scheme. When he returned to Israel, he turned to a reporter, Nurith Dovrat, who investigated the affair. On the 21st of March William Hicks, armed with a Rabbinical court order and with the aid of the police, succeeded in getting his wife out of "Bethel." The young woman was obliged to have psychiatric treatment to release her from her dependence upon Aharon Levy. The police also discovered documents verifying the complaint of William Hicks, and among them a document in which Linda Hicks had yielded her private rights and appointed Aharon Levy as her ~~representative~~ representative, empowered to act in her name.

On the day of the arrest of the suspects, the police charge ^{THAT WERE} threats against the lives of members of a Jewish religious organization that had provided shelter for the young couple and against the rabbi and reporter involved in the affair. The attorney for the defence, Moshe Teneh, argued in court that the police are giving the matter exaggerated prominence, and requested the release of the suspects, but the judge rejected the ~~request~~ request and, as noted, ordered the detention of Helena and Aharon Levy for ten days. END ARTICLE

DATE: 29.3.79 JOURNAL: "MAARIV" NEWS FEATURE

HEADING: "DISCOVERY OF ELIJAH IN AZUR...THE ISRAELI JONES PROMISES THE END TIME AND

DECEIVES THE INNOCENTS" (PHOTOS: (1) "The Prophet takes part in a circumcision of
 BILLINE : Nurith Dovrat (of the son of one of the believers. (2) The Hickses

QUOTE : In "Bethel Zion" there lives "Elijah the Prophet" who preaches faith in ~~the~~ Jesus, in the Messianic Days, and in the New World which will be established after the ruin (of the old) by his followers, who are the chosen race of God. For some ten years Aharon Levy and his wife Helena operated as "messengers of God" and promoted their teachings in Israel and overseas, reaching to Dallas, Texas (USA), and set up a branch there of "Bethel." This week the two were arrested by the Division of Frauds of the Israeli Police Force, as suspects....(details as in previous accounts above)....

For a long period the sect leaders worked to bring many followers to Israel, for whom they built tens of rooms and a large prayer hall. For the purpose of realizing their plans to settle tens of thousands of followers, they purchased 20 dunams of land near Ramle. They fixed the number at 144,000 believers during their campaigns to raise money in the U.S.A. and Israel, the number being taken from "the New Testament" in the place where it is spoken of the number of endtime survivors. Levy even appointed a leader of the sect, naming him "Joshua," and instilled in him the sense of his importance, Bill Hicks (even the one called "Joshua"), who was designated to be the leader of the sect of "Bethel" at the side of the "prophet." The believers planned to penetrate all areas of life in Israel and to get a foothold in Govt offices, universities, etc. But Bill was ejected from his post and called "Satan," after an article was published in MAARIV which opened his eyes. He traveled to the U.S.A. and underwent special psychological treatment to release him from his absolute dependence on his leader. When he returned to Israel to release his wife Linda, 24, from her sectarian captivity, he learned that the struggle demanded for this was long and violent since the Levys refused to release her. Bill was therefore compelled to turn to the press, to attorneys and to the police and thus he removed the mask from the face of the prophet.

The Levy family arrived in Israel from Bulgaria in 1945, and after awhile settled in Azur. Their two daughters and a son studied at Catholic schools and at present are living (one son and one daughter) in Dallas (Texas) and one daughter in Azur. Their son Yitzhak manages the branch of "Bethel" in Dallas and collects funds, organizes religious conferences, at which Levy preaches with his wife translating, distributes the sect newspaper, and in the despatch of letters to persons in Israel and abroad. Dallas was not chosen by chance, but as a place of strange religious ceremonies, whose residents enjoy watching radio & television programs which deal with religion.

