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REPORT FROM ELIZABETH HILL, on behalf of David Harley

I bring you greetings from David Harley, on whose behalf I am here at this Consultation. David was very thrilled to see the list of expected participants at this meeting in Chicago, with the numbers higher than ever before and a greater number of agencies involved in the task of Jewish evangelism represented. He was only sorry that his college term has not yet finished and that he wasn't able to be away at this point to come and join you. However, I did invade his home a couple of days ago with my tape recorder under my arm to see if he would like to say a few words to you himself. He was delighted at the opportunity, so here he is, almost live from England...

(Message on tape)

David mentioned on the tape how encouraged he was by the Lausanne Committee meeting a couple of months ago, and in particular by the high awareness of Jewish evangelism among that group. One of the major factors which had raised the expectations and interest in what is happening in Jewish evangelism among those coming from other parts of the world and other fields of interest, has been the fact that the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism has been featured prominently recently in the journal "World Evangelisation", the Bulletin of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation.

In June 1986, as you will remember, the lead article "To the Jew First" was contributed by Susan Perlman and David Harley, with three full pages of cover, including the Statement which had been issued by the Newmarket Consultation back in 1983. Then again we were treated to three further pages of cover in the December 1986 issue, courtesy of Steve Downey, the editor of this journal, who himself came as a participant to the Easneye Consultation last August as a representative of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation. He put together this upbeat report on the Easneye Consultation, summarising some of the major themes that were covered in our papers and workshops there. Again, the full Conference Statement was published.

This has gone to many thousands of Christians around the world, many of them leaders in their own right in their fields of evangelism. Those who compared the Statement in the June 1986 issue, dating from the 1983 Consultation, with this longer and fuller Statement in the December 1986 issue will have noticed not only that the latter Statement was twice the length of the former, but that it was more bold and more confident, and that it tackled themes which were omitted from the earlier Statement through lack of consensus, even though three times the number of people were trying to write it, 160 compared to 53! It talked not only of the Scriptural place of Jewish evangelism, but it called on the church at large to "restore vigorous evangelistic outreach to the Jewish people to the same, natural, and central place as it had in the ministry of the Early Church. It acknowledged not only the existence of the State of Israel as a sign of God's faithfulness to his people, but it rejoiced in the growing number of Jewish believers there, and in other parts of the world. It pointed to the development of "Jewish expressions of ... faith in Jesus", noting the use of "music and the arts and creative patterns of worship and celebration". It noted that congregations everywhere are beginning to be enriched by the perspective which new Jewish believers are bringing into their midst.

The Consultation at Easneye was the largest international gathering of its kind since the Warsaw meeting back in 1927. 160 participants came from 17 nations. Had the location of the Consultation not been transferred from Israel to England in its final year of preparation, it is safe to say that the numbers would have been even higher. While we were sad that circumstances made it impractical to hold this particular Consultation in Israel, we look forward to planning to hold a future one there. We were particularly pleased that 31 delegates came from Israel for the gathering, of whom only 11 were expatriate missionaries serving there. The other 20 were Israelis, either sabras or Jewish believers who have made their home in Israel. Their contribution to the conference, as individuals and as a group, was lively and heart-warming!

Lest we take for granted this exuberant Consultation, with over half its participants themselves Jewish believers, let's cast our minds back for a moment to 1974 when the historic Lausanne Congress took place in Switzerland, a gathering of 4000 Christian leaders and evangelists. Out of that gathering was born the Lausanne Covenant, the Lausanne Committee and a new vigour and resolve in world evangelisation. At that gathering, there were two workshops related to Jewish evangelism. They attracted an attendance of 25 and 50 people respectively: just over a half per cent of the total participation at one and just over one per cent at the other. That was it! There were no Jewish believers on the platform and, as we now regret, no reference was made either to the Jewishness of the Christian faith or to the priority of Jewish evangelism in the Lausanne Covenant.

Six years later, in 1980, there was a further Consultation on World Evangelisation in Pattaya, Thailand. While the vision for reaching the whole world with the gospel was affirmed at Lausanne, the consultation in Thailand worked on practical ways of implementing that vision by concentrating on different people groups. The consultation was therefore divided into 17 mini-consultations, one of which was concerned with "Reaching the Jewish People". This group consisted of 20 Jewish and Gentile believers, pastors, mission leaders and theologians. To their amazement, they found themselves in unity and harmony despite differences of methodology and theological standpoint. They produced the booklet "Christian Witness to the Jewish People", and the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism came into being. This is still less than seven years ago!

