

# כּשֶׁר

# Kesher

A JOURNAL OF MESSIANIC JUDAISM

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*GERSHON NEREL*

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## FROM THE EDITORS...

The Winter 2002 issue of *Kesher* addresses divers areas of Messianic Jewish history and theology.

Dr. Gershon Nerel examines three early Messianic Jewish magazines published in Israel in Hebrew and three others that were published in English, locally or overseas. Dr. Nerel weighs the impact of these publications on the formation of Messianic Jewish identity in the Land.

Continuing our dialogue on Messianic Jewish self-identity is an adaptation of Dr. Dan Juster's address given at the Theology Forum of the international conference of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, Snow Mountain, Colorado, July 19, 2001. Dr. Juster defines Messianic Judaism and lays out the various corollaries inherent in his definition.

A third essay by David J. Rudolph suggests that the book of Acts is a lynchpin of Messianic Jewish theology and argues from Acts 21:20-26 that Shaul of Tarsus was a Torah-faithful Messianic Jew. Rudolph challenges the classic Christian view that ritual Torah observance for Paul was a matter of *adiaphora*, or his purification in Acts 21, a concession to the Jerusalem leadership. Rudolph concludes that Shaul endorsed Messianic Jewish lawabidingness in the New Covenant era.

Along similar lines, Stuart Dauermann addresses major misconceptions in traditional Christian theology concerning the Messiah's Jewishness and the multinational nature of the *ecclesia* both now and in the future. Dauermann's essay concisely reveals the paradigm-shift nature of Messianic Judaism vis-à-vis the "theological tradition of the Borg."

In a follow-up to John's Fischer's article in the Summer 2001 issue of *Kesher*, Carl Kinbar discusses Max Kadushin's analysis of Rabbinic thought and suggests that unity and diversity can coexist within Messianic Judaism in the framework of an organic conceptual universe.

The Winter 2002 issue is topped off with three book reviews: Noel Rabinowitz interacts with *The Survivors of Israel* by Mark



Adam Elliott. Louis VosLevitz reviews *America's Real War* by Rabbi Daniel Lapin. Michael Healer reviews *Assimilation and Its Discontents* by Barry Rubin to complete this issue of *Kesher*.

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## **PIONEERS WITH A MAGAZINE: ISRAELI JEWISH YESHUA-BELIEVERS AND THEIR "JOURNALISM"**<sup>1</sup>

Gershon Nerel

In May 1948, when the modern State of Israel was born, there were only about two dozen Jews openly professing their faith in Yeshua there. During the following years, some other Jewish believers joined them through the vast waves of *aliyah*. However, many among those newcomers chose to disguise themselves as "Nicodemus believers," following the example of Nicodemus, who came to Yeshua secretly in the night (Yochanan 3:1-2).

Most of those secret believers had a "catacomb mentality." They dreaded the possibility of losing their jobs, or feared harassment and social denigration, suspecting even members of their own family. As a matter of fact, it was already in Mandatory Palestine that the "Nicodemus believers" lived with a strong underground consciousness, trying to avoid being a marginal and despised minority.<sup>2</sup>

Constant tensions characterized the relationship between the "open" and "closed" groups of Jewish believers in Yeshua. Usually the former emphatically criticized the latter as being fainthearted and slippery. Those who willingly exposed themselves as Jewish believers began to initiate first steps towards publicly shaping their identity and labored towards institutionalizing their activities.<sup>3</sup> In those early years of statehood there

- 1 This article in its enlarged, updated and documented form, is based on my brief and scattered writings formerly published in *Zot Habrit*, which is the bi-annual bulletin of the Israeli Messianic Jewish Alliance. I am grateful to many friends who kindly provided me with a variety of significant primary sources. I especially wish to thank: Ahuva Ben-Meir, Prof. Patrick Seale, Dr. Brian (Baruch) Pokroy, Menachem Benhayim, Yeshayahu Yeshurun (Theodor Wolfson), Jorge Quinonez, Miryam and Yochanan Zeidan, Rachel (Shelly) Bar-David, Linda and Warren Graham, Andrew Prochaska, Heinz Israel Pollack, Dr. Eric Gabe, Dr. Yoelit Migron, Tsvi Sadan and the late Solomon Ostrovsky.
- 2 See 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, pp. 109-114 (Hebrew). A shortened synopsis of the thesis was published in *Mishkan*, vol. 27, 1997, pp. 16-17. Cf. Menahem Benhayim, "Hebrew Christians in Modern Israel: Are They Strangers in the Land of Promise?" in *Eternity*, May 1974, p. 28; Sharon Donohue, "Let My People Live," in *Moody Monthly*, October 1985, p. 26.
- 3 Rachmiel Frydland, "Israel Minorities: Messianic Jews," in *The American Messianic Jewish Quarterly*, vol. 64, 1979, p. 24; See also Heinrich Israel Pollack, "Hebrew Christians in the Land of the Bible," in *Good News* (Johannesburg), vol. 39, 1989, p. 14; and "Secret Believers," in *Beshuv*, vol. 4, Spring 1983, p. 23 (Hebrew).



were hardly any existing patterns for routine communication between Jewish believers. Even the Hebrew language could hardly unite all new immigrants, as they still cherished their mother tongues. New channels of communication had to be established among the emerging local body of Israeli Jewish believers. The same channels of communication also began to develop between the Israelis and believers from the nations.

Gradually—in fact very slowly—Jewish believers within the newly born State began to establish their own Hebrew publications, struggling with minimal financial resources and with a very limited organizational basis. Simultaneously, some of them started to communicate (in English) with believers overseas, and published their ideas and reports within expatriate magazines abroad.

In this article it is my intention to examine the “journalistic activities” of Israeli Jewish believers during the early decades after the State was established. Some prominent Jewish believers in the Land were bright intellectuals who either learned in institutions of higher education abroad or were autodidacts. Continually they used a pen or a small typing machine, not merely for private correspondence, but also for widely publishing and disseminating their views, thus hoping to influence their readers. Their publishing work was in addition to their verbal witnessing for Messiah Yeshua. Therefore, we wish to raise several questions: What were the early periodicals that served those pioneer witnesses, and what was the message carried by those papers? Did those journalistic activities last long? Could those writers influence both their distant readership as well as their close relatives?

This article will present six noteworthy magazines. Three of them are early Messianic Jewish magazines that were published in Israel in Hebrew, while three others were published in English, either locally or overseas. In all six magazines one can easily trace the ongoing efforts of the writers to shape a collective identity with some authentic characteristics.

## KOL SHOFAR—A NEW EXCLAMATION IN THE LAND

In the fall of the year 1953, the first journal of Jewish Yeshua-believers in the State of Israel was published in Haifa under the name *Kol Shofar: A Messianic Jewish Organ*.<sup>4</sup> Two persons stood behind the journal: the chief editor, Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir<sup>5</sup> (1904-1978), a native Jerusalemite who perfectly mastered the Hebrew language,<sup>6</sup> and Abram Poljak (1900-1963), who spoke fluent German but hardly any Hebrew. Poljak's main contributions were his professional journalistic experience and many contacts abroad.

Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir had been well known in Messianic Jewish circles in the Land since Mandatory days, and occasionally he adopted the pen-name Moshe Tal. During the 1930s and 1940s he held the position of secretary of “The Hebrew Christians Fellowship of Palestine”<sup>7</sup> (later known as “The Hebrew Christian Alliance of Palestine and the Near East”). This incorporated society stopped functioning before the State of Israel was proclaimed.<sup>8</sup>

It should be noted that *Kol Shofar* was the continuation of an earlier Messianic Jewish Hebrew publication which was published in Jerusalem in September 1947 and was known as *Hashofar*. Originally, the name and the motto (“the horn”) were adopted from the biblical verse: “With trumpets and the sound of a horn shout joyfully before the Lord, the King” (Psalms 98:6).<sup>9</sup> By using that title, the editors wished to express their

4 *Kol Shofar*, P.O. Box 1305, Haifa, Israel. The traditional Jewish date was also mentioned on the front page.

5 Ben-Meir was a scion of the renowned Lillienthal family.

6 Yuda Aharon Segal Weiss, *In Your Gates Jerusalem (Reminiscences and Records)*, Jerusalem 1949, pp. 71-79 (Hebrew).

7 The Hebrew title was: “Hevrat Ha'Ahva HaArtzi-Israelit Liyehudim Meshihiim.” This association was established in July 1931. An instrumental co-worker with Moshe Ben-Meir in the literary field in Mandatory Palestine was Morris Sigel. Before the State was proclaimed Sigel moved to Lebanon and eventually changed his family name to Seale.

8 The Hebrew title was: “Histadrut HaYehudim HeMeshihiim BeEretz-Israel VeHamizrah Hakarov.” One should note the nomenclature differences between the English and Hebrew titles. While the English title was mainly addressing the Gentile constituency, the parallel Hebrew terms were addressing the Jewish milieu. See Gershon Nerel, Dissertation, pp. 90-102.

9 *Hashofar* contained only 16 pages, and was sold for the cost of 30 Palestine mils. E.g., “The Hebrew Christians of Palestine and the Near East Meet in Conference in Jerusalem,” in *Jerusalem Living Waters*, vol. 5, no. 5, May 1940, pp. 67-68.



sharp vision to witness publicly about Yeshua to the returning nation in the Land. Initially, *Hashofar* was intended to serve as the organ of the Hebrew Christian Alliance of Palestine. The editors wanted to use the journal as an instrument to create both visibility and vocality within Jewish society in the Promised Land.

*Hashofar* was issued in Jerusalem at the Living Waters Printing Press, which was managed by an Arab Christian, Chalil A. Gabriel, who was a very exceptional and enthusiastic supporter of Jewish causes. He spoke and wrote in Hebrew, and actively endorsed the cause of Jewish believers in Yeshua and the restoration of Israel to her ancient homeland. For many years Gabriel helped Jewish believers to publish their writings in his own magazine *Living Waters from Jerusalem*.<sup>10</sup> Gabriel's journalistic background, and his unique magazine, were instrumental in the publication of *Hashofar*, and in the long run also affected the printing of *Kol Shofar*. However, in 1948, when the State of Israel was declared and severe hostilities broke out, Gabriel and his wife Johanna, like many Moslem and Christian Arabs, fled to Lebanon.<sup>11</sup>

*Hashofar* did not last long. The first issue was also the last issue,<sup>12</sup> as circumstances deteriorated rapidly. The political and military situation in the Land escalated towards the end of 1947. The United Nations resolution of November 29, 1947 partitioning Palestine into both Jewish and Arab states, was the starting point of another cycle of violence. The turmoil in the Land forced people to focus on simple matters of their daily survival. Jewish believers in particular found themselves in a wretched situation in that many parties accused them of "dual

loyalty." They had to struggle to survive and could not deal with secondary matters like publishing articles and magazines.

