



Caspari Center

for Biblical and Jewish Studies

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Jerusalem, May 15 1996

Shalom!

Beginning in the month of May, we will introduce some changes in our clippings service.

From now on, I will be responsible for the whole process of translating and editing the clippings. I will also experiment with the format, such as creating different sections and featuring especially interesting articles at the beginning of each edition. I would very much appreciate hearing any suggestions you may have for improving the service.

Of special interest this month is the article about David Loden and his opera "David and Bathsheba." Praise God for the clarity and openness of this article. Let's pray that Messianic Jews and Christians will continue to receive such opportunities to express God's truth in the Israeli media.

In Yeshua,

Cindy Osborne
Caspari Center

Attn: Kai

THE VIEW FROM JERUSALEM

DAVID AND BATHSHEBA - THE OPERA

Yediot Aharonot (National daily), May 1 1996

As expected, there was a flurry of sensationalistic articles in the religious press decrying the missionary purposes of David Loden's opera "David and Bathsheba." They chronicled the attempts of Yad Le'Achim to have the various performances cancelled, and also the protests designed to scare away unwary opera-goers. The Jerusalem performance was interrupted at one point by a man crying out against the "blasphemous" content of the opera and Loden himself.

In stark (and surprising) contrast to these articles, the daily Yediot Aharonot published a well balanced two-page interview with Loden entitled "A Different Opera." In it he speaks about his past and his faith in Jesus, and responds to questions about his own beliefs as well as about Messianic believers in general. Following are a number of translated quotes from the article:

-Why should a Jew arrive at (faith in Jesus)?

"As far as we're concerned it's the truth. Whoever feels a strong need to build an intimate relationship with God arrives at it. If he asks God to show him the truth, this is what God will show him and then he will also believe in Jesus."

-Speaking of repentance: "Of what value is repentance (in Hebrew 'repentance' refers to becoming orthodox) if the heart is not involved? In Israel people think that all Christians are equal, but there are Christians who believe and those who just go to church on Sunday out of habit.... Judaism is the same. There are Jews who try to have a certain relationship with God and others who don't even believe he exists, and they're still Jews. That's the big difference between faith and religion. Religion should be an expression of the inner faith.

"When I read the New Testament I found the Messiahship of Jesus. ...I knew that faith in Jesus is true Judaism, and I know that some day all the Jews in Israel will recognize this."

-If you believe in Jesus why do you insist on calling yourself a Messianic Jew instead of a Christian?

"Because Jesus was a Jew. He was born and died a Jew. Jesus said much about the relationship man should have with his God... At its foundation is the concept of sin. Every man is a sinner and needs forgiveness of his sins in order to renew his relationship with God. In the opera I expressed the idea of dealing with sin from different angles.

"Why was David so great? Because his response to becoming aware of his sin was true repentance before God."

THE SOUL HUNTERS

By S. Shahor, Yediot Aharonot, April 9, 1996

A kibbutz outside of Netanya was the venue for a national messianic youth conference in late March.

The conference was organized by Ari and Shira Sorko-Ram, self-proclaimed Messianic Jews. They have sponsored a number of smaller regional youth conferences, which they say are attended only by children who come with their parents' permission.

The national conference was run by two groups from the USA. Brad, one of the American youth leaders, talked about "our cool rules," such as no drugs or alcohol, and threw free chocolate, cassette tapes, and CD's into the audience.

Scott Wilson, a charismatic American preacher, writhed and screamed like a rock star. He told the kids what to do, and they did not dare to disobey: "Don't any of you dare to talk! We're worshipping God and Jesus, and when the Holy Spirit is here, nobody talks, nobody moves! Start praying. Now! Don't move! Nobody dare to sit down! You Israelis, do you even know what worship is?" Wilson singled out individual kids, bringing them on stage and challenging them or praying with them.

More than 100 kids attended. Two of them, Ronny and Michal, come from dysfunctional homes. They were befriended by Messianic Jews, and caught by their "supposed love and understanding." The Messianic Jews seek teens from difficult family backgrounds as "weak links." "Most of the youth I spoke with were there without their parents' knowledge."

