

"NOTE TO READERS: Some months ago the WZPS (World Zionist Press Service) published an article by Dvora Waysman called, "THE AMAZING LIFE OF RABBI SHMUEL GOLDING." It was widely used in the Jewish press. Much of the material provided by Rabbi Golding himself to our correspondent has turned out to be inaccurate. Dvora Waysman wishes to disassociate herself from the information provided by Rabbi Golding, and the WZPS regrets the publication of the article." (SEE ALSO "SELECTIONS" No. 106 page 1 and forward for various clippings in the Israeli and Jewish press concerning the "amazing" life of Rabbi Shmuel Golding.) The aforesaid WZPS "Note to Readers" was undated but received end March 1984 and numbered 84/4/28/1106.

"MISSIONARY CALL-UP": COMPREHENSIVE MILITARY INVESTIGATION DISCLOSES: MISSIONARY LITERATURE NOT ENCLOSED WITH CALL-UP ORDERS. (SEE SELECTIONS No. 118, page 3, middle) The Chief Recruiting Officer recently conducted a comprehensive investigation in an attempt to verify a complaint made to the military according to which recruits had received missionary literature with their call-up orders. A 17-year-old young man reportedly received an envelope with such literature from the military. By request of the Chief Chaplain of the IDF the matter was investigated and it was learned that ^{into} the letter-box to which the call-up order had been mailed ^{there} also had been inserted missionary literature at the same time, and when the IDF envelope was opened it appeared to the recipient that the missionary literature was in that envelope. It was reported that notwithstanding the negative result of the investigation, there would be increased alertness lest missionaries attempt to introduce their literature to the IDF; and should soldiers or others be found distributing such literature within the armed forces, they would stand trial. (HAMAHANE HAHAREDI--THE ULTRA-ORTHO DOX CAMP-4.1.84)

KFAR YONA COMMUNITY WORKER ENGAGES IN MISSIONARY ACTIVITY: The Kfar Yona settlement in the Sharon is bubbling over. A local community worker, Yitzhak Azuz, his wife (a convert to Judaism) and one other person named Rami Daniel, have been exposed by the Activists of "Yad L'Ahim", the anti-mission society, as active in the framework of the movement of "Messianic Jews." A delegation has met with the local council head, Mr. Efraim Derai, who has promised to stop the activity of Azuz, a co-ordinator of children's activity at the local community centre. On the Sabbath before the reading from the portion from the Torah all the synagogues in the settlement heard denunciations of the soul-hunters. Last Sabbath the anti-mission society flooded the town with notices calling on the public to remove the "Gospel disseminators," one of whom was about to wed a non-Jewess. A spokesman for "Yad L'Ahim" disclosed this week that a local young man by name of Ribon Hajiji recently traveled abroad to take part in a missionary seminar as a result of local activities. The spokesman expressed the hope that the residents of Kfar Yona would assist in the removal of the Mission from the settlement. (EHEV SHABBAT: 30.3.84)

BIOLOGY TEACHER ENTICES FOR BELIEF IN JESUS: "We have proof that the biology teacher from Ben-Shemen, David Bar-David, is a missionary who is inciting his pupils to convert to Christianity," the director of the ultra-orthodox "Yad L'Ahim" organization, Rabbi Moshe Porush, active against the Mission and Christian sects in ten branches throughout the country, stated recently. Several months ago the anti-mission activists discovered that the teacher Bar-David at the Youth Village Ben-Shemen had had conversations with pupils and was influencing them to acknowledge Jesus the Nazarene as Messiah. The "Yad L'Ahim" director has demanded that Ben-Shemen director Arye Shirion dismiss the teacher.

"We have spoken with Bar-David," Shirion responded, "and demanded that he refrain from conversations about faith with students and adults. We learned that the student, Aaron Schwartz, began to believe in Jesus after reaching the age of 18, and he is free to do as he wishes." At "Yad L'Ahim" they were not content, and continued to investigate, and learned that Ofra Nahman, age 16, a Ben-Shemen student had also joined the circle of meetings of Jesus believers. "We cannot rely on the promises of this teacher," the "Yad L'Ahim" people angrily reacted. "The student Ofra Nahman joined the meetings of my group only after she had left Ben-Shemen," Bar-David responded in answering the accusations.

