

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.

JEWS AND JESUS: MESSIANIC JEWISH PUBLIC FORUM: Advertisements were placed in national and local newspapers in mid-May headed "INVITATION TO LECTURE: WHAT DO JEWS HAVE TO DO WITH JESUS? The lecture will take place at the Laromme Hotel in Jerusalem on 30.5.89." When the Jerusalem rabbinate got wind of the event, they approached the hotel management and warned them that it was intolerable that a hotel which receives a kosher certificate from the rabbinate lets out a hall for lectures to a sect whose aim is to convert Jews. The Jerusalem Religious Council chief, Rabbi Joshua Pollack, made it clear that the Jerusalem rabbinate would not allow the matter to pass unnoticed. As a result, the management apologized and claimed it had not been aware of the intent of those who had hired the hall, and the event would be cancelled. Meanwhile, Jerusalem's chief rabbi Kowitz has published guidelines for all premises which have kosher certificates, forbidding them to rent their halls to any missionary sect. (ULTRA-ORTHODOX PRESS 25-26 MAY 89).

The non-profit society for research of the Holy Scriptures in the Land of Israel, a Messianic Jewish society, (Jews for Jesus) had paid for the rental of a hall in the Laromme Hotel, owned by a subsidiary of El-Al, but the hotel bowed to the pressure of the Jerusalem rabbinate to cancel the contract and returned the money to the Messianics. Joseph Shulam, director of the Messianic society, commented: "We were considerate of the hotel's interests, since it was not at fault, and we cancelled the event after receiving compensation for all expenses, and we have passed the matter on to the Society for Civil Rights. Meanwhile, city council member Arnon Yekutieli (Citizens' Rights Movement) in a letter to the General Manager of the hotel, Ilan Wechsler, has written: "There is no link between verification of the kosher status of the hotel food, for which the hotel pays a good price to the rabbinate, and other activities of the hotel which the rabbinate do not like. You are making a serious error in trying to appease them."

Hotel manager Wechsler told MAARIV that the rabbinate had threatened to forbid weddings at the hotel if the lecture took place. "We cannot afford a conflict with the rabbinate. We are a kosher hotel, but without the rabbinate it is impossible to carry on a business of this kind in Jerusalem. As General-Manager I will not engage in a war by myself against the rabbinate." In reply to a question by the daily HAARETZ, the chairman of the Jerusalem Hotels Association, Yehuda Greenbaum, noted that the Jerusalem rabbinate tends to link the issuance of a certificate of kashrut to Sabbath observance and other matters unrelated to food. (MAARIV/HAARETZ 1 JUN 89)

LECTURE IN TEL-AVIV: On 8 June 89 HAARETZ published an announcement inviting the public to a lecture in Tel-Aviv at the Dugith Gallery on the 10th at 8:30 pm (address and phone numbers supplied). The subject was "JESUS: JEW OR CHRISTIAN?" Lecturers: J. Shulam and Z. Sedan.

On 2 June 89 the Jerusalem weekly KAWL HA'IR published an announcement by Leor Ilan, with phone and post box numbers supplied, under the heading: "MESSIAH IS COME is a movement for the right of the Jew to believe in Yeshua, as a Jew and in Israel, as Israel's Messiah, and in that New Covenant which God promised to Israel by the prophet Jeremiah (31:31-34) upon their return to their homeland. JOIN NOW!"

PLANNED VISIT BY MESSIANIC LEADER ABORTED: The ultra-orthodox press (HAMODIYA/EREV SHABAT 1-4 JUN 89) reported that the anti-mission society YAD L'AHIM had learned that the leader of the Messianic congregation in Ramat Hasharon, Ari Sorko-ram, planned to arrive in Israel at the head of a large group of Messianics, but had to cancel his arrival because of the unwillingness of the Messianics to visit Israel. It should be noted that Ari Sorko-ram sets the tone for all the Messianic congregations in Israel financially and ideologically. At his disposal is a luxurious villa on a huge plot of land guarded year-round by a private security agency. The failure of his planned visit is therefore a turning point for the better in the war against the Mission and the Messianic sects.

