

## LE JUDÉO-CHRISTIANISME DANS TOUS SES ÉTATS

Le Colloque de Jérusalem, dont les Actes sont présentés ici, a été organisé conjointement par Simon Cl. Mimouni, F. Stanley Jones et Claude Geffré et s'est déroulé du 6 au 10 juillet 1998 dans le cadre de l'École biblique et archéologique française ; il avait pour objectif de faire le point sur les différents aspects de la recherche actuelle sur le judéo-christianisme ancien, dans ses diverses composantes historiques (les Nazaréens, les Ébionites, les Elkasaites...) et dans ses multiples approches disciplinaires (littéraires et non littéraires). Afin de favoriser cette approche interdisciplinaire, les travaux du Colloque ont été centrés autour de plusieurs grands axes : histoire de la recherche, fondations, analyses et interprétations.

*Directeur d'études à la Section des sciences religieuses de l'École pratique des hautes études sur la chaire « Origines du christianisme », Simon Claude Mimouni, actuel directeur de la Revue des études juives, étudie depuis plusieurs années l'histoire de la formation du mouvement de Jésus au sein et hors du judaïsme aux I<sup>er</sup> et II<sup>e</sup> siècles.*

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HORS SÉRIE

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DE JÉRUSALEM  
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SIMON C. MIMOUNI

en collaboration avec  
F. STANLEY JONES

publié avec le concours de  
l'Association des anciens et amis de l'École biblique



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ANALYSES

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PRIMITIVE JEWISH CHRISTIANS  
IN THE MODERN THOUGHT  
OF MESSIANIC JEWS\*

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Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Résumé

*Un nouveau phénomène religieux est observé dans le monde depuis près de deux siècles : l'apparition d'individus et d'organisations qui développent une identité unique parmi les juifs qui reconnaissent en Jésus le Fils de Dieu et leur Sauveur, et cela d'une manière significative. Ces croyants forgent leur identité dans l'héritage biblique des premiers disciples juifs de Jésus. Ils acceptent par conséquent l'état canonique des Écritures saintes comme un fait accompli. Cependant, tandis qu'ils se concentrent sur leur désir de faire renaître de nouvelles assemblées messianiques selon le modèle de la communauté de Jérusalem au 1<sup>er</sup> siècle, ils fournissent avec insistance leurs propres interprétations de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament, le faisant souvent en contraste avec les traditions théologiques et liturgiques des Églises des Gentils. De plus, ils pratiquent la circoncision et observent le sabbat, ainsi que les fêtes bibliques, notamment Pâque.*

Summary

*A new religious phenomenon has been observed in the last two centuries: Jewish believers in Jesus who resist the option of assimilation and endeavor to shape their national identity around the biblical heritage of the early Jewish followers of Jesus. Modern Jewish Jesus-believers seek to restore the first century "authentic identity" of the primitive Jewish Church in Jerusalem, as reflected in the New*

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\* I owe special thanks to Professor Gedalyahu G. Stroumsa from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, for supervising my research on the topic of modern Jewish believers in Jesus.

*Testament. These contemporary believers accept the canonical status of Holy Scriptures comprising the Old and New Testaments and make no attempts to canonize new texts. While focusing on reviving new messianic congregations, they also insist on providing their unique interpretations of Scripture. This they frequently do in contrast with the theological and liturgical traditions of the Gentile Churches. They perform circumcision, observe the Sabbath, and keep the biblical feasts, mainly Passover.*

Modern Jewish believers in Jesus (*Yeshua*) of Nazareth have appeared as a new religious, national, and social phenomenon during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mainly known by the designations "Hebrew Christians" and "Messianic Jews" (*Yehudim Meshi-hiim*).<sup>1</sup> The foundation for their self-determination is the acceptance of the divinity of Jesus as son of God, as a personal savior, and also as king messiah of Israel and the redeemer of the world.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, the personal and collective identity of these modern Jewish believers in Jesus is greatly shaped around the early believers in Jesus, especially as they are portrayed in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup>

This phenomenon simultaneously covers many cities worldwide: London, Warsaw, Kishineff, Budapest, and Chicago, to mention only some.<sup>4</sup> However, more than in any other place in the world, in Jerusalem and in Eretz-Israel, the Land of Israel, modern Messianic Jews find a special motivation to relate to the early Jewish followers of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> This ancient heritage is grasped by them as the source of their faith. Specifically, the authentic beliefs of the first Jewish disciples of Jesus become for them the platform for constructing their own

1. G. NEREL, *Messianic Jews in Eretz-Israel (1917-1967): Trends and Changes in Shaping Self-Identity*, Jerusalem, 1996 (Ph.D.) (in Hebrew); see an English synopsis in *Mishkan* 27 (1997), p. 11-25. See also B. H. STOKES, *Messianic Judaism: Ethnicity in Revitalization*, Riverside, California, 1994 (Ph.D.).

2. I. STANFIELD, *Messianic Jews in the 19th Century and the Founding of the "Hebrew Christian Alliance" in England (1866-1871)*, Jerusalem, 1996 (Master's Thesis) (in Hebrew). E. E. BARKER, *Sect, Saints or Sinners: Current Perceptions of Messianic Judaism*, Oxford, 1995 (Dissertation for the Diploma in Jewish Studies, Oxford Center for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, Yarnton, University of Oxford).

3. K. KJAER-HANSEN (ED.), *Jewish Identity and Faith in Jesus*, Jerusalem, 1996; see also A. HORNING, *Messianische Juden zwischen Kirche und Volk Israel*, Basel, 1995.

4. J. GARTENHAUS, *Famous Hebrew Christians*, Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1979; G. H. STEVENS, *Jewish Christian Leaders*, London, 1966. See also H. SAMUEL (ED.), *Saved to Serve*, Ramsgate, n.d. [1967 ?].

5. A. POLJAK, "The Christian Synagogue," in *Jerusalem* (Organ of the Jewish Christian Community and the Jerusalem Fellowship) 14 (1947), p. 3. See *Halapid* (*The Torch*), holding the subtitle *Organ of the Israeli Messianic Community, Being the Revived Primitive Messianic Church in Its Original Form* 1 (1960), p. 2 (in Hebrew).

identity.<sup>1</sup> In their eyes, however, a genuine Messianic Jewish identity stands in complete contrast with the "unbiblical developments" to which they point within the history of both normative Judaism and traditional Christendom.<sup>2</sup>

Pursuant to adopting the ancient paradigm of the primitive Jewish disciples of Jesus, Messianic Jews practically regard themselves as belonging to a restorationist movement.<sup>3</sup> However, they are not only laboring towards reviving some special characteristics of the early Jewish messianic community. They also wish to gain a unique "starting point" for introducing changes and new concepts within the universal body of believers in Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

In general, it should be noted that Messianic Jews are not referring to the apostolic age as professional archaeologists or historians. They do not come, for example, with the tools of expert art-historians or multi-lingual philologists, aiming at the reconstruction of an ancient fresco or at getting involved in a theoretical discussion regarding an ancient society. Rather, they use the elementary information that is found in the New Testament, or in popular books on the early church history, adapting thence the data for their existential needs. Namely, while relying upon the scriptural apostolic prototype, they are reviewing the historical facts in order to create for themselves a modern ideological pattern for daily living.<sup>5</sup>

1. J. FIELDSEND, *Messianic Jews: Challenging Church and Synagogue*, Kent, 1993, especially p. 55-60. K. KJAER-HANSEN - O. C. M. KVARME, *Messianische Juden: Judenchristen in Israel*, Neuendettelsau, 1983.

2. G. NEREL, "A Marginal Minority Confronting Two Mainstreams: Jewish Followers of Jesus Confronting Judaism and Christianity (1850-1950)," in S. VOLKOV (ED.), *Being Diggerent: Minorities, Aliens and Outsiders in History*, Jerusalem, 2000, p. 283-297 (in Hebrew).

3. A. SAPHIR, *Christ and Israel: Lectures and Addresses*, n.l., n.d. [end of nineteenth century], especially p. 138-191 — reprint by *Yanetz*, P.O. Box 151, Jerusalem [1982 ?]; D. SEDACA, "The Search for a Genuine Messianic Jewish Identity," in *Kesher: A Journal on Messianic Judaism*, 2 (1995), p. 23-26.

4. "Ungrateful Christendom," in *The Hebrew Christian Witness*, London, n.s., 11 (November 1873), p. 490-491; B. L. COHEN, "The Case for Messianic Jewish Halacha," in *The Messianic Jew* 71, no. 1 (1998), p. 18-22.

5. Interestingly, this approach developed parallel to the visionary ideas of Theodor Herzl, founder of political Zionism, as expressed in his book *Altneuland*, where a revived Jewish life in the land of Israel is depicted. See G. NEREL, "Zion in the Theology of Leon Averbuch and Shabbetai Rohold," in *Mishkan* 26 (1997), p. 64-71.

