

Messianic Jews in Pre-War Germany – A Sequel

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At the onset of the pandemic, I presented a paper at the LCJE in which I described my efforts to locate Messianic Jews in pre-war Germany. After three years, I decided to conduct additional research in this area. The following is the result of this research.

A Brief History of the Messianic Jewish Movement in Europe¹

The focus of the following brief overview of the Messianic movement is on Europe. The pieces of information are by no means meant to paint a complete picture but are supplementary to what I researched for my previous paper.

The Enlightenment led many Jews in Europe to convert to Christianity in the typical Catholic or Protestant fashion. Unlike in past centuries, they were not forced to convert, but they identified more with the culture around them than with their Jewish heritage or religious identity. In the “conversion” process, they certainly had to give up both. My great-grandfather, Julius the Bamberger (he came from the Bavarian city of Bamberg), was one of them. He was the son of a door-to-door salesman, Lazarus Loew. In order to become a professor at the university in Munich, my great-grandfather had to be baptized. He chose “the lesser of two evils,” as he put it, and was baptized into the Lutheran Church by Queen Karoline of Baden. To demonstrate that he

¹ Due to the audience’s high level of education and familiarity with the history of the Messianic movement, the overview is concise and focuses on Germany and other European countries. For a comprehensive history of the Messianic movement in Germany, please refer to: Stefanie Pfister, *Messianische Juden in Deutschland – Eine historische und religionssoziologische Untersuchung* (Berlin, Germany: LIT Verlag, 2016).

had escaped the shackles of religion, he chose the surname Neumann—Newman—signifying that he was now a new man.

My great-grandfather's baptism only meant entry into the upper echelons of academia and had nothing to do with saving faith. But even Jews who came to believe in Jesus as the Messiah during the 1700s and 1800s did not form their own congregations but instead were absorbed primarily into the Lutheran Church, and less frequently into the Catholic Church.

In Germany, one of the pioneers in the outreach to the Jewish communities was the scholar, historian, and Hebraist Johann Christoph Wagenseil (1633–1705). He promoted a peaceful outreach to the Jews, which he described in his book *Hope in the Redemption of Israel*, published in 1705. It must be said that Wagenseil was not completely kosher, as he did not distance himself from the anti-Semitic Catholic belief that Jewish literature is fundamentally blasphemous and “anti-Christian.”

A more biblical approach to the Jewish communities was developed by the German Protestant theologian Nikolas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760). He was most likely the first scholar in Europe to advocate for a pastorate that did not forbid, on principle, believing in the gospel message while also observing some Jewish practices. Zinzendorf founded a Jewish kehillah (congregation) in Moravia. He invited Jewish followers of Yeshua to observe Yom Kippur and some Shabbat rituals in his church.

Zinzendorf's unique approach to Messianic faith ushered in a paradigm shift in the traditional understanding of Jewish-Christian relations in Europe. Jewish believers were no longer asked either to follow Jewish traditions and therefore reject Yeshua or to believe in

Yeshua and therefore reject Jewish rituals. This sensitivity to Jewish identity energized the Messianic Jewish movement in Europe.

The first authentic Messianic congregation in Germany was founded in Hamburg in 1845. Another forty years later, Joseph Rabinowitz (1837–1899) founded a Messianic synagogue in Bessarabia (Eastern Europe). After coming to saving faith in Messiah, Rabinowitz insisted on his Jewish identity, saying, “I have two subjects with which I am absorbed: one, the Lord Jesus Christ; the other, Israel.”² For the rest of his life, Rabinowitz would struggle with the question of the identity of Messianic believers. His Messianic movement emphasized its independence from the Christianity of the larger church. Eventually, Rabinowitz became known as the Herzl of the Messianic movement. His Congregation of Israelites of the New Covenant was active in Romania, Hungary, and Russia.

These broad strokes of history only scratch the surface, but they show that the gospel was reaching Jewish people in Europe in an increasingly Jewish way. Generally speaking, the Messianic movement collapsed in Europe in 1939 with the escalating persecution of the Jews. However, there were pockets of Messianic believers who continued to openly share their faith in Yeshua in a very Jewish way. One of them was Abram Poljak.

