



**LAUSANNE
CONSULTATION
ON JEWISH
EVANGELISM**

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BULLETIN**



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CONTENTS

Tisha Be'av	3
The Bible: Encoded or Not	4
Growing A Messianic Synagogue	12
Antimission in Israel	21
Book Reviews	24

New York 99

Sixth International LCJE Conference

After Pattaya 80,
Newmarket 83,
Easneye 86,
Zeist 91 and
Jerusalem 95

we are now looking forward to
New York 99
– the Sixth International LCJE
Conference.

The conference will be held in
New York from 12–17 August 1999.

The price for the conference –
accommodation in double room, all
meals and conference fee – will be
approx. USD 550 per person.

Program and registration form will
be sent to all LCJE members in
November 1998.

It is not a moment too soon to think
about New York 99!

Kai Kjær-Hansen

Tisha Be'av and evil speech

This year the Jewish fasting day Tisha Be'av (the 9th in the month of Av) fell on 2 August. The day marks the destruction of the Temple. According to Jewish tradition both the first Temple and the second Temple were destroyed on the very same day in 587 BC and 70 AD respectively. It is not just the day itself which is a day of fasting and mourning. The whole period surrounding Tisha Be'av is used for reflection.

In recent years a new tradition has seen the light of day. According to *The Jerusalem Post* it began in one of Jerusalem's orthodox neighbourhoods, where a group of women gathered to receive instruction in what the rabbis have said about bridling one's tongue and having an "evil tongue" *lashon hara*. Gradually, this phenomenon has developed, and this year has seen about 200 such study groups. They have been held in synagogues and schools in Hebrew, English, French and Yiddish. The idea has caught on – not only in other places in Israel but also in the USA, Canada and South Africa.

Some may smile at this sort of instruction which aims at teaching people not to gossip and warns them against what a loose tongue may lead to. Others will undoubtedly focus on the fact that it is women who gather for this instruction. In connection with the last point it may be noted that also men have enrolled this year, although their number is smaller. And of course they gather in their own groups.

Although this tradition was begun by orthodox Jewish women there is no reason to conclude that this group have special problems with gossip, have an evil tongue or have difficulty bridling it. What *can* be concluded is that they have recognized that gossip and an evil tongue harm and therefore must be fought.

The Apostle James realized that, and therefore he could write that the person who thinks he is religious but does not bridle his tongue "deceives his heart", and he calls the tongue "a little member", but compares it to a small fire which can set a great forest ablaze.

I wonder if we who are involved in Jewish evangelism would not do well to follow these Jewish women's example and take practical steps to get rid of evil speech. The *lashon hara* is sometimes used against others who are also active in Jewish evangelism.

Kai Kjær-Hansen

The Bible: Encoded or Not?

By Rich Robinson, Jews for Jesus, San Francisco

The full page ad in the *New York Times* called it "the runaway international bestseller." Michael Drosnin's new volume, *The Bible Code* is hot. "Everyone is talking about *The Bible Code*," says the promotional literature. "For three thousand years, a code in the Bible has remained hidden. Now it has been unlocked by computer—and it may reveal our future."

This 1997 release has been discussed on talk shows, covered in the major news magazine and on the Internet. Why?

For many, it blends computers, entertainment, mystery, and spirituality—a heady mixture. For Jewish readers in particular, there is the added dimension of Drosnin's Jewish identity, as well as references to discoveries by Jewish computer scientists, and revelations on Israeli prime ministers including assassination predictions.

If Drosnin's theories are correct, then the true author of the Bible and his message have been misunderstood from Mount Sinai on. According to Drosnin, it is possible today (thanks to the aid of computer analysis) to recognize that the author of the Bible was not the personal and holy God of Israel that we thought he was, and that the Bible message had little to do with



ethics, morality, sin, law or love.

Rather, Drosnin proposes, the Bible was an elaborately coded construction put together by an extraterrestrial super-intelligence.

He goes on to explain that the miracles of the Bible were not divine intervention but the outworking of advanced extraterrestrial technology. Moreover, the purpose of the encoded message was to "announce the existence of an Encoder" who was warning us about future disasters that could overtake the world so we could save ourselves from destruction.

This theory continues with the notion that previous generations of Bible readers had gotten it wrong. (Even some of the writers of the Bible must have gotten it wrong, for Biblical writers

frequently allude to and quote from earlier portions of the Bible.) Today, sophisticated computer number crunching has revealed the "true message" of the Bible for the first time in history. "Now the Bible can be read as it was intended to be read," Drosnin announces.

But who really discovered the system of Torah Codes and how does it work?

Chessboard Torah Reading

In 1994 the esteemed scientific journal *Statistical Science* published the results of an elaborate computer experiment on the Hebrew text of the Book of Genesis, which was conducted by three Israeli researchers¹, two of whom were Orthodox Jews. A few Jewish writers from previous generations, working without the aid of modern computers, had hinted at the existence of certain unusual patterns in the text of the Scriptures. Now by utilizing modern technology, the Israeli team claimed to have unearthed a remarkable series of patterns that could not have been the result of mere chance.

They worked like this. Pick a letter in the Hebrew Bible—for example, the letter *tav*. Now jump over a certain number of letters, let's say seven, and land on the

eighth letter—or skip ten letters and land on the eleventh. The effect is similar to that of moving pieces across a chessboard, skipping a certain number of squares until you place your piece. In this case the procedure was a little more involved. For instance, if you skip seven letters and land on the eighth one, then continue to skip seven letters and land on the eighth again and again throughout the text, according to a series of ground rules that have been established at the outset, you might discover that all the eighth letters spell out the word "Torah" or all the forty-ninth letters divulge a sentence like "The dictator will arrive."

The phenomenon is called "equidistant letter sequences" or ELS. The three Israeli researchers claimed that this "chessboard" approach to skipping through the text of Genesis produced some meaningful patterns. They claimed this method revealed the names of thirty-one well-known Jewish sages encoded in the text of Genesis in close proximity to their dates of birth or death, which were also said to be encoded. The results of their findings were seized upon by some as proof of the existence of both the codes and God.

After all, they reasoned, if *Statistical Science* was "peer-reviewed," then anything it published must be beyond argument. And if

mere chance could not account for the codes, then they must have been put in the Bible as the result of deliberate intent. And if the probability showed that no human being could possibly have engineered these codes, then the Creator of the Universe must have been the author—or at least the author of the Torah, for they reasoned that the same results did not appear to occur outside of the five books of Moses.

The Orthodox Jewish anti-missionary group Aish Ha-Torah began incorporating the "codes research" into their seminars, even winning over some skeptics with the apparently irrefutable proof of the existence of codes in the Bible. The original researchers also announced their conclusion that the codes demonstrated divine authorship of the Scriptures. At the same time, non-Jewish writers began to publish books that also drew on the results of the Israeli research, and they too concluded that the codes verified the existence of a supreme being. One author went so far as to call the codes the "signature of God," proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that God was real.

Are the Codes Reliable? How Can We Know?

Some who believed in God all along wondered why it would have taken the advent of the modern computer age

to prove God's existence. Others were not so sure that they had not been subjected to some kind of sleight-of-hand. Still others noted that contrary to correct scientific procedure, the original experiment had not been properly analyzed, reduplicated or verified, and that "peer-reviewed" was not the same as "proven." Even the former editor of *Statistical Science* was quoted as saying, "We hope that the material in them is correct, but we also try to publish pieces that are amusing to a wide variety of statisticians."²

The debate in print and on the internet focused on three things: One, were the codes real or not? Two, if they were real, what did that mean? And three, was the original Israeli experiment valid or not?

It wasn't until the publication of Michael Drosnin's book that the whole codes question came to the attention of the greater public, for Drosnin claimed for the codes something that no one had ever claimed before—namely, that they were a prediction or a warning of future calamity. Suddenly the study of the codes was no mere academic or statistical exercise, nor even one argument for God's existence to be placed alongside of others—it became a matter of life and death for all humanity, or at the very least a matter of great curiosity.

Bible Code Backlash

With the broader exposure came a closer look at the original 1994 research. *The Jerusalem Report* published a highly critical article³ as did *The Jerusalem Post*⁴. The non-sectarian magazine *Bible Review* published two pieces⁵ by Jewish scholars refuting both Drosnin's work in particular and the codes research in general.

Drosnin was criticized for outrageous blunders in translating Hebrew, such as when he rendered accidental manslaughter as an assassination. He was also called to task for failing to consider that the original Hebrew manuscripts do not exist. What we do have are various manuscripts that, while identical in content, vary in the way words are spelled, including the number of letters—all highly important to research that relies on the exact distances between letters.

