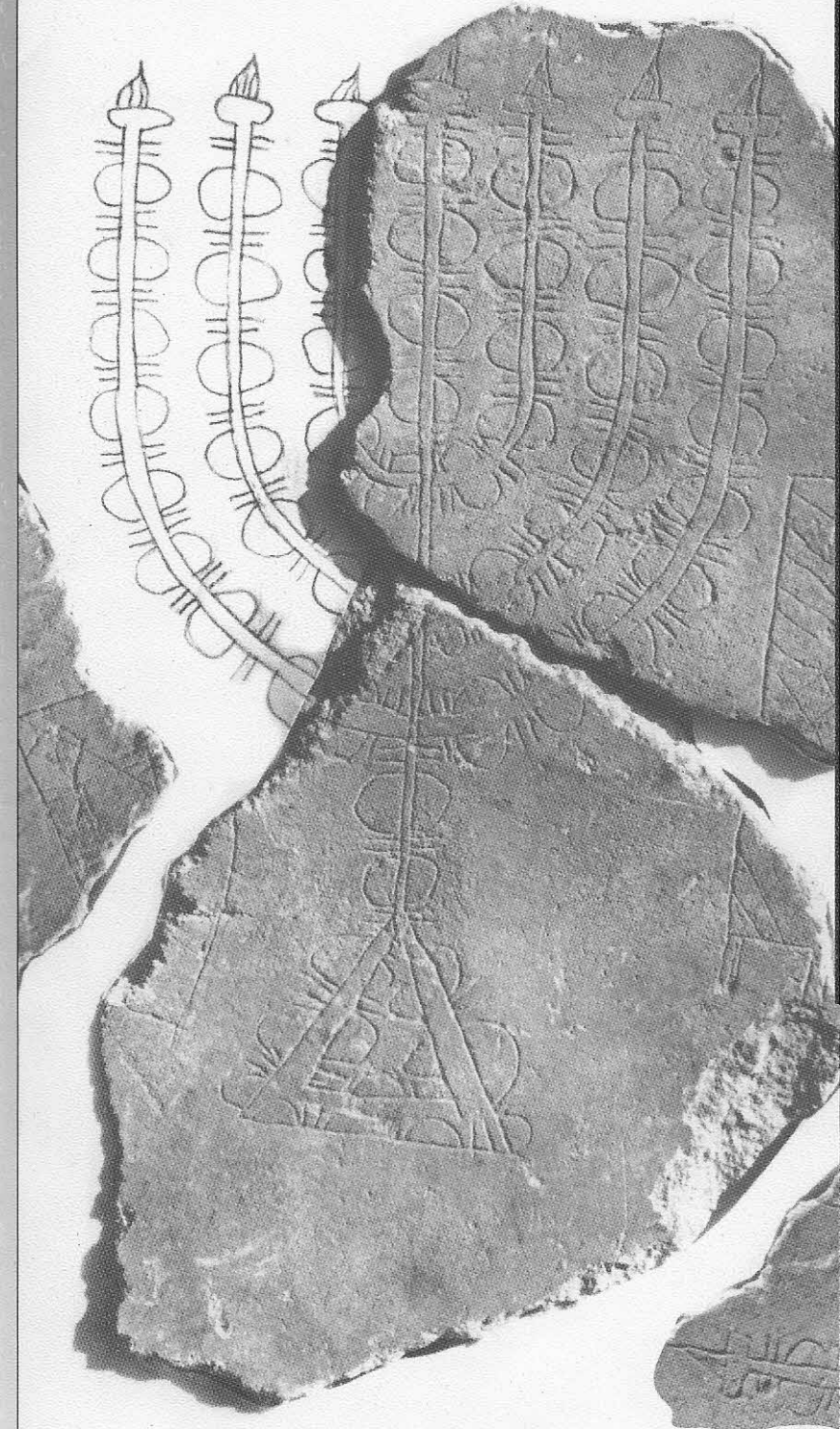


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“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us
and we beheld His glory,
glory as of the only begotten from the Father,
full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)



A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

MISHKAN

ISSUE 37/2002

Jerusalem

MISHKAN is a semi-annual journal dedicated to biblical and theological thinking on issues related to Jewish Evangelism, Hebrew-Christian/Messianic-Jewish identity and Jewish-Christian relations.

MISHKAN is published by the Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies.

MISHKAN's editorial policy is openly evangelical, committed to the New Testament proclamation that the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus (Yeshua) the Messiah is "to the Jew first." MISHKAN is a forum for discussion, and articles included do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors.

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Prices are for two issues per year, including airmail postage.

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Israel: US\$17 or the equivalent in NIS

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Haim (Haimoff) Bar-David: Apostolic Authority among Jewish Yeshua-Believers

Gershon Nerel*

Among the pioneers of the modern revival of a Messianic presence within Israel linked to Yeshua, the Bar-David family are unique. While not a few preceded them in the difficult witness and walk of Yeshua within reviving national Israel, none had succeeded in striking deep enough roots in the land to transmit their commitment to future generations who would remain in the land faithful to the parental vision.¹

Haim Joseph Haimoff was born in the small town of Doupnitza, not far from Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, 10 May 1905. He was the oldest son of six children, two younger brothers and three sisters. His parents, Joseph and Tamar, of Sephardic origin, were not observant Jews but kept Jewish traditions. His father, a wealthy tobacco merchant, was a free thinker who served as the president of the Jewish Community for nearly 15 years. Long before school age, Haim happily joined his father in *Selichot*—early morning prayers offered in the synagogue a month prior the Feast of Trumpets, so called New Year.²

When Haimoff was 13 his father sent him to an American College, conducted by the Congregational Church, in the nearby town of Samokov. There for the first time young Haimoff came in contact with the New Testament. "It impressed me very much," he wrote in one version of his brief autobiographies.³ But because the curriculum of the school was very extensive,

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¹ Menahem Benhayim, "In Memoriam - Haim (Haimoff) Bar-David," in *The Hebrew Christian*, vol. 64 (1991), 6.

² Haim Joseph Haimoff, *My Biography: Since Birth to Faith in Zürich 1923, Plus*, Manuscript in the Private Archive of Gershon Nerel, (= PAGN) n.d., (1969?), 1.

