

"WHO IS THE SACRIFICE?" Under this heading, a full-page paid notice was published in the afternoon Hebrew-language daily YEDIOT AKHRONOT on the eve of the Sabbath of Penitence preceding Yom Kippur (16 SEP 88). (With slight changes, the notice appeared on the eve of Yom Kippur in HADASHOT (20 SEP 88), and in the morning Hebrew daily HAARETZ following Yom Kippur on 23 SEP 88.) The subheading read: "There are those who say that the people of Israel were destined to be a sacrifice for the salvation of the Gentiles?! What do you say?" Below the subheading was a drawing of a slain lamb tied to the altar. Excerpts of the message follow:

"A Chosen People — For What Purpose: One may wear Orthodox Jewish head coverings. ... but who is really a Jew? Are the Orthodox more Jewish than the secular Jews? Where may we find an answer? Before replying, let us ask why God chose the Jewish people?" There follows an interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures on the basis of Israel's election to be a "light to the nations," which is compared to traditional Judaism with its "1,001 prohibitions which have nothing to do with God's Torah. ... We have fashioned for ourselves another Torah and ... established for ourselves our own righteousness ... but the animal sacrifices in the Torah were designed to point to the true atoning sacrifice about whom the prophets prophesied ... the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. ..."

Examples are given from the Hebrew Scriptures of Israel's sins and need for atonement and the failure of traditional Judaism to provide an adequate response through its rituals. False prophets and false Messiahs have arisen in Israel, but the true prophets and true Messiah have been rejected. "Even if all Israel would stand and cry aloud as one: WE WANT MESSIAH NOW!, a Messiah like the one the religious and secular have invented will not come. The prophets proclaimed the true King Messiah, and as they promised, he has already come, and shall return a second time.

"Following is a description of him and of his nature, as the prophet Isaiah describes him:" (A full quotation of Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12 follows, beginning "BEHOLD MY SERVANT SHALL PROSPER ... AND HE SHALL INTERCEDE FOR THE TRANSGRESSORS" (conclusion). This is followed by citation of Messianic texts in Daniel 9, Psalm 118:22, Micah 5:2, Zechariah 12:10.) ...

"The Name of the Messiah comes to your mind, and as it was hard to believe for us, so it is hard for you. ... Just as we denied and betrayed Joseph, son of our father Jacob, but finally acknowledged him as a deliverer, so we have denied the Messiah, but he will yet return to deliver. Then we shall look upon him whom we have pierced.

"The Messiah has already come, and every Jew can find in his soul the wisdom and the courage to receive him in faith." (In subsequent editions the reading was as follows: "The Messiah has already come. Yeshua is the Messiah. Most of the people indeed find it hard to understand and believe, but God's truth endures forever.")

"A true Jew does not try to save himself, for salvation belongs to God ... Tens of thousands of Jews have learned to distinguish between religious institutions and the loving and saving truth of God. You can continue to deny the Messiah and to boast in your religion while living in absolute separation from God. On the other hand, you can accept in faith God's Messiah, in whom you will find forgiveness of sins and the Shekina presence: A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT ... I WILL ESTABLISH YOU AS A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES, THAT MY SALVATION MAY REACH

THE ENDS OF THE EARTH. A happy New Year, be strong and of good courage, O Israel! Write or phone, and we'll be happy to send you a book to read or a cassette on request." (KOL KOREH, YAAKOV DAMKANI, POB 8355, JAFFA 61082)

"THE LAST TEMPTATION": Prime Minister Shamir has been asked by local fundamentalist Christian groups to condemn the recently released U.S. film, "THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST," and to prevent it from being shown in Israel. The P.M. reportedly agreed to "look into the matter." Cinema columnist Calev Ben-David advised the P.M. to "avoid the temptation of appeasing our fundamentalist Christian allies by involving himself in the controversy ... itself evidence of the utter hypocrisy of certain Christian fundamentalist leaders guilty of perverting the New Testament for personal financial gain.

