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**Yeshiva for Christians?**

Utilizing an article Judy Maltz, Ha'Aretz, December 19, 2019

For lack of solid teaching in their churches, a growing number of evangelical Christians prefer Bible lessons taught by Jewish teachers – ideally, by Orthodox Rabbis. Evidence that such demand is on the rise can be found in the growing number of initiatives cropping up around Israel with this particular audience in mind. “It’s become a phenomenon,” says Rivkah Lambert Adler, an Orthodox-Jewish educator active in several such ventures. “We’re seeing a profound hunger among Christians for authentic Torah teaching”.

By Christians Adler means evangelical Christians, who tend to take the Bible literally and see contemporary events as the fulfillment of prophecies. “Many of these Christians see the Jewish people as leaders in Bible scholarship, able to open the door to a better understanding of the Hebraic roots of their own faith,” says Adler, who published a book on the subject last year, “Ten From the Nations: Torah Awakening Among Non-Jews.” The title is based on Zechariah 8:23 which, Adler believes, inspired the trend.

Root Source, one of the first ventures of its kind, was launched in April 2014 by Gidon Ariel, an Orthodox Jew, and Bob O’Dell, a Christian philanthropist and high-tech entrepreneur. For up to \$27 a month or \$270 a year (there are three pricing levels, “in the spirit of Leviticus 5:6-11”), subscribers to Root Source can access prerecorded lectures on topics such as biblical Hebrew, women in the Bible, Jewish prayer, the Holy Temple, God, Moses and the Book of Proverbs.

Torah School for the Nations, founded earlier this year by Lambert Adler, focuses on face-to-face learning. Her project offers evangelicals visiting Israel during the three biblical feasts – Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles – the opportunity to participate in a full day of Torah study. It held its first such teach-in during Passover 2018 in the West Bank settlement of Ma’aleh Adumim, where Lambert Adler lives. “So many wanted to join that, for the next two times we had to move to Jerusalem for lack of space,” she says. The price is \$75 per participant per day, including a kosher lunch. “Ultimately, my dream is to have a brick-and-mortar facility that operates year-round”.

### **A Growing Wave**

Yeshiva for the Nations, launched about a year ago, bills itself as “an online academy that offers authentic Torah classes designed for non-Jews.” Like Root Source, it is a Jewish-Christian partnership. The Jewish partner, Rabbi Tuly Weisz, is an Orthodox rabbi from the USA, engaged in creating bridges between Israel and the evangelical community. His other endeavors include publishing Israel365 – a daily newsletter distributed to some 250,000 Christian Zionists around the world. His business partner, Donna Jollay, is an evangelical who recently moved from Hawaii to Israel.

Since experiencing a “spiritual awakening” about 20 years ago – in which she claims Jesus appeared before her – Jollay has become a devout Christian. She signs off every email she writes with the biblical verse from Genesis that explains why evangelicals like her are so devoted to the Jewish people: “God blesses those who bless the children of Israel” (which is how many evangelicals interpret Genesis 12:3: “I will bless them that bless thee”). The list of prerecorded online courses offered by Yeshiva for the Nations includes Bible 101, End of Days studies, Introductory Judaism for non-Jews and Israel’s Seven Holy Cities. Plans are underway to offer online webinars that allow students to interact real time with their teachers.

The most recent addition to the growing list of Christian yeshivas in Israel is Align With Zion, founded by AnaRina Heymann, a former marketing executive for the City of David archaeological site in Jerusalem who immigrated to Israel from South Africa seven years ago. Align With Zion was launched in October 2018, The plan is to provide online and live lectures on topics such as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, Hebrew language, the Jewish festivals and the centrality of Jerusalem in the biblical narrative. “There is a genuine, growing wave of interest from pro-Israel Christians. We have a responsibility to respond and engage through the common ground of biblical narrative – which in turn provides them with advocacy tools to stand with us against the growing wave of anti-Semitism in the world,” she says.

Lambert Adler estimates that “a few thousand” Christians participated in classes offered by this new crop of yeshivas. She believes the potential is greater and that what is preventing its realization, is the lack of teachers, not of students. “The pool of English-speaking teachers who are Jewishly knowledgeable and willing to engage with non-Jews is relatively small,” she explains. Asked if Orthodox Jews are reluctant to share their religious knowledge with Christians, Lambert Adler responds: “That would be an understatement. The Jewish people, by and large, are very defensive

with regard to Christians. We tend not to trust them, we tend to think they have a missionizing agenda. We want them just to leave us alone.”

Needless to say, this fascination with Jewish perspectives and the earnest search for so-called Jewish roots is the product of an unbiblical view of Israel and of Judaism, often the product of a disconcerting measure of biblical illiteracy among many evangelicals. The roots of the Christian Faith are biblical, not Jewish. The Jewish religion and Jewish practice constitute a departure from the biblical Faith and a conscious, determined rejection of Jesus’ claims, honor and achievements. We need more of Jesus, not of Judaism.

### **Knesset Bible classes**

The forerunner of these initiatives was the Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding & Cooperation (CJCUC), the first Orthodox-Jewish institution to offer Christians Jewish-taught Bible classes. CJCUC was established in January 2008 by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, a prominent Modern Orthodox rabbi, in the West Bank settlement of Efrat. Unlike some of the newer initiatives, it reaches out to Christians across all denominations – not only evangelicals. Interfaith Bible classes have found their way to the Israeli parliament. Among the participants was Michele Bachmann, a former U.S. presidential candidate and co-founder of the Tea Party movement.