³ H.J. Haimoff, *My Biography*, 1.

it proved impossible for Haimoff to study the Bible systematically and profoundly. At home they spoke Ladino,⁴ and in school he studied Bulgarian, French, English, Russian and German. Although he very much liked classical literature and philosophy, both ancient and modern, he complained that something was still lacking. "My soul was hungry for something that I did not know where to find. My world was the world of thought, and I continued reading and seeking."⁵

After graduating the American College at the age of 17, he continued his studies in the University of Zürich, Switzerland, in the Faculty of Law with its special branch of Social Economics. During two academic years (1923/4 and 1924/5) he took classes in economic theory and practice,⁶ and focused on legal aspects of business management. These studies actually enabled him to skip military service in Bulgaria.⁷ However, it was in Zürich that Haimoff decided to leave the academic world and to dedicate his entire life to the service of Yeshua. After he carefully read the Sermon on the Mount he realized that here he had found the treasure in the field. Decades later he wrote in his testimony:

What I found in this wonderful Sermon and in the New Testament I could not find in the whole of classical literature and in all the philosophical systems. I knelt and prayed to the God of my fathers. I was filled with the Holy Ghost who convinced me beyond any doubt that Christ was the Savior and in the New Testament was the truth. I had no more any interest in continuing my studies in the university. I wanted to know Christ deeper and deeper and serve Him by proclaiming His Gospel to my people. After four semesters, God helped me in stopping my studies. Only one year more I could get my doctorate in Political Economy. But I was not anxious for that since I did not intend to make any use of it.⁸

At home in the beginning his father did not make any objections to his faith in Yeshua. At the time Haimoff was his father's attorney and chief treasurer. They had in their tobacco workshop about 250 daily workers, mostly women, besides technical staff and clerks. Yet when the father saw that for his son the spiritual matters were indeed serious and deep, he told Haimoff that he could

⁴ *Ladino* is a Spanish Jewish dialect, also known as 'Judeo-Spanish' or 'Spaniolish', a form of *Castilian* with an admixture of Hebrew elements. Ladino spread after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. Like Yiddish, it is written in Hebrew characters.

⁵ H.J. Haimoff, *My Biography*, 1.

⁶ *Testatbuch für Herrn stud. jur. Haim Haimoff aus Sofia*, (Certificate of Accomplished Studies), Universität Zürich, from 12 November. 1923 to 27 April 1925. Matrikelnummer 29776. This document includes the signatures of the university professors, PAGN.

⁷ *Zeugnis z. H. der Königl. Militärbehörden in Bulgarien*, Universität Zürich, Testifying that Haimoff enrolled to the university on 16 October 1923. The document was signed on 9 July 1925, PAGN.

⁸ H.J. Haimoff, *My Biography*, 2. He repeated that story verbally in private and assembly meetings.

everybody about Yeshua. This Haimoff could not accept. So by the end of May, 1928 he left family and home and traveled to the land of Israel, which he believed was the only divinely appointed place for Jews to live.

Student, Laborer and Missionary in Mandatory Palestine

Haimoff went to Jerusalem. There he contacted the American Church of the "Christian and Missionary Alliance" (C&MA) located on 55 Prophets Street. He was told that they had a special department for work among the Jews, carried out about 400 meters down the road, on 56 Prophets Street. Haimoff met Leigh Irish, the missionary in charge, who told him that the C&MA had a Bible School in Bethlehem. Its official name was "The Bible Training Institute of the C&MA - Men's Department" (BTI). This was what Haimoff was looking for.⁹ He registered and paid the fees for the whole year.¹⁰ His parents came several times from Europe to take him back, but he declined. He stayed till he graduated in 1932.

After he finished his studies at the BTI, Haimoff worked in Mandatory Palestine as a daily laborer in agriculture and as teacher. He worked in the *Pardesim* (orange groves) of the Sharon plains, often in the citrus fields around Magdiel, near Netanya, as well as in banana plantations, and gave private lessons. He was ready to do everything to support himself and remain in the land. Occasionally Haimoff went for short visits to Bulgaria to convince his family to settle in the land of Israel, but because of the difficulty liquidating their real estate, this did not materialize. Eventually Haimoff returned to the land by himself.¹¹ In 1937 he wrote a bilingual pamphlet, in English and Hebrew, under the name H. Ben-Joseph. It was entitled "Does God Have a Son - What Says the Old Testament."¹² In this booklet Haimoff confessed that as a teenager in gymnasium he was greatly impressed by the New Testament, but

⁹ M.A. Butterfield, "Jewish Department", in *Palestine and Arabian Mission of the Christian and Missionary Alliance - Annual Report for 1928*, Jerusalem 1929, 37.

¹⁰ The principal of the school when Haimoff enrolled in 28 Nov 1928, was Charles H. Shaw. The total school fees for 1928-29 were twenty Palestine Pounds and 375 mils. Receipt no. 37. PAGN.

¹¹ H.J. Haimoff, "From Bulgaria to Jerusalem", in *Salvation* (Organ of the American Association for Jewish Evangelism, Winona Lake, Indiana), vol. 9, January 1955, pp. 9-10. It should be noted that the date of birth mentioned in this article (27 April 1905) is mistaken. The correct date (10 May 1905) appears on the gravestone which is at Yad-Hashmona.

¹² H. Ben Joseph, *Haomnam Yesh Ben Le'Elohim - Ma Omer Tanach Odot Zot?*, Living Waters Printing Press, P.O. Box 621, Jerusalem 1937 (10 pages in English and 6 pages in Hebrew). The publisher, C.A. Gabriel, was an enthusiastic pro-Jewish Arab Christian, who between 1928-1935 was in charge of the C&MA Jewish work.

there was one thing only that did not allow him to fully accept Christ: "He called Himself the Son of God; and if the Son, then God Himself. At once I remembered the first commandment of God 'Thou shall have no other gods before me', and I trembled before the thought of taking such a step without fully understanding it."¹³ Later on, he described how he became acquainted with the Old Testament and understood the unique plurality of the Godhead through the word *Elohim*. He particularly referred to the Sonship of Yeshua as related to the verse "The Lord has said to Me, You are My Son, today I have begotten You" (Ps 2:6-7). His conclusion was that the Word of God does not have only one passage about God having a Son, but a richness of texts revealing this truth. Haimoff never doubted the issue of the full divinity of Yeshua, still a stumbling-block for so many Jews, even for certain Messianic Jews. Throughout his lifetime, and frequently in his teaching, Haimoff quoted the verse "For it pleased the Father that in Him (Yeshua) all the fullness should dwell" (Col 1:19).

During the Second World War Haimoff again visited his family in Bulgaria. In Sofia in 1942 he married a second-generation Hebrew Christian girl named Rachel (Raschely or Schelly). They managed to escape the Nazis in January 1944 and came to Palestine/Eretz-Israel via Turkey and Lebanon. In Jerusalem Haimoff approached the *House of Seekers After the Truth* (*Beit Dorshe Emet*) located on 56 Prophets Street, where the C&MA had conducted its work among the Jews. The American Mission desperately needed a local helper, so they immediately employed Haimoff and his wife as local workers in their Jewish department.¹⁴ The Americans reported as follows: "Without overstatement we can say that the return of this brother after these years of Nazi persecutions was one of the minor miracles of Modern Missions – and perfectly timed."¹⁵

The compound of the *House of Seekers After the Truth*, well known for its simple *Tin Tabernacle*,¹⁶ was the residence of Haimoff and his family (1944-1947), as well as his working place. In the reading room he talked with visitors about his faith in Yeshua and also served as the librarian of the small

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3-4

¹⁴ The C&MA 'Second Quarterly Executive Committee', Feb. 23, 1944, in *Executive Committee Minutes Book*, Jerusalem C&MA Office, (Jan. 1927-Apr. 1944), 580; 586.

¹⁵ "A New Program for Palestine", in W.F. Smalley, ed., *Alliance Missions in Palestine, Arab Lands and Israel (1890-1970)*, N.Y. 1971, mimeographed, 384.

