

Zot Habrit

This is the Covenant

A Journal of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel



August 2001

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English Issue no. 3

In memory of Ilan Zamir (Chairman of the Alliance 1994-1999)

The founding of the Messianic Jewish movement some 150 years ago was an early expression of the desire for a Messianic Jewish renewal. The Alliance was first founded in Israel during the British mandate, but it "folded" during the struggle for the establishment of the State of Israel. After independence was declared, an attempt was made to revive the Alliance, but it was unsuccessful due to the enormous differences among the various streams of believers, personal backgrounds, and their diverse approaches to the situation of Messianic Jews in Israel. In 1979, while serving as the Israeli Secretary of the International Alliance of Messianic Jews, I was asked to investigate the attitude of Messianic Jews in Israel to the idea of establishing an Israeli Messianic Jewish Alliance. I visited all the congregations, and for the most part found a positive attitude on the part of both Jews and Gentiles. I then contacted Ilan Zamir and another brother, who has since left Israel, and asked them to organize a committee of Messianic Jews that would be composed of representatives of the various streams for the purpose of preparing bylaws this would be the basis for reviving the Israeli Alliance following discussion with the wider community of Messianic Jews in Israel.

The committee worked for about a year, and Ilan contributed a great deal from his skills, keen mind, and his ability to work with a team. He was blessed with a patient and tolerant spirit toward others, and with great wisdom. More than once he encouraged me to let matters develop naturally, and not to run too far ahead of the community. It was no easy task to gather Messianic Jews together in order to realize the Alliance vision in Israel. Ilan was an encouragement and example for me and for all of us. The Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel was founded by the broad consensus of a conference that was held in March, 1989. During the discussion on its re-establishment, there were only two votes for postponement.

Meanwhile, Ilan became ill and had to undergo a kidney transplant abroad. In spite of this, as soon as he returned to Israel and took up the position of president of the Israel College of the Bible, he continued his involvement in Alliance affairs, and afterward, during his last years, served as the Israel Alliance chairman. It was very difficult for us to separate from him when he finally succumbed to his illness. Ilan left us a sterling example of a Messianic Jew who served the broader Body of believers and the Messianic Jews within it, without personal conflicts, and with an open approach to all the brethren, Jew and Gentile, in a spirit of humility and dedication. May his memory be blessed.

Menahem Benhayim

"It is a Time of Trouble for Jacob, But he Shall be Saved Out of it" (Jeremiah 30:7)

Despite the troubles that beset our country as the year 2000 drew to a close, and as we make the transition to the new year 2001, we look back and reflect on the year gone by with gratitude and thanks to God, both personally and in regard to the Alliance. We thank God for His grace, His providence and His faithfulness, which have enabled us to remain faithful.

The Alliance had to undergo serious financial troubles throughout most of the year 2000. It was indeed "a time of trouble," but thanks be to God, in whom we trust and have complete faith that He cares for us. We know that if we are truly at the center of His plan, serving Him according to His will, He will supply all our needs according to His riches in glory by Yeshua the Messiah. And indeed, at the end of the year we were led into a spacious place, opening new doors and hearts to support and contribute to the work of the Alliance.

At the same time, in spite of the financial difficulties throughout the past year, God has graciously enabled us to maintain the Alliance's ongoing activities, beginning with the messianic music conference in February, continuing through the Shavuot (Pentecost) festival in June and the Jerusalem March in October during the Feast of Tabernacles. We were also able to revive the work of the Hadadit Fund for the assistance of needy believers in the land.

We also thank God for the members of the Alliance's Executive Committee, who have faithfully, devotedly, and lovingly given of their time, experience and skill in the service of the Lord and the Body of the Messiah in Israel through the Alliance. We thank God for this field of service that He has given us, and we pray that He will help us remain faithful to it, and that at the same time He will expand our vision in all matters related to serving and strengthening the Body of Yeshua the Messiah here in Israel.

And now mid-summer 2001, as we update this article for the English translated edition of Zot Habrit, we are still in time of distress in many areas of life here in Israel. We experience horror and deep grieving caused by awful events (fx. The terror action in Jerusalem, where 15 people have been murdered, mostly children, and five members of one family), but we also see the mighty hand of God in preventing miraculously other attacks. We believe and pray that many hearts and eyes will turn, in this time of distress and confusion to the God of Israel and will find peace and everlasting joy when they will behold The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! We believe that this is a time when God is working in Israel both in judgment and in loving-kindness. "...Yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, And will not let you go altogether unpunished" (Jer. 30:11). "At the same time, says the Lord, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people...Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn you" (Jer. 31:1,3).

May the Lord help us that we, the remnant according to the election of grace, the Body of Messiah in the Land, together with our brothers and sisters all over the world, those who are faithful and love and fear God, will take the place of intercession for the situation in Israel at a time like this. "For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for Israel from another place...Yet who knows whether you have come (been conveyed) to the Kingdom (of the Son of His love), for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14, Colos. 1:13).

