

[R1302 : page 69]

JOS. RABINOWITZ AND HIS MISSION TO ISRAEL

THE REPORT OF THE LONDON COUNCIL FOR AIDING HIS WORK, FOR THE YEAR 1890.

During the last few months the persecutions and sufferings of the Jews in Russia have called forth the deep sympathy of the English nation. No philanthropist can read the descriptions of their manifold and severe trials without profound pity. To the student of God's Word they suggest solemn thoughts. They remind him both of the "severity of God," and of the wonderful purpose of mercy, which will finally be made manifest. The condition of Israel is, indeed, very sad; yet amidst all the political, social, moral and physical evils which oppress them, we can see the upholding and sheltering faithfulness of the God of Abraham; we can trace indications of the blessed influence of the law of God, which they still reverence and study; and we have reason to hope that in the furnace of affliction some are led to inquire into the meaning of God's dealings with his people during the long period of their exile. We are thankful that at a time like the present the testimony of our dear Brother Joseph Rabinowitz continues to go forth with great clearness and [R1303 : page 69] power. And while the injustice and cruelty which they suffer must greatly deepen and embitter the opposition of the Jews to Christianity, the present distress seems to incline many to listen eagerly to the voice of one of their brethren, who, filled with a deep love to his nation, directs them to Jesus, as to the promised Messiah, and unfolds to them the testimony of Scripture.

Since the publication of our last statement, the new Hall has been finished, in which the meetings of the Congregation of the New Covenant are to be held.

The following document, in the Hebrew language, was placed in the foundation stone, and will be read with deep interest by all who love Israel and pray for the conversion of God's people:

"1. Every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God." – Heb. 3:4.

"2. The stone which the builders rejected has become the head-stone of the corner." – Psa. 118:22.

"3. Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." – Zech. 4:6. [R1303 : page 70]

"4. The foundation of this house to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who forever reigneth over the house of Jacob, was laid by a Hebrew, Joseph, son of David Rabinowitz, on the coronation day of the exalted Emperor of Russia (may he prolong his days and be prosperous), on the 15th day of May, by the help and money support contributed by the brethren in the Lord that dwell at London, Edinburgh and Glasgow, in the land of Great Britain, in order to preserve (literally, *increase*) the name and remembrance of that dear man and servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Rev. A. N. Somerville, D.D., who, in his great love towards the Jews, came in the month of February, 1888, and visited Rabinowitz in the city of Kischineff to hear from his mouth the word which he proclaimeth to the Jews.

"Tuesday, the 15th day of the 5th month, May, 1890 years since the birth of the Messiah, in the city of Bethlehem, Judah."

In a letter dated November 6th, Mr. Rabinowitz gives the following retrospect of the last six years:

"The beginning of my labors among Israel was not owing to the influence of any church or person, but solely through the grace, compassion and love of God, which convinced me that the

synagogue and the wisdom of the Jews were utterly unable to bring help to our nation, and that the only salvation was in Jesus Christ, who is the Redeemer of each individual soul and the Messiah of Israel. This direct and personal origin of my labors has given to them a peculiar character, different from the ordinary missionary methods, and providentially the method thus assigned to me is more in accordance with the political and legal condition of Russia.

"My one desire from the beginning was to bring my brethren into contact with the words of Christ, which are spirit and life, that by the power of the Holy Spirit they may believe in Jesus, the Son of the living God.

"In order to lead my brethren, who were languishing in the exhausted atmosphere of the synagogue, to the reviving fountain of the divine Word, as we possess it in the Scriptures, it was necessary to possess a meeting-place, separated from the synagogue and distinct from the existing churches.

"It seems a small thing in itself, but it is of great importance to the work of evangelization, that by God's mercy the Russian Government has allowed us to meet as a congregation of Israelites of the New Covenant and to build a hall for our services. For six years we have met, and in the same place the services have been held, and I can now trace the effects on the synagogue and on the churches.

"The synagogue excommunicated me in 1884, and the Jewish papers predicted that I would have no hearers except my brother. Instead of this my Hall has been a centre, where every Saturday public services are attended by a large number of Jewish men, women, and youths, to listen to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to worship the Father in the name of our Lord.

"The synagogue notices that the Hebrew language, which is still regarded by the Jewish nation as sacred, is at present more in

the service and to the glory of the Gospel, than of the Talmud and Judaism. My hearers openly express their conviction that they never heard before the true meaning of Scripture. We can see indications of misgivings on the part of the synagogue that Israel is about to free itself from the fetters of Talmudism and to follow the example of us children of the New Covenant. One leading member of the Jewish synagogue congratulated me cordially, when he saw our beautiful new Hall, and wished me success in my work, adding: 'I am convinced that our leaders are in error and unable to help us.' Another earnest Jew, when he entered our Hall, exclaimed, 'This does feel like a holy place.' (Ex. 3:5.) This impression is not confined to Kischineff and Bessarabia, but it is throughout the whole of Russia, as is evident from letters received by me from earnest Israelites in all parts of our Empire."

Mr. Rabinowitz explains the difficulties he has had to encounter in maintaining his position of perfect independence from all "churches," and laboring quietly in the simple testimony of Christ to his brethren.

Another feature, noticed by Mr. Rabinowitz, is the remarkable change in the attitude of the Jews toward himself and the other believing Israelites. Instead of the bitter opposition and undisguised contempt of former days, they meet now with respect and kindness. The behavior of the Jews who attend the services is strikingly calm and reverent. The New Testament is read in many houses, and the Lord's prayer offered in Hebrew, and many verses of the New Testament are known by heart. "Some years ago," says Mr. Rabinowitz, "I was pelted with stones and mud by hundreds of Jews, and now, from the highest to the lowest, respect and kindness are shown to me, and there is great willingness to speak on the truths of the Scripture." **[R1303 : page 71]**

During the months when the new Hall was being built, much interest was excited, and it became the occasion of many

discussions on the teaching of Rabinowitz. The fact of a permanent meeting-place being built greatly impressed the Jews, as a sign of his fixed purpose to devote himself to the work of the Gospel among Israel. We can sympathize with our dear brother when he writes: "I cannot describe to you in words the hope that gladdens my heart now I possess this beautiful and quietly situated Hall, and our own printing press. I intend to have, besides the meetings on the Sabbath day, two public meetings during the week for Bible teaching, also to have some classes for young men and conversational meetings with strangers passing through our town."

A very important branch of Mr. Rabinowitz's work is the publication of his interesting and instructive addresses, which are peculiarly adapted to the Jewish mind. Of these pamphlets there have appeared *sixteen* numbers in Hebrew and Jargon. Twenty-seven thousand two hundred copies have been printed, and the stock is nearly exhausted.

The friends of Israel will unite with us in thanksgiving, that the Lord has raised up our brother and upheld him in his important work, which is full of difficulties and daily trials. The Word of God is his strength, and by constant meditation and prayer his own heart is sustained and refreshed, so that he is able to preach Jesus with joyful opening of his lips. We long to hear of far greater blessing, and to see the power of the Word in bringing Israel to repentance and faith.

ADOLPH SAPHIR.