The tracking of the biology teacher is but one of the activities of "Yad L'Ahim," Porush states: "We have a letter that an American volunteer at Kibbutz Yiftah in the Galilee sent to his missionary superiors." The Kibbutz Secretary does not deny that one of the volunteers sent such a letter to his relatives, but adds: "He was a strange type.

You can't accuse all of the volunteers because of one person." The "Yad L'Ahim" organization, however, insists that "there is missionary activity in the kibbutzim, and the Christian Embassy in Jerusalem organizes it." Jan Willem van der Hoeven, the spokesman for the Christian Embassy, says: "These are unfortunate people making insane accusations." ("HADASHOT" TELAVIV: 11.3.84)

CHURCH TOURS: The innocent tale of Dubi Eiser of Class 7-A in the State School "Eli Cohen" in the Romema neighbourhood of J'lm exposed a most shocking fact: Special lessons are being devoted to the study of Christianity, even including guided tours, sponsored by the Nature Preservation Society, of several churches in the Old City of J'lm. A resident of the neighbourhood transmitted a copy of the school paper to the editorial offices of HAMODIYA (Ultra-orth'x daily), noting that neighbourhood residents were also shocked by the disclosure. Has the school exhausted the subject of Judaism so that it must stuff the minds and souls of the schoolchildren with Christian subjects? A letter of protest has been sent to the Minister of Education & Culture, Zebulun Hammer, and also to representatives of Agudat Israel (Ultra-orth. party). Following is the item in the ~~school~~ ^{school} paper:-

"On 31.1.84 the 7-A Class made a tour of churches on the Mt. of Olives within the framework of the Nature Preservation Society trips, and this in the context of the study of Christianity in the class. We began the tour on Mt. Scopus from which we looked down on the Judean Desert, afterwards continuing in the direction of the Mt. of Olives, and stopping along the way at the Augusta Victoria Hospital, and visiting several churches, among them "Viri Galilea," "Pater Noster", "Dominus Flavit" and the Church of Gethsemane. We also visited a cave called "The Prophets' Tombs." The trip was very interesting and enjoyable and the pleasant spring weather made it a delightful tour." (HAMODIYA : 23.2.84)

MISSIONARY ACTIVITY WITHIN THE SCHOOLS: Under this heading, "HAMODIYA" published an irate editorial (26.2.84) referring to the aforementioned account of a school trip which included visits to Christian sites in J'lm. After recounting the incident, the writer protests: Many are the ^{Jewish} children in the country who do not know how to read "Shema Yisrael" ("Hear O Israel"), many are they who haven't the faintest notion of the laws and customs of Israel, many are cut off from their sources... and here they are receiving Christian studies in State school along with tours, which the children enjoy. Why do we grumble about missionaries from outside while the Mission can rest content with Hebrew educators in a Hebrew State School...under the authority of an Orthodox Jewish cabinet minister? We can just imagine how some of our Knesset Members would screw up their faces at the report of increased Jewish studies in the State Schools (Oh that it might be so!); and we well know their hysterical reaction to the "Penitents" Movement (the conversion of secularist Jews to Ultra-Orthodox Judaism) or their fury over allowing leaders of the movement to appear before soldiers or students. But the introduction of Christianity to a State School leaves them untouched!

BOOK-BURNINGS: A response to a report that a local rabbi had conducted a book-burning ceremony of Gospel literature in Kiryat Gath by the rabbi himself, Mordecai Amir, the Masuah School Rabbi. (MA NISHMA B'KIRYAT GATH: 9.3.84) At the end of November 1983 there were distributed booklets titled "MAYAM HAYIM" ("LIVING WATERS: Annotated Gospels of Matthew) in Kiryat Gath published by the Mission. The report of the incident carried in this paper mentioned that the school rabbi conducted a bookburning ceremony of five booklets which had come into his possession. We have received a letter from the rabbi of his version of the incident. He ignored the original report, but following a Parliamentary Query in the Knesset by M.K. Wirshovsky he had decided to ^{public} correct certain inaccuracies in the news item. He himself had not conducted any bookburning, but had visited the classrooms and explained to the children the seriousness of the prohibition against reading such literature, "and that according to our religion these books are considered heretical and idolatrous and I stressed that there is a religious precept which commands the destruction of heretical literature." The booklets which came into his hands he disposed of privately. (SEE ALSO SELECTIONS 119, p.7, "LIVING WATERS")