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A few years ago after the Min. of Welfare stopped ^(as a result of complaints) sending them unmarried pregnant women, and their source of income stopped, the Levys decided to set up an Ottoman Society, "Bethel Zion," which was designed, so they declared, to gather money for providing aid and philanthropic works. The police ^{are} of a different opinion, after uncovering large sums of money in the Levy home in dollars, various bank accounts in Israel and abroad, and many assets including organs, deep freeze refrigerator, regular fridges, laundromat, sewing machine, etc. This property was for the most part obtained on the basis of the immigrant rights of Lunda and Bill Hicks who, inspired by Levy, obtained Identity and Immigrant Certificates.

"The prophet" spent his time spinning fanciful tales about his visions and dreams with the aid of "the New Testament" in order to substantiate by the examples cited therein the fact that he is "the apostle," and "the prophet bearing the word of God." With flashing eyes and a deep voice, in broken Hebrew and in English full of errors, he related his fanciful tales which, according to him, directed his path. His wife ~~supported~~ upheld him and related how much admiration her husband received in the wide world, the truth of his visions, and the depth of his faith in Jesus, in Messiah, in God, and... in Aharon Levy. The young people staying in his house worked hard building many things, and the women worked in the household and taking care of all the affairs of "Bethel", all for nothing in return.

It was not only in America that Levy had a following of believers. He also won recognition from lost souls in Israel. Lunda, young and pretty, clear-eyed, presentable, and Bill, tall, blue eyes, likeable, are witnesses that the phenomenon of false ^{new} gods is possible in our era also. Jim Jones did it with hundreds of followers in Jonestown, Guiana, and Aharon Levy did it in a more modest manner in Azur, Israel. There is an astonishing resemblance among the various "Messiahs," a widespread phenomenon in the U.S.A. "Hare Krishna" and "Sun-yan Moon", and many others, reach their followers in many and diverse ways. Their apostles work in the universities, in youth clubs, even on the streets. They employ systems like giving flowers, pocket money or faith "in a new way to the light of life." Most of the believers are young people, insecure, who have experienced many crises. They lean on the "prophets", the "Messiahs," and the idols, and their end is disillusionment. END ARTICLE

DATE: 29.3.79 JOURNAL: "HATSOFEH" (HEB AM NRP) NEWS ITEM

HEADING: "HEADS OF MISSIONARY SECT ARE ARRESTED AS FRAUD SUSPECTS"

QUOTE : The heads of a missionary sect in Azur, Aharon Levy, age 67, and his wife Helena, age 61, were yesterday arrested in the Tel-Aviv Court on suspicion of obtaining assets by fraudulent means from innocent persons that followed them. They are also suspected of giving false testimony and of tax violations. The police representative claimed that the two have been leading for years a religious sect named "Bethel Zion". The leader, Levy, believed that he is Elijah the Prophet, according to the investigator, and for years has attracted young Christians from the U.S.A. to ~~his~~ the sect centre in Azur near Holon. With the help of his son, who manages a branch of the sect in Dallas, Texas, he has brought many young people to Israel who have lived at Bethel and were under the complete influence of the suspects.

The Levys came to Israel in 1945, from which time he has not worked but subsisted on contributions which were sent him from the U.S.A. For this purpose he set up an Ottoman Society, the investigator said. Among the assets of the society were also 26 dunams land. The investigator claimed that for a period of four years the suspects exploited young couples from the USA, William and Lona Hicks, who joined the sect and were completely bound to them. They lived ~~in~~ under a strict regimen....(the balance as in above previous accounts.)

DATE: 4.4.79 JOURNAL: "HATSOFEH" (HEB AM NRP) NEWS ARTICLE

HEADING: "HEADS OF MISSIONARY COMMUNITY SUSPECTED OF PERJURY AND FRAUDULENT ACTS"

QUOTE : Pre-trial testimony in the trial of the couple Aharon and Helena Levy, heads of the religious community "Bethel" in Azur, suspected of fraud, was heard yesterday in the District Court of Telaviv. Testimony was heard from Linda Hicks, age 24, who lived for four years in the community of the Levys. The witness said that at first she had the impression that the Levys aspired to gain followers for their community, but now she felt they only wanted to get rich.

