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Conference Theme

**Jewish Evangelism
Telling the Story**

Contents

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Stories from Eastern Europe

Morning session

- Rolf G. Heitmann: Jewish Mission to Hungary168
Jim Melnick: Jewish evangelism today in the
Former Soviet Union173
Ferenc Kozma: The Jewish community
in Hungary today180
Susan Perlman: Jewish evangelism through
the eyes of the media185

Afternoon session

- Stanislav Alexiev: Jewish evangelism in Bulgaria.....187
Vladimir Pikman: Jewish evangelism
among Russian Jews in Germany.....189

Evening session

- Kai Kjær-Hansen: Isaac Lichtenstein –
a Jesus-believing Hungarian rabbi191
Hanspeter Obrist: My concern is to build bridges195
Frank Arthur: Stories from Russia197
David Zadok: The good Samaritan.....199

**LCJE
Networking
Jewish Evangelism**

LCJE
Lake Balaton 2007

Edited by
Kai Kjær-Hansen

Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism
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Jewish mission to Hungary

Rolf G. Heitmann, General Secretary, Norwegian Church Ministry to Israel

This paper is not a comprehensive review of all initiatives and acts taken to reach the Jewish people of Hungary with the Gospel. I will therefore primarily focus on what is close to me: The Hungarian-Norwegian partnership in mission, which is only a smaller piece of Mission to Hungary in general and the Jewish people in particular.

The renewal of mission

In spite of differences, like language and culture, there are also similarities between Hungary and Norway. The peoples of the two countries were Christianized at the same time by their respective kings Stephan and Olav, i.e. around 1000 AD. Both countries were strongly influenced by the reformation and adopted Lutheranism as major confession, even if the counter-reformation later made Roman Catholicism the dominant confession. More important for our topic is the impact of the Moravian movement on the Christian population of the two countries, represented by Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf (1700-1760).

The Moravians were more a movement than a Church, very much influenced by the pietistic revival with its focus on personal responsibility to share the Gospel and live their lives in piety. The renewed perspective by Zinzendorf is first of all the way he included the responsibility for the Jewish people. Theoretically and practically he tried to convince his followers about the importance of sharing the Gospel with Jews through words and deeds, by love and humility. The Moravians are therefore the first mission movement in modern times with a missiology and strategy including the Jewish people.

The Moravians had a great impact on the Lutheran German-speaking population in Hungary, primarily in Transylvania and Upper Hungary. Hungarian students studying at German universities became familiar with this new wave of spirituality and went back home as ambassadors for this new mission movement. Next to these students the Moravians also sent "preachers", or missionaries, to the area. The first, András Jäschke and Zacharias Hirschel were sent to Transylvania in 1740, and they spent a longer period of time in cities like Nagyszeben, Brassó and Beszterce. Their reports are not only comforting. The two brethren wrote that "in no other countries had they found such ungodly people as here and in Sweden". Maybe this was also the reason for staying and the convincing argument for raising support?

The Moravians did not establish any mission organization for Jewish mission, but their theological understanding and concern for the salvation of Israel was obviously included in their teaching and practice. Zinzendorf himself had a clear understanding of the role of the Jewish people in God's plan of salvation: "The issue of the Jews will develop until there is a congregation among them who will circumcise their children, keep the Sabbath, and later settle in the East" (1743) What amazing standpoint at that time in history!

The Scottish Mission

In 1839, after great revivals in Scotland, a deputation of four men (Dr. Alexander Keith, Dr. Alexander Black, Rev. Robert Murray McCheyne and Rev. Andrew Alexander Bonar) were sent to Palestine to

seek ways to initiate mission work among the Jews. However Dr. Black fell off his camel in the Judean desert, seriously injured his leg, and decided to return. Dr. Keith accompanied him on his return through the shortest highway; Danube river. They came to Budapest and decided to stay one night., but Dr. Keith became ill, and they had to stay for a longer period. At this time of history Hungary was under the Habsburg regime which did not allow any unauthorized protestant activities.

The Archduchess Maria Dorothea (1797-1855), by birth a princess of the Protestant house of Württemberg and influenced by the pietistic movement, became aware of these missionaries, visited them and supported them in their needs. She urged them to stay and establish a mission in the city, for reaching out to the numerous Jewish population of 240.000 of which 10.000 were living in Pest.

The delegation searching for a mission field in Palestine ended up by an accident in Budapest. On the request of the Archduchess' the Church of Scotland sent dr. John Duncan, Robert Smith and William Owen Allan to Hungary in 1841 with the aim to spread the Gospel among the Jews, but also to seek contact with the Protestant Churches and to care for the poor and needy.

Some Scotsmen were hired for building a new bridge over Danube, connecting the two parts of the city, Buda and pest (Chain bridge). They, and their families, became a base of a new British congregation. More important: A new bridge was built for the Gospel. The superintendent of the Reformed church, Pál Török, gave them permission to do religious activities. A mission was established in the midst of the strong Catholic Hungarian-Austrian Empire which influenced not only Jews, but even Hungarian Protestants and Roman Catholics.

Dr. Duncan, often named "the rabbi", had a good reputation and was deeply respected for his philosophical and theological learning and his spirituality. A

report by William Allen from an encounter with Hebrew and Roman Catholic doctors summarize: "The great subjects of the Gospel were defended and presented as new ... the discussion of these gave exercise to his beloved acquirements of Hebrew and Latin. The latter he spoke with great purity, precision and readiness When he had to quote the Scriptures, it behoved to be in the original, as such is the practice of the Jews, and only so is it of authority. Such engagement, too, active – and the fruit was seen."

One of the first "converts" was Israel Saphir. He was a wealthy merchant and confidant of the chief rabbi. Largely through his efforts many well-educated Jews attended the services in English and German language and the counselling meetings. During the following eight years it is reported that more than 50 Jews came to faith in Jesus and were baptized.

The son of Israel Saphir, Adolph Saphir, describes his impression of these years of revival as years of "solemnity: the intense conviction of sin, the abundant joy in redemption, the great love and brotherly unity ...". Another son, Philip Saphir, founded a primary school, at one time for more than thousand pupils.

An important part of the mission was to train the new believers to be missionaries themselves. Many of these Jewish believers travelled around the country, preaching the Gospel. The combination of sound theological teaching and reflection, deep spirituality and the dependence of God brought forth fruit. In a letter to the General Assembly of the Scottish Church in 1889, Professor Franz Delitzsch wrote that "Buda-pest showed in a striking way that there is a remnant in Israel according to the election of grace".

Several of these Jews who came to faith through the Scottish mission ended up as new missionaries even in other countries, like Adolph Saphir in Hamburg, Alfred Edersheim in Iasi (Romania) and Alexander Tomory in Constantinople. The last one ended up in Galac where he the

next couple of years baptized 50 Jewish adults according to the reports.

The Scottish mission is a good example of both cooperation with the local church as well as equipping the new believers for ministry. At a mission festival at the Scottish centre at Hold utca in Budapest in January 1902 the first initiative was taken to establish a mission organization which later became the Hungarian Evangelical Christian Missionary Society (Magyar Evangéliumi Keresztény Missziói Szövetség – MEKMSz). This was primarily a foreign missionary society. However, in paragraph 10 in their statutes it is said that it is a duty for the members of the organization “to pray, contribute and work for the Jews and pagans, out of love ...” The close relationship between the Scottish Mission and MEKMSz is exemplified through Gyula Forgács who used to be a board member of MEKMSz at the same time serving as the first Hungarian pastor at the Scottish Mission.

Rabbi Isak Lichtenstein (1825-1908)

It is impossible to speak about Hungarian Jewish believers in Jesus without mentioning rabbi Isak Lichtenstein. I will do it very briefly, since another session at this conference will go more into depth of his life and ministry. This rabbi from Tapio-Szele wrote books and taught at his synagogue that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. He was arguing very strongly that as a Jewish believer in Jesus he remained being Jewish. He did not want to identify with the gentile Church and therefore baptized himself in a Jewish ritual bath (mikwe).

Of course rabbi Lichtenstein received great opposition from other rabbis and in 1892 he left his position as rabbi of Tapio-Szele, but without neglecting his faith in Jesus.

I am mentioning Lichtenstein also because his conversion as a religious Jew, like the conversion of Joseph Rabinowitz in Kishinev, made a great impact on Jewish mission organizations and was an inspiration for all involved. Stories were

told and written in mission magazines all over Europe. Maybe the story of Lichtenstein even motivated the mission board in Norway to consider Hungary as a new mission field?

The Norwegian Mission

The Norwegian Israel Mission (later Norwegian Church Ministry to Israel – NCMI) was for several decades a mission organization without missionaries. Almost 50 years after the founding of the organization (1844) the national board was gathered discussing the option of sending missionaries to Jews. The Norwegians would not accept that smaller and younger sister organizations in Sweden and Denmark already had sent out their first missionaries to Beirut, Poland and Ukraine.

However, the Norwegian board did not find any candidate for such a position, so the chairman, dr. Carl Paul Caspari, was asked to visit Leipzig (1889) to discuss with Delitzsch if there was any candidates known to him that could be supported by the Norwegians. Then suddenly a young Norwegian priest approached the board, presented himself and his sincere calling and love for the Jewish people, and Rev. Ragnvald Gjessing (1859-1927) was accepted as the first Norwegian missionary to the Jews.

As most missionaries to the Jews at that time, Ragnvald Gjessing started his studies in Judaica at the Institutum Judaicum in Leipzig, founded by Franz Delitzsch, but became also well aware of the strategic discussions on the agenda – questions that are still valid.

First of all it was a question of *how*: In Leipzig there was an opposition towards the “British method” of sending out travelling missionaries, “proselytizing” Jews who were in need, and leaving them alone or bringing them to England. The right way to reach out to Jews is to have a base in a congregation for missionaries as well as new converts, according to Leipzig teaching. The model and good example of this strategy was the German congregation

Kishinev, led by Faber – a German priest with great success as a witness to the Jews.

Secondly it was a question of *whom*: Was the main target for mission the Chassidic Jews of Eastern Europe, or was it rather the Talmudic orthodox Jews? Or maybe the growing rationalistic secular Jewish community? The teaching Gjessing received was primarily focusing strategy on how to reach out to the orthodox community – a strategy that was not much relevant for his future service.

Thirdly it was also a question of *where*. The options were several with large Jewish communities many places in Eastern Europe at that time.

After some research, Gjessing and the Norwegian board decided to start up work in Galatz, Romania. The question immediately came: What congregation should be the base of his ministry? The solution was that Gjessing officially was sent as a pastor for Norwegian sailors visiting the harbour of Galatz. Through this position he came into contact with many Jews on the streets.. His problem, however, was that they did not fit in to his methodology of reaching out, simply because they were the kind of Jews he was prepared to meet. Gjessing describes the Jews of Galatz in this way: "Their clothes are modern, there is no Jewish spirit and no institutions, they are divided into parties, and are influenced by western ideologies. The main problem is that they are not at all religious"

After one year (1893) Gjessing left Galatz. Not because there was no success. But because of sickness and death. One of his wife's relatives travelling with the, their young daughter and house maid all died of dysentery. The doctor's advice was to leave for Budapest. Like the Scottish missionaries, the Norwegian missionary ended up in Budapest by an accident.

Budapest opened up Gjessing's eyes for new opportunities. He reports: I am happy to inform you that we are now busy in our work. Daily and richly we have the

privileges to proclaim the Gospel for the Jews about Jesus the Messiah, the right sacrifice for the sins of Israel and the right Saviour for daily and spiritual needs. This is (contrary to Galatz) a metropolis with 125.000 Jewish citizens. I am able to be more active and direct in my missionary activity than I could do as a seamen's pastor in Galatz. At the market place and squares, in coffeehouses and groceries- everywhere people have time to listen and willingness to enter into conversation on religious topics.

