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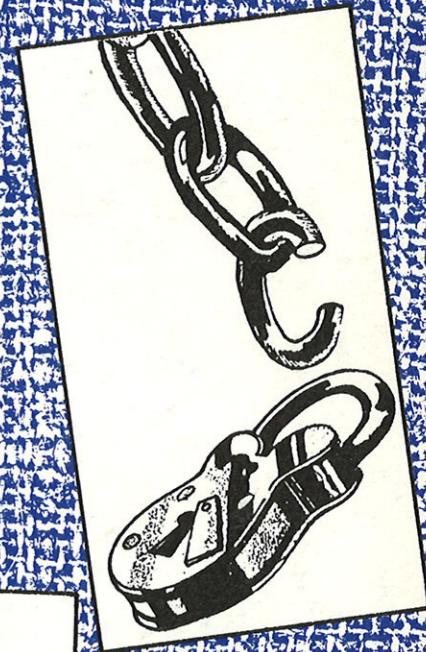
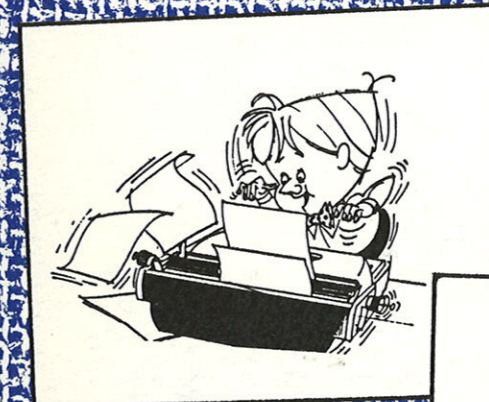
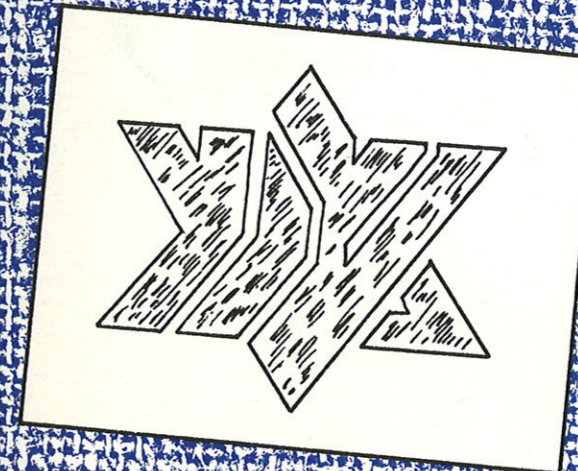
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# LAUSANNE CONSULTATION ON JEWISH EVANGELISM BULLETIN

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JUNE 1986



  
Let  
the Earth hear  
His Voice

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# from the STEERING COMMITTEE



The Steering Committee of the LCJE met in Ware, England on February 15th and 16th 1986. The main topics of discussion included a proposed budget for the next three-year period and plans and preparations for the triennial conference to be held in August 1986.

## Review

David Harley gave a review of developments in LCJE during the past year, noting that the year had been dominated by the search for an appropriate site for the 1986 Consultation. He expressed gratitude to the LCJE Chapter in Israel for their hard work in attempting to find a site in Israel, recognising the profound sense of disappointment among Israeli members that it has not proved possible to hold the Consultation there on this occasion.

He summarised the events of the Dallas meeting of the North American Chapter, and mentioned also his own trip to the USA in the summer of 1985, in which he met with various individuals and agencies on behalf of LCJE. He stated that he would be returning to the USA in April 1986 to attend the Chicago meeting of the North American Chapter (see page 4) and also to give a series of lectures on 'The Christian Church and the Jewish People' at Calvin Theological Seminary.

Elizabeth Hill presented a financial statement, which will be updated and audited in time for the triennial meeting at the Consultation. She said that we still had sufficient funds to cover the cost of office expenses until August and of producing and mailing the next two issues of the Bulletin, after the estimated travel and accommodation costs for the Steering Committee meeting had been taken into account. It was pointed out the Consultation itself is self-financing, with no funds from subscriptions or donations needing to be diverted.

## Dues Structure

David Harley noted that questions had been raised concerning the present dues structure. It was obvious that the present individual subscription was woefully inadequate, as it did not even cover the costs of printing and mailing the Bulletin! Enquiries had been made of IFMA and EFMA in North America concerning their dues structure, and of EMA in Britain. After considerable discussion, the Steering Committee agreed to recommend to the triennial meeting that a pattern of annual subscriptions should be adopted, beginning from August 1986, as follows:

Individual members	\$25 (per annum)
Agencies with an income of less than \$100,000 per annum and Messianic congregations	\$200
Agencies with an income of less than \$500,000 per annum	\$400
Agencies with an income of less than \$1m per annum	\$600
Agencies with an income of more than \$1m per annum	\$800 per \$1m

It was suggested that agencies in this last category might wish to give \$1000 per \$1m, but that \$800 should be adopted as a minimum subscription.

## 'Lines of Procedure'

David Harley pointed out that, while the purposes, basis of membership and dues structure of LCJE have been circulated in written form, lines of procedure concerning the duties and appointment of office-holders and the voting rights of members had never been formalised. The Steering Committee recognised that such lines of procedure needed to be drawn up before the Consultation in August, laying down in writing what already existed informally. The Steering Committee agreed that voting rights of members should be determined in the lines of procedure, which would be presented at the Consultation as a document approved by the Steering Committee. It was recognised that it was technically impossible to ask the triennial meeting to vote on its own voting rights without the formal existence of such voting rights in order to vote!

