

MESSIANIC JEWS IN COURT: The High Court of Justice heard Tel-Aviv attorney Yosef Ben-Menashe attempt to convince it that Messianic Jews who believe in Jesus, but have not joined a church, are not converts. The hearing concerned the petition of two Messianic Jews, the Beresfords from Zimbabwe, to be recognized as new immigrants under the Israeli Law of Return. The attorney argued that they were similar to 1st century Jewish followers of Jesus, or like modern Jews (Martin Buber and Joseph Klausner) who have expressed appreciation of Jesus. Justice Elon, however, indicated that in his view belief in Jesus as Messiah was a drastic divergence from Judaism. The hearing did not conclude the case. (JERUSALEM POST 20 MAY 88)

SHAVUOT '88: INTERNATIONAL MESSIANIC JEWISH CONFERENCE IN JERUSALEM: A group of some 400 members of Messianic Jewish congregations from the U.S. is arriving in Israel. A high state of alert has been declared at YAD L'AHIM (the anti-Messianic Ultra-Orthodox society), with dozens of volunteers recruited to "escort" the Messianics and prevent them from engaging in missionary activity. The Messianics plan to hold a conference in Jerusalem, tour in Galilee, and meet with Messianic Jewish groups in Israel, including "Grace & Truth" in Rehovot, "Sorko-Ram" of Ramat Hasharon, and David Loden's congregation from Netanya. YAD L'AHIM claims that by means of advance announcements in the U.S. Jewish press, they succeeded in reducing the number of Messianics coming from 4,000 to 400. (YEDIOT AHRONOT 18 MAY 88)

About 100 orthodox Jewish seminarians and YAD L'AHIM activists held a protest demonstration at Ben Gurion airport upon the arrival of some 500 Messianic Jews for the SHAVUOT (Hebrew Pentecost) '88 conference taking place at the Diplomat Hotel in Jerusalem. "Leave us alone," the anti-Messianics screamed. Six of them were taken into custody by border guards, but later released. Meanwhile, they distributed leaflets to the Messianics urging them to refrain from missionary activity, but the propaganda was confiscated by the authorities. (YEDIOT AHRONOT 19 MAY 88)

The Messianics feel at home in Israel while they labour to bring Jews over to faith in "that Man" (Jesus), persuading naive Jews that they can retain a Jewish lifestyle without apostasizing through baptism into Christianity while believing in the Nazarene. They brag of their support for the "State of Israel" and of the freedom of religious expression they can enjoy in Israel — as simple as that. What a scandal, what a shame! (HAMODIYA 20 MAY 88)

The Mormon university in Jerusalem has breathed new hope among the missionaries. Last week we were witness to a large group of missionaries arriving under the name of "Messianic Jews." In Israel a group of them has been trying to spread their influence, especially among the weaker elements in Tel-Aviv and surroundings. They distribute their propaganda during the holidays in such ways that unsuspecting Jews think it is Jewish propaganda. If the State of Israel shrinks from doing battle against the missionaries, let her enable groups like YAD L'AHIM engage them. Israel is not a no-man's land open to everybody from abroad or from within to do as they like. (SHEARIM 25 MAY 88)

In interviews given by spokesmen for the Messianics, the following excerpts are reported: "Yeshua means salvation," says Ari Sorko-Ram of Ramat Hasharon, a Messianic leader. "We have nothing against the Oral Law; but if there is a conflict between it and the written Torah, we accept the Torah, which are the words of the Living God."

doned their military careers following exposure to the Ultra-Orthodox penitents movement. (HATSOFEH 9 JUN 88)

BOOK FAIR MANAGER: OPEN TO ALL ... EXCEPT MISSIONARIES: The annual Hebrew book fair will not include any booth for missionaries, Arye Friedler, General Manager of the Publishers Association announced in an interview published in YEDIOT AKHRONOT (27 MAY 88). "This year the missionaries have not tried, and that's good; and even if they do, registration is already closed, so there won't be any problem. Except for them, we're open to all streams and varieties, as long as it doesn't undermine the Jewish people and Israel," he explains. "Last year a missionary publisher wanted to take a booth during Hebrew Book Week, but we didn't give them one. It was quite difficult to prevent them, but how can we, as Jews, allow the Mission to operate? Fortunately, they really came at the end when registration was closed, so it was no problem to refuse them."

