

READERS NOTE: SELECTIONS is a monthly abstract of Israeli newspaper and Jewish Diaspora news and comment relating to Evangelical Christian interests. The material abstracted is not necessarily unbiased, nor does SELECTIONS endorse the accuracy or views of the material printed.

CHRISTIANS CONTRIBUTE TO SYNAGOGUES

On the eve of Holocaust and Heroes Memorial Day, a new Orthodox synagogue, "Mitzpeh Nevo", was dedicated at Maaleh Adumim near Jerusalem, with the help of hundreds of German Christians through the International Christian Embassy (ICEJ) which is known as a missionary sect. They once sent a well-known missionary evangelist, Esther Dorflinger, to a camp of Soviet Jews in Vienna; she is listed in the Embassy reports as one of their activists. A couple named Rawlings from the Embassy distributed the "New Testament" to the Jews in Russia, and in an airplane they preached faith in "That Man" (Jesus). Another person from the Embassy volunteered to work at the Shaarei Zedek hospital in Jerusalem, and she engaged in missionary activity. In an article published about a year ago in NEWSWEEK, an Embassy person interviewed stated: "We are missionaries and we declare this openly." In view of these facts, the anti-mission YAD LA'HIM spokesman expressed surprise at the participation of a number of rabbis at the synagogue dedication. (HAMODIYA 1 May 1989)

In an expose of the Embassy and its synagogue connection, the ultra-orthodox weekly YOM HASHISHI (5.5.89) quoted anti-mission activists: "This is an original method to launder under-cover activities." They charged the Embassy with responsibility for most of the Christian missionary work done in Israel. While the Embassy was welcomed for its ardent support of Israel and won for itself support among the highest echelons of Israeli public life, inside information soon disclosed its under-cover missionary operation; for example, the missionary station VOICE OF HOPE in South Lebanon, PROJECT KIBBUTZ, PRAYER FOR ISRAEL.

One of the spokesmen for the Embassy, the apostate Menahem Benhayim, was among the authors of a secret and frightful document titled "CHRISTIAN ADVICE TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE" (Thailand Report No. 7), which appealed to Christian congregations to support Zionism, Soviet Jews and Jewish charities, inasmuch as Jewish mission work is more important than work among non-Jews. None of this has prevented prime ministers and other ministers from greeting the annual "Christian Feast of Tabernacles" in Jerusalem, nor prevented the strange connection between settlements beyond the green line and the Embassy, which has led to the dedication of the synagogue in the settlement of Maale Adumim, with Orthodox rabbis present.

The spokesman for the ICEJ, Jan van der Hoven, in response to questions by the newspaper correspondent, stated that the synagogue connection was meant as "a practical response to Kristalnacht (in 1938 when hundreds of German synagogues were destroyed by the Nazis)... No doubt what we have done will help us to recruit other churches who will see us as a bridge between churches and synagogues."

In response to the anti-mission accusation against the ICEJ, the chief rabbi of the settlement stated that he had heard of the contribution after it was received, and approached an ultra-orthodox rabbi accepted by all streams, who told him that the money could be used without reservation. The synagogue official who initiated the project, Arye Weiss, stated that he had received permission from the Chief Rabbis of Israel to accept the contribution. The contributors, Righteous Gentiles linked to the ICEJ, hope to assist in the construction of 230

synagogues, the number equal to the destroyed synagogues on "Kristal-nacht" in 1938. ("Jerusalem," 5.5.89)

Ruth Brand, 61, a survivor of Auschwitz and sole survivor of her family, a member of the synagogue, has threatened to leave the settlement because "it is destroying my peace of mind" and added: "I go to synagogue to pray, and not to be reminded of what I went through." The local rabbi, who is trying to persuade her to stay, commented: "It is important not to allow history to be erased, but it is also important not to reject someone who extends his hand in peace." (IN JERUSALEM 5.5.89)

MESSIANIC JEWS

ESCORTED TOUR: The Messianic Jews who arrived in Israel before Passover at the Egyptian border crossing, came in one bus of 50 persons instead of the ten buses expected. A close watch by the anti-mission activists has been kept on the group at every place, their activities recorded in video. It was agreed with them that if they do not engage in missionary activity, they will not be disturbed in their tour. There were, however, rumours that on the seventh day of Passover (a holy day) when Jews could not follow them around, a baptism was conducted in the River Jordan, which is being checked out. (YATAID NE'EMAN 1 May 89)

RAMAT HAGOLAN: In a letter to the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), YAD L'AHIM complained about the visit of a group of Messianics at an army base in Ramat Hagolan. Last Thursday they visited "Kay House", a rest home for IDF invalids in Nahariya, at which time one Brotman, the head of the group, presented a contribution to the institution. In their letter, the anti-mission activists demanded that the IDF "return the money to the Messianics, because any link between the Messianics and the IDF soldiers is liable to be disastrous to the soldiers."