The Steering Committee recognised that it would be inequitable to adopt a system whereby each member or member organisation received one vote, since individual members (who contribute 5% of the total funding) would thus receive 76% of the votes in the present constituency. It was felt that, in line with the method for determining the dues structure, the dollar size of organisations should be taken into account. The Steering Committee agreed that voting rights should be written into the lines of procedure as follows:

Individual members	1 vote
Agencies with an income of less than \$100,000 per annum and Messianic congregations	2 votes
Agencies with an income of less than \$500,000 per annum	3 votes
Agencies with an income of less than \$1m per annum	4 votes
Agencies with an income of more than \$1m per annum	5 votes, with 1 extra vote for each succeeding \$1m

## Third International Consultation

David Harley reported that plans were now proceeding smoothly for the Consultation. Out of a possible 147 delegates, 104 had so far registered from all parts of the world. (*Ed. The remaining places were all filled by the end of April.*)

Detailed reports on the Consultation will appear in the next issue of the Bulletin.



## Day of Prayer for World Evangelization

Pentecost Sunday  
18 May 1986



Theme:  
Hear the Voice of the Lord

Many thousands of Christians met together around the world on Pentecost Sunday to PRAY in response to the call of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation (the parent body of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism).

We in the fellowship of LCJE recall that at Shavuot nearly two thousand years ago "there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5). As the believers met to pray, they were empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak "to each one.. in his own language". A harvest was reaped that Shavuot, of a bounty probably beyond the wildest expectations of the believers!

When Jesus ascended into heaven, he left behind him a PRAYER MEETING! He told his disciples to tarry, that they might be his witnesses after the Holy Spirit came upon them.

Reproduced below is an article published by LCWE in conjunction with the call to prayer at Pentecost this year.

### SEEKING GOD'S FACE FOR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AND WORLD EVANGELISATION

#### What is a 'concert of prayer'?

Two stories will help answer this question. In January 1981, three people of prayer called for concerts of prayer involving Christians in the city of Madison (USA). Out of a population of two hundred thousand, six people showed up! But the number continues to grow. Why do they come? They're convinced that the church in Madison and world-wide is on the verge of another awakening. They want to help prepare the way for it in united prayer. On the last Thursday evening of each month, a city-wide group of lay people, students, missionaries and pastors gather for this purpose.

What they experience recalls the 'concert of prayer' which began over a hundred years earlier. A praying businessman, Jeremiah Lamphier, started a noontime prayer meeting in 1857 in the Dutch Reformed Church consistory in Manhattan, New York. In response to his advertisement, only six people out of a population of one million showed up. But the following week there were fourteen and then twenty-three. In a few months, there were concerts of prayer in hundreds of cities. This

was the beginning of a prayer movement that became the sustaining foundation for the Great Awakening of the mid-1800s. It resulted not only in revival for the church locally, but a world-wide missionary advance that lasted decades.

Thus we see that the term 'concert of prayer' is historic and generic. It helps describe Christians united (in concert) on a regular basis to seek God's Kingdom. Extraordinary, united prayer is not determined so much by how long one prays or how often, but rather than Christians *do pray*, that they pray for those things *most* on God's heart and that they do so in Jesus' name *together* - 'in concert'.

The primary focus of concerts has historically been on two major agendas: Christians prayed for Messiah's *fullness* to be revealed in his church to empower them to accomplish the task that was before them. They also prayed for the *fulfilment* of his saving purposes among the nations through an awakened, committed church. These are the two concerns toward which the current world-wide prayer movement is looking: fullness (awakening in the church) and fulfilment (evangelisation among the nations).

#### What is 'spiritual awakening'?

Spiritual awakening is God reintroducing us to Jesus Christ as Lord of the church, the nations and our lives. Why do many believe that we can expect another such awakening in our generation?

First, it is the *divine pattern* in Scripture and history. God revives succeeding generations to carry his saving purposes forward. If God has done it before, repeatedly, he is surely willing to do it again in our day. Should we expect anything less?

Second, there are signs of *dramatic preparations* for such revival: for example, the world level consultations to develop strategies for global outreach; the rapid increase in missionaries from the Third World (over 15,000); the upswing of interest in world evangelisation among students; and a growing movement of prayer in the body of Messiah worldwide.

Finally, we face the *desperate necessity* for full-scale awakening: the world rests on the brink of moral bankruptcy, regional famines and nuclear holocaust. Moreover, there are still two and a half billion people who have no viable Christian witness within their own language and culture. We stand helpless before this task unless God's love and power are poured out through Christ in unprecedented ways. We need spiritual awakening.

#### How does this relate to world evangelisation?

Billions still wait to hear the gospel. Most have no-one like them near them to tell them. In addition, the immensity, complexity and urgency of the challenge can create in many of us a paralysis of faith.

But in spiritual awakening, God changes this. He brings us face to face with the Lordship of Christ. The church discovers in new ways that he is the Lord of history, and that he is able to overcome all barriers to his kingdom's advance. We view him as Lord of his church and Lord through his church, able to empower us and work through us to fulfil his global cause. And we recognise how fully he is Lord of our own lives, able to work through our lives, without limits, to touch the very ends of the earth.