RAMAT HASHARON: In Ramat Hasharon there are no religious members in the Council. The Mission operates openly and provocatively. When Council Head Moshe Verbin tried to take on the Mission, he got nice words but no real support from religious groups, even from YAD L'AHIM. "The Mission is still here and it is active and vile," Verbin says. "I am in no small way an infidel, but even I have limits. I tried to act, but when I asked for political backing from religious representatives, I didn't get any; they acted cynically." (THE ULTRA-ORTHODOX CAMP 18 MAY 88)

JEWISH QUARTER: Residents of the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem have appealed to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and to the Jewish Quarter Restoration Company to remove two nuns who live on 12 Hanevel Street in the Quarter. The nuns work in hospitals and each morning attend Christ Church. Several months ago Mr. Daniel Rossing of the Christian Communities Division in the Religious Affairs Ministry submitted a report about this church, which acts as a large and dangerous centre for mission activity, including Jews who have converted to Christianity, as well as Arab Muslims who have converted to Christianity.

Recently the missionary institution was rebuked for displaying a large-print sign whose aim was to lure innocent Jewish passersby on their way to the Western Wall. One Sabbath a pair of missionaries tried three times to trap souls at the Wall although they were cast out each time. (A photo of a memorandum by Daniel Rossing to Dr. Dana of the Religious Affairs Ministry was reproduced. In it Rossing describes briefly the nature of I.T.A.C. (Israel Trust Anglican Church) and its link to Christian Mission to the Jews, and his effort to persuade the responsible clergyman at Christ Church to change the wording of a sign which was offensive to Jewish passersby.) (YETAID NE'EMAN 27 MAY 88)

"TWO MEN FROM EDEN": Schalom Ben-Chorin, in the German-language ISRAEL NACHRICHTEN, analyzed the reactions to the mass mailing of a Hebrew translation of the book under this title and finds them faulty. There were those who angrily discarded their copies at once instead of first browsing through it and learning something of another religion. It would be well if Israeli schools taught the New Testament and the Koran as well.

The burning of books, as YAD L'AHIM recommended, is a barbaric response and even sacrilege when it relates to the sacred beliefs of others. What is needed is civilized discourse among practitioners of different beliefs. Our Jewish youth also require more grounding in concepts which are shared by Jews and Christians (salvation, revelation, resurrection, sin and atonement) but so differently interpreted. They would be much less vulnerable to missionary propaganda and open

to dialogue if they were given a systematic overview of Judaism. (3 JUN 88)

In a letter to IN JERUSALEM (27 MAY 88) Douglas Ben-Shimon, "writing as a Christian," asks about the "almost panic reaction of YAD L'AHIM to this misguided missionary effort." They could have reminded Jews of their own Torah, pointed to the many biblical passages quoted incompletely, made a reasoned reply. Jews and Judaism have withstood almost 2,000 years of church evangelism.

NETANYA: A two-page interview with Rabbis Moshe Lachover and Eliezer Sorozkin of YAD L'AHIM in Netanya was carried by SHEARIM (25 MAY 88). The rabbis report that the Netanya branch was opened following their discovery of a "subtle and dangerous Baptist clergyman" who had converted a large number of families and singles and was planning to build a Baptist church in town. Eventually, the clergyman disappeared and his unfortunate victims were restored to Judaism with their families.

They have also neutralized or eliminated other "Christian" sects such as the Eman, and "the fanatic" Hare Krishna. TM is even more dangerous because they don't represent themselves as a Christian sect, like the others. Asked about the professional guidance YAD L'AHIM/NETANYA receives, they replied: "It may seem arrogant to say this, but in the fields in which we engage we are the most professional. Indeed, many come to us for information and guidance."