And then there were those things for which he wasn't criticized but should have been. Drosnin alleged that in the biblical passages describing the ark of the covenant, a "hidden message" is found which says "computer." From this "discovery" Drosnin concluded that the Ten Commandments were prepared on computer and that the Bible is "an interactive data base," a "computer program" that reveals "the hidden truth" about the past and future.

Such a procedure

depends on one thing only—what the reader wants or hopes or is creative enough to see. It's as though the Bible were one big Rorschach test and Drosnin is obsessed with an ink blot that he's interpreted as "computer." Even if the word "computer" really is encoded and not just the result of Drosnin's imagination, why should that indicate that the Ten Commandments were computer-generated, or that computers lie behind the miracles of the Exodus? Maybe it just indicates that someday the Bible would be available on computer. Or—ahem—that computers would one day be used to mishandle the Bible? It's anyone's conjecture.

And then there is Drosnin's see-sawing over what the codes are in the first place. Sometimes he says they are a warning of what will be. Elsewhere, he wants us to know that the codes portray things that might come to pass. How could Drosnin come to his conclusions? More insight can be found through the ancient sages of Jewish mysticism.

Kabbalah Doesn't Compute

Jewish mysticism, or kabbalah, while having its origins in medieval times, is now considered cool and there are centers around the world to study it. It has both serious students and dabblers. There are rabbis

who teach it and celebrities who endorse it. There are kabbalistic teachings on the nature of God, on reincarnation, on Torah and on the way God communicates to his creation. It's these last teachings of the kabbalah that undergird many of the conclusions coming from the codes movement, and explain some of Drosnin's more incredible statements about the Bible codes.

For example, Drosnin includes a quote from the 18th century sage, Vilna Gaon:

The rule is that all that was, is, and will be unto the end of time is included in the Torah, from the first word to the last word. And not merely in a general sense, but as to details of every species and each one individually, and details of details of everything that happened to him from the day of his birth until his end.⁶

It appears that the kabbalah has driven the search for Torah codes as well as the notion that Torah contains all that ever was and ever will be. One must conclude that understanding the Torah codes will provide the individual with the tools to understand the past as well as the future. Here we have something intriguing as a new millennium approaches, geared for the Unsolved Mysteries generation, a puzzle to be solved.

Some Plain Sense About Torah

Those who have taken the Bible seriously long before "The Codes Movement" offer a different perspective. Instead of looking for puzzles to solve, students of the Bible have relied on the "unencoded" version as a guide for life. They read it for its apparent meaning and have found it truthful and practical. They would say that it actually makes sense as plainly read.

Here's the bottom line. Mystical Jewish teaching tells us that the Torah contains all that ever was, is, will be or could be. Some significant patterns in the Bible may have been discovered but they have yet to be properly verified. Putting these two suppositions together is somewhat akin to adding one chemical to another and producing an explosion. If the Torah contains everything, and that "everything" is hidden in a code only decipherable by computer, where does that leave all the generations before us? Was the Bible intended only for people of this technical age? Why were computer codes given thousands of years before computers existed? Further, if the codes include what "could be," then does not the Bible also reveal many things that never will happen? In short, if you find everything, do you find nothing?

The unencoded Bible

also differs from the "coded" Bible in what it tells us about God. The codes purport to give us the tools to "save ourselves." The great Encoder is not someone that we can relate to or love or fear or worship or hate or pity. He or she or it resides completely in the background, able and willing only to communicate to us in elaborate code. It is nothing more than intelligent wallpaper, so to speak.

In contrast, the unencoded Bible gives us a glimpse of a personal God who created us, who loves us and is intensely interested in saving us. From Genesis all the way through the New Testament writings, we are confronted with a God who cares, who gives, and who expects much because he is holy.

The Bible code doesn't challenge us. It doesn't tell us about the problems in the world and how, so often, they are the result of sin for which we need to take responsibility and repent. *The Bible Code* just promises us that if we crack a rather entertaining puzzle, we will be able to sort out some future possibilities.

The truth is that thousands of years ago the Bible presented two possible futures for people. "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life that you may live."⁷ The plain, human-readable Bible contains predictions of its own. The Torah contained

predictions of blessing for Israel or disaster for the nation depending on whether they obeyed or disobeyed God. The prophets predicted the rise and fall of pagan nations and the coming of the Messiah. They didn't speak of multiple possible scenarios of the future. They didn't seek to conceal the truth of their words from those who would read or hear their message.

If people do not read the Bible for what it plainly says, they'll never discover these truths. They'll never find out that over the past several millennia the Bible has taught people about ethics, morals, the love of God, the love of neighbor and many other weighty topics. The unencoded text of the Bible has been read as a document that promotes justice, righteousness and peace. And not incidentally, as one Orthodox Jewish critic pointed out, the unencoded text of the Bible specifically prohibits augury, which is the attempt to read the future.

The New York Times ad copy boasted that, "The world is reading *The Bible Code*." However, the world has been reading and still is reading the Bible and will be reading the Bible long after *The Bible Code* become recycling material. The Bible, in all its unencoded glory, has stood the test of time. And it points us to a loving God who is both Creator and Redeemer.

Notes:

1. Doron Witztum, Eliyahu Rips and Yoav Rosenberg.
2. Horowitz, David, "Busting the Bible Code Breakers," *The Jerusalem Report*, September 4, 1997, p. 18, citing the former *Statistical Science* editor Robert Kass.
3. Ibid.

4. "Torah Codes Authors Pan Book," *Jerusalem Post*, Judy Siegel, June 14, 1997.
5. "The Bible Code: Cracked and Cracking," *Bible Review*, August 1997, pp 22-25. Includes "The Secret Code Hoax" by Ronald S. Hendel and "Snake Oil for Sale" by Shlomo Sternberg.
6. Vilna Gaon quoted by

Eliyahu Rips in *The Bible Code*, p. 19, quoting from *The Jewish Mind*, translated by Abraham Rabinowitz (Hillel Press 1978) pp 33-34.

7. Deuteronomy 30:19.

The article is a reprint from *Issues, A Messianic Jewish Perspective*, Volume 10-11.

religions. It had no authority over the Jews as such, but only over the "New Christians". Anyone who gave the slightest indication of practising Judaism was in danger.

The Spanish Inquisition was abolished by Joseph Bonaparte in 1808, re-established in 1814, and finally abolished in 1820. Its final years thus coincided with the period of the independence of the Spanish colonies in Latin America.

Procedure

When the Inquisition was about to begin an investigation, a period of grace was established, during which heretics were called upon to confess freely, and the public was encouraged to denounce Judaizers and others who were considered heretics. Those who confessed after having been warned had to do penance (perhaps a period of fasting, or a pilgrimage) and were then readmitted to communion. Those who did not admit their error after having been warned were treated with greater severity. From 1252 onwards the use of torture was permitted in order to achieve a confession. Sentence was pronounced at an *auto-de-fe*, an "Act of Faith". Punishments included the confiscation of the property of the accused, and imprisonment. In extreme cases, the victim was "relaxed" to the secular powers for execution.

It seems that many innocent people confessed offences which they had not committed, hoping thereby to receive a lighter sentence. They feared that if they maintained their innocence they would be treated as recalcitrant, and punished more severely.

The Jews in the "New World"

The expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 coincided with the "discovery" of the Americas. Many Marranos thinking that they could escape from the Inquisition. They had some relief for a time, but with the growth of the power of the church in the colonies, the pressure on the "New Christians" increased. Anyone who observed the Sabbath, or who refused to eat pork, (to mention just two examples) was in danger.

The "New Christians" were the principal victims of the Inquisition in Latin America, but they were not the only ones. Bigamy was fairly common, as it was not very difficult to leave a wife in Europe, and marry another in the Americas. Members of the indigenous tribes who had been baptised, and who then returned to their ancestral religious customs were treated as heretics. They were under the power of the local episcopal Inquisition, not the papal Inquisition. Even innocent Englishmen engaged in free trade were considered as pirates!

The main centres of inquisitorial activity were Spain and Portugal, but the purpose of this article is to consider only the Inquisition in the Latin American colonies. We may remind ourselves that the world was very different centuries ago. It was a world without Canada and the U.S.A., and Mexico and Lima were much more important than Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro.

Mexico

Theoretically, all those who went to the Spanish colonies had to prove that they were Christians, and descendants of four generations of Christians, with no "New Christian" blood. However, some New Christians obtained certificates of "pure" descent by bribery, and others successfully pretended to be "Old" Christians. In 1519, apostolic inquisitors were appointed, and an *auto-de-fe* was held in Mexico City in 1528. Three "Judaizers", among them Hernando Alonso, a companion of the *conquistador* Hernan Cortez, were put to death. In 1571, Philip II of Spain established an independent tribunal to free the land from "Jews and heretics, especially of the Portuguese nation".