¹⁶ Currently this property belongs to the "Israeli Messianic Assembly" in Jerusalem. See, for example, Gershon Nerel, "The 'House of Seekers After Truth' in Jerusalem: From an American Mission to the 'Messianic Assembly of Israel'", *The Thirteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, August 2001 (edited article forthcoming).

theological library there.¹⁷ As the Alliance evangelist to the Jews, he also spoke in regular meetings that were held each Saturday afternoon or evening.¹⁸

Following the United Nations "Partition Resolution" of the land in November 1947, the security and political situation in Palestine deteriorated rapidly. Violence was worse than the pattern of the Arab riots of 1936-39. Jews and Arabs were attacking each other and the situation was precarious. Thus, for example, when on his way from the *Katamon* residential area to the American Church, Haimoff was attacked by an infuriated Arab with a revolver, who shot at him four times from a distance of three feet.¹⁹ The first two shots missed him; the third shot hit his head just above his eye causing profuse bleeding but not a dangerous wound. The fourth shot pierced his shoulders, grazed his skin and the bullet lodged in the pad of his coat. He grabbed the hands of the man, knocked him down in the struggle and then from every direction shots rang out toward him, yet miraculously he was not hit. Later on he was taken by an ambulance and his wound was treated. He was then settled with his entire family in the basement of the American Church.²⁰

The Watershed of 1948

The British wanted to pull out as quickly as possible, and their withdrawal from Palestine was fixed for 1 May 1948. The government started to prepare the evacuation of their people. All the C&MA expatriate missionaries also left the country, except for Mrs. Bernice Gibson. In those days she wrote:

*The position of the Hebrew Christians is becoming more difficult every day. Now they are forced to leave the Arab quarters and come to the Jewish quarters, where they are more exposed to the persecuting elements of Jewry. With the evacuation of those who have employed them and the increased pressure of the Jewish organizations, their position is fast becoming humanly impossible.*²¹

¹⁷ See, for example, Gershon Nerel, "'House of Seekers After Truth' in Jerusalem: A Forerunner of the 'Israeli Messianic Jewish Assembly'", with photograph of the "Tin Tabernacle", in *Kivun*, vol. 25, fall 2001, 14 (in Hebrew).

¹⁸ Carolyn F. Irish with Elizabeth Irish-Wright, *Sharing Good Tidings in Zion*, Columbus, Georgia 1995, 82-84; 116.

¹⁹ A brief report was published in the daily *Davar* on December 30th, 1947 (no. 6828), p. A (Hebrew).

²⁰ Detailed report from Rev. Ralph Fried, Chairman, C&MA Church, Jerusalem, December 31st, 1947, to Rev. A. C. Snead, Area Director, p. 4, in C&MA 'A.B. Simpson Historical Archives', Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA.

²¹ B.C. Gibson, "In Troubled Jerusalem", in *The Alliance Weekly*, vol. 83, # 10, March 6, 1948, 152. Bernice Gibson (1892-1980) served with the C&MA in the land of Israel in the years 1931-1957. She was the editor of the first Messianic hymnal in Hebrew to contain both words and music.

Alongside the preparations for the evacuation of the British forces, the authorities, together with the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, and the International Hebrew Christian Alliance, launched a quasi-military action to evacuate all Hebrew Christians from the land. The fear was not merely that the small group of Jewish believers in Yeshua (JBY) be trapped between Jews and Arabs, but particularly that the JBY would be harassed and persecuted in the anticipated Jewish State.

"Operation Mercy," or "Operation Grace" as it was also called, was the name given by the British to evacuate the Palestinian Hebrew Christians through the Haifa seaport to England. On 7 May 1948, a group of about 40 JBY were escorted by police armored cars to *Kalandiah* aerodrome, north of Jerusalem, from where they were flown to Haifa and boarded the same day the S.S. "Georgic," which sailed for Liverpool on 8 May.²² There were about 80 Hebrew Christians, most of them from Jerusalem, Jaffa and Haifa.²³ Haim Haimoff and his family, as well as about a dozen other JBY in the land were also offered to evacuate via the "Georgic." Haimoff rejected the option of retreat, and took his decision as a step of faith in God who promised to fulfill his prophecies of restoration and redemption to Israel. Thus, alongside a few other JBY, like the Ostrovsky family in Jaffa²⁴ and the Ben-Meirs in Haifa,²⁵ the Haimoffs remained in the land during Israel's War for Statehood. In fact Haimoff volunteered for the *Mishmar Ha'am* (People's Guard), and took part in the civilian activities "defending the capital of Israel in the War of Independence, and esteemed for that."²⁶

The departure/evacuation of most Hebrew Christians was a significant watershed in the history of JBY in the land. Hebrew Christian communities and fellowships of the Mandatory period simply ceased to exist. "Operation Grace" caused rupture and discontinuity of grouping structures among JBY. It took decades for new congregations to develop. Yet the trauma of "Operation Grace"

²² Rev. Hugh Jones (Christ Church, Jerusalem) to Rev. C.H. Gill, (London, Church Missions to Jews), [=CMJ], 10th May, 1948, in *Bodleian Library*, Oxford, Department of Western Manuscripts, CMJ Miscellaneous Papers 581, (7pp).

²³ "Meet Georgic Liverpool with Cash", Copy of cable dated 3rd May, 1948, from Canon C. Witton-Davis, to Rev. R. C. Macanna, London (CMJ), in *St. Antony's College*, Oxford, Middle East Center, Private Papers, Box J&EM, LXXII/5.

²⁴ Cf. Menahem Benhayim, "Two Who were Twice Redeemed", in *The Hebrew Christian*, vol. 48, # 3, Autumn 1975, 113.

²⁵ Cf. Gershon Nerel, *Messianic Jews in Eretz-Israel (1917-1967): Trends and Changes in Shaping Self-Identity*, Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1996, 114-123 (Hebrew).

²⁶ An official certificate which solemnly testifies to this was given to H. Haimoff in 1964, on the occasion of the State of Israel celebrating its 16th year of independence (no. 00034). This is in the family residence living room, in 28 Arlozoroff St., Ramat-Gan.

in fact also had positive consequences. It enabled, step-by-step, formulation of new ways of thinking, new frameworks of traditions and self-determination of JBY – independent of the historic churches and of the missionary organizations in Israel. Thus, around the leadership of those few who did remain in the land in 1948, reinforced by new believers who moved into Israel through the massive waves of *aliyah*, gradually a new local generation developed. The Hebrew language became the common basis for the newly born Israeli assemblies of JBY. The remaining experienced leadership of the Mandatory times actually aimed towards organizational freedom from the established churches. They used the fresh linguistic tools of Hebrew to freely define their own theology, liturgy and identity.

