

ETRFI NEWSLETTER

Issue 34

January 2004

THE ECUMENICAL THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH FRATERNITY IN ISRAEL QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Mount Zion, Jerusalem. We moved to new premises with a wonderful view and plenty of fresh air! The transfer of our offices was facilitated by many helpers, and successfully accomplished by the 1st of October 2003. "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering." This verse from Hebrews 12:22 best describes our current sentiments.

Our new street address is
Aravna
HaYevusi 3
and the new telephone number is **673 5423**. The post box remains 249, 91002 Jerusalem.

ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

—2003/2004 Lecture Series: "Vision, Prophecy and Charisma in Jewish and Christian Thinking."

This year's subject, "Vision, Prophecy and Charisma in Jewish and Christian Thinking" was chosen by the Annual General Meeting. The aim of this year's research is to establish knowledge about current notions of Messianism from Judeo-Christian writings and historical communal events. The lecture series began with **Prof. Dr. Israel Knohl's** presentation, "Suffering and Divinity in the Qumran Hymns."

Prof. Knohl of the Bible Department of the Hebrew University is the author of *The Messiah Before Jesus. The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). His lecture was based on his book in which says: "There is evidence for a messianic precursor to Jesus who is described as the "suffering servant" in fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This clarifies many formerly incomprehensible aspects of Jesus' life and confirms the story of the New Testament about his Messianic awareness. Knohl shows that around the time of Jesus' birth there came into being a concept of "catastrophic Messianism" in which the suffering, humiliation, and the death of the Messiah were regarded as an integral part of the redemptive process."

Inside this Issue:

Special Lectures2
Week of Prayer3
Visas4
Of Blessed Memory5
Publications5

Dr. Tim Laniak is Associate Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in the United States. This year in Jerusalem he is the Annual Professor at the Albright Institute of Archeological Research working on shepherd imagery in the Bible and the Ancient Near East. He was the speaker in November, on the topic, "Shepherds after my own Heart: Toward a Biblical Theology of Leadership." Notes from his lecture are available in print by contacting our offices or at www.etrfi.org.

On December 18th the Fraternity hosted **Prof. Dr. Josef Wohlmuth**, the new rector for the study program at the Hagia Maria Sion/Dormition Abbey. Prof. Wohlmuth is Professor emeritus for Catholic Systematic Theology at Bonn University. He spoke on "Emmanuel Levinas: Messianic Texts." Prof. Wohlmuth: "If the Messiah is the suffering man, or myself, and if this interpretation is related with a theory of individuality and ipseity, then it must also be possible to understand the Christian concept of Messianism better which does not take away the responsibility of each man but is rather the foundation for such responsibility. The difference between Talmudic Messianism as Levinas interprets it and Christian Messianism may be the fact that what Christian Messianism says first about Jesus, Levinasian Messianism says about every man." It turned out that to many students of the younger generation present, Levinas' writings were less familiar and Prof. Wohlmuth's indepth knowledge of the great French-Jewish thinker provided stimulants for further studies.

On the 22nd of January **Rabbi Daniel Roth** converted the large audience into small *chevruta* study groups and guided them according to his experience of an Orthodox yeshiva into studies of rabbinic texts from Maimonides, Ra'avad (Maimonides' opponent) and from the Jerusalem Talmud *Ta'anit*, Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin*. The leading question was, "Who is a false Messiah?" as well as, "Who is qualified to be the Messiah?" The Ra'avad's cosmic concept of the Messiah was discussed against the concrete historical development of Messianism as presented by Maimonides. The young Rabbi Roth introduced the modern discussions at his yeshiva on Messianism and referring to the importance which modern-day Israel gives to Maimonides experience of a historical process of redemption.