How come local Christian fundamentalists aren't protesting this week's screening of Pasolini's "Gospel According to St. Matthew" at the Cinematheque, a stark Marxist interpretation of the Jesus story filmed by an openly homosexual film-maker, hardly the Gospel according to Jerry Falwell; but "MATTHEW" is the finest and most soulful version of the New Testament brought to the screen. ..." (IN JERUSALEM 19 AUG 88)

The chairman of the Anti-Defamation League of Bnai Brith, Abe Foxman, has sharply criticized popular TV preacher Pat Robertson for his refusal to disavow anti-Semitic expressions connected to the screening of the film "THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST." Robertson has said that he would do so only if Jewish organizations act to remove the film from the screen. Fanatical Christian groups are claiming that the film is a Jewish product aimed at befouling Christianity, and Robertson insists that U.S. Jewish leaders should press the M.C.A. studio, headed by producer Lew Wasserman, a Jew, to withdraw the film. Foxman, in an interview published in the NEW YORK TIMES, termed Robertson's remarks "scandalous."

Meanwhile, the preacher Jerry Falwell, who was the first to warn that the film would cause "a wave of anti-Semitism," responded to the ADL request to denounce the anti-Jewish character of Christian criticism of the film; nevertheless, in fanatical churches and among fundamentalist U.S. organizations, the image of the film as a "Jewish conspiracy" continues in the sermons and speeches of local religious leaders. (MAARIV 31 AUG 88)

In a review of a new weekly Israeli TV feature on world news, critic Eli Shai of the Jerusalem weekly KAWL HA'IR (2 SEP 88) commented on the report about the furore stirred up in the U.S.A. by the "LAST TEMPTATION" film. TIME Magazine, which on 15 AUG 88 devoted some ten pages to a major story about "WHO WAS JESUS" (in the wake of the Scorsese film) provided a good starting point for enlarging basic (Israeli) horizons. Prof. Flusser (of Jerusalem's Hebrew University) is quoted in TIME as saying that Jesus was a representative of the humanistic strain in the Judaism of his day, located in the liberal wing of the House of Hillel, preaching understanding and love.

The JERUSALEM POST (between 8 SEP 88 and 28 SEP 88) carried feature articles, news reports, critiques and readers' letters concerning the controversial film. Several excerpts follow:

"TEMPTATION" ROCKS VENICE: A local judge (in Venice), who asked to see the much-discussed film in order to establish whether its presentation would constitute a criminal act, told festival officials that he has no objection to showing the film in public. ... The film is an adaptation of Nikos Kazantzakis's novel (of the same name) presenting Christ as human rather than divine. ... (Dan Fainaru 8 SEP 88)

In a letter published 11 SEP 88, Thomas Ed. Steele, of Creative Communications Associations, Concerned Christians Against Anti-Semitism, Orange, California, protested "an obvious distortion" in a POST report of a meeting between George Otis, president of HIGH ADVENTURE BROADCASTING, which operates VOICE OF HOPE in South Lebanon, and Israeli P.M. Yitzhak Shamir. Steele defended a press release issued by Christians, which he alleged correctly indicated the P.M.'s "concern" about the film, his disdain for "anything that would be an indignity upon Christian people," and his promise to "be in touch with his Embassy in Washington for a report" (on the film).

Steele also expressed disappointment that U.S. Jewish leadership had not joined Christians who fight anti-Semitism and support Israel in denouncing the "malicious attack" on "the historical personage central to the faith of 1.5 billion people." The writer concludes: "A word fitly spoken ... would have been entirely appropriate and in the best interest of both the American Jewish community and the nation of Israel."

Under the heading "A JEWISH VIEW OF THE LAST TEMPTATION," Pierre Sauvage, a Holocaust survivor and film-maker, complained that "this fearless, very contemporary film turns out to be yet another old-fashioned, conventionally expurgated depiction of Jesus as goy (Gentile)." Sauvage also expressed his disappointment with the insensitivity of the movie industry to "the values and lifestyle of large numbers of religiously involved Americans ... and (that it) continues to serve up increasingly brazen dollops of moral know-nothingness in the guise of entertainment." He is not unmindful that "we Jews are being increasingly singled out for our not insubstantial contribution to this state of affairs."

The movie "commands respect" as "fiercely committed, sincere filmmaking" in its portrait of a "modernist, metaphorical me-generation saviour you can relate to." Sauvage experienced "discomfort," however, at the film's "casual falsification of one key aspect of Jesus' life," his Jewishness. Actually, the film is about "de-Judaizing" Christ, and transferring "Christianity-induced inner conflicts to Christ himself." This, however, "flies in the face of what I have come to know from some of Jesus' disciples, Christians who remained true to themselves and their beliefs when Christian apostasy was running rampant in Nazi-occupied Europe. I'm alive today because even then there were such true-life Christians."