However, this optimistic sound of the street evangelist very soon became more depressive. Gjessing did not feel much success. Maybe he was too negative. While his successor, Gisle Johnson, came to Budapest 20 years later (1922), he found a group of Jewish believers in Jesus, won by Gjessing's ministry. They were longing for a new shepherd that could lead and feed them.

Gisle Johnson (1876-1946)

How is Jewish mission or Jewish Evangelism put on the Hungarian agenda? As we have heard and learned from the Scots and the Norwegians: By av "accident", some will say bay coincidence. For us who believe in God's guidance, we trust that this was not a coincidence, even if the third example is fitting into the same pattern.

Gisle Johnson was employed by the Norwegian mission in 1901 and two years later sent to Romania. He stayed there under very difficult circumstances and working conditions during the first world war, and was completely burned out afterwards. Johnson needed a sick leave for almost half a year which he spent in France. On his return to Romania he was asked to make a stop in Budapest to look into options for continuing a mission work after 20 years without Norwegian presence. The reason was a letter from the Jewish Christian lawyer Guyla Fleischer in which he asked for a person that can take over the position of Ragnvald Gjessing.

With support from the Lutheran bishop

Sándor Raffay Johnson decided to stay in Budapest – a city he should serve in for 24 years – until his death. Gisle Johnson was the first Norwegian missionary who committed his whole life to Jewish ministry.

In Budapest Johnson became the priest for a French and a German congregation, and many Jews came to listen to him. A circle of Jewish believers in Jesus gathered around Johnson and after one year he bought a house in Pest as a centre for this new ministry.

Johnson was a skilled man and was therefore often asked to give lectures on different topics, especially on religious and philosophical topics. He also ended up as an associate professor in Nordic literature at the University of Budapest. Through all this kind of non-mission activities he came into contact with a lot of Jews and frequently visited many Jewish homes.

The new centre in Gyarmat utca became a vital tool for the mission. Johnson invited to weekly Bible studies and lectures, and both believing and non-believing Jews came to listen to him. The topic for the Bible teachings was on central Christian dogmas. The first to lectures were teaching of John 3,16. If we look into Johnson diary, we can see that he was an extremely busy man with a lot of appointments and lectures.

For Johnson it was also important to organize the work. He therefore took the initiative to gather some of the well-educated Jewish believers (among them three lawyers) and founded the first Jewish Christian Society (Agudath Ma'aminim) on the eve of Passover 1922. The aim of this society was to strengthen the faith and fellowship among Jewish believers in Jesus through regular prayer meetings, bible studies and fellowship. From

Johnson's diary we see 7-8 names of Jewish believers frequently mentioned as part of this society. From other sources we hear that a much larger number came to faith through Johnson's ministry.

New members were added to the group, one of the disciple of Rabinowitz, Robert Feinsilber, who did an extremely valuable diaconal ministry among the poor and needy by handling out soup and clothes. He was supported by the Hebrew Christian Testimony in London.

Gisle Johnson married a Hungarian lady who is buried in Norway. Gisle Johnson himself died at service and is buried in Budapest 1946). A personal conversation with his Hungarian friend Kádár on his deathbed has been known to us:

One thing you have to learn: You should not approach Jews without loving them. If you do not love them, keep away so that you do not dirty the name of Jesus by your hypocrisy. Jesus loved the Jews so deeply that he died for them. Maybe even I will die for them in a way. I could have returned to Norway instead of staying here through the war, through the fights. But I loved them

60 years later we are gathered in Hungary. Do we love the Jews so much that we will commit our lives in serving and sharing the Gospel with them.

We are not here by an accident or coincidence. We are here to renew our calling and to continue the ministry our forefathers started until the day we can see all Israel saved.

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Jewish evangelism today in the Former Soviet Union

Jim Melnick, President, Friends of Russian Jewry, Inc.; USA

Overview

I have been asked to "tell the story" of what is happening in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) in Jewish evangelism today. Though I have limitations based on distance, I do stay in touch with many people, ministries and their reporting, and this overview is largely based on that information and other material publicly available. Along with Chosen People Ministries, our mission, Friends of Russian Jewry, Inc., also recently held a very successful international conference of Russian Jewish ministry leaders in Berlin in September 2006 (see LCJE Bulletin, "Russian-speaking Messianic Conference in Berlin," Issue No. 86, November 2006, pp. 13-18), which provided us some of the freshest and most complete information in many years on the state of evangelism and church-planting in the former Soviet Union today. Indeed, in our planning for that conference, we placed special emphasis on trying to bring to Berlin a very solid contingent of FSU-based Messianic ministry leaders. Thus, we obtained much excellent insight from first-hand discussions. This article is a snapshot of current events and developments, with an attempt to view that story from the broad panorama of history while weaving in various perspectives.

Revisiting Wiesel's "The Jews of Silence" (A forty-year retrospective)

To begin, we will start with a retrospective look at Elie Wiesel's classic work on Soviet Jewry, "The Jews of Silence." Wiesel's book was a watershed in bringing Jewish, and later, world understanding to focus on the then plight of Soviet Jews. The book chronicles his trip to the Soviet Union during the High Holy Days in 1965, but it was published in November 1967 after the events of the Six-Day War. Thus, this is an appropriate time for a forty-year retrospective (1967-2007) of what has occurred in the former Soviet Union since

Wiesel wrote his famous book.

What has occurred in these forty years?

- The Soviet Union is no more
- A massive Russian Jewish exodus to the U.S., Germany, Australia and Israel took place
- God poured out a great revival among the Russian Jewish people in the years following this exodus from the FSU; many came to the Lord; literature and resources of all kinds were developed as needs grew and believers grew in the faith
- A Jewish renaissance of sorts emerged in some places of the FSU
- resurgence of some Hasidic influence, mostly Lubavitcher.

Within the FSU itself, an equilibrium of sorts in emigration has occurred: most of those who wanted to leave have already done so; those who have remained are often the elderly or those without resources or those fearful of another war in the Middle East. Others have wanted to remain because it is their home and is familiar; they have also heard stories of some of the extreme difficulties some immigrants in Israel have faced. The desperate and growing Russian addict and homeless problem of Tel Aviv and other cities in Israel is certainly not lost on potential immigrants to Israel still living in the FSU. What reason do they have for going to Israel other than the financial incentives that some aliyah groups make to them? As unbelievers, they do not have any spiritual reason or Zionist impulse to go to Israel; those who do have gone already for the most part. Combined with that is the fact that daily life for Jews in the Russian Federation today, Ukraine and Belarus cannot be compared with what it was in the Soviet period when Wiesel wrote his book. Today, life and daily reality consist of a much different set of circumstances. All of these factors impact

the dynamic of Jewish evangelization in the FSU today. It is a population that is more settled and not looking for an excuse to leave their present circumstances but rather to maintain and improve them.

Russia: The Yeltsin funeral: A watershed event; new pressures in Moscow?

The recent passing of Boris Yeltsin, Russia's first democratically elected President, is perhaps a good watershed event from which to assess this retrospective. On April 25, 2007, I actually watched his funeral live on Russian TV (NTV) from a hotel room in Beijing while on a trip to China; this seemed amazing in itself! There are many aspects to this event that bear discussion given their potential impact on Jewish evangelism in Russia and the FSU today and in the future.

Yeltsin's religious state funeral was actually the first of its kind of a Russian leader in over a century. On the positive side, in stark contrast to the official atheism of the past, during the funeral it stirred my heart to hear the traditional words of Resurrection greeting: "Khristos voskres" - "Von istinno voskres" ("Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!") - spoken by the attending Russian Orthodox priests and answered by the officials and assembled guests present in the rebuilt Church of Christ the Savior in Moscow. That is a cause for rejoicing - that the Name of our Lord is being lifted up. But there is another side as well, a darker side. The re-emergence and new ascendancy of the Russian Orthodox Church and its close alignment with the political forces of the state could bode more pressure and opposition both to Jews and to Messianic congregations and other evangelical groups in Russia in the months and years ahead.

For example, an email report in late March 2007 discussed a recent visit by Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) agents to the premises of a Moscow-based Messianic congregation that has been leased in a portion of a former cinema

building for at least two years. There was no warning prior to the visit, during which time government agents opened a locked door, searched the entire premises and also took some materials. The next stage in this drama is still unknown. However, given the closer ties between the Russian Orthodox Church and the state and the traditional anti-Semitism of that nexus, as well as some of the hostility shown toward evangelical Christianity (let alone Messianic Jewish congregations!), this is a troubling development.

Positive developments

The "Omega Project": "A Bible for every Jewish household in Russia"

On the positive side, besides what has been occurring with the establishment of Russian Messianic Jewish congregations in many countries of the FSU, Bible distribution through the "Omega Project" is one of the most exciting recent developments in the region, especially when one considers the remnant of Russian Jews left behind or sometimes forgotten in many of the cities of the Russian Federation. The "Omega Project" organized by MediaServe under Frank and Leena Arthur, as of March 2007, had distributed more than 347,000 Bibles to Russian Jews worldwide since the program's launch in 1994. Within Russia itself, 690,000 postcards have been mailed to Russian Jewish homes; of these, some 25,500 have asked for Bibles (MediaServe March 2007 Newsletter; www.mediaserve.org). These then need to be delivered. Frank Arthur presented the "Omega Project" at the last LCJE International conference in Helsinki, and I also shared about it in Berlin with the assembled delegates and asked if there were any Russian Messianic congregations or workers in various Russian cities who could help in following up on some of the Russian Jewish families who had requested Bibles. And that is exactly what happened in one case! Currently, the ministry's goal "is to reach at least 1,000 new households each workday

with the offer of a Bible. The area now being targeted is the Central Black Earth region of Russia - south from Moscow and west of the Ural Mountains." (MediaServe March 2007 Newsletter). Please pray for this very vital ministry!

The Russian Far East: Vladivostok, Birobidzhan and the nearby regions

Pastor Alexey Mishchenko from Vladivostok, who also attended the Berlin conference, has helped plant some 60 churches in the region of the Russian Far East and has a real heart for reaching Jewish people with the Gospel. We were thrilled to have him with us at the conference in Berlin. Meanwhile, Lawrence Hirsch of Celebrate Messiah in Australia has given us a wonderful picture of Jewish life in Birobidzhan today, that faroff region and city in Russia where Stalin wished to send all the Jews into exile from the European Soviet Union. Lawrence writes that the combined Jewish population of Birobidzhan plus Vladivostok and Khabarovsk comes to around 70,000 people (Lawrence Hirsch, "Outreach to the Forgotten Jews of Far East Russia," LCJE Bulletin, Issue No. 87, February 2007, pp. 4-7; see also "Jewish Ministry in Far East Russia," The Chosen People, Vol. XIII, Issue 3, April 2007). He also mentions the Messianic Jewish ministry of Andrei and Valeria in Birobidzhan to these people. I had the great privilege of meeting this extraordinary couple at our worldwide conference in Berlin in September 2006. Andrei is one of the gentlest men I have ever met, and his wife is the very symbol of a help-mate. Their love for the Lord exudes from them to people. But you have to know more of the story to know how truly extraordinary this is. Andrei's body is covered with the tattoos of Soviet prison life - he is a former zek (prisoner). But his hardened life as a former criminal is behind him - now he radiates the love of Jesus. To passersby on the street this is not immediately evident - as I witnessed while walking with him one day in Berlin - yet, as a true servant of the Lord, he receives

insults and stares with grace and meekness.

Ukraine

The Jews for Jesus Newsletter has regular updates on "Bits from the Branches" concerning outreach and testimonies from throughout the former Soviet Union. For example, the March 2007 Newsletter (p. 6) had a wonderful article by Mira Gracheva titled, "Purim in Moscow," in which Mira shared the story of how 25 guests, plus four staff and volunteers, crowded into her small one-room apartment to hear the story of Purim and the Good News of Yeshua. Of those, five Jewish guests prayed to receive the Lord, as well as one Gentile woman married to a Jewish husband.