In 1596, 44 penitents appeared at an *auto-de-fe*, among them 41 Judaizers. The case of Luis de Carvajal, the governor of the province of Nuevo León, and his family, is of particular interest. Some have stated that he was a Jew, but it

The Inquisition in Latin America

By Rev. Peter Clarke, LCJE Area Coordinator, Buenos Aires

Few subjects raise more emotion on the basis of little information than the Inquisition. The term refers to the investigation of heresy by special ecclesiastical courts. As such, it can be seen as an aspect of ecclesiastical discipline, which in some form or other has been practised in all churches in all periods. In the early church the usual punishment was excommunication, but when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, confiscation and the death penalty were accepted as punishments, although until the twelfth century many followed the teaching of Bernard of Clairvaux that faith can only be produced by persuasion, not by force.

In the second half of the twelfth century and in the early thirteenth century the



Cathari and other reforming groups appeared in Italy and France. These groups were considered such a threat to society that the church asked for help from the secular authorities in the task of eliminating heresy.

The Inquisition proper came into being in 1232 when the Emperor Frederick II handed the task of seeking out heretics to state officials. Pope Gregory IX reclaimed this power for the church, and appointed papal inquisitors chosen from the Dominicans and Franciscans.

In 1542 Pope Paul III

established the "Congregation of the Inquisition" as the highest tribunal for cases of heresy. It was reorganised in 1908, and it is now a court to which cases of faith and morality are referred.

The "Spanish Inquisition"

The so-called "Spanish Inquisition" was established in 1479 by Ferdinand and Isabella, with papal approval. They were motivated by both political and religious factors. They were fervent Roman Catholics, and saw a "pure" church as a key factor in the establishment of a united country. To begin with, they directed their attention to "Moriscos" and "Marranos", that is, Moslems and Jews who had been baptised. Later, the Inquisition directed its attention to Protestants. Theoretically, it was concerned with dissident Christians, not with members of other

seems that he was a devout Catholic, of a Christian family. However, his sister married a Marrano, and he nominated one of her children as his heir and successor. Carvajal's nephew took his uncle's name, and is known as Luis de Carvajal "El Mozo", "The boy". When the governor discovered his nephew's inclination to Judaism, he disinherited him. Luis "El Mozo", his mother, and three sisters were burned at the stake on 8th. December 1596, together with five other "Judaizers". The "Israelites" of Venta Prieto have considered themselves as descendants of the Carvajal family, but this is impossible.

The Inquisition in Mexico reached its high point in a great *auto-de-fe* on 11th. April 1649. Of the 109 people declared guilty, only one was not Jewish. Thirteen were burned at the stake.

It seems that the customs of the crypto Jews in Mexico were closer to those of traditional Judaism than those in European countries under the control of the Roman church. Circumcision was quite common, and the dietary laws were observed within the limits of possibility.

The first organised Jewish congregation in Mexico was established in 1885. Many of the immigrants came from middle eastern countries. Their appearance, and their knowledge of Ladino, helped in the process of absorption.

Mexican Jews have suffered persecution in recent times, including the activities of the "League against Chinese and Jewish Infiltration".

Philippines

The Philippines were administered from Mexico, and the Mexican Inquisition exercised authority in the islands. The accused, who at the beginning were all New Christians, were sent to Mexico for trial.

Peru

The main centre of Spanish government in the southern part of Latin America was Peru, and Lima was the scene of many *autos-de-fe*. An episcopal Inquisition existed from 1539, and from then until 1805 there were 34 *autos-de-fe*. As elsewhere, the Marranos formed a significant percentage of the victims.

In 1635 the so-called "Great Conspiracy" occurred, when many "*Conversos*" were found among the Portuguese merchants in Lima, and the most notable activity of the Inquisition outside the Iberian peninsula took place. There was not sufficient space in the prisons to hold all the accused.

At the "triumphant" *auto-de-fe* on 23rd. January 1639, there were many Marranos, of whom seven were burned alive, including Francisco Maldonado de Silva, who was born in Tucumán, in what is now Argentina. His father, Diego Nuñez de Silva, was

reconciled to the Inquisition in 1605, but admitted to his son that he still considered himself to be a Jew, and persuaded him to be a secret Jew also. Francisco tried to convert his two sisters, but they denounced him to the Inquisition in 1627. He circumcised himself, took the name Elí Nazareno, and while in prison encouraged other Marrano prisoners to remain firm. The building used by the Inquisition in Lima now houses a museum. Various artefacts and instruments of torture are preserved, but with little indication of the real horrors that lie behind them.

The River Plate area

Some have maintained that there was little inquisitorial activity in the area which now forms Argentina and Uruguay. It is true that there were no tribunals of the Inquisition in these countries, but there were episcopal Inquisitions. It was impossible to pass through Buenos Aires without coming under scrutiny.

New Granada

This province included Colombia, and part of the Caribbean. At first it depended on the Inquisition in Lima, but in 1610 a tribunal was established in Cartagena. Between 1614 and 1782 there were at least 54 *autos-de-fe*. The "Great Conspiracy" in Lima in 1635 had repercussions in Cartagena, and the property confiscated provided ample

funds for the tribunal.

In 1715, a "renegade" monk, José Díaz Pimienta was burned. After this, the Inquisition was not very active. In 1783, David de la Motta, who openly had returned to Jewish customs, was brought before a tribunal, but was set at liberty. In 1783-84, a number of non-Marrano Jews including a certain José Abudiente, lived in Santo Domingo without being troubled.

Certain customs which are found in the region of Antioquia in Colombia, together with certain supposed characteristics of the local population, have given rise to the theory that many descendants of Marranos live in the region. Serious investigations, however, have not supported the theory.

Guatemala

Those accused of Judaizing in Guatemala were sent to Mexico for trial. Rafael Gil Rodriguez, a monk who had drawn two of his friends to Judaism was condemned to death in 1788, but professed repentance at the last moment, and was reconciled.

Brazil

The Portuguese possessions in the Americas offered economic opportunities, and many *Conversos* went to Brazil. The Inquisition followed them. It operated through commissaries, and the accused were sent to Portugal. In Pernambuco,

Diego Hernandez and his wife were accused of having established a synagogue in a house.

It is calculated that in 1624 there was a very high proportion of New Christians among the 50,000 European inhabitants of Brazil. In May of that year, the Dutch captured two forts in Bahía, but were defeated the following year. Five New Christians who had returned to Judaism were executed for treason. Also in 1624 the Dutch established a colony in Pernambuco, and in 1630 they captured Recife. Many *Conversos* openly declared themselves to be Jewish. When the Portuguese expelled the Dutch, a wave of persecution broke out. The Dutch finally capitulated in 1654. The "Jewish Pilgrim Fathers" went from Brazil to New Amsterdam.

The last Brazilian New Christian to be condemned was Manuel Abreu de Campo, who died before the sentence could be carried out, and was burned in effigy in Lisbon in 1731. Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Inquisition was more concerned with masons and freethinkers than with Marranos. Brazil gained her independence in 1822, and as in the other independent states, persecution ended. The majority of Brazilian Jews are descendants of later immigrants, but in recent years there have been cases of a number of families who "discover"

(sometimes on the basis of very little evidence!) that they are descendants of Marranos, and who declare themselves Jewish.

Conclusion

Was the Inquisition really as bad as it is sometimes described? Is it still relevant, or is it just an unfortunate episode in history, which is best forgotten? Much evidence has been lost, or is withheld, but it seems clear that the activity of the Inquisition in Latin America was fierce, although it was not continuous.

Very few people would wish to defend the Inquisition today, but there have been some who have attempted to justify the spirit of the Inquisition on the basis of texts in the Bible which present a God who investigates and punishes. Virtually the only thing which can be said to defend the Inquisition is that it reflected the spirit of an age when nobody questioned the death penalty, or a close relation between church and state.

The concept of religious unity as a key factor in a well organised state is still popular in some Roman Catholic and Islamic countries. The Inquisition may no longer be active, but intolerance, injustice, and violence towards the Jews of Latin America still exist. We dare not forget the dictum of John Philpot Curran that "The condition on which God has given liberty to man is eternal vigilance".