During a visit by the Messianics to the shop GREETING FROM JERUSALEM, which engages in spreading "the Gospel" in downtown Jerusalem, two anti-mission activists were arrested by police for allegedly disturbing the Messianics, but were released after a brief investigation and continued their activities. The Messianics left the country at the weekend and are planning additional visits. (YATAID NE'EMAN 1 May 89; EREV SHABAT 5.5.89)

MESSIANIC PUBLICATIONS: The publications of the Messianic Jews contain routine missionary propaganda, by means of which they seek to create in the reader a sense that "there is no deliverance from sin except by blood, and J-S-S is our atonement, so that faith in him is the only way to salvation. When Yeshua knocks on the door of your heart, let him enter, and he will cleanse you with his atoning blood." These writings are designed to convince the reader that, by accepting the atonement of the Crucified one, one is completed as a Jew... The Holy Spirit also makes a flying visit from time to time, a wonderful adventure, and you return to your roots. In the affair with Yeshua and the movement, all that remains is to join up with other believers at least once a week. The Messianics are also careful to write "with the help of the Name," and "Hear O Israel," and decorate everything with Stars of David. (EREV SHABAT 12.5.89)

EILAT: The Eilat weekly, EREV EREV B'EILAT (6 April 89) published an interview and article about the Messianic Jews in Eilat against the background of youth seeking roots, joining mystical and other sects, becoming ultra-orthodox Jews. "One of the communities which has come to Israel was that of the Messianic Jews, people who believe in the Hebrew Scriptures (Tanach) and in the New Testament and in Jesus as Messiah and God." Excerpts follow from the interview with John and Judy Pex.

JUDY: The Bible was entirely new to me, and (after reading the Old Testament) I continued into the New. I had always thought that was a book for Christians, but I continued to read both Testaments and began to understand that Yeshua and all his disciples were Jewish. (The Messianic Jews call Jesus ["Yeshu" in ordinary Hebrew speech] "Yeshua" because ultra-orthodox Jews have given the name "Yeshu" negative meaning related to the initials of a Hebrew imprecation). It was the personality of Yeshua which attracted me; a simple person with authority, who helped the common people and the sick. The Messiah is a mirror of God through whom we can know God. We are not Orthodox Jews, but we believe in a new heart and new spirit as promised in Ezekiel 36:26. We emphasize the interior life without formal worship. We are also different from the Orthodox in that we believe in the new birth."

The reporter, Reuven Saltz, describes the work of the Pexes in Eilat, ministering to transients and outcasts, materially and spiritually. He noted how well-organized the house is, including their four children. They also manage a hostel, "The Shelter," which provides clean and inexpensive accommodations to mostly young travelers. They deny that they are missionaries (because of the negative association to the word), "but only want to help others, and if they are willing to listen to what we say, we're happy to share."

Rabbi Hecht of Eilat vigorously denies that there is a Messianic Jewish community in Eilat; "only a few Jews who have been enticed for various reasons to believe in Jesus the Nazarene, Heaven preserve us! While it's true that Jesus was born a Jew, it has no significance to Judaism, and Christianity has gone out to other nations." The rabbi became nervous and excited when asked to compare Jewish messianic hopes with that of the Messianic Jews, and rejects any comparison as well between Christian missionary activity and ultra-orthodox efforts to win secular Jews to Orthodox Judaism. "Missionary activity is forbidden in Judaism," he declares.

THE MISSION

JERUSALEM: A group of 35 German missionaries tried to trap innocent Jewish tourists visiting the Western Wall in Jerusalem into their net, which shocked worshippers who discovered missionary literature distributed by them. This sect is part of a worldwide movement, and is having a conference at a Jerusalem hotel to enlist new members, and is circulating in the streets of Jerusalem with invitations to the conference. ("YATAID NE'EMAN" 1 May 89). Subsequently, the Minister of Religious Affairs denied the report, claiming that inspectors at the Wall are stationed to prevent such incidents from taking place. (YATAID NE'EMAN 3 May 89)

HAIFA: Haifa residents have recently been "enjoying" the benefits of frequent visits from missionaries, most commonly in pairs, who present themselves as religious experts in the Bible, and when they gain admission to their homes, give a missionary lecture and distribute literature. They also accost people at bus stops, and have regular meeting places, such as Beth Shalom and Beit Yedidya (where recently there was a Bible study held). (YATAID NE'EMAN 1 May 89)

MISSIONARY ADS: Two missionary advertisements have been published in the Jerusalem weekly "KAWL HA'IR", produced by the well-known missionary Meno Kalisher. We asked Doron Glaser, the assistant editor, whether they would accept any advert. He replied that not every ad is acceptable, but this kind is legitimate, and why should it not be acceptable? We wanted to tell Doron that, even though he receives lots of money for ads (NIS 4,100), a newspaper that represents itself as Jewish should not accept missionary notices. (EREV SHABAT 5.5.89)

"THE MISSIONARY LAMB": Under this heading, the Orthodox daily HATSOFEH (5.5.89) published an angry critique of the Passover adverts above-mentioned, which were also printed in national newspapers. The writer proposed that the Chief Rabbinate, the Journalists Association and an Orthodox defence society act to prevent the publication of such "missionary notices."

CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

PROTEST: The JERUSALEM POST published a joint letter signed by leaders residing in Israel (all but two are clergy) on 14 May 89 expressing "dismay" by recent statements made by Church leaders concerning Israeli actions in Jerusalem and the territories. "While we would strongly condemn extremist violence by either side, we find blanket criticism of Israeli actions without reference to Arab violence to be unhelpful and one-sided," they stated. They identified themselves as part of "a sizeable body of Christian opinion in the world which believes that the return of the Jewish people to its ancestral homeland has been under God's hand... in accordance with God's word and will." Christians owe a particular debt to the Jewish people "who gave us our scriptures... and the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth..." (but) the Christian church has rarely reflected gratitude for its Jewish roots."

They concluded with a call to "best serve the cause of peace by refraining from partisan polemics and (to) pray for the peace of Jerusalem." Among the signers were ministers in Jerusalem Anglican, Baptist, Pentecostal, Dutch Reformed, Lutheran churches, and several directors of Christian pro-Israel groups.

CHAPLAIN TO VANUNU: Sentenced to 18 years imprisonment for revealing atomic secrets, Mordecai Vanunu spends his days in isolation, but meets an Anglican priest for prayer once a month, according to a SUNDAY TIMES report republished in MAARIV (30.4.89). The chaplain from St. George College in Jerusalem has said that Vanunu's new Christian faith is sustaining him in his isolation. He has drawn a large cross on the wall of his cell.

JEWISH ARCHBISHOP OF PARIS: A special interview for Holocaust Memorial Day by Michael Zlotowski of Paris with Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger, Archbishop of Paris, was published in the JERUSALEM POST (28.4.89). The cardinal admitted that there was resistance in Poland to the removal of the controversial Carmelite convent at the site of the Auschwitz extermination camp, where vast numbers of Jews were murdered by the Nazis during World War Two. He assured the interviewer that "active negotiations" were going on to resolve the problem of finding an alternate site for the nuns. "The problem is not only a practical one; it's also a symbolic issue," he noted. The Cardinal did see a positive side to the controversy, the unprecedented high-level meetings between Jews (who strongly object to a Catholic presence at the site) and Christians. Lustiger himself was born to a family of Polish-Jewish immigrants in France. Most of his family perished in the Holocaust. As a young man he entered the Catholic Church, but still identifies himself as a Jew.

STRANGE BAPTISM: At the start of a seminar on the philosophy of religion at Tel-Aviv University given by Professor Asa Kasher, a woman of about 40 entered the lecture room, briskly moved forward to the dais and poured a small bottle of ink over the head of the lecturer, covering his glasses. The professor fled the room after calling for the security officer. When asked why she had done it, the woman announced confidently: "I baptized him into Christianity and redeemed him from hell." She was taken away by an officer. (HADASHOT 6 Apr 89)

ULTRA-ORTHODOX HOST CHRISTIAN GUESTS: Some 50 Christian worshippers offered their prayers to the Crucified Messiah in a small room

adjacent to Jerusalem's Center Hotel ritual bath ("mikva"). The leader of the group, which was here for the celebration of Easter, stated that the pious Christians "feel comfortable in an ultra-orthodox hotel which is sensitive to their religious needs." The hotel management explained that, although it is owned by ultra-orthodox Rabbi (and Knesset Member) Menahem Porush, it operates by commercial standards, "providing the best possible service to every guest." The Christians accept "lovingly" the fact that it is strictly observant of Jewish tradition, including office closure on the Sabbath. "This is an example of co-existence," the management noted. ("JERUSALEM," 31.3.89)

CRUCIFIXION: In an ad in "THE NATION" (21.3.89), Shmuel Golding offered a free lecture and debate on the origins of Easter, the death of Jesus, examining Gospel witnesses and reconstructing the Passion story. This was against the background of Easter Christian Pilgrimages, said to be "perpetuating an ancient pagan ritual."

