

**News From**  
**Toward Jerusalem Council II**  
**August 2004**



**Marty Waldman**, Executive General Secretary

**John Dawson**, Chairman

**Evan Thomas**, Chairman

**The Africa Connection**

In these days following the East Africa Consultation held in Ethiopia in May, it would be difficult to determine which group was most impacted - the executive committee or the Africans attending. Around 150 Ethiopians and a dozen leaders from other East African nations [Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Nigeria, Mali, and Sudan] listened to the presentations by committee members and responded enthusiastically. Jonathan Bernis gave a clear and inspiring introduction to the Messianic Jewish movement, followed by Dan Juster's more historical reflections. Then Brian Cox spoke of the implications for the historic churches and issued a challenging call to repentance.

Bishop Joseph Kanunuku, the personal representative of the Anglican Archbishop of Kenya, immediately responded with a powerful statement of the need for repentance from the African church. He led with an apology for the effects of increasing liberalism in his own denomination and for replacement theology and ignoring the place of Israel in the one new man. The Spirit moved upon the group with a grace of repentance and lamentation. Many were on the floor weeping and confessing sins of their own people against the Jewish people, as well as against each other. The group included Africans from all church streams: Evangelical, Pentecostal, Anglican, Catholic, and Orthodox.

There was also sorrow and repentance over the situation of Ethiopian Jews, or Beit Israel [also known as Falasha, a word with the negative meaning of "foreigner"]. Some have come from Gondar in the north to Addis Ababa, waiting seven years in the poverty of refugee camps. A small group of them attended the consultation, and they were presented with a large restitution offering the next morning.

The time of repentance concluded with the Jewish brothers confessing their own sins, forgiving the Gentile church representatives, and embracing them in reconciliation. As one fruit of the growing relationship with the Jerusalem brothers last year, Benjamin Berger and Marcel Rebiai

came and played a significant role in the consultation. Benjamin gave a prophetic talk on Jerusalem and the engrafting in the olive tree.

The committee was also encouraged by the participation of Fr. Vasile Mihoc, Romanian Orthodox priest from Sibiu, Romania. He was able to relate very positively to those attending from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The committee has held a vacant place for an Orthodox Christian and still hopes one day to name a new member who identifies with the TJC II vision.

Mr. Gerald Gotzen, an English evangelical believer who has ministered in Ethiopia for thirty years, addressed the consultation on the history of the nation and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. East African church leaders were authorized to present the vision of TJC II in their own nations and churches.

The committee met in executive sessions and made some schedule changes for the upcoming meetings. There will be a second East Africa Consultation in Nairobi, Kenya in the fall of 2005, and the Israel meeting will be delayed until 2006.

After the meetings, some of the committee met with the President of Ethiopia, Mr. Girma Wolde-Giyorgis, at his request. Although this was a formal meeting, they were warmly welcomed and able to pray blessing on a leader and his nation. There was also an open door to meet with the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Abuna Paulos, in spite of his own full schedule with a synod of bishops. He listened carefully to the vision of TJC II and discussion of reconciliation, responding with affirmation and blessing. Afterward, the small delegation encountered a group of bishops in the lobby who quickly engaged them in conversation in several languages. Evan Thomas made contact with Bp. Aba Cuostos, the Ethiopian Orthodox Archbishop of Jerusalem.

On the outskirts of Addis Ababa, the committee visited an almost hidden group known as Beit Abraham, Orthodox believers with Jewish ancestry and retaining much Jewish practice, passed on through secret oral tradition. They are excellent artisans in weaving, goldsmithing, and creating pottery.

A few committee members remained after the meetings and traveled north to Lalibela to visit ancient churches carved out of rocks.

These travels and the uplifting contact with Ethiopian believers made a deep impact on the committee. They discovered an entire society marked with Jewish elements. They awoke each day to the chanting of psalms on loud speakers throughout the city, which lasted until sunset. They discovered that Ethiopians commonly observe Jewish dietary restrictions and the circumcision of male babies on the eighth day.

Ethiopians date their Jewish origins to the union of King Solomon and Queen Sheba and alliances made at that time. Jewish law and practices were introduced. There was a historically definable Jewish community before the time of Christ. The Ethiopian eunuch of Acts chapter 8, a high official to the court of Candice, is recognized as the father of the Ethiopian church because he brought the gospel back after his worship at the temple in Jerusalem.

Thus the Ethiopian church is unique in the Christian world as they regard themselves as being converted from Judaism and not paganism. The Orthodox Church claims to have the Ark of the Covenant at Aksum, and each parish church has a replica of the ark and tablets. They observe Torah requirements concerning marriage, eat unleavened bread at the time of Pesach, and, and include Davidic dance as part of their liturgy. The Star of David is a common symbol.

In spite of this rich heritage, prejudice developed toward Ethiopian Jews who did not become Christian. Orthodox Christians were involved in the repentance and special offering for Beit Israel, received at the consultation.

We praise God for the open doors and warm reception of Africans. The committee especially appreciates the work of Matthew Rudolph and Gateways Beyond staff, which coordinated events and provided intercession during the executive meetings.

### **Updates and Prayer Requests**

\* The booklet on the Messianic movement, written by Dan Juster and Peter Hocken, is in the final stages of editing and will be published soon.

\*The Russian translation of Don Finto's book, Your People Shall Be My People, will be distributed soon in Russia and possibly Israel. They are also considering a Portuguese translation for Brazil.

\* John Dawson has YWAM meetings in South Africa and England in August and in Brazil at the end of September.

\* Wayne Wilks will go to Siberia August 23-31 to meet with pastors and church leaders.

### **Special Request**

We extend our thanks to those of you who sent special offerings to help with the expenses of Africans attending the consultation. Those you enabled to attend played key roles in the meetings. We find, however, that our funds for ongoing operation are seriously depleted after Ethiopia. Would you prayerfully consider regular financial support for TJCII or a one-time gift this summer? We depend on our friends around the world and need your help to move forward with the vision. The funds you send will be carefully spent on publications, helping Eastern Europeans and Israelis attend the Vienna consultation in October, and toward the expenses of Africans for the Jerusalem 2006 meetings.

You may contribute to the work of TJCII with an automated bank-to-bank transfer of funds through our Vienna office. The routing should be through ERSTE Bank, code 20111; Umkehr-Verein account number 300304-43398; BIC is GIBAATWW; IBAN is AT 202011130030443398 . It is very important that transactions be clearly marked "TJCII" as this account receives other funds as well. Donors from the United States should consider checking with a tax consultant about the deduction status of funds sent overseas.

Soon we will be able to receive credit card contributions through Paypal. Instructions will be posted to the TJCII website.

## Booklet

The booklet "*Toward Jerusalem Council II, The Vision and the Story*" by Peter Hocken is online. Check the TJC II website at <http://www.TJCII.org>. A revised printed version in English is now available through our Ventura office. A German translation is being printed and will be available soon.

A revised printed version in English will be available through our Ventura office after January.

## Reminders

October 17-19, 2004 Executive Committee Meetings in Vienna, Austria  
October 19-22, 2004 European Consultation in Vienna, Austria  
May 2005 Executive Committee Meetings in Dallas, Texas  
October 2005 Executive Committee Meetings and Latin American Consultation in Buenos Aires, Argentina

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