A few months before the State was established, most Jewish believers were evacuated from the country in a military-like action called "Operation Mercy." This complex affair was handled by the Anglican ecclesiastical authorities in Jerusalem, together with the Mandatory government, and in cooperation with the International Hebrew Christian Alliance (IHCA). This massive evacuation of most Jewish believers from the Land (about 100 persons) was organized as a kind of "spiritual Dunkirk," basically associated with the First Century Jerusalem believers' "Exodus" to Pella in Transjordan, shortly before the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. This modern equivalent was a watershed in their local history, and later many strongly criticized it.<sup>13</sup>

In the forward of *Kol Shofar*, the reader was told that this journal was meant to fulfill the urgent need to establish relationships among Jews who were disciples of Yeshua, yet were spread around the country without knowing each other. Many believers were newcomers who immigrated to Israel from all over the earth. It was not easy to remove the language barrier, as many still spoke their non-Hebrew mother tongues. Openly, though sadly, the editor acknowledged the fact that many of the believers kept their faith secret. Therefore, the purpose of *Kol Shofar* was to encourage Messianic Jews around the country, and particularly to "put an end to the shameful underground."<sup>14</sup>

Ben-Meir publicly admitted the pressing difficulties of those days, when many Jewish believers feared social and/or economic "cherem" (excommunication) from the Jewish mainstream. This "fear of the Jews" (Yochanan 7:13) had already been in existence for about twenty centuries, as the Synagogue declared Jewish believers to be renegades and traitors. However,

10 Chalil Gabriel published his *Living Waters from Jerusalem* with the assistance of another Pro-Jewish Arab Christian, Anis Charles Haddad. Their address was P.O. Box 621 Jerusalem, Palestine. Later the magazine was named *Jerusalem Living Waters* with the sub-title: "A Monthly Magazine to Stir the Hearts for Immanuel's Land and for its People."

11 See Carolyn F. Irish with Elizabeth Irish Wright, *Sharing Good Tidings in Zion*, Brentwood, Georgia 1995, pp. 26-32.

12 See, recently, Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir, *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem*, excerpts from the Autobiography, Netivyah, Jerusalem 2001, p. 68 (Hebrew).

13 E.g., Harcourt Samuel, "News and Notes—Palestine," in *The Hebrew Christian*, vol. 21, 1949, p. 76; Cf. "Letter from the Bishop to All Anglican Clergy," in *Bible Lands*, vol. 12, no. 2, April 1949, p. 209. See also Gershon Nerel, "Messianic Jews in Eretz-Israel" in *Mishkan*, vol. 27, 1997, p. 17.

14 *Kol Shofar*, p. 3.



Ben-Meir emphasized that a new era began with the establishment of the modern Jewish state. He aimed towards uniting the believers, hoping that together they could launch a "civilian rights battle." Furthermore, in *Kol Shofar*, Ben-Meir stressed that according to the constitutional platform of Israel's Declaration of Independence, Jewish believers had full civil rights, and consequently should discuss freely and openly their particular needs and corporately look for solutions to their problems. "United, we can convince our brethren that we are not the criminals and the villains that our adversaries think of us," he wrote in his introductory words.

According to Ben-Meir, the magazine was named *Kol Shofar* for the following reasons:

The Shofar has different sounds, broken and disconnected sounds, as well as sounds of teru'ah—succession of tremulous notes—and sounds of triumph. *Kol Shofar* will produce all these tones. In this journal there are sections that deal with brokenness, reflecting the negative side of our lives. Other sections deal with mixed situations, both negative and positive aspects in our lives, which actually may be neither bad nor good, but do no harm. Lastly, there are sections that deal with the sound of great triumph, which will relate to the Salvation of God, His love and mercy, and will proclaim a life of repentance, faith and victory.<sup>15</sup>

After the introductory words of Moshe Ben-Meir in *Kol Shofar*, a short contribution by Abram Poljak (which appeared under the pseudonym of Avraham Ben-Shraga) was also published. Poljak/Ben-Shraga wrote as follows: "Our calling is to lift up the royal flag of the Messiah in Israel. John the Baptist proclaimed the first coming of the Messiah—we announce His Second Coming. Therefore we chose as our motto the words of the prophet Isaiah: 'Prepare the way of the Lord' (40: 3)."<sup>16</sup> The topic of the return of the Messiah occupied a focal place in his thoughts and teaching. Poljak also provided his exegesis that the time has arrived when the Gentile portion of the body of believers is decreasing, while the grace of God is going to return to the

Jewish portion—the ancient people of the covenant. In other words, both Ben-Meir and Poljak were looking forward to a new era where the duty and the leadership of the Gentile congregations would decrease, while Jewish believers would gradually move into the central place for teaching the way of Scripture.

In addition, *Kol Shofar* reprinted an article on "Yeshua in the Synagogue," which was written by Israel Sarna of Poland, who was murdered by the Nazis.<sup>17</sup> Sarna challenged Jewish believers to avoid "locking the door" to the synagogues, as Yeshua himself is not a stranger in the synagogue. Sarna also reminded the reader that the early Jewish followers of Yeshua were part and parcel of the synagogues and *Batei Hamidrash* (houses of study), until they were "purified" of these places by the introduction of the *Birkat haMinim*, a benediction aimed at the exclusion of Jewish believers from the synagogues. Only because of this new portion of the *Sh'moneh Esre*, attributed to Shmuel Hakatan, Sarna explained, Jewish believers eventually found themselves physically outside the doors of the synagogues. Yet Sarna had a new vision. He stressed that times have changed, and it is the duty of modern Jewish believers to bring Yeshua and his followers back to those synagogues from which they were thrown out.<sup>18</sup> Sarna even expressed his hopes that Jewish believers will not only return to the synagogues, but will also be able to revive these "frozen" places by bringing with them a new spirit and a new light originating from Yeshua's holiness and love. However, Sarna, and Ben-Meir who supported this idea, did not specify which kind of synagogue they had in mind.

Realistically, such thoughts could materialize only within a totally new framework of synagogue (a "Messianic synagogue"), not within a revolutionized Orthodoxy, nor within a Reform

15 *Kol Shofar*, p. 3.

16 *Kol Shofar*, p. 4.

17 Israel Sarna was a prolific writer and the editor (1936-1937) of the Hebrew Christian bi-monthly magazine *Der Weg*, published in Yiddish and in Hebrew in Warsaw from 1927 until the German invasion of Poland in 1939. See, e.g., Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir, "Al Mizbeach Yeshua" (On the Altar of Yeshua [Hebrew]), in *Der Weg*, vol. 11, no. 2, March-April 1937, p.3. *Der Weg* also published articles written by Abram Poljak. See *ibid.*, vol. 12, no. 3, May-June 1938, pp. 10-11.

18 *Kol Shofar*, p. 5.



synagogue. An early attempt to create a "Christian synagogue" occurred in Toronto, in 1913, by Shabbetai Benjamin Rohold.<sup>19</sup> Ben-Meir too adopted this concept enthusiastically, and eventually (in the early 1970s) established in Jerusalem his own Messianic synagogue. First it was known by the name *Netivyah* and today it is functioning under the name *Roeh Israel*, led by Joseph Shulam.<sup>20</sup>

In *Kol Shofar* the editors wrote extensively on the theme of observing the Shabbat according to Torah. They wrote that Messianic Jews should keep Shabbat—and not Sunday—and have their prayer and worship meetings on that day, because "anyone who despises the Holy Shabbat actually does not believe in the reality of God."<sup>21</sup> Actually in the State of Israel the topic of observing Shabbat became a non-issue for Jewish believers, and in *Kol Shofar* Ben-Meir strongly criticized the secular Jews in the Land who desecrated Shabbat by going to cinemas and dance clubs. As according to State legislation, the observance of Shabbat was obligatory within the Jewish population, Israeli Jewish believers found no scriptural reasons for keeping Sunday as the churches do.

Originally, the editors of *Kol Shofar* intended to publish it bi-monthly, but this scheme was not carried out as planned. Only the first edition of the journal was published. Thus *Kol Shofar* had the same destiny as *Hashofar*, its predecessor in Mandatory Palestine. Seven years went by before another journal of Messianic Jews in the Land was published.

### HALAPID—A NEW LIGHT IN THE LAND

The first issue of *HaLapid: Biton HaKehila HaMeshihit HaIsraelit* ("The Torch: Organ of the Israeli Messianic Assembly") was published in Jerusalem in January 1960. Subsequent issues

appeared in July of the same year, August 1961, and the fourth (and final) issue was published in April 1962.<sup>22</sup>

The initiators and editorial staff members for the first issue were three men: "Rabbi Ze'ev Shlomo Kofsman, Rabbi Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir and Rabbi Yehiel Goldin." Ze'ev (Wolf) Kofsman was born in 1909 in Kishineff, Bessarabia, and immigrated to Israel in 1948, after the State was established. He died in 1976 and was buried in Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup> Yehiel Goldin was a serious biblical scholar who died in Jerusalem in January 1967.<sup>24</sup> Alongside of them, was a woman, Rina Preiss.<sup>25</sup> Only Rina is still living and now belongs to the German Kibbutz "Bet El," which was founded by Emma Berger in Zichron-Ya'akov, near Haifa.<sup>26</sup> Kofsman and Preiss, unlike Ben-Meir and Goldin, shared their deep beliefs in the Pentecostal/Charismatic experiences.