This discovery brings a decisive devotion to Jesus as Lord that releases us from paralysis of faith and forms the spiritual dynamic behind world evangelisation. We need to develop thousands and thousands of prayer cells around the world that will commit themselves whole-heartedly to prayer until the victory is won.

# The Messianic Jewish Congregation

## A UMJC Perspective

by Richard C. Nichol

Pastor, Ruach Israel Congregation

(This paper was given at the Dallas meeting of the North American members of LCJE in April 1985).

### PROFILE: The UMJC

The Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations traces its roots to initial planning in 1976 and its formal establishment in July 1979 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Membership has grown from eighteen to forty-four associate and full-member congregations in the United States and Canada. Membership is open to those assemblies which share a vision for a congregational movement among those who name Yeshua (Jesus) as Lord. These must also have ten or more Jewish families represented in their memberships, have Friday or Saturday worship services and stand for the verities of the Biblical faith - the Messiahship of Yeshua, his virgin birth, his divine and fully human natures, his resurrection, forgiveness of sins on the basis of his atonement (as opposed to a system of 'works-righteousness') and his coming again.

The UMJC is governed by its elected Executive Board along with non-elected committee chairmen comprising the Steering Committee. Each full-member congregation receives two delegate votes at annual business meetings so as to prevent larger congregations from amassing inordinate power.

Theologically broad-based, the UMJC has no power to legislate doctrine or practice beyond its Statement of Faith. Many member congregations are charismatic in orientation. Others are not. Some leaders hold a pretribulation rapture viewpoint, others mid or post. Some member congregations enjoy a more Orthodox Jewish expression. Others are more moderate. This broad-based approach has the great advantage of developing mutual respect and healthy cross-fertilisation of ideas, thus lessening the potential for an intellectually stifling atmosphere. "Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another!"

The UMJC is leadership-oriented: that is to say, annual conferences, local conferences, pastors' fellowships and the Yeshiva programme are primarily designed to assist congregational leaders to develop themselves and their lay leadership.

Undergirding the philosophy of the UMJC is a basic belief in the value of the local Messianic Jewish congregation as the focal point of Jewish evangelism, discipleship, family nurturing and national/cultural expression. We now turn to the theological and practical rationale for this conviction.

### THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Fundamental to our discussion on the legitimacy of Messianic Jewish congregations is the weight or emphasis placed on the lifestyle of the earliest followers of Yeshua as it shapes our understanding of key Biblical teaching in these areas. Opponents of a UMJC perspective elevate a particular understanding of passages in the Pauline epistles and Hebrews while downplaying the obvious "Messianic Jewish" lifestyle of Paul, Peter, James and the thousands of Jewish believers in Jerusalem. The Book of Acts is viewed as strictly historical, with little value as determining doctrine or normative practice. Advocates of the UMJC position feel differently. There can be little doubt that the period covered in the Acts is in some ways transitional. For example, the writing of Scripture ended with the death of the original twelve apostles. However, Acts provides a context

for understanding the epistles without which we may end up with distorted exegesis. This point cannot be overstressed. In order to understand another human being, we must consider what he says and what he does. Both taken together inform us of his true thoughts and intents. God himself invites us to understand what he is like by speaking to us of his justice and mercy and by acting in history - the Exodus, the Dispersion, the resurrection of Yeshua, and so forth. Therefore, Messianic Jews place a higher premium on the didactic nature of the Book of Acts as it helps shape our understanding of where the apostles are "coming from" in their epistles.

As W.D. Davies notes in *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, "We begin with the significant fact that throughout his life, Paul was a practising Jew". Many passages may be cited proving Davies' point, but two are particularly striking.

Acts 21:17ff describes Paul's reception by the elders of the Messianic Jewish community in Jerusalem. It was a happy reunion flawed only by James' mention of a potentially dangerous rumour: "They [the believers] have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to the customs". The resolution to the problem involved a public show of Torah observance in the Temple. This would squelch the rumour before any dissension or strife could develop, the end being that "everybody will know there is no truth to these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law". James, the brother of the Messiah and, as history tells us, a pious Jew, says to Paul, "You are an observant Jew" - a powerful testimony to his lifestyle as noted by a man who was in a position to judge.

Acts 18:18 is most interesting because public testimony cannot be invoked as a rationale for Paul's action: "And Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchreae he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow". No reason is given why the apostle of grace - God's premier spokesman for the New Covenant truth - would have taken a Nazirite vow. Perhaps it was in response to the stresses of the second missionary journey: "Lord, help me and I will dedicate myself especially to your service". We don't know. But one implication is clear: no understanding of his epistles regarding the Jews and Jewish lifestyle is valid if it makes Paul a hypocrite. Whatever he meant by "being under the law" or "the letter kills but the spirit gives life" must agree with the pattern of his own life. This is not to say that the status of the Old Covenant has not changed. Hebrews 8 and 9 makes it abundantly clear that Moses provided us with helpful pictures - shadows of fuller truth. But Messianic Jews argue that a distinct Jewish lifestyle employing even some of the shadows to highlight the atoning work of Yeshua can be rich, and thoroughly Biblical. If it was good enough for Paul, it's good enough for us!

