

BAPTISMS AND "EXPORT": The baptism of Jews into Christianity was conducted about two weeks ago in the Baptist Village near Petah Tikva on the initiative of missionaries centered in Jaffa. This was reported in the bulletin "THE MESSIANIC CONGREGATION" in Jaffa, which was displayed yesterday by the organization "Yad L'Ahim."

The bulletin also reported a new kind of Israeli "export" . . . missionaries. Four "Gospel purveyors" from Jaffa worked during July in New York. Missionary success in Israel is so great apparently that the bulletin requests that the missionaries not be disturbed on Sundays. (HATSOFEH 4 Sept 86)

The ultra-orthodox daily HAMODIYA (7 Sept 86), in a similar article, identified the congregation as Beit Emanuel, and also reported on the computer bank the anti-mission society had built up about mission organizations and individuals around the world, which "can serve as a basis for helping in counteraction."

BIBLES FOR IMMIGRANTS: Jewish refugees from Houmeni's Iran received an unusual gift less than two weeks after arrival in Israel — a Bible with the New Testament in it, in the Persian language. The Bibles were stamped "GIFT — NOT FOR SALE" with the name of the missionary from Tiberias, K. Syvanto.

The emergency staff of "Yad L'Ahim" has decided to step up its activities in the face of the ongoing campaign of spiritual destruction. This is being sustained by the immigrant absorption authorities and the persistent refusal of the Minister of Absorption Yaakov Zur and his aides to grant the anti-mission activists regular access to the new immigrants upon their arrival at the airport as well as listing their locations in Israel.

A spokesman for the anti-mission society revealed that it has a "kosher" Bible in Persian translated from the Hebrew by an Iranian rabbi now in Los Angeles, but its printing has been delayed because of lack of funds. (YETAID NEEMAN 3 Aug; HATSOFEH 7 Aug 86)

A rally and demonstration against conversionist manifestations among new immigrants to Israel has been scheduled for today (11 Aug) by "Yad L'Ahim" in the Geula section of Jerusalem at the yeshiva (Orthodox Jewish seminary) "Mishkan Joel." In addition to leading rabbis and anti-mission leaders, young immigrants will testify to their plight. Religious new immigrants who had to leave their sacred articles behind when fleeing the Diaspora received neither prayer shawls nor phylacteries in Israel, but somehow the "New Testament" and other missionary literature did reach them.

The organization has also appealed to the P.M. and Deputy P.M. for permission to meet new immigrants on their arrival and to be given lists of the new immigrants. Today's demonstration will be the first of a number of public steps taken to prevent a recurrence of "the Teheran children" affair (during the early days of the State when Orthodox Jewish children were absorbed into secularist frameworks). (HAMODIYA 11 Aug 86)

U.S. AMBASSADOR "CENSURED": A local supplement of the national daily YEDIOT AKHRONOT reported that U.S. Ambassador Thos. Pickering was allegedly "censured" by the anti-mission society "Yad L'Ahim" for his reported intervention in the dispute between the Histadrut Labour

Federation and "Galtronics," a plant owned by U.S. Christians in Tiberias. (See "SELECTIONS" No. 141; page 2) YEDIOT HAGALIL 11 Jul 86

In response to the "censure" of the ambassador, the ultra-orthodox daily SHEARIM (3 Sept 86) reported that "Yad L'Ahim" had received a "diplomatic" reply in which the ambassador claimed that their information was not precise, that he certainly encourages American investments in Israel, and that he favours separation of religion and State as is customary in his own country.

"MORAL MAJORITY" IN JERUSALEM? A warning against a second Mormon affair in Jerusalem was sent to the P.M., his deputy, cabinet members, Knesset members, and others, by the "Yad L'Ahim" organization. It concerns the right-wing U.S. movement of "Moral Majority" headed by the preaching clergyman Jerry Falwell, an organization which regards missionary activity among Jews as "a sacred task." Like the "Mormon model," they are seeking to gain a foothold in Jerusalem by means of a handsome contribution to the Jerusalem Foundation for setting up a park near the Damascus Gate as well as by funding archaeological excavations near the Garden Tomb. The anti-missioners are worried that ulterior motives lie behind the contributions. (HAMODIYA 27 Aug 86)

