

THE UNIQUENESS OF RACHMIEL FRYDLAND AND HIS IMPACT UPON JEWISH OUTREACH

by Elliot Klayman

I. INTRODUCTION

In an issue of Christianity Today an obituary appeared in the Winter of 1985: "Rachmiel Frydland, 65, survivor of the Nazi Holocaust, Talmudic scholar, Jewish Christian movement in Israel, instructor in Judaica with Jews for Jesus; January 12, in Cincinnati." His whole life was reduced to a few short lines. There was so much that was left unsaid about this man who was specially fashioned by God to deliver the message of salvation to his people.

Rachmiel Frydland was a living epistle for his Messiah, Yeshua. He transcended the doctrine that divides Christianity and the Messianic movement. He flowed with the full range of factions within the Messianic movement. He was one of the few to operate well on the Hebrew-Christian/Messianic Jewish continuum, and he was able to bridge the gap between the old mission approach to Jewish evangelism of which he was a product and the new messianic congregational approach, of which he was a participant.

From the horrors of the holocaust to the glory of redemption, God fashioned Rachmiel Frydland as a vessel to be used for him. He was a living evangelistic tract. He actually lived the life that he professed. His life was ministry and his ministry, for so many, was life. Rachmiel Frydland, steeped in rabbinic and Talmudic teachings and principles, rejected the

majoritarian approach taught by the rabbis and the government, and chose to follow the Hanged One. That choice pleased God and impacted many lives.

This Paper presents a sketch of Rachmiel's life, and his ministry. It presents his legacy to us in the organization he founded -- MLO -- and its contributions to Jewish evangelism. It makes some additional observations regarding the uniqueness of Rachmiel and suggests some additional areas of further exploration, and research. Finally, it is open ended to allow you to add to the Appendix of this paper by your anecdotes and remembrances of Rachmiel, a missionary, evangelist, teacher, pastor, and scholar par excellence, shaped by God for the journey which he fulfilled with faithfulness.

II. HIS LIFE

A. Birth

Rachmiel Frydland was born "before Passover 1919" in "the little forest village," Lesniczowka. Located nine miles west of the river Bug, right across the border from the then USSR, he was but four miles southeast of Chelm in the Lublin District of Poland. In this little village his orthodox Jewish family lived adjacent to gentiles, sometimes in conflict and sometimes in toleration. He must have learned the difference between Jews and gentiles very early in his life. His father owned a little store and the Polish gentiles were prone to steal and incur goods on credit without repaying. Rachmiel went to public school for only a short period of time. Because his father, Abraham, did not want

him to be exposed to the gentile world and its influences, he made excuses for why he was not in attendance, and home schooled him for a while. But this pacified the authorities only for a season. With his side curls at an early age, and showing great promise as a Talmud Torah, Rachmiel began formal religious studies.

B. Religious Training

Rachmiel's father, Abraham, paid for a local Belfer to teach Rachmiel in the way of Moses. At age seven or eight, however, Rachmiel continued his studies in a nearby village called Ruta Huta. This town boasted a large Jewish community of 400 families. He was enrolled in Reb Pinhos' heder, but after this teacher ran away from his wife, Rachmiel was switched to Reb Froyim, and after he went out of business, to Reb Berle, who also doubled as a miller -- milling buckwheat into kasha. Quite interestingly, Reb Berle was Dr Arthur Kac's maternal uncle.

It became increasingly more financially difficult for Rachmiel's parents to continue his education at private schools in Ruta Huta. At age nine his father enrolled him at a yeshiva in Chelm, a religious training school supported by the free will gifts of the town's people. Here he concentrated on the Talmud-- the Mishna and Gemara -- and the commentaries of the Tosefta and Rashi.

After his bar mitzvah, he went on to one of the most famous yeshivas in Warsaw, Poland -- Yeshivat Emek Halacha. Sometime thereafter, he became discouraged with the rules of the school,

dropped out and enlisted in a less strict yeshiva and then a more liberal yeshiva, which concentrated more on the Tenach, than the Talmud, and permitted outside readings. While there however, he read from a passage in Berakhot 28:b concerning a very pious Jew, Yohanan ben Zakkai, who cried when death was imminent because he was uncertain as to where he would be spending eternity.

Rachmiel thought, "If this pious Jew was uncertain of his entry into gan Eden, then what hope was there for me." In 1936 he left the yeshiva never to return again.