Again, following our principle that people are best understood when we consider what they do as well as what they say or write, we may significantly penetrate the self-concept of the apostles. Put simply, they saw themselves as possessing a dual identity. Peter, James, Paul and the others saw themselves as leaders of remnant Israel, living within the historical flow of their covenanted nation and as members of the larger Body of Messiah. They remained true to both identities. Passages such as 1 Corinthians 10:32 ("Give no offence either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God"), which some take as God's final word on the relationship of Jewish believers to the larger community, must be considered along with other passages which reflect how their teaching operated in their own lives. Larry Rich comments:

"During Paul's continuing ministry he observed the holidays (Acts 20:6,16) and did not hesitate to have Timothy circumcised in deference to his own countrymen. Following his third missionary journey (the epistle to the Romans having already been written) he returned to Jerusalem and fulfilled a requirement of the Mosaic law as a sign of solidarity with his fellow Jews (21:17-26). In the late stages of his ministry, when most of his key epistles were already in circulation, he continued to identify himself as a Jew who believed in the Messiah rather than as a convert to something separate and distinct. He declared, "I am a Jew" (22:3) and "I am a Pharisee" (23:6). He had gone up to Jerusalem for the purpose, he stated, of worshipping in the temple (24:12) and indicated that he understood his faith in a Jewish perspective (24:14). He continued to observe

Jewish practices (24:17-18). Later, he was imprisoned for the sake of the hope of Israel (28:20), and, even as the Book of Acts ends, the Messianic faith is widely known as a part of Judaism." [1].

The last words of the risen Yeshua to his disciples speak volumes: "And so, when they had come together, they were asking him, saying, 'Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by his own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.'" (Acts 1:6-8). Can there be any doubt that their question was born of a thoroughly Jewish self-concept? Israel was the Lord's! They were of Israel - a remnant chosen by grace, yes - but they were Jews, dreaming the dreams, hoping the hopes and in their minds, sharing in a Jewish future. 'Lord, is now the time when ours will finally take its place of honour among all the nations? Will you, Lord, now defeat the godless Romans and set up your throne?' The Messiah's answer is instructive. He did not challenge their Jewish perspective but merely reminded them that the timing of Israel's future glory is God's business. Meanwhile, there was work to be done. Israel's remnant would fulfil the nation's commission - the whole world was to learn about the true God before Messiah would return and rule from Jerusalem.

If we become willing to put on our tunics and sandals and step into the world of the New Testament writers and walk with them in the Temple courts, sit with them in the circle of the Rabbis and hear the Sh'ma from their lips, the allegedly anti-law, anti-Jewish passages in the New Testament take on new colourations. This is because our exegesis is informed not only by statements in the epistles but also by the deeds of their writers captured without error on the pages of Acts.

Some have tried to reconcile their difficulty with Paul's blatant Jewishness by claiming that the apostle was "in the flesh" not living in accordance with the pattern of his own theology. We find this explanation utterly untenable because it must be remembered that the issue here is not an occasional slip into outdated practices, but the entire pattern of the man's life. James' comment in Acts 21:24 ("but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the law") clearly carries this sense. Paul says of himself in Acts 23:6, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"

These considerations must be taken along with the apostle's teaching (in the epistles) regarding the status of the law of Moses, his freedom in Messiah, the spiritual equality of Gentile believers, etc. Otherwise, distorted perspectives may emerge. Some of the specifics will be discussed later in the paper. For the moment, one major point must be made: when Messianic Jewish congregations seek to express faith in Yeshua within a Jewish framework, the good examples of the apostles light our paths.

Now that we have established the basic direction of our Messianic Jewish perspective, we may make necessary assurances, qualifications and provisos. First and foremost, the New Testament is clear that all believers' primary identity is with Messiah in his worldwide assembly. Yes, we are remnant Israel. Yes, we wish to live Jewish lives, but not at the expense of downplaying his central place in our lives or unhealthy separation from the Body. There is no inherent contradiction here, just the demands of a dynamic tension which we happily bear.

Nineteen centuries have passed since the days of our apostolic forefathers. Rabbinic Judaism has long since become the dominant religious expression of our people. How shall we view this faith? Evangelical believers often seem too quick to dismiss Rabbinic Judaism as a cold, spiritless, even cult-like religion. Is such a negative view warranted? What of the Rabbis' humanitarian concern? What of the loving zeal for HaShem? What of the ennobling values of family, hard work and study? What of the painstaking care in hand-copying the Scriptures? What of this faith which produced a people able to endure horrors of which we Americans can hardly imagine? What of this religion that produces a people that lifts up and blesses every land in which it finds itself? Rabbinic Judaism without the Messiah, Yeshua, will not grant heaven but it is not an evil cult. Truth here is

to be found between two extremes. Messianic Jews recognise the inadequacies of Rabbinic Judaism but we also note its glories and its strengths. And our borrowing of some of its worship forms, symbols and values is rooted in apostolic example and motivated by a love for our heritage, and our desire to live as a Jewish remnant in what may be the end of this age.

We must now consider the question, is it right for Jewish believers for establish Messianic Jewish congregations? The simple response is, why not!? Believers have normally aligned themselves along doctrinal, socio-economic or ethnic lines. Why should Jews not have this opportunity? Consider some of the advantages of such congregations:

1. Unbelieving Jews visit and often feel comfortable in culturally-familiar territory.
2. Jewish believers can be nurtured in Messiah along the lines of their unique identities. Acts 15 allowed the same for Gentiles.
3. Members are taught to tithe, creating a very cost-effective outreach to the Jewish community.
4. Holiday observance is woven into the fabric of congregation life, providing a rich background for appreciating Yeshua's atoning work.
5. The special issues and problems facing the Jewish believer are among the primary concerns of the Messianic Jewish congregation, whereas these are not (nor should they be) the primary concerns of Baptist or Presbyterian or any other assembly.
6. Outreach-oriented indigenous congregations have great potential for growth, so missiologists tell us.
7. A Messianic Jewish congregation provides the best atmosphere for transmitting our unique perspective and values to the next generation.