The prosecution is charging the two with fraudulent acts, perjury and instigation to perjury. There has as yet not been submitted to the court a formal accusation, but the court was asked to hear the testimonies separately of three persons about to leave the country, and one of the three is the witness Hicks. She told at length of the background of herself and her family, about the struggles of faith and opinions which she went through, until she ^{and her husband} came in contact with the Bethel community in Azur. This was followed eventually with a family breakup, and then her decision to return to him and to leave "Bethel" and to return to the U.S.A.

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After replying to the questions of the prosecutor's representative, Attorney A. Landstein, the witness was cross-examined by the attorney for the defence, Attorney Zvi Lidsky and Attorney Moshe Teneh. According to Linda Hicks, she had a very strong desire to live in the Land of the Bible, and she found happiness in the community of the Levys. But for a time various problems arose, and she was finally convinced that she must return to her husband and to the land of her birth. In response to the questions of the defence attorneys she denied that she had been kidnapped or had been removed from the community by force, and said that she would have left even without the police or a court order. But in reply to other questions she confirmed that she at first had refused to leave the place, and that the Holon Police had presented her with an order of the court which required her to leave "Bethel Zion". She also confirmed her testimony that following her departure from the place she had spent the night in the Meah Shearim neighbourhood, and there she was spoken to at length by her husband William Hicks, his escort, Steven Hiller, and others.

During the course of her examination she confirmed that she had greeted her husband when he came to remove her from "Bethel" with expressions such as "Swine," and "Satan," and explained that she had learned to use such expressions in the framework of the community with which she was linked and ~~from~~ which her husband had left. However, now she sees that her obligation is to be loyal to her husband, and also his escort, the psychologist Hiller had exposed to her things that were hidden in her subconscious.

Attorney Lidsky pressed the witness with such questions: "Is it not so that you have been brainwashed in recent weeks?" The witness denied it, and explained that during those weeks she had matured, and those who had helped her to mature had been her husband, the one who accompanied him, and the people of Meah Shearim to whom she had been brought. She added with emphasis that she was leaving the community, not because of a court order, but of her own free will.

Concerning the experiences she went through at "Bethel" she remarked that at first she had believed in the way of life of the commune, and she was happy in that path, "but there were problems which sprang up." According to her, contributions and gifts were received from abroad, and were for the use of everybody. END ARTICLE

DATE: 4.4.79 JOURNAL: "YEDIOT AKHRONOT" (HEB PM IND) NEWS ARTICLE

HEADING: "HEADS OF SECT 'BETHEL ZION' PERSUADED ME THAT MY HUSBAND IS SATAN:" - TESTIMONY YESTERDAY OF LONDA HICKS AGAINST AHARON & HELEN LEVY, FRAUD SUSPECTS"

BYLINE : Moshe Ronen, "Yediot Akhronot" Correspondent.

QUOTE : "They persuaded me that my husband Bill is Satan, and that if I return with him to the United States he would kill me," Londa Hicks, the young good-looking blonde testified yesterday in the District Court of Tel Aviv.

"I was born on 1 January 1955, as a Protestant, in the United States," the witness stated in reply to questions by the prosecutor, Avraham Landstein. "I was married to William Hicks in 1973 in a church. We were very religious, and we wanted to come to Israel. In Dallas, Texas, we met Hava, the daughter of Helen and Aharon Levy, and she proposed that we come to live in the home of her parents in Azur. She told us that her parents believe in ~~xxx~~ a mixture of God and Jesus. I wanted to convert to Judaism in Dallas, but we postponed the conversion. We came to Israel, and we lived at Bethel Zion in Azur. Every evening we had a prayer service in English in which Levy read excerpts from the New Testament and the Old Testament. I worked at cooking and housecleaning, and my husband at construction and plumbing in "Bethel." Whenever we spoke about conversion to Judaism, Aharon Levy would say to me: If you believe within your heart that you are Jewish and that you keep the Sabbath that is enough, and you are reckoned to be a Jew. I thought that this was the acceptable procedure for traditional conversion to Judaism. We went to the Ministry of Interior and signed various documents. Afterwards it was decided that that we should marry again at the Rabbinate. Before this, Aharon Levy said to me that I should say that the name of my mother was Miriam Jacobson and not Mary-Ann Hammond. After we were married at the Rabbinate, they said that we should take Jewish names. My husband was called Yosef and I was named Esther.

