

MESSIANIC RESERVIST PETITIONS HIGH COURT: A reservist in the Israeli Defence Force (IDF), in a petition to the High Court of Justice has charged that the anti-mission organization YAD L'AHIM had complained about him to the military authorities. This led to his removal from his unit without being given an opportunity to defend himself against charges that he engaged in missionary activities while on reserve duty.

The petitioner, Richard (Ari) Sorko-ram, represented by attorney Yosef Ben-Menashe, stated that he had immigrated to Israel from the U.S. eleven years ago, and had served in the IDF as a liason with overseas volunteers, which he claimed to have done successfully, winning commendation from his superiors. In September 1986 he received an order transferring him from his unit on grounds of surplus personnel. At the beginning of 1987 he learned that the transfer was based on the aforementioned allegations of missionary activity while on duty.

Sorko-ram admits that he is a member of the "sect of Messianic Jews", which is a stream of Judaism . . . that has strong links to the Land of Israel, its people and state, to Zionism and to service in the I.D.F. He further claims that he is a Jew by religion and a citizen of the State of Israel, with a Messianic belief; nevertheless, he opposes the conversion of Jews to Christianity and opposes missionary activity. He asserts that the YAD L'AHIM complaint about him was false, was inadequately checked, nor was his reaction to the complaint sought. Therefore, the transfer from his unit is contrary to the Israeli Declaration of Independence guaranteeing freedom of religion and conscience to Israeli citizens. He appeals to the High Court to instruct the Defence Ministry to reinstate him in his former unit. It was from the Defence Minister Rabin's response to a Parliamentary Question that Sorko-ram learned that he had been transferred for disseminating "messianic" doctrine. (Various Papers 14-17 MAY 87)

The Ultra-Orthodox daily HAMODIYA reported (17.5.87) that YAD L'AHIM was weighing the possibility of submitting a brief in reply to the charge that it had furnished the IDF false information about Sorko-ram. In its possession is a "Diary" written by him some four years ago which unfolds "his successes in the mission field." Sorko-ram has also filed a legal suit against the Ramat Hasharon Council Head Moshe Verbin for terming him a "missionary" during a council meeting. At the heart of his attorney's claims is his definition that the "Messianic Jews" (most of whom are apostates) are a stream of Judaism, and for this he seeks legal sanction.

Yoav Amiri of Tel-Aviv, in a letter to AL HAMISHMAR (26 MAY 87), asks: If it is true that the reservist was removed from his unit because he is a "missionary," why does the IDF have a double standard? Why are Ultra-Orthodox missionaries permitted to serve in the reserves? Why are the gates of army camps opened to religious (Orthodox Jewish) preachers like the Habad movement? If the IDF regards a religious mission as a disturbing factor, it must act against all forms of missionizing and not just against those the Ultra-Orthodox organization YAD L'AHIM makes a determination. To date we have learned that actual damage to the IDF comes from the Ultra-Orthodox missionizing, which has robbed it of pilots and hundreds of other essential military personnel. We have yet to hear of Christian missionizing causing similar damage, if at all.

"MESSIANIC JEWS PAY TAXES:" I was surprised to find my name appearing in the article "MISSION: SAY IT WITH FLOWERS" (KOL HAIFA 24 APR 87; See "SELECTIONS" No. 151, page 4 bottom "MISSION HAIFA"). I am sorry

that Messianic Jews are tagged as "Mission", an expression which conjures up a picture of soul snatchers, etc.

But who are the Messianic Jews? We are Jews and Israelis like all the other Jews and Israelis: We pay huge taxes, serve in the Defence Forces in all kinds of units, come from a variety of (Jewish) communities and countries, live in cities, settlement towns and elsewhere in Israel. As befits Jews, we believe in God and regard Him as the most basic principle of this world and therefore of our lives. Everything that is good and beautiful and lovely emanates from Him and is designed for His glory — and we also, as well as the entire people of Israel.

