

THE SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL

Subscription Price
50c. a Year.

VOL 39 - No. 3
NOVEMBER, 1955

A Serious Case of Discrimination

by Solomon Birnbaum

IT HAPPENED in one of the new, rapidly-growing cities of South Africa.

A number of Jewish families had also settled in that territory, and one day they decided that it was high time for them to build a synagogue.

Following the example of the other religious bodies in their community, they sent a delegation to the City Hall to wait upon the Mayor and his Council to request a piece of land for that purpose.

The Baptists and the Presbyterians and several other denominations had been there before them and, as a matter of course, received a full acre of ground each for the erection of a church, a school and other facilities necessary for the furtherance of their respective religious interests.

Naturally, the Jewish representatives expected the same prompt response to their request and the same amount of space for the fulfilment of their religious needs.

NOT MORE THAN HALF AN ACRE OF LAND

To their surprise, all that the authorities would grant to them was not a full acre of land but only half that amount.

Needless to say, the Jewish people were bitterly disappointed. "Why?" they asked. "Is our religion not as good as theirs? Are we inferior to the Christians? Clearly this is a case of discrimination!" And they vowed not to rest till the wrong done to them was righted and the stigma of inferiority removed from them.

A few days later the Jewish delegation again waited upon the Mayor and his Council to air their grievance.

The city officials vigorously rejected the accusation that they were influenced

by prejudice against the Jews. They insisted that their decision was made in all fairness and was in strict accordance with the merits of the case.

The Jewish spokesman was indignant. "What kind of fairness is that," he demanded, "giving to the others a whole acre each but to us, merely because we are Jews, only one half? Where are the merits of the case?"

The Mayor explained. "It was like this: The Christians, as you know, believe in the whole Bible, which consists both of the Old Testament and the New. You, however, who hold the Jewish religion, make it no secret that you believe only in the Old Testament—that is, half the Bible. Therefore the City Council judged that it was only fair that you be given not more than half the amount of space for your religion as was granted to the Christians."

"But we don't believe in only half the Bible!" the Jewish spokesman contradicted. "To us the Law of Moses with the Prophets is the **whole** Bible. It is the only Bible God has given us. The New Testament may be all right for the Christians, but it is not for us, who are Jews. Nowhere has God told us that we should believe in a New Testament. We, therefore, can have nothing to do with it."

At this moment one member of the Council rose to his feet and spoke as follows:

"I was the only dissenting voice, as you will remember, when this matter was voted upon. I am still of the same opinion. I am for treating the Jewish people in exactly the same manner as the Christians. A religion or its needs cannot be measured by the number of pages of a book—even though that book be the Bible.

WHERE HE DID NOT AGREE

"Nevertheless, I do not agree with the Jewish spokesman when he tells us that the New Testament may be all right for Christians and all wrong for Jews. Do Jews and Christians have different souls? Are they so different from each other that what is food for the one is poison for the other? This is a dangerous doctrine to hold. It opens the door to the very evil which we are so eager to combat.

"We Gentiles would have never heard of a New Testament had Jews not told us. It was a Jewish prophet who first prophesied concerning it. Then came Jewish preachers, traveling all over the known world, and persuaded us to receive it because through it the grace of God had appeared not to Jews only but to all men. Yet today, when we mention the New Testament to Jews, they raise their hands in horror and shout: 'No! No! It is not for us; we know nothing about it. We don't want anything to do with it!'"

"What is the matter with the New Testament that they are so strongly opposed to it? Is it its teaching? Listen to a sample of it:

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God (Matthew 5:6-9).

"These words are words of love and compassion; of forgiveness and holiness. How can anyone in his right mind object to a book which contains them and many others like these?"

"Maybe it is the miracles in the New Testament that are the stumbling block. But the miracles in the Books of Moses and the Prophets are not less miraculous than they. On the contrary, the very first verse of the Old Testament, '**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,**' speaks of a miracle which includes and surpasses all other miracles recorded anywhere in and outside the whole Bible. Moreover, the miracles of the New Testament are not just sprung upon the world unexpectedly or unprepared. They are **fulfillments** of promises which are contained in the Old. The Old Testament

Can a Jew Believe the New Testament?

When a Jew is asked to express an opinion on the New Testament, he usually does so without ever having read it. Would you like to read what a former Rabbi has to say on what he discovered after a careful study of the New Testament? Send us 5¢ in stamps to cover cost of mailing and handling and ask for our folder, "Can a Jew Believe the New Testament?"

