

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

JERUSALEM BAPTIST CHURCH: Six years after unknown arsonists torched the Narkis Street Baptist Church in Jerusalem, an imposing new church is rising at the same site. The Baptists tried to take advantage of the fire by proposing the construction of a much larger building, but the District Committee for Planning and Construction in the Jerusalem area approved a building plan of the same size as the burnt-out building. They were also ordered to install acoustic walls and double windows so as not to disturb neighbours, among whom are Orthodox Jews. (HAMODIYA 18 AUG 89) The Jerusalem weekly KAWL HA'IR (11 AUG) provided architectural details and a sketch of the new Church as well as background material.

IN JERUSALEM, the weekly Jerusalem supplement of the JERUSALEM POST (11 AUG) carried a feature article by Ron Kampeas about Pat Hoaldrige, pastor of the Jerusalem Baptist Church now being rebuilt. A 47-year-old native of Fort Worth, Texas, he has lived in Israel for 17 years. He says that money for the rebuilding was raised from congregants and visitors to Israel. He blames ultra-orthodox officials for the delay in rebuilding, but this is denied by Naomi Teasdale, Jerusalem Mayor Kollek's adviser on religious affairs. "The original plans were massive; you can understand why some of the neighbours would have objected," she stated, but "we used our influence on the planning commission to speed things up."

"Their missionizing is unambiguous," a spokeswoman for the ultra-orthodox YAD L'AHIM anti-mission society commented, while acknowledging that Hoaldrige, for two years pastor in Jerusalem, has not been as "excessive" as his predecessor, Dr. Robert Lindsey. "Missionary is a derogatory word in Israel," Hoaldrige notes, adding: "We don't go out and knock on doors, but I'm not going to lie; I am the possessor of good news that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah, and I feel comfortable sharing that news." He will not turn away Jews wanting to know more about his faith, although drawing the line at minors: "I certainly wouldn't want my boys to convert to Judaism, so I can understand how other parents might feel."

MIDDLE EAST TELEVISION: A three-page feature article, highly slanted, by reporter Naomi Levitsky of HADASHOT (11 AUG 89) "exposed" the South Lebanese M.E. TV station, which operates a "top secret" newscast from studios in Jerusalem. Arabic and English are the main languages of the station, with staff a combination of Lebanese and "eccentric," "dreamy-eyed," "religiously fanatical" Americans. The enterprise has its roots in the establishment of a radio station by George Otis, in whose "feverish brain" it was concocted. Although Otis won the confidence of Major Haddad and Israeli commanders, the U.S. State Department was not especially excited about the idea. It eventually gained strong support from the Israeli Foreign Ministry, which pressed for daily newscasts in Arabic.

Uri Lubrani, an Israeli Foreign Ministry person involved with the Lebanese situation, has been a main channel for handling border passes, customs exemptions, communications and military liaison for personnel and equipment involved in the broadcasts.

The TV station, which developed from the VOICE OF HOPE Radio Station, is controlled by the "extremist right-wing" preacher Pat Robertson,

who has both political and missionary interests in the area. The successor to Major Haddad, General Antoine Lahat, is allegedly displeased with the failure of Robertson to provide the help he promised. Unnamed local people are quoted by the reporter as entertaining ideas of sinister motives, besides the missionary motives, which are said to lurk behind the whole operation, reminiscent of the film "Casablanca" and "international espionage!"

In reaction to the article, Knesset Member Avner Shaki of the National Religious Party has requested an investigation of the M.E. TV programs to determine whether they contain missionary messages which might influence the population here; and if so, the use of studios in Jerusalem should be stopped. Other Jewish religious circles have announced their intention to investigate the reports of missionary programs. (AL HAMISHMAR 14 AUG 89)

The local journal HADASHOT HADERA (Netanya 21 JUL 89), in a brief feature article by Bat-Ami Hamizrachi headed "Speaking from the Scene," provided a favourable review of the news furnished by M.E. TV to Israelis in the north, "thirsty for news," and described it as "good reporting, updated and swift." The reporter claims the station is highly regarded by Israeli Jews and Druze for its on-the-spot information and also for its features, notwithstanding the "clear religious message" which motivates the enterprise. It is often the envy of Israeli and foreign correspondents working in Israel who do not have the kind of access to Lebanon that M.E. TV correspondents have.