Abram Poljak

Although Abram Poljak published an abundance of works, his autobiography is scant. He was born in Ukraine in 1900 to two Jewish parents. He was the grandson of a Russian rabbi, and his

² James W. Goll, *The Coming Israel Awakening: Gazing Into the Future of the Jewish People and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2009), p. 88.

family was very religious. That didn't stop the parents from hiring a Russian Orthodox nanny for their children.

Poljak's first memory of the Messiah developed when he was four years old. His nanny took him to church. He became obsessed with the cross and the man who hung on it. However, he was soon subjected to pogroms, and his family fled to Germany. At school, he was persecuted for being Jewish, and he quickly became embittered—until the day he read Tolstoy.

In his autobiography, Poljak explained:

Tolstoy showed me a Christianity I had not held to be possible. I thought that Christians learned from Jesus to murder Jews and torment Jewish children at school. But in Tolstoy's books I read that Jesus taught boundless love. In order to learn the true teaching of Christ, I bought a New Testament and began reading the Gospel of Matthew. I did not understand the first chapters and looked gloomily at the Bible's tiny letters. But hardly had I begun reading the fifth chapter, the Sermon on the Mount, when my heart opened and gave itself unconditionally to the Master of Nazareth.³

This marked the beginning of Poljak's faith search. He consulted a rabbi, who told him that Jesus was not really the problem for the Jewish community, but Paul was. This allowed Poljak to continue his search, and eventually, he met a group of believers whose understanding of the Scriptures had a profound impact on him:

³ Abram Poljak, *Bram: The Life and Wisdom of Messianic Jewish Pioneer Abram Poljak in his Own Words* (Marshfield, MO: Vine of David, 1976), p. 13.

Scales fell from my eyes. Now I saw Yeshua inwardly and outwardly—the Master of love, the Lord of grace, the Redeemer of the world, the Son of God and the King of the Jews! The One in everything and everything in the One: the King of the Jews.⁴

Career

Poljak’s parents had hoped that he would follow in the footsteps of his grandfather and become a rabbi, but his marriage to a Gentile woman put an end to his career in Rabbinic Judaism. He studied philosophy instead.

He had been politically active in Jewish organizations, rising through the ranks to positions of leadership. However, after his wedding in 1924, he left the “Jewish sphere,” as he called it. Still, in the summer semester of 1927, he continued to lecture on Jewish topics, such as Zionism, at the *Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum* in Leipzig, Germany.⁵ The purpose of this institute was to teach Judaism in order to prepare Gentile believers for their missionary activities among the Jews. In the same year, Poljak published his first book, *Between Man and God*.

⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

⁵ The Institutum Judaicum was a special academic program designed to prepare Protestant theologians for missionary work among Jews. The first of its kind was established at the University of Halle in 1724 by Professor Callenberg. The Lutheran theologian and Hebraist Franz Delitzsch (1813–1890) developed a keen interest in the outreach to the Jewish community, which prompted him to establish a similar course at the University of Leipzig in 1886, and Prof. Hermann L. Strack (1848–1922) did the same in Berlin the same year. The institutes of Leipzig and Berlin offered courses in New Testament theology with reference to Messianic passages in the Old Testament, as well as instruction in rabbinic literature. They also published works helpful to their cause, such as biographies of prominent converts, controversial pamphlets, and occasionally scientific tracts. The institute in Berlin published the book *Introduction to the Talmud* by Strack, his editions of certain tractates of the Mishnah, and a monograph on the blood accusation. Its publications are distinguished by the New Testament in Hebrew and Yiddish translations. After Strack’s passing, the Institutum Judaicum shifted its focus from missionary work to research on post-biblical Judaism. Under pressure from Jewish scholars such as Joachim Jeremias, research was contextualized in an effort to comprehend Christian-Jewish relations in the aftermath of anti-Semitism in the 20th century and the effects of World War II.

Eventually, Poljak became a journalist and worked as such until the age of 30, when the Nazis forced his dismissal.

Political Engagement and Escape to Palestine

Between 1930 and 1933, Poljak was a member of the German Social Democratic Party and openly opposed the Nazi Party. He also founded a communist organization that included elements of faith. In 1933, this organization was disbanded, and Poljak was arrested. The threat of Nazism to the Jews, which he had already perceived in his political activities, was confirmed by his imprisonment.

Due to an error in his paperwork, he was miraculously released from prison and immediately fled to France, and from there to Palestine. He arrived in Haifa in December 1934. By January 1935, he had reached Jerusalem.

