

REV. ABU--ASAL VS. THE STATE OF ISRAEL: Under this heading "HA'ARETZ" (18.3.83) published a three-page feature article and four photographs about the Anglican clergyman from Nazareth, Riah Abu-Asal, excerpts of which follow:

On the desk of Rev. Riah Abu-Asal lies the book of Rabbi Kahana, "THEY MUST GO." You are learning to know the enemy? I ask. No, he smiles; my real enemy is not Kahana, but the Government. The Israeli Gov't in his view is a faithful reflection of the Zionist idea, and Zionism in his opinion is the mother of all sin. He conveys his political doctrine as if he were standing before his congregation. His speech is moderate and quiet, his ideas well-ordered, and it is evident that he believes in them completely. But the moderacy of his speech does not cover up the content: The fulfilment of Fr. Abu-Asal's dream means the demise of the Zionist dream..

Fr. Riah is the spiritual leader of the Christian-Anglican community in Nazareth. Among the oldest Christian communities in Israel, the Anglican is the smallest. About a thousand of the community live in Israel, half in Nazareth and in the adjacent village Rineia. The community of Eretz Israel began in 1841, and until 1905 was under the direct authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury, at which time it became independent, and its ties with the mother church in England remained more in the ideological realm than in the practical. About 1500 Anglicans live in Jordan, and several hundreds in Lebanon; almost all of them Palestinians, he stresses. In 1974 Bishop Haddad was appointed leader of the Anglican Church in the Middle East. Until then Abu-Asal was the spiritual leader of the church in Israel. In January Bishop Haddad ended his term of service, and his successor has already been chosen, Samir Kafiti of Haifa, and not Abu-Asal of Nazareth.

Arab Christians were always among the most extremist elements in the Palestinian nationalist movement: Naguib Azori (author of "The Revival of the Arab Nation in Asia & Turkey" in 1905); Dr. George Habbash and Naif Huwatama; and Rev. Riah Abu-Asal. Riah's colleague Rev. Elias Houri was deported to Jordan after being caught while engaged in hostile activity. Houri is now the Anglican leader in Jordan. The Christians were always suspect of dual loyalty by the Moslem majority. Fidelity to Jesus does not jibe with fidelity to Palestine. An Arab Christian living in Israel represents a minority within a minority--an Arab in the Jewish State and a Christian among his Moslem compatriots. "Whenever I lecture abroad and am introduced as an Arab, people always think I am a Moslem; Arabism is identified with Islam, and that is a mistake," he relates. This provokes him, and he skims through the New Testament to indicate the passage which tells of Arab Christians who lived in Jerusalem...

Riah Abu-Asal is 46, married to an attractive young woman, and the father of three children. His family has been living in Nazareth for many generations. Two years before the establishment of the State of Israel the family moved to Beirut; and in 1949, when he was 12, he stole across the border into Israel and reached Nazareth. His brother is still in Beirut...For four years he studied theology at a university in India and afterwards served in St. John's Church in Haifa....In 1974 the church granted him a sabbatical, which he employed to complete his second degree at the American University in Beirut, but the civil war in Lebanon interrupted his studies...and (in 1975) he returned to Nazareth with his family.

Rev. Abu-Asal occupies himself also in mundane matters. By virtue of his position he is responsible also for the educational institutions of the church...an elementary school, kindergarten, a home for retarded children. Most of the children being educated in these institutions are Moslems. The emphasis in education is not on religion, he explains (but they do have Christian observances such as Christmas nativity plays.) (There follows a discussion about the massacres of Palestinians in the Lebanese camps and the Israeli Kahana commission which investigated the matter. Asked to comment on the fact that it was Falangist Christians who did the killing, he responded, "True, but they are Christians without Jesus. But those who are responsible are the ones who permitted them to enter Sabra and Shetila...")