"THE MISSION"

SCANDAL OVER ADVERT IN DISABLED VETERANS' JOURNAL: Hagefen Publishers of Rishon Letzion, POB 75, placed an ad in HALOHEM, the journal of disabled Israeli veterans (May 1989 issue), offering "books about the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, self-teaching manuals, tracts, quarterlies, cassettes and songbooks." A partial list of books and prices was given, including a study of Genesis, Chapter 3 ("explaining the appearance of sin and its effect on mankind and God's initial promise of a saviour"), Pilgrims Progress (the 17th century classic), several booklets dealing with the nature of Jewishness, the Messiah, Yeshua, Messianic responsa, and the book "Betrayed!, the true story of a man who had no choice but to be convinced."

Subsequently, several articles appeared in the Orthodox HATSOFEH (24 MAY 89) and ultra-orthodox press (EREV SHABAT, 4 JUN; YETAID NE'MAN 16 JUN; YOM HASHISHI undated) attacking the "blatant" missionary ad. They reported that several disabled veterans had protested to the journal for "acting as a trumpet for missionary ads." One paper (YOM HASHISHI) reported a conversation between their journalist and Baruch Maoz, HAGEFEN manager, who claimed that he was approached by the editor of HALOHEM to place an ad, but the editor was unavailable for comment, being on reserve duty. Maoz is himself disabled.

Joseph Lautenberg, chairman of the I.D.F. Disabled Veterans organization, in a letter to HATSOFEH (5 JUN 89), wrote: "We very much regret the publication of the advert, which was done without our knowledge ... and apologize to all our members." HAMODIYA later reported (14 JUN 89) that Lautenberg had condemned the publication as "insensitive, irresponsible, causing me, personally, and many members of our organization, profound distress."

MESSIANICS VISIT IDF BASE: In a letter to I.D.F. authorities, the anti-mission Yad L'Ahim has protested the visit of a group of Messianics at an Army base in the Golan Heights, during their Passover tour of Israel. The anti-missionaries charged that the Messianics are missionaries and they should not have been permitted on the base, neither should their gift check for a rest home accommodating disabled veterans have been accepted. "Any connection between the Messianics and I.D.F. soldiers is liable to be disastrous," the Yad L'Ahim letter stated, and demanded that the money be returned to the Messianics, led by Brotman. (SHAARIM, 3 MAY 89)

I.D.F. NEXT TARGET: For weeks now information is flowing into the anti-mission offices of Yad L'Ahim about those who are spreading "the New Testament" and are increasing its distribution among I.D.F. soldiers. In Tiberias last weekend, one soldier was shocked to discover at a soldiers' recreation center several dozen copies of "the New Testament," with many soldiers reading from them. He took them from their hands, explaining the seriousness of the matter, and destroyed the books. Recently, many missionaries have been seen distributing "New Testaments" among soldiers in Tel-Aviv at the Kiriya and at bus stops for soldiers. (YETAID NE'EMAN, 2 JUN 89) More than

once, missionary agents have picked up soldier hitchhikers to try to missionize them. (HATSOFEH 4 JUN 89)

TEL-AVIV MALL MISSION FOCUS: "The Messianics" have taken off on a massive campaign of "evangelism" for Shavuot (Hebrew Pentecost). They have placed ads in all the local papers and sent many young people out on the streets with much literature. Businessmen, artists, musicians, students and strollers are targets for the Messianics. The Gospel campaigners have been prepared by a series of lectures at Emmanuel House in Jaffa as well as in the homes of the Messianics so that "they may know how to respond according to the Scriptures." The public is asked to be on guard and to warn others not to engage in conversation with them. (HAMODIYA/YETAID NE'EMAN 8 JUN 89)

MISSION HAIFA: Haifa has been for long a target of mission organizations of various Christian sects hunting souls for "the religion of love and pity," in whose name rivers of Jewish blood were spilled in all generations. Recently, these groups have begun to work with redoubled energy and following is a resume of those in Haifa:

1. Rehov Hagefen, 47-A: A depot for missionary literature; also Quality Books, POB 7352, especially offers seemingly innocent children's books.
2. Ebenezer Nursing Home: 41 Meir Street, managed by Yohanan Kokkonen, linked to nearby Elijah Church, a focal point for converting aged Jews, who are baptized in a font on the premises.
3. Bethesda Church, 59 Allenby, corner of Ben-Gurion, run by Jewish apostates; also a clinic managed by Dr. Baruch (Brian) Pokroy.
4. Hagefen Store on Hehalutz Street, which misleads the public by sale of missionary literature and Judaica.
5. Bethel Hostel, 40-42 Hagefen, offers unknowing guests missionary literature, and is operated by Jewish converts to Christianity.
6. Emmaus publishers offer correspondence courses and other propaganda dealing with the Hebrew Bible and New Testament.
7. Beit Yedidya on Tishbi Street, conducts seminars, children's camps, weekends, for Jews in advanced stages of apostacy.
8. Stella Carmel hostel attracts local tourists and distributes missionary literature. Nearby are villas built by the missionaries John Zeidan, Dr. Baruch Pokroy, John Salinger.
9. Beit Shalom, 89 Sderot Hanasi, a hotel managed by missionaries, is listed in the official guides of the Israeli Tourist Ministry and Haifa municipality.
10. Jehovah Witness Centre, Zionism Ave., 25, a base of missionary raids house-to-house throughout the city; they also offer loans along with spiritual "aid." (EREV SHABAT JERUSALEM 23 JUN 89)

"THE OLD MELODIES": The organ of nationalist orthodoxy, HATSOFEH, published a pessimistic feature article under this heading by Joseph Friedlander (28 JUN 89). He writes of the continuation of Christian dreams for a final solution, through their Messiah, of the Jewish problem. The hopes that dialogue, two-covenant theology, mutual tolerance and respect would end these dreams of conversion have been dashed by recent events: The controversy over the monastery at Auschwitz, the Protestant evangelistic support for "Jews for Jesus" and missionary work among Jews. Conceding positive developments in certain areas involving Catholics, the writer nevertheless concludes:

"We had hoped that Jewish independence in the Land of Israel would suffice to end historic hatred, but the Jewish State itself has become a focus for this hatred, which, apparently will not vanish from the world, but remains like a dark shadow accompanying Jewish existence from antiquity."

THE LAST TEMPTATION: The Israeli Supreme Court unanimously overturned the ban by Israel's censorship board on the controversial film The Last Temptation of Christ. In its decision announced on 15 June 89, the court ruled that the principle of "near certainty" that the screening of the film in Israel would lead to public disorder or serious offence to Christian Israelis could not be applied in this case so as to justify interference with freedom of expression. The judges pointed out that the film is being shown throughout the Christian world: "There is no judicial basis for prohibiting a film in Jerusalem which is available to Christians in Rome and Paris," Chief Justice Shamgar wrote in the 28-page decision. The film would have to be extremely offensive to warrant a ban in an age of Christian pluralism, he argued. The distributors (Golan-Globus Cannon) announced that the film was ready for screening in cinemas around Israel.

Responses to the court ruling in Israeli circles were mostly favourable, with some liberal circles calling for the end of film censorship, but the court indicated that there was still place for censorship. As expected, Catholic and Orthodox prelates expressed disappointment, while an anti-semitic tract was circulated by an extremist Christian group in East Jerusalem, linking the film to "the Jews who 2,000 years ago committed a crime against the Christian world" and were again offending Christians.

Reviews of the film (between 18 June and 23 June) in the Israeli daily and periodical press were mixed. HAARETZ (20 June), the prestigious daily, in a brief review, recommended the film as "an impressive adaptation of the New Testament to the realm of the reasonable ... and a film easy to view." The reviewer of the left-wing AL HAMISHMAR (21 June) found the film "a renewed examination of the issue of the Christian Messiah. ... neither contemptuous nor cynical ... a courageous film." HAOLAM HAZEH (21 JUN), a bohemian weekly, claimed that the film was not "a denial of faith; on the contrary, it is a film of a believer by a believer ... Sorcese has created a film ... which involves us in a hard moral struggle."