One other thing characterizes us is our belief in the Bible ("Tenach" — Old Testament) and the New Testament. This biblical faith, which began among the people of Israel, points to Yeshua of Nazareth, the Messiah of Israel. There are several thousands of Jews in Israel today who share this belief. Why must they be slandered? Yaakov Damkane

"JEWS FOR JESUS": While Israel's courts and politicians continue to ponder the problem of non-Orthodox converts to Judaism, another no less complex problem confronts the state and its institutions. It is that of "Messianic" Jews, who believe in Jesus but insist that they are still Jews. In two cases now before the High Court a couple from Zimbabwe, the Beresfords, claim that despite their belief in Jesus, they should have all the rights provided by the Law of Return; and an Israeli citizen Arye Sorko-ram, also a Messianic Jew, is demanding to be returned to his army reserve unit.

Attorney Yosef Ben-Menashe, representing both appellants, in an interview with the Jerusalem Post, said that he is not motivated by any particular sympathy with his clients' faith. "For me it is a question of whether we are to have a closed society or an open society. ... On the one hand, they try to exclude Reform converts because they are not halachically Jewish, and on the other, they try to throw out the Messianic Jews although they are halachically Jewish." (Note: "halachically" — according to Orthodox Jewish religious law. Transl.) Both the Beresfords and Sorko-ram say they have not been baptized or otherwise become Christians, and maintain that they are observant (in keeping the Jewish commandments).

Former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren takes a very different stand: "They are Christians in every way the minute they believe in Jesus — even if they don't officially join another faith." Another Orthodox Rabbi, David Rosen, former Chief Rabbi of Ireland and now Director of Religious Affairs for B'nai Brith Anti-Defamation League, represents the opposite viewpoint. "I think that in a democratic Jewish state people should be free to maintain their own religious beliefs. ... A person who was born Jewish and considers himself a Jew must be accepted as a Jew." Rabbi Uri Regev, a spokesman for Israeli Reform Judaism, stated: "On the one hand, you have theological confrontation, on the other freedom of religion," which is a dilemma that will have to be faced. (Haim Shapiro, 29.5.87; JERUSALEM POST)

EDITH STEIN BEATIFICATION (CONTINUED): (See SELECTIONS No. 151, p. 2 "Jewish Catholic Saint") Additional articles reacting to the beatification of the German-Jewish Catholic Holocaust victim Edith Stein appeared in the Orthodox and secular Hebrew-language press and in the German-language Israeli journal "Israel Nachrichten" during May 1987. The writers do not express any hostility towards Stein and tend to view her as a Jewish martyr, but use the occasion to blast the Church for its complicity with the Nazis, its failure to rescue Jews, and for the anti-Jewish trends in Christendom which they claim prepared the way for the Holocaust. The writer of an article in HATSOFEH (15 MAY 87), organ of the National Religious Party, concludes: "According to

Jewish religious law, she remained a Jew as she was born; and according to her words on the way to Auschwitz, she kept to the last moment a sense of identity with her (Jewish) origins."

"THE MISSION": TEL AVIV — Mission propagandists have raided the streets of Tel-Aviv distributing dangerous missionary material. The Tel-Aviv police were notified by YAD L'AHIM, who pointed out that this was a violation of public order. Most of the recipients of the literature threw it away when they discovered what it really was. (SHEARIM/ULTRA-ORTHODOX CAMP 6 MAY 87). A sharp protest was sent to Tel-Aviv Mayor Shlomo Lahat by the anti-mission society YAD L'AHIM for the patronage granted a destructive sect in the Yarkon Park, the E.M. (sic.). A happening was arranged last Sabbath under the aegis of the Deputy Mayor and holder of the Culture Portfolio, Nathan Wolloch. (YETAID/MODIYA 19/20 MAY 87)