Independent Evangelist in the State of Israel

During the year and a half after the Jewish State was born in 15 May 1948, Haimoff continued his missionary work at the Jewish department of the *House of Seekers After Truth*, not far from the American Gospel Church in Jerusalem. Moreover, in the fall of 1949 the C&MA conferred upon him the "Ordination to the Ministry of Jesus Christ."²⁷ Thus occasionally he was also called "Pastor Haim Joseph Haimoff."²⁸ Yet by the end of 1949, after collaborating for nearly six years, Haimoff informed his superior in Jerusalem, Leigh Irish, that as of 1 January 1950, he would stop working for the C&MA.²⁹ He felt that his hands were tied by the mission with regard to establishing a new Israeli non-denominational congregation. Bernice Gibson felt the same way. She became a freelance worker, and Mr. Irish complained, "her work does not build up the Alliance because she is not definite in advising converts to come to the Alliance services."³⁰

In 1950 Haimoff became the missionary of the "American Board of Missions to the Jews" (ABMJ), and was made responsible for managing their Jerusalem branch. This veteran missionary organization had its world headquarters in New York City, with Joseph Hoffman Cohn as General Secretary, and it was

²⁷ Rev. Leigh F. Irish, C&MA Jerusalem Board Representative, to Mr. Haim Haimoff, Jerusalem, Sept. 12, 1949. Copy of letter at C&MA Archives, Colorado Springs, Colorado. See also Rev. Leigh F. Irish to Rev. Milton Lindberg, 3916 Rosevelt Rd., Chicago, Ill., Jerusalem Nov. 4, 1949. Copy at C&MA archives, CO.

²⁸ See, for example, A.C. Snead, "In Israel and Palestine", in *The Alliance Weekly*, vol. 84, # 40, Oct. 1, 1949, 634.

²⁹ Cablegram of Rev. L. F. Irish to Rev. A. C. Snead, Jerusalem 26 Dec 1949, and letter of the same dated Dec. 27, 1949. In the C&MA Archives in Colorado Springs, CO.

³⁰ W. M. Smalley, *Alliance Missions in Palestine*, *op. cit.*, 503.

officially registered in Israel as a foreign corporation.³¹ The constitution of the corporation was composed in Hebrew and contained seven clauses, openly stating that its purpose was to "introduce the Word of God (Old and New Testaments) among the Jews in Israel."³² However, only three years later, Haimoff left the *ABMJ* and joined a relatively new mission led by Dr. A.B. Machlin who was the director of the conservative "American Association for Jewish Evangelism" (AAJE), based in Chicago. De facto the *AAJE* split from the *ABMJ*, which was its parent organization. Machlin was also the first editor of *Salvation*, a monthly magazine which carried the motto "Salvation is of the Jews," published since 1946.³³

From the outset, Haimoff had made it very clear to both leadership and readership of the *AAJE* that he had every intentions of working freely with no theological or other dictates. The content of his ultimate position about that was published in *Salvation*, as follows:

*The cooperation which I referred to in my letter to you has to do with the freedom to attend meetings in different churches or missions and to preach or witness there if invited to do so; and the perfect freedom to use New Testaments, tracts or other Christian literature which I might find helpful to the spiritual enlightenment of the people I visit. These things ought to be done by my own free will as I am led by the Holy Spirit.*³⁴

Haimoff showed much enthusiasm in his missionary work, both at his home, where many came to visit him, and by traveling throughout the land.³⁵ Quite naturally his home's large family living room, either in Jerusalem,³⁶ in Haifa (1955-1957) or in Ramat-Gan (1958 until today),³⁷ was turned into a Gospel Hall. Every Shabbat afternoon, or evening, when the meetings were packed also in the corridor, they could hold up to 80 people, including the family members. On Monday afternoons he arranged a Bible class for children, also in his home. Wednesday was his day for traveling around the country.

³¹ The address of the Israeli Branch, P.O. Box 419, Jerusalem, appeared on the formal letterhead of the organization. In PAGN.

³² The seven clauses dealt with the name of the corporation, its aims, membership, management, sources of income, meetings and amendments. *Constitution of the "American Board of Missions to the Jews" in Israel*, (in Hebrew). In PAGN.

³³ Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People (Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000)*, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill & London 2000, 114-118; 148.

³⁴ H.J. Haimoff, "Jerusalem, Israel", in *Salvation*, vol. 7, # 5, May 1953, 13.

³⁵ See also "Jewish Evangelism" in *The Wesleyan Methodist*, vol. 112, June 29, 1955, p. (411) 11.

³⁶ Haimoff's residential flat between the years 1950-1954 was at 11 Arlozoroff Street, Rehavia, Jerusalem.

³⁷ Haim's widow, Schelly, is still living in the same flat in Ramat-Gan, on 28 Arlozoroff Street. By coincidence the street name in Ramat-Gan was the same as in Jerusalem.

Thus, for example, he regularly visited Lod (Lydda), Ramle, Jaffa and Ibne, where he taught the Bible in Bulgarian. Schelly, his wife, was proving to be a special help in all the meetings, not only in providing solo music, but also in teaching people how to sing spiritual hymns.³⁸

For two years (1957-1958) Haimoff was elected President of the Hebrew Christian Alliance of Israel.³⁹ In those times the Alliance had a "Hebrew Christian Center" in Haifa with a small library,⁴⁰ which was under the auspices of the umbrella organization, The International Hebrew Christian Alliance (IHCA), headquartered in London. Haimoff usually addressed those who gathered there with the saying: "We must be an organism, not an organization." He emphasized the need to focus primarily on the spiritual life of the believers, and at least twice, for example, he strongly rebuked those who introduced into the Alliance attitudes of "divisions, separatism, hatred and gossip."⁴¹ Then, during 1960-1961 Haimoff became a member of the United Christian Council in Israel (UCCI), representing the *AAJE* as delegate among about 20 other representatives of different churches, missionary societies and Christian institutions.⁴² He also functioned as a member of the UCCI Executive Committee. There he cooperated with Arab Christians,⁴³ and until 1966 attended the annual UCCI conferences.⁴⁴ However, when he realized that the UCCI leaders tended to politicize their activities by involving nationalist Palestinian claims, he decided to leave this group.

Gradually Haimoff became so disappointed with being active within broad organizations and discussing their regulations and constitutions that he withdrew totally from work with corporations and decided to concentrate only on his own congregation, around the nucleus of the members of his large family of six boys and one girl. Haimoff gradually limited his pastoral activities to the greater Tel-Aviv area, avoiding any commitments among JBY on the national level. Consequently, many believers in the land often criticized him as being a separatist and even a "sectarian," because he boldly refused to attend any committee work or join conferences around the country. Yet eventually certain

³⁸ H.J. Haimoff, "Jerusalem, Israel", in *Salvation*, vol. 7, #6, June 1953, 10-11. A photograph of the "Bible Class at Ramle" was printed in *Salvation*, vol. 7, #8, August 1953, 3.

³⁹ H.J. Haimoff, "Our Witness in Israel", ms., n.d., (1965?). In PAGN.

⁴⁰ About this "Judenchristliches Zentrum in Haifa" see H.D. Leuner, "Kurze Nachrichten" in *Der Zeuge*, no. 20, Nov. 1958, 31.

⁴¹ H.J. Haimoff, notes "H.C. Alliance - Haifa", ms., dated January 4, 1958, and June 14, 1958. In PAGN.