ATTACK IN MEAH SHEARIM: Several papers carried a report of an attack on four Christians (including two Messianic Jews) residing in the ultra-orthodox Meah Shearim neighbourhood in Jerusalem by some 20 "penitents" who objected to their allegedly loud singing and praying. The incident took place on Zechariah HaKofeh Street adjacent to an orthodox yeshiva at about 10:00 P.M. on Thursday, 22.3.84. The four,

holding U.S. nationality, were identified as Leib Dijon (42), Allan Freedman (40), John Wells (40) and Jack Cohen (46), had rented the flat that week. Allan Freedman was reported to have been a yeshiva student in the USA and a certified Cantor, but following several family tragedies he came to Israel ^{five years ago} and reading the New Testament here he came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. A leader of the "penitents" who attacked the group charged that they were involved in loud praying and also tried to persuade children to join them. Damage was done to the flat and one of the four required hospital treatment, but they refused to prefer charges against their attackers. (The JLM POST, in its account, referred to the two Jews as "former Jews", but the Hebrew press referred to them as "Messianic Jews" or "Jewish believers in Jesus.") JLM POST/HAARETZ/HADASHOT TELAVIV/25.3.84; KOL YERUSHALAYIM 30.3.84.

TIBERIAS MISSION: The problem of the Mission in Tiberias was discussed at a meeting embracing a spectrum of educators and the Deputy Mayor Mr. Yosi Peretz. It was clarified that there is no missionary activity within the school buildings, but all parties concerned took it upon themselves to be alert to the issue in order to prevent any such development. (EIEV SHABAT, BNEI BRAK : 16.3.84) Excerpt from a report by Helga Dudman of the JLM POST (23.3.84) on a disturbance in Tiberias over a TV filming at a Jewish religious site: "The disturbers of the peace were also even-handedly organized into Sephardi and Ashkenazi contingents. Prominent among the former was Tiberias-born Rabbi Maklef Eden, who gained notoriety recently for directing attacks on local Christian establishments. His family is known for its piety and religious observance, and he himself was well within the city's religious norms 'until he went off to study in Bnei Brak.'"

MISSIONARY MENACE: A computer and mobile exhibit enlisted in the struggle against the Mission. The activists of "Yad L'Ahim" are computerizing data on some 4,000 missionaries active in Israel; also a mobile exhibit of missionary preaching matter will be conveyed to "sensitive" places. During the Sabbath "Zekhor" ("REMEMBER WHAT AMAIEK DID TO YOU...") the organization is conducting its ^{traditional} fund-raising drive for financing modern implements and extensive activities against the soul-hunters. (SIEARIM/16.3.84) The same date HAMODIYA published a more expansive article about the organization and its achievements and requirements, under the heading: "THE SOUL HUNTERS--THE AMAIEKITES OF OUR GENERATION." Singled out for special attention in the three-column article were David Bar-David of Ben-Shemen, "Galtronics" of Tiberias, the "Voice of Hope" and the Christian Embassy. Referring also to the idolatrous cults, the writer cites an unnamed source in "Yad L'Ahim": "The difference between the Mission and the cults is that while the Mission brings money into the country, the cultists take out significant sums which they have succeeded in wringing from their victims..."

(30.12.83)
Three newspaper items in the JEWISH TELEGRAPH of Manchester, England report on "MISSIONARIES PREY ON THE VULNERABLE" (a response to the charges that Jewish educational institutions have used the missionary scare in order to raise funds for years and there is no cause for alarm now) by the anti-mission dept of "Yad L'Ahim" in Jerusalem. It focuses on the "very insidious mission project called PROJECT KIBBUTZ, promoted and sponsored by the Intl Christian Embassy in J'lm and in Britain by PRAYER FOR ISRAEL... We have written a study report on Christian and Hebrew Christian Missionary Activity in Israel... available at POB 5195 J'LM ISRAEL." A second brief news item claims there are "250 Jewish children in missionary clutch, largely from the South of England but also from Glasgow." (11.12.83) A third describes the work of Rabbi Ephraim Groundland, now working for the "Yad L'Ahim" and is headed "CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES DISGUISED AS FRUM (PIOUS) JEWS."

