



BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Hasty, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

January 28, 1988

88-14

Parks Urges Permission
To Return To Lebanon

By Mike Creswell

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Let Southern Baptist Convention missionaries return to Lebanon, SBC Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks has urged Secretary of State George P. Schultz.

The plea, sent to Schultz in a letter, was made in late January, a year after the U.S. government ordered all U.S. citizens, including 24 Southern Baptist missionaries, to leave Lebanon because of the continuing strife there.

Parks wrote the letter on the first anniversary of the ban because of indications the State Department plans to review the restrictions on American citizens living in Lebanon. Currently only a few exceptions to the order are allowed, primarily Americans with family ties to Lebanon.

Parks urged Schultz to at least allow Americans to return to East Beirut, "if they are engaged in a charitable and humanitarian service."

Current policy, Parks wrote, "forces some to feel they must choose between civil disobedience and a superficial faith. Better options should be provided." He asked that missionaries be allowed to take risks for their faith, just as Schultz and other government leaders do for "those ideals in which you believe."

"What we're really appealing for is the same opportunity that we've exercised in other troubled spots through the years, where the missionaries had the freedom to seek individual leadership as to whether they felt the Lord was leading their family to be in that place at that time," Parks said later in an interview.

The board does not want missionaries to feel guilty if they believe they should not be in a dangerous place, he said. But if they felt they should be there, "we wanted to provide affirmation and support." Parks said the board's approach in such matters is consistent biblically and "baptistically."

Since leaving Lebanon a year ago, the Southern Baptist missionaries have moved to other places of service in the Middle East. Some have tried to maintain the Lebanon work from Cyprus, while others have begun new ministries in other countries. In a quirk of current events, several of the missionaries now serve in Gaza, another Middle East area stricken by violence in recent weeks.

"If they lift the ban, we'll all be on the first boat back to Lebanon," vowed Southern Baptist missionary Pete Dunn, currently on furlough in Mobile, Ala. While some of the missionaries have seen the wisdom of a temporary departure, they believe it is time to return to duties needing their attention, he said.

"We have a hundred things in the works," he said. One key element of Baptist ministry in Lebanon often overlooked, he said, is the humanitarian aid of food, clothing and blankets distributed by Southern Baptist missionaries.

Dunn, a media specialist, said the Lebanon work has been difficult to maintain from Cyprus "by remote control." Radio programs he helps produce for a Baptist-operated station in Beirut have a potential audience of more than 1 million listeners, he said. A literature ministry and other works also are based in Lebanon.

Baptists Respond To Mexico
Mine Explosion, Cave-In

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (BP)--Soon after a Jan. 25 explosion and cave-in at one of Mexico's largest coal mining operations trapped more than 100 workers, local Baptists were on the scene ministering to grieving and anxious family members.

As many as 140 miners were thought to be inside the mine when the blast occurred. By Thursday morning, Jan. 28, 39 fatalities were confirmed, and an estimated 45 people were hospitalized in medical centers throughout the region. After three days of searching, rescuers believed they had recovered all of the trapped miners.

The disaster took place at the Cuatro y Media (Four and a Half) Mine near Esperanzas in the northern Mexico state of Coahuila, about 75 miles southwest of Eagle Pass, Texas.

Jack Calk, director of missions in Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association, received information on Baptist response to the disaster through Rogelio Guel, his counterpart in Coahuila Baptist Association. Coahuila Association lies within the area along the 890-mile Texas-Mexico border served by the Rio Grande River Ministry.

No Southern Baptist missionaries currently are assigned to the state of Coahuila.

"We don't know if any Baptists were among the fatalities, but it's not unlikely since the mine is the single industrial employer in the area," said Calk. Although there is no Baptist church in Esperanzas, congregations exist in most of the surrounding communities.

Guel and Abelardo Solis, pastor of Primera Baptist Church in nearby Nueva Rosita, were at a training institute outside of the area when the blast and cave-in occurred. However, they arrived within 24 hours after the tragedy to offer comfort to families whose loved ones were still trapped.

Primera Baptist Church of Nueva Rosita established a shelter for families during the rescue effort, and the church is acting as a temporary clearinghouse for blankets and food.

D.L. Lowrie, director of the state missions commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said Texas Baptists are responding to the emergency with existing disaster relief funds. No statewide appeal for emergency relief is being made.