Rev. Abu-Asal was chairman of two (Palestinian nationalist) trends (eventually banned by the Ministry of Defence because of their basic hostility to the State)...The sole solution to the Palestinian problem, according to Abu-Asal, is a bi-national democratic secular state. That will be the final result of co-existence between Jews and Palestinians. That will be the second stage; but first, Israel will withdraw from the occupied territories and a Palestinian state will be set up on Palestinian land...What about Jordan? Most of its inhabitants are Palestinians. Jordan (he replies) is an independent and distinctive political entity even though most of its inhabitants are Palestinians. The Palestinian problem must not be solved at Jordan's expense. We can then all live in peace like in Switzerland, he says. I remark, in Switzerland only Christians live, and you want Christians, Moslems and Jews to live here together, and

you believe that they will live in peace with one another. As an expert in Islam, you surely know that Moslems are not prepared to accept strangers in their midst and to regard them as equals. A process of secularization is required, the clergyman replies affably. We will put less stress on religious interests. Nowadays the Church, the Mosque, the Western Wall are sometimes more important than human life, but it will not be so in the future. (The concept of a secular state is indeed supported by Christians among the Palestinians in order to blunt the fact of their minority status, but it is strange to hear a Christian clergyman convert secularism into an ideal.)

(There follows a description of the cleric's involvement with the Israeli Council for Israel-Palestine Peace, which favours a two-state solution to the problem, Israel and Palestine living side by side, which is quite contrary to Abu-Asal's view of a binational secular state. Nevertheless, he is invited by the Council to give a lecture on "The Jewish Question as a Palestinian Dilemma." He states: The Jews call this "the Promised Land," but Palestinians were here even before Joshua the son of Nun; therefore, this is not only Jewish land. He also claims that the Philistines were the ancestors of the Palestinians... He proposes the solution to the Palestinian problem with the establishment of a secular binational state. The audience applauds his talk enthusiastically, even though his proposal is in opposition to the declared basic aim of the Council. (There follows a description of Riah's political involvement with Rakah--the New Communist Party--in the 1977 elections, an involvement which has since ended, both for political and ecclesiastical reasons.)

He has also been active in conferences of the World Council of Churches and has taken part in some of its formulations relating to the Middle East. Asked whether or not his political activity does not contradict his religious vocation, he compares his activities to those of the prophets who protested against the deeds of the kings when they did wrong. "So it was with Jeremiah and so with Elijah, and I go in their path when I express my opinions."

(END EXCERPTS)

**CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL:** A demonstration in support of Soviet Jewry and persecuted Soviet Christians was organized by the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem. It began a worldwide campaign in various world capitals organized by branches of the Christian Embassy. (AL HAMISHMAR:10.3.83; HAARETZ/MAARIV/AL HAMISHMAR: 17.3) The I.D.F. service periodical "B'MAHANEH" (9.3.83) carried a feature article in its MUSIC section about the Faith Bible Church of Denver, Colorado. An Israeli composer who spent sometime with the group and their "International Singers" choir described their religious enthusiasm for Israel, their performances on behalf of the Israel Soldiers Welfare Fund and before I.D.F. troops, their integration of Israeli songs and dances into their repertoire and church life. They have branched out to some 20 churches in the U.S.A. with over 14,000 members. AL HAMISHMAR (13.3.83) printed a letter in support of Israel from a young Dutch Protestant pastor who spent some time as a volunteer and Hebrew student in Israeli kibbutzim.

**JOHN HAGEE:** "We, tens of millions of Christians throughout the length and breadth of our blessed country, want to repeat and remind you, 'ISRAEL, YOU ARE NOT ALONE!'" This statement was made on American TV by Rev. John Hagee while wrapped in a "tallit" (Jewish prayer shawl). More than once he has appeared in the "tallit" to declare his support for Israel as well as to explain the significance of the "tallit" in Judaism. "Tens of millions of Christians are great friends of the people of the Bible, and they are convinced that one cannot be a good Christian without at the same time loving Israel," he told an Israeli interviewer. The article described several aspects of Rev. Hagee's public support for Israel, adding that he and his supporters are not "seeking to win souls for Christianity. 'We don't believe in missionary activities, especially when we are convinced that Christian survival is dependent on Jewish survival,'" he is quoted as saying. In early June a large group from his church is flying to Israel to express solidarity in song and words. (YEDIOT AKHRONOT:10.2.83)