C. Faith in Messiah

Rachmiel became a merchant, peddling chachkas on the streets. He found lodging in the home of a Jewish couple and he was asked to attend a missionary meeting one evening. He attended, ready to refute the arguments of the missionaries. There he was challenged by a Jew, Paul Rosenberg, with the Daniel 9 passage, and given a b'rit hadasha. Rachmiel could not find satisfaction in Rashi's contention that the Messiah there referred to King Agrippa. He returned to the mission, disappointed to find that Rosenberg was not there. Instead, a gentile woman, Tortis Christoffersen, was teaching concerning the tabernacle. It was there that evening that Rachmiel came to faith in tears. That summer Rachmiel worked for the mission at a camp, doing physical chores. Before the end of the summer he was arrested for previously peddling in the streets without a license and sentenced to two days in jail. He read the New Testament twice during that period and emerged with a new attitude toward the

world and the lost, and a sense of mission.

There were four Jewish missions in Warsaw and Rachmiel attended them all, including the one led by Jacob Jocz, and the ones sponsored by the American Board of Missions to the Jews and the Mildmay Mission. He was baptized by Moses Gitlin in the Polish Baptist Church in Warsaw and joined the German Baptist Church. He was given a job at one of the missions and exchanged his street peddling activities for gospel outreach activities.

D. The War Years

World War II was a reality. The Germans invaded Warsaw in September, 1939 and a few weeks later Poland was under German rule. The nightmare began for Rachmiel and the other Jews of Poland. Jews were singled out for special discrimination. They could not leave the city; they had to wear arm bands; and keep identity cards. Rachmiel defied the laws. He risked his life continually to visit his parents and to fellowship with the believers. Under a death penalty, he escaped from the Nazis on numerous occasions when death was sure. Resigned to die, sleeping in coffins, freezing in the forests, with bullets narrowly missing him, hunted by the Nazis and shunned by many Christians, he came to the realization that God sentenced him to live.

While most Jews were attempting to escape from the Warsaw ghetto, he snuck in to comfort the remnant of Jewish believers. He was one of the last persons out of the ghetto before its destruction.

He lost his whole family in the holocaust including his new bride, his sisters and parents. Yet he emerged by God's grace to tell the world of the salvation of God and the faith of the Jewish believers.

E. University Education

Rachmiel was helped after the war by the Mildmay Mission, and he went to England where he studied at the All Nations Bible College. At the University of London he earned two baccalaureate degrees in Semitic languages, and an M.A. in Medieval and Talmudic Hebrew. In 1952 he immigrated to the United States, and headed the Hermon House, a Hebrew Christian center in Manhattan. While there he earned an M.A. from New York University, with a major in Hebrew Education and Culture. He completed work as a Ph. D. candidate from 1957-1959 at New York University.

F. Post Education Ministry

In 1961 Rachmiel left the United States and moved to Israel where he became the secretary to Israel for the International Hebrew Christian Alliance. While there he married Estelle and their first of four children was born. He returned to the U.S. in 1965 and pastored briefly a congregation in Newark, New Jersey before moving to Chatanooga where he taught at Tennessee Temple Bible College. While there he came into contact with Jacob Gartenhaus, the founder of a Jewish mission. In 1973 he moved to Canada and took up mission and congregational work with the American Board of Missions. Then, he left Canada to pastor congregations in Cincinnati. In 1979 he resigned from pastoring and spent time

ministering with Hineni Ministries both in San Francisco and New York.

G. Death

Rachmiel often alluded to the fact that holocaust victims did not enjoy longevity. In fact, he took early social security when he was 62 for the reason that he doubted that he would make it to 65. His days escaping from the Nazis undoubtedly took their toll on his health.

Rachmiel preached his last sermon in October 1984 at Beth Messiah Congregation in Columbus, Ohio. On that occasion he had to cut the message short. He was experiencing a continual cough, and shortness of breath. Rachmiel had been misdiagnosed on a previous occasion and was placed on antibiotics. By the time he was discovered with cancer, it had spread to his liver and other vital organs. Sent home to die, in tremendous pain, he secretly ignored his pain medication. With his wife and children near by, on January 12, 1985, after smiling in response to the words of the Psalmist, "joy cometh in the morning" he went to the other side of eternity to his reward.