The Israeli Messianic Assembly was an autonomous organization, recognized in 1958 by the State of Israel under the legal regulations of an Ottoman Society. The official name of the assembly was *Kehila Meshihit Israelit—Kehilat Yerushalayim* (The Israeli Messianic Assembly—Jerusalem Assembly). The key personalities who founded the Assembly, and also continued to be active later on, were Ze'ev Kofsman and his wife Yvette, Hava Kronhaus, Rachel Greenberg and Rina Preiss.<sup>27</sup> The Kofsmans never gave up their vision that the Israeli Messianic Assembly would become the spiritual center for all Jewish believers in Yeshua in Eretz-Israel—both for sabras, and for all those immigrated to the Land from the four corners of the earth.

22 The addresses for *HaLapid* changed from P.O. Box 386 Jerusalem, in the first and second issues, to 4 Gershon Agron Street, Jerusalem, in the third and fourth issues. The latter was the Assembly's building before it moved to its present location on 56 Prophets St., Jerusalem.

23 See J.-M. Thobois, "Le pasteur Zeev Kofsmann, tel que je l'ai connu," in *Documents Expériences*, no. 59, Carhaix 1986, pp. 32-43. See recently J.-M. Thobois, "Un grand ami d'Israël disparaît," in *Keren Israel*, no. 51, 2001, pp. 38-41.

24 See Sh. Paul Re'em, "Book Survey," in *UCCI News* (United Christian Council in Israel), vol. 1, # 3, Fall 1970, p. 15. Cf. Idem, "Preface," *Analytical Concordance to the Delitzsch Hebrew Translation of the New Testament*, vol. 1, Jerusalem 1973, p. iii (Hebrew).

25 Rina Preiss was born in 1925 in Czechoslovakia, and immigrated to Eretz-Israel in 1937.

26 E.g., Sue Pishkoff, "Holy Mission," in *The Jerusalem Post Magazine*, February 2, 1996, pp. 16-18.

27 See Gershon Nerel, *Dissertation*, pp. 171-182.

19 See Jacob Gartenhaus, *Famous Hebrew Christians*, Chattanooga 1979, p. 155.

20 Kai Kjaer-Hansen and Bodil F. Skjott, *Facts and Myths About the Messianic Congregations in Israel*, *Mishkan* 30-31, Jerusalem 1999, pp. 109-117.

21 *Kol Shofar*, p. 7.



The name *HaLapid* ("The Torch") was chosen from the words of the prophet Isaiah, based upon a combination of two verses. The first was: "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a torch that burns" (Isaiah 62:1). The second verse was: "Arise, shine; for your light has come!" (Isaiah 60:1). The symbolism of light, expressing the unique light of the Messiah, was of great importance in the eyes of Kofsman.<sup>28</sup>

On the second page of each issue of the magazine, beneath the large headline of *HaLapid*, a significant sub-title was attached. It read as follows: "Organ of the Israeli Messianic Kehila (congregation) which is the resurrection of the ancient Messianic Kehila in its original form." In the first issue, Ze'ev Kofsman provided some explanatory words for this sub-headline. He explained that the modern Messianic Jewish congregation, the first that obtained a formal status in Israel, "is the direct and natural continuation of the first Israelite Messianic congregation which was founded in Jerusalem by Jewish believers in Yeshua in the first century." Further to this, Kofsman also made the following comparison:

Precisely as the Jewish people in Israel today are a direct and natural continuation of the ancient Jewish nation who were residents of this country 2000 years ago, not less precisely also the Israeli Messianic Assembly of today is an inseparable part of the Jewish people... Just as the Jewish people have begun to re-build their statehood and national life upon the ancient physical ruins, so also can this be applied to the spiritual life. Hence the Messianic Assembly has started to re-build its spiritual dwelling place in its renewed country.<sup>29</sup>

It is absolutely clear that the editors of *HaLapid*, who were also reflecting the opinions among their constituency, strongly aspired to adopt the general paradigm of the primitive Jewish

followers of Yeshua in the Land. Consequently, they did not regard themselves only as a restorationist movement, but also wished to gain a unique starting-point for elaborating changes and even for introducing new concepts within the universal body of believers. In fact, such patterns were detected also in many other Messianic Jewish circles in the Diaspora.<sup>30</sup> Today similar goals are openly set by the "Messianic Midrasha" of *Netivyah* in Jerusalem, and their magazine *Teaching from Zion*, through which they are trying to provide a means to upgrade the level of insight and restore First Century Jewish thinking and understanding of the New Covenant Scriptures.<sup>31</sup>

In connection with the return to Zion, Kofsman highlighted the fact that the Jews "do not come to this country as immigrants or squatters but to receive their *Nahala* (possession), to receive their fathers' estate as an inheritance." Therefore, he stressed, "likewise, we do not come to the Israeli Messianic Assembly as *Gerim* (converts), but rather as the redeemed who are returning to our spiritual inheritance."<sup>32</sup>

The Israeli Messianic Assembly, in Kofsman's opinion, was established in order to serve as a home (both spiritual and physical) for all Messianic Jews, so that they would no longer need to wander from place to place. In the long run, the Assembly was supposed to create a framework and a magnet for all the Jewish followers of Yeshua in Eretz-Yisrael who were still scattered among the many historical churches and denominations. However, this did not happen. Many congregations have since developed in Israel, yet there does not exist one central and authoritative assembly for all Jewish believers in the country. Probably Kofsman could not imagine the diversity and the individualistic tendencies that would characterize the future body of Jewish believers in Israel.

28 E.g., Gershon Nerel, "Symbols Used by Messianic Jews in Israel," in *Messianic Jewish Life*, vol. 73, July-September 2000, p. 25.

29 Shlomo Kofsman, "Words of Introduction," in *HaLapid*, vol. 1, Jerusalem, January 1, 1960, p. 2 (Hebrew).

30 E.g., David Flusser, "The Land and the Promise," in *The Jerusalem Post Magazine*, Friday, March 7, 1975, p. 18. And also recently, Gershon Nerel, "Primitive Jewish Christians in the Modern Thoughts of Messianic Jews," in Simon Claude Mimouni, ed., *Le judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états, Actes du colloque de Jérusalem 6-10 Juillet 1998* (École biblique), Editions du Cerf, Paris 2001, pp. 399-425.

31 See pamphlet "Messianic Midrasha," *Jerusalem*, n.d. (1998) p. 2.

32 Shlomo Kofsman, "Words of Introduction," *HaLapid*, vol. 1, p. 4.



Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir, who lived during those years on Abbas Street, Haifa, was the chief editor of the last two issues of *HaLapid*. The editorial board of the magazine's third issue included Ze'ev Shlomo Kofsman, Victor Smadja and Rina Preiss from Jerusalem, and Professor Shlomo Birnbaum from Haifa. In those years, Victor Smadja worked as a teacher at the Shalhevethyah School in Jerusalem, under the auspices of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission. Today Victor is the senior elder of the Israeli Messianic Assembly located on 56 Prophets Street in Jerusalem, and he is also the director of Yanetz Messianic Printing Press.<sup>33</sup> Solomon Birnbaum was the first director of the Jewish Studies program at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, and after he moved to Israel he was the manager of the Bethel orphanage in Haifa.<sup>34</sup> For the fourth issue of *HaLapid* two new persons were elected to the editorial staff: Ya'akov Yaffe and Haim Fastman.

Regarding the various articles that appeared in *HaLapid*, some interesting titles included, as follows: "Two Letters to the Chief Rabbinate in Jerusalem;" an ongoing series on the "Names of King Messiah," and "Not a Converted Jew but a Saved Jew." It is also interesting to pay notice to an announcement that appeared on the last page of the second issue:

Welcome! On every Sabbath morning at 10:00 a.m. a public prayer meeting and sermon are taking place at the following locations: Y.M.C.A building, room no. 10 in Jerusalem, and at no. 40, HaGefen Street, ground floor, in Haifa.<sup>35</sup>

From this short announcement we can learn about the meeting places of two small Messianic Jewish congregations in the year 1960: one under the leadership of Kofsman in Jerusalem and the other under Ben-Meir in Haifa. In fact, during the 1950s Ben-Meir arranged the meetings of his Kehila at the Scandinavian Seamen Church, then controlled by

Norwegian Lutheran Pastor Per Faye Hansen, on 41 Meir Street in Haifa, where today the Ebenezer Home for elderly believers and Bet-Eliyahu Messianic Congregation are located.<sup>36</sup> As for Kofsman's congregation, in 1961 it moved to no. 4 Gershon Agron Street, Jerusalem (today it is a Conservative Synagogue), and there the library of the Kehila was opened.

In this library, that was open to the public only three days a week, there were books in Hebrew, English, French, and a few in other languages. The readers of *HaLapid* were invited to visit in order to get acquainted with, and check out its books.

In each issue of *HaLapid*, on the second page, a short Articles of Faith was published. This credo included five points, stating:

We believe in: 1) the oneness (Achdut)<sup>37</sup> of God; 2) the Messiahship of Yeshua, son of David, that according to Scripture was born in Bethlehem in the days of the Second Temple, was killed for our sins, on the third day resurrected from the dead, ascended into heaven and is sitting at the right hand of the Power (Hagevurah)<sup>38</sup> on high, and will return to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth; 3) the Holy Spirit; 4) the Tanach (The Old Testament) as God's word; 5) the political Return to Zion (Shivat Zion) and the spiritual restoration (of Israel), according to God's promise.<sup>39</sup>

This "pentagonal creed" purposely avoided the traditional formulas of the historical Church creeds. Thus, for example, it is clear that any definitions concerning christological matters and the divinity of Yeshua are bypassed. This, therefore, is a very inclusive credo, aiming at the formation of a general theological common ground for a vast constituency. The desire for doctrinal independence strongly influenced the Israeli editors of *HaLapid*.<sup>40</sup>

Throughout the three years that *HaLapid* was in existence, it was distributed free of charge. In 1962, after the publication

36 See Ruth Bondi, "Yehudim Shel Yeshu Hanotzri" ("Jews of Jesus the Nazarene"), in *Omer*, Monday May 4, 1953, issue no. 564, p. 3 (Hebrew).

37 This Hebrew word can also be translated as "unity."

38 E.g., Matt. 26: 64; Mark 14: 62. Concerning the Apocryphic background of the term "Hagevurah" see especially Avraham Even Shoshan, *The New Dictionary*, vol. 1, Jerusalem 1968, p. 300 (Hebrew).