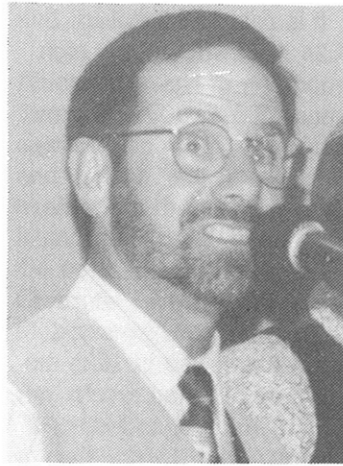
Growing A Messianic Synagogue

By Barney Kasdan, Rabbi of Kehilat Ariel, San Diego, California

The title of the article in a recent periodical caught my attention immediately. "A Different Kind Of Mosque: A new idea buys time for new Christians to grow." What would have been considered radical a few years ago is evidently now on the drawing board for missions to Muslims. Mind you, this article did not appear in some offbeat, fringe publication but in the highly regarded bulletin from the Fuller School of Missions. Perhaps more intriguing is that the article was simply a reprint from the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention who is actively engaged in this kind of contextualization to the vast Islamic world. The need was summarized in the following words:

"Muslims who accept Jesus as Savior often face intense pressure from the Muslim community. Families disown them. Friends shun them. Employers fire them. Militants abuse them. And traditional Christian churches usually are slow to accept them. Too often, they abandon their commitment to Christ and return to the mosque."¹

Sounds familiar, does it not? It wasn't that long ago that a "new idea" of planting Messianic synagogues was considered as a rather radical proposal to minister within the Jewish community.



While we have not entirely overcome our controversial nature, it seems that the Messianic synagogue movement has made great strides in justifying our philosophy. So much so, that the above article even points to the Messianic congregational movement is a case in point of the fruitfulness of contextualization. Maybe we have actually accomplished some things for the kingdom of God over the last 25 years? Perhaps it is significant that in this paper we are able to move beyond the idea of planting Messianic synagogues to growing them! I believe we are finally maturing enough to give thought to some of these more substantive issues of maintaining congregational growth within a Jewish context. In my 16 years of shepherding at Kehilat Ariel, I have found that four key areas keep

rising to the forefront of the life of our shul. These areas are illustrated in the famous passage describing the first century Messianic Jewish movement in Jerusalem. In response the Peter's Shavuot sermon we find:

"So then, those who had received his word were immersed; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart...And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:41-42).

In seeking to grow vibrant Messianic synagogues, I would suggest the following four strategic elements:

Avodah (Worship)

This may seem like a strange place to start but I am convinced that avodah/worship should be a top priority. In fact, this emphasis is logical when one considers the place of avodah in Jewish tradition. The word usually translated "worship" is more literally "work or service." These definitions flow from the

calling of Israel to be a "kingdom of priests" who were to serve HaShem in the Temple order of worship (Exodus 19:6). All this is quite informative as we think of the meaning of avodah. In the Jewish paradigm, worship is divine service. It would be unthinkable for a Levite to appear before the Lord empty handed. How far we have come in the modern perception of worship! It is like the coach who defined a football game as 22 overworked players being cheered on by 60,000 fans who need the exercise. This syndrome has affected both church and synagogue in our day. Most people (if they go to service at all) seem content to pay some professionals to do the work of worship. If we are Yeshua's priesthood, then we should stop to ask ourselves what we are bringing to our worship services. All of us are happy that Messiah has fulfilled the sacrifices of the Temple service, but what about our praises or, as Hebrews 13:15 graphically depicts, "the calves of our lips?" Are we not told to bring our spiritual gifts for the edification of the Body of Yeshua?

It seems that the early believers in Jerusalem were naturally thrilled about their new calling in Messiah. They continued "in the Temple"; the implication being that emphasized avodah/worship as one of their high callings. It should

be noted that they evidently found no contradiction between their newfound faith in Yeshua and the traditional service of the Bet HaMikdash which was still functioning at that time. Of course, sooner or later the religious establishment would no longer tolerate this Jewish messianic sect. From that point, the followers of Yeshua seemed to set up their own houses of worship; i.e. Messianic synagogues (cf. James 1:1; 2:2). Yet, the Jewish model of avodah certainly persisted and was greatly valued.

What does this perspective of avodah mean as we consider the healthy growth of Messianic synagogues in our day? Many of the principles and even the specific models can be applied with great fruit in our contemporary society. By recapturing the focus of our biblical priestly mandate, Messianic worshippers today can be challenged to enter into a deeper, more authentic experience in worship. We are not called to be spectators in the bleachers but workers on the frontlines. All that we do in our worship services should reflect the fact that we have moved beyond our self-absorbed culture to the reality of bending the knee before our Creator and Redeemer. The church at large is in somewhat of an identity crisis in regard to true worship. The modern synagogue is experimenting with new boundaries and

expressions. What a golden opportunity it is for Messianic synagogues to assert leadership in awakening a biblical spirit of worship! Undoubtedly, the development of Messianic praise music has made its impact felt. There is something special about the exuberance and depth that people sense through our distinctive style of worship. It seems we are striking some lost chords somewhere between Hava Nagila and Amazing Grace! And that is how it should be if we are truly developing a Messianic Jewish distinctive.

Although dance is not universally part of every congregation, at Kehilat Ariel we have found that this too has become an important part of our worship. For most churches, dance seems to be the last frontier. Even in relation to the Jewish community, it is mostly reserved for Bar Mitzvah parties or holidays on the kibbutz. Yet, biblically speaking, dance has often played a vital role in the joy of worship.² Consequently, many Messianic groups are asking the question, "why not?" It seems that many of the Jewish visitors to our services are touched with the joy of Messianic Judaism especially as they observe the expression of dance. At first, it may not appear to be very "traditional" to have this Israeli-style dance at a Shabbat service, but perhaps that is the very point

we should be making! We are not just another shul. In fact, if the Mashiach has truly come, quite appropriate to express the joy of our redemption in this way. Hence, dance worship not only has been a blessing to us, but it is a clear statement to others the God has done something special in our lives.

Which brings me to another area of avodah; namely, Liturgy. It is unfortunate that, in some circles, the traditional liturgy is not associated with anything good. Maybe it is because of a negative experience from a previous time or our anti-establishment fervor left over from the 60's. I was not brought up in an observant family so maybe that served to my advantage after I came to Yeshua. Whatever our feelings about liturgy, I believe it can serve as a strategic link between modern Messianic Jews and our rich heritage. I have even wondered if the Jewish liturgical service is not "the link" which keeps us connected in regards to worship. Isn't this aspect what makes a Messianic service distinctively "Jewish?" Of course, we must filter through the talmudic vs. biblical values to discern what is fitting for our avodah, which is no small task. Freedom must be the controlling factor as we put any tradition to the test. However, we must ask ourselves the honest

question, just how Jewish are our services if we ignore some 2500 years of our heritage. Without the chanting of the Shema or a Torah service, are we not in danger of simply replicating a gentilized, Protestant service. Not that there is anything wrong with such a service, but do we have a legitimate right to pronounce it Jewish? More often, it appears we are merely a charismatic church with a yarmulke.

Admittedly, this is a vast question with many proposed answers. The good news is that the Messianic congregational movement continues to develop to the extent that we now have increasing choices regarding liturgical expression. From the earliest days of Kehilat Ariel, we made a conscious choice to prioritize the liturgical part of our service. This was because of our sincere desire to worship the Lord in the forms that we found acceptable. It also set the tone for our whole service that our vision was distinctive from other churches and (because of its Messianic emphasis) even other synagogues. To be sure, many non-Jewish believers who visit us are not that interested in this part of our focus. What is even more discouraging is the Jewish believers who like most of the Kehilat Ariel service but are negative towards the liturgy. Of course, these are usually the

same ones who call us frantically as their son approaches 13 so he can learn some liturgy for his Bar Mitzvah! It seems that even the skeptics confirm that liturgy in some fashion is a vital link to our Jewish identity. The early believers continued in the expression of worship which they knew best which included Jewish liturgical forms.³ Through the questions and struggles, I still see the traditional liturgy as strategic in the growth of a Messianic synagogue. By means of music, dance and liturgy, avodah will not only bless us as believers but will speak loudly to others concerning the One who receives our worship.

Torah (Instruction)

Although the word "Torah" has various definitions, I am using it in the broadest sense here; that is, "Instruction." Since the days of Moshe, our people have looked to the covenant at Sinai as foundational to our existence. Certainly there is a plethora of legal material in the Torah but, in the larger context, the Torah was God's instruction for his redeemed people. It is little wonder that the synagogue and Temple service from ancient days have placed great emphasis on the public reading (Hebrew "kria") of the Torah. Moshe is even told by God to "write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the sons of Israel"; hence, the early

tradition of chanting the Scriptures through the taamim/cantillation (Deut.31:19). People frequently are impressed with the centrality of the Word of God in the Jewish model of worship as illustrated by the extensive Torah service. As Messianic believers, we are often grieved that our people know more of the mechanics of the Torah service than of the content of the Torah itself. Nonetheless, the model is certainly biblical and instructive (cf. Neh.8:1-8; Luke 4:14-22).