In a lead article, the same ultra-orthodox daily on the following day warned of the "grave danger" for Jerusalem in this project. It also took a sharp swipe at Jerusalem Mayor Kollek for his "sale" of Jerusalem to foreigners. "Jerusalem is certainly not his private property, although he may think so," the writer concluded. (28 Aug 86)

"EXTEND THE ANTI-MISSION LAW": The special cabinet committee set up to investigate the Mormon Centre on Mt. Scopus produced several important resolutions, notwithstanding the opinion of the Attorney-General that it is impossible to cancel the building permit the Mormons had obtained . . . The committee did recommend that the law against missionary activity be amended to apply to all areas and spheres of Israeli life. The present law only prohibits mission activity by means of monetary or material enticement.

When the present law against mission activity was enacted, there were those who feared the reactions of the churches, but it appears that the law does not disturb them. Now is the time for an additional step, a clearer and more comprehensive one, and it may be that the construction of the Mormon centre is the opportune time. The law should be extended (to prohibit all missionary activity). (HATSOFEH 12 Aug 86)

"MASSIVE MISSIONARY ATTACK FORESEEN": A massive missionary attack by the "Messianics" is foreseen in the near future in Israel in the wake of the decision by the cabinet committee to permit the completion of the Mormon University on Mount Scopus. Secret plans exposed by the activists of the "Yad L'Ahim" organization in the U.S.A. reveal that personnel "reinforcements" and funds from abroad are due to arrive in Israel in order to assist in "spreading the Gospel" in accordance with the plan devised two years ago at Lausanne in Switzerland.

The "Messianics" (who view the Mormons as serious rivals) are seeking to take the lead over their colleagues and are afraid that the present mission law will be amended. They interpret the decision of the cabinet committee as "a green light" for intensified activities.

Rabbi S.B. Lipschutz, chairman of "Yad L'Ahim," notes that the "Messianics" have welfare institutions, clinics, guest houses and recreation centres which operate beside the congregations scattered through the land, and mainly consist of Mormons (sic!). All of them

will be "enlisted" for an unprecedented attack which will cover most of the households in Israel.

After a lengthy discussion, the "Yad L'Ahim" leaders have decided to launch a counterattack in various original ways, at the same time appealing to top government leaders to enact legislation prohibiting all missionary activity. It was also decided to continue the campaign against the Mormon University on Mt. Scopus even if the university management "undertakes" not to engage in "spreading the Gospel." (HATSOFEH/YETAID NEEMAN 15 Sept 86)

OUTSIDE THE CAMP: According to the laws of the Torah, a Jew who converts to another religion, and his married brother dies childless, the widow must receive from her brother-in-law "halitza" (release from the law of levirate marriage; See Deut. 25:5-10). Even if he is an apostate, he is obliged to grant her this release: neither can she marry another until he grants this release. Such a Jew is defiled, but he is reckoned a Jew throughout his life, his place being outside the camp. (Rabbi Mordecai Gimpel, in an article about Orthodox and Unorthodox Jews, "HaAmana L'Geula HaShlayma," ADAR ALEPH - Feb/Mar 1986)

THE ARAB AWAKENING: An analytical article by Haim Regbi was published, tracing the history of modern Arab nationalism to an allegedly defective conception of Mideast reality by idealistic 19th century Western Protestant missionaries. "They were devout Christians, enlightened intellectuals and proud Americans, all in one, members of the Presbyterian sect which advocated the application of Christian values with a minimum of religious ritual. They were tolerant towards all believers and aspired by means of nondenominational education and good will to introduce culture and values to undeveloped communities, which wittingly or unwittingly would be permeated with the Protestant spirit, and would work for the good of all, lending a helping hand to one another . . . The essentials of religion were not taught by means of formal prayers or catechism but through study of the Old and New Testaments, especially those portions which were applicable to daily life and character-building . . ."