39 For a strictly Lutheran evaluation of this "First Israeli Messianic Creed" see Per Østerbye, *The Church in Israel, Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia XV*, Gleerup (Denmark) 1970, pp. 157-159.

40 For further comparisons cf. Gershon Nerel, "Creeds among Jewish Believers in Yeshua between the World Wars," in *Mishkan*, vol. 34, 2001, pp. 61-79.

33 E.g., Heikki Nurminen, "Israelista vieraita," in *Shalom* (Finland), no. 6, 1999, p. 20; Cf. *Keren Ahvah Meshihit, Report from Jerusalem*, June 2001.

34 See Robert I. Winer, *The Calling*, Wynnewood, 1990, p. 25; Cf. Rosalie Birnbaum, "These Found the Way," in *The American Hebrew Christian*, vol. 60, no. 2, 1975, p. 25.

35 *HaLapid*, vol. 2, Jerusalem, July 1960, p. 8.



of the fourth issue, it was discontinued, mainly due to differing theological views among members of the editorial board. Their differing exegetical approaches, particularly on observing rabbinical traditions and manifestations of the Holy Spirit, eventually caused them to separate.<sup>41</sup> The mid-1960s found each of the magazine's editorial board in a different place and position. Only towards the year 1969, the families of Ze'ev Kofman, Victor Smadja and Haim Fastman, together with others like Ya'akov Goren, Elias Sarikas and Amikam Tavor, managed to gather together as a Kehila in Jerusalem. With fresh efforts they revitalized the existing Israeli Messianic Assembly in the city.

As for Moshe Ben-Meir, he strongly opposed receiving help, be it theological or material, from supporters outside of Israel. Therefore he continued to make his living as a postman in Haifa and also to give lectures on Messianic Judaism outside the country, primarily in Scandinavia. In conjunction with this, Ben-Meir worked independently in publishing another new Messianic Jewish magazine under the name *Tal*.

### TAL—FRESH WATERS IN THE LAND

Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir was the founder and the exclusive editor of *Tal* (Dew), the third indigenous magazine of Jewish followers of Yeshua in the State of Israel. In his journal, the editor attempted to reflect a strong national consciousness.<sup>42</sup> The sub-title of this magazine was "A free bulletin of independent Messianic Jews in Israel."<sup>43</sup> This magazine was published quarterly from August 1962 to September 1967. Twenty-one issues of *Tal* were published, almost without interruption, and disseminated free of charge.

41 Interview with Rina Preiss in *Zichron Ya'akov*, September 8, 1999. Rina emphasized that she identified with the views of Kofman.

42 In addition to that, one of the later and stimulating publications of Ben-Meir was *How a Jew Explains Ephesians*, Jerusalem, April 1978.

43 Interestingly, on the front page of *Tal* it was mentioned that the magazine was printed in Jerusalem, with no specific location. The editor's address on the second page was P.O. Box 1305, Haifa. Obviously the publication of any residential or private address could have attracted harassment from anti-missionary and the like circles.

On the front page of each issue, the name *Tal* appeared in the center of a plain Magen-David. Six words were inserted into the six corners of that star, formulating the following sentence: "I will be like the dew unto Israel" (Hosea 14:5), and "the heavens will drop their dew" (Zechariah 8:12). The title *Tal* originated from the combination of these two verses from the *Tanach*.

Ben-Meir's vision for Israel was described in his editorial of the first issue of *Tal*. There he wrote as follows:

Messianic Jews in the State of Israel are as a flock without a shepherd. They are like a corpse attracting the vulture to nourish itself from its rotting flesh. The vulture does not dare to touch the live body, and a live body, as long as it breaths, will resist any attempt of the vulture to gouge piece after piece from its flesh. Messianic Jews in Israel are a source of financial income for all sorts of 'community leaders' (Parnasim), 'treasurers' (Gabbaim), 'pastors,' 'preachers' and 'secretaries' who build themselves up from the sad situation of Messianic Jews. From far and near they come to us, their rucksacks filled with all kinds of drugs and cures to improve our situation. But these drugs and cures are nothing other than anesthetics to numb our senses, turning us into unresisting clay in their hands. And the result is that our situation continues to worsen, while they prosper on our ruins.<sup>44</sup>

Ben-Meir did not hesitate to use this alarming example. From the very outset, he wanted to shock the reader and to draw the attention to what was, in his eyes, a severe situation which was the fundamental reason for many problems of Jewish believers in Israel. Immediately afterward, Ben-Meir continued and provided the explanation for his own parable:

This magazine comes to draw a line of salvation and life that will put us in order and help us chase away the birds of prey and to get strengthened against their efforts to keep us in a state of continuous anesthesia. As Messianic Jews we have a special, important role as witnesses to the Lord Yeshua the Messiah among our brethren in this country, and we can fulfill this role only as Messianic Jews, having both Jewish and Messianic sentiments. They are trying to destroy or anesthetize these feelings. Our bulletin is fully dedicated to declare war against this attempt. This magazine will aspire to set a table with

44 Moshe Ben-Meir, "A Word from the Editor," in *Tal*, vol. 1, August 1962, p. 2.



all kinds of healthful, strengthening food, which will be carefully gathered from the storehouse of the Holy Scriptures. Food and dishes prepared by the delightful hands of the "Yiddische Mamme" will awaken and stimulate us to the full and holy life that the Holy One, blessed be He, has destined for each and every one of us.<sup>45</sup>

In Ben-Meir's opinion, the "birds of prey" in the State of Israel were all representatives of official and distorted "Churchianity." In his view, most parts of Christianity had strayed from the path of pure, complete faith, rooted in the Jewish Bible and Jewish way of thinking. In other words, he opposed the "Gentilizing missionaries." Even before Ben-Meir founded *Tal*, he consistently attacked missionary organizations from abroad, particularly those whose workers in Israel taught that "the virgin Israel fell and has not risen, and Jews must be Christianized."<sup>46</sup> That is to say that Ben-Meir rejected the teachings of the "Church" in those matters that did not reconcile with what is written in Holy Scripture regarding the Jews and their unique status in God's plan of salvation. After the 1967 Six Day War and the reunification of Jerusalem under Jewish sovereignty he particularly emphasized that the "times of the nations" had come to an end.<sup>47</sup>

Among the various articles in *Tal*, we find two personal testimonies of particular interest. The first is by Daniel Zion,<sup>48</sup> who had been the chief rabbi of Bulgarian Jewry. During World War II, Rabbi Zion had been very active in the capital city of Sophia

in obtaining protection for the Jews.<sup>49</sup> In 1949, he immigrated to Israel and settled in the Bulgarian neighborhood of Jaffa, where he continued to function as rabbi of the Bulgarian Jews.<sup>50</sup> In his article "How I Accepted the Lord Yeshua the Messiah," which was published in the second issue of *Tal*, Daniel Zion described the many times that Yeshua was revealed to him personally. In his testimony he narrates as follows:

At the commencement of Rosh Hodesh (beginning of month) Shvat 5710 (1950), the Holy Spirit came upon me like a burning flame, my voice was strangled, I could neither speak nor breathe, and I did not know what was happening to me. Then that internal voice called to me, 'Go and declare your faith in Yeshua the Messiah to the two secretaries of the Chief Rabbinate.' This commandment bothered me and I could not sleep the whole night. Several times it was repeated to me. I had no rest and no quiet until I rose the next morning and went to Tel Aviv, where I met the two secretaries and told them what had happened to me.<sup>51</sup>

In the wake of this event, and after Daniel Zion gave a message on "Kol Israel," the Israeli broadcasting station, on September 14, 1952,<sup>52</sup> the whole affair became known throughout the country. Rabbi Zion was declared insane, and finally was removed from his position as rabbi in Jaffa.

It should be noted here that mainstream Jewry tends to find a very easy and simplistic answer to the question "what caused them to convert?" A frequent reaction of normative Jewry to the phenomenon of Jews who adopt faith in Yeshua follows a pattern that can be defined as the "insanity declaration." It is not only rabbinical circles that declare Jewish believers to have mentally disordered, lunatic or abnormal personalities. Sometimes even the academic world tends to accept this solution, among various other explanations. The Hebrew saying "Yatza Mida'ato Veahar

45 *Tal*, vol. 1, *ibid*.

46 Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir, *Al Hamissonim* (On the Missions), P.O. Box 1305 Haifa, n.d. (1964), p. 13 (Hebrew); On the historical background of this topic see Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel, A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire AD 135-425*, Translated from the French by H. McKeating, The Littman Library, London 1996, esp. pp. 237-254.

47 Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir, "The Times of the Nations," in *Teaching from Zion*, no. 3, October 1974, p. 4.

48 See Jacob Gartenhaus, "Rabbi Daniel Zion—100 Years Old," in *The American Messianic Jewish Quarterly*, vol. 64, no. 3, 1979, pp. 21-22. Other sources state that Daniel Shlomo Zion died when he was 96 years old (1883-1979). See memorandum of Menachem Benhayim, dated September 13, 1989, concerning an interview with Eliezer Asher Ansky, who was a personal friend of Daniel Zion (unpublished manuscript). In his later age, Zion also attempted to combine his theology with matters of nutrition and vegetarianism, and published a mimeographed pamphlet in Hebrew called *Hateva Veba'adam* (Nature and Man), which he sold for 20 Agorot. In volume 3 of *Hateva Veba'adam*, Daniel Zion published 25 songs about Yeshua (n.d.).

49 Joseph Shulam, "Rabbi Daniel Zion: Chief Rabbi of Bulgarian Jews During World War II," in *Mishkan*, vol. 15, 1991, pp. 53-57.

50 See Yohai Hakak, "Ani Lo Missyoner" (I am not a Missionary), in *Iton Yerushalayim*, December 12, 1997, p. 43 (Hebrew).

51 *Tal*, vol. 2, November 1962, p. 4.

52 "An Amazing Address Given on the Jerusalem Radio," in *Lamp and Light*, July/August 2000, pp. 17-18 (reprint).