While it is not my intent to enter into a theological discussion on the Torah, there is no doubt that the concept of Torah/Instruction must play a central role in the growth of a healthy Messianic synagogue. How can we fulfill our biblical calling as priests if we are confused about the One to whom we are to minister? In other words, there can be no true avodah without a strong awareness of Torah. We know that the first century believers emphasized Torah and the public reading of the Scriptures. In the description of Acts 2:42, the new believers "continued in the apostle's teaching." Paul, in his letter to the young Messianic rabbi Timothy, reminds him to "give attention to the public reading of Scripture ("kria"), to exhortation and teaching" (I Tim.4:13). These early believers naturally followed the only model that they

were familiar with; that is, the focus on the Torah at their public services. Later, we know that the Messianic community also read from the growing compilation of New Covenant Scriptures as the divine Word of God as attested by the church fathers Polycarp (110 AD) and Justin Martyr (150 AD).⁴ This is already evident in some of the New Covenant epistles themselves as we find the exhortation to publicly read the letters for the strengthening of the community (cf. Col.4:16; Rev.1:3). This paradigm has continued to this very day in the modern synagogue and even, with some adaptation, in the modern church. There seems to be a consensus on this general point that God's people must have God's instruction.

In relation to the healthy growth of a Messianic synagogue, we cannot underestimate the importance of the instruction from the Scripture. This emphasis will probably manifest itself in various forms. First, we see no reason to not continue in the Jewish model of the Torah service. There is something special that happens when believers are gathered together corporately to hear the Word. We have found it to be a special blessing as we focus on the Sefer Torah during the blessings, processional and the kria/reading. Without preaching a word, the message is clear for those

who attend such a service; this group believes that God has given us His unique Word. While we tend to follow the traditional order of service and parshiot, there are some important Messianic additions that can be blended into the service. Depending on the week and particular setting, we may chant from the Torah, Haftorah or Brit Chadashah. At Kehilat Ariel, as the Torah is being marched, we usually sing a Messianic song of praise which highlights our belief that the Torah and Yeshua are perfectly consistent (cf. Mat.5:17). A distinctively Messianic Torah service will not only fulfill the mitzvah of the public reading but we also serve the ongoing purpose of the Torah; that is, the instruction of God's people.

Of course, there are many more opportunities to receive instruction in the Messianic synagogue besides the traditional Torah service and weekly sermons. As our movement has matured, not surprisingly we are seeing the call for more teaching and equipping. For the last several years, many organizations have sought to address this felt need by developing Jewish Studies programs (cf. Moody Bible Institute, Fuller Seminary, etc) or a Yeshiva format (cf. UMJC, MJAA, Messiah Institute, etc.). These have been of invaluable help and will continue to equip believers in the Word. What is of special interest is a

newer development I see arising in our midst; that is, local Yeshivot in various congregations. The practical reality is that most people who desire more serious Messianic studies do not have the option of relocating to a distant city. Why not bring the Yeshiva format to them? We have started this at Kehilat Ariel on our Tuesday night program where we are currently teaching a class on "Talmud And Messianic Judaism." We have over 30 people attending this 21-hour, college level course which requires a textbook, syllabus and (for those who desire academic credit) a final exam and research paper. These courses will be taught by qualified instructors either locally or brought in from other regions. There are several other Messianic synagogues across the country who are moving in this direction and we welcome this adaptation which should make a serious, Messianic education available to larger numbers.

If the local Messianic synagogue is to grow effectively, I believe we must continue to emphasize the development of our weekly discipleship opportunities. While we certainly need all levels of discipleship formats, our Adult Education program must finally move beyond elementary teachings (I call it Messianic Judaism 101). I have found that, given their own time and space, many people

want to grow in the Torah/Instruction. We are trying to likewise equip people so they in turn can plug into the discipleship/equipping model which we are seeking (cf. II Tim.2:2). For example, one of our most popular classes was taught recently by one of our elders entitled "Messianic Hermeneutics." This is an encouraging tendency in light of the fluffy (flaky) theology which has been all too prevalent in history of our Messianic circles. I am convinced that we must emphasize an accurate, expository teaching of the Scriptures which means we must take a serious look at equipping our people in deeper ways.

Kehilat Ariel is also excited about the development of our Children's Education department. It has been also said that our kids are the future of our movement. And the future seems to have arrived! Along with our Shabbat School program and Bar Mitzvah training class, we are seeing the need for more actually for more Jewish studies for our kids. We feel they are actually getting a good dose of Bible and personal application in the current program, but the weaker link seems to be in the universal Jewish concern; their Jewish identity. We are in the process of planning an extra program to fill this need for the Kehilat Ariel young people. Included would be Jewish history, lifestyle,

modern Zionism and, for the older kids, even Holocaust studies. We obviously believe that the knowledge of the Word is top priority. But one of the points of the New Covenant is that our faith and our Jewish identity can and must coalesce. If not, we run the danger of having a generation of Bible believers who have lost their saltiness specifically for our people.

It has been said that people often are drawn to a congregation by its worship, yet they stay in a congregation because of its teaching. I believe this is an important truth; therefore, the Messianic congregational movement must make the expository teaching of the Word of God our central foundation. Torah/Instruction in the Word and in things Jewish will be a safeguard that our people will continue to grow in the faith and that there will be a strong, identifiable Jewish remnant until Yeshua returns.

Havurah (Fellowship)

It is interesting to note that there has been resurgence in the area of fellowship. The modern church is taking a fresh look at how to incorporate people into the body life of the congregation. Of special interest to us is the development of the Havurah movement within the Jewish community. Sensing the need for a more personal and meaningful contact with Temple members, the Havurah approach

came on the Jewish scene in the late 60's largely through the efforts of the Reconstructionist branch.⁵ Succinctly defined, Havurah means friendship, as particularly developed in a home-group setting. Of course, what synagogues and churches are rediscovering in our day was an important part of the early Messianic movement. In the words of the highlighted passage for this paper, we read that the new Jerusalem believers were "breaking bread together from house to house" (Acts 2:46).

This seems to be a good solution to a practical problem which this growing community faced. How do you practically minister to over 3,000 people at once. No doubt, this need for true Havurah was addressed during some of the larger, corporate meetings. Fellowship can and must happen at the public service if people are to feel a part of the body life. In fact, it is God's design for his people that we share in a team approach to ministry that in a sense can only happen when we get together with the larger group (cf. Heb.10:24-25). Avodah and Torah are greatly accentuated when there is a feeling of true community among the congregants. The proper use of spiritual gifts, which are meant for the mutual edification of the believers, is only possible in the group setting of a New Covenant community. This

was certainly one of God's priorities for Israel from the earliest times as Shabbat and the Feast Days were always to be times for a "mikra kodesh/holy convocation" (Lev.23:1-2). Yet beyond this clear exhortation, there has also been the need for more intimate and personal times for Havurah as illustrated in the house meetings of the Book of Acts.

There is little doubt that, if we are growing healthy Messianic synagogues in our day, the principle of Havurah must be a reality. People may be drawn by the Avodah; they may even stay because of the Torah; yet with no real Havurah, it may be a short-lived stay at the congregation. As a Messianic Rabbi, I find that this is an all-important challenge. We must seek ways to move people from attendees to active participants in the body life of the synagogue. Everything from how we welcome guests at our services to the Oneg afterwards should be looked upon as an opportunity to encourage true Havurah. I guess from the Jewish perspective, it makes sense that part of the fellowship of the early believers revolved around food/breaking bread! So it has ever been. There is a special type of Havurah which takes place around the Oneg Shabbat or our home meals. For this reason, we have adjusted part of our services at

Kehilat Ariel. For example, over the years we have had times where we had Erev Shabbat services on Friday nights to supplement our Shabbat morning service. People were enthused at times, however it became clear that this service was not a need for most of our members. In fact, we were being caught in the ironic situation of having so many activities that we had little time for true Havurah! I am glad that our leadership has always been flexible enough to adjust our programs to legitimate needs and not just the zeal of a new idea. We now leave Friday night open for family meals, Havurah opportunities with friends or just plain old rest (we almost forgot that is what Shabbat means!)

The point is that people are seeking meaningful relationships in our high tech society and the Messianic congregation has a great opportunity to provide new friends in the Messiah. We currently have 6 Havurot groups around San Diego County which meet mid-week in various homes. These are not designed to be Yeshiva-style classes but friendship groups which are based around the Word. For sure there is teaching, but these groups provide a chance for discussion, dialogue and significant interaction between the members. Although we believe Shabbat is our priority service, there is no doubt that the Havurah

groups are vehicles for building a more intimate fellowship that is hard to attain in the larger Shabbat setting. How vital this is for a ministry to our people. After all, we usually are known as the Jewish "community." Although not impossible, our people view it as very difficult to live as a Jew in isolation. It seems that an effective Messianic congregation must prioritize this concept of community as well, as exemplified in the Havurah homegroup.

