

CAMPAIGN AGAINST MORMON UNIVERSITY IN JERUSALEM IN FULL SWING:

A total of 52 news clippings from the Israeli press during May and June and 16 items in Diaspora Jewish periodicals in recent months have dealt with the mounting campaign to stop the construction of an extension to the Mormon Brigham Young University on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem. Nine Radio excerpts on Israeli newscasts were also picked up on the subject during June.

The plan to build the university extension was approved by the Jerusalem Municipality with strong support from Mayor Teddy Kollek. A 20-dunam plot of land was allocated to the Mormons and various government approvals granted to expedite the matter. Ground breaking work already commenced when the storm broke this year led by the anti-mission ultra-orthodox body YAD L'AHIM.

Support for the campaign came from other quarters as well, such as U.S. Reform Rabbi "JEWS FOR JEWS" leader Rabbi Dubin (who cooperates with the ultra-orthodox body YAD L'AHIM) and Likud leader Dov Shilansky; but the orthodox lobby has been the most adamant in pressing demands for the squashing of the ambitious Mormon project, a 110,000 square metre complex for an estimated 200 students, with a 400-seat auditorium and ample classroom facilities for an ongoing academic program.

While the campaign has highlighted the exotic origins of Mormonism in U.S. life, its early leaders Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, its teachings about the alleged Israelite connections of Mormons as "descendants" of the House of Ephraim, the main focus of the campaign has been Mormon proselytizing and suspicions that the university extension is merely a front for a major proselytizing invasion of Jewish Israel. The publication of a "Missionary Training Manual For Use in the Jewish Proselytizing Program" and a recent translation into Hebrew of the "Book of the Mormon" have reinforced suspicions of Mormon intentions. In addition, the well-known activism of Mormon "evangelism" in other countries (while maintaining an extremely low key in Israel) has fueled opposition to the Mormon construction project on the assumption that this will eventually be the headquarters for Mormon activity among Israelis and Jews worldwide.

"Remove the mission from the Christian religion generally and from Mormonism particularly, and you have removed the soul of this religion", Likud leader Dov Shilansky, chairman of the Knesset Committee currently investigating the Mormon project, remarked on a radio interview in response to Mormon assurances that there were no proselytizing intentions behind the project. Amid conflicting reports that verbal and written assurances have been given of the non-missionary nature of the project, the Mormon University director David Galbraith at first rejected demands for a hard and fast undertaking in the matter as "demeaning" but eventually came around to an agreement to work out a binding undertaking to that effect in cooperation with legal authorities.

Meanwhile, YAD L'AHIM produced a former Mormon "high priest" and present expert on Mormon theology, Ed Decker, who testified at a press conference in Jerusalem that "the Mormons intend to convert the extension to Brigham Young University they are erecting on Mount Scopus into a center of missionary activity". Decker was also invited to testify before the Knesset committee looking into the project. The two Chief Rabbis of Israel also hosted the committee in their offices (over the objections of secularist members) to express their strongest opposition to the Mormon project.

An appearance of the Mormon choir in Israel was canceled recently, reportedly under pressures from Jewish Orthodox bodies. At last report (23.6.85) a major public demonstration against the Mormon Project is being organized. At the same time, supporters of the project, including the Jerusalem municipality, point to the low-key Mormon student presence (since 1968) at Kibbutz Ramat Rahel in Jerusalem, the strong pro-Israel support that Mormons provide because of their belief in the Return to Zion of the Jews, and the need to sustain a pluralistic attitude towards the various religious communities in the Holy Land.

PROJECT KIBBUTZ: The Israeli Supreme Court has rejected the petition of the PROJECT KIBBUTZ SOCIETY, which engages in the recruitment of Christian volunteers for Galilean kibbutzim, that the Israel Ministry of Interior be instructed not to expel its leaders from Israel. The High Court ruled that the Ministry had acted lawfully in refusing to extend the visas of the PROJECT leaders, and they were therefore required to leave the country and to liquidate their project.