BETH SHALOM: In addition to two familiar "exposés" of the Gilo project of the pro-Israel Beth Shalom group headed by Wim Malgo (JEWISH PRESS 7.10.83 & JEWISH WEEK 25.11) an investigative piece on the entire movement and project was published in DAVAR weekend supplement (2.3.84) which, among other matters, quoted Rabbi Berliner of Gilo (who led the campaign against the project) as referring to Rabbi Shmuel Golding (see page 1, NOTE TO HEADERS) as the one who brought the matter to his attention and thus sparked the campaign. The report also claimed that the "incriminating material" which linked the Beth Shalom project to a missionary aim was the result of an improperly translated article into English from German; also that the Intl Christian Embassy allegedly cooperated with anti-mission activists to achieve the downfall of the Beth Shalom group out of motives of jealousy. (Byline: Zvi Lider) HAARETZ reported (27.2.84) that the "One Jerusalem" party in the Municipality has undertaken to oppose the Gilo project.

Following the arrest of three Israeli Jews charged with plotting to blow up the Temple Mount in Jerusalem with its mosques, a series of news stories and feature articles was published in the local press. The suspects were variously described as "Messianics," "eccentrics," and "mystics"—and on one TV newscast as "Messianic Jews." The group was said to be motivated by a desire to return to a biblical and natural milieu and had settled in an abandoned Arab village near Jerusalem called "Lifta," where they had lived for several years, occasionally sallying forth to Jerusalem to make "prophetic" and "Messianic" pronouncements dressed in exotic biblical-style attire, and one of their leaders (who later abandoned the group) who was dubbed "Messiah" sometimes came astride a donkey.

The group was said to have been influenced by a broad spectrum of ideas and ideologies, both religious and secular, and had accumulated a huge cache of arms for advancing the Messianic era, as they perceived it. Calling themselves "Sons of Judah," they plotted to remove all Christian and Muslim presence from the Holy City and reportedly confessed to terrorist action in the past. At the same time, the authorities believe they have ties with "foreign Christians" said to be "U.S. Fundamentalists." (A New Testament was reportedly found among their belongings and other literary possessions.)

The suspects were reported cooperating with the police investigators out of a sense of declaring their "divine mission." Links with other extremist groups, such as Rabbi Kahana's movement and the so-called TNT terror group, were being explored, as well as their possible involvement in unsolved crimes, such as the burning of the Baptist chapel in West Jerusalem in October 1982, attacks on Arabs and Muslim

Commenting on the rise of extremism and eccentric movements in Israel, the Gen'l-Director of the Jewish Agency, Judah Dominitz, remarked that the prominence of U.S. Jewish immigrants in the upsurge of so-called "Messianism" was only a marginal phenomenon among the new immigrants, which could be traced back to the effects of the Six Days War. (COMPILED FROM VARIOUS PRESS ACCOUNTS Between 8.3.84 & 16.3.84—

HAARETZ/JLM POST/KAWL HA'IR/KOL YERUSHALAYIM
CHRISTIAN & MUSLIM SITES: The J'lm Municipality has budgeted 3.2 million shekels for increased illumination of streets in the vicinity of Christian and Muslim institutions in the wake of terrorist attacks on them. Some of the sites mentioned were: Mount Zion, the Ethiopian Church, the Street of the Kadis, etc. (HAARETZ: 1.3.84)
"MESSIANIC KUMZITZ": A young 29-year-old French Jew, Abulkar Yves, was arrested this week on suspicion of setting fire to 150 trees in the Jerusalem Forest. The youth, in Israel since last year and living in a kibbutz, was found by Jewish National Fund foresters wrapped in a talit (prayer shawl) among the burning trees while singing hymns. In response to questioning, he replied that he was the Messiah, and he confessed to setting the fire. He was remanded for 15 days for further investigation. (HAARETZ/KAWL HA'IR: 28.10.83)

