

NEW ANTI-MISSION LAW TABLED IN KNESSET: A law against mission activity in Israel has been submitted by the Agudat Israel faction in the Knesset (sponsored by M.K. Avraham Shapiro and Menahem Porush) to the Knesset chairman. In the explanatory remarks it was noted that its aim is to restrict mission activity in Israel. At present the laws of the penal code, para. 174-a and 174-b, prohibit missionary activity involving enticement (by material benefits) to conversion, but it appears that the Mission is exploiting the difficulty of proving enticement in order to work among various religious communities, including Jews.

It is therefore proposed to supervise the activities of every missionary body engaged in preachments to another religious community by means of registration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Likewise, in order to prevent the deceit of missionary activities in the guise of cultural and educational activities, every such body will have to operate openly as a mission.

Among the articles of the proposed law will be the requirement that no organization or body will engage in religious preachment except after registration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and such body will include in its name the word "Mission," and will engage in such activities only under its registered name. For the purpose of the law, "religious preachment" is defined as informational activity, education and teaching in matters related to religion and faith on the part of a religious body or organization aimed at members of other religious communities. The proposed law would impose a prison sentence of up to three years and NIS 500,000 for violations. (HAMODIYA 31 MAR 87)

NEW ORDER: NO NEW AND OLD TESTAMENTS IN SCHOOLS: The Director General of the Education Ministry has ordered all State schools, including those of the kibbutz movement, to discontinue the use of Bibles which contain both the Old and New Testaments, nor are they to teach parts of the New Testament together with the Old Testament during Bible classes. These Bibles have been widely used in kibbutz and other schools which receive them free of charge from missionaries and Christian organizations.

The deputy director of religious education justified the ruling on the grounds that the Old Testament came from God, the New Testament was written by men. A school principal remarked that "... Jews have been murdered and persecuted because of the New Testament. The Old Testament must remain sacred, even to those of us who are not observant (of Orthodox Judaism), because it represents what makes us Jews."

Negative responses to the ruling were voiced in several quarters. A Bible teacher in a state school regretted the rule because he believes that pitting the Old Testament against the New shows why Judaism represents a higher level. A high school principal commented that the problem of relating to the New Testament in Jewish education is an old one in Israel, and referred to several instances earlier in the century involving major Hebrew writers who were "punished" for a liberal attitude towards the New Testament. The coordinator of education for the leftwing Kibbutz Ha'artzi movement called the rule "fetishistic and idolatrous," even though he did not regard the two Testaments as "equivalent." He regarded the Old Testament as "the source of our Jewish and human values."

Writing in the leftwing daily AL HAMISHMAR (20 MAR 87), Yehuda Lahav reacted angrily to the order, calling it a "boorish act ... truly scandalous ... and a grave attack on the most basic principles of

enlightened education." It was not only undesirable to prevent Israeli school children from looking into the New Testament, but they should be taught it, alongside the Old Testament, Darwinism, Talmud, Buddhism and world history. Even in the Soviet Union with its officially atheistic world view, voices are heard for renewing the teaching of the Bible in schools. Without knowledge of the Bible, it is impossible to grasp major portions of classical Russian literature as well as the general cultural heritage. "The New Testament, like the Old, has become an inseparable part of human culture, and acquaintance with it is a cultural asset of every intelligent person," Lahav wrote. He sees the ruling as another step in "the process of religious coercion and reactionary fanaticism and intolerance," undermining the foundations of modern culture and free objective scientific inquiry.

In response to a Parliamentary Query raised by M.K. Wirshuvsky, Education and Culture Minister Yitzhak Navon defended the ruling in the Knesset. "The ministry opposes missionary activity and will not permit the use of Bibles containing the Old and New Testaments bound together," Navon declared. "Whoever wishes to read the New Testament may do so separately," he added.

In response to a second question raised by the M.K. concerning the matter of censorship, Navon replied that there was no censorship involved, and that it was his belief that students in the upper grades should learn about Islam, Christianity and Buddhism; but not in the context of Bible study, since this would inevitably create the impression that the religious books of Judaism and Christianity are equally valid for Jewish children.

The anti-mission society YAD L'AHIM welcomed the new order and promised to check out its implementation in the field. (VARIOUS PAPERS 16 MAR 87 TO 29 MAR 87)

JEWISH DANCE TROUPE SPONSORED BY ENGLISH CHRISTIAN GROUP: A storm has been raised in Herzliya in Israel and in the U.K. over the appearance of Israeli high school teenagers, the "Shalhevet" folk dancing troupe, under the joint sponsorship of the Herzliya municipality and the allegedly "Christian fundamentalist missionary" organization PRAYER FOR ISRAEL. The three-week tour of the 23 member troupe was originally planned to encompass both the Christian and Jewish communities, but several Jewish groups have decided to boycott the dancers, who are raising funds for Israeli war wounded, because of the alleged missionary nature of P.F.I. and for scheduled performances on the Jewish Sabbath.