### Primitive Jewish Christians in Personal Testimonies and Biographies.

When Messianic Jews describe the way they adopted the faith in Jesus,<sup>1</sup> they often tell in their testimonies, or life stories, that they feel a unique linkage to the early Jewish disciples of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> The repeated references to the first believers in Jesus serve within these narratives as a unique means to safeguard for the individual an authentic Jewish identity. This in fact becomes for the convert an "identity anchor," to declare that the person experienced a spiritual transformation, yet not an ethnic or a national transition.<sup>3</sup>

Messianic Jews boast that through faith in Jesus they become "completed Jews" and so their Jewishness is fulfilled. The common ground they find with the early Hebrew Christian Church is based upon loyalty to the Jewish people.<sup>4</sup> By following this pattern of thinking, Messianic Jews view themselves as "free" of denominational identification and uncommitted to the Church dogmas. Especially in Eretz-Israel, for example, to become Anglicans, Baptists, Presbyterians, Calvinists, or Lutherans is basically rejected by most of them.<sup>5</sup>

In the conversion narratives we also observe a profound connection Messianic Jews make between the Old and New Testaments as God's whole word of promise. This is highlighted not only for the individual believer, but also for the nation of Israel. Through systematically uniting Old and New Testaments into one volume, they discover a special Jewishness.<sup>6</sup> They also relate to the Apostolic

1. For the issue of "Conversion Accounts," see Y. ARIEL, "From Judaism to Christianity: The Autobiographies of Jewish Converts to Christianity in the Twentieth Century," in *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division B, vol. 2, Jerusalem, 1994, p. 123-129 (in Hebrew). The autobiographies serve as a special source for "examination from below" of various patterns of collective consciousness. G. MIRON, "Autobiographies as Sources in Social History: German Jewry in Palestine / Israel as a Test Case," in *Historia* 2 (1998), p. IX (in Hebrew).

2. R. ROSEN (ED.), *Jesus for Jews: A Messianic Jewish Perspective*, San Francisco, California, 1987, especially p. 273-275, p. 300-301.

3. A. BERNSTEIN, *Some Jewish Witnesses for Christ*, London, 1909, especially p. 348, p. 455.

4. J. C. HEFLEY, *The New Jews*, London, 1974, p. 41, p. 75, p. 134.

5. See the testimonies of Shmuel Suran and Joseph Shulam in B. HOEKENDIJK (ED.), *Twelve Jews Discover Messiah*, Eastbourne, 1992, p. 25-26, p. 43-44, p. 71. Elhanan Ben Avraham, in another testimony in the same collection, mentioned the following analogy: "We are somewhat like the returning salmon, which swims upstream until it reaches the upper course of the river where it was spawned. That involves swimming against the current" (see B. HOEKENDIJK (ED.), *op. cit.*, Eastbourne, 1992, p. 46).

6. L. WOLF, "Good News from the Tenach," in M. G. EINSBRUCH (ED.), *A Way in the Wilderness*, Baltimore, 1981, p. 38-44. W. KATIN, "The Bible — An Historical

Scriptures as another stitch in the long chain of Hebraic continuity, going back to the Patriarchs of old. Consequently, Messianic Jews totally deny the feasibility of their assimilation or gentilization within Christendom.<sup>1</sup> This Hebraic identity is understood to be rooted in the whole word of God, from Genesis to Revelation. Both Testaments are accepted as Jewish texts that stress the peculiar and never-changing position of Israel. At the same time, however, they also point to the fact that the early *gentile* church, unlike the "Church of the Circumcision," soon lost the true understanding of the Old Testament and that there was a paganizing of Christianity which was especially obnoxious to the Jews.<sup>2</sup>

Namely, through basically proclaiming a *sola scriptura* attitude, they are aiming to highlight "Jesus the Jew," the seed of David and the seed of Abraham. For them the unity of scripture equals Jewishness.<sup>3</sup> In principle, therefore, Messianic Jews accuse and disregard those Gentile churches that to a large extent prefer to minimize the Jewishness of Jesus and his teachings. To bridge themselves directly to the Eretz-Israeli Jewish Jesus and to the early Hebraic minded Jewish believers, as a matter of personal categorization, becomes for them a *conditio sine qua non*.<sup>4</sup>

### Hebraisation of the New Testament.

Although modern Jewish believers in Jesus do accept the canonical status of Holy Scriptures comprising Old and New Testaments as a *fait accompli*, they make no attempts whatsoever to canonize new texts. At the same time, however, they also do not exclude any texts from these canonical writings.<sup>5</sup> Throughout their hermeneutics Messianic Jews practice the following principle: "the Old Testament

Document," in M. G. EINSBRUCH (ED.), *A Way in the Wilderness*, Baltimore, 1981, p. 4-7.

1. Z. LEVITT, *Jews and Jesus*, Chicago, 1977, p. 117-118. See S. TELCHIN, *Betrayed*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981, p. 66-74, p. 80-89, p. 123.

2. G. CARLYLE, *A Memoir of Adolph Saphir*, London, 1894, p. 313-317.

3. Stated, for example, as follows: "the Bible, Old and New Testaments, are pure Jewish faith and not as some would have us think 'a goyish' (= Gentile / pagan) one. [We] could remain Jews and believe in Jesus" (H. J. HAIMOFF, "Letter from Jerusalem," in *Salvation* [American Association for Jewish Evangelism] 7, no. 8 [August 1953], p. 3).

4. M. ROSEN, *Y'shua: The Jewish Way to Say Jesus*, Chicago, 1982, especially p. 106-113. See M. I. BEN-MEIR, *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem*, Jerusalem, 1977 (ms.).

5. See in the English synopsis of my dissertation "Messianic Jews in Eretz-Israel," in *Mishkan* 27 (1997), p. 25.

is the ground for the New, and the New Testament is the key to the Old.”<sup>1</sup>

Many modern Jewish believers in Jesus strongly insist on reconstructing the Hebrew nomenclature of the New Testament. While endeavoring to re-dress the original text by Hebraic terms, and particularly by restoring Hebrew appellations, they are aiming towards de-hellenizing, as well as de-anglicizing, the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> This becomes evident in two main currents, the Hebrew and the English translations of the New Testament.

An influential version of the New Testament in idiomatic Hebrew was produced in 1886 by Isaac Salkinson and David Ginsburg.<sup>3</sup> This translation provided a pioneer attempt to use within the text a prominent Hebraic appellation: the customary name of Matthew, the author of the first Gospel, was altered to *Matityahu*. This insertion of a significant Hebrew designation at the very beginning of the New Testament was intended to restore the Jewishness of the text. However, this was merely a preliminary step in such a direction.

About a century later, Eric-Aaron Gabe revised the same text, strongly supporting this approach.<sup>4</sup> Thus, for example, Gabe also asks the following question: “How shall the message of Jesus glow as fiercely in us as in the first Hebrew Christian disciples?” His crystal-clear solution is: “we need not invent new words, but only discover and use the terms enshrined in the text at our disposal. To refer to our Savior as ‘Rabbi’ is to re-state an old truth,<sup>5</sup> to reemphasize a neglected aspect and office of our Lord, to heal the spiritual schizophrenia of some Hebrew Christians — and appeal directly and immediately to the Jew of our day. It is to be again an Israelite indeed.”<sup>6</sup>

1. As it was often explained, for example, by the late Haim Joseph Haimoff, a prominent Israeli Messianic Jew. See H. J. HAIMOFF, “Beginning at Jerusalem,” in *Salvation* 32, no. 11 (1978), p. 10. See G. NEREL, “Rachel Bar-David: Mother of a Modern Israeli Messianic Jewish ‘Tribe’,” in *The Messianic Jew* 67 (1994), p. 66-70.

2. Concerning the question in which language Jesus spoke and taught see J. A. LUND, “The Language of Jesus,” in *Mishkan* 17-18 (1992-1993), p. 139-155.

3. See D. B. GWILYM-JONES, “The Salkinson-Ginsburg Hebrew New Testament,” in *The Lamp and the Light* 6, no. 1 (1984), p. 14.

4. It should be noted, however, that within the bilingual Hebrew-Yiddish version of the New Testament, recently revised by Gabe, on the Hebrew side of the text Gabe uses the designation *Matityahu*, while on the Yiddish side he still uses *Mattya*. Probably the reason for that is that Yiddish is increasingly losing its position as a spoken language. See J. QUINONEZ, “Yiddish-Hebrew New Testament,” in *Kesher* 7 (1998), p. 118-121.

5. Referring to Nathanael, when this disciple approached Jesus (John 1:49).

6. E. S. GABE, “Jesus and a True Israelite,” in *Good News* 41 (1991), p. 7-13 (Johannesburg).

During the 1970s Moshe I. Ben-Meir<sup>1</sup> assisted some Catholic scholars in Israel in preparing a new Hebrew translation of the New Testament. In this version a further step was taken towards Hebraizing the Greek appellations. In all the Pauline epistles, for example, the name of the apostle Paul was altered to Saul-*Shaul*.<sup>2</sup> In this translation the same was done with the name of the apostle Peter, whose name was changed either to *Tzur*, being the Hebrew synonym for rock, or to the Aramaic *Kepha*.<sup>3</sup>

In 1991 a similar step was taken by the “Bible Society in Israel” when an annotated version was published,<sup>4</sup> based upon the contemporary Hebrew New Testament published in 1976.<sup>5</sup> In this annotated version the designation *Shaul* almost entirely replaces the name *Pollos*.<sup>6</sup> In particular, *Shaul* continues to be called *Shaul* also in the second part of the book of Acts and remains in the Hebraic conformity. As regards Simon Peter, however, except for two instances,<sup>7</sup> Peter in this annotated version is consistently changed into *Kepha*.<sup>8</sup>

This modern Hebraizing of Greek names of Jews, according to some critics, however, is merely a superfluous deed. The critics raise the argument that many Jewish priests and sages in the Second Temple period did in actuality bear Greek and Roman names.<sup>9</sup> Yet in modern times, we should note, precisely because of the “identity lacuna” of Messianic Jews, the Hebraisation of New Testament nomenclature is the opposite of excessiveness or an anachronistic approach. Namely, by adopting a Hebraic nomenclature Messianic Jews can easily emphasize both the Jewishness of the New Testament

1. A Jerusalemite (1905-1978) who endeavored to restore “First Century Messianic Judaism” within modern congregations of Jewish believers in Jesus. See J. SHULAM, “The Man Moshe in His Generation,” in *Teaching from Zion* 20 (1979), p. 2-4.