MISSION: NETANYA — "The missionary David Loden is wont to draw people into Christianity by means of song and music," a man formerly involved with the Messianic sect of Loden in Neve Itamar near Netanya, told our correspondent. For several years activists of YAD L'AHIM in Netanya are trying to get the man to leave Israel, but to date their efforts have been unsuccessful. (YETAID 12 MAY 87) A performance of the missionary David Loden scheduled for Avihayil was canceled this week because of the pressures of YAD L'AHIM. They had requested permission for holding an anti-mission demonstration in front of the hall where the missionary leader of the Messianic sect was due to perform. The organizers then decided to cancel the event. (THIS WEEK IN NETANYA 8 MAY 87) Religious circles in Herzliya cried "scandal" at the efforts of Herzliya Mayor Eli Landau to prevent the cancelation of the Loden performance, overriding the agreement obtained from the hall owner. (See SELECTIONS 151, page 5 "MISSION HERZLIYA") (ULTRA-ORTHODOX CAMP 13.5.87)

In a two-page feature, the weekly supplement of YEDIOT AKHRONOT (KOL NETANYA/HADERA 15 MAY 87) described the varied activities of the local YAD L'AHIM branch (fighting intermarriage, sects, the Mission); an excerpt follows: They take credit for the liquidation of the missionary sects like "Messianic Jews" and "Jews for Jesus," with their next target being "Kehilat Asaf," a missionary body operating in the Neve Itamar neighbourhood, which engages in missionary and conversionist activity, mainly among needy families and unfortunates. To prove this, Rabbi Lachover pulls a check from his pocket in the amount of eighty shekels, which he claims is a payment towards the conversion of a family to Christianity. There is also the tale of a crippled young woman who was convinced that if she believed in Jesus she would be healed. ... They also work against sects like Scientology, Emin, EST and T.M., which they consider idolatry.

Commenting on the organization, M.K. Shulamit Aloni views their activities as illegal. "They are not an anti-mission group; they themselves are missionaries," she says. In her opinion everyone has the right to express themselves but not the right to persecute others for their beliefs or to gather information about them. Every mature and sane person has the right to marry and to live according to their personal views without being subject to undue pressures. She compares YAD L'AHIM activities to those of Houmeni in Iran.

PRAYER: Members of the Messianic sect in Netanya led by David Loden now interested in leaving the sect to return to Judaism have made contact with YAD L'AHIM, and reported a special "prayer" used by the sect. "In the name of that Man (Jesus), we appeal to You to cast out from us the evil and cruel enemy ... and prevent them from disrupting our meetings and prayers ... and save us from the cruel and evil enemy YAD L'AHIM, which is a messenger of Satan." The branch manager has submitted a criminal complaint to the police against Loden, and he

claims that he has evidence to implicate Loden for violating the law against conversion (by bribery). (YETAID 22 MAY 87)

"TRAITOR"? Your correspondent, Mr. J. Perlman, who writes on behalf of YAD L'AHIM (APR 16), uses the word "traitor" regarding a non-Jew living in Israel. Perhaps he should take a closer look at his own organization which has just issued a calendar for the (Hebrew) month of Iyar, and completely ignores (Israel) Independence Day on Iyar 5th, but instead reminds its readers that there is a fast on that day. To any self-respecting Israeli, this denial of the existence of Israel's independence constitutes a greater act of treason than that committed by a non-Jew, who has no real obligation of loyalty to this land. David Hamburger, Netanya (INTL JLM POST, Week ending 23 MAY 87)

MISSION: MOSCOW — Question: Is there a problem of missionary activity in the Soviet Union? Answer: I have met not a few people who try to persuade Jews to convert to Christianity. Inasmuch as many Jews have no Jewish background, there are cases where these missionaries receive Jews into the Christian fold; on the other hand, there is also a movement from Christianity to Judaism, with many converts. (From an interview with Yosef Begun, an Orthodox Jew recently released from prison in the USSR. EREV SHABAT 10 APR 87)

MISSION: JERUSALEM — The permanent committee (of the National Religious Party) will present to the next conference a detailed resolution against the activities of the Mission (from paragraph 8 of the N.R.P. ideological platform, meeting 30 APR 87, published in HATSOFEH 15 MAY 87) In a meeting between the Ultra-Orthodox Agudat Yisrael leaders and P.M. Shamir, M.K. Shapiro demanded that a committee be set up to work against the spread of the Mission. (HAMODIYA 2 JUN 87)

