
JMJS Vol. 3, 2020

ISSN : ISSN 2379-836X



Journal of
**MESSIANIC
JEWISH STUDIES**

CHARLES L. FEINBERG CENTER

Volume 3, 2020



Journal of
**MESSIANIC
JEWISH STUDIES**

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*The
Journal
of
Messianic
Jewish
Studies*

Volume 3
Summer 2020



Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies

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Times New Roman, Minion Pro, &
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2020

Charles L. Feinberg Center, New York
ISSN : ISSN 2379-836X

www.journalofmessianicjewishstudies.com

The Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies

Core Values

Theology:

We believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, the Triune nature of God and full deity and sinless humanity of Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah, salvation through faith in Yeshua alone. We also believe that God is faithful to His covenants and promises to the Jewish people and in the importance of Jewish evangelism.

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Our goal is to reflect the best of Evangelical and Jewish scholarship in our articles and to demonstrate how Christianity and Judaism intersect and inform one another on a variety of scholarly and practical areas of study. Therefore, submissions to JMJS are to be supported by a thoughtful, biblical, and theological analysis and relevant to Messianic Jewish thought, Jewish evangelism and the interplay between Judaism and Christianity.

Contributions:

The editors welcome contributions from all who respect the role of the Jewish people in the plan of God and who wish to explore the inter-relatedness between faith in Yeshua the Messiah and Judaism. Submissions are welcomed that are of interest and relevance to the aims and readership of the journal.

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Articles appearing in the journal do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors but are intended to promote a better understanding of the Messianic Jewish movement and the ways in which Evangelical Christianity relates to Jewish history, tradition, biblical scholarship and practice.

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Presenters

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University's Talbot School of Theology and Chosen People Ministries. He earned a degree in Ministry from Palm Beach Atlantic University and a Master of Divinity from Talbot School of Theology through the Feinberg Center. Although neither Robert nor his wife, Joanna, is Jewish, God laid a heavy burden on their hearts to share Jesus with the Jewish people. They reside in Brooklyn with their two young children.



Introduction

Alan M. Shore

As many of both sides of the border have discovered, interfaith dialogue between Jews and Christians is a frustrating and often fruitless exercise. How more so is *intra*-faith dialogue between Jew and Jew, especially since one of the saddest codas to any Jewish discussion is often, “I’m sorry to say I agree with you.” For then, what more is there to argue about?

Normal conversation between Messianic Jewish believers and other Jews is particularly difficult because emotions tend to run high. For some time, Jewish believers have asked, is there a more neutral space where Jews of various viewpoints can work toward constructively adding to one another’s knowledge and perspective?

It turns out that there is, in the environment of a shared love of scholarship. In the past ten years, Messianic and non-Messianic scholars have met together on numerous occasions on topics of shared interest, in an atmosphere of friendliness and mutual respect. This issue of *The Journal of Messianic Jewish*



Studies (JMJS), sponsored by the Charles L. Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies, consists of articles collected from such a conference held at the Feinberg Center entitled, “The Life and Times of Leopold Cohn,” which took place on December 4-6, 2019.

2019 was a milestone year for Chosen People Ministries, for it marked the 125th anniversary of the founding of the mission by Leopold Cohn in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn in 1894. Chosen People Ministries marked the occasion with conferences throughout the year in North Carolina, California, Wisconsin, Maryland and a gala banquet in Brooklyn. The idea to organize a conference to explore various facets of the history of the Mission came almost as an afterthought. Ironically, it was put forth by an outside source, Dr. Mendi Keren. Dr. Keren, whose work you will encounter later in the pages of this journal, is one of a number of non-Messianic Jewish scholars with whom Dr. Glaser and others on staff have cultivated cordial and collegial relationships.

This conference takes place in the context of a relatively newly aroused academic interest in the history of Jewish evangelism and missions to the Jews. It is quite natural that Chosen People Ministries, formerly the American Board of Missions to the Jews (ABMJ), should play a prominent role in this field, being one of the oldest and most influential organizations that is on the scene today. As well, the remarkable fact that the work was presided over for almost sixty years by the father-son combination of Leopold and Joseph Hoffman Cohn adds additional interest from the standpoint of contrasting personality and leadership style in the organization’s development. As I hope you will find, each of the contributors found different and fascinating aspects of the Mission’s history and, in some cases, offered differing perspectives as well.

My thanks to Dr. Glaser, who served as Executive Editor,

and especially to Dr. Gregory Hagg, whose prior experience and close involvement as Managing Editor proved to be invaluable. Brian Crawford and Robert Walter, both faculty members of the Feinberg Center, served as Assistant Editors and other faculty members including Dr. Rich Flashman also reviewed the papers. Typesetting and Design were by Dr. P. H. Brazier. As always, we acknowledge of many others who remain nameless. We could not have done without their efforts.

Dr. Alan M. Shore
General Editor





Leopold Cohn



Rose Cohn

Conference Papers

The Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies



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The Eschatological Worldview of Hungarian Jewish Ultra-Orthodoxy as Possible Background of Influence on Leopold Cohn

Motti Inbari
The University of North Carolina, Pembroke

INTRODUCTION

This paper explains the eschatological concepts that were held by Hungarian Jewish ultra-Orthodox rabbis in the late 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th century. Understanding this messianic worldview might offer an intellectual background to comprehend the Hungarian-born Leopold Cohn, founder of Chosen People Ministries, an evangelistic mission to the Jewish people. At the end of the paper I would argue that there is commonality between the ideology of Hungarian ultra-



Orthodoxy and pre-millennial dispensationalism, the ideology Cohn adopted after his conversion. Thus, there might have been some intellectual continuity between the different phases of his life.

In order to analyze the Hungarian Jewish ultra-Orthodox worldview, I will concentrate my attention on one influential figure – Rabbi Akiva Yosef Schlesinger (1837-1922), basing my examination of his beliefs on his treatise *Lev Ha'ivri* (“The Heart of the Hebrew.”) The rabbi employed mystical teachings and viewed the modern era as so degenerate that the advent of the messiah must be imminent. He influenced generations of rabbis who adopted a dualistic approach according to which the only proper Jewish way of life is radical ultra-Orthodoxy, while any deviation from it represents the rise of Satanic powers, which are expected to grow prior to the End Times. Schlesinger and those who thought like him viewed their opponents – moderate Orthodox Jews as well as the secular - as the reincarnation of the mixed multitude: an unauthentic segment of the Jewish nation.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON JEWISH ORTHODOXY

Jacob Katz, a leading scholar of modern Judaism, argues that Orthodox Judaism is a product of the late eighteenth century when Jewish society on the threshold of modernity underwent a loosening of the bonds of tradition leading to the emergence of non-Orthodox tendencies and trends. According to Katz, the difference between Orthodoxy and earlier traditional Jewish society is that in modern times loyalty to tradition is the product

of a conscious decision. Awareness of other Jews' rejection of tradition, an option that was not available in most cases in pre-modern times, is, therefore, an essential and universal characteristic of all forms and variations of Orthodoxy. This term became the label for those who persisted in their traditionalist behaviour once different kinds of Jew appeared on the scene – maskilim (exponents of the Jewish enlightenment) or reformers who deviated from traditional norms while continuing to affirm their affiliation to the community.¹

However, Orthodoxy is not just the guardian of pure Judaism, as its followers tend to argue. According to Katz, "Orthodoxy was a method of confronting deviant trends, and of responding to the very same stimuli which produced those trends, albeit with conscious effort to deny such extrinsic motivations."²

From the eighteenth century onward, Central and Western European Jewry witnessed the rise of the Haskalah movement and various forms of Reform Judaism. The latter part of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of Jewish secularism,³ Zionism, and the Bund (Jewish Socialism) in Eastern Europe. These ideological movements attracted people searching for new forms of Jewish identity. For the most part, the traditional rabbinical and communal leadership responded with resolute

1 Jacob Katz, "Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective," in: Peter Medding (ed.), *Studies in Contemporary Jewry 2; The Challenge of Modernity and Jewish Orthodoxy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986, 3–4.

2 *Ibid.*, 5. David Sorotzkin offers a somewhat different analysis, arguing that Orthodoxy and modernity should be seen not as contrasting movements but as two symbiotic sides of the same historical development. As such, one should not see Orthodoxy as merely responding to heterodoxy; these two movements actually interacted with one another. Sorotzkin bases his argument on S.N. Eisenstadt's idea of "multiple modernities," according to which secularity and fundamentalism are manifestations of the same modern phenomenon. David Sorotzkin, *Orthodoxy and Modern Disciplination: The Production of Jewish Tradition in Europe in Modern Times*. Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 2011, 3–16 (in Hebrew).

3 Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in 18th Century Europe*. Philadelphia and Oxford: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.



opposition. However, they understood that they must create new structures and organizations in order to compete for the souls of the Jewish population.⁴

The existence of Jews who deviate from normative Halakhic (Jewish religious law) practice is by no means an exclusively modern phenomenon. In pre-modern Jewish societies, however, there was no question that normative Judaism was defined by allegiance to the law. The autonomous Jewish communities had the power to expel, fine, or excommunicate the deviants. The emancipation of the Jews in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries eliminated the coercive power of the organized community. The growing number of Jews who preferred a less observant lifestyle created a dramatic change in the Jewish world as observant Jews became a small minority among the Jewish masses of Europe.

Moshe Samet proposed the following four characteristics of Orthodoxy:

1. A departure from the time-honored principle of *Klal Yisrael*, the perception of a unified Jewish community encompassing both the observant and the “backsliders.” In locations where it was unable to control the Jewish community as a whole, Orthodoxy tended to separate itself from the larger community and to create its own institutions and congregations. In effect, Orthodoxy formed a society within a society.
2. Orthodoxy viewed modern culture with the utmost suspicion. As a rule, it rejected modern schooling, even when Jewishly-sponsored and directed, in favor of an autonomous and conservative Orthodox educational system. This system adopted a highly selective position toward “secular” studies.
3. Orthodox Jews adopted an extremely strict standard of observance with respect to the Halakhah. It could be argued

4 Adam Ferziger, *Exclusion and Hierarchy: Orthodoxy, Nonobservance, and the Emergence of Modern Jewish Identity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005, 2.

that a stringent standard of observance previously associated with an elite now became the common norm. Likewise, there developed within Orthodoxy a belief in the ability of the pious Halakhic ruler to discern "Halakhic truth."

4. Under Orthodox inspiration, yeshivot were established for advanced religious studies. The students studied Talmud as a means of developing their religiosity and traditionalism and as a sign of piety. Later, in Israel, men studied in these institutions for years on end, regardless of the economic difficulties this created.⁵

Three different types of Orthodoxy developed in Europe: The first type, Neo-Orthodoxy, became the dominant approach among German Jews. Convinced of the inner significance of every detail of the Law, they observed it scrupulously while at the same time remaining open to the influence of the non-Jewish environment, to which they belonged by virtue of civic emancipation.⁶

The second type emerged in Eastern Europe and was willing to adapt to change on various levels. The followers of this philosophy reject modernity and its works on the principled level, even if they have to accommodate themselves to it in practice. The political and cultural developments in Eastern Europe did not include the adoption of modern education and political emancipation, and Jewish social structure was more diverse.

The third type of response is that of organized and total resistance to change – the radical ultra-Orthodox response that emerged in Hungary, and on which this study focuses. After various religious reforms were introduced in the Arad community under the leadership of Rabbi Aharon Horin (1766-1844) in the early nineteenth century, the traditionalists, under the leadership of Rabbi Moshe Sofer (1762-1839) (known as the "Hatam

5 Moshe Samet, "The Beginnings of Orthodoxy," *Modern Judaism* 8, 3 (1988) 249–69.

6 Katz, "Orthodoxy," 5.



Sofer,”) and Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum (1758-1841),⁷ went onto the offensive. In an effort to safeguard their community, the rabbis adopted an intellectual and institutional strategy that rejected all innovations; indeed, the Hatam Sofer coined the adage that “Anything new is forbidden according to the Torah.” He argued that the integrity of the Jewish community depends on the strict adherence of its members to the Orthodox way of life; deviators automatically forfeit the right to be called Jews.⁸

The clash between traditionalists and innovators gained intensity during the decades following the death of the Hatam Sofer. The state authorities also became embroiled in the conflict after the government proposed the establishment of a modern rabbinical seminary, a suggestion that was accepted by the reformers but rejected by the Orthodox. In 1868, following the emancipation of the Jews in Hungary, the government asked the Jews to form a national representative body along the lines of other recognized denominations. The Orthodox minority refused to join such a body, and a schism took place, after which Orthodoxy developed its own institutions. This was the first instance in European Jewish history of an officially-recognized Orthodox subgroup.⁹

The attempt to retrace the genealogy and ideological development of radical ultra-Orthodoxy leads to Marmaros

7 Moshe Teitelbaum, the great-grandfather of Yoel Teitelbaum, exerted a profound spiritual influence over the Satmar Hasidic movement. Relatively little research has been conducted concerning Moshe Teitelbaum. The first scholar to examine both Teitelbaum Senior and Junior is Menachem Keren-Kratz, *Marmaros-Sziget: 'Extreme Orthodoxy' and Secular Jewish Culture at the Foothills of the Carpathian Mountains*. Jerusalem: Carmel, 2013 (in Hebrew). see also: Jacob Katz, *A House Divided: Orthodoxy and Schism in Nineteenth-century Central European Jewry*. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1998, 77–85; David Myers, “‘Commanded War:’ Three Chapters in the ‘Military’ History of Satmar Hasidism,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 81 (2) (2013) 1–46.

8 Katz, “Orthodoxy,” 6–7.

9 For more details on the schism see: Katz, *A House Divided*.

county, situated in the northeast of Hungary to the south of Galicia (after the First World War, the area formed part of Romania and later Czechoslovakia). According to Menachem Keren-Kratz, for a period of almost a hundred years, Marmaros and some of the adjacent Hungarian counties served as the arena for the consolidation of radical ultra-Orthodox ideology. During this period the region became a bastion of religious zealotry, influencing the whole Jewish world by marking the limits of resistance to all modern ideas.¹⁰

MESSIANISM IN THE HASIDIC MOVEMENT
AND MESSIANIC EXPECTATIONS IN ORTHODOX JEWRY
DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD –
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Researchers of Hasidism are divided regarding the manner in which we should understand messianism in Hasidic thought and practice. The major outbreak of messianism that followed the spread of the Sabbatean movement ended in disillusionment. Hasidism, which was founded in the 18th century, approximately one century after the decline of Sabbateanism, did not share the collective messianic tension of the earlier movement. However, from the 1990s, strong messianic fervor developed in the Habad movement, challenging previous assumptions regarding Hasidic messianic passivity.

The dominant strand of research into the Hasidic movement, as identified in particular with the renowned scholar Gershom Scholem, adopted a more dialectical view of Jewish history. Scholem suggested that Hasidism had "neutralized" the

10 Menachem Keren-Kratz, *Marmaros-Sziget: 'Extreme Orthodoxy' and Secular Jewish Culture at the Foothills of the Carpathian Mountains*. Jerusalem: Carmel, 2013 (in Hebrew).



apocalyptical and collective fervor of messianic thought as manifested in the Sabbatean movement.¹¹ These approaches cannot provide a convincing explanation for the eruption of messianism in the Habad Hasidic sector among Hasidic zealots, as described below. Moshe Idel offered a more nuanced analysis, emphasizing that Hasidism is a diverse and longstanding movement. Accordingly, rather than a single, exclusive trend, efforts should focus on identifying diverse responses. According to Idel, the central theme of the first two generations of Hasidism was the spiritualization of the messianic age, with an emphasis on the possibility of individual and mystically-oriented redemption, rather than a collective perception. In later generations, the movement tended more to the collective, apocalyptic, and acute end of the messianic spectrum. Idel attributes this change to Rabbi Yitzhak Eizik Yehuda Yehiel Safrin, the founder of the Komarno Hasidic sect.¹² Another approach, represented by Mor Altshuler, argues that the messianic impulse formed the driving force of Hasidism in the movement's early stages, among the disciples of Rabbi Yechiel Michal, the Maggid of Zlotchov, but was sidelined after his death due to the failure of the messianic plan and the rapid growth of Hasidism from an esoteric sect to a mass movement. Altshuler suggests that this sidelining was not final, however, and that the inherent messianic impulse is liable to re-emerge in particular circumstances.¹³

The outburst of messianism in Hungarian Hasidism should be understood against the background of the particular circumstances pertaining at the time as well as the prevailing views in Orthodox Judaism around the turn of the twentieth century. The roots of

11 Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*. New York: Schocken Books, 1972, 176–202.

12 Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998, 212–47.

13 Mor Altshuler, *The Messianic Secret of Hasidism*. Haifa: Haifa University Press, 2002 (in Hebrew).

messianic tension lay in influences from the surroundings of Hasidism and in the dramatic changes in the condition of the Jews during this period.

Some of the explanations offered by Orthodox leaders for the enormous changes in the condition of the Jews in modern times drew on analogies with the messianic age. They argued that modern reality should be interpreted as the realization of prophecies relating to the period preceding the coming of the messiah.

We may divide the exponents of this position into two categories – optimists and pessimists.¹⁴ The optimistic approach is identified mainly with Religious Zionist thinkers, and in particular with the philosophy of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook, who explained that the rise of Jewish nationalism represents the "first pangs of redemption," that is – the beginning of the messianic process. According to this approach, which is based on natural messianism as described in Maimonides' writings, mundane actions by the non-religious Zionist pioneers reflect the first stages of redemption, which may be realized in full through the actions of mortals.¹⁵ Neo-Orthodox leaders of Agudat Yisrael such as Yitzhak Breuer also shared this approach, which facilitated cooperation between the movement and Zionism.¹⁶ An opposing trend depicted modernity in dismal and pessimistic terms as the "pangs of the messiah" – a period of distress and spiritual decline. Their approach was based on passages from the Babylonian Talmud describing the period of the *ikvata*

14 Gershon Bacon, "Birth Pangs of the Messiah: The Reflections of Two Polish Rabbis on Their Era," in: Jonathan Frankel (ed.), *Studies in Contemporary Jewry 7: Jews and Messianism in the Modern Era: Metaphor and Meaning*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, 86–99.

15 Dov Schwartz, *Religious Zionism: History and Ideology*. Boston: Academic Press, 2009; idem, *Faith at a Crossroads – A Theological Profile of Religious Zionism*. Leiden, Boston & Koln: Brill, 2002.

16 Yosef Fund, *Separation or Integration: Agudat Yisrael confronts Zionism and the State of Israel*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1999, 19–63 (in Hebrew).



de-meshiha (the footsteps of the messiah) as one marked by severe material and spiritual hardship.¹⁷ Those who adopted this position include the Lithuanian Rabbi Yisrael Hachohen of Radin, who ordered his students to study the laws relating to the priests in the Temple in anticipation of imminent redemption, and his disciple Rabbi Elhanan Bonim Wasserman, who composed the influential book *Ikvata de-Meshiha*, in which he interpreted the collapse of religious life as a sign of the approaching End Times.¹⁸ During the interwar period, the Habad Hasidic movement also developed an acute messianic tension that would intensify still further after the war.¹⁹

AKIVA YOSEF SCHLESINGER

Akiva Yosef Schlesinger (1837-1922) was a paradoxical and unusual character. The historian Jacob Katz commented: “Some have claimed that Akiva Yosef Schlesinger was both the grandfather of Zionism and the grandfather of Neturei Karta, and there is some truth in this claim... I do not know who takes more pride in him, but both drew elements from his philosophy, or if they did not draw them – then at least both show aspects that are close to his approach.”²⁰

17 For example, see Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 97a.

18 Gershon Greenberg, “Foundations for Orthodox Jewish Theological Response to the Holocaust: 1936–1939,” in: Alice Eckardt (ed.), *Burning Memory: Times of Testing and Reckoning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press 1993, 71–94.

19 Shalom Ratzbi, “Anti-Zionism and messianic tension in the thought of Rabbi Shalom Dovber,” *Zionism* 20 (5756–1996), 77–101 (in Hebrew); Menachem Friedman, “Messiah and Messianism in Habad-Lubavitch Hasidism,” in: David Ariel-Joël [et al.], *War of Gog and Magog: Messianism and Apocalypse in Judaism – Past and Present*. Tel Aviv: Yediot Acharonot Publishers, 2001, 161–73 (in Hebrew).

20 Quoted in Michael Silber, “A Hebrew Heart Beats in Hungary: Rabbi Akiva

Schlesinger was born in Pressburg, Hungary and received a strictly traditional Jewish education. His father was part of the circle of Moshe Sofer (the "Hatam Sofer,") the founder of Hungarian Orthodoxy,²¹ and he raised his son in keeping with Sofer's worldview. Akiva was ordained to the rabbinate in 1857 in Pressburg by Rabbi Avraham Shmuel Binyamin Sofer (the "Ktav Sofer,") the son of the Hatam Sofer. In 1860 he married Liba, the daughter of Rabbi Hillel Lichtenstein. Schlesinger and Lichtenstein would become the twin pillars of Radical Orthodoxy. In 1870 he emigrated to Palestine where he was involved in Jewish settlement activities; he was among the founders of the colony of Petach Tikva.²²

In 1863 Schlesinger published his treatise *Lev Ha'ivri* ("The Heart of the Hebrew,") which fiercely criticized the phenomenon of religious reform and the neo-Orthodox stream's support for acculturation. This book was dedicated to the teachings of the Hatam Sofer, of whom Schlesinger considered himself a rightful heir.²³ The book was very popular and appeared in five editions. Schlesinger wrote the book against the background of the crisis in Hungarian Orthodoxy during the nineteenth century. Jews who adhered to traditional values faced a series of challenges during this period: the requirement by the state that educational institutions provide secular studies; growing linguistic acculturation; pressure to adopt a Magyar identity; and

Yosef Schlesinger – Between Ultra-Orthodoxy and Jewish Nationalism," in: Avi Sagi and Dov Schwartz (eds.), *One Hundred Years of Zionism*, 1. Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 5763-2003, 226 (in Hebrew).

21 Jacob Katz, "Towards a Biography of the Hatam Sofer," *Divine Law in Human Hands: Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998, 403–43.

22 Michael Silber, "Schlesinger, Akiva Yosef," *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, 2010. http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Schlesinger_Akiva_Yosef, accessed March 4, 2013.

23 Meir Hildesheimer, "The Attitude of the Hatam Sofer toward Moses Mendelssohn," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 60, (1994) 141–87.



widespread religious reforms in the synagogues. By the 1870s Orthodox Jews realized that they would soon become a minority within the Jewish population of Hungary.²⁴

Schlesinger opened *Lev Ha'ivri* with an attack on the teaching of Jewish scriptures to Gentiles and the growing openness of Jews to study non-Jewish texts. This phenomenon had begun with the famous project initiated by Moses Mendelssohn (1726-1786) to translate the Hebrew Bible into German. Mendelssohn is considered one of the fathers of the Enlightenment movement that swept German Jewry.²⁵ Schlesinger regarded the study by Jews of non-rabbinical texts (which he referred to as “exterior books” and “Gentile knowledge”) as the greatest threat to the Jewish world. He argued that those who read such books are considered “evil” and believed that attempts to return them to the fold were futile.²⁶ Mendelssohn advocated various changes to the Jewish way of life, with an emphasis on the adoption of Gentile culture. He called for the abandonment of the Yiddish language and opposed a distinctive Jewish dress. He also advocated the abandonment of traditional Jewish names. However, the real point of concern to Orthodoxy was that Mendelssohn did not seek to abandon Jewish tradition in its entirety, but rather to create a hybrid version of Jewish and German culture. Accordingly, Schlesinger considered neo-Orthodoxy to be an even greater threat to Judaism than the Reform movement that deliberately introduced changes into the synagogue structure and in Jewish rituals. He dubbed the neo-Orthodox “Sadducees,”²⁷ referring to the sect from the Second Temple period that rejected rabbinical authority and the Oral Law.

24 Silber, “The Emergence,” 24–5.

25 David Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

26 Akiva Yosef Schlesinger, *Lev ha'ivri*, Jerusalem: Zuckerman, 5784–1924, 3 (in Hebrew).

27 Silber, “The Emergence,” 27–9.

As a counterweight to Mendelssohn's plan of acculturation, Schlesinger emphasized the distinctive identity of Judaism, which should be manifested in individuals' names, language, and dress. He referred to these three elements by the Hebrew acronym *shale"m*, which also means "complete," and argued that following the ways of the past and highlighting particularistic Jewish identity was a reflection of authenticity. His model of the ideal course to be followed by Jews was the mirror image of that promoted by Mendelssohn. He opposed changing Jewish first names (the process by which Aharon became Adolf or Moshe Martin). He rejected the call for the Jews to adopt the language of their Gentile environment and argued that Jews must remain separate from their neighbours and must not speak the Gentile languages. In the area of dress, too, Schlesinger prohibited such innovations as the shortening of the beard and sidelocks and growing long hair on the top of the head.

Schlesinger saw the dramatic changes in the condition of the Jews, and particularly the collapse of the world of traditional Judaism, as a manifestation of the approaching messianic age. Schlesinger refers to the discussions in the Babylonian Talmud concerning the period preceding the coming of the messiah. In the Rabbinic literature the "footsteps of the messiah" are described as a miserable period characterized by spiritual and material decline. For example, the Babylonian Talmud states that the messiah Son of David will come only in a generation that is either entirely guilty or entirely innocent (Sanhedrin 98a). Accordingly, Schlesinger argues, the emergence of the "Reform sect" is proof of impending redemption, based on his characterization of this movement as one devoted to the desecration of the Sabbath, intermarriage, rejection of the idea of miraculous redemption through the king messiah,²⁸ the selective observance of the commandments, and

28 The Reform movement consistently rejected the anticipation of an



the eating of forbidden foods in public.²⁹ He attacked the Reform as “Satan... a wolf in sheep’s clothing,” and warned his followers to separate themselves from Reform Jews.

Schlesinger’s eschatological and dualist perspective led him to the conclusion that isolationism and an internal schism in the Jewish world were unavoidable and even desirable. He argued that the Talmudic vision of a generation that is entirely guilty and a generation that is entirely innocent in the pre-messianic period demands a sharp distinction: “Those who remain in the Jewish people will be absolutely righteous or absolutely evil.” Accordingly, the best course of action is to divide the synagogues between the heretics and the faithful.³⁰

Schlesinger found further evidence of the imminence of the messianic era in the teachings of the mystical book of the Zohar, applying the term *erev rav* (“mixed multitude”) from the Kabbalistic treatise to those Jews who introduced innovations. The “mixed multitude” is mentioned in the Book of Exodus (12:38): “A mixed multitude (*erev rav*) went up with them, and also large droves of livestock, both flocks and herds.” The traditional Jewish literature defines the “mixed multitude” as non-Jewish Egyptians who joined the exodus from Egypt, assimilated into the nation, and were later responsible for various problems, particularly incitement against Moses and God. In the Kabbalistic literature (particularly the *Ra’aya Mehemana* and *Tikunei Hazohar*), this group receives particular attention, and the radical ultra-Orthodox leaders base their teachings on these mystical sources.

individual messiah Son of David, just as it rejected the concept of the formation of the Kingdom of the House of David in the End Times. Reform Judaism saw redemption as a gradual and infinite process achieved through human efforts to “repair” the world. See: David Ariel-Joël, “Messianism without Messiah: The Messiah Who Will Not Come,” in David Ariel-Joël and others (eds.), *The War of Gog and Magog: Messianism and Apocalypse in Judaism, Past and Present*. Tel Aviv: Hemed Publishers, 2001, 161–73 (in Hebrew).

²⁹ Schlesinger, *Lev ha’ivri*, 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

Two leading scholars in the field of Jewish thought, Yitzhak Baer and Yeshayah Tishbi, claimed that the epithet "mixed multitude" was attached to the leaders of the Spanish Jewish communities in the thirteenth century after they were accused of offending Jewish morality and forming alliances with Gentiles in order to harm the Jewish people and distance the Divine presence. The Kabbalistic works claim that when the messiah comes, the "mixed multitude" will be eliminated from the world. This formed part of their anticipation of the End Times as an imminent event in which God would reward the righteous and punish the wicked, including the "mixed multitude," for their countless offenses.³¹

Rabbi Chaim Vital, who lived in the sixteenth century and was close to Rabbi Yitzhak Luria, offered a different interpretation of the "mixed multitude," which he defined as an intermediate group between Jews and Gentiles. In the End Times, this group would be converted and brought fully into the Jewish fold. He viewed the *Conversos* – Jewish converts to Christianity who returned to Judaism in this period – as an example of this positive phenomenon.³² However, the negative perception of this term based on the Zohar has since become universally accepted. During the Sabbatean controversy in the seventeenth century, both followers and opponents of Shabtai Zvi denigrated each other as the mixed multitude.³³

The identification by ultra-Orthodox circles of modern Jewish trends as the "mixed multitude" is also based on the writings

31 Yitzhak Baer, "The Historical Background of the Ra'aya Mehemena," *Zion* 5, 1 (1940) 1–44 (in Hebrew); Yeshayahu Tishbi, *The Teaching of the Zohar*, 2. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1949, 686–92 (in Hebrew).

32 Shaul Magid, "The Politics of (un)Conversion: The 'Mixed Multitude' (*erev rav*) as *Conversos* in Rabbi Hayyim Vital's *Ets ha-da'at tov*," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95(4) (2005) 625–66.

33 Pawel Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement, 1755–1816*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.



of Rabbi Zvi Elimelech Shapira, the founder of the Dinov-Munkacs Hasidic dynasty. In his essay *Ma'ayan Ganim* ("The Spring's Gardens") he labelled Reform and Enlightenment as the reincarnation of the mixed multitude.³⁴ Like Shapira, Schlesinger argues that the current days are of the beginning of the pre-messianic days where the last selection between good and evil is about to be made.³⁵

According to Schlesinger, in order to ascertain whether the messiah's time has truly come, God presents tests to examine the Jews' faith. He saw his period, with the destabilization of past ways and the great temptations facing the Jews to integrate into the general culture, whether by way of assimilation or acculturation, as a Divine test presented by God to His faithful. He declared that it was preferable to live in poverty, suffering and hunger than to enjoy popularity and wealth at the expense of changing the old ways and turning to "external books."³⁶ Schlesinger wrote: "And you, Sons of Zion who are truly faithful to the Lord... if you wish you and your seed to have a portion and inheritance with the Lord, do not veer from your forefathers' ways... let not your feet follow the paths of evil."³⁷

For Schlesinger, joining Reform was equal to conversion into a different religion. It was preferable, he suggested, to "deliver one's soul" rather than join the Reform sect, which he considered a sin to be avoided even on pain of death.³⁸ He adopted a zealous approach, arguing that no mercy should be shown toward the

34 David Sorotzkin, *The Supratemporal Community in an Era of Changes: Sketches on the Development of the Perception of Time and Collective as a Basis for the Definition of the Development of Jewish Orthodoxy in Modern Times*. Jerusalem: Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2007, 193–203 (in Hebrew); Zvi Elimelech Shapira, *Maayan Ganim*. Zolkeiw: S. Meyerhoffer, 1848 (in Hebrew).

35 Schlesinger, *Lev ha'ivri*, 27.

36 *Ibid.*, 5, 23.

37 *Ibid.*, 45.

38 *Ibid.*, 37.

sinner since the Bible did not offer a model of such forgiveness. Moses, for example, showed no mercy when he killed those who persecuted the Children of Israel, and the Prophet Samuel showed no mercy when he beheaded the Amalekite King Agag. These examples, he concluded, suggest that the proper response to sinners is violence. The zealous behavior of Pinchas in the Bible also lauds the use of violence: Pinchas murdered Zimri and Cozbi after they sinned in public.³⁹ Nevertheless, Schlesinger moderated the Biblical message somewhat, emphasizing that individuals must not turn to violence as this is forbidden by the law of the land: "However, we are not permitted to actually kill and to wreak the Lord's zealous vengeance, since the law of the land is the law (*"dina d'malchuta dina"*); we are bound by the Three Oaths not to rebel against the nations."⁴⁰ Regarding the principle "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), which would seem to mandate a peaceful approach, Schlesinger responded that this applies only if the sinners repent. As long as they refuse to do so, there is a religious commandment to struggle against them: "They are Sadducees, and they must not be pitied whatsoever."⁴¹ For him, the identification of the sinners as the *erev rav* and as Sadducees removes them from the circle of Jews to whom one must remain committed, since this approach argues that there is a genetic distinction between proper Jews and the descendants of the *erev rav*; the obligation to behave peaceably does not apply in their case.

Schlesinger's adherence to the principles of zealotry led him

39 Schlesinger's opinions are over simplistic. For the Bible's approach toward violence see Robert Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 15–64.

40 Schlesinger, *Lev ha'ivri*, 47, 49. For a discussion of the effects of the Three Oaths on Jewish memory and practice, see: Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1993, 211–34.

41 Schlesinger, *Lev ha'ivri*, 48.



to reject any change or modification in response to new realities, even if the changes were tactical rather than substantive. He rejected any revision in the structure of the synagogue, quoting Talmudic and Kabbalistic sources in support of his position.⁴² He also prohibited the use of the local language, rather than Jewish languages as Yiddish or Hebrew, for sermons: “And on this matter our rabbi, may his memory be a blessing [i.e. Moshe Sofer], established a great rule prohibiting any change, whatever its nature, for we have only that which we inherited from our forefathers.”⁴³

Schlesinger engaged in a separate discussion on issues relating to women; here, too, he rejected any possibility of change. He called for the rejection of new fashions prevalent among women on the grounds of modesty. He also expressed his fear that a more moderate approach to women’s dress would prove a slippery slope leading to the mass abandonment of the old ways: “Our forefathers were redeemed thanks to pious women and now, for our abundant sins, they are collaborating and causing licentiousness in our generation.”⁴⁴ He advocated reprimands and demonstrations against women who exposed their hair, and even forbade women to wear wigs: “I absolutely forbid this for you.”⁴⁵ He opposed the provision of religious or secular education for girls and advocated the maintenance of traditional gender roles.⁴⁶ He later moderated his position regarding women’s education, and in the utopian society he depicted in an essay from 1873, he advocated teaching women Hebrew in order to strengthen its use as a spoken language in the home.⁴⁷

⁴² *Ibid.*, 63–4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 84–5.

⁴⁷ Silver, *Pa’amei lev*, 9.

Schlesinger argued that the situation was so bad that his supporters should not send their sons to the yeshivot due to the dangers they would face: "Happy is he who can protect his soul and his seed and not send them away from his home and his supervision until their time comes to marry." He believed that boys should study Torah for several years and then learn a trade, quoting a verse from the Ethics of the Fathers: "All study of the Torah which is not accompanied by work is destined to prove futile." However, boys must recognize that Torah study is the most important act, while work is of secondary importance.⁴⁸

On the basis of these insights, Schlesinger advocated a retreat into an ultra-Orthodox enclave: "Save your infants and children." A place of refuge must be prepared that is free of spiritual dangers, avoiding the need to live with the heretics. This approach reflects a desire to respond actively to change rather than remaining passive. This is a form of zealotry that does not resort to violence but calls for the removal of the wicked from the community of the faithful and rejects any changes in the structure or language of prayer in the synagogue.

Schlesinger anticipated that Orthodoxy would be defeated in its struggle against modernity, and therefore perceived an urgent need to create the ultimate ghetto. His reading of the direction events was taking led him to conclude that the only safe place for faithful Jews was the Land of Israel, a remote and isolated land. Accordingly, in 1870 he emigrated to Palestine, and three years later he published a detailed essay advocating the establishment of a Jewish state to operate on the basis of Orthodox principles, organized around agricultural colonies.⁴⁹

Schlesinger's struggle against acculturation, particularly in

48 Schlesinger, *Lev ha'ivri*, 67.

49 Michael Silber, "Alliance of the Hebrew, 1863–1875: The Diaspora Roots of an Ultra-Orthodox Proto-Zionist Utopia in Palestine," *The Journal of Israeli History* 27, 2 (2008), 119–47.



the fields of language and dress, motivated him to leave Hungary and to develop a utopian approach embodying nationalist ideas that predated the Jewish national movement.⁵⁰ As a result, some Zionist thinkers later came to see him as the harbinger of Zionism. Later ultra-Orthodox figures found it difficult to identify with Schlesinger and showed an ambivalent and suspicious attitude toward his thought. They readily adopted his diagnosis of the situation, but his adoption of a solution based on Jewish nationalism met with reservations and confusion.⁵¹

Schlesinger's theological and ideological stance can be summarized as follows. His principled opposition to any change in the religious way of life has an eschatological foundation. According to this approach, the End Times are imminent and the signs suggest the impending arrival of the messiah. He based his position on passages in the Babylonian Talmud describing the period before the arrival of the messiah, and compared his own time to that described in the sources, reaching the conclusion that this is precisely the period alluded to. The messianic model he presented includes a period of such severe deterioration that only the messiah can bring salvation. Accordingly, all the signs suggest that the period of deterioration has reached its nadir so that God now has no alternative but to send the messiah. This catastrophic messianic strand of theology argues that religious Judaism has reached the brink of spiritual and physical annihilation; the faithful need only to cling to the ancestral ways without any change for a little longer.

The eschatological approach also included a strong component of dualism and demonology. Schlesinger, and those who followed his approach, argued that their small group

50 Schlesinger follows here the Hatam Sofer's approach to immigration to the Land of Israel. See: Moshe Samet, *Chapters in the History of Orthodoxy*. Jerusalem: Carmel, 2005, 26 (in Hebrew).

51 Silber, "The Emergence," 81–2.

represented faithful Jews who would enjoy complete redemption and all the blessings of paradise. For the radical ultra-Orthodox leader, the identification of their adversaries as the *erev rav* and the increasing number of sinners among the Jews provided proof that these were indeed the final days, since the messianic period entailed an absolute distinction between the righteous and the impure. Accordingly, he argued, the sinners were removing themselves from the Jewish people as part of the End Times events.

THE INTELLECTUAL WORLDVIEW OF LEOPOLD COHN:
BETWEEN PRE-MILLENNIAL DISPENSATIONALISM
AND RADICAL ULTRA-ORTHODOXY

I want to end this chapter with an intellectual speculation. Although some of Leopold Cohn's biography is clouded, we know that he grew up as a Hungarian ultra-Orthodox Jew, who was also a yeshiva student at Pressburg Yeshiva, the same institution as Schlesinger's, and at a similar time period. We also know that Cohn eventually converted to Christianity, and adopted the pre-millennial dispensationalism school of thought, common among many Evangelical Christians in America. This is not the place for me to discuss this ideology in detail. According to this philosophy, the second coming of Christ is an imminent event that will take place in several stages. Pre-millennial dispensationalism is also suspicious about modern times and pessimistic. In contrast to the liberal belief that human beings could work toward the building of a better, even perfect, world, dispensationalists insist that only divine intervention – the appearance of the Messiah – could remedy the problems of the



human race.⁵²

When one compares Pre-millennial dispensationalism to Hungarian radical ultra-Orthodox worldviews, structural similarities become apparent. They both are marked by a belief in an imminent transition to the millennial kingdom. They both involve a pessimistic view of human nature and society. They both perceive a decline in humanity that is approaching its lowest point. Humans are so evil and corrupt that the old order has to be destroyed to make way for the perfected millennial kingdom. This approach adopts a radical dualistic worldview: reality is seen in terms of good and evil, reflected in an adversary perception of the relations between true believers and those outside the fold. Scholars refer to this religious pattern as catastrophic millennialism.⁵³

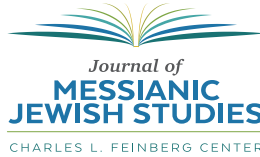
My speculation thus is twofold: From one hand, maybe it was easier for Cohn to convert from Judaism to Christianity because the transition from radical ultra-Orthodoxy to Pre-millennial dispensationalism involves similar ideological structures; secondly, since radical ultra-orthodox leaders were anticipating the coming of the redeemer, and some of them were actively engaged in messianic speculations, as I explained in the case of the Munckacser Rebbe.⁵⁴ Maybe it made sense from Cohn's perspective to argue that the messiah all Israel was waiting for is actually Jesus of Nazareth?

I hope these questions might open up new avenues for research in the history and background of messianic Judaism.

52 Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000, 9-21.

53 Catherine Wessinger, "Catastrophic Millennialism," in Richard Landes (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Millennialism and Millennial Movements*. New York: Routledge, 2000, 61-3.

54 Motti Inbari, *Jewish Radical Ultra-Orthodoxy Confronts Modernity, Zionism and Women's Equality*, Cambridge University Press, 2016, 94-130.