At the other end, MAARIV critic Aharon Dolav (18 June) called the film "pure kitsch ... it will be remembered in Israel, if at all, as a bad film which received massive free publicity" because of the censor. The cinema critic of the Histadrut daily DAVAR (Oshra Schwartz, 22 June) rated the film "primitive and boring and amazingly simplistic ... unimaginative in its reproduction of Bible land, straight out of the factory of C.B. DeMille ... soap opera." Yaron Block in the Jerusalem weekly KAWL HA'IR (23 Jun) wondered why "the Christian Fundamentalists were so angered by the film. The kind of Jesus portrayed in the film will not cause any Christian to deny the essentials of his faith ... it is so amateurish, almost like a DeMille film."

HAARETZ reported that from a box-office view, the film was a flop. In a Tel-Aviv cinema with 1,000 seats, only 200 were occupied, and many in the audience were restless and talkative. (18 Jun 89) Ten days later the newspaper reported that the film had been taken off screens in Israel because of lack of public interest, and was now being shown in only one cinema in Jerusalem. (29 June) The ultra-orthodox weekly YOM HASHISHI (30 June) reported that the "apostate" Messianic Jews, unlike Christian missionaries, were pleased at the court decision to allow screening of the film, in order to take advantage of the interest aroused in the subject to "spread the Gospel" of the man from Nazareth. (See also SELECTIONS No. 173, p. 4-5)

ISRAEL NATIONAL CHOIR SINGS CHRISTIAN MUSIC: The ultra-orthodox weekly YOM SHISHI (24 Mar 89) reported from New York on an uproar at a concert of the National Israeli Choir "Rinat" at its opening in New York. The choir, under its leader Stanley Sperber, sang at a Jewish Centre "blatantly Christian songs in praise of That Man (Jesus)". Among the Christian songs were two spirituals ("Live A-humble" and "Ain't That Good News") and the chorale "Almighty Father" from a Mass by Leonard Bernstein. "The stunned conductor and 33 choir members conferred among themselves, and the leader went out on the platform and apologized," the reporter noted; but the concert continued in "a heavy atmosphere with almost no applause."

SHOLOM ASCH "IN THE EYE OF THE HURRICANE": MAARIV (21 Apr 89) published an excerpt from a book of reminiscences by an Israeli Labour Party official. The article featured encounters with the Yiddish writer Sholem Asch in 1954. The author of the trilogy, The Nazarene, The Apostle, and Mary, Asch rocked the Jewish world in the 1930's and 1940's with his sympathetic approach to his subjects, and was ostracized and humiliated by many of his Jewish literary colleagues and others in the Jewish world.

The subject of divinity in general and Jesus the Nazarene in particular had always interested him, and he perceived Jesus as a great idealist who loved the poor and the oppressed, one who was of the root and branch of the Jewish people. Asch had always sought a solution to the tragic conflict between Christianity and Judaism, and he believed that he had contributed something through his trilogy, he told a friendly group of Israeli press persons who applauded him. Ben-Gurion also supported him against his detractors in the Jewish community and denounced the "idiotic campaign against him."

In cooperation with the Bat-Yam municipality, Asch arranged for the construction of a house to live in during his last years in Israel, to be left to the municipality as a museum after his death.