2. Y. BAUCHET-D. KINERETH, *The New Testament in Contemporary Hebrew*, Rome, 1975. See P. E. LAPIDE, *Hebrew in the Church: The Foundation of Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984, especially p. 100-115, p. 134-176.

3. See *The Anthology of the Gospels*, Gent, 1975 (in Hebrew).

4. *Annotated New Testament in Contemporary Hebrew*, Jerusalem, 1991.

5. M. BENHAYIM, “Modern Hebrew New Testament Published,” in *The Hebrew Christian* 50, no. 2 (1977), p. 66-67.

6. However, in two notes to Gal 3:24 and 6:17 he is still called *Pollos*.

7. In the first verse of both 1 and 2 Peter, as well as in the titles of these epistles.

8. See *The New Covenant Aramaic Peshitta Text with Hebrew Translation*, Jerusalem, 1986, especially p. 356 (edited by The Aramaic Scriptures Research Society in Israel). Interestingly, we should also note that the designation *Matityahu* instead of Matthew was not used in any other *Hebrew* New Testament that was published after the “precedent” of the Salkinson-Ginsburg Hebrew translation.

9. D. ROKEAH, “The New Testament in Hebrew Garb,” in *Mishkan* 20 (1994), p. 64-72.

and their personal Jewish identity. In fact many modern Messianic Jews who were given by birth a non-Jewish name, after believing in Jesus very rapidly drop their "gentile name" and adopt another biblical name, out of the same motivation.<sup>1</sup>

Now to view the other direction. In modern English translations of the New Testament initiated or published by Messianic Jews, we observe an even more comprehensive approach. David Stern, for example, recently published in English the Jewish New Testament, aiming towards restoring the Jewishness of the Gospel — not only for Messianic Jews, but also for Gentile Christians.<sup>2</sup> Basically Stern focuses on cosmetic changes, like using *Yeshua* instead of Jesus, and *Yohanán* instead of John, as well as using Hebraic terms like *tzitzit* instead of "fringe" — particularly for the clarification of cultural and theological issues.<sup>3</sup>

Another reason for Hebraizing terms in the New Testament is to confute antisemitism. For example, by using the titles "Book of the Covenants" (*Sepher Habritot*)<sup>4</sup> and "The Orthodox Jewish New Testament" (*The Orthodox Jewish Brit Chadasha*),<sup>5</sup> the idea is, inter alia, to refute antisemitic claims as well as mutual prejudices. By manifesting through the new translations that the New Testament is Jewish, Messianic Jews expect that Gentile Christians would perceive that the "Church of Uncircumcision" has *not* replaced the Jews as God's unique people, and that their own faith is far more Jewish than they may have thought. Jews in turn, would see, for example, that neither Jesus nor John's Gospel is antisemitic.<sup>6</sup> Dealing systematically with the invalidation of antisemitism is often in the background of this literary work.<sup>7</sup>

1. Thus, for example, "Martin" was dropped and "Moishe" adopted. See M. ROSEN-W. PROCTOR, *Jews for Jesus*, Old Tappan, New Jersey, 1974.

2. D. H. STERN, *Restoring the Jewishness of the Gospel*, Jerusalem, 1988. See also D. H. STERN, *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, Jerusalem, 1988, especially p. 202-216.

3. S. PERLMAN, "What Is the Future of Messianic Language?," in *The Messianic Jew (and Hebrew Christian)* 66 (1993), p. 88-89.

4. *Sepher Habritot: Hebrew-English Bible*, Jerusalem, 1997 (edited by The Bible Society in Israel and The Israel Association for the Dissemination of Biblical Writings); *Sepher Habritot: Hebrew-Russian Bible*, Jerusalem, 1991 (edited by The Bible Society in Israel and "Yanetz").

5. P. E. GOBLE, *The Orthodox Jewish Brit Chadasha*, New York, 1996. Within this translation words in Yiddish are extensively used, in certain instances even more than Hebrew words. The Yiddishizing tendency in this version seems to be an exceptional Diaspora phenomenon.

6. D. H. STERN, *The Good News of Yeshua the Messiah, as Reported by Yohanán (John)*, Clarksville, Maryland, 1991. See D. H. STERN, *op. cit.*, Jerusalem, 1988, p. 250-253.

7. See, for example M. BENHAYIM, *Jews, Gentiles, and the New Testament: Alleged Antisemitism in the New Testament*, Jerusalem, 1985, p. 63-70.

### The Apostle Paul: A National Jew and Supporter of Israel's Election.

Unlike the "Tübingen School,"<sup>1</sup> Messianic Jews aim towards rediscovering Paul's emphatic Jewish identity. They reject the theories of those scholars who claim that the apostle Paul deserted his Jewishness and created a deep conflict between his teachings and the teachings of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> By referring to chapter eleven in the Epistle to the Romans, Messianic Jews highlight Paul's vision that Israel's rejection is not total. Therefore the Gentiles, likened to the branches of a tree, should never boast against the Jews who are the roots of the tree. Israel still has a crucial future and a national calling.<sup>3</sup> *Shaul-Paul*, for modern Jewish followers of Jesus, is a national and loyal Jew of Antiquity, faithfully defending the Hebraic-biblical heritage. Accordingly, his teachings, regarded as a model of Jewish dedication, are highly valued and frequently presented throughout their Scripture interpretations.<sup>4</sup>

*Shaul-Paul* is also viewed as the Jewish educator who introduced the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to the pagan world, combating Greek and other oriental philosophies. He is commended for preaching the belief in a personal God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, and refusing to be allured from his Jewish monotheism by the subtleties of Greek speculation.<sup>5</sup> Thus Paul's powerful Jewish patriotism is greatly valued by them.<sup>6</sup>

In Paul's teachings Messianic Jews discover not only the path of personal salvation, but also a national hope and a special purpose for the entire people of Israel. They interpret Paul's words that "at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace" as referring to themselves.<sup>7</sup> However, although Messianic Jews view

1. F. L. CROSS-E. A. LIVINGSTONE (ED.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, London, 1974, p. 1398, s.v. "Tübingen School."

2. See particularly F. J. A. HORT, *Judaistic Christianity*, Cambridge-London, 1894; J. KLAUSNER, *From Jesus to Paul*, London, 1946, p. 528-536; D. FLUSSER, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, Jerusalem, 1988, p. 631.

3. A. POLJAK, *The Jewish Christian Calling*, London, 1946, p. 8-9.

4. J. FISCHER, *The Olive Tree Connection*, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1983; see C. SCHWARTZ, "Paul, A Witness for Christianity to Jews and Gentiles," in *The Scattered Nation* 1 (1866), p. 189-190.

5. L. LEVISON, *Life of St. Paul*, London, n.d. [1917?], p. 167-171. See also F. LEVISON, *Christian and Jew: Leon Levison 1881-1936*, Edinburgh, 1989, p. 103-114.

6. C. SCHWARTZ, "Hebrew Christian Alliance," in *The Scattered Nation* 1 (1866), p. 125-126. A. POLJAK, "Paul the Jew — and Jewry," in *Jerusalem* 18 (1948), p. 4-7.

7. Rom 11:5. See M. SCHIFFMAN, *Return of the Remnant: The Rebirth of Messianic Judaism*, Baltimore, Maryland, 1990, especially p. 16-70; L. LEVISON, *op. cit.*,



themselves as *The Remnant*, they still regard the rest of the Hebrew Nation as God's elect. While *they are the first fruits*, they also point to the eventual salvation of Israel as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, within their hermeneutics Messianic Jews argue that "Israel" in the Pauline teachings cannot be used for the universal Church, as Scriptures retain a definite and irrevocable place for national Israel.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, Messianic Jews reinterpret the Pauline Epistles in order to fully reject the ancient "Replacement Theology" of Christianity, claiming that the Church is *Verus Israel*.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, in Messianic Jewish exegesis the Gentiles who become the followers of Jesus should rather be called "the children of Abraham by faith" and not referred to as Israel. The Gentile convert, however, is no longer a gentile in the sense of the word "pagan," but neither is he a Jew. Yet on the other hand, the spiritual status of the Gentile believer before God is completely equal to the Jewish follower of Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

For Messianic Jews, therefore, *Shaul*-Paul — the "Apostle to the Gentiles" — also stands as a model of a faithful "Apostle to the Jews." In fact, they rehabilitate Paul who in their eyes is gentilized by churches that misunderstand him and thus falsely conclude that the "Jew of Tarsus" betrayed his people.<sup>5</sup> Messianic Jews claim that even in the new messianic dispensation God prevents the assimilation of Israel. Consequently, although the non-Jews participate in Israel's spiritual heritage (*Morasha*), they should neither annul Israel's unique calling nor modify the particular position of modern Jewish apostles of Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

Within these circles the Apostle Paul is also especially complimented for promoting the doctrine of Israel's election as a nation. When explaining, for example, the Epistle to the Ephesians, Messianic Jews interpret Paul in a new way. Namely, although Jesus

London, n.d. [1917 ?], p. 176-179; C. SCHWARTZ, *op. cit.*, in *The Scattered Nation* 1 (1866), p. 125.