Jewish? Christian? Why Not Both? – Leopold Cohn and the Introduction of Messianic Judaism to America

Mendi Keren

ABSTRACT

Ever since the early days of Christianity, it was generally accepted that a person could be either a Jew or a Christian, but not both. This, however, changed in the late nineteenth century. Eisik Leib Yosowitz was a young Orthodox Jew who studied at Hungary's top yeshivas. In the early 1890s he came to America. Shortly thereafter he converted, was ordained as a minister, changed his name to Leopold Cohn, and became a missionary. Unlike traditional missionaries who persuaded Jews to convert to Christianity, he suggested another missionary approach. It evolved in Europe in the early nineteenth century and was later known as Messianic Judaism.

This approach encouraged Jews to retain their former identity, traditions and sacred texts, yet also to adopt Jesus as their messiah and the New Testament as an equally holy addition to the Bible. Cohn claimed that this would not only make them better Jews, but would also win them a higher spiritual status than people who were born Christians. In Europe, Messianic Judaism gained very limited success, yet in America, under Cohn's leadership it became the largest mission to the Jews. Since its establishment on American soil, this movement has gained



millions of supporters, and their number continues to grow. Nowadays, Cohn's Chosen People Ministries celebrates 125 years since its establishment.

INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times, Gentiles have tried to convert Jews. Sometimes, they have done so through cultural influence and intellectual persuasion, and sometimes by imposing financial sanctions, social restrictions or even threats of deportation and death. In response, the rabbis have stated that converting to another religion is such a grave sin that a Jew is obligated to give up his life rather than commit it. The Jewish people have regarded converts with disgust, treated them as traitors, and excommunicated them and their families.¹

Efforts to convert the Jews intensified following the rise of Christianity. The new religion saw itself as a continuation of true Judaism, and often claimed that the Jews who did not believe in Jesus caused his death.² During the eighteenth century, following the end of the Middle Ages, Christian missionary efforts have intensified. Just as other missions operated among people in Asia, Africa, the Far East and South America, so numerous missions specifically targeted the Jews. Most Jews shunned Christians in general and missionaries in particular. Yet, for a few Jews, the economic and social benefits that came along with conversion to

1 Maimonides, *Mishne Tora: Sefer Mada*, 5, 2.

2 Jostein Ådna and Hans Kvalbein (eds.), *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000; Kimberly B. Stratton and Andrea Lieber (eds.), *Crossing Boundaries in Early Judaism and Christianity: Ambiguities, Complexities, and Half-Forgotten Adversaries*, Boston: Brill, 2016.

Christianity were a temptation they couldn't resist.³

Despite the missionaries' efforts, the number of converts remained low, as did their "quality" and it was clear that most Jewish converts to Christianity were motivated not by a strong inner belief, but by materialistic and social reasons. Seeking to attract a larger variety of Jews, some Protestant missions, especially in England and Scotland, no longer sought to fully convert the Jews, but rather encouraged them to preserve their Jewish identity while at the same time accepting Jesus Christ as their savior and the New Testament as their additional Bible. These converts were known as Christian Jews.⁴ The movement did not gain much success, and it seems that there were no more than a few hundred Christian Jews in all of Europe at this time.⁵

EISIK LEIB YOSOWITZ LIFE IN HUNGARY

Eisik Leib (in Hebrew: Yitzhak Arie) Yosowitz was born in 1862 in the village of Berezna, in Maramaros county in eastern Hungary.⁶ This was a remote region which was sparsely populated, and most of the people who lived there, including the Jews, were poor farmers. The Jews of this region were known for their strong religious beliefs, their Hasidic lifestyle, and their absolute compliance with their rabbis' commands. Like all other

3 *World Atlas of Christian Missions*, New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1911; Daniel Joseph Evesitt, *Jewish-Christian Missions to Jews, 1820-1935*, Ann Arbor, Michgen: UMI, 1989.

4 William Thomas Gidney, *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews: From 1809 to 1908*, London: London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, 1908.

5 Gershon Nerel, *Messianic Jews in Eretz- Israel*, PhD dissertation, Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1996, pp. 24-36.

6 Leopold Cohn, *To an Ancient People: The Autobiography of Dr. Leopold Cohn*, New York NY: Chosen People Ministries, 1996, p. 3; Yaacov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000, pp. 28-29.



Jewish children, Eisik Leib also grew up in an ultra-Orthodox environment and received a traditional Jewish education. This included acquiring basic Hebrew reading and writing skills, which were used to study some parts of the Old Testament and the basic study of the Talmud. Then, some of the boys were sent to study in a yeshiva – a higher education institution dedicated solely to Talmudic studies.⁷

At the age of seven, Eisik Leib's father died, and after his Bar Mitzvah his mother sent him to the Hasidic yeshiva in Sighet, the county's capital. The head of the yeshiva, Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda Teitelbaum, who was also the chief rabbi of the town, was a Hasidic leader who became known for his zealous outlook. A few years later, Yosowitz decided to continue his studies in Hungary's most prestigious yeshiva, located in Pressburg, today Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. There, according to his own testimony, he was ordained as a rabbi.⁸ This, however, conflicts with the fact that he did not spend enough time studying in Pressburg, nor was he married, or elected as a rabbi in his village – three necessary conditions for becoming a rabbi.⁹

After returning to his village, Yosowitz married Rosa Hoffman, the daughter of an established Jew from Apshitza, another small village in Maramaros, and the couple moved to live with the bride's parents. As was customary in those days, if the groom was a Torah scholar, the bride's father would support the newlyweds so that the groom could continue his studies without needing to provide for his wife. Unfortunately, a year later, the bride's father died and Yosowitz had to take over the

7 Gross and Cohen, *Sefer Marmarosh*, Tel Aviv: Beit Marmoresh, 1983, pp. 75-76 (Hebrew).

8 Leopold Cohn, *To an Ancient people*, New York NY: Chosen People Ministries, 1996, pp. 4-7; Alexander Bacon, *The Strange Story of Dr. Cohn and Mr. Jozovics* (with apologies to "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde"), New York, 1918, pp. 9-10.

9 Bacon, *The Strange Story*, pp. 64-66.

family business and manage the local inn. Given his more than average Talmudic knowledge, and although he did not hold any official position, the local Jews used to consult him on all religious matters, and he became a sort of unofficial rabbi.

In 1891, Yosowitz and his brother-in-law were accused of forging an ownership document for a piece of land that belonged to one of their clients who had passed away without heirs. Yosowitz immediately fled the country, leaving behind his wife with their four children: Benjamin, Joseph, Joshua and Esther. After a long journey, he arrived in the United State where he met some of his friends and countrymen who were happy to see him. Cohn denied that story and claimed that he decided to emigrate to America at the advice of a rabbi whom he consulted about the messiah.¹⁰

THE FIRST YEAR IN AMERICA

After his arrival in New York in 1892, Yosowitz said he sought the help of Rabbi Hillel Klein, who emigrated to America a year before. Rabbi Klein, who headed Ohab Zedek, the largest Orthodox community of Hungarian Jews in New York, was unable to help Yosowitz to find the rabbinical position he sought.¹¹ Later on, during one of Cohn's trials, Rabbi Klein denied ever meeting Yosowitz.¹²

Shortly thereafter, Yosowitz met Herman Warszaviak, a Polish Jewish immigrant who had converted and became a successful missionary.¹³ Warszaviak convinced Yosowitz to

10 Cohn, *To an Ancient People*, p. 9-10.

11 Chaim Steinberger, *First Hungarian Congregation Ohab Zedek: founded in 1873*, New York, NY: First Hungarian Congregation Ohab Zedek, 2005); Bacon, *The Strange Story*, pp. 11-14; The Sheperd of Israel, May 1926.

12 Bacon, *The Strange Story*, pp. 58-60.

13 C. G. Douglas, *Hermann Warszaviak: The Little Messianic Prophet, Or*



follow in his footsteps and on June 26, 1892 Yosowitz converted. Following his conversion, Warszaviak helped Yosowitz to obtain a scholarship for a Christian institution in Edinburgh, Scotland. While Yosowitz traveled to Scotland, the news about his conversion reached his family in Hungary, and they excommunicated him. Nevertheless, Yosowitz convinced his wife, who was devastated by his conversion, to join him with their children and eventually they too converted.¹⁴ He excelled in his studies and was ordained a Baptist pastor. After returning to New York in October 1893, Eisik Leib Yosowitz changed his name to Leopold Cohn and claimed he was a former Jewish rabbi.¹⁵ Despite numerous testimonies, including ones made in court by his own family members, Cohn denied ever having a former name.

A few weeks later, Cohn established his own mission in Brownsville and called it *The Chosen People*. In those days, Brownsville was one of the largest concentrations of Jewish immigrants, most of whom suffered from great poverty and were discriminated against.¹⁶ Shortly thereafter, a Jew named Adolf Benjamin published the facts about Cohn's dubious past in the local Jewish newspaper.¹⁷ Despite the negative publicity, Cohn acquired the trust of the Brooklyn chapter of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, which provided him with financial support. Since there were many missions at the time who were attempting to appeal to Jews, Cohn had to establish his own strategy.¹⁸

Two Years' Labour Among the Refugee Jews in New York, Edinburgh: A. Elliot, 1894.

14 Cohn, *To an Ancient People*, p. 10-30; Bacon, pp. 15-17.

15 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 10, 1887, p. 10.

16 *The Chosen People*, March 1897, p. 6-7.

17 *Hebrew Standard*, October 13, 1893, p. 6.

18 Cohn, *To an Ancient People*, p. 30-32; Tompson, *A Century of Jewish Missions*, Chicago, New York, Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1902,

He did this in two ways. Firstly, he adopted and expanded the idea of Messianic Judaism, which he had probably picked up in Europe, and which he preferred to "regular" conversion. Secondly, he divided his time and energy and spent as much time and effort preaching and working among the Christians, whom he convinced to contribute their time and money, as he did among the Jews.¹⁹

In time, Cohn's missionary station offered medical consultation, supplied used clothes that his Christian supporters donated, and delivered food packages to the poor. It also provided English-language classes and a sewing school. There, unskilled Jewish women were trained so that they could find work in the garment industry's sweatshops. This was virtually the only place where an uneducated woman who did not speak English could find work.²⁰

Cohn invited Jews to celebrate the Sabbath and the Jewish holidays in a traditional atmosphere. Thanks to his rabbinical knowledge, he delivered sermons that to the unaware ears of the newcomers, sounded like the ones they were used to listening to in the synagogue in their old homeland. Having caught the attention of his audience, he slowly incorporated his messianic messages in his speech. Unlike other missionaries, who persuaded Jews to abandon their Jewish legacy and replace it with a Christian one, he urged his Jewish listeners to embrace belief in Christ as a full realization of their Jewish identity.

Cohn directed much of his time and energy to creating strong links with the Christian community. In late 1895, he began

pp. 246—247; Bacon, *The Strange Story*, p. 17; Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen people*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁹ Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen people*, p. 33.

²⁰ *Chosen People*, December 1896, p. 8; *ibid.*, May 1897, p. 7; *ibid.*, March 1899, p. 7; Cohn, *To an Ancient People*, p. 32-41.



publishing *The Chosen People* magazine.²¹ He used it to report to his Christian readers about his activities and persuaded them to contribute money and volunteer in his mission. This became such a crucial tool to the mission's ongoing operation that regardless of the various changes of the mission's names and its numerous leaders, this monthly publication still appears today under the same name, more than 120 years after it was first published.

The magazine was intended for a Christians readership that was cautioned against sharing it with Jewish readers.²² *The Chosen People* had a regular structure. It first reported on the mission's ongoing issues, such as large donations, the purchase of property, upcoming events etc. Then, it reported on various incidents which occurred in the mission, the people who visited it, questions asked, confrontation with religious Jews etc. It then presented a report of a converted Jew, sometimes with his picture. The final section described the daily activities, such as those of the sewing school, the medical activity and other voluntary work. The last page was dedicated to listing the names of the people who donated money to the mission and the amount they gave.

In 1896, Cohn published his first book in Yiddish, entitled *What Is His Name and What is His Son's Name*.²³ In the ensuing years he published several other books in Hebrew, Yiddish, and English, including *Messiah Be Cut Off*, and *Behold the Virgin*.²⁴

The Jewish and Christian missionaries who preceded him portrayed Jews as traitors and evildoers and regarded Christians as superior to them. Consequently, they encouraged Jews to abandon their inferior standing and embrace Christianity's

21 Cohn, *To an Ancient People*, p 46-47.

22 For example: *The Chosen People*, January 1902, p. 2.

23 Leopold Cohn, *Mah Shemo U-Mah Shem Beno*, Brooklyn: Louis Zaltzman Press, 1896 (Yiddish).

24 Leopold Cohn, *Messiah Be Cut Off*, Brooklyn NY: Life Line Mission, 1898; Idem., *Behold the Virgin Shall Conceive and Bear a Son*, 1898, Brooklyn NY: unknown publisher, 1898.

supreme status. By contrast, Cohn regarded the Jews as the chosen people, as reflected in the name he chose for his mission. He implored Jews to retain their Jewish identity, while also acknowledging Christ as the true messiah and the New Testament as a direct continuation of the old one.

To his Christian listeners, he explained that the spiritual virtue of Messianic Jews is higher than that of non-Jewish Christians, since they resembled Jesus, who was also a Jew. He then argued that only a converted Jewish rabbi, like himself, could convince other Jews to adopt Jesus. Cohn was a great orator, and although he managed to convert only a relatively small number of Jews, he was able to persuade many Christians to support his work.²⁵

EXPANDING THE MISSION'S REACH

In 1897, Cohn opened another branch on a main thoroughfare in Williamsburg and named it the Williamsburg Mission to the Jews.²⁶ This neighborhood was home to many formerly Hungarian Orthodox Jews who had moved there from Manhattan's lower east side. Some 15 years later, by the turn of the twentieth century, the Williamsburg Mission was considered one of the most successful missions operating among Jews in America.²⁷

Over the years, the mission expanded its activities. By the early 1900s it also offered recreational activities for boys and girls, which allowed their mothers to go out to work. It also offered medical services which were provided by doctors and

25 *Chosen People*, April 1896, pp. 3-4; Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People*, pp. 30-31; Freuder, *A Missionary's Return to Judaism*, p. 173.

26 *Chosen People*, February 1897, p. 1; *ibid.*, May 1897, p. 8; Cohn, *To an Ancient People*, pp. 41-43.

27 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 31, 1906, p. 4; *ibid.*, February 10, 1899, p. 11; *ibid.*, February 9, 1900, p. 13; *idem.*, June 23, 1900, p. 13.



nurses who worked in the clinic he established or visited the sick in their homes.²⁸

Due to his success, Cohn had acquired many supporters, but also many enemies. His name became notorious among the Jews, and also among some Christians, who saw him as a charlatan and an exploiter. The Jewish leadership found it difficult to act effectively against Cohn's mission.²⁹ This was because in Christian America – which was partly antisemitic – such activity was considered legitimate and even welcome.

In addition, Jewish society was itself divided. Orthodox Jews felt that the larger Reform and Conservative communities posed a far greater threat to them than the small group of converted Jews. Cohn complained that in several instances his workers faced threats and violent attacks. Yet by and large, the Jewish community's response was confined to the publication of a few books and articles in the local Jewish press and the distribution of warning posters and leaflets.³⁰

Notwithstanding his efforts to convert them, Cohn regarded himself as the protector of Jews. For example, in 1899 he asked the New York City Education Commissioner to remove books like Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* and Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* that portrayed Jews in a negative light.³¹ Two years later, he responded to the accusation that the Jews refrained from waving flags to mark the death of President Theodore Roosevelt. He explained that the president had died during Rosh Ha-Shana, the Jewish new year, so that all the Jews had been in the

28 *Chosen People*, January 1898, p. 7; *ibid.*, March 1899, p. 7; *ibid.*, January 1901, p. 4.

29 *Morgen Journal*, October 23, 1910, p. 4; *ibid.*, August 31, 1916, p. 4; *Chosen People*, November 1900, p. 1.

30 Jonathan D. Sarna, "The American Jewish Response to Nineteenth-Century Christian Missions," *The Journal of American History*, 68, 1 (1981), pp. 35-51; *Chosen People*, January 1898, pp. 3-4; *ibid.*, January 1899, p. 4-5.

31 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 7, 1899, p. 14.

synagogues and were unaware of what happened.³²

With the rise of antisemitism in the early twentieth century, Cohn delivered countless sermons to the Christian public reminding them that Christians have a historical debt toward their "older brothers." He pleaded them to be more tolerant and not to offend, insult or discriminate against poor Jewish immigrants.³³ Like many other evangelicals, Cohn regarded Zionism, and the return of the Jews to the land of Israel, as a fulfillment of the Messianic redemption prophecy. To help the Zionist movement, Cohn raised funds among Christians and encouraged them to purchase products that were produced in the holy land.³⁴

In the early twentieth century some of Cohn's wife's family members emigrated to the United States. Since they had never forgiven him for converting, they told everybody that Cohn's real name was Yosowitz and that he was never ordained a rabbi. As this came to court, Cohn could no longer hide some of the facts about his life and his lawyer admitted he was not really a rabbi.³⁵ The witnesses also told the court his real name and Cohn needed to tell his side of the story.³⁶

In 1906, Cohn used some of the money he collected to purchase a large farm and country house in Connecticut.³⁷ A few years later, he was faced the accusation that instead of being used for his community, the farm served only Cohn's family.³⁸

32 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 24, 1901, p. 16; *Chosen People*, October 1901, p. 2
33 *Chosen People*, October 1902, p. 3; *ibid.*, November 1902, p. 1; *ibid.*, February 1904, p. 4; *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 19, 1902, p. 12; *ibid.*, February 21, 1902, p. 6; *ibid.*, May 5, 1902, p. 12; *ibid.*, May 7, 1902, p. 3; December 24, 1906, p. 11; *ibid.*, February 18, 1907, p. 21; *ibid.*, December 9, 1907, p. 10.

34 *Chosen People*, December 1915, p. 1.

35 Bacon, *The Strange Story*, pp. 21-40.

36 *Chosen People*, December 1899, p. 4; *ibid.*, January 1902, p. 3; Bacon, *The Strange Story*, 40-50.

37 *Chosen People*, November 1906, p. 6; *ibid.*, December 1906, p. 1; *ibid.*, November 1907, p. 7.

38 Bacon, *The Strange Story*, p. 60.



THE RISE AND DOWNFALL

In 1907, Cohn received a series of very substantial donations from a wealthy woman named Francis Huntley totaling about 100,000 USD.³⁹ Cohn refused to share this donation with the Baptist church which had previously supported him. The church leaders then accused him of violating his agreement with them and removed their sponsorship from Cohn's mission. Regardless, the donation was big enough, and Cohn's reputation was solid enough, to allow him to continue his operation and to raise funds independently.⁴⁰

Cohn used the money to buy a plot in the heart of Williamsburg on which he built his own building, which was completed a few years later. The building, named The House of the Prince of Peace, served as the mission's headquarters and activity center. In addition, he also set up another missionary station in Coney Island, where many Jews spent their summer vacation.⁴¹

Of all of Leopold's children, Joseph was the only one to follow in his father's footsteps and to seek a career as a Christian clergyman.⁴² In 1908 Joseph was ordained a pastor and began to participate in the mission's activities which, as a result, became a family business. Unlike his father, who spoke with a heavy accent, Joseph's English, which he acquired from an early age in the United States, was totally native. This assisted him as he traveled to many Christian communities across the country.⁴³

39 Bacon, *The Strange Story*, pp. 72-75.

40 Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People*, p. 30.

41 *Chosen People*, February 1908, p. 6-7; *ibid.*, December 1908, p. 7; *ibid.*, October 1909, pp. 3-4.

42 *Chosen People*, February 1902, p. 8; *ibid.*, March 1906, p. 1.

43 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 7, 1909, p. 14; *ibid.*, September 29, 1911, p. 3; Joseph Hoffman Cohn, *I Have Fought a Good Fight: The Story of Jewish Mission Pioneering in America*, New York NY: American Board of Missions to the Jews, 1953.

On these trips, Joseph delivered countless sermons in which he told his Christian listeners about his father's missionary activities and asked for their donations and support. Like his father, Joseph also became a protector of the Jews and spoke out against the slandering of the Jews and discriminating against them. He likewise described the many ways in which Jews contributed to the world in general, and to America in particular.⁴⁴

In 1908, Leopold confronted Philip Spivak and David Shapiro, two converted Jews who also ran a mission in Brooklyn. The two, who wished to undermine his credibility, visited the country house he had just purchased in Connecticut. Leopold had claimed that the farm was part of his missionary institutions, and the two sought to demonstrate that it was used only by the family. Upon their arrival, they confronted Joshua, Cohn's third son, who pulled a gun at them. The controversy between the three converted Jews drew the attention of the local newspapers. In the ensuing years, the press reported extensively on the mutual defamation war which was carried out both on the streets and in the courts.⁴⁵

Cohn's negative image intensified following his wife's death in 1908.⁴⁶ Soon after, he married Edith, who was 32 years younger, explaining that his sole reason for doing so was her willingness to raise his little son David. In addition, by that time it became common knowledge that Cohn had become rich and personally owned some of the mission's properties.⁴⁷

Hoping to salvage his tarnished public image Cohn published

44 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 2, 1912, p. 10; *Pokeepsie Evening Enterprise*, May 52, 1914, p. 6; *Bolivar Breese*, September 17, 1914, p. 1.

45 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 5, 1908, p. 6; *ibid.*, August 21, 1901, p. 7; *ibid.*, January 3, 1909, p. 2; *ibid.*, October 8, 1913, p. 1; *ibid.*, December 15, 1913, p. 11; Bacon, *The Strange Story*, pp. 18-20.

46 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 6, 1908, p. 22; Cohn, *To an Ancient People*, pp. 47-50.

47 Bacon, *The Strange Story*, pp. 69-72.



his autobiography titled *The Story of a Modern Missionary to an Ancient People - The Autobiography of Leopold Cohn, a Missionary Among the Two Million Jews of Greater New York*.⁴⁸ In subsequent editions, he retracted this grand figure and claimed he was just preaching to the 250,000 Jews of Brooklyn.

In 1913, Cohn was entangled in another legal affair, this time with Alexander Neuowich, a Hungarian Jew who came to the United States in 1902. Shortly thereafter he became Cohn's protégé and in 1906 became a missionary in Pittsburgh. A few years later, Neuowich was involved in some controversial businesses and had to leave his office. He returned to New York, where he was assisted by Cohn.

A few years later, several women claimed that following his wife's death Cohn promised to marry them, but eventually failed to keep his word. Neuowich, who heard their stories, went to Cohn and demanded him to compensate them for breaching the marriage promise and threatened to sue him. Cohn turned to the police and reported on a conspiracy against him and as result, Neuowich was arrested.

In May 1913, Neuowich filed a suit against Cohn for wrongful imprisonment, claiming that Cohn's false accusation caused him to suffer loss of employment and other expenses. At the trial, which sought to undermine Cohn's credibility, Alexander Bacon, Neuowich's lawyer, brought several witnesses who testified that Cohn's real last name was indeed Yosowitz and that he had never been ordained as a rabbi, but was a simple innkeeper. They also exposed his involvement in the forging of the deed documents and his escape from Hungary before trial.

⁴⁸ Leopold Cohn, *The Story of a Modern Missionary to an Ancient People: Being the Autobiography of Ex-Rabbi Leopold Cohn, Missionary to the Jews and Founder of the American Board of Missions to the Jews*, New York : American Board of Missions to the Jews, 1908; Idem., *The Story of a Modern Missionary to an Ancient People: Being the Autobiography of Leopold Cohn, Missionary to the 250,000 Jews of Brooklyn*, Brooklyn NY: Chosen People, 1908.

In 1915, Samuel Freuder published an autobiographical book titled *A Missionary's Return to Judaism*.⁴⁹ Freuder was also a former Hungarian Orthodox Jew who studied in Pressburg yeshiva. After his arrival in America, he was ordained a rabbi by the Reform Judaism's rabbinical seminary – the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati. In 1891, he was baptized by the Chicago Hebrew Mission and became a missionary himself. A couple of years later, he repented and returned to Judaism. In his book, he dedicated a whole chapter to Leopold Cohn in which he tells about his false identity, the fact that he was not a rabbi and the various affairs in which he was involved.⁵⁰

These revelations drove the church to set up its own special investigation committee which published its report in 1916. The committee acquitted Cohn of all guilt and encouraged Christians to continue to contribute to his missionary activities.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the court hearing continued till 1917 and although Cohn was acquitted, his reputation was badly damaged.⁵² A year later Philip Spivak sued Cohn for slandering him during the trial. Although the judge ruled in favor of Spivak, he only awarded him one dollar as compensation.⁵³

In 1918, Alexander Bacon, a former Colonel who was Neuowich's lawyer, published a book titled *The Strange Case of Doctor Cohn and Mister Yosovitz*, and added in a sarcastic manner: *with an apology to Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde*. The book, which was based on the formal court hearings and

49 Samuel Freuder, *A Missionary's Return to Judaism: The Truth about the Christian Missions to the Jews*, New York: The Sinai Publishing Company, 1915.

50 Freuder, *A Missionary's Return to Judaism*, pp. 164-177.

51 D. L. Pierson (ed.), *The Missionary Review of the World*, 39 (1916), p. 873; Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 15, 1916, p. 2; *ibid.*, June 16, 1916, p. 4; *ibid.*, September 22, 1916, p. 20; Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People*, pp. 33-34.

52 Brooklyn Daily Eagle, February 19, 1917, p. 1; *ibid.*, February 21, 1917, p. 3; *ibid.*, February 22, 1917, p. 14; *ibid.*, February 24, 1917, p. 15.

53 Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 7, 1918, p. 2; *ibid.*, May 13, 1918, p. 1.



protocols, reviewed the facts that had been revealed in recent years and accused Cohn of hiding the truth from his followers and acting in a dishonest manner. This was too much for Cohn, and in 1920 he resigned his role as head of the mission and was succeeded by his son Joseph.

AWAY FROM THE PUBLIC EYE

Groomed by his father for over ten years and having the advantage of being raised in the United States and understanding American mentality gave Joseph a great advantage in running the business. The father and son divided the work between them. Leopold, who had the advantage of speaking Yiddish and having an extraordinary knowledge of the Jewish texts, was now in charge of all “Jewish issues.” Joseph, on the other hand expanded the mission’s reach into other Christian communities and in 1924 he renamed it American Board of Missions to the Jews.

In 1920, Leopold began to write, edit and publish another monthly journal titled *Shepherd of Israel*. Unlike *The Chosen People*, which was aimed to the mission’s Christian supporters, the *Shepherd of Israel*, which was written in both Yiddish and in English, targeted the Jews. The journal attracted their attention by publishing articles on various Jewish related issues such as the Balfour Declaration, which promised the Jews to establish a “national home” in Palestine; the appointment of a Jew, Lord Herbert Samuel, as the first British governor of Palestine; and even the international assembly of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish movement in Vienna in 1923.⁵⁴

It also dealt with local issues which were of interest to the

⁵⁴ The Sheperd of Israel, December 1921; *ibid.*, November 1922; *ibid.*, November 1923.

Jews such as the "suicide epidemic," the 1920s emigration laws, which limited the number of newcomers, and the activities of the Ku Klux Klan.⁵⁵ In the 1930s, Cohn dedicated more articles to questions regarding Zionism and to Britain's new White Book, which curbed some of the rights the Jews had enjoyed so far in Palestine.⁵⁶ Each of the issues presented a certain "great Jew" who converted to Christianity, and several issues dealt with what it perceived as persecution of Christian Jews by Jewish leaders and by the Jewish press.⁵⁷

Leopold also published several new booklets titled: *To the Two Houses of Israel* (meaning the Orthodox and Reform); *Cain and Abel – Israel and Christ*; *Jewish Holidays and their Meaning*; *Do Christians Believe in Three Gods?*; and *A Debate Between a Jew and a Christian*. He also issued new edition of some he had published in the past.⁵⁸ By that time, the mission offered about ten publications for Jews and another ten, including one titled *How to destroy the Jews, for Christians*.⁵⁹

55 *The Sheperd of Israel*, April 1922; *ibid.*, October 1922; *ibid.*, December 1923.

56 *The Sheperd of Israel*, July-August 1930; *ibid.*, September 1930; *ibid.*, December 1930; *ibid.*, January 1931.

57 *The Sheperd of Israel*, May 1923; *ibid.*, July 1923; *ibid.*, June 1926; *ibid.*, November 1926.

58 Leopold Cohn, *To Both the Houses of Israel: Orthodox and Reformed Judaism*, Brooklyn NY: Beth Sar Shalom, 1911; *Idem.*, *Cain and Abel Israel and Messiah why art thou wroth?*, Brooklyn NY: Contributed for distribution by the Life Line Mission, 1911; *Idem.*, *Yidishe Yamim Tovim Un Zeyer Bedeytung*, Brooklyn: Williamsburg Mission to the Jews, 192? (Yiddish); *idem.*, *The Meaning of the Jewish Holy Days: Jewish Feasts and Fasts, Their Symbolism in Type and Fulfillment*, New York: American Board of Missions to the Jews, Inc., 192?; *Idem.*, *Messiah Shall be Cut Off*, New York: American Board of Missions to the Jews, Inc., 192?; *Idem.*, *Behold the Virgin*, New York: American Board of Missions to the Jews, Inc., 192?; *Idem.*, *A Dialogue Between a Jew and a Christian*, Brooklyn NY: American Board of Missions to the Jews, 193?; *Idem.*, *Cain and Abel, or, Israel and the Messiah*, Brooklyn NY: American Board of Missions to the Jews, 193?; *Idem.*, *The Trinity in the Old Testament or, Do Christians Worship Three Gods?*, Brooklyn NY: American Board of Missions to the Jews, 193?; *Idem.*, *Fun Vemen Redt Yeshaya 53?*, Brooklyn NY: American Board of Missions to the Jews, 193?.

59 *The Chosen People*, April 1930, p. 2; H. O. Van Gilder, *How to Destroy the*



In 1930, as an expression of appreciation for his lifelong missionary work, Leopold Cohn was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Evangelical Wheaton College of Illinois.⁶⁰ That same year, Cohn publicly attacked the fundamentalist pastor William Bell Riley for his antisemitic talks about a global Jewish conspiracy. In 1931, after three years in hospital, David, Leopold's youngest son, died.⁶¹

Joseph expanded the mission's outreach and by 1932 he opened branches in Philadelphia, Atlantic City and Pittsburgh, as well as a branch in Lithuania.⁶² By 1934, it also opened branches in Jerusalem, Palestine, as well as in Ukraine and Poland.⁶³ Leopold Cohn died at the end of 1937 at the age of 75.⁶⁴ The mission which he founded greatly expanded under the management of his son, Joseph, and by 1945 had several branches in the United States, as well as in Poland, Germany, Australia, France, Latvia and Jerusalem.⁶⁵ Joseph continued to develop the organization until his death in 1953, establishing additional branches both in America and abroad.

After seventy years under the leadership of the Cohn family, the mission's management was taken up by others. These included Harry Pretlove, Daniel Fuchs, Harold Sevener, Sam Nadler and the current president, Dr. Mitch Glaser. Today, 125 years after it was founded, Chosen People Ministries operates in

Jews: Sermon Preached by H. O. Van Gilder, Pastor of Central Baptist Church, Columbus, Ohio, to his Own Congregation on July, 27th, 1924, Brooklyn, NY: American Board of Missions to the Jews, 1930.

60 Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People*, pp. 33-34; Wheaton College: Honorary Degrees (<http://a2z.my.wheaton.edu/honorary-degrees>), retrieved April 1, 2020.

61 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 11, 1931, p. 3; *ibid.*, November 12, 1931, p. 19; *ibid.*, November 13, 1931, p. 21.

62 *The Sheperd of Israel*, March 1932; *The Chosen people*, December 1932, p. 11.

63 *The Chosen People*, February 1934, p. 2; *ibid.*, March 1935, p. 2.

64 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 20, 1937, p. 20.

65 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 27, 1945, p. 5; *ibid.*, October 28, 1945, p. 30.

many countries and caters to hundreds of thousands of people, including many Jews. Cohn's great success, as well as other social trends in the United States, led to the spreading of the idea of Messianic Judaism.⁶⁶

One of the most popular messianic movements, Jews for Jesus, was established by Moishe Rosen. He worked for the American Board of Missions to the Jews, formerly the Chosen People mission, for 17 years, where he studied the principles of Messianic Judaism. In 1970, he resigned and opened his own mission which was first called Hineni (Hebrew: here I am), and then Jews for Jesus.⁶⁷ Today, there are many dozens of messianic movements which have millions of supporters all over the world, including many Jews.

LEOPOLD COHN FROM A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE

Disregarding Cohn's missionary goals, one can argue that his activities in favor of the Jewish immigrants did not fall short of those of other Jewish leaders. Through his missionary work, he helped the poor Jewish immigrants to integrate into American society by teaching them English, and by giving them professional training that allowed them to support themselves and their families. Cohn also provided them with social and medical services that they could not otherwise receive.

Paradoxically, Cohn also helped preserve the Jewish identity of many of the young immigrants who, like himself, came to America without their families. Living alone, they had no place

⁶⁶ Michelle Mart, "The 'Christianization' of Israel and Jews in 1950s America," *Religion and American Culture*, 14, 1 (2004), pp. 109-147.

⁶⁷ Ruth Rosen, *Called to Controversy: The Unlikely Story of Moishe Rosen and the Founding of Jews for Jesus*, Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012.



to celebrate the Sabbath and the Jewish holidays. But when they visited his mission, they were treated like a family, and were reminded of the traditional foods, prayers, melodies and religious rituals such as fasting and praying on Yom Kippur, eating matzah on Passover and lighting the Hanukkah candles.

Cohn also enjoyed a unique position that allowed him to influence a large Christian public. He often reminded his Christian listeners that they should respect the Jews, the Christian's "big brothers," and to support them until they discover the truth and embrace Christ. He strongly opposed antisemitic manifestations in the American public and openly supported Zionism. In curbing antisemitic sentiments, especially in places like New York which were packed with Jews, Cohn contributed toward making America a much more tolerant place to newcomers. This eventually led to making America a safe haven for Jewish citizens during the Holocaust period.

COHN THE FOUNDER OF CONTEMPORARY MESSIANIC JUDAISM

Despite his numerous shortcomings, Cohn was a visionary and a man of outstanding capabilities. Like so many Jewish immigrants, he too used whatever advantage he had to help himself fulfill the American Dream. He was smart enough not to replicate the missionary approach all the other former Jews and Christians used, and to come up with a new approach which was hitherto unknown in America – Messianic Judaism.

This gained him a unique status, especially among the Christians who were convinced that Cohn's unique approach, along with the fact that he was a former rabbi, would achieve better results when compared with a more traditional missionary

approach. Indeed, various sources indicate that Cohn's ability to attract donations was far greater compared to other missions to the Jews. Although in 1902 Cohn's mission was still trailing behind, a report from 1911 reveals that its annual income of more than 25,000 USD was far greater than all of the other missions to the Jews. In fact, the second largest mission, the more established and reputed Chicago Hebrew Mission, had less than half of that income, while most other missions settled for a few thousands or even less.⁶⁸

Cohn's extraordinary financial and managerial talents need no further proof beside the fact that the organization which he founded in the nineteenth century still continues to operate successfully in the twenty-first. Regardless, one need to look at the mission's actual achievements. Clearly, the mission's main purpose was not survival or economic success, but to convert Jews. In that sense Cohn's achievements were quite miserable.

While being very explicit about the ongoing activities of the mission, the names of his donors and the sums they contributed, Cohn was very obscure about the names and numbers of the Jews he managed to convert. In 1905, eleven years after the mission was founded, Cohn reported that throughout this period it only managed to convert 72 Jews. Based on the figures published in *The Chosen People*, by 1915 – about twenty years after the mission's establishment – the total number of the converts was estimated at less than 200.⁶⁹ A survey of the magazine in later years indicates that the annual number of reported converts was between 10-20. It seems that until Leopold Cohn's death in 1937, his mission succeeded to convert a very modest figure of perhaps 500 Jews. Given the fact that during this 40-year period,

⁶⁸ Tompson, *A Century of Jewish Missions*, pp. 277-278; World Atlas of Christian Missions, pp. 74-75.

⁶⁹ *The Chosen People*, May 1905, p. 8; Freuder, *A Missionary's Return to Judaism*, p. 173.



over a million of Brooklyn's Jews were targeted, this is a very modest outcome. This also explains why, despite his numerous attempts, Cohn failed to establish a congregation of messianic Jews.⁷⁰

This, however, does not diminish from his real achievement, which was making Messianic Judaism the mainstream concept of American missions to the Jews. This carried a great meaning not to the Jews, who regarded all Jesus believers as heretics and traitors in any case, but to Christians. Through Messianic Judaism, Christians were taught that as much as they wanted Jews to convert and to accept Jesus, they must also respect them, not discriminate against them and to support their national identity – Zionism. Christians were advised to forget the old-time antisemitic hatred which was not going to force any Jew to convert, especially in America, where freedom of religion was a paramount principle. Instead, they were encouraged to respect and show mercy to the Jewish immigrants, for this act of love was the only way to show them the virtues of Christianity.

A NOTE ON COHN'S INVENTED BIOGRAPHY

According the many testimonies that were presented during his trials, there is little doubt that Leopold Cohn was in fact Eisik Leib Yosowitz; that he was not ordained as a rabbi; and that he was involved with a fraud scam which made him flee the country without his family. Cohn's story, that he began to ask questions about the messiah in Hungary and was advised by a rabbi to go to America does not make much sense. If indeed this was the case, Cohn had many options to discover Jesus in his own area.

⁷⁰ Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People*, p. 33.

He could have approached one of the local churches, or even one of the few Jewish families who converted, and everybody knew who they were.

In a recently unpublished article titled "A Report on the Charges Against the Founder of Chosen People Ministries, Rabbi Leopold Cohn," Brian Crawford, a member of Chosen People Ministries, set out to confront all the allegations voiced against Cohn. Relying on numerous sources, Crawford claims that all these allegations are false, and that Cohn was framed by his opponents. Regardless of these conclusions, there can be very good explanations for Cohn's behavior even if the so-called allegations are true.

A. As for changing his name, this was a very common practice among all sorts of immigrants who, seeking to integrate into a new society, preferred a more familiar and recognizable name. Therefore, it is not clear what Cohn had to gain from hiding what was impossible to conceal, especially after he provided so many details about his life in Hungary.

B. Hiding the criminal accusation made against him was not a smart step on his behalf, as this too was bound to be known sometime. He could have argued either that he was innocent or was framed by someone else, or that indeed in his former life he was tempted into unlawful actions, but in his new life as a Christian he was saved from this tendency.

C. Cohn understood that his only advantage over other missionaries, and especially former Jews, was his rabbinical education and the fact that he had a more



extensive Jewish training. Since he was not giving Jews religious rulings, and since he realized the Christians would not understand the subtle differences between extensive yeshiva training and rabbinical ordination, he simply referred to himself as a rabbi. This did not make any difference to his Jewish listeners who regarded him as a convert anyway.⁷¹

The fact that Cohn was not candid about his past might have been helpful in his early days, but eventually led to his downfall in his later years, especially after the publication of Bacon's book.

CONCLUSION

Leopold Cohn is one of a small number of Jews who, despite living very traditional and unaspiring lives in Europe, not only found a new calling in America, but also became exceptionally successful. Because of his unique position, halfway between a Jew and a Christian, Cohn did not receive proper recognition by either side. Christians, perhaps rightly so, were unhappy with the fact that he used his office to obtain a great fortune for himself and to his family, and with his extensive legal affairs. Jews never looked favorably at anyone trying to convert them, let alone someone who claimed to be a former rabbi.

It seems that both Jews and Christians failed to see how greatly Cohn contributed to their interests. For Jews, the benefits from Cohn's activity came rather early. He greatly assisted the newcomer immigrants and helped them in many ways. But his real contribution to the Jews was his work among

⁷¹ Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People*, p. 29.

the Christians. In his countless sermons before them he repeated the same messages, that Jews were their older brothers, that they should be treated fairly, and that showing them kindness was the only Christian way to help them see the true light of Jesus. This greatly reduced the level of antisemitism and eventually contributed to Jews becoming the most successful minority in America in the twentieth century.

From a Christian perspective, by practically inventing Messianic Judaism in America, Cohn gave the missions to the Jews a new and very sophisticated approach by which they could attract Jews. This, perhaps, was not felt so much in Cohn's lifetime, when most Jews were poor and underprivileged, as it was in the second half of the twentieth century when Jews, especially in the big cities, belonged to the socio-economic elite. Then, Jews who no longer felt obligated to the Jewish religion on one hand but did not want to become Christians on the other hand, were offered a magical solution. This basically is what made Jews for Jesus such a popular movement in the last third of the century.

