

SUSPECT ARRESTED IN JERUSALEM CHURCH FIRES: An 18-year-old activist in the "Kach" movement (led by the extremist Rabbi Meir Kahana) has been arrested as a suspect for terrorist acts and destruction of property. The youth, who is cooperating with the police, has re-enacted most of the crimes, which include arson at the Anglican Church in Jerusalem on Shivtei Yisrael, puncturing the tires of Arab-owned vehicles, and causing serious damage to the vehicle of the PEACE NOW spokesman, Dr. Amiram Goldblum. While the investigators from the special national police unit for investigating serious crimes, in cooperation with the Defence authorities, believe he acted alone, they are investigating the possibility that he received "intelligence assistance" from headquarter activists in the "Kach" movement, relating to Arabs, Christians and left-wing Israelis. (MAARIV 16.3.83 - See SELECTIONS Nos. 153, 159, page 1)

MESSIANIC JEWS IN ISRAEL: The Israeli weekly "KOTERET ROSHEET" ("Headline") published (2 MAR 83) a four-page feature article by Ilat Negev with photos of three Israeli Messianic Jews - Jonathan Goldberg, Yaakov Damkane, Dror Lahat - under the heading "The Boys Talk About Jesus" (a reference to a Hebrew play by that name some years ago TRANSL.). and subheaded: "The Gospel According to the Messianic Jews." Excerpts follow:

At No. 19 Yefet Street in Jaffa in the courtyard one can have an Israeli experience of another kind. "You can publish the number," says the owner; "those who attack us already know it." The name Yaakov Damkane is written in blue ink over the bell, but no need to ring; the door is wide open ... even for "a passerby who might not have a place to lodge in." With his dark curly beard and dark eyes, Damkane resembles one of the apostles in a Byzantine mosaic, and one can easily imagine him sitting around a table in a long robe with twelve companions.

Damkane is 35, born in Tiberias into a traditional Jewish family of Persian immigrants, who at 16 rebelled against society, went down to Eilat, joined the "hippie" movement, and at 18 was rejected by the I.D.F. for military service. He became an iron-worker in the construction industry, but sometime later emigrated to the U.S.A., operated a felaffel stand in New York and then a souvenir shop in New Jersey, and was financially and socially a success.

One day a Hebrew-speaking Gentile entered his shop, and noticing a Hebrew Bible on the counter asked him if he believed in Yeshua. Damkane was shocked at the suggestion that a Jew could believe in Jesus, recalling Jewish suffering at the hands of Christians. The man persisted, explaining that that kind of Christianity and Jesus had nothing in common. He opened the Hebrew Bible and pointed to Isaiah 53 and the book of Daniel (and Damkane rereads the texts in Hebrew). This was like a bolt of lightning. "Everyone who comes to faith has arrived at an understanding that before God he is a sinner and nothing can justify him; neither Sabbath candles nor Hebrew New Year rituals, he comments. "When he accepts that Jesus atoned for our sins by his blood, then his iniquities are forgiven him and he is born anew."

He describes the change in his lifestyle, which had once been focused on women and money, and how he understood that the New Testament was a book written by the Jewish people; it was not Christianity but Judaism only. "I devoured it and it revived me," he recalls. "I thought I was the only Jew in the world who had fallen in love with Yeshua." He closed his business and toured America, meeting believers, Gentiles who passionately loved Israel, and as a result he realized that his

place was in Israel among his people. "If it were not for Yeshua, I would never have returned," he says.

DROR LAHAT: At 38, with a reddish beard and ascetic face, Dror Lahat is the product of a totally secularist background. In the IDF he served as a gunner with rank of sergeant, and afterward began a career as pop singer in the early 1970's. Dissatisfied with his attainments, he began to search for spiritual values, from anthroposophy to rabbinic literature, spending four months in Yeshivat Or Samayach (for "penitents"), but was greatly disappointed, although clinging to an Orthodox Jewish lifestyle for about a year.