Dozens of frenzied wires were sent from the U.K. and within Israel to the Herzliya municipality, YAD L'AHIM, the Ministry of Education, the Chief Rabbis and other public figures, in efforts to exert pressure to prevent the exit of the troupe. A mass meeting was held at the Great Synagogue of Herzliya followed by a procession to the municipality. Offers were reportedly made by wealthy U.K. Jewish philanthropists to finance the tour if the Christian connection were dropped.

Meanwhile, the Herzliya municipality categorically rejected the charges that the event was a missionary ploy. It also rejected calls for cancelling the tour, and issued an official statement: "The troupe will travel as per plan to London, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Liverpool. It will indeed appear before a community of Christian pilgrims who saw them in Israel. The tour was confirmed by the mayor (Eli Landau of Herzliya)."

In an interview given to the ultra-Orthodox JERUSALEM TIMES (27 MAR 87), the deputy mayor Aryeh Urieli praised the P.F.I. group, and claimed that "the attitude of the parents (of the children touring) is absolutely positive." He noted the P.F.I.'s material support for

Israeli institutions, including several in Herzliya. The official municipality spokesman, Yossi Givati, also rejected "the attempts of extremists to sabotage the tour."

The parents of one of the children expressed full confidence in the program, stating that "even if the organization is missionary, there is no need to fear its influence on the children." As holocaust survivors they reject all forms of racism, including that of Jews against Christians, they told HAARETZ (30 MAR 87). Pressures had been exerted on parents to have their children withdraw from the tour.

The troupe finally left Israel as planned and arrived in London on time. A spokesman for the Board of Deputies of British Jews said that P.F.I. had organized the tour to "gain credibility for their missionary activities," and that Israel had been "duped." There were conflicting reports about whether the troupe members would be given home hospitality in Jewish homes or in P.F.I. homes. (VARIOUS PAPERS between 24 MAR and 5 APR 87)

LEBANESE VOLUNTEERS IN GALILEAN KIBBUTZIM?: The anti-mission society YAD L'AHIM warned against the absorption of volunteers from the Lebanese security zone to work in Galilean Kibbutzim. The program stems from a proposal of Francis Rizak, one of the leaders of the "Voice of Hope" radio station. The anti-mission group claim that the volunteers will be missionaries on the order of previous volunteers sponsored by "PRAYER FOR ISRAEL" ("PROJECT KIBBUTZ")

Sources in South Lebanon have denied any intention to enlist volunteers, but noted that last year a group of young South Lebanese in a gesture of friendship did work in local kibbutzim. (AL HAMISHMAR, YATAID AND HAMODIA (30 MAR 87)

PURIM MISSIONARIES: The missionaries have increased their activities during Purim by means of an illustrated tract focused on the festival. Thousands of holiday celebrants at the Tel-Aviv Purim parade were surprised at the "Purim gifts" distributed by the young apostate Jacob Damkane who recently removed from Haifa to Immanuel Church in Jaffa. (EREV SHABAT 20 MAR 87)

There are those who dress up in costume only on Purim, but there are those who are always in costume. A man with traditional forelocks and beard stands by the Western Wall and organizes prayer quorums, calling himself David, Son of Jesse, and preaching Christian faith. When asked who he is, he shows his Jewish conversion certificate. Investigation has disclosed that his mother is Jewish, and his true name is Marcus Miller. It has yet to be disclosed to which Christian group Miller belongs, but his tricks have already harmed several families. (ULTRA ORTHODOX CAMP, JERUSALEM 10 MAR 87)

MESSIANIC JEWS WIN LEGAL BATTLE: The struggle of a couple of Messianic Jews, who for nearly three years have sought to obtain entry visas to Israel under the Law of Return, came to its conclusion this week when the Attorney General, in response to a Memorandum from the Supreme Court, announced that the Interior Ministry has agreed to grant the couple immigrant status under the Law of Return.