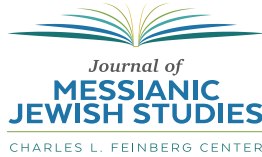
Reviewing history, we can say that Leopold Cohn and his son Joseph were among the first to openly express their commitment to the Jewish people and to the Zionist idea. They have spread those views among millions of Christian listeners, including thousands of clergymen. The Christian people who listened to them suddenly realized that instead of the centuries-old hate tradition, which was the only tradition they knew, they should love the Jews and support them.

We can therefore conclude that Leopold Cohn and his son were among the first to make the love to Jews, the love to Zionism, and later, of the State of Israel, one of the top values of evangelical Christianity. In their time, such pro-Jewish and pro-Zionist sentiments were quite rare among Christians. Nowadays,



however, thanks to the Leopold and Joseph, and other Christian leaders, tens of millions of American Christians firmly support Israel in a manner which was unthinkable in their time.⁷²

⁷² Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009; Yaakov Ariel, *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews*, New York: New York University Press, 2013; Samuel Goldman, *God's Country: Christian Zionism in America*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018.



The Chosen People.
Memorial Issue for Leopold Cohn

Volume XLIII, February 1938

“Our paper appears monthly, and is devoted to Jewish Mission Work, first in our own special field, located in the twenty-sixth ward formerly known as ‘Brownsville,’ where some fifteen thousand Jews reside.”¹

These are words that appear in the early editions of *The Chosen People* magazine, which first saw the light of day in October, 1895 – one year after the founding of the Brownsville Mission to the Jews. In the space of that one year, Leopold Cohn had made a valuable contact in Rev. Thomas J. Whitaker, pastor of the Bushwick Avenue Baptist Church. After receiving Cohn as a member, Pastor Whitaker set about forming a committee that would lend support and guidance to Cohn’s newly-fledged work. One of the first things he suggested was a monthly newsletter to

1 Harold A Sevenser, *A Rabbi’s Vision: A Century of Proclaiming Messiah ; A History of Chosen People Ministries, Inc.* (Charlotte, NC: Chosen People Ministries, Inc., 1994), 32.



publicize the Romans 1:16 mandate to evangelize Jewish people and encourage donors to support the worthy work. Within a few short years, *The Chosen People* numbered its circulation in the thousands.

Throughout its history, publications have played a major role in Chosen People Ministries' evangelistic efforts. In 1920, Joseph Cohn established The Publishing Salvation Department of the Mission, adding the Yiddish/English *Shepherd of Israel* to its monthly oeuvre. Throughout its lengthy history, as the Mission's outreach has increased to include outlets that Leopold could not have dreamed of, *The Chosen People* has remained the backbone of Chosen People Ministries printed material.


Although its size and format have changed over the decades, *The Chosen People* has continually stressed these constant themes: Exhorting Christian readers to share the Gospel with Jewish people, educating them concerning the Jewish roots of Christian faith and the integral connection between the Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament, encouraging prayer and financial support, and highlighting the edifying accounts of faith decisions made by new Jewish believers.

The following February, 1938 issue of *The Chosen People* is devoted to the legacy of Leopold Cohn, who left this life on December 19, 1937 after a brief illness. Although much has changed in the decades since he passed from the scene, one thing he would surely recognize is *The Chosen People* magazine, which has remained faithful to the vision of its founder.

Leopold Cohn Memorial Number
Vol. XLIII FEBRUARY, 1938 No. 5

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

"He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."
Ps. 121: 4.



JOSEPH HOFFMAN COHN, Editor
Station A, Box 10
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Published monthly, October to May only, as a
medium of information concerning Israel and the Work of the
AMERICAN BOARD OF MISSIONS TO THE JEWS, Inc.
Headquarters, 27 Throop Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.

10 cents a copy 50 cents a year

Entered at the Post Office, Brooklyn, N. Y., Jan. 10, 1904, as second-class matter under the act of March 3, 1879.



REV. LEOPOLD COHN, D. D.

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

Subscription Price 50c per Annum	JOSEPH HOFFMAN COHN <i>Editor</i> MILLS ELLA T. MARLTON <i>Associate Editor</i>	Appears monthly October to May inclusive
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Vol. XLIII

FEBRUARY, 1938

No. 5

Salutation

"We go down to salute the children of the king"—II Kings 10:13

Dearly beloved friends:

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord" Job 1:21. These are the words that have been going through our minds over and over again during these last few weeks of sorrow and readjustment. Our hearts also were much strengthened and cheered with the overwhelming number of letters that came to us, and still are coming, from our beloved friends in all parts of the world, giving us the assurance of their prayers and sympathy in our behalf, as we seek to forget the things that are behind, and strive to press forward to the prize of our high calling in the Lord Jesus Christ. A typical expression of Christian love and fellowship I take from a letter that has just come as I am writing these lines:

"I know you will be strong and of good courage, and carry on your great work as your father would wish you to. The prayers of your many friends will be constantly ascending on your behalf, and the Great Comforter will give you peace and joy."

Since it is hopelessly impossible for us even to try to answer personally all the letters that have come, may I do so now through these lines, and will you please accept this just as personally as though I were speaking to you face to face, for it is a word of thank you out of my heart. The shock has been a great one, and the loss still greater, but with the Lord's help and with the sustaining fellowship and prayer of the many friends He has given to us, we shall carry on for His honor and glory.

A MEMORIAL NUMBER

We have felt that this issue of *THE CHOSEN PEOPLE* ought to be almost entirely devoted to the putting down by way of a record a small portion of the eulogies of my father that have been pouring in upon us ever since the news of his home-going became known. We do this not because we seek to honor any man, or to praise any man, but we do it first of all to the praise of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who established this work through my father forty-three years ago, and Who has revealed His strong arm and His keeping power through all the years of battle and storm and persecution. And then secondly, when a man has stood the brunt of the firing line for forty-three years, certainly appropriate respect for his faithfulness imposes an obligation to pay at least a few words of tribute to his memory and to his faithful labors. And then, there will be many friends who will cherish this particular issue for years to come; as one dear friend wrote, "Dr. Leopold Cohn was always one of my heroes." We think no



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further apology or explanation will be needed to our friends for this special Leopold Cohn memorial number of *THE CHOSEN PEOPLE*.

"THY FATHER'S COMMANDMENT"

Only one word perhaps should be said by me personally; two things stand out in my own mind as I try to appraise the high points of the impressions built into my being through the years of bringing up and then association with my father. First was his unswerving loyalty to the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If ever there lived a man of whom it could be said that the one dominating motive of his life was "this one thing I do" Leopold Cohn was that man. He could never for instance tolerate it if I slipped sometimes and spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ as Jesus, or as Christ, or as Jesus Christ. He would invariably correct me and remind me that I must always refer to that blessed Person as the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, secondly, was his undaunted failure to be discouraged, often in the face of the most crushing and brutal persecutions. There was in his every fibre the supreme confidence that God put him here and that God would see him through, and to him there was the absolute divine contract of Isaiah 54:17, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

There remains to say one thing more at this point, and I feel that here is the appropriate place to say it. At the Annual meeting of the Directors of the American Board of Missions to the Jews, Inc., held on January 26, 1938, the following Resolution was moved and unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS on December 19, 1937, the Lord in His great wisdom removed from us our beloved brother and coworker, Dr. Leopold Cohn, be it resolved that

We hereby record our deep sense of loss at his going from us to be with the Lord whom he served so faithfully and tirelessly these forty-three years; that we also record our gratitude that in the fulness of time and in the Lord's own provision, Leopold Cohn was sent of Him to undertake and to lay the foundations of a work that has exerted an influence which has reached literally around the globe; that through his determined and courageous service, uncounted thousands of Jews have learned to know about the Lord Jesus Christ, and many hundreds of them have made open confession and received baptism at his hands.

We further record our joy that the triumphant close of a triumphant life brought Leopold Cohn into the presence of the Saviour whose name he loved to utter, and whose Gospel he loved to preach, and that now he has received from that Saviour a merited "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

ANNUAL REPORT NEXT MONTH

We omit the usual annual summary Report of the work which has been given heretofore in the February issue. We will hope to give this Report next month, and will content ourselves this month with printing on page 17 the annual financial report only. Concerning this Financial report we will only say here that we give thanks to the Lord for the greatest year of our history; the income alone was some \$10,000 more than the year 1936, and you will remember that 1936 was the banner year up to that time. And now once more He has enlarged our borders, and He has commanded us to go still further forward in making His name known to Israel in all parts of the world. This we are doing, and we are also straining our every nerve to give full explosive power to every dollar that our friends have committed to our care, so that the Gospel indeed shall prove to be the power of God, spoken of in Romans 1:16, for the salvation of many thousands of precious souls from Israel. So, we praise the Lord and we thank the beloved friends who are more and more learning to have confidence in the management of the work, in its vision of service for the Lord and in its carefully planned battle lines.

Ever gratefully yours in His service,

JOSEPH HOFFMAN COHN.

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IN MEMORIAM

Leopold Cohn, D. D.

Following the brief announcement last month of the sudden home-going of Dr. Leopold Cohn, we now come to the sad occasion when we need to make the more formal announcement and give fuller reports concerning this great loss, the news of which came as a shock to so many of the long-standing friends of the Mission, as well as a sudden blow to those of us who are here on the firing line. Truly a prince has fallen in Israel; and while we are only human, and the heart does ache, yet there is a joy and a satisfaction in knowing that we sorrow not as those who have no hope.

Dr. Cohn became suddenly ill on Saturday afternoon of December 11th, 1937, with hemorrhages. On Sunday the 12th he was removed to the Brooklyn Hospital where the hemorrhages were diagnosed as coming from a stomach ulcer which had apparently broken through the blood vessels. By Tuesday evening the treatments began to show definite results, for the bleeding had stopped and Dr. Cohn was taking nourishment. On Wednesday morning however pneumonia had developed, and the oxygen tent was at once resorted to. His condition however from that time on became gradually weaker and weaker, although several blood transfusions were given. On Saturday, December 18th, Dr. Cohn went into a coma, from which he did not recover; the end came peacefully on Sunday morning, December 19th, at 4:29 o'clock.

Many of the newspapers throughout the country reported the home-going; we will print hereunder an account which appeared in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle on Monday, December 20th, as follows:

The Rev. Dr. Leopold Cohn, founder and president emeritus of the American Board of Missions to the Jews, Inc., of Brooklyn, N. Y., the largest Jewish missionary agency in America, and the second largest in the world, died early yesterday morning in the Brooklyn Hospital after an illness of one week. He was in his 76th year.

Educated in the Yeshivas of Central Europe, Dr. Cohn was a rabbi of an orthodox synagogue in Austria Hungary, and shortly after his arrival became a convert to Christianity. So devoted was he to his new found faith that after further studies at the Free Church College of Edinburgh, Scotland, he returned to America and undertook immediately to preach the Gospel to the Jews in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn. His efforts at first encountered the most bitter hostility, and for years Dr. Cohn waged a militant battle for the Gospel.

A total stranger when he first arrived in America, his struggles soon won for him friends from the various Christian denominations, and these began to rally to his support. Slowly, and under many handicaps, there developed a society known as the Williamsburg Mission to the Jews, because the principal work then had come to be established in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. Again the work grew and enlarged until it began to reach out over the United States by means of branch stations and missionaries.

Branches were later established in Poland, Germany, France, Latvia and Palestine. The name was changed to the American Board of Missions to the Jews. At the headquarters building in Brooklyn many hundreds of Jews have been baptized, and a large congregation of Christian Jews remains as a testimony to the 43 years of labor of Dr. Cohn. From these headquarters buildings have gone out missionaries to all parts of the earth.

Dr. Cohn was honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by Wheaton College of Wheaton, Illinois in 1930. He was for nearly 40 years a member of the Long Island Baptist Ministers' Association, also a member of the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church of Brooklyn. Surviving are a wife and four children, Benjamin



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Cohn, the Rev. J. Hoffman Cohn, Mrs. John Lolis and Dr. Joshua Cohn.

Funeral services will be held at the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church, Marcy and Putnam Avenues, tomorrow night at 8 p.m.

The funeral services were held on Tuesday night, December 21st, at the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church of Brooklyn, where Dr. Cohn had been a member for forty years. The service was very largely attended, fully half of the audience was made up of Jews, many of whom had been brought to the Lord Jesus Christ through the faithful preaching of Dr. Cohn. The attendance of these Jews at such a service was a most remarkable tribute to the far reaching influence of Dr. Cohn's life and ministry. It was to these same Jews that he had many times preached from the Mission pulpit, and had told them that when he dies he has only one request to make and instruction to give—he wished that the Hebrew Bible, opened to the 53d chapter of Isaiah, shall be laid in his coffin; and he used to tell the Jews that when he enters into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ all he will do will be to point to that chapter as his admission ticket. And so it was actually done; in the coffin was the Hebrew Bible, opened to the 53d chapter of Isaiah, so that all the audience could see it.

The funeral service had been very kindly taken over by the Long Island Baptist Ministers' Association, of which Dr. Cohn had been a life-long member. The brethren who took part were the Rev. E. B. Richmond, 80 years of age, who had known Dr. Cohn from the very beginning of his missionary undertakings in Brooklyn, 43 years ago; Rev. Chas. T. Snow, who also had known Dr. Cohn for over 35 years; Rev. George T. McKiernan, likewise a close friend for over 35 years; Rev. Antonio Mangano, who himself a convert from Roman Catholicism had begun a work in Brooklyn among the Italians almost at the same time that Dr. Cohn had begun his work among the Jews. In addition to the brethren of the Long Island Baptist Association, addresses were also given by Rev. W. H. Rogers, D. D., pastor of the First Baptist Church of New York City, as representing the friendship and sympathy of the outside body of the Lord's people in all parts of this country; and last but not least, that noble layman, Hugh R. Monroe, LL.D., of Montclair, New Jersey, came all that distance to Brooklyn, and paid his tribute of love and esteem; for he too had been identified with Dr. Cohn for fully 35 years, and had come to have a deep affection for him.

Mr. Richmond in his address recalled the early days of Dr. Cohn's ministry, and told how bravely he had struggled against all odds and persecutions and lack of sympathy through the years of hard uphill labors; and he rejoiced to have noted all along how the Lord was blessing the work and was extending its testimony, until now it reached literally around the world.

At this time Dr. Snow led in prayer, and *The Old Rugged Cross*, one of Dr. Cohn's favorite hymns, was sung.

Dr. George C. McKiernan, Pastor of Wyckoff Heights Baptist Church and Clerk of the Long Island Baptist Association, spoke briefly of Dr. Cohn's courage and faith. Mr. McKiernan recalled how that he had offered the prayer of ordination at the time Dr. Cohn was ordained, and referred to the evident sense of responsibility felt by Dr. Cohn when hands of ordination were laid upon his head. Mr. McKiernan's words of eulogy were:

"A voice is heard on earth of loved ones weeping
The loss of one they love.
But he has gone where the redeemed are keeping a festival above.
The mourners throng the ways
And from the steeple the funeral bells toll slow.
But on the golden streets the holy people are passing to and fro.
And saying, as they meet, Rejoice! Another long waited for has come.
The Saviour's heart is glad,
A younger brother has reached the Father's home."

Among some of the words that were spoken by Dr. Rogers are the following: "We are not here merely to eulogize his numerous virtues, or to express all that we would like to say about the achievements and labors of his

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faith and life. First of all that would be impossible. Most of his labors are known alone to God, for he began the work that was dear to his heart before many of us ever knew of him or even heard of him. And in the second place to simply eulogize the memories of his life and service would not be in entire harmony with the simplicity, humility and modesty of his career. I knew the influence and character of his work long before I knew the man, but I have come to know him well enough to know that he would have Christ magnified in his death as he sought to magnify Him in his life and in his service. My knowledge of Dr. Cohn leads me to say that Christ was the center of his life. He was the beginning and end of his affection."

Then Dr. Mangano spoke. "So many beautiful things have been said that I feel that there is nothing that I can add. I am conscious that Dr. Cohn is one of the men that will be greatly missed in our community. It is said that men of faith and vision create institutions. But seldom do institutions create men of faith and vision. Our friend has created an institution. We trust that that institution will function as his heart desired and as he sought to make it function during the days that he was among us. I have known Brother Cohn for thirty years or more, and one of the things that impressed me above everything else was his complete devotion and consecration to the task that was upon his heart and mind. As I talked to him on various occasions I realized how deep was his interest in the work of evangelizing the Jews. He had a purpose and that purpose was God-given. It was not something that he had taken upon himself but just like the prophet Isaiah or Jeremiah he felt the burden of the Lord upon him to minister to his people and he gave himself in complete abandon to their welfare. Just how much Brother Cohn accomplished, well this audience is one of the evidences of it. But this is only the least part, for God only can tell how many lives have been touched and inspired through his ministry. My prayer is that his son who will take the leadership in this work shall be the worthy son of a worthy father to carry on the great work which his father began."

The last speaker was Dr. Hugh R. Monro, and he so ably summed up the important facts of what the other speakers had mentioned, and also facts out of his own contact with Dr. Cohn, that we are going to print the greater part of his address:

A Tribute By Dr. Hugh R. Monro

I am glad this evening to bear a simple word of tribute to this valiant soldier of Christ who was my friend for many years. As far as I have been able to draw from the remarks that have been given tonight, I think that my acquaintance extended over a period almost as long as that of any of the speakers this evening, nearly forty years. I treasure this fellowship as one of the inspiring things which have come into my life one of the real influences. I owe a great debt to this true soldier of the Cross. He was indeed a soldier, for, as several have indicated, he knew what strife was, what warfare was, on behalf of the Lord. There are probably not many in this audience who know how acute the suffering of this servant of Christ was in his early ministry. The anguish that he went through over a period of years. It is one of the phenomena of the spiritual history of this city and it is hard to account for it. I can hardly think of a parallel in the religious history of this country. To find an exact parallel I should have to go abroad to a celebrated case in France in which one of his own people was concerned a generation ago. The simple fact is that his life was in constant peril for years in his early ministry. He was the victim of assault more than once. How strange this is when we think of the gentleness of his spirit, and his humility, and his one passion, and that to serve others. Yet for some reason this violent opposition not only on the part of his own people, but on the part of some Gentiles, developed, and for many years he was hounded and haunted night and day by opposition, by obstacles, by vilest slander and misrepresentation. It sounds like a chapter out of the dark ages. Perhaps some day that history will be written. I think there would be a value in the record. We live in days of such indulgence and softness we know little of what our forefathers had to pass through. The things that put light into them and iron in their blood. But Leopold Cohn knew all about it. Another impression I have, and that was his singular poise and stamina. Leopold Cohn



knew his Bible as few men know their Bible. He was steeped in its teaching. He had a full-orbed message. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians there is a list of the endowments that are given to the Saints of God, fruits of the spirit. In the Epistle to the Ephesians there is a catalogue of God's gifts to His Church. And when our Lord ascended on high he gave gifts unto men, and these gifts were prophets, apostles, pastors, evangelists, and teachers. Now I can think of our beloved Brother right in the midst of that catalogue. He was in truth a gift of our Lord to the Church. He had the true spirit of the under shepherd. He had a passion for souls. He had a keen responsiveness to the voice of the Spirit. How unslightingly did he labor during all these years in this very community. Starting amidst discouraging circumstances and with only a few kindred spirits behind him to share his afflictions and persecutions, the work which he founded is reaching out, as has been observed, to almost all quarters of the globe. Our Lord is a great Vindicator. He has a way of seeing his children through, and he has a way of settling accounts, and squaring things. What a satisfaction and joy it is to realize as we meet here tonight that even while still in the flesh he knew his Lord's vindication. He had led him out into this large and wealthy place. So I salute this true soldier of the Cross. I would like to lay some worthy tribute upon this casket. He has fought a good fight. He has finished his course. He has kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up that crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give him: not to him only but to all those that love His appearing.

The Body at Rest

On Wednesday morning, December 22nd, we laid the tired body to rest in the burial plot in Cypress Hills Cemetery in Brooklyn, and as we said goodbye to the earthly habitation in which that brave soul had lived these many years, and brushed away the tears, we knew also that soon we will say a happy good morning in that land where God shall wipe away all tears.

Almost immediately telegrams and letters began coming to us from all over the country, and by the time *THE CHOSEN PEOPLE* for January had reached our readers, the mails were simply clogged with hundreds and hundreds of letters that have been pouring in upon us, expressing shock, and deep sympathy. It has been impossible to acknowledge these letters, and it is impossible to think of quoting from even a very small fraction of all that have been received. But we have made some selections which we think our readers ought to see, and share with us, and so here they are:

A Few Selected Tributes

Howard A. Kelly, M. D. of Baltimore, Maryland. Telegram: "Deep sympathy in great loss; love of thousands will cherish his memory while life lasts."

Edmund B. Buckalew, Mount Gretna, Pa. "This is no formal letter of condolence but a heartfelt expression of sympathy with you and Esther and the other members of the family.

Moreover it is, as I think you understand, an expression of peculiar partnership in the sorrow of your father's passing.

Above most men I have ever known he deserved the title of "Christian Gentleman." He has his own place in my heart and memory. I never told you but I loved your father better than anyone outside of my immediate family, save Dr. Gray and Dr. Ostrom. My father died when I was only 6 months old and I have never known the love of a real father. Dr. Gray, Dr. Ostrom and your father in a way filled that gap. There was nothing I would not have done for him within my power. Leopold Cohn, I salute you as one of those heroes of the faith of whom the world was not worthy.

He has gone to be with Christ, whom he loyally served, which is 'far better' for him, but leaves us poorer. But he will be joined with loved ones when Christ comes and then he will get a big hug from me. Meanwhile the Holy Spirit comfort you and gird you for the work."

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Irwin H. Linton, Washington, D. C., Attorney, President of the American Board of Missions to the Jews. "My heart goes out to you at this time of anxiety and sorrow. I lost the dear father whom I loved with some of the devotion which his years of tender kindness and fellowship deserved, not long ago, and I can enter into your feelings.

Give my greetings and a word of good cheer to your father from me if he is conscious and tell him to be of good courage, as unspeakable joy lies just ahead of him. 'And all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side' is what Bunyan wrote of the passing of Mr. Standfast. And a Mr. Standfast your father has been, and the crown rights of the Prince he may soon see face to face.

When I think of the scar on your father's face from the stoning in the early years of his preaching, I recall the passing of Mr. 'Valiant for Truth' of whom Bunyan wrote somewhat as follows:

'Now when it was noised abroad that Mr. Valiant for Truth was sent for, by the same token as the other, he made his last will and testament. And he said: My sword I leave to him who shall follow me in my pilgrimage; my skill at arms to him who can get it. My marks and scars I take with me to prove that I have fought the battles of Him who will now be my rewarder.'

Don't you wish we had a real scar as your father has?

My prayers go up for you, dear brother, and my love out to you and your dear father."

Dr. H. Zeckhausen, Missionary to the Jews in Brooklyn, N. Y. "I was terribly affected and shocked to read in this morning's N. Y. Tribune of the passing away of your dear father. Less than a month ago I saw him in his usual health and we talked over many incidents in our lives for over forty years in the work among our people. He was one of my true, sympathizing friends and collaborer in the field among the Jews. Always true, unassuming, yet forceful in his way of presenting the Gospel, above all the personality of Jesus, our Messiah, to his listeners. No more will I grasp his hands, but his memory and friendship will remain with me. His life was a benediction to me in hours of trial.

Asleep in Jesus whom he loved and whom he served. And I can now only convey my sympathy to his bereaved family, his children and grandchildren. Be of courage, my brother, he has fought a great fight and a victorious one. My heartiest condolence."

Rev. J. Palmer Muntz, D. D., Treasurer of the Buffalo Branch of the American Board of Missions to the Jews. Telegram: "The word that your dear father has slipped away at the call of the Master whom he so loved to serve and rejoiced to honor impels me to assure you that our hearts go out to you in deep and sincere sympathy. Though you would not for worlds call him back from his Saviour's glorified presence yet we know the pain and loss in separation will be very deeply felt. We commend you to the love and care of Him whose everlasting arms are underneath to sustain you. May His grace and comfort be yours in full measure."

Rev. David Otis Fuller, D. D., Pastor Wealthy Street Baptist Temple, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Telegram: "With genuine sadness we learn of your father's home-going. How blessed to have as our abiding hope the glorious morn of resurrection which means reunion forever. All members of the church with the pastor extend their deepest sympathy. Truly it can be said of your beloved father that in the face of bitter persecution and that at times coming from those who called themselves Christians, he fought the good fight, he kept the faith, he finished his course. To be with Christ his true Messiah is far better. Our prayer is that the great work he began may continue through God's grace, and be used till Jesus comes as a lighthouse where other lost sheep of the House of Israel may find the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world."

Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Duff, Missionaries to the Jews, St. Louis, Mo. "We read of the home-going of your dear father with deep sorrow, for we learned to love him as our own father during the time we were associated with him there in the work.



There are many who marvel at the great success of the work he founded and that it should stand and continue through all the attacks from the inside as well as the outside. We learned the secret however, that God had established that work on the faith and humility of that quiet man who like Abraham believed God.

Yours is a great heritage and we shall continue to pray that you will be kept in the will of God, ever seeking His guidance with praise and thanksgiving for the many avenues of service which He has opened to you through the medium of the American Board of Missions to the Jews.

May the Lord bless and keep you is the heart's desire and prayer of your Brother and Sister in Christ."

Rev. R. Paul Miller, Secretary of The Missionary Board of the Brethren Church, Berne, Indiana. "I can not express in words the deep sense of sorrow and loss that I feel because of his going. I shall never forget the time when he stepped aside from his rule, and came to Philadelphia with you when I was pastor in that city, to aid in the Jewish Conference held in my church. It was a sacrifice for him, and a strain upon him as I realized then, but his zeal for Christ was such that in spite of the weakness of the flesh he was willing to go another mile for the Lord. A great 'Cedar of Lebanon' has fallen and there will be a vacant place in the forest of God's faithful ones, where he stood. It shall always be a pleasant memory to me to remember that I knew him and had him, as one of God's chosen ones, in my pulpit. 'I will bless him that blesseth thee' is the promise of the Lord, and it has been true for me. It has been my privilege to pray for you both each day for nearly twenty years, and nothing gives me so much pleasure as this memory. He fought a good fight, he has finished his course and he kept the faith; henceforth, a crown of rejoicing is his today. May many others of us grasp the torch from his falling hands and lift it high in the fast darkening days of this age.

We shall pray earnestly that his mantle shall rest upon you as you assume the added duties to carry on alone. 'As thy day, so shall thy strength be.' I am sure that you will stand as he did and your hand shall 'cleave to the sword.' It is my privilege to have some small part with you in your great work until He comes."

Rev. Geo. C. McKiernan, Secretary Long Island Baptist Ministers' Union. "At the meeting of the Long Island Baptist Ministers' Union yesterday, it was announced that your beloved father had gone to his reward.

It was unanimously voted that I express to you and to your family, on behalf of the brethren, our deep Christian sympathy in your time of sorrow, and to bespeak for you that comfort and consolation that God alone can give. May you feel undergirded by divine strength and sustained by His grace. May God's blessing rest upon the work so nobly done by your father and may it be carried on, under His guidance, for many years."

Rev. Aaron J. Kligerman, Missionary to the Jews, Baltimore, Maryland. "It is with much grief that I read only yesterday of the passing of your dear father, Dr. Leopold Cohn. His friendship and encouraging messages from time to time I greatly prized. Your father, sir, was a great missionary to, and a real friend of, our people. His loss is felt throughout the world, and deeply mourned. It is difficult to estimate here what his life has meant to the cause of Christ among Israel. The fruit of his labor is in the hand of His Master and the reward is sure."

Rev. Harold Strathearn, D. D., Secretary, Interstate Evangelistic Association, Rochester, N. Y. "I have just learned of the home going of your dear father. I am writing to express my deep sympathy. He was a great father; he stood shoulder to shoulder with you in the day of battle, when the enemy was arrayed against you. It is wonderful how the Lord, from time to time has delivered both of you from the hands of your enemies.

The loss you have sustained in companionship, in the going of your father, can only be made up in the consciousness of the presence of the Lord. I want you to be assured of my prayers."

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

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Rev. Charles T. Snow, Brooklyn, N. Y. "I shall never forget the tender, affectionate greeting of your father to me when we met at the Ministers' Conference at East End Church Nov. 22nd. It seemed like a benediction blessing."

Miss Jessie J. Hiatt, Washington, D. C. "For twenty-nine years I have been greatly interested in your work. In the early years I received gracious and helpful letters from your father, answering questions and acknowledging gifts. They always overflowed with the Spirit of love, joy, peace, and long suffering. Many of these letters I have kept as treasures to this day because they so fully show the beauty and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ abiding in his daily life and work.

These latter years I have ever thought of him as a saint of God 'waiting for the consolation of Israel' which shall be full and glorious when He reigns on the throne of His father, David and sorrow and persecution shall not be remembered. O glorious day!"

Rev. Elias Newman, Director of Zion Society for Israel, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. "A few days ago I learned with sorrow of the departure of your dear father. It is permitted to very few of us to be able to establish such an enviable record as was your father's. Forty-four years of continual plodding in behalf of Christ and Israel is no mean accomplishment. I shall always remember his quiet and unostentatious spirit; his dignified personality; his conservative aloofness from all the noise and turmoil of the many questionable innovations of our modern day; his loyalty to truth; his persevering faithfulness in the preaching of the Gospel to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, and his gentle demeanor.

There is no need on my part to comfort you, as you are well aware of the true source of eternal comfort.

May God richly bless you, and may this sudden gap in your life be filled by His grace.

My heartiest sympathy goes out to you and your dear ones as well as all the workers of the American Board of Missions to the Jews."

Rev. Solomon Birnbaum, Director of Jewish Missions Course, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois. "Only a day or two ago I heard that your father had passed away. I was very sorry to hear it and want to express to you my deepest sympathy.

Dr. Leopold Cohn will stand out in the Annals of Hebrew Christian history as a man of the true pioneering spirit and as a courageous and unwavering hero of the faith in spite of untold stumbling blocks and obstacles. He left behind him a work and a tradition well worth carrying on."

Dr. Henry Ostrom, of the Extension Staff of the Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois. "Upon receipt of THE CHOSEN PEOPLE for January I learn of the home-going of your illustrious father. Let me inform you that for years I have wondered at the Christian devotion of both him and yourself. It was he who told me with much emotion how you came out of college to assure him that the work of The Mission should not suffer. Then of course, I had extra reason to watch its efforts and trials and victories during the following years.

To your devoted father the Holy Scriptures were not merely a fragrance acceptable. No! They were Bread. How he seemed to gain a realization of values clear back of all he could, even with his exceptional gifts, express! That characteristic, I think sent many away after hearing him determined to pursue the quest in God's Word with greatly increased zeal.

Ah! How the Lord sought and saved when he claimed Dr. Leopold Cohn! I assure you dear Joseph that I reverence the very thought of it."

Rev. C. Gordon Brownville, D. D., Pastor, Tremont Temple Baptist Church, Boston, Mass. "Permit me to express my sympathy to you in the home-going of your father and yet rejoice with you in his blessed experience.

Truly, a faithful servant is gone, but we praise God his seed is left to carry on in his stead. We shall be praying for you."



Rev. Max I. Reich, of the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, Illinois. "Returning to Chicago from my overseas trip a few days ago, I learned to my sorrow of the demise of your venerated father. On acquainting the members of the Executive of the H. C. A. which met yesterday and today, of this, they charged me to convey to you their deep sympathy and their expression of sorrow that a valiant in Israel has passed from the scene of earthly service. Happily he has left behind him a son on whose shoulders the mantle of his father can worthily be placed. May the work in your hand prosper under divine blessing more and more!"

Emanuel Woods, a convert of the Mission and now a student at the Moody Bible Institute. "Only God knows the way in which the testimony of your father lingers on my heart."

Rev. Moses H. Gitlin, G. Richter, S. Kalushyner, H. Shaftchick, M. Garfinkle, Mr. Kantowicz, Mr. Cygelman, H. Udinsky, Clara Gitlin, and Lea Reznik, special committee appointed by the Hebrew Christian Church of Warsaw, Poland. "Yesterday, on January the first, 1938, when the members of the newly founded Hebrew Christian Church of Warsaw came together for a session, we learned to know of the sad news that your highly esteemed father, the Rev. Dr. Leopold Cohn, has departed from this life to go for his eternal reward.

Brother Gitlin told us of the person and activities of your father, and we praised God in our prayers for his life and ministry.

May the memory of your saintly father, and the abiding fruit of his labors (and our Hebrew Christian Church is a latest expression of it) serve you and your fellow-workers to a life long blessing and encouragement in your work of making known the Messiah to His own, to the Church and to the world at large.

May the Lord comfort you in your sorrow."

Mrs. V. L. Blume, Richmond, Virginia. "Saturday's mail brought *THE CHOSEN PEOPLE*, telling of the home-going of your honored father. While I never met him I was drawn to him through reading *THE CHOSEN PEOPLE* and *Shepherd of Israel* as to no other whose literature I have ever read. Only in Eternity can it ever be known the good he accomplished.

You have my heartfelt sympathy, and at the same time I congratulate you on having such a spiritfilled father, who was permitted to live to see the work he began, so ably carried on by his son. (What a source of comfort to him during his last days.) May blessings from above ever abound for you."

Rev. C. F. and Mrs. Reitzel, Altoona, Penna. "Husband says he loved his own father after the flesh, as much as any son could. And yet, he seemed to love your adorable Father more."

Rev. Hugo Spitzer, Director-Treasurer of the Western Canada Missions to the Jews, Winnipeg, Man., Canada. "We just noted from *THE CHOSEN PEOPLE* the announcement of the passing away of your greatly beloved father. It was indeed a great shock to us, and we desire to express to you our very heartfelt sympathy in the great loss you have sustained; a loss we are sure will be felt by thousands of Christian people as well as a multitude of Hebrew Christians who have loved your father.

I believe it is not out of place at this time to state our view concerning him. He was indeed a great man in Israel and the Father of Jewish Missions in North America. In the commencement of his work in this land he had to contend with tremendous opposition and difficult problems. But he trusted in the Lord and won great victories for his Master whom he so faithfully served for so many years. The present work which you are so successfully carrying on will be a lasting monument to his faithfulness and love for his people Israel. We are indeed happy in the thought that you are so vigorously following in his footsteps, and we are certain that God's blessing will be your reward.

Brother Leopold Cohn now is with his Lord rejoicing in the fruitfulness of his labours."

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

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Mrs. Blanchard B. Stevens, Atlantic City, N. J. "Let me take this opportunity to extend to you and the members of your family my sympathy together with that of 'The Circle.'

You have sustained a great loss but we know you 'sorrow not, as those who have no hope.'

What rejoicing there must be in your heart when you meditate on your Father's meeting with His Lord! What an abundant entrance into the presence of Him for whom he forsook all, to serve and obey and follow to the end of his earthly career.

The Sunday morning that Mr. Coulson Shepherd gave the life's experience of your father over the Radio—he told us afterward, he was so thrilled by the recital of it, he quivered all over and that was the identical way it affected those of us who listened. The Holy Spirit winging those words over the air, 'A great warrior laying down his armor and silently stealing away!'

Can't you picture Dear gentle, meek, humble Father Cohn, being ushered into the presence of The Heavenly Father with bowed head, hearing the 'Well done good and faithful servant...'

My! it thrills me just to write about it! And today with all the 'blessed of all ages' to be forever with The Lord. What a heritage is yours, Dear Friend in the Lord Jesus! What an urge to still greater service! May the Lord strengthen you in body, soul and spirit, to carry the added burden your father's home-going places upon you."

Rev. Coulson Shepherd, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Atlantic City, N. J. "I just heard today that the Lord had called Home to be with Himself your very wonderful father.

Even for you who will miss him very much, it must be joyous to realize that he is with his Lord, the One he loved and served so faithfully.

We are praying that the Lord Himself will comfort your heart and the hearts of other loved ones, and that He will continue to give you wisdom to carry on the affairs of the Mission. As a memorial to your father, truly a modern Apostle Paul, I pray that God's people might pray and give for the work he founded as never before—perhaps in some definite and lasting way!

Mrs. Shepherd unites with me in sending our love and sympathy to you and yours at this time. I am so glad it was my privilege to see him and talk to him just last month."

Rev. Jacob Peltz, B. D., Secretary, The International Hebrew Christian Alliance, of London, England: "Please accept my profound sympathy in the great loss you and your family have sustained personally and in the loss the Jewish Mission field has suffered by the passing of one of its greatest missionary pioneers and leaders.

It was my privilege and pleasure to meet and have conversation with your father on three or four different occasions and each time I felt that I had been in the presence of a great Hebrew Christian scholar and one of the most gifted Jewish missionaries in the world. How proud and happy I am to have known your distinguished father.

How happy your father must have been after spending forty-three years of labour as a Jewish missionary (and I know that some of those years were full of pain, suffering, persecution, when all the satanic powers were at work to undermine him and the great work he was establishing) to be able to see such a harvest as a result of his indefatigable and faithful labours: Jewish converts everywhere, a network of Jewish mission stations in the United States and other countries of the world, a Jewish missionary periodical which is having untold influence over the minds of thousands of Jews the world over. I know of no Jewish Christian since the time of the Apostles who has left so much evident, visible and tangible fruits for his labours as your dear father.

I am quite aware that it is due to your great organizing ability, your genius in administration that the American Board of Missions to the Jews has had such a phenomenal growth and expansion during the last decade but none of us will forget that it was your father who built the foundation and weathered the storm when it was raging during the most violent tempests of controversy."



THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

INCIDENTS IN THE WORK

Christmas in Paris

(The latest addition to the staff of workers in our Paris Branch is Mlle. Germaine Melon-Hollard, a devoted child of God, of Quaker origin. In this personal letter she gives a heart touching account of the Christmas celebration held for the poor destitute Jewish refugees in Paris.)

I hope you began the new year in good condition. We were very much with you in thought during Christmas time and the end of 1937 year, and it would have been fine to have had you with us when we had the refugee fête on December 28th, here. About 120 refugees came. We had first a refugees' meeting in the church where Mr. Frankel, Pastor Vincent, and Mr. Lewis spoke. Between we had "cantique," and I played on my violin one "aria" from the 17th century (German one). I send you here the program. It was a very solemn and in the same time, fine and helpful atmosphere. After the meeting in the church (where some friends of the church came too) we had a big meal for the refugees (cocoa, sandwiches, bread, butter, jam). In 10 moments all was gone, and it was necessary to buy 3 kilos of new bread. "Excuse me if we eat so much," said some refugees. "we did not have such a meal for months." And their faces, fell; their sad expressions were our own troubles too. The end of the "meal" was only bread and butter, but for the refugees it was a "feast." You see, in the work for refugees, I have constantly in mind James 2:16 "And, if one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" In the same time, the spirit in which we try to give the necessary things for the body, is so important, and I can't say enough how I like Mr. Frankel's wonderful spirit of love.

Food and Gospels Together

A photo was taken during the meeting. As soon as it is ready you will have it. The week before December 28th, Mr. Frankel and I, we distributed food and clothes to 55 persons in their homes, with the gospel. We had the car of a friend of mine, so in the afternoon we had time for everything. We received some charming words of gratitude after that.

I am giving French lessons every Monday afternoon, here, for 15 refugees or so. Last week they said to me in French (very bad French, but so charming!) their gratitude of the Christmas fête. "It was some light in our darkness," or "Thank you to understand our misery. God bless you" said some of them.

On the Tuesday, when Mr. Frankel receives the refugees (I assist him) about 40-50 refugees come. Some to get 10 francs and food ticket, the others not only for that, but to speak and find friends. Very often they are in so great distress, and are crying. Then, it is to us to find the right words for those poor people. When they do not have the gospels, Mr. Frankel gives it. When they do have it, he reads something, or prays, and sometimes the sadness of their faces passes into peacefulness. New refugees continue to come, especially from Germany, and this refugee problem seems to be a permanent one.

Let me tell you, now, just a few words of personal deep gratefulness. The collaboration with Pastor Vincent, Mlle. Salomon and Mr. Frankel is a real blessing. Day by day, I am feeling more "at home" here, and the full confidence we have between each other is our strength. So, I am grateful to you especially, who gave me your own confidence when I saw you in New York.

Excuse all my mistakes, will you. I am afraid I made a great deal of them in this letter. I speak German all the time now, and I forget English!

The Lord bless you in all your ways.

Believe me very sincerely,

GERMAINE MELON-HOLLARD

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

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FROM OUR BOOK ROOM

TRACTS FOR JEWS

We have them. They are brief, to the point, and attractively titled. They are written in a background of over forty years of experience in reaching the Jew with the Gospel. The subjects grip the Jew with curiosity. For the most part they are written by Jews for Jews, and with a God-given native understanding of the Jewish mind. They treat with the difficulties the Jew finds by way of the stumblingblock mentioned in 1st Cor. 1:23, such as the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the Atonement. Here is the list:

By REV. LEOPOLD COHN, D. D.