The Americans tell scary stories about kids who end up as drug addicts or even die, and offer faith in Jesus as the solution. They don't talk about repentance, but about Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and what they have in Chicago. "It's ... bigger, ... cooler. And (they) have ... cool music."

The American Messianics are quite professional. "The treatment begins with a big party, complete with a band, smoke machines, colored lights and showers of chocolate and disks. From there on the messianics close in on the confused souls a step at a time."

At the end of the conference, the Americans told the kids that they would be back this summer with a larger group, witnessing on the streets all over the country. They invited the kids to join them, and said that they would "See the schools in Israel turn into God's kingdom in Jesus' name. We'll shake this country."

Editor's note: According to the organizers of the conference, no one was there without their parents' permission. Participants' reactions were by and large positive, though some found the speakers a bit "too American." For the interviews and review, see the upcoming issue (number 24) of MISHKAN (for information on MISHKAN contact the Caspari Center).

TOWARDS CO-EXISTENCE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR IN RESPONSE TO "FOR CHRIST'S SAKE"

The Jerusalem Post (English language daily), March 8 & 15 1996

There were many letters both for and against the Messianic Jews. The following is a sampling of quotes from these letters.

...why is it acceptable for Jews to believe that Rabbi Schneerson was the Messiah, but unacceptable to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah? The entire "Who is a Jew?" question seems to have become something to manipulate for the insurance of supremacy...

...Christianity originated as a messianic movement here in Israel... and for all practical purposes Christianity is historically an essentially Jewish phenomenon. (V. Emory)

There is no such thing as bad publicity, and you have given Jews for Jesus front-page advertising.

The messianic Jews... feed on fertile ground mainly due to the lack of Jewish education for Israeli youngsters... your article... is an invitation to the confused generation and those immigrants who still are searching for their identity.

A Christian is a Christian - no matter his origins. (E. Chenkin)

The absurdity of the article on Messianic Jews is that he/she is judged a Christian by Jews and a Jew by Christians - a bizarre mutant. (M. Kramer - reprinted by permission of the Jerusalem Post.)

...Christianity, like Islam, is a totalitarian religion. If you don't hold to their beliefs, some dire fate awaits you... (A.R. Morris)

A person's identity, Jew or Gentile, is an issue determined by birth, not by the choices of what one believes or rejects. (E. Cove)

It was interesting to read Shmuel Golding's admission of instigating "local harassment"... I hope indeed that his institute along with his Yad L'Achim cohorts are staying "within the framework of the law."

However, it isn't hard to find Messianic/Christian leaders who have experienced their phones tapped or mysteriously not working at a crucial time, tires slashed or car cables ripped out.

This type of "local harassment" is also known as "thuggery."

It would be nice to see the anti-missionary missionaries clearly distance their organizations from such behavior. (J. Marlow - reprinted by permission of the Jerusalem Post.)

AN AMBASSADOR OF LOVE TO ZION

By Y. Goldstein, HaZofe (Religious daily), March 8 1996

The third congress of the International Christian Embassy, longtime supporters of Israel's stand against the Arab threat, took place last week in Jerusalem.

As if to remind us that we are not yet living in a "new" Middle East, the conference opened on the day of the terrorist bombing of a bus in Jerusalem. With an isolationist candidate gaining popularity in the liberal US, and even the fervently Zionist Makuya sect from Japan accused of missionizing, it is hard not to be suspicious of Christian lovers of Israel...

With all this prejudice, I went to meet with Jan Willem Van der Hoeven, the founder of the International Christian Embassy. I met a man fluent in Hebrew, whose sons served in the Israeli army, and whose political opinions are decidedly right-wing. He derides the Israeli government for signing the Oslo agreement and calls on West Bank settlers not to give up.

Approximately 1,000 people, representing a 75,000 member world-wide Christian Zionist church, attended the conference in Jerusalem and paid solidarity visits to settlements in Judaea, Samaria and Gaza. The idea for the Embassy came in 1980, when the majority of embassies moved from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. Van der Hoeven saw this as a golden opportunity to do more than talk about loving the Jewish people and state, and with the blessing of the Chief Rabbis opened a new embassy, with representatives from 23 nations. One of the first things the new embassy did was raise money for the "Let My People Go" operation, which has so far paid the transportation costs for 50 planeloads of immigrants.