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

##### Don't Messianic Jewish congregations cause unhealthy divisions in the Body?

Some opponents of the congregational concept have charged sinful separation from the rest of the Body. As in the case of any individual believer, church or denomination, the Evil One would seek to divide and conquer - to seduce believers into thinking theirs is the only way to God's heart. This problem may be found in many quarters but to no greater degree among Messianic Jewish congregations than any other group. Many UMJC leaders have established significant relationships with local churches in their areas. Pulpits are shared, congregants visit one another's assemblies, holiday services involve many from the churches. Can examples be found in which Messianic Jewish congregations have developed spiritual xenophobia? Of course. But this is true of some Baptist and Methodist and other churches as well. The legitimacy of the congregational movement should not be judged by the errors of some Messianic Jews.

##### Are you not putting yourselves under the law?

Biblically speaking, being "under the law" refers to a system of justification in which a person seeks a right standing in God's sight on the basis of his own righteous acts. Being "under grace" (Romans 6:14) refers to another system in which forgiveness of sins, regeneration and the related spiritual blessings are received as gifts from God because of the finished work of Messiah. Messianic Jews have no illusions in this matter. Whatever holiday-keeping we may do, whatever foods we may avoid, whatever Jewish practices we may enjoy, we know that no-one has ever been or will ever be justified by works. Only faith in the Risen One can provide the salvation all people need. Again, we live Jewish lives - keep features of the law, if you will - because it is our privilege to live as a remnant of Israel.

##### Are you not perverting Jewish symbols, customs and observance by infusing them with New Testament theological significance?

Some practices require no alternation in the theological content. For example, many Messianic Jews honour the Sabbath for the very reasons offered in the Bible: it is a memorial to creation and to the Exodus to be enjoyed every week - it is one of the ten commandments. Holidays such as Yom Kippur require significant reinterpretation because atonement has been provided once for all through Yeshua. Here, the holiday is celebrated as a day of thanksgiving for the forgiveness we enjoy as believers. We fast not for ourselves but for our brothers according to the flesh who are outside Messiah. We stand in the gap for them, interceding on their behalf, asking God to grant t'shuvah to the nation. This is not a perversion of symbols, just a legitimate response to the fullness

of God's revelation in Yeshua. The alternative is to let the holidays and customs go. But this would leave the Church without any significant connections with her Jewish heritage and leave Jewish believers without a rich and colourful context for their faith in Yeshua. The Jewish community should not kvetch. The breadth of understanding among Jews of even the most basic theological ideas is staggering. For example, humanist Jews even deny the existence of God! There should be some room in the sun for Messianic Jews.

**Isn't Messianic terminology like 'Yeshua' and 'Ruach HaKodesh' (Holy Spirit) confusing and divisive?**

One hears occasional stories of Jewish people who embrace 'Yeshua' but almost gag when they learn they just prayed to Jesus! These are few and far between, but they do remind us how this Messianic "shop-talk" has to be clearly defined among our people. On the other hand, we understand that language is a powerful means of communicating values and perspective, and the Hebrew terminology is helpful in this regard. The name 'Yeshua' carries with it an atmosphere which is desirable and right: he was a Jew, we are Jews, and we honour him in a Jewish way.

**The UMJC requires its member congregations to have Friday night or Saturday service. Is this not a sinful throwback to pre-Messiah religion?**

The Sabbath, a wonderful gift to Israel, was kept by early Messianic Jews. This alone could provide adequate rationale for our keeping the day. However, additional reasons may be offered. The Sabbath is one of the ten commandments. It is a creation ordinance, the roots of which run deeper than the specifics of the Mosaic Covenant. And we have no New Testament teaching as to which day believers must meet. If the UMJC wishes for sake of testimony, authenticity or any non-salvific reason to have such a standard, the organisation is perfectly within its rights to do so. Has such observance dulled our appreciation of Messiah's resurrection, theoretically honoured on Sunday in many churches? Not at all. Messianic Jews are as keenly aware of the centrality of the resurrection as are other believers who may enjoy Sunday services. There is a practical advantage to worshipping on Shabbat - the opportunity for Jewish believers to visit churches and vice versa. Meaningful contact in the body is of great importance to a healthy Messianic Jewish congregation.

**Should all Jewish believers be in Messianic Jewish congregations?**

The many advantages of the Messianic Jewish congregation should make it the first choice of Jewish believers. Here we have the opportunity to shine brightly in our communities as Jews who embrace a thoroughly Jewish message - Yeshua as Lord. We have the structures by which parents and children can develop clear identities in a confusing world. We have the privilege of becoming self-supporting, self-propagating communities in which Jewish believers can walk tall, developing our unique expression of Biblical faith. It is difficult to live as part of remnant Israel in most church settings. The dominant evangelical/fundamentalist culture is powerful and all pervasive and churches are not (nor should they be) oriented towards small Jewish constituencies. Thus, the Jewish members must often find it difficult to develop a unique lifestyle. Their children attend the Boys' and Girls' Brigade and later they marry in the church. Their children know grandpa was Jewish, but there remains little vitality to their own sense of Jewish identity. Having said all this, there still may be good reasons for some Jewish believers to make their homes in a sound, Biblically-centred church. Many smaller cities are without Messianic Jewish congregations. And of course a church is to be preferred over a doctrinally aberrant Messianic assembly. And then, some Jews are utterly blase about their heritage. These should not be made to feel guilty for not aligning themselves with a Messianic Jewish congregation.