Today we have a steadily growing fellowship of those involved in this work. We now have 135 individual members from 22 countries and 23 agency members from 8 countries. Of the individual members, 39 are from the States and 31 from Israel. 18 are from Britain and then there are single figure numbers from the other 19 countries represented, from Peru to Australia and from South Africa to Finland. Of the 23 agency members, 11 are based here in the States and 4 in Britain. South Africa and Canada have 2 each, and there is one agency from each of Finland, Israel, Norway and West Germany. One new agency has joined within the last month, the Ministry to Jews of South Africa. Two messianic congregations have entered into membership, the Congregation Ruach Isarel of Boston and the Messianic Assembly of Prophets' Street, Jerusalem. We have links with many other congregations through members such as Dan Juster, Louis Lapides and others. It is, I think, realistic to say that if plans go ahead for a fourth international consultation in 1989, we will have at least 300 in attendance.

What this adds up to is that Jewish evangelism is now firmly back on the mission agenda of the whole evangelical constituency. In past decades, Jewish evangelism has not been seen as something of substantial consequence or interest. Those of you who have faithfully laboured through those decades will have got used to being thought of as a bit odd. But the climate is changing, and changing fast. Mitch Glaser, in the opening address of the Easneye Consultation, took as his theme "To the Jew First", claiming that "the same Holy Spirit who inspired the Great Commission of Matthew 28.. inspired the Jewish priority emphasised in Romans". But, he said, "Jewish evangelism has become the Great Omission of the church". That may have been so in the past: but it's not going to be so in the future!

One of the reasons for that is that we are starting to think and work together. As Arthur Glasser pointed out in his address on "Evangelism and Church Growth" at the Consultation last summer, the New Testament places great stress on the obligation of believers to express the unity of the people of God. Christians are repeatedly urged to receive one another and to love one another. "No-one", Dr Glasser said, "has 20/20 theological vision. All see truth as through a dirty window. Today they know in part; only tomorrow shall they understand fully." We are to receive one another, to listen to one another, to share with one another and thus to become better equipped for the ministry in which we are engaged. It is not the multiplication of individuals and agencies involved in Jewish evangelism that will make either the church or the Jewish people sit up and take notice. Rather it is in our being added together that we will be seen and heard. Those of you who were at the meeting in Dallas two years ago and here in Chicago last year know that this is true: that's why you've come back a third time for more!

The same is happening in other parts of the world. Good things are happening in Israel as a result of the believers there coming together under the banner of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism. One of the things which has found its way on to the agenda of the believers in Israel recently is the idea of Israeli evangelists being involved in outreach in other parts of the world. I don't need to tell you how many Israelis there are in, say, Los Angeles! There are Israelis constantly travelling in the capital cities of Europe and an increasing number of Israelis coming to live in England and in other parts of Europe. Whether it is that they are more open to the gospel when they are away from home, or whether it is that they have more opportunities to hear the message of Y'shua, Israelis seem to have a habit of coming to faith somewhere other than Israel and then later returning to their home country as committed and enthusiastic evangelists.

The opportunities for Hebrew-speaking witness in other parts of the world are immense. The Israeli believers are coming to the point where they are ready to grasp these opportunities, rather than leaving it to us second-hand Hebrew speakers!! As this begins to happen, the benefit will be felt in both directions. We will know that we have Israelis working with us by the results. And the Israelis themselves will have the opportunity to use their evangelistic gifts abroad, they will become more experienced, they will return home with broadened horizons and a new enthusiasm for the task. Already a handful of Israeli believers have been involved in summer outreach campaigns here in the States. We had two Israelis out on the streets with us in London for just eight hours last August: and the impact was felt! They seemed to find every Israeli in London with the help of the Hebrew tracts that we had reprinted!

The pastors of the congregations in Israel are keen to enable those with evangelistic gifts under their care to take part in this kind of activity. This realisation was a major encouragement to the first ever LCJE European Chapter Leaders' Consultation, which took place, as David mentioned, just three weeks ago in Amsterdam. At Easneye last summer, it was recommended that Otto Hovik, the new Area Co-ordinator for Europe (we British finally joined in with Europe and decided not to continue having our own private Area Co-ordinator!), should convene the European leaders of the Jewish evangelism agencies involved with LCJE within a year to discuss ways of advancing Jewish evangelism in our region, particularly in areas of no evangelistic presence. The Easneye recommendation stressed the importance of developing co-operative efforts in the training of volunteers and professional staff for a vigorous ministry of Jewish evangelism in Europe, and also the vital need of using personnel effectively in order to strengthen our voice in the theological battle over Jewish evangelism on the European scene.