I was surprised to learn that many Christians light Sabbath and Hannuka candles, and that a Christian Zionist congregation in Florida recently moved their service to a public hall in order to accommodate a visiting Israeli speaker. They also asked him to edit their song list for the service so as not to offend him.

I asked Mrs. Ellen Van der Hoeven if they, like other Christians, did not wish for Jews to repent and become Christians. She categorically denied this, saying that Jews should remain Jews, and that if anything it is the Christians who should get closer to Judaism.

In these terrible days, there is a man among us who is calling on Christians world-wide to support Israel politically and financially, and calling on us to love and believe in ourselves, and to remember that our salvation will come not from a political resolution but by the will of God.

MIGHTY CHRISTIAN OF THEM

L. Abramowitz, The Jerusalem Post, March 18 1996

The goals of Bridges for Peace, an evangelical Christian organization operating in Jerusalem since 1977, sound like those of a typical Jewish group: helping immigrants, repairing the homes of the elderly, providing food baskets, and raising support for Israel.

Founded by a Christian Zionist, Dr. G. Douglas Young, Bridges believes in the historic right of the Jews to return to their homeland, and sees in this return a fulfillment of scriptural prophecies.

Bridges has a program through which Christians abroad can support a family of new immigrants monetarily, as well as having personal contact with them through letters and photos. They have also refurbished over 250 homes and provided basic necessities for many families through their food bank.

Most of the support comes from overseas, but local workers have returned to the Biblical practice of gleaning in the fields of a number of kibbutzim and moshavim which have also donated surplus supplies on occasion.

Several American rabbis have assured Israelis suspicious of evangelism that Bridges is working "with no strings attached."

US CHRISTIAN GROUP AIDS TERROR VICTIMS

The Jerusalem Post, March 28 1996

At a meeting of the Pentecostal High Adventure Ministries' leadership in Los Angeles, George Otis, the head of the ministry and a longtime friend of Israel, remarked that more had to be done for terror victims than offering prayers and condolences. This remark resulted in \$10,000 being donated then and there, and Otis plans to continue raising money through his chain of newspapers and radio stations.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS OF ISRAEL (letter to the editor)

B'Gush Echad (Israeli Gaza magazine)

Recently two members of Christian Friends of Israel visited the settlements in the Gaza area in order to show their support to the residents there. Thousands of Bible-believing Christians all over the world have joined the "Wall of Prayer," in which people pray for individual cities and towns all over Israel. In this way, there are people praying specifically for the Gaza settlements. As Christians we know that our Bible and our Savior are from the Jews, and we see in the return of the Jews to Israel a fulfillment of prophecy.

We want to thank the residents of Gaza for their dedication to the land God has given to Israel.

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR?

MISSIONARY MATERIAL DISTRIBUTED IN ORTHODOX NEIGHBORHOOD'S MAILBOXES IN BEIT SHEMESH

Yated Ne'eman, March 15 1996

Residents of the orthodox neighborhoods of Beit Shemesh have recently found missionary material in their mailboxes, in the guise of leaflets offering Bibles in different languages. Responding to complaints, the spokesperson for the Postal Authority stated that their job is simply to deliver mail, not to check or censor its contents.

A number of other papers ran similar articles, one of them calling on the recipients of such material to burn it in the traditional leaven burning ceremony before Passover.

A FORUM FOR A MISSIONARY (Letter to the Editor)

Tel Aviv weekly, March 15 1996

A reader from Bnei Brak complains about an article written on Bill Thompson, in which Thompson propagates missionary ideas. The writer cites the uproar caused by Thompson's coming to play in Israel in the first place because of his evangelistic activities in the USA, which, apparently, he is continuing in this country.

IDF HOLDS SUMMER CAMPS IN MISSIONARY VILLAGE

Yated Ne'eman (Religious daily), March 22 1996

Lev l'achim has written to Prime- and Defense Minister Shimon Peres, warning that by holding summer camps in the Baptist Village the IDF is exposing vulnerable children to the influence of dangerous Christian missionaries. In response, the IDF spokesman announced that the camps would be relocated and all contact with the Baptist cult would be stopped.