*Rosemary and, Pastor Jim Garlow with MK Yehudah Glick at an interfaith Bible class in the Knesset, May 13, 2018. Olivier Fitoussi*

The driving force behind the initiative is the Schindler Society, an evangelical organization founded by megachurch Pastor Jim Garlow and his wife Rosemary Schindler. Lambert Adler profiles several dozen Christians in her book, who are “in some sort of relationship with Torah.” Mistakenly, Adler insists that the Judaism of Jesus’ day was identical to that later formulated by the Rabbis in response to the destruction of the temple and as a rejection of the Gospel.

“It’s a process that starts with being intrigued by Israel,” Adler says, “then, being intrigued by the Hebraic roots of Christian faith, and then learning the Bible from the people who they see are the natural continuation of Jesus’ life.” Paul’s words in his letter to the Galatians is pertinent here: “Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you … Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them” (Galatians 4:8-17).

### Israel – A New Government?

I delayed publication of this report in the hope that it would include a description of Israel's new Government. This was not to be. Instead, it looks like we are headed toward a third round of elections.

Having twice failed in forming a Government, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is positioning himself for the next round of elections, each of which had little to do with what the Israeli society or the national economy should look like; what should be Israel's policy *visa vie* the Palestinians, or how to cope with Hamas in Gaza or the growing threats from Iran and Hezbollah. The only issue at stake is whether or not Benjamin Netanyahu gets a Get Out of Jail card. To that end he is embracing bitter enemies, surrounding himself with fawning cronies, eroding the political basis of competing parties to his right, delegitimizing parties on his left weakening Israel's democratic and judicial systems and promising the Orthodox parties unprecedented social sway. He created a political bloc with parties to his right, rendering a Unity Government impossible, and is now seeking to lay the blame for the third round of elections on his political rivals.

His nemesis, former Chief of Staff, soft-spoken Benny Gantz, is supported by two other former Chiefs of Staff and a host of seasoned politicians, not a few of whom are respected defectors from Netanyahu's Likud. Gantz has offered to form a Unity Government with Netanyahu's Likud but not with the bloc. His offer has been refused. Should Gantz fail to form a government after which the Knesset will have 21 days to recommend to the President one of its Members, provably be able to form a parliamentary majority and therefore a viable government. Failing that, the remaining option is renewed elections, probably in March 2020.

### Ministry News

I've reviewed and responded to editorial comments on my **translation of the Greek in Matthew**, and **Mark**, most of which were very helpful and am now reviewing the same comments on my translation of **Luke**. This stage has to do with the veracity of my rendering of the Greek. My editor is an accomplished young man, with excellent knowledge of Koine (1<sup>st</sup> century spoken) Greek, better than my own. I am benefiting much from his comments.

Having completed writing and translating study note on **Isaiah and Jeremiah**, I am now fully engaged in writing and translating such notes on **Ezekiel**, much to my enjoyment and instruction. I've also completed **the Introduction to Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi** and fine-tuned my commentary on **Malachi**.

I've almost completed the **series of sermons on Galatians**, preached in the church we attend in Jerusalem. Responses have been encouraging, but I long for more than encouraging responses: I'm aiming at impact, and am grateful for evidence of some of that among a number, particularly some of the leading lights in the church.

My commentary on Romans is finally available. This is the most important of my undertakings. I pray it will impact the Israeli church in significant ways.

I endeavored to give expression to Pauls' understanding of the Gospel in terms of the saving power of Christ's death and resurrection, and of their implications for the unity of the church and for daily Christian living. At the same time, since Paul based so much on his argument in his letter to the Romans on the OT, I labored to demonstrate how faithful the Apostle was to the natural, original meaning of the texts he referenced. These issues – the sufficiency and finality of Christ's work, the unity of the church and the use of the OT in the New – are major issues in the life of the church in Israel.



### Family News

Following **Keith's** failure to land a job in Chattanooga, he and the family are likely to move to wherever a job is found. The decision to live near Keith, Shlomit and the children was made 3 years ago, when we were some 10 years (-:] younger than we are now. Bracha is my first responsibility, and she is healthy, but no spring chicken. I see her aging before my eyes and must provide her with some stability and security. Still further, it would be unwise and unfair for us to impose on a single family in Chattanooga (or wherever) the burden our old age is likely to create, when it can be borne by two families in Seattle. There seems to be little wisdom in our settling in Chattanooga, only to be uprooted again within a few years.

Therefore, after a good deal of intellectual and emotional too-ing and fro-ing, family pressure, prayer and discussion, we have decided to sell the house in Chattanooga and move to Seattle, where our other two children and their families are settled. It breaks our heart not to be alongside **Keith and Shlomit** in this, their lengthy hour of trial, but they support this decision, as do (needless to say) the rest of the family. We also hesitated due to the significantly higher cost of living in Seattle compared to that in Chattanooga. But we do believe this is the right decision at this stage of our lives – I will be 76 this coming December, and Bracha 71 in March. She and I are now working out the implications of our change of direction.

To those of you, friends, individuals and churches, who support our work: it would be extremely helpful if you would inform us by return mail whether or not you intend to continue that support into 2020, and if so – at what level. We do need to prepare our budget and, for lack of information, are presently unable to do so.

At the time of writing, I am in Seattle, where I am looking into the practicalities of moving here, and where I expect, God willing, to stay until November 25th, fly to Chattanooga and begin to make my way home to Bracha on December 4<sup>th</sup>. Since our

house in Israel has sold at last, we hope to relocate and continue the ministry somewhere between the end of February – end of April 2020. Meanwhile, Avital and Eran have arranged a make-shift office for me, and I am generally able to manage a full day's work 4-5 days out of the week, sometimes a little bit more.

In Christ by grace,

Baruch and Bracha Maoz

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**Jonah: A Prophet on the Run** a devotional commentary on the book of Jonah, Shepherd Press.

**Malachi: A Prophet in Times of Distress** a devotional commentary on the book of Malachi. Founders Press.

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