--30--

(Editor's Note: Following is the first of a three-part series on Jewish believers in Israel.)

Small Congregations
Sprouting In Israel

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
1/28/88

JERUSALEM (BP)--"I will never be a Christian," says a Jewish woman whose parents were killed by Nazis during World War II. "I believe the same thing as a real Christian believes. But to call myself a Christian, no. The word has been too contaminated for us as a people."

She is among some 3,000 Jews in Israel who believe the Messiah was revealed to mankind nearly two millenniums ago. Most of them do not call him Jesus. They use his Hebrew name, Yeshua (pronounced ye-SHU-uh).

Numerous believers came to faith years ago -- some after immigrating to Israel. Many more, however, are native Israelis in their 20s and 30s. Some can list parents, grandparents or other relatives killed in the Holocaust, the Nazi campaign that eradicated 6 million Jews -- one-third of all Jews worldwide. A few believers are concentration camp survivors.

About 30 Messianic congregations exist in Israel. Most have sprouted since 1980. Most are small; only a few encompass 100 or more believers. Most are led by a small team of elders selected from the members. They usually meet in apartments or homes each Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. In Israel, Sunday is one of six workdays.

--more--

One-third of the congregations are in the Tel Aviv area, where 40 percent of Israel's 4.4 million people live. Several congregations meet in Jerusalem.

Southern Baptists have nearly 50 representatives in Israel, and several worship with Hebrew-speaking congregations. Others worship at Narkis Street Baptist Church in Jerusalem or Baptist Village near Tel Aviv. Both are English-language congregations also attended by internationals working or visiting in Israel. Still other Baptist representatives are active in nine Arab Baptist congregations.

Israel's population includes about 750,000 Arabs. An additional 1.5 million Arabs live in the West Bank and Gaza, territories occupied by Israel since the 1967 Six-Day War.

Messianic believers voice appreciation particularly for Baptist Village, the largest Christian conference and summer camp center in Israel. And they hope its overnight capacity, now about 200, will be expanded someday to 500 or more. Such plans, however, are only on the drawing boards.

Messianic Jews meet at Baptist Village each Passover and other times during the year. One believer contrasts these times of fellowship and mutual encouragement with large churches in the United States, where "you can see more believers just by looking around than there are in the whole land of Israel."

Jewish believers were even a smaller minority 10 years ago, reminds Ilan Zamir, an elder in a Tel Aviv congregation. When he accepted Yeshua as Messiah in the mid-1970s, "I thought I was the only Jew who dared to think this way."

It was an unmentionable topic in Israeli society and media. Believers were called traitors to the Jewish people.

Such pressures still confront believers. But now, Zamir and others dare to dream. "Lord willing," he says, "you come in 10 years, I'm sure you'll see much greater numbers of believers and much greater evidence of the act of God in this land."

The Holocaust is an especially weighty matter for believers, because Orthodox Jews hold Christianity at least partly responsible. "Its preaching of anti-Jewishness was a very significant cause in ... the most awful phenomenon in history against my people," says Pinhas Peli, a Jerusalem Post columnist and professor of Jewish thought and literature at Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Be'er Sheva.

Reformation leader Martin Luther, in his pamphlet, "The Jews and Their Lies," attacked Jews with "a venom that has rarely been equaled," says David Rosen, inter-religious affairs director for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in Israel. Church history is stained with anti-Semitism, such as the Spanish Inquisition from the 15th to the 19th centuries and Russian pogroms, or attacks on Jews, in the late 1800s and early 1900s. And during the Holocaust churches failed to protest the atrocities.

"In the minds of most Jews," says Menahem Benhayim, an elder in a Jerusalem congregation, "Nazism was another phase of Christianity." Benhayim, who also publishes a Hebrew-language Messianic periodical, Return, notes some Jews "recognize that Nazism was anti-Christian and pagan. But they believe that Nazism was able to use traditional church hostility toward the Jews to effect its diabolical aims."

Christianity is not inherently anti-Semitic, believers contend. "You can take any religion and annex it to hate," says David Yaniv, who lives in a kibbutz-like community in northern Israel. "Christians can hate, Jews can hate, Moslems can hate."