"These volunteers are faithful in their labours without the slightest effort at missionary work", some of the kibbutzim who have employed them assert. Others, however, have claimed that they are a "fundamentalistic" Christian group whose aim is to do under-cover missionary work, "in order to bring the light to the Jewish people and to open the eyes of the blind..." and to convert the Jewish people to Christianity. One of the leaders of the campaign against the group is reportedly a Christian member of a kibbutz who never converted to Judaism.

Meanwhile, the PROJECT leaders have been winding up their affairs and selling property they had accumulated in Israel. In its decision the Court recommended that one of the leaders be permitted to remain an additional two months for this purpose. (MAARIV 2 Jun 1985)

KIBBUTZ BIBLE SWAP: The ultra-orthodox weekly EREV SHABAT reports that YAD L'AHIM has been "swamped" by requests from kibbutz members "who care", who wish to swap Hebrew Bibles with New Testaments which they received free of charge in exchange for Hebrew Bibles without New Testaments. The organization is seeking a "philanthropist" who will buy Hebrew Bibles to exchange for the "missionary" Bibles. (31.5.85) YAD L'AHIM reported that readers had responded to the appeal for funding "kosher" Hebrew Bibles and that Kibbutz Palmahim, following a "sharp letter" on the subject the secretariat of the kibbutz had received from a local rabbi, decided to obtain 20 "kosher" Bibles and put in their storehouse the "missionary" Bibles. (7 Jun 85)

THE LAW OF RETURN: For 5½ years deliberate delaying tactics were employed by clerks of the Ministry of Interior against Barbara and Irving Kugler, new immigrants from the USA, preventing them from obtaining status of Permanent Residents in Israel. Only after an appeal to the Supreme Court was the ministry willing to register them as new immigrants.

The affair began in March 1979 when the couple came to Israel with the intention of settling here. Their request for immigrant rights was not honored. Why? They are Protestants, as they indicated on their application, noting that Irving's father was a Jew who had converted (to Christianity) and Irving's mother was a Protestant. This in itself does not invalidate new immigrant status under the Law of Return, which states in Paragraph 4(a) that "...the rights of a Jew according to this law...and according to the Law of Citizenship, as well as the rights of every new immigrant according to any other legislation is also accessible to the child and the grandchild of a Jew". The legislator made clear his intent to grant residence rights to one who is not presently a Jew provided that his father or grandfather were Jews. Officials of the Ministry of Interior ignored this legislative intent and gave this couple the runaround. Irving Kugler provided documentary evidence to Zvi Shoshani of the Ministry that his father had been a Jew, and also that his grandmother had been buried in a Jewish cemetery in the U.S..

All the documentary evidence that Irving Kugler provided in the course of five years did not produce the desired effect or put an end to the run-around from office to office, from clerk to clerk, from rabbi to rabbi. His patience exhausted when he received a letter ordering them to leave Israel, Kugler turned to attorney Yosef Ben-Menashe. As a result of a legal opinion by the attorney for the Ministry of Interior, B. Yeari, which was conveyed to a senior official in the State Attorney's office, it was ruled that Irving Kugler and his wife were entitled to the benefits of the Law of Return. The petition to the High Court was withdrawn and the ministry was obliged to pay all legal costs at the taxpayers expense, not out of the pockets of the clerks. (MAARIV 17.5.85, BYLINE, Shaul Hon)

"I AM A MESSIANIC JEW": What prompted Irving (Yitzhak) Kugler to persevere in his petition in the face of the persistent footdragging he encountered at the Ministry of Interior? Kugler, who now lives in Jerusalem, replies: "Although I wasn't born a Jew, and so I stated in my petition to the Ministry of Interior, I emigrated to Israel out of a sense of being a Messianic Jew, and therefore I wanted to remain here... (MAARIV 17.5.85)

MISSIONARY CHALLENGE IN ISRAEL:

RAMAT HASHARON: A reception in Ramat Hasharon for Interior Minister Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz turned into a demonstration of solidarity with Council Head Moshe Verbin in his war against the Mission which has brought in its wake a legal suit against him. Verbin, who is a secular Jew, at a Council meeting termed Ari & Shira Sorkoram of Ramat Hasharon missionaries who are bribing Jews to convert. The couple sued him for slander and engaged attorney Ben-Menashe who represents many missionaries in Israel. At the reception for Rabbi Peretz, Verbin was told by rabbis taking part that they saw him as an emissary of the entire Jewish people. Meanwhile, a public committee has been formed in the town to back the Council Head in the fight against the sects. The "Eman" sect is also active in Ramat Hasharon. (TMURA, BNEI BRAK 24.5.85)

The Ramat Hasharon Council has rejected Council Head Moshe Verbin's request to fund his defence in the slander case instigated against him by a local sect. He has now found support in unexpected quarters, The ministry of Interior, notwithstanding his dramatic dispute with the Ministry over the status of Ramat Hasharon. Verbin stated: I still think that the fight against the Mission is part of the public consensus which even the Opposition must not break". Nevertheless, bitter opposition was expressed over the pact between the Council Head and the Minister of the Interior. "Verbin misled the minister in his desire to gain headlines", Opposition leader Gad Pnini remarked. "He offended the Sorkoram family and now he is trying to present the matter as if he were a warrior defending the faith. If indeed he was fighting missionary activity, I would propose that the Council fund his campaign. We'll have to meet with Rabbi Peretz and give him the tools for making a correct decision in the matter". (YEDIOT AKRONOT SUPPLEMENT-HERZLIYA/RAANANA 24.5.85)

A petition calling for the ejection of "Maoz" and the "Eman" sect from Ramat Hasharon has been organized by local residents, and has already been signed by thousands of residents, and will be submitted to the Prime Minister. (SHEARIM 22.5.85)

HOLON: A kindergarten in Holon is managed according to the teachings of Ron Hovard, founder of the Scientology sect, the anti-mission YAD L'AHIM group have charged. They have distributed leaflets exposing the tie between the kindergarten on Sireni St. where 30 children are under the care of kindergarten teachers who are members of the sect. It was also noted that in Beersheva YAD L'AHIM had exposed the principal of a local school as a Scientology sect leader. (SHEARIM 22.5.85)

INTERMARRIAGE: Some 2,000 young Jewish women are married to members of minority groups and some 10,000 Israeli children are reckoned Jewish by Jewish Religious law (having Jewish mothers) and Muslim by Muslim religious law (having Muslim fathers). This was alleged by Rabbi S.R. Lipschutz at the dedication in Petah Tikva of the National Center for the Prevention of Assimilation. The center was founded on the initiative of YAD L'AHIM, the anti-mission society, whose spokesman Aharon Kornfeld reported that the Center would work to prevent intermarriage and assist young women who desire to return to their people following intermarriage. (YEDIOT ADHRONOT SUPPLEMENT, PETAH TIKVA: 3 May 85)

"NO MISSIONARY PROBLEM IN JERUSALEM": Firstly, let me assure you that the Christian missionary activity in Jerusalem is almost non-existent", Mayor

Teddy Kollek has written to members of the Orthodox Jewish women's Zionest organization "EMUNA" in America who appealed to him on the issue. "It is clear that every Christian believes in soul-saving. I have no doubt about their evil intentions in this regard, but they restrict themselves. There are 38 Christian groups in the city, and we have done everything possible not to permit missionary activity". (EREV SHABAT: 24.5.85)

EXCERPTS FROM DIASPORA JEWISH PRESS CONCERNING MISSIONARY ACTIVITY IN ISRAEL:

"DER YID": Jerusalem Municipality supports the reconstruction of the burnt-out Baptist Church on Narkis Street despite opposition by religious Jews. (NEW YORK, 19.11.84) Local residents are also mounting a campaign against the rebuilding of the church which is "actually a missionary nest for promoting apostasy among Jews". (23.11.84) A Rehovot judge has issued an injunction barring the missionary "Messianic" sect called "Grace & Truth" led by the apostate Baruch Maoz, using the premises on Weizman street. (28.12.84) Missionary apostasy in the State of Israel has spread to all corners of the Land, even in the Holy City of Jerusalem, with apostates disguising themselves as ultra-orthodox Jews to spread their poison. Such things never happened when the Torah sages were in control of the Jewish community but only in "the democratic regime with a government which labours against our holy Torah". It maintains a liberal policy toward the missionaries and all kinds of idolatrous sects. (28.12.84)

JEWISH WEEK: A report on "Israel's small but prickly missionary problem" by Nechamia Meyers of Rehovot (21.12.84) mentions Israelis in Ashdod and Lod who have entered the stream of Messianic Judaism and Jehova Witnessess respectively, "Project Kibbutz", "Mishkan", a theological Journal on Jewish Evangelism edited by Rev. Ole Kvarme, and Israel Interfaith Assn. (which opposes organized missionary activity).