Behold a Virgin,	
Yiddish-English parallel	\$0.05
To Both the Houses of Israel,	
Yiddish-English parallel .....	.05
Cain and Abel,	
Yiddish-English parallel .....	.05
The Dialogue,	
Yiddish-English parallel .....	.05
What is His Name?	
Yiddish-English parallel .....	.05
The Voice that Cried,	
Yiddish-English parallel .....	.05
The Messiah Shall Be Cut Off,	
Yiddish only .....	.05
The Holy Days,	
Yiddish only .....	.05
I Daniel Understood by Books,	
English only .....	.05

WHAT EVERY JEW SHOULD KNOW:

1. What is a Christian?	
By J. H. Cohn, English or	
Yiddish .....	.02
2. Was Abraham a Jew?	
By J. H. Cohn, English or	
Yiddish .....	.02
3. Don't Go to Jerusalem,	
By J. H. Cohn, English only	.02
4. Son, Remember, By J. H. Cohn,	
Yiddish or English .....	.02
5. How Many Times Have You Been	
Born? By Rev. Coulson Shep-	
herd, English or Yiddish .....	.02
6. A Modern Jew Looks at Jesus,	
By Rev. H. Einspruch, D. D.	
English only .....	.01
7. The Riddle of the Changed Cal-	
endar, By Rev. W. H. Fit-	
chett, English or Yiddish .....	.05
8. An Open Letter to a Rabbi,	
By Rev. L. Abramowitch,	
English only .....	.05
9. Thirty-three Prophecies Ful-	
filled in One Day, By Rev.	
Charles Bauer, English only ..	.05
10. An Astonishing Yom Kippur	
Prayer, English only .....	.05
11. Do Christians Worship Three	
Gods? English or Yiddish .....	.05

These tracts are available to friends of Israel at prices close to, or even below, printing costs. We would gladly, as the Lord would enable us, send unlimited supplies free of all charge, were it not that we wish to avoid waste in unwieldy distribution.

AMERICAN BOARD OF MISSIONS
TO THE JEWS, Inc.
27 Throop Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.

AMERICAN BOARD OF MISSIONS TO THE JEWS, Inc.
27 Throop Avenue, Box 10, Station A, Brooklyn, N. Y.

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Dear Friends:

I enclose \$..... as my free will offering for the Lord's work among His scattered, yet beloved, people, Israel. I prefer that the gift be used especially for

Name

Address

If you can not personally use this Blank, will you not ask the Lord to guide you in passing it on to some friend?



OUR FAR FLUNG BATTLE LINE (I Cor. 14:8)

Branch Stations in important Jewish Centers in the U. S.
Our own Missionaries, and assistance to other missionaries, in Poland, Latvia, Soviet
Russia, Roumania, Palestine, etc.
Gospel Meetings, Bible Classes, Industrial Classes for men, women and children.
An extensive ministry of Christ-love among the Jewish victims of Nazi persecutions, in
Germany, also among the refugees in adjacent countries.
Open Air Meetings.
Distribution of Bibles, New Testaments and Tracts.
House-to-House Visitation.
Medical Relief and Assistance.
Relief to Poor, gifts in cash, payment of rents, gifts of groceries, clothing and assistance
in finding employment.
Education Fund for Jewish Christian Students in training.
Itinerary Field Evangelism.
The Shepherd of Israel, Yiddish-English Gospel monthly having world-wide circulation
among the Jews.

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

FROM OUR BOOK ROOM

FOR CHRISTIANS

Israel My Glory, By John Wilkinson	\$2.00
When Jews Face Christ, By Rev. Henry Einspruch	1.25
The Jew and World Ferment, By Basil Mathews .....	.75
Fasts and Fasts of Israel, By Rev. A. J. Kligerman .....	.50
The Tottering Nations, By Rev. Keith L. Brooks .....	.50
Jewish Confessors of the Faith, By Rev. Henry Einspruch, D. D. ....	.35
The Shame of Christendom, By Rev. W. N. Carter, M. A. ....	.35
A Modern Missionary to an Ancient People, By Leopold Cohn, D. D. ....	.30
The Trinity in the Old Testament, By Leopold Cohn, D. D. ....	.10
Sons of the Law, By Rev. W. N. Carter, M. A. ....	.30
In the Last Days, By Rev. W. H. Rogers, D. D. ....	.25
By Joseph Hoffman Cohn:—	
Will the Church Escape the Tribulation? .....	.20
To the Wild Olive Tree .....	.05
A Tomorrow for the Jews .....	.05
It Was Necessary .....	.05
The Time of the Promise .....	.05
Three Days and Three Nights .....	.05
To the Jew First .....	.05
Contrary to Nature .....	.05
Pleroma, the Times and the Fullness .....	.05
Responsibility of the Church, By Rev. B. B. Sutcliffe, D. D. ....	.05
Three Men, By Rev. W. B. Hinson, D. D. ....	.05
The Sabbath Question, By Rev. Charles F. Reitze) .....	.10
How to Destroy the Jews, By Rev. H. O. Van Gilder .....	.05
The End of the Age, By Charles Feinberg, Th. D. ....	.05
Life From the Dead, By Rev. Elias Newman .....	.05
The Jew and Christian Brotherhood, By Rev. George W. Arms, D. D. ....	.05
The House of Israel, Where Is It? By Rev. Keith L. Brooks .....	.10
Anglo-Israelism Refuted, By Rev. Roy L. Aldrich .....	.25
Delusion of Anglo-Israelism, By Rev. W. F. Roadhouse .....	.05
The Jew, God's Timepiece, By Rev. Otto J. Klink .....	.05
Jewish Missionary Program, Collection Taken At Meeting, or	1.00
Jewish Mission Mite Box .....	.05

AMERICAN BOARD OF MISSIONS
TO THE JEWS, Inc.
27 Throop Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Station A, Box 10

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

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**FORTY-SECOND ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT,
AMERICAN BOARD OF MISSIONS TO THE JEWS, Inc.**

(Receipts that have been acknowledged from month to month, and Disbursements, for the twelve months beginning January 1st, 1937, and ending December 31st, 1937.)
Respectfully submitted, PAUL H. GRAEF, Treasurer.

RECEIPTS		DISBURSEMENTS	
Balances forward January 1, 1937:		General Fund:	
General Fund	\$17,356.03	Salaries of Mission Staff:	
Poor Fund	1,657.82	Part and full time workers....	\$17,850.79
Literature Fund	613.67	Extension Department:	
THE CHOSEN PEOPLE	723.69	Field Bible Conferences, Salaries	
Resettlement Fund	1,423.82	of General Secretary and Field	
		Assistants, Traveling expenses,	
		Conference publicity, etc.	12,825.76
Total	\$21,744.83	Interest, discount, Agency Obliga-	
		tions	15,000.00
Receipts during 1937:		Office Administration:	
General Fund	\$87,825.76	Salaries of Office Secretary,	
Poor Fund	1,453.60	Stenographers, Bookkeepers, Ed-	
Education Fund	4,132.50	itorial workers, including clerical	
Literature Fund	2,440.52	help on THE CHOSEN PEOPLE and	
THE CHOSEN PEOPLE	3,280.91	on THE SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL. .	\$850.78
THE SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL	1,901.84	Miscellaneous Items:	
Philadelphia Branch	1,410.19	Salary, janitors, care and upkeep	
Pittsburgh Branch	3,330.47	of buildings; fuel; Fire, Liability	
Columbus Branch	3,147.52	and Workmen's compensation in-	
Buffalo Branch	1,225.61	surance; Office Supplies, includ-	
Los Angeles Branch	1,017.52	ing new equipment; advertising,	
Overseas Fund	12,811.07	donations to speakers and	
Resettlement Fund	2,131.00	writers, expenses of local Bible	
Dispensary Fund	867.65	Conferences; items not properly	
Children's Fund	351.35	chargeable to other funds.	17,460.19
Hewes Street Account	622.00		
Revolving Fund	205.00		
Transmission Fund	191.00		
Receipts for 1937	\$125,403.49	Relief to the Poor:	
		Cash help to needy cases.....	2,619.29
Total	\$147,148.32	Literature Fund:	
		Printing and distribution of tracts,	
		purchase of Bibles and New Testa-	
		ments, Yiddish Hymn Books	2,858.23
		Work Among the Children:	
		Sewing and work-room supplies; Sa-	
		crifics, Outings, Daily Vacation Bible	
		School	793.94
		Dispensary:	
		Physicians, Medical Supplies	1,087.61
		Hewes Street Account:	
		Maintenance and Improvements ..	953.68
		Education Fund:	
		Jewish Students supported in part	
		or in full, at Bible Training Schools	
		Philadelphia Branch:	
		Salaries, rent of 533 Spruce Street,	
		and all other expenses	3,810.43
		Pittsburgh Branch:	
		Salaries, rent of 1605 Centre Ave-	
		nue, and all other expenses	3,561.69
		Columbus Branch:	
		Salaries, rent of 712 South Hague	
		Avenue, and all other expenses...	3,314.51
		Los Angeles Branch:	
		Salaries, rent of 2005 Brooklyn	
		Avenue, and all other expenses...	2,970.57
		Buffalo Branch:	
		Purchase and furnishing of 206 No.	
		Park Avenue, Salary of 3 workers	
		Overseas Work:	
		Jerusalem, Soviet Russia, Warsaw,	
		Germany, Paris, other European	
		Fields, Special Relief Funds, in-	
		cluding appropriation for 1936 dis-	
		tributions	36,270.61
		Resettlement Fund:	
		Expenses in Resettling German Jew-	
		ish refugees	2,010.80
		Revolving Fund:	
		Advances to Missionary workers ..	\$75.00
		"The Chosen People":	
		Printing and mailing	7,782.49
		"The Shepherd of Israel":	
		Printing and mailing	2,708.64
		Transmission Fund	191.00
		Total Disbursements	\$138,266.27
		(Concluded at foot of left-hand column)	

January 21, 1938.
American Board of Missions to the Jews, Inc.
27 Throop Avenue,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

GENTLEMEN:
We have examined the books and securities of the American Board of Missions to the Jews, Inc., for the year ended December 31, 1937.

We have verified Cash on hand and balance in bank with Bank Statements—the totals of which agree with the amounts indicated in the various funds.

Receipts from investments have been verified and all vouchers for expenditures were audited and found correct.

The statement of Receipts and Disbursements is, in our opinion, true and correct and as appears by the books of the Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1937.

Respectfully submitted,
The Merchants Audit and Accounting Co.
JAS. O. MOTTREHEAD.

(From right-hand column)

Adjusted Balances, January 1, 1938:	
General Fund	\$7,098.01
Poor Fund	542.13
Literature Fund	165.96
THE CHOSEN PEOPLE	222.13
Resettlement Fund	1,523.82
	\$9,532.05
Revolving Fund	670.00
(Debit Balance)	8,882.03
Total	\$147,148.32



JEWISH NOTES

The new Germanic World View aims at the rejection of the Bible as the Word of God; it endeavors to displace the Christ of God, tearing the crown of glory from His exalted head. But what is this German brand of a New World View? It might be expressed by two sentences, "We are the people. We are superior to other races." *The hatred of the Jew is its backbone.* They have defiled and ruined our Nordic race! They speak of Rassenchaude (Race defilement and shame). No such defilement can be permitted any longer! Even if some Aryan married a Jewess a few years ago, he has committed the Rassenchaude and they must go. In a certain place a Christian brother came to the writer for some advice and for prayer. In a whispered breath he confided to us that his grandfather was a Jew.

Out of this anti-semitic agitation has sprung the New World View. Its prominent leader is Alfred Rosenberg. Others are Wilhelm Hauer, Ernst Bergmann, von Reventlow, and several more. Another movement of perversion is the one inaugurated and sponsored by Mathilde Ludendorff, the wife of the erstwhile General Ludendorff. She wants to get the old Teutonic paganism back and make Germany what it used to be two thousand years ago. I talked with numerous prominent Nazis about this attempt. Each discredited the movement and several said, "Ja, die scheinen verrückt zu sein" (Yes, it seems they are crazy).

The first thing which the Germanic New World View and new religion demands is the out and out rejection of the Old Testament. It should not be allowed to be read at all. They also attempt to eliminate such blessed words as "Jehovah," and the Hebrew word of praise, "Hallelujah," and the word "Amen," because they are Hebrew words and they should never be used by an Aryan. Another change now appears here and there in German obituaries.

The great majority, of course, continue to use the old-fashioned, "Gone to be with the Lord," or, "She died in the faith of Christ," or, "Rests in the Lord." Here are several of the ridiculous substitutes which are suggested and now used by these new Germanic religionists: "Er starb im Glauben an Adolf Hitler"—He died in belief in Adolf Hitler. Another one, "Starb in Glauben in seinen Führer"—Died in the faith of his guide. Still another, "Starb im Glauben in Deutschland's Zukunft"—Died in the faith of Germany's Future.

Later we shall speak of the "Hitler Youth" who are enthralled by this New World View. It has happened more than once that boys had come home and said to their parents, "You had better throw this old Jew book away, it should have no place in our Aryan home." Then they raise objections against the Apostle Paul. He was a Jew, a Pharisee at that, and he is held responsible for teaching the supernatural Christianity and the Gospel which they so dislike and, therefore—Away with Paul! But they go far beyond that. Christ—what are they doing with Him? To deny Him and reject Him out and out would never do. So this New World View that He was not a Jew at all, one of the silliest inventions of all history. He came from Galilee; and does not the Old Testament Jew book speak of "Galilee of the Gentiles"? (Isaiah 9:1). It was a mixed race and therefore He must be of Gentile, perhaps of Aryan descent. They picture Him as a Nordic hero.

Such is the new form of Anti-Christianity camouflaged as a "New World View." These men also claim that the greatest misfortune in German history was the Christianization of the German race. This awful mistake, they say, must be rectified by the creation of a new German faith founded upon the fact of the divinity of the Nordic race, which needs no forgiveness, no redemption, which is able to redeem itself, and more than that, able to *save the whole world*. What a hallucination! *Dr. A. C. Gaebelein, in Our Hope, January 1938.*

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

Published Monthly, October to May, as a medium of information concerning the work of the American Board of Missions to the Jews, Inc. Subscription price, 50c. yearly. Remittances should be sent by check or money order; cash should be registered. Address, P. O. Station A, Box 10, Brooklyn, N. Y. Agency in Great Britain: Pickering and Inglis, 14 Paternoster Row, London, E. C.

General Information

The American Board of Missions to the Jews is a missionary society incorporated under the laws of the State of New York, to promulgate the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ among the Jews. It had its inception in 1894 when Leopold Cohn, then recently converted from rabbinical Judaism, in obedience to the call of God, and in full dependence upon Him for support, established the beginnings of the present work.

Object—To reach the entire field of world Jewry. Mission stations are being established in such important Jewish centers as may be in greatest need of a Gospel testimony, consistent with the Lord's will, as evidenced through His provision of workers and funds.

Field Secretaries. The work of evangelizing the Jew is further being accomplished by Field Secretaries who come into personal contact with Jews.

Evangelization by Mail. A work of growing importance and one in which we have been the pioneers for many years past, is the use of letters, tracts, Gospels and Testaments mailed to selected lists of Jews in practically every city and many towns of the United States. *The Shepherd of Israel*, published monthly in Yiddish and English, has a circulation among Jews in all parts of the world.

Budget. Under God's leading and blessing, the needs of the Mission have grown to over \$100,000 annually. The Lord has never failed us. We have no guaranteed support from any human source; nor are worldly methods of raising funds resorted to. The Mission exists as a testimony to the God of Israel Who has never failed to move the hearts of His children to come to our help.

We covet your prayers and your sympathy. We invite fellow believers to

cast in their lot with us, taking fellowship in the great task He has committed to our charge.

Bequests and Annuities. Form of bequest: "I give and bequeath to the American Board of Missions to the Jews, Inc., of Brooklyn, N. Y., incorporated in the State of New York in 1924, the sum of \$..... to be used for the purpose of said corporation, as defined in its charter." Our Annuity Plan enables you to pay your bequest now and receive an income thereon for life. Write us for rates and full information.

Contributions are acknowledged promptly. Donors' names are not published. Gifts may be specified for any department of the work, and will be used only as the giver may designate.

Gifts of Clothing, etc., should be sent by express, prepaid, and marked plainly, 27 Throop Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.

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The Jews in Your Town. Send us 50c. with each name and address. We will mail them monthly *The Shepherd of Israel* for a year. When a Jew shows a spirit of inquiry, we will inform you.

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German Edition. *THE CHOSEN PEOPLE* is now published each month in the German language. The German title is, "Das Auserwählte Volk." Our Mr. Herbert Singer, who spent 27 years in Jewish Mission work in Hamburg, Germany, is the Editor. Sample copies, 10 cents each; subscription annually is 50 cents. We will appreciate your help in getting this paper in circulation.



American Board of Missions to the Jews, Inc.

Continuing the Williamsburg Mission to the Jews

Headquarters: 27 Throop Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mission Stations

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"The Chosen People"

(Official Organ)

Information concerning Israel; for circulation among Christians.

Leaflets

Expounding Scripturally Israel's place in God's program.

"The Shepherd of Israel"

(Yiddish-English)

A monthly paper for international circulation among Jews.

Gospel Tracts

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Auditors:—Our books are regularly examined by Certified Accountants and full reports made thereon in The Chosen People.



Chosen People Ministries and the Fog of War

Alan M. Shore

INTRODUCTION

As the title of my paper indicates, this research seeks to explore the activities of the American Board of Missions to the Jews (ABMJ), as Chosen People Ministries was known during the years under examination, namely World War II and its aftermath, including the declaration of Jewish statehood.

In order to bring coherency to this picture, I want to introduce my presentation by placing the priorities and activities of the ABMJ during this time in a number of contexts: the extent of the presence of the ABMJ in Europe at this time, the challenges it faced to remain true to its priority of Jewish evangelism, while at the same time acting to render practical aid to desperate Jews in their immediate spheres of influence and elsewhere, and



finally, what specific actions they took.

As the persecution of the Jews in Europe initiated by the Nazis began literally in the first weeks of Hitler's rule, quite naturally, influential American Jewish organizations such as the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee and the Joint Distribution Committee among others were deeply concerned, although somewhat at a loss as to how to formulate a coherent response. Agreement regarding strategy and concerted action was hampered by the simple fact that the spectrum of Judaism and Jewish ideological commitment in America was simply too broad to achieve consensus. This lack of unity remained a factor in the American Jewish response to Hitler's depredations before and throughout the decade in question.

The pre-war developments in Germany posed a different challenge to the American churches. In some cases, the Jewish situation exposed the uglier prejudices against Jews that had burrowed so deeply into many sectors of the dominant Christian culture. But the rise of Hitlerism and its attendant virulence toward the Jews also had the effect of stirring sympathetic Christian leaders and members of their flocks to come alongside Jews in an unprecedented manner. Thrust into new proximity and pitted against a common foe, Jews and Christians had an opportunity to inspect one another more closely than they had ever done. In so doing, they achieved, in some cases, a degree of rapport that had previously been absent in their relations in the midst of the existing social order.

With the notable exception of the durable, pre-existing relationship of Jewish and Christian Zionists, apart from occasional friendships between influential Jewish and Christian individuals, what we today call interfaith relations did not exist in the lexicon of American religious thought before the 1920s. Prior to that time, there were no official movements specifically

constituted for the purpose of fostering positive inter-religious discourse between Jews and Christians on the basis of mutual religious esteem. One of the most important side effects that the ascendance of Nazi power had on Jewish and Christian leadership in America was that it challenged it not only to respond to the brutalities being visited upon Jews in Europe, but also to break new ground in forming closer, more respectful ties. However, up until that time, the language of mutual religious recognition had not yet truly developed a vocabulary.

The groundwork, however, had already been laid. As early as 1919, Alfred Williams Anthony, chairman of the Federal Council of Churches, in a letter to Reform Rabbi Leo Franklin, president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, expressed the desire for Jews and Christians to foster relations upon a footing of greater reciprocity.¹ As well, early efforts to promote positive inter-religious relations were not initiated solely by Christians. Throughout the 1920s, Reform Rabbi Isaac Landman, editor of the influential *American Hebrew*, advocated closer Jewish-Christian interaction. It was evident that an attitude of new openness from both sides was in the air.

The Protestant establishment, specifically from impetus generated by the growing influence of the Federal Council of Churches, matched Jewish efforts to further inter-religious relations. Propelled by the participation of Christian luminaries such as Bishop Francis J. McConnell of the Methodist Episcopal Church and theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, the FCC's prestige was enhanced further by the endorsement of Theodore Roosevelt, Charles Evans Hughes and other prominent public figures. The energetic efforts of the FCC resulted in the 1924 formation of its Committee on Good Will Between Jews and

1 Jonathan J. Golden, “From Cooperation to Confrontation: The Rise and Fall of the Synagogue Council of America,” (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 2008), 39.



Christians. Heartened by the Committee's avowed commitment to improvement of Jewish-Christian relations, B'nai B'rith contributed \$6,000 to its annual budget.²

Many Jews were skeptical, however. There was the concerning matter of Christian proselytizing. It was well known to Jewish leaders that the FCC supported missionary efforts directed toward their people, which had in recent decades escalated as a result of the massive migration of over two million Jews to America from Eastern Europe, beginning around 1880. As Dr. Yaakov Ariel has noted in his wonderfully written *The Evangelization of the Chosen People*, by 1910, there were 45 Christian evangelical missionary organizations in the United States whose focus was to evangelize Jewish people, many of whom were immigrants, by employing the tools of publications, public meetings and practical aid.³ The ABMJ may be said to be first among equals, or else close to it.

Moreover, in his article, "The Evangelist at Our Door: The American Jewish Response to Christian Missionaries, 1880-1920," Ariel explores a number of facets of the Jewish response to Jewish evangelism and those who responded to its message. He notes that they mostly directed their complaints at Jewish converts who had become engaged in evangelization work. Jews reacted much more negatively toward Jewish converts involved in proselytizing than toward non-Jewish missionaries. He writes, "Gentiles could be expected to evangelize Jews, but Jewish missionaries were seen as traitors twice over. Not only had they defected from the Jewish camp, but they had also joined the enemies in their struggle to destroy the Jewish faith and Jewish

2 Matthew Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion: Book Culture and American Spirituality in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 147.

3 Yaakov S. Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 22-23.

national existence. They were bound to be villains.”⁴

Conscious of these pressures, Jewish leaders were adamant in their demand that if good will was truly the goal of a Christian approach to their community, then Jewish participation in any form of inter-religious dialogue was contingent upon the understanding that proselytizing was off the table.⁵ Despite repeated assurances that it would be, some Jewish leaders continued to be skeptical of the FCC’s motives and remained aloof. As Ariel further observes, “The aggressive missionary enterprises left their mark on Jewish perceptions of Christian attitudes toward Jews. Many in the Jewish immigrant community became suspicious of Christian charitable, welfare, or educational enterprises and at times were convinced that any Christian willingness to show goodwill toward the Jews was motivated by a hidden missionary agenda.”⁶

In short, although Jewish leaders often expressed contempt toward evangelists and what they considered to be the misguided Jews they were able to dupe, the efforts of Jewish evangelists clearly got under their skin for a number of reasons. But as Ariel further notes, “The idea that some converts might have been persuaded by the Christian message and had embraced Christianity after much thought and inner struggle was a possibility their fellow Jews were often unable to countenance. That the missionaries perceived themselves as sincere friends of

4 Yaakov Ariel, “The Evangelist at Our Door: The American Jewish Response to Christian Missionaries, 1880-1920,” n.d., 146.

5 In an editorial published in March 1931, *B’nai B’rith* criticized John Mott’s public commitment to Jewish evangelism, asserting that it is incompatible with the objectives of the goodwill movement. *B’nai B’rith Magazine*. 45 (1931): 190, cited in Benny Kraut, “A Wary Collaboration – Jews, Catholics and the Goodwill Movement” in William R. Hutchison, *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 228 note 31.

6 Ariel, “The Evangelist at Our Door: The American Jewish Response to Christian Missionaries, 1880-1920,” 149.



the Jews and saw their work as a manifestation of goodwill were concepts many Jews could not understand.”⁷

It was a concept that some Protestants were beginning to lose sight of as well. The matter of Christian evangelism toward Jews and the obstacle it presented to Jewish-Christian relations was also a bone of contention among Protestant churches, albeit for a different reason. While Jews were naturally suspicious of hidden missionary agendas in the goodwill movement, some of the more conservative figures under the umbrella of the more generally theologically liberal FCC were deeply troubled by the implication that the ground rules for inter-religious dialogue required Christians to lay down their tracts and cease to carry out what they perceived as their religious duty to bring Jewish people (among others in general) to faith in the claims of the Gospel. Conrad Hoffman, director of the FCC’s International Missionary Council’s Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews, and others like him, viewed such a move as a portent that would not only undermine Jewish evangelism, but would also have a greater unwholesome effect on the church’s larger commitment to world evangelism generally.⁸

Hoffman was a highly influential figure who proved to be not only a staunch advocate of Jewish evangelism, but one who also worked tirelessly in the 1930s to rally support to help Christians of Jewish background leave Germany.⁹ Serving at the same time as Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of National Missions, Hoffman also oversaw that denomination’s work among the

7 Ibid., 155.

8 Hoffman’s commitment to Jewish evangelism did not preclude friendly relations with prominent Jewish figures. During the war, he began and maintained a friendship with Sholem Asch that would come to include John Mott. Asch’s controversial views on Jewish-Christian relations and his best-selling New Testament historical fiction contributed doubtlessly to the spark of attraction.

9 Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People*, 128–129.

Jewish community.¹⁰ As early as 1933, he began to publicize the rise of antisemitism in Poland, including a firsthand account “What I saw in Poland” that was published as the lead article in the June, 1933, issue of the Protestant interdenominational *The Missionary Review of the World*.

Hoffman was also painfully conscious of the harmful effects of Christian antisemitism. In his pamphlet “The Jews Today: A Call to Christian Action,” published in 1941, he makes the case against antisemitism from three directions. First, he condemns it as being antithetical to authentic Christian teachings. Next, Hoffman emphasizes what he characterizes as the underlying kinship that exists between Christianity and Judaism, asserting that, “The Christian approach to the Jew must embody full respect and gratitude for Judaism.”¹¹ Finally, most importantly from his standpoint, Hoffman urges Christians to reject antisemitism because it impedes Jewish evangelism. For him, Christian antisemitism’s most pernicious effect is that it causes Jews to turn a deaf ear to the Gospel. Despite the ill feeling he knew his views were bound to stir up, he believed that to exclude the Jews from the church’s Great Commission was a variety of antisemitism in and of itself.¹²

The rifts between liberals and conservatives in the FCC on this issue only widened. At last, weary of struggling with more

10 Conrad Hoffman, *The Jews Today a Call to Christian Action* (New York: Friendship Press, 1900), 2.

11 Ibid., 54.

12 Perhaps Hoffman was somewhat reassured by a letter he received on June 3, 1936, from Reform Rabbi Morris Lazaron, a member of the National Conference of Jews and Christians. Reflecting on the subject of evangelization, Lazaron wrote, “I can see no reason, however, why if conversionist activities are conducted in the proper ways - that is without the temptation of candy and play and enticements of all sorts calculated to lure the immature - I say I can see no reason why anyone should demand that you cease such activities. I personally feel that I should like to spread my Judaism to the four corners of the earth...I do not see why either of us should not offer what we have for healing, inspiration and peace.” MS-71 Box 4 Folder 11 Lazaron-Hoffman Correspondence.



conservative elements in its own coalition that were suspicious of the goodwill enterprise in any event, leading members of the Committee on Good Will decided in 1927 to act independently of the FCC to join forces with willing Jewish leaders to form the National Conference of Jews and Christians. In the end, they prioritized placing Jewish-Christian relations on what they believed to be more productive footing. Whatever their convictions may have been regarding the Great Commission, they were clear-eyed enough to see that if they were to make the relational progress they sought with their Jewish counterparts, they must be able to convince them that as far as establishing inter-religious cooperation, their goals lay where they said they did. This they attempted to do with many soothing words.

If Hoffman was troubled by what he perceived as the prospect of a distancing among influential Protestants from the task of Jewish evangelism, one can only think what this must have meant to Jewish evangelistic ministries such as the ABMJ, which viewed the terms of the interfaith project as a betrayal not only of Jewish evangelism but of the Gospel itself. One need look no further than the lead article of *The Chosen People* in January, 1933. Departing from the usual format of the magazine, Joseph Cohn preempted Leopold's usual introductory piece and led off with an unusually lengthy editorial that excoriates the stance of FCC, the goodwill movement. He names names – the names of people who throughout the 1930s and 40s would be prominent in Jewish-Christian efforts to publicly and vociferously denounce Hitler and the Nazis in a mainly fruitless effort to alter the course of events for the Jews in Europe. He writes,

For the Church of Christ has been betrayed; and betrayed in the house of those who profess to be her friends," singling out former president Rev. S. Parkes Cadman, D. D, writer of a widely read syndicated newspaper column entitled

“Everyday Questions,” in which column, Cohn asserts Parkes had repeatedly and frankly asserted that he is opposed to “proselyting” as well as then FCC President, the well-known Bishop Francis J. McConnell, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, whom Cohn roundly condemns for his attempts at interfaith amity at the expense of Cohn’s understanding of the true Gospel message.¹³

Cohn goes on to cite an article which appeared in the *B’nai B’rith Magazine* of March, 1931, which he characterizes as nothing less than a betrayal. The article is entitled “Are Christian Missions Menacing Judaism?” by Rev. Everett R. Clinchy, Secretary, Committee of Good Will between Jews and Christians, Federal Council of Churches of Christian America, another stellar name in the mainline Protestant church.

Clinchy writes, “But why does the Christian missionary feel compelled to approach the Jews? The Christian missionary to the Jew has the conviction (sometimes bordering, on the pathological) that he has the only way of salvation. Does the Good Will movement prepare the way for proselyting? Just the opposite.”¹⁴

Cohn goes on at some length, clearly agitated, at what he is deeply convinced is a turn toward the theological wilderness with frightful ramifications.

It hardly needs to be said that organizations such as the ABMJ, whose missionary focus confirmed mainstream Judaism’s worst fears, were shut out of participation in the interfaith enterprise. Shunned by Jewish leadership and seen as a hindrance by Christians eager to find common ground with Jewish representatives, Jewish-Christians and their missions were viewed as an unwelcome, destabilizing and disruptive

13 *The Chosen People*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 4, (January, 1933), 3.

14 Everett Clinchy, “Are Christian Missions Menacing Judaism?” *B’nai B’rith Magazine* (March, 1931), 192.



force. With the backing of the churches and other Christian institutions that supported them, organizations such as the ABMJ would have to define a role for themselves as the desperation of the plight of European Jewry intensified.

THE ABMJ AND ITS ALLIES

Looking back at the ABMJ history, it is plain to see that from the moment the young Leopold Cohn entered the Dewitt Memorial Church building on Rivington St. that operated as a mission to Jews under the auspices of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, what became Chosen People Ministries was integrally connected to the churches and Christian learning institutions in synch with the project of Jewish evangelism. This was the stream of Christianity, embodied by Presbyterians such as Conrad Hoffman and others who shared his evangelistic viewpoint, from which Cohn derived support. Starting with his own education, this tradition influenced not only his theology, once he was established in the new world, but the theological principles upon which Chosen People Ministries rests up to this day.

It is a given that without the partnership of such Christians, their churches and the learning institutions that they spawned, Chosen People Ministries would have been hard-pressed, to say the least, to carry out the truly impressive program of expansion that Dr. Glaser has described under the leadership of Joseph Hoffman Cohn that brings us to and through the Nazi era. It is also true that Joseph's expanding network of contacts among church sponsored missions already established in Europe would prove especially valuable during the fraught times beginning with the rise of Hitler.

I turn now to the how and when the ABMJ crossed the

Atlantic and migrated, so to speak, in a reverse direction, from America back to Europe.

THE ABMJ IN EUROPE

One might say that the presence of Chosen People Ministries began to be established in Europe even before there were any workers on the scene. Just as the Yiddish language had proven such a potent international vehicle for the dissemination of so many varieties of Jewish ideology, so it was that copies of the Mission's Yiddish newspaper, *The Shepherd of Israel*, began find its way into the hands of Jewish people in Europe. As early as 1923, the Mission began circulating reports of Jewish faith decisions that came about as a result. Although *The Shepherd of Israel* was being distributed by various other agencies and individuals in Palestine, Great Britain, Germany, Russia, and elsewhere in Europe, it was not until 1932 that Simon Assur, a Lithuanian Jew, was taken on as a staff member to begin a work in Kovno, distributing *The Shepherd of Israel*. *The Shepherd of Israel* was also instrumental in works that were undertaken in Russia and Latvia although these works were tragically cut short. *The Shepherd of Israel* was also an instrument of choice for Frank Boothby, who used it in his “Gospel Gate” ministry in Jerusalem and who became a member of the ABMJ staff in 1933. About the work in Palestine and the emergent State of Israel, more will be said later.

The February, 1934 issue of *The Chosen People* newsletter reports:

We can never speak too highly of the incalculable influence of the little Yiddish paper *The Shepherd of Israel*, which now is in its 16th year of service for the Lord Jesus Christ. A summary of its world distribution would include France,



England, China, Austria, Palestine, Czecho-Slovakia, Australia, Latvia, Denmark, Roumania, Canada, Poland, Sweden, Scotland, Bulgaria, Turkey. Forty different Mission stations are included in these statistical summaries, and the number of papers sent to these various Missions total anywhere from 25 to 2000 copies a month.¹⁵

In July of 1934, Joseph traveled to London to attend the Triennial Conference of the International Hebrew Christian Alliance, founded in Hamburg in 1925. His purpose was to enlarge his network of contacts among Europe's leaders in the movement. While there, he was awakened to the increasingly dangerous situation of the Jews and determined to expand the Mission's presence in Europe with a large-scale relief effort to aid Jews attempting to flee from Europe while this was still possible as the storm clouds gathered.

Hebrew Christians had a particular vulnerability. Organizations such as the Joint Distribution Committee considered them Christians and therefore not Jewish any longer and as such ineligible for aid. The Christian community, by and large, did not attend to them, Therefore, as they fell between the two stools, as it were, they were without institutional shelter.

Cohn made two consequential contacts in London at that meeting. The first was Pastor Arnold Frank, a founding member of the IHCA and a leading Jewish evangelical leader in Germany whose Jewish mission operated under the auspices of the Irish Presbyterian Church. That contact would lead to Cohn to Frank's able assistant, Herbert Singer, another Jewish believer who had been discipled by Frank in 1909 and had served under him from that time, who joined the ABMJ staff in 1937, and by 1940 had taken charge of the Mission's Jewish Refugee Relief work. By that time, Frank's work had come under attack by the Nazis and

15 *The Chosen People*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 5, (February, 1934), 5.

Frank, at the age of 80, was hauled off for a mercifully brief stay at a concentration camp. Happily, Frank survive the war and would live to the age of 106 when he passed away in 1965.

The second contact Cohn made in London was with Moses Gitlin, who had come to faith and been baptized through the ministry of Leopold Cohn and had been educated, with the Mission’s help, at Moody Bible Institute. Gitlin and Joseph Cohn had maintained contact over the years and Cohn was able to bring him on staff in 1934 and open a branch in Poland. There, in Warsaw, the Mission made provision for a seven-room apartment, where Gitlin would train other Jewish evangelists to send out to the field. As the November, 1934 *The Chosen People* issue reports,

Now we present Brother Gitlin to our readers; many of you already know about him from the splendid reports that were published in past years... and you will rejoice that he has finally come, as a dove, to his original home, and now is one of us, a co-worker and a fellow servant...¹⁶

The work in Poland was cut tragically short, especially in light of the progress that the Gitlins were able to produce in a relatively short time. Amid glowing reports of well attended meetings in Warsaw, including the establishment of a Messianic congregation, and a wide-ranging ministry in other parts of Poland, after 1936 political pressure and increasingly violent antisemitic attacks stifled the ministry in the crib, in a manner of speaking. The Gitlins departed Poland in July of 1939 and although another faithful couple, Jacob and Leah Goren, heroically strove to continue the work throughout the war and eventually went on to minister in Jerusalem, the war destroyed the mission’s Polish outreach.

Cohn’s vision for expansion in Europe didn’t stop there. In

16 *The Chosen People*, Vol. XL, No. 2, (November, 1934), 6.



1935, he met with Henri Vincent, a Baptist pastor in Paris whose secretary, a highly literate Jewish woman named Marie Solomon, offered to translate *The Shepherd of Israel* into French – and thus was born *l'Berger d'Israel*. That contact led to another Jewish believer, Andre Frankel, who was taken on as a missionary. The Paris work would prove to be of enormous importance, as we shall come to, as the situation of the Jews continued to deteriorate as the war approached.

There is absolutely no doubt that Joseph Cohn's desire to expand the work in Europe was fueled by the urgency he felt on behalf of Jewish refugees. While in Germany that summer of 1935 he was able to observe first-hand the growing desperation of the thousands of German Jews who were fleeing to France. As the situation worsened, board minutes of the end of the following year note Joseph's concern for the overseas work and linked it directly with refugee relief. The board responded by allocating the sum of \$15,000 to be disbursed during the following year.

There are still a few more chess pieces to place on the board of continental Europe that fill out the picture of the ABMJ's readiness to respond as it was able to what was ahead. One is Otto Samuel, a Jewish believer who had a short-lived ministry in Nazi Germany until he was forced to flee to Belgium, where he established a soup kitchen in Brussels that fed a hundred Jewish refugees each day while also ministering to their spiritual needs as he could. Arrested and interned as the Nazis invaded and occupied Belgium, Samuel was incarcerated in the Spanish Pyrenees and was later moved to an internment camp in France. He endured horrific conditions until he was at last released in 1941 and was able to reach America.

Another is Emanuel Lichtenstein, the grandson of Rabbi Ignatz Lichtenstein of Tápiószele, Hungary, who was also a committed believer and the author of numerous books, articles

and tracts, including *An Appeal to the Jewish People*. After having been convinced of the Gospel after reading the New Testament, he was quoted as saying, “I looked for thorns and I gathered roses.” Growing up under the tutelage of his grandfather, it is perhaps not surprising that young Emanuel began to follow in his footsteps. Finding himself in Vienna after having been displaced by Nazi terror, Emanuel met Joseph in 1936, when Cohn brought him onto the staff. Of his time in Vienna, Joseph reported,

The brethren in Vienna cannot express enough gratitude to us, that we have in this way contributed a worker to help them in their efforts to reach the Jews of that city. Vienna at the present time has many thousands of poor desperate Jews that have escaped from Germany, and are in a state of starvation and suffering beyond the power of language to describe. I visited in some of their homes last summer, and was deeply touched with the unspeakable poverty and need. We are so thankful that we have been able to send not only the salary for Mr. Lichtenstein to Vienna each month, but we also have sent extra money for relief work to the most needy of these cases, and with strict limitations that our money shall be used exclusively for helping such Jews as are known to be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁷

CRISIS AND CHALLENGES UNDER NAZI PERSECUTION

Before I go into some further specifics about the kinds of relief work that was done, I want to pause a moment to discuss the challenges that faced not only the ABMJ, but every other Jewish agency that wanted to respond to the unfolding horrors of the 30s and 40s. In addition to formidable task of raising resources came the questions of to whom should aid be directed and how was it

17 *The Chosen People*, Vol. LVIII, No. 3, (December, 1937), 14.



to be distributed. I just finished reading a collection of articles assembled in a book, the JDC at 100, which commemorated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Joint Distribution Committee in 1914. In fact, Dr. Zhava Glaser contributed a very fine piece which was a comparative study of the Jewish refugee communities that managed to find a foothold in Shanghai and Cuba.

Some of the recurring themes in those essays dealing with the Nazi era is the scarcity of resources, the difficulty of getting those resources to where they were most needed and the internal strife among various factions who vied for what they thought should be their fair share. Another pattern that emerged was a growing concern that donations were a trust should be approached with the most responsible stewardship possible, and the related questions of who qualified for help and what criteria should define that. Certainly, in the case of the JDC, as I mentioned earlier, Jewish identity was a must, although there were inevitably exceptions to the rule along the way. But the rationale was that the JDC, by definition was a Jewish helping agency. This is what their donors expected them to be.