RARE YIDDISH BOOKS: Two rare old Yiddish books, an anthology of prayers for women (late 16th century) and Orah Hayim ("Way of Life") printed in 1602, were donated by a German monk from Mt. Zion's Dormition Abbey to the Jewish National and University Library from his private collection of rare Hebrew and Yiddish books. (IN JERUSALEM, 17 FEB 89)

CHRISTIAN ELECTRONIC MEDIA VISITORS: A delegation of 20 top radio and TV U.S. Christian broadcasters were guests of the Israeli Tourist Ministry for a week. The visit was organized by the department of pilgrimage, headed by Yaakov Dakar, to explore new ideas for the development of Evangelical pilgrimage from the U.S. to Israel at a difficult time. The visitors are due to meet with Israeli broadcasting personnel, tour the new museum at David's Citadel, meet with Jerusalem Mayor Kollek, and observe Pentecost "first fruits" celebrations at a kibbutz. (HAARETZ 3 JUN)

KOREAN GOSPEL SINGERS IN JERUSALEM: South Korea's most popular gospel singers, part of a pilot group of 500 Korean pilgrims in Jerusalem sponsored by Korea's Christian Broadcasting System, are being heard in Jerusalem. Over 4,000 Korean tourists have visited Israel over the past year, and they are a small portion of the 10 million Christians in Korea (25 percent of the population). Christian broadcasting is very powerful and effective in evangelism, Dr. Chai Eun Lee, president of CBS stated. (JLM POST 4 JUN 89)

SELLING ISRAEL TO U.S. CHRISTIANS: A former Israeli, Moshe Malka, has built up a flourishing business in the U.S. by selling Holy Land products. Malka believes that the key to business promotion between Israel and the U.S. lies in developing contacts with religious Chris-

tians. Besides pilgrimages, they will buy anything from Israel, except alcoholic beverages or porn; and they can be reached effectively through advertising on Christian TV. (GLOBUS 29 JUN 89)

"CHRISTIAN MESSIANIC": A Christian Messianic who arrived in Israel after representing himself as Jewish will be removed from the absorption centre for new immigrants in Mevaseret Jerusalem, in order to prevent him from engaging in missionary activity at this centre. The Absorption Minister Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz stated this in reply to a parliamentary question by Rabbi Avraham Verdiger. The minister announced that the non-Jewish family named Berezin arrived in Israel in 1986. The family head is an eccentric and was hospitalized in the USSR for mental illness. The family then drew near to Judaism, had themselves circumcised, but remained in contact with Christians and joined the ranks of the Messianic sect which believes in J-s-s. The family head circulated about the absorption centre with a loudspeaker preaching Christianity, at which point the process of evicting the man and his family began. (HAMODIYA 1 JUN 89)

"IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS": Dr. Yohanan Cohen-Yashar of Jerusalem, writing in the local weekly KAVL HA'IR (26 May 89), protested against the declaration signed by dozens of rabbis in Jerusalem calling upon young women to refuse alternative national service. "It would be well for these rabbis to visit an orthodox Jewish hospital like Shaarei Zedek where the sick and the aged cry for help, which does not come to them for lack of staff. Meanwhile, in Christian hospitals, which also absorb the Jewish sick, I have observed dedicated treatment in a relaxed atmosphere. The fact that the chronically ill of our people must seek help in Jerusalem Christian hospitals is an insult to our health system. The rabbis seek to dissuade Jewish young women from serving in hospitals while Jews are dying in the shadow of the Christian cross," he concludes.

RABBI GIVES SERMON IN CHURCH: Rabbi Levi Kelman, leader of the Reform Congregation "Kol Haneshama" in Jerusalem, spoke at the Sunday mass of the Greek Catholic church in Makr, near Acre in Galilee. A member of the interfaith "Clergy for Peace," Rabbi Kelman was invited by Rev. Ibrahim Daoud, a member of the same group, to deliver a sermon at his church. He spoke in Hebrew on the subject of peace between Jews and Arabs. Rev. Daoud was invited to speak at the rabbi's synagogue also.

CHRISTIANS PRO-ISRAEL: Per Faye Hansen and Gro and Bruno of the Scandinavian Seamen's Church in Haifa, in a letter to the JERUSALEM POST (26 May 89) were "surprised and shocked" at Jerusalem church leaders who had condemned Israel in "response to calls from Christian groups abroad." He was glad, however, that a group of Protestant pastors in Jerusalem had defended Israel, and joins with them, as representative of many Christians in Scandinavia and Germany.

END TRANSCRIPT

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