**"RIGHTEOUS GENTILES" ON 'GOD'S LITTLE ACRE':** Herman, Joseph and Marina, a threesome from Central Europe, have created a miniature paradise out of barren soil by dint of hard, persistent labour and faith in the Bible. Members of a group known as "Friends of Man," they were persecuted by the Nazis and many perished during World War Two. They came to the Holy Land 16 years ago to participate in the prophetic work of rebuilding the Land. For them the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament contain all the necessary information concerning the past and the future that man needs to know during his earthly sojourn. They are regarded as "Righteous Gentiles" by the neighbours who bring many people to visit them to hear their explanations of their vision. Many friends and interested believers from abroad visit their "Emek HaShalom" ("Vale of Peace"), there between Ramat HaShofet and Yokneam in the Galilee. They believe the world is on the brink of the war of Gog and Magog, after which will come the new era of which biblical prophecy speaks. (YEDIOT AKHRONOT: 18.2.83)

(MORE)

PILGRIMS IN ISRAEL "NEWS FROM THE <sup>HEBREW</sup> UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM" (Winter 82-83) reported a seminar involving 21 French-speaking African and Haitian Catholic and Protestant clergymen on "Biblical Tradition & Community Development." A feature article appeared in the JLM POST (28.1.83) about Archbishop George Appleton, formerly Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, and now a resident scholar at the Ecumenical Institute at Tantur in Jerusalem. Another report on pilgrimage appeared about 24 Christian clergymen from the Denver area in Colorado in an effort to increase contact between Jews and Christians and to promote pilgrimage to Israel in their home churches. (JLM POST: 8.2.83) More than 100 tourist guides (Israeli) were given certificates from the Roman Catholic church stating that they have received special training for handling pilgrims in the Holy Land. The training included "detailed explanations of Christian sites, explanations of Catholic theology, and even ways of answering pilgrims who ask the Jewish guides why the guides did not accept Jesus." (JLM POST: 2.2.83) Members of Christian institutions ensure a continual supply of Christmas trees by planting pine saplings in a Jewish National Fund forest on Tu B'Shvat (Hebrew Arbor Day) (PHOTO STORY: 3.2.83)

"PILGRIMS & STRANGERS": Tourism Ministry Director-General Rafi Farber recently presented a medal of appreciation to Dr. Jas. Ridgeway, a Methodist minister and founder of Education Opportunities, Inc., a non-profit organization which promotes visits by Christian pilgrims to Israel, and has brought some 20,000 pilgrims since 1973. It has also supported the Jerusalem Centre for Biblical Studies in the Old City. (JLM POST: 23.2.83) The ministry is also planning a Pilgrim's Fair for Christian clergy and journalists in Jerusalem this spring, with plans to bring in hundreds of clergy from North America, West Europe and a group from South Korea. (JLM POST: 3.3.83) "KEEPING POSTED (JERUSALEM)" in its Winter 1982-83 issue devoted a feature article to "CHRISTMAS IN THE HOLY LAND," describing the celebration of the Feast of the Nativity among various Christian communities. "KAWL HA'IR" (JLM SUPPLEMENT OF "HAARETZ") on 25.3.83 devoted 2½ pages and photographs to the story of Russian pilgrimages to the Holy Land during the 19th and early 20th centuries, and the religious, political, economic and related aspects of the massive pilgrimages of mainly Russian peasants and common folk motivated for the most part by religious enthusiasm. On Good Friday (28.3) the JLM POST published a feature article headed "PILGRIMS' PROGRESS" about the various denominational rites, processions and observances during Holy Week.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN ISRAEL: "KAWL HA'IR" (18.3) reported on the conflict between Armenian churchmen in Israel over Archbishop Aggeman. "HAARETZ" (21.2) reported on the connection between burglaries in European churches and synagogues and burglaries in the Tel-Aviv museum "HAARETZ" by a gang specializing in "religious" burglarizing. "HAARETZ" reported on the suspect in the murder of a monk, a gynecologist and a family engaged in fortune telling, Asher Rabi, who was declared incompetent to stand trial by reason of insanity. He is obsessed with religious delusions and reportedly believes he was ordained of God to commit the crimes. (17.1/4.3)