Ya'akov Damkani, a Jaffa-based full-time Messianic evangelist, one of three in Israel, regrets the church had "no love ... no approach for taking the gospel to the Jews" for 19 centuries. "But there is a new development taking place. It's the first time in history that Israel is beginning to really receive love from Yeshua's followers."

Messianic believers are striving to avoid sectarianism. There are no Baptist congregations, for example, although they baptize by immersion. And Messianic congregations have no affiliation with the U.S.-based Jews for Jesus organization. Congregations are influenced by various theological views, one leader says, but not enslaved to them.

Joseph Shulam, leader of a congregation in Jerusalem, says God has "collectively dealt with the Jewish nation" throughout its history -- and today's believers are pivotal to God's plan. Denominationalism, he asserts, would tarnish believers with an "allegiance to, and cultural identity from, some foreign group."

Some Messianic Jews, however, fear their movement is ignoring lessons from "2,000 years of Christian history," as Baruch Maoz puts it. Maoz, an elder in a congregation near Tel Aviv, says believers are groping with questions about Christ's deity and the Trinity that the church resolved ages ago. Although believers affirm the Bible's centrality, "when it comes to practical terms," in Maoz's opinion, some of them mold Scripture to fit their presuppositions. Cults could find fertile ground in some Messianic circles, he warns.

Some congregations are charismatic, with an openness to speaking in tongues, prayer for miraculous healings and revelation by dreams and visions. Other congregations are non-charismatic yet evangelical, emphasizing the new birth much like Southern Baptists do.

Charismatics and non-charismatics divide into three camps on observing rabbinic law, such as eating kosher foods. For many congregations the philosophy is, "Do whatever you feel convicted to do," Zamir says. In society at large, the attitude is much the same; 70 to 80 percent of Israelis do not strictly adhere to rabbinic law.

Some believers oppose the law, and Zamir shares part of their concern: "The more you observe the law, the less you see Yeshua in it. I've seen this happen again and again among believers."

Numerous other believers embrace the law. "We don't consider the law a bondage at all," says Martha Stern, a member of a Jerusalem congregation. "Believing in Yeshua doesn't mean you stop being Jewish." Dror Goldberg, also a Jerusalem-area believer, notes that in Matthew 23 Yeshua commended the Pharisees' teachings but not their hypocritical actions.

And Acts 21 counts thousands of Jews, all "zealous for the law," who were in the early church. "We're not saying we're under the burden of the law," Shulam qualifies. "Zeal for the law, in the right perspective, is a reliance on God's grace." At issue in the first century was whether Gentile converts were obligated to the law, he says. "There is no question that the Jews were."

Despite diverse convictions, Shulam reports, "All the believers in Israel, without exception in my opinion, see each other as brothers. We may disagree on the charismatic issue, we may disagree on premillennialism, we may disagree on the interpretation of any passage in the Bible, but we still have areas where we can cooperate without coercing each other."

Elders from about a dozen congregations have been meeting regularly for several years, and their evangelistic committee held its first-ever campaign in August 1986 in Tel Aviv. Volunteers used a questionnaire to spark conversations about Yeshua in the streets, and about 250 people gave their addresses for follow-up literature.

Other endeavors are afoot. Zamir and Benhayim are part of a Bible society team working on a Hebrew-language New Testament with explanatory notes. Shulam has organized a team to write a multi-volume New Testament commentary in Hebrew. Maoz is one of the editors of a theological journal, Mishkan, on Jewish evangelism. Stern's husband, David, is publishing an English-language New Testament using Jewish words and concepts.

Efforts to train businessmen to build an economic base for Messianic congregations are in the fledgling stages. Says Arie Klein, a member of a Jerusalem congregation, "God is telling us to prepare" for "rapid growth in the number of believers in the next few years."

Messianics bid like-minded Jews abroad to lend a hand, to make "aliyah," to join in world Jewry's return to Israel.

"If God prophesied that one day he will bring Jews back to their land," Zamir says, "he didn't mean they will be sitting in America or some other place."

But Benhayim laments: "American Jewish believers aren't too much different from their mainstream Jewish counterparts. They like the fleshpots of Uncle Sam better than the difficulties here."

--30--

(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Life Of Witnessing
Begins At Age 98

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
1/28/88

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Life begins at 98, according to Mable Adams of Glen Rose, Texas, who completed MasterLife evangelism training last year and recently led a teenager to faith in Christ while studying Evangelism Explosion through First Baptist Church of Glen Rose.