"THE MISSION"

JERUSALEM: Thousands of Jerusalem families have recently received missionary material in the mail. This was discovered when an ultra-orthodox man standing in a local post office queue turned to a devout woman who spoke English to inquire about a book he had received in English. When she informed him that it was a missionary book, he tore it to shreds. Besides the book, there was a subtly worded letter which could mislead readers to thinking it was a commentary on the Book of Psalms. Experts in missionary ideology are warning the public against the dangers of reading such books. (HAMODIYA 27 AUG 89)

BNEI BRAK: Residents of Bnei Brak were surprised to discover that books had reached their mailboxes along with missionary literature addressed to them personally. The book is called Two Men from Eden, and the public is warned to be extra careful not to allow such missionary material into their homes. (YATAID NE'EMAN 30 AUG 89)

CHRISTIANS IN ISRAEL

CHRISTIAN LIFE IN ISRAEL: The quarterly of the Israel Interfaith Association, Christian Life in Israel (No. 29, Spring 1989) included several items of interest to Evangelical Christians, among them a report on the 32nd annual conference in November 1988 of the United Christian Council in Israel (UCCI), on the theme, "Building His Church in Galilee"; a review of the book Judaism and the Origins of Christianity by David Flusser, published by Magnes Press of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem; and a call for Dialogue with Arab Christians, "a sorely missed voice in international Christian-Jewish dialogue."

The Summer/Autumn 1989 Issue, No. 30, of C.L.I.I. carried an item about the problem of burial for persons not belonging to established religious communities. Uri Mor, acting director of the Dept. for Christian Communities of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, hopes that a new Christian cemetery can be established in Nazareth for non-denominational Christians. The journal also reported on the Israeli branch of the United Bible Societies which was among the 1,000 publishers from 42 countries who participated in the 14th bi-ennial Jerusalem book fair in March. Samples of Bible translations were

displayed in their exhibit, and they reported that at least one book of the Bible has been translated into 1,907 languages.

An interview with Rev. Alfred Sawyer, rector of Christ Church in Jerusalem's Old City, brought forth "Some (Israeli) Independence Day Thoughts on the Restoration of Israel," in relation to biblical prophecy, the second coming of the Messiah Jesus, the attitudes of the historic, local Christian communities, the Gentile Church and bishoprics in Jerusalem (the first 16 bishops were Jewish) and "the extremely complicated" situation in the region. There was also a brief review of the monograph by Petra Heldt and Malcolm Lowe, issued by the American Jewish Committee in Israel, entitled Theological Significance of the Rebirth of the State of Israel: Different Christian Attitudes.

Two readers protested an editorial comment in Issue No. 28 on the subject of "Dialogue or Mission?", in which Messianic Jews were described "as much a marginal phenomenon of the Jewish community today as they probably were in the first centuries of the Church." Derek White, U.K. Director of CHRISTIAN FRIENDS OF ISRAEL, asked: "Whoever then comprised the early Church at its inception ...? To them we Gentiles owe all that follows ..." Menahem Benhayim, Israel Secretary, International Messianic Jewish Alliance, complained that in a publication aimed at promoting links between the Christian world and Israel, "to relegate the first generations of Jewish believers in Jesus to a state of insignificance is surely in poor taste, if not offensive." Editor Yishai Eldar responded that "obviously, Jewish Christians were significant to the history of early Christianity (but) have had but marginal significance in the history of the Synagogue."

CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

SOLIDARITY WITH CHRISTIAN PALESTINIANS: Three South Africans and an Indian theologian at the Manila Conference on World Evangelization (LAUSANNE II) called upon evangelicals to show more solidarity with Christian Palestinians in territories occupied by Israel. Loyalty to the Jewish people must not lead to approving oppression by Israel, they said. The Indian theologian, Vinay Samuel, criticized the "lukewarm" attitude of certain evangelicals towards racism and oppression, which was a great "stumbling block" to evangelism worldwide. (IDEA No. 3/4/89) Meanwhile, a ten-day conference of the Central Committee of the W.C.C. in Moscow, ending 26 JUL 89, passed a resolution in support of the "battle of the Palestinian people" in the territories occupied by Israel, demanded mutual recognition of Israel and Palestine, and the breakup of all Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. (IDEA 3/4/89)

The Czech theologian Cyril Horak, who attended a WCC conference on world missions as an observer of the Lausanne movement, held in San Antonio, Texas, in May, sharply criticized position papers which had called the Palestinian revolt an expression of God's will. (IDEA) West German Pietists have appealed for support of Israel with all means, especially by prayer, and expressed dismay with the WCC World Mission Conference's pledge of support for the intifada, the armed Palestinian revolt. The Jews had been "oppressed, persecuted and ostracized for centuries ... and six million were murdered by Germans," they stated in their declaration. (IDEA)

NEWS READER TURNED LECTURER: The well-known news reader on Israel Radio, Freda Keet, has turned to a different audience, U.S. Christian Fundamentalists. She has been speaking in "Bible Belt" areas in small-town and big-city churches as well as addressing UJA groups promoting Israel, and is again leaving for a five-month speaking tour. (IN JERUSALEM 26 AUG 89)

CENSORED PSALMS: The Anglican Church of New Zealand has published an "original" edition of the Book of Psalms in which the names "Zion" and

"Israel" have been altered or deleted in a total of 61 places. Brian Carel, chairman of the church council, defended the practice on the grounds that New Zealand Christians would be able to accept Christianity "more easily" without having to identify politically. (SHEARIM 28 JUN 89)

CHRISTIAN SYMBOLISM IN TEL-AVIV: An Orthodox writer protests that young Jewish people have taken to wearing medals and chains with gold crosses, and asks whether the schools have neglected to teach them what the cross has meant to Jews — the Inquisition, the blood libels, persecutions and pogroms and crusades. Yet why complain about youth, he asks, when the Tel-Aviv municipality continues to sponsor classical music events at Immanuel Church in Jaffa, and even allows them to be advertised on municipal bulletin boards. (HATSOFEH 20 AUG 89)

Ron Widberg, in a musical review of an organ concert at Immanuel Church, published in MAARIV (25 JUL 89), had high praise for the organist Peter Chirac and for an "interesting" program including "The Way of the Cross" by the modern French composer Marcel Dupre. "It is doubtful if all music-lovers in Tel-Aviv are aware of the Immanuel Lutheran Church, built like a spacious concert hall with an excellent organ," he writes.

SUNDRIES

ISRAEL SECTARIAN JAILED IN EGYPT: Jimmy Friedman, 35, from Bat Yam, was arrested in Taba when Egyptian border guards found literature of the Jehovah Witness sect in his car. Egyptian law prohibits the introduction of missionary propaganda into Egypt. Brought before an Egyptian magistrate, Friedman, an I.D.F. invalid, tried to persuade the judge to join the sect. He was detained for two weeks, fined the equivalent of US \$1,750 and released, following the intervention of the Israeli consul in Cairo. (YEDIOT AKHRONOT 13 AUG 89; HADASHOT 27 AUG 89)

LETTER TO A SHEIKH: A missionary organization in California has sent a letter to the abducted Lebanese Hizbullah Sheikh Abdul Obeid in care of the Israeli Army HQ, but it was decided not to pass the letter on to the sheikh. (HADASHOT 22 AUG 89)