The writer concludes that their basic error was to believe that a common Arabic language would provide the basis for amalgamating all the diverse peoples and religions and sects in the Mideast as was then happening in the U.S.A. "melting pot" they believed in. (ALEF YUD, Ariel, 15 Aug 86)

BAPTIST VILLAGE: A 1 1/2 page feature article with photographs, headlined "BAPTIST STRONGHOLD IN THE SHARON," by Amit Duvkin, was published in a local weekly "TSOMET HASHARON" Herzliya (1 Aug 86). At the time a summer camp for Arab children was in operation, and the main interviewees were Fidar Ramadan and Bilal Havivi as well as several U.S. volunteers and, by phone from the U.S., Norman Lytel, the Baptist Village pastor and director. The history of the village and its present activities were presented in a sympathetic way accompanied by explanations of Baptist distinctives: full immersion, believers baptism, personal biblical faith, independent congregations, non-liturgical worship, and a belief in the separation of religion and state.

BIBLICAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE: The International Society for Biblical Studies was hosted in Jerusalem for the first time. There were 468 participants, including 29 from East Europe and many others from Japan, South Korea, Nigeria, Tanzania, Latin America and the U.S.A. The East Europeans were reluctant to discuss any matters which might have political significance, even when it concerned the extent of Hebrew and biblical studies in their countries. (HAARETZ 3 Sept 86)

"WE'RE TURNING TO THE MISSION," SAY NINE GALILEAN FAMILIES: Some 20 souls from Kfar Kish from nine families are about to appeal to the abbot of the monastery atop Mt. Tabor and to ask him for aid in their severe financial plight. Several have threatened that if no solution is found to their heavy debt problem they and their children will be baptized and convert to Christianity. "We are on the brink of despair with no choice left to us but to turn to the Mission for help," says one of them. "We are not sending our children to school this year but to the monastery to study." They have already phoned the abbot to make an appointment to talk with him, they claim. (HADASHOT 27 Aug 86)

TALE OF TWO CHURCHES: The Franciscans are the Custodians of the Holy Places in the Holy Land. One of the churches they are responsible for is St. Anthony's church in Jaffa, which faces the Anglican St. Peter's church, built by Protestants who were latecomers to the Holy Land. The two churches symbolize the ongoing struggle between two central streams in the Christian church. (MAARIV TEL AVIV 15 Aug 86 with photos)

REFORMED JEWISH EX-BAPTIST: Susan Miller, the daughter of a strict Baptist minister, first began to question her parental faith when her mother replied to her childhood question about what happens to someone who doesn't believe in Jesus as the Son of God. The answer was, "He will be roasted in the fires of hell." She could not accept the artificial distinctions people make between absolute black and absolute white. Eventually she became interested in Jewish history and religion and accepted conversion into Judaism by Reform Rabbi Klein of Colorado Springs.

Last year Miller decided to settle in Israel after arrangements were made under the Law of Return. The Ministry of Interior refused, however, to recognize her Reform conversion and intimated that she should undergo Orthodox conversion, which she refused.

An alternative solution was offered by the ministry whereby the term "proselyte" would be written on the Identity Certificates of all proselytes, but this stirred up a minor tempest among various groups, including some Orthodox Jews. They claim it is a violation of "halacha" (Jewish religious law) to remind proselytes of their non-Jewish origin, or to stigmatize them in any way. Meanwhile, she has appealed to the High Court to compel the Ministry of Interior to register her as a Jewish immigrant. (BAMAHAHEH I.D.F.)

"CHRISTIAN" ANTISEMITISM: "I was appalled to read the term 'Christian antisemitism' used by Professor Littel. Any so-called Christian who does not totally defend and support his Jewish brothers and sisters in the battle against antisemitism denies Jesus, his Jewish Lord." Maria Fraser, Isfiya (JERUSALEM POST 26 Jan 86)

EL AL AND PILGRIMS: "I heartily endorse the recent letter from Rev. Miller about in-flight movies shown by El Al. I am organizer and leader of Bible study groups to the Holy Land and have always flown El Al. However, this year, members of my group were greatly disturbed by the film shown on the return flight involving sex and the occult. The excellent safety record of El Al is certainly a plus factor, but my main reason for using the national carrier is first to support the State of Israel and secondly the desire that the pilgrimage experience commence as we enter the plane. I have always felt in-flight movies to be an unnecessary intrusion." John Weston, Wimborne Minister, Dorset (JERUSALEM POST Overseas 9 Aug 86)

DIASPORA NEWS

ENGLAND: Rabbi Shmuel Arkush announced the launching of OPERATION JUDAISM, an anti-antisemitism campaign, at a conference in Birmingham.