"I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the Lord, do not keep silent, And give Him no rest till He establishes And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isaiah 62:6,7).

Hanan Lukatz

Tal: The Third Journal of Jewish Disciples of Yeshua in the State of Israel

by Gershon Nerel

Moshe Emanuel Ben-Meir, scion of the Jerusalemite Lillienthal family (1905-1978), was the founder and editor of "Tal - a free bulletin of independent Messianic Jews in Israel". Over half a decade, from August 1962 to September 1967, 21 issues of the quarterly were published, almost uninterrupted. On the first page of each issue the title Tal (Dew) appeared in the center of a Star of David, with the words k'tal (as dew) and talam (their dew) inserted in the upper and lower parts of that same Star of David. The name Tal has its source in two verses from the Tanach: "I will be like the dew unto Israel," (Hosea 14:5) and "... the heavens will drop their dew" (Zechariah 8:12). It is also noted on the first page that the bulletin was printed in Jerusalem, but Ben-Meir himself continued to live, as he had during the British mandate, on Abas Street in Haifa. Ben-Meir's vision was described in the Editor's Note that appears at the beginning of the first issue. He says there: "Messianic Jews in the State of Israel are a flock without a shepherd. They are like a corpse attracting the vulture to nourish itself from its rotting flesh... Messianic Jews in Israel are a source of financial income for all sorts of 'community leaders', 'treasurers', '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 build on our ruins."

Immediately afterward, Ben-Meir continues: "This bulletin 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 become proof 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 brothers in this country, and we can fulfill this role only as Messianic Jews, having both Jewish and Messianic sentiment. They are trying to destroy or anesthetize this feeling. This bulletin is dedicated to call-out war against this attempt. This bulletin will attempt to set a table with 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 "yiddishe mama" 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."

In Ben-Meir's opinion, the "birds of prey" in Israel were the representatives of official, distorted "Christianity" that had strayed from the path of pure, complete faith. In fact, even before Ben-Meir founded Tal, he consistently attacked missionary organizations from abroad, whose workers in Israel taught that

"the virgin Israel fell and has not risen, and Jews must be Christianized." That is, Ben-Meir denied the opinions and teachings of the "church" in all matters that did not reconcile with what is written in Holy Scripture regarding the Jews and their status in God's plan of salvation.

Among the various articles in Tal, we find two personal testimonies of particular interest. The first is by Daniel Zion, who had been the chief rabbi of Bulgarian Jewry. During World War II, Rabbi Zion had been very active in the capital city Sophia in obtaining protection for the Jews. In 1949, he immigrated to Israel and settled in the Bulgarian neighborhood of Jaffa, where he continued to function as rabbi of the Bulgarians. 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 relates: "At the beginning of



Rosh Hodesh 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 Rabbinat.' ... 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." In the wake of this, the affair became known throughout the country, Rabbi Zion was declared insane, and finally was removed from his position as a rabbi in Jaffa.

The second testimony was written by Lilly Wreschner, and was published in 1964 in the tenth issue of Tal. Lilly Wreschner (b. 1908) was born in Switzerland, where she dedicated herself to studying philosophy and psychology, and immigrated to Israel in 1938. She was active in spreading the gospel of Yeshua throughout the country for many years. She resided mainly in Haifa. In her article "I sought the truth," she wrote: "I labored in Eretz Yisrael 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 is written in the prophecy of Joel." Today Lilly plans to enter the Seniors' Home "Ebenezer" in Haifa.

An essential matter that concerned Ben-Meir was observance of the Torah by Jewish disciples of Yeshua, and he frequently expressed this in the pages of Tal. Thus, for example, in three issues (Nos. 2,3, and 20) articles were devoted to "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy!" In issue No. 14 of 1965, Ben-Meir posed the following question: "Is the prohibition of eating pork annulled?" And he answered himself 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 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."

At the same time, Ben-Meir allowed to express the dangers in observing tradition. In an article entitled "The basis of our faith," by "A Jewish Believer" that was also published in the tenth issue of Tal (October 1964), it is stated that only the Holy Scriptures, the Tanach and the New Testament, should serve as the basis of faith for Jewish believers in Yeshua. On the subject of tradition, the author writes: "There is serious danger from tradition, even for those who are aware of its exclusive origins in the Tanach. Traditional opinions are liable to infiltrate our ways of thinking, and to replace the word of the Tanach in the formulation of principles of faith... Each of us is the victim of the kind of brain washing caused by the tradition of generations, families, or society, and we tend to attribute opinions and points of view to the Tanach, which are not there. There is a kind of 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." Finally, he writes that "all of your opinions and halachic positions must pass the test of biblical truth." Recently, two articles from 'Tal' were reprinted in the Hebrew version of "from Jerusalem to Jerusalem", the autobiography of Ben-Meir, published in Jerusalem in 2001.

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