Kah Midato" (first demented, then converted) is especially attributed to those Jewish "dissidents" who openly believe in the divinity and Messiahship of Yeshua.<sup>53</sup>

The second testimony in *Tal* was written by Lilly Wreschner, who was born in Switzerland in 1908 and now lives in Jerusalem. As a Swiss youngster she dedicated herself to studying philosophy and psychology, and later, in 1938, made *aliyah*. For many decades she was active in spreading the gospel of Yeshua throughout the country. She resided mainly in Haifa. In her article "I Sought the Truth" she wrote as follows:

I labored in Eretz-Israel in order to hasten the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy—"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean" (36:25). These words were spoken to the House of Israel. I thank God and praise His holy name for giving me the entire truth, and revealing to me the Messiah of the God of Jacob, the King of the Jews, the glory of Israel, in the face of the man from Nazareth! He also poured His Holy Spirit into me as it is written in the prophecy of Joel.<sup>54</sup>

Lilly Wreschner<sup>55</sup> was only one among many single women in the Land who dedicated their lives to disseminating the message of Yeshua, even to the remotest villages. These spouseless women reached places and fields that others could not penetrate. Among those who have already passed away we need to mention especially Elsie Clor, Rose Warmer, Maly Kagan and Lotte Nussbaum.

A salient topic that concerned Ben-Meir was the observance of Torah and the keeping of Jewish customs and traditions. He frequently expressed these issues within the pages of *Tal*. Thus, for example, in three issues of *Tal* (nos. 2; 3 and 20) various articles were devoted to the theme "Remember the Sabbath Day to Keep it Holy!" Observing Shabbat, and not Sunday, remained a permanent item on Ben-Meir's agenda. Furthermore, he also

published in his magazine a unique prayer for the Shabbat candles. He wanted to establish a Messianic Jewish liturgical prayer for kindling the Shabbat candles, symbolizing the light of Messiah. Alongside this Shabbat prayer Ben-Meir added a special prayer for the peace of Jerusalem.<sup>56</sup>

Within the pages of *Tal* Ben-Meir also posed the following question: "Is the prohibition of eating pork annulled in the Messianic dispensation?" He answered that question as follows:

The Lord Yeshua did not eat pork. Simon Kepha and Paul did not eat pork. No member of the first Messianic community ate pork. Why should I deviate from this custom and eat pork? And what is wrong with eating the flesh of pure animals? The Torah unites the people of Israel and is the guarantee of its eternal existence. It makes Jews the people of salvation, and it is the rituals of Christianity that distort the image of the Lord Yeshua and turn the Torah of the living God into a cauldron of death. He who would guard his soul will keep his distance from it and draw closer and closer to the Lord.<sup>57</sup>

At the same time, Ben Meir was willing to publish other views in his magazine. Thus, for example, an anonymous writer under the pseudonym "A Jewish Believer," published an article in *Tal* on the dangers of observing tradition for the sake of tradition. The author stated that only the Holy Scriptures, the Tanach and the New Covenant, should serve as the basis of faith for Jewish believers in Yeshua. Additional thoughts on this subject were expressed as follows:

There is serious danger in tradition, even for those who accept exclusively the fundamentals of the Tanach. Traditional opinions are liable to infiltrate our ways of thinking, and to replace the words of the Tanach by formulating principles of faith. This happens even to those who in whole seriousness intend to build solely on the Tanach. Sometimes we accept as biblical and as fundamental things that actually originate from tradition of generations—either past or present generations. Each one of us is the victim of a kind of brain washing caused by traditions of generations—traditions within families and society, and we tend to attribute to the Tanach views and ideas

53 See David Assaf, "Convert or Saint? In the Footsteps of Moshe, the Son of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Lyady," in *Zion*, (The Historical Society of Israel, Jerusalem), vol. 65, no. 4, 2000, pp. 453-515 (Hebrew).

54 *Tal*, vol. 10, October 1964, pp. 13-15.

55 Cf. Lilly Wreschner, *Wie Gott Mein Suchen Nach Wahrheit Erfüllte*, *Dynamis Verlag*, Kreuzlingen 1991.

56 *Tal*, vol. 1, 1962, pp. 4-5.

57 *Tal*, vol. 14, October 1965, pp. 5-7.



which actually are not there. There is a human tendency to attribute to the Tanach opinions that were formed in the heart of man, knowingly or unknowingly, even before this opinion is tested against what is written in the Tanach.<sup>58</sup>

The conclusion of this article is that any personal opinions and halachic positions must pass the test of biblical truth. Truth is never defected during trials and tests. Only what is not truth is damaged in the test. The author emphasizes that it is painful to present personal opinions to the test, yet there is no other way to avoid the dangers of distorted and empty faith.<sup>59</sup>

The last issue of *Tal* (no. 21) was published for the quarter of July-September 1967, soon after the Israeli victory in the Six Day War. In that period Moshe Ben-Meir felt that prophecy was going to unfold even more rapidly, so he moved from Haifa to Jerusalem, and settled in the neighborhood of Kiryat Yovel. Since the third decade of the State of Israel is beyond the scope of this article, I will only briefly mention the last journalistic efforts of Ben-Meir.

### TEACHING FROM ZION— BEN MEIR'S MAGAZINE IN ENGLISH

In April 1974, together with the assistance of Ahuva (formerly Lempi Virtanen), who also became his third wife, Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir started to publish a new English magazine, called *Teaching from Zion* (Limud Torah MiZion).<sup>60</sup> The logo of this journal was an open Sefer Torah, with the seven-branch Menorah in its center. Its motto was: "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3). From the outset, he insisted on functioning as a totally independent publisher of his new magazine, and he named this private work "Bible Instruction Ministry." Like *Tal*, the smaller "*Teaching from Zion*" normally appeared on a quar-

terly basis. It was mimeographed on very simple paper. In some editions of the magazine it is almost impossible to read the text because of the low quality of both the printing and the paper.

In *Teaching from Zion*, Ben-Meir focused especially on two issues: first, on observing the Torah according to traditional Jewish perspectives, and second, on eschatological matters. Thus, Ben-Meir expected Yeshua to return very soon, and he even fixed the year for that event—1988. He was fully convinced that this would occur within the lifetime of one generation, namely forty years after the establishment of the State of Israel. He stated his idea as follows: "Those who saw the rise of the State of Israel will not pass till they see the fulfillment of all these things, including the majestic coming of the Son of Man. (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32)."<sup>61</sup> The decisive and visible sign in his eyes was the symbol of the blossoming fig tree, i.e. the territorial and national rebirth of Israel. This drew him to the conclusion that believers must live, speak and act as persons who wholeheartedly wait for the coming of the Holy One.<sup>62</sup>

Keeping Jewish traditions was Ben-Meir's precious "baby." For example, concerning the traditional customs of Rosh Hashanah, he wrote: "On Rosh Hashanah Eve, it is the custom to eat the head of a fish as a reminder of the promise that Israel should be the head of the nations and not the tail (Deuteronomy 28:13). Also pomegranates are eaten and the bread is dipped in honey and not in salt as always."<sup>63</sup> He also wrote on Purim and the custom of disguise, when old and young, men and women, disguise themselves.<sup>64</sup>

Political affairs, local and international, were frequently discussed in the pages of *Teaching from Zion*. Concerning

61 Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir, "The Eschatological Speech of the Lord," in *Teaching from Zion*, vol. 1, 1974, p. 7.

62 Cf. Moshe Ben-Meir, "The Personal Return of the Lord," *Teaching from Zion*, vol. 5, April 1975, p. 1. This article was also translated into Finnish and published in *Karmel*, XV-30, June 1975.

63 Moshe Ben-Meir, "Rosh Hashanah," in *Teaching from Zion*, vol. 7, October 1975 (Tishrei 5736), p. 7.

64 "Purim," in *Teaching from Zion*, vol. 17, April 1978, p. 7.

58 "The Foundation of Our Faith," in *Tal*, vol. 10, October 1964, pp. 6-7.

59 On this theme see, e.g., Gershon Nerel, "Observing the Torah According to Yeshua," in *Chai, The magazine of the British Messianic Jewish Alliance*, Issue 212, Summer 2001, pp. 1-4.

60 The initial address of *Teaching from Zion* was P.O. Box 9243, Jerusalem.



attempts to reach a political agreement or compromises with the Arabs, Ben-Meir often used very sharp words, and wrote:

"A partition of 'Palestine,' a dividing of the Promised Land, is contrary to the plan and purposes of God. All who involve themselves in this dividing up will have to face trial at the bar of God. Even the USA, which sides with Israel, is so smitten with blindness that it fails to see through the satanic tactics of the PLO.<sup>65</sup>

In fact, Ben-Meir remained—to his last day—a nationalistic activist Messianic Jew. He proudly told his readers that he enlisted in the Security Services in 1948 and faithfully filled his national obligation as did the other Jews of Haifa. Later he enlisted also in Zahal, the Israeli Defense Forces.<sup>66</sup>

After Ben-Meir died in 1978, *Teaching from Zion* continued to be published regularly under the editorship of Joseph Shulam, and it is currently distributed mainly outside of Israel. A Hebrew edition, *Torah Mizion*, containing a variety of articles translated from the English issue, appeared in April 1997.<sup>67</sup>

#### JERUSALEM—ADDRESSING THE NATIONS FROM ERETZ-ISRAEL

The first issue of *Jerusalem—Organ of the Jewish Christian Community and the Jerusalem Fellowship* appeared in London in October 1946,<sup>68</sup> and it is still published today, mainly by reprinting old materials. From the outset, on the front page of each issue a special logo was displayed: a cross in the Star of David. The chief editor of this English monthly was Abram Poljak, who strongly believed that the modern Jewish Christian movement is the most important event of our time, "the symbol of the changing aeon."<sup>69</sup> As a matter of fact, *Jerusalem* was

the English sister magazine of another journal published by Poljak in German, which already had been started in Jerusalem in 1935. This German journal was a small mimeographed paper called *Judenchristliche Pressekorrespondenz* (Hebrew Christian Press-Correspondence).<sup>70</sup>

Poljak started his journalistic work in Mandatory Palestine by reporting (in the first issue) on his "Correspondence" about the third annual conference of the "Hebrew Christian Alliance of Palestine." This event, opened April 2, 1935, and was organized by the secretary of the Alliance, Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir, and took place at Ain-Karem, the traditional birthplace of Yochanan the Immerser near Jerusalem. About thirty Jewish Christians and a number of guests participated. The first issue of the *Correspondence* reported on two interesting themes that were discussed in this conference: "What is the meaning of a Jewish Christian Church?," and "The formation of a Jewish Christian colony near the Gaza Strip."<sup>71</sup> No practical activities were reported.