**Since Jewishness is so important, don't Gentiles in Messianic Jewish congregations feel like second class citizens?**

This need not be the case. In a Biblically balanced congregation, the Gentile members are appreciated as those with a "Jewish heart" - called by God to bless Israel and to share in the rich nourishment of the Jewish olive tree. These are also "joint heirs with the saints", citizens of commonwealth Israel, whom God loves as much as any Jewish believer. Liturgy is presently being developed by the UMJC which honours the non-Jews in our congregations (naming ceremony, for example) and a comprehensive theological outlook is in the works as well.

**A CASE STUDY: CONGREGATION RUACH ISRAEL**

History

Ruach Israel, Boston's Messianic Jewish congregation, had its unpretentious beginning in around 1978 when a small group of Jewish and sympathetic Gentile believers began meeting monthly. The group grew, through a doctrinally unfocussed period, and by 1980 developed a quasi-congregational status. In 1981, Congregation Ruach Israel was formally registered with the state and in August of that year I was called to become its full-time leader. The thirty or so in attendance could not afford a full salary, but I had a number of personal supporters who were and continue to be very helpful. Since August of 1981, we have grown from eight to forty-two members, and from about thirty to eighty in regular attendance. Of our formal membership, seventy per cent are Jewish.

Structure

Congregation Ruach Israel is governed by the pastor along with two other elders (Zakenim) - one Jew and one Gentile, supported by three deacons (Shammashim) and two deaconesses (Shammashot), a cantor and a paid secretary. These are selected by congregational vote and serve indefinitely. Our non-charismatic though lively worship services have a fair amount of formal liturgy counterbalanced by free-flowing song times. Raising of hands to God is common and Israeli folk dancing often spontaneously flows during worship.

Erev Shabbat Service

Our regular order of Friday night service includes singing followed by announcements, lighting of Shabbat candles, Scripture reading, brief prayer, a cantorial from the traditional liturgy or B'rit Chadashah (New Testament), a sermon, another cantorial, a longer song time, a reminder about tithes and offerings, the Mourner's Kaddish, Sh'ma, Kiddush and HaMotzi and the Aaronic benediction. Oneg Shabbat follows immediately after the one and a half hour service.

Ministries of the Congregation

These include:

- Operation Lechem - providing food and clothing for Boston's poor Jewish families.
- Menorah Ministry - our nursing home visitation team.
- Mobile Prayer Unit - providing prayer at homes of congregants in need.
- Messianic Perspective - our radio programme.
- Tape of the Month Club - a subscription cassette programme.
- Foundations Class - our discipleship programme for new believers.
- Weekly Home Groups - Bible Study in different parts of the city.
- Kids Class/Parent Support Group - meets simultaneously on Sunday mornings.
- Beth Shalom - a congregation being planted in Springfield, MA.
- The Sisterhood of the Congregation.

Spiritual Emphasis and Goals

We deeply desire our people to become all they can as those made in the image of God. Not only are they encouraged to grow morally and ethically, but in the areas of talent as well. A major emphasis is the factual evidence for our faith, the concept that Biblical faith is not blind but rooted in the realities of history. Members are encouraged to view their faith as true, not just helpful. We deeply desire our Jewish members to feel and live as Messianic Jews, that is, to develop a commitment to Eretz Israel and our rich cultural heritage. Most important, we seek to instil a desire to reach out to our people and show them the good reasons why they should trust Yeshua. The leadership works hard to avoid a two-class mentality. Gentile members are treated no differently than Jews except for our regular reminders that we all should seek to bring Jewish friends to services, and slight differences in certain liturgy. An atmosphere of warmth and acceptance has developed, embracing all who walk through our doors, Jew or Gentile. We leaders emphasise the taking of personal responsibility as a key element in spiritual growth and emotional well-being, and teach our people to become decision-makers not overly dependant on special revelation from God as a prerequisite to moving on with life. We stand for the enjoyment of life in the will of God. Here the ancient rabbis had a Biblical insight many believers in the Messiah have missed.

Ruach Israel cooperates with other Jewish outreaches in Boston, specifically Jews for Jesus and the ABMJ, and has extensive contact with area churches through pulpit supply, Passover demonstrations, etc. We are committed to helping believers understand the Jewish roots of all our faith in Yeshua and to help them relate spiritually to Jewish friends. Some of our members visit churches regularly and church people are with us each week. So far, the rabbinic community has ignored us but this may change as our outreach becomes more visible.

Ruach Israel is a stable, healthy congregation with all of the normal challenges any congregation faces. Almost every member is a first generation believer, so areas of immaturity are evident but genuineness, honesty and joy are characteristic. God has been good to us and we are profoundly grateful to him.

#### CONCLUSION

We have sought to demonstrate the Biblical justification for Messianic Jewish congregational life. The concept is Biblically justifiable when the Book of Acts is viewed properly - as a context for understanding the epistles.

We have also sought to demonstrate the practicalities of such congregations in terms of potential for outreach, discipleship and lifestyle in general. Standard objections to the the concept were discussed and the real life example of one of many successful congregations was explored.