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The three bodies backing O.J. are the Chief Rabbi's office, the Board of Deputies and the Lubavivich hassidim. They aim to produce pamphlets (one available is "JEWS UNDER ATTACK") and video film to counter missionary propaganda. (JEWISH CHRONICLE, London 23 May 86) Rabbi Arkush, in a letter to the CHRONICLE (13 Jun 86), writes that The David House Fellowship, distributors of the VINEYARD magazine, is a missionary publication notwithstanding their support for Jewish causes (Soviet Jewry, Ethiopian Jews). OPERATION JUDAISM has been formed to help protect the community from such insidious advances, he writes.

MANCHESTER JEWISH GAZETTE: Christian missionaries are now concentrating vast resources and using extremely sophisticated techniques to convert Jews. This was the warning delivered by Rabbi Shmuel Arkush, director of "Operation Judaism." He contrasted their work with the pitiful efforts of Jewish organizations to combat them. More than 40 missionary organizations are currently distributing over 300 well-written and illustrated books, pamphlets and journals. Many of the writers put forward the appealing message that if you accept Jesus you can become a better Jew, he said, and exampled the notorious JEWS FOR JESUS organization . . .

He believed the impetus to conversion is inherent in the Christian doctrine and in the present-day insecurity of Christianity in the face of secularism and Islam. He outlined steps being taken to combat the menace, and urged the community to send conversion material to him. It is essential to keep a record of what the opposition is doing. (4 Jul 86)

LONDON JEWISH CHRONICLE: Missionary groups in Central London and Cambridge annoyed passers-by by handing out pamphlets advising Jews to "choose the good news" by converting to Christianity, which were issued by the Campaign for Messianic Judaism and the Church's Ministry among the Jews. Rev. Marcus Braybrooke, executive director of Council for Christians and Jews, urged "those who seek converts to fully respect the freedom of others and not put any pressure on them." (18 Jul 86)

U.S.A. (N.Y.C.): The "Jewish Press" of Brooklyn published a book review of Samuel Levine's "You Take Jesus, I take G-d: How to Refute Christian Missionaries" (Reviewer: I. Mozeson): This short, readable and effective book is bold and straightforward . . . none of the detached "cool" of the scholarly presentations of the "differences" between Judaism and Christianity . . . It takes charge . . . an arsenal of bombshells designed for verbal counterattacks . . . reflects the change in Jewish mood from apologetics to pre-emptive strikes. (25 Jul 86)

CANADA: The Canadian director of JEWS FOR JESUS, Steve Cohen, says his constitutional rights are being violated in not being allowed to distribute the group's literature at York University. He was arrested recently and charged with trespassing at York after a complaint was lodged that someone was ignoring requests to stop handing out JFJ literature. Court date has been set for May 7th, and he will plead not guilty, because, he told "Canadian Jewish News," "York is a public university, not a private school. My tax dollars support it. My constitutional rights cannot be checked at the gate. If JFJ is silenced, who's next?" York's director of student affairs, Cora Dusk, said permission is required for any group to distribute its literature on campus. She said JFJ "did not meet the proper criteria" for coming on campus, nor had it obtained prior permission to do so. (23 Apr 86)

SUNDRIES

PRIESTLY BENEDICTION: In the beginning was the Word. But when was the beginning and what was the Word? Two cigarette-sized silver amulets uncovered in an ancient tomb opposite Mt. Zion, deciphered

only a few months ago, have brought us closer to the beginning of biblical text than ever. The amulets contain a priestly benediction that shows that at least some of the prayers of our ancestors 2,700 years ago remain our prayers today, virtually word for word. The text is small but telling. On the larger of the two amulets it is almost identical to the poetic priestly benediction from Numbers 6:24-26 in the Masoretic text recited in synagogues to this day.

The amulets are part of the largest ancient treasure hoard ever found in Jerusalem, uncovered in 1979, and are dated by their discoverer, archaeologist Gabriel Barkay, to the 7th century BC. According to Barkay, who made a special study of the subject, the Garden Tomb (believed by some Protestants to be the burial place of Jesus) also dates from the First Temple period before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. (Excerpts from two-page article in International Edition JERUSALEM POST 9 Aug 86)

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