In 1979 he moved to India, exploring Hinduism for 2 1/2 years, but one day felt a sense of solidarity with Jesus at the sight of a crucifix; and when some time later he met several young Indian Christians who pointed out to him Messianic texts in the Hebrew Bible, he was convinced to believe in Jesus. In 1982 he returned to Jerusalem, where he passed a Bible shop and learned about many Jewish believers like himself, and was referred to a congregation in Tel-Aviv. Both he and Damkane belong to the Imanuel House Congregation, which only this year was reinforced by 20 new members.

JONATHAN GOLDBERG: Raised in a Messianic Jewish family, Jonathan recalls that until recently they lived almost an underground existence. The family emigrated to Israel from the U.S. 22 years ago when he was a two-year-old baby. "We suffered much harassment because we never concealed our faith," he recalls. "One Sabbath morning, when a number of families had gathered in our home to read Scripture, some 200 Orthodox Jews surrounded the house, several dozen breaking into the house. Most of the believers in the house were Israelis who serve in the IDF, so they got the youngsters out of the way and drove the intruders out."

They accept persecution as part of the "package deal" of their faith. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," they quote Yeshua, a well-known victim of persecution in his day. Damkane also recalls the time when the congregation to which he once belonged in Rehovot, "Grace & Truth," was invaded by young Orthodox Jews and their rabbi, and only the police could remove the zealots from the premises. Aharon Kornfeld, spokesman for the Ultra-Orthodox "Yad L'Ahim," denies that any of them have done violence to the believers. "We have much more sophisticated methods, such as planting our people in their congregations in order to know ahead of time of their activities," he says.

WITH JESUS IN THE RESERVES: They are insulted at the suggestion that they are "apostates," but regard themselves as true Jews who have found forgiveness of sin and new life, with the promise of life everlasting in the future. Neither do they see the concept of mission in a negative light. "The entire people of Israel should be missionaries; for this we were chosen," says Damkane. Goldberg adds: "We go out on the street and proclaim the Gospel. We don't brainwash anyone, but simply declare what we have to offer to seekers."

Lahat comments: "This is one of the commandments of Yeshua, to declare to everyone, Jew or Gentile, about the hope of life everlasting. In a month I am on reserve duty in Samaria. It would be difficult for me not to speak of my faith. During my last reserve stint, I was on guard duty for a month with one soldier. It would have been cruel if I had remained silent and not shown him the way."

Goldberg remarks: "I fought in Lebanon. There were difficult times, but I felt that Yeshua was with me. It made me a better soldier and more ethical, but I got myself out of an officers' training course, because I didn't have enough confidence about it."

Kornfeld of YAD L'AHIM doesn't favour removing "Messianics" from the Reserves, but they should be treated the same way as the "penitents" movement, not permitted to preach. "We see them as a group that tries to wrap their missionary character in a colourful attractive wrapper, but it is only Christianity in disguise, bringing in Jesus by the back door, in order to bring about the spiritual destruction of the Jewish people. Even if by Jewish religious law they are Jews, they are guilty of a grave religious transgression in receiving Jesus."

Dankane responds: "We aren't greatly concerned about the two recent appeals to the High Court (See SELECTIONS 160, page 1) involving Messianic Jews (about immigration rights and reserve duty - Beresford and Sorko-ram). I pity these Orthodox Jews because they are in absolute darkness. I was born Jewish and follow the God of Israel. The Orthodox Jews didn't give me my Jewishness and they can't take it from me." (End Excerpts)

HEBREW CHRISTIANS: Julius Bernman, Chairman, Task Force on Missionaries and Cults of the Jewish Community Relations Council of N.Y. (JCRC), in a letter to the JERUSALEM POST (2 MAR 88) related to the case of Jerry and Shirley Beresford who are seeking new immigrant rights under the Law of Return: "The Dahaf poll showing that 78% of Israelis are willing to accept them as Jews raises a question whether or not the community is prepared for the challenge; obviously most Israelis do not understand who these people are. The world-wide fundamentalist Christian movement believes that the year 2000 will mark the coming of Christ. Salvation, according to the New Testament, is possible only after 12,000 Jews from each tribe have accepted Christ ... Individuals claiming to be Jews while believing in Christ are not Jews ... The Jewish communities of the West recognize these Hebrew Christian groups for what they are. Is the Israeli Jewish community willing to accept the responsibility of granting such legitimacy?"