In light of that, I want to look a bit at the constraints the ABMJ operated under in terms of the offer of practical aid. Some things they shared in common with other Jewish aid efforts, such as the awareness of the urgency of the situation, the reality of scarce resources, the desire to use them wisely and narrowing the focus, at least to some extent, by prioritizing who was to be helped. And just as the JDC rationalized that other agencies were there to help non-Jews and that helping Jews seemed to be no one's else's priority, and that "taking care of our own" is a well-recognized Jewish value, it became the priority of the ABMJ. Even more, given the unique position of Jewish believers, Cohn was determined not only to give toward the neediest cases, but also with the strict guideline

that money should be used exclusively to help Jewish believers. We know that that exclusivity did not last, could not last, but the reason for its emphasis is worth noting.

First of all, as I stated earlier, Jewish believers were in many eyes neither fish nor fowl and had even fewer options than regular Jews. But there is a wider issue that bears upon the foundational principles of evangelical missiology. It is the relationship, made especially relevant in these circumstances, between the work of evangelism and the rendering of practical aid. With regard to Jewish missions, this question is taking place in the particularly anxious moment in American religious history I alluded to earlier and the context of larger battles having to do with the priorities of the church itself. The work of the Great Commission, once seen as a given, was now perceived to be under attack. And one unfortunate, perhaps unintended consequence of this, was a growing bifurcation in some quarters between evangelism and the work of practical assistance. If the growing Social Gospel movement in America that emanated from the liberal wing and which some perceived as coming at the expense of the saving of souls, privileging “Deed” over “Word,” the mission-minded and donors who supported them were perhaps in danger of over-reaction by falling into the opposite error of neglecting the good works enjoined by the Gospel in their zeal to uphold the authoritative power of the Scriptures.

This issue came to the fore in the ABMJ world around 1934, when the idea to purchase land for a colony in Israel or elsewhere for Jewish believers was bruited about the membership of the IHCA, only to founder on the reluctance of some members to use funds raised for evangelism for other than that designated purpose. To no avail Sir Leon Levison, then president, argued, “The bogey that money is only to be used for evangelizing is all wrong. We cannot get money to bring people to Christ...and let them die.”¹⁸

18 Harold A Sevens, *A Rabbi's Vision: A Century of Proclaiming Messiah*;



WARTIME ACTIVITIES OF THE ABMJ

With the invasion of Poland by Germany from the west and Russia from the east in September, 1939, the dense fog of war soon descended on larger part of the world's Jewish population. Almost six years and six million Jewish deaths later, the remnant of European Jewish civilization would emerge in tatters, never to recover the depth and beauty of its former cultural heritage. From the earliest moments of the onset of this calamity, the ABMJ strove mightily to do what it could to rescue and preserve Jewish lives.

With a history of kindergardens, medical clinics and educational programs deeply ingrained in its culture from the very beginning, the ABMJ was able to plot a course amid these conflicts, with only the condition that practical aid must be accompanied by a Gospel witness. As Cohn concisely phrased it,

It may be important to stress here once more, that we are not a relief agency, nor a Refugee Society. Ours is a God-commissioned work of presenting the message of Salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, and this we do in season and out. Refugee relief we use only as a means to a vital end — the salvation of men and women. Frankly, we are not interested in relief work for its own sake.¹⁹

Having said that, it is of vital importance to remember that in these harrowing years, not only did the ABMJ attempt to nourish souls, but to meet the needs of the bodies they inhabited as best it could. With a presence now established in Poland, Paris and Vienna and a man in place in Brussels, the ABMJ braced to meet the challenge of the influx of fleeing refugees and the

A History of Chosen People Ministries, Inc. (Charlotte, NC: Chosen People Ministries, Inc., 1994), 186.

¹⁹ *The Chosen People*, Vol. XLV, No. 1, (October, 1939), 5.

tightening vise of Nazi occupation. They ministered as they were able, for as long as they were able, both before the war and in some instances even after the commencement of World War II virtually cut off European Jewry from even the most basic forms of assistance. The following reports, disseminated through *The Chosen People*, offer accounts that retain their immediacy to this day and offer a glimpse of the small victories the ABMJ was able to achieve at this time and beyond, even in the deteriorating circumstances:

Despite Hitler’s annexation of Austria in March of 1938 and the resulting intensification of Jewish persecution, Immanuel Lichtenstein was able to continue his work, at least for a time. The November 1939 issue of *The Chosen People* reports,

In spite of the war conditions in Germany, the Nazis have left unmolested the work in which we have a share, in Vienna, of old Austria. The Jewish Mission with which we are affiliated there, is maintained by the brethren of the Swedish Missionary Society, ...The Director of the Vienna Mission told me how Mr. Lichtenstein had endeared himself to those poor Jews, hundreds and thousands of them, and how he had been able to organize by means of a staff of twelve volunteer workers, a beautifully systematized program of visitation, relief, employment-seeking, refugee emigration, hospital care, and many other activities incident to looking after what is really an overwhelming task...the problems presented and the tasks involved are truly overwhelming.²⁰

Lichtenstein’s persevered as long as he was able. Less than two years later, *the Chosen People* reported that, as the Nazi deportations of Jews continued,

Our friends are asked especially to pray for our missionary in Vienna, Rev. Emanuel Lichtenstein, for the numerous other missionaries with whom he was associated there and

20 *The Chosen People*, Vol. XLV, No. 2, (November, 1939), 8-9.



for the many hundreds of Jewish Christians who flocked to the Mission of Seegasse (a Jewish section) as a shelter in the hour of terror. We are doing our utmost to get Mr. Lichtenstein out of Vienna and to transfer him to some South American port such as Buenos Aires where he can continue as our missionary.²¹

Lichtenstein's rescue was accomplished, and he did indeed go on to service in Buenos Aires and America.

The years 1939 to 1941 were busy years for the ABMJ's ministries in Europe as it sought to meet the rapidly expanding needs of Europe's increasingly desperate Jews. In 1939, Cohn reports,

When we were in Paris last summer, we eagerly seized an opportunity which the Lord clearly presented to us. A dear Christian woman, a member of the Eglise Evangelique where our Paris Branch is located, and of which Pastor Henri Vincent is the presiding head, found herself a widow, and possessed of a chateau some 300 miles south of Paris. The grounds are spacious, and make a beautiful picture. She said to our workers in Paris, "Here I am a widow with a comfortable home and no occupation to keep me busy, and I do want to serve the Lord. If you can use the property as a Home for some of the dear children of your Jewish Christian refugees, you are welcome to it, and I will further devote my own time and strength to help in such a work." Cohn goes on to say, "We now have twelve children in the Home, and they are a happy lot, far removed from the heartaches and burning memories of the cruelties and sufferings heaped upon their helpless bodies and souls because of Nazi evictions. The parents are in Paris being looked after by our workers..."²²

The following month, Cohn wrote in an unmistakably heartfelt manner about the destitute refugee Jews in Europe,

21 *The Chosen People*, Vol. XLVI, No. 6, (March, 1941), 10.

22 *The Chosen People*, Vol. XLV, No. 3, (December, 1939), 7.

We have been traveling down a one-way street. And that street has led us with an ever-increasing intensity to widen and then widen again, our every effort to bring relief to hungry stomachs as well as to hungry hearts. And in God's mercy we have been allowed to do both. And so we took up correspondence with our missionary staffs in Brussels, Paris and Vienna, and beginning with November 15th we authorized in each city the establishing of a Soup Kitchen, or a Food Depot. The plan is to have a simple but substantial noon day meal, perhaps a bowl of beef stew and then some bread and coffee. After the meal there will be a regular Gospel service, with testimonies following, for the one is to feed the body, while the other feeds the immortal soul.²³

In addition to some of the direct ministry Cohn references at this time, we can also note requests that came from him from some far-flung places where the ABMJ had no direct presence at all. As the January, 1940, issue of *The Chosen People* reports,

From Bolivia also came the Macedonian call. Here too, refugee Jews from Central Europe have come, desperately seeking to find a place of shelter in a world which wants them not. So, there came to us an SOS call from our friends of the Bolivian Indian Mission asking for immediate grants of tracts in Yiddish, Gospels and New Testaments. And we were so happy to be able to respond without delay, just as we responded previously to similar calls from Shanghai, from Mexico, from Iceland and from many other quarters of the earth where Jews have trekked to- find a place upon which to set their feet.²⁴

As well, as escape from Europe became an ever-increasing matter of life and death, the ABMJ became more politically involved. For example, the ABMJ issued a call to its readership to volunteer to provide “Affidavits of Support.”

23 *The Chosen People*, Vol. XLV, No. 4, (January, 1940), 10.

24 *The Chosen People*, Vol. XLV, No. 4, (January, 1940), 9.



We are besieged from Europe with pitiful letters asking that we provide Affidavits of Support so as to enable destitute Jewish refugees to come to America. An Affidavit of Support is a form which any one in America can sign and in which the signer agrees to be responsible for the support of the family for whom he is signing the Affidavit, guaranteeing that the family will not become dependent upon the United States Government. We will also give you our Mission guarantee that any such families that will come over because of your affidavit will be cared for by the Mission and that you will be protected by us against any possible claims.²⁵

With the doors of Europe slammed shut, the ABMJ was forced to place its emphasis upon the refugees that had somehow escaped, especially those who had managed to make it to America.

1942-1945:

AWARENESS AND REALIZATION

The question of when the murderous intentions of the Nazis became widely known in America is bound up with other controversies including Roosevelt's policies, the actions of the State Department, other culpable parties and a multitude of other factors. However, although a more focused picture of the scope of catastrophe could not be determined until after the Allied victory, many dreadful facts had begun to emerge long before the war's conclusion. As early as August 1942, word of the "Final Solution" reached Rabbi Stephen Wise, President of the American Jewish Congress. At that time, uncertain of the reliability of the facts, Wise chose not to publicize what information he had received at the behest of Under-Secretary of

²⁵ *The Chosen People*, Vol. XLVI, No. 2, (November, 1940), 12.

State, Sumner Welles.²⁶ However, in the ensuing months, upon confirmation that hundreds of thousands and finally millions of Jews had perished, the realization dawned this was a catastrophe that so far outstripped previous calamities in the lengthy narrative of Jewish suffering that it defied description. Even as American Jews clung to the hope that something could be done to rescue their remnant, they began to realize that a way of life that they or their parents or grandparents had known had already been irretrievably altered and was in danger of complete extinction.

By 1943, it was well established that at least two million Jews had already perished in Europe. The question was what could or would be done to salvage the lives of the rest. The ABMJ experienced the same sense of helplessness that had descended over other deeply concerned Jewish organizations as the unfolding horrors engulfed European Jewry as the question “What Can Be Done” reverberated over and over. The answer turned out to be, precious little. As Cohn wrote,

And from the saddest depths of our heart we can only answer the dear child of God, this is the most important thing you can do—pray! For the moment nothing material can be done; there is no possible way to get money into the hands of these miserable victims of demon hate; there is no way whereby we can rescue even one family from the clutches of Hitler’s maw...²⁷

Of course, amid the carnage, some Jews did survive, depending on time, place and other factors known and unknowable. For example, thousands of young Jewish men in Germany who were able to pass as non-Jews were able to join the army and thus to hide in plain sight. In Germany, marriage to a non-Jew upped the

26 Yehuda Bauer, “The Holocaust, America, and American Jewry,” *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* VI no.1 (2012): 65.

27 *The Chosen People*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 7, (April, 1943), 9.



chances for survival. Although the Nuremburg laws set out strict outlines to prevent Jewish and non-Jewish weddings, the Nazis were reluctant to impose forced separations in the case of already existing marriages for fear of the effect of such a policy upon civilian morale. Of course, such restraint did not apply to Jews beyond Germany who fell into the Nazi net.

Did being a Jewish believer help? Certainly, there were assimilated, professing German Christian churchgoers who met the Nazis criteria to be labeled Jewish who somehow survived, but I see nothing to support the claim that their church membership, in and of itself, protected them. On the other hand, as we have seen, Jewish believers who resisted assimilation placed themselves in a no man's land where their needs were ignored by conventional Jewish and Christian helping agencies alike. As such, they were, if anything, more vulnerable.

ABMJ staff members risked their lives in their heroic efforts to continue to operate throughout the Nazi terror, under the threat of death, along with the Jews among whom they sought to minister. As we have seen, Emanuel Lichtenstein escaped from Austria and Arnold Frank also survived the war. So did his assistant, Otto Samuel. Released in 1941, he suffered severe psychological consequences as a result of his experiences and left the mission shortly thereafter. Herbert Singer, another Jewish believer who thrived under the mentorship of Arnold Frank also survived, answering a summons from Joseph Cohen to relocate with his family to America to assist Cohn there. However, his brother, Fritz, and other family members were overwhelmed by the Nazi terror and died in camps. Moses and Clara Gitlin left Poland barely six weeks before it was invaded. Jacob and Leah Goren remained, persevered and somehow lived.

We do not know the fate of the thousands of Jewish lives that were led to faith and nurtured or were otherwise aided by

the mission during these fraught years. No doubt, unnumbered of these nameless souls who were brought to faith and nurtured under the aegis of the mission lost their lives. Those who share their faith look to see them in the world to come.

Along with many other Jewish groups who had previously resisted political Zionism and had altered their stance in light of the war's devastating effects, the ABMJ seemed also to soften its position, even if only a little. One of the few instances where I find any references in *The Chosen People* to activities beyond the scope of its immediate co-religionists comes in as close to a printed affirmation of Jewish statehood as there would be in the Cohn years. Even so, it is not from Cohn himself, but in a reprinted address entitled “Calling All Jews! Or What about the Fifth Freedom (Ezekiel 20:33 - 35)” by C. Gordon Brownville, pastor of Tremont Temple Baptist Church of Boston. It was delivered at one of the sessions of the Second New York Congress on Prophecy, held in Calvary Baptist Church, December 5 - 12, 1943. In it, Pastor Brownville makes a direct reference to the production of *We Will Never Die*, a pageant presented at Madison Square Garden earlier that year written by Ben Hecht, one of Hollywood's foremost screenwriters and an avowed Revisionist Zionist. Pastor Brownville's oratory is both eloquent and stirring,

Thirty centuries ago in Egypt thousands of Jews sat in mourning, and with bowed heads cried unto God for deliverance. On March 9, 1943, a repetition in some degree of that former experience took place. Forty thousand men and women at two separate observances of deep mourning sat in Madison Square Garden and bowed their heads. The lights went out even as in suffering Europe, where two million Jews already have been slain by the hand of Hitler and where four million more await the same terrible fate of the oppressed.



Not only does the voice of these forty thousand Jews rise up in prayer and in demand for action, but the voice of every true Christian ought to be joined with them. What about the Fifth Freedom? Should we, as Christians and as a Christian church, not unite our voice with Jews everywhere in demanding action upon this Fifth Freedom by the United Nations? This freedom has to do with the United Nations' promise to the of freedom from future persecution and the recognition of Palestine as a national Jewish homeland.²⁸

THE ABMJ, ZIONISM AND THE JEWISH STATE

This brings me to the final element of my presentation – which is the development of the ABMJ's attitude toward Zionism over the time frame we have looked at. As we know, in its earlier days, Zionism was a minority ideology that was opposed by Jewish Communists, Socialists, the Orthodox and the Reform. It might come as surprise to some that although the ABMJ had an abiding interest in ministry in Palestine, Joseph Cohn, along with many other Jews of differing ideologies, was an implacable foe of Jewish statehood. Editorializing in *The Chosen People*, Cohn wrote,

Any Jew who has been born again and become a member of our Lord's body, the Church, has no further interest in Jewish racial or nationalistic schemes which the Palestine Zionist movement frankly is. Every so often we come across attempts to start something distinctively Jewish Christian, sometimes it is to be a Jewish Christian Church, as distinguished from a Gentile Christian... This of course is unscriptural, for in the Word of God it is always THE CHURCH, a church composed

²⁸ *The Chosen People*, Vol. XLIX, No. 5, (February, 1944), 16.

of both Jew and Gentile who, because He broke down the middle wall of partition between the twain have become one.²⁹

For Cohn, such opposition to statehood was not a matter of politics, or even, as it was for some religious Jews, so much a matter of Messianic timing. For him, it boiled down to sound ecclesiology and an almost instinctive aversion to any humanly derived substitute for the divine authentic expression of human community set forth in the Scriptures.

As the noose tightened around the neck of European Jewry, however, Cohn came to recognize that desperate times call for desperate measures and fervently threw his support behind Jewish immigration to Palestine, provided it be done legally. This, however, left the ABMJ to navigate the minefield around the problem of how to minister to illegal Jewish immigrants who had managed to dodge the British gatekeepers. Torn between the desire to render aid to unfortunate Jews, yet mindful of the risks of appearing to advocate lawlessness, Cohn nonetheless did not sugar coat the dire circumstances of European Jews desperate to find safety in what was virtually the only haven left available to them, provided they could reach it. As the situation grew more fraught, Herbert Singer, in charge of Jewish refugee ministry, reported as early as 1940,

Disillusionment is working its havoc. Thousands of Jews, fleeing the horrors and savageries of Central European desolations, overran the frontiers of Palestine, in their desperate search for a place in the sun. It is reported that many ships are still drifting about the Mediterranean, each loaded to the rails with hundreds of these poor shores, for a possible unpatrolled gap, into which their little ship might slip unobserved, and thus land their heart-weary cargo of human derelicts. It is thought that there must be between 15,000

29 *The Chosen People*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 1, (October, 1933), 14.



and 30,000 Jews now in Palestine, who have smuggled themselves in illegally. Your Mission is doing what we can to come to the help of these poor miserable and destitute human beings, but what we can do seems so small in the face of the appalling need, that we find ourselves bewildered and staggered.³⁰

Yet even after the war, when Britain appeared to be walking back every promise it had made to the Jews that once the war had ended, their plight would be addressed, Joseph, mindful of the authority of the British, would continue to exercise caution even as he attempted to provide practical aid. Clearly, however, there was a turning point when the ABMJ's feeling for Great Britain soured as the refugee problem escalated. As England continued to display a stony face beyond the end of the war, as he prepared to travel to Palestine in 1947, Joseph had an eye toward Jewish ministry even among those who had entered Palestine in a clandestine manner:

To my great pleasure, the British Government has already granted me a visa for Palestine...However, we shall hope and trust that the door will be open and that I will have full access not only to see for myself what is going on in that bitterly contested land, but that I may inaugurate a worthwhile program of help for the thousands who have been smuggled in, and who find themselves disillusioned and stranded. We may want to establish somewhere in Palestine a home which will care for these hapless creatures on a transient basis, so that many shall pass through our doors, and be helped on to something better both in material comfort and in spiritual blessings.³¹

The policy of the British and its effects upon suffering Jews exploded onto the world's front page in the affair of the ship

30 *The Chosen People*, Vol. XLV, No. 6, (March, 1940), 9.

31 *The Chosen People*, Vol. LII, No. 7, (April, 1947), 7.

Exodus in 1947, which was thwarted by the British Royal Navy in its effort to deliver about 4,500 Jewish refugees to Palestine. After weeks of unfruitful negotiations, the Jews were eventually shipped back to Germany, where they were held in two camps.

The appearance of a report in *The Chosen People* by journalist, activist and author Ruth Gruber, who died in 2016 at the age of 105, further demonstrates a dramatic change of attitude toward the harsh policies of British authority on the part of the ABMJ in its expression of open sympathy for the Jewish “illegals” who sought safety as the risk of life and limb:

It can now be revealed that while the population in the two camps apparently remained stable and the British authorities thought the Exodus people were settling down for the winter in Germany, actually these were people on the march, and nothing could stop them. In little groups they crawled out of the British camps and went down through Europe to secret ports in Italy and France, climbed on Haganah’s tiny fishing boats or large converted ships, and traveled the whole underground journey to Palestine, knowing the way might lead to Cyprus, knowing they might be killed... knowing the British might capture them again and send them back to Germany, yet knowing that the British could not break them.³²

Yet even so, one item not mentioned in *The Chosen People* was the declaration of statehood. In Joseph Cohn’s mind, the Zionist dream was a pipedream beneath his notice and doomed to fail because it would not take into account the authority of the King of Kings. For Joseph Hoffman Cohn, this had always been and would forever remain the paramount issue facing every nation and ideological system, as well as each individual Jewish and Gentile soul.

32 *The Chosen People*, Vol. LIV, No. 4, (January, 1949), 16.



CONCLUSION

Facing the same unimagined challenges posed by the onslaught of the Nazi atrocities that every Jewish organization faced, the ABMJ responded as best it could with the limited personal and resources it had at his disposal. In doing so, it faced challenges unique to its mission and the make-up of its constituency. Foremost among these was maintaining a balance between its primary focus of bringing the message of eternal life to its beloved Jews and rendering the practical aid that was necessary to maintain their lives in the midst of the threat of often imminent death. The members of the ABMJ staff on the ground who acted so courageously and sacrificially compose a roll of true heroes of the faith. In pouring out their lives so selflessly, they serve as an inspiration for us to remember and live up to their legacy.



Subscription Price
50 Cents a Year.

JOSEPH HOFFMAN COHN, Editor

Vol. XXIII No. 1
SEPTEMBER, 1940

און אזוי איז טראגעדי אונטער צום ספר אדם
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Published Monthly, except bi-monthly during July and August by the American Board of Missions to the Jews, 27 Throop Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.
Entered as Second Class Matter April 4, 1922, at the Post Office, Brooklyn, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Accepted for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in section 1105, Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized December 30, 1937.

The lead article contains a highly descriptive account of the assassination of exiled Communist leader Leon Trotsky, then living in Mexico, that included a Yiddish play on words with his name, which means 'fractious, provocative or obstinate.'



The Second Generation: Challenges and Growth Under Joseph Hoffman Cohn

Mitch Glaser

INTRODUCTION

Joseph Hoffman Cohn served as the second General Secretary of Chosen People Ministries¹ and I have the joy of serving as the seventh leader of this 125-year-old Mission to the Jewish people. Joseph was a prolific writer and communicator. His

¹ Chosen People Ministries is the current name for what was once called the American Board of Mission to the Jews or ABMJ. Previously the name of the organization was the Williamsburg Mission to the Jews. The name change from the American Board to Chosen People Ministries took place in 1982. The Williamsburg Mission to the Jews was kept as an extant nonprofit ministry organization until this day. Joseph Hoffman Cohn never served with Chosen People Ministries and therefore we will continue to use the name American Board of Missions to the Jews throughout the paper, unless we are referring to the organization after 1982. We will use the initials, ABMJ.



writings, sermons, and radio broadcasts span multiple decades. It is almost impossible to catalog and communicate his thinking about God, the Messiah, the Jewish people and work of the Mission with due justice, due to the sheer volume of his contributions. However, I will attempt to give a brief summary of his life and accomplishments and then turn our attention to the variety of shaping experiences that impacted his life and the strategies, methods and values, which he then communicated to an organization that continues until this very day. As it is with so many great leaders, their true legacy is not the organization, buildings, programs, funding or institutions they built, but rather it is the values and the ways in which they shaped the future of the organization they led. This is the legacy of Joseph Hoffman Cohn.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Chosen People Ministries newsletters, Board minutes, particular writings of J.H. Cohn, and his published books, are all held in *the Chosen People* Ministries archives, many of which are now repositied online, including his 400 radio programs.

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Joseph Hoffman Cohn was born on March 27, 1886 and died on October 5, 1953. He was the second oldest son of the founder of Chosen People Ministries – Rabbi Leopold Cohn. He led the American Board of Missions to the Jews (ABMJ) from the time of his father's passing in 1937 until his own death. Both father and son died on the job. The memorial service took place at 236 West 72nd street on Thursday night, October 8th, 1953. He



married Josephine Stone, who came from a wealthy and well-established Detroit family. Josephine was a Barnard graduate in June of 1917, and they had three children; Joseph H. Cohn, Jr., Huntley S. Cohn, who was named after the benefactress to the Mission, Frances J. Huntely, and Cordelia S. Cohn, as well four grandchildren. Josephine passed away at the age of 75 in Detroit, where she had grown up, in 1960. Her father was a school superintendent and businessman and her mother's name was Cordelia, the name sake for one of her children.²

Joseph attended Adelphi College in Brooklyn, studied briefly at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and was granted of Doctor of Divinity (honorary doctorate) from Los Angeles Baptist College in 1937, the same year his father died, and Joseph officially became the General Secretary of the American Board of Missions to the Jews. He was also a member of the Long Island Baptist Ministers Association at the time of his death.³

At the time of his passing, Cohn was writing a book about the history of Chosen People Ministries entitled, *I Have Fought a Good Fight*, which he completed on October 1st, 1953. Four days later, Dr. Cohn suddenly died of a heart attack and was called home to be with the Lord. He was buried alongside his father and mother in the Cypress Hills cemetery in Queens, NY.

As one of the Board members of the Mission stated at the time of his passing,

On Thursday, October 1, 1953, Joseph Hoffman Cohn finished correcting the proofs of this book. In his bold hand, he joyfully wrote, "finis" on his copy. Indeed, he had "fought a good fight," but he had also finished his course.⁴

2 *Battle Creek Enquirer* (March 11, 1960), 12.

3 *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (October 7, 1953), 19.

4 Joseph Hoffman Cohn, *I Have Fought a Good Fight* (New York: American Board of Missions to the Jews, 1953), 315.

Joseph was born in Hungary and emigrated to the United States with his mother and three other siblings by way of Edinburgh, where the family was reunited with Leopold, who was studying for the ministry at New College, Edinburgh. It was a dramatic escape as Rose, Leopold's wife, was held in virtual captivity by her family who opposed her marriage to Leopold upon hearing of his faith.

Joseph writes, almost as an aside, in *I Have Fought a Good Fight*,

There were four of us who sailed across the waters from Europe when my mother had managed to escape from the alert relatives who were watching her day and night. It was one black midnight that I can still remember, as a boy of seven, that a lumber box wagon drove up to our home in Berezna.. The wagon was drawn by one rather bulky horse, and the driver was my father's nephew from the town of Sziget, some twelve miles away. Into the lumber box body, all of us four children piled, and over us they spread a canvas such as is used for tents. My mother climbed up on the seat with the driver, and off we went. All that night we rumbled and rumbled along and early in the morning the poor bedraggled horse came to a stop in front of the little house in which lived my father's nephew and his family. From there came the flight by train to Berlin, and then to Hamburg, and then Edinburgh.⁵

There was one more son, David, who was the only American born child of the Cohn family.

There is always a lot to learn about the life of a man from his obituary. Of particular interest to our research is the special J.H. Cohen Memorial edition of the *The Chosen People* produced in November 1953, the year of his death, which included a variety of testimonies and memorials to this remarkable man and leader.

This volume of the ABMJ magazine, known as *The Chosen*

5 Cohn, *I Have Fought*, 108.



People, highlighted his character and achievements. The author speaks about Joseph Hoffman Cohn's spirituality and his evident love for Jesus the Messiah. He is also described as a man of conviction and it is these convictions that are of particular interest. Cohn's belief systems and views of doctrine and theology influenced the way in which he led and shaped Chosen People Ministries both prior to and after the death of his father. It appears that father and son were harmonious in their perspectives on the Bible.

The editor of the J.H. Cohn Memorial newsletter writes,

To him, the great teachings of the Bible, the atoning work of Christ, the place of his will and God's program, the pre-tribulation rapture of the church, and the pre-millennial return of our Lord Jesus for more than just theological terminology. They were the foundation upon which his life's work was built. Like his beloved father, Leopold, Joseph had the unshakable conviction that the Bible doctrine of to the Jew first was just as imperative today so was on the day that it was first uttered. He said, "upon this conviction this work stands or falls."⁶

The author describes Joseph as a man who was a "contender for the faith." This speaks directly to the context of his day, particularly in the church, which was harshly divided over the fundamentalist – liberal controversy. The author of the memorial writes,

The struggle between fundamentalism and liberalism found him always on the battle line warring for the faith delivered to the Saints. Time and eternity alone will count the worth of this ministry as a Bible teacher of the written and spoken word, as he proclaimed the great fundamentals of our faith. He kept the faith, and because he did many who might have wavered were established. Those who were fighting the

⁶ *The Chosen People*, Joseph Hoffman Cohn Memorial Edition (December 1953): 4.

battle were strengthened and encouraged by his presence at their side.⁷

Cohn was a prolific writer, as his articles in *The Chosen People* newsletter, books, tracts and his writing and editing *The Shepherd of Israel* magazine attest. He was also highly regarded as a Bible teacher and radio preacher through *The Chosen People* Hour radio broadcast. His monthly work appeared in the newsletter at first as a writer helping his Yiddish speaking father, and then as an editor of the monthly magazine, and eventually as the leader of the Mission.

Joseph was also known as a remarkably good businessman and built the financial base of the organization, purchased multiple properties and generally placed the organization on a good footing financially throughout his career.

In addition, Joseph had a great love for the missionaries serving with the Mission. In an interview with Ruth Wardell, a 50 plus year veteran of the mission, she regaled the current author with stories of Joseph Hoffman Cohn's ability to manage the staff and to take a deep personal interest in the lives of each worker. He would meet with every missionary staff member monthly and read through the daily journal of their ministry. Joseph would make comments, encouraging the staff and praying with them as well. Ruth Wardell served faithfully in New York City directly under the leadership of Joseph and died only a few years ago in her early 90s. She was one of many who deeply appreciated Joseph's personal attention. She spoke fondly of his gracious manner and ministry to her as she served the mission in New York City, Los Angeles and finally in Dallas, Texas, where she passed away.

Dr. Charles Feinberg, who knew Joseph for almost three

⁷ Ibid., 4.



decades, referred to him as a father in the Lord, a colleague and confidant, and eulogized Joseph in the Memorial edition of the magazine.

He speaks of Cohn's belief in the importance of telling Jewish people about Jesus as mandated by Scripture,

In the matter of Jewish missions, Dr. Cohn was a lifelong exponent of the truth of Romans 1:16, (I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God and salvation to everyone that believes it to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.) "To the Jew first" was not a shibboleth with him nor a fetish, nor a clever means for gaining support, as some may have fondly surmised, but it was life of his life and flesh of this flesh. He believed this with all his heart. He was willing to nail this truth to the mast of the ship and go down fighting for it. Yes, my dear friends, this man of God was characterized by deep convictions on these basic matters, and he was unswervingly faithful to them.⁸

Dr. Feinberg mentions that Joseph was also a man characterized by *mighty deeds*. He goes on to say,

Under God he was used to transform a small mission in Williamsburg into a worldwide testimony where truly "their line has gone out to all the world." This he did by the help of God, by dint of ceaseless work. As a young man he found himself knocking at the doors of ministers throughout the land... in order to get his message to the people. In addition to all of this, he looked personally after the financial welfare of the work, and the individual problems involving missionaries, he had a brilliant mind, and ceaselessly sought to promote the work of the mission to which God had called him. He was an untiring worker, easily did the work of three men or more.⁹

The autobiographical book, *I Have Fought a Good Fight*

⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁹ Ibid., 6.

explores the travels and connections Joseph made on behalf of his father and the ABMJ. By the time of his death, the ABMJ was certainly the best-known Mission to the Jewish people in the United States.

ACHIEVEMENTS

At the time of Joseph's death, the American Board of Missions to the Jews (ABMJ) maintained a seven-story headquarters building at 236 W. 72nd Street in Manhattan, eleven missionary centers in the United States and six overseas. There was a total of thirty-two ABMJ missionary staff in North America. Cohn had a deep, personal interest in France as demonstrated by the five staff members serving with the ABMJ at that time. The ABMJ published *The Chosen People* monthly, as well as the Shepherd of Israel, which was an evangelistic publication produced in both Yiddish and English, on a periodic basis. A Yiddish/French edition was regularly published as well. The French publication of *The Shepherd of Israel* continues to this day as Le Berger d'Israel.

The ABMJ also maintained a training school for Christian workers interested in Jewish evangelism in New York City, as well as a fellowship organization for Jewish believers in Jesus called The World Fellowship of Christian Jews. At one time, this fellowship had a European headquarters in Paris and an American headquarters in New York City.

The Mission published many different books at that time, including the Leopold Cohn memorial edition of the Yiddish New Testament, printed in 1941. This was a revision of the 1901 Bergman Yiddish New Testament published by the British Foreign Bible Society. At the time of Joseph Hoffman Cohn's



Resolution

A TRIBUTE TO DR. JOSEPH HOFFMAN COHN

SHE has gone. His chair is empty. A vacancy has taken place in the hearts of multitudes. Thousands upon thousands throughout the land and across the seas, bow in sorrow in the loss of a great friend, but rejoice in the achievements of a victorious life.

He slipped away so quietly, at the peak of his activities — his book of the history of the Mission just finished — the material for THE CHOSEN PEOPLE for November and December, just finished — the birthday gifts delivered to his grandchild, whose birthday was yet in the month to come — just as though the Lord had said to him (maybe He did, who knows?) "son get ready, you're coming home to the Father's house."

Those who were in close association with him during the past two or more decades, best realize what it meant to have fellowship with this great man of God. The days ahead are going to be hard for them. They will have to lean hard on Him whose everlasting arms were always round their leader.

Dr. Cohn was chosen of God for a great work, and God signally equipped him for his monumental task. As the Apostle Paul was signally prepared of God for the ministry to which God called him, so Dr. Cohn was prepared for his great assignment; and one cannot think of his genius apart from God's endowments.

We shall best revere his memory by giving ourselves unstintingly to the wonderful stewardship with which God has entrusted us.

God gave him rare executive and administrative ability; gave him great gifts of writing, so that one could hardly finish one paragraph, in anticipation of what the next would reveal; gave him great gifts as an expositor, so that he was totally unable to meet the demands for his ministry, that came to him, from all over the country; gave him great gifts in appraising men and women, enabling him to penetrate through the exterior and determine what was in the heart, that the personnel of the Mission would be above reproach; gave him great reserves of faith and strength to withstand the Satan inspired attacks that were levelled at him through the years; gave him great courage in his writings, in which he unsparingly attacked those whom he regarded as the enemies of his Lord; gave him great powers of discernment in the study of the Scriptures, enabling him to answer multitudes of those seeking light; gave him a phenomenal memory, a quick mind, ability to reach immediate decisions with exceptional inerrancy; and so we could go on and on before reaching the bottom of the well of God's reserves.

And now he has left a great work, firmly established, with a world wide recognition. In his meticulous care for details, he has seen that every phase of the work of the Mission, is in running order, with a consecrated personnel, so that the great ministry of the Mission may go forward, not only without abatement, but to scale greater heights in its witness for the Master.

D. M. Linton *Elie L. Cohen* *Dr. Robert Morris*
Chas. A. Davis *John C. McElroy*
Harold J. Givens *William James P. Smith*

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

passing, the ABMJ also maintained its facility on Throop Avenue in Williamsburg.

Additionally, Joseph's radio program was heard weekly on 44 stations throughout the United States and Canada. The Mission had nine Board members with a large advisory Board of eleven significant evangelical leaders at the time of his passing.

In the Memorial edition of the ABMJ newsletter a summary was written and signed by the Board members which articulates how fondly the Board felt about Joseph and his accomplishments.

FACTORS WHICH SHAPED JOSEPH'S CHARACTER AND MINISTRY HIS RELATIONSHIP TO HIS FATHER

Jewish Identity

Joseph, who grew up speaking Yiddish, as he did not come to the United States until the age of seven, had a Jewish identity that was unquestionable and was typical of Eastern European immigrants of his day who came from a more religious background.

He learned his Jewishness at his father's knee, as the Hebrew scriptures teach parents to teach their children the ways of the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). By the time Joseph was seven, he had read through the five books of Moses three times and could recite scripture from memory. Every morning, Joseph and his brothers had to read one chapter of the Torah or Psalms and repeat it back to their father in Yiddish, so that he knew they understood the text. Joseph's Eastern European Jewish identity, combined with his deep personal faith in Jesus, was expressed both personally and professionally as the Cohn's lives were fully integrated with their ministry of reaching Jewish people for Jesus. Their family "business" of reaching fellow Eastern European



Jewish immigrants for the Messiah made the issue of personal Jewish identity more complex for Joseph, whether he knew it or not. This identity was unfortunately not effectively passed down to his children and grandchildren. Though Cohn helped to establish a Jewish Christian community in many places, he always felt separated from the mainstream Jewish community, which opposed the work of his family.

In *I Have Fought a Good Fight*, Joseph ponders his relationship as a Jewish believer to traditional Jewish life. He reflects,

My father's method of "Gospelization," if I may use such a word, was what might be called "legalism."¹⁰ Pork he would never touch, and it was not allowed at any time in our home. And so with all the forbidden animals of the Bible and the creatures of the waters. The Mosaic law was adhered to. When it came time for Passover, we kept the feast at our home. My Father had been brought up among the Hasidic Jews of Europe, which made him ultra-fanatic in obeying the Mosaic law.

This training in the home has remained with me to the present hour, so that I too have never knowingly eaten pork, ham, or bacon, lobster, crab, clams, or oysters. For all of this, he was continually attacked, even by certain Jews who had already accepted Christ. The reason for my father's lifestyle was not that he felt himself under the law of Moses, but that by this method he was able to win Jews to Christ who could not have been won otherwise. I come face-to-face with the same problem as I go about the country. Many Jews come to me at the close of a meeting, pointing a finger of scorn at me, and telling me "Yes, you wanted to eat pork and so you became a Goy, a Gentile." I would turn on him and say, "Hold on a minute, my friend; you are a Jew; do you eat bacon with your eggs in the morning?" In most cases he would turn a bit red and confess that he did like a slice of bacon with his eggs in the morning.

I will then ask him again, "Do you like lobster?"

¹⁰ Though this term is used quite differently today.

Again, he would have to admit rather shamefacedly that he did eat lobster and that he did eat oysters and clams. I would ask him for the whether he keeps the Sabbath, or does he have a store open all day Saturday; whether he keeps the unleavened bread feast of Pesach? He would have to admit that he keeps his store open all day Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, and he does not always keep strictly the Passover Week with regard to unleavened bread.

So, then I would have him at my mercy, and I would say, "Now you see, my dear man, I've never eaten pork in my life; I've never eaten any other thing forbidden by God in the Pentateuch. I keep the Passover and for one week I do not eat unleavened bread. But I do eat unleavened bread. Now tell me, who is the better due? You are right?" And so, he would go away rather crestfallen, for his accusation had fallen flat and he was defeated in the presence of the people standing around.

My father used this method as a means to bring the Jews across the bridge from fanatic Judaism to genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Messiah. The result of this method was that my father in his own lifetime was able to report more actual conversions and baptisms than perhaps all the Jewish missions in America put together.

Joseph adds, never was there any quarrel as to dietetic practices of our converts.

If we were taking lunch with some Jewish Christian brother and he ordered baked ham, never did my father indulge in rebuke or even any comment. Romans 14:2-3 was always the standard, "whatever is not of faith is sin."¹¹

To this day, because of both Cohns' influence, Chosen People Ministries may be viewed as a Jewish, Jewish Mission. Chosen People Ministries starts and maintains Messianic congregations and encourages Jewish believers to be faithful to Jewish life. Not merely as a part of their testimony, but because it is a mark

11 Cohn, *I Have Fought*, 202-203.



of being part of the remnant established by God within Israel, according to Romans 11:5. From Leopold and Joseph's day until today, Chosen People Ministries has maintained Jewish persona and an "insiders" approach to the mission of Jewish evangelism.

The Cohns struggled to fit into American society and even more, the American fundamentalist movement, though Joseph was naturally far more American in culture and language than his father. Joseph's concerns for the Jewish people and Jewish life often brought a degree of conflict with his Christian friends and supporters, as neither Leopold nor Joseph ever felt totally at home in the church. Throughout his life, as demonstrated by his response to growing antisemitism during the 1930's and both the Holocaust and post Holocaust period, Joseph was disappointed that the American Fundamentalist movement did not do more to help the Jewish people.

Leadership Style

We learn quite bit about the way Joseph viewed his leadership style and work ethic as distinct from his father. Joseph, reflecting upon the accusations of his father being a shrewd businessman who was taking advantage of "good Christians" comments,

I have to smile further when they accuse my father of having been a shrewd scheming exploiter. The truth is that he never had one executive hair in his head. He knew nothing about business management; he knew nothing about the scheming state accused him up. It was a very simple mind, and a simple soul, whose one driving force was that he must reach the Jewish people with the gospel.¹²

When it came to fundraising, Joseph comments further about

¹² Cohn, *I Have Fought*, 123.

his father,

Not only was he single-minded in his devotion to the actual work of preaching the gospel to the Jewish people, so that everything else was pushed aside as a secondary consequence, he adhered pretty strictly to the policy he had adopted for himself that he would never ask a human soul for a single dollar for the carrying on of the ever increasing burdens which the Lord had placed upon him.¹³

As a result, much of the growth and expansion of the ABMJ was generated by Joseph's entrepreneurial drive, leadership and skill in developing partnerships and patrons.