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is as much implicated in them as the New."

A BIBLE FROM HIS POCKET

"Where in the Bible did God promise a New Testament to the Jews?" the Jewish spokesman challenged. "I never saw it there."

In answer the other pulled a Bible from his pocket, opened it and read:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant (or testament) with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31).

"That is not in our Bible!" the Jewish spokesman cried. "You are reading from your own, the Christian Bible! It is not in ours, the Bible which we read in the synagogue."

Someone produced a Jewish or synagogue Bible, opened it and, surely enough, that prophecy was there exactly the same, word for word.

"I admit I made a mistake," the Jewish spokesman apologized. "But," he continued, "you Christians read into it your own interpretation. We Jews, too, have holy books written by our learned Rabbis. Any one of them could well be the New Testament spoken of here by the prophet."

Thereupon the Council member who acted as chief speaker for the city rose again:

"There is only one book in the whole world of literature," he said, "which bears the title, 'The New Testament.' No human author, to this day, having written a book, presumed to call it by that name. God Himself, it seems, has restrained the hand of man from tampering with that name, so that it forever may stand unchallenged as the name for the only record of the Covenant which God had made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."

As this speaker sat down, another Council member rose and added:

THE CHRISTIAN IS PUZZLED

"For the life of me I cannot understand this strange attitude towards the New Testament on the part of the Jewish people. To every human action there must be some compelling motive. What is the motive behind this attitude?"

"Is it to please God? But how can one imagine that he pleases God if he so ungraciously rejects His gift? Such an action is certainly not calculated to please either God or man."

"Is it to honor the prophets? This is a strange way of honoring them. First, they don't take the trouble to find out what they say; and then when confronted with their words they employ every means at their disposal to discredit them."

"But perhaps it is for the sake of material gain—indeed, much material profit did they gain by rejecting the New Testament!—nothing but loss and suffering and persecution through the last twenty centuries!"

"True, ignorant and fanatical Gentiles,

falsely calling themselves Christians, persecuted, maltreated, and killed many Jews. Then why not have it out with those persecutors and fanatics? Why do they turn against the gifts and mercies of their own God? Why do they reject the New Testament which God has offered to them as their own? Why do they endeavor to discredit their own prophets and their own Messiah? This is something which I cannot fathom. . . ."

Thus the debate ran on and on. The outcome, however, was that in regard to their request they gained their point and, like the Christians, received a full acre of land; while in regard to the other questions the debate still continues. . . .

NOW SUPPOSE —

Suppose the Jews did accept the New Testament, what would happen to their people? Would they, as a result, cease to be Jews?

Not at all! Why should they? If they believed in their own prophets, their own New Testament, their own Messiah, they would then do, no more or no less, what every loyal and God-fearing Jew is supposed to do. And thus instead of being less Jewish, they would be better, more complete Jews.

Suppose, further, Jews became followers of the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah, what would happen to Yom Kippur, the Passover, and the other Jewish observances?

Nothing would happen, excepting that there would be a better understanding of their meaning and a more complete fulfilment of their purpose.

Yom Kippur means a day of forgiveness. In the Law of Moses the terms on which God forgave the sins of His people are clearly stated: first of all, it is obedience to, and complete fulfilment of, His Law. But because of man's failure to live up to the requirements of the Law, Israel was commanded to bring sacrifices in the temple at Jerusalem. In His directions as to how they should be offered God said the following:

For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul (Leviticus 17:11).

God's requirement, then, for forgiveness of sins is the offering of the blood of the sacrifice on His altar.

But you say: "The day is gone when we could offer such sacrifices. We have no temple, no altar, no priesthood; and Jerusalem is in the hands of the enemy."

This is tragically true. All the things connected with the Old Covenant are no more. But this is only another way of saying that the Old Covenant was broken, destroyed. And this is exactly the reason given in this prophecy of Jeremiah why the New Testament is offered. It is God's provision for our days, scattered as we are all over the world, without temple, without sacrifice, without an altar—so that His people may not at any time be without forgiveness of sins, without fellowship with God, without atonement.

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God's offer of His New Testament or New Covenant (the Hebrew word for both is the same) concludes with the following words:

For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jeremiah 31:34).

Thus for our present day and age the New Testament takes the place of the Old for forgiveness of sin and atonement.