⁴² H.J. Haimoff, "Beginning at Jerusalem", in *Salvation*, vol. 15, # 2, February 1961, 5.

⁴³ H.J. Haimoff, *ibid*, vol. 16, #1, January 1962, 6-7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 20, #3, March 1966, 7.

believers also apologized for their criticism. Thus, for example, Rachmiel Frydland, who represented the IHCA in Israel (1961-1965), and then returned to America,⁴⁵ wrote many years later in one of his reports, as follows:

I admitted to Mr. Haimoff, that when I was in Israel as secretary for IHCA, I did not know how to appreciate him and his family as they kept so much to themselves and did not mix with other believers. I asked him sincerely to pardon and forgive me. This he did readily.⁴⁶

Focus on the Family and Work with Children

Haimoff and Rachel Haimoff reared their seven children during the "Tzena Years," times of drastic austerity rations in Israel. People bought basic food with individual coupons and the black market flourished. A polio epidemic broke out and paralyzed many babies and even caused deaths. In her memoirs Rachel explained: "I felt then as if the angel of death was passing over our heads. I recall gathering the children for prayer, and asking the Lord to protect them from this microbe. Praise God, our prayers were answered and they all grew up healthy."⁴⁷ Daily the family devoted time to prayer and teaching from Scripture. Usually Haimoff explained Bible passages to the children in the evenings before bedtime and asked them, according to their age, to pray openly. Rachel taught them new songs which they also sang at the Shabbat worship of the congregation meeting in their home. Now those children are transmitting the same habit to more than 40 grandchildren as well as to their great-grandchildren. They also used to pray and give thanks in the name of Yeshua before every meal they had together.

The Haimoffs insisted that their children should attend public school with a Jewish curriculum in the Hebrew language. They refused to send the children to a separate Christian school, which actually did operate in Jaffa, not too far from Ramat-Gan. As a matter of principle, the parents wanted their children to be raised as Jews and therefore integrated into Israeli society, though difficulties were not absent. For example, sometimes their children were mocked by other children and nicknamed "gentiles" or "Christians." On such occasions the parents prayed with the children and encouraged them to trust the Lord for help and guidance. The home education to fear God and remember him

⁴⁵ See Menahem Benhayim, "The Messianic Movement in Israel - A Personal Perspective (1963-1998)", in *Mishkan*, vol. 28 (1998), 4-6. The same, with photograph, also in *Kivun*, vol. 10 (1998) 3 (Hebrew).

⁴⁶ Rachmiel Frydland, "Israel Minorities: Messianic Jews", in *The American Messianic Jewish Quarterly*, vol. 64, #1, Winter 1979, 24-25.

⁴⁷ Gershon Nerel, "Rachel Bar-David: Mother of a Modern Israeli Messianic Jewish Tribe", in *The Messianic Jew and Hebrew Christian*, vol. 67, #3 (1994), 68.

everywhere was deeply rooted in the children and gave them a profound consciousness of sin.

In the 1960s Haimoff was active in the formation of a group of young believers in Yeshua in the Tel-Aviv-Jaffa district. The nucleus of this young fellowship came from the children of a few large Hebrew Christian families who believed in the Messiah when they were still in Europe, among them the Herscu and Ball families from Romania, and the Yakobovitsch family from Germany. There were also youngsters of mixed marriages, where only one of the parents was a believer. On Friday evenings Haimoff used to collect with his large car the teenagers to and from the meeting place—usually Beit Immanuel in Jaffa. In the regular fortnightly gatherings they played different games like ping-pong, chess etc., after which they sang hymns and studied the Bible or saw some interesting film.⁴⁸ Haimoff frequently taught from Scripture. The group has attracted a few other friends whose parents were not believers. Sometimes the group also met at Haimoff's residence in Ramat-Gan, and the guests brought along guitars and a mandoline, while his boys brought the bass violin and accordion. Along with the piano they had an improvised orchestra.⁴⁹ Similar activities were organized for younger children, those between eight and 13.⁵⁰ In the 1970s and the 1980s the young Haimoffs participated in organizing youth camps and contributed as instructors and counselors.⁵¹

The Haimoff parents never developed an identity crisis as Jewish believers in Yeshua, and neither did their children ever doubt their Jewish identity.⁵² The children understood that except for their belief in Yeshua and the New Testament, they were no different from their Jewish neighbors. Basically, they kept the Shabbat and the Jewish festivals according to the biblical calendar. In 1973, prior to the Yom-Kippur War, the entire family abandoned the name Haimoff and adopted the Hebraic name Bar-David, as *Davidoff* was part of the

⁴⁸ H.J. Haimoff, "Beginning at Jerusalem", in *Salvation*, vol. 19, #8, Sept. 1965, 10.

⁴⁹ H.J. Haimoff, *ibid*, vol. 19, #6, June 1965, 9.

⁵⁰ H.J. Haimoff, *ibid*, vol. 20, #1, Jan. 1966, 8. Cf. "Report of Campmeeting at Jerusalem", in *Mount Zion Reporter*, no. 8, Nov. 1965, 5.

⁵¹ H.J. Haimoff, in *Salvation*, vol. 31, #9, Oct. 1977, 10-11.

⁵² All seven children of the Haimoffs served in the Israeli Army (IDF), including their daughter. Actually during two wars, the Six-Day-War and the Yom-Kippur War, three of them were serving in the military forces as paratroopers at the same time in the front lines. Every year they went to military reserve duty, and now the grandchildren serve in various units of the Israeli Defence Forces, also as combat officers. In the army, as well as in other walks of society, the Haimoffs openly continue to witness about their personal faith in Yeshua. Haim, as their patriarch, set the model for that. Like their father, the children spoke to their comrades about the prophetic significance of living in Israel, particularly during war times. See Menahem Benhayim, "Hebrew Christians in Modern Israel: Are they Strangers in the Land of Promise?", in *Eternity*, May 1974, 26.

ancestral family appellation. From now on the name Haimoff totally disappeared from the private family records, even from Haim's gravestone; yet it continually appeared beside his photograph published in *Salvation* until April 1986.

Shaping an Indigenous Assembly

For Haimoff it was of utmost importance to establish a local congregation of JBY which would develop independently of non-biblical traditions found within both Church and Synagogue. On the one hand he wholeheartedly welcomed non-Jews who wished to attend his home assembly, but on the other he insisted that the teaching and spiritual direction of the congregation had to be Jewish-minded. Thus, for example, he observed the biblical/Jewish calendar with its seventh-day *Shabbat* and not Sunday. Still he emphasized that the *Shabbat* needed to be kept as Yeshua taught, and not as the rabbis demanded. He also kept the Torah festivals by pointing to their messianic significance according to the New Testament.

Axiomatically, Haimoff taught that the Old and New Testaments are one book, being *the Jewish Scripture*. The New Testament, he underlined, was given by God as a continuation of God's revelation, so the Old and New Testaments form the complete Bible, "a pure Jewish faith and not as some would have us think 'a goyish' (gentile) one. We remain Jews and believe in Yeshua."⁵³ Interestingly, this statement about the "Jewish Bible, Old and New Testaments" still remains valid as a sharp contrast to the conception of the historical churches that Holy Scriptures are the "Christian Bible."⁵⁴ Actually Haim's biblical exegesis was based on the principle that the Old Testament stands as the basis for the New Testament, and that the New Testament provides the key to understanding the Old.