When he went to Palestine, he had a very specific mission in mind: to establish a safe haven for Jewish believers in the Messiah. Had his plans been successful, his community would have resembled a kibbutz, founded on the principles of Yeshua and His teachings, as well as some communist ideals.

Poljak himself defined his motivation to do what he did by what he called “the triad of his soul”: faith in Yeshua, Jewish Christianity, and Palestine. He said that only in this “triad” was he able to think.

Failure and Return to Europe

In Palestine, Poljak encountered several influential Jewish believers, such as Rabbi Moshe Immanuel ben Meir (1905–1978) and Rabbi Daniel Zion (1883–1979). The meeting with ben Meir, in particular, would have long-term consequences for him, as will be seen shortly.

Apparently, Poljak was endowed with a very magnetic personality. He was a visionary and a leader. Nevertheless, his attempts to build a safe haven for Jewish believers in Palestine failed. In 1936, he left for Vienna.

Publications

In July of that year, his first seminal work was published under the title *Jewish Christians in the Holy Land*. Half a year later, another book was released, this one under the title *The Jewish Christian Community*. The cover of this book depicts the symbol of a cross within a Star of David—and now you know where this symbol began making its way into the world. In March of 1937, a third publication came out under the title *The Cross in the Star of David*. Shortly after, all three books were combined, edited, and republished under the same title but with this new Jewish symbol on the cover.

Founding of the Jewish Christian Union

Also in 1937, Poljak went to Switzerland, where he founded what he called “a religiously neutral, purely humanitarian organization.”⁶ The name of this organization was “The International Association for Jewish Christian Settlement in Palestine.”

⁶ Poljak, *Bram*, p. 61.

In the fall of 1937, Poljak visited London and founded the Jewish Christian Union. The vision that had been planted in Jerusalem three years earlier now flourished in England.

While Poljak was a strong leader, he was constantly looking for other Jewish believers to assume leadership positions. Because of Britain's significant role in Palestine, he believed that the headquarters of his organization should be in England. So, he began searching for a mature believer to lead it. He found this person in the Reverend Dr. Paul Levertoff, a Jewish Anglican priest.⁷ That year, Levertoff joined the Jewish Christian Union and became its president. He was largely responsible for the rapid growth of the organization in England.

Paul Levertoff

Poljak described Levertoff as a middle-aged man with dark hair, a beard, and sympathetic features—a typical high-ranking Jew. The tallit Levertoff wore during services was held together in front by a blue *Magen David* brooch. The Anglican Eucharistic robe he also had to wear was hidden beneath his tallit. Levertoff would deliver portions of his sermons in Hebrew. This figure, who was both rabbi and priest, garnered considerable attention in England.

Poljak explained Levertoff's mission in the following manner:

He rescued the Jewish Christian idea by uniting it to an ancient Christian tradition and placing it within the ordered forms of a securely founded church... Levertoff had a historic task to fulfill. He could go no other way. He thus showed a twofold courage: courage in the face of the Christians in erecting a synagogue within the

⁷ Paul Philipp Levertoff was born in Orsha, Belarus, to Saul and Batya Levertoff, sometime between 1875 and 1878. His family came from a Sephardic background, whose religious persuasion was Hassidic. He may have been the descendant of Rabbi Schneur Zalman. He helped translate the Zohar into English for Soncino Press and was a major pioneer in the Messianic Jewish movement of his time. For detailed information about his life, see: Jorge Quiñónez, "Paul Phillip Levertoff: Pioneering Hebrew-Christian Scholar and Leader," *Mishkan*, 37 (2002), pp. 21-34.

church and courage in the face of the Jews by setting up his synagogue with the church.⁸

Levertoff did not assimilate into Gentile Christianity, but he also did not separate himself from the church. Poljak, on the other hand, became increasingly persuaded that Jewish believers had to align themselves with Judaism rather than Christianity. Eventually, this would become the dividing line between Poljak and Levertoff.⁹

Trying to Find Support in the US

After delegating the leadership of the Jewish Christian Union to Levertoff, Poljak crossed the ocean to America. In the United States, he tried to set up an American branch of the Jewish Christian Union. He also hoped that the American churches would help him raise the necessary funds to establish a Jewish Christian colony in Palestine. He informed as many people as he could of the danger the Jews faced in Germany. In his autobiography, he described the end of this endeavor in four words: “I had no success.”¹⁰

Separation from Levertoff and Arrest

Poljak returned to England. By now, it had become clear that Levertoff wanted to incorporate the Jewish Christian Union as a missions branch into the Anglican Church. Disagreeing with Levertoff’s vision, Poljak removed him from his leadership position. In 1939, he changed the name of his organization from Jewish Christian Union to Jewish Christian Community.¹¹

⁸ Poljak, *Bram*, pp. 68-69.