A PATCHWORK OF BROKEN PIECES

But the Rabbis went, picked up a few pieces of the Old Covenant which was broken (the prophetic term is "shattered in pieces," Jeremiah 31:32), patched them together and said: "We don't need a New Testament. We have enough pieces of the Old to keep us busy." And this patchwork they presented to their people as the true orthodox Jewish religion!

Indeed, it was the Jewish religion in the sense that it was manufactured by Jewish hands. But it is not God's gift to His people, nor has it the promise or assurance from God that by the doing of it there will be forgiveness and atonement!

Now the choice that stands before us is as follows:

On one hand, there is the New Testament which is God's provision for atonement and forgiveness of sin; on the other there is the Rabbinical patchwork without divine authority or promise.

Which will be your choice?

I have set before you (God is saying) life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live (Deuteronomy 30:19).

In God's provision there is life and hope, but man's ways end in death and in despair.

What has been said with regard to Yom Kippur equally applies to the Feast of Passover and many other Jewish observances which, in the Old Covenant, center around the temple and the altar. They belong to the Covenant which was broken and done away with.

Now we live in the days of the New Covenant which God has made with His people, so that we today as in the past and in all places of our habitation may have fellowship with Him through forgiveness of sin.

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רעה ישראל

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Subscription Price 50c. a Year.

VOL 39 - No. 3 NOVEMBER, 1955

א מערקווירדיקער פאל פון דיסקרימינאציע סאלאמאן בירנבוים

פאר יידן. האָבן דען יידן און קריסטן אנדערע זענען זיי דען אזוי פארשידן אז דאָס וואָס איז שפּייז פאר איינעם איז גיפּט פארן אנדערן? אזא לערע איז געפערלעך, וואָרעם עס עפנט אויף די טירן פאר דאָס שלעכטע וועלכעס מיר באַמיען זיך צו באַקעמפּן."

"מיר גוים וואָלטן קיינמאל נישט געווען געהערט פון א נייעם טעסטאַמענט וואָלטן יידן אונז נישט דערציילט דערפון. א יודישער נביא איז געווען דער ערשטער וועלכער האָט וועגן דעם נביאות געזאָגט. דערנאָך זענען געקומען יודישע פּרעדיקער, און גערייזט איבער דער גאַנצער דעמאָלט באַקאַנטער וועלט, און האָבן אונז באַווויגן עס אָנצונעמען, וואָרעם דורך דעם איז די נאָך פון גאָט אַנטפּלעקט געוואָרן נישט נאָר פאר יידן אָבער פאר אלע מענטשן. דאָך היינטצוטאָג ווען מיר דערמאָנען דעם נייעם טעסטאַמענט פאר יידן, הייבן זיי אויף די הענט מיט שרעק און שרייען: נין, נין! עס איז נישט פאר אונז; מיר ווייסן נאָרנישט וועגן דעם. מיר ווילן מיט דעם נאָרנישט האָבן צו טון." וואָס איז דען אזוינס מיטן נייעם טעסטאַמענט אז זיי זאָלן אזוי שטאַרק זיין דאַקענן דעם? איז עס אַפּשר די לערע? הערט אַן אויסצוג פון דעם בוך:

געווען באַאיינפלוסט מיט פאַראורטייל קעגן יידן. זיי האָבן באַהויפטעט אז זייער אַנטשיידונג איז א פּולקאם יושרדיקע לויט די פאַרדינסטן פון יעדן פאל.

דער יודישער הויפט־רעדנער איז געוואָרן אויפ־געבראַכט. "סאַרא יושר איז דאָס," האָט ער גע־פּאָדערט, "צו געבן יעדן א פּולק אַקער לאַנד אחוץ אונז, און דערפאַר וויל מיר זענען יידן גיט מען אונז נאָר א האַלבן אַקער? ווו איז דער יושר?" דער שטאַט פּרעזעס האָט אויפגעקלערט. "די זאך איז אזוי די קריסטן ווי איר ווייסט, גלויבן אין דער גאַנצן ביבעל, וואָס אַנטהאַלט דעם אַלטן טעם־טאַמענט (תנ"ך) און דעם נייעם. איר, אָבער, וואָס האַלט די יודישע רעליגיעזן, גלויבט נאָר אינם אַלטן טעסטאַמענט — דאָס הייסט, א האַלבן ביבעל. דאָריבער האָט דער שטאַט־ראַט גערעכנט אז עס איז יושרדיק אז איר זאָלט נאָר האָבן א האַלבן שטח פאר אייער רעליגיעזן אין פאַרגלויך מיט די קריסטן."