Besides the key branch in Moscow, the bulk of these are in Ukraine: in Odessa, Kharkov, Dnepropetrovsk and Kiev. Since this article is also a "retrospective," I want to honor the pioneering efforts of my dear friend and veteran Jews for Jesus missionary, Avi Snyder, and the enormous impact his life and ministry have had on Jewish ministry in the FSU. I well remember driving around in the car with him in Pasadena, California, in September 1990 (we had just had one of the very first national meetings in the U.S. for those involved in Russian Jewish ministry). Avi shared his dream of going to the Soviet Union and wanting to start out in Odessa, where his grandmother had emigrated from, to share the Gospel. What extraordinary things have happened since that time. Avi was also the person who "recruited" me into LCJE; otherwise, I would not be writing this article today!

Kiev

The Kiev Jewish Messianic Congregation, led by Boris Gritsenko, is thriving and is having an enormous impact in Ukraine. The congregation (website: baruhaba.org; e-mail: shalom_kjmo@voliacable.com) currently has some 1,200 members and attendees, making it, by far, the largest Russian-speaking Messianic congregation

in the FSU and globally as well. It supports or assists six rehabilitation centers for drug addicts and down-and-outers in Ukraine, ministers in 3 prison camps and to some 70 homeless children (according to a DVD distributed by the congregation). A daughter community called "Mishpaha" has a service "aimed at youth, teenagers, children and their parents," and also pays specific attention to the needs of handicapped children (Brochure of the Kiev Jewish Messianic Congregation). The congregation also has a very active Messianic concert, dance and drama program made up of numerous groups that give presentations in various cities of the FSU. There is also an "academic center of the congregation called 'Besora' that prepares true servants of the New Testament (New Covenant)." (Congregational website).

Odessa

Messianic Jewish Bible Institute (MJB I) Update

The Messianic Jewish Bible Institute (MJB I) in Odessa graduated its first class in 1998, in the wake of the major outreach campaign by Hear O Israel Ministries in that historic Jewish city. Graduates now serve in ministry throughout the former Soviet Union. According to the MJB I website, "the Odessa school has satellite Russian-speaking video schools in approximately 20 other cities in Ukraine, Russia and Central Asia." Also, besides its school in Odessa, in 2005 MJB I opened another school in St. Petersburg, Russia under the direction of Mike Becker and the assistance of other graduates and staff of the Odessa MJB I school (www.mjbi.org). There is also an MJB I Affiliate school now in Almaty, Kazakstan (see below).

The Kharkov Example: Reaching Evangelical Churches with the Messianic Jewish Perspective

Also in Ukraine, in the city of Kharkov, I would like to tell the story of a brother in the Lord named Vlad, who is partially disabled and comes from a family of Holocaust survivors. Vlad is an example of

one who has been having a very successful ministry among many evangelical churches in the area telling them about the Messianic roots of our faith. His ministry has been very well-received, and I believe this continues to be an area for fruitful development between mature Messianic believers who can share with traditional Baptist and Pentecostal churches in the former Soviet Union more about the Messianic Jewish roots of our faith, while combating anti-Semitism and misconceptions even within the Church. This is a vitally important ministry - ministry to the churches - and I think many evangelical churches in the FSU are hungry for this kind of interaction. It is so very much needed, both by the Gentile churches that want to learn more about the Jewish roots of the faith, as well as by the Messianic movement.

Belarus

The Lord continues to do amazing things in Belarus. The ministry of Stewart and Chantal Winograd and Shalom Network International blessed many in Belarus for a number of years and developed outreaches in various cities. A "Messianic Perspectives" article published by the Christian Jew Foundation Ministries (CJFM) in early 2007 discussed the CJFM's ongoing ministry in Minsk, where some 80 people - most of them Jewish - attended just one Shabbat service. CJFM also has ministry workers in Bobruisk, as well as in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine. As the author, Jonathan Singer, concluded: "Ministry to the Jewish people in this part of the world - for so long cut off from a Gospel witness with any Jewish flavor - is relatively new. Now, with indigenous Jewish congregations taking root, the feeling is palpable that history is being made." (Jonathan Singer, "Sharing the Gospel of Yeshua the Messiah in Belarus: Where History Haunts the Jewish People," *Messianic Perspectives*, CJFM, Jan./Feb. 2007, p. 5).

Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan. The controversy over "Aliyah-Buyers."

Many exciting things are happening in Jewish ministry in Central Asia. I think that it is also important to recognize the pioneering efforts of our brother, Jeff Bernstein, of Gates of Zion, who has done so much to minister in the Central Asian regions and to open up that world to the rest of us through introducing us to the beloved brethren there. As mentioned above, an MJBFI Affiliate school has been established in Almaty, Kazakstan. It has about 50 students and meets in the evenings three times per week (see also article by Wayne Wilks, Jr., "Central Asia and Messianic Jews," The Open Window, MJBFI Update, March/April 2007).

As I shared in my earlier LCJE Bulletin article about the conference, there were several representatives from various Central Asian countries of the FSU who attended the Berlin conference, and they brought exciting and fascinating news of developments in evangelism and congregation-planting in those countries (LCJE Bulletin, Issue No. 86, pp. 15-16). Though small in number in comparison with the Jewish communities of Russia and Ukraine, these nations and cultures have very ancient Jewish communities that have survived through the centuries under Moslem domination. Many of the Jews in these countries are open to the Gospel and/or have not been infected with anti-Christian prejudices.

Specific details of what is occurring cannot be shared due to the sensitivity of the situations. However, some of the highlights include a special audio and video course in one country that has been used both for new believers and in evangelism for non-believers. Some fellowships are quietly thriving, and in one situation, three former rabbis have come to faith! Though street evangelism in one situation would likely lead to immediate arrests, quiet door-to-door evangelism has been very successful - resulting in some 150 Jewish families responding to the Gospel. An issue of great concern,

however, that I also discussed in my previous article (Ibid., op. cit., p. 16) is the confusion wrought by some Western groups pushing aliyah among Central Asian Jews in return for gifts or other offers of inducement. This very destructive practice has made it much more complicated for those who are actually sharing the Gospel, as opposed to those groups who care only about getting Jews to Israel no matter how they do it. As I have previously discussed (Ibid., op. cit., p. 16), how this happens is this: when real believers sharing the Gospel come knocking on the door, they are often met with the question, 'What have you brought for us?' Thus, those who are sharing the Good News of Life are placed at a disadvantage because - though they seek and want to help those who are in need - they do not want to be placed in a position to have to "buy" a hearing in order to present the Gospel. Worse than that, some of these un-Biblical outside groups even seek to undermine directly in various ways the sharing of the Gospel with these Jewish souls of Central Asia.

Internet developments

There continues to be much activity of interest on the Internet related to Jewish evangelism in the FSU. One of the best known is Messianic.ru, registered to Kirill (Simkha) Polonskiy. This site has been in existence since at least 2004 and, in Russian, is called the "Common Russia Portal for Messianic Jews." It includes lectures by Avi Yampolskiy in Moscow (one of the leaders and speakers of the Berlin conference) and a host of Messianic books in Russian, including Simkha Polonskiy's latest book, "Times and Seasons." Some of the other books available in Russian include: David Stern's "Jewish New Testament" and "Messianic Jewish Manifesto," as well as the book titled, "A Rabbi Talks with Jesus," a modern rabbinical view of Jesus' teachings by Jacob Neusner, who tried to put himself into the first century to interact with Jesus.

The site also includes the latest online

editions of the newspaper "Shoresh." The May 2007 issue of "Shoresh" included a selection from Simka Polonsky's new book titled "Times and Seasons," an article by the very popular Russian historian Vladimir Solovyev (1853-1900) that was a continuation of his work, "Jewishness and Christianity" (published in 1897), as well as a poem titled "Pavel" ("Paul") by a poet in Moscow named Felix Segal about the Apostle Paul and how his life was transformed by the Lord Jesus.

There is also discussion on the Messianic.ru website of establishing a "Moscow Community Center" for Messianic believers. For more information, the email address shoresh@mail.ru is given. As far as general Russian Jewish resources are concerned, to better understand Russian Jewish life in the FSU today (a "virtual tour," so to speak), one can visit www.jewish.ru, a site that has many resources and items of interest. To burrow down even deeper, one can even take a virtual tour of the Moscow Jewish Community Center! (<http://www.mjcc.ru>).

In Belarus, the congregational website "Messianic Belarus" (<http://www.messianicbelarus.net/>) is the site of the "Star of Bethlehem" Messianic congregation in Minsk. A Russian language discussion of its purpose says that it is "...a place for coming together of Messianic believers. Here you can get acquainted with us and our ministry, ask questions or participate in what we do. You can tell about yourself, find friends and those who are like-minded. Here you have access to various useful resources for the believer....Don't forget to drop in on the site more and more often and always be in the course of Messianic life of Belarus."

Just in general, it is worth noting some of the amazing changes that have taken place in communications and connectivity with respect to evangelism, I received an email message recently from a brother in the Lord who has a Russian Jewish ministry in Moldova (the former region of Josef Rabinowiz). This came via SMS message from a cell phone and I read the

message via Web mail, actually, while I was in Beijing! What would Josef Rabinowitz himself think of these amazing opportunities today?!

Remembering the prisoners

But it is also true that most Jewish evangelism in the FSU today is occurring through traditional tried and true methods, not necessarily via the latest advances in technology. Most Jewish people in the FSU in real need do not have direct access to the Internet but will be reached or ministered to either in person or via letters and literature in the mail. This kind of ministry is as vitally important as ever. For example, I have been in touch over the last couple of years with two Russian-speaking Jewish brothers in the Lord, Vlad and Sasha, who are in prison in Ukraine. I do not know what their crimes were, but these brothers truly love the Lord and are in need of our prayers and encouragement. They are very much desirous of and thankful for any Russian Messianic literature that we can send them. The same is true of a Jewish brother in the Lord in Latvia named Peisekh and many others. Our ministries to Jewish believers and unbelievers in the FSU must continue with these traditional means as well as seeking ways to use new technologies to reach others, especially the young.

Collaboration with Jewish groups

Another theme that I want to briefly touch on that impacts Jewish evangelism in the FSU today and is actually quite amazing is the collaboration that exists between some Messianic believers and various local Jewish groups. I do not have statistics, only anecdotal information; however, again and again, one hears stories of Messianic believers having excellent relations with some local Jewish leaders - especially in areas where Jewish culture and life are under assault. This is certainly not true throughout the FSU; indeed, in some locations, Hasidic groups and anti-missionaries have done everything they can to try to shut out a Gospel witness.

Nevertheless, the fact that such cooperation and cross-communication is occurring at all in some places is remarkable.

Conclusions

This has been a snapshot of key issues and recent developments related to "telling the story" of Jewish evangelism today in the former Soviet Union. I certainly cannot "tell it all" within the brief confines of this paper. The political and spiritual landscapes of Jewish life, Yiddishkeit, and opportunities for evangelism have changed dramatically in the forty years since Elie Wiesel wrote his classic work on Soviet Jewry, *The Jews of Silence*. Today, despite latent anti-Semitism at times, local opposition to the Gospel, or even draconian measures in some cases, there

are still many opportunities for evangelism in the former Soviet Union, from Birobidzhan to Belarus to Central Asia and everywhere in between. In some cases, this does not mean that the Gospel can be presented openly and freely - often, it must be done quietly or with some new creative approach. Nevertheless, much has changed since the days of the Soviet Union when it was nearly impossible. For that, we are very thankful to the Lord, since we are witnesses of the incredible transformation that has occurred in the countries of the former Soviet Union since the fall of Communism in opening up new avenues and opportunities for evangelism to the Jewish people.