A NEW MISSIONARY PLOT

HaModia (Jerusalem religious daily), March 22 1996 & Kfar Habad Weekly, April 7 1996

Rabbi Zvi Cohen of Yad l'achim reports that Baruch Maoz, a missionary from Rishon LeZion, has founded a publishing house called "HaGefen" (the vine) with the purpose of producing missionary materials. These include Bibles containing both Old and New Testaments, which he wishes to distribute to school children.

According to Cohen, Maoz has made tempting offers to a number of local printers to convince them to print these materials. In response, Yad l'achim will mount a media campaign aimed at dissuading printers from cooperating with Maoz.

Two other articles, in the Jerusalem Post (March 22) and Arim, a Rishon area weekly (March 15), report on the fact that HaGefen, as a non-profit organization, receives a discount on its city taxes. A city council member has lodged a complaint against this, as he regards the discount as assisting missionary work.

On another front, Yad l'achim is fighting the distribution of missionary material at the Ramat Gan diamond exchange. Reportedly Israeli diamond dealers are loath to refuse the material for fear of offending the Belgian businessman/missionary distributing it.

SHAS REPRESENTATIVES IN TIBERIAS PREPARE TO FIGHT MISSIONARY ACTIVITY PLANNED FOR THE PASSOVER HOLIDAY

Yom LeYom (Jerusalem religious weekly), March 28 1996

The municipality of Tiberias has instructed its workers to prevent the distribution of missionary material in town.

Rabbi Raphael Cohen of Shas reports that they have received many warnings of planned missionary campaigns aimed at converting Jews. Last year during the Passover holiday there was an influx of missionaries, who targeted the many vacationing Israelis and tourists, as well as local residents.

Representatives of the cults also plan to attend the various festivals being held in the region, in order to influence young people.

Municipality workers, along with Yad l'achim and Lev l'achim activists, will work to foil the schemes of the missionaries.

SHAS DEMANDS A VERDICT IN THE STATE ATTORNEY'S INVESTIGATION OF THE MISSION

Yom LeYom, March 28 1996

Representatives of Shas have once again requested a verdict in the ongoing case against Father Marcel Dubois, in which he is accused of offering a financial incentive for conversion.

The case involves a woman who used her association with the Father as leverage to coerce the Housing Ministry into giving her an apartment.

The Jerusalem District Attorney intended to dismiss the case, a stand which drew fire from Shas. They argue that the woman's lack of sincerity in her dealings with the Father does not detract from the fact that he committed a crime by offering her assistance in exchange for her conversion. According to Shas, this law is too easy on soul-hunters, as it merely prohibits offering incentives for conversion, allowing them to freely spread their traps so long as there is no bait involved.

YAD L'ACHIM AND HABAD YOUTH FIGHT MISSIONARIES IN KIRYAT GAT

HaZofe (Religious daily), April 5, 96

The assistant mayor of Kiryat Gat informed our paper that a branch of Yad l'achim has opened in Kiryat Gat, due to recently increased missionary activity aimed primarily at new immigrants from the CIS and families struggling with financial difficulties. Yad l'achim has distributed materials which warn against the missionaries, who seek to take advantage of these people's ignorance of Judaism and their financial needs. The missionaries have gone from house to house and offered free New Testaments and Bible lessons in order to influence these families.

It should be noted that the missionaries do not leave a telephone number or address, but return to visit two or three times a week.

A similar article in the Ashdod weekly (March 15) states that Yad l'achim has declared "war" on missionaries in that city, naming both Jehovah's Witnesses and Messianic Jews as the targets of their anti-missionary efforts.

The article focuses on the Rabbi of the Ethiopian community's crusade to stop the missionaries' work among his flock, who he sees as particularly vulnerable since they have little Jewish background and great financial needs. He has written to the Minister of Absorption asking for immediate help in "saving" his people.