THE MISSION SCHOOL OF JAFFA: (SEE SELECTIONS #110 page 1 top; also #111 page 3 bottom) Dr. Shimshon Shoshani, Director of the Dept of Education in the Tel-Aviv Municipality, charged last week that M.K. Ora Namir, Chairperson of the Knesset Education Committee, was encouraging and inciting parents to send their children to the Mission. He based his complaint on Namir's remarks that she had visited the Mission in Jaffa with a parent and later said that "the standard of education at the mission school was higher than the Yarden School (the well-known controversial school in the Shekumat Hatikva neighbourhood). MK Ora Namir reacted angrily to Shoshani's remarks: "I don't need any guidelines or grades from Dr. Shoshani. I don't regret having gone with that parent to the Jaffa Mission, nor do I regret saying that its standard is higher. That is a fact. I went to visit the Mission in order to clarify why many parents send their children to study in the Mission instead of at the Yarden school. The number of Jewish children studying there shocked me. Dr. Shoshani should be worried over the fact that 200 children from Tel-Aviv and thereabouts prefer the Mission to the school in their area. At the Yarden school there is no proper standard, and I justify the parents. The fact that so many parents are acting in this way says more than enough about the situation." ("ANASHIM" TELAVIV: 31.1.83)

CARDINAL LUSTIGER: "ACLA" on 16.2.83 carried a feature article in Roumanian under the heading "CARDINAL LUSTIGER 'HEBREW POPE'." It discussed the cardinal's Jewish background, his clerical career, his election to the College of Cardinals which elects the Pope. "REVISTA MEA" (18.3), another Roumanian-language journal in Israel, carried a brief photo story about the new cardinal.

ARTS: An Israeli film company, Kastel, managed by Micah Shagrir, is producing a documentary film which includes excerpts from the life of Jesus the Nazarene and scenes of Christian holy places. Budgeted at close to a half-million dollars, the film has been ordered by the U.S. Army for screening at some 430 U.S. military bases worldwide during the Easter season. A film for Jewish servicepersons is also being produced for the Passover

season with appropriate subject matter. (HAARETZ/ MAARIV: 7.3.83) Under the caption "CHRISTIAN JUDAISM," Boaz Evron reviewed the theatrical adaptation of Bernard Malamud's novel "THE HELPER" (YEDIOT AKRONOT:6.2.83): "The play deals with what is supposed to be the essence of Judaism according to the author; that is, not commandments of "Thou shalt" and "Thou Shalt Not," but the ability to suffer and be a model of morality to mankind. Thus, the Italian Christian helper who comes to work in the Jewish store does so in order to atone for his attempted robbery there. To the Jew himself, this is a very personal interpretation of Judaism, although one may also argue that this is a Christian perception. According to Malamud's perception, even the figure of St. Francis of Assisi is actually Jewish."