The writer concludes the article with a description of a Protestant Huguenot community in France which rescued some 5,000 Jews from Nazi deportations during World War Two, headed by Pastor Andre Trocme of Le Chambon. Sauvage has won an award for his documentary film about the French community. Quoting the spiritual leader of the community ("Let us never forget that the God of Jesus Christ was the God of Israel ... nothing can be lost by re-Judaizing Christianity."), he cites the words of Jesus: BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM. "If Jesus had anything to do with inspiring the actions of the good Christians of Le Chambon and others like them, he could not have been the tortured, rootless soul of THE LAST TEMPTATION." (16 SEP 88)

In a 1-1/2 page feature interview with Martin Scorsese, director of the film, on a visit to Israel, film critic Dan Fainaru of the POST (16 SEP 88) elicited a different view of the controversy over the film. "How you reach for your relationship with God - for me that is an individual matter. If you find it through a church, it's fine with me. Personally, I was interested to show how much man needs spirituality in his life," Scorsese remarked.

For him, the film is "an act of faith, my personal faith, not necessarily that of the Scriptures. Don't forget, I adapted a NOVEL here,

called Ottoman societies, but are now called Benevolent societies ("amutot"). The Interior Ministry also recognizes several Protestant clergymen as authorized to perform marriages which are officially registered. Some evangelicals have considered applying for more formal recognition, but most feel it would be better if the law in some matters of marriage and divorce were secularized. The whole system is a hold-over from the Ottoman period. We support the enactment of the Basic Law on civil rights that will protect the civil liberties of all Israelis..." (C.L.I.I./27)

ISRAELI LUTHERANS: Three former Norwegian Mission churches in Israel have decided not to establish a local synod following an address by Pastor Shlomo Drori at a conference held at the Caspari Institute in Jerusalem. Drori argued that local believers "should not import anything not biblical, whether in Lutheranism, or other denominations. Our goal must be an indigenous, messianic synod based on Scripture only. European and American traditions and customs have no place here. Our goal has to be a local church, united but not uniform," he stated. (C.L.I.I./27)

ARCHAEOLOGY VACATIONS: A list of excavations in Israel accepting volunteer help is available at the Israel Department of Antiquities, with information about accommodations, clothing and equipment, work conditions and applications. Write to: Archeological Excavations, Department of Antiquities, P.O.B. 586 Jerusalem 91004 ISRAEL.

JERUSALEM MARCH: Ten Ultra-Orthodox Jews were arrested on Wednesday afternoon (28 SEP 88) after taking part in a demonstration of YAD L'AHIM (anti-mission society). They shouted protests at 200 members of the Messianic Jewish sect who took part in the annual Jerusalem March. (A photograph of a policeman and border guard forcibly arresting a demonstrator holding on to a loudspeaker accompanied the story in the weekend supplement "JERUSALEM" 30 SEP 88) Some 5,500 marchers took part in the Jerusalem March organized jointly by the Merkaz Hapoel and the Jerusalem municipality. Dozens of Israeli groups and Christian delegations participated from foreign countries, including hundreds from the Feast of Tabernacles celebration organized annually by the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, while Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek, Southern District police Commander Rahamim Comfort and other dignitaries welcomed the marchers from the reviewing stand on Jaffa Road.

During the march, the police arrested 22 Ultra-Orthodox militants on suspicion of unlawful assembly and for attempting to disturb and demonstrate against the Christian mission. Fourteen of the demonstrators were minors, and after an investigation of several hours, they were released. A group of some 30 Ultra-Orthodox tried to disturb the march of a group of the Messianic sect. They broke into the march waving banners declaring "Their Bible is the New Testament" but police prevented them from disrupting the march. Another sign read: "MESSIANIC JEWS ARE CHRISTIANS" and denounced missionary activity. The YAD L'AHIM spokesman Aharon Kornfeld stated that "the protest vigil" had thwarted the plans of the missionaries to exploit the march for preaching. (VARIOUS PAPERS 29 SEP 88)

END TRANSCRIPT

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