THEOLOGY

Premillennialism and Pre-Tribulationism

The best Christian friends of the American Board of Missions to the Jews at this time were those who were fundamentalists, dispensational premillennialists and others who believed in the pre-tribulation rapture of the church. Leopold developed a host of high-level friends who identified with these theological positions and even received an honorary doctoral degree from Wheaton College. At the time, Wheaton was led by Dr. J. Oliver Buswell, who served as president of the from 1926-1940. His tenure bridged the lives of both Cohns, father and son. Joseph developed a friendship with Buswell when he was the local pastor of a smaller church in the Midwest.

Buswell was also a committed Calvinist who held to the Westminster Standards and Covenant Theology. Yet, he was

¹³ Ibid., 124.



considered a fundamentalist in the most evangelical sense of the word, specifically opposed to the “modernism” of his day. He was also a premillennialist and believed in a mid-tribulation rapture, although he was not a dispensationalist.¹⁴

Buswell also served on the board of reference of the ABMJ, along with a number of other key fundamentalist leaders. In fact, the list of those who received Doctor of Divinity degrees from Wheaton college under Buswell’s presidency included not only Leopold Cohn, but also some members of the ABMJ Board.¹⁵

To the Jew First (Romans 1:16)

One of the fundamental beliefs Leopold and Joseph Cohn shared was the necessity for all Christians to bring the message of the Gospel to the Jewish people. By contrast, the liberal Christians were mostly concerned with social services and not interested in bringing the gospel to the Jewish people. The fundamentalists, especially those who befriended the Cohns, believed that the gospel should go to the Jewish people “first”, although there were different interpretations as to what the Apostle Paul intended. Many of the fundamentalists at that time identified themselves as dispensational premillennialists and Christian Zionists who believed in the literal land promises, the survival of Jewish people, and the end time repentance of Israel as the precursor to precipitate the second coming of Jesus. These were all fundamental doctrines of the Mission. The difference between

14 “J. Oliver Buswell,” Theopedia, accessed January 11, 2020, <https://www.theopedia.com/j-oliver-buswell>.

15 Advisory Council Rev. Cortland Myers, D. D., Los Angeles, Cal.; Rev. Otho F. Bartholow, D. D., Mount Vernon, N. Y.; Rev. John Bunyan Smith, D. D., San Diego, Cal.; Rev. Keith L. Brooks, Los Angeles, Cal.; Rev. R. Paul Miller, Berne, Ind.; Rev. C. Gordon Brownville, D. D., Boston, Mass.; Rev. David Otis Fuller, D. D., Grand Rapids, Mich. (*The Chosen People*, November 1939).

then and now was that these Christian Zionists always believed in the necessity of evangelizing the Jewish people. This is not necessarily the case today.

The Cohns' best friends among the fundamentalists were those who accepted the pre-tribulation rapture view that Jesus would gather both Jews and Gentiles who were part of the church to Himself, where they would remain for seven years and then return with him at the literal second coming. It is this second coming, described in the book of Zachariah 12: 9–10, as well as in Romans 11:25–29, that according to Joseph and other fundamentalist dispensationalists, was the hoped for the pre-millennial return of Jesus to establish his literal kingdom on earth with Jerusalem as the capitol. The turning of the Jewish people to Jesus precipitated the second coming of Christ and was the underlying reason why bringing the Gospel to the Jewish people was so important.

This argument was not unique to the American fundamental dispensationalists, as it was also a core belief of the Scottish and Irish revivalists in the early 1840's. Remember, Leopold Cohen studied at New College, Edinburgh, and would have been influence by the Scottish Presbyterians in theology and methodology. The Scots were definitively influenced by this linkage between the second coming of Christ and the end time repentance of the Jewish people. It is quite probable that either Leopold embraced this point of theology during his year in seminary or somehow picked this up upon his return to the United States. It is hard to tell, but regardless, the "To the Jew First" understanding of Romans 1:16 was basic to the approach of the ABMJ during the tenure of both Leopold and Joseph. In fact, he devoted his lead article every January in *The Chosen People* to this theme, a tradition that continues in the Mission's publications cycle to this day.



Eventually, Joseph would edit an entire book compiling his father's and his own January lead articles from *The Chosen People* which emphasized the "to the Jew first" theme. He writes in the introduction to this book, entitled *Beginning at Jerusalem*, which was published in 1948,

This book, *Beginning at Jerusalem*, is the answer to the urgent appeals of thousands of lovers of Israel, that we gather together in one volume the principal editorial messages which have been printed in *The Chosen People* on the exalted theme which has inspired this work of this mission throughout its history, namely, to the Jew First. My father, ex- Rabbi Leopold Cohn, founder of the American Board of Missions to the Jews and editor-in-chief of *The Chosen People*, made it his duty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the set apart the January number of the magazine each year to a prayerful exposition of the truth of Romans 1:16.

In collaboration with him, I began to take over the task of preparing these yearly messages. The early chapters in the book, 1918, 1919, and 1920, are his work. Beginning with 1921 and continuing through the rest of the 30 years until 1948, the responsibility for the authorship of the messages is to be charged to me. But in a sense, this book is a memorial to her father of whom it can truly be said "he being dead yet speaks," for it was at his feet, so to speak, that I imbibed the God inspired teaching that the Bible doctrine to the Jew first, is as basic and its application to the missionary program of the church as faith in Christ is basic to the program of salvation."¹⁶

ANTISEMITISM

Antisemitism was progressing vigorously and viciously in Europe during the "interwar" period between the First and Second

16 Joseph Hoffman Cohn, *Beginning at Jerusalem* (New York: The American Board of Missions to the Jews, 1948), Introduction.

World Wars, when in 1937 Leopold died and Joseph took up the reigns of the ABMJ. The actual beginning of the Second World War was only two years away, as Poland would be invaded in September of 1939 by Germany. Antisemitism was also growing as a movement in the United States during this time, led by the likes of Catholic leader Father Coughlin who branded a virulent Catholic antisemitism during this period. The Great Depression in the United States left millions unemployed and fearful of competition due the scarcity, therefore existing immigration quotas of the 1920s were left in place. The widespread hardships of the 1930s contributed to a feeling of xenophobia and antisemitism, as “Jewish conspiracies” provided a scapegoat for economic problems and changing social landscapes.

The fundamentalist movement, the major friends and supporters of the Chosen People Ministries, held political positions that sometimes led to anti-Jewish sentiments and rhetoric. Communist plots and global conspiracy theories with Jewish involvement were at times embraced by the fundamentalist as well during this time period. Joseph felt he needed to speak to these issues in support of the Jewish people without overtly offending his more extreme isolationist, anti-Bolshevik and “Jewish cautious” fundamentalist friends. He addressed these issues in *The Chosen People* newsletters and was quite brave and outspoken on behalf of the Jewish people, understanding that he and the Mission were in a unique place to stand between the church and the Jewish people. Joseph’s loyalty to his own Jewish people was especially tested during the dark days just prior to the Holocaust.

He writes,

We have been challenged why we do not spend our time and energies in denouncing Communism from the housetops; and the challenge has come to us in even more specific language, why do we not denounce “Jewish Communists”? The answer



is that we occupy a most perplexing and difficult position, and we are in constant need of the faithful prayers that our precious friends are continually pouring out in our behalf. We are a Jewish Mission first, last and always. This one thing the Lord has put upon us to do, and everything else must be bent to the one purpose of pouring out the Gospel message.

Joseph already saw the hard times ahead amidst the rise of National Socialism, and unfortunately there was a brief period when Hitler was viewed as a positive force in his anti-Bolshevik rhetoric. He wrote,

Israel in what may well be her darkest hour before the dawn. We stand astride the chasm between the Church of Christ and the Israel of the dispersion. To each God has given us a message, and the two messages cannot be confused without damage.¹⁷

And further,

Therefore, this is the point to press home with the Jew; nothing is gained by calling the Jews Communists, or by creating insinuations of evil character against them; the only task that the Church has with regard to the Jew is to press home to him his need of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. And a Church that will do this, in all Christian love, and totally apart from false accusations and bitter denunciations, will be honored of God and will find that He will give many tokens of His approval and blessing. Such a church can have the joy of seeing many Jews come to the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ through its ministry.¹⁸

This was a brave statement that could have cost the ABMJ some significant influence and support at the time.

His book *Jacob Have I Loved* addressed these same issues as oftentimes the story of Jacob was used to depict Jewish people in

¹⁷ *The Chosen People* XLV (November 1939): 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

a negative manner. He wrote the book to shatter the stereotype and show that Jacob, who would be named Israel and thereby become a synecdoche for the Jewish nation, should be viewed as a good and faithful man rather than a conniver and immoral person who thought nothing of deceiving his brother Esau for his Abrahamic birthright, who gladly gave it up for a bowl of porridge.

Of course, Joseph had some nascent idea of what was happening to the Jewish people in Europe as he was very close to the work of the Mission on the Continent and had travelled there a few years earlier. But he could not have imagined the horror of what would come next through the modern Haman, Adolph Hitler.

Joseph, in this same lead article of his November 1939 newsletter writes,

And so if we who are Christian Jews, knowing that it is a Satanic libel, hatched in Berlin, that all the Jews are Communists and everything else that is evil, if we swallow such falsehoods in unsophisticated gullibility, and jump to the rostrum to join the vociferous self-seekers who make capital out of exploiting such false accusations against a helpless people, then what will the Jews think of us? Will our testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ have any value? To us the Jews could very properly then say, "You are traitors, for you claim to be Christian Jews, and you claim to stand for the truth, and here you are taking sides against us with those who are known to be Jew-haters, and you are repeating the same falsehoods with which they have tried to destroy us from the face of the earth!"

The same sequences would naturally follow if we should just keep silence regarding charges which we know to be false. The old saying is, "Silence gives consent." So if we are witness to a whole race being libeled, and we keep silent, then we are to that extent partakers of the libel.¹⁹

¹⁹ Ibid., 5.



THE HOLOCAUST

Charles L. Feinberg goes on to say in his memorial,

No one can realize the activities Joseph underwent as he learned again and again throughout Europe of the Nazi persecutions of the Jews, as bereaved, after bereaved poured his or her tale of woe into his ears and heart.²⁰

Cohn's life and ministry were shaped to a great degree by the Holocaust. His European background and ability to speak Yiddish enabled him to speak directly to Jewish people who were caught in the Nazi vise grip and ultimately suffered the horrors of the Holocaust. Joseph was especially close to the missionaries serving in Europe among the Jewish people to the Jewish people just prior to and after these events. Cohn travelled to Europe immediately before the Holocaust and desperately tried to help Jewish believers and a number of missionaries to the Jewish people escape what lay ahead.

The ABMJ missionary in Vienna, Emmanuel Lichtenstein, would eventually flee Europe after working with the Swedish Israelite mission just prior to the Anschluss (the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany on March 12, 1938) enabling thousands of Jewish believers in Jesus and other Jewish people to escape through Sweden. Eventually, many of these Messianic Jews immigrated to Argentina and settled there. In due time, Lichtenstein himself and his Swedish wife also settled in Buenos Aires, beginning the work of Chosen People Ministries in this South American country that had multiple hundreds of thousands of Jewish people.

Cohn paid careful attention to the dark clouds of the Holocaust settling over France. He worked with Henri Vincent

²⁰ Ibid., 5.

and the French staff of the ABMJ to get ready for what was coming. Indeed, for some time Vincent, André Frankl and other ABMJ staff were thought dead, but thankfully these workers survived. However, many of those who were part of the work of the Mission died in the death camps.

The following letter from Jermaine Melon-Frankel printed in the December 1944 issue of *The Chosen People* gave more of the details:

My dear director and friend, It is such a blessing to be able to write again after these terrible years. I do hope you are well. Give me your news. Here in Paris we are safe, Vincent as well as my husband, our little girl, myself and all the staff. But I had last February the deep sadness to lose my beloved mother who died with cardiac illness.

Our work among Jews was never stopped. But we saw our people secretly and André did not live at home but went to hide himself in three different places in friends' homes. During this time the police came twice at home to arrest him, but he was not here, and all was well. And now is a splendid liberation! André is at home again and all the work begins again. We have now to see so many new people who are waiting for the gospel. We shall send a full report as soon as the correspondence with the U.S. will be possible again. With all our affection and gratitude.²¹

After the war, Cohn helped establish partnerships with various Missions in Europe, including the Belgian Evangelical Mission in Brussels to house and feed Jewish survivors. Otto Samuel, a staff member of the ABMJ, helped lead the post war efforts in Europe. Along with other missions to the Jews, the properties of the ABMJ, especially the Center in Warsaw, were destroyed in Allied bombings and the land lost to the formation of the USSR.

21 *The Chosen People* III (December 1944): 13.



ISAAC FEINSTEIN IN GALATZ

In 1938, Joseph Hoffman Cohn travelled to Europe to encourage a few Messianic leaders to leave Europe because he knew what was coming. His trip to Europe brought him into contact with some of these leaders and his conversations were printed in various issues of *The Chosen People*. Joseph especially had great admiration for Isaac Feinstein, who led the Norwegian Israelite Mission work in Romania before the War, and was an early martyr at the hands of the Nazi inspired Iron Guard.

Cohn tells the story of his martyrdom and of the ABMJ's continue care for his widow.

Many a time the tears come unbidden to our eyes as we ponder over the tragedies that lie hidden under the clouds of Nazi cruelties. In Galatz they took a beloved brother, Isaac Feinstein, and from what reports we got, they must have tortured him in a way that cannot even be described until his poor wilted body gave up the spirit within and the angels from heaven escorted him into the presence of his Lord whom he served to the point of death.²²

Cohn continued the story as he had actually visited with Feinstein before the war and tried to persuade him and his family to leave Europe:

It was the summer of 1938. We were walking together on the Buda side of the Danube at Budapest. My companion was Isaac Feinstein, a beloved young Jewish brother who was then stationed at Galatz in Romania, about 200 miles farther east than Budapest, and was carrying on a faithful and brilliant testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ under the support of some Christian brethren in Norway. I coveted this young man and his talents for our work here in the States.

²² Joseph Hoffman Cohn, "Salutation," *The Chosen People* 48, no. 7 (1944a): 6.

Every time I looked into his face I could not help thinking of Nathaniel of old, the Israelite in whom our Lord found no guile. His eyes burned with the explosiveness of impassioned zeal. He had the perfect background for a marvelous ministry to the Jews of New York City. He was young, he was steeped in all the Hebrew lore as on his way he was a master in Israel and could speak to his Jewish compatriots with authority. So, I turned to him suddenly and asked him if he would leave Romania, take his wife and six children and come to America and join our staff.

I pointed out to him the imminent dangers developing in Europe and brutal thoughts of Nazism and asked him to ponder and to pray seriously over the question as to whether the Lord would not have him leave these lands of horror and come to America for a greatly enlarged field of service and testimony.

He was overwhelmed for a moment, but soon recovered his poise and told me frankly with affection and emotion how grateful he was for this compliment. But that he felt it would be an act of cowardice to leave his post in the face of threatened dangers. He felt that Nazis or no Nazis, it was his duty to stay at his post. There were so many of his Jewish brethren in Galatz who were depending on him for spiritual comfort and leadership that he would feel all his life the terrible shame of having deserted them in the hour of their need. So, we parted, and my last words to him then were that if ever the time came that he found himself compelled to leave Romania, he should take the first boat to New York and report to our office.

Cohn continued:

Came the war, one by one the Nazi beasts took captive country after country. And soon Romania fell victim and the Nazis stormed over the land like the lice in Egypt. And to Galatz they came, spreading cruelties and death on every side. They seized this young brother, who had done them no harm but was a faithful servant to the Lord Jesus Christ. They tied him to a stake and then for days they tortured him. His tongue hung out of his mouth in desperate body-torturing thirst, but never was he shown one shred of mercy or decency. Finally,



he died from sheer torture and exhaustion.

Cohn printed another letter from Esther Feinstein in *The Chosen People* in which she thanked him and the ABMJ for their support. She also gave some insight into her continued ministry among the refugees and of the plight of the survivors in general:

This week I had the great joy to receive a letter from you, though with the date January 14, 1944, so it is just a year ago. It is the first message I had from you, but I hope others will follow. I was so glad to hear that you had some of my letters so at least you heard that I received your help for which I am so extremely thankful. Though the bank cannot give every month the sum you pay in for me, I get part of it when I need it badly and the remaining is kept for my use later on; I suppose when the war is over. It means very much to me, for I hope to be able with the aid of these savings to start a new house with the children. It is my dearest dream.

I cannot tell you how thankful I am for your help which I had never expected, and which came in such a wonderful way to us. I really see that the Lord sent it and I take it from his hand praising him. Of course, I had heard of you through my dear husband, but I shouldn't have thought to ask your help. It was Richard (Wurmbrand) who wanted me to do it. How glad I should be to have news from our friends there, but what a terrible time they must have gone through. I am looking forward very much to seeing you when you will come to Europe. I shall have lots to tell you. Somehow, I feel that you are a sort of a father for my little orphans and I am so happy that you take an interest in them. For the present I am working among Jewish refugee children and am trying to be a mother to those poor dear ones who lost so much. My own children are well, living with friends, except my six-year-old, little Gabrielle, was not healthy like the others and must be looked after in a special home. I use part of the money to pay her board. I ask the Lord to bless for all you do and have done for us.²³

23 Esther Feinstein, "Jewish Notes," *The Chosen People* 51, no. 2 (1945b): 14.

Cohn wrote of the ABMJ's continued concern for the wife and children of the martyred Feinstein. He also gave us some insight to his expectations for post-war ministry among the survivors.

His widow with her six children escaped to Switzerland, and like the woman in the wilderness of Revelation, it is our privilege to nurture her as we send each month, through your generosity, \$100 that she may have food for herself and her children. This is only a sample of what will await us once the war is finished and we are told to go across and minister to these, His disciples. I am hoping that we will have not less than \$100,000 in cash to take with us on that crisis trip of mercy and comfort.²⁴

After the war, Cohn visited the Displaced Camps throughout Europe and the ABMJ helped many Jewish people by providing food staples, helping them reunite with families, emigrate to Israel and more. He reports that the condition of the homeless survivors moved him to great compassion and motivated him to continue the benevolence that was part of the ABMJ ministries from the beginning. Only this time, instead of helping new immigrants learn English, receive medical care etc. as his father had done, he helped Jewish survivors of the Holocaust continue to survive. It was a different day and different need. Joseph would bring resources from Christians in the US to help the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust but who were still living in displaced persons camps and in terrible squalor.

A trip into the mountains to a camp for Jewish children only, must not be omitted from this report. There were several hundred children, most of them had neither a mother nor a father living, and here they were being brought up under Jewish United Relief funds, amid surroundings that looked as though they had provided every means for building up of health and strength. I was received most cordially and was

24 Cohn, *The Chosen People* (1944a): 6.



invited to take dinner with the children, which I gladly did. The bells rang, and the children immediately gathered in the courtyard for a military drill. They too were being trained and made ready to be shipped across to Palestine, there to partake of the struggle for freedom under the Israeli flag. The ages ranged anywhere from six to fourteen; the ache which filled my heart was that these children did not know how to smile or to laugh. Their smile was gone, and I thought that for many probably it meant forever. Many of them had lost their mothers and fathers back in the days of Polish warfare and Nazi gas chambers, and perhaps others from starvation and disease. But never again would the children have a father or a mother. I sat with them and partook of a simple, almost “austerity” meal, but it was nourishing, and wonderfully well cooked, and tasty. The children ate all that was given them and then they were offered second helpings. I took some motion pictures, and as I talked with the children, I found them somewhat frightened, although they were friendly when they felt they could trust me. But back of that friendliness there was something in the eyes that brought terror to my soul; I just wondered how the Gospel could ever make an approach to these young ones who were already old long before their time, old with the experience of what Jew-hate really means, old with a distrust for all that bears the name Christian. When they grow up, how will they respond to the Christian message?²⁵

Cohn had a difficult time accepting the silence of the Christian church. He writes,

I think of that poor impotent cripple who cried out from the agony of a heart wrung with the ache of many years of hopeful waiting, “Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me” (John 5:7). And so these thousands of helpless, defeated Jewish souls are calling out to a church strangely dumb, “I have no man to put me in the pool!” It is an astonishing perversity of human nature that we have an organized Christianity ready to make

25 Cohn, *The Chosen People* 53, no. 1 (October 1948): 5.

pronouncements upon every conceivable “problem” in the world, but it will do nothing to bring to these miserable creatures the only deliverance that there is in all the world, the message of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. When the Hitler outrages were running riot through Germany, when the Nazi savages were burning eighty-two synagogues in one day in Berlin, the Church of Christ was mute! It may shock our readers to know that at the present moment as we write these lines, Niemoller, the much-touted “hero” of the Nazi war, is still a Jew-hater! It may shock you to know that not a single church in Germany has yet had the decency and the courage to announce to the German people that Jew hate is a sin! And this is the Christianity that the Jew has to face. Is it any wonder that the Jews are alienated from the Church, from the Cross, from the Christ?²⁶

This was a part of the identity dilemma at the core of Joseph’s soul as he was part of two worlds and sometimes it was overwhelmingly difficult. Ultimately, Joseph would become somewhat embittered towards the Christian church, which he felt lost significant credibility for a lack of action during the Holocaust.

THE FOUNDING OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

Joseph was a Zionist, both theologically and in the most practical of terms. The ABMJ was a Zionist lightning rod for the fundamentalist movements within the United States. The hope of a Jewish return to the land of Israel was the subject of his writings, preaching radio broadcasts and books. It is a marvelous thing that he lived until 1953 and was able to see the return of the Jewish people and declaration of the modern state of Israel

²⁶ Ibid., 6.



in 1948, unlike his father. Joseph would believe that the modern state of Israel was the fulfillment of prophecy. He also viewed the establishment of the fledgling Jewish state as the precursor to far more and darker prophetic events which would entail great suffering during the Great Tribulation period until all was resolved with second coming of Christ and the establishment of the Millennial kingdom.

The writings of Dr. Charles Feinberg, the first Dean of Talbot Seminary (part of Biola University and named after Biola President Louis Talbot) were a regular feature in *The Chosen People* magazine under Joseph's leadership. Feinberg's commentaries on the Minor Prophets began as a series in the magazine. Feinberg's book *Premillennialism and Amillennialism* was an academic defense of the dispensationalism embraced by so many fundamentalists, including Joseph, the founders of Dallas Theological Seminary and other luminaries of the day including Harry Ironside, the pastor of Moody Church, and so many other fundamentalist leaders.

The ABMJ and those who supported the mission were confirmed "biblical Zionists" and usually dispensational in their theological vantage point.

The founding of the state of Israel was well covered by *The Chosen People*! However, during the early years of the state Joseph was still focused on the humanitarian needs of the refugees flowing into the land as Chosen People Ministries continued to work among the displaced person in Europe into the early 1950's.

Ultimately, the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel was viewed as a powerful polemic for the veracity of Scripture and of Old Testament prophecy in particular. The fulfillment of prophecy and the end times would continue as a major theme in the life of the ABMJ until this day. In fact, Cohn

would eventually turn his fund raising for Holocaust refugees into a fund to provide aid to Jewish people during the Great Tribulation period that was a key point in his and dispensational eschatology, as the church would be *raptured* and non-believers, both Jews and Gentiles, would left to go through this time of trial and testing.

CONFLICT AND CONTROVERSY

As had his father's, Joseph's life seemed also to be shaped by a variety of conflicts with other missionaries to the Jews stretching along the spectrum from fundamentalist to liberal Christianity. Much like his father, Joseph continued to conduct a steadfast ministry in the midst of these controversies.

There were many prominent Christian leaders who supported J.H. Cohn early on. One of them was Dr. Louis Klopsch, a Jewish believer. Founder of The Christian Herald magazine, in 1885 Dr. Klopsch purchased the building which the Bowery Mission was leasing at that time. He became the president of the Mission in 1897 when it was formally incorporated. After meeting Dr. Klopsch, Joseph was able to receive some financial help and good advertising, which enhanced the image of the Mission in the Christian community of New York City.²⁷

Joseph was also adept at developing patrons for the Mission and keeping and nurturing these relationships. Ms. Francis J. Huntley, the president of a manufacturing company in Rochester, New York, was a woman who gave generously to the Cohns. She gave a \$10,000 gift (almost \$200,000 today) to the expressed need detailed in the *The Chosen People* to help with the \$50,000, (about one million dollars today) building campaign to be used

²⁷ Cohn, *I Have Fought*, 114.



in erecting the headquarters building in Williamsburg. This created quite a controversy with the Home Mission Board of the Northern Baptists (now the American Baptists) which led to Leopold splitting with the group. For a time, Ms. Huntley's \$10,000 hung in limbo between the Baptist leadership and the Cohns, but ultimately Ms. Huntley made it clear that the money was not to be used for Home Mission Board expenses, but rather for the Williamsburg building. According Joseph's account, Ms. Huntley promised to support the Mission as long as both Leopold and Joseph gave their lives to the work of the Mission.

Joseph adds a poignant note on God's provision for the Williamsburg building, as Ms. Huntley promised a gift of \$25,000 at her death to pay off any loans that might be left owing by the Williamsburg facility.

On July 1 of 1909, the new building, Beth Sar Shalom, at 27 Throop Ave., Brooklyn, was dedicated. Gas was connected and turned on at 5 o'clock so that we would have light for the evening service. At 6 o'clock, a letter came from Rochester, and in it was a draft for \$25,000! Ms. Huntley wrote that she could not bear the thought of the building being dedicated with a \$24,000 mortgage on the property; so, she decided to pay her bequest ahead of time. And here we had \$25,000 with which to pay the \$24,000 mortgage and an additional \$1,000 to help pay for a little equipment in the building. That night as we went to bed we could say with the Nehemiah, "So we built the wall!"²⁸

This brief vignette speaks to two of Joseph's life principles. First of all, aside from cultivating patronage, he understood that ultimately God would provide, and this assurance gave him the confidence to build a strong financial base for Chosen People Ministries. Additionally, Joseph embraced the entrepreneurial and independent spirit of his day and the need, especially for

²⁸ Ibid., 120.

Jewish immigrants of the first American generation, to work hard and give their all to remain independent and to be successful in whatever endeavor they chose. This attitude continues within the Mission 125 years later.

Joseph's battles, along with those of his father, extended to many different areas of the ministry. From the very start, Leopold would have an embattled relationship with the North American Baptist denomination. At the turn of the twentieth century, the North American Baptist was a very conservative denomination, but over the next few decades would be heavily influenced by "modernism" and become a mixed denomination of both conservatives, fundamentalists and liberals. As one would expect, the liberals did not believe in Jewish evangelism.

In his book, *I Have Fought a Good Fight*, Cohn recounts some of the difficulties he had in getting ordained. Ultimately, he was, in his own understanding, forced to seek ordination outside of the New York Baptist Association in Michigan through Dr. Van Osdel, the pastor of Wealthy Avenue Baptist Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and patron of the ABMJ.

Joseph also felt the pressure to incorporate as the incorporation of nonprofit ministries was growing in importance as a means of obtaining the ongoing trust of Christians. In 1923, Joseph led the charge and the Mission was incorporated as the Williamsburg Mission to the Jews, as that is where the Mission headquarters was located at that time.

Joseph describes the series of attacks on Hermann Warszawiak who led his father to the Lord, and had a great rise in ministry popularity among Christians, and an even greater fall. He was defended by both Cohns. It was interesting to see how Joseph expressed the ways in which Hermann was mistreated as he claimed that he and his father were mistreated the same way. Joseph writes in *I Have Fought a Good Fight* the sense he



had throughout his life of being embattled and engaged in one conflict after another.

Joseph continues the story of Warszawiak

The Christian Herald had taken Herman Warszawiak with open arms, and had set aside for his use the whole suite of rooms in the old Bible house opposite the Wanamaker store in downtown New York. Warszawiak was gullible; he trusted everybody, suspected nobody. His subscription list and contributors' list, his office files, all, all, were wide open so that anybody who was evil minded could steal what names they wanted and use them to their own advantage. We have had the same experience ourselves more than once, when the subscription lists of *THE CHOSEN PEOPLE* were stolen from our files, our office rooms burglarized and ransacked; many important letters taken from our files. All of this to be followed later by the rascals guilty of these robberies sending out letters to the names they had stolen, vilifying your American Board of Missions to the Jews, vilifying the name of Leopold Cohn, and vilifying the name of Joseph Cohn. But slowly we got used to this thievery and we began to safeguard our mailing lists, until today they are under lock and key. But Warszawiak did not know of these measures of protection; he trusted everybody. It was this unsuspecting nature that brought about his ultimate destruction.²⁹

Joseph's further reflections on the life of Warszawiak and the way he was misunderstood and mistreated by both the Jewish and Christian communities reflected his own views about how a Jewish mission should be run. These values were well developed in *I Have Fought a Good Fight*.

The following reflects some of his thoughts about the state of Jewish missions, the acceptance of Jewish missions by the Christian community and the ways in which Jewish missionary activity were viewed in the Jewish community.

He writes to his Christian audience,

²⁹ Ibid., 165.

The truth is that your Jewish missionary work is the most difficult of our mission field and needs the most skillful management of any ministry undertaking. Just giving money to Jewish missions does not meet the requirement at all. Indeed, sometime soon we're better off if you give nothing for often you will accomplish more harm than good because you only encourage some who were not worthy of encouragement. Your ABMJ has been used of God to establish the most generously supported Jewish mission of the earth today. The support is come about honestly. You've learned through years of experience and satisfaction, that you should have every confidence in your work and in your workers. This is part of why others are so envious. So, we have more than a few bitter enemies. And the more covetous they are of God's blessings upon our labors, the more bitter is the greed. But you, our precious family and friends are already accustomed to these sad facts.³⁰

In the above statements one can see that Joseph constantly felt embattled with peers on the Christian side and by the nonbelieving Jewish community on the other side. This sense of embattlement, a desire to achieve and be successful as a second-generation American – especially who was naturalized and born outside of the United States, drove him to build the mission in a particular way. Cohn was unwilling to accept the default poverty of everyday missionaries to the Jews and marginalization by both the Christian and Jewish communities. Aligned with these other shaping experiences and values was a deep desire to professionalize the field of Jewish missions.

HIS PERSONAL LIFE

Joseph came to faith when he was thirteen years old and was baptized with his mother by Dr. W.C.P. Rhoads, pastor for more

³⁰ Ibid., 182.



than 40 years at the Marcy Avenue Baptist church in downtown Brooklyn. He was a dear friend and defender of the Cohns, and the church became home to many of the Jewish people whom Leopold and then Joseph helped come to the Lord.³¹

Joseph had a challenging domestic life. Though married for many years, he and his wife lived separately, although they never divorced. He carried out his final years of life and ministry on his own at the Beacon Hotel on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

Josephine, who had been active as a young person in church and missionary work as a Presbyterian, moved to Connecticut, where the Cohns owned acreage in the town of Easton on the 90 acres given to them for a camp purchased with funds donated by Francis Huntley. The Cohn children spent much of their childhood on this property, which did indeed operate as a camp for urban Jewish youth for many years. Eventually the land, given prior to corporate nonprofit laws, was added to the personal estate of the Cohn family and ended up in the possession of Joseph's side of the family and was passed through to his grandson, Huntley Joseph Stone III.

According to her obituary, Josephine had obtained "separate maintenance" through court action and had resumed her maiden name, Stone, which the children used as well. Nonetheless, Joseph was known for being a devoted father and Feinberg notes this in his eulogy when he wrote,

He tenderly loves his family. There was not one of them but what he was not proud of every accomplishment, with her daughter, daughter-in-law, sons or grandchildren. The memories of the early home life of his children spoke enough so tenderly.³²

Joseph's son Huntley, was a graduate of Princeton and an

³¹ Ibid., 91.

³² 1953 Memorial Edition of the *The Chosen People*

attorney in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and then Denver, Colorado. He served on the Board of the ABMJ until 1965 and passed away a year ago. We do not know a lot about Joseph's other son, Joseph Jr., nor about his daughter, Cordelia, except that she lived in the Denver area. One of Joseph's granddaughters is an attorney living in LePorte, Colorado.

There is quite a bit more that can be discovered regarding Joseph's family and family life.

CONCLUSION:
THE LEGACY OF A WELL MANAGED ROUGH
AND TUMBLE MISSION TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Joseph Hoffman Cohn was clearly the person that built the ABMJ, now Chosen People Ministries, on the foundation laid by his immigrant father. When telling the story of an organization, whether a for-profit company or nonprofit organization like the Red Cross, World Vision, a synagogue, local church or mission agency like Chosen People Ministries, there are a number of critical factors to be studied. There are external issues such as the macro-cultural context in which the organization or company developed. Also to be considered are the micro-cultural, more internal issues reflecting the particular industry wherein the organization develops, as well as the capabilities and personal circumstances of the leader or leaders initiating the organization. These factors continue throughout the life of an organization while adding complexity as other factors that are again more internal; such as values, organizational culture, adaptability, leadership selection, principles of financial management and others become even more important the longer an organization exists. However, the battle between micro and macro context which factor in determining in the growth and development of



an organization, a nonprofit or a ministry like Chosen People Ministries, will have ongoing impact into the future.

In studying the life of Joseph Hoffman Cohn, we are looking at a 125-year-old organization that was born in the midst of the largest wave of immigration of Eastern European Jewish people to the United States. Many researchers suggest this number to be between two and two and a half million Jewish immigrants of which a million and a half lived in the greater New York City area.³³ As briefly noted in the Library of Congress exhibition “From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America,”

Between 1881 and 1924, the migration shifted from Central Europe eastward, with over two-and- one-half million East European Jews propelled from their native lands by persecution and the lack of economic opportunity. Most of those who arrived as part of this huge influx settled in cities where they clustered in districts close to downtowns, joined the working class, spoke Yiddish, and built strong networks of cultural, spiritual, voluntary and social organizations. This period of immigration came to an end with the passage of restrictive laws in 1921 and 1924. Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe to the United States never again reached the levels that it did before 1920.³⁴

Leopold Cohn’s immigration to the New York City area where millions of Jewish people lived made the birth of an organization like the ABMJ possible. Rabbi Cohn himself was transformed by the message of the gospel, but was also uniquely suited to begin this ministry which led to the start of the ABMJ. He was perfect for the job – as if he was made for it. He was a man among the people, as he was called later on by Joseph. He

33 Samson D. Oppenheim, J.D., “The Jewish Population of the United States,” Census.gov, accessed January 11, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/jewishpop-ajc.pdf>.

34 “From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America,” Library of Congress, accessed January 11, 2020, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/haven-century.html>.

understood the language, culture, religion, needs and shared the same experience, both in Europe and in the United States, of those he served. This unique blend of qualities was integral to the founding of the organization as both the macro and micro contacts perfectly matched.

A more distant illustration of this is found in the start of Apple Inc. by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak. Whereas Wozniak was technically equipped to work in the field of computers, Steve Jobs was not. However, he had other gifts and talents, including an innate ability to understand the times and what people needed, as well as being an intuitive marketer. However, none of their leadership skills would have mattered if the technology were not available to create a home computer. Once again, this is an illustration of a perfect match between the micro context – primarily the leaders of the organization – and the macro context of the technical and cultural times in which they lived. The same would be true of Bill Gates of Microsoft and Larry Ellison, who founded Oracle. The illustrations are unending!

However, sustaining that organization and continuing the innovation upon which it was founded would be far more challenging. One only needs to study the growth of Apple Inc. to see how a growing organization, especially one that lost its founder so early, continued to adapt and remain successful. It is hard to believe that there was a time when it was thought that Apple would not survive without Steve Jobs and he had to return to the organization. Since his death, Apple has flourished, as did Chosen People Ministries under Joseph.

It would be easy to simply focus on the leader of an organization, whether that be the founder or the very important second person to follow that founder, and ignore the macro context in which the organization began and thrived. This would be a mistake and create a superficial, one-dimensional view of



the leader studied. We are all products of our times.

The micro and macro context of the founding of the ABMJ and its progress through a second generation of leadership must take into consideration the times during which both Leopold and Joseph Hoffman Cohn lived. One cannot separate the ways in which a leader responds or adapts to his or her macro-cultural context and simply study their past experiences and the extraordinary gifts with which they were born.

Joseph Hoffman Cohen was a gifted, driven, entrepreneurial, second generation Jewish immigrant who was the son and the apparent heir of the family business. This is not meant to be derogatory in any way, but simply to state or describe what seems to have transpired in the passing of the baton from Leopold to Joseph. There's no doubt that this passing of the baton happened many years earlier than the official date in 1937 when Leopold passed into the presence of the Lord. Joseph had already been the editor of the magazine, the chief representative and fundraiser for the organization and was probably the person doing the daily management of the ABMJ for more than a decade by the time he took over for his father. In fact, it could even have been a number of years earlier than that.

The environment for the second generation of the ABMJ led by Joseph was quite different than the first led by Leopold. By the time Joseph became General Secretary of the ABMJ, he was already well Americanized and though he probably spoke with a slight Yiddish accent, he was fairly typical of the more successful second-generation immigrant. His father founded a movement in a religious community, motivated by his love for Jesus and his own people and only cared about organizational life in as much as he was able to make a small living and meet the needs of his constituency. Joseph, like so many other eastern European Jewish immigrants, was a builder. His English was better than

his father's and he was better able to leverage his father's fundamentalist Christian friends to build a wider network of respectability for a work that was in reality for many years, a small localized ministry work in Brooklyn. Joseph was an excellent writer and had mastered the written English language. He fully understood how to communicate what was happening in Brooklyn and in many other places around the globe among the Jewish people and in Jewish missions in a way that captured the imagination of the Christian public.

He moved the organization into Manhattan, which was also sign of greater status in his quest for respectability. He married a gentile woman who was a graduate of Barnard College, another clear status elevator when looking through the eyes of the greater culture at that time. Again, this should not minimize the good work Joseph did, but rather help us understand him as a man of his times, a second-generation Eastern European Jewish immigrant building an organization which needed the respectability and acceptance of those outside the community he was serving.

Joseph was shaped by many of macro global events and experiences already noted in this brief paper including antisemitism, World War I, the Great Depression, and particularly World War II, the Holocaust, the formation of the state of Israel and the ongoing battle between liberals and conservatives among the Christians that supported the ABMJ. Joseph had superb adaptability skills and was able to meet many of these challenges in ways that propelled the ABMJ forward. Among comparable organizations around the globe, the ABMJ was certainly one of the most successful.

Jim Collins, in his book *Great by Choice*, written with Morton Hansen in 2011, speaks about the challenges of ongoing leadership, especially in the earlier stages of an organization's life.



Collins writes, “Why do some companies thrive in uncertainty, even chaos and others do not? When buffeted by tumultuous events, when hit by big, fast-moving forces they can neither predict or control --what distinguishes those who perform exceptionally well from those who underperform or worse?”³⁵

Collins continues to describe the study that became the basis for the book, which was unlike any of his previous research, as he writes, “cases were selected not just on performance or stature but also in the extremity of the environment.” He continues, “First, we believe the future will remain unpredictable in the world and stable for the rest of our lives, and we want to understand the factors that distinguish great organizations, those that prevail against extreme odds, in such environments. Second, by looking at the best companies and their leaders in extreme environments, we gain insights that might otherwise remain hidden when studying leaders in more tranquil settings.”³⁶

In order to understand Joseph Hoffman Cohn, one needs to understand the environment in which the organization grew. It was the years between the two great wars, which in many ways created a stable environment for a short season—but not within the field of Jewish missions itself, as Joseph was constantly embattled on every front. Even though we do not read about conflict with his father or with his board or even staff, certainly, he was in conflict with some other missions to the Jews and with the Christian church where he was seeking partnership and support. Clearly, there was tension between the growing work of the American Board of Missions to the Jews and the Jewish community.

Overcoming hardship and adaptability was one of Joseph’s gifts and at times it appeared that he thrived on difficulty.

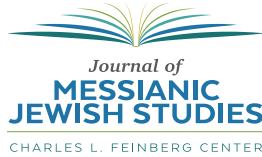
35 James Collins and Morten T. Hansen, *Great By Choice* (New York: Harper Business, 2011), 2.

36 Ibid., 4.

Perhaps because he was very good at using the energy of battle in fueling the growth of the organization. The most heart wrenching and deeply personal challenges he faced was brought about by a growing, virulent antisemitism which paved the way for the Holocaust.

However, the ABMJ survived and thrived and outlasted Joseph for another 66 years so far. The challenges brought about by the varying macro and micro contextual factors remain and, in some ways, morph from one generation to the next. Yet, the underlying values, principles and theological truths formulated by Leopold and especially by Joseph during this critical second generation of the ABMJ's organizational life continues to shape the present and will hopefully lead the ministry of the Cohns to a better and brighter future.