In response, Menahem Benhayim, Israel Secretary, International Association of Messianic Jews, called the letter a "striking example of confusing facts with a scare slogan like fundamentalist. Chairman Berman is obviously upset by the results of the Dahaf poll ... The High Court, in every case of this type, has conceded that, according to halacha (Jewish religious law), one born to a Jewish mother always remains a Jew, but the Law of Return is a secular act. Most Messianic Jews have long known through personal experience that the average Israeli Jew is willing to accept them or Hebrew Christians alongside Jewish atheists, Orthodox and Reform Jews and secularists. In the Beresford case the court is being asked to come to terms with modern Jewish pluralism as it exists in Israel and the Diaspora." (JERUSALEM POST; 13 MAR 88)

BERESFORD & SORKO-RAM: In a feature article 1-1/2 pages long, the leftwing daily AL HAMISHMAR related the story of the Beresfords and their appeal to the High Court for new immigrant rights, as well as the petition of Sorko-ram for restoration of his Reserve status (See SELECTIONS 160, page 1). The Beresfords stress that they are basically different from JEWS FOR JESUS, who are a Christian group, while they see Messianic Jews as another stream within Judaism. (19 FEB 88)

"THE MISSION"

POSTMEN REFUSE TO DISTRIBUTE: The Ultra-Orthodox organization YAD L'AHIM has launched a "fight-to-the-finish" war against missionary literature being distributed to private homes by means of the Israeli postal service. The organization spokesman reported that they have sent postal workers copies of a postal order which states that anyone sending a book or other printed matter which is offensive, defamatory or seditious is in criminal violation of the law. The spokesman claims that dozens of postal workers have announced that they will not deliver missionary materials but return them to senders. (MAARIV

10 MAR 88) The HATSOFEH correspondent (10 MAR 88) adds that recently there has been a wave of missionary envelopes from various countries, including the U.S., Germany, Switzerland, France as well as from within Israel. The same story appeared in other Jewish religious newspapers with a quotation from government regulations about handling objectionable mail.

Thousands of families all over Israel have received unsolicited missionary material from an unknown source. Due to the recent letter-bomb scare, the envelopes having no return address or postmark have aroused suspicion and many recipients called the police before opening them. On opening them, one discovers a copy of a 93-page book titled TWO MEN FROM EDEN written in literary Hebrew without Christian symbols as it slyly tries to present the appearance of Christianity as a gradual development from Judaism. It is only on p. 33 that Jesus is at last introduced by name. (JERUSALEM TIMES 11 MAR 88) Two other Orthodox periodicals carried stories about the book and the fear caused by suspicion of letter bombs.

MISSIONARIES CELEBRATE: A special staff has been set up by the anti-mission activists to cope with the expected arrival of some 4,000 "tourist-missionaries" for the celebration of Israel's 40th anniversary as a state. Over a thousand of them are to take part in the Christian Zionist Congress under the auspices of the International Christian Embassy. Senior government officials are expected to take part, and pressure is being exerted to discourage them from granting any official blessing to the congress.

The apostate Moshe Rosen who heads the U.S. mission movement is planning to bring over 1,000 "Gospel promoters" to tour Israel. In addition, the "Messianic Jews" are to bring tourists under the name of "Shavuot 1988" (Pentecost 1988), and participants have been promised rooms in the Hotel Diplomat in Jerusalem and in Tel-Aviv. Their escorts on tours will be the missionary couple Ari and Shira Sorko-ram who head the messianic congregation "Maoz" in Ramat Hasharon. YAD L'AHIM has appealed to the Hotel Association to separate the missionary guests from other guests. At the same time, they are recruiting volunteers to provide a "suitable welcome" to the uninvited provocateurs wherever they visit. (Yetaid Neeman 18 FEB 88; HAMODIYA 21 FEB 88) Representatives of the Ultra-Orthodox party Agudat Yisrael have submitted a parliamentary query to the Prime Minister about the missionaries, the Christian Zionist Congress and the Messianic congregations. What is being done to counteract these activities? (HAMODIYA 24 FEB 88)

