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lifted was through this Jewish crucified man. I prayed to God to this end and I asked for forgiveness and I committed my whole life to Him. My wife also made a decision for Jesus at the same service. A few weeks later we were baptised in the name of Jesus, Yeshua. Our lives have been changed completely by the Lord. He led us into another country, where we are now allowed to serve him. Our family is

lovely and we endeavour to live our lives before our Jewish people as a testimony to Yeshua for we want to bring to them the "Good News" – the *Besorah* of Yeshua the Messiah "... for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first..." Rom. 1:16.

Anatoli leads a congregation of Russian and Ukrainian Jewish believers in Echterdingen, Germany.

The New Testament and Messianic Jews in Israel Today: An Update



by
Gershon
Nerel

Today, in various book shops in Israel, inquirers may easily find and purchase at least one of three versions of the New Testament in the Hebrew language, either in the traditional ancient style or in modern phrase. About a dozen of these shops are "official" Bible shops which specialise in selling Messianic and Christian literature. At the same time, however, there exist in the country many other book shops, as well as public libraries, that consciously and strictly refuse to present on their shelves "this impure



Gershon Nerel.

book", as they refer to it. And one may also discover here complete ignorance about the very existence of the New Testament, and sometimes receive answers like: "What is the New Testament?" or, "The New Testament has nothing to do with Jews" . . .

Similarly, one can trace mixed attitudes towards Messianic Jews who insist on combining the New Testament with the Old within one volume. Alongside attitudes of understanding and tolerance, one may also meet approaches of rejection and antagonism towards Messianic Jews. This attitude is expressed both by individuals and institutions. Usually the Establishment, religious and secular, takes the lead in shaping an "evaporating policy" towards any possible way of mentioning Yeshua, His Message and His modern disciples.

It is also well known that owners of book shops in Israel find themselves under direct threats of arson, etc., to stop them selling the New Testament or any other "Christian writings".

The Situation in Elementary and High Schools.

As a matter of principle, the curriculum of the elementary and high schools in Israel does not require that pupils systematically read the New Testament and have an examination on its content. Actually pupils are severely forbidden to bring the New Testament to their classes. Furthermore, they are told that they desecrate the Old Testament when they use it bound in one volume together with the New. In Israel,

therefore, pupils finish elementary and high schools with a clear sense that the State educational authorities constantly de-legitimise the New Testament. Messianic Jews, consequently, are de-legitimised as well.

Thus, unfortunately, pupils are still taught that the name of the New Testament Messiah is *Yeshu*, a distorted negative appellation. Only rarely would pupils learn that the correct name is *Yeshua*, which means Saviour. They still do not read, *en masse*, even some small samples of the New Testament, for example on the level of classical literature, to verify its substance. As a result of this situation, in many homes of these youngsters the New Testament is still a *terra incognita*.

The Situation in Universities

While in Israeli universities students increasingly learn about western civilisation, western history, including occidental art and literature, they are hardly acquainted with the New Testament. Although some of them are required by their professors to read selective passages from the New Testament, on which they have to pass examinations, one cannot escape the feeling that the New Testament is demonised even within the university walls. Thus, for example, sometimes the New Testament would be regarded on the same level as the *Mein Kampf* of Adolf Hitler.

But furthermore, while in Diyonon, the large book store of Tel-Aviv University, one could find among "eccentric books" copies of *Mein Kampf* translated into Hebrew, it is still

impossible to find these copies of the Hebrew New Testament. To the pinpoint question: "Why can students not purchase the New Testament in Hebrew in this university book shop?", the naïve response of the academic manager would be; "I do not know where to order this book . . ."

On the other hand it should be mentioned that students at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem can easily find in Academon, the Hebrew University's book shop, even *two* different versions of the Hebrew New Testament. Yet, the central National Library of the Jerusalem Hebrew University seems to be the single academic institution in the world where writings of Jewish believers in Yeshua are marked in the index-cards, on the top of each and every card, that this is "Mission Literature"(!). This cataloguing method still serves there to warn the reader, as a visible "alarm bell", against the possible influence of the Gospel.

Recent Police Harassment

A particularly worrying situation for some Jewish believers in Yeshua who recently immigrated to Israel from the former USSR and from Ethiopia, is that they find themselves under harassment from the police. Apparently, in consequence of the emergence of the present Rightist Netanyahu government, the police are directed to relate to meetings and worship services of newly coming Messianic Jews to the Land as to criminal acts.

Thus, for example, in January of this year an Ethiopian believer from a

caravan neighbourhood near Haifa had her home invaded by the police without the support of a court order. The police confiscated nine video cassette tapes from her home. This was done without a search warrant or a charge sheet. A week later the pastor of the Ethiopian national congregation was requested by the Police to come from Tel-Aviv to Haifa where he was interrogated concerning unfounded and baseless charges dealing with "Enticement to Change of Religion Law 1977". This pastor, who was interrogated by the police with questions like "In whom do you believe?", "Did you go from home to home preaching by giving money?" and "With whom do you meet?", was threatened with court for the above "implied charges".

The Israeli Attorney General

Old-timer Messianic Jewish leaders in the Land were immediately informed about these developments and they provide counselling to the *Olim Chadashim*, the new immigrants. Also the Executive Committee of the United Christian Council in Israel (UCCI) was involved in these matters. Consequently the Chairman of the UCCI dispatched an urgent letter to Mr Eliakim Rubinstein, the newly appointed Attorney General, concerning Freedom of Religion in Israel.

This letter of complaint strongly expressed the protest of many believers in the country against the blatant denial of basic human and civilian rights. Furthermore, the Attorney General was reminded in this letter that in the beginning of 1978 the State of Israel publicly gave solemn assurances

at the highest level that no action at all would be taken on any eventual provocations with reference to the above mentioned legislation – except it be with the direct personal authorisation of the Attorney General.

The immediate intervention of the present Attorney General was requested to terminate the police proceedings.

While facing this situation in the Land we are not discouraged! When we read all the promises in Scripture, we reach a conclusion quite opposite to hopelessness. "But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out . . ." (Exodus 1:12).

The Use of *Chadash* in the 8th and 6th Century Prophets

The history of this paper is briefly as follows. In its studies on the "New Covenant" the Theological Committee of the I.H.C.A. found itself inevitably dealing with the meaning to be given to "new". Apart from certain dogmatic, i.e. unproven, statements about its sense, it was stated, "It is significant that in the New Testament . . . the adjective is almost always *kainos*, not *neos*. Its newness is one of quality".

The objection was raised:

(a) The clear distinction between *kainos* and *neos* in Classical Greek had become blurred in the *koine* (common tongue), as is the use of *neos* with *diatheke* in Heb. 12: 24. This example is the more telling because this epistle is written in the most classical Greek in the New Testament.



The late H. L. Ellison, 1903-83.

(b) In any case the term *kaine diatheke* is taken from the Septuagint of Jer. 31: 31. In dealing with theological terms not *koine* but Septuagint usage is normally decisive.

(c) At best the Septuagint is only interpreting, and if the question is to be answered linguistically, we must turn to the Hebrew itself.

by
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