—Special Lectures

- **Bat Ye'or** spoke in Jerusalem over the past two months on several occasions on the topic of "Dhimmitude." Dhimmitude is the Islamic system of governing populations conquered by *jihad* wars, encompassing all of the demographic, ethnic, and religious aspects of the political system. The word "dhimmitude" as a historical concept, was coined by Bat Ye'or in 1983 to describe the legal and social conditions of Jews and Christians subjected to Islamic rule. The word comes from *dhimmi*, an Arabic word meaning "protected." *Dhimmi* was the name applied by the Arab-Muslim conquerors to indigenous non-Muslim populations who surrendered by a treaty (*dhimma*) to Muslim domination. Islamic conquests expanded over vast territories in Africa, Europe and Asia, for over a millennium since 638. The Muslim empire incorporated numerous varied peoples which had their own religion, culture, language and civilization. For centuries, these indigenous, pre-Islamic peoples constituted the great majority of the population of the Islamic lands. Although these populations differed, they were ruled by the same type of laws, based on the *shari'a*.

Bat Ye'or has a forthcoming book, *The Birth of Eurabia*. For books, articles and lectures on this theme, consult: www.dhimmi.org.

- The Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature and the

Center for the Study of Christianity of the Hebrew University conducted an international symposium on “Text, Thought, and Practice in Qumran and Early Christianity” on January 11-13, 2004, including a keynote address by **Prof. Harold Attridge** of Yale Divinity School on “The Scrolls and Johannine Christianity.” The Fraternity’s **Prof. Eileen Schuller**, **Fr. Etienne Nodet OP** and **Rev. Dr. Petra Heldt** contributed to the conference.

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

—Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2004

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was held this year on January 25-31. We received the sermons of **Fr. Afrayam** given at the Coptic Orthodox Church of St. Antony, now on the Fraternity’s website: <http://www.etrfi.org> and the one of the **Archbishop of Canterbury** at St. George’s Cathedral, available on his personal website: www.archbishopofcanterbury.org. One of the highlights was again the ecumenical gathering at the Coenaculum where the joint-liturgy was, as every year, prepared by the Dormition Abbey Study Program under the leadership of **Prof. Wohlmuth**. Everyone enjoyed the colourfulness and careful preparations at the Armenian and Ethiopian churches.

FRATERNITY COMMUNITY NEWS

—The Student Christian Forum

The Student Christian Forum has resumed its activities this year, under the continued leadership of **Dr. Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen**. Office hours are Mondays from 12:30-14:00 in the Hebrew University’s Boyar Building room 103. To be included in the list for invitations, please contact the Fraternity offices.

—Ordination

Br. Basilius H.-M. Schiel OSB was ordained a priest on the Feast of Epiphany on Sunday January 6, 2004 at the Dormition Abbey. We wish you many blessings, [Fr. Basilius!](#)

—Volunteers

Roland Webb from the UK was sent from the diocese of Coventry to Jerusalem for three months, assisting in the work of the Ecumenical Fraternity. Thanks for your most helpful contribution!

—Visitors

We were pleased to welcome some representatives of the **Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary** as our first visitors, and to receive their blessing upon the new premises of our offices.

In December we welcomed **Dr. Michael Strucken** from Germany of the Kindermissionswerk together with a film crew headed by **Mr. Joerg Kolbenschlag** who featured the Fraternity in a documentary for German television.

Also in December we received the director of the EMW (Evangelische Missionswerk Hamburg) **Rev. Herbert Meissner** and his deputy, **Rev. Maren von der Heyde**.

In January, we received the delegation and study group of NCLCI (National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel) headed by **Mr. David Blewett** and **Rev. Dr. William Harter**.

A study group of rabbis from Toronto came for a week of study of Jewish-Christian relations. This group was led jointly by the Fraternity and **Mr. Yossi Klein Halevi** of the Jewish Orthodox community.

Rev. Jen McCoach and **Rev. Mervyn Roberts** from Coventry Cathedral came on a study tour of Jerusalem organized by the Fraternity in January. It was a delight to meet you both.