1. See M. BENHAYIM, "'The Remnant' in Israel Today," in *Christianity Today* 27, no. 2, January 21 (1983), p. 12-15.

2. J. JOCZ, "The Concept of the Remnant in Theological Perspective," in *The Hebrew Christian* 47, no. 4 (1974), p. 160-169.

3. D. C. JUSTER, *Jewish Roots: A Foundation of Biblical Theology for Messianic Judaism*, Rockville, Maryland, 1986, especially p. 97-105. See A. P. GOLD-LEVIN, "Paul and His Gospel," in *The Hebrew Christian* 3, no. 1 (1930), p. 29-31.

4. T. ZARETSKY, "The Church Has Replaced the Jewish People — A Perspective," in *Mishkan* 21 (1994), p. 33-35. See R. PRITZ, "Replacing the Jews in Early Christian Theology," in *Mishkan* 21 (1994), p. 21-27.

5. H. L. ELLISON, *The Mystery of Israel*, Exeter, 1978. See also D. G. REID, "The Misunderstood Apostle," in *Mishkan* 20 (1994), p. 3-12. See R. ROBINSON, "My Yiddische Paul?" in *Mishkan* 20 (1994), p. 13-22.

6. M. I. BEN-MEIR, *How a Jew Explains Ephesians*, Jerusalem, 1978, p. 66-67. See also P. LEVERTOFF, *St. Paul: His Life, Works and Travels*, London, 1907 (in Hebrew).

did redeem the Gentiles and they too receive the blessing of election, this election of the non-Jewish believers does not, by any means, cancel or negate the election of Israel. The particular election of Israel is still an election within a broader election. This election of Israel is perpetual and is guaranteed by God. Thus God's elections are viewed as a "wheel within a wheel," as portrayed in the vision given to the prophet Ezekiel.<sup>1</sup> Israel's national election, therefore, is viewed as everlasting.<sup>2</sup>

### References to Primitive Jewish Christians within Corporate Entities of Messianic Jews.

A salient feature of the modern Messianic Jewish movement is the formation of their particular ethnic and national corporate entities. Within these fellowships they frequently refer to the primitive Jewish church in Jerusalem in order to discover original and legitimate roots — as belonging to a Hebrew apostolic succession.<sup>3</sup> Through associating themselves with that apostolic and authentic precedent they in fact demonstrate the rationale for organizing their own separate meetings and exclusive activities.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, for example, when "The Hebrew Christian Alliance" was established in London in 1866, the founders stated as follows:

There are special ties which bind us together as descendants of Abraham. The invitation was addressed to Hebrew-Christians exclusively, in order to allow ourselves full freedom in speaking about our Jewish brethren. Our Gentile-Christian brethren cannot always understand the mind and manners of the Jews... We may boldly say that such a gathering of converted Jews exclusively had not been witnessed since the early days of the Christian Church.<sup>5</sup>

1. M. I. BEN-MEIR, *op. cit.*, Jerusalem, 1978, p. 16-17. See M. BENHAYIM, "Issues Facing the Messianic Jew Today," in O. C. M. KVARME (ED.), *Let Jews and Arabs Hear His Voice*, Jerusalem, 1981, p. 13-23.

2. Ezek 1:16. See also A. PALIAK, "Shaul Ish Tarsus," in *Der Weg* (Warsaw) 12 (1938), p. 10-11, and A. PALIAK, "Von Unser Meschichischen Otzar: Die Didache," in *Der Weg* (Warsaw) 12 (1938), p. 16 (in Yiddish).

3. P. COHEN, *The Hebrew Christian and His National Continuity*, London, n.d., [1920 ?], especially p. 47-54, p. 97-98. See H. SAMUEL, "The Relationship of the Remnant to the Covenant," in *The New Covenant: The Sense in Which the Jews Continue to Be the People of God*, London, 1966, p. 14-16.

4. I. STANFIELD, *op. cit.*, Jerusalem, 1996, p. 112-115 (Master's Thesis) (in Hebrew). As regards the issue of legitimation, see B. Z. SOBEL, *Hebrew Christianity: The Thirteenth Tribe*, New York-Toronto, 1974, p. 216-219.

5. C. SCHWARTZ, "Hebrew Christian Alliance," in *The Scattered Nation* 1 (1866), p. 163-164. See A. SAPHIR, "The Everlasting Nation," in *The Everlasting Nation* 1 (1889), p. 8-9 and p. 138, and "The Hebrew Christian Prayer Union," in *The Ever-*

This "Messianic Jewish Alliance of Great Britain" is still functioning.

The same pattern is also detected in Kishineff, in the congregation called "Israelites of the New Covenant," established by Joseph Rabinowitch in 1885, and regarded by the Russian authorities as a Synagogue.<sup>1</sup> Rabinowitch was baptized while adopting a creed written by himself in Hebrew, avoiding terms which characterize the dogmatics of the Gentile churches. Thus, for example, he intentionally did not use the term Trinity.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, when writing in his "private creed" concerning the unity of God, Rabinowitch omits mentioning that there are three persons of one substance in the godhead.<sup>3</sup>

In principle, most Messianic Jews, like Rabinowitch, refuse to accept the formulas of the three Symbols of the Early Church: the Nicene, Athanasian and Apostles' Creeds. These historical creeds are not regarded by Messianic Jews as binding or as precise and final expressions of faith. Modern Jewish Jesus-believers rather relate to the whole body of verses scattered in Scripture as a whole "comprehensive creed." Consequently, while recurrently ignoring those historical creeds, sometimes Messianic Jews are simply viewed by certain ecclesiastics as unyielding heretics who follow the paths of the Ebionites.<sup>4</sup>

However, Messianic Jews insistingly continue to explain Christological issues differently, without necessarily using traditional terms like *personae* and *naturae*. In specific, when referring to Christology, Messianic Jews merely use words and sentences quoted from the New Testament — relying upon the canonicity of the text and depending upon the vocabulary attributed to the first apostles. They thus openly aspire to develop nonconformist hermeneutics.<sup>5</sup>

With regard to financial matters, we should also mention that

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*lasting Nation* 4 (1892), p. 280-282. We should also note the following declaration which speaks for itself: "The ancient Hebrew Christian Church, though long disappeared in space, has, like a remote star, left its light behind to illuminate our path in the darkness that surrounds us, and to guide our little ship in its long and hazardous voyage it has set out to make" (see *Hebrew Christian Association Record* 5 (November 1909), p. 2).

1. For an early account see "Autobiography of the Jewish Reformer in Bessarabia — Joseph Rabinowitsch, with an Introductory Preface by Franz Delitzsch," in *Church and Synagogue* 1, no. 2 (January 1897), p. 45-59.

2. K. KJAER-HANSEN, "Josef Rabinowitz the Herzl of Jewish Christianity," in *Mishkan* 14 (1991), p. 8-9.

3. K. KJAER-HANSEN, *Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement*, Edinburgh-Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995, p. 98.

4. See, for example, K. KJAER-HANSEN, *op. cit.*, Edinburgh-Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995, p. 113-115 and p. 203.

5. H. D. LEUNER, "The Messianic Jew's Place in the Universal Church," in *Torah and Other Essays*, Ramsgate, 1983, p. 61-63.

Rabinowitch and his Kischineff congregation did not object to receive large amounts of contributions from different Gentile churches and missionary organizations in Europe and the USA.<sup>1</sup> This monetary dependence of modern Jewish followers of Jesus upon the material support of their Gentile brethren is found not only in Kischineff. The vast dependence upon generous economic aid is uniquely justified by the precedent of the early Jewish church in Jerusalem which was given regular assistance from abroad through collections.<sup>2</sup> It seems that this pattern would characterize many assemblies and organizations of modern Messianic Jews.<sup>3</sup>

The repeated attempts of Messianic Jews to establish ideological links with the early Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem are manifest also on the global level. This was clearly expressed, for example, when the first *International Hebrew Christian Conference* was convened in London in 1925, with delegates from twenty-two countries.<sup>4</sup> There it was unanimously felt that such a worldwide conference was the direct continuation of the first Hebrew Christian Conference held in the days of the Apostles as recorded in Acts 15. This modern conference, namely, "bridges the many centuries since apostolic days and gathering up the threads of operations dropped since the call of the Gentiles, is a trumpet call to all Hebrew Christians of to-day to continue the work of the Jewish Apostles."<sup>5</sup>

It seems also that modern Jesus-believing Jews frequently refer to the early Jewish church in reaction to the pressures, direct or indirect, targeted at them by the Gentile Christians, namely, that they should not dare to take any actions that could be regarded as unloyalty or dissociation from the existing churches. De facto, only individual Jewish believers are welcome as an extraneous minority within the Gentile churches. As a corporate body, however, they are in principle not welcome to revive the authentic Jewish church. Therefore whatever their designations, Jewish believers in Jesus often feel that

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1. K. KJAER-HANSEN, *op. cit.*, Edinburgh-Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995, p. 167.

2. See, for example, "The Hebrew Christian Alliance (of America) to 'The Churches of the Gentiles,'" in *The Hebrew Christian Alliance Quarterly, USA* 7, no. 1 (January 1923), p. 1-2.

3. See G. NEREL, "Attempts to Establish a 'Messianic Jewish Church' in Eretz-Israel," in *Mishkan* 28 (1998), p. 38.

4. *Statement and Programme of the International Hebrew Christian Conference*, Islington-London, 1925 (Bodleiana, Oxford, Dep. C.M.J., d. 21/8, Miscellaneous Papers, A/272).

5. As expressed by Samuel Schor, the President of the British Branch of the Hebrew Christian Alliance, in *Report of the First International Hebrew Christian Conference, Held at Islington, London, London-Edinburgh, 1925*, p. VI-VII, see p. 53-54.