Afterward we received a blue book (New Immigrants Certificate) and then when a supporter of the "Bethel" group sent them a fridge from the U.S.A., a laundromat, an organ, an electric oven and stove, they were recorded in the blue book. There was also another couple in the Bethel community in Azur: Fred and Kay Romana. Kay was Jewish and Fred was born a Christian but became a Jew like us."

In reply to the questions of the defence attorneys, Zvi Lidsky and Moshe Teneh, Londa Hicks related that during her 24 years she had been throughout the United States, but when she arrived at "Bethel" she finally found peace of mind. "I thought that according to the

Bible this is the place to be, and that people who believe in God have to live in the Land of Israel," she stated. The prosecutor, Avraham Landstein, presented to the court the testimony of Aharon Levy in the Rabbinical Court, according to which he knew Lunda Hicks for five years, and that she was Jewish. On the basis of this testimony she was granted new immigrant rights, according to the prosecutor, which were exploited by Helen and Aharon Levy.

In addition to Lunda Hicks there arrived in Court the ^{American} psychologist who has been treating her. According to the defence attorneys this psychologist specializes in strange religious phenomena such as that of the minister Jim Jones who brought about the suicide of all his followers.

END ARTICLE

SUBJECT TWO: CHRISTIANS AND ISRAEL

~~DATE~~ DATE: 5 Jan 79 JOURNAL: AMERICAN JEWISH WORLD (MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.) FEATURE ARTICLE

HEADING: "THE CHRISTIANS RIGHT HAND MAN IN ISRAEL" (

BYLINE : ROBT D KAPLAN (PHOTO INSET: THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM)

QUOTE (EXCERPTS) Delicacy is the touchstone of daily Israeli Govt policy towards its Christian minorities in Jerusalem. Officials must maintain a deft juggling act between the various & strangled denominations, many of whom command powerful support from outside the Jewish State, yet within the country are as one pundit explained, "minorities three-times over." The dual personality of Jerusalem's Christians forms the basis of how the Govt deals with them on an everyday level. The Holy City is not the world centre for any Christian group. Thus all the sects are representatives of more powerful elements outside Israel. The Latin Patriarch here, to put it mildly as a friend to the Vatican, Jerusalem Anglicans can turn to Canterbury. Rival church hierarchies in N.Y. and Moscow monitor the treatment of their respective Russian Orthodox communities here. And church bureaucracies in Soviet Armenia and Ethiopia keep a watchful eye on the fate of their Jerusalem congregations. So it goes.

On the other hand, the phrase "minorities three times over" is not a mere rhetorical one. First, most of the city's 12,000 Christians are Arabs, a people who are a minority vis-a-vis the Jews. Secondly, because they are Christian, they are a minority within Arab society, which is predominantly Muslim. And thirdly, since there are 35 different Christian groups in Israel, unless they belong to a dominant group like the Greek Orthodox they are also a minority within the Christian ~~popul~~ population at large. The conflicting characteristics of the Jerusalem Christians have caused a relationship where the Israeli Govt gives a kind of preferential treatment to its Christian inhabitants as if they were official representatives of foreign states, "because in many ways they are. Since the triple minority status makes the sects so sensitive to their already weakened position, a minor crisis in this relationship can revolve around something like failure of the Govt to grant a tax exemption on a clergyman's car or refrigerator. As one official of the Relig Aff Min said: "The Ministry on one hand compensates for their minority status, but at the same time is sort of conducting diplomatic relations with foreign powers."