In fact Haimoff by himself conducted the lion's share of the teaching in the congregation. Only rarely did he allow guest-speakers to teach at the *Shabbat* services, and even then he carefully examined the background of the teacher. As he aged and his boys matured and were baptized—mainly since mid 1970s and on—he directed his own sons to become the teachers in the congregation. They followed in his footsteps and de facto adopted his advice to search and teach Scripture with the aid of the Holy Spirit—without using traditional commentaries. Thus, step by step two of his sons, David and Moshe, replaced their father respectively, each one teaching on alternate *Shabbats*. In fact during the last decade of Haimoff's life, most of the teaching was done by the two,

⁵³ H.J. Haimoff, "Jerusalem, Israel", in *Salvation*, vol. 7, #8, August 1953, 3.

⁵⁴ See recently the Vatican document "The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible", issued by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002.

while Haimoff sat near the speaker and provided, when he thought fit, his "polishing remarks," which included additional points as well as his corrections.

Haimoff strongly rejected the idea that young Israeli believers should acquire theological education in Christian schools abroad. This he expressed constantly in his sermons as well as in private talks. Therefore he objected to sending his own sons to a Bible School overseas, although he was offered to do so gratis. Actually Haimoff was suspicious of the multiform non-biblical indoctrination of the historical churches, especially as many of them were captives of their own denominational heritage and anti-Jewish traditions. Haimoff's conviction was that a genuine theology needed to grow within the body of believers in the fatherland of the Messianic faith. Often he used to say: "To study the Scriptures in Hebrew, interpreting it through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, focusing on the words of Yeshua and *practicing* that daily—this is the heart of the organism."⁵⁵

Haim's vision was to establish the infrastructure for an authentic Israeli congregation of JBY, following the paradigm of the early disciples of Yeshua, the simple (not simplistic, as he emphasized) fishermen in Galilee and Judea 2000 years ago. This was his model—the early apostles who did not attend theological seminaries yet entirely relied upon the words of the Messiah and the Spirit, and as faithful servants commenced a powerful new movement.

"We are not talking about leaders but about becoming disciples of Yeshua" he used to emphasize. Therefore over and over he returned to the basic teachings of Yeshua, mainly in the Sermon on the Mount, the parables in the gospels and the issue of being born again.⁵⁶ In other words, the congregation itself became de facto the "theological school" for its next generations, without seeking an institutional church ordination or Yeshiva ordination.

Although music, both vocal and instrumental, was a major characteristic of the Haimoff congregation and witness,⁵⁷ Haimoff rather focused on the teaching and preaching of the Word of God, and strictly limited "musical praise." He set the structure of the regular *Shabbat* service within one hour only, with the Bible study in the center. The worship order was as follows: starting with three hymns, and then prayer by one person, in rotation, praying in front of the fellowship, concluding the prayer by all gathered saying the Lord's Prayer. The focus of the service was 40 minutes of expository teaching, and finally one last hymn and then the benediction. The benediction, for which

⁵⁵ See also, for example, H.J. Haimoff, "Beginning at Jerusalem", in *Salvation*, vol. 31, # 11 Dec. 1977, 9-10.

⁵⁶ As also appearing in notes of Haim's various sermons, mss. form. In PAGN.

⁵⁷ See, for example, in *Salvation*, vol. 31, # 3, March 1977, 9.

all stood up, consisted of a combination of both the Aaronic Blessing (Num 6:24-26) and the Apostle's Blessing (2 Cor 13:13).

Concerning the Lord's Supper, Haimoff laid the principle of practicing it as a special event in the congregation.⁵⁸ Namely, Communion was not a weekly nor monthly event, but rather practiced alongside the major feasts—*Pessach* (Passover), *Shavuot* (Pentecost), Yom Kippur, and Christmas. Actually Haimoff found no justification to observe the feast of Hanukkah, which is based on the Apocrypha, yet he dedicated the regular *Shabbat* service, before or after the 24-25 December, to highlight the incarnation of the Son of God. Even though Christmas is not scriptural, Haimoff used the opportunity to remind the congregation of the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies concerning Immanuel and to express solidarity with the universal body of believers. Occasionally, the Communion of breaking of the *Matzot* (unleavened bread) was also served in the assembly right after the baptism ceremony of a new believer.⁵⁹

While Haimoff focused on the indigenous assembly of believers, he also spoke about the need to maintain small congregations. He did not support the notion of establishing huge mega churches which hold hundreds or thousands of members. Rather he stressed the importance of family sized congregations, locally based and not more than several dozen, in the capacity of an average meeting place. As an example of that, he offered the model of Yeshua himself who gathered only a very small group around himself.

The Written and the Oral Torah

Theologically, Haimoff was a Dispensationalist. He clearly set forth the difference between the old dispensation of the Law of Moses and the new dispensation of grace through Messiah Yeshua. At the same time, however, Haimoff frequently quoted the words of Yeshua, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Torah or the prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matt 5:17). Haimoff taught that the Pentateuch is still valid for the modern JBY yet with the guidelines and corrections of Yeshua and in his spirit.⁶⁰ Consequently Haimoff was not legalistic about the Torah, because the observance of any of the Torah commandments cannot provide forgiveness of sins, salvation and eternal life. Thus, for example, Haimoff naturally advocated the practice of circumcision for Jewish babies, because it was God's plan for the eternal

⁵⁸ Cf. Per Østerbye, *The Church in Israel*, Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia XV, Gleerup 1970, 192. See also 157 n.

⁵⁹ H.J. Haimoff, "Beginning at Jerusalem", in *Salvation*, vol. 27, #2, February 1973, p. 9. Cf. *Ibid.*, vol. 38, #3, March 1984, 7.

⁶⁰ H.J. Haimoff, "The Hebrew Christian and the Law of Moses", draft of a sermon, ms., n.d. (1970?), in PAGN.

descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen 17:10-13). However, this he understood only as a national commandment given to the Hebrews, without any credit whatever for salvation, and without requiring it from gentile believers (Acts 15:1-20).

