

**Update on Media Coverage  
in the field of Jewish Evangelism**

presented by

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This media report covers the time period of March 1998 through February 1999.

This year I've chosen to concentrate on the following categories: Israel, Messianic Congregations, Opposition Articles, Pro-Movement, How the Jewish Community Looks at Itself, Our Pop Culture, Legal Issues and Potpourri.

## 1. Israel

The media attention to the Anti-Missionary Bill in the Knesset continued to make its way into the religious press, both Jewish and Christian. The September 4th edition of the *The Jewish Press* included the article: "Netanyahu Promises Norwegian PM Anti-Missionary Bill Will Not Pass." This article reported on an interview in *Ha'aretz* in which Prime Minister Bondevik asked Netanyahu to clarify his position and where the Director of Yad L'Achim condemned Netanyahu for his "concession to the missionaries."

I have also included one of the ads published by the Messianic Action Committee in Israel in *Ha'Aretz* on the subject. [read ad]

*Christianity Today* in its October 5, 1998 issue did a feature article on "How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend." Written by Tim Weber who teaches church history and is dean at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, this 11 page treatment gives a detailed history of dispensationalism and concludes by saying, "A new generation of dispensationalist scholars have toned down the excesses and sensationalism of its predecessors. He calls them "progressive dispensationalists" and says that though seeing a future for national Israel are less inclined to draw maps or make predictions. Several letters to the editor ran in a subsequent edition of CT.

Also on Israel is a piece on the Yad L'Achim protest at the Be'er Sheva congregation. I think the description of the event is quite enlightening. [Read section]

There is also notice of the Hebrew language broadcast produced by Israeli believers in conjunction with Trans World Radio

Under Israel, I thought to include the flurry of clippings in relation to Israel's Jubilee and the Orlando, Florida event called "Israel at 50" planned by the Christian Alliance for Israel. Netanyahu, Eckstein and others in the Jewish community distanced themselves from the event. But it was covered in the Jerusalem Post, the Baltimore Jewish Times, and by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, to name a few who called the promotion of the event deceptive because some of the organizers and speakers were messianic Jews. One article ended with the snide comment, "And once again, the 'completed' Jews have given us incomplete information."

## 2. Messianic Congregations

A significant number of articles came out this year profiling Messianic congregations. Temple Beth Israel in Central Kentucky is a messianic congregation recently formed by T.E. Beckh'am. The Jewish community in the area is up in arms over it and an April 7th article in the *Herald Leader* contains quotes from the a local rabbi who said, "I will not recognize their rabbi as a rabbi, and I will not recognize them as Jews." Another rabbi said, "What can I say? They're welcome to try."

A follow up to the Dallas messianic congregation article last year with the shooting where the bullet struck their building, the perpetrator was sentenced to 12 years in prison (June 3rd, *National Jewish Post & Opinion*) The P & O ended their editorial with the comment, "Some local media including the *Dallas Morning News* refrained from calling the building a synagogue. However, some ignorant reporters treated the congregation as if it were really Jewish."

Other articles of note were an August 20th piece in Raleigh, North Carolina on Beth Lechem. This article contains some excellent testimonials of faith in Y'shua. The *San Gabriel Valley Tribune* did a feature entitled, "Jews, Arabs unite in worship" about an annual meeting in a Nazarene church in Pasadena for Jewish and Arab believers. Jan Rosenberg and Beth Zion Messianic Synagogue were featured in the *Jackson Sun*, December 18th in a very positive article as well. Their testimony and a clear statement of what faith in Jesus means came across. Also in December *The Observer and Eccentric* profiled Loren Jacobs as the head of Congregation Shema Yisrael. The article even included his email address and website.

*Christianity Today* did a feature article in September entitled, "The Return of the Jewish Church" by Gary Thomas. It was specifically focused on messianic congregations and profiled Beth Yeshua of Philadelphia, the MJAA, the UMJC. Thomas seems to be out of touch with a lot of what is happening and not happening in Jewish evangelism and even in the messianic congregational movement. Unfortunately, CT did not have fact checkers who knew enough about our very particularized field.

