

The Jerusalem Post

Letter to the Editor

Subject: *Jesus for Jews* by Mr. Larry Derfner dated Feb.12, 2009

Dear Sirs,

it was with great interest that we learned about Mr. Derfner's intention to write about Messianic Jews in Israel and then, on Feb 12, to read the article.

For that purpose we turned to him and provided him not only with the meantime "historic" publications and activities by the chairman of the *Institute for Israel's Universal Vocation* all along the past decades, but also informed him about the latest attempt to murder him in his home, an attempt that is still pending a thorough investigation of the Police.

This all started with repeated telephone terror and the cursing of our chairman as "son of a bitch" and the like, as well as "I will come and show you...". Only a few days later fire was set in his apartment. So, should this be only another mere coincidence? Our information (the cell phone number of the caller and his messages left on the voice mail) unequivocally links at least this caller with *Yad L'achim*: after simply recalling him, he identified himself before us by his name "David" and as belonging to this organization.

Cases like this, where human lives are at stake, are referred to by Mr. Derfner only haltingly, when he writes: "*There are at least two haredi "antimissionary" organizations, Yad L'achim (Hand to Brethren) and Lev L'achim (Heart for Brethren), that go to the limits of the law, if not beyond, to expose and harass them.*" If such organizations, harassing and hunting Jews for their mere belief, existed in any democratic country abroad (where we Messianic Jews, by the way, are nevertheless fully committed to defend Israel's cause also in these increasingly difficult times) an outcry of outrage would go around the world! We missed in this article, therefore, a truly investigative journalism that goes also well beyond the merely repeated reporting of a "Jewish-Messianic folklore" that is indeed nothing else than "Christian Evangelicalism" in Jewish disguise, as admitted by one quoted Eitan Kashtan in the article and as Mr. Derfner himself is, therefore, lead to believe quite rightly. The trouble is: that is not yet Messianic Judaism worth its name!

Great Jewish personalities like Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck or Martin Buber were perhaps even closer to the truth than the in the article presented "Messianic Jews". It is, after all, not superficially understood "christening" (literally!) or "baptism" that makes a Messianic Jew – as well as it is not the beard that makes a Prophet –, but the Spirit. And it is this Spirit of Israel's Lord, His Holy Ghost that motivated the Messiah Yeshua from his inception (Isaiah 11,1ff) and that is the root of our reality – and hence even its troubles (ibid. 50,1-3; 54,16; 58; 59). And it is our reality that makes us raise our questions. Questions turning around the presently still clear **absence** of God's blessings for a peaceful and quiet life in our country (Leviticus 26,3-13; Deuteronomy 28,1-14), where we live still surrounded by so many enemies that defy our sovereign existence in this region. Thus, today's still rather baneful reality reminds us more of the ancient times of our Judges (Judges 2,10-15) than of a glorious atrium of Messianic advent (*atchalta de-ge'ulah*) – only that all the "Judges" in our epoch turn out to be vain self-complacent, and nowadays even more often also corrupt, small and provincial politicians without any fruitful vision!

Above mentioned Buber, for instance, could not compose his thoughts about Yeshua and had to confess that "*from my youth onwards I have found in Jesus my great brother*" leading him further to even point out that the fact "*that Christianity has regarded and does regard him as God and Savior has always appeared to me a fact of the highest importance which, for his sake and my own, I must endeavor to understand...*" In contemporary – democratic! – Israel it seems to be already impossible to openly express thoughts like these. Poor Israel, that is still unable to really break away from a hackneyed tradition that – to be sure – may have preserved us through, though perhaps rather in, the Exile among the Nations, but did not prevent nor end this very same Exile – the longest and most fatal in the history of our existence.

It is, therefore, not deep and true enough to state as Mr. Derfner a little opportunely does: "*However, their enemies are right about one thing: The religion these people believe in is not Judaism, it's Christianity*". And thus, it is up to us confessing Messianic Jews to break fresh ground by asking questions that maybe lead us (as, after all, original Zionism itself actually!) well beyond any ready-made "tradition" – but finally back into the hands of our Lord and His Messiah Yeshua, **before** falling for another merely political pseudo-messianic Hero that will promise us "peace" and bring yet even more painful devastation to our People.