SOVIET HEBREW BIBLE LOVER: In an interview given by Alexander Kriokov, a non-Jewish Soviet historian, sociologist and Hebrew scholar who recently visited Israel, he remarked: "As a historian, I don't know of another example of a state that has revived after 2,000 years and also revived its ancient language... The more I study Hebrew, the more I love it... On my first trip to Jerusalem I had the feeling that at any moment a long-haired man in a white tunic, staff in hand, would come out from behind the hills and begin to prophesy. The Bible landscape, Bible country; What a pity it hasn't been preserved in its biblical wholeness!" (HADASHOT 7 Apr 89)

ARCHITECTURE, AUSCHWITZ & CHRISTIANITY: In an interview given by the Dutch-Jewish architect Jan Van Pelt during a visit to Israel, the 33-year-old architect commented on Nazi architecture, and the impact of "social Darwinism" ("survival of the fittest") on the Nazi genocide program, and the "erosion of all the great institutions of the world; for example, the Church" which preceded the Nazi era. "Auschwitz turned history on its face. It was a massive collapse in the history of civilization, and it is impossible to continue as if nothing happened. After the crucifixion of Jesus, Christianity also required a revival; perhaps a resurrection from the dead, as a vision to renew the face of the world..." (KAVL HA'IR 24.3.89)

SECTS

"THE SUFI OF NAZARETH:" A feature article in the Hebrew daily HAARETZ (12 May) under this heading described the way of an Arab ex-Communist from the Muslim community back to Islam. Disillusioned with Marxist atheism (which had the effect of convincing him of the existence of God!) and its failed ideology, he began a search for faith. "I began to read the Hebrew Scriptures and even thought of converting to Judaism, until I came to the story of Joshua (and the command to slay all the Canaanites). I then tried to search for the truth in Christianity and the New Testament; but here, too, I felt a resistance because of the idea of the Holy Trinity. Therefore, I decided on Islam; not because I was born a Muslim but out of choice." He eventually became a leading member of the mystical and ascetic Sufi sect of Islam, considered heretical and sometimes persecuted by mainstream Orthodox Islam.

BOOK OF THE MORMON: The Committee Concerned about the Mormon University will soon be meeting in Jerusalem to clarify who is behind the distribution of the Chronicles of the Nephites, a Mormon book of faith, in a Hebrew translation. The initiative for the meeting actually comes from representatives of the Mormon University, who want to avoid any connection between the book and the Mormon community. Dr. Martin Hawkman, the university president, said that the publication of the book and its distribution "was the work of a group which

broke with mainstream Mormons 150 years ago." The heads of the university also disassociated themselves from the book in a letter which was sent about two months ago to the committee which is monitoring the agreement between the Mormons and the Israel Lands Authority, in which the Mormons agreed not to engage in any missionary activity, or other activity contrary to the educational values and culture of Israel.

The source of the Chronicles of the Nephites is Independence, Missouri, U.S.A., but the book was printed here and has recently been distributed by mail. Another book of a missionary character was sent from the same address and is in the hands of Hebrew University Professor David Flusser. The dissident sect, he states, is called "The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," which is "a small sect more closely related to the Protestant Church."

Chairman of the monitoring committee, Director-General of the Justice Department, Haim Klugman, took care to stress this week that there is a good rapport among committee members, which includes the former Director-General of the Interior Ministry Haim Kubarsky, Jerusalem municipality representative Naomi Teasdale, and two representatives from the Mormon University. "The main work of the committee," says Klugman, "is preventative. I am impressed that the Mormon representatives are trying to respond to the positions of the other members." Meanwhile, (ultra-orthodox) Knesset Member Menahem Porush has submitted a parliamentary query in the matter to the Prime Minister. ("JERUSALEM" weekly 5.5.89)

SUNDRIES

BROTHER DAVID: "IN JERUSALEM," the weekly local supplement of the JERUSALEM POST (12 May 89) carried a two-page feature article headed BROTHER DAVID'S JERUSALEM, about "a devout Christian who moved to Israel nine years ago" (and who worked at a Catholic shelter in New York), who spends his time on the streets doing "good works; his mission is not to proselytize or spread the word of Jesus." He operates a private ministry called "House of Prayer" out of his home with volunteers and primarily foreign donations. The writer, Stuart Dow, describes some of the beggars, alcoholics and eccentrics who are helped by Brother David.

"JESUS PASSION": A new "Passion", which "rejects the St. Matthew version of the Crucifixion vigorously," was presented at the Redeemer Church in Jerusalem on Good Friday 20.3.89 by the composer, Oskar Gottlieb Blarr, organist and music director at the Meanderkirche at Dusseldorf. According to the composer, Bach's St. Matthew's Passion instils in listeners a frightful anti-Jewish message through its unbelievable beauty, without intending to. Blarr's work is based on quotations from the Psalms, the Prophets, the Talmud, the New Testament and the poetry of Israeli writer Pinhas Sadeh. His musical material is drawn from Yemenite Jewish and Samaritan liturgies, and prayer modes of the Syrian churches and Orthodox Jewish synagogues. According to the reviewer, "Blarr has taken a decisive step to rectify historical wrongdoing...with enormous musical strength." (JERUSALEM POST 27.3.89)

END TRANSCRIPT

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