—WCC Conference

On November 12-14 **Rev. Dr. Petra Heldt** was invited to participate in the World Council of Churches Jewish-Christian Consultation held in New York's Temple Emanu-El where she presented a keynote lecture on, "How Does Christian Understanding of Jews and Judaism Shape Christian Understanding of Themselves?" The lecture stresses the turning point in Christian-Jewish studies and relations. The accomplishments of the past, particularly between the Vatican and Israel, are presently institutionalized while Christian-Muslim and Jewish-Muslim relations are being emphasized. Simultaneously, anti-Judaism grows and the traditional Christian-Jewish relation institutes cannot provide an antidote. However, the increase in studies of Late Antiquity, including religions such as Christianity and Judaism, stimulates new areas of interest.

—Visas

All visas for Christians in Israel are currently being reviewed. Following the dismantling of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the visa task has been taken over jointly by the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of the Interior, resulting in a complete overhaul of the policies followed to date. As a result, most Christians working as volunteers or as employees in the country are currently without a visa due to the new procedures pending implementation. In response, a new Christian Caucus in the Knesset was initiated, amongst others, by **Dr. Yuri Stern**, chairman of the National Union Party. There are eight Knesset members in the Caucus, from six different political parties, from the ultra-Orthodox Shas party to the right-wing National Union and Likud parties to the left-wing Labor and secular Shinui party. For more information, see: <http://crosswalk.com/news/religiontoday>.

—The Organ Festival

A good friend of the ETRFI, the German-Jerusalemite and internationally respected organist **Elisabeth Roloff** was a feature at the Israel International Organ Festival held on November 17-20. Concerts were held in Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Ms. Roloff specializes in Bach, Mozart, Mendelssohn among many other classical favourites.

—Of Blessed Memory

For those who may not yet have received the sad news: **Prof. Shmuel Safrai** passed away on July 16. Prof. Safrai contributed extensively to the research of the Ecumenical Fraternity via lectures and articles published in *Immanuel*.

Prof. Emil Fackenheim has passed away on Friday, September 19. Prof. Fackenheim internationally-known for his philosophy after the Shoah, was a close friend of the Fraternity.

Derek Prince passed away in Jerusalem on September 24 at the age of 88. Author of over forty-five books, Mr. Prince taught on six continents over seven decades. He is survived by eleven children and an extended family of over one hundred and fifty people.

—New from the ETRFI!

- *To Heal the Wounds that Divide Us. Ecumenical Fraternity Studies 2000/2001.* This publication includes articles such as: “The Authority of Scripture: Canon and Community” (**Justin Taylor**), “The Messianic Movement: Between Doubting Jews and Questioning Christians” (**Bodil F. Skjott**).
- Now available in English: *The Holy Land Christians*, a comprehensive survey of the history of the Christian presence in the Holy Land by **Dr. Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen**. Originally published in Danish.

ETRFI Newsletter

The Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel was founded in 1966 by a group of professors, theologians and lay people in Jerusalem. They shared the perspective that recent history demanded a fundamental consideration of Christian attitudes towards the Jewish faith and people, and that the State of Israel offered a unique setting for facing this task together.

Today, the ETRFI is the recognized roof-organization for Christians engaged in Christian-Jewish dialogue in Israel. It is also the ecumenical group containing the widest range of members from all the historic churches.

LEADERSHIP

President:	Dr. Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen
Vice-President:	Canon William Broughton
Executive Secretary:	Rev. Dr. Petra Heldt
Treasurer:	Br. Elio Passeto NDS

MEMBERSHIP

Members of the ETRFI represent the Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Churches in approximately equal numbers, totaling more than one hundred, both locally and abroad.

Donations can be made by cheque or via bank transfer addressed to: Ecumenical Fraternity; Union Bank; Main Branch; 34, Jaffa Rd; Jerusalem; Account # 10638/62.

We're on the
web!
www.etrfi.org

*POB 249
Jerusalem 91002
Israel
Tel: 02 673 5423
Fax: 02 672 4237
Email: ecu_frat@netvision.net.il*