A true spirit of Havurah, of course, goes beyond a homegroup ministry. Every Shabbat morning we have the perfect opportunity to encourage fellowship through the Oneg Shabbat. Sometimes I have observed the most important part of the ministry for a person has been over the cup of coffee or a nosh as we visit after services. Times of relationship building can be structured in so many other areas. We have planned such Havurah events as Men's and Women's Retreats, campouts, Sukkah dinners, fieldtrips to Jewish museums, beach picnics, teen video nights and Havdalah folkdance evenings, just to name a few.

Although we could mention prayer under the area of avodah, there certainly is an aspect of Havurah which takes place in corporate prayer times. There is a depth of fellowship that develops when people pray together.

At Kehilat Ariel, we have provided group prayer times in the form of a rather traditional minyan (tallit and tefillin welcome), to the Havurah group prayer time, to a Tuesday night intercessory prayer group before our Yeshiva class. We can have all the dynamic programs, studies and services in place, but without vital prayer we may be lacking in the very power of the ministry. For those of us in Jewish ministry for any length of time, we soon realize that our only true hope for effectiveness will come by a spiritual breakthrough in the hearts of our people (cf. Rom.10:1). Havurah, whether it be through prayer groups, retreats or even pizza night, is clearly one of the pillars needed to grow a vibrant Messianic synagogue. As this type of real community develops, we will see some of the same blessings experienced by the first century believers who made Havurah a priority of the early movement.

Eydut (Testimony)

In order to bring balance to the multifaceted vision of a Messianic synagogue, I would not leave out an ancient calling for Israel; namely, Eydut. As Isaiah 43:10 succinctly states, "Atem edai neum Adonai" (You are my witnesses, declares the Lord). And although they do live in Brooklyn, he is clearly not talking about the JW's! The

word Eyd/Eydot means a witness or one who gives testimony. The implication is that this is a person who has firsthand knowledge of important evidence. Certainly the concept of Eydut was emphasized in regard to legal proceedings in the Torah, however Isaiah reminds our people that part of our calling is to give public testimony in regard to the only true God, YHVH. Of course, to give proper testimony of God implies that we Jews have firsthand knowledge of who He is and what He has done. How tragic that today, for the most part, we have become a witness people with little firsthand evidence. Such wasn't always the case as we know from Jewish history (cf. Mat.23:15). But we have come a long way since then for various reasons. Today the common Jewish posture is that Judaism/Torah is strictly for Jews or those Gentiles who exert great effort to join the Jewish people. The pro-active stance of Isaiah has long been jettisoned. Rabbinic Judaism often takes pride in the fact that they are not a "proselytizing religion."

Those of us in Messianic Judaism and Jewish ministry ask "why not?" We are exciting about what we have experienced in the Messiah Yeshua. We have become the firsthand witnesses to some vital evidence. We gladly receive the mandate of Isaiah which was reiterated by Yeshua himself

(cf. Mat.28:19-20). In the record of Acts 2:47, "The Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." If the true Mashiach has come, it shouldn't be a surprise to anyone that we are eager to share this Good News. Bible-believing churches have understood this mandate and taken it to virtually every corner of the earth. Unfortunately, the church has often forgotten the original ones called to the holy mission. Somehow God has called us, both Jews and Gentiles, to take up the burden for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The sad irony is that now we must go back to our people to share with them the riches they should have been enjoying all along. This is our sacred task as well as the joy of our participation in God's plan.

Messianic Eydut is the completion of the circle of ministry for a growing Messianic synagogue. We cannot stay exclusively in the Holy Place (Avodah). Nor can we solely focus on the riches of Torah or the blessings of Havurah. If our congregations are to be healthy as well as to fulfill our commission, we must be active participants in Eydut. With this there is a large degree of consensus. However, the philosophy and tools of how to accomplish this is quite varied from group to group. I would say that at Kehilat Ariel we take a broad approach to our

outreach. We take part in the more aggressive approach with such tools as our outreach table on college campuses and the local parks. We have found it very productive to simply go to these locations which the Jewish community frequents and put up our table with the banner proclaiming "Messianic Jews—Kehilat Ariel Messianic Congregation." It certainly receives it fair amount of attention from the passersby and often curious people will stop to inquire about our group. The nice thing is that when such a person approaches us (even a somewhat irate Jewish person), we know we can share with them openly because they have made the move to us. Even those who do not want to talk, the mere presence of our table we believe is successfully planting the seed of the Good News of Yeshua in their mind.

Our congregation recently moved to a new building in a different neighborhood. Although we realize that people today are often skeptical and even put off by someone knocking on their door, we prayerfully decided that we should get out and let our neighbors know who we are. We found some good success in taking a low-key approach of simply informing people about Kehilat Ariel and letting them know that they are welcome to visit us. Despite the expected rejection from some quarters, we had some

excellent opportunities to fulfill the mitzvah of Eydut, including a constructive talk with a young Chabadnik. We also believe that we created some good understanding between Jews and non-Jews in our neighbor which will bear some good fruit.

It is clear to modern strategists that methods of outreach/evangelism have gone through some significant changes the last few years. People are often skeptical of large institutions, including denominations. We are more comfortable now behind a computer surfing the net than we are being out on the street taking to a neighbor. Our Messianic congregations, like the modern church and synagogue, must deal with these realities or be in danger of succumbing to the famous last six words of the church; "We've always done it this way!" While I believe there will always be a place for the more tradition ways of outreach, the day has come to step out with new models which take our contemporary situation into account. For this reason, I welcome the fact that many Messianic ministries are actively involved in the Internet. While we do not have the statistics, I wonder what percentage of the computer mavens of the world are Jewish? What a great place for new outreach and dialogue. The Kehilat Ariel Website receives hits from all over the world and is

vital to our 21st century approach to Eydut.

Saul reminds us that the most effective way to reach a people, especially our people, is to contextualize the Good News so they may understand it (I Cor.9:20). This principle has vast implications on the healthy growth of a Messianic synagogue. In fact, we must constantly evaluate not only what relates properly to the Jewish community, but what relates in our particular Jewish community. San Diego is not Crown Heights and Buenos Aires is not Jerusalem. Most of you know our brother Rich Nichol at Congregation Ruach Israel in the Boston area. As his group contemplated what could be done to effectively reach out to the distinctive culture of New England, they came across an innovative idea for a Messianic congregation. He is an accomplished jazz musician in the midst of a community which greatly appreciates fine music. Why not sponsor some jazz concert which would be open to the public? In the process of so doing, Ruach Israel has build many bridges for communication and Eydut.

In the Messianic synagogue movement, we must carefully consider two juxtaposed principles. We are called to share the Good News with our people; yet we are also called to relate to them in a way which is meaningful. It is easy for Jewish community to

demonize us as wild-eyed cultists if they do not know us. However, we must guard against watering down our Eydut for the sake of community acceptance. Is there not a balance between the two? As a Messianic synagogue, we are in the community to stay. Our kids go to the same schools, play in the same little leagues, we shop at the same stores. Relationships have been built over the process of years and we are seeing good fruit because of it. We all know that ultimately Yeshua himself is the stumbling block to our prideful generation. But we believe the Messianic synagogue can do a lot to dispel some of the misinformation and cultural barriers that exist between Yeshua and the Jewish community. The powerful thing we have noticed over the years is that there is a great statement made in a community witness. If 2 or 3 witnesses suffice for a Torah judgment, how much more 250 born again believers standing together for our Messiah? A contextualized Eydut in the Jewish community will enable many of our people to reconsider the real Yeshua and their possible affiliation with His people.

Such are the four relevant principles which I have highlighted in regards to growing a Messianic synagogue: Avodah, Torah, Havurah and Eydut. It is interesting to note how successful "gentile" church

ministries have adapted these principles from the Book of Acts. These principles are the same for the Jewish community today. I think of the old Jewish saying; "Jews are like everyone else...only more so!" I believe the call of the modern Messianic synagogue movement should be to reapply these principles as our first century spiritual forefathers did. We may appear to be rather different from the average church but in reality we have the same foundation. We see ourselves as a local congregation with a Jewish taste. Certainly we have not attained to these lofty goals but hopefully we are enjoying the progress as we continue in this faith journey. May there be a growing multitude of vibrant Messianic synagogues which can fulfill our high calling in Yeshua HaMashiach.