⁹ Of interest to some readers may be the fact that Levertoff was highly respected by the International Hebrew Christian Alliance (IHCA), although he was never entirely associated with the Alliance itself (see: Quiñónez, “Paul Phillip Levertoff,” p. 29). As for Poljak, I was unable to find any connection at all between him and the Alliance.

¹⁰ Poljak, *Bram*, p. 73.

¹¹ In an article on the different creeds of Messianic Jews, Gershon Nerel elaborated on Poljak’s most basic vision: “From the outset, Abram Poljak emphasized that the future of Jewish Christian communities had to remain

Then the war began. In 1940, Poljak was arrested in England on the grounds of being a German citizen. He was locked up in camps on the Isle of Man and in Canada and remained behind barbed wire until 1944.

Return to Palestine

After the war, Poljak traveled to Palestine, where he reconnected with Moshe Immanuel ben Meir. By this time, ben Meir had become one of the most prominent personalities in the Messianic movement in Israel.

Ben Meir and Poljak shared the opinion that Jewish believers should be kept distinct within the larger church. What this really meant for Poljak is explained in the following exchange he had with a journalist:

“[I am] a Jewish Christian,” ... “Why do you emphasize ‘Jewish’?” ... ‘First of all because there are English, German, and Russian Christians, and second because I assume from your question that you make a difference between Jews and Christians. If you had asked me whether I am a German, I would have said simply ‘no’, because I’m not a German but a Jew. Here, there is actually a national difference. But if you make a difference between Jews and Christians, the way I understand things I cannot accept a radical division and must answer as my conscience demands... My Christianity is also a Jewish duty. For the New Testament belongs to the Old, it is one. Jesus is a Jew, our spiritual king, the

“communities,’ and not develop into a ‘church.’ Often Poljak spoke about a unique ‘Jewish Christianity’ that ought to be and remain a *movement* and not to become an established national organization, ‘a state within a state.’ On the other hand, however, in the late 1930s Poljak anticipated that in the near future Jewish Christian communities would arise in Palestine and elsewhere, and thus, the Jewish People would get their church.” (See: Gershon Nerel, “Creeds among Jewish Believers in Yeshua between the World Wars,” *Mishkan*, 34 (2001), p. 74.)

fulfillment of the Jewish law of destiny, the salvation of the Jewish spirit. The revelation of world history begins with Moses' words, "In the beginning God created" and ends with... "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!" These words end the Jewish Bible, God's gift of grace to his chosen people, the gift of our people to mankind. Let us not tear the first and the second apart, for thus we separate the soul from the body, and we need both.¹²

Operation Mercy

A significant turning point in the history of the Messianic Jewish community in Palestine was Operation Mercy, the evacuation of Messianic Jews in April and May of 1948, at the end of the British Mandate. As you probably all know, during this operation, at least one hundred Jewish believers left Palestine. Some of them viewed the evacuation as God's grace that saved them from an imminent threat, namely, the first Arab-Israeli war.

Those who chose to stay in the newly formed State of Israel thought that God's grace was shown precisely **with** the rebirth of the nation, following the horrific events of World War II. Poljak and ben Meir urged other Jewish believers to stay despite the danger this decision posed. Poljak recalled the Prophets and wrote the following:

"He who believes does not flee!" Stay in the land! Close ranks! Let us serve one another! If we must go hungry, let us be hungry together, and if we must die, we will die together. There is no fairer death than that on the way of faith in the Holy land. Let us give thanks to God that he has given us an opportunity to prove our

¹² Frederico Dal Bo, "The Theological and Cultural Challenges of Messianic Jews. Towards a New Jewish Paradigm?" *PaRDeS – Zeitschrift der Vereinigung für Jüdische Studien e.V., Jesus in den Jüdischen Kulturen des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Heft 21 (2015), Universitätsverlag Potsdam, p. 46.