How does this extra-special relationship work? Very efficiently. The reason is simple. The Min. of Relig. Affairs is, in the words of one expert, the Christians' "right-hand man" in Israel. If a clergyman has trouble with a customs deduction at the Customs House, if he can't get a slip from the Health Ministry, if he has visa problems at the Interior Ministry, he turns to the 8-member dept at the Relig. Affairs Ministry, and then they handle it all, like a private ombudsman. A principle duty of these 8 officials is to dispense privileges to Christian clergymen here. These rights, very generally, are similar to rights given to new Jewish immigrants, except they don't expire after 3 years.

The 40 French and Italian Christian institutions in Jerusalem, such as Ecole Biblique for example, receive the most benefits simply because their rights were negotiated between France, Italy, Turkey in Ottoman times, and all the succeeding govts in this area have kept the status quo in this regard. These mostly include tax exemptions on all imported merchandise, little different than immigrant benefits....also, all Christian community heads are entitled to purchase a new car every 3 years tax free....all these exempted taxes are paid by the Govt with the Relig. Aff. Min. transferring the funds to the appropriate Govt office.the Ministry occasionally gives grants for the purpose of new church bldg or acquisitions. A IL 50,000 gift to the Maronite Christians for their soon-to-be-completed centre in the Old City, and a IL 30,000 gift to the Armenians for book purchases are examples.The Ministry is also in the business of mediation between Christian groups that happen to be at odds, which can sometimes be costly. The Ministry will soon spend IL 23,000 for repairs in the Chapel of St. Helena...both the Copts and Ethiopians claim rights to the roof. Since paying for repairs signifies ownership, the State of Israel will bear the cost.

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Since 1967 the Ministry claims to maintain good relations with all Christian groups in East Jerusalem. Church officials are in daily contact with the Ministry, and the Ministry's Director General Israel Lippel is unusually interested and concerned with the whole area of Jewish-Christian relations in Jerusalem, Christian and Govt officials note.

The Ministry also acts as an information centre for foreign visitors... This information drive is exemplified by CHRISTIAN NEWS FROM ISRAEL, a quarterly publication in three languages to which many libraries and churches in the West subscribe. Unfortunately, the people of Israel don't receive much applause for their behaviour towards area Christians. This admittedly is partly the Ministry's fault. Though it invests much effort in distributing information about Jerusalem Christians, it invests little effort in distributing information about what it does on their behalf. Its helpful policy towards the various groups is well known within those communities. In fact, rarely does a local Christian newsletter not mention some note of gratitude for aid received from the Min. of Relig. Affairs. But Christian publications from outside Israel rarely mention such things. Perhaps we should be thankful for small mercies: Most Christians in the West do recognize by now the simple fact that the Holy Places are "open" here. END FEATURE

DATE: 15.12.79 JOURNAL: JEWISH NEWS (DETROIT MICH) NEWS ARTICLE

HEADING: "CHRISTIAN PLAN SEEKS TO EDUCATE GENTILES ON ISRAEL"

QUOTE : CHICAGO (JTA)- A massive grass roots effort to reach 45 million Christians with the positive story of Israel and the Jewish people was advocated by a noted Christian clergyman. Dr. G. Douglas Young, founder of the Institute of Holy Land Studies, an Evangelical Christian seminary in Jerusalem, maintained that Jewish groups are only "wasting their time" trying to re-educate top leaders of the Christian church because the "World Council of Churches is a predominantly pro-Arab group that tends to side with PLO terrorists on all issues." Speaking to a group of Jewish leaders, Young said that the average pastor takes his lead from the higher echelons and so the masses of Christianity are being taught a "philosophy of contempt for Jews that fosters antisemitism." Young, who has lived in Jerusalem for the past 8 years said that Jews and Christians have "no problems" in living together in Israel. The Israeli Govt "carefully follows" articles in its Declaration of Independence guaranteeing the rights of all citizens, Young said.