COMPARATIVE RELIGION: CORRECTION PLEASE! Haim Bar-Am of the Jerusalem weekly KAWL HA'IR (10 JUN 88) apologized to Prof. Yosef Ben-Shlomo for a column published on 6 May 88 (See SELECTIONS 163, page 5 bottom) in which he attacked the professor for "joining the ranks of aggressive Jewish chauvinism" by allegedly stating that "Judaism is the religion of life while Christianity idolizes death." Actually, he had stated that it was the Egyptians ("Hamitzrim") who idolized death in antiquity, but the columnist had thought he said the Christians ("Ha-notzrim") idolized death.

PALESTINIAN LUTHERAN LEADER COMPLAINS: The vice-president of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Aida Haddad of Jerusalem has expressed pessimism about tensions in the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians were beginning to lose hope of an independent state, she said ... because of the "continued repression of the Palestinian people." Palestine and Israel should be able to live together in the region, she stated, "based on human rights and justice." Married to the former Evangelical Lutheran Bishop in Jordan, Daoud Haddad, she heads the library at Birzeit University in the West Bank. She also expressed her sorrow at the plight of Arab mothers whose children had died or been injured by Israeli soldiers. (IDEA 25 MAY 88, p. 15)

EVANGELICALS & ISRAEL: The vice-president of the German-Israeli society, conservative M.P. Gerster, lamented the fact that Israel was "pitilessly criticized," and called on Arab states to recognize Israel's right to exist within secure borders, while Israel should show good will by negotiating. Meanwhile, Evangelical publisher Friedrich Haenssler of Stuttgart said that Evangelicals want to show with their books that they "remain friends of Israel also in critical days." (IDEA, p. 3-4)

LAND SALE: M.K. Rabbi Joseph Shapiro has demanded of the Knesset Speaker that an urgent motion be placed on the agenda concerning the leasing of one-third of moshav (cooperative settlements) land to Arabs. This represents a danger to Jewish ownership of state land, whether it involves Arabs, foreigners or missionaries, he said. (HAMODIYA 31 MAY 83)

The German fundamentalist Beth-El religious community in Zichron Ya'acov has again begun purchase of land, community leader Else Berger told the JERUSALEM POST (29 MAY 88). One of the largest landowners in the region, Beth-El suspended purchases for four years at the death of its founder, Emma Berger. Suspected missionaries, they faced much opposition, but have now been accepted by local Jewish residents, and recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of their first settlement. With a resident staff of 80-100 members and more than 40 children who speak fluent Hebrew, they are joined each month by 50-70 pilgrims from South Germany who work on the factories and farms of the community. Ironically, their best customers for their vegetable produce are the Ultra-Orthodox who once strongly opposed them.

"WHO IS A MESSIANIC JEW?" - A LETTER FROM A STUDENT: Da'im Aziz, a student of pharmaceutical chemistry at Hadassa of the Jerusalem Hebrew University, in a letter to the student journal "PI HAATON" (JUNE 1988), relates to an article by Dr. Ariel in the journal (No. 7) about Messianic Jews. Aziz protests the linkage of the Messianic Jews to 19th century Anglican Protestant activity while Dr. Ariel ignores "the historical fact that all the first disciples of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah were Jews," as were the first 5,000 Messianic believers reported in the Book of Acts. The fact that in the 19th century Messianic Jews were strong enough to re-organize as Jews within the worldwide Messianic movement only reinforces it.

The student was also disturbed that a lecturer who knows well the distinction between "Yeshua" and "Yeshu" (the latter having negative connotations of the Hebrew name of Jesus) would persist in using the name "Yeshu," especially in view of his being a lecturer on religious subjects and the Reformation. Messianic Jews and Messianic Christians regard Jesus as the Messiah, as more than an ordinary man, one whose name they believe will endure forever, who was born, died and was raised from the dead for the salvation of every believer, Jew or Gentile.

CHRISTIAN ARABS: An anonymous Christian Arab told reporter Ben-David ("JERUSALEM'S CHRISTIAN ARABS CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE," 4 MAR 88) that in a Palestinian state under the influence of Islamic fundamentalism, "I am afraid the Christian Arabs will have the same position that all Palestinians have now under Israeli rule." Reader Joseph Lerner responded (18 MAR 88): "They are more likely to find themselves drastically disadvantaged, as already indicated by the concern that some Moslem shop owners on strike get money from Arab countries while Christian Arabs get nothing."

END TRANSCRIPT
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