

Some flashlights of the work done by Jewish mission organizations in Denmark

By Bodil F. Skjøtt

The words in the title here “in Denmark” will refer mainly to the fact that the three organizations mentioned in this report are based in Denmark. However, their main work is done in Israel and not all of them see themselves as “Jewish mission” organizations in the traditional sense. Only one, the Danish Israel Mission, is a member of LCJE. It also happens to be the one I am most familiar with and it will therefore get the main attention in the report.

Three organizations

1) Dansk jødisk venskab is - as the name also reflects – a “friendship” organization that sees as its purpose to create a dialog between Jews and Christians with the ultimate goal to bring blessing and salvation to all people based on” an understanding of the Old and the New Testament where Israel and the Messiahship of Jesus are closely linked together”.

Dansk-jødisk venskab supports different social project in the state of Israel with financial help and through volunteers who come to work in the country. Its main support base is found among free churches in Denmark. The establishment of the organization is closely linked to establishment of the state of Israel.

2) The establishment of the organization “Ordet and Israel” is also closely linked to establishment of the state of Israel, but its main support base is found within the Lutheran church. In Denmark it seeks to promote a correct biblical teaching on Israel and the continued role of the Jewish people within God’s plan of salvation and what the prophetic word teaches. In Israel the organization takes an interest in and gives support to the Messianic movement in different ways as well as other social projects such as a soup kitchen. It runs a small bible school in Israel for young Danish people and seeks to introduce them to Israel, the land and the people.

3) The Danish Israel Mission (DIM) has just celebrated its 125 years anniversary and has a history very similar to other traditional Jewish mission organizations in Europe. It has had work in Denmark among the Jewish population here mainly back in the early part of the 20 century when many Jews came from Easter Europe/Russia and settled in Denmark. It has had work in Easter Europe before the 2 WW mainly in Poland and often in cooperation with other Jewish missions. After the war DIM also work in Algeria and in France. Today the main part of the work is in Israel – as is true for so many other organizations with a similar history. What is done outside Israel is mainly done by the youth work of DIM and in connection with campaigns organized by JFJ.

There are five areas of work which DIM supports – either financial and/or through involvement of staff. Although they are different they all support the profile DIM has as a Jewish *Mission* organization

- I. Evangelism – by giving financial support to the Bible Society and the Student work
- II. Social/diaconal work – through financial support to the Ebenezer Home
- III. Education and theological training – through the Caspari Center
- IV. Congregation work – through the Immanuel Church in Tel Aviv

V. Reconciliation – though the work of Musalaha.

Apart from this a major part of the work in Israel is done through the work of the Danish church/congregation in Jerusalem. It provides spiritual and social support for the Danish volunteers sent mainly through the youth organization and it gives as a platform from which DIM can stay informed about what is happening in the country – mainly within the Messianic movement which is a primary focus for the organization and its presence in the country. That the Danish pastor is also a staff worker at the Caspari Center is perceived as a positive development strengthening the involvement within the local messianic movement, which the DIM also has together with others at the Immanuel Church in Tel Aviv.

Where would we want to go from here?

We have no desire to stop our involvement in any of the areas in which we are engaged. They all seem relevant and meaningful to us. We wish we could do more in all of them and take more responsibility both financially and through personal involvement. So far this has not been an option for us because the resources haven't been there. Some could argue that the resources haven't been there because we have lacked the courage to step out in faith and following a calling trusting that God would provide if only we were faithful and obedient. Maybe – but that has not been our tradition.

But what if? Where would we then get involved?

To me the most obvious challenge to us as a Jewish mission organization with roots and a network in Europe would be to look at the Jewish scene in Europe and ask where the unfinished job is. Here France sticks out with its Jewish population of about 750.000 and only a very small evangelical community trying to reach out to them with the gospel.

I would therefore very much welcome a discussion in this forum on how we - using LCJE as our platform - can network together to challenge Jewish people in France to consider the Gospel and the Messiahship of Jesus and how we best can support the efforts already made by our evangelical brothers and sisters in France.