A final word of exhortation and encouragement is in order. For those who may have had difficult experiences in the past with a Messianic Jewish congregation or leader, our movement is very young. At times, enthusiasm may have got in the way of sound judgement and the discovery of new Biblical truth may have eclipsed equally important 'old' truth. Try not to judge us too harshly! God is at work in our midst and we need your blessing and love.

[1] "Consultation on the Variations of Life and Expression of Jewish Believers", 18-19 November 1977, Response to Paper by Rev. William Currie entitled "The Traditional Approach to Witness to the Jews", by Mr Larry Rich, Moody Bible Institute Dept of Missions.

# personally speaking...

Pastor Richard Wurmbbrand

in conversation with Richard Harvey

RSH How did you come to faith in Jesus as the Messiah?

RW I was 26 and an atheist, and the Nazi years had begun. I encountered a carpenter, a German, who had prayed for many months that God might grant him to bring one Jew to Christ, because Christ himself was Jewish. God always gives better than we ask - this man asked for one Jewish person and he got two! We were the first Jews he met. He was old, poor, sick, and so he said to God, "I can't go around to see the Jews, you must bring a Jew to my village". He gave me a New Testament to read. I really couldn't read it, I could only weep over it as I compared my life with the life of Jesus. He was everything that I wasn't. Then I repented of my sins and I believed in him, and that's how it all started.

RSH What effect did becoming a Christian have on your sense of Jewish identity?

RW I understood what it was to be a Jew for the first time when I became a Christian. Being Jewish was simply something for which I was despised and beaten. I had no attachment to Judaism. I didn't know a word of Hebrew, I wasn't interested in the synagogue and the synagogue wasn't interested in me. When my father died, I went to synagogue twice a day for a year to pray in a language which I didn't understand and which the rabbi wouldn't explain to me. No-one from the synagogue ever visited me. Then, when I became a Christian, I had all the rabbis in my house, saying, "Why did you become a Christian?" I asked, "Where have you been up until now?" Only at that point did I begin to study Hebrew. I read the Talmud, I studied the Kabbalah and all kinds of rabbinical books. I became a Zionist. All these things started for me after I became a Christian.

RSH Did you find it difficult then to find a balance between your Jewish identity and your Christian faith?

RW For me, there is no contradiction. When I was first given the New Testament by the old carpenter, I was amazed to find that everyone in it was part of the Jewish mishpochah! It was all about the descendants of Abraham, the descendants of David. Everything about it seemed so Jewish to me! I read texts like "I have come for the lost sheep of the house of Israel", and "Salvation comes from the Jews". I wondered why I hadn't known all this before. My people perish for lack of knowledge. They don't know how Jewish the Christian faith is. When I enter a church, they sing Jewish songs (the psalms), they read a Jewish book (the Bible). I believe it must be much more difficult for non-Jews!



RSH **How do you express your Jewishness today in terms of your lifestyle?**

RW I don't eat pork. My ancestors were compelled to eat pork and were then killed - so naturally I feel a reluctance in this matter. I honour the Sabbath - I don't find that difficult in the West, because nobody works on the Sabbath! I don't keep any other special practices. I believe the Christian practices are Jewish practices and that's enough for me.

RSH **In what sense do you see the Jewish people as God's "chosen people" today?**

RW I don't have to turn to the Bible to find out that there's something special about the Jewish people. I just look at the world around me. I see the Judaeo-Christian civilisation, bearing the name of a Jew (Jesus Christ), and I see the Marxist "civilisation", bearing the name of another Jew (Karl Marx). I see great scientists who are Jewish. I see Jewish people in the British cabinet, in the American government - their contribution to the world's affairs is out of all proportion to their numbers. There's just something about them, you know.

RSH **Some Christians say that the Jews have a way to God already and don't need salvation through Christ. How would you respond to that?**

RW We have all gone astray. Jewish people commit the same sins as everybody else. It's not a question of having a way TO God, but of finding his way to you.

RSH **Would you like to comment on the Holocaust tragedy and its effect on the Jewish people today?**

RW First of all, a huge part of my own family was killed in the Holocaust. It has caused many questions to be asked. As a result of Auschwitz, the "God is dead" theory appeared. People ask why there should be such terrible suffering for innocents if there is a good God. But "Why suffering?" is the wrong question. Which two even figures add to make 19? What colour is a symphony? Not every question can have answers - we have to ask the right questions. The question should be, "How can I respond to suffering?" Suffering is here: I can respond with love, with goodness, with forgiveness, with a desire to see that a similar situation should not arise again in the future - or I can respond with rebellion. They say, "I can't believe in God any more". I myself have spent years in Rumanian communist jails, but I did not reach that conclusion.

RSH **Do you see any special relationship between the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, and the evangelistic mission of the church to the Jewish people?**

RW The word 'church' is ambiguous in this context. Many churches will not do evangelistic among the Jewish people, because they have a wrong gospel. But for those who really love Christ and believe the Bible, the return of the Jews to Israel is the fulfilment of prophecy... against all the odds. Only God can do great things like this. We are living in a century apart. Many great Jewish people have declared their faith in Jesus. In America, there are thousands of Jewish Christians, won through the outreach of all kinds of churches. But I hope there will be a great return of Jewish people to Israel: the Jews in Israel really need to know who Jesus is. They seek peace now. There is no peace for Jerusalem other than in Jesus.