Gentile Christians relate to them suspiciously as sectarians who are "conspiring at divorcing" from the universal church.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the antagonistic views expressed by Gentile Christians against them, however, Messianic Jews consistently substantiate their rights to have separate gatherings — of and for themselves. Thus not only individually but also corporately they grasp their unique identity through assertive ideological attachment to the first century Jewish church, where it was absolutely appropriate and normative to form exclusive Jewish congregations.

### "The End of the Law of Moses"?

Modern Messianic Jews express their loyalty to the *Torah*, the "Law" of Moses, through likening themselves to the Nazarenes of the primitive church who continued to observe the Pentateuch: by circumcising their children and observing the feasts of the Pentateuch.<sup>2</sup> They hold the conviction that the *Torah* has a continuing validity regarding ethical issues and is valid for observing Hebraic national customs. Yet the *Torah* is no longer considered by them as providing external measures for receiving righteousness or means of salvation.<sup>3</sup>

The verse, "Messiah is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes," as it appears in the Epistle to the Romans (10:4), is interpreted by them as follows: Messiah did not come to put an end to the *Torah* in the sense of abolishing it. The Greek word *telos* is not presented as the "end" in the sense of annihilation of the *Torah*, but rather as the fulfilment and culmination of the *Torah*.<sup>4</sup> Therefore Jewish believers in Jesus, contrary to what the historical churches

1. As expressed, for example, in the following statement: "There is a very great principle to my mind that in Christ there cannot be Jew and Greek, and we can see even in the Hebrew Christian Alliance a tendency to regard the Gentile Christian as rather an inferior kind of being, just as the ordinary Englishman abroad regards the Hebrew Christian member of a Christian congregation in the same way... I should hesitate to weaken our witness to the unity of Christendom" (C. H. GILL, Director of Church Missions to Jews, to Weston, Bishop in Jerusalem, 29.3.1946. Bodleiana, Oxford, Dep. C.M.J., C.218 no. 99).

2. D. C. JUSTER, "Covenant and Dispensation," in *Torah and Other Essays*, Rams-gate, 1983, p. 56-58. See R. A. PRITZ, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity from the End of the New Testament Period until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century*, Jerusalem-Leiden, 1988, p. 109.

3. J. SHULAM-H. LE CORNU, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Romans*, Baltimore, Maryland, 1998.

4. M. I. BEN-MEIR, "St. Paul and the Law," in *The Sabbath Observer* 7, no. 15 (July-September 1950), p. 113. See J. SHULAM, "The Early Church and the Jerusalem Temple," in *Teaching from Zion* 10 (1997), p. 17-27.

taught for many centuries, still have the permission, and even the obligation, to continue and keep the God-given customs of the Jewish people.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, keeping the Jewish Sabbath, for example, in contrast to the Roman *dies solis*, has a special significance for them. Their firm argument is that "If God had desired us to keep the first day of the week holy in memory of the resurrection of His Son, He would have made it clear by a definite 'Thus saith the Lord'."<sup>2</sup> However, it seems that only in the State of Israel do Messianic Jews observe merely the Sabbath and not Sunday. Israeli Messianic Jews, for example, hold their principal worship services on the Sabbath day, while Sunday is a regular working day for them and their children attend the State schools. In the Diaspora, however, Messianic Jews usually still keep both Saturday and Sunday.<sup>3</sup>

It should be also noted that besides performing circumcision and observing the Sabbath, Messianic Jews particularly emphasize the celebration of the feast of Passover — according to the Jewish calendar. Namely, by practically avoiding the date of Sunday-Easter, Messianic Jews refer to the primitive Jerusalem church in order to justify the restoration of the biblical chronology in the celebration of Passover.<sup>4</sup> On that occasion they also practice the Communion, or the Lord's Supper, and prefer to use only the Passover *matza*, the unleavened bread.<sup>5</sup>

Messianic Jews, in consequence, discover Christendom's greatest wrong to the Jews at the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325), when the Gentile church officially ceased to observe the Holy Days of Sabbath, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles concurrently with the Synagogue. The aim of Messianic Jews, therefore, is to reverse the genti-lizing tendencies which have prevailed since Nicaea. Furthermore,

1. T. SADAN, "The Torah: What Do We Do with It?" in *Teaching from Zion* 5, no. 2 (1994), p. 17-31.

2. M. I. BEN-MEIR, "The Change of Sabbath," in *The Sabbath Observer* 7, no. 13 (January-March 1950), p. 97-98. See A. WALDSTEIN, "The Sabbath," in *Jerusalem* 77 (February 1953), p. 3-7.

3. See A. G. FRUCHTENBAUM, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, Tustin, California, 1994, p. 594-601, p. 665-680.

4. A. WALDSTEIN, "Passover and Easter," in *Jerusalem* 5-6 (February-March 1947), p. 2-3. See D. ZION, "The Meaning of Passover," in *Jerusalem* 69-70 (June-July 1952), p. 1-3. H. J. HAIMOFF, "Beginning at Jerusalem," in *Salvation* 22 (1968), p. 6.

5. *Passover Hagadah*, Jerusalem, 1978 (edited by Messianic Assembly of Israel, Keren Ahvah Meshihit) (in Hebrew and English). See C. ROSEN-M. ROSEN, *Christ in the Passover*, Chicago, 1978; see also E.-P. LIPSON, *Passover Haggadah*, San Francisco, California, 1988.

they also request Gentile Christians to confess this wrong of Christendom as committed against Jesus himself.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, however, Messianic Jews strongly insist that they do not require Gentile believers to observe the Jewish customs of the Torah, except for the specific rules which were agreed upon at the first Jerusalem council reported in the book of Acts. They have no intentions to judaize the Gentiles. In spite of that, however, the mutual recriminations of "judaizers" and "gentilizers" still are heard from time to time on both sides, either openly or behind the curtains.<sup>2</sup>

### From Rome to Jerusalem: The Hebrew Catholics.

The pattern of self-identification among modern Jewish believers in Jesus follows the direction of two "macro lines": within Protestant circles and within a Catholic milieu. These trends usually take separate tracks, yet sometimes they also coincide and even form crossroads of mutual interests.<sup>3</sup> Occasionally, Hebrew Catholics share with Messianic Jews the common ideal of bridging the psychological and theological gaps between themselves and the Jerusalem first century disciples of Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

It should be noted, however, that some Hebrew Catholics strongly claim that they have no intentions to revive the *Church of the Circumcision* because it practised two religions at one time. For them the Hebrew Catholic Community is not "Judaean-Christian" but rather becomes an integral part of the Catholic Church. From the Catholic Church they expect to receive a new religious constitution and recognition.<sup>5</sup>

Those Hebrew Catholics who prefer to join the Latin Church and object to being called "Messianic Jews" still endeavor to adopt a historical and genuine self-identity as Jewish followers of Jesus. At the same time, however, like the Messianic Jews, Hebrew Catholics openly struggle against their assimilation into the institutional

1. M. J. LEVY, "To Atone for Christendom's Greatest Wrong to the Jews," in *The Hebrew Christian* 1, no. 4 (1929), p. 194-197.

2. See, for example, G. NEREL, "The Formation and Dissolution of a 'Messianic Jewish' (Hebrew Christian) Community in Jerusalem in the 1920s," in *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem, forthcoming) (in Hebrew).

3. G. NEREL, *op. cit.*, Jerusalem, 1996, especially p. 4-5, p. 154-166 and p. 303-310 (Ph.D.) (in Hebrew). See S. SCHOON, "Jewish Christians: At Home yet Doubly Alienated," in D. BURRELL-Y. LANDAU (ED.), *Voices from Jerusalem*, New York, 1992, p. 96.

4. N. TEC, *In the Lion's Den: The Life of Oswald Rufeisen*, New York-Oxford, 1990, p. 240-241.

5. E. FRIEDMAN, *Jewish Identity*, Agra (India), 1974, p. 168-170.

Gentile churches and denounce traditional Christian antisemitism. As Jews, Hebrew Catholics too insist on maintaining a unique position among all other followers of Jesus, especially as belonging to the biblical and apostolic "Chosen People."<sup>1</sup> Fundamentally, there are two major inclinations among Hebrew Catholics. On the one hand, some of them deliberately and officially subordinate themselves to the Roman ecclesiastic hierarchy. Others, on the other hand, still earnestly hope to renew the autonomous "Jerusalem influence" of the primitive Jewish Jesus believers within the church universal. For example, the modern Hebrew Church of Jerusalem, according to Rina Geftman,<sup>2</sup> one of the spokespersons of the group in Israel, has a special task:

Jérusalem me paraît plus qu'une étape, elle est l'aboutissement de la route. Rome et Jérusalem sont comme deux pôles de l'histoire de l'Église ; mais Rome, malgré toute sa splendeur, me paraît plutôt sa ville d'exil. Dans l'Écriture nous ne trouvons aucune annonce eschatologique se rapportant à elle. Le fait que le pape siège à Rome me montre que l'Église se trouve encore dans une situation de non-plénitude. Pierre n'a pas abandonné Jérusalem pour venir se fixer à Rome.<sup>3</sup>

In specific, the physical restoration of Israel and the rebirth of a Hebrew Church are essential parts of the "signs of the times" — signifying that the universal church is recovering that lost part of her, the *Ecclesia ex Circumcisione*.<sup>4</sup> Hebrew Catholics, therefore, wish to recreate the early Jewish Church mainly as a new step to further ecumenical dialogue between Church and Synagogue. The reestablishment of early Jewish Christian legitimacy, according to them, would ultimately restore to the entire church its universality and unity.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, both Messianic Jews and Hebrew Catholics are practically referring to the revival of the primitive Hebrew church as a means to rehabilitate the relationships between Jews and Jesus and between Jews and Gentiles.