Parallel to that, Haimoff ignored the *Torah she'bealpeh* (Oral Torah), the Torah according to rabbinical traditions and restrictions. In Messiah's economy, he neither deemed relevant the Talmud nor the *Halakha* (practice) of orthodox Judaism. He asks,

*Is there a common interpretation of the Old Testament in the Talmud? For one rabbi says one thing and another something different, and a third expresses yet another opinion, ending up with quite contradictory statements. Isn't that an indication that the Talmud is not an inspired book?*⁶¹

Thus Haimoff taught that while JBY are keeping the *Shabbat*, God did not command lighting *Shabbat* candles or saying blessings upon such candles.⁶² Similarly, Haimoff questioned the traditions of the historical churches, including the replacement of *Shabbat* with Sunday, Easter eggs, Christmas trees and Santa Claus. Thus, for example, at an annual conference of the UCCI where the theme of "Revelation and Tradition" was raised, Haimoff addressed the participants saying, "There is great danger of placing on an equal footing the revealed Word of God and tradition, as some churches do, thus making of no effect the commandments of our Lord."⁶³

Yet, on the other hand, Haimoff did not totally ignore the rabbinic establishment. In a sense even today, the rabbis are still sitting "in Moses' seat" (Matt 23:2), he explained. Consequently JBY may receive some technical services, from their institutions. Such services include, for example, the performance of matrimony ceremonies. In fact five of Haim's children were married at the Tel-Aviv Chief Rabbinat offices, with a formal *Ketubah* (marriage) certificate.⁶⁴ Another example would be the operation of authorized *Mohalim*, circumcisers, to perform their work at the *Brit-Mila* (circumcision) ceremonies. Likewise, Haimoff found no reason to object to the use of *Hevrah Kaddisha*, the services of the authorized Jewish Burial Society, and bury the dead in the formal Jewish cemeteries. Obviously, these services may be used when the rabbinical institutions do not turn down such requests of JBY.

We should draw special attention to the significance that Haimoff/Bar-David stressed regarding Christmas. While fully aware that there is no biblical

⁶¹ H.J. Haimoff, "Beginning at Jerusalem", in *Salvation*, vol. 30, #5, May 1976, 3.

⁶² See also, for example, Gershon Nerel, "Observing the Torah according to Yeshua", in *Chai*, Organ of the British Messianic Jewish Alliance, vol. 212 (2001) 4-5.

⁶³ H.J. Haimoff, "Beginning at Jerusalem", in *Salvation*, vol. 19, #2, Feb. 1965, 9.

⁶⁴ About the special occasion of two Haimoff brothers married to two sisters see also Roger Allison, "Congratulations", in *UCCI News*, vol.1, #3, Fall 1970, 20.

commandment regarding this event, he still used the Christmas season to highlight the climax of human history, the first coming of the Messiah, Son of God.⁶⁵ Haimoff never sanctified Christmas day, and in fact insisted that on this day his children should go normally to kindergarten and school. However, he often spoke about not allowing the feast of *Hannukah* to eclipse the significance of Messiah's birth that brought great salvation into this world. At the same time, however, Haimoff also used to compare two major festivals – Christmas and Passover. His conclusion was that in a sense Passover was "more important" than Christmas, because it was at the cross that Yeshua accomplished his redemptive plan. To support this view, Haimoff mentioned that Yeshua himself gave the commandment to commemorate his death, not his birth.⁶⁶

Apostolic and Spiritual Authority

Haim Bar-David was not ashamed of calling himself a "fundamentalist believer," as he literally believed in the absolute truth of the Old and New Testaments, without questioning the inspiration of the Bible and its infallibility.⁶⁷ The guidance of both Scripture and Spirit were his solid foundation and therefore he had no doubt that he possessed no less spiritual authority than Yeshua's first Jewish apostles in the first century.⁶⁸ At the same time, however, Haimoff explained that it was necessary to prioritize the use of Scripture because not all of the biblical books share the same significance. Hence he taught that the New Testament, and particularly the words of Yeshua, must hold the ultimate and supreme authority regarding the Kingdom of God. This scriptural prioritization, he clarified, was also necessary because life on earth is short and the believers need to focus on the essential parts of the Bible.

Having experienced the Jewish national restoration in *Eretz-Israel*, the land of Israel, Haimoff was fully convinced that he was led by a personal calling of Yeshua to carry out a special responsibility to witness about the Kingdom of God. He strongly held the belief that he and JBY of his own generation shared a much wider theological spectrum than the one that belonged to the first apostles who had lived 20 centuries ago. In his interpretation of Scripture Haimoff demonstrated his deep conviction that he retained a genuine spiritual

⁶⁵ See, for example, H.J. Haimoff, "Beginning at Jerusalem", in *Salvation*, vol. 13, #2, Feb. 1959, 7; vol. 16, #3, March 1962, 6; vol. 18, #2, Feb. 1964, 8.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 38, #4, April 1984, 9.

⁶⁷ H.J. Haimoff, *Ibid.*, vol. 39, #9, Oct. 1985, 7.

⁶⁸ H.J. Haimoff, *Ibid.*, vol. 8, #1, January 1954, 12; cf. *ibid.*, vol. 11, #11, Nov. 1957, 8. See also Gershon Nerel, "Primitive Jewish Christians in the Modern Thought of Messianic Jews", in S.C. Mimouni & F.S. Jones, eds., in *Le judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états*, Paris 2001, 399-425.

authorization to contextualize the Bible according to the new reality of prophecy being fulfilled during the 20th century. He fully believed that God was behind Israel's election and physical restoration in the land. Hence he also believed that God had raised a spiritual leadership among JBY that held full apostolic authority to guide the "Remnant," the first-fruits of the tiny Jewish minority that believed in Yeshua – being "life from the dead" (Rom 11:15).⁶⁹

This fresh spiritual and prophetic authority to shepherd modern JBY, Haimoff reasoned, did not require the approval or the legitimization of the historic churches. It came directly from God. Therefore he frequently spoke about the vocation and divine authority of biblical prophets and servants of God like Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah and John the Baptist. Thus, for example, he repudiated the strong arguments of the Roman Catholic Church concerning the existence of *Apostolic Succession* (and authority) only within its own ranks.⁷⁰ This was completely irrelevant in his theological thinking. Needless to say he also dismissed similar claims "to absorb JBY under evangelical-denominational wings," coming from the Protestant churches.⁷¹ In other words, Haimoff/Bar-David understood that Israel's territorial restoration (particularly since 1948) was divinely restored to JBY as was theological hegemony – without the need to get approval of the institutional Church or Synagogue. Essentially this notion was also related to the interpretation of the verse "the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24), namely that apostolic authority among JBY originates from the biblical canon and is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Actually the same belief was held also by other contemporary JBY like Moshe Ben-Meir and Zeev Kofsmann who lived in other parts of the land during almost the same period.⁷²

Biblical Zionism, according to Haimoff, was leading towards the spiritual revival of the Jews through Yeshua (Zach 12:10; Rev 1:7). Hence he had no doubt that he already had been living in the End-Times, with the imminent return of Yeshua. Jerusalem being Israel's capital city was a clear sign for Haimoff that soon Yeshua would come exactly there and "will fill it with the 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel harping with their harps songs of praise and adoration."⁷³ So when he was earnestly looking for the Millennial reign of

⁶⁹ Haim systematically expressed these views along his many sermons and Bible classes.

⁷⁰ See, for example, *Catéchisme de l'Église Catholique*, Paris 1992, clauses 77; 815; 1209; 1576. Cf. James G. McCarthy, *The Gospel According to Rome*, Eugene, Oregon 1995, 263-339.

⁷¹ Based upon personal talks with Haim and David Bar-David. See also recently, for example, Gershon Nerel, "Hebrew Christian Associations in Ottoman Jerusalem: Jewish Yeshua-Believers Facing Church and Synagogue", in *Revue des Études juives*, 161 (3-4), 2002, 483-509.