Abram Poljak was supported by three other persons, Dr. Agnes Waldstein, Pauline Rose<sup>72</sup> and Albert von Springer.<sup>73</sup> They established and sponsored two small congregations in Haifa and in Jerusalem. The ideal of Hebrew Christian communities in the Holy Land appears throughout the many volumes of *Jerusalem*. Thus, for example, concerning the Jerusalem community during the first year of Israel's national independence, it was reported as follows:

A flat has now been secured in Jerusalem where some of the members of the Community live, one of the rooms being used for the meetings

65 "A 'Palestinian State'," in *Teaching from Zion*, vol. 10, July 1976, p.1; Cf. "Yasser Arafat's New Tactics," *ibid.*, vol. 11, October 1976, p. 6.

66 Moshe Immanuel Ben-Meir, *What is the Truth?*, Haifa, n.d. (1965?), pp. 6-7. Cf. the same text in a Hebrew version, with two photographs added, showing military documents that authenticate his military service.

67 The Hebrew articles in *Torah Mizion* were translated from the English text by Amikam Tavor, and published by Netivyah—Aguda Leheker Kitvei Hakodesh (Society for Study of Holy Scripture), located at 16 Narkis Street, P.O. Box 8043, Jerusalem.

68 E.g., Stephen Sharot, "A Jewish Christian Adventist Movement," in *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, vol. 10, 1968, pp. 35-45.

69 Abram Poljak, *The Cross in the Star of David*, London 1938, p. 2. Cf. Gershon Nerel, "Messianic Jews and the Modern Zionist Movement," in *Torleif Elgvin*, ed., *Israel and Yeshua*, Caspari Festschrift, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 79-80.

70 Originally this was a very small paper, first published under the address P.O. Box 385, Jerusalem, and later at P.O. Box 869, Jerusalem. The first issue of the *Correspondence* contained six mimeographed sheets, the second and third issues contained three sheets each, and the fourth had four pages.

71 *Judenchristliche Pressekorrespondenz*, vol. 1, Jerusalem, May 1, 1935, pp. 3-5. The first four issues were published twice a month.

72 See Pauline Rose, *The Siege of Jerusalem*, London 1949; *idem*, *Window on Mount Zion*, London and New York 1973.

73 Albert von Springer was a Jew of Austrian background. He also edited the French version of *Jérusalem* (P.O. Box 1353, Jerusalem). In 1953 the sub-title of the French edition was changed from "Organe de l'association judéo-chrétienne" to "La parole du royaume, mouvement judéo-chrétien."



and services. This particular room, which is a small 'upper room' built on the roof of the house, looks out on to the Mount of Olives. Its position seems like a symbol of the calling of the Community. In this room a daily prayer meeting is held. Last thing at night the lights are kindled with a prayer for the return of the Messiah. On Friday evening at 5:30, when the sirens announce the official beginning of the Sabbath all over Jerusalem, we gather for our Sabbath service. This is followed by a Sabbath meal. On Sabbath at 11:00 we meet for morning service. It is encouraging to see that we are never less than ten and usually up to fifteen for the Sabbath meeting.<sup>74</sup>

This group enthusiastically focused on the Shabbat liturgy, and strongly rejected the Church tradition of Sunday worship. In fact, Poljak and his company incorporated the symbolism of Shabbat candles into their official "Statement of Faith." This they stated as follows: "The light of Christ has begun to shine afresh in Israel, and His Spirit will reveal Himself in an ever increasing measure, until Christ returns, which we expect soon. The candles which we light are a symbol of the light of Christ in Israel."<sup>75</sup> The Shabbat liturgy, focusing on the motif of Messiah's light, became also a central theme in their daily prayers, mainly as a community of brotherhood.<sup>76</sup>

Elements of traditional worship, both Jewish and Christian, were joined within the liturgy of this group. The "welcoming of the Sabbath" was adopted from the Synagogue service. The central prayer was the prayer of repentance, intercession and request for the return of Messiah. This was followed by prayers for the government of Israel and the peace of Jerusalem. In conclusion, the "Lord's Prayer" was recited by the whole congregation and the service closed with the Aharonic benediction.<sup>77</sup>

The Shabbat candles and Messiah's light were understood by this group as a light to the Goyim. It was hoped that the center of this Jewish Christian community would be in Jerusalem,

leading towards the foundation of the Messianic Synagogue in Israel. By sharing the vision of "Jesus in the Synagogue," the leaders of the group challenged the Gentile Christians to carry this light into other countries, to talk about the light of the Jewish Messiah among the nations. Gradually, however, the center of gravity of this group moved from Israel to the nations, particularly focusing overseas on the millenarian hope that after Yeshua's return he will set up the Kingdom of God on earth.<sup>78</sup> The Jewish part of the group's leadership preferred to live and work outside of Israel.

It was especially during the 1950s that *Jerusalem* served as a platform for Israeli Jewish believers to share their thoughts and activities among the nations. Thus, for example, it was reported that in December 1950, Jewish believers held their first national conference in Jerusalem. A committee that was elected at the conference worked out their statutes, intending to present it to the Israeli government for recognition. After three months of negotiations and delay, the government informed the committee that it was unable to formally recognize an association of Messianic Jews. Eventually this "Union" dissolved on November 28, 1951, mainly because of denominational disagreements between its various members.<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile, however, local congregations in the Land continued to develop and maintain close contacts with Gentile Christians abroad.<sup>80</sup>

Although Poljak and his companions lived for some time in the State of Israel, their headquarters was always located in the *Galut*. First, it was in London, and eventually in Möttlingen, Germany, where Poljak died on October 28, 1963.<sup>81</sup> In fact, Poljak's death marked the beginning of the decline and dissolution of this movement that can be seen mainly as a "one man movement." Poljak first lost focus when he stopped working

74 Albert Springer, "The Community in Jerusalem," in *Jerusalem*, nos. 33/34, June/July 1949, p. 2.

75 "Statement of Faith," in *Jerusalem*, nos. 22&23, July-August 1948, p. 5.

76 "Prayers of the Jewish Christian Community," in *Jerusalem*, nos. 22 & 23, 1948, p. 3.

77 "The Liturgy of the Jerusalem Community," in *Jerusalem*, nos. 44/45, May/June 1950, pp. 1-7. This was reprinted several times, see e.g., in *Jerusalem*, no. 107, August 1955, pp. 9-15.

78 Abram Poljak, "For Zion's Sake," in *Jerusalem*, no. 41, February 1950, pp. 1-2. Cf. Pauline Rose, "The Light of the Messiah," in *The Jewish Christian Movement*, London (Patmos Publishers), n.d. (?1955), pp. 33-37.

79 "Union of Messianic Jews," in *Jerusalem*, no. 65, February 1952, p. 7.

80 Agnes Waldstein, "Message from Jerusalem," in *Jerusalem*, no. 99, December 1954, pp. 2-3.

81 See "Departure," in *Jerusalem*, no. 204, December 1963, p. 1.



exclusively in Israel. As he and other leaders of the group labored simultaneously in too many parts of Europe, eventually they failed to establish a solid infrastructure in one place. Ultimately they lost their work not only in Israel, but everywhere. The only one who is living today is Albert Springer, who at the age of 87 resides in Switzerland. During the last few years Springer has totally disassociated himself from Jewish believers in Yeshua, and their current organizations.<sup>82</sup>

Finally, the movement and the journalistic work that was initiated and maintained by Abram Poljak and his colleagues changed its character from "Jewish Christianity" to an international Community of Jews and Christians. Today this movement is almost non-existent. Retrospectively, in comparison with its original goals, Poljak's movement could be described mainly as a "paper empire," with only some long-term results. Its major influence was probably among Scandinavian Christians. Through the Norwegian and Finnish "Karmel" movement, Scandinavians adopted the symbol of the cross in the Star of David, and Nordic volunteers discovered the idea of Christian Zionism and tried to implement it.<sup>83</sup> There is no doubt that Poljak and his friends were prolific journalists, but at the end of the road they were not successful in creating a direct second generation that would follow them in the State of Israel.

### **SALVATION—REPORTS FROM ISRAEL IN AMERICA**

Since 1946, the monthly magazine *Salvation* has been published regularly by the American Association for Jewish Evangelism (AAJE), which in the summer of 1985 adopted the new name of International Ministries to Israel. Interestingly, no public explanation was given for the change of names for the organization.<sup>84</sup> On its cover page, *Salvation* presented a symbol

that combined the cross with the Star of David, side by side. From the outset, the central motto of this magazine was "Salvation is of the Jews."<sup>85</sup> In this magazine, the late Haim Joseph Haimoff published a personal column uninterruptedly from May 1953 until April 1986. He joined the staff of the AAJE in January 1950.<sup>86</sup> In the 1970s he formally changed his Diaspora surname to the Hebraic name Bar-David.

Haim Haimoff/Bar-David was born in April 1905 to a wealthy and respected Sephardi Jewish family near Sophia, the capital of Bulgaria. He obtained higher education at the University of Zürich, Switzerland, where he also accepted Yeshua as his personal Savior (1923-1925). In 1928 he settled in Eretz-Yisrael, and during his whole life labored as a living witness for Yeshua in the Land.<sup>87</sup>

Haimoff's brief "reports" in *Salvation*, usually in the format of a personal letter, appeared during all those years under the sub-heading "Beginning at Jerusalem." In his first report, Haimoff made it very clear that he had perfect freedom to act in the Land according to his own spiritual understanding. This freedom he cherished greatly, and he explained that as follows: "things ought to be done by my own free will as I am led by the Holy Spirit."<sup>88</sup> Indeed, he strictly followed this principle during the four decades that he labored and made his efforts known through his reports in *Salvation*.