The challenge was taken seriously and representatives of eight of the LCJE member agencies met in Amsterdam, along with three missiological scholars. Participants came from Norway, Finland, West Germany, Denmark, Scotland and England. We began by giving reports on what is happening in Jewish evangelism in Europe - or, perhaps I should say, on what isn't happening! I was sitting there taking the minutes and was rather amused as one mission leader after another stressed all the wonderful things his mission was doing in Israel! But we weren't there to talk about Israel! We came to realise that we had very little to say about what was happening in Europe. Virtually all of our mission stations had closed down at the beginning of the Second World War and, apart from the odd individual engaged in personal evangelism in scattered capital cities, we had transferred our attention elsewhere. As the theological battles hotbedded up after the war, we kept out of sight. Local and national churches (not so much in England but in the rest of Europe) began publicly repudiating mission to the Jewish people. The remaining Jewish believers in Europe were too few and far between to protest. And, until three weeks ago, the mission leaders had not come together to discuss the situation.

I guess we could have been thoroughly depressed about it all. But rather than looking back over our shoulders, we looked forward. In those three days, new visions were shared and new possibilities for working together to advance the cause of Jewish evangelism in Europe were opened up. Murdo MacLeod led our thoughts on building a strategy for Jewish evangelism in Europe and Walter Riggans brought a paper exploring the means of winning or re-winning the theological battle. Both those papers are summarised in the latest issue of the LCJE Bulletin,

which I have brought with me and will be distributing to you. Mr MacLeod began with the basics: how many Jewish people there are in Europe and where they live. He then pointed us to the strategy for Jewish evangelism as detailed in the Pattaya booklet: motivating and educating the local church for effective outreach to the Jewish people, helping the church through para-church missionary agencies, and making available a highly mobile task force to meet particular opportunities.

In our discussions, we concentrated very much on this latter point. Mr MacLeod pointed out that there already exist among the mission staffs of Europe a number of multi-lingual missionaries who could be united into a mobile team for short periods of witness in different countries, and who could lead local Christians in special outreach programmes. It was in this context that the idea of an Israeli contribution to Jewish evangelism elsewhere was so enthusiastically received.

I'm excited that, if this begins to happen, it will have been the bringing of leaders together through LCJE that has caused it. LCJE in itself does not of course engage in evangelistic endeavour: that is the task of its member individuals and agencies. But this is an example of how God can pour out his blessing on a whole new venture through our having come together to seek his purposes.

It was an encouragement to each of the leaders who met in Amsterdam to realise that they weren't alone in their concerns: they all wanted to see new initiatives in Europe, they all wanted to reach out to itinerant Israelis, they all wanted to see bold forms of outreach taking place in our capital cities while the climate is right, and they all wanted to see progress made in the theological battle. Walter Riggans underlined the needs of a number of different groups to whom we should be communicating our position: the need for universities and seminaries to have works of scholarship in the field of Jewish evangelism that can be taken seriously; the need for Bible Schools to have access to material pitched at a more practical level; the need for denominations and parent bodies of congregations to have cause to consider officially the biblical theological place of Jewish evangelism; the need for mission societies to have access to training that will produce more theologically articulate and knowledgeable workers; the need for dialogue groups to be challenged to step beyond their present boundaries; and the need for people in the pews to have access to materials which will lay down the issues in a way that will iron out some of the confusion that reigns at present in churches in Britain and in Europe.

There was plenty in all of this that we could have got worried about. Instead, we left Amsterdam full of hope and anticipation, convinced that we can enable new initiatives in evangelism to take place through co-operation, convinced that we can come together to publish both scholarly and more popular materials, convinced that we can start coming out on top in the theological battle.

These things can happen when we work together. One of the real encouragements to those of us who met in Amsterdam was that, while we were meeting together in this way for the first time in the European chapter, you were about to meet for your third annual Consultation here in the North American chapter. By our listening to one another, by our loving one another, may we make both the church and the Jewish people take notice of our message!