

Shechinah '78

by Bob Wright

Date Line: Stonybrook, Long Island, New York

"Jewish Evangelism, God's Challenge for 1978" read the headline of a recent article in Christian Herald, a leading evangelical magazine. This was prophetic as the "Shechinah '78" Conference on Jewish Evangelism sponsored by B'nai Yeshua was coming under extreme attack. The week before the conference in mid-June brought a three pronged effort to bring discredit upon the gathering and close it down. The first of these attacks centered on Ruth Carter Stapleton, sister of President Jimmy Carter. The significance of her appearance as the scheduled keynote speaker and the recognition it would have provided the evangelistic effort among the Jewish population on Long Island was too much to go unchallenged. Various political and economically powerful organizations such as the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the National Council of Churches used every means of pressure available to force her cancellation. They were successful; she cancelled.

The second prong of the attack upon B'nai Yeshua came by way of a violent frontal attack by the Jewish Defence League. The JDL, as they are popularly called, sent twenty of its fanatic and militant storm troopers into the first public meeting to bring disruption and spue hatred. These fanatics interrupted keynote speaker Jamie Buckingham's message with shouts from the audience and finally were given the microphone for their promise to leave the meeting. For five minutes Howard Barbanel, the JDL's National Student Director, spoke threats. They were bent on denying B'nai Yeshua the right to exist. Strange isn't it that a group who demand the right of the Jews to exist would themselves demand that some other people not exist, namely the Hebrew-Christians. The news media on the scene accurately reported it to be a confrontation between love and hate, between raised hands in prayer and clenched fists in anger. "This house of slime, this house of profanity will never be allowed to exist. This is just the beginning of the JDL campaign to eradicate the bastard movement. We consider you whores and traitors to your people," he said. "This is just the beginning. The burning of this building will be the end." After he spoke, the protestors left the building as they had agreed but refused to leave the grounds whereupon they were arrested by Suffolk County policemen.

The third prong of the attack was quieter. Sponsored by the Long Island Board of Rabbis, a reported 1300 Jews assembled in the North Shore Jewish Center in the neighboring town of East Setauket. The Rev. Jack Alford, executive director of the Long Island Council of Churches attended this gathering, supported the Board of Rabbis who opposed the evangelism of Jews. The theme of this meeting was to preserve "traditional ties" and denounce "Shechinah 78" and B'nai Yeshua.

Mike Evans the leader of B'nai Yeshua stated at a press conference that there is no contradiction between being Jewish and being a Jew who has accepted Jesus as Messiah. He said, "You cannot go 20 feet onto our property without seeing a sign which says we are Jews who have accepted the Messiah. We take offense at being called ex-Jews. We don't believe we've done anything to destroy our Jewishness." This was in answer to the theme of all the attacks upon B'nai Yeshua and "Shechinah 78" which had at their core the strong position that if a Jew became a believer in Jesus as Messiah they ceased to exist as Jews.

This reporter has investigated B'nai Yeshua and has extensively interviewed its staff members, living for 13 days in close fellowship with Mike Evans, the movement's leader. The observations and conclusions gained were that the B'nai Yeshua ministry is in the center of what God is saying to the church today. We of New Life Journal endorse B'nai Yeshua and encourage them in their ministry among God's natural olive branches whom He is seeking to graft into Jesus, the true vine.

The national wire services carried a report on Wednesday evening June 27th that the JDL reportedly broke into a private home on Long Island and "beat up" the Hebrew Christians that had gathered together to worship God. Pray for our fellow believers, the Hebrew Christians and particularly B'nai Yeshua (Brothers of Jesus). They are on the front-line in a spiritual battle, and need our support.