### 3. Opposition Articles

Not unlike previous years, there is no lack of articles opposing the work of Jewish evangelism. The Star in South Africa published a letter on March 4th of last year, from the head of the Jewish Defense League there which threatened Jews for Jesus with these words: "It is intended that this letter also serves as a warning to these misty eyed missionaries that the weight of history strongly aided by the Jewish Defense League will ensure that they will follow the path of all the other enemies of the Jewish people...into the rubbish dump of history." This was followed up by a strong letter of protest that the newspaper carried a "hate letter" on its pages.

Later that month, Debra Nussbaum Cohen of JTA moonlighted an article for *New York Magazine* entitled, "Kosher for Passover?--as more and more Christians hold Seders to get in touch with their Jewish roots, some rabbis see appropriation, not appreciation."

In June, the duo of Skobac & Ciss of Jews for Judaism/ Canada were interviewed in the Western Jewish Bulletin on their anti-missionary activities. Jeff Forman of House of David was interviewed as well.

Several articles complaining about Jews for Jesus' summer ads appeared in New York and Philadelphia Jewish papers. [read from Exponent]

An article that is Israel oriented, but on opposition from Yad L'Achim had an interesting chart on the number of missionaries targeting Israel for Mass Conversion. (*Jewish Press*, 7/24/98) According to the chart, the number of missionaries has increased from about 1300 to 16,000 from 1970 to 1996.

Another barb at the Messianic Times came in an August 20th article in the Canadian Jewish News warning of its distribution in the Toronto area.

An interesting article from the UCLA paper, the *Bruin* complains about "flyer people" bombarding the campus and includes the broadsides being handed out as an example.

The traditional Jewish defense agencies have been going wild in their opposition to such innocuous items as the honoring the French Cardinal. ADL was upset since Lustiger is of Jewish parentage.

The JCRC of New York picketed outside of Calvary Baptist Church in New York City for hosting David Brickner.

The Canadian Jewish Congress, blocked a bill that would have enabled a Christian Bible College to get accreditation on the grounds that the college's faculty "made a career of focusing on Jews for conversion." Ultimately, the school dropped the "Jewish studies" courses it was offering.

An alleged "former messianic Jew" is profiled in the *Forward* on January 1st, as bringing Russians back to the "True Way." Yitzhak Geyer, denounces the movement at a Brooklyn counter-missionary conference. Philip Abramovitz is extensively quoted as well.

The *Canadian Jewish News* called the Chosen People ad in the *Globe and Mail* in December as "deceptive and misleading."

Charges of fraud were leveled at a Dallas bookstore, Moses-Hillel & Co. which admits it is part of Baruch Ha Shem messianic congregation.

The Jewish Board of Deputies in England called a Jews for Jesus evangelistic billboard offensive and went to great lengths to have the entire hoarding removed. (*Jewish Chronicle*, 12/18/98)

We can see over the years, that opposition articles, more often than not are an occasion to amplify our gospel message. In most of the cases cited here, the individuals and organizations received more opportunity to make Y'shua known because of the controversy that the opposition generated.

#### 4. Pro-Movement

Having said that, I always appreciate being able to present articles where the movement is given a fair hearing. The following are several examples.

The April 20, 1998 *Fresno Bee* reporter interviewed Moishe Rosen in the article "Jews for Jesus founder still spreading message"

The Community Bible Study Newsletter featured the testimony of Sandy Sheller.

The Jewish Chronicle of London reported on Vladimir Pikman and Berlin's Beit Sar Shalom congregation allowing the believers to share in their own words what their meant to them.

The organ magazine of the Baptist General Conference did a three page article on Susan Perlman with encouragement for the denomination to be involved in Jewish evangelism.

David Brickner was given a lengthy interview in the Anchorage Daily News in July of 1998.

Jhan Moskowitz was featured in the Madison, Wisconsin *Capitol Times* with a clear gospel statement.