III. HIS MINISTRY (See Figure 1)

A. As a Missionary

Rachmiel was a product of the missions. Initially, he despised the missions, equating them with antisemitism and polytheism. However, his longing to break out of the rigidity of yeshiva training into the fresh world of thought opened him for the debate, and ultimately the rage within his soul that moved him to

Date	1945-47	1947-52	1952-62	1962-65	1965-73	1973-75	1975-85
Country	Poland	England	U.S.	Israel	U.S.	Canada	U.S.
Selected Activity	Mildmay Mission	Mildmay Mission All Nation's Bible School Univ. of London	Hermon House New York Univ.	Secretary IHCA	Newark Cong. Tennessee Temple	ABMJ	Beth Messiah Kehilat Mashiach Mess. Jewish Alliance Quart. Jews for Jesus MLO

FIGURE 1: SELECTED ACTIVITIES

repentance and faith in Messiah. He went to the mission to refute the missionaries. He who became a product of the mission then became a missionary, first with the Mildmay Mission to the Jews in Warsaw, and then after the war in England with that same mission. He was a missionary with the American Board of Missions to the Jews, full time from 1973-1975.

B. As a Teacher

Rachmiel was a teacher. He was professor of Jewish Studies at Tennessee Temple Bible School at Chatanooga for seven years. He taught Talmud at Ashland Seminary in the 1980's. His method of teaching was not the ordinary western-minded presentation. His was not a compartmentalized mind of neatly packaged labels, but more of an eastern mind of fluidity and process.

His knowledge was so vast that he had something to teach everyone. In 1979 he developed a relationship with Hineni Ministries -- Jews for Jesus. In that year he participated in Avodah, a year of training in San Francisco, where he taught young missionaries. Actually, Rachmiel had taught Moishe Rosen at the Jewish Missionary Training Institute from 1954 to 1959, when Moishe was with the American Board of Missions to the Jews. Today at the Jews for Jesus headquarters in New York a chapel stands in memory of Rachmiel.

C. As an Evangelist

No one knows how many churches and messianic congregations Rachmiel spoke in during his days as an evangelist. He was a global evangelist, having evangelized in eastern and western

Europe, Israel, the United States, Canada, the USSR and India. There was no church too big for him nor no messianic congregation too small for him. Fluent in no less than 10 languages, he was always able to speak to the heart of the people in their own language. While working with Jews for Jesus during their campaigns in New York the street corner was often Rachmiel's pulpit and he reached out to many as far as their own homes.

D. As a Pastor

Rachmiel Frydland pastored no fewer than five groups. He was the second pastor of Beth Messiah Congregation in Cincinnati, Ohio succeeding Martin Chernoff from 1975-1976. He was the first pastor of Kehilat Mashiach in that same city from 1976-1979, succeeded by Jeff Adler. While secretary to Israel for the International Hebrew Christian Alliance he was perceived as pastoring the Jewish believers in that country. When he worked for the American Board of Missions to the Jews he pastored a small flock of believers in Toronto. For a brief spell he pastored at New Messengers Covenant congregation in Newark, New Jersey.

E. As a Scholar

Rachmiel was a scholar. He possessed the knowledge and discipline of a scholar. However, most of his writings were not scholarly, but designed to reach the masses of lost Jews. Rachmiel's writings were all of an evangelistic nature, taking every opportunity to present the gospel message in a palatable form. He wrote a whole assortment of tracts centered around his

testimony, the holocaust, Jewish holidays, and traditions. His writings appear in various languages including Spanish, Italian, French, Yiddish, Russian and Chinese. He wrote for the Shepherd of Israel, edited the Messianic Jewish Alliance Quarterly from 1975-79, following a line of eminent scholars who preceded him, and founded The Messianic Outreach. His writings appear in a variety of messianic forums including, The Messianic Jewish Alliance Quarterly, Hebrew Christian Quarterly, Issues, Good News, The Interpreter, The Messianic Outreach, The Shepherd of Israel and many more including some 100 articles. He wrote five books of which four have been published: A Hebrew Christian Looks at Israel, Joy Cometh in the Morning, When Being Jewish was a Crime, and his most recent one published posthumously last year, What the Rabbis Know About the Messiah. He has left us an unfinished manuscript which he was working on at his death, with a working title of The Book of Witnesses. In addition, he has left us a quantity of teaching tapes recorded from churches, congregations, conferences, TV and radio broadcasts, and reams of sermon notes, none of which have been categorized.