"MESSIANIC JEWS": An investigative article on the subject of "yehudim meshihiim" (Messianic Jews) headed "INHABITANTS OF THE BORDERLAND OF FAITH: 1,500 MEMBERS OF THE MOVEMENT OF 'MESSIANIC JEWS' ARE INHABITANTS OF THE BORDERLAND OF JUDAISM OPERATING IN THE NO-MAN'S LAND BETWEEN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY" was published in the Friday edition of HAARETZ (16.3.84) with photograph and caption relating to the Messianic Assembly of Israel in J'lm, by HAARETZ reporter Lilly Galili, excerpts of which follow:-

...times a week a small group of people gathers for prayer and study in a small building on Prophets Street in J'lm in one of the most beautiful structures in the neighbourhood. At times they also sing together songs and melodies which are only blossoms, you will find no external symbols, no inscriptions, no image or other which would betray the identity or the aim of those who visit there. This is the congregation of one of the groups of Messianic Jews who dwell in J'lm.

...t into the news this time because of an unpleasantness, although less violent than the previous occasion when they were in the headlines in January, at the time their chapel was set afire. This time it was due to the refusal of

both Jews and Christians to take part in the TV program "MIFGASHIM" (ENCOUNTERS), in which one of the "believers", Menahem Benhayim, was scheduled to participate. More than anything else perhaps, this fact symbolizes their situation in society: "Apostates" in the eyes of the greater part of the Jewish religious establishment, or even Christian missionaries, a deviant and unacceptable phenomenon in the eyes of the Christian establishment.

It is in this sense that the approximately 1,500 members of the "Messianic Jewish" movement in Israel inhabit the borderland of Judaism, operating in the no-man's-land between Judaism and Christianity. In their own eyes they are Jews in every sense, and if you will--Jews plus.... Professor Zvi Verblowsky, an investigator of religions, views them as a "psychopathological phenomenon," a social expression of Jewish alienation. Father Marcel Dubois, who was the head of the Philosophy Dept in Jerusalem, respects their authenticity and their spontaneity, but he regards them as those who function outside the history of the relations between Judaism & Christianity.

It is no simple matter to understand and for the sake of simplification to define so unusual and abstract a phenomenon as the "Messianic Jews". It is possible to denote them as "fundamentalists" whose sole authority is the Tenach ("Old Testament") and the New Testament. In their own eyes they are the true Jews inasmuch as such was Yeshua (Jesus), and it was to the Jews that he turned. According to another definition, they are the first Christians, the true Christians who received the Gospel. The Messianic Jews do not make it simple to define them: They have no symbols, no ceremonies, no crystalized customs, and above all, no religious establishment or organization, which they disdain, whether in Judaism or in Christianity. The very essence of all things is absolute faith in the Messiah, which is accompanied by a special comprehension of their role in the world as Messianic Jews and as Israelis. They are already a part of the vision of the last days and of the days of the Messiah who has already come, and even if the process continues for hundreds, thousands of years more, it is already in creation.

The organization "YAD L'AHIM", and other organizations relentlessly warring against missionizing, attribute hidden aims to them connected to the desire to expedite the last days by missionary activity among Jews. For this reason, they attacked the Messianics in Tiberias, and even Victor Smadja, Chairman of the (Messianic) Assembly in J'lm, received telephone threats. His car was once set afire and his children required a police escort on the way to school in times past. Missionaries? I ask. "Certainly not in the prevalent sense of enticement and bribery," they say. "Spreading the Gospel--yes. Why shouldn't one promulgate what one believes in among those interested?"

This information activity is mainly accomplished by distributing the New Testament or Messianic writings composed over the years. There is also the periodical "B'SHUV: A Messianic Jewish publication," which appears three times a year edited by Menahem Benhayim, and there is MAYAYT L'AYT edited by Maoz of Rehovot. The funding comes entirely from independent sources, and only those who want to are participants in the work of disseminating the Gospel. There are others, who hold their faith in secret, who are not bound to take part.

By the very nature of these matters and the stereotypes which develop around them, one anticipates an encounter with eccentrics and all kinds of deviants "with a tale." Truthfully, the variety of the Messianics makes it difficult to affix labels. There are Ashkenazim (Western Jews) and Sephardim (Eastern Jews), young people and older people, native Israelis and immigrants, members of kibbutzim, and even members of the ultra-orthodox community and a resident of Mesh Shearim (ultra-orth. Jerusalem area) whom they know personally.