DATE: 15.12.79 JOURNAL: B'NAI BRITH MESSENGER (LOS ANGELES, CALIF) NEWS ITEM

HEADING: "CLERIC URGES ON CHRISTIANS POSITIVE STORY OF ISRAEL"

SUMMARY: This is an abbreviated version of the previous above-quoted article, beginning as above: "A massive grass roots effort to reach 45 million Christians..."

DATE: 23.3.79 JOURNAL: "JEWISH CHRONICLE (LONDON ENGLAND) NEWS ARTICLE

HEADING: "AS CHRISTIANS SEE ISRAEL" (PHOTO: Israeli Ambassador Abraham Kidron with participants in lecture series at Westminster Abbey on "Christian debate on Israel" Canon Peter Schneider, Socy Archbishops consultants on interfaith relations, Dr. Edward Carpenter, Dean of Westminster, Canon John Baker, Subdean Westminster.)

BYLINE: JEWISH CHRONICLE REPORTER

QUOTE : "Saying 'Yes' to Israel does not necessarily involve one indetracting from the firm genuine communal and ethnic aspirations of Palestinian Arabs, but these cannot be at the expense of Israel," said Canon Peter Schneider in a lecture at Westminster Abbey last week. Canon Schneider, who is secretary of the consultants to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on interfaith relations, was for 11 years Canon of St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem. His talk on the "Christian Debate on Israel," (the first of three) was entitled "An Inquiry into the Churches' Ambivalence on the right to existence of the State of Israel." The Canon, in discussing this ambivalence, stated that, as a Christian theologian, he could appreciate the grounds for recognizing the special relationship and the link between the Jewish people and the land of Israel, and the continuity of the Jewish people since biblical times. END

DATE: 27.3.79 JOURNAL: JERUSALEM POST EXCERPT FROM FEATURE ARTICLE ("CONTEXT")

HEADING: "A MOST UNUSUAL MAN" (PHOTOS: (1) Orde Wingate leading Jewish commando unit (2) Orde Wingate)

BYLINE : Martin Sieff

EXCERPT: "WINGATE--there was a man of genius who might have been a man of destiny," wrote Winston Churchill after the death in a plane crash in Burma of Maj-Gen Orde Charles Wingate on March 24, 1944. Wingate, like that other great 20th Century soldier, George Patton, was an odd man out in modern times. His parents were members of the Plymouth Brethren. His driven personality was directed by a deep belief in a personal God and a literal belief in biblical prophecy that led him to a fanatical commitment to the Zionist cause. When he was posted to Palestine in 1936 in the early stages of the Arab rebellion, the 34-year old Capt. Orde Wingate still briefly shared the fashionable antisemitism of his fellow British officers. He soon came to the conclusion, however, that the Zionist pioneers MORE

were the descendants and heirs of his Old Testament heroes, and their return to the Land of Israel was the fulfilment of biblical prophecies. And the result was an impassioned commitment to Zionism which remained with him until the end of his turbulent life. END EXC.

SUBJECT THREE: CHRISTIANS AND PEACE TREATY

DATE: 30.3.79 JOURNAL: JERUSALEM POST FEATURE ARTICLE ("CONTEXT")

HEADING: "CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO THE PEACE TREATY" (PHOTO INSET: Head of Coptic Church, Pope Shenouda III)

BYLINE: OILOUMENIROS (CHRISTIAN COMMENT)

EXCERPTS: HOW DO CHRISTIANS feel about the peace treaty that was signed in Washington this week? The responses are almost as diverse as the various Christian communities in Jerusalem. One evident response in many quarters is THANKSGIVING to God that at least in part of the Middle East, people are willing to make the sacrifices and take the risk that mark the path to peace. No one is under the illusion that we have entered a millennium of peace. ...Another response, not necessarily exclusive of other reactions, is CAUTIOUS HOPE. Hope that people will indeed "beat their swords into ploughshares" is tempered by the realization that there are numerous hurdles yet to be overcome.... ADMIRATION FOR THE MEDIATING AND RECONCILING role of Pres. Carter is expressed by many Christians.