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The Jewish community in Hungary today

Ferenc Kozma, Christian Witness to Israel, Hungary

At the beginning of March this year, Peter Feldmajer, president of the Alliance of the Jewish Communities of Hungary, announced that Jewish people should stay at home for their own safety during the national holiday on 15th March.¹ He said that there was a risk of Jewish people being confronted by people shouting anti-Semitic chants and waving banners associated with fascism during the anticipated anti-government rallies. Although Mr Feldmajer was not necessarily warning that people would be attacked *physically*, many Jewish people – including Rabbi Shlomo Koves the leader of another Jewish denomination – claimed that the announcement had overstated the danger, and called for people not to be afraid. He reminded everyone that 15th March was the festival of the Hungarian revolution and uprising in 1848, when Hungarians and Hungarian-speaking Jewish people had joined with others to fight for the freedom of Hungary. American Congress representative Edolphus Towns, who is based in Brooklyn, New York, while obviously not understanding the Hungarian situation, quoted Feldmajer's announcement as if he was calling for Jewish people to stay at home during Jewish holidays. Towns was also worried that large anti-Semitic groups might call for attacks against Jewish institutions and buildings and asked the Hungarian Ambassador to explain how the Hungarian government was planning to stop anti-Semitism.² The Hungarian Ambassador successfully calmed Mr. Town's fears, convincing him that only a small, but recently vocal, minority held such views, and that the vast majority of Hungarians condemned anti-Semitism.

Even so, Peter Feldmajer's announcement and other elements of Hungarian politics raise questions for us as we consider the present situation of Jewish people in Hungary. Let us have a look at Hungarian Jewish history, denominations,

organisations and life today. Then we can examine Jewish identity and demography and can see some hopeful trends in the lives of the younger generation. Following on from that, I would like to share some facts and thoughts about anti-Semitism in Hungary.

Jewish people in Hungary

Although there have been Jewish communities in Hungary since the time of the Roman Empire, the most important period of immigration was at the start of the 18th century, following the end of Turkish rule, when their number rose. From 1791 they were allowed to settle almost anywhere in the country, and their emancipation became an important topic during the early 19th century until it was finally put into legislation in 1867. By the early years of the 20th century the Hungarian Jewish population numbered almost one million.

The deportations that began in 1944 came unexpectedly to the Hungarian Jewish people. Although Hungary was in alliance with Germany during the Second World War, for a long time it had remained an isle of peace compared with the situation in the surrounding countries. Indeed many Jewish people took refuge in Hungary even though some of its laws were restrictive.

During the 1940s, Hitler was increasingly aggressive in his demand for Hungary to apply the Nazi principles against the Jews. A new anti-Jewish law was introduced on a racial basis, and those who didn't have Hungarian citizenship were given over to the Nazis. In early 1944, as Hungary tried to find a way out of the Nazi alliance, German troops occupied the country. They started to establish ghettos and to organize transportations to the death-camps. The gas chambers were operating around the clock and the rural Jewish communities were destroyed at an alarming rate.

However, due to the Soviet occupation of Hungary, Eichmann didn't have enough time to destroy those living in the Budapest ghetto. As a result, after the Holocaust, there was a significant number of survivors in the capital.

About 600,000 Jewish people from Hungary were killed during the Shoah, accounting for about 75% of those based in rural areas and 40% of the Budapest community. There were about 200,000 Jewish people in our country after the war, of whom around 50,000 made aliyah to Israel before the early 1950s. After that time, the Communist regime persecuted and tried to close Zionist organisations and blocked the community's contacts with Israel and western Jewish groups.

The Communist regime declared assimilation as the only solution for the Jewish people. The Communists removed the Jewish people's right to express their national, ethnic or religious identities, so the awful pain of the Holocaust and the tensions that existed between Jews and non-Jews became taboo subjects. The number of Jewish people was still declining, and prejudices and ignorance stayed hidden, and were not addressed.

Although most Jewish people had welcomed Soviet troops as liberators of the Ghetto, many were now experiencing a new type of oppression and violence. Others felt that Communism provided an opportunity to find solutions to the problem of anti-Semitism or to take revenge for Nazi crimes against their families. Later they came to see that the Soviet type of Communist rule raised new questions and brought new types of anti-Semitism. Many of these well-educated Jewish people became important personalities of the revolution in 1956 and Jewish people were over-represented in Communist concentration camps, prisons and among Hungarian martyrs executed between 1957 and 1960. Of 100,000 Hungarians who left the country in 1956, around 20,000 were Jewish.

During the decades in which the new Communist rule took hold, Jewish people

were involved in organising opposition groups and publishing a large quantity of illegal academic papers, periodicals and studies. Many of them lost their jobs or were not able to find employment after spending time in prison.

Changes came unexpectedly as the new Soviet leadership, and many young Hungarian Communist leaders, realised that their political system needed serious and painful economical reforms. At the end of the 1980s anti-Communist opposition started to form new political organisations. Conservative Christian-Democrat intellectuals (some of whom were Jewish!) frequently held strong national attitudes, whilst many Jewish (and non-Jewish) leaders of former illegal groups were committed to rather liberal views. These groups were growing more suspicious of one another and while liberals condemned the right-wing for being nationalist, some of the other side started to use anti-Semitic terminology against the liberals. After the first elections, during the rule of the conservative Antal-government many extreme nationalists were excluded from the right-wing parties and formed their own party (MIÉP – Hungarian Truth and Life Party). However, they were unable to send representatives to the parliament until the elections of 1998. These tensions still have a serious impact on our political life and help to explain many of the events that took place during 2006.

After 1990 new opportunities opened up for Jewish people. They were able to live openly and confess their identity. Diplomatic relationships with Israel were restored and Jewish organisations were able to contact Jewish communities outside the country. Jewish community life was re-established with new schools, community centres and clubs. Today the old Jewish district is being reclaimed as a centre of Jewish activity. After forty years of unity, Orthodox communities have formed their own denomination. Having operated successfully in Budapest for many years, the Lubavitch movement motivated the reorganisation of their

denomination. This decision was criticised by those communities that had been members or even centres of this old denomination before the War, but who now chose to stay with the main Jewish denomination, MAZSIHISZ. A Reform Jewish Community, Sim Shalom, was also formed in Budapest and became popular among young people as did Pesti Shul, a modern orthodox community.

Jewish life today

According to the registers of Jewish communities and organisations, there are about 100,000 Jewish people living in Hungary, 80% of whom are in Budapest. These numbers were not reflected in the 2001 census in which only 12,871 people declared themselves as being Jewish.³ This can be partially explained by the fact that the census form related Jewish identity to religion rather than to ethnic or national distinctiveness. So many secular Jewish people defined themselves as non-religious. Also, as it was not obligatory to give answers to the questions about religion or nationality, many people may have elected not to disclose such information. Because of these factors, we need to realise that the 2001 census only gives us information about those who openly uphold their Jewish religious identity.

However, the census gave a few insights about the distribution of Jewish people across Hungary. 73.6% of the group mentioned live in Budapest, 11% live in other major cities, 8.8% in smaller cities and towns, and 6.6% in villages. There are nearly 300 villages or towns where only one person declared being Jewish. Budapest is divided into 23 districts and 71.7% of Jewish people live within eight of these districts, including the former ghetto.

There are historical reasons for this large concentration of the Jewish population. Often survivors returned to their villages to find that there were no opportunities for them to stay. They had lost their homes, their jobs and their

relatives, so they were attracted to the capital with its large Jewish community and opportunities for a new life. The newer generation has started moving out of the former Jewish areas to the suburbs or to the surrounding villages and towns.

In 1999, further research was carried out concerning the Jewish population in Hungary.⁴ It showed that 51% of married Jewish people had married non-Jews. Amongst 26-35 year-olds, this figure increased to 63%. Despite these numbers, the research gave some hope that the younger generation was developing a new interest in their Jewish heritage it showed that amongst those who are under 25, there was less intermarriage, and this group are more likely to practise Jewish customs. This can be seen in the following table⁵: (See next page)

Anti-Semitism in Hungary today

Let us also have a look at the statistics of anti-Semitism in Hungary. According to the research of the Hungarian Gallup Institute,⁶ in the early 1990s there were 14-15% saying that they generally didn't like Jewish people. It has been changing from the middle of the decade and today it is around 5-6%. However, this research didn't contain any specific questions about anti-Semitism or the state of Israel. The Anti-Defamation League's research about anti-Semitic attitudes in Europe (2005)⁷ gives a more realistic picture about the views and prejudices of people in our country. 37% of Hungarians believes that Jewish people are more loyal to Israel than to their own country (the European average was 43%). 55% of our people think that "Jews have too much power in international financial markets" and also "in the business world" (European averages were 30% and 32%). 46% of Hungarians think that "Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust" (the European average was 42%.) 20% of Hungarians answered "probably true" for the statement "The Jews are responsible for the death of Christ" (20% was also the European average).

	Full assay		18-25 years		26-35 years		36-45 years		46-55 years		56-65 years		66-75 years		Over 75 years	
	In childhood	Now	Ch.	N	Ch.	N.	Ch.	N.								
Shabath	30	14	8	11	6	18	11	14	20	14	38	10	49	14	58	19
Yom Kippur Fast	52	34	33	44	14	34	23	33	41	38	60	26	80	27	84	40
Seder dinner	41	29	24	37	13	35	20	34	33	35	46	24	61	21	49	24
Kosher household	20	8	5	13	6	14	10	9	13	8	19	5	32	3	42	10
Cooking Sholet	59	38	44	50	40	31	50	38	57	43	64	38	73	34	77	35
Mezuza	37	21	25	31	13	26	17	25	24	26	37	11	59	13	66	22
Bar mitzvah of the boys	36	15	20	25	10	12	16	17	21	16	37	11	59	13	69	16
Funeral in Jewish cemetery	64	44	58	51	46	41	58	44	59	50	68	34	79	40	80	45
Circumcision	41	17	21	23	13	18	19	17	29	12	47	13	65	15	72	22
Chanukkah	43	32	27	39	13	41	22	38	33	36	47	26	67	23	69	28

The Holocaust has made the local Jewish community very sensitive about any kind of prejudice or exclusion. Due to the discrimination and persecution that the Jewish community experienced in the 20th century, this is very understandable.

Jewish people are generally committed to building a tolerant, liberal society. They are often wary of any kind of "Christian" or "national" renewal. Their political and social inclinations seem to be in contrast with the values of conservative Christianity and this affects the attitude of our churches as well. In my experience, it is difficult to teach about the role of Israel or about the Jewish roots of our Christian faith without

receiving questions about the political role of Jewish people or the state of Israel.

It is not my task to declare who is right and who is wrong in modern politics. However, Christians need to recognise and make one another aware of the fact that political opponents use anti-Semitism as a tool for building up their own power bases. Some right-wing politicians hesitate to condemn anti-Semitic incidents, as they are trying to win the votes of those who support radical national parties. Socialist (former Communist) governments use the charge of "anti-Semitism" as a means of justifying any measures that they take against their political opponents.

Recent anti-government protests organised by extremists and nationalists often turned into violent demonstrations whilst those organised by the main opposition parties attracted huge number of people without any violence. However, Jewish people were shocked at seeing some protesters holding flags which are strongly nationalist. (These are red-and-white striped flags that remind holocaust survivors of those used by the fascist Arrow Cross regime. However the "Arpad-stripes" are actually a medieval historical symbol of the Hungarian state – the two are not the same).

On 15th March, about a week after Peter Feldmajer had made his controversial announcement, Hungary held its annual national festival. A small group of anti-Semites aggressively protested against government representatives and threw eggs at the liberal mayor of Budapest while he was speaking. In the evening approximately a thousand young nationalists fought against police on the streets of Budapest. The main opposition party was able to organise it's own protest. However many of their fans took flags containing Arpad stripes to the meeting and many Jewish people found that very disturbing.