faith, our sincerity and faithfulness and to glorify the name of Christ in Israel—in the hour of need!¹³

Despite the presence of Poljak and ben Meir, the Messianic Jewish movement in Israel began to drift apart. Some believers who stayed in Jerusalem during the 1948 siege broke away from the original Messianic congregation and founded an autonomous Jewish Christian fellowship in the city. It began moving toward more liberal doctrines. The community gradually assimilated into the Gentile church and started to follow the standard Gentile church policies. For Poljak, this development was a threat to the Messianic Jewish community in Israel, and he fought against it. But when he saw that he could not stop the developments, he left Israel and returned to Germany in 1950.

Thus, Poljak left the land of his ancestors to return to a land of death and destruction. He did so with the goal to share the Jewishness of Yeshua and his vision for Messianic Judaism with the German people. In 1951, he founded the Messianic Jewish Community of Möttlingen, a small town in the southwest of Germany. He continued writing books and became a fairly well-known speaker in independent churches. He continued his work until his death in 1963.

Theology

As mentioned, Poljak's main goal was to keep Jewish believers distinguishable within the larger church. In addition, he believed in a few other interesting doctrines.

For example, Poljak strongly believed in divine providence. In this context, he asserted that Hitler had a divinely determined historical mission:

¹³ Ibid., p. 49.

Our belief that Hitler is merely a tool of Satan leaves the question unanswered. Instead, we should direct the question toward God. The “tools of Satan” and Satan himself are ultimately dependent upon God. Nothing in the heavens, in hell, or on earth happens without God’s knowledge and permission. So also, Hitler is, in the final analysis, like Nebuchadnezzar, “a servant of God” (Jeremiah 27:6), a scourge in the hand of God.

His war against Judaism and Christianity has been decreed. If we find ourselves in the hands of Satan, it is not God, but our sins that have driven us there. God does not create these clouds of misfortune; we do. We bring down punishment, and punishment comes to correct us from walking the wrong paths...

The crooked path is assimilation, the desire of the Jewish people to no longer be Jews, but to be reckoned as Germans. The Jews and Germany are not suffering today because they are bad Germans, as the Nazis maintain, but because they were too good at being Germans. In reality, the assimilated Jews have sacrificed everything for Germany, even truth itself and their own honor...

They even took German names for themselves. And as if that were not enough for them, they were baptized and changed to own family names. So it was that a Kohen became a Mr. Karsten, and a Levy became a Mr. Ley. Instead of the Hanukkah, they took a Christmas tree. The assimilated Jews wanted to forget Jerusalem completely. However, “If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget her skill” (Psalm 137:5).

And they forgot!¹⁴

In summary of this quotation, Poljak interpreted the Holocaust as a straightforward cause-and-effect relationship. Having studied under Dr. Fruchtenbaum, I personally believe that the Holocaust (like all other persecutions of the Jews in the last 2,000 years) was indeed permitted by God and was ultimately the result of Israel's rejection of Yeshua's Messiahship. Poljak, on the other hand, attributed the Holocaust to the assimilation of Jews into European societies. I do not agree with this conclusion.

The Demonic Background of Hitler's Rise to Power

Be it as it may, Poljak clearly understood something that has often been neglected in biographies about Hitler: the spiritual background of the Holocaust. Even today, most theologians and historians spend too much time studying the political and social factors that led to the rise of Nazism in Germany and not enough time learning about Hitler's spiritual role models.

Hitler had extensive contact with occult and esoteric groups in Germany and Austria before the war. In 1949, way ahead of his time, Abram Poljak wrote his particular evaluation of Hitler and titled it *Hitler: Warlord and Spiritualist*. Poljak claimed that Hitler had come into contact with occultism through the spiritualist and Nazi Arthur Dinter and his book *The Sin Against the Blood*.¹⁵ A spirit by the name of "Blessing Bringer" is said to have ordained Hitler as the messiah of the German people.¹⁶

¹⁴ Poljak, *Bram*, pp. 53-54.

¹⁵ See: Abram Poljak, *Hitler – Warlord and Spiritualist* (Marshfield, MO: Vine of David, 2019), p. 19.

¹⁶ See: *Ibid.*, p. 17.