Several years ago when George Appleton was Anglican Archbishop of Jerusalem, he advocated a mediating role for Christians, insisting that Christians should be sensitive to the long and tragic history of Christian-Jewish relations and its impact on the present, and should also emphatically understand the Palestinians' plight. "The Christian," he said, "must be willing to accept the vulnerability and risks of standing between. Because he has learned to listen with sensitivity, a Christian may be called upon at times to speak for the absent party, endeavouring to represent the views of another if face-to-face encounter is not occurring." Appleton himself knew how costly that could be, since he was accused and misunderstood by both his Arab parishioners and his Jewish friends.

Pres. Carter, in a similar role, has experienced the vulnerability of that mediating position and has been attacked by the press and by cartoonists from both sides. Nevertheless, many Christians in Jerusalem draw inspiration from the dramatic symbolism of a committed Christian standing between a devout Moslem and an observant Jew, and pray that in some small way they may do the same....

Will the treaty lead to increased contacts with Coptic Christians? With over 500,000 Coptic Christians in Cairo itself and a vital renewal in progress, many in Israel will be happy for contacts with this branch of Christianity. Large numbers of Coptic pilgrims previously came to Jerusalem, especially at Easter time. Can a renewal of pilgrimages be anticipated now that the peace treaty has been signed? A spokesman for the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate says, "No, not under the present circumstances; not until our holy places and properties are returned to us." Unfortunately, there is a longstanding conflict with the Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate. To date it has not resulted in the return of disputed property to the Copts....

Christians who are interested in further contact and dialogue with Islamic scholars await with keen interest signs that the new era with Egypt may provide a context for new relationships with Islam. Those advocating interfaith dialogue are aware that the Al Azhar University has in the past produced some vitriolic anti-Jewish material. However, it may be hoped that the amazing changes brought about through the leadership of Pres. Sadat may also have their impact in Islamic circles in Cairo. Some in Jerusalem already envisage the possibility of tripartite religious encounter here, perhaps with international sponsorship.

The nature of one's response to the treaty is often bound up with one's own identity. Most Christians in Israel are Arabs, of course, and live in Galilee. One Israeli-Arab Christian leader, Ibrahim Sim'an, expressed the opinion this week that the majority tends to believe that the treaty can indeed be the first step towards a comprehensive settlement. There is a widespread admiration for the courage of Pres. Sadat, even if it is not widely voiced. There is disappointment generally that there has not been more progress yet towards a solution of the Palestinian problem, which they view as crucial. Peace should begin at home, says Sim'an, and Israeli Arabs may serve as a bridge--if a real sense of partnership can emerge, in mutual respect, in dealing with domestic issues....

West Bank Christians sometimes perhaps succumbing to peer-group pressure view the treaty negatively and their future pessimistically. The large number of Arab Christian emigrants is a reflection of the general outlook. The continuing program of Jewish settlements in the West Bank is to them a sign that "autonomy" is a smokescreen for virtual annexation. One occasionally meets a person who is seeking a path out of his bitterness towards a more Christian response...

MORE

Among Christians who are not native to the Holy Land, one frequently discovers polarized positions: On one side strong supporters of Israel, including Christian Zionists; at the other end of the spectrum, supporters of Palestinian Arabs, including some working in the West Bank, in refugee camps, or in West Bank universities. Both extremes seek to justify their advocacy by appeal to Scripture. The Christian Zionist sees Israel as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, so Israel must be supported in every area. Among Christian Zionists—who hold views similar to Gush Emunim—there are those who are suspicious of Pres. Carter and claim that Israel has already given up too much. Certain Christians who work in the West Bank, on the other hand, envisage their role to be that of identifying with, and actively taking the part of the "oppressed." They fear that "autonomy" will merely maintain the military administration as the status quo.