PROTESTANT ACRE CHURCH ARSON: At a meeting in the Acre Baptist Church attended by Moslem and Christian leaders and members of the City Council, it was decided to appeal to the Minister of Police to ask him to work for the apprehension of the arsonists responsible for the church fire. The arson itself was denounced sharply, which act did not contribute to good relations among the citizenry. It was also decided to set up a committee comprising members of the various communities in Acre and its environs which would work to establish a Jewish-Arab council for promoting tolerance and co-existence. (KAWL HATSAFON, Acre, 24 APR 87; See also SELECTIONS 151, page 1, "FIRE IN ACRE CHURCH")

STREET OF THE PROPHETS: ... The building of the Finnish Mission is surrounded by a very large yard. This splendid building was in the last century the residence of the Anglican Bishop in the city. The building rights to the Finnish Mission grounds have been obtained by an Ultra-Orthodox entrepreneur from England by name of Pollack who is going to have the Orthodox Jewish contractors "Mashav" build a six-storey structure of 70 flats. It will be built at a distance from the mission house and will not dwarf it. The architect has planned for a narrow green belt to remain around the old house. (From a feature article about Jerusalem's Prophets Street in "KAWL HA'IR", Jerusalem weekly)

NEVE SHALOM: "HAOLEM HAZEH" (8 APR 87) published a feature article about the Jewish-Arab "peace settlement" near Latrun, and about its founder, Fr. Bruno Hussar, a Dominican monk born to an assimilated Jewish family in Egypt, a man of four identities — Jewish, Catholic, Egyptian, Israeli — which led him to dream of bringing diverse peoples into closer contact. The settlement now has 13 families, eight Jewish and five Arab.

HALFWAY HOUSE FOR SCHIZOPHRENICS: A one-time Jerusalem inn for camel caravans will be the home of two dozen mental patients at the Kfar

Shaul government hospital in Jerusalem. The facility was made possible by members of the Dutch Reformed Church who organized a fund-raising campaign for Kfar Shaul a few years ago. Sixteen young Dutch volunteers are helping in renovation work. "We are helping out as an expression of our great solidarity with Israel," a Dutch leader of the group remarked at a dedication ceremony. Another churchman, Rev. T. van Weelie, said that his group solicited support from Christian friends of Israel worldwide, and volunteers from Ghana in Africa had promised to come to work at the hospital. (JLM POST 28 APR 87)

JESUS OR ANGELS? A painting on a public building near the entrance to Jerusalem, described by the artist as an angelic figure, reminded some Orthodox Jews of Jesus, the Christian Messiah. As a result of their insistent complaints, the figure was touched up to remove any imagined resemblance to "the Christian Messiah." (VARIOUS PAPERS 15 MAY 87)

JESUS QUIZ: Hundreds of officers and soldiers were shocked to hear one of the quiz participants asked at a decisive stage of the quiz about Jerusalem to identify the author of a statement, which turned out to be "that Man" (Jesus). The I.D.F. spokesman, questioned about the matter, replied: "The quiz was conducted in the framework of the 20th anniversary of the liberation of Jerusalem. As is well known, Jerusalem has many sites linked not only to the Jewish religion but to other religions, and therefore there were questions relating to other faiths." An astonishing reply for a 20th anniversary celebration of Jerusalem's unification, bringing in by the back door all that pertains to Christianity and its Founder. (EREV SHABAT 22 MAY 87)

THE BIBLE: The Tenach (Old Testament), the Book of Books of the people of Israel, was once again placed on the agenda of the people of Israel only with the beginning of free and enlightened modern Zionism. Before that, it was only a part of Jewish religious ritual alongside the vast talmudic literature which was so far removed from the original spirit of the Bible.