According to Poljak, Hitler also used an Austrian psychic, who revealed to him the thoughts and intentions of political opponents. Poljak further claimed that Hitler himself was a medium who remained in lively conversation with his spiritual leaders after they had died.¹⁷

It must be said that Poljak did not offer verifiable proof of all of his claims, and much research still has to be done in this field. At the same time, for any student of the Bible, it is clear that Satan hates the Jewish people and will try his all to eliminate them. Hitler was a willing vessel.¹⁸ He was a loser on all accounts, easy to be filled by whatever demonic entity it was that would come over him.¹⁹ But ultimately, like Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus Epiphanes, and the future Antichrist, Hitler was a tool in God's hands, and out of the ashes of the Holocaust, Israel was reborn.²⁰

Clear Eschatology

As has been stated numerous times, Poljak wanted Jewish believers to stand out within the larger church. His view of Messianic Jews had a lot to do with his view of eschatology. During my research, I came across the following definition of the expression "Messianic Jews," offered by the German Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Potsdam, Nathanael Riemer: "A

¹⁷ See: *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

¹⁸ The concept of Hitler as an empty vessel was first brought to my attention by German journalist and historian Sebastian Haffner, who described Hitler in these terms in his 1979 biography of the dictator (Sebastian Haffner. *The Meaning of Hitler: Hitler's Use of Power, His Successes and Failures*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1979). Sir Ian Kershaw, a British historian, was another biographer who thought along these lines (Ian Kershaw. *Hitler: A Biography*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2000). Of importance is the fact that neither biographer approached Hitler from a biblical perspective, which means that their conclusions did not come from the notion of Satan using a person for his own purposes, as Poljak would have understood it.

¹⁹ Poljak described the situation quite well when he wrote: "Those who heard Hitler speak, and more important, those who saw him speak know that in the first minutes he often hesitated and searched for words. His face seemed tired, and his eyes flickered. That was Hitler. But suddenly he stretched, his eyes became clear and shining, his face bold, thoughts and words poured out, and a magic power streamed from him, grasping even those who were not his adherents. This was no longer Hitler; he became a medium for Segenbringer ["Blessing Bringer"]. That was the secret of the leader who was being led" (Poljak, *Hitler*, pp. 18-19).

²⁰ For a thorough analysis of Satan's war against the Jews, see: Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah – A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2020).

closer look at the overall phenomenon reveals that this is one of many modern cultures of life and piety that today might be described as ‘religious queer’ rather than ‘syncretism.’”²¹ Poljak would have objected to this claim on all accounts. He did not believe that Messianic Jews were religious queers, nor did he believe in the idea of syncretism. He strongly believed that the growth of the Messianic movement was a sign that Yeshua would soon come back and set up His kingdom. Poljak wrote: “We ... are signs of the times, pointing to Messiah in an era far away from Messiah. Therein lies our calling, the assignment of the Messianic Jewish community—the huge task of a small community.”²²

Conclusion

Some ministries that promote Torah observance, even among Gentiles, have used Poljak as a poster boy for their teachings. We at Ariel Ministries distance ourselves from these ministries. Only because Poljak wanted to see Messianic Jews stand out within the larger church as a distinguishable entity, it does not mean that he advocated for a separation of Gentile and Jewish believers. His credo was that “in Christ there are ‘neither Jews nor Greeks.’ ... Jewish Christian communities must not know any racial discrimination, nor any other earthly divisions... [They] are therefore open to non-Jews with full rights and duties. Non-Jews who excel by special gifts of the Holy Spirit may become leaders of the Jewish Christian communities.”²³ We at Ariel Ministries appreciate that. At the same time, we appreciate Poljak’s zeal to reach the Jewish people with the gospel without forcing them to give up their Jewish identity. Poljak’s theology

²¹ Nathanael Riemer, “Messianische Juden und ihr Beitrag zu deutsch-jüdischen und deutsch-israelischen Begegnungen,” *Juden und Nichtjuden nach der Shoah: Begegnungen in Deutschland*, edited by Stefanie Fischer, Nathanael Riemer and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019), pp. 167-194. Excerpt from p. 170 translated by Christiane Jurik.

²² “Abram Poljak: Prophetic Visionary and Institution-Builder.” *Yachad BeYeshua*. (2022, January 12). <https://www.yachad-beyeshua.org/webinars/january2022>. Accessed on 2/16/2023.