THE CHURCH IN ISRAEL

ATTORNEY SOKOVOLSKY'S CRUSADE

Ma'ariv (National daily), March 12 1996

This is a two page tribute to an attorney who represented many of the historic churches in their property transactions in Israel. The article contains stories of disputes over church property and institutional greed, saying that "even the priests knew that in case God didn't help them, it wouldn't hurt to have money..."

PHOTO CAPTION, Jerusalem Post, April 1 1996

Local Catholics and pilgrims took part in a procession marking Palm Sunday at the beginning of the Christian Holy Week. At the request of Religious Affairs Minister Shetreet, the civil administration will consider the possibility of granting Palestinian Christians from the territories permission to take part in Easter celebrations in Jerusalem.

GOOD FRIDAY MUTED BY CLOSURE AND FEAR OF BOMBS

The Jerusalem Post, April 5,7 1996

Many tourists and Palestinian Christians were kept away from Good Friday celebrations this year by fear of terrorist bombings and the closure on the territories. The small number of pilgrims shocked those who are accustomed to a large turnout for the procession down the Via Dolorosa, which marks Jesus' crucifixion.

An Easter message from the heads of 11 denominations in Jerusalem, addressed to Palestinians and Israelis, called for an end to violence and the building of a new society for both peoples. The message expressed sympathy for the victims of terror and their families, while calling on the Israeli government not to "indulge in the same logic of violence which it condemns itself as extremism." The church leaders said that the closure is punishing only Palestinians, and in another statement called on Israel to stop expropriating land in Bethlehem.

The French Foreign Ministry spokesman called for Israel to allow Palestinians from the territories free access to the holy sites during the holiday.

GREEK-CATHOLIC PRIESTS IN ISRAEL ASK BISHOP MAXIMUS SALOME TO RESIGN

HaAretz (National daily), April 7 1996

The conflict between a majority of the priests in the Greek Catholic church and its head reached a new high this week, with the priests requesting Bishop Salome's resignation as well as the Vatican's intervention in the administration of the Church.

This latest disagreement centers on Salome's appointment of Father Majad Atalla as general secretary of the diocese. His opponents claim that he has broken a promise to appoint someone holding an academic degree, who has experience and is single. Father Atalla does not match up to any of these criteria.

According to Father Elias Shakur, another candidate for the disputed position, Bishop Salome is too elderly to fulfill his duties, and has for years ignored the various councils which should be part of the decision making process in the Church. His superiors reside in Syria and Lebanon, and have little knowledge or interest in what happens in Israel.

THE POLITICAL SCENE

CHRISTIAN COUNCIL MEMBERS CHECKING INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF COMPETING IN THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS

Zafon 1 (Acre weekly), March 8 1996

A number of Christian council members from the Galilee area are holding intensive talks on founding a Christian political party which would compete in the elections for the Knesset. The move is a result of a feeling that there is no viable candidate in the Christian forum of the Labor party. This is the second time in Israel's history that a Christian party will compete in Knesset elections. The first was in 1981, when the party did not win any seats in the Knesset.

In a related article in the Nazareth weekly, the Christian forum of the Labor party announced that attorney Isam Hadad will be their candidate in the party primaries. Many believe that Hadad will be supported by Moslem as well as Christian voters.

ELISHA PELEG'S "SAVIOR"

Hadashot Mishpaha (Jerusalem religious weekly), March 21 1996

This article reports that Elisha Peleg, a lawyer and Jerusalem city council member who is running for a Likud seat in the Knesset, has gained the support of David Stern, a Messianic Jew. In a letter to Messianic citizens of Israel, Stern advises them to vote for Peleg, as he would support the right of Messianic Jews to immigrate to Israel and prevent their being discriminated against.

When interviewed by the paper, Peleg denied that Stern had any connection with his political activities, saying that he is merely a client in his private law practice. He defended his integrity as a Jew by noting that he prays regularly in a synagogue and that his daughter attends a state religious school. He claims that the attempt to identify him with the Messianic Jews is a plot to sully his reputation and harm his standing in the Likud party. He justified his meeting with a group of Messianics (in order to draft voters for the party) by saying that there are Arabs and Druse in the pluralistic Likud, so "why not Messianics?"