And *Charisma Magazine* devoted a major spread in their October 1998 issue to an article entitled, "The Messiah Visits New York City." This article by Peter Johnson profiled Gary Selman and Jonathan Cahn of "Two Nice Jewish Boys" as well the Jews for Jesus summer witnessing campaign in NYC, Bruce Cohen of Congregation Beth El and Jan Rosenberg of Beth Zion in Jackson, New Jersey.

The newest article I've brought is in the most recent CT, which profiles Messiah's Shofar, a Ukranian Jews for Jesus music team and their efforts in Germany.

#### 5. How the Jewish Community Looks at Itself

I think we all find it helpful to keep a pulse, not only on where we are at, but where the community we are looking to reach with the gospel is at. The following clippings come at this point from different places.

The first article is a Purim comic strip that appeared in the *Jewish Week* in New York on March 13, 1998. [explain Jewish identity descriptions]

Next is a piece in the *Chicago Jewish Star* which came out just before Passover on the final preparations needed for Moshiaich to come. It included a coupon with thirteen different boxes to check on what the person was committing themselves to do to bring in Messiah.

A JTA release in April tries to delineate between the various flavors of Orthodoxy in the Jewish community and concludes that is quite confusing even to the Orthodox.

Continued clippings on the Orthodox/Reform/Conservative controversy include one on June 12 by JTA on the conversion bill and the need for reconciliation between Judaism's major streams.

Jews in Cyberspace writer Jon Kalish gives some information on America Online's Jewish Community site. (*Jewish Week*, July 10, 1998) Let me read the first paragraph.

Some demographics from Jewish sources. The *National Jewish Post & Opinion* quotes the American Jewish Yearbook 1998 statistics. An interesting note: In 1945 the world Jewish population was estimated at 11 million. It grew to 12 million between '45 and '58 but took another 38 years to reach 13 million. The *Jewish Week* reported on a study by the World Jewish Congress which predicted that diaspora Jewry (now estimated at 8.6 million will fall to have that number within 30 years. It also mentioned assimilation statistics such as, worldwide Jewish assimilation at 50%, with Europe at 80%.

A very interesting piece by J. J. Goldberg to the *Jewish Week* in October speculates that Jews are not vanishing in America, "just evolving toward some new kind of Jewish identity." This identity is sorely deficient in an Jewish ethnic culture.

A chart in a similar article by JTA shows Jewish religious commitment at 35%, ritual observance at 50% and faith in God at 35%.

Jonathan Rosenblum, Orthodox himself, wrote an editorial for the *National Jewish Post and Opinion* (January 6, 1999) in which he excoriates American Jews for basing their identity on anything but Judaism as he sees it.

Another article on American Jews in particular by Rabbi Noah Golinkin in the *Washington Jewish News* outlines what he sees as the problem areas for Jewish continuity: intermarriage, low birthrate, lack of home observance, lack of Hebrew knowledge and rate of joining Jews for Jesus and Messianic Judaism.

An article that just appeared on February 19 in the *Jewish Week* of New York by Dennis Prager which bears quoting. Says Praeger, "Many Jews have adopted important beliefs and attitudes solely because these beliefs are the opposite of what they believe Christianity and Christians believe." He goes on to explain this power of "Not-Christianity" and why it is a tragedy.

Two interesting pieces that reflect on how the Jewish community sees itself when it comes to belief appeared in the *Jerusalem Report* May 1, 1998 and the *Jewish Forward* June 19, 1998 respectively. The first profiled the famous Brother Daniel (of Who is A Jew fame) and gave the history of this Polish Jew who became a Catholic priest and is looking to create his own brand of Hebrew Christianity. The second another look at "Who is A Jew" from the Ad Hoc Task Force of the Reform Jewish movement.

## 6. Our Pop Culture

Some articles that I just found interesting in that they reflect our culture, was one in a alternative magazine in England call Face which picks up on the animated program, South Park and how Jews for Jesus has used it in a pamphlet to "promote its own alternative message."

A flurry of media seems to follow Jerry Falwell whenever he opens his mouth, this time in claiming that the anti-Christ is Jewish which the ADL and other Jewish agencies labeled as anti-Semitic.