Haimoff's "Salvation Reports" reflected his routine activities, first when he resided in Jerusalem, then in Haifa, and eventually in Ramat-Gan (from 1958), a suburb of Tel Aviv. Almost every such report was accompanied by Haimoff's photograph.

82 Interview in Jerusalem with Neomi Springer, daughter of Albert von Springer (October 28, 2001).

83 See, e.g., "Profile: Reverend Per Faye-Hansen—Seamen's Pastor and Christian Zionist," in *Christian News from Israel*, vol. 26, #1, 1976, pp. 21-23. Cf. Judah Raviv, "Remembering the Eight," in *The Jerusalem Post*, Friday, July 30, 1976.

84 Compare the two consecutive issues of *Salvation* (vol. 39, # 6, June 1985, and vol. 39, # 7, July/August 1985).

85 The American Association for Jewish Evangelism was established by Abraham B. Machlin, who resigned from the American Board of Missions to the Jews (now known as Chosen People Ministries) in 1944. See recently Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People (Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000)*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 2000, pp. 115-117; 148. Cf. Gershon Nerel, "An Interaction with a New Book on Jewish Believers in Yeshua," in *Mishkan*, vol. 33, 2000, pp. 71-78.

86 Haim Joseph Haimoff, "From Bulgaria to Jerusalem," in *Salvation*, vol. 9, # 1, January 1955, p. 9.

87 Haim Joseph Haimoff, "My Biography," unpublished manuscript, n.d., in the private collection of Gershon Nerel. Cf. Nate Scharff, "Missionary Journey," in *Salvation*, vol. 8, # 11, November 1954, p. 18.

88 Haim J. Haimoff, "Jerusalem, Israel," in *Salvation*, vol. 7, # 5, May 1953, p. 13.



Until the late 1960s, he traveled extensively throughout the country, arranging Gospel meetings and Bible classes for various groups of *olim* (new immigrants), as he spoke several languages fluently, including Bulgarian, Hebrew, English, German, Spanish and Russian. Thus, for example, he regularly visited the Bulgarian *olim* at Ramle and Lod (Lydda), and his wife Rachel (Shelly) occasionally helped him, especially with teaching the people how to sing spiritual hymns.<sup>89</sup> The provision of good musical activities by the Haimoffs, including solo songs, choirs and instrumental music, was a major characteristic of their witness.<sup>90</sup>

Haim Haimoff realized the huge importance of targeting his Bible teaching, particularly to children. Thus, for example, at one summer vacation he started a "Bible School" for dozens of children in the Jerusalem area, using flannelgraphs for Bible stories and, again, spiritual songs. He always emphasized the need to teach children the ways of God from their early youth.<sup>91</sup> Thus, for instance, he consistently taught his children how to pray before meals, to thank God for everything before going to bed, and to pray publicly during worship services.<sup>92</sup> They kept the daily family devotions and explained Scripture passages to the children.<sup>93</sup>

As he aged, Haimoff concentrated his evangelistic work at his home, where he turned the living room into an assembly hall. There he started a small congregation around the nucleus of his large family. Besides the open Bible and prayer meetings on Shabbat and during the week, he kept the routine of an "Open House," as he hosted many visitors and inquirers who

heard about his message. Concerning the ongoing happenings in his home and assembly, which gradually became more of an inreach ministry than an outreach effort, he reported regularly in *Salvation*. Thus he narrated about immersions that he conducted, sometimes at the Sea of Galilee.<sup>94</sup> He also repeatedly reminded his listeners about the great danger of placing an equal footing on the revealed Word of God and tradition, as some churches and other believers did. Such emphasis on tradition, Haimoff stressed, "is making of non-effect the commandments of our Lord."<sup>95</sup>

While in principle Haimoff kept the major holy days of the Torah, he focused on Yeshua through these observances. He built a Sukkah and with the assembly fasted and prayed on Yom Kippur, as a way to identify with the Jewish people. And when he talked about the meaning of Yom Kippur, he emphasized the way in which Aaron made atonement before the Ark of the Testimony and the Mercy Seat for the sins of Israel and his household—by sprinkling the blood in the form of a cross.<sup>96</sup> The cross, the blood of the Lamb and the words of Yeshua were approached in his teaching and writings about the Holy of Holies.

Among the Jewish holy days that Haimoff celebrated in his assembly, and about which he also reported in *Salvation*, it was especially Pesach that enabled him to systematically link the messianic prophecies of Tanach with the message of the New Covenant. He explained that celebrating Pesach helped to keep the people of Israel separate from the nations, and to prepare Israel to meet King Yeshua at his Second Coming.<sup>97</sup> Concerning Pesach symbolism he often used the following exegesis:

I read Exodus 12:1-15. I then asked one of our guests to go to the nearby door and explain verse seven of the chapter, telling us what figure one would see if he drew a line between the two side posts and then a vertical one from the upper door post. He looked and thought

89 H.J. Haimoff, "Jerusalem, Israel," in *Salvation*, vol. 7, # 6, June, 1953, p. 10. Cf. *ibid.*, # 8, August 1953, p. 3; *Salvation* vol. 12, # 7, July-August 1958, pp. 10-11.

90 See photographs in *Salvation*, vol. 18, # 7, July 1964, p. 8; *ibid.*, vol. 15, # 6, July 1961, p. 6. Cf. *ibid.* vol. 19, # 2, February 1965, p. 9.

91 H. J. Haimoff, "Jerusalem, Israel," in *Salvation*, vol. 7, # 10, October 1953, p. 13.

92 H. J. Haimoff, "Beginning at Jerusalem," in *Salvation*, vol. 21, # 2, February 1967, p. 8. Cf. *ibid.*, vol. 21, # 8, September 1967, p. 8.

93 See also Gershon Nerel, "Rachel Bar-David: Mother of a Modern Israeli Messianic Jewish 'Tribe,'" in *The Messianic Jew and Hebrew Christian*, vol. 67, # 3, September-November 1994, pp. 66-70.

94 H. J. Haimoff, "Beginning at Jerusalem—Mt. Carmel, Israel," in *Salvation*, vol. 11, # 9, September 1957, pp. 3-4. Cf. *ibid.*, vol. 24, #1, January 1970, p. 6.

95 H.J. Haimoff, "Beginning at Jerusalem," in *Salvation*, vol. 19, # 2, February 1965, p. 9.

96 H. J. Haimoff, "Beginning at Jerusalem—Mt. Carmel, Israel," in *Salvation*, vol. 12, # 1, January 1958, p. 7.

97 *Salvation*, vol. 30, # 7, July-August 1976, pp. 3-4; Cf. *ibid.*, # 8, September 1976, p. 8.



a bit and then exclaimed: "A Cross!" So I explained that the type of the cross, which our Lord bore and on which He was slain for our salvation, was clearly shown to the children of Israel over 1,500 years before it actually was placed on Calvary for us. But that they did not understand it, although at the sight of the cross of blood the death angel passed over their homes. I emphasized that Jesus was, and still is, our real Passover, our Paschal Lamb.<sup>98</sup>

In his assembly, Haimoff initiated the custom of regularly celebrating the Lord's Supper four times a year, namely before the three major Jewish holy days of Pesach, Shavuot and Yom Kippur.<sup>99</sup> To these occasions he added Christmas as the fourth justification to perform the Eucharist in the congregation. The other event that offered the opportunity to celebrate the Lord's Supper was following the water immersion of a new believer, that now was allowed for the first time to partake in this ceremony. Haimoff immersed, "in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."<sup>100</sup>

Haimoff also reported in *Salvation* how he celebrated Christmas at his assembly, although not necessarily on the fixed days of December 24/25. This took place annually, during a regular Shabbat meeting close to the traditional Gregorian date of Christmas. In his Christmas sermons, Haimoff emphasized the miraculous incarnation of the Son of God, and how he solved the universal problem of sin.<sup>101</sup> Upon the pages of *Salvation*, Haimoff annually described in detail how the Christmas message and party were organized at his home. Often there was a presentation of a Christmas film.<sup>102</sup> Haimoff never used a Christmas tree, but did expose the great significance of that occasion, and Christmas carols accompanied the service.<sup>103</sup> As it became a tradition in this assembly, the Christmas celebration ended with the song "Silent Night, Holy Night."<sup>104</sup>

98 *Salvation*, vol. 22, # 7, July-August 1968, p. 6. Cf. *ibid.*, vol. 19, # 7, July-August 1965, p. 8.

99 See, e.g., *Salvation*, vol. 26, # 5, May 1972, pp. 7-8. And *ibid.*, vol. 26, # 11, December 1972, p. 9.

100 *Salvation*, vol. 23, #1, January 1969, p. 7. Cf. *ibid.*, vol. 16, # 6, June 1962, p. 6.

101 *Salvation*, vol. 26, # 1, January 1972, pp. 6-7.

102 *Salvation*, vol. 27, # 1, January 1973, pp. 6-7.

103 *Salvation*, vol. 40, # 4, April 1986, p. 7. This report was Haimoff's last letter that was published in the magazine.

104 *Salvation*, vol. 8, # 2, February 1954, p. 14; *ibid.*, vol. 39, # 11, December 1985, p. 11.

The theme of Yeshua's return greatly occupied the teaching and writings of Haimoff. He frequently spoke about the Second Coming of Messiah that may occur at any time.<sup>105</sup> In this context he often mentioned the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), and strongly challenged all believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit—like the five wise virgins. Consequently Haimoff also wrote about the literal establishment of Messiah's millennial kingdom on earth.<sup>106</sup> He was not ashamed to call himself a fundamentalist believer in the Holy Scriptures.<sup>107</sup>

Haim Haimoff/Bar-David died in February 1991 and was buried at Moshav Yad Hashmona.<sup>108</sup> His seven children and many grandchildren continue to follow in his footsteps and enthusiastically witness about Yeshua in Israel. Among the pioneers of the modern revival of Jewish believers within Israel, the Bar-David family are unique. We should note that while not a few preceded them in the 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."<sup>109</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The six magazines which are examined in this article—*Kol Shofar*, *HaLapid*, *Tal*, *Teaching from Zion*, *Jerusalem* and *Salvation*—are a rich and unique mine of information concerning the brief, yet still obscure, history of Jewish Yeshua-believers in the State of Israel. These magazines published authentic materials written by Jewish believers during the early decades of Israeli statehood, and they manifest quite valuable sources for documentation and further study.