MISSION CAMPAIGN FORECAST: A U.S. Christian missionary group based in Maryland is planning a vigorous campaign in Israel, the chairman of an anti-mission task force, Julius Berman, reported. It will include giant ads, radio programs, street meetings, records and other means to gain Israeli attention. (EREV SHABAT 4 AUG 89)

"BECAUSE WE MOURN, BECAUSE WE SHALL BE COMFORTED": A review of a book of poems by Israeli poetess Rickie Deskal was published in KAWL HA'IR (30 JUN 89). Her "attraction to Jesus and the New Testament is part of one of the most important and significant streams in contemporary Israeli poetry: a free faith, religion, without skull caps, unorthodox, which gives equal weight to Moses and Jesus, to Buddha and cabbala." One of her poems is about a visit to the Mount of the Beatitudes, "and it is clear to the reader that she has profoundly internalized the message of the Nazarene." She alludes to the famous saying of Jesus about comfort in the Sermon on the Mount, in which she comforts the Messiah no less than he comforts her.

BAPTIST PRINCIPLES: Rev. Musa Abu Ali, First Baptist Bible Church in Ramallah, in a letter to the JERUSALEM POST (20 AUG 89) protests against the impression created by some Christians (including Baptists) who have taken political positions regarding Israel, biblical prophecy and the intifada. "Such statements are contrary to the fundamental principles of Baptists (who) have always accepted the principle of the separation of Church and State ... based on the Bible, the inspired Word of God ... Concern for peace and justice for all God's children,

Israeli or Palestinian, and not partisan politics, is the true Christian position."

DIASPORA JEWISH NEWS:

SCOTLAND: Christian missionary activity among Jews is being pursued with increased vigour at a time when the Jewish community is riven with doubts over the direction in which Israel is moving (or, perhaps, failing to move). Some missionaries have been quick to seize on the uncertainty as a path into the minds and hearts of the waverers ... that accepting Jesus as Messiah does not preclude remaining Jewish. The Church of Scotland has made efforts over the past few years to improve its contacts with Scottish Jewry, yet even here there have been undercurrents of missionary tendencies. (JEWISH ECHO, GLASGOW 13 JAN 89)

Proselytization and conversion were the main issues discussed at the public meeting of the Council of Christians and Jews. The meeting, held by the West of Scotland branch of CCJ, was followed by a heated discussion, with many contributors expressing their grave concern at the activities of Christian missionary organizations. Canon Jim Richardson, Executive Director of CCJ in the UK, said that a statement condemning "coercive proselytism directed towards Jews as incompatible with the Christian faith" had been "almost happily" accepted until "the new movement JEWS FOR JESUS had come from the United States." (JEWISH ECHO 20 JAN 89)

The main discussion at a delegate meeting of the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council was concerned with conversion attempts by missionary organizations within the local Jewish community. In his presidential statement, Dr. Walter Sneader drew attention to the targetting of Jews through conspicuous ads placed by missionary organizations. This damaged Jewish-Christian dialogue. "Christians must accept that our holy covenant with God is permanent and requires us to obey the full 613 commandments; the earliest followers of Jesus considered themselves Jews, and continued to observe all the obligations incumbent upon them as such," he stated. "Christians believe Jesus was divine; Jews do not, and there can be no middle ground," he added. (JEWISH ECHO 27 JAN 89)

ENGLAND: In a hard-hitting talk at Hillel House, London, co-sponsored by the Lubavitch University Council and "Operation Judaism," Canadian Rabbi Jacob Schochet, expert on missionaries and cults, and philosophy professor at Humber College, attacked Christian evangelism. Several missionaries (including Chuck Snow from the London Messianic Congregation) were present at the meeting. The rabbi traced evangelism through the ages and its horrific effects on the Jews, culminating in the Holocaust. The new evangelism has met with more success than in the past by leaving Jewish rituals and practices intact. "They are willing to spend thousands of pounds to gain one Jew," he remarked, and discounted the common view that those involved in this movement were problem Jews. "They are some of the finest and most religiously sensitive people we have," he admitted, "but the missionaries are the first shoulders they have to lean on in times of stress and depression." One must argue against the "moral repugnance of evangelism." (JEWISH TRIBUNE 16 FEB 89, JEWISH CHRONICLE 17 FEB 89)