Even the news items regarding our American president end up in getting a Jewish point across. James Besser, who is a syndicated columnist for many Jewish weekly papers did a piece entitled, "Ken Starr's Jewish Connections." And what, might you ask, are these connections, well first of all he has a Jewish wife. But even more interesting, he has a Jewish pastor—Lon Solomon who is also identified as on the board of Jews for Jesus. The *Los Angeles Jewish Times* did a similar article picking up on Besser's lead.

Lon Solomon, responded to these articles and one of his letters to the editor appeared in a subsequent edition of the newspaper. It reads [include text here] Solomon was then featured in a Wall Street Journal piece called, "The Bible in the Beltway" and gave a forthright testimony again.

## 7. Legal Issues

Two legal items of note in our movement. Jews for Jesus' internet lawsuit in which an anti-missionary lawyer misappropriated the Jews for Jesus name in his website continues to get press and as the case goes through its final appeals on the part of the anti-missionaries, more press is likely. A representative article is one that came out in the Daily Law Journal (hopefully read by many Jewish lawyers) which was entitled, "Jews for Jesus Seeking Protection of Its Domain Name".

The other, opposition from the Canadian Jewish Congress and B'nai B'rith Canada for Chosen People Ministries' attempt to trademark their logo which is of a menorah. Two Toronto lawyers spotted the trademark application by CPM and so went the sparks.

At least there's been some good publicity for the gospel from something that comes from lawyers. A television talk show in the Toronto area came as a result of this publicity.

## 8. Potpourri

I wanted to take some time to commend some letters to the editor that came out this year. Jonathan Bernd in the England newspapers responded to the billboard protests with letters such as one I've included in your packet. Likewise, Glen Harris wrote a great letter to the Detroit Jewish News on our friend, Rabbi Eckstein in which he applauded the fact that Eckstein's true colors were unveiled. [read some of article]

An article to that effect in Christian circles came out in *Charisma* in September 1998 entitled, "Eckstein Won't Support Messianics."

Along the line of a letter to the editor was an editorial response that Zola Levitt made to an editorial by a Dallas area rabbi. Rabbi Ofseyer did a guest column in which he tried to make the case against Jews being for Jesus. Levitt responded a week later (May 30th *Dallas Morning News*) with a piece entitled, "Jesus: He remains the Jew's Jew". Levitt makes a very cogent argument for Jesus from a Jewish perspective.

An interesting twist on getting media, *Newsday*, the Long Island daily newspaper read by many Jews did a feature on Jews for Jesus entitled, "On a Mission". The same paper had turned Jews for Jesus down on advertising earlier, but through this article which was three pages long, more was said than any evangelistic ad could have accomplished.

The final items in my Potpourri section all come from *Christianity Today* Magazine. In recent years, CT has done quite bit on covering issues regarding Jews and Jesus. A more general article entitled "Are You Tolerant? (Should You Be?) came out on January 11th. The writer admits his own dilemma with how he is perceived by unbelievers when it comes to a tolerance quotient. He relates a story regarding his support of a Jews for Jesus staffer and his relationship to a Jewish unbeliever who teaches on the Holocaust for one of his classes. He asks if it should bother Christians to be considered intolerant. He asks if God is tolerant. A great think piece.

A final reflection on CT. This most recent issue which included a positive news report on Jewish evangelism activity in Germany also had an article on David Horowitz, an unsaved Jew who fights for the persecuted church, an advertisement for a book on Dr. Laura and a book review of David Klinghoffer's spiritual odyssey entitled, "The Lord Will Gather Me In." Klinghoffer tells how he became ba'al teshuvah. Here's what bothers me. The article includes some recommended reading by authors like Elliott Abrams and Yechiel Eckstein and the reviewer ends with sadness over Klinghoffer not being a Christian "Close; but close doesn't count." yet leaving the door a little open with the comment, "I cannot help hoping that he and I and our fellow believers are praying to the same Father, who gathers us with his triumphant love."