Notes

1. Mission Frontiers Bulletin July-October 1997 p. 20
2. See Murray Silberling's book, The Joy Of Dance by Lederer Publications.
3. Note the use of the definite article in Acts 2:42, literally 'the prayers' which seems to indicate the structured liturgy.
4. For an excellent overview, see Worship In The Early Church by Ralph P. Martin.
5. Rabbi Stephen Wylen, Settings Of Silver, p. 295.
6. Harris, Archer and Waltke, Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament, p. 648.

Antimission in Israel

The following is an extract from Freedom Report no. 50 (July 28, 1998) released by Messianic Action Committee (MAC), Israel.

When the Zvilli/Gafni religious literature-censoring legislation was first introduced, many here felt we were facing a "David and Goliath" situation. Others were of the opinion that it is our responsibility to exert whatever efforts we could to properly and lawfully oppose that legislation. What resulted was a campaign having two major thrusts, namely: foreign pressure to offset the internal political pressure tactics of the Ultra Orthodox and a domestic advertising effort presenting our case.

We were gratified to see that our efforts were far more effective than originally anticipated. Members of the U. S. Congress and Parliaments and legislative bodies world-wide responded to requests for mail to be sent to Israel (E-mail to government officials is often disregarded.)

Advertising in newspapers (Hebrew, English and Russian) gave us direct access to the



In July MAC representatives visited several European countries. Here they are together with Mr Flemming Kofod-Svendson (centre), member of the Danish Parliament, at the railway station in Århus, Denmark. Left: Mr Charles Kopp, chairman of the United Christian Council in Israel, and right: Mr Paul Liberman, newly elected chairman of MAC.

Israeli public. Because the issues were legislative and political, we were able to obtain advertising space that would otherwise have been unavailable to us.

It has been interesting to see how sensitive the Israeli government has been to foreign political and diplomatic expressions of concern over the introduction of such legislation. Visits to U. S. Capitol Hill offices, European Members of Domestic and European Parliaments, Foreign Ministries and Embassies have really paid off. These have so far been conducted in Denmark, Finland,

Holland, Germany, Norway, the U.K. and the U. S. Mail from individuals has also proven effective. The Israeli government has admitted that substantial foreign diplomatic pressure has been exerted.

Following many months of rigorous activity, we began to see back-peddling on the part of MK Zvilli, culminating in his withdrawal of co-sponsorship of the Zvilli/Gafni bill proscribing mailing or distribution of evangelistic literature. That was followed by MK Rabbi Pinchasi's more stringent bill seeking to preclude evangelistic discussions.

Now Prime Minister Netanyahu, Coalition Whip Sheetrit and even MK Pinchasi are offering reasons why we should not be worried. For example, the Prime Minister says he did not know what he was doing when he backed the legislation. Meir Sheetrit says he opposed the legislation and only sought to buy coalition peace for six months. Pinchasi was quoted as saying he only introduced the bill so his party would not be overshadowed by another religious party.

It would appear that the prompt passage of the bill hoped for by Pinchasi has been temporarily put at bay. We must remain on guard, however, since a special session of the Knesset can be called, and once convened, any bill can be brought to a vote during such a session. We need to

continue to work diligently to prevent its passage at any time and in any form.

Our many friends abroad who joined their action with ours deserve much credit and thanks. For our part, we are appreciative and grateful for your interest and help in our struggle to insure religious freedom and democracy in Israel.

ADVERTISING

During this last year we have placed over 60 advertisements (five different messages with multiple insertions) in Hebrew, English and Russian newspapers. Each message insertion reaches some one million subscription readers. That's almost half of the Jewish adult population.

At the outset, our ads explained who we were and attempted to correct both misconceptions and lack of correct information. In

subsequent ads we stated why religious censorship was bad for Israeli society and destructive of its democratic nature. Each succeeding ad became slightly more bold.

Recently, a well-known news commentator (TV, radio and newspaper columnist) responded to one of our latest ads. The response is long on emotion and short on sound argument. It is included below [= next page] so you can see the passionate reaction of a segment of Israeli society.

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MAC on comment on Israeli television - see next page

There are some who may think that our efforts in resisting proposed legislation seeking to impose religious censorship in Israel is making much ado about nothing. We do not agree.

Christianity is no more racist than Zionism or Judaism are. But there are Christian racists and Jewish racists, an example of the latter being Tommy Lapid. His sickening attempts to use bigoted generalizations against an entire religious community (the Christians*) and then to paint the Messianic Community in Israel with the same tainted brush smacks of the very worst expressions of anti-semitism--using the same tools which our enemies have employed to justify the most diabolical attacks against our people. Lapid's willingness to support anti-democratic restrictions on basic human rights of a segment of Israeli society exposes his ignorance of one crucial historical fact: that true democracy--rigorously maintained--has been the only (and, to our sorrow, rare) protection for the Jewish people in the diaspora. With people like Pinchasi, Gafni and Lapid practicing their own forms of reckless demagoguery in the renewed Jewish homeland, our people require that same protection more than ever.

I say to the missionaries, "Go to hell"

Israeli Television, Channel 2, 18 July, 1998, 6 pm, Tommy Lapid

The Messianic Action Committee in Israel this week published an ad against the bill in which Member of Knesset Raphael Pinchasi from Shas proposes that all who preach their faith in public with the aim to persuade another of its correctness will be sentenced to three years' imprisonment or fined 50,000 Shekels. Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu has promised his Christian supporters in the United States that Pinchasi's bill will not be passed in the Knesset, but the bill worries the Messianic community in the land which is occupied with missionary activity. The statement asserts that this bill will return all of the residents of the country to the dark days of the Middle Ages.

The meaning of the bill, says the statement, is the trampling of freedom of expression and faith in Israel and the trampling of its democratic character. If tomorrow peaceful citizens would be sent to prison, says the statement, only on account of their faith that Yeshua is the Messiah of Israel, no one will be able to say we didn't know. The expression

"we didn't know", that the Germans used after the holocaust, is a hint that this is Nazi legislation.

The ad calls us to come out to defend democracy, and I refuse. I support Pinchasi's anti-democratic bill. From my perspective, all religion is superstition, but two thousand years of persecution have granted us the right to be left alone in our Land. If we hadn't been murdered, if we hadn't been forced to convert to Christianity, then today we would have been a nation of two hundred million people. The source of all anti-semitism is Christianity; all the troubles that have come upon us are because of that rebel rabbi whom Christianity sees as the Messiah. Let them enjoy him, let them adore him, let them pray to him and let them believe that he is God, but not in our schools. Here we have immunity. We bought it with our blood.

Regarding the claim that it [the bill] is undemocratic, every society places limitations on the freedom of the individual. Even in the most liberal regime there are laws which forbid the promulgation of racism. In my view, preaching about Christianity is a kind of racism. A Christian missionary tells a Jew that he is deficient, that his

religion is not the right religion, like the racist who says about the Negro that he is deficient because the color of his skin is not right. I am sensitive to my right to be a Jew like the Negro is sensitive to his right to be black. No one forbids the Messianic community to believe in Yeshu.* All that the bill forbids is to preach to us that we should believe in Yeshu* as the Messiah. As a democrat and a liberal, I say to the missionaries, "Go to hell."

*This alternative spelling {Yeshu} is a derogatory anagram in Hebrew, meaning "May His name and memory be blotted out".

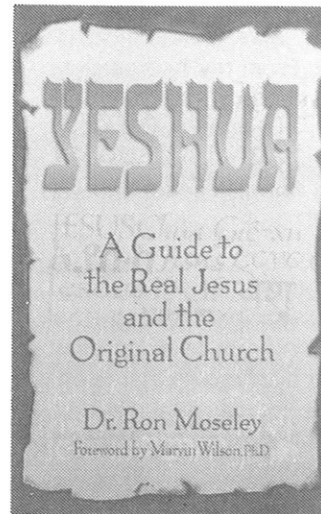
Book Review

Yeshua. A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church By Dr. Ron Moseley

Reviewed by
Gregory Hagg

Readers of this excellent work by Dr. Ron Moseley are in for a surprise. They will be surprised by the bold assertions the author makes concerning how crucial it is to understand the world of first-century Judaism before one tries to understand the New Testament. Moseley states that, "... because of the Jewish underpinnings of both the historical figure named Jesus and the early Church He founded, it is impossible to do any meaningful historical analysis without a critical review of the proto-rabbi and the first-century Jewish roots," (p. 5). This may be offensive to some, but he is absolutely correct.

Furthermore, there is a reason for this problem. "Today, neither Rabbinic Judaism nor the Church, which formed much of its theology from fourth-century Roman ideas, hold the same views as the pre-70 Judaism of Jesus' and Paul's day. Both Judaism and the Church have developed reactionary theologies aimed at keeping this separation permanent," (p. 69). The author's intent is to bridge



*Messianic Jewish Publishers,
Baltimore, Maryland, 1996*

the gap of misunderstanding by providing the reader with information about five areas of knowledge where deficiencies occur. Those topics are the Law, the Pharisees, the Jewish idioms used by Jesus, the organization of the church and synagogue, and the Jewishness of the first church. Three of these concepts will now be discussed.