Chosen People Ministries and its Place within the Larger Context of Evangelical Missions to the Jews¹

Yaakov Ariel

We would have probably not paid much attention to the early history of the Chosen People Ministries, and to Leopold Cohen, the founder of the mission, if it were not for the energy and resourcefulness of his son, Joseph Hoffman Cohn. It was Joseph Cohn, who turned his father's successful neighborhood mission into one of the largest and most influential global enterprises in the history of Jewish evangelization. Understanding the different roles of Leopold and Joseph Cohn and the contexts in which they operated is important to the understanding of the early history of the mission, and the significance of the different stages in its development.

¹ Unable to attend the conference in person, Dr. Ariel's contribution here consists of the transcription of his lecture delivered via skype, plus responses to questions posed by those in attendance – editor's note.



At the beginning of Leopold Cohn's career, at turn of the twentieth century New York, Cohn was one among many. There were dozens of missionaries who labored among the Jewish immigrant community in the New York area. However, Leopold proved to be more successful than most other missionaries were. Obtaining his theological education in Scotland and settling in Williamsburg, New York, the founder of what would become the Chosen People Ministries was more systematic, resilient and perseverant than other missionaries. As Cohn's mission grew and expanded, it also attracted envy, resentment and defamation, but its benefactors stood by Cohn and lent him their support.

One major element that worked in favor of the mission was its leader's ability to gain the trust of and build lasting connections with Protestant groups and individuals who showed interest in supporting missionary work among the Jews and turned into benefactors of the mission. It helped that the mission was successful in the number of converts it made, pointing to a good understanding on the part of Cohn and his lieutenants of the aspirations of potential converts, who visited his mission, heard sermons, and explored spiritual and communal options. Long before the rise of Messianic Judaism, missionaries labored on a one-on-one basis to bring young Jewish immigrants to accept the Christian faith, paying individual attention to every inquirer.

Leopold Cohn and later on Joseph Cohn's real achievement resulted therefore from realizing the real nature of missions as two-fold agencies: propagating the Christian faith in its Protestant Messianic form among Jews, and at the same time advocating in the Protestant community the importance of the Jews in God's plan of redemption and the need to evangelize them. In that, they followed in the footsteps of earlier Protestant missions.

EARLIER HISTORY

Although by the twentieth century it became the hub of such missions, Protestant missions to the Jews did not start in America. From the very beginning of Protestantism, its proponents wished to bring the Jews to accept Christianity in its new Protestant form. Martin Luther took great interest in evangelizing the Jews, as did other Protestant leaders. German Protestants were the first to establish, as early as at the turn of the eighteenth century, missions directed specifically at Jews. The first Protestant house of converts was located in Hamburg. However, it was the Halle Pietists who established the first systematic mission to the Jews in the early eighteenth century. The Pietists studied Jewish texts, wrote tracts to introduce Jews to the Christian faith, recruited, trained and sent missionaries to visit Jewish communities, talked and argued with Jews over the right interpretation of scriptures, and reported to the mission about Jewish life in Eastern and Central Europe as they encountered it. Further Pietist missionaries came about in Germany, Scandinavia, Switzerland, and Holland.

The rise of the evangelical movement in Britain in the late eighteenth century brought with it growing interest in evangelizing the Jews. In the early nineteenth century the London Society for promoting Christianity amongst the Jews became a leading mission, establishing dozens of missionary posts around the globe. British missions proliferated throughout the nineteenth century, representing various denominations, regions and approaches of British Protestantism.

Attempts at creating missions in America did not work well at first. There were a few attempts at establishing missions to the Jews, but until the 1880s, proponents of evangelism did not succeed in creating solid lasting institutions.

Leopold Cohn has come to represent a new wave of missions,



some of which have endured, with changes and adjustments, to this day. The initial paradigm that the missions followed was British. It was, perhaps, not a coincidence that Leopold Cohn received theological education and training as a missionary in Britain. In tracts that he wrote on Christian themes for interested Jews, he proved to possess good theological knowledge and ability to transmit it to people who had not been familiar with Christian tenets of faith. He helped bring the Pietist-British missionary tradition of evangelizing the Jews, to America.

Albert E. Thompson, in *A Century of Missions*, which he published in the early twentieth century, recorded dozens of missions: British, European-Continental, Middle-Eastern and others. It showed that America joined the wagon towards the end of the nineteenth century as a vital, dynamic, and successful force in the field.

THE RISE OF A MISSION

A local endeavor at first, one among the many, Leopold Cohn's mission grew and prospered. Joseph, his son, studied at the evangelical Moody Bible Institute, gaining a good understanding of the Protestant community, its attitudes, and manners, and saw himself as a crusader for an appreciative position towards Jews and the cause of missions to that people. Throughout the years, he turned the mission into the largest in the field of Mission to the Jews at that time, venturing out on an international level. The Cohns established excellent connections with benefactors in the Protestant community, raised funds, expanded, produced literature, and facilitated the conversion of a relatively large number of Jews. However, just as important was the fact that they understood the place and culture in which they were operating.

The time and place were ripe for the rise and growth of missions to the Jews directed towards the evangelization of Jews. The social and religious developments in America at the turn of the twentieth century worked in favor of Leopold and Joseph Cohn's enterprise. To fully understand the realities in which the mission operated, one should therefore begin by looking at the realities of American Protestantism and Jewry at that time.

The first attempts at establishing missions to the Jews took place in the 1810s-1820s, corresponding with the first American wave of systematic missions at home and abroad. The American Jewish community counted at that time merely a few thousand people. Between the 1820s and the 1870s, a quarter of a million Jews came to America, mostly from German speaking Central Europe. From the 1880s to 1923, there was a mass Jewish immigration to America, when as many as three million Jews arrived, mostly from Eastern Europe. Most of them were Yiddish speakers, with very meager means, who worked in sweatshops, or sold merchandise out of pushcarts, living in poor working-class neighborhoods. Such newly arrived immigrants were mostly young, hopeful, hoping to integrate into new social, economic, political, and cultural surroundings.

The people who approached the missions were young migrants and immigrants, eager, hardworking, and ambitious. Leaving their small towns in Eastern Europe for big American cities, they needed to reorganize their spiritual and communal lives. They were seeking a new social, communal, mental, spiritual, and intellectual framework. Many chose secularized or liberalized frameworks within the Jewish fold, but some explored other spiritual options. Christianity, as presented by missionaries, was an option that some young immigrants considered. The mission would not have been there, alongside dozens of others, if it was not for the huge immigration that took place during those years.



This provided a meeting ground for Protestants to relate to Jews, just when their interest in the Jews and their zeal for missionizing that people was on the rise.

WHY THE JEWS?

Why have Protestant-sponsored missions directed so much effort, energy, hope, resources, and personnel toward the evangelization of the Jews? Why were Protestants relating to the Jews with much eagerness and hope? One needs to look at the theology that motivated missions. Jews have often been suspicious or resentful towards the presence of missions in their midst. Contrary to a common perception, however, missions are not composed of antagonists who are trying to destroy the existence of Jewry. Enemies of the Jews do not dedicate their lives to evangelizing them. Those who engage in missions to the Jews are interested in the Jews, their history, their place in God's economy, and the realities of their lives. Missionaries to the Jews held at times ambivalent opinions on the Jews culturally, but they considered them a special people. They saw the Jews as God's first nation, still destined for a glorious future in a restored Davidic kingdom in the Land of Israel - the Holy Land. Leopold Cohn's mission, and almost all the other missions that came about during this period, held to that hope. They did not see the Jews as ordinary people who needed to be Christianized, but as a people with special significance in God's plans for the nations.

The missionaries were not the only ones who held such views. They represented the position of a large Protestant constituency around them, including their sponsors, the groups and individuals who helped support their work. The community, at times with some reservations and residues of old stereotypes, was changing

its opinion of Jews based on a new reading of the scriptures and the adoption of Messianic hopes. Already Philipp Spener, the late seventeenth century German theologian and founder of a Pietist university in Halle, adopted a biblical Messianic outlook on the role of the Jews in God's plans for human redemption and called upon Christians to treat Jews with kindness. Messianic convictions informed the position of the Institutum Judaicum, which the Pietists established in Halle, as well as a series of Pietist missions, such as the Berlin Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews. Missionary hopes and a new reading of biblical prophecies also informed British missions, as well as missions in other countries.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Stuart: We are grateful for your enlightened, positive, and respectful dealing with matters of missionary behavior and things of that sort. Do you have punitive kickback from those in the Jewish world because you have the chutzpa to talk positively about Jews who believe in Jesus?

Dr. Ariel: I did. I had forgotten about the suspicious attitudes that I had received, but you reminded me. I wrote a number of books and articles on missions and Messianic Jews. I received a prize once from the American Society of Church History, but not from any society of Jewish history. Once a writer, who was "combating missions," decided, based on my writings, that I was suspicious, and related to me as "an enemy of the Jewish people." That hurt me a lot. I happen to be a highly committed Jew. Moreover, the writer failed to understand what my work was about and what a historiographical line



I was taking. I believe that we need to treat seriously and respectfully the people and communities that we study, and write in an open-minded and even-handed manner on all groups and faiths that we explore. As a Jew, I do not think that there is an ideal type of ‘Jew’ in the Weberian sense. There are at least a hundred different ways of being Jewish. I consider all people who consider themselves Jewish to be Jewish and I do not discriminate between one Jew or another based on ideology, theology, or political affiliation.

The suspicious attitudes represented a previous generation. I have sensed a change throughout the years. People can still react with hostility, but I think that there is a growing acceptance of Jewish Believers in Jesus. You can see this in newspaper and journal articles, and in academic works, as well as in the attitudes of individuals. The change is not universal; it depends on where people are located in the Jewish community and where they stand on tolerance and inclusivity. But, on the whole, I think that there is growing awareness in some Jewish circles, that there is no one definition of a Jew, and that people can be Jewish in many ways. Attitudes also depend on encountering and interacting with Messianic Jews. In Israel, and in the United States as well, there are growing communities of Messianic people who interact with them and respect them for what they are.

Stuart: Dr. Ariel, we are very grateful for the depth of scholarship that you bring to our conference. Can give us some insight into Leopold Cohen’s standing in his own milieu, that is among his peers and his time?

Dr. Ariel: When I researched missions to the Jews I was amazed at how often missionaries were competitive with one another. They competed for resources, for

approval of the Protestant community, for Jewish immigrants and young people to approach them, and they competed over the quality of and recognition they can get for their writings. In some ways, they competed in the same way that people compete over turfs and resources. In other times, they competed the way academicians do, over students, reputation and publications. Leopold and Joseph Cohn stirred envy and resentment. Leopold and Joseph Cohn were formidable persons but, for the most part, not popular among fellow missionaries. Missionaries and writers have sometimes overlooked their achievements, which were quite impressive: a systematic, well-functioning, growing missionary endeavor, which became a global organization. Success is a tricky reality. Missionaries had enemies in the Jewish community who were on their case, and enemies within the missionary community. The defamations against Leopold Cohn were incredible, but when one reads his writings, this man was theologically educated, and he was charismatic and persuasive enough to convert hundreds of young people. Still, missionaries like Leopold Cohn were under watch; theirs was a risqué business, particularly when the missions were still small endeavors. A Pop and Mom missionary enterprise with some assistance was dangerous, since one person was associated with the mission, and his downfall could mean the ruin of the mission.

Joseph Cohn lamented about the pitfalls, but his book also radiates the excitement of an engaging pioneering enterprise. The dangers might have added to his sense of accomplishment. When JHC wrote his book he called it, "I have fought the good fight." The fight with the Protestant community over respect for Jews and support for missions, and a fight within the



missionary community, where his father and he faced envy, competition and defamations. Antagonists of missions, in the Jewish community, and non-Jewish community as well embraced such negative gossip with gusto. No one, of course, should be immune from criticism, but the idea that the Cohns and their missionary endeavor also deserve respect has dawned on larger missionary community rather belatedly.

Jim: You made a comment about the Pietists that caught my interest and a comment about Nazi Germany. Recently, I started reading this book by Alfred Rosenberg, called *The Track of the Jew through the Ages*, and I was actually astonished by some of the material that was in it. He goes back and besides all the other junk that is in there and the antisemitism and everything else, he actually refers back to works related to German missions to the Jews, and Philosemites in Germany. It was amazing, I had never seen it before. I had wondered if you had done any work on that.

Dr. Ariel: Yes, if you are interested in the story of German Philosemites and Pietists I can make a few recommendations. This topic has only come up in recent years. Studies started hesitantly in the 1960s-1970s; people at that time were in denial of the idea that there were German Philosemites. However, first let us relate to the term 'Philosemitism,' which needs to be defined. It is a complicated term, related to Christians interested in Jews and their wellbeing. Philosemitism has mostly represented Christians interested in Jews on behalf of their Messianic Christian faith. Such Christians, even if not completely devoid of negative cultural stereotypes of Jews, supported Jewish causes, defended Jews

against harassment and defamations. Philosemites often used the venue of mission as a convenient way of connecting with Jews and affecting their lives. Works on German Philosemitism started hesitantly in the 1960s- 1970s. At that time, many were wary of the idea that Germans could be Philosemitic, and that there had been a large Philosemitic movement in Germany. On the Prussian mission to the Jews, there is a book by Christopher Clark, professor at Cambridge University, and one of the most respected historians of Germany and Prussia. I recommend it.

There has been a renewed interest in the positive aspects of German-Jewish relations throughout history, including Christian German interest in Jewish culture, languages, and writing. Aya Eliada, a professor at the Hebrew University, wrote about Christians who took interest in Yiddish, and collected books in that language. The Halle Pietists at the turn of the eighteenth century established a university in Halle, which excelled in the fields of Ancient Near East, Biblical Studies, and Semitic languages. It was the first university to establish academic teaching of Yiddish, just as in the United States the first to teach Yiddish was the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago in the 1920s. Teaching Yiddish in secular universities would come later. Unfortunately, the Philosemites in Germany were not strong enough to counterbalance or serve as a checks and balances to anti-Jewish forces.

Pieter: Thank you Dr. Ariel. Yesterday, Dr. Keren mentioned that Leopold Cohn was successful because he really knew how to connect with the background of the Jewish people coming to America. The way he communicated the Christian message to them. That he made it (the Christian message) easier for them to



swallow than other missionaries did. Is that something you can comment on?

Dr. Ariel: I would agree with that, although I would add that there were two schools of how missionaries should approach the Jews. Some people claimed that it was better if the missionary was NOT Jewish because then the Jews were not as resentful or suspicious. Arno Gaebelein, who established a mission to the Jews in New York's Lower East Side and spoke Yiddish, claimed that very often Jews suspected that he was Jewish and then he would lose credibility. The Jews were more respectful towards a non-Jewish missionary. They did not see such a person as a traitor, who defected to the other camp, and did not question his sincerity, honesty, and motivation. He therefore insisted that non-Jews should be those who approach Jews.

This was one school of missionaries, and another school was that of the Cohns. In contrast to Gaebelein, Joseph Cohn wrote that one needed to be Jewish in order to understand and relate to Jewish people, speak their language, understand how they felt and what they were going through. It is a fact that as missionaries Leopold and Joseph Cohn were very successful on many levels. One of their successes was how he approached young Jews and how young Jews approached him. However, who am I to say that one was more successful than another and take sides in an historical argument, to go back 120 years and say "Hey Gaebelein, you were mistaken, the Cohn did a better job." I respect both groups and I have a particular admiration to Gaebelein, who was a first-rate intellectual, who became a spokesperson in the fundamentalist-modernist debate.

Zhava: I was just wondering, what sparked your interest in studying Messianic Jewish movements?

Dr. Ariel: This goes back to my early years as a child in Jerusalem. I grew up in pre-1967, divided Jerusalem, on the border between Israel and Jordan. Jerusalem at that time had numerous missionary houses, and a variety of Messianic groups, including one in my neighborhood. I was curious and wanted to make sense of those people, what brought them to Jerusalem, motivated them, whom they represented, and why were they so interested in Israel and the End-Times. They were both representative of an outside world, and, at the same time, they were part of the city and its special atmosphere. That's my standard answer, but I would have to back to that war in 1973 to give you the full answer. I am not sure you want to hear it...

Alan: Well, we want to hear about it if you are willing to tell it.

Dr. Ariel: ...Well . . . I wrote about it, but you would need to translate my work into English. I have a book about that period in my life called "The Road to Damascus: Memoirs of Captivity." It does not necessarily follow St. Paul, but relates to my intellectual and spiritual searches.

I find it amazing that many Jewish historians have ignored this aspect of Jewish life in recent centuries. Missions as well as Jews who have accepted the Jewish faith have been part of the Jewish scene. This includes people, literature and ideas, what I would call the borderline cultures that they created. They created something that was in between Jews and Christians, as well as new facets within Judaism and Christianity. Overlooking this is a terrible mistake.



Zhava: My question is about pre-Reformation Jewish evangelism. Do you know of any efforts besides forced baptism, forced conversions, Jewish-Christian converts turning against their people and against the Talmud, do you know of others?

Dr. Ariel: There were such efforts during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era. There were individuals and groups that devoted their efforts to the evangelization of Jews and even wrote special sermons to that effect. I have never done any work on pre-Reformation or post-Reformation Catholic missions, I have to be outright about that, although I have read about such work, especially in the Late Modern Era.

Alan: I am remembering a testimony by someone named Hermann, does that ring a bell? It was quite a few years ago. It was a Jewish account of a Jewish man named Hermann. (*The person I am referring to is Hermann of Cologne, a Jew who penned an autobiographical account of his conversion in the mid-twelfth century. – editor's note*).

Dr. Ariel: I have not encountered Hermann's testimony, but studying Jewish conversions to Catholicism is important. It is a field of research that should be encouraged.

Reviews

The Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies

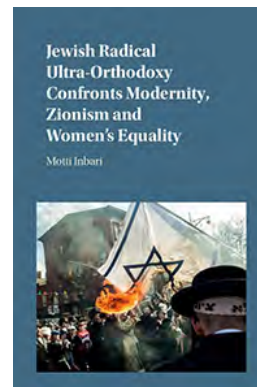


JMJS/CHARLES L. FEINBERG CENTER



Motti Inbari *Jewish Radical Ultra-Orthodoxy Confronts Modernity, Zionism and Women's Equality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2016), pp. 279.

Review by Alan Shore



In December, 2006, the world press took note of the highly controversial “International Conference to Review the Global Vision of the Holocaust,” hosted in Iran during the administration of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Despite its lofty title, its participants and presenters were mainly Holocaust deniers from countries ranging from Austria to Indonesia, including Germany, France and Sweden. Former Louisiana State Representative and Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke was also in attendance. However, although Holocaust denial was certainly front and center, it had less to do with the past than the present, for its main purpose was to delegitimize Zionism and call for the destruction of the State of Israel. By denying the Holocaust, these enemies of the



Jewish State sought to undermine what they believed to be the main justification for the creation of the Jewish State in the first place. Destroy the credibility of the Holocaust; destroy the credibility of the State of Israel.

None of this was particularly new. But what might have caused your eyes to pop, if you happened to be paying attention, was that a half dozen ultra-Orthodox Jews were also there to express solidarity with the aims of the conference organizers. Although they were not there to deny the Holocaust, these members of the Israel-based, anti-Zionist organization Neturei Karta (Guardians of the City) likewise called for the end of the Jewish State. Although they were roundly condemned by the rest of the Jewish world for their attendance and even by leaders of their own community, the viewpoint they represented was nonetheless already deeply entrenched in their religious tradition. How are we to begin to understand this?

A good place to start would be Motti Inbari's informative and engrossing *Jewish Radical Ultra-Orthodoxy Confronts Modernity, Zionism and Women's Equality*. In it, Inbari provides a roadmap to guide us through the bumpy and sometimes confusing terrain of radical ultra-Orthodox Jewish faith and practice and its fractious relationship with what amounts to the rest of the Jewish world. One of the most fascinating aspects of his study is his exploration of the eschatological and ideological basis of their religious passion that is encapsulated in their Messianic hopes.

Inbari begins by taking us back to the challenges Judaism encountered in the modern era, beginning in the late eighteenth century, as the Enlightenment beginning in Western Europe and its Jewish counterpart, the Haskalah, gained traction. Orthodoxy in Judaism became a category only in response to competing Jewish movements and other forms of change that were perceived as threats. Ultra-Orthodoxy could be viewed as even more reactionary, cultivating a mentality characterized by a deep suspicion of modern culture, secular influence, particularly with regard to education, increased religious observance and more rigid standards of social behavior, with a special emphasis on modest dress among women.

What Inbari defines as "radical ultra-Orthodoxy" features a social structure he characterizes as an enclave that goes even further to separate itself not only from mainstream culture, but even from other Jews and Jewish groups that do not



share its views. Its alienation from the larger world of Judaism is amplified by an attitude of utterly uncompromising opposition to innovation. As Zionism grew in numbers and influence in the twentieth century, groups like the Neturei Karta in Jerusalem and the Satmar Hasidism, which originated in Hungary and was revived after WWII in Williamsburg, Brooklyn under the leadership of Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, became increasingly virulent in their opposition. At times, they identified Zionism and its goals as nothing less than the work of Satan.

The basis of this implacable enmity, Inbari submits, is to be found in radical ultra-Orthodoxy's whole-hearted commitment to a specific vision of Messianic fulfillment that is at odds not only with secular Zionism, but even more so against religious groups such as Agudat Yisrael, the union of Haredi groups that came to terms with statehood, albeit reluctantly, once it had been established. Part of the reason for radical ultra-Orthodoxy's refusal, Inbari points out, is to be found in its interpretation of "The Three Oaths," a passage in the Babylonian Talmud (Ketubot 111a) that forbids Israel from "storming the wall." Traditionally, this has been interpreted to mean that Israel is prohibited from mass migration to the Promised Land before the End-Times. Rabbi Amram Blau, head of Neturei Karta, to whom Inbari devotes a whole chapter, vocally and repeatedly renounced Zionism as nothing less than rebellion against God and went so far as to portray the Holocaust as the outcome of God's wrath against such rebellion.

For Blau, the ascendancy of Zionism is simply one more proof that Satan is strengthening his grip on the world, and even the apparent triumphs of Israel such as that of the 1967 "Six Day War" are the work of Satan. In Blau's view, this period of spiritual degradation is so terrible that it is actually a sign of "the pangs of Messiah," and His imminent arrival. Contrast this view with



that of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of British Mandatory Palestine, who understood Zionism as part of an unfolding process of Messianic redemption. While disapproving of the secular ideology that propelled political Zionism, Kook's view enabled him to cooperate with Zionists where he felt it advantageous to do so.

Moving forward, Inbari turns his attention to Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, leader of the Satmar Hasidic group that traces its roots to the Maramaros region of Hungary, whose religious influence Menachem Keren-Kratz has so well described elsewhere. Grandson of Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda Teitelbaum, the head of the yeshiva where Leopold Cohn studied, Yoel upheld the rigorous standard of strictness that was the hallmark of Hungarian Hasidism and the Haredi antagonism toward modernism, secularism, and Zionism. Yet, as Inbari points out, it was the Zionists who saved his life by smuggling him out of Hungary and into Palestine as the Holocaust caught up with Hungary in 1944. This fact may have complicated Teitelbaum's attitude. As Inbari writes, "In my opinion, it is almost impossible to believe that Teitelbaum was not even slightly grateful to the Zionists for saving his life, particularly during the period immediately following the war."

Arriving in Williamsburg, New York City in 1946, Teitelbaum set about to rebuild the Jewish life he envisioned. Under his leadership, Satmar Hasidism has risen from the ashes and now boasts impressive numbers of adherents. It still holds to the creed of its forbears in its resistance to innovation, its disdain for alternative forms of Judaism, and a Messianic expectation that rejects the State of Israel.

Inbari concludes his work with a fascinating and enjoyable exploration of eschatology and the psychology of zealotry, proposing some commonalities between the first-century



Jewish rebels who were fired by their Messianic hopes and the later expressions of zealotry he has described throughout his book. Although beyond the scope of his study, the reader with an interest in the Christian side of things will find food for thought in comparing Inbari's cogent presentation of Jewish eschatological expectations and responses with the history of Christian movements that stressed Jesus' imminent return.

The only argument I have with the book is its title — *Jewish Radical Ultra-Orthodoxy Confronts Modernity, Zionism and Women's Equality*. Although Inbari devotes some space to the role of women in Haredi life and briefly features the influential wives of some of the leaders, the confrontation with women's equality the title promises does not fully materialize. However, the contributions of Dr. Inbari's scholarship far outweigh what is inevitably left undone in the ongoing work of academic research.

Menachen Keren-Kratz,
“Maramaros, Hungary—The
Cradle of Extreme Orthodoxy”
Modern Judaism
(Apr. 17, 2015)

Review by Brian Crawford



The twentieth century witnessed the survival of Ultra-Orthodox Judaism through the Holocaust, its rebirth in Israel and the United States, and its explosive growth in radically new contexts. The story of how the *shtetl* lifestyle of Eastern Europe came to thrive



in urban Brooklyn and Mea Shearim is one that deserves to be told. However, Mendi Keren argues, one cannot fully understand the success of Ultra-Orthodox Jewish people unless one uncovers “the Maramaros Legacy” from which it came.

The Maramaros region is a county that once belonged to pre-World War I Hungary, but is now split between Romania and Ukraine. Keren writes that the region was the “cradle” whose unique dynamics shaped Ultra-Orthodoxy in the nineteenth century and enabled it to survive to this day. The Maramaros region had been an unpopulated wild land when the founder of the Hasidic movement, the Baal Shem Tov (1700-1760), set his eyes on its potential. He commissioned his followers to settle and cultivate the land, and by the mid-nineteenth century, it had been transformed into an exclusively Ultra-Orthodox enclave. With this exclusive control came a host of political, educational, and ideological conflicts that few Jewish communities had faced before.

Keren briskly walks through the significant personalities, towns, and controversies of the Maramaros era, which he splits into three periods. He begins with the early nineteenth century Hungarian reform movement, called Neology, which sought to adapt Jewish law to modern (Enlightenment) times, often to the detriment of tradition. At first, some Hungarian rabbis accepted moderate reforms, such as adding general education studies to their curriculums, but then the reformers began forsaking traditional Jewish education altogether. This led to an unprecedented number of Hungarian Jewish people joining the modernist Neology movement or believing in Jesus as Messiah. Ultra-Orthodoxy arose as a movement to combat this slide away from tradition. Important early leaders of this movement included the Ashkenazi Rabbi Hatam Sofer, who famously said, “Everything new is forbidden by the Torah,” and Rabbi Moshe



Teitelbaum, who advocated for Hasidism in the region. Their successors, Rabbi Moshe Schick and Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda Teitelbaum, respectively, carried on the movement, with great success. Their deaths in the 1880's brought the first period of the Maramaros legacy to a close.

The second period, Keren writes, stretched from the 1880's to the 1930's and involved ideological consolidation and decline. By this point, Ultra-Orthodox exclusivity in the region had been achieved, and no deviation from accepted policy was allowed. However, this period was also plagued by political infighting, controversies over Zionism, and the chaos of the region being split as a result of World War I. Significant leaders in this period included Ashkenazi Rabbi Amram Blum and Hasidic Rabbi Haim Zvi Teitelbaum.

The third period begins with the 1930's and ends with the reestablishment of Maramaros survivors in Israel and the United States by the 1960's. Keren narrates the emerging split between the Ashkenazi and Hasidic leaders on Zionism during this period. Ashkenazi Rabbi Yosef Zvi joined the Zionist *Agudath Israel* political conference and eventually came to lead it in 1932, two years after he left Maramaros for the Holy Land. He was instrumental in representing the interests of the Ultra-Orthodox to the British Mandate, establishing Ultra-Orthodox communities and institutions in the Land before the Holocaust. None of this was acceptable to the Hasidic Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, who rejected Zionism and narrowly escaped Maramaros onboard the Kasztner train in 1944. After attempting to establish himself in the Holy Land—despite his anti-Zionism—he settled in New York, where he built the thriving Satmar community until his death in 1979.

Several themes recur throughout this story, each of which are relevant to today's Ultra-Orthodoxy. The movement's disavowal



of “general education” is of particular interest. Keren explains that many of the movement’s leaders had never been exposed to non-religious education (science, history, mathematics, etc.) or non-Yiddish languages, nor did they see their relevancy to Jewish life. This attitude inculcated an expectation that the Ultra-Orthodox community should be allowed to teach itself without any interference from outside sources of knowledge. Another relevant theme is the politicization of Ultra-Orthodoxy in Maramaros, which became a necessity because the region was absent of Gentile or non-Haredi citizens. The leaders of the movement survived only because of shrewd political calculations and denunciations of opponents, enabling a no-compromise atmosphere to thrive. Finally, the theme of Zionism was a powder keg in Maramaros, with leaders taking hard lines for or against the resettlement of the Holy Land.

Keren’s retelling of the Maramaros legacy is insightful and compelling. It provides a detailed origin story for how the Ultra-Orthodox came to be, filling in gaps that may have been unknown to outsiders who see them as curious holdovers from a lost way of life. In fact, their way of life was never lost, but rather preserved.

While this story is skillfully retold, the reader may come away with a less sympathetic view of the Ultra-Orthodox movement than could have been achieved. This begins with the title. Keren chose to use the term “Extreme Orthodoxy” to describe this movement, rather than the more common “Ultra-Orthodoxy” or the term used by the community itself, “Haredim.” The word “extreme” has connotations of negative moral judgment, unlike the other two, which is unfortunate.

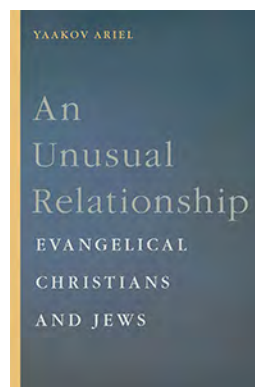
Further unsympathetic judgments are implied through the narration of Ultra-Orthodox ideologies and positions. We are told that the Extreme Orthodox of the era were against



general studies, against foreign languages, against the Neology movement, against modernity, against Zionism, against political compromise, against women's immodesty, against change in men's dress code, and against military service. We are not told *why* the Ultra-Orthodox had these positions, or what they were *for*. Speaking of their ideology in this way conveys the sense of an outsider's perspective, which may be unavoidable in this case, but also an evasion of stepping into the Haredim's ideological shoes to sympathetically explain their vision of the world. Keren's narrative would be helpfully complemented with a parallel account of the internal and self-described social, religious, and political motivations that combined to make the Maramaros legacy so fascinating and enduring.

Yaakov Ariel. *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews*. New York: NYU Press, 2014.

Review by Gregory Hagg



Dr. Yaakov Ariel is an Israeli scholar and professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill whose research in the field of Christian Messianic groups and their relation to Jews and Zionism makes him eminently qualified to address this topic.



The author provides a common-sense evaluation of the relationship between evangelical Christianity (with all its variegated forms of support for Israel) and Judaism (with all its variegated suspicions of Christianity). One is struck with the absolute absence of acrimony, judgmentalism, sarcasm, or animosity in his writing. Such an irenic and generous tone is a pleasant departure other evaluations of the movement.

In Chapters 1-3 Appropriately, Dr. Ariel gives an extensive review of dispensationalism. It is an unusually fair treatment of the movement's history, major proponents, biblical support, and emphasis on the centrality of biblical Israel. He concludes that this approach to prophetic Scriptures has been one of the primary motivating factors in creating the unusual relationship of which he speaks. Ariel quotes influential scholars from early dispensational thinking to explain the position. His breadth and depth of this research is admirable. However, his case could be improved with the inclusion of "progressive dispensationalism" as articulated by Darrell Bock, Craig Blaising, and Robert Saucy, none of whom are mentioned in this regard.

Popular Christian culture in the form of novels, like Hal Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth*, and *The Left Behind Series*, by Tim Lahaye and Jerry Jenkins, figure prominently in Ariel's discussion. Concerning *Left Behind* he states, "Positive attitudes toward Jews and Israel are found in these writings. The attitude toward the Jewish people in this genre is relatively positive," (56).

Teaching on evangelizing the Jews was coupled with promoting Zionism as seen in the work of William Blackstone who wrote *Jesus is Coming*. Ariel retells the wonderful story of Blackstone's evangelistic zeal in having thousands of his book, *Jesus is Coming*, stored in Petra for the Jews who would run there to escape the Antichrist in the tribulation, (79).



Chapters 4-5 focus on the role evangelical Christians played in the restoration of the Land of Israel. Beginning with Lord Shaftsbury, Dr. Ariel traces the trajectory of events that led to Jewish people returning to Israel in the middle 1800's. Concerning Lord Shaftsbury, Ariel observes, "And like a number of evangelical leaders who were concerned with the fate of the Jews, he was involved both in evangelizing the Jews and in trying to restore them to their ancestral homeland," (82). This two-fold purpose is an oft-noted thread in evangelicalism that Ariel reports throughout the book, but it was evangelical Christian fervor surrounding the plight of the Jewish people that paved the way for restoration.

Not only did evangelicals argue for the right of Jewish people to settle in the Land, they joined them. "Attachment to the Holy Land and hopes for the rejuvenation of the country and the people of Israel went hand in hand," (110). There was a mutual symbiosis between evangelicals like Blackstone and Spafford; the former seeing prophecy being fulfilled, and the latter gaining medical aid, protection, and other material blessings.

In Chapters 6-7, Dr. Ariel turns his attention to the efforts of evangelicals to convert the Jewish people. Those holding different views of the future joined the premillennial Christians in the cause of evangelizing the Jews. His detailed account of European, British, and American missions is worth noting. The London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews is given credit for the majority of work with Jewish people prior to the War of Independence, (112).

The work of Leopold Cohn and the American Board of Missions to the Jews (Chosen People Ministries) is highlighted by Dr. Ariel as a prominent force since its inception just before the turn of the century. In all of these descriptions there is no



dispute of their right to evangelize or the methods used. Ariel simply gives a dispassionate account of the activity. In fact he concludes, “Since the 1970s, missions to the Jews have emphasized more emphatically that becoming Christian does not eradicate Jewish cultural or ethnic identity but rather makes Jews truer to their real purpose and character,” (117). He also describes the love-hate relationship of the Jewish people with evangelical mission.

An entire chapter is devoted to the influence of Yiddish literature developed by Jewish believers for the purpose of evangelizing the Jewish people. He states, “Another noted Yiddish missionary journal during the period was *Roe Yisroel* (Shepherd of Israel) . . . published from the 1890s to the 1960s. Like titles of other Yiddish missionary journals, *Roe Yisroel* referred to Jesus,” (129). [A sample page of this publication appears after the article by Dr. Alan Shore, “*Chosen People Ministries and the Fog of War.*”]

Ariel’s treatment of this development is extraordinarily generous. The work of Henry Einspruch, a Polish Jewish believer who was also a Lutheran scholar/missionary whose translation of the New Testament into Yiddish was called *Der Bris Khodoshe*, is appreciated on different levels. He states, “Einspruch’s literary achievements gave him an entry into Yiddish literary circles, which had opened its doors to other converted Jewish writers as well,” (138).

In Chapters 8-10 attention is turned to the enemies of the Jewish people, whether the writers of the conspiracy theories like the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* or the Nazis with their concomitant genocide. Dr. Ariel presents an honest picture of confusion among early evangelicals who endorsed the protocols as legitimate, but who later rejected them as bogus. Since the 1970’s the conspiracy about world domination by the Jews has



faded away in evangelicalism except for some radical minority opinions.

Ariel focuses on the literature which described the evangelical Christian relationship with the Jews of that period such as Corrie ten Boom's *The Hiding Place*, which tells of heroic Christian protection of Jewish people. Among other writings, he highlighted the books by a former Nazi, Maria Anne Hirschmann, who became a Christian, Johanna-Ruth Dobschiner, the Jewish survivor who became a believer and wrote *Selected to Live*, and Vera Schlamm, another survivor who wrote *Pursued*. He discussed these books under the heading, "Jesus Heals Everyone," (157).

Concerning these writings Ariel stated, "They portray the behavior of evangelical Christians throughout the war years as exemplary, a proof that the acceptance of Jesus as a savior guarantees correct moral behavior, courage, and an ability to survive spiritually, if not physically," (165). Rather than ridicule these testimonies as some have done, Dr. Ariel accepts them at face value and sees them for what they purport to be, evidence of genuine faith.

Chapter 11 is a fascinating account of the common interest Orthodox Jews and many evangelical Christians have in rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. Of course, after the 70 C.E. destruction the rabbinic shift to Talmudic centrism is well known, but Dr. Ariel gives an excellent summary of the ongoing importance of the Temple in Jewish liturgy and writings. He concludes, "Such interactions and alliances have even brought the Jews and Christians involved in them to modify their opinions and theological perceptions. The cooperation of Christian and Jewish advocates in plans to rebuild the Temple strikingly diverges from the familiar historical dynamics of Jewish-Christian interactions," (213).



In Chapter 12, the final chapter, Dr. Ariel reveals a thoroughgoing grasp of the history of the modern Messianic Jewish movement, citing forerunners like Joseph Rabinowitz in Russia who attempted to encourage Jewish identity among believers. He gives an account of its rise in a refreshingly positive light, describing how the resurgence of Jewish believers in the 60's took a turn away from mere assimilation into the Gentile dominated church. As Ariel puts it, "Evangelical missions promoted Jewish symbols, such as the Star of David and the menorah, and claimed that accepting the Christian faith did not contradict retaining a Jewish identity but rather completed it. This innovative position involved abandoning the traditional Christian claims that the church had inherited God's promises to Israel," (215).

Dr. Ariel is well acquainted with the stories of early leaders, and he tells those stories with generosity and accuracy. He even notes the differences between those who were more charismatic and/or orthopractic in orientation than others. The inclination on the part of some to distance themselves from the congregational movement is mentioned along with the change of heart that came later to those organizations. For example, he states, "By the 1980s, groups such as the American Board of Missions to the Jews began sponsoring Messianic congregations," (221).

Many other evangelicals joined the cause to encourage Messianic Judaism whether seminaries, publishers, denominations, or other missions. All this was occurring while the liberal wing of the church registered its dismay over the attempt to preach the gospel to Jewish people. The pro-Israel stance of Messianic Judaism has often impressed the Jewish people, but most have rejected the amalgam of Jewish and Christian identity as bizarre to say the least. Ariel mentions the anti-missionary groups like Jews for Judaism and *Yad L'Achim*



in Israel, which have strenuously opposed the movement, (227). Occasionally, the rhetoric erupts in violence.

On the other hand, Dr. Ariel eloquently explains why many Jews respond positively to the message. Several factors may attract them to the faith: theoretical or theological convictions, a sense of community, spirituality, moral boundaries, a conservative world view. In other words, “From their point of view, the newly converted have found in their new religious communities more nurturing environments than in liberal Jewish congregations or in secular, unaffiliated Jewish or non-Jewish life,” (229).

Subculture status is given to the Messianic movement by Dr. Ariel in that it has its own conferences, music, communities, camps, education, scholarship, internet presence, liturgies, vocabulary, and literature. While it was very small for many years, the movement has become larger than either Reconstructionist or Humanistic Judaism, (230).

As an Israeli, Dr. Ariel is eminently qualified to assess the strength of the movement in the Land. Concerning its growth he states, “The community of Messianic Jews in Israel grew considerably from the 1970s on. From no more than a few hundred people in the mid-1960s, it grew to over fifteen thousand by the 2010s,” (236). The growing secular Israeli acceptance continues to the extent that now most Israelis consider Messianic Jews to be one of many new religious communities rather than a serious threat to the society.

The unusual relationship is improving in Israel due in part to nomenclature. “Those joining Messianic congregations have called themselves *maaminim* (believers) and have spoken about “*lehagea laEmuna*” (becoming a believer) and not about their “conversions.” They remain “Yehudim” (Jews) and not “Notzrim” (Christians), even after their conversion,” (237). In other words, they are trying to maintain this two-fold identity



as Jewish followers of Yeshua, the epitome of the unusual relationship.

If there is a glaring omission in this wonderful book, it is the lack of emphasis on the primary motivating factor in evangelical theology. It is not merely an eschatology of premillennial restoration of the Kingdom of Messiah in the Land of Israel. It is a more fervent desire that Jewish and Gentile evangelicals see their Jewish friends and families come into relationship with the One who will occupy the throne, the Son of God, Yeshua the Messiah.

Joseph Hoffman Cohn,
*I Have Fought a Good Fight:
The Story of Jewish Mission
Pioneering in America.* New
York: American Board of
Missions to the Jews, 1953.

Review by Mitch Glaser.