1. S. GUDOWITZ, "Israel and the Church," in *Newsletter of the Association of Hebrew Catholics* 33-34 (November, 1988-January, 1989), p. 4-5.

2. R. GEFTMAN, *Sur tes murailles Jérusalem*, Jerusalem, 1975. See also R. GEFTMAN, *L'Offrande du soir*, Paris, 1994, p. 96-100.

3. R. GEFTMAN, *Guetteurs d'aurore*, Paris, 1987, p. 225-227.

4. B. HUSSAR, *Quand la nuée se levait*, Paris, 1988, p. 126-128.

5. D. O. RUFISEN, "Hebrew Christians between Early and Later Christian Traditions," in T. ELGVIN (ED.), *Israel and Yeshua*, Jerusalem, 1993, p. 49-55.

### The Authority of the Apostle James.

While Messianic Jews express a profound desire not to become gentilized by any terminology or "heathen practices of churchianity," they also face accusations from Gentile ecclesiastical circles that through their "Jewish inclinations" they are holding a selfish agenda, namely, that they aspire to regain theological hegemony over Gentile believers, as it was in the first century. In fact, modern Jewish believers in Jesus do openly state that one of their main tasks is to counteract the apostasy that penetrated the Church.<sup>1</sup>

As a matter of principle, Messianic Jews challenge the unbiblical traditions within the churches, like the sanctioning of the date of December 25, having Christmas trees, dressing up as Santa Clauses, and using colored Easter eggs.<sup>2</sup> Alongside this critical approach they mention the example of *Yaakov* (James), the brother of Jesus and the first bishop of the early church, who had undisputed authority to fix guidelines for the universal body of believers. Just as James gave instructions to the Gentile believers,<sup>3</sup> so also modern Jewish believers in Jesus want to renew a position of theological influence that is grasped as belonging naturally to the Jewish "mother church," *mater omnium ecclesiarum*.<sup>4</sup>

Almost all contemporary Jewish believers in Jesus adopt the dispensational interpretation that the historical phase of the "fulfillment of the gentiles" (Rom 11:25) has arrived. Consequently, they argue, the end-time "Jewish Era," followed by a unique position of Messianic Jews, is already starting to be manifested throughout the universal church.<sup>5</sup> No wonder, therefore, that fears were expressed within ecclesiastic circles in reaction to the possibility of having either a modern influential Jewish "Bishop" in Jerusalem — or a recognized worldwide Messianic Jewish Church.<sup>6</sup> Such a situation

1. H. D. LEUNER, "Is the Term 'Hebrew Christian' Theologically Correct?" in *The American Hebrew Christian* 51, no. 2 (1966), p. 3-9.

2. See H. J. HAIMOFF, "Beginning at Jerusalem," in *Salvation* 13, no. 2 (1959), p. 7; 19, no. 3 (1965), p. 7; 22, no. 3 (1968), p. 9; 25, no. 2 (1971), p. 9. See M. I. BEN-MEIR, "Thoughts about Christmas," unpublished manuscript, n.d.

3. Acts 15. See "Yaakov, der Erster Bishap," in *The Shepherd of Israel* 22, no. 6 (1940), p. 2 (in Yiddish). See M. I. BEN-MEIR, "James and the Torah," in *Teaching from Zion* 21 (April 1979), p. 3 and p. 6. See also F. WRIGHT, "James, the Brother of Jesus," in *The Journal of the Centre for Biblical and Hebraic Studies* 1, no. 4 (1997), p. 12-15.

4. See A. POLJAK, "Letters from Jerusalem," in *Jerusalem* 14 (November 1947), p. 2-4. A. POLJAK, "Before the Foundation of the World," in *Jerusalem* 33-34 (1949), p. 1-7.

5. A. POLJAK, "The Olive Branch," in *Jerusalem* 35-36 (1949), p. 3-8.

6. For these reasons failed the attempts to establish a universal "Hebrew Christian Church" during the 1930s. See L. LEVISON, "The Hebrew Christian Church," in *The*

was clearly seen, for example, in Mandatory Palestine in 1932 when the Archbishop of Canterbury rejected the proposal of the *International Hebrew Christian Alliance* to appoint a Hebrew Christian to the vacant post of bishop in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

In the State of Israel, too, when it was publicized that the first convention of Messianic Jews in 1950 elected the former Rabbi Daniel Zion as "Bishop,"<sup>2</sup> some Gentile Christians responded that this step of "fanatic zealots" created an extreme judaizing policy.<sup>3</sup> Such developments are grasped by certain Gentile Christians as a "Messianic Jewish menace,"<sup>4</sup> namely, that Messianic Jews would increasingly raise claims towards renewing a theological supremacy on grounds of spiritual primogeniture based on the heritage of the Apostle James. Thus, the option of creating a renewed Messianic Jewish church, independent and authoritative, is viewed as dramatically threatening to undermine the status quo of the traditional gentile theological prerogatives — not only in the Holy Land but in the worldwide Christian milieu as well.

### The Followers of Nicodemus.

Among both Messianic Jews and Hebrew Catholics we observe those who were, or still are, controlled by strong feelings of insecurity because of fear of social bans and excommunications. In Eretz-Israel, for example, where a Jewish majority prevails, not every Jewish believer in Jesus is willing to expose himself as such in public.<sup>5</sup> We know about "Secret Believers" particularly in Mandatory Palestine and during the first decades of Israeli statehood. Thus we observe the existence of the so-called "Nicodemus Jews," who, like Nicodemus (John 3:1-2) secretly believe in Jesus. For them, Nicodemus is a "legitimate" prototype believer. Some of them try even for decades to

*Hebrew Christian* 5 (1932), p. 52, p. 111, p. 168-170; M. KLERKOPER, "Should There Be a Hebrew Christian Church?" in *The Hebrew Christian Alliance Quarterly* 19 (1935), p. 12-13.

1. L. LEVISON, "The Appointment of a Bishop in Jerusalem," in *The Hebrew Christian* 5 (1932), p. 10. See also L. LEVISON, "Episcopal Notes," in *Anglican Church Magazine* 12, no. 2 (1932), p. 2235.

2. "Convention of Messianic Jews," in *Jerusalem* 53 (February 1951), p. 6-7; see A. WALDSTEIN, "The Jerusalem Conference of Messianic Jews," in *Jerusalem* 54 (1951), p. 2-11.

3. P. OSTERBYE, *The Church in Israel*, Lund, 1970, p. 158-159, p. 168-171.

4. F. BRAUN, "The Fight about Jewish Christianity and Its Message of the Kingdom," in *Jerusalem* 68 (1952), p. 2-5.

5. A. POLJAK, *The Cross in the Star of David*, London, 1938, p. 41-50.

keep their belief in Jesus secret and to live permanently with an underground mentality.<sup>1</sup>

In those times the main fear of the "Nicodemus Jews" was that they would not be tolerated by normative Jewish society. They dreaded the possibility of jeopardizing their positions at work and being socially stigmatized as "traitors."<sup>2</sup> Thus, alongside those who publicly declared their faith in Jesus, many others endeavored to remain in the shadows.<sup>3</sup> When we examine the relationship between the "open" and the "closed" groups of Jewish believers in Jesus, it becomes evident that they are characterized by constant tensions. Usually, the "visible group" strongly criticizes the "clandestine group" as being "fainthearted and defeatists, avoiding the path of the primitive believers who openly confessed their faith and were not afraid to suffer torture and death."<sup>4</sup>

Those who lived such double lives also declared solemnly that "We must live like the early Christians in the catacombs." Consequently they held clandestine meetings in private homes where no music was sounded, and the participants were instructed to come at separate times.<sup>5</sup> It should be noted, however, that the phenomenon of the crypto believers has almost completely disappeared within recent generations of Jewish Jesus-believers.

### The Flight to Pella — A Model to be Followed or a One Time Event?

Towards the end of the British Mandate over Eretz-Israel in 1948 and the approaching establishment of a Jewish State, Jewish believers in Jesus who lived in the Land found themselves at a crucial crossroad. They feared that within a Jewish State they would be persecuted and harassed, particularly as they were closely linked to the "double British enemy," namely, the British missionaries and the British government.<sup>6</sup> Modern Jewish Jesus-believers recalled by

1. H. J. HAIMOFF, "Beginning at Jerusalem," in *Salvation* 21 (1971), p. 10. See also S. DONOHUE, "Let My People Live," in *Moody Monthly* 86 (1985), p. 26.

2. R. FRYDLAND, "Israel Minorities: Messianic Jews," in *American Messianic Jewish Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (1979), p. 21 and p. 24. See A. POLJAK, "The Independent and the Secret Believers," in *Jerusalem* 11 (August 1947), p. 5.

3. D. L. BAKER, "The Christian Church in Israel," in *The American Hebrew Christian* 53, no. 1 (1968), p. 6.

4. M. E. BEN-MEIR, "A Call to the Secret-Believers," in *Tikvat Zion: The Hope of Zion* 15 (October 1931), p. 8-9.

5. M. BENHAYIM, "The Messianic Movement in Israel — A Personal Perspective (1963-1998)," in *Mishkan* 28 (1998), p. 13. See H. L. SIMON, "The Young State of Israel," in *The Hebrew Christian* 30 (1957), p. 13.