In my opinion, Hungary is a peaceful country. However we are gradually growing closer to mainstream European politics. The number of radical nationalists is not growing, and although we may find anti-Jewish prejudices in many sections of the society, the vast majority of our people condemn violent anti-Semitism. Since the start of anti-government protests last September, the number of anti-Semites has not grown although small anti-Semitic groups have been more open in

expressing their views and their activities have become more intensive.

It is impossible to overcome the anti-Semitism of this minority. Instead we need to oppose anti-Semitism wherever it is found. This is our responsibility, to preach, teach and educate; to share truthful information about Jewish people. Whatever we think about politics, the Jewish people are our fellow citizens, and have given heroes, martyrs and great personalities to our nation. They suffer with the rest of our society because of bad politics and they enjoy the benefits of good politics. For us as Christians, the Jewish people remain God's own people, who have faithfully preserved God's word and have shared it with all the nations, and amongst whom the Messiah and Saviour, Jesus, was born.

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Notes

1. <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSL08535928>;

See reflections to this in Hungarian at <http://www.zsido.hu/hirek>

2. <http://www.nol.hu/cikk/440964/>;
<http://www.nol.hu/cikk/440183/> (in Hungarian)

3. See these numbers at <http://www.nepszamlalas.hu>

4. Kovács András: Számszaki jelentés – Statisztika a magyarországi zsidóságról, in Szombat March 2000.

See at <http://www.zsido.hu/stat>

5. <http://www.zsido.hu/stat/stat4.htm>

6. <http://www.gallup.hu/Gallup/release/eloitelet030919.htm>

7. http://www.adl.org/anti_semitism/european_attitudes_may_2005.pdf

Jewish evangelism through the eyes of the media

Susan Perlman, Director of Communications, Jews for Jesus, USA

In the United States alone, businesses spent over 53 billion dollars on print ads this past year, another 57 billion on television ads, 12 billion on Internet ads and 8 billion on radio. Such expenditures would seem to indicate that the world has no trouble seeing the importance of Media in effectively getting a message across.

Yet, as powerful as paid advertising can be, earned media coverage surpasses it. Unlike advertising, earned media often carries more weight and is more credible to those who view, read or hear it. After all, the person or organization who is the subject of the piece does not control it. Instead it is conveyed through a reliable third party, whether it be a reporter, columnist or broadcaster or talk show host.

In both cases, earned and paid media exposure, we have a very powerful tool in conveying the greatest message of all times – the good news of Y’shua.

The subject matter of Jews and Jesus has had unprecedented coverage in the earned media over the past three decades. No one, including those who oppose our efforts, contest that.

With over twenty-five thousand articles, thousands of radio interviews, more than 600 television newscasts, well over 175 feature television interviews, hundreds of pod casts, and tens of thousands of blogs on our movement, the idea that there are some Jews who believe that Y’shua is their promised Messiah is being communicated loud and clear. Add to this the paid media in the form of print, broadcast, outdoor and Internet advertisements and the potential reach of this combined media extends to hundreds of millions of people – among them, the thirteen million Jews in the world.

Media is important to our movement for several reasons.

1. Media can educate by making things to be known whether these things are ideas, products or celebrities or politicians. Before I became a believer I remember reading an article in Time Magazine about

a psychedelic Jesus. While I didn’t recognize this as important at the time, it did establish Jesus as a real person for me and the shortly afterwards meeting an unconventional looking Christian strengthened the connection. How many times have you heard a testimony where a person indicated one or more media messages had a place in his or her journey of faith?

2. Media provides enablement. It gives you the opportunity to do something about it, whether it is to vote for or against a candidate, buy a product or consider a new idea. When it comes to faith, we recognize that we are incapable of convincing another individual of the truth claims of Jesus apart from the work of the Holy Spirit doing the persuading. However, there are Jewish people who are out there seeking to know more or already asking the burning question, “what must I do to be saved?” and it just might be that media such as paid evangelistic ads with response devices or stories of faith told on a news broadcast might be the opportunity for them to move forward.

3. Media offers a marketplace for social interaction. In every culture the market offers a special place in society. It’s not merely where we buy or sell goods. It’s where we encounter other people and socialize. We exchange ideas and we gain information that helps us develop the attitudes and the actions we need. The Internet is rapidly becoming the largest media marketplace. By the end of the 2005, just over 1 billion people were online—1/6 of the world. About 7,200 blogs are created every hour. More than ten million people listen to pod casts. Over 100 million videos are viewed every day on YouTube. More than 140 million people in the world have a broadband connection. Social media is very important.

4. Media as a lens. If you know how people see you then you know how to shape your message and you know how to

interact to a degree. If you know what has been observed by the media, it can also give you some idea of where you have had an effect. For example, while the secular press almost ignored the distribution of Survivor Stories, the video which recounted the stories of seven Holocaust survivors who came to faith in Y'shua, there was hardly a Jewish newspaper that did not comment on it, being careful not to attack the survivors featured, only those who produced the film.

5. Media as an expander of your vision. Oftentimes we have been extremely parochial in how we view the Jewish missions world. Our interest is centered on our own organization or congregation or geographical area or those who hold to the same theological distinctive as us. Media can help us to expand our own vision. For example, to hear the media talk about a work in another city or another country shows us something of the potential in that place. It also shows us that we are not necessarily alone and that while it may not be "happening" with us at this time, praise God, it is happening with another who is laboring in this same field of Jewish evangelism. What a vision expander it was for all of us to see the Israeli Channel Two feature on Jewish believers at Yad HaShmona. A favorable full-length feature interview in Israel in our generation stretches us and gives us cause to hope for more for the whole movement as a result.

6. Media can be an important gauge of our effectiveness by what the Jewish community is saying about us. I often find the articles by anti-missionaries or those who oppose Jewish evangelism to be helpful to some extent. The Jewish community spokespeople finds it very difficult to remain quiet over our movement and instead seek media platforms to defame us, discredit us or simply to

dismiss us. This begs the question that if we are so ineffective, why go to such lengths? One can only speculate on the degree of pressure that is being brought to bear on these leaders by congregants and other constituents who are demanding that something be done about the Jewish believers in Jesus or who perhaps have raised concerns of a spiritual nature that their leaders don't want to or are incapable of grappling with.

7. Media as a tool to inform our strategic thinking. As communicators, we need to be well informed on what is happening around us and its implications for Jewish evangelism. In April, the Jerusalem Report did a story on the political power struggle here in Hungary between Prime Minister Gyuresany and opposition leader Viktor Orban. The article went on to say that this conflict has escalated into riots, which has brought out neo-Nazis. As a result the 80,000 member Jewish population of Hungary are not looking to draw attention to themselves, the implications for whs5doing Jewish evangelism at such a time and in such context.

Media is important but not everyone can get it. I believe God has blessed us asa movement with not only the means to pay for a place in the media, but more importantly, a subject matter that continues to be controversial and therefore newsworthy to be reported on.

Early on, the attraction was in our novelty as a movement, our newness as a concept and the sheer "chutzpah" of it all. The media interest has ebbed and flowed over the years, but there are no doubt the subject is still newsworthy. And for this, we are all thankful.

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Afternoon Session

Jewish evangelism in Bulgaria

Stanislav Alexiev, Pastor, Christian Witness to Israel, Bulgaria

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, I am grateful for the invitation to address this session of the conference and it is a great privilege for me to share with you some aspects of my work among the Jewish people in Bulgaria.

Historical background

Bulgaria is situated in the southeast of Europe. It is a beautiful country, rich in natural resources, where the dominant religion is Eastern Orthodoxy. Bulgaria is a former Communist country and was very loyal to the Soviet Union but its government and economy are now based on democratic principles.

Bulgaria was established in 681 A.D. when the Bulgars conquered the country but there were Jewish people living in this part of Europe long before that. History tells us that the first Jewish settlements were established in our land after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple in 70 A.D. Since then there has always been a Jewish community in Bulgaria.

The largest Jewish migration to Bulgaria occurred in 1492 when Ferdinand II expelled the Jews from Spain. At that time Bulgaria was under the yoke of the Ottoman empire and during the Ottoman reign the Jews lived a very peaceful and free life. The price of freedom, however, was high taxation but the Jews enjoyed their liberty and classified their 500 years under Ottoman rule in Bulgaria as an "earthly Zion".

During the Second World War, although Bulgaria was allied to Germany, the Bulgarian people and the Orthodox Church resisted Hitler's attempts to deport its Jewish community. Bulgaria was one of

only two countries in Europe – the other being Denmark – whose entire Jewish population was saved from extermination. Not one Jew who lived under the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian state was deported to any of the Nazi concentration camps. Indeed, it has been noted that during the Second World War the Jewish population of Bulgaria actually increased in number by more than a thousand.

In 1948, when the world recognized the establishment of the new State of Israel, many Bulgarian Jews wanted to settle there and to give of their best for the building up of the nation. So between 1949 and 1951, 45-48,000 Bulgarian Jews made aliyah, leaving only 4-5,000 in Bulgaria. Those who emigrated to Israel were Zionist and anti-Communist; those who remained were secular and convinced Communists.

During the Communist era, Bulgaria broke off diplomatic relations with the Jewish state because of Israel's links with the USA on the one hand and Bulgaria's ties with the USSR on the other. During that time, there was discrimination against the Jews; although they were not persecuted they were not allowed to occupy high positions in the government. After the fall of Communism in 1989, so many younger Jews left Bulgaria that the average age of the 3,000 who currently live in the country is now 80. The Jewish community is diminishing steadily and it is not easy to reach these elderly Bulgarian Jews with the gospel.

My approach

I shall describe my evangelistic approach to under three headings: (1) Individual, (2) Scriptural and (3) Communal.

1. Individual

Because the Jewish population of Bulgaria is spread thinly throughout the country and there are no so-called "Jewish" areas where one might engage in door-to-door visiting or organise special evangelistic events, my approach to Jewish people is mainly individual and personal. That is why I try to establish friendships with individuals and, in most cases, they then introduce me to their friends and relatives. This is how I develop most of my contacts. Through this approach, my Jewish friends are able to observe both my character and the way I live for the Lord, Messiah Jesus. It is interesting to see their reactions; even though I make many mistakes, they see God at work in my life and the difference He makes. For me, this is the most powerful way of sharing the faith.

2. Scriptura

My approach involves using the Word of God. I enjoy making friends but my concern is to take my friendships with Jewish people to a higher level. I buy copies of the Bible and give them as presents to my friends and so far no one has refused this gift! Then, when my Jewish friends experiencing difficulties I try to explain God's perspective on their problems and also his solution from their Bible. By this means they will hopefully see that they have the answer to their problems in their homes!

As I mentioned before, the Jewish people in my homeland are quite elderly. When I ask them if they ever read the Bible, they usually say something like, "I am very old and cannot see well". That is why I offer to read the Bible to my friends when I visit them. With some this approach works, with others it does not but, generally, it yields results. For example, when I began to read the Bible to the Mashiah family, Mr Elijah Mashiah was very suspicious. However, after a few weeks of reading from the Gospels, whenever I visited the family, he would ask me to read the Bible right away and after that we would speak about other things. Then Mr Mash-

ah insisted on coming to church with me and said that he would like to believe in Jesus as his Messiah. I am now almost certain that Mr Mashiah has been born-again.

3. Communal

My approach is community orientated. Although Bulgaria is now a member of the European Community, the standard of living for most people in the country is modest and many live in poverty. The Jewish people are no exception. Although some Jews are reasonably wealthy, others do not even have daily bread. That is why I have developed a small programme for delivering humanitarian aid to the needy. This way of reaching the community has proved to work well and through it I have made many contacts.