Gertrude and Paul Fodor, residents in HOD HASHARON, claim that they are Jewish despite the fact that they had Protestant parents. When they came to Israel in 1984 and asked the Interior Ministry to grant them immigrant status, Fodor stated that, although not born a Jew, his grandfather was Jewish and therefore he was entitled to immigration status. The couple presented a certificate from the Jewish community of Toronto proving that Fodor is a Jewish Holocaust survivor, as well as the ruling of the Rabbinic court that he is a Jew. Seven members of his family perished in the Holocaust. The Interior Ministry claimed

that the documents were counterfeit, and ignored their appeals. In July 1985 they appealed to the Ombudsman and then to the High Court. (MA ARIV 5 APR 1987)

MESSIANIC JEWISH BIOLOGY TEACHER: Moshe Bar-David a teacher at the "Ohel Shem" high school in Ramat Gan is well-known to the Ministry of Education. Three weeks ago the anti-missionary society YAD L'AHIM warned the authorities about this teacher who had misled a student at the youth village BEN-SHEMEN into the Messianic faith. The Director of the village wrote at that time: "As a result of our investigations it appears that (the student) was influenced by Bar-David after he completed his studies in our school. We have had discussions with Mr. Bar-David and forcefully insisted that he refrain from all discussions relating to beliefs and opinions with the students and the graduates, and he faithfully promised to accept this stipulation."

Meanwhile, additional material had come up indicating that Bar-David has conducted Messianic circles in his own town. When it was learned that a pupil at the youth village had attended a missionary meeting under the influence of the teacher, a sharp letter was despatched to the office of the Ministry. "If Bar-David is honest with himself and his faith, then he is obliged to bring the 'gospel' to every Jew. The use of his position of influence as a teacher is dangerous." Finally, Bar-David had to terminate his work at Ben-Shemen, and this year he found employment much closer to home in Ramat Gan. YAD L'AHIM updated the principal of the school, MIRA HEMED, about the "character" of their new teacher. In reply, the principal wrote, "I thank you for your letter in connection with the biology teacher. The matter will be investigated and taken care of." (EREV SHABAT 3 APR 87)

WANTS TO CONVERT: Dr. Nina Yanovsky wants to convert to Christianity and to return to Russia, she told the public during a demonstration in Jerusalem. She claims that, although she practiced medicine in Russia for 18 years, she was deprived of her medical license in Israel because of mental problems. "I am not mad," she protests. "Let me go back to Russia." (YEDIOT AKHROT 17 MAR 87)

NEVE SHALOM: In the beginning it was the dream of Bruno Hussar, age 76, born a Jew in Egypt. When he was 15 he moved to France, and there he was baptized into Christianity in the Catholic Church. In 1972, 19 years after his immigration to Israel, he became the pioneer of Neve Shalom, a village in which he hoped that members of the three great monotheistic religions would live together. The idea did not work out, and until 1977 Neve Shalom was like a railroad station with a constant turnover. In that year Bruno's dream underwent a slight ideological adjustment. A community of Jews and Arabs took shape, setting itself up as a model for co-existence between the two peoples. (The article continues with a detailed description, from a communal and ethnic perspective, of life in the Jewish-Arab village near Latrun, with interviews of members and leaders. (KAWL HA'IR 3 APR 87)

COLLEGE OF THE SCOTTISH CHURCH IN SAFED: In the course of personal reminiscences, retired Supreme Court Justice Zvi Berenson, recalled his studies at a Christian school in his home town Safed: "There were no religious studies, but at morning assembly we read portions from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament, for half a year, and the second half we read from the New Testament. It was not Mission in the usual sense, but it was an excellent school where Jews, Christians and Moslems studied together ..." (KAWL HA'IR 27 MAR 87)

LAWYER FOR THE DEFENCE: In an interview given to a Hebrew-language daily, Israeli defence attorney Yoram Sheftel in the trial of John (Ivan) Demjanjuk (accused of being "Ivan the Terrible" of the World War Two death camp Treblinka), in answer to questions about his interest in the Holocaust replied: "The Holocaust was the work of

Christians ... and the fulfilment of Christianity ..." (HADASHOT 20 MAR 87)

JAPANESE PHILOSEMITES TRADE COUNTERCHARGES: TSOMET HASUARON (27 MAR 87) published a feature article about two Japanese groups ardently pro-Israel, one the "Makuya" sect and the other "Beth Shalom," both purporting to be motivated by Christian principles but intensely disdainful of the other. Each group has an Israeli "guru" or representative (Prof. Pinhas Pelli of Ben-Gurion University for "Makuya," Prof. Tuva for "Beth Shalom" also of Ben-Gurion University) equally critical of the opposite group.

Pelli charges the "Beth Shalom" group with being missionaries. "They have all kinds of hostels in Japan for hosting Israelis without charge, which attests to missionary intentions, but we in Makuya are very devoted to Israel and have no missionary intentions," he says.

"Beth Shalom" counters that their vision began some 50 years ago, long before "Makuya," that the latter are apprehensive about their popularity and are therefore accusing them of being missionary. Furthermore, unlike "Makuya" they do not pretend to be descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel or claim an artificial common history. Every four years the "Beth Shalom" conducts a gala concert in Tel-Aviv, to which are invited several thousands of Israelis who have stayed at their hostels in Japan.