RSH **How do you feel that Jewish Christians can play a useful role within the churches?**

RW I believe they have an important role to play. My experience is that Christians listen more attentively to a Jewish Christian in their midst. They can be a real "light to the Gentiles". The Jews were given God's revelation in order that they might bring monotheism and the moral laws of God to the whole world. When I go to Africa and Asia, I find everybody talking about the God of Israel, about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Who taught them? The Pharisees, the rabbis? No, it has been through Jesus that the eternal values of Judaism have been brought to all the nations. I know many Christian leaders who are Jewish. They can do great things! The Christian Mission to the Communist World started because people listened to a Jewish Christian.

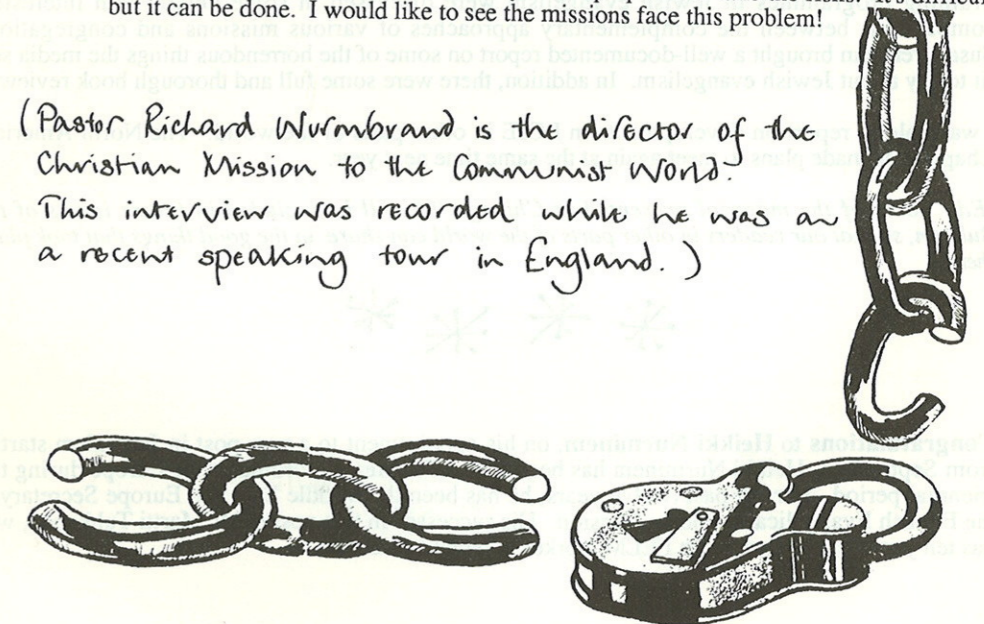
RSH **Do you think Jews should be encouraged to form Messianic congregations as well as belonging to other churches?**

RW You must allow for diversity. Some would be very happy in a Jewish congregation, others wouldn't. Those for whom their Jewish practices are important should be in Messianic fellowships without despising those who feel otherwise.

RSH **Do you have any special concerns within the practical task of Jewish evangelism that you would like to enlarge on briefly?**

RW Yes. In a family of three, do you visit only the two healthy ones and leave the one who is sick? One-third of all the Jews live in the Soviet Union. The two-thirds who live in the free world are the sole concern of the missions to the Jews. I read so many magazines of Jewish missions and they don't even talk about the Jews of Russia. They CAN be reached with the gospel, just as we are able to reach people through the Christian Mission to the Communist World. There ARE missionary works in Russia and elsewhere. You can work there if you are prepared to take the risks. It's difficult but it can be done. I would like to see the missions face this problem!

(Pastor Richard Wurmbbrand is the director of the Christian Mission to the Communist World. This interview was recorded while he was on a recent speaking tour in England.)



# The **BACK** Page

Chicago '86

*David Harley writes:*

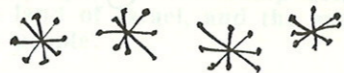
Members of the North American Chapter of LCJE met in Chicago for a two-day conference at the beginning of April, continuing the pattern established at their Dallas conference a year earlier. Last year's numbers were doubled, with leaders of Jewish missions, pastors of Messianic congregations, representatives of denominational groups involved in Jewish evangelism and academics engaged in missiological research and teaching coming together to discuss a variety of relevant topics.

I was encouraged by the frank and friendly nature of all the discussions, particularly when potentially divisive issues were under discussion, such as whether it is obligatory for Jewish believers to keep the Sabbath. I think everyone realised that they shared many common areas of concern, on which it was important to be able to think and plan together. For example, the need to publish the kind of apologetics that would be helpful to young Jewish believers facing criticism and opposition was recognised. Another topic which aroused strong feelings was the matter of burial rights for Jewish believers.

Training programmes in Jewish evangelism were discussed in some detail, with interesting comparisons between the complementary approaches of various missions and congregations. Susan Perlman brought a well-documented report on some of the horrendous things the media sees fit to say about Jewish evangelism. In addition, there were some full and thorough book reviews.

I was able to report on developments in LCJE in other parts of the world. The North American Chapter has made plans to meet again at the same time next year.

*(Ed. Some of the material presented at Chicago '86 will be included in future issues of the Bulletin, so that our readers in other parts of the world can share in the good things that took place there.)*



**Congratulations to Heikki Nurminem**, on his appointment to a new post in Jerusalem starting from September. Heikki Nurminem has been the LCJE Area Co-ordinator for Europe during this triennial period. For the past twelve years, he has been the Middle East and Europe Secretary of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission. His successor in this post is Mr Martti Tuhkanen, who has ten years' experience as an FELM worker in Israel and Oman.