"PURIMSPIEL": The Ultra-Orthodox weekly EREV SHABAT published on the Purim weekend photographs of five "Gospel promoters" who pose as Orthodox Jews (Simha Perlmutter of Ir Ovot, Ari Sorko-ram of "Maoz," Allen Douglas and Shlomo Hizak of Jerusalem, and Arye Amit (really Steve Smith) of Moshav Aminadav) with appropriate acid comments. Also displayed was a sampling of Jewish-style missionary graphics. (4 MAR 88)

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND THE MISSION: In an emotional opinion article, Shmuel Schnitzer of MAARIV (19 FEB 88) reacted to a full-page 3,000-word advertisement by the "Institute for Research of the Everlasting People" about the fateful error caused by ignoring the Messiah Yeshua. Responding to angry phone calls from readers over the publication of the advertisement, Schnitzer agrees that such propaganda for Christianity in 1988 has no place in any Jewish paper. Although he favours complete freedom of speech and idea exchange in other areas, the history of the Jewish-Christian encounter, with rivers of blood shed by the church and its agents and Jewish martyrdom, prevents any such exchange in this case. "There are millions of good and convincing reasons for the instinctive revulsion of many Jews to missionary

activity," since all the answers to Christian claims have been made down through the centuries, he argues. "We have nothing more to say to our own Christian sectarians, and we doubt that they have anything more to say to us," he concludes. "In the face of Jewish stiff-neckedness they remain as impotent as their predecessors."

M. Naftali, in the Ultra-Orthodox weekly YETAID NEEMAN (24 FEB 88) summarizes the Schnitzer article and then calls on MAARIV to make a thorough house-cleaning to find out how it could be possible to publish such a spiritually destructive advertisement. Schnitzer should also consider how much secularism has contributed to the ignorance and vulnerability of Israeli Jewish youth to Messianic and other sects.

Arye Malinyak, in MAARIV (29 FEB 88), writes sarcastically about "Ultra-Orthodox Jewish 'missionaries' who are trying to convert us all to their brand of Judaism." He suggests that we all "convert" and put them out of work, and then see to it that they stay in their yeshivas (seminaries) keeping the commandments, and leaving us alone.

GENTILE MISSIONS: Three separate articles appeared in the Hebrew press giving a sympathetic appraisal of Gentile Christian missionaries among Arabs in Ramallah and elsewhere (KAWL HA'IR 19 FEB 88), St. Joseph's hospital in East Jerusalem for the incurable which has received a prize from the Knesset for its work (JERUSALEM SUPPLEMENT YEDIOT AKHRONOT 19 FEB 88), and about Bolivian-based missionaries working among primitive tribespeople (14 DEC 88), and the contact Israelis have had with these "idealistic missionaries, motivated by religious faith and humane principles."

JEWS AND CHRISTIANS

M.E.C.C.: The Middle East Council of Churches has launched a prayer and fasting appeal for peace in the Israel-occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza. Most Orthodox, Coptic, Protestant churches in the Eastern Mediterranean to Persian Gulf countries belong to the MECC, with headquarters in Limassol, Cyprus. The WCC, which has close links to the MECC, has appealed for an international conference for solution of the Israel-Arab conflict with representatives from Israel, the PLO, Arab states and the UN Security Council attending. Churches were urged to monitor human rights violations in the territories and to work for a dialogue between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples aimed at mutual recognition. (IDEA No. 1/2/88, p. 10)

FOOTBALLER "DECIDES" IN ISRAEL: The English soccer star Glenn Hoddle told the Trans-World Radio (TWR) European director that he was influenced to take a closer look at Christian faith by English pop star Cliff Richards, and decided to "get serious" about it when he toured Israel in 1986 with his former club. He is getting involved with Christian radio in Monaco, where he also plays football. (IDEA p. 16)

ARAB CHRISTIAN WARNS OF LAND OBSESSION: "If the State of Israel clings to its obsession over land, it will only bring destruction upon itself and all the people with it," according to Dr. Naeem Ateek, spiritual leader of the Arabic-speaking congregation at St. George's Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem. His blunt remarks, made in the context of a theological interpretation of the 40 years of Israel's existence (for the Ecumenical Research Fraternity dedicated to Christian-Jewish dialogue) disturbed many in the audience.