Due to the influence of the Orthodox Church Bulgarian society has many traditions. These traditions are so deeply rooted that they have found their way into Jewish minds also. I try to be sensitive to that and on one occasion Mathilda called to ask me to visit her and her husband. When I arrived at their house, Mathilda told me that many bad things were happening to her family and asked me to consecrate the house because she believed that some evil spirits were probably in control of them. Consecrating a house is an Orthodox tradition but I decided to use the occasion to share the gospel with Mathilda and her husband. I said I would consecrate the house but not in the way an Orthodox priest would. Instead, I read Psalm 91 to them and told them that if they would like to have peace in the house, they must have peace with God first. They asked me how to do that and I explained that the only way this could happen was through Jesus the Messiah. I then asked Mathilda the question, "What do you think of Jesus? In your opinion who is He?" She gave me the most unexpected answer: "He is the Son of God." When I asked if she really believed what she had told me Mathilda replied, "Yes!" Then we prayed and she and her husband received the Lord into their hearts. It all started with a simple tradition!

Conclusion

When I first discovered that Jesus was a Jew and that He lived and preached as a Jew, it amazed me! The discovery turned my world upside down. I realised that Jesus had lived in history and was like many other Jewish people in the first-century world. But, being the Lord in flesh, He was so devoted to God and knew His will so well that He was able to explain

God's story in such a way that it reached the hearts of many people.

We are called to do the same; to live in this world but never to forget that we belong to another Kingdom and are commanded to tell the story of Jesus "to the Jew first".

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Jewish evangelism among Russian Jews in Germany

Vladimir Pikman, Executive Director, Beit Sar Shalom, Germany

On the last LCJE Conference in Finland I have reported about the miraculous, unique and unprecedented revival of the Jewish life and the messianic community in Germany. I would encourage you to consider reading my paper submitted to the conference the last time and to get encouraged by the mighty work of God in the country where so much evil was done to the Jewish people. If you would like I can also e-mail you an electronic copy of it.

Although I am involved in the outreach since almost the beginning, it still seems unbelievable to me that since 1991 the Jewish community in Germany is in percentage the fastest growing Jewish community in entire Jewish history and since 1994 the number of the Jewish believers in Jesus is growing in percentage faster than anywhere else. All this is due to the massive Jewish immigration of the so-called "Russian Jews" from the former Soviet Union.

I want just to remind you of some facts:
1991 – maximum 30.000 Jews in Germany
2007 – at least 250.000 Jews in Germany
1994 – maximum 100 identified Jewish believers in Jesus in Germany and no messianic congregations
2007 – at least 5.000 Jewish believers and more than 30 messianic congregations and groups

Chosen People Ministries, AmZI,

Evangeliumsdienst für Israel (EDI), Licht im Osten, and Beit Sar Shalom were ongoing involved in the Russian Jewish outreach in Germany from the very beginning. In 2000 Jews for Jesus joined the group. Although most of the churches, both official and free, were abstaining or rejecting the Jewish evangelism due to the post-Holocaust sensitivity, there has been growing number of churches (especially Russian speaking) making successful attempts to reach out to the Russian Jews.

Many different types of outreaches have been done so far. Among others are congregational planting, "from door to door," visiting people, street evangelism, special events (e.g. concerts, celebrations, etc.), discipleship, advertising, publishing periodicals, etc. The most effective ways of the outreach have always been the "friendship evangelism" (believers bringing their friends to a messianic congregation or to a church) and providing a fellowship (in a messianic congregation or a church).

For several years refugee camps (the housing facilities) for the new Jewish immigrants were great places for the outreach, providing a well accessible gathering of the Russian Jews who had much time and curiosity to listen to the visiting evangelists. Another great evangelistic opportunity was the fact that the Russian Jewish immigrants were

looking for fellowship, help to start and psychological support that could be provided by messianic groups and churches with loving respect to the Jews. Another important special characteristic of the Russian Jewish outreach in Germany was that the tremendous growth (revival) caused the Jewish outreach and the messianic movement to be chaotic and unorganized. Everything was moving so fast that there was no time to consolidate the things. For other specific characteristics of the Russian Jewish life till 2003 see my paper for the LCJE conference in Finland in summer 2003.

However, the circumstances are in some respects different today. Here are some examples:

- Messianic movement is established and known among the Jewish people who are informed about it also negatively by the Jewish organizations.
- There are many different Russian speaking churches that can attract Jewish seekers.
- The immigration has slowed down and there are not many refugee camps any more.
- The majority of the Russian Jews are well established and used to the new country and its culture.
- The youth and the children speak better German than Russian.
- Jewish communities are run primarily by Russian Jews due to their overwhelming majority. It leads to more comfortable fellowship and abundant services to the Russian Jews in those communities.
- Russian Jews either got much more assimilated in comfortable German lifestyle without any desire to listen about God or got more conscious about being Jewish, while following the common misconception that Jesus is not for the Jews.
- The messianic movement and the Russian Jewish outreach experience stabilization phase of coming to a new level of

leadership, structural and spiritual maturity.

This change of circumstances leads to the fact that the Russian Jews have different felt needs and, consequently, it requires some changes in the methods and ways of Jewish outreach in Germany. Being limited with time and size of my presentation, I have to skip detailed discussion and to come directly to some proposals for the future. Thus, in addition to the evangelistic methods that have been used so far, here are some things that I find important in this new stage (as response to the changes mentioned above):

- Elevating theological and organizational standards of the messianic movement and its stronger public presence in the society;
- Theological and clergy training for new messianic leaders;
- For messianic believers to be more "Jewish" in their life-style and for others in the Jewish outreach to be more conscious about Jewish life-style and values (churches can reach out to those Jews who do not care about it);
- Training churches and individuals to reach out to the Jews they know or will meet;
- Encouraging the Jewish believers in churches to be more evidently Jewish in order to be a good testimony to other Jews.

By the way, the challenge of the Russian Jewish outreach in the current stage is not possible to meet only by the resources that we have in Germany. We ask now for and rely on help of experienced theologians, messianic leaders, missionaries, messianic congregations, churches and mission organizations from other countries. So, please join us in this outreach in this history making place at the history making time, namely, in Germany today.

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Evening Session

Isaac Lichtenstein - a Jesus-believing Hungarian rabbi Kai Kjær-Hansen, International Coordinator of LCJE

Jewish believers from the past

Tonight we are going to meet Isaac (Ignatz) Lichtenstein. Joseph Rabinowitz, Yechiel Zwi Lichtenstein, Christian Theophilus Lucky and Rabbi Isaac Lichtenstein made up a remarkable quartet towards the end of the 19th century. They differed in their understanding of the faith and in their mission strategy, but on one thing they agreed: their faith in Jesus had not made them ex-Jews. They were not ashamed to be Jews who believed in Jesus. But was it possible to be believers in Jesus without being baptized publicly? Rabbi Lichtenstein and Rabinowitz gave different answers, as we are now going to see.

But first we are going to the north-eastern corner of Hungary, to a small town by the name of Tisza-Eszlar. It became famous in 1882 and is connected to Rabbi Lichtenstein's faith in Jesus.

The Tisza-Eszlar Affair

With the Tisza-Eszlar Affair we have a repeat of the same old story that Jews at Pesach kill a Christian to mix the blood into their unleavened bread. On April 1, 1882, a young servant girl by the name of Esther Solymossi is sent shopping. She never comes back. It is soon rumoured that she has been killed by the Jews. Eight-year-old Moritz, son of a Jewish butcher, is threatened to say that he had seen his father and others take Esther to the synagogue, cut her throat and pour her blood into a basin.

And then an anti-Semitic hell broke loo-

se. Esther was later found, she had drowned in the river and there were no signs that her throat had been cut. Of course the groundless charges did not stick, and at a trial in Budapest in 1883 the Jews were acquitted. But the whole situation had, before then, received much attention in the European press. Professor Franz Delitzsch, Leipzig, also got involved through articles and a pamphlet, which pointed out the unreasonable accusation against Jews for using Christian blood at Pesach.

In Tapio Szele, then a two-and-a-half-hour train journey east from Budapest, Isaac Lichtenstein was District Rabbi. He was born in 1825 and had been a rabbi since circa 1845. He naturally kept himself informed about the Tisza-Eszlar Affair. And at that time Delitzsch's writings came into Rabbi Lichtenstein's hands. In these there were severe attacks on the anti-Semitism that had been expressed by some Christian theologians. Lichtenstein was now challenged to find out if the New Testament is an anti-Semitic book. He even had the "forbidden" book in his library. Although unread, for approximately 30 years earlier a schoolteacher in Tapio Szele had shown Rabbi Lichtenstein a Bible that included the New Testament. Lichtenstein immediately confiscated the dangerous book and placed it in his own library.

But in connection with the Tisza-Eszlar Affair Rabbi Lichtenstein read in the forbidden and dangerous book. And yes, in 1883 he came to faith in Jesus Messiah. He did not at once proclaim his new-found faith from the rooftops. But gradually his sermons became more and more influenced by New Testament ideas, although the name of Jesus was not

mentioned. It is in 1885 (presumably) that he preaches on the whitewashed tombs; he says that the text is taken from the New Testament and confesses that he believes in Jesus as Israel's true Messiah.

And then, not unexpectedly, opposition against him from the Jewish leadership flared up. That was in 1886, but the extraordinary thing is that Lichtenstein even until 1892 continued to work as a rabbi in Tapio Szele. He must have had some very loyal supporters in his congregation.

I will confine myself to a few glimpses from the first time after he has made it public that he is a Jesus-believer.

Did not Jesus belong to the Jews?

Andrew Moody was at that time in Budapest as a missionary for the Free Church of Scotland. In his yearly reports Moody gives much interesting information about Lichtenstein, information that fills out some gaps that other sources have left.

In his yearly report for 1886 (published May 1887) Moody says that Lichtenstein came to him in Budapest "about two years and a half ago". So the meeting must have taken place in the period from the summer of 1884 to the turn of the year 1885. Lichtenstein came "in secret, and although he said that he was a Rabbi in office, he hesitated about giving his name, and saying where the little town or village was from which he came."

But the connection between Lichtenstein and Moody has been made and it is cemented in the following time. "From the first," Moody writes, "he said that it was his desire, in confessing Christ, to carry his little flock with him; he had been long with them, enjoyed their respect and confidence, and hoped to be able to hold his ground. He was determined, if possible, not to separate himself from the Jews. Did not Christ belong to the Jews? was his contention."

As we shall soon see, there are more sides than one to such an issue.

Three pamphlets in 1886

In the summer of 1886 Lichtenstein tells

Moody in one of their conversations that he has committed his thoughts to writing. Moody urged him to give them publicity through the press. "We had much conversation on the subject; the resolution cost him a struggle; for it was evident that, to publish what he had written with his name appended, would be to cross the *Rubicon*," Moody writes. Lichtenstein insists that first must a pamphlet "in defence of the Talmud" be published. "His object was to introduce himself to the public in his real character as a true Jew, who held in high honour the commentaries and traditions of the fathers."

Which is what he did. In August 1886 the first pamphlet is published, in German, the English title is given as *The Talmud on its Trial*. It does not attract any attention to speak of. Jesus and the New Testament are quoted, but it is no manifesto for the Christian faith. In one of the newspapers a Jewish writer described it as in the main "harmless". In December 1886 appears a pamphlet with the title *Love and Conversion*, which I am not going to deal with here. In between, in the autumn of 1886, had come pamphlet no. 2 with the German title *Mein Zeugnis (My Testimony)*. It caused an uproar in the Jewish world in Austria-Hungary.

Moody says that "its appearance was like the bursting of a bomb-shell". In Moody's English translation the pamphlet opens with these words: "My testimony for Christ is so simple and self-evident that I feel, if I were to keep silence, that the very stones would cry out." And Lichtenstein continues: "Christ is the pillar of truth, the most glorious treasure of heaven, the brightest ornament of creation, the most exalted Son of Man who ever worked on earth, incarnate righteousness, the world's Saviour, the world's Messiah." And further on: "The Mosaic religion, with its sacrifices and ceremonial observances, was for the Jews, but the Jewish faith – the worship of God, trust in God, love of one's neighbour, self-denial, sanctification, the sanctity of marriage, chastity and moral purity, the faith, the religion of the world – was

founded and established by Christ. 'The law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Christ'."