Meanwhile, others seek to be a quiet presence—praying and doing good, and feeling no compulsion to support any particular position or side. This underscores the fact that Christians often perceive their responsibility to a given situation differently, albeit with equal sincerity. END PREAMBLE

DATE: 2.4.79 JOURNAL: "AL HANASHIMAN" (HEB AM MAFAM) NEWS ITEM

READING: "MANY CLERGY CAME TO WELCOME BEGIN"

LINE: Gabriel Stern, correspondent of "Al Hanashmar"

QUOTE: An unexpected number of Christian clerical leaders from East Jerusalem responded to the invitation to take part in the state ceremony upon the return of Prime Minister

Manher Begin from the signing of the peace treaty with Egypt in Washington. Among those

who came were the deputies of the Greek and Armenian patriarchs, the Archbishops Constantinos and Shaima Afanias, the Deputy Chief of the Ethiopian Community, Fr. Yohannes, and

the Deputy Chief of the Syrian Catholic Community, Nuros Ebed-ekhad, and the head of

German Lutheran church, Dr. H. Galata. They were presented at the reception following the

ceremony first before the Prime Minister by Daniel Hossing of the Director of the Christian

affairs Dept in the Min. of Relig. Aff., in addition to the heads of the communities from

Israel, the Archbishop Maximos Salam (Greek Catholic), Dr. Robt Lindsey, Chairman UCCI

(Protestant), the Baptist minister who recently welcomed his fellow-baptist, Pres. Carter,

to Jerusalem. END ARTICLE

SUBJECT FOUR: THE DONFLINGER CASE (WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?) (See Select. 56* for main body of

clippings)

DATE: 19.3.79 JOURNAL: JERUSALEM POST NEWS ARTICLE

READING: "SUPREME COURT RULES WHO'S NOT A JEW"

QUOTE: The Supreme Court frequently asked to define what makes someone a Jew, yesterday

came out with a leading judgment about what makes a Jew cease being a Jew. Three justices,

sitting as the High Court of Justice, rejected an application for an order against the Int.

Minister from a woman who had been born to a Jewish mother and been baptized a Christian, but

still considered herself a Jew. Eileen Dorflander (sic.) is connected to the Jews for Jesus

movement. She arrived in Israel 18 months ago and received a temporary identity card. She

was refused Israeli citizenship and wanted the High Court to order the Int. Min. to show

cause why she not be granted citizenship under the Law of Return. The law defines a Jew as

a person born to a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism, provided he is not a member of

another religion. Dorflander claimed she was a Jew, but the Int. Min. presented evidence

that she had been converted to Christianity. The Int. Min.'s reply said the minister sees

the Jews for Jesus movement as the operator of a "ruse to bring Christianity's message to

our nation and make Jews renounce their religion." Dorflander insisted that she was a Jew

since she was born to a Jewish mother. The court needed recourse to the most basic theology

to solve the impasse. The justices asked the woman if she believes Jesus was the messiah.

She answered: "Yes." They then asked her if she believes in Jesus' godhead. Her answers

were evasive. Dorflander said she had never been formally baptized, but has "immersed her

body in water as an expression of purification" three times. The justices decided to accept

the Int. Min. account of her formal baptism in Connecticut in the spring of 1975.

In their ruling the judges said that a Jew's membership in another religion must be checked

according to the specific criteria of that religion, and not according to the criteria of

Judaism. Since belief that Jesus was the messiah is the most basic tenet of Christianity,

the judges ruled Dorflander could not be considered a Jew. END ARTICLE

MISCELLANEOUS ITEM

DATE: 23.3.79 JOURNAL: MITTELSTUNGSBLATT (TELAVIV) GERMAN LANGUAGE HIGH COURT RULINGS

HEADING: RECHT UND GERECHT (Justice & Law)

SUMMARY: This is a newsbrief about a ruling (C.A. 545/77) in the High Court involving

a breach of promise suit between an Israeli Christian and Israeli Jews in which the

court ruled that since such marriages could not be contracted within Israel, there could

not be a breach of promise. END TRANSCRIPT 10.4.79 mb