⁷² Cf. Gershon Nerel, *Dissertation*, 188-195.

⁷³ H.J. Haimoff, "Beginning at Jerusalem", in *Salvation*, vol. 20, #3, March 1966, 7.

Messiah he also saw the imminent great events connected with the people of Israel—already happening within his own times.

Death and Legacy

Well beyond his four score, Haim Haimoff died on 6 February 1991, and was buried at Yad-Hashmona, a small Messianic Moshav (village) in the Judean Hills west of Jerusalem, where four of his children and their families have settled since 1979.⁷⁴ While on his sickbed, Haimoff spent his last days at Yad-Hashmona during the Iraqi missiles strikes on Ramat Gan, near the family home. At his graveside, inaugurating the Moshav cemetery, his whole family and a host of friends and believers from around Israel gathered. A month later the following words in Hebrew were inscribed on the gravestone: "I have finished the race, I have kept the faith and from now there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness," taken from 2 Timothy 4:7.

Until Haimoff died, all members of the large family gathered in Ramat Gan for the worship service on Shabbat evening. Later, between the years 1992-1995, the congregation met in two locations alternately: one Shabbat in Ramat-Gan and the other in the Moshav. Every second week the congregation hired a bus that transported the people from Ramat Gan to the Moshav and back, while those who resided in the Moshav traveled by their local cars. However, in the next year, exactly half a decade after Haimoff passed away, the Ramat Gan congregation split into two groups following theological disagreements between the brothers Moshe and David. In fact it was the issue of leadership that caused the disintegration within the congregation.

One Shabbat in January 1996 Moshe unexpectedly announced in the congregation that David would have to stop teaching every second week, as he used to do for more than two decades with the blessing of his father. The reason Moshe gave was hermeneutical issues. Since then there have been two separate assemblies, one that meets with Moshe in Ramat Gan and the other that meets with David at Yad Hashmona.⁷⁵ The assembly in Ramat Gan had incorporated into an *Amuta* status (non-profit society), whereas the *Kehila* in the Moshav has not acquired a formal legal position. Now basically both groups consider themselves to be the followers of the family patriarch, and remained non-charismatic in their doctrine and style of worship.

At the same time, some of the Bar-David grandchildren have established their own families, and with their spouses have joined other congregations. Thus, for example, two couples became members of *Kehilat Shemen Sasson*, in

⁷⁴ Gershon Nerel, "Haim J. Bar-David (Haimoff): In Memoriam", in *Zot Habrit*, Organ of the Israeli Messianic Jewish Alliance, vol. 2 (1991), 33-34 (Hebrew).

⁷⁵ Kai Kjaer-Hansen & Bodil F. Skjott, eds., *Facts and Myths about the Messianic Congregations in Israel*, Mishkan 30-31, UCCI & Caspari, Jerusalem 1999, 242-246; 131.

Jerusalem, that has an expressive charismatic style of worship.⁷⁶ Currently all members of the Bar-David "tribe" including the younger generations, continue to walk in faith in Yeshua. They openly and boldly witness about their belief around the country, while many of their activities take place at Yad Hashmona.⁷⁷ Both groups insist on focusing their witness ministry in the state of Israel, with no aims of establishing work in other countries, because according to prophecy this is the place for the nation's future.

Summary

Haim Haimoff Bar-David lived and labored during a most formative period in the land of Israel.⁷⁸ Conceptually as well as practically he succeeded in bridging a gap of 2000 years, linking the contemporary Jewish believers in Yeshua directly to the first *Kehila* of the apostles in Jerusalem. For him this was neither a utopia nor an anachronism. Therefore he did not feel defensive or apologetic with regard to his faith. Along with that, he did not hesitate to deal authoritatively with operative questions that bothered the newly-born congregations in the state of Israel. Interestingly, although for over four decades he worked closely with an American mission, he never visited America. After a short visit in Holland in the 1950s, he never again left Israel. His focus was totally in the land, as he also believed that the *Golah*, the Jewish Diaspora had to cease following eschatological prophecies.

While certain aspects of Haimoff's theological thinking developed and changed throughout his lifetime, he never compromised his fundamentalism—sticking to the absolutes of Scripture. Thus, for example, he gradually abandoned the use of the rabbinical *Haggadah* during the Passover *Seder* meal, and focused on the biblical text which pointed to the Lord's Supper.⁷⁹ He also disregarded the festival of Purim because of its "un-messianic" nature and therefore deemed it unnecessary. As Haimoff had a low opinion of "some misleading ways" of both Church and Synagogue, he also questioned, for example, the denominational Easter traditions of the churches. He did not put faith automatically in the long list of creeds and dogmas that the historic

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 124-126.

⁷⁷ See Menahem Benhayim, "Chocolate for Ave Maria - Reminiscences 1963 to 1998", in *Kivun*, vol. 11 (1998), 3 (Hebrew).

⁷⁸ For a more comprehensive and comparative perspective about some key-figure Israeli JBY see recently Gershon Nerel, "Pioneers with a Magazine: Israeli Jewish Yeshua-Believers and their 'Journalism'", in *Kesher*, A Journal of Messianic Judaism (USA), vol. 14, Winter 2002, 3-39.

⁷⁹ H.J. Haimoff, in *Salvation*, vol. 31, #7, July-August 1977, 6; and seven years later, *ibid.*, vol. 38, #9, Oct. 1984, 10.

churches presented. In fact tradition was not sacrosanct in his eyes and historical habits not obligatory for shaping his identity as a believer in Yeshua.

Actually Haimoff found great advantage in the *lack* of a uniform tradition among JBY. The significance of lack of tradition during the past two millennia de facto enabled JBY, he reasoned, to freely think and shape their own theology and identity—as unattached believers in the land where their faith was born. This unapologetic approach better equipped him to evaluate and comprehend the reality surrounding him.

The *Peilim*, the anti-missionary orthodox activists in Israel, were fully aware of Haimoff's "missionary work," but never stopped his labor. Occasionally they harassed him and his family, even threw stones at his house and disturbed him by telephone calls, but not beyond that.⁸⁰ At the same time, however, his independent theological approach resulted in the antagonism of some Jewish and gentile believers in Yeshua, so that sometimes it looked as if he were completely alone and isolated from the mainstream movement. Yet many Israeli believers still respected the originality of his teaching, as well as his faithfulness and stability in stirring times. Especially in times of despair and crisis he kindly offered advice and support. For many he remained a solid source for spiritual orientation. Although as a matter of principle Haimoff refused to write books, today his children follow his vision of a restored Israel and the centrality of Yeshua. They continue to contribute to the ongoing development of JBY within the land with the pioneering legacy of their father, frequently encouraged by his motto, "Satan is Mighty but God is Almighty."

⁸⁰ See, for example, Yaakov Ariel, "Evangelists in a Strange Land: American Missionaries in Israel (1948-1967)," in Peter Y. Medding, ed., *Coping with Life and Death, Jewish Families in the Twentieth Century, Studies in Contemporary Jewry, an Annual* XIV, N.Y. & Oxford 1998, 195-213.