Rachmiel could speak with the best of the rabbis and make an impression. He could speak to the common folk and be heard as well. Truly, in this sense, Rachmiel was all things to all people. His death has created a void in the movement. But that void has influenced a number of messianic believers to seek higher learning. The movement must have leaders steeped in knowledge.

IV. HIS LEGACY (See Figure 2)

Rachmiel left us a legacy, first in the people who were impacted by his life and second in Messianic Literature Outreach.

Rachmiel founded Messianic Literature Outreach (MLO) in 1977. The name, MLO, is a Hebrew acronym for m'lo, which means "fill." It is used in the book of Genesis, for example, when God commanded mankind to multiply and fill the earth. It was Rachmiel's desire to fill the earth with the gospel of Messiah Yeshua. Toward that end MLO has tapered its outreach to "the Jew first."

A. Tracts

Over the years MLO has produced approximately 30 distinct evangelistic tracts centered around testimonies, holidays and the gospel, all designed to convey the message of salvation in Yeshua Hamasheach, most of which were authored by Rachmiel. These tracts are widely disseminated throughout the world. We are reminded that the "gospel must be published to the whole world and then the end will come."

Some of the tracts have been translated into Spanish, French, and Italian. Most recently, Our Tragic Mistake, and He Set the Captives Free have been translated into Russian, and are available for widespread distribution. Some tracts are printed on specially thin paper for overseas bulk distribution. These tracts are sent free to countries as far away as India.

B. Books

In addition, MLO has produced four books. Joy Cometh in the Morning and When Being Jewish Was a Crime are the testimonies of

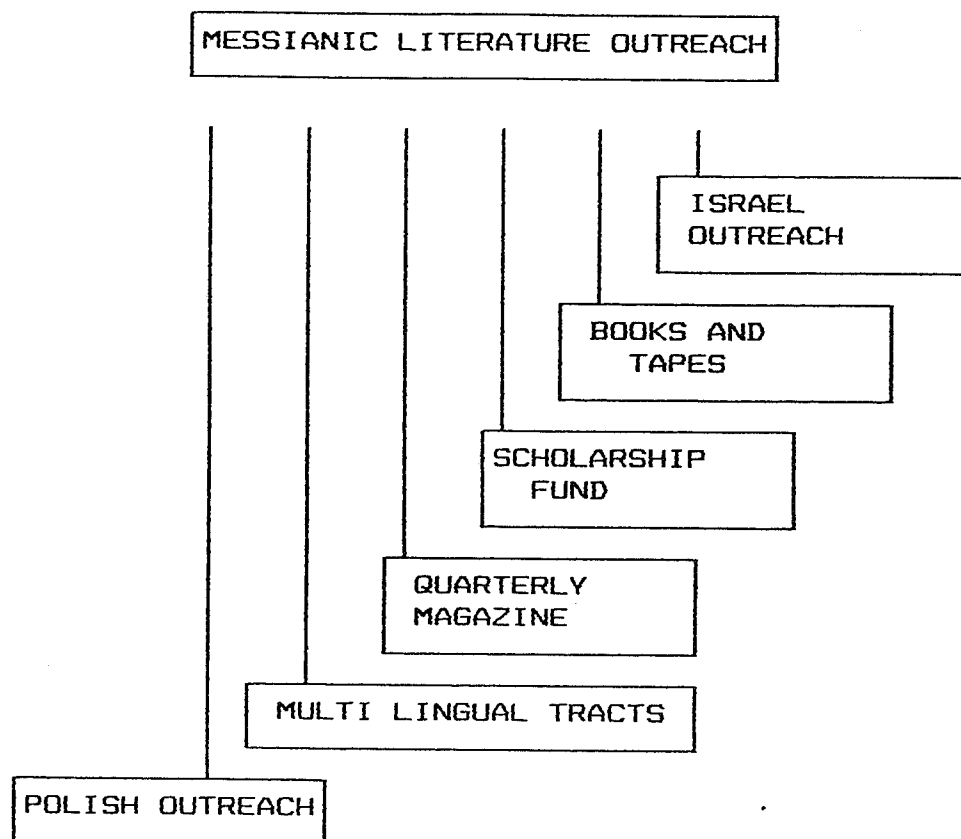


FIGURE 2: MLO ACTIVITIES

Rachmiel Frydland's encounter and escape from the Nazis during World War II, and the experiences that led this yeshiva bocher to trust in Messiah Yeshua. MLO also publishes a book, How Can Three Be One, which presents the triunitarian nature of God from ancient rabbinic understanding. The most recent book, What the Rabbis Know about the Messiah, is edited from an unfinished manuscript left by Rachmiel. It is a discourse, which can be characterized as a large tract (over 100 pages), tracing the messianic lineage, and presenting the atoning nature of Messiah, with supportive rabbinic material.