For him the events of 1948, with the "uprooting, dehumanization and repression" of the Palestinians, ranked with events such as the Holocaust and the life of Jesus. "God's unfailing demand for justice for all people everywhere ... and an unconditional stand with the marginal and poor" were theological principles to be stressed, as well as the concept that "God has no favourite people or nation."

He also spoke of "the deep-seated hatred of Christianity under the surface in Israeli society," and that it was necessary to dispel the myths and misconceptions that most Jews have about Jesus. The State of Israel, which has been obsessed with power, has not solved the two major problems of Judaism — assimilation and antisemitism, he assented. "Theologically speaking, what is at stake in the conflict over the West Bank and Gaza is the nature of God." (BYLINE Haim Shapiro, JERUSALEM POST 1 MAR 88)

In response to the article, Clarence Wagner and Mrs. Douglas Young of "BRIDGES FOR PEACE" wrote in a letter published 3 MAR 88 that "as Christians living in Israel we found the remarks of Dr. Ateek most disturbing," and it was "outrageous" to put the blame for the tragedy and problems of Palestinians solely on Israel. Arab "intransigence" and the refusal of Arab nations to accept the existence of Israel are factors, too. Vilifying the State of Israel and the national aspirations of the Jews resembles the "scapegoating scenarios from Christian leaders for 1900 years." This plays into the hands of extremists and does a "disservice" to Dr. Ateek's congregants, by leading them into confrontation rather than reconciliation. "We take exception to this negative expression of Christianity," they conclude.

HISTORICAL ERROR? In an unusual series of lectures, which has already been attacked by Ultra-Orthodox Jews as "absolute heresy," Avraham Burg of the "Open Seminary" has undertaken to examine fateful decisions in Jewish history. Topics will include the Great Revolt (AD 66-70) against Rome, the rejection of primitive Christianity, and the mass suicide of the beleaguered Jewish militants at Massada (AD 73). While Burg is convinced that the Great Revolt was a hopeless cause, it did have positive after-effects, such as the removal of the focus in Judaism on animal sacrifice to more "spiritual creativity." Burg has no answer, however, to the question of whether or not the Nazarenes should have been excluded from Judaism. (KAWL HA IR 11 MAR 88)

INTERMARRIAGE TODAY: LOVE & TRADITION: Marriage Between Jews and Christians by Egon Mayer, Schocken Books, N.Y., was reviewed in the JLM POST (Int'l Edition 19 MAR 88). The book is based on interviews with 450 intermarried couples and responses to a questionnaire from 117 of their adolescent and adult children in the U.S., under the sponsorship of the American Jewish Committee.

BACH PASSION IN JERUSALEM: The Ultra-Orthodox HAMODIYA (2 MAR 88) reported that the Dormition Church on Mt. Zion, Jerusalem, is producing the famous "antisemitic" Passion play of Bach in the framework of the Israel Festival, with a German choir of about 80 singers, soloists, children's chorus, orchestra and organ. There are demands that this "antisemitic" production be cancelled. "This exposes the true face of the Christian colony in the Holy Land," the writer concludes.

BIBLE VALLEY PROJECT PROPOSED: If the Jerusalem Foundation has its way, a five-kilometre stretch of the Hinnom and Kidron Valleys will be converted into a "Bible Valley," combining historical sites with tourist facilities in a giant, open-air, on-site museum. (IN JERUSALEM 11 MAR 88)

END TRANSCRIPT
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