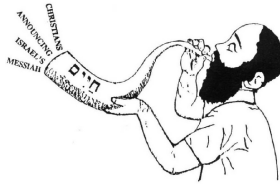


CHAIM TIMES

The Newsletter of CHAIM, "CHristians Announcing Israel's Messiah"

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Famous False Messiahs...and the True One

We know that tens of thousands of Jews in the first century embraced and proclaimed Jesus as Messiah, yet the majority of the Jewish community did not believe. What many people don't know is that there have been *false* messiahs who *have* been embraced and proclaimed by large numbers in the Jewish community.

In the first century the Jewish people were looking for a Messiah who would throw off the Roman shackles. They wanted another Judah Maccabee, a guerilla fighter who defeated the Syrian-Greek Antiochus IV in 164 BC. Because they were looking for a Messiah who would lead a revolt against Rome, Jesus was cautious about receiving acclaim as the Messiah. He made it clear his kingdom was not of this world. About 100 years after Jesus atoned for sin, rose, and ascended, a leader came along after their own desires.

Simon bar Kokhba lead a revolt against Rome in 132 AD and was proclaimed the prince of a new Jewish state. The great Rabbi Akiva, who put the Jewish Oral Law in its final order (later written down as the Mishnah), proclaimed Bar Kokhba to be the Messiah. The name Bar Kokhba was derived from the word for star found in Numbers 24:17 "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel..." Hundreds of thousands of Jews joined the revolt, but Jewish believers in Jesus of course could not join a rebellion under a false messiah and in fact were persecuted for their refusal to participate.

This Second Jewish Revolt failed miserably. After some initial success in setting up a headquarters in Jerusalem, Roman troops eventually prevailed and drove them out. Bar Kokhba retreated to the town of Betar and was eventually defeated. Simon Grayzel wrote in his *History of the Jews*: "Five hundred and eighty-thousand men are said to have been killed in battle alone. Tens of thousands more must have fallen before the relentless destruction carried out by the Romans. The slave markets were again glutted with Jewish captives. Judea lay desolate, and the Jewish people were in mourning."

Rabbi Akiva, one of the greatest rabbis of all time, proved to be completely wrong about who the Messiah was. Jerusalem was in ruins, and study of the Torah was prohibited on pain of death. Rabbi Akiva refused to comply and was flayed alive. He died with the Sh'ma on his lips: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone." (Deut. 6:4) To this day Akiva is revered as a great scholar and rabbi, but even so, he followed a false messiah.

There were other false messiahs in Jewish history, such as Abu-Issa, Judghan al-Rai, and Serenus. All arose in response to Islam and all also failed miserably. Another movement failed in 1525 under a certain David Reubeni.

A huge false messianic hope came in the mid 1600s through a mystic, Shabbetai Zvi. He was born on the 9th of the Hebrew month of Av, the day the Temple was destroyed twice, and according to Jewish tradition the day the Messiah was to be born. Shabbatai Zvi was quite a controversial showman. He openly pronounced the name of God, Yahweh or Jehovah, and at a later point publicly married the Torah. He traveled about and ended up in Cairo where he became popular with Jewish mystics devoted to Kabbalah. A wealthy benefactor sent Zvi to Jerusalem to bring charity relief to poor Jews and a local self-proclaimed prophet, Nathan of Gaza,

declared himself the reincarnation of Elijah and Shabbetai Zvi to be the Messiah.

Meanwhile in Ukraine, a Jewish girl's parents were murdered by followers of Chmelnitzki who fought against the Poles. Sarah ended up

in a nunnery and later claimed she was rescued by her dead father who told her she would marry the Messiah. She became famous in Europe. When Zvi found out, he asked her to be his wife. The Jewish community was excited with messianic expectations as the year 1666 approached. He took a ship full of his followers to Constantinople where he said he would be crowned, but he was arrested and placed in a fortress where he was allowed to hold court. Emissaries throughout the world proclaimed to Jewry that Zvi was the Messiah. Threatened with either death or proving himself, Zvi converted to Islam and took a post under the sultan.

Out of the remnants of the Shabbatean movement Hasidic Judaism arose. Various Hasidic communities began to think a descendant of the line of their rabbi would end up as the Messiah. In our own time the Lubavitch Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, who had no heir, was proclaimed to be the Messiah—even after his death—and some thought he would rise again after his suffering. They even quoted Isaiah 53 as applying to him! Some still await his resurrection!

So what can we conclude? Even the most learned rabbis and devout Jews have been completely wrong about who the Messiah would be. Some Jewish writings have said Messiah should have come during the Roman Empire, but because of Israel's sin he is long overdue. Jesus said to the people of his own day: "I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him... For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me." (John 5:43 & 46)

"I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him." (John 5:43)

CHAIM MINISTRY UPDATES



Vitaly Kalinovsky, Rev. Ken Klett, Fred Klett, and Rick Anderson. We took this picture just before praying together before doing evangelism at the Wildwood NJ Boardwalk. Ken Klett was serving at the Boardwalk chapel for a week, so we came down. We shared the gospel with both Egyptians and Israelis. Pray for Abdul from Egypt and Mali, an Israeli woman. Both were willing to take gospel materials.



Rick Anderson sharing the Good News of Messiah on the street with two Hasidic Jews.



We had a great Passover Seder in the Spring. There were five Jewish friends there plus one Azerbaijani Muslim woman who brought her friend, who was one of the Jewish participants!



Fred and Vitaly had a great time at a local fair. We gave out Bibles in Russian, Ukrainian, and Hebrew. Pray for Christine, an American Jewish woman who took a New Covenant in both English and Hebrew and also Alexander, a Ukrainian Jewish man who took a whole Bible in Russian. We will be doing this again in the fall, Lord willing.



Fred, Rick and Vitaly at the PCA General Assembly. We let churches know about our ministry as a resource. We also learned about valuable resources for us.



While there we met others doing ministry to actual Russians. In Philly most immigrants are Ukrainian with a large % being Jewish. We appreciate these brothers.



It was great to reconnect with old friends who helped us out with the Rock of Israel PCA work in Philly many years ago! Jon Eide is now the regional director for MTW's work in Eastern Europe. Alister

Torrens is now the Academic Dean of the Evangelical Reformed Seminary of Ukraine. They gave an update on the situation in Ukraine where many churches have been planted. What a privilege of having partnered with these fine servants of the Lord years ago! Pray for their important work.

We at CHAIM truly appreciate your prayers! Thank you for your much needed financial support as well! Always keep us in mind for presentations at your local church.