Reactions to the three pamphlets

Franz Delitzsch reads these pamphlets with great joy and immediately sends his congratulations in a letter to Lichtenstein. The reaction was, naturally, different in the Jewish world. In *Oesterreichische Wochenschrift* the editor, Dr. Bloch, writes an article entitled *The Christian Rabbi* and says, among other things: "That a Rabbi in office should maintain that Christ was the Messiah was a thing unheard of, and was not to be endured. Out with him! Away with him! If he has his convictions let him keep them; but he cannot remain with us."

Lichtenstein is invited to a meeting in Budapest with the chief Rabbis of the city. First they query that Lichtenstein is the author of the pamphlets; next they try to persuade him to stop the circulation of them. Then he challenges them to prove that he is wrong. Moody then continues: "When they saw that their threats were useless, they concluded by saying that if he adhered to these opinions he must leave them and be baptized immediately (!) When he came to me next day he was much excited, and said, 'If the Jewish ministers of religion now tell me that I must be baptized, it is a sure sign that this ought not to be at present'."

I cannot here deal with the many "wicked efforts" that were made to stir up the people against him. Moody says in this connection: "The people, however, showed no disposition to part with him, and we were told that on one occasion, at a meeting, a member rose to say, 'We are attached to our Rabbi and wish no other, and if he tells us that we ought to be baptized we shall follow him'."

How Lichtenstein reacted to opposition to him emerges from the following example from the autumn of 1888.

In 1888-1889 Lichtenstein and some of his family are involved in a business, which resulted in a heavy financial loss, and he is forced to sell his house. However, he is

able to buy another in Tapio Szele from money he receives from friends in London.

Moody believes that Lichtenstein was treated unjustly by the Jews, and in the beginning of 1889 he has this comment: "A few weeks ago I asked him to furnish me with a succinct account of the course of events, bringing out how the Jews had dealt with him." In a letter of February 8, 1889, Lichtenstein sends his reply from Tapio Szele: "Rev. Sir, in order to comply with your request I should have to begin with accusations, and end with pronouncing judgment, while my Master has taught me to bear every evil in humility, to cast the mantle of love over human weaknesses, and with the Son to say, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'."

In 1892 he realizes that for the sake of peace he will have to step down from his task as rabbi in Tapio Szele. Which he did. But as far as I can see, this does not mean that he emerges as an evangelist in Budapest or forms a congregation.

Again Moody has an interesting note. In his report for 1893 he mentions that the Free Church has begun to have a Hebrew meeting on Sundays. A board is hung up on the door with the words, "Beit Ha Midrash" and there are texts in Hebrew that invite people to attend. They focus on the Psalms, occasionally also on passages from the Prophets. And then Moody writes: "Rabbi Lichtenstein is usually with us. He reads his verse with the others, and offers his remarks, which are often striking and interesting. He has not lectured in this city [Budapest] as he has done in Hamburg and London, but he is ready to take part in this meeting as it is not advertised."

"... as it is not advertised". I wonder what that means and what conclusions can be drawn about Rabbi Lichtenstein's work for the salvation of Jews in Budapest. At that time approximately 10 years have passed since he came to faith.

Lichtenstein and baptism

Lichtenstein did not accept the challenge from some in the congregation in Tapio

Szele who said that they would follow him even if he were baptized. For he himself did not want to be baptized although there was no shortage of requests that he do it. A few examples:

In his report for 1886 Moody writes about Lichtenstein: "I have spoken with him repeatedly about baptism, and endeavoured to show him that if he confessed Christ fully he must be baptized, but he has till now maintained that if he were to be baptized, he would break the connection with his people, and that his influence would be gone. He is exposed to many dangers, however, and one cannot but desire that he would take the decisive step now." Moody reminded him several times but without success. So did others, including Joseph Rabinowitz, on a visit to Budapest. But also in vain.

In a letter to Moody in February 1889 Rabinowitz writes: "Greet Rabbi Lichtenstein, and tell him 'the hour is come ... a corn of wheat if it *die*, it bringeth forth *much fruit*.' 'We are *buried* with Him by baptism *into death*, that like as the Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk *in newness of life* (John xii, 23,24, Rom. vi. 4). If Rabbi Lichtenstein verily loves his people Israel, and wishes to bring him fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God, let him be baptized." Rabinowitz concludes his letter with the following words: "In general, the Jews are not standing in need of *theology learning* by their Rabbis, but of *good examples*." According to Rabinowitz Lichtenstein has not taken the crucial step away from Judaism or realized that one cannot put a patch onto an old garment.

In the autumn of 1891 Rabinowitz was in Budapest with his wife and his daughter. On that occasion Rabinowitz' wife was baptized by Moody. On October 5, Rabinowitz telegraphed home, "*Mama, gerettet*" (mother saved). Lichtenstein and Rabinowitz met twice in Moody's house.

They did not see eye to eye on the necessity of Jesus-believers being baptized publicly. According to some sources, however, Lichtenstein later baptized himself in a Sabbath *mikve*, immersing himself in the name of Jesus.

I do not have a clear impression why Lichtenstein did not take that step. As he had been ostracized from the synagogue, baptism would not have made any difference in relation to that. And yet. The fact that he had not been baptized publicly presumably made it possible for him to be buried in a Jewish graveyard in 1908.

But during his life Dr Bloch's words from 1886 remained in force: "Out with him! Away with him! If he has his convictions let him keep them; but he cannot remain with us." I, for one, cannot criticize Dr Bloch. It is Jewish people's right to define what the synagogue will accept as regards a Rabbi in office – a rabbi who believes in Jesus.

Or what do you think?

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My concern is to build bridges

Hanspeter Obrist, Executive Director, Association for the Messianic Witness to Israel, Germany and Switzerland

Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. This fact has fascinated and affected me all of my life. I was taught the Bible since I was a little child, and I became fond of it. When I was 8 years old, I told my Bible teacher when I grow up I would be in a ministry for God. This was my heart's deep desire. Some years later, the pastor teaching us Biblical studies had a preference for prophecies. So we were discussing about it for hours in his classes. Therefore I was taught eschatological perspectives in an early age. After having learned a profession, I studied theology at St. Chrischona near Basel (Switzerland). There I got to know the work of Conrad Schick, whose scale model of Jerusalem is at St. Chrischona.

After serving some years in different congregations, I was appointed to the leadership of amzi. My life and my calling deeply depend on the vision of Chrischona in the Middle East. The vision of our forefathers became a part of me. I found I really enjoy to show people the correlation between the Tanach and the New Covenant.

amzi (Association for the Messianic Witness to Israel) is part of "Pilgermission [pilgrim mission] St. Chrischona". Our special concern is to serve our brothers and sisters in the Middle East through prayer and financial support. This vision began from the very beginning of our denomination. In 1833, Chrischona sent somebody to the Middle East to find out whether it was possible to build a colony to go and share the Gospel with the peoples of the Middle East. This turned out to be impossible due to the political situation. When this changed in 1840, Chrischona sent the second and third student of its newly founded theological education institution to Palestine. Their names: Conrad Schick and Ferdinand Palmer. Together with other brothers who followed they tried to find a living, though life was very hard and supplies from Europe were

insufficient. In the end, they all had to join other organizations to survive.

Though Chrischona didn't have the money, they sent people with a great impact to the Land. Conrad Schick was the constructor of New Jerusalem and got an honorary doctor's degree from the University of Tübingen (Germany).

Ludwig Schneller was the builder of the biggest orphanage for Arabic children.

Johannes Frutiger developed the biggest retail business (C.F. Spittler & Cie.) in the Middle East and made emigration to Palestine more attractive. He was the founder of a bank and financed the building projects of Conrad Schick as well as the railroad to Jerusalem. Together with Conrad Schick he constructed Mea Shearim, Menachem Yehuda and other important buildings.

Christoph Hoffmann and the Templers had a relation to Chrischona, too, though they evolved in a different theological direction.

There was even an Apostle road, which started in Jerusalem, to take the Gospel through Ethiopia to all Africa. Martin Flad from Chrischona founded the Messianic movement within the Falasha in Ethiopia.

The men's selfless service helped develop the infrastructure in the Middle East. The impulses for this came from Basel, where already in 1812 a Jewish school was founded to teach Jewish children on the initiative of Christian Friedrich Spittler (founder of Pilgermission St. Chrischona) and others.

If projects or ministries already do exist, it is characteristic for Chrischona to cooperate with them. That is the same today; Chrischona has connections to different denominations all over the world. In Israel and the neighboring territories, we network with all brothers and sisters, both Messianic Jews and Arabic Christians.

That's where I find myself and the ministry of amzi. It is my concern to build

bridges between the different traditions to live our faith. In his last prayer, Jesus prayed for unity in Christ, the Messiah. I am committed to esteem one another in love and respect. There is only one Messiah: Yeshua, Jesus, the Jewish Messiah.

Acts 15 is a special challenge for all of us. Do we have the greatness to allow ourselves to express our faith in different traditions and ways? Theologically, we have to go back to this point. We have the freedom to live our faith in our Jewish or non Jewish traditions without denying the other his freedom as unbiblical. The challenge is to respect the different traditions and consider them as an enrichment.

God Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one. Nothing the Son does is contrary to the Father and the Holy Spirit. The same, everything the Holy Spirit does is in accordance to the Father and the Son. We as human beings can hardly imagine this unity. Even as a very good married couple, we will have dissensions now and then. God is different. He is one. This unity is the picture, which touches me and which Jesus' prayer was all about. Are we ready

to be one in the spirit even if the outer appearance is different?

I understand my life as part of this ministry. I would like to connect people from Europe and from the Middle East, Arabic Christians and Messianic Jews. This unity is our God's desire.

We as amzi are less involved in direct evangelism; we rather want to serve those who are called to the ministry of evangelism by God. We want to pray for them and motivate others to pray for them as well. We do this through writing about their concerns in our magazine and in our weekly prayer e-mail, which is translated to German, English, French, Russian, Italian, and Hungarian. We also translate and mail several newsletters of different ministries and publish our own magazine every two months.

We are grateful for everyone who shares this vision and cooperates with us. It's not our job to start ministries in our own name, but to support existing ministries. This kind of ministry is unusual to a lot of people, but that's our vision.

*Hanspeter Obrist
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Stories from Russia

Frank Arthur, Executive Director, MediaServe, Sweden

My wife Leena and I began reaching Russian Jews with God's Word in 1994.

We had many years of experience in publishing Bibles for specific people groups in Asia, Africa and South America. So when the Lord called us to develop a Bible for Jewish people, we knew it would be a Bible with a difference. Instead of a black cover with a cross, we put striking illustrations of the Star of David and a menorah. Then inside, on the very first pages, we included a selection of God's eternal promises to the Jewish people, followed by the messianic prophecies and their fulfilment in Jesus. We called the book, "The Holy Scriptures".

From the outset, Leena and I saw the wonderful hand of God at work. It took six months to get everything ready for the printer, but we still had no money for the project! Then, quite unexpectedly, we became beneficiaries of a will, where a lady had designated money for the evangelization of the Jews. We were walking in prepared paths! The first printing was 30,000 copies. That was twelve years ago, and we rejoice at what the Lord has done – 347,000 Bibles since 1994. It's a miracle!" These Bibles have gone to Russian Jews in the former Soviet Union, Israel, Germany, the USA, and Australia.

The Omega project

At the end of 2002, God began stirring us to intensify our efforts in Russia, and especially Siberia. In March 2003 we launched "The Omega Project". From within Russia, we send out a postcard offering a free copy of our special edition of the Russian Bible. The vision the Lord had placed in our hearts was to offer a free copy of this Bible to every Jewish home in Russia. We have more than a million addresses available to us today, and by the end of April 2007 had mailed offer postcards to 750,000 Jewish homes in 36 cities and regions. Over 27,000 Jewish households have responded to the free

offer and received a copy of this Bible.