"אָבער מיר גלויבן נישט אין א האַלבן ביבעל!" האָט דער יודישער וואָרטפירער פאַרלייקנט. "פאר אונז איז תורת משה מיט די נביאים די גאַנצע ביבעל. עס איז די איינציקע ביבעל וועלכע גאָט האָט אונז געגעבן. דער נייער טעסטאַמענט קען זיין גוט פאר די קריסטן, אָבער נישט פאר אונז יידן. גאָט האָט אונז קיינמאל נישט געהייסן גלויבן אין א נייעם טעסטאַמענט."

אין דעם מאָמענט איז א מיטגליד פונם שטאַט־ראַט אויפגעשטאַנען און אזוי געזאָגט: "ווי איר וועט זיך דערמאָנען, בין איך געווען דער איינציקער וואָס האָט נישט מיטגעשטימט ווען די זאך איז אַנטשיידן געוואָרן. איך האַלט אז מען דאַרף יידן באַהאַנדלען פונקט אזויווי קריסטן. א רעליגיעזן אין אירע נויטבאַדערפנישן קאָנען נישט אַנטשיידן ווערן לויט די צאָל בלעטער פון א בוך — מעג עס אפילו זיין אזא בוך ווי די ביבעל."

ווי ער האָט נישט איינגעשטימט

"דאָך, איך שטים נישט איון מיטן יודישן וואָרט־פירער וועלכער זאָגט אז דער ברית הדרשה (נייער טעסטאַמענט) קען זיין גוט פאר קריסטן אָבער נישט

נישט אין עס אין איינע פון די נייע, שנעל־וואַקסענדע שטעט פון זיד אַפריקע.

א צאָל יודישע פאַמיליעס האָבן זיך אויך באַזעצט אין דעם געגנט, און אין א געוויסן טאָג האָבן זיי אַנטשיידן אז עס איז שוין די העכסטע צייט צו בויען א שול.

נאַכפּאָלגנדיק דעם ביישפּיל פון אנדערע רעליגיעזע קערפערשאַפטן אין זייער ראַיאָן, האָבן זיי אוועקגעשיקט א רעלעגאַציע צו דער שטאַט פאר־וואַלטונג אז מען זאָל זיי געבן א שטיקל לאַנד פאר דעם צוועק.

די באַפּטיסטן און די פּרעסביטעריאַנער און אַנדערע רעליגיעזע קערפערשאַפטן זענען שוין געווען פאַר זיי און יעדער פון זיי האָט שוין געקרוגן אין אַקער לאַנד פארן אויפבויען פון א קירכע, א שולע און אנדערע באַהוועמלעכקייטן וועלכע זענען נויטיק פארן גוט פון זייערע באַזונדערע רעליגיעזע איי־טערעסן.

נאַטירלעך האָט די יודישע רעלעגאַציע דערוואָרט־טעט אז זייער בקשה וועט נישט דערפילט ווערן און אז זיי וועלן באַקומען דעמולעבן שטח לאַנד פאר זייערע רעליגיעזע נויטווענדקייטן.

נאָר א האַלבן אַקער לאַנד

צו זייער דערשטוינונג, אָבער, האָט די שטאַט פאַרוואַלטונג זיי נישט געוואָלט געבן מער ווי א האַלבן אַקער לאַנד.

נאַטירלעך, די יידן זענען געווען ביטער אַנט־טוישט. "פאַרוואָס?" האָבן זיי געפּרעגט. "איז דען אונזער רעליגיעזן נישט אזוי גוט ווי זייערע? זענען מיר דען נידעריקער פון די קריסטן? עס שיינט קלאָר אז עס איז א פאל פון דיסקרימינאַציע!" און זיי האָבן א גרד געטאָן נישט צו רוען ביז יושר וועט געפונען ווערן פאר דער קרוודע וואָס איז זיי אָנגעטון געוואָרן.

א פאַר טעג שפּעטער איז די יודישע רעלעגאַציע ווידער אוועק צו דער שטאַט פאַרוואַלטונג און געוואַרט אויפן פּרעזעס און זיין ראַט כדי אויפ־טענהן פאר אים זייער באַלידיקונג.

דער שטאַט ראַט האָט אָפּגעוואָרפן די באַשולדיג־קונג אז זיי האָבן עס אזוי געטון ווייל זיי זענען