"BERGMAN AND THE GOOD JEW": A review of Ingmar Bergman's latest film, "FANNY & ALEXANDER," in which the villain is a Swedish bishop around the turn of the century and the hero is a Jewish antiques dealer. Bergman, himself the child of a Swedish clergyman, is said to have "expressed all his hostility and hatred for the Church through the image of the bishop," according to Swedish film critics. (HAARETZ : 27.2.83)

A PLAY ABOUT JESUS: In an interview with Israeli writer Nissim Aloni, the writer was asked about the play he is writing about Jesus: "I am writing a play about Jesus and Judas Iscariot. It is only in the New Testament that a brief story appears about the oil brought to Jesus with which he anoints his body. Judas Iscariot says to him: 'Lord, this oil would have been enough to feed 10,000 poor!...' and Jesus says, 'The poor will always be, but the Messiah is only one...and then Judas Iscariot betrays him...I would like to finish the play within the next five years. Judas Iscariot and Jesus are no more than illustrations in the play...' (MAARIV:25.3.83)

ST. MATTHEW'S PASSION: A feature article in YEDIOT AKRONOT (10.12.82) recollects an attempt by ultra-orthodox zealots to halt a performance of Bach's St. Matthew's Passion in Jerusalem's Convention Hall ("Binyabei HaHama") some 15 years ago. As the all-Jewish choir was about to sound one of the climactic moments of the oratorio, Jesus' cry on the cross, "ELI ELI LAMA AZAVTANI," some half-dozen zealots barged into the entrance of the auditorium chanting a Hebrew hymn, and the concert stopped. Angry members of the audience rushed forward to evict the intruders, the police were called, and the zealots were arrested, and the audience applauded loudly as the oratorio was resumed some 20 minutes after the disturbance began. It took place during the peak of the Abu Ghosh Festival of Church Music which had been moved to Jerusalem to accommodate large audiences.

#### OF JEWS AND CHRISTIANS

MENONITES AND THE MENNONITES: Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, in a NEWSWEEK interview, reported that he had located Dr. Joseph Mengele, "the Nazi angel of death" accused of the murder of 400,000 Jews during World War Two, now living in a pacifist Christian community in South America. Wiesenthal said: "He is regarded (by the Mennonite Christian community) as a refugee, and they are not in a hurry to turn him over to the police. He has joined the community of Mennonites who believe in justice after death." The Mennonites are a Protestant sect which opposes military service. (HAARETZ: 1.2.83)

"PILATE, THE FALANGISTS AND US": In the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 27, verses 25 and 26, the famous dialogue between Pilate and the Jewish "people" during the trial of Jesus is related. "I am innocent of the blood of this man. You have seen it." And the all the people answered and said "His blood be upon us and upon our children!" Jesus was crucified, and the Christian Church Fathers made a forceful use for centuries of this saying of "the Jewish people" in order to cast the guilt for the murder of the Son of God on all generations of the Jewish people in all its dispersions, and they continued so even in enlightened times. (Applying this principle to the massacre of Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila): At that time Pilate judged, the Roman soldiers crucified, and the Jews were guilty. Today the Falangists murdered and the Jews are guilty..." (Dr. Avraham Arzi, Ramat Aviv; HAARETZ: 16.2.83)

#### SECTARIANS

EMIN: Members of the sect disturbed a lecture given at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem which dealt with the writings of the sect. The sectarians arrived from around the country and demanded that the lecturer be silenced. Nurith Rinon of the Sociology Dept was the lecturer, and they charged she was falsifying and distorting the sect's teaching. Pressure had been exerted before the lecture took place to have it cancelled. The Anthropology Dept which sponsored the lecture refused to yield to the pressure or to grant equal time to the sect to present its views, but the organizers promised to allot time to Questions & Answers following the lecture. They then decided to appear en masse in order to prevent the lecture from being given, claiming that the lecturer was not objective or well-informed, and that they were suffering from the effects of a witch-hunt as a result of slanders

being made against them. In reply to the charges, the lecturer denied any malicious intent and claimed that she had limited her remarks to the texts of the group itself, which she quoted in full and not out of context, as the sectarians claimed. She later admitted that much of her lecture could not be given because of the disturbances caused by the sectarians. (KAWL HA'IR: 18.3.83)

HARE KRISHNA: In a report from Italy, the HAARETZ correspondent (24.3.83) noted that an Israeli girl of Italian extraction is the voice of the Hare Krishna sect in Italy through the medium of radio broadcasting. In an interview she claimed that the sect was growing in numbers, even in Israel where a new centre in Tel-Aviv is about to be opened. Israel is very close to the heart of the present Hare Krishna sect leader, she claims; not only because it is the Holy Land for millions of believers in the monotheistic religions, but mainly because "Jewish blood flows in his veins," and he has visited Israel several times. During the Krishna festivals many foreign guests come to the sect's centres in Italy, and recently a dozen Israelis were among them. Another Israeli in Italy is connected with the sect, it was also reported.