²³ Nerel, “Creeds among Jewish Believers in Yeshua,” p. 74.

does not match ours point for point, and there are certainly doctrinal issues we could bring up. But the main point of this presentation really has less to do with theology than with the following:

We see the passion with which Poljak loved his Savior, the King of the Jews, and we concur with him that the return of Yeshua is imminent. Maranatha, Lord! Please come quickly! But most of all, we appreciate that there was a Jewish believer in Germany who saw the danger his people faced at the hands of the Nazis and actively tried to save some of them. That made Poljak a hero in our eyes, and we are grateful for the example he set.

Appendix: The Creed of Poljak's Jewish Christian Community

In 2001, Gershon Nerel summarized the creed of Poljak's Jewish Christian Community in the following manner:

In 1937 Abram Poljak founded the "Jewish Christian Union," which mainly spread in Switzerland, Poland, Romania, the Baltic States and England. This Union was an international association of Jewish and gentile Christians who wanted to establish the Jewish Christian movement as a branch of the universal Body of Christ. Since January 1939, the name was changed to the Jewish Christian Community, and its organ, with the same name, was published in England. Two other key figures in this movement were Agnes S. Waldstein and Baron Albert von Springer.

From the outset, Abram Poljak emphasized that the future of Jewish Christian communities had to remain "communities," and not develop into a "church." Often Poljak spoke about a unique "Jewish Christianity" that ought to be and remain a *movement* and not to become an established national organization, "a state within a state." On the other hand, however, in the late 1930s Poljak anticipated that in the near future Jewish Christian communities would arise in Palestine and elsewhere, and thus, the Jewish People would get their church.

At the same time, Poljak and his friends formulated independently their own creed, under the heading "Our Belief." This credo included Ten Articles of Faith, as follows:

1. The Bible, i.e. the Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God.
2. Jesus of Nazareth was Spirit from the Spirit of God (The ‘Son of God’). He died for our sins on Calvary, has Risen from the dead and Ascended into Heaven from whence He will come again.
3. There is only One Church, the Body of Christ.
4. Israel, the Jewish people, was, is and remains chosen by God for the carrying out of a spiritual task.
5. God does not want those Jews who believe in Christ, to merge into the nations of their abode.
6. Christian Jews are to be witnesses of Christ in the midst of their Jewish people.
7. Therefore, in Palestine and all the countries where Jews live in masses and have a national life of their own, there ought to come into existence Jewish Christian communities.
8. In Christ there are “neither Jews nor Greeks.” The Jewish Christian communities must not know any racial discrimination, nor any other earthly divisions.
9. The Jewish Christian communities are therefore open to Non-Jews with full rights and duties. Non-Jews who excel by special gifts of the Holy Spirit, may become leaders of the Jewish Christian communities.
10. For its development and well-being the Jewish Christian community needs the prayers of Gentile Christendom. “

Like most JBY [Jewish Believers in Yeshua] of his times, Poljak too underlined the fact that spiritually and theologically there is no difference at all between Jewish and gentile believers in Yeshua. In the same breath, Poljak also stressed that there remains a Jewish distinctiveness in the Messiah. In other words, that normally there exists a *functional* particularity

between Israel, the chosen people, and the other nations. Obviously, this functional differentiation had nothing to do with racial superiority or inferiority. Thus, for example, Poljak also declared that “whatever might be good for the Gentile Christians, it is not good for Jewish Christians. Israel must not be like the nations of the earth.”

It should be noted, however, that the Jewish Christian communities under the leadership of Poljak, Waldstein and Springer were not exclusively Jewish. Thus, unlike the Constitution of the IHCA, which admitted non-Jewish members *only* as associate-members, and with no official positions in its governing committees, the JCC did formally accept non-Jewish believers as full members. This “personnel” difference between the IHCA and the JCC was a clear outcome of their respective creeds.

After the Second World War the JCC continued to develop and expand in Europe and Palestine. It was only after Poljak died in 1963, and was buried in Möttlingen, Germany, that this movement gradually minimized its activities, as there was no younger generation to follow the founders. In Israel they have completely disappeared.²⁴

²⁴ Nerel, “Creeds Among Jewish Believers in Yeshua,” pp. 73-75.