In the wake of the Tiberias affair and the cancelation of the MIFGASHIM TV program, we met three of them: Menahem Benhayim (59), a native of the USA; Victor Smadja (52), a native of Tunis; and R.F. (34) a second-generation woman in Israel on her mother's side, who asked to remain anonymous....

MENAHM BENHAYIM: Born in New York in the well-known Jewish Ghetto to Traditionalist parents, immigrants from Galicia, he is 25 years in Israel. In his youth he was educated as a religious Jew, regularly laying "tefillin" (donning phylacteries for the traditional weekday service). In those days the novel by Sholem Asch,

"THE NAZARENE", stirred up a mighty tempest within the Jewish community. He himself did not have the money to buy the book; only after he had joined the Army did he obtain a copy to read. He then decided to investigate the source, "the Holy Bible," which he purchased in a nearby village under cover of the (wartime) blackout. The reading of it turned out to be a spiritual experience, and he was profoundly impressed by Yeshua (Jesus) and his teachings....He never once thought of converting to Christianity, and always felt very Jewish, a part of this people. "I do not leave the Jewish people any more than a Messianic (Christian) Chinaman does not leave the Chinese people nor does an Englishman stop being an Englishman."His wife has shared his path with him. In his Identity Book he is listed as Jewish, and he sees no conflict between the two categories. "Messianism" is not a religion but a belief which is part of the Jewish religion. He celebrates the festivals according to the Jewish calendar, even the Day of Atonement, as a part of the tradition of the Jewish people and not for the sake of a tonement, inasmuch as his atonement has already been realized through Yeshua.... Messianic life in Israel is not easy for him. The Orthodox Jewish press classifies them as "converts to Christianity." In most instances, the Christian establishment regards them as Jews. Benhayim feels like an outsider only when they relate to him in this way, but absolutely not something "abnormal."

R.F. An intelligent and attractive young woman, wed to a non-Jew for two years, she entered the Messianic movement four years ago. Prior to that, there were five years of seeking, frequent visits among various sects, which in retrospect she characterizes as "a time of preparation which led me to find only partial answers." She grew up as an absolute atheist, and with the smile of one who has grown wise with the passage of time, she relates that she even managed to be a discotheque girl. A girlfriend introduced her to "someone who knew someone who was not even himself a believer...." At the beginning the mind rejected it, mainly because in her ignorance Christianity was mixed up with the matter—but all of this was quickly neutralized and eliminated. She met "him", and knew that she was included in his plan. She asked "him" questions, and she received answers; not visions, and nothing dramatic. The message which she received became a part of her. She had no problems of identity; on the contrary, "I became a complete Jew, and Yeshua was the one who restored my Jewish and Zionist identity." ...

Despite her request for anonymity, R.F. wants the public to recognize the Messianics. "We aren't a malaise that can be eliminated from society, just because we aren't an organized body, and our very dispersion gives us strength. How did Jesus put it? 'You are the salt of the earth,' and although salt is essential, it's impossible to consume in great concentration."...

VICTOR SMADJA: It was 27 years ago that Victor Smadja made aliya from Tunis. Today he lives in Jerusalem, and here he manages a printing and binding plant and raises his three children, ages 20+. In addition, Smadja is the chairman of the congregation on Prophets Street, founded in 1969, and one of the committee of five elders. Inasmuch as faith is grounded in a personal decision and an interior conviction, it is not something which can be inherited. The children grow up as Israeli Jews, circumcised and bar-mitzva'd, and in due time they must make their own decision. He arranged for a bar-mitzva (confirmation) for his son at the Western Wall notwithstanding the disturbances and pressures which were exerted. Two of his children have joined the Assembly.