C. Quarterly Magazine

Additionally, since 1981, MLO has been producing The Messianic Outreach, a 24 page quarterly magazine that carries articles that are edifying and educating to believers and that are designed to speak to Jewish people. Each issue has a theme associated with it, and includes a Messianic Midrash, by Dr. John Fischer; and Ask the Doctor column, by Dr. Louis Goldberg. The magazine includes other contributing editors, Ludwig Dewitz, Menahem Benhayim, and Ernest Lloyd. In addition, the magazine welcomes relevant articles from believers.

D. Israel and Polish Outreaches

MLO affords its donors an opportunity to give specifically to needy believers in Israel and in Poland. One hundred percent of all monies so designated are directed to those causes through responsible trustworthy believers we know.

E. Scholarship Fund

MLO established a scholarship fund at Moody Bible Institute in 1988. Since that date scholarships have been awarded annually to those students who meet the scholarship criteria and who have demonstrated a call to Jewish work after graduation. We are working toward endowing that fund.

F. Other Works

MLO seeks to stay on the cutting edge of Jewish evangelism and to continue in the rich tradition of evangelism established by Rachmiel Frydland. The ministry looks to those who are called to support the ministry. As the Lord permits, MLO hopes to continue to globalize with tracts, and to disseminate the message of Yeshua on cassette tapes, and videos, and through computer networks.

V. HIS UNIQUENESS

From Rachmiel's life and ministry it is possible to make some observations about his uniqueness.

1. Rachmiel Frydland was perhaps the last of an old breed of Jewish evangelicals, who survived the holocaust and made it to the west to tell the world of man's despicable nature and God's loving kindness.
2. Rachmiel Frydland was one of the last Jewish evangelists who rubbed shoulders, and sat under the teaching of men such as Jacob Jocz, H. L. Ellison, Solomon Birnbaum, Moses Gitlin, Jacob Goren, Aaron Klingerman, Henry Einspruch and many other witnesses and scholars in the faith.
3. Rachmiel Frydland was perhaps the last product of the old

eastern European Talmudic scholars trained in the eastern European discipline who came to faith and actively shared it with his Jewish brethren. Because of his unusual training he was able to speak with learned rabbis, and other Talmudic scholars.

4. Rachmiel Frydland is one of the last Jewish evangelists versed in language skills enabling him to speak to the diversity of the Jewish people.

5. Rachmiel Frydland was one of the few Jewish evangelists with a true international ministry, having spanned the globe from eastern and western Europe, to the Middle East, the U.S. and Canada.

6. Rachmiel Frydland was perhaps the last Jewish believer who was a product of Jewish missions who bridged the gap and became a participant in the new messianic congregational movement.

7. Rachmiel Frydland was one of the last Jewish believing survivors of the holocaust, who was able to overcome the tragedy and fulfill a meaningful life in witness to his people.

VI. CONCLUSION: ADDITIONAL AREAS OF EXPLORATION

There is a need for further research. Let me suggest some areas and perhaps you can add to them during our sharing time:

1. A study of the Yeshivot in Poland where Rachmiel trained.

This would give us a greater insight into this man.

2. Collecting, categorizing and publishing all of Rachmiel Frydland's writings, sermons, papers and cassette tapes. This is a large undertaking.

3. A search to discover other Jewish believers who survived the

holocaust. Now with the computerized system at the Diaspora museum in Tel Aviv it may be a possible task.

4. A study of Jewish believers and missions in Poland during the War, and their impact.

5. A study of Jewish missions to immigrants to the United States during the war era and their impact.

In conclusion, Rachmiel Frydland was unique and he will continue to impact Jewish evangelism through Messianic Literature Outreach. This messianic missionary, evangelist, teacher, pastor and scholar is sorely missed. But his memory lives in the hearts of those who knew him and of him, and his life, a continual challenge to emulate. For this humble man of God "fought a good fight," he "finished the course," he "kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up ... a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give him."

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