Mrs. Adams spoke at the Jan. 20 morning session of the Texas Baptist Evangelism Conference in Fort Worth's Tarrant County Convention Center.

When Adams' pastor, Arthur N. McAninch Jr., invited her to join MasterLife I about two years ago, she said, "Oh, Brother Art, at my age I have trouble memorizing Scripture."

"But she memorized every Scripture and really did well," McAninch said.

MasterLife is a discipleship and witnessing program sponsored by the church training department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

After completing MasterLife, Adams enrolled in the Evangelism Explosion seminar at her church. She and some other women went together to do evangelism visitation and stopped at a home where some teen-age girls were having a slumber party.

Adams shared the message of salvation, and a girl about 13 years old prayed and received Christ as her savior.

"That made me very happy," said Adams, who recalls as though it were yesterday her own conversion experience in 1898 at the age of nine.

Her family had moved to Plainview, Texas, in 1891, and she recalls fondly "the windmills and dugouts and cattle and the sandstorms and blizzards" as well as "the itinerant evangelists who came to conduct services in the little one-room white frame church."

It was something a preacher said when she was nine that led her to accept Christ, she said. "I was just a child, but I wanted God in my heart. Mother sent me to gather gooseberries, and I was talking to the Lord.

"I said, 'Lord, I want you to live in my heart,' and he came right into my heart. I have not always been as good a Christian as he wants, but I've never had a doubt."

When she arrived at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, after attending a small woman's college, Adams recalls, "Baylor was so big I like to have never found myself."

She recalls Samuel Palmer Brooks was president, and there were 200 students in her graduating class in 1911.

At Baylor she met her husband, Ernest "Bull" Adams, "a great big six-footer and a wonderful scholar."

--more--

"I'll never forget the first time I saw Ernest play football," she said. "He was one of Baylor's best football players at the time, and State (the University of Texas) had come up to play us. Ernest had run for a touchdown, but the referee ruled against him. So he just sat on that ball in the end zone and wouldn't give it back. Both sides were so disgusted that the players, fans and everybody just left the stadium. And all that time Ernest just sat there and wouldn't give that ball back for anything in the world."

After they married, they moved to Glen Rose in 1915 where she recalls that her husband's younger brother, George, had discovered a dinosaur track while playing hooky. He told the school superintendent about it, and instead of punishing George for playing hooky, the superintendent turned school out so all the children could see the discovery.

The couple lived on his father's farm near Rock Creek, Texas, "but we lost everything in the Depression," she said. Her husband was elected county attorney at \$30 a month. Then they moved into Dallas, where they discovered he had contracted tuberculosis.

He had to live away from his family in West Texas for three years. After he was able to return home, he suffered a cerebral hemorrhage which disabled him but he lived for more than five years, enjoying his grandchildren who moved down from Dallas.

"It was marvelous how he accepted his condition," she said. "When I think of God's goodness, I am filled with thankfulness. God is so good to all of us."

She said, "God, Mary and calcium keep me going." Mary Adams, her daughter, moved in with her eight years ago "to see that I ate right." Her daughter, who is the church clerk, also took the MasterLife and Evangelism Explosion courses.

"I don't see why people as they grow older don't do something like this because it stimulates the mind so," said Adams. "We grow old in mind before we grow old in our bodies."

"I read, read, read and I love to work outdoors. I ask God to go with me in the least of things. When I plant flowers, if he guides me, I won't have to dig them up again."

Carlos McLeod, director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas evangelism division, said: "We are so fortunate to have her speak at the evangelism conference. She has lived a long life, but her spirit is young and vital and reminds us of that beautiful song, 'The Longer I Serve Him, the Sweeter He Grows.'"

Adams admits she is excited about giving her testimony at the conference but she says: "It shall be the Lord's doing. It shall not be mine."

HOUSE MAIL

The logo consists of the letters 'BP' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, enclosed within a black rectangular box. The letters are slightly shadowed to give a three-dimensional effect.

BAPTIST PRESS

901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

HOUSE MAIL

SO. BAPT. LIB. & ARCH.
901 COMMERCE SUITE 400
NASHVILLE, TN. 37203