He came to the Messianic movement at the age of 16—when his family in Tunis (a traditional family stemming from "cabbalists") sent him to a youth camp managed by a Messianic. For two years he struggled with Messianism, studying in secret because of family opposition...and the family tried to arrange meetings with rabbis. One of them claimed that the young Victor believed in what he believed only because he was reading the Hebrew Bible in French in an unfaithful translation. If he would but read it in the original, he would be reading the truth. The result was a journey to Israel in order to learn the language. There followed a brief return to Tunis for the purpose of marrying a Messianic Jewess—and then aliya to Israel. The number of Messianics in J'lm at that time was very small. Smadja, who declared his faith quite openly, sustained more abuse than the other Jerusalemites. The problems are seasonal, he says. "There are times when they think it appropriate to be more active, especially before elections, when they want to demonstrate greater activism."...

At times it is precisely the attacks on them which prove helpful, such as the burning of the chapel which brought them to the attention of the media. "There is suffering in being a minority; but I still have never had any regret," he concludes. "We are the true penitents."

Prof. Zvi Verblowsky describes the Messianic Jews as a relatively new phenomenon... What has developed in this century is that there are Jews who say that in order to bring their Jewishness to completion; they need not formally belong to this or that ecclesiastical organization. In this way they revert to several of the Jewish and Christian sects of the first centuries. Verblowsky sees the sharp Jewish reaction to this phenomenon as an expression of foolishness and intolerance. "One may be a Jew who throws stones on the Sabbath or one who believes in Karl Marx--and only belief in Jesus disqualifies a Jew from being a member of the community?" In his opinion, the persecution only strengthens the one afflicted with the Christian virus and turns him into a martyr. "This also grants moral superiority inasmuch as it converts Judaism from being a persecuted religion to a persecuting religion." On the other hand, because of the age-old trauma resulting from the persecutions of the Church, it is understandable that an encounter with a Jew who through an interior awakening embraces the essentials of this idea, arouses opposition." The actual phenomenon, according to Prof. Verblowsky, should engage the attention of a psychologist and not of a philosopher....The Christian churches want to shake off their disgraceful past and are fearful of any exposure. Thus, the Messianics fall between two stools.

"Who am I to criticize them?" asks Fr. Marcel Dubois. At the heart of the matter, he sees the continuity and the discontinuity in the relation between Judaism and Christianity. Is Christianity a continuation of Judaism, or is it an absolute discontinuity? They place the emphasis on the continuity which the Church has often forgotten. Nevertheless, Dubois sees a bit of oversimplification in the content and the form of expression of their faith....Is it possible to be a Jew and to believe in Yeshua the Messiah, and to preserve Jewish identity within the framework of such faith? "In my opinion, the spiritual-theological situation of Jewish and Christian consciousness is not yet ripe for this at the moment," Dubois replies. "There is a great stumbling-block here." (END EXCERPTS)

"NO BIBLE-ISRAEL CONNECTION, SAYS PRIEST": An Arab clergyman told a Jerusalem audience March 15th that there is no connection between the Israel of the Bible and the present political entity. Alex Awad, Dean of the Bethlehem Bible College, was answering a question on the removal of the word Israel from local church hymnals. The question was asked after Awad gave a lecture in the Jerusalem YMCA entitled "HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE OLD TESTAMENT". The lecture is part of a series of lectures sponsored by representatives of local churches. In answering a question for AL FAJR, Awad said that there is no biblical basis to the interpretations of Christian fundamentalists who say that the existence of the State of Israel is a fulfilment of a heavenly promise. "Theologically speaking, God's promises to Abraham ended with the birth of Jesus," Awad said. An 11-member council of the Bible Society in the West Bank, consisting of representatives of major Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches, have sponsored a series of events for the month of March. (AL FAJR-JLM PALESTINIAN WEEKLY 28.3.84)

NAZARETH CLERIC BANNED: The Israeli military governors of the West Bank and Gaza Strip have issued military orders 28.2.84 barring a Protestant minister, an activist in the Nazareth Progressive Movement, from entering the West Bank & Gaza Strip for one year. Rev. Riyah Abu al-Asal, minister of the Anglican Church in Nazareth, was handed the travel restriction orders after being summoned to the Nazareth police station. The minister helped establish the Nazareth Progressive Movement in 1982 and is a member of its executive committee and is planning to appeal the travel ban to the Israeli High Court. (AL FAJR 14.3.84)

BAPTIST COUPLE IN KIBBUTZ: (SEE SELECTIONS 120, page 5 top) A letter from Iula Gordon, a resident of Kibbutz Maanit was published in AL HAMISHMAR (28.2.84) and MAARIV (15.3.84) in which the writer, a friend of the Baptist couple, claimed that they had told her, following the rejection of their candidacy for membership in the kibbutz, that the

mad Gary, was ordained as a missionary and could be a missionary in Israel. "Only as a matter of propriety vis-à-vis the kibbutz were we leaving Israel," he was quoted as saying. "Whoever is indeed interested can come and see for themselves that some ten Christians, some of them members and some candidates for membership, are already living in the kibbutz."