105 H.J. Haimoff, in *Salvation*, vol. 21, # 4, April 1967, p. 6.

106 H.J. Haimoff, "Beginning at Jerusalem," in *Salvation*, vol. 20, # 9, October 1966, p. 8.

107 H.J. Haimoff, in *Salvation*, vol. 39, # 9, October 1985, p. 7.

108 See Gershon Nerel, "Haim Joseph Bar-David (Haimoff)," in *Zot Habrit*, vol. 2, Spring/Summer 1991, pp. 33-34 (Hebrew).

109 Menachem Benhayim, "In Memoriam—Haim (Haimoff) Bar-David," in *The Hebrew Christian*, vol. 64, # 1, March-May 1991, pp. 6-7. Cf. Roger Allison, "Congratulations," in *UCCI News*, vol. 1, # 3, Fall 1970, p. 20.



The first three magazines (*Kol Shofar*, *HaLapid* and *Tal*) were published in Hebrew, and were printed in Israel. The other three journals were published in English and were distributed abroad. All six publications functioned as a special bridge of communication during a most formative period. Interestingly, it should be noted that while the Hebrew magazines did not last long (for example only one edition of *Kol Shofar* was printed), and in the case of *HaLapid* it was printed for only two years, the other English magazines are still in existence. However, it should be noted that with the exception of *Teaching from Zion*, the current issues of English journals hardly reflect the authentic thoughts and daily reality of Jewish believers in the Land.

Naturally, each of those six publications established a particular "paper bridge" of its own. Each one of the pioneers had developed a sharp and strong vision of his own, and made this known to their readership in his own way. From a quantitative point of view, it is difficult to measure the real impact of their writings. However, there is no doubt that the English magazines provided not merely a wider channel of communication (mainly internationally), but also supplied substantive contributions towards shaping the public opinion among their readers. This took place mainly overseas—within Gentile and Messianic Jewish circles abroad.

While the writings that were published within the different magazines were the personal views of a few individuals, they ultimately functioned as a collective tool that helped Israeli Jewish believers to shape and define matters of their joint identity. This happened within a unique situation where Jewish believers were a tiny minority surrounded by the mainstream Jewish majority. Consequently, we must be very careful not to underestimate the Messianic Jewish writings within those magazines. Even the shortest and simplest articles can teach us a lot about their struggles and victories. They are authentic and useful texts that authoritatively reflected the real needs and fore-sights that existed among the pioneers of that generation.

One major conclusion is that in the articles that appeared in these magazines, we do not observe the later phenomena of fantastic reports and showy news. The regrettable phenomenon of "pompous writings" from Israel has developed primarily since the early 1970s, after the Six Day War, when global interest focused on Israel. In other words, the early writings of Israeli Jewish believers which were presented here did not include sensational and melodramatic stories, nor exaggerated numbers concerning Israelis coming to faith in Yeshua.<sup>110</sup> Although the above mentioned journals did occasionally print some expressions of enthusiastic expectations, which included some wishful thinking, in principle they did maintain their integrity and printed truthful reports, faithfully describing the complex reality in the Land.

While the focal vision of all the writers—Ben-Meir, Poljak, Springer Kofsman and Haimoff—was to witness about Yeshua primarily to the Jewish people, they still did not limit themselves to their Jewish readership. Their comprehensive vision was to witness also to the whole body of believers in Yeshua. The Israelis fully realized how much the believers abroad were eager to learn about the modern Messianic Jewish movement in Israel, and how much they could support them both by prayers and material gifts.

In their own way each one of those writers wanted not only to crystallize a clear identity for Jewish believers in Yeshua, and especially in Israel, but also to share their views among the brethren within the nations worldwide. Thus, for example, Ben-Meir extensively published his translated articles also within various Scandinavian magazines, mainly those related to the "Karmel" movement in Finland and Norway. Kofsman regularly had his articles published in the French-speaking world, especially in a magazine called *Shalom*.

It seems that for all the "journalists" mentioned, their articles served as a mechanism to break through the boundaries of

110 Cf. Menahem Benhayim, "The Messianic Movement in Israel—A Personal Perspective (1963-1998)," in *Mishkan*, vol. 28, 1998, pp. 13-15.



their local condition of being an isolated and scattered minority. They were well aware of the fact that in the State of Israel they were classified under the de facto status of an eccentric and rejected sect. They were, however, strongly convinced about their position as elected prophetic leaders and writers. All of them emphasized their clear personal calling, a divine vocation, to publicize their faith in Yeshua—primarily to the Israelis gathered in their ancient homeland. Therefore, the “marginality factor” did not hinder them from continually talking, preaching, writing and publishing their spiritual convictions and hopes.

Ben-Meir, Poljak, Kofsman, Springer and Haimmoff systematically looked into biblical prophecy when they read the daily newspapers and followed the radio news. They always had some comments about the developing reality surrounding them. They directly connected their personal faith about the fulfillment of biblical prophecy with factual developments. Consequently, they even viewed their “marginality” as a matter of a higher position, a prophetic advantage and responsibility. While they fully realized their position as an “outcast sect,” they highlighted their important position of being a biblical remnant, the remnant of Israel. It was from this perspective that they persisted in witnessing about the Messianic truth of Yeshua and his second coming, until their last minute.

It was frequently the image of the watchman that stood in front of their eyes and motivated their writing. As watchmen, they focused in their speeches as well as in their “journalistic output” on the themes of alertness, edification and exhortation. The variety of their writings on Messiah Yeshua and the daily fulfillment of biblical prophecy were used to teach and warn not only their own people, but also the nations (Ezekiel 33:1-6).<sup>111</sup>

Regarding the parental legacy of the above mentioned pioneers, there is no doubt that all writers wrote prolifically, and in the case of Poljak, his journalism seems to have been almost

an obsession. However, although they reached a relatively wide readership—and even influenced many people—most of them were unsuccessful in influencing their own children. All of those “journalists” were first generation Jewish believers in Yeshua, having no former Messianic Jewish tradition within their family background. Retrospectively therefore, after several decades, we may ask what was the the generational aftermath of their own witness? Did those “journalistic key figures” like Ben-Meir, Poljak, Kofsman, Springer and Haimoff manage to “reproduce” a new generation within their own families that would follow in their footsteps?

The answer to this question cannot take Abram Poljak into consideration, because he did not have children. As for the others, we can see that it was only Haim Joseph Haimmoff (Bar-David) who left a second and third generation. The growing clan that sprang from the seven children of Haimoff/Bar-David is the only one that reproduced itself since the formative period following the creation of the Jewish State. Of that generation of “Israel around 1948,” referring to those who were in the Land when the State was established, only the Bar-Davids still continue to follow the footsteps of their “Patriarch” in the land.

Today, when we observe the “family fruits” of those pioneer writers, we also raise the following question: what was Haimoff’s “secret,” so that eventually only his children and grandchildren, of all the first generation of Jewish believers in Eretz-Yisrael, remained on the same track that he paved? It seems that the basic answer to that question is his focus on the family. Haimoff rarely traveled overseas, and during his last 30 years never left Israel. Even when he was travelling throughout Israel, he did his utmost to get home during the same evenings, in order to pray with his children. In that way Haimoff implemented his motto that “my vision is to shape an organism, not an organization.”

Finally, in order to update the picture portrayed in this article, we should also point to a younger generation of Jewish believers that introduced a second wave of “Messianic Jewish

111 See, e.g., Gershon Nerel, “A Marginal Minority Confronting Two Mainstreams: Jewish Followers of Jesus Confronting Judaism and Christianity,” in Shulamit Volkov, ed., *Being Different: Minorities, Aliens and Outsiders in History*, The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, Jerusalem 2000, pp. 283-297 (Hebrew).



Journalism" in the State of Israel, mainly after the Yom Kippur War of 1973. This was another first generation of Jewish believers in the Land that started their own activities in the journalistic field. With the exception of Joseph Shulam, who continued to publish Ben-Meir's *Teaching from Zion* in English, the new generation of Messianic Jewish journalists started their publications from scratch, with no reference to the earlier periodicals of those Jewish believers in the Land since British Mandatory times.

During the last three decades we have witnessed the appearance of several new publications. The following magazines were published in Hebrew: *Me'Et Le'Et*, since 1974, has been initiated and edited by Baruch Maoz, and is still produced today, soon to reach its one hundredth issue. Esther Tel-Tzur, in cooperation with Baruch Maoz, was the first editor of *Rea Ne'eman*, a magazine for Messianic Jewish children. *Rea Ne'eman* was published for ten years (1979-1989), with thirty-seven issues appearing. Another magazine, named *Beshuv*, was edited by Menachem Benhayim, and was published between the years 1981-1989 (seventeen issues). A new magazine, *Zot Habrit*, which first appeared in 1991 and is still in publication, is the continuation of *Beshuv*. *Zot Habrit* is the official organ of the Israeli Messianic Jewish Alliance. Another magazine that is currently published in Hebrew is *Kivun*, initiated and edited by Tsvi Sadan since January 1997. *Kivun* appears on a bi-monthly basis. Two other new Hebrew journals are specifically targeting Messianic Jewish youngsters: *Mashehu Aher* and *Mahapecha*.

We should also mention some other journalistic publications of Israeli Jewish believers, which are published in English. There are many missionary magazines that contain various reports and articles written by Israeli Jewish believers, but they are another story. Here, I wish to mention only three major magazines that are produced in the Land and consistently dedicate special attention to Messianic Jews in Israel.

First, there is *Mishkan*, a bi-annual magazine printed in Jerusalem since 1985, which among others also contains many

contributions by Israeli Jewish believers. Second, we have *Bikurei Tziyon* (First Fruits of Zion), founded in 1993 and edited by Boaz Michael. The 70th issue appeared in 2001. Third is the monthly magazine *Israel Today*, produced by the Ludwig Schneider family in Jerusalem. *Israel Today* is the English version of a monthly German magazine *Nachrichten Aus Israel* (News from Israel—NAI), which has a special column on Messianic Jews in Israel. However, this entire second wave of "Messianic Jewish Journalism," during the recent decades in the State of Israel deserves a totally separate and detailed study.

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