6. K. CROMBIE, *For the Love of Zion*, London-Toronto, 1991, p. 216-218. See

analogy the complex circumstances that the early church faced before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in A.D. 70. They, too, similarly faced the question whether to remain in the Land and accept the future whatever may happen, or to leave the country as did the early Jerusalem community which fled to Pella.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike in the circumstances of A.D. 70, there was no consensus within their circles in 1948 and the "Hebrew Christian Community of Palestine" split. The greater part, about 100 persons, followed the paradigm of the first century Jewish church and preferred not to remain within the anticipated chaotic situation.<sup>2</sup> Eventually they were evacuated *en masse*, in a quasi military operation which was organized as a "spiritual Dunkirk — a repeated rescue from danger," according to the Pella pattern. The operation, ciphered as "Operation Grace," was sponsored by the Jerusalem Anglican Bishopric<sup>3</sup> and the *International Hebrew Christian Alliance*.<sup>4</sup>

Thus for a second time, after nineteen centuries, a corporate body of Jewish believers in Jesus again fled from Eretz-Israel, yet this time not to Transjordan but to Europe. All involved in organizing "Operation Grace" were strongly motivated by the association of ideas relating to a modern equivalent of the first-century Jerusalem community's "Exodus" to Pella. This cognitive juncture between the modern and ancient "flight events" was possible because it again uniquely occurred in Jerusalem.

At the same time, however, a smaller group of about a dozen Messianic Jews refused to accept the correlation of events and totally separated the circumstances in the first century from the situation in the twentieth century. Among them were Solomon Ostrovsky, Moshe Ben-Meir, Hayim Haimoff, and Abram Poljak, and they objected in principle to the evacuation operation.<sup>5</sup> Those very few who remained in the Land were reinforced by other Messianic Jews who immigrated to the State of Israel. Together they formed a new foundation for local

C. H. GILL, "Refugees from Palestine," in *Jewish Missionary News* 38, no. 7 (July 1948), p. 118.

1. G. NEREL, *op. cit.*, Jerusalem, 1996, p. 114-123 (Ph.D.) (in Hebrew). See R. A. PRITZ, *op. cit.*, Jerusalem-Leiden, 1988, p. 122-127.

2. As reflected in the correspondence between Hugh Jones (Jerusalem) and C. H. Gill (London), key personalities of the "Church Missions to the Jews" (CMJ), dated 4.6.1948, CMJ Archives in 5 Yeshayahu Street, Jerusalem.

3. H. WESTON, "The Bishop's Letter," in *Bible Lands* 11, no. 19 (July 1948), p. 177-178.

4. H. SAMUEL, "News and Notes," in *The Hebrew Christian* 21 (1949), p. 76.

5. M. BENHAYIM, "Two Who Were Twice Redeemed," in *The Hebrew Christian* 48 (1975), p. 112-113. See M. I. BEN-MEIR, "From Jerusalem to Jerusalem," Jerusalem, 1977 (ms.), p. 105. Among the Messianic Jews who were in the State of Israel in the early 1950s, only the seven children of Hayim Haimoff followed the footsteps of their father.

congregations of Israeli believers, gradually becoming a self-determined ideological minority on their own. Since 1948, Messianic Jews have developed numerous fellowships in the Land and the theme of corporate "Flight to Pella" has become a non-issue for them.

### Dissemination of Belief in Jesus.

Following the paradigm of the early apostles who widely spread the Gospel of Jesus, Messianic Jews apprehend that they too should openly speak up for their scriptural faith. While they emphasize that they are part and parcel of the Jewish "Elect Nation," they also recognize that it is their special national task to share the belief in *Messiah Yeshua* with their people.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, however, they also proclaim that they have a universal commitment to approach the Gentile world, both to understand church history correctly and to get involved in a mutual process of reeducation.<sup>2</sup>

"To the Jew first," is their principal revivalistic motivation. Thus they wish to mirror the "typical zeal of the first messengers, apostles and evangelists who were Jews."<sup>3</sup> For them this is not merely a privilege but rather a liability, following the explicit commandments of Jesus himself to spread the message of his kingdom.<sup>4</sup> While they personally witness for Jesus and focus especially upon the individual,<sup>5</sup> they also have in mind the eventual salvation of the whole Jewish nation through belief in Jesus. All this Messianic Jews grasp within the entire *Heilsgeschichte*, the global redemption.

Despite heavy pressures originating from institutions and individuals, Messianic Jews do not feel deterred by threats that their opponents make against them that they are "corrupt missionaries" and "soul hunters."<sup>6</sup> Thus, for example, they openly distribute tracts and books and stimulate "evangelistic talks" in various public areas.<sup>7</sup>

1. See "Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE) Conference Statement," in *Mishkan* 23 (1995), p. 70.

2. A. G. FRUCHTENBAUM, "Jewish Evangelism and the Gentile World," in *Mishkan* 24 (1996), p. 54-63.

3. J. GARTENHAUS, *Winning Jews to Christ*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1963, p. 16-19. See H. J. HAIMOFF, "Beginning at Jerusalem," in *Salvation* 20, no. 9 (1966), p. 8. See also *David Baron and the Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel*, London, 1943, p. 117.

4. See Matt 10:27-33; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; 10:42.

5. C. ROSEN-M. ROSEN, *Share the New Life with a Jew*, Chicago, 1976, especially p. 14.

6. See *Religious Liberty and the Law: Proceedings of Symposia Sponsored by the Israel Interfaith Committee, the American Jewish Committee, and the United Christian Council in Israel, November 14, 1979 and March 26, 1980*, Jerusalem, 1980.

7. M. BENHAYIM, "Tracting in Tel-Aviv," in *The Hebrew Christian* 59, no. 1

In their declared statements and writings as well as their deeds, Messianic Jews constantly emphasize that they have a civil and a natural human right to share their faith with others.<sup>1</sup>

In response to traditional rabbinic attacks against them, Messianic Jews frequently claim that they are not a part of *The Mission*, in the historic sense of propagating the idea of assimilation and the desertion of Jewish heritage and identity.<sup>2</sup> Messianic Jews explain that those who speak in the name of normative Judaism, like *Shaul* of Tarsus before he "saw the light," intentionally misrepresent them as being unethical and spread disinformation about them and their witness.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, modern Jewish Jesus-believers stress that for them the terminological difference between "mission" and "maintaining a candlestick of witness" is rather a matter of substance and not solely an issue of semantics.<sup>4</sup> Thus, they are fully convinced that their testimony for Jesus is empowered with no less spiritual authority than the confession of the primitive Jewish apostles.

### The Second Coming of Messiah: Imminent Eschatology.

The model of the early Jewish believers who enthusiastically expected the imminent return of Jesus<sup>5</sup> — in fact not only in the first century but also in the second and third<sup>6</sup> — serves for Messianic Jews as another significant pattern to follow. Within their hermeneutics modern Jewish believers teach that Israel's restoration to its Promised Land has clear eschatological implications, namely, that the ingathering of the Jews and the establishment of a sovereign state

(1986), p. 6-7; V. SMADJA, *Report from Jerusalem — September 98*, Jerusalem, 1998, especially p. 2-3. See R. MEDOFF, "Missionaries in Israel," in *Midstream* 31, no. 7 (1985), p. 6.

1. E. PILLISCHER, *Freedom of Worship and the Messianic Jew in Israel*, Mimeo-graph, n.l., n.d. [1978 ?].

2. G. NEREL, *op. cit.*, Jerusalem, 1996, p. 326-335 (Ph.D.) (in Hebrew). See J. GARTENHAUS, *op. cit.*, Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1979, p. 17, p. 21-22.

3. Messianic Jews mainly oppose the prevalent myth in the Jewish community that Jews are being bribed into faith in Jesus. See D. BRICKNER, "An Ethical War: The Struggle for Integrity in Jewish Evangelism in North America," in *Mishkan* 19 (1993), p. 14-20.

4. See, for example, S. PERLMAN, "Coming Clean: Jewish or Christian? Messianic Jews and the Language of Disaffiliation," in *Mishkan* 19 (1993), p. 43-53.

5. This notion is also implicitly viewed within their concept of the Last Days. See Acts 2:17; Heb 1:1; 1 Pet 1:20; Jude 1:18.

6. D. FLUSSER, "The Reflection of Jewish Messianic Beliefs in Early Christianity," in Z. BARAS (ED.), *Messianism and Eschatology*, Jerusalem, 1983, p. 121-125 (in Hebrew).

precedes the second coming of Messiah and the inauguration of his millennial kingdom on earth.<sup>1</sup>

To Messianic Jews the return of Jesus is 'the theme of all themes' and is expected to be the future climax of history. They anticipate that "Messiah will be seated on the throne of David in Zion, Israel's night of sorrow ended and Israel completes her mission."<sup>2</sup> Just as this hope was "the mainstay of the early believers in all their sufferings and an incentive to holiness," the doctrine of Messiah's coming again is repeated within modern Messianic Jewish thought.<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, they accept this eschatological event in a literal form and reject other interpretations that spiritualize the scriptures concerning the second coming.<sup>4</sup>

The Israeli victory in the 1967 Six-Day War and the reunification of Jerusalem were soon interpreted by Jewish believers in Jesus as a significant "sign of the times," preceding the second coming of Jesus and the establishment of his millennial kingdom in Zion. They believe that full Jewish hegemony in Jerusalem means the end of the "times of the Gentiles" (*Kairoi Ethnon*), and that Gentile global spiritual leadership will begin to be replaced by Jewish disciples of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, the conquest of the Old City of Jerusalem by Israeli forces signifies a decisive turning-point for Israel and the nations. It is the visible sign that the times of the nations are fulfilled, that God's grace will be turning away from them and turned towards Israel.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, Jerusalem's reunification symbolizes for them the approach of the satanic Antichrist who will rule the world. Since for the first time in 1900 years Jerusalem is again in Jewish hands, this signifies for them God's "historical clock," leading towards the third

1. A. A. ISAACS, "The Second Advent of Our Lord in Its Relation to Israel," in *The Scattered Nation* 1 (1866), p. 63-64. See "The Second Coming of the Son of Man," in *The Scattered Nation* 4 (1869), p. 65-69; *Report of the First International Hebrew Christian Conference*, London, 1925, p. 111-112, p. 175-179.