CONVERTS: According to data presented at the Min. of Religious Affairs, some thirty Jews convert to another religion officially each year. In 1983 a total of 23 women converted to Islam and Christianity (20 to the former), mostly on the basis of marital connections. A total of 13 persons converted from another religion to Judaism. "Yad L'Aham", however, alleged that there are hundreds of incidents of conversion to Christianity and Islam from Judaism unknown to official circles. (DAVAR 18.3.84; EREV SHABAT BNAI BRAK 23.3.84)

5% JEWISH MOONIES: An Israeli professor who organizes tours to conferences conducted by the "Unification" sect ("Moonies") on the assurance that the sect will not operate in a religious way in Israel claims that less than six percent among the sectarians are Jewish in origin. (YOM HASHISHI : 4.11.83)

ZICRON YAAKOV: An exposé in an ultra-orthodox weekly (EREV SHABAT BNAI BRAK:30.3.84) of the religious situation in Zicron Yaacov, with especial emphasis on the Emma Berger group, which the local rabbi fiercely attacked but conceded that at present they were not engaging in missionary activity. Meanwhile, development of an ultra-orthodox community was proceeding, according to the paper, in the town. "BREAD & MILK FOR THE CHILDREN OF ZICRON YAAKOV": A report on anti-mission campaign appeal in Zurich in the "Judische Rundschau Maccabi" of Basel, Switzerland. (9.2.84)

INTERFAITH: Following discussions in January between the American Jewish Congress and the Vatican Committee for Religious with the Jews in Lucerne, Switzerland, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, President of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Rabbis in the USA & Canada, declared that he was absolutely opposed to all dialogue between Jews and Christians, even on political, social and ethical topics, and especially theological topics. He added that the position of the rabbinical union for many years is that an Orthodox Jew is not permitted to take part in such meetings. The American Synagogue Council, which embraces all three streams of U.S. Judaism, also criticized the discussions conducted in Lucerne by the AJC because they were not representative of all branches of the religious Jewish community. This was stated in response to the decision of the American Jewish Congress to set up an institute for Christian-Jewish relationships in order to advance the dialogue on theological topics. (HAAHETZ : 3.2.84)

RABBI, MINISTER & SHEIKH: A theological debate, the first of its kind in Israel, in which representatives of the Jewish, Muslim and Christian religion took part, was held Saturday night in Kfar Kassm. Rabbi Jonah Metzger, the rabbi of North Tel-Aviv, represented Judaism; Sheikh Hussani Kihathni from Bikah El-Garbia, a graduate of Hebron University, represented Islam; while the Christian religion was represented by Rihni el-Asli, the chief priest of the Nazareth Anglican Church. The meeting was held at a clubhouse in the village with hundreds of Arabs from the Triangle present. The debate was opened by the rabbi who related the anecdote of the aged Hilel who told a Gentile that the Torah could be summarized on one foot by the commandment, "Love your neighbour as yourself." He then turned to the Muslim sheikh and asked why a Muslim who wishes to convert to Judaism should be condemned to death. The Muslim refuted this, arguing that only in specific cases did Islam see a divine fiat in killing, and absolutely not for conversion to another religion. The Anglican priest referred to the tolerance and mutual aid preached by his religion and pointed out the many institutions (hospitals, clinics, schools) sponsored by the Anglican Church in Nazareth for the use of all, without distinction of religion or race. The debate was conducted alternately in Arabic and Hebrew in a very tolerant and courteous manner, and all the participants expressed their desire for similar meetings in the future. (HAAHETZ : 26.3.84)

*** END TRANSCRIPTION/4.4.84/mb ***