Indeed, for most of Orthodox Jewry by the end of the 19th century the Bible was not emphasized or taught the way Zionism began to teach it and educate by its light. ... As an example, until a few decades ago it was impossible to obtain a Hebrew Bible in original Hebrew letters without commentaries, except for the edition of Meir Halevi Letteres. He had proofread and published the Bible for the British Missionary Society. From the time of its publication in 1852 it was distributed in millions of copies and unending editions during the course of 106 years. Even I, in my childhood, first came to know the Bible through it, until the publication of the complete (Hebrew) Bible without commentaries in the 1953 Cassuto edition published in Jerusalem. (From a feature article in MAARIV 5 JUN 87 concerning Jewish sources)

"GENETIC CODES": Professor Dan Miller, in a feature article, derided attempts by Ultra-Orthodox Professor Branover to find a "genetic code" in the Torah proving its divine origin; also a Christian missionary society endeavour to find proofs in the Hebrew Bible of the Messiahship of Jesus, and various numerical computerized "games" allegedly proving the divine origin of the Bible. "The simple fact is that the rules of the game were fixed by man himself, who is preaching faith!" he writes. (MAARIV 6 APR 87)

CHRISTIAN TOUR LEADERS: The Pilgrimage Promotion Division of the Ministry of Tourism has published a handbook for leaders and organizers of Christian tours and pilgrimages to the Holy Land. The 114-page reference book provides nine suggested itineraries for Catholic, Protestant and interfaith groups, and is available from the Ministry of Tourism, P.O.B. 1018, Jerusalem 91009 Israel, or from any Israel Government Tourist Office abroad. (CHRISTIAN LIFE IN ISRAEL, No. 23, page 4)

DIASPORA MISSION: USA -- The Reform movement has decided to do battle against the missionary movement called JEWS FOR JESUS. This movement has in recent years succeeded, thanks to the charismatic leadership of Moshe Rosen, to penetrate campuses and recruit young Jews, by demonstrating expertise in propaganda. The Reform movement has decided to integrate into the Jewish struggle against the attempts of JFJ to infiltrate the camp of American Jewish youth by subversion. This was revealed in the recent issue of the Reform organ, "DAVAR B'EETO" ("KEEPING POSTED"), whose editor is Aron Hirt-Mannheimer.

In an article entitled "YOU ARE THE TARGET," the leader of the Reform movement campaign against missionaries and sects, Annette Daus, describes the infiltration methods of JFJ into schools, colleges, social clubs, and their deceitfulness in using Hebrew. One of the participants in the periodical is Robin Shenker, 26, who was a missionary member in college who has returned to her people. (OUR ISRAEL, NYC 1 MAY 87: PHOTOGRAPH OF MISSIONARY "SEDER" OF THE HEBREW CHRISTIANS AS IT APPEARED IN REFORM PERIODICAL)

The Assemblies of God ministries have begun an aggressive outreach program in the Brighton Beach area of Brooklyn in an attempt to lure susceptible Russian Jews into joining their ranks, according to Julilus Berman, chairman of the task force on missionaries and cults of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York. The task force has located two Assemblies of God "synagogues" in the Brighton Beach vicinity offering services to the Jewish community in education, summer camp for children, English language instruction, children's day care all at nominal fees or free. The director of the task force, Dr. Philip Abramowitz, stated: "The Jewish community must respond by providing the Russian community in Brighton Beach with much needed services. It would be a shame if the thousands of Russian Jews who came to escape religious persecution were lost to conversion and assimilation."

INTERFAITH CONFERENCE: The Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington issued a statement condemning efforts at religious conversion which are deceptive or deny the legitimacy of another religion. The conference is made up of 29 Islamic, Jewish, Mormon, Protestant and Roman Catholic "faith communities" in Washington and the surrounding Maryland and Virginia suburbs. The statement stressed support of "the right of all religions to share their message" with people of other religions, "but it is inappropriate for one faith group to openly demean or disparage the philosophies or practices of another faith group as part of its proselytizing."

The statement listed practices used by such groups as Hebrew Christians, Messianic Jews and Jews for Jesus, which "specifically target Jews for conversion to their versions of Christianity" as a fulfillment of their Jewishness. (JERUSALEM TIMES/JEWISH PRESS Jerusalem/NYC 24 APR 87)

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