MOUNTAIN OF GOD: Emanuel Anati, an Israeli archeologist of Italian-Jewish background, in a recently published book "The Mountain of God," claims to have discovered the historic site of Mt. Sinai at Mount Karkom, which was said to have been a major cultic centre for 1,000 years of antiquity. He found many explanations for Biblical events in the region. He bases his thesis on a liberal reinterpretation of Biblical narrative and chronology, which he claims involves "the telescoping of time and the idealization and simplification of complex stories." (JERUSALEM POST 27 MAR 87)

LAND SALES: The Minister of Agriculture Arik Nehamkin yesterday informed the Knesset, in response to a Parliamentary Query of M.K. Rabbi Menahem Porush, that State lands are not being sold to any foreign body, including missionaries. Rabbi Porush had cited reports of missionary sects who had purchased land and property throughout Israel, including the Mormon sect which is about to purchase an additional 26 dunams on Mt. Scopus. Another sect was reported to be purchasing the Gil cinema in Hazor, and a Messianic sect was obtaining land and houses in Tiberias. The Minister noted that, while no State land was being sold to foreign bodies, the Agriculture Ministry and the Israel Land Authority had no means to prevent the sale of private land to foreigners. (HAMODIYA 4 MAR 87)

"TASK FORCE": Michael Miller, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of N.Y., told a meeting of JCRC's Task Force on Missionaries and Cults that these groups are making a tremendous impact on Israelis. He cited the Mormon Church setting up headquarters in Jerusalem's French Hill, Evangelical Leader Jerry Falwell's plan to construct a shopping centre outside the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem, Christian evangelist Jim Bakker's desire to build a "Christian Theme Park" in East Jerusalem, and Christian Friends of Israel seeking to build a convention centre as their focus for mission. He also rejected the Christian Embassy's contention that it does not engage in mission, citing its links to the "Voice of Hope" Gospel program and "Project Kibbutz" for Christian volunteers who seek to convert Jews to Christianity.

Miller also stressed that Israelis do not enjoy a cult-free culture, noting that Scientology has made tremendous inroads on Israeli

society, especially in Beersheba where it is brainwashing Israeli children. Jewish institutions in the Diaspora are also being "infiltrated" by such missionary groups as the "Hebrew Christians." A leading Jewish educational institution in the Northeast had Hebrew Christians applying for admission to their Jewish studies program; and if the institution should reject them, they would risk losing government funding. (JERUSALEM TIMES/JEWISH PRESS 6 MAR 87)

"RATIONAL APPROACH TO BIBLE AND RELIGION": The Jerusalem Institute of Biblical Polemics presents "The Light of Reason", a public lecture series given by Shmuel Golding every Tuesday evening in our new centre. These lectures refute cult and missionary teachings, and repudiate bibliolatry. They present a rational approach to the Bible and religion. The audience is invited to participate in the debate that follows each lecture. Admission free.

Our Institute offers overseas students and tourists a four-week crash course on counselling psychology and techniques for refuting cults and missionary teachings. Diploma on completion. The moderate fee also covers students' notes. (Ad in IN JERUSALEM SUPPLEMENT, JLM POST 6 MAR 87)

AMERICANS PRO-GOD: Perhaps the U.S. invented pornography, perhaps she introduced sex boutiques to the world, but America believes in God and in the Church no less than any other country; maybe more. A survey published prominently in the paper U.S. TODAY reveals astonishing details about the religious leanings of Americans: 91% believe there is a God, 80% believe there is a Paradise, only 67% believe there is a Hell, 72% defined their chances of ending up in Paradise between good and excellent. Asked about what sex they thought the Creator of the world is, 91% were sure he is male, while 32% of the believers are certain that God speaks to them and directs their daily lives. (HADASHOT 19 DEC 86 Menahem Less)

THE MISSION IN THE DIASPORA:

CANADA: The Canadian director of JEWS FOR JESUS, who argued that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guaranteed his right to be on York University property to express his religious beliefs, has been found guilty of trespassing. In finding Steven Cohen guilty, Provincial Court Judge Mercer ruled in Toronto that he could find no evidence to support Cohen that York University is a public place under the terms of the Charter, and gave him a suspended sentence with probation for three months. In an interview outside the courtroom, Cohen said he was disappointed by the ruling and might appeal it. "This is a decision that speaks against freedom and the very nature of the university," he said. "The university should be a forum for the free exchange of ideas, even the unpopular idea that Jesus is Messiah ... Some people who oppose our beliefs feel that the Gospel should be silenced at York University, and that's why this action was brought." (THE GLOBE AND MAIL: Robert MacLeod 19 NOV 86)

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15 APRIL 1987/mb

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