Buber's thoughts were groundbreaking when he announced to be "*more than ever certain that a great place belongs to him* (i.e. Yeshua) *in Israel's history of faith and that this place cannot be described by any of the usual categories.*" And he

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had most certainly not the notorious category of "false Messiah's" in mind, which our religious establishment still and by persistently fatal mistake assigns also to the true Messiah, Yeshua, who meantime made against all the odds disciples among all and every nation upon this earth to the glory and honor of the God and Lord of Israel and His Torah. It is he, therefore, who is the true universal dimension of Judaism, a fact justly acknowledged also by a man like Theodor Herzl, when he claimed against the Protest Rabbis of his time and movement that "*if there was a Jewish mission, then this was Christendom*" (1897).

And before labeling us Messianic Jews superficially as belonging to "Christianity" or "another" – even "pagan" – "religion", it might be worth citing also a passage from Rabbi Leo Baeck's remarkable essay *The Gospels as Document of Jewish Faith* (as so many other remarkable writings on this matter not translated into Hebrew!): "*In the old gospel, a man with noble features stands before us, a man who lived during tense, emotional times, who was active, who helped others, who suffered and died, a man of the Jewish people, who walked in Jewish paths, in the Jewish religion, and in hope, whose spirit dwelled in the Holy Scripture, who wrote poetry and meditated, and who spread the word of God and taught, because God had given him the gift of listening and preaching. Before us stands a man who won disciples among his people, who were seeking the messiah, the son of David, and found such a one in him, and insisted so vehemently in their belief until he himself began to believe it [...]*

These disciples believed so firmly in him, that after his death, their belief still provided the foundation of their lives, and they became convinced that - just as the prophets had foretold - he 'arose after the third day.' In this old document we see a man before us who bears all the characteristics of a Jewish sensibility, a man so pure and good, one who could only have come forth out of the ground of Judaism, and only out of this ground could he have found disciples and followers, a product of Jewish yearning and confidence, a man who could only have lived and died in this Jewish realm - a Jew among Jews". Do we thus really "leave" Judaism when we must state that from no other people could a man like the Messiah Yeshua have come forth, in no other people could he have walked and acted and in no other people could he have found the apostles who believed in him and spread his lore amongst all nations?! We are thus not only convinced not to leave Judaism, we know to have found our other long lost messianic "Brother Joseph" (Genesis cc44; 45), he too betrayed and cast off by our own erring fathers, who is still willingly awaiting our remorseful return to him according to the in advance documented plan and will of his heavenly Father, Israel's God (Hosea 3,5; Isaiah 10, 20-22 with 9,5; Zechariah 12,10-12). This is a holy fact standing also against any indocile Church – itself gone astray from very early on!

Hence, ignoring this and now ostracizing and harassing His "envoys" and "ambassadors" or sympathizers will only prolong our anyway awkward situation among the nations and, finally, also our suffering, since they will – literally "losing their religion" without our People's proactive and universal Messianic ministry (*mamlechet cohanim*) among them – increasingly see our existence in Israel as the wellspring and root cause of unrest and warmongering in this region and beyond. Thus, here lies the root cause for our troubled reality in these times and region, located on the rift between a nowadays ever **less** rather than more Messianic-Christian West (Europe, US) and a visibly anti-messianic, Islamist or atheistic East gaining momentum (Russia, Iran, China et al.). And it is here, that our self-declared militant Orthodox adversaries should concentrate their energies and resources, instead of mangling and mauling our People from within. Ignoring this will once more – to our very own distress – come with a cost, as always in our history. And it is not the least this existential concern for our People in Zion, nurtured especially from the still very present, most horrible and ineffable experiences of Godforsaken forlornness (Isaiah 54,8: *hester panim*) and thus abandoned into the cruel hands of murdering henchmen or general human apathy in the times of the past Shoah, that drives our deep sense of responsibility before our heavenly Father and His Messiah Yeshua, which nobody can contest, certainly not in a self-proclaimed democracy – the only one in this region, after all. Otherwise this so long longed for State of the Jews will not prove to be democratic and law-abiding as claimed – and thus also forfeit at last its rightly understood "Jewishness" that made of Herzl's Zionist movement and the State's birth date in May 1948 the God-granted hallmark and milestone they are – not only in our history but for all mankind "on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2,14).

Therefore, instead of speaking always only **about** Messianic Jews it would be far more desirable to publish **what** Messianic-Jewish faith in Yeshua is all about! May the reader then, each and everyone, judge according to his own conscience, as it is worthy for any democracy in our time and epoch – even, and maybe all the more so, for our Jewish democratic State Israel.

Sincerely,

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