Testimonies

We at MediaServe are so grateful for the help and partnership of other ministries. I recently visited Olavi Syvantö in Beesheba. He and his family have been spreading Bibles in Israel for many years. They have distributed almost 100,000 of our Russian Bible, and you can't go very far in Israel today without seeing a copy. Olavi reminded us: "Most Jewish people come to faith through reading the Scriptures." And the number of believers is growing in Israel – many of them Russian! The seed of God's Word is being sown in good ground and bearing much fruit.

From Russia itself, we receive many interesting letters. Here's one from Naumova, a grateful recipient in the city of Perm. She writes: *A year ago, I wrote asking for a Bible. I didn't believe in anyone or anything then. But The Highest turned towards me and I came to faith in God. I read the Bible a lot. I've learned to pray, and you know what? It became easier for me to live.*

R. Solomonovna in Nizhnevartovsk couldn't believe the time would come in Russia when she could receive a Bible by mail. *Thank you for this edition with the Star of David on the cover. Please send such a Bible to my daughter, so she will know that Jesus is a Jew and born of a Jewish woman!*

Some Russian Jewish people have only recently become aware of their "Jewishness". Shabalina in Nizhnevartovsk writes:

The friend of my youth just recently found out she is Jewish, because her parents hid this fact from her during the time of Communism. She is 50 years old now, and I have not seen her for about twenty years. I would like to ask you to mail her three copies of the "Holy Scriptures": for my friend personally, for her mother and for her daughter.

Igor Lisetskiy in Bratsk, Siberia writes:

I am mailing this letter because my daughter has slightly damaged the postcard. I was surprised to get a postcard from you. I live in Bratsk and you wrote to me from St. Petersburg. How did you find me? For me it is a mystery. Anyway, I would like to get the Holy Scriptures.

The Bible project is actually being used of God to locate Jewish people in Russia. One lady wrote: "I always felt that I was different, and my neighbours thought I was German. But now I know that I am a Jew!" It's the first and middle names that give them away.

Reaching Hebrew-speaking Jewish people

We have just released a Hebrew edition of "The Prophets Speak" – the same compilation of God's promises to the Jews and prophecies about the coming Messiah as featured in the Russian Bible. We have a wonderful sense that this is God's time to begin reaching Hebrew-speaking Israelis with this compilation of Scriptures. Distribution is now under way through many different congregations and

ministries in Israel. David and Karen Davis of Mount Carmel Assembly have asked for 4,000 copies. They told us that since the war with Hezbollah, Israelis are more open to hear about their Messiah.

"For the Jew first..."

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 1:16, For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, *for the Jew first* and also for the Gentile.

In the last few years, we have discovered that God pours out an extra blessing on ministry to the Gentiles, as we do what Paul says and go first to the Jew. Since we began going to Jewish people with God's Word, we have witnessed a huge increase in the distribution of other literature: well over 50 million pieces, in partnership with others.

Evangelist Sid Roth put it this way: "By going to the Jew first, it literally opens up a supernatural door of blessing for all people to come to know the Lord."

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The good Samaritan

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The theme of this Eighth LCJE international conference is Jewish Evangelism. And I am thankful for the organizers of this conference that they have added the parable of the Good Samaritan as one of the subjects. I think that we all agree that while we see our mission as reaching out to our Jewish people, and while we concentrate our efforts on them, we can not ignore others that God puts in our way. We ought not to forget our neighbors also when it comes to evangelism.

In the last two centuries we witnessed or heard of several revolutions in our world. Most revolutions such as the Islamic revolution in Iran where I personally witnessed in its early stages, were done via bloodshed, killing, and often robbing. The word revolution itself comes from the Latin word *revolutio* which means "turn around". The modern Hebrew word *maepekha* used for revolution also denotes the same idea of turning around or opposite. It can basically be defined as a means to achieve social or economical changes or turn around. It is the way by which people try to achieve what they cannot achieve in a usual way.

Christ was a revolutionary, and his message was revolutionary. He was revolutionary in the way that he taught, in the things that he did, and in the way in which he behaved. There is no doubt that he brought a revolution, one whose effects we see today and forevermore. When the people heard him teach they were amazed, because he taught with authority. When he cast out demons or quieted the storm, the people were astonished by his power. But he also brought a social turn-about by his teachings and actions.

Christ changed the social status of various groups of people. He was the friend of sinners. In his time three groups of people from among the Jewish people were considered outcasts. These were the tax-collectors, the shepherds and the

women. And in his unique way He gave them a prominent place. The books of the New Testament start with the Gospel of Matthew, who was a tax collector. The shepherds were the first ones who came to the new born King and presented him with gifts and worshiped him. And the women were the first missionaries, since they were the first to see the empty tomb, and ran to the disciples to tell them, "He is Risen!"

However, Jesus' peaceful, gentle social revolution extended beyond Jewish society and included an other cast down group, namely the Samaritans. In John 4, he goes into the Samaritan city and initiates a conversation with a woman. That ended many in the city believing that Jesus is the Savior of the world. Considering the rivalry that existed at the time between Jews and Samaritans, it was revolutionary for Christ to go into their city and even to stay there for two days. For Christ there were no geographical, social, or ethnic boundaries, and certainly none that could not be crossed over. And therefore we should not be surprised that in the parable before us, Jesus uses a Samaritan as the one who helps the wounded man, who most likely was a Jew.

In light of these facts we hopefully can gain a deeper understanding of the parable of the Good Samaritan, found in Gospel of Luke 10:25-37.

Luke 10:25-37

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"²⁷ And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."²⁸ And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man

was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise." (ESV)

The parable

This parable is a bit different than others in that it is a story within a story. Dr. Luke began by telling us that a lawyer, the kind that is skilled in the Mosaic Law, comes to test Jesus by asking an innocent question. The purpose was not to discover or to learn, but to test and to cause the Teacher to stumble. Jesus knew the heart of the man, as John the evangelist tells us, *But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people* (John 2:24). So as it was often Jesus method, he answered the question by another question, a question that began with a story and ended with a self explanatory answer. At the end the specialist in the law fell into the trap. He received the answer, "*You go, and do likewise*" but obviously was not happy with it. You can never win an argument with Jesus, who is the word, the Logos.

In this parable the lawyer begins by asking the most important question, though with wrong intention and motive. He asks "*Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal*

life?" I do not recall the last time, or even the first time that someone asked me this question. Asking this question is admitting that one is at least seeking to inherit the eternal life, if not more than that. And the "law expert" was far from being there.

Though Jesus answer-by-question should not surprise us, it is interesting to note that Jesus refers him back to the scriptures, to the Law. For Jesus, who was the Word, the scriptures had a place of supremacy, and he often used it to answer questions. He held them in high regard. He takes the lawyer to his familiar field, and as expected the man knows the right answer, but still his heart is not there. If the lawyer had been satisfied by the answer, without feeling that he needs to justify himself, then he might have been satisfied or have stopped at Jesus answer "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." But going one more step, asking "And who is my neighbor?" he gets a parable as an answer.

The parable is not about doing good, but about who we should consider our neighbor, since we are commanded to love our neighbors. We often like to put boundaries and limit the extension of God's commands. Would it not be easy if I had to do good only to those who are part of my family, or live within a certain distance? Would it not be easy if I had to forgive only seven times? Apparently, the law-expert was hoping that Jesus would tell him, "well your neighbor is only your family members", or those that live within 3 miles, or at most only the covenant people, the Jews." But Jesus expanded and extended and did not limit. Your neighbor is anyone who needs your help, and whom you can help. The Samaritan acted as a true neighbor to the wounded person, lying at the side of the street. When it comes to who my neighbor is there is no social, ethnic, economical or any other boundary that should limit me, or should prohibit me from extending a helping hand.

The scriptures of the Old and New Testament give us a picture of the enmity between the Jews and the Gentiles. The

beginning of that enmity began at the time of the last king of Israel, Hosheai. In II Kings 17:24 we read that when the king of Assyria conquers the Samaria and exiles the people of Israel he also sends people from Babylon and other cities to settle in Samaria. After some time the two people intermarry and as a result when the Israelites come back from the exile, they do not recognize the people in Samaria as Jews. In the years the tense relationship becomes even tenser, when a rival "temple" is built in Samaria. The depth of that enmity can be seen in the words of the James and John when they come to the Samaritan village that did not receive Jesus the Jew, and said "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" Luke 9:54. These are strong words coming not from Peter, but from James and John.

In light of this background and the history we now can see the importance of Jesus example and in his bringing three characters into the story – the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan.

In our modern cyberspace times we are all super busy. For many of us there are good things that we do for the Kingdom's work. At the first glance we might sympathize with the priest and the Levite who were also busy doing the work of the Lord: the injured man was a hindrance to their immediate ministry. Not knowing who he was, they could have defiled themselves, and after all may be even he was dead, and this would have disqualified them from serving in the temple. Can you imagine any thing more important than the work of the priest and Levites in the temple? After all sacrifices had to be made, praises to the Lord had to be sung, and offerings had to be made to the Holy God. All of these were important enough to leave the injured man by himself. They had a very important task at the temple in Jerusalem. No doubt someone else could help the injured guy, after all they were the priest and the Levite, and God cannot expect them to do a mundane task of taking care of an unknown injured, half

dead stranger!

But then the third character in the narrative is the Samaritan man, who comes to the same place. Unlike the other two he does not pass to the other side of the road, but rather checks the injured guy and takes care of his wounds. The key in this parable in my opinion is the words, and when he saw him, he had compassion. The Greek work used for compassion in the parable (εσπλαγγισθη) is the same word that is used often for what Jesus felt about the crowd that he saw. In Matthew 9, after Jesus traveled to the various towns and cities, teaching and healing (v. 35), he then had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (v. 36). Also when Jesus sees the dead son of the widow from Nain, her only son, he has compassion on them. In this case and in other cases the word is used in referring to Jesus and how he responded to the needs of the people. It is interesting to note that the word is also used in the parable of prodigal son. When the father from a distance sees his son, he has compassion on him – But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him (Luke 15:20). In all the places where we come across this word, it is always preceded by the act of seeing. The person sees and has compassion.

In our parable the Samaritan sees the person and based on what he sees he has compassion on him. That compassion causes him to act. We can see why Jesus said that the eye is the lamp of the body (Matt. 6:22). Through the eyes, the Samaritan had compassion. He did not feel compassion, he had compassion. He not only took care of his wounds, but gave him a ride to the nearby inn and there continued to take care of him. Furthermore, he paid the inn keeper for the extra days that the man needed to recover. The Samaritan man wanted to make sure that his "new neighbor" was taken care of as long as needed. He truly went the extra

mile. He was willing to go the extra mile, even though there was a price to pay.

Unlike the other two who passed to the other side of the street, the Samaritan had a good sense of his priority. He realized that at this point in time, though he has a business meeting to attend and though he might lose on an important deal, there was something far more important that here and now he needs to take care of – a man is lying half dead in the middle of the road.

When Jesus asks the law expert who acted as the neighbor to the injured man, he received the right answer. He answered “The one who showed him mercy.” It would have been too hard to expect him to say the Samaritan, but nevertheless he gave the correct answer. The Samaritan was the true neighbor because he was the one who showed him mercy.

The lesson for us is that when it comes to helping and having mercy, there are no limits. We need to help and show mercy to

anyone that God brings to our path, no matter what nationality, what race or what religion he is from. We cannot discriminate against any person. Just as God in his mercy and goodness pours the rain on all men, so we should be willing to give to all who need.

The words of Jesus echoes to us even today and here – You go, and do likewise. We need to open our eyes to see the need of the people that are around us. Though we all have our schedules and tasks we need to be flexible in allowing the Holy Spirit to guide us to those who need our attention, who are not written in our diaries or PDA's. Are we willing to open our eyes to see and to have compassion on people? And are we willing to act as their neighbor? I hope so.©

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