2. S. SCHOR, "The Second Coming of Our Lord," in *The Hebrew Christian* 1, no. 3 (1928), p. 153-156. See *A Hymnal for Messianic Congregations in Israel*, Jerusalem, 1976, p. 205-217 (in Hebrew).

3. S. SCHOR, *The Everlasting Nation and Their Coming King*, Eastbourne, Sussex, 1971, p. 57-61. See G. NEREL, "Continuity and Change Among Messianic Jews in Eretz-Israel: Before and Following the Establishment of the State of Israel," in *The Messianic Jew (and Hebrew Christian)* 66, no. 3 (1993), p. 83.

4. A. W. KAC, "The Coming Again of Jesus the Messiah: Why a Second Coming?" in A. W. KAC (ED.), *The Messiahship of Jesus: What Jews and Jewish Christians Say*, Chicago, 1980, p. 271-288.

5. Luke 21:24. See "The State of Israel: A Statement of Our Position," in *The American Hebrew Christian* 53, no. 4 (1968), p. 5. See M. I. BEN-MEIR, *The Times of the Gentiles*, n.d., ms. no. 63, unpublished.

6. A. SPRINGER, "The Times of the Gentiles," in *Jerusalem* 258-259 (June-July 1968), p. 1.

World War.<sup>1</sup> In their hermeneutics Messianic Jews consider the Six-Day War as also preceding the eschatological battle of Gog and Magog which will introduce the millennial reign of Jesus in Zion over the whole world. Jerusalem will then become the center of the world, and God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be completely fulfilled.<sup>2</sup> It is expected that for one thousand years peace and tranquility will prevail under Messiah's reign, followed by a fourth World War and then finally the appearance of a "new earth and new heavens."<sup>3</sup>

### Conclusion.

1. Like the primitive Jewish Christians, contemporary Jewish followers of Jesus cannot be described as a monolithic or stereotyped establishment. Unlike the situation for Antiquity, however, for modern times we hold most precise evidence about a wide spectrum of various Jewish Jesus-believers. We also have direct access to the original information that the modern believers produce about their thoughts and deeds. We suggest, therefore, that when we deal with this modern phenomenon, we should rarely, if ever, use the terms *Jewish Christianity* or *Messianic Judaism*.

Instead, we should rather simply use the terms "Jewish Yeshua-Believers" or "Messianic Jews." The latter personalizing designations accurately reflect a reality to which we are relating, mainly through the beliefs of individuals — and those groups that gather around them.<sup>4</sup> The usage of such a "singular nomenclature" is also reasonable though we are still aware of the existence of the unions, alliances, and congregations established by various Jewish Yeshua-Believers.

We can hardly talk about dogmatic doctrines or homogenous groupings within the various circles of modern Jewish Jesus-believers — as we must also admit that "Judaism" and "Christianity"

1. A. SPRINGER, *op. cit.*, in *Jerusalem* 258-259 (June-July 1968), p. 3. See A. SPRINGER, "The Borders of the Land," in *Jerusalem* 249 (September 1967), p. 8-10.

2. A. SPRINGER, "The World War, Gog and Magog," in *Jerusalem* 264 (December 1968), p. 3-6. See S. OSTROVSKY, *Israel Today and Tomorrow*, Jerusalem, 1995, p. 31-32.

3. See Rev. 20-21. See H. J. HAIMOFF, "Beginning at Jerusalem," in *Salvation* 23, no. 8 (September 1969), p. 7; M. I. BEN-MEIR, *The Lord Is Fighting for Israel*, n.d. [1969?], unpublished ms., p. 6-7.

4. See J. JOCZ, "The Significance of the Hebrew Christian Position," in *The Hebrew Christian* 18, no. 1 (1945), p. 11-14; J. JOCZ, *A Theology of Election*, London, 1958.



are complex categorizations. In fact, in modern times we possess not only the knowledge concerning the exact origins of our sources, but also an abundance of private and public documents, as well as numerous photographs and artistic symbols. Accordingly we are able to prepare a large, detailed, and multi-dimensional inventory of the whole data. In contrast with the relatively limited and indirect historical sources that exist about the primitive Jewish Christians, our research regarding the phenomenon of modern Jewish disciples of Jesus can be much more specific and penetrating.

2. The content of this article sometimes raises claims concerning the "danger" of creating anachronisms.<sup>1</sup> A priori such arguments reason that it is totally anachronistic for Jewish believers in Jesus in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to relate themselves so closely to the Jewish Christians of the first century. However, no one can deny the simple fact that this bridging-process is continually happening and is indeed shaping the present identity of modern Jewish followers of Jesus. Interestingly, at the same time we also observe a similar phenomenon within Gentile Christian circles, namely among those who are increasingly searching for the original Jewish roots of their faith.<sup>2</sup>

Another aspect also deserves attention. There exists a clear resemblance between the messianic movement of Jewish believers in Jesus and the modern Zionist movement. Basically both movements highlight the idea of bridging a historical gap between modern times and biblical times. Namely, they consciously reject allegations that they maintain anachronistic approaches. On the contrary, contemporary Jewish Jesus-believers and mainstream Zionists raise the opposite argument that they still possess a natural right to bypass the last two millennia and directly relate to the pre-exilic period in Israel's history.

These two movements, however, uphold at the same time both principles of restorationism and change. Physically they look for restoration of national entities and a territorial Homeland, while spiritually they wish to create a "new Jew" and an alternative idealist society. Obviously, however, the ultimate goals of Herzlian Zionism and Messianic Jewish renewal differ in many ways.<sup>3</sup>

3. During the last decade the question "Who is the Messiah?" is increasingly debated within Jewish circles, both in the State of Israel

1. See S. C. MIMOUNI, *Le Judéo-christianisme ancien. Essais historiques*, Paris, 1998, p. 40-41.

2. See for example M.-J. DUBOIS, *L'Exil et la Demeure: Journal de bord d'un chrétien en Israël*, Jerusalem, 1984, p. 149-162.

3. G. NEREL, "Messianic Jews and the Modern Zionist Movement," in T. ELGVIN (Ed.), *Israel and Yeshua: Festschrift*, Jerusalem, 1993, p. 75-84.

and in the Diaspora. This interest arose particularly since the adherents of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the *Lubavitcher* of Brooklyn, New York, claim that he is the Messiah. Even after his death in 1994, the *Chabadniks*, his followers, still believe that he will resurrect and soon return to redeem the world.<sup>1</sup> Namely, the Chabad movement, a salient stream within normative Judaism, adopts the concept of a resurrected human messiah, and even attributes divinity to Schneerson as the creator of the world.

Like the primitive Jewish Christians who challenged the Jewish world of their times, contemporary Jesus-believing Jews also challenge the messianic teachings of the *Lubavitch* movement.<sup>2</sup> While even after the death of Schneerson his adherents widely spread his pictures and instructions, Messianic Jews regard the *Lubavitcher* as a false messiah like Bar Kochba and Shabbetai Zvi. In a general sense, the primitive Jewish Christians and the modern Messianic Jews on the one hand, and the followers of the *Lubavitcher* on the other, fervently stick to the prophetic chapter of Isaiah 53. Yet from their differing standpoints they obstinately present two irreconcilable Messiahs.<sup>3</sup>

4. Finally, contemporary Jesus-believing Jews do not regard themselves merely as "Dwarfs" who stand upon the shoulders of the "Giants" of the primitive *Church of the Circumcision*. They stress rather that with the historical knowledge of the recent two millennia, they are even more equipped with "panoramic perspectives" to evaluate and comprehend events of the past, present, and future. Occasionally modern Jewish followers of Jesus also claim that they possess a wider spiritual outlook than their predecessors 2000 years ago. Thus as a matter of fact they also stand as "Giants upon the shoulders of Giants" — interpreting and contextualizing anew the teachings of the Bible both for Jews and for non-Jews.

1. See *Chabad Press*, Chabad Lubavitch Youth Organization, Montreal, Rosh Hashana 5753, 1993; Y. KLEIN HALEVI, "Keeping the Rebbe Alive," in *The Jerusalem Report* (July 28), 1994, p. 22-23.

2. S. PERLMAN, "What the Press Wrote About Schneerson," in K. KJAER-HANSEN (Ed.), *The Death of Messiah*, Baltimore, 1994, p. 1-8; C. CALISE, "The Habad Movement and Its Messiah," in K. KJAER-HANSEN (Ed.), *The Death of Messiah*, Baltimore, 1994, p. 69-74.

3. E. KASHTAN, "A Dead Messiah and a True Messiah," A Supplement to *Me'et Le'Et*, Rishon Letzion, n.d. [1995?] (in Hebrew). See J. GUTWIRTH, *Les Judéo-chrétiens d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, 1987, p. 58-59, p. 250-257, p. 266-268.