PHOENIX JEWISH NEWS: Same article as above headed "CONVERTS TO CHRISTIANITY COMING OUT OF THE CLOSET". (12.12.84)

JEWISH WORLD (ALBANY NY): The Jewish Community Relations Council's Task Force on Missionaries & Cults has learned that Morris Cerullo, founder of the fundamentalist missionary organization "World Evangelism", recently outlined a plan for the distribution in Israel of 25,000 Hebrew Language New Testaments, including an Israeli training outreach program to train Israeli converts in a Kibbutz. (10 Jan 85)

KANSAS CITY JEWISH CHRONICLE (Mo.) 8 Feb 85 (AS ABOVE)

CANADIAN JEWISH OUTLOOK (TORONTO) "JEWS FOR JEWS" has alleged that as many as 30,000 Israelis in 15 cult groupings are actively working in Christian missionary programs to convert Jews to Christianity, allegedly including kibbutz infiltration, offering bribes to convert, infiltrating schools. (Jan. 85)

JEWISH PRESS (N.Y.): Two feature articles by M.K. Menachem Porush of the ultra-orthodox religious community deal with "Missionary Waves in the Holy Land" and describe the appearance of missionaries "in full force whenever there is an especially difficult situation" in Israel. "They are coming to Israel by the thousands, backed by great power, armed with unlimited amounts of money..." Among the "missionaries" listed are: The Christian settlement in Galilee, Nes Amim, "one of the first missionary bases in the new system", Beth Shalom linked to the Christian International Embassy, and "Kibbutz Project" centered in Kfar Giladi. (22.3.85, 12.4.85)

JEWISH CHRONICLE (London): A strong protest at alleged harassment of Christians in Rehovot has been made in a letter from the Free Church of Scotland's Glasgow presbytery to Israeli P.M. Shimon Peres. The letter accused Israeli authorities of turning a blind eye to anti-Christian activity, and the town's mayor of also being party to "stirring up vilification against Christians". Yoram Kessel of Jerusalem cabled that local residents were angered by missionary activities and that "Shlomo Maoz, an Israeli convert to Christianity has received funds...by unfounded allegations that (the congregation) has been harassed". (3 May 85) In a letter replying to the Kessel cable, Murdo A. MacLeod, Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland and Director of the Christian Witness to Israel, rebutted "every paragraph of the Cable (which) is a gross misstatement of the facts". A letter by one Gloria Mound of Wembley Park, Middlesex, claimed to have been with family in Rehovot at the time of the disturbances and claimed reports about the harassment of Christians were exaggerated, and that missionary activity in the area had disturbed local people. (17 May 85)

EXCERPTS FROM DIASPORA JEWISH PRESS CONCERNING MISSIONARY ACTIVITY IN THE DIASPORA:

JEWISH TELEGRAPH (MANCHESTER): Letters appeared with respect to an article by Rabbi Rabinowitz who wrote that "latter day Christians who publicly declare that they have no intention of missionizing Jews...negate (a) basic principle of their faith". Rev. Murdo MacLeod expressed regret that "the word missionizing has become so loaded with misunderstanding...resulting from the insensitive methods of the few that it is now almost pejorative... (and) it is with the nature of the person of Jesus..." that the conflict between Church and Synagogue must be seen as the major issue. J. Henley of Liverpool cahrges that Jesus "made unkind belittling remarks or told anecdotes hostile to Jews..." Rabbi Rabinowitz commented that "One may agree that Jesus had a superior measure of (God's) spirit but he was still a man of the earth, not a heavenly being". (15.2.85) A previously unheard of German missionary organization ("Call for Reconciliation International Messianic Jewish Movement") headed by a Jew, Arie Ben Israel, alleged to be a former refusenik who settled in Israel in 1960 and now lives in West Germany, has announced a grandiose scheme to reconcile Jews and Germans. Ben Israel's contact in England is Mrs. Carol Paterson of St. Helens in Lancashire. (8 Mar 85) In a further letter to the editor Rev. MacLeod denied that Christians compromise the doctrine of the Unity of God as expressed in the "Shema", or that any "true follower of Jesus can be associated with any persecution or denigration of the Jewish people". (1 Mar 85) J. Henley of Liverpool calls for the exposure of "the hypocrisy, brutality and nastiness of all organised beliefs, both religious and secular" in the fight against missionaries. (29.3.85) Catholics and Jesuits are the greatest threat to Jews and Israel, a spokesman for a pro-Zionist, non-missionary Christian sect, Mr. Edgar Hall of the Christadelphian Movement, alleged. He claimed the latter are a worldwide organization with 15,000 members in Britain and have been shipping vast amounts of clothing to Israel. (29.3.85)

JEWISH GAZETTE (Manchester): A warning was published against the missionary activities of the Jehova Witness sect distributing leaflets in Hebrew, Yiddish, English by means of "attractive young girls". The same appeared in the JEWISH GAZETTE of Leeds. (22.2.85)

JEWISH WEEK (New York, NY): "The aim of the missionaries is the same as the Nazis--destruction of the Jews", writes a reader and calls for better "nurture" of Jewish children. (8 Feb 85) The first Hebrew-Japanese dictionary has been published by the Japanese "Christian Zionist" group Makuya. "Missionaries contradict the goals of our group. Their emphasis is on teaching others, and their goal is to buy souls", says spokesman for the Makuya, (15.2.85)

JEWISH CHRONICLE (LONDON): A London clergyman, Rev. Edwin Robertson of the Hampstead Baptist church and former head of BBC religious broadcasting, in a three-part series of articles in the "Baptist Times" has called on fellow Baptists to be active in trying to convert at least non-practising Jews (10 May 85) An angry editorial appeared the same date, headed "LEAVE US ALONE!" Referring to "an incredible series of articles" in the "reputable" BAPTIST TIMES about conversion of Jews, the writer concludes: "We have not survived the death camps of Europe in order willingly to surrender our Jewish identity. Well-meaning in Christian terms though the proselytisers may be, they will have to try and understand when we tell them to leave us alone".

SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH TIMES (Jo'burg): Cyric Fernandez and Jack Levine are two young Jews who were brought back to Judaism with the guidance of Rabbi Selwyn Franklin of the Green & Sea Point Hebrew Congregation in Cape Town after having been baptized into Christianity. "Evangelists have made an impact on our young people and we must endeavour to give moral and financial assistance, as well as offer programs of solid study. We must tackle this problem", says Rabbi Franklin. (22.2.85)

JEWISH HERALD (Jo'burg): A letter purporting that Menahem Begin's daughter had converted to Christianity was pronounced false and attributed to JEWS FOR JESUS "from the mistaken belief that this would advance their cause". (20.11.84)

BNAI BRITH MESSENGER (L.A. Calif.) An attack on "the atrocious JEWS FOR JESUS cult (which) had a full page ad in the L.A. TIMES". (28.12.84)

"OUR ISRAEL" (New York--Hebrew-language): A two-page feature article headed "THE WOLVES: MISSIONARIES & SECTS POUNCING ON U.S. JEWRY" appeared under the by-line of Gad Nahshon, filled with vitriolic language about "the missionaries", Scientology, JEWS FOR JESUS, the "moonies", Hebrew-Christians, etc., and an interview with Rabbi Philip Abramowitz of the anti-mission task force of the Jewish Community Council of New York. (21.3.85) A letter by a member of the same council refuted the claim that Moshe Rosen of JEWS FOR JESUS was a graduate of Flatbush Yeshiva. (29.3.85)

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27.6.85/mb

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