INTRODUCTION:

I Have Fought a Good Fight is an anecdotal history of what began as the Brownsville Mission to the Jews and is now called Chosen People Ministries, but at the time of writing, was known as the American Board of Missions to the Jews (ABMJ). The key to understanding this book is to understand that it was completed within days of the death of the author. Joseph Hoffman Cohn, the son of Rabbi Leopold Cohn, the founder of the American Board



of Missions to the Jews, died suddenly on October 5th, 1953. *I Have Fought a Good Fight* is the story of this now 125-year-old Jewish ministry told through the eyes of one who personally experienced almost 60 years of the organization's history.

Joseph was eulogized in the preface of the book by the Chairman of the Board of the ABMJ, the well-known pastor, W. H. Rogers. He wrote,

Since the above was written, our dearly beloved leader of the mission and the author of these memoirs has gone home to be with his Lord and with his father, the founder of the mission. On October 8th, a beautiful service marked by simplicity and triumph, was held at the Mission, and many eloquent and well merited tributes given in memory of the honored life of the worker. Good and noble men found it extremely difficult to choose suitable words to adequately voice the mingled emotions of their hearts and the loss of their greatly esteemed friend, noble Christian, highly honored servant of God, and a prince among the Israel of God.

Dr. Rogers goes on to say,

This book now represents the last great work of its author on earth, for he had just finished it before going home to heaven. It will be a lasting monument to his memory, into the work he so dearly loved, and for what he gave his talent and strength, (IHFAGF pp.5-9).

The book traces the history of the ABMJ from its founding in 1894 until the death of the author in 1953. It is the last will and testimony of this son of the founder of this great historic mission to the Jewish people, the personal lives of its principle architects, and the intriguing cast of characters who helped shape the Mission and to some extent the growing and viable Protestant Fundamentalism in New York City, throughout the United States and even beyond.

The beauty of the book is that within itself it is a period piece



and a product of its historical context as much as it reflects Joseph's effort to recount the history of the Mission. I appreciate Joseph's honesty and his colorful use of language, which describes and rarely holds back on an opinion or interpersonal conflict. *I Have Fought a Good Fight* reveals as much about Joseph's personality and perspective as it does about the founding and growth of the organization.

THE EARLIEST YEARS

The story of the ABMJ is inextricably intertwined with the personal journey of the author. Joseph, in the most endearing of terms, describes the pilgrimage of his father, Rabbi Leopold Cohn, who left his native Breznia in Hungary to blaze a new path for his family in the United States of America, what so many Jewish immigrants at that time called "the Golden land."

Although Joseph advocated for the verity and motivational purity of his beloved father, I also appreciate the honesty with which he recounts the deeply personal details of the very stormy beginnings of ABMJ. With painstaking and heart wrenching pathos, Joseph describes the never-ending conflicts connected with the founding of the Mission.

According to Joseph the tensions experienced by Leopold Cohn and his team of missionaries to the Jewish people came from a variety of sources. Joseph writes two lengthy chapters defending the innocence of the Jewish man who led his father to belief in Jesus as his Messiah. He presents a rare and very detailed account of how this man, Hermann Warszawiak was slandered and mistreated by the leadership of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian church, the church which sponsored his ministry on the lower East Side. It was because of the sponsorship of this



church that Warszawiak was supported in a ministry to Jewish immigrants to New York City which enabled him to meet Leopold Cohn in 1892. The conflict which erupted at the church, according to Joseph, caused the pastor, Reverend Jon Hall to have a nervous breakdown and end his career.

It seems that Warszawiak was accused of misusing funds and some other charges, which the Cohn's believed to be false. The Cohn's were very sensitive to what they deemed the antisemitic proclivity of many of Fundamentalist Protestants who also often supported their ministries. This was a typical sensitivity of European Jewish immigrants at the time—a basic mistrust of non-Jews. Cohn came from an area of Europe where Jewish people were often persecuted and had their rights restricted by alleged Christians, though not often Protestants.

After Leopold came to faith in Jesus, Warszawiak secured a scholarship for Leopold to study in Scotland, at the New College Edinburgh. Upon Leopold's return to Brooklyn after studying, Leopold established a ministry in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn and affiliated with the North American Baptists. However, as the story unfolds as told by Joseph, some of the Baptist leaders turned against his father. Whereas Leopold continued to have a number of friends among the Baptist Fundamentalists, he took the ministry independent. The fight between Cohn and the Baptists had to do with some large financial gift given to Leopold.

Again, this is the way Joseph understood the situation, and in part this mutual mistrust grew out of a basic alienation between Rabbi Cohn and the Christians who he felt did not really like Jewish people and tried to control his work and funding. It is remarkable that both father and son had a relationship with fellow Christians that was constantly tainted by conflict and mistrust.

Yet, in the midst of these uncomfortable relationships, the



Cohns had some very influential supporters among the Baptists and within the growing fundamentalist movement growing across the United States during these early decades of the 20th century. This movement was also influenced by an early form of dispensational theology, which was almost synonymous with a premillennial eschatology and thereby theologically favorable to the Jewish people. Sometimes, these same fundamentalists were more open to early 20th century conspiracy theories and the growing isolationism within the United States at that time. The anecdotal reporting of Joseph reflects the complex social/political and even racial milieu in which the ABMJ grew as an organization.

The Cohns lived an embattled existence. This included Leopold and Joseph's relationships with local churches which were so often fraught with difficulty. The Cohns never felt they quite accepted as equals because they were Jewish. Joseph wrote page after page describing how he and his father were constantly fighting to get a seat at the table among other Christian leaders in the greater New York area.

The Cohns were often fighting with other missionaries to the Jewish people as well. There was small group of Jewish missionaries to the Jewish people, like them, whom the father mentored and helped in their ministerial development. These men accused Leopold of fraud and immoral behavior.

The conflict grew to such a degree that it landed in the secular Brooklyn courts and were tried as well in the court of public opinion. The Brooklyn Eagle covered these trials at the courthouse between Leopold and the other missionaries to the Jewish people. In the end, Leopold sued these gentlemen for defamation of character, and after settlement the court case was dropped.

There were many battles fought by father and son with



Christians, Jewish believers in Jesus, and, of course, with the non-believing Jewish community who, according to Joseph, constantly sought ways to denigrate the character of his father and the authenticity of his Rabbinic qualifications, ultimately attempting to neutralize the efforts of the ABMJ.

Joseph details these battles in the most excruciating manner in *I Have Fought a Good Fight*. He seemed to feel that he was always on the edge of legitimacy and, like his father, constantly felt that he had to prove himself. These efforts to prove their integrity was endemic to the legacy of both Leopold and Joseph.

GROWTH AND SOPHISTICATION

On the other hand, because of faithful supporters like Francis Huntley of Rochester New York, an early and generous Cohn benefactor and surrogate mother to Joseph, and other friends who were national leaders within the greater fundamentalist movement across United States, the Mission stabilized. It changed its name to the Williamsburg Mission to the Jews and moved into a well-appointed facility in the heart of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. This began a slow climb to greater influence, staffing, funding, and success as a Mission.

A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

Joseph Cohen reflects upon the growth of the Mission in chapter 19 of *I Have Fought a Good Fight*,

the work had now grown to a size far beyond my father's early dreams. The old name, the Williamsburg Mission to the Jews, no longer reflected properly the ever-increasing outreach of the mission. Branches and other cities have begun to be open



up. These brethren have found the Lord within the plaster walls of 27 Throop Avenue (in Williamsburg, Brooklyn) . . . we have come to be noticed as having the finest and most competent staff of Jewish Christian missionaries in all the world.

Joseph was proud of his staff of workers who were primarily Jewish believers in Jesus, and many had come to faith and even grew up within the ABMJ family.

The Holocaust period was especially stressful for the European born Cohns, and the outreach, benevolence, and care extended to Jewish people suffering before, during, and after the Holocaust became perhaps one of the high points of Joseph's life and ministry. Leopold died before it happened in 1937. Joseph made many trips to war torn Europe, which he describes in the book, trying to help Jewish believers in particular escape the terrible and tumultuous times of the Holocaust.

Joseph then goes on to mention many of the workers who have served with Chosen People for many years. One of the major future-oriented steps Joseph took was to purchase a building in Manhattan, as the mission was growing more and more International. He bought a building on E. 54th St. in New York City, which for many reasons did not work out well, and the facility needed to be sold before the Mission occupied the space. Instead, the ABMJ purchase the property at 236 W. 72nd St., New York City for \$65,000 in cash. Cohn sold the E. 54th St. building and earned \$40,000 dollars profit on the sale which meant that the W. 72nd St. building cost only \$25,000.

Joseph writes about the success of the ministry in the new building on the Westside, "but from the very day we opened until the present hour the place has been one beehive of activity. We have made an impression on the Jewish population all about us," (IHFAGF p.311).



Joseph further comments,

And now here we come to the end of the story. The mission had become firmly established, deeply ingrained in the hearts of thousands of the Lord's people from coast-to-coast, though we never sent out any letters begging for money. All the gifts that come to us come because the Lord moved upon the heart of the individual givers to sit down and according to their free will and accord and send their gifts to us.

Joseph concludes, "we lay down our pen; it has not been an easy task to write these memoirs; but now they are written and to God we leave the results."

CONCLUSION

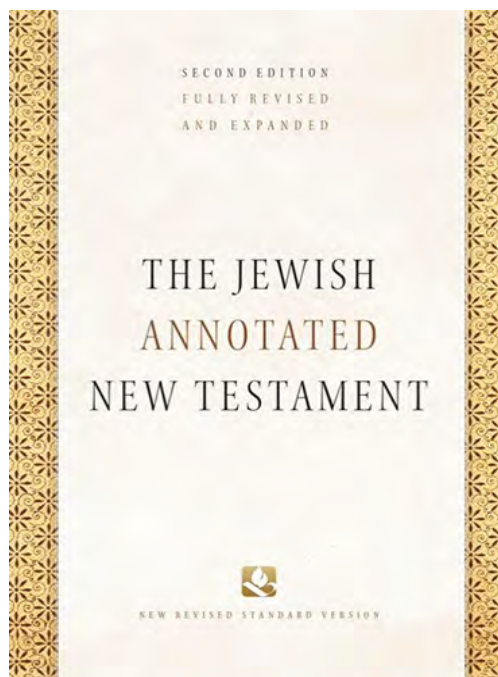
Joseph's life and ministry, as his father's, was steeped in hardship and conflict and reflects one battle after another. Clearly, Joseph believes it was worth it! He summarizes the embattled nature of their mission to the Jewish people when he writes,

As Mr. Irwin Linton, president of our Board of Directors, has often said, 'the American Board . . . thrives on persecution' . . . and never has anything truer been said; for literally our mission has always come out from under the tidal waves of persecution more strongly entrenched in the hearts of its supporters than ever before. From the first day that my father opened a little renovated horse stable in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, even to the present hour, there's hardly been a day and it did not produce its particular harvest of persecution, (IHFAGF p. 200).

Once again, it is clear that the title of the book *I Have Fought a Good Fight*, from the verse in Paul's second letter to his disciple Timothy summarizes the ministry of both Leopold Cohen and his son Joseph who believed the fight was worth it.



I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing, (2 Timothy 4:7-8).



Amy-Jill Levine & Marc Zvi Brettler.
The Jewish Annotated New Testament.
OUP USA, 2nd edition (2017)
pp. 856 pages

Editor's Note:

The following reviews consist of essays included in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler. They represent some of the current thinking among Jewish scholars about the New Testament and the life of Jesus. The concluding review addresses one of Dr. Levine's books, *The Misunderstood Jew*.



“Jewish Movements in the New Testament”
by Daniel R. Schwartz

Review by Richard Flashman

Daniel R. Schwartz (born 1952) is a professor of Jewish History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research focuses on Jewish history in the Second Temple period. The topic of his article is clearly in the area of his expertise.

The author notes the main Jewish sects (Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and the Sicarii/Zealots) and summarizes his thesis on the philosophical tension between them:

“Could, and should being Jewish remain natural, a product of one’s birth – something most appropriate to life in Judea? Or was it, rather, something to be undertaken deliberately – an orientation more appropriate to a Diaspora situation, in which the geographical, social, cultural, and linguistic context do not define an individual as Jewish?” (615)

Schwartz asserts that the Sadducees, Essenes and anti-Roman rebels come out of the priestly/natural, nationalistic school of thought. Being Jewish is the result of one’s birth and ethnicity, the *Sons of Aaron/Priesthood* being a defining expression of this conviction. Being Jewish is something that you *are* (or *are not*), not something you *decide* to be. For example, the so called “proselytes” (Gk. *allogenes*) were not allowed in the inner courts of the Temple. They were seen as a distinct (perhaps inferior) group.

By contrast, Pharisees and Hellenistic Judaism represent the idea of Judaism as a more transcultural religious expression based on the willful decisions of the individual. The Pharisees were committed to the precise understanding and application of the Torah/TaNaKh, while the Sadducees were committed



to the Temple/Sacrificial system and priestly rituals. While the Essenes had major problems with the Sadducees, they too were preoccupied with the priestly aspects of Jewish life and practice.

For the Sadducees and especially the Essenes, birth and location were the central elements of Jewish identity; for the Pharisees and especially the Hellenistic Jews it was more a matter of values and commitments. (618)

But then the author admits that all the various New Testament era Jewish sects had more mixed and nuanced views and practices than previously indicated. For example, Schwartz asserts that the Essenes had more universalistic categories in their belief system (e.g. Sons of Light and Darkness) and it's out of the tension between these universalist and naturalist world views that John the Baptist possibly emerges with a distinctly un-nationalistic prophetic message. (Mt.3:9)

Also, according to Schwartz, the Pharisees were not as dogmatic about the role of *choice* in the creation of Jewish identity as he had led us to believe. *Birth* was not unimportant to Pharisees after all. It should be noted that even John the Baptist thought that it was on their minds, as he warned the Sadducees *and the Pharisees* not to say to themselves "we have Abraham as our Father..." (Mt.3:9).

After following the author's arguments carefully for 90% of the article, he seems to (at least partially) overturn his own premises in the last 10%. The reader could be understandably confused by all this. One is left to wonder how sound the author's original premise was.

And then of course there was Jesus, influenced as he was (according to the author) by the anti-Roman rebels of the Galilee region (Lu.13:1; Acts 5:37) and recognized by Pilate as a rebel leader and handled as such by him (putting him to death). And then there is the evidence of his disciples who despite Jesus social



and ethical teaching were expecting him to crush the Romans and restore the kingdom to Israel (Luke 24:21; Acts 1:6-8).

These and other conclusions seem to ignore the testimony of the New Testament itself, which clearly depicts Jesus as not leading a rebellion (Lu.22:52,53); Pilate clearly understanding that reality (Mk.15:6-14) and his disciples not grasping his mission. (Lu.18:34)

All the above requires handling the New Testament as one would any other credible ancient source. That is to say, with special care not to allow one's presuppositions to govern one's conclusions. However, in this case, the author seems to indicate his bias early on in the article when, despite evidence to the contrary from Josephus and rabbinic literature, he cast doubt on the New Testament depiction of the resurrection dispute between the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Why?

In Schwartz's words, "because Luke's focus (on resurrection) corresponds so well to the interests of Christian readers we must wonder how central the issue was for the sects themselves." (615)

So we, the readers, are left to wonder if the author is following the evidence (Josephus, rabbinic literature and the New Testament) or simply allowing his own bias to guide him to his predetermined conclusions.

**"Logos, a Jewish Word:
John's Prologue as Midrash" by Daniel Boyarin**

Reviewed by Robert Walter

In his short essay, "Logos, a Jewish Word: John's Prologue as Midrash," Daniel Boyarin sets out to demonstrate how, based on Second Temple Jewish sources, the opening five verses of John's Gospel are not a departure from Jewish thought or belief,



but rather serve as an example of early Jewish midrash. He achieves this goal by relying heavily on Philo of Alexandria, the use of *Memra* in the Targumim, and laying out the formula for midrashic interpretation. In doing so, Boyarin shows how John's prologue meets the criteria.

Boyarin begins with the assertion that monotheistic, Second Temple Jewish communities would have been comfortable with the idea of a second, visible God communicating the divine will on occasion. Often this would be designated as the *Logos* (Word) or *Sophia* (Wisdom) in Greek, or *Memra* (Word) in Aramaic. Philo would use *Logos* without qualification, as if it was understood by his audience that the visible and perceivable "Word" of God had the ability to create, reveal, and redeem—attributes and actions reserved for the invisible God. This *Logos* was part of God but also a separate being, "neither uncreated by God, nor created by you, but midway between the two extremes, a surety to both sides" (546).

For Philo, the idea of *Logos*, *Memra*, and *Wisdom* were synthesized and viewed as referring to the same being. Boyarin lists a number of biblical (Prov. 8:22-31) and intertestamental (Sirach 24:1-34) passages that served as the basis of this "second power in heaven," but the clearest evidence of the personification is found in the use of *Memra* in the Aramaic paraphrastic translations of the Old Testament, the Targumim. There we find the Word of God creating (Gen. 1:3), speaking to humans (Gen. 3:8), revealing the Divine Self (Gen. 18:1), punishing the wicked (Gen. 19:24), saving Israel (Ex. 17:21), and redeeming (Deut 32:39). While the later rabbinic community would reject the "heresy of the two powers in heaven," Boyarin points out that "before the rabbis, contemporaneously with them, and even among them, there were many Jews in both Palestine and the Diaspora who held on to a version of monotheistic theology that



could accommodate this divine figure linking heaven and earth” (547.) He also points out that in the first and second century CE, *Memra* was “an actual divine entity functioning as a mediator” (547).

At this point we are introduced to the suggestion that John constructs his prologue with the pieces laid before us. One of the most helpful insights from Boyarin is his brief explanation of midrashic interpretation. A midrash is a homily on a portion of the Torah that uses texts from the Prophets or Writings as the “framework of ideas and language,” (548) to interpret the portion from the Torah. For the early Jewish audience, this would demonstrate the intertextual consistency of entire Tanakh, and purport the idea that the later portions of Scripture are a form “interpretation of the Five Books of Moses” (548). Along these lines, John 1:1-5 would be an example of a midrash on Genesis 1:1 and the creation account, with Proverbs 8:22-31 as the interpretive framework. John used “Word” rather than “Wisdom” because the guiding passage was Genesis 1 where God “said” let there be light. John uses this to demonstrate the identity of Jesus as present at creation, and also introduces themes that focus on his incarnation. Boyarin closes his article by suggesting that it is only at John 1:14 when “the Word became flesh,” that John departs from the teaching of the synagogue, but asserts that nonetheless John is writing within a thoroughly Jewish framework.

Indeed, Boyarin’s short essay provides sufficient evidence for the reader to gain a greater understanding of John’s methods and view of Jesus as the embodiment of God’s Word and Wisdom, and that this was not a foreign idea or concept in the early Jewish world.



“Judaizers, Jewish Christians, and Others”
by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert

Reviewed by Daniel Nessim

In a perceptive and balanced article, Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert surveys the current consensus on key issues that put the early Jesus movement in its religious context. The bulk of the text deals with the ambiguities in labeling the Jewish members of the early Jesus movement.

Beginning with a discussion on the “so-called parting of the ways,” Fonrobert points out the complexity of the process that resulted in “two distinct and separate phenomena.” This process, if it can be called that, did not reach its *terminus ad quem* in the first or second century as previously supposed, but somewhere between the third and eighth centuries, at the end of Late Antiquity. Of particular concern, is how did the later boundaries between Judaism and Christianity form, and where do we find their origin?

In the midst of this boundary formation, various “hybrid” groups variously termed as Jewish Christian, Christian Jewish, minim, or Judaizers are treated. As she points out, none of these terms would have been recognizable by their subjects, most being contrived either for polemical or scholarly purposes.

In fact, there is a certain “messiness” which she speaks of, as the boundaries between Jews and Gentiles in the movement were not always clear. In Antioch, this was epitomized in the conflict between Peter and Paul noted in Gal. 2, which raises the issue of Judaizing – the encouraging of Gentiles to “behave or live as Jews.”

Following the modern consensus, Fonrobert hereafter uses the term “Jewish Christian” for Jewish groups, as it is “more



straight forward.” She notes that this too raises questions, as to whether “Jewish” is referent to ethnic identity, Jewish praxis, or identity recognition by other Jews. Rightly, Fonrobert concludes from this that there is no clear delineation between Christianity and Judaism at this time, with Jewish Christianity bridging the gap, yet atrophying over time. Rather, it is forces of institutionalization both within Judaism and Christianity that calcified the boundaries between the two.

It is possible, however, that Fonrobert does not place early Christianity in its Jewish context firmly enough. This is reflected in the use of the term “Jewish Christian” rather than “Christian Jew.” While the first suggests that Jewishness is secondary to Christian identity, the latter suggests the reverse. This is the thrust of an article by Mark Kinzer on the “Nature of Messianic Judaism,” which puts the same issue in a modern context.

To say that in the early Jesus movement, Jewish disciples considered themselves as primarily Christian and secondarily Jewish is an anachronism. It was precisely the claim that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah that persuaded Jews to believe in him as an expression of their very faith in the God of Israel and the epitome of their eschatological hopes for the salvation of the Jewish people. In the context of Messianic Jewish studies, the very term “Messianic Jewish” rather than “Jewish Messianic” reflects this same perspective in the modern framework. Notably, the term “Christian Judaism” did not originate with Messianic Jews. Rather it is the likes of Marcello del Verme and David Sim who have argued for its use.

Use of the term Christian Judaism would signal that as the boundaries were being negotiated, the beginnings of the process were indeed to be found in places such as Antioch, but Jews in the nascent movement were far from hybrids.



“Midrash and Parables in the New Testament”
by David Stern

Reviewed by Daniel Nessim

As David Stern asserts, midrash touches directly on the “Jewishness” of the New Testament, although his assertion that it does so more than any other topic could be reframed. As he defines it, midrash both refers to the activity of seeking out the meaning of Scripture, and the results of that enquiry. Collections of midrashim began at the end of the third century, thus two centuries after the New Testament.

According to Stern, midrash is generally defined by its use in early rabbinic literature, and reflects a form of enquiry and exposition of the Hebrew Bible common to Jews in the Second Temple period through to the fifth century. It should be no surprise then that early Jewish followers of Jesus employed the same approach to, and assumptions about, Scripture and the use of the form as other Jews. This included the belief that the true significance of a text was “by definition cryptic.” In other words, midrash often involves the seeking out of a deeper, true, meaning underlying the text.

To substantiate this approach, Stern gives two examples of midrashic “fulfillment narrative.” These are Matt 2:15’s explanation that Jesus’ return from Egypt fulfilled Hos 11:1, and the virgin birth narrative of Matt 1:22–23 as fulfillment of Isa 7:14 (based on the LXX translation of the Hebrew ‘almah). These fulfillment narratives are paired by Stern with rabbinic midrash that used the same literary-exegetical form and a similar “hyper-literal” interpretive approach. Thus, in the rabbinic example Lam 2:12 was given an application as being fulfilled in a very specific time and place. The difference between the



Matthean and rabbinic midrash, Stern argues, is that the Christian narratives serve to “authorize their theology and understanding of scripture” whereas the rabbinic fulfillment narratives serve to show that the catastrophes that befell the Jews were “part of a larger divine plan that continues to govern Israel’s destiny.”

This drawing of boundaries in the context of Christian – rabbinic comparison culminates in the Jesus’ telling parable (or mashal) of the wicked tenants in Matt. 21:33–42, which includes the interpretive nimshal from Psalm 118:22–23 “the stone which the builders rejected.” Because of the mostly supersessionist cast this mashal has been given in Christian interpretations, the passage is not only the premier example of a midrashic form in the Gospels, but also of importance to Christian–Jewish relations.

Stern’s relation of the parable to the very similar Sifre Deut. 312 is an excellent example of how Jesus’ parable fits into a common Jewish pattern. Even more so, with the Gospel’s nimshal explaining the parable, it may be “our earliest example of the literary-exegetical form that becomes so prevalent in rabbinic midrash.”

Reflecting on Stern’s quite defensible assertion that this is the only Gospel mashal with a nimshal, echoes of the mashal–nimshal pattern do occur elsewhere. For example, Matt 13, which begins with Jesus’ mashal of the four types of soil is notable as the disciples request clarification on it. The mashal itself reflects a common four-fold pattern found in later rabbinic literature, as with the four types of sons in the Passover haggadah and the four types of people, four types of donors, four types of students, etc. found in Avot 5.13–18. Here Jesus does not directly use a nimshal to explain the mashal but in response to the disciples in Matt 13:14–15, quotes Isaiah 6:9–10 in order to explain specifically why he does not. Here, we may suppose, is a quotation much like a nimshal to explain the absence of a nimshal. The disciples,



holding a justified expectation for some form of clarification of the mashal, as was customary, were given a clarification to explain its absence.

Stern's excellent lesson in Midrash and Parables thus leads the reader to consider the even more pervasively Jewish character of Midrash and Parables found in the New Testament.

“Jewish Responses to Believers in Jesus”
by Claudia Setzer

Reviewed by Richard Flashman

Claudia Setzer is a Professor of Religious Studies at Manhattan College in Riverdale, NY. Dr. Setzer's books and articles focus on social relations between Jews and early Christians, and is thus highly qualified to write on this topic.

The main idea in Dr. Setzer article seems to be that while relations were not perfect, early Jewish believers in Jesus and early Jewish non-believers in Jesus existed together in the same communities and were generally tolerant of each other. (732)

This may seem surprising to many who read the New Testament accounts of the tension and outright persecution of the Jewish believers in Jesus by the Jewish religious establishment in the early days of the Messianic Jewish movement. Beginning in the early days of Jesus ministry, the Gospel's portray a swift and even murderous opposition from the established religious leadership toward Jesus' ministry (Mk. 2:1-3:6), leading to his crucifixion by the Romans at the urging of the Jewish religious leadership (Mk. 15:1-15; etc.).

As Jesus predicted, sometimes violent opposition toward the Messianic movement would continue after his death and



resurrection (Mt.10:17-25; John 15: 18-25; etc.). These instances include Peter and John dragged before the Sanhedrin and flogged (only saved from death by the intervention of Gamaliel - Acts 5:33-40). Then Stephen is martyred, which leads to what the Luke calls “a great persecution” against the Jewish believers in Jerusalem, who in turn flee for their lives to Judea, Samaria and even as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch in Syria (Acts 8:1; 11:19).

This event even propels Saul of Tarsus to begin to destroy the Messianic community, going from house to house, dragging off men and women and putting them into prison (Acts 8:3). After Saul encounters Jesus on the road to Damascus and responds to his calling to carry Jesus’ name to Gentiles and Jews, Luke records that he faced Jewish opposition and hatred almost everywhere there was a Jewish community.

All this does not sound very tolerant. But the scriptural record is not a problem for Setzer’s thesis, for she believes Acts to be, “second century imaginings of church origins, probably a mix of memory and invention.” (730) But this is a decidedly minority view among scholars. Most are persuaded that the “we” statements from the author of Acts (16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16), the abrupt ending of Acts (with no mention of Paul’s release, Nero’s persecution, the Jewish Revolt and the Temple’s destruction), and the overwhelming, almost unanimous external testimony from ancient witnesses date Lukan authorship in the first century.

Setzer also has some unusual interpretations of the New Testament record. For example, she speculates that Saul’s violent persecution of the church (Acts 8:3) was not so much because Jewish religious leaders (including Saul at the time) felt threatened by Jesus and the Messianic movement, but rather as a response to the trouble the Jewish Jesus followers created



for other Jewish community members by hailing as King one executed by Rome, evangelizing Gentiles and alienating them from the gods of their family or state, promoting celibacy, or proclaiming a destabilizing, imminent eschatology. (731) Setzer's efforts to build a case for her alternative interpretations of the New Testament witness are unconvincing. Setzer's concluding argument is one from silence. Tolerant people don't say much about their tolerance. (732)

To be fair, there are examples of Jewish tolerance toward the followers of Jesus embedded in the New Testament (although Setzer views these scenes as not necessarily historical). (732) No doubt, there were traditional Jews who spoke out against injustice (as at the stoning of James), advised benign neglect (like Gamaliel), identified with certain Messianic beliefs (like the Pharisees about the resurrection of the dead) and did not bother to send a report to Rome on Paul (as at the end of Acts). But exceptions do not make a rule. A respectful reading of all the phenomena (and not just the data one likes) will, in this reviewer's opinion, lead the reader to conclude that in the early years of the Jesus movement, there existed significant tension between Messianic Jews and traditional Jewish leadership.

“Jesus in Modern Jewish Thought”
by Susannah Heschel

Reviewed by Alan Shore

Daughter of Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972), one of the twentieth century's most influential Jewish religious thinkers, Susannah Heschel, Eli Black professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College, is a formidable scholar in her own right. In her short essay in *The Annotated Jewish New Testament*, “Jesus



in *Modern Jewish Thought*,” Heschel manages to distill decades of her rigorous scholarship into a coherent, informative overview of her topic. The trajectory she follows is roughly this: after centuries of being forced to endure hateful and wildly inaccurate characterizations of Judaism on the part of Christian bible scholars and theologians, modernity gave Jewish scholars the opportunity to raise a voice with which to respond. The question was, who would be willing to listen? Although their perceptions about where to locate Jesus in the multifarious world of first century Judaism differed wildly from one another, they were united in two important respects. The first is that it is impossible to understand Jesus apart from the context of the Jewish world of which he was a part.

In “Reversing the Gaze,” the introductory chapter of her book, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, Heschel makes creative use of the image of Edouard Manet’s nude portrait, *Olympia* which, when exhibited in Paris in 1865, caused an uproar because rather than being modestly averted, the gaze of the figure appeared to be challenging the observer. Heschel likens this reversal to the work of Abraham Geiger and other scholars of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Science of Judaism) who spoke for a Judaism that had been for centuries interrogated by Christianity without the ability to respond. Now, ironically, enlisting the tools of modern historiography employed by Christian scholars, they brought to bear their knowledge of Jesus’ Jewish world to challenge the narrative of Christian scholarship by articulating a Jewish counter history that restored and emphasized Jesus’ Jewish identity. This not only places the Jew at the table of Western civilization, but in the seat of honor.

A second element that united, what has come to be called, “the Jewish reclamation of Jesus” is that whatever else Jewish scholarship proclaimed him to be (Zionist, mystic, religious



reformer, political revolutionary, et. al.), he was emphatically *not* the Savior that Christianity took him to be. By attempting to wrench apart the “Jesus of history” from the “Jesus of faith,” these early Jewish New Testament scholars were, for their own purposes, making common cause with liberal Christian theologians who had already wandered down that path.

As Heschel goes on to point out, a modern reconsideration of Jesus on the part of Jews was not confined to the ivory tower, singling out poet Uri Zvi Greenberg and Marc Chagall as two important Jewish artists who sought to enlist a non-Christian, Jewish Jesus as a figure of Jewish suffering and martyrdom. She also references author Sholem Asch, whose so-called “Christological trilogy” of novels gave his avid Christian reading audience a Jewish Jesus who was close enough to the Gospel’s Redeemer to make him a best-selling writer while he also infuriated many Jewish critics along the way.

As she continues, Heschel notes later scholars who built upon this earlier work in the 1960s and 70s, such as Schalom ben-Chorin, Pinchas Lapide, David Flusser, and Samuel Sandmel, all of whom in one way or another seek to situate Jesus in the world of Second Temple Judaism. She completes her catalogue with a “Third quest” list that includes Geza Vermes, Jacob Neusner, Paula Fredericksen, and Amy-Jill Levine. One name that is conspicuously absent, in the reviewer’s opinion, is that of Daniel Boyarin. Although *The JANT* was published some years before Boyarin’s notable *The Jewish Gospels*, his earlier works such as *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (1999) and *Border Lines* (2004) make him difficult to ignore. Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig also deserved at least passing mention.

These quibbles aside, Heschel covers a remarkable amount of ground in a very short space and provides ample reason to



examine her own work more closely. She also challenged us to join the complex dance around Jesus that Jewish scholars continue to choreograph – now often in true partnership with their Christian counterparts.

“The Misunderstood Jew:
The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus”
by Amy-Jill Levine

Reviewed by Simon Lissak

The quote “the mark of an educated mind is to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it” is often attributed to Aristotle. One might keep this in mind when reading Amy-Jill Levine’s book, which demonstrates what might be gained by an informed and considered exploration of traditionally unacceptable ideas within the Jewish community. For example, and one of the key ideas in her excellent book, is to show how the Jewishness of Jesus provides an excellent bridge to better Jewish-Christian dialogue.

As Professor of New Testament Studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School and practicing Orthodox Jew, Amy-Jill Levine knows her topic well and writes in an engaging and provocative style that is “easy to read, easy to understand, hard to ignore.”

This book is exciting for those of us who want to better understand how Jewish people see Jesus and to see him in his geographic, cultural and religious context. The surprise for us might be that in the process, our own subconscious presuppositions, false assumptions and religious blind spots may also be exposed.



Informed by the perspective supplied by her knowledgeable Judaism, Dr. Levine writes, “I did not have to read Matthew 2-7 to know that the rescued baby [Jesus] would take a trip to Egypt, cross water in a life changing experience, face temptation in the wilderness, ascend a mountain, and deliver comments on the Law- the pattern was already established in Shemot, the book of Exodus.”

Levine is convinced that interfaith conversations are essential if we are to break down the prejudice and enmity that has kept the church and synagogue apart for millennia. She wants to reframe the dialogue as “two siblings fighting over the parents’ legacy,” promoting well informed, passionate, engagement without fear or compromise. With typical wit and incisiveness, she writes “The day Jews and Christians agree on everything is the day Messiah comes, or comes back!”

The book provides us with numerous examples of how understanding Jesus’ Jewishness brings new life and greater depth to many well-known passages, such as Mark 7:19 and Matthew 13:45. Levine also shows how historic context enriches the meaning of these and many other texts.

We are expertly led through the early history of the Messianic movement and the church as the movement of Jesus followers transitioned from a Jewish sect to Gentile-dominated church. She also presents very painful difficult material showing how the Jewish people were mistreated by the church as it grew more Gentile to the point where Jewish people were generally labelled as “Christ Killers.”

Levine weaves together seven prevalent mis-perceptions of first-century Judaism, drawing the materials seamlessly from the New Testament, Old Testament and Rabbinic sources.

Finally, she takes us through an acrostic solution to promoting genuine and fearless inter-faith conversation. Literally working



from A-Z, she notes, for example, that the “A” standing for avoid making any statement that begins with the phrase “All Jews think...” She then continues down the line, with letters starting phrases encouraging Jews and Christians to read the Scriptures together in an interfaith setting, train ourselves to look at the one another’s tradition with generosity, and seek the good for the sake of friendly engagement and dialogue.

The book issues a clarion call to both Jews and Christians to restore Jesus’ language, society, culture, birthplace and religion while illustrating how interfaith dialogue has a central role to play in this process.

Dr. Levine states her purpose succinctly - “If the church and synagogue both could recognize their connection to Jesus, a Jewish prophet who spoke to [other] Jews, perhaps we’d be in a better place for understanding.”

Appendix

The Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies



JMJS/CHARLES L. FEINBERG CENTER



Charles L. Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies

The *Charles L. Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies* in Brooklyn, New York is a partnership between Chosen People Ministries and Biola University's Talbot School of Theology. Several years ago, the leadership of Chosen People Ministries recognized a tremendous need within Messianic Judaism and Jewish missions for more seminary-trained leadership. Through this partnership with Biola University's Talbot School of Theology we were able to develop this cutting-edge new Master of Divinity program with an emphasis on Messianic Jewish Studies. After receiving accreditation through the New York Board of Regents and the Association of Theological Schools, we began classes in summer of 2007.

The Feinberg Center program contains 98 credits and awards a Master of Divinity degree in Messianic Jewish Studies from Talbot School of Theology. Our program is still the only one of its kind in the world; it offers unique coursework to prepare leaders for Jewish ministry as missionaries, Messianic congregational leaders, non-profit leaders, and educators. Three key components



of the program make it unique: the coursework, field ministry, and cost.

COURSEWORK

We have designed the curriculum for the Feinberg Center to incorporate both a typical Jewish studies program and an evangelical seminary program, while also catering each specific class towards the current needs of Jewish ministry. Each of our Jewish studies courses, like *Rabbinic Literature and Theology*, *Theology of the Siddur* (Jewish prayer book), and *Jewish History*, contains practical elements on how a better understanding of Jewish tradition can enhance our work in Jewish missions. Additionally, each of the traditional evangelical seminary courses, like *Pastoral Studies*, *Church History*, and *Apologetics*, provides a unique Jewish perspective for the context of Jewish ministry. Our professors are all excellent scholars with a long history of personal experience in Jewish ministry.

FIELD MINISTRY

We placed the Feinberg Center in New York City because it is the center of Jewish life in America. With close to two million Jewish people, the city provides endless possibilities for students to immerse themselves in Jewish culture and ministry while completing their coursework. In fact, each semester we organize various Jewish-focused field ministry programs to help each student put what they have learned in the classroom into practice.

We have designed the different field ministry opportunities to expose our students to several aspects of Jewish ministry over the course of their studies. These aspects include direct

evangelism, discipleship, leading Bible studies, Messianic congregation leadership, and non-profit administrative training. We also provide other unique projects each semester, such as our evangelistic Jewish holiday celebrations, interfaith benevolence projects, debates, and café-style youth outreaches. These numerous field ministry programs take students into several areas of New York City, including Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn.

COST

We established the Feinberg Center to provide our students an affordable education and give them the opportunity to graduate debt-free, enabling them to enter vocational ministry without the tremendous burden of student loans. To achieve this affordability, we offer a wide range of scholarships and subsidies to offset student costs. Not only is our tuition a quarter of what it would normally cost, we also provide student housing for single students and offer students with families a housing scholarship to make their rent affordable. The generous and regular support from our ministry partners makes an affordable education possible.

THE CHARLES L. FEINBERG MESSIANIC JEWISH CENTER – HISTORY, PURCHASE, AND PROGRAMS

While we have hosted classes for the Feinberg Center in our Manhattan administrative offices since it launched in the summer of 2007, we knew we would eventually need to find a larger and more suitable space to house the seminary. In 2010, as God continued to bless and develop the seminary, we began a search for the right facility to house the program—and the Lord miraculously provided the perfect location.



Brooklyn is home to more than 750,000 Jewish people, making this borough of New York City one of the highest concentrations of Jewish people in the United States. We discovered a building in Brooklyn that had previously functioned as a Jewish funeral home. This rare, 14,000 square foot facility, which provides three floors, a basement and a sanctuary on the first floor, is located in the heart of an Orthodox Jewish neighborhood. We thought it seemed too good to be true.

This facility gives us significant opportunities to expand our ministries. It sits right on the borders of Orthodox Jewish, secular Jewish, and Israeli communities. It is within an even larger neighborhood of Russian Jewish immigrants. We believe this facility provides unprecedented opportunities for evangelism, as there is no other Jewish ministry in the area. God has clearly placed us at the center of this key location.

After extensive renovation, the building floors allow the following functionality:

1st Floor – Sanctuary for Messianic Congregations, reception area, kitchen, and multi- purpose ministry room

2nd Floor – Three classrooms, study areas with computers, professor and missionary offices

3rd Floor – Separated living quarters for students, guest bedroom for visiting professors and missionaries

Basement – The 12,000-volume Feinberg Center Library

In addition to housing the seminary, the facility gives us increased ministry space. The sanctuary has allowed us to plant a new English-speaking Messianic congregation, along with hosting our current Russian-speaking congregation. The kitchen and multipurpose room has allowed us to host special meals and event, coupled with other benevolence work, like ESL classes

and addiction care ministries. As the only Jewish missions organization in the heart of this strategic area, we pray the Lord will continue to use this space for His glory.



The Passover is a picture of God's love and salvation.

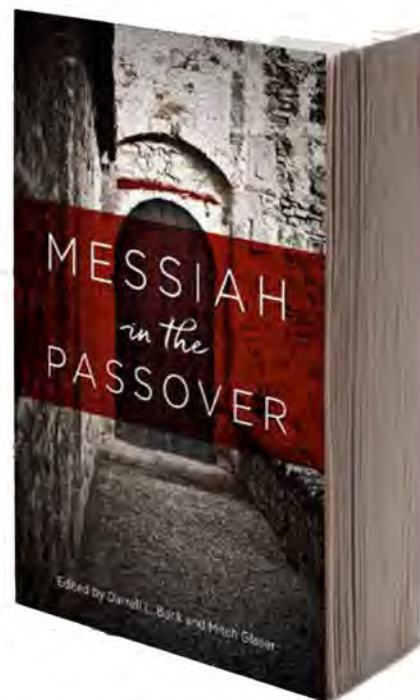
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© *Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies*
Charles L. Feinberg Center, New York
ISSN : ISSN 2379-836X
2020

www.journalofmessianicjewishstudies.com