First is the area of the law, its purposes and requirements (chapters 3-5). This is the section that will raise the most questions simply because of the

controversy among Jewish believers as to the applicability of the law. Moseley argues that while keeping the law is not necessary for salvation (pp. 13, 23, 53, et. al.), Jewish (not Gentile) believers are "obliged to maintain and preserve the Law," (p. 13), as were the first-century Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Apparently, the obligation extends only to the so-called moral and ethical matters of the Law, but since "few Christians recognize them as a part of modern theology . . . it has fallen to the Jewish people to preserve this aspect of God's law until the present," (p. 14). Many will take issue with such a statement, for at least two reasons. First, although Moseley does a good job of explaining the different aspects of the law (pp. 58-59), the Law of Moses should be seen as a unity. To offend in one aspect is to be guilty of all of it (James 2:10). Therefore, it is difficult to understand how the mishpatim can be legitimately separated from other aspects as a kind of "identification code." His discussion of the meanings for "abolish" and "fulfill" is

not convincing (p. 73). Furthermore, while this may merely be a problem of semantics, one would wish for a bit more clarity concerning whether or not Sabbath observance, kashrut, feast days, and other Jewish customs, are actually required by God of Jewish believers today. Surely, Dr. Moseley is recommending a voluntary rather than obligatory observance of such things. In his defense, he later notes that all believers should abide by the "moral" principles of the Law (p. 78), but these are found in the New Testament as well.

A second area for discussion is the "distorted image" that many have of the proto-Pharisees (chapters 6-9). Dr. Moseley provides a superb analysis of this important group including their influence on the original church, their rise to power, and their unique teachings. Although he considered Jesus to be closely associated with the school of Hillel, he does not quite admit that He was a Pharisee (p. 107, 95, 140). Some, however, would place

Jesus in the subgroup of the hakhamim (see Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, p. 126). Moseley speaks highly of the "good" Pharisees, as he should, but it is a stretch to assume that the reason Jesus was invited to dinner in the home of a Pharisee was because they agreed on matters of the law. Of particular interest is the last chapter which shows the considerable influence that this party of the Jews had in the first century. Certainly, this section will be very enlightening to those who have never studied the Pharisees in any detail before. He presents some of the positive contributions they made such as restoring and studying the Law. Moseley carefully differentiates the schools of Hillel and Shammai, and he also helps the reader understand the immense popularity of the sect.

A third area concerns the "nearly complete absence of knowledge concerning the Jewish idioms used by Jesus," (p. 5). This rather harsh statement is mollified somewhat when Dr. Moseley later mentions that "volumes

of documentation have been preserved on the Jewish idioms used by Jesus," (p. 20). However, he is correct in assuming that most Christians have not studied such idioms as kal-ve-chomer, secondary burials, or the good eye versus the bad eye, so Dr. Moseley makes a significant contribution to his readers' understanding. He again proves his point that the New Testament is informed by the rabbinical concepts of the Mishnah.

This volume should be required reading for any serious student of backgrounds of the New Testament. It is very well documented. His endnotes show exceptional familiarity with the primary Jewish sources, although important scholars such as Danby, Hereford, and G.F. Moore are not included. Also missing is an index of topics and scriptural references. Thankfully, this important book is easy to read for the non-technical student. Study questions are provided after each chapter, and a helpful glossary is included, as well.

Israel LCJE meeting

August 28-30 1998 is Haifa outreach. All LCJE members are invited and we will have an LCJE meeting on Saturday the 29th from 0900-1300 at Beit Yedidia. This meeting will deal with the subject "A Vision for developing the next generation of Israeli believers." That is, how the older generation can help, and what is actually needed to encourage our young people to be our next elders and leaders. What practical steps can we take to develop their leadership, etc. Please contact me for further information. Address on back cover.

Art Goldberg

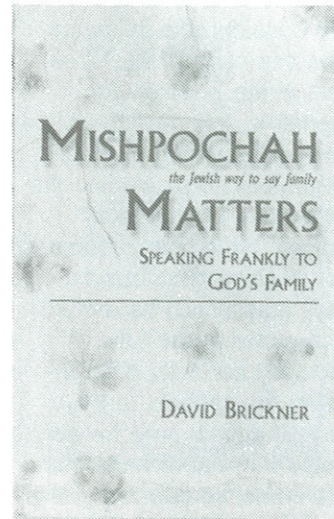
Book Review

Mishpochah Matters: Speaking Frankly to God's Family By David Brickner

Reviewed by
Theresa Newell

It is one thing to call the family together for an "insiders' powwow" and get some tough, perhaps even toxic, issues on the table. It is another to invite the rest of the relatives to sit in on the discussion. That takes courage, humility and maybe even a little *meshuggener!* But that is what David Brickner, Jews for Jesus Executive Director, has done in this open-the-system book. He doesn't duck the hard questions like, "Should a Jewish believer be in a gentile church?"

The title tells it all: this is a book written to the family (*mishpochah*) of Jewish believers who face the question, "What do I do after I come to faith in Y'shua?" As a goy who has worked in Jewish evangelism for several decades, I rejoice that there is now an audience of Jewish believers large enough and diverse enough to be wrestling with the issues Brickner puts on the family table. The very presence of such a book says the phenomenon of Jews believing in Jesus has rounded the "evangelism" first base and is moving



Purple Pomegranate Productions, San Francisco, California, 1996.

toward the second base called "maturity."

Mishpochah opens by getting the basic question settled: who is the family? To be a member of the family, you must a) commit to Y'shua and b) choose the road of discipleship. Once the basic membership is defined, Brickner moved forward. Defining who family is, after all, is fundamental to the table talk that follows. He pauses in the section titled "walking with God's family"

to hammer home the unity in the Body of Messiah issue, basing his argument that "Y'shua founded one church" on Ephesians 2:14-16 and 4:12-14. He appeals to those Jewish believers in Messianic congregations (of which he is one) to be sensitive to fellow Jewish believers who worship elsewhere. Brickner adamantly posts the "No Stereotyping Allowed" notice for all parties.

Beginning the discussion in his own backyard, Brickner addresses the question: is Jews for Jesus against Messianic congregations? His answer: it is not, but the organization also does not believe that all Jewish believers are required to belong to one. He gives a litany of the advantages of a Jewish believer belonging to a Messianic congregation. He cautions that some congregations can become alienated from their brothers and sisters in the larger Body of Christ. They may even use such misnomers as "the Gentile church" signaling a deep mistrust of the non-Jewish church.

His brief treatise on "Symbols and Substance" (pp. 119-130) is masterful.

In it he makes the case that misplaced loyalty to Jewish culture may lead to a compromise of creedal (read Nicene, A.D. 325) Christian doctrine: "Doctrine is *not* an expression of loyalty," he writes. It is to be believed because it is true. It must not be confused with a test of loyalty to the larger Jewish community or family of origin. In keeping with the book's practicality, Brickner includes a sample doctrinal statement useful for Messianic congregations.

Brickner stands firm on the non-negotiable fact that *Jesus is God*. The truth of the matter is that no amount of *halakhah* can win heaven without Him. This belief in Jesus as true God, he says,

is the heart of the discussion with which all believers have had to wrestle from the days of Arias to the present. It is well that Brickner has put this major doctrine in the central position which it deserves.

The rest of this 159-page book is wonderfully practical, dealing from a uniquely Jewish view with Scriptural admonitions regarding celibacy, marriage, intermarriage, caring for elderly parents, facing death. Other hard issues brought up in this family discussion are questions of differing views on eschatology, miracles (do they happen today?), and modern missiological approaches which ignore the "to the Jew

first" premise of Paul's writing. Obviously, the author does not attempt to be exhaustive in dealing with such complex issues, but he sets out lots of "samplers" for the family to chew on together as the search the Word on these topics.

This eavesdropping gentile learned a lot about what is on the heart of those in my spiritual family who are Jewish and some of the difficult dilemmas they face. I hope that both Jewish and non-Jewish leaders (perhaps together!) will use this book as a platform for further discussion of issues touching the *mishpochah* of God as Jewish branches continue to be added to the olive tree.

MEETINGS

LCJE Israel
Meeting in Haifa, 29 August 1998. See p. 25.

LCJE North America
The next meeting will be held in St. Louis, 8-10 March, 1999. Further information to follow in next issues of the Bulletin.

LCJE E-MAIL

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Next International LCJE Conference

The Sixth International LCJE Conference will be held in New York, 12-17 August 1999.