#### GENERAL CHRISTIAN NEWS IN THE HEBREW PRESS (EXCERPTS)

SOLZHENITSYN: The award of the prestigious Templeton Prize has been made to the Russian emigre and dissident, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. It is the largest prize offered in the world (\$170,000), and its aim is to reward persons who contribute "to the encouragement of religious revival in atheistic societies." In their award, members of the prize committee wrote that the persecuted writer is "a living symbol of the continued essentiality of the Orthodox Church," and that his literary attainments would have been impossible without his profound Christian faith. His courage is reminiscent of the sacrifices of the Church Fathers, in their opinion. The prize has been awarded for eleven years on the 10th of May at the historic Guildhall of London. A previous recipient of the prize has been Mother Teresa of Calcutta. (HAARETZ: 3.3.83)

THE PAPACY: The official news agency of Bulgaria has claimed that Pope John Paul I, the predecessor of the present Pope, was poisoned and did not die of a heart attack, as given out. This charge was seen as a counterattack against charges that Bulgarian agents were involved in the assassination attempt on the life of the present Pope. (HAARETZ: 16.2.83) In a reprint of an article from "LE MONDE" about the present Pope's visit, local church authorities allegedly expressed chagrin at the timing of the Pope's visit, a time when there is increased tension between the Church and the regime. (HAARETZ: 6.3.83)

AFRICAN "POPE": Some five million Africans recognize the authority of an independent black "Pope" chosen in 1959 for life to continue the work of the "prophet" Simon Kimbango of Zaire who founded a major independent church in Africa. The church maintains a large network of social services and religious and organizational enterprises with some thousand priests in its ranks.

ORAL ROBERTS: The evangelist Oral Roberts from Oklahoma told hundreds of his "brethren in prayer" that Jesus Christ Himself told him that he was chosen to find a remedy for cancer, with the breakthrough to come at his medical and research centre in Oklahoma which he is setting up. "In a conversation of seven hours with Jesus, the Son of God charged him to ask his supporters to contribute \$240 each towards the completion of the medical centre." (BENNY LANDAU, CALIFORNIA: HAARETZ: 24.1.83)

CANON LAW: Writing from Italy, HAARETZ correspondent Hulda Libernoma described the new Catholic Church canon law, an outgrowth of the Second Ecumenical Council of 1962-64, which was originally convened by Pope John 23rd, and its significance for the Catholic world. (HAARETZ: 14.2.83)

#### MISCELLANEOUS

A. SHULAMIT ALONI: "I have never seen anything great, new, impressive, created in human society without 'astronauts.' When Luther stood before his church and demonstrated against the corruption of the Catholic Church and said, 'Here I stand and I will not move,' no one expected it would lead to a revolution, but it did indeed." (From an interview in a local periodical given by M.K. Aloni, leader of Civil Rights Movement.)

"FATHEER, FORGIVE THEM..." "Concerning those ignorant ones (presumably Sephardis who painted anti-Ashkenazi swastikas in Tel-Aviv) one might say, 'Forgive them, for they know not what they do;' but who will forgive the intellectuals who introduced not only the swastikas but concepts borrowed from the Nazi lexicon in the (intercommunal) struggles waged in our midst. Perhaps they must answer for opening the door for the symbol of Satan again running wild among us." (HADA BOSHES, HAARETZ: Jan 83 Sabbath Supplement).