Some Jewish families are being "torn to pieces" by Christian missionary groups operating in the Redbridge area, and the whole community should be on its guard against brainwashing tactics employed by controversial organizations such as JEWS FOR JESUS, CHRISTIAN MISSION TO THE JEWS, and others. This warning was issued by the head of the Habad Lubavitch Centre in Gants Hill, and supported by Rabbi Shmuel Arkush, in a speech at the Redbridge Jewish Youth and Community Centre. (JEWISH CHRONICLE 19 MAY 89)

"HELEN SHAPIRO'S CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY HAS HIGHLIGHTED THE DANGERS OF THE MESSIANIC APPROACH. RABBI ARYE FORTA EXPLAINS." Under this heading the London JEWISH CHRONICLE (9 JUN 89) featured an article attacking "Misguided Missions" and "the dawn of something completely new, and potentially the most sinister threat of all," the "Messianic approach." (The article itself made no mention of the English-Jewish singer's "conversion to Christianity.") The rabbi concludes: "We need intensive educational projects. We need to know what we are and why. With enough communal effort, we might yet see the day when even our Messianic brothers and sisters return to the fold." (This article was translated into Hebrew and reprinted in the ultra-orthodox daily HAMODIYA, 23 JUN 89.)

In response to this and another article, Helen Shapiro writes (CHRONICLE 23 JUN 89): Apart from being totally inaccurate, they are calculated to stir up animosity towards me and other Messianic Jews. I have not converted to a new religion, neither have I stopped being a Jew. On the contrary, through belief in Yeshua as the Messiah in its original biblical context, I am returning to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I know more about why I am Jewish, and identify with my people more than ever. I became a believer not through missionaries, but through carefully reading the Scriptures. I am flattered that you are so concerned about my beliefs and so interested in Messianic Judaism, but would ask that you check your facts before printing anything in future.

The same date the CHRONICLE published a letter by the Rev. Ronald H. Lewis: I write as a Jewish believer in Jesus, but I am not a missionary. I serve the United Reformed Church as adviser on Christian-Jewish Relations ... and am secretary of the Hebrew Christian Alliance. Rabbi Forta has every right to wage a campaign against missions (but) goes wrong to make false accusations, such as the suggestion that we teach that the Holocaust happened because of Jewish disbelief. It happened because of human sin. Incidentally, the message that you do not stop being a Jew (when coming to faith in Yeshua) was not new in the 1970s; it has always been true and is talmudic.

Two other letters were published on the same subject, one by T. Goldsobel, calling for more loving of fellow Jews, especially those vulnerable to missionaries, the elderly, the ill, the ignored. The other letter was by Richard Harvey of Church Ministry among the Jews, asking: "Are your high journalistic standards upheld by printing such a mixture of uninformed lies and half-truths about Messianic Jews?"

Following recent deceitful new tactics by missionaries near synagogues in North West London, leading rabbis have warned their congregants to avoid this insidious menace, with Rabbi Arkush of OPERATION JUDAISM of Birmingham giving full support. These missionaries behave in an orthodox Jewish manner, wearing ritual fringes and conducting Sabbath prayers, to ensnare Jewish souls. In addition, au pair girls employed in Jewish homes are instructed to tell children Bible stories in order to influence them for Christianity. They aim to capture as many souls as possible by the year 2,000. (JEWISH TRIBUNE, LONDON 13 JUL 89); also HAMAHANEH HAHAREDI, JERUSALEM 26 JUL 89)

*****END TRANSCRIPT*****
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